PLAYING TO LOSE?

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WEHRMACHT IN MODERN WORLD WAR II VIDEO GAMES

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Master thesis Geschiedenis van Nederland in Mondiale Context

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Mural on church, Feichten an der Alz, Bavaria, Germany

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PREFACE

From an early age I have been fascinated by games. Whether it was the classic board game *Stratego* or the fantastical video game of *Warcraft*, the world of games have always provided me with ample entertainment and possibilities to develop myself. Besides books and films, video games also provided me with my first historical experiences. The flight simulator *Red Baron* sparked my interest in the history of flight and early twentieth century politics. *Medieval Total War* taught me about the existence of the different Islamic Caliphates in North-Africa and the many tribes and principalities of early Medieval Europe. Video games never taught me history inasmuch as they taught me to think about history. It was in part thanks to video games exposing me to different periods in time that I seriously began exploring history. They made me reflect on the rise and fall of great empires, on the importance of technological advances, and on the impact war can have on the individual. Therefor it was only fitting to end my academic studies by writing my Master's thesis on history and video games.

I would like to thank the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies for providing me with my research topic, and also for the opportunity to work as an intern for the Institute. I extend my thanks to my supervisors prof. dr. Kees Ribbens and Pieter van den Heede MA for their guidance and feedback. Their combined knowledge of World War II and historical game studies helped me to find my way around in this, for me hitherto unknown, field of study. I also wish to thank prof. dr. Maria Grever for taking the time to act as my second reader.

My parents have always stimulated my desire to learn new things and my passion for history. I could not have come this far in life without their unwavering faith and support. I am indebted to my fellow students, in particular Nils, Jetske, Evy and Michelle, for providing a sounding board when I needed one. I would also like to thank my good friends Samir and Merel for their friendship, council and encouragement during all our years of study. A final special thanks to Karina for all of her love and moral support during these months of research and writing by being the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel.

Tom Rijnberg
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Warfare makes for great storytelling. Mankind has been fascinated with the exploits of warriors, pitted against each other in epic struggles, since the time of the Iliad. World War II, the largest and most devastating conflict mankind has ever inflicted upon itself, has been a source of inspiration for storytellers ever since the war ended. Just as literature and cinema have used WWII as a source of inspiration, so too have video games. Video games combine the traditional storytelling with player input, allowing for players to become part of the story they are experiencing.[1] This point of view was not adopted by everyone from day one. According to Jesper Juul, games could not be seen as storytelling media. In reviewing several games with a cinematic counterpart, he found the video game versions to be much simpler than the movie versions. Torben Grodal objected to this in his contribution to *The Video Game Theory Reader* (2003) by stating that the level of intricacy, or lack thereof, is no valid reason to deprive video games from their status as storytelling media, he says. Mind you, this was back in 2003. As computing power advanced, so did quality of in-game cinematics and various other gameplay elements, providing players with a richer story world. Though Juul remains true to his ludological approach, it seems he has accepted the storytelling qualities of video games since 2003.[2]

Though there are countless games allowing players to immerse themselves in combat operations fought by the Americans, British and Soviets, games that feature a story told from a German perspective are really quite rare still. This could be explained in many ways. One explanation is simply put the possible apprehension players might foster about playing a German in a WWII setting. As one game consumer put it very eloquently in an online discussion: "*I ain't playin' as no damn Nazi!*[sic]."[3] Besides the possible apprehensions one might feel about playing as part of National-Socialist Germany, the fact of the matter is that games are meant to be won. In the end players want to feel like winner, to feel like their actions mattered in the end. Nazi-Germany lost the war, so when you are playing as the German side, are you not effectively playing to lose? With their narrative inevitably ending in defeat it is interesting to see how video games with a German campaign represent their versions of the German soldier.

Games with a historical setting come in many shapes and sizes. Some merely draw inspiration from the pages of history, like the *anime* styled *Valkyria Chronicles* (Sega 2008) in which players must defend its fictional homeland (modelled on Belgium) against the aggression of its militaristic neighbour (which strongly resembles Germany).[4] But there are also games which set their narrative in a historically accurate background, and seem to suggest they provide players with 'authentic' historical experiences. Often these games make use of

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[1] Kees Ribbens, *Strijdtonelen. De Tweede Wereldoorlog in de Polulaire Historische Cultuur*, (Rotterdam 2013), 11.

[2] Jesper Juul, 'Meanings of Difficulty in Video Games', in Mark J.P. Wolf & Bernard Perron, *The Video Game Theory Reader II*, (New York 2009), 250.

[3] 'World war games in which you could play as Germany (Nazi Germany)' (November/December 2010), http://www.gamespot.com/forums/games-discussion-1000000/world-war-games-in-which-you-could-play-as-germany-27491796/ (12-03-2016).

[4] Jerremie Clyde, Howard Hopkins & Glenn Wilkinson, 'Beyond the "Historical" Simulation: Using Theories of History to Inform Scholarly Game Design', in *Loading... The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association* Vol 6(9) (2014), 3-16, 11.

historical sources such as archival material, ego documents and secondary literature. Even though these digital stories are not to be considered historical texts, they do convey historical information to the players. Some historians, like Jerremie Clyde, Howard Hopkins and Glenn Wilkinson, have expressed concerns about this because, as they say, these games merely coat themselves in historical fact in order to claim 'historical authenticity'. There is no critical reinterpretation of the sources these games cite, they are merely presented at face value.[5] This in itself is not a problem of course. Video games aren't history and are not meant to be history. The claim that video games even claim 'historical accuracy' is very much a historian's argument, claims Jeremy Antley, who identifies the historian's resistance to the current way of historical representation in video games as a reaction to the degradation of the historian's position of historical interpreter.[6] Video games, through their gameplay, allow the players to produce responses that go beyond the simple consumption and affirmation or negation of the presented arguments. The players, or readers as Antley calls video game consumers, are enabled to prosume their own historical 'truths'.

It is true that game producers market their products with buzzwords such as 'historical', 'authentic' and 'realistic', but I argue that these claims need to be criticised on their own separate merits and not as supportive of one another. Realism more often than not refers to the way weapons look and sound, or the way the player characters are textured. Accuracy, despite the meaning of the word, can be interpreted in such a loose manner that almost any game could make that claim. Accurate how? Accurate in the depiction of the surroundings? In the sound effects? In the amount of suffering players experience? Who is to say? Game developers seem to remain deliberately vague on this point. And what about the claim that certain games are historical? They are historical because they are set during the Crusades, such as *Assassins Creed* (Ubisoft 2008), or during WWII like the games I will be studying.[7] Games do not produce historical understanding by interpreting facts and events, rather they are based on a previously established historical narrative, constructed in the secondary literature on the subject matter. In some cases a clear representation of a dominant cultural narrative is noticeable.[8] For instance the American narrative of WWII has been shaped by cultural representations of said war and the soldiers who fought in it. Debra Ramsay describes how this image of the 'citizen soldier', who fought for freedom and democracy, became ingrained in popular historical thinking in the United States, by the constant re-creation of this image in the cinema and literature. In video games this reflects on the choice of battlefields and which armies are playable, at least for the games Ramsay has examined.[9] Though it is certainly interesting to try and link the video game representations of German soldiers to dominant cultural narratives, for instance in the games' countries of origin, there is still vital data lacking on the influence of dominant cultural narratives on video game development. Most research into cultural

5   Ibid., 9.
6   Jeremy Antley, "Going beyond the Textual in History", in *Journal of Digital Humanities* Vol. 1 No.2 (Spring 2012), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-2/going-beyond-the-textual-in-history-by-jeremy-antley/ (04-05-2016).
7   Adam Chapman, "Privileging Form over Content: Analysing Historical Videogames", in *Journal of Digital Humanities* vol.1 No.2 (Spring 2012), http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-2/privileging-form-over-content-by-adam-chapman/. (03-06-2016).
8   Debra Ramsay, "Brutal Games: Call of Duty and the Cultural Narrative of World War II", in *Cinema Journal* Vol. 54, No. 2 (2015) 94-113, 95.
9   Ibid., 98.

narratives of WWII focus solely on the representations of the soldiers of that respective nation. Ramsay has opened up the discussion on this matter with her paper on the *Call of Duty* franchise (Activision 2003-2016) and the American cultural narrative of WWII. Unfortunately this thesis will add little to this discussion on cultural narratives and video game representations, but it might provide a point of departure for future research into this subject matter.

This thesis is meant to provide a basis for further research into historical representation in video games, the representation of the losing side of a conflict to be precise. The goal is not to establish whether or not these games give a 'historically accurate' image of German soldiers during WWII. It is not my intention to delve further into the discussion of 'good versus bad history'. Instead I will examine the narratives of two video games set in World War II which feature the German side as a playable faction in the singleplayer campaign.[10] No longer relegated to the role of simple, 'evil' cannon fodder, German soldiers are placed under the player's control, and the player experiences the narrative from the German perspective. [11] How then is this perspective constructed? **How do WWII video games represent German soldiers?** In order to investigate this question I will perform a narratalogical analysis of two games, being: *Red Orchestra II – Heroes of Stalingrad* (Tripwire 2011) (ROII) and *Company of Heroes – Tales of Valor/Opposing Fronts* (Relic Entertainment 2006) (CoH – ToV/OF). I have selected these games on the following criteria. They both have a closed, linear narrative, meaning the games' endings are predetermined and thus not open to player agency. Both games are available on the digital video game distribution network *Steam*. In selecting suitable games, finally I have looked at the release date of the games. This has in part to do with hardware compatibility and in part with allowing these games to represent the contemporary take on German representation in video games. Both games allow players to fight WWII battles on the side of the Wehrmacht. ROII is set in 1942 on the Eastern Front and CoH is set in 1944 on the Western Front. I will subdivide my research question into several smaller questions: *How is the narrative focalised?* Through whose eyes does the player experience the game and the story? How do characters view themselves, their enemies and allies, and the conflict in general? *How do the narratives of these video games fit into the historical construction of the image of the Wehrmacht?* I will look at elements of the so-called 'clean' Wehrmacht myth to answer this question. And finally, seeing as a game is meant to be won, and Germany lost WWII, how do the games circumvent this issue? In other words, *how can players win the game when playing as the German Wehrmacht?* This question will be answered by looking at the games' victory conditions, and story conclusions. In order to find out how these games establish the image and narrative of the German soldiers during their campaigns in WWII, I will answer the following questions using my analytical framework, on which I will elaborate further in paragraph 1.2.

It is important to look at the way how video games, as one of the newest and most interactive narrative medium, represent German soldiers during WWII because of a several reasons. First, research into this subject matter is still lacking in corpus. Secondly, without diminishing the atrocities such as the Holocaust, it is time to stop the portrayal of all Germans in WWII video games as over the top genocidal, evil monsters. They serve a narrative purpose in games such as titles from the *Wolfenstein* franchise (1991-2014), but

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[10]   Singleplayer games meaning there is one human-controlled party competing against computer operated parties.
[11]   Ramsay, "Brutal Games", 95.

incorporating this version of German soldiers in games with a more historically accurate setting this only helps to propagate overused tropes and stereotypes. The danger we face today, in portraying people who perpetrated some of the most heinous crimes in human history as some sort of caricatures or comically evil monsters, the fact that the Nazi crimes were very real and that they were perpetrated by everyday people is lost. By emphasising the human element in German soldiers in a WWII context and making the soldiers relatable to players, even when they avoid the hot topic of actual war crimes and genocide, I believe these games underline the fact that the war crimes of WWII were committed by ordinary people. Herein lies the strength of this immersive, though admittedly selective, storytelling of the video game medium offers us.

I will first give an introduction to the historiography of the Wehrmacht, in which I will elaborate on the phases in which historical knowledge of the German army has evolved. I will especially focus on the elements of historical myth surrounding the Wehrmacht, and how the historiography paints the image of the Wehrmacht today. Although it is not my intention to thoroughly fact check the researched games in this thesis, I will be looking at how the narratives of ROII and CoH hold up to the general historiographical image of the Wehrmacht in the 21st Century. I will end this chapter by elaborating more on the field of (historical) game studies, and position my research in this relatively new field of academia.

1.1 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE WEHRMACHT

German society constantly re-evaluates its Nazi-era past in order to come to a 'workable past'. This is aptly named *Vergangenheidsbewältigung,* which means overcoming the past.[12] Theodor Adorno, in an address he gave during a conference hosted by the *Deutsche Koordinierungsrat der Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit* (German Coordinating Council of Organizations for Christian-Jewish Cooperation) in Wiesbaden in 1959, described the desire to overcome the German wartime history did not consist of seriously working on this past. On the contrary, the intention was to close the books on the past and, according to Adorno, even erase it from collective memory if possible.[13] In the years immediately after the war, the main narrative was that the main part of German society was innocent of the crimes committed by the Nazi-regime, and that they too were victims. People didn't speak much about their personal experiences and traumas. The West-German government held up the story that the Wehrmacht had remained a 'clean' organisation that had no connections to the crimes for which the Nazi-era had become synonymous even decades after WWII ended.[14] On the subject of war crimes they chose to emphasise the suffering of the German people at the hands of the Soviet conquerors, even equating these crimes with the German crimes against the Jews and other peoples. This selective remembrance is not the same as forgetting, according to Robert Moeller. German

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12   Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley 2001), 16.

13   Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past" in Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York 2005), 89-103, 89.

14   Omer Bartov, 'German Soldiers and the Holocaust: Historiography, Research and Implications', in *History & Memory* vol.9 no.1/2 1997), 162-188, 163.

society simply placed more emphasis on the crimes suffered by the Germans themselves that those committed by the Germans onto others.[15]

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, in the German Democratic Republic, a similar emphasis on the suffering of the German populace was present. The only difference being that the focus lied more on the suffering caused by the Western armies and in turn regarding the Soviets as the heroes who liberated the German people from both Capitalism and Fascism.[16] The following acceptance of German atrocities, with the Holocaust at the core, came with the additional belief that these crimes were committed solely by the fanatics of the *Schutzstaffel*, and local paramilitary groups in the occupied zones. Naturally, the people responsible for bulk of the killings were the SS leaders, administrators, and members of the death squads. It was this organisation which guarded the camps and spearheaded the operations of the *Einsatzgruppen* who attempted to cleanse the conquered territories of Gypsies, Communists and Jews.[17] A German joke on the subject remarks that although the Wehrmacht might not have done so great in the war itself, it really had a great public relations strategy for winning the post-war.[18] Though it would be a gross oversight to equate soldiers of the Wehrmacht with soldiers of the SS just like that, the image of the 'clean' Wehrmacht soldier did get shattered in 1995 when an exhibition titled *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht, 1941–1944* (War crimes of the Wehrmacht) was opened in Hamburg.[19] This exhibition, produced by the *Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung* (Hamburg institute for Social Research), was not without controversy though. Many scholars found the image put forth by the exhibition to be wanting and in some ways unfounded. A call for more extensive research into the Wehrmacht was made in 1999 by Rolf-Dieter Müller.[20]

1.1.1 CONSTRUCTION OF THE POST-WAR NARRATIVES

According to authors like Omer Bartov, Hannes Heer, Alexander Pollak and Ben Shepard, the shift in the scholarly debate about the Wehrmacht came about in three phases.[21] Bartov, in a 1997 publication, points out which questions scholars did not ask regarding the history and conduct of the Wehrmacht. For instance, according to Bartov the body of scholarship failed to give a clearer understanding of the German wartime mentality because it implemented a traditional methodology of focussing on the upper echelons of the Nazi regime and the military, and thus neglected to look into the conduct of the rank-and-file soldier and his attitude towards the local population and enemy soldiers on the Eastern Front and the implementation of the

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[15] Robert G. Moeller, *The Miracle years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (New Jersey 2001), 83.

[16] Bill Niven, *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, (New York 2006), 113.

[17] Jochen Böhler, "Race, Genocide, and Holocaust", in Thomas W. Zeiler 7 Daniel M. DuBois (eds), *A Companion to World War II* Vol. I (Oxford 2013), 666-684, 674-675.

[18] Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht – History, Myth, Reality* (London 2006), 195.

[19] Ben Shepard, 'The clean Wehrmacht, the War of Extermination, and beyond', in *The Historical Journal* vol.52, no.2 (2009), 455-473, 457.

[20] Ibid., 458.

[21] Sheperd, "Clean Wehrmacht", 461; Alexander Pollak, "The Myth of the 'Untainted Wehrmacht': The Structural Elements of Wehrmacht Mythology in the Austrian Press since 1945", in Hannes Heer (ed.), *The Discursive Construction of History – Remembering the Wehrmacht's War of Annihilation* (New York 2008), 132-154, 132.

Holocaust.[22] But the construction of the 'clean Wehrmacht' myth goes beyond the scope of historical research. This myth is embedded in the larger question of how Germany dealt with the legacy of WWII. Pollak, in a chapter on the cultural memory of the Wehrmacht in Austria, identifies ten structural elements on which the historical construction of the 'clean Wehrmacht' in Austria was based. I believe most, if not all of these elements are generally applicable to the German society as well. The first element is the myth of victimhood. Building upon that, the second and third elements focus on a small group of the guilty and the construction of the dominant, symbolically laden 'victim' event: 'Stalingrad'.[23] The disastrous outcome of this battle was used to justify claiming German victimhood as well. The GDR used the devastating bombing of Dresden to a similar effect to illustrate the war crimes committed by the Western Allies.

In narratives published in the years immediately following the war, the emphasis lied heavily of the brutal conditions the Wehrmacht soldiers had to operate in, and on their heroic yet tragic demise in the face of an overwhelming enemy. West-Germany emphasised the Soviet hordes while the East-Germans focussed more on the Capitalist Western invaders, but the core remained similar. Germany was confronted with insurmountable odds, so naturally it lost. This myth, linking in with the broader myth of the honourable defeat of the Wehrmacht as a whole, originated in the final documents produced by the Wehrmacht High Command (Oberkommando Wehrmacht, OKW). German soldiers could boast of 'unforgettable achievements' and could surrender with their pride intact.[24]

Furthermore the offsetting and downplaying of war crimes while at the same time heavily emphasising of crimes perpetrated by the Allies, such as American bombings on German cities and Soviet brutalities in East-Prussia, and the denying of responsibility for the war enforced the notion of the German soldiers as victims rather than perpetrators. The ordeals of the Wehrmacht were highlighted in post-war media by publishing stories of individual 'battles', in isolation from the whole-war context. What I mean by that is these stories focussed on singular acts of heroism during a battle, but they did not place these battles in the broader context of the war. In short, the 'why' of the war was ignored. During the first post-war decade, these stories were published in 'soldier novels' and veterans magazines, which were widely circulated in German society.[25] Also published in these magazines were the portrayals of the wartime biographical accounts, again in isolation from the whole-war context. If and when there was attention for the brutal actions of the Wehrmacht, such as the anti-partisan actions in the Balkans and on the Eastern Front, these operations were framed as a logical response to rear-guard assaults by 'bandits' and 'partisans'. The blame for these brutal reprisals was placed with the people who suffered them, the 'Jews and Bolsheviks'.[26] These German post-war media outlets also published lauding obituaries of generals and soldiers.[27] These memoirs served to posthumously glorify the deeds of German soldiers and officers in order to further the image of the Wehrmacht as a 'professional' and 'apolitical' institution.

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22   Bartov, "German Soldiers and the Holocaust", 167-168.
23   Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 142.
24   Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 136.
25   Ibid., 149.
26   Shepherd, "Clean Wehrmacht", 463.
27   Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht",136.

Perhaps the biggest argument in support of this 'clean' image were the claims regarding the naivety and apolitical outlook of 'ordinary' soldiers. The soldiers were professional troops, in service of Germany and not the Nazi-party. Yet Wehrmacht recruits pledged their oaths of loyalty not to the German people but to the Führer himself.[28] The claimed lack of room for discretion on the part of Wehrmacht soldiers, with the appeal to that very oath was also used to divert responsibility away from the soldiers in the field on those issuing the orders. *Befehl war Befehl* was the common excuse used by German soldiers after the war, claiming they were honour bound to follow orders and thus lacked the agency to act against them.[29] Johannes Hürter explains that though many Wehrmacht officers, especially those with an aristocratic background, identified more with the Prussian militarism and were normally not likely to align themselves with Nazi beliefs, their endemic resentment of Slavs, Communists and Jews coincided with the NSDAP's brutal goals in the East. Many German career officers saw the Slavs as enemies for the Russian army's invasion of Eastern-Germany in 1914, the Communists for their bloody 1917 revolution against the established order, and the Jews for their role in that Communist revolution and for the alleged spreading of defeatism in Germany during WWI.[30] Therefore the resentments of Germany's military commanders and the resentments of Germany's dominant ideology, though differently motivated, overlapped, leading to the willing participation of the Wehrmacht in Nazi-Germany's war of destruction in the East.

1.1.2 HISTORICAL RESEARCH FROM THE 1960S ONWARD

In the 1960s studies on the anti-partisan campaigns fought by the *Ostheer* (the German eastern army) were published, often written by former participants in these campaigns. They focussed on vilifying the tactics used by the partisans in a means to justify the brutality with which the Ostheer combated these partisans. In the 1970's a harsher tone was used in publications on the Ostheer. In 1996 this image was brought to the attention of the German public with an exhibition on Wehrmacht war crimes in Hamburg. One of the major publications following this exhibition is the edited volume titled *Die Wehrmacht: Mythos & Realität* (The Wehrmacht: Myth & Reality), edited by Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans-Erich Volkmann. This publication was the result of an academic conference on the subject, held in 1997. This volume contains over sixty articles, ranging from discussions on the influence of Prussian militarism on the attitude towards civilians to the development of the myth of the 'clean, non-political' Wehrmacht.[31] Then again, in his introduction of this volume, Müller addresses the formulation of a new myth about the Wehrmacht. The exhibition in Hamburg creates the idea that the Wehrmacht operated on its own accord in carrying out the atrocities of the Eastern Front. In reality, the Wehrmacht wasn't a monolithic organisation. Propagating this notion diminishes and marginalises the protests

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[28]   Hannes Heer, "The Head of Medusa: The Controversy Surrounding the Exhibition 'War of Annihilation: Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941 to 1944', in Heer, *Discursive Construction of History*, 227-250, 239.
[29]   Henning Stühring, *Als der Osten brannte – Erlebnisse aus dem Russlandfeldzug "Fall Barbarossa" 1941/42*, (Berlin 2011), 16.
[30]   Shepherd, "The Clean Wehrmacht", 463.
[31]   Donald G. Schilling, 'Review of *Die Wehrmacht: Mythos & Realität* by Rolf-Dieter Müller & Hans-Erich Volkmann', in *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 73, no.1 (2001), 208-211.

and even acts of resistance against these atrocities coming from within parts of the Wehrmacht by placing them outside of the narrative.[32]

Besides broad-scale publications like this, monographs about individual military leaders and events shed new light on the so-called 'clean' image of the German Wehrmacht's behaviour during the war. In his essay on field marshal Albert Kesselring, supreme commander of the Mediterranean theatre, titled *Evaluate the influence of 'Vergangenheitspolitik* David Johnson dissolved the long standing image of the Italian front as being a 'clean' one, and of Kesselring as being merely a victim of 'victors justice'. The role of German *Vergangenheidspolitik* (politics of the past) which propagated the myth of Kesselring as innocent of the crimes for which he was convicted in 1947 helped establish not only the image of a clean field marshal, but that of a clean army altogether.[33] Other publications dealing with the influence of this Vergangenheidspolitik are *German Soldiers and the Holocaust*, by Omer Bartov (1997) and Ben Shepard's *The Clean Wehrmacht, the War of Extermination and beyond* (2009). Bartov's article, being published a few years before Müller's call for new research, makes a lot of the same observations as Müller. The image of a clean Wehrmacht was propagated not only by the soldiers and media, but especially by the emerging West-German government. The rebuilding of the German state required an as narrow as possible definition of who the Nazi's were. Incorporating the mass of the Wehrmacht, including almost 18 million Germans in its ranks at one point, into this image was not acceptable. Germany and its society needed to appear 'purged of its misdeeds' as soon as possible.[34] Shepard gives an overview of the more recent state of historical debate on the matter. His focus lies more on the Wehrmacht's anti-partisan operations on the Eastern Front, which have for a long time been excused for their brutality. Taking place, for the most part, behind the front lines in occupied Soviet territory, these actions were carried out by the Ostheer and might not have been as brutal and bloody as the actions of the SS-Einsatzgruppen in the same area but were still clearly war crimes. Shepard also describes the shifts in historiography I have touched upon earlier.[35] Unfortunately data on the effects of this shift in historiography on the perception of the general society in both Germany and abroad is still lacking, nor is it easy to say whether or not this shift has had a significant impact on media depictions of WW2.

1.2.3 WEHRMACHT & WAFFEN-SS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

The bulk of the historiographical literature discussed in the previous paragraph concerns itself with the German conduct on the Eastern Front. The *Vernichtungskriegsthese* only applies to the brutal acts of war and subsequent war crimes committed by German troops in the Soviet Union. A similar comprehensive historiographical review of the German conduct on the Western Front is still lacking. There are several monographies regarding specific brutalities and war crimes committed by the German occupying forces in for instance France and the Netherlands, but as it lacked the systemic destructive nature of the occupation in the

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[32] Rolf-Dieter Müller, 'Introduction', in Rolf-Dieter Müller & Hans-Erich Volkmann (ed.), *Die Wehrmacht: Mythos & Realität,* (Munich 1999), 20-23, 22.

[33] David Johnson, 'Evaluate the influence of 'Vergangenheitspolitik', the motives of collective memory, its effect on the post-World War II war crimes trials and judgments of the 'Wehrmacht' and subsequent shaping of the wider historical narrative', in *Teaching History*, Vol. 47, No. 2, (2013): 58-63, 60-61.

[34] Bartov, 'Holocaust', 164.

[35] Shepherd, 'Clean Wehrmacht', 458.

East the literature is very fragmented still. This is not to say there were no cases of extremely brutal war crimes committed by the Germans on the Western Front. In his 1996 dissertation William Wiley addressed the myth prevailing in the Western and English-speaking world that the German army conducted itself honourably towards its Western foes.[36]

This generally favourable view of the German conduct in the occupied countries in the West is reflected in the literature written about German units', both Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, operations in the West. They read mostly like a battle report, with the focus lying on unit strength and applied tactics during engagements with the Western Allies rather than describing the conduct and crimes of the German occupiers. Most of these works, some of them written by former military personnel, do not hold up to academic standards, rather they function more as interesting reading for laymen with an interest in military history and as reference material for model kit makers. These works often ignore the nasty history to instead focus on the 'epic battles'. Though too many of these books muddy the waters for decent historical research into the conduct and misconduct of the German occupying forces in Western Europe the last few years did see several publications attempting to shatter this Western 'clean Wehrmacht' myth. In her article on the simultaneous presence of this clean Wehrmacht myth and the national memory of German atrocities such as the Putten raid in the Netherlands, Jennifer L. Foray explores how the Wehrmacht devolved from a fairly restrained occupying force early in the War to a tool of brutal oppression in the later stages of the War. She concludes that it was a combination of factors such as an increase in violent resistance to the occupation and the ultimate integration of the Wehrmacht in the Nazi-regime's anti-Jewish efforts that would 'undo the military's attempt to remain out of the fray of politics'. Like in Eastern Europe, she ends, the idea of a 'clean Wehrmacht' in the Netherlands would prove more myth than reality.[37]

1.2 HISTORICAL REALISM AND MYTHS IN VIDEO GAMES

That the Wehrmacht, as a military organisation, has been guilty of mass atrocities is beyond a doubt. Will this mean, however, that video games reflect this element of history? Or do these games propagate the idea of the 'clean' Wehrmacht? One might say that game developers will of course not touch upon the topic of war crimes in their narratives as this might prove a too heavy a subject to incorporate tastefully in a gamic setting, but at the same time the war on the Eastern Front has become synonymous with the German term *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of annihilation).[38] Using the elements of the Wehrmacht myth as a template for my analysis I will establish if the game's narratives share similarities with the myths propagated in the post-war years. It is my expectation that several elements will surely be present. I do not believe the reasoning behind framing the games narratives in this way is to whitewash the history behind it. Rather I suspect that focussing on individual battles is needed to limit the space of the gamic world, and the game's protagonist needs to be focalised in such a way that players can project their own identities on the character, thus creating immersion. Therefore the way in

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[36] William Harry Wiley, *Onwards To New Deeds! – The German Field Army and War Crimes during the Second World War*, (PhD dissertation University of York, Ontario 1996), iv.

[37] Jennifer L. Foray, "The 'Clean Wehrmacht' in the German-occupied Netherlands, 1940-5", in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.45 No.4 (2012) 768-787, 784.

[38] Shepherd, 'Clean Wehrmacht', 462.

which the elements previously attributed to the 'clean Wehrmacht myth' are used in the narratives of these games ultimately varies from absolving the bulk of Wehrmacht soldiers for the committed wrongdoings to generating enough empathy for the German characters in order for players to be able to immerse themselves in the in-game destinies of the Wehrmacht soldiers they are playing.

Video games have become increasingly more realistic since their inception. Lots of games today present themselves using the same terminology. They promise the players an 'authentic, immersive and realistic experience'.[39] But how real can a video game really get? Surely it is undesirable to create a 'PTSS Simulator', and no one truly wants to experience warfare in real life. It is clear then that 'realism' is a too broad a term in this case. Alexander Galloway, in his 2004 paper on social realism, states that there are three different modes of realism identifiable in video games. *Realisticness* refers to the general accuracy of the audiovisual representations.[40] When a game simulates a German soldier he must at least look and sound like a German soldier in order to be deemed 'realistic'. *Social realism* refers to the matter of believability in the characters' interactions and narratives. *Behavioural realism* finally indicates the levels of realism in in-game movement and object physics. Defeating a Soviet tank by shooting it repeatedly with your sidearm would probably not be deemed behaviourally realistic.[41] Expanding on Galloway's definition, Breuer, Festl and Quandt add *narrative realism*.[42] The plot of *Company of Heroes* for instance, where players follow the story of a German soldier during several operations in Northern France, would be seen as narratively realistic, whereas the plot of *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (Machinegames 2014), American commando awakes from a fifteen-year long coma to find the entire world controlled by robot Nazi's, would in all likelihood not be deemed as such. As a historian it is tempting to add 'historical realism' to that list, yet I agree with authors such as Frank Ankersmit and Alun Munslow that 'history is never as good as the original it represents'.[43] In the end which type of realism you identify in a game is ultimately irrelevant, says Holger Pötzsch, as they are usually all present in some way. He uses the term 'selective authenticity', first coined by Salvati and Bullinger in 2013, and rephrases it to 'selective realism'. Similarly to the claims to authenticity, this form of realism remains superficial at best, focussing on surface features such as landscapes, uniforms and weapon designs. But, as Pötzsch explains, what is more interesting is what is -not- represented. All the uniforms and gun sounds are on point, as are street signs and colours of the roof tiles, but where are the civilians? Where is indeed the psychological damage inflicted on soldiers during combat? Where are the dead and wounded? The war crimes? Et cetera.[44]

In her article on history and death in WWII video games, Eva Kingsepp discusses how video games with a WWII narrative frame can be analysed as reflections of the current state of affairs in Western society. She

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[39] For instance, the official website of ROII promises the player that "the game allows the player to experience one of the most brutal battles in all of human history […] delivering unrivalled accuracy.", http://www.heroesofstalingrad.com/overview.aspx (15-05-2016).

[40] Alexander Galloway, "Social Realism in Gaming", *Game Studies* 4, (2004), http://www.gamestudies.org/0401/galloway/. (31-07-2016).

[41] Holger Pötsch, 'Selective Realism: Filtering Experiences of War and Violence in First- and Third-Person Shooters", in *Games and Culture* (2015). 1-23, 2;

[42] J. Breuer, R. Restl & T. Quandt, "Digital war: An empirical analysis of narrative elements in military first-person shooters", in *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* Vol. 4 (2012), 215-237, 218.

[43] Frank Ankersmit, quoted in Alun Munslow, *Narrative and History* (New York 2007), 29.

[44] Pötzsch, "Selective Realism", 3.

states that there is a basic loss of reference points in modern society, especially concerning history.[45] Because there are no clear points of reference anymore, and game developers rely on the immersive aspect of their products for commercial success, it is easier to mimic the image people are already familiar with. Even though video games claim to give players an authentic WWII battlefield experience, these are in fact nothing more than second-level experiences according to Kingsepp. Because true historical experiences cannot be achieved, games and gamers alike refer to historical objects in a form of, what she calls, fetishism. She makes mention of German weaponry and Nazi imagery which function as signs of authenticity and 'Nazi-ness', but she claims these symbols also carry a strange aura of power connected to the narrative of WWII and the Third Reich.[46]

Game developers, in their desire to produce a setting that is both historical and recognisable often mimic cinematic renditions of this period. Clear examples are the titles *Call of Duty: World at War* (Infinity Ward 2008) and *Medal of Honor* (Dreamworks Interactive 1999). The first mimics scenes from Hollywood movies as *Enemy at the gates* based on the battlefield experiences of Vasili Zaytsev, a famous WWII Soviet sniper. In *World at War* players can once again relive (the popular representation of) the Soviet experience of Stalingrad, this time playing as the fictional Dimitri Petrenko who is loosely based on Zaytsev. Medal of Honor shares a family tree with the popular film *Saving Private Ryan*, as both are the brainchild of director Steven Spielberg.[47] People playing the games who lack extensive knowledge of WWII will see these images mirrored in other popular media, and use them to create their own idea of WWII. The image is mediated and remediated, and thus a simulacrum is created. A copy without an original.[48] This of course can also be said of history itself, as we are once again reminded by Ankersmit. While this remediation might be unavoidable in today's multimedia society, it does call for scrutiny of the images being produced. If, for instance, only stereotypical representations are being used this might lead to a warped world view like Kingsepp claims. In fact, this is exactly what has happened with the image of the 'clean' Wehrmacht in the first decades after WWII. The same image was being repeated over and over in different forms of media, and this image went years without scrutiny.[49]

The observations of Eva Kingsepp come to mind when Debra Ramsay states that shooting Nazi's offers players a gaming experience without too many moral implications. Perhaps gamers might still be reluctant to play an entire campaign through the eyes of a WWII German soldier. Certainly some people on the internet voiced such sentiments as one forum thread regarding first-person games featuring a German campaign on the website *Gamespot.com* shows. In it a forum user asked the following question: *"Do you have any suggestions of an FPS game where you are a soldier from the Wehrmacht or the SS? I don't want any of those zombie,supernatural etc., I'm looking for a ww2 setting, it's ok even if the events are in alternate history (Germany won Barbarossa, Germany repelled the Russians, etc.) [sic]"* which was followed by replies such as

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45   Kingsepp, "Hyperreality", 367.
46   Kingsepp, "Hyperreality", 368.
47   Ramsay, "Brutal Games", 96.
48   Robert Goldman; Stephen Papson, 'Simulacra Definition', *St Lawrence University website* (30-08-2003), http://it.stlawu.edu/~global/glossary/simulacra.def.html, (07-01-2016).
49   Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 138.

"Why play as a nazi when you can shoot a nazi instead?" and *"I ain't playin' as no damn Nazi.[sic]"*[50] Some responses tried to nuance the idea a bit more, by pointing out the supposed differences between the (Waffen-)SS and the regular Wehrmacht. One response, incidentally one suggesting ROII as an answer to the question, stood out for me: *"Red Orchestra 2. And guys, Only the SS were nazis, not the normal army. Get your facts staight, and stop being ignorant.[sic]"* But who was really being ignorant here though? The question of the Wehrmacht's role in the Holocaust and other war crimes on both the Eastern and Western front has been the catalyst for the historiographical reforms of the Nineties, and these remarks on the supposed difference between SS and Wehrmacht seem taken straight out of the pre-1990's historiography.[51]

That video games can establish historical consciousness is demonstrated by Cecilia Trenner in 2012. She defines historical consciousness as the role history plays in people's lives. By incorporating flow of time in video games a sense of 'before, now and after' is created. She uses the narrative patterns of nostalgia and dystopia/utopia as examples.[52] Especially in historical WWII games with a scripted linear narrative, there is an end goal for the players. Players work towards this goal in a teleological way, driven forward to match up the game's narrative with that of history. Unfortunately, this could work the other way around as well. Players, having worked their way through the game's story, expect their gameplay experiences to match up with the historical events. Ultimately the players' actions must contribute to ending the conflict and restoring the world to the way it was. I would presume this restoration angle is missing from games which let players assume the role of the German army, therefore I will demonstrate in this thesis the methods game developers can use to establish an end goal (victory conditions) instead.

1.3 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The academic specialisation of historical video game studies is somewhat of a chimera. It is comprised off several different disciplines and research methods such as 'regular' history and game studies of course, but it borrows concepts from narratology and film-studies. In order for me to present my empirical chapters as clearly as possible I will elaborate on this amalgam of concepts used, followed by my research methodology.

1.3.1 CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Let me start by clarifying what the term *video game* means in the context of this thesis. Games in general are a rule-based system with a parameters for victory and defeat. Besides this general description, Mark Wolf and Bernard Perron give a more elaborate definition in their first edition of *The Video Game Theory Reader* (2006): "The video game is considered as everything from the ergodic (work) to the ludic (play); as narrative, simulation, performance, remediation, art and, of course, as a toy and a medium of entertainment [sic]."[53]

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[50]   'World war games in which you could play as Germany (Nazi Germany)' (November/December 2010), http://www.gamespot.com/forums/games-discussion-1000000/world-war-games-in-which-you-could-play-as-germany-27491796/ (12-03-2016).
[51]   Shepard, 'Clean Wehrmacht', 1.
[52]   Cecilia Trenter, *Gameplay and historical consciousness in Dragon Age: Origins and Dragon Age II* (Bioware) (2012), 5-6.
[53]   Mark J.P. Wolf & Bernard Perron, *The Video Game Theory Reader* Vol.1 (2006), 1.

Central to this definition is the user experience. The reason for play, and the gratification the user receives through play. This user experience is built up out of the game's narrative and the game's mechanics.[54] Naturally both elements are needed to constitute a video game. The narrative gives rise to the need for gameplay, and the gameplay in turn helps propel the plot onwards. In this thesis I shall focus mostly on the narrative aspect of the video games, as I am looking purely at how these games represent the Wehrmacht soldiers in their narrative, though the nature of the medium dictates that plot progression comes through obtaining ludic goals, i.e., the game's victory conditions.[55] As Adam Chapman writes in a 2012 paper researching historical content in games reveals only some basic information, but it will not give us real information on the stylistic and epistemological creation of the game's content, nor about how the players experience it. Focussing solely on those elements leaves out the possibility for a discourse analysis on player agency and historical progression.[56]

This would be an ideal start-off point for further extensive research into how games' contents are appropriated by players, but that is beyond the scope of this thesis. For now, I hope to lay the groundwork for future research into this subject by demonstrating how the narrative works as the step-off point for the full spectrum of gameplay and representation. Without the narrative, which is predetermined by the game's developers, there would not be motivation for the ludic elements. It is the way in which the characters are being represented that influences player immersion. For immersion to be possible the playable characters need to be relatable in some shape or form.[57]

1.3.2 NARRATIVES IN ALTERNATE HISTORY AND HISTORICAL FICTION

The games in my corpus all have a scripted, linear narrative, also called an embedded narrative. The narrative is fragmented by the level structure of the game. Players progress through the narrative by progressing through the level structure.[58] This means the outcome of the narrative is fixed from the start. Player performance during gameplay does not affect the outcome, it merely progresses the story. I have chosen games with a scripted narrative to eliminate the element of user experience as a variable. Despite the perhaps many options players have to progress through the gameplay, the story told throughout remains the same. Games with a so called emergent or interactive narrative, in which the players' actions shape the unfolding narrative, detract from the goal of this thesis, not only because of the uncertainty of the story's outcome, but also because such a narrative guarantees the story to be counter-factual.[59] Counter-factuals are incredibly useful from a storytelling perspective, as it allows storytellers to not be hindered by having to accurately portray historical events, and in a gamic sense it gives the freedom for player input, allowing the acts of players to have meaning in the game world. In their paper on historical simulations in digital media Jerremie Clyde et al dismiss this form of

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[54] Melte Elson, Johannes Breuer, James D. Ivory & Thorsten Quandt, "More than Stories With Buttons: Narrative, Mechanics, and Context as Determinants of Player Experience in Digital Games", in *Journal of Communication 64* (2014) 521-542, 525-526.

[55] Gonzalo Frasca, "Simulation vs Narrative – Introduction to Ludology", in *The Video Game Theory Reader* (New York 2003), 221-235, 230.

[56] Chapman, "Privileging Form over Content".

[57] Jonne Arjoranta, "Narrative Tools for Games: Focalization, Granularity, and the Mode of Narration in Games", in *Games and Culture*, (July 28, 2015), 1-22, 6-7.

[58] Fernández-Vara, *Introduction to Game Analysis,* 107-108.

[59] Clyde, "Historical Simulation", 10-11.

storytelling as ahistorical, but I must respectfully disagree with this. As Jeremy Antley argues, Clyde et al. present a reactionary stance that seeks to bind the 'gamic', or ludic, action within tightly defined epistemological boundaries which are incorporated into the textual modes of history.[60] They state that player input automatically creates a counter-factual narrative, but in saying this they disregard video games with a scripted narrative. In these kinds of games the narrative and the gameplay still interact of course, yet only in a way that progressing through the gameplay triggers narrative progression as well. This narrative does not alter because of the way in which the game is played. Such a configuration allows for a certain level of historical fidelity, I say, but discussing whether or not a game's narrative is historically accurate is irrelevant in the context of this thesis. Judging video games on the same criteria as historical texts will always result in the same conclusion: video games aren't 'real history'.

I don't assume anyone in the industry will claim they are. As Chapman reminds us "Obviously the aim of the developers of historical videogames […] in addition to create an entertaining game, is to create history, not as it can be represented in a book but as it can be represented in a videogame."[61] Therefore this conclusion is, in my opinion, a bit cheap and frankly overly dismissive of the entire medium. We as historians should do well to avoid this behaviour. Rather I propose we take video games for what they are: narrative media which may draw inspiration from history for their settings, events or characters. As Adam Chapman in his 2016 publication *Digital Games as History* puts it 'we [are] asserting through our actions, if not our conscious recognition, that games could engage history'.[62] With this he means that the historical elements in video games can trigger historical thinking in the players. In his book he explores the ways in which games represent the past. According to Chapman some scholars are very critical and dismissive of history in video games because of their disliking of popular history in general. This dislike is grounded in two popular fears. First, that the general public has little interest in history to begin with, and second, when they receive historical information they do so in the 'wrong' ways. Games being one of those 'wrong' ways.[63] Already in 2012 Chapman made an appeal for academic work on historical video games to move beyond merely focussing on the historical content (i.e., historical accuracy) and to start privileging how the audio-visual ludic structures of games operate to produce meaning and allow players to explore and configure historical discourse.[64] In this thesis I will do just that by privileging the portrayal of the actors in the context of their historical events over the portrayals of purely these historical events alone.

I shall focus on how they represent the German soldiers in their partly fictional and partly historical narratives. Most WWII video games are historical fiction.[65] Fiction set in the past. I differentiate this from counter-factuals because for a story to be deemed historical it needs to fit into the progress of history

[60] Antley, "Going beyond the Textual in History".
[61] Chapman, "Privileging Form over Content".
[62] Adam Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*, (New York 2016), 3
[63] Chapman, *Digital Games as History*, 4.
[64] Chapman, "Privileging Form over Content".
[65] Sarah Johnson, "Defining the Genre: What are the rules for historical fiction?", *Associated Writing Programs annual conference* (March 2002), https://historicalnovelsociety.org/guides/defining-the-genre/defining-the-genre-what-are-the-rules-for-historical-fiction/ (24-05-2016).

seamlessly. To give an example, the brilliant novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1963) written by Philip K. Dick, features a world in which the Germans and Japanese conquered the United States of America and divided the territory amongst themselves. Stories like this are considered *contrahistory* or *alternate history* by authors such as Gavriel David Rosenfeld and Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, who consider this a literary genre separate from historical fiction.[66] In order for me to honour the 'historical' in historical game studies I have been mindful to select video games which have narratives that fit into the 'historical fiction' genre.

Both ROII and CoH have a scripted narrative. Narratives in a historical game studies context are not fundamentally different from narratives in literature or cinema. The *Dictionary of Video Game Theory* defines it as 'the presentation of a fixed sequence of events by way of a discourse'. Marie-Laure Ryan, in her 2001 paper on narratives in digital media, defines it more elaborately as being *'a sign with a signifier (discourse) and a signified (story, mental image, semantic representation). The signifier can have many different semiotic manifestations. It can consist for instance of a verbal act of story-telling, or of gestures and dialogue performed by actors.'*[67] A major work on the study of narratives is *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative* (1985) by Mieke Bal, which raised the bar in the empirical study of narratives and gave us the tools for story analysis.[68] This book, reprinted in 2009, is still relevant in the field of narrative studies. Unfortunately her work does not yet include a chapter on video game narratology, which is a severe lack. A more recent addition to the field of narratology written by David Herman, titled *Story logic: problems and possibilities of narrative* (2002), centres on the so-called 'ecology of narrative interpretation'. In this method not the story, but the surrounding context of the story world in which the story enfolds is the main focal point. This approach could be especially useful for understanding a video game story world as a system in which stories not only just play out, but where the story world is an active part of the story itself.[69] A story about German soldiers in battle transforms completely when set in Normandy as opposed to in the Caucasus.

1.3.3 FOCALISATION AND PERSPECTIVES

In this thesis I will be basing my research predominantly on the definitions given in the article on modes of narration and focalisation in video games written by Jonne Arjoranta. I suspect that the focalisation, the point of view from which the narrative is presented and experienced, of the games' German narratives is very important in revealing how these games ultimately represent the Wehrmacht. There are three types of focalisation. Internal, external, and zero focalisation.[70] The main difference between internal and external focalisation is whether or not there is access to the characters' inner thoughts and emotions. In an internally focalised narrative you are given insight in the mental landscape of the characters, where an external focalisation gives a behaviouristic view but lacks this mental aspect. In other words, an internally focalised

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66 Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, "The Third Reich in Alternate History: Aspects of a Genre-Specific Depiction of Nazism", in *Journal of Popular Culture* Vol. 39, No. 5 (2006) 878-896, 878; Gavriel David Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (New York 2005), 5.
67 Marie-Laure Ryan, "Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media", in *Game Studies* Vol.1 No.1 (July 2001), http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/ryan/ (19-05-2016).
68 Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative,* (Toronto 1985).
69 David Herman *Story logic: problems and possibilities of narrative* (Lincoln, 2002), 13-14.
70 Arjoranta, "Narrative Tools", 5.

narrative gives us insights in the inner thoughts and feelings of the focalised subject, and in an externally focalised narrative reveals only that which the subject says out loud. When the story is presented, for instance, through the perspective of a group of soldiers who discuss the events of the war amongst themselves, the game will represent a very different image of the Wehrmacht from a game which focalises the narrative through an external narrator. In a narrative with zero focalisation the story is not focalised in any character, but rather told outside any of them by means of an external narrator. Games with a top-down perspective, such as most strategy games like *Blitzkrieg* (Nival Interactive 2003), tend to have zero focalisation. Players can freely shift across the map, paying attention to areas of their choosing. This is not to say that camera movement equates narrative perspective per se, however the choices of perspective can have narrative consequences. According to Arjoranta the external focalisation is typical to video games. Usually there is a central protagonist's perspective from which the story is told and in the case of first-person games even viewed, but often the player lacks access to the character's inner thoughts. The game's players control this character without having much insight into their mental landscape.[71] This mostly applies to first- and third-person perspective games. Having the narrative externally focalised helps in establishing the 'featureless you', that is to say, a tabula rasa character on whom players can project their own feelings on and responses to events in the game, thus creating the sense that they are personally involved in the narrative.[72] This process is called immersion, players become absorbed with the stories and the game world, or begin to identify with a game character.[73]

Narration can have a different storytelling function besides simply providing exposition. Sometimes the narrator tells us things that simply aren't true, either deliberately misleading the consumers of a text, or through irony, or because certain information is simply lacking for the narrator. This type of narrator was first described by Wayne Booth in his seminal book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) as an unreliable narrator, sometimes also referred to as the fallible narrator.[74] Text consumers, be they readers, viewers or gamers, are misdirected by this allowing for plot twists or surprise reveals to occur in the narrative. It also challenges consumers to not simply take everything at face value in a text. William Riggan, expanding on Booth's work, has identified several types of unreliable narrators: the *Picaro*, a narrator characterised by exaggeration and bragging; the *Clown*, a narrator who does not take the narration process seriously; The *Naïf*, a narrator with an immature perception or otherwise limited point of view; the *Madman*, a narrator demonstrating altered mental states due to trauma or due to other mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia or paranoia; the *Liar*, who is a mature narrator of sound cognition who deliberately misinterprets himself, often to present a better image of himself.[75]

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[71]   Arjoranta, "Narrative Tools", 6.
[72]   Veli-Matti Karhulahti, "Feelies: The lost art of immersing the narrative", in *DiGRA Nordic 2012 Conference: Local and Global – Games in Culture and Society* (Tampere, Finland 2012), 1-9, 1.
[73]   Laura Ermi & Frans Mäyrä, "Fundamental Components of the Gameplay Experience: Analysing Immersion", in *DiGRA 2005 Conference: Changing Views – Worlds in Play.* (2005), 1-14, 8.
[74]   Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago 1983), 159.
[75]   William Riggan, *Picaros, Madmen, Naifs and Clowns: The Unreliable First-person Narrator,* (Oklahoma 1981), 172.

1.3.4 SYMBOLS

Historical video games use historical images, or signs, such as archive footage, pictures, posters and symbols like the Hammer & Sickle or the Swastika to anchor their narratives in a broader historical meaning. This in turn helps to ground the games' narratives in historical reality. Signs are constituted by a relation between the meaning, the form and the referent. The form is the shape of the sign, which is not necessarily a physical form. The meaning is the sense that is made of the sign. The referent is the object that stands for the sign, which may include abstractions, actions or even other signs. This threeway relation is called the semiotic triangle[76] Anchoring concentrates on constructing and maintaining a relation between a symbol and a sensory image that one gets from observing a physical object.[77] Grounding goes beyond anchoring by attaching philosophical issues relating to the meaning of the anchored symbols.[78] In the case of ROII and CoH they might use archival footage and military and ideological symbols in order to anchor their narratives in the broader WWII context. But this also poses issues for the video game genre, as some historical symbols are troublesome. International distribution of video games is hindered by censorship laws, such as section 86a of the German Criminal Code which prohibits the display of Nazi imagery and symbols in product outside of the scope of education or art. Some might consider video games as an art form, similar to literature and cinema, but according to German law they are considered toys. Therefore displaying Swastikas and other Nazi symbols is strictly prohibited.[79] As Jakub Mirowski, a Polish video game critic points out, this makes for ridiculous movies as *Dead Snow,* in which a cast of Norwegian teens are being hunted by zombie SS soldiers, having no restrictions imposed on its content, where video games with a more realistic premise such as ROII do face restrictions. Therefore many games will forego displaying these images, lest they have to make special export versions for the German market. While this is understandable from a distribution standpoint it does put these narratives in an awkward position. Players are playing the narrative of the Wehrmacht in a gaming environment that is expunged from any references to National-Socialism.[80] I will discuss the use of signs and symbols in the respective chapters for ROII and CoH in order to illuminate the influence the use of censored symbols have on the representation of German soldiers.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the 1990's the field of digital game studies was established by authors like Jesper Juul and Espen Aarseth, calling for attention to games as a valid field of study. Aarseth identified four types of gamers: the so-called *killers,* players who enjoy hunting other game characters down; the *achievers*, who have a love for competition with other gamers; *socialisers,* who derive their main enjoyment from the social interaction within games; and

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[76]   Paul Vogt, "Anchoring of semiotic symbols" in *Robotics and Autonomous Systems* Vol.43 No.1 (2003), 109-120, 113.

[77]   S. Coradeschi & A. Saffiotti, "Anchoring symbols to sensor data: preliminary report", in *Proceedings of the Seventeenth National Conference on Artifical Intelligence (AAAI-2000)*, (Austin, 2000), 129-135.

[78]   Vogt, "Anchoring of semiotic symbols", 112.

[79]   Jakub Mirowski, "Who's afraid of the Swastika? Nazi Symbols in Video Games", in Game Pressure (17 February 2015), http://www.gamepressure.com/e.asp?ID=57 (01-08-2016).

[80]   Kingsepp, "Hyperreality", 368-369.

explorers, players who enjoy all the aspects the in-game world has to offer them.[81] In order to fully analyse a game, Aarseth argues, the researcher should attempt to play the game in all four manners of play style to get the full gaming experience possible. Since this is not always possible, due to time constraints and other limitations, the researcher should at least develop an awareness of these different strategies of gameplay. These analyses should then be complemented with secondary sources, like press- and player-reviews to diminish interpretational bias. Though this bias must of course be avoided, I will take a slightly different approach. Instead of the actual gameplay, my focus will be much more on the narrative elements in the games. Elements like cutscenes, texts, and verbal commands given during gameplay. The actual style of gameplay, being a personal input, will be less important for my final conclusions.

I shall approach the analysis of my corpus of games by combining the two analytical frameworks for games provided by Clara Fernández-Vara and Steven Malliet. Malliet incorporated the principles of ludology into video game content analysis.[82] Elements like simulation and rule-based systems need to be taken into account, and in order to do so Malliet has formulated a new framework to operationalise the principles of ludology alongside with narratology. Since video games have the unique element of user interaction propelling the narrative, analysing them from a narratalogical standpoint alone will not suffice. The ludological aspects of games go beyond simply establishing rules and mechanics.[83] These rules, limiting what players can and cannot do, directly impact the narrative and overall gaming experience. These mechanics each serve a role in telling the story, and need individual analysis. Previous authors in the field of ludology viewed their discipline as separate from the narratological one[84], but Malliet argues for fusing both fields together, and rightly so in my opinion. I will adapt this framework provided by Malliet to structure my own research. In order to establish how the German narrative is being portrayed, his framework of combining elements of representation and elements of simulation will hopefully provide me with a complete picture.

Introduction to Game Analysis, a recent publication by Fernández-Vara, has quickly become the standard work for the textual analysis of games.[85] Fernández-Vara, like Consalvo, sees games like texts to be analysed like any other, but since video games provide deeper layers of immersion by combining visual and audio elements with player input, a special approach for game analysis is needed. The quality of the analysis is fully depending on how the scholar plays the game.[86] Her main issue with how video games were being analysed, by both scholars and players, was the vocabulary being used. Too much, games were being described in the vocabulary of 'Hollywood marketing'. She emphasises the difference in experiences between consumers

[81]   Espen Aarseth, 'Playing Research: Methodological approaches to game analysis.', *Proceedings of the 5th digital arts & culture conference* (Melbourne 2003).

[82]   Steven Malliet, 'Adapting the Principles of Ludology to the Method of Video Game Content Analysis', in *Game Studies* vol.7, issue 1, http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/malliet (05-01-2016).

[83]   Frasca Gonzalo, "Ludologists Love Stories, Too: Notes from a Debate That Never Took Place," in *DiGRA '03 - Proceedings of the 2003 DiGRA International Conference: Level Up* (Level Up, Utrecht - The Netherlands: Digital Games Research Association, 2003), http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/05163.01125.pdf (07-08-2016).

[84]   Frasca Gonzalo, 'Chapter 10: Simulation vs Narrative – Introduction to Ludology', in Mark J. Wolf & Bernard Perron, *The Video Game Theory Reader* (New York 2003), 221-235 , 222-223.

[85]   Clara Fernández-Vara, *Introduction to Game Analysis* (New York 2015).

[86]   Ibid., 26.

and critics. Both have different expectations of the game they are experiencing. Therefore she advocates more diversity of ways to engage with games, ranging from the casual player to the *ludophile*.[87] According to Fernández-Vara, this book is an attempt to start a new discourse in game analysis and to add depth and nuance to the discussion.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In both ROII and in CoH the narrative is told through the use of so-called cutscenes. These are cinematic events that occur before, after and sometimes also during a mission. In the cutscene before the start of a mission players are introduced to the game objectives of the following mission. As is the case with many WWII video games this usually comes in the form of a mission briefing, in which the players are explicitly told what they are meant to achieve by a figure or a voice representing an officer. A great deal of information is to be gotten from these briefings. Not only does it explicitly tell the player what needs to be done to achieve victory, but usually the why and the how of it all is also addressed.

In order to distil all this information from the cutscenes I have formulated an analytical framework which I will use to catalogue the data. After studying the cutscenes I will divide the information into three categories: audiovisual elements; narration; myths. The audiovisual element is comprised of the use of symbols and archival footage. The bulk of the data will be contained in the narration category. Firstly, I will look at the in-game goals. What do players, as members of the Wehrmacht, have to do in order to win the game? These game goals are constituted by the victory conditions per mission as well as in the game as a whole. The second element is the player-character's role. Who is it he is playing? How is he described? Does he have a name, backstory, hopes and dreams? The third element is the focalisation. How is the narrative focalised? The fourth element is the description of the conflict. This could be the specific battles the players need to fight, or the war as a whole. The answers given to why the Wehrmacht fights is included in this as well. The fifth element will be the dates and locations of battles mentioned. Obviously these are the most susceptible to historical fact checking. At first glance this seems little to do with the representations of Wehrmacht troops, but I take this element into account anyway because it will allow me to answer *which* Wehrmacht is represented in the narrative. Identifying which symbols are being used will aid in this task as well. Will they reflect the historical symbols used at the time, or are they fictional? The last element in the narration-category is the description of the Wehrmacht's allies and opponents. How do the soldiers speak of friend and foe?

Myths will make up the third and final category. For this category I will be using the structural elements of the so-called 'clean' Wehrmacht myth that emerged in German and Austrian society in the post-war years in order to absolve the Wehrmacht veteran of blame and responsibility.[88] Alexander Pollak identifies ten elements:

1) The myth of victimhood of the German/Austrian citizens.
2) Focussing on a small group of the guilty.
3) Construction of the dominant, symbolically laden 'victim' event: 'Stalingrad'.

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[87]   Fernández-Vara, *Introduction to Game Analysis,* 5.
[88]   Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 137.

4) Offsetting and relativizing of war crimes.

5) Denying responsibility for the war.

6) Portrayal of individual 'battles' in isolation from the whole-war context.

7) Portrayal of the wartime destinies of individual soldiers (biographical accounts).

8) Claims regarding the naivety and apolitical outlook of 'ordinary' soldiers.

9) The claimed lack of room for discretion on the part of Wehrmacht soldiers

10) Writing lauding obituaries of Wehrmacht generals and soldiers.[89]

Though it is immediately clear not all of these elements will be present in the narratives of WWII video games, it is useful to examine which elements are prevalent. Ultimately this framework will give a clear image of the elements of representation present in the Wehrmacht campaigns of ROII and CoH.

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[89] Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 137.

CHAPTER 2: QUITTING WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD: *RED ORCHESTRA II: HEROES OF STALINGRAD*

Title	Genre	Game modes	Setting	Developer	Release date
Red Orchestra II: Heroes of Stalingrad	First Person Shooter	Singleplayer (German campaign: 12 missions) (Soviet campaign: 12 missions) Multiplayer	World War II, Eastern Front 1942-1943	Tripwire Interactive (USA)	September 14th, 2011

Table 1: *Red Orchestra II: Heroes of Stalingrad*

The Battle of Stalingrad, which began on August 23th 1942 and lasted until February 2nd 1943 was one of the most pivotal battles of World War II.[90] The initial conquest of the Russian city on the river Volga, important both for its strategic position and its symbolic importance[91], eventually ended in a devastating defeat for the German Wehrmacht and signalled the beginning of the Soviet counter-offensive. The first-person shooter *Red Orchestra II: Heroes of Stalingrad* (ROII, 2011) allows players to relive this battle and a few surrounding operations from July 1942 to February 1943. The game is mostly renowned for its online multiplayer battles in which players from all around the world face off against each other on maps simulating the bombed out ruins of Stalingrad, playing either as a Red Army or as a Wehrmacht soldier. Besides this multiplayer gameplay the game also offers a singleplayer campaign in which players can play either as a Wehrmacht or a Red Army soldier. This campaign leads players through the collection of skirmishes and battles fought during the Battle of Stalingrad. The title and the setting of this particular video game suggest that the main focus of the game does not lie with the German side of the conflict. The meaning of the title 'Red Orchestra' remains vague. The only WWII related element I could discover was to the codename given by the *Reichssicherheitshauptambt* (RSHA), the SS counter-espionage branch, to communist resistance groups in Germany, *Rote Kapelle*. Radio operators were 'pianists', their transmitters the 'pianos', and ringleaders were codenamed 'conductors'. As there I could not discover any other use of this term during, or reflecting on WWII, I can only assume that the title has nothing to do with Stalingrad, other than signalling resistance against the forces of Nazi-Germany.[92] Keeping in mind that this is the second instalment in a video game franchise the main reason for the title is brand recognition, but it remains puzzling. By emphasising the 'Red' element though, already there is a sense in the title of what the position of the German soldier will be in this video game, despite it being a playable faction it is clearly not the Wehrmacht which is meant by the 'heroes of Stalingrad'.

I will be discussing the question of how this game represents the German WWII soldiers by looking at how a game can set up a campaign which is meant to be lost (ie. the victory conditions), by looking at how this

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[90] Christian Hartmann, *Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg – Front und militärisches Hinterland 1941/42* (Munich 2009)*,* 402.
[91] Idem.
[92] Shareen Blair Brysac, *Resisting Hitler: Mildred Harnack and the Red Orchestra* (New York 2000), 225.

narrative is focalised, by examining the use of personal narratives, historical symbols and images, and by finding out the mythical elements that might be present. I will start with a brief history of the battle, followed by how the game presents itself. I will then present my content analysis of the German campaign, based mostly on the cut scenes and mission briefings. Finally I will point out noteworthy elements, such as the use of historical propaganda images and slogans, present in the game and compare them with the current historical knowledge available on the Battle of Stalingrad. In this way we get a clear image of how ROII represents the soldiers of the 6th Army and their stories of their doomed fight for that now notorious city on the Volga.

2.1 GAME OVERVIEW

I have chosen ROII as one of my primary sources for a couple of reasons. First and foremost because it fits into my initial selection criteria of being a recently released PC video game with a fixed-narrative German singleplayer campaign. Secondly because this particular game really is one-of-a-kind, being the only video game in the First-Person Shooter genre to fit my criteria. This stems from the fact that ROII is, to date, actually the only FPS with a German singleplayer campaign.[93] Being that it is a first-person shooter game, meaning that players see the game-world through the eyes of the playable German soldier, this game gives us a unique perspective on the representation of German soldiers in WW2 video games.

Heroes of Stalingrad is the second title in the *Red Orchestra* franchise. The first one, titled *Red Orchestra: Ostfront 41-45*, was completely multiplayer-based and therefore has no singleplayer campaign for me to compare to ROII's. During gameplay the players' 'lives', the number of attempts possible to finish a level, are not concentrated in a single playable avatar. Instead, when players 'die', the gameplay is transferred into a previously AI controlled squad member. The number of attempts therefore are linked to the size of the squad. If, for instance, all the AI squad members die before the players do, they cannot 'respawn' again that mission and has to restart the mission completely. Alternatively, players receive 'reinforcements' after successfully completing objectives, assuring themselves from new respawns. This squad-based gameplay makes that there is no single named playable character, but a string of anonymous digital soldiers individually controlled by the players.

Tripwire Interactive, the publisher of ROII, stated that the aim for this game was to let players *"experience one of the most brutal battles in all of human history. Delivering unrivalled accuracy and attention to detail, along with gritty, vicious combat in multiplayer and single-player modes the game will feature everything from quick, brutal firefights to more intricate and challenging tactical modes."94*
It is interesting to note that nowhere on their promotional website a reference is made to providing players with a narrative of the Battle of Stalingrad. The description of the game in the *Steam Store,* the store of the digital video game distribution platform Steam, reads as follows:
"Red Orchestra 2: Heroes of Stalingrad, the leading tactical multiplayer WWII shooter on the PC, will take the award winning Red Orchestra franchise into the next generation of gaming. Cutting edge graphics and audio

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[93] 'Red Orchestra Sequel to Feature First FPS German Singleplayer Campaign', *Shacknews* (04-05-2009), http://www.shacknews.com/article/58477/red-orchestra-sequel-to-feature, (16-03-2016).
[94] Story, http://www.heroesofstalingrad.com/overview.aspx (16-03-2016).

built using the Unreal Engine 3, inventive features and streamlined realism will deliver an unrivalled tactical shooter experience. Heroes of Stalingrad will focus on the Battle of Stalingrad and the surrounding operations, both German and Russian, from July 1942 to February 1943. The game allows the player to experience one of the most brutal battles in all of human history. Delivering unrivalled accuracy and attention to detail, along with gritty, vicious combat in multiplayer modes the game will feature everything from quick, brutal firefights to more intricate and challenging tactical modes. "[95]

Like I stated in my introduction it becomes very obvious that terms as 'realism' and 'accuracy' are merely buzzwords used in the marketing schemes of game developers and should not be as an actual descriptor of the game's contents. Note that this description makes no mention whatsoever of 'historical accuracy/realism', though some might argue it at least insinuates this. Even in a description as vaguely worded as this, claiming historical accuracy would be non-sustainable. The game's official website is stingier still with specific details, for instance when it comes to describing the playable factions. For the German campaign it merely says: "*Play as members of the German armed forces of World War II, some of the most professional of all time - the Wehrmacht*[sic]".[96] And that is basically what you do. You play as a 'member' of the Wehrmacht, not as a fully fleshed out, named character. The game's story revolves around the setting and the action, not the actors.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Stalingrad has gained somewhat of a legendary status in history. The battle that took place in this city rivals the epic clashes of the ancient world, such as Cannae and Thermopylae. No doubt this image is in part the result of Soviet post-war propaganda and of popular portrayals of the battle in media such as *Stalingrad* (1993) and *Enemy at the gates* (2001), the latter making the name of the famed Soviet sniper Vassily Zaitsev[97] more known to the general public and in turn inspiring video games such as *Call of Duty: World at War* (2008). Because it is important to remember that the battle of Stalingrad was not merely an epic clash of two armies, it is good to take some time to delve into the *how* and especially the *why* of Germany's war against the Soviet-Union.

Germany invaded the USSR in the summer of 1941, catching the Red Army off guard and making enormous advances in the early weeks of the assault. But after failing to obtain victory in Operation *Tyfoon*, meant to capture Moscow, the German command had to reassess their campaign in Russia. The depletion of manpower and resources meant resuming the offensive would prove difficult. Many German generals, like Gerd Von Rundstedt, agreed a tactical retreat to a better defendable position was prudent. This arguably sensible suggestion was dismissed by Hitler. The German chancellor still believed his armies could defeat the Soviets in 1942. According to General Guenthen Blummentritt, deputy chief of the Wehrmacht high command at the time, Hitler's war policies were guided by three factors: *"First, he hoped to win in 1942. He did not believe the Russians could increase the strength of their armies. He would not listen to evidence that they were*

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[95] "Red Orchestra II: Heroes of Stalingrad", Steam Store, http://store.steampowered.com/app/35450/ (20-06-2016).
[96] Faction overview, http://www.heroesofstalingrad.com/overview/factions.aspx#slider-1 (16-03-2016).
[97] John C. Tibbetts, "Film Review: Enemy at the Gates (Paramount Pictures 2000)", in *American Historical Review* (June 2001), 1107-1108.

growing stronger […] Second, Hitler did not know what else to do but attack. […] Third, Munitions Minister Albert Speer and Reichsminister Göring urged him to continue the attacks because they needed the oil from the Caucasus and the grain from the Ukraine to continue the war."[98] So the Wehrmacht turned towards the Caucasus oil fields and the city of Stalingrad. Aided by Romanian, Hungarian, Croatian and Italian troops the 6th Army pushed up on the city, hoping to encircle it quickly.[99] These allied forces would be deployed in the northern flank, leaving the attack on the city for the Germans themselves. Before the ground assault commenced the *Luftwaffe* first reduced the city to rubble in an extensive bombing campaign spanning from July 25th till the 31st, dropping approximately a thousand tonnes of explosives and destroying about 80% of the structures in Stalingrad.

When the battle commenced in earnest the city was the setting of countless bloody street fights. Vasily Chuikov, commander of the defending Soviet 62nd Army said he found: "*the streets of the city dead; there is not a single green twig; everything has perished into flames. All that is left of the wooden houses is a pile of ashes and stove chimneys sticking out of them."*[100] Some of the skirmishes and smaller battles have become notorious themselves, such as the fierce resistance put up by a Soviet platoon under the command of a sergeant named Yakov Pavlov. These men defended an apartment building in the centre of Stalingrad so determined that the Germans marked its position on their maps as a fortress, and dubbed it *Pavlov's house.* In mission 8 players are tasked with capturing this position. In reality, it was never taken.

In November the Soviets launched operation Uranus, the counterattack to break the German advances in the Caucasus. This new influx of Soviet troops quickly started overpowering the battered German troops, who were in no condition to fend off the stream of fresh Red Army soldiers. A month later, the roles had been fully reversed with the 6th Army being encircled by the Soviets, leaving 290.000 soldiers trapped. After an attempt by General Von Manstein to break through the Soviet lines and liberate the 6th Army definitively failed on December 23rd, all hope for the Germans in Stalingrad was lost. Friedrich Paulus (1890-1957), commander of the 6th Army, was captured by the Soviets on January 31st 1943, only hours after being promoted to Field Marshal. The Germans officially surrendered on February 2nd, leaving 91.000 German soldiers of which 24 generals and 2500 other officers in Soviet captivity.[101]

We have established how the Wehrmacht went about invading and conquering large areas of the USSR, but what did Nazi-Germany hope to get out of it? What were the war goals? And how were these goals communicated down the lines to the common soldiers? Adolf Hitler summed up his policy towards the Soviet-Union in three words: 'conquer, rule, exploit'.[102] This was to be a war, not just of conquest, but of annihilation. Annihilation of the USSR, of the unwanted peoples living there, and of Marxism. Replacing the USSR, Hitler envisioned a patchwork of German ruled colonies which would provide his Third Reich with ample food and oil to fuel his future ambitions.

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[98] General Guenthen Blummentritt, quoted in Hoyt, *Stalingrad*, 45.
[99] Walter Gorlitz, *In the service of the Reich – The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Keitel* (London 2003)*, 213.*
[100] Isabel Denny, *The Fall of Hitler's Fortress City* (London 2007), 140.
[101] Samuel W. Mitcham jr, *The Rise of the Wehrmacht – The German Armed Forces and World War II Vol. 2* (London 2008), 668.
[102] Hoyt, *Stalingrad*, 17.

The veracity of this war was soon to be apparent. The Nazi high command wasted no time to start the exploitation of the land and the harsh repression of the people living on it. This was reflected in orders issued to German soldiers in the field. Since the USSR had not signed the Geneva war conventions the German troops were given virtual carte blanche. One order, dated to September 25th 1941 read: "I order firing at every Russian as soon as he appears within 600 meters distance. The Russian must know that he is faced with a resolute enemy from whom he cannot expect any lenience."[103] This order seemed to apply to Soviet soldiers and civilians alike, as the high command was faced with Soviet partisan actions behind the frontlines. Before the invasion began, on May 12th 1941, Hitler had decreed his 'Order Concerning Military Justice in the Barbarossa Area'. This gave German troops immunity from prosecution for any atrocities committed on the Eastern front. [104] It is clear that the war crimes committed in the East were officially sanctioned and encouraged by the high command. It is this mind-set that ultimately caused the human tragedy that was the battle of Stalingrad. With this historical background in mind, let us now turn to the narrative of ROII.

2.3 FOCALISATION & PERSPECTIVES

To examine ROII as a narrative text we must first identify the crucial elements, namely location, time, actors and events. The time is clearly demarcated. The battle itself raged from August 23nd 1942 until February 2nd 1943. The game narrative starts off on, going by the date mentioned in the first mission briefing, August 31st 1942, a week after the start of the battle. The final mission in the German campaign is fought on November 21st 1942, three months before the actual end of the battle. The location is fairly obvious. Soviet-Russia, in and around the city of Stalingrad. Each event has a specific location with distinct characteristics. The town of Spartanovka feels like a small Russian town, and is, for example, distinctly different from the Red Barracks mission in Stalingrad itself.

2.3.1 THE EVENTS

In the case of a video game as narrative text the events propelling the plot are the missions. These missions have goals which the players must accomplish in order for the story to advance further. In the case of ROII there are seven chapters to the story, each consisting of one or two missions. There are twelve missions in total. These mission chapters are then concluded by a narration of an excerpt from a soldier's diary or letter. I will address these excerpts later. The gameplay begins on August 31st, a week after the battle of Stalingrad commenced in earnest. In this first mission players are briefed on the situation of the campaign and on the targets for the current operation. In order for the German army to attack the city without fear of attack from the rear, the town of Spartanovka, described as a 'sorry pile of bricks', must be 'taken from Ivan'. During this briefing, given by the same voice as in the opening narration, the battle plan for the capture of the town of Spartanovka is presented. The player, being part of the infantry squad apparently under the voice's command, is spearheading the assault. The commander's voice warns the player for the 'dirty fighting' of the Bolshevik troops, saying never to underestimate their willingness to spill German blood. This statement is a clear example

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[103] Hoyt, *Stalingrad*, 21.
[104] Earl F. Ziemke, *Moscow to Stalingrad – Decision in the East* (2014), 50.

of stereotyping of the enemy. Even though it is the Germans who invade the USSR, the Soviets are considered to be dirty and bloodthirsty. The next string of missions takes us deep into the city of Stalingrad. Some notorious skirmishes and battles are highlighted. The German army advances, is forced to retreat and manages to advance again. The game heavily features the bigger, better documented battles, such as the fight for the tractor factory, the grain elevator and the train yard of Stalingrad. Some, but not all battlefields are revisited in a 'retreat' or 'reconquest' mission.

2.3.2 IN-GAME NARRATIVES

Red Orchestra II is told from the perspective of a single German soldier. This character is not playable during the game, he merely functions as narrator. We never see his face throughout the entire game and he is never given a name or rank. Despite these omitted character elements it is made clear that this narrator isn't just relating the story to the players. We know the narrator is present during the events, watching them unfold. We hear him react to the chain of events. We listen to him voicing his hopes and fears. We, as players of the game are living the story through his perspective. Given that we experience the entire story through his perspective there are several things the game reveals us about who and what this narrator is.

It is clear he is a German. We know this because he references to Germany as 'the Fatherland', and not in the least place through his thick German accent. It is also clear that he is serving in the Wehrmacht. He clearly identifies himself with his fellow soldiers, and he indicates several times where his place within the structure of the army is. Though it remains unclear throughout the game to which unit the narrator himself belongs, we can at least establish his approximate position in the chain of command. While listening to his mission briefings it becomes clear his position is somewhere between Battalion command and the infantry squad commanders.[105] If we look at the Wehrmacht command structure during WWII, this puts our narrator most likely in the position of company commander, which would entail he is holding either the rank of *Leutnant* (lieutenant), *Oberleutnant* (first lieutenant) or *Hauptmann* (captain).[106] Besides this, the only thing we can say for certain about this narrator is that he survives the fighting, at least until November 21st 1942, when we last hear from him as he proclaims the German victory. The game shows us glimpses of his thoughts, intermixed with the briefings he gives to his men. Therefor I will divide his narration into his inner thoughts and his briefings, and discuss these separately.

2.3.2.1 INNER DIALOGUE: WAR GOALS AND CONFLICT DESCRIPTIONS

Right in the opening cinematic for the German campaign, we are given an insight into the mind of our narrator. As if writing in his personal diary he reminisces to the opening days of Barbarossa. According to the narrator the invasion was an "audacious pre-emptive strike" against Communism, which "is a red plague which threatens all of Europe", emphasising the ideological aspect of this war. This crusade against Communism

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[105] Appendix I, "We have the right flank of the division. [...] Battalion believes there is only a small Russian force.", Mission 6, German campaign, *Red Orchestra II*.

[106] The Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS were organized in so called "Stellengruppen". Each position (Commander, drivers, squad leaders etc.) in a company was related to a certain "Stellengruppe. http://www.wwiidaybyday.com/kstn/stellengruppen.htm (22-04-2016).

mirrors the wartime rhetoric used to frame the war in the East as a necessary fight against *Judeo-Bolshevism.*[107] He sounds proud when recalling the gains made in the initial months of the invasion, which brought them to the gates of Moscow. Then he does have to admit that the German army isn't quite invincible after all, because they had to give ground to "an enemy possessing seemingly limitless numbers."[108] His explanation for their current positioning around the city of Stalingrad is that the high command deemed Moscow "unworthy of the German blood being spilled". Capturing Stalingrad instead will sever a vital trade route and allow the Germans access to the oil-rich city of Baku. He continues to say that their inevitable success will deal a blow to the already crumbling Russian war machine. The very same war machine that managed to drive the Germans back at the battle for Moscow.

The narrator finishes his inner monologue by restating his confidence in the final victory, even though the flanks are being guarded by Romanian and Italian forces. Historically these flanks would collapse, allowing the Red Army to envelop the German main army, but this statement still comes seemingly out of the blue for people who know nothing of the background of Germany's views towards its allies. Field Marshal Gerdt von Rundstedt, when briefing Hitler on the fighting strength of their allies, described the martial quality of the Romanians as 'beyond description', the Italians as 'terrible people' and the Hungarian troops as 'only wanting to get home quickly'.[109] These sentiments seem to have trickled down the ranks to our narrator, who concludes his monologue expressing the hope for a swift victory, so that they may return home soon. Apparently the Germans and the Hungarians were not so different after all.[110]

We do not return to his inner monologue until the end of the campaign, when he proclaims victory for Germany in Stalingrad on December 22nd 1942. The victory, so he says, was always inevitable. The Bolsheviks fought hard, but the German army was just too superior to the Red Army. Even though he speaks of victory, it is clear that some Soviet forces remain in the city. These will be mopped up in time, he assures us. "The German 6th Army occupies most of the city", he says. "Soon all of Stalingrad will be in German hands." He expresses his hope once again that he and his men might return to their homes soon, maybe even welcomed as heroes, but at least back into "the loving arms of our wives and children, and able to enjoy a warm Christmas".[111] These remarks are one of the rare humanising remarks made about the German soldiers in the entire game's narrative. They only occur in the narrator's inner monologue. Sure, he expresses concern for the wellbeing of his men during the battles they fight, but these remain general remarks at best. Here we get a glimpse of a man whose confidence in their final victory has managed to pull him through all the mayhem he has endured, and who is relieved thinking he can now finally leave it all behind. A somewhat odd statement, as the war, or even the battle itself for that matter, is still ongoing.

2.3.2.2 NARRATION THROUGH MISSION BRIEFINGS

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[107] Shepherd, "Clean Wehrmacht", 455.
[108] Appendix I, *Introductory cutscene*
[109] Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad,* 16, 77.
[110] Appendix I, *Introductory cutscene*
[111] Appendix I, *Final cutscene*

In between the inner monologues at the beginning and end of the German campaign the narrator speaks to us in his role as company commander. Before the start of every mission we fight, it is his voice telling us, as soldiers in his company, what we are up against. He is directing his troops, but in doing so he is directly addressing the players. The narrator comes off as a man staunchly confident in the quality of his men, though equally worried for their wellbeing. In the beginning he warns his men, and thus the players, for the dirty tricks 'Ivan' likes to use in order to cause maximum casualties. Progressing through the narrative, and through the timeline of the battle, his briefings turn from almost propagandistic enthusiasm to a still somewhat positive demeanour, which seems to be a lot more toned down. It gives the impression that this man, this commander has shared the battles with his men. He too is slowly being ground down by the madness which is slowly consuming his men.

At times there is even outright despair in his voice. Not every mission he sends his men on is one of forward movement. There are a couple of instances the German soldiers are forced on the defensive. "Damn, the Russians have got behind us, damn gangster methods again", he curses at the start of mission seven (07-10-1942 in-game), in which players have to defend the positions in the *Barrikady* gun factory they have conquered just one (06-10-1942 in-game) day before. Interestingly enough, according to the diary of Willhelm Hoffmann, which is used as a source in this game, the German troops did not manage to secure that factory until October 27th 1942.[112] It would seem the in-game timeline starts to diverge from the real-world timeline at this point.

The narrator seems to be caught off guard by the Soviet advance once more in mission eleven (13-11-1942). "*Verdammt*! Quickly everyone - hurry! The Russians are counter-attacking already." "We have to hold the line with what little we have here - and you are it, men. [...] don't let the death of your comrades be in vain!"[113] A far cry from his initial optimism indeed. Here we also see a blending of the fictional and the factual historical narratives present in ROII. The 'gangster methods' phrase sounds like it is lifted straight from one of the pages of Willhelm Hoffmann's diary, and we will see that many of the statements made by the narrator probably originated in the private correspondence of actual German soldiers. "The Russians continued to defend themselves just as stubbornly. You don't see them at all, they have established themselves in houses and cellars and are firing on all sides, including from our rear-barbarians, they use gangster methods", Private Hoffmann wrote.[114] The initial faith in the Final Victory, the prospect of a Christmas at home, the growing despair. If not on the person, the narrator is at least based on the sentiments of Private Willhelm Hoffmann which most likely would have been shared by many Wehrmacht soldiers in Stalingrad.

2.3.2.3 EMBEDDED HISTORICAL NARRATIVES
We have already established that there is a clear influence of historical ego documents present in the narrative of ROII, but besides using it for inspiration only the game developers have also included actual fragments of diaries and letters in between missions. The game gives us seven different accounts of German soldiers and

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[112] Willhelm Hoffmann, "October 22nd 1942 – October 27th 1942", *Diary* (unpublished 1942).
[113] Appendix I, *Briefing mission 7 & 11*.
[114] Hoffmann, "September 26th 1942", *Diary*.

officers fighting in Stalingrad. As these excerpts follow after the conclusion of one or two missions of which the contents and narration was largely fictional, they serve to ground the game's narrative in reality. Especially in the early missions, where the narrator's confidence in the final victory is still unshakeable, these snippets of actual soldier's experiences give players a harrowing reminder of the reality of this battle. In narratology this is called the embedding of a narrative text within the primary text. There are a few different relations between this primary and embedded text. In this case the embedded private thoughts of German soldiers function as a mirror for the reader of the primary narrative text. Since the primary and embedded text appear so similar the embedded text functions either to veil the outcome, or in this case, provide foreshadowing. Mieke Bal describes this foreshadowing function as follows: 'the fabula of the embedded text does not veil its resemblance to the primary fabula. The foreshadowing effect is preserved at the expense of suspense.'

This foreshadowing is in this case the known outcome of the battle for the Wehrmacht. We, as readers, know the outcome. At least we believe so. In order to parry this fact the embedded text is used to emphasise this instead of hiding it. In doing so the game creates a new form of suspense. 'The commander is so positive. What will happen? I know how it ends, but how will this story end?' The function of this embedded mirror-text is to enhance significance. The excerpts paraphrase the gamer's combat experience and the commander's briefing but adds a new layer. A more general truth, an unescapable fate. According to Bal, these mirror-texts serve as a suggestion how to read the text.[115] By showing the private thoughts and sentiments of a private who was there, the players' activities in the gameplay are being placed into perspective. Yes, you have just accomplished all the mission parameters, and yes, the game tells you you're victorious. But are you really? Did the soldiers in the real battle ever feel that way? Players always have the option of saving their progress, closing the game, and carry on with their lives. The soldiers fighting in Stalingrad obviously did not.

A prime example of how quickly the veneer of an easy victory dissipated in real-life is given to us by *Gefreiter* (corporal) Otto Lanz, from the 305th Panzer Jäger Abteilung (tank hunter division): *"Been three days in the hell of Stalingrad. One has no idea what is happening there. This surpasses everything experienced so far. The city is continually getting smaller and the ruins are getting bigger. Every house must have been destroyed and often battles are fought for mounds of rubble. The artillery is smashing into it, tanks and infantry combed the streets and this is the toughest work. Everyone who gets out alive may thank God..."*[116] Unfortunately I have been unable to find any information on this German Gefreiter, but another author cited in this game has been better documented. Willhelm Hoffmann, a soldier in the 267th Infantry Regiment, 94th Infantry Division of the 6th Army, is cited in a book by Vasili Chuikov, commander of the Soviet 62nd Army during the battle of Stalingrad, titled *The Beginning of the Road* (1963), to illustrate the decline in German confidence experienced during the course of the battle, and has since been cited in several other works.[117] Chuikov stated in his book that the diary of Hoffmann was in his personal possession. In his book he quoted Hoffmann's entries from July 27th 1942 until his last entry on December 26th of that year.

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[115] Bal, *Narratology*, 55.
[116] Appendix I.
[117] Vasili Chuikov, *The Beginning of the Road: The Story of the Battle for Stalingrad* (London 1973), 248-254.

The fragment cited in ROII follows after mission 4, in which players captured the grain elevator in the south of the city on September 20th 1942. This battle took place over several days and is chronicled in the diary of Private Hoffmann, who was an active participant in this battle.

Figure 1: Chapter complete screen following the end of ROII German mission 4. The image of Adolf Hitler in the background serves to remind who sent men like Hoffmann to face these 'devils' he described in his diary.

"Our battalion is attacking the grain elevator with tanks. Smoke is pouring out of it. The grain is burning and it seems that the Russians inside set fire to it themselves. It's barbaric. The battalion is taking heavy losses. Those are not people in the elevator, they are devils and neither fire nor bullets can touch [destroy] them." – Willi Hoffmann, 9th Infantry Division[118]

It is easy to read Hoffmann's descriptions of his Russian foes as 'devils' as him talking about his enemies in a dehumanising fashion, but when examining his other entries regarding this specific fight and the enemies he faced it becomes clear that this was a man who was gripped by a deep fear for his adversaries. Two days after the previous fragment he wrote *'If all the buildings of Stalingrad are defended like this then none of our soldiers will get back to Germany'*.[119] His words were those of a man who experienced genuine terror on a daily basis, and his words proves prophetic in the end as he ultimately perished fighting in Stalingrad. To cite his words is to have a clear break of the morale boosting 'can-do' attitude of the main narrator's story at the beginning of the missions. The narrating officer's remarks on getting home for Christmas seem to mirror those found in the pages of Private Wilhelm Hoffmann's diary. On November 10th he writes: "A letter from Elsa today. Everyone expects us home for Christmas. In Germany everyone believes we already hold Stalingrad. How wrong they are." But besides mirroring the sentiment of wanting to spend Christmas at home with their loved

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[118] Cited from Willhelm Hoffmann, 'diary entry September 16th 1942', in Chuikov, *Beginning of the Road*, 250-251. In Chuikov's book Hoffmann's writing says 'can destroy' instead of 'can touch'.
[119] Chuikov, *Beginning of the Road*, 267.

ones, this is where the game stops to mirror history. Elsa would not spend the Christmas of 1942 together with her Willi, nor any Christmas that followed. His words following the ones from early November drip with despair, which seems to grow with each new entry. On December the 18th we can read the final glimmer of hope Private Hoffmann would most likely ever experience, when the report came in that General Mannstein was poised to break through with his forces to relieve the battered 6th Army. On December 25th the Russian radio announced the defeat of Mannstein. December 26th, four whole days after the narrator in ROII had proclaimed German victory in Stalingrad, Willhelm Hoffman would make his final entry.[120]

This break in viewpoint forces players, as the consumers and participants of the text's narrative, to question the game's events, and how their own role as soldier fits into this new perspective. Given that the game does not present the playable soldiers as fleshed-out characters, but instead as two-dimensional avatars of German soldiers a certain sense of detachment and anonymity is created. The players fight, they die, and carry straight on as the next hollow avatar. Right away you no longer spend a thought on this fallen soldier. You jump straight back into the fight. He's already dead, you're still alive. This dynamic, combined with the despair flowing from the pages of the letters and diaries of Wehrmacht soldiers present in Stalingrad superimposed on the optimistic prefacing words of the Company Commander before each mission, creates an interplay that gives the narrative an overall sense of futility. Essentially you're playing this game not as a soldier, but as just another potential battlefield statistic.

2.3.2.4 SYMBOLS

Next to ego-documents, the game also uses other historical materials such as German wartime propaganda posters and slogans. Keeping in mind that a text is made up out of signs which can be units in all semiotic systems, I will now take an in-depth look at the way these symbols are being used in ROII.[121] These symbols signify meaning. In this case they are meant to ground the narrative in the broader historical setting of WWII.[122] The use of symbols in a narrative text is never to be perceived as random outright. Though sometimes difficult to make sense of, we must assume that each symbol is placed where it is for a specific reason, unless stated otherwise. Even then, they are not without meaning. The games uses both fictional and historical symbols. I will give an example of both, and elaborate how these relate to the representation of the German soldier.

Let's start off with the main symbol of the Wehrmacht, at least in the game world. This symbol, or rather, collection of symbols is purely fictional in nature. It appears to have been made up out of a large Maltese style cross with golden rays between the arms. This cross resembles the decoration paired with the *Pour le Mérite* (order of merit) award. This order of merit was awarded to individuals for recognition of extraordinary achievements during the Prussian and Imperial German period. The military version was last awarded in 1918. In the middle of the cross is another cross. This time more distinctly 'German' in aesthetics, resembling the so called *Eisenen Kreuz*, (Iron Cross). This symbol has an undeniable martial connotation in German history. It was the shape used for a military decoration first issued by Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm

[120] Chuikov, *Beginning of the Road*, 267.
[121] Bal, *Narratology,* 124.
[122] Kingsepp, "Hyperreality", 371.

III, to commemorate those who distinguished themselves in the German Wars of Liberation fought against Napoleonic France. It was again awarded during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and during WWI. It was reissued during WWII and featured, besides a prominent Swastika, the date 1939 on it. After WWII the iron cross became the new insignia of the German Bundeswehr. Lastly, this in-game emblem features a pair of black wings on the background. Most likely a reference to the German eagle which was so prominent on Nazi symbolism used during this era, although they look more like angel wings.

All in all, there are certainly German elements to this symbol. It looks the part, though it is still a completely fictional image. When I inquired with Tripwire, the developer of ROII, why they went with this fictional symbol instead of the historical Wehrmacht *Balkenkreuz*, I unfortunately received the following reply: *"To be honest, I can't remember"*[123]. But just because the creative process behind this symbol seems lost to us it does not mean that this symbol is meaningless just because it is fictional. On the contrary. I would argue that by utilising this fictional symbol to represent the Wehrmacht, the game is actively detaching their version of the German army from the historical Wehrmacht. When they would have used the *Balkenkreuz* it would have made clear to players that the Wehrmacht in ROII is actually meant to be the historical Wehrmacht. To emphasise the deliberate nature of the game developers' choice to go with this symbol to represent the Wehrmacht I would like to point out that they do indeed feature the *Balkenkreuz* in-game, for instance on tanks, so the emblem does exist in the game's universe. In effect, by using this fictional symbol to represent the ROII version of the Wehrmacht, the game is creating a counter-factual narrative.

Figure 2: Left: the game's fictional Wehrmacht emblem, right: a historically accurate Wehrmacht *Balkenkreuz* on a German Panzer IV

According to Jerremie Clyde et al. this counter-factual construct a trait inherent to historical video games. They state that video games are digital reconstructions of the past but they fail to make that leap towards 'real' history because of the ludic elements inherently present in the medium.[124] Because there is player interaction present in the narrative video games, despite their claims, or rather I should say suggestions to authenticity, automatically create a counter-factual version of history. Game developers attempt to create 'historically authentic' games by using historical sources, yet they lack the critical interpretation of these

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[123] Appendix II.
[124] Clyde et al., "Beyond the 'historical' simulation", 9.

sources to make justified truth claims about the past, Clyde et al. claim. The use of archival footage, letters and diaries can help establish the narratives, without having to be historically accurate per se.[125] Besides this being somewhat of an open door and at the same time dismissing the possibility of a 'true' historical game altogether, the argument for counter-factuals in video games is too narrow-minded. Games do not become counter-factual merely because there is player input, nor because they fail to provide a critical interpretation of their source material. Especially not when video games have fixed narratives like in this case. Combining the presentation of historical sources with the factor of player input is not enough to constitute a counter-factual. Actually going against the historical facts does. ROII is most definitely counter-factual, as I will demonstrate, but not for the reasons Clyde et al. give. In this game you fight battles on slightly different dates as in the actual timeline. But this is minor still compared to the missions in which players, as Wehrmacht soldiers, conquer Soviet positions when in fact these positions were never taken by Germany to begin with. The focalisation of ROII's narrative effectively shifts from the historical Wehrmacht to the fictional reminaginig of the Wehrmacht which eventually 'wins' the Battle for Stalingrad. The use of symbols further enforces this branching off into alternate history territory. This establishing of an alternate version of history has major implications for the outcome of the narrative and the representation of the German soldiers in it. Let's take the use of propaganda posters in ROII as an exemplifying case study.

2.3.3.3 PROPAGANDA

ROII is definitely not lacking in the historical sources department. The list of primary and secondary sources allegedly used during the development of this game is quite impressive, and I have included this list in the appendix.[126] One of the main historical images the game uses, besides the ego-documents, are WWII era German propaganda slogans and posters floating in the background during the mission briefings. These images, in contrast to the Wehrmacht symbol, aren't fictional. They have been sourced from real posters from that time. Tripwire Interactive's response, when asked about the selection criteria for these posters, was that "they were sourced off of period posters"[127], so it would seem that getting the periodisation right was the only priority here. This makes for some interesting examples used in-game, and I will elaborate on two examples.

The first poster I will discuss is found in the cut-scene for the briefing of mission 2. In the background the image of a uniformed man shouldering a shovel can be seen. This man stares determinant in the distance. His image is devoid of recognisable symbols, but despite this the original image is quickly found. It turns out to be a poster from the so called Rhineland referendum held on the 29th of March, 1936.[128] The poster lists the accomplishments of the Hitler government, which include work, joy, discipline and comradery. The uniformed man in the poster is clearly wearing a Swastika armband, which is replaced with an iron cross in-game. Still, even without this Swastika, the figure is clearly recognisable as a National-Socialist, both because of the image

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[125] Clyde et al., "Beyond the 'historical' simulation", 10.
[126] Appendix II.
[127] Appendix II.
[128] "The text: "*Before: Unemployment, hopelessness, desolation, strikes, lockouts. Today: Work, joy, discipline, camaraderie. Give the Führer your vote!*" Courtesy of the University of Minnesota Library.", http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters2.htm (30-06-2016).

itself and because of the context in which it is presented. The image of the worker is accompanied by the slogan *Durch Wehrwillen zur Wehrkraft* (With military will towards military strength).

Right: a NSDAP propaganda poster urging people to support Hitler in the 1936 referendum, left: the same image scrubbed clean of Nazi context and symbolism, together with the slogan "Durch Wehrwillen zur Wehrkraft".

The second poster features the silhouette of a soldier wearing a German 'Stahlhelm', equally glancing off into the distance. Stylistically, both images are very similar. This figure too is uniformed, but the helmet shows us he truly is a soldier. This characteristic image is not hard to retrace to the source either. The image is lifted from a recruitment poster for the Dutch Waffen-SS, urging Dutch men to enlist in order to combat bolshevism to defend their 'honour and conscience'.[129] The SS-rune on his helmet is absent though. This is most likely due to distribution factors and national laws concerning these kinds of symbols. But even without the symbols it conveys a clear message. If we remember that the war in the East was not just a war between states, but between ideologies who were hell-bent on destructing each other, the positioning of this silhouette serves to remember the players of this ideological element. This image is reinforced with German slogans such as *Am Ende steht der Sieg* (Victory awaits in the end) and *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer* (One nation, one empire, one leader). Especially the last slogan underlines the National-Socialist origin of the fighting on the Eastern Front. The combination of this imagery and these propaganda slogans on the one hand helps to ground the narrative of ROII in the broader WWII context, yet at the same time it presents a 'clean' version of National-Socialism. It hints at the ideological struggle behind the conflict, National-Socialism versus Communism, but where the Nazi's used to group together their enemies under the label of *Judeo-Bolshevism* the game leaves out that first aspect.[130] The racial aspect of Germany's war of annihilation is thus completely left out. As I explained in chapter 1 we cannot fault game developers for this alone. This is a direct result of censorship laws backfiring.

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[129] Koninklijke Bibliotheek/Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, "Nederlanders. Voor uw eer en geweten. Op! – Tegen het Bolsjewisme. De Waffen-SS roept U!", AG/00344 (Affiche, Lithografie), Oorlogsaffiches NIOD 1933 - 1946, NIOD/KB, http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/NIOD01:50429 (05-05-2016).
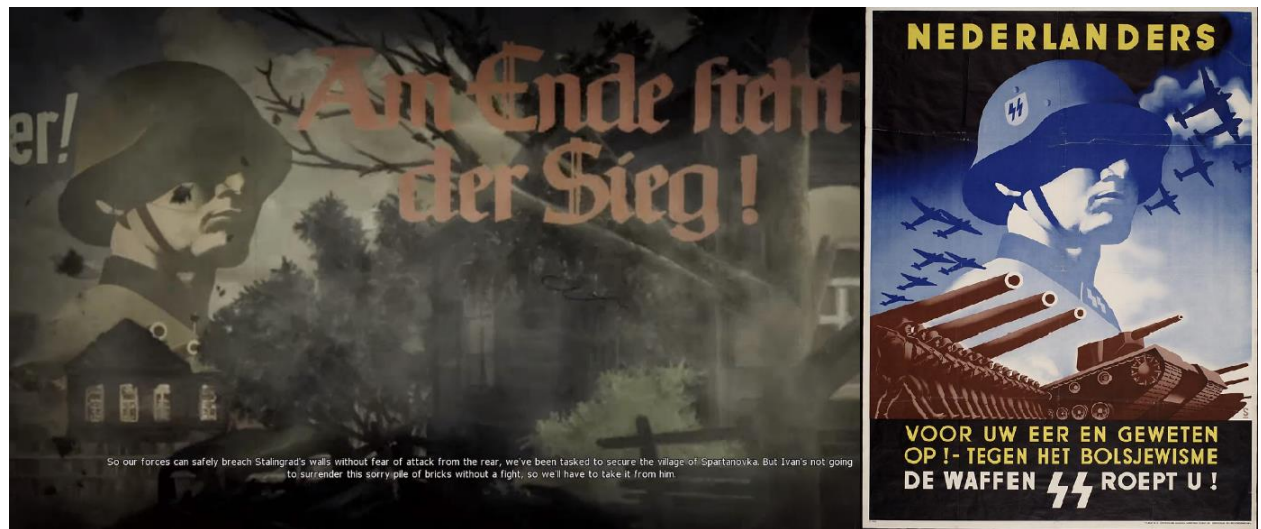
[130] Shepherd, "Clean Wehrmacht", 455.

Figure 3: Right: a Dutch Waffen-SS recruitment poster, left: the game's sterilised reinterpretation paired with the slogan "Am Ende steht der Sieg!".

2.4 MYTHS

When examining the narrative of ROII for mythical elements several things stand out. We must be careful not to take the apparent presence of these mythical elements as proof that ROII is attempting to further the 'clean Wehrmacht myth'. I can merely highlight these elements in a modern representation of Wehrmacht soldiers to highlight the fine line between remediating history and remediating propaganda. But I would also like to take this opportunity to point out where the narrative actively dispels mythical elements.

2.4.1 THE 'VICTIM' EVENT STALINGRAD

This mythical element seems obvious for ROII, though here I would like to point out how the game chooses to portray Stalingrad. It is definitely a victimising event, but the victims are not the entire German population. If anything, they are presented as the perpetrators. The German state sent those men to Stalingrad to fight, and then left them to die when their request to surrender was refused, but in ROII the Wehrmacht does not surrender. Therefor the mythical claim that the 6th Army, and the German people along with them, was betrayed by the Nazi-regime is not emphasised at all. The ones victimised by this battle are the soldiers who fought it. And not just German soldiers. The German campaign pays special attention to the fate of Germans during the fighting, this much is true, but it also emphasises the Soviet adversaries' suffering. For instance when the excerpt from Private Hoffmann concerning the Russians who fought to the death is mentioned. Soviet suffering is not kept out of the narrative. It must be emphasised that this game does not portray the civilian population of Stalingrad and Spartanovka, yet it pitches battles in the village of Spartanovka where soldiers fight in amongst the drying laundry hanging from clothing lines. Also the game mentions the cause of the destruction of the city to be the relentless bombings of the Luftwaffe, and playing the game this destruction is clearly seen, yet other traces of civilian life are missing.[131]

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[131] Appendix I, *Briefing mission 2.*

Figure 4. Advancing passed the drying laundry in Spartanovka, ROII German mission 1.

2.4.2 DENYING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR

Here ROII strongly goes against the mythical claims. It is stated in the opening sequence that Germany invaded the Soviet Union as a pre-emptive strike against Communism. That does not constitute owning up to the responsibility of WWII completely, but the narrator at least acknowledges that Germany brought the war to the Soviet Union. That being said, the narrator feels this was a just course of action. It was necessary to defend Europa against the 'Red Plague'. Here again no mentioning of the racial aspect though.

2.4.3 PORTRAYING BATTLES ISOLATED FROM WHOLE-WAR CONTEXT

This element is the only truly mythical part of ROII's narrative. The narrator mentions Moscow, and Operation Barbarossa, but presents it like the whole invasion was building up towards conquering Stalingrad. By stating that the German army, instead of conquering Moscow, went south towards Stalingrad the narration completely ignores the exploits of the German Army groups North and Centre. Only Army group South went for Stalingrad and the Caucasus. There is no indication that there are battles raging on other battlefields, or that Germany is also active in combat operations in Western Europe and North Africa. This isolated portrayal might give off the suggestion that Stalingrad was a self-contained event. This is somewhat relegated by the fact the narrator mentions that Stalingrad is not the end goal for the German armed forces, but that they seek to use it as a gateway to Baku and the oilfields of the Caucasus. There might be storytelling reasons behind this choice. By isolating Stalingrad the game portrays it as a epitome of human suffering, supported by the emphasis on the suffering of the soldiers on both sides who partook in this battle. Nevertheless, this whole aspect could have

been achieved by simply adding an epilogue in which the history of the War after Stalingrad is summarised. We will see a similar method being used in chapter 3.

2.4.4 PORTRAYING WARTIME BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNTS

The publications of soldiers' ego documents occurred straight after the war to provide the general public with 'evidence' that the Wehrmacht soldiers had acted professionally at all times and fought and dies as heroes, therefore dispelling any pesky rumours of mass killings and other war crimes committed by German servicemen.[132] But the inclusion of such ego documents in the narrative of ROII serves another purpose. By showing the horrors the Germans faced, offset against the propaganda they were being fed at the same time, the game emphasizes the madness of this battle and the powerlessness of the men involved.

2.5 FINAL VICTORY

So what does all this mean for the representation of German soldiers in ROII? Seeing as ROII is before all else a video game, and video games ultimately need to let the player have a sense of achievement. Whereas a history textbook provides an observation of the meaning of other people's actions, video games give the players the agency to provide that meaning. This meaning usually comes in the form of, simply put, winning the game.[133] But how do you win a game in which you are playing as a German soldier in Stalingrad? How has ROII adapted its narrative to allow a player to claim victory for the Wehrmacht?

We have established that at some point the game narrative diverges from the historical narrative, thus creating an alternate history. This automatically frees up the narrative from the 'constraints' of historical facts concerning temporal continuity. Yet this counter-factual element in ROII's narrative is cleverly hidden away. It is only when looking at the dates in the missions compared to the events on those dates in real life that this divergence in focalisation and in representation becomes apparent. At some point in the game there emerges a new Wehrmacht. A Wehrmacht symbolised by the amalgamation of two of Germany's most iconic medals. A Wehrmacht devoid of complicity in all the crimes for which the historical Wehrmacht is now condemned. A Wehrmacht that can ultimately claim victory in Stalingrad. As long as the story ends on a high note. Quitting while you're ahead has always been sound advice, though for a besieged army, cut off from the rest of the world, this is hardly an option. The narrative focalised through this fictional Wehrmacht in ROII might end on December 22nd 1942, but the battle of Stalingrad did not end until February 2nd 1943. Surely this was the developers' solution for this conundrum? They even stated as much themselves:

"Basically, this covers the period during which the Germans were "winning". Mid-November was effectively the high-point of the German advance into the city - and it all went to shit from there on, pretty much. So we kind-of split the whole battle into (a) the parts where there Germans were doing well and (b) the parts where the Soviets were doing well, leading up to their eventual victory."[134]

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[132] Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 137.
[133] Clyde, "Beyond the "historical" simulation", 10.
[134] Email interview with Alan Wilson, vice president Tripwire Interactive LLC, (22-04-2016).

This seems to be a plausible explanation for how this historical campaign can be won regardless of the events it is based on. The German campaign was but the first part of the entire story of Stalingrad. In the second part we would see the Soviets ultimately beating the 6th Army in early February 1943.[135] But when taken into account that the game has established a new counter-factual narrative of the battle of Stalingrad, a scenario emerges in which an ultimately fictional and seemingly 'clean' Wehrmacht battles its way into the city and manages to claim Final Victory. Not only does the Wehrmacht claim victory at the end of the game. The Wehrmacht truly is victorious! In this version of history Field Marshal Paulus apparently does not capitulate to the Red Army, but instead finalises the occupation of Stalingrad. This is not just idle speculation on my part, but rooted in the game's narrative. It would appear the battle for Stalingrad continued after the game's ending. When completing the German campaign we are treated to the final inner monologue of the narrator, but that is not the end of the battle. After the narrator's final words a newspaper front page appears. Not just any paper, but the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official newspaper of the NSDAP. The date reads February 4th 1943, and the headline reads "DEUTSCHLAND IST SIEGREICH" (Germany is victorious). Though such a bold claim would not be beyond the realm of expectations for a newspaper such as the VB, the actual headlines on February 4th did give a different story. "Der Kampf der 6. Armee um Stalingrad zu Ende. Sie starben, damit Deutchland lebe." (The 6th Army's battle for Stalingrad is over. They died, so Germany could live).[136] Both headlines could not be in a more stark contrast to each other.

Figure 5. Left: The ROII German victory screen, right: the front-page of the *Völkischer Beobachter* on February 4th 1943 announcing to the German people the death of the 6th Army. Note that the in-game front-page is missing the Swastika despite still stating the *VB* is the *Kampfblatt*. Of the Nazi party of "Greater Germany".

It is not a coincidence they chose this date as the date on that front page. It is a clear indicator that somewhere along the line the in-game history diverged, and Germany actually won the battle for Stalingrad. In-game dates also varied enormously with the actual dates on which specific combat operations took place. In the game Wehrmacht soldiers took positions, like Pavlov House, which in reality were never taken. What might happen

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[135] The Soviet campaign continues on until February 2nd 1943, the historical date on which the 6th Army capitulated.

[136] *Völkischer Beobachter: Kampfblatt der national-sozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands* (04-02-1943).

next in this alternate version of WWII is anyone's guess. Rounding it all off is the fictitious Wehrmacht emblem, warning the player that the narrative he is about to experience through play is in fact fiction as well.

We can conclude that the representations of the Wehrmacht soldiers in ROII is at least very interesting. By not giving the soldiers a face or a name, the game mimics the disposable nature of the German soldier on the Eastern front. We now know that almost every German that marched into Stalingrad would perish, either during the battle or in Soviet captivity.[137] They were dead men the moment they set foot on that battlefield. By having the narrator pose as the propaganda spouting officer, and having his overly positive outlook offset by the embedded narratives of soldiers fighting in Stalingrad, players are confronted with the schizophrenic world these German troops found themselves in. The Germans in ROII do not deny their responsibility for the war, at least what concerns their front. It addresses the ideological element of Germany's war in the East, but leaves the racial aspect unaddressed. It also inverts Pollak's myth building element of the soldier's ego document.[138] Instead of painting a heroic picture of the German soldiers the game uses fragments from diaries and letters to illustrate the German soldiers' slow descent into despair while fighting in Stalingrad. ROII might overshoot into alternate history by forcing a plausible win condition for the German army, but it does provide players with a more psychologically realistic experience of war on the Eastern Front.

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[137] Beevor, *Stalingrad*, 408.
[138] Pollak, "Untainted Wehrmacht", 149.

CHAPTER III: POSTPONING THE INEVITABLE – COMPANY OF HEROES

Title	Genre	Game modes	Setting	Developer	Release date
Company of Heroes	Real-time Strategy	Singleplayer: US campaign Multiplayer	France, 1944	Relic Entertainment	September 11th 2006
CoH: Opposing Fronts	Real-time Strategy	Singleplayer: British campaign German campaign Multiplayer	France & The Netherlands, 1944	Relic Entertainment	September 27th 2007
CoH: Tales of Valor	Real-time Strategy	Singleplayer: German campaign US campaign Multiplayer	France, 1944	Relic Entertainment	April 8th 2009

Let us now turn our focus to the Western Front. The Netherlands and France to be precise. The failed allied attempt to capture key bridges in the Netherlands to push on into the German heartland, codenamed Market Garden, brought the war back to the Dutch population in 1944. This operation has been immortalised in the 1974 novel and 1977 film titled *A Bridge Too Far*, with the title even becoming a proverb in Dutch for something proving a too ambitious a goal.[139] Besides novels and movies Market Garden has been the background for many games, both digital and non-digital. A table-top rendition of the battle, creatively titled *Operation Market Garden* (GDW Games) was first released in 1985 and in that same year the first digital game on this topic was released as well. *Arnhem – The 'Market Garden' Operation* (Cases Computer Simulations Ltd. 1985) was released on MS-DOS and the Commodore Amiga.[140] Later, several other table-top and digital games covering the operation would appear, such as *V for Victory: Market-Garden* (Three-Sixty Pacific 1993), *Monty's Gamble* (Multi-Man Publishing 2003)[141] and *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* (Gearbox Software 2008). The latest title is the most recent digital interpretation of the battle, yet unfortunately it does not feature a German side as playable faction. Therefore I will instead use the critically acclaimed title *Company of Heroes* (Relic Entertainment 2006), and their expansion packs *Opposing Fronts* (2007) and *Tales of Valor* (2009).[142]

The initial release in 2006 did not contain a German campaign, but the expansions filled this gap by putting players in charge of the Wehrmacht *Panzer Elite,* a fictional interpretation of both Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS Panzer divisions. In Opposing Fronts (OF) the player assumes the role of Wolfgang Berger, and his brother Aldrich, both officers in the *Kampfgruppe Lehr*, a fictional division based on the historical Wehrmacht

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[139] Cornelius Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far* (1974); United Artists, *A Bridge Too Far* (1977).
[140] *Arnhem: The 'Market Garden' Operation* (Cases Computer Simulations Ltd.1985), https://www.mobygames.com/game/arnhem-the-market-garden-operation (26-05-2016).
[141] *Monty's Gamble: Market Garden* (2003), https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/6353/montys-gamble-market-garden (26-05-2016).
[142] *Company of Heroes* (2006) Metacritic score: 93/100, http://www.metacritic.com/game/pc/company-of-heroes (26-05-2016).

Panzer Lehr Division and a melange of other German forces engaged during Market Garden, such as the 2nd SS Panzer Corps and *Luftwaffe* paratroopers.[143]

In 2009 the next expansion pack was released, titled *Tales of Valor* (ToV). In this expansion the player got to explore the military career of one of the supporting characters in Opposing Fronts: the commanding officer of the Kampfgruppe Lehr, Maximillian Voss. In two small three-part campaigns the player gets to fight his way through the Battle of Villers-Bocage (*Tiger Ace*) and the Battle of Falaise Pocket (*Falaise Pocket*), both of which occurred in the weeks following the Allied landings in Normandy on June 6th 1944. In this chapter I will examine how this game represents German soldiers by once again looking at the focalisation and perspectives in the narrative, as well as the use of symbols and myths. Finally I will explain how this game allows the German side to emerge victoriously.

3.1 GAME OVERVIEW

The game's developers give us a good overview of the goals they had in mind when making this game. The list of features on the official website mention the game giving a 'cinematic single plater experience that captures the turmoil of WWII as never before", and claims the 'advances squad AI (artificial intelligence) brings the soldiers to life as they interact with the environment, which is 'completely destructible'.[144] It is noteworthy that the terms 'realism', 'historical accuracy' or 'authenticity' are lacking from the promotional material. It would appear immersion is achieved through creating a realistic game world, in which physics seem to play a role, similar to the real world. Houses and barricades can be destroyed, the same as in real world battle environments. Instead they mention a 'visceral and cinematic gaming experience', making very clear that the goal was to provide entertaining gameplay and not a historical experience.

The game was well received, as reflected in the high scores and many awards the game has received since its release. Similar to ROII, CoH is a game that is mainly played for the multiplayer experience, yet unlike ROII the singleplayer campaign was very well received. An emphasis seems to lie on depicting the many vehicles and weapons used in WWII as accurately as possible, and there is a linear progression present in the availability of forces available to the player. In the early game you start out with simple *Volksgrenadier* infantry. These can be upgraded, or 'promoted', to *Knight's Cross soldiers*. The idea is that, through progression in the game, the player gets access to more and more troops of higher quality. This is of course the complete opposite of the situation the German Wehrmacht was in in 1944. Quality of weaponry and troop strength dwindled in the twilight months of the war. Many divisions were divisions only on paper, consisting of a few battalions at best.[145]

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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[143] Robert Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September: The German View of MARKET-GARDEN and The Battle of Arnhem, September 1944* (Surrey 2004), 48-50.

[144] "Command the Company that changed History", http://www.companyofheroes.com/games/company-of-heroes (26-05-2016).

[145] Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September*, 11.

The game takes the player to several different battlefields on the Western Front. Participating in these battles, the player assumes the role of a commanding officer of the *Panzer Lehr Division*, or Kampfgruppe (meaning battlegroup) Lehr (KG Lehr) as the game interchangeably refers to the Wehrmacht armoured division represented in CoH. This is more than a semantic difference as I will explain in the following historical background. In this part I will also give some much needed background information for the different battles represented in the game. I will start off with talking about the historical Panzer Lehr Division. Then I shall examine on which historical events the depicted battles in CoH are based, together with an overview of the actual German units that took part in these engagements.

3.2.1 PANZER LEHR

The Panzer Lehr Division was established at Potsdam, Germany in November 1943 and moved to Verdun, France in January 1944 to complete formation. It was comprised of several elite demonstration and training units, mostly drawn from the *Panzertruppenschulen*, the tank crew academies. These were not raw recruits, most of the men in the division had seen combat in Africa and the Eastern front. Living up to its elite status the division was equipped with the best the Reich had to offer. The armoured battalions were outfitted with Panzer IV and V tanks, and all the *Panzergrenadier* battalions had armoured personnel carriers at their disposal.[146] At the time of the D-Day invasion the Lehr Division had 202 tanks and 31 *Jagdpanzers* (tank destroyers) in its ranks.[147] At full strength the division was almost 15.000 men strong. At the end of June, the division had lost 3000 men and 51 tanks, as well as almost 400 support vehicles.[148] After two months of fighting in Northern France, the division had been reduced to only 20 tanks and was rendered combat-ineffective. It was reinforced with 72 new tanks and 21 new assault guns in Paderborn Germany, after which the division was thrown into battle again.[149] This time in Operation *Wacht am Rhein*, the German counter-attack in the Ardennes, more commonly known as the Battle of the Bulge. It is here where the historical Panzer Lehr Division and the fictional KG Lehr diverge. The historical Lehr Division saw action in the Netherlands, but only nominally and not until early spring of 1945.[150]

3.2.1.1 DIVISION OR KAMPFGRUPPE?

Although the Panzer Lehr Division was the model for the Wehrmacht corps the player becomes a part of in CoH it is mostly referred to in-game as the KG Lehr instead of Panzer Division. Is this just a semantic difference? Did the developers choose KG because it sounds martial and rolls of the tongue easily enough? On the last part I can only speculate. Perhaps they chose to rename the unit to a KG instead of a division to create more separation between the narrative reality and the historical reality. But there is certainly a difference beyond the semantic between a Division and a KG. A German Division was largely structured like divisions in other

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[146] Robert Edwards, *Scouts Out: a History of German Armored Reconnaissance Units in Wold War II,* (2014), 102.
[147] Franz Kurowski, *Die Panzer Lehr Division: die grösste Deutsche Panzer-Division und ihre Aufgabe* (1964), 16.
[148] H.P. Willmott, *June 1944* (New York 1984), 84.
[149] Charles B. MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington DC 2001), 42.
[150] "Operation Veritable", http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/Canada/CA/Victory/Victory-17.html (26-05-2016).

national armies. It consisted, on paper at least, of between ten and twenty thousand soldiers and was subdivided in *Abteilungen* (regiments). Two Divisions combined formed a Corps.

A KG on the other hand had no predetermined composition, but was an ad-hoc combination of combined arms. Usually these units were drawn from depleted Abteilungen and *Battalione* (battalions). These KG's were usually named after the commanding officer, such as the KG *Peiper* which was active in the Ardennes. Whereas Divisions and other units had a permanent presence in the Wehrmacht, KG's were more of a temporary arrangement, sometimes hastily organised to form a line of defence against the advancing Allied armies. This cobbled up nature of the KG might be why the developers went with this configuration. In the opening scene Wolfgang and Aldrich Berger discuss the quality of the reinforcements they have been sent. "Young boys and old men, most of which have never fired rifles before", Wolfgang complains. It is clear that the KG Lehr has been through the wringer and no longer resembles a fully battle ready Division. The addition of Luftwaffe paratroopers to the KG Lehr further emphasises this 'combined arms' aspect of the German army in CoH.

Figure 6. Hauptmann Wolfgang Berger: "These boys and old men are so green they haven't even fired rifles before…"

The game's narrative really beats players over the head with the fact they are playing as a member of a German Kampfgruppe. Characters refer to the KG as a title for their subordinate troops an absurd amount of times. "Excellent work, Kampfgruppe!", "Kampfgruppe, listen up!", "Kampfgruppe Lehr has control of the bridge", etc. It is mentioned so often it completely replaces the Wehrmacht as an identity marker. It mentions other German battle units to indicate their separateness from the KG Lehr, most notably the 9th SS-Panzer Division which the game refers to several times.[151] The game frames KG Lehr as operating there where the Waffen-SS apparently failed, thus fully separating those two identities even if some elements of the KG Lehr were based off of SS units active during Market-Garden.

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[151] Appendix III *Market Garden mission 4, 5 & 6.*

Interestingly enough, outside of gameplay the game and all of the surrounding literature consistently refers to the Wehrmacht/KG Lehr as the *Panzer Elite*, stating that the Panzer Elite is "*a representation of a generic Panzergrenadier* (Mechanized Infantry) *division, such as were fielded by both the German army (the Wehrmacht) and the notorious Waffen SS. It is primarily inspired by the mish-mash of German units that opposed Operation Market Garden, including the 2nd SS Panzer Corps and the Luftwaffe's Fallschirmjäger divisions. [...]In the Panzer Elite single-player campaign, the "Kampfgruppe Lehr" division struggles to prevent British forces from attaining control of a series of bridges in Holland during Operation Market Garden.*"[152] So perhaps the game does not quite know what to call this *Panzer Elite*, as it even refers to it as the KG Lehr Division. But going by this description and the in-game rendition it certainly matches the 'mish-mash' that would have comprised a German KG.

3.2.2 WEHRMACHT VS WAFFEN-SS?

The game is quite explicit about the player assuming command of Wehrmacht divisions and troops, be they *Heer* (ground forces) of *Luftwaffe* (air forces), but the battles depicted were historically fought by soldiers and divisions of the *Waffen-SS*. Again, is this merely a semantic difference, creating continuity in between the different German campaigns by having all the characters serve in the same division (Lehr)? Or would the change from Waffen-SS to Wehrmacht have something to do with allowing the game to portray these battles in a gamic setting? As I have explained in my historiography on the image of the Wehrmacht, the Waffen-SS served to deflect attention from the war crimes committed by ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers by putting all the focus on the many war crimes committed by SS forces. This thesis is not about ranking criminality or severity of these horrific events, yet the fact that the (Waffen-) SS has become synonymous with war crimes might go a long way towards explaining the changes in narrative made in the CoH German campaigns. I will elaborate more on the Waffen-SS divisions who were historically involved with the depicted battles.

3.2.2.1 1ST SS PANZER DIVISION LEIBSTANDARTE SS ADOLF HITLER

We have now identified the historical inspiration for the KG Lehr, and have established that although this division was present near the Battle of Villers-Bocage it was in fact the 101er SS-*Schwerer Panzerabteilung* under the command of Hauptmann Wittmann who fought in the actual battle. It raises the, perhaps fairly rhetorical question why CoH chose to make the unit under player control part of Lehr Division instead of this division of Adolf Hitler's personal bodyguards. For marketing reasons games are not allowed to portray Nazi imagery and symbols, such as the SS runes, but it does not explicitly ban game developers from mentioning the SS. CoH even states that units of the SS are present on the battlefield, albeit not directly under player control, and when they are, always in a lesser role to that of the Wehrmacht.

As the name implies the 1st SS-Panzer Division was created out of the original armed branch of the SS, the Leibstandarte AH. In the violent period of the interwar German republic the NSDAP organised a paramilitary branch within the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) in order to keep the leadership safe. At first called the *Stosstrupp* (shock troop) *Adolf Hitler*, their loyalty to the party leadership was first tested during the failed 1923

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[152] "Panzer Elite", *Company of Heroes Wiki*, http://companyofheroes.wikia.com/wiki/Panzer_Elite (03-06-2016).

Munich Beerhall Putsch. In 1925 the SS was created to serve as a kind of Praetorian Guard to Hitler's new order. Nine years later, between October and December 1934 the LSSAH was reorganised into a fully armed division, complete with armoured car and mortar brigades. The following year, during the reoccupation of the Rhineland the LSSAH was 2500 men strong. A quarter of the total SS numbers at the time.[153] The LSSAH would help cement the Nazi regime by taking part in the extrajudicial measures taken by the Hitler government in its early years in power, such as murdering political opponents.[154]

Following engagements in Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Low Countries and France, the LSSAH was sent to the Eastern front, where it took part in the campaigns in the Ukraine. After the collapse of the Moscow campaign the LSSAH was on the defensive. On the 12th of May 1942 they helped bring a Soviet counter-offensive to a halt, capturing 240.000 Soviet troops in the process. At the Nuremberg trials the LSSAH would be found guilty of having committed war crimes against prisoners of war on the Eastern Front. The division took part in mass executions.[155] One battalion, the Kampfgruppe Peiper, would earn itself the nickname of 'blowtorch' battalion, for their eagerness to put Russian villages to the torch. These burnings would usually also involve mass killings of the inhabitants. Elements of the LSSAH also took part in *Operation Fabrikation*, the final push in the mass deportation of German Jews in order to utilise them as forced labour.[156]

3.2.2.2 2ND SS PANZER CORPS

The game mentions the presence of SS troops in the Arnhem region. In-game these are represented purely by the presence of *Panzergrenadier* units on the battlefield, and Voss mentioning that 9th SS Division (9th SS-Panzer Division *Hohenstaufen*) has suffered heavy losses at the hands of the British. During the Market Garden campaign the 2nd SS-Panzer Corps was stationed near Arnhem to replenish their losses suffered during their retreat from France. During Market-Garden the Corps was comprised of the previously mentioned 9th SS-Panzer Division and the 10th SS-Panzer Division *Frundsberg*. Also attached to the Corps was the 3th Fallschirmjäger-Division. This division suffered heavy losses when the pocket of Falaise collapsed and almost had to be fully reconstituted. It therefore had little in the way of combat strength during Market-Garden and served as Kampfgruppe *Becker,* mostly to hold positions between the Rhine and Waal rivers.[157]

3.2.2.3 SS TRAINING AND REPLACEMENT BATTALION 16

The largest self-contained unit nearest to any of the Allied landing-zones was the SS Training and Replacement Battalion 16 under command of SS-Hauptmann Sepp Krafft. He and his men had been training near Wolfheze, approximately 3 kilometres east of the British landing-zone. Krafft correctly deduced that the British paratroopers' goal was the the Arnhem road bridge, therefor he positioned his battalion in a defensive line along the two main routes into Arnhem. One of these routes was the Ede-Arnhem railway line. In-game players are set upon British paratroopers and gliders dropping almost untop of them at the town of Wolfheze. The KG Lehr's headquarters is located in the Wolfheze trainstation. There is therefor no doubt that the opening events

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[153] Sharpe, *Leibstandarte*, 10.
[154] Tim Ripley, *The Waffen-SS At War: Hitler's Praetorians 1925-1945* (2004), 17.
[155] Tim Ripley, *SS Steel Storm: Waffen-SS Panzer Battles on the Eastern Front 1943–1945* (2000), 73.
[156] Saul Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust* (London 2004), 173.
[157] Steven J. Zaloga, *Operation Market-Garden 1944 vol.1: The American Airborne Missions*, (2014), 70.

of CoH:OF's German campaign are inspired by the exploits of this SS Battalion 16. "We knew from experience that the only way to draw the tooth of an airborne landing, with an inferior force, is to drive right into it", Krafft later said about his experiences at Wolfheze.[158] It would appear that almost all of the German formations and the battles they partake in within the narrative of CoH are in face derived from Waffen-SS units.

3.2.3 THE BATTLEFIELDS
On the 6th of June 1944 the Allies launch Operation Overlord, the full-scale invasion of German-occupied France in order to liberate the countries in Western-Europe and take the fight to the German homeland.

3.2.3.1 VILLERS-BOCAGE
A week after the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy a British armoured column advanced on the small village of Villers-Bocage, hoping to exploit a gap in the German defences near Caen. While the 22nd Armoured Brigade reached the village without incident it was set upon by four Tiger tanks of the 101st Heavy Panzer Battalion under command of SS-*Obersturmführer* Michael Wittmann. In a fierce but brief exchanging of fire numerous British tanks, anti-tank guns and transport vehicles were destroyed by the Germans. The Germans, reinforced by the rest of the 101st Battalion and units of the Panzer Lehr Division followed through with a costly attack on the British positions inside Villers-Bocage. After six hours of fighting the British had to pull back. It marked the first time since the landings that Allied forces had to retreat before the German army. Villers-Bocage would remain a German stronghold until the 4th of August, when it was bombed to rubble by the Royal Air Force.[159]

3.2.3.2 THE FALAISE POCKET: STALINGRAD IN NORMANDY
All did not go well for the German army after their brief victory in Villers-Bocage. The relentless influx of Allied troops and equipment proved unstoppable for the Wehrmacht and before long they were driven in retreat. The battle that would decide the invasion of Normandy was fought in an area in between the villages of Falaise and Argentan. The advancing British, Canadian, Polish and American forced had managed to cut off the German retreat and encircle the 7th Army in the so-called 'pocket' of Falaise, though US general Omar Bradley referred to it as the 'Argentan-Falaise Pocket', and British commander Bernard Montgomery chose to call it the 'Mortain-Falaise Pocket'.[160] The battle that followed has been referred to as *Stalingrad en Normandie* by French historian Eddy Florentin, which is also the title of his book on this particular battle. Linking the battle of Falaise Pocket to the battle of Stalingrad clearly indicates the brutality and sheer loss of life that occurred there.[161]

When the Polish forces meet up with the Americans at Chambois on August 19th they attempt to seal off the pocket, but they lack the manpower to do so effectively. On the night of the 20th of August the 2nd SS-Panzer Corps attempted to counterattack and break out of the pocket they and the rest of the 7th Army found

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[158] Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September*, 69-73.
[159] George Forty, *Road to Berlin: The Allied Drive From Normandy* (London 1999), 31.
[160] Paul Latawski, *Falaise Pocket* (Gloucestershire 2004), 17.
[161] Eddy Florentin, *Stalingrad en Normandie: La destruction de la VIIe armée allemande 30 julliet – 22 août 1944* (London 2002).

themselves in.[162] This heavy fighting opened up a small gap between the villages of Trun and Chambois, allowing some German units to escape, and for some time the Polish soldiers now found themselves surrounded. The following day this gap would be sealed up for good by the Canadian forces, leaving more than 100.000 German soldiers trapped.[163] In the end the German forces where outmatched by almost three to one. Their defeat was certain, though in the end it was not as definitive as it could have been. Many authors have pondered why Bradley was reluctant to close the trap on the German army in a more definitive way than he did. The corridor created between Trun and Chambois allowed a large number of Wehrmacht troops to escape the annihilation, amongst them the Panzer Lehr Division.[164]

3.2.3.4 OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

With the German army in the west in full retreat the British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery devised a plan that, when executed successfully, would ensure the Allied armies a direct access into the German heartland. The plan consisted of dropping British, American, Dutch and Polish paratroopers near Arnhem and Nijmegen. Their goal was to capture vital bridged across the Rhine and Waal rivers. These paratroopers then had to hold out against German resistance until the 30th Armoured Corps could push up to their positions and relieve them. Three days the paratroopers would have to hold their positions near the bridges, the plan was originally. Reality once again proved the death of battle plans as the German battle strength around Arnhem was much higher than anticipated. It was true that the German divisions were severely thinned out, yet they remained Panzer Divisions and paratroopers have a hard time facing tanks in battle.[165] According to the testimonies of German soldiers the morale amongst the men was low. Many soldiers had been on the retreat since June, having lost many friends and material since then. Several German veterans declared believing the war would end as soon as they were driven over the German border, and Arnhem was not too far from said border.[166]

3.3 FOCALISATION AND PERSPECTIVES

The story of the German campaign in CoH: OF focusses around two German brothers, Wolfgang and Aldrich Berger, who are both officers in the Kampfgruppe Lehr. Wolfgang is the older of the two, indicated by him referring to Aldrich as 'little brother' and mentioning that their mother had tasked him with looking after Aldrich. The two men form the link between the player and the commander of Kampfgruppe Lehr, Majorgeneral Maximillian Voss. In the storyline of Voss plays the role of a side-character and narrator at the same time. It is Voss who briefs the Berger brothers, and thus the players, on the missions at hand. He comes over as a hard-line officer whose only objective is to get the job done. This unsympathetic attitude pits this character against the more nuanced worldview of the Berger brothers. Voss is the main character in the *Tiger* Ace campaign found in the expansion pack *Tales of Valor.* Voss gets more fleshed out as a character in this campaign after having been introduced in the main game, as antagonist to the American soldiers of Able

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[162] Michael Sharpe & Brial Davis, *Leibstandarte – Hitler's Elite Bodyguard* (Surrey 2002), 58.
[163] Ford & Gerrard, *Falaise 1944*, 12.
[164] Anthony Tucker Jones, *Falaise: The Flawed Victory – The Destruction of Panzergruppe West, August 1944*, (2008), 75.
[165] Forty, *Road to Berlin*, 106-107.
[166] Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September*, 33.

Company during their landing in Normandy, and as commanding officer of the Kampfgruppe Lehr during the CoH: OF storyline in which he served a similar narrative role.

3.3.1 THE MAKING OF A TANK LEGEND: VILLERS-BOCAGE

Maximillian Voss, Hauptmann, is introduced as a veteran of the Eastern front, and this is where the player is introduced to him, as well as the rest of his Tiger tank crew. In an introductory cinematic we see them engaging a Soviet T-34 tank and scoring a kill. Voss narrates his own story and seems to glance over his time on the Eastern Front. He mentions that he and his crew made a name for themselves there, but they were reassigned in the spring of 1944. Their new battlefield would be Normandy. In the morning of the 13th of June 1944 Voss and his crew near the village of Villers-Bocage. They are suffering from engine trouble and the tank struggles to move ahead. It is then that Voss and his crew spot a British armoured column moving through the village and Voss gives the order to engage. In this moment the cutscene ends and the player assumes control of the Tiger tank and its crew. As the Tiger crew makes its way towards the village and the oncoming British vehicles the driver, gunner, commander and radio operator all interact with each other. As the player gives a move order you hear Voss telling *Oberschütze* (private 1st class) Arno Schroif, the driver, to move towards the designated position. Likewise when the player issues a fire command. Voss relays this order to *Feldwebel* (sergeant) Joseph Schultz who then directs fire towards that position.

It is clear by the date and setting of this campaign, June 13th 1944 near Villers-Bocage, that the character of Voss is emulating the German tank ace Michael Wittmann, who followed a similar career path as Voss.[167] SS-Hauptsturmführer (captain) Wittmann is regarded to be the most successful tank commander of WWII. Wittmann is best known for his role in the Battle of Villers-Bocage, though he earned most of his decorations on the Eastern Front, much like Hauptmann Voss. During the Battle of Kursk, the biggest tank engagement in history, Wittmann's platoon of four Tiger tanks destroyed several Soviet tanks for which he was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* (Knight's Cross) by Adolf Hitler himself.[168] Two days after making landfall during the D-Day invasion the British 7th Armoured Division had pushed up towards the French village of Villers-Bocage.[169] The 1-SS *Schwerer Panzer Abteilung* 101 (heavy armour battalion) under command of Wittmann, who held the rank of SS-Obersturmführer (first lieutenant) at the time, was stationed just outside of Villers-Bocage in order to protect the flank of the *Panzer Lehr Division* and the *12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend* (Hitler youth).[170] According to Wittmann's own after action report he was surprised by the British presence, he did not expect them to have moved up all the way to Villers-Bocage yet.[171] Having no time to assemble the rest of his company, Wittmann set out with his tank alone. He engaged the rear of the British column and destroyed several tanks. He then moved up towards the village, destroying supply vehicles abandoned along the roadside. After a brief and unsuccessful duel with a British Sherman Firefly tank Wittmann's Tiger is reported to have moved up into the town. Though there is discussion on how far into the village Wittmann managed to push,

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[167] Ripley, *Waffen-SS*, 150.
[168] Peter Stockert, *Die Eichenlaubträger 1939-1945* Vol. 4 (Bad Friedrichshall 1998), 342-343.
[169] George Forty, *Villers-Bocage: Battlezone Normandy* (2004), 57.
[170] Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno: I SS Panzer Corps in Normandy* (2001), 99-100
[171] Forty, *Villers-Bocage*, 58.

historians like Daniel Taylor and George Forty[172] say he reached the outskirts whereas Wittmann stated he reached the village centre, there is little discussion on what happened next. Wittmann's Tiger tank came under British artillery fire and sustained critical damage, rendering it combat ineffective.[173]

It is at this point the tales of Wittmann and Voss overlap again. As Voss and his crew rampage through Villers-Bocage, destroying British vehicles and gun positions left and right, they are finally and quite literally stopped in their tracks by a British field gun. Unable to move and under heavy fire by the British soldiers, the order is given to abandon the Tiger tank. The five-man crew, armed with only their sidearm have to flee their immobilised war machine and escape the village back to German lines. The player now controls all five of the crewmembers, but they still function as a single unit. They are, however, all visible and present on the battlefield and each crewmember vocalises his emotions, warns the others for incoming fire and curses at the British. It becomes apparent very early on in the campaign that it is neigh impossible for one of the crewmembers to die. Similarly to the tank, which behaves as an unstoppable steamroller during the first part of the game, the second part has the crew facing incredible odds and enemy resistance that would have wiped out whole battalions in real combat. If the British manage to wound one of the crewmembers the player has ample resources to 'revive' this soldier. There is no possibility of the crew dying because you are playing their story, and their story is not yet over. So no matter how many soldiers, tanks and artillery barrages the British throw at the German tank crew, their successful retreat from Villers-Bocage is basically assured.

After successfully fleeing the village Voss monologues that "Tommy" (the German nickname for British soldiers) has fought bravely, but the German people have a strong belief in the invincibility of the German tank weapon. Therefore, he reasons, they will have to return to Villers-Bocage in force to demonstrate this supposed invincibility to the French people as well. To this end the Germans return to Villers-Bocage with more tanks, to show "Tommy" the German resolve and the Tiger's strength. Once again the player is tasked with clearing out all of the British troops, this time with additional Tiger tanks and Panzergrenadier support. Once again the Germans cut through the swaths of British soldiers like a hot knife through butter. It becomes obvious that this is not a campaign meant to be lost, it simply is not possible.

While the tank advances through the village Voss sounds emboldened by their success. He encourages the men to have some fun in between the fighting. A very odd statement for a tank commander who needs to keep his and his crew's heads in the proverbial game. Voss encouraging the crew to crush civilian vehicles with their tank is most likely a trigger for the player to explore the destructive terrain this game sports. *"Does anyone else want to crush those civilian vehicles? Let's have some fun, Tigergruppe."*[174] Tank shells and explosions make an impact on the surroundings. Walls crumble, vehicles crush underneath the Tiger's tracks and roads are pockmarked with craters. All the units, both German and British, can make use of the surroundings for cover against their enemy's fire. By blowing up walls and hedgerows this protective advantage can be denied. Still, crushing civilian vehicles is not an objective in the game, nor does the player score points in doing so. It sounds like it is there merely for 'fun'. By including this element into the battle, it deflates the sense

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[172] George Forty, *Villers Bocage* (Sutton 2004), 134.

[173] Ibid., 156.

[174] Hauptmann Maximillian Voss, "Tiger Ace, mission 3: Return to Villers-Bocage", *Company of Heroes: Tales of Valor* (Relic Entertainment 2009).

of urgency and danger the Germans might have. Don't forget that in the game they are a solitary Tiger tank up against waves of British armoured cars, tanks and infantry. Yet completely undeterred by the enormous superiority in numbers the British have over Voss and his crew taking back Villers-Bocage for the Fatherland entails running over every civilian car the player can find. What it does do is emphasise the callous attitude the LSSAH, which units the game emulates at this point, had towards the civilian presence on the battlefield.

In the end the combined effort of the German tanks and the Panzergrenadiers is successful in securing Villers-Bocage once more. Voss orders Dieter Benrdt, his radio operator, to call it in to Division Headquarters. "Villers-Bocage is the Fatherland's again". The Tiger Ace campaign ends the way it started, with Voss giving a monologue. He sounds nostalgic, mentioning that the Battle of Villers-Bocage was the last time he saw the insides of a Tiger tank. It would also be the last time he would see *Feldwebel* Joseph Schultz, his gunner and second in command. Schultz would take over command of the 502 *Tigergruppe* and would fall in battle fighting against the Americans during the Battle of the Falaise Pocket, on August 9th 1944. This battle is also playable in ToV. By September what was left of the division would be redeployed to 'Holland', and Voss would assume command of the *Panzer Lehr Division as Majorgeneral*.[175] There is no Majorgeneral rank in the Wehrmacht though, rather it is called *Generalmajor*. Perhaps this slight change is made to make it easier to understand for English speaking players, as major-general is a rank in the US Army. What is more striking is that Voss was apparently promoted from Hauptmann, captain, to Majorgeneral, skipping several ranks in between. This too is most likely a narrative choice. Voss was introduced as a Majorgeneral in the Arnhem campaign, and the Tiger Ace campaign preceded this by only a couple of months.
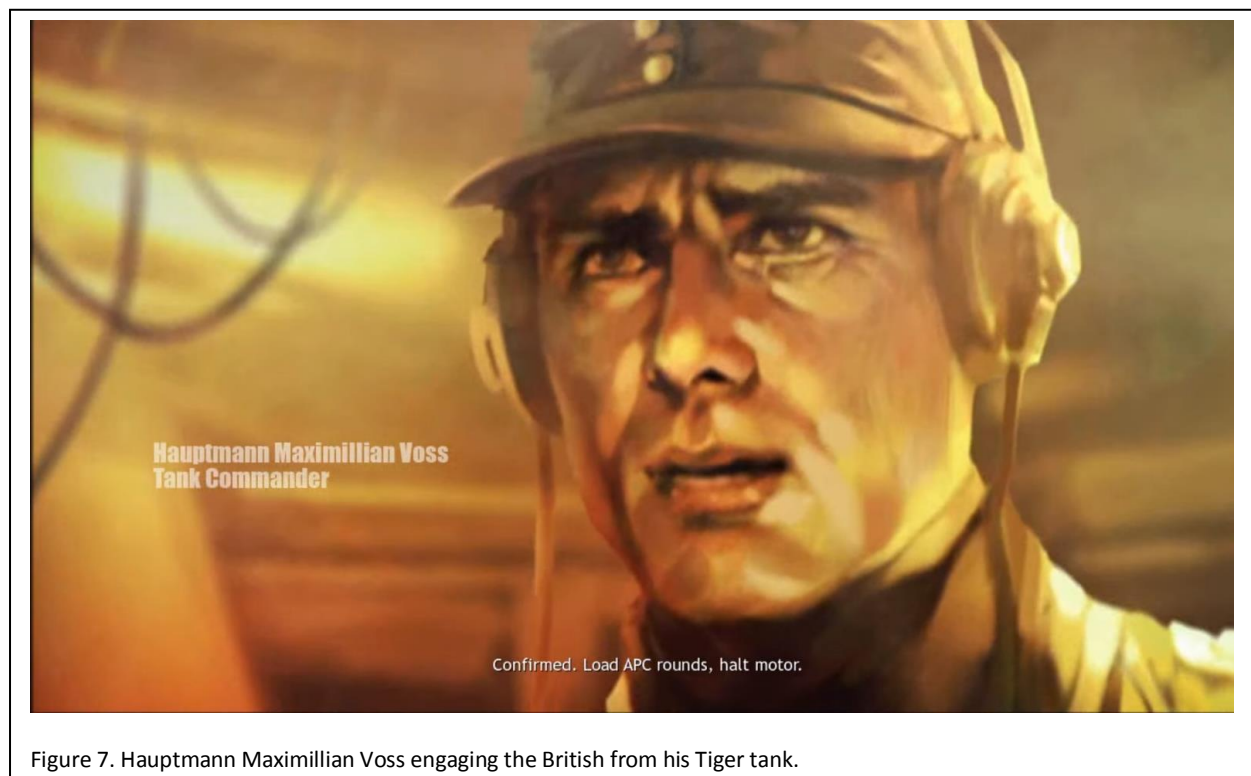

Figure 7. Hauptmann Maximillian Voss engaging the British from his Tiger tank.

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[175] Appendix III, *Tiger Ace*.

Besides similarities in the story of Wittmann and Voss there are also a lot of differences. First, the obvious differences. Wittmann was a soldier of the Waffen-SS and served in the 1st SS-Panzer Corps *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (Adolf Hitler's bodyguards). The Panzer Lehr Division was stationed in the rear guard of the Leibstandarte during the Battle of Villers-Bocage, but there is no indication that this division was involved in the battle directly. The choice to change the division names in this way seems fairly obvious. As the forum user I have quoted earlier in the introduction chapter so eloquently put it "I ain't playing as no goddamn Nazi". Even with the changing of the player controlled units from Waffen-SS to Wehrmacht, some reviews of the game still lamented the fact that Tales of Valor, with its Tiger Ace and Falaise Pocket storylines, was two-thirds a 'Nazi-game'. As one video game reviewer put it: "*when 3 hours of your 4.5 hour game are spent playing as the ~~Nazis~~ Germans, you're either astonishingly confident or perhaps not entirely clear what the audience wants from a WW2 game*."[176] Though German propaganda attributed most of the devastation wreaked in Villers-Bocage to Wittmann, this was grossly exaggerated.[177] Wittmann spearheaded the assault as commander of an armoured column of his own, instead of with a single tank like Voss. This difference is mainly for gameplay reasons. You follow the linear narrative of Hauptmann Voss and his crew. Other player-controlled units might have distracted from this narrative.

3.3.1.1 UNRELIABLE NARRATOR

It is noteworthy that Voss mentions that Schultz was killed in action at a town called Autry. This is an indication that Voss is most likely an unreliable narrator, since Autry is in the French Ardennes far behind the frontlines on August 9th.[178] There are more erroneous elements to his story. The way he names the units in which he served for instance. He uses *Tigergruppe* (Tiger group) and *Schwerer Panzerabteilung* (heavy armour battalion) interchangeably. He does the same with his referencing to Kampfgruppe and/or Panzer Division Lehr. These differences might not even be noticeable to the casual observer, but the difference between a Kampfgruppe and a Division is immense, and misnaming his units is not something one would expect from a battle-hardened officer like Hauptmann, and later Majorgeneral Voss.

William Riggan had identified several types of unreliable narrators. One of those types is the so-called 'madman'.[179] This is a narrator who is either only exhibiting mental defence mechanisms spurred on by trauma, or who suffers from severe mental illness. This narrative is therefore extremely unreliable in giving an accurate picture of what has occurred, and why the narrator did what he did. That Voss might fit this picture is further illustrated by his final words. He laments: "It had seemed so clear, so necessary. But in the end, Senior Command[180] had lost its way, and unfortunately the fatherland followed." At first glance this sounds like a soldier who, after years of fighting, has become disillusioned and starts to question the sense of all his hardships. But this is not the Maximillian Voss the player knows. Voss never was the character to question the

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[176] Alec Meer, "Wot I Think – Company of Heroes: Tales of Valor", *Rock Paper Shotgun* (April 14th 2009), https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2009/04/14/10190/ (01-06-2016).

[177] Henri Marie, *Villers-Bocage: Normandy 1944* (Bayeux 2004), 56.

[178] Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago 1983),

[179] William Riggan, *Picaros, Madmen, Naifs and Clowns: The Unreliable First-person Narrator*, (Oklahoma 1981), 172.

[180] It is most likely that Voss/CoH is referring to Hitler and the Oberkommando Heer (army high command) here. After several purges there were no capable commanders left who dared challenge Hitler's military decisions.

'why' of the war. His role was that of the stereotypical dutiful German (SS) officer. Never eager to give up, even when facing impossible odds. When his Tiger got detracked in Villers-Bocage he at first ordered his crew to remain at their posts before reluctantly giving the order to abandon the tank. And after the events of the Opposing Fronts campaign Voss encounters Wilhelm Berger grieving over the corpse of his fallen brother. His only words of comfort? "Honour your brother with service to the fatherland".[181] Never for one moment does Voss give us the idea that he might have had doubts about the 'why' of it all. To a man like Voss the why was of no matter, and seeing his callous attitude towards civilian and friendly casualties the 'how' does not seem to have been an issue either.

Seeing as how Voss misrepresents seemingly simple facts like unit names, and the fact that a single Tiger tank supposedly cleared out the entire village, it stands to question if these are even his own memories he is recalling. He was a Hauptmann in the Lehr Division, which was stationed on the flanks of the LSSAH, so Voss was close-by the fighting in Villers-Bocage but, historically at least, his division did not take part in any of it. This event of a solitary German *Panzer* cutting through *Tommy's* lines like a hot knife through butter does not seem realistic, even in a gamic setting. The tank did not display the properties of a normal Tiger tank during regular gameplay, so what explains this? It is my assumption that the missions we play in Tiger Ace are not representations of the actual battle. Rather, they are representations of the memory of a German soldier of this battle. A battle he might not even have experienced first-hand, but at a later age has appropriated because the actual soldiers involved were long dead anyway. Within two months after the battle at Villers-Bocage, SS-Hauptmann Wittman was killed in action. With time the propaganda surrounding his persona died off, leaving Voss in a position to claim his role in the battle.

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[181] Appendix III *Tiger Ace* end cinematic.

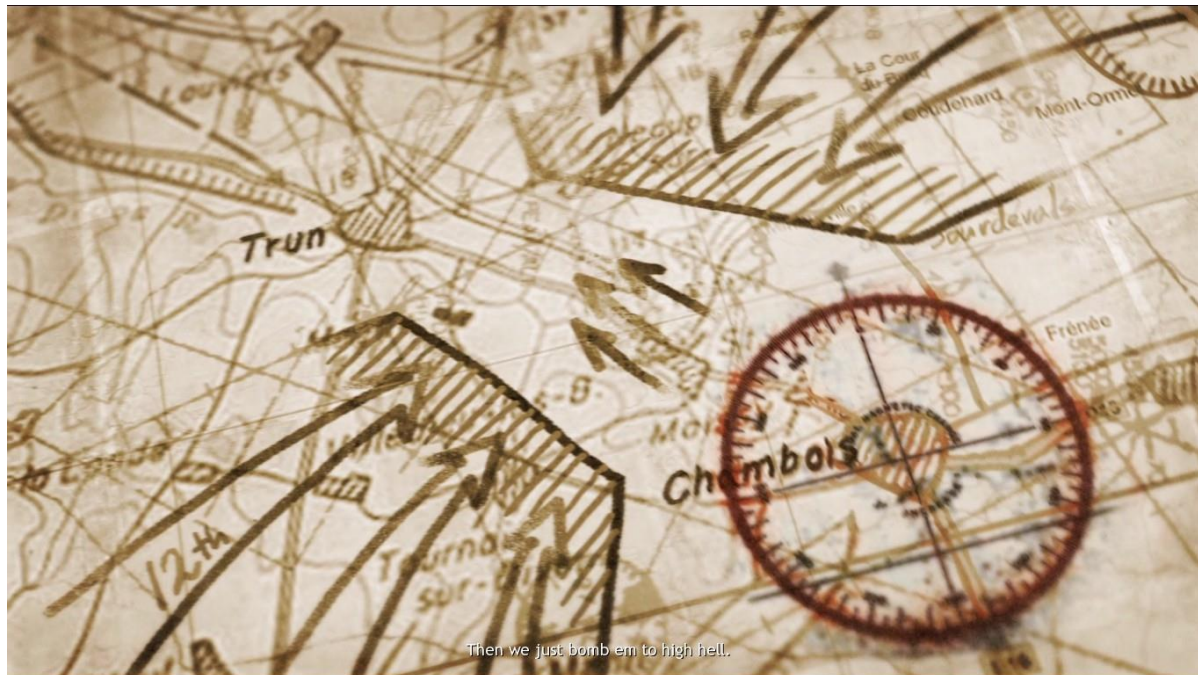## 3.3.2 FALAISE POCKET: "MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON THOSE WHO RAN"

Figure 8. The Falaise Pocket visualised in the introductory cinematic of the 'Falaise Pocket' mission in *Company of Heroes: Tales of Valor*.

In the campaign titled *Falaise Pocket*, subdivided into three missions as well, the player gets informed of the tactical situation by a conversation between two crewmembers of an American bomber on its way to bomb German forces at Chambois. Their conversation, which is obviously inserted for exposition on the situation the Germans were in during the encirclement at Falaise, the player is told that the American forces led by general Patton are to the west of the German 7th army, the British are coming down from the north and the '12th' (with which they meant the British 12th corps) are pushing in from the south. It would seem their compass was on the fritz though, as Patton was pushing up via the south towards Argentan and Chambois, and the Canadians (not the British) closed in on Trun and Falaise from the north. The British 12th corps did move in towards the west, not from the west. It would appear the people who wrote this dialog made use of an inverted map.

The American bombers, in their extremely shoehorned attempt at banter, explain that the towns of Chambois and Trun are vital to pinch off the German army, after which the bombardiers can 'just bomb them to high hell'. The screen fades to black and up comes an image of a German *Funker* (radio operator) sitting behind his equipment when a distress call comes in from the 9th division stationed at Chambois. They are under heavy fire from the Americans, and are about to be overrun. This message is relayed to the commander of the German forces at Trun, Hauptmann Funke, who puts Leutnant Hess in charge of the defences, a role the player will take on in the gameplay. Funke does not appear to be a very capable nor confident commander. By relegating responsibilities to Hess, and thus the player, Funke is free to criticise everything that goes awry. The player is constantly verbally abused by Funke, who seems to feel like the player/Hess fails him in doing his duty properly. Hess, in turn, comes over as a steadfast and confident leader. His mission is clear, and he will perform his duty. But unlike with Funke, Hess does not dress his words in jingoism. Instead he focuses on the men around him as his main motivation. He seems genuinely concerned with getting as many German soldiers out

of the Allied pincer movement as possible.

With Chambois lost, the player needs to shore up defences in Trun, hold off the coming waves of Allied soldiers, and keep open the corridor. To do this the player needs to direct his soldiers across the map, going from garrison to garrison as a veritable German Paul Revere, warning the sleeping garrisoned troops that 'the British are coming'. I say British, because the British and Canadian forces were the ones to push up towards Trun. In the game though, the player is fighting American soldiers. And these Americans seem relentless. Wave after wave smacks into the defences hastily put up by the player in their effort to wipe out all German presence from the playmap. This makes the battle very gruesome and bloody. The destruction is immense, and the amount of burning vehicles and bomb craters make the village of Trun look like something seen at Verdun during WWI.

The player manages to hold off two attempts by the Allies to capture Trun when he is treated to another cutscene depicting the radio operator receiving a message. It is the German High Command reporting that the Falaise Pocket has collapsed and the 7th Army needs to retreat by way of the small Trun corridor. HC orders the Germans at Trun to stay and fight until the evacuation is complete. Hauptmann Funke choses to ignore this order and instead shoots the radio, cutting off all communications with HC. "Gentlemen", he says, putting his gun away, "I suggest we leave immediately." To which Hess protests "As long as Germans are fighting their way to Trun, we must keep the door open!" Funke mockingly congratulates Hess on his resolve and gives his a field promotion to *Oberleutnant* (lieutenant first class), effectively leaving him in charge, before making his escape. "*Anyone that does not want to die here is free to join me. Otherwise, good luck gentlemen.*"[182]

When Hess and his soldiers exist the building they see the first waves of wounded and broken German soldiers coming towards Trun. Hess curses HC and calls them idiots and cowards. His adjutant despairingly remarks that they have embarked on a "suicide mission", but resides in his fate and commits to defending the Trun corridor alongside Hess. After a long battle in which the player needs to defend a column of retreating German soldiers and tanks from Allied attacks, the mission, and the campaign as a whole, is 'won'. Hess reflects on the events: *"When the pocket collapsed, the corridor that led my German brothers to safety became an alleyway of death. Ten thousand died. Forty thousand loyal German troops were captured. But because of the bravery at Trun, many more escaped. My Gruppe did not contain heroes, nor martyrs. We stayed in Trun, and fought because we wouldn't have been able to live with the alternative: sleepless nights filled with the memories of those we had left behind. I spared my men that, even if they hated me for it... because at least we did something. At least we tried. May god have mercy on those who ran."*[183]

3.3.3 WINNING THE BATTLE BUT LOSING THE WAR: MARKET-GARDEN
The campaign opens with another voice-over from Voss. We see German soldiers marching in lockstep underneath a line of banners. In one of the rare moments in the game where the Germans are actually speaking German, Voss tells us "*Während den letzten fünf Jahren hat das Dritte Reich, mit Ihrem begehren nach*

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[182] Appendix III, *Falaise Pocket.*
[183] Appendix III, *Falaise Pocket.*

Lebensraum fast ganz Europa bereicht. Al das ändert sich." (In these past five years the Third Reich, in its desire for living space, acquired almost the whole of Europe. All this is about to change.)[184] The screen then cuts to two German soldiers who are discussing the current state of their men. They are officers in the Lehr Division, and are apparently tasked with training the newly arrived raw recruits. "What are we supposed to do with this lot?" Wolfgang Berger asks out loud. "We train them to be soldiers, what else?" his younger brother Aldrich replies. "Mother always said you were a positive thinker", Wolfgang jests. It is immediately clear that the players will experience the coming events from the perspectives of these two brothers who serve together in the Lehr Division, which we now know is based on the 16th SS-Training Battalion. The brothers carry on talking about their parents' wisdom when suddenly the air raid alarm rings. Planes fill the skies and paratroopers glide down towards the ground. No time to train the men, it would seem, as players are thrown straight into battle. At the start of mission 2, titled 'September Snow', the Allied paratroopers are still raining down on the German protagonists. Aldrich, paraphrasing the quote of a German soldier in Robert Kershaw's book titled *It Never Snows in September*, jests how remarkable it is that it is snowing in September, "And on such a warm day, no less."[185]

Figure 9. Aldrich Berger: "A September snow is upon us!" – *Opposing Fronts: Market Garden* mission 2 opening cinematic.

The soldiers of Lehr Division, who are as mentioned before interchangeably addressed as Kampfgruppe, fend off this Allied invasion, but at a price. Many soldiers lose their lives. We see a nightly scene in between missions where the Berger brothers are leading a squad of men through a Dutch village at night. All of a sudden a British soldier opens up on them with his machine gun, instantly killing *Leutnant* Deinhard, one of the other narrating side-characters. Aldrich cries out for him but Wolfgang, always the watchful big brother pulls him back before he can leap out of cover to save his fallen comrade. Again Wolfgang remind his brother of

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[184] Appendix III, *Market-Garden opening cinematic*.
[185] Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September*,

one of their father's wisdoms. They appear to survive this ambush, as the cutscene ends and the game progresses with driving back the British paratroopers. After crushing the final pockets of resistance the Berger brothers are seen hauling off prisoners of war.[186] Aldrich mentions to his brother that these men, referring to the British paras, fought hard and should be proud of themselves. Aldrich lives up to the thing his mother told about him. He truly seems like he wants to see the good in everything. Sadly, the war manages to break his spirit in the eleventh hour.

Figure 9. Aldrich Berger's prophetic words: "Enjoy the War while you can, Wolfgang, the peace will be hell."

In a letter from their family they learn of the Allied bombings of Munich, their home city. Their family home lies in ruins, and the Berger family is forced to flee to Duisburg. This news hits the brothers hard. Aldrich begins to lament how the war has turned out for them. What sense is there in fighting in The Netherlands when they can do nothing to stop their home from being bombed? Wolfgang, taking a page out of Voss' book, urges Aldrich to pay no mind to the American propaganda. Aldrich however is convinced Germany is already lost. He is killed in action during the next mission, which is also the final one of the campaign. The British forces have all surrendered to the Lehr Division, the Germans have beaten the Allies back. For now. Majorgeneral Voss meets up with Aldrich, who is found mourning over the corpse of his younger brother. He laments the fact he now must return home without him. Voss, oblivious to his grieving, congratulates Wolfgang on their great victory. Wolfgang snaps at Voss, asking him what they won exactly. His brother is dead, his home is destroyed and, despite this reprieve, Germany has clearly lost the war. Voss urges Wolfgang to honour his brother with service, but instead he seems to honour him by adopting his realisation of the situation he and all the German soldiers now face. They are fighting on the losing side. A remark of Aldrich he made in the opening scene best

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[186] Here it must be mentioned that the British soldiers during gameplay do indeed surrender at the end of this mission, and players do not have to fully destroy the enemy presence to win as is usually the case with RTS games.

summarises this realisation: "Enjoy the war while you can, because peace will be hell."[187] Interestingly enough, this quote too is found in Kershaw's book on Market-Garden. "The Allied call for 'unconditional surrender' confirmed a gut reaction that there was no recourse but to fight on. [...] Their sardonic response, couched in black humour, was: 'Enjoy the war while you can, because the peace will be terrible'"[188] Kershaw used this quote to illustrate how the grim outlook of the war for the German soldiers unified both Nazi and non-nazi afficiated soldiers in a dogged determination to fight on. The time for politics in the ranks was over and the only alternative was total annihilation.

3.3.4 SYMBOLS & PROPAGANDA

CoH does not make as extensive use of archival footage and symbols as ROII does, but still this game too provides ample examples of how video games use historical signs and symbols in order to ground their narrative in the broader historical context of WWII. Like was the case with ROII there are no overtly Nazi symbols to be found in CoH. The Swastika has been systematically replaced by the Iron Cross. The opening cinematic of the Market-Garden campaign sees digitally rendered German soldiers marching underneath 'Nazi-German' banners, in which the Swastika has been replaced with the Iron Cross. The same banners can be found in-game on German structures.

Figure 10. Left: the cleaned up Nazi banners in the opening cinematic of the *Market-Garden* campaign. Right: in-game version of the banners.

In another shared use of imagery to ROII, CoH employs the same silhouette of the Dutch SS recruitment poster in their opening cinematic. Again as was the case in ROII the image is presented without any Nazi symbols which it originally did have. Also the poster's original message is missing, which is not strange seeing as there is no talk of combatting the 'Judeo-Bolshevik' menace while fighting against the British and American forces. The image however is apparently so iconic that the game developers decided to incorporate it regardless. And again, as was the case with ROII, this creates the issue of presenting the German side in WWII detached from its Nazi driving force. There would, in all likeliness, not have been any German soldiers in either France or the Netherlands in 1944 if the NSDAP had not ruled Germany. The cause of the war, as given by Voss,

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[187] Appendix III, *Market-Garden opening cinematic*.
[188] Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September*, 57.

is the 'drive for *Lebensraum'* (living space). This was a core tenant of the Nazi ideology as formulated by Hitler himself in *Mein Kampf*. This sterilises portrayal of Germany's 'regime', as the game calls it, is compounded by the fact CoH never mentions the elephant in the room. The fact that Germany, and its armed forces, was under Nazi control.

Figure 11. Left: the sterile in-game version of a Waffen-SS recruitment poster. Right: the original poster.
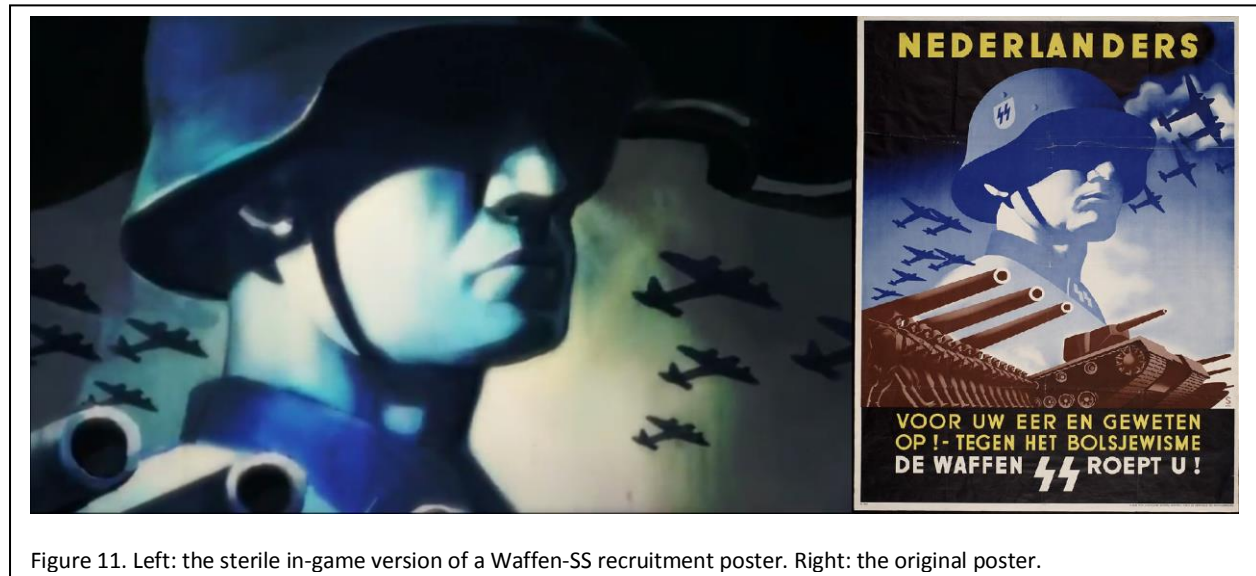
The final piece of in-game use of German wartime propaganda I want to address is one we have not yet seen before in ROII. When the player has won a mission in either one of the German campaigns a so-called 'endgame screen' pops up. It shows the player statistics such the main- and side-objectives and medals gained etc. It also displays a brown shirt wearing individual waving a Nazi-German styled flag. I say styled because here too the Swastika has been replaced by the Iron Cross. This image of the flag waving man too is an iconic Nazi-German poster. It is originally found on the advertisement for the 1933 film *SA Mann Brand*, chronicling the tale of a man who joins the *Sturm Abteilung* (Nazi Stormtroopers) in order to do his part in getting Hitler in control of the country.[189] Many people playing the game will in all likelihood not know this bit of trivia and just perceive it as a Nazi-styled German soldier waving a flag. That would probably be the best-case scenario, as then at least the game makes some reference to the Fascist regime that was in power in Germany during the 1930's and early '40's. Again I am hesitant to place blame for this lack of acknowledgement on the game developers. Perhaps this was the only way they saw fit of somehow referencing the Nazi element of WWII. Even so, the sterile depictions of the symbolism used, combined with the narrative choices made in-game create a game in which it would appear that Germany went to war because it wanted more living space, and other countries took objection to this. If this sounds an irreverent summary of WWII, that is because it is. CoH does a lot of things right, such as depicting the hardships of regular soldiers placed in an impossible situation, but as ROII proved the developers could have done so much more to at least emphasise the ideological driving force behind the largest conflict in history. Replacing the Swastika with the Iron Cross is especially problematic as this is exactly the symbol the contemporary German military is using, thus equating the modern *Bundeswehr* with the Nazi Wehrmacht. Adopting a new name and symbol for the German military was done explicitly to

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[189] *SA MANN Brand* (1933), IMDB, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0224042/ (08-08-2016).

create a break between those two organisations. [190] By using the Iron Cross as a de facto Nazi symbol creates a false sense of continuity between the Wehrmacht and the Bundeswehr.

Figure 12. Left: the endgame screen in *Company of Heroes'* German campaigns, sterilised of any Nazi symbols the original image had. Right: the poster of the 1933 film *SA Mann Brand.*

As is shown on the above image players can earn medals by achieving certain main- and side-objectives during gameplay. Just as in real life being awarded a medal does nothing for the overall experience of the War other than to provide the recipient with a brief sense of accomplishment. There are Infantry Assault Badges, Anti-Air Badges and of course Iron Crosses to be earned. The Iron Cross is awarded at the end of one of the campaigns. The Iron Cross is a martial medal that dates back to the Napoleonic era, but it was in WWI and WWII where this medal would be distributed by the millions to German frontline soldiers. After Germany's defeat in 1918 the award was abolished, but in September 1939 it was reinstated by Adolf Hitler.[191] This time redesigned to incorporate the year *1939* and a prominent Swastika in the centre. The Iron Crosses players are awarded with in-game lack this Swastika for reasons stated previously. Again, understandable but problematic.

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[190] Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton 1988), 4.

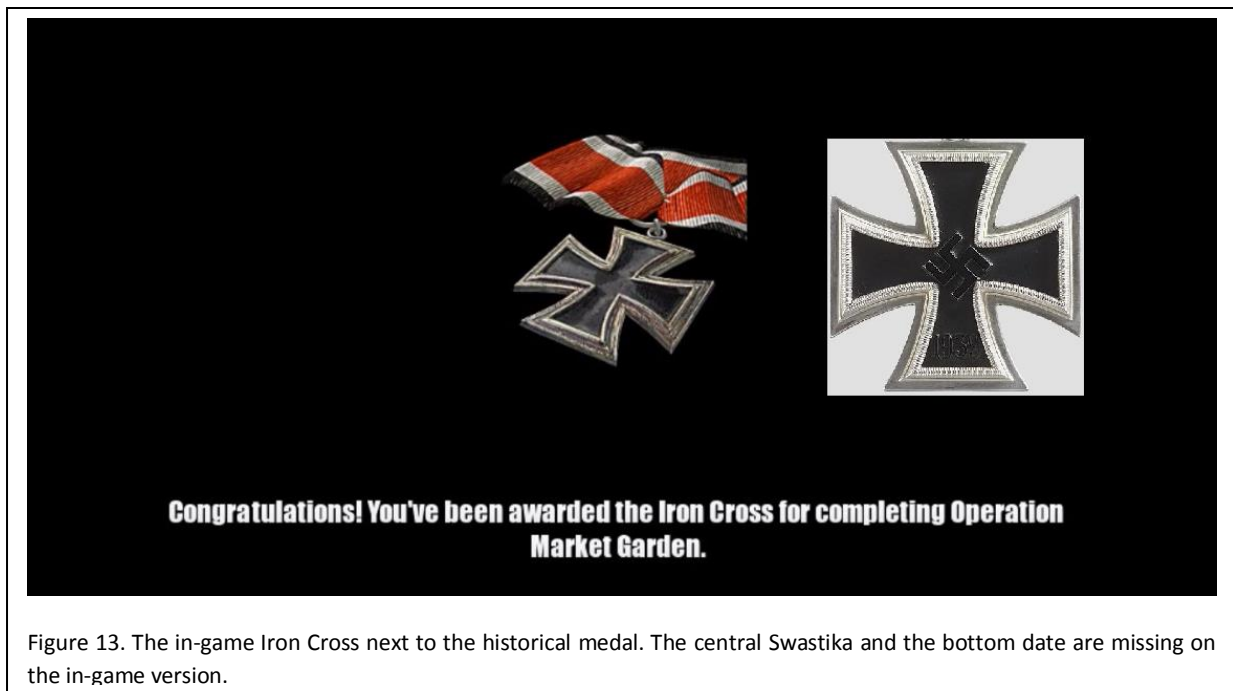[191] Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 3-4.

Figure 13. The in-game Iron Cross next to the historical medal. The central Swastika and the bottom date are missing on the in-game version.

3.4 MYTHS

A couple of obvious mythical elements are present in the German narratives of CoH. I will touch upon the most noteworthy implementations of these mythical elements, and I will reflect on how the use of these elements affects the representation of German soldiers in CoH. There are instances in the narratives of CoH where the mythical elements are present in a way, but are inverted in their meaning. For instance, the responsibility for the war is not denied by anyone. In fact, Voss tells us that "*the reasons had seemed so clear at first*".[192]
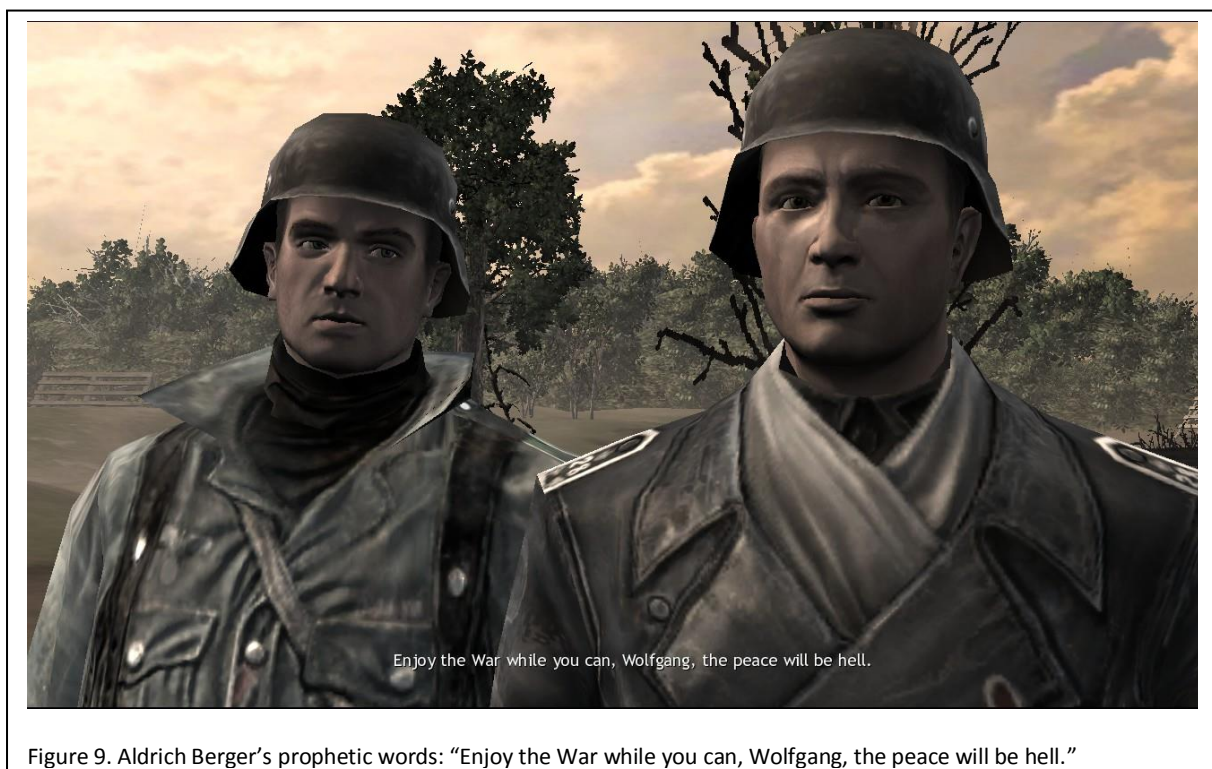
3.4.1 WHOLE-WAR CONTEXT

Having the German soldiers operate in a few select battles their narratives are automatically detached from the whole-war context. Yet in CoH this is not as stark as it is the case with ROII. There the player is only exposed to one battle, and the rest of the war does not exist for him. In CoH the player moves from battlefield to battlefield, and this movement is the direct result of other events happening during the war. The player has no influence on the outcomes of these events, but these events in turn do affect him in the experience of the narrative. The whole reason the KG Lehr is present in Arnhem is because the Wehrmacht had to retreat from France. In the dialogs between the Berger brothers there are also references made to acts of war inflicted on their relatives. The Berger family has had to evacuate their home in Munich because the city was heavily bombed by allied raids, leaving the Berger brothers effectively without a home. Not only does this reference help to tie in the combat actions of KG Lehr in Arnhem into the whole-war context, it is also a rare and noteworthy reference to the way WWII affected civilian populations, albeit only the German civilian populations.

3.4.2 RELATIVIZING OF WAR CRIMES

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[192] Appendix III *Tiger Ace* end cinematic.

The mention of German civilians having to flee Allied bombings has often been used to underscore the suffering of the German people at the hands of the Allied forces in an attempt to diminish or relativize war crimes committed by Germany. The game mentions the bombing of Munich by Allied bombers, but the fact that the Berger family has had to flee for the violence of the war is not used to diminish acts by the German Wehrmacht in this case. In fact, in the context of the narrative of CoH's Market Garden campaign, it is used to underscore the futility of the German fight against the advancing Allied armies. Of course it helps to humanize the Berger brothers, making the impact of Aldrich's death later on even greater, but the element of futility is later underscored again in the epilogue text of the campaign. In it the player is told how this German victory was but a delaying of the inevitable, and that the Nazi regime crumbled anyway. It lets the player know that Wolfgang Berger survived the war, only to return to a destroyed Munich where the task befell on to him to rebuild his family home. What had happened to the rest of his family, we are not told. It is noteworthy that, when the Berger brothers learn the news of the bombing and the subsequent fleeing of their family, they do not respond in anger or disgust. They do not seem to think of this Allied bombing as a crime inflicted on their family, rather just another destructive element of this pointless war they were fighting.

Figure 9. Aldrich Berger's prophetic words: "Enjoy the War while you can, Wolfgang, the peace will be hell."

3.4.3 THE NAÏVE BUT PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER

All of the German soldiers with dialog come across as the embodiment of the dutiful soldier, with Hauptmann Funke being the exception to the rule. They have a job to do and, come hell or high water, they will do their job. The ultimate embodiment of this image is Maximillian Voss. He seems to breathe duty and sacrifice, yet it is also made clear that this might just be a façade, a coping mechanism for him to keep going. He does not know how to deal with grief, be it his own or that of his men, so he hides it away behind rhetoric about serving the Fatherland. Wolfgang Berger and his brother Aldrich are perhaps the best examples of the apolitical and

naïve soldiers. After capturing British paratroopers Wolfgang warns his brother not to get friendly with the enemy, to which Aldrich replies that he sees 'only soldiers'. This too has more of a narrative role than actually claiming innocence for the Wehrmacht. The whole plot of CoH revolves around soldiers on all sides doing and living through incredible events. Demonization of the enemy, at least in the German campaign, is relatively absent. There is the odd name-calling when a German calls the British troops *Tommy* or a more explicit *Britisches Schweinhund*, but that is it. When we put some of the remarks made by the Berger brothers in the context of Kershaw's book that in all likelihood served as an inspiration for a large part of the Market-Garden campaign the image arises of soldiers who know full well what is at stake when the Germans lose the War. This is regardless of political conviction. "The peace will be hell."[193]

3.5 FINAL VICTORY

After playing through all of the German campaigns, what have we experienced? We have retaken one small French village, only to be driven out of the country entirely in the campaign epilogue. We have tried, and failed, to hold on to Trun and allow the German 7th Army to escape, the failure of our attempt not becoming obvious until the epilogue once again. And finally we have successfully fought off the combined attempts of the Allied forces during Operation Market Garden to secure the bridges over the Rhine, only to lose our brother, home and ultimately the war as well. Can we actually say we have won the game? Well, yes. The game said as much. "You are victorious", it told us on several occasions. Story-wise however, it is clear that the German soldiers, and thus us as players, have lost. The game basically tells us "you have fought hard and against overwhelming odds, but to no avail. Here, have a medal."

Looking at the victory conditions for the Tiger Ace missions, the player needs to advance to one place, then retreat from that place, only to return once more to that place. After that, the game declares victory for the German side. This story, which CoH was only able to retell by changing the main characters from being members of the Waffen-SS to members of the much less tainted Wehrmacht, was exactly that: a story. A mythical retelling of one soldier's experiences during the war. We have not played the actual battle, rather the memory of this battle as recollected by Maximillian Voss. This is what allows the player to destroy an entire British armoured column with only a single tank and successfully guide the tank crew to safety after their tank stopped functioning. You win this campaign, because it is a memory. A memory of a victory. Perhaps this is why the protagonist is suddenly a Wehrmacht officer, instead of a serving member of the Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler. Perhaps it might be a second-hand memory, retold by a soldier who might have wished for his moment of glory. As I mentioned earlier, Wittmann did not live to relish his victory for long, as he was killed in action a month later. Voss could really have been a Hauptmann in the Panzer Lehr Division. After all, this division was stationed right next to the LSSAH during the battle of Villers-Bocage. Perhaps Voss, being the unreliable narrator he is, is merely an example of 'stolen valour' (or *valor*, in this case), using the *Tales of Valor* of other soldiers for self-aggrandisement.

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[193] Appendix III, *Market-Garden* campaign.

The Falaise Pocket campaign on the other hand is more designed towards conservation. Conserve your troops, your strongpoints, hold on long enough for the timer to run out and you have won. It is not so much winning as it is not losing. The player is instructed to protect the German tanks from enemy fire, but if he fails in protecting them this will only cost him not receiving an extra medal at the end of the campaign. Players, in taking on the character of Leutnant Hess, are even asked if they would not do better to just flee. Not that players have any agency to act upon this suggestion, but it underscores the 'unwinnability' of this mission. At least in a narrative sense. The final objective, i.e., the victory condition, is for players to evacuate their troops from the battlefield. Hounded by Allied soldiers and tanks players might succeed only in getting a single German soldier to the safe point. This is enough for the game to register a win, but in fact the players's entire army has been wiped out. Again it is a distinct possibility here, as the story is capped off by Leutnant Hess
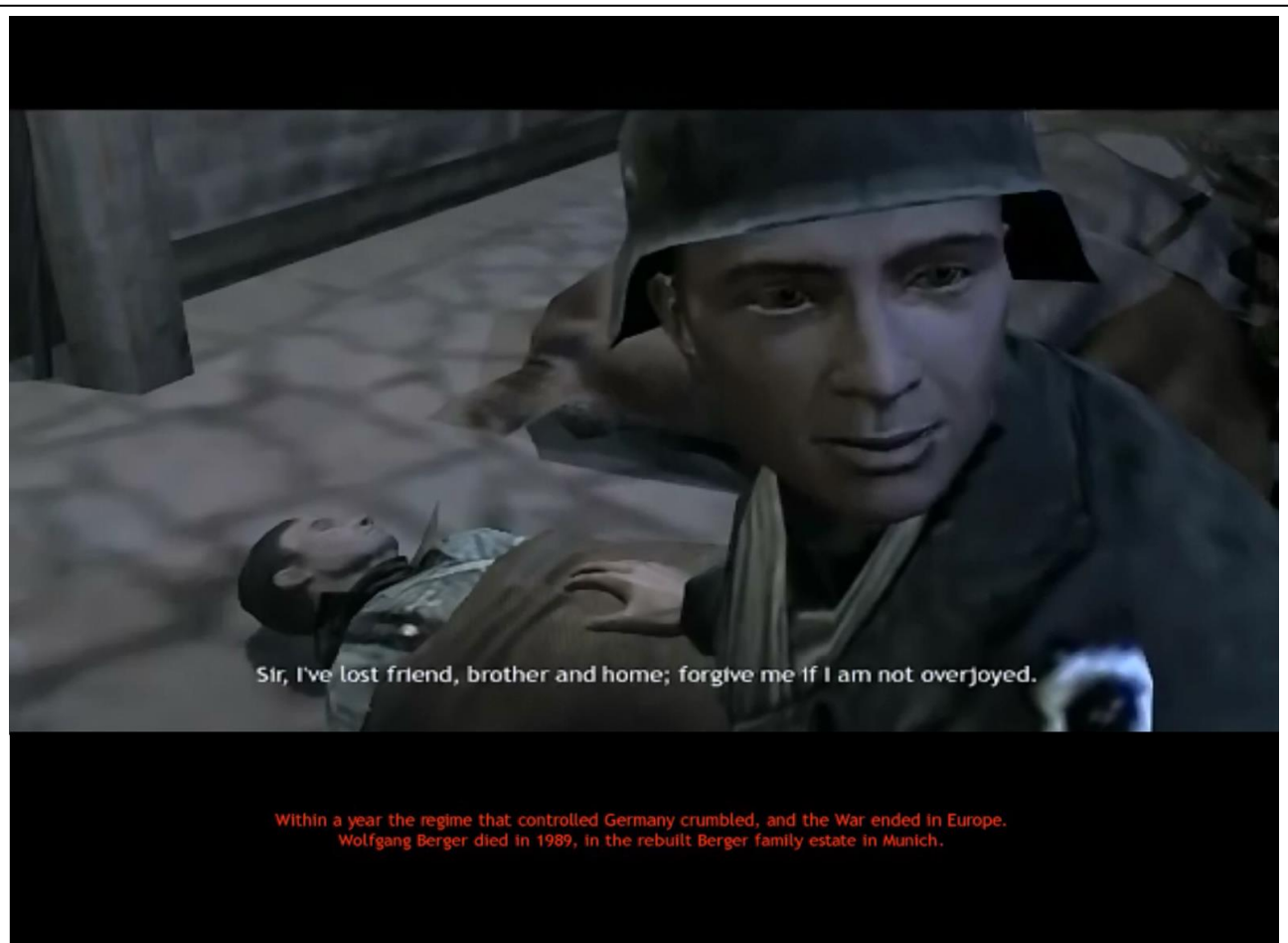
Figure 10. "Within a year the regime that controlled Germany crumbled, and the War ended in Europe. Wolfgang Berger died in 1989, in the rebuilt Berger family estate in Munich." – *Opposing Fronts* German campaing end-screen.

monologuing about why he forced his men to stay in what effectively was a suicide mission. He tells the players his reason for staying. It was his moral duty, he states. He stayed to fight and save his countrymen so he and his men would not be haunted by the memory of those otherwise left behind. He even wraps his story up by saying "may God have mercy on those who ran", making clear that the important aspect of the narrative of the Falaise Pocket campaign was not the actual battle itself. The focus lies on the fact that the players, playing as Leutnant Hess, stayed when others ran, making this story truly a *tale of valor*.

The story of Market Garden is perhaps the most usable setting to allow a German campaign to end in a win. It was one of the last major victories the Germans managed to win during the end phase of the war. Even so, the game's narrative does not allow the player to experience this win as an actual victory. By equating players' actions and narrative progression with those of the character of Wolfgang Berger, and to a lesser extend of his brother Aldrich, they might have won in a military sense but have lost a lost in a personal, narrative sense. Wolfgang captures this feeling best when he says "I have lost friend, brother, and home; forgive me if I am not overjoyed." When Majorgeneral Voss tells him to honour Aldrich by serving his country Wolfgang asks Voss if he truly believes they have a country left to fight for, to which Voss replies that he honestly doesn't know. The cutscene ends and players get to see a black screen on which a postscript appears.[194]

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[194] Appendix III, *Market-Garden Epilogue*.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

In this thesis I examined the German narratives of two WWII video games, Red Orchestra II and Company of Heroes. Although both games differ quite a bit in geographical and temporal settings, one set in Russia 1942 and the other set in France and the Netherlands during 1944, and in overall gameplay style, one being a first-person shooter and the other a real-time strategy game, both games give us a idea of how game developers can represent German soldiers in WWII games. By dissecting the audio-visual and narrative elements in these games I am now able to give an answer to the questions I set out to resolve. How do these games represent German soldiers? How are the games' narratives focalised, how do the games' narratives fit into the historical construction of the Wehrmacht, and how are players able to win a German WWII campaign?

4.1 NARRATIVE & FOCALISATION

The focalisation of a narrative determines through which perspective the story is presented. This point of view determines how players experience the in-game events, as they are ultimately seen through the eyes of the focalised characters.[195] In analysing both ROII's and CoH's narrative I found out the many ways in which game developers can utilise focalisation to direct the flow of their narrative and to steer representation. I will now give a brief summary of my findings, paying special attention to the main differences in focalisation that exist between these games.

First of all, it becomes clear that narrative focalisation and playable characters do not always coincide. The narrated story is not per se the story of the players' character. This becomes most clear in ROII. In this game the whole narrative unfolds through the monologues of an unnamed, unspecified Wehrmacht officer, either through his own diary entries or through the mission briefings he gives his men. It becomes clear that the narrator, though never visualised in the gameplay itself, is in the same situation as the soldiers controlled by the players. The focalisation remains external. In a way this is a good thing. First and foremost, because the narrator and the player-character are separate entities having the narrator's inner most thoughts present during the battle would be very schizophrenic. Secondly, by having the narrator remaining somewhat aloof in regards to his inner thoughts the players get the freedom to project their own thoughts on the gameplay experiences. In a lesser way this is also the case with CoH. The main story of Market-Garden is focalised through the fleshed out characters, Voss and the Berger brothers. These characters are never truly under direct player control, but are merely 'present' on the battlefield. Players instead control a large number of German soldiers, vehicles and equipment on the battlefield while Voss and the Berger brothers issue commands and describe the situation to the players. At one point Aldrich Berger dies and there is nothing players can do to prevent this. They are as powerless as Wolfgang, his older brother, is to help him. The only instance where player-controlled characters and the focalisation of the narrative intertwine is during the Tiger Ace campaign of CoH:ToV. Here players are in full control of Maximillian Voss while he in turn commands his tank.

Interestingly enough the narrations by Maximillian Voss are extremely riddled with flaws, counter-factuals and half-truths. He is in fact an unreliable narrator, either a so-called 'madman' or a 'liar'. I have

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[195]   Arjoranta, "Narrative Tools", 5.

mentioned the possibility of mental trauma causing the recalling of his war exploits to become warped, as fitting with the 'madman' type of unreliable narrator. It could also be he is retroactively trying to polish up his own service record by claiming the heroics of other German soldiers as his own. In the end he laments that Germany had lost its way, yet during his retelling of his times in combat there is no sign he ever doubted his reasons for fighting. Voss is a career soldier, rising through the ranks from Hauptmann to Majorgeneral. He laments the fact Germany, and thus he himself, has lost the war but he never doubts the reasons for going to war in the first place. Doubting the reasons for fighting however, is something the Berger brothers do quite a lot. They represent the distress a soldier is likely to feel when faced with situations out of his control. They mention a lot that they fight for their homeland, but progressing through the narrative this motive crumbles further and further.

4.2 HISTORICAL MYTHS & SYMBOLS

For these games to anchor themselves in the broader narrative of WWII they make use of symbols as historical markers. These can be the Tiger tanks, the recognisably German *Stahlhelms* on the heads of the Wehrmacht soldiers, or propaganda posters used in the cutscenes and in-game menus. National-Socialist symbols are not present in either game, most likely due to distribution concerns. Yet this poses a dilemma for the narrative as well as for the representation. As I mentioned previously the 'why' of the conflict isn't clear most of the time. Nor is it even clear if the Wehrmacht that is being represented is meant to be the historical Wehrmacht or a fictional, or even an alternate reality one.

4.2.1 RED ORCHESTRA II'S STERILE STALINGRAD

To the casual observer the fighting in ROII's version of Stalingrad may appear as the result of a conflict between the German and Russian people. The ideological aspect is hinted at somewhat in the narration, with Communism being a plague needing to be wiped out, but there is no mention of the ideology the Germans mean to replace it with. This Nazi driving force behind the war in the East isn't completely invisible though. Through the use of propaganda posters from the Nazi-era the game developers have made sure that the peering gaze of Adolf Hitler is present in the background while the passage of a terrified German soldier's diary is being read. Slogans float across the screen while the narrator explains the day's battle plans. "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!*" one of them screams at the players. At least that way the game makes clear there is such a thing as a Führer pulling the strings. Images of uniformed men pass the screen, armbands and all. Yet these armbands contain not the original Swastika but an iron cross. The Nazi element is there, and not there at the same time. The National-Socialist paper front page clearly states its constituency, members of the NSDAP, yet here too the Nazi symbols are missing. By showing Hitler's face, mentioning the title of Führer, and mentioning the NSDAP the game avoids scrubbing off the Nazi element completely, yet it does leave this element out of the main narrative making it seem like the presence of the Nazi-regime in Germany is but a minor coincidence.

Even though ROII establishes in some shape or form that the Nazi-party under leadership of Hitler is in control of Germany it also feels the need to subvert the common Wehrmacht symbols of the *Balkenkreuz* for a fictional symbol. The reason for this is unclear, even for the developers themselves. The need for it is even

more unclear as the Wehrmacht symbols are largely exempt from the ban on Nazi imagery. At the very least the Balkenkreuz is, and this symbol would have made the German soldiers and tanks instantly recognisable as being German and would have anchored the narrative in the broader historical context of WWII. Coupled with the fictional timeline the game follows this brings the narrative, despite all of its well-researched historical data, into the realm of alternate history. A history which allows the game to claim victory for the Germans at the end of the campaign, and where the hatred towards 'Judeo-Bolshevism' of the NSDAP as a motivation for the war either doesn't exist or is kept very low-key.

4.2.2 COMPANY OF HEROES' CLEAN WAFFEN-SS MYTH?

Just as ROII CoH refrains from using Nazi imagery, even more so than ROII did. The opening shot of soldiers marching underneath German banners shows players not the Swastikas one might expect emblazoned on the banners. They are, as they were in ROII, replaced with iron crosses. Using the Iron Cross in lieu of the Swastika or even the Balkenkreuz poses issues. As the Iron Cross is the roundel of the modern-day German Bundeswehr using this symbol in a WWII context suggests a continuity between the Wehrmacht and the Bundeswehr which is false. I am not as much worried that it might shine a negative light on the Bundeswehr as much as it might legitimise in-game representations of the Nazi Wehrmacht. CoH does use the correct Balkenkreuz emblem when depicting German tanks and vehicles, so the choice for the Iron Cross as a placeholder for the Swastika is puzzling.

The similarities with Kershaw's book *It Never Snows in September* and the transcript of the Market-Garden campaign of CoH:OF are striking, opening the possibilities for future intermedial research on representations of this military operation in other popular media. Many of the sentiments expressed by German soldiers in the narrative of CoH are either directly quoted out of Kershaw, or at least paraphrased. It is true that the Kampfgruppe Lehr, as shown in the game, never existed and serves as a placeholder for the Waffen-SS units whose stories players are actually experiencing, but these stories are not without historical basis. Kershaw paints a picture of German soldiers who, regardless of political convictions, see no other path for them but to keep on fighting. Fully convinced that "the peace will be hell".

The combat operations Lehr is involved in during gameplay are all battles in which, historically, Waffen-SS divisions played a major role. The Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler fought in Villers-Bocage and in the Market-Garden campaign the KG Lehr assumes the role of the 2nd SS-Panzer Corps. There is mention of the SS in the game so their role in the German combat operations is not completely covered up, yet they are not playable and only appear in reference. The game, having established the presence of the Waffen-SS on the battlefield, lets players fight these battles only as a fictional Wehrmacht Kampfgruppe. Is this done to avoid censorship laws or to make the participants in those battles more likable to the general public? Censorship laws prevent the game from portraying the correct symbols, yes, but clearly these laws do not go as far as to expunge all reference to the SS from video games. In the end, changing the German units from Waffen-SS to Wehrmacht does little to alter the context of the battles being portrayed. Therefor it is most likely that this change has been made introduce the general public to some of the more spectacular German combat operations of WWII, without bogging down the narrative with questions about 'right or wrong'. In the end

Germany is defeated and the regime is destroyed. Having players experience battles from a German perspective does nothing to change that.

4.3 FINAL VICTORY

How does the use of focalisation, archival material and symbols work together to represent German soldiers in a winnable game? By examining the narratives of ROII and CoH two different strategies emerged, which I have summarised in 'quitting while you are ahead' and 'postponing the inevitable'.

4.3.1 QUITTING WHILE YOU ARE AHEAD: RED ORCHESTRA'S STALINGRAD

I have established the narrative of ROII to most likely be based in alternate history. This is due to the fact that the dates on which battles take place in the game do not coincide with the dates in real life, and due to the fact that the Wehrmacht is being represented by a non-historical emblem. But, alternate history or not, ROII's narrative does not progress to the point where a dominant Wehrmacht manages to fully crush the Red Army's resistance and wholly occupy Stalingrad before moving on to their next war goal. Instead the game's narrative progresses to the point where it could be argued that, provided history ended completely at that point in time, the German army could be deemed victorious. This moment comes on November 22nd 1942, when the Wehrmacht has assumed control of the majority of Stalingrad. The narrator resumes his monologue and tells us how convinced he had always been that victory would be inevitable for the German war machine. Now his men could finally get some respite and maybe even enjoy a Christmas at home. It is a lovely thought, but everyone playing this game knows reality ended up very differently. The embedded narratives link the players to the historical facts behind ROII's fictional narrative, making the ending somewhat awkward. Especially considering the Soviet campaign continues until February 2nd 1943, the day the German 6th Army surrendered unconditionally. What players end up with is a strange mix of historical images, texts and a completely fictional narrative that ends in a victory that can hardly be seen as such.

This discrepancy between reality and German propaganda is in fact precisely what the German soldiers had to endure on a daily basis. Each day they were spoon fed tales of the imminent *Endsieg*, Germany's final victory. And each day they were being killed by the hundreds. When the Wehrmacht surrendered in Stalingrad the German people were fed a similar fantastical version of the events. The 6th Army supposedly fought to the death, ignoring Hitler's pleas to surrender and spare German lives in this futile undertaking. A ridiculous rendition of reality, much like declaring victory on that seemingly random 22nd of November 1942 is too. How does ROII represent the German soldier? Given that they are presented as expendable, interchangeable cannon fodder for a cause that is not even made clear, and that they have no agency to steer the outcome of the battle whatsoever, ROII paints a realistic picture of the German soldiers' situation in Stalingrad. A mere pawn in a game way beyond his control. Powerless to change his fate. Dead on arrival. The representation of German soldiers in ROII is not a historically faithful one, but it certainly is psychologically faithful. It represents the fate of the Germans who entered Stalingrad and never left it, without falling into the trap of presenting Stalingrad as this great disaster that befell the entire German people.

4.3.2 Postponing the inevitable: Company of Heroes

This psychological representation of the wartime experiences of German soldiers is the common thread binding ROII and CoH together. Like the shooter game set on the Eastern Front this strategy game set on the Western Front places a lot of emphasis on the psychological experience of war for the German protagonists in its narrative. This is also reflected in the way players are able to win this game. Maximilian Voss is recalling his war adventures and, in a way, we are replaying his memories more than the actual events themselves. This accounts for all the historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations present in the narrative, like the ones I elaborated on in chapter 3. Playing through the retelling of events during the war, spawned from Voss' broken mind players get to experience several themes at once. First of all, the recalling of the sense of power some soldiers experienced during the war. We must not forget that, as a soldier, these men in a sense wielded the power over life and death. This is represented in Voss' encouraging of his men to crush civilian vehicles with their Tiger tank for fun. Though, this might also be a manifestation of powerlessness experienced during the war. As mentioned earlier, soldiers during WWII were thrown into battle with little to no agency. This sense of helplessness might result in fantastical retellings of events in which the narrator had given himself a position of absolute power. When we see a solitary German tank facing off against an entire British armoured column it is not too farfetched to interpret this as a power fantasy. We then see Voss coming to terms with the way the war ended for Germany and for himself. At the end of his power fantasy he recalls friends he lost in battle, and mentions that Germany had lost its way, though he never goes into specifics on what he means by that. He seems to be wanting to distance himself and his actions with those of the regime, as the Nazi-party is referred to in the game.

Meanwhile the Berger brothers seem to suffer under the strains of war, as bad news from the home front reaches them while they are in battle. They obviously experience deep feelings of helplessness. They are soldiers yet fail to protect even their own home. Wolfgang Berger is constantly looking out for Aldrich, his only tangible part of home. When they have defeated the British paratroopers at Arnhem Wolfgang warns Aldrich not to empathise too much with the enemy. Aldrich Berger mentions he doesn't see them as enemies, only as fellow soldiers fighting on the other side. Sadly, Aldrich is killed soon after which rips away the last piece of home Wolfgang had left. In the final scene of the game his despair is unmistakable. Voss congratulates Wolfgang on defeating Operation Market Garden, but Wolfgang feels he has lost everything. He snaps at Voss, asking him what it is they have won exactly. Germany is already lost. Even Voss has to admit as much. The players have reached the in-game goals and won the game, but Wolfgang the German soldier has not. Again this narrative emphasises the psychological impact of the war on German soldiers. They are represented as men fighting in a war they had already lost. Nowhere is this theme as prominent as in the Falaise Pocket campaign, where you keep fighting despite knowing you are already soundly defeated. In this the game does not mean to portray the Wehrmacht soldiers as helpless victims of a deterministic outcome of WWII, but instead decides to emphasise feats of heroism, brotherhood and sacrifice. Elements often emphasised in representations of Allied soldiers, thus eliminating the idea of German soldiers somehow being this 'great other' in WWII. They too fought, suffered and died. They too came home coping with trauma and loss. By letting players experience these elements in scenarios in which the Germans were victorious but ultimately

were unable to change the course of history, CoH allows for German soldiers to be seen as humans. The German protagonists in CoH's campaigns are not the good guys, nor are they the bad guys. They are merely human.

By choosing to focus on the psychological aspect of war experiences both ROII and CoH manage to illicit player empathy for German soldiers in WWII. Some might argue that this empathy would somehow detract from the immense horrors committed by German soldiers during the war. I respectfully disagree with this. First because I reject the notion that video games have a responsibility to educate players on historical events. Games surely can help to teach historical facts, or at least historical thinking, but they should not be judged on this basis alone. Secondly, video games are currently shackled by a combination of commercial interests and national laws prohibiting them to portray historically correct imagery which prevent game developers to better frame their German campaigns in the narrative of WWII. If my conclusion is that video games now do not provide players with a 'historically accurate' representation of the Wehrmacht and its actions during WWII it is mostly due to legal barriers imposed on the video game medium as a whole.

Video games are first and foremost a cultural medium. Art makes people feel, makes them think about what is being represented. By representing German soldiers as human beings who also suffered as a result of WWII they are humanised. By humanising them the idea that the horrors and war crimes committed by Wehrmacht-, Waffen-SS and Auxiliary forces are somehow unique to WWII is eliminated. It eliminates the false notion that these genocidal forces could never return to our societies again. By portraying German soldiers as men with hopes and fears being damaged by the war they effectively inflicted on themselves these games can help us in fostering more understanding for modern day soldiers. At the end of the day games are meant to be won, but real wars usually know only losers. People are killed and displaced. People are hurt both physically and emotionally. By representing the losing side of conflicts these games make clear that German soldiers in WWII desired to return home and, when and if they did, had to live with the scars of war. Wolfgang Berger buried his brother and then had to return to his home in rubble. This has been the fate of many a German soldier. This is also the fate of many people around the world today. We have been blessed with decades of peace in Europe, but to protect that peace we need to be reminded what wars do to people. Video games can provide these reminders. Of course historical facts can serve as reminders, but perhaps we also need to experience wars through the subjective eyes of the losing side once in a while.

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APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPT RED ORCHESTRA II: HEROES OF STALINGRAD – GERMAN CAMPAIGN

[GERMAN CAMPAIGN: INTRODUCTORY CUTSCENE]

Communism is a red plague that threatens all of Europe, unless we can halt its spread. In June 1941 Operation Barbarossa, the Fatherland's audacious pre-emptive strike against the Bolshevik menace, won us countless victories and took our forces to the very gates of Moscow itself. But any army, even one such as ours, must give ground when facing an enemy possessing seemingly limitless numbers. In 1942, the High Command decreed Moscow unworthy of the German blood being spilt in its name. Instead, it sent the 6th Army south, to secure a different prize – the city of Stalingrad. Its capture will sever the Soviet's vital trade route to the Caspian Sea and allow us access to the oil-rich city of Baku. Our inevitable successes shall deliver a devastating blow to the already crumbling Russian war machine. The men have entered the city and are poised to launch a series of attacks designed to wipe out the remainder of the Soviet 62nd Army. Resistance has been sporadic, no doubt the enemy is digging in, determined to extract as high a price as possible for the city named after their leader. We will methodically locate each enemy strong point, isolate it, then destroy it. No doubt the Russians will, whenever possible, carelessly spend Bolshevik lives launching suicidal counter attacks, so we must be cautious. While the world has never seen a force as highly-trained as ours, the Russians have proven themselves stubborn opponents and it would be foolish to underestimate an enemy as desperate as they. I am confident of victory, though the thought that our flanks are guarded by Romanians and Italians fills me with unease. I wish, as do the men, for a swift victory and swifter journey home.

[BRIEFING MISSION 1: SPARTANOVKA 31-08-1942]

31st August 1942, Spartanovka.

The Fatherland's forces have made excellent progress towards Stalingrad, our swift advance has caught the Soviets by surprise – an advantage we should capitalize upon. So our forces can safely breach Stalingrad's walls without fear of attack from the rear, we've been tasked to secure the village of Spartanovka. But Ivan's not going to surrender this sorry pile of bricks without a fight, so we'll have to take it from him. First, take the church – use the gullies for cover on the way in and watch for enemy fire coming from the windows. Then move to clear the first housing block – remember, Russian soldiers love dirty, close-quarter fighting, so watch your backs going room-to-room. Next clear the second housing block – again, be careful and watch your flanks for stray enemy activity. Finally, once the other three objectives are secure, move to capture the Town Hall to the east. We think it'll be the most heavily defended enemy position, so make good use of cover wherever possible. It's a simple mission, but you'll still need to work fast. Remember your training; while the Bolsheviks are ill-prepared, never underestimate their willingness to spend lives if it means spilling even just a drop of German blood.

Objective 1: Take the Church
Objective 2: Clear Housing Block 1
Objective 3: Clear Housing Block 2
Final Objective: Capture the Town Hall

[BRIEFING MISSION 2: WESTERN STALINGRAD 05-09-1942]

5th September 1942, Western Stalingrad.

As our High Command expected, the Russian Army is poorly prepared to face the full might of Germany's finest and even now scurries deeper into the city. We've driven back the local Bolsheviks and they marshal their remaining forces in the so-called Red Barracks. We have orders to clear the last of the resistance in the area. This will be a night-time mission, though the moon is full so you'll be able to see. Begin your assault by securing the warehouse – be sure to clear the upstairs offices before moving on. Then eliminate all resistance in the political school to the south of the warehouse – it's a single-storey structure which should present few problems. Next capture the infirmary – it's little more than a two-storey ruin, but no doubt crawling with Russians, so be sure to use cover where possible. Your final objective is the administrative hall to the south of the infirmary. It's mostly intact so watch those windows. The Luftwaffe has reduces the area to rubble but proceed with caution, poorly trained and ill-equipped though he is, at close quarters Ivan makes for a cunning foe who loves nothing more than to drive his rusty blade into honest German flesh.

Objective 1: Secure the Warehouse
Objective 2: Clear the Political School
Objective 3: Capture the infirmary

Final Objective: Take the Administrative Hall

[CHAPTER COMPLETE: GEFREITER OTTO LANZ, 305TH PANZER JÄGER ABT.]

"Been three days in the hell of Stalingrad. One has no idea what is happening there. This surpasses everything experienced so far. The city is continually getting smaller and the ruins are getting bigger. Every house must have been destroyed and often battles are fought for mounds of rubble. The artillery is smashing into it, tanks and infantry combed the streets and this is the toughest work. Everyone who gets out alive may thank God...'

[BRIEFING MISSION 3: STALINGRAD CENTRAL STATION 15-09-1942]

15th September 1942, Stalingrad's central station.
We have been tasked with securing Stalingrad's central railway station. I won't lie, the Russians have fought hard to keep the place, but it's time to end this farce. The building itself has taken substantial bomb damage from the Luftwaffe, but be careful, as that just gives Ivan a bunch of rat-holes to hide in. Some of the building is caved in, which may actually give us extra routes in, so keep your eyes open for opportunities. You'll approach the station from the North. Your first objective is to secure the rail yard. Be sure to clear any Soviet troops stationed inside damaged train cars. Once the platform is secure, move to take the station's North Hall. It's a three-storey structure that's suffered some bomb damage but is still more than capable of providing Ivan with lots of hiding places. Next, take the Central Hall to the south – it's little more than a two-storey ruin, but again, Ivan likes his rat holes, so stay alert. Finally, capture the South Hall. We suspect this to house the largest concentration of Russian troops, so be especially wary here and be sure to watch for enemies trying to flank you. Dismissed!
Objective 1: Secure the Rail Yard
Objective 2: Attack the North Hall
Objective 3: Take the Central Hall
Final Objective: Capture the South Hall

[BRIEFING MISSION 4: SOUTHERN STALINGRAD GRAIN ELEVATOR 20-09-1942]

20th September 1942, Grain Elevator.
Southern Stalingrad is almost ours, but one last Bolshevik unit stubbornly occupies the district's grain factory – our mission is to clear them out. The Elevator itself is a brute of a building – solid concrete. The artillery have been hammering away at it for the last 24 hours, but it really isn't making an impression on it. Our armor can't get close as the Bolsheviks can simply shoot down on the tanks. So this is going to be one for the infantry alone. You'll approach from the west. First secure the weigh station at the facility's main entrance. It's an open space, so find cover where you can. Once the area is secure, move to take the conveyor tower to the northeast. Its height will make it ideal for Russian snipers, so move quickly and again look for cover. Then head north and establish a foothold on the factory grain elevator's ground floor. When the floor is ours, work your way up and capture the second floor's south-side. Finally, capture the structure's fourth floor. Beware, this is where resistance will most likely be strongest. The enemy are determined and relentless, but failure in this vital mission is not an option – know that Germany's pride rests on your capable shoulders.
Objective 1: Secure the Weigh Station
Objective 2: Take the Conveyor Tower
Objective 3: Take the Elevator Foothold
Objective 4: Clear the Second Floor
Final Objective: Capture the Fourth Floor

[CHAPTER COMPLETE: WILLI HOFFMAN, 94TH INFANTERIE DIV.]

"Our battalion is attacking the grain elevator with tanks. Smoke is pouring out of it. The grain is burning and it seems that the Russians inside set fire to it themselves. It's barbaric. The battalion is taking heavy losses. Those are not people in the elevator, they are devils and neither fire nor bullets can touch them.'

[BRIEFING MISSION 5: SPARTANOVKA 26-09-1942]

26th September 1942, Spartanovka.
We took this stinking village 3 weeks ago, men, but our supporting units haven't managed to clear the Bolsheviks completely from the area. The enemy grouping by the river has actually broken out and is pushing this way. We

only have minutes to get organized. We don't have the time to set up defence right through the village, so we're going to pull back and let the Bolsheviks come to us. That will buy us a few minutes to get the machine-guns emplaced! Get a defensive line set up in the old church. It is a solid building with good fields of fire through the housing blocks to the town hall, where the Russians will be attacking from. I want men on the machine-guns. Cut the Reds down before they get close, if you can. If you dig in, you should be able to hold the church. If they break in to the church, either push them out or, if all else fails, pull back to the gullies behind. We MUST not retreat any further than that. This Russian attack stops here! Get to your positions – LOS!
Objective 1: Defend the Church
Final Objective: Defend the Gullies

[CHAPTER COMPLETE: FROM THE DIARY OF AN UNKNOWN GERMAN SOLDIER]

"Stalingrad is no longer a city. By day it is a cloud of burning, blinding smoke; it is a vast furnace lit by the reflection of the flames. When night arrives, one of the scorching, howling, bleeding nights, the dogs plunge into the Volga and swim desperately to the other bank. The nights of Stalingrad are a terror for them. Animals flee this hell; the hardest stones cannot bear it for long; only men endure."

[BRIEFING MISSION 6: WEST OF THE TRACTOR FACTORY 06-10-1942]

6th October 1942, west of the Tractor Factory.
We are on the approaches to the factory district here. The overall plan is to squeeze the Reds into smaller and smaller spaces, probably in the factories themselves, then destroy them there. We have the right flank of the division and will lead the turn towards the Tractor Factory. So our task today men, is to clear out the apartment blocks in front of us. Battalion believes that there is only a small Russian force holding the area, but they have the cover of substantial buildings, that are reasonably intact, so be careful. The first step is to get across the gully and clear the block on the far side of the bridges. Look out for MG and sniper fire from the buildings around but keeping pushing them. With the bridges secure, rush for the Propaganda House and take it. it has a basement, so remember that too. The Reds will be on the run, so push them through the so-called "Potapova Park" as quickly as you can. Use an MG or sniper to cover the open areas – don't let them regroup. Finally, get into the General Store building on the far side of the park. If they've lost everything else, expect them to dig in here – but get in there and finish them off. Good. Get to your startpoint, men.
Objective 1: Take the Apartment Block
Objective 2: Take the Propaganda House
Objective 3: Capture Potapova Park
Final Objective: Capture the General Store

[BRIEFING MISSION 7: WEST OF THE TRACTOR FACTORY 07-10-1942]

7th October 1942, west of the Tractor Factory.
Achtung, menner, quickly! The Russians have got behind us, damn ganger methods again. They're trying to do to us what we did to them yesterday and push us out of the block. This cannot happen – if they force us into the open ground beyond, we'll have no chance. The rest of the battalion will have to break through the Bolsheviks to join up with us, but that means we are on our own for now. But we've been in these situations before and won – now we will do the same again! So, squad leaders, look to where you position your men. We can't afford heavy casualties, so be careful. They'll come in over that gully, so cover both bridges. Ideally we can stop them before they break in. Rather than lose everyone, pull back to the Propaganda House if you must. If you can't hold that, then fall back through the little Park and all the way to the General Store building. But we MUST hold them somewhere in there or we are finished. And we are NOT going to rot in some Bolshevik prison camp. Pick one of those objectives and hold it, to the last round! We have to hold out!
Objective 1: Defend the Apartment Block
Objective 2: Defend the Propaganda House
Objective 3: Defend Potapova Park
Final Objective: Defend the General Store

[CHAPTER COMPLETE: OBERLEUTNANT HANS JOACHIM MARTIUS, STURMSCHADRON 24.]

"Beyersdorf is now in hospital for the third time - wounded in the arm. Soon there will be no more men left. The 5th has today lost its seventh commander! All hell's been let loose in the city. We face each other at 20 meters…

our men often hit the Russians on the head with spades. Yesterday, a soldier pulled at one end of a machine-gun, a Russian at the other. A hand grenade finished it off..."

[Briefing mission 8: 9th of January Square 14-10-1942]

14th October 1942, 9th of January Square.
Our attacks through this part of the city have stalled, mostly against these damned Russian strongpoints they have set up in the ruins. We are only 300 meters from the river and the landing stage bringing in their reinforcements – that is why this is so important to the enemy. Make no mistake, men, this will be a tough one. We aren't the first to be thrown into this particular mess, so we'll do this RIGHT. Engineers – I want you to blow anything really stubborn to hell. I'm not losing the rest of the battalion for one damn house. So, listen carefully. We'll take it one piece at a time. Start with the ruined Voyentorg building and watch out for Bolsheviks high in the ruins. We take that, consolidate, then hit the next ruin – Zobolotniy or some such Russki name. Same danger above, MG and sharp-shooter cover high, please. The rest of you – get in and blast anything that moves. Then we get to the bit everyone else has failed on: Pavlov's House. We need cover – MG and smoke – to get across the street. Or just run like hell. We'll go in the west end and we have to clear it, floor by floor. Work together. Cover each other. Once we've broken in at the west end, we'll work through the building to the east end and clear "Herr Pavlov" out of his damn nest. Alles klar? Gut. Get to your positions and let's get this done. Good luck.
Objective 1: Attack the Voyentorn Ruin
Objective 2: Attack the Zobolotniy Ruin
Objective 3: Take Pavlov's West End
Final Objective: Take Pavlov's East End

[Chapter complete: Oberst Herbert Selle, Engineer Detachment, 6th Army]

"Attack and defence, assault and counter-assault, constant burning, yelling, mortar and artillery fire - Stalingrad has become a living hell. Rubble has become fortresses, destroyed factories harbour deadly sharpshooters, behind every lathe and every machine tool lurks sudden death. Every corner and every cranny threatens a sudden burst of automatic rifle fire. Every foot of ground has to be literally torn from the defenders."

[Briefing mission 9: Behind the Barrikady gun factory 13-11-1942]

13th November 1942, behind the Barrikady Gun Factory.
Good morning, men. This attack is intended to clear the last Russian defences before the river, so we can expect determined resistance. We have engineer and armored support, so let's make use of it. I want the armor to prioritize enemy infantry targets – strong-points holding up the infantry. Only take on enemy armor if you consider them a real threat to your support role, lease. Stay on hand, give the infantry cover and close support. First – Building 81, to clear the assault route. It's a small building, take it quickly and don't get held up. Beyond that, we need to get into that Commissar House, the north side first. Dump HE into it to cover the infantry's approach, then destroy any Ivans you can see. The infantry will push through the building to take the south end – the armor needs to keep pace outside. If possible, push the armor ahead and prevent any further Russian reinforcements – but be very careful. You are at risk without infantry support! The last step is to clear the Pharmacy building beyond. Use HE, smoke, machine-guns. Whatever support you can give – the infantry have to take that damn building! Thank you, men. Get ready...
Objective 1: Take Building 81
Objective 2: Commissar House North
Objective 3: Commissar House South
Final Objective: Take the Pharmacy

[Briefing mission 10: Behind the Barrikady gun factory 13-11-1942]

13th November 1942, behind the Barrikady Gun Factory.
Verdammt! Quickly, everyone – hurry! The Russians are counter-attacking already. Well, we were warned they wouldn't give this area up easily. We need to buy time to bring up the rest of the battalion. We have to hold the line with what little we have here – and you are it, men. ALL our gains to date rest on your determination – so don't let the deaths of your comrades be in vain! Take your sniper team and set up in the Projection Booth. You have a good field of fire from there. Scharfschutze – you are best used firing from the upper windows, while the rest of the team hold the ground level. You'll have to make every shot count on this one. Pick your targets carefully – but do it fast! Try to hold out in the booth, but if you are forced out, fall back to Building 81. It won't be a great

defensive position, but that is all you have. Use the anti-tank rifle carefully if they throw in tanks. Look... the Bolsheviks want this place back and they are NOT going to stop. You are all we have – sorry, men, but this has to be done. We have no choice... Now, get going – god go with you...
Objective 1: Defend the Projection Booth
Final Objective: Defend Building 81

[CHAPTER COMPLETE: LEUTNANT JOACHIM STEMPEL, PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT 103]

"It slowly is getting colder here, long lasting rains, yes even snow showers announce the coming season - the Russian winter. Will we experience it here? All this now adds to the difficulties of the battle. The losses in men and materiel have risen so high, that it simply cannot be imagined that the units that led the attack from the beginning are to remain in operations."

[BRIEFING MISSION 11: NORTH-WEST OF STALINGRAD 20-11-1942]

20th November 1942, north-west of Stalingrad.
Listen carefully, all of you. The Soviets are attempting to break through the lines here at the airfield. Obviously we have to stop them, or their armor will be all over our airfield and headquarters areas. They are attacking in strength – large numbers of T-34s expected. We can out-gun them, but they have the numbers, so support each other! We will set up defensive lines, falling back only if we are in danger of being completely destroyed – but we MUST hold the Station area. The first defensive line is the airfield. Get there quickly and we can catch the enemy in open ground. If necessary, fall back to the ruined Administration Buildings and set up there. You can fall back further, to the Dispersal Field if you have to, but do not give up either lightly! The final defensive position, which must be held at all costs, to prevent a complete Russian breakthrough, is the area around Gumrak Station. If we have to retreat that far, then there is nowhere beyond that to go – the enemy has to be destroyed there! You all know your tasks. See you after the battle...
Objective 1: Defend the Airfield
Objective 2: Defend the Administration Ruin
Objective 3: Defend the Dispersal Field
Final Objective: Defend Gumrak Station

[CHAPTER COMPLETE: UNKNOWN SOLDIER, 6TH ARMY]

"There is nothing but the rhythm of explosions, more or less distant, more or less violent... there are the cries of the wounded, or the agonizingly dying, shrieking as they stare at a part of their body reduced to pulp... There are tragic, unbelievable visions, which carry from one moment of nausea to another: guts splattered across the rubble and sprayed from one dying man to another... That is how we took part in the German advance..."

[BRIEFING MISSION 12: RED OCTOBER FACTORY 21-11-1942]

21st November 1942, Red October Factory.
Good evening, men. This is one of the last Bolshevik strong-holds – and we have been chosen to break it. The factory has been fought over for weeks and is ruined, so there is plenty of cover for the enemy. This will be a night attack, so the swine can't see us coming. I don't need to explain to you all how important this is. I know that you are all tired. But we really are close to the end now. If we can break them here, there really won't be much resistance left. We should catch them by surprise, take the Sheet Finishing Hall quickly. But surprise won't last long... As we move forwards to the Forging Area, we can expect the resistance to stiffen. If we are lucky we may catch them all sleeping – but I doubt it! The Calibration Workshop is likely to be a harder job. We have to cross open ground to get to it and the ruins inside will give the Reds plenty of cover. Use your grenades, use smoke. If we can clear that workshop out, our final push is into the Finished Products Warehouse. Again, open ground to cross to get there, so be careful! I expect cover fire from the Mgs, smoke from the quad leaders, to get your troops in there. Expect them to fight to the last man. The river is not far behind that warehouse, so they'll have nowhere left to run. Now – let's finish them all off, men!
Objective 1: Take the Sheet Finishing Hall
Objective 2: Attack the Forging Area
Objective 3: Clear the Calibration Workshop
Final Objective: Take the Warehouse

The battle to take Stalingrad in the name of the Fatherland has been a brutal one, but in truth victory was always inevitable! The Bolsheviks fought hard against forces superior to theirs in almost every way but, despite their best efforts, most enemy units on the West Bank of the Volga have been eliminated and the German 6th Army occupies most of the city. The last scraps of Soviet resistance cling hopelessly to a few key areas but even these will soon crumble; we will not waste precious German lives needlessly in the final days of battle, so these stubborn red islands will be eliminated by small, hand-picked units. I cannot help but feel that the hard work is finally behind us, that soon all of Stalingrad will be in German hands. There is every chance we will soon be able to return home, welcomed as heroes, back to the loving arms of our wives and children and able to enjoy a warm Christmas! After months of bitter struggle, I can think of no better gift for the men.

17-04-2016

Name: Tom Rijnberg
Email: trijnberg@student.eur.nl
Subject: Historical research into Red Orchestra II: Heroes of Stalingrad

Dear sir/madam,

I am currently writing my thesis on the representation of German (Wehrmacht) soldiers in your game. As Red Orchestra II is, so far, the only video game that allows players a first-person German perspective of WWII, this title is essential to my research. I am focussing on the personal narratives, as well as the methods you have used to enable players to win a German WWII campaign, despite Germany losing in actuality of course. So far the results are very interesting. I have a couple of questions I would like to pose to the developing team of RO2 though. Concerning the, clearly well carried out, historical research that went into writing the narrative. Could you please provide me with a list of your source material? I am especially interested in the sources for the personal stories in the form of letters/diaries at the end of each chapter. There are a few I've managed to track down, but not all of them. Also, to ensure my final conclusions will be as well sourced and fair as possible, could you please tell me the developing philosophy behind structuring the German campaign narrative the way you did? I am referring to having the campaign end three months before the end of the actual battle. I thank you in advance and I hope I can count on your cooperation in my research.

Kind regards Tom Rijnberg MA Student Global History - Erasmus University

20-04-2016
Tom,

I'll pick this one up. Just to simplify, can you re-iterate what you are looking for? I was looking for a (brief) list of sources, which I thought we'd included somewhere. Did you look in the help files for the game?

Cheers,

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22-04-2016

Hello Alan,

Thank you for your swift reply. Let me reiterate. I am researching the representation of Wehrmacht soldiers in video games. For this reason I'm looking at three games in which the Wehrmacht is a playable faction. I'm looking at the presence of personal narratives, for symbolisms used in both visuals and narrative, and I am especially looking at how game developers, like yourself, manage to transform a historical narrative (of Germany eventually losing the war, or in your case, the battle of Stalingrad) into a playable narrative which the player can win.

For Red Orchestra II, I am curious as to which narrative choices you've made in writing the story. For example, you start the German campaign a week after the start of the Stalingrad battle, and end the campaign about three months before it actually ended. I have my theories, but could you tell me why you went this route?

What were your selection criteria for the German propaganda posters and slogans depicted in the background of the cutscenes?

Symbolism wise, I get that certain national laws hinder you from showing Nazi imagery, so you had to alter the German symbols. What is the source for the German emblem used in the game? (I've included a screenshot). Why did you not go with the Wehrmacht 'Balkenkreuz' for example?

I own the Steam version of RO2, which unfortunately doesn't contain the singleplayer campaigns. Also, I get a '404 not found' message when I open the game manual through Steam (http://cdn.akamai.steamstatic.com/steam/apps/35450/manuals/RS%20Game%20Manual%20V1_2.pdf?t=1458758081).

For my research I'm currently relying on cutscenes and let's plays on Youtube. This works well for my purposes, as I'm looking at the narrative specifically.
That being said, I would really appreciate it if you could share a list of your sources with me. It is clear it is well researched, but I'm having a hard time retracing a lot of the Chapter ending diary/letter excerpts.

Once again, I really appreciate your help in this.

Kind regards
Tom Rijnberg
MA Student Global History - Erasmus University Rotterdam

26-04-2016

Answers below :) Hope it helps!

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On Fri, Apr 22, 2016 at 3:37 AM, Tom Rijnberg <trijnberg@student.eur.nl> wrote:
Hello Alan,

Thank you for your swift reply. Let me reiterate. I am researching the representation of Wehrmacht soldiers in video games. For this reason I'm looking at three games in which the Wehrmacht is a playable faction. I'm looking at the presence of personal narratives, for symbolisms used in both visuals and narrative, and I am especially looking at how game developers, like yourself, manage to transform a historical narrative (of Germany eventually losing the war, or in your case, the battle of Stalingrad) into a playable narrative which the player can win.

For Red Orchestra II, I am curious as to which narrative choices you've made in writing the story. For example, you start the German campaign a week after the start of the Stalingrad battle, and end the campaign about three months before it actually ended. I have my theories, but could you tell me why you went this route?

Basically, this covers the period during which the Germans were "winning". Mid-November was effectively the high-point of the German advance into the city - and it all went to shit from there on, pretty much. So we kind-of split the whole battle into (a) the parts where there Germans were doing well and (b) the parts where the Soviets were doing well, leading up to their eventual victory.

What were your selection criteria for the German propaganda posters and slogans depicted in the background of the cutscenes?

From memory, they were sourced off of period posters, being careful around the legal issues that you mention below.

Symbolism wise, I get that certain national laws hinder you from showing Nazi imagery, so you had to alter the German symbols. What is the source for the German emblem used in the game? (I've included a screenshot). Why did you not go with the Wehrmacht 'Balkenkreuz' for example?

To be honest, I can't remember :)

I own the Steam version of RO2, which unfortunately doesn't contain the singleplayer campaigns. Also, I get a '404 not found' message when I open the game manual through Steam (http://cdn.akamai.steamstatic.com/steam/apps/35450/manuals/RS%20Game%20Manual%20V1_2.pdf?t=1458758081).

Try this Steam Key - should give you the SP campaign... I think :)

I3X00-0RNYN-XZQMG

For my research I'm currently relying on cutscenes and let's plays on Youtube. This works well for my purposes, as I'm looking at the narrative specifically.
That being said, I would really appreciate it if you could share a list of your sources with me. It is clear it is well researched, but I'm having a hard time retracing a lot of the Chapter ending diary/letter excerpts.

Here is a list of books/materials used. I don't think it is complete, though, even just for Stalingrad. The full list of books in now in the thousands:

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Appendix III: Transcript Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts/Tales of Valor – German campaigns

Tales of Valor - Tiger Ace

[Opening scene]

"Leningrad, Russia. 0723 hrs, September 29th 1942."

Hauptmann Maximillian Voss, tank commander: *It was a red dawn the morning our Tiger Tank first arrived on the front lines.*

Funker: 1st schwere-Panzer-Abteilung 503 reports T-34s entering our sector

Voss: *Confirmed. Load APC rounds, halt motor.*

Oberschütze Arno Schroif, Fahrer: *Hydraulic takeoff 600 PS to turret.*

Feldwebel Joseph Schultz, Schütze: *Target aquired*

Voss: *Fire at will*

Schultz: *There she is. Come to Papa.*

Schütze Alfred Litzke, Ladeschütze: *Round up! Shot out!*

Voss: *berndt, radio HQ, the Stahlvormund has two more kills.*

Schütze Dieter Berndt, Funker: *Jawohl, I have a Pak one kilometer out.*

Voss: *Engage!*

Voss: *It was there on the Eastern Front we made a name for ourselves. By the spring of forty-four we had been redeployed to the Western Front, France.*

[Mission 1: Birth of a legend]

"Villers-Bocage, Normandie. 0717 Uhr, 13. Juni 1944" (D-Day + 7)

Voss: *I gave orders to move at first light, directing the bulk of my Panzer Company ahead to point 213. The Stahlvormund was moving slowly, we had engine trouble.*

Schroif: *Brand new motor and it runs like scheisse.*

Schultz: *Just keep the turret powered.*

Litzke: *Great! A turret for targets we can't reach!*

Voss: *Halt! Halt! Britische Panzergruppen!*

Schultz: *Confirmed!*

Voss: *Gefechtsbereit! Ready for combat!*

[during combat]

Voss: "*what was that? What's happening to the Tiger?*"

Schroif: *The motor has stalled out. Just give me a moment."*

Voss: "*keep this tank running! We can't afford a breakdown now! Schultz, engage all enemy vehicles coming down the road. Don't let them pass!*"

Schultz: "Understood"

Voss: "For the fatherland, men! Destroy the British! Fire at Will!"

Voss: "Convoy destroyed! Excellent, men. Headquarters will be delighted."

[During mission map overview]

Voss: "The fools act as if they've won the war already. Prove them wrong! Berndt, radio silence! Get ready on the hull MG. Litzke, be ready to load specified rounds. Schultz, target enemy Panzers and Paks. Make every round count. Strike hard and clear the village of all enemy armor."

[In game mode]

Voss: crush the bastards while they're down. Crush all the civilian vehicles, and I'll give you ten Marks.

[when targeting a building with infantry in it]

Voss: *bury them alive. High-Explosive rounds on target. Those infantry aren't a threat! Destroy the armor! Does anyone else want to crush those civilian vehicles? Let's have some fun, Tigergruppe. Make ready the gun to move. More tin cans to cook. Go Tigergruppe!* [these sentences cycle during gameplay depending on player-given commands]

Voss: *Firefly knocked out! Stand down. Arno, get us out of the village and make for 213.*

Schultz: *Litzke, kill count?*

Litzke: *40! 40 kills! Heilige Scheisse!*

Schultz: *Skill like this doesn't come easy!*

[End of mission cutscene] British anti-tank gun aims and fires at the Tiger Tank.

Schroif: *Pak! Tread broken! We're stuck!*

Schultz: *Power turret! Sighting new target! Load round!*

[All yelling]

Berndt: *...Out, get out!*

Schultz: *We don't run. Load, load!*

Voss: Litzke, stand down!

Schultz: *Load the cannon!*

Voss: *Achtung! All of you! Grab munitions and Med-paks. Deploy smoke. Tigergruppe, abandon tank!*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 2: RETREAT FROM VILLERS-BOCAGE]

[The men exit the Tiger under heavy fire]

Waiting for orders, Hauptmann! Get to cover.

Voss: *Beeile dich, Berndt! Move! Move! Rückzug! [in-game it says 'vorrücken'] Get to point 213! Take one of the side roads. Man down! Med-pack, schnell! Pick up what you can, use it against them! Take that weapon and make ready.*

Berndt: *I don't know how those fucking infantery do it! We can't fight every Britischer we see. Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor.*

All: *Angriff!*

Voss: *Find cover! Fire on that sniper, get his head down!*

Voss: *the British are digging in. We need to soften the fools before they get settled. Berndt, mark those emplacements and call in artillery!*

[Mission objective: destroy the British anti-tank emplacements]

Voss: *Emplacement destroyed. Mark another one for Germany.*

Voss: *Anti-tank gun eliminated!*

Voss: *Excellent! Targets eliminated. To point 213! Raus! Schnell!*

Voss: *Patience, Tigergruppe! We're almost there! Don't Rush it; Tommy could be anywhere.*

Schultz: *Scheisse! They've blocked out exit! What do we do?*

Voss: *Don't talk! Find another route!*

[Mission objective: find another way out]

Voss: *Berndt, break silence! Get HQ on the radio! We need artillery support to cover our retreat, NOW!*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 3: AN ACE REBORN]

Voss (narrating): *Tommy put up a good fight, but the German people thought our tanks were unstoppable. We had to return to Villers-Bocage to show them that they were.*

[In-game]

Voss: *Achtung, Tigergruppe! Gather your courage!*

All: *Ja, mein Commandant!*

Voss: *Prepare for contact!*

Commander 501 Panzergruppe: *This is Panzergruppe 501, taking your lead.*

Voss: *Achtung! Blitz the remaining forces. Schnell!*

[Mission objective: destroy the advancing British armor]

Voss: *AP rounds. Watch for infantry.*

Litzke: *Round up!*

Schultz: *Requesting target, Hauptmann!*

Voss: *Fire at will, Joseph.*

[Tactical map]

Voss: *Since our escape, the 7th Armored Division has dug in around Villers-Bocage. We need to clear the roads for Panzer Grenadier support. Destroy all Britische defensive emplacements along these routes. Once that is accomplished assult the town and help the Grenadiers lock down these strategic sectors. Let's show Tommy our fatherland's resolve. The Tiger's strength!*

Commander 501: *Hauptmann Voss, sir! Do we have new orders?*

Voss: *Keep pushing. The British regroup. Schnell!*

[Optional: secure Villers-Bocage in 20 minutes]

Voss: *Eliminate the Britische defenses. Open the roads for the Panzer Grenadiers, schnell!*

[Mission objective: destroy the MG emplacements defending the road]

Voss: *MG Emplacement neutralized.*

Berndt: *Panzer Grenadiers have received orders and are en route.*

Commander 501: *Sending additional Grenadier support.*

Voss: *Panzergruppe, this is Hauptmann Voss. We've stopped the assault. All targets are cleared.*

Schultz: *Where are we going to put all the medals?*

Voss: *Now we make sure the town is in German hands, Tigergruppe! Escort the Panzer Grenadiers into the village to secure it.*

[Mission objective: Secure Villers-Bocage]

Voss: *Emplacement destroyed! Keep up the good work.*

Berndt: *Panzer Grenadiers are on their way, Hauptmann.*

Voss: *Good shot Schultz! MG Emplacement down.*

Berndt: *Additional Grenadier support is on its way, Herr Hauptmann.*

Voss: *The Britische defensive perimeter is destroyed. HQ, this is Panzergruppe Lehr requesting additional Grenadier support. All roads are clear. I say again, all roads are clear.*

Commander 501: *HQ has allocated 3rd company for support. Incoming reinforcements.*

Voss: *Tigergruppe! Destroy that artillery. Macht schnell!*

Commander 501: *Grenadiers report that the ammo dump is secure.*

Voss: *Jabos on approach. Verdammt noch mal! Berndt, radio HQ. Request anti-aircraft support.*

Berndt: *HQ, this is Lehr. Britische aircraft on approach. Send reinforcements! A-A support has been dispatched, sir!*

Commander 501: *Central sector of Villers-Bocage is secure.*

Voss: *Mobile artillery has been neutralized! Inform HQ that it is safe for the Grenadiers to continue operations.*

Litzke: *Counterattack! Cover your flanks! Incoming Panzers! Weapons free! Protect the infantry.*

Commander 501: *Town sector has been captured and is secure.*

Voss: *We're done! Berndt – report Villers-Bocage secure! It's the fatherland's now!*

[Cutscene]

Berndt: *I say again, Villers-Bocage is now secure.*

Voss (narrating): *That was the last time I saw the interior of a Tiger Tank, the last time I saw Schultz. He went on to command the 502 Tigergruppe. On August 9th, 1944, he held the advancing Americans at Autry long enough to allow our division to escape Normandy. He died in his Tiger. By September what was left of our division redeployed to Holland. I assumed command of the Panzer Lehr Division as Majorgeneral. It had seemed so clear, so necessary. But in the end, Senior Command had lost its way, and unfortunately the fatherland followed.*

[Mission complete]

TALES OF VALOR – FALAISE POCKET

[Opening cinematic:]

American bomber crew: *"hangin'a louie in 20 minutes! One hundred and twenty two clicks to chambois"*

"*Ditry Kraut. What are they doing going west? Do they really think they can take out patton?"*

"*Let ém try. With the Brits pushing down from the North?"*

"*And the 12th coming up from the South. We're pinching their entire 7th army right off."*

"*Chambois and Trun. Take these two towns, and we got em."*

"*And we just bomb them to high hell"*

[laughing]

Over the radio: *This is the 9th Grenadier, stationed in Chambois. We've got enemies on all sides. We can't move. The bombs!*

Radio operator: *Come in please, come in please!*

[Bombs exploding in the distance, radio static]

Tank commander: *our panzer will cut a swathe through their lines like a scythe through grass. We'll give the americans a taste of german engineering."*

Tank crewmember: *as long as the american planes...*

Commander: *our steel is strong! The american bombs will fall upon our panzer like rain on rock.*

Soldier in the street: *what is he doing? He's driving straight into the allied front lines!*

Officer: *high command has ordered him to attack. What else can he do?*

Soldier: *I don't think anyone has any idea what's going on anymore*

Hauptman over the radio: *good luck oberst!*

Oberst: l*uck is for the weak, hauptmann!*

[2nd cinematic]

Radio operator: *please repeat! The signal is very weak!*

Radio: *Your orders are as follows: you must hold Trun until the entire 7th army has evacuated the pocket.*

Officer: *no, we're still not hearing you. Here, let me try something.*

Radio: *these are your orders!*

[officer shoots radio]

Officer: *gentlemen, I suggest we leave immediately.*

Leutnant Hess: *leave? As long as Germans are fighting their way to Trun, we must keep the door open!*

Officer: *Well then Hess, congratulations. You are hereby promoted OBERLEUTNANT effective immediately. You can stay if you want to.*

Hess: *the 7th hasn't made it to the town. If you go now you are disobeying a direct order from high command.*

Officer: *as far as high command knows, that order never made it to Trun. Anyone that does not want to die here is free to join me. Otherwise, good luck gentlemen.*

[Third cinematic]

Hess: *Mein Gott. The americans knew exactly where they would be. Damn high command!*

Soldier: *all of this is starting to feel like one giant suicide mission. Our Panzers are destroyed. What hope do we possibly have? We stayed longer than anyone could expect.*

Hess: *expected by whom? By cowards! By idiots! I will not leave my fellow countrymen behind to be swallowed up by the Americans. WE will not leave them behind!*

Soldier: *but without communication from high command, we won't know when to...*

Hess: *Fuck high command! Our last orders were to stay. So we stay.*

Soldier: *then what will you have us do?*

[Final cinematic:]

Hess monologuing: *When the pocket collapsed, the corridor that led my German brothers to safety became an alleyway of death. Ten thousand died. Forty thousand loyal German troops were captured. But because of the bravery at Trun, many more escaped. My Gruppe did not contain heroes, nor martyrs. We stayed in trun, and fought because we wouldn't have been able to live with the alternative: sleepless nights filled with the memories of those we had left behind. I spared my men that, even if they hated me for it... because at least we did something. At least we tried. May god have mercy on those who ran.*

OPPOSING FRONTS GERMAN CAMPAIGN: OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

[MISSION 1: 'WOLFHEZE']

Voss: *Während den letzten Fünf Jahren hat das Dritten Reich mit seinem begehren nach Lebensraum fast ganz Europa bereicht. All das ändert sich.*

Wolfheze, 6km west of Arnhem.

1258hrs September 17th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr Training Depot

Wolfgang Berger: *Schau sie an. Was machen wir mit ihnen zu tun?*

Aldrich Berger: *Wir bilden sie aus, was sonst?*

Wolfgang: *Father always said you were a positive thinker! These boys and old men are so green they haven't even fired rifles before... ...and yet these are the best Germany can provide us.*

Aldrich: *Enjoy the War while you can, Wolfgang, the peace will be hell. Remember what mother used to say: 'Make Earth your heaven."*

Wolfgang: *If this is heaven, little brother, then we best stay away from hell.*

[Air raid sirens go off]

Wolfgang: *At action stations!*

Deinhard: *Steady up men. Orders from Companieführer!*

Companieführer: *Kampfgruppe, listen up! Man the AA guns and shoot down all enemy craft!*

[Mission Objective: Man the AA-guns]

Wolfgang: *Anti Aircraft batteries manned! Fill the skies with tracers! Aircraft incoming! Fire at will!*

Wolfgang: *Get over to the HQ! There's an AA Battery that needs to be manned!*

[Tactical map]

Deinhard: *Formations of Fighter-Bombers and transports are inbound and wreaking havoc on our Kampfgruppe. We've lost contact with the Feldmarschall's HQ in Arnhem and with the other Division's commanders. Seems the Yanks and the Brits targeted our communications first, as on D-Day.*

Wolfgang: *Untill we re-establish contact, Kampfgruppe Lehr will defend Wolfheze. Have the Panzer Grenadiers man the Anti Aircraft guns at these positions. I have taken the initiative to recall light vehicles from the 113th Regiment to defend against the commandos. We must alert Division Command and Majorgeneral Voss. This is*

no simple attak if the enemy is dropping paratroopers in broad daylight. Stay strong and I'll see you on the other side.

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Make ready all defensive positions! Deploy security screens to intercept any of their assault teams, and defend all Flugabwehrwaffe AA positions!!*

[Mission Objective: Defend the Anti-Aircraft Guns]

Aldrich: *Anti Air defences are being overwhelmed. Provide a security screen and make sure they are manned!*

Deinhard: *They are good shots, I'll give them that!*

Wolfgang: *AA Flugabwehrwaffe Gun under attack! Am Arsch leckern! Get support over there!*

[Tactical map]

Deinhard; *All Kampfgruppe Lehr stations report an apparent halt in enemy activity. Additional gliders were sighted landing heavy equipment nearby. The Tommies are either digging in, or preparing for offensive operations, Hauptmann.*

Wolfgang: *The commandos are likely to try to make a push for Wolfheze. Securing the railyard would give them a base from which to attack Arnhem. Have the Kampfgruppe set up defenses at these critical locations along the railroad. Brother, make sure you man the 88s and target any enemy vehicles you see! Equip the Panzer Grenadiers with Panzerschrecks for additional firepower. Prevent any and all British forces from moving past Wolfheze.*

[Mission Objective: Destroy the Gliders]

Deinhard: *Incoming message from forward sector.*

Wolfgang: *We have three confirmed enemy Glider sightings. Form up and assault their positions! The British will be guarding their Gliders fiercely, destroy them before we are overwhelmed!*

Aldrich: Forward elements report enemy jeeps headed down the road! They're going to try and break through at the rail station!

[Mission Objective: Destroy the Jeep Convoy]

Deinhard: *Incoming message from forward sector. Incoming British Jeeps, heading west of our current location, and should hit the edge of Wolfheze.*

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe! This area is secure. Move to the next target before the jeeps flank out position! Don't let them pass you!*

Deinhard: *Hauptmann Berger, the Jeeps are changing paths again! They're heading to the opposite edge of the village, east of our current position.*

Wolfgang: *You know the drill – form up and move out!*

Wolfgang: *Well done, all of the enemy Jeeps have been stopped! Radio the Division Command Center in Arnhem to mobilize in case of other Airborne attacks.*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 2: 'WOLFHEZE: SEPTEMBER SNOW']

Wolfheze

1330hrs September 17th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

Aldrich: *A September snow is upon us, and on such a warm day no less.*

Wolfgang: *I've seen things you wouldn't believe. Swarms of troopers storming Paris, the power of the Blitzkrieg... A beach made fortress. The beauty of the war machine has subtle power.*

Aldrich: *Our enemy falls from the heavens, Henze.*

[Tactical map]

Aldrich: *Wolfheze is secure, Brother! It is safe to expect the enemy to secure their drop zone and prepare defences. The longer we take, the more time they have to dig in.*

Wolfgang: We still haven't established contact with Division Command and Majorgeneral Voss. Untill we have orders otherwise, our task will be to dislodge the invaders from Wolfheze. Have the Kampfgruppe move in and neutralize the enemy Drop Zones before they have time to get comfortable! In preparation for an assault, requisition reinforcements from the HQ and Kompanie Command, here. That's all Aldrich, I'm counting on you.

[In-game]

Aldrich: *We hold everything south of Wolfheze, but the enemy paraforces are controlling the outlying area. Assemble yourselves into combat groups and move to clear resistance in the Drop Zones.*

[Mission objective: Clear the Drop Zones]

[After capturing a British Hamilkar glider]

Aldrich: *Plans? The British can't be this stupid. They must be fakes. The Royal scum meant to throw us off course.*

Wolfgang: *No matter, we need to give the plans to Voss, he will know what to make of them. Do we have a radio uplink to Geldmarschall's HQ in Arnhem yet? We need to alert Majorgeneral Voss.*

Wolfgang: *Bravo, Kampfgruppe! Three of the Drop Zones have been cleared. Only one remains.*

Wolfgang: *Well executed! You've managed to levy their counter-offensive. Kampfgruppe Lehr remains in control of Wolfheze!*

[Cutscene]

Voss: *Why didn't you radio sooner?*

Aldrich: *It's another one of Tommy's tricks.*

Deinhard: *They want Majorgeneral Voss.*

Voss: *No. Germany is their aim.*

Wolfgang: *What does it mean, Herr Majorgeneral?*

Voss: *Are you familiar with the tale of Hansel and Gretel? We've found the children's crumbs – there will be no way home.*

Voss (narrating): *We are losing more than 70 kilometers a day on the front to British and American forces. They now seek passage into Germany. Holland would be their gateway. The British 1st and 3rd Parachute Battalions are moving towards Arnhem, and the 4th to the rail bridge near Oosterbeek. The American 82nd and 101st Airborne are pushing for Best and Nijmegen. Using their beloved 30th Corps they intend to push up Highway 69 towards Arnhem uniting paratrooper drop zones along their path. Kampfgruppe Lehr is to stall 30th Corps' advancement and destroy the enemy's precious drop zones. We must stop this 'Operation Market Garden'!*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 3: 'OOSTERBEEK']

Oosterbeek, 3km west of Arnhem.

1149hrs September 18th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

[Cutscene]

Aldrich: *To the bridge!*

[In-game]

Aldrich: *Get down the road! We must destroy the bridge before the Tommies lock it down!*

[Mission Objective: Destroy the Bridge using a Goliath]

Aldrich: *Just keep going, men, we're almost there! Clear the area of all enemy units, Kampfgruppen! Verdammt, deploy a Goliath from the Munitions Halftrack.*

Deinhard: *Goliath is in position! Detonate the charges! Blow the Goliath!*

Aldrich: *Kampfgruppe Lehr has done it! The damn Brits and Amis will need to find another way across the river! Wolfgang, it's finished! The bridge is destroyed!*

[Tactical map]

Voss: *Now that the bridge is destroyed, it is imperative that we expand our defensive line. The British 1st Airborne has paused its assault and is probably regrouping. Hauptmann Berger, have your troops establish our front and order your brother to prevent the British from reaching Arnhem. Reports also indicate that paratroopers have taken the heights. Send a combat patrol to the area.*

Wolfgang: We must move quickly and capture these point. We dont know when the commandos will renew their attack. Once the area is secured, the Luftwaffe will be sending in support along with Fallschirmjäger squads.

Aldrich: Voss better know what he's doing, brother. Destroying that bridge also cut off our own reinforcements...

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe Lehr, we now must expand our defences. By securing these two point we can expand our frontlines!*

Aldrich: *Combat groups assemble and move on that command point!*

Wolfgang: *If we have time, secure the target of opportunity as a secondary objective.*

[Mission Objective: Capture Westerbowing Heights]

Wolfgang: *The Westerbouwing Heights are ours, thank Tommy for the presents!*

[Tactical map]

Wolfgang: *Elements of the 1st Airborne enemy combat groups are regrouping in Oosterbeek. They have the intention of making a push beyond Oosterbeek and into Arnhem.*

Voss: *It is essential that we protect the way to Arnhem from every approach. These are the main roads from Oosterbeek to Arnhem. We can expect a fience push to secure the roads, here and here. If, for some reason, we lose ground on these positions, have the Kampfgruppe fall back to these secondary positions. Stay strong, hold your ground, and keep the British out of Arnhem.*

[Mission Objective: Defend the Roads to Arnhem]

Wolfgang: *The RAF is dropping supplies for the British Paratroopers. If you manage to capture all the supply drops, I'll give you a medal.*

Aldrich: *The Fallschirmjäger are now in support of Kampfgruppe Lehr!*

Voss: *Luftwaffe Fallschirmjäger are now in support. These men are efficient hunters and are far better than regular infantry, especially when equipped with assault rifles.*

Aldrich: *Bomber formations inbound! Scheisse! Find cover!*

Aldrich: *The storm is finally here. The British don't have the balls to fly in bad weather.*

Wolfgang: *We've done it! My congratulations, Kampfgruppe! The Majorgeneral will be pleased. The enemy is retreating, and their air assault has been called off! Hold these positions. Do not mount a forward offensive!*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 4: 'HIGHWAY 69']

[Cutscene]

Voss (narrating): *With the bridge at Oosterbeek destroyed, enemy forces must now find a new passage into Arnhem. Tommy's 30th Corps is moving steadily up Highway 69, dubbed, "Hell's Highway". It will be our job to make good on that name. Kampfgruppe Lehr is to block the enemy war machine from furhter advancement.*

Highway 69 near Valkenswaard

1523hrs September 18th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe Lehr at attention! Move into Valkenswaard and clear the lead enemy elements! Form up into combat groups and advance on the target!*

[Mission Objective: Scout the road]

[Tactical map]

Wolfgang: *The Kampfgruppe's reconnaissance reports that the British 30th Corps should be arriving in our sector shortly. Highway 69 will lead them right through the town of Valkenswaard, here. The Tommies' lead elements have already deployed into the town and are currently attempting to establish a base of operations.*

Voss: *The enemy forces are led by British tank commander Earl Wolmer. Move into the city and eliminate his combat group. Once they've withdrawn, garrison the local cathedral, establish a line of supply and set up a forward HQ, here. Procees immediately, we need to infiltrate the town quickly in order to ambush 30th Corps.*

[Mission Objective: Eliminate the recon force in Valkenswaard]

British soldier: *The town isn't safe, we need to pull back and inform the rest of 30th Corps.*

Deinhard: *Commonwealth Command tank eliminated! 30Th Corps forward observers are retreating from the Valkenswaard. We need to establish a forward base of operations and quickly!*

Wolfgang: *Garrison the Cathedral and upgrade it to a Field Barracks. It will act as a forward base of operations for our Kampfgruuppe.*

Aldrich: *A supply line must be in place to support any forward HQ position. Assemble the troops and have them secure this strategic point along the road. It is the only wat to get a supply line operational to forward lines.*

Wolfgang: *We must ready preparations for the British 30th corps.*

Aldrich: *We need to move quickly. Direct additional recruits to begin establishing a base.*

[Tactical map]

Aldrich: The enemy forces have retreated from Valkenswaard. Kampfgruppe Grenadiers have moved in to establish an HQ in the town Cathedral, here. 30Th Corps will be arriving shortly. Previous encounters with the 9th Panzer SS-Division indicate the formation is heavily armored.

Voss: 30th Corps orders are to advance up the highway and link their drop zones through this area. Kampfgruppe Lehr must prevent the British forces from capturing any of these strategic sectors along this roadway and delay the column. Assemble the Kampfgruppe and set up defensive positions just outside the village. Build roadblocks, here and here. If we can delay the 30th Corps untill nightfall, we'll buy enough time for Kampfgruppe Lehr to deal with the additional paratrooper landings to the north.

[Mission Objective: Prepare Ambush for the Armored Column]

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Grenadiers! Assemble yourselves and move to the grid locations north of town. Set up defenses! We need AT weapons and road obstructions, our enemy will be arriving shortly. Move! Take the troops and start booby trapping structures the enemy might use for cover.*

Aldrich: *Kampfgruppen! Additional Marders will be critical in delaying 30th Corps. Set up the Panzer-Jager Kommand structure near the church in order to deploy them. Reinforce the defensive line with those abandoned AT guns.*

Wolfgang: *Call in some Marders! Deploy them around town to ambush any counterattack.*

Wolfgang: *Leutnant Deinhard, assemble a fighting patrol and booby trap that strategic point. If necessary, scorch the area.*

[Cutscene]

Wolfgang: *They must not advance a kilometer up that Highway! Keep your wits about you!*

[Mission Objective: Delay the Armoured Column]

Aldrich: *The 30th corps column has moved into the area! Prepare the assault!*

Deinhard: *Tommy cookers sighted*

Deinhard: *Infantry are inbound and moving to capture! Defend our territory!*

Aldrich: *Enemy forces are gaining ground. Push them back!*

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe don't give up! Hold the road at all costs!*

Deinhard: *We have heavy British armor inbound! Luftwaffe Fighter-Bombers are available to provide air support. Allied planes are grounded and pose no threat. Mark targets of opportunity so the bombers can take them out.*

Wolfgang: *Scorched Earth tactics has been approved by High Command. If we have to, burn the strategic point to deny the enemy access. But remember, it will also impede our forces from using the resources.*

Wolfgang: *Outstanding performance, Kampfgruppe Lehr! 30Th Corps must pull back and regroup. That should delay their advancement until tomorrow morning. Gather your Soldaten, we need to relocate to Best!*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 5: 'BEST']

[Cutscene]

Voss (narrating): *The British 30th Corps has been stalled by Kampfgruppe Lehr preventing any hopes the enemy may have of a hasty advancement. Despite this they continue their progress towards Germany. Enemy movements indicate they will be attempting to cross over the Wilhelmina canal at Best. Kampfgruppe Lehr is to destroy the bridge prior to the arrival of 30th Corps. Do not fail me.*

Best.

1841hrs September 19th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

[Cutscene]

Wolfgang: *...the house is in shambles, Mother says, without a roof. The family has relocated to Uncle's estate in Duisburg.*

Aldrich: *Then tell me dear brother, what in God's good name are we fighting for? The fatherland is destroyed! We have no home!*

Wolfgang: *Give up now and we fight for nothing! Do not let the American propaganda fool you!*

Soldier: *Americans!*

[Mission Objective: Defend Best]

Wolfgang: *American Paratroopers! Defend our positions!*

[Tactical map]

Aldrich: *Brother, we have American paratroopers dropping on our heads! They have already taken the bridge here, and secured a number of drop zones! To make matters worse the rest of our Kampfgruppe is still en route from Best.*

Wolfgang: *We must hold Best until Voss and the troops from Valkenswaard arrive. Aldrich, mobilize the troops. Neutralize the drop zones and delay the 30th Corps until we can link up with Voss and the Kampfgruppe.*

[Mission Objective: Secure the Drop Zones]

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe at attention! The locations must be seized to stop any further Para-drops.*

Deinhard: *Drop Zone is under Kampfgruppen Lehr control!*

Wolfgang: *Forward observers are sighting a massive column moving into the area. We have some time before they arrive, but we cannot let them cross the bridge! The road to Arnhem must be protected!*

Deinhard: Artillery! Get out of the kill-zone!

Wolfgang: *The British 30th Corps has arrived! We must blow that bridge.*

[Tactical map]

Voss: *Hauptmann Berger, we have lost contact with Valkenswaard. The 9th SS is unaccounted for. This means the 30th Corps is pushing hard for Best. We cannot risk allowing them to gain a foothold. The bridge must be destroyed! The Kampfgruppe Lehr demolitions crew has been stalled by engine trouble, but their transport will drop them at this location. As soon as the Pioneers arrive, wire the bridge with demolitions. What we need now is swift action! Destroy that damn bridge!*

[Mission Objective: Destroy the Bridge at Best]

Wolfgang: *The demolitions crew transport has arrived! Get those pioneers to the bridge! Do not let good men die! The pioneers need support. Their work is delicate and they are not easily replaced.*

Wolfgang: *Headquarters wants the bridge destroyed! We need to wire it before the Tommies can cross!*

Wolfgang: *Executed with skill! Well done, Kampfgruppe Lehr, all of the American drop zones are now secured.*

Wolfgang: *The English Dreckskerl must not cross the river! Get those pioneers to wire the bridge!*

Deinhard: *Rockets incoming! Take cover!*

Wolfgang: *That American Calliope will do nothing but harass us. If an opportunity presents itself, silence it!*

[Mission Objective: Destroy the Calliope Rocket battery]

Aldrich: *Gute! With the Calliope neutralized we can focus on wiring the bridge! Finish the job, Kampfgruppen!*

Deinhard: *Du scheisst' mich an detonate the bridge! They must not cross!*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 6: 'ARNHEM: THE LAST BRIDGE']

[Cutscene]

Voss (narrating): *We must now secure Arnhem. Enemy paratroopers control the area and have been holding off German forces for three days now. Elements of the 9th SS-Panzer division have already been laid to waste. If all opposing forces are not neutralized by Kampfgruppe Lehr, our enemies will cross the Rhine and into our homeland without opposition! Germany must not be brought to its knees again as it was in 1918. Destroy the occupiers!*

Arnhem.

0939hrs September 20th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

[Tactical map]

Wolfgang: *British commandos have held the bridge at Arnhem for three days now, giving them clear passage across the Rhine river. 2nd Airborne Battalion is embedded throughout the city. Forward observers indicate the*

enemy has commandeerd a number of captured heavy weapons. In addition to these pockets of rsistance, the urban terrain of Arnhem is riddled with wrecks and blockades. A clear path may probe difficult to find.

Voss: *Our success has become increasingly critical. Königstigers, King Tigers, are in support to assist with blockade removal. Assemble them into combat groups with infantry and advance into the city! I will make additional armor support available once Kampfgruppe Lehr has secured these roads to the bridge. Without airdrops to resupply, or 30th Corps reinforcements, the British para forces are now facing grave circumstances. Capturing these two munitions depots, will effectively cut off their supply chain, and starve out the Englishmen.*

[Mission Objective: Secure the roads to the Bridge]

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe Lehr, it is the time for action! Use the King Tiger to forge a path to the main roads!*

Aldrich: *Incoming artilley fire! They're using our Nebs! One of the depots must be supplying those Nebelwerfers! Cut off their supplies! The Brits need the ammo to keep firing, take them!*

Deinhard: *Get a security screen around that Tiger Tank! Use the troops!*

Deinhard: *Get repair crews on that Tiger! Deploy a security screen around its position!*

Deinhard: *Kampfgruppe controls the Road, area secured!*

Deinhard: *Tiger Tank needs Grenadier support! Cover his advance!*

Aldrich: *They captured 88s! Alert the vehicle crews!*

Soldier: *Nebelwerfer ammunition captured and secured!*

British soldier: *German's are starving us out, sir. Supplies are at 35%*

Aldrich: *Mein Kampfgruppen, the Munitions Depot is secured! I advise we position a security picket to defend the captured Munitions Depot, the dogs will surely fight for their supplies!*

Wolfgang: *There is only one supply target left. Move to the grid location, seure and capture the area!*

Deinhard: *We need infantry around that Tiger!*

Deinhard: *We have to deny the English movement along the river. The boats moored at the dock must be destroyed.*

[Mission Objective: Destroy all River Barges]

Deinhard: *Our King Tiger is taking a lot of fire! Supress the enemy Anti Tank weapons before we advance!*

Deinhard: *Kampfgruppe has secured the second Road into Arnhem! The road is now open for reinforcements. Wolfgang, all road objectives are secure. It's only a matter of time untile the British come walking out!*

Wolfgang: *Form up the combat groups and wait for new orders.*

Deinhard: *Hauptmann Berger, we have an incoming radio transmission from Majorgeneral Voss.*

Wolfgang: *Patch it through, Deinhard.*

[Tactical map]

Voss: *I have just received a report indicating elements of the 9th SS-Panzer division have fallen to the enemy in Nijmegen. The Tommies have taken the bridge! The only thing between Kampfgruppe Lehr and 30th Corps is a twenty kilometer stretch of open road on Highway 69. It is now critical to secure the paths into the city and capture that god forsaken bridge. This is our chance to break their backs. Their command and control is being orchestrated from the buildings on either side of the bridge. Secure the area and capture these points. Be swift! Time is not something we have the luxury of. Arnhem is almost ours!*

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe Lehr, we must take the bridge!!! 30th Corps has advances beyond Nijmegen and will be arriving shortly!*

Wolfgang: *The paratroopers defensive positions are too strong! Secure the supply depots before the main assault on the bridge and we will drain them of ammo!*

Aldrich: *Forward elements of the 30th Corps are inbound!*

Wolfgang: *Do not worry, they can no longer reach Arnhem. Destroy anything that tries to cross the bridge.*

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe! Push onto the bridge! Neutralize those defensive positions! Adjust the axis of advance! Blitz the English and secure that bridge! Our sheer numbers will overpower them! Move to secure the bridge!*

Deinhard: *Flak 88 ammunition depot captured!*

British soldier: *Supplies are at 15%. We need some god damn support! Maintain supply lines!!*

Aldrich: *The second depot is ours. Now it is a waiting game, I doubt the British will last long without munitions. The supply objectives have been secured!*

Deinhard: *Kampfgruppe Lehr now controls the bridge deck!*

British soldier: *Out of ammo, God save the King.*

Deinhard: *Haha, the bridge is ours! Wolfgang, we've done it! The bridge across the Rhine is ours!*

Wolfgang: *Excellent work, Kampfgruppe Lehr! Clear the wreckage on the roadway and call up command. The bridge is open for business.*

Deinhard: *What should we do with all these prisoners?*

Wolfgang: *Let's line them up and march them out!*

[Cutscene]

Wolfgang: *Come on, keep it moving!*

Aldrich: *These men fought well, the sould be proud. Strange, for a second I thought I knew that one.*

Wolfgang: *My brother, they are the enemy. Don't foget that.*

Aldrich: *Are you so sure about that? They look like soldiers to me.*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 7: 'RETURN TO VALKENSWAARD']

[Cutscene]

Voss (narrating): *Now that we have Arnhem in our grasp, Kampfgruppe Lehr can focus on delaying and disorganising the 30th Corps' advancement up Highway 69. Dutch intelligence indicates a set of British Hqs has been established in Valkenswaard since we last defeated them there. We will cut off the heads of British command, and let them bathe in their own bitter blood, sending any remaining enemy forces into total disarray.*

North of Valkenswaard.

0520hrs. September 22nd, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

[Cutscene]

Wolfgang: *Wait!*

Aldrich: *Deinhard!*

[Leutnant Deinhard is shot and killed by British machinegun fire]

Aldrich: *Deinhard?*

Wolfgang: *Father gave you a good brain, now use it!*

[In-game]

Voss: *Oberleutnant Deinhard died for a noble effort. We have now identified the main line of 30th Corps' defences here, in Valkenswaard. I'm relying on you, Hauptmann Berger, to locate the remaining enemy HQs. Expect the 30th Corps' HQ to be heavily defended. Those brits know a thing or two about defences. English officers are renowned for their pompousness. They'll be sure to commandeer every division in the Corps to hold the town. I've provided Kampfgruppe Lehr additional support with the use of the Schwerer Panzerjäger V Jagdpanther. The Jagdpanther can handle anything our Kampfgruppe may encounter. Your brother, Aldrich, has reported to Oosterbeek in order to coördinate with Kampfgruppe's defensive effort there. I'm relying on you, Wolfgang, to locate and destroy the remaining 30th Corps HQs in Valkenswaard. Good hunting, Hauptmann Berger!*

[Mission Objective: Destroy the British Command Posts]

[In-game]

Voss: *Kampfgruppe, we can aid our forces in Arnhem and Oosterbeek by crippling the Allies convoy there. Take out a number of their canopy and open-topped supply trucks – destroy the convoy!*

[Mission Objective: Destroy Supply Trucks]

Voss: *Ausgezeichnete Arbeit Panzertruppen! The British Armor Command Truck has been neutralized! That will limit 30th Corps' access to tank reinforcements.*

Wolfgang: *They're breaking contact! Don't let the HQ Command Truck get away!*

Wolfgang: *Majorgeneral, it's done! All British Command Vehicles have been destroyed, objective completed and waiting for new orders.*

Voss: *Excellent Wolfgang, with 30th Corps' Command elimitated the remaining forces in the area will be left in total disarray! Your efforts have ensured the British 30th Corps will never set a foot across the Rhine! Assemble the troops and relocate to Oosterbeek in support of your brother Aldrich's efforts there.*

[Mission Complete]

[MISSION 8: 'OOSTERBEEK: DER HEXENKESSEL']

[Cutscene]

Voss (narrating): The operation Market Garden will soon be no more. Kampfgruppe Lehr has destroyed any hope the British and American forces have of holding on to their foolish ambitions. Despite this they continue. British paratroopers have dropped on the south side of the Rhine in an effort to save their brothers in Oosterbeek. Like cornered tigers they will fight hard to draw German blood. This will be their final stand.

Rhine River near Oosterbeek.

1330hrs, September 24th, 1944

Kampfgruppe Lehr

[In-game]

[Mission Objective: Establish Defensive Perimeter along the River]

[Tactical map]

Aldrich: *Another battalion of British paratroopers has established a position across the river in Drier. They are attempting to cross the river and reinforce remnants of 1st Airborne entrenched at Oosterbeek. The paratroopers will be pushing across the river from a number of directions.*

Wolfgang: *Set up our defences along these point along the river, here, here and here. I suggest that we run layers of barbed wire and butterfly mines. We will be defencing on two sides! Stay aware of enemy activities in Oosterbeek as you set up defences along the river. The enemy will be attempting to establish a line of supply along these paths. Emply a mobile defensive strategy in reaction to the Airbornes' varied tactics. Stand strong and be vigilant, brother! Once we defeat the enemy here our country will be safe and Holland secure again. We will return home victorious!*

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe Lehr at attention! The enemy is still rallying on the opposite shore. Stay ready and prepare defenses! We need barbed wire, mines, and anti-infantry weapons lining the beaches.*

Wolfgang: *Raft assault! We have enemy boats sighted!*

[Mission Objective: Defeat the British Counter-attack]

Wolfgang: *Air Drop some SD-2 Butterfly Bombs on the bank!*

Wolfgang: *Enemy contact in Oosterbeek! Block their advance! They're pinching us from both sides! Make sure to maintain a strong defensive screen along the entire riverbank. Let's cover our asses as best we can!*

Wolfgang: *The Howitzers are putting holes in our defenses. Call up artillery units and destroy their positions if the opportunity presents itself.*

[Mission Objective: Destroy the Artillery]

Wolfgang: *Commandos are trying to break out of Oosterbeek! They've got armor! Maintain our defenses! Once the raft assault is complete we can focus on the commandos in Oosterbeek.*

Wolfgang: *More rafts! Don't let them through! Crush them!!*

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppe! They're attacking en masse! Enemy battle group at the river! We must prevent them from advancing!*

[Tactical map]

Aldrich: *The rafts have stopped! It looks like they are giving up!*

Wolfgang: *This is it! The commandos holed up in Oosterbeek are the only thing between us and victory. The main HQ of the resistance is here. We need to maintain the pressure on the forces in Oosterbeek to ensure victory. Your orders, Majorgeneral Voss?*

Voss: *Encircle Oosterbeek and engage the remaining commandos. They're desparate, but no less dangerous. Have the armor move in and perhaps they will see reason. Otherwise, crush them. Until all resistance has been neutralized, we cannot assure victory, and without victory here, all will be lost. There will be no going back.*

[In-game]

Wolfgang: *Kampfgruppen at attention! The push from the Rhine has been stopped! We are almost finished here!*

[Mission Objective: Defeat the British in Oosterbeek]

Aldrich: *Assemble combat groups, flank the town of Oosterbeek, and eliminate or neutralize all remaining forces.*

Soldier: *Hauptmann Berger, sit! Aldrich Berger was embedded with that infantery squad, he has been killed in action. Do I have further orders?*

Wolfgang: *Verdammt/Verflucht noch mal.* [Wolfgang says 'Verdammt' but the subtitle says 'Verflucht'] *Update me on his status when you can, Axel, you are now Leutnant. Assemble the men and move on the objective. Henze, der Teufel wird sich den Tommy holen!*

Leutnant Axel: *Yes, Hauptmann Berger. Kampfgruppe Lehr! Quickly, we must neutralize the enemy!*

Leutnant Axel: *They're falling back! Block their route!*

Wolfgang: *The remaining enemy forces have surrendered! Excellent work, Kampfgruppe Lehr! Operation Market Garden is no more.*

[Cutscene]

Wolfgang (talking to Aldrich's corpse): *It won't be easy telling mother; she always told me to look after you, brother. You were right. Where have we gone?*

Voss: *Wolfgang, we have done it! Though it appears I have lost my cross.*

Wolfgang: *Sir, I've lost friend, brother and home; forgive me if I am not overjoyed.*

Voss: *Oh yes, my condolences. Repay your brother with service. Aldrich died for our country.*

Wolfgang: *Tell me sir, do you honestly believe we still have a country?*

Voss: *I don't know son, that is for the gods to answer.*

[Epilogue]

30th Corps was stopped only 9.4km away from Arnhem and the bridge over the Rhine to Germany. The river would remain a barrier to the Allied advance until March of 1945. Within a year the regime that controlled Germany crumbled, and the War ended in Europe. Wolfgang Berger died in 1989, in the rebuilt family estate in Munich.

[Mission Complete]