

Bank Raid 1945 Style!

A fictional WWII article by
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'I want the Gold and I want it now'!

Introduction

This is a WWII small action article, based around an *actual* event that took place in the battered German capital city during the spring of 1945. The article and scenario describes a surreal armed bank raid by members of the SS security office, (SD) on the German Reichsbank in Berlin on the 25th of April 1945.

It was and still is the biggest bank raids in criminal history, the leader of the gang escaped with almost \$80 Million Dollars of gold bullion, money and precious jewels, (\$2.8 Billion Dollars in today's money)!

In this article I want to suggest an alternative RPG scenario to that which actually happened, enabling gamers to use their miniatures in a slightly different way than originally intended?

The prelude

On the third of February 1945, a Saturday almost 1,000 USAAF bombers pounded the German capital, the cities destruction was almost complete, most important government buildings were hit and devastated. At least 2, 000 civilians died during the air assault. Of significance to this article the German Reichsbank, (similar to England and Wales bank of England) was smashed by US bombs exposing its impregnable underground vaults.

The bank was no longer safe so the banks president decided to move a large portion of the banks gold, precious metals and bank note reserves out of the city to deep mines in Merkers, Thungaria, (captured a week later by the 90th US Infantry Division).

The capture of the Merker's mine was a disaster for the Nazi Government, the remaining treasure in the Reichsbank, (including looted commodities from death/concentration camps and gold stolen from occupied countries) was moved south to Bavaria to be hidden from the advancing allies. The RSHA or main state security office run by SS General Kaltenbrunner had already began secreting their ill-gotten

gains in Bavaria and Austria in anticipation of funding a Nazi led 'partisan' war after the inevitable defeat of Germany. It made sense to the panicking staff at the Reichsbank to send their remaining reserves south too.

The bulk of the Reichsbank reserves left Berlin on the 13th of April 1945 for the Bavarian Town of Mittenwald on two trains, the RSHA hoard left separately.

The 5, 000 staff of the Reichsbank moved in to new premises with the remainder of their reserves, (kept working so they could continue to pay civil servants wages and prop up the regime) and waited as the Soviet juggernaut came closer to the capital).

A Plot Is Hatched!

On the 23rd of April 1945 SS General Kaltenbrunner as usual half drunk on Cognac ordered 39-year-old SS Brigadenfuhrer Spacil the chief of the Budget administration department of the RSHA to his office, (Spacil was chief of Amt II). Spacil a favourite crony of Kaltenbrunner's was given the most extraordinary order by his drunken commander, he was ordered to take an armed detachment of SD troops to the new Reichsbank building and seize by all mean possible the remaining jewels, securities and foreign exchange assets from the building!

Spacil immediately left Kaltenbrunner's office and arranged transport and men for the unusual job. There was no time to loose, already the Eastern Front was collapsing and the Soviets were almost upon the capital city. He commandeered three trucks from the RSHA motor pool at Prinz-Albrechstrasse, (probably 3 ton trucks) and drove to the bank. Once they SD arrived at the temporary Reichsbank General Spacil at gunpoint ordered the terrified bank staff to hand over the assets he was sent to collect. The recalcitrant, frightened staff watched by the threatening armed fanatics of the SD loaded the trucks with the banks remaining stock and could only watch helplessly as the SS gang drove away with 23 Million RM worth of loot!

SS General Spacil quickly made his get away and drove his small column to a Berlin airfield, under the guns of the advancing Red Army flew his precious cargo south to Salzburg. Transferring the loot to commandeered lorries he drove to Burgwies. Some of the loot was

handed over to RSHA officials, buried or hidden, but by far the largest part of the haul was given to Otto Skorzeny the head of the RSHA commando department, Amt VI/5. Spacil spent the next couple of days hiding the rest of his treasure, burying most of it around Rauris and Taxenbach.

The Scenario

History is full of what ifs? What if Spacil had arrived at the bank and its officials had stood up to the feared secret policeman? Perhaps doubting his paperwork and orders they call the police and a fight between the bank officials, local cops, Feldjager and SD resulted?

Lets assume that Spacil and his squad of secret police thugs arrive at the bank they are delayed by a bank bureaucrat arguing over protocols, suddenly a dreaded Feldjager patrol turn up, real Army hero collectors with hanged corpses in their eyes, their automatic suspicions aroused by the sight of armed SD men hanging around a Berlin street when there is fighting to be done?

A fierce argument breaks out, threats are issued and suddenly a fire- fight breaks out! Then add to the fray a detachment of Bank Volkssturm, (militia) to the mix and you have a very unusual WWII scenario?

Suggested Rules

1946 Storm of Eagles© rules of engagement of course, available as a free pdf download from the TQD Castings web page.

Terrain

You need a small street dominated by 19c style buildings. A courtyard leading to a large building will be needed for the trucks to park in. I would use a building with at least two floors and if possible a basement, so you have more room to fight.

Alternatives

An alternative scenario could be a gang of escaping French POW's chance upon the loading of the lorries and pitch in to steal the valuables?

Or perhaps a crowd of curious Berliners chance upon the scene and decide to 'help' themselves....?

Figure availability

I am not aware of any 1/72 scale miniature figure company, (my preferred scale) that manufacture's SD troops. Substitute with lightly armed Wehrmacht infantry in long boots, paint on the appropriate insignia.

Both C-P Models and Battlefield Miniatures manufacture Feldjager troops.

You need armed civilians, (depending on the scenario) and unarmed civilians to represent the bank staff. At least twenty large boxes will be needed to represent the valuables.

SD Uniform Notes

The SD was created in 1931 until 1938 to basically spy on the SS and the country, they played a significant part in the Nazi's genocide polices. They wore the Allgemeine Black uniform. The pearl Grey uniform with slash type pockets was issued in 1938, initially the Waffen SS version was issued, during the war it was common for SD troops to wear the Wehrmacht 1936 or 42 field Grey uniform with appropriate SD insignia.

The arms of service colour worn on the shoulder straps and headgear was Toxic Green, Senior Officers wore white on their cap and occasionally are seen with white piping on their shoulder straps.

The grey/silver national Eagle was worn on the upper left arm, on the extreme lower left arm was worn a diamond badge with SD woven in it. The right hand collar patch was left blank; rank was displayed on the right hand collar patch.

Tunic collar was usually worn open; the shirt was either white or light brown? The SD was issued it's own lightweight helmet, distinctive with a dip in the brim and rear edge, shallower than the Army M35/42 type.

SD personnel were entitled to wear any 'combat' awards earned with the regular armed forces before joining the SD or 'won' fighting partisans or participating in the destruction of the Jews in the East?

Conclusions

SS General Josef Spacil was a career SD officer. Born in 1907 in Munich Bavaria. Before his assignment at RSHA he had been the chief administrator of SS Oberabschnitt Donau, (SS district Danube) under SS General Ernst Kaltenbrunner. When Kaltenbrunner succeeded Reinhardt Heydrich (the dreaded head of

RSHA assassinated in Prague) he brought Spacil with him to head the Administration and Finance department of the RSHA. This largely unknown department was in charge of SD budgets, payrolls, legislation and confiscations. Basically Spacil's Department handled all the valuables the SS stole from the victims of genocide and state terror. There is some evidence that a sub office from the Administration department also provided technical assistance in the gassing of Jewish people in the East?

Spacil may have been on the staff of SS Oberabschnitt Ukraine based at Kiev, I haven't been able to confirm this, but it was usual for SD members to spend short periods in the East getting their 'hands dirty' a duty seen as a right of passage by members of the SD and way to improve their career prospects in the SD!

Spacil was Kaltenbrunner's paymaster, 'Spatz' as he was known knew where all the bodies were buried, the dirty secrets and knew where the profits from SS murder were hidden.

After Spacil hid the remaining loot from his raid he disguised himself as an SS Corporal and surrendered to the US Army in Bavaria. While attempting to bribe his way out of a POW camp he was betrayed by his fellow captives and forced to reveal his hiding places.

Biography

Ger. security and police soldier 1939-45 G. Williamson

Nazi Gold – Ian Sayer and D. Botting