

Gerald R. Kleinfeld

## **THE SPANISH BLUE DIVISION IN THE GERMAN ARCHIVES: INVESTIGATIONS INTO GERMAN DOCUMENTS ON THE 250. INFANTRY DIVISION**

At the end of the Second World War, all of the German archives fell into the hands of the invading Allied Powers. Some were kept in Germany, but others were removed to foreign locations. The United States and the United Kingdom, aware that these documents would ultimately be returned to a democratic Germany, were intent that they should be available to recognized scholars, regardless of future German law. As a result, the United States began a massive program of microfilming and indexing the German documents. These copies were intended to be kept in United States Archives after the return of the German originals, and were placed under the administration of archivists specifically able to deal with documents in German. These archivists were assisted by a number of scholars recruited from the American academic community. The project was hasty, but not inefficient, and it was underfunded, but usable indices were developed. The Spanish Blue Division was sent into the Leningrad theater, under the command of German Army Group North. The records of this Army Group and its subordinate units have survived and are still held in the National Archives in microfilm form.

The German Archives reveal that the Spaniards were dispatched first to Hof, to the training facility in Grafenwöhr, where they were issued uniforms and equipment. There, and on the way to the Russian Front, the initial opinions held by the German military



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officers of these Spanish officers and men was that they were not comparable to Germans. Such negative opinions were reinforced by the cultural differences between the two peoples. The first division commander, General Agustín Muñoz Grandes, did his best to dispel German criticism and informed his troops that the political AND military situation demanded that they give their best. The Germans were not only thinking of the Soviet Union, because their greater war plans might encompass an invasion of Spain to secure both vital war materiel and also Gibraltar. Both Francisco Franco and his generals in Russia were aware of this. Operation Felix was the plan for a German invasion of Spain. So, Spain was being defended in Russia.

