

awarded the Knight's Cross. Within two days the bridgehead had been almost completely destroyed by Estonian operations, but meanwhile, a new Soviet offensive needed the defenders' attention.

On the east bank of the river positions near the village of Lilienbach were attacked by Soviet troops. Units of the I./SS-Freiwilligen-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 48 "General Seyffard" were dislodged from the village.⁴⁸

The Wehrmachtsbericht explained the battles:⁴⁹

»In the Pleskau and Narva area the Bolsheviks continued their attacks with fresh reinforcements. Heer and Waffen-SS troops battered their assault in rigorous fighting, halted local raids and destroyed 17 enemy tanks.«

On the night of March 6/7, 1944 Soviet bombing raids focused on the city center, factory and housing districts, marking the beginning of a steadily intensifying bombing campaign.⁵⁰ Large numbers of planes flew overhead on intensive bombing runs. The railroad bridge was blown up when a bomb hit the prepared demolition charge. The suburbs and inner city of Narva were completely leveled by the aerial bombardment and many casualties were incurred as a result.

On the next night, the dreaded planes were back. This time, though they converged on the southern part of the bridgehead near Kreenholm. Twelve hours of sustained bombing raids left the defenders in the city stunned.⁵¹

Soon, Soviet troops were attacking all the villages on the east bank of the Narva River. At 0700 hours a Soviet artillery barrage began to fall on the positions of SS-Freiwilligen-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 48 "General Seyffard"; it was to last for two and a half hours. The 63rd Guards Rifle Division, supported by some 25 tanks and assault guns, attacked the narrow road south of Lilienbach, but SS-Oberscharführer Philipp Wild⁵², a tank commander in the SS-Panzer-Abteilung 11 "Hermann von Salza", was credited with destroying 12 of them. Two Dutch anti-tank cannons destroyed a similar number of armored vehicles. SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 11 claimed five or six, while Wehrmacht and SS artillery

⁴⁸ Vincx/Schotanius, page 188

⁴⁹ Wehrmachtsberichte, page 50

⁵⁰ "Bombs burst everywhere in the inner city and buildings collapsed like houses of cards. SS-Pionier-Bataillon 11 suffered a large number of killed at Petri square." (Tieke, page 75)

⁵¹ As if twelve hours of bombing were not enough, Soviet artillery was unleashed on the city once the planes left. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 24 "Danmark" lost 34 vehicles, 13.(IG)/SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 24 "Danmark" lost a third of its guns, and 14.(Flak) lost two thirds of theirs. (Tieke, pages 75-76)

⁵² Philipp Wild - Knight's Cross awarded on 21.3.1944. (Scherzer, page 757) See Appendix page 53

claimed a further number.⁵³ SS-Freiwilligen-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 49 “de Ruyter” was not so lucky and was dislodged from the south of Lilienbach.⁵⁴



Pictured is the bandaged SS Danish volunteer Kurt Tebring. Tebring was awarded the Iron Cross I. Class for actions at Narva in 1944 as the tank driver of the Knight's Cross winner Philipp Wild. (PK)

On March 9 the Wehrmachtsbericht announced:⁵⁵

»Southwest of Narva, our counter-attacks gained ground against persistent enemy defense. To accomplish this the 20th Estonian SS-Brigade, under command of SS-Oberführer Augsberger, with Germanic volunteers of a SS-Panzerkorps annihilated both enemy bridgeheads during several days of fighting and caused them severe losses. Renewed Soviet attacks were denied after destroying 14 enemy tanks.«

⁵³ The daily report written for March 9 says “Two more tanks destroyed. Since the morning of March 1, the total score has become 24 tanks by now.” (Kriegstagebuch of 4. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Brigade “Nederland” : 9.3.1944)

⁵⁴ Kriegstagebuch (war diary) of 4. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Brigade “Nederland” : 9.3.1944

⁵⁵ Wehrmachtsberichte, page 53