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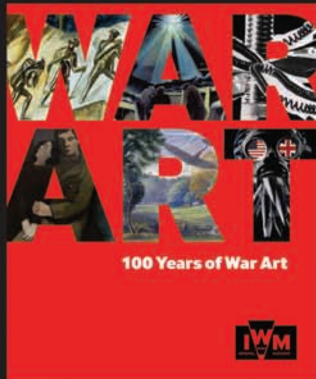

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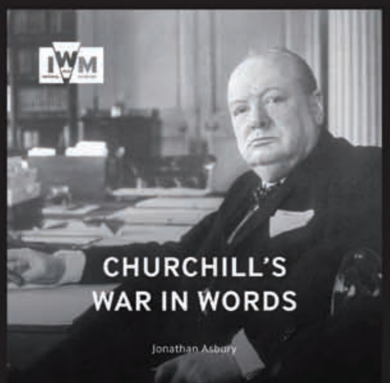

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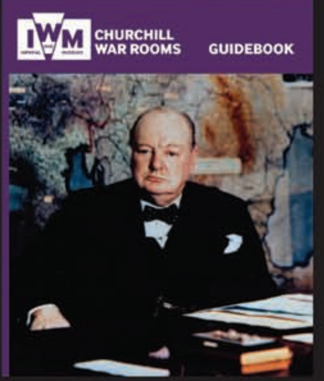

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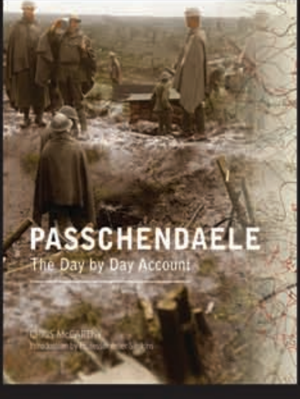

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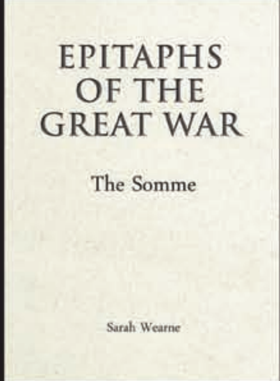

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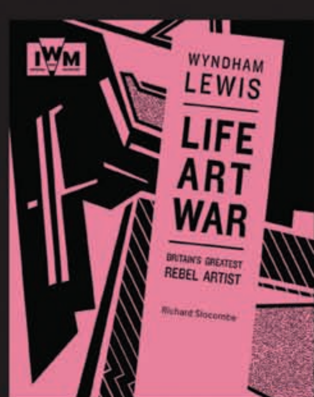

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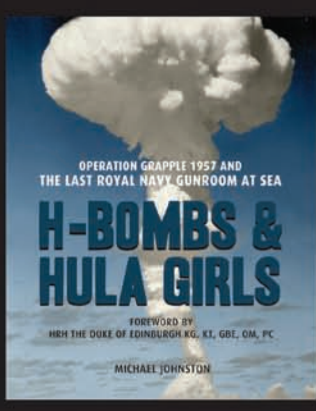

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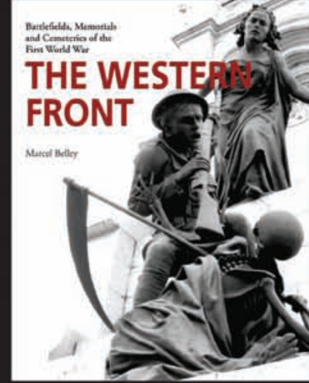

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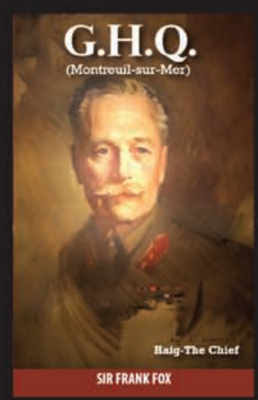

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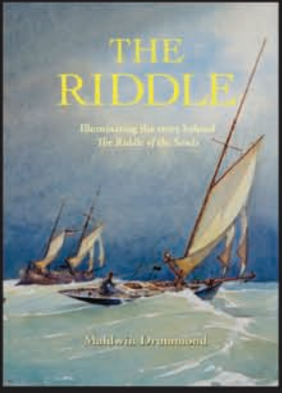

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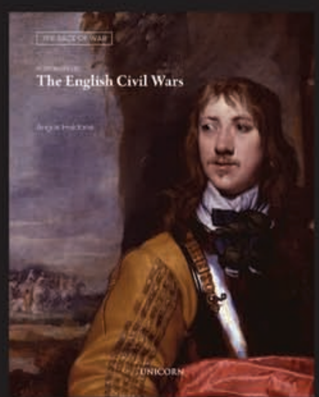

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Cover: During the Hundred Years' War, when kings still waged war along side their soldiers, French king John II is shown on foot, bloody sword in hand, shortly before his surrender at Poitiers. See our story on the Battle of Crecy, the first major land battle of the war, page 32. Painting by Graham Turner, akg-images / Osprey Publishing / Poitiers 1356

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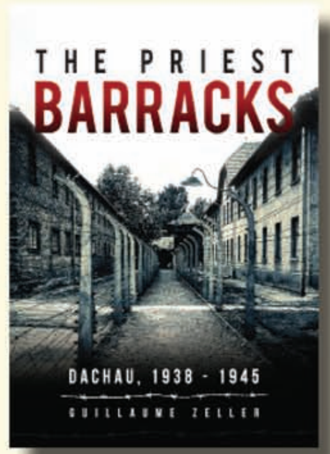

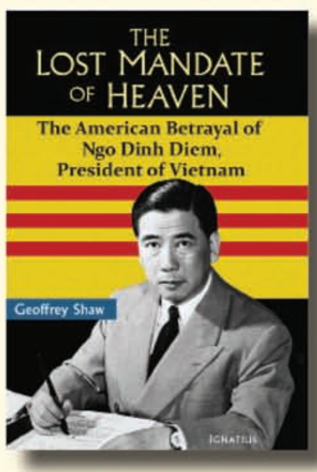

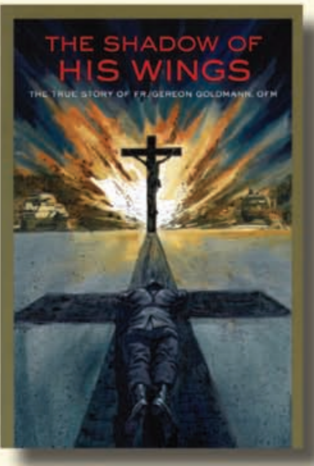

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editorial

Holly Springs was Van Dorn's ticket to fame.

THE HORSEMEN CHARGED INTO THE TOWN FROM the northeast guns blazing and screaming the hair-raising Rebel yell. Yankees wearing their sleepwear struggled to get out of their tents in the dawn attack and then ran for their lives. The railroad depot of Holly Springs, Mississippi, was under attack on December 20, 1862.

Confederate Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn had three cavalry brigades totaling 3,500 men for the raid. Colonel Robert C. Murphy, commanding 1,500 Illinois cavalry and infantry deployed in three locations around the town, had failed to put his troops on alert even though had advance warning.

"We struck the camp like a thunderbolt," wrote Colonel A.F. Brown. "The sleeping Federals were partially aroused by the wild cheer given General Van Dorn [by his men], but before the echoes ceased to reverberate, we had literally ridden over them."

The catalyst for the raid was Lt. Gen. John Pemberton's desire to disrupt the advance of Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee as it pushed toward Vicksburg. Van Dorn had failed miserably as an army commander in 1862. Pemberton, who replaced Van Dorn, retained him to lead his cavalry.

As a prewar member of the U.S. Army's regular cavalry, Van Dorn relished a chance to apply his aptitude for cavalry operations. Van Dorn was to suppress the enemy guarding the depot, carry off as much war matérial as possible, and burn the rest.

Van Dorn assembled his raiders at Granada, Mississippi. Grant's army was bivouacked at Oxford blocking the most direct path. On December 16, Van Dorn led his horse soldiers east and then north.

Locals informed Murphy the night of December 19-20 that a Rebel cavalry column was approaching the town. The Union colonel wired Grant, probably hoping for reinforcements. Murphy's troops did not put any of his three groups of soldiers on alert. One group of Prairie State infantry was encamped at the railroad station and another in the town. The Union cavalry was bivouacked at the fairgrounds.

The cavalrymen were the only ones who put up a fight. They formed a hollow square and drew their sabers. Van Dorn ordered an attack from various directions. When the rebels broke through one side of the square, 150 Union horsemen managed to escape by riding out of town. Confederate troopers, who had endured 18 months of hardship and rationing, were astounded at the amount of war matérial in the town. Almost every building was packed to the roof with supplies.

Van Dorn and his officers supervised the removal of arms, ammunition, medicine, clothing, blankets, and horse equipment. They then proceeded to torch the warehouses, machine shops, and sutler shacks. The troopers rode off as thick black clouds roiled into the already overcast sky. Grant dispatched several columns of troops to intercept Van Dorn before he could reach the safety of Confederate lines, but none succeeded.

Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest conducted a concurrent raid through West Tennessee against the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Realizing his long supply line was highly vulnerable, Grant retreated to the Mississippi-Tennessee border for the rest of the winter.

When he transferred to Middle Tennessee in February 1863, Van Dorn committed adultery with a married woman living in Spring Hill. Her husband stormed into his headquarters and gunned him down at his desk. In less than six months, Van Dorn had gone from hero to villain.

—*William E. Welsh*

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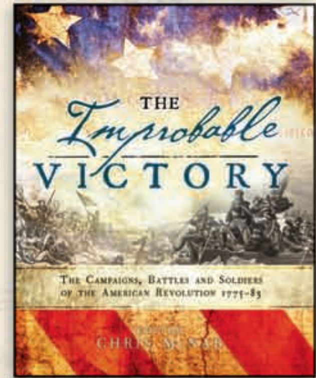

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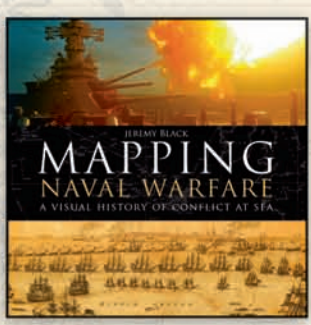

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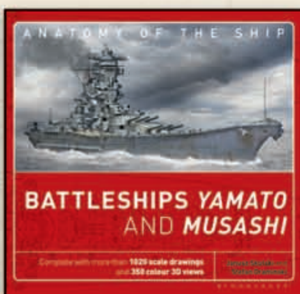

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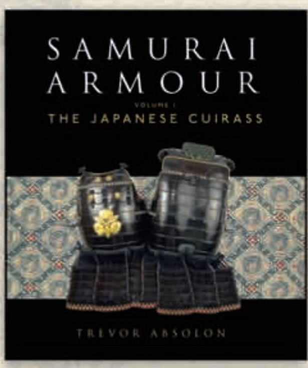

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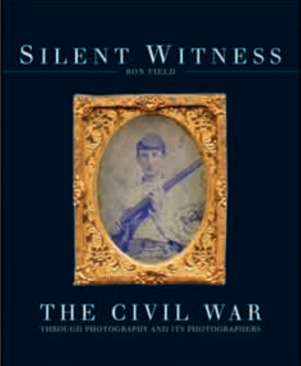

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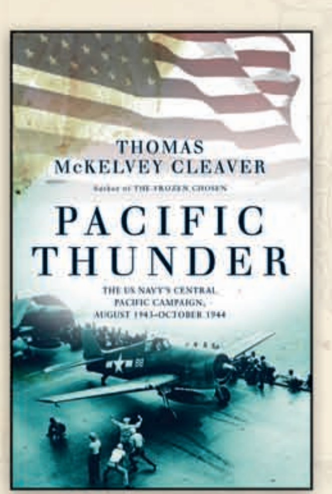

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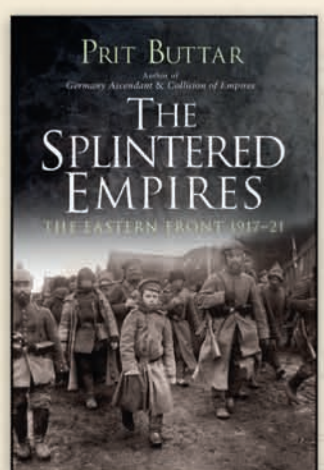

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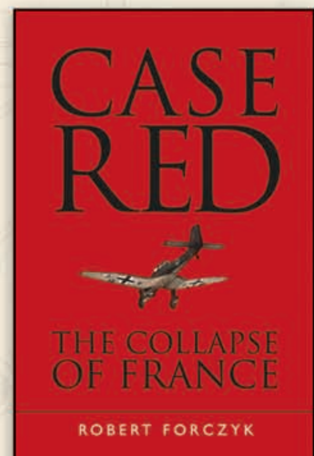

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By William F. Floyd, Jr.

Confederate Earl Van Dorn did not have the right stuff to succeed as an army commander, but he excelled as a cavalry general.

Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn (above) suffered a major defeat at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in March 1862 due to a lack of coordination among several different Confederate commands.

CONFEDERATE MAJ. GEN. EARL VAN DORN HAD A GLARING FLAW. Although the Mississippi-born general had a son and daughter from his marriage to Caroline Godbold, he committed adultery on multiple occasions. "Let the women alone until after the war is over," a Southern woman warned him. "I cannot do that for it is all I am fighting for," he replied. The Southern cavalier was an amateur poet, an incorrigible romantic, and considered one of finest horsemen in the prewar U.S. Army.

Earl Van Dorn was born near Port Gibson, Mississippi, on September 17, 1820. He was the son of Peter A. Van Dorn, who served as a judge in the Claiborne County Probate Court. Van Dorn had the good fortune to be a great nephew of U.S. President Andrew Jackson. Jackson assisted the young Van Dorn in his quest to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Van Dorn, who graduated number 52 in the class of 1842, was only four rungs from the bottom of his class. During his troubled education at West Point, he was nearly dismissed for excessive demerits.

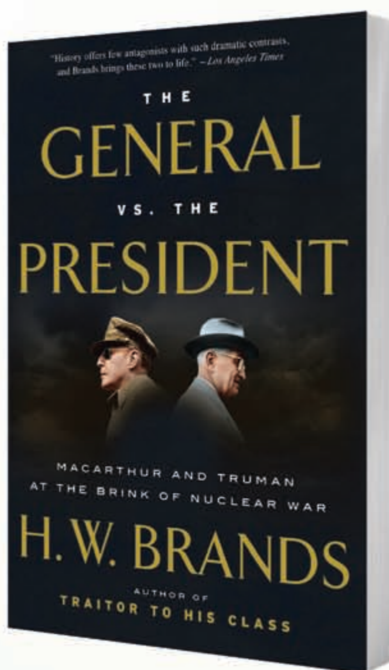
After his graduation, brevet Second Lieutenant Van Dorn served in the 7th U.S. Cavalry stationed at Fort Pike, Louisiana. While serving at the federal arsenal at Fort Morgan, Alabama, he wed Godbold in 1843. He eventually was transferred with his regiment to the star-shaped Fort Texas on the north bank of the Rio Grande in what is now Brownsville, Texas. The fort was situated in contested territory that the Mexicans claimed belonged to them. He was one of the soldiers who defended the fort against an attack in May 1846 by General Mariano Arista's Mexican Army.

He tramped with General Zachary Taylor's army into northern Mexico in September 1846 and fought with the victorious American forces in the Battle of Monterey. The 7th U.S. Cavalry was transferred to General Winfield Scott's army for the pending expedition to the Mexican Gulf port of Veracruz in early 1847. Having received a promotion to first lieutenant, Van Dorn served as an aide-de-camp on the staff of General Persifor F. Smith, who commanded the 1st Brigade of the 2nd Division in Scott's army. He would be in the thick of the fighting as the moved war into the Valley of Mexico.

All: Library of Congress

Although he had been an unruly student, he appeared to be establishing himself as a fine soldier. He was brevetted captain for gallantry at Cerro Gordo, and again brevetted major for his bravery at Contreras and Churubusco. "No young officer came out of the Mexican War with a more enviable reputation, earning commendations for his actions at Fort Texas, Cerro Gordo, and Mexico City," wrote Maj. Gen. Dabney H. Maury of Van Dorn's performance during the war.

Following the war, he was transferred to various posts, winding up at one point fighting in the Third Seminole War. In March 1855, Van Dorn was promoted to captain in the 2nd U.S. Cavalry and sent to serve with his unit on the Western frontier.



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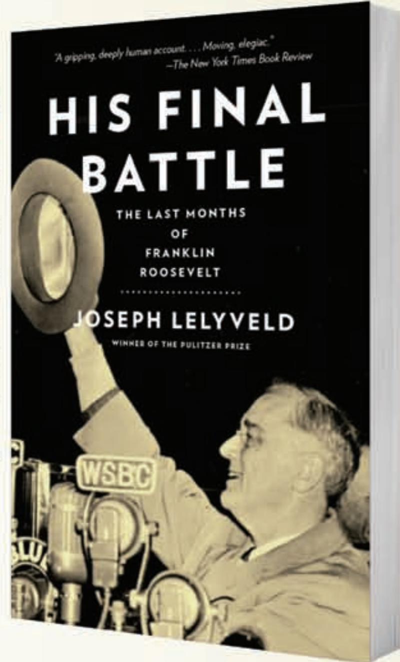

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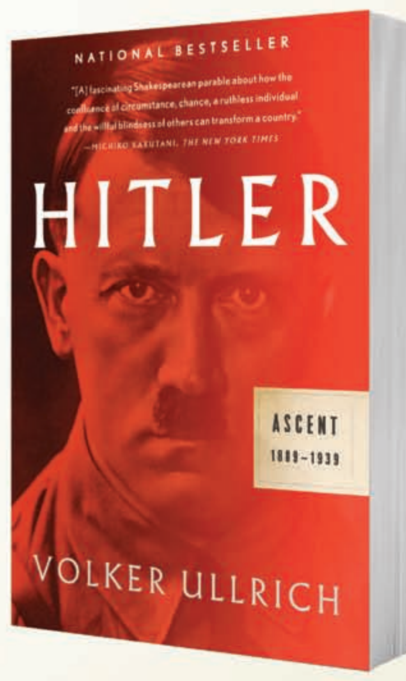

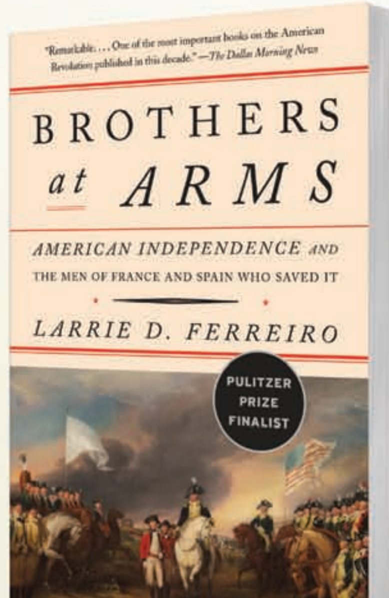

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ANCHOR

ABOVE: A Confederate corpse lies in Battery Robinette following the Second Battle of Corinth in autumn 1862. The clash showed that Van Dorn had little skill as a commander of infantry forces in large battles. OPPOSITE: Van Dorn's finest hour came at Holly Springs, Tennessee, in December 1862 when he conducted one of the most daring mounted raids of the Civil War. Less than six months later he was murdered by a wealthy landowner angered over Van Dorn's affair with his wife.

His company was sent to Camp Cooper, Texas, which was situated on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River about 40 miles north of present-day Abilene.

In autumn 1858, Brevet Major Van Dorn led a strike by four companies of U.S. Cavalry against a Comanche village on the Washita River in Indian Territory. The cavalrymen rode north on September 30. Although they had Indian guides, they failed to reach their objective that day. On October 1, they approached the Comanche camp shortly after sunrise. The engagement became known afterward as the Battle of Wichita Village. He divided his troops into four columns and ordered the men to approach with stealth, riding in pairs with 100 yards separating each pair. When the cavalry struck the camp, the Indians organized a hasty defense. Although they were taking heavy casualties, the Comanches fought with great frenzy to protect their women and children. Eventually, the Indians withdrew. The cavalry burned the camp to the ground and rounded up 300 horses.

Late in the battle, Van Dorn engaged two Indians riding double on a horse in an effort to escape. He shot and killed their horse, but they fired on him with their bows from a kneeling position. He was struck in the wrist by an arrow that ran up through his forearm. The second was a near fatal wound that struck him in the ribs. He was so badly hurt that some of the soldiers remained at the site with him for five days and on the sixth day dragged him out on a litter. He was sent home to Mississippi where he convalesced for five weeks. "I had faced death often, but never so palpably before," he wrote.

Van Dorn withdrew his commission from the U.S. Army on January 31, 1861. At the outset of the war, he commanded Mississippi troops. On March 16, 1861, he received a commission as a colonel in the Confederate army. He was immediately given command of the garrisons of the two forts below New Orleans on the Mississippi River. The following month, he was entrusted with the Department of Texas where he directed forces in capturing and securing various resources of the U.S. Army. For example, he supervised the capture of the *Star of the West* in Galveston Harbor on April 20.

The Confederate high command thought well enough of Van Dorn to order him to report for duty in Richmond, Virginia. He arrived in the capital of the Confederacy in September. In October, he was given command of the First Division in General Joseph Johnston's short-lived Army of the Potomac, which eventually became the Army of Northern Virginia. Johnston commanded the division for slightly more than three months during a period of inactivity as the Federals contemplated their next step following the disaster at First Bull Run.

In mid-January 1862, Johnston was reassigned to the Trans-Mississippi Department. He took command of the department at a point in which the Confederates had withdrawn to Arkansas following their defeat at the Battle of Wilson's Creek. It fell to Van Dorn when he arrived to settle an ongoing dispute between rival Maj. Gen. Sterling Price and Brig. Gen. Ben McCulloch, who commanded the Missouri State Guard and Army of the West, respectively. The two had clashed repeatedly over who should direct the forces, but when Van Dorn arrived he outranked both. It was an important occasion for Van Dorn because it marked the first time he would lead a Confederate army on a campaign.

Van Dorn's first objective was to drive the army of Union Maj. Gen. Samuel Curtis out of northwestern Arkansas. On March 4, Van Dorn's 17,000-strong army advanced toward Curtis's 10,500-man Army of the Southwest deployed on the high ground overlooking Little Sugar Creek. The two sides made contact two days later when the Confederate army attacked the Federal rear guard. Van Dorn had the misfortune of falling seriously ill during the battle. For that reason, he was forced to ride in an ambulance and issue orders from it.

Under cover of darkness on the night of March 6, Van Dorn split his army into two columns for a forced march to outflank the Union position on the bluffs along Little Sugar Creek. The Confederate plan called for McCulloch and Brig. Gen. Albert Pike to engage the Union right and center, while Price attacked the Union left at Elkhorn Tavern.

Price's attack was slow in developing. His troops did not attack until late morning. The Federals repulsed two Confederate charges. The third charge, delivered with the full fury of Price's column, drove the Union forces south past the tavern. At the opposite end of the line, the Confederates broke through the Union line but were soon pushed back.

On the morning of March 8, Curtis correctly surmised that the Confederates were running low on ammunition. He ordered two Union divisions at Elkhorn Tavern to launch a counterattack. The Federals forced back the Confederate left, which prompted Van Dorn to order a general retreat.

The Battle of Pea Ridge showed the danger of a cooperative attack. If Van Dorn had struck the Union rear with the force of his entire army, it was possible he would have achieved victory. A lack of coordination among Confederate units cobbled together from several commands contributed substantially to the Confederate defeat.

The loss of huge swaths of territory in Kentucky and Tennessee to the Union Army in the wake of the Confederate defeat at Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862, created a crisis situation for the Confederacy. As a result, Van Dorn received orders to march his army from Arkansas to Mississippi. Van Dorn's troops arrived in Corinth on April 23, and he reported to his superior, General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, the commander of the Army of Mississippi.

For obvious reasons, Van Dorn was anxious to restore his reputation, which had been badly damaged at Pea Ridge. As the Federals under

Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans advanced on Corinth, Beauregard ordered Van Dorn to hold the Confederate line east of the city. In the month-long siege, which lasted from April 29 to May 30, Van Dorn received orders to attack Maj. Gen. John Pope's army at Farmington, Mississippi, which lay seven miles east of Corinth. Two attempts to engage Pope failed when he withdrew. On Van Dorn's third attempt against Pope on May 22, the general got lost. Van Dorn's attack that day was intended as the first step in a major Confederate counterattack, but when Van Dorn failed to execute his attack properly, Beauregard called off the entire counterattack.

Van Dorn was still eager to restore his reputation, which plummeted even farther downward after the debacle in the First Battle of Corinth. On June 28, he was appointed to command the Department of Southern Mississippi and East Louisiana. At the time, Union riverine forces were converging on Vicksburg from above and below the city. He rushed to Vicksburg to direct the defenses, seeking to keep control of a three-mile stretch of the river directly under the Confederate guns on the Vicksburg bluffs.

Van Dorn arrived in Vicksburg and set about raising the morale of the city's 4,000 garrison troops and improving the Confederate defenses. He strengthened artillery positions, ordered the construction of new fieldworks, and established strong cavalry patrols to guard the approaches to the city. The arrival of Maj. Gen. John Breckinridge's 5,000-man division greatly strengthened the garrison. But just when everything seemed to be looking up for him, he made the mistake of declaring martial law in some of the Mississippi counties and Lousiana parishes. Confederate citizens protested, and this brought the wrath of Richmond upon him. In October 1862, Van Dorn was replacednas department commander by Lt. Gen. John Pemberton.

Still in search of a way to redeem himself as an army commander, Van Dorn set his sights on Corinth, which was occupied by Rosecrans's Army of the Mississippi. Van Dorn led his Amy of West Tennessee against Corinth in early October. In the two-day Second Battle of Corinth, which was fought October 3-4, the Confederates repeatedly made frontal assaults against strong Union fieldworks. On the first day, the Confederates made considerable progress. The Rebels carried some of the outer works, which forced the Yankees to fall back to their inner fortifications. The Confederates attacked these tough positions by assaulting them in small groups. But the Confederates exhausted themselves in the hard fighting.

During the night Van Dorn issued orders for a fresh assault in the morning. Both sides fought desperately to maintain their positions. At one point, the Confederates penetrated to the streets of Corinth, but the Federals counterattacked and drove them out. The Confederates launched a heavy assault on Battery Robinette, west of Corinth. Here the Confederates desperately tried to overwhelm the Federals holding a key artillery position. The troops fought hand to hand with bayonets, clubbed muskets, and fists. Despite the desperate fighting, Van Dorn ultimately ordered a retreat. Some of the officers who served under Van Dorn during the battle blamed him for the defeat. One of them, Brig. Gen. John Bowen, brought charges against Van Dorn, but a court of inquiry dismissed them.

On December 12, 1862, Pemberton assigned Van Dorn to serve as his cavalry commander. Five days later, Van Dorn embarked on a cavalry raid against the Union depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi. Van Dorn's raiders destroyed a number of large caches of Union supplies and also disrupted the Federal overland advance against Vicksburg. The Holly Springs Raid was one of the great cavalry raids of the Civil War, and it proved beyond a doubt that Van Dorn was suited for cavalry command.

In early 1863, Van Dorn and his cavalry command were transferred to Middle Tennessee. Van Dorn established his headquarters at Spring Hill. His job was to protect the left flank of Bragg's Army of the Tennessee and operate against the Federal line of communications stretching north to Nashville. The Federal forces in the area were surprised at Van Dorn's constant attacks and repeatedly sallied forth from their strongholds in captured towns in an attempt to bring him to bay.

At Thompson's Station on March 5, Van Dorn defeated Union Colonel John Coburn's 2,800 troops. On March 25, Brig. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, who served under Van Dorn at the time, smashed a Union column at Brentwood, Tennessee, capturing men and matérial. Out of this affair came a heated altercation between Van Dorn and Forrest. At one point, the two hotheads drew their swords against each other.

Van Dorn's demise began shortly after his arrival in Spring Hill, when he met Mrs. Jessie McKissack Peters. Mrs. Peters was the much-younger third wife of a wealthy landowner and retired doctor, George Peters. While her husband was away at the Tennessee State Legislature, his wife could be seen at Van Dorn's headquarters, which left little doubt about the nature of her visits. These unsupervised visits and their carriage rides were soon the talk of the town.

It did not take long before Peters became aware of what was occurring. He was determined to catch Van Dorn in the act. The doctor left on one of his routine trips, but he doubled back in an effort to observe his wife and her lover. On the morning of May 7, 1863, Peters arrived at Van Dorn's headquarters.

"I came upon the creature at about 2:30 AM, where I expected to find him," Peters told the Nashville police. Peters said that Van Dorn begged for his life. A number of officers noticed Peter's arrival at the general's headquarters but thought nothing of it. The officers would later find Van Dorn slumped over his writing desk, a bullet in the back of his head. Peters was never prosecuted for the crime.

A great deal of mystery surrounded the murder of Van Dorn. Peters contended that Van Dorn had violated the sanctity of his marriage; however, there were others who said that the doctor had political reasons involving his support of the Federal forces in Tennessee. The mystery was further compounded by conflicting reports concerning the circumstances of Van Dorn's murder and the activities of the doctor and his wife after the murder. The couple soon divorced but later reunited in Arkansas where Peters had mysteriously received a land grant. Van Dorn's sister, in her personal memoir published in 1902, offered a strong argument that the doctor had more sinister reasons. She asserted that Peters was disloyal to the Confederate cause he had originally supported.

Despite Van Dorn's personal failings and his repeated poor performances as an army commander at the Battle of Pea Ridge and the two battles at Corinth in 1862, after the war he would be regarded as one of the South's top cavalry commanders. It was a fitting epitaph for a U.S. Army soldier who almost died from a Comanche arrow. □

By Christopher Miskimon

The bolt-action British Lee-Enfield rifle proved to be robust, reliable, and effective during the global conflicts of the 20th century.

A SMALL PARTY OF ABOUT 40 GERMAN SOLDIERS HAD INFILTRATED the Australian lines around the besieged town of Tobruk, Libya, during the night of April 13, 1941. They began setting up a half dozen machine guns, several mortars, and even a pair of small infantry guns laboriously dragged through the desert sands. It was a foothold the Germans could use to expand into the perimeter and capture the town. They began firing at the nearest Australian unit, B Company of the 2-17 Infantry Battalion. The Aussies replied with rifles and machine guns, but it was tough going. A party consisting of Lieutenant Austin Mackell and five privates, along with Corporal John Hurst Edmondson, decided to mount a counterattack to drive the Germans back.

The men clutched their bayoneted Lee-Enfield Rifles tightly and moved into the darkness, attacking the enemy fiercely despite the machine-gun fire thrown at them. Edmondson was hit twice but continued on, killing one enemy with his bayonet. Nearby, Mackell fought as well, but soon he was in dire need of help. His bayonet broke and the stock of his Lee-Enfield was shattered while fighting the Germans, at least three of whom were now attacking the young officer. Edmondson waded into the fray without hesitation, shooting or bayoneting all of them with his rifle. During the action he was mortally wounded. His comrades, saved by his actions, carried him back to their own lines, where he died four hours later. The Germans were defeated and the line was restored. Edmondson's feat of bravery was the talk of Tobruk afterward and he would be the first Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross in World War II.

Australian troops armed with the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield capture a German position in North Africa during World War II. The ubiquitous rifle became one of the most widely used military rifles in the world.

Australian War Memorial

The Lee-Enfield rifle is one of the most widely used bolt-action military rifles in the world, surpassed only by the Model 1898 Mauser and its derivatives in sheer numbers. Entering service at the dawn of the 20th century, it is still seeing active use well into the present century. It is the iconic rifle of the British Empire and it is still seen everywhere the Empire went, from Europe to remote regions in Africa and Asia. Soldiers in Afghanistan today are still being fired upon with the same Lee-Enfields British troops carried over the top in World War I.

The Lee-Enfield had its origins in the late 19th century, when repeating rifles firing full-powered cartridges were coming to the fore. Its direct predecessor was the Lee-Metford, a similar bolt-action design that brought the British military a state-of-the-art weapon comparable to the latest Mausers. The rifle used a magazine and bolt system developed by American inventor James Lee. Approximately 13,000 were built in 1889 and distributed to the army for field testing. A gradual series of product improvements led to an upgraded model being standardized in 1892, but the rifle still suffered from a few weaknesses such as barrel wear and

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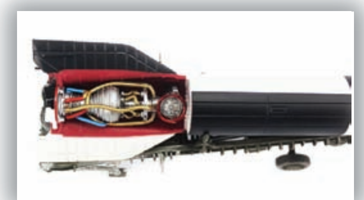

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German Sd.Kfz.8 DB10 Gepanzerte (Armored) 12-Ton Prime Mover - Camouflage

Historical Information: Originally, plans called for the V-2 (German: Vergeltungswaffe 2, "Retribution Weapon 2") to be launched from massive blockhouses located at Eperlecques and La Coupole near the English Channel. This static approach was soon scrapped in favor of mobile launchers. Traveling in convoys of thirty trucks, the V-2 team would arrive at a staging area where the warhead was installed before towing it to the launch site on a Meillerwagen. There, the missile was placed on the launch platform, armed, fueled, and the gyros set. This set up took approximately 90 minutes and the launch team could clear an area in 30 minutes after launch.

This mobile system proved highly successful and up to 100 missiles a day could be launched by German V-2 forces. Also, due to their ability to stay on the move, V-2 convoys were rarely caught by Allied aircraft. The first V-2 attacks were launched against Paris and London on September 8th, 1944. Over the next eight months, a total of 3,172 V-2 were launched at Allied cities including London, Paris, Antwerp, Lille, Norwich, and Liege. Due to the missile's ballistic trajectory and extreme speed which exceeded three times the speed of sound during descent, there was no existing and effective method for intercepting them. To combat the threat, several experiments were conducted involving radio jamming (the British erroneously thought the rockets were radio-controlled) and massing anti-aircraft guns. These ultimately proved fruitless.

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ABOVE: OP British soldiers train with the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield during the early days of World War I. Conditions in the trenches were hard on rifles, but soldiers used their ingenuity to keep the dirt and mud out of their weapons. BELOW: The iconic bolt-action, magazine-fed Lee–Enfield was used widely around the globe in the first half of the 20th century.

Wikimedia

poor sights. After testing, further refinements were made to the weapon, resulting in the Lee-Enfield Mark I in 1895. The name combined James Lee's design with the Royal Small Arms Factory's location at Enfield Lock, Middlesex. Thus the name of the famous rifle was established, even though further refinement continued over the following decade.

The standardization of the Lee-Enfield into its most long-serving form took a number of years and is a reflection of the state of rifle development in the early 20th century. At the time there was considerable discussion about the use of rifles versus carbines, the rifle being a full-length weapon with a barrel length of 30 inches or more for use by infantry. Carbines were intended for cavalry use and had shorter barrels for more convenient use on horseback, with lengths of 16 inches to 22 inches being common. Full-length rifles had the advantage of greater accuracy at long ranges. Most designs of the period had sights graduated for distances of 2,000 yards or more, but some critics felt that was too far for any sort of accurate fire and recommended a shorter rifle, which would save production material and lighten the soldier's burden. Opponents of this view felt the rifle could be effective at long distances using volley fire and loathed any decrease in accuracy.

Eventually the argument for a shorter rifle prevailed, particularly as even a shorter rifle's barrel was still capable of greater accuracy than the average conscript could achieve. In this era many armies were slowly transitioning to large forces of conscripts who would transition into the reserves for long periods after a few years of active service. Although Great Britain's army was still a relatively small professional force optimized for securing a far-flung empire, it still took the new lessons to heart and set about perfecting its rifle design.

The result was the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield No. 1 Mk. III, standardized in 1907 and often abbreviated as the SMLE. The soldiers who carried it soon modified this acronym into the nickname "Smelly," which bore no relation to their opinion of the weapon. As adopted, the rifle weighed just under 8¾ pounds with a barrel length of 25.2 inches. It had a detachable magazine that held 10 cartridges of .303-caliber ammunition, though in practice the magazine was most often reloaded using stripper clips rather than swapped out for a new one. A magazine cut-off device could be used to block the firer from loading fresh rounds from the magazine. This was thought to allow a more controlled rate of fire by making the shooter load a single cartridge at a time. The contents of the magazine could then be saved for heavy combat requiring a higher rate of fire or when ordered by a superior.

The Lee-Enfield's sights were graduated to more than 1,000 yards. Originally, an unusual long-range sight was also added to the left side of the rifle's stock for use in extended-distance volley firing. During World War I this volley sight, along with the magazine cut-off, would be deleted to simplify production. The bolt action was simple; in practice the user would chamber a fresh round by rotating the bolt handle upward and then drawing the bolt backward. This would eject a fired cartridge case. Pushing the bolt forward strips a new cartridge out of the magazine and pushes it into the chamber. Pushing the bolt handle down locks the bolt into place so the rifle can be fired. Critics state that the bolt design of the Lee-Enfield is weaker than the German Mauser's. Although there is some truth in the assertion, it only comes into play with extremely high-powered cartridges such as those used to hunt large game. In practice, using standard military ammunition, the SMLE's bolt is strong enough to handle the load.

Upon entering service, the Lee-Enfield went through a round of criticism, not unusual for a new weapon in any age. Shooting was a serious sport in England at the time and pundits criticized the Lee-Enfield for problems with accuracy, recoil, and weight. As expected, some took issue with the shorter barrel, claiming it was responsible for the accuracy issues. Most of the complaints came from expert riflemen, armorers, and similar experts. The average soldier seemed to have few such qualms, however, and the weapon soon gained an increasingly good reputation among them. For service use, it was robust, reliable, and effective. Its bolt action was quick and smooth, allowing a soldier to make fast followup shots. Its 10-shot magazine had twice the capacity of its contemporaries, enabling small units to lay down an impressive rate of fire and keep it up longer.

The first major test for the design came with World War I in August 1914. The British Army was small at the time, about 247,000 strong and fully half that number went to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Shooting skills had been emphasized after marksmanship problems were noted during the Boer War over a decade earlier, so the average English soldier was highly skilled with a rifle. It was not unusual for a soldier to achieve 25 aimed shots or more per minute. This came in handy during the first months of the war, when armies on the Western Front still maneuvered into battle, before the stalemate of the trenches trapped men below ground for four long years.

Private Frank Richards of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers used the Lee-Enfield in the First Battle of Ypres in the autumn of 1914. His unit was advancing by platoons across open fields when they took rifle fire from a wooded area 600

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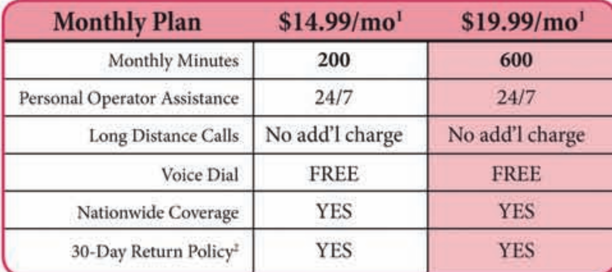

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yards ahead. The platoon went into a prone firing position and opened fire with their Lee-Enfields. Soon a group of Germans began advancing toward the British, who poured fire into them. Richards recalled "We had our rifles resting on the bank ... and it was impossible to miss at that distance. We had downed half a dozen men before they realized what was happening; then they commenced to jump back into the trench … but we bowled them over like rabbits.… We had expended our magazines, which held ten rounds—there wasn't a live enemy to be seen and the whole affair had lasted half a minute."

In the German Army the First Ypres became known as the "Massacre of the Innocents" due to the 25,000 student volunteers who fell to British musketry during the fighting. The amount of fire British units could produce was so heavy German General Alexander von Kluck reportedly believed his opponents were armed completely with machine guns. In fact, British battalions had only two apiece and were often short even that paltry number. Casualties were made worse by the close order troops often used when advancing early in the war.

By 1915 the days of mobile columns were over and the armies settled into trench systems that extended hundreds of miles. British casualties were heavy, which diluted the army's overall skill level as quickly trained replacements took over for the now lost regulars. Still, a few skilled marksmen remained, appearing from their trenches to take snap-shots at the enemy before ducking back down. A Canadian, Private Henry Norwest, was famed for his quick-shooting skills. He was a Metis Indian who was noted for his ability to rise, aim, fire, and reload before aiming and firing again in less than two seconds. Over time he is known to have killed at least 115 enemy troops before a sniper felled him in August 1918. Such shooting became harder as more German snipers were equipped with telescopic sights for their weapons. The SMLE saw its own sniper version as well, known as the No. 1 W (T).

Conditions in the trenches were hard on rifles and the SMLE was no exception. Mud could clog the action or the barrel. As a countermeasure, soldiers would plug the barrel with a cork or place a sock over the muzzle. A canvas breech cover was produced that could be clipped over the bolt and receiver to protect it from dirt and the elements. Keeping a weapon clean was a true challenge in the filthy conditions of trench warfare; soldiers could be charged with an offense for having a rusty or dirty rifle so maintenance took an even larger part of an infantryman's time. The Lee-Enfield was a quality weapon with close tolerances in manufacturing, so extra care had to be taken, but if care was given the rifle stayed in action. Rifles with worn-out barrels were used to launch rifle grenades.

Both: Imperial War Museum

TOP British soldiers riding on a Sherman tank clutch their Lee-Enfield rifles as they advance into Holland during Operation Market Garden. A scarcity of funds and an abundance of rifles and leftover ammunition from World War I compelled the British to distribute the improved SMLE No. 4 Mark I to their soldiers in World War II. BOTTOM: A British 6th Airborne Division soldier uses a SMLE No. 4 (T) sniper model with a scope during the Battle of the Bulge.

The disadvantage of having such a well-made weapon came on the production end. Only 108,000 rifles were made annually before the war began, not enough to equip the British Empire's forces once the war was underway. Great increases were made once the conflict started; for example, from August to December 1914 approximately 120,000 SMLEs left the production line. This still was not enough so older Lee-Metfords were used for training and other designs were adopted as substitute standard weapons, in particular the P-14 Enfield made in the United States and called the No.3 Mark I in British service. Rifles were even ordered from as far away as Japan. SMLE production continued to increase. In 1917 more than 1.2 million rifles left the factory and more than 1 million in 1918.

After the war the SMLE again became the standard for the army with the substitute designs being placed in storage. While development between the wars did occur in semi-automatic weapons and new cartridges, scarcity of funds and abundance of rifles and leftover ammunition meant the Lee-Enfield served on in the hands of Imperial troops around the world. The biggest advancement was in redesigning the rifle to simplify production in the event of another war. The barrel was made slightly heavier to improve accuracy, and the sights were reconfigured and the muzzle was changed so that the barrel protruded slightly and was fitted with a new spike bayonet instead of the long blade-type from the previous conflict.

The improved SMLE was designated the No. 4 Mark I. It was approved for service just as World War II began. Initially, many soldiers did not take to the new rifle, preferring their old No.1 Mark IIIs. Despite this, more than 4.2 million No.4s were made by the end of World War II. Only about 10 percent of them were made at Enfield while the rest were made at the various factories set up around the Empire to increase production. The Australians continued to make the older Mark at their Lithgow Arsenal, having never adopted the No. 4. The Ishapore Rifle Factory in India also turned out the No. 1. The newer Mark was made in Canada at the Long Branch Factory near Toronto and in the United States by the Savage Arms Company. The American-produced rifles were stamped "U.S. Property" to help justify their distribution through the Lend-Lease program. The SMLE had truly become a worldwide rifle.

Most of the combatants started World War II using rifles very similar to those they used to fight the previous conflict, and often they were the same designs. A few semiautomatic rifles made their appearance early in the fighting, such as the American M1 and Soviet SVT-40. As the war continued, other nations, such as Germany, put forth their own new designs, including the first true assault rifle, the STG-44. Nevertheless, most of the war's riflemen still carried bolt-action weapons and the SMLE still outshone them all. The days of volley fire and rows of men in trenches were gone, but the Lee-Enfield's smooth action and 10-round magazine still allowed Commonwealth soldiers to put out effective fire.

The SMLE No. 4 was also used to create variants, including a sniper model, the No.4 (T). It was a respectable long-range shooter, with good accuracy well past 600 yards. More than 24,000 were made and the design survived in British service into the 1970s and beyond. Two soldiers of the Cambridge Regiment, named Arthur and

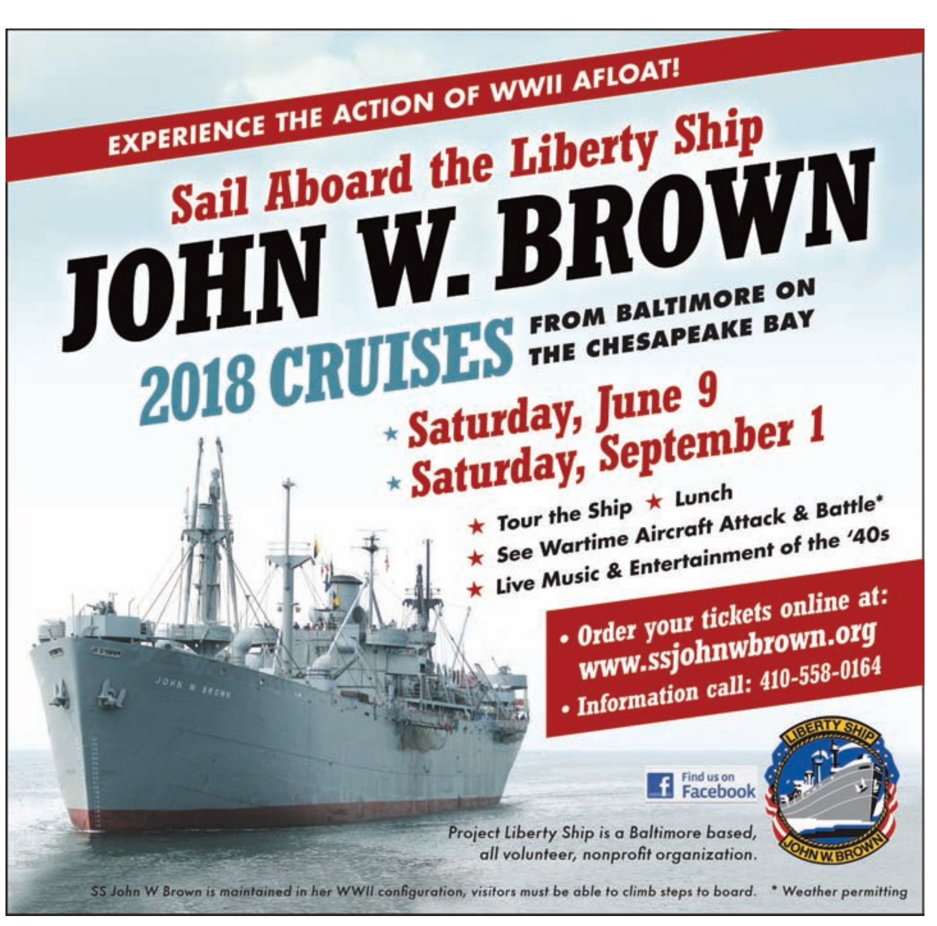
Packham, used their sniper SMLEs while hunting for a German sniper who had shot a British officer. For three days they stalked their opponent with no luck. But near the end of the third day Arthur spotted a wisp of smoke rising from some cover. The enemy marksman was having a cigarette. While Arthur spotted, Packham slowly slipped his rifle through their camouflage net. He took careful aim but could not get a good shot at the German. Now they knew the sniper's hiding place, so they returned before dawn the next day and got ready. Shortly after 6 AM a German appeared. Just his head and shoulders were silhouetted in an opening in the vegetation. It was enough. Packham fired and was rewarded with a view of the enemy sniper's rifle flying into the air as he collapsed.

The other major variant was the No. 5 Mk. 1, popularly known as the Jungle Carbine. It had a shorter barrel with a flash hider and cut down stock. It was lighter and handier but its recoil was harsh, which made it unpopular with the troops. Most were issued to troops in the Far East though the British 6th Airborne used them in Europe at the war's end.

After the war ended the British Army retired the remaining No. 1s and retained the No.4 as its primary rifle. While the service experimented with a replacement, its soldiers took the SMLE into action again in Korea. In April 1951 the Gloucestershire Regiment's 1st Battalion had to defend Hill 235 against several days of determined attacks by Chinese troops. Their Vickers machine guns ripped apart the enemy formations while the riflemen fired their SMLEs until the rifles were too hot to hold any longer. When that happened they picked up cool weapons from the dead and wounded. Sometimes a single bullet would fell two of three Chinese, so tightly packed together were the attacking regiments. The British eventually had to withdraw but they left behind some 10,000 enemy casualties.

Outside of England, at least 46 nations adopted the SMLE in its various guises, according to one estimate. India and Pakistan continue to use thousands of SMLEs, though they are no longer frontline weapons. Some Afghan fighters prefer the Lee-Enfield for its superior range compared to the AK-47. They still show up across the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Even the Canadians still give them to rural northern militiamen known as the Canadian Rangers.

The British Empire created a rifle that has endured for more than a century. It is said the sun never set on the British Empire. Unlike the days of empire, the sun still has not set on the life of the SMLE for soldiers still carry it into combat in Asia and Africa. It shows no sign of disappearing anytime soon. □



By Phil Zimmer

A coordinated effort by the U.S. military in April 1943 resulted in the death of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto.

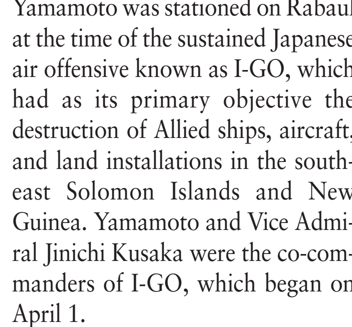
ADMIRAL ISOROKU YAMAMOTO, COMMANDER OF THE COMBINED Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy, intended to press ahead with his morale-boosting visits to forward units in the South Pacific in April 1943, despite dire warnings from subordinates of possible enemy ambushes. He had no idea that the Americans had plotted through a military operation codenamed Operation Vengeance to intercept and shoot down his transport bomber aircraft.

The 60-year-old mastermind of the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941 knew his forces needed a psychological boost in the face of a string of defeats at the hands of the U.S. Navy in 1942 and early 1943. By the spring of 1943, the Americans had firmly established themselves on Guadalcanal in the Soloman Islands, having defeated multiple attempts by the Japanese over a six-month period from August 1942 to February 1943 to recapture the island.

The Japanese had captured Rabaul, which was located on New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago in January 1942 and transformed it into a major air and naval base. The Base was manned by as many as 100,000 Japanese soldiers, sailors, airmen, and military personnel, from which the Japanese could continue their conquests to the south in the direction of New Guinea. The Japanese eventually constructed five airfields on the island. In April 1943,

"Mission Accomplished," © Roy Grinnell

First Lieutenant Rex T. Barber's P-38 attacks the Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bomber transporting Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto on a tour of forward naval facilities in the South Pacific. INSET: Navy Commander Joseph Rochefort.



Yamamoto was stationed on Rabaul at the time of the sustained Japanese air offensive known as I-GO, which had as its primary objective the destruction of Allied ships, aircraft, and land installations in the southeast Solomon Islands and New Guinea. Yamamoto and Vice Admiral Jinichi Kusaka were the co-commanders of I-GO, which began on April 1.

One of the key warnings he received came from Lt. Gen. Hitoshi Imamura, commander of the ground forces at Rabaul, who had barely escaped death on a similar flight just two months earlier. Another high-ranking officer, Rear Admiral Takoji Joshima, also had grave reservations about Yamamoto's tour. When he learned that Yamamoto's schedule was going to be sent encoded out over the radio, he was flabbergasted. Joshima landed at Rabaul to beg

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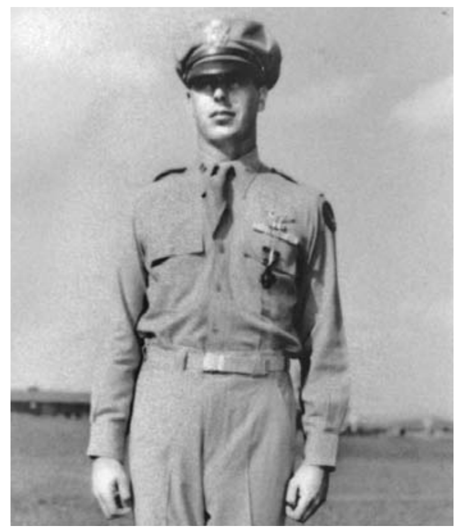
Yamamoto not to proceed with his plans to visit forward-deployed units at Ballale, Buin, and Shortland Islands. Joshima argued that such a trip was sheer madness and an "open invitation to the enemy" to intercept his plane because of the close presence of American forces in the South Pacific.

Yamamoto pressed ahead as a sign of confidence to his men and despite having left a poem to his mistress locked in his personal safe. "The body is frail, yet with a mind firm with unshakable resolve I will drive deep into the enemy's positions and let him see the blood of a Japanese man," wrote Yamamoto. "Wait but a while, young men! One last battle, fought gallantly to the death, and I will be joining you!"

The poem seemed to foretell Yamamoto's



LEFT: P-38 pilot Rex T. Barber successfully petitioned the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records to have his half credit on the lead bomber kill changed to whole credit. RIGHT: Ground crewmen at Henderson Field inspect the damage to the P-38 that Barber flew on the mission, which sustained 100 bullet holes.

fate as he emerged on April 18, 1943, from his quarters on Rabaul wearing his green uniform rather than the bright white ceremonial uniform usually worn on goodwill visits. It would be the last uniform he would wear.

Within hours Yamamoto would be shot down and killed in a daring daylight attack near Bougainville, ending the life of the man who initially cautioned against war with the United States but later diligently planned the successful surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor.

The attack on Pearl Harbor caused a considerable shift in code-breaking tactics. Commander Joseph J. Rochefort led the U.S. Navy's effort to decode the enemy's naval codes at Station HYPO, which was the U.S. Navy's signals monitoring and cryptographic intelligence unit in Hawaii. Rochefort had used a clever ruse in the weeks leading up to the Battle of Midway when he discovered that the Japanese were planning an elaborate attack on Midway using five separate task forces. That, in turn, enabled the U.S. Navy to set a trap for the oncoming Japanese force that worked only by the narrowest of margins and led to Japan's punishing defeat at Midway, a turning point in the Pacific War just six months after Pearl Harbor.

But interservice rivalry posed a considerable stumbling block. Rochefort, for one, drew the ire of his career-focused superiors in Washington who jostled for recognition for their role in breaking the codes and therefore in the victory at Midway. Despite high praise from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Rochefort's superiors in Washington called him back home on October 11, 1942, for temporary additional duty. The next month Nimitz was informed that Rochefort's stateside duty had become permanent.

Nimitz became so angry that he refused to speak for two weeks with Admiral John R. Redman, Rochefort's superior, who had become Nimitz's fleet communications officer. But the order stood. When Rochefort put in several requests for assignment changes, he ended up commanding a floating dry dock in San Francisco, never to work on codes again. Although he had departed, Rochefort had left behind a trained, skilled cadre of codebreakers in place at Station HYPO.

With Rochefort gone, Marine Corps Colonel A. Bryan "Red" Lasswell and cryptographer Joseph Finnegan oversaw the effort to analyze the data compiled from Japanese radio signals at Station HYPO. The two cryptographers alternated 24-hour shifts with each other. During a given shift, they would review the most promising intercepted messages and try to translate them. Lasswell was on duty April 14, 1943, when multiple American listening posts picked up an enciphered message transmitted from Rabaul with the title "C-in-C, Combined Fleet," which was an obvious reference to Yamamoto.

What they stumbled upon was an enciphered message from Commander Yasuji Watanabe, who was Yamamoto's staff officer responsible for his daily schedule, sent to the commanders of five naval detachments. This was how the Americans came to learn when, where, and how Yamamoto would be arriving at the advanced bases on that fateful day.

The decryption machines at Station HYPO began sorting through and automatically filling in known elements of the five-digit groups of the Japanese naval code. This gave Lasswell and his cryptographers about 15 percent of the message's content. The cryptographers worked diligently to discern the specifics of the message. Based on their preliminary translation, they gleaned that Yamamoto was scheduled to make a day-long inspection tour of a number of forward bases. Yamamoto alternated between spending time on his flagship at Truk Lagoon and the fortified bastion of the Imperial Japanese Navy at Rabaul 800 miles to the south.

The message was a proverbial gold mine of information. It listed Yamamoto's destinations that day, the precise times of depature and arrival, the type of aircraft that would fly him to the forward bases, and the type of boat he would use to visit a given island. "We've hit the jackpot," said Lasswell, who immediately sent it up the chain of command. Pacific Fleet intelligence officer Commander Edwin Layton personally gave it to Admiral Nimitz.

Yamamoto, known for his determined adherence to schedules, would theoretically be an easy target. Nimitz and Layton debated at length the

TOP: Yamamoto is shown in his dress whites addressing Imperial Japanese Navy pilots on Rabaul Island on the morning he was killed. BOTTOM: Wreckage of the aircraft in which Yamamoto was being shuttled lies on the jungle floor of Bougainville Island.

pros and cons of the intercept mission.

On the one hand, killing Yamamoto would tip off the Japanese that their codes had been broken. Moreover, it would remove a moderate voice from the Imperial Japanese Navy, for Yamamoto had studied as a special student at Harvard University from 1919 to 1921. It was conceivable that if he eventually took a position in the Japanese War Cabinet he might serve as an intermediary who could help bring the war to an earlier end. On the other hand, killing Yamamoto would remove the most gifted commander from the Imperial Japanese Navy.

Nimitz decided that it was in the United States' best interests to take out the celebrated Japanese admiral.

The distance from Guadalcanal to the target area was about 450 miles. This was beyond the range of the new Vought F4U Corsairs introduced in December 1942. The only aircraft available in the region that could successfully carry out such a strike were the Army's P-38s based on Guadalcanal. They could be modified to carry the drop tanks required for the long-range mission. The U.S. Navy badly wanted to direct the mission, but in the end it realized that it had to let the Army handle it.

Army Major John W. Mitchell, the commander of the 339th Fighter Squadron, was tasked with preparing a detailed plan of attack. Mitchell would personally lead the 18 P-38s that would participate in the mission. Of the 18 aircraft, 14 would fly cover and four would serve as the kill team. Mitchell had to grapple with an array of challenging factors, including the estimated speed of the Japanese planes, wind speeds and directions, and the need for drop fuel tanks. Moreover, there was the need to skim the surface of the ocean to avoid detection by enemy radar. Because of the low-altitude flight, the U.S. fighter pilots would not be able to confirm their location and progress with land markers along the way. At that point in time, none of the planes was outfitted with radar.

The pilots were fully aware that Yamamoto was the target of the mission. They were told that the information came from coast watchers rather than code breakers, which was deemed a necessary precaution in case the pilots were downed and captured by the Japanese. The Americans were to focus on downing the Mitsubishi G4M bomber, which the Americans gave the reporting name Betty, and then turn back to base rather than trying to engage the Japanese fighter escorts. Because of the distance and the variables, Mitchell considered the mission a long shot.

The American codebreakers had misread part of the intercepted message. They believed that Yamamoto's aircraft would fly all the way from Rabaul to Ballale, a smaller island located off Bougainville; however, his plane was scheduled to land at an airfield on Buin Island. Fortunately for the Americans, the two landing sites were in a straight line from Rabaul and were relatively close together, so the plan could still work as long as the punctual Yamamoto adhered to his schedule.

Mitchell would lead his flight of P-38s west through the Coral Sea and then angle back three times before reaching the point in Empress Augusta Bay on the southeastern coast of Bougainville where they would intercept Yamamoto's transport bomber.

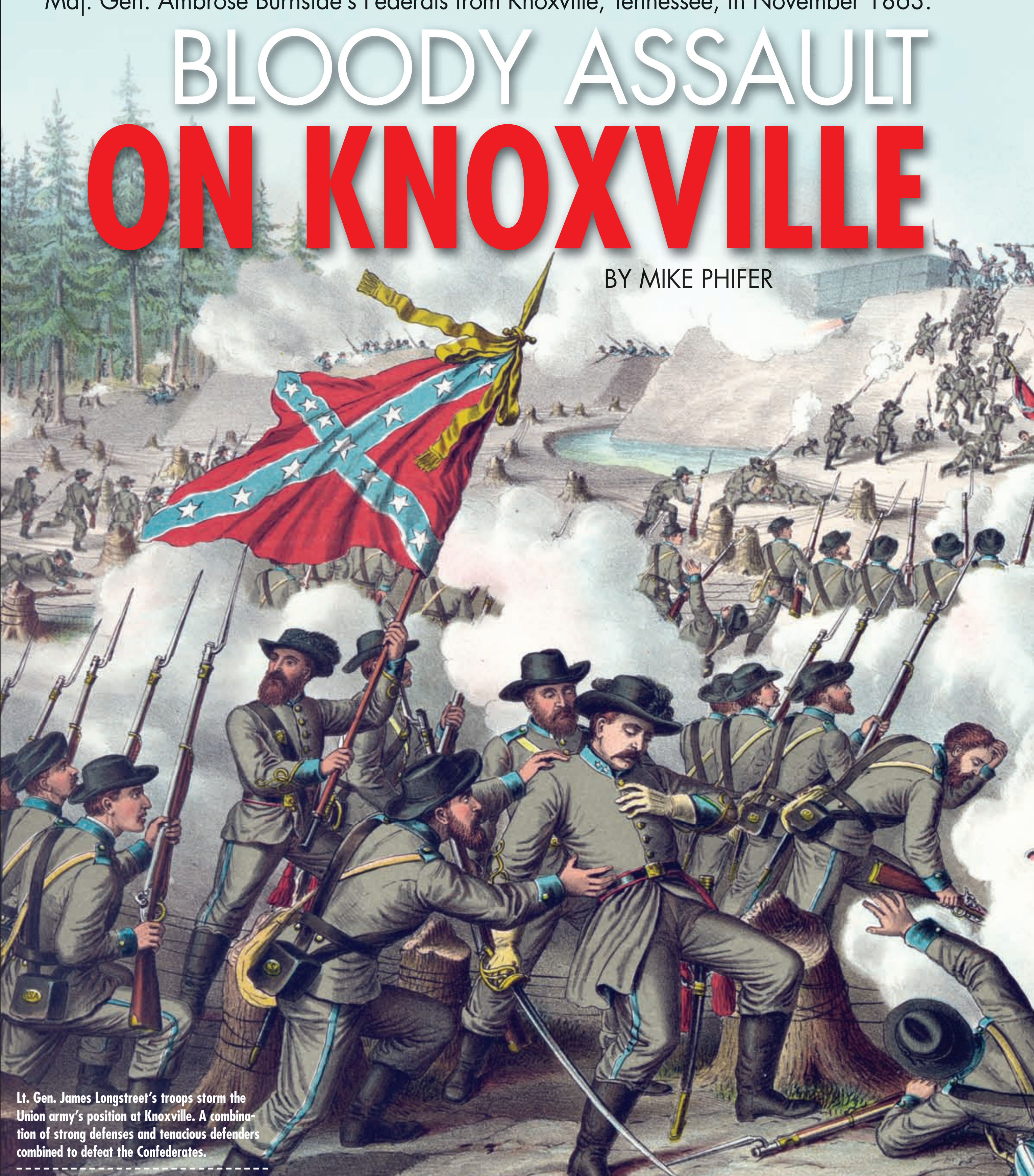
As with any mission, things went awry. Lieutenant James D. McLanahan, one of the designated shooters, punctured a tire attempting the takeoff, spun out of control, and had to abort the mission. A second shooter, Lieutenant Joe Moore, had to abort early in the flight when a test of his auxiliary tank revealed it was not feeding the engines. The experienced Mitchell motioned Lieutenant Besby F. Holmes and Lieutenant Raymond K. Hine over to fill the

Continued on page 70

Confederate Lt. Gen. James Longstreet faced a daunting task trying to dislodge Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside's Federals from Knoxville, Tennessee, in November 1863.

BLOODY ASSAULT ON KNOXVILLE

BY MIKE PHIFER



Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's troops storm the Union army's position at Knoxville. A combination of strong defenses and tenacious defenders combined to defeat the Confederates.

AT MIDNIGHT on November 13, 1863, two companies of the Palmetto (South Carolina) Sharpshooters Regiment led by Captain Alfred Foster slipped down to the south bank of the Tennessee River at Huff's Ferry. Behind a river bend they were concealed from the Yankees positioned a few miles upstream on the north side opposite Loudon, Tennessee. Across the river, though, were enemy pickets. It fell to Foster's men to capture them by surprise.

The Rebels quietly shoved their boats into the cold water and climbed into them. Paddling across the river, Foster's men secured the north shore but could find no enemy pickets. The rest of the sharpshooter regiment soon came across the river and secured a bridgehead.

While artillery was positioned to secure the south side of the crossing site, engineers toiled in the darkness stringing a pontoon bridge across the river. The task was made more difficult due to the strong current and insufficient anchorage, which bent the bridge. By dawn on November 14 the pontoon bridge was complete, and the Confederate troops marched across it.

The men belonged to Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's 15,000-man command whose objective was to drive the Yankees out of East Tennessee. The Federals would soon be aware of Longstreet's presence because the pickets that Foster's men had missed raced back with word that the Rebels were coming. A grueling campaign lay ahead for both sides as they battled not only each other but hunger and the weather in the third year of the war.

One of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's goals since the beginning of the American Civil War was the liberation of the mountainous region of Eastern Tennessee, which contained a large number of Union loyalists. From a military standpoint, the region was significant because it was a major railroad corridor for the Confederacy that linked Virginia and Tennessee. If the Union could sever the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, which ran from Bristol, Virginia,

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to Knoxville, Tennessee, it would deny the Confederates the most direct railroad route between the two states.

Following his disastrous stint as commander of the Army of the Potomac during the Fredericksburg campaign, Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside was given command in March 1863 of the Department of the Ohio and the army of the same name. His initial orders were to invade East Tennessee to protect the left flank of Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland as it advanced toward Chattanooga.

Various events delayed Burnside's advance. The first was Confederate Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan's six-week cavalry raid that began on June 11 in which more than 2,000 Confederate cavalry rode through southern Indiana and Ohio. The second event was the detachment of the Union IX Corps to reinforce Union forces participating in the drive on Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Henry Halleck, the general in chief of the U.S. Army, knew all too well Burnside's lack of aggressiveness and procrastinating nature, as exhibited by his tardy advance at Antietam in September 1862. Growing increasingly impatient with Burnside, Halleck ordered the commander of the Department of the Ohio to begin his march in early August against Knoxville, even though the IX Corps had not yet been returned to his command.

Halleck fired off a similar message to Rosecrans to resume his march on Chattanooga, which had ground to a halt in early July. Minus the IX Corps, Burnside's Army of the Ohio comprised Maj. Gen. Jacob Cox's XXIII Corps as well as cavalry and mounted infantry.

Burnside's command marched south beginning on August 20 from different points in Kentucky. Within Cox's 200-wagon supply train were 5,000 rifles that the Union army intended to distribute to Union loyalists in East Tennessee. While the majority of Burnside's troops headed for Knoxville, Burnside sent a detachment under Colonel John DeCourcy to secure Cumberland Gap.

Reduced to half rations, the bluecoats struggled along terrible roads. At various times, the Yankees had to manhandle their wagons and artillery up steep hills when their mules and horses had collapsed from exhaustion.

Burnside's columns met little resistance from the enemy as they made their way into East Tennessee. Maj. Gen. Simon Buckner, who commanded the Confederate forces in that theater before Longstreet's arrival, had received orders from Bragg to gather his 8,000 troops in the region and join Bragg's army assembling along Chickamauga Creek in north Georgia. The first clash occurred at Loudon, Tennessee, when Burnside's army bumped into Confederate cavalry. The Federals drove off the Rebel horsemen and then proceeded to burn the railroad bridge that spanned the Tennessee River. This bridge was part of the rail line that ran from southwestern Virginia through East Tennessee toward Georgia and Chattanooga.

Burnside reached Knoxville on the Holston River on September 3. (The Holston River joins the French Broad River at Knoxville to form the Tennessee River.) He promptly set up his headquarters as the first step in securing East Tennessee for the Union.

To aid DeCourcy in taking Cumberland Gap, which was held by about 2,300 Confederate troops, Burnside dispatched a cavalry brigade to assist him. Confederate Brig. Gen. John W. Frazer, an ineffectual commander entrusted with holding the gap, was sufficiently intimidated by the Federals to surrender his entire force on September 9.

With only a small Confederate force under Maj. Gen. Samuel Jones on the Virginia-Tennessee border, Burnside assumed that he had fulfilled his objective of conquering East Tennessee. Plagued with intestinal trouble, Burnside asked Lincoln to be relieved of command. Lincoln informed him that his services were still required.

Burnside returned to Knoxville with orders from Halleck to vanquish Jones and link up with Rosecrans, even if the latter objective was only achieved with his cavalry. Burnside shifted his forces northeast to deal with the growing Confederate menace near the Virginia border.

Jones divided his command. He sent Brig. Gen. John Williams' cavalry brigade, which was composed of the 1st Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry and 4th Kentucky Cavalry, south along the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad with orders to disrupt Union communications and capture Bull's Gap. He also sent Maj. Gen. Robert Ransom's brigade to retake Cumberland Gap.

Williams advanced no farther than Blue Springs, which lay midway between Bristol and Knoxville, while Ransom wound up withdrawing to Virginia. By that time, Brig. Gen. Robert B. Potter's IX Corps had rejoined the Army of the Ohio. In addition, Burnside also received Brig. Gen. Orlando Willcox's division, an infantry brigade from the XXIII Corps, and some cavalry units.

On October 10 Burnside defeated Williams' cavalry brigade at Blue Springs. The Rebels retreated toward Virginia. As for Burnside, he returned to Knoxville but left a strong detachment to keep an eye on this sector.

In reaction to Williams' repulse, Bragg dispatched two cavalry brigades and Maj. Gen. Carter Stevenson's division, which was composed of three brigades, to threaten Burnside and secure the area south of Knoxville. The Confederates overwhelmed Colonel Frank Wolford's Federal cavalry brigade in a brief clash on October 20 at Philadelphia, Tennessee. The Confederates, which sought to secure control of the key railroad stop on the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, captured most of Wolford's Kentucky cavalry. The Yankees who escaped withdrew six miles north to Loudoun. It was the first defeat of Union forces in the unfolding East Tennessee campaign.

Burnside, who was concerned over the strong

Rebel presence south of the Tennessee River, evacuated Loudon on October 28. He left a brigade from Brig. Gen. Julius White's division on the north side of the river near the town. It was about this time that Burnside again reminded Lincoln of his diminishing health and desire to be relieved once the East Tennessee crisis was over. Again he was not allowed to leave his command.

On October 18 Washington gave Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant command of the newly created Military Division of the Mississippi. The key promotion gave Grant control of the Armies of the Ohio, Cumberland, and Tennessee. From that point on, Grant would control Burnside's movements. Grant immediately urged Burnside to secure his position by stockpiling ammunition in case the Confederates managed to cut his supply line to Kentucky. It was sound advice. Burnside's troops would need cartridges they could get their hands on as Longstreet's Confederates would soon be headed their way.

Following the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg in July 1863, Longstreet was sent to the Western theater two months later. The arrival of his corps tipped the scales in favor of the Confederates at the Battle of Chickamauga, and it was one of Longstreet's finest hours as he delivered a sledgehammer attack on September 20 that smashed Rosecrans's army. The brilliant assault with his crack troops in forested terrain earned him a new nickname, "Bull of the Woods."

But Longstreet, like other proud Confederate generals, clashed repeatedly with the irascible commander of the Army of Tennessee. Following Chickamauga, Bragg's army had become more dysfunctional than ever before. A dozen of his senior commanders, including Longstreet, signed a petition in early October asking Confederate President Jefferson Davis to remove Bragg from command of the army. The charges were severe enough to compel Davis to travel to the front to assess the situation in person. Despite the best efforts of Bragg's detractors, the surly army commander remained. Like a cornered animal, he sought revenge against his critics using a number of methods, such as transfers and suspensions, to rid himself of them. Bragg informed Davis on October 31 that he planned to send Longstreet into East Tennessee to secure the area.

Bragg informed Longstreet of his plans on November 3. Longstreet, who had heard rumors of Bragg's plan, argued that the Army of Tennessee should abandon Missionary Ridge and fall back behind Chickamauga Creek in north Georgia. Longstreet suggested that Bragg might send a large force of Confederates to strike Burnside. Once that objective was accomplished, the detached force could either return to north Georgia before the Federals could respond or it could push into Middle Tennessee and strike Grant's supply bases.

Bragg dismissed Longstreet's suggestions. On November 4 Bragg ordered Longstreet to advance into East Tennessee and either destroy Burnside or at the very least drive him out of the region. Bragg gave Longstreet 10,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 35 guns to carry out his objective.

Upon receiving his orders to drive Burnside out of East Tennessee, Longstreet prepared his troops to entrain to Sweetwater, which was located 40 miles south of Knoxville. From there they would march against Knoxville. Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws' division began arriving at Sweetwater on November 6, but Maj. Gen. John Hood's division, which was led by Brig. Gen. Micah Jenkins following the life-threatening wound Hood received at Chickamauga, found themselves delayed due to the aging locomotives the Confederates were using. Colonel Porter Alexander's artillerymen did not set out for Sweetwater by rail until November 10. The following day, the Confederates detrained at Sweetwater.

Longstreet was immediately confronted by a supply problem. Stevenson, who was marching back to rejoin Bragg's army, informed Longstreet that he had no rations for him. Longstreet had no choice but to wait for a supply wagon train from Bragg. Although Longstreet received some wagons, he never received as many as his troops needed during the campaign.

At dawn on November 13, Longstreet began his advance from Sweetwater toward Loudon. In the meantime, Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler's cavalry was sent to seize the heights on the south side of the Holston River opposite Knoxville. By dawn on November 14 Longstreet's men began moving across the pontoon bridge just completed across the Tennessee River at Huff's Ferry.

All: Library of Congress

ABOVE: Veterans of Knoxville: Union Chief Engineer Captain Orlando Poe, Sergeant Samuel Cole Wright of Co. E, 29th Massachusetts, and Colonel Joseph Walker of the Palmetto South Carolina Sharpshooters Regiment. OPPOSITE: Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside's Union columns met little resistance from the enemy as they made their way into East Tennessee in August 1863, but they had to manhandle guns and wagons over poor roads sometimes in driving rain.

White was informed that Federal pickets had spotted the Rebels crossing the river, and he passed the information to Burnside. By that time, Burnside had received a telegram from Grant informing him that the Federal army at Chattanooga would soon make an assault against Bragg in hope of forcing Longstreet to return; however, that attack was postponed.

Grant also sent two officers to visit Burniside at his headquarters on November 13. The visitors were Colonel James Wilson of Grant's staff and Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana. After a long meeting with the two men, Burnside resolved to engage Longstreet in order to lure him back to Knoxville. The goal of the attack would be to stretch the Confederate commander's supply line and prevent him from returning to Chattanooga.

Leaving his chief engineer, Captain Orlando Poe, to look after Knoxville's defenses, Burnside set out for Lenoir's Station on November 14. Dana and Wilson accompanied Burnside. After arriving at Lenoir's Station, Burnside ordered Brig. Gen. Edward Ferrero to march his division to Huff's Ferry, which was situated eight miles to the southwest. Ferrero was joined along the way by Colonel Marshal Chapin's brigade. During their march, the Federals skirmished with Rebel forces near their bridgehead and secured a nearby bluff.

Federal forces withdrew the following morning toward Lenoir's Station just as Longstreet began his advance. It was almost dark when Jenkins had troops in position southeast of Lenoir's Sta-

tion. McLaws' division arrived soon afterward and bivouacked for the night a few miles to the rear. The Federals prepared to retreat out of Lenoir's Station. Much of the artillery was sent off during the night on the muddy Lenoir Road. The Yankees spent a good part of the night destroying wagons and supplies they could not take with them. Just before sunrise on November 16, tired and cold Federals slogged out of Lenoir's Station.

McLaws' division advanced along Kingston Road toward Campbell's Station in the hope of cutting off Burnside's retreat, but the Federals beat the Confederates to the hamlet. The crossroads would become the scene of a sharp clash that day.

The 6th Indiana Cavalry and Colonel John Hartranft's division of the Union IX Corps held the key junction. The Federal horse soldiers spurred their mounts west along Kingston Road to engage the Confederates. Hartranft's division took up positions on both sides of the Kingston Road just west of the intersection to buy time for the main column of retreating Federals. In less than an hour the Indiana cavalry made contact with Rebel cavalry riding ahead of McLaws' troops. Rebel infantry and artillery were soon brought up to help the cavalry drive back the Federals.

In the interim, fighting erupted along Little Turkey Creek about two miles away. Colonel William Humphrey's brigade of Ferrero's division faced Jenkins' brigade of South Carolinians, commanded by Colonel John Bratton. Positioned on the west side of the creek, the outnumbered 17th Michigan put up a fierce holding action as long they could. With their flanks threatened, the bluecoats gave way and splashed across the creek.

Both: Library of Congress

Two photographs of Fort Sanders taken after the battle. Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's adopted a seemingly defeatist posture toward the attack, dismissing ideas by brigadiers and engineers for how to get the troops quickly across the deep and wide ditches in front of the enemy redoubts.

The 17th Michigan formed up with the two other regiments of the brigade. With Bratton attempting to flank him, Humphrey's ordered his men to fall back in echelon under fire. After driving back another attempt by Bratton to flank him, Humphrey took up position near the road junction where he was reinforced by Colonel David Morrison's brigade. The crack of musket fire filled the air as the two sides made contact. By this time the Federal supply train was past the road intersection.

Bratton's brigade and Brig. Gen. George T. Anderson's brigade moved against Humphrey and Morrison in an effort to flank them. Both Federal brigades skillfully withdrew at the double quick and joined Hartranft's men, who were already falling back.

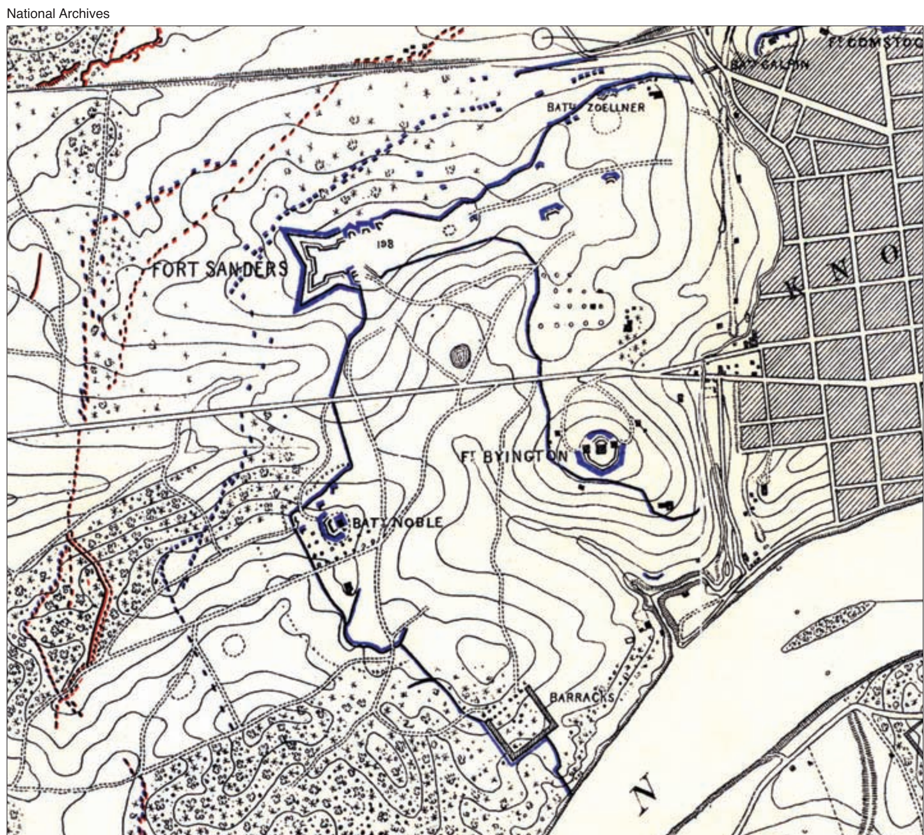
The bluecoats took up a new battle line at Turkey Creek near Campbell's Station where Burnside had earlier ordered Union batteries to take up position on a bluff. The Federal guns, supported by some of their infantry, broke up an attack by Jenkins around noon. While Rebels guns traded fire with the Yankee batteries, McLaws arrived on the scene and formed his brigades into a battle line stretching to the north from Kingston Road. Longstreet ordered him to threaten Burnside's right flank. McLaws believed that Jenkins would do the same on the Federal's left flank. Poor communication led each division commander to believe the other was to launch the main assault.

At 3 PM Jenkins ordered Brig. Gen. Evander Law's brigade of Alabamians, supported by Anderson's brigade of Georgians, to flank the Federal left using the cover of trees and rough terrain. The Federals spotted the Rebel movement and withdrew to a new position on some high ground east of the creek. Longstreet pursued the Federals. Both sides deployed their artillery. The artillery batteries traded fire until darkness put an end to the Battle of Campbell's Station.

After nightfall, the bluecoats resumed their retreat toward Knoxville. While Longstreet pushed toward Campbell's Station, Wheeler's horse soldiers secured Maryville on November 13. Wheeler then advanced to the high ground south of Knoxville, forcing back Brig. Gen. William Sanders' Federal horse soldiers. Federal infantry, however, counterattacked and reclaimed the heights.

The Federals tramped into Knoxville on the morning of November 15. Poe told the Federal brigade commanders where to position their men on the city's defensive perimeter. The newly arrived bluecoats soon were busy entrenching. They also set to work enlarging

National Archives



A period map shows the prominent position held by Fort Sanders in the western approaches to the Union defenses at Knoxville. From the tall parapets of the fort, Yankee infantry could fire down on the Confederates as they tried to negotiate a variety of obstructions, including ditches, abatis, and telegraph wire strung between tree stumps.

an existing Confederate strongpoint known as Fort Loudon. Everyone pitched in. Federal soldiers worked alongside Union loyalists and African Americans to improve Knoxville's fortifications.

To buy time for the completion of the fortifications, Burnside ordered Sanders to deploy his mounted troops in an effort to slow Longstreet's advance on the Kingston Road west of the city. Sanders' screening force collided with the Rebels at mid-morning. The Confederates gradually pushed him back. Sanders' troops made a stand in the late afternoon on a hill north of the road. To strengthen his hold on this key hill, Sanders had his men build breastworks using fence rails.

Burnside asked Sanders that night whether he could continue to hold his position so that the troops could have more time to finish the defensive works. Sanders assured Burnside that his troops would do everything within their power to keep the Rebels at bay.

Longstreet began deploying his troops around Knoxville on November 18. McLaws held the Confederate line from the Holston River north across the Kingston Road, and Jenkins extended the Rebel line to the Tazewell Road north of the city. At the same time, skirmishers from Brig. Gen. Joseph Kershaw's South Carolina brigade probed Sanders' position.

The 8th Michigan Cavalry held Sander's left flank, the 112th Illinois Mounted Infantry was in the center, and the 45th Ohio Cavalry was on his right. These dismounted horse soldiers held their position until mid-afternoon, which was several hours longer than Sanders had promised Burnside.

The fighting heated up when a section of Confederate artillery began shelling the Yankee breastworks, which sent fence rails flying through the air. The 2nd and 3rd South Carolina Regiments charged and carried the Federal position. Sanders was among the Federal casualties. He died the following day.

Under Poe's watchful eye, the Federals constructed their defenses to the west, east, and north of the town. Burnside's Federals were covered to the south by the Holston River. When the work was completed, the Federal defenses included 13 strongpoints around the city. The Federals gave Fort Loudon, which anchored the northwest corner of the city's defenses, a new name. In honor of the fallen cavalry commander, they renamed it Fort Sanders.

The enlarged fort, which was 95 yards long on the west side and 120 yards long on the north and south sides, consisted of two bastions. The side that faced the interior of the Federal lines was left open. The outside perimeter of the fort was protected by a wide ditch. Atop the tall parapets, the Yankees had placed cotton bales with green hides draped over them to prevent them from catching fire from cannon and musket fire.

The northwest bastion of Fort Sanders was a prominent salient in the main line and thought to be the most vulnerable spot in the Union defenses. To strengthen it, the Federals strung telegraph wire between tree stumps. They also constructed abatis—branches of trees laid in a row with their sharpened points directed outward toward the attacking force.

Poe had ordered those working on the defenses to dam parts of First Creek and Second Creek to create water obstacles to thwart the attackers. The soldiers and civilians working on the fort also prepared secondary positions inside the fort to which the soldiers could withdraw if the perimeter was breached. The Federals also fortified the hills on the south bank of the Holston River opposite the city to deny that key terrain to the Confederates. To protect the vital pontoon bridge that stretched across the river, Poe ordered the troops to build two booms that were placed across the river to prevent the Confederates from floating debris downstream in an effort to destroy the bridge.

The Confederates also were busy fortifying their positions. Using mostly captured shovels and picks taken at Lenoir's Station, Longstreet's troops dug earthworks and batteries on the west and north side of the Federal lines. On November 19 Wheeler's cavalry deployed in a line opposite the Federal works east of the Tazewell Road. Because they had so much ground to cover, the dismounted troopers were spread thin.

Following the arrival in East Tennessee of the Federal IX Corps, Burnside had approximately 30,000 troops in the region. But when Longstreet arrived at Knoxville, the Union commander had only 12,000 defending the city. Although Longstreet's troops besieged his army on three sides, Burnside was not cut off because the area south of the river was open to him. He regularly sent out foraging parties to gather whatever they could find to help feed his troops. Union loyalists also sent food downriver to the city to supplement the Federal supplies. Nevertheless, Burnside was forced to put his men on half rations and sometimes even on quarter rations.

The Confederates were in even worse shape than the Federals regarding rations and supplies. The railway that carried their supplies ended at Loudon where the bridge was down. From that

point, wagon teams had to haul their supplies over muddy roads to Knoxville.

Federal skirmishers posted in rifle pits outside their main works delivered a steady and accurate fire at the Rebels. The Yankees occasionally launched sorties in an effort to push back the Confederates. A Federal sortie on November 24 resulted in 83 casualties when the Yankees tried to drive away Rebel sharpshooters. The Federals captured an enemy trench, but they were driven back to their lines by a determined Rebel counterattack.

The same day, most of Wheeler's command arrived outside Kingston, located southwest of Knoxville. Concerned over the Yankee presence, which threatened his supply line, Longstreet ordered Wheeler to leave behind a brigade to hold its position at Knoxville and take the majority of his command south in an attempt to capture Kingston. A Yankee brigade and regiment of mounted infantry held Kingston. After some desultory skirmishing, Wheeler decided that the Federal position was too strong to carry, so he decided not to attack. The disgruntled Confederate cavalry returned to Knoxville. When he got back to Knoxville, Wheeler received orders to rejoin Bragg to take command of Bragg's cavalry. Command of Wheeler's cavalry at Knoxville devolved to Maj. Gen. William Martin.

Longstreet pondered the best way to capture Knoxville. He suggested that McLaws attack Fort Sanders with his three brigades under cover of night on November 22. After discussing the matters with his subordinates, McLaws informed his superior that his brigade commanders could not effectively direct the advance of their men in a night operation. Based on that reasoning, Longstreet cancelled the night attack.

After reconnoitering the south side of the river where the 10th Georgia had recently captured bluffs opposite McLaws' line, a Confederate staff officer suggested a battery could be positioned at that location to shell Fort Sanders. This would allow the Rebels to bombard the fort from three directions. Longstreet agreed. Colonel Edward Porter Alexander, Longstreet's artillery chief, ordered Captain William Parker's Virginia battery to cross the river on a makeshift ferry. Two Confederate brigades, Brig. Gen. Evander Law's brigade and Brig. Gen. Jerome Robertson's brigade, were to support the battery. Working through the night of November 24-25, the Confederates cut a road up the steep bluff, and then hauled the guns into position for a major assault scheduled for the following day. But Longstreet postponed the attack when he learned that Bragg was sending reinforcements under Brig. Gen. Bushrod Johnson. He planned to wait for Johnson's troops before launching the attack.

On November 25, elements of Law's and Robertson's brigades fought a brisk engagement with Colonel Daniel Cameron's brigade at Armstrong Hill. The Federals repulsed the Rebel attack. The bluecoats then began to extend their works south of the river.

That night Brig. Gen. Danville Leadbetter, who was the chief engineer of the Army of Tennessee, arrived and the next day conducted a reconnaissance of the Yankee works with Longstreet. Leadbetter favored an attack from the Confederate left against Mabry's Hill, which anchored the northeast corner of the Federal lines. Much to Alexander's chagrin, Longstreet agreed with the engineer and ordered him to move most of Parker's battery back across the river to support the attack scheduled for November 28.

A second reconnaissance on November 27 by Longstreet and other high-ranking officers revealed the futility in attacking Mabry's Hill. Attackers would have to cross a fair piece of open ground while under fire and be seriously hampered by a creek and ponds in their way. By that time, Johnson had arrived with two fresh brigades totaling 2,600 men.

After returning from his reconnaissance of the Federal defenses, Longstreet decided that he would send his troops against the northwest bastion on the morning of November 28. McLaws was tasked with leading the assault.

Brutally cold weather set in. McLaws requested that the attack be delayed until November 29. On the evening of November 28, Longstreet heard rumors circulating throughout his army that the Federals had driven Bragg from Missionary Ridge.

McLaws took that opportunity to suggest that Longstreet postpone the attack indefinitely until the rumors could be confirmed. Longstreet vehemently disagreed. "There is neither safety nor honor in any other course than the one I have chosen and ordered," said Longstreet. Come what may, the Confederates would attack the following morning at daybreak.

The deep ditch surrounding the bastion greatly concerned Jenkins. After failing to find Longstreet, Jenkins told McLaws that the first troops to reach the ditch should fill it with fascines so that those following them could cross the ditch more easily. McLaws dismissed his concerns. If the ditch was deep, he said, the troops would just have to trust their luck that they would be able to get over or around it.

Jenkins then approached Alexander with a proposal that the infantry build ladders to bridge the ditch. Alexander thought it was a good idea. They approached Longstreet, but he did not believe it was necessary. If the men showed enough determination, they would make it across the ditch, he said.

Around 10 PM on November 28 Confederate skirmishers advanced with orders to drive back the Federal skirmishers outside the fort. The graybacks overran the Yankee pickets. This would enable the Rebel skirmishers to furnish covering fire for the planned massed infantry attack.

On the morning of November 29, McLaws' troops prepared to attack in two columns. The left column consisted of Brig. Gen. William Wofford's brigade, which was commanded by Colonel Solon Ruff since Wofford had fallen ill. The right column was made up of regiments from Brig. Gen. Benjamin Humphreys' and Brig. Gen. Goode Bryan's brigades. Johnson's two brigades formed the reserve. Anderson's brigade of Jenkins' division was to attack the Federal line east of Fort Sanders, while two of Jenkins' brigades served as a reserve. This force numbered approximately 6,000 men.

Lieutenant Samuel Benjamin commanded four 20-pounder Parrots from his Company E of the 2nd U.S. Artillery, six 12-pounder Napoleons from the Rhode Island Light Artillery, and two 3-inch Ordnance Rifles from the 2nd New York Light Artillery. The supporting garrison, which was drawn from IX Corps, consisted of approximately 400 troops from four regiments.

At dawn the Rebel guns opened up, signalling that the attack was about to begin. More Confederate guns soon began shelling Federal strongpoints around Knoxville, including Fort Sanders. After about 20 minutes the guns mostly fell silent. Then, McLaws' infantry began advancing toward Fort Sanders.

At Fort Sanders, Benjamin had only one gun that he could bring to bear on the Rebel columns. He loaded it with triple canister, but the gunners did not have time to get off many rounds. As they narrowed the distance to the forward lines, the attacking Confederates began falling over the telegraph wire. The Federals poured musket fire into their ranks as the hapless Confederates negotiated the obstacles.

Pushing past the telegraph wire and through the abatis, the two Rebels columns were closing in on the northwest bastion when they encountered the deep ditch. The advance briefly stopped as troops began to crowd in front of the ditch. With no choice but to go forward, the Rebels jumped into the ditch. Men strug-

National Archives

One of the most difficult operations in the Civil War, and one that failed regularly, was the attempt by infantry to storm strongly held field fortifications. Following their orders, clusters of Confederates desperately try to fight their way uphill to Fort Sanders.

gled to claw and scratch their way up the slippery far side of the ditch and the looming parapet, with most sliding back down again. A handful climbed up on their comrades' shoulders only to be shot down when they reached the top of the parapet. Others tried to crawl through the narrow gun embrasures but were killed by musket or canister rounds.

As the Rebels struggled to get into the fort, they managed to briefly plant three flags on the parapets. The bluecoats redoubled their efforts to repulse the attackers. Private Joseph Manning of the 29th Massachusetts Infantry remembered being "in a fever of excitement" loading and firing as fast as he could. Picking up artillery shells and cutting their fuses to five seconds, Benjamin lit them and tossed them down into the mass of Rebels struggling in the ditches.

Confederate casualties were quickly mounting not only from the defenders of Fort Sanders, but also from flanking fire from the Federal lines to the east. With no chance of taking the bastion, many Rebels began to fall back. This proved as dangerous as they had to endure fire as they withdrew across open ground. Others remained in the ditch. The attack was over in 20 minutes.

"I saw some of the men straggling back, and heard that the men could not pass the ditch for the want of ladders or other means," wrote Longstreet. "Almost at the same moment I saw that the men were beginning to retire in considerable numbers, and very soon the column broke up entirely and fell back in confusion." Longstreet called off the attack.

The attack on Fort Sanders had cost the Rebels approximately 800 men, one quarter of which were taken prisoner. In contrast, the Federals suffered approximately 100 casualties.

Not long after the repulse Longstreet received word that Bragg had been severely defeated at Chattanooga. Davis advised Longstreet to wrap up the siege and rejoin Bragg. Shortly afterward, Longstreet gave the order to retreat. He countermanded the order, though, when he learned that Bragg had retreated to Dalton, Georgia. Bragg offered him the choice of joining him at Dalton or returning to Virginia. Longstreet chose neither option. After consulting with his division commanders, the Bull of the Woods decided to continue the siege in an effort to tie up Federal forces that might be used against Bragg.

Under pressure from Washington to rescue Burnside, Grant dispatched Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman to relieve Knoxville. But Longstreet eventually decided to return to Virginia. On the night of December 4-5, he ordered his men to break camp but leave their campfires still burning to deceive the Federals in Knoxville. In a cold rain, Longstreet's battered command marched away from Knoxville. The siege of Knoxville was over. In total, the Knoxville campaign had cost the Confederates 1,300 casualties, and the Federals approximately 700 casualties.

After a gruelling march through rough terrain, Sherman arrived at Knoxville on December 6. Given the supply challenges that Burnside faced, he was surprised that his men were not on the verge of starvation. Except for Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger's corps, Sherman's command countermarched to Chattanooga.

With Granger's men holding Knoxville, Burnside sent his cavalry after Longstreet on December 5 and then sent the IX and XXIII Corps to join the pursuit two days later. Perhaps the Federals believed that Longstreet's men were whipped, but they would learn otherwise.

On December 14 Longstreet defeated the Federal cavalry under Brig. Gen. James Shackelford at Bean's Station. The Confederates pursued the retreating Federal horse soldiers. On December 16 the Confederates found them in a strong defensive position at Blain's Cross Roads about 15 miles northeast of Knoxville. At that point, Longstreet resumed his retreat east. His command bivouacked for the winter in East Tennessee before returning to Virginia.

Burnside left Knoxville on December 12 after he was relieved of command. In late January 1864, Burnside and his men received a resolution from the U.S. Congress thanking them for their efforts at Knoxville. Like many of the bluecoats marching east, Captain Henry Burrage of the 36th Massachusetts took pride in the IX Corps' role at Fort Sanders, remembering it "was Fredericksburg reversed." □

The blind King John of Bohemia leads the vanguard of the French army in a headlong charge against dismounted Englishmen in a romantic painting by Czech artist Viktor Barvitius. John implored his barons to allow him the opportunity to die with honor.

DEATH BY LON

National Gallery, Prague

AT the age of 50, John of Bohemia was already old for a warrior and completely blind. He not only was the Count of Luxembourg and King of Bohemia, but also claimant to the thrones of Poland and Hungary. On August 26, 1346, he found himself just south of Calais in northern France, fighting for the French against the English near the village of Crécy. Although unable to see what was occurring, he was able to hear the rout of the front line of Genoese crossbowman and the charge and repulse of the first wave of French cavalry.

He asked two of his barons how bad the situation was, and they told him that the French forces were being cut to pieces. "You are my men, my companions and friends in this journey," he said. "I ask that you bring me forward, that I may strike one stroke with my sword." At the doubts of a few of them, John insisted that they join the fight. "Let us go forward and die with honor," he said. Seeing no way to object further, the men are said to have "lowered their voices like lambs" and assented, according to an anonymous Roman chronicler. They then tied the bridles of their horses together to guide him.

He would never see the last field he fought upon or wash his hands in the nearby stream or even know from the evidence of his senses that the day was ending just as his life was ending, too. "Lead me into the thick of the fray and God be with us," he said. Once there, the wings of the English army closed around him and his men, and the blind man was quickly driven from his horse. Soon after the French knight who carried John's banner also fell, and John himself was trampled to death by the two horses to which his own was attached. John's death was mourned on both sides. Prince Edward of Wales, whose division had slain John of Bohemia, later adopted his crest and motto.

The Battle of Crécy was the first large-scale land battle in the Hundred Years War. The conflict began as a typical drama of royal succession. Philip IV, king of France, died in 1314 with what he might have imagined was a continued lock on the French throne for the Capetian dynasty because he had three sons. And indeed all of them did succeed him, but by 1328 they were all dead, too. Louis X had died at 26, Philip V at 29, and Charles IV at 33. None of them left a male heir.

Philip IV's daughter, Isabella, had married the king of England in 1308, making her son, later king Edward III, closest in line to the French throne. In swooped Philip of Valois, and with the French barons and prelates on his side, they invoked a clause in the Salic law that stated that women could not inherit landed property. It was the first time the French crown had invoked the law that had been instituted eight centuries earlier by Frankish King Clovis.

Not surprisingly, this clause was extrapolated to cover kingship; after all, if a woman could not inherit property, how could she inherit a kingship that could never be hers, let alone pass that claim to her children? No doubt this interpretation had something to do with an English king being so close to the French throne, and it easily won support. The French crown declared that the transmission of kingship could only pass through the patrilineal line, making Philip of Valois (Philip VI) the new French king. The English contested the claim, insisting that Edward III should be made king over the French by right of his mother Isabella.

GBOW

English King Edward III's longbowmen shattered multiple charges by French King Philip VI's mounted French knights at Crécy in 1346.

BY TIM MILLER

History is never quite as easy as arcane or convenient interpretations of law, though. At the time of Philip's accession, Edward III had been on the English throne only for a year. Edward was crowned king in 1327 when he was 15. Even more dramatically, he had only come to the throne after his mother and her lover, with the support of French King Charles IV, had deposed, imprisoned, and likely murdered his father, Edward II. Following a decade in which his half-brother and first cousin had also been executed, no one would have expected that Edward would reign for the next half century. Yet he showed his willfulness almost immediately. His mother and her lover were made the fools if they assumed the young king would be easy to control. In 1330 he forced his mother into retirement, while her lover was tried and executed for various crimes. In the middle of this, Edward's rightful claim to the throne of France was taken from him by a technicality, and yet he had the temerity in 1329 to travel to the Cathedral of Amiens and, expected to accept Philip's claim, did so in such a vague way as to ensure future disputes.

Edward also immediately renewed England's continual wars with Scotland, and in 1333 won a victory at Halidon Hill, installing an English-backed king. This prompted the expected response from France, which supported a different monarch for Scotland. Through the Auld Alliance, France frequently sent aid to Scotland in its wars against England and vice-versa. Although the French requested Scottish assistance at Crécy, the Scots were unable to provide it.

Two more matters exacerbated the dispute. The first involved an exile from the French court, Robert of Artois, who escaped to England and whom Edward III refused to extradite. The second concerned the area of Gascony in southwest France, which had long belonged to the English but only on the condition of their recognition of the the French crown. As a show of disapproval over England's treatment of Scotland and its refusal to extradite Robert of Artois, Philip annexed Gascony in 1337 and invaded it the following year, prompting Edward to declare himself the rightful king of France. Artois, by then a trusted adviser of Edward's, seems to have egged the king on in his own way, reputedly placing a heron, the symbol of cowardice, before him at a banquet.

Both: Wikimedia

English King Edward III (left) and French King Philip VI. Although King Edward initially planned to avoid battle, he could not resist offering it when the conditions seemed favorable.

But Edward must have soon realized that Philip felt hemmed in by his moves. While France was clearly more powerful and boasted a larger population, England was more united than France. For Philip, it was unlikely that the population of Gascony would quietly become French subjects, no matter how the French tried to either force them or foment rebellion there. Like their neighbors the Basques of northern Spain, the Gascons had their own culture and customs and even their own language. They preferred the English to the French in part because they were allowed more autonomy under the English. Flanders also was largely autonomous. When Edward, in response to Philip's actions, halted the export of English wool and invited manufacturers from the Low Countries to set up shop in England, the threat to the remaining Flemish merchants was a real one. As such, Edward's claim was said to have the support of everyone from the sheep farmers on up. This included the authorities of Ghent, Ypres, and Bruges, all of whom declared Edward the rightful French king.

As English rulers or enemies all quickly realize, though, any expedition going either way across the English Channel becomes an immensely expensive logistical endeavor. While Edward's forces did defeat the French fleet off the Flemish port city of Sluys in 1340, in 1337 and 1339 full-scale invasions of the Continent had faltered over lack of money, and another would not be attempted until 1346. There was, as yet, nothing like a dependable military industrial complex for either country to rely upon, and the finances of such an invasion were so precarious that Edward's later inability to pay back a loan received from the famous Bardi bank of Florence led to its collapse. Even the money earned from England's wool trade, which at one point was being diverted for the war effort, was not enough. Meanwhile, Philip's subjects refused to pay any more taxes during the brief truces of 1340, 1343, and 1345, stubbornly declaring they would pay no more taxes unless there was an actual invasion.

By early 1346, though, Edward had his money and began gathering his supplies and forces. With no permanent navy, the 700 ships used in the invasion belonged to fishers and traders knowing they would be paid well by the king. They began gathering at Portsmouth near the end of April and for the next two months supplies were assembled for the invasion.

Unlike the campaigns in Scotland, which could easily be replenished by land, there was no such luxury awaiting the English army in France, both thanks to the unpredictable weather in the English Channel and the likely hostile French population.

The amount of equipment, ammunition, and food needed to support the English army on campaign was staggering. To outfit the longbowmen, for example, more than 132,000 arrows and 5,500 sheaves were ordered, and the work to produce them was spread throughout the country. Once at Portsmouth, approximately 60 carts alone were needed to transport these supplies to the Continent and beyond. English archers, mounted knights, and men-at-arms were responsible for their own swords, lances, and knives, the production of new innovations like early cannons and 12-barrel ribalds (operated by two or three men and firing lead shot) were the responsibility of the armorers at the Tower of London, which also served as a collection point for supplies as they came in from throughout the country.

The soldiers in battle required a wide array of leather and iron protection. The knights wore various types of helmets, including snout-faced bascinets. They were clad primarily in plate armor and wore surcoats over their armor. As for the foot soldiers, they sported kettle hats and wore quilted gambesons or brigandines reinforced with metal strips to protect their upper bodies.

A medieval army on the move was less a matter of organized lines of men and matériel and more like a merchant caravan. Along with soldiers of all stripes there were also carpenters and engineers who would prove invaluable in navigating a French countryside whose bridges would end up destroyed or sabotaged ahead of their arrival. There were also those responsible for the army's food supply. It was assumed that the French would take to burning their fields and slaughtering their animals rather than have them satisfy the hunger of the invading army, and so in the months leading up to the invasion royal purveyancers scoured England and were able to buy huge supplies of food at much cheaper prices than usual. Flour, oats, pork, peas, and beans were packed into huge barrels. As with the thousands of carts needed simply to roll its more valuable product along, an enterprising person may well have earned a fortune in producing barrels or in coordinating the transportation of them to Portsmouth. Fresh meat was supplied by the small herd that accompanied the army, but since no meat was eaten on Fridays, there was also wide sampling of fish as well as 130,000 gallons of wine.

In addition, the English transported approximately 10,000 horses—belonging to knights, men-at-arms, or mounted archers, or those used for transport—across the English Channel. This alone required a special talent, and upon landing the horses had to be rested for a few days to relieve the stiffness from standing for a more than a week.

By the 1330s England was able to field a fairly regular and reliable volunteer army that was well paid and professionally trained. Edward III's army at Crécy was composed of 12,000 men: 7,000 English and Welsh archers, 2,700 men-at-arms, and 2,300 Welsh spearmen. As for payment, a common soldier received two to three times that of a peasant laborer. Many aristocrats also raised armies from their own tenants, households, or localities, with the young men from entire towns or villages filling out proto-regiments that would have a long pedigree in the history of European warfare. Where volunteer numbers were scarce, convicts were pardoned in exchange for their service. The rolls were also filled with archers and spearmen from Wales, Cornwall, and Ireland. In contrast to the handful of languages that hampered the communications of the French army, aside from some German mercenaries among the cavalry and men-at-arms, Edward's army had no language barrier of any kind. What is more, many of the men had served together before.

The French army numbered 30,000, comprising 6,000 Genoese crossbowmen, 10,000 mounted men-at-arms, and 14,000 conscripted feudal infantry. The French were still caught in the chivalric ideal where mounted knights and men-at-arms made the difference in a fight, and so they refused to believe that proper tactical implementation of their infantry could mean much, let alone turn the tide.

If the French were caught off guard by the final location of the invasion, this was in part because the English were as well. Amazingly, in a letter on July 6, after a few days of bad weather that made crossing impossible, Edward III remarked that when they finally did set out they would go wherever the wind took them. The major English ports of London, Dover, Winchelsea, and Sandwich had been closed for the two weeks before and one week after the invasion to keep news of it from spreading, but it is hard not to imagine that such action actually clued the French in to what was happening, since earlier in the year they

Biblioteque Nationale, Paris

ABOVE: Although this period image shows hand-to-hand fighting, only a small number of French knights reached the English line through the dense fire of the archers. BELOW: The English produced 132,000 arrows and 5,500 sheaves to outfit their longbowmen for the invasion of Normandy. The archers' performance at Crécy elevated the reputation of the English army.

Wikimedia

had called upon a Genoese fleet to protect the French coast. But by early July the Genoese had only reached Lisbon and, the actual English landing at the Cherbourg peninsula was more than 100 miles away from the Seine estuary where the French were expecting the invasion. The Cherbourg peninsula had only a local defense force at best; while there were approximately 300 Genoese bowmen there, they refused to fight because they had not yet been paid.

And so, with very little opposition, Edward's army landed at St. Vaast la Hogue on July 12. His troops spent the next five days unloading supplies and raiding the surrounding countryside. By the time they were done, the English had left a 21-mile-long swath of destruction behind them. Indeed, the English army never had to camp out in the open during the 39 nights they spent on the campaign because they drove the locals out of whatever town, village, or city they came to. Once they decided to move on, the place was almost completely destroyed. At the city of Barfleur, for example, some of its leading citizens were taken hostage until a ransom was paid, after which the town was destroyed and its riches pillaged.

Edward then separated his men into three divisions. King Edward led the main body, his 16-year-old son led the vanguard, and William de Bohun, the Earl of Northampton, led the rear guard. At that point, Edward took steps to protect French towns and property from any further destruction. "No house or manor was to be burnt, no church or holy place sacked, and no old people, children or women in the kingdom of France were to be harmed or molested," read King Edward's proclamation. It fell on deaf ears, though, as the English troops proceeded to burn every town on their route of march.

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Edward paid a local guide to lead him to a tidal causeway at Blanchetaque where he crossed the Somme River. In a taste of things to come, the English defeated a French force sent to impede their crossing.

On July 20 they sacked the town of Carentan, and since Edward was still at this stage of the campaign envisioning holding the territory he conquered, he left a garrison to oversee the town and accepted the local commanders' surrender. Shortly afterward Edward's army ransacked the town, killing more than 1,000 people before he left. The French retook the town, killed the English garrison and sent their commanders to Paris to be executed for treason. But even Carentan was nothing compared to the destruction of Caen.

From the start of the campaign Edward had been reluctant to lay siege to any town as large as Caen, but the reality on the ground proved that to let it alone would be disastrous. It also helped that the three wings of the army had been reunited just before approaching the city, with 200 of the ships following them inland via the River Orne.

When Edward sent a monk to Caen to offer terms of its peaceful surrender, the powerful bishop of Bayeux, head of the garrison stationed at Caen's castle, had the monk arrested. Wasting no time, the next morning Edward sent in his men, and by day's end more than 2,500 had been killed. Among the slain were the townspeople who had improvised barriers to help the French forces, as well as a number of French noblemen who, if the English had been following expectations, should have been taken prisoner and ransomed. But loot was in no short supply at Caen, and news of the riches taken there reverberated even louder than the city's destruction.

"The woman was of no account who did not possess something from the spoils of Caen and Calais and the other cities overseas in the form of clothing, furs, quilts, and utensils," wrote 16th-century English statesman Thomas Walsingham. Scholars in the 18th century could apparently chart the prominence of certain families via the wealth the spoils of Caen had brought them. Indeed, the Crécy campaign can be seen as a turning point when loot and plunder of this kind became as expected a part of military service as regular payment or grants of land.

The city of Bayeux, whose bishop had led the resistance in Caen, saw the writing on the wall and surrendered quickly. Somehow still imagining that he might keep an English force on French soil after hostilities ended, Edward left another garrison in Bayeux and continued on. By the end of the month that garrison had also been murdered and the town retaken.

Edward met twice with a delegation of cardinals sent by the Avignon Pope Clement VI, who hoped to broker a peace deal, the second time with a marriage alliance between the houses of Valois and Plantagenet. Nothing positive came of either meeting, although a humorous episode unfolded when a handful of Welsh horsemen stole the cardinals' mounts. By August 4, Edward's allies in Flanders were now in French territory and attacking south of Calais so that Philip actually was fighting on three fronts: Artois, Aquitaine, and Normandy.

The next 20 days saw inconclusive skirmishing. It is difficult to discern Edward's true intentions at that point. Although he clearly intended to conduct a chevauchee that would challenge King Philip's authority and demonstrate in stark terms his inability to protect the people of Normandy, it is less clear whether he intended to provoke a pitched battle. He had every confidence, though, that his army could repulse a French attack.

The French sent their hired Genoese crossbowmen (left) into battle without their pavises or adequate ammunition. In any event, their crossbows were no match for the more powerful longbows (right).

On his march to Flanders, Edward avoided the French army at Rouen and headed for Elbeuf where he found that the French had destroyed the bridges over the Seine River. Following the river south, with Philip's army across the river, the English army was again hampered by repairing a bridge over the Seine at Poissy. Meanwhile, the French withdrew temporarily to Paris. While searching for one of these crossing points, French soldiers on the other bank were said to have bared their backsides to the frustrated English.

Once Edward was finally across the Seine, he skirted Paris entirely in a dash north to meet up with his Flemish allies. Along the way he encountered more and more garrisoned towns and local Frenchmen ready for a fight, haphazard militias and trained knights among them. While these forces posed no immediate threat to the English army, they were persistent and annoying enough to cause delay in its trek north. At least both armies got a rest on August 15, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, when military maneuvers ceased altogether.

By August 22 Edward's army reached the Somme River. The French had destroyed the bridges over the lower Somme, thus impeding Edward's attempt to reach his Flemish allies. When Edward learned of a tidal causeway called the Blanchetaque that could be crossed when the tide was out, his men made quick work of it, crossing in less than an hour, easily beating off the French force sent to harass them.

"When we came to the river Somme, we found the bridges broken, so we went towards St. Valery to cross at a ford where the sea ebbs and flows," wrote King Edward. "By God's grace a thousand men crossed abreast where before this barely three or four used to cross, and so we and all our army crossed safely in an hour and a half." Shortly thereafter the English arrived at the forest of Crécy and the village of the same name. They were aware that the French army was near. Edward was familiar with the terrain because he had been in Crécy as recently as 1329—the area in which it lay, Ponthieu, had been an English possession until 1338. The king knew a good piece of ground when he saw one. Knowing that battle was now unavoidable, he waited for the French to arrive.

On the morning of August 26, the English army was arrayed north of Crécy on a slight rise in the landscape. Its left flank stretched all the way to the village of Wadicourt, while the right edged close to Crécy and the River Maye, protected by the nearby forest and swamp. As a handful of contemporary sources describe, the extreme right flank was protected by a defensive barrier of carts.

King Edward ordered all of his men-at-arms to dismount. The grooms took the horses to the rear where they were protected in a makeshift corral formed by the baggage carts. Prince Edward commanded the right wing under the watchful eye of Thomas de Beauchamp, the Earl of Warwick, and Northampton commanded the left wing. King Edward commanded the reserve, which deployed behind the right wing. The dismounted men-at-arms deployed in the center of each of the three formations with longbowmen on both flanks. Positioning the men-at-arms in the center afforded them the flexibility to reinforce either flank if necessary.

Always ready to learn from their defeats, the English also took a page from the Scottish victory over them at Bannockburn in 1314 and dug dozens of postholes in front of their lines to trip the French horses. At mid-afternoon, Edward III rode a conspicuous white horse among his ranks and encouraged his men to defend his right to the French throne.

The French army stumbled upon the English almost by accident. The lead elements of the French vanguard sighted the English army at noon. The French were strung out over 12 miles of road. Philip VI was prepared for a fight, but he had not decided whether to attack right away before all of his troops were present or to postpone his attack for the following day. His nobles, however, were itching for a fight. They overrode their king's impulse to rest for the evening.

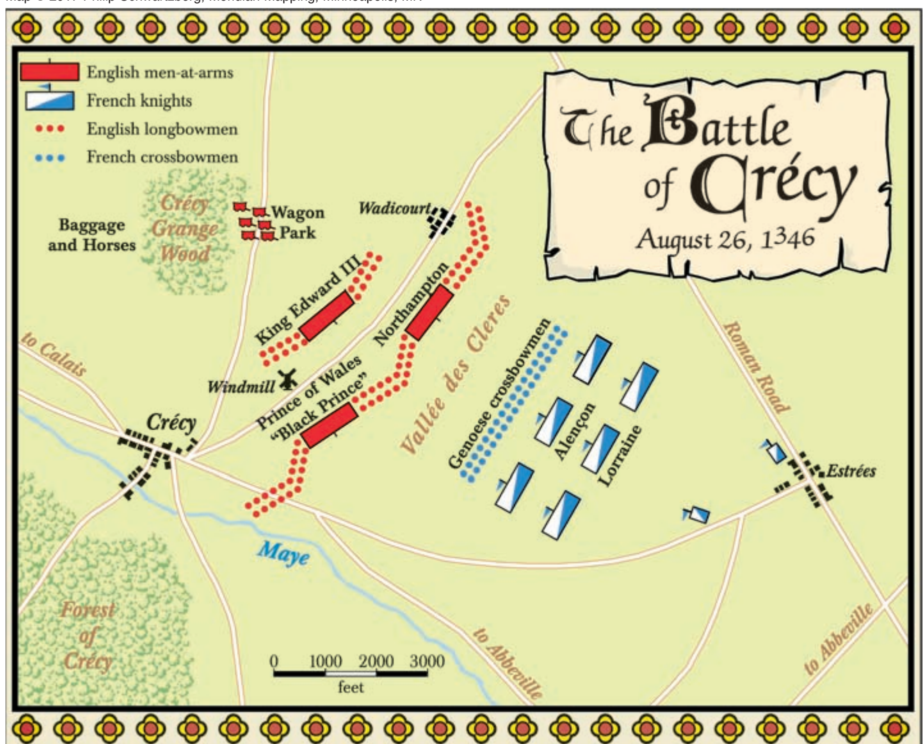
Indeed, the cocky French nobles already were discussing how they would divvy up the high-value English prisoners they knew they would find at Crécy and calculating the ransom each was likely to draw.

As the French army left Abbeville for Crécy, suddenly the force, which had harassed Edward III for the past month, became a motley, undisciplined crew. "This disorder was entirely caused by pride, every man wishing to surpass his neighbor," wrote chronicler Jean Froissart. Even when one mentions that Philip was the only monarch to actually enter the fight, given that Edward III directed his lines from atop a nearby windmill, the chroniclers tell us this only happened because Philip was suspicious of his nobles, as well as the foreigners in his ranks.

With that said, it is ironic that Philip would put the Genoese crossbowmen in the first line of battle together with blind King John of Bohemia and 300 mounted men-at-arms. The second line of battle consisted of the bulk of the French heavy cavalry led by Charles II, the Duke of Alençon, who was Philip's younger brother.

With no time to rest or wait for the remaining line and baggage train to arrive, the Genoese crossbowman advanced at 5 PM. They apparently were jostled into view of the English lines by the eager French cavalry behind them. Tired from the march, the Genoese crossbowmen also complained at having to advance without their pavises and reserves of ammunition, which were still far back in the baggage train with the rest of the foot soldiers.

Map © 2017 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: King Edward deployed his army on high ground so that the French would have to attack uphill. The English line overlapped the flanks of the attacking French, allowing the English archers to fire into the enemy flanks. OPPOSITE: Prince Edward examines King John of Bohemia after the battle. When the prince requested reinforcements at the height of battle, his father refused so that the young commander "could earn his spurs."

To make matters worse, the crossbowmen's advance also was marked by a sudden rain shower. When the clouds passed and the sun came out, it appeared behind the backs of the English line and shone directly into the faces of the Genoese. With the effectiveness of their crossbows now limited from the downpour, the Genoese halted a handful of times before finally unleashing a volley at the English.

In response, the much more powerful longbows, which their users had kept covered during the storm, filled the sky, as did the strange new sound of cannons. If the latter were still ineffective as weaponry, they shocked the French side simply with their sound, not to mention the confusion of their smoke. Amid such din it was unlikely the Genoese would have been able to hear the trumpets or drums that might direct them elsewhere or see the banners that would do the same. The arrows from the longbowmen continued without end. A good bowman could get off 15 shots per minute, a rate three times as fast as a crossbowman.

The Genoese wasted no time. They turned to run and almost immediately were trampled by the advancing French cavalry of the second line that rode toward the English right flank. The Genoese were upset at having not been paid and chose this moment for treachery, according to an anonymous Roman chronicler, who wrote, "These men are not firing their crossbows, and if they do fire them they are using wooden shafts without iron tips. Let the Genoese die." Another contemporary account echoes the claim of treachery. "The French knights and men at arms, seeing them flee, thought they had been betrayed; they themselves killed them, and few of them escaped," wrote chronicler Giovanni Villani.

The rash destruction of the Genoese forces backfired almost immediately, and the French cavalry, which was attacking uphill, quickly became bogged down amid their fallen bodies all as they continued to come under fire from the English longbowmen. "The arrows of the English were directed with such marvelous skill at the horsemen that their mounts refused to advance a step," wrote chronicler Jean le Bel. Some horses leapt backwards stung to madness, some reared hideously, some turned their rear quarters towards the enemy, others merely let themselves fall to the ground, and their riders could do nothing about it." In other words, all the cavalry armor in the world could not protect their horses from injury or confusion. Against such an onslaught the traditional use of the cavalry charge was essentially rendered useless, and the Duke of Alençon was killed in the fighting as his own men retreated, only to regroup and attempt another charge. If it is true that a medieval cavalry advance was not likely any faster than a trot, it is not hard to imagine how slow this advance, repulse, and advance truly became. Meanwhile, those few who reached the English lines were beaten back by their men-at-arms and their own cavalry as the longbowmen melted into the background, having done their job. The French cavalry launched 15 separate charges, all of which were repulsed. As the battle progressed, the French assaults became increasingly confused. Philip apparently attempted to lead a final charge, but John of Hainault grabbed his reigns and led him to safety.

Amid the melee of French cavalry charges, which mainly focused on Prince Edward's division on the army's right, the king's son was himself unhorsed and put in mortal danger. Upon hearing the news of his son's predicament, Edward is believed to have told the messenger that reinforcements were not necessary. The

Julian Russell Story

king supposedly did this so that young Edward would have an opportunity to "earn his spurs." This may be a bit of the victor's propaganda, or even an attempt by the English to picture war as it had once been, more a matter of individual and aristocratic prowess than a more capable use of lowly infantry.

Yet the collapse of the French forces, and the fact that the blind King of Bohemia's suicidal charge remained one of the more memorable moments from their side, shows how dated such a view of warfare had become. As has been said thousands of times already, Crécy represented the triumph of the longbow and therefore of the everyday soldiers. It only took slightly more than four hours to make this point. The stragglers from the French line, still arriving at that late hour, were all cut down, while Philip VI eventually withdrew with what was left of his forces and was not pursued.

Before the battle, both monarchs had declared that no prisoners were to be taken and no quarter given to the wounded or captured. But this was understood to refer to those who were not nobles since the capture and ransom of a noble was as much an opportunity for a paycheck as actual plunder. The infantry on both sides of a battle fought so ferociously and in such an unchivalric manner because they were worth nothing in exchange and quite literally fought for their lives.

English soldiers walked among the French wounded and killed them all, regardless of station, including approximately 1,500 nobles. A handful were separated out for proper burial, but most were placed in a mass grave that later took on the name Valees des Clercs. Meanwhile, the local monks buried the English dead in the corner of a field that was never ploughed again.

The Battle of Crécy was unique in the annals of the Hundred Years War in that it was the only time that the king of England and king of France would face each other on the field of battle. The battle proved that the English army was capable of defeating a first-rate power on the battlefield. Previously, the English had only bested the Welsh and Scots. But in the wake of Edward's victory over the French in the Battle of Crécy, the English army's standing in the eyes of feudal Europe rose considerably. The achievement was particularly impressive considering that the population of England was approximately six million compared to France's slightly more than 12 million. The larger population of France meant that it had more manpower and greater revenue than England.

The upshot of the victory was that Edward was able to march to the port of Calais and besiege its French garrison. This he was able to do without fear of attack by Philip VI, who although he contemplated trying to lift the siege ultimately decided against risking his army a second time. The siege began on September 4, 1346, and ended with the surrender of the French garrison on August 3, 1347. The successful siege gave Edward and his successors a reliable point of entry into northeastern France, meaning that they did not have to rely on their Low Country allies for a port to debark their troops and supplies.

The French House of Valois remained on the French throne for the next two centuries, while the English House of Plantagenet was succeeded a century later by the Tudors, and the security of neither monarchy ever seems to have really been at threat. If anything, the war succeeded in solidifying a separate French and English identity, an event that in its own way was no more a recipe for peace than a forced attempt at union.

England's supposed advantage in recruiting troops led to famous but ultimately inconclusive victories at Poitiers and Agincourt, but in the end England was left with no continental possessions beyond Calais, which itself would fall to a resurgent France in 1558. □

PATRIOT RAID ON
FORT TICONDEROGA

Ethan Allen's capture of Fort Ticonderoga in 1775 was little more than a sharp skirmish, but it had strategic consequences that influenced the course of the Revolutionary War.

BY JOSHUA SHEPHERD

FOR GENERAL THOMAS GAGE, 1775 was shaping up to be a disastrous year. Gage, who was the supreme British commander in North America, was headquartered in Boston and tasked with the unenviable job of enforcing a blockade of the town's harbor. Worse yet, relations with the provincial assemblies in all 13 American colonies were rapidly degenerating. Indeed, tensions were so high in Massachusetts that an armed clash seemed inevitable.

Affairs were little better on the frontier. Gage began receiving intelligence reports early in the year from the British post at Ticonderoga in northern New York. Settlers who lived near the fort reported a series of bizarre encounters with roaming backwoodsmen. The persistent newcomers were pushy, stole food, and asked a lot of questions regarding the condition of the fort, the size of the garrison, and the number of sentries guarding each gate.

Alarmed by such suspicious interest in His Majesty's post at Ticonderoga, Gage warned the commander of the fort, Captain William Delaplace, to be wary. "The intelligence you sent me will no doubt have put you on your guard," wrote Gage. The greatest threat, he believed, came from lawless frontiersmen from the New Hampshire Grants. "There are a number of armed vagabonds going frequently about the lakes, and if they meet you off your guard may form a scheme to seize your ammunition which they are in want of," he wrote.

The posts that sparked Gage's concern were the British installations at Ticonderoga and Crown Point. These forts commanded the most strategically vital body of water in North America: Lake Champlain. Although the lake straddled vital trade routes, its greatest value was military. The locale had truly been at the crossroads of empire since the 16th century. To the north, Champlain flowed into the mouth of the Richelieu River, affording direct access to the French citadels of Montreal and Quebec in the heart of Canada. The head of the lake offered two options for southbound travelers, ones via Lake George and the other via Wood Creek. Both routes required a short portage to the Hudson River, which flowed directly to the English strongholds at Albany and New York City.

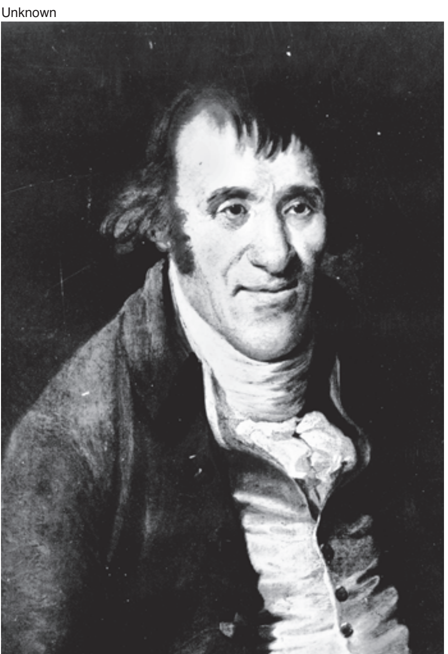
Not surprisingly, Lake Champlain was at the epicenter of fighting during the French and Indian War. In the deadly race to control the water route that commanded the continent, France initially took a commanding lead. In the 1730s, French troops built an impressive citadel at Crown Point, a jutting peninsula that commands the narrows of Lake Champlain. Although the installation boasted masonry walls 12 feet thick, it was a less than flattering testament to the longevity of French engineering. Two decades later the fort was a crumbling shell, and French troops, desperate to block an English advance toward Canada, opted to construct another fort just 15 miles south of Crown Point.

North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy

Ethan Allen demands that Captain William Delaplace surrender Fort Ticonderoga to the American Patriots. Although initially reluctant to comply, the captain quickly realized he had no alternative given the success of the surprise attack.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Unknown



Captain Benedict Arnold (left) and Colonel Ethan Allen. The rival commanders clashed repeatedly and their juvenile posturing bedeviled American operations on Lake Champlain after the raid.

The new installation, christened Fort Carillon, was situated at Ticonderoga. To the Native Americans, the locale was aptly known as "the meeting of the waters," a strategically placed narrows of the La Chute River that joins Lake George and Lake Champlain. Ticonderoga was likewise fortified with a masonry structure intended to withstand a conventional European siege. In their time, the forts at Crown Point and Ticonderoga were the crown jewels of France's North American empire, but by 1759 they had fallen into British hands. The following year, British forces succeeded in mopping up the last French resistance in Canada.

With the advent of uncontested British dominance in North America, the formerly vital installations on Lake Champlain largely lost their strategic value. No longer considered powerful bulwarks on an imperial frontier, Ticonderoga and Crown Point were regarded as little more than obscure backwater posts; nevertheless, British troops continued to garrison both forts. Crown Point was assigned a token detachment while the impressive fortress at Ticonderoga, which was bristling with captured French artillery, was manned by a larger force. The Redcoats on Lake Champlain, though, were by no means considered the elite of the British army. Drawn from the 26th Regiment of Foot, which was based out of Canada, the detached companies that served at Ticonderoga were idle garrison troops who were often convalescents unfit for other duties.

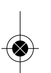
Despite a continued British military presence, the forts suffered from a decade of peacetime neglect. At Crown Point, an atmosphere of lax discipline contributed to disaster. On April 21, 1773, two soldiers' wives who were boiling soap let their fire get out of hand. The timber fortress, which had been painted with tar as a preservative, ignited, causing a major fire. The ensuing conflagration almost completely destroyed the fortress.

The charred remnants of Crown Point took a backseat to a rapidly degenerating political crisis in the spring of 1773. In the face of a looming colonial rebellion in the 13 colonies, Gage sailed for England to assist in formulating an official government response to a state of virtual insurrection in Massachusetts. Assuming temporary command in his absence was Maj. Gen. Frederick Haldimand, a Swiss soldier of fortune who spent a career serving the king of Great Britain. Although Haldimand was confronted with far more weighty matters, the nettlesome question of the decrepit posts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point fell to him.

The following year, British engineer Captain John Montressor was dispatched to northern New York to report on the condition of the forts. Montressor was hardly impressed with what he saw. Due to the fire at Crown Point, that fort had been rendered, in his words, "an amazing useless mass of earth." To Montressor's trained eye, Ticonderoga was little better. Montressor described the outer wall of the fort as badly rotted, and large sections had collapsed. What was left of the log palisade was sadly "leaning to the horizon," he noted. After studying the situation, Montressor concluded that to maintain a post at Ticonderoga, the old structure would have to be completely razed to make room for a new fort.

Rebuilding Ticonderoga simply was not worth it, Montressor said. Crown Point, which was situated at a natural choke point on the Champlain narrows, would be a healthier locale for the troops, as well as a better location for wintering British vessels. Crown Point also had another advantage over Ticonderoga: it was a virtual blank slate. The fortress had been so wrecked by fire that little demolition work would be necessary before the construction of a new post. Following Montressor's advice, Haldimand recommended abandoning Ticonderoga because of its dilapidated state and constructing a new fort at Crown Point.

As relations between colonies and mother country continued to degenerate, Haldimand had ulterior motives for his decision. By the spring of 1774 it was becoming increasingly apparent that an armed confrontation with the colonies was a distinct possibility. In a commendable display of strategic foresight, Haldimand proposed using the new construction project as an excuse for a massive military buildup on New England's back door. The general suggested transferring two regiments from Canada to Crown Point "under the pretense of rebuilding that Fort, which from its situation ... opens an easy access to the back Settlements of the Northern Colonies and may keep them in awe."



Haldimand's opinions should have carried greater weight. Throughout the summer of 1774, the British high command, which was clearly occupied with weightier affairs, largely ignored the dilapidated posts on Lake Champlain. The decrepit commissary's store room at Ticonderoga, which was plagued by rotted timbers, collapsed in August. Gage informed the officers at the fort that he was aware of the bad condition of the post; however, given that Ticonderoga might be abandoned, he ordered that reconstruction efforts "be at as little expense as possible."

By that autumn, Gage's superiors in England opted to reject the professional engineering opinions of John Montressor. The British decided that Ticonderoga would undergo extensive repairs and that a new fort would be built at Crown Point. But with the harsh northern winter setting in, construction would have to wait until the spring thaw. In March 1775 Gage finally issued orders for work to begin at Crown Point. He hoped that the new post would be a nearly impregnable wilderness stronghold. On a frontier where rebels were sure to have no chance of bringing artillery to bear, Gage recommended that the new fort be built of stone.

But time and fate were working against British plans for strengthening defenses of the Champlain corridor. On the morning of April 19, 1775, a British column out of Boston, which was headed for Patriot arms and munitions in the country hamlet of Concord, ran into trouble. After clashing with local militia on Lexington Common, the Redcoats were badly cut up in a day-long running fight that resulted in 300 British casualties. The fight marked the beginning of armed hostilities in the American Revolutionary War and set in motion a turbulent struggle for the backcountry post of Ticonderoga.

Patriot leadership had been eying the fort for some time. Earlier that year, Massachusetts authorities had commissioned a covert mission to Canada, dispatching Patriot lawyer John Brown to the far north. As part of his report on the mission, Brown strongly recommended an audacious strike for Lake Champlain in the event of war. "The Fort at Ticonderoga must be seized as soon as possible should hostilities be commenced by the King's troops," he wrote. Furthermore, Brown added, he had found just the men for the job. In the rugged outer reaches of modern Vermont, Brown had encountered a hard-bitten set of frontiersmen who were more than willing to do the job.

As events would prove, Brown's observations were correct. On the northern frontier, the arduous nature of pioneering had engendered a rough and ready populace that was accustomed to, and often itching for, a fight. In Vermont, which was then known as the New Hampshire Grants, the situation was exacerbated by conflicting claims to the region. Perched along the eastern shore of Lake Champlain, Vermont was a region dominated by rugged mountains and rugged men. The area had largely been settled by farmers from New Hampshire who had acquired land grants under the auspices of Governor Benning Wentworth. Thriving communities had sprung up in the decades preceding the conflict, but they were by no means years without conflict.

The trouble arose due to an unfortunate territorial dispute between New Hampshire and New York. While New Hampshire granted hundreds of thousands of acres to its citizens, the colony of New York was busy doing the same. When claims overlapped and competing authorities vied for taxes, trouble was bound to ensue. The contest was seemingly resolved in 1764 when King George decided the controversy in favor of New York. But New Hampshire persisted in selling grants in Vermont, and British authorities procrastinated in the implementation of New York governance.

By 1771 the situation had spiraled out of control. Despite the superficial appearance of legality, New York officials began to encounter more forceful resistance to their authority. Settlers possessing New Hampshire land grants, fearful that their property would eventually be seized by the New Yorkers, formed ad hoc militias to oppose encroachment of their settlements. The ensuing territorial squabbles failed to result in major bloodshed but did lead to a good measure of chaos. New Yorkers, including surveyors, sheriffs, assessors, and common settlers, were subjected to mass resistance and mob violence. Despite being the third most populous colony in North America, New York was largely impotent to enforce its authority east of Lake Champlain.

The triumph of New Hampshire settlers was due in no small part to volunteer militias that began forming in 1771. Composed of farmers, tradesmen, and laborers who were determined to keep their homes and land at all costs, the militias made New York governance all but impossible. One of their key leaders was Ethan Allen, a bull-headed Vermonter with a penchant for tough talk and rash action.

Allen was born in 1738, son to a starchy Connecticut farmer who passed a good deal of his stubbornness on to his son. The younger Allen initially made his living as a farmer, then as an iron monger, and alternately lived in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Notoriously combative over the slightest provocation, Allen occasionally ran afoul of the authorities for petty infractions. By the late 1760s, Allen had pulled up stakes and set out for the New Hampshire Grants. A gifted public speaker and charismatic leader of men, he quickly became a prime spokesman for the beleaguered settlers of Vermont.

Wikimedia

Although Fort Ticonderoga was dilapidated, its capture produced valuable artillery for the Patriot cause and disrupted communications between British forces in Quebec and those in Boston and New York.

But when words gave way to violence over the land dispute in the New Hampshire Grants, Allen proved himself more than capable of exerting force. Allen met in 1771 with other disaffected settlers at the Catamount Tavern in Bennington, an inn and grog shop that functioned as something of a de facto seat of government in the Grants. Allen was instrumental in forming the Green Mountain Boys, the legendary Vermont militia that would enforce its own punishing brand of frontier justice.

In safeguarding the property rights of the Vermonters, Allen quickly established a reputation for impetuous force that was difficult to discern from outright thuggish behavior. Allen and his followers were not above burning the homes of New York settlers, and eventually a small reward was offered for his capture. Allen was little affected by such threats, and at one point issued a contemptuous dismissal to New York officials. "The gods of the valleys are not the gods of the

Alamy

Ethan Allen's militiamen overpower a company of the British 26th Regiment. The regiment, which was based in Canada, contained a number of convalescents unfit for combat duty.

hills," he wrote. To the frustrated authorities in Albany, Allen and his cohorts would eventually earn the unflattering sobriquet the Bennington Mob.

The unique skills of such men benefited the Patriots when armed conflict broke out with England in April 1775. As soon as hostilities commenced, Patriot leaders began looking into the possibility of a strike against Ticonderoga. Subsequent to the British debacle at Lexington and Concord, heavily outnumbered Redcoats in Boston were placed under siege by swarms of New England militia. The volunteer soldiers carried a motley assortment of small arms but were woefully ill equipped for siege operations. Few artillery pieces were available, and those few possessed by the Patriots were generally smaller fieldpieces unsuitable for conventional siege operations.

A remedy for the woeful lack of artillery would come about largely due to the audacious idea of Benedict Arnold, a particularly scrappy Connecticut militia captain. Arnold was a fiercely self-determined man possessed of driving ambition. Born in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1741, he was initially apprenticed to a druggist at the age of 14. During the French and Indian War, Arnold ran away from his master and enlisted as a private in a company of New York troops and then deserted. By 1760 he had enlisted again and, almost just as quickly, deserted again.

Arnold's luck, oddly enough, took a turn for the better following the death of his parents. After selling off a good portion of the estate, Arnold moved to New Haven, where he opened up shop as a druggist, bookseller, and merchant. He succeeded remarkably well in his business ventures, eventually trading in commodities and horse flesh in New England, the West Indies, and Canada. It was during his business trips to Canada that Arnold became familiar with Ticonderoga. A keen observer, Arnold could not help but take note of the installation's decrepit condition.

Arnold had been elected a captain in 1774 in the most prestigious militia outfit in New Haven: the Governor's Foot Guard. When the news of Lexington and Concord reached New Haven, hesitant town fathers decided that they would not authorize the local militia to march to the aid of Patriot forces. Arnold would have none of it, and demanded that his men be supplied with ammunition from the public stores. When he was refused, an infuriated Arnold thundered that he would assault the magazine and remove the supplies by force. As was his custom, Arnold generally took what he wanted.

Such a penchant for impetuous action would prove highly advantageous in the high-stakes contest for control of Lake Champlain. When Arnold marched his command to Boston, he encountered Colonel Samuel Parsons, who was headed the opposite direction to obtain further recruits. Parsons mentioned the desperate need for artillery, and Arnold immediately recalled the scores of guns that he had seen at Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

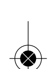
When he reached the American lines outside of Boston, Arnold approached the Massachusetts Committee of Safety and outlined a plan to seize the guns. The committee initially demurred and simply forwarded Arnold's intelligence to New York authorities. But Dr. Joseph Warren, a key Patriot leader who favored bold initiative over bureaucratic inaction, strong-armed other members of the committee into authorizing an expedition without waiting for cooperation from New York.

On May 3, 1775, Arnold was commissioned a colonel and authorized to mount what was described as a secret service. He was tasked with recruiting up to 400 men from the frontier settlements of western New England, reducing the British garrisons at Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and removing the desperately needed artillery from both forts.

Arnold succeeded in raising recruits in short order and proceeded to organize affairs in the New Hampshire Grants. But when he reached Stockbridge in western Massachusetts, Arnold was taken aback to learn that another expedition for the reduction of Fort Ticonderoga was already underway; even worse, it was completely out of his control.

Colonel Parsons, after his return to Connecticut, had taken it upon himself to apprise Connecticut authorities of the availability of British guns at Ticonderoga. While Arnold had been organizing his expedition, Connecticut opted to launch its own independent campaign toward Lake Champlain. Command of the Connecticut operation ultimately fell to a man who had already proven he could make a good bit of trouble on the frontier: Ethan Allen.

Outraged at what he considered an encroach-



ment of his authority, Arnold sped ahead to find the Green Mountain Boys and assume personal command of them as well. When he caught up with them at Castleton, the meeting, not surprisingly, did not end cordially. The Green Mountain Boys already had agreed to proceed under Allen's command when Arnold arrived in a huff. Arnold demanded "command of our people, as he said we had no proper orders," according to Captain Edward Mott. True to form, the westerners simply brushed him off, informing Arnold in no uncertain terms that they would only serve under their own officers.

Not easily dissuaded, Arnold set out to find Allen personally and assert his authority. When the two stubborn Patriot leaders finally met, a confrontation was inevitable. When Arnold finally found Allen at the rendezvous point on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain, he demanded command of the entire operation. Such last-minute wrangling did not go over very well. Allen naturally rejected the idea in blunt terms. Arnold persisted. The argument escalated until a frustrated Allen finally snapped. "What shall I do with the damned rascal?" he asked his men. "Put him under guard?"

The impasse ostensibly was resolved due to a sudden display of backwoods compromise. One of Allen's men unexpectedly arrived at a surprisingly simple solution: "Better go side by side," he said. At that, Arnold and Allen reached terms, and the plan for seizing Ticonderoga unfolded with remarkable speed. By the evening of May 9, Allen and Arnold had their men assembled at Hand's Cove on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain. Altogether, there were about 100 Green Mountain Boys, 40 volunteers from Massachusetts, and 20 from Connecticut. The lake crossing took place that night, but a lack of boats caused delays. By the early morning hours, 80 Green Mountain Boys were poised to strike, and Allen and Arnold, fearful that daylight would arrive before the rest of the men, chose to attack immediately.

As dawn approached on Wednesday, May, 10, 1775, it promised to be another uneventful day for the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga. Even though armed conflict already had broken out between the Patriots and the British, no one expected anything out of the ordinary. There had not been any sign of trouble, and Ticonderoga had not witnessed a shot fired in anger in nearly two decades. Only a handful of sentries were on guard duty while the bulk of the garrison slept.

For the British troops, the quiet ended at about 3:30 AM during a few moments of unexpected pandemonium. At the fort's south gate, the sentry simply could not believe his eyes when a mob of unidentified men emerged from the darkness and rushed toward his post. They were drawn up in three ranks, armed, and moving fast. After issuing an abrupt challenge that went unanswered, the sentry leveled his musket at a large man who appeared to be their leader and pulled the trigger. He had taken aim in the direction of Allen, who was carrying a drawn sword and was marching in the center of the column. Fortunately for Allen, the musket lock snapped but failed to fire.

Understandably unwilling to confront the attackers by himself, the sentry ran into the fort, frantically shouting the alarm. When he reached the parade ground, he dove for cover in a bombproof shelter. Allen, who was wildly swinging his sword, led a charge to the parade ground. By this point the Americans were considerably keyed up and clearly exhilarated that they had secured the element of surprise. Allen formed the men in two ranks on the parade ground opposite the barracks. The jubilant Americans let out three huzzahs. The cheers startled the bleary-eyed Redcoats.

While the Americans were struggling to form up, another British sentry, desperately thrusting with his bayonet to keep the rebels out of the fort's guard room, slightly wounded Gideon Warren, one of the Americans. Allen was close by and took a swing for the man's head. At the last moment he thought better of killing the sentry. "I altered the design and fury of the blow to a slight cut on the side of the head," wrote Allen. At that, the brief melee was over. The frightened sentry dropped his musket to the ground and bellowed for quarter. Allen relented but demanded to know where the commanding officer's quarters were. The frightened Englishman flung his arm in the direction of the west barracks. He said that there was a staircase that led to the officers' quarters on the second story. At that Allen was off on the run with Arnold following closely behind.

In the officers' quarters, the fort's high command had been caught, quite literally, with their pants down. Lieutenant Jocelyn Feltham was awakened by angry shouts of "No quarter! No quarter!" A bemused Feltham described the racket as shrieks that emanated from what was, in his words, an "armed rabble." The lieutenant immediately leapt from bed and ran to the door of Delaplace's room, loudly knocking on the door for orders. Delaplace, though, who was clearly a sound sleeper, was not up yet. Realizing that time was of the essence, Feltham scrambled back to his own room where he hastily donned his waistcoat and red uniform coat. He did not have time to put on his trousers.

To get his point across, Allen menaced Feltham with a drawn sword, and his men were pointing muskets at the half-dressed lieutenant. Mistaking Feltham for Ticonderoga's commanding officer, Allen demanded the surrender of the fort and angrily threatened that if a single British musket was fired, not a man, woman, or child in the fort would be spared.

The Americans, however, were already forcing their way into the barracks. The men in the enlisted barracks were roused from their sleep at gunpoint and made prisoners amid a good bit of shouting and cursing. Feltham darted back to the captain's room where he found that the captain had just awoken. The two officers briefly conferred. Feltham asked for orders but just as quickly offered to force his way to the enlisted men and attempt to organize resistance. Delaplace assented to the idea as he struggled to throw on his own clothes.

The situation, however, failed to improve for the startled British. Feltham bolted out of Delaplace's quarters and made for a stairwell but found his route of escape barred by an exceedingly noisy crowd of rebels. The lieutenant attempted to get their attention from the top of the stairwell but could not make himself heard above their shouting. He finally motioned for them to stay where they were and at last got them to quiet down. Feltham still maintained hopes that the British enlisted men would put up some sort of a fight and expected to hear the firing of muskets at any moment. Clearly stalling for time, Feltham barked a series of questions down the stairwell. The rebels were not at all pleased with his stalling tactic.

What ensued was a farcical parley for the surrender of the fort. Feltham, who still had his trousers slung across his arm, put on a bold showing for a man who wasn't wearing any pants. He asked who the group's leaders were, and Allen and Arnold mounted the stairs, announcing that they shared a joint command. Feltham remained defiant, demanding to know by what author-

Wikimedia

ity they had entered His Majesty's fort. Arnold, playing the part of a genteel officer, calmly announced that he had received orders from Massachusetts. Allen, who was far less diplomatic, barked that his orders were from the Province of Connecticut and that he was taking immediate possession of the fort and its contents.

To get his point across, Allen menaced Feltham with a drawn sword, and his men were pointing muskets at the half-dressed lieutenant. Mistaking Feltham for Ticonderoga's commanding officer, Allen demanded the surrender of the fort and angrily threatened that if a single British musket was fired, not a man, woman, or child in the fort would be spared. The situation was apparently cooled by Arnold, who endeavored to rein in the unruly Vermont backwoodsmen. When the Americans finally realized that they were not talking to the fort's commander, some of the enlisted men attempted to break in the door to Delaplace's quarters. Arnold, who was still trying to get control of the situation, held them back.

During the commotion, Delaplace, who had finally dressed, emerged from his room. Allen and Arnold conferred briefly with the fort's commander. Understandably, Delaplace was reluctant to surrender the fort immediately. The chagrinned officer asked Allen by whose authority he demanded the surrender of Ticonderoga. Allen, perhaps confusing Delaplace for Feltham, later claimed that he blurted out one of the most legendary remarks in the annals of American history. "In the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress," Allen purportedly said.

Regardless of the precise words that passed among the three men, it was obvious that surrender was inevitable. It took little more than a half hour for the American rebels to take control of Fort Ticonderoga, and it had been a nearly bloodless coup. Feltham, who was placed under guard in the barracks, could not believe that his men failed to put up a fight. Ultimately, he correctly concluded that they had been seized in their beds. Delaplace, who was escorted down the stairs, ordered his men paraded without arms as he had surrendered the garrison. The affair was over in a matter of minutes.

An enthusiastic Allen gleefully reported the capture of the fort's two officers, two artillerymen, two sergeants, and 44 enlisted men. More important, the fort's entire complement of artillery had fallen into Patriot hands, and it was a considerable haul of ordnance. The Americans seized 100 cannons, one 13-inch siege mortar, and a large number of small swivel guns. To celebrate the stunning victory, Allen said the victorious American troops toasted the Continental Congress and the "liberty and freedom of America." In plain language, the hard-drinking Green Mountain Boys broke into the fort's liquor stores and proceeded to get inebriated.

The free flow of alcohol did little to implement an orderly occupation. In no time the troops were helping themselves to whatever took their fancy. Feltham was disgusted by the entire spectacle, later writing that the spoiling of the fort amounted to little more than "plunder which was most rigidly performed as to liquors, provisions, etc., whether belonging to His Majesty or private property." An outraged Delaplace howled when his own private liquor stash was seized by the rebels. Allen simply brushed him off and gave Delaplace a receipt for the stolen alcohol.

For his part, Arnold was equally disgusted by what he considered a shameful lack of military discipline. Still seething that he was not in command of the operation, Arnold described the Vermonters as "committing every enormity." He held that the Americans deliberately destroyed and plundered private property, acted boorishly, and, worst of all, completely neglected their military duties. In a matter of hours, the rebel operation had degenerated to "the greatest confusion and anarchy," he wrote.

Despite the celebratory chaos taking place at Fort Ticonderoga, there were further prizes to be had on the northern frontier. With Fort Ticonderoga securely in their hands, the victorious Americans quickly made plans for a quick strike against the British installation at Crown Point, which seemed even more vulnerable than Ticonderoga had been. Only hours after the stunning American raid succeeded, Captain Seth Warner finally crossed Lake Champlain with Allen's rear guard and joined forces with the main body. Allen immediately put him to work, dispatching him with 100 men to seize the skeleton British garrison at Crown Point. Warner set out on the lake. He apparently encountered stiff headwinds for he was unable to reach Crown Point until the following day. The post was guarded by a mere sergeant's command consisting of just 12 men. Outnumbered nearly 10 to one, the Britons surrendered the post in short order. As at Ticonderoga, the

capture of a handful of British infantry was far outweighed by the ordnance contained in the remains of the fort. Warner's detachment took possession of a motley assortment of swivels, field guns, and mortars. Allen reckoned that there were more than 100 guns at Crown Point.

Notwithstanding the repeated successes, an embittered Arnold continued to seethe at the utter lack of discipline that reigned among American troops. More than that, he was clearly miffed that he lacked the authority to do anything about it. The day after the victory, he penned a report to the Massachusetts Committee of Safety that gave vent to his frustrations. Fort Ticonderoga was "in a most ruinous condition and not worth repairing," Arnold wrote. He was unable to begin the process of removing the British artillery because no one would follow his orders. And worst of all, Allen was no longer sharing any command responsibilities. In a pointed missive, Arnold gave his nemesis a backhanded compliment. Allen was "a proper man to head his own wild people, but entirely unacquainted with military service," he wrote.

In a few days, the squabbling officers had patched up their differences enough to mount another operation. Although the British toehold on Lake Champlain had been eliminated, another target was close at hand. Interrogations of British prisoners revealed that a major British threat was within easy striking distance of American troops. The British sloop-of-war *Royal George* was moored at Fort St. Jean on the Richelieu River. With direct access to Lake Champlain, the vessel could easily command the lake and prove a decided menace to further American operations. True to form, the hot-blooded Arnold, who thus far had been denied a leadership role in the campaign, decided to launch a preemptive strike.

Arnold was able to set his plan in motion when troops loyal to him finally began to arrive at Ticonderoga. In a raid on the property of noted Tory leader Philip Skene, Arnold's men were able to commandeer a number of bateaux and a schooner, which Arnold christened the *Liberty*. The amphibious strike against Fort St. Jean took shape by the middle of the month. Arnold set out with his own fleet followed closely by a scratch fleet of bateaux manned by Allen's Green Mountain Boys. On the evening of May 17, Arnold had pulled ahead of his erstwhile companions and was closing on Fort St. Jean. After receiving an intelligence report that indicated the approach of British reinforcements, Arnold pushed his men hard to reach their objective.

The next day, Arnold achieved the martial glory he so desperately sought. His men achieved a total surprise of the thin British garrison at St. Jean, taking the fort without a fight, as well as seizing the *Royal George,* the most powerful ship of war on Lake Champlain. Leery of pressing his luck too far, Arnold loaded captured supplies and artillery onto the former *Royal George*, now named the *Enterprise,* and headed back for Ticonderoga. On the way, Arnold ran into Allen, who had missed the entire show. After being shunted aside at Ticonderoga, Arnold, no doubt, relished the moment. Not to be outdone, Allen pressed on to Fort St. Jean, entertaining hopes that he could hold the fort that Arnold had just abandoned. He occupied the fort, ever so briefly, and then abandoned the installation in a good bit of haste when news arrived of the approach of several companies of British regulars.

Such juvenile posturing would continue to bedevil American operations on Lake Champlain. Arnold incessantly howled for the authority to take command at Ticonderoga. Allen responded by ignoring Arnold and refused to even acknowledge his opponent in his official reports. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress, exasperated at the pointless bickering between rival commanders, finally dispatched an investigatory committee to get to the bottom of it. Outraged that the Massachusetts authorities did not automatically rally to his side, a furious Arnold resigned immediately and stalked off in disgust. In the petty game for accolades at Ticonderoga, Ethan Allen had bested all comers.

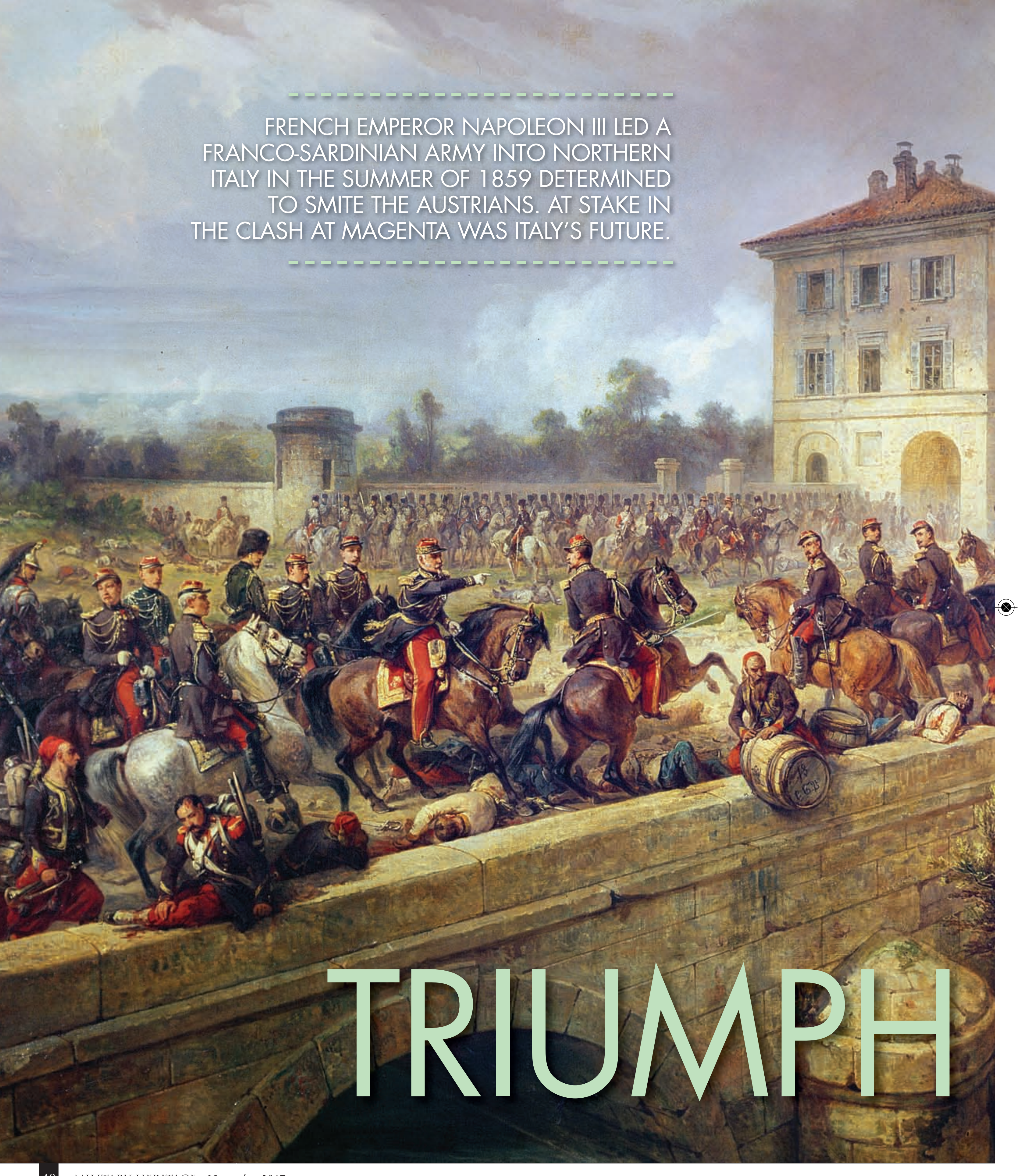
Tactically, the American seizure of Fort Ticonderoga can barely be classified as a minor skirmish. But the strategic consequences of the daring raid would remarkably affect the course of the war. Although Arnold had been frustrated in his desire to remove the artillery from Ticonderoga for siege operations at Boston, another energetic Continental officer implemented the idea. Henry Knox, a young Boston bookseller and aspiring artillery officer, advanced the scheme to General George Washington in the autumn of 1775. Knox and his men faced the herculean effort of transporting the massive load some 300 miles, in the dead of winter, through some of New England's most rugged terrain.

Library of Congress

ABOVE: Colonel Henry Knox and his men transported 58 heavy guns captured at Fort Ticonderoga 300 miles in the winter of 1775-1776 to Boston. When they were deployed in various positions overlooking the city and harbor, the British were compelled to evacuate on March 17, 1776. OPPOSITE: Fort Ticonderoga as it appears today with Lake Champlain in the background. The Patriots followed up their success by capturing lightly held Crown Point the following day.

Knox reached the American lines outside of Cambridge in February. To the amazement of the Continental Army, he had 58 heavy guns in tow. On the night of March 4 Washington erected impressive fieldworks on heights that commanded Boston and brought the town under the threat of artillery bombardment. With their position rendered untenable, the British evacuated the city on March 17, 1776.

The standoff at Boston was the first time that British forces faced off against the nascent Continental Army. The affair ended in an embarrassing black eye for the British due in no small part to the guns of Ticonderoga and the fierce backcountry warriors who had aggressively taken the war to the enemy. □



FRENCH EMPEROR NAPOLEON III LED A FRANCO-SARDINIAN ARMY INTO NORTHERN ITALY IN THE SUMMER OF 1859 DETERMINED TO SMITE THE AUSTRIANS. AT STAKE IN THE CLASH AT MAGENTA WAS ITALY'S FUTURE.

TRIUMPH

of SPIRIT

BY ERIC NIDEROST

Musee de l'Armee, Paris, France / Archives Charmet / Bridgeman Images

On April 20, 1859, Emperor Franz Josef paid a respectful visit to Prince Klemens Wensel von Metternich's place at Rennweg in Vienna. Metternich was a legend in his own time. The prince was occasionally reviled but also revered as statesman with an international reputation. Metternich was a leading figure in European politics and diplomacy in the decades just following the turbulent Napoleonic Wars. Although the 86-year-old had been out of power for more than a decade, the Austrian emperor still sought his advice.

Franz Josef wanted Metternich's opinions on the diplomatic crisis that was developing between Austria and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, one of the small states that made up the Italian peninsula. Curiously, the emperor seemed to want validation on decisions already made, not guidance on future policy.

The old statesman was hard of hearing, mainly because of his advancing years, but Franz Josef was deaf in another way. In particular, he seemed to be fatally immune to good advice. As the interview progressed, Franz Josef's bellicose intentions were becoming obvious, and as the muffled words reached Metternich's brain he felt a sense of growing alarm. The aging statesman was a reactionary, a defender of absolutism and the old order, but at the same time he was a man who was dedicated to the balance of power and the maintenance of peace in Europe.

Finally Metternich could stand no more. "For heaven's sake, send no ultimatum to Italy!" he said. By Italy he meant Piedmont-Sardinia, and Franz Josef hardly knew how to reply. The emperor, perhaps a little embarrassed, had to admit that the ultimatum already had been sent. It was done, and there was no turning back. Sardinia-Piedmont was Lilliputian compared to Austria, but it had a powerful ally in the form of French Emperor Napoleon III, whose full name was Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte. This ultimatum was going to set off a chain of events that led to the Franco-Austrian War of 1859, a conflict sometimes called the Second War of Italian Independence.

In 1859 Italy was a geographical expression, not a politically unified nation. The Italian peninsula was divided into a patchwork of independent states, the most powerful of which was Piedmont-Sardinia, a northern kingdom ruled by Victor Emmanuel II of the House of Savoy. Allowing for regional differences, its states

The French Imperial Guard advances on Magenta. Stiff Austrian resistance and the confined nature of the terrain combined to slow the French advance toward Austrian-held Milan.

shared a common culture, language, religion, and rich heritage that dated back to Roman times.

The Duchies of Tuscany, Parma, and Modena were in some respects artificial creations that could be easily swept aside if momentum for unification took hold. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies occupied the lower half of the boot of Italy. It was a medieval, corrupt state whose people were mired in poverty and ignorance. Central Italy boasted the Papal States, the territories the Roman Catholic Pope ruled as a temporal, not spiritual leader. Pope Pius IX was a bit of a political reactionary who was not about to give up his earthly powers voluntarily. Still, many Italians dreamed of Risorgimento, that is, the birth of Italy as a unified nation.

Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, who had been Piedmont-Sardinia's prime minister since 1851, was one of those dreamers. Balding, slightly chubby, with a thin line of whiskers that circled his face like a bib and left his chin and upper lip bare, he looked more like a small-town businessman than a master politician. But appearances were deceiving. Cavour was a passionate Italian nationalist who was a grand master of diplomatic chess, a hard-headed, coolly methodical politician who had few equals in Europe.

Cavour knew that Italian unity and ultimate independence would not be achieved without the expulsion of Austria from the peninsula. Austria held Lombardy and Venetia, key parts of Italy that were vital to the creation of a unified state. The two provinces were also Austrian bases

All: Wikimedia

Clockwise from top left: Austrian Emperor Franz Josef, Piedmont-Sardinian Prime Minister Count Camillo Benso, French General Francois Canrobert, and Austrian Field Marshal Count Ferenc Gyulay.

where Franz Josef's Second Army could be used to suppress any nationalistic, democratic, or liberal uprisings.

The Count of Cavour knew Piedmont-Sardinia could not take on Austria alone, and France was the most logical ally if war should break out. Napoleon III was an inveterate schemer. He was an unscrupulous politician who was not above censoring newspapers and jailing or exiling opponents of his regime. Yet he also had a romantic streak and even an idealistic side as well. He was genuinely sympathetic to Italy's plight.

He had spent some time in Italy as a young man, and while there had joined a secret revolutionary movement called the Carbonari (charcoal burners). The members of the Carbonari were fierce Italian patriots and as such vehemently anti-Austrian. Young Louis-Napoleon jumped into the movement with both feet, distributing revolutionary pamphlets and generally delighting in being a subversive. His revolutionary period was brief but remained with him the rest of his life.

The wily Cavour first began efforts to win over the French emperor to Piedmont's side. His cousin, the ravishingly beautiful if slightly eccentric Virginia Oldoini, Countess of Castiglione, was dispatched to try and win Napoleon over to the Italian cause. Although already married, she created a minor scandal by becoming Louis-Napoleon's mistress for two years. Scandal was nothing to the avant-garde countess.

An avid patron of photography, she delighted in being shown barefooted and sometimes barelegged, though in all other respects modestly dressed. In the Victorian period, when women wore long dresses and hoop skirts, showing legs or bare feet was a titillating endeavor. Apparently she did her job well for Louis-Napoleon seemed to favor her cause as well as her charms.

There were other considerations as well. Napoleon III was eager to emulate the military successes of his uncle, Napoleon I. For this reason, northern Italy was an almost irresistible lure. It was in that region, after all, that the first Napoleon had won fame and everlasting renown. The battlefields of northern Italy, with names like Lodi, Rivoli, and Marengo, were milestones of the Napoleonic legend that still resonated with the French public.

Yet Napoleon III's idealistic streak, while genuine, only went so far. If an Austrian war was successful, Piedmont-Sardinia would be enlarged, which was a vital step in Italian reunification. But Napoleon III wanted payment in the form of some territory for France. Cavour, his eyes on the

greater prize of unification, happily sweetened the secret deal. Among other things, France would get Savoy. But there was something else; namely, the French emperor would not budge unless Austria was the aggressor.

Cavour was sure he could arrange something, and with little trouble on his part. He was right. The wily minister simply massed troops along Piedmont's border with Austrian-occupied Lombardy and waited for Vienna's predicable reaction. It was not long in coming. Emperor Franz Josef I took the bait, and his government issued the ultimatum that had upset Metternich. Cavour rejected the ultimatum out of hand, so at last the Franco-Austrian war was a reality.

The Lombard plain was going to be the future theater of war. Situated between the towering Alps in the north and the great Po River in the south, it was richly veined with the Po's many swift-flowing tributaries, including the Sesia, Ticino, Adda, Oglio, and Mincino. The Po River itself was large, 550 yards across at Valenza, and had comparatively few masonry bridges across its broad expanse. From a logistical standpoint, the region's many canals, vineyards, and forests made the movement of large armies difficult, especially cavalry.

The Franco-Austrian War, like the near-contemporary American Civil War, was a transitional conflict that was modern in some respects, but also embodied traditional methods as well. From a modern standpoint, the Franco-Austrian War was the first to effectively employ travel by rail. The railroads were revolutionary for the time, and the French in particular used them extensively. The French army used two routes to get to the front, and trains were important elements in both.

In one instance, Gallic soldiers in northern France boarded trains that took them to Marseilles or Toulon and then transferred to troop transports for a sea journey to Genoa. The alternative was an all-land route that involved taking trains to the French side of the Alps at St. Jean de Maurienne, marching through the mountains via the Mount Cenis Pass, and picking up trains on the Italian side at Susa. The Susa railway provided easy transportation to Turin, the Piedmontese capital. The Mount Cenis Pass was choked with snow, but 4,000 workers managed to clear it in time for the foot-slogging French infantry to get through.

The telegraph was also a new and revolutionary tool for war. Napoleon III stayed in Paris in the early weeks but kept the telegraph wires hot with a stream of orders to his far-flung troops. Frequent incoming messages also kept him abreast of ever changing political and military events as they unfolded. The emperor left Paris for the south of France on May 10, intending to take a ship like many of his soldiers. He arrived in Genoa aboard the *Queen Hortense* and joined his assembling army at Alessandria by May 14.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Magenta was a soldier's battle, and the French army boasted some of the finest infantry units in Europe. Bearskin-hatted grenadiers of the French Imperial Guard are shown heavily engaged at Magenta.

The Austrian army reflected in microcosm the strengths and weaknesses of the empire at large. The ranks were filled by peasants from the various ethnic groups that made up the sprawling multinational empire. Literally a polyglot force, the Austrian army recognized no less than 10 languages, though German was the language of command. At times officers had to use translators to address their men.

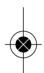
Nationalism was also stirring among Franz Josef's subjects, and this too was reflected in the Imperial armed forces. There were ethnic Germans, Hungarians, Slovenes, Poles, Czechs, Ruthenians, and Serbs. The Hungarians had fomented their own revolution in 1848; it had been suppressed and resentment still lingered. The Italians were also considered unreliable, and apt to desert at the first opportunity.

The typical white-coated Austrian soldier was armed with a muzzle-loading Lorenz rifle-musket, but some units still had old-fashioned smoothbores. By and large, the Austrian light infantry was excellent, especially the skirmishing Jäger units. The Croatian light infantry was also excellent, albeit politically unreliable. Austrian officers commanding such men never knew if the soldiers would take it into their heads to shoot them instead of the enemy.

By contrast, the French army was homogeneous, generally well equipped, and brimming with confidence and élan. The army had performed well in Algeria and the Crimea and had gained valuable combat experience. French infantry were armed with percussion cap, muzzle-loading rifle muskets, just like their Austrian enemy; however, it was a Gallic article of faith that the increased accuracy of these weapons could be neutralized by a rapid advance across a field in a bayonet charge.

The French soldier had a sharp uniform that underwent little change until 1914 and the beginning of World War I. It consisted of a dark blue greatcoat with turnbacks, red trousers, and a forage cap with a visor known as a kepi. The kepi, which was adopted by the Americans in their civil war, largely replaced the stiff and relatively heavy leather shako. Only Napoleon's Imperial Guard grenadiers harkened back to an earlier time with their splendid bearskin headdress.

The French did have an advantage in artillery. Louis-Napoleon was not strictly speaking a soldier, but he was interested in artillery and had written intelligently on the subject. The French army was the first in the world to adopt rifled cannons, which greatly improved range and accuracy. In contrast, tradition-bound Austria kept smoothbore guns.



The 60,000-strong Piedmont-Sardinian army was, like the French, a homogeneous force enjoying the same language, customs, and goals. King Victor Emmanuel II was a competent soldier who at one point actually led his men into battle; he was the last European monarch to do so. The Piedmontese also boasted fine light infantry, in particular the feather-hatted Bersaglieri. Far more controversial were the Cacciatori delle Alpi. Two thousand of these Hunters of the Alps were attached to the Piedmont-Sardinian forces. These irregulars were led by Giuseppe Garibaldi, an out-and-out revolutionary who had an unsavory reputation in conservative circles.

The campaign began with an Austrian invasion of Piedmont-Sardinia on April 29, 1859. This made strategic sense, because if pushed vigorously the Piedmontese might be knocked out of the war and forced to sue for peace before the French arrived in sufficient numbers to come to their aid. The Austrian Second Army was the main part of this effort, with 107,000 men and 364 guns. As it crossed the Ticino River boundary that separated Piedmont from Lombardy, the Austrians were confident they could take Turin, the enemy's capital, only 75 miles away.

The Hungarian-born general who commanded the Austrian army was Field Marshal Count Ferenc Gyulay. Despite his lofty title, he lacked real experience in the field. At 69 he was an able administrator but tended to be slow, overcautious, and easily frightened if the tide of events seemed to turn against him.

In the meantime, the Piedmontese got some timely advice from Marshal François de Certain-Canrobert, commander of the French III Corps. His men were still trudging over the Alps, but Canobert had arrived with an advance partly to size up the situation. Instead of a direct defense of Turin, Canobert suggested that the Piedmontese move four of their five divisions south by rail to the fortifications around Alessandria and the Po River bridgehead at Casale.

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ABOVE: Feather-hatted Alpine light infantry of the Piedmont-Sardinian Army known as Bersaglieri fought with Maj. Gen. Patrice de MacMahon's II Corps at Magenta. OPPOSITE: French Zouaves storm the Ponte Nuova Bridge shouting "Vive l'Empereur!" The Austrians kept up a galling fire from a nearby building, but the fierce Zouaves took the building with the cold steel of their bayonets.

Such a savvy move for the Allies would cover all possible scenarios. If Gyulay insisted on advancing on Turin, the Piedmontese forces in the south could threaten his left and his line of communications. If somehow he turned south and tried to besiege Alessandria, the Piedmontese would simply hold out, confident that powerful French forces now gathering in Genoa would sooner or later come to their aid. The Piedmontese accepted the advice with alacrity.

As Canobert predicted, Gyulay did indeed become worried about the threat to his left, and reports of French arrivals in Genoa did nothing to assuage his concerns. That was bad enough, but heavy rains drenched the Austrians, overflowing river banks, turning roads into quagmires, and generally dampening a morale that wasn't high to begin with. It took effort to slog through mud in pouring rain, and the troops were plagued with fatigue.

After four days of marching, the Austrian army had advanced only 20 miles. Unable to contain his growing anxiety, Gyulay ordered a retreat back to Lombardy. Soon the dejected white coats had retired behind the Ticino, leaving Piedmont safe and at the same time handing the initiative over to the Allies. By mid-May the French and their Piedmontese colleagues were ready to take the offensive. Napoleon III's contribution to the upcoming campaign included five corps and his Imperial Guard, a total of around 170,000 men.

Gyulay did try an abortive reconnaissance in force with 20,000 men, but he fell back after a clash at Montebello. Thereafter the Austrians adopted a passive, defensive mode, in part because Gyulay was lethargic by nature, and also because he knew Austrian reinforcements were coming that would boost his numbers.

With Piedmont safe from invasion, the Allies' next task was to liberate Lombardy from Austrian control. As a first step they would cross the Ticino and march on Milan, the capital of Lombardy. The Ticino was unfordable, but the river was bridged at San Martino, a village along the main road to Milan. The Austrians, realizing the San Martino bridge's importance, built a redoubt on the river's western bank to protect it.

Seven miles north of San Martino was the village of Turbigo, which offered some possibilities. It too was on the Ticino River, and that stretch of the waterway did not seem to be guarded. Napoleon ordered Maj. Gen. Jacques Camou, commander of the Voltigeur Division of the Imperial Guard, to secure a bridgehead there.

A French officer nostalgically recalled the moment when the Imperial Guardsmen marched off to fulfill their assignment. "Nothing could be finer than to see these magnificent troops parading in the streets of [Novara], with drummers beating and a band leading the way, before going to prepare the invasion of the enemy territory," he wrote. Camou reached Turbigo with no difficulty, and, since there was no bridge there, sappers quickly constructed three pontoon bridges across the Ticino. They were ready by dawn on June 3.

Napoleon was more politician than soldier, and was nothing if not an inveterate gambler, trusting to luck with a casual throw of the dice. In the course of his turbulent career he had seen many ups and downs; at one point, he had even been in prison. But once Louis-Napoleon secured the imperial crown he must have felt he was on a roll. Trusting to luck, and his own gambler's instincts, Napoleon decided on a two-pronged offensive whose ultimate goal was to open the main road and capture Milan.

Once a bridgehead was secured, Camou, who was responsible for carrying out the first prong, was to advance southward to the village

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

of Magenta. The effort would include Maj. Gen. Patrice de MacMahon's II Corps and the Piedmontese army, at least if all went according to plan. The second prong was spearheaded by the Grenadier Division of the Guard and would cross the Ticino at San Martino and proceed eastward to Magenta. The village was the critical rendezvous point, with the two prongs uniting before continuing on to capture Milan.

Napoleon III's plan was fraught with danger and violated a key precept of military science: never divide your forces when the enemy's exact whereabouts or numbers are unknown. Napoleon Bonaparte, one of the greatest military geniuses of history, would have been appalled at his nephew's rash maneuvers. If one prong was attacked and got into trouble, the other would be virtually powerless to come to its aid. What is more, there were no telegraph lines in the immediate region, so the French would have to fall back on old-fashioned dispatch riders to relay messages from command to command.

The clash at Magenta is often called a meeting engagement, meaning neither side had anticipated serious fighting there. On June 4 Gyulay had intended to give his tired troops a day of rest after their exertions during the abortive Piedmont campaign. He had only the Austrian II Corps, the majority of the I Corps, a cavalry division, and part of the VII Corps available for battle. Other units, such as the III Corps, were within marching distance, at least in theory, but the Austrian army was still in disarray and straggling was the norm after the Piedmont fiasco.. Ironically, the awkward Austrians were actually in better overall shape than the Allies, at least when it came to numbers. Altogether, Gyulay had approximately 60,000 men.

By contrast, the Allies seemed unable to act in concert. Victor Emmanuel and his Piedmontese army remained idle at Turbino all day, leaving the main burden of the Magenta fight to 48,000 Frenchmen. This was later to cause some bitterness among the French when they reviewed the events of the day. Despite this, the Gallic troops moved forward with their customary zeal.

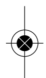
The Austrians attempted to blow up the bridge at San Martino, but they did not have blasting powder available. Ordinary powder was used, so the damage was only partial and largely confined to two arches. Battered but unbroken, the bridge was passable to infantry and could, in any case, be repaired. French engineers lost no time in repairing the span, and as an added measure constructed a pontoon bridge 300 yards away.

The Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard were the first to reach San Martino, arriving at 10 AM on June 4. Emperor Napoleon and his staff arrived a half an hour later. It was nearing midday when the emperor heard the sound of thunder from the north, and in the distance, just beyond the trees, smoke rose in great clouds. These were telltale signs that MacMahon had started his offensive from the Turbino bridgehead.

Once past the Ticino River, the guardsmen found that they had to cross a broad plain two miles long. Slightly to the right of their approach was a steep embankment, a natural rise, though it almost looked like a man-made earthwork. Just east of this rise was the Naviglio Grande Canal, a waterway that paralleled the Ticino River. The canal was 30 feet wide and three feet deep, but its current was very strong so it could not be crossed on foot.

To make matters worse, the canal's sides were steep, and thick clusters of prickly acacia grew abundantly along its banks. Four local bridges spanned the canal, but the Austrians had managed to destroy only two of them, those at the village of Boffalora to the north and Ponte Vecchio to the south. This left intact the bridge at Ponte Nuovo, which carried the main road to Milan, as well as a railroad bridge that was part of a rail line that paralleled the main road all the way to the Lombard capital.

The 2nd Grenadiers of the Guard surged forward toward Boffalora only to be stopped dead in their tracks when they discovered the bridge had been blown up. They had to satisfy themselves with firing at the white coats across the canal. Not too far away the 3rd Grenadiers of the Guard



advanced though the broad open plain under fire. Their progress was hampered by the fact it had rained some time before and the plain was partly flooded in spots. The guardsmen had alternately to wade knee-deep through water and slog ankle-deep in mud.

Quickly shedding their heavy knapsacks but still retaining their famed bearskin headdress, the guardsmen climbed up the embankment slope without bothering to fire. The Austrians, who were startled by the sheer audacity of the Gallic effort, fell back. But the French had not yet crossed the bridge that spanned the Naviglio Canal at Ponte Nuovo. Some of the Imperial Guard Grenadiers managed to take the two houses on the west bank of the canal opposite Ponte Nuovo, but when they attempted to actually cross the span they were repulsed by heavy fire from the 60th Austrian Infantry Regiment.

Undeterred, Brig. Gen. Jean Joseph Gustave Cler brought up the Zouaves of the Guard to see what they could do to cross the bridge. The Zouaves were originally of Algerian origin, and although by the 1850s they were mostly Frenchmen, they still retained the Turkish costume with baggy pants that some U.S. and Confederate units adopted during the Civil War.

The Zouaves went forward in a rush. As they crossed the Ponte Nuovo bridge their enthusiastic shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!" could be distinctly heard over the rattle of musketry and deep-throated roar of cannons. The Zouaves took the two customs houses located just on the other side of the bridge, but it was no easy task. Austrian soldiers kept up a galling fire from each window, but the fierce Zouaves took the building with the cold steel of their bayonets.

The Imperial Guard grenadiers also participated in this mad scramble, and when the customs points were taken many placed their bearskins on the ends of their rifles and waved them ecstatically. The attack was well timed because the Austrians were in the midst of making final preparations to blow the bridge. A quick-acting Zouave bayonetted the Austrian engineer who was about to light the fuse. Six barrels of gunpowder were in place for the demolition. The French soldiers quickly and unceremoniously rolled them into the canal.

But the Austrians launched a powerful counterattack, capturing a French gun, and retook the houses at Ponte Nuovo on the east bank of the canal. The Imperial Guard Grenadier Division was now isolated, desperately clinging to its foothold along the canal, ferociously attacked again and again by fresh Austrian units as they arrived on the battlefield. These men were the elite of the French army, tough and resilient, but still only flesh and blood. They needed assistance.

Messengers who galloped to Napoleon III at San Martino received the same reply. "I have nothing to send," said the French emperor. "Hold on." Other couriers were sent to find the French III and VII Corps, which had not yet appeared, because the main road from Novara was clogged with a major traffic jam.

After holding on courageously for about an hour, the Guard Grenadiers were rescued by elements of Marshal François de Certain-Canrobert's III Corps. Seeing the red trousers and kepis of their comrades in arms, which stood out so differently from the white coats of the enemy, the guardsmen knew they had been rescued. Their joy and relief took audible form as they cheered with all their remaining strength.

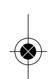
But the respite was only temporary. The guardsmen managed to retake the customs houses. The fighting seesawed back and forth with increasing ferocity. The village of Ponte Vecchio changed hands no less than six times in the course of the afternoon. The fortunes of war ebbed and flowed as more units from both sides entered the fray.

At one point it seemed that the Austrians were on the cusp of victory. Gyulay had sent a premature message to Vienna announcing his triumph. Yet victory was elusive. The countryside was stitched with vineyards, walls, and other obstructions that impeded the movement of the Austrians as much as the French. Austrian staff work was sloppy and confusing as well. The army's multinational nature was yet another weakness. Scores of Italian soldiers from Archduke Sigismund's Infantry Regiment deserted whenever they saw an opportunity.

MacMahon's II Corps had still not arrived on the scene. If it did not appear soon, all hope of achieving a French victory would be gone. MacMahon was a competent soldier, but stiff Austrian resistance and the nature of the countryside impeded his progress. The lush green fields were broken up by countless irrigation channels, rows of trees, and dense patches of mulberry bushes that limited visibility and impeded marching and fighting.

In spite of all the difficulties, MacMahon did make progress. At one point MacMahon's advance units halted and waited for the rest of the corps to catch up. Magenta, their primary objective, could be seen a mile and a half away. From a distance the town looked picturesque, a dreamy and romantic vision with its narrow streets, red tile roofs, and ochre walls so typical of ancient Italian communities. But Magenta was about to be transformed into a charnel house, a place where the smell of gunpowder was going to mingle with the sickly sweet stench of blood.

Elite French forces steadily push back white-uniformed Austrian infantry in a contemporary painting by Italian soldier Gerolamo Induno. In the claustrophobic and murderous nature of the fighting, generals fought and died like common soldiers.



The II Corps contained the 1st and 2nd Etranger, a relatively new unit nearly 30 years old. It was young in comparison to regiments that traced their lineages back to Bourbon France, but it was already gaining a reputation that would becoming legend. The 1st and 2nd Etranger were in fact the French Foreign Legion, and the 2nd Zouaves were part of their battalion.

These troops began moving again, and a cavalry screen of the 7th Chasseurs a Chaval passed through their ranks on the way to the rear. The troopers were being driven in by three columns of Austrian infantry. It was the first inkling of trouble for the Legionnaires. A captain with the 1st Etranger was the first to spot the white-coated ranks in the distance. Impulsively, he ordered a charge even though in effect he was launching an offensive with a single company of soldiers.

But support was on the way. Colonel Louis de Chabriere, commander of the 2nd Etranger, ordered his men to drop their heavy packs and

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charge, but the words were scarcely out of his mouth before he was hit by an Austrian bullet that knocked him from his saddle. Chabriere was dead, but his last order was obeyed to the letter. The Legionnaires and Zouaves became a human tidal wave of blue and red as they clambered over walls, squeezed through grape vines, and negotiated through blinding clouds of powder smoke.

Many Austrian prisoners were taken, but only the outskirts of Magenta had been cleared. The Legionnaires and the Zouaves paused to regroup and reform before carrying out the final assault. It was at this precise moment that MacMahon trotted up to the assembled ranks. He was a man of military bearing, dignified with his red kepi and mustache and goatee. "The Legion is here! The affair is in the bag!" he said. His words gave the men fresh heart.

Just as they were about to attack, Imperial Guard units came on the scene and formed up to join them. The Guard, which had already participated in some heavy fighting, was composed of men who were for the most part old soldiers. Nevertheless, regimental rivalries were always present, especially when there was a chance of glory. The hard-bitten Legionnaires filled the air with derisive catcalls. "The Guard?" they shouted. "Get them out of here! Let them stand guard at Saint Cloud! The chambermaids of the Tuileries will be too sad if they get hurt!"

But such verbal sniping was quickly forgotten when the order was given to advance. The French troops swarmed into Magenta and a virtual meat grinder. This is where the term "soldier's battle" is particularly apt. All cohesion was lost; serried ranks and proud battle flags were replaced by hand-to-hand fighting of the most desperate kind. The narrow streets were clogged with the bloodied bodies of friend and foe alike, and each house was a miniature fortress defended by white-coated soldiers determined to hold on at all cost.

Officers were in the thick of the fight and suffered accordingly. Lt. Col. Antonio Martinez of the Foreign Legion was probably so full of adrenaline he scarcely noticed the fact that a bullet had torn away his left eyelid. Ignoring the rivulets of blood that coursed down his face, he ordered the axe-wielding engineers to break down doors so infantry could gain interior access. Martinez ordered others to climb stairs to deal with white-coated riflemen on second stories.

The Austrian defenders—some of whom were not even ethnically German—were stubborn. The Croatians might have been politically unreliable, but at Magenta their rifle fire was accurate and deadly. The same held true for the Tyrolian riflemen, whose marksmanship was rightly respected. These troops made it exceedingly difficult to take Magenta. It had been a town of 4,000 residents before the battle, so there were quite a lot of buildings to take one by one.

In these claustrophobic and murderous conditions, even generals fought like common soldiers. Maj. Gen. Marie Esprit Espinasse led the 2nd Zouaves into Magenta on horseback, but the steed was having trouble walking down a narrow lane that was clogged with dead and wounded. "We can't stay on this moving ground," he said, referring to the writhing wounded who were trying desperately to drag themselves to safety.

Espinasse dismounted, but moments later his orderly, Lieutenant Andre de Froidfond, was struck in the stomach by a bullet. The young man fell heavily against a nearby wall. Looking around amid the confusion and noise of battle, a sharp-eyed Espinasse saw that the shot had come from a multistory building that stood on a street corner. A pile of corpses bore mute testimony to the fact that the French had tried to take the building but failed.

"We must take it at all costs!" said Espinasse. He led the Zouaves over to the structure, ignoring the shots that peppered the air and ricocheted off the street. Espinasse ran up to the door and

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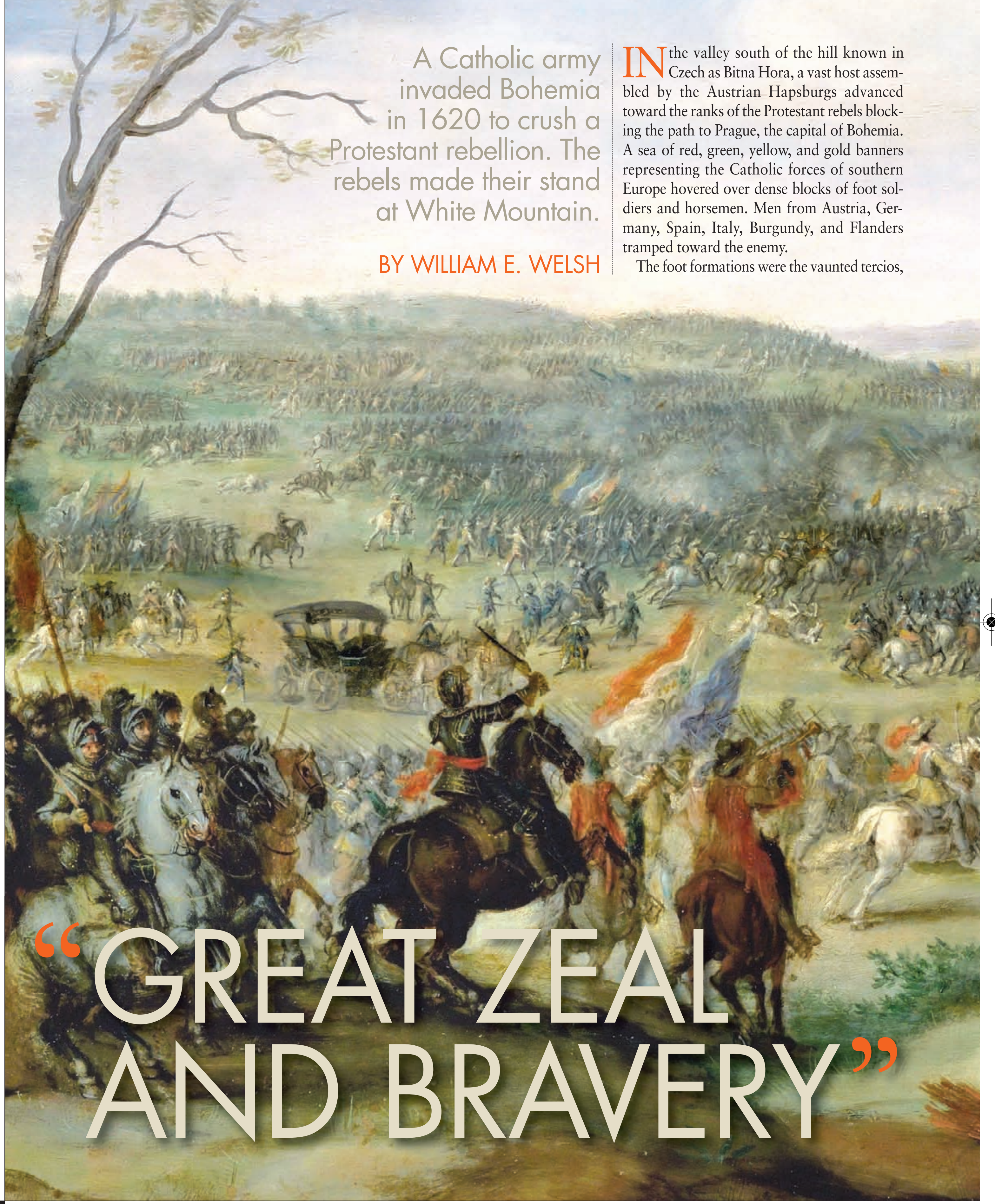


"GREAT ZEAL AND BRAVERY"

A Catholic army invaded Bohemia in 1620 to crush a Protestant rebellion. The rebels made their stand at White Mountain.

BY WILLIAM E. WELSH

IN the valley south of the hill known in Czech as Bitna Hora, a vast host assembled by the Austrian Hapsburgs advanced toward the ranks of the Protestant rebels blocking the path to Prague, the capital of Bohemia. A sea of red, green, yellow, and gold banners representing the Catholic forces of southern Europe hovered over dense blocks of foot soldiers and horsemen. Men from Austria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Burgundy, and Flanders tramped toward the enemy.

The foot formations were the vaunted tercios,

composed of hundreds of men in deep files and broad rows that seemed to swallow the tall grass and fallow fields through which they tramped. In the center of the tercios were armor-plated pikemen carrying 15-foot, steel-tipped pikes that rose in chorus toward the heavens. Musketeers armed with muzzle-loading muskets swarmed the front and sides of the tercios. To the left and right of the sea of foot soldiers, iron-breasted cuirassiers armed with razor-sharp sabers sat astride powerful war horses.

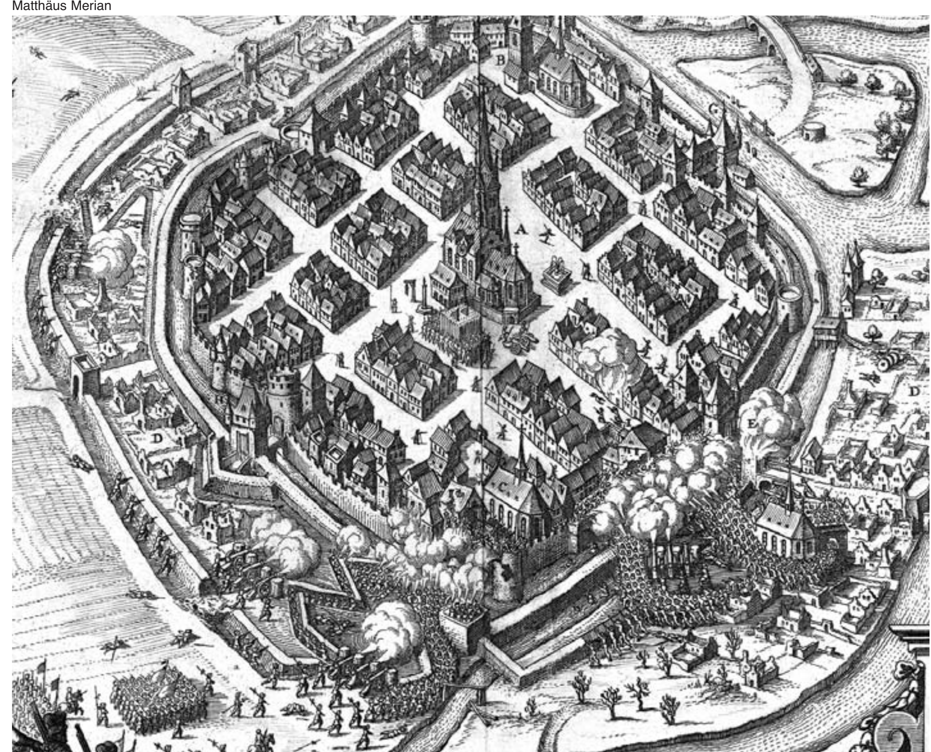
From the relative safety of the rear of the army, Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria and Lt. Gen. Johann Tserclaes, the Count of Tilly, watched the advance. They were proud of the army that advanced before them, and they had every expectation of victory that crisp autumn day. The time had arrived to send the Protestant heretics to Hell and restore the Catholic Church to its rightful place as the true religion of Christian Europe.

The first phase of the Thirty Years War involved the struggle for control of Bohemia between the Protestant Bohemians and the Catholic forces of deposed King Ferdinand of Bohemia, who belonged to the powerful Austrian branch of the House of Hapsburg. The seeds of the conflict lay in the emergence of Lutheranism and Calvinism in the first half of the 16th century.

At the beginning of the 17th century, Lutheranism flourished in northern Germany and Scandinavia. Although Calvinism was practiced widely in the United Provinces, beyond that it existed in scattered enclaves throughout Europe. All things considered, the Roman Catholic Church still had a firm grip on southern Europe.

Forces of the Catholic League and Holy Roman Empire advance against the Protestant rebels on the outskirts of Prague in a contemporary painting by Flemish artist Pieter Snayers. After a two-year stalemate, the fate of the Bohemian revolt would be decided that day.

Matthäus Merian



ABOVE: In 1619, Protestant Count Ernst von Mansfeld beseiged and captured Pilsen in western Bohemia, using it as a base for his German mercenaries. RIGHT: Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II (left) headed the reactionary Catholic Austrian Hapsburgs, and Bohemian King Frederick V led the Protestant Bohemian rebels.

In the early 16th century, the Bohemians had elected a Hapsburg prince as their king largely for protection against the continuing menace posed by the Ottoman Turks. In so doing, they made Bohemia a constituent state of the Hapsburg dynasty. The Hapsburgs welcomed Bohemia with open arms in large part because it had considerable wealth derived from agriculture and commerce. The Kingdom of Bohemia comprised not only the province of Bohemia, but also the provinces of Silesia, Lusatia, and the margravate of Moravia.

The Austrian Hapsburgs at the time also controlled the imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire, a loose confederation of semiautonomous territories established in 962 by German King Otto I. The empire was ruled by secular kings, archdukes, dukes, princes, and counts, as well as by ecclesiastical officials. It covered so many lands and peoples that the territories hardly ever came together for the common good. The emperor was elected by seven powerful elector princes, three of which were ecclesiastical princes (the archbishops of Mainz, Trier, and Cologne), and four of which were secular princes (Saxony, Brandenburg, Palitinate, and Bohemia).

The health of 61-year-old Holy Roman Emperor Matthias was deteriorating rapidly in 1618, and the Hapsburgs were poised to advance a new candidate for the imperial throne. In addition to holding the imperial title, Matthias also was the king of both Germany and Bohemia and the archduke of Austria. The leading candidate to succeed him was his cousin Ferdinand, Archduke of Styria, a Jesuit-educated conservative. In 1617 the Bohemian Diet had elected Ferdinand to succeed Matthias upon his death.

The Long Turkish War of 1593-1606 caused widespread epidemics and famine in Hungary, and in the aftermath Stephen Bocskay, the Calvinist prince of Transylvania, led a rebellion against the Holy Roman Empire and invaded Moravia. As part of the peace deal brokered in its aftermath, the Hapsburgs granted full religious liberty to the Hungarian people. When the Bohemian Diet learned of this, it demanded the same freedom of worship. The Letter of Majesty of 1609 allowed the Bohemians to worship God as they chose. Fearing that the Hapsburgs might renege on the agreement, the Bohemian Diet established an official body called the Defensors to protect this right.

In the years preceding Matthias's death in March 1619, there was considerable anxiety among Protestants who feared that Ferdinand would dispense with the Letter of Majesty. Subsequent events would prove them right.

Ferdinand was shrewd, bold, and zealous. Because he wanted to prove to Europe that he was willing to take a hard line against the Protestants, he banished Protestant clergy and school teachers from his duchy when he assumed control of it in 1596. He also ordered the destruction of Protestant churches throughout his duchy.

In addition to Ferdinand, the Hapsburg king of Spain also had a claim to the imperial crown. In 1617 Ferdinand entered into a secret pact with King Philip III of Spain whereby Philip would support Ferdinand's bid to become emperor in return for the transfer of the province of Alsace and various imperial fiefs in Italy from the Austrian Hapsburgs to the Spanish Hapsburgs.

Before the Bohemians crowned Ferdinand as their king, they inquired as to whether he would honor the Letter of Majesty. Although he secretly had no intention of honoring the agreement, he said he would. He appears to have justified this falsehood on the grounds that he might be in a better position to mediate the matter with the Protestants after he was crowned.

In early 1618 Ferdinand's Council of Regents in Bohemia, which consisted of five leading

Catholics appointed to conduct the day-to-day business of the kingdom while Ferdinand remained at Graz, informed him that Protestants were building two churches on lands belonging to the king or that had an effect on the king's property. At Klostergrab, a village close to the border of Saxony that belonged to the Archbishop of Prague, Protestants were constructing a church. They maintained that they had the right to build their church because they were freemen and not the archbishop's vassals. And at Braunau on the Bohemian-Silesian border, another group of Protestants also was building a church. In the process, the Protestants allegedly stole construction materials from an adjacent monastery. The Council of Regents found grounds to oppose both churches. In the Braunau case, they even arrested and jailed some of the Protestants.

The two cases had both political and religious implications. The Defensors took up the two cases. They held that Ferdinand's officials had

overstepped their bounds and that the churches were protected under the Letter of Majesty. They demanded that Ferdinand's regents release the Protestants imprisoned in the Braunau case.

Count Matthias Thurn, a Protestant Bohemian noble who had served as a colonel in the Imperial army, convened a meeting in Prague on May 22 at which the Defensors and other prominent Protestants discussed the situation. Thurn suggested that they march on the royal palace and depose the Hapsburg officials.

The following day Thurn and the Defensors stormed into the royal palace in Prague. They seized two regents on duty at the time, Count Slavata and Count Martinice, and threw them out of the window of their palace office. Fortunately for the two regents, they landed in a pile of waste and rubbish in the palace moat and avoided serious injury. The incident, known as the Defenestration of Prague, led to preparations for war by both the Protestant Bohemians and the Catholic Hapsburgs.

In the wake of the Defenestration of Prague, the Protestant leaders of Bohemia moved to depose Ferdinand on the grounds that he had misrepresented himself to them. They believed that Frederick not only threatened their religious freedoms, but also their civil liberties. The Bohemian Estates appointed a search committee and tasked it with finding a Protestant prince to replace Ferdinand as king of Bohemia.

The leading contender was 22-year-old Frederick, the Calvinist Elector Palatine and leader of the Protestant Union. The most prominent of the four secular electors controlled both the wealthy Lower Palitinate along the Upper Rhine River and the less wealthy Upper Palitinate adjacent to the east. Frederick was amiable and outgoing, but he lacked the skills necessary to lead a kingdom in time of war.

The best thing that Frederick had going for him was that his polished chief councilor, Prince Christian I (the Elder) of Anhalt-Bernberg, was an accomplished statesman and widely respected by Europe's leading Protestant princes. Anhalt's grand ambition was to create a political network of strong Protestant allies capable of countering the enormous power of the Hapsburgs and the Counter Reformation. Anhalt's greatest political achievement was establishing the Protestant Union in 1608, which had been followed the next year by the establishment of a Catholic League of south German princes led by Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. Maximilian was a financial wizard whose coffers were full as a result of the duke's sound fiscal policies and financial skills.

While the Bohemians planned to raise an army, they had an immediate need for troops to counter the Imperial forces controlled by the Austrian Hapsburgs. Duke Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, who detested both the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs, had recently hired a mercenary general, Count Ernst von Mansfeld, to campaign against the Spanish in northern Italy. Savoy sent Mansfeld's German mercenaries to the Lower Palatinate where they could support Frederick of Palatine if he were elected king of Bohemia.

Mansfeld was born and raised in Luxembourg in the Spanish Netherlands. In his early career, he fought in the Imperial army in Hungary. He had a falling out with Archduke Leopold V of Outer Austria, who led campaigns in the Spanish Netherlands and other theaters, which drove him into the service of the Protestant princes of Europe as a mercenary commander.

Silesia, Lusatia, and Moravia all agreed almost immediately to join the rebellion. In addition, the small population of Protestants in Austria also agreed to assist the Bohemians. The opposing forces in Bohemia and Austria began raising troops. They not only recruited on their own lands but also sought troops and money from their respective European allies.

On the Catholic side of the dispute, Ferdinand was severely hampered by his lack of funds to wage war against the rebellious Bohemians and their allies. What little funds he did have were used up almost immediately at the outbreak of war. Fortunately, the Spanish Habsburgs saw it was in their interests to back Ferdinand, who was the leading contender for the imperial title. Don

Hogenbergsche Geschichtsblätter

Count Bucquoy's Imperial troops trounced Count Mansfeld's Protestant force at Sablat in 1619 in a foreshadowing of White Mountain.

Inigo Velez de Onate, Spain's ambassador to Vienna, arranged financial support for Ferdinand and procured Spanish troops to assist the Austrian Hapsburgs in stamping out the rebellion. The support from Spain gave Ferdinand the resources needed to switch to the offensive.

As Bohemia drifted toward war, Maximilian offered to furnish troops and additional funds, but unlike the Spanish he made certain demands on Ferdinand to ensure that the emperor would eventually reimburse him. Onate arranged for Maximilian's troops to occupy part of the Archduchy of Austria until such time as they were repaid by the emperor. Although this was distasteful to Ferdinand, he had no choice if he wanted to prevail over his Protestant enemies in Bohemia. Besides, Maximilian's investment was enormous. The Bavarian duke, who also presided over the Catholic League, would eventually pledge upwards of 18 million florins to Ferdinand.

In September 1618 the Bohemian Estates ordered towns and villages throughout the kingdom to raise troops. The goal was to raise as many as 20,000 troops, but they only raised 12,000. Thurn was chosen to lead the weak and largely ineffective Bohemian army whose numbers made it appear strong on paper. The Bohemians failed to raise taxes effectively, and there was hardly any money to pay the troops.

The Silesians and Moravians each raised 3,000 troops, but only the Silesians joined the Bohemian

ABOVE: Count Tilly and Duke Maximilian of Bavaria led the Catholic League forces at White Mountain, and Counts Thurn and Anhalt commanded the Protestant forces at the battle. OPPOSITE: Count Tilly argued vehemently for a decision at White Mountain as the Bohemian countryside had been heavily pillaged after two years of war. The land could no longer support a large army on campaign.

army at the beginning of the conflict. In addition, the Austrian Protestants raised 3,000 troops to serve in the nascent Bohemian army.

The Imperial army was led by Charles Bonaventure de Longueval, the Count of Bucquoy, who had served as the Imperial army's commander-in-chief since 1614. Born in Arras, Bucquoy had joined the Spanish army where he had risen to the rank of colonel by the age of 26. Bucquoy had gained extensive combat experience serving under Spanish Captain-General Ambrogio Spinola, who led the forces of the Spanish Netherlands. Assisting Bucquoy was Heinrich Duval, the Count of Dampierre, a native of France who had served in the Imperial army since 1602 and had extensive experience fighting the Turks, Venetians, and rebellious Hungarians.

Thurn massed his forces at Caslav in central Bohemia in late summer 1618. Bucquoy and Dampierre arrived in Bohemia that month prepared to assault Caslav. The arrival of 3,000 Silesians under the Margrave of Jagerndorf enabled Thurn to go over to the offensive. Bucquoy withdrew to Budweis, but not before the Austrians had pillaged 24 villages. Budweis, which was strategically located close to the frontiers of both Lower Austria and Upper Austria, would pose a perpetual problem for the Protestant army. While Bucquoy defended Budweis, Dampierre withdrew with a small force to Krems in Lower Austria.

The Bohemians continued on the offensive. Thurn took the main body of troops into Moravia to secure it. He also gave Count Heinrich von Schlick, a former Imperial army field marshal who had fought the Turks, 4,000 men to invade Austria. The first major battle of the war occurred on September 9 at Lomnice in Moravia. When Thurn's larger Bohemian army bore down on Bucquoy's smaller army, the Imperial commander sought to withdraw. But the Bohemians caught up with the Imperial rear guard, which touched off a nine-hour running battle that bled the Imperial army.

The Protestants received substantial reinforcements with the arrival in September of Mansfeld's 4,000 troops. His command, which became known as the Bohemian Army Corps, was composed of mercenaries of many nationalities, including Germans, Dutch, Walloons, English, and Scots. He moved against Pilsen. His troops besieged the town for two months, eventually forcing a breach on November 21 and expelling the Catholics. Although there was a discussion about burning Pilsen to the ground, Mansfeld decided it was more useful as a base of operations against the Imperial army.

Although an experienced commander, Mansfeld committed a major blunder by failing to detach a force to occupy the so-called Golden Track by which supplies and reinforcements marched from Austria to Bohemia. Lt. Col. La Motte, an Imperial officer commanding 1,300 Walloon cuirassiers opened a supply line to Bucquoy at Budweis in southern Bohemia. La Motte put his men to work fortifying the corridor by building a series of blockhouses.

Ferdinand received large numbers of Spanish reinforcements in 1619. In January, Spain sent 6,000 Walloons and Germans from the Spanish Netherlands and 3,000 from Italy via the Valtelline to Austria. Spain sent another 7,000 troops from the Low Countries to Austria in July.

After securing Moravia in the spring of 1619, Thurn marched on Vienna with 9,000 men; however, he lacked siege weapons to attack the city walls. Instead, he counted on the Austrian Protestants to rise up against Ferdinand. On June 5, a group of Protestants from the Lower Austrian Estates went to the Hofburg Palace to badger Ferdinand into signing a petition.

Just as Ferdinand was on the verge of being compelled to grant concessions to them, 400 Imperial arquebusiers and cuirassiers arrived at the palace to rescue him from the clutches of the Protestants. The troops had only days before been recruited to Imperial service. Colonel Gilbert of St. Hilaire embarked his troops on barges at Krems and they sailed 40 miles downstream to Vienna, entering the city through a waterfront gate and marching immediately to the palace.

Five days later, Bucquoy's 5,000 Imperial horse soldiers intercepted Mansfeld's corps as it was marching to reinforce Count Georg Friedrich von Hohenlohe, general commader of the Bohemian Estates, at Budweis. In the ensuing Battle of Sablat fought June 10, the Imperialists annihilated Mansfeld's corps. With the Imperial forces capable of attacking Prague, Thurn broke off his siege of Vienna and hastily retreated north.

Bucquoy's victory over Mansfeld restored the morale of the Imperial army. Dampierre invaded Moravia in August but was repulsed by the Protestants. On August 26, the Bohemians deposed Ferdinand and elected Frederick of Palatine as their new king. Two days later, the electors elected Archduke Ferdinand as the Holy Roman Emperor. The majority of the electors saw the revolt as a local affair that did not have an adverse effect on their people or territories, and for that reason they decided to maintain the status quo and allow the Hapsburgs to control the Imperial crown. Catholic fortunes grew stronger when Spain, Bavaria, and Austria formally became allies on October 8 through the Treaty of Munich. On October 31, Frederick V and a long train of supporters arrived in Vienna. Count Anhalt, who arrived with Frederick, assumed overall command of the Bohemian army but retained Thurn as his second in command.

Although Bohemian King Frederick and Hungarian Prince of Transylvania and King Bethlen Gabor did not formally sign a treaty until April 1620, they began operating jointly in October 1619. Bethlen Gabor swept into Hungary with 35,000 light cavalry. After securing Pressburg, he advanced on Vienna where he planned to rendezvous with Thurn's Bohemian army. Bucquoy, who had been planning to make a strike against Prague, countermarched to Vienna. At the last minute, though, fortune smiled on the Catholics. When he heard a rumor that Polish Cossacks had invaded Upper Hungary and that the Catholics in Transylvania were preparing to rise up against him, Bethlen Gabor led his army back to Transylvania. This, in turn, compelled Thurn to return to Bohemia.

Polish King Sigismund III Vasa, a Catholic monarch who wanted to rid himself of the troublesome Cossacks at the time of the Bohemian revolt, had arranged with the Austrian Hapsburgs for thousands of Cossacks to join the Imperial army. The troop transfer began in March 1619 and lasted for five months. Although as many as 19,000 were promised,

the majority never made it. The reason they never made is not clear. Although some were supposedly intercepted or blocked, it is more likely that many chose to desert. But 3,000 Cossacks did join the Imperial army in 1620.

The Bohemian army received 4,000 reinforcements from the United Provinces and Scotland in the spring of 1620, too. Mansfeld raised fresh mercenaries to serve in his corps. In addition, Bethlen Gabor sent 9,000 Transylvanian cavalry under Jarmusch Bornemissa to assist the Bohemians.

The opposing Catholic and Protestant forces were back at their starting points in the winter of 1619-1620 eyeing each other across the Bohemian-Austrian border. In the spring of 1620, Anhalt led the Bohemian army into Moravia where he won some minor victories. During that same period, John George, the Elector of Saxony, who was a Lutheran, entered an alliance with Emperor Ferdinand whereby the Saxon army would take the field in support of the Catholic cause.

Duke Maximilian fielded 30,000 Catholic League troops in May 1620. He dispatched mercenary commander Johann Tserclaes Tilly with 18,000 troops to Austria, deployed 7,000 along the Bavarian-Upper Palatinate border, and retained 5,000 to garrison Bavarian cities. Born in Brabant in the Spanish Netherlands, Tilly had served as a young soldier in the Spanish army fighting the Dutch. He was later hired by the Austrian Hapsburgs to serve in the Imperial army where he rose to become a field marshal during the Long Turkish War. Duke Maximilian hired him in 1610 to command the Bavarian forces.

Onate worked out an agreement between Ferdinand and Maximillian whereby the Bavarian army would occupy part of western Austria as collateral until Ferdinand repaid Maximilian for the use of his army. After this was arranged, Tilly crushed Protestant unrest in Upper Austria. By the summer of 1620, the Imperial army also had 30,000 troops in the field. Bucquoy commanded a corps at Krems in Lower Austria, Dampierre led a corps at Vienna, and Baltasar Marradas led a corps at Budweis.

The Spanish sent three million ducats to Ferdinand to finance his war machine. In September 1620, Tilly and Maradas joined Bucquoy in Krems, which became the staging area for an invasion of Bohemia. Meanwhile, the Hungarian Estates crowned Bethlen Gabor as their king on August 20 in a ceremony at Pressburg. The Hungarian king had a firm grip on the city with 20,000 troops. Bucquoy sent Dampierre to liberate Pressburg. To achieve this objective, Dampierre had an army composed of Polish Cossacks, Inner Austrians, and Hungarian Catholics. Although Dampierre was slain in action at Pressburg on October 9, his troops succeeded in burning the Danube Bridge. This discouraged Bethlen Gabor from marching north to assist the Bohemians.

The 32,000-strong Catholic army was nominally commanded by Duke Maximilian, but Tilly and Bucquoy made the operational plans and carried them out. As for the 27,500-strong Protestant army, it was nominally led by Anhalt, but the de facto commander was Thurn. In addition to Thurn and Hohenlohe, Schlick had joined the main army from Lusatia. Although Schlick was both competent and experienced, his input was ignored completely by the other two generals. With a major battle looming, the advantage lay with the Catholics whose troops were far more experienced than their Protestant counterparts.

The Protestant commanders remained near Znaim in the mistaken belief that the main Catholic army intended to invade Moravia. But the Catholics had set their sights on Prague. In mid-September, the Saxons seized Bautzen in Upper Lusatia as a preliminary move to invading Silesia if instructed. By November virtually all of Lusatia was under the Saxon thumb. When the Catholic army crossed into Bohemia, Anhalt marched towards Pilse where Mansfeld was situated. For some unknown reason, Mansfeld did not join the main Bohemian army.

Unfortunately for the Catholics, Tilly and Bucquoy began to squabble with the former favoring an aggressive posture and the latter arguing for a conservative approach. Tilly rightly argued that

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southern Bohemia had been extensively pillaged during two years of continual warfare and could not support the Catholic army. In addition, typhus was spreading through the ranks and taking its toll on the Catholic troops. With Maximillian accompanying the army, Tilly prevailed.

Tilly ordered Baltasar Marradas to take his corps and block Mansfeld while the main Catholic army continued its march toward Prague. Anhalt began falling back to the northeast on the Pilsen-Prague road before the advancing Catholic army. At Rakonic, which was 30 miles from Prague, King Frederick visited the camp to the cheers of the Protestant troops. Anhalt, who was expecting a fight, ordered his troops to entrench on high ground. Beginning on October 30, the armies faced each other at Rakonic for four days. Tilly sent companies of musketeers forward to probe the Protestant army in an effort to gauge its strength. After one sharp skirmish, the victorious Catholics occupied a walled cemetery. Afterward, Bucquoy sent his light cavalry to harass the enemy. The two sides engaged in a desultory artillery duel on the third day. On the fourth day, Tilly marched his troops around Anhalt's northern flank, compelling his adversary to abandon his strong position. Bucquoy, who was riding ahead with cuirassiers to reconnoiter the road, was wounded.

Fortunately for the Protestants, they won the race to the outskirts of Prague. They filed into position on White Mountain, the last defensive position outside the Bohemian capital. Five miles behind them was the city. When Anhalt ordered them to entrench, they made various excuses, such as the soil was too hard. It was an ominous sign of disobedience on the part of his troops and a clear indication that their morale was waning.

The Protestant army deployed across the low ridge. Its right flank was anchored by a royal residence known as the Star Palace. The residence was surrounded by woods that in turn were enclosed by a long wall. The Protestant left was unanchored, which left it vulnerable to being turned. Moreover, the troops on the Protestant left were on flat ground. To reach the Protestant position, the Catholics would have to cross a shallow stream called the Scharka, which was lined on both sides by marshes.

On the day of battle, November 8, the Catholics fielded 24,800 troops compared to the Protestants' 23,000 troops; however, the Catholic troops had about 18,000 infantry compared to the Protestants' 12,000 infantry. Anhalt arrayed his troops in three lines. In the first two lines, he alternated the horse and foot units. The third line consisted almost entirely of the questionable Transylvanian hussars, who were under their second in command, Gaspar Kornis, since Bornemissa had been wounded in a cavalry skirmish. Some of the Transylvanians had been badly mauled in skirmishes with the Imperial cuirassiers and were in no shape for battle.

The Bohemian Royal Foot, which constituted the reserve, formed up in the center of the third line. Thurn commanded the left, Hohenlohe the center, and Schlick the right. Dutch pikemen of the Saxe-Weimar Infantry Regiment held the grounds of the Star Palace on the extreme right flank. In advance of the front line were a half dozen artillery pieces supported by musketeers drawn from Schlick's infantry regiments. Schlick's troops were Germans, Moravians, and Silesians. Hohenlohe's troops were mostly Bohemians and Germans. Thurn's troops were almost entirely Bohemians.

The Catholic host was divided into two wings. The Imperial troops formed the right wing, which was the traditional place of honor, opposite Thurn and Hohenlohe, and the Catholic League troops formed the left wing opposite Schlick and Hohenlohe. Ordinarily Bucquoy would have commanded the Imperial wing, but he was still incapacitated, so Rudolf von Tiefenbach assumed overall control of the Imperial forces.

The Imperial troops advanced in three lines, whereas the Catholic League forces advanced in two lines. Prince Maximilian of Liechtenstein commanded the first line of the Imperial right wing, and Tiefenbach led the second and third lines of the Imperial right wing. The Imperial ranks in both lines contained Walloon and German cuirassiers and Spanish and German infantry. Several hundred Polish Cossacks reported for duty on the day of the battle.

Tilly commanded both lines of the Catholic League's left wing. His troops were Germans and Lorrainers. Although many of the Catholic Germans were from Bavaria, some were from Cologne and Wurzburg. The Catholic League had a dozen heavy guns they nicknamed the 12 Apostles. Tilly kept eight and gave Bucquoy four to use during the battle.

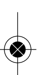
A thick fog carpeted the low-lying areas on the morning of the battle. The Catholic commanders welcomed the fog as it concealed the movement of their troops as they crossed the Scharka. Once across the meandering stream, the Catholics began forming up for their attack about a third of a mile from the Protestant position.

While the Catholics were slowly crossing the stream, the Protestant commanders conferred. Schlick was adamant that the Protestants should attack the Catholic army while it was crossing the stream. Thurn agreed with Schlick, but Hohenlohe argued in favor of adhering to the original plan. Anhalt, who lacked experience and was therefore conservative in his tactics, overruled the idea.

The Scharka, which was situated on Tilly's left flank once the army had completed its crossing, constricted Tilly's front. It was probably far narrower than he would have preferred and undoubtedly caused a problem for his cavalry.

Each wing of the Catholic army formed five infantry tercios. By the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, the tercio had been the dominant tactical formation for infantry for more than a century. The Dutch and Swedes had developed alternatives to the tercio, and the Protestants were probably inspired by the Dutch method for they had divided their large infantry regiments into two smaller battalions. A tercio was a roughly 3,000-man infantry formation with pikes in the center and muskets concentrated in so-called sleeves on each of its four corners, as well as musketeer skirmishers in front. The musketeers softened up the opposing formation with their shot in preparation for a followup attack by the powerful block of pikes that formed the core of the tercio. If cavalry threatened the musketeers, they could take cover inside the formation or even underneath the bristling pikes. Tilly and his colonels had a wealth of experience in leading and directing tercios in combat.

As for the cavalry, there were a variety of types on the field of White Mountain. Heavy cavalry consisted of heavily armored Polish and Hungarian lancers, as well as heavily armored cuirassiers who carried long swords used primarily for thrusting. Both types of heavy cavalry carried a brace of loaded pistols stored in saddle holsters for use in the caracole, which was a method whereby each rider in a file rode toward the enemy, fired his pistols, and rode to the back of the file to reload and wait his turn to fire again.



Various kinds of medium and light cavalry participated on both sides. The medium cavalry were partially armored arquebusiers, also armed with pistols and swords to cover any contingency, as well as light cavalry, which were primarily eastern horsemen, such as Cossacks or Croats, who carried a lance, carbine, and pistols. These men attacked in a zigzag fashion that allowed them to fire one pistol to the right, the other to the left, and their carbine to the right before wheeling off to reload.

While Bucquoy organized his cavalry into 23 small squadrons, Tilly chose to mass his cavalry in seven large formations. The 12 Apostles fired in unison at 12:15 PM as the signal for a general advance. Shortly afterward, the Catholics began their advance. "The attack finally began between 12 and 1 o'clock, and on both sides there was great zeal and bravery, and the

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The sight of the vaunted Spanish and Imperial tercios marching uphill towards their line produced wholesale panic among the undisciplined Protestant rebels. They ran after putting up only token resistance.

artillery fired against each other with great din and thunder," wrote German chronicler Johann Philipp Abelinus.

Tilly had previously surveyed the ground over which they would attack, and he instructed Tiefenbach to attack first so that the Catholic troops assaulting the high ground would have sufficient time to climb the slope under fire. Anhalt had sent forward two cavalry regiments to contest the Catholic advance, but they were swept from the field by a spirited attack by Jean de Gaucher's Walloon regiment of veteran arquebusiers at the head of Bucquoy's wing. Formed into four squadrons, they overwhelmed the enemy vanguard, which possessed none of the flair showed by the Walloons. Tiefenbach then ordered Colonel Stanislaw Rusinovsky to lead his 800 Cossacks in a sweeping charge around the enemy's open left flank. They thundered off to harass and unnerve the enemy, doing more harm to the enemy's psyche with their presence than actual harm with their swords. The Transylvanians made no effort to contest the advance. Anhalt was completely taken aback by the full-scale attack by the Catholics. He had expected Tilly to probe his position as he had done at Rakonic. It was a terrible, unnerving surprise. At the base of the slope, the Protestants heard the Catholic war cry as thousands of troops shouted "Sancta Maria!"

Thurn had divided his Bohemian infantry regiment into two battalions. The first-line battalion numbered 1,320 men in six companies, and the second-line battalion numbered 880 men in four companies. He sent his first line battalion toward Bucquoy's advancing tercios. Thurn's musketeers halted to fire a volley at long range, and then they promptly fled from the enemy.

Christian Anhalt the Younger, who led three companies of arquebusiers in the second line near the center of the battlefield, ordered his men to ride forward to fill the breach, a difficult task given that he had only 300 men. They fired into the Imperial tercios as they advanced. At that point, Bucquoy, having decided he could not stand the idea of missing the grand assault, arrived on the field. Supporting Gaucher were waves of well-led, Imperial cuirassiers and arquebusiers who shattered Anhalt the Younger's German-Bohemian cavalry, capturing their bold commander in the process. None of the Protestant horse came to Anhalt the Younger's assistance; instead, they all began to quit the field. Seeing the cavalry depart, the remaining infantry of the Protestant left and center fled toward Prague.

The Protestant right, under the command of Schlick, held on about a half hour longer, but that was only because Tilly's tercio juggernaut had not yet struck them. After putting up a half-hearted fight, the Protestant right fled as well. By 1:30 PM, the entire Protestant force, save the pike troops at the Star Palace, had fled.

What began as a retreat turned into a rout when rumor spread that the Cossacks had cut off their retreat. Some of the Protestant troops were so unnerved that they drowned trying to swim across the Moldau to safety. An attempt to form a rear guard to hold the Charles Bridge and prevent the Catholics from gaining the city even failed.

Maximilian was amazed. In his wildest dreams he had not though the day would be so easily won. The Protestants suffered 2,400 casualties compared to 650 Catholic casualties. King Frederick conferred with Anhalt and Thurn, both of whom told him that there would be no more fighting that day.

In the days that followed, Maximilian granted the Protestant troops amnesty. This brought about the complete disintegration of the main Bohemian army. Although Mansfeld was still in the field, there would be no more resistance. The leaders of the rebellion were only concerned with how to save themselves given that Ferdinand was likely to exact a harsh retribution. Frederick fled first to Silesia and then to Brandenberg.

White Mountain was more of a rout than a hard-fought battle. The Protestant princes of Germany and the anti-Hapsburg powers of Europe had left Frederick and his rebels to fight their battle alone against heavy odds. It was no wonder they failed. The tide of battle would not turn in the Protestants' favor until the arrival of Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus in Pomerania in 1630. □

By Christopher Miskimon

The French Foreign Legion crafted itself into a legendary fighting force over the course of a century of warfare.

AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD
THE HEROIC CENTURY OF THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION
JEAN-VINCENT BLANCHARD

The French Foreign Legion cemented its reputation for hardship, sacrifice, and determination against great odds in legendary encounters throughout the world, including the Siege of Tuyên Quang in the late 19th century.

THE CHINESE WERE COMING, AND THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION WAS preparing to meet them. In January 1885, 390 Legionnaires, backed by a handful of sailors, locally recruited troops, and eight sappers, busily fortified the old Chinese fort at Tuyen Quang. Taken from the Chinese seven months earlier, the fort was situated on the Lo River and commanded the communications routes between the Tonkin Delta and the Yunnan region. Now a Chinese army was marching to retake the vital place. It was a square bastion 300 yards long on each side and had 10-foot walls. A blockhouse was constructed to furnish cover from some overlooking hills to the west.

The Chinese made their first major attack on January 26. General Liu Yongfu massed 3,200 troops for an all-out assault. The attack failed but it was professionally conducted, leading some of the Legionnaires to wonder if British or German soldiers were advising the Chinese. Whether this was true or simply the Eurocentric prejudice of the era, Liu Yongfu wasted no time gathering supplies and additional troops, soon swelling his numbers to more than 10,000 men. His troops began to dig trenches toward the French-held fortifications. The men trapped inside the fort could hear Chinese sappers digging tunnels for mines.

The trenches and tunnels soon grew near the walls, causing the French to abandon the blockhouse. Engineer Jules Bobillot led countermining efforts and soon most of the fighting was underground. On February 11 a Legionnaire named Maury was digging with his pickaxe when the wall gave way, exposing a Chinese soldier armed with a revolver. Some of the Chinese charged out of the tunnel, but the French managed to seal the opening. When the Chinese detonated their mine, it failed to explode properly. But within two days a pair of mines destroyed a large portion of the wall. The Legionnaires drove back the attack through the breach that caused a dozen casualties in the garrison. A French corporal led four men to recover the body of a comrade who fell outside the walls.

The Chinese made a major assault again 10 days later. They exploded another mine and stormed through the breach. The Leggionnaires repulsed the attackers at bayonet point. Over the next few weeks, more mine explosions and attacks still failed to dislodge or overwhelm the Legionnaires. By the end of February there were only 180 Legionnaires left to defend the walls, yet still the Europeans held. On March 2 a rescue column approached after a march of 180 miles, firing shots to announce its arrival. A Chinese attempt to stop them at nearby Hoa Moc failed, ending the siege and further cementing the reputation of the

Waterloo. Normandy. Agincourt. Gettysburg.

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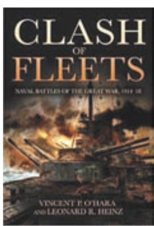
French Foreign Legion. A pair of blue Chinese battle flags taken during the battle remain treasured trophies of the dogged victory.

The history of the Foreign Legion is filled with an air of mystery, adventure, and peril. It is also a story of hardship, sacrifice, and determination against great odds. Although the Legion's story is still being written today, it won its grim reputation during its first century of existence, proving to the world it was a force to be taken seriously. This history is recounted in ***At the Edge of the World: The Heroic Century of the French Foreign Legion*** (Jean-Vincent Blanchard, Bloomsbury Press, New York, 2017, 272 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover).

The Legion was created as a force to fight France's overseas conflicts without having to resort to the large scale use of indigenous French troops. Although it eventually began enlisting native Frenchmen, at first the majority of its troops were Germans, Poles, Italians, and Spaniards. These recruits were given the most dangerous assignments, fighting in the worst conditions and taking the greatest risks. Despite this, the Legion still had no problem attracting volunteers as France struggled to expand its overseas empire in a bid to rival Great Britain.

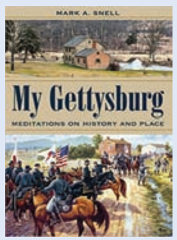
Blanchard concentrates on the three main campaigns of the Legion's first century: Vietnam, Madagascar, and Morocco. All three are covered within the wider context of the French Colonial Era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The book is well written with extensive use of memoirs and archival material, including the stories of high-ranking officers, colonial governors, and common soldiers. The skillful blend of these sources makes it an enjoyable read. This is a worthy retelling of the French Foreign Legion at the height of its fame and renown, when the kepi-clad Legionnaire became a symbol of French power across the globe.

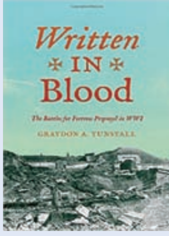


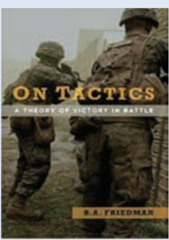
Clash of Fleets: Naval Battles of the Great War 1914-18 (Vincent P. O'Hara and Leonard R. Heinz, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2017, 384 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

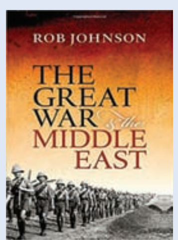
The Cocos Islands held little of importance to the Allied war effort beyond a radio and telegraph station, but it was enough to draw German attention. On November 9, 1914, the German light cruiser *Emden,* famous for its very successful career as a commerce raider and for the chivalry of her captain in the treatment of

SHORT BURSTS









My Gettysburg: Meditations on History and Place (Mark A. Snell, Kent State University Press, 2016, $29.95, hardcover) This is a scholarly look at Gettysburg that examines its significance and cultural influence. It also includes information on how Gettysburg was used after the war.

Written in Blood: The Battles for Fortress Przemysl in WWI (Graydon A. Tunstall, Indiana University Press, 2017, $45.00, hardcover) The battles for Fortress Przemysl, which occurred in 1914-1915 on the Eastern Front in World War I, produced more casualties than the Battle of Verdun. It resulted in a staggering 1.8 million Russian and Austro-Hungarian casualties.

On Tactics: A Theory of Victory in Battle (B.A. Friedman, Naval Institute Press, 2017, $29.95, hardcover) A study of tactics as an art form. The book uses numerous historical examples to make its points.

The Imagineers of War: The Untold Story of DARPA, the Pentagon Agency that Changed the World (Sharon Weinberger, Knopf Publishing, 2017, $32.50, hardcover) The research arm of the Defense Department was created during the Cold War to study advanced technologies. This history documents its evolution and explores both the science and politics behind the agency.

The Great War and the Middle East (Rob Johnson, Oxford University Press, 2016, $34.95, hardcover) The author examines the strategic and operational course of the war in the Middle East. The book offers an in-depth look at a frequently overlooked theater of the war.

Images of War: Great War Fighter Aces 1916-1918 (Norman Franks, Pen and Sword, 2017, $24.95, softcover) This is a photobook highlighting various fighter aces from both sides of the conflict. Each image is captioned with extensive background information.

Malice Aforethought: A History of Booby Traps from World War One to Vietnam (Ian Jones MBE, Frontline Press, 2017, $39.95, hardcover) This new work illustrates the ingenious methods soldiers develop to trap their enemies. The author was a British Army expert in bomb disposal.

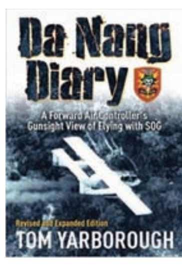
The War for Africa: Twelve Months that Transformed a Continent (Fred Bridgland, Casemate Publishing, 2017, $32.95, hardcover) This book presents the story of the Cuban-South African war in Angola in 1987-1988. It uses the accounts of the South African veterans to produce a rich and gripping narrative.

Lake Trasimene 217 BC: Ambush and Annihilation of a Roman Army (Nic Fields, Osprey Publishing, 2017, $24.00, softcover) Hannibal's defeat of the Romans at Lake Trasimene solidified his position as one of history's great commanders. This work takes advantage of new archaeological studies of the battlefield.

Hook Up! U.S. Paratroopers from the Vietnam War to the Cold War (Alejandro Rodriguez and Antonio Arques, Andrea Depot USA, 2017, $50.00, hardcover) This coffee table book looks at the history, uniforms, training, and weapons of American paratroopers during the 1960s. It is well illustrated and documented.

captured sailors, appeared on the horizon. The British radio crew got off a short SOS before their signal was jammed. Soon a German landing party came ashore to destroy the transmitter and cut the cables. Before they could finish the job and return to their ship, the Australian cruiser *Sydney* arrived. The Australian vessel had come to investigate the distress call. The *Emden* came out to meet her, but found her more heavily armed opponent stayed out of effective range. Instead, *Sydney* kept her distance and pounded the *Emden* with her powerful 6-inch guns. Soon the German raider was on fire, her guns wrecked, and her engines failing. Her captain beached her to help his crew survive. *Emden*'s career was glorious but also short, and most of her surviving crew went off to prison camps to await the war's end, almost four years away.

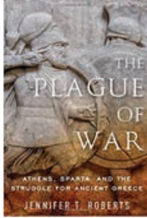
World War I naval combat was far more than just Jutland and a few other engagements. The fighting at sea ranged across the world, through the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, along with almost every sea and even some rivers. This fresh work from an established naval historian reads almost like an encyclopedia of the subject, yet the clear writing weaves in an effective narrative of the battles, tactics, and technologies of the era. It is an engaging and well-written history of a naval war that was far larger than many realize.



Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controller's Gunsight View of Flying with SOG (Tom Yarborough, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2017, 356 pp., maps, photographs, glossary, bibliography, index, $19.95, softcover)

Captain Tom Yarborough was a young pilot flying his first combat mission on May 5, 1970. He was in the back seat of an OV-10 Bronco, a small propeller-driven plane used by forward air controllers to mark targets for the big fighter-bombers. Soon Tom was over the Laotian jungle, searching along the Ho Chi Minh Trail for targets. He was new to the job, and he could not see any through the thick canopy. The lead pilot, Lieutenant Homer Pressley, had a better eye and saw a pair of trucks camouflaged in a clump of trees. While Pressley checked his map, Yarborough spotted two more vehicles. Within minutes they were guiding a pair of bomb-laden F-4 Phantoms in. Homer marked the target with a rocket and soon afterward eight 500-pound bombs exploded around the marker rocket. Tom had been through extensive training, but this was the first time he had seen a live strike with real ordnance. Eight more bombs landed moments later. When the smoke finally cleared, all the trees in the area were flattened, but the trucks were still sitting there, apparently intact from altitude but Yarborough realized they had to be badly damaged.

The job of a forward air controller was dangerous. They flew low over the jungle in small, slow-moving aircraft that enemy soldiers desperately wanted to shoot down. Furthermore, Yarborough flew missions for the shadowy, secretive Studies and Observation Group. This memoir recounts his time as a forward air controller and places the reader beside him in the cockpit as he flies top-secret missions over South Vietnam and Laos. The book fills an interesting gap in the history of Special Operations in Vietnam.



The Plague of War: Athens, Sparta and the Struggle for Ancient Greece (Jennifer T. Roberts, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2017, 416 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

The Peloponnesian War began in April 431 BC when the longstanding rivalry between the two Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta exploded into violence. This enmity pulled Greece into a brutal struggle that lasted for more than a generation. The fighting dragged on, even after the capture of the Athenian navy in 405 BC. After Sparta's victory, that nation's supremacy was challenged in the follow-on Corinthian War from 395 BC to 387 BC when even Sparta's former allies combined with Athens against it. In 371 BC the Boeotian League decisively defeated the Spartans at the Battle of Leuctra through the use of skilled Theban infantry. Along the way, entire cites were destroyed, families were split apart by death and enslavement, and the future of Greece teetered back and forth between Athenian and Spartan domination.

The full history of this war spans more than six decades. Roberts' work is one of the first to cover that entire period in one volume. It is an engaging story of the various plots and counterplots, missed opportunities, and political as well as military mayhem. The author is a professor of classics. Her in-depth knowledge of the period's players, locations, and events are all woven expertly into the narrative, providing the reader with a broad, expansive view of the war and its consequences for Greek culture and

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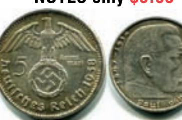

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the future of Western civilization.

Proud to Be a Marine: Stories of Strength and Courage from the Few and the Proud (C. Brian Kelly with Ingrid Smyer, Sourcebooks Inc., Naperville, IL, 2017, 400 pp., bibliography, index, $18.99, softcover)

Lieutenant Presley Neville O'Bannon led seven Marines through the desert to fight against the Barbary Pirates, earning the line "to the shores of Tripoli," which would later become part of the "Marine's Hymn." Lieutenant Israel Greene led a detachment of Leathernecks into action against John Brown in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Corporal John Mackie manned a gun in a damaged warship during the American Civil War and became the first U.S. Marine to earn the Medal of Honor. Smedley Butler, who would end his service as a major, fought first during the Boxer Rebellion in a career that would span the first decades of the 20th century. A Marine reservist, Corporal Hussein Mohamed Farah Aidid, would later go on to become a Somali warlord, following in the footsteps of his father.

The U.S. Marine Corps has served around the globe for over two centuries at a cost of more than 140,000 killed and almost 200,000 wounded. The author has brought together dozens of notable stories from the history of the Marine Corps to illustrate its successes, struggles, and the determination and capabilities of its members. The book covers the span of the organization's exis-

simulation gaming *By Joseph Luster*

WE HIT THE OPEN SEAS IN THE MORE WHIMSICAL, BATTLESHIP-LIKE *SAILCRAFT* BEFORE FACING REALITY IN *FIRST STRIKE: FINAL HOUR*.

SailCraft

Hey, you sunk my battleship! If you grew up on board games, you definitely recall uttering that phrase, or at least hearing it over and over again on TV. The original *Battleship* would eventually go on to inspire a Hollywood movie of its own, proving that you can adapt anything with the right amount of money. So, why in the world is *Battleship* of all things on my mind at the moment? Simple: I've been playing *SailCraft,* which is basically a fancy version of *Battleship* with all the bells and whistles we've come to expect from mobile experiences.

SailCraft isn't shy about comparisons to *Battleship*. In fact, it directly makes them in promotional materials, so don't think of this as a knockoff attempting to be sly. The basic gameplay premise is the same: Your grid of randomly spaced-out ships faces off against your opponent's grid, only you can't see where any of their ships are. You have a few clues at your disposal, though, including a roster of enemy ships that lists how many tiles each one takes up on their overall grid. As each battle begins, you'll start by dropping a bomb on a tile of your choosing, hoping for the satisfying BOOM that coincides with a direct hit. If you end up getting said hit, you get to take additional shots until you miss, after which it's the opponent's turn to potentially wreak havoc on your grid.

The first wrinkle thrown into the mix is the addition of ship-specific special moves. Submarines, for instance, can fire off a torpedo straight down a single line of the grid. If it hits anything, you've got your strike in and another chance to sink. There are also wide-ranging bombs, magic missiles, and other moves that can quickly turn the tables on a seemingly overpowered enemy. You would be overpowered yourself if these moves were infinitely useable, but each one has a charge meter, and once the ship with the move is destroyed you won't be able to use it again for the entirety of the battle. Thus, *SailCraft* becomes a game of taking down opponents as quickly and efficiently as possible, leaving them little room to counterattack with a deadly hail of bombs.

SailCraft also has some fun customizability to it. Not only will you unlock new ships in your rise through the ranks, you'll be able to upgrade each one using coins earned in battle. Other ships can be sent on missions of their own, and the process of everything here can, naturally, be sped up with real-world money. Yep, this is a free-to-play mobile game, so it's tough to begrudge them for introducing familiar micro-transaction systems. I'm a little tired of the aesthetic of these systems—even the menus, text, and the constant prodding with upgrades can be a little bothersome—but it's hard to argue against the business model when the base experience is free.

If you have no beef with these time-sucking mobile games, *SailCraft* is one of the better options out there, and the naval war theme manages to come off as colorful and eye-catching. The graphics in battle are particularly well done, and the music is repetitive but not terribly grating. I was surprised at how much fun I had during the meat of my journey through *SailCraft*. It's a great way to kill some time, and you'll most likely find yourself playing well after that time has been effectively obliterated.

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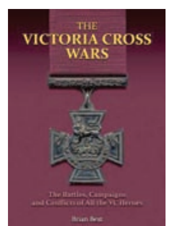
First Strike: Final Hour

Blindflug Studios' *First Strike: Final Hour* seems especially topical right now, what with the looming tensions of nuclear war ever on the horizon. Those tensions aren't quite as palpable in the game itself, which is somewhat of a DEFCON lite that will only thrill those who really relish micromanagement. If that sounds like something directly up your alley, well, you'll at least want to try before you buy.

First Strike: Final Hour lets players choose from 12 nuclear superpowers, after which they will build advanced rockets, conquer territories, and choose who to fire at and when it's best to use your missiles as defense. You have to find a good balance between weapons development and offense if you want to survive, and be wary of the temptation to go full-on *First Strike* too early. Whenever a superpower fires off all their weapons, they're stuck in cool-down mode for a little while, leaving them wide open to counterattacks and other brutal measures of opposition.

tence, from the Revolutionary War to the continuing wars in the Middle East.



The Victoria Cross Wars: Battles, Campaigns and Conflicts of All the VC Heroes (Brian Best, Frontline Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2017, 574 pp., photographs, index, $50.00, hardcover)

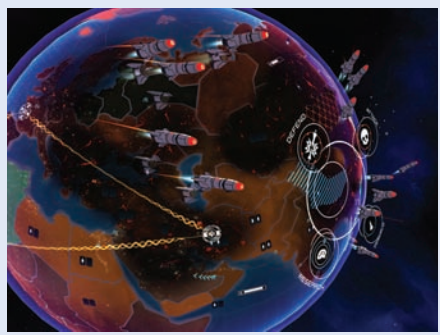
Sergeant James Langley Dalton had a career spanning the British Empire. He served a quiet posting in Mauritius before going to Canada to fight Fenians and a rebellion in Manitoba. He retired after 22 years and went to South Africa but soon went back into the service, this time in the Commissariat Department as an Acting Assistant Commissary, equal to a lieutenant. When the Zulu War of 1879 began, he wound up at Rorke's Drift, a small mission station in Natal. The Zulus attacked the outpost soon afterward, and Dalton was instrumental in convincing the officers in charge to stay and defend it. When the fighting began he picked up a rifle, using it with great effect. Meanwhile, he spoke words of encouragement to the men to sustain their morale. He stayed in the line even after being wounded. For his bravery he was awarded the Victoria Cross, one of only 1,358 given since the medal was created.

Dalton's story is just one of many in the 61 chapters in this volume, each of which covers a different conflict or part of a larger one, such as World War I and World War II. Within each chapter are the stories of one or more Victoria Cross holders. Some of these campaigns and wars are barely known today, but the author has filled each summary with good detail and extensive background on the actions the soldiers fought and the award of the decoration.

Death Was Their Co-Pilot (Michael Dorflinger, Pen and Sword Press, South Yorkshire, UK, 2017, 208 pp., photographs, appendices, $39.95, hardcover)

Major Lanoe Hawker was out to down an enemy plane on July 25, 1915. He had already downed one plane in June. In his Bristol Scout fighter, he scoured the skies looking for targets. About 6 PM he spotted two German planes. Hawker fired a burst across the first, causing the pilot to land his aircraft and surrender. He got onto the tail of the second plane using the setting sun to hide his movement. He fired on the aircraft, which burst into flames. A few weeks later on August 11, he shot down two more enemy planes and became the British Empire's first fighter ace. Until January 2016 he also was the leading ace of all the warring nations, even though he shared the title with other pilots part of that time.

World War I converted the skies into a battlefield for the first time in history. Daring young men became the first heroes of the new war, engaging in aerial duels and earning the sobriquet of ace. Dorflinger's work introduces the reader to a number of these aces from both sides of the war. Their exploits, triumphs, and tragedies are all recounted in detail. □



You may also want to opt for some form of diplomacy, but it won't necessarily get you too far. In fact, being diplomatic and attempting to team up with others against your enemies will leave you open to further attacks, so use this technique wisely (read: sparingly). Besides, at the end of the day your goal is apparently to be the ruler of a barren wasteland, hammering home *First Strike*'s message about the fruitless dangers of nuclear warfare.

From the presentation to the at-times hectic state of micromanagement (particularly on higher difficulties), it's clear that *First Strike: Final Hour* started out as a mobile game. Most of the tweaks made to the recent PC release are purely visual, but at least more players will be able to give it a shot. Much like the devastatingly decisive attack in its name, though, you should make sure it's a shot worth taking before you hit the big red button. In my estimation, there are way too many great strategy games out, both classic and contemporary, to bother spending too much time fumbling with this particular set of nuclear codes. □

Intelligence

Continued from page 23

two slots as shooters. That put two new pilots into the mix and reduced the covering force to a dozen planes.

The P-38s were all flying about 50 feet above the water as they buzzed into Empress Augusta Bay a minute ahead of schedule. They had come 494 miles, which set a record at the time for the longest fighter intercept ever recorded. They had begun their climb to 10,000 feet when Lieutenant Doug Canning, flying one of the fighters tasked with furnishing air cover, spotted their prey shortly after 9:45 AM. "Bogeys, 11 o'clock high," he said into his radio.

Although the Americans anticipated one Mitsubishi G4M and a group of escort fighters, they encountered two Bettys and only six Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zeros. The Bettys were unwieldy aircraft to fly and their pilots had almost no chance of outmaneuvering the American fighters. Their only hope in that regard was that they were heavily armed with cannons and machine guns. They boasted 20mm cannons in the top and tail turrets, and four machine guns (one in the nose, two in the waist, and one on the cockpit side). The 65-foot twin-engine bomber had an 82-foot wingspan. But because they carried a lot of fuel, they had a reputation for turning into a torch once they were hit. Their key attribute was that they could fly almost 2,000 miles carrying a full bomb load. For that reason, the Japanese had built them knowing that they would be useful in long-range strikes against distant objectives in the Pacific Ocean.

The four attacking P-38s came in from below the Japanese and caught the enemy pilots by surprise. They shot down the first bomber, which carried Yamamoto, and sent it crashing into the jungle. Everyone aboard died in the crash. The second Mitsubishi G4M fled toward the open sea, but the Americans caught up with it and shot it down, too.

Lieutenant Ray Hine's P-38 took fire from a Zero and failed to return to Guadalcanal. He was reported missing in action. One of the Japanese Zeros suffered damage, but it managed to make an emergency landing on Shortland Island.

The Japanese were unable to reach the crash site of Yamamoto's aircraft until the following day. They found the deceased admiral. He had been thrown from the plane. He was strapped in his seat wearing his service ribbons on his chest and he was grasping his sword. He may have been placed in that position by a dying member of the air crew.

Except for Hine, the other Americans made it safely back to Guadalcanal. Lanphier immediately claimed to have shot down the aircraft that was carrying Yamamoto. The captain asserted in his report that after turning to engage the escort Zeros he had flipped upside down as he worked his way back to the two Bettys. Lanphier held that he had come out of his turn so that he was perpendicular to the lead bomber. When he fired on it, the bomber's right wing came off. Lanphier reported that Lieutenant Barber shot down the other bomber. The Army's handling of the affair was complicated by the absence of a formal debriefing of the pilots. They were not debriefed because there were no formal interrogation procedures on Guadalcanal at the time.

The controversy over who shot the lead bomber with Yamamoto aboard dragged on for many decades. The Army eventually awarded half credits to Lanphier and Barber for shooting down the lead bomber carrying Yamamoto that crashed in the jungle, and half credits to Barber and Holmes for the second bomber carrying Yamamoto's chief of staff, Matome Ugaki that crashed into the sea.

Barber maintained that when Lanphier went after the fighter escorts, he chased the bomber transports, which were rapidly descending. He came in behind one and fired into its right engine, rear fuselage, stabilizers, and left engine. He watched as it crashed into the jungle. He then watched as the second bomber attempted to shake off Holmes, who had managed to severely damage its right engine. When Holmes flew past the bomber, Barber fired at it and watched it crash into the ocean. Ugaki and two others survived water crash landing.

The most recent analysis holds that Barber shot down the lead bomber carrying Yamamoto, not Lanphier. Barber eventually petitioned the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records to have his half credit on the lead bomber kill changed to whole credit. The Air Force ruled in 1991 that there was enough uncertainty in both claims for them to be accepted. It ruled to let the shared credit stand. Barber appealed to U.S. Federal Court, but it declined to intervene. Site inspections of the jungle crash site of the lead bomber reveal that the path of the bullet impacts validate Barber's account because the damage was made by bullets entering from behind the bomber as Barber asserted in his account, and not from the right as Lanphier stated in his account.

In the final analysis, though, the cryptologists, mission planners, and pilots all deserve credit for the success of Operation Vengeance. □

Magenta

Continued from page 55

beat on it with the pummel of his sword. "Come my Zouaves!" he said. "Break down this door!" But when the door refused to give way, Espinasse turned his attention to a nearby ground floor window. He pounded on the window's metal frame in an effort to be heard over the noise of battle, urging his men to go in through the window. But a bullet fired at close range from that same window hit Espinasse, mortally wounding him.

The bullet had broken the general's arm and then punched into his kidneys. The bullet's impact was so great that Espinasse dropped his sword and slumped to the ground. But the Zouaves, enraged at their leader's fate, lost no time in breaking into the building to avenge him. Those Austrians not willing to surrender were put to the sword.

The battle raged on, though the fighting slowly died down. By 8:30 PM the French had captured Magenta, and the Austrians were withdrawing. It was a victory, but the French were exhausted and hardly in a celebratory mood. Many French soldiers broke into wine cellars where they wound up dead drunk. They were not celebrating; rather, they were trying to temporarily forget the horrors they had witnessed that day.

The French lost more than 4,500 dead and wounded, but the Austrian butcher's bill was even higher, totaling 5,700 casualties. The French also took 4,500 prisoners. Napoleon III, seeking to honor MacMahon's slow but crucial intervention, made him Marshal of France and Duke of Magenta. Yet it was the soldiers, particularly the rank and file, who deserved the glory. Emperor Napoleon was a mere spectator through much of the fight, showing little of his uncle's admittedly rare genius. The French also were fortunate that the Austrian leadership was third rate and often incompetent.

Magenta did not end the war. Another more sanguinary fight would occur at Solferino, a battle so bloody it would spur the creation of the International Red Cross. It was another French victory, but Napoleon III was deeply shaken by the horrific sights he saw. Napoleon's instincts as a politician kicked in, and he made peace with rival emperor Franz Josef. The pact fell short of Cavour's ambitions, but a start had been made as Piedmont-Sardinia annexed Lombardy.

That same year a French chemist named François Verguin created a new reddish-purple dye. Hearing of the French victory, he unwittingly gave the battle a kind of immortality by naming the new color magenta. □

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