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Cover: PFC Thomas Gilgore, 8th Infantry Division, appears to show the strain of battle during combat in the Hürtgen Forest, December 5, 1944.

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Photo: National Archives

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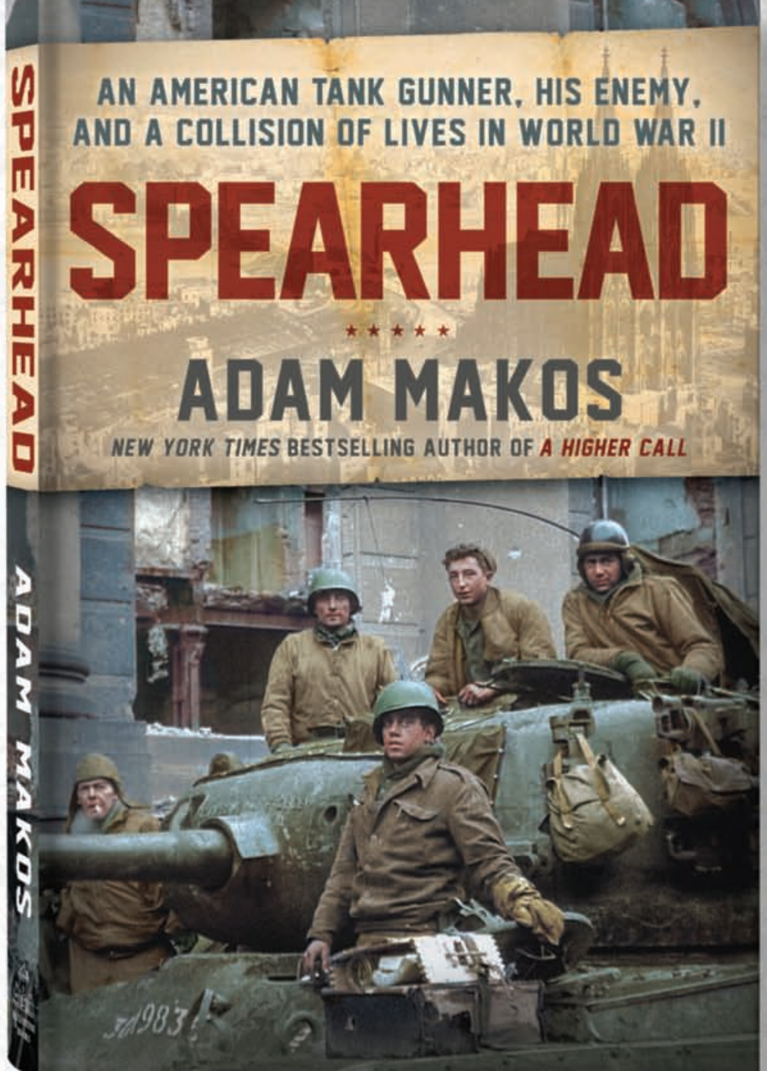

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Editorial

The bold British stroke at Taranto preceded the Royal Navy victory at Cape Matapan.

THE GREAT BRITISH ROYAL NAVY VICTORY AT CAPE MATAPAN SEALED THE FATE OF the Italian Regia Marina, rendering Mussolini's fleet virtually impotent after the spring of 1941. However, it was the heroic effort of a few men of the Fleet Air Arm that set the stage for that final neutralization of the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean.

A dazzling aerial assault on the Regia Marina anchorage at Taranto on the night of November 11, 1941, shocked the Italian naval establishment so thoroughly that it was reluctant to expose its capital ships much further for fear of a devastating Jutland-style encounter with the Royal Navy. By the autumn of 1940, the Italians had six battleships in the Mediterranean Theater, the sleek new *Vittorio Veneto* and *Littorio,* modern and powerful, along with the *Conte di Cavour* and *Giulio Cesare* and the Doria-class *Andrea Doria* and *Caio Duilio*. Together, these warships constituted a clear threat to Royal Navy operations in the Mediterranean.

The British Admiralty was rightly concerned with an effective option to counter Italian naval power, even though several skirmishes had turned out badly for the Italians in recent months. Several Italian cruisers and destroyers had been sunk, and *Guilio Cesare* had taken a 15-inch shell from the British battleship *Warspite* in an action in July 1940. After that hit, the Italians turnedg tail and ran for home.

Still, British concern persisted. Finally, an old plan to attack the Taranto anchorage by air that had been developed in the mid-1930s was resurrected and reviewed. Dubbed Operation Judgment, the Taranto attack found new life, and to execute it the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* and a handful of antiquated biplanes would play a major role.

On November 6, 1940, *Illustrious* set sail from the harbor of Alexandria, Egypt, with a powerful task force of escorts. Aboard *Illustrious* were 24 Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers. The Swordfish was a biplane, made of wood and canvas mostly, and known throughout the Fleet Air Arm as the "Stringbag." Although it was lumbering and slow, the Swordfish carried a lethal 1,200-pound torpedo. If a handful of these aircraft could get within range of Taranto, the enemy battleships might be sitting ducks despite anticipated heavy fire from more than 240 antiaircraft guns ringing the harbor.

On the 10th, *Illustrious* and a screen of cruisers and destroyers under Rear Admiral Lumbey St. George Lyster detached from the fleet for the run-in to a launch point just west of the Greek island of Cephalonia. At 8:30 PM on the 11th, *Illustrious* turned into the wind to launch two waves of Swordfish, the first included 12 planes, the second, taking off an hour later, included nine. The pilots and crewmen were from Royal Navy Squadrons No. 815 and 819.

By 11 PM, British flares were illuminating Taranto harbor. The torpedo bombers started runs toward their targets, and the startled Italian antiaircraft gunners began to put up a curtain of shells. Tracers streaked across the sky.

Through this torrent of enemy fire, the Swordfish pilots pressed home their attacks, at times skimming just above the water. In the first wave, only one Swordfish was brought down, that of the raid leader, Lt. Cmdr. Kenneth Williamson. He and crewman Lieutenant N.J. Scarlett both survived the crash and were taken prisoner—and they knew that their torpedo had successfully slammed into the hull of *Conte di Cavour.* Two other torpedoes damaged *Littorio*.

Only seven planes of the second wave reached Taranto. Pilots of the second wave scored another torpedo hit on *Littorio* and one on *Caio Duilio*. Another Swordfish dropped a bomb on the nearby seaplane base, igniting a huge explosion.

When the last British plane had turned for *Illustrious, Littorio* was down by the bow, *Caio Duilio* would be undergoing repairs for months, and Conte di Cavour was beached with heavy damage. She would never go to sea again. The cruiser *Trento* was also damaged. In minutes, the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean swung irrevocably in favor of the Royal Navy.

The British lost only two Swordfish, and two airmen were killed. The "Stringbag" fliers had written a new chapter in the glorious history of the Royal Navy and validated the concept of aerial torpedo attack for the world to see.

Ironically, in the Pacific the leaders of the Imperial Japanese Navy received the news of Taranto with interest. The success encouraged the Japanese to pursue their own plan of attack, and one year later the result was Pearl Harbor.

Michael E. Haskew

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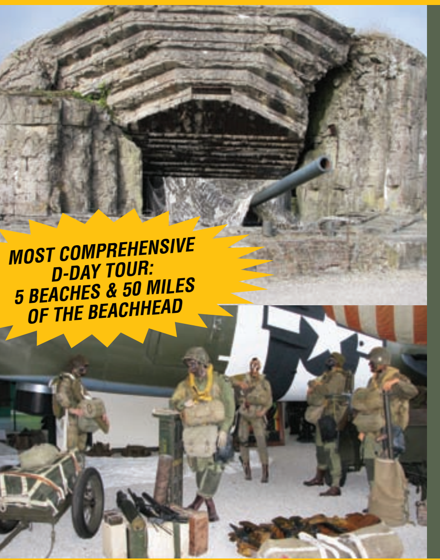

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The Wonderful Weasel

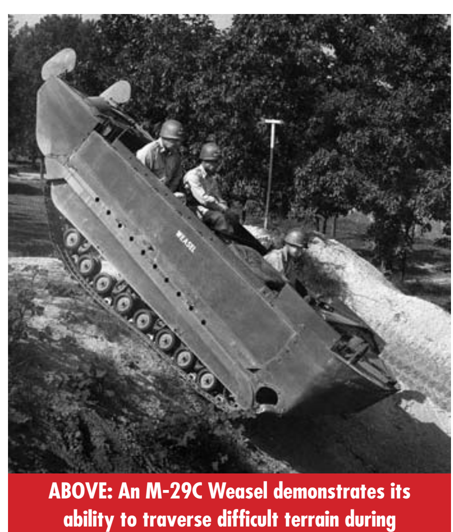
Although the M29 Weasel's intended mission never took place, it found work transporting troops and supplies during World War II.

THE M29 WEASEL WAS A MACHINE CONCEIVED BY A BIZARRE BRITISH CHEMIST obsessed with ice for a unit that did not exist and a mission that never occurred. While super-secret Operation Ploughshare was scratched, the Weasel went on to lead a long and productive, if unheralded, life.

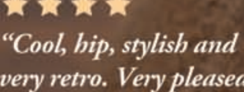
Designed and manufactured at a feverish pitch even as its raison d'etre disappeared, it went on to find myriad military and civilian applications. Fully tracked and amphibious, it carried a payload and crew approximating that of a jeep. Its outstanding feature was its minimal ground pressure, less than that of a human foot. In snowy regions its crews, riding on its wide, full-length tracks, would race over terrain that would stymie a man wading waist deep in the drifts. In the subsequent decades they were used in swampy, snowy, and difficult terrain by troops across the globe. In 1946 they were deployed, but not employed, by the U.S. Army during an alpine rescue operation in Switzerland. Civilian deployments included ski patrolling, even supporting the 1960 Winter Olympics.

Geoffrey Pyke, an Orthodox Jew, fatherless from the age of five, initially attended Wellington College. Sporting the motto *Heroum Filii* ("The Children of Heroes"), it was the independent school of choice for military officers' children. Relentlessly bullied for being neither athletic nor Anglican, Pyke was withdrawn and privately tutored until he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge. With the outbreak of World War I he traveled to Germany, using the cover of a journalist for the *Daily Chronicle* and the identification of an American sailor, and undertook covert public opinion research for British intelligence. Quickly detected, he was interned near Berlin. Escaping and crossing Germany to neutral Holland, he eventually returned to England and wrote a bestseller about his exploits. Before World War II he developed a larger, similar system of operatives claiming to be British golfers, even persuading the Nazis to host a very public Anglo-German match.

In the interwar years he completed his Ph.D. in chemistry, gained and lost a fortune investing, established the alternative Malting House School in his home, and became increasingly obsessed with ice. Central to his bizarre geostrategy was the "fourth element": ice. Pyke believed employing ice as a weapon of war could defeat England's enemies. Through Tory Member of Parliament (MP) Leo Amery he became acquainted with Tory MP and future



ABOVE: An M-29C Weasel demonstrates its ability to traverse difficult terrain during maneuvers. The tracked Weasel proved to be a versatile performer. TOP: This M-29 Weasel amphibious tracked vehicle of Company C, 1st Engineer Combat Battalion, 29th Infantry Division has been nicknamed the *St. Lo Special.* This photo was taken in France during the summer of 1944.



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During exercises at Camp Hale, Colorado, in 1943, a camouflaged M-28 cargo carrier speeds along on a snowy landscape while pulling a sled loaded with soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division.

prime minister Winston Churchill, who became enamored of their shared eccentric, occasionally offensive habits, Pyke's flamboyant life story, and his often outrageous strategic ideas.

Of the latter, HMS *Habakkuk*—Pyke's fantastically improbable, icy answer to the "air gap" over the North Atlantic that deprived convoys of aerial protection mid-ocean—takes the cake. His solution was simple and simply impossible. He proposed dynamiting huge bergs loose from the Arctic pack ice and deploying them mid-Atlantic as floating airfields. More practical minds, noting an iceberg's propensity to roll over as it melted, quickly nixed the idea. Pyke then invented Pykrete, a frozen composite material of approximately 14 percent sawdust and 86 percent ice by weight, with a slow melting rate that is stronger and tougher than ordinary ice. He proposed that his crystalline aircraft carrier be manufactured of it. While a scale model was built secretly in the Canadian Rockies, the introduction of Coastal Command's long-range Consolidated Liberator GR.I aircraft (known to the British as the VLR) and the outrageous cost in men, materials, and manufacturing capacity of the 2.2 million-ton frozen vessel combined to scupper the project.

Simultaneously, Pyke developed the concept of a mechanized special operations unit swooping from Europe's snowy wastes onto essential Axis facilities. He proposed attacks on heavy water plants in Norway, from the snowy peaks of the Carpathian Mountains onto the Ploesti oilfields in Romania, and from the Alps into northern Italy. In March 1942, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations Executive, made the heavy water plan actionable. Codenamed Operation Ploughshare, its approval initiated a search for mechanized snow machines and the men to operate them.

The men, uniquely both Canadian and American, were required to have "the combined qualities of mountaineer, northwoodsman, and skier" along with "a knowledge of I.C. [internal-combustion] engines, leading to driver mechanics qualifications" to operate and maintain the snow machines. Designated the 1st Special Service Force, they would never strike aboard Weasels nor serve in Norway. However, in Italy they captured impregnable Monte La Difensa astride the Liri Valley and terrified the Germans by aggressively patrolling the Anzio beachhead, leaving calling cards on victims, and ended the war in southern France.

The contract to develop and build the snow machine was promptly assigned to auto manufacturer Studebaker with a team of designers and engineers quickly assembled at its South Bend, Indiana, plant. At the same time, existing snow machines were field tested and assessed on Mount Rainier, near Fort Ellis in Washington. Irascible, opinionated, and intolerable, Pyke proved an obstacle threatening a timeline that foresaw production commencing in only six months and field trials following two months later, in early December 1942.

Pyke was convinced that two Archimedean screws or screw pumps (rotating cylinders with a spiral flange like a wood screw), not tracks, were the only acceptable propulsion system. He was dead wrong. The screw pump system worked poorly on inclines and was useless on bare terrain, roadways, and rocks. The drums' large diameter necessitated their placement under the body and crew compartment, increasing the height of the vehicle commensurably. Finally, unless the engines were placed in the cylinders, an insurmountable engineering problem in the compressed timeframe, the vehicles were top heavy and prone to tipping. Pyke's insistence on an Archimedean screw was illogical, ineffective, and, thankfully, an engineering impossibility. Justifiably, the chairman of America's National Defense Research Committee, Dr. Vannevar Bush, described him as "short on physics, especially short on engineering judgment." Over Pyke's vociferous and oft overweening objections, the designers settled on a tracked vehicle.

Originally designated the Cargo Carrier, Light, T-15/M28, it had to meet a series of strict parameters. Primarily, it had to be transportable in the modified bomb bay of an Avro Lancaster heavy bomber to be dropped by parachute and amphibious so it could launch from seaborne transport. Minimum speed on the level was set at 20 miles per hour with an operating radius of 250 miles. Carrying a payload of 4,000 pounds, it was to produce less than one psi (pound per square inch) ground pressure, a fraction of the ground pressure of a human foot; operate on terrain ranging from heavy snow and swamp to roadways and other hard surfaces; and be "silent, free-running, capable of free down-hill run" to facilitate commando-type surprise attacks.

The first issue that had to be addressed was the power plant. In 1938, Studebaker introduced the Champion, an inexpensive, fuel-efficient model designed from a "clean sheet." The Champion engine was a flathead six with a 164.3-inch displacement weighing only 455 pounds, including transmission. With a bore and stroke of 3.00 x 3.83 inches, its compression ratio was set at 6.25:1, and it generated 70 horsepower. It was equipped with a single-plate standard transmission with a controlled differential and a two-speed planetary driving axle with final drive assemblies and drive sprockets. With integral balance weights and oversized bearings, the need for a weighty vibration damper was eliminated, and with all main and connecting-rod bearings interchangeable steel-back Babbitt-lined types, maintenance in the field was simplified.

Judged adequate for the Weasel, the Cham-

M-29 Weasels and bulldozers sit in the foreground of this photo taken on August 16, 1943, in the camp of the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment on the island of Kiska in the Aleutians after it was retaken from the Japanese.

pion offered two important advantages considering the hurried schedule. First, the Studebaker factory was already producing it. Second, scavenging warehouses and dealerships would provide parts for the assembly of an additional 2,000 immediately. Both Firestone and Goodrich were enlisted to design and produce the tracks—rubber-coated metal grouser-plates riveted to two endless cable-reinforced rubber belts.

By mid-summer, after only four months, prototypes of the T-15/M28 were ready for field trials on the Michigan-Indiana sand dunes on the Lake Michigan shore. Later in the summer, finding snow for further tests presented a problem. Maj. Gen. Simon B Buckner, commander of the Alaska Defense Command, refused to cooperate: "We are right on the doorstep of a Japanese invasion of the Aleutians and are fully committed in all respects. We cannot give you any assistance." He helpfully suggested the Chilean Andes, but they were rejected over security concerns. In the end, a snowfield in the Canadian Rockies provided the test track.

Reflecting the harried pace from drafting table to field trials, the T-15/M28 proved woefully inadequate. Its top speed was 15 miles per hour, not 20, and it could only climb an incline of 15 degrees, not 20. Its range was only one third of the 250 miles specified. On the other hand, the T-15/M28 outperformed the existing models examined earlier and, most importantly, easily outran crack 87th Mountain Infantry troops on skis over a three-mile course. While the first attempt at an airdrop from a C-54 Skymaster transport failed when the Weasel overturned and cut the suspension lines, with removable fairings and a shock absorbing platform added it could be airdropped. Thus, the basic design was retained for the T-24, and with significant improvements, emerged as the M29A Weasel.

The most important and fundamental change involved the powertrain. The drive wheel moved from the front of the T-15/M28 to the rear, exchanging places with the idler. This followed moving the engine from the rear of the vehicle to the front, on the right of the driver's compartment. This significantly shifted weight from the rear to the front, quadrupling climbing ability to 60 degrees in ideal conditions. Moving the engine from the rear also provided room for three folding seats across the back of an enlarged cargo compartment that could now accommodate wireless sets and other bulky equipment. With minor modifications, weapons from machine guns to recoilless rifles were also mounted on Weasels.

At the same time the suspension system was entirely redesigned with the original four bogie pairs being replaced with eight to address a problem with track throwing. Overall, the vehicle weighed less that two tons and exerted a ground pressure of 2.1 psi with the 15-inch track and a mere 1.69 psi with the extended 20-inch track. The M29A was five feet wide, 10 feet long, and a few inches under six feet tall, weighing in at 3,725 pounds. Including crew it could carry a payload of 1,200 pounds. After serial no. 2102 the wider 20-inch track was standardized, and in January 1945, a suspension conversion kit was introduced to update older 15-inch models. The wide track added approximately 300 pounds to the gross weight, while reducing overall ground pressure.

The first 1,002 Weasels to roll off the assembly line were officially designated T-24s. Interestingly, the earliest model had a TNT charge mounted between the engine and the rear deck to facilitate self-destruction if this still 'secret' vehicle had to be abandoned to the enemy. Studebaker produced 523 M29As in 1943 and another 2,951 in 1944 for a total production run of 4,476 vehicles.

Still numbered sequentially, the M29C integrated design changes to improve its amphibious performance. These included bow and

ABOVE: An M-29 Weasel sits at the headquarters of the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, near the French town of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont shortly after D-Day in 1944. The 8th Regiment had come ashore at Utah Beach. RIGHT: In December 1944, an M-29 Weasel carries wounded soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 16th Regiment, 1st Infantry Division to an aid station. The Weasel performed in multiple roles during and after World War II.

stern flotation compartments that enhanced freeboard and, conveniently, provided extra storage. The addition of twin rudders greatly improved steering afloat. Together they upped the overall length to almost 16 feet. A capstan was also added to the bow deck to facilitate self-recovery. In 1944 and 1945, a total of 10,647 M29Cs were manufactured for a total production run of 15,123 Weasels.

Three armed factory variants were also produced in limited numbers during World War II. The Type A was armed with a center-mounted 75mm recoilless rifle, and in the Type B the weapon was mounted in the rear. The Type C carried a center-mounted 37mm gun. Additionally, a small number of Weasels were armored and equipped with mine/bomb disposal equipment. In the postwar era, a limited number of Weasels upgunned with a 105mm rifle were produced.

Early model Weasels were first deployed by the First Special Service Force during the unopposed invasion of Kiska in the Aleutian Island chain southwest of Alaska on August 15, 1943. They would go on to serve in theaters of operation across the globe from the South Pacific to northwestern Europe.

Weasels participated in Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, and went ashore on D-Day. They served the U.S. Army throughout the campaigns in northwestern Europe and Italy. In Normandy they carried ammunition to the front and escorted prisoners to the rear. With the stretcher kit included after serial no. 4104, they were ideally equipped for transporting casualties out of the combat zone. With an RL-31 reel mounted on the rear deck, they were particularly popular for cable laying with Signals units. Designed for installation of antennae on the rear deck, the Weasel was wired to support SCR-506, -508 and -510 radio sets, permitting its use as a command vehicle.

The British 79th Armoured Division, known as "Hobart's Funnies," deployed specialized armored vehicles from bridge layers to modified mine-clearing tanks known as "Flails," and Weasels were included in their repertoire. They proved particularly useful to the Canadian Army in southern Holland in the fall of 1944. The massive Belgian port of Antwerp was captured intact in early September 1944. However, it was of no use until the inundated and heavily defended Scheldt Estuary was cleared, opening Antwerp to the North Sea. The oft flooded and always sodden terrain demanded a series of small-scale amphibious assaults, which required every amphibious animal in the Allied menagerie: Alligators, Buffaloes, Ducks, Terrapins, and, of course, Weasels.

In the Pacific the Marine Corps used them on Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and throughout the theater. A corps report on their deployment on Iwo Jima dated April 25, 1945, concluded, "While not seaworthy, the Weasel proved of inestimable value on land, where it was fast, maneuverable, and could pull trailers and light artillery pieces over terrain untrafficable for wheeled vehicles." Eventually, the 2nd through 5th Marine Divisions all had Weasels in strength.

In the postwar era, the French used them in their combat operations against the Viet Minh in the deltas of the Red and Mekong Rivers. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Canadian Army operated Weasels across that country's high Arctic.

In 1946, a C-53 Skymaster bound for Pisa, Italy, from Vienna crashed on the Gauli glacier in Switzerland. There were no fatalities, but the crew of four and eight passengers, including two senior U.S. Army officers and a child, were stranded. The U.S. Army dispatched Weasels to Interlaken, 15 miles west of the crash site, to affect a ground rescue. However, a successful landing on the glacier

by a pair of Swiss Air Force Fieseler Storches, light reconnaissance aircraft, saw the individuals shuttled out by air.

During the 1950s many Weasels were auctioned off as surplus, and they became popular with ski resort operators. This led the organizing committee for the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, California, to request the loan of Weasels from the U.S. Army. Consequently, 25 Weasels provided support throughout the event. Its attendance at the VIII Winter Olympiad may have been the Weasel's only brush with greatness, but throughout its career it quietly filled a variety of roles for multiple armies in theaters of operation throughout the world, despite the fact the mission that inspired it never was.

Author Bob Gordon is a first-time contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Brantford, Ontario, Canada.*

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By Robert E. Cray

In November 1942, the merchant ship *Irish Pine,* flying the flag of neutral Ireland, was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine *U-608.* There were no survivors, and the incident sparked political difficulties for Irish Prime Minister Eamon De Valera in dealing with Nazi Germany.

Ireland's Quixotic Neutrality

Prime Minister Eamon De Valera navigated difficult diplomatic relationships during the war years.

IRELAND'S REFUSAL TO TAKE PART IN WORLD WAR II AGITATED WINSTON Churchill during the war's first months.

Irish Prime Minister Eamon De Valera

German U-boats had been sinking British ships in the autumn of 1939. Irish ports were off limits to British naval vessels although Ireland technically remained in the Commonwealth. At one point the clearly enraged future prime minister (then First Sea Lord) thundered against the Irish government, "Legally, I believe they are at war but skulking," wondering if Britain should invade Ireland. He blamed Eamon De Valera, Ireland's prime minister, for keeping his nation enveloped in a cocoon of noninvolvement. Neutrality did not suit Churchill. It did, however, suit De Valera's purposes very well.

Yet the wily De Valera, a political survivor if nothing else, proved less neutral than he appeared, officially evoking nonbelligerent status while covertly tilting toward the Allies. It was a high-wire political balancing act. Unwanted attention might come from either the Allies or the Axis if De Valera stumbled; both sides wished to exploit Ireland for their own purposes. German and British intelligence agencies each sought openings. What a disgruntled Churchill said mattered little to De Valera. For Dev, as compatriots called him, keeping Ireland out of war mattered far more. "The Emergency," the Irish euphemism for World War II, required Ireland's prime minister to do some fancy footwork (not always appreciated by Winston Churchill) but that placed Ireland closer to the Allies' camp than many people realized.

Eamon De Valera had learned the craft of survival from an early age. American born, his parents' marital status questionable, De Valera went to Ireland at the age of two, enjoyed sports, and became a teacher. He was also an avowed Irish nationalist. As an Irish patriot in a British colony, De Valera participated in the 1916 Irish Uprising, commanding a company of troops and narrowly escaping execution for his role. A 1917 amnesty set him free. De Valera would weather other crises, some of them from his fellow Irish nationalists and the Irish Republican Army, all part of the maelstrom that embodied Ireland's turbulent path to free state and later republic status. Ulster in the north remained part of Great Britain. But in the south, Prime Minister De Valera chipped away at British links, refusing to allow Ireland's former colonial master the use of the Treaty Ports (signed over to Ireland in 1938) for military purposes, further unsettling Churchill.

As war approached, De Valera worked to keep Ireland secure and out of harm's way. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), intent on achieving a unified Irish nation, saw things differently, embarking on a terrorist campaign in 1939 that involved killing British citizens and Irish police officers. Any IRA provocations against Ulster would likely prompt a British response against Ireland, as De Valera well knew. Accordingly, De Valera outlawed the IRA in June 1939. Then, in a daring December raid, the IRA swooped down on the Magazine Fort in Dublin's Phoenix Park, site of most of the army's munitions, making off with a million rounds of ammunition and shell casings. Two weeks later a Dublin policeman was shot dead,the work of the IRA again. Could another civil war be brewing?

De Valera adopted more stringent security measures, getting the Dail, Ireland's parliament, to pass an Emergency Power Act in 1940, allowing individuals to be held 48 hours without trial. He also sealed the northern Irish border and

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Until now, many sufferers have failed to consider a topical cream as an effective way to manage neuropathy. *Diabasens* is proving it may be the only way going forward.

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According to research, activating this pathway (which can only be done with a cream) increases the sensitivity of nerves, relieving feelings of tingling and numbness in your legs and feet.

Supporting ingredients boost blood flow, supplying the nerves with the nutrients they need for increased sensation.

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A number of large signs visible from the air, such as this one atop Slieve Liag Cliffs, County Donegal, were intended to warn German airmen that they were above Ireland and not Britain.

employed 5,000 special police. In Dev's words, "The policy of patience has failed and is over."

More problematic were those IRA members who saw Germany as a potential ally in their fight against a wartime Great Britain. In late 1939, the IRA refused to support either "king" or "dictator," more or less in line with Ireland's neutral status. By the summer of 1940, the IRA stated, "If German forces should land in Ireland, they will land … as friends and liberators of the Irish people." A victorious Axis, they believed, would enable Ireland to "achieve absolute independence in the next few months."

Such statements met with rapid criticism. Although some Irish citizens delighted in Britain's wartime misfortunes, the overwhelming majority favored neutrality. Irish military intelligence believed the IRA would defend against a British invasion; they also believed the IRA would support the Germans if they landed. As historian Brian Hanley notes, a German occupied Ireland would have made the IRA potential collaborators. Some IRA members would resist, of course. Others might turn a blind eye to fascism, revenging themselves against opponents while becoming little more than Nazi stooges.

Dev's forceful measures, however, precluded such a possibility, as hundreds of IRA members were swept up under the Emergency Power Act, left to languish in jail or simply interned. Indeed, the IRA's overblown prose may well have reflected its relative marginalization due to De Valera's actions. During the war Ireland executed six IRA men by firing squad, interned 500 without trial, and committed another 600 under the Offenses Against the State Act. Dev did not believe in halfway measures.

As a neutral nation, Ireland joined the ranks of such countries as Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal. Ireland's small size and its proximity to Great Britain made nonalliance appealing. Nor could Ireland afford to be a wartime target, given its small, poorly equipped army. Perhaps most importantly, the country's memory of British rule made neutrality a natural extension of Irish identity. Ireland needed to forge its own foreign policy in the world of warring powers, and that made neutrality the best political option.

Nevertheless, Germany did have a legation in Dublin headed by Doctor Eduard Hempel, a cultured career diplomat. Hempel believed, correctly, that Ireland wished to avoid war, something Germany favored provided Ireland's neutrality favored the Allies and the Axis equally. German spies did on occasion appear in Ireland. One Dr. Hermann Goertz ran from his Dublin home in May 1940; once inside the police discovered a radio transmitter along with 20,000 pounds and papers detailing an airborne attack on Irish military facilities. But Hempel remained a disappointment to German intelligence. Irish intelligence tapped Hempel's phone, opened his mail, and kept up a steady surveillance. Hempel's tendency to panic made him a less than ideal man for on the spot intelligence work.

Neutrality did not stop Ireland's citizens from volunteering in the British Army. Some Irish had fought in specially designated Irish Regiments when part of the British Empire. Now with war close, perhaps as many 60,000 Irish citizens enlisted in the British armed service. Eight earned Victoria Crosses, Britain's highest military medal, while more than 4,500 died. For English soldiers puzzled by the behavior of people from a neutral nation fighting alongside them, the standard answer Irish recruits gave was, "We know whose side we are neutral on."

De Valera, however, needed Ireland's neutrality respected. While he could not physically stop Irish citizens from sailing to Britain, especially the tens of thousands who worked in Britain's war industries and sent money home, he could insist on certain protocols for Irish recruits in British regiments who returned on leave to Ireland. What did this mean? British uniforms must be discarded before arrival. The British government complied, supplying stores of civilian clothes. Normally, warring soldiers in uniform in and from a neutral nation would create a dilemma. Dev had found a way around the predicament.

Nevertheless, the Irish government used wartime censorship to conceal Irish enlistments in the British Army. No official acknowledgement of their service occurred in newspapers. Bizarrely, even the Irish heredity of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, Britain's famed World War II commander, went unmentioned by the press. Printing obituaries of slain Irish soldiers was forbidden as a matter of course. In fact, this official secrecy about Ireland's soldiers survived Dev's life, with the Republic of Eire refusing to recognize its World War II veterans publicly until 1995.

Wartime bombings presented another, greater challenge to Ireland. The German Blitz hammered British cities in the summer of 1940, unleashing aerial bombardment and its attendant horrors upon millions of civilians. Across the Irish Sea, Ulster in Northern Ireland constituted a part of Great Britain and hence a potential wartime target. Adolf Hitler even pondered invading Northern Ireland, suggesting that the campaign be launched on the 25th anniversary of the Easter Uprising of 1916. The invasion never occurred; however, Belfast represented a tempting Luftwaffe target, and 180 planes unloaded 100 tons of bombs on the city on April 15, 1941, killing hundreds. Several weeks later on May 4, another Luftwaffe sortie killed 150 people. De Valera's neutral Ireland still sent fire brigades across the border to assist. It was, of course, a breach of neutrality, but for Dev assisting fellow Irish even in a partitioned Ireland was more important.

Eamon De Valera had warned his countrymen that war was close to their borders. In a February 1941 radio speech he suggested that Dublin might have to be evacuated. It would be too difficult to provide deep underground shelters, he believed, so women and children must be prepared to go to the countryside. When Irish guards arrested a parachuting German in March, De Valera reiterated the danger

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of invasion, musing, "Would to God we had a quarter million men armed and equipped. Then the danger would be lessened." On April 14, 1941, the 25th anniversary of the Easter Uprising, he again proclaimed that Ireland would defend itself if its neutrality was threatened, warning it would "mean suffering and death for many."

If the Irish Republic thought neutrality and strong language protected it from the Luftwaffe, it failed to reckon with war's cruel ambiguities. Aerial bombardments might miss targets and bombers might be led astray. In early January 1941, German bombs accidentally fell on a Dublin suburb, perhaps due to the plane lightening its bomb racks for the return trip home. Several people were killed. Far more serious was a May 30 incident when the Germans mistook Dublin for a wartime target after the British jammed their radio signals. Thirty-four Dubliners died while flames engulfed the city. Ireland refused any offer of firefighting assistance from Belfast, but De Valera sent a strong letter of protest to Germany. Some people thought Hitler was sending Ireland a message: stay neutral or else.

Such crises notwithstanding, Dev kept Ireland officially out of the conflict. Many in the United States and Great Britain decried this stance, unaware that Dev bent the rules to favor the Allies. British intelligence could depend on steady information from their Irish counterparts. Ireland sent Britain meteorological updates that benefited the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. British overflights into Irish airspace, along with British use of Shannon airport, were conveniently overlooked by the Irish government. Downed RAF pilots who ended up in Ireland were sent to Northern Ireland. German pilots did not have that option.

Private efforts cloaked by official secrecy kept Ireland's identity as a neutral nation secure before the public. What people did not know (or guess) preserved Ireland's nonbelligerent status in accord with Dev's desires. Of course, critics existed, even in the United States, where a majority of Irish Americans thought Ireland should allow the Allies the use of the naval bases and should enter the war. Ireland's ambassador to the United States, Robert Brennan, made the case for Ireland's neutrality in 1943, blasting rumors that German submarines refueled in Irish ports while their crews allegedly received warm welcomes in obscure rural hamlets.

As the war swung in favor of the Allies by 1943, the threat to Ireland from the Axis accordingly lessened. Irish residents more or less went about their daily lives, aware of the "Emergency" beyond their border, but shielded from the worst horrors. De Valera's policy had won their support despite the occasional critic's carping.

The Thousand Year Third Reich, as Hitler once proclaimed it, tottered close to collapse by the spring of 1945. With Allied forces pressing across the Rhine, having beaten back the final Nazi push in the Battle of the Bulge, and the Soviets targeting Berlin, the end was in sight. Even Adolf Hitler down in his Führerbunker could see that reality. An April 20 birthday party witnessed a battered Hitler greeting a group of Hitler Youth impressed into a last-stand fight for Berlin. It was the last film clip of Hitler's career. By April 29, Hitler married his long-term mistress, Eva Braun. On April 30, he committed suicide, shooting himself in the head and biting down on a cyanide capsule. SS guards doused Hitler's and Braun's bodies in gasoline and ignited the remains.

News of Hitler's death traveled fast. The man who enflamed Europe had, fittingly enough, been immolated. The war in Europe was winding down. But in neutral Ireland, Eamon De Valera insisted on paying a visit to the German legation still headed by Dr. Hempel. Previously, De Valera visited the U.S. legation to express

condolences to President Harry Truman upon word of Franklin D. Roosevelt's death. Now, apparently, De Valera thought diplomatic protocol demanded the same for the dead Führer. De Valera claimed the visit had no special significance, although he later admitted privately that he should have been "unavailable." At the time, however, De Valera thought Dr. Hempel, who had always behaved diplomatically, merited the courtesy. As Dev said, "I certainly was not going to add to his humiliation in the form of affront."

De Valera found the whole episode on May 3 incredibly embarrassing. Dr. Hempel, according to his wife, felt crushed and humiliated by Hitler's suicide—better he had died fighting than by his own hand. The Irish prime minister heard Dr. Hempel blabbering, "It's all so humiliating; it's all so humiliating." Accompanied by Joseph P. Walshe, secretary to the Department of External Affairs, Dev wondered about the so-called German stoicism, a stereotype now proved false by the doctor's emotional outburst. The two Irish officials left after a brief time.

As many as 40 Irish citizens were killed during a German air raid that hit the heart of Dublin, capital city of the Irish Republic, on May 30, 1941.

The firestorm against De Valera did not take long. That the Irish prime minister visited Hempel's home, not the legation, some individuals interpreted as a bit of De Valera-like Machiavallianism, an overly artful way to suggest that the visit was not really official. They were not convinced. Newspapers berated the gesture. In fact, U.S. newspapers may have devoted more space to De Valera's visit than to any of his other wartime policies or gestures.

The *New York Times* thought De Valera's insistence on making the visit remarkable, "considering the character and the record of the man [over] whose death he was expressing grief. There is obviously something wrong with the protocol, the neutrality, or Mr. De Valera." The *Times* did not add that Allied armies had discovered the true meaning of Hitler's Final Solution by early May, evidence of the concentration camps horrifyingly visible. Historian Jarrold M. Packard later summed up the evidence and judged De Valera's action to be diplomatically correct but still a "morally idiotic act."

Eamon De Valera wrote privately to Ambassador Brennan in the United States, aware of the mounting furor he had created. Even so, De Valera stood by his reasoning—to do otherwise, he believed, would have been an "unpardonable discourtesy to the German nation." That the German nation had been led by a

Continued on page 78

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By Eric Niderost

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A Time of Unreasoning Hatred

Governor Ralph L. Carr stood up for American ideals.

ON FEBRUARY 28, 1942, GOVERNOR RALPH LAWRENCE CARR OF COLORADO received a telegram from the White House. At that moment he was in his office, surrounded by staff, but routine business had to be put on hold while Carr quickly scanned the missive that came directly from the president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt. The United States was at war, and no message coming from the nation's chief executive could be taken lightly.

Carr was five feet, eight inches tall but seemed even shorter because of his chubby jowls and protruding belly. The governor was demanding but fair, and his seriousness was leavened by a hearty sense of humor. Governor Carr idolized Abraham Lincoln, who had allowed the public to come and see him personally on a regular basis. The Colorado governor did the same, only modernized the concept: his home phone number was listed in the Denver telephone book. Predictably, his phone rang incessantly day and night.

The governor read the telegram, and his staff nervously noted the warning signs of a major tantrum about to erupt. His face started to turn pink, then red, telltale indications of a mounting fury. The telegram informed Carr that the president had just signed Executive Order 9066, which gave the military a free hand in authorizing security zones along the West Coast. Once these zones were established, the military could bar anyone from entering them—and also, more ominously, eject anyone living there without bothering about due process of law.

The wording of the document was vague and spoke of security threats in an almost generic fashion. But Carr was not fooled—nor was anyone else living in the western half of the country. The main targets of the act were the Japanese Americans, some 120,000 of them, who mainly lived in California, Oregon, and Washington. The governor was incredulous.

"Now, that's wrong!"Carr shouted loudly, though the outburst was more to himself than to the surrounding staff. His anger was like a force of nature, a hurricane of words that could not be stopped, only endured until it was spent. "They're American citizens!" he seethed. "Why would a man want to put that kind of order out? Why would a man want to put those people in jail?"

Carr was a Republican and Roosevelt was a Democrat, but Carr's outburst had little to do with partisan politics. To him the Constitution was the cornerstone of American democracy, a document that gave all citizens rights. If you were a law-abiding American citizen, you could not be denied these rights. Race or ethnicity was of little account in these matters. Carr's principled stand was going to set him apart from most other politicians of the period.

Estimates vary, but there were between 112,000 and 120,000 Japanese Americans residing in the continental United States. About two-thirds were Nisei, the second generation in America and, since they were born here, full-fledged citizens of this country. The first generation Issei were prohibited from becoming naturalized citizens due to racist laws that were on the books in the first half of the 20th century.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor unleashed a virulent wave of racism and hyste-

TOP: A U.S. soldier stands guard in 1943 at the internment camp for Japanese Americans located at Manzanar, California. ABOVE: Ralph Carr, Republican Governor of Colorado, opposed such treatment of American citizens.

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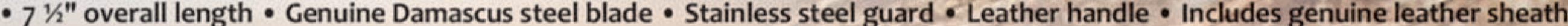

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ria throughout the country. Partly because of its geographic position on the Pacific Rim, partly because of its resident Japanese American population, the West Coast, particularly California, was more outspokenly anti-Japanese than most. The seeds of racism, buried in western soil for decades, spouted and grew strong when watered by hysteria and a growing paranoia.

Even the slightest incident was treated like it was the beginning of the apocalypse. On February 23, 1942, for example, the Japanese submarine *I-17* surfaced about 1,000 yards from the California coast under the cover of darkness. Commander Kizo Nishino ordered the firing of armor-piercing shells at the Bankline Oil Company refinery at Ellwood, a small community about 12 miles north of Santa Barbara. Damage was minimal, but the attack stoked fears of invasion.

Such fears were augmented by concerns over "fifth columnists," a then-current term that meant saboteurs and spies. We might call them "terrorists" today. Walter Lippmann, a prominent national newspaper columnist, stoked the flames of paranoia with an article he wrote in the *Washington Post* titled "The Fifth Column on the Coast." Lippmann pulled no punches; he advocated the removal of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast. "The Pacific coast," he declared, "is in imminent danger of being attacked from within and without."

The invasion fears worked in tandem with racial prejudice of the most overt kind. Agricultural interests like the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association made no bones about it. "We've been charged," they wrote in an article, "with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man."

Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, head of Fourth Army and the Western Defense Command, quickly got into the act. "The Japanese race," he stated unequivocally, "is an enemy race, and while many second and third generation Japanese born in the United States [are] possessed of American citizenship, and become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted…." Then, with the "logic" worthy of an Einstein, DeWitt finished by saying, "The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication such action will be taken [in the future]."

Ralph Carr was one of the few people in the country who dared to raise a voice in defense of the Japanese Americans. A few days after Pearl Harbor the governor made a statewide radio speech that pleaded for toleration and reminded his listeners, "Let us remember that America is the great melting pot of the modern civilized world. From every nation of the globe people have come to the United States who sought to live here under our plan of government."

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Governor Nels Smith (left) of Wyoming and General John DeWitt were among the proponents of the internment of Japanese Americans in the western United States.

Defense of the persecuted and powerless came naturally to Ralph Carr. A native Coloradan, he was born in the town of Rosita in 1887, son of a Scots-Irish pioneer miner. He later said that living in mining camps gave him compassion for the underprivileged. Carr was a newspaperman in his early career and later became a lawyer. He spoke fluent Spanish—self-taught—and often represented Hispanic people from the San Luis Valley. He grew familiar with Japanese Americans in La Jara as well.

After weeks of growing tensions, President Roosevelt issued his Executive Order 9066, which in essence gave the military powers to remove people from designated zones. Armed with this presidential carte blanche, General DeWitt created Military Areas No. 1 and No. 2 just 10 days after 9066 was issued. Military Area 1 included the western halves of Washington, Oregon, and California and the southern half of Arizona. Military Zone 2 encompassed the remainder of those states.

From February 19 to March 27, the Japanese Americans were given an opportunity to leave voluntarily from the newly created exclusion zones. DeWitt and others in authority hoped most would take the hint, pull up stakes, and leave. It would, among other things, save the government the transportation costs of expelling them. Of course, this was no vacation trip, no temporary absence. Japanese Americans would have to sell homes and other property they might possess. Relatively few, just under 5,000, left during the "voluntary" period.

Those who did leave often found new homes, but others were far less lucky. Clarence Iwao Nishizu, his young brother John, and his friend Jack Tsuhara jumped into their Chevrolet and drove nonstop from Southern California to Littleton, Colorado, in search of work and a sanctuary to ride out the political storm. They hoped to get a job at a seed company but were quickly rejected. They then drove south to the San Luis Valley, and La Jara, Costilla County, where they sought help from a Japanese American farmer. Fearful of his own status among his white neighbors, the farmer refused to employ them.

They tried New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, but the story was the same. No matter where they went, they found indifference, rejection, or outright hostility. Frustrated, they ended their four-state odyssey by returning to their original home in Orange County. Yet many others found a home in Colorado. Tillie Honda, a nurse from California, took a position at Denver's Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, a job arranged by a white doctor she knew. She suffered no racism and spent the rest of her life in the mountainous state.

Though a small minority, the Japanese had a long history in Colorado. There were a handful of Japanese there as early as the 1880s, but most were relative transients. After 1900, Colorado's resident population of Japanese Americans grew modestly. Most were common laborers, railroad workers, miners, rural farmworkers, and factory employees. They suffered racial discrimination at times. There was always white paranoia over the perceived "Yellow Peril," but on the whole they did well. The 1940 census listed 2,734 Japanese Americans as permanent residents. Most were farmers.

In all about 2,000 Japanese Americans, people like Tillie Honda, found new lives in Colorado during the "voluntary" removal period that finally ended on March 27, 1942. But the pressure on Governor Carr to bar them from entering the state, even by the use of force, mounted daily. Every day Carr's desk was inundated by letters and telegrams, virtually all apprehensive and often openly racist. "We are protesting," a Mr. and Mrs. Cline wrote, "California's Asiatic, almond-eyed, yellow bellied, sneaking skunks."

Governor Carr kept his silence for a time, then scheduled another radio address designed to assuage fears and inject a note of calm and tolerance. The speech would be carried statewide and was scheduled for a Saturday evening to ensure a maximum listening audience. Carr basically said that Colorado would do its part in the general war effort. If the U.S. government required that some Japanese Americans live in the mountain state, so be it. "Colorado will do her part and more."

The only part of his address that was negative, at least in hindsight, was his acceptance that the Pearl Harbor attack was greatly aided

by "fifth columnist" saboteurs and that the West Coast might indeed harbor additional subversives. The idea of spies, saboteurs, and enemy terrorists was an obsession of the time, and as a man of his time, Carr shared it. The reports of massive sabotage were later proved to be utterly false.

Ralph Carr was more true to form when he said he wanted to "speak a word on behalf of the loyal German, Italian, and Japanese citizens who must not suffer for all the activities and animosities of others. In Colorado there are thousands of men and women and children—in the nation there are millions of them—who by reason of blood only are regarded by some people as unfriendly."

Warming to his subject, Carr continued: "They are as loyal Americans as you or I. Many ... are American citizens, with no connection with or feeling of loyalty toward the customs and philosophies of Italy, Japan, and Germany. It is not fair for the rest of us to segregate the people from one or two or three nations and to brand them as unpatriotic or disloyal regardless."

Some Colorado newspapers applauded his stand, but most were negative. In one paper an editorial cartoon labeled Carr "Mr. Softy" and showed him smiling benignly at three kids representing Germany, Italy and Japan. The "kids" are delinquents at best; "Japan" has a gun, "Italy" a knife. The "kids" also have labels on their clothes, like "Enemy Aliens," "sabotage," and "Map of U.S. Defense." And, sadly, the people of Colorado mainly agreed with the cartoon, not the governor.

His radio speech was noteworthy, but Carr's most shining moment was when he confronted an angry group of white Coloradan farmers in person. The towns of Swink, La Junta, and Rocky Ford were located in the Lower Arkansas Valley, and they were increasingly unhappy when Japanese Americans started to come into the area. There were tumultuous town meetings, and Carr was warned that "open violence" might erupt at any time.

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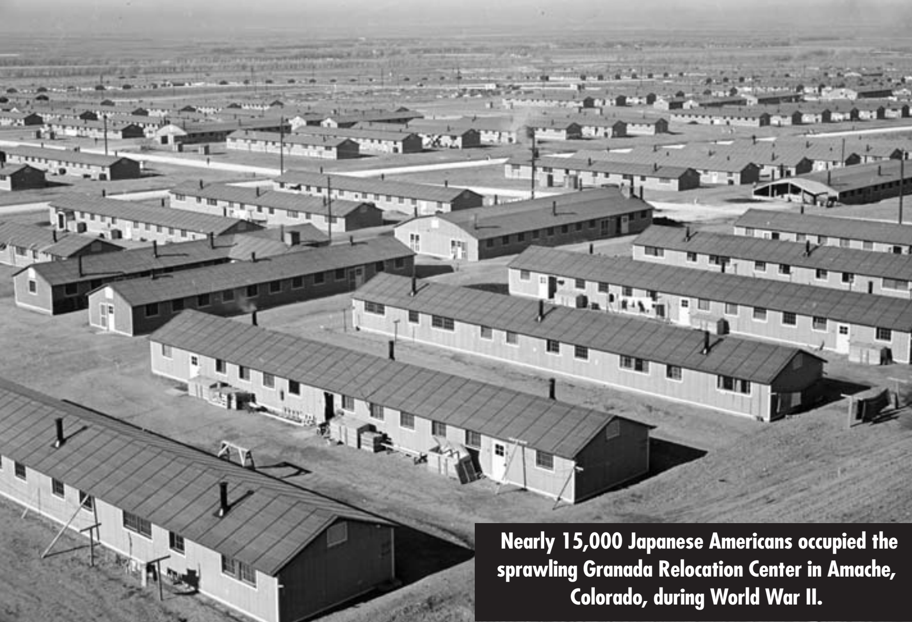

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ABOVE: A group of Japanese Americans prepares to board a passenger train for an internment camp under the watchful eyes of U.S. soldiers. Many of the internees were forced to sell their belongings and never recovered financially or emotionally from the trauma of internment.

Governor Carr's response was to meet the problem head on by personally traveling to the affected area. When he went to the podium to speak at a farmers' meeting, the tension was palpable, but he was not going backtrack one inch.

"An American citizen of Japanese descent," he thundered, "has the same rights as any other citizen.... If you harm them, you must first harm me. I was brought up in a small town where I know the shame and dishonor of race hatred. I grew to despise it because it threatened the happiness of you and you and you." As Carr spoke the last sentence he dramatically pointed to three farmers in the crowd. "In Colorado," he added, "[they] will have full protection."

The crowd let him have his say, but few if any were won over. A group of Lower Arkansas residents later sent Carr a sarcastic telegram. "Rush 250 doses of Jap soothing salve to Swink," ran the missive, "Last Thursday [your speech] did not take." But the speech has stood the test of time in clearly enunciating American ideals.

On April 7, 1942, Milton Eisenhower, director of the War Relocation Authority, held a meeting with western state governors, attorneys general, and other officials at Salt Lake City. The conference was an important one because it was going to determine the ultimate fate of the 112,000 or so Japanese Americans who had not moved during the "voluntary" period. Ten states were represented, including Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Washington, Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, and Nevada.

Eisenhower was the younger brother of the soon-to-be-famous General Dwight D. Eisenhower, but he had a distinguished New Deal career in his own right. Director Eisenhower was emphatically not in favor of Japanese American incarceration and did what he could to avoid establishing concentration camps. Before the state governors meeting he had suggested that

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only Japanese American men be temporarily removed, letting families stay in their homes and wives or female relatives run businesses if needed. The idea was quickly shot down.

Casting about for a solution, Eisenhower thought that temporary camps, not prisons, could be established for the Japanese Americans. They would live in these temporary encampments but find employment in nearby communities. The model he envisioned was based on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) working camps in the 1930s. Japanese Americans could help in agriculture, for example, where there were labor shortages due to men being drafted into the military.

Milton Eisenhower expected some opposition, but he was totally unprepared for the reaction he received when he tried to discuss the matter with the governors. Eisenhower was pummeled with a firestorm of racist invective against the Japanese Americans. Each governor, with one exception, Ralph Carr, seemed determined to outdo each other in expressing the vilest forms of bigotry. Many were literally yelling at the top of their voices.

Arizona Governor Sidney Osborne wanted all Japanese Americans in concentration camps. "Concentration camps" was the term he preferred because apparently it conveyed the harshness he wanted meted out to the Japanese Americans. No soothing euphemisms like "relocation centers" for him! Idaho Governor Chase Clark was worried that, after the war, the temporary Japanese American communities might become permanent. "I don't want 10,000 Japs to be located in Idaho!" he declared. Idaho Attorney General Bert Miller concurred, adding, "We want to keep this a white man's country."

But probably the worst remarks came from Wyoming Governor Nels Smith. "People in my state don't like Orientals," he explained. Indeed, if any Japanese Americans tried to buy land in Wyoming "there would be Japs hanging from every pine tree."

Govenor Carr predictably welcomed any evacuees, but he was in the minority. The message was clear: the Japanese Americans would only be accepted if they were locked up in prison camps, placed securely behind barbed wire and under guard. Eisenhower, shell shocked from his reception, was forced to recommend prison camps to Congress. There was simply no alternative under the circumstances.

Eventually 10 permanent concentration camps were established throughout the country. The most famous, at least in retrospect, were those in California, Tule Lake, and Manzanar. But Colorado also had a concentration camp, the formally named Granada Relocation Center. Located in southeastern Colorado, about 15 miles from the Kansas border, Granada was nicknamed Amache. The camp was opened in August 1942, and though Carr left office in early 1943, something of his tolerant spirit seems to have rubbed off on both camp administrators and local white residents.

Amache was unique in that it was only one mile from the town of Granada, well within walking distance. Permission was given for Japanese American inmates to visit the town, which they did. After some initial tension, most Granada businessmen came to appreciate the Japanese Americans as customers. Shopping around town or visiting the local soda fountain were frequent occurrences and boosted inmate morale.

The Japanese Americans found the land was generally arid, but with irrigation water from the nearby Arkansas River the high plains bloomed. In 1943 alone inmate farmers produced four million pounds of vegetables. Even more amazingly, prisoner Frank Tsuchiya obtained his release and opened the Granada Fish Market in town. His business was very successful; he even brought in sashimi-grade

Continued on page 78

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German Ambassador to Turkey Franz von Papen stands at far left, near Adolf Hitler, prior to a Nazi rally before the outbreak of World War II. At right is Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels. BELOW: Erich Vermehren and his wife, Countess Elisabeth von Plettenburg, defected from Germany because of their disdain for the Nazis.

The Vermehren Betrayal

The defection of anti-Nazi activists led to horrific and unintended consequences.

AFTER THE LONG JOURNEY FROM GERMANY TO ISTANBUL, THEIR ESCAPE TO North Africa and finally to England, the two defectors ended up in an apartment in South Kensington, one of the more wealthy neighborhoods of London. The old woman who lived there was named Dora, and the husband and wife had only come to her apartment because Dora's son was a member of MI-6, a division of British intelligence.

So as to keep German intelligence guessing, their flight from Turkey had been staged as a kidnapping; a month later, in February 1944, their defection was announced for what it was. As the Associated Press reported, "The 24-year old attaché and his wife declared that they had deserted the Germans because they were disgusted with Nazi brutality. He is said to possess detailed information of the greatest value.... [He] reached Allied controlled territory despite every effort by Germans in Turkey to apprehend him. Ambassador Franz von Papen interrupted a vacation in the Bursa mountains to go to Istanbul to direct an investigation into his disappearance."

What the AP did not mention was that Ambassador von Papen was the cousin of the attaché's wife and that it was just such family connections that had made their defection possible. At the same time, while the arrival in England of Erich Vermehren and his wife, the Countess Elisabeth von Plettenburg, did secure their own safety and did provide British intelligence with mountains of information, ultimately the lives of those they had left behind in Germany were betrayed when they thought their journey from danger was at an end.

Following Erich's conversion to Catholicism in 1939, the Vermehrens had married in 1941.eErich came from an old German family from Lubeck, whose trading connections with the Hanseatic League allowed for at least some admiration of the British. Along with other deeply religious Germans—Erich's sister Isa had also converted, and become a nun, spending much of the war at the Ravensbrück concentration camp—the Vermehrens saw the Nazis as no better than pagans and the Russians as godless communists. One of the earliest hands they took in the underground was distributing Pope Pius XI's anti-Nazi encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (*On the Church and the German Reich*). When the outcome of World War II merely became a matter of waiting for Germany's collapse, the Vermehrens and their friends wanted to make sure that a democratic and Christian elite survived the war to rebuild Germany afterward.

One way to do this was to shore up influence at home; the other was to seek help from the Allies. As early as the spring of 1943, Erich, then in Lisbon with his mother, made his first overtures to British intelligence. While the Vermehrens and their circle were already well-known anti-Nazis, Elisabeth was still in Germany and at the time they had little but their zeal to offer the British. The encounter was filed away by Kim Philby, a member of MI-6's Section V, which covered the Iberian Peninsula, but no action was taken.

By the end of the year, Erich's cousin, Adam von Trott zu Solz, who worked in the German foreign office and who also wanted to see Hitler overthrown, was able to secure Erich a position in German intelligence, the Abwehr. After the briefest training, he was sent to Istanbul to act as personal assistant to a colleague of his father. That Erich received this appointment at all seems surprising; as late as 1939 Hitler himself had personally prevented Erich from accepting a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford

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because of his refusal to join the Hitler Youth. Yet as his later obituary states, Erich's appointment was just as well the result of "the cousinhood of good German families [which] then, as now, [are] dominant in the country's foreign service." If there was any suspicion thrown Erich's way, the usual deterrent deployed against diplomats serving outside the country was obvious. Elisabeth could not join him there and had to stay in Berlin, essentially a hostage.

Yet, the couple was not to be deterred, and the Istanbul station of the Abwehr was an ideal setting for their plans. Especially by late 1943, German intelligence was rife with men who had little sympathy for the Nazis, and this began with Abwehr's chief, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. A veteran of German intelligence from World War I, Canaris was an eccentric character who placed little value either on appearances or military decorations. He left his in a desk drawer. Appointed chief of military intelligence in 1935, Canaris had initially been sympathetic to Hitler's criticism of the Versailles Treaty and in seeing communism as an existential threat, but as the Fuhrer's brutality showed itself, and as the Abwehr came into constant conflict with the SS, Canaris became only one of a wide net of German military men intent on doing away with the Führer. While in Lisbon earlier that year, he had unsuccessfully tried to defect to the British, just as Erich had. By the time Erich arrived in Turkey, Canaris's Abwehr in Istanbul was as much a hiding place for anti-Nazi Germans and Jews as it was a mediocre intelligence gathering operation.

Erich almost immediately sought contact with British intelligence. Only now, with his previous approach in Lisbon on record, his second attempt succeeded, and on December 27, 1943, Nicholas Elliott, MI-6's representative in Istanbul, met Erich and smiled, making reference to his Rhodes Scholarship: "Why, I believe you were coming up to Oxford." For his part, Erich was immediately reassured: "I had a tremendous sense of relief. I felt almost as if my feet rested already on English soil." It was not quite as easy as that, however. Youthful and patriotic as he was, when the possibility of his ideals now began turning toward action Erich got cold feet. Was he about to betray Germany? And what about Elisabeth? Elliott had also described Erich in a report as "highly strung, cultivated, self-confident, extremely clever, logical-minded." But it was his piety which finally clinched the deal. God wanted a Christian Germany, and this could only come about if Hitler was defeated.

Thankfully, Erich's cousin had also found a position in Istanbul for Elisabeth, in the office of her cousin and German ambassador Franz von Papen, and when the couple reunited in Berlin they began to plan for their defection. If they thought Elisabeth's new job would get her all the way to Istanbul without any trouble, however, they were mistaken. A Gestapo officer was their neighbor on the train journey, and he had her arrested at the border with Bulgaria. But once again, family connections saved the day. Erich's cousin von Trott, as well as a sympathetic member of the local Abwehr, snuck Elisabeth onto a diplomatic courier plane to Istanbul. Once there, Erich's boss at the Abwehr, Paul Leverkühn, became suspicious himself at how Elisabeth had been able to travel to Istanbul, but this somehow did not keep him from giving his new employee access to whatever files he wanted. Erich moved quickly, delivering paperwork on a nightly basis that Nicholas Elliott would then photograph, and which Erich returned in the morning.

As judged by the later German response, the amount of information Erich passed on to the British was staggering, although it was mostly isolated to the Abwehr's actions in Turkey, the Middle East, and the Near East. Later exaggerations planted in the press by MI-6, to the effect that he had passed along the Abwehr's code books, were untrue, but it did the job of infuriating Hitler. By late January 1944, one of Elliott's informants in the Turkish police made it clear that they at least knew that the Vermehrens were working for the British, and so it was only a matter of time before Leverkühn and the Abwehr did as well, assuming they did not already.

TOP: MI6 agents Nicholas Elliott (left) and Kim Philby (right) became aware that Vermehren and Plettenburg were interested in defecting. Philby was already working for the Soviet Union as a spy. ABOVE: Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr, was anti-Nazi and paid with his life. He was hanged days before the end of the war.

On January 27, under the guise of attending a cocktail party at the Spanish Embassy, Erich and Elisabeth were "kidnapped" and quickly put aboard a ship bound for Izmir. By the next day they were in Cairo. A week later, having been shuffled to Algiers and Casablanca, they landed in Cornwall, and finally arrived in London. If the kidnapping ruse had been meant to stave off suspicion of their defection, and by turns to protect their families still living in Germany, it did not last for long. Members of Erich's family were rounded up and sent to concentration camps, and investigations into the Istanbul Abwehr revealed other German agents working for the British and Americans. One report to Hitler concluded, "The entire work of the Abwehr station has been exposed and its continuation seems impracticable." Indeed, as one member of MI-6 put it, the Vermehren defection led to destroying "the fundamental reasoning power of the German supreme command."

As the Allies guessed he would, Hitler became so dissatisfied and suspicious of the Abwehr that he had the organization abolished entirely. While what was left of the Abwehr was reorganized under the SS and Gestapo, the enmity that had always existed between these groups caused many former Abwehr officers to resign, some even preferring assignments on the Eastern Front. Those who remained, in the words of Vermehren's later obituary, turned what was left of German intelligence into a "viper's nest" of infighting. This gaping hole in German intelligence allowed them to be that much more easily deceived as to the date and landing sites for the D-Day invasion of Normandy in 1944, known as Operation Overlord. As one newspaper correspondent wrote at the time, the "ignorant and inept" and "gauche thugs" that filled the ranks of the Gestapo could not possibly replace even a highly flawed operation as the Abwehr had been.

Meanwhile, back in the apartment in South Kensington, Erich and Elisabeth were telling their story, giving up the names of German officers, agents, and operations in the Middle East.

But for the Vermehrens, the most vital information they could share with the British were entirely different names, those in the Catholic underground and anticommunist resistance who were lined up and ready to play a role in postwar Germany's reconstruction as a true democratic and Christian nation. Their religious beliefs were central to everything the Vermehrens had done, but as one recent historian put it, while some defectors acted out of idealism or even a desire for adventure, the Verhmehrens' motives were entirely religious, and their "piety made them quite irritating." While they could not be compromised or manipulated, nor could they be approached or interacted with like other, merely ideological, defectors. They had God on their side, and in any other situation would likely have never sought the help of men who had in many ways created their own religion in the work of intelligence.

And, of course, they were right to be suspicious. The communist Soviet Union was, after all, an ally of the British, and it soon became apparent to the Russians that of the information gleaned from the Vermehrens, the British had only shared a small bite. MI-6 refused to hand over any of the names and addresses of the anticommunists or Catholics they had been given—but as British intelligence would not realize until years later, someone within their ranks passed that information along himself. While the context of the Vermehrens defection worked wonders in connection with the D-Day landing, it was terrible in the context of the Russian approach to Berlin.

Kim Philby, whose mother's apartment had hosted the Vermehren debriefing, had been working for the Russians for almost a decade already. Philby had been recruited in the early 1930s, while still a student at Cambridge; in his own words he said, "I was given the assignment to infiltrate counterespionage however long it took." While, like many young students, he did betray communist leanings at university, and while in 1934 he married a communist from Vienna so that she could escape to Britain, he later abandoned his wife as he took on the guise as an anticommunist, even a profascist. Around 1939, and depending on the source (Philby claiming MI-6 came to him, and MI-6 the opposite), a combination of academic and personal and familial connections, as well as the old fashioned ways of the British class system, allowed Philby to enter the world of British intelligence as effortlessly as thousands of other well-placed young men in the interwar years.

It just so happened that Philby was a traitor

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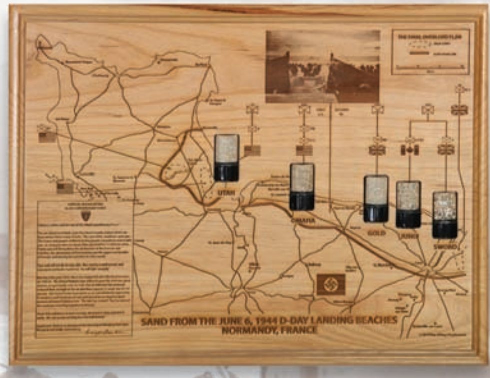

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as well as being immensely more talented a spy than nearly all of them (many thought he would one day head MI-6). As a reflection of either just how good Philby was, or how much of an "old established racket" British intelligence was, around the same time as the Vermehren defections, Philby the Soviet spy was actually put in charge of Britain's anti-Soviet operations and for years was able to deflect and reroute British and Russian intelligence as he saw fit.

Before then, however, he handed over the names of prominent Catholics and anticommunists which the Vermehrens had so prized. A year later, when Allied forces finally reached Berlin and began looking for the men and women on the list, they discovered they were all gone, dead or deported or disappeared. As Guy Liddell, member of MI-5, reflected in his diaries, for the Russians the Catholic church was "the most powerful international force in opposition to communism." Indeed for Philby, a Christian Germany was still an enemy Germany. "One of the reasons I acted as I did," he said, "was because the total defeat of Germany was almost a personal matter for me. I had strong feelings about the war." And so, when he later admitted that he was "directly responsible for the deaths of a considerable number of Germans, thus doing my modest bit towards winning the war," he obviously did not mean just Nazis.

In a sad irony, the same kind of links engendered by class and family which had allowed the Vermehrens to leave Germany and become so close to German intelligence circles in Istanbul were in a way the same forces which had allowed Kim Philby to arouse no suspicion and take his place within the machinery of British intelligence, and ultimately to betray the Vermehrens. Remarkably, the members of Erich's family who had been arrested following his defection all survived internment, and both Erich and Elisabeth lived long lives after the war, residing in Britain, Switzerland, and France. Only as Elisabeth's health declined did they return to Germany, living in Bonn, where she died in 1998, and Erich in 2005.

Pious but independent until the end, they reacted against the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and were prominent in the traditionalist Catholic circles. Kim Philby came under suspicion as a double agent in the late 1940s, but was still working for British intelligence in some capacity as late as 1963, when he was then living in Beirut. With proof of his treason finally undeniable, his old school friend, the same Nicholas Elliott who had helped usher the Vermehrens out of Istanbul, traveled to Beirut to tell him the game was up. Between a

series of interviews in which Philby admitted as little as possible, he got away. Whether he was still that good—or whether MI-6 allowed him to escape to save the agency the embarrassment of a trial back in Britain—Philby was smuggled aboard a freighter bound for Odessa, and soon after was in Moscow, where he lived until his death in 1988.

The way in which the Vermehren's Catholic friends ended their lives can hardly be imagined; and while it is hard to say which is more brutal, the sadism of the victorious Russians or the defeated Germans, their fate may well have been similar to that of Wilhelm Canaris, the Abwehr chief who had hoped to bring down Hitler. As it happened, after the Vermehrens defected and the Abwehr was disbanded, he was forced into "retirement." However, in the aftermath of the July 20, 1944, plot to kill Hitler, although he was not believed to be one of the conspirators, Canaris was rounded up with many others for whom old suspicions could now be acted upon and old scores settled. For the next nine months he was interrogated and tortured by the SS. By early April, 1945, as Germany's downfall even became apparent to those in Hitler's bunker, orders came to execute him.

A final message from Canaris, tapped out in code to a fellow prisoner the night before he was killed, said: "I am dying for my country. I have a clear conscience. As an officer you will understand that I did no more than my patriotic duty in trying to oppose the criminal madness of Hitler, who was leading Germany to its ruin. It was in vain, as I know now that my country will go under, as I knew already in 1942."

On April 9, 1945, Canaris was hanged with piano wire. His executioners took their time, not wanting to kill him but only, it was later said, to give "him a taste of death." Sufficiently tortured for the final time, he was hanged again and his body burned.

Josef Mueller, a Vatican emissary who had been working with anti-Nazi parties within the Abwehr as a hopeful intermediary with the Allies, occupied the cell next to Canaris. Assuming his own execution was soon to occur, instead he had perhaps the more horrifying experience of watching as the ashes of his incinerated friends, Canaris among them, blew through his cell window and surrounded him in a swirl. Somehow he survived the war, but the ashes of so many had been betrayed.

Author Tim Miller is a first-time contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

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After Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower decided against advancing on Berlin, American troops captured Germany's fifth largest city, taking a monument to a 19th-century victory over Napoleon in the process.

National Archives

Last Stand IN LEIPZIG

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

IN October 1813, the combined allied armies of Russia, Austria, Prussia, Sweden, Saxony, and Württemberg met and defeated the French Grand Armee under Napoleon Bonaparte at the German city of Leipzig, forcing him to retreat and hastening his eventual abdication and exile to the island of Elba. Some 600,000 soldiers took part in the momentous battle.

A century later, the German people commemorated the great victory in the Völkerschlacht, or Battle of the Nations, with the construction of a huge monument, the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, that was completed in time for the centennial of the battle.

One of the tallest monuments in Europe, the monolith rises 299 feet and occupies a square base 417 feet by 417 feet. Nearly 27,000 granite blocks and tons of concrete and sandstone were used in the construction of the two-story edifice, which includes a crypt and 500 steps to a viewing platform at its top. Adorned with figures mourning the sacrifice of the dead in the Battle of the Nations and celebrating the triumphant will of the German people, the monument was constructed like a massive, thick-walled fortress. In April 1945, as World War II came to an end, the monument actually became one. How that happened is a story in itself.

Wikipedia Commons

ABOVE: A key part of the battle for Leipzig centered around the huge Völkerschlachtdenkmal monument, dedicated to the defeat of Napoleon in 1813, shown here in a recent photo.
OPPOSITE: A 3rd Armored Division crewman with a .30-caliber machine gun mounted on an M3 "Stuart" light tank fires on enemy troops in the woods flanking a highway near Leipzig, April 17, 1945. Although the war was nearly over, some Germans stubbornly resisted, preferring death to dishonor.

For months, the Allied rallying cry in the West had been "On to Berlin!"

From D-Day through the hedgerows of France, the breakout, and the pursuit across the German frontier, British and American commanders and their troops had looked forward to the day that the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes would be raised in triumph in the capital of a defeated Nazi Germany.

Now, in the final days of World War II with the Third Reich in its death throes, Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower, architect of the broad-front strategy, skirted protocol a bit and cabled Soviet Premier Josef Stalin directly. On March 28, 1945, he forwarded a message to Maj. Gen. John R. Deane, the U.S. military liaison in Moscow, and three days later the communiqué was in the Soviet dictator's hands.

It read in part, "My immediate operations are designed to encircle and destroy the enemy forces defending the Ruhr. My next task will be to divide the remaining enemy forces by joining with your forces.... Before deciding firmly on my plans, it is, I think, most important they should be coordinated as closely as possible with yours both as to direction and timing. Could you, therefore, tell me your intentions and let me know how far the proposals outlined in this message conform to your probable action. If we are to complete the destruction of German

armies without delay, I regard it as essential that we coordinate our action and make every effort to perfect the liaison between our advancing forces. I am prepared to send officers to you for this purpose."

By the end of March, the Allied XXI Army Group under British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery had completed Operation Plunder and was across the Rhine in strength. Monty's next move, he believed, was to be a massive eastward offensive against the German capital 250 miles away. Meanwhile, the American XII Army Group, commanded by Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, had crossed the Rhine more than two weeks earlier, particularly leveraging a bridgehead across the great river at Remagen.

Montgomery's setpiece victory in the north had been ponderously slow in developing. Despite his March 27 message to Eisenhower, "Today I issued orders to army commanders for operations eastward which are about to begin," and expressing his intent to cross the Elbe River swiftly and drive "thence by autobahn to Berlin, I hope," some high-ranking staff officers estimated that he would need several weeks of preparation for a renewal of offensive operations.

Early in March, Eisenhower received word that the Soviet Army was across the Oder River, in some places less than 30 miles from Berlin. On March 19, the supreme commander invited Bradley to accompany him to Cannes, on the French Riviera, for a few days of rest and relaxation. While there, Eisenhower sought the perspective of his old comrade and fellow member of the U.S. Military Academy graduating class of 1915.

Eisenhower asked Bradley what he thought about a final, all-out push for Berlin. Bradley responded that the effort would cost 100,000 casualties and added wryly that it was "a pretty stiff price to pay for a prestige objective, especially when we've got to fall back and let the other fellow take over."

True enough, though symbolic of the Nazi evil, Berlin held little strategic military value. Further, the "Big Three"—U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Stalin—had sealed the deal that designated prescribed Allied occupation zones in Germany after the end of the war. Berlin was 100 miles deep in the Soviet zone. It stood to reason that American and British blood should not be shed for the German capital if it was to be subsequently relinquished to the Soviets. There was also talk of diehard Nazis, many of them battle-hardened men of the SS, moving into the Harz Mountains and establishing a national redoubt from which to carry on a guerrilla war that might last for years.

Above all, Eisenhower strove to fulfill his mission to prosecute the war with military rather than political objectives in mind. His communication with Stalin was not altogether improper. He had been authorized to discuss purely military issues with the commanders of Allied troops, and Stalin was the commander in chief of all Red Army forces. Churchill and Montgomery howled disapproval, but Eisenhower prevailed with the solid backing of U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall.

His mind made up, Eisenhower rankled the British once again by removing Maj. Gen. William Simpson's Ninth Army from Montgomery's command and returning it to Bradley and XII Army Group for upcoming operations. It was clear to Montgomery that the focus of Allied offensive efforts was shifting southward to the Americans. Eisenhower had long managed the difficult task of balancing the Anglo-American alliance, a tall order given the often-prickly relations between his lieutenants. This decision, however, was true to form—the right choice given the exigencies of the military situation.

Berlin would be left for the Soviets to conquer—and shed blood for. British and American troops would halt at the Elbe River and

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ABOVE: As the front lines moved closer to Berlin, the fighting became more intense. Here a soldier from the 104th Infantry Division looks for any signs of life in a disabled German tank in the middle of a ruined village. BELOW: GIs from a machine-gun squad move through the rubble of a destroyed German town in early April 1945. OPPOSITE: An M4 "Sherman" medium tank from the 3rd Armored Division rolls cautiously through a shattered German village.

National Archives

link up with the Soviets there. Territory seized by Eisenhower's command and slated for postwar occupation by the Soviets would be vacated at the appropriate time. Not surprisingly, some American field commanders, particularly Simpson, were dismayed that they were not to be allowed to advance on Berlin. Nevertheless, they followed orders.

In his response to Eisenhower, Stalin confirmed that American commander's course of action "coincided entirely with the plan of the Soviet high command." Almost as an afterthought, he added, "In the Soviet high command plans, secondary forces will therefore be allotted to Berlin."

In reality, Stalin mistrusted his Western allies. Red Army forces were already being marshaled for the conquest of the Nazi capital. By the time the fight for Berlin was over, the Soviets had suffered at least 80,000 dead and nearly 300,000 wounded. Some estimates are higher.

On March 25, just two days after the first of Montgomery's troops set foot on the east bank of the Rhine, seven divisions of the U.S First Army under Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges struck eastward from Remagen, spearheaded by Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose's 3rd Armored Division. Simpson's Ninth Army jumped off from positions around the German city of Wesel with Maj. Gen. Isaac White's 2nd Armored Division in the lead. The two pincers would converge some 70 miles eastward near Lippstadt and Paderborn, trapping German Army Group B in the Ruhr, the industrial heart of the Reich.

Completing their lightning run, elements of the two armored divisions met at Lippstadt about 1 PM on Easter Sunday, April 1. Surrounded in the Ruhr Pocket, some 30 miles by 75 miles, were more than 300,000 German soldiers, including the headquarters and support troops of Army Group B, most of the Fifteenth Army, two corps of the First Parachute Army, and all of the Fifth Panzer Army.

Eisenhower weighed his options. Bradley allocated 18 divisions to the reduction of the Ruhr Pocket and readied his remaining 30 divisions for the next move. The bulk of the First and Ninth Armies were directed to continue their eastward advance across central Germany and to the Elbe. Montgomery was ordered to advance in the north, protecting the left flank of the XII Army Group. The U.S. Third Army, under General George S. Patton, Jr., continued driving southward toward the German city of Chemnitz and the Czech border, while the Sixth Army Group attacked farther south and the Seventh Army thrust toward the Austrian frontier, capturing the city of Nuremberg, site of Hitler's massive Nazi Party rallies of the 1930s, on April 20.

For reasons that were never made perfectly clear, perhaps to preserve their fighting spirit, Eisenhower chose to withhold his decision not to advance on Berlin from virtually all of his senior commanders except Bradley. On April 4, the day Ninth Army was officially returned to XII Army Group command, Bradley maintained that his subordinates were to endeavor to cross the Elbe and even ordered Simpson to "exploit any opportunity for seizing a bridgehead over the Elbe and be prepared to advance on Berlin or to the northeast."

The veteran 2nd Armored Division again led Simpson's thrust; by April 12, Ninth Army had crossed the Elbe at Magdeburg, only 50 miles from Berlin. As Simpson sought permission to continue toward the German capital, he was taken aback by Bradley's response.

"My people were keyed up," Simpson remembered. "We'd been the first to the Rhine, and now we were going to be the first to Berlin. All along we thought of just one thing—capturing Berlin, going through and meeting the Russians on the other side."

Bradley telephoned Simpson on April 15: "I've got something very important to tell you, and I don't want to say it on the phone," the XII Army Group commander said. When the two generals met at Wiesbaden, Simpson was carrying his detailed plan for the advance on Berlin.

Then, Bradley stopped him cold. "You must stop on the Elbe," he said flatly. "You are not to advance any farther than Berlin. I'm sorry, Simp. But there it is."

Hodges's First Army was tasked with the main American thrust, directly east toward the cities of Dresden and Leipzig in Saxony. For the offensive, Hodges fielded two corps: to the left was the VII under Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins consisting of the 1st and 104th Infantry Divisions and the 3rd Armored Division, and on the right was V Corps under Maj. Gen. Clarence Huebner and including the 2nd and 69th Infantry and 9th Armored Divisions. Eventually, Dresden was occupied by the Red Army following the German surrender. However, the American advance on Leipzig precipitated an unusual series of events.

On April 5, First Army resumed its eastward drive. Huebner's V Corps was led by the 69th and 2nd Divisions, under Maj. Gens. Emil F. Reinhardt and Walter M. Robertson, respectively. After two days of fighting against the Ger-

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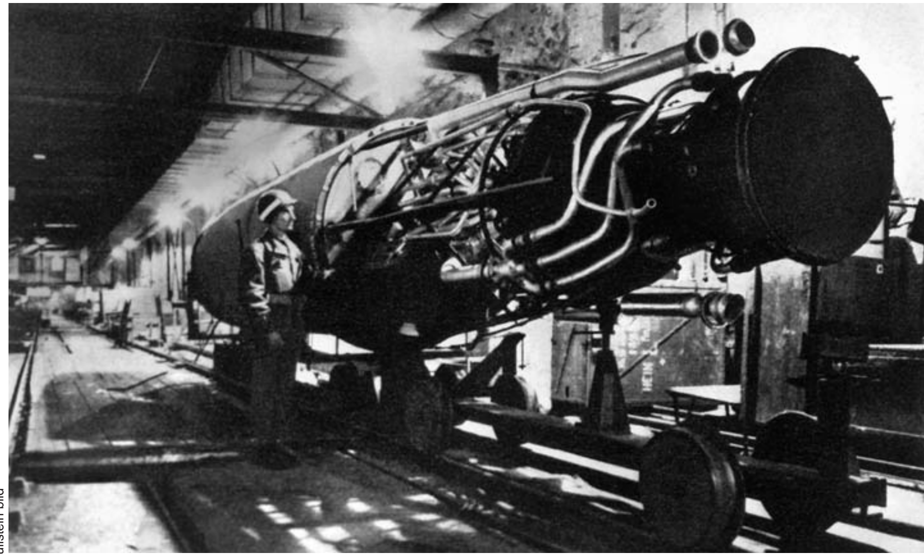

ABOVE: The bodies of hundreds of slave laborers are laid out at Nordhausen concentration camp in preparation for burial. GIs from the 3rd Armored Division liberated the camp on April 11, 1945. BELOW: An American soldier inspects the engine of a V-2 pilotless rocket bomb on the assembly line at the underground factory near Nordhausen. The V-1 rockets were also assembled here by slave laborers from concentration camps.

man LXVII Corps, the best of their patchwork Eleventh Army, the 69th Division had advanced from Kassel and crossed the Werra River. Against lighter opposition, the 2nd Division was across the Weser River in little more than 24 hours. On April 7, troops of the 2nd Division pressed six miles beyond the Weser. Concerns that the Germans were preparing a substantial defense in the vicinity of the Weser faded.

On April 8, both V Corps infantry divisions crossed the Leine River near Göttingen, and the following day they advanced another 10 miles against only token resistance. Troops of the 2nd Division discovered a prison camp at Duderstadt and freed 600 prisoners, including 100 Americans. Meanwhile, the 69th occupied Heiligenstadt.

To date, Bradley had been concerned that his combat units maintain a coordinated front as they advanced. However, on April 10, he lifted all restrictions on eastward movement. Huebner shifted the 9th Armored Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. John W. Leonard, to spearhead the V Corps drive. In Collins's VII Corps, the 3rd Armored Division, under the command of Brig. Gen. Doyle Hickey after the death of General Rose near Paderborn at the end of March, led the way.

Both divisions made significant progress as the 3rd Armored Division liberated the Nordhausen concentration camp on April 11, where a corpsman of the 329th Medical Battalion observed, "Rows upon rows of skin-covered skeletons met our eyes.... Their striped coats and prison numbers hung to their frames as a last token or symbol of those who enslaved and killed them."

The tankers waited for fuel, and in the meantime found a slave labor camp with a capacity for 30,000 workers, none of whom appeared to have been left alive, and a large underground manufacturing facility that produced engines for the dreaded V-2 rocket that terrorized London and other cities in the waning months of the war.

As the V Corps vanguard approached the Saale River, its northern shoulder came under fire from German antiaircraft weapons, their crews directed to depress their firing angles to hit the American armored formations. The 9th Armored Division lost nine tanks to the accurate fire before the guns were silenced. Apparently, the Germans had concentrated several rings of antiaircraft weapons in the region—not to defend the cities, but to guard synthetic oil refineries and numerous industrial facilities in the vicinity. Reports indicate that 374 heavy flak weapons were in the area, 104 of them around the city of Leuna and 174 around Leipzig.

Since the spring of 1944, the 14th Flak Division had been headquartered in Leipzig. Grouped in batteries of 12 to 36 guns, they ranged from 75mm to heavy 128mm weapons. Early in the war, the German 88mm antiaircraft gun had proven deadly against ground targets, and the flat terrain surrounding Leipzig offered excellent fields of fire. The area had been known to Allied airmen as "Flak Alley" for some time; however, no one had found it necessary to inform the advancing infantry and armor of the menace that awaited them.

General Huebner concluded that the flak guns were the outer band of the defenses of Leipzig. He ordered the 9th Armored Division to move 13 miles southeast, around the city and to the banks of the Mulde River. The 2nd Infantry Division was to continue directly eastward toward Leipzig, while the 69th was ordered to follow the 9th Armored and then enter the city from the south and southwest.

General Leonard's tanks ran into stiff resistance at the Saale River near the town of Weissenfels and rerouted to cross the waterway on an intact bridge to the southwest. That same day, April 13, the tanks neared the town of Zeitz and rolled over the Weisse Elster River. Breaking through the deadly ring of flak guns, Combat Command Reserve (CCR) of the 9th Armored raced to the Mulde River, 20 miles southeast of Leipzig, on April 15.

On the 16th, CCR entered Colditz and lib-

erated the 1,800 Allied prisoners of the infamous Oflag IV-C, better known as Colditz Castle, which held a number of famous and high-ranking officers, some of whom had been transferred there because of repeated attempts to escape. With the capture of Halle in the Harz Mountains two days later, Leipzig was effectively cut off.

Meanwhile, the 271st Infantry Regiment, 69th Division secured Weissenfels during some spirited fighting on April 13-14, killing or capturing many of the 1,500-man garrison and then crossing the Saale in small boats. On the 15th, elements of the 2nd Division captured Merseburg and occupied numerous small towns in the area. As one regiment crossed the Saale after dark on a railroad bridge that was damaged though still standing, other infantry units crept close enough to the German antiaircraft guns to radio coordinates to their own artillery and bring accurate fire on the positions, finally destroying many of the enemy weapons.

The Allied noose around Leipzig, Germany's fifth largest city with 750,000 inhabitants, was tightening. Leipzig had long been revered for its historical significance and as a center of German culture, higher education, trade, and industry. Martin Luther had led the congregation of the St. Thomas Church there; composer Johann Sebastian Bach played the organ in the same church for more than 25 years and was buried on the grounds. Composer Richard Wagner was born in the city. And in Leipzig the Völkerschlachtdenkmal was built to commemorate a great victory. It was inevitable that the monument would become the scene of Germany's last stand.

Colonel Hans von Poncet commanded the relative handful of German defenders in Leipzig, which included troops of the 14th Flak Division, some of whom had lost their antiaircraft weapons and were now serving as infantry, 750 men of the 107th Motorized Infantry Regiment, a motorized battalion of about 250 soldiers, some Hitler Youth, and several battalions of the Volkssturm, mostly old men and boys who had been forced into the Army as a home guard when the fortunes of war turned decidedly against Germany.

One sizable unit that Poncet did not control was the 3,400-strong Leipzig police force. The policemen, paramilitary in their own right, were firmly under the command of Brig. Gen. of Police Wilhelm von Grolmann.

Grolmann decried Poncet's willingness to employ the Volkssturm and considered it tantamount to murder. He saw nothing to be gained in a futile defense of the city. Hoping to spare Leipzig from destruction, Grolmann was particularly concerned about damage to the city's electrical and water supplies if the bridges over the Weisse Elster River were destroyed to slow the Americans. Poncet couldn't have cared less; he was determined to fight and fortified numerous buildings around the city hall and later withdrew into the Battle of the Nations Monument with about 150 men, some of whom were later described by the Americans as SS troops.

While Poncet plotted his own Götterdämmerung, Grolmann was trying his best to surrender the city. Late on the afternoon of April 18, Grolmann miraculously made telephone contact with General Robertson of the 2nd Division and offered to capitulate. As the news was passed up the American chain of command from Huebner to Hodges, Grolmann got Poncet on the telephone and was told curtly, just prior to the click of a hangup, that Poncet had no intention of surrendering.

By this time, Hodges had responded that only the complete, unconditional surrender of Leipzig was acceptable. Then, an already strange series of events became even more bizarre. Despite Poncet's intransigence, Grolmann sent a junior officer to the closest Americans he could find. In the gathering darkness, the emissary was shuffled into the command post of Company G, 23rd Regiment, 2nd Division and the presence of its commander, Captain Charles B. MacDonald.

At the tender age of 22, MacDonald was a combat veteran of the Battle of the Bulge, the Hürtgen Forest, and the campaign into the Third Reich. In later years, he became an acclaimed author and deputy chief historian for the U.S. Army, writing and supervising the preparation of several volumes in the official series *United States Army in World War II,* popularly known as the *Green Book Series.* Among his other works are the quintessential reminiscences of a young officer in combat, *Company Commander,* and *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge.* MacDonald authored *The Last Offensive,* the volume of the official history containing the story of the fall of Leipzig and downplayed his role in it. In *Company Commander,* however, he remembered a wild night of cat and mouse, cloak and dagger, and outright comedy.

National Archives

An M7 105mm howitzer motor carriage ("Priest") of the 9th Armored Division advances through the streets of a German town, April 1945.

"Now wait a minute," MacDonald remembered asking the excited soldiers who had brought in the German officer. "Does he know I'm just a captain? Will he surrender to a captain?"

"A captain's good enough," another soldier said. "The Oberleutnant [first lieutenant] here came along so you'd believe us. He'll tell you."

"He [the other American soldier] spoke to the German officer in German mixed with gestures, mostly gestures, and the Oberleutnant

looked at me and smiled widely, shaking his head up and down," MacDonald recalled, "and saying, 'Jawohl! Jawohl! Ist gut! Ist gut!'"

Only the regimental executive officer was available for any higher direction, and he told MacDonald to give it a try. The young captain went first to see a German major and several other officers, dressed in clean, neatly pressed uniforms, inside the city. When MacDonald was not convinced, the major offered a bottle of cognac. After a drink, MacDonald, another American officer, the German major, and their chauffeur embarked on a wild nocturnal ride in a sleek Mercedes Benz—to see Grolmann.

MacDonald was fearful of being shot by German sentries and by his own men. Finally, he arrived at Grolmann's headquarters. In contrast to MacDonald, dressed in a filthy uniform and with a scruffy beard, Grolmann was "even more immaculately dressed than the others, a long row of military decorations across his chest. His face was round and red and cleanly shaven. A monocle in his right eye gave him an appearance that made me want to congratulate Hollywood on its movie interpretations of high-ranking Nazis."

Grolmann offered to surrender but acknowledged that he had no control over Poncet. Still, he pressed MacDonald for a guarantee that the Americans would not attack. Finally, MacDonald, Grolmann, a staff officer, and the general's civilian interpreter were on their way in Grolmann's open-top car to the confused American captain's battalion headquarters. Once they arrived, the situation was out of MacDonald's hands. As it turned out, the surrender effort was noble but fruitless. There was already some fighting in Leipzig.

Forward elements of the 2nd and 69th Divisions entered Leipzig on April 18. The 2nd encountered some resistance along the Weisse Elster River, but the bridges remained intact. A few Volkssturm and Wehrmacht soldiers made a stand behind a roadblock of overturned trolley cars filled with large rocks but were rapidly subdued. Spearheaded by an armored task force of the 777th Tank Battalion under the command of Lieutenant David Zweibel, troops of the 69th advanced into Leipzig from the south at 5:30 PM and ran into determined resistance at Napoleon Platz, where the monument was located.

As Zweibel's armor neared Napoleon Platz, the tankers were greeted with a hail of small-arms fire and rounds from panzerfaust antitank weapons. One Sherman tank was disabled, and the supporting infantry took a number of casualties. Eager to get out of the line of fire, the tanks picked up speed and rolled at nearly 30 miles per hour down the streets toward the city hall; some infantrymen riding atop the armored vehicles were actually thrown off. Faulty maps caused the attackers to overshoot city hall and placed them in a precarious position, unable to advance or fire on nearby German positions. After dark, the tanks were withdrawn.

The following morning, Zweibel again assaulted the center of Leipzig, firing at city hall and the surrounding buildings from a range of only 150 yards. Just after 9 AM, following several frustrating attempts to secure the area, Zweibel sent Leipzig's fire chief into city hall with a surrender demand. The note read that the Germans must surrender if they wanted to avoid a heavy artillery bombardment followed by an all-out assault with tanks, flamethrowers, and a division of infantry; the attack would begin in 20 minutes. Nearly 200 Germans walked out of city hall with their hands up. Inside, the bodies of Mayor Alfred Frieberg and his wife, City Treasurer Kurt Lisso and his wife and daughter, and several others who had committed suicide were found.

However, Leipzig was not completely subdued. The drama at the monument remained to be played out. On the morning of April 19, Poncet was still defiant. His small force occupied a nearly impregnable position. Heavy artillery shells did little damage to the sturdy walls of the monument, and the Germans inside were holding 17 American prisoners. Because there were Americans inside, General Reinhardt decided against using flamethrowers to burn the Germans out.

As the standoff wore on, Captain Hans Trefousse, an interrogator of German prisoners with the 273rd Infantry Regiment, persuaded his commanding officer, Colonel C.M. Adams, to allow Trefousse to attempt to persuade Poncet to surrender. Trefousse had been born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1921 and emigrated to the United States with his parents at the age of 13. He graduated from City College of New York with a Phi Beta Kappa key and joined the U.S. Army when war broke out.

National Archives

ABOVE: A knocked-out Sherman tank in support of the 2nd Infantry Division burns on a Leipzig street corner during the assault on the city, April 18, 1945. The entire crew perished during the fight. RIGHT: An American MP escorts three German prisoners of war, who had changed into civilian clothing in hopes of evading capture, to a temporary stockade near the main Leipzig railroad station. Note the other prisoners lying on the ground.

At 3 PM on the 19th, Trefousse, a German prisoner, and the executive officer of the 273rd Regiment, Lt. Col. George Knight, approached the monument under a flag of truce. When Poncet and two other German officers met them, Trefousse pointed out the hopelessness of the situation but Poncet responded that he was under a direct order from Hitler not to surrender. He did, however, agree to a two-hour ceasefire to allow at least a dozen American casualties to be removed.

Throughout the ceasefire, the two argued in front of the entrance to the monument's gift shop. At 5 PM, the heated discussion moved inside. While celebrations among the American troops were in full swing elsewhere in Leipzig, the grim exchange at the monument continued past midnight.

"If you were a Bolshevik," Poncet sneered, "I wouldn't talk to you at all. In four years, you and I will meet in Siberia."

Trefousse retorted, "If that is true, wouldn't it be a pity to sacrifice all these German soldiers who could help us against the Russians?"

As it seemed the impasse would never be resolved, Trefousse extended one last option. If Poncet surrendered and walked out of the monument alone, his men could follow one at a time. At 2 AM on April 20, the diehard Nazi commander strode out of the main entrance. The pockmarked, damaged monument was secured, but not before some confusion ensued as to the disposition of the newly acquired prisoners.

Word reached Trefousse that only Poncet would be allowed out of the monument and that the rest of the Germans would temporarily remain inside under guard. When Trefousse tried to persuade the captives to accept the change in terms, he offered to try to get them 48 hours' leave in the city in exchange for a pledge not to escape. One German insisted on the original bargain and was allowed to leave the monument.

Trefousse went to Lt. Col. Knight for permission to grant the 48-hour leave. Knight agreed but insisted that the Germans had to be moved without General Reinhardt getting wind of the compromise. As Knight supervised the disarming of the enlisted prisoners, Trefousse guided more than a dozen German officers through the lines to their homes in Leipzig. When it was time for them to return to captivity, only one failed to appear, although he did leave behind a note of apology.

Leipzig was, at long last, completely in American hands. The infantry of the 2nd and 69th Divisions hurried to catch up with the V Corps armor that was already near the banks of the Mulde River. Garrison troops began to file into the city to initiate its military administration.

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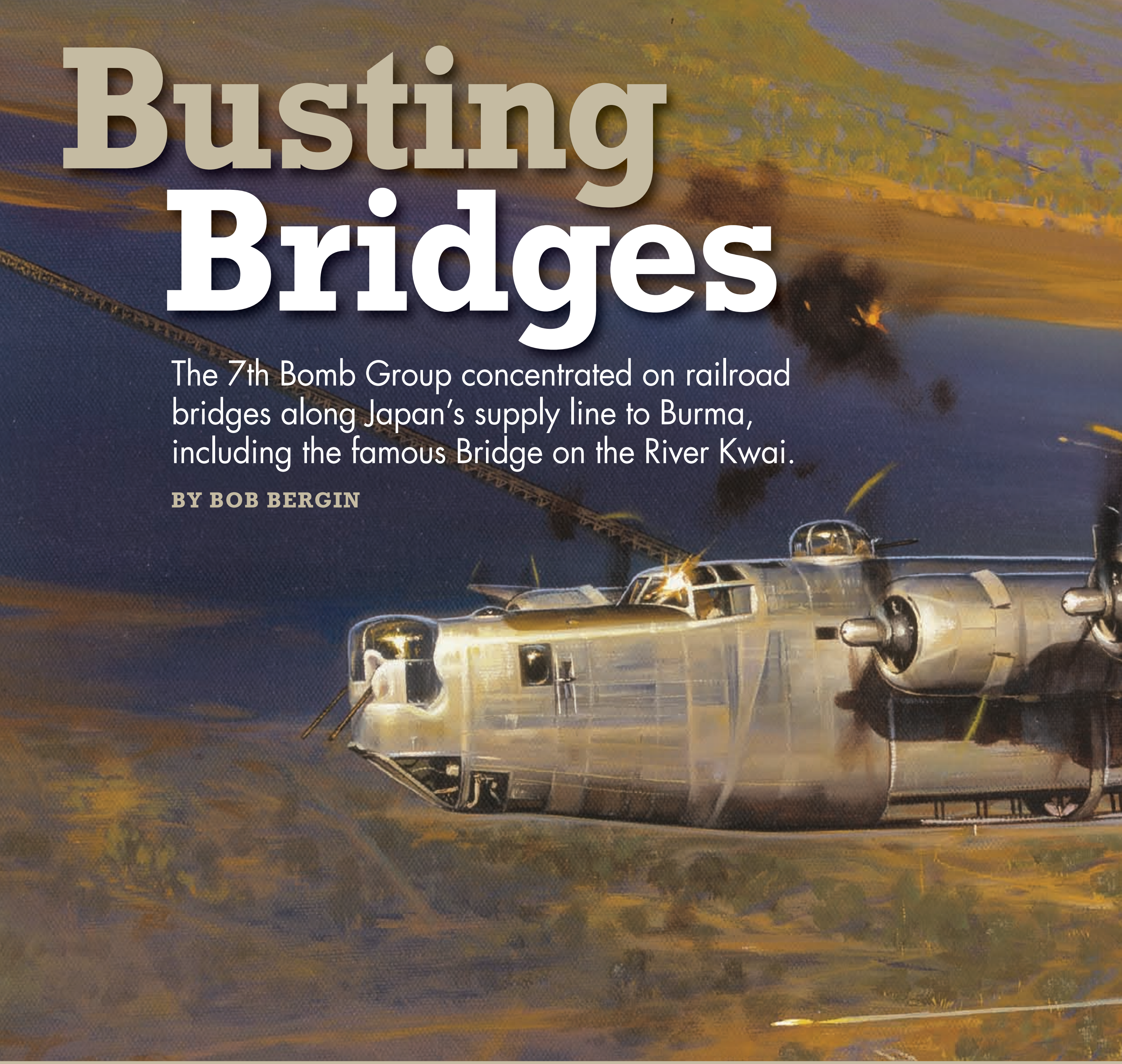
ABOVE: Seemingly being watched by displeased Germanic statues, a 69th Infantry Division soldier stands amid the rubble inside the Völkerschlachtdenkmal shortly after Leipzig was taken. BELOW: Not wishing to live in a defeated Germany, Leipzig municipal treasurer Kurt Lisson, his wife, and daughter committed suicide in the Rathaus (city hall).

For most American soldiers, the fighting was over. They were not going to Berlin. They were simply to wait for the Red Army and extend a tenuous hand to their allies. On April 25, 1945, 1st Lt. Albert Kotzebue of the 69th's 273rd Infantry Regiment and three soldiers of an intelligence and reconnaissance unit crossed the Elbe in a small boat and met soldiers of a Red Army Guards rifle regiment belonging to the 1st Ukrainian Front. East and West had met amid the ruins of the Third Reich.

In July, the Americans withdrew from Leipzig, retiring westward to the line that marked the designated postwar zones of occupation and the Red Army moved in. For the next half century, Leipzig was one of the principal cities of the communist German Democratic Republic.

Today, after years of neglect and disrepair and the reunification of the German nation, the Völkerschlachtdenkmal has undergone extensive renovation in observance of the 200th anniversary of the first great Battle of Leipzig. It remains an imposing monument, not only to the victory over Napoleon, but also to one of the last battles of World War II. □



Busting Bridges

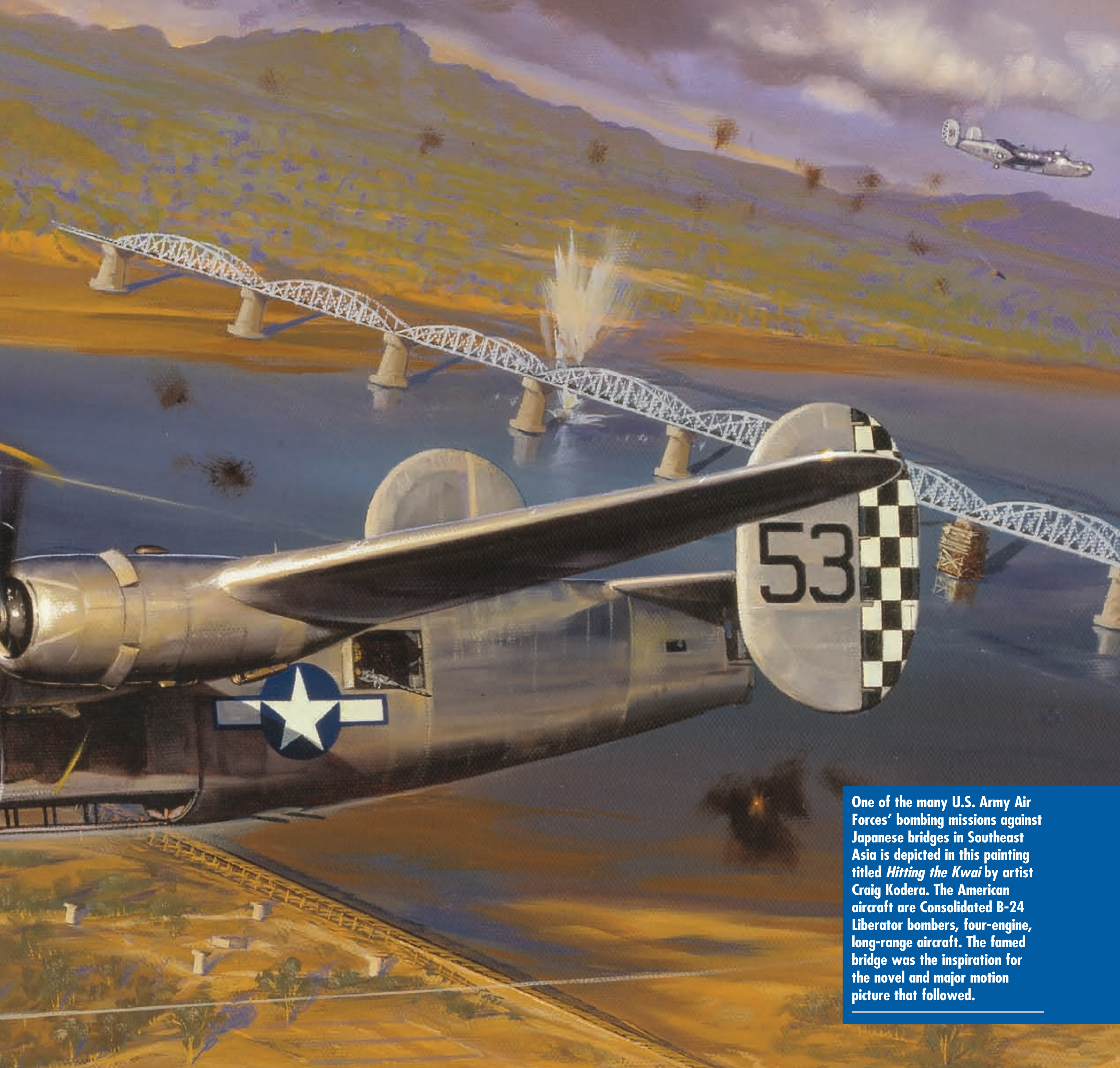
The 7th Bomb Group concentrated on railroad bridges along Japan's supply line to Burma, including the famous Bridge on the River Kwai.

BY BOB BERGIN

Thirty-five Boeing B-17C Flying Fortress bombers of the 7th Bomb Group happened to be on their way to Asia the morning the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. They had been sent to reinforce U.S. Army Air Corps units in the Philippines. Eight of the B-17s arrived at Hickam Field while the Japanese attack was in progress. Three were attacked by Japanese fighters and damaged; one was set afire, becoming the first American-flown B-17 destroyed in World War II. The encounter was one sided; the B-17s' machine guns had been removed from the bombers to reduce their weight for the long flight over the Pacific. It was a dramatic introduction to World War II.

The 7th BG eventually regrouped in Australia; some of its elements were sent on to join in the futile Allied defense of Java. When Java fell, the group was ordered to India to fly against the Imperial Japanese Army, which had occupied Thailand, Malaya, and Burma. In June 1942, most U.S. heavy bombers based in India were sent to the Middle East to stop German General Erwin Rommel's advance toward the Egyptian frontier. That reduced the 7th Bomb Group to a single squadron of B-17s and two squadrons of North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers.

In August 1942, American war planners decided that the 7th would be reconstituted as



One of the many U.S. Army Air Forces' bombing missions against Japanese bridges in Southeast Asia is depicted in this painting titled *Hitting the Kwai* by artist Craig Kodera. The American aircraft are Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers, four-engine, long-range aircraft. The famed bridge was the inspiration for the novel and major motion picture that followed.

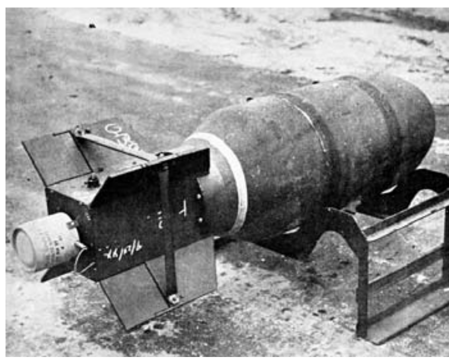
Hitting the Kwai, © Craig Kodera, licensed by The Greenwich Workshop, Inc., www.GreenwichWorkshop.com

a heavy bomb group with four squadrons. The new commander of the Tenth Air Force in India, Brig. Gen. Clayton Bissell, did not consider the B-17 suitable for the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI). The Flying Fortress lacked the range required by the long distances in the theater. He asked that the group's B-17s be replaced by Consolidated B-24 Liberators. Given heavy demand in the European Theater for the Liberator, it would be months before the B-24s reached India. In the meantime, the group flew out of Calcutta and Agra while a new base was prepared for the 7th at Pandaveswar, India, outside Calcutta.

In 1942, the Allied position in the CBI was precarious. The British Army's defense of its Burma colony collapsed quickly; surviving British forces retreated to India, which the Japanese were already preparing to conquer. America had just entered the war and was still mustering its forces and establishing the complex logistical network required to support sustained military operations.

The Japanese Army in Burma had its own logistical challenges. All of its military equipment and supplies had to come from Japan by sea, a voyage of 4,000 miles from the home islands to ports in Burma and Thailand. From those ports to the Burma front lines the journey included an additional 2,000 miles of single-

Both: National Archives



ABOVE: An example of an early smart weapon, this VB-1, or Vertical Bomb 1 AZON, a guided munition, is shown prior being loaded aboard an American bomber. LEFT: An American B-24 Liberator bomber flies low over the Burmese countryside following a bombing raid against bridges. The spans that have previously been attacked successfully are visible in the distance.

track railroad line. Burma's heavy jungle offered concealment for the Japanese and made them difficult to target and engage from the air. There were no industrial targets beyond the area of the Burmese capital at Rangoon, and thus an observer wrote, "The air war in Burma became a war against enemy communications and supplies.… The interruption of the movement and transshipment of supplies by sea or land into lower Burma became the primary objective of the 7th Bomb Group."

The 7th BGs' bombers first went after the major targets, the ports at Bangkok and Rangoon, and Japanese shipping heading there via the Gulf of Siam, the Andaman Sea, and the Bay of Bengal. In doing so, the 7th set bombing records. On December 19, 1943, the group flew the longest known mission of the war at that point, to Bangkok, a 14- to 15-hour flight. It also inaugurated new bombing techniques. On November 1, 1944, the campaign to destroy Japanese lines of communication in Burma began, and bridges became the primary targets.

Author Edward M. Young, in his book *B-24 Liberator Units of the CBI,* notes, "Bridges were never easy targets. An analysis of the bombing effort during 1943 had shown that the 7th's Liberators had managed to achieve only one direct hit for every 81 sorties, and these were targets that required direct hits—near misses did little damage to a bridge's structure.… Part of the solution to the problem of bombing bridges came with the introduction of a new weapon, the AZON bomb." This was the first American smart bomb, a 1,000-pounder with a radio-controlled tail fin that allowed the bombardier to maneuver the weapon after it had been dropped to correct deflection errors in flight. A flare attached to the rear of the bomb enabled the bombardier to track its fall.

The AZON designation derived from "azimuth only," which meant the bomb could be steered left or right but lacked pitch control. Much like today's Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM), the AZON control and guidance package was attached to the tail of a standard 1,000-pound bomb. The Eighth Air Force initially tried AZON bombing in Europe in the latter half of 1944, with disappointing results. Apparently Europe's inclement weather, the rain and the fog, affected AZON guidance. But in the clear, dry weather of Southeast Asia's hot season, AZON bombs proved ideal for attacking the narrow bridges on the Thai-Burma rail lines. By November 1944, the group had 10 dedicated AZON B-24s fitted with necessary transmitters and antennas and flown by crews specifically trained in the AZON technique. They were assigned to the 7th's 493rd Bomb Squadron.

The group also developed a new bombing technique. Referred to in some histories as "dive bombing," it actually was "glide bombing" when performed with a B-24. Young notes, "A form of glide-bombing with a sharp pull-up at the end of the glide could send a bomb directly into a bridge structure instead of it bouncing off as had happened in many low-level attacks.… The pilot would approach the target along its long axis, begin a 20 to 25 degree glide at 1,500 feet, and release the bomb at 500 feet as he pulled out. A toggle switch was fitted to the control column so that the pilot could release the bomb using a special sight designed specifically for that purpose." On April 24, 1945, a total of 41 Liberators from all four of the 7th's squadrons were sent out, the 493rd squadron equipped with AZON bombs, the other three prepared for glide bombing. Thirty bridges were destroyed, and 18 were damaged—a spectacular success.

B-24 bombardier Lieutenant Guilford W. "Chip" Forbes got into the fight at the tail end of the war. He arrived at the 7th's base at Pandaveswar in January 1945. By that stage of the war, American and British fighter groups in India had established air superiority, but there could still be a lot of flak. Forbes recalled, "Flak could be very heavy, or very light. It depended where you went. On all the missions we flew, we never saw a Japanese fighter."

All of the missions were long ones and not all targeted railroads. One of the longest of Forbes' early missions was to the port of Bangkok, his target a drydock that was duly put out of commission. On March 19, 1945, he participated in a mission to the Kra Isthmus, the narrowest part of the Malay Peninsula. All four of the 7th's squadrons were represented by the 37 B-24s that participated in the raid. The targets were railroad bridges on the Bangkok-Singapore rail line. Each aircraft carried only four bombs; two bomb bays were fitted with extra gas tanks to hold the fuel required by the long flight. Orders were to fly to the target at 400 feet, "a ridiculously low altitude for a B-24," remembered Forbes. "We heard that the strategy for this raid came right from the top commander in the CBI, Lord Mountbatten, and we griped mightily about his misuse of B-24s."

Forbes continued, "Lumbering along at 400 feet, a B-24 is an easy target." Sure enough, Forbes's B-24 was struck by small-arms ground fire that cut three fuel lines in the bomb bay. "With the bomb bay doors wide open and fuel

spilling, our plane was a big-time atomizer," he added. "We were afraid the next hit would make a spark and the plane would go off like a firecracker." Forbes and the flight engineer tried to find the leak in the bays with the extra gas tanks as their clothes got saturated, and the pilot started thinking it might be necessary to ditch in the sea. Forbes' fingers found the leak, finally, and the mission continued. Several significant bridges were among the targets destroyed. The flight was a round trip of 2,700 miles; it took 17½ hours, the longest B-24 formation flight made in the CBI.

On March 22, Forbes' crew went on a 10-plane raid to Great Coco Island, the north end of the Andaman Island chain, and this time bombed from 3,800 feet. Under normal procedures the Norden bombsight was linked to the autopilot, and course changes on the bomb run were made automatically. But the autopilot was not working; the pilot had to fly manually. Forbes' primary targets were miniscule from their altitude, two small trailers, about six feet by 10, on which radar equipment was mounted. The targets were about a half mile apart, and each required a separate pass. Forbes had three bombs for three passes. "Everything worked perfectly; two passes, two bullseyes," he remembered. For the third pass, Forbes picked a building related to the radars "and made another bullseye.... I really believe we could have hit a pickle barrel that day."

One of the 7th's more difficult targets became famously known after the war as the "Bridge on the River Kwai." More than 70 years later, there are still questions about the existence of that bridge and its fate. In the novel that became a popular film, a wooden bridge was built by British prisoners of war and destroyed by British commandos. The reality was somewhat different. There were, in fact, two bridges over a river called the Kwai Yai, both built by prisoners of war and both destroyed before the war ended—by American bombers.

About 325 feet north of a wooden bridge on the river was a second, more substantial looking structure of concrete and steel. Both bridges had been built in 1943 by the forced labor of Allied prisoners of war who were used by the Imperial Japanese Army to construct a railway linking Thailand to Burma. The railway that stretched from Bangkok to Rangoon was built under extreme conditions through hilly jungle terrain. The British government, which ruled Burma as a colony, had considered such a project as early as the late19th century but concluded that it was too difficult to carry out. The Japanese used about 200,000 Southeast Asian workers in the railway's construction, many of them as forced labor, and about 60,000 Allied POWs. About 90,000 Asian workers died, and more than 12,000 Allied POWs perished. The wooden bridge was the first completed, in February 1943; the concrete and steel structure was completed several months later. By October 1943, when the railway was completed, the Japanese were able to move thousands of tons of supplies to their military forces in Burma every day.

At the end of November 1943, two B-24 missions were sent against the concrete and steel bridge on the River Kwai, which was designated "Bridge 277." The bridge remained standing. On December 13, the group's 9th Squadron attacked Bridge 277 again while the 436th Squadron bombed flak batteries guarding the bridge. When the smoke cleared, the bridge stood. It would be attacked so often that the [concrete and steel] structure would become known within the 7th as "Old 277." Finally, on February 13, B-24s carried out an attack at 300 feet and dropped two of the spans of the concrete and steel bridge into the river. By early April, photoreconnaissance showed that although the steel bridge remained unusable, damage that had been done to the wooden bridge had been repaired and trains were again

National Archives

The evidence of a successful bombing raid by Liberators of the Tenth U.S. Air Force is seen as the Bawgyo railroad bridge has been dropped into the river below. Numerous craters are noticeable after bombs scored near misses against the span.

National Archives

ABOVE: This photograph of the wooden, top, and steel, lower, bridges across the Kwai Yai River was taken by a U.S. Army Air Forces reconnaissance aircraft prior to a scheduled raid to destroy the Japanese rail connection. The Maeklong River was renamed the "River Kwai" in 1960. BELOW: Today a popular tourist destination, the largely intact Kwai bridge across what was originally known as the Maeklong River, shows signs of age.

Wikimedia

moving over it. The 7th now had the job of eliminating the wooden bridge. The story of how the wooden "Bridge on the River Kwai" was finally destroyed, as told by Chuck Linemen, the pilot who led that raid, gives a good sense of how 7th BG missions were conducted, and of the challenges the crews faced.

On the morning of April 3, 1945, a few minutes before 9 AM, a lone aircraft appeared in the clear sky above Kanchanaburi, a small town in western Thailand. The plane was set on a course that would take it over a wooden bridge that spanned the river on the northwest edge of the town. The river at that point was known as the Kwai Yai, and, because of a fictional bridge in a novel that would be written years later, Kanchanaburi would become known as the site of the "Bridge on the River Kwai."

The lone aircraft over Kanchanaburi on the morning of April 3 was a B-24 Liberator from the 436th Bomb Squadron of the 7th Bomb Group. In command of the aircraft was 20-year-old 1st Lt. Charles Linamen from Ashland, Virginia, known to his crew as "Curley." The nine others who made up the crew included copilot Inyron Bradley Harnlett, navigator Raymond A. Henderson, engineer-gunner William A. Nations, radio operator-gunner Bernard K. Bondurant, armorer-gunner Clifford B. Webb, assistant armorer-gunner Herbert Clyde Saylor, nose gunner George Barrett Twelvetree, and tail gunner Raymond F. Hertzin.

The mission had started eight hours earlier with a briefing at the 7th BG's airbase in India. The target of the mission was designated as "the bypass bridge at Kanchanaburi" to distinguish the functional wooden bridge from its heavily damaged concrete and steel neighbor. Linamen's B-24 would lead the raid, and six other B-24s would follow one-by-one at 10-minute intervals. Linamen's aircraft would make three bomb runs over the bridge and on each run drop two 1,000-pound bombs. Because of its importance, the bridge was well protected by Japanese antiaircraft guns. An attempt to neutralize these guns would be made by flak-suppression aircraft, B-24s that would sweep over the area just before Linamen arrived on target and drop antipersonnel bombs on the gun positions. Hopefully this would silence the guns before Linamen's aircraft started its bombing run.

Takeoff was at 2 AM. Linamen's B-24 turned on a southeasterly course, over Calcutta, out over the Bay of Bengal, across the tip of Burma, and then due east to Thailand. The night was dark; there was no moon and few stars. No lights showed from the B-24 as it flew low to avoid detection by radar.

They had flown past the southern tip of Burma when the tail gunner became aware of another aircraft that flew alongside them, no more than 229 feet away. By its size and shape, it was a fighter. In this area—well beyond the limited range of Allied fighters—there was no question that it was Japanese.

The tail gunner alerted Linamen who instructed him to track the fighter carefully in his gunsight but not to open fire unless the fighter made an aggressive move toward the B-24. Ten tense minutes passed while the Japanese fighter and the B-24 flew side by side. Suddenly the fighter banked away and headed back toward Burma. In the darkness, the B-24 crew thought about what had happened. Because of the blackness of the night it is possible that the Japanese pilot never saw the B-24. If he did, he chose not to fight.

Linamen's B-24 reached Kanchanaburi just before 9 AM. The sky was empty. There was no sign of the flak-suppression aircraft that were to precede the bombing raid. Linamen did some calculations. The return flight to India was a long one, and fuel conservation was a major concern; it was not wise to wait. Linamen alerted the crew that they would go ahead with the bomb run. At 8:59, Linamen started the first run over the target at an altitude of 6,000 feet. He was conscious of the Japanese antiaircraft guns below and the Allied prisoner of war camp that was located near the western end of the bridge.

The Japanese gunners opened fire, and shells stared exploding above the aircraft and to its right. When the B-24 was directly over the bridge, bombardier Bill Henderson released the first two bombs. For an unknown reason only one bomb fell away from the aircraft. The crew watched it fall until it struck the bridge and exploded. A direct hit! One span of the wooden bridge was destroyed.

Linamen turned the B-24 left in a wide circle that lined the aircraft up with the bridge for a second time. The Japanese antiaircraft gunners adjusted their aim, and the shells started exploding closer to the B-24 now, but still high and to the right. The bombardier released two more bombs, and both fell away this time. They exploded in the river, close to the bridge but they did not hit it. Linamen again banked the B-24 into a left turn and started the third bombing run on the bridge.

The Japanese gunners made more corrections and now had the B-24 bracketed. The bombardier toggled all three of the remaining bombs. As they dropped away from the aircraft, Henderson asked Linamen to hold the B-24 steady so that a camera in the aircraft could record the damage done to the bridge. As the last three bombs exploded close to the bridge, Linamen kept the aircraft straight and level. He was ready to turn away from the target when Japanese shells struck the aircraft. The two rear bomb bay doors were blown away. Three feet of the right wing tip vanished, followed into oblivion by a section of the right vertical stabilizer. Linamen did not realize it immediately, but an important control cable had also been cut and the B-24's ailerons were now useless. The B-24 started a steep diving turn to the right.

The pilot had his hands full. As the aircraft headed down, it seemed to Linamen that the right outboard engine had probably been shot out. He applied left rudder and left aileron and pulled back on the control wheel to get the aircraft out of its dive. He called for the copilot to increase power. Slowly, the B-24 came out of its dive, but despite Linamen's best efforts he could not get the wings level. When he glanced at the engine tachometers he saw that all four engines were reading normally. It was not an engine causing the problem.

Linamen twisted the yoke on the control column left and right to activate the ailerons. Nothing happened. He felt his stomach drop. There was no aileron control and—according to the men who had designed and engineered the aircraft—the B-24 was not supposed to be able to fly without ailerons!

Linamen hit the alarm bell to alert the crew to a possible bailout. The crew prepared to abandon the aircraft, but Linamen did not want anyone to bail out until it was absolutely imperative. They were over enemy territory and 1,500 miles from the nearest Allied base. They were not far from the target they had just bombed. The longer they stayed in the air, the closer they would get to friendly territory.

Things were not looking good, but Linamen did have something to think about. In the diving turn that occurred when the aircraft was first hit, it had lost 4,000 feet of altitude and the airspeed had increased to 170 miles per hour. When Linamen instinctively stomped down on the left rudder to stop the turn, the right wing rolled level. Linamen had accidentally learned how he might be able to control the plane—with one hitch. When the aircraft's speed dropped below 160 miles per hour, the right wing dropped and the aircraft turned right and started to dive. When that happened, Linamen would have to build up airspeed to regain rudder control and then use the left rudder to lift the damaged right wing.

National Archives

Medium bombers of the 1st Air Commando Group of the U.S. Army Air Forces are shown in action while bombing Japanese warehouses full of military supplies and equipment in Burma.

The B-24 flew on at an altitude of 2,000 feet. To clear the mountains en route to its base, the aircraft needed at least 4,000 feet. Linamen began a tedious climb to higher altitude, keeping speed higher than normal and using higher than normal power settings. This meant that the B-24 was burning more fuel than normal. Linamen thought about the condition of the aircraft. He did not know how badly it was damaged or how long it would stay together. It did not seem likely that the aircraft could reach India. Linamen reviewed the options. One possibility was to head south for the Andaman Islands where supplies were stored for just such emergencies.

To avoid the areas with the heaviest concentrations of Japanese, Linamen turned due west toward the Bay of Bengal. When they finally reached water, Linamen decided to try to reach "Cox's Bazaar," a British airfield outside Akyab, Burma. Linamen knew the airfield; he had landed there in the past. The B-24 turned to follow a northwestern course along the Burma coast. Cox's Bazaar was seven and a half hours away, but Linamen had coaxed the B-24 up to 6,000 feet.

With Cox's Bazaar in sight, Linamen alerted the crew. He told them they had the option of parachuting; he was not sure he would be able to maintain control of the aircraft when he tried to land it. One of the gunners asked what Linamen would do. "Ride it down," he said. "What the hell are we waiting for?" was the response from the crew.

Airspeed on the approach had to be kept above 160 miles per hour to keep the wings level and the aircraft in a straight line. To add to the problems, there were many B-24s lined up wingtip to wingtip on both sides of the runway. Landing a crippled aircraft on the runway would be a great risk. Loss of control could send the cripple plowing through the rows of

Continued on page 78

CAPE MATAPAN Triumph

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

IT was called "rodding," and it was a complex manual procedure used by British cryptographers at Hut Eight in the Government Code and Cipher School at Bletchley Park to decipher Italian Naval Enigma coded messages. Unlike its more sophisticated German version, the Italian Enigma machine lacked a plugboard that increased the variations on a coded message. Since the Italian Enigma lacked the plugboard, it was easier to solve.

The complicated process of decoding these Enigma messages was developed by a British mathematician named Dillwyn Knox, the very model of the "absent-minded professor." Knox had a keen eye for talent to staff Bletchley Park, and one of his hires was a London University student in German studies named Mavis Lever, who was only 19 years old when she came to Bletchley Park in 1940.

Knox assigned Lever to use the rodding procedure to definitively break the Italian Naval Enigma. The system worked. What was needed to break a message every day was a good, solid crib—an easily broken and regularly used phrase that was stock to military messages.

Lever went straight to work, using a combination of knowing how military messages followed repetitious formats, her skills as a crossword puzzle fan, and even the idea of cross-ruffing in a bridge game. She found the word "Personale" in a message and realized that signified a "personal" message for some Italian bigshot and was able to find the wheel order and message setting for the signal she was rodding.

With this breakthrough in hand, the British could now read Italian naval message traffic quickly and efficiently, and on March 25, 1941, an Italian Enigma operator transmitted a three-line message that began with an established crib: "Supermarina," the Italian word for the Naval High Command. Using the rodding procedure, the message was broken and passed on to the Admiralty.

It was a message from Supermarina in Rome to an Italian commander on the island of Rhodes, an Italian holding in the Aegean between Greece and Crete. The message simply

British battleships *Warspite* and *Valiant* open fire at point-blank range on the Italian cruiser *Fiume* during the Battle of Cape Matapan. The Italians were expecting to intercept British transports headed to Greece, but with the help of code breakers and British deception the Italian fleet was thoroughly defeated.

BRITISH WARSHIPS DEALT A STAGGERING BLOW TO THE ITALIAN FLEET IN THE MEDITERRANEAN DURING A NIGHT ACTION.

said, "With reference to the message 53148 dated 24. Today 25 March is day X-3."

To the average reader, the message meant nothing. But it would set up one of the greatest victories in the British Royal Navy's long history, a battle that would severely wound the Italian Navy and take its largest ships out of the war—the Battle of Cape Matapan.

By March 1941, the British situation in the war was as bleak as the seas the Royal Navy was trying to defend. Germany had conquered Europe, and the Luftwaffe's bombers were pounding London every night. In the Mediterranean, the stunning victory of Lt. Gen. Sir Richard O'Connor's Western Desert Force over a larger Italian force had been quickly reversed by German troops under an unknown German general who would become a legend: Erwin Rommel. The island of Malta was besieged by German and Italian aircraft. Only in Greece, where the Italians had launched a badly planned and organized offensive through Albania, was there hope, as the outnumbered and outgunned Greeks had driven the invaders back.

More importantly, the Royal Navy had lived up to its hundreds of years of tradition of offensive action on November 11, 1940, when a small number of Fleet Air Arm aviators in Fairey Swordfish biplanes from the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* had attacked the Italian naval base at Taranto and put out of action three Italian battleships, one of them their newest and largest, the *Littorio*.

Meanwhile, despite constant Italian and German air raids on Malta, the island's submarines and torpedo bombers wreaked havoc on Axis convoys supplying Rommel's tanks. In turn, the Royal Navy was pushing through convoys to keep Malta supplied.

Solving this problem was the responsibility of the Italian Navy, and on paper it was a formidable force. Despite three battleships being dockyard cases after the Taranto raid, it still had three more, headed by the powerful *Vittorio Veneto,* a speedy ship that packed nine 15-inch guns, sister of the ill-fated *Littorio*.

In 1940, the Italian Navy, or Regia Marina, was the fifth largest in the world, larger than

John Hamilton, *War at Sea 1939-1945*

Both: Wikimedia

Two antiquated weapons of the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm participated in the fight against the Italian Navy for supremacy in the Mediterranean. At left is a World War II-era photo of a Fairey Albacore torpedo bomber, and at right is an image of a restored Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber.

those of Germany and the Soviet Union. Lacking the worldwide commitments of the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy, its ships were virtually all deployed in the Mediterranean, a force that consisted of more than 20 cruisers, 61 destroyers, and 70 torpedo boats, divided between the main bases at Taranto and La Spezia. The 100-submarine fleet alone was the world's largest, divided up between five bases, including Rhodes and Tobruk.

Yet while these numbers were staggering, and the fleet enjoyed the central point in the Mediterranean, it was deficient in nearly every category of naval warfare. Italian ships lacked sonar and radar, even though Italian scientists had created outstanding such devices in the wake of work to develop television programming. Even after the Taranto disaster, Admiral Domenico Cavagnari, the Regia Marina's chief of staff, balked at deploying radar sets on his ships. He was determined to refight the "Fire-Away Flanagans" of Jutland in the Great War.

The problem was that his gleaming ships lacked the wherewithal. The battleships and cruisers lacked accurate and reliable main guns. Cavagnari accepted one percent tolerances in shell weight and a similar lack of uniformity in propellant charges. The Italians also ignored serious rangefinders, loading systems, firing circuits, and shell fuse defects that had shown up in exercises. While Italian cruisers could crack on 40 knots in a calm sea, their thin armor meant that they disintegrated when hit by shells or took serious damage in heavy weather. Destroyers swamped. Antiaircraft protection was lacking. Training, particularly in damage control, was poor. The Regia Marina did not plan on waging night engagements and so did not train its men or equip its ships for such battles. At night, Italian warships did not assign crewmen to their main turrets, even on combat missions.

Another Italian naval problem was logistics. The fleet lacked ammunition, spares, and most importantly, oil. The Regia Marina started the war with 1.8 million tons, just enough for nine months' steaming. Operations had to be predicated on consumption limits.

The Italian Navy's biggest weakness was its inability to see the advantages of a new weapon in warfare: the aircraft carrier. Despite being allowed to build as many as four under the 1942 Washington Naval Treaty, Italy refused to do so. Benito Mussolini saw Italy as an unsinkable aircraft carrier and believed the crack pilots of a nation that had scored amazing aviation feats like Italo Balbo's flight from Rome to Chicago in 1931 could dominate the Mediterranean.

Now, with Rommel on the move, the British Mediterranean Fleet, under Admiral Andrew B. Cunningham (known as "ABC" to his pals) was proving the Royal Navy's superiority in spirit and technology, if not numbers. HMS *Illustrious,* the carrier that punched out the Italian Navy at Taranto herself had been knocked out of action in January 1941 by Luftwaffe airstrikes, but her sister ship HMS *Formidable* had arrived from Britain to replace her, joining a tough force of battleships headed by the flagship, the battleship HMS *Warspite*.

The supporting cast of battleships bore proud names like *Valiant* and *Barham* and was in turn backed up by cruisers like HMS *Ajax,* and the Australian cruiser HMAS *Perth,* alongside another Australian warship, the destroyer HMAS *Stuart*.

All of these ships were better equipped than their Italian counterparts, with more realistic training. Most importantly, they were manned by long-service sailors who had seen long hours of combat steaming, come under enemy attack, and knew their jobs and ships.

The head of those ships was undoubtedly *Warspite*, the seventh combatant vessel of that name, a line that began in 1596, which supposedly meant "war's spite," a form of contempt for an enemy. This *Warspite* packed eight 15-inch guns and was only the third oil-powered battleship ordered by the Royal Navy, commissioning in 1915, displacing 30,600 tons. At the heart of a squadron of five sister ships, one of the Royal Navy's fastest, she had seen action and survived a pounding at Jutland in 1916.

When World War II broke out, *Warspite* proved such was the case. Under her skipper, Captain Victor A. Crutchley, a World War I Victoria Cross recipient, she steamed boldly into Narvik Fjord on April 13, 1940, and sank six German destroyers and a surfaced U-boat. Off Calabria that July 9, she brushed off the Italian Navy's battleships handily. When O'Connor's Australian troops attacked Bardia and Tobruk in January 1941, her guns pulverized Italian fortifications. When the Luftwaffe pounced on *Illustrious* later that month, a German Stuka's bomb merely bounced off of one of *Warspite*'s turrets. At the Royal Navy's main base at Alexandria, *Warspite* was the "Cock of the Fleet."

On March 15, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, boss of the German Navy, summoned Admiral Angelo Iachino, commander in chief of the Italian Navy, to Berlin.

By any navy's standard, the 51-year-old Iachino was an experienced officer and an excellent gunnery technician. He had a fine reputation and four years of service as naval attaché in London from 1931 to 1934, which gave him considerable knowledge of the Royal Navy.

Now Raeder told Iachino that the two Axis partners were going to launch a double offensive sweep as far as Crete, planned by the Italian Navy's high command, the Supermarina. The purpose of this naval operation was to smash a British transport of troops from Egypt to Greece, codenamed Operation Lustre.

This series of convoys was transporting the 6th Australian Division, the 2nd New Zealand

Division, and a British tank brigade, which would be the main force to face Hitler's invading troops in Greece. Ambushing them at sea would be a great victory.

To quell Iachino's concerns about the British Mediterranean Fleet, German intelligence reported that the British had only one battleship, *Valiant,* in the eastern Mediterranean fully ready for action, and no aircraft carriers. Iachino was sold by this intelligence, even if it was utter rubbish. A great deal of Germany's wartime intelligence was wrong, whether fooled by the legendary British Double-Cross System of turned German spies or by British deception and camouflage work in battle areas.

The Admiralty warned Cunningham, "Rome informed Rhodes that today 25 March is day minus three. Comment. Signal refers to a message from Rhodes to Rome on 24 March. Any further information will be forwarded when possible."

The message of the 24th was decoded on the 26th and sent to Cunningham. It told the commander in Rhodes to organize reconnaissance over the route from Alexandria to Crete and Piraeus in Greece, starting March 26. The airport in Crete was to be bombed the night before "Day X" and again at dawn on "Day X."

Bletchley had not yet seen a message from the Supermarina to Iachino sent on March 25, giving him his sailing orders for the mission they called Operation Gaudo, named for the island just south of Crete where the Italians expected to spot the British convoy.

Iachino was to sweep the area north and south of Crete on March 28, with his ships in three sections, cruisers on the flanks, battleship in the middle, all hunting for the Lustre convoys. "If the enemy is sighted an attack should be made," but only "if conditions are favorable." Cunningham did not see that order, either.

But Cunningham was not taking any chances. He signaled his chief of light forces, Vice Admiral Henry Pridham-Whippell, ordering him to be 30 miles south of Gaudo "standing by for eventualities. Your action must depend on circumstances. Your dawn position has been selected to enable you to withdraw in face of an unreasonably superior force or to intercept force as it returns." Convoy AG9, heading from Alexandria to Piraeus, was to turn back after dusk on March 27. Convoy GA9, in Piraeus, was to stay there.

Iachino headed out to sea from Naples late on the evening of March 26, *Vittorio Veneto* picking up her cruiser and destroyer escorts. At dawn on the 27th, the battleship steamed through the Straits of Messina, battling choppy seas, into a mist that cut visibility down to 5,000 yards, concealing the Italian advance. Among the young sailors on *Vittorio Veneto* was a 19-year-old naval cadet named Walter Mazzucato, who had joined her in January. "It made my heart thud seeing such a vast ship for the first time," he wrote in a memoir. Now he manned one of the immense ship's 20 37mm antiaircraft guns.

Meanwhile, Bletchley Park tried to assemble the pieces of the Axis puzzle for Cunningham. It was not certain, but it made enough sense to enable Cunningham to summon his 10 senior staff officers for a final strategy session. The staff officers did not know about the Enigma breakthroughs and were not cleared for

Both: Imperial War Museum

FAR LEFT: Young Mavis Lever, working for British Intelligence, provided valuable information that helped the Royal Navy in the victory at Cape Matapan. LEFT: Admiral Andrew Cunningham led the Royal Navy task force to victory at Cape Matapan. BELOW: The aging battleship HMS *Warspite,* a veteran of World War I, still packed a heavy punch a generation later in the Mediterranean as the Royal Navy dueled with the Italian fleet for supremacy.

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"Ultra" material. He told them what he thought the Italian Fleet could do the next day—sail to Tripoli or Rhodes or interfere with convoys to Greece. He told the staff to work out which of the alternatives was the most likely possibility. They determined that the Italians must be after the troop convoys. They were the most luscious prize and likely reason for the Italian Navy to expend valuable fuel oil.

They presented this to Cunningham, who readily agreed. "That's decided then," and he handed out orders he had already prepared. "I have decided to take 1st Battle Squadron and HMS *Formidable* to sea after dark tonight Thursday to proceed westward south of Crete," Cunningham signaled Pridham-Whippell. One minute later, at 12:20 PM on the 27th, a patrolling British Short Sunderland flying boat flown by Pilot Officer Adrian Warburton of 69 Squadron spotted three Italian cruisers and a destroyer 80 miles east of Sicily's southeastern corner, headed for Crete.

That clinched it. Even so, visibility in the Mediterranean was dropping, and night was coming.

On *Vittorio Veneto*'s flag bridge, Iachino was disheartened by word that his cruisers had been spotted. Now he believed he had lost the advantage of surprise.

That afternoon, Italian reconnaissance planes swooped over Alexandria to check on the British fleet; the ships were still all in harbor but it was clear now that if surprise was lost the British would recall their convoys. Iachino ordered his varied forces to rendezvous on the morning of the 28th.

Meanwhile, Cunningham launched a brilliant deception exercise to fool the Axis. A keen golfer, Cunningham regularly played at Alexandria's Sporting Club, and another regular was the Japanese consul, a pear-shaped man who was ridiculed as the "blunt end of the Axis." But the consul was also a major Axis spy, and

when he saw the commander in chief playing golf, it was a fair bet the fleet was not going to sea, and he would report that to his masters and allies.

On the warships, everyone was preparing to sail. *Formidable* and her escorts steamed at 3:30 PM, and the squadrons of Fairey Albacore and Swordfish biplane torpedo bombers and Fulmar fighters started landing on her flight deck as she sailed off. Orders went to other ships to drop what they were doing and be ready for sea. Among them was HMAS *Stuart,* which had lost half of her rudder from a near-miss off Benghazi and was awaiting her turn in drydock for repairs. But when Cunningham flag-signaled from *Warspite*'s foremast, "Raise steam for full speed with all dispatch," the destroyer's crew, excited at the opportunity to see action, hurried their repairs and prepared for sea.

At 7 PM the ships headed out. The night voyage proved uneventful, but at 5:55 AM, 20 minutes before dawn, Cunningham launched his search planes from *Formidable*. As the planes flew and the sun rose, everyone on the British ships waited for reports. Forty-five minutes after dawn, the British secured from dawn action stations, and sailors swapped out helmets and antiflash gear for cereal, boiled eggs, and coffee.

For an hour and a half, British aircraft patrolled the seas, until 7:20 AM, when one of them spotted four Italian cruisers and four destroyers. Everybody thought the planes had spotted Pridham-Whippell's ships.

Then Pridham-Whippell, in his flagship, the light cruiser *Orion,* heading south from Gaudo to rendezvous with the battleships, reported three unknown vessels bearing north from her at a distance of 18 miles, steering eastward.

Cunningham was in the bath when Lee walked in with the news, nervous about how the fiery admiral would react. He could turn into a "caged tiger" when battle neared.

But Cunningham, calm and covered with soap, simply rose from the tub and began dictating orders: "Battlefleet to increase to full speed. Light forces to retire towards us. *Formidable* to prepare torpedo striking force."

Iachino was not idle, either. Another deficiency of the Italian Navy was that her battleships and cruisers could launch their reconnaissance seaplanes but not recover them. Nonetheless, Iachino shot off an RO-43 spotter plane at 6 AM, and at 6:43 it reported Pridham-Whippell's cruisers. Iachino had no reports that the British battleships and carrier had gone to sea. Cunningham's deception had done its job, so Iachino sent his cruisers to draw the British into his waiting heavy guns, theorizing with some accuracy that the Royal Navy would live up to its tradition of aggressive action. He could draw the smaller British ships into the heavy guns of his battleship.

Designated "Force X" on British plot charts, the Italian group consisted of the three heavy cruisers, *Trieste, Trento*, and *Bolzano,* along with three destroyers, under Vice Admiral L. Sansonetti. The cruisers' 8-inch guns out ranged the four British light cruisers' 6-inch weapons. Worse, Pridham-Whippell did not know that another Italian group under Vice Admiral C. Cattaneo, comprising three more heavy cruisers, *Zara, Pola,* and *Fiume,* two light cruisers, and six destroyers, was nearby. Nonetheless, Pridham-Whippell was not prepared to flee. His four cruisers—*Orion, Ajax, Perth,* and *Gloucester*—and four destroyers hoisted five battle ensigns each as the Italians opened fire at 8:12 AM.

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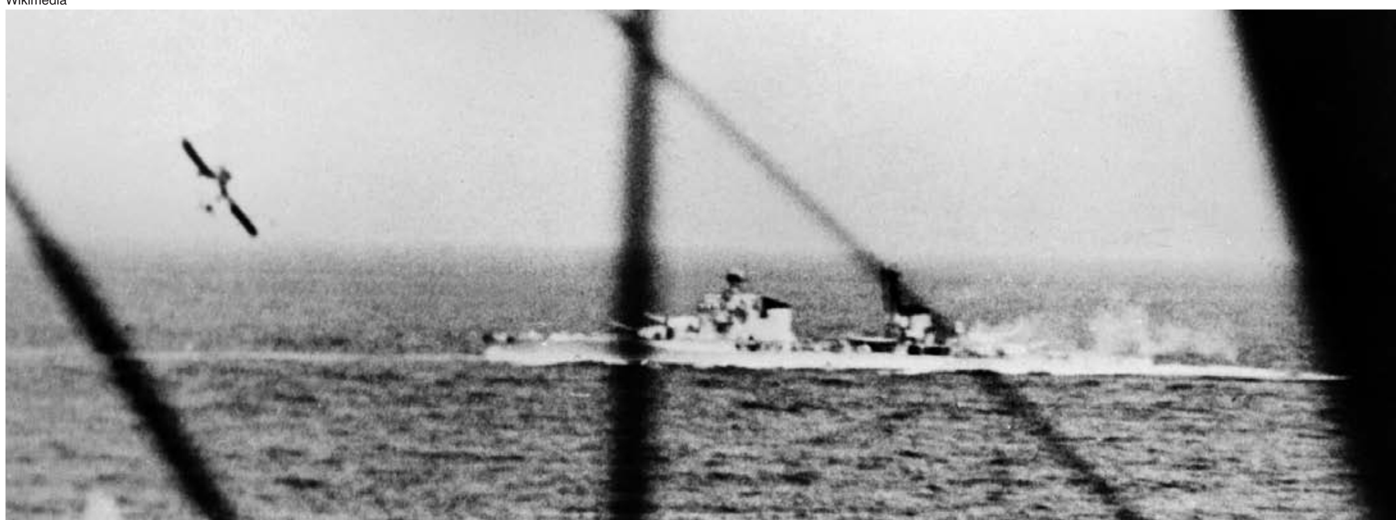

ABOVE: In this photo taken during action against the Italian fleet, a Fairey Albacore torpedo bomber pulls up after releasing its torpedo against the Italian cruiser *Pola.* The photo was taken from a Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber. TOP: This aerial photograph shows British warships operating in the Ionian Sea about the time of the Battle of Cape Matapan. The aircraft in the foreground is a Fairey Fulmar.

The Italians' first shots were short, but they closed the range with superior speed, concentrating fire on *Gloucester,* closing to 23,500 yards. At that point, *Gloucester* opened fire with three salvos. All fell short, but the Italians turned away for a few minutes, then onto a parallel course. As they did, the British destroyer *Vendetta* developed engine trouble, and Pridham-Whippell ordered her to Alexandria.

At 8:55, the Italian cruisers checked fire, turned in a circle to port, and headed northwestward, having claimed two hits.

Pridham-Whippell chose to shadow the ships that had engaged him, racing northwestward, unknowingly straight for *Vittorio Veneto* and her 15-inch guns. The Italian dreadnought had gone to action stations, and 19-year-old cadet Mazzucato was now at his post.

Meanwhile, Cunningham cranked his three battleships up to 22 knots, the fastest the *Barham* could do. She had not been modernized like *Valiant* and *Warspite* between the wars. Cunningham ordered *Valiant* to connect with Pridham-Whippell as soon as possible and *Formidable* to launch an airstrike on the enemy fleet.

On *Vittorio Veneto*'s flag bridge, Iachino wondered why Pridham-Whippell had apparently withdrawn from Samsonetti's cruisers. The Italian ships had higher speed than the British ships, so they were guaranteed to catch up and act as picadors for his battleship, which would play the role of matador.

At 9 AM, Iachino was given a message from Rhodes: "At 0:745 No. 1 aircraft of the Aegean strategic reconnaissance sighted 1 carrier 2 battleships 9 cruisers 14 destroyers in sector 3836/0 course 165° 20 knots." Iachino promptly drew the wrong conclusion: the Italian reconnaissance plane had sighted his own force and reported it as British. He estimated that the British cruisers were southeast of him and ordered his ships to head east and jump at them from the north and on their starboard quarter. Meanwhile, Samsonetti would double back on the British cruisers and drive them straight to *Vittorio Veneto.* The British would be caught in a deadly sandwich of heavy gunfire.

On *Formidable,* the carrier prepared to launch a strike of six Albacore biplanes from No. 826 Squadron under Lt. Cmdr. Gerald Saunt, covered by two Fulmar fighters of No. 803 Squadron, to support Pridham-Whippell. But when the Italian cruisers broke off the action, Cunningham delayed the strike to avoid revealing the presence of this potentially decisive weapon. Instead, Cunningham requested RAF 201 Group to send in Sunderland flying boats to shadow the Italian fleet.

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The aircraft carrier HMS *Formidable* was a major asset to the British effort to control the Mediterranean Sea. Her aircraft played key roles in reconnaissance and attack.

At 9:39, Cunningham ordered *Formidable* to launch the strike it had readied to hit Force X, warning Pridham-Whippell that the Albacores were on their way. Pridham-Whippell misread the message to think that an Italian or German airstrike was headed for him because when No. 826 Squadron arrived the British ships greeted them with antiaircraft fire. Fortunately, nobody was hurt.

On *Orion,* British gun crews sat atop their turrets at 10:58 AM to avoid the intense heat inside them, and stewards and cooks provided everyone with action bully beef sandwiches. On the bridge, *Orion*'s executive officer, Commander T.C. Wynne, nudged operations officer R.L. Fisher and said, 'What battleship is that over on the starboard beam. I thought ours were miles east of us?'"

As Fisher whipped out his binoculars to look at the hull to the north, a 15-inch salvo splashed into the water near *Orion. Vittorio Veneto* had announced her presence with authority.

Pridham-Whippell reacted immediately, ordering his cruisers by radio to make smoke, turn together to 180 degrees, and go to top speed.

On *Warspite*, Cunningham and his staff heard these urgent messages and wondered what Pridham-Whippell was up to. Cunningham read the signals and said, "Don't be so damn silly. He's sighted the enemy battle fleet, and if you'd done any reasonable time in destroyers, you'd know it without waiting for the amplifying report. Put the enemy battle fleet in at visibility distance to the northward of him."

Now Sansonetti's cruisers sprinted into action from Pridham-Whippell's starboard quarter, putting the British cruisers in the position Iachino wanted. The Italian battleship's fire was accurate but with too large a spread. A near-miss sent splinters scratching *Orion.* Only the smoke kept the Italian ships—lacking radar—from scoring major hits. *Gloucester,* her top speed reported at 24 knots due to engine trouble the night before, somehow cranked up to 30 knots. Unfortunately for her, *Vittorio Veneto* could do 31.

At 11:27, the British cruisers' situation seemed hopeless. At that same time, *Formidable*'s striking force arrived. Among the Albacore pilots was Lieutenant Frank Hopkins, who rose to the rank of admiral and later gained a knighthood.

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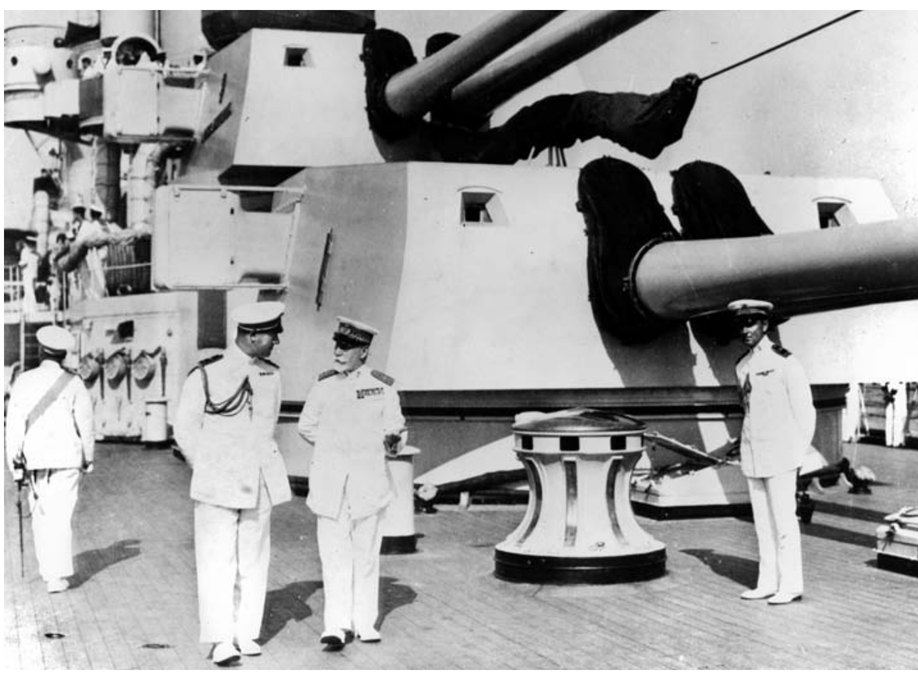
ABOVE: The modern Italian battleships *Littorio* and *Vittorio Veneto* participate in gunnery exercises in the summer of 1940. Their performance was disappointing in the Mediterranean, and after early setbacks Mussolini was reluctant to deploy his capital ships. BELOW: Italian naval personnel walk the deck of the heavy cruiser *Pola* in this image of the warship's aft 8-inch gun turrets. *Pola* was sunk during the Battle of Cape Matapan.



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"We sighted on large warship, escorted by four destroyers, steaming towards our cruisers, and shortly after this the large warship, which turned out to be a battleship of the Littorio class, opened fire on our cruisers. Since the battleship was steaming at 30 knots, it was clear that our cruisers were in for trouble, and they could expect no help from the main fleet, which was more than 80 miles away," he wrote later.

After the escorting Fulmars shot down a German Junkers Ju-88 fighter that had been sent to the scene, the Albacores moved in.

"Unless we could do something quickly our cruisers would be picked off one by one at long range by the *Vittorio Veneto*. The trouble was that we were all abaft the beam of *Vittorio Veneto*. She was steaming at 30 knots, the wind at our height was 30 knots against us, so that since our air speed was only 90 knots we were catching up at a relative speed of only 30 knots. I think it took the best part of 20 minutes to creep up to a suitable attacking position ahead of *Vittorio Veneto*. Throughout most of this time she and her four destroyers kept up a spirited but fortunately inaccurate bombardment with their A/A guns. The battleship was also doing some good shooting at our cruisers and appeared to be straddling them frequently. I suspect that the only reason that they did not score any direct hits was that the spread of their individual salvoes was too large," Hopkins wrote.

Despite Saunt's determined attack, all torpedoes missed *Vittorio Veneto,* but they saved the British cruisers. Iachino broke off the action, realizing that if a British carrier was nearby, so were British battleships. He ordered his ships to head on course 300° at 28 knots, heading home. Pridham-Whippell, heading south and behind a smoke screen, could not see the Italian ships retreating.

When the smoke cleared, Pridham-Whippell saw only a clear horizon to the north instead of *Vittorio Veneto* and to the northwest, where Italian cruisers had been bearing down on him. His ships were safe. He ordered them to connect with Cunningham, who was now 45 miles east-southeast of Iachino, chasing the Italians at top speed, but he could not catch up with the faster enemy unless they could be slowed down by *Formidable*'s aircraft.

To do so, *Formidable* was detached with two destroyers to enable her to crank up to her higher speeds, both to launch and recover aircraft and to close the distance with the Italians.

Formidable launched a second strike from No. 829 Squadron, consisting of three Albacores and two Swordfish, under Lt. Cmdr. J. Dalyell-Stead, with two Fulmar fighters to escort them.

Meanwhile, British battleships and aircraft pursued the withdrawing Iachino. Pridham-Whippell's cruisers and destroyers hooked up with Cunningham at 12:28 PM, and Cunningham briskly signaled his junior: "Where is the enemy?"

Pridham-Whippell had no alternative but to respond: "Sorry, don't know; haven't seen them for some time."

Those Italian warships sprinted along at 28 knots until 2 PM, when Iachino cut speed to a slightly more sedate 25 knots to conserve fuel in his destroyers. That still outran Cunningham, but closed the range for *Formidable*'s strike.

On his armored flag bridge, Iachino finally got his first accurate intelligence information at 2:25 PM. The first was a delayed signal from Rhodes reporting a British force of one battleship, one carrier, six cruisers, and five destroyers some 80 miles east of him. The second, from the Supermarina, based on radio direction-finding cross-bearings, reported enemy ships 170 miles to the southeast. From his experience, Iachino believed that aircraft reports were unreliable, particularly on reported positions. Either way, the British were at sea with a carrier, and while Iachino was not too concerned about the

Royal Navy's slower moving battleships, their carrier worried him. He had sufficient speed and hitting power to defeat any surface opponent, but not the Fleet Air Arm's maneuverable torpedo bombers.

The Fleet Air Arm was keeping Iachino busy. At noon, Swordfish from the Fleet Air Arm base in Maleme in Crete attacked his cruisers. At 2:20 PM, the RAF joined in with three Bristol Blenheim bombers from Greece. At 2:50, 3:30, and 7 PM, more Blenheim bombers tried their luck, but none gained hits. Iachino was angry at the constant pinpricks and even angrier that neither the Italian nor German air forces sent him fighter cover.

At 3:10 PM, *Formidable*'s strike, headed by Dalyell-Stead, arrived over the Italian fleet, emerging from out of the sun, and the three Albacores, 5F, 5G, and 5H, swung ahead of *Vittorio Veneto*. Iachino ordered his dreadnought 180° to starboard. The two Swordfish, 5K and 4B, attacked *Vittorio Veneto* from her starboard side.

"We had all our hearts and minds fixed on the aircraft," Iachino wrote later, adding that he was impressed by their skill and courage. The leading aircraft launched its torpedo just 1,000 yards ahead of the battleship, then turned to his left, coming under intense antiaircraft fire. The Albacore staggered, dipped violently across the track 12 yards ahead of V*ittorio*'s bows, and plunged into the sea 1,000 yards on the starboard hand.

Mazzucato had a grandstand seat for the action at his 37mm antiaircraft gun. "The aircraft that was almost aligned with the bow of the ship attacked with extreme resolution and a spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of a hail of antiaircraft fire. Hit by it, the plane fell into the sea and disappeared," he wrote later.

The pilot who died was Dalyell-Stead himself, who received a posthumous Distinguished Service Order. Also killed were his observer, Lieutenant Cooke, who received a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross, and Petty Officer Blenkhorn, the telegraphist/air gunner, who received a posthumous Distinguished Service Medal.

Incredibly, they were the only British casualties in the entire battle.

As *Vittorio Veneto* swung to starboard, Dalyell-Stead's torpedo hit home, just above the outer port screw 15 feet below the waterline, shaking the immense dreadnought. More than 4,000 tons of water flooded into the battleship, smoke rings flew out of her funnel, and she settled by the stern.

Vittorio Veneto was stopped, and along with her the entire Italian Fleet. Cunningham's battleships were just 65 miles astern, unknown to Iachino, and closing at 22 knots.

The British planes formed up to head back to *Formidable* and reported at least three hits and that *Vittorio Veneto* and her escorts had "made a large decrease in speed." Rear Admiral Denis Boyd on *Formidable* passed that news on to Cunningham, who answered, "Well done. Give him another nudge at dusk."

Cunningham ordered Pridham-Whippell to take his cruisers ahead of the battleships at their higher speed and locate Iachino's ships, now that they had been slowed down. Cunningham had two hours of daylight left and hoped to achieve a decisive engagement by nightfall.

On *Vittorio Veneto,* damage control parties coped with a list to port and stern and stopped engines. Within a short time, the battleship's engines were working up to 16 knots on one propeller. With his battleship damaged, Operation Gaudo had to be aborted. Safety was 420 miles away at Taranto to the northwest.

Studying his charts, Iachino determined that an advancing British battleship could only do 20 knots and it could not catch him by nightfall. The real danger would be an air attack by

Map © 2019 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: The Battle of Cape Matapan ended the Italian threat to British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. Never again did the Italian fleet sortie in great force during World War II. BELOW: Moments before coming under attack, the British cruiser *Gloucester* is unable to take advantage of a thick, black smokescreen laid by the cruisers *Ajax* and *Perth*. Other British warships have already been forced to take evasive action as shells from the Italian battleship *Vittorio Veneto* crash nearby.

Australian War Memorial

day, followed by a destroyer attack by night. That would require a close screen of escorts to prevent the destroyers from breaking through the barrier. As he watched the cruisers *Zara, Pola*, and *Fiume* take up their stations on his starboard side, Iachino studied them with pride. He had served on board all three, knew their captains, and commanded all three as head of the 1st Cruiser Division. He was seeing them by day for the last time.

On *Formidable,* six Albacores of No. 826 Squadron and two Swordfish of No. 829 Squadron were spotted on the flight deck for the "nudge" Cunningham sought, and they flew off at 5:35, again under Saunt. After making the attack, they were to land at Maleme rather than risk a difficult night recovery on *Formidable*. They were supported by two Swordfish of No. 815 Squadron from Maleme. They met up at five minutes before sunset.

Meanwhile, Cunningham's big ships steamed on. The admiral flashed his intentions to the ships by signal blinker. "If cruisers gain touch with damaged battleship, 2nd and 14th Destroyer Flotillas will be sent to attack. If she is not then destroyed, battlefleet will follow in. If not located by cruisers I intend to work around to the north and then west and regain touch in the morning."

The burden was being put on the long-serving destroyermen, their tried tactics, and reliable torpedoes. The 10th Destroyer Flotilla, under Captain H.M.L. Walker, consisted of HMAS *Stuart,* HMS *Griffin, Greyhound,* and *Havock*. They would take station ahead of the battlefleet and act as a screen. The14th Flotilla, under Captain Phillip Mack on *Janus*, consisting of *Nubian* and *Mohawk,* would position itself one mile on the port bow of the battleships. Finally, 2nd Flotilla, under Captain H.S.L. Nicholson on *Ibex,* with *Hasty, Hereward,* and *Hotspur,* would take up station one mile on the starboard bow. As soon as Pridham-Whippell made contact with *Vittorio Veneto,* 2nd and 14th Flotillas would unleash their torpedoes on the Italian battleship.

Cunningham launched *Warspite*'s Swordfish seaplane to find and fix the Italian ships at 5:45 PM. Realizing he would have to make a night sea landing, Lt. Cmdr. A.S. Bolt, the pilot, took extra flame floats with him. He spotted the Italian battleship at 6:20 PM and reported the sighting 11 minutes later. The Italians were heading west-northwest at 15 knots, 43 miles from the British. Studying their plot chart, the British realized they had a 7-10 knot speed advantage over the Italians.

Cunningham had to cut the distance from 50 miles to 12 to bring his 15-inch guns within range of the enemy. That would take four hours. So it was up to the destroyers, sprinting ahead at 36 knots, to tie into the Italian ships.

Now Bolt reported the composition of the Italian fleet: *Vittorio Veneto* at the center of a column with four destroyers, two fore and aft, with two more columns port and starboard. The port outer column consisted of three destroyers and the starboard outer column of four destroyers. The port inner column was made up of the heavy cruisers *Trento, Trieste,* and *Bolzano*. The starboard column consisted of the heavy cruisers *Zara, Pola*, and *Fiume*. The battleship was therefore well shielded from night attack. Iachino's neat and well-organized column needed to be broken up.

Sun was setting at about 7:15 PM when Pridham-Whippell's radar picked out the Italian warships. At that time, *Formidable*'s planes droned in. Iachino saw them, too, swooping out of the orange western sky like vultures. "These were the planes," Iachino wrote later, "whose job it was to give us the coup de grace at nightfall."

The Albacores swooped in from a darkening sky as the Italian ships opened fire with all their guns and illuminated the scene with their searchlights. Iachino ordered his ships to turn 30° to starboard.

The British planes plunged in to attack despite the heavy fire and launched their torpedoes, aiming for *Vittorio Veneto,* but missing. The very last plane, aircraft 5A, piloted by Sub-Lieutenant C.P.C. Williams, attacked at 7:45 PM and pressed in on close range despite heavy Italian fire and blinding searchlights. He slammed a torpedo not into the battleship, but the escorting *Pola,* blasting open her starboard side and flooding her engine and No. 3 boiler room. *Pola*'s electrical power failed, three more compartments flooded, and the main engines stopped. The cruiser was in no immediate danger of sinking but could not move.

Incredibly, Iachino's four columns continued to steam on. He did not know that *Pola* was sitting helpless in the dark until 8:15 PM, half an hour after she was hit.

"Now came the difficult moment of deciding what to do. I was fairly well convinced that having got so far it would be foolish not to make every effort to complete *Vittorio Veneto*'s destruction," Cunningham wrote in his memoirs. "At the same time it appeared to us that the Italian admiral must have been fully aware of our position. He had numerous cruisers and destroyers in company, and any British admiral in his position would not have hesitated to use every destroyer he had, backed up by all his cruisers fitted with torpedo tubes, for attacks upon the pursuing fleet."

Radar gave the British Royal Navy a decided advantage during the Battle of Cape Matapan as evidenced in this dramatic rendering of the engagement by artist Frank Norton. In the foreground the Australian cruiser *Stuart* and the British destroyer *Havoc* move against a pair of Italian Zara-class destroyers during the great British victory in the Mediterranean.

Cunningham was taking a great risk—the Royal Navy had not fought a night engagement since the Battle of the Nile in 1798, and even then Nelson had attacked before dark.

Another admiral was furious at that moment. A 8:18 PM, Iachino finally got word that *Pola* was hit and stopped. He ordered Cattaneo to head back with *Zara, Fiume,* and four destroyers to protect the cripple and bring her home. Cattaneo asked to send two destroyers—thus reducing the risk to his own heavier ships—but Iachino wanted the heavier ships on hand if the British attacked and an admiral on the scene to assess and coordinate the response and defense.

Cunningham ordered the destroyers he had sent forward to attack. At 8:37, his radiomen sent the signal: "Immediate. 14th DF, 2nd DF, from Commander in Chief: Destroyer flotillas attack enemy battlefleet with torpedoes. Esti-

Australian War Memorial

mated bearing and distance of center of enemy battlefleet from Admiral 286° 33 miles at 8:30. Enemy course and speed 295° 13 knots."

Pridham-Whippell had already cranked his ships' speeds up to 30 knots and into a search formation seven miles wide. At about 7:40 PM, he was only 12 miles from the Italian fleet, and his lookouts saw the flashes of antiaircraft fire and searchlights in the distance from *Formidable*'s airstrike.

By 8:30, *Orion* was nearing the target, and Pridham-Whippell informed Cunningham that it might be the damaged *Vittorio Veneto*. An immobile battleship was a prize beyond belief. Cunningham promptly ordered his ships to form a battle line with *Warspite* leading, followed by *Valiant, Formidable,* and *Barham*, each 600 yards apart. It seemed incredible that the daring Cunningham would put an aircraft carrier in a battle line, but he did so. The destroyers *Stuart* and *Havock* were a mile to starboard, *Greyhound* and *Griffin* one mile to port.

As *Warspite* lacked radar, it was *Valiant*'s job to locate the contact. She found the immobile ship six miles distant on her port bow, at a length of about 600 feet.

Cunningham ordered his battle line to change course toward the radar target and the port side destroyers to head for the starboard side to clear the line of fire. On *Valiant,* everybody in the radar room watched the green pulsing radar lines on the cathode ray tube come together. A young midshipman who answered to the title of Prince Philip of Greece stood at his action station on the port side searchlight on the bridge, awaiting orders to snap his beam on the bearing given by the radar operator.

The immobile ship was *Pola*, of course, and the two mysterious arrivals were *Zara* and *Fiume*, there to save their sister. And if the British were surprised, the Italians were even more so. Their crews had been stood down from battle stations and were prepared to assist *Pola*. *Fiume* had her towing cables out and ready. At 10:25, Cattaneo fired off a red signal rocket to let *Pola* know he had arrived. In the burst of the rocket, Cattaneo's lookouts reported a second force ahead of them and to port—Cunningham's battle line.

Cunningham used his tactical radio to order his big ships to change course to starboard, keeping them in line ahead. Unlike the Italians, they knew the enemy was there and everyone was at action stations. *Formidable* pulled out to starboard, useless in this kind of action, so as not to risk her precious flight deck.

"I shall never forget the next few minutes," Cunningham wrote. "In the dead silence, a silence that could be almost felt, one heard only the voice of the gun control personnel putting the guns on to the new target. One heard the orders repeated in the director tower behind and above the bridge. Looking forward, one saw the turrets swing and steady when the 15-inch guns pointed at the enemy cruisers. Never in the whole of my life have I experienced a more thrilling moment than when I heard a calm voice from the director tower—'Director layer sees the target;' sure sign that the guns were ready and that his finger was itching on the trigger. The enemy was at a range of no more than 3,800 yards—point-blank."

At that moment, *Zara*'s Captain L. Corsi said to Sub-Lieutenant Giorgi Parodi: "There's the *Pola*. Is that our recognition signal?"

Almost as if in answer, *Greyhound* snapped on a searchlight that illuminated the third Italian ship in line, *Fiume,* showing a silvery blue shape. The beam revealed *Zara* second in line in silhouette and the destroyer *Alfieri* on the far

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

left, first in line. On *Valiant,* Prince Philip was ordered to "Open Shutter" and lit up his searchlight. It illuminated half of a cruiser. It was 10:27 PM.

All three of the dreadnoughts lit up the night with massive 15-inch broadsides. *Warspite* fired at a range of 2,900 yards and *Valiant* 4,000.

Prince Philip saw "all hell break loose" as the British guns savaged their targets and shifted to new ones. "By this time the night was full of smoke, loud bangs and flashes and the dark shapes of our own destroyers, with their colored recognitions, appeared and disappeared. That bit of the Mediterranean then became a very dangerous place. There must have been some 20 British and Italian warships dashing about in every direction at high speed," he wrote.

Five *Warspite* shells hit *Fiume,* and the cruiser burst into flames just aft of the bridge back to the after turret. The mammoth forward 8-inch gun turret was blown over the side by the explosion. On *Zara,* Corsi thought that *Pola* was firing on them in a case of mistaken identity.

On *Stuart*, Australian sailors watched *Fiume* as it "dissolved into a mane of shearing flame. She heeled, stricken under the onslaught, transformed in a few awful seconds from a proud fighting ship to a twisted tangle of iron." Listing badly, blazing away, *Fiume* fell out of line. Sailors pulled out hoses to control the blaze but could not do so. Sailors hurled ready-use ammunition over the side to prevent it from exploding.

Zara never fired a shot in response—*Warspite*'s shells punched out her electrical system immediately. Worse, the 8-inch gun crews on the other Italian ships discovered that they lacked flashless charges, which meant that when they opened fire, they were temporarily blinded by their own guns firing shells.

In seven minutes *Warspite* had fired 40 rounds of 15-inch armor-piercing ammunition and 44 of 6-inch high explosive shells. In that barrage of ordnance, Cunningham was astonished that none of his own ships had been hit by friendly fire. "To my horror I saw one of our destroyers the *Havock*, straddled by our fire, and in my mind wrote her off as a loss. The *Formidable* also had an escape. When action was joined she hauled out to starboard at full speed, a night battle being no place for a carrier," he wrote.

The blazing *Fiume* fell out of line and started listing badly. Her skipper, Captain G. Giorgis, ordered "Abandon Ship" at 11:15. The crewmen hurled rafts into the sea as the ship sank by the stern.

Zara blazed in the dark as well, spouts of flame reaching to the top of her masts. Her crew was ordered to abandon ship. Admiral Catteneo snarled, "The crew of *Zara* does not surrender. I have given orders to sink the ship." The cruiser's executive officer headed below to set off charges to scuttle *Zara*. At 12:30 AM, they exploded, taking Admiral Cattaneo, her skipper, and much of her crew with her.

Other Italian ships suffered under the barrage of British shells as well. The destroyer *Carducci* roared with fires, and her skipper ordered her scuttled and went down with his command.

Soon *Barham* shells started dismembering *Alfieri.* The heavy British bombardment forced *Alfieri*'s skipper to order abandon ship. The destroyer's skipper refused to enter a lifeboat. Instead, he calmly lit a cigarette and started to tend the wounded. *Alfieri* was the only Italian ship to fire back in the battle. She sank at 11:30 PM anyway.

Two destroyers were able to escape—*Gioberti* made a torpedo attack on the British ships that failed to score hits but bought time for her and her sister *Oriani* to flee the scene, with *Oriani* the only Italian warship to get

away undamaged. *Gioberti* reached Calabria with one engine knocked out.

With the heavy lifting done, Cunningham ordered his destroyers to finish off the Italian cripples.

Havock moved among the burning and sinking Italian ships, using her torpedoes to finish off the cripples. She turned north to follow Cunningham's orders, firing starshells to illuminate the scene. To the amazement of her skipper, Lieutenant G.R.G. Watkins, the starshells revealed a stopped and apparently undamaged ship before them. Watkins thought it was a battleship, but it was of course *Pola,* whose immobility had caused the action.

Havock opened fire at 11:45 PM and signaled (wrongly) that she had engaged a *Vittorio Veneto*-class battleship. Just after midnight, Watkins corrected his signal, properly identifying the target as an 8-inch gun cruiser and giving his intention to shadow the vessel, as he had no more torpedoes.

Fortunately, help was on the way. Captain Mack on *Jervis* and his eight destroyers were heading westward to find the rest of the enemy fleet. They had altered course northwest, unknown to him, increased speed, and opened the range. When Mack received Watkins' signal, he turned back, figuring that a firm sighting in the hand was worth shadows in the bush.

It had been a rough night for *Pola* and her crew. The ship immobile and powerless, Captain De Pisa was extremely aware that his cruiser could offer no resistance to the British dreadnoughts that had torn apart the Italian ships that came to support him. De Pisa gloomily ordered the sea and condenser intake valves opened to scuttle the ship. Incredibly, the British had raced past her in the dark to blast the other Italian cruisers, seemingly uninterested in an immobile and dark vessel.

LEFT: During the Battle of Cape Matapan, the searchlight of the British destroyer *Greyhound* catches the Italian cruiser *Fiume* in its beam. The Italian fleet was thoroughly defeated during the night battle in 1941. BELOW: Italian sailors, survivors of the Battle of Cape Matapan, float in the Mediterranean Sea. The position of the survivors was relayed to Italian authorities, and a hospital ship was directed toward the location to rescue them.

Australian War Memorial

At 3 AM, Mack's destroyers came up to *Pola,* and *Jervis* came alongside with boarding parties mustered. The British pondered the possibility of towing *Pola* home but figured it would be too slow to drag through the Mediterranean, particularly with the certainty of heavy enemy air attack the next day.

With that, *Jervis* and *Nubian* fired two more torpedoes at the settling cruiser. *Nubian*'s torpedo was the coup de grace, as *Pola* exploded and sank at 4:03, ending the Battle of Cape Matapan.

Cunningham ordered his victorious ships to reassemble, and all were back together at 7 AM. Cunningham ordered his ships back to the scene of victory, now to rescue survivors. They found an ocean covered by oil, and boats, rafts, wreckage, and corpses floating around. The British picked up about 900 Italian sailors, although some died later. A Greek destroyer flotilla that had been unable to join the battle due to a delay in ciphering orders pulled out 110 more.

The British were forced to withdraw when Ju-88s attacked the ships, with men still in the water. Refusing to press his luck, Cunningham withdrew. But first he shot off an aircraft from *Formidable* to Suda Bay with a message to be sent to Malta and then on a clear channel to the Supermarina in Rome, giving the location of the survivors still in the water, in a touch of old-style chivalry lacking in modern war.

The Italians promptly sent out the fully marked hospital ship *Gradisca,* and two days later she reached the scene, where she saved 13 officers and 147 men.

The Italian Navy had lost three heavy cruisers and two destroyers and suffered 2,400 casualties. Except for the Swordfish and its three-man crew lost by *Formidable,* the British had suffered no casualties or damage, to Cunningham's great relief. In the melee, he had feared that *Warspite* had sunk one of his own destroyers.

Cunningham had won the first naval battle that involved carrier- and land-based aircraft, coordinating all elements extremely well. Matapan was an incredibly one-sided victory and gave the Royal Navy a moral ascendancy over the Italian Regia Marina for the rest of the war. While their submarines, midget submarines, torpedo boats, and aircraft would show ample determination and considerable courage in future battles, their main fleet would not sortie to engage any British force that included a battleship or carrier.

The victory was also won by Bletchley Park's codebreakers, and they were very aware of what was going on. On the evening of March 29, John Godfrey, Director of Naval Intelligence, phoned Bletchley Park and asked to speak to Dilly Knox. Knox was unreachable, being at home, but Godfrey told Edward Clarke, who answered the phone, "Tell Dilly that we have won a great victory in the Mediterranean, and it is entirely due to him and his girls."

The girls knew it. Mavis Lever said, "There was a great deal of jubilation in the cottage and then Admiral Cunningham himself came to visit us [a few weeks later]. The first thing he wanted to do when he came was to see the actual message that had been broken. Somebody rushed down to the Eight Bells public house to get a couple of bottles of wine, and if it was not up to the standard the C-in-C Mediterranean was used to, he didn't show it when he toasted 'Dilly and his girls.'"

Author David Lippman is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He has written on a number of topics and has maintained a website detailing the daily events of the war.*

The Nightmare

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

THE U.S. 22ND INFANTRY REGIMENT AND MANY OTHER UNITS SUFFERED HEAVILY IN THE GRIM, BLOODY HÜRTGEN FOREST.

GRAY SKIES HUNG LOW AND A STEADY DRIZZLE DRIPPED THROUGH THE tall, dense fir trees of a forest on the German-Belgian border on the morning of Thursday, November 16, 1944.

As artillery volleys thumped occasionally in the distance, small groups of chilled soldiers ventured out from the forward foxholes and bunkers of German General Hans Schmidt's 275th Infantry Division, scouting for signs of an expected American attack. Only a mile away, men of the U.S. 22nd Infantry Regiment's rifle and weapons companies rolled up their blankets and ate breakfast. It would be their last hot meal for 18 days. Officers and sergeants made last-minute preparations for an assault.

The "Double Deucer" Regiment had landed at Utah Beach with Maj. Gen. Raymond O. "Tubby" Barton's 4th Infantry (Ivy) Division on June 6, 1944, and suffered heavy casualties in the Normandy campaign. But, seasoned and with high morale, it was rated one of the best infantry regiments in the U.S. Army. Captain William S. Boice, one of its chaplains, called the 22nd Regiment "a fighting machine trained to an efficiency not matched at any time during the war." Its motto was "Deeds, Not Words," and it would be awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation.

The regiment, almost at full strength, was commanded by 42-year-old Colonel Charles T. Lanham, a wiry, graying 1924 graduate of West Point and former Infantry School instructor and War Department staffer. Also a poet and writer, his prewar work on infantry manuals had caught the attention of General George C. Marshall, and the Army chief of staff listed Lanham in his "black book" of up-and-coming officers. The scrappy Lanham led from the front to the point of foolhardiness and expected his junior officers to do the same. He told them, "As officers, I expect you to lead your men. Men will follow a leader, and I expect my platoon leaders to be right up front. Losses could be very high. Use every skill you possess. If you survive your first battle, I'll promote you. Good luck."

Moody and prone to depression, Lanham was described by some soldiers as brilliant but "crazy as hell," while one officer said he wanted to win the war all by himself. But there was never any question of his courage.

Stretched thinly, "Buck" Lanham's regiment was responsible for a three-mile front in the 20-mile-by-10-mile Hürtgen Forest, situated in a 50-square-mile triangle bounded by the German cities of Aachen and Duren and the town of Monschau. There, a prolonged and bitter battle of attrition was being waged by American and German soldiers, and nowhere else on the front lines during World War II was the stamina, courage, and fighting spirit of U.S. soldiers tested more severely.

When all was ready on November 16, soldiers of the 22nd Infantry Regiment's forward companies waded across the Roter Weh stream and began climbing a fir-clad ridge toward the Roer River plain, five miles ahead. They were starting 18 days of hell in the Hürtgen Forest "meat-grinder." Famed novelist Ernest Hemingway, a friend of Colonel Lanham and a correspondent for Collier's magazine, described the Hürtgenwald campaign as "Passchendaele with tree bursts." He was recalling the grim Western Front battle of 1917 in which British

National Archives

Forest

During the bloody fighting in the Hürtgen Forest on November 18, 1944, Pfc. Benny Barrow of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division helps a fellow soldier to negotiate a difficult climb.

and Canadian troops suffered 300,000 casualties in gaining a five-mile-deep salient.

Like many other units engaged, the Double Deucers fought longer than normally expected in the gloomy Hürtgenwald, and few American combat outfits have ever experienced such severe casualties. After three days, the regiment had lost its three battalion commanders, and the attrition rate among rifle company leaders was more than 300 percent. By the end of the sixth day, the regiment had suffered 50 percent casualties, the point at which an infantry unit is considered to have lost much of its effectiveness. By the night of November 20, after five days in action, the 22nd Regiment's rifle companies had lost more than 40 percent of their strength. Then, Colonel Lanham's men fought for another 12 days.

Despite heavy artillery support, it cost the regiment 2,806 casualties to advance 6,000 yards—averaging just over 300 yards a day—during 18 continuous days of action. One soldier fell for every two yards gained. The regiment's casualty rate was a staggering 86 percent of its normal strength of 3,250 officers and men. And it was not alone, for several divisions and regiments were mauled in the campaign. General J. Lawton Collins, dashing commander of the U.S. VII Corps, a veteran of Guadalcanal and liberator of Cherbourg, called Hürtgen a "green hell," while Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin, the youthful, gallant commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, characterized the forest as an "ice-coated moloch with an insatiable appetite."

Lasting from September 1944 to January 1945, the campaign was part of a drive by the U.S. First Army, led by white-haired, dependable Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges, to cross the Roer River and eventually capture its vital dams. The overall aim was an attack on the Aachen-Cologne axis designed to close with the River Rhine, as a first step toward the envelopment of the industrial Ruhr Valley. The fighting was bitter because the two forest dams controlled the water level of the Roer River flowing northward. The Allies could not launch a broad, massive attack across the Cologne Plain to the Rhine as long as the enemy held the dams and could threaten to flood the Roer River Valley.

By September 1944, the British, American, and Canadian Armies were crowding against the borders of Germany. After the unexpected success of the Normandy breakout, the Allied high command believed that the enemy was virtually defeated. Euphoria clouded sound strategic judgment, and some rude awakenings lay ahead. The German Army was being pushed back to its home ground, but it was still a well-disciplined and formidable force. Its defenses—both natural and man-made—were strong, and it was resisting the Allied crusade more stubbornly than ever.

The rugged Vosges Mountains in northeastern France formed a traditional defensive barrier, while the Siegfried Line and the River Rhine comprised a significant obstacle to the Allied forces. The weather worsened that autumn and winter, and a series of bitterly contested battles—Walcheren Island, Aachen, the Saar Basin, the Vosges Mountains, the Reichswald Forest, and the Hürtgen Forest and the Roer River—was fought under the most trying conditions. Besides the weather, the Allied armies were plagued by shortages of ammunition and supplies.

The Allied high command was eager to breach the German border defense lines, vault across the Rhine, and push into the Reich, but the way was barred by the River Roer and the large forested area south of Aachen. The corridor for advance was narrow and unsuitable for large-scale maneuvering. Nevertheless, Generals Collins and Hodges decided that it was necessary to clear the Hürtgen Forest. The former said later, "If we would have turned loose of the Hürtgen and let the Germans roam there, they could have hit my flank."

In their haste to enter Germany, the Americans underestimated this major obstacle on the path to the Roer River, the strongly defended forest with its dense trees, deep ravines, and lack of roads. Collins and Hodges made no plans to capture the hydroelectric and flood-control dams on the river, just inside the forest. It would be too perilous to send troops across the Roer while the enemy controlled the dams. They were the key to the river, but it would take a bitter struggle in the forest by several divisions before Hodges ordered an attack against them.

The first engagements in the Hürtgen Forest were fought by Brig. Gen. Maurice Rose's 3rd Armored Division in September 1944. It was followed by the 9th Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry (Keystone) Division, and numerous supporting units as the Americans hammered with little success against the German pillboxes and bunkers deep in the damp, gloomy forest. Reinforcing combat groups were fed piecemeal into the Hürtgen cauldron. The other units involved in the grueling campaign were the 1st, 8th, 9th, 78th, and 83rd Infantry Divisions, the 5th Armored Division, the 505th and 517th Parachute Infantry Regiments, and the 2nd Ranger Battalion, led by Lt. Col. James E. Rudder of Pointe-du-Hoc fame.

A series of attacks in the forest were ill fated, and from the beginning the campaign reflected little credit on the senior American commanders. The initial objective, to protect General Collins' flank, was limited, and the high command failed to recognize that the Roer River dams would allow the enemy to flood any Allied advances made to the north. The Hürtgenwald was valuable territory to the Germans, and its loss would threaten their entire defense line west of the Rhine.

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During a fight to ward off a German counterattack at Grosshau on December 1, 1944, American soldiers of the 22nd Infantry Regiment man an 81mm mortar as fire is directed against the advancing enemy from a position amid the rubble of the village.

The American high command blundered by not proposing an easier avenue of approach southeast of the Hürtgen Forest, allowing Hodges' army to seize the dams and then clear the difficult terrain downriver. The offensive as undertaken placed the American forces at a severe disadvantage in the forest. There, the Germans were able to delay and wear down the Americans, providing security and buying critical time to prepare for the Ardennes counteroffensive.

In the Hürtgenwald, the U.S. First Army encountered a tactical nightmare. Starting on October 6, two attacking regiments had to fight for five days to advance one mile to the first clearing in the forest. The 9th Infantry Division then took 10 days of intense combat to push another mile. The two-mile advance cost almost 5,000 casualties. More divisions, including Maj. Gen. Norman "Dutch" Cota's long-suffering 28th Infantry Division, were fed into the Hürtgenwald maelstrom, and the losses continued to mount.

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Soldiers of the American 28th Infantry Division advance warily through the thick woods of the Hürtgen Forest. The 28th, popularly known as the "Bucket of Blood" because of their red keystone shoulder patch, was one of several U.S. infantry divisions that suffered heavy casualties in the Hürtgen.

The truculent Hodges did not press for air attacks on the Roer River dams until late November, but they failed. Direct hits were made, but the concrete structures were so massive that damage was negligible. On December 13, three months after the first GIs entered the Hürtgen Forest, a ground assault on the dams was launched. It would not be until February 1945 that Hodges had control of the dams and was able to confidently place troops on the eastern bank of the Roer River.

One reason for the intensity of the struggle in the forest was that the intention of General Omar N. Bradley's U.S. 21st Army Group to reach for the strategic city of Aachen had been obvious to the enemy for some time. In the Hürtgenwald, solidly dug in with 1,000 well-concealed guns and plenty of ammunition, were the men of General Erich Brandenberger's German Seventh Army, General Gustav von Zangen's 15th Army, and General Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army.

Hürtgen was a campaign that could and should have been avoided—a campaign of prolonged and bitter attrition in which U.S. infantrymen were challenged by stubborn, unyielding defenders, rugged terrain, and appalling weather. Army Colonel David H. Hackworth, a distinguished battalion commander in the Vietnam War, called Hürtgen "one of the most costly blunders of World War II."

The Hürtgen campaign was strictly a foot soldier's war because the thick, ravine-creased woods, steep ridges, lack of a road net, mud, and weather conditions—rain, fog, sleet, and snow—negated the customary American superiority in armor and air power. It was only late in the battle that U.S. tanks were able to be deployed, and it was left to the infantry to decide the battle. In the final measure, it was sheer guts rather than skill that got them through the forest. In the end, the campaign absorbed some 17 divisions, caused dreadful casualties, and proved a heavy strain on troop morale. It was one of the worst reverses for the U.S. Army in the European Theater.

American soldiers faced no greater odds under such harrowing conditions in World War II than did the riflemen, machine gunners, and mortarmen who struggled through the Hürtgenwald. "The forest up there was a hell of an eerie place to fight," reported Technical Sergeant George Morgan, an armorer-artificer of the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment. "Show me a man who went through the battle and who says he never had a feeling of fear, and I'll show you a liar. You can't get all of the dead because you can't find them, and they stay there to remind the guys advancing as to what might hit them. You can't get protection. You can't see. You can't get fields of fire. Artillery slashes the trees like a scythe. Everything is tangled. You can scarcely walk. Everybody is cold and wet, and the mixture of cold rain and sleet keeps falling. Then they jump off again, and soon there is only a handful of the old men left."

Colonel Lanham observed wryly, "Up there, it was our troops who combed the tree bursts out of their hair while the Kraut lay snug in his hole."

Because it was so disastrous, and because Americans tend to remember only victories, the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest has been virtually forgotten. Overshadowed by Operation Market Garden, the Allied invasion of Holland in September 1944, and the momentous Ardennes campaign of December 1944 and January 1945, the tragic Hürtgenwald campaign was accorded only brief mention in the memoirs of such generals as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Omar N. Bradley and has been overlooked by most historians.

When the battle finally fizzled out, all the Americans had to show for their sacrifices were a few miles of tree stumps, shell holes, shattered buildings, and swamps. British troops played a minor part in the campaign, but they were able to gain new respect for the fighting spirit and fortitude of their allies. Hürtgen Forest echoed the horrors of the World War I killing grounds and brought much suffering to the enemy soldiers as well as the GIs. A German officer reported, "Great losses were caused by numerous frost bites. In some cases, soldiers were found dead in their foxholes from sheer exhaustion."

The village of Hürtgen changed hands 14 times during the battle, and the village of Vossenack eight times. In at least one U.S. infantry battalion, morale cracked under the strain. In four days' time, three company commanders lost their commands. In one rifle company, all of the officers were relieved or broke under the strain, while a platoon commander who refused to order his men into the line was put under arrest. Soldiers of all ranks broke down under the strain of continuous combat.

The Hürtgen campaign mirrored the best and the worst in the American foot soldier. Several

Ullstein

Armed with antitank panzerfaust weapons and automatic rifles, these German troops were among those who tenaciously fought for every yard of the Hürtgen Forest during the winter of 1944-1945.

men were awarded the Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross, and there were many other acts of gallantry that never came to light. But there were also instances in which fear paralyzed men who had seen more combat than they could stomach. Some GIs ran from their positions when the enemy was not near; others refused to move without armored support, and some tank crews would not go forward without infantry protection.

Shells bursting in the tops of the 100-foot fir trees and mines planted in the forest floor made life particularly hellish for the American infantrymen in the Hürtgen Forest. A tree burst would send steel fragments and timber raining down, and foxholes provided scant protection. Many GIs fell victim to their own artillery. The enemy troops also suffered severely from the shell bursts in the trees. General Schmidt, commander of the German 275th Infantry Division, reported, "The weird and wild surroundings intensified all combat reactions and impressions, especially since the effect of the shells exploding in the treetops was much greater due to the falling and splintering of trees and branches. Small arms fire hit trees and branches with a sharp crack, and the enemy often appeared suddenly close at hand and engaged in embittered close combat."

Mine fields in the forest were an additional peril, and keeping safe paths through them proved difficult. Engineers marked cleared paths with white tape, but this was invariably blown away by the wind or obscured by snow and mud.

When U.S. armor was eventually brought up to support the infantry, mines and the dense trees forced the tanks to stick mainly to the few narrow, muddy forest roads and logging trails, preventing them from maneuvering. The roads were also mined, and a disabled tank or truck could block a whole column.

Besides the enemy and the weather, the GIs battled exhaustion, hunger, battle fatigue, pneumonia, and trench foot. They lacked sufficient boots and winter clothing, and hot meals and a dry place in which to sleep were almost nonexistent. The men in the forward companies spent long nights, half frozen in open foxholes with only their uniforms for protection. Much to the surprise of British troops in the area, the GIs were forced to subsist on cold C-rations. Many went without hot food for days on end.

One British Army officer reported, "What surprised us was the apparent indifference of the American commanders to the physical needs of their men in winter warfare. In these conditions, hot food once a day is as vital as ammunition. In the first few days, the infantry of the 84th Division were expected to exist on packets of odd items such as eggs and bacon compressed into tablets, gum and candy, with nothing hot to drink. Men fight with greater cheerfulness even on the cheapest form of pig's belly of transatlantic origin masquerading as bacon, if hot, or the bully beef and tea and biscuits which maintained the British. They also need a pair of dry socks every day."

The 84th Division suffered 500 casualties from trench foot.

Before Hürtgenwald and the campaigns of the winter of 1944-1945, no American soldiers had suffered such hardships as did the men in that nightmarish forest. Overcoats soaked with moisture and caked with frozen mud became too heavy to wear. Rain seeped into radios and rendered them useless, and the forest floor was so tangled with brush and debris that men broke under the physical strain of carrying weapons, moving supplies forward, and evacuating the wounded.

The fighting was often at such close quarters that hand grenades were the only decisive weapons. Booby traps in abandoned foxholes and ditches turned promised sanctuaries into graves for the unwary. The Germans sometimes planted explosives underneath wounded men; one GI lay motionless for 72 hours, struggling to remain conscious so that he could warn whoever might come to his rescue. Meanwhile, as the living strove to survive, the bloated, frozen bodies of the dead lay strewn in grotesque positions.

"The toll was staggering," reported one American survivor of the Hürtgenwald campaign. "By mid-December, the three line companies of my armored infantry battalion had left only four officers and 170 enlisted men; at full strength, its complement was 18 officers and 735 enlisted men. Commanders of the three line companies had been either killed or wounded."

The slaughter and misery dragged on well into December 1944, when the Americans were ordered to pull out of the forest. Some did not withdraw until Christmas Eve. By that time, all attention from the Allied high command on down was fixed upon the debacle caused by Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's great breakthrough in the Ardennes on December 16.

At least 120,000 U.S. troops took part in the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest, and an estimated 24,000 were killed, wounded, or captured. Combat fatigue, pneumonia, and trench foot claimed another 9,000 men.

When the appalling losses were revealed, some participants and high-ranking officers, both American and German, questioned the necessity of the campaign and regarded it as a major blunder on the part of General Bradley. Blame for the initial reverses, panic, and confusion in the Battle of the Bulge had also been laid at his door. The critics questioned Bradley's wisdom in choosing to make his main effort through the Hürtgenwald instead of using the more open, easier going farther north on the Ninth Army front between the U.S. First and

British Second Armies. The hapless Bradley responded cryptically, "You don't make your main effort with your exterior force."

Lieutenant Frank L. Gunn, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment, which captured the village of Merode, said, "In retrospect, it seemed to me that the Hürtgen Forest could have been contained rather than assaulted, and a large flanking or encircling movement performed by corps. This would have reduced the casualties and still have accomplished the mission of capturing the dams on the Roer River."

Lieutenant William Burke, a company commander in the 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, agreed: "Some of us with combat experience from the beaches to Hürtgen were hard pressed to understand the tactical wisdom of slogging it out in such an unforgiving environment instead of bypassing it."

Major General Rudolph Gersdorff, chief of staff of the German Seventh Army, was quoted as saying, "The German command could not understand the reason for the strong American attacks in the Hürtgen Forest.… The fighting in the wooded area denied the American troops the advantages offered them by their air and armored forces, the superiority of which had been decisive in all the battles waged before."

Ironically, some experts saw the disastrous Hürtgen campaign as having unintended consequences beneficial to the American cause. The bloodletting, particularly the fight around the villages of Hürtgen, Kleinhau, and Grosshau, may have altered the outcome of the Battle of the Bulge by presenting a strong shoulder that the German Sixth Panzer Army never broke. If the U.S. effort had bypassed the Hürtgenwald to the north in November 1944, it was reasoned, the forest could have served both as a hinge on which the German counteroffensive would pivot in December and as a natural shield to benefit the enemy.

Ill conceived in the Allied high command's haste to reach the gates of Nazi Germany, the Hürtgen Forest campaign was a strategic blunder that could have been avoided—a five-month waste of American lives and resources.

Yet, despite the many hardships and appalling losses, the U.S. infantry there were able somehow to maintain unit integrity and to persevere. While criticism fell inevitably upon the high command, there was no questioning the heroism and determination of the GIs in the foxholes.

The historian of the crack British Guards Armored Division, which exchanged officers and men with the Americans, reported, "Their [the Americans'] methods might be somewhat curious and unorthodox, but there could be no doubt about the excellent results when put into practice. Divisions such as the 29th and 30th Infantry which fought in this battle could have challenged comparison with the finest of our own."

The costly Hürtgen Forest struggle seriously weakened Hodges' First Army, with its extended front line unable to resist the German onslaught in the early hours of the Battle of the Bulge. The Big Red One and 9th Infantry Divisions had to depend almost entirely on replacements after Hürtgen, and the 4th and 8th Infantry Divisions also had big manpower gaps to fill. The 2nd Ranger Battalion and the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment emerged from the bloody forest as skeletal units. General Cota's 28th Division was trying to recover and regroup in the town of Wiltz in northern Luxembourg when it was struck by von Rundstedt's advance columns on December 16.

The Hürtgen campaign was replayed a few weeks later, shortly before the end of the European war, in the Battle of the Reichswald as Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery's British 21st Army Group closed to the River Rhine. There, in a large tract of gloomy forest southwest of Cleves in Westphalia, troops of the 2nd Canadian Division and five British Army divisions had to battle through five German defense lines on a narrow, flooded front. Part of Monty's Operation Veritable, the offensive in the Reichswald—the northern anchor of the Siegfried Line—kicked off on February 8, 1945, and involved fierce fighting in heavy rains. Despite support by artillery and Royal Air Force bombers, progress was slow and the casualties heavy. The forest was not cleared until March 9.

Like the Hürtgen campaign, the Reichswald struggle bore marked similarities to the grim fighting on the Western Front in 1914-1918 and has been overlooked by most historians.

Author Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

National Archives

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ABOVE: During the fight for the town of Schmidt in the Hürtgen Forest, armored vehicles of the 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion roll forward in support of a 28th Infantry Division attack. RIGHT: More than 70 years after the battle for the Hürtgen Forest ended, this concrete German bunker remains menacing and is indicative of the many strongpoints American GIs encountered during the fighting there.

Great Raid on CABANATUAN

ONE of the great tragedies of war for the United States in the 20th century has been the suffering of American military servicemen seized by the enemy. During World War II, American GIs held captive by the Japanese confronted starvation, disease, despair, brutality, and death. Behind bars and barbed wire, they waited year after year, looking to the skies and praying for release or rescue. Many died waiting.

Four months after Pearl Harbor, in April 1942, the Imperial Japanese Army invaded the Philippines where it cornered and captured nearly 80,000 defenders near Mariveles on the Bataan Peninsula of Luzon, some 12,000 of whom were American GIs. They were herded to the National Highway for the 65-mile march to Camp O'Donnell that became known as the Bataan Death March. More than 1,000 Americans died or were savagely murdered on the way.

Roughly half the surviving American POWs were transferred to Cabanatuan, a former Philippine Army recruit training camp 40 miles northeast of O'Donnell. Less than three years later, disease, execution, random murder, and shipments to slave labor districts in Formosa, Manchuria, Japan, and other sites had reduced the inmate population to 600 or less.

In October 1944, General Douglas MacArthur kept his promise to the Filipino people: "I shall return." General Walter Kreuger's Sixth Army landed with MacArthur at Leyte. Then, on January 9, 1945, Americans went ashore at Lingayen Gulf on the west-central coast of Luzon and began to press toward Manila.

Among MacArthur's landing detail was a 19-year-old private of the Sixth Army's Alamo Scouts who had participated in a successful raid to rescue 66 civilians held as slave labor by the Japanese at Cape Oransbari in northwestern New Guinea. Galen Charles "Kit" Kittleson was the eldest of eight barefooted offspring from an Iowa farm. A closed-mouthed diminutive soldier barely five feet four inches on a tall day, he was the youngest fighter assigned to the elite Alamo Scouts.

"The other day I happened to overhear the longest conversation Kit's ever had," went a standing joke. "Kit says to Olsen, 'Let's go to chow.' And Olsen says, 'Okay.'"

At Luzon, Kittleson was nonetheless bold enough to ask the stern-faced supreme commander when, if ever, they were going to rescue the Bataan Death March survivors. MacArthur fixed his hawk's gaze on the little private.

"Were you on the Cape Oransbari raid, son?" he asked gruffly.

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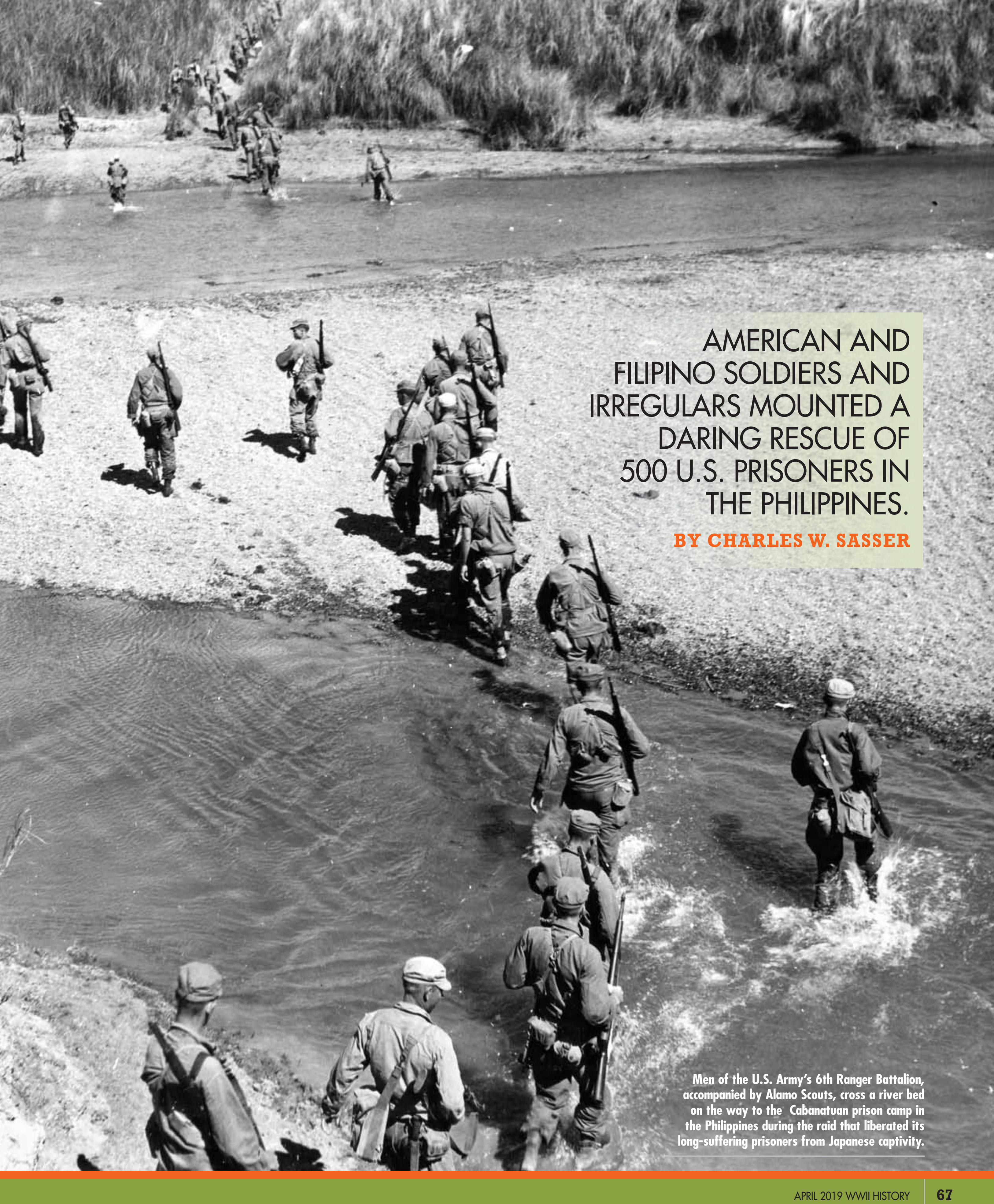


AMERICAN AND FILIPINO SOLDIERS AND IRREGULARS MOUNTED A DARING RESCUE OF 500 U.S. PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES.

BY CHARLES W. SASSER

Men of the U.S. Army's 6th Ranger Battalion, accompanied by Alamo Scouts, cross a river bed on the way to the Cabanatuan prison camp in the Philippines during the raid that liberated its long-suffering prisoners from Japanese captivity.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, son. Let me tell you this. You be ready when the time comes."

The Sixth Army had been activated for service in the Southwest Pacific on January 22, 1943, under the command of General Kreuger. Fresh out of airborne parachute training, Kittleson arrived in New Guinea as a Sixth Army replacement in November, just in time to volunteer for the Alamo Scout Training Center established to "train selected volunteers in reconnaissance and raider work." The Scouts retained 117 enlisted men and 21 officers.

Their reputation would far exceed their small number. It would be built upon two missions to free prisoners of war from the Japanese—the Cape Oransbari rescue and, soon, the raid to free the American POWs at Cabanatuan.

On January 26, 1945, as the Sixth Army pushed inward toward Manila from Calasiao, a thin major in a worn uniform and riding a travel-weary bay horse halted at the edge of the encampment to ask a group of GIs directions to headquarters.

"I wonder who that is," Private Kittleson mused as the traveler continued to the far side of tent city.

"Don't you know nothing, private?" Willie Wismer joked. "Don't you recognize the most famous American guerrilla chief in the South Pacific?"

U.S. Major Bob Lapham, who commanded Filipino guerrillas, had urged his spent horse through 30 miles of Japanese-infested terrain to bring crucial information about the Bataan Death March survivors at Cabanatuan.

"Sir," he reported to General Krueger's intelligence chief, Colonel Horton White, "there is imminent danger that the prisoners of Cabanatuan will be massacred out of vengeance when our units start approaching the camp. If we wait much longer, we'll be able to rescue what's left in one carabao cart."

Colonel White nodded. "What's the enemy situation at the camp?"

"The road in front of the prison camp is heavily traveled by tanks and vehicles withdrawing toward the mountains or establishing defensive positions. There are 5,000 Japs in and around the town of Cabanatuan and a strong enemy force bivouacked along the Cabu River less than a mile from the camp. At any given time there may be between 100 and 300 Japs inside the compound."

Willie Wismer burst into his team's tent.

"I know where we're going next," he blurted out. "You guys remember the Bataan Death March?"

Only about 530 surviving POWs celebrated Christmas 1944 behind the wire at Cabanatuan. That number dwindled daily. The camp's most prominent feature was its large makeshift graveyard where fresh mounds appeared daily. Over half the remaining men were so feeble they couldn't walk across the courtyard without help. Almost all suffered from gangrene and an array of tropical diseases. Many were missing limbs.

"If I was in that camp," Kittleson said, "I'd sure hope somebody'd come get me."

Lieutenant William Nellist confirmed Wismer's revelation. His team and Lieutenant Thomas "Stud" Rounsaville's were to be tasked with an important mission. They, along with Charley Company from the 6th Ranger Battalion and two companies of Major Lapham's guerrillas, were "going 25 miles inside Jap lines to rescue 500 GIs held at the Cabanatuan POW camp…. Be ready to move out at 1630 hours to our forward position in Guimba."

Never before had U.S. soldiers been called upon to rescue such a large number of POWs from so deep inside enemy territory.

By 1930 hours that evening, Scouts, Rangers, and guerrillas were assembling at Guimba, a cluster of nipa huts now under U.S. control. Everything beyond was Indian country.

At 2100 hours, 13 Scouts and about 50 of Major Lapham's partisans set out under a half moon to establish advance surveillance on the prison camp. Kittleson ran point with two Filipino guerrillas for the 24-mile forced march over dry rice fields and prairies of tall Kunai grasses. Any enemy encounter might well compromise the mission.

Nine miles into the march, they approached the National Highway between Manila and Cabanatuan. Running lights glowed like cats' eyes on Japanese truck convoys and tank units crossing the highway bridge to defensive positions in the mountains. The entire patrol slithered a few at a time underneath the bridge to the other side while tanks clanked overhead.

Traffic was light on the Rizal Road that came next. Raiders crossed it without incident to arrive at daybreak in Balincarin where they joined additional partisans under guerrilla leader Juan Pajota. After a brief rest and bowls

Both: National Archives

LEFT: Alamo Scouts of teams Nellist and Rounsaville posed for this photo after playing a key role in the liberation of the Cabanatuan prisoners. Some of the prisoners had been in captivity for several years. RIGHT: Army Ranger Colonel Henry Mucci was in command of the raid on Cabanatuan to free the Allied prisoners.

of rice and beans, the Scouts saddled up for their initial appraisal of the POW camp while the partisans prepared for their phase of the operation.

The Alamos descended into the lowlands along the Pampanga River. Grasses growing head tall provided excellent cover. They waded the river and crawled to the top of a knoll where they parted the grasses and peered out.

The camp sat in the open about 700 yards away. Kittleson noted guard towers and roofs of thatched palm fronds or tin behind high wire. Even a lizard would have a tough time scurrying unseen across the turnip and sweet potato fields that surrounded the stockade to reach the camp's front gate.

In the meantime, Colonel Henry Mucci, overall raid commander, led his 6th Ranger component of 121 soldiers out of Guimba not quite 24 hours behind the lead Scout element. He linked up in the predawn of January 29 with Filipino guerrillas under Captain Eduardo Joson to the west of Balincarin. Now numbering more than 200, the combined force proceeded to the staging area at Platero about a half mile to the Scouts' rear and a mile and a half from the POW stockade. Lieutenants Nellis and Rounsaville hiked back to report the Scouts' observations to Colonel Mucci.

"A Jap division was moving past all night until it shut down at dawn to hide out from planes during the day," Nellist informed the colonel. "Our bacon will be out for frying if we collide with those bastards."

"Could the prisoners have been moved?" Mucci fretted.

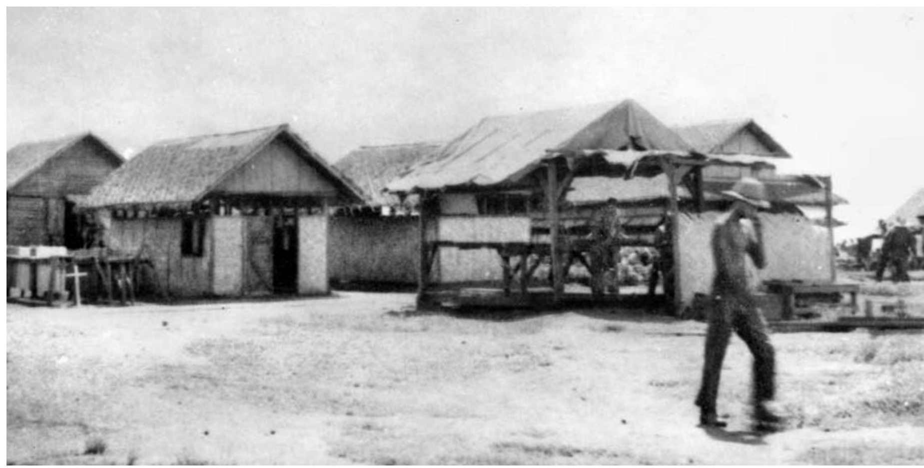
"We haven't been able to get close enough to look inside the camp," Rounsaville said.

Colonel Mucci arched his back. "We'll postpone the raid until tomorrow night to let the Jap division clear out. In the meantime, we've got to get someone close to the front gate. The gate is key to the entire operation."

A single nipa hut sat isolated in the field about 200 yards outside the prison gate. Kittleson and the other Scouts kept watch while Lieutenant Nellist and Rifo Vaguilar donned local peasant garb and wide-brimmed straw hats to make their way across the fields, stopping now and then to point and squat as though inspecting crops. The peasants had been cautioned to ignore whatever happened or whoever appeared.

Once concealed inside the hut, Nellist observed that the front gate was about nine feet high and made of saw lumber. Strands of barbed wire surrounded the entire stockade. Buildings were either bamboo with thatched palm roofs or mortar and concrete with corrugated tin roofs. Sentry towers studded strategic locations.

Getty



TOP: Army Rangers led by Lieutenant John Murphy secured the back gate of Cabanatuan prison and fought the Japanese with determination during the raid. Murphy, center, and a group of his men posed a short time after the raid along with Filipino guerrillas visible at right. ABOVE: Inside the camp, a prisoner walks past huts in this undated photo.

Prisoners inside tottered about like emaciated scarecrows on their side of a road that beelined across the compound from front to back. Japanese guards estimated to number between 225 and 250 billeted on the opposite side of the road.

That night in Captain Pajota's hut in Platero, Mucci finalized operations orders with his element leaders.

"As I see it," he began, "our main threat after the last of the Jap divisions move on through tonight is posed by the 2,000 Japs barricaded at the Cabu Bridge. They could run over us within 10 minutes after the assault begins."

"They won't," promised grim-faced Captain Pajota.

Two companies of partisans totaling 280 fighters were tasked with providing security and a blocking force while U.S. Rangers and Scouts conducted the raid. Pajota's men had responsibility for stopping the Japs at the Cabu Creek Bridge while Joson's guerrillas and a Ranger bazooka team set up a blocking force on the road 800 yards southwest of the camp to catch Japanese elements attempting to break through from Cabanatuan town.

"We need a half hour to shoot our way into the camp and herd out the prisoners," Colonel Mucci estimated.

While the guerrillas had proved themselves in hit-and-run tactics, could they stand their ground against an organized assault supported by tanks?

"I and Captain Joson promise you a half hour," Captain Pajota said.

The raid would work this way: from the assembly point, guerrillas would proceed to their positions to block off the camp. Scouts and Rangers would crawl across 700 yards of

open fields under the cover of darkness to reach the prison main gate before 1930 hours. Lieutenant John Murphy would lead his platoon to the rear gate.

"Lieutenant Murphy initiates the attack by opening fire on the guards at the back gate," Colonel Mucci directed. "That should provide a momentary distraction to allow us to take out the guards at the main gate and bust through into the compound."

Lieutenant O'Connell's Scouts would rampage down the length of the beeline road to engage all resistance; Lieutenant Schmidt's platoon and Captain Bob Prince's detachment would round up POWs and get them to the front gate while Murphy, coming through the back gate, covered them; Alamo Scouts and a squad of Rangers at the secured front gate would hustle prisoners to the river where 150 Filipino irregulars waited with carabao carts to make the escape.

Everything had to work precisely for the raid to succeed.

"Remember," Colonel Mucci cautioned, "these boys have been in that shit hole beaten and starved for nearly three years. If they can't walk to the river, carry them. We don't leave one of them behind. Not a single one! We attack tomorrow night. I think the date of 30 January 1945 will be long remembered. Go with God—and bring our boys home. They have not been forgotten."

An Allied Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter buzzed the camp on the morning of January 30. Otherwise, the compound lay smoldering quietly in the sunlight. Rangers moved up from Platero in the afternoon and hid in the grass on the knoll with the Scouts. Word passed from man to man as the sun at long last dropped from sight. "Get ready to move out."

It suddenly struck Kittleson: "What if they had been betrayed and the Japs were waiting in ambush?"

He dismissed the thought and cradled his Thompson submachine gun in the crook of his arms as 121 Rangers and 13 Alamo Scouts moved out through the darkness on their bellies like giant reptiles. Overhead, a U.S. Northrop P-61 Black Widow warplane buzzed the camp at treetop level as a planned distraction. Suddenly, the gonging of a bell reverberated out of the prison camp. Kittleson's heart threatened to vault from his chest. Only later did the raiders learn that a U.S. Navy POW had improvised a ship's bell to sound the watch at periodic intervals.

After what seemed an eternity, the Scouts and Rangers slipped into the drainage ditch that paralleled the road in front of the stockade. Through the gate slats Kittleson spotted Japanese guards smoking not 20 yards away. Others in their underwear lounged in the open doorways of lighted barracks. Asian music drifted with the breezes. Apparently, the Japanese felt secure here 25 miles behind the front.

All photos: National Archives

Filipino guerrillas defended a bridge to prevent Japanese reinforcments from joining the fight at the camp.

Lieutenant John Murphy and his Ranger platoon approached the back gate along a filthy sewage ditch. It was 1920 hours, 10 minutes until H-hour, when they heard a commanding "Halt!" Either the guard in the tower possessed some acute sixth sense or the moon playing through the clouds revealed something suspicious in the night shadows.

The guard shouted back into the camp to summon help. Murphy decided it was close enough to H-hour. The platoon opened up with a murderous crescendo that took care of the guard in the tower and killed several other Japanese lounging on the stoop of a nearby barracks.

At the front gate, Scouts and Rangers took the cue and brought down their assigned targets. Kittleson scrambled out of the roadside ditch with Ranger Sergeant Ted Richardson, whose task was to smash the padlock on the gate to allow troops to surge inside. An enemy soldier lurking in the shadows took a quick shot, his bullet striking Richardson's .45 pistol and knocking it out of his hand.

Kittleson responded with his Tommy. The Japanese soldier shrieked and died.

Richardson shook his numbed hand and picked up his pistol. It still functioned. He fired into the gate lock, smashing it. Rangers stormed through while Kittleson, Wismer, and the other Scouts took positions to keep the gate secured while they waited to guide rescued POWs to safety.

Enemy mortar shells rained down on Kittleson and the others. He hit the dirt and heard someone shout, "I'm hit!"

Lieutenant Rounsaville.

"I'm with him," Nellist called out. "Everybody hold where you are."

He crawled to his friend's side. "You're wounded, Stud. Where're you hit?"

Rounsaville groaned. "In the ass. Bill, I need you to look at my ass."

"I've seen your ass."

Flying shrapnel struck Sergeant Alfred Alfonso in the gut and ripped open a Ranger's inner thigh. Litter bearers rushed to the river with the raid's first casualties.

"Bill?" Rounsaville called out as he was whisked away. "Thanks for caring about my ass."

By this time the fight for the Cabu Bridge down the road had begun. The horizon erupted with explosions and flying tracers as some 200 Filipino irregulars took on 2,000 pissed-off Japanese. Could they hold?

Demoralized and caught off guard, few of the 250 Japanese inside the compound managed to rally anything like an effective defense. Lieutenant O'Connell's men on the interior road were stacking up enemy bodies against the anvil provided by Murphy's Rangers coming through the back gate. Panicked Japanese scattered like defenseless chickens.

Japanese officers caught in their underwear stared in shock as blackened-faced GIs burst in and stitched them with bullets. Shouting and roaring with adrenaline, Rangers kicked in doors along a hallway and sprayed dorm rooms with lead.

A ragged figure leaped into sight and threw up his arms. "Don't shoot. I'm an American!"

He had been at the Japanese officer quarters mending a generator.

"Get to the front gate as fast as you can!" a Ranger instructed.

The scarecrow shambled off toward the gate babbling, "God bless you. Thank God you've come."

In another section of the compound, bazooka gunner Sergeant Stewart and his loader spotted two trucks full of Japanese infantrymen speeding toward the main gate in an escape attempt. Stewart's well-aimed rockets enveloped both trucks in bright flames. Human mini-bonfires screaming in terror and anguish tumbled from the burning vehicles. Ranger gunfire put them out of their misery.

The rescue also caught Allied POWs by surprise. They thought the Japanese were execut-

ing everyone. Some attempted to hide or secure weapons for a last-ditch fight. Most, who were too physically weak to resist, pressed themselves against split bamboo floors and waited in mute stupor for the end of their long suffering.

Thinking he might save some of them, POW Merle Musselman ran on weakened legs toward the camp surgical ward that housed 100 patients. To his consternation, he discovered the beds empty. His staggered outside where a huge man in green with a blackened face startled him.

"Get to the front gate!" the invader ordered. "You're being rescued."

Inmate Airman George Steiner began crawling in the muck of a latrine drainage toward the fence. A strong hand jerked him to his feet.

"It's a prison break!" a voice explained in a deep Southern drawl. "We come to get y'all out."

POW Sergeant Bill Seckinger thought the Japanese were slaughtering the inmates. "Tear the legs off your bunks," he yelled. "Get anything you can. Some of them are going to die when they come in."

Although so debilitated he could barely stand, he wasn't going down without a fight. Then a voice in English rang out. "You'll be fine. Head for the front gate."

A POW named Jackson didn't let the inconvenience of having only one leg slow him down. He reached the front gate on one leg and the stub of the other.

Ranger Corporal Jim Herrick hoisted a naked bag of bones into his arms and trotted toward the gate. The prisoner suddenly gasped and went limp. One hundred yards from freedom, he had died.

Prisoners emerged from the inferno, all hollowed angles and stench, running sores and lost limbs, staggering, hobbling, tattered skeletons, and scarecrows crawling like zombies emerging from graves into unexpected light. Blinking, weeping, laughing, thanking God and their liberators. Dead men returned to life.

The scene brought tears to Private Kittleson's eyes. He and the other Scouts began carrying and escorting the prisoners to freedom. They waded the muddy Pampanga to where more than two dozen two-wheeled wooden carabao carts waited.

"If they're too bad off to walk," came an order, "put 'em in the carts."

Kittleson tenderly lowered a naked man onto a grass mattress in one of the carts. The guy, who weighed no more than a child, was sobbing with gratitude.

Colonel Mucci fired flares to signal the raid completed and let Pajota and his men at the Cabu Bridge know to withdraw from a battle they were doomed to lose if they stayed with it long enough. The walking dead and their liberators, a procession nearly a mile long, pulled out in the dark to the sound of sobbing, shuffling feet, and rattling carts. The raid was over in 28 minutes. The Japanese garrison was destroyed. The bloodied remains of Japanese soldiers littered the wreckage.

The rattle of bull carts soon faded into the night.

Galen Charles Kittleson retired as Command Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army's 7th Special Forces Group. During the Vietnam War, he twice more penetrated enemy lines to rescue American POWs. Other than the rescue at Cabanatuan, the raid against the Hotel Hilton POW camp only 23 miles from Hanoi in North Vietnam on November 21, 1970, is undoubtedly the most daring and famous in American military history. Kittleson is the only American soldier ever to have participated in four separate POW raids.

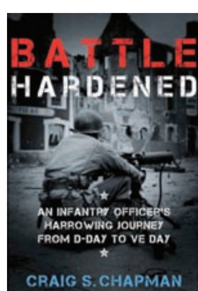
TOP: A number of the prisoners liberated at Cabanatuan were too weak to walk out of the prison under their own power. They were carried out by their liberators and helped on to carabao carts pulled by oxen. ABOVE: Former prisoners of the Japanese at Cabanatuan enjoy their first moments of freedom in many months while several of their exhausted liberators lie asleep on the ground following the raid.

Charles Sasser is the author of the classic book of sniper warfare titled One Shot-One Kill. *He has written dozens of other books and articles and appeared on numerous television networks including ABC, Fox, the History Channel, and CNN. He is a veteran of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army Special Forces. He resides in Chouteau, Oklahoma.*

Slogging into the Reich

Bill Chapman fought his way across Europe from Utah Beach to the heart of Germany.

LIEUTENANT WILLIAM PAUL CHAPMAN'S FELLOW SOLDIERS WERE TANK hunting on the afternoon of August 11, 1944. The Battle of Mortain was raging around them, a counterattack by a German armored spearhead against the growing and inexorable advance of the Allied armies out of the Normandy beachhead. Chapman was an infantry officer in the 12th Regiment, U.S. 4th Infantry Division, who began his combat tour as a mortar platoon leader and later became a company commander. German tanks and panzergrenadiers were attacking his battalion's part of the line. So far, the Americans were holding their own, particularly against the enemy infantry. The German tanks were a different story; they pounded Chapman's riflemen with cannon and machine-gun fire even as he repositioned them for a better defense.



An enemy tank appeared from behind a hedgerow and began firing at the battalion command group. The Anti-Tank Platoon Leader, Lieutenant Morgan Welch, took a bazooka team out to destroy the tank. They used the hedgerow to conceal their approach, and soon they crouched behind some shrubs and loaded a rocket into the weapon. The tank on the other side was a dreaded PzKpfw. VI Tiger, one of the most heavily armored tanks Germany possessed. Welch took up the bazooka himself, stood up, took a fast aim, and fired. The rocket raced out in a whoosh of smoke and flame, struck the Tiger squarely in the side of the turret—and bounced harmlessly away.

The Americans watch helplessly as the Tiger's turret swung their way, its long 88mm gun barrel searching for them. It fired, and the blast knocked the men flat. When Welch regained his senses moments later, he heard a sound … plop … plopplop.… It took a few seconds for them to realize the sound was that of their helmets falling back to the ground. The explosion had launched them high into the air. Mercifully for the Americans, the tank's commander decided to withdraw and simply drove away.

More hard fighting lay ahead that day. An American tank crew spotted another German tank nearby and put three rounds into it. Smoke poured from his target, so the American tank commander moved on to other targets nearby. Soon, however, the "dead" panzer moved away. A trio of German PzKpfw. V Panther tanks shelled the Americans, wounding the battalion commander. Soon most of the battalion's officers were dead or wounded. Despite this, the soldiers held their ground, even knocking out a Panther with a lucky hit with a bazooka rocket. The day ended with the American advance stalled by the fierceness of the German counterattack, their only gain being the ability to bring forward tanks of their own. Unknown to them, however, the Germans also had to pull back, battered by artillery and air attacks enabled by the stiff American infantry defense.

TOP: A German casualty and a knocked out half-track, part of a convoy destroyed during the fighting near Mortain. ABOVE: Lt. Bill Chapman,

August 11 was only one day in Bill Chapman's war. Along with his comrades of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry he made his way from Normandy to Germany, fighting for seven months until wounded. By that time, he had gone from platoon leader to battalion operations officer, unfortunately not uncommon in the brutal and unforgiving world of infantry combat. The battalion had 35 officers when it landed on Utah Beach on D-Day; by V-E Day, only four of them were still in

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Karen James is a noted journalist who specializes in relationships, romance, and sex

Ask The Expert
The inside Story on Healthy Sex!

The Amazing Secret Of A 78 Year-Old Latin Lover!

"I was shocked by his passion and energy. He took me in the bedroom like we were newleyweds - It was incredible!"

Power and Pleasure…

Lately I've received several letters from women about a "little secret" that's made their sex life absolutely explosive! This one from Tina in Texas got a little hot and spicy! (Those Texas women tell it like it is!)

Tina writes: Dear Karen,

Last month my husband came home from a business trip in Europe and shocked me with more energy and passion than he's had in years. Hard as a rock, he tossed me around the bedroom like we were newlyweds, and gave me a night I'll never forget! It was incredible - and our sex life has been like that ever since. His erections are harder than ever and spark the most intense toe-curling 'moments' I've ever had! So here we are, enjoying the best sex of our lives… in our late 50's!

On his trip, my husband stayed next to an Italian nutritionist and his wife, and heard them making loud, passionate love every single night. One afternoon, my husband asked the man his secret. The nutritionist smiled and said in broken English that he's 78 years old and after 42 years together, their sex life was still fantastico! Then he pulled a small pack from his satchel, gave it to my husband, and said "These tablets come from a small village in the north where they're cultivated organically from the most potent sexual extracts on earth. They will give you erections and a climax like you've never had before!" Then he laughed and said "You'll become an Italian Stallion, like me!"

Karen, Italian Stallion is right! But now the pack is almost empty and we both want more. Do you know about these European super-sex tablets and how to get some in the States?

Sincerely,
Tina D., Fort Worth, TX

Tina, you're in luck, I do know about them. Ever wonder why older men from Italy and all over Europe are famous for staying energized and sexually passionate well into their 80's? Well, for years, these men have relied on a unique blossom seed extract to enhance their sexual power and performance.

Milled on the fertile northern plains, and sold under the brand name Provarin, these key extracts are cultivated along the sea where pure seeds, nutrient-rich soil, and perfect weather conditions combine to deliver maximum potency.

Finely ground and pressed into tablets, these extracts have a legendary reputation throughout the European sexual underground for fueling extremely hard erections and a long, powerful climax. As Giovanni from Milan put it, "It's like bedroom rocket fuel - especially for us older guys!"

The best part from a woman's perspective is the extreme hardness and on-going power is enough to send us over the blissful edge! I found out about Provarin a few years ago when I was dating a cowboy from Wyoming. He took Provarin every morning and believe me, that good ol' boy sure rocked my nights!

All-natural Provarin is still a well-kept secret for those in the know. It's an old-school, family business and they like to keep it that way. They don't do any advertising or seek publicity. They don't need to. Long-time customers and word of mouth ensures their limited stock is sold out every year.

They do have a distributer here in the U.S. and a spokesman told me they are proud to produce the highest quality product for men and couples. He went on to say that if any of my readers call today and mention this article, they'll get a onetime 50% discount plus free shipping!

So there you go, Tina - and the rest of you readers! Just give them a call today and mention this article. The number is 1-800-483-9611.

Aren't you glad you asked?

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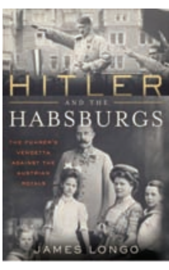
the unit, including Chapman. His story and that of his comrades is relayed in fascinating detail in ***Battle Hardened: An Infantry Officer's Journey from D-Day to VE Day*** (Craig S. Chapman, Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2018, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.50, hardcover).

The book relays the visceral experience of infantry combat in World War II. The mix of bravery, determination, selflessness, horror, brutality, callousness, and mercy known to Chapman and his soldiers is laid bare for the reader. The unit began like all others, unblooded and green, but quickly had to learn hard lessons to achieve survival and victory. The author reveals how this bitter process worked for Chapman's unit. Reading this work imparts a better understanding and appreciation of what American soldiers went through to do their part in winning the war. The author is Bill Chapman's son, a former soldier himself. He uses this personal knowledge and his own experiences to bring the subject matter to vivid life for the reader.



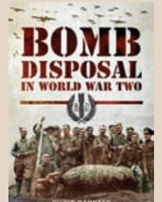
Hitler and the Habsburgs: The Führer's Vendetta Against the Austrian Royals (James Longo, Diversion Books, New York, 2018, 336 pp., notes, bibliography, index, $25.99, hardcover)

Few now know it, but Adolf Hitler hated the Austrian royal family. The Hapsburgs ruled over an ethnically and culturally diverse empire that was essentially dismembered after World War I. Despite this diversity, the Hapsburgs themselves were an Austrian family—except for the children of the late Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination ignited the war. They were considered outsiders. Ferdinand's sons grew to become outspoken opponents of the racial ideologies of Nazi Germany, something Hitler would not tolerate. As soon as Austria was absorbed by the Reich in 1938, they were quickly arrested by the Gestapo and shipped off to the infamous Dachau concentration camp. The deceased archduke's daughter, Princess Sophie Hohenberg, remained free but did not remain quiet. She and other women in the family fought back against the Nazis despite the imprisonment and torture of various family members, showing bravery and determination in the face of the brutal regime.

This book is the product of a decade of research into what is a little-known episode of the war. The author explores the cause of

New and Noteworthy

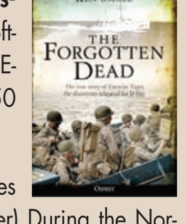
Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice (Mary Fulbrook, Oxford University Press, 2018, $34.95, hardcover) This book explores the depths of Nazi inhumanity and the efforts to reconcile the past after the war. It reveals that many war criminals were never brought to account.



Bomb Disposal in World War Two (Chris Ransted, Pen and Sword Books, 2018, $44.95, hardcover) The author has compiled the story of the British Army's Bomb Disposal Units, including those in the Home Army. These soldiers defused and removed thousands of German bombs and mines during the war.

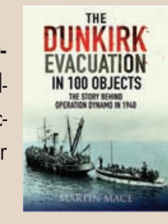
SS Specialist Units in Combat: Rare Photographs from Wartime Archives (Bob Carruthers, Pen and Sword Books, 2018, $22.95, softcover) SS units included cavalrymen, artillerymen, engineers, medics, and even bakers. This is an illustrated history of these men during the war.

The Battleship Bismarck (Stefan Draminski, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $60.00, hardcover) Bismarck was Germany's most famous battleship. This new work contains hundreds of drawings and illustrations of the ship.

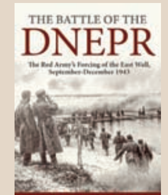


The Forgotten Dead: The True Story of Exercise Tiger, the Disastrous Rehearsal for D-Day (Ken Small, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $16.00, softcover) This is a new telling of the Slapton Sands incident in which German E-boats attacked a practice amphibious landing prior to D-Day, killing almost 750 Americans.

Objective Falaise: 8 August 1944-16 August 1944 (Georges Bernage, Pen and Sword Books, 2018, $34.95, hardcover) During the Normandy fighting, the First Canadian Army launched two operations to break through the German defenses, Totalize and Tractable. This book covers those battles in detail.

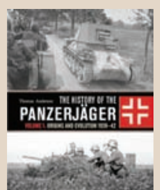


The Dunkirk Evacuation in 100 Objects: The Story Behind Operation Dynamo in 1940 (Martin Mace, Frontline Books, 2018, $39.95, hardcover) This work compiles 100 items that together tell the story of the Dunkirk Evacuation. It contains a wide variety of artifacts with interesting detail about their roles in the operation.



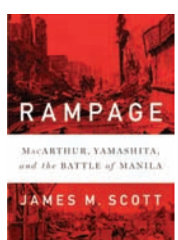
The Battle of the Dnepr: The Red Army's Forcing of the East Wall, September-December 1943 (Translated and edited by Richard W. Harrison, Helion and Company, 2018, $79.95, hardcover) This is a translation of the Soviet General Staff's account of a critical period in the Soviet Union's war against Nazi Germany. It reveals a Soviet view of the battle in stark detail.

The Long-Range Desert Group in World War II (Gavin Mortimer, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $27.00, hardcover) The author has written several books on British Special Forces in World War II. This latest volume covers this famous group, which worked closely with the Special Air Service.



The History of the Panzerjager Volume 1: Origins and Evolution 1939-42 (Thomas Anderson, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $45.00, hardcover) The author is an acknowledged expert on German armored fighting vehicles of World War II. This book covers the German antitank forces during the early years of the conflict.

Hitler's disdain for the children of Franz Ferdinand as well as the family's resistance. The work is full of details of the royal family and their experiences as well as Hitler's obsession with Vienna, the city where he spent much of his youth. It is an enlightening account of fading royalty's struggle against the terror and ruthlessness of 20th-century fascism.



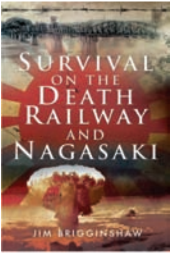
Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita and the Battle for Manila (James M. Scott, W.W. Norton, New York, 2018, 640 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover)

The 1st Cavalry Division was hell-bent on reaching the city of Manila in the early days of February 1945. A task force of the division's 8th Cavalry Regiment pushed ahead of the rest of the division, intent on reaching the city and rescuing the American civilians interned at the Santo Tomas camp. The American leadership feared the civilians would be murdered by the Japanese and took the risk of overextending the unit to reach the camp before the expected executions could begin. The task force reached a bridge over the Tuliahan River and found it wired for demolition with the fuse already burning. A Navy demolition expert, James Sutton, was attached to the cavalry. He rushed onto the bridge and cut the wires; the bridge was saved 14 minutes before the charges would have exploded. That evening American tanks arrived at the camp to the utter joy of the prisoners, but the ordeal was not yet over.

The Battle of Manila was more than a military engagement. It was a liberation of human beings who suffered up to the last moments of Japanese control. This new book explores the numerous facets of the battle, including the military leaders and actions, the civilians who suffered and tried to stay alive, and the freed internees who spent years enduring torment and neglect. The author does not ignore the plight of the noncombatants and likens Manila to the infamous Rape of Nanking in its brutality and destruction. The book is engaging, descriptive, and thorough.

Survival on the Death Railway and Nagasaki (Jim Brigginshaw, Big Sky Publishing, Newport, Australia, 2018, 179 pp., $29.99, hardcover)

Jim Bodero was a living skeleton, his body ravaged by the mistreatment and abuse he suffered while a prisoner of the Japanese during

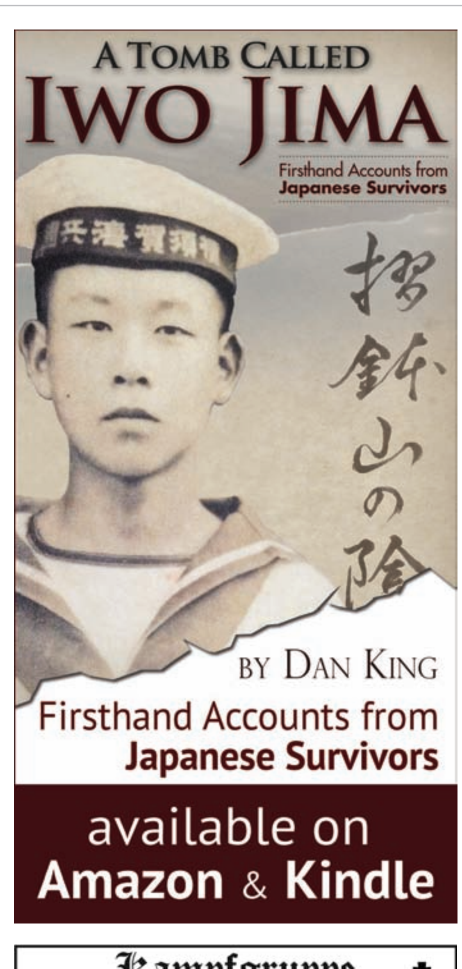


World War II. The horror of this statement is that Jim was still a thin, emaciated man 27 years after the war ended. He never recovered from his ordeal. Jim was captured with the fall of Singapore in early 1942 and spent the rest of the war as essentially a slave laborer. When the atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Nagasaki, Jim was nearby, deep underground in a coal mine. Finally, the war ended, and Jim was liberated along with thousands of his surviving fellow prisoners. But his difficult journey wasn't over.

This book covers not only Jim's experiences while a prisoner of war, but also the aftermath, including the Australian government's poor treatment of this returning veteran. The book is quite readable, with a smooth narrative that flows almost like a novel. It also covers the subject's difficult battle to regain his health after years of brutality. Finally, this work is a testament to Jim's resilience, his very Australian ability to endure hardship, and his unflagging sense of humor and good cheer. There are a number of accounts of prisoners of war in the Far East coming to light recently; this one stands out for its clear prose and enlightening detail, relaying all the terror of the POW experience.

Hitler's Brandenburgers: The Third Reich's Elite Special Forces (Lawrence Paterson, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2018, 310 pp., photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

Germany did not produce special forces organizations to the degree the Allies did, but the few units they created performed with distinction. The Brandenburgers were perhaps the best of them. They were originally raised before the war began as part of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris's Abwehr intelligence group and soon carried out all manner of commando-style operations for the Third Reich. In North Africa they undertook missions like those of the British Special Air Service and Long-Range Desert Group. Initially, General Erwin Rommel chastised them for such tactics but ceased when the Axis felt the effects of the same techniques at British hands. The Brandenburgers also served on the Eastern Front, pulling off daring raids in



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DOGFIGHTER: WORLD WAR 2
PUBLISHER IGGYMOB • **GENRE** AIR COMBAT • **SYSTEM** PS4 • **AVAILABLE** SPRING 2019

Quality aircraft combat games aren't exactly a dime a dozen, and publisher Iggymob aims to fill in that hole with the upcoming *Dogfighter: World War 2,* which is currently in development collaboratively with iBong and Grumpy for PlayStation 4. Originally announced as *Plague Sky,* the multiplayer action has a battle royale mode as its core, but there's more to this high-flying shooter than capitalizing on the hottest gaming trend of today.

It's been clear from the debut footage through the latest updates that *Dogfighter* is aiming for a more arcade-style approach to air combat. In fact, I'm relatively certain that dogfighting in World War II—or any war in human history, for that matter—didn't involve actual dogs at the controls. Correct me if I'm wrong here! Since you spend most of your time staring at your plane in third person or through the cockpit from the pilot's POV, I suppose the developers saw no reason not to swap out humans in favor of cloud-cruising canines.

Like most battle royale games, blowing up everyone else on screen is just part of the battle. *Dogfighter* is all about surviving until you're the last fighter in the skies, which should be an interesting challenge if enough players latch onto this particular brand of action. It's not going to be easy with heavyweight competitors like *World of Warplanes* out there, but competition is always a good thing, and the right level of post-launch support could give a game like this some serious legs on PS4.

As arcadey as *Dogfighter* may be, there's still a focus on realism despite the fact that it stars actual dogs. Explosions rock the screen high above and each aircraft is a nicely rendered recreation of real-world counterparts like the Spitfire Mk V, P52-Mustang, Messerschmitt BF-109, and Zero A6M. There appears to be plenty of respect for the actual battles of World War II, as well. Beyond the centerpiece battle royale mode lies a scenario mode that puts players in situations that approximate real events in a more cinematic way and tell their own wartime story.

How true *Dogfighter: World War 2* ends up being to history is still up in the air, but it looks like a serviceable option for all the virtual pilots out there who need a brief respite from *Warplanes* or the more modern thrills of *Ace Combat 7*. If that sounds like a familiar scenario, keep your PS4 warmed up and ready for action this spring.

HELL LET LOOSE
PUBLISHER TEAM17 • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** EARLY 2019

It's been almost a year since we first wrote about *Hell Let Loose,* a World War II-based shooter developed by a small team and powered by Unreal Engine 4. This teamwork-focused outing was originally set for release sometime in Q2 2018, but now it's lined up for an Early Access debut on PC in early 2019. Team17 is publishing, with Black Matter handling the suitably gritty take on the war that aims to support huge 50-on-50 multiplayer matches.

With historically accurate firearms and over 20 vehicles to choose from, the battles in *Hell Let Loose* will be, ahem, let loose upon 1:1 scale maps. As Black Matter previously detailed, the Norman countryside map alone—which is the battleground on which the game's recreation of 1944's Operation Overlord will be waged—takes roughly 15 minutes to traverse on foot. The realism carries over to strategies and the weapons themselves, which are outfitted with true limitations like jamming and overheating.

The wait has been extended for *Hell Let Loose,* so it's understandable if expectations are a little higher at this point. If Black Matter has used the extra time wisely, this could be another alternative to the *Battlefield* series multiplayer shooter fans have been requesting for years.

KARDS
PUBLISHER 1939 GAMES • **GENRE** COLLECTIBLE CARD GAME • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW (BETA)

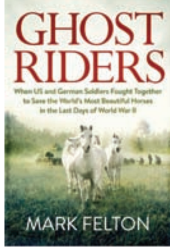
Making a physical card game can be difficult and costly, which is why developers are no doubt relieved at the growing popularity of digital versions. From *Hearthstone* to *Gwent* and beyond, taking your collectible cards to an online space means you don't have to worry about printing on the production end or expensive collecting on the consumer end, making games like *KARDS* possible and immediately accessible.

As you might have surmised, *KARDS* is a collectible card game based on World War II, and it comes from the Iceland-based 1939 games, which is comprised of both current and former employees of EVE Online studio CCP. Players can build decks full of infantry, tanks, aircraft, and more from all periods and theaters of World War II, with a variety of tactics at your disposal. You could opt for a focus on advanced technology or espionage, or just bully your way forward with Blitzkrieg tactics or strategic bombing attempts.

The warfare on display is depicted through illustrated cards that stay true to the aesthetic of the time. It's not all going to be free to play, of course. If you want to stay competitive you'll eventually need to throw down money for more cards and decks that you can customize to your liking, until you're a tabletop military force to be reckoned with. Beta access sign-ups are available for the PC version of *KARDS,* which also has a release on mobile devices planned for the future.

the Caucasus. They went on to hunt partisans in the Balkans but were broken up in 1944 and converted into a panzergrenadier division, though many of the men transferred to Otto Skorzeny's SS Jägdverbände.

The relative unfamiliarity of many history enthusiasts with the Brandenburgers is corrected by this new volume. The author dispels the myths surrounding the unit and goes into its major operations in detail. Various officers and soldiers of the unit are included in the stories, making the book more than just a dry unit history. Much of the material is gained from the accounts of former Brandenburgers, and the book is well illustrated.

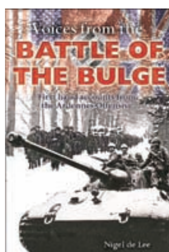


Ghost Riders: When US and German Soldiers Fought Together to Save the World's Most Beautiful Horses in the Last Days of World War II (Mark Felton, Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2018, 304 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $27.00, hardcover)

When the plague of Nazi Germany spread across Europe, one of the most notable acts of theft they executed was to take many of the famed Lippizzaner horses, known for being the purest bred equines in Europe, to a special location in Czechoslovakia. Their goal: to breed an "Aryan super horse." There they stayed until the last days of the war. An American colonel named Charles Reed learned about them; he also knew their location would soon be under the control of the advancing Soviet Red Army. At the insistence of General George Patton and fearing the horses might be slaughtered for their meat, Reed led a task force to find and rescue the horses. Along the way they received help from Germans who were enemies just hours earlier.

The story of this amazing and unorthodox rescue mission has been unnoticed by most historians until now. The author pieced together details from various archives and overlooked documents to create a narrative that is both flowing and riveting. He also places the event within the larger political picture of the war's harrowing last days. The American soldiers who carried out this mission stated they did so to "do something beautiful." Now that act of beauty is better known.

Voices from the Battle of the Bulge (Nigel De Lee, Greenhill Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2018, 288 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $19.95, softcover)



On December 16, 1944, Hitler committed most of his remaining reserves of troops and armor to a surprise attack against the American forces in the Ardennes Forest. By this time more than a million troops from both sides were involved in World War II on the Western Front. The Battle of the Bulge was the largest land battle fought by American soldiers during the war. The fighting was often brutal and the conditions always difficult. The Germans made many initial gains, but after a month of fighting their offensive failed and the Allies had cleared the way for the final defeat of the Nazis in Western Europe. The Bulge was truly one of the epic battles of the entire war and one that none of the surviving participants ever forgot.

The firsthand accounts of more than 70 of those participants are included in this new edition of a classic work on the battle. These comprise the experiences of the generals and planners who created the operations to ordinary soldiers fighting for their lives from foxholes and inside tanks. These individual stories are engaging, full of detail, and help the reader understand how various parts of the battle were woven together into the hard-fought campaign that helped signal the end of the Third Reich.

Otto Skorzeny: The Devil's Disciple (Stuart Smith, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2018, 384 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

Otto Skorzeny was once dubbed "the most dangerous man in Europe." As the leader of SS Special Forces, he planned and carried out a number of daring raids and missions during the course of the war. He also received credit for a few he had little to do with. After the war he managed to escape conviction for war crimes, once again ducking accusations and avoiding blame. After the war he led a life of intrigue, never really facing justice for his life of violence and conspiracy.

This biography of the famed Nazi commando lays out his deeds and misdeeds in a clear and interesting way. Skorzeny is a figure given to creating bias among historians, but the author takes care to present the facts in a straightforward manner, allowing the reader to see the subject's story with clarity.

Profiles

Continued from page 21

fascist dictator engaged in crimes against humanity failed to register. One could quibble and note that at least De Valera had not ordered the Irish flag lowered to half mast in mourning, as Portugal did for two days upon news of Hitler's death, but Dev's gesture as the head of a nonfascist nation proved unsettling.

Eamon De Valera scored a measure of redemption after Winston Churchill berated the Republic of Eire and by extension its prime minister in his victory speech of May 13, 1945. Churchill praised Northern Ireland and touted Britain's restraint toward De Valera's Ireland; indeed, if not for Ulster, Churchill noted, he might have invaded southern Ireland. As it was, Britain respected Ireland's neutrality, which "left the De Valera government to frolic with the Germans and later with the Japanese representatives to their heart's content." It was a rhetorical savaging. How would De Valera respond?

On May 16, De Valera delivered a radio address. The streets were quiet, but the pubs and dance halls were crowded with people listening to the wireless. Dev turned the tables on Churchill, citing Ireland as a small nation that retained its values while resisting aggressors for centuries, a backhanded slap at its former imperial British master: "There is a small nation that stood alone not for one year or two, but for several hundred years against aggression; that endured spoliations, famines, massacres, endless succession; that was clubbed many times into insensibility, but that each time on returning to consciousness took up the fight anew; a small nation that could never be got to accept defeat and has never surrendered her soul."

Listeners across Ireland responded with cheers. Others nodded thoughtfully. Dev had struck the right tone. The often critical Irish Times saluted De Valera as a gentleman. Even people opposed to Dev's German legation visit found his speech the appropriate riposte to the British. In the war of words, Dev had scored a victory.

Churchill had nothing to say publicly about the matter, a rare thing for him. Shortly thereafter, a Labour Party victory ushered Churchill out of Number 10 Downing Street, his Tory Party swept from power. De Valera would remain as Ireland's prime minister, his citizens still behind him.

First-time contributor Robert E. Cray is a member of the history department faculty at Montclair University in New Jersey.

Insight

Continued from page 27

fish from Los Angeles.

To show his continued support for Japanese Americans, Carr wanted to hire an inmate woman to be his employee. The position to be filled was "house girl." The term would be considered racist, demeaning, and perhaps even sexist today, but in 1943 it simply meant housekeeper. It was to be a salaried job; the governor was determined to put his "money where his mouth was."

Wakako Domoto was the Japanese American woman who was hired as Carr's housekeeper. A Nisei, American born, 31 years old, she hailed from Oakland, California, and had attended Stanford University for two years. Her father, Kanetaro Domoto, was the co-owner with his brother of the largest nursery in the Golden State. She hesitated about accepting the job; few women left Amache camp, and there was a very real fear of lynching or other violence.

Domoto accepted and nervously boarded a train for Denver. When she arrived at the Denver railroad station the governor himself was there to safely escort her to his home. Besides room, board, and a regular salary, Carr enrolled her at the Emily Griffith Opportunity School at his own expense.

Ralph Carr's courageous stand came at a high political price. When he ran for U.S. senator he was defeated by the leading Democrat, Edwin "Big Ed" Johnson. Johnson, who served as governor before Carr, had called out the Colorado National Guard in 1936 and tried to seal the border with New Mexico. The main reason was to keep out Mexican migrant workers and "indigents" and prevent them from entering the state. Johnson's racist and xenophobic attitudes resonated with Colorado voters in 1942.

But after the war Coloradans realized that Carr had been right, and in 1950 he was on the brink of a comeback. He ran for governor that year, but after winning the Republican nomination he died of a heart attack. He was 62. After his premature death he was forgotten for decades, but there has been a renewed interest in his life and career. Colorado is proud of its native son, and highways and buildings have been named in his honor. A bust and memorial to Governor Carr were dedicated in Denver. In a time of darkness, he was a shining example of the best in the American character.

Author Eric Niderost is a frequent contributor to WWII History *on a variety of topics. He resides in Union City, California, where he is also a college professor.*

Busting Bridges

Continued from page 47

parked B-24s. Linamen decided to abort the approach to the runway and try to land instead on the beach at the edge of the airbase.

Linamen flew north of the base then turned south and started to let down. Indicated airspeed was kept at 170 to 175 miles per hour to keep the wings level. As they flew over a small inlet, crewmembers took their crash-landing positions. As they neared the ground everything seemed to be going well. When Linamen leveled the B-24 off to set it down, speed dropped to 155 miles per hour, and a crosswind started to drift the B-24 left toward the sand dunes. Linamen touched right rudder. This spoiled the airflow over the wing and caused the aircraft to lose its lift. It stalled and hit the ground at 155 miles per hour. Linamen flipped switches off as the aircraft hurtled over an area where backwater was held in a shallow hollow about 196 feet across. The nose gear snapped off. With its nose now plowing through the pool of water, the B-24 came to an abrupt halt. Exit hatches were flung open, and all 10 crewmen got out of the aircraft as quickly as they could. The B-24 was a write-off. It had been a brand new plane.

The wooden "bypass bridge at Kanchanaburi" was not rebuilt after this mission. For bringing back the severely damaged B-24 and its crew, Linamen was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The achievements of the 7th Bomb Group are summarized by James Young: "In nearly three years of combat the B-24s of the 7th BG dropped 13,165 tons of bombs in the course of nearly 500 combat missions and carried close to 3,000,000 gallons of fuel to China. The group lost 71 aeroplanes, 48 on combat missions and 23 on 'gas hauling' missions."

An interesting sidelight has emerged. During Southeast Asia's monsoon season, from about mid-June to the end of September 1944, when extreme weather interfered with aircraft operations, the 7th's B-24s were relieved from bombing missions and sent to haul gasoline to China over the famous "Hump," the Himalayas. To convert the aircraft to tankers, gun turrets were removed and three gunners left behind; three 420-gallon tanks were installed in the bomb bays.

Flying the Hump involved some of the most dangerous missions of the war. They were flown through heavy rain, ice, and extreme turbulence. Foul weather took its toll, but so did overloading. The conditions were reflected in aircraft losses. The 7th Bomb Group lost more B-24s flying the Hump than in combat that year. □

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