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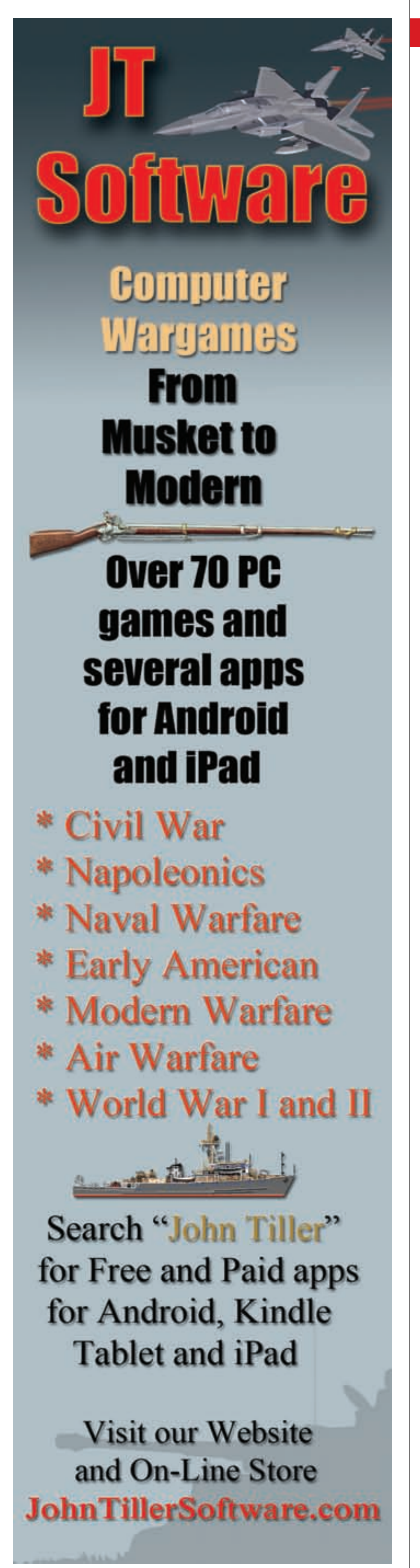

editorial

The Battle of Arras through Rommel's eyes.

SOUTH OF THE CROSSROADS OF ARRAS IN THE PAS DE Calais region of France, British and German troops are buried alongside each other. They were casualties of a gutsy British armored counterattack on May 21, 1940, by two British tank regiments against General-Major Erwin Rommel's 7th Panzer Division.

Rommel's division was racing west toward the Channel coast on the right flank of General-Colonel Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group A at the time of the British counterattack. The commander of the British Expeditionary Force ordered British 50th Infantry Division commander Maj. Gen. Gifford Martel to strike Rommel's division to temporarily check its advance.

Rommel's swift reaction and characteristic hands-on leadership from the front contributed greatly that day to preventing a setback from turning into a disaster. The British Matilda I and Matilda II tanks that participated in the Battle of Arras generally were meant for infantry support and not to go head to head with the German panzers. The two-pronged British attack consisted of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment with 23 Matilda Is and 16 Matilda IIs leading the right column and the 4th Royal Tank Regiment with 35 Matilda Is leading the left column.

That afternoon Rommel had ordered his 25th Panzer Regiment to attack the enemy. In the meantime, Rommel drove south to see what was holding up his 6th and 7th Rifle Regiments. He was near the village of Wailly south of Arras when struck by the British right column.

"The enemy tank fire had created chaos and confusion among our troops in the village," said Rommel. A traffic jam ensued in which German vehicles of the 7th Rifle Regiment became snarled. "It was an extremely tight spot, for there were several enemy tanks close to Wailly on its north side," said Rommel. The German commander, together with his aide, Lieutenant Most (who was mortally wounded in the battle), rounded up every available antitank and antiaircraft gun they could find and ordered them into action. "I personally gave each gun its target," said Rommel. "With the enemy tanks so perilously close, only rapid fire from every gun could save the situation."

Rommel's quick work to stabilize the situation blunted the advance of Lt. Col. H.M. Heyland's 7th Royal Tank Regiment. Unfortunately for the British tank crews, their radios were malfunctioning, and therefore tank leaders had to convey orders in an exposed position with hand signals. Because of this, Heyland was killed leading the assault.

To Rommel's right, Lt. Col. J.G. Fitzmaurice's 4th Royal Tank Regiment had burst through a thin line of antitank weapons deployed by the German 6th Rifle Regiment. "The antitank guns ... were put out of action by gunfire, together with their crews, and then overrun by the enemy tanks," said Rommel. Additionally, many of the vehicles of the two rifle regiments were "burnt out" by the tanks, according to Rommel.

The 6th Rifle Regiment's forward position at the village of Agny was pierced, and although the majority of the tanks were stopped at the next concentration of villages to the east, which included Mercatel and Neuville, a few doughty British tankers made it as far as Wancourt. What finally broke the back of the German attack was the use of divisional artillery and the dreaded 88mm antiaircraft guns in a tank-buster role. Rommel lost approximately 400 men, which was four times what he lost during the breakthrough into France. The British lost two-thirds of their armor, a loss they could ill afford.

William E. Welsh

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By Ludwig Heinrich Dyck

Janos Hunyadi showed tactical genius in safeguarding Hungary against the Ottoman tide in the 15th century.

JANOS HUNYADI, HUNGARY'S NATIONAL HERO, WAS ONE OF THE GREAT captains in the war between Europe and the Ottoman Turks. Hunyadi rose from obscurity to dominate Hungarian politics in the first half of the 15th century and lead the Hungarians to victory against the formidable Ottoman Empire. At the turn of the 15th century, Hunyadi's father, the Wallachian knight Woyk, immigrated to Hungary to serve its king, Sigismund of the House of Luxembourg. At the time Hungary was one of the great European powers, straddling the land route from central Europe to the Near East. Woyk married Erzsebet Morsina, who was of minor Hungarian nobility. Erzsebet bore Woyk three sons and two daughters, giving birth to Janos around 1407.

In 1409 Sigismund bestowed upon Woyk the Hunyad castle, whose name the family took. Janos grew up in Hunyad castle in the foothills of the western Carpathians, where Woyk lorded over two score villages. More affluent than the poorest of the lesser nobles, the Hunyadis nevertheless ranked far below the powerful baronial families.

The Hunyadi children learned to read and write Hungarian from their priest and from nearby Franciscan friars. The brothers also underwent intense physical training to prepare them for a life of war. They learned to cope with death early. In 1419 the Hunyadi children asked that Hunyad castle be transferred to their names, which almost certainly meant that Woyk had died.

Janos Hunyadi grew up to be a man of medium height with a well-proportioned body, chestnut brown hair, and intense, focused eyes. The 15th-century historian Thuroczi represented Hunyadi as a "man of war, born to bear arms." A devout Catholic, Hunyadi would leave his bed at night to spend hours praying at the chapel. He believed in strict discipline for himself and for his men. Soldiering in the armies of a number of Serbian and Hungarian lords, Hunyadi obtained the command of six lancers.

Although Hunyadi fought the Turks in frontier skirmishes, Hungary was spared any major Turkish invasion until the late 1430s. After the Ottoman defeat by the Mongols at Ankara in 1402, Sultan Mehmed I was busy rebuilding Ottoman power. Mehmed's successor, Sultan Murad II, led the Ottomans back on the offensive, reducing the Byzantine Empire to little more than besieged Constantinople.

In 1428 Hunyadi gained entry into the *miles aulae,* Sigismund's knights of the household. Sigismund had ruled Hungary for 41 years. Intelligent, tall, strong, and handsome, his was a life of extravagant pleasures and scandalous romances. Later historians even maintained that Hunyadi was actually the bastard son of

Ottoman troops assault Belgrade in 1456. When Sultan Mehmed II threatened the key city, Hunyadi was one of the few nobles ready to fight the Ottomans.

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Despite attempts to rally the Crusaders at Varna following the death of Polish King Wladyslaw III in a cavalry charge, Hunyadi was unable to prevent an Ottoman victory.

Sigismund. Although having helped lead the disastrous 1396 Franco-Hungarian crusade, Sigismund's fluid defensive war and strong border fortifications curtailed Ottoman expansion north of the Danube.

Hunyadi protected the king and recruited mercenaries. It was around this time that Hunyadi married Erzsebet Szilagyi, whose noble family was spread throughout Transylvania. In the fall of 1431 Hunyadi accompanied Sigismund to Italy, where Hunyadi became enthralled by the world of the Renaissance. He temporarily left Sigismund's entourage to take up mercenary service and learn of the Italian military arts.

In the fall of 1433, Hunyadi rejoined Sigismund, who had been crowned Holy Roman Emperor. By 1436 Hunyadi had risen to the command of 50 knights. Traveling to Bohemia with Sigismund, who also was the King of Bohemia, Hunyadi familiarized himself with Hussite battle wagons.

Sigismund passed away in 1437, leaving no male heir and ending the House of Luxemburg. Hunyadi loyally served Sigismund's son-in-law and successor, Albert of the House of Habsburg, who was already King of Austria. In 1338 Albert was also crowned King of Germany and of Bohemia, where the puritan Hussites' Czech nobles rejected Albert's claim. They invited Kasimir, the 13-year-old brother of Wladyslaw III, the King of Poland, to be their king.

While Albert was busy fending off Polish invasions, the Ottomans returned to raid through Transylvania. A papal truce between Albert and the Poles allowed Hungary to focus on the Turks. In May 1439 Hunyadi was sent to take over the government of the military district of Szoreny on the war-torn border with Ottoman-held Bulgaria.

Sultan Murad besieged the Serbian castle of Szendro in June 1439. Serbia's ruler, the despot Djuradj Brankovic, fled to Hungary and left the defense of Szendro to his sons. Hunyadi took the fight to the Ottomans by raiding into the Ottoman-Bulgarian district of Vidin. King Albert, for his part, tried to muster an army at Titel but the nobles did not heed his call. Unruliness and dysentery decimated the army. In August 1439 Szendro fell; the sons of Brankovic were captured and blinded. The sultan left a garrison and returned to Edirne for the winter. Hunyadi successfully ambushed Szendro's commander, Bey Iszhak, who was returning to Szendro from a raid. Hunyadi's men-at-arms attacked frontally while his cavalry circled to strike at the enemy flanks.

When King Albert succumbed to dysentery on October 27, 1439, Hunyadi sided with old compatriots, who chose as their king the 15-year-old Wladyslaw III (Ulaszlo I) instead of Albert's son, Laszlo "Posthumus" born early the following year. Albert's widow, Queen Elizabeth von Cilli, asserted herself as regent for the infant king. Queen Elizabeth allied herself with 24-year-old Frederick III of the Habsburgs, Albert's cousin and newly crowned German king, and made Frederick Laszlo's guardian. Hunyadi distinguished himself in the ensuing civil war. By the spring of 1441 many of the queen's supporters had come over to Wladyslaw. Wladyslaw rewarded Hunyadi by appointing him captain of Belgrade (part of Hungary since 1426) and, alongside Miklos Ujlaki, voivode of Transylvania.

During the Hungarian infighting, Murad unsuccessfully assaulted Belgrade, but he devastated the countryside. The Turks bragged that a beautiful girl sold for the price of pair of boots. Hunyadi retaliated by raiding around Szendro, avoiding at trap set by Bey Iszhak and driving the Ottomans back into their fortress.

During the spring of 1442, Mezid Pasha, Bey of Vidin, led 17,000 sipahis (cavalry) into central Transylvania. The panic spread by Mezid's ravages drew Hunyadi into an ill-prepared engagement at Santimbru. Hunyadi barely escaped but rallied peasant reinforcements and riposted only a few days later. Mezid ordered his best troops to take out Hunyadi. "To kill a lion, his heart must be pierced," Mezid told his troops, advising them that Hunyadi "wears a silver helmet and carries a shield emblazoned with a raven. Mounted on a white horse, he is always found in the thick of battle." Forewarned by a spy, Hunyadi let a volunteer, Simon Kemeny, wear his armor. Kemeny was slain but Hunyadi was left free to lead the attack and defeat Mezid on March 22. A wagonload of severed Ottoman heads was sent back to Buda.

In the late summer of 1442, the sultan bestowed an army tens of thousands upon Sehabeddin, the Ottoman commander-in-chief of Rumelia, the Ottoman Balkan territory. Sehabeddin boasted that the infidel would flee at the sight of his turban and that his sword would bring a rain of blood. Commanding barely 15,000 men, Hunyadi prudently held off from an engagement until Sehabeddin's sipahis were off looting the countryside. Early in September Hunyadi defeated Sehabeddin in a narrow defile, capturing more than 200 flags and 5,000 prisoners.

Alongside Brankovic, who wanted Szendro and Kosovo back, Hunyadi continued to press Wladyslaw to fight the Ottomans. Cardinal Julian Caesarini mediated between Poland and Frederick to enable Wladyslaw to concentrate on fighting the Turks. Elizabeth agreed to recognize Wladyslaw on the condition that her son was to succeed him and that Wladyslaw marry Elizabeth's older daughter. Encouraged by Hunyadi, Wladyslaw was free to lead a crusade. With Sultan Murad II having left to fight the emir of Karaman in south-central Turkey, the time seemed right to take the offensive.

By the time Wladyslaw's army struck into Ottoman territory in the fall of 1443, it had grown to approximately 38,000 men. In addition to the Hungarians and Wladyslaw's Polish troops, Hunyadi had spent 32,000 gold florins to hire thousands of mercenaries, among them Serbian refugees and 600 Hussite battle wagons. Caesarini brought Czech and Austrian mercenaries. Brankovic's troops numbered nearly 8,000. Moldavians and Wallachians had joined the ranks as well, including voivode Vlad Dracul II of Wallachia.

The ensuing "Long Campaign" lasted from September 1443 to February 1444. Hunyadi wrote to Ujlaki, who had yet to join his troops: "A great many Bosnians, Bulgars, Serbs, and Albanians are constantly arriving in our camp, bringing all sorts of presents." Hunyadi led the vanguard south into the valley of the River Morava. At night Hunyadi surrounded a 2,000-strong Turkish detachment, scattering them in a surprise attack in the morning. After capturing Nis, Hunyadi was faced by the approach of several large Ottoman armies. Hunyadi defeated them all in less than 48 hours. Returning victoriously from Anatolia, Murad confronted and was defeated by Wladyslaw and Hunyadi at Snaim.

Murad adopted a scorched-earth strategy. The mild weather turned to frosty cold. Food and fodder dried up. The Ottomans felled trees to block the mountain road and rolled boulders down on the Hungarians. Wladyslaw's army was forced to turn back. Kasim Pasha, Sehabeddin's successor as governor of Rumelia, led the Ottoman troops in a cautious pursuit. Brankovic's rear guard feigned flight, drawing Kasim into Hunyadi's ambush. The Ottomans were scattered and Kasim captured. Murad sent envoys, offering a long-term truce.

Wladyslaw and Hunyadi's victory was celebrated throughout the Christian world. The debate on whether to continue the war dragged through the summer of 1444. At Szeged, Wladyslaw agreed to a peace treaty. Murad paid 100,000 florins to Wladyslaw and returned Serbia to Brankovic. A grateful Brankovic awarded Hunyadi a number of Serbian estates. Hunyadi now ruled more than 25 castles, 30 towns, and 1,000 villages.

The peace was not to last. Incited by the warmongering Caesarini, Wladyslaw declared war on August 4, 1444. The time seemed favorable. One reason was that Murad was back in Anatolia; another was that the Venetians promised that their fleet would block his return. Hunyadi's troops looted their way from Transylvania through Wallachia, infuriating Vlad Dracul, who nevertheless joined Wladyslaw's army. By the time the army was united near Nicopolis in October, it only numbered 20,000 men. Dracul mocked that the sultan's hunting entourage was bigger and implored Wladyslaw to turn back. Hunyadi accused Dracul of conspiring with the sultan. Insulted, Dracul left the army, leaving his son in command of his Wallachians.

Hoping to be reinforced by Byzantines and Albanians, the army continued east along the Danube. On November 9, 1444, the Hungarians reached Varna on the Black Sea where disastrous news arrived. Murad had crossed the straits at night, having been ferried across by the Genoese for one gold florin per soldier. Hungarian scouts saw no sign of the expected

Byzantines. Even worse, Brankovic, who now desired good relations with the sultan, used his troops to prevent the arrival of Skanderbeg's Albanians. By nightfall, the campfires of Murad's army, which numbered more than 60,000, flickered in the distance.

The Battle of Varna began on November 10, 1444. The Christian army fended off Ottoman cavalry, and Hunyadi led his cavalry in pursuit. With only his janissaries holding their ground, Murad contemplated flight. Ottoman historian Nesri described what happened next. A grizzled, veteran janissary stopped Murad's horse and implored him to rally his men. "Sultan, admirable lord, Ottoman Murad, get off your horse this minute to die with us and we with you," the janissary said.

Victory all but in his grasp, Wladyslaw entered the fray with 500 cavalry. The young king smote through the janissaries, but then his horse was killed under him. Wladyslaw was hurled to the ground where a janissary swooped off his head and hoisted it on the tip of his lance. Galloping back to battle, Hunyadi tried in vain to stem the growing panic. The sun set upon a vanquished Hungarian army. Hunyadi escaped the Ottomans, but on his way back to Hungary he was captured by Dracul. Dracul fortunately released Hunyadi when the royal council threatened war.

Laszlo V was chosen as Wladyslaw's successor, although the boy king remained under King Frederick's protection. Hunyadi continued to fight the Ottomans, scoring a minor victory at Little Nicopolis in 1445. He strengthened royal authority by restoring its finances and cleaning up corruption. Wages of miners were increased, the growth of free towns was promoted, and roads were improved.

During the 1446 June diet, the Hungarian nobles chose Hunyadi to act as regent for the absent Laszlo. During the same summer, Dracul was ousted by the rival noble Dan. Dracul fled to Murad II, and with the aid of Ottoman troops drove Dan out of Wallachia. Hunyadi came to Dan's aid and annihilated Dracul's forces at the Jalomitsa River. Dracul and his elder son were beheaded and his younger son blinded. Among Vlad's surviving children was Vlad III the Impaler, of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* fame.

Hunyadi intended to lead another great campaign against the Ottomans. He gained the support of Prince Dan with 8,000 men. Brankovic, however, sided with the sultan. When Pope Eugenius IV advised Hunyadi to postpone the campaign, he objected to the proposal. "We have had enough of our men enslaved, our women raped, wagons loaded with the heads of our people, the sale of chained captives, the mockery of our religion," Hunyadi wrote in a letter dated September 8, 1448. "We shall not stop until we succeed in expelling the enemy from Europe."

ABOVE: Janos Hunyadi saved Hungary from the disgrace of Ottoman bondage. BELOW: Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II failed to take Belgrade in 1456, but it would fall to the Ottomans in the following century.

In the fall of 1448, Hunyadi's 24,000-strong army marched to southern Serbia's Kosovo-Polje where he waited for Albanian reinforcements. But Murad showed up first on October 17 with 60,000 men. The stage was set for the Second Battle of Kosovo. The following day

cavalry of both sides skirmished. Hunyadi attacked the sultan's camp that night but was forced back when the Ottomans rallied. The next morning, Murad threw in his rested Anatolian cavalry. Hunyadi's heavy cavalry smashed through the janissaries and reached the baggage camp, but it was surrounded and destroyed. First the Wallachians, then the whole Hungarian army collapsed into flight. They left behind 17,000 casualties but inflicted nearly twice as many on the Ottomans.

While fleeing through Serbia, Hunyadi escaped temporary capture by Ottoman raiders, who fortunately did not recognize him. Brankovic captured Hunyadi, and the Hungarian was only released after he had ceded land to Brankovic.

In 1452, the wily Frederick, now also Holy Roman Emperor, released Laszlo V to Hungary. Hunyadi resigned his regency in a show of loyalty, and Laszlo rewarded him by appointing him chief captain of all of Hungary. On May 29, 1453, came the news that Constantinople had fallen to Mehemed II "The Conqueror," the son and successor of Murad II. King Laszlo showed little concern, partying at Prague for a year after being crowned King of Bohemia in October 1453. Mehemed invaded Serbia in 1454. He besieged Szendro despite Brankovic's attempts at appeasement. Mehemed gave up the siege, but he left behind a large detachment under Firuz Bey. Hunyadi smashed the Ottoman detachment in a surprise attack at dawn. Brankovic nevertheless became the sultan's vassal.

When Mehmed threatened Belgrade in 1456, Hunyadi was one of the few ready to fight the Ottomans. Laszlo V, by comparison, fled Buda for Vienna. He did this ostensibly to go on a hunting trip. Hunyadi, however, gained the support of the 71-year-old Franciscan friar Saint John (Giovanni) of Capistrano, whose zealous devotion would be a greater boon than any king. Capistrano rallied the people with a vigor that defied his old age. "Behold! Unarmed peasants, blacksmiths, tailors, carters, artisans, and students march at the head of armies, believing themselves to have been called by God to great deed," related 15th-century historian Ebendorffer. They gathered at Szeged, armed with rusted swords, straightened scythes, clubs, and a few bows and arrows. Capistrano and the first peasant crusaders arrived at Belgrade before Hunyadi and just before the Ottomans.

Mehmed laid siege to Belgrade on July 2 with an army of 50,000. Located at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube, the fortress of Belgrade boasted formidable natural defenses that supplemented its man-made walls and moat. The Ottoman army had dwindled considerably as a result of the plague its soldiers brought over from Asia. Mehmed blockaded Belgrade from land and water. He then proceeded to bombard the stronghold with 300 cannons and massive stone-throwing catapults.

Hunyadi brought 16,000 men and 200 ships to relieve the beleaguered city. On July 14 Hunyadi defeated the Ottoman fleet by squeezing it between his own and Szilagyi's smaller fleet. Hunyadi then led 3,000 of his men into the fortress, deploying the remainder on the opposite bank of the Sava. After Mehmed's cannons had nearly demolished the walls, the janissaries launched all-out assault on July 21. By nightfall the Turks were fighting in the streets. Hunyadi ordered his men to throw tarred wood and blankets saturated in sulfur into the moat. Set alight, the moat erupted in flames and burned the Ottomans trying to gain the walls. The isolated janissaries in the city were slaughtered.

On July 22 a handful of emboldened crusaders made their way through the partly demolished walls. Exchanging insults with the Ottomans, their numbers grew. Capistrano got caught up in the growing furor and incited the masses to attack. Hunyadi sallied forth to join the confused melee. The fighting lasted until dusk. "Even the dead climbed out of the breaches in the wall, swarmed out of the fortress and fell upon the army of Islam," wrote Ottoman historian Tursun Bey. Both sides drew apart, but the Turks knew they were beaten and retreated.

The victory at Belgrade brought great fame to the victors. There were calls for Capistrano's beatification, and Pope Calixtus called Hunyadi "the most outstanding man the world had seen in 300 years." Hunyadi did not survive his greatest triumph for long. He passed away on August 11, 1456. In all likelihood, he succumbed to the plague that had spread from the Ottoman camp into the city. With his last words, the dying Hunyadi pleaded for the continued defense of Hungary and Christianity.

Hungary's deeds elevated him into the realm of legend to become Torokvero, the "scourge of the Turks." Even in defeat, he led his troops well and carried on with undiminished resoluteness. Hunyadi fought his way through military battlefields and Machiavellian politics to become the de facto ruler of Hungary in all but name. Hunyadi laid the groundwork for his younger son, Matyas, who after Laszlo V's unexpected death in November (rumored to be by poison) became one of the great kings of the Renaissance. Hunyadi's great victory at Belgrade safeguarded Hungary from the Turks for decades. He is remembered and celebrated in Hungary to this day. □

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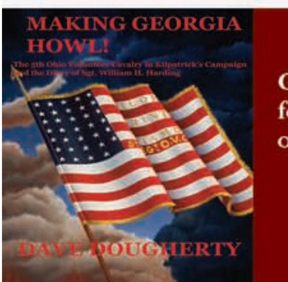

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By Blaine Taylor

American-born Nazi radio propagandist William Joyce amused, and also terrorized, British listeners.

THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RADIO BROADcasters from Nazi Germany was Brooklyn, New York-born William Joyce, known by the disparaging moniker Lord Haw Haw. Joyce became the most popular broadcaster on the "Germany Calling" propaganda radio program broadcast to a large audience in Great Britain from inside the Third Reich.

Joyce assisted the Nazis throughout the war in their attempt to undermine British morale in the hope of forcing the country's surrender. Although Joyce was not the only English-speaking propagandist on the program, he took it to new heights of popularity during the Blitz, the Luftwaffe's aerial offensive against civilian and industrial targets in Great Britain from September 1940 to May 1941.

The broadcast Barrington heard may not have been Joyce, but instead Sandhurst-educated British Army officer and Nazi sympathizer Norman Baillie-Stewart, who moved to Austria in 1937 and became a propaganda broadcaster for the "Germany Calling!" program in July 1939. Baillie-Stewart's voice was far more authentically pompous than Joyce's American nasal twang. Barrington subsequently bestowed the nickname on the more popular Joyce, calling him Lord Haw Haw of Zeesen, which was the site of the English transmitter in the Third Reich.

Believing that William Joyce was reaching for a gun when he was reaching for his false passport, British Lieutenant Geoffrey Perry shot him in the leg in May 1945.

Approximately 60 percent of the BBC's audience reportedly tuned in to his informative and humorous programs immediately following top news. They did so in part because they enjoyed Joyce's over-the-top, sneering verbal assaults on the arrogant British establishment, and also because they badly wanted to hear what was happening elsewhere. In 1940, it was estimated that Lord Haw Haw had six million regular listeners and as many as 18 million occasional listeners. Although listening was discouraged in Great Britain, it was not illegal.

From Joyce's broadcasts, listeners learned of an alleged pro-German fifth column throughout the United Kingdom. They were frequently astonished by his eerily accurate predictions and his knowledge of minute details of British life. Over time, British listeners came to hate him when it became clear that his aim was to terrorize the English people.

Joyce was born April 24, 1906, to Anglican Protestant Gertrude Emily Joyce and Irish Catholic Michael Joyce, both of whom had become U.S. citizens on October, 25, 1894. The Joyce family returned to Ireland in 1909 when young Joyce was three. The family viewed itself as staunch supporters of the British Empire. Up to 1921, Joyce was a

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Sir Oswald Mosley leads a parade of Britain's British Union of Fascists. Joyce, who was captivated in the pre-war years by Mosley's British Union of Fascists, proved a superb stump speaker for the group.

practicing Irish Roman Catholic who attended Galway's Jesuit Order St. Ignatius Loyola School in County Mayo. He was an intelligent, albeit argumentative, student. He often defended his views with his fists. His nose was broken in one fistfight, but he stubbornly refused to have it reset. This resulted in the distinctive nasal twang he made when talking on "Germany Calling."

Joyce was later ridiculed for being a puny figure, but he was of average height and build and excelled in boxing, swimming, and fencing. Because of his youth, Joyce missed serving in the British Army during World War I, but he later claimed to have aided the Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve, more commonly known as the Black and Tans, which the British government deployed to suppress Irish nationalism. He opposed the Irish Republican Army.

In 1921, at the age of 16, Joyce became an Irish Republican Army target, but the plot to assassinate him miscarried. His parents had both their home and business attacked by Irish Sinn Fein nationalists, who threatened they would slit his tongue if young Joyce continued informing on them.

The Joyces relocated to England in 1921 for safety, and Joyce applied for admittance into the London Officers' Training Corps. Joyce resumed his studies as a foreign exchange student and lied about his age when he enlisted in the British Army. When Army officials discovered he had lied, he was discharged. By 1923, he was a student of English language, literature, and history at Birbeck College. He became involved with the British Fascisti, which was founded by Rotha Lintorn-Orman. He gained a reputation as a fiery speaker and combative opponent when heckled.

By 1924 Joyce commanded his own Fascisti combat squad. He became embroiled in a violent fracas with left-wing opponents at a Conservative Party rally during which he alleged he was attacked by Jewish Communists, who slashed the right side of his face with a razor blade. The severe cut ran across his right cheek from behind the earlobe to the corner of his mouth and required 26 stitches. Joyce left the British Fascisti in 1925 for the Conservative Party. Six years later he left that political party, too.

Joyce graduated with honors in 1927. The same year he married his first wife, Hazel Kathleen Barr. The couple had two daughters, Diana and Heather. Joyce was captivated in 1932 by Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. He jettisoned a teaching career and joined the fascist political party as a salaried orator, activist, and organizer. Joyce immediately proved an effective stump speaker. "Thin, pale, intense, he had not been speaking many minutes before we were electrified by this man," said British journalist Cecil Roberts of Joyce's eerie oratory style that resembled that of German leader Adolf Hitler. "[It was] so terrifying in its dynamic force, so vituperative, so vitriolic!" He was "a brilliant writer and speaker who addressed hundreds of meetings," added A.K. Chesterton. "Always revealing the iron spirit of fascism."

In June 1934, Mosley named him as the organization's propaganda director and later as deputy leader of the movement. Joyce was always "the first to dive into a fracas with knuckle duster at the ready," said one eyewitness. Opponents at British Union of Fascists events rose from a dozen to thousands, especially as Joyce's anti-Jewish rhetoric grew ever shriller. Joyce loved being perched on a soapbox outfitted in a fascist black shirt, buttoned dark suit, and high-necked pullover, with his right hand gripping the microphone. Joyce became a leading spokesman against the British cabinet's Government of India Act of 1935, which passed despite opposition.

Joyce's violent speeches and tilting toward the British Union of Fascists ever more anti-Semitic rhetoric soon began alienating both the British voting public and Mosley. Nevertheless, Joyce persuaded Mosley to rename the party in 1936 as the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists, thus aping Hitler, Joyce's ideological hero.

In 1937, Joyce ran as a British Union of Fascists candidate for an elected seat on the London County Council, but he lost. Badly defeated in the April 1937 elections, the British Union of Fascists lost membership and contributions. Mosley dropped anti-Jewish rhetoric in favor of preventing another Anglo-German war. The schism between Mosley and Joyce was also based on their different personalities. Mosley was charming, humorous, and outgoing, while Joyce was hot tempered, intense, and impatient. Their break came when Mosley pared down the organization's paid staff from 143 to 30. Joyce was among those who were laid off.

Joyce took with him 60 former members of the British Union of Fascists to launch his National Socialist League. Joyce's second wife, Margaret Cairns White, served as the organization's treasurer. The league had little influence, and it was soon down to 20 members. Joyce argued against numerous personal assault charges in court between 1937 and 1939 and was acquitted of all of them. MI5 of the British Secret Service put Joyce under surveillance beginning in July 1939 for being in contact with German agents in Britain. Once Great Britain was at war with Nazi Germany, Joyce was placed on an arrest list.

In an effort to avoid arrest, Joyce disbanded the National Socialist League. He also renewed his British passport. Joyce lied when applying for his first British passport by falsely stating that he was a British subject when he was still legally a U.S. citizen. Tipped off by an MI5 pro-fascist informant that they were about to be arrested, Joyce and his wife left Britain on August 26, 1939, one week before England declared war on Germany.

Upon arriving in Berlin, Joyce met German

Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop's private secretary, Erich Hetzler. The Nazis immediately put him to work. Joyce was given the dual job of editor and speaker for all German foreign language radio broadcasting. As such, he was supervised by the staff of the radio department of the Propaganda Ministry headed by Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda Joseph Goebbels.

Initially, Joyce was not well received in Berlin. Some Nazis suspected that he was an MI5 double agent. A dejected Joyce rushed to the British embassy to return home even if that meant internment for the duration of the war, but it was too late. Joyce would have to survive in the Third Reich to the best of his ability.

Joyce subsequently flubbed his radio audition, but a studio sound engineer believed that he showed promise. Thus, by default was born the star of German airwave propaganda against Great Britain. Joyce made his first broadcast on September 11, 1939, as an anonymous speaker. He defied established rules by writing his own scripts. Joyce's programming was a smash hit with his British target audience.

Joyce's odd accent accounted for most of the unintended derision against him. London comedians regularly parodied him, and he was even featured in BBC radio advertising, although at the time no one knew his identity.

At first everyone laughed at the mysterious announcer's pretentiousness. After France fell in June 1940, and there was a very real threat of a cross-Channel invasion of the British Isles, officials at the Home Office in London took a more serious interest in the shows, particularly as the broadcaster assumed an all-knowing aura of authority and accuracy.

Joyce was credited with knowing minute, precise details about what the British government was doing. To the amazement of his listeners, Joyce correctly predicted what targets would be bombed and the results of the bomb strikes. By reading official Luftwaffe reports that were not released in England, he was able to scoop BBC reports. In addition, Joyce read day-old London newspapers, selectively monitored foreign newscasts, and featured speakers from prisoner of war camps inside German-occupied Europe. As the devastation from aerial bombing worsened, though, his popularity sagged.

Joyce and Margaret became German citizens on September 26, 1940, and his reach expanded with script writing for a trio of black radio propaganda stations: Radio Caledonia, Workers' Challenge, and the New British Broadcasting Service. He also recruited British POWs to enlist in the British Free Corps unit of the Waffen SS, and he published a book, *Twilight Over England,* in which he contrasted the ideal Nazi Germany versus the Jewish-dominated, capitalist enemy state.

ABOVE: Joyce was known as Lord Haw-Haw when broadcasting from Nazi Germany. BELOW: Joyce photographed in an ambulance after his wounding and capture. He received the death sentence for his treason, and a conspiracy theory held that he was a double agent.

In September 1944, Hitler awarded him the German War Merit Cross, which came complete with a personally signed certificate. Despite this, they never met in person. Joyce's last, allegedly drunken and audibly slurred voice broadcast went out over German Radio Hamburg on the day of Hitler's suicide. In it he predicted that postwar Great Britain would lose her global empire as a result of her having "won" World War II. Lord Haw Haw signed off his last program with a virulent, "Heil Hitler, and farewell!"

With the war lost, Margaret turned to opium, and both drank heavily and had numerous extramarital affairs. Joyce asked himself rhetorically in a diary entry of April 22, 1945, "Has it all been worthwhile? I think not. National Socialism is a fine cause, but most of the Germans, not all, are bloody fools." On May 1, 1945, the British Army took Hamburg, causing the Joyces to flee northward to Flensburg in Schleswig-Holstein. Behind them, Joyce's personal microphone was captured and used on air to mock the fugitive Lord Haw Haw and Lady Haw Haw.

A pair of British Army intelligence officers stumbled upon Joyce on May 28, 1945. When Joyce greeted them, the officers immediately recognized his distinctive voice. They asked him point blank if he were Lord Haw Haw. As Joyce reached into a pocket for a false passport that identified him as Wilhelm Hansen, Lieutenant Geoffrey Perry, a German Jew, suspected Joyce might be reaching for a pistol and shot him in the leg.

His captors turned over Joyce, who was unarmed, to Royal Military Police later that day. After spending a fortnight recuperating at the British Military Hospital in Luneburg, Joyce was flown back to the United Kingdom on June 16, 1945, under heavy guard. The irony of his arrest was noted in one account. "The soldier who shot the infamous broadcaster ... had been born a German Jew ... arrived in England to escape Hitler ... became English, and arrested an Irish-American who pretended to be English, but had become German," stated the account.

His three-day trial at London's Old Bailey began on September 17, 1945. Attorney General Sir Hartley Shawcross indicted him on three counts of treason against the Crown while residing in Germany at first on a British passport and then upon becoming a German citizen during wartime after his passport expired on July 7, 1940.

The court convicted Joyce on one count only, but it carried the death penalty, and on September 19, 1945, he was sentenced to hang. A large segment of the population felt that Joyce had been railroaded, and even Shawcross admitted that he was not proud of the case. Noted British historian A.J.P. Taylor added waspishly that a noose was being placed around Joyce's neck for making a false statement on a passport, for which normally he would be fined but two pounds.

On January 3, 1946, hangman Albert Pierrepoint carried out the death sentence on 39-year-old William Joyce at London's Wandsworth Prison. He was buried that night within the prison walls in an unmarked grave at night. In 1976, Joyce's body was exhumed and taken to Ireland where it was reburied.

His daughter Heather regularly appeals to have his conviction legally overturned. She asserts that he secretly sent coded messages to MI5 from Germany in his radio rants. "He was very pro-empire," she insists, "and every time he heard 'God Save the King,' [he] stood up." □

By Victor Kamenir

The armies of Asia relied on a menacing curved sword for close-quarter combat that went by many different names.

ON THE COAT OF ARMS OF FINLAND, A CROWNED LION TRAMPLES UPON a curved sword with his hind paws while brandishing a straight sword in his right forepaw. The straight sword represents Finland, and the curved sword represents Russia. Together, they symbolize the struggle between the West and the East. The curved sword depicted in the coat of arms is not the traditional Russian saber, but its forerunner, the scimitar, a sword found in cultures from North Africa to China.

The Persian word *shamshir,* meaning "lion's claw," is generally acknowledged as the origin of the word *scimitar.* It had likely entered English usage by the way of French *cimiterre* or Italian *cimitarra,* the two Western countries having the most frequent dealings with the Arabs of North Africa and Muslims of the Levant. The curved sword is known by many names. In Arabic, it is known as a *saif,* in Turkey as a *kilij,* in Morocco as a *nimcha*, in Mughal India a *tulwar,* and in Afghanistan as a *pulwar*.

As it adapted the scimitar, each country added its own national characteristics, but the basic definition of a scimitar remained the same. The scimitar is a backward-curved, single-edged sword with a thickened, unsharpened back edge. Due to this distinctive backward curve, scimitars sometimes are referred to as backswords. The blade of a scimitar is generally narrow and equal in width along most of its length. The upper third of the blade either narrows or widens toward the tip, and in some designs the upper third of the back edge of the blade is sharpened as well.

Various features differentiate scimitar types, including where along the blade the curve begins, the depth of the curve, and the length, thickness, and weight of the blade. Other unique features include whether it has a blunt or sharp tip, inclusion and shape of the handguard, and shape of the hilt. Although there is no standard scimitar size, the sword is generally 30 to 36 inches in length, weighs approximately two pounds, and is approximately 1 1/2 inches wide.

While it is a common mistake to regard the scimitar as a weapon exclusive to the Middle Eastern world, scimitars and straight swords existed side by side in the region for millennia. In the 7th century, scimitars first appeared among the Turko-Mongol nomads of Central Asia. A notable exception was the sickle-sword of ancient Egypt, which appeared to be an outgrowth of a battle axe rather than a true sword. As successive waves of nomads spread through Asia, their curved swords were adapted by the Indians, Persians, Arabs, and Chinese. With the steppe warriors migrating farther west, the scimitar entered Eastern Europe by way of Russia and Ukraine. The spread of the scimitar into Central and Western Europe can be tracked linguistically. From sabala of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia, it became *sablya* in the Russian language, *szabla* in Hungar-

Muslim cavalry armed with curved swords fight Latin crusaders using straight swords. The curved sword was used more widely in the Near East where lighter armor was worn.

ian and Polish, *sabel* in German, *sabre* in French, and *saber* in English.

Growing rapidly in popularity and adapted by more societies, scimitars did not completely replace straight swords. While the curved swords were generally lighter than straight swords of roughly the same length, there were many heavy scimitars and many light straight swords. Likewise, there was no clear distinction of straight swords being employed exclusively in the West, with the scimitars being employed exclusively in the East. During the Latin Crusades both European knights, and Arab cavalry were armed with straight swords. European warriors used falchion swords with a straight blade on one side and a thicker and convex blade on the other. In India, warriors used a heavy straight sword called *khanda*. But in the Middle East, where lighter armor was worn, the curved sword was more widely adopted.

A continuing challenge for medieval warriors was the contest between thick armor and heavy swords. Because of various climatic, economic, and cultural influences, the Western cultures adapted heavier armor, culiminating in full suits of plate armor in the 15th century. Improvements in armor drove the advancement of sword making. As metallurgy techniques improved over centuries, the straight dagger evolved into a long, straight sword. Only the finest crafted straight swords, available to a select group of warriors, could puncture through heavy armor. Most men-at-arms had to make do with cheaper swords, relying on chopping and battering their opponents. Thus the heavy straight swords, acting more like bludgeoning tools, did not require razor-sharp edges.

The weight of the sword influenced the technique with which it was used in fighting. The greater weight of a long sword quickly wore out the swordsman's wrist. To compensate for this, the long, straight blades were swung in sweeping motions using the momentum of body weight, while the short, straight swords were employed for thrusting in a forward motion. The low center of balance of a straight sword, close to the hilt, was advantageous in delivering piercing strikes.

LEFT: An Indian warrior is armed with a Damascene scimitar made from wootz steel. RIGHT: A 16th-century Persian shah is shown with a kilij.

When a soldier delivered a swinging blow with a heavy, straight blade, the sword stopped at the point of impact. A sword with very sharp edges would frequently stick in the victim's body or armor. For a warrior wielding a straight sword, it took conscious effort and training to continue the strike into a pressing motion forward or drawing motion backward. In contrast, a strike with a scimitar, due to body mechanics, naturally followed into a cut, which was vital to a horseman in forward motion. Still, the jarring impact of a sword strike was hard on the wielder's wrist, whether the blade was straight or curved. For this reason, U.S. cavalry troopers called their heavy Model 1840 saber "Old Wristbreaker."

Originating in China in the 13th century, firearms capable of penetrating armor from a distance effectively brought an end to heavy swords and thick armor. As armor became lighter over the next three centuries and eventually obsolete, scimitars and sabers came to dominate the contest of swords.

TOP: An Ottoman kilij is set with coral and turquoise. The kilij was particularly effective against heavy armor used in the 15th century. BOTTOM A 17th-century zulfiqar with its scissor-like blade. The zulfiqar image is frequently depicted on flags of the Muslim world.

During the Middle Ages, a sword was rarely a warrior's primary weapon. European knights and men-at-arms used lances for the initial attack and maces, swords, and battle axes in the ensuing melee. The lower classes used polearms, spears, and bow and arrow as their main weapons. Middle Eastern horse archers used composite bows as their primary shock weapon; however, through the cultures of that region the scimitar replaced the straight sword.

In a clash between two swordsmen, the sword rarely played a decisive role by itself. The victory went to the man with better armor, skill, or strength. A man wearing heavy armor had difficulty evading a blow, thus medieval European swordsmanship involved heavy use of blocking techniques. Blocking edge to edge

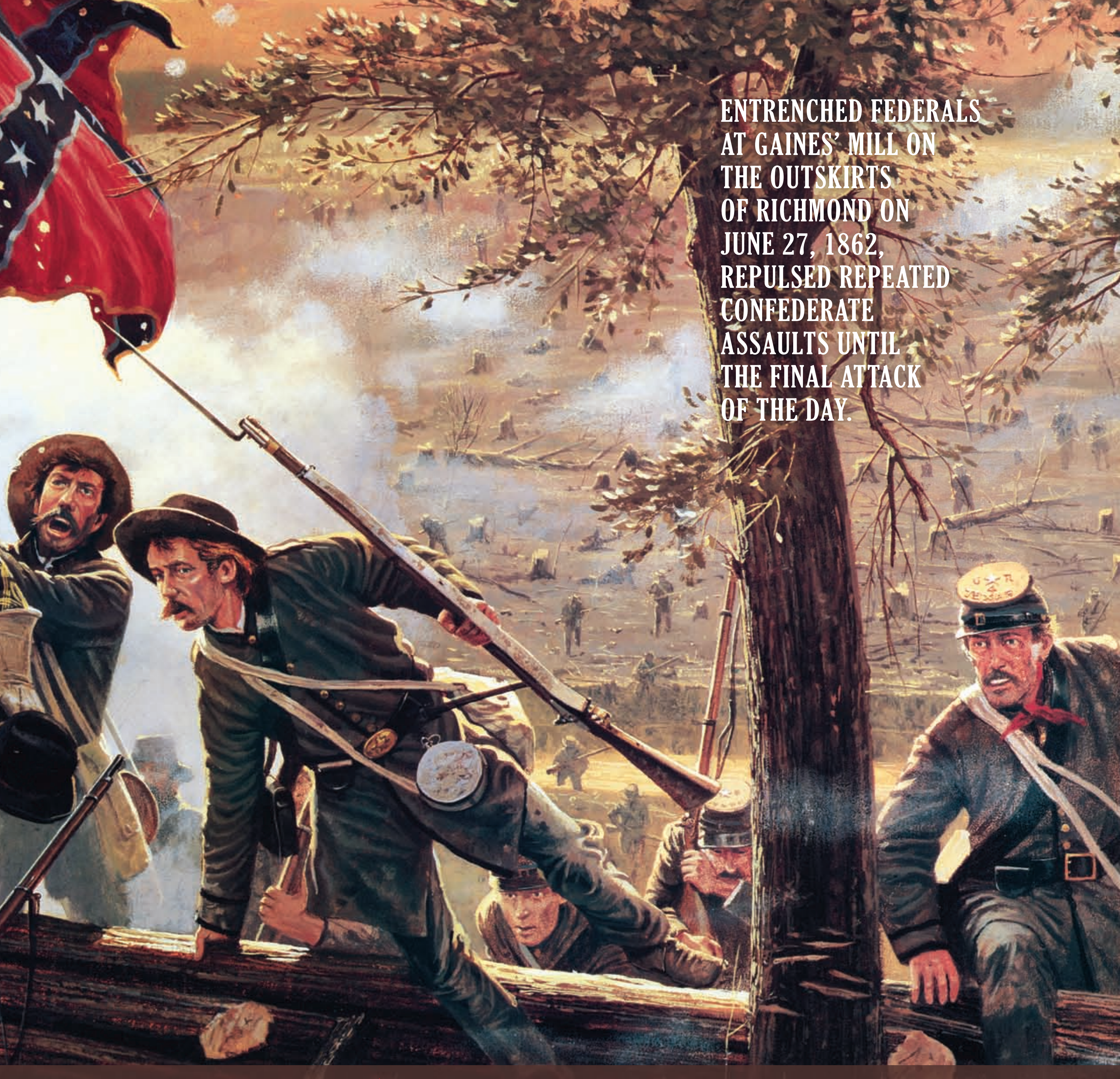
Continued on page 65

DEATH IN A TANGLED CREEK

BY JOHN WALKER

With just an hour of daylight remaining on the smoke-shrouded battlefield near Gaines' Mill six miles northeast of Richmond, Virginia, Confederate General Robert E. Lee sought out one of his most promising officers, Brig. Gen. John Bell Hood. The commander of the Army of Northern Virginia's troops had been launching uncoordinated attacks throughout June 27, 1862, against Union works on the slopes east of Boatswain's Creek without making a dent in the enemy's line. There was only time for one more attack.

As the sun dipped low in the sky, Lee had finally



ENTRENCHED FEDERALS AT GAINES' MILL ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF RICHMOND ON JUNE 27, 1862, REPULSED REPEATED CONFEDERATE ASSAULTS UNTIL THE FINAL ATTACK OF THE DAY.

managed to gather all his forces for a general attack along a 2½-mile front. He remained confident that he could turn the potential defeat into victory, and he wanted Hood's Texas brigade to spearhead the assault. Lee told Hood what he needed, omitting none of the difficulties the previous attackers had encountered.

"This must be done," Lee told Hood. "Can you break his line?" When the young brigadier replied that he would try, Lee turned to ride away and said, "May God be with you." Hood's five regiments were about to charge across the swamp and into history.

After an almost uninterrupted four-month string of Union successes in early 1862 put the very survival of the Southern Confederacy in jeopardy, Maj. Gen. George McClellan, the commander of the Army of the Potomac, advanced up the Virginia Peninsula and by mid-June had five Union infantry corps deployed on the eastern outskirts of Richmond, one on the north side of the rain-swollen Chickahominy River and four on the south side. "Little Mac's" intention was to advance just a bit farther westward and capture Old Tavern on the Nine Mile Road, entrench, and deploy

Brigadier General John Bell Hood took control of his old regiment, the 4th Texas, and led it in a successful charge at dusk against the Union defenses at Gaines' Mill. The unstoppable Texans fixed bayonets and screamed the Rebel Yell.

"Desperate Valor" by Dale Gallon, www.gallon.com

his siege guns to pound the city into rubble. His siege train included enormous 13-inch sea mortars. The rebellion would be brought to an early end with minimal Union casualties.

Lee, who had assumed command after Maj. Gen. Joseph Johnston was wounded on May 31 at the Battle of Seven Pines, had managed in a matter of weeks to concentrate his forces and improve Richmond's defenses somewhat, but knew he could not defeat McClellan's 94,000 entrenched troops.

Lee devised an elaborate strategy to drive the enemy host from the outskirts of the capital, destroy it, and revive his country's sagging fortunes. He would shatter the isolated Federal right flank north of the Chickahominy held by the 27,000-man V Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Fitz-John Porter, and threaten the Army of the Potomac's line of supply which ran to White House Landing on the Pamunkey River. When McClellan evacuated his works east of Richmond to protect his vital supply base, the Confederates would catch his huge main force in the open and destroy it as well.

After Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson returned to the Richmond area from the Shenandoah Valley with his reinforced corps, Lee planned to concentrate the bulk of his army, six divisions totaling approximately 60,000 men, on the Chickahominy's north bank early on June 26. "Old Jack" already sent Brig. Gen. James Ewell Brown Stuart on a cavalry reconnaissance to locate McClellan's right flank. "Jeb" reported that it did not extend beyond the headwaters of Beaver Dam Creek and was unanchored. Sending the majority of the Confederate troops into battle north of the Chickahominy River would leave fewer than 25,000 Confederates, many of whom were green recruits, south of the river under Maj. Gen. John Magruder and Maj. Gen. Benjamin Huger where they would be holding a position opposite McClellan's main body of 67,000 men. If McClellan figured out Lee's intention, and showed some initiative, he could try to fight his way through Magruder and Huger into Richmond. But Lee had a good measure of his opponent, and he doubted McClellan would seize such an opportunity.

TOP: Confederate Brig. Gen. John Bell Hood. BOTTOM: Union Brig. Gen. Fitz-John Porter showed his mastery of defensive fighting during the Seven Days Battle. OPPOSITE: Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, commander of the Army of the Potomac, surveys the approach to Richmond during the Battle of Mechanicsville. General Robert E. Lee's offensive put Union forces on the north bank of the Chickahominy River in danger of destruction.

Both: Library of Congress

The key to Lee's plan was maneuver. When Jackson arrived in the area on the morning of June 26, he would link up with one of Maj. Gen. Ambrose Powell (A.P.) Hill's advance brigades, after which their two columns would march southeasterly onto and around the reported enemy flank near the northern end of Beaver Dam Creek. While this was underway, Stuart's 2,000 troopers would cover Jackson's left. Meanwhile, A.P. Hill would lead his other five brigades across the Chickahominy at Meadow Bridge, drive eastward, and clear Mechanicsville of enemy forces, allowing the divisions of Maj. Gen. James Longstreet and Maj. Gen. Daniel Harvey (D.H.) Hill to cross the river and fall in behind the surging Confederate tide. With vast gray columns advancing on his front, flank, and rear in echelon, Lee believed, the outnumbered Porter would have to abandon his position to avoid encirclement and annihilation. It was a classic Napoleonic tactic.

With the success of Lee's strategy depending entirely upon Jackson's timely arrival, the June 26 attack immediately went awry. Jackson, feverishly ill and exhausted from his spring 1862 Valley Campaign, did not get his column onto the road until 8 AM, six hours behind schedule. Destroyed bridges, muddy roads, and enemy skirmishers impeded his column's march, and when supply wagons failed to keep up hundreds of stragglers left the column in search of food and fresh water. When the Confederate vanguard reached Pole Green Church near Hundley's Corner at 5 PM, Jackson could clearly hear the sounds of pitched battle three miles to the south. With his force strung out behind him along two roads and believing he had obeyed Lee's orders to the letter, Jackson put his men into bivouac without notifying Lee or anyone else of his arrival, a confounding lapse by one of the South's most aggressive commanders. As it turned out, Lee had based Jackson's arrival on a faulty map that placed Hundley's Corner near the headwaters of Beaver Dam Creek when it was actually three miles farther north.

In the meantime, A.P. Hill had crossed the Chickahominy that afternoon and initiated Lee's attack on his own. He cleared Mechanicsville and pursued the retreating Federals toward Beaver Dam Creek. When he learned A.P. Hill had advanced without Jackson, Lee saw no option but to continue the assault. Neglecting to concentrate his division's nine artillery batteries to contest the enemy's guns, "Little Powell" led half his division eastward into battle. The result was a bloody, costly repulse. With three brigades stalled in the Union front, Lee unwisely sent two more to test the enemy's left near Ellerson's Mill. This attack also was repulsed with devastating losses. In the first clash of the Seven Days Battle, which was Lee's offensive to drive McClellan from Richmond, the Army of Northern Virginia had suffered a major defeat.

Despite numerous deficiencies exhibited by the Confederate army, Lee's offensive strategy was working. Jackson's arrival northeast of Richmond had rendered the Federal position north of the river untenable. Unknown to Lee, McClellan had already decided to abandon his vulnerable base at White House Landing in favor of one located south of the Chickahominy. As reports of Jackson's arrival came in on the night of June 26, McClellan knew he had to act or Porter's corps would be swallowed whole. Ruling out offensive action on either side of the river, much to the chagrin of subordinates who urged him to exploit Porter's victory, and imagining overwhelming force wherever he looked, McClellan opted to abandon his offensive and retreat, not back down the Virginia Peninsula the way he had come, but due south to the nearest haven, the James River. McClellan termed his retreat a "change of base" that would save his army. Porter was told to fall back to a new defensive position near Gaines' Mill that would cover the river crossings and hold the Confederates at bay. Although McClellan was already defeated, his army still had plenty of fight left in it.

At 3 AM on June 27, Brig. Gen. George McCall, whose three infantry brigades had fought and won the Battle of Mechanicsville, got the order to withdraw from the Beaver Dam

Creek line. Rear guards supported by artillery screened the movement, holding the creek crossings until after sunrise, when Rebel skirmishers advanced as soon as it was light enough to see. Except for two companies of the 13th Pennsylvania, who did not get the order and were captured, all the Union men and guns made good the three-mile withdrawal to a new position beyond Boatswain's Creek, which also was referred to as a swamp. After shifting brigades so fresh troops could attack at dawn, Lee arrived in Mechanicsville determined to achieve everything on June 27 that was not accomplished on June 26. When it became obvious that the enemy was falling back, Lee had A.P. Hill push across Beaver Dam Creek. The Confederate commander ordered Magruder and Huger to hold the Richmond works "at the point of the bayonet if necessary."

One of Lee's first moves that morning was to send an aide to guide Jackson south from Hundley's Corner to join the main Confederate body. Lee met Jackson and A.P. Hill at 10 AM and explained his plan to envelop the enemy. Jackson would march northeastward on Cold Harbor Road across the headwaters of Powhite Creek to Old Cold Harbor, where he would be joined by D.H. Hill. Hill was already in motion, conducting his own wider turning movement on the Old Church Road farther north. When joined, D.H. Hill and Jackson would command 14 of the army's 26 infantry brigades. On the Confederate right, Longstreet would move his division down the River Road along the bluffs overlooking the Chickahominy River in support of A.P. Hill's advance in the center toward Powhite Creek and Gaines' Mill. Unlike the previous day, Hill had orders to attack the Federals wherever he found them. He put Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg's brigade of well-rested South Carolinians, which had been held in reserve the previous day, at the front of his division.

By mid-morning Porter had his reinforced corps on the plateau behind Boatswain's Creek, which enclosed a horseshoe-shaped position of great natural strength. The oval-shaped plateau was about two miles wide and a mile deep with its long outer side facing north. The Watt, McGehee, and Adams families each had homes on the plateau, and the cleared land around these structures furnished superb fields of fire for defenders. The highest elevation was known locally as Turkey Hill, though the day's battle would take its name from a site a mile away, the home and grist mill of Dr. William Gaines. The doctor was the area's largest landowner and was renowned for his support of the rebellion. Union troops had been camped on his land for several months and had, over his protests, buried a number of their fever-stricken dead on the property. Gaines had defiantly announced he would dig up the bodies and feed them to his hogs after the Yankees were driven away.

Rising at the northeast corner of the plateau and curving around its northern and western sides before emptying into the Chickahominy River, Boatswain's Creek was a sluggish little stream, its banks and bottomlands heavily overgrown with trees and underbrush. The ground to the north and west was largely open and under cultivation and sloped down to the swampy bottomland. Porter arranged his corps in a crescent-shaped line almost two miles long facing north and west. Brig. Gen. George Morell's division covered the left flank on Turkey Hill, and Brig. Gen. George Sykes' division held the right flank. Morell's position was nearly impregnable. The Yankees were posted in a first line on the eastern edge of the bottomland and in a second line halfway up the hillside. McCall's division was deployed in a third line along the crest of the plateau as the reserve. Two companies of Colonel Hiram Berdan's U.S. Sharpshooters were deployed in the first line.

The infantrymen in all three lines sheltered behind hurriedly fashioned earthworks of logs, fence rails, and dirt. Believing he was not strong enough to extend his line back to the Chickahominy River on his right, Porter relied on the boggy, broken ground there to discourage a turning movement. Porter had 96 guns with which to support his infantry. The guns were positioned along the third line of works or in reserve on the plateau. Adding additional firepower were three batteries of long-range guns on the south bank of the Chickahominy where they could assist Morell's division. Brig. Gen. Philip St. George Cooke's five cavalry companies were posted on the far left, cov-

THE BATTLE OF GAINES' MILL ERUPTED IN EARNEST AT ABOUT 2:30 PM. FROM ACROSS THE SWAMP CAME WITHERING MUSKET FIRE JOINED BY SHELL AND SOLID SHOT FROM UNION GUNS ON THE HIGH GROUND.

Library of Congress

ering the ground between Morell's division and the river.

As A.P. Hill's troops advanced toward the enemy's picket line beyond Powhite Creek, the day's first contact took place three miles away, entirely unknown to Lee, after D.H. Hill's troops arrived at Old Cold Harbor well ahead of Jackson. Old Cold Harbor was a nondescript crossroads hamlet. Another small village, New Cold Harbor, was situated a mile and a half to the west.

When D.H. Hill pushed two brigades down the road toward the Chickahominy River from Old Cold Harbor, his skirmishers were hit by sharp musket fire from behind a stream to their front and artillery fire from the slope beyond. An Alabama battery, hurried forward to suppress this fire, was bombarded so severely by rifled guns from the high ground to the east, which were manned by U.S. Regulars from Sykes' division, that it was quickly withdrawn.

Hill realized he had met far heavier resistance than was expected and also seemed to be facing the enemy's front rather than his flank. The stream behind which the Union infantry sheltered was not shown on Hill's map, and therefore he wisely decided to await Jackson's arrival. This action took place a little after noon, but Lee learned nothing of it or the enemy's position. Normally the sound of artillery at that distance would be heard, but on that hot and sultry day there were so-called acoustic shadows. These heavy pockets of dense, moist air scattered across the field frequently muffled the sounds of battle.

In their first action of the war, Gregg and his men pushed down Telegraph Road and reached Powhite Creek at Gaines' Mill around noon. Told to expect a fight there, Gregg's troops met only desultory fire and continued on across the creek to New Cold Harbor, moving on the run down a slope toward a wooded area that bordered yet another swampy body of water. The Battle of Gaines' Mill erupted in earnest at about 2:30 PM. From across the swamp came withering musket fire, joined by shell and solid shot from Union guns on the high ground, that halted Gregg's men and drove them back in confusion. After Gregg rallied his shaken regiments and reported back to A.P. Hill that he had made contact with the enemy, Hill and Lee rode up for a look. Lee quickly realized the Federals had taken their stand not behind Powhite Creek as he expected, but in a far more imposing position behind a creek that did not appear on his maps. Furthermore, the enemy was facing north as well as west and appeared to be in great force.

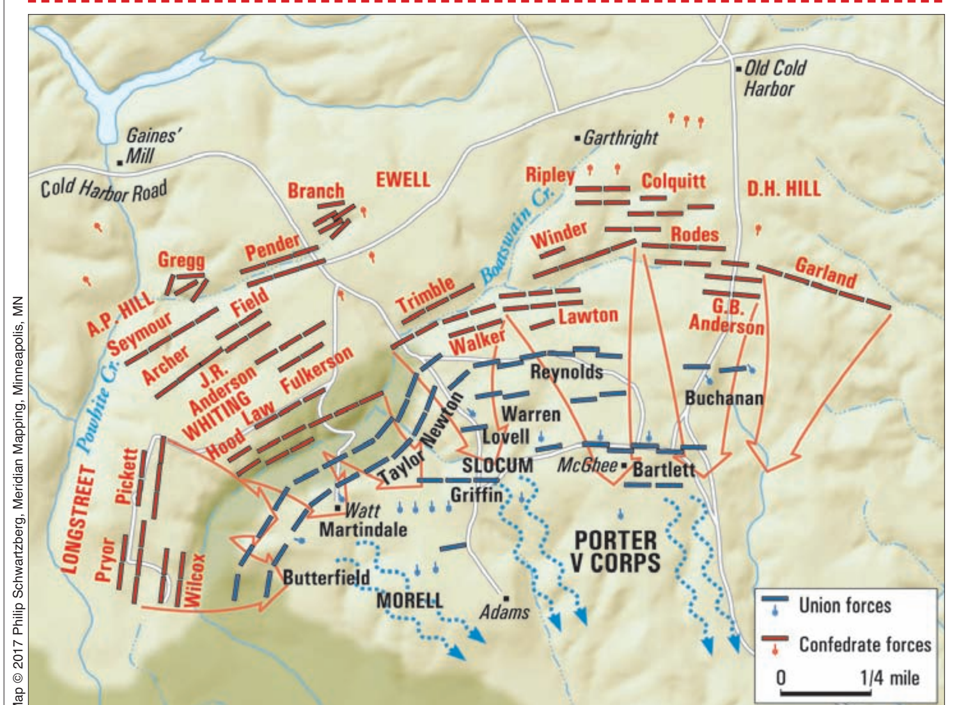
Believing Jackson and D.H. Hill would soon be adding their weight to the contest, Lee told Gregg to hold his position until the rest of the division came up to renew the assault. After the brigades of Brig. Gens. Lawrence Branch, Dorsey Pender, Joseph Anderson, Charles Field, and James Archer formed up on Gregg's right, the Confederate battle line stretched for almost a mile. Once again the attackers failed to mass their guns for concentrated fire, and both the gunners and infantrymen would suffer as a result. Most of A.P. Hill's men would have at least a quarter of a mile of open ground to cross before they reached Boatswain's Creek. From his command post at the Watt home on Turkey Hill, Porter observed Hill's brigades deploying for battle and rising dust clouds off to his left along the River Road and signaled a request for reinforcements to army headquarters. Brig. Gen. Henry Slocum's division had been designated to serve as reinforcements if necessary. McClellan, coordinating his army's efforts by telegraph from his headquarters south of the river, and thus not personally directing any of the actual fighting, relayed the request to VI Corps, and Slocum's division tramped across the river at Alexander's Bridge.

A.P. Hill ordered his 12,000-man division to advance at 2:30 PM. Brig. Gen. George Morell's division numbered a thousand fewer men than A.P. Hill's, but with a part of Sykes' division also engaged the defenders there had a small advantage in numbers. They also held a considerable advantage in artillery. They had three batteries posted on the plateau's lower slopes to thwart Hill's attack in addition to those packed tightly on the crest. The Confederate gunners made little impression on this formidable array. When Captain D.G. McIntosh's Pee Dee Artillery came onto the field, dust and smoke so obscured the swamp and surrounding hills that McIntosh could not tell friend from foe and ceased firing after three rounds.

Gregg's attackers, after forcing a lodgment in the center of the Union line where the divisions of Morell and Sykes met, were soon engaged in fierce fighting. The 1st South Carolina Rifles charged with fixed bayonets against a Union battery and clashed with its supporting infantry, the 5th New York Zouaves, and after hand-to-hand fighting were forced back with the loss of 309 men killed or wounded. The rest of Gregg's brigade fared little better. Branch's brigade, which like Gregg's had not seen action the previous day, was badly battered during the two-hour assault and lost 401 men.

Berdan's Sharpshooters, in particular, contributed to the heavy toll. Posted as skirmishers, they moved from tree to tree along the swamp's eastern edge, feeding cartridges into their Sharps breech-loading rifles and firing from ranges as short as 40 yards. None of Hill's brigades except Gregg's gained even a toehold beyond Boatswain's Creek. Anderson's brigade launched three spirited but unsuccessful charges, while Field's became so entangled in the swampy undergrowth that his second line poured volleys of friendly fire into the men in the first rank, forcing the colonel of the 47th Virginia to order his men to fall flat to avoid fire coming from both front and back. In two

General Robert E. Lee ordered his entire line forward at the end of the day, dislodging the entrenched Union forces.



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

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Brigadier General George Sykes' crack U.S. regulars defend the Union right flank against a spirited attack by Maj. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill's division in a sketch by battlefield artist Alfred Waud.

hours, A.P. Hill's division suffered more than 2,000 casualties while fighting unsupported.

Captain William Biddle of McClellan's staff arrived at Turkey Hill about this time and found Porter calmly sitting atop his horse behind a strip of woods overlooking the Union left, while a tide of wounded men streamed past and shells exploded all around. A staff officer asked him if he had a message for headquarters. "You can see for yourself, Captain," said Porter. "We're holding them, but it's getting hotter and hotter." At that moment, the vanguard of Slocum's division arrived from the river crossing, raising Porter's numbers to 36,400, and he rode off to plug reinforcements into the line.

In the meantime, Jackson was struggling to bring his forces to bear where Lee wanted them. He had obtained a guide that morning after meeting with Lee but neglected to offer precise directions as to how he wanted to reach Old Cold Harbor. The guide took the shortest and most direct route, one that led past Gaines' Mill. When Jackson realized he was not arriving on the enemy's right flank as Lee wanted, he ordered the column to turn around and countermarch to Cold Harbor Road, delaying the Valley forces' arrival on the field for almost two hours. Maj. Gen. Richard Ewell, in Jackson's van, was the first to reach Old Cold Harbor, where he found Lee's aide, Lt. Col. Walter Taylor, anxiously awaiting him. Worried Porter would mount a counterattack against A.P. Hill's battered division, Lee had dispatched Taylor to find any of Jackson's units and get them into battle as soon as possible. At the same time, Lee told Longstreet on the right to make at least a diversion in support of A.P. Hill. It was almost 4 PM when Lee met Ewell on Telegraph Road and told him to attack with his three brigades against the Union center where Gregg and Branch had been beaten back. Lee also sent one of Ewell's aides to locate the rest of Jackson's corps and get them to the field as well.

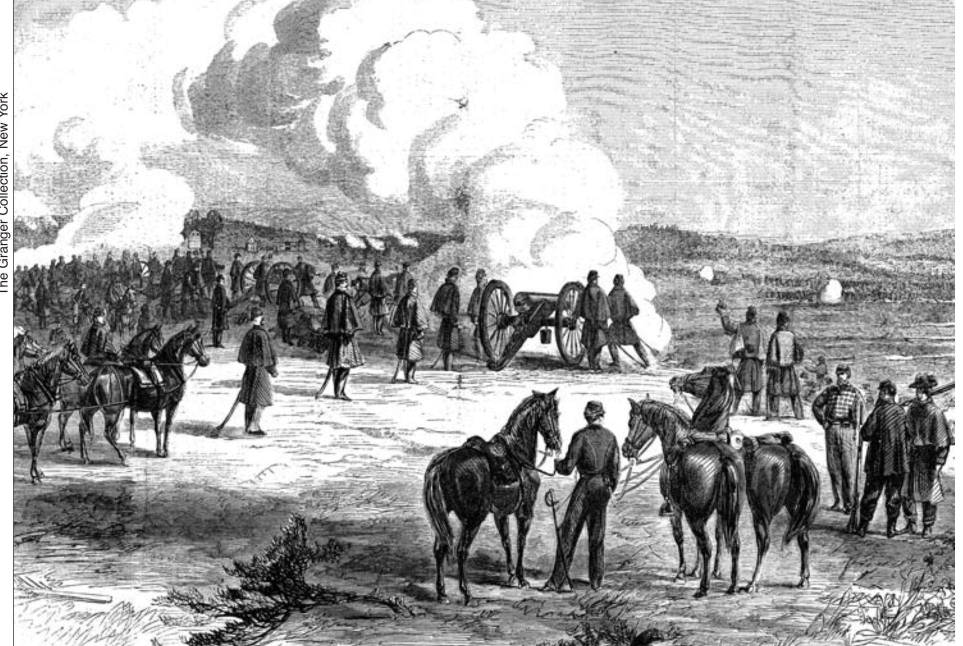
Ewell sent in his lead brigade, the Louisiana Tigers under Colonel Isaac Seymour, without waiting for the rest of his division. After Seymour was killed, his troops became confused in the boggy thickets of the creek. Command devolved to Major Roberdeau Wheat, the commander of the 1st Louisiana Special Battalion, who was mortally wounded. The Tigers wavered and then fled to the rear.

Ewell's next brigade under Brig. Gen. Isaac Trimble attacked in piecemeal fashion with just two of its regiments, the 15th Alabama and 21st Georgia. "Boys, you are mighty good but that's hell in there," a retreating Louisianan warned them as both regiments charged into murderous rifle and cannon fire without hesitation. Neither was able to advance beyond the western edge of the bottomland.

The Union lines held against these repeated attacks, but each took a toll. Since their midday skirmish near Gaines' Mill, the Irishmen of the 9th Massachusetts had repulsed consecutive attacks by Branch, Pender, and Trimble and were out of ammunition. The nearby 5th New York Zouaves, after losing a third of their number in a succession of charges and countercharges, was sent to the rear for rest and resupply. As Porter moved units from McCall's reserve into the hardest hit parts of his line, the 9th Pennsylvania advanced with fixed bayonets to relieve the 9th Massachusetts. "We chased them across a field into some woods, but then they got reinforcements and we had to fall back," wrote Corporal Adam Bright. "Three times we reformed our lines and charged them but could not get them out of the woods." More of Slocum's troops were arriving at this point, inserted like McCall's into the lines where they were most needed.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his entourage were observing the fighting from high ground one mile behind the front but could see little of the fighting in the tangled bottomland. On the extreme Confederate right, Longstreet ordered Brig. Gen. George Pickett's 2,000-man brigade to attack the Union position behind Boatswain's Creek to assist A.P. Hill's hard-pressed division. The Virginians marched downhill and disappeared into the thickets near the water's edge. Concentrated artillery fire from the crest of Turkey Hill and the south bank of the Chickahominy, pummeled the Virginians. Longstreet learned from walking wounded of the attack's failure. "Old Pete" realized that it would take the entire army attacking in concert to dislodge the enemy from the hill.

Though the attacks of A.P. Hill, Ewell, and Longstreet had been repulsed, Porter was growing more anxious by the minute. By 5 PM his men were exhausted, dehydrated, low on ammunition, and their weapons fouled. "I am pressed hard, very hard," he informed headquarters. "About every Regiment I have has been in action, and unless reinforced I am afraid I shall be driven from my position." Having made no contingency plans for such a situation, McClellan sent no imme-


The Granger Collection, New York

"UP TO THE CREST OF THE HILL WE WENT AT A DOUBLE QUICK, BUT WHEN WE CAME INTO VIEW AT THE TOP OF THE RIDGE WE MET SUCH A PERFECT STORM OF LEAD RIGHT IN OUR FACES THAT THE WHOLE BRIGADE LITERALLY STAGGERED BACKWARD SEVERAL PACES AS THOUGH PUSHED BY A TORNADO."

diate reinforcements, but instead merely asked his subordinates if they had any troops to spare. McClellan finally dispatched two of Maj. Gen. Edwin Sumner's brigades, but due to their location it would be almost three hours before they arrived.

Jackson had finally arrived at Old Cold Harbor and, at last cognizant of the situation and the enemy's dispositions, was trying to get his remaining forces into the fray. These were the divisions of Brig. Gen. William H.C. Whiting and Brig. Gen. Charles Winder, at that point stretched out for several miles along Cold Harbor Road. Rather than sending his ailing chief-of-staff, Major Robert Dabney, to guide these units into position, Jackson gave hurried, complicated verbal orders to another aide, his quartermaster Major John Harmon.

The two fresh divisions were to move into line in echelon between D.H. Hill and Ewell. If that failed, they were to move toward the sound of heaviest firing. Knowing little of tactics, Harmon became hopelessly confused when he attempted to relay Jackson's instructions to Whiting and Winder, after which the puzzled generals remained stationary for another precious hour. As the roar of gunfire intensified all along the front, Dabney realized what had taken place and rode over and conveyed the correct orders. One after another, six more Confederate brigades finally began moving into line.

Some of the brigades had two miles to march and others encountered further confusion when they neared the front but, with the daylight beginning to fade, overriding everything else was a sense of urgency. After Jackson met briefly with Lee on Telegraph Road, he rode back to his units and dispatched couriers to his two brigadiers. "Tell them this affair must hang in suspense no longer," said Jackson. "Sweep the field with the bayonet!"

But getting these scattered units into position in the woods and marshes was a painfully slow and difficult process. As a result, two of Winder's brigades ended up in the reserve behind Longstreet's division on the far right a mile from the rest of Winder's men. Whiting commanded the brigades of Hood and Colonel Evander Law. As he marched the two brigades toward the sound of the heaviest firing, Whiting had allowed them to drift to the right. They went into action on Longstreet's left, under that officer's direction.

It was almost 7 PM and the setting sun appeared a dull red to the soldiers through the haze of smoke and dust. With A.P. Hill's division and part of Ewell's too exhausted for further fighting, and one of Longstreet's brigades allocated to the reserve, Lee deployed 16 brigades totaling 32,100 into line for the final attack. The battle line stretched in a great arc for two miles. On the right the soldiers faced east and on the left they faced south. With McCall's and Slocum's divisions fully engaged, Porter's strength was approximately 34,000 men, even though many of the men in the front-line divisions of Morell and Sykes were worn out after hours of heavy fighting. Moreover, a number of McCall's and Slocum's regiments had been put into line haphazardly, which was apt to lead to significant confusion as the attack went forward.

After Lee ordered his entire line forward, the climax of the Battle of Gaines' Mill turned into a confused melee. D.H. Hill faced a daunting task on the Confederate left. The slope to the crest of the hill was 400 yards long. The stretch of hillside was entirely open, and the Federals had placed a battery near the McGehee home to contest any advance with enfilading fire.

D.H. Hill's five brigades went in and quickly became entangled in the swamp, emerging from the woods and marshes piled one behind the other. One regiment, the 27th North Carolina, suffered heavy casualties in a vain effort to seize the battery's guns. Struggling mightily toward the crest of the hill, the bulk of Hill's division engaged in savage fighting with Sykes' Regulars in an orchard near the McGehee home that became a bloody battlefield. "Every post, bush, and tree now covers a man who is blazing away as fast as he can," wrote Sergeant Thomas Evans of the 12th U.S. Infantry. "Column after column of the enemy melts away like smoke but is quickly re-formed and again rushes on."

Successive waves of Confederates rushed the Yankee line. Brig. Gen. Alexander Lawton's 3,600-man brigade eagerly advanced into their first fight of the war against the Union center. The Stonewall Brigade of Winder's division pushed into line on Lawton's left next to D.H. Hill, joined by a fresh brigade from Ewell's division and Trimble's reformed brigade. On the Confederate right, Longstreet's division faced the most difficult terrain and heaviest cannon fire of any attacking unit. His men also had to cross almost a quarter mile of open ground to reach the swamp and the first line of enemy works. "Up to the crest of the hill we went at a double quick, but when we came into view on the top of the ridge we met such a perfect storm of lead right in our faces that the whole brigade literally staggered backward several paces as though pushed by a tornado," wrote Corporal Edmund Patterson of the 9th Alabama.

Whiting's two-brigade division, which numbered fewer than 8,000 men, moved into position and constituted what amounted to the left wing of Longstreet's assault. Hood's Texas Brigade comprised the 1st Texas, 4th Texas, 5th Texas, 18th Georgia, and the South Carolina

Legion. After observing the fierce resistance offered by the well-posted Union defenders, Whiting realized that if the attack was to succeed then Law's and Hood's brigades would have to advance without pausing to fire, cover the open ground down to the swamp as swiftly as possible without losing order, and punch through the Yankee line.

As he moved his five regiments into line on Law's left, Hood noticed a gap between Law and Longstreet and therefore split his command, marching the 4th Texas into the gap. For some unknown reason, several companies of the 18th Georgia attached themselves to the 4th Texas as well. Because of these circumstances, Hood would send his brigade forward on both flanks of Law's brigade. Ignoring the jurisdiction of the 4th Texas' colonel, John Marshall, Hood assumed personal command of his old regiment. Marshall was killed just minutes into the advance.

With Hood leading the advance on foot, more than 500 men of the 4th Texas and 18th Georgia stepped off. The field to their front was littered with dead and wounded comrades, smashed artillery caissons and carriages, stricken horses, and broken ammunition wagons. Law's and Longstreet's men kept pace alongside. They held their fire and tried to make as little noise as possible. As fire from the massed batteries on Turkey Hill tore holes in the gray line, the number of dead and wounded mounted rapidly.

Hood seemed to be everywhere at once. He urged men forward, shouted for them to close on the colors, and ordered them to continue to hold their fire. As the range closed to 300 yards, fire from Berdan's Sharpshooters and Brig. Gen. John Martindale's and Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin's front-line troops exacted a horrendous toll. Hood's men fell by the score, but the survivors closed ranks and pushed on.

About 150 yards from the swamp Hood's companies passed through a line of Confederates who were hugging the ground and ignoring the entreaties of their young lieutenants to advance. Disregarding the pleas of these demoralized men to turn back, Hood's troops reached the top of a ridge that led down to the swamp, the ridge marking the farthest advance of A.P. Hill's men. As Hood's soldiers pushed over the rise and started down the slope toward the swamp, sheets of flame erupted from the Union works to their front.

"The fire of the enemy was poured into us with increasing fury, cutting down our ranks like wheat in a harvest," wrote Private William R. Hamby of the 4th Texas. Law and Hood would lose a total of 1,018 men this day, most of them during this sprint to the water's edge. When they were within 100 yards of the swamp, the order went out to fix bayonets while on the move and advance at the double quick. They finally hit the swamp and at point-blank range from the first line of Federals raised the Rebel yell. Concurrently, off to the right, a half-mile-long line of Longstreet's troops were crashing into the swamp, traversing the water, and scrambling up the slope.

Porter's numbers there were at least equal to those of the attackers. With even the best infantryman able to get off no more than three rounds a minute, the exhausted defenders could not fire fast enough to halt the swift advance. The Federals in the first line panicked, turned, and fled, and in their rush to the rear blocked the fire of the troops in the second line, carrying those defenders along with them. As the blue tide surged toward the crest of Turkey Hill, Confederate infantrymen stopped to fire at last.

"One volley was poured into their backs, and it seemed as if every ball found a victim, so great was the slaughter," wrote a Texan. With a breach finally accomplished in the Federal center, Porter's left and right flanks crumbled as Longstreet and Jackson widened the rupture in both directions. On Jackson's left, Ewell and D.H. Hill outflanked Sykes' Regulars, forcing them to fall back.

At that point, the battlefield contracted rapidly toward the river crossings. Those Union regiments still under firm control, mostly the Regulars, withdrew without panicking, halting to fire occasionally before continuing on. Others fell back in disorder. The Rebel objective at that point became the enemy's artillery on the plateau. As the range closed, Yankee gunners switched to canister rounds, but as their infantry supports began leaving the field the gunners came under merciless fire as well. After capturing 10 guns from the batteries along the crest, the attackers turned their attention to a second line of guns in reserve on the plateau and encountered, to

Continued on page 66

BELOW: The victorious Confederates captured many cannons and two regiments of infantry, but nightfall prevented another attack that might have destroyed Porter's command. Sykes' regulars covered the retreat of Union troops over four fragile bridges spanning the Chickahominy River. OPPOSITE: Confederate infantry charged into the teeth of Porter's guns. The Union gunners switched to canister rounds, but still could not stop the gray tide.

Library of Congress

The midday sun sat almost directly overhead as Subaltern T. Hepple led his tank out of the French village of Petit Vimy. Nearby was the famous Vimy Ridge, where a generation earlier British soldiers had struggled so desperately during World War I. It was just before 12 PM on May 21, 1940, and the Battle of France was in full swing. The Allied armies were reeling before the Nazi onslaught, unable to match the blitzkrieg. Hepple was leading a scouting party on reconnaissance ahead of a British counterattack aimed at blunting that assault. His unit, B Company, 7th Battalion, Royal Tank regiment (7RTR), was a key element of that attack.

As his tank, a light Mk. VIB named *Guinevere,* rumbled down the road, antitank shells began landing just a few yards ahead. Fortunately for Hepple and his crew, the enemy gunners had led their target just a little too much. Hepple could not spot the guns, so he ordered his tank into cover and radioed a report to his headquarters. Receiving no reply, he moved on, spotting a company of tanks in the distance. The British officer thought they were French tanks and moved toward them, but they left before he could approach.

Soon he reached the town of Dainville. Suddenly Hepple spotted two men hiding in a cornfield just off the road. Chasing them into the field, Hepple opened fire with his tank's .303 machine gun. One of the Germans was hit, sending him sprawling to the ground. The other, a noncommissioned officer, quickly surrendered. Hepple had him sit on the rear of the tank, covering him with his revolver as they continued down the road. They passed the wrecks of automobiles and the body of a dead civilian in the mile to the next village. Once there the British tankers found the hamlet occupied by German troops. Their fire flew all around the tank as Hepple and his crew beat a hasty retreat back to British lines. He found a unit of the Durham Light Infantry in Dainville and handed over his prisoner to them. Afterward he returned to his company commander, Captain M.W. Fisher, and made his report.

Hepple's abortive reconnaissance mission was part of a greater effort that May morning. The war had been going badly for the Allies since the Wehrmacht invasion began 11 days earlier. Up to that point, World War II in Western Europe had been almost comically quiet, leading pundits in the press to label it the "sitzkrieg." That changed on May 11, when the Nazis enacted operation Fall Gelb (Case Yellow), which was their plan to invade France and the Low Countries. More than three million soldiers supported by thousands of tanks, artillery pieces, and aircraft attacked the Allies.

In terms of numbers, the British, French, Dutch, and Belgians matched or even exceeded their attackers. They had more artillery and tanks. Many of the French tanks in particular were considered qualitatively superior to what the Germans were fielding. Also, the Allies were fighting a defensive battle, one where their near parity in troop numbers boded ill for German success. Many thought it would be a repeat of World War I.

Any overconfidence in Allied superiority was dashed when the blitzkrieg struck. Although some troops in both the French and English armies understood what modern mechanization meant for the conduct of warfare, others were not so astute. Many senior leaders in particular were unprepared for the pace of armored warfare and could not react quickly enough to German movements. This meant Allied leaders often lacked good intelligence on the enemy and that their countermoves came too late to make a difference.

BRITISH TANKERS MADE A COURAGEOUS, BUT ULTIMATELY FUTILE, ATTEMPT TO FOIL THE GERMAN BLITZKRIEG IN FRANCE ON MAY 21, 1940.

Even German leaders were hard pressed to maintain an even pace. Only part of their army was mechanized, the rest moving by foot and horse as armies had for centuries. This left it better prepared for short, violent campaigns rather than long attritional struggles. Frequently the fast-moving panzer formations left behind their supporting infantry divisions, leaving them with only the few riflemen riding alongside in half-tracks and trucks. In some cases the infantry units were several days' march behind the armored divisions, creating gaps that were thinly held if at all.

This was the situation the opposing armies faced when they met near the French town of Arras on May 21, 1940. The panzer divisions

armored strike AT ARRAS

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

Panzers spearhead the German drive to the English Channel in May 1940. The British sought to blunt the drive with a coordinated attack by two parallel columns.

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A German motorized column moves through the Ardennes. By mid-May, the British were surrounded on three sides and in danger of being cut off from their fuel supplies. RIGHT: Generalmajor Erwin Rommel led from the front at Arras. OPPOSITE: A British Matilda II during an exercise in 1940. The majority of the British tanks at Arras were machine-gun armed Matilda Is rather than the more powerful Matilda II.

had raced ahead, threatening to cut off Allied units and destroy them piecemeal. At the same time, the distance they had gone from their support created an opportunity the Allies could exploit if they could move quickly enough. Success would result in the panzer units being cut off from their fuel and supply sources. The tables would then be turned. A dire situation turned into a last minute victory, perhaps one big enough to turn the tide of the campaign and allow them time to consolidate and strike back.

Up to that point, the war had gone largely according to the German plan despite the problems caused by the speed of the panzer formations. When the Nazis attacked on May 10, they did so with three Army Groups. Army Group C attacked the Maginot Line in the south, diverting French attention and resources. In the north, Army Group B invaded Holland and Belgium, drawing both the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and French formations toward it. The main German blow came in the center using Army Group A, which came through the Ardennes, a heavily forested area thought impenetrable to large armored formations. It quickly crossed the Meuse River and headed for the French coast to cut the Allied forces in half.

For several critical days the Allied intelligence services had tried to guess where the German main thrust was headed. Some thought it would turn south to encircle the Maginot Line, while others believed the panzers would make a dash for Paris. They eventually realized the goal but struggled to foil it in time.

By May 20 the German XV Panzer Corps under Generalleutnant Hermann Hoth was near Arras. Two other corps-sized tank formations had already advanced farther. Generalleutnant Heinz Guderian's XIX Panzer Corps had reached the English Channel and was securing bridges over the Somme River. Guderian's troops had repulsed a French armored counterattack on May 17 led by Maj. Gen. Charles De Gaulle. The situation grew dire for the French and the BEF as the German thrust created a corridor between their forces.

French Commander-in-Chief General Maxime Weygand ordered a counterattack from the north and south to cut off the leading German divisions from their support. The French struggled to form a scratch force for their counterattack. Most of their tanks had been distributed among the infantry units in small groups, making it impossible to concentrate them. Assembling the requisite number of tanks for a counterattack would require a direct order to the infantry commanders threatening any who disobeyed with a court martial for disobedience. But it would take time to reassemble them into a coherent unit.

The British were better positioned to carry out their own plan, having kept their small tank force together. The 1st Army Tank Brigade was composed of the 4th and 7th Battalions, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR). The tank brigade was the only armored unit in the BEF, and it was below strength due to mechanical failures. In the beginning of the campaign, it moved north with the rest of the English force. Ordered south on May 15, the tankers were forced to conduct a 130-mile road march because freight trains were unavailable. The local road network was poor and streams of panicked refugees further slowed the brigade. Along the way, Luftwaffe ground attack aircraft strafed and bombed the long columns of tanks, trucks, and staff cars. The British were lucky, though, losing only a single tank when a bomb blew it onto its side.

Once in place, the British organized their armor into two columns. The Right Column was composed of the 7th RTR, 8th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry, 260 Anti-tank Battery of the Royal Artillery, a platoon from the antitank company of the 151st Brigade, and a machine-gun company and a scout platoon from the 4th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers. For artillery support, the column would have the 365 Field Battery of the Royal Artillery.

The Left Column was similarly organized. It comprised the 4th Battalion RTR and the 6th DLI as their primary components. In support the column boasted a machine-gun unit and scout platoon from the 4th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers. The Left Column's antitank firepower came from the 206 Anti-tank Battery and another platoon from the 151st Brigade's anti-tank company. In addition, the Left Column had the 368th Field Battery of the Royal Artillery. Between the two columns, the tanks available amounted to 58 Matilda Mark Is, 16 Matilda Mark IIs, and 14 Mark VIB light tanks. The precious Matilda IIs were divided equally between the tank regiments.

The Matilda I was an infantry support tank capable of only eight miles per hour. It was armed with either a .50- or .303-caliber Vickers machine gun. Despite its rather anemic armament, the Matilda I had up to 60mm of frontal armor. This made it resistant to the standard German antitank gun of the time, the 37mm PAK 36, which could penetrate only 29mm of armor at 500 meters. The Matilda I's two-man crew consisted of a driver and a commander who also acted as the gunner. In practice this meant the commander had to divide his attention between the two duties. The machine-gun armament had almost no effect on any but the lightest German tanks; nevertheless, it could spray infantry or antitank guns with bullets from a distance with little fear of effective reply.

The British tank the German crews truly feared was the Matilda II, an improved model sporting a 2-pounder cannon that could pierce 37mm of 60-degree sloped armor at 500 yards. Unfortunately, the 2-pounder had only armor-piercing ammunition not high explosive, making it ineffective against enemy guns or infantry. Against such targets the tank depended on its coaxial machine gun. The Matilda II carried 78mm of frontal armor, making it nearly impervious to the PAK 36. It was faster than its predecessor but still only managed 15 miles per hour. As an additional advantage the Matilda II had a crew of four: a driver, gunner, loader, and commander. This freed the commander to control his tank and coordinate with his unit.

The Mark VIB was a light tank suited only for reconnaissance duty. It carried a .50 and a .303 Vickers machine gun side by side in the turret. Armor protection was a paltry 14mm that left it vulnerable to gunfire. The tank was rated at a maximum of 35 miles per hour on roads, but crews complained the tank's suspension was so bad it could not move quickly cross-country. It had a three-man crew consisting of a driver, gunner, and commander.

The plan of action called for the columns to move in parallel. The two columns would descend Vimy Ridge and move south toward Arras, passing the town to the west. Afterward the British would turn left and move south of Arras before forming a new line oriented toward the east. The distance for the Left Column was 18 miles. Since the Right Column would have to make its left turn farther out, it would cover 21 miles in total. The entire British force would have its right flank covered by a French armored unit, the 3rd Division Legere Mechanique.

From the beginning, the chance of victory for the British appeared tenuous at best. Originally, two entire divisions were to make the counterattack, the 50th and 51st Infantry Divisions reinforced with the 1st Army Tank Brigade. The counterattack went forward with what amounted to four battalions of tanks and infantry reinforced with what supporting arms were available in time. Both the English and French commands were having extreme difficulty moving forces and reacting to German movements.

Preparations had to be made quickly, causing misunderstandings and leaving insufficient time for planning at all levels. Leaders received orders without enough time to brief their subordinates properly. The infantry was still marching to their forming-up areas so the armor officers couldn't coordinate with them. Few maps were available. Worse still, the entire brigade had been under radio silence since it was in Belgium. After the march the radios were switched back on, only to find the bulk of them had drifted off of frequency and could not be retuned in the time available. Most of the tankers would have to use flags and hand signals to communicate. Only the light tanks had working radios since they had used them during recent scouting missions.

The German XV Panzer Corps was situated in the path of the British columns. The 7th Panzer Division under Generalmajor Erwin Rommel had a mission to isolate Arras from the west. For this purpose, it would be heading west and north into the oncoming British. Once west of Arras, the division was to seize crossings over the Scarpe River, a tributary of the Scheldt River. The 5th Panzer Division was assigned to protect the 7th's right flank through supporting attacks. The inexperienced SS-Totenkopf Division was deployed on the left flank of the 7th Panzer Division. Rommel was still building his reputation during the Battle of France. He would gain everlasting fame as the Desert Fox in North Africa in less than a year's time. For now, he was proving himself an aggressive and bold leader.

As events unfolded, the 5th Panzer Division was delayed and therefore never became involved in the Arras fighting. This left the 7th Panzer Division as the only armored force committed. To carry out his mission, Rommel had 36 PzKpfw IV tanks along with 106 PzKpfw 38(T)s. Unlike his British opponents, his tanks were liberally equipped with functioning radios and his crews were

"Earth was being thrown up all around and strange thudding noises were heard and felt. I distinctly remember Squadron Sergeant-Major Armit, just ahead of me, getting repeated hits on his turret. Everyone was firing away briskly."

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well-drilled with a decent amount of combat experience.

The 21-ton PzKpfw IV was Rommel's largest tank but was designed for infantry support. It was armed with a short-barreled 75mm cannon. This fired a low-velocity round giving poor armor penetration, though its high-explosive round was deadly to exposed infantry and gun crews. It carried a maximum of 30mm of armor and could make 25 miles per hour. Its five-man crew allowed the commander to pay full attention to leading his tank.

The smaller PzKpfw 38(T) weighed in at only about 10 tons. It was actually a successful Czechoslovakian design inherited by the Germans after they occupied that country in 1939. A decent tank for this early stage of the war, it sported a 37mm cannon and a pair of machine guns. The tank's armor was 25mm thick and it could go 26 miles per hour. It was rugged and reliable, so the Germans kept manufacturing them in captured factories. The light tank was issued to the 7th Panzer Division essentially as a replacement for the PzKpfw III, which was in short supply due to the expansion of the number of armored divisions in the German Army.

The Germans and British were on opposite courses, moving straight toward one another. The numerically superior Germans were about to run into a British armored force with fewer numbers of better protected tanks, only a few of which carried effective armament. By coincidence, both forces were scheduled to begin their attacks at about 2 PM on May 21. While Subaltern Hepple was carrying out his harrowing reconnaissance, troops on both sides were carrying out last-minute maintenance and waiting for the weary infantry to catch up and get into position.

Rommel's tanks moved first when he ordered Panzer Regiment 25 forward at 2 PM. Its goal was the village of Acq, northwest of Arras. Rommel accompanied the leading elements, a normal practice for the German leader. After a short time, though, he had to leave to find his motorized infantry regiments, which were supposed to be close on the flanks of the panzer regiment. They were not in sight, which prompted Rommel to go find them and prod them forward.

About 30 minutes later the British Right Column began moving. 7RTR took the wrong road and became separated from the infantry, drifting west. Near the village of Duisans, elements of the Right Column became involved in a brief firefight with what turned out to be French tanks from the screening unit to the west. The misunderstanding was quickly realized and the unit moved on Duisans itself. The French tankers also pointed out German tanks advancing to the west. These tanks were from Panzer Regiment 25.

Earlier in the morning, a British armored car company mauled a German artillery battery at Duisans. Then, English tanks and infantry arrived to seize the village and take the survivors prisoner. The captured Germans were rounded up and turned over to the French for evacuation. It was a short fight but had a significant effect on the rest of the battle. The 7RTR commander, Lt. Col. H.M. Heyland, realized he was falling behind the progress of the Left Column and wanted to make up lost time. He decided to bypass the next objective, the town of Warlus, and advance on Dainville. He left two companies of infantry and some antitank guns in Duisans and ordered his tanks to move.

This fateful decision meant the Right Column would pass the advancing Panzer Regiment 25 to the east rather than meeting it head on near Warlus. The German tanks would have been unable to penetrate the armor on the Matildas, but they were vulnerable to the Matilda II's 2-pounder cannon and even the .50 caliber machine guns of the Matilda Is. A potentially serious problem for the Germans was eliminated by a fluke.

To the northeast, the Left Column ran into the German Infanterie Regiment 6, pushing deep into its flank. This unit was the right flank for 7th Panzer Division and one of the formations Rommel was trying to find and push forward. At that point, one of its columns was under attack by the Left Column's tanks. The German infantry and antitank guns in the column deployed and began firing at the attacking armor.

The Matilda I tanks at the front of the column returned fire and advanced. Sergeant H.D. Reed commanded one of these tanks. "Earth was being thrown up all around and strange thudding noises were heard and felt," wrote Reed. "I distinctly remember Squadron Sergeant-Major Armit, just ahead of me, getting repeated hits on his tank turret. Everyone was firing away briskly." Gunfire flashed between the two sides as trucks, half-tracks, and other vehicles were hit and burned.

"I claimed a motorcycle and sidecar machine gun outfit, which divided itself around a tree, and a lorry," wrote Reed. "I could not get at an antitank gun concealed in front of a railway bridge but decided to polish off two lorries parked nearby. Next thing, a flash and a cloud of smoke—even inside the tank I felt the blast. This had been an ammunition lorry and its demise also put paid to the gun."

The German infantry watched in alarm as their 37mm antitank guns had little effect on the Matildas. Rounds fired in rapid succession bounced off their thickly armored hulls. The British tanks had unarmored stowage bins outside the armor, and in several cases the contents were lit ablaze by all the gunfire. This caused quite a spectacle on the battlefield as apparently burning tanks continued firing and attacking. The Matildas kept coming, overrunning the enemy antitank guns and destroying them by crushing the gun's trails under their tracks. The gun crews were slain by machine-gun fire as they fled.

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This became too much for the German infantry. Seeing their antitank guns destroyed, they stood helpless against the British armor. Although the riflemen had seen combat earlier in the campaign, the casualties they took here were heavier than anything experienced before. A few of the riflemen initially broke and ran. Within a matter of minutes, the entire force fled the field either on foot or in the few vehicles that remained operable. The fleeing troops ran south, where they collided with Infanterie Regiment 7, itself now embroiled in combat with 7RTR.

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ABOVE: Rommel appreciated the value of the 88mm antiaircraft gun in an antitank role. He ordered his heavy artillery and an 88mm battery to stop the British advance at Arras. OPPOSITE: Generalmajor Erwin Rommel took this photo of the German Panzers of his 7th Panzer Division advancing through the rolling terrain of northeastern France.

Sweeping aside the German infantry, 4RTR continued through the villages of Achicourt, Agny, and Beaurains. The British infantry occupied the last two towns while the tanks moved to seize ground south of Beaurains, an area known as Telegraph Hill. The advance began to falter. Rommel, aware of the peril facing his division, had personally intervened to bring forward his heavy artillery and a battery of his 88mm antiaircraft guns.

The powerful 88s were the only weapon capable of penetrating the armor of the Matilda. Although designed primarily as an antiaircraft weapon, the designers possessed the forethought to make it a dual-purpose gun. To meet that requirement, they had outfitted it with sighting systems and the appropriate ammunition. That foresight paid off in that moment of crisis for the Germans.

A stiff fight began as the British found the odds beginning to even. The 88mm rounds could easily pass through the Matilda's armor. Worse still, Luftwaffe aircraft appeared overhead. Stuka dive bombers screamed down on the vulnerable British, dropping high-explosive bombs and strafing any enemy targets they could find. The tide of battle swung to the Germans, and burning British tanks began to litter the battlefield. The commander of 4RTR, Lt. Col. J.G. Fitzmaurice, was directing the action from his Mark VIB light tank when a round struck it in the side, tearing a hole through the armor and killing him.

Shortly after Fitzmaurice was killed, the regimental reconnaissance officer, 2nd Lt. Peter Vaux, arrived at the scene of the fighting. He also was riding in a Mark VIB light tank. Vaux's recollections of the battle capture the change in British fortunes that afternoon. "Up to that moment the battle had been great fun—we had enjoyed it, but when we reached this line of field guns we could go no further," wrote Vaux. "I was sent off to contact some tanks to tell them to pull back to Achicourt. Some small antitank guns opened fire on my light tank and a shot went in through the left of the turret, just behind my gunner's head, and out through the right of the turret, just behind my head. I suppose we both turned a bit pale. Then, without a word, the gunner bent down, brought out his small pack, opened it and took out a very smelly pair of socks. He handed one to me; the other he stuffed into the hole on his side and I stuffed mine into the hole on my side—somehow or other we felt safer like that!"

Soon 4RTR had lost 20 tanks. Senior British commanders issued the order to withdraw. As they began pulling back, a few more German tanks appeared on the battlefield. They were stragglers from Panzer Regiment 25, separated from their unit earlier in the day. These tanks took part in several small counterattacks designed to throw the English back, but none succeeded. Hastily conceived, these responses occurred in a piecemeal fashion and only resulted in the loss of all the panzers.

Evening fell over the battlefield as 4RTR prepared its nine operational tanks for a German attack. Two light tanks, a Matilda II, and six Matilda Is were all that was left to hold back what was expected to be a strong assault. Almost all the available machine-gun ammunition had been expended during the day's fighting. What was left was shared out among the remaining tanks. It amounted to 50 rounds per vehicle. Major J.S. Fernie took command of the regiment. Still, they had to hold as long as possible to allow what remained of Left Column to withdraw to relative safety.

At 9:30 PM the sound of tank engines could be heard in the distance. The regimental adjutant, Captain Robert Cracroft, thought they were a group of Matilda IIs, which had become lost in the dark and were moving toward the rally point. He stepped onto the road and waved the approaching column down with his map case. The line of tanks came to a halt in front of the British captain who only then realized the tanks were German. Cracroft and the Germans stared at each other for a few seconds; the unlikely encounter had surprised them all. Sergeant Reid, who had earlier blown up the enemy ammunition truck, was still in command of his Matilda I and recalled the bizarre scene. "Then a revolver shot rang out, then a burst of machine gun, then a bigger gun," he wrote. "To our left a lorry went on fire and in the light of that we saw the doubled-up figure of the adjutant scurrying towards his light tank, he in a very white-looking trenchcoat. The next minute all hell was let loose, tracers everywhere, especially the rapid fire green tracer of the German motorcycle outfits."

The sudden firefight lasted just a few minutes, ending with a German withdrawal. In the shadowy darkness, punctuated by the flames of the burning lorry, the British could see a pair of knocked-out tanks and some dead and wounded men from the accompanying motorcycles. They had whipped the Germans, but it was likely they would soon return, and by that point the British tanks were out of ammunition. Cracroft looked for Major Fernie for orders, but he was nowhere to be found. The captain decided to withdraw since the tanks could accomplish no more. He led them through the fields to Vimy Ridge. Major Fernie and Lieutenant Vaux were separated during the fighting and captured by the Germans. They escaped by swimming across the Somme

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The expected German riposte did occur but met with little success. The side effect of Rommel's personal involvement in countering the British assault was a loss of focus on what his own tank force was doing.

River and ultimately were reunited with 4RTR in England.

While 4RTR was fighting Rommel and his guns, 7RTR went through its own ordeal. After reaching Dainville, the regiment spread to the southeast. Having driven past the enemy tanks, the British instead ran into Infanterie Regiment 7. The Matildas were proof against the infantry's weapons and once again swept the German riflemen away, just as their brethren in 4RTR did to the north. This German unit also broke, the survivors running straight into the neighboring SS-Totenkopf. This division had barely seen any fighting that day and was similarly unprepared to face tanks. A number of the SS units panicked and ran as well.

This success spurred the British onward, but at about 3 PM they ran into Rommel's line of artillery and 88mm guns. Some of the leading Matildas were knocked out. The 7RTR commander, Lt. Col. Heyland, was killed along with his adjutant. Despite this setback, Major John King assumed the lead and both Achicourt and Beaumetz were in British hands by 4:50 PM. King further led a tank attack against Rommel's gun line and punched through with his Matilda IIs. For his part, Rommel remained with his guns most of the day, directing their fire. He was so focused on the battle he did not notice when his orderly was killed standing next to him.

As the battle continued, opposing tanks and artillery desperately tried to win the upper hand. Major King commanded one Matilda while Sergeant B. Doyle led another. Their first move was to overrun a battery of antitank guns, knocking out the guns and sending the surviving crews into headlong flight. After that, they ran headlong into four panzers and destroyed them all. The 2-pounder shot went right through the panzers' thin armor, setting two afire. A stowage bin on King's tank erupted in flames, causing excessive smoke. The crew had to open their hatches to avoid choking on the fumes.

Continuing their rampage with King's tank in the lead, they smashed through a barricade made of farm carts only to be hit by an artillery round. The hit jammed the turret, and the concussion from the blast broke the gunner's arm even through the armor plate. The next target was another antitank battery. Doyle's tank crushed one of the guns under its tracks. The rest of the battery suffered the same fate as the earlier one.

Meanwhile, King spotted one of the dreaded 88mm guns nearby. He maneuvered his tank through some dead ground into which the enemy gun could not fire. They eventually reached a spot where he could turn his entire tank to allow the machine gun in the jammed turret to bear. Spraying the 88mm with bullets suppressed the crew long enough for Doyle to get close enough to knock the gun out for good.

The pair of tanks moved on, their crews eager to inflict more destruction, but their run was at an end. Doyle's tank took a direct hit from an artillery piece, putting it out of action. King's tank suffered an internal fire, likely caused by the beating it had taken, forcing the crew to evacuate. Both tanks sat just in front of the Germans' last line of defense.

This was the high-water mark for 7RTR. The infantry dug in and readied the villages for German counterattacks. The tanks pulled back to support them but were later to return to Vimy. They arrived at 11 PM. Their long day was over.

Subaltern Hepple of 7RTR went through his own ordeal. After making his report, the young officer took his tank back to the battle. He soon caught up with the rest of B Company, falling in behind two Matilda IIs. He was intent on passing them and catching up with the other light tanks when enemy antitank guns opened fire on them a mile west of Achicourt. Hepple's tank was hit three times, breaking its right track and leaving it immobile. He returned fire and

LEFT: A Matilda II burns during the Battle of France. The British only had 16 Matilda IIs at Arras and each attack column had eight. BELOW: Stuka aircraft dive bombed Allied troop concentrations in support of the German armored columns. OPPOSITE: A German Panzer II in action near Arras. The Germans had approximately 600 newer Panzer IIIs and Panzer IVs to add weight to their blitzkrieg in France.

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along with the Matildas silenced the guns. The other tanks moved on, leaving Hepple and his crew alone with their crippled tank.

For several minutes, rifle fire peppered the British tank. Then Hepple saw two large groups of Germans gathering down the road. He scattered them with his machine gun and then engaged more enemy troops trying to operate one of the abandoned antitank guns. Throughout this time the crew tried to reach help by radio, but no one answered their calls. They later found the antenna damaged by rifle fire.

A short time later more British tanks and infantry appeared. Hepple dismounted to inspect the damage. The right track was broken and the radiator leaking badly. Members of his tank crew worked furiously to repair the tank while artillery began to fall around them. Overhead a few Stukas appeared to strafe and bomb the area. A Matilda was also disabled nearby and Hepple went with another officer to check on it. The tank's commander was dead, and the tank's track blown off. They placed a demolition charge inside the tank and abandoned it.

By that time, it was dusk. With the light fading and a German attack seemingly imminent, Hepple and his men prepared to abandon their own tank as well. There were several German motorcycles nearby, and these were set afire along with several antitank rifles. They removed everything they could and put it on a Bren Carrier they managed to start. Setting their own tank ablaze, the British troops started toward Achicourt.

Soon they came under the expected German attack. A captured French tank came down the road firing at them with its machine guns. The carrier broke down, leaving Hepple and his men on foot. They joined with another tank crew and an infantryman, grabbed a pair of Bren guns, and moved off. They soon found a destroyed airfield where they stopped to rest. The next morning Hepple led his party into Arras, where the local commander sent them back to Vimy.

The expected German riposte did occur but met with little success. The side effect of Rommel's personal involvement in countering the British assault was a loss of focus on what his own tank force was doing. Panzer Regiment 25 had secured it objective earlier in the day and then sat there awaiting further orders. By the time the battle had subsided enough for Rommel to once again look at the larger picture, the sun was beginning to set.

At 7 PM Colonel Karl Rothenburg, commanding Panzer Regiment 25, finally received orders to attack the British columns in their rear. He complied and sent off his tanks, which promptly ran into a line of 2-pounder guns from the 260th Anti-tank Battery. While those guns savaged the German armor, French tanks from the 3rd Division Legere Mechanique also attacked the German flank. At least a dozen panzers were lost along with a few of the French heavy tanks and a few of the 2-pounders. Afterward, at 11 PM, Rothenberg's unit was ordered to stop for the night.

The failure of the panzers, however, was not Rommel's last attempt. He pushed forward his two infantry regiments as well. At 12 AM the 6th was able to overrun a British machine-gun company while the 7th attacked the village of Warlus. German artillery and mortar fire started large fires within the town as infantry from the 8th DLI battled to defend it. The German pressure was intense, and British ammunition supplies were running low. But when the situation was most desperate, the proverbial cavalry arrived. A half dozen French tanks accompanied by two troop carriers blasted their way through the German lines. The remaining garrison rallied around these vehicles and the whole group fought their way out of Warlus and fell back to Vimy. The Arras counterattack was over.

The fighting of May 21 had failed to cut the German line of advance. Failures in coordination between the British and French and the limited tanks and troops available for the attack had made attaining such an objective a remote possibility. Still, the counterattack had an effect, if only a temporary one. It had cost Rommel approximately 40 tanks and 600 casualties, along with the majority of his antitank guns. Rommel reported being attacked by hundreds of enemy tanks. He was either padding his report to cover his mistakes or had simply overestimated his opponents, a phenomenon that was not altogether uncommon in a confusing action such as Arras. Partly as a result of this report, the Germans reallocated some of their panzer forces toward Arras in case Allied strength there was not yet depleted. This slowed their forward advance.

By slowing the German panzer advance, the Arras counterattack had bought more time for the Allies to solidify their defenses at Dunkirk for the sea evacuation. When combined with German leader Adolf Hitler's decision to halt his tanks short of Dunkirk and allow the Luftwaffe to attack the port city, it allowed the British to hold out long enough for the Royal Navy to initiate its evacuation, which began on May 26. By June 4, approximately 336,000 British, French, and Belgian troops were saved from imprisonment or death. These soldiers would form the nucleus of the Allied armies that fought in North Africa, Italy, and France during the liberation of those regions and countries from Axis control. □

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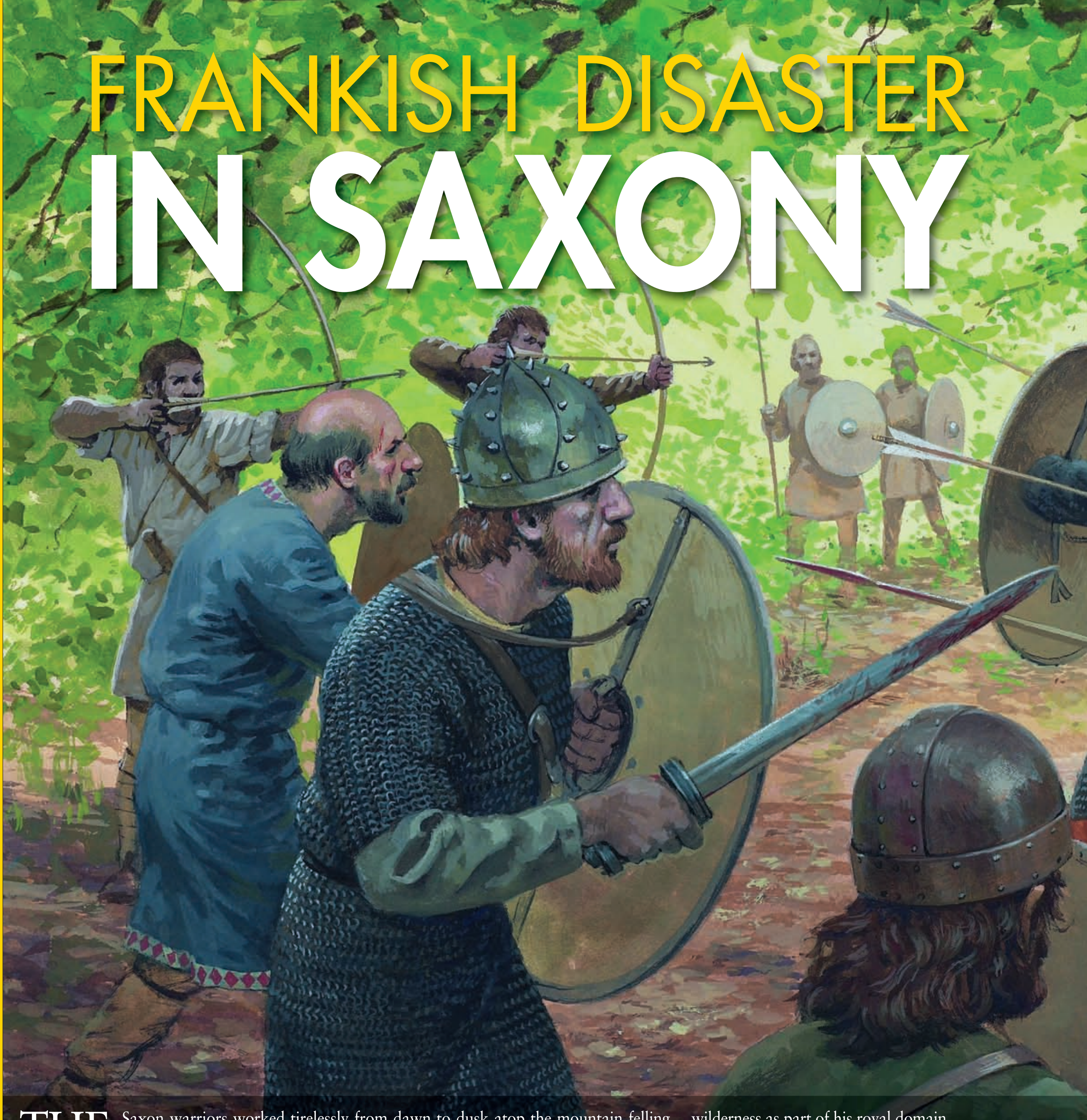
FRANKISH DISASTER IN SAXONY



THE Saxon warriors worked tirelessly from dawn to dusk atop the mountain felling trees, cutting them into logs, and adding them to the field fort they were building on a flat spur of the Suntel Mountains in the heart of their homeland. Widukind, a Westphalian chieftain who ruled the Saxon warriors, had ordered them to fortify on the Hohenstein, a spur on the north side of the Suntel ridgeline. He wanted his men to be ready if the Franks suddenly attacked.

The Saxon rebellion in the summer of 782 was widespread. Carolingian King Charlemagne, who sought to subjugate them, not only wanted to convert them to Christianity but also wanted to send Christian priests to live among them. What is more, the Frankish king planned to require the Saxons to pay tithes to support the church and the priests whose job it was to baptize the pagan Saxons. As if this were not enough, Charlemagne planned to procure large parts of the Saxon wilderness as part of his royal domain.

The Frankish initiatives were an enormous affront to the Saxons, and warriors from Westphalia, Angria, and Eastphalia snatched up their spears and shields and flocked to Widukind's new fortress by the hundreds. The wily rebel leader planned to use the stronghold as a base from which to assail Frankish forts and monasteries in eastern Francia and Hesse.

Saxons loyal to the Franks informed them of

Widukind (at left with drawn sword) corners two Carolingian senior commanders as they withdraw from the Suntel battlefield in a modern painting by Graham Turner. The reconstruction is based on period accounts and Carolingian tactics.

Saxon leader Widukind outsmarted a Frankish force at the Battle of Suntel in 782. Charlemagne made the Saxons pay for their treachery.

BY WILLIAM E. WELSH

Widukind's mountaintop fortress and his intention to resume raiding towns and abbeys. Coincidentally, a column of Frankish heavy cavalry was marching west to punish the Slav Sorbs for raiding Frankish-held Thuringia. When the commanders of the column learned of Widukind's plans, they dismissed the Saxon auxiliaries attached to their force and countermarched to meet the bigger threat to Frankish security. A clash was inevitable. Saxon foot soldiers were no match for Frankish heavy cavalry, so Widukind deemed it essential for his men to entrench and await the inevitable Frankish assault.

The Franks had begun converting to Christianity in the late 5th century, but the pagan Saxons, who were the last group of pagans in so-called inner Germany, continued to worship multiple gods. In the mid-6th century, Frankish King Chlotar I imposed an annual tribute on the Saxons of 500 cows. Several generations later, Frankish King Dagobert rescinded the tribute in return for assistance in fighting the Slavs.

In the final years of the 7th century, some Saxons had begun expanding into Frankish-controlled Hesse. This was part of a quest to leave the marshlands of the lower Rhine, Weser, and Elbe Rivers for the drier uplands south of Saxony. The Franks viewed this as a serious

akg-images / Osprey Publishing / Conquest of Saxony 782-785 / Graham Turner

encroachment on their territory.

In 738 Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, who had risen from the powerful position of Mayor of the Palace of both Austrasia and Neustria to become the de facto king of the Franks during the last four years of his reign, had designated Anglo-Saxon monk Boniface the archbishop of all of Germany east of the Rhine. Significantly, Boniface assisted the Franks in establishing a handful of fortified monasteries in Hesse during his lifetime, including Fulda, Fritzlar, Hersfeld, Amonenberg, and Buraburg. At the time of his last raid in 737, Martel informed the Saxons that henceforth he would require them to pay taxes to the Carolingian crown. Pepin the Short, who was Charlemagne's father, continued the Frankish tradition of punitive expeditions against the Saxons.

Pepin had left explicit instructions that after his death his eldest son Charlemagne was to rule the northern part of the Carolingian realm and his second son Carloman the southern part. Following the death of his brother Carloman in 771, after which Charlemagne became the sole king of Francia, he began the forcible conversion of the Saxons to Christianity. The Franks had grown weary of the Saxons' annual raids against the settlements on the eastern border of their realm. During their bloody forays, the Saxons carted off gold, silver, and precious objects. They also murdered priests and monks at abbeys established by Saint Boniface and his followers in the early 8th century.

When the Frankish sword was against their throat, the Saxons would swear oaths of loyalty. To get the Saxons to abide by their oaths, the Carolingian rulers demanded that they give hostages to the Franks to guarantee their oaths. Much to the Franks' frustration, the Saxons routinely broke their sworn oaths even though the hostages' lives were forfeit if the oaths were broken. Charlemagne eventually came to realize after a decade of fighting the Saxons that it was necessary assimilate the Saxons into Frankish society.

LEFT: Saxon chieftain Widukind, shown in a modern painting, fought a long guerrilla war against the Franks. RIGHT: Charlemagne, who is depicted in a medieval image, assimilated the Saxons by force of arms.

Charlemagne's biographer Einhard, author of the 9th-century work *Vita Karoli Magni* (*Life of Charles the Great*), succinctly captured the challenges facing Charlemagne in subjugating the Saxons. "Our boundaries and theirs touch almost everywhere on the open plain ... so that on both sides murder, robbery, and arson were of constant occurrence," wrote Einhard. "The Franks were so irritated by these things that they thought it was time to no longer be satisfied with retaliation but to declare open war against them."

Dealing with the Saxons was problematic, for they had no monarch with whom Charlemagne could negotiate. Instead, the Saxons were organized in tribes under chieftains. The two peoples' value systems were several centuries apart and there seemed to be no way to breach the wide gulf between the cultures.

When the Franks rode into Saxony, it was if they had stepped back in time. There were neither cities nor roads. The Saxons lived in wattle huts in small settlements scattered throughout the heavily forested north German plain.

While in his prime, Charlemagne campaigned annually. He typically held an annual assembly between March and May at one of his Austrasian palaces and afterward embarked on a major military expedition to punish or conquer an adversary as the situation required. During the protracted Saxon Wars, the annual assembly was occasionally held in Hesse. The Carolingians often were engaged in more than one offensive military expedition at a time, and Charlemagne frequently had to delegate an expedition to a trusted subordinate commander so that he could personally lead the most important expedition.

Charlemagne also wanted to convert the Saxon pagans to Christianity as a way to further the interests of the powerful Church of Rome. Charlemagne would allow himself to be deceived during the 770s into believing that he had succeeded in subjugating the Saxons and putting them on a path to Christianity. What he failed to consider was the difficulty of transforming the religious and social customs of a fiercely independent people. It ultimately would take Charlemagne 32 years to completely conquer and assimilate the Saxons. "Never was there a war more prolonged or more cruel than this, nor one that required greater efforts on the part of the Frankish peoples," wrote Einhard.

The Carolingian king held his annual assembly in the Rhine River city of Worms in the spring of 772. His most powerful nobles attended the gathering at which Charlemagne made the case for invading Saxony in a punitive raid during which one of the key objectives would be the destruction of the pagan shrine known as the Irminsul. The Irminsul was a wooden pillar in a grove in southern Saxony that served as a symbolic representation of the column in Saxon mythology that held up the universe. Charlemagne's intention was to destroy the Irminsul to show the Saxons that their Gods—Woden, Thor, and Saxnot—could not protect them against the Franks and that Christianity was a stronger religion than their paganism. Weary of Saxon raids, the nobility of Austrasia enthusiastically agreed to the armed expedition.

A large Carolingian army crossed the Rhine River at Mainz in July and marched north approximately 80 miles to the Saxon stronghold of Eresburg. After a successful assault on Eresburg, the army marched a short distance to the

Irminsul, which was located in a grove and surrounded by the residences of pagan priests. The Franks were delighted to find that the caretakers of the shrine had failed to remove large stores of gold and silver, which the attackers eagerly plundered.

Contemporary Frankish sources are conflicted as to how the shrine was destroyed. Some accounts state that it was simply cut down by soldiers with axes. The *Royal Frankish Annals,* however, advances a far more intriguing method of destruction. The author of the annals contends it was destroyed by flood as the result of an act of God. Charlemagne "wished to stay there two or three days in order to destroy the temple completely, but they had no water," writes the Annalist. "Suddenly at noon, through the grace of God, while the army rested and nobody knew what was happening, so much water poured forth in a stream that the whole army had enough." If this account is accepted, then the Franks may have cut down the pillar and then diverted a stream to flood the site so that it could no longer be used by the Saxons as a holy site. Charlemagne met with local Saxon nobles, accepted a dozen hostages as an act of good faith, and withdrew his army, hoping the pagans had learned a lesson.

The Saxons had no intention of honoring any pledge made under duress. What is more, they were irate over the destruction of the Irminsul. The rebellion that erupted the following year succeeded because it was well led and because Charlemagne was absent from the region while campaigning in Lombardy. The Saxons, facing a major external threat, united under Widukind. The Saxon guerrilla leader not only had the backing of the various Saxon tribes, but also had alliances in place with the Frisians and Danes. During a whirlwind counterattack, the Saxons retook Eresburg and assaulted the Frankish fortresses of Buraburg on the Eder River in north central Hesse and Syburg on the Austrasian-Westphalian border. Charlemagne was tied up besieging Pavia in Lombardy throughout the winter of 773-774 and unable to return to Austrasia. Widukind and his rebels struck again in the spring of 774, massacring monks at the Benedictine Abbey of Fritzlar on the Eder.

Upon returning in the fall of 774, Charlemagne went to his palace at Ingelheim on the Rhine to plan a quick strike against the Saxons. Four columns were dispatched, three of which "fought the Saxons and, with God's help, had victory," states the Annalist. During the quick strike, Charlemagne retook Eresburg, but the onset of winter called a halt to further campaigning. By that time, Charlemagne had resolved to begin the gradual annexation of Saxony. He believed that the only way to end the Saxons' annual raids and convert them to Christianity was under the iron thumb of the Franks.

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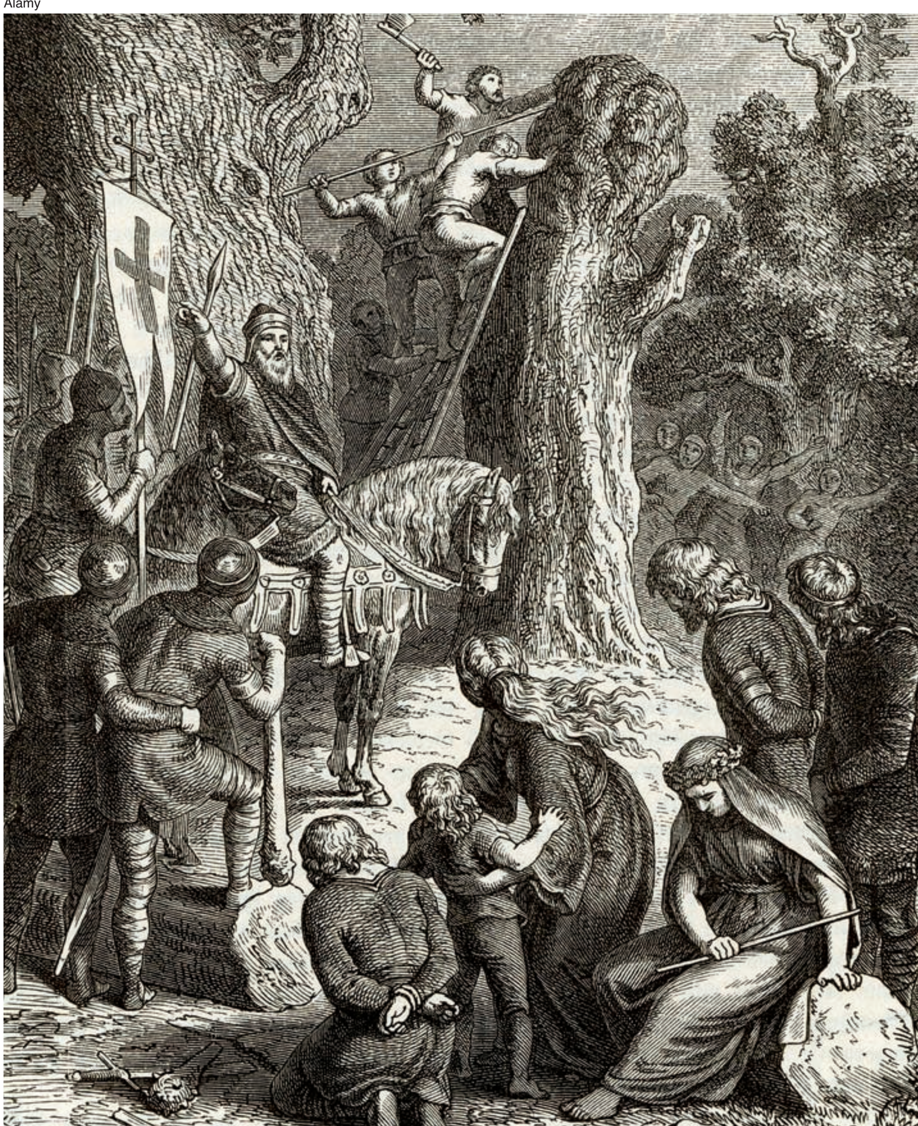

Charlemagne oversees the destruction of the Irminsul, the principal pagan shrine, in a 19th-century illustration. Christian missionaries were protected by Carolingian troops as they went about their dangerous work.

Charlemagne summoned his royal officials and leading nobles to the palace at Quierzy in January 775 to plan a major invasion that involved fighting in various locations between the Rhine and the Weser. The Carolingian king was determined to complete the conquest of the Saxons. The Carolingians marched up the Moselle Valley two months later and turned north at Koblenz. They drove a small force of Saxons out of Syburg and continued east to Eresburg. When Frankish scouts reported that a Saxon army was at Braunsberg on the east bank of the Weser River approximately 50 miles northeast of Eresburg, Charlemagne conducted a forced march to fall upon the Saxons before they could withdraw to the safety of the deep forests on both sides of the north-flowing Weser. The Franks won a decisive victory over the Saxons at Braunsberg.

At that point in the 775 campaign, Charlemagne divided his army into two columns. He led one column east into Eastphalia to find and destroy any hostile forces, and a Frankish commander whose name is not recorded led a group north into Westphalia with the same objective. Charlemagne achieved his objective without incident. When he reached the town of Orhum on the Oker River, the Carolingian king met with Hessi, the chieftain of the Eastphalians. Hessi, who had no standing force with which to fight the Franks, pledged an oath of loyalty to Charlemagne and turned over hostages to guarantee his pledge.

Meanwhile, the other Frankish column had detailed orders to clear the Weser Valley of any rebel

group it encountered. The mounted column followed the Weser north, moving for many miles through thick forests until they eventually entered the marshy lowlands of northeastern Westphalia. They bivouacked near the Saxon settlement of Lubbecke to decide their next move.

Unknown to them, the wily Widukind was leading a band of Westphalians that had been shadowing the Frankish column. The following morning, the Franks sent out a forage party. When it returned with what it had procured from the Westphalians, a group of Saxons disguised as Franks followed the returning foragers and infiltrated the camp's perimeter. Once inside the camp, "the Saxons attacked the sleeping or half-awake soldiers and are said to have caused quite a slaughter among the multitude who were off guard," wrote the Annalist. "But they were repulsed by the valor of those who were awake and resisted bravely." Badly shaken by the guerrillas' ability to infiltrate their supposedly secure camp, the Frankish commander sent a messenger to request assistance from Charlemagne. The Annalist's disgust is evident in his summation of the failed probe into Westphalia. "The men acted carelessly, and were tricked by Saxon guile," he wrote.

Charlemagne ordered the commander of the force in Westphalia to hold his ground until the two Carolingian columns were reunited. Charlemagne marched west, crossed the Weser, and stopped for a short time at Buckegau where he met with Angrian chieftain Brun. Like Hessi, Brun also pledged an oath of loyalty to Charlemagne and turned over hostages to the Carolingian king. The Franks subsequently converted the hostages to Christianity and used them as pawns in their relentless push to convert the pagan Saxons. Shortly afterward, the two Frankish columns united at Lubbecke. Charlemagne was eager to punish the Westphalians for their guerrilla attack. He sent scouts to scour the surrounding area, and they located Widukind's force. The reunited Carolingian army clashed twice with Widukind's rebels. The first clash was a draw, and the second one a decisive victory for the Franks. Unfortunately, Widukind slipped away. He travelled north to Denmark where his close ally King Sigfred protected him from the Franks.

THEIR MOOD WAS ONE OF UNBOUNDED CONFIDENCE, ACCORDING TO THE ANNALIST. **"THEY TOOK UP THEIR ARMS AND, AS IF THEY WERE CHASING RUNAWAYS RATHER AND GATHERING BOOTY INSTEAD OF FACING AN ENEMY LINED UP FOR BATTLE,"** HE WROTE.

In the autumn of 775, Charlemagne cleared the Westphalian Hellweg, the main road connecting the lower Rhine with Thuringia, of any threat from armed Saxons. The Westphalian Hellweg ran from the confluence of the Rhine and Ruhr Rivers through the Lippe Valley to the middle Elbe River. The Franks would soon strengthen their defenses in the eastern end of the Lippe Valley with the construction of a fortress near Pader Springs that they named Karlsburg in Charlemagne's honor. By the close of the 8th century, the Frankish settlement in the area would expand to include a royal palace and become the seat of the Bishopric of Paderborn.

Charlemagne held his annual assembly in May 777 at Pader Springs. He informed the Ripuarian and Saxon nobles in attendance that he intended to divide Saxony into bishoprics. Having established a church at Paderborn, Frankish priests and monks baptized large numbers of pagan Saxons. Conspicuously absent from the assembly was Widukind, who bided his time in Denmark waiting for another chance to disrupt the Frankish subjugation of the Saxons.

The Carolingian king led a great army into the Iberian Peninsula in 778. On his return to Austrasia, Charlemagne learned that Widukind had assembled a large Saxon army east of the Weser River. The Saxons' first objective was the new Frankish fortress of Karlsburg. They defeated the garrison and destroyed the fortress. Afterward, the rebel army marched southeast to Deutz, a Frankish-held town on the right bank of the Rhine River, which they sacked and burned. "The rebels advanced as far as the Rhine at Deutz, plundered along the river, and committed many atrocities, such as the burning of the churches of God in the monasteries and other acts to loathsome to enumerate," wrote the Annalist.

Widukind's rebels then engaged in a running battle with the Frankish garrison from Koblenz, which sought to weaken the rebels until reinforcements arrived to assist them in crushing the insurrection. The clever rebel leader pretended to retreat but turned around suddenly and attacked the Franks. The Saxons prevailed in what was likely a bloody encounter. Charlemagne, who had reached Auxerre on his way back to the Rhine region, dispatched a large force to Saxony with orders to destroy Widukind's army. Having learned that the Saxons were in the Lahn Valley, the Franks pursued them. They finally overtook the Saxons near Leisa and overpowered them. Widukind led the remnants of his force north to Wigmodia, the region that lay between the lower Weser and Elbe Rivers. He established a base for future operations in Wigmodia where he could receive assistance from the Danes and several tribes of pagan Slavs that lived east of the Elbe.

Charlemagne gathered a new army at Duren on the west side of the Rhine in the spring of 779. The Carolingian army marched north along the west bank of the Rhine and then crossed the wide river to attack the Westphalian settlement at Bocholt. The Saxons cowered before the Carolingian host, according to the Annalist. "The Saxons wanted to put up resistance at Bocholt," he wrote. "With the help of God they did not prevail but fled, abandoning every one of their bulwarks."

With the Frankish sword at their throat, the Westphalian nobles, with the exception of Widukind who once again had fled to safety with the Danes, all swore their loyalty to Charlemagne. The Carolingian king then turned south to the Lippe Valley. He led his Frankish host east along the Westphalian Hellweg to the Eastphalian town of Medofulli where he compelled the Angrians and Eastphalians to submit to him.

The following year, Charlemagne marched with a sizable force to the Eastphalian settlement of Orhum. He once again demanded that the Saxons swear their loyalty to him, which they traditionally did by swearing on their weapons, and hand over additional hostages as a way to guarantee their compliance. He also continued with the work of dividing Saxony into ecclesiastical units with bishops overseeing the monumental task of converting the pagan Saxons to Christianity.

Two years passed by without a major Saxon revolt. The Frankish fortresses in southern Saxony and northern Hesse had substantial garrisons, and this likely discouraged large-scale Saxon raids against Frankish towns and settlements. In the spring of 782, Charlemagne held his annual assembly at the Lippespringe, which was the source of the Lippe River. He ordered the Saxon nobility to attend, and he informed them that he planned to divide Saxony into Frankish counties and that they would be ruled by Saxon counts who had converted to Christianity. At the same time, Charlemagne's royal

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Widukind rallies foot soldiers armed with spears and axes to fight against Charlemagne's better equipped forces.

advisers working with church officials issued a harsh set of rules known as the "First Saxon Capitulary." The document outlawed pagan worship and contained a comprehensive set of rules regarding Christian worship to which the Saxons were to adhere. Of the 34 clauses contained in the capitulary, violation of any one of 14 of them was punishable by death.

Once these matters had been addressed, Charlemagne departed for the Duchy of Bavaria where he went to work planning the conquest of the Avar Khanate that lay east of the duchy. While in Bavaria, he was informed during the summer that the Slav Sorbs were conducting raids against Saxony and Thuringia. He therefore ordered three of his ministers to assemble a Frankish scara, which was to be supplemented with Saxon auxiliaries. A scara was a picked group of strong warriors, according to the 7th-century *Chronicle of Fredegar.* Depending on the scope of the campaign, scarae might be recruited locally or, in the case of a large campaign, from multiple regions. The scara mobilized for the 782 expedition was to punish the Slav Sorbs for their transgressions and consisted of light and heavy cavalry, but no foot soldiers, and was supplemented with mounted Saxon auxiliaries. The nobles, each of whom belonged to Charlemagne's court, were Chamberlain Adalgis, Count of the Stables Gallo, and Count of the Palace Worad. Of the three ministers, Adalgis was the senior commander.

Charlemagne built upon the Carolingian system for military recruitment of free men by establishing a quota tied to wealth. A free man's wealth determined the minimum amount of equipment he should furnish when answering the call to participate in an expedition. A free man who owned 12 manses (the equivalent of approximately 300 to 500 acres) was required to outfit himself as a heavy cavalryman. Those who owned fewer than 12 manses were required to equip themselves as light cavalry. Nobles with large estates were required to furnish a specified number of cavalry or foot soldiers in relation to their wealth.

The Frankish heavy cavalry was superior to any troops on the eastern frontier that might be encountered in the open field, including Saxons, Slavs, Avars, Frisians, and Danes. The Frankish heavy cavalryman wore a helmet and mail coat and carried a shield with a boss. He carried a spear and a double-edged long sword between 35 to 39 inches in length. As for the Frankish foot soldiers, their primary weapon was the heavy spear, which was used for thrusting. They also carried a shield and a bow with a dozen arrows.

The three commanders of the Carolingian expedition against the Slav Sorbs departed in late summer from Koblenz. Rather than take the Westphalian Hellweg, Adalgis led them through Hesse and Thuringia. They were operating east of the Thuringian-Sorbian border when they learned that the Saxons had risen up in revolt and were murdering Christian priests and monks.

Aware that Charlemagne was campaigning in Bavaria, Widukind returned to Saxony from Denmark. He crossed the Aller River at Verden and established a fortified camp on a northern spur of the Suntel Mountains known as the Hohenstein, which overlooked the Weser River. The Suntel Mountains are not characterized by sharp peaks; instead, their tops are gently rounded and some spurs are crowned by plateaus. Widukind had a keen eye for terrain, and he had chosen his ground carefully. Surrounded on three sides by cliffs, the Saxons awaited a Frankish attack from the southeast, which offered the only approach over level ground available to a mounted force of attackers.

While the Saxons toiled to enhance their field fortifications, Aldagis and his co-commanders backtracked to Hesse and turned north to Eresburg where they rendezvoused with Count Theodoric, a trusted cousin of Charlemagne, who had led a large scara of foot soldiers into Saxony to reinforce the scara under the three Carolingian officials.

After a brief meeting, the four Frankish commanders agreed to conduct a pincer attack. That approach, however, would only be viable if the terrain allowed it. If Widukind had his troops

deployed with their backs to the Suntel Mountains, it might not be possible to get behind them. Therefore, Theodoric suggested that the nobles conduct a thorough reconnaissance of the Saxon position before launching their attack. Theodoric seemed to be acting like the principal leader of the combined army, and Adalgis and the other two commanders feared that he would try to steal their glory after they had crushed the rebels.

The Carolingian troops set off together to engage Widukind's rebel army, which continued to grow in size as Saxons flocked to his side from the north and east, which were areas not yet pacified by the Franks. The Carolingians marched east through the Diemal Valley and then turned north to continue their advance along the Weser River. The cavalry under the trio of senior commanders formed the vanguard, and the foot soldiers under Theodoric constituted the main body. The exact size of the combined Carolingian forces is unknown, but it was smaller than the Saxon army that it was marching to destroy. A large Carolingian army of the time might have 15,000 men, but that was the size of an army Charlemagne might lead on a major campaign. The army that marched to crush Widukind probably numbered 3,000 men. As for Widukind, he commanded approximately 4,500 men.

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

Charlemagne's conquests are shown in light purple. Saxony was bordered to the west and south by the Carolingian empire and to the north and east by the Danes and Slavs, respectively.

When the Carolingian army was opposite the Suntel Hills to the northeast, Adalgis led the vanguard across the Weser at a suitable crossing point. North of the Lippe River the terrain changed dramatically, becoming more rugged on both sides of the Weser River. The land on the right bank of the Weser belonged to the Angrians, and they knew every track and trail. The vanguard proceeded with a sense of urgency, knowing that it was operating in rebel-infested terrain to the east side of the mountains. At that point, the Carolingian cavalry entered thick woods that blotted out the sun and ascended to the top of the 1,500-foot ridgeline where it bivouacked in the vicinity of the Hohe Egge, which was the highest point in the Suntel Mountains. At that point, the Carolingian vanguard was only two miles from Widukind's fortified encampment on the Hohenstein.

Once the vanguard had crossed to the east bank of the Weser, Theodoric led the main body downstream. The foot soldiers plunged through a ford of the Weser and established a camp on the right bank astride a principal track that led west into Westphalia. He purposely chose that location so that if the Saxons tried to raid westward, he would be in a good location to disrupt their advance. While he waited for word from the commanders of the vanguard, Theodoric set his men to work fortifying their position in case they were attacked by the rebels.

At their mountain camp, the three commanders of the Frankish vanguard conferred as to their next step. The trio of veteran commanders assumed that they would have no trouble overrunning the Saxons. For that reason, they conspired to smash the rebels without coordinating their movement with Theodoric. They believed "that if they had Theodoric with them in the battle the renown of the victory would be transferred to his name, and they therefore resolved to engage the Saxons without him," wrote the Annalist. Believing that a reconnaissance would only serve to alert the Saxons of their approach, they decided to forego a fundamental part of any offensive action.

But Adalgis and his co-commanders deeply underestimated their foe. Believing that the Frankish horsemen would not attack a fortified position alone without the assistance of a sizable force of foot soldiers, Widukind led his foot soldiers outside the fort. They deployed in line of battle with the palisade directly behind them. By making his army seem vulnerable, Widukind hoped to lure the Frankish cavalry into a premature attack before it could be reinforced with foot soldiers.

The day of the battle, the Franks in the vanguard mounted their horses and rode as quickly as possible along the ridgeline. Their mood was one of unbounded confidence, according to the Annalist. "They took up their arms and, as if they were chasing runaways rather and gathering booty instead of facing an enemy lined up for battle," he wrote. "Everybody dashed as fast as his horse would carry him for the place outside the Saxon camp, where the Saxons were standing in battle array."

Although details are almost nonexistent for the battle that unfolded at the Saxons' camp, modern historians offer a likely scenario based on similar encounters and knowledge of Saxon tactics. Widukind ordered archers and men armed with javelins into the woods along the track leading to the Hohenstein encampment. The Saxon archers, javelin throwers, and slingers were light foot soldiers who had neither helmets nor mail and therefore could not engage a Frankish warrior in hand-to-hand combat with any hope of success. Their job was simply to try to inflict injury with their missile fire. The commanders of the ambush teams allowed the

Franks to get well into the kill zone before giving the order to fire. From their hiding positions behind trees, the bowman killed some of the Frankish horsemen, but since the Franks wore helmets and mail, many of the riders avoided serious injury during the ambush.

The Carolingian heavy cavalry rode as fast as possible through the ambush. When they neared the Saxons' encampment, the Franks saw a line of Saxon spearmen deployed in front of their palisade with archers on a rampart inside the field fort. The Saxon archers fired over the heads of the spearmen in an effort to inflict more casualties on the Franks as they prepared to charge. At that point, Widukind's heavy foot soldiers, who stood shoulder to shoulder, planted their spears at an angle to foil the cavalry charge. They wore helmets and carried large round shields, which they positioned in an overlapping manner for increased protection.

Adalgis was in the center of the line with Gallo and Worad commanding warriors on Adalgis' right and left, respectively. Because of the rugged nature of the terrain and their hasty attack, the Franks struck the Saxon line in a piecemeal fashion. The Saxons killed the Franks' horses to prevent their escape. The Saxons stabbed the Franks with their spears and hacked at them with swords and battle axes. As Frankish casualties mounted, the remaining Franks fled into the surrounding ravines pursued by the victorious Saxons.

The Annalist exaggerates somewhat by stating that all of the Franks were slain, but he is correct in his assessment that the Franks never had the upper hand. "The battle was as bad as the approach," he wrote. "As soon as the fighting began, they were surrounded by the Saxons and slain almost to a man."

Aldagis and Gallo made a last stand in the Blutbach (Blood Stream) in a valley on the north side of the Hohenstein. They fought to the death against overwhelming Saxon numbers. As for Worad, he and a small group of men managed to successfully fight their way out to the south. To reach Theodoric's camp, they scrambled over the mountain and made their way toward the Weser. When Theodoric learned of the disaster, he ordered a general withdrawal to Eresburg. Although the exact losses are unknown, the Carolingian mounted vanguard lost two of its three commanders, four counts, and 20 other high-ranking nobles, according to the Annalist.

Upon learning of the humiliating defeat in the Suntel Mountains, Charlemagne departed Bavaria for Saxony. He led a large Carolingian army from Bavaria to Eresburg. Sensing retribution at hand, Widukind once again sought safe haven with the Danes, thus leaving his hapless rebels to their fate. The Carolingian king summoned the Saxons who had destroyed the Frankish army in the Suntel Mountains to appear before him to receive their punishment. The Saxons who had participated in the rebellion were ordered to assemble at the Saxon settlement of Verden on the Aller River and await Charlemagne's arrival. Since they probably believed Charlemagne would hunt them down if they failed to appear, the cowed Saxons assembled at Verden as instructed. Aware that his reputation throughout Europe was at stake following the debacle, Charlemagne unmercifully ordered the immediate execution of 4,500 Saxons who answered the summons. The tyranny that Charlemagne displayed at Verden was regarded by many Franks as unconscionable.

Widukind is baptized following his voluntary surrender in a romantic depiction of the event. Continued Saxon uprisings compelled Charlemagne to resettle some Saxons inside the Frankish kingdom.

Despite Charlemagne's decision to execute the rebels, the Saxon rebellion flared up anew the following year. Widukind returned to Saxony to lead the rebellion. To gain the upper hand, Charlemagne recruited additional forces, which he fed into the main theater of the war between the Hase River in Westphalia and the Elbe River in Eastphalia. The Carolingian troops used Paderborn and several nearby fortresses as their base from which to conduct strikes against the Saxon rebels. Once the Carolingian forces had gained the upper hand, Charlemagne led a fast-moving mounted column on a lengthy raid that began in Westphalia and went as far east as the Elbe River. Once his column reached the Elbe, Charlemagne turned south into friendly territory in Thuringia. Afterward, the Franks disbanded for the year, and Charlemagne returned to Austrasia.

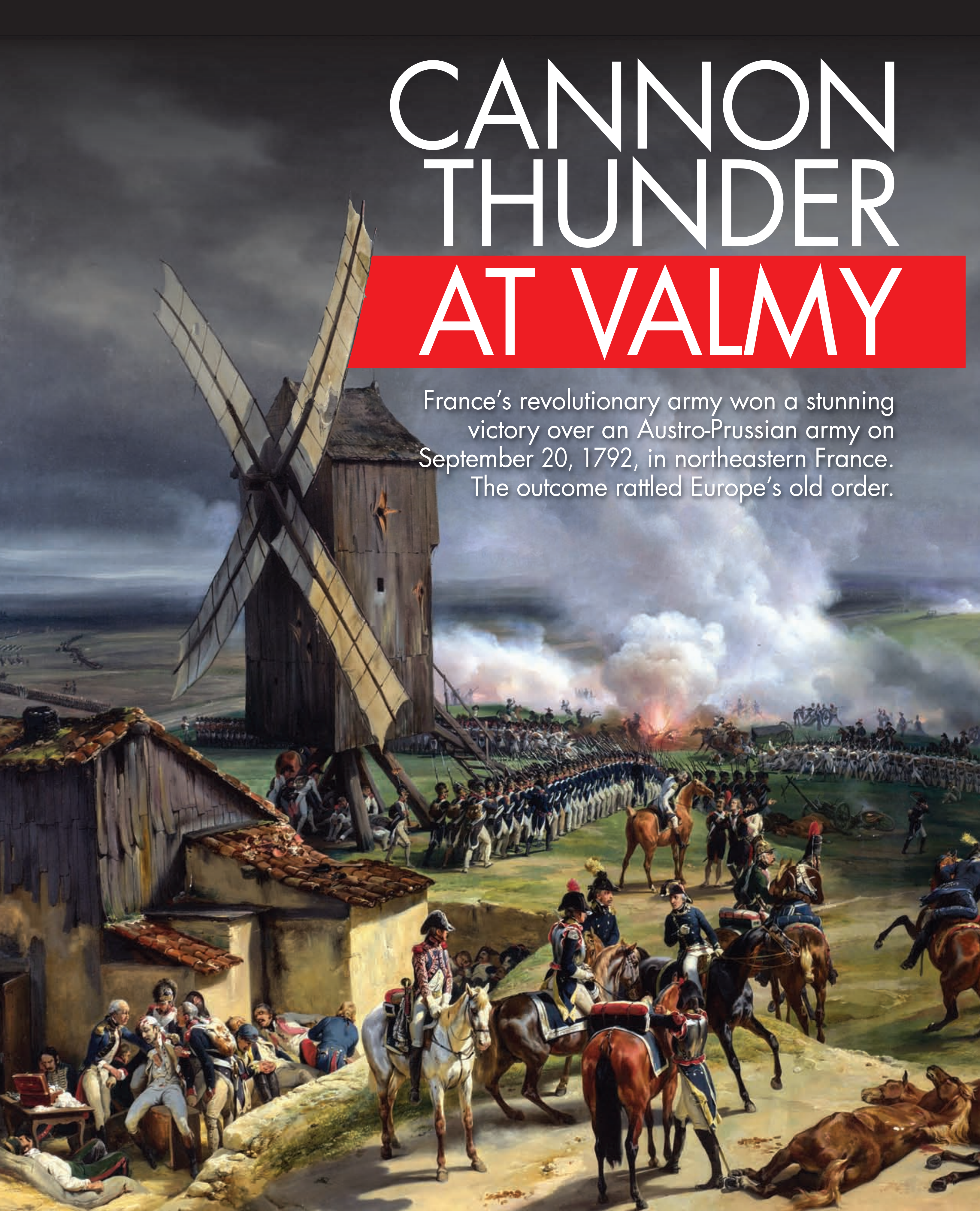
In 784, Charlemagne once again marched into Saxony. He divided his army in half to form two smaller armies. He gave command of one army to his son, Charles the Younger, with instructions to suppress the Westphalians, and he took command of the other army. Charlemagne led his army on a long raid through Eastphalia during which the Franks burned Saxon villages and destroyed their crops. Widukind stayed in Saxony to fight the Franks, but as always he remained elusive. In the late spring of 785, Charlemagne held his annual assembly at Paderborn during which he met with both Frankish and Saxon nobles. From Paderborn, Charlemagne "marched through all of Saxony wherever he wished, on open roads with nobody putting up any resistance," wrote the Annalist.

Later that year, Widukind signaled his willingness to negotiate with Charlemagne provided the Carolingian ruler guaranteed his safety. Charlemagne agreed, and Widukind travelled under escort to Attigny in Austrasia where he and other recalcitrant Saxon leaders were baptized on Christmas Day 785. Although this was a significant milestone in the suppression of the Saxons, further uprisings would occur intermittently for nearly two more decades until they finally stopped in 804. During that time, Charlemagne ordered the resettlement of many of the Saxons into the interior of the Carolingian realm. "He took ten thousand of the inhabitants of both banks of the Elbe, with their wives and children, and planted them in many groups in various parts of Germany and Gaul," wrote Einhard.

Through his conquest of Saxony, Charlemagne proved that he had nearly superhuman stamina and an iron will. Although faced with constant setbacks, he kept his eye on the goal of integrating the Saxons into the Carolingian realm, and he eventually achieved that objective. □

CANNON THUNDER AT VALMY

France's revolutionary army won a stunning victory over an Austro-Prussian army on September 20, 1792, in northeastern France. The outcome rattled Europe's old order.



Wind lifted away the fog sheltering the French lines. Atop a low ridge where the French army was deployed, a lone windmill provided a vivid range marker for 58 Prussian cannons on the neighboring hills. Shot fell like black hailstones amid the staff officers by the man-made landmark. French commander General François Christophe de Kellermann narrowly escaped death from a cannonball that tore through his saddle cloth and killed his horse under him. There was a flash of fire when a Prussian shot exploded a French ammunition cart. Two battalions of infantry bolted from their posts, and panicky artillery drivers fled with their wagons. To Prussian observers on September 20, 1792, it looked as if the Battle of Valmy was going to be the beginning of the end of the French Revolution.

When the uprising against King Louis XVI began in 1789, intellectuals guided the revolutionary movement under the rational ideals of the Enlightenment. But they lost control to the chaotic and violent voices of the Jacobin faction, which demanded immediate and radical reforms. At the top of their list was bringing an end to the privileges and high status of the nobility and the abolition of the monarchy.

BY DAVID A. NORRIS

The French royal family, fearing the worst, decided to flee the country. On the way to the citadel of Montmedy at the border with Flanders, the king's carriage stopped at the little town of Sainte-Menehould on June 21, 1791. The postmaster recognized the king from a royal portrait on an *assignat* (a piece of paper currency). Alerted by the postmaster, antiroyalists arrested Louis XVI at Varennes and sent him back to Paris.

Queen Marie Antoinette of France was the sister of Leopold II, the Holy Roman Emperor and the ruler of Austria. Concerned for the safety of Louis XVI and the royal family, Leopold II, together with King Frederick William II of Prussia, issued the Pillnitz Declaration on August 27, 1791. The document threatened retaliation if the French royals were harmed.

The revolutionaries in Paris considered the document an affront. Already the radical leaders worried about the intentions of the growing forces of royalist exiles in the Austrian Netherlands. On April 20, 1792, France declared war on Austria. Prussia, Great Britain, and smaller monarchies joined Prussia to form an antirevolutionary alliance. Thus began the War of the First Coalition.

France was in poor shape for war. Her army had deteriorated in size and quality during the reigns of Bourbon kings Louis XV and Louis XVI. Aristocrats faced the growing prospect of imprisonment, and many fled the country.

Politics spilled into the French army. Military officers were from the upper reaches of society, and many of them resigned or were purged from the army, costing France many skilled and experienced leaders. Soldiers no longer feared their aristocratic officers, and many men suspected or accused their superiors of treasonous loyalties. France had a long tradition of hiring Swiss, Germans, and other nationalities and enrolling them in special regiments. Tainted with suspicion of

Blue-uniformed volunteers at left and white-uniformed regulars at right defend the French center on the heights of Valmy. Smoke in the distance marks the Prussian battle line.

From left to right are French General Francois Christophe de Kellermann; Prussian General Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick; and Prussian King Frederick William II.

royalist leanings, many of these troops were exiled. They promptly became trained recruits for the armies of revolutionary France's enemies.

With the outbreak of the new war, France planned an invasion of the Austrian Netherlands. Three forces, the armies of the North, Center, and Rhine, had already been formed to protect the boundary regions of northeastern France.

The opening of the Flemish campaign was a disaster. On April 29, Marechal de Camp (brigadier general) Count Theobald Dillon led a small force from Lille toward Tournai. His advance was merely a diversionary attack to cover the main attack on Mons, and he was ordered to avoid battle. Dillon, the son of an Irish viscount, was resented by his sullen and insubordinate troops.

Halfway between Lille and Tournai, near a village called Baisieux, a larger Austrian force confronted Dillon. When the Austrian artillery opened fire, the Irish officer fulfilled his instructions and ordered a retreat. His infantry filed away as commanded, but anger surged through the cavalry. Horsemen suspecting treachery shouted, "Save yourselves! We are betrayed!" Orderly withdrawal turned into a panic. Dillon was wounded while trying in vain to rally his men. Placed in a cabriolet, the stricken commander followed the retreating army.

Believing they had been sold out, the soldiers turned on and killed several of their officers. When Dillon reached Lille, mutinous soldiers attacked him with bayonets. Stabbed countless times, the body of the dead general was dragged through the streets and tossed on a bonfire. Although the soldiers accused of his murder were executed, the incident left the officers and rank and file in mutual suspicion of each other.

The Flemish invasion collapsed. Turmoil still gripped France. On August 10, 1792, mobs attacked the Palais des Tuileries, the royals' Paris residence. Six hundred Swiss guards were killed defending the king. Louis XVI and his family were placed under arrest. Early in September, Paris mobs broke into the city's prisons, slaughtering hundreds of political prisoners and ordinary criminals.

At the end of July, the coalition had assembled more than 150,000 troops in three armies. The main army, numbering about 84,000, marched into France on August 19. Of this army, Prussia contributed 42,000 troops, and the Austrians provided 29,000. Also with them were about 5,000 Hessians and 8,000 French émigrés.

Officially, the main coalition army was under the command of Charles William Ferdinand, the Duke of Brunswick. The duke was the husband of Princess Augusta, sister of King George III of Great Britain. A popular and respected ruler, he had also proved himself a capable general in the Seven Years' War and subsequent smaller conflicts. Flemish-born General François Sebastien Charles Joseph de Croix, Count of Clerfayt, commanded the Austrians.

Supreme command of the Prussian and Austrian forces, however, went to the monarch of Prussia, King Frederick William II. Ruler of Prussia since 1786, the king succeeded his uncle, Frederick the Great. The new king preferred intellectual and artistic pursuits over military matters. But he accompanied the main army when it invaded France and asserted his authority when his ideas clashed with those of the Duke of Brunswick.

Paris recalled the commander of the Army of the North, Gilbert de Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette. Fearing execution at the hands of the radicals, this veteran of the American Revolution fled the country. Appointed as the new head of the army was General Charles-François du Perier Dumouriez. A high-ranking veteran officer, he had turned to the revolution more to advance himself than for political idealism.

Dumouriez' counterpart, in command of the Army of the Center, was a Strasbourg-born veteran of the old royal army, Kellermann. Despite achieving the high rank of marechal de camp during his years of military service, Kellerman was attracted to revolutionary ideals.

After entering France on August 19, the coalition leaders disagreed on strategy. Brunswick worried that the army would find itself deep in France with autumn and winter looming. Supplies from the countryside were scarce, and the population was hostile and offered little voluntary help. Brunswick preferred, once some of the fortresses of northeastern France were taken,

to wait out the winter and begin a new campaign in the spring of 1793.

King Frederick William overrode the duke's cautious strategies. The king fully believed the French émigrés when they vowed that masses of Frenchmen loyal to the Bourbon dynasty would join the Germans. Together, they would scatter the amateurish revolutionary army, whose officers the émigré leaders dismissed as "barbers" and "tailors" rather than soldiers.

German writer and thinker Johann Wolfgang von Goethe accompanied the army. He was invited as a civilian guest of Karl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who commanded a regiment of Prussian cuirassiers. In a September 2, 1792, letter to his mistress, Christiane Vulpius, Goethe reflected the army's confidence when he promised he would soon be shopping for her in Paris.

But reality was already setting in and would soon tarnish the spirits of the army. Rain fell with such persistence that the Germans joked that Jupiter (Roman god of the skies) was a Jacobin.

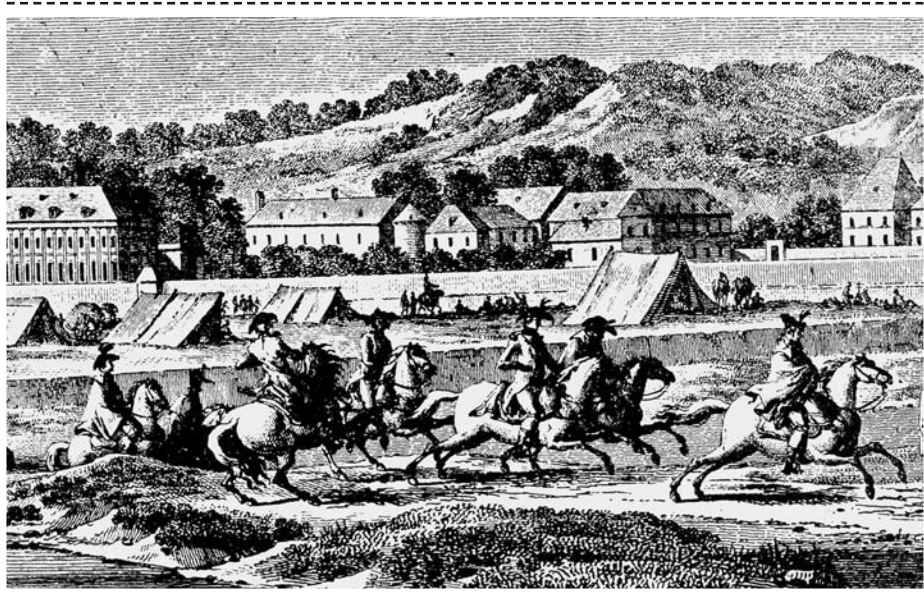
On September 2, the fortress city of Verdun fell to the coalition army. Next, the Prussian king intended to march to Chalons and from there to Paris. Chalons was beyond the western edge of the Forest of Argonne, later to be the site of Meuse-Argonne offensive in 1918.

For an 18th-century army, the Forest of Argonne was a formidable barrier. A miniature mountain range, the forest's thickly wooded and broken terrain ran about 40 miles from north to south. Ravines, gullies, and streams lined with marshes slashed through the forest. An army burdened with wagons, carts, and guns could pass through the Argonne only by way of a few roads following natural passes.

Lieutenant General Arthur Dillon (the unfortunate Theobald Dillon's cousin) held on to the central pass at Les Islettes through which ran the main road from Verdun to Chalons. Dumouriez held the pass at Grand Pre, which lay to Dillon's north. Rather than force these heavily defended passages, the Prussians were willing to invest several days in marching to the northerly pass of Crois-au-Bois, where Clerfayt's Austrians brushed aside a thin screen of 100 French soldiers.

During the withdrawal, a force of Prussian hussars routed part of Dumouriez' army. Several thousand troops fled for 30 miles or more, spreading wild rumors as far as Chalons and Reims that the army was destroyed, and the enemy was marching freely toward Paris. "We are betrayed! All is lost!" the panicked volunteers cried. Fortunately for the French, clear-

ABOVE: A dark British cartoon portrays the death of French Count Theobald Dillon, who was killed by his soldiers on the mistaken belief he had betrayed them, at the outset of the war. BELOW: American Revolutionary hero Marquis de Lafayette initially led troops for the French revolutionary government but fled the country for fear the French radicals might execute him.



headed officers organized a defense and repulsed the hussars.

The coalition army passed through the Argonne and marched west and south into the plains of Champagne. If they expected the French to withdraw to the west and hold Chalons, they were proved wrong. Outflanked, on September 15 Dumouriez withdrew south to the town of Sainte-Menehould, about four miles west of Les Islettes. The little town of Sainte-Menehould had another brush with European history as Dumouriez camped there and waited for Kellerman to join him from Metz. At that point, the French had a good defensive position along the road to Chalons and Paris, but it lay in the rear of the coalition army.

Kellermann's arrival with the Army of the Center gave the French a combined force of 36,000 men, but the army was under divided leadership. Although Dumouriez had the largest force, he could only offer advice and observations because Kellermann was not under his command.

The Army of the Center camped along the Chalons Road at the village of Dommartin-la-Planchette on September 19. This was, Kellermann realized, a dangerous spot. Between his camp and Dumouriez' troops was a large pond. Behind him was the Auve River, which was lined with wetlands. Two miles away was the village of Valmy atop a hill offering any advancing foe a perfect setting for his artillery to bombard the French camp.

Kellermann decided to shift his force to Valmy. As an advance guard, he sent Lt. Gen. Étienne Despres-Crassier to the west, where he halted on a hill.

The coalition army made slow progress after crossing the Argonne. Rather than marching for Chalons, King Frederick William II worried about the French army behind him at Sainte-Menehould. The army turned to deal with Dumouriez and Kellermann.

On the night of September 19, the Prussians were in the advance and camped at Somme-Tourbe, half a dozen miles from Dommartin-la-Planchette. Goethe wrote that the king settled in a hotel, while the Duke of Brunswick occupied "a kind of shed" by the hotel.

September 20 began as a chilly morning of fog and rain. Only 34,000 coalition troops, nearly all Prussian, were on hand as Frederick William II and the Duke of Brunswick pushed them ahead toward the French. Thousands more of the Prussians were tied up holding captured fortresses or watching the Argonne. Clerfayt's Austrians and the French émigrés were miles to the northwest. They were delayed by their march from Grand Pre and slowed further by reports of nonexistent French forces in their way.

After daylight, Kellermann's army reached the hill of Valmy. Without the fog, it would have been easy to see the site's defensive advantages. Topped by a lone windmill, the hill with its gentle slopes was the highest point in a great panorama of rolling farm country. Few trees or woods interrupted the vista of open fields and pastures. To the north was a low ridge called Mont Hyron, which looked down on and paralleled the little Bionne River. To the south was the Chalons Road, beyond which was the hamlet of Gizaucourt near the Auve River. To the west, the road from Somme-Tourbe joined the Chalons Road. At the road junction was another rise, not so high as that of Valmy, marked by an inn called the Cabaret de la Lune. The inn was about 1½ miles from the Valmy windmill.

French volunteers of the young republic (left) stand in stark contrast to the well-groomed regulars at right. At Valmy, the citizen soldiers proved they could stand up to enemy fire.

Blindly plodding through the fog, three squadrons of Prussian hussars came under fire. They had stumbled into a small number of French troops who occupied la Lune. These were the first shots of the Battle of Valmy.

The main portion of the Prussian force was just reaching a farm called Maigneux, not far from the Chalons Road. Major Christian Karl August Ludwig von Massenbach, a Prussian staff officer, rode ahead with the Duke of Brunswick's son, Count Forstenbourg. After covering 1,000 yards, they found themselves at la Lune. The Prussian hussars had driven the French away from the inn, which was now pocked with bullet holes. The yard was littered with shattered roof tiles and dead or wounded French soldiers. One artillery officer lay among them, with both of his legs broken. Massenbach ordered the Frenchman carried inside the inn.

Forstenbourg and Massenbach both saw that their army must hold the elevated ground at the battered inn. Whichever side held la Lune could cover the Chalons Road and the surrounding countryside. The two staffers rode back toward the main army, hoping to convince their superiors to commit enough troops to occupy the hill. Both officers lost precious minutes feeling their way through the fog. Finally, they informed the Duke of Brunswick of la Lune's importance. The duke dispatched two staff officers to la Lune, one with a battery and the other with a battalion of grenadiers. Massenbach himself took another battery and headed to the front.

At the same time, Dumouriez learned that la Lune was given up and ordered General Jean-Pierre François de Chazot to retake it. Before obeying the order, Chazot stopped to ask Kellermann's opinion. Kellermann, it turned out, agreed with Dumouriez that the hill was a vital position that should be held. Chazot then complied with his orders and started for la Lune.

When Massenbach and his battery rolled toward la Lune, they saw Chazot approaching in the distance. The Prussian drivers cracked their horsewhips, and they dashed the final yards up the slope and set up their guns. Behind them pounded the drummers of the grenadier battalion, their drum rolls blending into the noise of the first loads of grapeshot fired at Chazot. The heights of la Lune hung in the balance for a few moments. From the right, crossing the Auve, Colonel Erich Magnus von Wolffradt arrived with 10 squadrons of hussars. Chazot withdrew, leaving la Lune as the anchor of the Prussian line in the coming battle.

Marching southeast from their camps at Somme-Tourbe and Somme-Suippes came the main portion of the coalition army in two columns. One column was under Brunswick and Frederick William, and the other under Lt. Gen. Frederick Adolf, Count von Kalkreuth. Still moving in the fog, the Prussians formed a line with their right spilling beyond la Lune, and their left on the Bionne River.

Goethe, intent on observing the battle in the way a scientist might study natural phenomena, rode with a cavalry squadron on the Prussian right. It seemed safe enough. They thought they were heading toward one of their own batteries, and they believed that the French lines were too distant to concern them. They were surprised when a French battery, sited forward of the main line, fired at them out of the fog. "Balls were falling by dozens ... not rebounding, luckily, for they sank into the soft ground; but mud and dirt bespattered man and horse,"

wrote Goethe. The shriek of soaring shells fascinated the observer. "The sound of them is curious enough, as if it were composed of the humming of tops, the gurgling of water, and the whistling of birds."

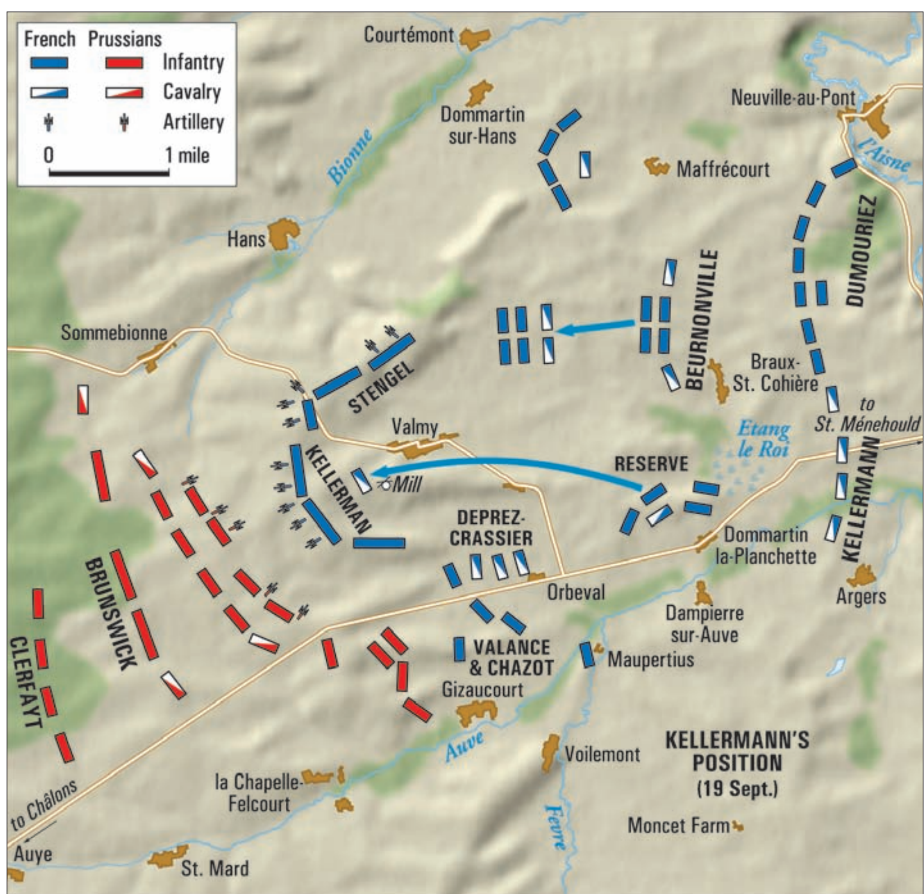
Dumouriez remained at his camp, but he believed that Kellermann had selected a poor place to stand against the Prussians. The hill of Valmy was too exposed to enemy guns. The French were crowded too tightly together, and the flanks were vulnerable. For those reasons, Dumouriez sent Bavarian-born veteran General Henri Christian Michel de Stengel to reinforce Kellermann's right. Stengel deployed his troops along Mont Hyron, and Chazot was ordered to shield the French left.

Late in the morning, the winds stirred and blew away the fog. Sweeping in a great convex arc, Kellermann's line came into focus 1,300 yards in front of the Prussians. Bristling from the French line were 40 guns under Lt. Gen. Francois-Marie d'Aboville. The sexagenarian had served as a teenager at Fontenoy in 1745 and later commanded Count Rochambeau's artillery at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. Prussian Colonel George Friedrich von Tempelhoff commanded 58 guns, which bolstered the Prussian infantry. Tempelhoff fired a blistering barrage at the lines around the Valmy windmill. Kellermann's horse was shot from under him. The French commander escaped serious harm, but several staff officers near him were struck dead or seriously wounded.

Kellermann's mistake in crowding too many troops together on the ridge triggered a crisis. With considerable carelessness, carts loaded with gunpowder were parked close to the formations of foot soldiers near the windmill. An enemy shell struck an ammunition cart at approximately 2 PM. The resulting explosion touched off two nearby cartloads of powder. "I saw whole ranks swept away by the explosion ... without the line being broken," Kellerman wrote in his report, brushing off the incident.

The situation around the windmill was more serious than Kellermann acknowledged. The fire and smoke of the explosion were visible from the coalition lines. Goethe and his companions "rejoiced in the mischief which was thus probably caused to the enemy." And for some minutes, there was considerable mischief. Fragments of shattered carts and mangled horses rained down among the soldiers. Two battalions of infantry bolted from their position near the site of the blast, leaving behind many dead or wounded comrades.

The artillery drivers were not soldiers, but farmers forced into emergency service by the Jacobin regime. Lashing their horses, the panicked farmers sped away with their still loaded carts. With most of their ammunition gone, the batteries on the Valmy hill slowed their fire.



The "Cannonade at Valmy" was more of an artillery duel than a pitched battle. The Duke of Brunswick decided it would be useless to launch a frontal infantry attack against the strong French position.

Steady officers prevented the surprise explosion from unraveling the line. D'Aboville quickly brought more ammunition to the ridge, and the French artillery resumed its fire.

The young Louis Philippe d'Orleans, Duke of Chartres, calm and highly visible on his horse amid the turmoil, lent his aid to the line officers as they steadied and reformed their battalions. Only 19 years old, the duke's high rank as a division commander was due to his status as the son of the Duke of Orleans, one of France's wealthiest men and the head of the cadet branch of the royal family. "I have never seen a general as young as you," Dumouriez said upon their first meeting. "I am the son of the man who made you a colonel, and I am entirely at your service," the duke replied.

Brunswick and his staff saw the temporary chaos in the French lines. It looked like a good moment to launch an attack, and the duke sent his infantry forward. They moved slowly across the hundreds of yards between their lines and hesitated under the heavy artillery bombardment.

As the enemy troops marched closer, Kellermann raised himself in his stirrups. He was fortunate that a great portion of his army, especially the artillery, was made of professional troops of the old royal army. Just the same, the Jacobin-inspired volunteers under his command could hardly inspire the confidence of a commander. Prussian hussars had ignited a stampede of his troops only a few days ago, and the murder of Count Theobald Dillon at the hands of his mutinous troops five months before was an ominous precedent.

Kellermann, though, showed no sign of concern about how the men would face this crisis on the hill of Valmy. He removed his hat, placed it on the tip of his saber, and raised his sword arm high in the air, shouting, "Vive la Nation!" Electrified by the general's example, the soldiers answered, "Vive la Nation! Vive la France! Vive Notre General!"

Amid the cheers, army musicians struck up the new tunes that were inspiring the revolutionary movement: "Ca ira," "La Carmagnole," and "La Marseillaise." So popular was the second song that the ragtag new soldiers recruited from among the peasant and working class radicals

were called “carmagnoles.” “La Marseillaise” remains the national anthem of France. “The Cry of Valmy” became a legendary moment in French history. The soldiers would fight not for the king, but for their nation.

Some of Kellermann’s volunteers had already pleasantly surprised their commanders. One of the Duke of Chartres’ battalions was made up of new recruits. Its men refused orders to remain in the rear and guard the baggage trains. Confronted by the duke, a spokesman said, “General, we are here to defend our country, and we entreat you not to require any of us to leave the standard of our battalion for the purpose of guarding the baggage.”

“Very well,” answered the duke, “your baggage must take care of itself for today, and your battalion shall march along with your fellow soldiers of the line.”

French foot soldiers pressed ahead to trade volleys with the enemy. One of the new volunteers was a 15-year-old former clerk named Charles François, who was assigned to the 5th Paris Battalion. A bullet hit young François. The ball whizzed by over his right ear and “only just grazed the skin and went clean through my hat,” he wrote years later. “I was very proud of that hat, and kept it for a long time.”

Neither side pushed their infantry too far. In the face of the advancing French and the incoming artillery fire, Brunswick recalled the Prussian battalions, and they returned to their lines.

After the infantry returned, the artillery fire rolled on. At 4 PM, the Prussian foot formed for another advance against the hill of Valmy. Like the first assault, though, this advance made little headway before the troops were recalled.

The rescinding of the second order for an infantry advance marked the end of any offensive moves by the Prussian infantry that day. Brunswick called a quick council of war. “We do not fight here,” the duke told his staff. King Frederick William did not object.

Later the duke told Massenbach that the situation bore an unsettling resemblance to the 1762 Battle of Nauheim during the Seven Years’ War. At Nauheim, the French troops occupied a height much like the ridge Kellerman held at Valmy. Brunswick, under the impression that he faced only a portion of the enemy, launched an attack against the ridge. Unknown to him, the entire French force was on hand, and the duke’s error brought a painful defeat upon his troops. Three decades later, Brunswick wanted no repeat of Nauheim.

After the recall of the Prussian advance, the roar of the artillery slackened as it became clear that there would be no more attacks coming that day. By the time the firing ceased at 6 PM, approximately 20,000 rounds of artillery ammunition had been expended that day.

French casualties were approximately 200 killed and between 500 and 600 wounded. The Prussian losses were one artillery officer and 44 men killed, and four officers and 134 men wounded for a total of 183 casualties, according to one detailed Prussian account. Kellermann’s deployment of so many troops in a small space on the exposed heights of Valmy contributed to the higher French toll. Goethe’s observation of cannon balls plunking into the wet clay soil without ricocheting and rolling partly explains why such a heavy cannonade resulted in rather low losses for a major engagement.

“The cannonade had scarcely ceased when wind and rain again commenced, and made our condition most uncomfortable on the spongy clay soil,” wrote Goethe. There were only four

guest rooms at the battered Cabaret de la Lune. The King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick each took one room. Three princes packed into another room with some of the king's aides. The fourth was packed with wounded soldiers, including the fellow Massenbach had looked after that morning. Staff officers slept in the dining hall.

The rest of the Prussians did as best they could outdoors where they were exposed to the elements. Massenbach slept on a bale of hay, his reins tied to his ankle. Goethe and his companions had no shelter. Their solution was to "bury ourselves in the earth and cover ourselves with our cloaks." Even "the Duke of Weimar did not despise this kind of premature burial," Goethe wrote.

Although their battle was successful, Kellermann and Dumouriez agreed that their position was dangerous. Leaving their campfires flaring, as if settled in for the night, the army instead slipped away. The next day found the French in a better situated line south of the Auve.

French troops still blocked Grand Pre. They intercepted cattle droves and supply wagons bound for the coalition army. Meanwhile, the peasantry resisted helping the invaders. Prussian deserters informed the French that they had been reduced to eating horses killed during the cannonade.

Far deadlier than French guns were the invisible pathogens that spread dysentery through the coalition forces. The deadly outbreak of what the French called *la couree Prussienne* was serious enough to earn a place in 19th-century medical literature. The role of microbes in causing disease was of course unknown, and this epidemic during the Valmy campaign was often attributed to soldiers eating unripe grapes and potatoes. In vain, army surgeons treated patients by bleeding them or dosing them with rhubarb, ipecac, or even lemonade. Approximately 12,000 of the 42,000-man army came down with dysentery, and a great portion of them died.

For 10 days, the Duke of Brunswick hovered at La Lune while dysentery and food shortages ate away at his army. After 10 days, on September 30, he broke camp and led the army toward home. Dumouriez let them slip through the Argonne. In early October, the Prussians gave up Verdun. Dysentery and the long, insecure supply lines finally induced the coalition army to leave France altogether.

After Valmy, Dumouriez grew disenchanted with the regime. In March 1793, he plotted with the Austrians to lead his army to Paris and restore the monarchy. When his plans were discovered, he fled. Drifting about Europe looking for employment, he eventually came into the pay of the British as an adviser. He died in England in 1823.

ABOVE: The Duke of Chartres, on foot at left, and his brother, the Duke of Montpensier on horseback, are shown in green dragoon uniforms at Valmy. Chartres' citizen soldiers begged to be put on the front line, and the duke allowed it. OPPOSITE: General Kellerman, who is mounted with his hat atop his sword, and his troops celebrate their triumph over the Prussians. In the wake of the French victory, the Paris press played up the heroic qualities of France's citizen soldiers.

Even the hero of Valmy was not above suspicion and denunciation, and Kellermann was imprisoned for over a year when he fell afoul of the radicals in Paris. Upon his release, he went on to a long career in military administration and in French politics. While in Napoleon's service, he was made a duke in 1808. Marking his victory of 1792, Kellerman took the title of Duke of Valmy. After the fall of the First Empire, he remained in the government of the restored Bourbon monarchy. Following his wishes, upon his death in 1820 the duke's heart was buried on the Valmy battlefield.

As for the Duke of Chartres, he went into exile after getting entangled in plotting by Dumouriez. He settled in England after traveling as far as Cuba and the United States. Returning home after the fall of Napoleon, he was crowned King Louis-Philippe of France in 1830.

Approximately 70,000 soldiers were present at the Battle of Valmy, but the casualty lists resembled those of a large skirmish. Indeed, many historians referred to the action not as a battle, but as "the Cannonade of Valmy." Yet the results of the battle echoed through European history. As the first victory of the revolutionary regime over foreign enemies, Valmy proved that the so-called citizen army of France could defeat armies fielded by traditional monarchies of Europe.

Goethe realized that the outcome of the September 20 "cannonade" would forever alter European politics. Sharing a campfire with some officers on the night of the battle, Goethe assured them, "From today and from this place begins a new epoch in the history of the world and you can all say you were present at its birth." Indeed, buoyed by news of the victory, the National Convention declared that the monarchy was at an end. On September 22, 1792, France became a republic.

Building on the gains of Valmy, French forces pushed into the Rhineland. Dumouriez resumed his invasion of the Austrian Netherlands in October and took Brussels and Antwerp. An army once seething with chaos and mutiny was poised to spread the doctrine of revolution across all Europe.

Although the radical fervor of the Jacobins soon burned itself out in the so-called Reign of Terror, Napoleon Bonaparte, a rising star in the French Revolutionary Army, harnessed the political forces set in motion by the French Revolution to further his own ambitions. France, in less than a decade, would transition from monarchy to republic to empire under Napoleon. Valmy set the stage for more than two decades of violent upheavals that would convulse Europe and much of the world until 1815. □

THE ARMIES OF RIVAL EMPERORS CONSTANTINE AND MAXENTIUS MET IN AD 312 ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ROME AT THE MILVIAN BRIDGE. AT STAKE WAS CONTROL OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE.

BLOODY CLASH ON THE TIBER

BY TIM MILLER

ON OCTOBER 28, AD 312, A ROMAN emperor was drowning. The sight must have amazed his soldiers. All summer Rome had been filled with rumors of the western emperor, Constantine, and the ease with which he and his army had crossed the Alps and, once on Italian soil, strung together a handful of victories in the north. The average soldier in Rome,

The climactic point at which Maxentius and his troops fell prey to the roiling waters of the Tiber River is portrayed in a Flemish baroque painting by Peter Paul Rubens.

whose allegiance was to his emperor, Maxentius, must have seen what was coming and wondered how the well-trained, veteran army would fare against them.

Their armies met about two hours northwest of Rome at the remains of the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber River, and in less than an hour the worst fears of Maxentius's troops were realized. The superstitious among them may have thought Maxentius knew the outcome before going in. Having ordered the destruction of the Milvian Bridge to halt Constantine's advance, Maxentius had built a temporary bridge of boats over the swift-flowing Tiber and lined his men with their backs to it, making anything but victory a choice between drowning and being butchered. Suddenly, the bridge of boats buckled under the weight of all those retreating to it. Fleeing men weighed down by armor and weapons, and those unable to release themselves from their frantic horses, drowned in the Tiber's swirling waters.

Those lucky enough to have reached the other side before the bridge gave way would have seen Emperor Maxentius fall just as quickly. Indeed, he fell just like any other man. The survivors watched in horror as their leader, supposedly of some greater importance than the rest, drowned just the same as any man.

For all this, though, contemporary accounts try to maintain that distance between emperor and solider by saying that the Tiber, personified as the god Tibernius, actually swallowed and devoured Maxentius in his own personal whirlpool. Although the logistics of this seem less than probable and reek more than anything of the victor's propaganda, there is no doubting that the image is born from the real terror and amazement of an all-powerful emperor succumbing to the waves.

"Byzantine" has not become a byword over the centuries for scheming and intricacy by accident, as only the briefest summary of its early years can attest. The years AD 235 to AD 284, during which more than 20 men were proclaimed emperor, was a period of astonishing instability and near collapse in the Roman Empire. Things changed when Diocletian, a cavalry officer from Dalmatia, was proclaimed by the western and eastern armies in 284. A year later he appointed a co-emperor in Maximian, also plucked from the military, and together they adopted the titles of gods and heroes. Diocletian took the title of the distant and bureaucratic Jupiter, and Maximian chose the name of Hercules, who was the muscle of the empire. Perhaps unintentionally, they were taking a page from their greatest enemies, the Persians, who had long found centralized authority easier to maintain by equating religious and political power. This created an implicit demand for a form of religious uniformity unknown until then in the Roman Empire.

WHETHER CONSTANTINE INVADED ITALY AS AN AGGRESSOR OR IN RESPONSE TO MAXENTIUS'S DECLARATION OF WAR IS IRRELEVANT. BOTH WERE TECHNICALLY USURPERS; AT THAT POINT, THEY WERE FINALLY AT WAR WITH EACH OTHER.

During his reign Diocletian also divided the empire up into provinces of smaller sizes, all to impose a visible imperial presence on as much of the subject population as he could. This required the creation of a massive bureaucracy he hoped would subdue the risks inherent in governing such a large empire. While Diocletian had obviously benefited from the influence of armies, the presence of high government officials in the daily lives of the citizens also was meant to discourage usurpers and keep the military from proclaiming another emperor.

To fix that other inherent problem of kingship; namely, that of succession, in 293 the Tetrarchy was created. Under this arrangement, Diocletian and Maximian (who used the title of Augustus) both appointed someone beneath them in the slightly lesser position of caesar, and the Roman Empire was now divided into four zones of authority. Maximian oversaw the areas of Italy north through the Alps and to the Rhine, south and west to Spain, and the North African coast to Egypt. Diocletian administered Egypt, Israel, Syria, and Turkey. Galerius governed the areas south of the Danube River, Greece, and the Balkans (including Diocletian's old home of Dalmatia). Constantius, the father of Constantine, was responsible for northern Spain, France, and Britain south of Hadrian's Wall.

Only after 298, which saw the defeat of the British and Persians and the subduing of a rebellion in Egypt, did Christianity come under suspicion. At that time it was a religion tolerated by the empire, whose adherents were regulars in the royal courts and the military. Diocletian and Galerius were in Antioch in or around 299 when a sacrificial ritual of divination produced unreadable results, the Christians of the court were blamed because they refused to participate, and the two men quickly set about to enforce the basics of pagan piety. They ordered that regardless of the god, everyone must sacrifice.

The swiftness of this move highlights how much of the pre-Diocletian volatility still remained. The return to pagan sacrifice produced immense religious anxiety and conservatism. The demand for religious uniformity spread to military personnel, too. By 303 this shift produced the Great Persecution in the Eastern Roman Empire, which manifested itself in the destruction of Christian churches, the burning of holy books, the outlawing of their even meeting in public, and in torture and execution.

Those who survived but still refused to participate in pagan rites were stripped of their rank, and there was an attempt to imprison all clergy. And like many a fundamentalist before and since, Galerius fell into the persecutions with a savage joy and fervor that went beyond

any mere political advantages they might yield or religious devotion they might reflect.

By this time Constantine, whose birth year varies in the sources, was in his mid-30s. He had spent his formative years receiving the best education possible in the crowded court of Diocletian, but at the same time had likely been held there, if not as a prisoner, certainly as insurance against his father revolting. In the years leading up to the Great Persecution, Constantine saw Babylon and Memphis, had fought the Persians in Syria and Mesopotamia under both Diocletian and Galerius, and elsewhere campaigned against the barbarians on the Danube. There is no indication that he either protested against, or took part in, the persecutions, but historian Eusebius does say he was present at the court of Diocletian when so-called edicts of carnage were promulgated, and it is possible that he witnessed the Christians' steadfastness even unto death.

Soon afterward, in 305, the Tetrarchy was put to its first and only test. Despite Diocletian's careful hopes for stability, corruption found its way. When Diocletian fell ill in 305, Galerius encouraged both Diocletian and Maximian to abdicate, which the latter did only reluctantly. As a result, Constantius and Galerius both became Augusti. But instead of Constantine being chosen as caesar under his father in the west, the two caesars actually selected both had family ties to Galerius. Flavius Severus was a friend in the army, and Maximinus was his nephew. Diocletian subsequently retired to a vast palatial complex in Dalmatia.

Suddenly stripped of the title that many thought belonged to him, Constantine found himself a prisoner of Galerius. Folk tales arose in which Galerius made unending attempts on Constantine's life, but the amusement derived from some notion of Constantine always getting his way belies the real danger to his life. In the summer of 305, his father asked that Constantine be sent to help fight the empire's wars in Britain, and Galerius agreed only after a night of heavy drinking. By the time he emerged from his stupor the next morning, Constantine was long gone. He met his father in Gaul, and the two crossed the Channel to Britain. They spent the next many months campaigning north of Hadrian's Wall, warring against the Picts. On July 25, 306, Constantius succumbed to illness and died.

Before passing away, and without any authority to do so, he assented to his son succeeding him as Augustus, and his father's army did the same. Thus, Constantine was first acclaimed emperor in a city rarely associated with Byzantine history. This event occurred not amid wars in North Africa, the Middle East, or Italy, or in the cauldron the Balkans has always been, but in Eboracum (modern-day York).

The moment when Constantine's troops declared him emperor of the Roman Empire in AD 306 is depicted on the Arch of Constantine. The battle between the two rival emperors would not be fought for six more years. OPPOSITE TOP: Maxentius's profile is shown on a coin. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Constantine's likeness is portrayed on a Roman bust.

Word was immediately sent to Galerius, with Constantine disingenuously claiming his father's title had been foisted upon him by the army, and that he had never sought it. Knowing that to refuse Constantine outright would result in civil war, Galerius placated him by offering him the title of caesar only, with Severus promoted to Augustus. Since it bought him time, Constantine agreed, and he spent the next year or so cementing his control of Britain and then crossed the Channel to deal with the unruly Franks, who had risen up at the news of his father's death. Along the way, he also continued his father's more lenient treatment of Christians (the edicts of persecution enacted so enthusiastically in the east were hardly followed at all in the west), and in his new position Constantine made contact with many Christians, among them the bishops of Cordoba, Trier, and Cologne.

Constantine spent the next six years in the west, solidifying his control there, while claimants for the eastern throne exhausted themselves in civil war. Maxentius, the son of Maximian, who had also been overlooked for the title of caesar upon the abdications of 305, saw how easily Constantine had forced a title on himself and so was proclaimed emperor by the Praetorian Guard in Rome. In a few years, he took control of Italy and North Africa, defeating attempts by Galerius and his caesar to take back both. In 311, he seized the provinces in Asia Minor upon Galerius's death.

Muddied into all of this were his successful attempts at calling his father out of retirement, only for them to eventually oppose one another. And indeed the aging Maximian, before his death, fled to Constantine before it was all over, dying in the west. When Maxentius declared

war on him, he did so in part under claims that Constantine had killed his father, which is unlikely. What is clear is that Diocletian's hopes for easy succession had not lasted beyond a breath. Whether Constantine invaded Italy as an aggressor or in response to Maxentius's declaration of war is irrelevant. Both were technically usurpers; at that point, they were finally at war with each other.

Constantine entered Italy in the spring of 312. Accounts of the events that followed are derived from two church historians and theologians, Eusebius and Lacantius, and two orators, one named Nazarius and one simply known as the anonymous orator. All but the last of these historians were Christian, and all of them witnessed the Great Persecution. They wrote their accounts of Constantine when Christianity was still a new and potentially perilous presence as

THE ENEMY SOLDIERS WHO REMAINED—CONDEMNED BY THE ORATOR AS HAVING ESSENTIALLY ABANDONED THEIR ROMAN IDENTITY WHEN THEY TOOK UP ARMS AGAINST CONSTANTINE—WERE PUT IN SHACKLES MADE FROM THEIR OWN MELTED-DOWN WEAPONS.

a favored religion in the empire. The orators also were the authors of publically performed panegyrics, or speeches of praise, and at least one of them likely performed before Constantine himself. To the cynic, all of these circumstances might throw their accounts into suspicion, but a reliable narrative can be found.

Before the campaign began, Constantine's soothsayers oversaw a divinatory sacrifice that clearly made any military action in Italy ill omened, but by this point Constantine was beyond confident and ignored their warnings. He was given a boost thanks to an event that probably dates from the months before he crossed the Alps with his army. Collating all the accounts, we can say that, fervently pious toward the religious cult of the Unconquered Sun (Sol Invictus, one of the most popular deities in the Roman army), Constantine one day at noon was in prayer, with the sun at its highest point in the sky, when "he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, 'By this, conquer.'"

The company of soldiers with him also witnessed the event. But as if the author of this vision was aware of its vagueness, that night Christ himself appeared in a dream and was more specific, saying that Constantine and his men should fight beneath the symbol of the Chi (X) Rho (P), a monogram of the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ. A standard, or labarum, topped by the Chi Rho was then constructed and placed before the advancing army, and Constantine also told his soldiers to paint it on their shields.

Yet combining the accounts, as later streamlined tradition inevitably does, results in a nonexistent clarity over the event. One account places the vision on the day before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and another leaves out the night dream and betrays neither a Christian or pagan slant, while the earliest account of the Italian campaign mentions no vision or dream at all, but does assume Constantine was divinely guided: "You must share some secret with that divine mind, Constantine, which has delegated care of us to lesser gods." Perhaps counterintuitively, the inconsistencies in the accounts may speak to the genuinely strange nature of the experience, which was remembered, retold, and reinterpreted throughout Constantine's life.

The standard of Sol Invictus was not left behind in light of this new one; rather, they were both taken together, and Constantine's allegiance to Sol is still reflected years later. Neither the divine visions of emperors or generals nor the painting of apotropaic symbols on shields or armor was anything new, nor did Christianity have a monopoly on using cross-shaped signs for good fortune or protection. The man who only a few years earlier had had a vision of the sun god Apollo, and who said Sol had carried his father off after death, and who no doubt knew of the Christians in his train who associated Christ and his resurrection with the risen sun, could not miss the connections or refuse the support of whatever gods he could get. His self-assurance must have been overwhelming as he crossed a southwestern portion of the Alps, taking only a quarter of his army with him and leaving the rest behind in Gaul. He emerged in northern Italy with around 40,000 men who would not be satisfied until they reached Rome.

The first town they came to was Segusio, which closed its gates to the army and apparently did not believe that Constantine was really among them. "For who would believe," asks the anonymous orator, "that an Emperor with an army had flown so quickly from the Rhine to the Alps?" When he offered to forget their obstinacy if they would only open the town to him, they still refused, and so Constantine ordered a siege not with palisades or battering rams but quite simply by setting fire to the closed gates. Segusio quickly capitulated even as the fire spread, and Constantine went

ABOVE: Constantine's troops drive Maxentius's men onto the pontoon bridge in a modern painting by Peter Connolly. In keeping with Constantine's instructions, his troops have painted Chi-Rho on their shields. OPPOSITE: Romans fight each other in a relief panel from the Arch of Constantine. Constantine proved himself to be a superior general to Maxentius at Milvian Bridge.

from the town's destroyer to its savior, ordering his men not to pillage or rape but also to put out the flames, which took more time and effort than the attempted siege. "Thus at his departure he made the city so fond of him that it was not fear of his victory but admiration for his gentleness which reconciled it to total allegiance," wrote Nazarius.

Constantine continued 40 miles to the east to Turin, one of the many cities in northern Italy where Maxentius had placed pieces of his vast army. Originally stationed there in case Constantine's only ally in the east, Licinius, attempted to enter Italy from Dalmatia, they must have been surprised to face an enemy arriving from the west. Uniquely, the Maxentian force (their leader is not named) was led by a huge line of mailed cavalry.

"How terrible," Nazarius wrote, "horses and men alike enclosed in a covering of iron!" These were the clibinarii, or "oven men," based on Persian riders similarly encased; although, for these men, their enclosure became their doom. Constantine's men, outnumbered and impressed by the spectacle, are said to have taken confidence in the challenge: the victory at Segusio had been too easy and not worth bragging about, while these men hiding head to toe in armor were an enemy that Constantine wanted badly to defeat. They rode right into Constantine's trap. By extending and thinning out his lines, he invited a charge which his men immediately encircled and swallowed in a classic envelopment.

They were beaten to death, with clubs, maces, and axes all battering down on their armor and helmets, and on the exposed areas of their quickly collapsing horses. Thousands of death-rattled horses threw their mail-wrapped riders to the ground. Those who attempted to flee back to Turin found the gates closed to them, and the slaughter continued there until their piled corpses blocked the gate entirely. "What else could you have expected for yourself, unhappy soldier, when you had devoted yourself to a loathsome monster?" wrote the anonymous orator.

It was in this way that the people of Turin declared themselves for Constantine and saved the city the terror of a siege. Many other cities in northern Italy, but by no means all, followed suit in welcoming him, and they sent both embassies and supplies. He received a grand welcome 100 miles farther east in Milan, where he and the army rested for a month or more.

Before he could turn south for Rome, however, and after a victorious cavalry skirmish in Brescia, Constantine had to face what the anonymous orator calls "that miserable town, Verona." It was held by an army headed by the praetorian prefect Ruricius Pompeianus, one of the mainstays among Maxentius's generals, and a man characterized as being as vicious as his soldiers were mad and filled with greed. Verona was also protected by its location in a bend of the River Adige, but knowing this, Constantine merely sent a contingent of his army north (perhaps as far as a bottom lip of the Alps that dipped near the city), to cross the Adige at a calmer point. With Constantine's forces suddenly approaching the city, the bend in the Adige became the barrier at Pompeianus's back, and the force he sent out to face them was easily defeated. With the entirety of Constantine's army now across, Pompeianus led a force that was also defeated, only to retreat east of the city to receive the lucky arrival of reinforcements.

All later accounts of the Battle of Verona downplay the danger of this moment, but it was palpable. Essentially forced to fight on two fronts (those besieging the city and those awaiting further battle with Pompeianus), and at that point with the Adige at his back, Constantine's army was spread thinner without any additional aid. Well aware of the superiority of his numbers, Pompeianus was eager to get on with the fight, but made the mistake of continuing it immediately. Rather than giving the recently arrived men an evening to rest, he rushed out to face

Constantine is shown leading his troops to victory at Milvian Bridge in a Vatican fresco. Constantine is said to have worn a jewel-encrusted helmet into battle that fateful day.

Constantine who, to avoid his own trap at Turin, spread his lines out even further to keep Pompeianus's wings from closing around him. By then it was nearing nightfall, and Constantine himself entered the fray, leading the cavalry charge. The anonymous orator equally praises and condemns Constantine's courage in putting himself and his reign in danger by entering battle so conspicuously. The orator concludes that this must reflect something like his invincibility and divine approval: "You were carried away entirely by your impulse, like a river in flood carrying along trees broken off at their roots and rocks torn away from their foundations," he wrote. "What do you have to do, emperor, with the fate of inferior beings?"

Comparisons to those rulers from Persia to Rome who preferred to watch battles from a distance are exploded by Constantine's youth and action, courage, and vigor. This is no better illustrated than by his and his army literally fighting in the dark, leaving so much to Fortune, and even stealing from their victims the usual honor of knowing who cut them down, since a dying moment would apparently be assuaged if you knew someone famous had done it. Indeed, Pompeianus' force was defeated, and he was killed in the battle. "Death subdued his fury," wrote Nazarius.

The enemy soldiers who remained—condemned by the orator as having essentially abandoned their Roman identity when they took up arms against Constantine—were put in shackles made from their own melted-down weapons. When Verona finally acquiesced to Constantine, so did other towns in northern Italy, such as Aquileia, Ravenna, and Mutina.

Although some smaller cities may have capitulated after a siege, Constantine's road was essentially open south to Rome. By then it was late summer, and Constantine's army took its time moving south; the evidence of battle-wounded soldiers who died and were memorialized along the way provide evidence of his movements.

Maxentius tried to suppress news of Constantine's victories among the Roman elite and the public, but such news could not help but get out. At the games, which took place in the coliseum, jeers of Constantine's invincibility surrounded him. What he had taken as an expression of his strength and position, namely that others were fighting in the north instead of him, clearly became a sign of weakness. Constantine milked this growing sense of Maxentius's softness as long as he could, not reaching Rome and not being met by another army until late October.

The ancient sources fill these months of Maxentius's time with every excess and crime of which a supposedly idle tyrant might be accused, including lechery, theft, and even murder. He is also given the physical description of a tyrant, universal then and now, who is deformed in some conspicuous manner. Moreover, while Constantine is granted the counsel of divine powers, Maxentius is said to have been guided by the superstitious mischief found in unconventional magic far different from what might anachronistically be called orthodox paganism. Some of the practices he was accused of, such as prophesying from the entrails of slaughtered lions or newborn babies torn from their mother's wombs, or in attempts to conjure demons, would have been beyond the pale for anyone at the time.

As October neared, however, the real Max-

entius remained, and still remains, a mystery. That anyone held power during that time, and had done so for six years, must speak to some level of charisma, some competency in leadership, and he must have inspired confidence beyond the desperation of armies needing to acclaim someone. All of the accusations heaped upon him only surfaced after Constantine's string of victories, and indeed, had their one and only battle turned out differently, everything from Constantine's vision to his wars in the north would likely have been turned into the worst superstition and atrocity.

In the lead up to battle, Maxentius consulted the oracles and received one of those mainstays of ancient prophecy. He was told that "an enemy of Rome would die." While other ancient recipients of such prophecies seem to have derived confidence from similar predictions, never imagining the words to refer to themselves, Maxentius's line of battle at the Milvian Bridge suggests grave doubt, indecision, perhaps even ineptness. He nearly decided to stay in Rome and risk a siege, and many of the sources do indeed mock him for hiding behind its walls until the last moment. A few years earlier this tactic had worked against both Severus and Galerius, but an experienced military man like Maxentius must have felt goaded to prove himself in battle yet again.

He therefore led his men out to await Constantine's approach. As the Milvian Bridge lay along the Flaminian Way, only two miles from Rome's Flaminian Gate, he had the bridge torn down and crossed the river with his army a little farther upstream over a temporary bridge of boats. While this initial position upstream, near to a steep wall of rock, did offer his left flank some protection, his right began with their backs to the Tiber; and when the battle began, almost immediately his men shifted so that nearly everyone had the river behind them, forcing either victory or death in battle or drowning in retreat. "His very plan for arraying his forces proved that he was in a desperate state of mind and confused in counsel," wrote Nazarius. He added that those last in his line, as if foretelling their awful end, had "the fatal waves" of the Tiber literally lapping near their feet.

While Maxentius's troops, which some number as twice Constantine's 40,000, included the loyal Praetorian Guard who had acclaimed him emperor in the first place, as well as legionaries and leftovers from the forces of Galerius and Severus, the majority of his regular troops, whether North African or Italian, were inexperienced and could not be counted on for affection or loyalty. By contrast, the army of Constantine had a pedigree of loyalty and success dating back to their time under the emperor's father, and they had all fought together in Britain and Gaul for years. It was such a collection of men that faced each other near Rome, their lines extending hundreds of yards in either direction, on one of those warm early fall days in central Italy.

Aside from the regalia of the two emperors, Constantine is said to have worn a jewel-encrusted helmet, while Maxentius was outfitted in conspicuously splendid armor and clothing that helped identify his body the next day. Beyond that, both sides were essentially equipped equally. The cavalrymen of each side went into battle with a full array of swords, light javelins, two-handed lances, axes, and maces. In contrast, the infantrymen still carried the old standby short sword, the gladius, along with two long javelins, but they also would have had access to maces and clubs and even slings. They also had their shields, which in the case of Constantine's army were decorated for good luck. Nearly everyone would have worn the bronze Roman galea helmet, and otherwise the mix-and-match of outfitting imperial armies from Britain to Babylon meant that a variety of body armor, whether leather or steel or both, was inevitable, as was protection for the arms and legs. In many cases men were fighting with or against weapons and armor that could just as easily be generations old or brand new.

For all this, though, the brevity of the ancient accounts suggests that the battle did not last for long. "A battle speedily finished should not seem to be longer in the telling than in the execution," wrote the anonymous orator. Nazarius mentions both that the deities who were angry with Maxentius saw to his downfall, and that heavenly armies came to Constantine's assistance. Whoever it was overlooking and influencing the scene, Constantine led his superb Gallic cavalry in the opening charge and, suddenly seeing their own cavalry defeated and now facing the full force of Constantine's infantry, Maxentius's troops broke for the bridge of boats. The Italians were especially reluctant to continue the fight, and the number of men who tried and failed to make it to the bridge simply glutted the riverside in a bloody snake of bodies and glittering weapons, or it cascaded them into the Tiber.

Somehow protected in retreat by the Praetorian Guard, Maxentius made it to the bridge only for it to buckle under the weight of so many men. "Pressed by the mass of fugitives, he was hurtled into the Tiber," wrote Lacantius. It is here that the Tiber is said to have literally snatched him up "in its whirlpool" and devoured him, especially when he attempted to escape the water and make for the other side. The anonymous orator called on an allusion to Virgil to describe the breathtaking chaos of men and horses drowning in a crowd, or being carried downriver in the Tiber's swift stream, or likely fighting each other for air and space in an attempt to save their lives, grappling onto the drowned or still living without a thought, or trying to free themselves from the armor that had only recently been their protection. Nazarius simply imagines the clogged river "moving along with weakened effort among high-piled masses of cadavers."

Maxentius' battle plan seems to have been doomed to such an end, and indeed the anonymous orator suggests "he sensed already that his fatal day had come and wished to drag as many as possible with him." It is hard not to imagine this remark coming sarcastically, or perhaps with dread from the memory, from the mouths of Constantine's own men or of Constantine himself, who witnessed the drowning death of fellow Romans they might otherwise have respected. Maxentius could be allowed no respect, though. His body was found the next day and decapitated, and his head was mounted on a spear.

Despite the parallels Eusebius saw between Maxentius's death and how Pharaoh and his army drowned in Exodus, and therefore his equating Constantine's vision and Moses' experience of the burning bush, the Battle of Milvian Bridge was no definitive end. Even with three-quarters of his army in Gaul, the wars with the Franks continued. Constantine's eastern ally, Licinius, was married off to Constantine's sister; a few months later, in the spring of 313. It was Licinius's turn to receive a divine message via a dream on the eve of battle, and upon his victory he and Constantine agreed to divide the empire between them. A year later they were fighting each other, and while Constantine eventually prevailed, and while he founded the city of Constantinople in 325, and in so doing literally reoriented the focus of the Roman Empire to the east, only a year later he had his son Crispus and his second wife Fausta put to death for supposedly carrying on together.

He also remained embroiled in political and religious controversy until the day he died, discovering that Arian and Donatist and Catholic Christianity's disagreements could be as vicious as any battle. Although his are the words that many still say in church every week, his life and subsequent Byzantine history seem to suggest that, even for those granted visions of God, the lives of such isolated people remain nasty, brutish, and short. □

By Christopher Miskimon

Clifton Cates was a tenacious Marine in World War I who rose through the ranks to become commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

THE SUN SHONE BRIGHTLY OVERHEAD AS THE THIN LINE OF U.S. Marines lay in a beet field in France. It was July 19, 1918, a hot day made hotter by the streams of German bullets playing across the field. Marines took cover in old trenches or scraped out shallow holes for cover. Overhead a German fighter swooped down. U.S. Marine Lieutenant Clifton Cates raised his Colt .45 and fired at it. He swore he hit it. He saw the fabric of the fuselage move and he saw the pilot's eyes. The plane flew on, though, unaffected by his shots.

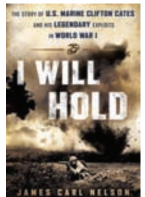
The American advance began the previous day, through towns and fields that showed the signs of battle. The Americans marched past fallen men, dead horses, shattered buildings, and the wreckage of wagons and vehicles. They even saw a column of German prisoners being escorted to the rear. As they continued forward, the Marines found luck was against them. German planes strafed them. They were supposed to advance after an artillery barrage, but the gunners ran out of ammunition an hour before the attack was scheduled to start.

Cates was lucky, though. A machine-gun bullet thudded into his shoulder, but it was a spent round with little power remaining. He dug it out and stayed with his men. Afterward, the order to advance came, and the Marines stepped off into relentless German machine-gun and artillery fire. Cates and about 20 Marines from different companies dove for cover in an old trench. Cates had shrapnel in one knee. Incessant fire kept them from moving. While trapped in the trench, Cates fired on the enemy plane. Later on he saw one brought down by a machine gun, and he took great satisfaction in the sight.

Among the surviving U.S. Marine officers pictured with the 2nd Battalion, 6th Regiment are Major Thomas Holcomb, 1st Lt. Clifton B. Cates, and 1st Lt. Graves B. Erskine.

Nearby a Marine used six captured machine guns to give the appearance of a strongpoint, moving back and forth between the guns to make them all appear manned. Still, Cates knew he was in a bad situation. At midmorning, he sent a message to his unit informing them of the predicament. It was a message that would became a famous piece of Marine Corps lore. "I have only two men out of my company and 20 of other companies," wrote Cates. "We need support, but it is suicidal to try to get it here as we are swept by machine-gun fire and a constant artillery barrage.... I have no one on my left and very few on my right. I will hold."

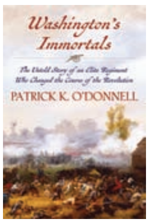
With those last three words Cates became entrenched in Marine history, but it was only a beginning for him. He would serve for over two more decades, holding positions of high command in World War II and afterward becoming the 19th commandant of the Marine Corps. It



was a long and rich career, and it began in the maelstrom of Belleau Wood in World War I. It is a story told in great detail in ***I Will Hold: The Story of USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, From Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War*** (James Carl Nelson. NAL Caliber, New York, 2016, 340 pp., map, photographs, appendix, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover).

Cates is unknown to many outside the Marine Corps, but his exploits deserve attention. Heroes are often known for one supreme action; in World War I, Army Sergeant Alvin York is a prime example. Cates proved himself a hero by his actions each day. He consistently performed his duty in the face of seemingly never-ending combat. He received numerous decorations for his valor, including the Purple Heart.

Nelson's book centers on Cates and his service and includes the stories of Cates' fellow Marines. Their shared experiences are blended together into a work that reads almost as an epic saga, one of men put through the extreme crucible of machine age warfare. The centennial of World War I has brought forth a large number of new volumes on the history of that conflict. This work stands out for its detail and storytelling. It offers critical insight into the challenges faced by Americans who fought in the Great War.



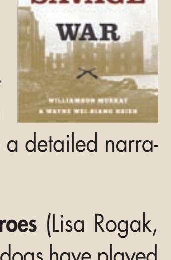
Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution (Patrick K. O'Donnell, Grove Atlantic, New York, 2016, 463 pp., maps, illustrations, notes, index, $28.00, hardcover)

Neither the British nor the Americans had the upper hand for long on the morning of January 17, 1781, during the sanguinary clash in South Carolina that would become known as the Battle of Cowpens.

Suddenly, a misinterpreted order caused the Virginia troops to fall back rather than wheel right as ordered. Other Continental troops fell back as well. The British surged forward in response, under the mistaken belief that the Patriots' ranks were breaking. Lt. Col. John Eager Howard, the commander of the Continental troops, ordered the troops to turn about and fire. They did as ordered and fired a deadly volley into the charging British. The well-delivered volley broke the British charge. The bulk of the Continental battalion was three companies of the Maryland Line. It was a proud moment for the Marylanders, whose line had fought bravely across the entire war since the Battle of Brooklyn five years earlier.

The saga of the Maryland Line is a story about a group of soldiers who played a pivotal role in many of the revolution's greatest battles. The

SHORT BURSTS



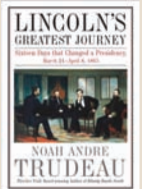
A Savage War: A Military History of the Civil War (Williamson Murray & Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, Princeton University Press, 2016, $35.00, hardcover) This is a summary of the American Civil War. The authors add their own fresh insights into a detailed narrative of the conflict.

Dogs Who Serve: Incredible Stories of Our Canine Military Heroes (Lisa Rogak, Thomas Dunne Books, 2016, $16.99, softcover) Military working dogs have played many roles in America's recent conflicts. This book describes their lives from training through service and retirement.

Somme: Into the Breach (Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, Harvard University Press, 2016, $35.00, hardcover) The Somme was meant to be a decisive strike, but it turned into a horrifying battle of attrition. The author shows the struggle through frontline stories of combat and bravery.

Cowpens 1781: Turning Point of the American Revolution (Ed & Catherine Gilbert, Osprey Publishing, 2016, $24.00, softcover) The American colonists performed superbly at this battle fought in the woods of South Carolina. This summary of the engagement includes original artwork and detailed maps.

Toussaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life (Phillippe Gerard, Basic Books, 2016, $29.99, hardcover) This former slave rose to military command, masterminding the only successful slave revolt in the history of the Western Hemisphere. His life is chronicled here in great detail.



Lincoln's Greatest Journey: Sixteen Days That Changed a Presidency, March 24, April 8, 1865 (Noah Trudeau, Savas Beatie Publishing, 2016, $32.95, hardcover) This book covers U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's historic trip to City Point, Virginia, to confer with Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant about the end of the Civil War. It was a difficult time for the man, but the journey would prove a success.

A Different Face of War: Memories of a Medical Service Corps Officer in Vietnam (James G. Van Straten, University of North Texas Press, 2016, $34.95, hardcover) The author describes his travels through war-torn Vietnam to tend the wounded and help the Vietnamese people. It is a heartfelt look at the war and those who survived it.

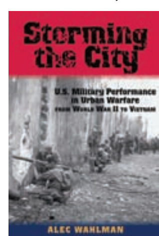
British Battle Tanks: World War I to 1939 (David Fletcher, Osprey Publishing, 2016, $30.00, hardcover) The British pioneered tank technology and tactics. This edition covers their early efforts up to the eve of World War II.

Dagger 22 (Michael Golembesky, St. Martin's Press, 2016, $26.99, hardcover) The author was part of a Marine Special Operations Unit in Afghanistan. His experiences with his team in the Bala Murghab Valley are retold here.

The British Army of the Rhine: Turning Nazi Enemies into Cold War Partners (Peter Speiser, University of Illinois Press, 2016, $39.95, hardcover) In the course of a decade, British troops helped transform West German forces into a strong ally against the Warsaw Pact. This work details that effort.

book reads like an 18th-century version of Stephen Ambrose's World War II classic, *Band of Brothers*. Taking archival information and weaving it with numerous first-hand accounts, O'Donnell reveals what 18th-century soldiers experienced on and off the battlefield. While the Maryland Line is known to history, this book brings the details of their service and sacrifice into the light.

Storming the City: U.S. Military Performance in Urban Warfare from World War II to Vietnam (Alec Wahlman, University of North Texas Press, Denton, 2015, 368 pp., maps, photographs, notes, glossary, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)



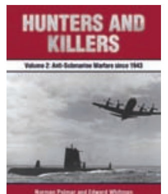
From the mid-20th century to the present, military operations have increasingly occurred in urban areas. American soldiers fought many of their most famous engagements in cities during this period, and the trend shows no sign of ceasing. Fighting in urban terrain calls for special weapons and tactics and produces high casualties. The author offers a detailed examination of how U.S. forces have adapted to the unique challenges of urban combat.

The work spans World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

The author offers four case studies: Aachen in 1944, Manila in 1945, Seoul in 1950, and Hue in 1968. In each of the battles, U.S. forces were victorious.

In the course of his analysis, the author shows not only how high-level planners prepared units for the experience, but also how U.S. troops made the necessary adjustments under fire. The book shows how those victories were achieved in a pragmatic and analytical way before and during battle.

Hunters and Killers Volume 2: Anti-Submarine Warfare from 1943 (Norman Polmar and Edward Whitman, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2016, 272 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $49.95, hardcover)



The year 1943 was a great turning point for the submarine. That year the Allies turned the tide against the Nazi U-Boats that had plagued their shipping since the beginning of World War II. The menace of German submarines would persist until the war's end, albeit in a much reduced capacity. In the Pacific Theater, U.S. submarines fared well against the Imperial Japanese Navy despite losses of their own.

After the war new technologies emerged. For example, nuclear-powered submarines carried nuclear weapons. New weapons had to be developed in the continuing duel between submarines and surface ships. Submarines were active during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Falklands War of 1982. More recently, submarines have evolved into launch platforms for conventional missiles, giving new urgency to efforts to find and destroy them.

This in-depth history of the war against the submarine is chock full of detailed research and stories of individual submarines under attack by surface ships and antisubmarine aircraft. It is a highly technical work that offers extensive background on the various weapons developed to combat submarines. Although it deals with complex material, the text is logically written and easy to follow. The authors are acknowledged experts in the field, and their expertise is clearly evident as it was in the first volume.

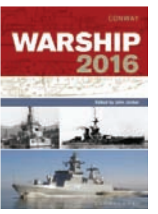
Battle Story: Hastings 1066 (Jonathan Trigg, Dundurn Press, Ontario, Canada, 2016, 159 pp., maps, photographs, index, $14.99, soft*cover)*

The Battle of Hastings was one of the most significant battles in British history. The battle changed England forever. For England, the battle was as significant as Gettysburg was to the United States and Waterloo was to the nations of Europe.

English King Harold Godwinson died in the battle, which was fought in East Sussex on October 14, 1066. In the aftermath of the victory, the Norman dynasty replaced that of the House of Wessex. In the hard-fought battle, Duke William of Normandy conducted a masterful combined arms attack against Harold's English army, which was composed entirely of infantry. In contrast, the composition of the Norman army was approximately 50 percent heavy infantry, 25 percent archers, and 25 percent cavalry.

This compact edition packs a great deal of information into its pages. The narrative offers a step-by-step account of the battle. Other key features are concise fact boxes that describe, for example, the English and Norman cultures, their armies, and their leaders. Additionally, the book contains descriptions of armor, weapons, and tactics, together with detailed maps.

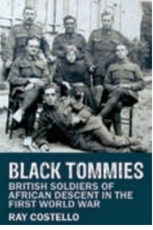
Warship 2016 (Edited by John Jordan, Conway Military History, New York, 2016, 208 pp., maps, photographs, footnotes, $60.00, hardcover)



Naval history has enormous breadth. During the so-called Age of Empires, small colonial sloops patrolled their overseas holdings. Their captains enforced their will at cannon point. In the arms race preceding World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy built and launched destroyers that would wreak havoc with their torpedoes against enemy ships. These are just two of the compelling examples offered in this new title.

The book is a compilation of articles by contributors who are experts on their respective topics. The purpose of the book is to describe in detail the design, development, and service of key warships at various points in history. Each chapter is meticulously researched and finely illustrated with period photographs, design drawings, and data tables. The result is a work that will interest not only naval buffs but also anyone interested in military history.

Black Tommies: British Soldiers of African Descent in the First World War (Ray Costello, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, UK, 2016, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, softcover)

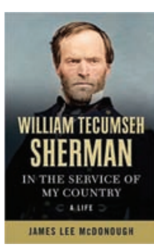


Albert James, son of a Bermudan sailor and a mother who was a grocer, joined the Royal Field Artillery of the British Army on January 7, 1915. He sailed to France but soon continued on to the Eastern Mediterranean. He spent the rest of the war in that region fighting, for example, in Greece, Egypt, and Palestine. He achieved the rank of corporal, which placed him in charge of white troops. He fought enemy troops as well as diseases like malaria. He remained in Palestine on occupation duty until sent home in 1920. His tale is one of many of black soldiers in the British Army during the Great War.

Although the service and experiences of non-white colonial troops is finally beginning to receive attention, this book goes a step farther. It offers insight into the experiences of black soldiers, many of whom were born in England and were British citizens. This work is the result of painstaking research and involved accessing material in the possession of James's descendants.

William Tecumseh Sherman: In the Service of My Country (James Lee McDonough, W.W. Norton, New York, 2016, 816 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $39.95, hardcover)

One of the engineers of the Union victory in the American Civil War, Maj. Gen. William T.



Sherman is revered by many as a tough general who was willing to make the hard decisions. In the South he is still despised for his March to the Sea in 1864 during which his army cut a swath of destruction from Atlanta to Savannah, Georgia. His aim was to contribute to the disruption of the South's economy and transportation network in order to force it to surrender.

He was a complex man, flawed and yet possessed of a genius that made him the right man at the right time. Having seen the dreadful casualties the war produced, he resolved to end it as quickly as possible by striking at the heart of the Confederacy in Georgia. After the war he led the army in its new struggle in the West, paving the way for America's inevitable expansion. Although plagued by self-doubt, Sherman was of great service to the United States at a critical point in its history. He helped make the country whole again, albeit roughly. After the war, he helped the reunited country get started on its path to becoming a global power in the following century.

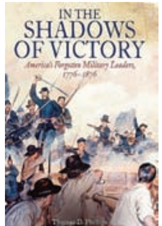
Sherman was a prolific writer. The author makes good use of Sherman's extensive correspondence. This book is a solid contribution to our understanding of one of the most complex generals of the American Civil War. It delves deeply into Sherman's complexities, revealing a human being trying to do his best in trying circumstances. Sherman saw many triumphs and tragedies during his life. This book brings them to the reader in a flowing narrative that entertains as it informs.

Fighting Cockpits: In the Pilot's Seat of Great Military Aircraft from World War I to Today (Donald Nijboer, Dan Patterson and Capt. Eric M. Brown, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2016, 224 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $40.00, hardcover)

Captain Eric Brown, a British Spitfire pilot during World War II, was about to go up against an enemy fighter, the Focke-Wulf FW-190. He was confident since he had actually flown the German plane before. In June 1942 a German pilot had mistakenly landed at a British airfield and his plane was captured intact. Brown felt he could handle the other plane since he knew its capabilities. Very soon, however, he realized he was up against a highly skilled pilot. Each went after the other aggressively, but after several minutes neither could gain an advantage over the other. Both planes were running low on fuel, so they were forced to break off. In the aftermath of the dogfight, Brown had a new respect for the FW-190 and the men who flew it.

This new coffee table book is a tribute to famous aircraft and their pilots. Each of the 51 chapters covers a different aircraft. The scope ranges from the World War I-era Nieuport 28 biplane to the F-35 Lightning II, a fighter so new it is just now entering service around the world. A chapter begins with a full-page color photograph of the aircraft's cockpit. The rest of the chapter is filled with text about the planes and the impressions of those who flew them. The book offers an easy-to-read look at a selection of famous planes from more than a century of flight.

In the Shadows of Victory: America's Forgotten Military Leaders, 1776-1876 (Thomas D. Phillips, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2016, 288 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover)



The War of 1812 was but a few months over when Commodore Stephen Decatur took a naval squadron to the Mediterranean Sea. Years before, the young Decatur fought the Barbary Pirates there, gaining fame for himself through his courageous exploits. He was back and eager to put the Barbary States back into check. The war had made them active against the United States again. His squadron quickly defeated two Algerian warships before they sailed into Algiers harbor and forced the local ruler, known as the Dey, to release American and European hostages, pay $10,000 in reparations, and sign a treaty acknowledging America's right to unfettered access to the Mediterranean. It was a tremendous feat of arms of which few are aware today.

Bringing awareness of forgotten American soldiers and sailors is the point of this new work and it succeeds in its task. The book is limited to America's first century of existence so that most of the men chronicled within actually fought within American borders, unlike its heroes of the following century and beyond. A dedicated student of history will know many of the names. The author also delves into exploits even an astute history buff may not be aware of about these men. Names like William Worth, David Porter, Eugene Carr, and Wesley Merritt are given detailed attention, along with 21 other Americans the author believes history has neglected. On the whole, the book is a worthy look at leaders who deserve greater attention in the annals of American military history. □

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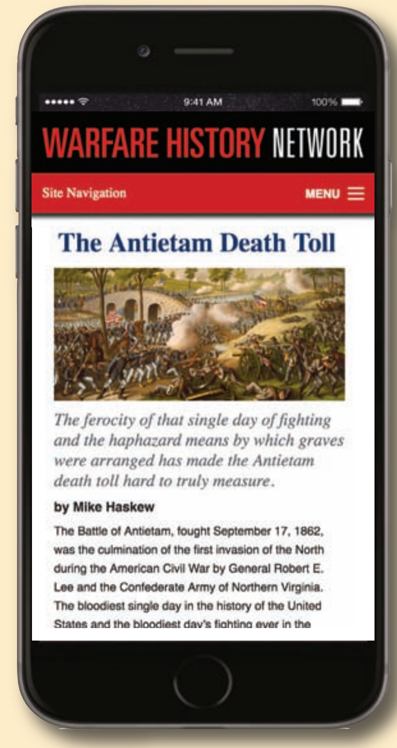

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EA DICE IMMERSES PLAYERS IN THE WAR TO END ALL WARS WITHOUT SPARING ANY OF ITS HORRORS IN *BATTLEFIELD I.*

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One of the most interesting aspects of *Battlefield 1*'s initial announcement was how oddly novel the entire concept seemed. While World War I has been covered to a lesser extent in the area of big-budget triple-A video games, there was a time that similarly paced World War II shooters were a dime a dozen. After they eventually oversaturated the market, however, publishers and developers brought their settings up to speed and continued leaning toward a more futuristic take on the genre. That's why—especially in a year in which we also got *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare,* aka *Call of Duty IN SPACE—Battlefield 1* comes off as especially necessary.

With that in mind, EA DICE could have easily just dialed its aesthetic back a century and called it a day, leaving it up to the players to breathe life into The Great War. Instead they opted for a more personal approach, crafting a series of "War Stories" that make the single-player campaign a sturdy pillar of the overall package. Rather than having players progress through various stages of the war in a linear fashion, these War Stories bust out the microscope to focus on individual human beings. Considering how impersonal war games can be, this is a refreshing take on the subject matter, and it doesn't flinch at the horrors of battle or attempt to hide how cruel and arbitrary combat can be.

One of the first War Stories has players stepping into the role of a British tank driver named Danny Edwards. Together with his crew he attempts to navigate a Mark V tank nicknamed *Black Bess* through enemy territory, resulting in a mix of intense in-tank combat and stealthy ground missions. In the case of the latter, Danny occasionally has to leave the tank to either clear the area ahead on foot or, in one particularly exciting segment, sneak through an enemy encampment to steal components for tank repair. *Battlefield 1* is all about atmosphere, so these areas all have their own foreboding personality. The enemy encampment is filled with windmills that are perfect for climbing and observing the area, giving Danny an opportunity to spot enemies and mark them on the map for easier sneaking and killing.

The story that follows switches things up and makes its protagonist a hot-shot pilot, and if this is all starting to sound like training for multiplayer, that thought wasn't completely lost on me while playing. As engaging as many of these missions are, *Battlefield 1* starts off with the impression that they just want to show you the ropes, especially when the first tank mission has you capturing and holding positions just as you would on one of the more expansive multiplayer maps. Once it comes into its own, though, this forced tutorial feeling begins to fade. Besides, when you do start playing online you'll be glad they opted to ease you into the process while weaving a riveting, occasionally heartbreaking yarn.

Before we move on to multiplayer, I have to point out one slight disappointment with the narrative. The opening mission set a really high bar for what could have been even more unique than the isolated stories that followed. "Storm of Steel" is a prologue set in 1918 that has players controlling different members of the Harlem Hellfighters in France. The goal is simple: Survive as long as you can manage while defending your position, but if you die, well, that soldier is permanently dead. His name and lifespan will pop up on screen as a brief memorial before transporting you into the perspective of another soldier in the squad. There have been many attempts to drive home the nature of war in the past, but this is hands down the most effective. It ends on a poignantly somber moment—one that shows two confused, young, and hopeless sides of the same coin—before transitioning to the world map and the story selection screen.

If these War Stories ever get to be too much, you can always take a break with multiplayer, which I realize is the exact opposite way that works for the majority of players. For most people the online battles are the main course, and now that I've spent more time with *Battlefield 1* I can see why. First, they're incredibly easy to just jump right into without any unnecessary preamble. I'm more of a Team Deathmatch kinda guy, so I first tested the waters in that mode, landing right in the middle of an already lopsided firefight. Thankfully, losing is still a valid way to level up your character, because I would be doing plenty of that over the hours that followed.

There's a little something for everyone as far as maps go, and *Battlefield 1* has some real doozies. Ballroom Blitz was an immediate favorite of mine. It has some amazingly designed close quarters inside, a courtyard that caters to a variety of strategies, and areas farther out that come into play in interesting ways when experienced in different modes. There's nothing quite like holing up in the ballroom only to see a tank roll up outside and start wreaking havoc on any unfortunately positioned teammates. I can't imagine how difficult it must be to balance these maps for both foot soldiers and land and air vehicles, but EA DICE makes it seem like a piece of cake.

The response to *Battlefield 1* is solid evidence that people are still interested in playing shooters that stick to history and attempt to recreate past battles in both accurate and entertaining ways. Anyone on the fence about this one should do themselves a favor and leap on over, because otherwise you might miss out on one of the best shooters 2016 has to offer. □

Continued from page 19

quickly damaged the sword. One technique to overcome this problem was to parry the opponent's blade with the side of one's own blade, which involved a slight shift of the wrist. This was much easier done with a lighter curved sword than a heavier straight one, and it required extensive training to make this maneuver a natural one.

The technique of using a light sword was dramatically different from that of a heavy sword. The lighter weight permitted the greater use of the wrist and elbow, which allowed more intricate maneuvers like faints, figure eights, and circles. The primary strikes were cutting and slashing, using the top third of the blade, and and parrying. The center of balance of a curved sword moved farther along the blade, thus adding greater weight to the initial cutting motion.

Curvature of a scimitar greatly reduced its utility when thrusting, and the tips of the scimitars with their greater curvature were frequently left dull. Those with slight curvature, like the Russian *shashka,* retained the sharp point and could be used in thrusting. When used in this way, the scimitar inflicted a wider cut than a straight sword of similar blade width.

This curvature of the blade roughly divided the scimitars into two categories. One category was that of shorter blades with a pronounced curve, which primarily were used for cutting. The second category was longer blades with a gentle curve, which were used for both cutting and thrusting. Although scimitars were used by both foot and mounted soldiers, they were particularly useful for the light cavalry. It is natural for a warrior to swing a sword, which typically follows a circular downward trajectory. The curved blade allows its wielder to draw it in a tighter arc around the body. This was particularly useful to a cavalryman who had to avoid striking his horse's head.

The legendary swordmakers of Damascus contributed greatly to the spread of scimitars.

After a chopping strike with a curved sword, a blade naturally continued to slide from the point of impact in a cutting motion, therby extending the cut and allowing its wielder to ride by without losing his grip on the sword. As the result of the chopping blow, delivered in a circular motion, the saber inflicted more serious injuries than a straight sword of the same weight and length. Blades with a greater curvature had a greater cutting effect. While a straight sword penetrated the body to reach vital organs and was deadlier as a rule, a curved sword was fully capable of cleaving open heads and severing limbs. There were recorded instances of particularly powerful blows with a scimitar, delivered at the junction of the neck and shoulder, penetrating deep into the torso. In addition, maiming injuries inflicted with a scimitar had a detrimental effect on morale of the opposing troops, especially on new recruits.

Such feats of strength greatly depended on the quality of the blade. The Middle East boasted some of the best swordmakers in the world. The legendary swordmakers of Damascus contributed greatly to the spread of scimitars. Damascene swords with their distinctive flowing water pattern were greatly treasured. The key to their strength was the exceptional wootz steel with high-carbon content discovered in India in the 6th century BC Merchants brought ingots of wootz steel to Damascus in five-pound cakes.

The flowing water pattern was the result of forge-welding steel with varying levels of carbon content. The best of the Damascene swords made from wootz steel can bend without breaking and remain sharp after prolonged use. The technique of making wootz steel was lost by the end of the 16th century. Although some scholars believe that the British forbade the manufacture of wootz steel as a means to disarm their Indian subjects, a British rule was not yet firmly established in the Indian subcontinent by the time the secret of wootz steel was lost.

A similar manufacturing technique using bulat steel spread through Persia into Russia, but was lost there as well by the end of the 17th century; nevertheless, a keen interest in this exceptional steel remained. Swordmakers were able through extensive experimentation to recreate the process by the end of the 19th century, albeit not in its original form.

ABOVE: A British Hussar displays his curved saber. Hungarian hussars popularized the saber and facilitated its adoption throughout Europe. BELOW: Muslims armed with scimitars kill crusaders in a medieval manuscript.

Around the time the exports of wootz steel from India began to dry up, Syria came under Ottoman Turkish rule. Under the expansionist policies of the Ottoman Empire, weapons manufacture flourished in Asian and European provinces of the far-flung empire. There are two types of scimitars associated specifically with the Ottoman Turks. One is the *kilij,* whose blade has a pronounced curve at the distal third; that is, the farthest third from the base of

the blade. This distal portion of the blade, which is known as the *yelman,* flares out and becomes wider. The added weight of the yelman, which came into service during the 14th century, was useful in overcoming heavier armor. The *kilij* was the forerunner of many sabers that spread through Eastern and Southeastern Europe. A shorter version of *kilij* was known as *pala.*

Another distinctly Ottoman scimitar is the *yatagan,* the trademark weapon of the sultan's janissary soldiers. The distal portion of a *yatagan* curved forward rather than backward, as in a typical scimitar. The curvature of this weapon was relatively gentle, which allowed it to be used for both stabbing and slashing. Some *yatagans,* particularly those employed by infantry, were double curved. The forward curve of the *yatagan* at the distal part of the blade brought the tip back in line with the hilt, allowing for better stabbing motion compared to a backward-curving scimitar.

A few exceptionally made *yatagans* could even penetrate plate armor. The pommel of a *yatagan* was topped by distinctive protrusions that increased stability in the wielder's hand. Typically a shorter weapon, more like a long knife, the *yatagan* was frequently carried in addition to a scimitar. While the scimitar was worn at the wearer's side, the *yatagan* was carried tucked in the belt in front. The Afghan *pulwar* and Indian *tulwar* are similar in appearance, but they are readily differentiated by their pommels. The Indian *tulwar* features a flat disc at the end of the pommel, while the pommel of an Afghan *pulwar* is topped by a cup shape.

The European saber originated in Eastern Europe and was strongly influenced by the Hungarian and Polish *szabla,* a gently curving sword with a large hand guard. A Polish type of *szabla* called *karabela,* with an eagle-shaped pommel, was especially popular among the Polish nobility. Hungarian hussars popularized the saber and facilitated its adoption throughout Europe. Proving their worth against the Ottoman light cavalry, the hussars were widely imitated by other European states. By the 17th century, the saber was the prevalent weapon of European light cavalry, and it eventually spread to North America. A dashing hussar, elegantly dressed and sporting a curved saber, came to represent the romantic élan of the Napoleonic Era. In addition to cavalry, infantrymen of many continental armies in the 19th century were armed with short, curved swords as secondary weapons.

Russian Cossacks serving on the empire's southern borders adapted the *shashka,* the traditional weapon of their Caucasus mountaineer adversaries. Its blade had a slight curve, allowing for both thrusting and slashing. The hilt did not have crossguards, and a distinct bend at the end of the pommel prevented the sword from slipping out of the hand. The *shashka* earned an excellent reputation. By the 1850s, it had become the standard weapon of the Russian Army. The Russians would use the *shashka* for another century.

For the gallant actions of the U.S. Marines against the Barbary pirates on the coast of North Africa in 1805, the Ottoman viceroy presented First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon with a Mameluk sword. The scimitar was modeled after the type used in Ottoman Egypt. Mameluk swords are still issued for ceremonial use to officers of the U.S. Marine Corps.

The Chinese version of a scimitar is the *dao,* also known as the Chinese broadsword. Resembling a machete, it is wide at the distal third of the blade, single edged, and gently curved, with a disc-shaped hand guard.

Even though one does not generally think of the famous Japanese *katana* as a scimitar, its backward curve and single sharp edge places it in the same category. Although a typical *katana,* which has a 28-inch blade, is shorter than a typical scimitar, it is designed to be used with two hands in a powerful slashing motion.

No discussion of scimitars can be complete without mentioning the *zulfiqar,* a more legendary than functional type of a sword. The original *zulfiqar* is said to have been given by Prophet Mohammad to his cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib at the Battle of Uhud in 625. It is commonly depicted as a scimitar with a double tip or a scissor-like double blade, frequently displayed on flags of the Muslim world, in particular the Ottoman standards.

In the 20th century, rapid-firing weapons came to rule the battlefield and the sword steadily lost its relevance. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union, Germany, and Poland employed large cavalry in World War II. In particular, the Soviet Union conducted multiple large-scale cavalry operations, although with a limited effect. Even though saber-wielding riders looked menacing in staged photos, a rifle and a machine gun were the primary weapons of the 20th-century cavalry.

Although no longer used in combat, the curved sword survives to the present as a prominent feature of ceremonial military uniforms in most countries. In some modern military weddings, the bride and the groom pass under a sword arch and the curved edge of the scimitar is used to cut through the wedding cake as it did through bone and armor in the days gone by. □

tangled creek

Continued from page 27

their surprise, a Napoleonic-style cavalry charge. St. Cooke had, without orders, led his command up the hill to support the threatened batteries and, with sabers drawn, 250 men of the 5th Cavalry charged the advancing Confederates. The attack accomplished nothing but the death of 55 troopers.

The victorious Confederates captured nine more guns and two entire Federal regiments, which became lost in the hasty retreat that followed the Union collapse. Unfortunately for Lee and his generals, there was too little daylight remaining for another concerted Confederate push. Sykes' troops, maintaining their reputation by retiring in good order, joined with Sumner's two brigades, which had just arrived, to cover the retreat while Porter got the rest of his army and his reserve artillery across the river in the darkness. Gradually the fire slackened and then died away.

Lee sent a message to Jefferson Davis that the Army of Northern Virginia had gained its first victory. But the victory had come at a dreadful cost. The Army of Northern Virginia suffered 1,483 men killed, 6,402 wounded, and 108 missing. As for the Army of the Potomac, it suffered 894 killed, 3,114 wounded, and 2,829 captured.

The two armies had together put a staggering number of men onto the field, 96,000 including reinforcements, making Gaines' Mill the costliest and largest battle of the Peninsula Campaign. McClellan was fortunate that it was not a great deal worse. Only poor Confederate communications, the stoutness of Sykes' Regulars in retreat, the last-minute arrival of two of Sumner's brigades, and darkness saved his command from being driven against the Chickahominy and wiped out before it could cross four narrow bridges to safety.

"Had Jackson attacked when he first arrived, or during A.P. Hill's attack, we would have had an easy victory, comparatively, and would have captured most of Porter's command," wrote Colonel Porter Alexander, the Army of Northern Virginia's chief of ordnance.

That night, after a day during which he had allowed more than 60,000 Union soldiers to sit idly by south of the river while Porter's lines were being driven in in savage fighting, McClellan announced he would do what he had privately already decided to do: abandon the campaign and seek a new base on the James River. Lee closed his message to Davis, "We sleep on the field, and shall renew the contest in the morning." □

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