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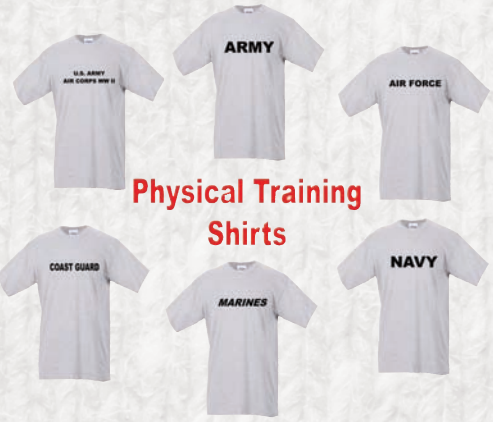

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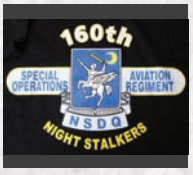

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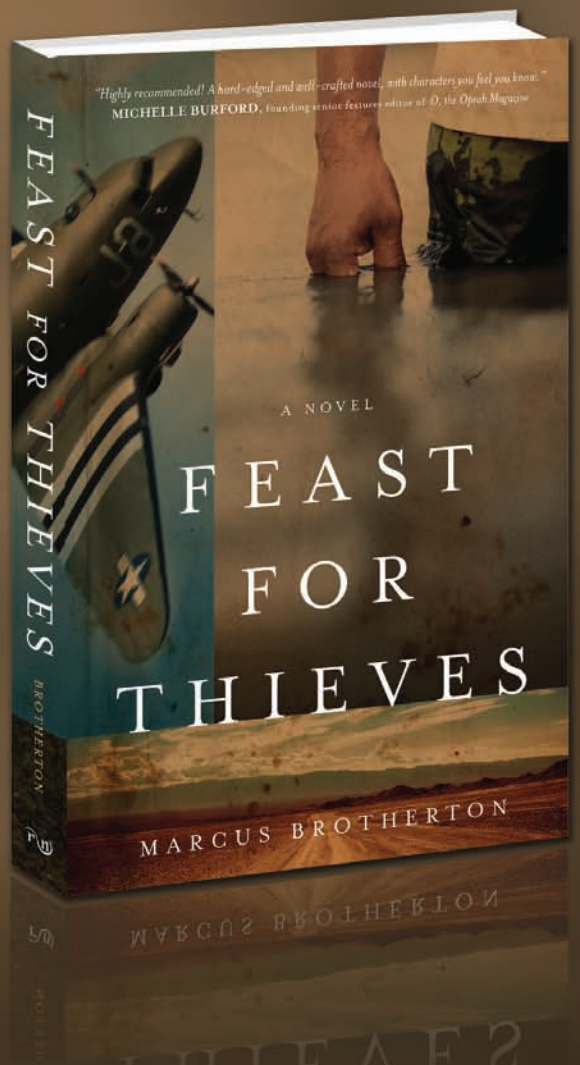

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Marcus Brotherton is the author or coauthor of more than twenty-five nonfiction books. Notable works include *Shifty's War*, *A Company of Heroes*, and the oral history project *We Who Are Alive and Remain: Untold Stories from the Band of Brothers*, a *New York Times* bestseller. This is his first novel.
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Cover: His face painted for camouflage, and his dog tags wrapped to keep them from making noise, a Marine on Guam waits for the order to advance against the Japanese. Photo: National Archives.

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Dining in a Nazi-themed café … Really?

SOLDATENKAFFEE, NAMED AFTER A CAFÉ frequented by German soldiers in Nazi-occupied Paris during World War II, is, thankfully, one of a number of choices for luncheon fare in Bandung, Indonesia. The eating establishment first opened its doors in 2011 and then staged a reopening in June of this year following a supposed overhaul of its heavily Nazi-themed atmosphere.

According to a story carried by GlobalPost, the café, located in Indonesia's third-largest city, features a décor that leaves most of the civilized world scratching its collective head. A portrait of Adolf Hitler occupies a prominent location above the fireplace, while wrought iron Nazi eagles, posters, and propaganda adorn the walls. Large Nazi flags and broadsides exhorting the virtues of enlisting in the Waffen SS are placed around the establishment, and the interior walls are painted red. By the way, some of the Führer's best quotes, sage wisdom indeed, are reproduced for diners to enjoy as well.

Those seeking a Nazified dining experience can have it all, right down to the Swastika emblazoned china and menu items such as nazi goreng, a slightly renamed version of a traditional Indonesian dish of fried rice called nasi goreng.

A story that appeared some time ago in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper generated a public outcry and produced enough concern that the café owner, Henry Mulyana, amid a large number of death threats, was hauled before local authorities to discuss the nature of his business. Innocently enough, he explained that he was not a Nazi, neo-Nazi, or even a bigtime Hitler fan. He just decided to come up with a theme that would bring in a steady stream of customers.

Mulyana further explained his idea during a news conference. "From the beginning," he related, "I have said that the SoldatenKaffee is not a Nazi café. This café's theme is World War II. We have a lot of customers from Europe, and they don't have a problem with the World War II theme because it is seen here from a historical perspective."

Such reasoning must also be tempered with his previous remarks to the Jakara newspaper, disclaiming the verity that the Holocaust actually occurred. "Controversy will always exist," he said, "depending on from what side we are looking. The way I see it, the Nazis didn't commit slaughter."

It was after the comments to the newspaper were published that the owner closed down and promised to broaden the perspective of the SoldatenKaffee theme. In fairness, there are now photographs of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin (a communist mass murderer is a vast improvement over Hitler alone, right?), along with memorabilia from several Allied nations on display. However, the overriding ambience, one would reasonably conclude, remains Hitleresque.

Perhaps even more disturbing than the continued overt homage to Nazism presented by the proprietor of SoldatenKaffee is that its patrons frequently show up for a meal dressed in period uniforms of the German Army—and though they might get a free pass if participating in some sort of reenactment—others step out in full SS regalia.

It is worthy of note that the Holocaust and the Nazis are not known to be major topics in Indonesian schools. The GlobalPost article quotes one individual as saying, "Perhaps the Holocaust was mentioned, but very briefly. We only heard about Adolf Hitler. I think we were taught to dislike the Jews more than the Nazis."

Now, there is an assertion that could use deeper analysis.

No, I have not been to Indonesia. So, it follows logically that I have not visited SoldatenKaffee. Thinking about it, though, just looking at the place from the street would probably be enough to cause most of us to lose our appetites.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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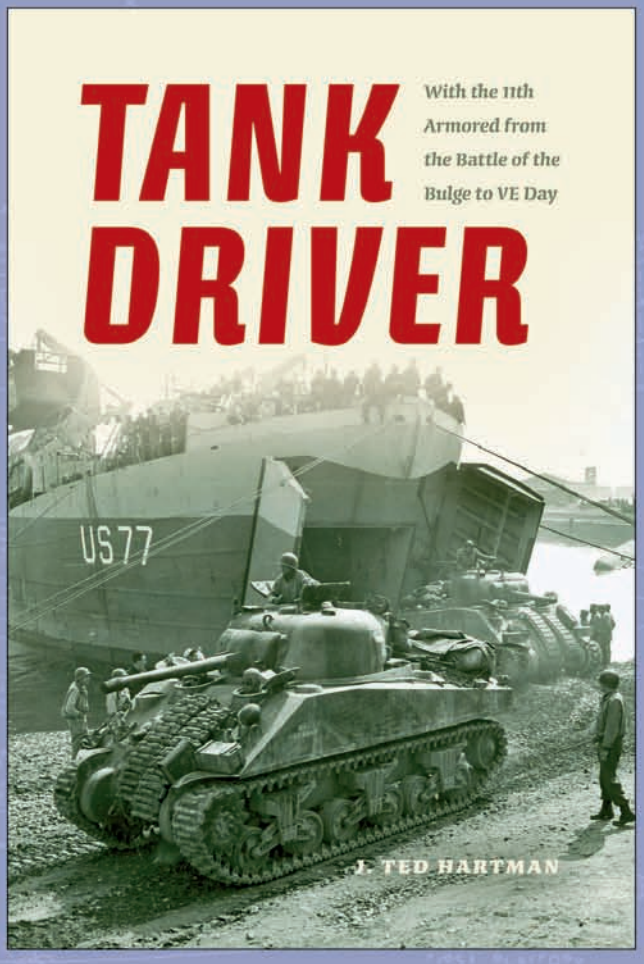

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By Kelly Bell

Wolfpack Commander

Colonel Hubert Zemke led the famed 56th Fighter Group in the skies over Europe.

ON MAY 4, 1943, THE U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES' 56TH FIGHTER GROUP WAS ORDERED to meet a formation of Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers returning from a run over Antwerp, Belgium.

Colonel Hubert Zemke, commanding the American fighters, lost his radio communications as he reached the Dutch coast, forcing him to hand over command to Colonel Loreen McCollum, commander of the 61st Fighter Squadron and return to base. It was Zemke's second aborted fighter mission due to radio failure, and since he was unable to inform his men as to why he left he was concerned they would misconstrue his departure as cowardice. After arriving back at his base outside the English town of Horsham St. Faith, he vented his wrath on the hapless mechanics. His radio would not break down again.

Meanwhile, his squadron met the B-17s over the German coastline. As the bombers passed over Walcheren Island a squadron of Focke-Wulf FW-190 single-engine fighters assaulted them. McCollum eagerly turned his flight toward the approaching "Butcher Birds" and attacked. Latching onto the tail of a fighter, he opened fire and was thrilled when it exploded into flames under his Republic P-47 Thunderbolt's brutal pounding, but as he eagerly watched the stricken aircraft plummet he was horrified to realize it was not German. Flushed with the exhilaration of his baptismal dogfight, McCollum had attacked the first aircraft he saw and shot down a British Supermarine Spitfire.

Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters of Colonel Hubert Zemke's Wolfpack escort Boeing B-17 bombers on a mission over Germany in Roy Grinnell's tribute to the 56th Fighter Group, "A Wolfpack Salute."

Despite his absence from the engagement, Zemke's status as group commander made him liable for the tragedy, and it was he who was summoned to 1st Fighter Command headquarters to answer to a livid Brig. Gen. Frank Hunter. Nevertheless, although he was just getting started in World War II combat, Zemke had already come a long way.

When Lieutenant Hubert Zemke had reported to the 56th Fighter Group in March 1942, he was a priceless commodity to his country in this new war. After spending the past two years overseas training British, Russian, and Chinese pilots to fly the Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk fighter, he was a rare and sorely needed gem—an experienced fighter pilot.

At the end of June, he was promoted to major and given command of the 56th's newly formed 89th Squadron. The ex-boxer from Montana was finally back in the ring, but this time the stakes were much higher than in his earlier bouts.

Soon after his advancement to major, Zemke was promoted to lieutenant colonel and made group commander. Six months earlier he had been an obscure lieutenant with nobody to give orders to, but he had no time to be overwhelmed by his vastly expanded status and the pressures that came with it. The group's aircraft were arriving.

For the rest of 1942, Zemke and his fellow group commanders relentlessly drilled their men in their new Thunderbolt fighters in preparation for the inevitable day when they would be called on to face the polished pilots and sleek flying machines of Germany's renowned and feared Luftwaffe. Word came on Thanksgiving Day. The 56th was officially alerted that overseas transport was imminent.

The pilots and ground crewmen arrived (without their aircraft) in England just after the new year, and like most Yanks these newly arrived young fliers were impatient. As days kept passing with still no sign of their planes, their agitation mounted. On January 24, 1943, two full weeks after the 56th's arrival, the first machines were delivered. Within a few days the group was fully equipped, and the men were testing their planes and themselves in the dreary English skies. By spring it was time to fight.

For the bulk of April, the 56th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, and 4th Fighter Groups made relatively short-range "rodeo" sweeps over coastal areas of occupied France

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in attempts to lure enemy fighters away from the routes of B-17s and Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers. The Germans rarely accepted fighter combat, preferring to go after the bombers.

On May 9, Zemke received notification of his promotion to full colonel. This action was a policy matter in which senior commanders received promotions more or less automatically so there would be room for the advancement of junior officers. In most cases this would be a pleasing but unsurprising event for a man in Zemke's position. However, the fact that his command had no German kills (only a British one) so far fueled already widespread derision of the 56th as the European Theater's black sheep outfit, and any of its personnel being promoted came as something as a surprise. The 29-year-old colonel and his men were grimly resolved to shake off their reputation. It would not take long.

Things started to look up on June 12 when McCollum led a sweep over Belgium and closed with a hostile flight. Captain Walter Cook knocked down an FW-190 for the 56th's first confirmed kill. The next morning Zemke and eight of his men waylaid a formation of unsuspecting Focke-Wulfs that were climbing to attack another Thunderbolt flight. Leading the charge, Zemke shot down two planes while Lieutenant Robert Johnson got a third.

When Zemke was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on July 19, he figured he had better make sure nobody thought it was merely to boost morale. He put his pilots through such intensive flight training that headquarters called to learn why the 56th was using so much more fuel than the other groups. It would be gasoline well spent.

The Luftwaffe's policy of avoiding combat with the U.S. fighters backfired. The Germans had refused to accept battle with inexperienced fliers. These men were now becoming battle tested, dangerous pilots.

On the afternoon of August 17, Zemke and one of his squadrons headed east to meet and escort home a flight of B-17s returning from the costly first raid on the Schweinfurt ball bearing factory. Their range extended by exterior fuel tanks, the P-47s made it as far as Antwerp before they had to switch to their interior fuel supply.

Soon after jettisoning their empty tanks, the American fighters encountered the surviving homebound B-17s under heavy fighter attack. The Germans were not expecting to encounter Thunderbolts so far east and were taken totally by surprise. Zemke immediately downed a Messerschmitt Me-110 twin-engine fighter as

National Archives

Colonel Hubert Zemke, commander of the famous U.S. 56th Fighter Group in Europe, examines one of the .50-caliber machine guns placed in the wings of his P-47 Thunderbolt fighter.

the sprawling dogfight commenced, and the 56th drove the enemy from the battered bombers.

The group destroyed 17 enemy fighters, damaged nine, and had one probable in exchange for one lost and two missing. The news that the 56th had accounted for all but two enemy kills that day further bolstered the pilots' soaring confidence and morale. When they learned one of their victims was renowned Major Wilhelm Galland, commander of II Squadron of Jadgergeschwader 26 with 55 kills of his own, the young Americans knew the enemy was theirs. At this point some enterprising individual first referred to the 56th as "Zemke's Wolfpack." The moniker stuck.

With his fifth kill on October 2, 1943, Zemke became an ace. On bomber support missions during the month, the 56th shot down 29 German planes. The Luftwaffe ruefully noted this success and withdrew its squadrons from coastal areas, clustering them around likely bombing targets. On October 14, while Zemke was at Eighth Air Force headquarters receiving a British Distinguished Flying Cross, his men went aloft to escort bombers on the ill-fated second Schweinfurt raid. The Germans waited until the P-47s were nearing their range limit then attacked in force. They shot down 60 B-17s against a loss of just 13 of their fighters.

This debacle sobered Zemke and his men. It jarred them into the realization that the Luftwaffe was far from beaten, and it was a grim 56th that took off November 5 on a vital bomber support mission to Munster. Rendezvousing with the B-24s over the Zuider Zee, they were one of eight fighter groups sent up in relays to provide the Liberators with near continuous protection. As it neared the target, the formation encountered a flight of 30 rocket-armed FW-190s.

As the Germans assembled to attack the bombers they never thought to look above and to either side of their targets, where the vengeful Wolfpack lurked. Nothing in the sky was as fast as a diving Thunderbolt, and these were diving as they tore into the enemy formation from both sides.

Plunging out of the sun, Zemke and his flight knocked down two bandits on their first pass, scattering the rest. They encircled the bombers in a protective swarm, shooting down six interceptors and losing just one B-24. The day's work brought the 56th's tally to 102 kills.

Despite the stunning success of the 56th and other U.S. fighter groups late in 1943, the Eighth Air Force bomber wing was slowly bleeding to death. Its fleets were being decimated in the constant, crucial raids on Hitler's industry, and the flow of replacements could not keep up with the rate of attrition. Back in Washington there was a feeling in some quarters that the Britain-based strategic bombing offensive was a failure, and some sorely needed planes and crews were diverted to Italy to comprise another bomber wing. There was also a faction favoring the virtual abandonment of the war in Europe and total concentration on the war with Japan.

The men at the front could see the threat still posed by Nazi Germany despite its recent reverses in Russia and Africa. Giving Hitler respite now could prove suicidal. His scientists were working on a new generation of revolutionary weapons the Allies could not afford to allow to come into widespread use. The Fortresses and Liberators had to keep the pressure on the Third Reich, so the high command organized a lecture team to tour the States and drum up support for the European bombing offensive. Since he had come to be regarded as the top fighter commander in Europe, Zemke was included in the group.

The young war hero was unhappy about leaving his command just as it finally had achieved such a high degree of effectiveness, but he could not deny the importance of this assignment. Support for the European air war was at a critical low, and the controlling interests had to realize the absolute necessity of taking the fight to the enemy's heartland and destroying his ability to support his armies.

Zemke and his lecture team did an excellent job of impressing on the politicians and voters the need for a continuing air war against Hitler. By Christmas the continued flow of men and aircraft to Europe was assured.

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The heavy P-47 Thunderbolt fighter was capable of absorbing tremendous battle damage and bringing its pilot home safely. Nicknamed the "Jug," the P-47 also excelled in the tactical fighter bomber role.

Just after the new year, Zemke reported to the Pentagon for his orders back to his base at Halesworth Airfield in England but was informed he was to be reassigned stateside to the Directorate of Operations of the First Air Force at Mitchel Field. The army was absurdly trying to consign Zemke to a desk. He had no intention of allowing it.

Since he had not yet received written orders for his new posting, Zemke saw an escape route. He still had his original written orders which stipulated he was to return to his command in Britain after the speaking tour, so he caught a cab to Andrews Field where he showed these papers to an Air Transport Command clerk without telling the man they were obsolete. The clerk directed him to an empty seat on a C-54 transport plane bound for Britain. Later presenting himself at the office of his commanding officer, General Bill Kepner, he truthfully informed the general he was reporting for duty as per his original orders, and that he had not received any subsequent written orders. Kepner also regarded this new assignment as ludicrous and went all the way to Eighth Air Force commander General Jimmy Doolittle to have the stateside posting rescinded.

At Kepner's suggestion, Zemke made himself scarce until the matter could be settled. He hid out in Edinburgh, Scotland, for a week, after which Kepner summoned him and told him merely, "Get back to Halesworth." Zemke did so without asking questions. Things were changing, though.

Zemke was one of the few Thunderbolt pilots to recognize the potential of the North American Corporation's new P-51 Mustang fighter, and had he been present at the time of their delivery, the Wolfpack would have been one of the six fighter groups that switched from the Thunderbolt to the Mustang.

Under McCollum's command the 56th had continued to perform superbly, notching 80 more kills and setting a one-day record with 23 on November 26. McCollum was not on hand to greet his returning chief. He had been shot down by antiaircraft fire and captured a few days earlier. Yet the Wolfpack did not let his loss slow its depredations.

Despite the Luftwaffe's ever greater efforts to avoid the increasing numbers of diversifying Allied fighters over Europe, the 56th scored its 200th kill on January 30, dedicating it to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on his birthday. That same day the 4th Fighter Group, in second place, claimed its 100th victory. Still, the Wolfpack's days at high altitude were numbered.

In February the 56th commenced serious ground attacks, concentrating on airfields despite their notoriously deadly antiaircraft defenses. The Thunderbolt's extreme toughness and pulverizing firepower made it the obvious selection to send after the dwindling Luftwaffe on the ground.

At the end of the month, the group took time off from strafing and dive bombing for Big Week. With preparations for the Normandy invasion underway, the high command was giving neutralization of the Luftwaffe top priority. Attacking the problem at its source called for heavy bombing of airframe and engine factories. With the arrival of optimum weather on the 20th, the Italy-based Fifteenth Air Force joined the England-based bomber wings in a major offensive against aircraft production facilities in Schweinfurt, Hanover, and other targets in the region of central Germany that Zemke and his Wolfpack had come to call their "Happy Hunting Ground."

Aided by new, pressurized 150-gallon drop tanks, the group ranged deeper than ever into enemy airspace, marvelously protecting the B-17s and B-24s. From February 20 to 25, the 56th lost two planes and shot down 72. Its domination of the German skies was so total that the bulk of the damage to its planes came from flying through debris from exploding enemy aircraft. Also, the quality of the German pilots was declining due to attrition. The Me-109 was not an easy plane to fly, and training men for it took time that the reeling Reich no longer had. The strain on the Luftwaffe was never so apparent than when, on the last major raid in February, Zemke and his fliers encountered no enemy interceptors as they escorted bombers to Brunswick.

However, on March 6, American bombers made their first major strike on Berlin, and swarms of Germans rose in desperate defense of their capital. Perhaps a spy had tipped them off to the coming raid and they clustered their remaining veteran squadrons around Berlin, but regardless of how they did it their performance was lethal. The Eighth Air Force took its worst pounding of the war, losing 80 planes, 69 of them bombers, on that one mission.

Two days later the heavies resolutely hit Berlin again, and the Wolfpack stayed busy as the enemy threw everything it had at the bombers. With 27 kills, the 56th accounted for more than a third of all aerial victories made by Eighth Air Force fighters that day, becoming the first fighter group to reach the 300 mark.

Following the fruitful first days of the month, severe weather grounded the air war over Europe. Zemke was stunned on March 14 when Generals Kepner, Doolittle, and Carl Spaatz arrived at Halesworth and decorated him with the Distinguished Flying Cross. During the next few days he would earn it all over again.

On the 15th and 16th, the group knocked down 32 Germans while losing just one of their own. It was a performance they were making seem commonplace, but their days of free-wheeling mastery of aerial combat were drawing to an end.

The Mustang was easing the Thunderbolt out of escort duty. These new P-51s did not leave much aloft for the P-47. The increasingly frustrated Wolfpack grew weary of patrolling skies devoid of targets and took its frustration out on ground marks. Railways, shipping, airfields, and truck convoys became the main victims of the Thunderbolts' .50-caliber machine guns. The main danger now was also on the ground. Several high-scoring veterans wound up dead or as prisoners when they strayed too near the flak pits. Still, on July 4, 1944, the group surpassed the 500 mark. There were 38 aces in the outfit.

As the fighting in France progressed, the 56th became as proficient at ground attack as it had in aerial combat the previous year, but there was too much of the gladiator in Zemke for him to be fulfilled by shooting up locomotives and parked cargo planes. When the commander of the rookie 479th Fighter Group was

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killed in action on August 10, Zemke applied for the vacancy and was quickly accepted.

After its arrival in May, the 479th had been too quickly hustled into combat to give it some crucial battle seasoning before the Normandy invasion. It had so far shot down just 10 Germans while losing 35 of its own. By September, Zemke had his new command of Mustang wranglers believing in themselves. One of his men had even achieved ace status. In a massive dogfight over the Arnhem battlefield in September, the 479th shot down 29 planes while losing just one.

Despite air superiority, the onrushing Allies were bloodily halted at Arnhem, and it became apparent that the European war would not be over by Christmas as so many had hoped. If nothing else, this setback gave the 479th time for more seasoning, and its colonel was able to get back to his passion of escort duty. It was not quite the same.

Zemke and his fliers began to encounter strange jet aircraft and others that looked like rocket-powered gliders. These developments, however, were coming too late to impact the outcome of the war in favor of Germany.

In October, Zemke was again informed he was slated for a desk job. With 19 confirmed kills and now in a position to add to this total, he remained emphatically disinterested in a paperwork career and was busily scheming to avoid it and stay in the sky as he took off on his next patrol.

He was cruising for home with two of his men when an Me-262 jet fighter attacked them. Powering their Merlin engines to their fullest and twisting through an interminable series of gyrations, the trio of young Americans was able to avoid the jet's deadly passes until the German ran low on fuel and departed. Unknown to Zemke, the wild maneuvers had severely weakened his Mustang's structural integrity, and when he lifted off on October 30, 1944, on what was slated to be his last combat flight he did not suspect it would be one mission too many for his strained machine.

The weather forecasters had goofed, and as the bombers and their escort penetrated German airspace they were forced to weave through masses of cumulus clouds. When the Liberators blithely flew directly into a particularly enormous cloudbank, Zemke and his flight had no choice but to follow.

Upon entering the clouds, the Mustangs commenced a violent bucking in the severe turbulence, so Zemke ordered a direction reversal. When he attempted to turn it, his P-51 nosed over into a tailspin, and as he tried to pull out the starboard wing buckled, slammed against

National Archives

As a German truck loaded with ammunition explodes in a fireball, an American P-47 fighter flies through the flames, smoke, and debris.

the fuselage, and was ripped off by the wind. Over the next few seconds the plane simply disintegrated around the pilot, leaving him plummeting earthward in the seat to which he was still strapped. Kicking loose, he noticed his right arm was not functioning, so he pulled the parachute ring with his left hand.

After hobbling westward for two dreary, bone-chilling days Zemke despaired of reaching the still distant Allied lines. Becoming desperate for medical attention for his injured right arm and leg, severely bruised when the wing hit the side of the cockpit, he surrendered.

The Germans were intrigued by this youthful American who was so proficient in their language. This and his name made it easy to deduce his heritage, and realizing what a propaganda bombshell it would be if they could pull it off, they tried for a whole month to persuade him to come over to their side. All their cajoling, threats, wining, and dining were utterly unsuccessful, for Colonel Hubert Zemke would no more have considered taking up arms or a propaganda microphone against America than he would have against his own immigrant parents. This prodigal "son of the Fatherland" was 100 percent American.

By Christmas, Zemke's disappointed captors had given up and packed him off to a prison camp outside the northern German town of Barth. Here he spent the remaining months of the war eagerly awaiting the arrival of his comrades from across the sea.

The desk job back at wing headquarters went to somebody else.

Kelly Bell has been writing professionally from his home in Tyler, Texas since 1981. His work has been published in such periodical as Command, Strategy & Tactics *and* Muzzle Loader.

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By Gary McIntosh

National Archives

A Greyhound with Wings

The Fletcher-class destroyer was a workhorse for the U.S. Navy in World War II, but experiments with aircraft aboard were less than satisfactory.

THE FLETCHER-CLASS DESTROYER WAS ONE OF THE FINEST, MOST VERSATILE warships of World War II. More than 170 of them were built, a figure that far exceeds the total of any other type of warship of the era. From 1943 until the end of the war, Fletchers participated in virtually ever campaign in the Pacific.

The U.S. Navy was justifiably proud of the design; even its replacement, the Sumner class, was visually similar. The Navy was not averse to experimenting with the design, however, and chose it as the experimental platform for one of the most unusual modifications ever made to a destroyer when it added a seaplane to a handful of ships that were under construction.

The idea was not entirely new. The U.S. Navy had toyed with the idea of mounting a seaplane aboard a destroyer as early as 1923, and chose the USS *Charles Ausburn* as the experimental platform. On August 29, 1923, at Hampton Roads, Virginia, and with assistance of the Naval Air Station and a crew from the aircraft carrier USS *Langley,* the plane was mounted aboard the destroyer.

On September 1, 1923, the *Charles Ausburn* steamed from Hampton Roads for experimental operations and battle practice. The plane would be lowered to the surface for takeoff and then hoisted back to its perch near the bow. The experiment was short-lived, and the plane was soon removed.

The idea apparently lay dormant for a few years but was never completely forgotten. In 1940, the four-piper destroyer *Noa* was fitted with a boom and an XSOC-1 seaplane. The airplane was lowered into the water, where it would make a conventional run to become airborne. During 1940, the *Noa* conducted several operations with the floatplane, apparently satisfactorily enough that the Navy Department decided to mount seaplanes with more sophisticated launching methods aboard some of the its other destroyers.

A Vought OS2U Kingfisher scout/observation plane takes off with the assistance of a catapult installed aboard a U.S. Navy Fletcher-class destroyer.

On May 27, 1940, Secretary of the Navy Charles Edison directed that six destroyers of the new Fletcher class be equipped with a catapult-launched floatplane and all necessary components to make it operable. An official Navy document, BuShips Drawing 305055, approved on September 12, 1940, was drawn to include the modifications necessary to mount the plane aft of the superstructure between gun mounts 53 and 54. The plane and its equipment would replace a 5-inch gun mount, a torpedo tube mount capable of launching five torpedoes, two twin 40mm guns and their fire directors, and three 20mm guns. Concerned about the possible consequences of "dive bombers approaching from astern" created by the loss of most of its aft armament, the Bureau of Ordnance requested that "the maximum number of machine guns also be mounted aft for protection."

The Bureau of Ordnance was not the only department that viewed the proposal with a lack of enthusiasm. Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, also was concerned about the loss of gun and torpedo firepower and suggested the design order be rescinded. The Bureau of Aeronautics voiced its opinion that "the advantages to be gained from the necessarily limited operation of the aircraft do not warrant the necessary sacrifice of other features." Finally, the Bureau of War Planning added, "The price necessarily paid in loss of other valuable military characteristics is unjustifiably great." Despite their objections and concerns, construction was begun on the first of the catapult-equipped destroyers.

The ships chosen for the modifications were the USS *Hutchins, Pringle, Stanly, Stevens, Halford,* and *Leutze*. The *Pringle, Stanly,* and *Stevens* were all built at Charleston, South Carolina. The *Hutchins* was built at the Boston Navy Yard, and the *Halford* and *Leutze* were built at the Puget Sound Navy Yard at Bremerton, Washington. There is some disagreement about how many of these ships were actually built with the modifications with some historians stating that only three of the ships were built and others insisting that five were. All agree that modifications to the *Leutze* were cancelled before the conversion began. There is no doubt that the *Pringle, Halford,* and *Stevens* were built with the modifications and references mention that the *Stanly*'s sea-

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The Fletcher-class destroyer USS *Halford* was one of the warships equipped with a catapult. The *Halford* is shown at sea with its Vought Kingfisher aircraft and catapult (circled) in place.

plane catapult was removed around December 30, 1942. There is no record of the *Stanly* ever using the catapult. Evidence is even less convincing that the *Hutchins* was constructed with the equipment; the ship's official history does not mention the catapult or floatplane at all.

The plans called for a rotating catapult similar to those aboard cruisers and battleships. The catapult was rotated to the ship's starboard side to launch the plane and a derrick-hoist mounted on the port side was used to recover the plane. When not in use, the hoist was stowed on the deck.

A 1,780-gallon tank for aviation fuel was placed below deck aft of the superstructure. The huge tank was surrounded by a cofferdam filled with carbon dioxide as a safety measure. A fuel line ran from the tank along the port side of the ship to the plane for fueling. A compartment aboard the ships provided storage for tools and spare parts.

The magazine normally used for the 5-inch gun was used to store the bombs and depth charges carried by the plane. The 5-inch gun mount base and the ammunition hoists were left in place, apparently to facilitate the conversion to the conventional Fletcher design in the event the seaplane idea did not work.

The plane selected for use aboard the Fletchers was the Vought OS2U Kingfisher scout/observation plane with a top speed of only 125 knots. In theory, it was to be used for scouting, spotting, and antisubmarine warfare when the destroyers were operating without heavier units that would normally provide air support. In addition to its regular crew, each destroyer would carry a pilot, a radioman/gunner, an aviation ordnanceman, and an aviation mechanic.

In its theoretical role of scout plane, the pilot would fly out of sight of the ship searching for enemy shipping. As a spotting plane for shore bombardment, it would circle between the ship and the beach, relay information about the target, and assist in directing the ship's fire. The plane could also carry depth charges and bombs to be used against enemy submarines, but this was considered a secondary role. Because it lacked tracking gear, the plane could only be used against submarines if its crew spotted a periscope or a Japanese submarine running on the surface. The plane could also be used for mail runs when the ship had been at sea for extended periods of time, and on at least one occasion aboard the *Stevens* it was used for towing target sleeves for gunnery practice.

The *Hutchins, Pringle,* and *Stanly* were all commissioned in 1942, and the *Stevens* and *Halford* in 1943. The *Pringle* was the first of the destroyers to actually have the catapult and related equipment aboard, and in January 1943 it became the first destroyer to launch an airplane from its own deck. However, during the recovery process a design flaw was found in the hoisting equipment and the ship was unable to recover the airplane as planned. The catapult, hoist, and related equipment were removed shortly thereafter. The equipment was also removed from the *Stanly* about the same time.

The *Stevens* and the *Halford* were launched after the catapult equipment had been removed from the other three ships. Fitted with a redesigned hoist, the *Stevens* was commissioned on February 1, 1943; the *Halford* was commissioned on April 10, 1943. Of the six ships originally selected for the modification, only these two ships went into combat with planes aboard.

At 8:30 AM on Tuesday, April 6, 1943, at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Rear Admiral Morton Deyo, Commander of Destroyers, Atlantic Fleet, came aboard the *Stevens* to watch the first launching of its Kingfisher. Shortly after 9 AM, Lieutenant H.W. Smith, the pilot, climbed into the cockpit and fired the engine. He brought the engine to full throttle, set the trim on the plane so that it would fly even if he were to black out from the force exerted on him by the launch, and signaled to Leroy Fadem, the torpedo/catapult officer, that he was ready. Ensign Fadem gave the order to fire the catapult, and at 9:14 the plane roared down its length and into the air. The plane was back aboard by 11:25, making *Stevens* the first destroyer to successfully launch and recover an airplane, thereby carving a niche for itself in U.S. Navy history. The crew would eventually conduct a total of 48 successful launches and recoveries. While the hoist performed without a problem, a recommendation was made that additional bracing be added to strengthen it, which was done upon the *Stevens*' return to the states.

Following shakedown cruises in the Atlantic, where she steamed from Guantanamo Bay to Portland, Maine, the *Stevens* passed through the Panama Canal on July 26, 1943, on the way to Pearl Harbor. There she met up with the *Halford,* which had departed from San Diego on July 5 and arrived in Pearl Harbor five days later. In the early stages of their tours the two ships operated with each other as they tested the feasibility of carrying the scout planes on smaller vessels. Both ships participated in the Marcus Island raid on August 31, 1943, and returned to Pearl Harbor on September 7. During the return from Marcus Island, both destroyers launched and recovered their aircraft. Both conducted patrol duty near Hawaii until they temporarily parted company, with the *Stevens* participating in the Tarawa attack on November 19, 1943, and the *Halford* in the Wake Island attack on October 6, 1943. That same day the *Stevens* began its return voyage to Mare Island, California, near San Francisco, to have its forward 20mm guns replaced with Bofors 40mm guns.The *Halford* followed shortly thereafter. Following reconfiguration of the standard Fletcher design, both left Mare Island on December 6, 1943, and arrived in Pearl Harbor on December 10.

Living with the seaplane was not easy, and the sailors aboard the *Stevens* did not like having it aboard. Although the plane itself was more than capable of doing its job when in the air, its presence aboard the *Stevens* created a number of problems for the ship and its crew. The installation of the catapult and subsequent removal of the guns that would normally have been there caused a significant loss in firepower vital to the ship's defense. The presence of the plane also made the destroyer appear to be a light cruiser and cultivated the fear among the *Stevens* crew that the ship might be mistaken

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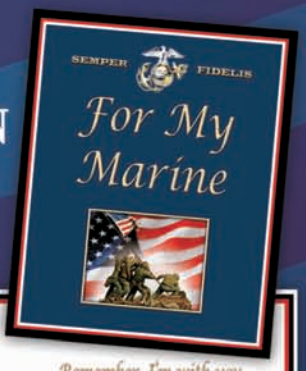

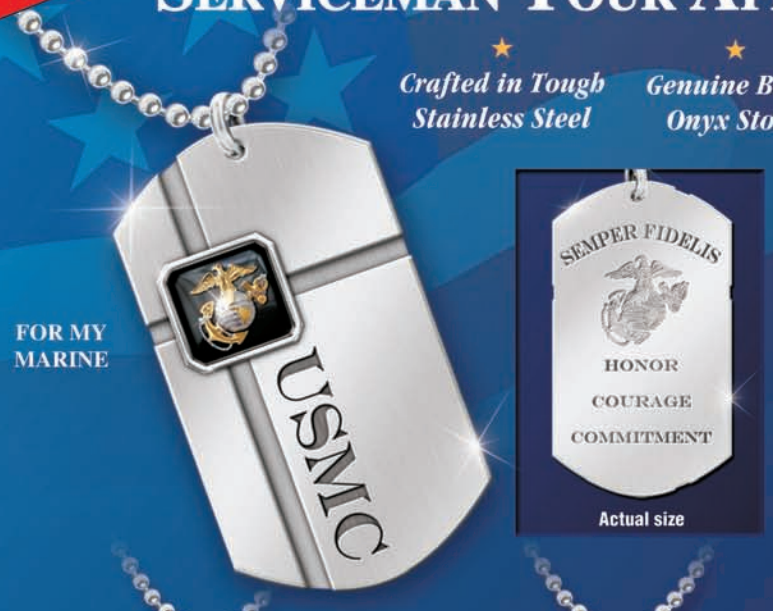

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Recovering the catapult-launched Kingfisher aircraft while at sea was a perilous task for the crews of Fletcher-class destroyers, and this particular attempt by sailors aboard the USS *Stevens* reveals some of the difficulties encountered in the open sea.

for one and consequently draw additional enemy fire or air attack. Finally, the huge fuel tank presented a potential catastrophe should it be hit by enemy fire. These thoughts may also have crossed the minds of Navy brass, for following the Tarawa attack the *Stevens* remained in the vicinity of Pearl Harbor conducting anti-submarine warfare exercises until its departure for Mare Island to be refitted. Immediately following the Wake Island raid, the *Halford* was also ordered to Mare Island.

Repairing the airplane when the ship was at sea was also a problem. Replacement parts stored aboard ship were not always sufficient to make repairs to the plane, necessitating a return to port and reducing the amount of time actually spent at sea. The alternative was for the plane to be inoperable for a period of time. A related problem, albeit minor, was of special concern to the aircrews. They were paid a premium for logging a specified number of hours in the air. If they did not fly, they did not get paid the premium. Naturally, the air crews wanted to log as many hours as possible.

Perhaps the biggest problem created by the plane, however, was recovering it while at sea. The placement of the catapult and airplane amidships, rather than at the stern as on most cruisers and battleships, created a number of problems. In heavy seas, the destroyers would roll, and if the plane was suspended from the hoist, it would alternately bang into the side of the ship when it rolled to starboard or crash into the ocean on the port roll, damaging both the plane and the ship. This was less of a problem on cruisers and battleships because the larger ships tended to be more stable and the scout plane was launched and recovered from the stern of the ship. The destroyers did not have the luxury of the extra room; the stern was reserved for depth charges and smoke screen generators.

Standard recovery procedures for shipboard planes included a turn by the ship, thus smoothing the water behind the ship and creating a place for the plane to land. Battleships and cruisers had no problem creating this "slick." The two destroyers, because they were much smaller, were not always successful in this endeavor, especially in heavy seas.

Finally, while the plane would land behind the ship it had to taxi to the side of the moving destroyer and onto a rope "sled" to be hoisted aboard. Because the ship was normally moving faster than the plane could taxi, the ship itself would have to slow down considerably, coming to a virtual standstill.

A barely moving American warship at sea made an excellent target for Japanese submarines. While neither ship was actually attacked while recovering the plane, the sailors aboard the two ships nonetheless were relieved when the plane was back aboard and the ship was underway once more.

First Lieutenant Stan Lappen, damage control officer of the *Stevens,* recounted an incident that occurred during the recovery of the airplane. "We were returning from a raid on Tarawa Island when the Task Force Commander [Rear Admiral Charles Pownall] wanted to see how the plane operated off a destroyer. We launched the plane, and it made a few runs around the Task Force before coming in. The sea was choppy and the plane was having trouble making much headway on the water after it had landed, and we couldn't make much of a slick to smooth the water for it. We had to slow down to almost a stop so the plane could catch up to us.

"We finally got the winch cable attached to the plane, but we were moving so slowly that we were rolling heavily from side to side. Since we had to pick the plane up off the port quarter, the roll was a problem. It was necessary to get the plane up rather quickly once it was hooked onto the cable. Just as we got the plane out of the water, the power temporarily failed on the crane, leaving the plane dangling on the end of the cable. As we rolled to port the plane hit the water, and as we rolled to starboard it swung into the ship. The pilot, my roommate [Lieutenant (j.g.) Hal Smith], jumped from the plane and caught the life rail. We grabbed him and pulled him on board. His radioman-mechanic jumped or fell into the water and had to be picked up by the motor whaleboat. The plane hit the side of the ship a few times, demolishing its wing. It looked AWFUL!"

Electrician's Mate 1/C William Wickham recalled that the pilot had extricated himself from the plane and had managed to get out onto the wing, where he made a perfectly timed leap toward the destroyer as it began another roll and just before the airplane smashed into the ship again. Smith, the pilot, was grabbed by a "big, brawny machinist's mate who just happened to be standing there watching the operation" and pulled aboard. According to Wickham, cheers erupted from the onlookers. Wickham also recalled that the radio operator who had taken the unexpected dip into the Pacific had several comments that he shared with the crew, mostly about the intelligence of the their ancestors.

Launching the plane could be equally difficult. Lappen also provided this interesting insight into the launching process, as well as to what the crew of the airplane was thinking during the launch. "When I first went on board the *Stevens,* the pilot was my roommate. During the night he would have nightmares, yelling, "Now! Now!" I asked him about this, and he explained. Since the catapult was about amidships, it had to be swung out at a right angle to the ship's progress for the launch. This meant that the ship's headway did not provide any headwind for the plane as it traveled down the catapult. The OS2U needed 90 knots to become airborne. The short catapult plus no headwind meant that it would just barely make the 90 knots at the end of its catapult run. With the catapult out at right angles to the ship's heading, the roll of the ship would be increased and

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could be used to help the plane's launch. However, the catapult charge had to be fired when the catapult was at its lowest point, so that the roll toward the opposite side would raise the catapult end, flipping the plane into the air as it left the catapult. The pilot's nightmare was that the torpedo officer might not fire the catapult charge at the right time and the plane would arrive at the catapult end on the down roll, driving the plane directly into the drink."

The *Stevens* made many successful launches, never sending the plane into a 90-knot dive into the ocean, but it was always a harrowing experience for the pilot and radio man, as well as the *Stevens* crew.

Life with the seaplane was not easy, even when it was not being launched or recovered. Seaman 2/C William E. Wenger was aboard the *Stevens* from its commissioning in Charleston until just before it returned to Mare Island. He was transferred to another ship at Pearl Harbor. He recalled this incident aboard the *Stevens*. "We went on a shakedown cruise to Cuba and the surrounding waters. Of course, there were German subs in the area, so the plane was always swung out on the catapult during morning and evening General Quarters. One day we were shooting at towed targets from land-based planes for antiaircraft practice as well as for making adjustments on the firing arcs of our shipboard 20mm and 40mm guns. The guns were fitted with 'stops' to prevent them from rotating and firing past a certain point. However, during one practice session, the stops failed on one of the 20mm and the gunners shot the tail off the OS2U. I never saw two guys abandon an aircraft so quickly! The skipper and the gunnery officer were ticked off, and we wound up with a bunch of junk on our catapult." The damaged airplane was replaced upon the ship's return to the United States.

In July 1943, just prior to the *Stevens*' departure for the Pacific Theater, Rear Admiral G.J. Rowcliff came aboard. Admiral Rowcliff conducted interviews with the ship's officers and came to the same conclusion that everyone aboard the *Stevens* already had: an airplane aboard a destroyer was not a practical idea. In a letter to the general board, he wrote, "This installation would be of extremely limited usefulness on account of the difficulties of stowage, handling, service, launching, and recovery. It would appear that the use would be limited to messenger or quick reconnaissance work of a special nature under favorable conditions of use, operating by stealth or without much opposition." Nonetheless, the *Stevens* steamed for the Pacific still carrying her albatross.

While the *Stevens* was performing its duties

in the Pacific, the conversation regarding the catapult and the airplane continued back in the States. The Bureau of Ships (BuShips) requested that the Norfolk Navy Yard submit plans and a cost analysis for widening *Stevens*' deck around the catapult. The plans were submitted on September 8. Convinced of the uselessness of the catapult-equipped destroyer, Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, had seen enough. On October 13, he requested authorization from BuShips to have the equipment removed from the *Stevens* and the *Halford*, and Admiral King, who had opposed the idea from its inception, concurred. On October 15, 1943, the order was issued directing the removal of the equipment from the two ships. The *Stevens* was already at Mare Island for installation of the 40mm guns when the order was issued. After conversion to conventional Fletchers, the two departed Mare Island for the Pacific in December.

The *Stevens*' experiment with the seaplane lasted slightly more than a year, but it certainly provided memorable experiences for the crew. During the time the plane was on the *Stevens*, the ship participated in two engagements with the Japanese, the raid on Marcus Island on August 31, 1943, and the attack on Tarawa on November 19, 1943. During both actions, the *Stevens* was part of a carrier group that provided the air cover for the task group, and its Kingfisher was never used for antisubmarine warfare or fire direction. It was used occasionally in its role as a scout plane, but it never spotted any Japanese shipping or encountered any Japanese airplanes.

In retrospect, the idea of mounting an airplane aboard a destroyer may have seemed like a good idea in 1940, when there were fewer ships with the capacity to launch aircraft. However, with the massive buildup of the American fleet by 1943, the destroyer-mounted observation plane was an idea whose time had passed. Due to their greater size, the newer battleships and cruisers could more easily handle the problems associated with the airplane. It should be noted, however, that aviation did eventually return to the decks of destroyers, when the Navy began equipping a much later generation with helicopters.

The *Stevens* and its sister ships were ahead of their time, but they proved that aircraft could successfully operate from smaller naval vessels.

Pacific War historian Gary McIntosh grew up listening to his father's stories of life aboard the USS Stevens *during World War II. He is a veteran of the U.S. Navy. This is his first published article.*

By Jacqueline Vautrain Collins

All Images Author's Collection

The Grand Escape

Allied officers planned a daring prison break from Oflag XVIIA in Austria in 1943.

SPRING HAD FINALLY ARRIVED IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AREA OF THE AUSTRIAN Waldviertel, land of long winters and short summers. Timid clumps of grass were showing up here and there in the meadows, at one time verdant, but now barren surfaces. In the distance, light green growth softened the dark green of the dense woods of pines surrounding the camp. Inside the camp, taking advantage of the welcomed warmth, the men laid out their clothes and all kinds of articles to air and dry out the mustiness of months of winter rain and snow.

In one of the prairies behind a barracks, half a dozen men were busy with shovels and wheelbarrows moving clumps of earth around what was known as the open-air theater, in reality a gentle slope with a makeshift stage at the bottom, a place where the men could sit on the ground to watch plays, shows, and other entertainment. They were digging a trench. A few feet from the edge of the theater and parallel to the slope a double row of barbed wire stretched from one watchtower to the other. Rumor had it that the trench would serve to channel the water from the frequent downpours to prevent flooding of the hill.

The men digging the trench were prisoners of war in Oflag XVIIA, one of 17 German prisoner of war camps predominantly holding French officers during World War II. Located on a remote plateau some 60 miles northwest of Vienna, close to the Czechoslovakian frontier, Oflag XVIIA housed 5,000 officers, captives since June 1940. Twenty-eight low-lying wooden barracks—each 5,400 square feet and occupied by 220 men—bordered a central alley. In the back of the barracks were the meadows. The entire complex was enclosed by a double row of barbed wire.

As soon as they arrived, the officers organized their own command, and in the intervening three years created the feel of a small French town, adding landscaping to the barren alley, transforming a vacant spot off the alley into a central square with a gazebo, and erecting a bell tower for the barracks designated as a church. They established institutions such as a library and a university that held regular classes, entertained with a number of theater troupes and an orchestra, and formed sports teams. They clandestinely acquired 23 radios and formed a fully functioning news service, which redacted a daily communiqué to be read in each barracks every evening, keeping the prisoners abreast of the progress of the war.

Over the years, individual prisoners attempted 32 escapes using a variety of means. Some would hide in boxes in the middle of trucks leaving the camp, or under the truck, or cut the barbed wire and pass under it. Two or three men would build tunnels, starting usually under a barracks. No one succeeded in making good their escape. The Germans probed the ground around the barracks and examined their flooring most every day. Sometimes telltale signs, an imprudent remark, or occasionally a stool pigeon caused the unfortunate discoveries. Three men lost their lives.

In November 1942, following the Allied landings in North Africa, many of the prisoners and particularly the young active duty officers were anxious to join their comrades of the French Forces who had joined the Allies, armed with equipment supplied by the Americans. They agitated for planning a big escape. By 1943, the 5,000 men had coalesced into a community with such unwavering solidarity that a large escape was considered.

This sketch depicts a cart filled with dirt moving down the tracks placed in an escape tunnel by French officers intent on escape from the German prison camp Oflag XVIIA.

Aware that previous tunnels originating in the barracks had been discovered, the prisoners looked for other ways to escape. After surveying the entire camp, two of the POWs, a captain who had served in an engineering regiment

We found our most important watch in a soldier's pocket

It's the summer of 1944 and a weathered U.S. sergeant is walking in Rome only days after the Allied Liberation. There is a joyous mood in the streets and this tough soldier wants to remember this day. He's only weeks away from returning home. He finds an interesting timepiece in a store just off the Via Veneto and he decides to splurge a little on this memento. He loved the way it felt in his hand, and the complex movement inside the case intrigued him. He really liked the hunter's back that opened to a secret compartment. He thought that he could squeeze a picture of his wife and new daughter in the case back. He wrote home that now he could count the hours until he returned to the States. This watch went on to survive some harrowing flights in a B-24 bomber and somehow made it back to the U.S. Besides the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, my father cherished this watch because it was a reminder of the best part of the war for any soldier—the homecoming.

He nicknamed the watch *Ritorno* for homecoming, and the rare heirloom is now valued at $42,000 according to *The Complete Guide to Watches*. But to our family, it is just a reminder that nothing is more beautiful than the smile of a healthy returning GI.

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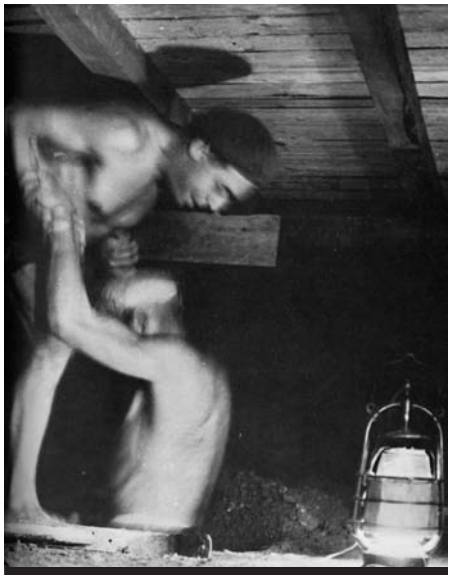
and an infantryman, decided that the best place was at the upper corner of the open-air theater. It was the closest area to the outside barbed wire enclosure, requiring a tunnel half the length of one originating from under a barracks. It also had the advantage of being near the only road, which opened the possibility of access to a train station. The major hazards, however, were the theater's proximity to a watchtower and constant patrolling by guards inside the camp.

To conceal the underground activities, the prisoners needed to justify some work on the grounds. To that end, the two officers sketched out a proposal that they said would improve the open-air theater. They showed it to the ranking POW officer, who immediately approved it to be presented to the German prison administration. For that purpose, a prisoner who was a professional architect drew an elaborate plan. It included cosmetic improvements and emphasized that drainage of the water was essential to prevent the flooding of the hill. To correct the potential problem, it was proposed that a ditch should be dug around the theater.

When the German commandant noticed that the plan included building a few bridges over the ditch to facilitate access to the theater, he was impressed and said, "You thought of everything!" The Germans always believed that prisoners who were occupied with some type of project would not be thinking of escape. The commandant agreed to distribute shovels, picks, and wheelbarrows. The tools were given in the morning and taken back in the evening. One shovel and one pick, however, ended up in the hands of the prisoners for good.

Work started on May 26, 1943, with two teams, one underground and the other above ground. It took the underground team one day to complete the entry shaft, a 60-inch hole almost 10 feet deep, mixing the excavated earth with some of the earth from the ditch. Next, they fitted a casing, which had been prepared in a barracks, and dug a storage room for handling the bagging of excavated earth. Then they were ready to begin digging the tunnel. Meanwhile, the above-ground team worked as slowly as possible digging the ditch, building mounds on both sides and a bridge over the shaft.

With the location of the shaft in plain view of a watchtower, even though covered by the bridge, the underground team had difficulty entering and leaving the tunnel without being discovered. To help hide the movements of the team, physical education classes were moved to the theater. In the morning, the exercising prisoners would do forward rolls and somersaults and group movements of attack and defense, during which the workers would disappear into the shaft, leaving the class short a few men. In the evening, with the same routine, the class would add a few more men. To guard against German patrols inside the camp, they recruited a watch team that signaled the proximity of oncoming patrols. On the ground, a large team milled around, removing earth from the ditch.



A prisoner assists another officer into the tunnel at Oflag XVIIA. The two men worked wearing only shorts to prevent telltale stains on their clothing.

The tunnel was to be 23 inches wide and 31 inches high with a vaulted ceiling. The planned length was 276 feet. For leveling, the engineer directing the digging of the tunnel used a flashlight and his own artillery sito-goniometer, vintage 1911, which had been undetected during searches. The proper direction was obtained with a fixed plumb line in the tunnel, set behind the working face, with each team checking by sight every day.

Within days, the tunneling prisoners met a major obstacle, an eight-inch layer of kneiss rocks. When they began breaking up the rock, it made such a booming sound that they needed to find a way to drown the noise. The choir came to the rescue, its members rehearsing at the top of their voices. To light the tunnel, the diggers used tin cans filled with margarine and a tightly woven piece of cloth serving as a wick. A two-man crew worked at the end of the tunnel, one man digging while the other filled the bags, which he passed to the above-ground team. In early July, the Germans, suspicious, came with long poles to poke around the theater. They found nothing unusual.

Rain and a few raging storms delayed the work. The tunnel advanced very slowly. As summer began, it was just 40 feet long. Still, it was too long to be without ventilation. One of the POWs set out to build a machine that would serve as a blower and was almost finished when the Germans arrived at his barracks for a routine search before the watch team could send a warning. They found the blower. They did not know, however, who was building it. Nevertheless, the excavation had to stop.

The prisoner working on the blower went right back to work building a new machine. Using a dentist's drill and tin cans, he worked out a pulley system powered by a hand crank. Set inside a wood casing mounted on two crossbars, it was capable of 1,200 turns per minute, blowing 2,825 cubic feet of air per hour. Named "Typhoon II," it was installed by the end of July.

The prisoners resumed work on July 27, but the above-ground team, which had worked on the ditch as slowly as possible, had completed its work. The prisoners needed some plausible reason to continue working around the theater. The leader of the excavation went to the German commandant, told him that his comrades were worried about the more frequent Allied bombings, and suggested that they enlarge the ditch so that it could be used as a shelter in case of an attack. The additional excavated earth would serve as flat surfaces at the edge of the theater to be used as a solarium. The Germans agreed.

With all the delays, time was now of the essence. A date of mid-September set for the escape was the latest the prisoners could make their move before the onset of winter. To catch up, they organized an underground team of five men. Two labored at the working face. One dug while the other shoveled the excavated earth into a cart, now with wheels moving on tracks. When the cart was full, he signaled to a comrade at the entrance to pull the cart. This third worker emptied its content into bags, signaled to his comrades at the end of the tunnel to pull the empty cart back, and then passed the bags to the above-ground team. Two other men activated the blower, a particularly excruciating task. The teams were regularly replaced.

The excavation began moving at a good pace. The above-ground team mixed the earth from below with the earth of the enlarged trench and spread it and packed it down to create what looked like flat couches for the so-called solarium.

The entire enterprise was supported by many other prisoners in the camp. The tailors sewed all kinds of civilian clothes. At least one man was disguised as a woman. Some compasses had been hidden in packages, and others were made in the camp. They made false identity papers, taking pictures with a clandestine camera. They copied maps, train schedules, and permits obtained from young Frenchmen who had been

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forced to work in Germany. They also provided the would-be escapees with German money.

On September 14, the underground team found a note from the engineer, who had inspected the tunnel the previous evening, informing them that the tunnel had reached its planned length and instructing the team to build the exit shaft. The team broke through the ground and installed a trap, which would be lifted when the first wave of escapees departed and replaced for the second wave and a potential third wave. After 3 1/2 months of hard work, the men at the exit portal looked up at a pure blue sky, a free strip of grass about 65 feet beyond the barbed wire enclosure, and the open road about six feet away. The tunnel ended exactly where it had been planned.

Two hundred men had signed up to leave. The selection of who would escape and in what order was rigorously handled. The men who had directly worked on building the tunnel were selected for the first wave. The order in which they left was decided by drawing lots. The second wave included those who had supported the whole effort or had made previous attempts to escape.

Finally, a possible third wave was for those who had contributed marginally to the effort. Those who escaped had stringent instructions to follow a specific itinerary and in case of capture to be silent for at least 24 hours. The first escape wave of was set for the following Saturday. Sunday's roll calls were more relaxed, as many guards were allowed to go to Vienna for the weekend. With a new moon, Saturday night would be extremely dark.

The logistics of the entry into the tunnel required an intricate choreography. The theater was in plain view of the watchtower, and the access to the prairies, strictly prohibited after 6 PM, was enforced by beams of searchlights. The leaders of the escape again enlisted the help of the physical education trainers, who in the morning performed aerobic exercises that made use of blankets or the big capes of prisoners belonging to alpine regiments, spreading these out on the ground. By planning precise movements, rolling over or somersaulting with the blankets or capes, all the backpacks disappeared into the shaft. They were then lined up in the order of the escapees' numbers.

The prisoners devised a different stratagem for the entrance of the men into the tunnel. As a diversion, they scheduled some competitions in the stadium, far from the theater. Starting at noon, small groups of three or four walkers began crisscrossing from all directions. When they reached the theater, they engaged in an animated discussion with three other men sitting at the edge of the ditch near the shaft, forming a group that provided a screen for one man to disappear into the shaft. Once in the tunnel, the men lay down on their backs with their bags on their chests and with the next man's head on their stomachs. It was a long wait, from afternoon to after nightfall. It proved to be too arduous for two of the men, who fainted despite the full force of the blower. They had to be evacuated.

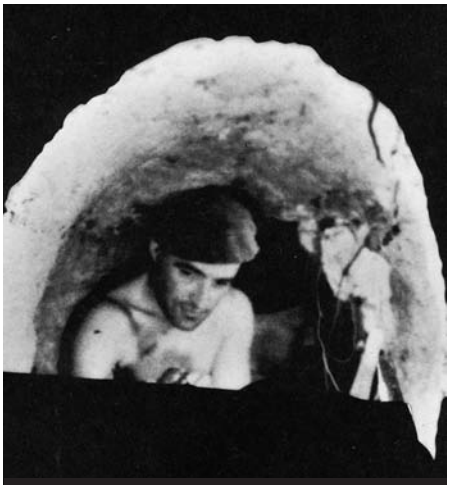
At 8:30 PM, the officer in the lead, the prisoner who had directed the excavation, pushed the trap up and hoisted himself onto the side of the road. Behind him the searchlights crisscrossed fully on the barbed wire, creating the impression of broad daylight. By 9:30 PM, only a single escapee remained in the tunnel. The engineer stayed behind to place the trap back over the hole and lead the next batch of escapees the following day. With no roll calls on Sunday and no one caught so far, the German administration did not suspect anything. Saturday's procedure was repeated on Sunday. Altogether, 131 men escaped.

The next morning, roll call took place in the barracks. The men had devised a system for some to be counted twice, using traps in the ceiling. The roll call came out exactly right. By mid-morning, however, a call from the Vien-

nese police alerted the camp commandant that they had picked up a few prisoners. Another roll call was held. In the new count, 42 men were missing. After an extended search, the entry shaft was located by midafternoon. Then, a rigorous, painstaking roll call by numbers, checking each prisoner's tag, showed that 120 men had disappeared. The Germans were so incredulous that they thought it was a joke and asked the prisoners to come out of hiding.

However, as more prisoners were brought back to the camp, the Germans had to admit that a large number of POWs had escaped. Most were picked up within days. A rumor had spread that a paratrooper unit had landed, sending the local police, military units, Gestapo, and the local population on the hunt. The nearby borders with Hungary and Czechoslovakia were closed.

Benefiting from being the first large escape and with the German high command anxious to conceal it as much as possible, the escapees were brought back to the camp and subjected to only some minor retaliation. Two were killed during their recapture. Eleven reached Hungary, where they were put under house arrest in Budapest. Over time, they escaped to join the resistance groups in Slovakia andYugoslavia and some French partisans. One of them went through Turkey to North Africa and joined the French Army, which landed in southern France in August 1944. He was killed during the liberation of Alsace, fighting with the French First Army led by General Jean De Lattre de Tassigny. One escapee reached France some months later.



A shirtless French officer labors in the escape tunnel being beneath the noses of German guards at Oflag XVIIA located in Austria.

The escapees told many stories of their adventures, but the most colorful was the odyssey of a young lieutenant, who had created the role of an ingénue on the stage of the theater. His getaway clothes were a gorgeous lady's outfit. He walked for about nine miles, changed his clothes, and was able to quietly take a seat in a train departing for Vienna. Unfortunately, a young woman accompanied by her beau on leave from the Wehrmacht took a seat across from him. The soldier immediately showed great interest in the disguised POW officer, who tried to be ignored. When the train arrived at the station in Vienna, everyone stood up to get off. A sudden jolt thrust the disguised POW into the real young woman, who exclaimed, "They are made of cardboard! Her breasts!"

Shoving people aside, the POW leaped onto the platform and managed to get out of the station, but running was in vain. He wound up in the station of the security forces, where for hours and still in the same outfit he endured interrogation by the Gestapo. A few days later on a train from Vienna, passengers saw a charming young woman flanked by guards, her cheeks bristling with the beard of a tramp.

Author Jacqueline Vautrain Collins was born and raised in Paris, France. She lived with her mother while her father was a prisoner in Oflag XVIIA. Her book Five Years Behind Barbed Wire *is pending publication.*

By Patrick J. Chaisson

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Guns for Victory

America's cannon factory forged World War II firepower.

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT ELECTRIFIED THE WORLD WHEN ON December 29, 1940, he called on America to become "the great arsenal of democracy." In this speech he urged a national effort to produce war matériel while pledging to support Great Britain in its fight against the Axis powers. By providing arms and supplies to the British, Roosevelt nudged the nation farther away from its posture of neutrality and closer toward direct participation in World War II.

Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy" speech sent a strong message to friend and foe alike. Yet it was one thing to promise these munitions and quite another matter to actually manufacture them. In 1940, America was still emerging from the decade-long Great Depression. Furthermore, a national spirit of isolationism fueled by the horrors of World War I kept military budgets small throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

As a result, the United States found itself with an inadequate number of mostly obsolete weapons. American industry possessed the manufacturing capacity to make tanks, ships, and aircraft, but it needed time to retool for wartime production.

The knowledge required to build these armaments was also in short supply. For instance, while automobile makers could easily reconfigure their assembly lines to turn out jeeps and trucks, the manufacture of such uniquely military hardware as cannon barrels was another matter. No civilian firm then possessed the know-how necessary to fabricate an artillery piece.

In this photo from 1942, the gaping barrel of a 16-inch coastal gun emplaced at Fort Story, Virginia, bears the mark "Watervliet Arsenal 1921." The great arsenal in New York produced heavy guns for the U.S. armed forces for decades.

Fortunately, this specialized manufacturing knowledge resided in a system of government-operated arsenals. One such plant, the Watervliet Arsenal, was the U.S. Army's sole cannon factory in 1940.

Located on a 142-acre site eight miles north of Albany, New York, the Watervliet Arsenal had been building big guns since 1889. During World War I, 5,126 craftsmen worked there, manufacturing heavy artillery for the U.S. Army and Navy. Postwar downsizing, however, left a mere 321 skilled machinists on duty as of mid-1937.

Things began to turn around when, in November 1938, Colonel Richard Somers took command of Watervliet Arsenal. A forward-thinking officer, Somers correctly saw World War II coming and was determined to prepare for it. First, the arsenal received a facelift. A $24,750 Works Progress Administration project saw several old factory buildings reconditioned while the installation of new machinery promised increased manufacturing efficiency.

Colonel Somers then began expanding the workforce. By July 1939, Watervliet Arsenal's personnel roster had grown to over 1,000 employees. One year later its staff had swelled to 1,752. By December 1941, over 3,000 people worked there.

Recognizing the need for skilled craftsmen, arsenal leaders opened an apprentice school in August 1939. This three-year course graduated expert machinists capable of making everything from 37mm antitank cannons to massive 16-inch naval guns.

High salaries attracted many to work at the Watervliet Arsenal. In 1940, a machinist's daily wage was $6.96, while a mechanic's helper earned $4.72 per day. Toolkeepers made $1,260 a year, and inspectors took home salaries of $2,300 annually. This was good money indeed for Americans accustomed to Depression-era pay.

In July 1940, Colonel Somers was replaced as commanding officer by Brig. Gen. Alexander G. Gillespie, the first and only general officer to command Watervliet Arsenal. Gillespie immediately directed the arsenal to adopt a 48-hour work week, which he deemed necessary to handle the increasing volume of orders from a rapidly expanding military.

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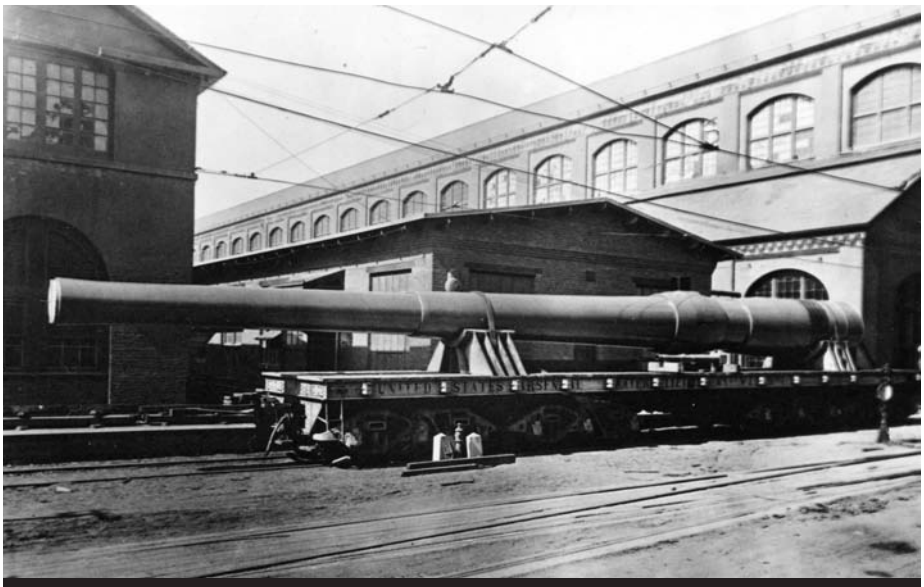

ABOVE: This huge 16-inch seacoast gun, produced at the Watervliet Arsenal in 1942, is placed on a rail car for transport to its final destination. Skilled craftsmen produced weapons there throughout World War II. BELOW: General Alexander Gillespie, who became the commander of the Watervliet Arsenal in July 1940, examines equipment used to fabricate artillery pieces on the factory floor.

The nation had just authorized its first peacetime draft when President Roosevelt visited Watervliet Arsenal on October 7, 1940. Escorted by General Gillespie, Roosevelt observed cannons being forged in the bustling Big Gun Shop. While the United States was not yet at war, the workers at Watervliet were getting ready for one—and so was the president.

When Japanese planes struck Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the arsenal's workforce was enjoying a Sunday off. Ernie Blanchet, an inspector from Troy, New York, was at his sister's house when he heard the news. "I remember thinking that maybe the arsenal was going to be a target," he said, "because of the important work we were doing to help prepare our country for war."

The next day, Blanchet recalled, "Lines of cars, as well as workers, were backed up as security guards checked every vehicle and person coming into work." To make it in on time, Ernie and hundreds of other employees jumped the arsenal walls rather than wait at the gate. Special security badges later speeded entry for the thousands of war workers employed there.

Watervliet Arsenal's expansion accelerated with the declaration of war. In December 1941, Gillespie announced construction of a tank repair center. By August 1942, it was open and overhauling war-weary combat vehicles. New warehouses and a modern cannon factory also went up at a rapid pace.

Arsenal employees began traveling across the United States to help private companies start up their own gun factories. Standardized manufacturing procedures developed at Watervliet resulted in near 100 percent interchangeability among U.S.-made cannons.

All the while Watervliet Arsenal kept busy filling orders. In December 1942, the factory delivered 1,294 37mm barrels, 954 75mm cannons of various types, 209 3-inch antitank guns, and 270 90mm antiaircraft tubes. Large-bore production that month included 49 155mm, 14 8-inch, and two 240mm howitzer barrels.

This unprecedented growth left Watervliet Arsenal facing an acute labor shortage. Many experienced workmen had either been drafted or volunteered for military service, and General Gillespie refused to grant Selective Service exemptions except to those deemed "practically indispensable." During the war 2,600 arsenal employees would enter the armed forces, draining Watervliet's gun shops and repair depot of experienced workmen.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, the arsenal began hiring women to replace departing male employees. By December 1942, a total of 2,905 females—31 percent of the total workforce—held jobs there.

Women Ordnance Workers (WOWs) filled a variety of positions at the Watervliet Arsenal. Supervisors found them well suited for almost all manufacturing and repair work. Following a three-week training course, female "mechanic learners" began operating drill presses, milling machines, and hydraulic cutters—often with remarkable skill.

The WOWs fit in well. Of Jean Wiorek, a 22-year-old machinist from Albany, one shop foreman remarked: "She's picked up amazingly fast and now can turn out a reamer as perfect as any toolmaker ever could."

Other women repaired tanks or helped run the unheated Field Service Depot, nicknamed "Siberia." There, workers ran three shifts six

days a week packaging and shipping repair parts needed by Allied armies around the world.

Women took jobs at Watervliet for a variety of reasons. One 18-year-old from Troy, New York, named Maureen Stapleton briefly worked there as a typist in 1943. Stapleton's goal was to earn $100 so she could move to New York City and study acting. This she did, later embarking on a 57-year career in show business that would earn her Tony, Emmy, and Oscar awards.

As private industry took on the manufacture of small-caliber cannons in 1943, the Watervliet Arsenal shifted its focus to big gun production. The Army required more large-bore 155mm, 8-inch, and 240mm cannons, which meant a new mission for the arsenal. It also put new strains on the workforce. Watervliet Arsenal responded by hiring 200 "commandos"—high school students, homemakers, and people employed elsewhere—for work six evenings a week plus full shifts on Saturday and Sunday.

The arsenal got another boost when 51 former workers returned to Watervliet wearing the uniforms of privates in the United States Army. In many cases, these servicemen went right back to their previous jobs as machinists or toolkeepers. The most noticeable change was

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Workmen on the floor at the Watervliet Arsenal finish the breech housing for a medium caliber gun at the Watervliet Arsenal. Hundreds of workers were employed at the arsenal during the war years.

in their salary—as skilled civilian technicians they brought home over $200 a month, whereas an Army private made less than one-fourth of that amount.

The WOWs, commandos, soldiers, and civilian employees at Watervliet Arsenal worked hard to meet the Army's demand for heavy artillery. From July 1943 to May 1944, Watervliet's gun factory turned out 9,888 cannons with an on-time completion rate of 99.5 percent. In one month, November 1943, the arsenal made more guns than it did during all of World War I.

These accomplishments did not go unrecognized. In a ceremony held September 30, 1942, the Army-Navy Production Board presented the employees of Watervliet Arsenal with the first of five "E" (for excellence) awards they would eventually win. Each worker received a pin and the Production Award pennant was flown on an arsenal flagpole. Then everyone went back to work.

The surrender of Japan brought with it a return to normal routines at Watervliet Arsenal, yet the workforce could take great pride in its wartime record. From 1940 to 1945, Watervliet's workers assembled 49,052 cannons at a total cost of $260 million. At its peak the arsenal employed 9,332 men and women.

The miracle of production that occurred at installations such as Watervliet Arsenal transformed America into the great Arsenal of Democracy. The guns built there won victory on every battlefront of World War II. Today, Watervliet Arsenal continues its proud manufacturing tradition as the United States' premier cannon factory.

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer who writes from his home in Scotia, New York.

First Day at ARRACOURT

BY LEO BARRON

DURING THE ALLIED ADVANCE ACROSS FRANCE, AMERICAN ARMORED UNITS PREVAILED IN A MAJOR BATTLE WITH GERMAN TANKS. THE OPENING HOURS AT ARRACOURT WERE CRUCIAL.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON, Jr., the commander of the newly constituted U.S. Third Army, had one simple order that late summer of 1944: "Go east and go like Hell.

Since the beginning of August, Patton's tanks had rolled through France, cutting up retreating German units while bypassing enemy strongpoints. Patton's swift advance had been an unmitigated disaster for the German Army. Hitler had hoped that his Aryan supermen could bottle up the Allied juggernaut inside the Normandy beachhead for the rest of the year. Alas, Operation Cobra shattered his hopes, and by the first week of August, American troops were racing eastward toward Germany.

Suddenly, disaster loomed for the Germans along the entire Western Front. Instead of a war of attrition, the Allies had turned the conflict into a war of maneuver. This type of warfare favored the Allies, whose armies, thanks to American industry, were almost completely motorized, while the German Army still relied heavily on horse-drawn transport. Because of this mechanization, the Allies were outrunning the withdrawing German forces. Inside the Falaise Pocket, over 50,000 German soldiers surrendered and thousands more died after Allied forces had outflanked and surrounded them.

By the end of August, Patton's divisions were closing in on the German frontier. All that stood between the tanks of "Old Blood and Guts" and Germany were the remnants of several tattered German armies. To the GIs, it seemed like they would be in Berlin by October. Unfortunately, tanks require gas, and on September 1, the Third Army ran out. The great race came to a screeching halt. Patton's soldiers had traveled over 300 miles since the beginning of August and were now within 100 miles of the Rhine River.

The German high command welcomed the unexpected halt and began to rush units to the frontier while preparing the West Wall, or Siegfried Line, for the inevitable showdown. The Germans did not know how much time they had before the Americans resumed the offensive. Accordingly, Hitler ordered Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) to shift newly constituted units originally destined for the Eastern Front westward instead. Even though Hitler had lost countless divisions in Operation Bagration in eastern Poland, he felt he could trade land for time in the East. He did not have that luxury in the West. Once the Allies crossed the Rhine, it would only be a matter time before they captured the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany, and the Saar River region of the Reich. Hitler could not afford to lose either. He had to stop Patton's steamroller somewhere.

The Führer's solution lay in his reliable panzer brigades. Panzer brigades were stopgap measures originally designed for the Eastern Front. Like a panzer division, these brigades had two battalions of panzers. One battalion had long-barreled Mark IVs, while the other operated Mark V Panthers. Each type mounted a high-velocity 75mm cannon. Unlike a typical panzer battalion within a division that had four panzer companies, each battalion in these panzer brigades had three companies, and each company had three platoons.

At full strength, each platoon had four panzers, and each company command section had two panzers, bringing each company's total to 14. Together, each battalion had over 40 panzers, and each brigade had over 80 panzers at full strength. According to General Horst Stumpff, "The three brigades [111-113] were consequently—measured by Western Front standards at that time—extraordinarily well equipped with armor."

However, unlike the panzer divisions, the panzer brigades had only one regiment of panzergrenadiers. The single panzergrenadier regiment had two battalions, each with three motorized infantry companies. While a standard panzer division had four battalions of infantry, the panzer brigade

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American crewmen peer from the chassis of their M4 Sherman tank somewhere in France. This Sherman mounts a 76mm gun, a higher velocity weapon than the original 75mm cannon that equipped the M4. The 76mm gun was nicknamed the 'hole puncher.'

had half that number. The panzer brigades also lacked an artillery regiment. Hence, they had to rely on corps assets for indirect fire support. Even worse, each brigade had only one reconnaissance troop with just two platoons, while a panzer division typically had an entire squadron of reconnaissance vehicles with five scout troops. Bereft of reconnaissance units, the panzer brigades would likely be bumbling around the battlefield blind. This lack of resources would come back to haunt them.

The shortages of artillery tubes and reconnaissance units were not the only shortcomings hampering the panzer brigades. They also were deficient in headquarters staff. General Stumpff later wrote, "The brigade staff consisted in fact of only one armored infantry regimental headquarters and therefore did not have the means of signal communications with [the] armored units. The brigade commanders were obliged to take part in the tank attack in order to ensure their control whereby they became conspicuous in their armored personnel carriers and drew fire upon themselves."

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-301-1970-29; Photo: Hasse

German panzergrenadiers of the 111th Panzer Brigade relax and clean their weapons prior to going into action against American tanks and armored infantry at Arracourt, France, in September 1944.

The most glaring issue facing the Germans was the lack of trained soldiers and leaders. Most of the noncommissioned officers were from replacement and training units, while the majority of the junior officers were infantry officers. According to Stumpff, these junior officers "had no idea of the commitment of motorized formations." Even worse, the panzer brigades "were organized just at their points of assembly immediately behind the front line, and had, therefore, never been able to hold combined exercises and give the commanders experience."

Facing these newly constituted panzer formations with their lack of resources and lack of trained personnel were the armored divisions of Patton's Third Army. Leading the way was the 4th Armored Division under the command of Maj. Gen. John S. Wood. In contrast to the new panzer crews and panzergrenadiers in the panzer brigades, many of the tankers and infantrymen of the 4th Armored Division had been training together since 1941. Moreover, the division had been fighting almost nonstop since mid-July. These armored formations were battle hardened and at the top of their game.

Unfortunately, many of the tanks in the 4th Armored were the ubiquitous M4 Sherman, which mounted a short-barreled 75mm gun. Against the long-barreled Mark IVs and Mark V Panthers, the M4 was at a distinct disadvantage. Its gun had a lower muzzle velocity and could not penetrate the frontal armor of a Mark IV at distances greater than 1,000 meters. Against a Panther, the disparity was even worse. The M4's stubby 75mm had trouble penetrating the front glacis of a Panther even at point-blank range. In contrast, the 75mm KwK 42 of the Mark V Panther could penetrate the frontal armor of a Sherman from 2,000 meters. In the ensuing battle, one question was at the forefront. Would American training and organization overcome German technology?

On September 5, 1944, Patton found some gasoline for his tanks and ordered his XII Corps, under the command of Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy, to push across the Moselle River and head east toward the Rhine. Eddy instructed his 80th Infantry Division to leap the river north of Nancy, France, but the German defenders threw the 80th back with little trouble. It was obvious now to Eddy that the Germans had used their down time wisely while the Americans were securing supplies.

Crossing the Moselle River would now require all of the corps assets. General Eddy and General Wood devised a plan. On September 11, the 80th Infantry Division would cross north of Nancy near the town of Dieulouard, while the other two divisions, the 4th Armored (minus Combat Command A) and the 35th Infantry Division, would cross the Moselle south of Nancy. In the meantime, Combat Command A, under Colonel Bruce C. Clarke, would act as corps reserve, waiting to exploit any potential breakthrough.

Clarke's Combat Command A (CCA) was one of the three combat commands in the 4th Armored Division. Each combat command in an American armored division would usually have one armored artillery battalion, one armored infantry battalion, and one tank battalion. In CCA's case, Clarke had the 37th Tank Battalion under the command of Lt. Col. Creighton W. Abrams. Clarke also had several units attached to his command, including a company of tank destroyers from the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion under Captain Thomas J. Evans.

On September 13, CCA crossed the Moselle at Dieulouard after the 80th Infantry Division had established a bridgehead as planned two days earlier. To the south of Nancy, the 35th Infantry Division and the rest of the 4th Armored Division had crossed the Moselle on the 11th. For several days, CCA pushed deeper into German-held territory. By the evening of the 18th, it was firmly entrenched along the east side of the Moselle, concentrating near the town of Arracourt, France. The appearance of U.S. armored units east of the river sent shockwaves throughout the German high command.

Unknown to Patton, his constant hammering against the German lines had led to a penetration between two German armies, the Nineteenth to the south and the First to the north. It was a dangerous situation, and neither army was in position to close the gap. Once again, Patton's tanks were poised to break through and spread havoc in the German operational support areas.

Both German armies fell under the command of Army Group G. Realizing the precariousness of the situation, Col. Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz, the commander of Army Group G, had no choice but to commit the newly reorganized Fifth Panzer Army to battle under the command of General Hasso von Manteuffel. For Manteuffel and Blaskowitz, the only realistic option was a massive counterattack. Unlike the First and Nineteenth Armies, which were woefully understrength, Fifth Panzer Army had three new panzer brigades: the 111th, 112th, and 113th. Blaskowitz chose Manteuffel's command to conduct the operation for that very reason. Furthermore, there was no time to establish a new defensive line east of the Moselle. Manteuffel had to stop Patton or at least delay him before Third Army reached the German border near the Saar, and before the Americans were able to turn the flank of the German First Army.

Manteuffel then selected two panzer corps to lead the attack. His southern strike force would be the XXXXVII Panzer Corps under Maj. Gen. Heinrich Freiherr von Lüttwitz. The XXXXVII Panzer Corps' attack would comprise the 112th Panzer Brigade and the 21st Panzer Division. Once the corps reached its area of operations, the understrength 15th Panzergrenadier Division would also fall under its command. The corps mission was to recapture the town of Luneville, which had fallen to the U.S. XII Corps on September 16, and then proceed to the Rhine-Marne Canal, severing the American salient.

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To the north would be the LVIII Panzer Corps under General Walter Krüger. His corps attack force would comprise the 111th and 113th Panzer Brigades. Its mission "was to delay the enemy [CCA] advance as far to the west as possible [and] … north of the Rhine-Marne Canal with the 113th Panzer Brigade...." While the southern strike force planned to attack on the 18th, the northern strike force would push toward Xousse, France, and develop the situation. Facing this massive panzer onslaught in the north was CCA, with its single battalion of tanks.

National Archives

ABOVE: An M4 Sherman medium tank belonging to the U.S. Third Army fires on German positions near the city of Nancy, France, in the summer of 1944. The Sherman did not pack the firepower of opposing German tanks; however, it appeared on the battlefields of Western Europe in overwhelming numbers. LEFT: Captain William A. Dwight served as the liaison officer between Combat Command A, 4th Armored Division, and the 37th Tank Battalion at Arracourt. FAR LEFT: Major General John S. Wood commanded the 4th Armored Division, the spearhead of General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army.

Krüger watched the operation run into trouble almost immediately. The 111th Panzer Brigade was late arriving, leaving the 113th to tangle with American armored reconnaissance elements alone. In spite of this setback, the 113th Panzer Brigade still had more than enough combat power to overwhelm CCA, and the American forces, according to Krüger, "fell back toward the southwest."

By the evening of the 18th, Krüger still did not have a clear idea of the enemy strength in front of his forces. The 113th's lack of reconnaissance units was beginning to hamper the operation. Despite the absence of the 111th Panzer Brigade, the corps commander knew he had to press on, and he ordered the 113th, under Colonel Freiherr von Seckendorff, "to take possession of the high terrain of Rechicourt-le-Petite and to make observations to the west from that spot in order to control this sector even before the arrival of the 111th Panzer Brigade and in order to maintain, at least, liaison by reconnaissance with the right wing of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division near Hananenil."

Opposite Krüger's panzers, the Americans prepared to bed down for the night, but not everyone was sleeping soundly. First Lieutenant Wilbur J. Berard, leading 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 37th Tank Battalion, sensed trouble. It was 9 PM on September 18, and one of his soldiers, Staff Sergeant Timothy J. Dunn, had just reported that he could hear the gurgling and humming of German panzer engines southeast of his position near the town of Lezey, France. Dunn knew the tanks were German because a local villager had told him that he had seen six tanks earlier in the day near the town of Ley, just two kilometers southeast of Lezey.

Luckily, Berard had positioned his three tanks for just such an engagement. Earlier that afternoon, he had placed one Sherman, under the command of Sergeant Earl S. Radular, north of the road that linked Lezey with Bourdonnay. Radular did not want his vehicle exposed, so he backed it into a gully, providing cover and concealment. Berard had positioned his own tank and Dunn's M4 south of the same road. The seasoned lieutenant had hidden his tank behind some bushes while Dunn's tank occupied a high point to observe the entire area. All three oriented their guns toward the last known position of the panzers near the town of Ley.

To prevent the Germans from flanking to the east, Dunn laid 12 mines across the Lezey-Bourdonnay highway. After reporting to higher command about the possible panzers, Berard coordinated with the 94th Armored Field

Artillery to conduct harassment and interdiction fire missions on likely German locations. Then they waited.

The following morning, a dense fog hung over the valley. Despite the limited visibility, Berard still could hear the tanks southeast of his position. He reported the news to his commander, Captain Kenneth R. Lamison. Lamison immediately dispatched the rest of 2nd Platoon to join Berard. Lamison also reinforced his company picket line around Lezey with 1st Platoon, under the command of 2nd Lt. Howard L. Smith. The 1st Section of 1st Platoon occupied a position south of Lezey, while the 2nd Section relieved the other section of 2nd Platoon, west of the town. The reunited sections of 2nd Platoon, minus Dunn's tank, moved north of the Lezey-Bourdonnay highway.

While Lamison arranged his forces, a platoon of M5 light tanks from Dog Company detected one of the few reconnaissance units from the 113th Panzer Brigade. The platoon spotted the German half-tracks near the town of Montcourt. When the tankers identified the vehicles appearing in front of them as the enemy, they opened fire, destroying one half-track. As light tanks were susceptible to catastrophic damage, they quickly withdrew to the west, only stopping to pop off a few rounds at the Germans and buying time for the rest of the battalion. After all the positioning, this engagement signaled the beginning of the Battle of Arracourt.

Smith's 1st Section was the first element in Charlie Company to engage the enemy. One of the company's tanks was west of the north-south road, and the other was tucked away in a barn, camouflaged under some straw. Both tank gunners could see the road that connected Lezey with Bezange, just south of their location. In an effort to provide early warning, the tankers had dismounted a team to man a forward observation post. The team communicated with the tanks by a telephone hooked up to a single wire that led back to the tank. It was an effective tactic, and it paid off that morning.

Suddenly, around 7 AM, Smith's observation post spotted several Panthers as they emerged from the fog. They approached Smith's platoon from the direction of Bezange at a distance of less than 75 meters. The observation post telephoned back to the M4 crews, who were waiting for the unsuspecting Panthers. Within seconds, the two M4s opened fire. At such a short distance, the stubby 75mm guns could not miss. Almost immediately, two of the lead Panthers brewed up. The other German tank crews realized it was an ambush, and they began to back away into the mist.

THE FIGHT CONTINUED. THE CREW OF A FOURTH PANZER SAW THAT THE TANK DESTROYERS NOW OUTNUMBERED THEM AND BEGAN TO BACK UP. IT WAS TO NO AVAIL. THE SURVIVING HELLCAT CREWS REFUSED TO ALLOW THEM TO LEAVE, AIMING THEIR 76MM GUNS AT THE RETREATING PANZER. WITHIN SECONDS, IT WAS A SMOLDERING WRECK.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-301-1958-22; Photo: Genzler

Sergeant Dunn saw the firefight from his position east of Lezey and ordered his gunner to swing south toward Bezange. The Panthers were the lead elements of 1st Battalion, 130th Panzer Regiment. This battalion was one of two from the 113th Panzer Brigade. Dunn could probably care less what unit the Panthers belonged to. He just knew he had to kill them before they slew his tank. At approximately 600 meters, Dunn opened fire on a third Panther as it attempted to escape. It took three rounds from Dunn's tank, but the hapless Panther started to smoke and burn. Dunn watched several of the crewmen clamber out of the tank to escape the fiery deathtrap.

Captain Lamison now knew where the enemy was. In response, he ordered Smith's 1st Platoon to consolidate south of Lezey. Lamison sent the 2nd Section of 3rd Platoon to occupy the now vacant position west of Lezey. Meanwhile, the Charlie Company commander decided to cut off the retreating German column. Between the last the section of 3rd Platoon and his own headquarters element, Lamison had four tanks at his disposal. He quickly scanned the map and realized the best place to interdict the column was a ridgeline west of Bezange. He shouted at his driver to head south, skirting the military crest of the ridge. It was a race.

The speed of the Sherman tank afforded Lamison an advantage. He outran the lumbering column of Panthers and reached an attack position west of Bezange three minutes before the slow-moving panzers passed through the village. From his location along the ridge, Lamison's tank crews had perfect flank shots on the column, while the crest provided the M4s with natural cover.

Lamison waited for the best shot. Crack! His 75mm cannon opened fire, and his fellow tankers quickly fired their own main guns, adding to the fiery fusillade. With their flanks exposed, the Panthers did not have a chance. One by one, the vulnerable German tanks started to pop and explode.

Lamison's hasty ambush highlighted another deficiency in the German tanks. The Sherman had a more powerful motor on the turret traverse mechanism, and therefore the Sherman's turret traversed faster than the Panther's. The result was that a Sherman tank crew could lay its gun on a target quicker than its German

adversary. This lesson was made painfully clear that September morning. When the first Panther finally returned fire, Lamison estimated his makeshift team already had destroyed five enemy tanks. Only three Panthers remained.

Sensing victory, Lamison pressed the issue. He ducked his tanks behind the ridge and then rushed south to another position. His four tanks then popped up from behind the crest and opened fire on the last three panzers still in Bezange, destroying all three. Before they could celebrate, a concealed Pak 40, a towed 75mm antitank gun from one of the weapons companies in the 2113th Panzergrenadier Regiment, blasted away at Lamison's team from an unknown location near the village. With rounds skipping past their tanks, the drivers once again backed their M4s behind the crest.

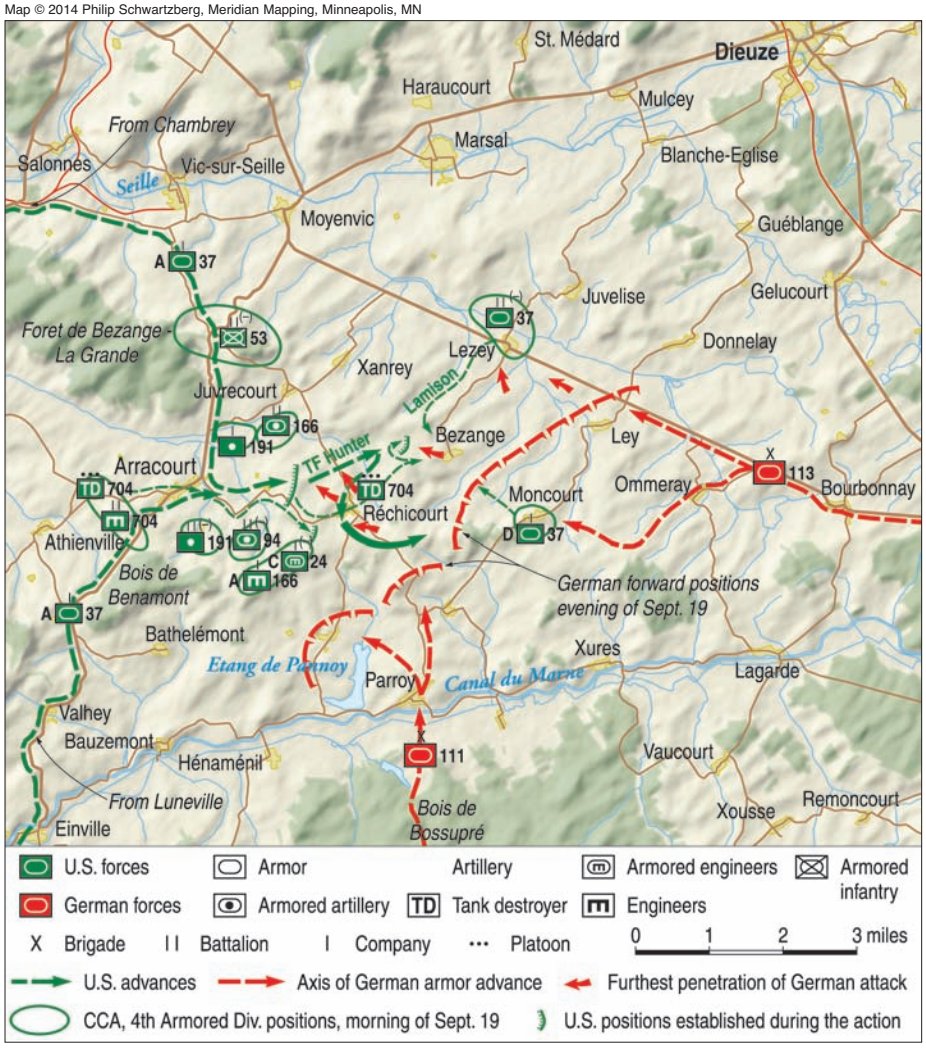
The Charlie Company commander climbed out of his tank to search for the pesky gun on foot. After several minutes, he found it and directed his tankers to open fire on its location. No longer the hunter but the hunted, the gun crew labored to pull the weapon to safety. However, the Germans were unsuccessful, and Lamison's tanks destroyed it. The battle, though, was far from over.

East of Lezey, another column of German panzers approached Lieutenant Berard's 2nd Platoon from the village of Ley. The panzers traveled along a shallow valley in an attempt to infiltrate through the 2nd Platoon's tank outposts from the south. They failed.

When Sergeant Dunn was interviewed, the NCO described 2nd Platoon's response to the German incursion: "All five tanks opened up and knocked out three of the Germans; the fourth [panzer] retreated behind the wreck of an American bomber. The second platoon put HE [High Explosive] on the plane and set it on fire. The tank was not observed to escape…. A fifth German tank was hit when observed coming out of Ley and destroyed."

Berard's platoon did not suffer a single casualty in the exchange. The only damage he sustained was to his own tank. A single round from one of the panzers had knocked off two bogey wheels from his track. That was it. But the Germans were drawing blood farther south.

Colonel von Seckendorff still had another battalion to throw into the fray. The 2113th Panzer Battalion had over 40 Panzer IVs. Seckendorff directed the battalion to strike the American lines southwest of Bezange, near the town of Rechicourt. Unknown to the German colonel, the Americans had few forces with which to stop him. If his panzers flanked Abrams' one tank company in Lezey, they would be able to overrun the headquarters of



ABOVE: When German armor and panzergrenadier units advanced toward the French town of Arracourt in September 1944, they failed to deploy adequate reconnaissance and were unable to fix the positions of their American enemy until they had lost the initiative. As a result, the Germans suffered grievous losses in men and tanks. OPPOSITE: A German PzKpfw. V Panther medium tank lies in ambush amid the cover of trees along a dirt road in France. The Panther mounted a high-velocity 75mm cannon and was protected by thicker armor plating than the American M4 Sherman tank, although the lighter Sherman was capable of greater speed.

Combat Command A around the town of Arracourt, less than two kilometers west of Rechicourt.

A little after 7 AM, Captain William A. Dwight, the liaison officer between CCA and the 37th Tank Battalion, was driving his jeep between the two command posts when he spotted a rumbling column of panzers as they approached from the town of Moncourt. He immediately returned to CCA headquarters to report what he saw. When Colonel Clarke heard the news, he realized how perilous his situation was, and he marched down to where Charlie Company, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion had established its staging area. With him was Captain William A. Dwight.

Captain Thomas J. Evans, commander of Charlie Company, remembered that fateful morning when Clarke arrived at his tank destroyer. "I was shaving, beside a tank, when a shell came right down between the tank that I was standing near and another. It plowed up the ground. That's when Colonel Clarke came over and said to move into position for the attack."

At that moment, Evans only had one platoon that he could immediately dispatch. He grabbed the 3rd Platoon leader, 1st Lt. Edwin T. Leiper, and told him to go with Captain Dwight and Colonel Clarke. Leiper then rounded up his four tank destroyers, M18 Hellcats, and rolled out toward Rechicourt. Leiper and Dwight were leading the column in their own jeeps. It had started to drizzle, and no one could see anything through the rain and fog.

Without warning, explosions rocked the convoy. Dwight stopped his jeep and ran over to

Leiper, asking him if the detonations were the result of direct fire or artillery. Leiper thought they were likely from direct fire weapons, but because of the poor visibility neither of the officers could tell what direction the rounds were coming from. While they debated, an American jeep raced past them from the direction of Bezange.

Dwight ordered Leiper to move his platoon to the northeast and occupy a position atop Hill 279. Leiper hopped back into his jeep and waved his hand forward, signaling his four tank destroyers to roll out. The platoon leader then drove his jeep up a trail and swung east cross country toward Hill 279, unassuming high ground with trees along its slopes.

Before his jeep reached the hill, Leiper, according to an interview, "was startled to see the muzzle of a German tank gun sticking out through the trees at what seemed to be less than thirty feet away. He immediately gave the dispersal signal and the many months of continuous practice proved its worthiness as the platoon promptly deployed with perfect accord. The lead tank destroyer, commanded by Sergeant [Emilio] Staci, had evidently seen the German tank at the same time as Lieutenant Leiper and opened fire immediately. Its first round scored a direct hit, exploding the German tank. The flames of the burning tank revealed others behind it in a V-formation, and Sergeant Staci's next round hit a second German tank…."

Unfortunately, another Mk IV Panzer leveled its gun on Staci's tank destroyer and blasted it. The Hellcat rocked backward from the hit as the armor-piercing round penetrated the gun shield. The resulting shrapnel ricocheted inside the turret, killing the assistant driver, Private Richard Graham, and injuring most of the crew. In retaliation, Sergeant Pat Ferraro's tank destroyer knocked out the panzer that had shot at Staci's Hellcat, avenging Graham's death.

The fight continued. The crew of a fourth panzer saw that the tank destroyers now outnumbered them and began to back up. It was to no avail. The surviving Hellcat crews refused to allow them to leave, aiming their 76mm guns at the retreating panzer. Within seconds, it was a smoldering wreck. A fifth panzer then appeared, but it, too, fell victim to 3rd Platoon. According to the lieutenant, the short engagement lasted only a few minutes, but the Hellcat platoon had emerged victorious.

For the next hour, the two sides continued their game of cat and mouse in the lingering mist and rain. Leiper could not see the panzers, but he could hear them east of his location. By now, the mid-September sun was burning off the fog, and it only remained in the valleys. After a fruitless search for the noisy panzers, Leiper returned to his tank destroyers still on the hill northeast of Rechicourt.

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ABOVE: A tank commander of the American 4th Infantry Division uses his radio to determine the positions of other tanks in his unit. Superior radio communications provided a distinct advantage for the Americans in combat. BELOW: Pictured during training in England prior to their deployment to the European continent, members of Captain Jimmie Leach's B Company, 37th Tank Battalion gather atop one of their M4 Sherman medium tanks for a group photo.

Author's Photo

Around midmorning, Leiper and his men spotted some armored vehicles and infantry moving along the ridgeline that ran from the eastern edge of Rechicourt to Bezange opposite their location. At first Leiper and Dwight thought the tanks were tank destroyers from the other Charlie Company platoons. The appearance of a fifth and sixth tank quickly dissuaded them of that notion, as Hellcat platoons had only four tank destroyers. Someone probably grabbed some binoculars and discerned that the tanks were in fact more Mk IV panzers from the 2113th Panzer Battalion, not a friendly column of Allied tanks.

With the enemy sighted, the crews swiftly brought their 76mm guns onto the targets. Once again, the Americans were able to get the drop on the Germans, firing first. The crack of the 76mm guns echoed across the valley. Less than a second later, one of the panzers shuddered as the armor-piercing round from one of the Hellcats ripped through its steel hull. Seconds later, another panzer brewed up. Before it was over, four or five were ablaze, and not a single Hellcat had been damaged in return. Leiper's luck, though, would not last forever.

A few minutes earlier, Captain Dwight had requested artillery support for his position on the hill northeast of Rechicourt. Within minutes, an artillery spotter plane arrived over the battlefield to coordinate fire. For the panzergrenadiers, the incoming artillery was deadly, and after several devastating barrages the harried infantry scattered and disappeared. Then the aerial forward observer spotted three more panzers trying to flank 3rd Platoon and attack it from the rear. To alert Leiper's platoon, the pilot dove the plane and fired several rockets at the creeping tanks to mark their positions.

When Leiper saw the three panzers, he ordered Sergeant Steve Krewsky's tank destroyer to swing around and open fire. Krewsky's crew responded. Within seconds, Corporal Floyd Eaton opened fire and had knocked out two of the panzers before the third returned fire. The third panzer's round slammed into the Hellcat's right sprocket. The wounded vehicle lurched from the blow, neutralized.

With two tank destroyers now out of action, Leiper decided it was time to pull back and lick his wounds. He ordered Sergeant Ferraro's tank destroyer to move up and tow the other disabled Hellcat out of harm's way. Ferraro then edged his armored vehicle forward. Meanwhile, the third panzer remained unscathed. When the panzer crew saw Ferraro's M18 appear along the crest, it opened fire. As with Staci's Hellcat, the 75mm armor-piercing round penetrated Ferraro's gun shield, and the spall bounced around the turret like a pinball machine, wounding both Corporal Valentine Folk and Pfc. Henry Godwin.

Both Leiper and Dwight realized it was time to hunker down and wait for reinforcements. Sergeant Edwin McGurk, commanding Leiper's last operating Hellcat, reversed his vehicle behind the ridge so that it was now in defilade. The surviving platoon members pulled the

machine guns off the two stricken Hellcats, using them in a perimeter defense. Meanwhile, Captain Dwight kept CCA informed of their precarious situation with his jeep's radio.

Throughout the rest of the morning and into the early afternoon, panzers emerged from the wood line bordering the village of Moncourt, east of their battle position, to probe for Americans in the valley. Each time, McGurk's lone Hellcat would make them pay for their curiosity. In fact, Corporal Dominick Sorrentino, McGurk's gunner, knocked out two more panzers with shots to their rear. The panzergrenadiers also tried their luck advancing from the wood line, but Leiper's dismounted machine guns kept them at bay. Later that day, tanks from the 35th Tank Battalion relieved Leiper's platoon. His tank destroyers had singlehandedly destroyed at least 14 panzers.

Despite the success of the two Charlie Companies, the Germans refused to give up. Another column of 12 Panther tanks attempted to breach the cordon around CCA headquarters. Initially, Colonel Clarke only had artillery to stop them. Nevertheless, the cannon cockers pulled the lanyards on their howitzers and opened fire over direct sights. Clarke was anxious for any unit to reinforce his headquarters. The first to arrive was Captain Jimmie Leach and Baker Company, 37th Tank Battalion.

In an interview for a television documentary, Leach recalled his meeting with Colonel Clarke. "Now, when I arrived at Clarke's CP … I found Colonel Clarke, Colonel [Hal] Pattinson, and Major Pat Hyde in a ditch, and the German tanks were right up in front of them … about a dozen Panther tanks moving right across [from] them."

According to the interview, Clarke then said to Leach, "You see those vehicles?"

"Yes sir," Leach replied.

Pointing at the offending tanks, Clarke declared, "They're German. I want you to get rid of them."

Leach then rallied his platoons as they arrived on the battlefield. Once he had two platoons ready, he gathered his tank commanders and showed them the location of the nearby Panthers. Leach then instructed them: "Mount tanks now. I want you to move guns a-blazing—In line formation [with] all guns a-blazing."

Leach's company was under the direct control of Colonel Clarke and CCA for the time being. After receiving his marching orders from Captain Leach, 1st Lt. Merwin Marston, 3rd Platoon leader, took his Shermans down the Arracourt-Rechicourt road and divided his platoon into two sections. The first, under the command of Sergeant Morphew, rolled directly

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-301-1954-15; Photo: Kurth

A German PzKpfw. V Panther medium tank lies along a roadside near the town of Bures, France, not far from the scene of heavy fighting at nearby Arracourt. Although the Panther was superior to the American Sherman in direct tank versus tank combat, German reconnaissance was inadequate at Arracourt.

down the road, while Marston and the other section were north of the road, occupying a support position.

As they approached Rechicourt, both sections spotted the enemy. Marston spotted two panzers, while Morphew spotted three more from the road. Their training kicked in, and both sections opened fire as instructed, forcing the panzers to back into a patch of woods north of Rechicourt. Marston then ordered his gunners to keep firing to suppress the German panzers and prevent them from returning fire. At first, his plan did not work.

Leach described what happened. "Then the enemy got the range. One round dropped just short of Marston's tanks. The next three hit all three tanks. Only Marston's tank was penetrated, his gunner killed and his loader wounded. The other tanks were hit high, one [on] the turret, the other on the cupola. The latter was repaired and used again later the same day."

By now, Marston had called for help. Within minutes, 2nd Platoon, under the command of Staff Sergeant James N. Barese, had passed by 3rd Platoon, moving into a blocking position south of the Arracourt-Rechicourt road. As ordered, Barese's tankers were firing like mad. Then, according to Leach, "They [the Panthers] abandoned the battlefield. They put those things in high gear, those Panther tanks, and they took off over a hill, and disappeared beyond a big hill on the right."

For several hours, the two platoons maintained these positions until Major William L. Hunter, the 37th Tank Battalion's executive officer, arrived with the rest of B Company and two platoons from Able Company, 37th Tank Battalion. Together, these two companies formed a makeshift unit known as Task Force Hunter with the mission to blunt another German column approaching from the south.

At 3 PM, Task Force Hunter received orders to reinforce Captain Lamison's tank destroyers west of Bezange. When it arrived, one of the A Company tankers saw a panzer atop Hill 297, south of his location. One of the platoon leaders engaged the single panzer, which replied in kind, but neither side drew blood. Still, the panzer sighting was enough for Captain Leach and Captain William L. Spencer, the Able Company commander.

Spencer turned to Major Hunter, "We're not doing any good right here. Why don't we go look for these bastards? Maybe we can find them." Hunter agreed, and all of them proceeded on foot toward Rechicourt, where they believed the rest of the panzers were hiding.

When they neared Rechicourt, they found four panzers laagering in a draw that was south and east of the village. The three officers planned a frontal attack with Able Company in front and Baker Company echeloned to the rear and south of Able. Spencer had only six tanks, but Leach had 14 M4s. Hunter wanted Spencer to fix the enemy with his smaller force, and

Continued on page 78

An American machine-gun crew carries its disassembled weapon up a steep hill on the embattled island of Guam in the Marianas. In the foreground, a soldier carries the tripod across his back. He is followed by squad mates carrying the .30-caliber weapon and ammunition along the trail. American Marines and Army troops overcame stiff resistance to retake the U.S. territory from the Japanese in 1944.

Liberating GUAM

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

THE ISLAND IN THE MARIANAS HAD BEEN U.S. TERRITORY FOR NEARLY HALF A CENTURY WHEN IT WAS OVERRUN BY THE JAPANESE IN 1941.

Above all, the island was defendable. From Ritidian Point in the north to the extreme southern coastline, Guam is 34 miles long, made in an irregular shape covering 228 square miles, the largest of all Pacific islands between Japan and New Guinea. It is surrounded by coral reefs, and the island's mountains rise more than 500 feet.

Prewar Guam had only a few miles of asphalt roads. As soon as the rainy season began in July, the dirt roads would turn to mud. July was also typhoon season, and tides would be unusually high. In July 1944 Guam was the next target for invasion. The Marianas island chain was critical to the American advance against Japan. In American hands, the islands would become major air and naval bases. Guam was also prewar American territory. Won from Spain in the 1898 war and confirmed by treaty in 1901, the island's 22,290 residents (1940 Census), while not American citizens, lived under the protection of the American flag.

After Japan conquered the island on December 10, 1941, the islanders groaned under enemy rule. The Japanese confiscated land and reduced the island's farmers to the level of slaves working in the rice fields. As the war droned on, the Guamanians were impressed to build defenses against American attack.

The Japanese planned to move the veteran 13th Infantry Division from China to the Marianas, but only sent 300 men in an advance detachment. They then assigned the 29th Infantry Division, part of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, to the Marianas, under Lt. Gen. Takeshi Takashima. The Japanese also sent the 29th Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. Kiyoshi Shigematsu. This was divided into the 48th Independent Mixed Brigade (2,800 men) and the 10th Independent Mixed Regiment of 1,900 men.

The Marianas came under the command of the 31st Army, under Lt. Gen. Hideyoshi Obata, who was on an inspection trip on Palau when he learned the Americans were invading Saipan. He rushed back at once but could only get as far as Guam and stayed there, sharing command with Takashima.

The Imperial Navy also had forces on Guam, the 54th Keibitai, consisting of 3,000 naval combat troops under Captain Yukata Sugimoto. The Japanese also had 1,800 men in two naval construction battalions that could be used as infantry and 2,000 men of the naval air force. Originally, the island held 80 bombers and 80 fighters, but all were lost. It all added up to 35,000 men, but only 19,000 of them could be seen as first-line combat troops. Static defenses included a powerful collection of weapons, including dozens of heavy guns and howitzers and 580 machine guns.

American naval forces came under Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly and Task Force 53, and the ground forces under the 3rd Amphibious Corps, commanded by Marine Maj. Gen. Roy Geiger, a 59-year-old Guadalcanal veteran. Conolly, 52, had commanded invasion forces at Sicily and was known as "Close In" Conolly for his commitment to tight naval support of invasions.

The spear point of the corps was Maj. Gen. Allen Turnage's 3rd Marine Division, which had fought on Bougainville. It had three regiments, the 3rd, 9th, and 21st Marines, and added up to 17,465 Leathernecks. The other corps asset was Brig. Gen. Lemuel Shepherd's 1st Marine Provisional Brigade, which consisted of the 4th and 22nd Marine Regiments. The 22nd had suffered an outbreak of filariasis while training in Samoa which led to 1,800 transfers.

There was no designated backup for the two Marine units, but the Army considered its 27th Infantry Division, assigned to invade Tinian, and the 77th "Metropolitan" Infantry Division, originally drawn from New York City, to be the potential reserves. Ultimately, the 77th, under Maj. Gen. Andrew Bruce, was tapped for Guam.

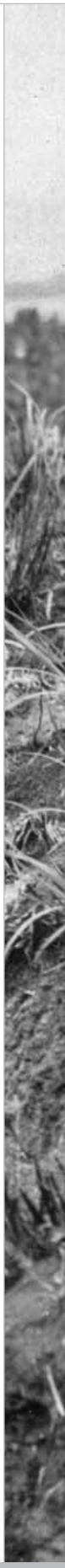
The tactical plan for invading Guam was called Operation Stevedore and was drafted in April 1944. It set the invasion date for June 18, but the assault was postponed for a month due to the harsh fighting on Saipan.

Although Guam had been an American possession for 40 years, the United States had very little information about the island. Geiger asked for submarine patrols to contact Guamanians for up-to-date intelligence about Japanese deployments. His request was denied. The Americans would not have good maps of Guam until the invasion had begun, or even thereafter.

The Americans chose simplicity and daring for their invasion plans: the best place to land on Guam was Tumon Bay north of Agana. Both the Americans and Japanese knew this, and the Japanese defended the bay heavily. Geiger chose to contend with wide coral reefs and shallow water rather than Japanese gunfire. The 3rd Marine Division would attack at Agana, while the 1st Marine Brigade would storm ashore on the Agat beaches, surrounding the Apra Harbor and sealing off the Orote Peninsula.

As the Marines rehearsed the invasion, the Navy began softening up the defenders on Guam and pulverized the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. The Navy began shelling Guam on June 16.

Checking the weather, Conolly decided that W-day would be July 21, and H-hour would be 8:30 AM. The invasion force left Eniwetok atoll



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bound for Guam on July 15 and arrived right on time. Weather conditions on W-day were perfect: clear with a slight overcast and a light wind. Early on the 21st, the Leathernecks loaded into their landing craft. Navy warships opened a massive bombardment at 5:30 AM, joined by air support. At 6 AM, the assault units were in position. The Navy began shelling the shore at 8:03 AM.

The main Marine attack was directed at 2,000 yards of landing beach between Asan Point and Adelup Point, the 3rd Marine Regiment storming ashore at Red Beach 1, the 21st at Green Beach in the center, and the 9th Marines on Blue Beach. South of Orote Peninsula, the 4th Marines were to hit Beaches Yellow 1 and 2 and the 22nd Marines White Beaches 1 and 2. The Americans expected little resistance to the initial landings at Asan. When the bombardment lifted, they returned to their positions and opened fire on the 1st Provisional Brigade.

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Marines pause on one of the invasion beaches on Guam in July 1944. An amphibious tracked vehicle is seen at left, while soldiers take up positions and prepare to advance inland.

Even so, the Asan landings were successful. Within 40 minutes, the Leathernecks were moving. The 3rd Marine Regiment lost 231 killed and wounded. Once the Marines moved inland, the fighting grew tougher. The 3rd Marine Tank Battalion's Shermans waddled up to support the riflemen, and flamethrowers joined the attack. Soon Chonito Cliff was taken.

The 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines also ran into trouble with machine-gun fire. Captain Geary Bundschu, commanding the battalion's A Company, tried to flank the position but was unsuccessful. He sought permission to disengage but was refused. Instead, regiment ordered a second direct attack. Bundschu fell in the assault, and his company was pinned down all day. With all weapons firing, the Marines finally silenced the machine guns with hand grenades. The 2/3 Marines were slowed by determined defense, too. The Marines promptly named the hill "Bundschu Ridge."

At Agat beach, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade faced a wide coral reef and intense enemy fire. The Japanese were protected from the low trajectory naval guns by hills and caves. Japanese troops of the 38th Regiment poured rifle and machine-gun fire on White and Yellow Beaches. Invading landing vehicles were hung up on the coral reef and drew Japanese fire.

Despite the heavy fire, the 22nd Marines stormed ashore according to plan with DUKWs bringing in Sherman tanks. These blasted open strongpoints and rumbled toward Agat village against sporadic resistance.

The 4th Marines also landed on schedule and came under concentrated fire. The 2/4 Marines were halted by Japanese fire from a hill that was not on their maps and were pinned down until noon. The 1/4 Marines found safety in a drainage ditch before regrouping and defeating the Japanese.

General Shepherd himself came ashore at noon, finding the situation critical. Despite successes, his men were exhausted, thirsty, and short of ammunition and water. Communications were a mess. A Japanese counterattack might cause chaos. At 12:45 PM, the 1/22 Marines moved through the rubble of Agat with tank support and took the town.

The Marines headed east to seize a hill, but the Japanese machine gunners were too determined to dislodge. The 4th Marines did not do much better, even with air support. With sunset coming, Shepherd knew the Japanese would launch ferocious night counterattacks and ordered his men to dig in.

Shepherd was right. Takashima was indeed planning night counterattacks, but his forces had suffered heavy casualties and his plans lacked cohesion. Colonel Tsumetaro Suenaga wanted to hurl two battalions at the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade at 5:30 PM. At first, Takashima demurred. Then he agreed. Before launching the attack, Suenaga ordered his regimental colors burned—a sign that his command would be destroyed. The attack went in at 11:30 PM with a heavy mortar barrage on the right flank of the 4th Marines. Half an hour later, Japanese troops accompanied by four clanking T-97 tanks hit the 3/4 Marines. The Americans replied with bazookas and 75mm shells from their Sherman tanks, setting the rivet-hulled T-97s ablaze and breaking up the attack.

The Japanese tried again at 3:30 AM, with Suenaga himself leading the charge. Hit by a mortar fragment, he kept charging until killed by a rifle bullet. Navy and Marine starshells illuminated the scene. The Marines wondered if their enemies were drunk. They later found caves full of liquor.

In the 3rd Marine Division's area, there were fewer attacks, but one hit the 3/3 Marines around midnight, where Pfc. Luther Skaggs, Jr., of Kentucky, was defending a position. A Japanese grenade exploded in his foxhole. Instead of calling for a medic, Skaggs applied a tourniquet and for the next eight hours defended his position. Skaggs received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman on June 15, 1945.

Meanwhile, the 77th Infantry Division's 305th Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Vincent Tanzola, was to start coming ashore, and chaos soon reigned. Shepherd did not want the 2/305, under Lt. Col. Robert Adair, coming ashore, so its landing craft circled around in the tropic heat, men growing exhausted and seasick. They finally landed at 2 PM on White Beach 1, under direct fire, overloaded with 50 pounds of equipment.

The 1/305 had a harder time. Under Lt. Col.

James Landrum, it was held in its landing craft until 5:30 PM. Finally, the 3/305 came ashore in the middle of the night. The 3/305 had to cope with faulty compasses, boats going off course, crossing over the reef, and missing their beach guides. Some of the men did not get ashore until 6 AM.

As dawn broke on July 22, the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade counted the Japanese bodies near their front line. More than 390 were reported near one unit, 200 at another, and 69 at a third. Clearly, the Japanese had taken a major defeat.

At Asan, Shigematsu reasoned that he needed to keep the 3rd Marine Division pinned down with mortars and artillery. His gunners scored a direct hit on the 3rd Division Message Center. Japanese infiltrators tried to break open the seam between the 3rd and 21st Marine Regiments but were defeated.

With the attack defeated, 1/3 Marines were ordered to attack Bundschu Ridge and again failed to take it in the first assault. The Marines changed their tactics, moving two companies to flank the Japanese on the ridge, while two other companies attacked directly ahead. At 10 AM, the attack went in with Company C of the 1/3 heading around to the right. Japanese fire stopped them cold. Companies A and E moved straight ahead against the ridge backed by tanks, half-tracks, and mortars. This attack succeeded. The Marines reached the top of the ridge. Kentucky Marine Pfc. Leonard Mason received the Medal of Honor for his heroism during the action.

Even though the Marines took the ridge, they were too few to hold the ground—the 3rd Marines suffered 615 casualties on July 22. Company A of 1/3 Marines was no longer effective. The 21st Marines had an easier time, sending out patrols, and 9th Marines took the old Piti Island Navy Yard against light resistance.

Meanwhile, 3/9 was loaded into LVTs and assigned to seize the small Cabras Island off shore in the early afternoon, under heavy naval fire. Cabras turned out to be lightly defended. Meanwhile, in 1st Marine Provisional Brigade's sector Shepherd struggled to restore order to his jumbled command. The 305th was in bad shape from its sloppy unloading. It took all morning to get it into position to relieve the 2/4 Marines. The 22nd Marines attacked from positions north of Agat toward Old Agat Road, seeking to isolate Orote Peninsula. The 4th Marines advanced on Mount Alifan. The 1/4 reached the summit but found it too dangerous to stay there if the Japanese counterattacked and withdrew to a more defensible position.

That evening, Takashima dithered again, reluctant to make a major counterattack. He was determined to hold the Orote Airfield and the old U.S. prewar Marine barracks. At the same time, Geiger decided to land the 306th Infantry on White Beach starting at noon on the 23rd.

When the 306th went in, the Army men found trouble again—their DUKWs and LVTs could not cross the coral reefs. Vehicles had to be pulled ashore by bulldozers. Army General Bruce complained about how his men were being treated, requesting that his last regiment come ashore and the division be put under his command as a unified force, not as an attachment to Shepherd's brigade. Geiger was reluctant to land his floating reserve but decided to do so on the 24th.

The 307th's experience coming ashore was similar to the other two regiments, with the added agony of a storm at sea that created swells. While the GIs suffered seasickness, the Marines advanced through rice paddies, swamps, and hills. Numerous 14-inch shells from the *Pennsylvania* shredded Japanese positions around Mt. Tenjo.

Shepherd now prepared to isolate the Japanese forces on the Orote Peninsula with the 22nd Marines. Naval barrages, air strikes, and tank support buttressed the attack on July 24. The covering fire blasted the barricades and sealed up Japanese caves. The Japanese sent in five tanks, and the American Shermans made swift work of them. But in four days of fighting, the 1st Brigade had suffered 1,003 casualties and 188 killed in action.

On July 23, the 3rd Marines attacked the Japanese right flank supported by aircraft and division and corps artillery. The 2/3 Marines tried to flank Bundschu Ridge and found the Japanese had abandoned most of it. The Japanese counterattacked against 3/3, and its commander warned his bosses that his manpower situation was critical—A Company was down to 40 men.

Map © 2014 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

American Marines and Army troops landed on the beaches of western Guam and pushed across the island, taking control while battling strong Japanese resistance, dense jungle growth, disease, and mountainous terrain. The campaign for Guam lasted from July 21 through August 10, 1944.

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Taking cover behind an advancing M4 Sherman medium tank, American Marines proceed with caution through the Guam jungle. The Sherman was more powerful than any armored vehicle the Japanese could muster, while its 75mm gun also proved its worth against hardened enemy positions.

On July 24, the Marines attacked again with the 21st and 3rd seeking to reach Fonte Plateau and tie together their exposed flanks. To the south, 9th Marines tried to link up with 1st Brigade. It failed; however, the Japanese seemed to be abandoning defensive positions.

By July 25, the Americans were beginning to address their supply and organization problems, landing defense battalions, combat engineer Seabees, and water tanks. That day, the 2/9 took up the attack on Fonte Plateau at 9:30 AM with effectiveness despite an incident of friendly fire that resulted in 15 Marine casualties. The 2/21 and 3/21 Marines also advanced behind pulverizing air and artillery support, finding 250 dead Japanese lying in their ravine.

The 9th Marines did better, taking high ground north of the Aguada River and capturing several supply dumps intact. In the dumps they found great quantities of soft drinks and Asahi beer. However, the 3rd Marine Division was holding a line 9,000 yards long, a severe stretch for the depleted force. Some of Shepherd's units were down to 50 percent strength.

July 25 was intended to be a day of reorganization and rest for the invaders, but fighting continued anyway as Shepherd worked to seal off the neck of the Orote Peninsula, facing Japanese pillboxes, fortifications, and more tanks. The defenders were mostly naval troops of the 54th Keibitai, under Commander Asaichi Tamai. Japanese Type 97 tanks, armed with 47mm guns, could not cope with the American M-4 Shermans, and the Japanese lost eight tanks. Some 2,500 Japanese troops were now trapped on the peninsula.

Tamai realized he had only one choice now: a night banzai charge by all of his men—to link up with Takashima. He passed out every weapon his ammunition officers could find. Then he issued all the beer, saké, and synthetic Scotch on the peninsula to build up the men's courage for the grand assault.

Luckily for Tamai and his porous plans, Takashima was planning the same thing—a massive night assault by his 10,000 men, coordinated with Tamai's attack. It did not seem like a good idea, but on the 24th Tokyo radioed Takashima: "Defend Guam to the death. We believe good news will be forthcoming."

With that in hand, Takashima assembled the 18th Regiment and the 48th Brigade. They would strike from the Fonte Plateau against 2/9, under Lt. Col. Robert Cushman, and drive all the way to Red Beach 2. Meanwhile, two battalions of the 18th Regiment would hit the 21st Marines and another battalion the left wing of the 9th Marines. They would use the shallow Asan and Nidual River valleys to take advantage of the 800-yard gap between the two Marine regiments.

Heavy rain began pouring from the Guam sky on the afternoon of the 25th. GIs and Leathernecks huddled in flooded foxholes. The Japanese assembled unseen against the 3rd Marine Division. However, the attack on the 1st Provisional Brigade went badly, with most of the naval attackers apparently drunk. They charged forward in white uniforms, which made them highly visible in the dark.

Soon starshells illuminated the scene for the Marine artillery. Many of the Japanese troops fled into swamps. Incredibly, they regrouped and hurled a second assault at the 1st Brigade. The Marines called it their own version of the "Marianas Turkey Shoot." One Marine platoon found 256 Japanese dead in front of its positions without losing a single Leatherneck.

As the attacks failed, the Marines were content to save their own casualties by letting the survivors flee behind a curtain of shells. Dawn found 400 Japanese sailors dead on the field and 600 more dying or wounded for a loss of only 75 Marines.

In the northern attack, the Japanese jumped off at midnight. The Marines relied on discipline, training, and marksmanship to fend off the assaults. The 1/21 had only 250 men to hold a front of 2,000 yards, which would normally be held by 600 men. Turnage ordered his engineers, headquarters, service, and motor pool men to be ready to go to the front.

At 3 AM on July 26, signal flares told Major Chusa Maruyama to lead his 2/18 Regiment against the American 1/21 Marines at one of their weakest points. In the light of the signal flares, the American machine guns mowed down the attackers. The 21st Marine line turned into clumps of men trying to hold positions and stay alive under the waves of Japanese attacks.

The second portion of Takashima's assault was 3/18 Regiment, led by Major Setsuo Yokioka. They captured two machine-gun positions but were stopped by a Marine counterattack. The Japanese found the half-mile gap between the 21st and 9th Marines and poured through it, seizing the high ground. Colonel Wendell Duplantis, leading the defenders, prepared to destroy his cipher device and mobilized three platoons of his weapons company, backed by cooks, bakers, clerks, and other rear-area Marines, to face the Japanese.

Some of Yukioka's men made it into the 3rd Division's headquarters area, which surprised everyone there, but the headquarters and 3rd Motor Transport Battalion men reached for their rifles. They fended off the attack, but some of the Japanese broke into the division's hospital area at 6:30 AM. Most of the severely wounded had been evacuated to the beach, but there were still doctors, corpsmen, and less seriously wounded, and the latter held off the Japanese.

The Japanese advantages of attacking from high ground by night into seams in American lines disintegrated as Takashima's armor got lost in the darkness and could not engage the Americans. Worse, while the Japanese troops

had their morale raised by the heavy issuance of beer, saké, and wine, the liquor also unraveled discipline. By dawn, 90 percent of the Japanese officers involved in the attack lay dead or mortally wounded.

Facing certain defeat, not knowing what to do, the leaderless Japanese survivors reacted in typical fashion. They took off their helmets, placed primed grenades on the tops of their heads, replaced the helmets, and waited for the inevitable. On the extreme left of the American beachhead, the 48th Brigade made seven separate attacks against the 3rd Marines and 2/9 Marines, who were low on ammunition.

Nearby, Captain Louis Wilson, commanding Company F, 9th Marines, led his troops against the Japanese. He received the Medal of Honor for gallantry under fire. Incredibly, Wilson not only survived this battle, he stayed in the Marines and became the 26th Commandant of the Corps, serving in that role from 1975 to 1979.

The 48th Brigade took a beating in its failed counterattacks, suffering more than 950 dead. The Japanese tactics and operations were

National Archives

sloppy. They captured most of the mortars and ammunition of the 21st Marines, for example, but did not turn them against the Americans. When the Marines counterattacked to recapture their property, the Japanese did not destroy the mortars. Daybreak found weary Marines in possession of the battlefield, evacuating their wounded, and inspecting the more than 3,500 dead Japanese lying in heaps. Marine casualties were 166 killed and 645 wounded.

Geiger chose to proceed cautiously. He went ashore at about 1 PM and ordered his men to bring up more ammunition, tighten the perimeter, and string barbed wire against further attack.

On the other side, Takashima and his staff reviewed the results of their futile attack. As many as 95 percent of the attacking officers lay dead. Worse, 90 percent of the weapons were destroyed. Nearly 4,000 of his men were dead. The only purpose to the struggle now would be to inflict damage on the Americans as they moved inland. Takashima's counterattack was

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ABOVE: U.S. Army soldiers of Company B, 305th Regiment, 77th Infantry Division advance along a dirt road on Guam. The Army troops experienced delays in landing and heavy enemy fire on the landing beaches. LEFT: The smoking hulks of Japanese tanks, knocked out by the superior firepower of American Sherman tanks, smolder along a trail on the island.

the decisive battle of the Guam campaign.

Geiger had to continue his attack while assuming the enemy still had formidable resources. Studying his casualty reports and maps, Geiger decided not to commit the 77th Division until the Orote Peninsula had been captured, the Fonte Plateau taken, and the front line secured.

The first task was destroying the Japanese defenses on the Orote Peninsula. This was a job for Shepherd and the 22nd Marines on the right and the 4th Marines on the left. The attack was to go in at 7 AM on July 26, with the Army's 902nd Artillery firing the first of more than 1,000 rounds in deep support. The Americans brought up Marine and naval artillery. Channeled up the Agat-Sumay road, the 22nd's advance came under Japanese mortar and artillery fire. Meanwhile, the 4th Marines, advancing on the right, met light resistance.

The Japanese pounded the Marines with mortar and machine-gun fire, forcing the Americans to bring up tanks, which pushed through the Japanese defenses only to uncover another line of pillboxes and dugouts just east of the old Marine barracks area.

The 4th Marines had an easier day but faced a number of Japanese banzai attacks. Curiously, after dark Japanese defenders, instead of forming up for a suicide attack, broke and ran, an unusual spectacle.

On the 29th, the offensive resumed, and the 22nd found the enemy in front of them collapsing. The Leathernecks took the old Marine barracks ground by noon and moved on the outskirts of Sumay.

By contrast, the 4th Marines had a tougher day. They fought through thick undergrowth and against strong defensive lines. The 4th Marines' commander, Lt. Col. Alan Shapley, asked Shepherd, who was visiting the front, for tank support. Shepherd sent up two platoons of Marine Sherman tanks and asked Bruce for a like number of Army Shermans. Bruce had only landed his M5 Stuart light tanks, but he obligingly sent them up. The tank-infantry teams went straight to work, grinding Japanese positions.

At dawn on the 29th, Shepherd unleashed a massive artillery and naval bombardment. When the Leathernecks attacked at 8 AM, they were supported by every tank Shepherd could find, including M-10 tank destroyers. By noon, the airfield was captured.

With the Orote Peninsula and victory in hand, 1/22 and 2/22 were ordered into reserve, while 3/22 cleaned up the last resistance. On the afternoon of the 29th, the 2/22 made the victory formal. With Vice Admiral Raymond Spruance, "Howlin' Mad" Smith, Geiger, and

AP Photo/Joe Rosenthal

American Marines survey the death toll following one of several Japanese banzai charges on Guam. Although the Japanese charges sometimes temporarily penetrated American lines and inflicted casualties, the result was predictable. Japanese losses were heavy and irreplaceable.

Shepherd present, an honor guard from 2/22 raised Old Glory over the battered remains of the prewar Marine barracks. Total U.S. casualties for Orote Peninsula were 116 killed, 721 wounded, and 38 missing. Some 2,500 Japanese soldiers died.

The 3rd Marine Division was short on men and ammunition, thinly stretched, and all hands needed a rest. Geiger believed that the Japanese night attack of the 26th was the last offensive shot in the Nipponese locker, and he was determined to regain the initiative, ordering his force into a major assault against the Japanese line.

On the morning of the 27th, the 3rd Marine Division attacked on a broad front from Fonte in the north to Mt. Tenjo in the south. The 21st took the lead in the center, driving on the high ground with its radio towers and main north-south power line. The 2/21 was held up by swampy ground and Japanese machine-gun fire and required tanks moving around the swamps to blast open the defenses. By late afternoon, 2/21 was just short of the power lines.

The 1/21 had a tougher day, halted by Japanese troops dug in along the slopes of a small hill. The Americans brought in guns, planes, and tanks, but the Japanese would not retreat. The 3/21 on the right flank faced less resistance but was delayed by trying to keep connected to the Leathernecks on its left.

At the Fonte Plateau, 2/3 faced moderate resistance as it bypassed enemy strongpoints. The 2/9 had a hard day, too, being hit by friendly fire. It spent an hour reorganizing but by midafternoon had reached its portion of the power lines.

Studying his maps, Geiger ordered the Fonte Plateau captured on the 28th, and all other Marines to advance in their sectors. Reinforced by the Army's 3/307, the 9th Marines attacked the Mt. Chachao-Mt. Alutom line against the usual determined defense.

On the left flank, 2/3 and 2/9 advanced on the Fonte Plateau, moving into a large depression that the Marines named "the pit." Even small Leatherneck patrols working into the pit came under fire from many directions, halting their advance. With Turnage's permission, Colonel Cushman delayed the attack until he could bring up heavy demolition charges, flamethrowers, and rocket launchers to the pit

At dawn on the 29th, Cushman opened up with crisscrossing fire into the pit. After the bombardment, Marine assault teams moved in, ordered to kill any Japanese left. The Marines cleared the pit without a single casualty.

The 21st and 9th Marines also resumed their advance and found only sporadic enemy fire before achieving their objectives. The 2/9 had lost 75 percent casualties in two of its rifle companies and 50 percent in its third.

Takashima saw the importance of holding Fonte Plateau and had resisted with determination, hurling in 11 separate counterattacks, all of which had been failures and cost him at least 800 irreplaceable men.

Meanwhile, the bulk of the Army's 77th Division awaited its opportunity to contribute to the battle. The men had recovered from their seasickness and were ready to go but literally stuck in the muddy terrain. Geiger drew up his plan for the final liberation of Guam. The major task was to drive north. The 77th would be on the right, the 3rd Marine Division on the left, with 1st Marine Brigade mopping up the remaining Japanese holdouts on the southern half of the island. The 3rd Marine Division began struggling toward Fonte Plateau, while the Army's 305th Infantry Regiment began heading toward Mt. Tenjo.

Company A of 3/305 reached the top of Mt. Tenjo at 8:30 AM on July 28. The 2/307 took over and consolidated, hooking up with the 3rd Marine Division on the left, and Phase One of the Guam operation was complete. American casualties were 5,733, with 513 killed in action, most of them Marines. The Provisional Brigade reported 75 percent efficiency, 3rd Marine Division 80 percent efficiency, and 77th Division in excellent shape. Japanese dead were estimated at 4,192.

On the 28th, Takashima personally took over the defense of the Fonte Plateau. When the position was lost, Takashima ordered his men to withdraw and reassemble north of the Agana River. Marine machine gunners caught the general and his party and opened fire. Takashima died immediately.

Command of Guam's defenses went up the chain to Obata. As senior Japanese officer on the island, he now had to command the troops as well as the entire 31st Army tasked with holding the Marianas. He promptly set up his headquarters in the central Guam town of Ordot. He concentrated 1,000 surviving combat troops, 800 naval infantry, 2,500 support troops, 12 tanks, and some guns into a motley force.

Obata ordered a withdrawal to Mt. Santa Rosa to establish two blocking positions, one near Finegayan, the other near Barrigada village. The Japanese defense would be a series of small unit delaying actions. However, the Americans did not know the depth of the Japanese troubles. Geiger decided to proceed cautiously.

After two days of deploying troops, passing out ammunition, and typing up memos, the Americans were ready. The 3rd Marine Division had to shift slightly to get in position for attack, while the 77th would have to drive across the waist of the island and realign its regiments into position. The Marine objectives were Tiyan airfield and Finegayan, while the Army aimed for Barrigada and Mt. Santa Rosa.

On the night of July 30-31, Army, Marine,

and Navy artillery blasted Japanese positions. The Marines launched their attack at 6:30 AM and faced sporadic fire and enemy mines. Within four hours, the Leathernecks entered Agana. By noon the entire town was under Marine control. The Leathernecks found Guam's capital badly damaged and filled with mines and booby traps.

Against slim opposition, the Marines moved fast. The 21st faced one brief firefight with an enemy pillbox, reaching its objective line by 2 PM. The 9th's forward movement was held up by difficult terrain and a few Japanese defending a supply dump near Ordot. They counterattacked with two tanks, and Marine bazookas disposed of them.

The 77th drove across Guam's waist and found no resistance until late afternoon. Bruce used his troops' fatigue in his favor. He told the 307th's Colonel Hamilton: "Capture that [the cross-island] road, and we'll bring up your breakfast." The 307th did so, and Bruce sent forward captured Japanese salmon and candy.

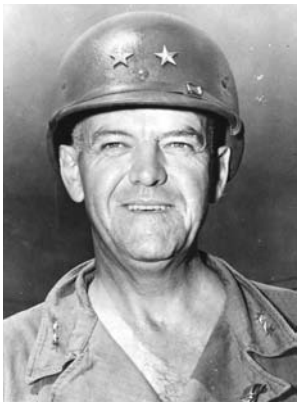
By nightfall on July 31, the 77th had almost reached Pago Bay. The next day, August 1, the Army reached the east coast. By noon, the 307th had reached and secured the Agana-Pago Bay road. By the evening of August 2, Geiger had both of his divisions in position for the final assault. The 77th also won the respect of the Leathernecks, who now called it the "77MarDiv," a high accolade. Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith wrote that the 77th showed a "combat efficiency to a degree one would only expect from veteran troops."

With a third of the island remaining to be liberated, the outcome was clear. Geiger intended to fight his battle in a manner designed to keep American casualties low. His next objective was the town of Barrigada, which had a huge reservoir capable of pumping 20,000 gallons of water a day. The "Battle of the Reservoir" would be the 77th Division's next major fight.

Progress remained slow. Bruce hurled his two regiments forward on August 2 and ran into trouble. The 3/307 was halted by machine-gun fire. One battle swirled around a newly built Buddhist temple and a two-story greenhouse. Bruce ordered a coordinated artillery, tank, and infantry assault at 1:30 PM, and it failed. By day's end, the 77th had fallen short of its objectives and suffered 125 casualties.

Things improved the following day. On August 3, a walking barrage preceded the 307th's riflemen, who took the Barrigada Well three hours after going forward. The 3/307 reached the top of Mount Barrigada by midafternoon. The next day, the slow, methodical advance continued. However, tragedy occurred when a signals snafu resulted in Marines of 2/9 and tanks supporting the 307th swapping fire. On August 8, the Marines caused chaos when their own artillery fired on 2/306.

All: National Archives



ABOVE (l to r): Major General Andrew Bruce commanded the 77th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army during the liberation of Guam. U.S. Marine Pfc. Frank Witek lost his life and received a posthumous Medal of Honor for heroism on Guam. Marine Pfc. Leonard Mason, a native of Kentucky, was a recipient of the Medal of Honor for bravery under fire during the campaign to liberate Guam. TOP: A U.S. Marine Corps howitzer belches smoke during a bombardment of Japanese troop concentrations and machine-gun positions on Guam.

It was clear now, though, that the Japanese were conceding most of the good defensive positions and were falling back on Mt. Santa Rosa in the island's northeast corner for a last stand.

August 5 saw the Army struggling through some of Guam's worst jungles amid pouring rain, up and down slippery trails. Tanks and tank destroyers led the way, probing for sniper fire. By evening, the 305th had advanced 2,000 yards.

That evening, 1/305 tried to dig foxholes amid the coral with little success. Logically, two Japanese medium tanks and a platoon of infantrymen charged the battalion's A Company. The Americans gunned down the infantry, but their machine guns were less effective against the rivet-hulled tanks. The bazooka men had no luck either, and the tanks rumbled through the perimeter into the company area. After a few minutes of shellfire and flares, the tanks retired unscathed, leaving behind 46 wounded men—33 of whom had to be evacuated—and 15 dead.

The two tanks turned up the next day, when E Company of the 2/305 met up with them on the only trail in the area. The tanks were in defilade when the Americans advanced, and they fired into the trees along the trail. Shermans were unable to close with the enemy in the jungle terrain. The Americans brought up heavy machine guns and 81mm mortars, forc-

ing the Japanese crews to abandon their tanks, leaving behind three killed in exchange for 16 dead and 32 wounded Americans.

On August 6, the 77th Division's chief of staff, Colonel Douglas McNair, set up a new divisional command post about 600 yards south of the village of Ipapao. McNair noticed a small hut approximately 200 yards off the trail and set out to investigate. A sniper hiding in the building fired a single round, killing McNair instantly. McNair was the highest ranking American officer killed in the battle. McNair's father, Lt. Gen. Leslie McNair, head of Army ground forces, had been killed two weeks earlier by friendly fire in Normandy, the highest ranking American officer to be killed in the European Theater.

ABOVE: Prior to the American landings on Guam in 1944, the occupying Japanese fortified high ground and took advantage of the natural protection of caves, in which they placed artillery, machine guns, and troop concentrations. In this photo, U.S. Marines cautiously approach a cave opening to confirm that its Japanese occupants are dead. BELOW: In close combat, a pair of American Marines watches the exit of a fortified Japanese bunker on Guam after hurling a smoke grenade inside.

Both: National Archives

Bruce ordered 3/305 to sweep the area thoroughly. The Americans found 150 Japanese only a third of a mile from the planned divisional command post. Bruce wasted no time sending in a platoon of Sherman tanks to support his two assault companies. After a six-hour firefight, the area was secured.

By now the 77th Division was closing in on the last Japanese redoubt in the sector, the Yigo-Mount. Santa Rosa defenses. Yigo was a small village located at a junction of narrow roads amid the usual thick undergrowth, but Mount Santa Rosa was a misnomer—it only stood 800 feet high. The Navy steamed in with battleships, cruisers, and destroyers on August 3 and treated the mountain to point-blank fire for days.

The main effort was to be by the 77th in the Yigo-Mount Santa Rosa area. Bruce's plan called for a turning movement, with the division shifting the axis of its advance 90 degrees. The 306th would move along the division's left boundary supported by an attached company of tanks from the 706th Tank Battalion. After passing Mount Santa Rosa, it would turn eastward and seize the area north of the mountain. The 307th would take Yigo and then block the westward slopes of Mount Santa Rosa, backed by the rest of the 706th Tank Battalion. The 305th would be on the right and support the 307th to block off the southern slopes.

All three regiments jumped off at 7 AM on August 7. The attack on Yigo went in at noon, backed by the usual heavy Navy and Army artillery barrage. Bruce's plan called for the barrage to lift precisely at noon, so that the tanks would be in position to lead the attack. The tanks were 20 minutes late getting to the head of the infantry column. They swept ahead and disposed of Japanese machine-gun positions—and ran into an ambush. As the M5s climbed a slight rise, Japanese fire ripped open two of the tanks. The Shermans behind them came into action, but one threw a track and another stalled. The Americans were pinned down by rifle and machine-gun fire.

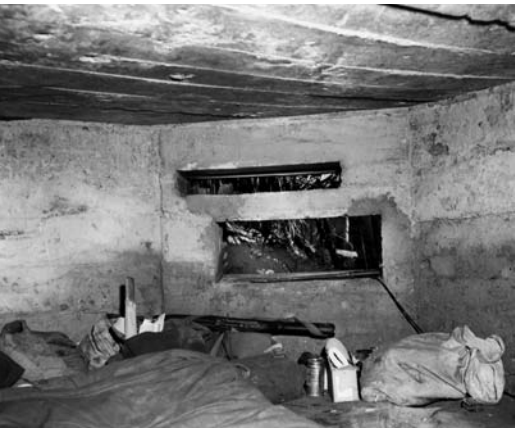
The tanks bypassed the roadblocks to enter Yigo, but the infantry was still pinned down. Lt. Col. Gordon Kimbrough, commanding 3/306, took quick action, detaching a platoon to move through the jungle terrain to take the defenders in the rear. His move worked perfectly. The Americans wiped out the strongpoint, and the offensive resumed.

Even so, the offensive was moving slowly. Yigo was taken by nightfall, and the 307th moved 1,000 yards past the village. The 306th achieved its ground through tank-infantry cooperation. The lead company of infantry was

assigned a platoon of tanks. These took positions on either side of the road with one tank guarding the rear. Doing so, they overcame Japanese machine gunners. On the right, the 305th used bulldozers to blaze a trail.

In the early evening, the Japanese tried their usual trick of infiltration attacks against the Americans but were beaten off. The last Japanese tank-infantry attack of the campaign was launched against the 3/306 along the road north of Yigo. Three tanks and Japanese infantry attacked the Americans. The infantry pinned down the American bazooka teams, while the tanks fired shells into the surrounding trees. The GIs fired a light machine gun into the 6x10-inch forward opening of one tank, killing the crew. A rifle grenade ripped open the thin armor of the second tank. The third towed away one of the damaged tanks. The Japanese killed six Americans and wounded 16, while losing at least 18 dead.

On the morning of August 8, the 306th headed up the trail to Lulog village against



weakening Japanese resistance. The 306th killed more than 100 Japanese as they moved to within a few hundred yards of the ocean. The 307th slogged its way up to the summit of Mt. Santa Rosa, killing 35 Japanese. Incredibly, they found no enemy, and by 2 PM Lt. Col. Thomas Manuel, who commanded the regiment, was standing astride its summit.

By dusk, Bruce could look at his maps and see that his division had achieved all of its objectives in the northern sector of Guam, at a tolerable cost of 30 killed and 104 wounded, while counting 528 Japanese bodies. The only problem was that some 2,000 Japanese men expected to be at Mt. Santa Rosa were not there. That was a problem for the 3rd Marine Division, also conducting a slow and methodical advance.

The Marine drive began at 6:30 AM on August 2 with two regiments abreast, 3rd Marines on the left and 9th on the right, connected to the 77th Division. The Marines had a hard time advancing in the dense undergrowth, gaining only one mile by evening.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Although many Japanese soldiers chose suicide rather than surrender, 221 of those enemy soldiers taken prisoner are shown on the deck of an American transport vessel, headed for a prisoner of war camp in Hawaii. Japanese holdouts were captured on Guam as late as the 1970s. LEFT: The interior of a Japanese pillbox that once housed an antitank gun near Agat Beach is shown in this photograph.

While the 3rd Division advanced, the 1st Provisional Brigade was getting a bit of a break. Patrols to the south were not finding many Japanese defenders, the largest being a group of about 12 holed up in a cave near Mt. Lamlam.

On August 3, Geiger brought the 1st Provisional Brigade up to an area behind 3rd Division's lines so that it could advance on the extreme left of the line in the final drive into northern Guam. That same day, the 3rd Marine Division attack continued. The 3rd Marine Regiment moved out at 7 AM against slight opposition and covered 3,000 yards before nightfall. The 9th Marines had a harder time, hitting a company-sized Japanese unit dug in on either side of the Finegayan-Santa Rosa road just below Junction 177.

Backed by tanks and heavy weapons, Marines of B Company overcame the position by 10 AM. They counted 105 enemy dead.

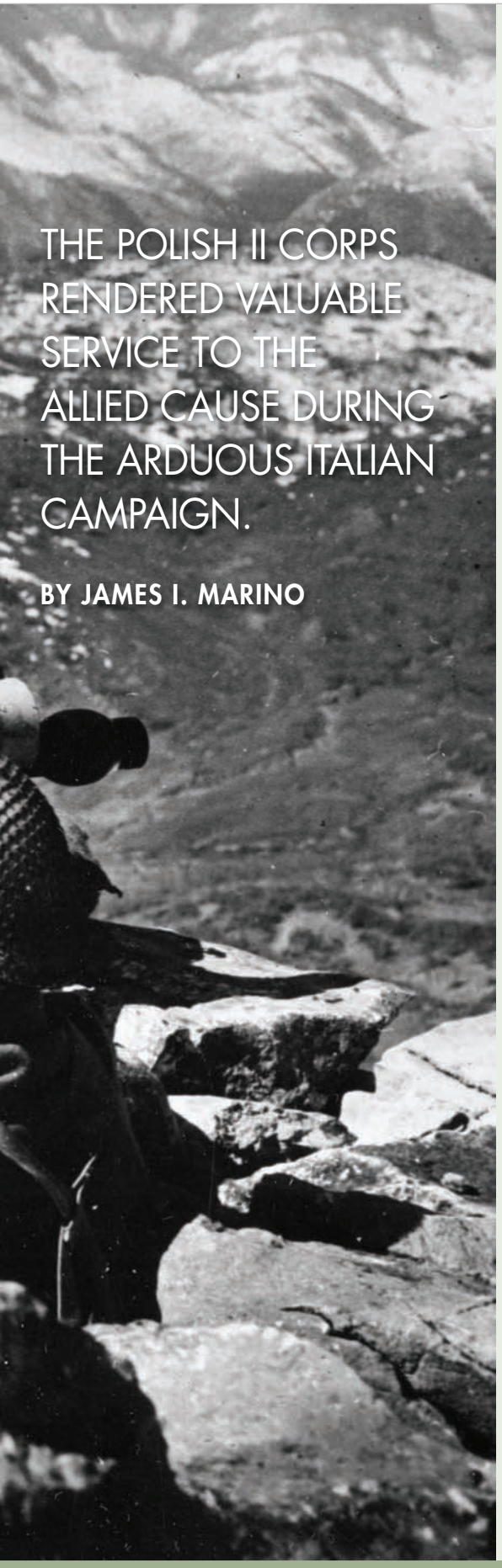
Some 500 yards ahead at Junction 177, the 9th Marines found more formidable defenses. Japanese troops sited their machine guns in ravines and ditches, almost invisible in the dense undergrowth. The heroism of 23-year-old Marine Pfc. Frank Witek helped crack the Japanese defenses. Witek received a posthumous Medal of Honor. On Sunday, May 20, 1945, General Alexander Vandegrift, the commandant of the Marine Corps, presented Witek's mother with the medal at a ceremony at Chicago's Soldier Field, before 50,000 people.

At 8 AM, Turnage sent his division's reconnaissance company to patrol northward to Ritidian Point. Later in the day, Company I of 3/21 and Company A of the Marines' 3rd Tank Battalion joined the reconnaissance team. Lt. Col. Hartnoll Withers of the tank battalion was in charge of this ad hoc group. Things went wrong right away. First, the task force lacked fuel to return home. Next, the lead vehicle missed the key turn to the left and continued eastward through enemy lines and smack into Japanese fire. The defending Imperial Marines, backed by 75mm and 105mm field pieces, machine guns, and tanks. The Leathernecks took cover while their tanks ripped open the Japanese positions. That evening, the Japanese kept the heat on the Marines with mortar fire, flares, and patrols in the 9th Marines area.

On August 4, the Marines reorganized their men, putting the 21st Marine Regiment in the center and gaining ground against slim resistance. The next day the 3rd Marines moved forward, facing more trouble from undergrowth than the enemy, gaining 1,000 yards. The 21st Marines also advanced easily, but the 9th Marines and their two supporting tank pla-

Continued on page 79

Polish Power IN ITALY



THE POLISH II CORPS RENDERED VALUABLE SERVICE TO THE ALLIED CAUSE DURING THE ARDUOUS ITALIAN CAMPAIGN.

BY JAMES I. MARINO

DESPITE THE NAZI CONQUEST OF EUROPEAN NATIONS DURING World War II, individual soldiers from the occupied countries rose again to fight the German Army, and the largest army in exile to fight the Germans was Polish. Polish forces fought in North Africa, on the Eastern Front, in Western Europe, and on the Italian peninsula.

The Polish II Corps carried the fight to the Axis during the Italian Campaign. Thousands of former Soviet prisoners and scattered exiles provided the bulk of the corps. The Polish soldiers traveled a long, hard road to fight in Italy. British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wrote in his memoirs, "Poles played a part which gained them the admiration of their comrades and the respect of the enemy."

According to Polish historian Michael Alfred Peszke, "The Polish Army from the Soviet Union is the keystone to the history of the Polish endeavor in World War II."

Following the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland in 1939, some 1.5 million Polish citizens found themselves arrested and transported to Soviet labor camps and prisons. After the Nazis struck Russia, British diplomats led by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden indicated to the Soviets that the exiles could provide a potent source of manpower for the antifascist struggle. On July 30, 1941, the leader of the Polish government in exile, General Wladyslaw Sikorski, reached an agreement with the Soviets. Poles residing on Russian soil after September 1939 were allowed to join the Polish armed forces, responsible only to the Polish government and led by Polish officers.

All: National Archives

ABOVE: Major General Wladislaw Anders commanded the Polish II Corps from training through arduous combat during the Italian campaign and became a national hero in his native land.
LEFT: The mountainous terrain of Italy was ideal for defense, and the Germans utilized it to the utmost during World War II. In this photo, a machine-gun crew of the Polish II Corps mans its weapon on high ground in May 1944, a few weeks prior to the successful assault on the ruins of the abbey of Monte Cassino.

Major General Wladislaw Anders was given command of the proposed army. Born in a Russian-controlled area of Poland, he graduated from high school in Warsaw and continued on to Riga Technical University. In 1913, he joined the Russian Army and entered the cavalry school. During World War I, he commanded a cavalry unit and was wounded five times. In 1917, he studied at the Academy of the General Staff in St. Petersburg. Then he took part in the formation of the Polish Corps, under General Jozef Dowbor-Musnicki. After the surrender of Germany, he returned to Poland in 1918 and joined the Polish Army and became chief of staff of Greater Poland. During the Russo-Polish War in 1920, he directed the Pozna Uhlans. He entered the Ecole Superieure de Guerre in Paris and became the military commander of Warsaw in 1925. In 1932, he led the Polish team riding in the equestrian competition of the Nations Cup in Nice.

Between 1928 and 1939, Anders commanded the cavalry brigades based in eastern Poland. He fought against the Wehrmacht in September 1939. After fighting along East Prussia, his cavalry task group marched south toward Hungary and engaged the Red Army invading Poland on September 17. Wounded, the Soviets captured him, and the NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) imprisoned him in Lubyanka Prison and later in Lwów.

Released after 18 months of captivity, Anders was tasked to form the Polish Army in the Soviet Union. He distrusted all things Soviet and later wrote in his autobiography, "God only knows how many were murdered and how many died under the terrible conditions in the prisons and forced labor camps."

The communist government refused to allow the Polish soldiers to head to Britain to

join the units forming there. Soviet Premier Josef Stalin would only open the gulag gates to provide soldiers for his own army. The Soviets noticed two clear attitudes among the Poles: disdain for everything communist and complete trust between the soldiers and officers.

By November 1941, there were 40,000 Polish men at arms, 60 percent without boots, numerous Polish women, and hundreds of children to be cared for. The Soviets reduced the food rations. Most of the welfare aid for the gathering Polish citizens came from over 800 American charitable services, which enabled the Poles to set up 105 schools and 58 old people's homes in Russia. By March 1942, the army's strength reached 67,500 soldiers.

By April 1942, approximately 26,000 Polish veterans were organized into two divisions in Uzbekistan under the command of Anders, but the communists provided only 8,651 rifles and 16 artillery pieces. After long political wrangling and a direct appeal from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in a letter dated July 17, 1942, Stalin finally agreed to allow the Poles to move to Iran as part of the Allied occupation force there. Anders led an exodus of 112,000 men, women, and children. Unfortunately, over 4,000 soldiers died in Russia waiting for Stalin's permission.

From Iran, the Poles moved to Iraq and came under British command for further training and equipping. By August 1942, an additional 44,000 soldiers and 26,000 civilians, refugees and exiles from around the world, joined them. Although the majority of these were ethnic Poles, there were also members of other nationalities who joined the units of II Corps, most notably Jews, Belarusians, and Ukrainians.

Historian Thomas Brooks noted in *The War North of Rome,* "Anders matched his men in fighting spirit and toughness of mind and body, with a fiery Polish patriotism."

The Polish eagle became a prominent decoration on British-supplied helmets throughout the corps. When their training ended in June 1943, American General George S. Patton, Jr., reviewed the Polish soldiers and described them as "the best looking troops, including the British and American, that I have ever seen."

At the Quebec Conference in August, Roosevelt and Churchill decided to send the Polish Corps to Italy. Churchill wrote to Chief of Staff General Sir Alan Brooke, "The time has come to bring the Polish troops into the Mediterranean theatre. The men wish to fight. The intention is to use them immediately."

After Polish Prime Minister Sikorski died in a plane crash at Gibraltar, Anders became the focus of Polish nationalistic pride and fervor. To his countrymen Anders was an inspiration, and to his allies he was a military leader whose ability commanded the greatest respect.

Churchill wrote a second memo to Brooke: "There is an urgency for reinforcements in Italy and the need to bring the Polish Corps into operations. A lot of time and energy has been spent on the Poles who for two years have done nothing."

After months in the Soviet Union, the soldiers who formed the Polish II Corps were allowed to leave the country for their eventual destination of Iraq, where they came under British command. Their families were permitted to follow the soldiers to the West.

Anders met Churchill at the British Embassy in Cairo on August 22. Churchill immediately liked Anders, while Anders extended trust and belief in the prime minister.

The Polish II Corps became a major military formation of the Polish Army in World War II under the nominal control of the Polish government in exile in London. Its 3rd Carpathian Division was formed in the Middle East from Colonel Stanislaw Kopanski's seasoned Carpathian Brigade, which fought at Tobruk and in Egypt. The 5th Kresowa was built around the staff of the 5th Division originally organized in the Soviet Union.

According to the British Army Act of 1940, Polish units were to be grouped in a single theater of war. The British completely equipped, organized, and trained the Polish units to British standards and organizational guidelines, but only after a direct order from Churchill to chief military assistant General Bruce Ismay, which read, "I regard the equipping of the Polish Corps as of the first importance and urgency."

Manpower shortage meant that each Polish division would have only two brigades instead of the standard three in a British division, with skeleton staffs for their third brigades awaiting the recruiting of additional manpower. An armored brigade was formed with only 10 tanks, along with an independent infantry brigade that became the basis for a third division. To help solve the troop shortage, the Poles recruited Polish prisoners who had been forcibly recruited into the Wehrmacht.

In July and August 1943, the Polish II Corps moved to Palestine for final training. This consisted of maneuvers in the mountainous regions to acclimatize the troops to the terrain they would encounter in Italy. Prior to arriving in Italy, the Corps totaled 45,000 men. The 3rd Division included the 1st and 2nd Carpathian Rifle Brigades, and the 5th Division was composed of the 5th Wilenska and the 6th Lwowska Infantry Brigades.

The Corps' divisional order of battle followed British lines with three field artillery regiments, an antitank regiment, engineers, a heavy machine-gun battalion, communications troops, an antiaircraft artillery regiment, and a reconnaissance regiment, the 12th Podolski Lancers in the 3rd Division and the 15th Poznanski Lancers in the 5th Division. The Corps' 2nd Armored Brigade consisted of three armored regiments and supporting units. The 3rd Division had 13,200 men, the 5th Division 12,900, and the 2nd Armored Brigade 3,400. In 1944, the corps was transferred from Egypt to Italy and became part of the British Eighth Army under General Oliver Leese.

There was concern as to how the corps would be utilized. The British wanted to augment their replacement pool with the Poles. Anders furiously rejected suggestions that his corps be broken up and attached to British and American divisions in battalion-sized units, but attempts to make up the corps' manpower shortage with recruits from Polish communities in Canada and the United States failed miserably. The Soviets also refused to allow more Poles to leave the country.

Anders proposed to send his corps into battle without a pool of replacements. The Poles would take "liberated" manpower to replace their losses and flesh out their incomplete divisions on the battlefield. Large numbers of ethnic Poles had been impressed into the Wehrmacht as ethnic Germans, and Anders believed they would gladly join him if given the chance. The Poles also had intelligence indicating that thousands of Polish prisoners had been sent to Italy as laborers. These men could also be freed and join the II Corps.

The British relented, and the Polish II Corps

would fight as an autonomous unit. After arriving in Italy, the Polish corps eventually swelled to a force of 110,000. At age 52, Anders commanded Poland's only force facing the Germans in Western Europe.

Elements of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division began landing in Italy at Taranto on December 21, 1943. The transfer of all Polish units from Egypt and the Middle East continued until the middle of April 1944. These troops landed at the Italian ports of Taranto, Bari, and Naples. Corps headquarters followed in January 1944, the 5th Kresowa Division in February, and the armored brigade in April. The 2nd Base Corps completed the move.

The first Polish unit to see action in Italy was the Independent Commando Company. On December 29, 1943, it took part in a diversionary raid with British No. 9 Commando on the Gariglianio River estuary defenses. The 3rd Carpathian Division entered combat along a quiet sector of the front on the Sangro River. On February 10, Lt. Gen. Anders reported to General Leese at Eighth Army headquarters at Vasto, and the Polish II Corps officially became part of Eighth Army.

British soldiers readily acknowledged the fighting spirit of the Poles. An Irish Guards officer in the 78th Division described his encounter with them. "Their motives were as clear as they were simple. They only wished to kill Germans and they did not bother at all about the usual refinements when taking over our posts. They just walked in with their weapons, asked where the Germans were, and that was that." The 78th Division history carried a significant entry. "Of their resolve there was no doubt. For whose gallantry the Division soon learnt to feel an awed yet amused admiration. They exposed themselves with the most reckless abandon. They seem to know no fear."

The 3rd Carpathian Division's first patrol went out on February 21, northwest of San Angelo. In May it moved up to Monte Cassino, where the Poles proved their worth in capturing the destroyed abbey high atop a mountain that commanded the Allied approaches through the valley below.

The German defenses at Cassino had not been penetrated despite three assaults and heavy bombing. The enemy held fast and continued to block the road to Rome. In May, along the 18-mile stretch from Cassino to the Gulf of Gaeta, 17 Allied divisions stood ready for the next phase of battle. After previous attempts had failed to take Cassino, General Leese called Anders and his chief of staff, General K. Wisniowski, to Eighth Army headquarters on March 24. Leese told Anders of the planned offensive, Operation Diadem, to open the road to Rome.

ABOVE: During training exercises in Iran, Polish soldiers stand in ranks for review. The Poles were first sent to Iran before making the journey to Iraq to join the British Army in the Middle East. BELOW: Soldiers of the Polish II Corps attached to one of the Carpathian Rifle Brigades fire a British 4.5-inch field artillery piece during offensive operations in the Apennine Mountains of Italy.

Leese offered the Polish corps the mission of taking Monte Cassino. After a brief discussion with Wisniowski, Anders accepted the task. Anders later described his reasoning. "The battle would have international scrutiny and impact; it would be the first face to face battle with the Germans since 1939; capture of Monte Cassino would disprove the Soviet propaganda that the Polish Army was unwilling to fight the Wehrmacht; casualties would probably be the same in a supportive role; it would have great significance for the future of the Home Army of Poland."

The Polish II Corps prepared to launch the fourth assault on the monastery. Operation Diadem would begin May 13 and the Polish II Corps' task was to isolate the abbey from the north and northwest, dominate Highway 6, and then capture the abbey itself. At the same time, eight American divisions, four Commonwealth divisions, and four French divisions were to cross the Liri River, cutting Highway 6. The Polish II Corps assault force consisted of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division, the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division, and the 2nd Armored Brigade.

The corps staff began to formulate the battle plan. General Anders contributed extensively to the staff's work. He drew certain conclusions

Although German authorities asserted that their troops had not occupied the Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, Allied commanders wanted it bombed. After the aerial bombardment that left the abbey in ruins, German paratroopers did occupy the rubble and put up stiff resistance against Allied troops. BELOW: German paratroopers man a machine-gun position amid the ruins of the abbey of Monte Cassino.

from the previous Allied assaults and decided not to become bogged down in a street fight in the town. He rejected an assault from the south that was too exposed to German flanking fire. He decided to attack from the northwest between Hills 569 and 601. The 3rd Carpathian Division was responsible for seizing the southern end of Snakeshead Ridge, Massa Albaneta, Monte Castellone, and Hills 593 and 569. The 5th Kresowa Division had Colle Sant' Angelo and Hills 575, 505, 452, and 447, and was then to cover the advance of the 3rd. Each division allotted one brigade for the initial attack. The plan utilized direct frontal assault into strong German positions. Capture of the high ground would isolate the abbey. To the Polish soldiers, who had wandered through Russia, the Middle East, and now Italy for five years since the defeat and subjugation of their country and people, the battle would be a chance to confront the hated Germans and regain their honor.

General Anders' order of the day just before the assault on Cassino read: "Soldiers, The task assigned to us will cover with glory the name of the Polish soldier all over the world. The moment for battle has arrived. At this moment the thoughts and hearts of our whole nation will be with us. We have long awaited the moment for revenge and retribution over our hereditary enemy. For this action let the lion spirit enter your hearts, keep deep in your heart God, honor, and our land—Poland! Go and take revenge for all the suffering in our land, for what you have suffered for many years in Russia and for years of separation from your families."

A postwar Polish veteran explained their motivation: "The spirit of self-sacrifice that had been manifested at the Battles of Grunwald, Chocim and Warsaw is passed on from generation to generation and constitutes the bedrock of Polish pride. The Poles entered the Battle of Cassino with the vision of a free Poland … carried in their hearts and minds. They joined the battle not because they were so ordered but because of their inner love for Poland and their hatred for the oppressor of their Motherland."

For the night assault, the Polish troops blackened their faces and equipment and donned camouflage wraps.

A 40-minute barrage opened the assault. Immediately, the Poles caught an unlucky break. The Germans planned to relieve defenders with fresh units, and they had nine battalions in the strongpoints when the assault started. At 1 AM, the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division's 1st Carpathian Rifle Brigade assaulted Point 593 (Mount Calvary on Snakeshead Ridge), Hill 569, and Albaneta Farm. The 1st Carpathian Battalion's attack on Massa Albaneta failed with heavy losses, due mainly to German artillery. By 2:30 AM, the assault battalions had lost one of every five men.

The 2nd Carpathian Battalion of the 1st Carpathian Brigade carried Point 593. Four counterattacks by German paratroopers, the final ending with bitter hand-to-hand fighting, left few Poles on the position at dawn. Forced to retreat, the entire 2nd Battalion numbered no more than a few dozen men. The 3rd Carpathian Battalion strike on Hill 569 also failed.

The 5th Kresowa Infantry Division's 5th Wilenska Brigade jumped off a half hour after the Carpathian Brigade to seize Colle Sant' Angelo, Hills 706, 601, and 575. The infantry ran into heavy fire. By 3 AM, all three battalions were engaged along Phantom Ridge. The division commander, Brig. Gen. Nikodem Sulik, committed the 18 battalions of the 6th Lwowska Brigade to reignite the advance, but it was not possible to continue the attack.

The 13th and 15th Battalions of the 5th Wilenska Brigade were decimated. According

to the brigade diary, "In the valley and on the slope of the ridge lay corpses, twisted human shapes, shattered limbs, bloody bits of bodies." General Anders had no alternative but to terminate the assault.

The Poles had attacked with panache and skill but took heavy casualties. The Germans committed a horrific atrocity after the assault. Two young officer cadets were captured, and the Germans crucified them with barbed wire and nails. No quarter was given by either side from that moment on.

The II Corps staff immediately began drawing plans for a second assault. Leese arrived and expressed satisfaction with the Poles' attack because it was "of great assistance" drawing artillery fire and reserves away from the British. Anders used the same basic strategy, but this time the attack would be made by both entire divisions. Both brigades of the 5th Kersowa Division were directed on Colle Sant' Angelo. The 3rd Carpathian Division focused both brigades on just Albaneta. The Poles concentrated their artillery support and planned a rolling barrage for the advancing infantry. Polish sappers and engineers cleared minefields and obstacles during the interim. Leese endorsed the entire endeavor.

The second assault jumped off at 10:30 PM on May 16. New brigades were leading the assaults, supported by 200 air sorties at daybreak. One observer wrote, "When the second attack began the soldiers were drained physically and psychologically. The issue hung on a knife edge, only vigorous leadership could overcome the exhaustion and inertia." Fighting raged all night.

Lance Corporal Dobrowski of the 5th Battalion described the assault on Hill 593: "We begin to ascend Hill 593, the weakest soldiers can no longer keep pace. We are in no particular formation. No sections; no platoons. The situation is such we must use our own initiative. Now we engage the enemy. All is confusion and the Germans' positions are mixed with ours. With munificent impartiality we hurl our hand grenades. From the neighboring heights Spandaus, Schmeissers and heavy machine guns catch us in a murderous crossfire." The hill was taken and held.

The divisions seized the initial objectives on Phantom Ridge and Snakeshead Ridge then moved on to Hills 601, 575, 505, and 569. By May 18, the Poles had seized the objectives. The French Expeditionary Corps breakthrough south of Cassino forced the German Tenth Army to order the withdrawal of the 1st Parachute Division from Monte Cassino.

The Poles intercepted the radio message but were too weary to pursue the paratroopers. Corps headquarters sent word to the 3rd Carpathian Division to send a patrol from the 12th Podolski Lancers Reconnaissance Regiment to scout the abbey. The scouting party, led by Lieutenant Casimir Gurbiel, entered the ruins of the abbey and found them empty except for a few wounded German paratroopers. A homemade regimental pennant was raised at 9:50 AM above the ruins. A Lancer bugler played the medieval Polish military signal, the "Krakow Hejnal." When the notes were heard in the 4th Carpathian Battalion's command post, officers and enlisted men unashamedly cried.

A Polish officer wrote in his diary about that occasion. "We hung on grimly until the exciting news arrived that the monastery was in our hands. I shall never forget the pure joy of that moment. We could hardly believe that our long task was done."

General Anders walked up to the abbey late in the afternoon. He recounted the moment in his postwar memoirs. "The battlefield presented a dreary sight. Corpses of Polish and German soldiers, sometimes entangled in a deadly embrace, lay everywhere, and the air was filled with the stench of rotting bodies. There were overturned tanks with broken caterpillars. Crater after crater pitted the sides of hills and scattered over them were fragments of uniforms, helmets, tommy guns, Spandaus, Schmeissers and hand grenades. The slopes of hills where fighting had been less intense were covered with poppies in incredible number, their red flowers weirdly appropriate to the scene."

The Poles continued fighting until May 25, by which time the positions of Saint Angelo Hill, Point 575, Passo Corno, and Mount Cairo were captured. The Polish II Corps lost 50 men a day, about 20 percent of its strength, by the end of the Cassino battle. The Poles immediately attacked east to penetrate the Hitler Line before the Germans could man it.

Through Operation Diadem, the capture of Rome, and the advance beyond the Italian capital, the Allied forces were heavily battered. The British and Canadian rifle companies had 30 percent casualties. The American casualty rate was 41 percent, but the Polish II Corps had the highest with 43 percent, sustaining 3,784 casualties of which 860 were killed. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wrote after the war, "Only the finest troops could have taken that well-prepared and long-defended fortress." Immediately after the battle, General Charles de Gaulle commented to the press, "The Polish Corps lavished its bravery in the service of its honor."

Polish II Corps soldiers begin the steep ascent toward the summit of the mountain crowned by the ruins of the abbey of Monte Cassino. The Poles found some wounded enemy soldiers in the ruins of the abbey and hoisted their pennant to signify that the position had been taken.

The Polish II Corps received an honorary decoration after Cassino. Eighth Army Order No. 65 granted the right of all individuals who took part in the Cassino operation to permanently wear the Eighth Army shield on their right shoulder even if in the future they were no longer part of the Eighth. Later, Order No. 95 extended the privilege to any soldier of the Polish II Corps.

After the battle at Cassino, the Polish II

Corps shifted to the Adriatic coast. On June 15, 1944, the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division replaced the 4th Indian Division. The entire sector came under Anders' command. The Polish corps headquarters was located at San Vito near Ortona. Additional British regiments and Italian units bolstered the strength of the corps. The 17th and 26th Heavy Artillery Regiments, Royal Artillery, the 7th Queens Own Hussars, and the Italian Corpo Italiano de Liberazione came under the Polish II Corps. The 5th Kresowa Infantry Division arrived between June 18 and 21, followed by the corps artillery and the 2nd Armored Brigade.

The Battle of Ancona took place from June 16 through July 18, 1944. The Polish objective was the capture of Ancona harbor. Anders' orders to his units were simple, direct, and aggressive. "Pursue the enemy at the highest possible speed and capture Ancona harbor."

Anders also deceived the Germans. He created the impression that the 3rd Carpathian Division would attack along the coast road. Instead, he launched the 5th Kresowa and the 7th Hussars on an encircling sweep inland. Anders performed a series of feints, radio deception, and skilled maneuver, unhinging the German 278th Division. Supported for the first time entirely by air attacks by the Polish City of Gdansk No. 318 Squadron, the Poles moved rapidly up the Adriatic coast and crossed the Aso River by June 20. Assisted by Italian Alpini, the Poles captured Fermo and Pedaso on June 21. By the 25th, the Polish II Corps faced the German LI Mountain Corps, and stiff resistance held up the Polish offensive around the Chienti River.

In July, the Polish corps began rolling again, capturing Numano on July 5 and Osini, only 10 miles south of Ancona, the following day. The Poles repulsed a counterattack by the mountain troops on July 8, and took Monte Palesco two days later. After a fierce battle, Ancona was captured by the Carpathian Lancers on July 18. The 3rd Carpathian Division secured the port and 2,500 prisoners. This was the only battle in the West that was exclusively carried out by the Polish military. The offensive cost the Poles 2,150 casualties.

As one of their comrades attempts to establish communications via walkie-talkie, a pair of Polish soldiers mans a two-inch mortar on an Italian hillside. The Poles have taken cover adjacent to a destroyed German self-propelled gun.

On July 19, the Poles crossed the Esino River and encountered strong German opposition near Ostra. On the 22nd, they reached the Misa River. The Germans placed the 71st Infantry Division and the Poles' old adversary, the 1st Parachute Division, along the river. It was another 10 days before the Polish force reached the next river, the Misa. A five-day struggle ended with the capture of Ostra, and the corps advanced to the town of Senigallia.

On August 11, the Cesano River was crossed, and the Poles seized a series of towns, Gabrielle, Mondolfo, Poggio, and Orciano. Ten days later, the Poles crossed the Metauro River and reached the Gothic Line.

The Allies now reorganized their forces before the assault on the Gothic Line. The Polish II Corps was on the extreme right flank at the Adriatic coast with the 1st Canadian Corps on its left. Operation Olive, the breakthrough in the Adriatic sector, began on the night of August 25. The Polish II Corps opened the offensive, capturing the high ground north of the resort of Pesaro. The corps' fighting lines stretched seven miles inland from the coast with its two divisions advancing abreast.

Historian Thomas Brooks described the assault. "The Poles were under-strength and again lacked replacements. They went in without preliminary artillery barrage. The infantrymen waded through water almost three feet deep up into the olive groves on the far side. At midnight, shells rained down four hundred yards ahead of the advancing troops moving forward at the anticipated rate of a hundred yards every six minutes. The Poles inflicted heavy damage on a German parachute regiment caught out in the open in the act of withdrawing. By dawn the divisions were well across the river and into the hills before Foglia."

The night attack by the Polish II Corps, Canadian I Corps, and the British V Corps caught the Germans flat footed and pierced the eastern flank of the Gothic Line.

Its task complete, the Polish II Corps now withdrew to become a reserve force. On the 26th, Anders met Prime Minister Churchill, who visited the Polish headquarters. Anders tried to warn Churchill about Stalin, six months before the Yalta Conference. He told Churchill, "Stalin's declarations that he wants a free and strong Poland are lies and fundamentally false."

Anders spoke of the Katyn Massacre, in which the Soviets murdered Polish officers and civilian officials, and then mentioned the situation with the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw. "We have our wives and children in Warsaw, but we would rather they perish than have to live under the Bolsheviks."

Churchill replied, "I sympathize deeply. But you must trust us. We will not abandon you, and Poland will be happy."

Between October 1944 and January 1945, the Polish II Corps was reinforced and reorganized. The 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division and

With victory in sight but heavy combat still ahead, Polish II Corps soldiers slog through mud somewhere in Italy in February 1945. The Poles acquitted themselves admirably throughout the Italian campaign.

the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division had the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Brigade and the 4th Wolynska Rifle Brigade added, respectively. The 2nd Armored Brigade was expanded into an armored division with the addition of the Carpathian Lancer Regiment, 2nd Motorized Commando Battalion, 16th Pomorska Infantry Brigade, 4th Armored Regiment Skorpion, 1st Krechowieckich Lancer Regiment, and the 6th Armoured Regiment Dzieci Lwowskich.

After a short period of rest, the Polish II Corps returned to the battlefield and occupied Predappio, the birthplace of Benito Mussolini, and Castrocaro on October 27. The Poles bypassed Faenza and crossed the Lamone River on their way to the Senio River. As the rain, mud, and snow arrived in November, the Polish II Corps pushed through the Appennine foothills south of Highway 9. The Polish troops captured Monte Caselo and Lamone in November and Brisighella on December 6. All operations in the region ceased by the end of December 1944.

"The operations of the Polish II Corps in the Emilian Apennines had needed strenuous effort by the men, who, battling the hills or paddling in mud, fought, attacked, and pushed back the enemy," wrote Anders. "There were no spectacular achievements; it was just a case of steady relentless fighting, and duty well done. The Corps' losses in these battles amounted to 42 officers and 627 other ranks killed, 184 officers and 2,630 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 32 other ranks missing."

General Richard McCreery, the new Eighth Army commander, recognized the Polish effort in a signal to Anders on December 17: "My best congratulations to you and the 3rd Carpathian Division on your successful operations in difficult country. This attack with the great lack of roads in your area was a fine achievement. Engineers and gunners deserve every credit."

In January 1945, the Italian front was at a standstill. The Eighth Army, after a series of hard-fought river crossings, stood on the banks of the Senio River. The country was sodden from winter rains, and armored operations were impossible.

International events and foreign policy would now impact the Italian campaign. Anders learned of the terms agreed by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin at Yalta. He wrote a letter to General McCreery saying, "I can see but the necessity of relieving those of my troops now in line. We had marched thousands of miles together and had suffered thousands of casualties. We had come from the torture of the Russian labor camps to the brink of battle which would seal our claim to be allowed to go home. Suddenly we are told, we were told, without ever being consulted that we had no home to go to."

In early March 1945, McCreery, American General Mark Clark, and British Field Marshal Harold Alexander met Anders, who told them, "How can I ask my soldiers to go on fighting, to risk their lives for nothing. I must withdraw them from the line."

General Clark replied, "I know the great confidence the Polish soldiers have in their commander, and I also know that they would accept any decision coming from you without hesitation. "

McCreery added, "If you took your troops out of the line, there would be no troops to replace them, and a 10 mile gap would be opened up."

Anders remained silent for a minute, reflecting that the Polish removal might negatively impact the Allied victory in Italy and also forfeit the Polish claim to be an independent nation. Anders quietly but firmly said, "You can count on the Polish II Corps for this coming battle. We must defeat Hitler first."

Later in the week, the Polish troops learned that Churchill was to speak to them by radio. Vladyslaw Karnicki, a veteran soldier, remembered what Churchill said. "He said he had to give up a part of Poland because of the Curzon Line. When we looked it up on a map, the meaning became clear. The Anglo-American leaders had given Stalin that part of Poland

Continued on page 80

American GIs aided French children who suffered the ravages of combat. **BY KEVIN HYMEL**

Normandy's

WAR SPARED NO ONE. As modern armies clashed in France's Normandy countryside, French civilians found themselves in the crossfire or on the receiving end of bombs and heavy weapons. American medics, and sometimes just frontline soldiers, took time from their official duties to check, bandage, and cure whoever they could. Many suffered from maladies related to living in the elements to escape aerial artillery bombardment.

The Ninth U.S. Air Force set up a civilian dispensary for locals who had been without medical care for more than four years. The occupying German forces had refused to treat civilians or allow doctors into Normandy.

Of particular interest were children, truly innocent victims of war. The sight of a child in pain stopped GIs in their tracks, and the liberation of France suddenly became a personal mission. To the children, American soldiers were heroes and saviors. They would never forget the men and women who saved them. The feeling was mutual. □

Little Victims

TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: A four-year-old French boy, his head in bandages, was treated by GIs behind the battle lines after he was wounded by German shrapnel. A medic dresses a small girl's wounds as her mother looks on. A truly Allied medical team tends to a French baby. The doctor is an American, the nurse in the center is a former Russian surgeon who was captured by the Germans in Leningrad, and the nurse on the right is a Swiss member of the French Army.

BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: A private treats a small French boy's hand while other soldiers watch. Ten-year-old Jean Louis receives first aid from American airborne medics after the fighting at St. Sauveur. American medics treat a girl while her worried mother kneels by her side.

In this photo, typical of those produced for Soviet propaganda purposes, Red Army soldiers uniformed against the cold leap across a trench while their comrades take aim at the invading Germans.

DEATH ON THE Volkhov

BY PAT McTAGGART

AN INITIALLY PROMISING SOVIET OFFENSIVE DURING THE WINTER OF 1942 ULTIMATELY LED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE 2ND SHOCK ARMY.

THE GREAT CITY of Leningrad was being strangled, its people dying by the thousands.

Death came in many ways. German troops under Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb's Army Group North had been blockading the city since the first week of September 1941. Starvation had already taken its toll as rations were cut for the civilian population, with the very young and very old facing agonizing deaths. There was also the German artillery and the Luftwaffe, which pummeled the city on a daily basis. For those caught in the open, death came quickly if one were lucky.

Orders for the blockade came directly from Adolf Hitler. He did not want his forces to become embroiled in a vast urban battle, which would be both time consuming and costly. However, the city was not entirely cut off. Supplies were still coming in on a haphazard basis on a rail line that ran from Tikhvin through the city of Volkhov, ending at the town of Lednevo located on the shore of Lake Ladoga. From there, supplies were loaded on ships which then made the hazardous trip to Leningrad.

To totally cut off the city, Hitler planned to send his forces across the Volkhov River. Once that was accomplished, General Rudolf Schmidt's XXXIX Motorized Corps would move north to take Tivkhin with two panzer and two motorized divisions that were supported by infantry. Once Tikhvin was taken and reinforcements arrived, the Germans would continue north to the Svir River and link up with Finnish units of the Karelia Army, effectively cutting all lines of supply to Leningrad from the outside world.

Schmidt's southern flank would be protected by infantry units, one of which was the 250th "Azul" (Blue) Division, made up entirely of Spanish volunteers. The Blue Division was Spanish leader Francisco Franco's contribution to the war against the Soviet Union. Hitler had tried to persuade Franco to become an Axis partner in 1940, but the wily Spanish dictator asked for supplies and war matérial that Germany could not possibly provide before he gave his approval. Hedging his bets, Franco remained neutral during the war, but he did authorize raising a division of volunteers to participate in the "war against Bolshevism." The gesture was also partial repayment for the help received from Germany during the Spanish Civil War. It would also give Franco the appearance of giving Hitler help in the war in case Germany was victorious in the East.

While Schmidt's motorized corps was assembling for the attack on Tikhvin, the Blue Division marched toward Veliky Novgorod located on the north shore of Lake Ilmen. There, it became part of Group von Roques, commanded by General Franz von Roques, the rear area commander of Army Group North. Roques was tasked with crossing the Volkhov River on a front running from Novgorod north to Chudovo—a front of about 84 kilometers.

The purpose of the attack was threefold. Besides providing for Schmidt's flank, an attack across the Volkhov in that sector would draw enemy troops to the area, which would hopefully make Schmidt's task easier. Bridgeheads established on the eastern riverbank could also be used as springboards for future offensive operations.

Major General Augustin Muñoz Grandes, commander of the Blue Division, received his orders from Roques. The Spaniards were to cross the Little Volkhov River north of Novgorod, drawing the attention of the Soviets. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Paul Laux's 126th Infantry Division would cross about 45 kilometers to the north at Kuzino. Once both divisions secured bridgeheads on the eastern bank, they would assault Soviet positions of the Valdai Hills.

On October 16 the offensive opened with artillery fire raining down on the Soviet positions opposite the Spaniards. The Soviets responded in kind and also called for reinforcements, thinking that the entire sector would become the object of a major attack. Meanwhile, the 126th crossed at Kuzino while the Blue Division remained in place, keeping the Russians guessing where the attack would occur. To the north, shielded by General Kuno-Hans von Both's I Army Corps, Schmidt moved forward in his thrust toward Tikhvin.

Muñoz Grandes was finally ordered to move forward on October 18. During the next few days, despite pouring rain and an insufficient

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number of boats, the Blue Division established bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the Volkhov. The bridgeheads were attacked by Brigade Commander Iakov Dmitrievich Zelenkov's 267th Rifle Division, but the Spaniards held their perimeter while ferrying more men across the river. Finally linking up with the 126th, Muñoz Grandes and Laux proceeded to advance. The terrain favored the defenders. Pocked with woods and swamps that restricted movement, the Russians had set up defensive positions along anticipated avenues of advance. Reinforcements from the 305th Rifle Division and 3rd Tank Division were also arriving in the area.

Northwest of Tikhvin, I Army Corps infantry units advanced on the city of Volkhov. Besides guarding Schmidt's left flank, the initial thrust was to be made up the western bank of the Volkhov River north of Kirishi. Maj. Gen. Herbert von Böckmann's 11th Infantry Division took the lead and soon ran into Soviet defenses that slowed his advance to a crawl.

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ABOVE: German soldiers, wearing sheets for camouflage against the Russian winter landscape and ill prepared for combat in such harsh conditions, seem perplexed by a vehicle that has become locked in ice during an attempt to cross a stream. OPPOSITE: During the winter of 1942, the Soviet Red Army mounted an effort to relieve pressure on the besieged city of Leningrad. These troops prepare to fire on German positions with a machine gun and other automatic weapons.

Reinforced with part of Maj. Gen. Otto Sponheimer's 21st Infantry Division, Böckmann (whose command was now called Group von Böckmann) continued to attack through the Maluksinskii swamp. The area was defended by the 285th, 310th, and 311th Rifle Divisions of Lt. Gen. Vsevolod Fedorovich Iakovlev's 4th Army, which were dug in and determined to stop the German advance. Because there were only a few good avenues of advance, defenses were prepared in depth. The history of the 21st Infantry describes part of the advance of Group von Böckmann as it prepared to cross one of the tributaries that fed the Volkhov.

"The enemy was probably aware, admittedly, of the importance of this river area. Outside a village [Red Army] units counterattacked the regiment, which was advancing from the direction of Lyubuny. The regiment repulsed the attacks and then, in a counter thrust, stormed the village and prepared to break through the enemy positions on the river." Such actions continued to slow the advance.

The Soviets showed great tenacity all along the Volkhov. Although mistakes were initially made in Red Army troop dispositions, they were countered by the weather and the terrain across the entire region. While Groups von Roques and von Böckmann slogged forward, Schmidt's forces were also facing increasing resistance. Freezing weather followed by periods of thaw turned the primitive roads in the Tikhvin area into an endless mass of mud.

As Schmidt moved his motorized forces closer to the town, Stavka (the Soviet High Command) sent reinforcements to Iakovlev's 4th and Lt. Gen. Nikolai Kuzmich Klykov's 52nd Armies. Those forces continued to grind down Schmidt's divisions as they occupied new defensive positions. They also mounted counterattacks against Schmidt and his flanking infantry divisions. Although costly and poorly coordinated, they had the desired effect of further slowing the German advance.

Farther south the troops of Group von Roques faced similar problems. To the men of the Blue Division, their attacks seemed like anything but a diversion as soldiers of the 305th Rifle Division hit a section of the front with two battalions supported by artillery and heavy mortar fire. The assault centered on the small village of Nikltkino. The Spaniards held their ground, machine-gun fire spitting out a stream of death toward the advancing Soviets. A Spanish machine gunner, Tomãs Salvador, was amazed at the way the Russians advanced, never seeking cover or crouching down unless ordered to. When the fighting was over the Spaniards counted 221 dead Russians in front of their position. Their own casualties were 15 dead and 50 wounded.

On November 6, an Arctic blast hit the Volkhov area. Rivers and streams began to freeze and snow began to fall. The weather proved to be both a blessing and a curse for the Germans. With muddy roads freezing solid, the motorized drive toward Tikhvin could continue. Schmidt captured the town on November 8, advancing through a heavy snowstorm, but that was as far as he got. The ravages of combat, increased Soviet resistance, and the onslaught of winter made any further advance to the Svir River impossible.

Soviet forces suffered along with their German counterparts as the cold set upon them. Frostbite was rampant on both sides, and winter clothing was in short supply. On the Soviet side, the vast bureaucracy resulted in massive delays of vitally needed supplies. Padded jackets, fur gloves, and warm hats lay rotting in forgotten depot areas because of gross inefficiency. New winter uniforms were issued to divisions that were forming, but few found their way to the frontline troops.

However, it does appear that the average Red Army soldier was a little more innovative than his German counterpart during that first savage winter of the war. Paper and straw were stuffed into boots and under uniforms to provide extra protection from the sub-zero temperatures. The Russians also had the "luxury" of holding defensive positions, which provided some shelter from the elements, while the attacking Germans were forced to keep moving in the open.

For the Germans, the incredible cold caught them flat-footed. There was no winter clothing to be found, and the summer uniforms that car-

ried a victorious Wehrmacht into battle in June had become worn and threadbare. Troops wore all the clothing they carried, which also made movement more sluggish. The leather boots that the average soldier wore were no match for the Russian winter, and they also served as conductors of the cold, which caused even more frostbite.

After the war, General Erhard Raus, a highly decorated panzer commander, wrote about the effects of that first winter: "When German troops were attacking Tikhvin in the winter of 41, cold set in suddenly. Lacking winter clothing and adequate shelter, the Germans suffered more casualties from cold than from enemy fire…."

On the same day Schmidt's forces entered the town, Group von Böckmann, now reinforced with Maj. Gen. Walter Behschnitt's 254th Infantry Division, was nearing the southern outskirts of Volkhov. The advance was stopped by Soviet counterattacks, but it was worrisome enough for Stavka to relieve Iakovlev and replace him with General Kiril Afansevich Meretskov.

By mid-November, the Germans were facing the reality of their situation. As losses mounted and temperatures plummeted, even Berlin recognized that nothing more could be gained by continuing the expansion of the bridgeheads across the Volkhov. Supplies were running short, and the troops manning the 350-kilometer front on the eastern side of the river were stretched dangerously thin.

In the November 16 entry of his diary, General Franz Halder, chief of staff of the Army, wrote: "The situation between Lake Ladoga and Lake Ilmen has taken a very bad turn ... 21st Division thinks it can get as far as Volkhovstroi [Volkhov Station], but it will not be able to advance farther unless it receives reinforcements ... Commander of the Army Group [von Leeb] has considered abandoning Tikhvin in favor of strengthening the 'Volkhov Front."

Von Leeb had good cause to worry. Since November 12, Soviet forces had been attacking all along the Volkhov River front with forces from Meretskov's 4th Army, Klykov's 52nd Army, and Maj. Gen. Ivan Ivanovich Fediuninskii's 54th Army. The attacks were meant to retake Tikhvin, keep pressure on the rest of the front, and prevent movement of forces to support Army Group Center's drive on Moscow, which was making some progress.

In the north, Fediuninskii's divisions probed the lines of Group von Böckmann, while Meretskov continued to pound at the forward German units at Tikhvin. Farther south,

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Klykov's 111th, 259th, and 267th Rifle Divisions attacked the 126th Infantry Division's strongpoints on the eastern bank of the Volkhov at Malaya Vishera, Bolskaya Vishera, Glutno, Muasnoy Bor, and Krasnaya Viherka.

The Blue Division was hit by the 305th Rifle and 3rd Tank Divisions. A part of the division was surrounded around the town of Posad, and other strongpoints were also in danger of being surrounded or overrun. With no way to extricate the wounded in the threatened areas, many of them froze to death as temperatures continued to plummet.

Meanwhile, the divisions of Group von Roques were taken over by General Friedrich-Wilhelm von Chappius's XXXVIII Army Corps. The dismal results of von Roques's advance since the Volkhov had been crossed had caused his dismissal, but as Chappius looked at the dispositions of the units on the eastern bank he could see that the attack had been bound to fail, given the terrain and the strength of the enemy.

Shortly after Chappius took over the sector, units of Colonel Afansii Vasilevich Lapshov's 259th and Colonel Sergeii Vasilevich Roginskii's 111th Rifle Divisions overran German outposts and struck the rear of Laux's 126th. They succeeded in capturing Malaya Vishera, which forced Laux to order a general retreat along his section of the line.

Although the 126th was in retreat, it was no rout. In the sub-zero temperatures the soldiers from the Rhineland and Westphalia prevented the Soviets from making a full breakthrough to the Volkhov. During the fighting withdrawal, Laux's men held on until being reinforced by Maj. Gen. Baptist Kniess's 215th Infantry Division, which had recently arrived from France.

The Soviet attacks along the Volkhov in late November were the first real Russian counteroffensive of the war. In the central and southern sections of the Eastern Front, German forces were still struggling to maintain the offensive, but the defense of the eastern bank of the Volkhov and the counterattacks on that front had stopped the Germans cold. Although the Germans had been forced to go on the defensive in local areas in the past, for the first time in the Eastern campaign an entire German army had lost the initiative and had been forced to adopt a defensive posture. Although it was on a limited front, the mere fact that this had happened gave the Soviets a big boost in morale.

The November offensive was only a part of the overall plan that Stavka had prepared for a more general counteroffensive across the entire Eastern Front. Buoyed by the knowledge that the Japanese would not attack the Soviet Union, Stalin moved division after division from his Far Eastern Army westward. New divisions had also been raised quickly—as events were to show too quickly—and reinforcements were being fed into frontline units that had been bled white by the previous months' fighting. Saving Moscow would be the main priority, but raising the Leningrad siege was also an important objective in the northern part of the front.

The final days of November saw fresh attacks by the Soviets along the Volkhov. The 54th Army had taken the initiative after stopping units of Both's I Army Corps six kilometers south of the city of Volkhov. Feduininskii's army, now reinforced with the 80th Rifle Division from the Leningrad Front, continued the assault and forced Sponheimer's 21st Infanrty Division to retreat several kilometers.

On the eastern bank of the Volkhov, attacks against the 126th Infantry Division threatened the river crossing at Chudovo. The 126th, after its fighting withdrawal, was almost at its breaking point with some companies at no more than platoon strength. Laux exhorted his men to hold on, knowing the importance of holding Chudovo and denying the enemy the area.

It was the same for Muñoz Grandes's Blue Division, which held a front of 110 kilometers. Posad still held—a small corridor having been opened to provide contact with the rest of the division. The Spanish had been under intermittent attack for several days, which further depleted their units. Although freezing in their foxholes and trenches, the men refused to give way. To them it was a matter of national honor to keep the Soviets from reaching the Volkhov.

Their corps commander, Chappius, was not so sure. He had not been particularly impressed while visiting the division, noting its poor equipment (supplied by the Germans) and understrength artillery (also supplied by the Germans). "I don't believe the Spanish can hold Novgorod against a strong Russian attack," he told 16th Army commander General Ernst Busch. "With the loss of Novgorod, the Reds will win a prestigious prize."

Busch, who had been in contact with Muñoz Grandes since the Blue Division had entered his sector, let a few seconds go by. "The commander of the Spanish Division told me ... that, especially on the Novgorod Front, he will be able to hold his positions," he replied. With that, the conversation ended.

During the first days of December, all eyes were on the German attempt to take Moscow. German forces had clawed their way to within sight of the spires of the Kremlin, but they could go no further. The Moscow defensive ring had held, and the time was right for Stalin's counteroffensive, which he entrusted to General Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov.

Along the Volkhov, Meretskov's 4th Army was hammering away at the German forces around Tikhvin, while Fediuninskii and Klykov continued to attack the left and right flanks guarding Schmidt's precarious positions. Fortunately, those attacks were ill coordinated, usually resulting in heavy Soviet losses due to their reliance on frontal attacks. It seemed that the lines would hold, even though German ranks were also thinning at an alarming rate. All that was about to change on December 5.

An incredible cold front moved through the area, dropping temperatures to below minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit. In their threadbare summer uniforms, German soldiers literally froze to death at their posts. It was the perfect moment for the Soviets to attack. The Russian counterattack at Moscow began, and German forces reeled from the assault. Hitler reluctantly called off his Moscow offensive, instructing units all along the front to assume a defensive posture.

On the Volkhov, December 5 saw a renewed effort by the 4th Army to take Tikhvin. To the south, the 126th and Blue Divisions struggled to repulse Soviet attacks on their positions. Heavy artillery fire pounded the garrison at Posad, which was once again surrounded. Between barrages, Soviet propagandists, speaking perfect Castilian, tried to persuade the Spanish to surrender.

"We admire your resistance as heroic, as it is useless," the loudspeakers blared. "Don't you know you are surrounded? Kill your officers and join us, we will respect your rank. To our rear are beautiful cities, entertainment, diversions ... you will no longer be cold."

The Spaniards answered with catcalls and curses. They soon faced a renewed infantry assault supported by light tanks. After heavy fighting the Russians withdrew, leaving a mass of bodies in front of the Spanish positions. Then, the loudspeakers began once more.

On the Blue Division's left flank, Laux's 126th was hit along its front by up to five divisions. The strongpoint at Nekrasovo, about 18 kilometers east of the Volkhov, was lost, giving the Russians access to one of the few good roads in the area. With its capture, the entire line on the eastern bank was in jeopardy. Conferring with Busch after learning of the loss, Chappius proposed a complete withdrawal to the western bank of the river, with Muñoz Grandes holding the Novgorod sector and Laux defending the area around Chudovo.

During the next few days the Blue Division pulled back step by step. The four companies at Posad broke through the encircling Russians, taking what wounded they could with them. Once across the Volkhov the Spaniards occupied makeshift defensive positions. The men were exhausted, and some battalions were down to between 200 and 250 men.

Chappius was concerned about the reliability of the Blue Division after speaking to Muñoz Grandes. He asked the Spanish general if his men could hold the line. Muñoz Grandes replied that, with the shape his men were in, it was doubtful they could do so for long.

"Then I shall recommend that you be pulled out for rest and resupply in a safe area behind the front," Chappius said.

That was deemed a personal insult, not only to Muñoz Grandes, but also to his men—both living and dead. He glared back at his corps commander and answered, "We will recuperate in the line. My soldiers will fight to the death."

German divisions along the Volkhov were in no better shape than the Blue Division. Most of the horses that the infantry divisions depended on to transport artillery and supplies were dead. Entire units had ceased to exist, and the bitter cold continued to drain more and more men.

In the Tikhvin sector, Meretskov continued to squeeze the German forces defending the corridor leading to the town, and by December 7 forward Soviet units were in Tikhvin's outskirts. Enveloped on three sides, it was only a matter of time before the Russians would retake their prize.

Hitler bowed to the inevitable on December 8 and allowed Schmidt to retreat from the town. Two days later Tikhvin was back in Russian hands after overcoming a desperate German rearguard action. In the meantime, Schmidt's troops were now on their way back to the Volkhov, hoping to form a defensive line on the western bank.

Smelling blood, the Russians tried to turn the retreat into a rout. Schmidt's forces were in terrible shape—his two panzer divisions down to about 30 tanks each. Brig. Gen. Friedrich Herrlein's 18th Motorized Division had only 741 men fit for combat, and the flanking infantry divisions were equally decimated.

For once, the terrain favored the Germans. Units at the front of the retreating columns set up defensive positions at key points, allowing the rest of the men through before retreating to the next position, which was already occupied by the next unit in line. The Soviets, also hindered by the snow that had fallen, threw themselves at the German positions, but the German leapfrog tactics made it impossible for the Russians to score a clean victory.

Both's I Army Corps was also fighting for its life. Soviet ski units were constantly harassing its flanks and making penetrations into the rear areas, attacking supply columns and cutting lines of communication. The main objective for the Russian forces was Kirishi. Taking the town would give the Soviets a staging area for cross-river assaults.

On December 17, Stavka formed the Volkhov Front, which would have command control over the area. Meretskov was appointed its commander and Maj. Gen. Petr Alekseevich Ivanov replaced him as 4th Army commander. The front was also to be reinforced with two newly formed armies, Lt. Gen. Grigorii Grigorevich Sokolov's 26th and Maj. Gen. Ivan Vasilevich Galanin's 59th.

While the Germans were struggling to make their way back to the Volkhov, Stavka devised a

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Spanish troops of the volunteer Blue Division service an artillery piece during the German advance on Leningrad during the winter of 1941-1942.

fresh mission for Meretskov's command. The front was to cross the Volkhov and make a thrust toward Lyuban, about 33 kilometers west of the river. Expanding his bridgehead, Meretskov was then to attack northwest to encircle German forces along the Neva River line and link up with attacking forces from the Leningrad Front. There was one problem. Soviet forces were still several kilometers away from the Volkhov in the planned area of the attack.

Even with his two new armies, Meretskov found it impossible to accomplish the task set before him. Most of his men were as exhausted as the Germans. Huge quantities of supplies and ammunition had been expended in forcing the enemy back to the Volkhov, and the cumbersome Soviet bureaucracy was still having problems getting material to the fighting front in a timely manner. As Russian units made their way to the eastern bank of the river, they were hampered by continuing heavy snowfalls, which made the going even slower.

Stavka finally realized that the plans for a December crossing of the river were no longer feasible, and as troops trickled into the Volkhov line they, like their German counterparts, dug in to rest and await more supplies. It was a respite that both sides needed. For the men at the front, the cold was a mutual enemy, and dugouts along the front line provided some relief from temperatures that had now reached minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Soviet victory at the gates of Moscow along with other successes along the Eastern Front had made Stalin more ambitious. Besides keeping the pressure on the Germans west of Moscow, he had Stavka draw up meticulous plans for an overall general offensive from Leningrad to the Black Sea. On January 1, Soviet forces hit the Germans in the Ukraine. This was followed by a series of staggered attacks along the rest of the front.

For Soviet units on the Volkhov, the offensive began January 4 with Fediuninskii's 54th Army hitting German forces east of Kirishi. The attack was poorly coordinated. Because of the strict timetable set by Stavka for the attack, some units had not yet arrived at their jump-off points while others had not been fully concentrated at the main points of the assault. As a result, the Soviets were only able to advance four or five kilometers. The two divisions facing Fediuninskii's forces, the 11th and 126th, held their ground and inflicted heavy losses on their attackers. Elements of Brig. Gen. Josef Harpe's 12th Panzer Division were rushed to the area, and the attack disintegrated. After two days of fighting, the 54th was forced back to its starting positions.

Still under Stavka's timetable, Meretskov ordered his other armies to attack on January 6, despite Fediuninskii's failure. The plan called for Galinin's 59th Army to batter its way across the Volkhov in the Gruzino area. After expanding its bridgehead, Sokolov's army, which had been renamed the 2nd Shock Army in late December, would follow. The two armies would then make a thrust toward Lyuban while enlarging their flanks to the north and south and meet up with attacking forces from the Leningrad Front. Meanwhile, Klykov's 52nd Army was to cross the Volkhov and destroy enemy forces around Novgorod. Ivanov's 4th Army would cross the river on Meretskov's right flank to protect the drive to Lyuban.

Coordination of these attacks would be a struggle for the staffs of these armies, even if Meretskov had been given a month or two to carefully plan the offensive. Given the short timeline issued by Stavka, it was a logistical nightmare. Fuel and ammunition were still making their way to the front, and the few good roads in the area were filled with massive traffic jams, with units becoming intermingled as they struggled to reach their jump-off points.

Nevertheless, Meretskov opened his offensive on January 6 with a preliminary artillery bombardment that was hampered by a lack of shells. It was, however, enough to keep the Germans' heads down as the first wave of Galanin's army moved across the Volkhov. The river was 400 meters wide in some spots, and the advancing Russians found themselves exposed to enemy fire as the Germans recovered from the barrage.

Reaching the western bank, the survivors of the first wave laid down covering fire for the following troops. German artillery then started to hit the bridgehead and casualties mounted, but the Russians kept coming. Local German counterattacks forced some Soviet units back across the river, but enough of the following wave made it across to firm up and expand the bridgehead.

By the end of the day, the 8th Rifle Division was entrenched in the Vodos'ia sector while the 376th and Colonel Ivan Mikhailovich Platov's 288th Rifle Divisions moved forward to the Menesksha River. Colonel Sergii Vasilevich Roginskii's 111th Rifle Division was struggling against German strongpoints at the mouth of the Lyuban'ka River, and elements of the 372nd Rifle Division had established positions south of Krasnofarfornyy on the west bank of the Volkhov south of Gruzino. It was not the smashing success that Stavka had envisioned, but it was a start.

Although the 2nd Shock Army's artillery was still in transit and some of its units had not yet arrived, Meretskov threw the remaining troops of the 59th Army into the fray. He also ordered the 2nd Shock Army to move into the bridgehead the following day. Once across the river the troops were immediately involved in a series of uncoordinated attacks against German positions.

The Germans were ready, and they met the Soviets with a wall of fire. Sokolov, a former NKVD (secret police) commander, was completely out of his league. His clumsy handling of the initial assaults cost his army more than 3,000 casualties as it attacked without the needed artillery or air support. Frontal assaults against the dug-in Germans cost more casualties in both the 2nd Shock and 59th Armies, resulting in Stavka ordering a halt to operations on January 10 so the two armies could try and consolidate their positions on the west bank.

On the northern flank, Ivanov's 4th Army found itself the object of counterattacks that caused heavy losses to the 65th Rifle Division and Colonel Ivan Pavlovich Roslyi's 4th Rifle Division. The counterattacks forced a limited withdrawal before the Russians could stabilize the line. To the south, Klykov also ran into serious trouble while trying to cross the river.

North of Novgorod, the Soviets had more success. A gap between the 126th and 215th Infantry Divisions had grown to about five kilometers. While the 215th continued to hold its line, the 126th was in danger of collapsing. Colonel Harry Hoppe, commander of Infantry Regiment 424, 126th Infantry Division, was hard pressed to keep the Russians at bay. Soviet forces took the town of Teremets and then moved to expand the bridgehead, threatening the north-south road and railway system from Novgorod to Chudova. Reinforced with troops from the neighboring Blue Division, Hoppe tried to retake the town, but his repeated attacks were repulsed as more Russian units entered the area.

At this point, Stavka ordered another halt to allow Soviet forces to regroup. During the lull, the Soviet command on the Volkhov underwent some important changes. Sokolov was sacked for the incompetent way he had handled his army. He was replaced by Klykov, who turned over the 52nd Army to Iakovlev. A representative from Stalin, Army Commissar 1st Rank (equivalent to General of the Army) Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis, arrived at Meretskov's headquarters to serve as Stalin's representative on the Volkhov.

Mekhlis was a close confidant of Stalin. He literally had the power to remove and execute any soldier or commander that he considered not showing the proper fighting spirit. Even though he had no command experience, he would constantly meddle in the military operations on the Volkhov Front. His word was law, and a "suggestion" from him had to be regarded as a direct order from Moscow.

The offensive resumed on the 13th with the 2nd Shock Army making some gains against the German defenders. The Russians might have obtained greater success if they had simply bypassed the hastily erected strongpoints of the 126th. As it was, the inexperienced recruits and local commanders used the frontal assault to try and overrun them. It was a costly and bloody affair, which yielded little result.

At one such strongpoint in the village of Senitsy, 1st Lt. Ernst Klossek, commander of the 12th Company of Infantry Regiment 422, fought off several attacks, denying the Soviets their objective and causing severe casualties among the attackers. His company's staunch defense of the village earned Klossek the Knight's Cross.

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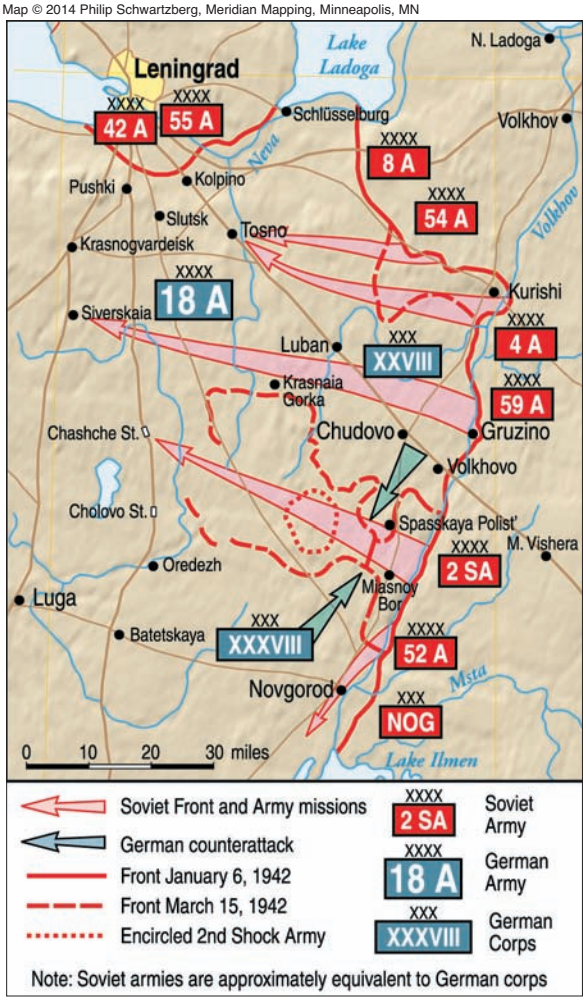
Soviet shock troops, wearing winter camouflage uniforms, sprint across the barren winter landscape in action against German forces.

Looking at the big picture, Army Group North's commander, Leeb, saw the dangers represented by the offensives of the Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts. His troops were barely hanging on, and he asked Hitler for permission to either retreat to form a more stable line or to relieve him. Hitler had already decided on a "no withdrawal" policy, so von Leeb was relieved "for reasons of health" on the 17th. He was replaced by 18th Army commander Georg von Küchler, who turned his command over to General Georg Lindemann.

The day Leeb was relieved, Meretskov called another halt to his offensive to reinforce the west bank forces and consolidate his line once again. With Klykov's fresh troops, the offensive resumed on the 21st. Several German strongpoints were taken and the bridgehead was widened somewhat, but the following day Meretskov called for yet another halt as he expressed worry about the 2nd Shock Army's northern flank where Galanin's 59th Army was making abysmal progress.

After transferring three infantry divisions and four artillery regiments to beef up Galanin, Meretskov ordered the assault to resume. Exploiting Klykov's success from a few days ago, Maj. Gen. Nikolai Ivanovich Gusev's 13th Cavalry Corps (25th and 87th Cavalry Divisions), supported by infantry, broke into the German rear. The Germans reacted by reinforcing the flanks of the penetration, and although Gusev and his accompanying infantry had made good progress, the lack of supplies inside the bridgehead once again forced a halt to offensive operations.



Early Soviet advances near the Leningrad front were met with stiff and often well-coordinated German resistance that ultimately prevailed, throwing the Soviets back with heavy losses.

I.I. Yelokhovsii, a platoon commander of a 76mm artillery battalion in Lt. Col. Chernik's 59th Independent Rifle Brigade, recalled the situation: "It was not only shells that were lacking. The supply situation from January right up to the very end was deplorable. Food was in short supply. Pea soup mash in a common pot for 10 men—that was it. We were saved by the fact that the artillery was horse-drawn. There was no way to feed the horses … they died and we ate them. This occurred around once a week…."

Under continuous prodding from Mekhlis, Meretskov once again resumed his attack. The 2nd Shock Army position resembled a mushroom, with a fairly strong base established along the western bank of the Kolkhoz followed by a narrow stem that expanded into the main section of the salient. It was that narrow stem that threatened Klykov, but try as they might the Soviets could not dislodge the German forces that threatened the corridor.

Meretskov continued to funnel men and supplies across the Volkhov. Getting supplies to the front line was another matter. The swamps and forests hampered the movement of food and ammunition, which had to be brought forward by sleds or horses. The artillery, as Yelekhovskii noted, also faced extreme difficulties in keeping up and supporting attacks.

Nevertheless, at the end of January Meretskov ordered his forces to continue attacking as planned. The 59th and 52nd Armies threw themselves against the narrow corridor at the base of the salient. The 2nd Shock Army was split into three operational groups that were to expand the perimeter of the salient by assaulting German strongpoints on the flanks. Those attacks were to be supported by tanks that had made their way to the front. Meanwhile, Gusev and his supporting infantry would continue to advance on Lyuban.

Meretskov's stop and go assault had given Küchler time to reorganize his command and move more units around the perimeter of the 2nd Shock Army. By early February, the northern flank was occupied by Maj. Gen. Siegfried Hänicke's 61st, Maj. Gen. Theodor Ender's 212th, Maj. Gen. Hans von Basse's 225th, and Kniess's 215th Infantry Divisions, as well as SS Brig. Gen. Alfred Wünnenberg's SS Polizei (Police) Division. The southern flank was held by Maj. Gen. Erich Jaschke's 20th Motorized and Laux's 126th Infantry Divisions, reinforced by part of a security division.

Impressive as the German order of battle looked on paper, most of the divisions had been severely weakened by the earlier fighting. With more than 100,000 men inside the salient, Meretskov thought success was possible. He pushed more troops toward Gusev's position while Klykov's operational groups hit the Germans on the flanks.

A key defense point was Spasskaya Polist', held by units of Kniess's 215th. An operation group under Maj. Gen. Ivan Terentevich Korovnikov attacked the area with three infantry divisions and a tank brigade, but once again poor coordination between the infantry and armored units led to failure. A similar fate befell the Zhilitsov Operation Group at the strongpoint at Zemtitskoye. Both German positions were key to capturing the north-south communication network to Novgorod.

In the south, the 126th was able to hold onto the strongpoint at Podberezye. With help from an artillery battery sent by the Blue Division, the Soviets were beaten back. Around Novgorod, the Spanish line also held against several Soviet attacks.

Throughout February, as the Russian units on the flanks of the salient continued to widen the bulge, Gusev's cavalry and supporting infantry continued to advance toward Lyuban. The commissar of the 59th Independent Rifle Brigade, now led by Colonel I.F. Glazunov, recalled: "During the first days of February, the brigade captured the town of Dubovik ... A punitive company of Estonian irregulars was routed and destroyed. Its commander was captured and executed."

Glazunov's brigade then advanced farther to the edge of a forest near the villages of Bol'shoe and Maloe Yeglino, where it halted

to await the arrival of more units. The villages were heavily defended, but with the help of a couple of ski battalions the 59th took them. However, without cavalry to support a further advance, German positions along a viaduct west of the villages forced the Russians to go into a static mode.

V.N. Sololov, a clerk at the 13th Cavalry Corps Headquarters, recalled the difficulties of the advance. "On February 11 the cavalry reached the town of Dubovik but was unable to advance further through the deep snow and trackless landscape. There was no hay to be had for the horses, as the Germans had swept everything clean, while under the snow was nothing but swamp, void of anything edible. The cavalry could not exploit the successes of the rifle divisions and assumed a defensive posture on foot."

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The goal of Lyuban was tantalizingly close, but Glusev and his supporting troops had run out of steam. Recognizing an opportunity, the Germans attacked Soviet positions at Krasnaia Gorka, about 15 kilometers southwest of Lyuban, with Maj. Gen. Kurt Herzog's 291st, Hänicke's 61st, and Kniess's 215th Infantry Divisions. Retaking the village on February 28, the Germans then encircled the 80th Cavalry Division, which had been brought forward, and the 327th Rifle Division, which had almost reached the outskirts of Lyuban.

P.I. Sotnik, commissar of the 100th Cavalry Regiment of the neighboring 25th Cavalry Division, recalled the events near Lyuban: "The enemy put up stubborn resistance on the southwestern outskirts of Lyuban, then launched a tank attack, which pushed our forces back to a forest. Our units passed over to the defense…. Supplies of food and artillery shells were nonexistent and the ammunition ran out…The [Soviet] units were forced to destroy all of their heavy equipment and during the night of March 8-9 attempted to break through to the main forces with nothing but sidearms, suffering heavy losses…."

While Gusev's forces were fighting for their lives, the Germans were formulating a plan to totally cut off the Soviet salient. Reinforced with Brig. Gen. Friedrich Altrichter's 58th Infantry Division, Chappius's XXXIII Army Corps (126th and 150th Infantry Divisions) would attack up the rail/highway line north of Novgorod while the 215th and SS Police Divisions would attack southward along the same thoroughfare. When the two forces met, the Volkhov pocket would be sealed.

Meanwhile, Meretskov was still ordering his forces to attack, even though supplies inside the pocket were rapidly dwindling. North of the pocket, Fediuninskii's 54th Army was still attacking the German forces on his bridgehead perimeter. Reinforced by Maj. Gen. Nikolai Aleksandrovich Gagen's 4th Guards Rifle Corps, he managed to push forward to within 22 kilometers of Lyuban by March 15. With that success, Stakva put more pressure on Meretskov to keep his own offensive rolling inside the salient with the objective of meeting up with the 54th, which would trap several German divisions.

The Russian command was optimistic that the two forces would be successful in linking up. A March 15 entry in the Leningrad War Diary stated, "The Volkhov Front's 2nd Shock Army and the Leningrad Front's 54th Army are conducting offensive operations with the aim of encircling the enemy Lyuban grouping, which can considerably ease the blockade of Leningrad."

Coincidentally, after days of delay waiting for weather good enough for Luftwaffe support to arrive, the Germans opened an offensive code named Raubtier (Bird of Prey) against the 10-kilometer-wide corridor leading into the pocket. In temperatures of minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit, the Germans rolled forward. The order of the day for the 58th Infantry Division read, "We have been given a task which will have a decisive influence on the entire situation in the Leningrad area. Because of the cold and the difficult terrain, it will make extraordinary demands on us!"

The Soviets defended their positions with terrible ferocity. German soldiers waded through waist-deep snow, pushing slowly toward their objectives—two Russian supply routes nicknamed Dora and Erika. In the north, Wünnenberg led his division from the front, funneling his companies into combat in an area west of Spasskaya Polist. In the south, Colonel Alexander von Pfühlstein's 154th Infantry Regiment of the 58th Infantry Division pushed the Soviets back west of Myasnoy Bor. With temperatures still well below zero, the attacks continued for the next few days.

At 4:45 PM on March 19, units of Altrichter's division reached Dora. The day before, Wünnenberg's troops had taken Erika. Both groups moved tentatively forward in the thickly forested area, and on the 20th they met, slamming the door on the approximately 130,000 Russians inside the pocket.

Klykov reacted immediately by ordering several units inside the pocket to head east to reopen the corridor. From the 22nd on, the thin German lines were under constant attack from tank and infantry units and from artillery fire from the eastern bank of the Volkhov. A new operational group formed under Maj. Gen. Korovnikov battered the German forces, and by March 27 the Erika route was reopened. Another small land bridge was also established, giving the Russians two accesses to supplies, but the corridor had also shrunk to a width of three to five kilometers. During the next few days, Soviet engineers, working under horrific conditions, were able to construct two narrow-gauge rail lines inside the corridor to funnel supplies to the troops in the west.

In late March, the weather finally broke, and

the *Rasputitsa* (muddy season) set in. The snow began to melt, and the swamps and bogs filled with water. Mud was everywhere, making movement extremely difficult. Getting supplies to the Soviet forces in the western area of the pocket was almost impossible.

"At the end of March, the roads turned to water," platoon leader Yelokhovskii remembered. "Shells had to be dragged the five kilometers from the brigade's supply at Dubovka. And how many shells could a hungry man carry?—two shells at the most, with each shell for a 76mm gun weighing 7.5 kilograms…. The food situation became quite bad. The horses, which had died during the winter, could still be eaten while frozen. But with the warm weather the corpses swelled up and maggots appeared…."

Farther north, the mud and stiff German resistance had brought the 54th Army's drive toward Lyuban to an end. Stretched to the limit, the German lines bent, but they did not break. Even so, German commanders were not certain that they could hold Lyuban given the state of the divisions holding the lines, both at the Volkhov pocket and at the 54th Army's bridgehead.

Throughout April, both sides were virtually paralyzed by the weather. The rainy season had set in with a vengeance, turning the ground into a quagmire that made any movement a fatiguing process. Inside the Volkhov pocket, Klykov used the respite to regroup his forces and integrate the replacements that were slowly making their way to the front into his units.

The Germans used the time to strengthen the perimeter of the pocket with reinforcements that were finally coming. However, any offensive operation to liquidate the pocket was out of the question for the moment since the mud made supplying anything but the basics for those troops impossible.

The deadlock also cost the jobs of commanders on both sides. Chappius was replaced by Hänicke. Blamed for the Soviet success in reopening the corridor in March, Altrichter was replaced by Colonel Karl von Graffon. On the Russian side, Meretskov's Volkhov Front was combined with the Leningrad Front effective April 23, putting him out of a job.

On April 24, Meretskov was back in Moscow. Stalin was present at a Stavka meeting when Meretskov spoke of the dangerous position the 2nd Shock Army was in. "In its current state, 2nd Shock Army can neither attack or defend," he said. "Unless it can be given reinforcements it should be withdrawn from the pocket at once. If nothing is done, a catastrophe is inevitable."

National Archives

ABOVE: A German soldier seems to ignore the hulk of a Red Army tank knocked out during the fighting around the besieged city of Leningrad. The great city in northern Russia held out during an epic siege that lasted 900 days. OPPOSITE: Spring thaws turned once icy Russian roads into quagmires. In this photo, German soldiers struggle to walk with their loads through mud that sometimes reached more than calf deep.

A few days earlier on April 20, Lt. Gen. Andrei Andreevich Vlasov, Meretskov's deputy commander, arrived at Klykov's headquarters to take command of the 2nd Shock Army. Klykov was ill, suffering from fatigue. The abysmal conditions inside the pocket had also taken a toll on his health. The new commander was tasked with regrouping the 2nd Shock Army for either continuation of the offensive or pulling out of the salient. It was a daunting task considering the supply corridor was under constant German fire, which disrupted or destroyed the material making its way across the river to the pocket.

What Vlasov found was an army that was undersupplied and lacking artillery. Despite its impressive name, the 2nd Shock Army has lost many experienced officers and men. Those who remained were weak from hunger and inadequately trained.

By late April, Stalin's winter offensive had stalled all along the Eastern Front. Overextended and running short of supplies, the armies were ordered to assume a defensive posture in most areas. However, German and Russians forces were still fighting it out in the Crimea, and Hitler was already making plans for Operation Blau (Blue)—the drive to Stalingrad.

In the Volkhov sector, Moscow finally realized the futility of continuing the Lyuban operation. As the ground began to dry, it was clear that the Germans would once again begin offensive operations to liquidate the pocket. On May 21, Khozin, who was now overall commander of the Leningrad Front, issued orders for Vlasov to prepare to evacuate the salient.

The evacuation would take place in stages, with the westernmost troops in the pocket falling back to a 30-kilometer line stretching from Ostrov in the south to about five kilometers west of Krassnaia Gorka in the north. Following that maneuver, the troops would retreat to the main line of defense, which curved about 35 kilometers from Volosovo to Ruch'l. Once that was accomplished, at least four rifle divisions that were guarding the flanks of the pocket would be freed to regroup and serve as a reserve force.

The final position would be a 25-kilometer line from Piatilapy to Krivino, about 35 kilometers west of the Volkhov. From there Vlasov's army could make its way through the corridor to the eastern bank of the river. The withdrawal would be covered by attacks on the Germans by flanking armies (59th and 52nd).

The plan looked good to those who formulated it. However, it would need good logistics, communications, and cooperation between the participating Soviet forces—things the Russians had not yet perfected during this stage of the war, especially in the Volkhov sector. The 59th and 52nd Armies were separated by the corridor leading into the pocket and were weakened by the casualties incurred in the previous

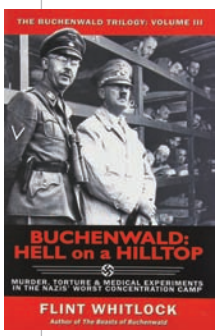
Continued on page 82

By Christopher Miskimon

Infamous Camp Beechwood

The story of Buchenwald remains a chilling chapter in the annals of World War II.

ON JULY 15, 1937, A CONVOY OF TRUCKS SLOWLY DROVE UP THE ETTERSBERG, a wooded hill a few miles north of the German city of Weimar. The vehicles arrived at their destination and stopped in a line; the men aboard the trucks were ordered off. A midsummer sun beat down on the heads of the 149 prisoners overseen by guards of the dreaded SS as they lined up in rows. A photographer stole a quick moment to take a picture of the scene before the men, "enemies" of the Nazi State, were put to work.



These men unwillingly took the first steps in constructing a new concentration camp, one that would become infamous even among those places of death and misery. Soon after arriving, the camp's newly appointed commandant, Karl Koch, selected a new name for the camp. Looking around the hill, he noted a forest of beech trees surrounding him. From then on the camp would bear the name Camp Beechwood—in German, Buchenwald.

While not an extermination camp, Buchenwald was still a pit of murder and human agony. Men would die just building the camp, and conditions only worsened over time. Slave labor, torture, medical experiments, and even suicide would all take their toll on the poor wretches unfortunate enough to pass through Buchenwald's gates. Posted above those gates was a German proverb—*Jedem das Seine*—"to each what he deserves." What a man deserved had little to do with what he would receive at Buchenwald, however. The bloody history of the camp is retold in detail in Flint Whitlock's newest work, ***Buchenwald: Hell on a Hilltop*** (Cable Publishing, Brule, WI, 2014, 345 pp., maps, photographs, notes bibliography, index, $25.95, hardcover).

The story of the camp is the story of those who ran it, an infamous list of Nazi thugs who visited unimaginable cruelty upon the inmates. Karl Koch, the first commandant, was selected precisely because he was harsh and pitiless; he was also corrupt and a thief who lined his pockets with the camp's funds. His wife Ilsa was, if anything, even worse, having inmates beaten just for looking at her. Rumors of lampshades and wallets made of tattooed human skin surrounded the couple. The chief jailer, Martin Sommer, was a sadistic madman who tortured and killed for amusement. Heinrich Hackmann had two prisoners bend a tree and then use it like a catapult to launch another prisoner into the air. The various doctors who worked at the camp carried out numerous experiments on unwilling subjects, many of whom died.

It is also a tale of survival. The prisoners endured horrible conditions, working long hours with little food, always fearful of the capricious nature of the guards. Many persevered, survived the experience, and later were able to testify against their torturers in the numerous war crimes trials that stretched for decades after the war. Many of their personal accounts appear in this book.

While the horror of the camps is well documented, this book provides an excellent overview any serious student of World War II must have. Aside from a strict history of Buchenwald itself, the author devotes space to explaining how the camp and others like it fit into the hierarchy of the Third Reich. Attention is also given to how the Nazi system created and used the camps and how it selected and molded the men and women who operated them. There was an organized, systematic methodology used to create a large pool of people who could control and

An emaciated prisoner drinks from a bowl in front of barracks at Buchenwald concentration camp. The photograph was taken after the camp was liberated by the U.S. 6th Armored Division.

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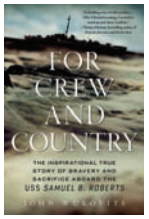
abuse the prisoners without compassion; the few who showed mercy faced demotion or transfer. The Nazi leaders knew the capacity for such bestial behavior would be hard for most to maintain, and so they systematized it. In the words of the author, the Nazi solution was to "replace the mob with a bureaucracy."

This history of Buchenwald explains why World War II had to be fought. It is true that the common Allied soldier knew nothing of the camps while fighting. It can also be argued the Allied leadership, whatever it knew of the camps, gave little if any consideration to them while prosecuting Germany's downfall. Nevertheless, a regime capable of perpetrating such atrocities had to be stopped. The author's flowing prose and knack for detail make this book engaging and fascinating to read. It is the third book in a trilogy on Buchenwald; the first book, *The Beasts of Buchenwald*, covers the actions of Karl and Ilsa Koch and the war crimes trials that followed the war. The second book is *Survivors of Buchenwald*, co-written with Louis Gros, a former prisoner at the camp. Together they give a complete accounting of one of the world's most infamous places.

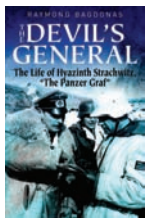
For Crew and Country: The Inspirational True Story of Bravery and Sacrifice Aboard the USS Samuel B. Roberts (John Wukovits, St. Martin's Griffin, New York, 2013, 349 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $16.99, softcover)



A destroyer escort was a small, light warship designed only to escort larger ships and defend them against aircraft and submarines, perhaps the odd torpedo boat. They were never designed to take on cruisers and battleships, which dwarfed them. On October 25, 1944, that is exactly what happened, however. A force of destroyers, destroyer escorts, and escort carriers designated Taffy 3 took on a major Japanese task force near the island of Samar during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. If this Japanese force got past them, the U.S. invasion fleet of transport and cargo ships would be defenseless.

Though completely outmatched, the *Samuel B. Roberts* and her consorts threw themselves at the enemy, making suicidal torpedo and gun runs while the carriers' aircraft attacked with bombs meant for ground attack. The *Samuel B. Roberts*' crew conducted a daring defense, and the ship was overwhelmed and sunk. The crew spent three days in the water afterward, but achieved its goal. The Japanese were driven off, and the landing force was saved. This was the only destroyer escort sunk during the war, and her sacrifice is still remembered in the annals of the U.S. Navy.

The author is a respected historian of World War II, and this book does not disappoint. Wukovits has a flair for telling the story from the sailor's point of view, and he succeeds here. If any battle deserves the description "epic," this one does, and any student of naval history will enjoy and learn from reading this book.

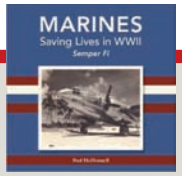


The Devil's General: The Life of Hyazinth von Strachwitz, "The Panzer Graf" (Raymond Bagdonas, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2013, 376 pp., maps, photographs, notes, appendices, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover)

This is a biography of the German Army's most decorated regimental commander of World War II. An aristocrat (Graf is the Germanic equivalent of an English earl), Strachwitz had fought in World War I and in the Freikorps after that conflict. The German Army encouraged leadership from the front, and Strachwitz took this to heart. He was often found at the front lines, taking his men where he wanted them to go rather than sending them.

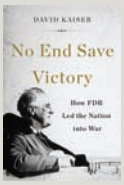
It is perhaps surprising that he survived the war. He fought in Poland, France, and Yugoslavia before entering the maelstrom of

New and Noteworthy



MARINES SAVING LIVES IN WORLD WAR II: SEMPER FI (Bud McDonnell, Kalamazoo Publishing, 2013, $15.00, softcover) This is the autobiography of a Marine pilot who served in World War II and Korea.

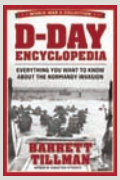
WOT A WAY TO RUN A WAR! THE WORLD WAR II EXPLOITS AND ESCAPADES OF A PILOT IN THE 352ND FIGHTER GROUP (Ted Fahrenwald, Casemate Publishing, 2014, $14.99, softcover) This is a memoir of a pilot who was shot down, captured, and escaped. His combat missions are mixed with stories of daily life.



NO END SAVE VICTORY: HOW FDR LED A NATION INTO WAR (David Kaiser, Basic Books, 2014, $27.99, hardcover) The months just before America entered World War II were a critical period for the Roosevelt administration. The author shows how FDR prepared the American people for entry into the war.

ENTER THE ENEMY: A FRENCH FAMILY'S LIFE UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION (Roland J. Bain, Merriam Press, 2014, $14.95, softcover) This is the story of a French officer's family and its experience during the occupation. The daily lives of the family members are covered in detail.

KAITEN: JAPAN'S SECRET MANNED SUICIDE SUBMARINE AND THE FIRST AMERICAN SHIP IT SANK IN WWII (Michael Mair and Joy Waldron, Penguin Books, 2014, $27.95, hardcover) This is a history of Japan's suicide subs and their attack on a U.S. oiler. Accounts from both sides of the engagement are included.



D-DAY ENCYCLOPEDIA (Barrett Tillman, Regnery History, $18.99, softcover) This is a complete reference of the most important day of the war in the European Theater.

THE OSS IN BURMA: JUNGLE WAR AGAINST THE JAPANESE (Troy J. Sacquety, University Press of Kansas, $22.50, softcover) The OSS conducted an extensive campaign against the Japanese in this theater. By April 1945, it was the only American unit in Burma.

REQUISITIONED: THE BRITISH COUNTRY HOUSE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR (John Martin Robinson, Zenith Press, 2014, $40.00, hardcover) This book profiles 20 British homes taken over for military use in World War II. Their role during the conflict is shown along with their eventual postwar fate.

WORLD WAR II AT SEA: THE LAST BATTLESHIPS (IMAGES OF WAR) (Philip Kaplan, Pen and Sword, 2014, $24.95, softcover) This collection of rare warship photographs has been mined from archives worldwide. It shows the battleship in its final days.

the Eastern Front. There, he was wounded at Stalingrad but was one of the relative few to be evacuated by air. After recovery, he fought at Kharkov, Kursk, and Narva. As German fortunes waned, Strachwitz commanded various Kampfgruppen, ad hoc battle groups formed with whatever was on hand. Wounded a dozen times over the course of the war, he was lucky to be able to surrender to the Americans in May 1945 and eventually was able to rebuild his shattered life.

Tirpitz: The Life and Death of Germany's Last Super Battleship (Niklas Zetterling and Michael Tamelander, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2013, 360 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, $18.95, softcover)

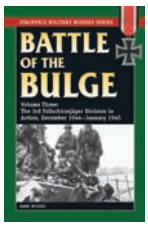
The battleship *Tirpitz,* like most German surface warships, spent most of the war denied the open sea and prospects for battle there. It was what the ship was built for, but instead small actions and Norwegian fjords were to be its fate. This did not mean the ship's story was a dull one, however. Despite being often unable to sortie, her very existence was a threat that could not be ignored by Great Britain's Royal Navy. *Tirpitz* was a menace to convoys and warships alike, and even a rumor of her sailing would divert extensive Allied resources.

To end this threat, British aircraft and midget submarines made attempts to sink the ship, efforts that eventually bore fruit on November 12, 1944. A large force of Avro Lancaster bombers dropped huge Tallboy bombs on *Tirpitz*, causing her to later capsize. This book by a pair of Swedish researchers is a detailed and thorough account of the ship's history and fate. It is an enjoyable tale of a German battleship and the British efforts to destroy it.

The Fight in the Clouds: The Extraordinary Combat Experience of P-51 Mustang Pilots During World War II (James P. Busha, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014, 256 pp., photographs, index, $30.00, hardcover)

The experiences of World War II are often best told in the words of the veterans themselves. This book collects the experiences of P-51 pilots to present an overview of that famous aircraft. The P-51 Mustang was the quintessential American fighter plane of the war, and those who flew it saw service in nearly every theater of the war from 1943 on. They escorted bombers, provided close air support to ground troops, and took on the future when they battled jets over Nazi Germany near the war's end.

Each chapter focuses on a different period or region of the conflict. While some are predictable, such as Operation Overlord or the Mediterranean Theater, there are a few that tell lesser known stories, such as Mustangs in the Pacific and an unusual and inadvertent battle between American P-51s and Soviet Yak-9 pilots on March 18, 1945. This accidental fight had political consequences for the two Allied nations that were soon to become enemies.



Battle of the Bulge, Volume Three: The 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Division in Action, December 1944 – January 1945 (Hans Wijers, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2014, 193 pp., photographs, bibliography, $18.95, softcover)

The Battle of the Bulge is one of the most significant engagements of World War II and has been widely covered with literally hundreds of books on the battle. Finding new ground to cover on this battle requires delving into individual units and their specific actions, particularly those not as famously associated with the

Ardennes Offensive. Stackpole Books has succeeded here with a new look at the German 3rd Parachute Division.

This unit was part of the Sixth Panzer Army fighting on the northern shoulder of the Bulge. It fought various American units, including the 1st, 30th, and 99th Divisions. The book takes the war down to the squad and individual level, providing the reader with a detailed survey of what the soldiers on the front lines experienced. Refreshingly, the author liberally uses accounts from both sides to portray what these young men went through, giving a blended look at combat in the Bulge.

Lost in the Pacific: Epic Firsthand Accounts of WWII Survival Against Impossible Odds (Edited by L. Douglas Keeney, Premiere Publishing, Campbell, CA, 2014, 193 pp., maps, photographs, glossary, index, $27.95, hardcover)

For pilots and aircrew flying in the Pacific Theater, perhaps the worst threat they faced

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

Wargaming's Monster Hit Shrinks Down for Apple Devices and Manages to Pack an Explosive Punch On the Go.

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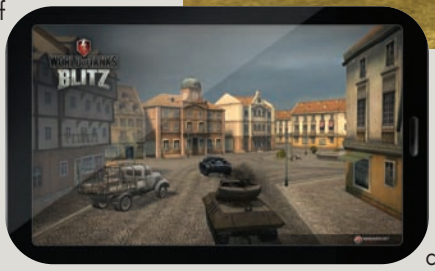


It can be a hefty challenge to shrink a majorly popular console/PC experience down to the world of mobile gaming without sacrificing too much of what made it work in the first place. Frankly, most aren't up to the task, and even when they are they tend to take the smarter route of tweaking the gameplay to suit its intended platform. That's perfectly understandable; after all, some things that work on large screens with keyboards and controllers just won't play on the go with a touch screen. Against all odds, the folks at Wargaming.net ended up coming up with a nice solution with *World of Tanks Blitz.*

For an example of the best way to botch something simple, look no further than iOS or Android ports of classic video games. Titles as barebones as, say, *Double Dragon* or *Ghosts 'n Goblins* just don't work without tactile buttons. Virtual d-pads and face buttons don't cut it for twitch-based timing or tricky maneuvering. On the opposite end of the spectrum is something like the recently released *Hitman GO,* which takes the stealth-assassinating Hitman franchise and transforms it into a turn-based reflection of its former self. The goals are the same and it's recognizable as *Hitman,* but the genre switch-up was completely necessary for making something playable.

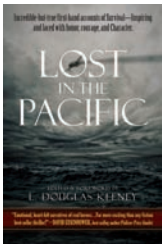
World of Tanks Blitz finds somewhat of a comfortable medium. It's not as fully featured as its elder sibling, but it packs an impressive amount of punch when played on an iPad (iPhone or iPod Touch). Once you hop into your new or existing account you can go through a quick tutorial that sets up the controls, which are, as you might expect, all touchscreen-based. Swiping across the right side of the screen moves the camera around and aims, while a virtual stick on the left is used to move and steer your tank. Buttons on both sides—or just one, depending on how you choose to customize the controls—are used to fire at enemies, and a few other icons do things like zoom in, use expendable items, and more.

It's remarkably simple and admittedly not as easy in the heat of battle as it is in the context of the tutorial. I felt pretty confident after learning the controls and heading to my garage to select the tank I would use to theoretically lay waste to my enemies. What I found on the other side, however, was immediate defeat. Matches are decided when your team either captures territories or defeats all enemy units, and the initial handful I engaged in had my smoking pile of wreckage sitting around like a lump while I cycled through the rest of the units on my team to watch them actually attempt to succeed.

I don't consider myself a quitter, but it did cross my mind that maybe, just maybe, I would never win in *World of Tanks Blitz.* I couldn't quite steer and plow forward elegantly enough while also keeping my eyes on enemies and lining them up for a few quick shots. I'm glad I didn't chalk it up to something I simply wasn't good at, though, because once I got the hang of it *Blitz* quickly became a case of "just one more." Matches can play out fairly quickly, and there were always plenty of people online wiling away the hours in similarly bombastic fashion. By the time I had gotten a few hours in I was actually winning more than losing and coming out on top of my team's scoreboard (or at least pretty darn close to it).

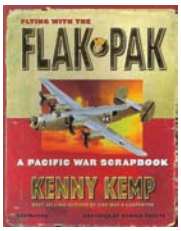
How well you'll do in *Blitz* can be largely dependent on finding the tank or tanks you're most comfortable controlling. Heavy, Medium, Light, and Tank Destroyer units are represented across the U.S., German, and Soviet forces, and they're all good for different tasks and with various unlockable add-on combinations. I had the luxury of a premium account with the ability to purchase and choose pretty much any tank I wanted to from the outset, but others will have to earn their way to the more specialized equipment through either in-game experience and funds or real-life cashola. Like *World of Tanks* itself, though, there's plenty to do with the base game, and you can earn yourself a nicely outfitted garage by playing enough.

The framerate and visuals were pretty consistently impressive during my time with *Blitz.* It's not going to blow the mind of anyone who's been playing *World of Tanks* proper on a high-end PC, but it looks great and runs smoothly on Apple devices. It won't take you too long to roll through all the battlefields available, but the variety is certainly there, from small battle-worn European towns to barren deserts. Considering the basic game is perfectly playable for free, there's no reason not to recommend trying out *World of Tanks Blitz.* Just make sure you factor in the learning curve and tough it out for the first few bewildering charges into battle.



was the nightmare scenario of their plane going down and becoming lost in the open waters and myriad islands below. If lost at sea, they could literally drift until they died from exposure and thirst. Islands could be enemy held with the promise of capture, torture, and death; even deserted islands meant isolation and hardship.

This book contains 23 accounts of survival by aviators whose planes went down. Despite the vast efforts made to rescue downed airmen, many floated for days. Some awaited rescue even after planes spotted them because floatplanes had to be vectored in and weather often got in the way. A few reached shore and were helped by friendly coastwatchers who aided them in repatriation, often by submarine. For readers who enjoyed the recent bestseller *Unbroken*, this volume makes an interesting companion.



Flying with the Flak-Pak: A Pacific War Scrapbook (Kenny Kemp, Alta Films Press, Midvale, UT, 2013, 272 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $24.95, softcover)

Here is another book on the air war in the Pacific giving a different perspective. When the author's father passed away, the son took possession of his late parent's footlocker containing memorabilia of his time as a Consolidated B-24 bomber pilot during World War II. He initially expected to use the contents for nothing more than a shadow box commemorating his father's service. As he emptied the footlocker of its treasures, suddenly he saw something more. The result is this work revealing the day to day life of his father and thousands of other B-24 air crewmen in the Pacific.

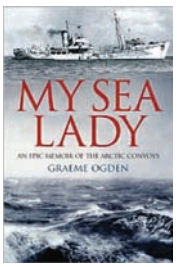
Using a photobook-style format with lavish color illustrations, every aspect of a pilot's life is shown, from home life before entering the service to training and deployment overseas. Once overseas they started life at a forward base, an existence interspersed with actual combat missions. All of this is shown through clear text and the imagery of relics, photographs, and artwork.

Disobeying Hitler: German Resistance after Valkyrie (Randall Hansen, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2014, 464 pp., maps, illustrations, notes, index, $29.95, hardcover)

Valkyrie was by far the most famous of the attempts to assassinate Hitler both before and

during World War II. Claus von Stauffenberg's failed attempt to kill the Nazi dictator was the last large-scale, overt effort to overthrow the regime. Smaller efforts at resistance continued, however, right up to the end of the war. The Third Reich was suicidal in defeat; if they were to lose the war, the Nazis wanted nothing left, not a building standing or a round of ammunition unspent. It was a madness that would leave the German people destitute and starving.

Fortunately, this was a fate the more rational Germans fought in myriad small ways. Rather than active resistance they committed acts of simple but vital disobedience. When a bridge was ordered destroyed, the plunger never fell on the detonator; when a city was ordered defended to the last cartridge, white flags appeared once further resistance was futile. For those who dared disobey such orders, the cost could be their lives, but these efforts saved untold numbers of lives and preserved critical infrastructure for postwar recovery. While such disobedience has been noted often, this book brings various examples together to show the effects of the combined efforts of numerous Germans spread across many battlefields.



My Sea Lady: An Epic Memoir of the Arctic Convoys (Graeme Ogden, Bene Factum Publishing, London, UK, 185 pp., 2013, illustrations, $15.95, softcover)

The convoys that carried weapons and material to the Soviet Union formed a vital link to that nation and faced hardship from both the weather and enemy action. Graeme Ogden was an officer aboard a trawler converted for anti-submarine duties. This ship escorted the merchantmen that plied the waters of the far North Atlantic, always watching for German submarines, aircraft, or surface raiders.

Ogden's memoirs reveal an overlooked facet of the Battle of the Atlantic: that of an escort ship's crew at war. Everything from an ill-trained cook to shore leave in Murmansk to an attack on an enemy submarine is given in excellent prose. Many of his day to day experiences will be familiar to sailors anywhere. The anecdotes and humorous moments combine with the terrifying times to make this book worthwhile.

arracourt

Continued from page 41

then Leach would swing around and hit them in the flank with the larger company.

To conceal the movement, Hunter coordinated with the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion to blanket the area with smoke. Spencer then moved out with his company, comprised of only two understrength platoons. He placed 1st Platoon, under the command of Lieutenant Turner, on his northern flank and 2nd Platoon, under the command of Lieutenant C.L. De Craene, along his southern flank. Captain Spencer was in his tank between the two platoons.

Turner's platoon stumbled upon the enemy first. Unfortunately, Leach and Spencer had not seen all the panzers. In fact, nine Panthers were in the immediate area, and Turner's platoon hit them on the eastern flank. Turner's three tanks halted along a ridge and then opened fire at a range of 250 meters.

According to Captain Leach, most of the Panther crews had dismounted and were "eating supper." The sudden maelstrom of fire surprised them, and the panzer crews scurried back to their vehicles. Able Company struck them head on, which meant that the American gunners would have to penetrate the thickest portion of the panzers' armor. Almost immediately, Captain Spencer's tank shook and then rolled to a stop. One of the panzer gunners had scored a hit on Spencer's tank. Then another panzer slew Turner's tank, killing one of his crew. That left only two tanks from his platoon.

It got worse. Another 75mm round rattled De Craene's tank, knocking the M4's .50-caliber machine gun from the turret. The concussion also stunned De Craene for several moments. When he recovered, he ordered his driver to jam on the throttle, and his Sherman rumbled toward the line of panzers. Reacting to this charging metal rhinoceros, the German gunners peppered De Craene's tank with multiple hits, killing him and most of his crew. Able Company was now in serious trouble. Spencer and De Craene had the only 76mm long-barreled Sherman guns in the company. All the other tankers in the company still were armed with the stubby 75s. Fortunately, help was on the way.

While Spencer's company kept the Germans occupied, Leach's company crept along a side road and passed the Panthers. The hedges and ridges lining the road prevented the Panther crews from detecting B Company until it was too late. When Leach's last tank cleared the edge of the German line, he ordered, "By the left flank, gun's ablazing, let's move."

The sudden attack to their flank stunned the German tankers. Barese's platoon was the first to make contact. Leach's company rolled down the hill, his tanks only stopping to fire. One by one, the Panthers brewed up until all nine were in flames. Leach's company had also cleared out all the panzergrenadiers in the area around Moncourt, and both companies killed over 100 dismounted Germans. It was a total American victory.

Southwest of Task Force Hunter, Hellcats from 1st Platoon, Charlie Company, also joined the battle. Like their brethren in 3rd Platoon, the four Hellcats were scoring hits. Sergeant Henry Hartman's crew accounted for the immobilization of five panzers, while Sergeant Tom Donovan's team destroyed another three tanks. By nightfall, the initial German assault had ended.

For the American forces, the final tally was staggering. The tank destroyers alone were credited with knocking out 19 panzers, while losing only three Hellcats. That was not all. Colonel Abrams claimed his battalion destroyed another 29 enemy tanks. His crews killed more than 200 enemy soldiers while losing only three tanks in return. For the Germans, this meant that the 113th Panzer Brigade had lost most of its panzers. The German assault had resulted in a complete disaster.

Though the battle for Arracourt would last several more days, the Germans had squandered their best chance to inflict severe losses on the American forces on September 19. The 113th Panzer Brigade had overwhelming superiority in tanks and men. Despite this fact, it was still unable to defeat Abrams' 37th Tank Battalion and Evans' C Company, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

The chief reason for the German defeat was their lack of reconnaissance, which prevented them from discovering the American battle positions before it was too late. As a consequence, the panzer companies rolled through the French countryside like blind men. Though the American tankers were outgunned in their Sherman tanks, they knew the ground and were far better trained. The result was a tactical American victory.

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toons faced Japanese defenses backed by 75mm guns. The Marines brought up a tank destroyer to eliminate the Japanese and by evening were nearly in the village of Liguan.

But the news was not all good. The Marine right flank was hanging in the air with no connection with the Army's 77th Infantry Division. Geiger and Turnage worried about their open flank.

However, the Japanese were close to the end of their tether. Their last attempt to hold off the Marines took place defending the Finegayan area, where they still had a few artillery pieces and good observation posts. Japanese shells could rain down on key American road junctions. On August 6, Turnage ordered his Marines to concentrate on the roads and trails. The Marines moved forward three miles and tied together their front lines.

The 1st Provisional Brigade took over the left flank of the Marines on August 7, with the 4th Marines heading north for Junction 460, four miles south of Ritidian Point, the northernmost part of Guam. The same day, the 3rd Marine Division advanced three miles on a northeastern axis.

On August 8, Shepherd's brigade resumed its advance at 7:30 AM with the 22nd Marines on the left flank, moving cautiously behind destruction caused by Navy and Marine artillery. Company F of 2/22 reached the northern coastline of Guam first.

By August 9 and 10, the Japanese were taking refuge in the northeastern corner of the island, and the Americans were finding the pursuit of the enemy frustrating. They could not find five Japanese tanks that had broken into the lines of 2/3 on the night of August 8, which escaped completely and were likely abandoned.

On August 9, the Marines abandoned their final push into the northeast when they learned from Guamanians that 3,000 Japanese were in the area—this looked more like a job for Marine artillery. The heavy guns poured 4,000 rounds into the suspected area for 2½ hours.

While the Marines moved forward, so did the Army. Heavy Japanese defenses slowed the 77th Division's reconnaissance company, so the 1/306 moved in on August 10 with greater firepower. The Americans brought up flamethrowers and were greeted with rifle and machine-gun fire, which killed eight and wounded 17 GIs. The Americans decided to wait for the next day to hit the Japanese with more force. On the 11th, the 1/306 attacked the trenches and caves with flamethrowers, mortars, and machine-gun fire.

At 11:30 AM on August 10, Geiger announced that Guam was secure, just before a visit of Admirals Chester Nimitz and Raymond Spruance and Generals Vandegrift and Holland Smith, to see how the campaign was doing. Geiger could report that 10,984 Japanese bodies had been counted for a loss of 7,714 U.S. casualties. Of these, the Marines had suffered 1,190 killed, 377 dead of wounds, and 5,308 wounded. The Army had lost 177 killed and 662 wounded in its drive north.

Nevertheless, more than 7,000 Japanese troops were still hiding out in Guam's bush, and while they presented no organized threat to the American forces, they were still capable of taking American lives.

The island was taken over by Navy, Marine, and Army engineers, who created vast air and naval bases on a once neglected corner of America's empire. Nimitz himself established the forward headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet there. Vast fleets of B-29s roared from the Marianas to pulverize Japan's cities. However, the struggle to secure the island continued for weeks.

The Americans gave diehard defenders a carrot-and-stick approach, dropping Japanese psychological warfare leaflets by day from the air, urging surrender. In August, U.S. patrols averaged 80 Japanese killed each day, and as late as February 1945, there were 141 killed that month with only 44 prisoners taken.

Incredibly, some Japanese hung on. A Major Sato and his 34 men operated in southern Guam all the way to June 11, 1945, when he finally surrendered. Takeda and a group of 67 men would not give in until September 4, 1945—two days after Japan's surrender in Tokyo Bay.

Japanese holdouts across the refused to dishonor themselves by surrendering. In 1960, two fugitives, Tadeshi Ito and Bunzo Minegawa, surrendered. They helped local authorities scout for other holdouts but did not find any. It was presumed that Guam was finally liberated.

It was not.

On the night of January 24, 1972—28 years after Geiger had declared Guam secure—two Guamanian fishermen, Jesus Dueñas and Manuel De Gracia, headed out to check their shrimp traps along a small river near Talofofo. A skinny man charged out of the jungle. The two Guamanians subdued him. Once in the hands of Guamanian authorities, the man was identified as Sergeant Shoichi Yokoi of the 38th Infantry Regiment, officially listed as dead since 1955.

New Jersey-based author David Lippman is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He also maintains a website dedicated to the daily events of World War II.*

polish power

Continued from page 59

which was the homeland of the Polish II Corps. He then concluded by saying that after the war if you wished to go home you may, but if you chose not to, England would welcome you with employment and homes. The men were immediately bitter and one sergeants said, 'Why the hell are we fighting now? We have no country to go to.' The Colonel stepped in and showed us pictures of England and London which he had visited. He said how good the country and people were. I acclaimed that's for me, I'm not going to the Russians."

Although most of the men decided to settle in Britain, the Poles did not show the aggressive spirit in the remaining combat.

The final offensive to break the stalemate on the Italian front was scheduled for the night of April 9, 1945. The Eighth Army objective was to break through the Po Valley and seize the cities of Bologna and Florence. The Polish II Corps was assigned the direct assault across the Senio River straight to Bologna.

The 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division spearheaded the attack across the Senio, north of the Via Emilia (Highway 9) toward Bologna. The corps struck the boundary between the German 98th and 26th Panzer Divisions. The Poles closed in on Imola, 15 miles from Bologna, and by April 14 that town was captured. At this point the Poles were confronted by their old enemy, the German 1st Parachute Division. The Polish attack was so successful that the German division disintegrated.

The Poles captured the 1st Parachute Division's battle flag, and on the morning of April 21, the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division entered Bologna ahead of the American 34th Division. The German flag was eventually presented to General Anders as a trophy. The Polish victory was honored by a congratulatory letter from McCreery, who wrote, "You have shown a splendid fighting spirit, endurance and skill in this great battle. I send my warmest congratulations and admiration to all ranks."

Another British politician, Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan, publically renounced his prior view of the Polish II Corps. In an open letter he wrote, "I have underestimated the marvelous dignity and devotion of Anders and his comrades. They fought with distinction in the front of attack in the last battles of April. They had lost their country but they kept their honor."

The liberation of Bologna ended 14 months of Polish II Corps operations during the Italian campaign. Today, 1,432 soldiers of the II Corps rest in the Polish War Cemetery in Bologna-San Lazzaro di Savena, the largest of four located in Italy.

In May 1945, the corps consisted of 55,780 men and approximately 1,500 women in auxiliary services. There was also one bear, named Wojtek. The majority of the forces were composed of former citizens of eastern Poland. During 1944-1945, the Polish II Corps fought with distinction in the Italian campaign, losing 11,379 men. Among them were 2,301 killed in action, 8,543 wounded, and 535 missing.

After the war, Polish divisions remained in Italy near Ancona, providing care for displaced Polish refugees. They continued to train because they expected a war between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. The total establishment of the Polish II Corps in mid-1946 was down to 103,000 personnel. In August 1946, two divisions were transported to Britain and demobilized. The 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division remained in Italy as part of the occupation forces. Because of the Soviet occupation of Poland, most of the Cassino veterans never returned to their homeland. Inexplicably, the Poles were not allowed to participate in the massive victory parade in London.

Ten members of Parliament signed a letter published in the *Daily Telegram* in June 1946, objecting to the treatment of the Poles. The letter read, "Polish dead lay in hundreds on Monte Cassino. The Poles fought at Tobruk, Falaise, and Arnhem. Polish pilots shot down 772 German planes. The Polish Forces who fought under British command have not been invited to the Victory March June 8. Ethiopians will be there, Mexicans will be there, the Fiji Medical Corps, the Labuan Police and the Seychelles Pioneer Corps will be there—and rightly too. But the Poles will not be there."

In 1947, the Carpathian division was moved to Britain and housed at Hodgemoor Camp, Chalfont St Giles, and Buckinghamshire. It maintained a presence there until 1962.

Anders, a staunch anticommunist, remained in Britain. The Polish communist government stripped him of his Polish citizenship. He died in exile in 1970. His citizenship was reinstated posthumously in 1989, with the formation of a democratic government in Poland under Lech Walesa. Anders also received the title of Commander of the Legion of Honor from the new government. In accordance with his will, he was buried among his soldiers in the Polish military cemetery at Monte Cassino.

James Marino, military writer, history teacher, and World War II reenactor lives in Hackettstown, New Jersey, and has written extensively on World War II since 1999.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Israel and the United States

Is Israel an asset or a burden to our country?

The United States is without question Israel's most important ally. Also, without question, Israel is the staunchest and most reliable friend of the United States. But there are some who believe and vigorously advocate that Israel is a burden to the United States and that, were it not for Israel, peace would prevail in the Middle East.

What are the facts?

The "Israel lobby." There are those who claim that Israel is a liability, a burden to our country. Professors from prestigious universities write essays in which they aver that the United States is in thrall to the "Israel lobby." This lobby's supposed main supporters are AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee), and CUFI (Christians United for Israel) and other advocacy groups. They are said to exert an almost magical spell over U.S. policy makers, including leaders of Congress. Some even say that the Iraq war and efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons were promoted by this omnipotent "Israel lobby"—not in order to defend the United States, but in order to further the interests of Israel. While it's true that members of Congress have for decades overwhelmingly supported Israel, this is because of Israel's undeniably high strategic value to the U.S., as well as our shared political and moral principles. Critics also fail to note that for more than a decade the majority of Americans—both Democrats and Republicans—have supported for Israel in its relations with the Arabs, with such support currently at 62 percent, according to a recent Gallup poll. In fact, America—and Americans—support Israel for common-sense reasons.

> "Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values will bind Israel and the United States forever."

America's staunchest ally. While Israel receives $3 billion annually in military aid from the U.S., fully 75% of this money must be spent with U.S. military contractors, making Israel a large customer of those companies. But since Israel is also one of America's strongest allies globally and its only true ally in the Middle East, this aid can be seen as a smart investment in our own country's defense. Virtually without exception, Israel's government and its people agree with and support the foreign policy objectives of the United States. In the United Nations, Israel's votes coincide with those of the United States over 90% of the time. The Arabs and other Muslim countries, virtually all of them recipients of American largess, almost reflexively vote against the United States in most instances.

Israel is America's major strategic asset in the Middle East, the cradle of Islamist terror, which is dominated by tyrants and religious oppression and shows almost total disregard for human rights. During the decades-long Cold War, Israel was America's indispensable rampart against the inroads of the Soviet Union. It is now the bulwark against the aggressive intentions of Iran. During Desert Storm, Israel provided invaluable intelligence, an umbrella of air cover for military cargo, and had personnel planted in the Iraqi deserts to pick up downed American pilots.

A foreign intelligence bargain. Gen. George Keagan, former head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, stated publicly that "Israel is worth five CIAs," with regard to intelligence passed to our country. He also stated that the yearly $3 billion that Israel received in military assistance was worth $50 to $60 billion in intelligence, R&D savings, and Soviet weapons systems captured and transferred to the Pentagon. In contrast to our commitments in Korea, Japan, Germany, and other parts, not a single American serviceperson needs to be stationed in Israel. Considering that the cost of one serviceperson per year – including backup and infrastructure – is estimated to be about $200,000, and assuming a minimum contingent of 25,000 troops, the cost savings to the United States on that score alone is on the order of $5 billion a year.

Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank. Its superb harbor, its outstanding military installations, the air- and sea-lift capabilities, and the trained manpower to maintain sophisticated equipment are readily at hand in Israel. It is the only country that makes itself available to the United States in any contingency. No, Israel is not a burden, but a tremendous asset to the United States.

Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East and the indispensable defender of America's interests in that area of the world. The people of the United States, individually and through their Congressional representatives, overwhelmingly support Israel in its seemingly unending fight against Arab aggression and Islamist terror. But that support is not only based on the great strategic value that Israel represents to the United States. It is and always has been based on shared values of liberty, democracy, and human rights. Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against radical Islamist terrorism. This shared purpose and these common ideals will bind Israel and the United States forever.

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month's fighting. As usual, reinforcements and supplies were slow in coming, which would also hamper their efforts.

The terrain and weather also continued to remain a problem. On the German side, Sgt. Maj. A. Gütte of Jaschke's 20th Motorized Division noted: "The forests grew green and storm clouds darkened the skies. Mosquitoes swarmed over the swamps, tormenting the long-suffering soldiers, and neither gloves nor nets provided relief. With this plague came the almost unbearable nausea occasioned by the decaying flesh of the fallen lying in the swamps and woods."

On the Russian side, Yelokhovskii recalled: "For the last days of April and all of May supplies were generally nonexistent. Aircraft would drop dry rations, but to what purpose? A sack would either fall into the swamp or strike a stump and break into dust. Some would glean the meager pieces from the mud, but there would be little at all to be found…."

The withdrawal to the first defensive line began on May 24. For the most part, the movement went unnoticed by the Germans, and the retreat continued until the main defensive line was reached on the 28th. By that time some units inside the pocket had already made their way to the eastern bank of the Volkhov. They would be the lucky ones.

The Germans finally realized what was happening during the final days of May. With the skies still pouring rain, there was little that could be done until the weather cleared. The sun finally appeared on May 30, and the Germans struck at the tenuous Soviet lifeline. On the south side of the corridor, the 58th Infantry and 20th Motorized Divisions, supported by the 2nd SS Brigade, moved forward to meet I Army Corps' 254th, 121st, 61st, and SS Police Divisions.

Soviet positions were overrun after heavy casualties were incurred. The terrain slowed the advance as the Germans fought to gain a foothold on the high ground that held the Soviet supply corridors. Brig. Gen. Martin Wandel, commander of the 121st, watched his troops struggle to advance.

Pushing forward, the divisions of I Army Corps severed the Erika supply route. The next day, the divisions of Hänicke's XXXVIII Army Corps linked up with the I Corps. The linkup did not wholly seal the corridor, as gaps in the line still remained, but it managed to cut once and for all the supply routes servicing Vlasov's army. Once the divisions met, their commanders formed lines that faced east and west to prevent the Soviets from retaking the area. Other divisions on the perimeter of the pocket also moved to compress the area the Soviets held on the west bank north and south of the corridor.

With his escape route to the east blocked, Vlasov mounted an attack to the northeast, hoping to link up with the 59th Army, whose advance units had fought their way to the eastern bank of the Polist River. The attack came up against formidable German defenses on June 5 and fell apart. German counterattacks pushed Vlasov's forces back into the ever shrinking pocket the next day.

On June 8 Stalin reestablished the Volkhov Front with Meretskov once again in command. The change did little to affect the situation. The 52nd and 59th Armies were slamming against the German lines, achieving little while suffering heavy casualties. Inside the pocket things grew even more grim.

Communications between Vlasov and Meretskov were lost on the night of June 21, leaving the Volkhov Front commander totally in the dark as to the dispositions of the 2nd Shock Army's formations. Nevertheless, some Soviet troops were able to escape from the pocket when a group of Vlasov's soldiers opened a narrow corridor to the advance elements of the 59th Army. More than 6,000 men were able to make their way to freedom before German counterattacks, supported by Stuka dive bombers, closed the escape route. Other smaller groups found gaps in the German lines and made it to safety, but most were cut down by German fire as they tried to escape.

By June 25, the Germans had totally sealed off the corridor near the Volkhov after fighting off several attacks to reopen it. Inside the pocket the agony of the 2nd Shock Army continued. German forces had split the pocket into several pieces on June 23, further hampering any wholesale breakout attempt. The lack of communications between units, even between units subordinated to battalion or regimental headquarters, resulted in the further disintegration of the starving army. By the end of the month, the battle was over.

The 20th Motorized Division's Sergeant Major Gütte recalled, "A last desperate attempt to break out of the encirclement was beaten back by dive bombers. The pocket was then split and the end point arrived. The Russian troops emerged from their hiding places in the hundreds and thousands. Many were wounded. Most of them were half-starving and barely retained the semblance of human beings!"

SS Private Sayer, a member of Wünnenberg's Police Division, also described the end of the battle: "On either side of the path a portrait of misery wherever the eye fell! Our route led us past the dead and wounded or columns of half-starved Russian soldiers…. When day broke, we saw where we were for the first time. We already knew we were on a corduroy road, but what was on and along the road—that was something we had never seen before. Hundreds of motor vehicles, guns and weapons of every kind had gotten stuck there. An immense mass of war matérial of every kind was strewn around. And then the mass of prisoners arrived from all sides—wounded, ragged and totally fought-out figures, gnawing the bark in their hunger—they came and came—there was no end!"

The woods yielded about 33,000 prisoners. Total Russian losses for the Lyuban operation from January 7 on were approximately 149,000 dead and 253,000 wounded for the 2nd Shock, 52nd, and 59th Armies. Most of the blame for the fiasco has to be placed squarely at the feet of Stalin and Stavka. The logistics failures, use of half-trained and inexperienced troops, and the several ordered halts of the operation made its objectives nothing more than a pipe dream. However, a convenient scapegoat for the failure was found in Vlasov.

Since losing communications with the outside, Vlasov had wandered aimlessly from unit to unit in the pocket. On July 21, the Germans received a report from a village mayor that two partisans were hiding in his town. The operations officer of the XXXVIII Army Corps, a Captain von Schwerdter, took a patrol to the village and confronted the pair. They turned out to be Vlasov and his female cook.

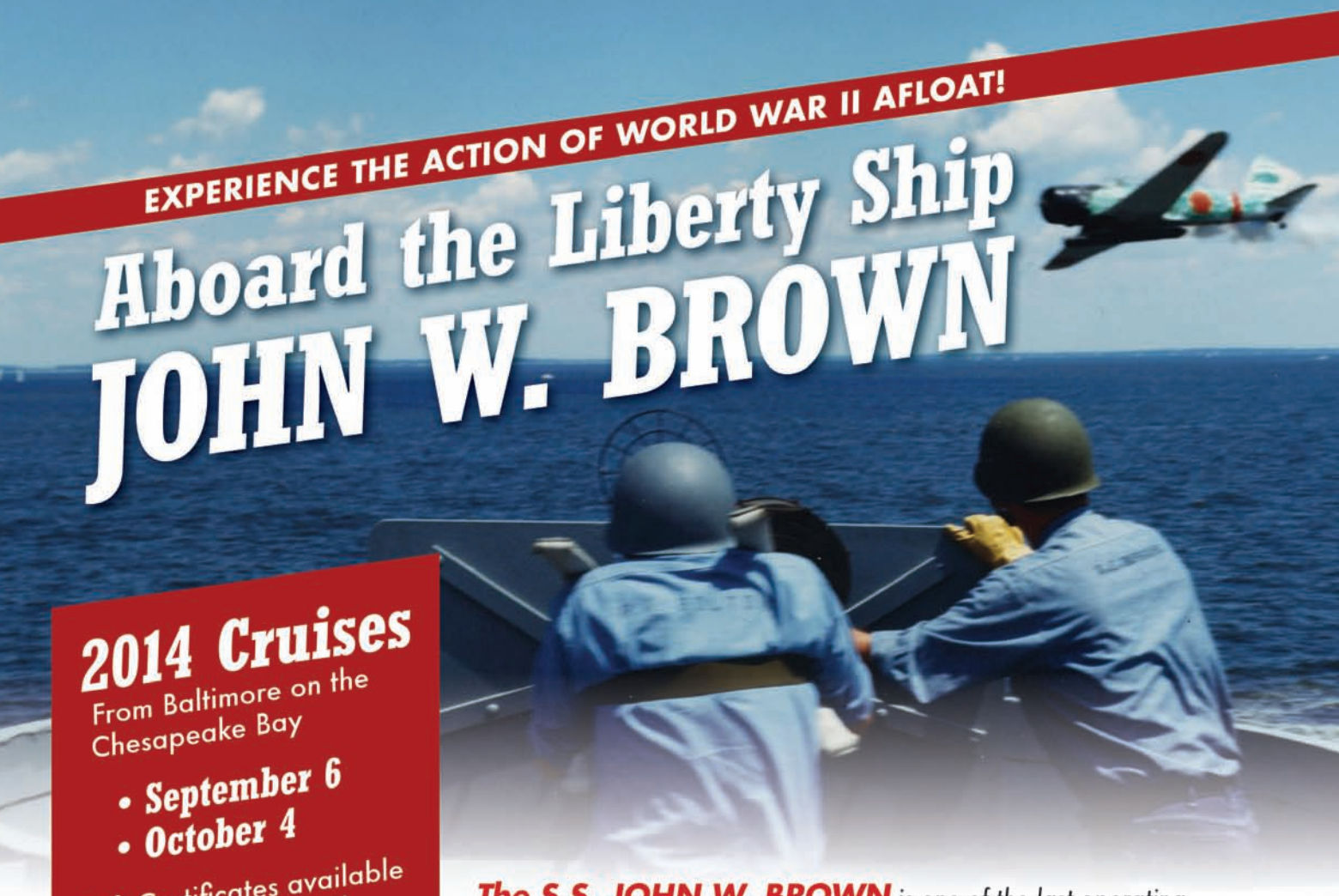
Vlasov was treated somewhat as a celebrity. During the next two years he was visited by several prominent officials, including anti-Soviet Russian officers. Eventually, he was convinced to sign leaflets encouraging Soviet troops to desert. In March 1943, he wrote an open letter titled, "Why I decided to fight against Bolshevism." Although his plans for a Russian movement composed of anti-Soviet prisoners never got off the ground, he was given the command of two Russian divisions in late January 1945.

Captured by Soviet troops at the end of the war, Vlasov was taken to Moscow for trial. Among the charges leveled against him were treason and cowardly actions, which purportedly led to the destruction of the 2nd Shock Army. After the three-day trial, Vlasov and 11 of his associates went to the gallows on August 1, 1946.

Pat McTaggart, a longtime contributor to WWII History, *is an expert on the war on the Eastern Front. He resides in Elkader, Iowa.*

EXPERIENCE THE ACTION OF WORLD WAR II AFLOAT!

Aboard the Liberty Ship JOHN W. BROWN



2014 Cruises

From Baltimore on the Chesapeake Bay

- **September 6**
- **October 4**

Gift Certificates available
Tickets are $140 each
Group rates available

The S.S. JOHN W. BROWN *is one of the last operating survivors from the great fleet of over 2,700 war-built Liberty Ships and the last operational troopship of World War II. The ship is a maritime museum and a memorial to the shipyard workers who built, merchant mariners who sailed, and the U.S. Navy Armed Guard who defended the Liberty ships during World War II. The John W. Brown is fully restored and maintained as close as possible to her World War II configuration. Visitors must be able to walk up steps to board the ship.*

This exciting 6 hour day cruise *includes continental breakfast, lunch buffet, music of the 40's, period entertainment and flybys (conditions permitting) of wartime aircraft. Tour on-board museums, crew quarters, bridge and much more. See the magnificent 140-ton triple-expansion steam engine as it powers the ship through the water.*

CFC

Find us on Facebook

- **Order your tickets online at: www.ssjohnwbrown.org**
- **For information call: 410-558-0164**

Last day to order tickets is 14 days before the cruise. Conditions and penalties apply to cancellations.

Project Liberty Ship is a Baltimore based, all volunteer, nonprofit organization.

LIBERTY SHIP JOHN W. BROWN

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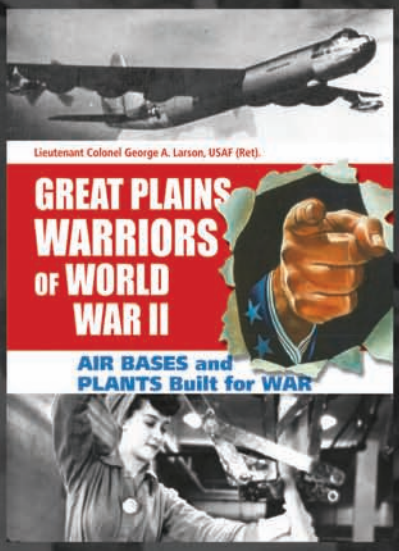

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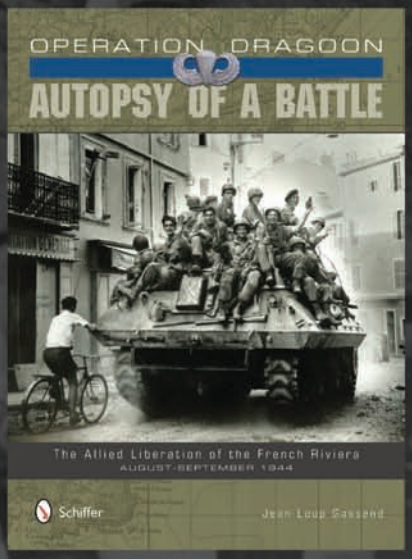

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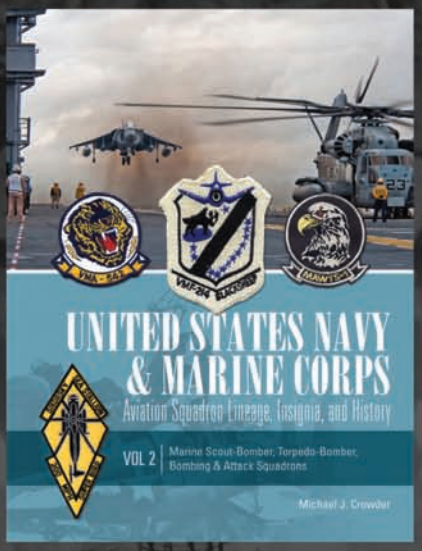

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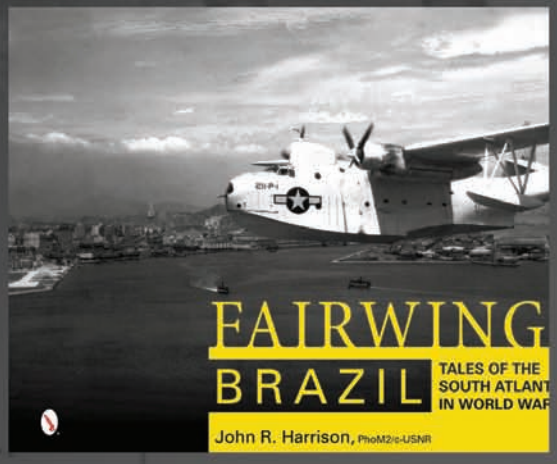

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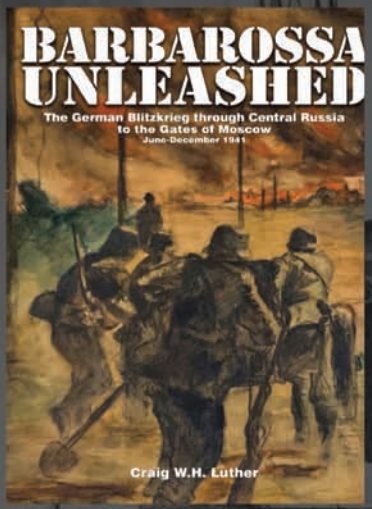

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