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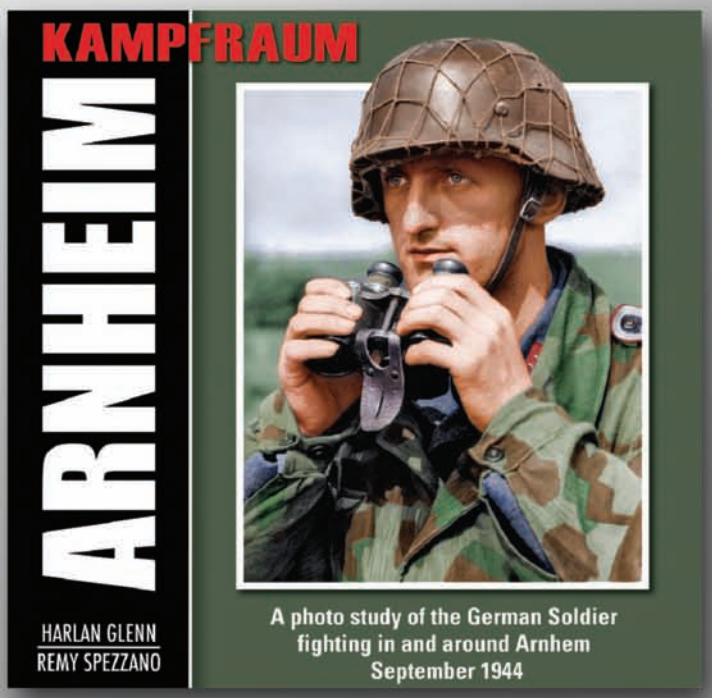

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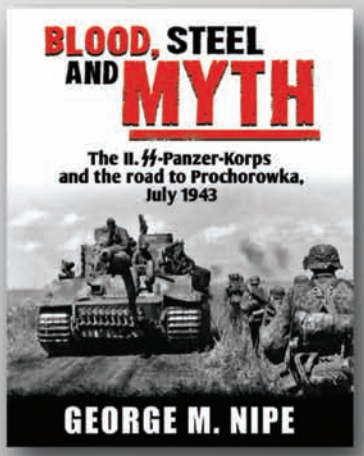

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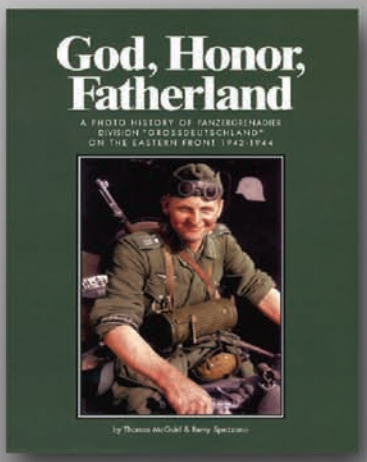

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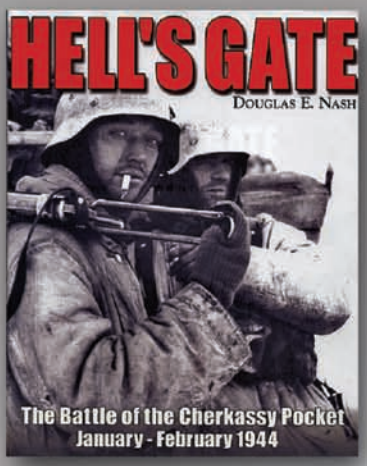

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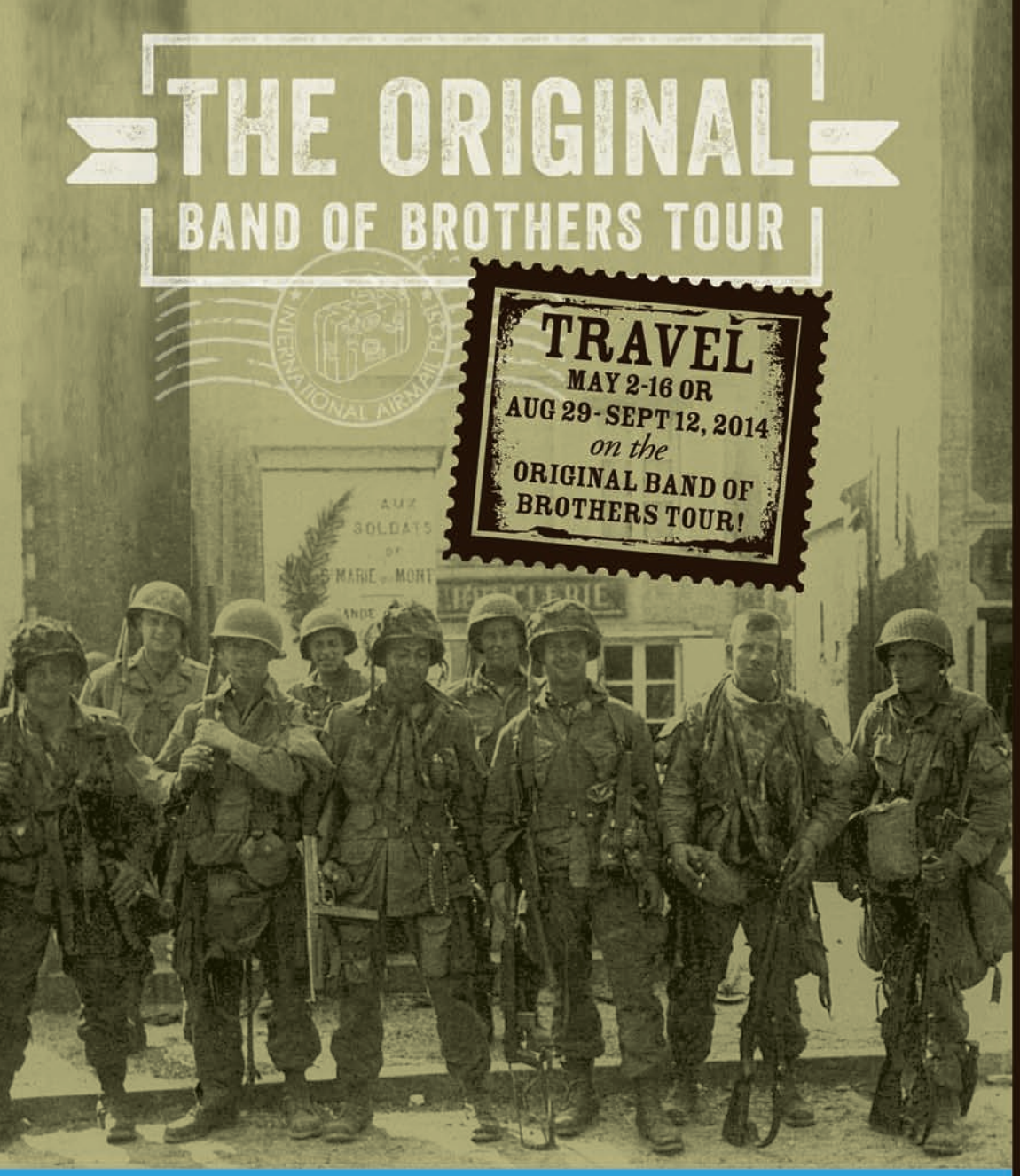

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Cover: A German soldier takes aim at a Soviet position somewhere in the south of Russia. See story page 48. Photo: akg-images / Interfoto

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Editorial

A physician predicted Roosevelt's death in office.

BY THE TIME PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT ATTENDED HIS LAST BIG conference, at the resort town of Yalta in the Crimea in February 1945, his health was visibly failing. Photographed while seated with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, Roosevelt is visibly gaunt. His once robust, full face is now lined and weathered.

Most students of history are aware that the president succumbed to a cerebral hemorrhage at his cottage in Warm Springs, Georgia, on April 12, 1945, just into his unprecedented fourth term in office. Most are also aware that he was a heavy smoker and that he had suffered the onset of poliomyelitis in 1921 at the age of 39, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down.

One interesting historical footnote regarding Roosevelt's health has recently emerged from the shadows of nearly 70 years. In the summer of 1944, while the president was campaigning for reelection to his fourth term, Dr. Ross T. McIntire, a U.S. Navy officer and the president's personal physician, requested that other doctors examine the chief executive amid growing concerns about his apparently deteriorating health.

FDR had been diagnosed with severe hypertension as early as 1937, and in the spring of 1941 was treated for iron deficiency anemia. It is also believed that he may have undergone surgery to remove a malignant melanoma from above his left eye sometime during the early to mid-1940s. Attacks of severe abdominal pain and digestive issues of apparently unknown origin surfaced during the Teheran Conference in the autumn of 1943. He was later treated for hypertensive heart disease. In early 1944, he began to complain of severe headaches, and later in the year a pronounced lack of appetite resulted in significant weight loss.

As Dr. McIntire's concerns apparently grew, one of the doctors who was asked to examine the president was well-known surgeon named Frank Lahey of Boston. In a letter dated July 10, 1944, and made available in 2011 by the Lahey Clinic of Burlington, Massachusetts, Dr. Lahey expressed his concerns.

"I wish to record the following information regarding my opinion in relation to President Roosevelt's condition and to have them on record in the event there comes any criticism of me at a later date. I want to do this after having seen him in consultation as a private record," wrote Lahey.

"I have reviewed all of his xrays and findings over the past years and compared them with the present findings and am recording my opinion concerning Mr. Roosevelt's condition and capacities now," Lahey continues. "I am recording these opinions in the light of having informed Admiral McIntire Saturday afternoon July 8, 1944, that I did not believe that, if Mr. Roosevelt were elected President again, he had the physical capacity to complete a term. I told him that … he [Roosevelt] had been in a state which was, if not in heart failure, at least on the verge of it, that this was the result of high blood pressure he has now had for a long time, plus a question of a coronary damage. With this in mind it was my opinion that over the four years of another term with its burdens, he would again have heart failure and be unable to complete it. Admiral McIntire was in agreement with this…."

Dr. Lahey went on to advise that Roosevelt, in the event that he sought and won a fourth term, bore a "very serious responsibility concerning who is the Vice President."

As Roosevelt strategists weighed the prospects for a fourth term and the probability that FDR might not complete that term, they urged the replacement of then Vice President Henry A. Wallace on the upcoming ticket. Wallace, they agreed, was too far to the political left and too pro-labor. The president stated that he was willing to accept either Senator Harry Truman of Missouri or Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas.

The choice was Truman, who completed Roosevelt's fourth term, made the decision to drop the atomic bomb, led the United States during the early years of the Cold War, and won reelection in his own right in 1948. Dr. Lahey's somber prediction was realized, and his letter has preserved the prognosis for us to ponder its political implications today.

Michael E. Haskew

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CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Richard Beranty, Patrick J. Chaisson, Michael D. Hull, Joseph Luster, Pat McTaggart, Christopher Miskimon, John W. Osborn, Jr., Richard Rule, William Weidner

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
BEN BOYLES
Advertising Manager
(570) 322-7848, ext. 110
benjaminb@sovhomestead.com

Advertising Sales
LINDA GALLIHER
(570) 322-7848, ext. 160
lgalliher@sovhomestead.com

MARK HINTZ
Chief Executive Officer

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

BROOKE BLEE
Subscription Customer Service
sovereign@publishersserviceassociates.com
(570) 322-7848, ext. 164

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By Michael D. Hull

Into the Fray by Richard Taylor © The Military Gallery, www.militarygallery.com

The RAF's Legless Legend

Douglas Bader was a formidable foe in the air and as a prisoner of the Germans, even though he had no legs.

BOMBED ALMOST DAILY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND IN FEAR OF AN IMMINENT German invasion, the British were hanging on by their fingernails when September 1940 came.

With the fate of Western freedom in the balance, history's first major air battle raged as Supermarine Spitfires and Hawker Hurricanes of Royal Air Force Fighter Command rose to challenge relentless formations of Luftwaffe bombers over southeastern England. Aerial supremacy was vital to the Germans, and the British had to be softened up before Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler could mount his postponed invasion, Operation Sea Lion. Otherwise, the English Channel assault was considered too risky.

A September 14 directive from the impatient Führer gave Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring, commander of the Luftwaffe, until the 17th to batter the RAF into submission. So, as dawn clouds cleared and the sun rose early on Sunday, September 15, the powerful Luftwaffe prepared to launch its supreme attempt.

The climactic day of the Battle of Britain unfolded quietly. "It was one of those days of autumn when the countryside is at its loveliest," observed Air Vice Marshal Keith Park, the able commander of No. 11 Fighter Group. Royal Air Force patrols reported an empty, cloudless sky, and no enemy aircraft appeared until mid-morning, apart from reconnaissance flights.

At Chequers, his Tudor country seat in Buckinghamshire, Prime Minister Winston Churchill took note of the fine weather and guessed that the enemy might soon be active. So he called for his car and was driven to Park's 11 Group headquarters at Uxbridge, on the western edge of London. In the bombproof operations room 50 feet below ground, Park said to Churchill, "I don't know whether anything will happen today. At present, all is quiet."

But 15 minutes later, at 11 AM, Women's Auxiliary Air Force plotters began to bustle about the 11 Group map tables. Ominous reports filtered in from coastal radar stations: 40-plus enemy planes assembling in the Dieppe area, then a force of 20-plus, and then another of 40-plus. It was not until 11:30 AM that these formations began to move northward. The Luftwaffe was launching the assault without its usual feints and subsidiary attacks aimed at luring Fighter Command planes prematurely into the air.

Air Marshal Park had been given 30 minutes to organize his squadrons. Fuel tanks were topped and magazines filled, and 17 RAF fighter squadrons were deployed by 11:30 AM. They included one from No. 10 Group and five from Air Vice Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory's No. 12 Group, based at Duxford, north of London. Heading southward toward the action, Leigh-Mallory's three Hurricane and two Spitfire squadrons comprised a single "Big Wing" formation under the tactical command of Group Captain Douglas R.S. Bader.

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Squadron Commander Douglas Bader sits on the edge of the cockpit of his Hawker Hurricane fighter. LEFT: In this painting by artist Richard Taylor, Bader leads Royal Air Force Hawker Hurricane fighters of No. 242 Squadron in a diving attack against German Heinkel He-111 bombers approaching the coast of Kent during an air raid in September 1940 at the height of the Battle of Britain.

Staunchly advocated by Leigh-Mallory and the legless Bader, the Big Wing concept was based on tactics initiated by the famed Italian airman, General Italo Balbo. It called for large fighter formations to hit an approaching air

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By Peter Metler, Health Writer

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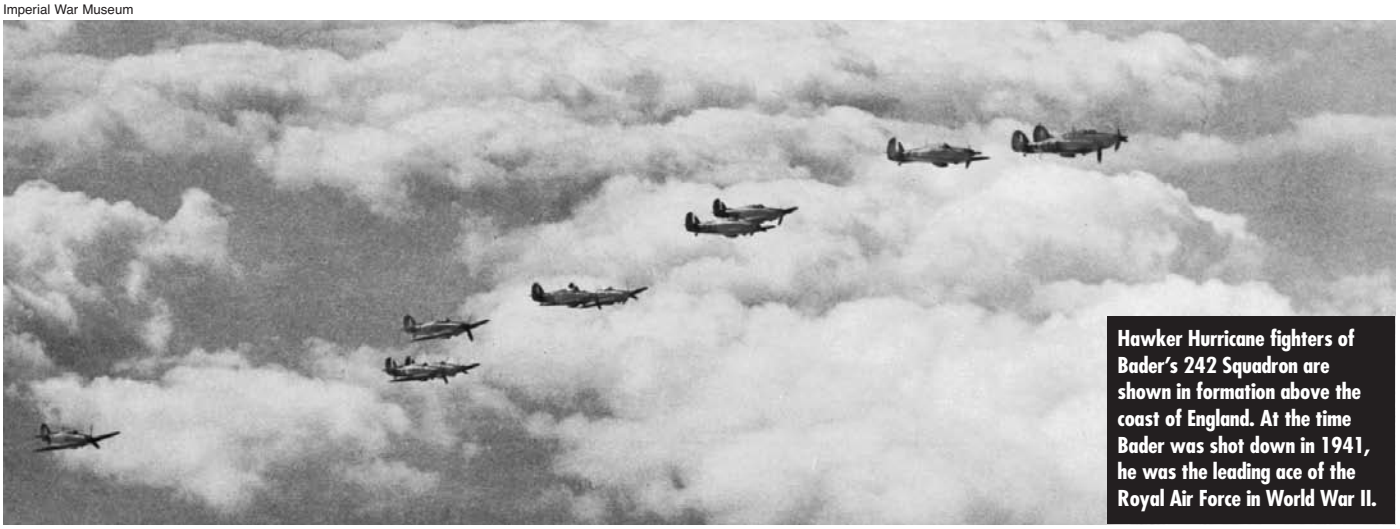

Hawker Hurricane fighters of Bader's 242 Squadron are shown in formation above the coast of England. At the time Bader was shot down in 1941, he was the leading ace of the Royal Air Force in World War II.

fleet with maximum striking power, rather than with what Bader called "penny packets." The tactic would trigger much controversy in Fighter Command.

Before noon on that fateful Sunday, the first of the estimated 200 German planes—the largest bomber force yet dispatched—crossed the English coast at Dover. Dornier Do-17 and Do-215 bombers escorted by many Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters zigzagged over Kent and Sussex and headed for London. RAF fighters attacked, dogfight vapor trails skeined the blue skies, and burning planes plummeted and parachutes billowed down. The battle seethed toward London, and bombs fell all over the capital.

Along with several other RAF squadrons, the Big Wing from 12 Group tore in to break up enemy formations. "This time, for a change, we outnumbered the Hun," reported Bader, "and believe me, no more than eight got home from that party…. It was sudden death that morning, for our fighters shot them to blazes." He attacked a Dornier Do-17 and watched its rear gunner bail out. "But his parachute caught on the tail," said Bader. "There he was, swinging helplessly, with the aircraft swooping and diving and staggering all over the sky. That bomber went crashing into the Thames Estuary, with the swinging gunner still there."

Dogfights raged above London for 25 minutes, and by 3:15 that afternoon the German formations had been ripped apart with the loss of an estimated 60 planes. Still harassed by Spitfires and Hurricanes, enemy stragglers headed back across the English Channel to their bases along the French coast. Although few people realized it at the time, Fighter Command had decided the Battle of Britain. Two days later, Hitler postponed the invasion indefinitely. September 15 was thereafter commemorated as Battle of Britain Day.

The RAF's fierce opposition and the timely role of the 55 fighters of Leigh-Mallory and Bader's Big Wing on September 15 squelched a German myth that Fighter Command was a beaten force that had to call on its "last 50 fighters." The Luftwaffe suffered a blow to its morale from which it never recovered. After a few more heavy raids on London and other cities, the main daylight blitz quietly fizzled out.

Some conventional thinkers in Fighter Command, including Park, believed that the Big Wing's results did not justify the expenditure of effort, but Leigh-Mallory and Bader—both uncompromising, strong-minded men unafraid to buck the established system—stoutly defended their tactics. In 15 sorties between September 7 and 27, the Duxford Big Wing claimed 135 German planes destroyed, apart from "probables" and others severely damaged, with the loss of seven RAF pilots. When the Luftwaffe encountered the Big Wing, said famed strategist Basil H. Liddell Hart, it received "a very unpleasant shock."

Group Captain Bader, a veteran of the air battles over Dunkirk before becoming an ace and inspirational fighter tactician, was a fearless maverick. He refused to let a severe disability keep him on the ground and out of uniform and emerged as the most famous RAF pilot of World War II.

Douglas Robert Steuart Bader was born on Monday, February 21, 1910, in the fashionable St. John's Wood district of London. He was the second son of Frederick R. Bader, a heavy-set civil engineer on furlough from India, and his tall, black-haired wife, Jessie. After their father was commissioned in the Royal Engineers and sent to France at the outbreak of World War I, Douglas followed his older brother, Derick, to the Colet Court (London) and Temple Grove (Eastbourne) preparatory schools.

Impulsive and lively, Douglas held his own in fistfights with bigger boys and excelled in rugby, gymnastics, cricket, running, soccer, and hockey. He and his brother learned archery, and a retired chief petty officer taught the younger boy to shoot. Douglas tried his utmost on the sports field, but, obstinate like his strong-willed mother, he was lazy in the classroom. He picked up Latin and Greek with ease but detested mathematics and other subjects.

In 1922, a War Office telegram informed the family that Major Bader had died of head wounds in St.-Omer, France. Though not slackening his sports activities, Douglas then buckled down to serious studies and won a scholarship to St. Edward's School at Oxford University. While there, the young man spoke with a visiting graduate who was now attending the Royal Air Force College at Cranwell in Lincolnshire and decided that flying might be fun. Douglas wrote to his uncle, Cyril Burge, who was personal assistant to Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, visionary father of the RAF, and asked what his chances were of becoming an air cadet.

After an RAF examination in London in the spring of 1928, Douglas was informed that he had finished fifth and won a cadetship to Cranwell. He was in high spirits and acquired a second-hand Douglas flat-twin motorcycle. In the second week of September 1928, he strapped two small suitcases to the pillion, kissed his doting mother goodbye, and roared off for Cranwell.

Four miles from the college, a stray cow wandered across the road. Douglas swerved, and he and his machine somersaulted over the verge and a steep bank. Bruised and shaken, he started off again. Eight minutes later, he rode through the gates of Cranwell and into the Royal Air Force.

At Cranwell, then just a collection of cavernous hangars, wooden huts, and two runways, Bader and the other cadets drilled in

bowler hats before being issued uniforms and learned military discipline from caustic warrant officers. A few days later, on a sunny autumn afternoon, Bader was taken up by a flying officer for his first flight—in a flimsy Avro 504 biplane. The cadet was exhilarated.

On the following day, Bader's instructor let him take the control column, and in October, after 6½ hours of dual instruction, he soloed. He flew and landed smoothly and proved to be a natural flier. Inspired after reading about Royal Flying Corps aces in World War I, Bader decided that he wanted to be a fighter pilot.

Unlike most of his fellow cadets, the high-spirited Bader shunned alcohol but nevertheless got into trouble for speeding on his motorcycle and flouting minor regulations. After being threatened with dismissal from Cranwell, he transformed. While still excelling in all sports, he strove to master mathematics and showed a flair for leadership. He scored high on the final examinations in June 1930, and his fitness report termed him "plucky, capable, headstrong." His flying was rated "above average," an RAF understatement.

Pilot Officer Bader was posted to No. 23 Fighter Squadron based at Kenley, a large, grassy airfield in Surrey. He was proud and elated. He rode his motorcycle to London, traded it in for a tiny Austin Seven car, and drove south to Kenley one August morning in 1930.

The squadron was equipped with Gloster Gamecocks, stubby but agile biplanes with a top speed of 156 miles per hour. For two years, two squadron pilots had performed aerobatics in them at the annual Hendon Air Show. After an exhilarating half hour in the cockpit one morning, Bader decided that he wanted to take part in the next show. He got his wish in the summer of 1931, when he and a World War I veteran performed aerial tricks for 10 minutes before 175,000 people at Hendon. The *London Times* called it "the most thrilling spectacle ever seen in exhibition flying."

A daring airman and outstanding sportsman, Bader found himself being viewed as a heroic figure, although he drew the wrath of his superiors for too much aerial stunting. A flight commander chastised him for "showing off." But the outspoken Bader enjoyed the attention of the press and adoring young women and rewarded himself by trading in his Austin Seven for an MG sports car.

Replacing the obsolete Gamecocks, No. 23 Squadron was equipped in 1931 with Bristol Bulldogs, then the last word in fighters. The biplanes had a top speed of 176 miles per hour, but they were heavier, less maneuverable, and had a tendency to sink fast in the middle of a slow roll. One of the pilots was killed when he spun into the ground, and low aerobatics were strictly banned.

Imperial War Museum

Bader swings one of his prosthetic legs into the cockpit of a Supermarine Spitfire fighter in September 1945. After being liberated from a German prison, Bader returned to duty and led a flight of Spitfires from North Weald Airfield in a flyover of London commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The brash, sometimes arrogant Bader was unfazed, and his promising career almost came to an abrupt end because of overconfidence. On the frosty morning of Monday, December 14, 1931, he and two fellow pilots flew Bulldogs to Woodley Aerodrome near the Berkshire city of Reading. While sipping coffee in the clubhouse, Bader's companions quizzed him about his aerobatics at Hendon and dared him to give a demonstration. Though reluctant, he took off.

He banked steeply, turned back, and started a low run across the airfield. But the Bulldog rolled to the right and started to drop rapidly with its wings vertical. Bader tried frantically to gain control, but the left wingtip, cowling, and propeller hit the grass. The plane cartwheeled and crumpled in a cloud of flying dirt. Strapped in the cockpit, Bader felt nothing but heard only a terrible noise.

Bloodied and semiconscious, the young man was pried from the crushed cockpit with the aid of a hacksaw, laid on a stretcher, and offered a glass of brandy. "No, thanks very much," said Bader casually. "I don't drink." Then he was rushed in an ambulance to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. Within a minute of his arrival, he was on an operating room table.

Bader endured several operations and great pain as his shattered legs—first the right and then the left—were amputated. He was fitted with stumps, and learned to hobble around with crutches. He was determined to try and live a normal life and stay in the Royal Air Force because it was his "home." Bader learned to drive a car without his legs, and during an outing with his mother from the RAF Hospital at Uxbridge, they stopped at a roadside café in Bagshot, Surrey. A comely waitress named Thelma served them tea and later became Bader's devoted wife.

At Roehampton, a London hospital specializing in artificial limbs, Bader was fitted with metal legs. He fell many times but learned to stump around on them. He refused to use a cane. He was ecstatic at being able to stand, and nothing held him back. After passing a disabled driver's test, he took his little MG back on the road. With his "tin legs," he played cricket and golf, went dancing, and returned to the air. Joyfully, he flew an Avro 504 of 601 Auxiliary Squadron from its base at Lympne, Kent, to Kenley and back again.

But, inevitably, the Air Ministry decided that Bader should be reverted to the retired list because of his disability. Devastated, he went to work in the aviation section of Asiatic Petroleum Co., based in London. It was a dull job, but he kept his spirits up by driving fast and mastering golf. One morning in 1935, he was heartened by a *Daily Telegraph* story announcing that the RAF was to be expanded. He began pressuring the Air Ministry for a refresher flying course so that he could be ready when war came. In October 1939, a month after its outbreak, a telegram summoned him to the Central Flying School at Upavon, Wiltshire.

Bader eagerly retrained in a number of aircraft types, including the North American Harvard trainer, Avro Tutor, two-seater Fairey Battle, and Miles Master before going on to Hurricanes and Spitfires. He had great admiration for the Hurricane, but said of the latter, "Here was the aeroplane par excellence … in fact, the aeroplane of one's dreams." He was posted in February 1940 to No. 19 Squadron at Duxford, where he flew Spitfires, and then to Squadron Leader Tubby Mermagen's No. 222 Squadron, also based at Duxford, as a flight commander.

Patrols and sorties by Fighter Command's frontline Hurricanes and Spitfires increased dramatically as the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was pushed back to Dunkirk in late May and early June. Over the fire-swept beaches during the BEF's historic deliverance by the Royal Navy and a motley fleet of "little ships," Bader scored his first victory by downing an Me-109. He was exultant. He took part in the last patrol over Dunkirk on June 4, and then,

exhausted, slept for almost 24 hours.

The following month, Bader was given command of No. 242 Squadron, a mainly Canadian unit that had been mauled in the Battle of France. Morale was low, but Bader's inspired leadership restored the squadron's fighting spirit. Gregarious, cheerful, and effectively leading five squadrons as a wing commander in 1940, he imparted freely his knowledge and the dogfighting philosophy laid down in World War I: "He who has the sun creates surprise. He who has the height controls the battle. He who gets in close shoots them down." He advised his Canadian pilots to attack from below and astern.

Bader proved to be both an inspirational group leader and ace pilot during the tense, hectic weeks of the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940. His aim was to hit the German raiders before they could drop bombs. Voicing the spirit of the RAF's famous "few," Bader said, "For most of us, it was purely the [enemy] airplane we wanted to get rid of. We didn't care a bit whether the chap inside it got out or whether he was killed. We disliked the iron crosses and the crooked sign of the swastika, and, anyway, who the hell were they to come over and drop bombs on our people?"

Chalking up 11 confirmed victories, with an eventual score of 22.5, he was one of the most visible heroes of RAF Fighter Command as it repelled superior Luftwaffe formations and forced Hitler to call off his invasion plans. Citing Bader's "courage and tenacity," Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Beetham, a distinguished Bomber Command pilot, said of him, "He was a truly national hero in every sense."

In March 1941, the legless warrior was appointed wing leader at Tangmere in West Sussex, where he quickly made his presence felt and improved aerial tactics. Though dogmatic and unwilling to accept contradiction, Bader had a cheery, irreverent relationship with his pilots as they flew many defensive patrols and "rhubarb" sorties over Nazi-occupied France. The Tangmere Wing was a happy family. The leader inspired confidence by trivializing risks and dubbed the wing the "Green Line Bus." Its motto was "Return Tickets Only." Bader's initials, DB, painted on the side of his Spitfire, were transmuted to "Dogsbody," and he adopted this as his call sign in the air.

In the air over France, Bader eased his pilots' tensions by cracking jokes, making irrelevant comments, and even smoking his pipe (because of oxygen use no sane man would light a match in a Spitfire cockpit). His seeming indestructibility became legendary. Wing Commander James E. "Johnnie" Johnson of No. 616 Squadron, who became the RAF's top-scoring ace, observed, "Invisible threads of trust and comradeship hold us together, and the mantle of Bader's leadership will sustain and protect us throughout the fight ahead."

But Bader's luck ran out on August 9, 1941, while he was leading the Tangmere Wing on a sortie over northern France. After being shot down or reportedly rammed by an Me-109, he was captured by three German soldiers and taken to a hospital in St.-Omer, where, ironically, his father had died after being wounded in 1917. The famed wing commander, who injured his ribs and lost one of his artificial legs when he bailed out, was well treated. While in the hospital, he was invited to visit Lt. Col. Adolf Galland, commander of the nearby Luftwaffe airfield at Wissant. Picked up in a Horch staff car, Bader was feted at a tea party by the amiable German fighter leader and his pilots, given a can of captured English tobacco, and allowed to sit in an Me-109 cockpit.

Bader asked Galland's interpreter if he could "take off and try a little trip in this thing." Suffering a pang of homesickness, the RAF flier thought that if his hosts were distracted for a few minutes, he could flee in the plane and be back in the Tangmere mess for tea. But Galland chuckled, and his interpreter said with a grin,

"He says that if you do, he'll be taking off right after you."

Bader responded eagerly, "All right, let's have a go!" Galland laughed off the suggestion and said that he was off duty. Bader was unaware at the time that a German officer was covering him with a pistol. Shortly afterward, Galland chivalrously arranged for Bader's spare tin leg to be air dropped by the RAF.

With the aid of a French nurse, Bader escaped from the hospital by lowering himself from a window with knotted bed sheets. He hobbled to a peasant's house but was betrayed by another nurse and recaptured. Transferred to prison camps, he made several more escape attempts before his captors took away his legs at night. Growing to loathe the Germans, he regularly defied and insulted them. Shipped eventually to the grim Colditz Castle in Saxony, in August 1943, as an incorrigible escape artist, he languished there until liberating U.S. troops arrived on April 16, 1945.

The legless ace had been in captivity for three years and eight months. After being flown home in a twin-engine Avro Anson transport, he was joyfully reunited with his beloved Thelma.

On September 15, 1945, henceforth celebrated as Battle of Britain Day, Bader wound a blue polka dot scarf around his neck, climbed into the cockpit of his "Dogsbody" Spitfire, and led 300 RAF fighters and bombers in a thunderous victory fly-by over London. His decorations included the Distinguished Service Order with bar, the Distinguished Flying Cross with bar, and Commander of the British Empire. He was later knighted and named a fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

After leaving the RAF in July 1946, Bader worked for Shell Petroleum Co. He toured Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the United States with retired General James H. Doolittle, a Shell vice president. The two famed fliers—both chunky, dynamic, and outspoken—became good friends. Bader also kept in touch with his former foe, General Galland. Invited to a reunion of former Luftwaffe pilots in Munich, Bader commented when he walked in, "My God, I had no idea we left so many of you bastards alive!"

The RAF hero continued to fly regularly after the war, preferring the Percival Proctor, Miles Gemini, and Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft. He eventually logged a total of 5,744 hours of flying time.

Bader devoted much of his time to counseling and encouraging fellow amputees, wounded veterans, and sometimes handicapped children. He became a tireless champion of the disabled in Britain and abroad and was knighted in 1976 for his work.

The flier's wife, Thelma, died of throat cancer in January 1971, and he married Joan Murray in January 1973. Bader continued to lead an active life. Besides walking and playing golf, tennis, and squash, he flew regularly until grounded in 1980 because of a heart condition.

The legless hero attended many RAF reunions, and his last was an emotional banquet honoring Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, the wartime leader of Bomber Command, in London's Guildhall on Saturday, September 4, 1982. Bader died of a heart attack while driving home with his second wife, Joan. He was 72.

On Thursday, August 9, 2001, slender, white-haired Lady Bader unveiled a bronze statue of her famous husband at Westhampnett, West Sussex, near the Tangmere RAF field from which he took off on his last mission on August 9, 1941.

"He was defiant, single-minded, and fought for the things in which he believed," commented the Duke of Richmond at the unveiling. "Douglas Bader was a very British hero."

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

By Patrick J. Chaisson

Japan's Fighting Falcon

The workhorse fighter aircraft of the Japanese Army Air Force, the Nakajima Ki-43 Hyabusa served throughout World War II.

AT THE START OF WORLD WAR II, JAPANESE AIRPOWER RULED THE SKIES OVER China and the Pacific. Japan's modern, highly maneuverable fighters, flown by well-trained and combat-tested pilots, outperformed anything the Chinese, British, or Americans could get airborne to oppose them.

When the Mitsubishi A6M Type 0 naval fighter first appeared over China in 1941, Allied aviators were astonished. Not only was the Zero more agile than anything they had ever seen, but its speed and heavy armament guaranteed almost certain victory in a dogfight. Quickly this new airplane earned a terrifying reputation for flying circles around the Hawker Hurricane or Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk.

Few Westerners realized at the time that most of these so-called Zeros were actually Nakajima-designed Japanese Army Air Force (JAAF) aircraft. Known as the "Army Zero" and later code-named "Oscar," the Ki-43 Hayabusa (Peregrine Falcon) became the JAAF's most important fighter of World War II.

In this painting by Jack Fellows, a 59th Sentai Nakajima Ki-43 Hyabusa fighter, code-named Oscar by the Allies, maneuvers into firing position against a P-38 Lightning fighter of the U.S. Fifth Air Force.

The Hayabusa served throughout the Pacific War, undergoing several design upgrades to improve performance, protection, and firepower. Some 5,919 were built, more than any other Japanese aircraft except the Zero. Almost all the JAAF's top aces scored kills with this nimble little fighter, a capable workhorse in skilled hands right up to war's end.

In 1937, a Nakajima design team headed by Hideo Itokawa began work on a successor to its Ki-27 fighter, known as the Type 97. The Japanese Army required a lightweight, maneuverable air superiority fighter that would clear the skies of enemy aircraft so ground forces could operate unimpeded. The Ki-27 met this requirement but was already getting long in the tooth compared to Anglo-American aircraft then in development.

Itokawa's engineers set out to design a fast, modern interceptor possessing superb maneuverability. The low-wing, single seat Ki-43 would feature all metal construction, a streamlined canopy, retractable landing gear, and a

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I wasn't looking for trouble. I sat in a café, sipping my espresso and enjoying the quiet. Then it got noisy. Mr. Bigshot rolled up in a roaring high-performance Italian sports car, dropping attitude like his $14,000 watch made it okay for him to be rude. That's when I decided to roll up my sleeves and teach him a lesson.

"Nice watch," I said, pointing to his and holding up mine. He nodded like we belonged to the same club. We did, but he literally paid 100 times more for his membership. Bigshot bragged about his five-figure purchase, a luxury heavyweight from the titan of high-priced timepieces. I told him that mine was the ***Stauer Corso, a 27-jewel automatic classic now available for only $179.*** And just like that, the man was at a loss for words.

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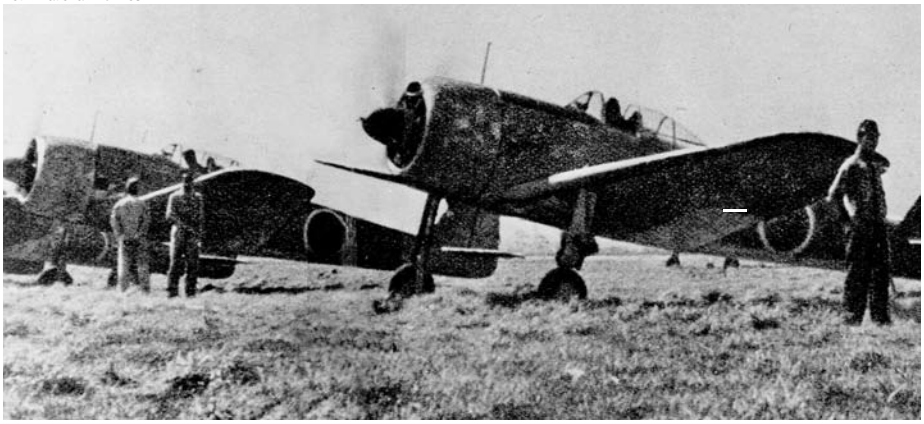
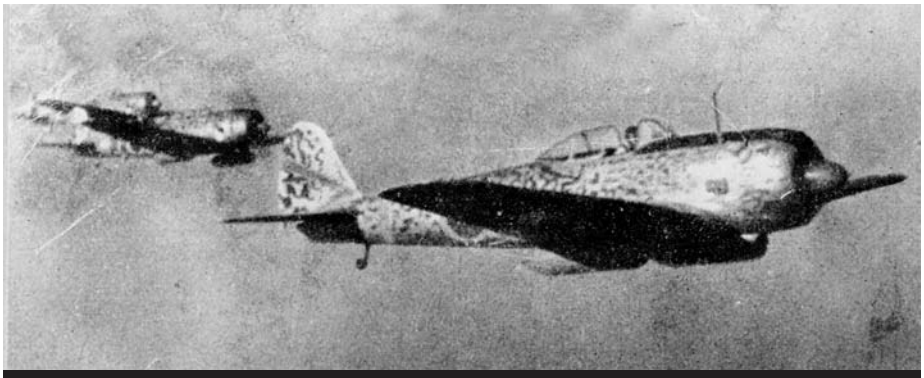




TOP: In this captured Japanese photograph, ground crewmen stand near Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar fighters being prepared for a mission. The pilots are in their cockpits and ready for takeoff. ABOVE: A trio of Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar fighters patrols above Japanese installations somewhere in the Pacific.

950-horsepower Sakae radial engine propelling it to over 300 miles per hour. To meet JAAF weight specifications, Nakajima designers chose to omit armor protection and self-sealing fuel tanks. Pilots would rely on the machine's speed and agility to close with an enemy, finishing the job with two Type 89 7.7mm machine guns.

Yet, when the Ki-43 prototype first flew in January 1939, it performed poorly. Test pilots complained the Nakajima design was unresponsive, sluggish, and not much faster than the Ki-27 it was intended to replace. Clearly, Itokawa's design needed work.

It took Nakajima 18 months and 13 separate modifications to deliver an acceptable aircraft. Engineers trimmed every ounce of extra weight from the Ki-43, as well as increasing wing area and redesigning the canopy. They also installed a set of paddle-shaped "butterfly flaps" under the wing roots to boost maneuverability.

The newly modified interceptor performed wonderfully. It could reach an altitude of 38,500 feet with a 3,900 feet per minute rate of climb. Maximum speed was 308 miles per hour at 13,000 feet. Its butterfly flaps enabled the Hayabusa to turn inside any aircraft then flying, even the Zero.

Nakajima's Ki-43-I, as the modified design became known, measured 28 feet, 11 inches long, with a wingspan of 37 feet, six inches. It weighed 3,483 pounds empty and 4,515 pounds combat loaded. Armament was initially two 7.7mm machine guns in the front cowling, later replaced by one or two heavier Ho-103 12.7mm aircraft cannon as those weapons entered service.

Full-scale production of the Peregrine Falcon began in April 1941. The JAAF accepted it as the Army Type One interceptor, and Ki-43-equipped squadrons entered service in October. Before long the Hayabusa was battling P-40s of the legendary Flying Tigers and British-flown Brewster Buffalo fighters over Burma.

As war spread across Asia and the Pacific, Allied fliers learned to fear Japan's angry little falcon. Tangling with a Ki-43 usually resulted in fiery death, so air tacticians such as General Claire L. Chennault of the Flying Tigers taught their pilots to avoid dogfighting with one at any cost.

It took time, however, for Chennault's lessons to take hold. For the first year of the war Hayabusa aces such as Warrant Officer Iwataro Hazawa (15 kills) and Lieutenant Guichi Sumino (27 victories) racked up impressive scores against their Hawker-, Brewster-, and Curtiss-equipped adversaries.

On December 22, 1941, a flight of 18 Ki-43s encountered 13 Australian Brewster Buffalo fighters over Malaysia. Sergeant Yoshito Yasuda described his role in this air battle: "Luckily, Capt. [Katsumi] Anma found a fleeing Buffalo and attacked it from above and behind. My turn came when Anma's guns jammed. I sent a burst into the Buffalo's engine and saw it belch white smoke." Hayabusa pilots claimed 11 kills that day for the loss of one Japanese plane; Australian records indicate three Brewsters were actually destroyed while two more made it home too badly damaged to repair.

Despite these early successes, JAAF aviators found fault with the Peregrine Falcon's performance, firepower, and durability. In service the Ki-43 developed a fatal tendency to shed its wings during a steep dive. This was a direct consequence of Nakajima's earlier weight saving modifications, and headquarters suspended all flight operations until strengthened wing spars could be installed.

Pilots also disliked the slow-firing Ho-103 cannon. A Japanese copy of the U.S. Browning M2 .50-caliber machine gun, early models often jammed in combat. The Ho-103's unreliability forced most pilots to keep one 7.7mm machine gun installed as a backup.

Nakajima designers watched with concern as modern Allied fighters like the Lockheed P-38 Lightning and Vought F4U Corsair took to the skies starting in late 1942. They began work to upgrade the Hayabusa, adding a more powerful 1,150-horsepower engine, self-sealing fuel tanks, and armor protection for the pilot. A reflector gunsight was also installed, and the Ho-103's reliability problems were fixed. Subsequent modifications included bomb/drop tank racks, radio equipment, and clipped wings intended to improve the roll rate.

The updated Ki-43-II was faster, stronger, and no less maneuverable than older models. Remaining uncorrected, however, was the Peregrine Falcon's alarming vulnerability to enemy gunfire. Allied fliers soon discovered that one burst of .50-caliber machine-gun bullets into the Ki-43's unprotected oxygen tank would usually cause a catastrophic explosion.

The Hayabusa's two-gun battery was one-third as potent as the six heavy weapons carried by most American fighters. Even firing explosive shells, the Ho-103 cannon proved woefully inadequate against tough-skinned Allied warplanes. When Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers began operating in Chinese airspace in late 1942, JAAF fliers had no choice but to attack them with their poorly armed Falcons.

It took great courage to intercept the formidable B-24s, and even greater luck to bring one

National Archives

First Lieutenant Okumuru Masao climbs into his Ki-43 Oscar fighter plane to take part in a mission on the Chinese mainland in August 1943. This photograph was taken for publication in a Japanese magazine of the period, and censors have obscured certain details of the plane's configuration and unit identification.

down. Captain Yasuhiko Kuroe told his pilots to fly head-on into the American formations and concentrate on a single bomber. "Attack boldly," Kuroe counseled. "Go into the wall of fire and take their bullets, be relentless." Kuroe's tactic worked, but often at great loss to the fragile Ki-43s.

The tables were turning for those brave aviators forced to fly this increasingly obsolescent fighter. Twelve-kill JAAF ace Captain Yohei Hinoki observed: "By the time the Hayabusa had become a good attack aircraft things were changing. It was now to be used for defense … so again its firepower was insufficient. The Hayabusa was coming to the end of its time."

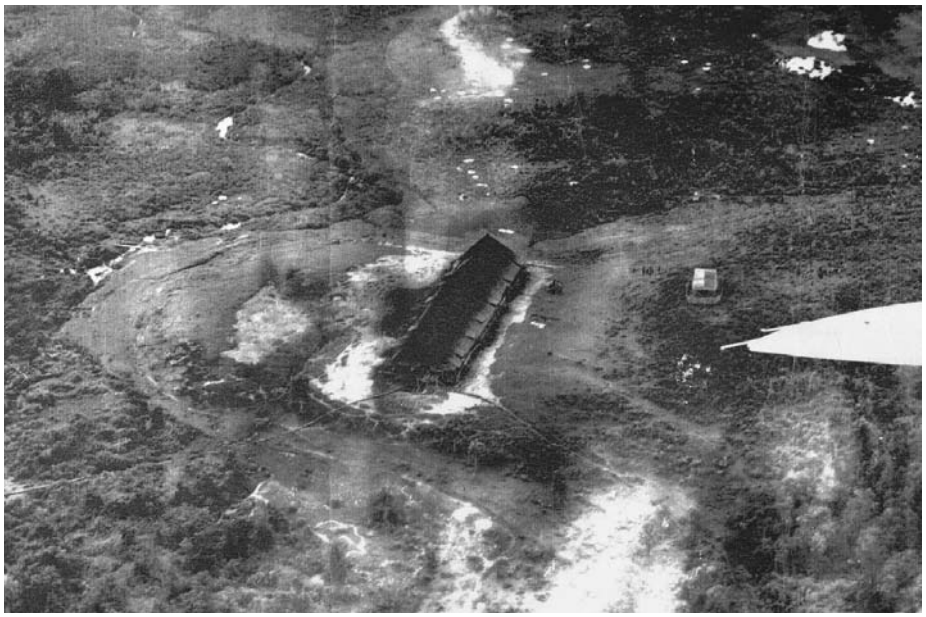
Japanese Army Air Force pilots continued to operate the aging Ki-43 simply because that was all they had. While JAAF-flown Hayabusas fought desperately against superior Allied fighters, development of more advanced aircraft like the Ki-84 Hayate remained a low priority. Perhaps the government believed its own propaganda; in 1942 only good war news reached the Japanese people.

Those fighting over China and the Pacific knew better. American aviators were learning how to cope with the Nakajima fighter, now code-named "Oscar." Using team tactics, well-trained U.S. Navy and Army Air Corps fighter aces began scoring heavily against the diminishing number of skilled Hayabusa pilots.

On August 2, 1943, Captain James A. Watkins and 15 pilots of the USAAF's 9th Fighter Squadron pounced on a large formation of Ki-43s over the Huon Gulf in New Guinea. Flying the powerful P-38 Lightning, Watkins quickly destroyed two Ki-43s before diving on a third Oscar that was running away at wave-top level. Trying to outturn Watkins's plane, the Ki-43 accidentally dipped a wing into the water

Continued on page 77

By John W. Osborn, Jr.



Long Rainforest Fight

An anthropologist led operations against the Japanese on the world's third largest island.

WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC WAS FOUGHT IN THOUSANDS OF REMOTE locations. The island of Borneo was the site of one of the least known clandestine operations of the conflict, led by an adventurous, but arrogant, anthropologist.

"Because of the Japs," wrote author Tom Harrisson of a reconnaissance flight he took, "in this latter part of 1944 the sweet soaring cry of the gibbons, black, white, swift and smart swinging against the canopy green; the faint singing of old ladies making mats by flickering gum-candle-light; and the echoing murmur of wind sniffling out of the cold, mist-laden cliffs down onto the plain below; these and many, many other noises (tree crash, cicada buzz, mongoose chuckle, the whistle of the blood-red and black hill partridge, grasshoppers, a million moving termites, piglets, bat swing, goat laugh, eagle, owl and the legendary noises of the enspirited night, to name a few others) were, for the first time in far upland history, swamped for a few moments by the sound of a great mechanical device.

"Lying in the bomber-aimer's blister of an American four-engined Liberator little was to be seen on this first flight. In fact the navigational plot below and the existing map made, showed us nearly fifty miles out at nowhere. Meanwhile, scarcely dreaming and certainly feeling nothing of the land under our belly, from the clouds something very special was being cooked up by the [inhabitants] down below. I was the [unwitting] chef."

During that flight in December 1941, Harrison flew across Borneo, the world's third largest island with 284,000 square miles, a hybrid of colonies and kingdoms. The southern three-quarters were part of the Dutch East Indies. Nudged in the northwest corner were a pair of British dependencies: North Borneo, run by a chartered company since 1881, and the Sultanate of Brunei, a protectorate. Most unique and exotic was Sarawak, ruled since 1841 by the famous White Rajahs, a dynasty founded by swashbuckling James Brooke in 1841 and recognized by the British in 1863.

Borneo has 165,000 square miles of the world's oldest rainforest, estimated at 130 million years old, inhabited by primitive tribes scarcely out of the Stone Age, and many headhunters, who with Borneo's name are synonymous with wildness to the outside world. It had, unfortunately for the time and circumstances, something else—oil. Imperial, expansionist Japan invaded on December 16, 1941.

Borneo's entire defense consisted of a single, inexperienced, expendable Punjabi regiment from India, 2,500 native volunteers, and 6,500 Dutch troops. A Dutch submarine torpedoed two Japanese transports, but it was not even a reprieve. Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, was bombed and fell Christmas Day, the elderly Rajah Charles Brooke finding refuge in Australia, and by March 1942, all resistance had ended. But now, for the Western civilian internees and prisoners taken or shipped there, the real, desperate, struggle began—survival in Japanese captivity. Tragically, in the end 3,908 were to lose their lives.

Borneo was in the bleak backwaters of the war until the southern Philippines were liberated by the Americans at the beginning of 1945, finally placing Borneo within reach for the Allies. But for one Ally, Australia, there seemed no need for invasion—the island and its oil could now be cut off from Japan by the U.S. Navy.

ABOVE: Author Tom Harrisson posed with an indigenous Kelabit tribesman on the Japanese-held island of Borneo in 1944. LEFT: Jack Tradrea, a member of the Z Special Unit, took this photograph from the B-24 bomber that transported the covert unit to Borneo. The image shows the longhouse where the group spent its first night in Borneo. Tradrea accompanied Tom Harrisson during this mission to the Japanese-held island.

But Borneo lay in the Southwest Pacific Area and in the hands of its imperious commander, General Douglas MacArthur, who rarely listened to anyone, and never to Australians.

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In July 1945, Australian troops storm ashore in the first wave of Allied soldiers to initiate the liberation of Borneo from the Japanese. These troops were tasked with the capture of the key city of Balikpapan.

While the reasons he gave for his decision to have the Australians liberate Borneo were plausible from a military standpoint—airfields from which to attack Malaya, a base for the Royal Navy to operate against the Japanese fleet, the rescue of the long-suffering prisoners—it was strongly suspected that it was just as much about giving the unused Australians in his theater something to do and keeping them occupied away from the crowning achievement of his career. He wanted to keep the invasion of Japan itself an all American operation.

The British and Australians knew they needed both information from inside occupied Borneo and wholehearted cooperation of the tribes. In the end, that meant turning, and not eagerly, to that adventurous, arrogant anthropologist.

Tom Harrisson was familiar with Borneo, having led a 1932 expedition to study Sarawak's tribes. He had followed up with more groundbreaking work in the New Hebrides before founding the first mass market research organization in Britain in 1937. Along the way he became known for something he alluded to in the title of his autobiography, *The Most Offending Soul Alive*. He had, putting it mildly for those he had had fierce run-ins with (among them his own father, who disinherited him), "a reputation for strong self-opinionation and a general reluctance to opposition."

It followed him into a hotel room in Northern Ireland in 1944 to a secret meeting with a retired cavalry colonel about joining Britain's covert war arm, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and its branch in Australia.

As he wrote in his war memoir, *World Within, A Borneo Story* (1959), "All the time Borneo whispered in my ear…. Anyway, Mott offered me Borneo in the end, adding that I was about the last of their hopes. They had already (he said) asked everyone with any conceivable knowledge, including my colleagues of the 1932 expedition. When I practically leapt at the offer, he shed his cavalry veneer of calm for a second in pleased evident relief. For in a tiny way, the British Services at that moment badly needed to find a few men to go back into Borneo and try to save of the face, chin-up, lost to the Japanese."

The mission to Borneo was code-named Semut, Malay for ant. "We were to be biting ants," Harrisson wrote. The first two attempts to parachute in failed, but finally, after a six-hour flight from the Philippines, Harrisson and his seven team members descended into Sarawak on the night of March 25, 1945.

Harrisson was "the first white man to touch down and thus to return after years of Japanese occupation." He found himself called something very different after spending that night in a nearby tribal longhouse big enough to accommodate 500. "I awoke to find myself a Rajah," he later recounted. "I was The Rajah. Plainly and flatly that—though I was slow to realize it!"

The tribesmen took his descent as a sign of magical power. They thought his major's gold crown was a royal symbol and assumed he was Rajah Brooke's nephew and heir! "My position in their eyes was further accentuated because they saw seven other white men doing (at times!) what I told them," Harrisson related. "No situation of this kind had previously risen among them, or would normally arise in public anywhere in Brooke Sarawak."

Eventually 100,000 tribesmen supported him. "There seemed to be no limit to the willingness of inland loyalty. So far as I know there was not one traitor," he wrote.

Two more Semut were dropped in to cover North Borneo and Brunei, and Harrisson would be constantly on the move between them and the members of his team scattered among the tribes. "I do not think I have ever walked so fast, so far, in such exhausting country," Harrisson happily recalled. "But it was marvelous to be clear of radio and paper work, to feel actually in the field and subject to the proper discomforts and hazards. My mobility helped to coordinate and tighten things up considerably."

Though in his account Harrisson gives no indication of any strife, to judge from the later comments—far from flattering—of some of his comrades, he evidently carried his admittedly offending ways around with him. Nor, by his own admission, did he spare the tribes when their omens and superstitions got in the way of his mission. "Clearly we could not operate like this. And in this one respect I did simply roughride over every consideration of local custom and belief."

As it happened, Harrisson had his own reason to get away from the radio. He had built up a broadcasting network covering 20,000 square miles, but the results proved to be mixed.

"We felt elated by the amount of valuable information we were obtaining, yet horribly frustrated when time and time again this failed to get through," he bitterly remembered. "Our signals had to be repeated, and repeated in reply to queries already distorted. These were some of the worst hours ever. Some nights I spent entirely with the code books and a hurricane lamp, probably only adding to the confusion in a type of mental exercise which is no more my métier than crossword, mental arithmetic, chess, or bridge (all of which I abhor)."

Drawing on his own experience, Harrisson had given his Semut teams a crash course on tribal customs. At the same time, he was familiarizing the tribesmen with Western ways of waging modern war. "We never had to teach a Kelabit or Murut how to move or kill," Harrisson related later. "But there was always an appreciable danger that in moving they might kill themselves, with things like hand grenades; or kill each other, instead of the enemy, by a combination of over-enthusiasm and the automatic lever on a carbine or Sten gun."

Arms were dropped in, but bows and arrows and even the deadly blowpipe were also put to use. Harrisson eventually trained some 6,000 tribesmen who would quickly show what eager, deadly learners they were. "On a shout," Harrisson later described, "this fearful blast of firepower was discharged from behind a ridge into all the rear of the party, which included the Japanese and their fully implicated satellites.

Our first operation went one hundred percent. No one escaped down-hill to tell the tale."

"This so one-sided ambush greatly heightened the already high morale of our continually growing forces," he added. "With several more which soon followed, it gave reassuring indications that my subordinates could control their guerrillas; and that their guerrillas could control themselves. There was no looting, or even lopping off of heads on this occasion—or on any occasion later, unless for some reason permission was given; or unless the forces concerned were Ibans, lowland people who had not yet got into the Semut system of ants with firearms, but para-military, uncouth manners."

The tribesmen would soon have more targets. On June 10, 1945, some 23,553 Australian soldiers landed at Brunei Bay to begin the long-awaited liberation of Borneo, and Harrisson and his tribes launched their own attacks in support. "We fell as best we might upon the Japanese, their co-operators, installations and communications," he wrote.

"In strict military terms this was no great shakes. But the wide scatter, the ferocity and the complete surprise of these attacks had a far greater effect than their simple statistical significance. Our irregular efforts gave to the unlucky enemy the impression of a general, synchronized attack. This impression was accentuated in that we were able to take over wireless and administrative posts and to kill off every Jap on routine duty along the whole of the Brunei and Sarawak installations in the huge arc of Brunei Bay and the coastal plain behind."

On July 1, some 21,000 additional Australians landed at Balikpapan, southeast Borneo, for the final amphibious operation of World War II. Soon, the Japanese began to flee into the interior. "Thus," Harrisson grimly recorded, "Semut ceased to be engaged in intelligence and sabotage, and decreasingly in administration. Instead, we devoted the greater part of all effort directly to killing Japanese."

Harrisson and his tribes were credited with killing 1,000 Japanese. Others died by their own hand, hanging themselves by tree branches with their belts. "Years later," Harrisson was to relate, "skeletons were still being found; several times single skulls strangely dangling, ghostly jokes in a land so long scarred by head-hunting."

Hiroshima and Nagasaki intruded on Harrisson's Stone Age world. It took the Japanese commander a month to emerge from hiding to surrender, but a captain with 560 under him was still out in the rainforest. It would be Harrisson's final mission to find them, and he did. "In a highly inconsequential 'ceremony,' the Japanese commander handed me his sword, as we stood beside a rice hut, which I remember was almost fallen down as a relic of the previous harvest season. This was on the last day of October 1945."

Harrisson marked the occasion in his offending style by bedding a Japanese Army nurse. "The war was properly over," he simply concluded. But it ended less agreeably for the families of the 299 Australians soldiers killed on Borneo (634 were wounded) in a final campaign. Many had a hard time seeing any real necessity in the campaign. Harrisson, for his part, never commented.

The war had devastated the island, and the resulting political changes would set it on the road to another longer conflict in less than two decades. Unable to recover on their own, both the chartered company and the last white Rajah formally ceded North Borneo and Sarawak to the British in June-July 1946, and they became crown colonies. In 1961, they merged with Malaya to form Malaysia, while Brunei, offered the chance, opted for full independence instead.

The Dutch thought they could return affairs to what they had been before the war. They were wrong. "We were conscious of the anti-Dutch feelings of the Indonesians that these people didn't want to be bossed about," one Australian soldier on occupation duty recognized. They were not to be for much longer—in 1949 southern Borneo became part of independent Indonesia.

But Sukarno, the leader of the revolt against the Dutch, proved to be a megalomaniac, determined to force his own union with Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines with himself in charge. The result was a conflict during the early 1960s called, simply, the Confrontation. The British, Australians, and Indonesians were involved in a series of hit-and-run raids back and forth across the borders.

The conflict was kept so quiet that the sole Victoria Cross awarded was kept secret at the time, the citation falsely saying the action took place in defense of Malaysian soil and not across the border in Indonesia. Finally, in 1966 Sukarno was overthrown, and the Confrontation ended.

Tom Harrisson organized loyal tribesmen during the conflict. He spent years on Borneo after the war running the local museum and continuing his studies of the tribes, even expanding his field to archaeology, finding the skulls that first placed man on Borneo around 50,000 BC. He died in 1976.

Author John W. Osborn, Jr. is resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has previously written for WWII History *on numerous topics.*

By Michael D. Hull

The Kobal Collection

Cameras Go to War

Hollywood director John Ford brought unique talent to the film interpretation of World War II.

WITH SUCH AWARD-WINNING FILMS AS *STAGECOACH, YOUNG MR. LINCOLN,* *Drums Along the Mohawk, The Grapes of Wrath, The Long Voyage Home,* and *How Green Was My Valley* behind him, John Ford was one of Hollywood's most respected directors by the time World War II broke out in 1939.

But 46-year-old Ford, the owner of the *Araner,* a 110-foot, two-masted yacht, also dreamed of becoming a naval hero, although he had failed the entrance examination for the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1914. He was sure that his country would be drawn into the conflict, offering him his "last chance to be a boy." He started his naval service several years before the Pearl Harbor attack sent America to war.

After being appointed a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve in September 1934, Ford made periodic cruises aboard his yacht down the coast of Baja California between 1936 and 1939, gathering information for the 11th Naval District. He reported that the crews of Japanese shrimp boats off the Mexican coast were spying and constituting "a real menace" to national defense. He said that there were Imperial Navy officers aboard the trawlers and that the Japanese were familiar with every cove and inlet of the Gulf of California. Ford was commended for his "unselfish and patriotic work."

By the autumn of 1939, with Europe now engulfed in war, Ford's desire to get involved intensified. Garnering a second Academy Award for his Dust Bowl saga *The Grapes of Wrath* did not deter him. "Awards for pictures are a trivial thing to be concerned with at times like these," he explained. So, in April 1940, Ford created an unofficial Naval Reserve unit.

His recruits for the Naval Field Photographic Unit, known simply as Field Photographic, were some of the best talents in Hollywood. They included writers Garson Kanin and Budd Schulberg, cinematographer Gregg Toland, editor Robert Parrish, and special effects expert Ray Kellogg. The unit's mission was to photograph combat, and Ford hoped that the Navy Department would recognize the value of such a trained auxiliary.

Aided by retired chief petty officer and actor Jack Pennick, a gaunt Marine Corps veteran of World War I and China service, Ford molded the ragtag group into a military force. Its members wore rented uniforms, carried weapons borrowed from the 20th Century-Fox property department, and drilled on a studio soundstage. They learned discipline and even sword drill because "Pappy" Ford, while hating regulations, loved military ceremony. The group became known as "John Ford's Navy."

The project was not taken seriously by the Navy brass for some months. Ford was ridiculed in some quarters as a "warmonger" and an "over-age Sea Scout," and his appeals for authorization drew no response. But he was well connected in the Naval Reserve, and he persisted. He lobbied in Washington, and his unit eventually gained official sanction late in 1940. By 1941, with the draft being felt in Hollywood, Field Photographic was deluged with applications.

An impatient John Ford watches as a film crew prepares equipment for an upcoming movie scene. Ford pursued an opportunity to assist the American war effort and made the landmark documentary of the Midway fighting in the Pacific.

In September 1941, Ford and his unit members were summoned to Washington where a big surprise awaited them. With the support of Merian C. Cooper, a film producer and colorful soldier of fortune, Field Photographic had been accepted intact—not by the Navy but by the newly formed

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While filming his Academy Award-winning documentary on the Battle of Midway, Ford and an assistant observe the action during a Japanese air raid against Midway Atoll in the Pacific.

Office of Strategic Services headed by Colonel William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan, a legendary World War I Medal of Honor winner. Ford was to be accountable to Donovan, who in turn reported to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The unit was assigned an operating budget of $5 million for its first year.

Ford's unit received its first assignment in November 1941, when Donovan ordered it to produce a filmed report on the U.S. Atlantic Fleet as it helped the British escort convoys and waged an undeclared war against German U-boats. Donovan showed the film to Roosevelt. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, Field Photographic was sent south to film defenses in the Panama Canal Zone.

In February 1942, Ford turned over his yacht to the Navy for use as a patrol craft off the California coast. Many Hollywood luminaries, meanwhile, joined the war effort. Ford's attractive, elegant wife, Mary, worked at the popular Hollywood Canteen, and his stars John Wayne and Ward Bond served as air raid wardens in Los Angeles.

Impressed with Ford's North Atlantic and Panama documentaries, Colonel Donovan—backed by FDR—next ordered Field Photographic to film the war in the Pacific, beginning with a top secret report on the Pearl Harbor debacle. The unit started filming in Hawaii, and Ford flew to Honolulu in mid-February to check on progress. While there, he learned of a planned raid against Japan by Colonel James H. Doolittle's Army Air Forces North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers from the carrier USS *Hornet*. Leaving Toland in charge of the Pearl Harbor film project, Ford and several cameramen managed to talk their way into joining Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr.'s Task Force 16, formed around the *Hornet,* so that they could cover the launching.

Ford sailed aboard the heavy cruiser USS *Salt Lake City*. On the morning of April 14, 1942, four days before Doolittle's 16 bombers lifted off the *Hornet*, Ford was proud to learn from the cruiser's radio that he had won his third Academy Award for *How Green Was My Valley,* the poignant story of a Welsh coal mining family.

But the irascible, hard-drinking filmmaker, who liked to be called Jack, was angered when he returned to Hawaii and learned that the Navy had confiscated Toland's Pearl Harbor film and locked it in a vault because it was considered controversial. The high-strung, depressed Toland was assigned to the Field Photographic station in Rio de Janeiro, and Ford headed for Washington.

During a brief stay in the hot, muggy capital, Ford was told by Donovan that something big was imminent in the Pacific. Navy cryptographers had breached Japanese codes and learned that the Imperial Navy was trying to provoke the U.S. Pacific Fleet, still weak after the Pearl Harbor attack, into a confrontation around remote Midway Atoll, 1,304 nautical miles northwest of Hawaii. Donovan asked Ford to fly out and film what might be the most important naval battle of the Pacific War.

The filmmaker did not hesitate. In mid-May, he flew in a Douglas C-47 transport to San Francisco and boarded a destroyer for his four-day return to Pearl Harbor. Then, Ford and Jack MacKenzie, a photographer's mate, rode a Navy patrol plane to Midway. Circling the tiny atoll after a four-hour flight, Ford peered down and saw that its small Marine and Navy garrison was braced for action. Sandbags were piled, slit trenches dug, machine guns positioned, and ground crews bustled around fighter planes on the airstrip.

Ford sensed the resolve of Midway's defenders and was in high spirits. "This is some place, really fascinating," he wrote to his wife on June 1. "The morale here is extremely high, and the food is really delicious—best I've had in the Navy."

When a Midway-based patrol bomber sighted the powerful Japanese fleet on the morning of June 3, 1942, Midway's Marine battalion and sailors took last minute defense measures. As more emplacements were hastily dug, fighters fueled, and ammunition belts distributed, Ford and MacKenzie got ready to film the inevitable attack.

On Thursday, June 4, the two-day Battle of Midway—the most decisive naval engagement since Trafalgar—began as dive bombers and torpedo bombers from the U.S. carriers *Hornet, Enterprise,* and *Yorktown,* led by Rear Admirals Frank Jack Fletcher and Raymond A. Spruance, sought out and attacked Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's four carriers, *Akagi, Kaga, Soryu,* and *Hiryu*.

On Midway itself, Pappy Ford and the red haired, freckled MacKenzie took their positions with hand cameras and waited tensely. Ford climbed the airfield's wooden control tower and sent MacKenzie to Midway's generating plant. Ford advised the young man, "Photograph faces. We can always fake combat footage later." They did not have long to wait.

At dawn on June 4, before Ford had dressed, Midway came under attack. Waves of Japanese carrier bombers and fighters roared in, bombing and strafing. Explosions shook the atoll, debris flew, and a fuel dump belched smoke and flame. Though feverish and with their hearts pounding, Ford and MacKenzie calmly captured on film the fury around them—incoming enemy planes, bombs falling, fires, leathernecks firing machine guns, weary American fighter pilots returning, medical corpsmen carrying bodies to ambulances, and smoking wreckage.

On the control tower, Ford was both terrified and exhilarated when Japanese fighters zoomed in and riddled the structure. One of the planes came so close that Ford saw the pilot give him a toothy grin. At 8 that morning, the filmmaker aimed his camera at a group of Marines hoisting the Stars and Stripes while smoke and flame swirled in the background. The dramatic shot eventually became one of the best known images of World War II.

As Ford descended from the control tower, a

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close hit by an enemy plane stunned him. Then he realized that he was bleeding. Shrapnel had splintered his left forearm. He sought medical attention and then continued to film the attack and devastation. The filmmaker was later awarded the Purple Heart and a citation from the 14th Naval District recognizing his "courage and devotion to duty."

In the close-run naval battle, meanwhile, American carrier planes had sunk the four enemy flattops and scored a costly but momentous victory. Yamamoto abandoned Midway invasion plans, and his shattered fleet retired westward. The Imperial Navy had been put on the defensive in the Pacific.

Library of Congress

John Wayne and Robert Montgomery (center left and right) pour over a map along with fellow naval officers in John Ford's famous film *They Were Expendable* depicting the drama and hazards of wartime duty aboard PT-boats in the Pacific Theater. The movie's main character was based on the exploits of naval hero Lieutenant John Bulkeley.

Ford spent several days photographing Midway's damage before quietly collecting his footage—eight cans of color film—and sailing to Los Angeles aboard a transport ship. He had a rush print made of the Midway film and found himself being hailed as a combat hero. A *Hollywood Reporter* headline announced on June 18, "Ford Filmed Battle of Midway," while columnist Louella Parsons gushed that he "is Hollywood's own personal hero."

The filmmaker flew on to Washington and arrived at OSS headquarters unshaven and with his left arm bandaged. He went to work immediately on the Midway footage with editor Parrish. Ford wanted no official interference and suspected that Navy brass and censors might come "snooping around," so he ordered Parrish to fly to Hollywood and work on the film there.

Parrish assembled the film on the 20th Century-Fox lot. Screenwriter Dudley Nichols wrote a narration, which was rewritten by Jim McGuinness of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Ford flew out when the project was ready. The narration was recorded by Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, and Donald Crisp, three of Ford's players, and the director watched a screening of the rough cut in a locked editing room while a Marine stood watch outside. Ford regarded the 18-minute documentary, titled *The Battle of Midway,* as a timely morale booster. "It's for the mothers of America," he declared. "It's to let them know that we're in a war and that we've been getting the s—- kicked out of us for five months, and now we're starting to hit back."

Donovan and the director rushed the film to

the White House, where it was promptly viewed by the president, his wife, Eleanor, trusted adviser Harry L. Hopkins, and Admiral William D. Leahy, FDR's senior naval aide. The footage included a shot of Marine Corps Major James Roosevelt attending a memorial service for the Midway dead, and when the president recognized his son, he fell silent. After the viewing, the first lady wept and FDR was ashen. Turning to Leahy, the president said, "I want every mother in America to see this picture."

Twentieth Century-Fox distributed 500 prints to theaters across the country, and the first public screening was at New York's Radio City Music Hall on September 14, 1942. Editor Parrish reported, "It was a stunning, amazing thing to see.… City women screamed, people cried, and the ushers had to take them out.… The people, they just went crazy."

Ahead of its time, the Ford film was propagandist yet realistic and inspirational and showed that an Allied victory in the Pacific was possible. *The Battle of Midway* was widely seen and critically acclaimed and eventually won the Academy Award for best documentary short subject of 1942.

Immediately after the White House screening, Ford flew to London in a Pan American flying boat with Pennick, now his unofficial aide. The purpose was to organize Field Photographic crews for Operation Torch, the upcoming Allied invasion of North Africa. Ford sent his camera crews to the British Commando School at Achnacarry in the Scottish Highlands for special training and conditioning.

The complex invasion was launched on November 8, 1942, with three Allied task forces converging on the Morocco-Algeria coasts. Thirty-four thousand U.S. troops landed near Casablanca; 39,000 British and U.S. troops went ashore near Oran, supported by airborne troops; and 33,000 men landed near Algiers. Pappy Ford waited in Gibraltar, impatient to get to the front.

As soon as permission was granted, he left Gibraltar on November 14 with Pennick and photographer's mate Robert Johannes. They commandeered a jeep in Algiers and attached themselves to D Company of the 13th Armored Regiment in Major General Orlando Ward's 1st Armored Division. The regiment advanced to the Algerian port of Bone, where Ford spent several days with Hollywood producer Darryl F. Zanuck. Driving a requisitioned Chevrolet coupe and armed with a Tommy gun, two pistols, and hand grenades, the diminutive Zanuck was covering the war for a documentary and a book.

Ford and his 32 cameramen saw plenty of action in Algeria and Tunisia. Huddling in fox-

holes and sharing the risks and hardships of the tankers and infantrymen, they survived German artillery, machine-gun fire, and dive bombers. Ford lost 32 pounds while subsisting on tea and hard English biscuits.

One day in Tunisia, while D Company was under attack by German bombers and dive bombers, Ford, Pennick, and Johannes took refuge in a grove of eucalyptus trees. A flight of Royal Air Force Supermarine Spitfires swooped to attack the enemy planes, and Ford had his camera ready to film the fierce dogfight that ensued. He watched a Spitfire shoot down a twin-engine Junkers Ju-88 medium bomber, and a crewman bailed out.

As the parachute billowed and drifted down, Ford shouted to his companions, "Come on! Let's take him prisoner." The three Americans jumped into their jeep and careened across wadis and scrubland to where the German had landed. He surrendered, told Ford that he was the bombardier, and asked to be taken to where the plane had crashed to see if any others of the four-man crew had survived. Ford agreed.

But the smoking wreckage yielded three charred bodies. While the bombardier mourned his friends and Ford pondered what to do with him, a Free French Army lieutenant drove up and demanded jurisdiction over the German. Ford turned him over, and the Frenchman began slapping the captive while interrogating him. Ford intervened, saying, "OK, that's enough! The prisoner stays with us." The French officer was enraged, but Ford stood his ground and eventually turned over the airman to the company commander. The German was not aware that the humane American who had captured him was a famous Hollywood director.

After their six hectic weeks in combat, Ford, Pennick, and Johannes flew to Gibraltar in December 1942, and then headed home aboard the attack transport USS *Samuel Chase*. Ford, who had been promoted to captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve, then spent several months in Washington busying himself with his film unit and lobbying high-ranking officers and Congressmen. But he grew bored, so he decided to resurrect footage of the Pearl Harbor disaster by Toland and Navy cameramen. Parrish trimmed the footage to half an hour, Budd Schulberg wrote the narration, and Alfred Newman, one of Hollywood's leading composers, wrote the score. The documentary was titled *December 7th*.

As part of the Industrial Incentives Program, the film was not released to theaters, but was shown in defense plants to boost production and morale. Producer Walter Wanger told its director that *December 7th* was a "great picture" and a "triumph," and it received an Academy Award for best documentary of 1943.

Ford continued globetrotting and his association with Colonel Donovan. In the summer of 1943, while the latter was getting the OSS established in the China-Burma-India Theater, the tireless filmmaker flew to New Delhi to oversee work on a new documentary, *Victory in Burma.* The film would focus on the theater commander, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and the long, bitter struggle waged against the Japanese in the Burmese jungles by General William Slim's "forgotten" British 14th Army. Ford flew reconnaissance flights to China, photographed air raids in Burma and China, and worked closely with Maj. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, the theater commander of U.S. forces, and Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault, leader of the U.S. Fourteenth Air Force and the legendary Flying Tigers.

After a wearying seven-day flight from New Delhi, Ford and Pennick arrived home in January 1944. Called into Donovan's office, Ford was praised for his efforts in the Far East, told that he had been a great asset to the OSS, and was recommended for promotion to captain. Donovan then informed him that his Field Photographic would be in charge of filming the planned Allied invasion of Normandy. The filmmaker was both stunned and jubilant.

Captain Ford flew to England early in April 1944 and busied himself for the next two months getting his film unit ready to cover the invasion. Mark Armistead's Field Photographic team in London had been hard at work for 18 months photographing the European coast from low-flying B-25 bombers and gathering data on French waters, beaches, and inland terrain. One of Armistead's prime sources on the Normandy shore was his friend, Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley, the commander of a PT-boat squadron in the English Channel.

"Buck" Bulkeley had gained fame as a daring PT-boat skipper in the doomed Philippines early in 1942 and for evacuating General Douglas MacArthur and his family from Corregidor. Bulkeley was awarded the Medal of Honor, and his feats were celebrated in William L. White's bestselling book *They Were Expendable*. Ironically, Pappy Ford was under Hollywood pressure from April 1943 onward to turn the book into a film, but he felt he could not leave Field Photographic and that the war was more important. Screenwriters McGuinness and Frank W. "Spig" Wead kept up the pressure, but Ford resisted, saying that he was "committed to a major operation."

One spring morning shortly before the Normandy invasion, Ford was resting in his room at London's elegant Claridge's Hotel when there was a knock on the door. It was Armistead and Bulkeley. Although he was naked, the filmmaker jumped out of bed, stood at attention, and saluted the PT-boat hero. "I'm proud to salute the man who rescued General MacArthur," he declared. Bulkeley regarded Ford as eccentric, but the two soon became firm friends.

On the night of June 5, 1944, after dispersing his camera crews among the Allied assault groups, Pappy Ford went aboard the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta,* the flagship of Rear Admiral Alan G. Kirk's Western Task Force. Too excited to sleep, Ford paced the decks that night as the *Augusta* and the rest of the Allied armada butted through the choppy English Channel toward France. When the historic early hours of Tuesday, June 6, 1944, came, the filmmaker peered through binoculars as the British, American, and Canadian armies started landing across five Normandy beaches.

He saw the high bluffs behind Omaha Beach and the murderous German crossfire that pinned down elements of the U.S. 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions there for several critical hours on D-Day. The *Augusta* was some distance offshore, and Ford grew restless; he wanted to get close to the action. So he sent a radio message to Armistead, who was aboard Bulkeley's PT-boat, and told him to come and pick him up. The boat duly eased alongside the cruiser, and Ford was swung aboard in a boatswain's chair.

Bulkeley briefed the filmmaker on his boat's operations, which had included ferrying undercover agents in and out of Normandy and which now centered on beachhead patrols and keeping German U-boats away from the Allied ships. Ford enjoyed himself for five days aboard the PT-boat, standing watch on the cramped bridge, getting a ringside taste of combat when the craft skirmished with enemy E-boats off Cherbourg, and growing to admire the gallant, unassuming Bulkeley. He told Ford frankly that his service in the Philippines had been exaggerated in White's book, that he had received too much publicity, and that he had not deserved the Medal of Honor.

The five days with Bulkeley convinced Ford that the hero's story could be told on the screen and that he was the one to direct it. Vacillating no longer, he said, "I frankly admit that I am getting as enthusiastic as hell about *They Were Expendable*."

Two weeks after the Normandy landings, the bulk of Ford's film unit sailed home. The weary director checked into a New York hotel, slept for 12 straight hours, and then headed for the West Coast. After agreeing to produce and

direct *They Were Expendable* for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, he summoned writers McGuinness and Wead and put them to work on the script. Wead, an early record-breaking naval aviator before being partially paralyzed in a staircase fall, had penned screenplays for many films about the Navy, including *Dirigible, Hell Divers, Ceiling Zero, Submarine D-1, Dive Bomber,* and *Destroyer*.

Ford went on detached duty from the Naval Reserve in October 1944, and he and Wead honed a final script, focusing on the PT-boat squadrons that fought delaying actions against Japanese invaders in the Philippines early in 1942. It was a saga of gallant sacrifice in the face of heavy odds. Shooting on the film began around Key Biscayne, Florida, early in February 1945. The Navy loaned MGM several PT-boats and their crews, and Biscayne Bay stood in for Manila Bay in the action scenes.

The director chose boyish actor Robert Montgomery to portray the lead character, Lieutenant John Brickley, based on Bulkeley. Ford had to arrange for the Navy to release Montgomery from duty. Montgomery had commanded a PT-boat in the Solomon Islands, served on a destroyer off Normandy, and been decorated. Brickley's brash executive officer, Lieutenant Rusty Ryan, was played by John Wayne, who said, "Jack was awfully intense on that picture and working with more concentration than I had ever seen. I think he was really out to achieve something." Although he revered Ford, Wayne was regularly bullied on the set by Ford until Montgomery stepped in on his behalf. The film's supporting cast included Donna Reed, Ward Bond, Jack Holt, Pennick, Marshall Thompson, and Leon Ames.

Because of the Japanese surrender in September 1945, MGM delayed the release of the film until the following December. Its world premiere at Loew's Capitol Theater in Washington on December 19 was attended by many Hollywood and military luminaries, including Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Moving and sometimes poetic, *They Were Expendable* was critically acclaimed. *Nation* magazine reviewer James Agee called it "so beautiful and so real." But audiences were limited because filmgoers had grown tired of war stories, and the powerful imagery of Ford's creation was not generally appreciated for several years.

The producer-director, meanwhile, remained active with Field Photographic and Colonel Donovan despite his failing health. While his film unit aided the OSS in gathering evidence about Nazi war criminals, Ford oversaw the disbanding of Field Photographic and purchased an eight-acre tract near Encino, California, where a recreation retirement center was established for the 180 cameramen who had served under him. Donovan pinned the Legion of Merit on the "poet with a camera" in September 1945.

In the postwar years, Ford was best known for a string of screen masterpieces about the American West, but he also directed four more documentaries, including two about the Korean War and two more films about the Navy. These were the comedy-drama, *Mister Roberts,* starring Henry Fonda and James Cagney, and the biographical *The Wings of Eagles,* with John Wayne portraying Ford's longtime friend Spig Wead.

Pappy Ford retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of rear admiral in 1951. Five months before he died of cancer on August 31, 1973, he was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Richard M. Nixon. At his funeral, Ford's coffin was draped with the frayed American flag he had filmed being hoisted by Marines at Midway.

Long-time contributor Michael D. Hull has written for WW II History *on a variety of topics. He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

AN AMERICAN Betrayal

SOME HISTORIANS WRITE OF A U.S. MISCALCULATION OF THE SOVIETS RESULTING IN THE DESCENT OF THE IRON CURTAIN ACROSS EUROPE. BY WILLIAM WEIDNER

BRITISH HISTORIAN ALAN CLARK WROTE IN HIS BOOK *BARBAROSSA*, "Roosevelt's betrayal of Eastern Europe, whether out of calculation or gullibility, is so notorious as to need no further recapitulation."

National pride is a bitter pill to swallow. Some of the bitterness goes away if the pill can be dissolved in a mixture of faded memories and shared guilt. Sharing the guilt for the tragedy that befell the states in Eastern Europe after World War II has become a passionate occupation for generations of British historians.

Throughout the summer of 1938, German Chancellor Adolf Hitler was demanding international action to protect the rights of oppressed Germans living in the western provinces of Czechoslovakia. Coming after the German reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 and the Anschluss with Austria in 1938, Hitler's demands raised the fear of another devastating European war. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain received broad approval throughout Europe for his determined efforts to keep the peace. After lengthy discussions, on September 30, 1938, representatives from the governments of Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom signed the Munich Agreement.

ABOVE: The betrayal of Czechoslovakia and later Eastern Europe originated with a misguided notion of peace on the part of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and other Western diplomats. In this photo, German armored vehicles roll through the streets of a Czech city a mere six months after the signing of the infamous Munich agreement. Hitler's army marched into Prague without firing a shot. INSET: Following his meeting with Hitler at Munich in September 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain waves a meaningless treaty that he assures the world preserves '…peace in our time.'

They believed they had solved the crisis created by those ethnic Germans living in western Czechoslovakia. They gave the Sudetenland to Germany. Representatives from the government of Czechoslovakia were not invited to attend the conference. Neither was Soviet Russia, the only country willing to fulfill her treaty obligations to the Czechs in the event they were attacked by Nazi Germany.

Chamberlain had taken the lead in negotiations at the Munich Conference. He and Adolf Hitler had also signed an agreement declaring it was indicative "of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again." On returning to London, Chamberlain was greeted with great enthusiasm. He told the welcoming crowd, "I believe it is peace for our time."

Unfortunately, it did not take long for Chamberlain's "peace for our time" to unravel. The Munich Conference would leave a bitter taste in many British mouths. It worsened after Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia. A British statesman in the Foreign Office, while searching for an explanation of his government's failure to act, declared: "Nothing can be done to stop Germany … the less we interfere

All Photos: National Archives

in this crisis the better."

The shame of the Munich Agreement had become a salient factor in European politics almost since the day it was signed. It attached itself to the men and countries responsible for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. The sad fate of Czechoslovakia and later Poland has left a deep scar of culpability in British memories. One can sense the fate of Eastern Europe inducing a national shrug of the shoulders and a sigh of deep concern.

Prior to World War II, British diplomats sought to reach an accommodation with nearly every state in Europe. Throughout the 1930s the British government feared Russian communism as much than they feared German fascism. Their halfhearted attempts to reach an agreement with the Russians left Hitler free to negotiate a treaty with Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed on August 23, 1939, and barely one week later Hitler attacked Poland.

The Poles had tried to modernize their army and air force. They asked the British for a loan of 60 million pounds. British officials cut the loan request to eight million pounds and added the caveat that it was not a loan but a credit to be used for purchasing armaments from British factories. A.J.P. Taylor wrote, "They explained that, as British armament factories were fully employed, the credit could not be used in any case. No credit had passed by the time the war broke out; no British bomb or rifle went to Poland."

At 4:45 AM on September 1, 1939, German troops crossed the Polish frontier, and by 6 AM German planes were bombing Warsaw. This was a clear violation of the guarantee that the British and French had given to Poland and

Within weeks of their invasion of Poland from the west, German troops occupied the Polish capital of Warsaw. In this photo, Hitler watches Wehrmacht soldiers pass in review. The parade took place in Warsaw about a month after the outbreak of World War II, and at the time the photo was taken, Soviet troops had invaded Poland from the east.

good cause for an immediate declaration of war against Germany, but nothing happened. The governments of Britain and France, panicked by their fear, continued to look for ways out of the war with Germany. First, there was a peace conference proposed by Italy's Mussolini, but that fell apart. Then the French protested that they needed extra time for mobilization.

While Chamberlain was looking for a peaceful way to settle the disagreement between Poland and Germany, public opinion had turned against him. With the cloud of Munich still hanging over Parliament, ministers warned Chamberlain that the government would fall unless it sent an ultimatum to Hitler before the House met again. Chamberlain gave way. The British ultimatum was delivered to the Germans at 9 AM on September 3, 1939. When it expired at 11 AM, Great Britain was at war with Germany.

The British often try to cast themselves as the "white knights of freedom and democracy" riding to the aid of the poor Poles in Eastern Europe. They had thrown the lives of British grenadiers into the caldron of a continental war against the tyranny of German fascism. This was true but completely irrelevant to the Poles at the time. Ultimately, however, British principle does not appear to have been a matter of any great concern because no British grenadier gave his life for it.

In 1914 the British Empire was at the zenith of its power. During the first year of the Great War, the British sent 50 well-trained and -equipped divisions to France. The Great War, which the European powers had enthusiastically joined, became a slaughterhouse. England had a smaller population base than the continental powers and could not afford the horrible losses.

In the eight months between the British declaration of war on Germany in September 1939 and the German attack on the Allied armies on May 10, 1940, the British government sent the paltry British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of 10 infantry divisions and a few armored brigades to France. These were both poorly equipped and untrained in the combined arms tactics employed by the Germans.

The "Sitzkreig," or "Sitting War" was shamefully the best they could do for Poland. The British watched their Polish ally fall to the Germans and later to the Russians without firing a single shot. No British aid found its way to Poland, no British soldier gave his life for Polish freedom.

The British people had tired of appeasement and the shameful stain that policy left on their national honor. They demanded a war. But it was not a war their army was prepared to fight. In 1940, the Germans put an army of 157 divisions onto the field of battle, of which 135 were detailed for their May offensive against the Western Allies. The French Army had 80 of its 117 divisions available for the defense of northern France. Compared to the two continental powers, the British contribution of only 10 divisions left them open to French charges of failing to share the sacrifices of their war against Germany.

What had been obvious to Adolf Hitler from the beginning soon became obvious to everyone else. The British and French would not fight to save anyone but themselves, and this they would do rather poorly. Indeed, Hitler was counting on their lack of involvement while his army was fully engaged in Poland. The Western Allies threw away their last, best chance to defeat Hitler while his back was turned in Poland.

We now know that the French and British lost the war to Hitler in May and June 1940. We do not know what might have happened had they summoned the courage to attack Germany while its army was fighting in Poland.

The end of World War II presented historians in Great Britain with an opportunity to recast these events in a more favorable light. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich and the "Phony War" on Poland's behalf are barely mentioned. It appeared that the Americans had been the culprits all along. The Americans had not seen the tragedy unfolding in Europe and had been years late in joining the European democracies' war against the horrors of German fascism. They came into the war only because they were attacked by the Japanese Imperial Navy at Pearl Harbor and not as a matter of higher principle like the British and French.

If British Prime Minister Winston Churchill thought American participation in the war ultimately guaranteed Allied victory, he also thought the American military chiefs, Admiral William Leahy, General George Marshall, Admiral Ernest King, and General Henry "Hap" Arnold, made up one of the "stupidest strategic teams I have ever seen." Chief of the Imperial General Staff Alan Brooke was equally critical of the Americans.

The British would voice a host of concerns about their new American ally. The most accurate of those in 1942 was a lack of battlefield experience for nearly all the senior American generals. The British loved to run things. They viewed themselves as the most qualified strategists with far more actual combat experience than any of the Americans.

If the British had a low opinion of Americans, they had a much higher opinion of their own abilities. Given their experiences in 1939 and 1940, the Czechs, the Poles, and the French might be forgiven if they did not share any enthusiasm for the benefits they derived from British leadership.

Chester Wilmot was a journalist attached to Montgomery's British 21st Army Group headquarters in Europe. His book *The Struggle for Europe* was published in 1952; it was one of the first major accounts of World War II in Europe. Not surprisingly, Wilmot usually favored the British point of view. He wrote,

"The two most serious miscalculations of the Second World War both concerned the Soviet Union: Hitler's miscalculation of Russia's military strength, and Roosevelt's miscalculation of Russia's political ambition. It was these two errors of judgment which gave Stalin the opportunity of establishing the Soviet Union as the dominant power in Europe."

If the Americans had been willing to consider a postwar political balance of power in Europe, Wilmot wrote, the Western Allies might have been able to occupy Berlin and Prague ahead of the Russians. He apparently believed that if the Allies had occupied Berlin and Eastern Europe before the Russians, the Russians would have simply forgotten all about those agreements they had made with Britain and the United States during the Yalta Conference, and at the end of the war they would have simply have turned their armies around and sent them trudging peacefully back to Russia. If this was indeed Wilmot's belief, it was shared by neither Churchill, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, nor Soviet Dictator Stalin.

There was the rub. The Americans missed a golden opportunity at the end of the war and had insisted on separating postwar political concerns from military strategy, while the British always included political consequences as a factor in their military decisions.

One of the differences between Great Britain and the United States was their pecking order among world powers. International status hardly mattered to the senior Americans serving in Europe because they had never exercised political power in Europe. President Woodrow Wilson's one attempt to get his fellow countrymen involved in European affairs after World War I had come to grief in 1920 when the United States Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles that President Wilson had brought back from France.

The British had been intimately involved in European politics for well over 100 years. Given their limited population base and much smaller armies, the British had been forced to seek political accommodations with other countries. This was necessary to maintain the "balance of power" in Europe, thereby keeping the Continent open to British industrial trade. British power had always been based not on the size or might of the British Army, but on the persuasive ability of British politicians to get other continental powers to share Great Britain's strategic goals.

The Americans serving in Europe never wasted much time thinking about their ability to influence world events. But by 1944, American allies, especially the British, were beginning to feel the political pressure as U.S. industrial production and the increasing size of the U.S. Army became a dominant factor. Wartime events had conspired against the British, and they were experiencing a most unwelcome decline in their ability to influence global events.

ABOVE: American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force (center), is flanked by British Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir Alan Brooke (left) and Prime Minister Winston Churchill (right). To the rear strides Deputy Supreme Commander Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder. LEFT: Photographed in England during pre-invasion maneuvers, American General Dwight D. Eisenhower and British General Bernard Montgomery confer in February 1944.

Most British statesmen were uncertain how much influence their country would have in the emerging new world order. They saw British power waning and believed they had to seek an accommodation with the United States and the Soviet Union while they were still part of the Big Three. British power declined as the country sank further into debt. The manpower crisis limited their ability to conduct offensive operations without substantial assistance from their American allies. Only the Americans had the military strength to address the fascist or communist conundrum the British would face in Eastern Europe at the end of the war.

In spite of the substantial American contributions in men and industrial production to the British war effort, the Allied numerical advantages in both men and war matériel might still be thrown away unless American military efforts could be tied to British global strategy. The British loved to run things their way politically—and run things they did. From the time the Americans hit the North African beaches in November 1942 for Operation Torch through Field Marshal Montgomery's Rhine crossing at Wesel in March 1945, the loudest voice in determining the pace and direction of Allied strategy in Western Europe was British.

The Americans got what they wanted in the two invasions of France, Normandy and Marseilles, which had been approved by all three Allies at the Teheran Conference, but the British got almost everything else. Montgomery determined the pace of battle at Caen despite desperate pleadings from his American boss. Montgomery issued the halt order to Patton's Third Army on August 12, 1944, at the Falaise Gap, again despite Eisenhower's repeated requests that they destroy the enemy in Normandy.

It was Montgomery who determined when and how the port of Antwerp, Belgium, was opened to Allied shipping. Despite letters from British Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay and Eisen-

hower both dated September 4, 1944, and a host of SHAEF logistical studies that had clearly shown that no advance into Germany was possible until the port of Antwerp was open and unloading Allied supplies, Montgomery ignored the port of Antwerp for over a month.

Montgomery had been using the shortage of Allied supplies to further his arguments for a single thrust north of the Ardennes into Germany. One of the main points of Montgomery's single-thrust argument was that one large American army should accompany him, protecting his southern flank, while the other Americans, namely George Patton's Third Army, were ordered to halt where they were. The northern drive would be led, of course, by Montgomery commanding his British 21st Army Group.

Later Montgomery used the same shortage of supplies to stop his American adversary dead in his tracks. If Eisenhower could not stop Patton, Montgomery would. He increased his demand for Allied supplies and delayed the opening of Antwerp for as long as he could. In early September 1944, Montgomery got his wish. Patton's Third Army ran out of gas and was grounded west of the Moselle near Metz and Nancy, less than 80 miles from the unoccupied Siegfried Line at Saarbrucken.

Prior to the invasion, SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) planners had determined that the main Allied drive into Germany should be led by General Omar Bradley's 12th U.S. Army Group. Their reasoning was sound. Bradley's Americans, Eisenhower's center group of armies, would be fighting over far better ground on the central German plateau; they were better equipped for mobile operations and had the only army in the European Theater with the manpower reserves capable of conducting sustained offensive operations. Finally, the Americans were the army that got the Allies out of Normandy by bleeding their way through the swamps and hedgerows.

In addition to their manpower, transportation, and terrain problems, the British faced another potentially far more serious problem. After five years of war, their Army was tired. "The British Army became noticeably tired, poorly disciplined, weakly led. Montgomery had no illusions about the limitations of his troops," wrote historian D.K.R. Crosswell.

At some point during September 1944, Eisenhower and his British minions at SHAEF seem to have entered an *Alice in Wonderland* world. Montgomery talked Eisenhower into making his northern thrust the major Allied drive into Germany. The British had created the political nature of the arrangement exactly for the purpose of controlling Allied strategy, and it worked for them time and time again.

By the time the Germans attacked the badly stretched Americans in the Ardennes in mid-December 1944, fully 16 divisions of the U.S. Ninth and First Armies had been drawn north of the Ardennes onto Montgomery's southern flank. The remaining four divisions in Hodges's First Army screened a 70-mile defensive front in the Ardennes.

It is interesting to note that the strategic deployment of Allied divisions in mid-December 1944 was almost exactly the same as Montgomery had requested in August during the Battle of the Falaise Gap. Montgomery had asked that the Allied armies stay together in one solid mass of 40 divisions and accompany his 21st Army Group north of the Ardennes.

THE TRUTH WAS THAT THE AMERICANS WERE OVERSTRETCHED IN THE ARDENNES PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY HAD SENT SO MANY DIVISIONS NORTH IN SUPPORT OF MONGOMERY. EISENHOWER HAD ACTUALLY WARNED MONTGOMERY OF THIS VERY POSSIBILITY.

By mid-August, when Montgomery made his proposals for a "full-blooded" northern thrust by 40 Allied divisions, he was facing two huge problems. First, he had an acute manpower shortage in his infantry divisions. Second, the command issue was also looming large in Montgomery's mind. Although the British had agreed that Eisenhower would take over command of Allied ground forces as soon as a second U.S. Army, Patton's Third, was activated in France, it was never something they accepted with good grace. British attempts to undermine Eisenhower's command authority became part of inter-Allied political intrigue.

Montgomery did not want to relinquish command of Allied ground forces to Eisenhower, whom he considered unqualified for the job. If Bradley's 21st Army Group followed SHAEF's preinvasion plans and headed east for the Nancy Gap and the German border with three large U.S. armies, Montgomery was sunk. Montgomery's British and Canadian armies were both suffering from a severe shortage of infantrymen. The British were no longer capable of sustaining offensive operations without American assistance. An Allied front from Switzerland to the North Sea also made it most unlikely that a British general with his headquarters north of the Ardennes could retain command over all Allied ground forces. However, a British general north of the Ardennes was far more likely to retain command over Allied ground forces if the Americans were willing to forgo their offensive south of the Ardennes and join his British and Canadians in the north, solving both Montgomery's manpower and command issues.

How Montgomery's "absurd and unacceptable" proposal (in Bradley's words) on August 13 became the centerpiece of SHAEF's strategy to defeat the Germans in the fall of 1944 is a most unpleasant story. The one chance the Allies had of ending the war in 1944 was simply thrown away. Bradley's thrust into central Germany,which Eisenhower had promised to Patton, was meekly deposited into SHAEF's wastebasket.

The British, of course, deny Montgomery's dominant influence on Allied strategy after September 1, 1944, because it does not fit into their template of blaming Eisenhower for the inept fall campaign and those casualties incurred by the overstretched Americans during the Battle of the Bulge. The Americans want to deny Montgomery's continued influence on Allied strategy because it raises serious questions about who actually exercised command after Eisenhower had supposedly taken command of all Allied ground forces on September 1.

Fortunately for those interested in discovering the truth, these arguments are part of the historical record. The truth was that the Americans were overstretched in the Ardennes precisely because they had sent so many divisions north in support of Montgomery. Eisenhower had actually warned Montgomery of this very possibility. Three months later, the Germans did manage to concentrate a bit of strength in the Ardennes, and the Allies were taken completely by surprise.

In Eisenhower's defense, one mitigating factor may have been his desire to placate the British prime minister again. Back on August 5 and 9, Churchill had badgered Eisenhower hour after hour over the Allied landings in southern France. Churchill wanted them cancelled, and Eisenhower was equally determined that they go forward. Eisenhower's aide wrote that at the August 5 meeting, after Eisenhower

had said no in every form in the English language, "he [Eisenhower] was practically limp when the PM departed."

Four days later, on August 9, Churchill was back at it. At this meeting, which also lasted for hours, he complained that Eisenhower was acting the part of the big, strong bully unconcerned and uncaring about his poor British cousin.

On August 11, Eisenhower wrote Churchill a deeply personal letter in which he begged for Churchill's forbearance. The very next evening (August 12), Montgomery ordered Patton's XV Corps to stop at the inter-Army Group boundary south of Argentan and not to cross into British territory. Eisenhower did not overrule him. Between August 13 and August 21, about 200,000 German soldiers walked out of the Falaise Gap.

By the end of August 1944, the Allies were in the middle of arguments over the correct strategy to follow for their drive into Nazi Germany. Eisenhower and SHAEF preferred sticking with the pre-invasion plans and using the central group of armies under U.S. General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group for the major Allied thrust. General Montgomery was still without a major victory; he was running out of men. He would also lose command of Allied ground forces in a matter of days.

Churchill had lost the argument over Anvil-Dragoon, but he was not known for giving up easily on any argument. Under political pressure from London, Eisenhower was forced to amend SHAEF's planned main thrust with Bradley's 12th Army Group into central Germany. He would cancel Bradley's thrust and make Montgomery's northern thrust the main Allied effort, at least until his armies had crossed the Rhine.

The Americans had a good run in Normandy; now it was time to share the glory with their British ally. This would keep Churchill quiet for the moment and give the British the right to claim full participation in the defeat of Germany while allowing Field Marshal Montgomery to protect his fragile British Second Army by using the Americans and Canadians for any difficult fighting. For the British it was a win–win situation.

Both President Roosevelt and General George Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, gave their subordinates wide latitude in the performance of their duties. Eisenhower had license to direct Allied armies in Europe in accordance with directives from the Combined Chiefs of Staff but without close political supervision from his commander-in-chief. This allowed Eisenhower to give Montgomery most of what he demanded in the fall of 1944 without creating a political firestorm in Washington.

Canadian troops of the Allied 21st Army Group, under the command of General Montgomery, march through a Dutch town in early 1945. Montgomery opposed Eisenhower's broad front strategy and sought to concentrate the main Allied thrust into Germany with his command. To do so, Montgomery continually tried to bring American troops under his personal authority and to divert war matériel from other Allied operations.

The reason Churchill was so fond of playing politics with Allied strategy was the same reason Montgomery acquired a huge fascination with crossing the Rhine River. The British had to play politics with Allied strategy simply because the army His Majesty sent to Europe was not able, on its own, to conduct sustained offensive operations.

Churchill believed that it was necessary to maintain the strength of the British Army in Europe to retain the public's illusion that the British Army was almost as big as the American Army and just as capable of conducting sustained offensive operations. He considered that it was politically crucial to their war effort, their status within the Anglo-American alliance, and to the future of the British Empire for the Second British Army to win a great victory in Europe.

It was equally important for British self-esteem that whatever assistance the Americans provided should be delivered discreetly. The Americans should be willing to provide assistance to Montgomery's 21st Army Group, but they should not expect any acknowledgment from the British that such assistance had been rendered. This would allow the British to claim equal credit for the Allied victory in Europe in spite of the fact that the British would never furnish more than 15 divisions while the Americans would eventually supply 60 divisions.

Operation Market-Garden was the British plan to get across the Rhine at Arnhem and drive into Germany, bypassing the Siegfried Line to the north. One British airborne division, two American airborne divisions, and one Polish airborne brigade participated in Operation Market-Garden. Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin's U.S. 82nd Airborne Division fought in Holland during Operation Market-Garden with a second U.S. Airborne Division, the 101st. Making sure he got everything he could out of the excellent airborne infantry, Montgomery transferred the U.S. airborne divisions to his XXX Corps and kept them fighting as ordinary infantry for almost two months after Market-Garden ended. When it came to reporting the event back in England and the United States, however, the two American divisions simply disappeared and Market-Garden was reported as an entirely British operation.

With tacit approval from Washington, Eisenhower did what he could to support British efforts. As long as he did not create political problems for Roosevelt's government in Washington, Eisenhower was clearly given permission to do whatever he wished with the United States Army in Europe. Indeed, many American officers and even a few British officers thought Eisenhower had gone too far in his support of the British. Eisenhower did protest Montgomery's behavior (his slowness at Caen) in Normandy to both Churchill and Alan Brooke, but to no avail.

Most of Eisenhower's efforts to aid the British, his willingness to side with the British

point of view, and the results of his Allied cooperation have been neatly scrubbed from the pages of most United States Army historical records. According to most accounts, Eisenhower and Montgomery vehemently disagreed about Allied strategy. They disagreed about the correct route to take into Germany and whether to employ a single thrust or broad-front strategy. Although their discussions sometimes became heated, these disagreements were always on the merits of sound strategy. This simply was not true. These inter-Allied arguments clearly display the heavy hand of British politics and the tainted strategy they created.

Eisenhower was committed to the Anglo-

Dead German soldiers and destroyed trucks and armored vehicles litter the countryside of northern France after an air attack by Allied fighter bombers near the towns of Falaise and Argentan. General Montgomery was instrumental in issuing an ill-conceived order for American troops to halt before much of the German Seventh Army was encircled in the Falaise Pocket. As a result, approximately 200,000 Germans escaped the trap to fight another day.

American alliance; Montgomery was not. Eisenhower was selected for his job because he was the most politically savvy U.S. general. Montgomery was selected for his job because he was an impossible subordinate. The result was a hodgepodge of politically motivated strategic decisions based primarily on the level of political pressure emanating from London.

Ralph Ingersoll, an aide to Bradley during the war, wrote *Top Secret* in 1946. He was bitterly critical of Eisenhower's performance as Supreme Allied Commander. Ingersoll believed that in August 1944 the Allies missed a great opportunity for winning the war by Christmas. In light of Eisenhower's great success within the alliance and the overtly political nature of his job, Ingersoll's criticism is probably overstated. Ingersoll also mentioned the British fondness for playing politics with military strategy.

General Albert C. Wedemeyer began the war working for the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall. On an information gathering tour for his boss in North Africa, he noted that many American officers believed Eisenhower was leaning too far in favor of the British in most inter-Allied decisions. There was also an experience factor involved; Eisenhower was ostensibly commanding British officers in North Africa who had far more command experience than he did. It would have been appropriate for an inexperienced American officer to take advice from those more experienced members of the Allied team. Still, the tone of General Wedemeyer's criticism implies more than Eisenhower's simple preference for the British side of an argument and is a cause for concern.

Colonel William Whipple, Jr., was a West Point graduate, an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a Rhodes Scholar. During the war in Europe, he served on Eisenhower's SHAEF staff in the G4 division of the Logistical Planning Branch. His unpublished memoirs confirm what Ralph Ingersoll, Albert C. Wedemeyer, George S. Patton, Jr., and Omar N. Bradley have written about General Eisenhower's longstanding preference for taking the British side of the argument. That the British side of the argument was often influenced by political goals and ignored sound military strategy seems not to have greatly concerned Eisenhower.

According to Colonel Whipple, SHAEF's planning staff was heavily weighted in favor of the British. The SHAEF Planning staff and the Air, Naval, and Intelligence staffs were all headed by British officers. Whipple acknowledges that the British officers at SHAEF "were extremely well qualified, generally outclassing the Americans.... Besides being bright, the British officers were subtle and seemed to work as a team. In contrast, the Americans pretty much did as they pleased individually, and many of them seemed unaware of the intriguing (politicizing) that was afoot."

Since the Americans were not following any political agenda, they were usually free to act individually, to decide each case on its own merits in determining the correct Allied strategy for any given course of action. The Americans, with few political ties in Europe, rarely had to separate political goals from strategic options.

Since they had political ties to nearly every country in Europe, the British usually had a political agenda for most Allied strategic options. All members of their team had been made aware of those options. Therefore, British decisions were not based solely on the correct strategy but on the best strategy consistent with previously defined British political and economic goals.

British negotiators acted as a team and came to Allied meetings fully prepared with a plan of action; the Americans acted individually and were often caught unaware by British political motives. British staff officers had become quite expert at manipulating critical information in their staff reports to reflect the preferred British political point of view. They were not shy about providing erroneous and misleading information to get their way in an argument. Eventually the Americans caught on. One example of exposed British duplicity was the invasion of Southern France (Anvil-Dragoon), which the British bitterly opposed. They produced a mountain of staff work for Prime Minister Churchill hoping to prove to the Americans that the operation would never succeed.

After the operation had succeeded brilliantly, the Americans "published the British studies as a book called *The Castigation of Anvil*. It was used in staff officer training as a collection of planning howlers." By 1944, the Americans had figured out what the British were doing and how they manipulated information for their own political purposes. The British knew that

Victorious troops of the Soviet Red Army ride through the streets of Bucharest, Romania, as the capital city falls in the spring of 1945. The country had been an Axis partner under the rule of dictator Marshal Ion Antonescu. Soon after World War II ended, the communist faction in Romania solidified its power base with Soviet backing. Failed British diplomacy prior to the outbreak of World War II contributed directly to half a century of postwar communist domination of Eastern Europe.

the Americans were aware of their crafty schemes. Yet in Allied strategy sessions those strange kabuki dances continued right up to the end of the war.

Finally, in late March 1945, even the long-suffering Eisenhower had reached the end of his patience with Montgomery. It is difficult to say exactly what changed his mind. It may have been the vacation he and Bradley took together in early March. Bradley undoubtedly seized the opportunity to present the American side of the argument for a U.S.-led drive into Germany.

Whatever the cause, by the end of March Eisenhower had clearly reached the limits of his patience with the little British field marshal. In a 1963 interview with writer Cornelius Ryan, Eisenhower said, "Yeah. Well, I'll tell you—what happened was—he [Montgomery] got so damned personal to make sure that the Americans, and me in particular, had no credit, had nothing to do with this war, that I just stopped communicating with him…. All I said is I am just not interested in keeping up communication with a man that just can't talk the truth, that's all, so I just don't do it."

After Montgomery had gotten his army across the Rhine, Eisenhower was determined to ignore Berlin and change the thrust of the Allied advance into Germany. Despite British wishes, Eisenhower would ignore both Berlin in the north and Prague in the south and strengthen Bradley's 12th U.S. Army Group for the main Allied drive through the center of Germany.

Eisenhower's letter of March 28, 1945, therefore took General William Simpson's Ninth U.S. Army away from Field Marshal Montgomery and gave it back to Bradley. Prime Minister Churchill immediately howled in protest. He also argued that this "would leave [Montgomery's] 21st Army Group too weak to carry out offensive action … and relegates His Majesty's Forces to an unexpected restricted sphere." This was true, but wholly irrelevant.

It was never Eisenhower's job to see that the British Army remained strong enough to conduct sustained offensive operations. That was Churchill's and Brooke's job. The fact that the Americans had finally decided to sacrifice the lives of their soldiers under a United States commander and not for what U.S. General Mark Clark once called "the British Empire machine" must have come as a rude shock to Churchill and his government. The American general Churchill had personally selected to assist the Second British Army in its victorious drive to Berlin had failed them at the critical moment. British protests finally died down after Eisenhower's plan for the final drive into Germany received unanimous support from both Marshall and the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington.

Two days after the war in Europe ended, on May 10, 1945, Eisenhower summoned his senior generals for a luncheon meeting at his headquarters in Reims, France. General Patton made the following notes in his diary, "Lunched with the Supreme Commander and four Army Commanders and their air officers. After lunch General Eisenhower talked to us very confidentially on the necessity for solidarity in the event that any of us are called before a Congressional Committee. He then made a speech … on cooperation with the British, Russians and the Chinese, but particularly with the British. It is my opinion that this talking cooperation is for the purpose of covering up probable criticism of strategic blunders which he unquestionably committed during the campaign. Whether or not these were his own or due to too much cooperation with the British, I don't know. I am inclined to think that he over-cooperated."

George Patton was right, but the historical discussion of those strategic blunders has been muted by the great Allied victory. Huge celebrations followed the Allied victory in Europe.

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Flak Was Our WORST ENEMY

WILBUR "BIB" BOWERS FLEW BOMBING MISSIONS WITH THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE AND WITNESSED AERIAL COMBAT AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS FIRSTHAND.

BY RICHARD A. BERANTY

A German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter lurks like a vulture behind a U.S. Eighth Air Force Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber as an air battle rages in the skies above Schweinfurt, Germany, during a raid on a key ball bearing manufacturing facility. Painting by artist Robert Taylor.

FOR 33 MONTHS beginning in 1942, the U.S. Eighth Air Force and its precision daylight bombing strikes against German targets in Europe tried to pound the Third Reich into submission.

Attacking the enemy's transportation networks, arms factories, cities, fuel depots, ball bearing plants, and power stations with Consolidated B-24 Liberator and Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers, the air assault seriously crippled Germany's industrial capabilities, making the job for Allied ground forces considerably easier when the country was finally overrun and the Nazis surrendered in May 1945.

But the air effort came with a staggering cost to the Americans who flew those missions. German fighter planes such as the Messerschmitt Me-109 and Focke-Wulf Fw-190, along with the ever present nemesis called flak, killed some 20,000 airmen, wounded another 9,300, and resulted in 26,000 being taken prisoners of war. As one historian noted, "pinpoint daylight bombing was a high-stakes crapshoot," but it did alter the course of the war against Germany.

Unlike their infantry counterparts, Allied airmen experienced a somewhat normal existence once they returned from a flight: hot food, showers, and a bed to sleep in. On a mission, however, they faced the sobering reality that death could come at any moment, five miles above the ground where temperatures reach 40 degrees below zero Farenheit. It was akin to a throw of the dice whether they would return to base safely or spiral earthward because a wing or an engine had been blown to pieces.

Wilbur M. "Bib" Bowers of Kittanning, Pennsylvania, took part in the air campaign over Europe with the Eighth Air Force. As a 19-year-old tail gunner, he flew 30 missions with the 306th Bombardment Group, 368th Bomb Squadron in a B-17. With his flights originating out of southeastern England, Bowers would become an inadvertent witness to history, seeing firsthand the start of the D-Day invasion, taking part in the controversial fire bombing of the ancient city of Dresden, and feeling the effects of Hitler's vengeance weapons, the V-1 buzz bomb and V-2 ballistic missile. But his most frightening memories of the war are those involving flak, the indiscriminate metal shrapnel that flew outward in all directions from exploding shells the enemy sent skyward against the Allied air armadas.

"Flak was the worst thing in the world," Bowers says. "We faced it on every flight. Once it started, all you could see was this black stuff. Of course, that black stuff has been expanded. What gets you are the ones that have a red dot in the middle. That's where the explosion takes place. You can see the red and then it just turns to gunpowder. It was scary because you knew the flak was there and you knew you had to fly through it. And the Germans knew we were going to fly through it, too. They knew we weren't going to change air speed, and they knew we weren't going to change altitude. So they would get their shells up there at the right height and the right time, and you just had to fly through it. There was no way we could turn back. We never took evasive action. Once we started the bomb run and the pilot turned the plane over to the bombardier, he was flying the plane. And in the history of the Eighth Air Force, no one ever turned back from a mission because of enemy fire. As far as I was concerned, flak

Both: Bowers Family Photo

ABOVE: Wilbur "Bib" Bowers survived 30 missions in a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber during World War II. The average service expectancy of an American bomber crewman was significantly shorter. Bowers is shown in this photograph in the tail gunner position aboard a B-17. The small barrel protruding in front is the sight. The actual twin .50-caliber machine guns were positioned below him. BELOW: The crew of the Boeing B-17 bomber nicknamed *Begin the Beguine* posed for this photograph with its aircraft in the background shortly after arriving in England. Bib Bowers is kneeling second from right.

was worse than fighters."

Bowers' ride through the skies over Europe began shortly after America entered its second year of the war. Giving up a scholarship to play football at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, he ended his deferment after one semester of college and was drafted in the spring of 1943. He was accepted into the Army Air Corps and volunteered for gunnery school.

"They wouldn't draft you as a gunner," Bowers says. "It was voluntary." His decision was made in part during basic training in Florida after watching an Army propaganda film starring actor Burgess Meredith, whose plane is shot down by a Japanese Zero fighter. In what Bowers laughingly describes as Hollywood imagination, Meredith grabs a .50-caliber machine gun, takes aim at the strafing plane, and shoots it out of the sky.

To be part of a bomber crew during World War II, the Army Air Corps required men to undergo three levels of specialized training: airplane mechanic school in Gulf Port, Mississippi, gunnery school in Kingman, Arizona, and overseas training in Ardmore, Oklahoma. This last level of training consisted of night flights, day flights, and practice bomb runs, training that forged each crew into a cohesive 10-man unit. They were then sent to Kansas to be assigned a bomber and fly it to England.

"Once we started overseas training in Ardmore, we were a crew for the rest of the war," Bowers explains. "When we got to Kansas a terrible storm broke out. It lasted for days. Planes couldn't go, and more crews kept coming in and there was no place for them. So they put us on a troop train and sent us to the East Coast."

Along with a host of others, Bowers' crew left for England on May 10, 1944, arriving there seven days later aboard the troopship *Andes*.

"It was an ocean liner before the war and it was pretty speedy, so we went over alone," Bowers says. "We sailed north and went across the North Atlantic. They told us that as fast as that ship was, we could probably outrun any submarine. So we went over without an escort or convoy."

Once in England, which was now teeming with Americans preparatory to the Allied invasion of Europe, bomber crews were distributed to various bases around the country and assigned to squadrons. Bowers was a staff sergeant.

"When we went in the service, we made private first class real quick," he explains. "Then we made corporal in gunnery school. When we finished gunnery school, we were sergeants. When we arrived overseas, we made staff sergeant. All the gunners on a B-17 were staff sergeants except for the upper turret gunner, who was a tech sergeant."

His crew was ordered to an air base near the small town of Bedford, just north of London. On the way there, Bowers witnessed the most pivotal event of the war. The date was June 5, 1944.

"As we were going down to Bedford on the train, we saw all of these C-47s going over us pulling gliders. The sky was full of them! We thought, 'Holy hell! What a helluva training mission!' When we arrived at the base we were assigned to our barracks. The next morning a mater sergeant came in about 5 o'clock. He blew his whistle and yelled, 'D-Day! D-Day!' We had no idea at first what he meant. It was the first time we ever heard of D-Day. But then it finally dawned on us what the hell he was talking about. We thought it was a training mission when we saw C-47s pulling those gliders. It was actually the D-Day invasion."

A short while later, the crew was assigned to

fly *Begin, the Beguine,* a name given to the Flying Fortress by its former crew.

"*Begin, the Beguine* was the name of a song," Bowers says. "It was a very popular song at the time. They used to play it a lot. It was quite a dance tune. Why its first crew named it that, why they picked it, I'm not too sure. And what happened to that crew? They must have finished up because the plane didn't get shot down. They got their 25 missions."

The 25-mission quota, which was enough to qualify an airman for tour completion, was altered in 1944. The appalling number of lost planes and crews dictated a command directive, and the 25 was upped to 30. Later in the war, it was increased to 35. The disappointment the airmen felt, of almost attaining their mission quota and seeing it evaporate before their eyes, was disheartening to say the least.

"When they raised the requirement to 30, we all thought, 'Damn,'" Bowers says. "At the time they changed it, we were well on our way to reaching 25 missions. Also, a strange pattern seemed to develop. Either you got shot down on your first mission or on your last. So it was disappointing in that respect."

Considering the fact that an airman did not know beforehand on which days he would fly, his anxiety level was doubly increased. Down time might be three days, a week, or even months. When bad weather grounded Allied planes during Germany's last offensive in the West through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium in December 1944, planes from the 368th Bomb Squadron did not fly for more than two months—from November 13, 1944, to January 20, 1945.

"You never knew when you were going to fly until someone woke you up, announced captain so-and-so's crew, and called your name. You'd answer, and then you knew you were flying," Bowers remembers. "So every night when we went to sleep, we thought about flying the next day, but we never knew until that day. And it's a strange thing. You didn't necessarily want to fly because you could get killed. On the other hand, if you did go you could get your flights in and be able to go home."

"Sometimes, when we weren't flying, they would send us to airplane recognition school," he continues. "I also played for the base football team. We played a regular schedule. If I didn't happen to be flying that day, we might have a game. Other times they would give us leave, a three-day pass, then we knew that for three days we could go to London or into Bedford. A lot of times we didn't go into town. On base were two Quonset huts set up in the shape of a T. One Quonset hut was a bar heated by three 55-gallon drums. The other hut held a library and recreation area for NCOs. Everything we needed was right there. But otherwise, every night we went to sleep, and when the sergeant blew that whistle, we woke up. If he called your name, you flew. And if he didn't call your name, you went back to sleep."

When airmen did find their way into Bedford, the pubs were a common gathering place. Although most men were not used to the warm beer served there, Bowers says with a laugh that it was potent.

"It would do the job," he says.

London, on the other hand, despite its allure, was a more dangerous place to visit than small-town Bedford because of Hitler's obsession with leveling the British capital. Bowers says he was in London when he experienced the terror of Germany's V-1 flying bomb and its V-2 rocket.

National Archives

United States Army Air Forces personnel replace the British Union Jack with the U.S. Stars and Stripes after taking over the former Royal Air Force base at Bedford, England, in 1942. Bib Bowers arrived in Bedford in 1944 to begin his tour of 30 bombing missions over Nazi-occupied Europe.

Called a "buzz bomb" by the British because of its distinctive noise, the V-1 was a pilotless craft comparable to today's cruise missile. It was loaded with explosives and traveled through the air at 400 miles per hour. During the war, approximately 8,000 were sent toward London. Since a V-1 flight was both visible and audible, antiaircraft crews and RAF fighter pilots became somewhat proficient at knocking them out of the sky, but an estimated 2,400 did reach their targets. Although they killed some 6,000 Londoners and wounded another 40,000, they did not wreak the havoc or cause the panic that Hitler hoped they would. Seeing one in flight remains fixed in Bowers' memory.

"I was at the Red Cross Building in London. It was morning, and I was shaving. I had an outside window, and I looked out and there it was. I could see it! It made this strange 'putt, putt, putt' noise and then it quit. Well, when they quit they either drop straight down or they glide down. I'm looking at this thing and it quit, and it was gliding. Fortunately, it went on past us and hit somewhere else."

The V-2 rocket, however, was quite a different weapon. The forerunner of today's long-range ballistic missile, it was fueled by liquid oxygen which allowed it to fly at extremely high altitude. Since there was no way to defend against it, the V-2 was a much more menacing weapon to Londoners than the V-1. At 46 feet long and weighing 14 tons (one ton of which was a high-explosive warhead), the V-2 smashed into its target from 60 miles high and hit the ground at over four times the speed of sound. Although they destroyed hundreds of buildings and caused thousands of casualties, they did not alter the course of the war either. Feeling its impact left a lasting impression on Bowers.

"I happened to be in London another time when a V-2 hit. You can't hear or see anything. Again I was going into the Red Cross, which was a rather large building, and I had just gotten hold of the door when a V-2 hit. Because the rocket was so large, the whole building shook. And I mean it shook! I'm not too sure how far away it hit, it could've been quite a ways away. So London," he laughs, "wasn't the best place to go for leave."

Aside from London, a far deadlier place for men of the Eighth Air Force was in the air on a 10-hour mission deep inside enemy territory.

To be a gunner on a B-17, to be awakened with a blow of a whistle and have your name called, meant that a long and dangerous day was in store.

The first thing a gunner did was head to the mess hall for breakfast. A typical meal, Bowers says, was pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, and coffee. It was followed by a morning briefing; pilots had their own, as did navigators, bombardiers, radiomen, and gunners.

"We would assemble in a room. There was a drape over a map and an officer would pull off the drape. On the map was a red tape connected to the target for the day. The longer the tape, the longer the mission. He explained the type of flak guns we could expect, the kind of fighters, the weather, what we were going to bomb and why, the takeoff time and ETA to bomb target."

Following this briefing, a gunner assembled his gear. Since the planes were not pressurized and flew at such high altitudes, airmen wore electrically heated suits because of the sub-zero temperatures.

"Everybody had their own bag, which held our wool socks, underwear, and a heated electrical suit," Bowers says. "Our shoes would hook to the legs. Everything on this suit hooked together, even the gloves, and we plugged it into an outlet on the plane. When we flew at high altitudes, you couldn't take your gloves off to touch the guns because your hands would stick to them. We always took along K-rations or C-rations on missions, but we couldn't eat them until we dropped down low enough and they thawed out."

Also in the airman's bag were a parachute, parachute harness, flak helmet, life preserver, goggles, throat microphone, oxygen mask, and a .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol. It also held an escape kit that contained a silk scarf imprinted with a map of the plane's destination, money that corresponded to the country the plane flew over, and an escape picture to aid friendly forces that forged identification papers in case the plane was shot down and the airman survived.

"The escape picture was similar to those you'd have taken at an arcade booth; the same size," he says. "They gave us a shirt, tie, and coat and took our picture. The Underground in France could manufacture a lot of fake documents, but they didn't have the ability to take a picture. So we carried this escape picture in case we were shot down."

For obvious reasons the flak helmet was a valuable asset to airmen, but often the men found another use for it.

"I puked in it more than once," Bowers says. "Of course up there it froze. That was okay. But when you came down and landed, that stuff thawed out. Then it was bad. When you're in the tail, it's going up and down, up and down. It's not the smoothest spot to be in because you're right at the end of that damn plane and every time there's a maneuver or turbulence you feel it pretty quick."

With his gear assembled, a gunner's next stop was the weapons tent. Bowers says the working parts of a gun were never left on the plane after a mission because they had to be cleaned and serviced. For every person in the air, it took seven on the ground to support him. Maintenance of the bombers was a big challenge.

"The mounts were all still in the plane," he explains, "but the guts were in the armament tent. We didn't have to clean them or anything, the armorer took care of that. We would get our guns, put them together into the mounts, set the head space and put the back plate on."

Cartridges for his twin .50-caliber Browning machine guns were housed in two plywood boxes located on both sides of him on the floor of the plane. For safety purposes, guns were not armed until the plane was airborne.

"Once we were in the air, the pilot would say, 'Okay, test your guns,' and we would fire five or six rounds."

The position of guns on a B-17 and the flying formation itself were designed to provide the maximum amount of firepower possible. Ten men manned the plane: pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, upper turret gunner, radioman, ball turret gunner, two waist gunners, and a tail gunner. This made a total of 13 manned machine guns (three were located in the nose of the plane where the navigator and bombardier sat).

Bowers explains that four B-17s routinely flew in a box formation. The lead plane was first. Just to the rear and underneath was another bomber. This was called "flying in the hole." There was another bomber situated high right (the right wing man) and another low left (the left wing man). This formation was repeated for eight other bombers. So in a group, there were three sets of four bombers. Each group was stacked high, lead, and low. And one group was joined by many others on a typical raid. Toward war's end, it wasn't unusual to have 1,000 bombers flying missions into Germany.

"On some raids there were bombers as far as I could see, and I could see far being in the tail and being with the lead plane," he says. "When we flew a box formation, we were so tight that it really discouraged fighters from hitting us. They really kept away. The tighter the box, the better our fighter protection. And the tighter the formation, the more concentrated our firepower. We flew a very tight formation. You could almost make out the people in the other planes. That's how close we flew."

In addition to their devastating firepower, some B-17s were equipped with the Norden bombsight, a top secret invention of the time that enabled a plane, as some put it, "to drop a bomb inside a pickle barrel." *Begin, the Beguine* was equipped with one.

"We were the lead crew, and the lead plane always had a Norden bombsight," Bowers explains. "The right wing man had a Norden bombsight, and the other planes may not have had any bombsight at all. They didn't have enough for every plane. When the lead plane opened up its bomb bay doors, all the other 11 planes in the formation did the same. When the lead plane dropped its bombs, all the others dropped their bombs. And if the lead plane got shot down, the right wing man would move in and lead. That's why we'd have two planes with bombsights."

As the air war over Europe progressed and tactics were fine tuned, a directive was issued reducing the number of men on a B-17 from 10 to nine. This was mainly due to the box formation. The close proximity of one bomber to another and the possibility of the inside waist gunner (called waist gunner mechanic) hitting another bomber with his bullets was considered too dangerous. To avoid this, the waist gunner mechanics were taken off and put into a pool where they were used to form new crews to replace those that were lost.

"We had two waist gunners: waist gunner mechanic and waist gunner armor. I happened to be the waist gunner mechanic on our crew and I was taken off. So I was off for a few raids, and then our tail gunner quit. He wouldn't fly anymore. He decided that he had it and wouldn't fly.

"If you wanted out," Bowers continues, "you could go to the infirmary, see the doctors, talk to them and tell them that you couldn't take it anymore. That would be it. They'd move them somewhere, preferably off the base. So our tail gunner quit us. Well, I didn't want to be flying with a lot of strange crews. I wanted back on the crew because I knew all the guys and I knew the pilot. We were the lead crew, and the lead crew had to be above average. We all got along great, even though we didn't associate with each other after a raid. When we came down from a mission, the officers would go that way and we'd go this way. We'd never see them again. But when the mission would start, we'd all be back together, and we got along fine. We never had a bad word. We just didn't associate

National Archives

During a heavy raid on Magdeburg, Germany, in September 1944, Boeing B-17 bombers of the U.S. Eighth Air Force drop their sticks of bombs almost simultaneously as they brave flak and enemy fighters to remain on course for an accurate bomb drop. Magdeburg and other major German cities were well protected by the Luftwaffe in the air and by flak units on the ground.

with each other like some of the other crews did. They would go to London together, and they were tight. But we never did that. It wasn't because we didn't get along; we got along great when we were flying.

"So I didn't want to be off that one because it was a good crew. I went to the captain and I said, 'I'll fly the tail.' He said, 'You'll fly back there?' I said, 'If it means I get back on the crew, yes.' So he went to headquarters and talked to them. He came back and said, 'Look, if you want to fly the tail, it's yours. You're back on the crew.'"

Flying in a lead bomber on every mission that he flew, Bowers experienced his first raid into enemy territory on June 11, 1944, five days after the Normandy landings. His log shows that *Begin, the Beguine*'s first few missions were against targets just across the English Channel, including the Pas de Calais, where many German officers, Hitler included, thought the cross-Channel invasion would take place.

"A lot of our earlier raids were on submarine pens on the coast of France," he says. "We called them milk runs. We loved those. We were over to France and back in a matter of hours."

Little damage was done to the German sub bases despite a B-17's potent short-run maximum bomb load of 12,800 pounds (a 4,000-pound load was typical for the longer raids into Germany). These missions proved mostly ineffective because of the reinforced roofs covering the submarine pens, some of which were constructed with 12 feet or more of concrete. One early mission on which Bowers flew that did gain a lot of notoriety was against St. Lo in Normandy. Three days prior to the Allied breakout in July, the Eighth Air Force was ordered to carpet bomb the German garrison at St. Lo, so on July 24 three waves of bombers set out to do just that.

Poor visibility caused the attack to be canceled, but not in time for the planes to be called back. The first wave of 500 heavy bombers did not drop its bombs because of bad weather. Of the second wave, 35 planes dropped ordnance but only after three passes were made to identify the target. In the third wave, 300 bombers released 135 tons of fragmentation bombs and 550 tons of high explosives. Not only were St. Lo and the German garrison decimated, but 25 American ground troopers were killed and 131 wounded. As a result, General Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered that Allied bombers would no longer be used for close ground support. They never were again.

"We went in support of ground forces which we had never done before," Bowers explains. "Engineers had put out cloth markers on the ground in front of the troops. When we came over at low altitude, we saw those markers and knew where to bomb. The night before, though, the Germans moved the markers back toward the American lines, and some of the bombs fell short and hit our troops. That was one of the reasons why it happened. But then another thing, some guys just bombed short."

Another notorious raid that Bowers flew was the bombing of Dresden in the final months of the air war. Located 100 miles south of Berlin, the city ranked near the bottom of the Allied hit list since it held no military significance. But at the time, it was the largest German city to have escaped full-scale bombing, and with the Big Three soon to meet at Yalta, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wanted to impress upon Soviet Premier Josef Stalin that no target was off limits.

Known as both a cultural center and historical city because of its opera house, parks, and museums, Dresden boasted buildings that dated to the 13th century. It offered Allied bombers no opposition because the city's antiaircraft batteries had been moved to the Eastern Front weeks before and fuel shortages had grounded German fighters.

With perfect visibility, two British raids and one by the Americans comprised of planes armed with incendiary bombs attacked Dresden on February 13-14, 1945, burning the city and thousands of its war-weary residents. Ironically, it was Ash Wednesday. The resulting firestorm touched off by the incendiaries generated winds of tornado force, claiming an estimated 35,000 lives. As a result, Dresden burned for a week. To some it was terror bombing; to others it was punishment long overdue. To Bowers it was just another mission in his quest to get home.

"We carried fire bombs that day," he says. "We all knew it. All you had to do was look in the bomb bay. There were huge racks of them. The bombs were big and round and in bundles. When they dropped they would open up, spin out, and all these little ones would come flying out."

The Dresden raid was the last that Bowers

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Photographed in 1943, this image of a new Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber presents an excellent view of the four-engine aircraft that was instrumental in prosecuting the air war against Nazi Germany. The tail gunner's position is visible at lower left.

would fly with his crew on *Begin, the Beguine*. The other members had flown their required 30 missions, but he was short four. Although the mission total by that time had been raised to 35, Bowers says that 30 missions still qualified an airman for tour completion if his crew had flown lead.

"If you were flying lead, or most of your flights were lead, you only had to fly 30 missions. So when my crew finished up, they had done their 30, but I was still short four missions. Well, they were very nice about it at headquarters. Since I had all these leads, the last four raids that I flew with different crews I always flew with the lead plane, so I was able to get in my leads and I only had to fly 30 missions. It was pretty nice of them to do that."

It was with one of these new crews, one of the last missions that Bowers flew, that he registered his only kill of the war.

"I saw these fighters. Of course I called up right away and alerted the crew: 'Unidentified aircraft coming in at 7 o'clock low.' So I'm sitting back there in the tail watching them come in and the pilot said, 'Keep your eye on them.' At first I wasn't too sure whether they were our own P-47s coming at me, because a Focke-Wulf 190 and a P-47 look a helluva lot alike. They both have a round engine. But pretty soon I saw these red spots coming out of the wings. I yelled 'Bandits!' to alert the rest of the crew. One of the fighters was flying a little farther out than the others, and when he got within range I started firing. I could hear the guys of the crew on my headset yell, 'Keep firing! Keep firing! You're getting hits! Your getting hits! Keep firing!' So this one plane burst into flames. It was a Focke-Wulf 190, and it was burning just like a torch. It was completely engulfed, just about ready to blow up. It went right by us, and I could look into the cockpit. That's how close it was."

Bowers says he nearly emptied his two boxes of shells in the engagement.

"I was so busy at the time that I didn't even think of being scared," he explains. "It was an automatic thing. He's shooting at me and I'm shooting at him. You're concentrating and so damn busy on what you're doing that you're not even thinking about being scared. After we landed, instead of going to be debriefed, for some reason I went straight to the mess hall. Here, someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'You've got to get over to debriefing.' So I went and they asked what happened, and I explained the whole thing to them, and they said, 'We're going to give you half a kill because when that plane went past you, a P-51 picked it up and blew it up.' So I ended up with half of a Focke-Wulf 190."

At some point prior to this action, Bowers learned that his good friend Jimmy Burns of Yatesboro, Pennsylvania, had been lost over Europe. The two had undergone training together, and Burns had served as best man in Bowers' wedding following gunnery school. Although Bowers heard that his friend's plane had been shot down, it was not until after the war that he learned Burns had died. Downed personnel were carried as missing for at least one year, and it was not until 1946 when the War Department administratively labeled these men FOD, or Finding of Death under Public Law 490, following an investigation of each case.

"It was one of his last missions," recalls Bowers. "His plane was shot down over the Netherlands. The whole crew was lost. He wrote to my wife one time and told her he was going to beat me home, that he was ahead of me in missions. He and I would write to each other, and I pretty much knew how many flights he had and he knew how many I had. He was ahead of me because I was flying leads and he wasn't, so he was flying more often."

The fate of U.S. airmen such as Burns was a more common occurrence on the 10-hour deep penetration raids into Germany. It was on one such flight to Frankfurt on August 15, 1944, his 12th of the war, that Bowers saw such devastation unleashed on American bombers that it sickens him to describe it.

"On that particular mission we were flying at a really high altitude, and there was another group of bombers below us returning from a raid. I looked down and saw this group of Me-109s, there must have been six or seven of them, coming in at 6 o'clock and lined up in a straight line, like the line on a football team. They went right through that formation, and B-17s were catching on fire and going down. So these fighters go through—I never saw them do this before—and they lined up again. They got ahead of the bombers and made a line again, like the line of a football team, and went back through this formation again. But this time they went in from 12 o'clock. They hit them first from 6 o'clock, went out and reformed, and went right through them again at 12 o'clock. I forget how many planes I saw go down, something like 10, which would probably be 90 men, or if they were flying 10-man crews, it would have been 100 guys. That was the worst thing I ever saw on a mission. And it all happened so fast."

Speed is essential in aerial combat. The top speed of a Focke-Wulf Fw-190 was 408 miles per hour at high altitude. The top speed of a B-17 was 303 miles per hour at high altitude. But these air speeds paled in comparison to that of a Messerschmitt Me-262, the war's first operational jet aircraft, whose top speed was 540 miles per hour. When the plane was first developed and put into production, German designers knew they had an aircraft that could alter the war. And it might have, but Hitler ordered it redesigned as a bomber, then reversed himself so late that only a handful operated in the closing months of the war. To airmen on a B-17 flying at cruising speed and seeing one pass by, it seemed as though they were standing still.

"I saw one of the first ones," Bowers says. "We were going in on a raid and our pilot said, 'Here it comes.' And I can remember looking to my left. I looked over and … it was gone. But it wasn't firing at us. I think it was giving anti-aircraft gunners our air speed and our altitude so they could adjust their guns. He didn't fire at us, but he went through the formation like nothing. That was the first time I had ever seen one, and the last. Thank God they didn't have too many of those."

Bowers was never injured during the war, although *Begin, the Beguine* did receive damage from flak at different times. He says maintenance crews never failed to have the plane ready to fly when it was assigned a mission. It was during a raid over Merckwiller, France, on August 3, 1944, when flak not only ripped a

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healthy hole in the plane but seriously injured one of its crew.

"Our radioman, Urdolph, got hit. Flak took his shoulder off. It came right through the skin of the plane, hit him, tore his shoulder off, blew him the whole way across the radio room, and knocked him up against the other side of the room. So our waist gunner was taking care of him. He put him down in the radio room and gave him a shot of morphine and got him going. He called back to me and said, 'Bib, how about coming up and taking over. I'm getting sick.' So I went up and took care of Urdolph while the waist gunner went back to the tail. I stayed with him, kept his oxygen mask on, and kept him from bleeding to death, and we were just going in on the target. When we got back to base, the medics came out and took him. They told both of us that we'd saved his life. One said, 'If it hadn't been for you two, he would have died.'"

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This B-17, nicknamed *Mizpah,* took a direct hit from German flak during a raid in July 1944. The enemy shell smashed the bomber's nose section and killed two crewmen instantly. The pilot of the stricken bomber was able to hold the plane level long enough for the remaining crewmen to bail out. The plane crashed in Hungary and the survivors were captured. LEFT: This startling photograph is indicative of the ferocity of the air war over Europe in World War II and of the price paid by Allied bomber crews during raids on military targets. On April 8, 1945, this B-17, nicknamed *Wee-Willie,* lost a wing to flak above Stendal, Germany. Two crewmen survived the plane's crash, and eight others were killed.

When bombers returned from a raid, the crews were debriefed so intelligence officers could glean any noteworthy information such as what kind of fighters they encountered and whether an enemy plane was shot down.

"That had to be confirmed," Bowers says of a kill. "Somebody else had to see you do it."

Intelligence was also interested in what airmen might have seen happen to Allied planes.

"They wanted to know where a plane got hit, how many fighters there were, how many chutes you saw going out and how many chutes you saw going down. Sometimes when a plane went down, you would see parachutes and sometimes you didn't. Once the plane starts a dive, people inside of it can't move. It's centrifugal force. You're stuck wherever you are, and you can't move. If you're going to bail out, you've got to get out real quick."

"They always had a nice thing for us when we were finished being debriefed," he continues. "We went to the mess hall afterward, which was a combat mess, meaning nobody was allowed in there but combat men. Even the guys serving the meals were combat. When we were done eating and going out, we gave them our name, and they poured a big double-header of whiskey. You would pop it down, they would check your name off, then you would head back to the barracks."

Bowers reached his 30-mission quota in February 1945. He left England on April 2 aboard a hospital ship in a convoy.

"Being a staff sergeant, I was kind of a guard," he explains. "They had some prisoners on the boat, and I had to guard them. Two days out of England, German subs attacked. Our ship wasn't hit, but some in the convoy were. I couldn't tell you how many were hit or how bad because at that time I was so damn seasick I couldn't even see."

The ships arrived in New York harbor on April 12, the day President Roosevelt died.

"His death meant a lot to us. He was our leader, the whole way through the Depression, the whole way through the war," says Bowers. "It was a pretty dramatic moment, it really was. The war wasn't over yet. We were still fighting and then we lose our leader."

Back on U.S. soil, Bowers was given leave and ultimately ordered to Miami.

"In the meantime, they were processing us," he says. "I didn't know whether I would have to go back and train and go to the Pacific. Plus, the war in Europe was still on. So I signed up for Instrument Specialist School. I figured I'd go that route and try it, so I signed up. Well, we were down in Miami Beach and the war in Germany ended. I had enough points to get out, so I thought, 'Great! I'm going to get out!' I went down to see them and they said, 'Oh, no. You can't get out because you already signed up for this school and you've got to go through this school.'"

Bowers attended and graduated Instrument Specialist School at the University of Illinois in

Continued on page 76

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Palermo CAPTURED


1

Axis civilians cheered the soldiers of Patton's Seventh Army as they rolled into the largest enemy city captured up to that time.

WHEN THE SICILIAN PORT city of Palermo fell to Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Seventh Army on July 22, 1943, his soldiers were surprised by their reception. Women dressed in their finest clothes kissed, hugged, and shook the GI's hands. Jeeps, trucks, and tanks came under showers of flowers, almonds, apples, and lemons. Some people ran forward to offer melons, others offered advice on where mines and booby traps were hidden in Palermo harbor.


2

The infantrymen of the 3rd Infantry Division, tankers of the 2nd Armored Division, and paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division enjoyed the cheering crowds. In some places policemen had to restrain the enthusiastic populace. Reporter Alexander Clifford remembered being swarmed by happy civilians. "Our hands were wrung until they were limp and sore," he wrote. "Men and women kissed us—it was noticeable that there was no shortage of garlic." The locals stuffed the reporter's pockets with nuts and fruit and offered him a seemingly endless supply of wine. They slapped him on the back and cheered him with what little English they knew: "You are welcome," or "America, England, Sicily, I come!" Clifford even noticed a few Italian soldiers joining in the merriment.

The surrender was made official when Patton entered the city that night at the head of an armored column. Civilians cheered "Down with Mussolini!" and "Long live America!" They tossed flowers at him. "It is a great thrill to be driving into a captured city in the dark," he later confessed. Patton's column rolled to the Royal Palace, where he congratulated his commanders and passed a flask around to celebrate.

Clifford summed up the excitement of the day's events when he reported, "Hitler and Mussolini should have been here today. They would have learned a lot."

1. Major General Geoffrey Keyes and Italian Generale di Brigata Giuseppe Molinero ride into Palermo after Molinero offered to surrender the city to the Americans.

2. Lieutenant General George S. Patton, with one of his ivory-handled pistols on display, discusses the capture of Palermo with Maj. Gen. Lucian Truscott, who is wearing the blue-and-white striped patch of his 3rd Infantry Division. Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, who commanded the Provisional Corps, sits in the left seat of Patton's command car.

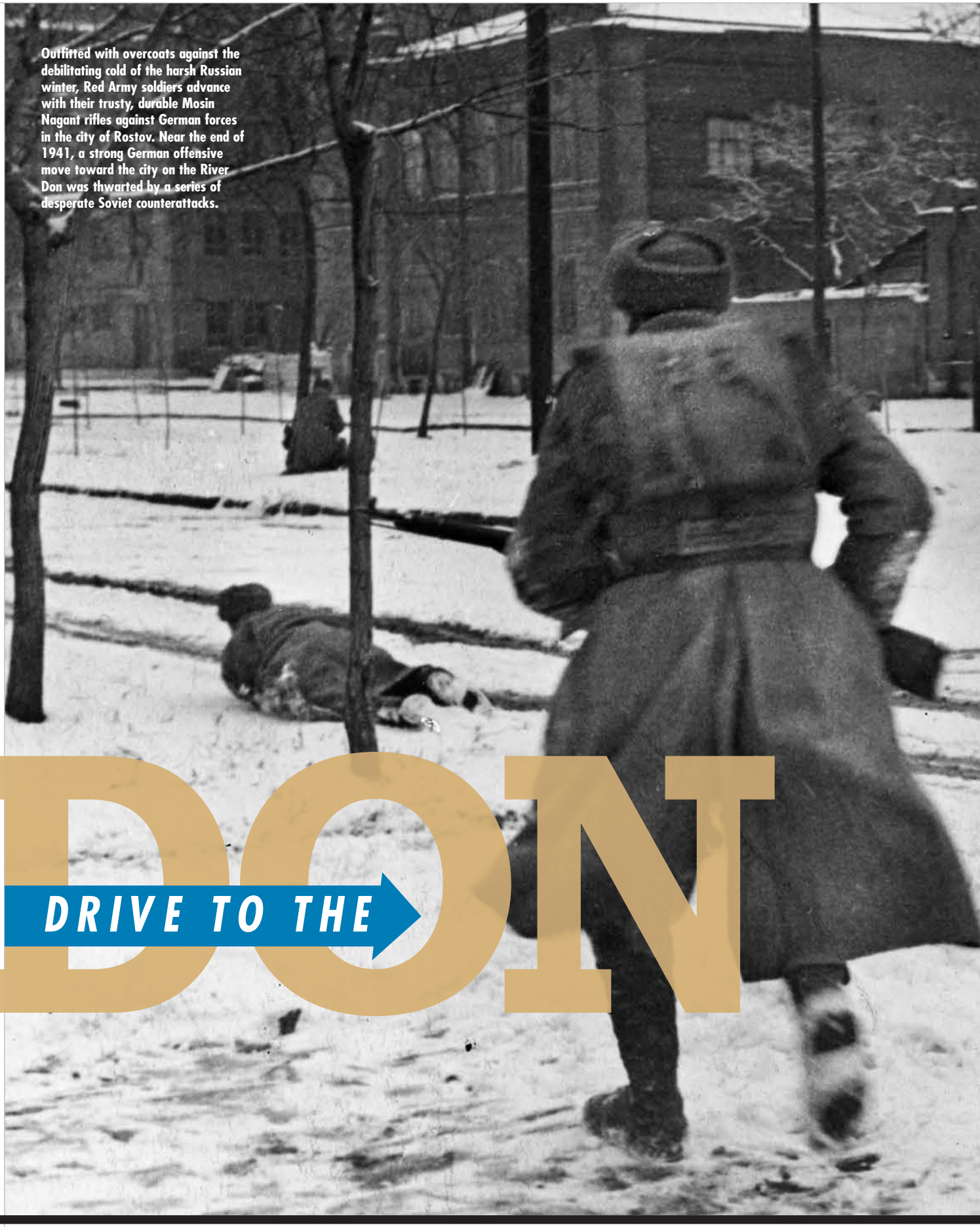
3. Tankers of the 2nd Armored Division roll down one of Palermo's narrow streets while civilians cheer.

4. Civilians in Palermo's theater district cheer and wave to the Americans, whom they treated as liberators.

5. Armored Infantrymen from the 2nd Armored Division take a break in their half-track under the shade of some palm trees.

6. A tanker with the 2nd Armored Division escorts his smiling Italian prisoners to a holding pen.

All photos: National Archives



Outfitted with overcoats against the debilitating cold of the harsh Russian winter, Red Army soldiers advance with their trusty, durable Mosin Nagant rifles against German forces in the city of Rostov. Near the end of 1941, a strong German offensive move toward the city on the River Don was thwarted by a series of desperate Soviet counterattacks.

DRIVE TO THE DON

Rostov was the key to the Caucasus and the rich Soviet oil fields that lay along the Black and Caspian Seas. No one could accuse Adolf Hitler of being underambitious. The great battles of encirclement at Kiev, Minsk, Uman, Smolensk, and other pockets had yielded hundreds of thousands of Russian prisoners during the first months of the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, otherwise known as Operation Barbarossa. Believing that Soviet Premier Josef Stalin was almost certainly finished, the German leader thought his armies were capable of even greater victories.

With that in mind, he ordered his eastern forces to continue attacking all across the vast front. In the north, Leningrad was the target. In the center it was Moscow, and in the south it was the Ukraine with its great agricultural and industrial resources. In conjunction with the capture of the Ukraine, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group South was ordered to capture the Crimea and, at the same time, take the city of Rostov-on-Don and the bridges that spanned the mighty river on which it sat.

On December 15, 1749, a small customs house had been established near the mouth of the Don River to help control trade with the Turkish Empire. A fortress was soon built on the site, and gradually the small town that sprang up in the area turned into a city full of tradesmen and merchants.

At the beginning of Barbarossa, Rostov was more than 1,000 kilometers behind Army Group South's staging areas in Poland. The people of the city watched as troops headed for the front passed through almost daily. Soviet propaganda assured civilians that the Germans were being slaughtered by the thousands and that the enemy would soon be vanquished. In reality, the forces of Army Group South were assembling less that 400 kilometers away, ready to continue their victorious advance.

Von Rundstedt had done his job well. Lt. Gen. Dmitrii Ivanovich Riabyshev's South Front and Lt. Gen. Mikhail Pertrovich Kirponos's Southwest Front had been shattered in the previous months. Kirponos had paid with his life on September 20 when he was killed while trying to escape German forces. His replacement was the extremely capable Marshal Semyon Konstantinovich Timoshenko.

Although the Germans had inflicted a grievous wound on the Soviet forces in southern Russia, it had come at a price. The seemingly endless steppe, sandy roads, and dust-filled air had taken their toll on men and machines. Engines were worn out, supply lines were long, and casualties had cut the strength of divisions. Replacements of both men and machines were slow in coming, and most of von Rundstedt's panzer and motorized divisions could only field a half or less of their combat vehicles at a time. Nevertheless, Hitler insisted that his new priorities be met.

The main part of Army Group South began its redeployment in late September. Taking the Crimea would be the task of the 11th Army, while the 6th Army would advance toward Kharkov. The task of taking the Don Basin fell to the 17th Army, and the 1st Panzer Group would strike out toward the Sea of Azov with its eventual objective being Rostov.

General Ewald von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group had two motorized corps (III and XIV) to use as his main attacking force. During the last week of September, German units moved into bridgeheads at Zaporozhe and Dnepropetrovsk in preparation for the forthcoming assault. Mechanics worked furiously trying to fix broken-down vehicles. The trickle of replacements coming from the West were assimilated into units as best they could, but the divisions going into battle would still be short of men and machines as the assault began.

General of Infantry Gustav von Wiethersheim's XIV Army Corps (mot.) was deployed in the Dnepropetrovsk area facing the Soviet South Front's 12th Army. To his north, General of Cavalry Eberhard von Mackensen's III Army Corps (mot.) was facing the Southwest Front's 6th Army. The first part of the operation would involve breaking the Russian line and then heading southeast, making an end run behind the South Front's 12th, 18th, and 9th Armies.

In late 1941, a German thrust toward the city of Rostov and the River Don was blunted by strong Soviet counterattacks.

BY PAT McTAGGART

Sovfoto / Eastfoto

Early in their drive toward Rostov, German soldiers still enjoy reasonably good weather as evidenced by their short sleeves. These panzer troops are spearheading the German effort to take the city.

With those armies cut off, the German 17th Army under General of Infantry Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel and elements of General of Infantry Erich von Manstein's command (mainly the XXX Army Corps under General of Infantry Hans von Salmuth) could push up the shore of the Sea of Azov. Von Kleist's armor would be the anvil, while the 17th Army would be the hammer that would open up the rich Don basin to German forces. With that accomplished, the 1st Panzer Group would set its sights on Rostov.

On October 1, von Kleist's units erupted from their bridgeheads. Just three days before, Timoshenko and Riabyshev had received orders to hold their positions directly from the Soviet High Command in Moscow (Stavka). It was a forlorn hope, especially with the heavy casualties already incurred in the previous months.

The Soviet forward defenses were woefully inadequate, and von Wietersheim's panzers were able to crack them open with comparative ease. While German forces swept east, the Italian Mobile Group attached to the panzer group engaged in mopping-up operations behind the main line. In the south, von Salmuth's XXX Corps began its drive along the Sea of Azov while elements of the 17th Army kept pressure on the western defenses of the 8th and 18th Armies.

Among the units in the XXX Corps was Lt. Gen. Sepp Dietrich's SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (LAH). Its strength was that of a reinforced brigade. During the first week of October, the LAH, along with other elements of the XXX Army Corps and the 3rd Romanian Army, battered the South Front while von Kleist's panzers raised havoc in the front's rear area.

On October 4, Dietrich's men came up against concentrated antitank positions, which they immediately attacked. While the fighting was still going on, Dietrich appeared and began issuing orders to set up a temporary defensive line about 11,000 meters to the east after the positions had been captured. The move was necessary because the LAH had outpaced its neighbors on the left and right (the 8th Romanian Mountain Division and the 72nd Infantry Division) and had to wait for them to catch up to protect its flanks.

The next day the LAH's reinforced reconnaissance battalion under SS Major Kurt Meyer headed toward the Molochana River, with other elements of the LAH following. Its 1st Company, commanded by SS 1st Lt. Gerd Bremer, took the village of Federico, about 12 kilometers from the town of Terpinnya, at 12:30 PM and pursued the retreating Soviet forces toward the town, which held a bridge that would ease the crossing of the river.

By 2 PM, leading elements of Bremer's company were in Terpinnya itself. Fighting their way through the retreating Russians, the SS troops reached the bridge just as Red Army engineers blew it up, killing several of their own troops that were still on the structure.

Bremer was reinforced by SS Major Fritz Witt's I/LAH and SS Major Teddi Wisch's II/LAH, which took over the fight for the town. Meanwhile, Bremer moved his company out of Terpinnya, found a ford in the Molochana, and crossed. About three kilometers east of the crossing his men came under heavy mortar and artillery fire and direct fire from antitank positions. Leaving Wisch to clear Terpinnya, Witt pushed his battalion across the river at Bremer's ford and established a strong bridgehead late in the afternoon.

The South Front was now in total disarray, and Riabyshev seemed to be incapable of doing anything to rectify the situation. The same day Bremer was crossing the Molochana, Col. Gen. Iakov Timofeevich Cherevichenko arrived at the South Front headquarters. He informed

Riabyshev that he was there to take command of the front immediately. The change of command would bring results in the future, but the current crisis could not be easily resolved.

During the evening, SS engineers were able to build a bridge across the Molochana after Terpinnya had been cleared of enemy troops. On October 6, the LAH was on the move again. The day's objective was the town of Novospas'ke, about 45 kilometers to the east. With Meyer's reconnaissance battalion in the lead, the units moved forward. Near the village of Romanovko the Germans ran into antitank fire. Soviet tanks also appeared, causing some casualties to Meyer's antitank detachment. The arrival of the battalion's 88mm guns soon drove the Soviets off, and the village was taken. Among the Soviet prisoners taken were several members of the 9th Army's staff. With the capture of the village, the way to Novospas'ke was open. Later that evening Dietrich was notified that the LAH was now subordinated to von Wiethersheim's corps. A day later it came under the command of von Mackensen's III Corps.

On October 7, the LAH was ordered to pursue the Russians in the direction of Berdans'k and Mariupol. At the same time, a battalion of Brig. Gen. Friedrich Kühn's 14th Panzer Division moved south to link up with the division. Berdans'k was captured by midday, and Dietrich's men continued moving toward Mariupol.

After a few hours rest, Meyer held a commander's conference in the early hours of the 8th. He had received a report stating that there were only weak enemy forces inside the city. Logically, Meyer should have waited for other elements of the LAH to catch up to his battalion for a concentrated assault on Mariupol. His men were exhausted after days of continuous combat, but Meyer had faith in them. He ordered his company commanders to form up and head for Mariupol at top speed.

SS Corporal Wontorra recounted his experiences in the LAH divisional history. "My orders were simply to push on past the Russians," he said. Eventually the motorcyclists ran into a group of around 30 Russians marching toward the city. "I remembered Meyer's words 'Ride on by!'" he continued. "By now my driver was asking me what he should do. 'Give her gas and drive on by' was my answer. When we caught up with the Russians they looked at us in disbelief and had no time to grab their rifles. We rode on past. It had worked beautifully.… We passed one column after another. We often passed artillery being pulled by tractors."

Before long, Wontorra's motorcyclists were in the city itself. Behind him came the rest of the battalion, followed by Wisch's II/LAH. By noon the city of approximately 250,000 people was firmly in German hands, and a bridgehead had been established on the eastern bank of the Kalmius River.

The bulk of the 18th and 9th Armies was now effectively isolated, with von Kleist's forces in their rear and XXX Corps at their front. Soviet units were suffering horrendous casualties, and general officers were not immune from the carnage. The commander of the 18th Army, Lt. Gen. Andrei Kirillovich Smirnov, was at his command post near the village of Popovka when German artillery killed him. He was later buried by German troops, who placed a marker on his grave that asked their soldiers to fight as bravely as this Soviet soldier. The inscription was in German, Romanian, and Russian.

Smirnov's artillery commander, Maj. Gen. Aleksei Semenovich Titov, died the same day when he was hit by artillery fire as he was overseeing the withdrawal of his forces. As German infantry advanced, he joined his gun crews in an effort to drive them off. He was killed by a direct hit on the gun he was manning.

The following day, Chief of Staff of the Army General Franz Halder wrote in his diary, "We must exploit the unexpectedly swift capture of Mariupol by the SS Adolf Hitler by pushing through as quickly as possible to Rostov, and perhaps even crossing the Sea of Azov. The Italian divisions unfortunately are so ineffectual that they can be employed for nothing more than passive flank cover behind rivers, but not for broadening the attacking front of the [1st] Panzer Army [Panzer Group 1 was not officially renamed 1st Panzer Army until the last week of October]."

The Soviet troops trying to stem the advance of Panzer Group 1 had suffered greatly, but the remarkable resilience of the Red Army was beginning to make itself known.

It did not take Berlin long to announce another great German victory to the world. An October 11 communiqué from the Wehrmacht High Command began with "the battle at the Sea of Azov is over." It went on to state that the losses to the 9th and 18th Armies included 64,325 prisoners, 126 tanks, and 519 guns. It also mentioned that Army Group South had captured 106,365 prisoners and destroyed or captured 212 tanks and 672 guns since September 26.

The 13th Panzer Division under Brig. Gen. Walter Düvert had now moved up to Mariupol and had established contact with the LAH. With the rest of the division moving into the city, Dietrich's men were ordered to advance to the next objective—the city of Taganrog, which was a little more than 100 kilometers away. Meyer's reconnaissance battalion met no opposition as it sped eastward, and it reached the town of Nossavo, about 11 kilometers northwest of Taganrog, by 3:30 PM. A platoon was then sent to reconnoiter the nearby town of Nikolaevka. It reported that the western edge of the town was heavily fortified and that any attack route would be clearly visible to enemy positions on the east bank of the Mius River. There would not be another Mariupol-like coup this time.

The bridges at Nikolaevka were of critical importance if the advance to Taganrog was to continue. On October 12, orders were given for the LAH to establish a bridgehead across the river, while the 13th and 14th Panzer Divisions moved up to protect its flanks. Meyer's reinforced battalion attacked the Soviet forces on the west bank of the river supported by Witt's I/LAH.

Successful penetrations were made, but the SS were soon met with a hail of fire from the eastern bank that stopped the assault in its tracks. It soon became evident that the attack would not succeed, and after a few hours of fighting Meyer and Witt were ordered to withdraw.

Meanwhile, Dietrich had received reports that the Soviets had constructed an emergency bridge across the Mius at Prokovskoya, about 18 kilometers to the north. He immediately sent Wisch's II/LAH to check on the report, which turned out to be correct. Once again, however, Soviet defensive fire made it impossible to take the bridge by storm. Despite the day's setbacks, Dietrich was still determined to get across the river.

Waiting until darkness fell, SS 1st Lt. Heinrich Springer took his 3rd Company along the bank of the Mius north of Nikolaevka. Sending a platoon across by raft, Springer was able to establish a bridgehead on the eastern bank. By 9 PM, his entire company had crossed the river and had taken a commanding position overlooking the town. Witt immediately sent

the other companies of his 1st Battalion across to reinforce Springer. The III/LAH, under SS Captain Albert Frey, soon followed.

The following day, Wisch used his battalion to make another effort to capture the bridge at Prokhovskoya. With the help of assault guns the battalion was able to close on the bridge, but intense enemy fire once again prevented its capture. Wisch suspended the attack after suffering heavy casualties, and late in the day he turned the sector over to Düvert's 13th Panzer.

Realizing a bridgehead north of Nikolaevka had been established, the Soviets attacked Witt and Wisch—first in company strength and then in battalion strength. The attacks were supported by Red Air Force bombers, artillery, and an armored train, but were repulsed with bloody losses.

Düvert turned his engineers loose later in the day, and by midnight an eight-ton bridge had been built over the Mius, allowing more German infantry to occupy the eastern bank. With the added strength protecting its flank, it was time for the LAH to move on Nikolaevka.

During the 14th, Witt's men fought their way into the center of the town, meeting heavy resistance along the way. The Soviets fought for every house, stubbornly refusing to give way until the last man was either killed or wounded. The Red Air Force also appeared time and again, bombing friend and foe alike. Fighting raged throughout the night, giving the men on either side no time for rest.

Armor was now becoming available to the German forces on the east bank. Düvert's engineers had constructed a heavier bridge, capable of supporting his panzers, which were now crossing the river, albeit under Soviet artillery fire. This reinforcement kept the Russians from reinforcing Nikolaevka from the north and east, allowing Witt's battalion to take the town by midafternoon on the 15th.

The Soviet troops trying to stem the advance of Panzer Group 1 had suffered greatly, but the remarkable resilience of the Red Army was beginning to make itself known. During the third week of October a new army, the 56th, was formed under the command of Lt. Gen. Fedor Nikitovich Remezov. The 56th, consisting of six rifle and six cavalry divisions, was given the task of defending the approaches to Rostov.

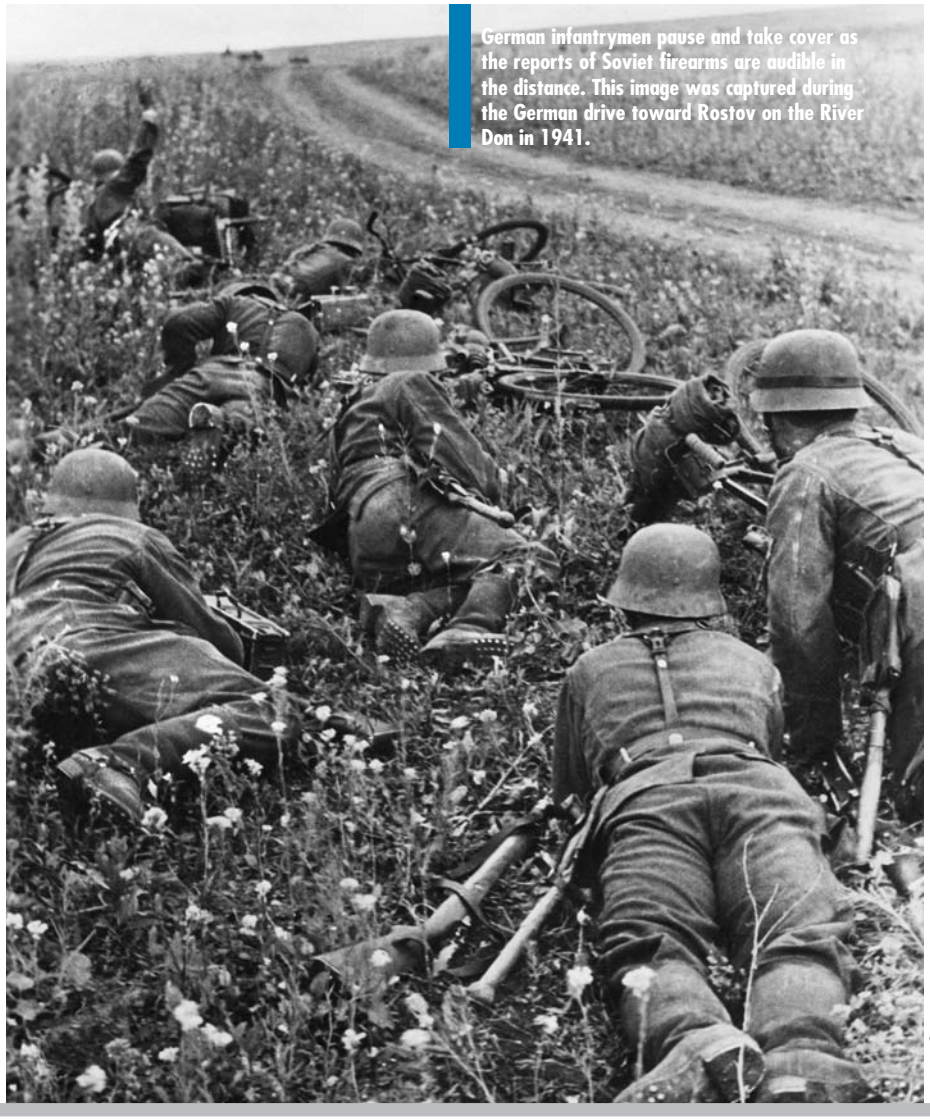
With Nikolaevka taken and more German units flowing across the Mius, the advance on Taganrog could now continue. The LAH still had the mission of capturing the city, and at 5:30 AM on October 17, Witt's reinforced I/LAH moved out with the southern section of the city as its objective. SS Major Günther Anhalt's IV/LAH was ordered to take the southwestern shore along the Gulf of Taganrog, while Wisch and Frey would hit the city from the east.

The attack went according to plan, with units of all four battalions fighting in the city itself by midmorning. By 3 PM, the Soviets had been pushed into the southeastern part of Taganrog, and Witt's battalion had occupied the city's harbor installations. A member of the LAH wrote: "As we approached the city, the roar of explosions announced the Russians' intent to abandon it. The clouds of smoke from burning fuel and ammunition stores stood like giant mushrooms above the city and darkened the azure sky."

With most of Taganrog in German hands, new orders came down from corps command. The 13th Panzer Division was to expand the bridgehead at Sambek, about 15 kilometers northeast of the city, with the 14th Panzer guarding the corps' northern flank. Meanwhile, the LAH was to continue to mop up any nests of Soviet resistance remaining in Taganrog.

Those units, along with the rest of von Kleist's panzer group, needed both rest and supplies. Fuel was at a premium for most of the divisions in the command, and the supply route stretched hundreds of kilometers to the west. Weather was another issue. German units farther north had already experienced the mud of the Rasputitsa, and in the central and northern regions of the Eastern Front snow had already fallen in some areas. Vehicles, especially wheeled vehicles, became mired in the mud that was once a sandy road, and the long supply lines made getting the necessary fuel, ordnance, and other materials to continue the advance an arduous trip.

On October 19, von Mackensen issued the following order for the capture of Rostov. "The 13th Panzer Division and the LAH are to attack at 0530 hours on 20.10 by moving the bulk of their forces across the line reached today. The LAH is to halt its progress when it is level with the 13th Panzer Division." Once again, the 14th Panzer would provide cover for the corps' northern flank.



German infantrymen pause and take cover as the reports of Soviet firearms are audible in the distance. This image was captured during the German drive toward Rostov on the River Don in 1941.

The corps moved out on time, and during the 20th both divisions had achieved the days' objectives. Meyer, commanding the reconnaissance battalion, was replaced by SS Captain Hugo Kraas during the day due to illness. As the divisions settled in for the evening, cold winds began blowing across the steppe. It was a harbinger of things to come. As the men lay shivering in their summer uniforms, von Mackensen sent the following message to von Kleist: "Supply of winter clothing scheduled for between 21. and 31.10. In Dneptropetrovsk it is too late. If winter clothing does not come soon, the troops' ability to perform will be too greatly taxed. Urgently request supply of winter clothing to Mariupol, at the least." It was one of many such pleas from commanders all along the Eastern Front.

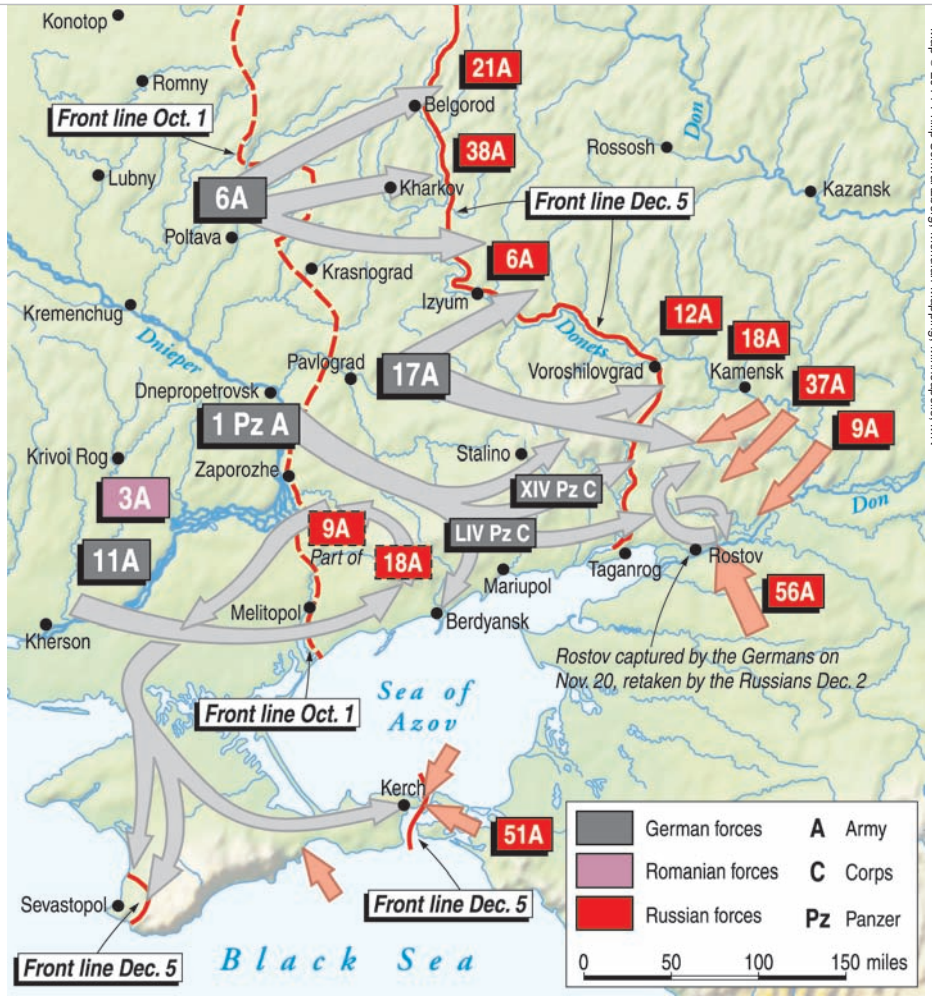
Despite the weather, von Mackensen's divisions continued to advance. For the next two days more ground was taken. Captured prisoners told German interrogators that some of the divisions facing them had been raised within the last couple of months. Many of those prisoners were Kuban Cossacks—men who did not have an especially favorable attitude toward the Soviets.

At the South Front headquarters, Cherevichenko issued orders to his subordinates to hold the line at all costs now that the weather was changing. He knew German supply lines were stretched to the limit and that the more men and equipment expended by the enemy facing him the less they would have for a final push to their obvious objective of Rostov.

The Germans were getting perilously close to the city, and Cherevichenko needed to buy time for Remezov to deploy his new army. Therefore, he ordered a series of counterattacks on the 23rd that caused von Mackensen to reel in his forces and go over to the defensive for the time being. His divisions held a front of about 70 kilometers, but not all of his units were manning the front line as several elements were still struggling to catch up to the lead forces. The supply situation was also getting critical.

An October 23 corps memo stated, "The Panzerarmee has informed us that the supply situation will remain unpredictable due to the unfavorable weather and bad road conditions on the long supply routes and despite all the auxiliary measures and personnel put into action; it may even occur that the supply lines may be temporarily out of service."

The memo also made several recommendations that should be implemented down to company level. It said units must be self-reliant for ammunition, fuel, and provisions for up to several days at a time. Strict rationing was also



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

The Red Army mounted numerous counterattacks against the advancing Germans once their enemy's intentions were clear. The city of Rostov was aggressively defended, and those Soviet forces that were cut off by the advancing Germans northwest of the Sea of Azov fought ferociously.

recommended, and prisoners were to be used along supply routes to help retrieve vehicles that had become stuck in the quagmires that were once roads.

Soviet attacks hit the entire line held by the 13th Panzer Division, which centered around Cahltyr' about 16 kilometers northwest of Rostov. Düvert's infantry was pounded by artillery as the Russians strove to smash his lines, but timely counterattacks from the unit's armor helped keep the front stable. Although the Russian attacks failed to break the German line, Cherevichenko was achieving his objective. The longer the Germans were forced to be on the defensive, the more time he had to prepare the positions around Rostov.

The heavy fighting during the past few weeks was also affecting the morale of the German troops. "We lay for weeks in the cold Steppes," wrote SS 2nd Lt. Bäder of the 14/LAH. "Chomped on by lice and freezing to death, our unit was decimated."

A situation report from the III Corps also expressed pessimism. "The 13th Panzer Division and the LAH have been physically overtaxed for weeks," it said. "Daily care with good food and canteen allotments is lacking. Their clothing is torn; as socks most of them are wearing foot rags torn from Russian uniforms or Russian bandages. Most of the troops are freezing at night.

"Morale is down, especially because of the optimistic propaganda given out, which contradicts their experience on the battlefield…. The effect of the Russian Air Force, rocket launchers and tank platoons on the men's morale is enormous…. The small number of officers is dwindling…. The Panzer regiment is unfit because of lack of fuel…. Neither the 13th Panzer nor the LAH is in a position to move all of its combat vehicles…. The panzers use up enormous amounts of fuel every night. We cannot shut them off, even for a short time, for we are lacking anti-freeze…. A motorized unit needs fuel even when it is standing still."

Torrential rains fell during the last days of October, exacerbating the misery of the troops on both sides. The rain made offensive operations nearly impossible during the opening days

of November, giving both attacker and defender a much needed break in the fighting.

The lull also gave von Mackensen time to remedy some of the problems that had plagued his corps. Fuel was finally arriving in sufficient quantities to continue the drive to Rostov. At 1st Panzer Army headquarters, von Kleist was fine tuning a new plan in the face of reports that Remezov's 56th Army now occupied strong positions along the eastern approaches to the city.

Bolstered by General of Mountain Troops Ludwig Kübler's IL Mountain Corps, von Kleist planned to sweep down on the city from the north. Using von Wietersheim's XIV Corps as protection in the north, the 14th Panzer Division, Maj. Gen. Friedrich-Georg Eberhardt's 60th Infantry Division (mot.), and SS Maj. Gen. Felix Steiner's 5th SS Wiking Division were to attack from the General'skoye-Serafimov area and swing southeast. Brig. Gen. Hans-Valentin Hube's 16th Panzer Division would cover von Wiethersheim's northern flank. Farther south, von Mackensen's corps would perform a similar movement, with the LAH coming down from the northwest and the 13th Panzer attacking entrenched Soviets in the Mokryy Chaltyr'-Kalinin sector.

The opening moves of von Kleist's panzer army went well on November 11, with the 14th Panzer and Wiking establishing bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the Kropkaya River. Kraas's LAH reconnaissance battalion also gained its first day's objective, but the weather turned once again, halting the advance in all sectors. A member of the battalion, Kannonier Gottzmann, wrote: "During the night we sank in mud. There was no chance of moving forward, even if we lost contact with the enemy.… A few days later a cold wave arrived and froze everything.… The cold tore at our nerves, and morale dropped.… And Rostov still lay before us. Unattainable!"

Von Mackensen's corps was virtually immobilized, as were other units slated for the attack. The element of surprise was gone, and the Russians were able to bring reinforcements in to bolster areas that were likely targets for renewed German attacks. Meanwhile, von Mackensen was given command of the 14th Panzer and Eberhardt's 60th Motorized Infantry Division to strengthen his striking force.

In preparation to support the crossing of a Russian stream during the advance on Rostov, the crew of a German antitank gun sets up a defensive position.

The weather finally broke on the 17th, and von Mackensen ordered his divisions to attack all along the III Corps front. Dietrich's LAH, reinforced by Panzer Rgt. 4 (13th Panzer Division), made good progress against determined enemy resistance. On Dietrich's left the 14th Panzer took Bolshiye' Saly in a surprise assault. The Soviets reacted with violent counterattacks against the division the following day, but Kühn's men held their ground.

Dietrich ordered his troops to keep moving. By the end of the 18th, elements of the LAH had taken Krasnyy Krim, only 2½ kilometers from the outskirts of Rostov. Other LAH units, however, were held up by Soviet troops in the heavily defended village of Sultan Saly, about 10 kilometers northwest of the city.

Cherevichenko now faced a dilemma. He could see his armies destroyed or he could conduct a fighting withdrawal, biding his time while reorganizing the South Front for a counterattack. In fact, Stavka was already planning a counterstroke across the entire Eastern Front. In the far south, Timoshenko's South West Front and Cherevichenko's front would be tasked with the destruction of von Kleist's 1st Panzer Army, but since the counterattack was still in its planning stages the fate of Rostov was still an unknown factor.

On November 19, Sultan Saly fell after bitter fighting took many lives on both sides. The fall of the fortified village broke the back of the Soviet defensive line northwest of Rostov. As the LAH pressed forward, the 14th Panzer sliced through Remezov's units stationed north of the city. By the end of the day, Kuhn's division had penetrated into some of Rostov's northern suburbs while the 60th Motorized Division spread out to the east, establishing a defensive line stretching from Aksyiskaya on the Don River north through Shchepkin to Kammenyy Brod. The line was then taken over by Hube's 16th Panzer Division.

The next day the LAH and 14th Panzer fought their way into the center of the city by noon. With the 13th Panzer pushing in from the west, Remezov had no choice but to pull his units back toward the Don. House to house fighting ensued, but the LAH continued to make good progress, bypassing strongpoints as it attempted to capture one or more of the bridges that spanned the river.

Springer, with his 3rd Company, heard explosions coming from the direction of the Don as Red Army engineers began their work of destruction. Pushing his men forward, Springer managed to reach a point overlooking the river. As evening fell, he found himself staring at a massive railroad bridge that was crawling with both soldiers and civilians. Through his field glasses, Springer could see the bridge had already been prepared for demolition.

"I had to make a hasty decision," Springer wrote in a 1992 letter to the author. "Most of the LAH was still engaged in heavy fighting within the city. We saw a train approaching the bridge, and I ordered my men to fire on it with all weapons. The engine was hit numerous times, and it finally halted with steam belching out from several holes."

The attack caused confusion among the civilians and soldiers on the bridge. Taking advantage, Springer ordered his company, along with an accompanying unit of engineers, to cross the structure. Under covering fire from the 3rd Company the engineers cut demolition wires as they advanced. Reaching the opposite side,

Springer's men took several Red Army soldiers assigned to guard the bridge prisoner.

Establishing a small bridgehead, the assault group fought off several attacks. "We were essentially cut off," Springer wrote. "Fighting was still going on in the city, and reinforcements could not be sent."

To make matters worse, von Wiethersheim's XIV Corps was coming under heavy attack from units of Maj. Gen. Fedor Mikhailovich Kharitonov's 9th Army. The attack prompted von Kleist to order the 13th Panzer to move north to help alleviate the situation. With the loss of the division and the LAH still engaged in trying to clear Rostov proper, it was impossible for Springer to cling to his bridgehead.

Early on November 21 Springer received orders to abandon his position and make his way back to the northern bank of the Don. "We had achieved our objective," Springer wrote, "but events overtook us. Our hard-won position had to be given back to the Russians."

Remezov's men quickly reoccupied the southern portion of the bridge. Engineers set new charges and repaired cut wires, and a few hours later the mighty bridge was destroyed in a thunderous blast.

Another bridge fell into German hands thanks to Captain Willy Langkeit, acting commander of the 14th Panzer's II/Pz. Rgt.36. During the advance on the city, Langkeit's battalion was hit by a Soviet counterattack on November 18. Ordering his panzers to hold their fire, he let the Russian tanks advance to within 600 meters. When the panzers opened fire, shells tore into the Soviet formation, stopping it cold. The Russians came forward two more times, meeting the same fate. When they finally gave up they left 17 smoldering tanks on the field, including some T-34s and heavy KV Is and KV IIs.

As his panzers entered Rostov on November 20, his accompanying infantry support became engaged in house to house fighting. Pushing forward, Lankeit formed a battle group around his battalion that included infantry of Schützen-Regiment 108 and motorcycle infantry of Motorcycle Battalion 64.

On November 21, Lankeit took a bridge over the Don that was also set for demolition. The appearance of German tanks was too much for the Russians guarding the bridge, and they fled or were cut down before the charges could be set off. Smashing its way through several other Russian positions, the battle group reached the southern edge of a large island in the middle of the Don before being halted by strong opposition. Like Springer, Lankeit was forced to give up his prize due to lack of reinforcements and the changing nature of the battle for the city.

By now, attacks from the 9th and 56th Armies were increasing. The dangerous situation north of Rostov had turned into an impending disaster as the XIV Corps and Kübler's Mountain Corps struggled to hold their positions. On the 9th Army's right flank, Maj. Gen. Anton Ivanovich Lopatin's 37th Army and Maj. Gen. Fedor Vasilevich Kamkov's 18th Army joined in to attack the 1st and 4th Mountain Divisions and the Wiking Division with a combined force of 10 rifle divisions, two cavalry divisions, and two tank brigades.

On November 22, Halder wrote in his diary, "1st Panzerarmee was forced into the defense by the Russian attacks with superior forces and will have a hard time of seeing it through." However, in the same entry he remained somewhat optimistic as well as realistic. "The measures instituted are well taken and promise to be successful. However, after 1st Panzerarmee has disposed of the attacker, it would probably be too much to expect it to clear the enemy out of the Donets bend with what is left of its forces."

The same day Halder wrote those words, von Mackensen came to the conclusion that his entire corps was in grave danger. Von Kleist also recognized the probable goal of the South and South West Fronts. The maps did not lie. With four Soviet armies attacking, the main points of the assault indicated that a strong force was about to swing southwest in an attempt to encircle the III Corps. It was also apparent that the ultimate goal was to destroy the entire panzer army.

Moving forward during one of their numerous counterattacks against the Germans advancing toward Rostov, Red Army soldiers hitch rides atop several self-propelled assault guns. With fixed forward-firing main weapons, the assault guns were usually at a disadvantage when they encountered German tanks with traversing turrets.

Sovfoto / Eastfoto

At noon on the 22nd, von Kleist issued orders to prepare for a withdrawal. His Panzer Army Order No. 31 stated, "In the face of the strong forces which the Russians have massed before my army, I have decided to move my units back in an orderly manner from the extended arc position, at first behind the Tuslov (River), then to a consolidated position behind the Mius…. The next few days will place great demands on the officers and the men. The hour of our testing has just arrived."

With the 13th Panzer gone and the 60th Motorized engaged on its northern flank, it was up to the LAH to hold Remezov's 56th Army at bay as long as possible. Von Kleist's forces, stretched out to the northeast, needed time to make the fighting withdrawal to the Mius line, and if Dietrich's men caved Remezov could send his divisions streaming up from the south, cutting 1st Panzer Army's escape route.

The I, II, and III Battalions set up positions along the northern bank of the now frozen Don. They were joined by the antiaircraft and reconnaissance battalions. To the northeast, the IV and engineer battalions continued to fight Soviet units still entrenched inside Rostov. The battalions, already depleted by weeks of battle, were stretched incredibly thin, and Remezov sent out constant patrols looking for weaknesses in the German line.

On November 25, Colonel Mikhail Ivanovich Ozimin's 31st Rifle Division and Colonel Petr Pavlovich Churvaskev's 343rd Rifle Division attacked the positions of the reconnaissance battalion. At 5:20 AM, supported by artillery, the Red Army soldiers advanced across the ice. According to Meyer, the front ranks came on with arms linked, "forming a continuous chain which stamped across the ice in wild singing."

German machine guns opened up on the mass, cutting wide swaths through their lines. Behind the fallen, more soldiers appeared, trampling their comrades as they sought to reach the German positions. A force of two Soviet battalions managed to penetrate the German line, threatening to dislodge the entire set of defenses, but a counterattack by the reconnaissance battalion's 2nd Company, which was supported by LAH artillery, managed to seal the breach. The company reported capturing six officers and 393 men and counted 310 dead enemy soldiers at the end of the action.

The attacks continued for the next two days, augmented by artillery and air attacks. Although the LAH continued to hold, events in the north soon made Rostov untenable. In von Wiethersheim's sector the 14th Panzer Division had been pushed out of General'skoye and was in retreat with the Soviets nipping at its heels. The 13th Panzer and Hube's 16th Panzer were also in retreat, as was Steiner's Wiking Division. However, the Russians were thwarted in their attempt to outflank the corps, thanks in large part to the efforts of SS Major Plöw, who defended the Balabanov Heights against several heavy attacks with a combat group from the 5th SS. His stand allowed the mass of von Wiethersheim's corps to fall back to the Tuslov position.

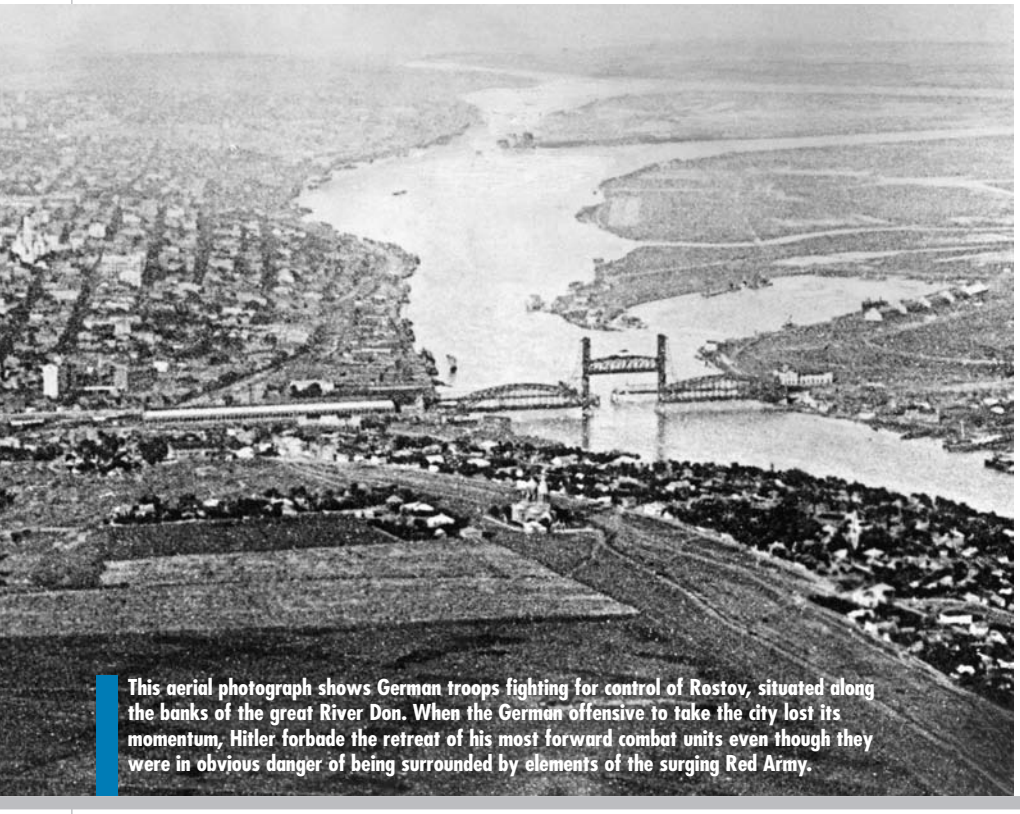
By now, von Rundstedt was ordering a general retreat all along Army Group South's front. On November 28, the LAH began its own retreat, fighting off concentrated attacks from both the 56th and 9th Armies. By this time, Cherevichenko had concentrated about two dozen divisions against von Mackensen. He was well aware of the great propaganda coup that would come from news that his South Front had succeeded in wresting the first major Soviet city from German hands. During the afternoon and evening of the 28th, the 56th and 9th Armies had reoccupied most of the city.

Hitler received word of von Rundstedt's order to retreat on the 29th. Although von Rundstedt had given a clear picture of the enormous danger facing the 1st Panzer Army, the Führer flew into a rage, berating the esteemed field marshal in front of his personal staff. Later in the day he sent orders countermanding the withdrawal, but it was already too late.

Cherevichenko kept pushing his armies. The Germans were conducting a skillful retreat, and the Soviets received a bloody nose in several sectors of von Kleist's front from counterattacks by ad hoc formations when advance elements got too close. By using this method, von Kleist succeeded in crossing the Tuslov and occupying the western bank.

It was only a stopgap measure. The Tuslov was not that wide or deep, and its west bank offered little in regard to a decent defensive position. With the Soviets adding new divisions to their assault forces and Red Air Force planes practically owning the sky, von Kleist began another staggered withdrawal. Leaving a heavy rear guard, the 1st Panzer Army moved back toward the more defensible Mius River.

The massive losses of the summer were made up by the seemingly endless supply of Russian manpower, and although many divisions were ill trained and understrength, the sheer volume of troops was enough to stop the German advance.



This aerial photograph shows German troops fighting for control of Rostov, situated along the banks of the great River Don. When the German offensive to take the city lost its momentum, Hitler forbade the retreat of his most forward combat units even though they were in obvious danger of being surrounded by elements of the surging Red Army.

© SZ Photo / The Image Works

German soldiers fighting in the streets of of Rostov advance warily alongside a self-propelled gun that is being used to root out snipers and eliminate Soviet strongpoints during close-quarter urban combat.

"The numerically weak forces of 1st Panzer Army had to give way before the concentric attack launched in very great strength from the south (apparently a main effort), west and north," Halder wrote on the 29th. He was correct as far as German strength went. Most of von Kleist's divisions were down to two-thirds or even half strength. The Westland Regiment of the 5th SS reported that from July 1 to November 30 the unit had suffered 29 officers, 65 NCOs, and 347 men killed. In addition, a further 21 officers, 138 NCOs, and 920 men were wounded and 29 men were reported missing—a grand total of 50 percent casualties for the regiment in four months.

November 30 saw renewed Russian attacks on the flimsy Tuslov Line. The Soviets battered away at the German defenses, and the ferocity of the attacks forced von Kleist to commit the 14th Panzer (1st Panzer Army's reserve) into the fray to stem the enemy advance. Even with that commitment, penetrations were achieved in several places. Bowing to the inevitable, von Kleist ordered all remaining units along the Tuslov to fall back to the Mius.

Halder noted, "The Führer is in a state of extreme agitation over the situation. He forbids withdrawal of the army to the line Taganrog-Mius-mouth of the Bakhmut River and demands that the retrograde move be halted further east."

At 1 PM on the 30th, Hitler met with members of the Army High Command. Halder reported the meeting to be "more than disagreeable, with the Führer pouring out reproaches and abuse and shouting orders as fast as they came into his head."

The meeting ended with the High Command agreeing to Hitler's demands that the retreat to the Mius Line be halted. When he received the new order, von Rundstedt replied that compliance was not possible. He also said that if the new order was not rescinded, he would ask to be relieved. The following day, Hitler dismissed von Rundstedt and replaced him with an ardent National Socialist, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, who took over command immediately.

Replacing the commander of Army Group South would not change the situation. The army group had shot its bolt. Von Reichenau, after a quick review of his new command's position, agreed with von Rundstedt's evaluation. He reported as much to Hitler.

Halder commented on Hitler's afternoon staff conference on December 1. "At 1530 hours the Commander of the Army (Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch) was with the Führer, and von Reichenau telephoned during the conference. He requested permission to pull forces back to the Mius position. Führer concurs. Now we are where we could have been last night. It was a senseless waste of strength and time, and to top it, we lost von Rundstedt also."

Long supply lines, wear on vehicles, inadequate winter clothing, and the Russian winter itself were all factors in the failure to hold Rostov. Perhaps the biggest factor was the Germans' underestimation of the resiliency of the Red Army. Most of its incompetent general officers either perished or were removed and imprisoned or shot during the opening phase of Barbarossa. Those who replaced them were tough survivors. The massive losses of the summer were made up by the seemingly endless supply of Russian manpower, and although many divisions were ill trained and understrength, the sheer volume of troops was enough to stop the German advance.

With the opening of the Russian winter offensive on December 5, the Red Army moved forward, sending German forces reeling in most cases. The 1st Panzer Army held its position on the Mius, but the prize of Rostov had been lost, at least for the time being. However, Hitler would not give up his dream of taking the city and capturing the oilfields in the Caucasus, but he would have to wait until the following year to try again.

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

DEATH OF HIMMLER'S HENCHMAN

BY RICHARD RULE

IN A DESPERATE BID TO AVOID another war in Europe, both Britain and France signed the notorious Munich Agreement in 1938, which annexed the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis. One of the first political casualties of this shameful capitulation was Czech President Eduard Benes, who resigned in despair and fled to England.

Within six months, Czechoslovakia's newly elected president, Emil Hacha, would discover that Hitler's designs on his country were not yet finalized. On March 14, 1939, the aging Hacha was summoned to Berlin and threatened with the destruction of his nation if he did not accept the peaceful incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the Greater German Reich as the Protectotarate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Hacha fainted but upon being revived reluctantly agreed to Hitler's demands. At 9 the following morning, crowds of grief-stricken Czechs sang their national anthem as German troops marched triumphantly into the golden, historic capital city of Prague. Few could comprehend that while they were sleeping their 20-year-old Czechoslovak Republic had ceased to exist.

After two years of German occupation the humiliated Czechs had wearily resigned themselves to life under the heel of their harsh German rulers, but further misery was to come. Believing that treachery loomed in the Protectorate, Hitler appointed 37-year-old SS Obergruppenfuhrer (General) Reinhard Heydrich to the key post of Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia.

Heydrich had enjoyed a spectacular and meteoric rise to prominence within the Third Reich in his role as SS leader Heinrich Himmler's deputy and founding head of the Nazi security apparatus.

Tall, handsome, and cultured, the fiercely ambitious Heydrich epitomized the Nazi ideal of the cold, hard, emotionless SS officer. Exquisite manners and charm complemented by an impressive military bearing were, however, notable attributes that served only to disguise his true character. As a driving force behind the "Final Solution" to the Jewish Question, Heydrich had shown himself to be a mass murderer utterly devoid of moral scruples, pity, or qualms of conscience.

The unsuspecting Czechs would soon learn for themselves that in Heydrich, Hitler had

RIGHT: In full uniform and regalia, Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heydrich gives a stiff Nazi salute during an official party function. ABOVE: In this artist's rendering of the assassination attempt on Reichsführer Reinhard Heydrich, Josef Gabcik, a Czech partisan trained by the British, steps forward to fire his Sten gun at the Nazi official riding in the back seat of a Mercedes convertible.

National Archives

Both: National Archives

THE RUTHLESS REINHARD HEYDRICH, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF MANY, WAS HIMSELF ASSASSINATED IN PRAGUE IN THE SPRING OF 1942.

delivered into their midst inhumanity personified.

With sinister black SS flags now adorning Prague's Hradcany Castle, Reinhard Heydrich was installed as military governor of the Czech lands on September 23, 1941. Looking resplendent in his SS uniform, a stern-visaged Heydrich immediately outlined his agenda for the Protectorate to a select gathering of key Nazi officials; it was clear to all that he would adopt a hard line right from the start.

National Archives

The modern Czech factories already supplied up to a third of Germany's armaments, but with the war expected to continue for a lot longer than first thought Heydrich would drive the workers to deliver more. "My task," he declared, "is to teach the Czech people that they cannot deny the reality of their relationship with the Reich, nor avoid the obedience that the Reich demands."

With the SS now controlling the levers of power, the people would be encouraged to work harder for the Reich through a mercilessly orchestrated campaign of unrestricted terror and bribery—the carrot and the stick. To guarantee their loyalty, however, Heydrich was determined to bend the Czechs to his will. But first he would bring them to their knees.

True to his word, Heydrich's vision of horror quickly became a reality as the stick, clutched firmly in the iron fist of the Nazi security apparatus crashed down on the hapless population. With ferocious energy, the razor sharp talons of the "New SS Order" ruthlessly set about not only crushing any formal or suspected resistance but eliminating those among the intelligentsia and Czech military likely to arouse nationalistic fervor. Heydrich's cold-blooded brutality during this period of inexorable violence and murder impressed even hardcore SS officers, who, unshackled by any legal or moral restraints, carried out their duties with unflagging zeal.

Heydrich's reign of terror was sophisticated, thorough, and relentless. In coordinated security operations the Gestapo dragnet swept nearly 5,000 Czech suspects into the prisons, 400 of whom were immediately sentenced to death and their relatives forced to pay the cost of the execution.

As savage German repression swept across the country, the brutalized Czechs could not comprehend why they were being subjected to such vicious punishment; no matter what they did to placate the "Butcher of Prague," his thirst for blood remained insatiable. Within a matter of weeks the SS began herding the first of Prague's Jews into the ghetto established in the fortress town of Terezin (Theresienstadt) 40 miles to the north. Of the nearly 94,000 men, women and children transported out of Terezin to the death camps during the war, fewer than 3,500 survived to see liberation.

HEYDRICH HAD GIVEN THE CZECHS A CHILLING BUT SHORT-LIVED DEMONSTRATION OF WHAT AWAITED THOSE WHO OPPOSED HIM. IT WAS NOW TIME TO SHOW THE PEOPLE THE BENEFITS OF WORKING LOYALLY FOR THE NAZI REGIME.

President Emil Hacha's reluctant policy of collaboration with the Germans had been instigated to spare the people from this type of senseless bloodshed. His objections, however, to this maelstrom of murderous German oppression, fell on deaf ears; Heydrich and his Czech-hating SS deputy, Karl Hermann Frank, were left completely unmoved by the suffering of the people.

Then, just as suddenly as the storm of SS violence had commenced, it stopped.

Heydrich understood perfectly that the use of terror had its place, but he also knew that for psychological reasons there would have to be a strict time limit so as not to push the people "to the point of explosion and self destruction."

By design Heydrich had given the Czechs a chilling but short-lived demonstration of what awaited those who opposed him. It was now time to show the people the benefits of working loyally for the Nazi regime—the carrot.

With visible repression dramatically toned down and a steady decrease in the number of executions, Heydrich set about cultivating and fully exploiting the vital support of the working classes. To maintain a state of appropriate subordination, he deemed that "the Czech workers must be given their grub," and to this end he set in motion a "shop floor campaign" to ensure that they received it.

Those employed in the armaments field began receiving extra rations and enticing labor incentives while their families benefited from far-reaching social reforms and state-funded welfare schemes. The now seemingly benevolent Heydrich toured the factories, heaping praise on the diligent staff and encouraging them to strive for even greater productivity. On a cultural level, he openly sponsored the arts and became a regular attendee of the opera, where he and his wife were fêted like royalty.

Heydrich's purely cosmetic veil of generosity left the Czechs completely bewildered, but they nonetheless wholeheartedly embraced this sudden change; many may have loathed Heydrich but few harbored any desire to actively resist him.

It was soon apparent that the carrot was having a very positive effect; the increased volume and quality of weapons being churned out of Czech factories staggered even the Germans. The despotic Heydrich, part monster part operational genius, was at the height of his power. With the population pacified and the Czech armaments industry integrated into the war economy of the Reich, Heydrich's stocks had risen enormously in Berlin. Hitler was extremely impressed.

In London, Benes was deeply troubled by reports that Czech industry was openly collaborating with the Nazis. Heydrich's success in binding the nation's lucrative agricultural and industrial resources closer to the Reich was

not only disheartening but also a serious political problem.

Benes feared that in postwar Europe the victorious Allies would neither negotiate with a Quisling nation nor intervene to stop a communist takeover. To obtain bargaining power, Benes would need a dramatic demonstration of Czech resistance to Nazi oppression, but it was easier said than done.

With Heydrich's security crackdown virtually ruling out major sabotage, Benes explored the possibility of assassination. There was no shortage of enthusiastic high-profile Czech traitors to choose from, but to make an impression on the Allies and maximize the propaganda impact, there was really only one viable target —Reinhard Heydrich himself.

The British did not object to the Czech proposal for a political assassination. It was actually part of the SOE (Special Operations Executive) charter, but they were fearful of savage German reprisals. Benes no doubt shared these concerns but in the long-term interests of his nation, he gave Czech military intelligence the order to terminate Heydrich's grisly career. A match had been controversially struck to the fuse; it would remain to be seen whether Benes would take responsibility for the explosion.

In England the SOE had already begun sending Czech patriots back into the Protectorate, but their successes had been minimal. Most agents were quickly killed or compromised and their missions abandoned. Despite this backdrop of dismal failure, the SOE was approached by the notoriously secretive Czech intelligence community to provide logistical assistance.

If the perilous operation, code-named Anthropoid, was to have any chance of success it would need skilled, courageous men who could be relied upon to carry out their orders under extreme duress. After an extensive search, two candidates, Josef Gabcik and Karel Svoboda, were selected. Both were senior Czech NCOs in the Free Czechoslovak Army in Britain and, despite not knowing the nature of the mission, both volunteered without hesitation.

The exiles were anxious to strike as soon as possible, but the British would not move until the two soldiers were adequately trained for the task at hand. The Czechs conceded to wiser counsel but were frustrated by a further delay when Svoboda was injured and had to be replaced by another Czech, Jan Kubis.

The early setbacks for Anthropoid had been difficult for the Czechs to endure, but with the team now finalized, preparations began to move ahead quickly under a cloak of great secrecy—not even the home resistance were informed of the operation.

Gabcik and Kubis underwent grueling training at Cholmondely Castle in Cheshire and at the SOE Special Training School in Scotland. The British believed that with the supremely arrogant Heydrich carelessly spurning normal security precautions he would be at his most vulnerable while traveling in his open-topped car. To this end, the men were trained in the methods of attacking a moving vehicle using a sten gun and modified antitank grenades. The Czechs had been given the best training possible, but it was clear from the outset that the success of a mission like Anthropoid would ultimately rely on the initiative of the assassins. Once they left the aircraft, they would be on their own.

By late December all was in readiness, and the two Czechs boarded a RAF Handley-Page Halifax bomber along with seven other agents destined for operations in the Protectorate. One of these men was the hard-drinking Karel Curda, a man they were destined to meet again but under very different circumstances.

The two agents knew they were undertaking a virtual suicide mission, but as Gabcik climbed into the aircraft he turned to the Czech intelligence officer who had overseen their training. "You can rely on us, Colonel," he said. "We shall fulfil our mission as ordered." A few minutes later the large four-engine bomber took off from Tempsford aerodrome, climbed into the night sky, and soon disappeared into the gloom on its long, hazardous flight deep into occupied Europe.

Hours later the Halifax finally approached the drop zone, but the pilots were confronted by a landscape completely blanketed in snow-obscuring roads, towns, and other vital landmarks. Pinpointing the landing zone was virtually impossible, but rather than abandon the mission the decision was taken to drop the agents at an approximate position and hope for the best.

So, in the early hours of December 30, 1941, the two patriots parachuted into the frigid night sky over the Protectorate, but Gabcik hit the ice awkwardly and badly injured his foot.

It was the worst possible start.

After burying their parachutes, the two insurgents labored through the snow to find shelter.

Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Czech partisan Josef Gabcik stands at attention during an inspection by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Gabcik and three other Czechs chosen for the clandestine operation to assassinate Heydrich underwent extensive training in Britain. LEFT: When Karel Svoboda was injured, another Czech partisan, Jan Kubis (above), was chosen to take his place during Operation Anthropoid. OPPOSITE TOP: Shaking hands following the betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich on September 30, 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (left) and German Chancellor Adolf Hitler (far right) part company after the conference that sealed the fate of the Czech nation. Chamberlain erroneously proclaimed that the deal struck at Munich had preserved peace in Europe. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Aging Czechoslovakian President Emil Hacha was bullied into an agreement that allowed Nazi Germany to assume control of his country without a shot being fired in its defense.

The going was tough, and neither of the men recognized where they were—nothing looked remotely familiar. Eventually stumbling into a quarry, the two dejected Czechs knew that with Gabcik's foot getting worse by the minute they faced an uphill battle to carry out their mission. The mood was grim, but just when all seemed lost they were discovered by the local miller who had been awakened by the British aircraft.

The joy of seeing a friendly face was tempered by the news that they were over 20 miles from Prague and hopelessly separated from their emergency contacts in Plzen. The miller offered to put them in touch with a resistance group in the capital, but the agents hesitated. For security reasons they had been instructed to avoid dealing with the locals, but given their gloomy prospects they had little choice.

Four days later they were spirited to Prague and into the hands of the resistance, which provided new papers, refuge, and medical attention for Gabcik's foot, which would take eight weeks to heal.

At the heart of this resistance network was Marie Moravec who, through her tireless work with the Red Cross and Tuberculosis League, had established vital connections within Prague for her clandestine work. Aided by her 17-year-old son, Ata, "Tante Marie" Moravec was an integral and trusted member of the local resistance, and the two assassins often stayed in her house and grew very close to the Moravec family.

In London, meanwhile, the Czech intelligence service was worried. Six weeks of silence had elapsed since their two agents had arrived in the Protectorate, and if they had been captured or killed, the Czechs would have to send others. The assassination was too important to cancel. In desperation, they finally broke their own rules and radioed the resistance in Prague and were relieved to discover that while Anthropoid had gotten off to a rocky start the agents were in safe hands—it was now a waiting game.

Finally Gabcik was fit enough to move and he and Kubis began secretly making preparations. Long, tedious weeks were spent building a detailed picture of Heydrich's movements, but it soon became apparent that heavy SS security ruled out an ambush either near his villa or in the vicinity of his headquarters in Prague. Their attention, therefore, turned to his frequent travel between his private residence at Panenske Brezany and Prague; but they realized that to complete the picture they would need inside information. Involving outsiders had been strictly forbidden but it was now clearly an unavoidable necessity.

With the aid of the resistance, contact was established with a number of Heydrich's domestic staff who, despite the incredible risk, provided Gabcik and Kubis with Heydrich's timetable and travel habits. These sources proved invaluable, but as the two men were finalizing their plans an unexpected development suddenly threatened the entire operation.

During the long months the assassins had spent in Prague they had refused to divulge the nature of their mission. By late April, however, their intense focus on Heydrich left resistance leaders in no doubt about their intentions. They were horrified. Having barely survived the last wave of SS terror, the resistance could barely comprehend the savagery of German retribution if Heydrich was assassinated; the nation would be plunged into a bloodbath.

In an awkward meeting the two agents were confronted over the matter, and while sympathetic they made it clear that as soldiers they could neither question their orders nor change them—they had come to Prague to kill Reinhard Heydrich, and that was exactly what they planned to do.

In a state of near panic, resistance leaders dispatched a message directly to London pleading for the mission to be cancelled. The issue was allegedly tabled at a high-level meeting in Britain, but despite some opposition the intelligence representatives won the day. The order to kill Heydrich was not revoked. Anthropoid would go ahead as planned.

In early May, a strong rumor swept through Prague suggesting that Heydrich would soon be leaving the Protectorate to pursue new career opportunities in France. The men could not allow him to leave the capital in triumph, but they still had not settled on a firm plan. This unexpected turn of events galvanized the assassins into action, but time was now against them.

With the aid of additional agents Josef Valcik and Adolf Opalka, they decided to lay the ambush at a sharp street corner in the Prague suburb of Liben on a day when Heydrich's movements were known to them, May 27, 1942. They were forced to settle on the ambush site hastily, but their instincts were sound and their choice well founded. The busy route leading to the Vlatva River was isolated from police or military posts and would allow them to escape on bicycles before security forces could react.

The plan was crude but simple; their accomplices would signal Kubis and Gabcik when Heydrich's Mercedes came into sight at the top of the hill. As the vehicle slowed to negotiate the hairpin corner, Gabcik would step forward from the pavement with his sten gun and fire at the vehicle. As a backup, Kubis would use the two specially modified antitank grenades to finish the job if Gabcik failed.

Even at this late stage the local resistance was trying desperately to talk the agents into aborting the attack. As tempers became frayed, the assassins made it clear that nothing would prevent them from completing their mission. The order had been given. The time for discussion was over.

The fateful morning of May 27 dawned bright and clear. Five months had passed since Gabcik and Kubis had arrived in the Protectorate, and as the four men arrived at the

The green Mercedes convertible in which Reinhard Heydrich was riding on the morning of May 27, 1942, lies abandoned at the sharp curve where the assassination attempt took place. The car sustained extensive damage when a hand grenade exploded nearby, injuring Heydrich with fragments of glass, metal, horse hair, and other debris that later caused a fatal infection.

National Archives

The National Archives, United Kingdom

ABOVE: British war artist Terrence Cuneo painted this inaccurate image of the attack on Heydrich, perhaps before details of the event were known in London. Several Czechs are shown firing at Heydrich's car. In reality, only one gun, a Sten carried by Josef Gabcik, was leveled at the car, and that weapon failed to fire. BELOW: The bodies of dead Czechs, innocent victims of Nazi retribution for the death of Heydrich, lie in heaps following the devastation of the village of Lidice. The slaughter of the villagers by the vindictive SS was one of the most heinous war crimes of World War II.

National Archives

ambush site all were aware that this would probably be their one and only opportunity. After a brief discussion, Valcik and Opalka moved up the road to their lookout point. Gabcik casually crossed the road with his sten gun draped under a raincoat and waited at a tram stop near the bend, while Kubis, with two grenades secreted in a briefcase, moved a few yards down the street and loitered in the shade of several large trees. The four men could now do little more than wait for their quarry, who was due around 9:30 AM.

By 10 AM, however, there was still no sign of the normally punctual Heydrich; Gabcik and Kubis began to worry. As the minutes ticked by the tension mounted. Had he changed his travel plans at the last moment? Accompanied by nagging uncertainty, the two men watched as the morning rush hour crowds began to disperse, leaving them standing conspicuously on an empty street.

Finally at 10:32 AM, Valcik signaled that the open-topped Mercedes had come into view. As usual, Heydrich had no security escort other than his bodyguard and driver, SS Oberscharfuhrer (sergeant) Klein. Gabcik immediately moved to the sharpest angle of the street corner —he would be firing from point-blank range.

With the moment of truth now upon them, both men caught sight of a packed tram lumbering up the hill from the Troja Bridge which seemed likely to arrive at the same time as Heydrich; civilian casualties were now a real but unfortunate possibility.

As Klein changed down to second gear at the sharp corner, Gabcik stepped forward, raised the automatic weapon from beneath his raincoat, and squeezed the trigger. Nothing happened. It was jammed. The Czech assassin stood momentarily frozen in disbelief as the vehicle swung around the bend in front of him. Heydrich saw his assailant, but instead of ordering Klein to drive out of the ambush to safety, he called for his driver to stop. It would prove a fatal error in judgment. As the dark green Mercedes ground to a shuddering halt, Heydrich stood up amid the screams of onlookers and drew his pistol to fight it out. Neither of the Germans noticed Kubis toss one of his grenades, but it fell short and exploded alongside the right rear wheel, ripping through the bodywork of the Mercedes and showering Heydrich with debris.

During the confusion, Valcik and Opalka had already managed to slip away unnoticed, but their two comrades at the scene were in mortal danger. Kubis, wounded by the blast from his bomb, lurched toward a railing with blood pouring from his face before quickly getting on his bicycle and dashing down the hill to safety. With Heydrich appearing unhurt, Klein briefly gave chase to the fleeing Kubis. Gabcik was still frozen to the spot holding his useless weapon as Heydrich came toward him. The would-be-assassin was forced to abandon his bike and take cover as bullets began whistling past him. He was trapped.

Heydrich had moved only a short distance toward his assailant, when suddenly he doubled over and staggered to the sidewalk in obvious pain. Gabcik seized the opportunity to make a run for it through the stunned crowd spilling from the tram. When Klein returned from his fruitless chase, Heydrich, his face pale and contorted in pain, pointed out the fleeing Czech and through gritted teeth hissed: "Get that bastard!"

Klein was quickly in pursuit, but the burly bodyguard struggled to keep pace with his nimble quarry. Finally the two men came to grips in the doorway of butcher's shop where Gabcik managed to wound Klein and make good his escape to a prearranged safe house in Prague. Kubis had also made his way to safety, where his wound was treated. Both men were bitterly disappointed that Heydrich was still alive.

At the scene of the attack, Heydrich tried to walk but only succeeded in stumbling like a hopeless drunk before collapsing across the bon-

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A group of high-ranking Nazis involved with the brutal government of the Czech protectorate converse during a dinner gathering. At center is Obergruppenführer Karl Hermann Frank, who was hanged as a war criminal in 1946 for his role in the massacre at Lidice.

net of his wrecked car then sliding to the pavement. Dozens of Czechs stood watching impassively as the most powerful man in Prague lay writhing on the ground in agony, but not a soul moved to help him. Finally, a young women and an off duty police officer commandeered a truck and lifted the gravely wounded tyrant into the small cab. The jolting trip to Prague's Bulkova Hospital proved too painful, so Heydrich was unceremoniously put in the back on his stomach among tins of floor polish.

In the hospital's emergency ward an initial examination found lumps of wire, felt, horsehair, glass, and leather firmly imbedded in Heydrich's back and side, but his prognosis seemed good. The shrapnel appeared to have inflicted only flesh wounds. Later x-rays, however, revealed that there was potentially serious internal damage: a broken rib, a ruptured diaphragm, and a metal splinters in his spleen.

Reports that a German general, perhaps the Reichsprotector himself, had been wounded in an attack reached Gestapo headquarters at about 10:45 AM. Initially at least, it was not taken seriously, but when Gestapo agents arrived at the hospital to find Heydrich actually there, the situation changed dramatically. SS troops were immediately dispatched to secure the hospital and surrounding areas, while the top Nazi surgeon in Prague was summoned to perform emergency surgery.

As Heydrich was wheeled into the operating theater, the Gestapo were methodically sealing off the ambush site, rounding up witnesses, and piecing together the sequence of events. Evidence recovered from the scene included a fused bomb and a sten gun that pointed toward British involvement with Czech agents the prime suspects.

By the afternoon of May 27, news of the assassination attempt had traveled far and wide. People were initially stunned, but as the shock wore off, they were overwhelmed by paralyzing fear. However, it was not only the Czechs who were left badly shaken by the attack. With the declaration of martial law, the sudden state of emergency seemed to have sown the seeds of panic throughout the Protectorate's German security forces. Two senior Gestapo officers who had arrived from Berlin that day were taken aback to find "chaos of catastrophic proportions" in Prague. They were surrounded by senior SS officers who appeared to have completely lost their heads as they frantically issued wild orders for drumhead court martials, mass executions, and wholesale arrests. It was painfully obvious to the two Berlin detectives that few among the local authorities had any idea what to do.

When details of the attack reached Hitler at his headquarters in East Prussia, he vowed to slaughter more than 10,000 Czechs; Himmler demanded that 100 prisoners already in custody be executed that very night. The savagery of the Nazi leadership was fueled by fear. The specter of assassination had reached the most powerful men in Nazi Germany for the first time.

Karl Hermann Frank, a high-ranking Czech Nazi, actually resisted calls for wholesale reprisals, but not on humanitarian grounds. He was concerned they would not only disrupt vital armaments production but also play into the hands of the exiles and provide damaging propaganda. Hitler reluctantly agreed to Frank's proposal for "selective terror" but remained in a bloodthirsty mood. If the Czechs did not like Heydrich, he raged, he would send them someone a great deal worse. His choice was SS General Kurt Daluege, commander of the uniformed police and a man well credentialed in the art of terror. With fears of open revolt, Daluege's first public announcements left the inhabitants of Prague in no doubt that he was firmly in control and would stop at nothing to maintain the security of the state.

The 10 million crown reward for the arrest of the assassins came with a warning stating that anyone who aided the assassins or withheld information would be executed along with their entire families; more than 462 death sentences were soon carried out to reinforce the threat. In the frightful period following the attack, dubbed the Heydrichiada by the Czechs, the Gestapo and SS literally tore the capital apart in search of Heydrich's attackers. The largest manhunt in the history of the Third Reich resulted in at least 36,000 homes being raided and over 13,000 civilians being arrested.

Under Daluege, the violent German rampage seemed to have no boundaries—but in actual fact, Frank ensured that a tight rein was kept on reprisals. Believing that an implied threat would be as effective as the act itself, he ensured the Czechs remained in a constant state of nervous tension by orchestrating a rumor campaign warning of the dire consequences soon to befall the nation if the assassins were not surrendered. He also saw to it that the executions, of which there were hundreds, were not as random as many thought. Mindful of pushing the people over the edge completely, he stage-managed the killings by directing that only "anti-Nazi elements" be eliminated. He wanted to promote the perception that those Czechs who were loyal to the Reich would have nothing to fear. The reality for the population, however, was that as the death lists grew ever longer no one seemed to be safe no matter how loyal they had been.

The Czech exiles in London learned of the attack through Prague radio on May 27. Even though Heydrich was still alive, Benes was buoyed by the news that he had been wounded, labeling it a clear rejection of Nazi rule and a warning that no one was beyond the reach of Allied justice. For the tens of thousands of Czechs enduring the horrific consequences, these inspiring words from the safety of far-off London carried little weight. Many who had been brutalized to the point of despair prayed that Heydrich would recover in the forlorn hope that it would bring an end to the murderous Nazi retribution.

Their prayers would not be answered.

Despite the best efforts of his doctors, Heydrich's condition suddenly plummeted as septicemia took hold. Neither morphine nor transfusions could control the blood poisoning or his excruciating pain. Finally, a week after the attack, on June 4, Heydrich died.

As news of the tyrant's death swept through the Protectorate, the horrified Czechs braced themselves for a fearful new wave of terror; many anticipated the decimation of their entire nation. Savage German retribution was, however, put on hold as the Third Reich paused to bury one of its most evil sons. Presented to the world as the greatest Nazi martyr since Horst Wessel, Heydrich's coffin was paraded on a gun carriage through the Old Town on June 7, then put aboard a black-creped funeral train for the journey to Berlin. In an attempt to placate the Nazis, Emil Hacha and other Czech government officials would escort the body to Germany.

Two days later an emotional Himmler delivered a lengthy eulogy at Heydrich's lavish state funeral within the Mosaic Hall of the New Reich Chancellery. Hitler, more distressed than anyone could remember, was apparently too overcome to say more than a few words and bestow upon the slain SS general the highest class of the German Order, the Reich's most distinguished medal.

Immediately following the ceremony, Hacha and his ministers endured a ferocious tirade from Hitler. The German leader, who had worked himself into an uncontrollable rage, made it clear that if the Czechs did not hand over the assassins he would think nothing of deporting the entire population. No one doubted that he meant what he said.

As a brutal warning against further armed resistance, he backed up his threats by ordering the total destruction of the small town of Lidice, 48 miles from Prague. The reprisal action at Lidice, which had been incorrectly connected with the assassins, was to become one of the most notorious Nazi atrocities of the war.

At 9:30 PM on June 9, 1942, SS troops and security police cordoned off the sleepy mining village, then dragged the families from their homes. The women and children were separated and placed inside the local schoolhouse, the men and older boys in a barn. At dawn the next morning the males were led out in groups of 10 and all 170 were shot. To speed up the killing a further 26 where burned alive in a nearby barn, while another 11 men returning to the village from night shift were also executed. The 200 women of Lidice were deported to Ravensbruck concentration camp, and more than 100 children were either handed over to SS families or sent to the concentration camp in Gneisenau. Only a handful would return after the war.

Having overseen the massacre or deportation of the entire population, the SS set about systemically destroying every building and structure in the village. After removing 84,000 square yards of rubble, they leveled the ruins, ploughed them over, and planted grain. With its name removed from the maps of the Protectorate, Lidice had been erased from the face of the earth.

The blood sacrifice of Lidice, however, did not satisfy the Nazi thirst for vengeance, and the campaign of ruthless terror ground on relentlessly. Frank ordered the use of loudspeakers to broadcast the names of people who had been executed each day. In the evenings, crowds gathered somberly at newsstands to read the latest list of those condemned to the same fate. More than 1,360 would be executed in Prague alone.

FRANK WAS UNDER ENORMOUS PRESSURE FROM BERLIN TO IMMEDIATELY INSTIGATE MASS REPRISALS. HE HAD IN FACT RECEIVED AN ORDER FROM HIMMLER DEMANDING THAT 30,000 POLITICALLY ACTIVE CZECHS BE ARRESTED AND EXECUTED.

Meanwhile, as the German security net tightened, the pressure on the fugitive Czech agents intensified. Not only were many of the safe houses in the city compromised, but roadblocks and train security made escape from Prague a virtual impossibility. In desperation, the local resistance organized temporary refuge for the assassins and a handful of other Czech agents in the crypt of St. Cyril and Methodius Church in central Prague. The lay preacher, Vladimir Petrek, had agreed to smuggle in the men, but not all of them could be found. Karel Curda, whose team had arrived in the Protectorate on the same aircraft as Gabcik and Kubis, had fled the German crackdown and remained at large.

The seven fugitives settled into the dank catacombs as best they could, but the mounting death toll coupled with the reprisal action in Lidice, left Gabcik and Kubis absolutely distraught. They had fulfilled their mission but

FAR LEFT: SS General Kurt Daluege was appointed to the post of Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia following the death of Reinhard Heydrich. He was convicted of war crimes and died at the end of a rope after the war. LEFT: The Nazis sadistically tortured teenager Ata Moravec, who assisted his mother, Marie Moravec. Marie was a key player in the Czech resistance network, who aided the Heydrich assassins after they were parachuted into Czechoslovakia by the British. BELOW: Reinhard Heydrich, the brutal Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, was given a lavish Nazi state funeral in June 1942. In this photo, Adolf Hitler extends a Nazi salute.

All: National Archives

now, overwhelmed by a sense of personal responsibility and guilt, they decided to commit suicide in a park with placards around their necks stating they were Heydrich's killers. They were talked out of it. Noble as the gesture was, it would hardly have satisfied the Nazis, who clearly wanted the assassins alive. With plans afoot to spirit them out of the city in a matter of days, there was nothing they could do but sit tight and wait.

The Gestapo, in the meantime, was at its wits end trying to break open the case after nearly two weeks had failed to unearth a single worthwhile lead. As the investigation ground to a complete standstill, Frank was under enormous pressure from Berlin to immediately instigate mass reprisals. He had in fact received an order from Himmler demanding that 30,000 politically active Czechs be arrested and executed. He balked at such action, but with Hitler's patience wearing thin, time was running out. He needed to find the assassins quickly.

A new approach was needed as Prague's frustrated criminal police came to realize that their draconian measures were perhaps working against them; no one would come forward for fear they would be executed for having previously withheld information. In a complete change of tactics the authorities offered an amnesty to anyone prepared to denounce the assassins or provide information leading to an arrest. This new approach proved an instant success. Whether motivated by greed or fear, informers came forward providing thousands of statements, among which the Gestapo discovered one anonymous letter that read: "Cease searching for the assassins of Heydrich; cease arresting and executing innocent people. I can't stand it anymore. [The assassins] are a certain Gabcik from Slovakia, and Jan Kubis ... from Moravia."

The writer was himself a fugitive Czech parachutist, Karel Curda. His nerve had broken in the wake of the mass murders and terror that had followed Heydrich's attack and, fearing for his life, he had turned traitor.

When the Germans did not act on his letter, Curda decided to go in person to the headquarters of the Prague Gestapo housed within the bluestone walls of the notorious Petschek Palace. Shaking with fear, Curda tried to tell the Gestapo that he knew something about the killing, but his stuttering was so severe the Germans could barely understand a word he said. Their skepticism immediately vanished when the Czech correctly identified Gabcik's briefcase from 20 similar ones.

Having started down the path of betrayal, Curda could not stop and the Gestapo ensured that there was no turning back. Under intense questioning and beatings, he confessed to being an agent himself but, disillusioned with the exiled government in London, he had come forward to save his family from execution. While unable to provide the exact whereabouts of the assassins, his traitorous revelations divulged the locations of several safe houses including the home of the Moravec family.

At 5 AM on June 17, the authorities converged on the home, but Marie Moravec managed to commit suicide before she could be questioned. The attention of the Gestapo turned to her teenage son, Ata, who was brutally beaten, tortured mercilessly and plied with alcohol. The teenager stood up manfully to his tormentors but finally broke when the Germans produced his mother's severed head floating in a fish tank. The horrific sight pushed Ata over the edge, and he let slip that the resistance sometimes used the catacombs of the St. Cyril and Methodius Church in Prague as a refuge.

It was the break the Germans had been waiting for, and the area around the church was immediately cordoned off by more than 750 Waffen SS troops in full battle order. Just after 4 AM on June 18, the Gestapo began a thorough search of the small baroque church but initially found nothing. When they turned their attention to the choir loft, however, they were greeted by a grenade followed moments later by small arms fire.

The SS troops stationed outside immediately raked the church with frenzied gunfire of their own, shattering windows and alerting local residents that something was going on. The Gestapo agents took cover and then beat a hasty retreat from the church. SS troops took their place, and after a two-hour close-quarter battle, Adolf Opalka, Jan Kubis, and another agent, Jaroslav Svarc, were killed or mortally wounded.

The Germans, believing more agents were in the church, discovered the concealed entrance to the catacombs beneath a flagstone. The only other access to the crypt was through an airshaft on an outer wall that opened onto the street. The SS wanted to storm the tomb, but the Gestapo were desperate to take the remaining agents alive, particularly Gabcik. They were anxious to prove to the world that Heydrich's attack was not carried out by disgruntled local Czechs, but rather assassins trained and flown in from England. The Gestapo tried persuasion, promising the men would be treated as prisoners of war if they gave themselves up.

"We are Czechs; we shall never surrender!" was their defiant answer. Curda was then brought to the scene and approached the opening in the wall to speak to his former comrades: "Surrender boys, it'll be all right," he told them. A hail of bullets was their response.

Karl Hermann Frank and other high-ranking Nazi officers examine the bodies of the Czech partisans they had surrounded in a Prague church. OPPOSITE: Following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, eight Czech partisans were tracked to the Church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague after they were betrayed. Surrounded, the Czechs resisted but were eventually either killed by the Germans or committed suicide rather than surrender.

The crypt appeared almost impregnable, so the Germans commandeered the Prague Fire Brigade to flood the burial chamber. The agents, using a ladder to reach the opening in the wall, quickly cut the hoses and pushed them out through the narrow stone vent. Tear gas was used, but it too was thrown back out. With the Germans unable to get in and the parachutist's unable to get out, the tense standoff dragged on for hours.

Frank, who had arrived on the scene in person, was furious that a handful of Czechs were very publicly holding at bay hundreds of elite German troops. He ordered a redoubling of efforts, but before the fire brigade tried again grappling hooks were used to drag the ladder from inside the crypt, preventing the agents from reaching the hoses.

SS troops battled their way to the crypt from inside the church but were beaten off with casualties. As the SS prepared to go back in for a final confrontation, onlookers on the street heard four shots ring out from within the catacombs. The trapped men had tried to dig their way through a wall toward the sewer, but with their ammunition now spent and water rapidly filling the crypt, time had run out. They chose to commit suicide with their pistols rather than surrender. Shortly afterward, the wet and bloody corpses were recovered and laid out on the pavement where the turncoat Curda was on hand to identify Valcik and Gabcik.

With Heydrich's assailants dead, the people of Prague were desperate to bring an end to further German reprisals, and more than 250,000 Czechs took part in a mass rally in Prague's Wenceslas Square, swearing an oath of allegiance to the Third Reich. A small group of Hacha's puppet government officials even appeared in front of the cameras singing the Czech National Anthem with their hands raised in the Nazi salute.

However, neither this massive demonstration of loyalty to the Reich nor the death of the assassins satisfied German bloodlust. Throughout that long awful summer, the reprisals continued. In late June, 500 SS troops and police converged on the small village of Lezaky, which was inhabited by poor stonecutters. The adults were executed, the children killed or resettled with German families, and the village torn down.

In September, 13 church officials and members of the congregation were executed, and later that month 252 relatives and supporters of the dead agents were arrested. During their interrogations, many were confronted with the severed heads of the seven agents impaled on stakes. All were eventually murdered in Mauthausen concentration camp on October 24, 1942.

In all, more than 5,000 Czechs had paid with their lives for the death of Reinhard Heydrich.

For reasons best known to themselves, the Allies, with the support of the Czech government in exile, generally attributed Anthropoid to members of the local resistance and hailed the attack as a symbol of Czech opposition to Nazi tyranny. The role of the specially trained agents was never mentioned.

The assassination, coupled with the highly publicized destruction of Lidice and Lezaky, did help the Czech cause in two important ways. It not only dispelled any doubt that Czechoslovakia was on the side of the Allies, but created worldwide outrage and sympathy for the Czechs that helped Benes secure the political concessions for which he had fought tenaciously since 1939. The expectation, however, that the attack would breathe new life into the Czech underground movement was proven to be sheer folly. The home resistance was already hopelessly crippled by Heydrich, and in the wake of his assassination the SS annihilated most of what remained—but not all.

In May 1945, the smoldering embers of the resistance movement reignited to brutally settle old scores. Karl Hermann Frank and Kurt Daluege tried to escape justice but were returned to Prague and hanged in 1946. The unrepentant Karel Curda, who had received 5 million crowns for betraying his comrades, was convicted of high treason and executed. Emil Hacha would die a broken man in a Czech prison in June 1945.

Heydrich was the highest ranking Nazi to be assassinated by resistance forces during the war, but in postwar Czechoslovakia the public outrage over the reprisals was so intense that few London exiles would admit any connection to the operation. They had perhaps taken their lead from the ailing Eduard Benes himself, who, following his reelection as the nation's president, avoided the topic all together and in fact refused to speak about the matter at all.

In time, a conspiracy of silence would descend over the whole tragic affair, but to this day Anthropoid remains the subject of passionate historical debate.

Imperial War Museum

The Czechs, however, did not direct their anger at the four assassins. More than 60 years later these men are still revered as national heroes and are commemorated by memorials in both Great Britain and the Czech Republic, the crypt within St. Cyril and Methodius Church in Prague being one of the most moving.

As for Reinhard Heydrich, in death as in life his name will forever remain connected to not only the murderous regime that created him but to the courageous Czech patriots who brought about his demise. It is perhaps fitting that within Berlin's Invalidenfriedhof Cemetery the grave of one of history's most evil mass murderers remains to this day unmarked, untended, and largely unknown.

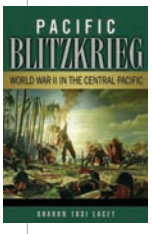
Australian author Richard Rule is a frequent contributor to World War II History. *He resides in Melbourne.*

By Christopher Miskimon

Combined Operations

The U.S. Army carried a large combat burden during the war in the Pacific.

THE ISLAND FIGHTING OF THE PACIFIC WAR IS OFTEN PORTRAYED IN THE popular media as the sole province of the United States Marines. Without doubt, they deserve their hard-won accolades. The truth is that prosecuting the war against Japan on land was a joint effort between the USMC and the U.S. Army with much of the overall control under the purview of the U.S. Navy.



In terms of raw numbers, the Army had many more troops in theater than the Marine Corps; it brought the bulk of the manpower while the Marines had prepared the amphibious doctrine and expertise needed to get American forces ashore across the various islands they stormed. Each service had its own doctrine, tactics, and specialized equipment. Further, each had its own prerogatives and goals. Unfortunately, both branches also had leaders more concerned with their own service's interests than the ultimate goal of victory, and fortunately each had leaders who understood winning the war was more important than inter-service rivalry.

How all of this came together is the subject of Sharon Tosey Lacey's new book, *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific* (University of North Texas Press, Denton, 2013, 282 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $27.95, hardcover). The book is a study of the high-level leadership of both services and how they adapted to combined operations. It was at times a rocky road, but ultimately the effort bore fruit. Each chapter is a case study of a combined Army-Marine operation focusing on the leaders, training, and results of each battle.

From the beginning of the war, the "Germany First" policy meant the Pacific Theater would have a smaller share of the resources. When the Japanese began experiencing setbacks in mid-1942, however, the U.S. high command decided to seize the opportunity and blunt the enemy offensive. This began at Guadalcanal, where Marines began the counteroffensive and soldiers arrived later. This initial effort went well; the Marines' General Alexander Vandegrift and Army General Alexander Patch worked well together with no sign of rivalry, focusing on getting the mission done. This was all the more important because the planning and training for the invasion were done quickly and with shortages of almost everything.

Following operations resulted in victory despite the problems encountered. Divisions seldom were together for preinvasion training since they were usually spread across numerous islands. This gave them little chance to work out doctrinal and training differences. Often, last-minute decisions from higher headquarters shortened training time or sometimes did not account for the real situation on the ground. Many of these issues were simply the result of quickly evolving wartime conditions; some problems were encountered due to the rivalry between General Douglas MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific command and Admiral Chester Nimitz in the Central Pacific. While this book is focused on the Central Pacific, MacArthur's efforts to acquire resources and draw attention to himself affected events and are mentioned in the book.

Although the joint operations after Guadalcanal—Tarawa/ Makin, the Marshall Islands, and Saipan—were won, problems with Army/ Marine discord continued, coming to a head on Saipan. Each operation has its own chapter, and the various facets of planning, training, and the attack are discussed. At this point, the author concentrates largely on the relationships and conflicts of the senior officers involved.

U.S. Army troops of the 2nd Battalion, 165th Infantry, struggle to shore on Butaritari Island November 20 , 1943.

Particular focus falls upon Marine General Holland Smith, nicknamed "Howlin' Mad" by

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By Steven Wuzubia; Health Correspondent;

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his Marines. Smith was charged with training and administrative duties over the combined ground forces in the Central Pacific and eventually commanded them in combat. He had a dislike for the Army, which appeared to color his decision making and created much animosity and argument among officers in both services. He often criticized Army units for moving too slowly in combat, and several times accused them of cowardice. This came to a head on Saipan when he relived the commander of the 27th Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Ralph Smith. This "Smith vs. Smith" controversy even filtered down to the lower ranks and into the press, causing acrimony most. As a result, while Holland Smith would command Marines at Iwo Jima, he was taken out of consideration for the war's last big battle.

For the Okinawa operation, an Army general, Simon Bolivar Buckner was selected. The sheer size of the invasion meant this attack would require that the majority of troops be soldiers. Buckner was known for his lack of interservice animosity and even selected a Marine as his second in command. Like Guadalcanal, this last fight was marked by relative harmony among senior leaders.

This book is a good choice for anyone interested in the higher decision making and planning of the island-hopping campaign in the Central Pacific. The author, while clearly disapproving of Holland Smith's actions, takes pains to portray him as an otherwise effective officer whose inability to overcome his bias against the Army colored his otherwise good service. The faults of Army and Marine officers are given equal attention, as are their strengths, providing a balanced view. The work is insightful and the arguments well reasoned.

The Music of World War II: War Songs and Their Stories, Sheldon Winkler, Merriam Press, Bennington, VT, 2013, 125 pp., photographs, bibliography, $14.95, softcover, $4.99 digital PDF from the publisher.

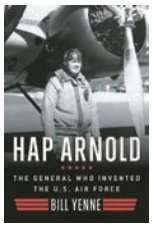
Music has always been a part of the experience of war. Songs of patriotism, propaganda, and the personal understanding of war and the loss it brings appear almost with the first shots of a conflict. During World War II, radios and phonographs were widespread, and music was used widely in films and cartoons of the day. This new book explores the music of this conflict, telling the stories of how a number of popular songs came to be, what made them so well loved at the time, and describing the origins of songs still widely known today that originated in the dark days of the early 1940s.

Once America entered the war, most of its effort went into achieving victory. The entertainment industry was no different; in the days before television, music had great power to influence. Existing songs, such as "God Bless America," found new life. Originally written for a 1917 musical while Irving Berlin was in the Army, it sat unused until Kate Smith, a contemporary singer, sought out a patriotic song. It quickly became a hit and is still a well-known standard today. Meanwhile, composers feverishly worked to create original pieces as well. Tunes such as "Rosie the Riveter" and "The Ballad of Roger Young" memorialized the war's participants, combatant and civilian, both real and representative.

Perhaps the most valuable purpose of music was in the relief it gave from everyday work and worry. "Der Führer's Face" was a song created to accompany a Donald Duck cartoon but proved immensely popular on its own. Performed by Spike Jones and the City Slickers, the song has a humorous tone still able to make people laugh today. The cartoon won an Academy Award in 1943 but has since disappeared from view. The song lived on, introduced to the

children of the wartime generation on record players. This book is a good choice for anyone interested in the stories behind some of the greatest music in American history.

Hap Arnold: The General Who Invented the U.S. Air Force, Bill Yenne, Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2013, 324 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover.



General Henry "Hap" Arnold is one of only five Americans to wear five stars on their shoulders and the only one to wear them in two branches of the U.S. armed forces. He began his career in the Army, entering West Point in 1903. Upon graduation he was assigned to the infantry and served in the Philippines. In 1911, he volunteered for pilot training, then part of the Signal Corps. He received instruction from none other than Orville Wright, one of the inventors of the airplane. From there, his rise as an early proponent of American air power began.

His nickname, "Hap," was a contraction of the word "happy"; Arnold was good natured, and he was given the sobriquet by movie crews when he was flying in films. During World War I he helped organize the infant Air Corps, and he spent the interwar years keeping it alive. His competence kept him on a steady trail upward, and by 1938 he was a brevet major general and the chief of staff of the Air Corps. In this position he oversaw the transformation of that service from a small force of mostly obsolete planes to the most powerful one in the skies. Afterward he led the Air Corps as it became the Air Force.

How all that happened is the subject of this book, and it is well done. The research is detailed and the book well written and easy to read. Arnold is probably the least known of the five-star generals; hopefully this work will help to correct that.

Salerno 1943: The Allies Invade Southern Italy, Angus Konstam, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2013, 96 pp., maps, photographs, illustrations, index, $21.95, softcover.

Osprey's Campaign Series covers the major battles of history, giving a general overview of an engagement while retaining a fair level of detail. This volume covers Salerno, part of the larger invasion of southern Italy in the autumn of 1943. The attack was meant to put a major force ashore near a usable port, in this case Naples. The Italian govern-

ment had just surrendered, giving hope Italy could be taken with little bloodshed. As the British and American soldiers of the landing force went ashore, they likewise hoped there would be only surrendering Italian soldiers awaiting them, eager for the ordeal of the war to be over. Their wishes for a peaceful landing were in vain.

The German Army, long expecting an Italian capitulation, had planned for it and moved quickly to disarm Italian units and take their place defending the long Italian peninsula. When the Allied soldiers arrived at Salerno, dug-in German troops awaited them. These German units were mainly the remnants of those recently fighting in Sicily; while still rebuilding from that battle, they were experienced, tough, and partially mechanized.

While the Allies got ashore and quickly established a lodgment, German counterattacks foiled their attempts to move inland and quickly placed the beachhead in jeopardy. The relatively untested Anglo-American units were hard pressed to hold back the Axis onslaught. In the end, some bitter defensive fighting coupled with massive artillery and naval gunfire support combined to hold off the Germans until their strength was spent and Montgomery's Eighth Army approached from a separate landing point to the south, forcing the Wehrmacht to withdraw.

Patton's Third Army in World War II: A Photographic History, Michael Green and James D. Brown, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2013, 288 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, index, $24.99, softcover.

This coffee table book delivers exactly what the title promises: the story in pictures of the Third Army's offensive across Europe from France into Germany. The flamboyant and volatile General George S. Patton, Jr., had been sidelined before D-Day due to a number of politically insensitive remarks and actions. Still, his acknowledged skill meant he would be returned to active service almost seven weeks after the invasion. From there, he led Third Army in a significant contribution to the eventual victory in the European Theater.

Divided into chapters covering specific periods, each has text to explain Third Army's actions during the specific time. While the text is good, it is not the point of this book. As intended, the illustrations stand out. Often, books involving Patton tend to focus on the armored forces that made him famous. These photographs highlight infantrymen, medics, artillerymen, and the Germans they fought, with many pictures showing up-close views of individuals rather than focusing simply on weapons and equipment.

Maps accompany each chapter to give a sense of location to the book's timeline. This work will satisfy those who enjoy a visual experience of one of America's most famous fighting forces.

Stalingrad: The Death of the German Sixth Army on the Volga 1942-43, French L. MacLean, Schiffer Books, Atglen, PA, 2013, 704 pp., in a two-volume boxed set,

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

The *Panzer General* franchise continues with a free-to-play online game, and *Men of War* returns with more strategic WWII action.

PANZER GENERAL ONLINE

2013 was a strange year for World War II-related gaming. While it's certainly reverted to a more niche subject matter—partly in thanks to all the bigger titles still focusing on modern and future warfare in a neverending arms race to the number one spot—some major contenders have managed to keep it in the spotlight to some degree. Outside of smaller audience fare like the ever-stalwart tactical titles we tend to cover in these pages, games like *World of Tanks* and the more recently open *World of Warplanes* continue to build wider audiences, pulling in folks who might not have otherwise been interested in the topic or time period in question.

PUBLISHER Ubisoft
DEVELOPER Blue Byte
SYSTEM(S) PC
AVAILABLE Now (Beta)

On the tactical end of things, Ubisoft has been working on heading back to a tried and true classic with *Panzer General Online,* which has its roots in the 1994 PC game *Panzer General,* developed by Strategic Simulations, Inc. The series ended up garnering a good following, with the first game earning the Origins Award for Best Military or Strategy Computer Game at the time. After a hefty helping of sequels, *Panzer General* is back, with developer Blue Byte handling the free-to-play *Panzer General Online,* which, as of right now, at least, is still in closed beta, with an open beta set to begin sometime in the near future.

Panzer General Online shares some common aspects with *Panzer General: Allied Assault* and its subsequent board game adaptation. It combines tank combat with a new card-collecting system and single and multiplayer modes. Players can customize their own decks in hopes of developing a solid, personalized army, and collect and trade miniatures of tanks, infantry, and artillery units. Special items like Command Cards can up the ante by calling in air strikes and other maneuvers that turn the tables on the enemy. It basically ends up being the free-to-play digital equivalent of a tabletop game, so anyone who likes more physically bound takes on war might want to look into taking that hobby online.

Those who prefer playing alone can dig into a handful of missions inspired by historical battles, with campaigns available for both the U.S. and German forces. It would probably be a good idea to work on that before diving into multiplayer, anyway, especially if you hope to successfully take on other players and climb the leaderboards. As the first game in the franchise to go free-to-play, *Panzer General Online* is still very much an experiment. Ubisoft acquired Strategic Simulations, Inc., and the *Panzer* brand name back in 2001, and it's nice to see them continue the tradition with an interesting, download-free take on a classic.

maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, $69.99, hardcover.

Schiffer Books is well known for covering the Wehrmacht in exhaustive detail, and this two-volume set is no exception. Stalingrad was a turning point of World War II, pitting two implacable foes in a brutal attritional battle neither was willing to concede. It has been covered often, but new records occasionally turn up from the old Soviet archives to breathe new life into the research. The Germans initially had the upper hand, but over time the dogged Soviet defense wore them down and a counteroffensive left the Sixth Army surrounded and starving. Hitler's refusal to accept reality kept him from allowing them to break out until it was too late.

This book examines the activities of each unit in the Sixth Army on a month-by-month basis for the length of the battle. This is not a book for those who want a general history of the battle. Rather, it is for the serious student of Stalingrad, one who knows the battle already and wants to get into finer detail in the quest to be an expert on the grim fight on the Volga River where the Nazi onslaught was blunted and the slow struggle to push the Germans back began.

"A" Force: The Origins of British Deception During the Second World War, Whitney T. Bendeck, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2013, maps, notes, bibliography, index, $45.95, hardcover.

The A Force was a British military organization charged with implementing tactical and operational deception. The group's origins date to the beginning of Britain's desert war in North Africa against the Italians. The British Army in Egypt was badly outnumbered by the Italian Tenth Army and needed time to prepare for the coming fight. To do this, the British made the Italians think they had greater numbers by making feints, conducting aggressive patrols, and other tricks to impress the Italians.

After this success, the British commander in the theater, General Archibald Wavell, brought in Dudley Clarke, an officer he knew from Palestine and considered an unconventional thinker, just what Wavell thought was needed. Clarke turned out to be the correct choice. Under his direction the unit used established methods such as feints, camouflage, and mis-

MEN OF WAR: ASSAULT SQUAD 2

PUBLISHER
1C Company

DEVELOPER
Digitalmindsoft

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
February 20

Men of War: Assault Squad first arrived in 2011 as an expansion to *Men of War,* which was itself a sequel to *Faces of War,* which had its roots in *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II*. Phew, that's a mighty storied history, and it's continuing with *Men of War: Assault Squad 2,* which is bringing more of developer Digitalmindsoft's real-time strategy action to PC.

Assault Squad 2 aims to up the ante of battle scale with a new eight-versus-eight multiplayer mode that puts massive battles on equally impressive maps. There are also new maps at smaller scales for those who want to keep things intimate, including four-on-four, and even one-on-one multiplayer for that extra personal, grudge-developing touch. It's all tied together with improvements to the game engine and visuals, including some love for oft-requested upgrades such as improved AI movements, a better user interface, advanced shader technology, and advanced multi-core support.

The solo mode in *Assault Squad 2* isn't your typical single-player, instead going for "single-player-style skirmish modes." These modes offer up a variety of scenarios, from straight-up tank combat to sniper missions that take things down a stealthier path. Ultimately, however, it looks like multiplayer will be the true meat of *Men of War: Assault Squad 2*. There's certainly no shortage of *Men of War* games available as it is. Four expansions were released for 2009's *Men of War* alone, including *Red Tide, Assault Squad, Vietnam,* and *Condemned Heroes*. Hopefully *Assault Squad 2*'s improvements bring enough to the table to warrant jumping in all over again.

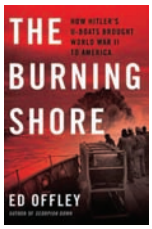
information as well as new ideas. Sonic deception used false noise to simulate military activity, such as tank tracks and engines. Radio and message traffic could mislead the enemy or cause it to think a whole army was in place when in fact it did not exist.

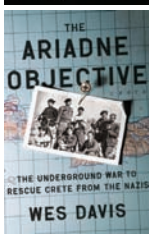
Clarke's A Force was so successful that its methods were adopted throughout the war, being used at Normandy and elsewhere. How these techniques were developed is the subject of this fascinating work. Intelligence work has long been a hallmark of the British war machine; this book gives the reader insight into why this reputation is well deserved.

The Burning Shore: How Hitler's U-Boats Brought World War II to America, Ed Offley, Basic Books, New York, 2014, 312 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $27.99, softcover.

World War II found the United States woefully unprepared to wage modern war on land or sea. This was not only true of actual military readiness in terms of weapons and equipment. America was mentally unready to enter into a conflict with an enemy that had some ability to reach its shores. After Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war on Japan, Germany followed suit with its own declaration of war against the United States. This meant the U-boats of the Kriegsmarine could now range close along American shores in search of merchant shipping.

Many cities along the U.S. East Coast did not enact precautions against U-boats, such as blackouts and shore watches, in a timely manner. That quickly changed once ships starting being sunk, sometimes within sight of the shoreline. The shallow waters of the Continental Shelf made it more difficult for submarines to operate, but American forces were hampered by inexperience and obsolete weapons. It was a bitter struggle, and this book focuses on several of the key players on both sides to give a personal view of what the combatants experienced.



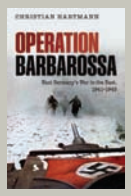


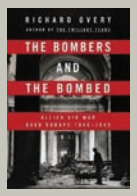
The Ariadne Objective: The Underground War to Rescue Crete from the Nazis, Wes Davis, Basic Books, New York, 2013, 352 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $26.00, hardcover.

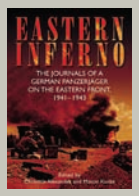
This is the story of a quartet of British intelligence agents posted to Crete after the German conquest. Chosen for no better reason than they spoke Greek, these four men—an archaeologist, two writers, and a scholar—infiltrated the island and joined the Cretan resistance. Once there they embarked on a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the occupying Nazis. They moved often to avoid capture.

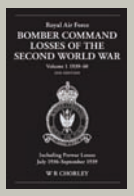
Eventually they undertook a mission to kidnap the German general in charge of the entire island. They succeeded in capturing him, and then attempted to get him off the island without getting killed in the process. How that happened is a fascinating tale that at times reads more like a novel than historical nonfiction. Anyone who enjoys the wartime exploits of the British Special Operations Executive will appreciate this story.

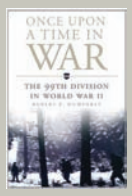
New and Noteworthy











Rising Sun, Falling Skies: The Disastrous Java Sea Campaign of World War II, Jeffrey R. Cox, Osprey Publishing, 2014, 368 pp., $29.95, hardcover. This is an in-depth analysis of the disastrous Allied holding action in the Pacific. This was the first major naval engagement of the Pacific War.

Dog Company: The Boys of Pointe du Hoc, The Rangers Who Accomplished D-Day's Toughest Mission and Led the Way Across Europe, Patrick K. O'Donnell, Da Capo Press, 2013, 305 pp., $15.99, softcover. This is the story of a Ranger company's odyssey across Europe during the war. The author used extensive personal interviews.

Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany's War in the East 1941-45, Christian Hartmann, Oxford University Press, 2013, 184 pp., $21.95, hardcover. This is a concise telling of history's largest military operation. The political prelude is covered in addition to the military events.

The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe 1940-1945, Richard Overy, Viking Press, 2014, 541 pp., $36.00, hardcover. This is the story of the air war that took a terrible toll on both combatants and noncombatants. It includes a chapter on the bomber offensive against Italy.

Eastern Inferno: The Journals of a German Panzerjaeger on the Eastern Front, 1941-43, Edited by Christine Alexander and Mason Kunze, Casemate, 2013, 240 pp., $18.95, softcover. This is a newly discovered war diary of a German soldier and his Eastern Front service, well illustrated with original photos and documents.

Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Volume 1 1939-40, W.R. Chorley, Classic Publishing, 2013, 372 pp., $32.95, Softcover. This is a reference work delving into the losses suffered by the Royal Air Force during the early months of World War II. The level of detail reveals individual bomber crewmen by name.

The Leibstandarte in Greece: The 1st Battalion LSSAH During Operation Marita, 1941, Branislav Radovic and Martin Stiles, Schiffer Publishing, 2013, 239 pp., $69.99, hardcover. This is a photobook of an SS unit's daily activities during the invasion of Greece. Combat and noncombat photos are included.

Once Upon a Time in War: The 99th Division in World War II, Robert E. Humphrey, University of Oklahoma Press, 2014, 376 pp., $24.95, softcover. A history of the division compiled from over 300 hundred veteran interviews, this book details the actions of a unit that fought through Belgium and Germany including the Battle of the Bulge.

Hitler's Spanish Legion: The Blue Division in Russia in WWII, Gerard R. Kleinfeld, Lewis A. Tambs, Stackpole, 2014, 432 pp., $21.95, softcover. This is the story of the Spanish troops who volunteered to fight with the Nazis on the Eastern Front. Much of their service was around Leningrad.

I'll Be Back When Summer's in the Meadow, Melanie Ippolito, Merriam Press, 2013, three-volume set, $39.95, hardcover. This is a three-volume set of the love letters between an Irish woman and a U.S. Army sergeant during the war. The letters detail the war's effect on both of them.

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Israel: A Light unto the Nations

Those who demonize Israel are either misinformed or malevolent

If that proverbial man from Mars came to visit and read the world's newspapers, especially those in the Arab and Muslim world, he would be convinced that Israel was the most evil nation in the world and the source of all of the world's strife.

What are the facts?

A nation to be emulated. The reality, of course, is that Israel is a nation, a society, that should be admired and emulated by many countries in the world. The very fact of how the State of Israel came into being is one of the most inspiring in history. Born out of the ashes of the Holocaust, it has emerged as one of the most advanced, productive and prosperous countries in the world.

The demonization of Israel, assiduously cultivated by the Muslim world, reached a crescendo following Israel's defensive actions in Gaza. Instead of being grateful to the hated Jews for having totally withdrawn, the Palestinian Gazans showed their "gratitude" by almost daily pounding of Israeli towns with thousands of rockets and bombs. After countless warnings, Israel ultimately decided to put an end to this travesty.

> As the prophet Isaiah presaged: "Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations."

When Israel finally did invade Gaza it took the most elaborate precautions not to hurt civilians. As a first in the history of warfare, Israel dropped tens of thousands of leaflets, warning the population and urging it to abandon areas in which military action would take place. The Israeli military made thousands of phone calls urging people to leave areas that would come under attack. But fighting in a densely populated environment is difficult and loss of civilian life is hard to avoid. Hamas fighters wear no uniforms. It is impossible to tell them from civilians. Is a person who allows a rocket launcher in his backyard a civilian or a fighter? And how about using schools, hospitals and mosques as munitions depots and staff centers? The hue and cry of Israel's demonizers of using "disproportionate force" is totally absurd. The ultimate insult, comparing Israel to the Nazis, is freely bandied about by Israel's detractors.

Israel is not an "apartheid state." Another familiar tack of Israel's vilifiers is to call it an "apartheid state," on the model of former South Africa. But that is so ridiculous, so preposterous, it is hard to believe that serious people can countenance it. The exact opposite is the case. Israel is the only country in its benighted neighborhood in which people of all colors and religions prosper and have equal rights. Israel, expending substantial effort, rescued tens of thousands of black Jews from Ethiopia. And it has given assistance and absorbed countless Christian expatriates from Sudan, who escaped from being slaughtered by their Muslim countrymen. Israel's over one million Arab citizens enjoy the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows. They are represented in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, and are members of its bureaucracy, of its judiciary, and of its diplomatic service.

All over the world, Leftists, including in the United States and, sad to say, even in Israel itself, tirelessly condemn and vilify Israel. Why would they do that? First, of course, there is good old-fashioned anti-Semitism. Second, many of those who hate the United States vent their poison on Israel, which they consider being America's puppet in that area of the world. But Israel should certainly get top grades in all areas important to the Left. In contrast to all its enemies, Israel has the same democratic institutions as the United States. All religions thrive freely in Israel. Also, in contrast to all of its enemies, women have the same rights as men. Until quite recently the Chief Justice of Israel's Supreme Court was a woman. One-sixth of the Knesset are women. Compare that to Saudi Arabia, a medieval theocracy, where women are not even allowed to drive cars, where they cannot leave the country without permission of a male relative, and where they can be and often are condemned to up to 60 lashes if the "modesty police" deems them not to be properly dressed in public. Gays and lesbians are totally unmolested in Israel; in the surrounding Muslim countries they would be subjected to the death penalty.

In spite of demonization and vilification by so much of the world, Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations. The State of Israel is the foremost creation of the Jewish enterprise and Jewish intellect that has benefited every country in which Jews dwell, certainly our own country, the United States of America. Second only to the United States itself, Israel is the world's most important factor in science and technology, way out of proportion to the small size of its population. Israeli Jews are at the forefront of the arts, the sciences, law and medicine. They have brought all these sterling qualities to bear in building their own country: Israel. By necessity, they have also become outstanding in agriculture and, most surprisingly, in the military. What a shame that the Arabs opted not to participate in this progress and in this prosperity and chose instead the path of revenge, of Jihad and of martyrdom. As the prophet Isaiah presaged: Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations.

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b-17 missions

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Urbana. By that time, Japan had surrendered and the war was over. He was discharged on September 16, 1945, at Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

Looking back, Bowers has no regrets about serving in the Air Corps or flying as a tail gunner. He does admit to having reservations today about getting into an airplane and attributes his coming home from the war to the strength of prayer.

"I would take the Air Corps over the infantry any day," he says. "We fought at the most for 10 hours and came home to showers and hot food. The living conditions were better. If I had to do it over again, I'd enlist in the Air Corps. No question about it. A tail gunner sits on a wooden bicycle seat and you're on your knees the whole time. Maybe that's why my knees are so bad today. It gets to you, especially when you're sitting in that tail all by yourself, like the ball turret gunner is. He's down there by himself, too. There's nobody to see or talk to. At least the waist gunner can talk to the radioman. But the tail gunner or ball turret gunner can't see or talk to anybody. All I could see was where we had been. And it wasn't like the movies, where everybody is talking to everybody else on their throat microphones. We only spoke to each other when it was absolutely necessary."

"I've only been up in the air twice since the service," he continues. "Both times I flew to Florida to visit my sister. I was a little nervous, but I couldn't say anything because my grandson was sitting beside me. So I had to put on a really good show. But actually I was a little bit tense.

"When we were flying, we naturally didn't know the extent of the bombing. But seeing pictures of it today, especially films of it on television, I realize how devastating it really was. I think it had a lot to do with the way we live today and the freedoms we have. I always think of how many people gave their lives so we can do what we want to do, and have the things that we have.

"When you figure that there were 55,000 American airmen killed, wounded or captured, it's absolutely amazing to me that I came home okay. I credit my wife and her prayers and the hours she spent in church praying. That's what I really do attribute to me coming back: her prayers. I swear that's what got me through the war."

Richard A. Beranty is a U.S. Navy veteran and retired English teacher who lives in Kittanning, Pennsylvania.

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and cartwheeled into a thousand pieces. This splasher was Watkins's 11th career kill, seven of which were Hayabusas.

U.S. Navy aviators also encountered the Peregrine Falcon in combat. Lieutenant Ralph Rosen, piloting a Grumman F6F Hellcat from the aircraft carrier USS *Bunker Hill,* recounted how he shot down one Ki-43 on October 12, 1944: "An Oscar passed almost in front of me in a steep dive, apparently going for some F6Fs below. The Jap pilot apparently did not see our section, and I managed to get on the Oscar's tail. After a short burst, the wing root exploded and then the whole plane caught on fire and went down." This victory was one of three Hayabusas Rosen would claim over Formosa that day.

By mid-1944, the Ki-43 was hopelessly outclassed as a fighter interceptor. This did not stop Nakajima from fitting it with an uprated 1,230-horsepower engine and twin 20mm cannons in a desperate attempt to again improve performance. The Ki-43-III was a case of too little, too late—for now there was a fearsome new threat making its presence known over Japan.

When Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers began flying combat operations, most surviving Ki-43s were withdrawn to the home islands. There they served in an air defense capacity, occasionally downing an American bomber despite the Hayabusa's deficiencies in speed, protection, and armament. Often, fliers chose to ram their targets, a tactic usually fatal to both the Falcon and the B-29.

Other Hayabusas rammed Allied warships in their final role as kamikaze planes during the war's last months. Those remaining soldiered on to the bitter end. After VJ-Day, captured Ki-43s continued to fly for several years in Chinese, North Korean, and Indonesian service. One Indochina-based French air squadron even briefly operated a few leftover Hayabusas against Viet Minh rebels.

Its sleek lines and impressive handling characteristics endeared the Ki-43 Hayabusa to its pilots but masked many serious flaws. An obsolete design, this workhorse could not compete against the increasingly more capable opponents it faced in combat. In the end, Japan's angry little Falcon and the daring men who flew it were simply overwhelmed by superior Allied production, training, and technology.

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

betrayal

Continued from page 37

The reputations of most senior Allied officers soared into the stratosphere in May 1945, and there they remain to this day.

While Eisenhower clearly earned his praise from most members of the Anglo-American alliance, he could never completely fulfill British wishes or make the British Army whole again. That would have forced him to completely shut down Bradley's 12th U.S. Army Group and was never a real possibility. Churchill and Alan Brooke should have recognized this in August or September 1944 and adjusted their strategy accordingly. But they never did.

British imperial pretensions remained at full sail through March 1945. Neither Churchill, nor Brooke, nor Montgomery ever considered, even for a minute, that the Americans might be able to win the war if they simply got out of the way. The British, for reasons that mystify us today, preferred Fleet Street's headlines and their political games to the stark reality of an American victory on the European battlefield.

Try as they might, and Churchill's government made a mighty effort, the British could never convince the Americans that Italy, the Mediterranean, and Eastern Europe were strategically important to the United States. In meeting after meeting the British prime minister and his senior generals argued vehemently for a continuation and reinforcement of the Italian campaign against American determination to strengthen Eisenhower's invasion of France. Churchill harbored visions of Allied armies driving up the mountainous Italian boot through the Ljubljana Gap into the Balkans ahead of the Russians. But British generals who argued so vehemently for the Italian campaign during the war later admitted that they had agreed with the Americans.

The British also wanted American involvement in the Balkans ahead of the Russian occupation. But they had conveniently forgotten how their own foreign policy in the 1930s had ruled out any treaty obligations east of the Rhine. Put another way, the British were accusing the Americans of following the same strategic policy toward Eastern Europe that they had followed in the 1930s.

After Munich, the smaller countries in Eastern Europe were on their own to make political accommodations with either Germany or the Soviet Union. Poland's unlucky geographical position between two powerful dictatorships and its failure to heed the lessons of Munich left it vulnerable on both borders.

As the war was coming to an end, the Americans also proved unwilling to sacrifice the lives of their men in Eastern Europe. Eisenhower refused to occupy either Berlin or Prague ahead of the Russians. According to some British historians, this failure led directly to the poor countries of Eastern Europe falling into Stalin's grasp behind the Iron Curtain. If only General Eisenhower had listened to Prime Minister Churchill and been willing to drive his armies deeper into Europe, the Western Allies could have used the occupation of Berlin and Prague to negotiate a more favorable peace for Poland and saved Eastern Europe from the scourge of communism. At least this is the impression left by some British accounts of those events.

Neither Marshall nor Roosevelt complained when Eisenhower's decisions seemed to favor British interests or left major cities like Berlin or Prague to the Russians. This is not to suggest, as some historians have, that President Roosevelt was indifferent to the fate of Eastern Europe. Roosevelt was a consummate politician, but he clearly recognized the limits to his power in Eastern Europe.

Many Americans held the opinion that a Soviet orbit or sphere of influence in Eastern Europe was not necessarily a bad thing. European countries had attacked Russia three times through the smaller states in Eastern Europe. During World War II, the Germans caused great economic damage to the Soviet Union and had killed more than 20 million Russians. Western Russia was devastated by the German occupation. This gave the Russians the moral high ground in any subsequent negotiations with the Western Allies regardless of well-meaning British efforts to create a democracy in Poland.

It is easy to look back through history with the clarity of vision that hindsight provides and condemn President Roosevelt because he was not able to predict the unfortunate conditions that eventually emerged in communist Eastern Europe. Once Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, it was obvious that either Russia or Germany was going to control the smaller countries of Eastern Europe. Short of war, which was unthinkable, it is difficult to see what Roosevelt could have done differently.

It was the British, not the Americans, who had misplayed their role in European politics. The nonaggression treaty between Hitler and Stalin in August 1939 had been a disaster for British diplomacy. The German attack on Russia in June 1941 was equally unfortunate. This was true in spite of the fact that Great Britain had found a new ally in its war against Nazi Germany. It was obvious that Great Britain's position in Europe had been compromised by the war between Russia and Germany. The winner would control Europe's heartland, and short of a war with the Soviet Union there was very little the Western democracies could do about it.

It was Churchill, not Roosevelt, who traveled to Moscow for an infamous October 1944 meeting with Stalin during which the parties discussed the future of Eastern Europe. In fact, Churchill shared Roosevelt's opinion about the Russians. He told his doctor, Lord Moran, "There is only one course open to us, to make friends with Stalin." One of the results of Churchill's meeting with Stalin was an agreement on the percentages of influence each country wanted over the states in Eastern Europe. Churchill wrote: "Romania: Russia 90%; all others 10%. Greece: Britain (in accord with USA) 90%; Russia 10%. Yugoslavia: 50% - 50%. Hungary: 50% - 50%. Bulgaria: Russia 75%; the others 25%."

Stalin looked at Churchill's paper and then changed the percentage of Russian influence in Bulgaria to 90 percent. Stalin put a tick mark on the paper and pushed it back across the table to Churchill. Churchill thought their document might appear cynical or insolent to those millions of people in Eastern Europe whose futures they had so casually determined. He asked Stalin if they should burn the paper. "No, you keep it," Stalin replied casually. Sadly, Churchill's piece of paper was as meaningless as the piece of paper Neville Chamberlain brought back from Munich six years earlier. Huge Russian armies were already moving into Europe from the east.

The dramatic events of May and June 1940 had shown that Eastern Europe was strategically important to British efforts to secure a balance of power in Europe. However, the British would cede the balance of power in Europe to the Germans at Munich; they would never get it back.

The United States had no prewar treaty with any country in Europe. Nothing General Dwight Eisenhower did in Europe or President Franklin Roosevelt did in Washington, D.C., would change those basic facts. The word "betrayal" implies a broken agreement or a violation of confidence, or of trust, a deception. The countries of Eastern Europe were betrayed, but it was not by the United States.

Author William Weidner is a veteran of the U.S. Army. His book Eisenhower & Montgomery at the Falaise Gap *was selected by the Military Writers Society of America as its book of the month in January 2011 and nominated by the group for its 2011 Non-Fiction History Award. He resides in Grand Junction, Colorado.*

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