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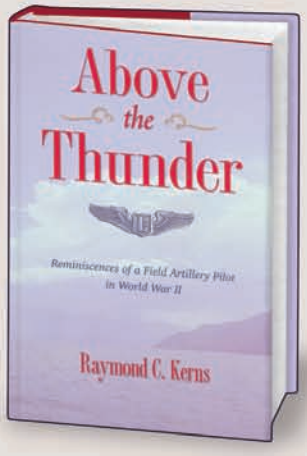


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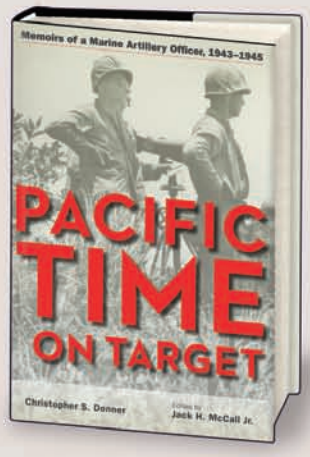


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*Edited by Jack H.McCall Jr.*

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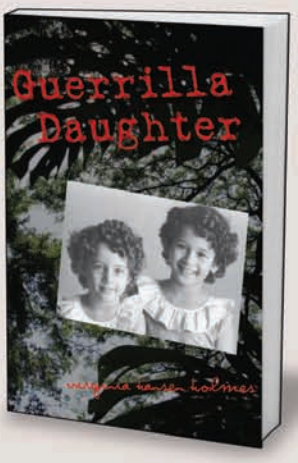


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MILITARY HERITAGE

December 2012

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*COVER: French hussars attack a Prussian position at the Battle of Gravelotte, August 16, 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War. Painting by Edouard Detaille. See story page 20. Photo: bpk/RMN/ Art Resource*


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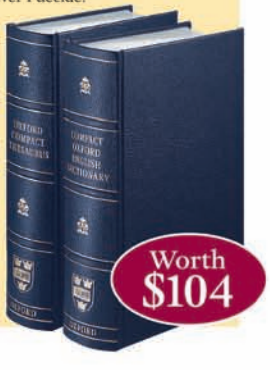

## Shakespeare was not overly concerned about facts, particularly when they contradicted the version of those sitting on the English throne.

ONE OF HISTORY'S—OR AT LEAST LITERATURE'S—greatest villains is King Richard III, the second and last English monarch to wear the white rose of York. Thanks largely to William Shakespeare's devastating portrait of Richard as a "poisonous bunch-backed toad" and "bottled spider" who proudly proclaims himself a villain, the king has come down through the ages as the very epitome of a ruthless and murderous tyrant.

As the familiar cliché has it, history is written by the victors, and following Richard's defeat and death at the Battle of Bosworth Field on August 22, 1485, the victorious Tudor dynasty founded by Henry VII took pains to portray Richard as an evil despot who richly deserved his fate at the business end of a Welshman's poleax. The fact that Richard was the legally crowned king of England and Henry Tudor was a self-appointed usurper made for an inconvenient legal argument. To forestall such complaints, Tudor apologists, beginning with Sir Thomas More, grossly exaggerated Richard's faults to make their champion look better by comparison.

According to the Tudor version, Richard was virtually a serial killer, a hunch-backed freak who murdered his way to power. Among his putative victims were King Henry VI, the last Lancastrian king; Henry VI's son, Prince Edward; Richard's older brother, the Duke of Gloucester; Richard's own wife, Anne; various dukes, lords, and earls; and most infamously, "the little princes," Edward V and the Duke of York, the sons of newly deceased King Edward IV.

The Richard III Society is dedicated to rebutting these charges. How successful the Society is in its defense of Richard depends, as always, on the eye of the beholder. Certainly, the Society makes a strong case for the theory that Henry VI was killed on the orders of Edward IV, his immediate successor, who was the only man in England at the time with the moral and legal standing to order such a killing. The Duke of Gloucester, too, was killed on Edward's orders. There was little that Richard could have done to prevent those executions—even assuming he would have wished to do so.

Less persuasive, perhaps, is the Society's insistence that Richard had nothing to do with the deaths of Edward's young sons, Edward V and the Duke of York. The boys, aged 12 and 9, respectively, were imprisoned in the Tower of London after their father's sudden, unexpected death in 1483. Richard, their uncle and protector, moved to supplant them and ascend the throne instead. (The princes, by then, had been declared literal bastards and therefore were not, legally speaking, heirs to the throne.) At the very least, the princes' suspicious disappearance and presumed deaths a few months later were immensely convenient to their Uncle Richard, who had the means, motive, and opportunity to have them killed.

Whatever Richard's guilt in the long trail of deaths that opened his path to the throne, it is indisputable that he was the legal monarch of England at the time of his death at Bosworth Field. His reported last words—"Treason treason, treason!"—were as accurate as they were despairing. When William Shakespeare came to write *The Tragedy of King Richard III* in 1591, the granddaughter of the treasonous Henry Tudor, Queen Elizabeth I, was on the throne. The play repeats the well-worn charges against Richard while celebrating Henry Tudor's brutal coup d'etat as a restoration of divine order and justice. The brilliance of the writing and the memorable title performances over the years of such legendary actors as Richard Burbage, Edmund Kean, Laurence Olivier, and Ian McKellen have insured that Shakespeare's badly slanted version of Richard III remains the one that endures in popular culture. It is an irony that Richard himself might have appreciated.

*Roy Morris Jr.*

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**CARL A. GNAM, JR.**
*Editorial Director, Founder*

**ROY MORRIS JR.**
*Editor*
editor@militaryheritagemagazine.com

**LAURA CLEVELAND**
*Managing Editor*

**SAMANTHA DeTULLEO**
*Art Director*

***Contributors:***
Kelly Bell, Al Hemingway, Joseph Luster, Blaine L. Pardoe, Gustav Person, Mike Phifer, George T. Raach, Jessica J. Sheets, Peter Suciu, Blaine Taylor, John Walker

ADVERTISING OFFICE:

**BEN BOYLES**
*Advertising Manager*
benjaminb@sovhomestead.com
(570) 322-7848, ext. 130

**MARK HINTZ**
*Chief Executive Officer*

**PHIL PROBST**
*Subscription Customer Services*
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**KEN FORNWALT**
*Data Processing Director*

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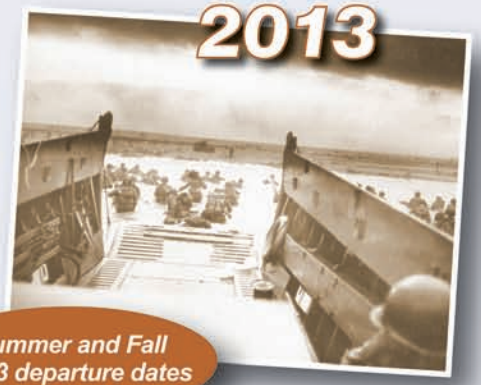

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By Blaine L. Pardoe

# Count Felix von Luckner embodied German naval experience from the era of the windjammer to the dreadnoughts of World War I.

The much-dreaded German World War I merchant raider SMS *Seeadler* in full sail. Right: Count Felix von Luckner.

COUNT FELIX VON LUCKNER WAS KNOWN BY MANY TITLES IN HIS life: runaway, sailor, hero, braggart, fool—even spy. In some respects, all the titles were well earned, although some were more accurate than others. Luckner was born on June 9, 1881, in Dresden, Germany, the first son of Count Heinrich von Luckner. The Luckners were a cavalry family with a long history of service in the wars of Europe. Felix's great-grandfather, Nicolas Luckner, was a marshal of France under Napoleon, leading the green-clad riding troops dubbed Luckner's Cavalry. His name is memorialized on the Arc de Triomphe.


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Felix went on a sailing trip as a boy and fell in love with the sea. His father would hear of no such talk from a Luckner. All the family's men were expected to serve the emperor as cavalry officers. At the age of 13, tensions with his father reached a peak. Stealing his father's raincoat and borrowing enough money from his brother to get by, Felix set off for Hamburg to become a sailor. An old salt named Peter Böemer found the young count wandering the dock and took him under his wing. He tried to convince the boy to go home, but Felix's mind was made up. Boe-

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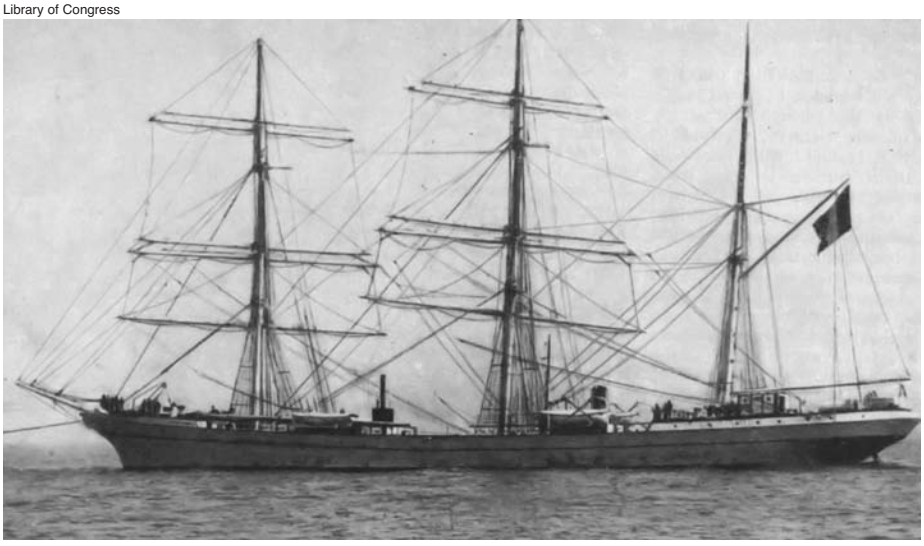
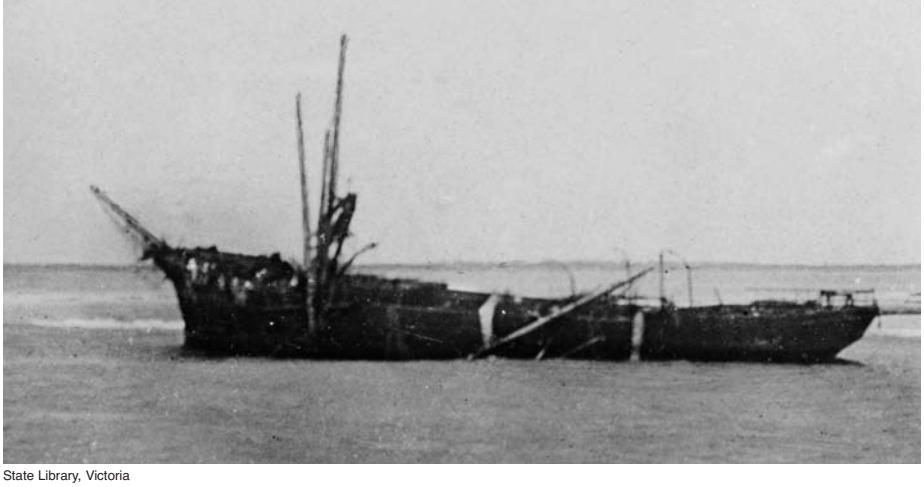


**ABOVE: The French merchant vessel *Charles Gounod,* sunk by Luckner's *Seeadler* off the South American coast on January 21, 1917. BELOW: A crippled *Seeadler* after she was abandoned by her crew at Mopelia atoll in the Society Islands.**



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mer did convince him to take an alias so that his family could not track him down. Felix von Luckner became Phylax Lüdicke, taking his mother's maiden name.

Böemer helped get Felix passage on the Russian merchant vessel *Niobe,* traveling between Hamburg and Australia. Felix's time aboard *Niobe* hardened him to life on the high seas. The windjammer was an older ship and her crew did not speak German. He was given such menial duties as emptying latrine buckets and slopping the pigs in the lower decks. One day Felix fell overboard and nearly drowned. The captain reluctantly brought him back onboard and beat him for his clumsiness.

In Australia, Felix jumped ship and joined the Salvation Army, selling the *War Cry* in the streets. He held a number of odd jobs, from lighthouse keeper to bartender to champion wrestler. During this period he occasionally wrote to his parents to let them know he was still alive. After seven years away from home he returned to Germany and joined the naval reserves. His long-held alias was shed when he discovered that the commanding admiral was an uncle on his mother's side. The admiral took the boy under his wing and helped the young officer graduate.

Luckner returned home wearing the uniform of an officer in the service of the German kaiser. Luckner was given a number of postings, but it was his service as a lifeguard that drew the attention of the royal court. He saved the lives of five people and was awarded several medals for courageous actions. This eventually drew the attention of Kaiser Willhelm II, who met and liked the well-traveled young officer.

When World War I broke out, Luckner was posted as a turret officer aboard SMS *Kronprinz Wilhelm*. Turret duty was a dangerous assignment. Being surrounded by 100-pound bags of explosives in a hot, cramped space under enemy fire was often an express ticket to a quick burial at sea. Luckner fought in the Battle of Jutland in May 1916 and was fortunate enough to be aboard one of the ships that escaped damage.

After Jutland he was made a gunnery officer on the merchant raider *Möwe* (*Gull*). *Möwe* played a dangerous role in naval warfare for Germany—merchant raider. These were merchant ships disguised as neutral vessels. Hidden under a fake superstructure or false crates were good close-range deck guns. Under international law merchant raiders could falsely sail under a neutral country's flag as long as they changed to their own national flags and their crews wore the uniforms of their respective countries in battle. The threat of raiders, proverbial wolves in sheep's clothing, generated enough fear that some merchants would not even risk leaving port.

A year before the Germans had captured a three-masted American windjammer, *Pass of Balmaha*. An enterprising naval reserve officer, Alfred Kling, concocted the idea of using the wind-powered ship as a merchant raider. To most it was a ludicrous idea—this was the age of the battleship. A merchant sailing ship simply didn't stand a chance if it was pressed into combat. But the idea was so out of left field that it just might work—the last thing the Royal Navy would expect.

The German Admiralty needed a qualified captain, someone with experience handling and commanding a large sailing ship. Of all the candidates in the German Navy, Luckner was the most qualified. The problem was that he was too young, 35, to be considered for such a role. The problem was solved by the kaiser himself. He simply predated Luckner's commission so that he was qualified.

*Pass of Balmaha* was commissioned secretly as SMS *Seeadler* (*Sea Eagle*). Her crew was hand-picked volunteers because of the risks of its mission. *Seeadler* was covertly refitted for the assignment. Two 4.2-inch deck guns were mounted on her hull, hidden under tarps to appear like pigpens on the deck. She carried machine guns and a large arsenal hidden below decks. An auxiliary diesel engine was installed so that she could maneuver without wind if necessary. A wireless set was put in, its antenna hidden around the main mast. The captain's mess was an elevator. At the proper signal, the entire floor dropped to the deck below where waiting marines could surround intruders.

The crewmen disguised themselves and the ship as *Hero,* a Norwegian merchant ship. A load of lumber stamped from a lumber yard in Norway was tied down to her deck, further helping to conceal some of her secret armaments. Luckner took an undercover trip to Copenhagen and stole the log of a similar vessel to help in the ruse. The crew was trained to

speak Norwegian and its rooms were filled with trinkets and photos from Norway to help finish the disguise. One crewman even wore a dress and pretended to be Luckner's Norwegian wife, a common sight on a merchant ship.

In December 1916, in a hurricane-force gale, *Seeadler* slipped out of German waters and into the North Sea. The ship was battered by the bitter cold, and her rigging and sails froze almost solid as she rounded England. The vaunted Royal Navy had pulled into port to avoid the storm, and for a while it appeared that *Seeadler* might escape completely.

On Christmas day that changed. The Royal Navy auxiliary cruiser *Highland Scott* appeared. Steaming up with the windjammer, she sent a boarding party to *Seeadler* to check her out. Everyone played their roles to the hilt. Luckner had soaked his own cabin with sea water to explain the unreadable ship's log. The boarding party inspected the ship, never finding the hidden German crew in the lower decks. *Highland Scott* signaled for *Hero* to resume sail.

Luckner was supposed to head toward the Indian Ocean and attack other merchant sailing ships, but when the raider came across the steamship *Gladys Royale,* the crew signaled her for time (to synchronize their chronometers). The ship steamed in close, and suddenly *Seeadler* dropped her deck railing and put the ship under the targeting sights of one of her deck cannons. The German flag went up and the crew dropped its overcoats to reveal German naval uniforms, in compliance with international law.

*Gladys Royale* ignored orders to heave to. Luckner ordered a traditional shot across her bow. After several shots, the captain realized that this was no ordinary windjammer he had encountered and stopped her engines. With precision the crew was removed from the ship, supplies were taken from her, and the ship was sunk. The next day another ship, *Lundy Island,* was spotted. Like *Gladys Royale,* she attempted to get away, but Luckner gave her a warning shot as well. This time there was a surprise on board. The captain of *Lundy Island* knew the doctor of *Seeadler.*

Luckner's string of captures continued as he moved between South American and Africa. Ships from France, Canada, Italy, and Great Britain fell to the German raider as *Seeadler* captured *Charles Gounod, Perce, Antonin,* and *Buenos Aires*. In all his initial captures, Luckner managed to avoid taking lives, even refusing to sacrifice a ship's mascots or pets. He even captured *Pinmore,* a ship that he had sailed on as a young boy years before. With a sense of loss, he gave the order to send his former ship

to the bottom.

*Seeadler* captured two more ships before she came across *Horngarth,* a British merchant steamer. *Horngarth,* which mounted a five-inch cannon, opted to take on *Seeadler.* Luckner's crew lined the deck and pinned down *Horngarth*'s gunnery crew with rifle fire as he tried to maintain close distance. When his crew spotted a wireless shack on the ship, Luckner ordered the ship fired upon. The shack was hit and blown apart, causing the only casualty that Luckner inflicted in his raids, a young sailor by the name of Richard Douglas Page who was fatally scalded by a ruptured steam pipe. The next day, the crew and prisoners mustered on deck for his burial. Luckner conducted the service himself. There wasn't a dry eye on the ship.

With more than 200 prisoners on board, Luckner was worried that the Royal Navy might catch onto his activities. He had temporarily detained a neutral Danish ship, *Viking,* and he knew that once she made port she would tell authorities about the German raider. On March 21, 1917, *Seeadler* captured a three-masted French ship, *Cambronne.* Luckner transferred his prisoners to the newly seized ship. The prisoners were elated at their newfound freedom. They cheered Luckner as he released them for the trip to South America.

As they passed out of sight, Luckner ordered *Seeadler* to head south and made a run for Cape Horn. If he was lucky, he could get through the storms there before the Royal Navy moved to intercept him. The running of Cape Horn from the Atlantic to the Pacific was treacherous in a sailing ship, even one with an auxiliary engine. The Horn was a churning, storm-filled sea of icy waters that challenged even the most hardened sailors. Luck was again on the side of *Seeadler.* The Royal Navy blundered in its patrol pattern, allowing the Germans to escape its net. To help alleviate growing merchant shipping fears and rising insurance rates, the Royal Navy falsely broadcast that *Seeadler* had been sunk.

By the time *Seeadler* entered the Pacific, the war had changed. The United States had declared war on Germany. In June and July 1917, Luckner captured three American merchant ships: *A.B. Johnson, R.C. Slade,* and *Manila.* But *Seeadler* was beginning to experience problems. Her freshwater supply was dwindling, and the crew was showing signs of scurvy and beriberi. Luckner made the decision to put in at an isolated island to reprovision the ship and let his crew rest for a while on land—the first time in seven months. The island he chose was the small atoll of Mopelia in the Society Islands, a narrow circle of land surrounding a pristine lagoon 280 miles from Tahiti.

Library of Congress

**Luckner survived hazardous duty as a turret officer at the Battle of Jutland in May 1916.**

The crew found the lush green island teeming with rats, insects, and other irritants, but also with fresh fruit. It seemed to be a perfect home until one morning when the crew was scraping the hull and the current changed. *Seeadler* slipped her anchorage and smashed into the coral reef, puncturing her thin metal hull in several places. In a matter of hours, the ship was a total loss. The crew and her 46 American prisoners were literally shipwrecked.

The Germans and Americans settled in on the tiny island, creating two tent cities. Even with the salvaged supplies from the ship, the small island would not be able to support the survivors indefinitely. Luckner and his officers came up with a solution. Taking one of the two motor launches that *Seeadler* had carried, they outfitted it with a mast and set sail across the Pacific. With any luck a small crew might find another ship to capture and return to Mopelia, where it could pick up the remaining castaways and continue the mission. If not, the stranded crew might be in a position to capture a ship passing by. Either way, remaining on Mopelia indefinitely was not an option.

After days of outfitting, the tiny launch was christened *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* and ready to go. With five men, Luckner set off across the Pacific in search of another ship to steal. Three days later they reached Atiu in the Cook Islands, representing themselves to New Zealand authorities as Norwegians who had undertaken a gentleman's bet to sail the Pacific in an open boat. They were given supplies and sent on their way. After days in the scorching sun with salt-sprayed clothing rubbing their skin raw, the crew reached Aitutaki and again tried their cover story—only to find it half-heartedly believed by the locals.

*Kronprinzessin Cecilie* set sail again, heading

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

**Luckner, right, negotiates the surrender of his hometown of Halle, Germany, with American Major General Terry Allen in April 1945.**

toward Fiji. The small ship sailed 3,000 miles through vicious storms, baked in the sun. Eventually, the exhausted sailors reached Katafangato, then moved on to Wakaya, where they spotted several ships that might prove vulnerable to capture. Before they could enact a seizure, however, the suspicious locals rallied against them. A constable boarded the boat armed with just a pistol. The crew carried a machine gun from *Seeadler,* as well as several rifles and grenades—enough firepower to take control of the entire island if they wanted. But since they were not under a German flag or wearing German naval uniforms, if they acted against the constable they would be labeled spies or pirates and could be hanged for their actions. Rather than risk his men's lives, Luckner surrendered to the stunned policeman. Eventually, the prisoners were taken to New Zealand, where they became celebrities. Except for an abortive, eight-day escape attempt, Luckner spent the remainder of the war in New Zealand.

The Germany to which Luckner returned was dramatically different than the one he had left three years before. Germany had suffered deeply in the war. Its people were starving, and there were open street battles between Fascists and Communists. Luckner's return brought hope. Here was a man who had sunk more than $25 million worth of Allied ships and cargo. Luckner was a hero in the eyes of his fellow Germans. Children wore hats stitched with his name or that of *Seeadler.*

In an effort to rebuild after the war, Germany sent its most respected hero to America on a goodwill tour to promote German industry and business. It was a stunning success. Former prisoners had told stories of decent treatment under Luckner's command, and he was warmly greeted everywhere he went. Henry Ford gave him a new car as a token of thanks. San Francisco and Miami made him an honorary citizen; the Boy Scouts named him an honorary scout master. Luckner spoke to audiences from school gymnasiums to Carnegie Hall. Americans embraced the gallant count almost as one of their own.

After the Nazi Party took control of his homeland, they hoped Luckner would continue to be a good spokesperson for their cause, but the count refused to disavow his honorary American citizenships or his membership in the Masons, and he was excluded from joining the Nazi Party. He did consent to Nazi funding for a cruise to Australia and his old stomping grounds in the Pacific. The Nazis hoped he would help ease tensions there, but Luckner proved to be an uncooperative spokesman, sometimes causing more public relations problems than he smoothed over. He cared more about revisiting old *Seeadler* triumphs than about promoting the Nazi cause.

Upon his return to Germany, Luckner was ostracized by the Nazis. He was brought before a court of honor on trumped-up charges of misuse of government funds and personal misconduct. Although not convicted, he was placed under house arrest, his books were banned, and he was forbidden to speak in public. He was too popular to kill but far too uncooperative for the Nazis to leverage for their own purposes.

Near the end of the war, the mayor of Halle, where Luckner was living, asked the count to negotiate a safe surrender of the town to the onrushing Americans. Driving through the German lines carrying a scrapbook of his adventures and escapades as a form of ID, Luckner miraculously located Maj. Gen. Terry Allen and negotiated the town's surrender. His actions saved countless lives and preserved Halle as one of the few German cities untouched by the ravages of war.

Hitler issued a death order for Luckner, but it was never carried out. Within a month, Hitler himself was dead, and the Third Reich had fallen. Luckner spent several weeks with General George S. Patton, himself an avid sailor. Return to his hometown became impossible after the Russians took possession of Halle. The count retired to Malmo, Sweden, with his Swedish-born second wife. He returned to Germany only once, to bury his brother.

After World War II, interest in Luckner faded away. Because of the ban on his books, an entire new generation did not know who he was. Even worse, some of his own people saw Luckner as a traitor, and he was cut off from his family estate. An aging symbol of a bygone era, Luckner died in Malmo in 1966. His obituary was front-page news around the world. When he was interred in Hamburg, thousands lined the streets to salute the old "Sea Devil" one last time. □

By Gustav Person

# When Ulysses S. Grant began his Overland Campaign, his advance was aided by the pontoon bridge-building efforts of Union engineers.

THE UNION ARMY'S AMBITIOUS OVERLAND CAMPAIGN BEGAN ON May 4, 1864. It was the fourth year of the Civil War, and Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant had been brought east to command all the Federal armies and end the war. He immediately planned a series of simultaneous offensives to deny the Confederates the ability to redistribute their forces to meet the attacks. Grant knew that Virginia would continue to be the main theater of the war, and he chose to make his headquarters in the field with the Army of the Potomac, commanded by Maj. Gen. George G. Meade. Facing them were General Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.

The campaign did not begin well for the Union, with the Army of the Potomac suffering heavy casualties as it fought its way south from the area around Fredericksburg toward Richmond. Grant sidestepped Lee's army repeatedly, and both armies came to rest at Cold Harbor, eight miles east of the Confederate capital. After the failure of Federal frontal assaults on the morning of June 3, a stalemate ensued as the opposing armies dug in extensively. The armies would remain in place under hot, fetid conditions for the next nine days.

Grant decided to change his strategy. His new target would be the Confederate commercial and transportation hub at Petersburg, 20 miles south of Richmond on the Appomattox River. By capturing Petersburg, Grant could starve the Southerners out of their defenses around Richmond and defeat them on open ground of his own choosing. But to do that, he would first have to steal a march on the Confederates, cross the James River undetected to the south, and capture Petersburg before the Confederates could react.

Grant devised a complex plan that involved combined actions between the Army of the Potomac and the

Timothy O'Sullivan photographed the massive Union pontoon bridge over the James River at Weyanoke Point. Anchoring schooners can be seen in the background.

All photos: Library of Congress

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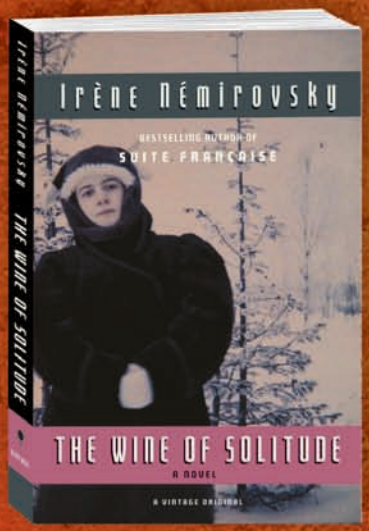


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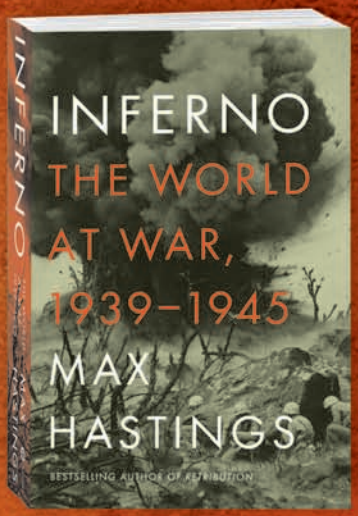


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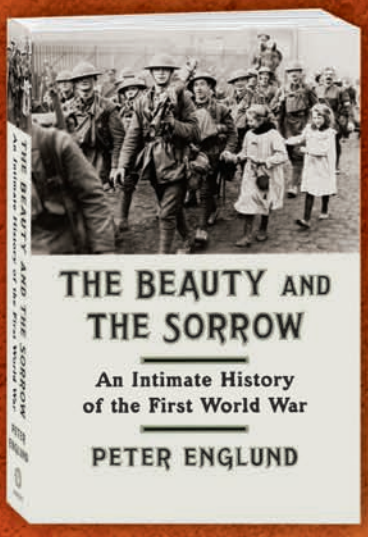


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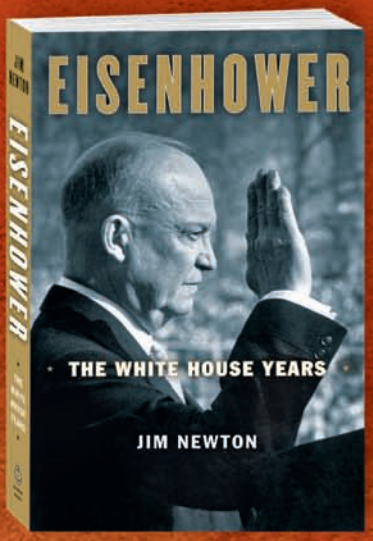


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**ABOVE: The well-maintained camp of the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers at Rappahannock Station, Virginia, photographed in the winter 1864. Their pontoon train can be seen at left. BELOW: Brigadier General Henry W. Benham commanded the Engineer Brigade in the Union Army of the Potomac.**

Army of the James under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler. Army engineers would play a vital role. The Engineer Brigade of the Army of the Potomac had already performed Herculean tasks since the beginning of the campaign, erecting 38 pontoon bridges with an aggregate length of 6,458 feet.

Meade had an efficient force of engineer troops, including Captain George H. Mendell's United States Engineer Battalion, consisting of four companies. Brig. Gen. Henry W. Benham's Volunteer Engineer Brigade, like the Regular battalion, had served with the Army of the Potomac since late 1861. It was a seasoned unit of volunteers, originally consisting of the 15th and 50th New York Volunteer engineer regiments. Soon after Chancellorsville in May 1863, most of the 15th New York mustered out of service after their two-year enlistments expired. Its few remaining companies, composed of three-year enlistees, were detailed to behind-the-lines duties. But the 50th New York, commanded by Lt. Col. Ira Spaulding, remained with the Army of the Potomac throughout the war. The 50th consisted of 11 companies, divided into four battalions, with 40 officers and 1,500 enlisted men.

During the Overland Campaign, the battalions were parceled out to support the different corps of Meade's army. Benham and most of the 15th were at the engineer depot in Washington at the beginning of the campaign. He transferred the 15th and his headquarters to Fortress Monroe when it became the forward engineer base for Grant's operations. Butler's Army of the James' engineer troops consisted of eight companies of the 1st New York Volunteer Engineer Regiment, commanded by Colonel Edward W. Serrell.

On the afternoon of June 6, Grant dispatched two of his aides, Lt. Cols. Cyrus Comstock and Horace Porter, to confer with Butler and apprise him of the impending operation. In late May, Maj. Gen. William F. "Baldy" Smith's XVIII Army Corps of the Army of the James had been detached to reinforce the Army of the Potomac and was currently entrenched in the Union line at Cold Harbor. Grant intended for the corps to leave White House Landing on the Pamunkey River, steam 150 miles around the James peninsula, and lead the attack on Petersburg from Bermuda Hundred. Smith would cooperate with the II Army Corps, which would cross the James farther downstream. Comstock and Porter were to select the best crossing point on the river for the pontoon bridge site, choosing a place that would give the Army of the Potomac as short a line of march as practicable, while at the same time being far enough downstream to allow for sufficient distance between it and Lee's army.

Grant had foreseen the possibility of crossing the James as early as April 15, when he ordered Benham to gather and hold at Fortress Monroe sufficient water transports to tow necessary quantities of bridge-building materials to span the James. At 9 AM on June 13, Union forces would begin to disengage from the defenses at Cold Harbor. Grant's careful planning had already paid dividends when he ordered the pontoon boats upriver around noon on June 4. A total of 150 pontoon boats with attendant

bridging equipment had quickly gone to Bermuda Hundred, and additional battalion bridge trains from the 50th New York were ordered south.

Meade's talented chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys, was directed to draft the operations order. In broad outline, Humphreys detailed that the Army of the Potomac would evacuate Cold Harbor in four coordinated columns. The operation was to begin with V and II Army Corps crossing the Chickahominy River at Long Bridge. Engineers of the 50th New York were detailed to build a 1,200-foot-long pontoon bridge across the watercourse, requiring extensive use of corduroy approaches because of the surrounding swampy terrain. Once over, V Corps turned west to provide screening and blocking and to create the impression that Grant intended to launch an offensive north of the James toward Richmond.

Once in place, V Corps occupied a five-mile defensive position from the White Oak Swamp to Malvern Hill. The 3rd Cavalry Division of Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan's Cavalry Corps reinforced Maj. Gen. Gouverneur Warren's V Corps for the mission. Simultaneously, VI and IX Corps were to follow separate routes to Jones' Bridge on the Chickahominy River and continue on to Charles City Court House. A third column, made up of the army's trains and accompanied by Brig. Gen. Edward Ferrero's division of United States Colored Troops as a guard force, was to cross the Chickahominy east of Jones' Bridge.

On June 12, Brig. Gen. Godfrey Weitzel, chief engineer of the Army of the James, directed Lieutenant Peter S. Michie to make a detailed reconnaissance of the river crossing areas in the vicinity of Fort Powhatan. Michie selected Wilcox Landing for a ferry site, three-fourths of a mile upstream from Fort Powhatan, and Weyanoke Point for the bridge site, three miles downstream. The width of the river at the latter point spanned 1,992 feet. The landward approaches would require considerable clearage of trees and an extensive trestle ramp. The James was navigable for 108.8 miles from its mouth to Richmond. At Weyanoke Point, the narrow river channel averaged 85 to 90 feet deep, with swift tides that rose and fell three to four feet each day. Michie also selected an entrenched bridgehead position covering the crossing sites. By the evening of June 14, the entire army—less the army trains and the cavalry—had arrived at the bridgehead.

The United States Engineer Battalion moved out in full marching order at 5 PM on June 12, crossing the Chickahominy on the pontoon bridge at Jones' Bridge laid by the 50th New

York. On the far side, they awaited the passage of VI Corps and then marched to Charles City Court House, where they made camp. On June 14, the battalion moved out at 11 AM; three hours later it went into bivouac at Weyanoke Point. At 3 PM, the men fell in without arms and proceeded a short distance down the bank, where Weitzel waited with several companies of the 1st New York.

The area was a scene of confusion; nothing had been done toward erection of the bridge. The pontoon material had been transported to Bermuda Hundred in early June, and then, inexplicably, moved back to Fortress Monroe on June 12. It would take another 24 hours to reposition all the equipment at Weyanoke Point. Not to be delayed further, the detachment of 200 engineers sprang into the slimy, muddy, neck-deep water and succeeded in building in one hour an abutment of trestle work some 150 feet long through the soft marshes—arguably the hardest part of the entire project. The battalion then went to work on the opposite shore, with volunteers taking up the work at Weyanoke Point.

Benham arrived around noon from Fortress Monroe with portions of the 15th New York and a number of vessels with bridge materials in tow. He was soon joined by an additional

**A pontoon boat belonging to the Army of the Potomac.**

detachment of 220 men and a bridge train of the 50th New York. Major James C. Duane, chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac, turned over the completion of the bridge to Benham. As fast as materials could be unloaded from the vessels, they were made into "rafts" of six pontoon boats and rowed into position. The bridge was built simultaneously from both shores by successive rafts.

Most of the three infantry corps began ferrying across the James at Wilcox Landing on the morning of June 14. Major Wesley Brainerd and his battalion of the 50th New York (Companies B, F, and G) had already arrived to repair the wharves. Later that evening, he was ordered across the river to Windmill Point to construct an additional wharf for the use of follow-on troops. Federal officers had gathered a varied flotilla of steamers and ferries to carry the huge army. The 141st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment of II Corps crossed from Wilcox Landing on the *Thomas Powell*, a steamer that normally cruised the less-troubled waters of the Hudson River.

The ferrying operation required 62 hours to convey the infantry across. The same troops might have marched over the bridge in less than one-fourth the time. About noon, steamers carrying XVIII Corps began to pass Windmill Point en route to rejoin the Army of the James. Smith, commanding the corps, was aboard the leading steamer. The troops marching overland and those moved by water met simultaneously on the James River.

The engineers began assembling the pontoon bridge around 3 PM on June 14, after a further delay to allow the river passage of XVIII Corps past Weyanoke Point. The bridge, completed seven hours later, was 2,170 feet long and used 101 pontoon boats. It was constructed with intervals of 20-foot spans. Planking called chess, laid across balks, provided a roadway 11 feet wide between guardrails. To permit the

**The pontoon bridge over the James River at Jones' Landing was the gateway for thousands of Union troops heading for the siege of Petersburg.**

passage of vessels upstream and downstream, a draw 100 feet wide was incorporated into the bridge. This draw, constructed of pontoon rafts, could be disengaged and floated out with the current to open the draw. To anchor the bridge in the swift current, three schooners were positioned abreast above the bridge and three below.

At the time of the crossing, Grant estimated the combined strength of the Armies of the Potomac and the James at about 115,000 men, even though half of the artillery was sent back to Washington. Although Meade ordered IX Corps to begin crossing immediately, the first troops did not start crossing the bridge until 6 AM on June 15, even though the bridge was fully operational at 1 AM. Except for five hours on June 15, from 6 AM that day until 9:30 AM on June 17, the bridge was in constant use—a total of 46 hours. Personnel, animals, and vehicles crossed without incident.

The crossing greatly lifted the morale and spirits of the men who had left the horrid trenches at Cold Harbor and made the hot, dusty march from the Chickahominy. Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman of Meade's staff asserted, "To appreciate such a sight you must pass five weeks in an almost unbroken wilderness, with no sights but weary, dusty troops, endless wagon trains, convoys of poor wounded men, and hot, uncomfortable camps. Here was a noble river." As the 7th Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry Regiment reached the James, its brigade band serenaded them with "Ain't I Glad to Get Out of the Wilderness," which dramatically summed up the feelings of the entire army.

With all the troops safely across the river, the bridge was disassembled on June 17 and its components towed upriver to Bermuda Hundred and City Point. It still holds the world record as the longest temporary military bridge in modern history. □

By Blaine Taylor

# Otto von Bismarck turned a routine diplomatic message from King Wilhelm I into a pretext for war with France.

IN MAY 1867, FRENCH RULER NAPOLEON III HOSTED A GALA GREAT Universal Exposition that proved to be the high-water mark of his ornate but tissue-thin Second Empire. Among the glittering guests that day was Wilhelm I, King of Prussia. The two ruling sovereigns addressed each other as "my dear brother," but their civility and good cheer masked the fact that Napoleonic France and upstart Prussia were on an unavoidable collision course to war. In the distance, storm clouds were gathering.

The man who would help launch that storm was Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, the head of Wilhelm's government at Berlin. Bismarck had already masterminded the formation of the smaller Teutonic states into the North German Confederation in 1866, with Prussia as its linchpin. Moreover, as Prussia's "blood and iron chancellor" since 1862, Bismarck was completely unimpressed with Napoleon III, characterizing him dismissively as "a sphinx without a riddle."

While Bismarck recognized that France was Prussia's most formidable continental foe, he also believed that when the time came he could circumvent the unwary French ruler. He was more concerned about completing German unification without the intervention of the other major European powers that had a vested interest in preventing such a unification—Romanov Russia, Habsburg Austria, and Victorian England.

Czarist Russia, angered by the Franco-British coalition that had defeated her in the Crimean War of 1854-1856, stood aside during Prussia's Unification Wars, thus giving Bismarck a free hand to do his work. Allied with Austria in 1864, Prussia

French Emperor Napoleon III, left, surrenders to Prussian King Wilhelm I after the Battle of Sedan in September 1870. Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck, in white, looks on.

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had prevented Denmark from annexing the pro-German duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, then defeated Austria two years later to establish unquestioned Prussian hegemony within Germany and seized both duchies for herself.

In Paris, Napoleon III had also remained neutral, believing that Prussia could not vanquish Austria alone. He did not want to see France tied down in another Seven Years' War. Like many other military observers, Napoleon III was frankly amazed at the speedy demise of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the Six Weeks' War. The last thing he wanted was a war with suddenly mighty Prussia.

Time had not been kind to Napoleon III's tottering regime. In March 1867, the French had pressured King William III of Holland to cede Luxembourg to France, but Bismarck refused to countenance such a territorial acquisition and successfully blocked the move. Three months later, on June 19, the Austrian claimant to the Mexican throne, Emperor Maximilian, was captured and shot by a Juarista firing squad after the French bayonets that had propped up his regime had been withdrawn in the face of diplomatic demands from the angered United States. On top of everything else, the "Little Napoleon" was already a very sick man, afflicted with painful gallstones.

Meanwhile, a new diplomatic disaster for Napoleon III was brewing closer to home as the new decade began. It involved the so-called "Hohenzollern candidature" for the vacant throne of Spain. Two years earlier, in 1868, the unruly Spaniards had ejected corrupt and sexually promiscuous Queen Isabella II from her throne. In 1870, the crown was offered to young Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the Catholic branch of the mainly Protestant Prussian ruling House of Hohenzollern.

Neither Leopold nor King Wilhelm, as head of the family, favored accepting the Spanish offer. The ever-scheming Bismarck was for it, though, because he realized that the prospect of Hohenzollern kings reigning on both France's Rhenish and Spanish frontiers was a political and military threat that no French ruler could countenance. Meanwhile, Napoleon III's wife, the Spanish-born Empress Eugenie, was already thinking seriously about a regency in which she ruled France alone to ensure that the throne would remain secure for their son and heir, the Prince Imperial. Worried that her husband would never agree to step down, she moaned, "We are marching to our downfall, and the best thing would be if the Emperor would disappear suddenly, at least for the time being."

All: Library of Congress

**Napoleon II and his wife, Empress Eugenie.**

Ultimately, Leopold renounced the Hohenzollern candidacy, but Napoleon III's new foreign minister, the Duc de Gramont, wanted more. He thundered that the now-refused offer had threatened the balance of power in Europe and "placed in peril the interests and the honor of France." He said the nation relied "on the wisdom of the German and the friendship of the Spanish people. But if it proves otherwise, then we would know how to fulfill our duty without hesitation and without weakness." Bismarck, reading the speech, commented with some satisfaction, "This certainly looks like war."

Compounding his error, Gramont directed the French ambassador to Berlin, Count Vincent Benedetti, to extract a further promise from King Wilhelm I that neither Leopold nor any other German prince would ever consider sitting on the Spanish throne. If Wilhelm refused, said Gramont, "It will be war at once, and in a few days, we will be on the Rhine." He urged Benedetti to act swiftly, before the Prussians had the chance to mobilize their own troops. "You cannot imagine how excited public opinion is," wrote Gramont. "It is overtaking us on every side and we are counting the hours."

In the midst of the diplomatic furor, Wilhelm happened to be taking a health cure at the German resort town of Ems, east of Koblentz on the Lahn River in Hesse-Nassau. On the morning of July 13, 1870, he was strolling unconcernedly in the park with his aides when the French ambassador violated protocol and approached him directly. Remarkably, a photograph exists of the encounter, showing a top hat-wearing Wilhelm and a straw hat-wearing Benedetti walking side by side. Each is using a cane.

By all accounts, the brief conversation was cordial, if carefully cool. Wilhelm congratulated the Frenchman on the news of Leopold's refusal of the Spanish offer. Benedetti, as instructed by Gramont, demanded that the king give assurances that such a thing would never happen again. Wilhelm politely refused, saying he could not bind himself or the nation to such an iron-clad position for the unforeseeable future. The two men parted within minutes. A little later in the day, Wilhelm forwarded Benedetti a copy of the formal letter of renunciation that Prince Leopold's father, Charles Antony, had sent to the Spanish ministry. The letter, Wilhelm noted, had "his entire and unreserved approval." When Benedetti asked for another meeting to press his demands for a formal guarantee, Wilhelm replied that as far as he was concerned there was nothing further to discuss.

Afterward, Royal Secretary Heinrich Abeken sent the following telegram to Bismarck: "His Majesty the King has written to me: 'Count Benedetti intercepted me on the promenade and ended by demanding of me in a very importunate manner that I should authorize him to telegraph at once that I bound myself in perpetuity never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollerns renewed their candidature. I rejected this demand somewhat sternly, as it is neither right nor possible to undertake engagements of this kind forever and ever. Naturally, I told him that I had not yet received any news, and since he had been better informed via Paris and Madrid than I was, he must surely see that my government was not concerned in the matter.' The king decided in view of the above-mentioned demands, not to receive Count Benedetti anymore, but to have him informed, by an adjutant, that His Majesty had now received confirmation



**Straw-hatted French ambassador Count Vincent Benedetti, center right, famously encounters Prussian King Wilhelm I, center, left, at Ems, Germany.**

of the news which Benedetti had already had from Paris and had nothing further to say to the ambassador. His Majesty suggests to Your Excellency that Benedetti's new demand and its rejection might well be communicated both to our ambassadors and to the Press."

Bismarck was the ultimate opportunist, waiting for just the right moment to strike. "One must wait for the Goddess of History to pass, then grasp the hem of her garment as she does, being carried along with it," he had noted in the past. After receiving Abeken's telegram, Bismarck edited it slightly to sharpen the apparent differences between the offended king and the importunate French diplomat. The new Ems Telegram, which Bismarck forwarded to all Prussian ministries abroad, was subtly but tellingly different in tone: "After the news of the renunciation of the Prince of Hohenzollern had been communicated to the Imperial French government by the Royal Spanish government, the French Ambassador in Ems made a further demand of His Majesty the King that he should authorize him to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King undertook for all time never again to give his assent should the Hohenzollerns once more take up their candidature. His Majesty the King thereupon refused to receive the ambassador again, and had the latter informed by the adjutant of the day that His Majesty had no further communication to make to the ambassador."

Bismarck was privately exultant. "This will be a red rag to the Gallic bull!" he chortled to confidants as the second version of the events in the garden at Ems was released for publication to all diplomatic posts and news bureaus in Berlin. A third version appeared, inadvertently strengthening Bismarck's hand, when the French translation by the Havas Agency altered the ambassador's demand into a question and also translated the German term for adjutant (a high-ranking aide de camp) into the French term for a low-ranking noncommissioned officer. It was this third version that was published the next day in French newspapers. Ironically, it was Bastille Day.

Now both sides believed themselves simultaneously insulted: the Germans in having the much-revered Prussian monarch humiliated, and the French in having that king brush off their duly appointed representative before he could deliver his message in full detail. Angry citizens filled the Paris and Berlin streets demanding satisfaction and crowing intemperately about national honor.

On the German side, only Bismarck and select Prussian Army leaders wanted war, while the king, the queen, the crown prince, and the

**LEFT: Duc de Gramont. RIGHT: Otto von Bismarck.**

crown princess all opposed it. On the French side, virtually everyone—both military and public, and foremost the Empress—was for the war, while the sick emperor eventually was persuaded as well. Of the French marshals and generals, Eugenie later recalled, "They all vouched for our victory: 'We shall swallow Prussia at one gulp!'" Only left-wing assemblyman Louis Adolphe Thiers rose to speak out against the looming war. "Do you want all Europe to say that although the substance of the quarrel was settled, you have decided to pour out torrents of blood over a mere matter of form?" That was precisely what French leaders had decided.

Without having the support of a single European ally, France declared war on Prussia five days later, on July 19, 1870. The overconfident French Army always intended to invade Germany first, but France suddenly found herself invaded instead. After losing several engagements, the main French army was surrounded and defeated at the Battle of Sedan on September 1, with Napoleon III surrendering as well. On the 4th, the Third French Republic was proclaimed in Paris, and Eugenie sought asylum in neutral Britain. The Second Empire had fallen ignominiously and completely, as she had once more clearheadedly predicted.

In January 1871, besieged Paris also fell. The Prussian Army staged a victory parade, and King Wilhelm was proclaimed German emperor by his fellow Teutonic princes. Bismarck, whose editing skills had equaled his back room machinations, was named a count and promoted to the rank of full general.

The last French Bonapartes all died in exile: the deposed emperor died in England in 1873, the Prince Imperial was killed in the Zulu War of 1879, and ex-Empress Eugenie expired in 1922, but not before seeing the hated German Empire fall in 1918. The following year, an angry Berlin mob publicly burned the captured French battle flags and standards of 1870. It seemed, in retrospect at least, that no one had wanted the war that one artfully edited telegram had so carefully and callously instigated. □

By Peter Suciu

## Although banned by the Turkish Army, Muslim and African volunteers in various European armies wore military fezzes.

THANKS TO MOVIES AND TV, THE FEZ IS USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH the Middle East, notably Turkey. It has also become a form of ceremonial headgear for lodges and fraternal organizations in the United States. As with many forms of military headdress, the history and origins of the fez are largely forgotten and filled with misinformation.

The fez originated in Morocco and spread across North Africa to the Ottoman Empire, where it became a popular form of headdress. The most accepted history is that it was worn by Andalusian Arabs in the city of Fes, Morocco, which is where the circular hat got its name. The fez was worn by wealthy Arab traders as a sign of status, likely because the red dyes needed to produce the vivid colors were somewhat expensive and stood out. Because the hat had no brim, it could be worn by Muslims during their daily prayers.


Private Collection

Almost as soon as it spread to the Ottoman Empire, the fez became used as a military headdress, where it initially was worn with a curtain of mail around the cap. And while today it might seem like an archaic style of cap, it was actually introduced in the 1840s as a new and seemingly Western style of headdress, likely because it was a middle ground between the Eastern-looking turban-like ketche hats and the shakos used by European armies.

Turkey's move to a Western model of dress began in 1826 when Sultan Mahmud II suppressed the Janissaries, the traditional elite of the Ottoman military, and modernized the military. The turban was largely banned, and civil officials were ordered to wear a plain fez, which was seen as a symbol of modernity throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

The standard headdress of the Turkish Army from the 1840s was a red fez with a blue tassel, and this remained in use until around 1900. Today it is difficult for collectors to determine what might have been a military version. "In Turkey, where there was no set pattern for the fez as this was a civilian item of dress, it was made the national headdress in 1832, and since the Army and Navy had no designated headgear,

Fez-wearing King Otto I of Greece is seen with his military entourage, 1840. Right: A fez worn by the South Nigeria Protective Services.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

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soldiers and officers wore the fez," noted Christopher Flaherty, a collector of Ottoman Empire militaria.

Just as Mahmud II had looked to modernize the outdated Ottoman Empire's military in the early 19th-century by introducing the fez, it was removed from active service for similar reasons when the army was updated in the years prior to World War I. The last major conflict where the fez was worn by Ottoman armies on the battlefield was the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878). By the outbreak of World War I, the fez was officially relegated to the status of an off-duty cap.

Surviving examples suggest that the Turks continued wearing the cap, as large numbers were worn on the various World War I fronts by the Turkish forces. The fez also remained in service throughout the war with the small Ottoman navy. "It was used in Gallipoli and many examples of captured Turkish fezzes can be found in Australian collections," said fez collector Sean O'Mara. "The fez stopped being used in Turkey around 1920."

With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk actually banned the fez in 1925, but it continues to be sold as a tourist item to this day. Ironically, Ataturk wanted to ban the headdress because in the post-World War I era it was considered a Greek head covering. The Greek Army wore a soft version of the fez from its founding in 1837 until World War II, and today the Evzones (light infantry) still wear a variation on the classic fez as part of the presidential guard in Athens.

Private Collection

**ABOVE: Italian Bersaglieri dress uniform fez, worn by colonial forces during World War II.**

The Greeks were not the only European nation to adopt the conical headdress. The fez was also utilized by the armies of Great Britain, Portuguese Spain, France, Italy, Germany and Belgium, which generally issued it to colonial troops. Additionally, some African armies, including those in Egypt and Ethiopia, wore the fez much the way that the beret today has become a universal and cheap form of headdress.

British colonial forces, including those with Muslim units, were issued the fez, usually red and sometimes taller than the traditional Turkish versions. These included the West India Regiment, the King's Africa Rifles from East Africa, and the West African Frontier Force. By World War I, the fez was covered with a khaki cover and neck curtain. German Askaris (colonial troops) wore a similar form of fez and cover, while French Tiralleurs, Spahis, and Zouaves, along with Belgian Force Publique troops in the Congo, wore floppy versions. Spanish fezzes were softer and shorter than the Belgian or French versions.

Bosnian infantry units in the Austro-Hungarian Army wore the fez during World War I, and these troops are often misidentified as being Turkish in period photographs. Interest-

Author's Collection

Private Collection

**ABOVE LEFT: A fez worn by the Tarbuch de Regulares, Muslim troops serving in North Africa under Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. ABOVE RIGHT: A pre-World War II fez belonging to the Royal East African Frontier Force. RIGHT: Egyptian or North African infantryman, c. 1828-1845.**

ingly, by the end of the war the fez was actually used more by British and Italian soldiers than by Turks.

The fez made a final comeback during World War II among the Bosnian and other Muslim volunteers in Nazi SS units. The 13th Waffen Mountain Division, which was raised in Bosnia, used both gray and red fezzes, typically with the SS eagle and skull and bones.

All this can make it very challenging for collectors today, especially as the fezzes can look quite similar. "You first of all need to decide what you call a fez," said O'Mara. "Not all fezzes are hard round cones. The French Zouaves and Tiralleurs wore a soft rolled fez. Not all fezzes have tassels, nor were they issued with them. The Ethiopian armies wore an extremely tall fez with colorful wool tassels."

The fez existed in many forms and was used by countless armies. The fact that civilian merchants and tourists wore the same headdress makes it very challenging today for collectors. Finding stamps or other identifying marks becomes all the more important. "When trying to identify military fezzes, it's a bonus to find markings," said O'Mara. "Most government- produced military items have markings of some kind. It is sometimes hard to find them due to age. Many of the markings were inked on the interior felt and vanish over time. The reason many British markings still exist is because they in most cases used a sort of paint and not standard ink. So the markings are more durable."

Of course, to every rule there is an exception—not all British fezzes are inked. "A debossed arrow along with date and maker's details on the sweatband marks the King's African Rifles red fezzes," added O'Mara. "This is pretty unusual and more akin to a civilian fez. But then these items were specialist and made by civilian hat makers. You find many different markings by different makers for the same type of fez."

The end of World War II was not the end of the fez. "The Royal Egyptian Army continued with the fez as military headgear till the end of the Royal Kingdom of Egypt in 1953, and only after the Egyptian national revolution was it abandoned," said Flaherty. "In the case of British and Sudanese troops, their fez was still a ceremonial item of dress."

The quality of the military fez can vary, and while many are nothing more than a floppy cloth or felt cap, some are of very high quality. Flaherty described one fez in his collection as made of a "fine cherry wool cover, with leather sweatband, cardboard-reinforced top, and a maker's tab to a Cairo maker displaying the Khedive crest of three crescent stars, typical of pre-1914 construction."

With so many variations, what can collectors do? The first thing is to buy from respected and trusted sources. Beyond that, it can takes years of experience to master determining what is a real military fez and what was just brought back by a tourist who visited the Middle East years ago. "First of all, the best way to tell is to actually handle fezzes," said O'Mara. "There are thousands of civilian types of fezzes used, from the German salt mines to the coffee houses of Cairo. Most military fezzes are government issue."

As with many military caps, private purchases can complicate matters. "The Italians preferred to have their own fezzes made to

*Continued on page 74*

Famed illustrator Howard Pyle catches the dramatic moment when American light infantry overwhelmed British defenders in the night assault on Yorktown's Redoubt 10, virtually insuring Cornwallis's surrender.

# THE REDOUBTS AT YORKTOWN

AT NIGHTFALL ON OCTOBER 14, 1781, AMERICAN AND FRENCH SOLDIERS MADE A SURPRISE ATTACK ON REDOUBTS 9 AND 10 AT YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA. THE SMALL EARTHEN FORTIFICATIONS WERE THE KEY TO LORD CORNWALLIS'S BESIEGED DEFENSES.

BY JESSICA J. SHEETS

AT NIGHTFALL on October 14, 1781, 150 British and Hessian soldiers sheltered in two small earthen fortifications at Yorktown, Virginia. Across the field from the two redoubts waited 800 Continental soldiers and their French allies. There was no moon. Silence—or rather "Rochambeau"—was the watchword of the night.

Yorktown, established in 1691 as a port along the York River just off the Chesapeake Bay, stirred with commerce when the Revolutionary War began in 1775. In the spring and summer of 1781, British General Lord Charles Cornwallis raided areas of Virginia in order to reduce the amount of supplies and food being provided by the state for the Continental Army. Meanwhile, General Sir Henry Clinton, the overall British commander in North America, ordered Cornwallis to capture a coastal area where British ships could harbor safely. In early August, Cornwallis took Yorktown and Gloucester Point, a peninsula a half mile across the river from Yorktown. There ships could easily maneuver in the deep water of the York River, while the bluffs along the Yorktown shore would intimidate potential invaders. The terrain outside town provided reasonable defense, but fortifications would also be necessary.

Cornwallis had his soldiers, as well as slaves who had been promised freedom for their service to the crown, build a defensive line surrounding Yorktown. The general believed that Yorktown could be fortified in six weeks. Since no immediate threat existed, the men labored slowly in the oppressive heat. Captain Johann Ewald of the Hessian Field-Jäger Corps had been in Virginia for months. He described the heat as "so unbearable that many men have been lost by sunstroke or their reason has been impaired. Everything that one has on his body is soaked as with water from the constant perspiration."

The British soldiers and slaves felled trees, tore down houses, set up artillery batteries, and constructed trenches and redoubts. They did their work with spades, shovels, pickaxes, hatchets, and wheelbarrows. The men had difficulty building the earthworks because of the sandy soil. Nonetheless, the redoubts that eventually took shape would serve as defensive outposts to help the British hold Yorktown. Redoubts 9 and 10 were constructed on the left of the British line, southeast of Yorktown. Redoubt 10 stood closest to the York River, with Redoubt 9 about 300 yards southwest. The two redoubts shared certain features—palisades, fraises, and abatis—but they were of different shape and size. Redoubt 9, a pentagon, was 103 yards in perimeter. Redoubt 10 was square and somewhat smaller than Redoubt 9.

In the 18th century, principles for constructing fortifications and conducting sieges followed the designs and doctrine set forth by Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban, a Frenchman who served under King Louis XIV. During the Revolutionary War, manuals espousing Vauban's techniques included *The Field Engineer of M. le Chevalier de Clairac* by Louis Andre de la Mamie, Chevalier de Clairac, and *An Essay on Field Fortification* by J. C. Pleydell.

Redoubts could be square, pentagonal, hexagonal, or circular in shape and could be sized to hold a small or large number of men. A square redoubt with a 40-yard interior perimeter required 80 men for its defense, while a square redoubt of 120 yards interior perimeter required three times as many men. The entrance was placed on the side away from the enemy. Redoubts were surrounded by a ditch, which ideally was at least six feet deep. The sides of a ditch were sloped, with sharpened logs called palisades placed close together and vertically. Palisades typically stood as tall as a soldier.

Dirt from the ditch was used to form the parapet—the mound of earth that formed the perimeter of the redoubt and protected the men inside from enemy fire. Parapets were usually higher than the soldiers, which helped keep the men inside from being seen. In his man-

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U.S. Navy

French Admiral the Comte de Grasse's victory over Rear Admiral Thomas Grave's British fleet at Chesapeake Capes in September 1781 left Cornwallis and his infantry bottled up in Yorktown.

ual, Clairac recommended fixing the elevation at 7½ feet, with a 12-foot thickness if cannons were involved. A firing step against the interior of the parapet, called a banquette, allowed men to look over the parapet and shoot. Openings called embrasures were made in the parapet for artillery to fire through. Pointed logs called fraises, placed at an angle near the outside base of the parapet, pointed over the ditch. "Fraises are made eight feet long, and five inches broad, sharp at one end. Two men may make twelve fraises in an hour," Pleydell wrote.

Other items soldiers might build for redoubts included abatis, gabions, fascines, and sods. Abatis consisted of hewn trees with the points of their branches turned toward the enemy. They were placed before the ditch. Gabions, basket-shaped devices from one to three feet high, were made of intertwined twigs and branches. To provide support for a parapet, men placed gabions at its base and piled dirt into and over them. Gabions, and sometimes sand bags, were also placed on top of a parapet to provide more cover for soldiers. Fascines, bundles of tree branches, were laid against the parapet and secured with stakes to keep the soil stable. When a ditch was in a line of attack, lead soldiers would fill the ditch with fascines to help troops cross the ditch more easily. Lastly, a parapet might be covered with brick-shaped sods to keep the earth in place.

While the British soldiers and slaves shoveled sandy dirt to form the earthworks at Yorktown, American General George Washington and his ally French Lt. Gen. Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, remained outside New York City. They deceived Clinton, inside the city, into thinking they would attack. Instead, beginning on August 19, they stealthily moved their troops 450 miles south to Yorktown. The urgent desire to trap Cornwallis at Yorktown was evident in a letter Washington wrote to Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln. "Every day we now lose is comparatively an age. As soon as it is in our power with safety, we ought to take our position near the enemy. Hurry on then, my dear sir, with your troops on the wings of speed. The want of our men and stores is now all that retards our immediate operations. Lord Cornwallis is improving every moment to

## YORKTOWN'S REDOUBTS AFTER 1781

"This morning 9 o'clock our brigade went on fatigue to demolish the works we had the trouble to throw up when his lordship had possession of the town," wrote Lieutenant William Feltman of the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment, 10 days after the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Not all of the works were leveled, however. Some survived nature and destruction for many years.

In 1854, a writer with *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* visited Yorktown. He noted that there were "ruins of tenements destroyed during Cornwallis's siege, meeting you at every turn." The writer described other sites, including what was left of Redoubts 9 and 10: "We next looked for the two redoubts stormed by the allied forces on the 15th [sic] October. The first, or most eastern of these, that was stormed by the Americans, being near the river, has nearly been washed away; that taken by the French portion of the allied army, may still be traced."

During the Civil War, a second siege took place at Yorktown. Confederates led by Maj. Gen. John Magruder enhanced

Library of Congress

A Union soldier inspects old British trenches used by Confederates at Yorktown during the Civil War.

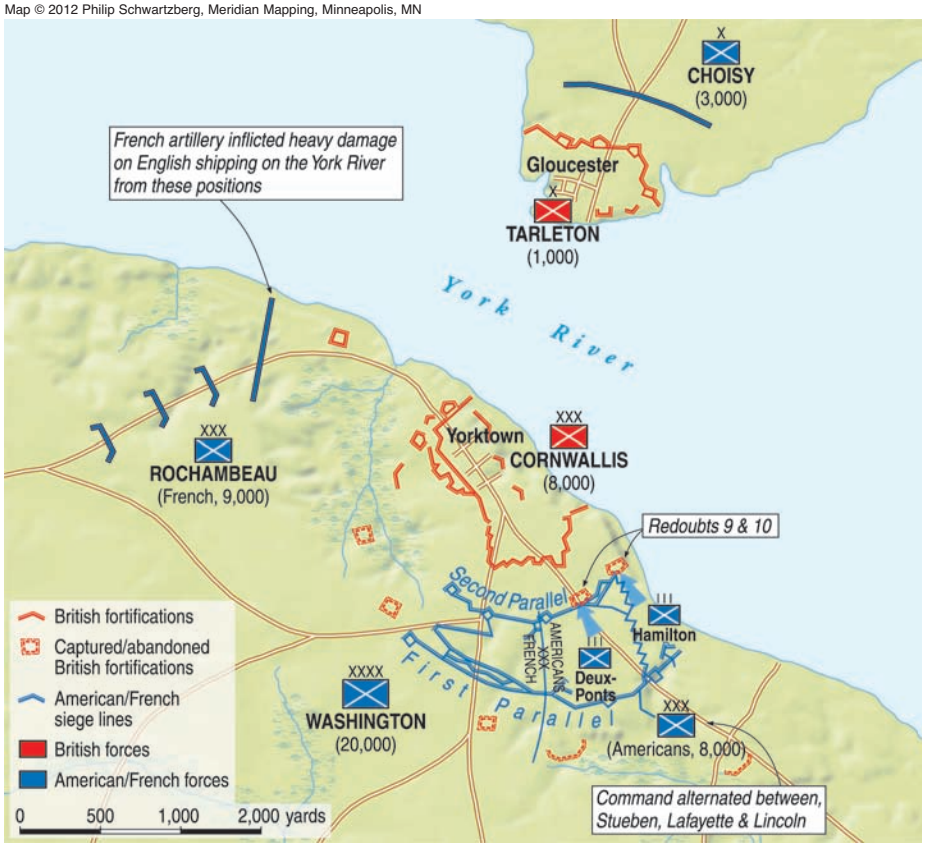
the best advantage, and every day that is given him to make his preparations may cost us many lives to encounter them."

Meanwhile, French Admiral Francois Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse, arrived off the coast of Virginia on August 26 and occupied Chesapeake Bay a few days later. Corporal Stephan Popp, who served in the German Bayreuth Regiment with the British, wrote in his journal on August 26, "A French Fleet has arrived. Day and night we are at work strengthening our lines—have hardly time to eat and little food—but we are getting ready to make a stout defence." The days of unhurried work were over.

A British fleet under Rear Admiral Thomas Graves sailed from New York and arrived off the Virginia coast on September 5. French ships came out of the Chesapeake to confront them, and a two-hour battle ensued. De Grasse's 24 vessels inflicted severe damage on Graves's 20 ships. After the sea battle had claimed some 300 killed or wounded, the British fleet returned to New York. Cornwallis was cut off by the sea.

On September 28, more than a month after slipping away from New York, the main Continental and French army, numbering over 17,000 men, arrived within a couple miles of Yorktown. On the morning of September 30, the Allies discovered that the British, who numbered around 8,000, had abandoned their outermost fortifications and fled to their defenses closest to town. The Allies took over the abandoned redoubts. The British still held Redoubts 9 and 10, approximately 300 yards from the British line, and Cornwallis continued to be confident. He expected Clinton's promised reinforcements to break through the French blockade and reinforce his troops. American patriot Benjamin Franklin knew better. Cornwallis's army, he said, "have had the goodness to quit a situation from whence it might have escaped, and placed itself in another from whence an escape was impossible."






**The Virginia port of Yorktown, on the deep York River, seemed a strong defensive point for the British, who added rows of trenches and redoubts. A second British post was located at Gloucester Point, across the river. Neither could be held against the Allies.**

Meanwhile, there was activity across the river at Gloucester Point involving the feared British cavalry leader Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton. British troops under the command of Lt. Col. Thomas Dundas had been posted at Gloucester to help protect the army across the river and forage for provisions. As the siege of Yorktown intensified, Tarleton's British Legion was sent to Gloucester, where it could be of more use than passively enduring a siege. French forces, including Louis Armand de Gontaut-Biron, duc de Lauzun, and his Legion, joined Virginia militia already at Gloucester to hold the British there. Militia forces stationed around Gloucester Court House were under the command of Brig. Gen. George Weedon. French Brig. Gen. Claude Gabriel de Choisy was given command of all the Allied troops at Gloucester. He intended to threaten the British.

On October 3, the Allies received word that the British were foraging, with Tarleton's Legion and added to the deteriorating Revolutionary War earthworks for their defense of Yorktown. Magruder tried to inspire his troops by recalling the Revolution. "You breathe the air and tread the soil consecrated by the presence and heroism of our patriotic sires," he told his men. "Shall we, their sons, imitate their example, or basely bow the neck to the yoke of the oppressor? I know your answer."

Union troops under Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan laid siege to the town in April 1862. A month later the siege ended with the Confederates withdrawing to Williamsburg. Sergeant Major Elisha Hunt Rhodes of Rhode Island traveled through the area several months after the siege and noted, "Passing through the main street we saw the old forts built by the British Army when it was besieged by Washington in 1781. Some of these forts were used by the Rebels."

In the 1930s, Colonial National Historical Park at Yorktown recreated some of the Revolutionary War earthworks. Redoubt 9 was reconstructed on the actual location and is still open to the public. While work was being done, crews found human skeletons, musket balls, buckles, buttons, and other relics. In 1956, archeological digs for Redoubt 10 revealed some of the trench, but much of the area had eroded away. The redoubt was partially reconstructed but is not accessible to the public.

More recently, in the summer of 2005 the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, began plans to recreate a redoubt on its Army Heritage Trail. Using research by a graduate student, drawings by an architect, the expertise of a period craftsman, the labor of an excavator, and the input of many others, a full-scale reproduction of Redoubt 10 came into being. It was officially opened and made accessible to the public in November 2006.

For more information on Colonial National Historical Park and the Yorktown Battlefield, visit www.nps.gov/york, and for more information on the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center in Pennsylvania, visit www.usahec.org. □

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**"IT WAS AS BRIGHT AS DAYLIGHT, BUT WE IGNORED THE FIRING AND KEPT ON MARCHING. ONCE WE GOT CLOSER TO THE REDOUBT AND THEY COULD REACH US WITH THEIR MUSKETS, THEY FIRED SO HEAVILY AT US FROM OUT OF THE REDOUBT THAT WE FELL JUST LIKE SNOWFLAKES."**

and other cavalry and infantry troops providing protection. The Allies, already heading south to Gloucester Point, intended to confront them. Lauzun stopped at a house and learned from a woman that Tarleton had just been there. Soon the enemies encountered each other at a hook near where two roads met. Tarleton fell from his horse before he could fight Lauzun in the initial attack. Other British troops rushed to his rescue and retreated. The Allied cavalry under Lauzun, outnumbered by the British, had the edge at the moment.

Both sides formed for another attack. Lauzun's cavalry fought British soldiers along a tree line and were pushed back. Select militia under Lt. Col. John Mercer eventually repelled the British, who retreated to their defenses at Gloucester Point. The Allies had suffered five killed and more than two dozen wounded, while the British suffered greater losses—50 killed or wounded, including Tarleton, who recovered. Washington commended "the brilliant success of the Allied Troops near Gloucester." Thanks to the Allied victory at the Battle of the Hook, the British at Gloucester would no longer be able to aid their brothers across the river.

Meanwhile, at Yorktown the Allies were busily constructing siege works outside of town. They worked on the first parallel, a 2,000-yard-long trench line along the south side of Yorktown, which included batteries and redoubts. It ran about 800 yards from the British line. On October 7, Allied troops manned the parallel. Continental Sergeant Joseph Plumb Martin, in the Corps of Sappers and Miners, related the reaction of the British to the first parallel: "As soon as it was day they perceived their mistake and began to fire where they ought to have done sooner. They brought out a fieldpiece or two without their trenches, and discharged several shots. They had a large bulldog and every time they fired he would follow their shots across our trenches. Our officers wished to catch him and oblige him to carry a message from them into the town to his masters, but he looked too formidable for any of us to encounter."

Two days later, the Allies began shelling Cornwallis and his men. The firing was persistent. In his October 9 diary entry, Continental Army Captain Benjamin Bartholomew wrote, "Just as the sun was setting our Battery on the Right and one from the French on the Left opened a most tremendous blaze on the British which continued incessantly all night." Georg Daniel Flohr, an enlisted German in the French Royal Deux-Ponts Regiment, noted in his journal that "houses stood there like lanterns shot through with cannonballs." George Washington himself lit the first cannon shot, which passed smoothly through the window of British headquarters and landed on the dinner table where the commissary general and his staff had just sat down to dine. The general was killed, and several officers were wounded when the cannonball bounced directly off their plates.

The British fortifications began to crumble. Construction of a second parallel by the Allies, 750 yards long and 300 yards from the British lines, began on the night of October 11. Lieutenant William Feltman of the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment recorded the efforts. "Every second man of the whole detachment carried a fascine and shovel or a spade, and every man a shovel, spade or grubbing hoe," he wrote. "We dug the ditch three and a half feet deep and seven feet in width."

But the parallel could not be completed until Redoubts 9 and 10 were taken from the British. "Two redoubts advanced of their lines, and within rifle shot of our second parallel, much in the way," Major Ebenezer Denny of Pennsylvania wrote in his journal. "These forts or redoubts were well secured by a ditch and picket, sufficiently high parapet, and within were divisions made by rows of casks ranged upon end and filled with earth and sand. On tops of parapet were ranged bags filled with sand."

Hessian Captain Ewald noted, "Without bragging about my limited perception, I have told everyone that as soon as one of these redoubts is taken the business is at an end, and Washington has us in his pocket. Yet one still hears, 'But our fleet will come before that time and raise the siege.'" The experienced Ewald had his doubts, as did an unnamed fellow officer who complained: "We get terrible provisions now, putrid meat and wormy biscuits that have spoiled on the ships. Many of the men have taken sick here with dysentery or the bloody flux and diarrhea. Foul fever is spreading. We have had little rest day or night." Hundreds of skinned and butchered British horses could be seen floating down the York River.

The assignment of capturing the redoubts was given to French Maj. Gen. Antoine Charles du Houx, Baron de Viomenil, and American Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton. On the night of October 14, Viomenil's troops, led by Lt. Col. Count William de Deux-Ponts, undertook to seize Redoubt 9. A group of grenadiers and chasseurs, trained to overcome defenses surrounding fortifications, went first to clear the abatis. They brought along fascines to fill the ditch and ladders for scaling the parapet. At eight o'clock, the prearranged signal—three successive cannon shots—rose into the night. The attack began.

Deux-Ponts described the advance in his journal. "At a hundred and twenty or thirty paces, we were discovered," he wrote. "We lost not a moment in reaching the abatis, which being strong and well preserved, at about twenty-five paces from the redoubt, cost us many men, and stopped us for some minutes, but was cleared away with brave determination; we threw ourselves into the ditch at once, and each one sought to break through the fraises, and to mount the parapet."

Popp, on the receiving end of the attack, entered in his journal on October 14: "The French grenadiers stormed our line, without firing a shot, captured a hundred of our men on the advanced line, killed and wounded those who refused to surrender—made a great noise with their shouting, seized our lines and turned them." He also noted that they "could distinctly hear and understand the orders given in German to the enemy's German troops."

Second Lieutenant Wilhelm Heinrich Florus Graf von Schwerin, in the French Royal Deux-Ponts Regiment, was among the Germans serving with the Allies. He wrote, "At 8 o'clock at night we approached the redoubts, always hidden behind our entrenchments. At 8:15 we were ordered to march in attack step up to the enemy redoubt and ascend it in an assault, our colonel-en-second at the head. There was a very lively fire from all sides for about a quarter of an hour."

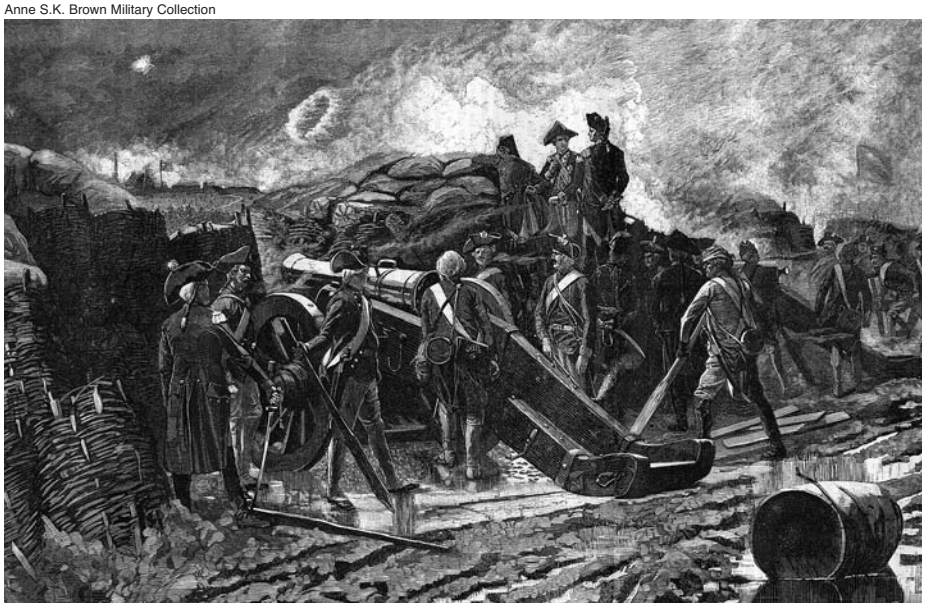
Flohr also described the advance of the soldiers and the ensuing confusion inside: "It was as bright as daylight, but we ignored the firing and kept on marching. Once we got closer to the redoubt and they could reach us with their muskets, they fired so heavily at us from out of the redoubt that we fell just like snowflakes. One could think that it rained bullets. Since we were completely surrounded by the enemy we were almost annihilated. One screamed for help here, the other there. We had to run at a double-quick pace until we finally reached the redoubt and got into the ditch, where we were without protection from the fire out of the redoubt.

"The carpenters cut off the palisades with the utmost speed. As soon as there was a little space, the attack had to be made up into the redoubt. The enemy troops stood on top of the redoubt and had their bayonets lowered against those who wanted to get up. Many had axes to defend themselves with.

"But as the noise was too great, our general could not become master of the situation. The soldiers everywhere were so enraged and excited that our people killed each other. The French ... struck down everyone who wore blue coats. Since the Deux-Ponts regiment also wore blue, very many were stabbed to death that way. Some of the Hessian and Ansbach troops wore uniforms almost identical to ours, and the English wore red, which in the dark of night seemed blue as well, and things went unmercifully that night." According to Flohr, after the struggle for Redoubt 9, "the whole redoubt was so full of dead and wounded that one had to walk on top of them."

Schwerin, Flohr, and the rest of Viomenil's 400 men took control of the redoubt from the 120 British and Hessians inside within half an hour. The French suffered 15 killed and more than

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection



**ABOVE: Washington watches the opening bombardment at Yorktown in this 19th-century engraving. The general himself fired the first shot. BELOW: A French officer sketched various American soldiers at Yorktown, including, left to right, an African American soldier from Rhode Island, a Regular musketeer, a backwoods rifleman, and an artilleryman holding a burning match-cord used to ignite cannon charges. OPPOSITE: Generals Washington and Rochambeau are surrounded by their aides during the siege at Yorktown. The Marquis de Lafayette is visible at the opening of the tent.**

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

70 wounded. Eighteen British were killed, 50 were captured, and the rest escaped.

At the same time, 400 of Hamilton's Continental troops stormed Redoubt 10. Before they went, Washington spoke to the men. "General Washington made a short address or harangue, admonishing us to act the part of firm and brave soldiers, showing the necessity of accomplishing the object, as the attack on both redoubts depended on our success," wrote Captain Stephen Olney of Rhode Island. "The column marched in silence, with guns unloaded, and in good order. Many, no doubt, thinking that less than one quarter of a mile would finish the journey of life with them."

They approached with fixed bayonets toward a redoubt held by British troops.

Washington watched the attack on the redoubts through an embrasure cut for the main battery. Generals Henry Knox and Benjamin Lincoln stood beside him. When one of Washington's aides remonstrated that the commanding general was too exposed, Washington told him scornfully, "If you think so, you are at liberty to step back." A moment later an English musket ball ricocheted through the opening off a nearby cannon and fell at Washington's feet. He ignored the spent shot and continued watching the advance.

Sergeant Joseph Martin recounted the swiftly unfolding events: "The Sappers and Miners were furnished with axes and were to proceed in front and cut a passage for the troops through the abatis. At dark the detachment was formed and advanced beyond the trenches and lay down on the ground to await the signal for advancing to the attack, which was to be three shells from a certain battery near where we were lying. We had not lain here long before the expected signal was given. The word up, up, was then reiterated through the detachment. We immediately moved silently on toward the redoubt we were to attack, with unloaded muskets. Just as we arrived at the abatis, the enemy discovered us and directly opened a sharp fire upon us. We were now at a place where many of our large shells had burst in the ground, making holes sufficient to bury an ox in.

"The Sappers and Miners soon cleared a passage for the infantry, who entered it rapidly. Our Miners were ordered not to enter the fort, but there was no stopping them. I therefore forced a passage at a place where I saw our shot had cut away some of the abatis; several others entered at the same place. While passing, a man at my side received a ball in his head and fell under my feet, crying out bitterly. While crossing the trench, the enemy threw hand grenades into it. As I mounted the breastwork, I met an old associate hitching himself down into the trench. I knew him by the light of the enemy's musketry, it was so vivid. The fort was taken and all quiet in a very short time."

Captain Olney described the attack as well. "When we came near the front of the abatis, the enemy fired a full body of musketry. At this, our men broke silence and huzzaed; and as the order for silence seemed broken by every one, I huzzaed with all my power. The pioneers began to cut off the abatis. This seemed tedious work, in the dark, within three rods of the enemy."

U.S. Army Art Collection

Once he got through the abatis, Olney entered the ditch, "and when I found my men to the number of ten or twelve had arrived, I stepped through between two palisades (one having been shot off to make room) on to the parapet, and called out in a tone as if there was no danger, 'Captain Olney's company form here!' On this I had not less than six or eight bayonets pushed at me; I parried as well as I could." Although stabbed twice, Olney reached the redoubt and kept his company in good order before being carried away with the wounded.

It took a mere10 minutes for Redoubt 10 to fall into Continental hands. Doctor James Thacher,

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

**ABOVE: Painted four years after the siege and based on eyewitness accounts, a French artist depicts the defeated British Army marching out of Yorktown. American soldiers line the near side of the road, while French troops stand on the far side. Redcoats are grounding their arms in the field at the left while spectators gather in the foreground to watch. LEFT: American light infantry storm Redoubt 10 while sappers, bottom right, use axes to hack through the log palisade. Painting by H. Charles McBarron.**

a surgeon with the Continental Army, wrote, "I was desired to visit the wounded in the fort, even before the balls had ceased whistling about my ears, and saw a sergeant and eight men dead in the ditch." Nine Americans were killed and 30 wounded. The British had sustained eight casualties.

Baron Ludwig von Closen, a captain and aide to Rochambeau who helped take Redoubt 9, noted in his journal: "We established quarters during the night in these captured redoubts.... We completed the parallel and its communications and marked out a battery in front of it, between the two captured redoubts." By morning, the second parallel had been completed. Troops added artillery to the redoubts, dug a trench connecting them, filled the entrances the British had created, and opened new entrances in the back.

Cornwallis could read the handwriting on the wall. He wrote to Clinton that "experience

has shown that our fresh earthen works do not resist their powerful artillery. The safety of the place is, therefore, so precarious, that I cannot recommend that the fleet and army should run great risk in endeavoring to save us." Washington, for his part, was extremely proud of his soldiers. He wrote that the redoubts "were attacked by storm" and that Rochambeau should honor his soldiers for "their gallantry in storming the enemy's redoubt on the night of the 14th. instant, when officers and men so universally vied with each other in the exercise of every soldierly virtue."

In the early hours of October 16, the British made a futile sortie to disable Allied artillery. That evening, Cornwallis tried to send men to safety across the river to Gloucester Point, but a storm thwarted the mission. In a sense, they "were attacked by storm" again. The Allies continued to shell the British lines. One observer wrote, "By the force of the enemy's cannonade, the British works were tumbling into ruin."

The Allies fired until a drummer, and then an officer bearing a white handkerchief, appeared on a parapet in late morning. Denny recorded: "Had we not seen the drummer in his red coat when he first mounted, he might have beat away till doomsday. The constant firing was too much for the sound of a single drum; but when the firing ceased, I thought I never heard a drum equal to it—the most delightful music to us all." That drum beat and small fragment of cloth ultimately signaled the end of the ordeal that would make America a nation.

Surrender negotiations started that same day. Two days later, on October 19, Lt. Col. John Laurens, an aide to Washington, wrote "that the generals of the Allied Army will be at the Redoubt on the right of our second parallel at 9 o clock—this morning—when they expect to receive Lord Cornwallis's definitive answer and sign the capitulation." Based on the description, Laurens was likely referring to Redoubt 10. After signing the surrender documents, Cornwallis sent them to Washington, probably waiting in Redoubt 10. Washington noted, for the sake of posterity: "Done in the trenches before York Town in Virginia, Oct. 19 1781" and underneath signed "G. Washington." Rochambeau and a French naval officer signed after him.

Cornwallis himself did not appear at the surrender ceremony that afternoon, claiming conveniently to be ill. Washington could not have cared less. The humiliated Cornwallis's aide, Brig. Gen. Charles O'Hara, took his place. The British marched between a mile-long line of American and French soldiers lining Hampton Road outside Yorktown and gave up their arms. Soldiers were taken prisoner, but officers were allowed parole if they promised not to participate in the war until exchanged. O'Hara, either through an honest mistake or a pompous desire not to recognize the new American ascendancy, tried to surrender his sword to French General Rochambeau, who wordlessly pointed to Washington. The American commander, in turn, refused to accept the surrender from an inferior officer and had O'Hara hand over his sword to General Lincoln. With that seriocomic pantomime, the surrender of Yorktown was complete.

In the days following the surrender, Allied soldiers began leveling some of the earthworks. If new British troops arrived, Washington did not want them using the works. Unknown to the Allies, Cornwallis's desired reinforcements had left New York on the same day as the surrender. They arrived off the Virginia coast on October 24, but after learning of the surrender they quietly returned to New York a few days later.

Although Yorktown was the last major confrontation of the Revolutionary War, the struggle would not be over until September 1783, when the Treaty of Paris was signed. Key to the defeat of the British was the victory at Yorktown, and critical to the American victory at Yorktown were Redoubts 9 and 10. From their creation to their capture, the small fortresses of British defense were transformed into shining icons of American freedom. □

American cruisers *Quincy, Astoria,* and *Vincennes* are struck by Japanese torpedoes and naval gunfire at Savo Island in this painting by John Hamilton. The U.S. ships were quickly put out of action.

Like the rest of the Navy, the Solomon Islands task force was less experienced than its adversary. Its prewar core of seasoned seamen had been scattered throughout the suddenly far-flung fleet as wartime military expansion created a crying need for old salts to train the hordes of rookie sailors. Getting the newcomers battle ready as soon as possible left insufficient time for nocturnal drilling, which had never been emphasized in the first place. American sailors did not know how to fight in darkness. This would cost them dearly in the initial stages of the Guadalcanal campaign.

Japan's navy, by contrast, had a long tradition of night fighting. Its men were meticulously trained in this element of warfare, and they were also well aware of the U.S. Navy's neglect of it.

Apart from superior Japanese training, a critical factor was the advanced state of Japanese weaponry. Following extensive post-World War I experimentation with various types of torpedoes, the island nation's naval technicians had discarded air-powered propulsion systems and commenced perfecting and manufacturing waterborne missiles fed by volatile, powerful pure oxygen. By 1933, the peerless Type 93 "Long Lance" was being delivered. Its robust engine could

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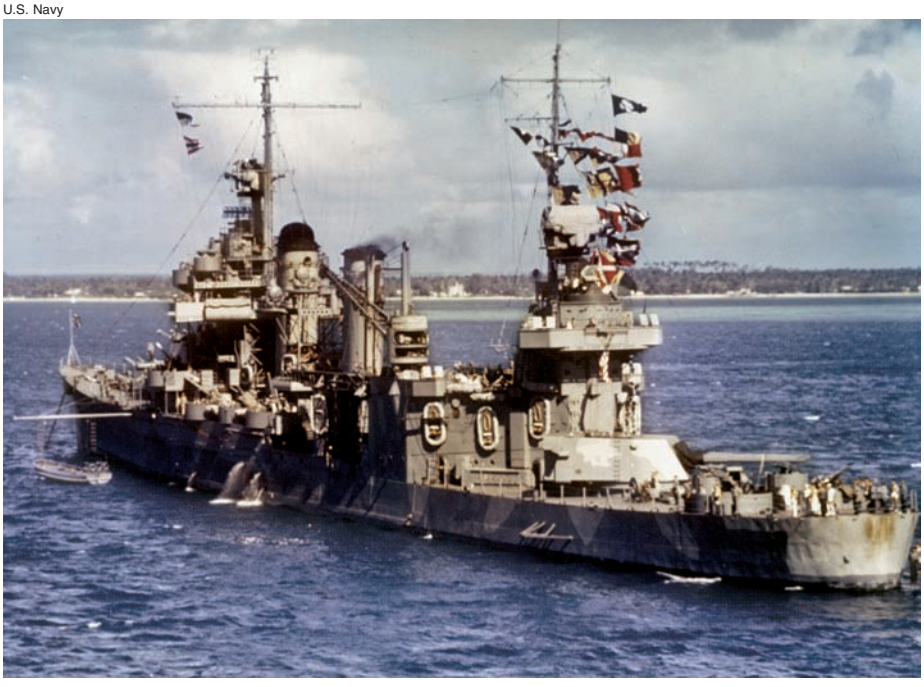


**ABOVE: USS *Quincy*, photographed mere days before the battle. RIGHT: USS *Vincennes*, pictured in July 1942.**

U.S. Navy

push a 1,090-pound warhead along a straight, wakeless, 11-mile track at 49 knots. It was a very unfortunate target indeed that suffered even a glancing blow from the new, infernal weapon.

Despite the recent pivotal victory off Midway, most American tacticians still clung to the ingrained truism that a warship's deck guns were her dominant armaments. They preached a doctrine of advancing to within artillery range of hostile squadrons and opening accurate shellfire while still outside the presumed reach of the enemy's torpedoes. The U.S. Navy had yet to encounter the Long Lance, and this fearsome weapon would prove horrendously effective.

The Japanese fleet approaching Guadalcanal in early August 1942 was laden with vast stores of the Type 93, and its sailors were quite expert in their use. The joint American-Australian task force guarding the Marine beachhead carried few torpedoes. Those they did carry were of inferior quality, and the seamen were ill-trained in their deployment in nighttime combat. The American Mark XV torpedo sported a far smaller warhead than the Long Lance and was limited to just three miles at 45 knots. Furthermore, its notoriously unreliable depth-setting mechanism and magnetic-influenced exploder resulted in few successful attacks. The missiles usually passed harmlessly under their targets, exploded prematurely, or failed to explode at all.

Admiral Gunichi Mikawa began assembling his attack force on August 7, the day of the Marine landing at Guadalcanal. Four heavy cruisers were joined by the elderly light cruisers *Yubari* and *Tenryu* and the equally aged destroyer *Yunagi*. Aboard his heavy cruiser flagship *Chokai*, Mikawa dispatched the old transports *Meiyo Maru* and *Soya* with 519 rifle-armed sailors in hopes of reinforcing the land forces straining to shove the Marines from their tiny perimeter in the Pacific. However, the motley troop convoy chanced across the bow of Lt. Cmdr. Henry Munson's *S-38* submarine. The sub had been built in 1909 and was armed with old, reliable Mark X torpedoes that featured simple, dependable contact detonators. When Munson stuck one of these rusty charges into *Meiyo Maru*, she sank like a sandbag, taking 373 Japanese sailors with her.

This was just one worrisome factor Mikawa had to confront. The crews of his cruisers were sharply honed teams that operated in lethal harmony, but the other vessels in the hastily gathered assembly were strangers to each other and unlikely to perform with a great deal of efficiency in combat. Also, Mikawa's shortage of destroyers would leave his command open to the fate of *Meiyo Maru*. Without the speedy little war boats to screen the more ponderous vessels from American subs, the flotilla was not only susceptible to sniping submersibles, but also to having its presence detected and betrayed by undersea prowlers. Apart from the venerable *Yunagi*, there were no destroyers available. Mikawa decided that the risk was acceptable, and at 2:30 PM the fleet churned from Rabaul's Simpson Harbor and steered for Guadalcanal in a manner so brazen that American pilots patrolling from aircraft carriers anchored off the Solomons never dreamed that they should watch for such a move.

On the morning of August 8, Japanese reconnaissance aircraft out of Rabaul located the American supply ships anchored off Guadalcanal. The airmen counted three heavy cruisers, several destroyers, and 13 additional cargo carriers moored just off adjacent Tulagi. Moving his command to an out-of-the-way patch of ocean east of Bougainville, Mikawa sent three floatplanes aloft later that morning. The aircraft sniffed out more potential victims off Lunga Point and the opposite side of Tulagi.

At this point, a twin-engine Lockheed Hudson bomber buzzed the raiders. *Chokai*'s antiaircraft gunners opened up on the snooping aircraft and scared it away. Fearing that his ships had been reported and would soon be assaulted, Mikawa dispersed the vessels and made ready to defend against American torpedo planes. In a never-resolved mystery, the air crew either did not report its crucial sighting or else had its alarm disregarded. It is possible the airmen thought friendly vessels had mistakenly fired on them. Whatever the case, a relieved Mikawa watched the onset of sheltering darkness without having sighted a single U.S. warplane.

By this time he had turned his fleet southward at 24 knots, and although still worried about the American aircraft carriers' whereabouts (they were safely concealed beneath thick cloud cover), Mikawa made his approach into New Georgia Sound. By 6:30 PM, all his warships were battle ready, and the admiral

sent a blinker signal to his crews: "In the finest tradition of the Imperial Navy we shall engage the enemy in night battle. Every man is expected to do his utmost."

The Americans and their Australian allies had laid out a multilayered defense grid of long-range search aircraft and radar-equipped picket destroyers. An inner perimeter of cruisers and destroyers provided a screen of floating artillery to shield the vulnerable Marine beachhead at Guadalcanal and the indispensable supply ships. On paper it looked like the search planes could blanket the region, but in practice the searchers would prove half blind.

Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boats patrolled the sea north and northwest of Guadalcanal, watching for any hostiles who might approach from Truk. Hudsons flown by Royal Australian Air Force pilots from airfields around Milne Bay, New Guinea, covered the south and southwest sectors. Twenty 11th Bomb Group Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses watched over the western approaches. The Catalinas and Fortresses were equipped with new ASE surface-search radar sets. These devices could detect surface craft from as far away as 25 miles, but there were still a few bugs in the system, and sets frequently malfunctioned.

American Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, commanding Carrier Task Force 61, recommended that planes prowling over New Georgia Sound time their search patterns so that they reached the ends of their outbound flights at dusk, then return the same way while probing with radar in case enemy elements should try to slip down the corridor under cover of darkness. Nobody bothered to act on Fletcher's well-reasoned advice, and on the afternoon of August 8, Mikawa's fleet easily eluded the porous air coverage. Fletcher was unaware his request for air reconnaissance had been ignored. He thought aircraft were patrolling the most likely route of approach by hostiles, and when he received no reports of danger in the channel he simply assumed there was none.

Incredibly, several nonreconnaissance units sighted Mikawa's task force, but these reports were also ignored. As Mikawa's warships commenced their high-speed advance, they were spotted by B-17s returning from a raid on Rabaul, and a second B-17 flight noted the flotilla churning southeast down St. George's Channel. Most significant was a dispatch from *S-38* warning that what sounded to her crew like two destroyers and three heavy cruisers had passed over her at 5:42 PM. No one bothered to inform Guadalcanal's naval commander, Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, of these contacts. Precisely as Fletcher had feared, the raiders entered the passage at dusk, and as the attack took shape the unwary Americans and Australians were vulnerable in the gathering twilight.

Earlier that afternoon, Fletcher had received an intelligence report that twin-engine Japanese torpedo bombers had been spotted over Guadalcanal, and he made what was perhaps the most critical error of the many Allied miscues leading up to the battle. Americans had first come to dread the enemy's torpedo planes at Pearl Harbor. They had also wrought mayhem during the Battle of the Coral Sea when they damaged the aircraft carrier *Lexington,* and at Midway when they sank the carrier *Yorktown.* Learning that the feared torpedo planes were prowling in his vicinity, an unnerved Fletcher ordered his carriers to withdraw southeast to a safe distance. With the flattops no longer present to provide air cover, the transports and their guardians off Guadalcanal were open to attack.

Another opportunity had been squandered when the pilots of two Hudsons overflew the Japanese at 10:25 and 11 AM and inexplicably waited until they landed back in New Guinea to sound the alarm. Furthermore, they underestimated the speed of the vessels. The dispatches indicated the ships were moving at just 15 knots, leading Turner to calculate that they would not reach Guadalcanal that night. The airmen even mistook the task force's heading, causing Turner to conclude that it was not coming his way.

National Archives

**ABOVE: Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner and Marine Major General Alexander Vandegrift confer shortly before the attack. BELOW: Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, left, and *Quincy* Captain Samuel N. Moore.**

National Archives

U.S. Navy

Nevertheless, it was sufficiently worrisome for Turner to summon Vandegrift and British Rear Admiral Victor A.C. Crutchley, commander of Cruiser Task Force 44 (*Hobart, Chicago, Canberra,* and *Australia*) to discuss the situation. With Fletcher having already departed with his carriers, the conference meant that every senior Allied commander was away from his unit. Mikawa's leaderless victims were ready to be harvested.

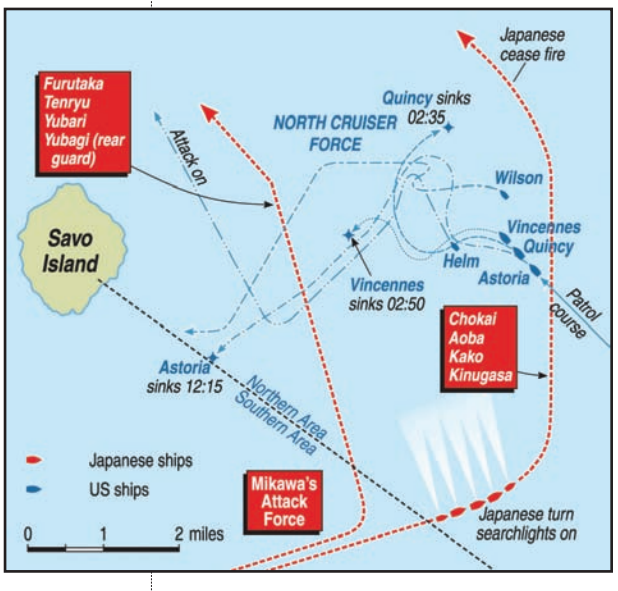
As the Japanese steamed down Savo Sound, staying undetected behind 1,673-foot Savo Island, Crutchley positioned *Australia, Canberra,* and *Chicago* just south of Savo Island to watch for raiders who might approach from the west. The northern passage was staked out by the cruisers *Vincennes, Quincy,* and *Astoria*. Crutchley critically neglected to ascertain that the captains of the northern and southern groups were aware of each other's positions. He also sent out seven of his nine destroyers as antisubmarine pickets, effectively removing them from the defensive shield at Guadalcanal.

At 11:30 on August 8, the usual late-night thunderstorms formed east of Savo Island and drifted directly into the path of the hurtling attackers, cloaking them from aerial and shipboard spotters. As the raiders charged down the passage, *Blue,* an old U.S. Navy picket destroyer, cut directly in front of them, but *Blue*'s navigators were concentrating on navigation landmarks to the east and did not notice the lethal fleet bearing down from the opposite direction. Moments later, at 12:43 AM, the attackers passed unnoticed behind the destroyer *Ralph Talbot,* one of the few torpedo-armed Allied ships in the area.

The Japanese had sounded battle stations at midnight and accelerated to 26 knots while assembling into combat formation. From *Chokai,* Mikawa led *Aoba, Kako, Kinugasa, Furutaka, Tenryu, Yubari,* and *Yunagi.* The Japanese squadron was still undetected as it passed south of Savo Island. At 1:33 AM, Mikawa broke radio silence to order his captains to increase speed to 30 knots, then yelled, "All ships attack!" into his microphone.

U.S. Navy

**ABOVE: USS *Astoria* photographed during gunnery practice a month before the battle. RIGHT: Because of the downpour at Savo Island, Japanese ships inadvertently became separated, which actually worked in their favor by providing crossfire.**




Map © 2012 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Surging from an opaque curtain of rain, *Chokai* uncorked four torpedoes at *Canberra*; *Furutaka* and *Aoba* swiftly followed suit. The trio also opened fire with deck guns on the Australian cruiser and quickly set her ablaze. Within five minutes *Canberra* was dead in the water, her crew decimated and her radios inoperable. Straining against her 30-degree starboard list, survivors watched in horror as their attackers pounded past them, guns blazing, deeper into the harbor.

At 1:46 AM, *Chicago*'s helmsman alertly jerked her hard to port to dodge two torpedoes, but seconds later another torpedo from *Kako* ripped open her starboard bow. Captain Howard Bode, awakened from a sound sleep, turned his wounded vessel west to face the Japanese, and presented them with the smallest possible target. Searching wildly for the still invisible enemy, *Chicago*'s gunners managed to discern some unfamiliar vessels attacking the destroyer *Patterson*. Opening up with his 5-inch rifles, Bode killed 23 of *Tenryu*'s sailors with a direct hit but mysteriously held a static position west of the harbor while the fighting moved south. Even more puzzling, he failed to broadcast a radio report of the developing battle. By this time, *Patterson*'s skipper, Commander Frank Walker, was desperately filling the airwaves with a panicky message of his own: "WARNING! WARNING! STRANGE SHIPS ENTERING HARBOR!" Walker's gunners gamely cut loose on *Tenryu, Yubari,* and *Kinugasa*, pumping 5-inchers at them until 2:10 AM, when he received a radio message from Crutchley to disengage.

After just seven minutes, Turner's southern cruiser force was blazing wreckage, and Mikawa turned his prows north. The rain squall was still roiling the waters. The downpour concealed the raiders' approach and masked the muzzle flashes and conflagrations from the Americans to the north. As the Japanese moved away from their crippled and sinking victims and reentered the deluge, *Furutaka, Tenryu,* and *Yubari* became separated from the rest of the fleet and emerged from the storm front in single file slightly west of their sister ships. This unplanned positioning placed the attackers on parallel courses that would trap their quarry between them in a killing crossfire.

At 1:48 AM, Mikawa lined up his forward torpedo tubes on *Vincennes* and fired a four-shot spread from 12,000 yards. The missiles missed, but seconds later *Vincennes, Quincy,* and *Wilson* were caught in the blinding rays of searchlights from *Chokai, Kako,* and *Aoba*. At 1:51 the Japanese began firing their main batteries at their startled victims. After just four minutes the Allied warships were badly damaged and in no condition to retaliate, but at this point the killers began to lose formation, making it difficult for either side to tell friend from foe.

*Astoria*'s crew was totally unaware of the attack; most were sleeping when *Chokai* fastened her spotlights on them. By sheer coincidence, gunnery officer Lt. Cmdr. William H. Truesdell was near the main battery director when Mikawa's first salvo battered the water around the American cruiser. Truesdell instantly rang the bridge and cried out for general quarters, but watch supervisor Lt. Cmdr. James R. Topper did nothing. Realizing that vital time was waning, Truesdell independently ordered the main batteries to commence firing. *Astoria*'s skipper, Captain William G. Greenman, stumbled half asleep onto the bridge and asked Topper who had given the order to fire. When his subordinate professed ignorance, Greenman drawled: "Topper, I think we are firing on our own ships. Let's not get too excited and act too hasty. Cease firing!" An instant later Truesdell came over the intercom and wailed, "For God's sake, give the word to commence firing!" A crucial four minutes had passed since the Japanese opened fire. It was now too late.

At 2:16, *Astoria* was too badly damaged to still be a threat, and it was now safe for *Kinugasa* to give away her own position, so she turned her light onto the burning ship to make it easier to finish her. Lt. Cmdr. Walter B. Davidson climbed onto *Astoria*'s number two turret and verbally directed a final salvo. Using the last of their electrical power, the gunners trained their five-inchers on *Kinugasa* and fired their ship's last volley, missing their intended target but scoring a direct hit on *Chokai* immediately behind her. Mikawa's foremost main battery was pulverized, killing or wounding 15 men. Seconds later, *Astoria*'s remaining power reserves fizzled out and she coasted to a halt, an inferno of oily flames.

Just before the shelling started, *Quincy*'s radio operators had picked up *Patterson*'s wireless warning of the oncoming strike force, and Captain Samuel Moore did not hesitate to sound general quarters. As the enemy's lights stabbed through the sodden blackness, Moore

received radio orders to steam at 15 knots and fire on the lights, but his main battery was not yet battle ready. Before the gunners could finish priming their weapons, *Aoba* struck *Quincy* with a blizzard of shellfire, wrecking her bridge and fantail. One round hit a floatplane in the well deck and spattered the area with flaming gasoline from the aircraft's fuel tank.

*Furutaka* and *Tenryu* joined the attack, trapping *Quincy* in a three-pronged crossfire. Realizing that he was sandwiched between two columns of hostiles, Moore ordered his helmsman to maneuver hard to starboard to avoid colliding with *Vincennes*. The maneuver set *Quincy* on a direct heading for the eastern group of Japanese cruisers, earning her instant admiration from the Japanese for what they later called her crew's great spirit. At 2:04 AM, two Long Lances from *Tenryu* disemboweled *Quincy,* and in a final act of defiance Moore's gunners fired a broadside at *Kako*. In another incredible fluke of gunnery, the salvo missed its intended mark and crashed into *Chokai* instead, destroying Mikawa's chartroom and killing or crippling another 36 of his men.

At 2:10, another direct hit killed Moore and his bridge staff, and six minutes later a torpedo from *Aoba* holed *Quincy*'s port side. At this point the raiders ceased firing on the pugnacious but plainly dying American ship, and at 2:38 she sank bow first. By battle's end, she would be one of so many warships on the sea floor that the sector would forever be known as Iron Bottom Sound.

Aboard *Vincennes* a befuddled Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl tried to raise Crutchley on the radio and obtain some information about the chaos. At 1:53 AM, *Kinugasa* had trained her searchlight on *Vincennes,* and *Kako* then assailed her with main and secondary batteries. Turning from sinking *Quincy, Chokai* joined in the shelling as Mikawa maneuvered his eastern group toward the reeling Americans. He was attempting the ancient naval tactic of crossing the "T" and placing him in position to let loose broadsides at the Allies, who would be unable to reply except with their handful of after turrets.

Riefkohl had no trouble diagnosing his opponents' intentions. After screaming for 20 knots of speed, he ordered his helmsman to turn 40 degrees to port and yelled for his gunners to fire on *Kinugasa.* The second volley knocked out the Japanese ship's steering gear and convinced her crew to switch off its searchlight—not that it was really needed anymore, since *Vincennes* was burning violently. Still, Riefkohl had disrupted Mikawa's T-crossing stratagem.

At 1:55, realizing what a conspicuous target

Australian War Memorial

**ABOVE: Australian cruiser *Canberra* conducts a night-firing drill. In battle, she fired only a few rounds before being left dead in the water. BELOW: Japanese cruiser *Yubari* uses searchlights to locate the Allied fleet.**

U.S. Navy

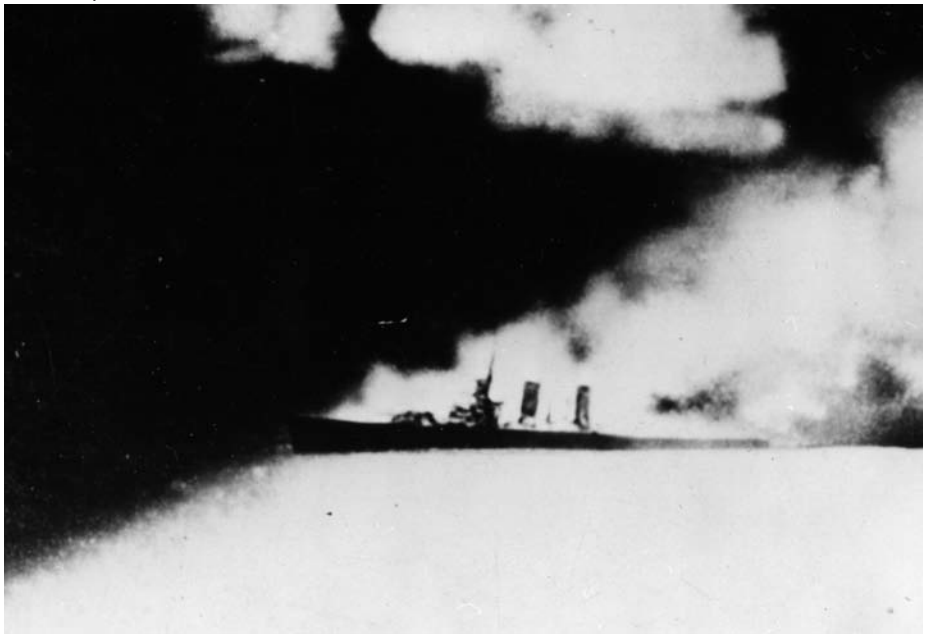
his flame-shrouded boat had become, Riefkohl turned to starboard and asked for 25 knots in an effort to split up the savaged clump of Allied warships, making them a smaller collective target. Before *Vincennes* could get underway, a Long Lance from *Chokai* shattered her forward port hull, and *Tenryu* and *Furutaka* opened their deck guns on her. At 2:03 AM, *Yubari* drilled a torpedo into *Vincennes*' number one fire room, killing every man there and silencing her last operable battery. Still wondering if he was under friendly fire, Riefkohl ordered a different set of colors hoisted. This confused the Japanese into thinking they were pummeling one of their own ships, and for seven minutes they ceased fire. At 2:13, Mikawa and his officers realized all their boats were accounted for and resumed hammering *Vincennes*. At 2:30 Riefkohl gave the order to abandon ship; at 2:58 she gurgled to the bottom.

After finishing their latest victim, the Imperial pincers resumed closing toward the northeast. *Ralph Talbot* had slipped alongside *Yubari* in hopes of staying unnoticed long enough to loose a spread of torpedoes, but the Japanese cruiser's crew instantly spotted the sleek shadow and wrecked her with five direct hits. The storm saved *Talbot* from further damage as she lurched away

under the gushing clouds, making for the shallow anchorage just off Savo.

While *Yubari*'s gunners were crippling *Talbot,* Mikawa was gathering his command staff around him. Despite his squadron's having sustained little damage and having plenty of ammunition remaining, it had totally lost formation. The admiral and his officers estimated that it would take two hours to reassemble their fleet and deploy to attack the transports. This would leave just one hour of darkness, and if the American carriers were en route to the area, aircraft would likely intercept the raiders before they could reach their next targets. There was also the possibility that if they departed right away the attackers might use themselves as bait to coax vengeful American

Both: U.S. Navy



**ABOVE: The doomed *Quincy,* photographed from a Japanese ship shortly before being sunk. BELOW: As seen from Mikawa's flag ship, *Chokai,* Allied cruisers *Chicago* and *Canberra* are illuminated by flares.**

carrier commanders into following within range of Japanese torpedo planes based on Rabaul.

The Imperial Navy had already won a smashing victory that night. Surviving Allied naval elements had quit the area and were steaming eastward at best speed. At 2:20 AM, Mikawa ordered his own fleet to withdraw. This flabbergasted some of his captains, who had never dreamed their exalted admiral would not perform the final task of the operation by destroying the helpless Allied supply flotilla. The freighters were much more significant than Mikawa realized, and by sparing them he committed a fatal error that grievously tainted his victory and eventually tilted the Solomons campaign against Japan.

Although he grudgingly complied with the order to come about and head west, *Kinugasa*'s captain, Masao Sawa, blew every one of his starboard torpedoes from their tubes in a futile effort to strike the transport anchorage 13 miles away. Aboard *Chokai,* Captain Mikio Hayakawa pleaded vainly with Mikawa to destroy the cargo ships before leaving the area, but by 3:40 AM the raiders had regained formation and set out for home.

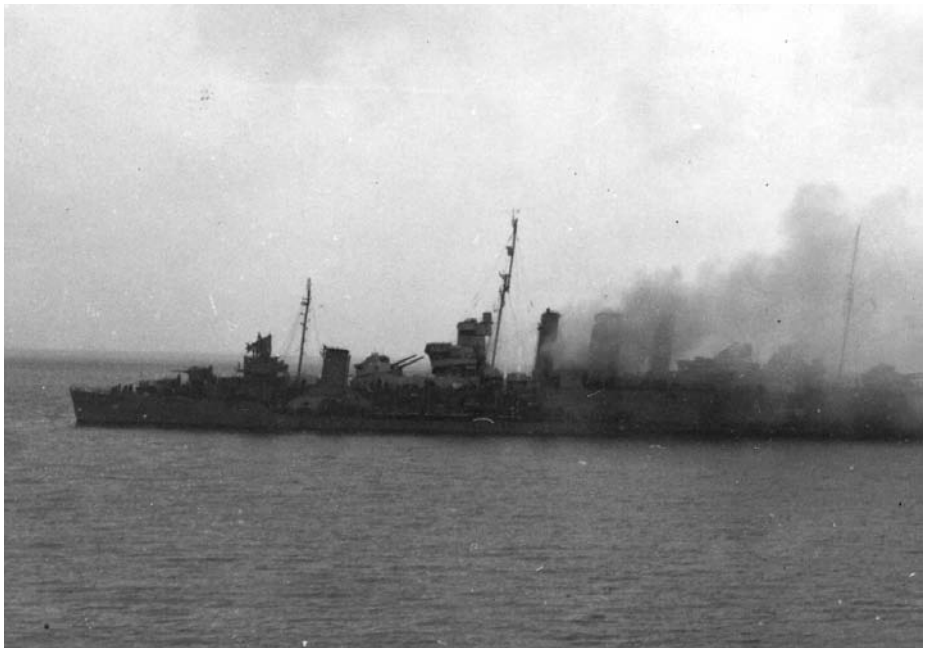
Later that morning, U.S. sub *S-44* stalked to within 700 yards of *Kako* and pumped three old-fashioned torpedoes into her; five minutes later she went down with 71 of her men. Meanwhile, back in the debris-choked waters around Savo Island, *Quincy* and *Vincennes* were already on the bottom. The fires on *Canberra* were being held somewhat in check by the pounding rain, but Turner soon realized the mangled vessel was beyond salvaging, and at 8 AM he had the destroyer *Ellet* sink her with a torpedo. The deluge also delayed *Astoria*'s last rites. The storm adequately extinguished her blazing topside, but internal fires continued to spread. With her insides being wracked by explosions, the last of her men abandoned ship at 12:05 PM. Ten minutes later she rolled onto her port side and sank stern first.

Like his counterpart, Fletcher was also disregarding good advice. When Fletcher finally saw battle dispatches at 5 AM, he declined to come about and pursue the Japanese, citing the threat of enemy airpower from nearby Rabaul. He was unswayed by arguments that he could launch dive bombers and torpedo planes from his own carriers against the withdrawing strike force and still retain his fighter planes in case enemy aircraft appeared. Instead, the carriers that Mikawa so feared maintained a timid distance.

Fletcher also refused to return to Guadalcanal to provide air cover for the continued unloading of the transports. At 2:15 PM on August 10, he turned over his position as expeditionary force commander to Turner. Although the aircraft carriers were long gone by then, the new commanding admiral made a gutsy decision to return to Guadalcanal and furnish whatever protection he could to the freighters despite his destroyers and remaining cruisers being dangerously vulnerable to air attack. Turner assembled the remnants of his command and shepherded the merchantmen eastward after their cargoes had been offloaded.

Vandegrift's Marines were now alone and encircled, but they had just enough arms, food, and medical supplies to sustain them until help

National Archives



**ABOVE: A still-smoking *Canberra,* the day after the battle. She was sunk by friendly fire. LEFT: Exhausted *Chicago* crewmen photographed by their captain, Howard Bode, the day after the battle. FAR LEFT: *Chicago*'s badly damaged bow was also photographed by Captain Bode.**

could arrive. The haughty Japanese land forces would soon be soundly defeated in battle at the Ilu River and the heights overlooking Henderson Field. When the Japanese attempted an overly complicated offensive to assault the American perimeter from the interior of the island, large numbers of their troops became lost in the jungle and wandered aimlessly around until they succumbed to starvation, tropical disease, or Marine bullets. Had Mikawa completed his mission, the Marines would have had insufficient ammunition to defend themselves and would almost certainly have lost Guadalcanal. As at Pearl Harbor, excessive Japanese caution saved the Americans from total defeat.

Some 1,077 Americans and Australians died in the Battle of Savo Island, and another 700 were wounded. When the American destroyer *Jarvis* went down later that morning in a Japanese air attack, she took another 233 men with her. A half century later, undersea explorers were horrified by the number of sunken vessels littering the sea floor in Iron Bottom Sound.

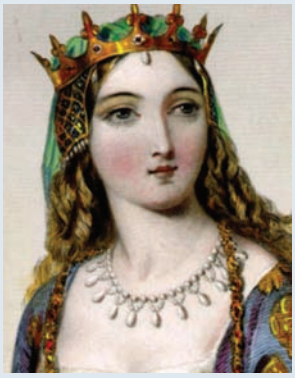
When a beaming Mikawa made it home, he was stunned to learn that Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the Combined Fleet, was not entirely pleased with his spectacular but incomplete victory. Having traveled extensively in the United States, Yamamoto had a better grasp than most Japanese of America's industrial capabilities. He realized that his little island nation could not win a prolonged war against a country with such massive reservoirs of men, material, and natural resources, and that a long step closer to the quick finish that was Japan's sole hope of victory had been squandered. His navy's reverses in the recent battles of Coral Sea and Midway had spawned momentum for the Americans. Off Savo Island, Mikawa could have crushed this swelling impetus while securing the Solomons as a base of operations for resurgent air and sea offensives. Instead, he flinched.

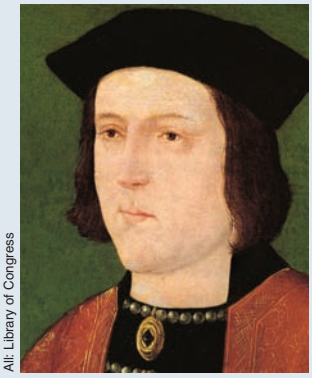
Following the battle, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox ordered Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn to convene a board of inquiry to clarify the causes for the humiliating defeat. Hepburn dug tirelessly into every aspect of the affair. After a comprehensive review, he blandly attributed the overriding reason for the defeat to "the complete surprise achieved by the enemy." He blamed the fleet's being taken so utterly unawares on its poor state of readiness in the event of night attack, its failure to react to repeated sightings of Japanese forces, overdependence on obviously inadequate radar, inefficient communications, and insufficient aerial reconnaissance. Hepburn also cited the departure of the carriers as an inexcusable action that made it impossible to strike back at the withdrawing enemy.

The chief—indeed only—scapegoat for the Savo Island debacle was *Chicago*'s captain, Howard Bode. After Crutchley's departure the evening before the battle, Bode was left in charge of the southern cruiser group. Rather than position *Chicago* at the head of the line of warships as was customary for an element's command ship, Bode left *Chicago* behind *Canberra*. He wanted to avoid tricky nighttime maneuvering, and nobody had bothered to tell him Crutchley would not be returning. By not being at the head of the line, Bode was unable to effectively command his cruisers when the shooting started. Hepburn also castigated Bode for maintaining a static position west of Savo Island after the fighting moved southward and for broadcasting no radio reports of the developing attack.

After Hepburn concluded his investigation and submitted his findings to Admiral Nimitz, Bode's mistakes became public knowledge. Unwilling to face court-martial, Bode committed suicide in April 1943 while billeted in Panama. He was, in a way, the last casualty of the Battle of Savo Island. □

# ROSES IN THE SNOW





All: Library of Congress

**Left to right, King Henry VI, Queen Margaret of Anjou, and King Edward IV.**

IN THE MIDST OF A BLINDING SNOWSTORM, YORKIST FORCES UNDER EDWARD IV ATTACKED THE ARMY OF LANCASTRIAN KING HENRY VI AT TOWTON, IN WESTERN YORKSHIRE, ON MARCH 29, 1461. FOR SIX HOURS, THE LARGEST BATTLE EVER FOUGHT ON ENGLISH SOIL RAGED. **BY MIKE PHIFER**

ON MARCH 1, 1461, English Chancellor George Neville faced a large crowd of Londoners in St. John's Field outside the city. Neville asked the people if they believed sitting King Henry VI was fit to rule. "Nay, nay!" they cried. Would they rather have Edward IV, the Duke of York, as their king? "Yea, yea!" they answered. Two days later, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Salisbury and Exeter, and other leaders held a council and ruled that Edward should be the king of England. The following day, 18-year-old Edward went to Westminster to accept the crown and scepter as king. There was no formal coronation, however. The Yorkists may have wanted Edward to be king, but the Lancaster forces still supported Henry VI. Blood would have to be shed before it was ultimately determined which man would rule England. The white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster were set against each other.

Before he had turned a year old, Henry VI had become king of England and France on October 21, 1422. His grandfather, Henry IV, was the first king of the house of Lancaster, while Henry VI's father, Henry V, had been a strong, ambitious king who captured a good part of France and put it under his reign. Henry VI would prove to be nothing like his forebears. In 1445, the king married French Princess Margaret of Anjou, giving her as a dowry the French province of Maine. With the province back in French hands, English-held Normandy was open to invasion and was lost in 1450. England's empire in France was quickly crumbling under the weak if not indeed simple-minded king.

Things were not well at home, either. In 1450, open rebellion broke out, putting London briefly into anarchy as reform-minded rebels from Kent entered the city angry at the losses in France and the resulting damage to trade. They were unhappy mainly with the

Yorkist troops led by the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of York storm through the streets of St. Albans on May 22, 1455. The rebels captured King Henry VI, killed the Duke of Somerset, and ignited the 30-year-long War of the Roses. Painting by Graham Turner.

king's senior counsellors, spelling out in a manifesto: "We believe the king our sovereign lord is betrayed by the insatiable covetousness and malicious purpose of certain false and unsuitable persons who surround his highness, day and night, and daily inform him that good is evil and evil is good."

It was rumored that Edward IV's father, Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York, had been behind the rebellion. York had been lord lieutenant of Normandy and had helped finance the war in France. Blamed for various failures on the Continent—not all of his own making—York had been removed in 1447 and sent to Ireland to get him out of the way. To make matters worse, York was replaced as the king's chief adviser by his longtime nemesis, Edmund Beaufort, the Duke of Somerset.

For the better part of a decade, York and his allies worked to undermine King Henry VI, sometimes secretly in the halls of government, sometimes openly on the field of battle. Matters came to a head in June 1459, when York and his most powerful supporters, the Dukes of Salisbury and Warwick, marched to the king's castle at Kenilworth to take him captive. At Ludlow, the combined Yorkist forces began a final move toward Kenilworth. They were not to make it. Spotting the king's large Lancastrian army between Worcester and Kidderminster, York and his allies decided to retreat to Worcester. From there they fell back to Tewksbury.

Rejecting a general pardon offer, the Yorkists continued their retreat, stopping on October 12 at Ludford Bridge over the River Teme and establishing a defensive position. Heavily outnumbered and suffering from low morale, York and his allies endured a major blow when Warwick's second-in-command, Andrew Trollope, deserted to the king's side, taking with him both much-needed troops and York's battle plans.

**Edward, Earl of March, kneels before King Henry VI following the Yorkist victory at Northampton in 1460. In the foreground is one of the Lancastrian cannons rendered useless by the rain. Henry retained his crown, but the Duke of York would govern in his place. Painting by Graham Turner.**

That same night, York, Warwick, and Salisbury fled, leaving the army on its own. Queen Margaret was merciful to the abandoned Yorkist troops, who were pardoned after being fined and imprisoned for a short while. York fled to Ireland, while the others fled across the English Channel to Calais, where they found safety with Salisbury's brother, Lord Fauconberg. Although temporarily defeated, the Yorkists were not done yet. Warwick and his allies began to plot their return.

At Calais, the Yorkists worked to rebuild their power base. The region was commercially crucial to the wool trade, which was England's main source of wealth. The Lancastrians could ill afford to let the Yorkists occupy Calais. Henry Beaufort, the new Duke of Somerset (his father had died in battle in 1455), was sent to recapture the valuable port. Somerset was repulsed, although his forces managed to secure a castle from which they launched harassing attacks. In early 1460, the Yorkists struck back, raiding Sandwich twice and capturing two Lancastrian fleets preparing to sail on Calais.

On June 26, the Yorkists struck Sandwich again, but this time it was no raid. Landing at Sandwich with a few thousand men, the Yorkist army began to swell with recruits. A few days later they were in London, where they trapped the small Lancastrian force under Lord Scales in the Tower of London. Before leaving to move against the king's army south of Coventry, the Yorkists reaffirmed their oath not to harm the king, but merely to remove him from his enemies. The king, meanwhile, having left Queen Margaret and their son in Coventry, led his army to Northampton, where they fortified their camp outside town. There the king awaited the Yorkists.

He did not have long to wait. By the evening of July 9, a 7,000-man Yorkist army commanded by Salisbury, Warwick, and York's son, Edward, the Earl of March, had reached Northampton. Facing them with their backs to the River Nene was the 5,000-man Lancastrian army draw up in a good defensive position behind ramparts strengthened with cannons. The Yorkists began their advance across the boggy ground toward the Lancaster defenses. Rain made the attack more difficult for the Yorkists but also proved beneficial by rendering the enemy cannons useless. The king's forces were quickly defeated, and the king was captured and taken to London. Upon hearing of the king's defeat, Scales surrendered the Tower of London.

When York heard of the victory at Northampton, he returned to London from Ireland. Heading straight to Westminster Hall, he literally put his hand on the English throne. A compromise was reached with Parliament in October 1460. Under the so-called Act of Accord, Henry would remain on the throne, but York would govern on his behalf. Upon the king's death, York and his heirs would assume the crown on their own. Queen Margaret, understandably, had no intention of agreeing to a plan that would rob her son, the Prince of Wales, of his inherited right to be king. She began to build an army in northern England of longtime Lancastrians and newly recruited Scottish and Welsh auxiliaries.

After sending his son Edward to the Welsh border to recruit troops, York and his other son, Edmund, 17, headed north to deal with

## ARTIST GRAHAM TURNER BRINGS THE WAR OF THE ROSES TO LIFE.

Over the past 17 years, artist Graham Turner has carved his own niche, building a reputation for his paintings of the Wars of the Roses that combine dramatic compositions with attention to detail and careful research, bringing to life the people who lived through this turbulent period in British history.

"As a boy I was attracted by the iconic images of castles and knights in armor, and my first couple of 'medieval' canvases were of Arthurian-type knights errant. However, I soon became enthralled by the real history of the 15th century—it was far more exciting than anything you could make up!"

"I find the research that each new painting requires utterly absorbing. I piece together the scraps of information from diverse sources—written accounts, manuscript illuminations, museums, archaeological finds, historic sites—to recreate a real world populated by real people who live, breathe, and feel emotion just as we do."

Turner visited the battlefield at Towton when he was planning his painting of the battle. "Towton is such a moving and evocative place. I visited near the battle's anniversary, and although it wasn't snowing it was bitterly cold, with the wind blowing across that exposed plateau. I have worn armor in sub-zero temperatures, so have experienced how it sucks all the heat out of your body; it would have been a very unpleasant place to be, even without the thousands of soldiers ranged against you."

The discovery of a mass grave containing some of the victims of Towton, and the research done on the remains, provides a glimpse of the realities of warfare and helped Turner appreciate the human side of the story. "One of the skeletons had survived a previous massive facial injury, yet had gone back into battle knowing what that might lead to; that's something I am thankful I have no experience of, but it shows that the reality of the period

Margaret. Bad weather made things miserable for York and his men as they marched north deeper into Lancaster territory. At Worksop, in Nottingham, York's vanguard was cut to pieces by Lancastrian troops led by the turncoat Andrew Trollope, forcing York to withdraw to Sandal Castle, near Wakefield, and wait for reinforcements.

Lancastrian forces in the area continued to grow; they now numbered close to 15,000 men. Cut off from Warwick in London and his son Edward in Wales, York was in a bad situation. It was about to get worse. On December 30, a Yorkist foraging party was attacked by Lancaster troops under Somerset, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Clifford. Desperate for food, York charged out from the castle to save the foragers, heading straight into an ambush.

York quickly discovered that the troops attacking his foragers were not the whole Lancaster army. Outnumbered, he and his men fought desperately for about half an hour before they were overwhelmed. York was cornered in a stand of elm trees and hacked to death, while Edmund attempted to escape to Wakefield. Lord Clifford caught up with him on Wakefield Bridge. Ignoring the youth's pleas from bended knees, Clifford was pitiless. "By God's blood," he said, "thy father slew mine, and I will do thee and all thy kin." Drawing his sword, Clifford plunged the blade through the boy's throat and out the back of his neck. Salisbury was captured the next day and beheaded. His head, along with the heads of York and Edmund, were put on display over the gates of the city of York. Atop York's head a paper crown was placed in mockery.

Queen Margaret now moved her army south toward London, burning and pillaging as they went. Many of these plunderers were the Scots, to whom the queen had promised that all the country south of the River Trent was fair game. Refugees escaping from Margaret's marauding army brought with them horrific stories of the northerners. Warwick played up these atrocity stories as he set about organizing the defense of London.

Meanwhile, on the Welsh borderland, Edward learned of the deaths of his father and brother. On February 2, 1461, he met a Lancaster force under the Earls of Pembroke and Wiltshire at a place where four roads met near the River Lugg at Mortimer's Cross in Herefordshire. Edward routed the Lancastrians and chased them for 16 miles. Ten lords were captured and quickly executed, including Owen Tudor, grandfather of future King Henry VII.

Library of Congress

**This 19th-century painting depicts Lancastrian Lord Clifford killing Edmund, son of the Duke of York, after the Battle of Wakefield in December 1460.**

Back in London, the Earl of Norfolk left the city with a Yorkist force and the captive King Henry VI in tow. Outside of St. Albans, Norfolk joined up with Warwick on February 12. Five days later they were attacked by Queen Margaret's army of about 12,000 men. Badly surprised, Warwick was defeated and forced to withdraw, leaving behind his royal prisoner, who was reunited with his wife and son.

Yorkist London was spared a sacking from the queen's army. When news of Edward's victory at Mortimer's Cross reached Margaret, she decided to withdraw to the Midlands and the north, both firm Lancaster territory. There she could recruit more troops, while Edward would have the disadvantage of having to fight her on her own ground.

Warwick and his defeated army linked up with Edward, who marched toward London after hearing of the St. Albans defeat. The united Yorkist forces entered London together on February 26. A week later Edward was proclaimed king. Formal coronation would have to wait, however, until the existing king and his queen could be dealt with.

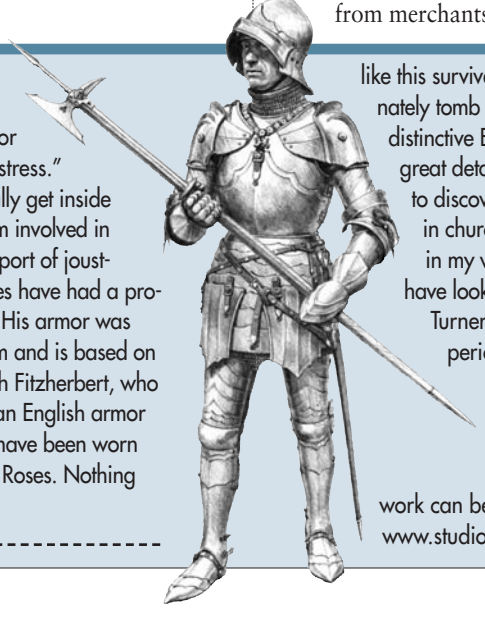
Edward wasted no time in preparing to attack the Lancastrian army. On March 5, the day after his crowning, Edward dispatched Norfolk into East Anglia to recruit more men, while Warwick headed out two days later to recruit in his lands. On March 11, Lord Fauconberg set out with the vanguard of the army, consisting of 10,000 footmen. Edward followed with more troops a day or two later, bringing with him a long baggage train of wagons and carts. In contrast to the Lancastrians, Edward gave strict orders to his army not to rob, rape, or plunder on their march. Those who did would face the death penalty. Thanks to immense loans from merchants in London and Calais, Edward's soldiers were able to pay good money for everything they needed.

While recruiting around Coventry, Warwick had the grim satisfaction of capturing the Bastard of Exeter who had executed Salisbury, Warwick's father, after the battle of Wakefield. Warwick was not long in having him killed. Warwick then united with the forces of Fauconberg and Edward on their way to York. The commanders decided to head to Pontefract Castle, where they could refresh themselves and wait for Norfolk. Norfolk, however, was quite sick and there was some concern that he would show up at all. After reaching Pontefract, Edward sent Lord Fitzwalter with a small force to seize and hold the bridge at Ferrybridge that spanned the River Aire. Fitzwalter's men found the bridge wrecked and quickly set to con-

was far from the romantic world of knights in shining armor rescuing damsels in distress."

Turner's desire to really get inside his subject has seen him involved in the medieval extreme sport of jousting, and his experiences have had a profound effect on his art. His armor was made especially for him and is based on the tomb effigy of Ralph Fitzherbert, who died in 1482. "This is an English armor of the style that would have been worn during the Wars of the Roses. Nothing like this survives today, but fortunately tomb effigies depict these distinctive English armors in great detail. I find it fascinating to discover them hidden away in churches and show them in my work as they would have looked in use."

Turner also paints other periods of military history and has illustrated over 40, from ancient Rome to World War II. His work can be seen on his website: www.studio88.co.uk



**A pencil sketch by Turner**



**Obscured by the snow, Yorkist archers fire their last deadly volley into the advancing Lancastrian army at Towton. On their left, Edward and his dismounted knights stand ready to fight. Painting by Graham Turner.**

structing a temporary platform over it.

The Lancastrian army, meanwhile, was at York, which despite the city's name was a Lancaster stronghold. Recruiting had gone well for the queen's army, and although many soldiers came from the north, not all did. Men also joined from the south, east, and west of England, as well as from Scotland and France, making it more than just a war between the north and the south. The Lancastrians had a majority of nobles fighting with them as well.

Leaving the king and queen and their son in York, Somerset led the army to Tadcaster, west of York. From there they marched south crossing the bridge over the River Wharfe, which was damaged in the process, then continued down the Old London Road to ford the flooded River Cock at Towton.

Lord Clifford, whose father had been killed five years earlier at the first Battle of St. Albans, rode south with a force of 500 mounted troops, surprising Fitzwalter's force at Ferrybridge in the early hours of March 28. Most of the Yorkist troops were wiped out, including Fitzwalter and the Bastard of Salisbury, Warwick's half-brother. A soldier who escaped the massacre hurried to warn Warwick of what had happened. Warwick immediately mounted his horse and galloped to Edward's side. Dismounting, Warwick drew his sword and killed his mount, proclaiming dramatically, "Let him fly that will, for surely will tarry with him that will tarry with me." He would not retreat as he had done at St. Albans.

Edward warned his men that any who wanted to leave should do so now, since those who ran once the battle was joined would be killed, with their slayers receiving double wages for doing so. Edward then collected a group of soldiers and hurried up the road to retake the bridge, while the main Yorkist forces prepared to follow after him.

The fighting at Ferrybridge was fierce, with Clifford and his tough troops desperately holding on to the narrow passageway over the bridge and resisting all Yorkist attempts to take it. In one charge Warwick was struck in the leg with an arrow. Meanwhile, Edward ordered Fauconberg to take part of the army three miles to the west and cross the River Aire at Castleford to strike Clifford's force in the flank.

When Clifford spotted this threat to his flank, he ordered a summary retreat. After finally being pushed off the bridge, Clifford and his men quickly remounted and thundered up the road toward Towton. Yorkist troops galloped after them and caught them 2½ miles from Towton at a place called Dinting Dale. Clifford's men were wiped out and Clifford himself, after removing his gorget (rarely worn at the time), was fatally struck in the throat by an arrow.

With Ferrybridge now cleared of Lancaster forces, the main Yorkist army made it way toward Towton. At nightfall Edward decided to make camp. It was an uncomfortably cold and icy night, made doubly so since Edward's men were short of supplies after leaving their baggage train back at Ferrybridge. Besides the cold night and shivering, hungry troops, Edward was concerned about the whereabouts of Norfolk, who had not yet joined the main army. With a battle looming the next day that very well could decide who ruled England, Edward could only hope that Norfolk had remained loyal.

The morning of March 29, Palm Sunday, brought with it a biting wind and a sky threatening snow. The opposing forces began to prepare for the bloodletting to come. The Lancastrian army took up an ideal position on the battleground. The ground between Saxton and Towton was a plateau, higher than the surrounding farmland, but it was by no means flat. The northern part of the plateau was the highest and sloped steeply downward for 400 yards. Taking the high ground, the Lancastrians' right was protected by a severe drop to a waterway known as Cock Creek, while to their left was treacherous marshland. The Yorkist army would have no choice but to attack uphill.

With their banners flapping in the wind, Edward's troops began to form for battle. The Yorkist army numbered 20,000 men, while Somerset had 25,000 soldiers. This war, sparked to

a great extent by two men—Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York, and Edmund Beaufort, the Duke of Somerset—was now being fought by their sons, who were leading their respective armies in the decisive battle of the war. It was in many ways a blood feud, with numerous private and personal scores to be settled. Neither army intended to show quarter to the other.

Before the fighting began, both armies took Mass. It was 9 AM before Edward's army assumed its final position. By this time the weather was raw, whipping the soldiers with snow and sleet driven by a strong south wind. As it turned out, the weather would play heavily in the Yorkists' favor.

Fauconberg with 10,000 archers moved out first toward the Lancastrian archers positioned in front of their army. The Yorkists archers moved forward slowly in a 10-man-deep checkerboard formation that allowed them better visibility and room to maneuver. With a draw weight of between 100 to 200 pounds, an effective range of about 300 yards and a rate of fire of 10 arrows a minute, the English longbow was a fearsome weapon in the hands of archers trained from childhood to use it.

Fauconberg, a veteran of the French war, fully intended to take advantage of the weather. With the wind blowing at his back, he halted his longbowmen and ordered the archers to loose one volley of arrows and then wait. As Fauconberg anticipated, the Lancastrian archers had trouble seeing the Yorkists who were raining down death on them because of the blinding snow being driven into their faces. They replied as best they could, but unable to see their enemies and shooting into the wind, their arrows fell far short of Fauconberg's men. The Lancastrian longbowmen continued to let fly until their sheaves of 24 arrows were exhausted.

When the Lancaster arrows stopped raining down, Fauconberg ordered his longbowmen forward with orders to "knock, draw and loose" another volley of arrows. When they ran out of their own arrows, the Yorkist archers simply pulled the Lancaster arrows out of the ground and fired them back at their previous owners.

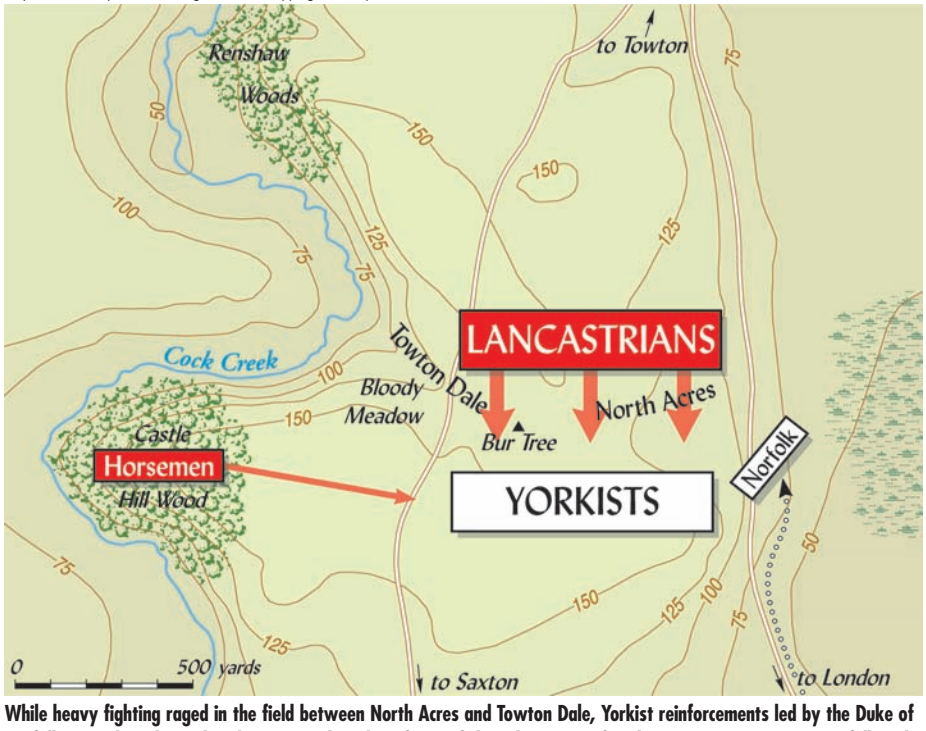
With 10,000 Yorkist longbowmen shooting 10 arrows a minute, an astonishing 100,000 arrows a minute fell into the Lancanstrian position, sowing havoc and death. The Lancastrian army had no choice but to advance. Stepping over and around the wounded and the dead, Somerset's army pushed forward toward the Yorkists with their banners flapping, shouting, "King Henry! King Henry!" The knights moved forward on foot with the other troops, not wanting to make themselves sitting targets to the deadly longbowmen. As the Lancastrians came on, Fauconberg and his archers fell back to the rear. It was now up to the men-at-arms to continue the battle.

With the archers out of the way, the Yorkist men-at-arms moved forward to meet the oncoming Lancaster army on more level ground at the bottom of the slope. The battle devolved into bloody hand-to-hand combat as the armies collided with a shout. Troops fought as units, keeping close together to protect their lords and prevent the enemy from breaking through. Each side thrust and jabbed at the other with sharp staffs and great swinging blows from their poleaxes. Anyone who lost his footing in the slippery conditions and fell to the ground stood a good chance of being trampled by the mass of men above him.

As the battle raged on, the numerical superiority of the Lancaster forces began to show, pushing the Yorkists back in Edward's sector. The Yorkist left flank began to buckle but did not break. At this point, some 200 Lancastrian lancers came charging out of Castle Hill Wood and struck the enemy left. Although the attack caused some confusion and localized panic, the line held firm. Edward himself was in the thick of the fighting.

While snow continued to blanket the battlefield, the Yorkist left was being pushed back to the slopes. Somerset was on the verge of winning a great victory if his troops, with their numerical superiority, could only push a little harder. Then the much anticipated Norfolk finally arrived, hurrying his men up the road from Ferrybridge. The fresh troops, both mounted and on foot, arrived on the right side of the plateau in early afternoon and scrambled up the snow-covered slope, extending the Yorkists' right flank and falling in on the enemy's left.





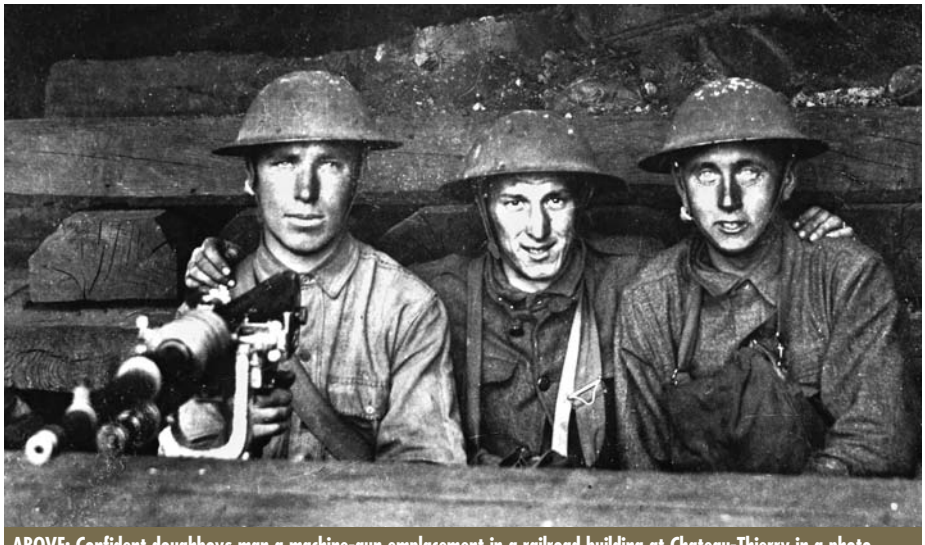

**While heavy fighting raged in the field between North Acres and Towton Dale, Yorkist reinforcements led by the Duke of Norfolk arrived on the York right, turning the tide in favor of the White Rose of York. As many as 38,000 men fell at the Battle of Towton.**

The sight of fresh troops was demoralizing, but the Lancastrians pressed on. Intense, bloody fighting continued in the fields between North Acres and Towton Dale. The Lancastrian left was feeling the pressure of the Yorkist reinforcements, and panic seized some of the battle-weary soldiers, causing them to break. The panic spread like wildfire. Somerset and other nobles, realizing what was happening, mounted up and tried to escape, but the bloodletting was far from over.

Somerset's choice of a defensive position ironically caused the deaths of many his men, who were caught in a trap with no open escape route. Many attempted to flee across Bloody Meadow, which lay behind them, but they were quickly run down and killed by the pursuing Yorkists. Others managed to reach Cock Creek and desperately tried to find a way across it. Some drowned trying to wade across, realizing too late that the creek was deeper than it looked. The exultant Yorkists chased after their beaten foes, killing them wherever they found them. This was made

*Continued on page 74*

# AMERICAN STAND AT CHATEAU-THIERRY



ABOVE: Confident doughboys man a machine-gun emplacement in a railroad building at Chateau-Thierry in a photo taken on June 7, 1918. RIGHT: A seemingly endless procession of trucks brings American soldiers and supplies to the front at Chateau-Thierry in May 1918. Painting by William James Aylward.

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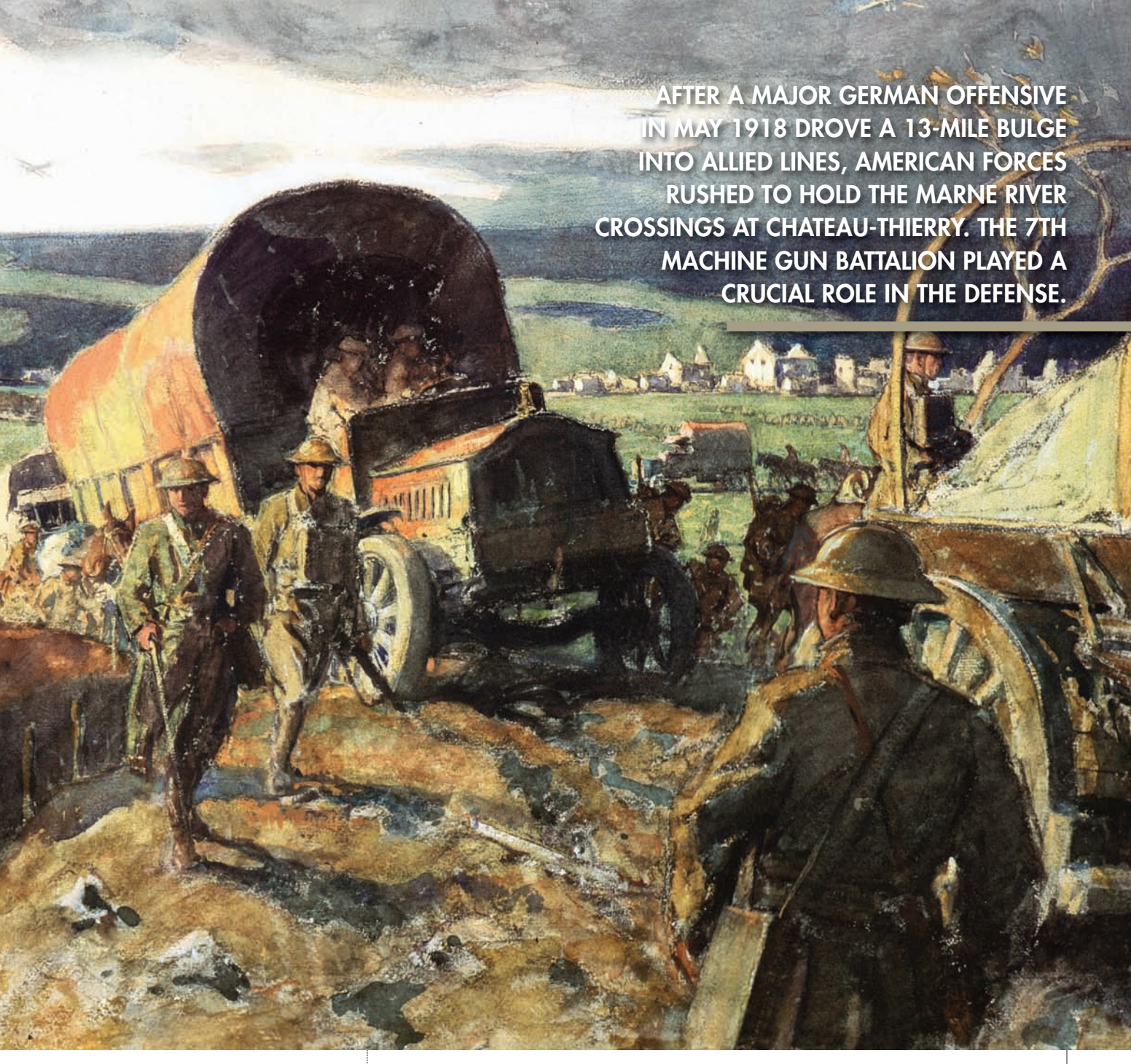
U.S. Army Art

BY GEORGE T. RAACH

FOR THE HARD-PRESSED German Empire, New Year's Day 1918 brought a compendium of evils. The Allied naval blockade, increasingly effective, depressed industrial production and stoked a war weariness made manifest in strikes and bread riots. Manpower reserves were dwindling; those called to the imperial colors were often in their middle teens. It seemed likely that one or more of Germany's allies would soon seek a separate peace. And worst of all, the United States was now in the war on the side of the Allies, the first of its large, fresh divisions already in France.

The only bright spot in the German gloom was the prospective peace with Russia, a move that already had begun to free up some 44 German divisions for use on the Western Front. These additional units would change the force ratio from 3:2 in favor of the Allies to 4:3 in favor of the Germans, thus making possible a series of last-ditch spring offensives. General Erich Ludendorff, acting commander of the German Army, believed it imperative to use these divisions quickly and decisively. Unless this was done, he warned in a year-end letter, increasing numbers of robust American forces would make it impossible for Germany to achieve complete victory or even a satisfactory negotiated peace that enabled the Kaiser to keep some of his territorial acquisitions.

It was a desperate prognosis, but Ludendorff's assessment had merit, and in March and April 1918, the German Army launched two major offensives—Operation Michael and Operation Georgette. These new offensives met with only limited success against British and French forces in northern sectors of the Western Front, partly because of the unexpectedly strong defense put up by the Allies, partly because there were no reserves



**AFTER A MAJOR GERMAN OFFENSIVE IN MAY 1918 DROVE A 13-MILE BULGE INTO ALLIED LINES, AMERICAN FORCES RUSHED TO HOLD THE MARNE RIVER CROSSINGS AT CHATEAU-THIERRY. THE 7TH MACHINE GUN BATTALION PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE DEFENSE.**

immediately available to exploit or sustain initial German gains.

On May 27, Ludendorff initiated a third offensive, Operation Blucher-Yorck, with the intent to drive a salient into the Allied lines from Soissons and Rheims to Chateau-Thierry and force the Allies to commit their reserves. Then, depending on the tactical situation, German armies could either cross the Marne at Chateau-Thierry and continue their attack southwest toward Paris or attack again in the north over the old Somme battlefield.

The German attack burst against four French and three British divisions arrayed on a 25-mile front along the historic road known as the Chemin des Dames. It tore through poorly prepared defensive positions, capturing 60,000 prisoners, 650 artillery pieces, and 2,000 machine guns. Despite the fact that the French committed almost all of their reserves, including 35 infantry and six cavalry divisions, the attack surged ahead. Crossing the Aisne River on the first day, German forces captured Soissons on May 29 and drove relentlessly south toward Chateau-Thierry. A breakthrough seemed likely to open the road to Paris.

The town of Chateau-Thierry, 53 miles northeast of Paris, was a French transportation hub of 7,000 people. It straddled the Marne River, which at this point was between 150 and 225 feet wide and up to 15 feet deep. A large island created by the Marne and a canal on the south dominated the waterfront. Houses and small factories dotted the island's eastern end, while at the western end there was a wooded park. The town and the surrounding area had been outside the active war zone since the autumn of 1914. Buildings were still intact and fields cultivated.

On the north bank, formidable bluffs rose 450 feet above the river. The chateau from which the town took its name was located on the lower portion of the bluffs and was occupied by a small

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**The 7th Machine Gun Battalion detrains at Montmirail on its way to reinforce French defenders at Chateau-Thierry.**

French garrison. Proceeding southeast from the chateau, the Rue Carnot crossed the Marne via a stone span known as the West Bridge. It then passed over the island and canal and entered a large, circular plaza, the Place Carnot, before continuing south across a broad plain.

Parallel to the river on the north bank was a road leading from the village of Brasles to the east. It ran into the Quay, an oblong plaza adjacent to the West Bridge, before crossing the Rue Carnot and continuing south. A similar road paralleled the river on the south bank, running from the village of Crezancy to the Place Carnot. Two smaller roads led north. The one to the east ran through a grove of trees to the Marne, while the road to the west ran alongside a railroad spur next to a sugar factory. Both crossed the Marne on the East Bridge, a structure that could accommodate rail cars, wagons, and troops.

The West and the East Bridges, about 1,500 feet apart, were the only Marne crossings for five miles on either side of Chateau-Thierry. Once in German hands, they would permit troops to move freely across the Marne and be resupplied via the extensive Marne rail system, avoiding the logistical problems that had forced Ludendorff to abandon his first two offensives. The French Army lacked the ability to prevent such a crossing on its own.

On May 30, the Germans occupied the bluffs north of Chateau-Thierry, 40 miles from their starting point, and sent patrols into the city. French resistance was far from stiff. The 10th Colonial Division, composed of Senegalese and other African troops and a smattering of disparate and disorganized French units, had managed to establish only a few hastily prepared, vulnerable positions. The bridges appeared well within German grasp.

At the end of his resources, French Army Chief of Staff Henri Pétain sought assistance from General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). Heretofore, Pershing had been prickly about allowing American troops to serve under French command, but this was an emergency. He immediately placed the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Divisions under French control. American divisions were organized with two infantry brigades of two regiments each, a three-regiment artillery brigade, an engineer regiment, a machine gun (MG) battalion, and various supporting units. They had an authorized strength of 28,059 personnel, 6,638 horses and mules, and more firepower than existing Allied or German divisions.

The 7th was the 3rd Division's machine-gun battalion. Originally organized with four companies comprised of soldiers levied from the division's infantry regiments, the battalion had been reduced to two companies in January 1918 and designated a motorized unit to give it the ability—theoretically—to rapidly reinforce infantry brigades. However, no trucks were issued before the battalion left the United States in April. In fact, the battalion had received neither its vehicles nor its full complement of Hotchkiss machine guns until May 24, when 52 Ford Model T half-ton trucks, six touring cars, and 24 Indian motorcycles arrived. In an era when few men had either driven motor vehicles or fired machine guns, there was much training to do and little time in which to do it.

When Maj. Gen. Joseph Dickman, commanding general of the 3rd Infantry Division, received Pershing's order, he immediately directed his division to prepare to move to the

## MACHINE-GUN BATTALIONS

The 7th Machine Gun Battalion's principal weapon at Chateau-Thierry was the 8mm French-made Hotchkiss Model 1914, known as La Mitrailleuse. Developed in the Saint-Denis factory of American expatriate arms maker Benjamin Hotchkiss, the M1914 was accurate to a range of about 625 feet. It could reach 1,900 feet, but accuracy at that range was problematic. Gas-operated and air-cooled, the Hotchkiss weighed 55 pounds. The tripod assembly added another 70 pounds. Capable of firing 600 rounds per minute, the Hotchkiss's maximum practical rate, as listed in French Army field manuals, was 250 rounds per minute—and that for only a few minutes before overheating.

Ammunition was fed into the gun from 25-round metal strips that were easily bent and had to be kept clean to function properly—no easy task on a war front of limitless mud. The Hotchkiss's massive barrel could only be changed slowly, using a special wrench. Because the guns were prone to stoppages, each company normally kept a few in reserve, usually without crews, to replace malfunctioning or overheated guns.

American machine-gun companies were organized into three platoons with four one-gun sections per platoon. A section consisted of a sergeant and seven men. The section leader usually took position to the right of the gun to help manage its fire. Two men were assigned to the gun as gunner and assistant gunner/loader. The gunner sat on a small seat affixed to the tripod and fired in what was called "loose lateral lever," a technique by which the traversing lever was tightened just enough to give control during firing but was loose enough to allow a sharp slap on the receiver to move the gun slightly to disperse fire over a wider range.

The loader sat on the ground to the left of the gun facing the rear to ensure that when

vicinity of Chateau-Thierry to reinforce French forces fighting in the area. With little organic support, the division was dependent on rail to move the bulk of its troops, horses, equipment, and supplies. The only unit with the wherewithal to move immediately was the motorized 7th MG Battalion. At 10:30 on the morning of May 30, Dickman ordered the 7th to Conde-en-Brie, a town located seven miles southeast of Chateau-Thierry. There, Major Edward G. Taylor, the battalion commander, was told to place his unit at the disposal of the senior French officer.

By mid-afternoon, the 7th had loaded its Fords and begun its march. Each section had two vehicles: one for the gun, its three-man crew, and part of the 2,500 round basic load of ammunition, the other for the remainder of the section's personnel and ammunition. All vehicles carried an extra five gallon can of gasoline. Touring cars carried officers and headquarters personnel, while the motorcycles were used by NCOs, messengers, and guides. The division provided eight three-ton trucks to carry gasoline and additional supplies.

On the move, badly rutted roads choked with retreating soldiers and refugees limited the 7th's progress. Several times the battalion halted to locate missing fuel trucks and refuel, causing several hours' delay. Soldiers often had to dismount and push the overloaded, underpowered Fords up inclines. Mechanical failures and flat tires were commonplace. When night fell, the battalion pushed on without headlights. The trek seemed endless to the soldiers on small, cramped trucks, but at noon on May 31 the lead elements reached Conde-en-Brie, having averaged five miles per hour for 100 miles.

In the throes of a general retreat, Conde-en-Brie was bedlam. It took Taylor time to find someone with the authority and knowledge to position the battalion. Ultimately, the commander of a retreating French division told Taylor to take his battalion to Chateau-Thierry and support the 10th Colonial Infantry Division, which was still fighting a rearguard action.

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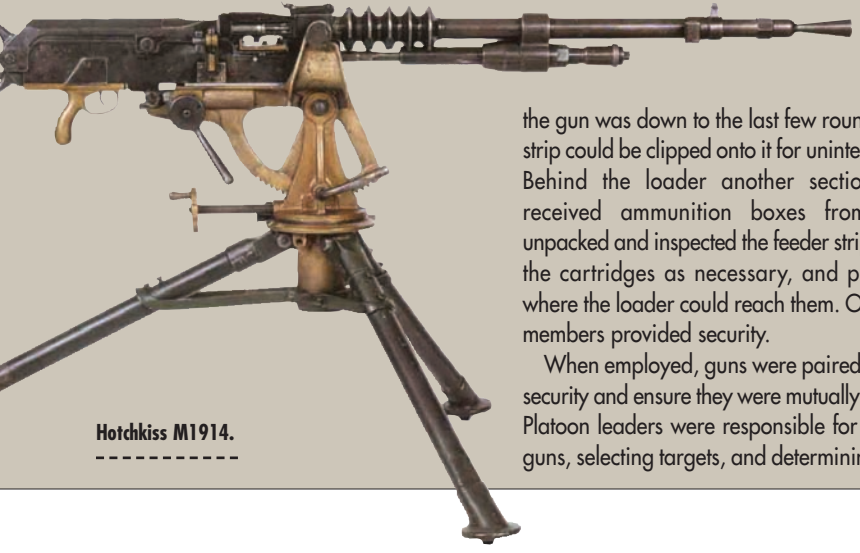
**American machine gunners in a garden on the south bank of the Marne River keep a sharp eye out for Germans. A third soldier naps behind some wooden ammunition boxes.**

Although his vehicles were low on gas, Taylor pushed on rather than waiting to refuel. Early Fords lacked fuel pumps; when fuel was low and hills steep, the engines stalled. Shortly after leaving Conde-en-Brie, the column ground to a halt. Crews hurriedly dismounted and lugged guns, tripods, and a limited supply of ammunition four miles to the hamlet of Nesles-le-Montagne, south of Chateau-Thierry. Gas tanks of some sputtering Fords were drained to put fuel into others, allowing more troops and ammunition to come forward during the night.

At Nesles, Taylor found that the battalion had all of its guns but only about half of its soldiers. Most had not slept for nearly 36 hours or eaten since breakfast the day before. While they formed into marching order for the descent into Chateau-Thierry, nearby French batteries began to fire at Germans in the hills north of the Marne.

Taylor remained in Nesles to sort out arriving forces, sending Captain Charles Houghton, the A Company commander, into the town. At the West Bridge, Houghton found the commander of the retreating 10th Colonial Division, who told him to place his guns on the south bank and cover the French withdrawal. The battalion began to deploy on a 992-foot front. Taylor positioned his two companies to cover the approaches to the bridges and the streets on the north bank. He assigned A Company the island, the left half of the battalion sector. On the right, B Company occupied the sugar refinery and other nearby structures. Fires of the two companies were tied into the West Bridge, where the French had placed four additional machine guns. The companies were to



**Hotchkiss M1914.**

the gun was down to the last few rounds, another strip could be clipped onto it for uninterrupted fire. Behind the loader another section member received ammunition boxes from carriers, unpacked and inspected the feeder strips, adjusted the cartridges as necessary, and placed them where the loader could reach them. Other section members provided security.

When employed, guns were paired to enhance security and ensure they were mutually supporting. Platoon leaders were responsible for pairing the guns, selecting targets, and determining range. In pairing, both weapons were sighted on the same target, but fire was alternated between the guns and if one gun was threatened by hostile infantry, the other could provide fire in its defense.

Because the tripod gave the gun a relatively high profile, firing from open ground was dangerous, and platoon leaders normally sought covered positions for their guns in trenches or buildings. Ideally, machine-gun units were not committed in isolation but were placed in support of infantry units operating under the umbrella of supporting artillery. At Chateau-Thierry, the tactical emergency made this impossible, and the 7th went into its first combat action without either infantry or artillery support. □

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**A German aerial photo of Chateau-Thierry, looking southwest, shows the West bridge in the bottom left corner. German troops attacked from the north side of the river at the lower right.**

cover the bridges and the French engineers who were planting demolition charges on them, prevent a German crossing of the Marne, and protect the left and right flanks of the battalion, which were in the air.

A Company deployed along the river using woods, houses and garden walls for cover. B Company covered the East Bridge with two platoons facing north across the Marne and one deployed farther east across the Crezancy Road to protect the right flank. Not all guns were in place by the time darkness fell, and during the night officers and NCOs placed the remainder, adjusting their positions at first light.

The French commander ordered Houghton to send two machine guns north of the Marne to support a small French rearguard detachment. Houghton selected Lieutenant John T. Bissell, West Point class of 1917. Bissell took 12 men and two guns from A Company across the river that evening. Once on the far bank, he led his small force up the Rue Carnot to the foot of the hill in front of the chateau, then northeast to an old watchtower at the intersection of four streets. Near the tower, he placed one gun facing north to engage Germans descending the bluffs and the other to the east to fire down the Brasles Road. The French troops kept one Hotchkiss in reserve. Later that night, the French pushed their line farther east and placed their Hotchkiss to cover the right flank, allowing Bissell to move his second gun to the north, where he paired it with the other. The battalion spent the night improving its positions under occasional artillery fire. To keep the Germans from learning their location, the 7th did little firing.

The first streaks of dawn appeared at 3:45 AM on June 1. In the B Company sector, Captain John Mendenhall had verified the emplacement of four guns in the sugar refinery under the control of Lieutenant Luther W. Cobbey. This position was well sited to protect the East Bridge and interdict movement on the road entering Chateau-Thierry from Brasles. Another platoon was deployed across the road leading past the sugar factory across the East Bridge, and Lieutenant Paul Taylor Funkhouser's three-gun platoon was about 200 feet farther east and north of the Crezancy Road facing the Marne.

In the growing light, Funkhouser saw movement across the river on the Brasles Road. Straining his eyes, he made out a column of German infantry advancing in perfect marching order, oblivious to the Americans. He ordered his guns to fire, and shortly Cobbey's guns also opened on the advancing column. As the guns found the range and the fire became more effective, the Germans rushed into the wheat fields between the river and the road. Regrouping, they began to move in rushes toward the East Bridge. Simultaneously, German artillery began to rain shrapnel and high-explosive shells onto Funkhouser's positions, forcing him to relocate.

Cobbey's guns in the sugar refinery were not much bothered by the artillery fire. However, the Germans now had the cover of their own Maxim machine guns sited in buildings directly across the river from the refinery. Despite the enemy's Maxims, Cobbey, who later received a Distinguished Service Cross for his part in the battle, broke several German attempts to rush the bridge and forced them to keep under cover.

Fighting began along the length of the line, and artillery fire drove some American gunners from the top floors of buildings into positions lower down. Shells also cut the telephone wires on which communications depended, and command and control was limited to runners and personal intervention. Gas shells were intermixed with shrapnel and high explosives, making occupation of shell holes and basements hazardous. Rue Carnot, the resupply route, came under artillery and machine-gun fire, and daylight resupply had to be abandoned.

On the north bank of the Marne, the French infantry continued to resist, although as the day wore on the numerically superior German forces gained the upper hand. French forces began to give ground, and fresh German units massed for a night attack against the bridges. To complicate matters, a rumor reached the defenders that German forces had forced a passage over the Marne at Jaulgonne, five miles east. If true, that force could take B Company in the flank and roll up the battalion, leaving the crossings unguarded. To meet the threat, Mendenhall designated secondary positions for his company farther south where they could enfilade the Crezancy Road.

At dusk on June 1, the end of their first day of combat, A Company had four guns on the west end of the island covering the battalion's left flank. Two guns were in the center of the company position enfilading streets north of the Marne and the quay adjacent to the West Bridge. The other two guns were placed on the east end of the island to interlock with the B Company guns in the sugar refinery and riverside warehouse. Bissell and his two-gun section remained isolated north of the river. Shortly after dark, the four French guns in A Company's sector were withdrawn. Houghton replaced them by taking one gun from each platoon and positioning them where they could fire on the quay north of the river.

B Company had Funkhouser's three guns on the east covering the battalion's right flank. Cobbey's four guns remained in the sugar refinery buildings, and the four guns of B Company's first platoon were located along the Crezancy Road embankment due south to cover the East Bridge. After nightfall, German artillery fire increased.

Early in the evening, the chateau fell to the Germans, and combat intensified as the French fell back across both bridges. At 10 PM, close-

range fighting erupted on the quay at the north end of the West Bridge, and German artillery fire shifted to the houses that fronted the Marne on the south bank. Hand-to-hand fighting moved onto the West Bridge, and it appeared that the Germans would soon force a passage. At this point, despite the mob of French and German soldiers intermingled on the bridge, the engineers set off their demolitions. French and German soldiers were hurled through the air, and 50 feet of the bridge fell into the Marne. With the bridge down and the combatants separated, A Company, whose fires had been masked by the fighting on the bridge, opened with devastating effect on the quay. Twice the German infantry massed for another try at the bridge; twice they were repulsed.

The West Bridge was gone, but Bissell and his detachment were still on the north bank. As the French began to withdraw from the northeast part of the city toward the West Bridge, Bissell's two-gun detachment and a small platoon of Senegalese infantrymen covered them. This was a mixed blessing. Although grateful for the infantry support, Bissell could not communicate with the Senegalese, who spoke unfamiliar tribal languages. Bissell leapfrogged each gun to ensure that at least one could always fire on his pursuers and moved his men slowly toward the West Bridge.

Amid the chaos of ongoing fighting and the cries of the wounded littering the street, Bissell was unprepared for what happened next. A German Maxim suddenly enfiladed the street where Bissell and his men crouched in doorways. It delayed his approach to the bridge, which moments later went up in a sheet of flame.

In the darkness, Bissell's small detachment, joined by a number of French poilus, worked its way toward the East Bridge along streets swept by both German and American fire. There, he was confronted by the challenge of how to get across in the darkness in the face of B Company's guns. At first Bissell thought he might be able to swim the river, but the fast current convinced him that it was too risky. Bissell and his runner went to the north end of the bridge where he called to the men on the other side. He was answered by a burst of machine-gun fire. Ducking under cover, he continued to shout across the river until Cobbey appeared, crossed the bridge, and brought in Bissell's bedraggled force. With a combination of American, French, and Senegalese on the bridge, B Company held its fire, and in the confusion and darkness an unknown number of Germans mingled with them and reached the south bank, where they quickly disappeared.

The situation on the south bank was bewildering. Mendenhall was unsure how many Germans had penetrated his position and whether he could hold them back with the forces at his disposal. He had heard the explosion at the West Bridge but did not know whether the Germans were across in force there. Telephone lines to battalion headquarters, 300 yards to the rear, had been severed, and although Mendenhall sent several runners none returned. Seeking to learn the true situation, he sent more runners to his three platoon leaders, telling the 1st and 2nd Platoons to hold their positions and reorienting the 3rd Platoon toward the right flank. Then he and a runner made their way back to battalion headquarters.

Taylor told Mendenhall that no Germans had made it across the West Bridge. From his perspective, the greatest threat was a German advance across the East Bridge. Mendenhall told Taylor that some Germans had reached the south bank when Bissell returned. Taylor instructed Mendenhall to clear them from his sector and gave him the four guns he had at battalion headquarters together with improvised crews.

Mendenhall returned, traveling across the cultivated fields. When his small force reached the Crezancy Road where he had positioned 1st Platoon, he found no Americans. Looking into the darkness, he saw silhouetted against the night sky the unmistakable shapes of German helmets on the south bank. Clearly the Germans were massing, perhaps for a rush at the rear of the gun positions covering the bridge. Had 1st Platoon remained in position, it could easily have disrupted them. So could 2nd Platoon located in the refinery to the east of the field in which the Germans were gathering, but 2nd Platoon had not fired a shot.

Gathering up his four guns, Mendenhall positioned two of them to fire if the Germans made an attempt to move or if they heard fire from the sugar refinery. Taking the other two guns, he made his way to the refinery, where he found no trace of 2nd Platoon. There were no Germans there, either. Southwest of the refinery were two long, open sheds. Mendenhall quietly placed his guns under the cover of the sheds within 100 yards of the nearest Germans and opened fire. The two guns he left at the original 1st Platoon position opened as well. Surprised by the sudden

*Continued on page 74*


**This post-battle painting of Chateau-Thierry by Aylward shows trucks and horse-drawn wagons crossing a pontoon bridge over the Marne.**

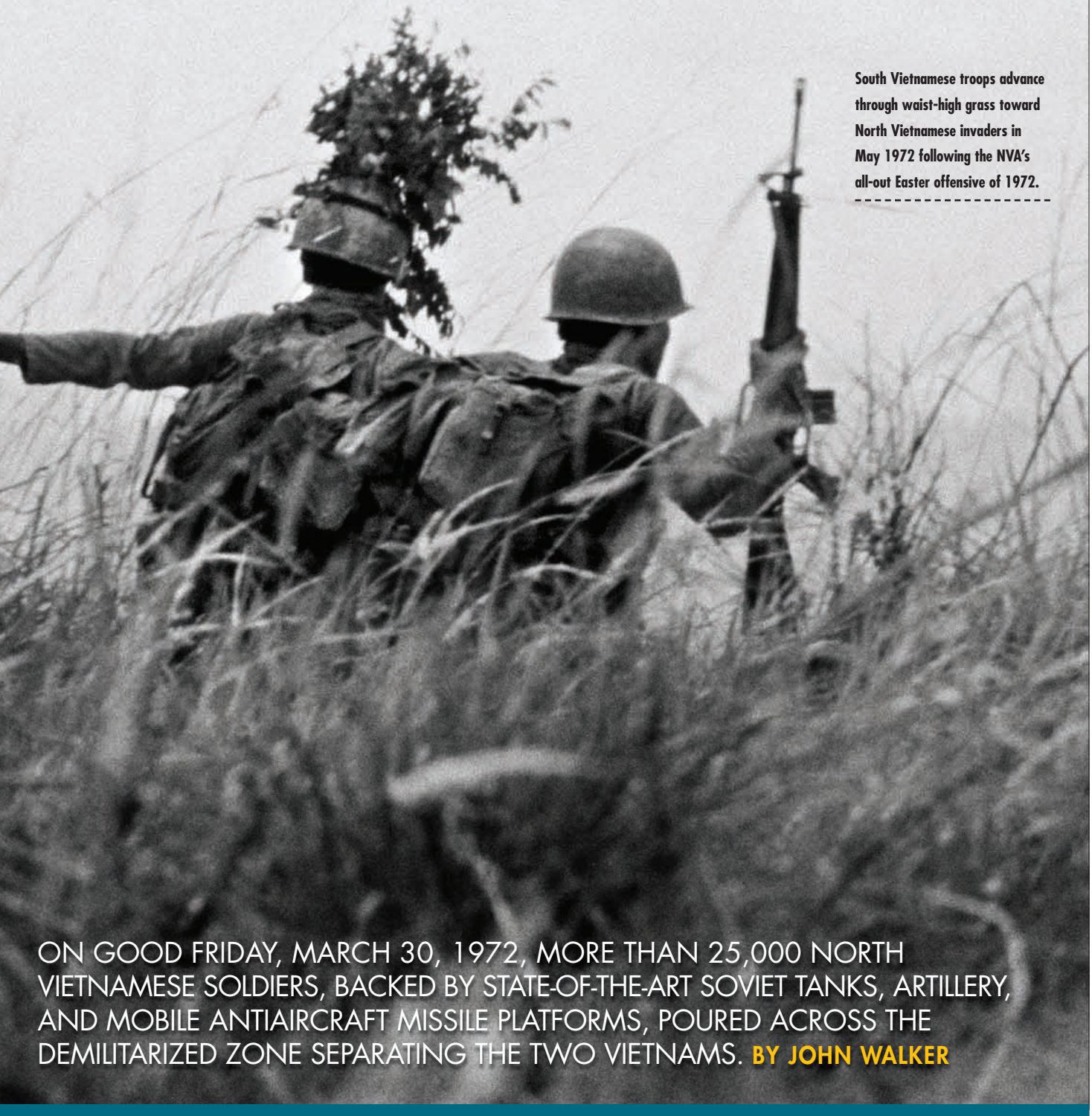
U.S. Army Art

# The EASTER OFFENSIVE of 1972

AT NOON ON GOOD FRIDAY, March 30, 1972, more than 25,000 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers, backed by state-of-the-art Soviet tanks, artillery, and mobile antiaircraft missile platforms, poured across the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Vietnams. The NVA troops attacked a string of South Vietnamese-held firebases just below the border in Quang Tri Province. Within hours the outnumbered troops of the inexperienced 3rd Infantry Division of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) fell back in the face of the Communist onslaught. Two more Communist divisions rolled south across the DMZ in follow-up attacks, while another division, supported by an armored regiment, crossed the Laotian border and attacked from the west toward Hue City.

One week later, three combined NVA-Viet Cong divisions crossed the Cambodian border and drove into Binh Long Province to threaten the towns and airfields of Loc Ninh and An Loc, a provincial capital 65 miles northwest of Saigon. On April 12, three additional NVA divisions attacked the cities of Pleiku and Kontum in the Central Highlands in an effort to cut South Vietnam in two.

Just as they had done during the infamous Tet invasion in 1968, when the attacking force was made up almost entirely of Viet Cong insurgents, the North Vietnamese Politburo again had gone all-in, committing 14 infantry divisions and 26 separate regiments—some 120,000 men—backed by 1,200 armored vehicles, long-range, heavy-caliber artillery, and antiaircraft missiles. Almost every available Communist combat unit in North and South



South Vietnamese troops advance through waist-high grass toward North Vietnamese invaders in May 1972 following the NVA's all-out Easter offensive of 1972.

ON GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 1972, MORE THAN 25,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS, BACKED BY STATE-OF-THE-ART SOVIET TANKS, ARTILLERY, AND MOBILE ANTIAIRCRAFT MISSILE PLATFORMS, POURED ACROSS THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE SEPARATING THE TWO VIETNAMS. **BY JOHN WALKER**

Vietnam and Laos switched over from protracted guerrilla tactics to combined-arms conventional operations.

By the spring of 1972, Vietnamization, a process by which all American troops would be withdrawn from Southeast Asia while the ARVN was left to fight the war on its own, was almost complete. American in-country strength had fallen from its peak of 550,000 to just 70,000 troops, of whom only 6,000 were combat soldiers. The only American ground units left in South Vietnam were the 196th Light Infantry Brigade at Da Nang and the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile) at Bien Hoa.

The large and complex U.S. intelligence, communications, and logistics structure in South Vietnam had been dismantled, and virtually all American-built bases had been turned over to the ARVN, which lacked the means to secure and maintain them. With the advent of Vietnamization, the ARVN had to do some major shifting of units to cover strategic regions; one of these areas was along the DMZ, where ARVN soldiers and South Vietnamese marines were stretched dangerously thin. In mid-1968, some 45 allied infantry battalions had been deployed in South Vietnam's two northernmost provinces, Thua Thien and Quang Tri. By 1972, with American infantry gone, only 21 South Vietnamese battalions occupied the same area. Artillery strength and ammunition supply rates in the northern region had suffered a similar decline.

In early 1972 the ARVN deployed the newly activated 3rd Infantry Division, comprised mostly

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**ABOVE: North Vietnamese 130mm field guns pound ARVN positions during the Easter offensive. BELOW: Tough, battle-tested North Vietnamese regulars surge across the Demilitarized Zone in a blitzkrieg-type assault.**

The Granger COllection, New York

of green troops, along the DMZ in 13 firebases formerly occupied by American Marines. Of the division's three regiments, only the 2nd Regiment, recently transferred from the battle-tested 1st ARVN Division, had combat experience. The 56th and 57th Regiments were made up of local force units upgraded to division status, filled out by recaptured deserters and convicts, and officered by cast-offs and incompetents. The NVA attack on March 30 caught the 3rd Division changing position. Hundreds of ARVN soldiers were caught in the open as shells began raining down. Supported by 200 tanks and self-propelled artillery on a scale never before seen in the war, the Communists crossed the border along the Ben Hai River and pushed south into Quang Tri Province.

On April 1, after heavy fighting, Brig. Gen. Vu Van Giai, the 3rd Division commander, ordered a retreat, instructing his troops to set up a new line on the Cua Viet and Cam Lo Rivers, anchored on Camp Carroll, an artillery firebase halfway between the Laotian border and the coast. On April 2, Colonel Pham Van Dinh, commander of the 56th ARVN Regiment, surrendered Camp Carroll, its 2,000-man garrison, and 22 intact artillery pieces without a fight.

The NVA advance toward their initial objective, Quang Tri City, was slowed by ARVN delaying actions and liberal applications of American air strikes and naval gunfire from U.S. Navy 7th Fleet ships on station in the Gulf of Tonkin. On the morning of April 27, the Communists advanced again, launching multi-pronged attacks against Dong Ha (which fell the next day) and advancing to the outskirts of Quang Tri. Beginning a withdrawal from that city, Giai's units collapsed after receiving conflicting and confusing orders from I Corps commander Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, a political general who had performed poorly during an abortive ARVN drive into Cambodia in 1971.

Ordered to conduct a general retreat to the My Chanh River, ARVN columns were hit hard as they fell back. To the south near Hue, Fire Support Bases Checkmate and Bastogne were lost after bitter fighting. The exodus of ARVN forces was joined by tens of thousands of South Vietnamese civilians fleeing south toward the dubious safety of Hue City. As the mass of humanity jostled and shoved its way south on Highway 1, it presented an inviting target for NVA artillerists and infantrymen. NVA formations captured Quang Tri City on May 2. That same day, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu replaced Lam with Lt. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, one of the ablest and most experienced commanders in the ARVN. Truong's arrival immediately lifted the spirits of the troops under his command tasked with holding Hue and reestablishing ARVN defenses.

Although the initial fighting in the north had proven disastrous for the ARVN—in one month of battle, the South Vietnamese in Military Region I had lost almost all their artillery and all but one of their American M-48 tanks—staunch defensive efforts in other areas, combined with massive American air support, inflicted extremely heavy casualties on NVA attackers.

The Communist attack in the Central Highlands developed more slowly, but by April 24 NVA forces had destroyed the ARVN 22nd Division at Tan Canh and Dak To, seized control of northern Kontum Province, and were knocking on the door of Kontum City. Thieu removed another corps commander, essentially leaving the senior civilian American adviser, John Paul Vann, in command of Military Region II as Kontum City braced for an all-out assault.

Farther to the south in Military Region III, realizing too late that the main attack was developing in Binh Long, not Tay Ninh Province, the South Vietnamese and their American advisers were slow to reinforce the corridor down Highway 13. Loc Ninh fell to the 5th NVA Division after a week of fighting. A few days later, Communist infantry and armor invaded An Loc's northern neighborhoods and could not be ejected. American commander General Creighton Abrams cabled Washington in early May that Saigon had lost the will to fight and the war might soon be lost.

The Communist forces that attacked Pleiku and Kontum consisted of the NVA 320th and 2nd Divisions in the highlands and the 3rd Division in the coastal lowlands, approximately 50,000 troops. Arrayed against them were the ARVN 22nd and 23rd Divisions, two armored cavalry squadrons, and the 2nd Airborne Brigade, all under the command of Lt. Gen. Ngo Dzu. The preparatory attacks in Binh Dinh Province, long a Communist stronghold, threw Dzu into a panic and almost convinced him to divert his forces from the highlands. Vann reassured Dzu that it was only a ruse and advised him to remain ready for the main blow, which Vann was convinced would come from western Laos. Vann began working day and night, utilizing his extensive civilian and military contacts to channel American support (especially airborne) to the region. To counter the threat from the west, Dzu deployed two regiments of the 22nd Division to Tan Canh and Dak To and two armored squadrons to Ben Het.


**The well-coordinated NVA offensive struck four separate regions of South Vietnam: Quang Tri Province, Hue City, Binh Long Province, and the Central Highlands. A total of 120,000 Communist troops participated in the offensive.**

On April 12, the NVA 2nd Division, elements of a tank regiment, and several independent regiments attacked the outpost at Tan Canh and the nearby firebase at Dak To. When ARVN armor moved out of Ben Het toward Dak To, it was ambushed and wiped out. Overwhelmed, the South Vietnamese defense northwest of Kontum quickly disintegrated, placing the South Vietnamese high command in a quandary. With the rest of the 22nd Division covering the coast, there were few forces left to defend the provincial capital of Kontum. Inexplicably, the North Vietnamese advance halted for three crucial weeks. While the crisis calmed, however, Dzu began to unravel. Vann gave up all pretext of South Vietnamese command and took over himself, placing responsibility for the defense of Kontum on the shoulders of Brig. Gen. Ly Tong Ba, commander of the 23rd Division. Vann then utilized massive B-52 strikes to hold the North Vietnamese at arm's length and reduce their numbers while he managed to find additional troops to stabilize the situation.

On May 14, the North Vietnamese reached the outskirts of Kontum and launched their main assault. The 320th Division, two regiments of the 2nd Division, and elements of the 203rd Tank Regiment attacked the city from three directions. The city mustered a defense force that consisted of the 23rd Division and several Ranger groups. Their three-week delay, probably due to the need for resupply, cost the attackers dearly.

By May 14, the worst of the fighting in other sectors had passed, and American B-52s were free to concentrate on the Central Highlands area. During the Communist attack, the positions of the 44th and 45th ARVN Regiments crumbled and were overrun, but a well-placed B-52 strike landed directly on the NVA attacking force at the point of the breakthrough. The next morning, when ARVN troops returned to their former positions unopposed, they discovered 400 enemy bodies and seven destroyed tanks.

At Vann's insistence, Thieu replaced Dzu with Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Toan, whose outwardly confident and assertive nature was the complete opposite of Dzu's. For the following two weeks, massive NVA assaults were lashed by B-52s and helicopter gunship attacks. ARVN troops then counterattacked over the remains of the attacking waves. On May 26, four NVA regiments supported by armor managed to punch a hole in the Kontum defenses, but their advance was halted by U.S. helicopters firing new tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) missiles. In three days, 23 North Vietnamese T-54 tanks were destroyed by TOWs and the breach was sealed.

With the aid of the American and South Vietnamese air forces, the ARVN managed to hold Kontum during the remainder of the battle. By early June, the North Vietnamese had faded to the west, leaving behind over 4,000 dead on the battlefield. U.S. intelligence later estimated that total NVA losses in the Central Highlands sector during the offensive totaled between 20,000 and 40,000 killed and wounded. Vann did not have time to savor the victory, however. While returning to

Kontum from a briefing in Saigon on June 9, he was killed in a helicopter crash.

On April 4, reacting to the fierceness of the offensive, American President Richard Nixon authorized tactical air strikes from the DMZ north to the 18th Parallel, the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. This interdiction effort was the first systematic bombing carried out in North Vietnam proper since the end of Operation Rolling Thunder in November 1968. Air strikes north of the 20th Parallel began on April 5, and the first B-52 strike of the new operation was conducted on April 10. Nixon then upped the ante even further, targeting the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong.

Between May 1 and June 30, B-52s, fighter-bombers, and fixed-wing gunships carried out 18,000 sorties over North Vietnam. On May 8, Nixon ordered the aerial mining of Haiphong harbor and other North Vietnamese ports to half the flow of Chinese and Soviet supplies necessary to sustain the offensive in the south. Nixon gambled that the Soviet Union, with whom he was conducting negotiations for a strategic arms limitation treaty, would withhold a negative reaction in return for improved relations with the West. The People's Republic of China also muted any overt response for the same reason. Emboldened, on May 10 Nixon launched Operation Linebacker, a systematic aerial assault on North Vietnam's transportation, storage, and air defense systems. The operation significantly impeded the NVA's ability to sustain its offensive by severing supply routes into North Vietnam and preventing reinforcements from entering the South.

The North Vietnamese had seriously underestimated American technological progress in weapons

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systems since the end of Rolling Thunder and the resolve of a different American commander-in-chief to use them. Nixon's desire to rescue South Vietnam depended on the growing strategic mobility of American air power. As the crisis unfolded, several hundred U.S. Air Force combat aircraft were rushed to Southeast Asia from scattered bases in Thailand, where they were joined by five U.S. Navy aircraft carriers.

The massive impact of U.S. B-52 bombers and AC-130 gunships was especially valuable in devastating North Vietnamese formations, as was naval gunfire along the coast. Often overlooked, courageous U.S. Air Force cargo pilots and crews delivered essential supplies in the face of deadly enemy fire. In North Vietnam, laser-guided bombs delivered by USAF strike forces inflicted unprecedented damage on key targets. Sizable numbers of precision-guided munitions—"smart bombs"—were being employed for the first time. American warplanes used wire-guided bombs to destroy North Vietnamese bridges that had withstood years of attack by conventional ordnance. The bombing continued for the next six months.

When the Easter Offensive began, the only South Vietnamese division operating in Binh Long Province was the 5th ARVN Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Le Van Hung, while the 25th ARVN Division manned firebases along the border with Cambodia in neighboring Tay Ninh Province to the west. On April 2, the 24th and 271st NVA Regiments attacked the firebases using tanks, rockets, and mortars. Although earlier intelligence reports had indicated the North Vietnamese were preparing for offensive operations in Military Region III, comprised of the 11 provinces surrounding Saigon, South Vietnamese leaders continued to insist wrongly that the main attack would come in Tay Ninh Province, near the Cambodian border.

In the early morning hours of April 5, the NVA launched a major armor-supported attack

**ABOVE: A U.S. B-52 Flying Fortress, left, bombs NVA positions in the Central Highlands. LEFT: A U.S. Navy A-7E Corsair II from USS *Kitty Hawk* bombs Hai Duong railway and a highway bridge in North Vietnam. BELOW: F-4 Phantom II flies over North Vietnam.**

in Binh Long Province against the city of Loc Ninh, a district town located on highway QL-13, halfway between An Loc and the Cambodian border. As fighting escalated, Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van Minh, Military Region III commander, and Maj. Gen. James Hollingsworth, Minh's American adviser, determined that the attacks in Tay Ninh were a mere diversion and that the main focus of the Communist attack would come in Binh Long Province. Although Hollingsworth directed all tactical air support in support of the hard-hit garrison, inflicting heavy casualties, the NVA's superior numbers

American helicopters in the skies over Vietnam in 1972. American air power helped blunt the NVA attacks and take the fight to North Vietnam.

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eventually overwhelmed the defenders. Repeated human wave attacks overran the ARVN positions in Loc Ninh late on April 7.

The North Vietnamese plan for taking An Loc—encircling the city, cutting Highway 13 south of the city to prevent its reinforcement, destroying the ARVN forces in An Loc, and the use of the city for a follow-on attack against Saigon—involved three main force NVA divisions. The elite 9th NVA/VC Division targeted An Loc, the 7th NVA Division moved to stop supplies and reinforcements from reaching An Loc from Saigon, and the 5th NVA/VC Division was to join the 9th Division in attacking An Loc after Loc Ninh was secured.

Shortly after the fall of Loc Ninh, the 9th Division made its initial move against An Loc by seizing the airstrip at Quan Loi, two miles northeast of the city. Meanwhile, south of An Loc, the 1st ARVN Airborne Brigade, moving up from Saigon, pushed north up Highway 13 from Lai Khe to reinforce the An Loc garrison. The ARVN paratroopers immediately ran into heavy elements of the 7th NVA Division, which was entrenched in blocking positions along the highway. The reinforcements were stopped in their tracks. The subsequent loss of the airstrip and the obstruction of Highway 13 meant that An Loc was surrounded. If An Loc fell, nothing stood between the NVA and Saigon.

Early on the morning of April 13, NVA gunners hit An Loc with artillery, mortars, and rockets. Just after dawn, Communist forces began a coordinated tank and infantry attack from the northeast, advancing on the town through a deluge of rockets, bombs, and napalm delivered by Allied aircraft. When Soviet-made T-54 and PT-76 tanks attacked down the main north-south highway into An Loc, panic ensued among the ARVN defenders, who had never encountered tanks. Several units broke and ran before an ARVN infantryman calmed the situation by knocking out one of the lead tanks with an M-72 Light Anti-tank Weapon.

Heavy fighting raged for three days as NVA soldiers advanced from house to house. Casualties were heavy on both sides. By the third day, NVA attackers had lost 23 tanks but had forced the defenders into a small redoubt in the southern sector of the city. The critical factor holding back the North Vietnamese thrust was U.S. air support, coordinated by American advisers serving with the ARVN ground forces while U.S. attack aircraft, AC-130 gunships, and Cobra helicopters worked in close support. Hollingsworth called in B-52 strikes against the enemy's staging areas in the rubber plantations surrounding the city. The vital air support during the three days of pitched fighting saved the ARVN from almost certain defeat.

Despite the continued pounding from the air, the Communists succeeded in completely encircling the city of An Loc. They then began shelling the city heavily, firing 25,000 artillery rounds and rockets during the first three days, then firing between 1,200 and 2,000 rounds per day into the city for another week as they regrouped for another attack. On April 16, Minh ordered the 1st Airborne Brigade to assault the high ground southeast of the city. At the same time, he ordered the newly arrived 21st ARVN Division, which had been operating in the Mekong Delta, to attack north up Highway 13 to relieve An Loc.

The NVA's plan to overrun An Loc no later than April 20 had failed. Their next attempt would come from the east. The 9th Division would again conduct the main thrust against the city, with elements of the 5th and 7th NVA/VC Divisions launching supporting attacks against ARVN positions southeast of the city. To counter U.S. air support, the Communists moved forward additional antiaircraft weapons, including Soviet-made SA-7 Strella shoulder-fired, heat-seeking, surface-to-air missiles.

A massive predawn artillery bombardment on An Loc and the 1st Airborne Brigade positions southeast of the city signaled the start of the NVA's second attempt to capture the provincial capital. The attackers overran one battalion and drove the other two into the city. The main attack against An Loc did not fare as well. ARVN defenders and American advisers continued to fight off repeated armor-supported human wave attacks. With the aid of continuous air support, the

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**ABOVE: ARVN airborne troops wait for helicopters near the province capital of An Loc in April 1972. BELOW: Sharpshooting South Vietnamese riflemen exchange fire with enemy fighters near Quang Tri, below the DMZ.**

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defenders held their positions. By the second day, NVA attacks had abated.

Conditions inside the city deteriorated. As the Communists continued to pour a withering amount of 100mm tank gun, rocket, mortar, and artillery fire into the city, defenders and civilians lived underground. The repeated ground attacks, shelling, and air strikes destroyed most of the city's buildings, and the city's streets were strewn with mounds of garbage, rubble, shattered trees, and dead animals.

The human toll was dreadful. An Loc's streets were littered with the dead, both military and civilian. Soon, diseases such as cholera were running rampant through the ranks of civilians and defenders alike. To avoid a spreading epidemic, ARVN soldiers used bulldozers during the infrequent lulls in the fighting to bury the bodies in mass graves, some of which contained 300 to 500 corpses. Antiaircraft fire had become so intense that it became almost impossible to resupply the defenders by air. With medical supplies exhausted, little could be done for the increasing numbers of casualties. The city's condition, coupled with the continuous artillery bombardment, demoralized ARVN defenders. The garrison, now numbering about 4,500 troops after the arrival of the two airborne battalions, grimly prepared for the next NVA onslaught.

Once again, the Communists changed plans. The 9th Division commander had been severely reprimanded for his failure to take An Loc after two attempts, and the mission was turned over to the commander of the 5th Division, which would conduct the next main assault. At 5 AM on May 11, the NVA opened up with yet another massive artillery barrage. For 12 hours some 8,300 rounds of enemy fire struck the ARVN defensive perimeter, which shrank to a mere 1,000 square yards before the day was over. Meanwhile, seven NVA regiments attacked from the north and northwest supported by tanks. Taking heavy losses, the attackers managed to drive two salients into the ARVN lines, almost bisecting the defensive perimeter. During heavy fighting, the defenders came close to breaking on several occasions, but continued tactical air support kept the NVA units from overrunning the defenders.

AC-130 gunships, Cobra helicopters, and B-52s vied for position in the crowded skies over An Loc to unload their ordnance on NVA forces. Some 297 tactical air support sorties were flown on May 11 alone, followed over the next four days by approximately 260 sorties each day. This air support, flown in the face of some of the most severe antiaircraft fire of the war, broke the back of the Communist offensive, enabling ARVN defenders to stabilize their lines and reduce both enemy salients.

The fighting along Highway 13 involving the ARVN 21st Division did not go as well. The division fought up the highway foot by foot, sustaining heavy casualties in the process, but the ill-coordinated attacks failed to dislodge entrenched NVA defenders along the road. Although it was unable to open the road and link up with An Loc's defenders, the 21st Division's efforts were not a total loss. The 21st tied down most of one Communist division, making it unavailable for the fight in An Loc. The presence of one more NVA division in the attack might well have tipped the scales in the Communists' favor.

Although the fighting was not yet over, by

the end of May the tide had turned in the favor of An Loc's defenders. Around-the-clock air strikes inflicted a terrible toll on NVA formations; the Communists sustained 10,000 casualties in the months of April and May alone. In early June, with the exhausted enemy unable to mount another attack upon An Loc, Minh sent reinforcements into the city and withdrew the battered 5th ARVN Division. Thieu declared the siege broken on June 18. Continuous NVA shelling during the two-month siege had reduced An Loc to total ruins. The ARVN had suffered 5,400 casualties, but with the help of U.S. tactical air power the defenders had defeated three of the finest divisions in the North Vietnamese Army and held the city against overwhelming odds.

As the fighting raged in An Loc, the North Vietnamese attempted to break another stalemate that had developed on the far northern front, pressing their attack southward down Highway 1, across the Thach Han River and on toward Hue City. Fortunately for the South Vietnamese, ARVN and marine divisions had been reinforced by the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the Airborne Division and the reorganized 1st Ranger Group, raising the ARVN manpower in Military Region I to 35,000 troops. A one-week clearing of the weather allowed the application of massive U.S. bombing.

The North Vietnamese advance was finally halted on May 5. By mid-May, Truong felt strong enough to go on the offensive in a series of limited attacks to throw the Communists off balance, enlarge the defensive perimeter around Hue, and deny the enemy time to maneuver. Between May 15 and 20, ARVN forces recaptured Firebases Bastogne and Checkmate. The NVA launched another attempt to take Hue City on May 21, losing 18 tanks and 800 men in the process. On May 25, a second NVA assault managed to cross the river, but ARVN defenders put up ferocious resistance, forcing the enemy back across the river on May 29. This would prove to be the last serious assault on the defenses of Hue.

By mid-June, clearing weather allowed more accurate aerial bombardment and shelling from U.S. warships offshore. In June, Truong launched Operation Lam Son 72. The 1st ARVN Division pushed westward toward Laos while the Airborne and marine divisions, the 1st Ranger Group, and the 7th Armored Cavalry moved north to retake Quang Tri City. The Airborne Division led the way, utilizing airmobile end-runs to lever the North Vietnamese out of their defensive positions. Within 10 days, ARVN forces had reached the outskirts of the provincial capital. Truong planned to bypass Quang Tri City, isolating the Communist defenders, and push on to the Cua Viet River. Thieu intervened, however, demanding that Quang Tri be taken immediately, seeing the city as a symbol of his authority.

It was not an easy task. The ARVN advance soon bogged down in the outskirts of the city, while the NVA 304th and 208th Divisions were moved to the west to avoid the U.S. firepower. The defense of the city and its walled citadel was left to NVA replacements and raw militia units. Recalled one participant: "The new recruits came in at dusk. They were dead by dawn."

On July 11, the ARVN Marine Division launched a helicopter assault north and east of the city to cut the last remaining road and force the NVA to reinforce and resupply across the Thach Han River, making them vulnerable to air strikes. During the month of July, American aircraft flew more than 5,000 sorties and 2,000 B-52 strikes to support the counteroffensive. On July 27, the ARVN marines relieved the airborne units as the lead elements in the fighting, but progress continued to be slow throughout the summer. The fighting degenerated into an ugly battle of attrition, vicious house-to-house fighting and incessant artillery barrages by both sides. The heavily defended citadel was finally taken on September16.

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**A disabled Soviet-made T-54 tank at An Loc in April 1972. UPI photographer Gerard Hebert, killed by NVA artillery three months later, found the Communist crewmen shackled to the tank.**

The North Vietnamese paid dearly for the ground they gained during the Easter Offensive—approximately 40,000 soldiers killed and another 60,000 wounded. They also lost almost their entire inventory of armor: 134 T-54s, 56 PT-76s, and 60 T-34s. In return, the North gained permanent control of large areas of the four northernmost provinces—Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, and Quang Tin—as well as the western fringes of the II and III Corps sectors, around 10 percent of South Vietnam.

Hanoi wasted no time in making use of what it had gained. The North Vietnamese immediately began to extend their supply corridors from Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam, as well as rapidly expanding port facilities at the captured town of Dong Ha. Within a year, over 20 per cent of the materiel destined for the southern battlefield was flowing across the docks of Dong Ha.

Peace negotiations resumed in Paris with both sides now willing to make concessions. The last American combat units would leave South Vietnam by the end of March 1973. The fatal weakness of the accords was that NVA troops were allowed to remain in their present positions in South Vietnam, most of which had been taken in the Easter Offensive. It was a virtual death sentence for the South. In early 1975, 20 NVA divisions rumbled south in an offensive that was almost identical to the Easter Offensive and rapidly overwhelmed ARVN resistance. Victorious NVA troops and tanks entered Saigon on April 30. The war was over; the Communists had won. □

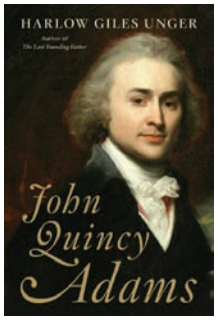
By Al Hemingway

# John Quincy Adams was a brilliant statesman who negotiated the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, SON OF THE SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED States, John Adams, sat across from his counterpart, British Admiral Lord James Gambier, at Ghent, Belgium, desperately attempting to hammer out a peace treaty that would end the War of 1812. The United States had declared war on Great Britain for the second time in the country's short history for myriad reasons, the main one being the impressment of American sailors by British ships on the high seas.

Adams, arguably America's foremost foreign affairs expert, was appointed the nation's chief negotiator by President James Madison. For nearly two years, the two sides met to discuss terms to end the conflict. Although the British had won decisive battles in Maryland and along the U.S.-Canadian border, and had even put Washington to the torch, the fledgling American Navy had performed magnificently against the powerful British, winning decisive sea battles and seizing much-needed war matériel.

An agreement was finally signed on Christmas Eve 1814, although news did not reach American shores in time to prevent the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815, when General Andrew Jackson and a polyglot force of volunteers soundly defeated the cream of the British Army. Adams had performed a minor miracle, even though the treaty was certainly not definitive for either side.




John Quincy Adams, center, shakes hands with British Admiral Lord James Gambier after signing the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812. RIGHT: Adams, painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1818, three years later.

Both: Library of Congress

Historian Harlow Giles Unger has written an admiring new biography of America's sixth president entitled ***John Quincy Adams*** (Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2012, 350 pp., maps, illustrations, photographs, notes, index, $27.50, hardcover). The book covers Adams's childhood, diplomatic career, term as Secretary of State under President James Monroe, his own presidency, and his time in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

No doubt John Quincy inherited his oratorical skills from his father, John Adams, the Massachusetts lawyer who managed to get an acquittal for the British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre in 1770 and later served as a member of the Continental Congress. The elder Adams took his son on a perilous sea journey to France during the Revolutionary War, when both narrowly escaped being caught by a British man-of-war that chased their vessel for several miles. It was in France that John Quincy's education flourished. He later attended Harvard, becoming fluent in German, French, and Dutch and even speak-

# "LESSONS LEARNED ON THE BATTLEFIELDS of yesterday, can still be applied today."

**John D. Hoptak | Faculty, School of Arts & Humanities**

John D. Hoptak is an American and Civil War historian and educator. Author of *The Battle of South Mountain*, *Our Boys Did Nobly*, *First in Defense of the Union*, and *Antietam: September 17, 1862*, Hoptak brings to life the riveting conflicts that divided a nation. Hoptak's laboratory is the Antietam National Battlefield, where as a Park Ranger he shares his vast knowledge about the bloodiest day of battle in U.S. history.

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ing some Russian. This linguistic ability, and his unique diplomatic tact and skills, endeared him to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe, all of whom offered him numerous overseas assignments during their tenures as chief executive.

As Secretary of State, Adams penned the Monroe Doctrine that forbade European powers "from the attempt to spread their principles in the American hemisphere or to subjugate by force any part of these continents to their will." As Thomas Jefferson stated, Adams's "pointed pen" was the deciding factor that made the Monroe-Adams relationship work so well.

Adams squeaked out a victory in the 1824 presidential election when his longtime friend Kentuckian Henry Clay, the Speaker of the House, threw his support behind the Massachusetts native. This infuriated Andrew Jackson, Adams's opponent, who called it a "monstrous union" and vowed to destroy his administration by ensuring that any legislation would not pass either the House or Senate. Jackson's supporters made this threat a reality, and Adams's term in office did little to advance the fortunes of the country. He was denounced for being out of touch with his America, and his dream of advancing the nation, culturally and economically, was shattered by hyper-partisanship.

As Unger points out, Adams, although a staunch Federalist, was not a down-the-line party man. Instead, he was a person of conscience who tried to cast his vote for the betterment of the United States and its citizens. This was evident in his ardent opposition to slavery, which he called a "great and foul stain." It was his passionate appeal before the Supreme Court in 1841 that gained freedom for 36 Africans who had rebelled and hijacked a ship while being transported to the United States to become slaves. The men freed themselves and killed the captain and three crew members of *Amistad*, the ship on which they had been imprisoned. Adams's magnificent speech had many in the courtroom sobbing, and prosecutors realized that they had lost their case.

While attempting to stand and answer the roll call in the House one cold, wintry day, the 80-year-old Adams suddenly collapsed. He was carried to the Rotunda, then to the Speaker's office, and muttered his last words before lapsing into a coma: "This is the end of earth, but I am composed." He died several days later on February 23, 1848. Despite being a failed president, the eloquent orator from Braintree, Massachusetts, left an indelible mark on the nation.

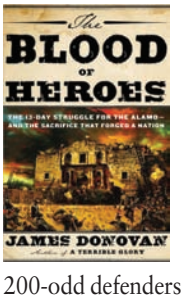
***Ground Pounder: A Marine's Journey Through South Vietnam, 1968-1969*** by Gregory V. Short, University of North Texas Press, Denton, 2012, 368 pp., map, photographs, notes, index, $29.95, hardcover.


As a Vietnam veteran and former Marine who served in Northern I Corps in 1969, I found this to be one of the best memoirs written by a veteran who was also "in country" during the 1968-1969 period. Short's experiences while serving with different units as a ground pounder, or infantryman, and in a rear-echelon unit in Da Nang, give readers good insight into what life was like for a Marine enlisted man in the Vietnam War.

Short's accounts of life in the bush and in the rear are excellent, but it is his depiction of his return home that will really ring true for veterans of that unpopular war. His disillusionment, confusion, and attempts to reconnect with family and friends are emotions many veterans shared. And like other veterans, Short keeps asking himself why we were there. Was the tremendous sacrifice really worth all the lives lost?

Short's book should be required reading in high schools and colleges. It well describes the futility of a war that could have no long-term success, given the strategy—or lack thereof—of politicians attempting to bring the grimly determined North Vietnamese to their knees. It is also castigates those who called returning veterans "baby killers." "It wasn't our fault that in the final analysis we were put in an impossible situation, a situation created by forces beyond our control," writes Short. "Needless to say, the deep emotions that I had felt during my years in the Marine Corps would persist in me for a very long time." Most Vietnam veterans can relate to that.

***The Blood of Heroes: The 13-Day Struggle for the Alamo and the Sacrifice That Forged a Nation*** by James Donovan, Little, Brown and Co., New York, 2012, 500 pp., maps, illustration, photographs, notes, index, $29.99, hardcover.




Few American battles garner more attention than the 13-day plight of the 200-odd defenders of the Alamo, who held out against thousands of Mexican soldiers led by

the self-proclaimed "Napoleon of the West," General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. For nearly two weeks, Lt. Col. William Barrett Travis, Jim Bowie, David Crockett, and others holed up in the 18th-century adobe structure in San Antonio and repeatedly fought off the enemy hordes before finally succumbing to an all-out pre-dawn assault the killed nearly every defender in less than an hour.

Everyone knows that part of the story, but historian James Donovan does an excellent job at knitting together all the events, the history, and the participants on both sides and why they met at the old Spanish mission on that fateful March day. He describes the flaws of all the major players, both Mexican and American, particularly the political in-fighting within the newly formed provisional government of Texas, whose governing body could not reach an agreement about anything, and the self-serving sycophants who surrounded Santa Anna, an egotistical peacock and ladies' man.

Donovan closely examines two items that have been hotly disputed for years regarding the battle: Travis drawing his fabled line in the sand and the existence of Moses Rose, who allegedly made good his escape from the fort. The author concludes that both events did indeed take place. As with much about the Alamo, truth continues to be stranger than fiction.

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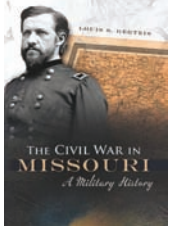
*The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* by Louis S. Gerteis, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 2012, 250 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $29.95, hardcover.




When historians and Civil War buffs discuss the major battles of the war, the state of Missouri is largely overlooked. Despite the Battle of Wilson's Creek in August 1861, most of the fighting in the state, albeit very bloody, was reduced to guerrilla warfare. University of Missouri history professor Louis S. Gerteis asserts that Missouri's status as a border state was crucial to the Union, and that conventional forces from both sides attempted to outmaneuver each other to gain the upper hand. At stake was the fertile land in the Missouri River Valley, where the flow of Confederate supplies could go on indefinitely if not stopped.

Gerteis makes a solid argument that Missouri was much more than just a sideshow of the conflict. According to the Federal Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, Missouri ranked third in important battles, with three

of them listed at the "highest level of significance." The invasion of the Confederate Army led by the portly Maj. Gen. Sterling Price of the Missouri River corridor and his subsequent defeat at Westport in October 1864 by the Union Army all but sealed the Southern collapse in Missouri. The savage fighting would continue as bands of irregulars rode the countryside dispatching their own brand of cruel justice to the population, even after the end of the war.

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***Many Were Held by the Sea: The Tragic Sinking of the HMS Otranto*** by R. Neil Scott, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., New York, 2012, 264 pp., photographs, notes, index, $35.00, hardcover.

On the stormy night of October 6, 1918, one of the worst maritime disasters of the era occurred off the coast of Scotland, near the small village of Islay. HMS *Kashmir* was transporting American and English soldiers to Liverpool, England, in the waning days of World War I. *Kashmir* saw land, but was it the coast of Scotland or Northern Ireland? The raging storm, with its strong winds and gigantic waves, obscured everyone's view. Fortunately, *Kashmir* made the right decision, figuring it was Scotland, and changed course to a southerly direction. Another ship, HMS *Otranto,* did not and veered off to the north. A 60-foot wave slammed *Kashmir*'s bow into *Otranto,* spinning her around like a top. The accident resulted in the deaths of nearly 500 men.

The author has written a moving and thought-provoking book that carefully describes the terrible tragedy and the heroism of Scottish townspeople who braved the frightful storm to rescue surviving servicemen who washed ashore. Also delineated are the efforts of the local police, who had the grisly task of identifying victims and notifying their kin in England and the United States. This is an intriguing story about a little-known naval disaster and its all-too-human aftermath.

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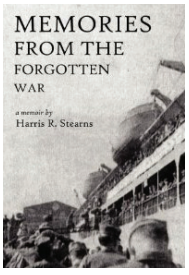
***Memories From the Forgotten War: A Memoir*** by Harris R. Stearns, Vantage Press, New York, 2012, 120 pp., photographs, $14.95, hardcover.

Stearns has written an unusual account of his experiences during the early stages of the Korean War. Instead of writing his memoirs as a first-person account, he has opted to write his book in the third person. The author saw




considerable action as a member of the 89th Tank Battalion and was wounded by shrapnel during a mortar attack on his position. He explains in detail the deplorable conditions of the Sherman tanks when he first arrived in South Korea. Many had nonworking radios, bad voltage regulators, deteriorated fan belts, and no ammunition with the exception of armor-piercing shells, which were useless against infantry assaults by the North Korean Army.

Stearns participated in the Battle of Chinju from August 5 until September 19, 1950, near the all-important Masan-Chinju Railroad line. Elements of the 25th Infantry Division, supported by South Korean forces, were finally able to halt the enemy advance. The resulting victory gave the Marines time to land at Inchon, recapture Seoul, and rapidly pursue the retreating North Korean Army.

Surviving the war, Stearns was discharged from the Army and moved back to his native New York. He retired in 1986 as assistant chief on the Gloversville Fire Department after more than 20 years of service. His look at the Korean War from one soldier's point of view sheds new light on another aspect of that sadly forgotten conflict.

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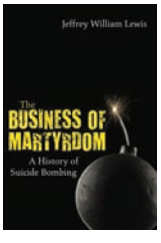
***The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*** by Jeffrey William Lewis, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2012, charts, notes, index, $39.95, hardcover.




Suicide bombers are not new to history. What is new, however, is the technology used to build and ignite their explosive devices. The author, an instructor in International Studies at Ohio State University, delves into the reasons that certain individuals choose to become martyrs, the terrorist organizations who recruit them, and the societies that allow, and even idolize, such murderous methods to achieve their goals. He has penned a fascinating and frightening story of a sinister world that is bent on toppling governments and entire societies by enlisting the aid of radicalized people who are willing to kill themselves to gain what their religions promise to be eternal glory.

Since ancient history, mankind has had many martyrs. Not until World War II, however, when the Japanese used kamikaze pilots

to attack American ships, were suicide attacks used on such a large scale. Today, radical groups from Al Qaeda to the Taliban and other largely Muslim factions have rediscovered the technique to carry out attacks against those they view as oppressors.

Over-the-counter technology for terrorist cells is the core to manufacturing dangerous weapons that can inflict the most damage, Lewis says. The author writes that today's radicals possess the best of both worlds by using "precision and sophistication" as well as "simplicity and reliability" to ensure the success of their mission. They are a difficult enemy to defeat, since they rely on unconventional means to conduct their war. As one Irish Republican Army bomber quipped: "[We] would be nowhere without Radio Shack."

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*Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers* by Douglas R. Cubbison, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2012, maps, illustrations, bibliography, index, $45.00, hardcover.


According to many historians, the Battle of Saratoga, fought on September 19, 1779, was the turning point in the American Revolution. After British General John "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne surrendered the remnants of his army, a previously uncommitted France entered the conflict on the American side. The author has collected unpublished letters and paperwork by Burgoyne that he intended to use in his defense when he was held accountable by Parliament for the disastrous loss at Saratoga.

Prior to his arrival in North America, Burgoyne had no experience in the type of warfare being waged there. Although Burgoyne was certainly not a great commander, historians now hold Lord George Germain equally accountable in the humiliating loss at Saratoga. As Cubbison writes in his introduction, Germain's handling of the British war effort was "vacillating, indecisive, and lacked insight into the actual conditions to be found in the North American theater."

Germain would prevent Burgoyne from seeking a court-martial to clear his name. Could it be that Germain's inadequate leadership might have come to light? We will never know. In the end, "Gentleman Johnny" would go on to have a career as a successful playwright, a vocation that appeared to suit him much better than that of an officer in the British Army. □

By Joseph Luster

# If you're looking for a well-priced downloadable WWII flight game, give *Dogfight 1942* a try.


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## Dogfight 1942

World War II aerial combat games are surprisingly not that few and far between, at least relative to what one would expect from such a niche genre. Most of the games that come out, however, are full-fledged retail titles, and your mileage may vary as to how much value comes from the experience. Maybe that's one of the reasons *Dogfight 1942* seems like such a perfect fit for the download circuit. Players can now hit the skies on either PC, PlayStation Network, or Xbox Live Arcade, and *Dogfight 1942* provides an experience that speaks nicely to the pick-up-and-play crowd.

Visually speaking, *Dogfight 1942* is just barely discernible from the pack, but it does have some aesthetic advantages over other recently released titles, such as Trickstar Games' *Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII*. While that one spent most of its energy on rendering historically accurate plane models, skimping somewhat on the background love, *Dogfight 1942* offers a more balanced presentation. Individual locations—such as buildings that must be defended, or other crucial landmarks—aren't always lovingly rendered on their own, but there's a nice cohesion to it all that makes it easy to accept the environment and enjoy blazing up the skies above it.

Of course, a game like this lives and dies not on its visuals (though they help), but on the ferocity of its combat. While many similar titles toe the line between arcade and simulation, often providing a distinct choice between the two, *Dogfight 1942* lives up to its place on services like Xbox Live Arcade. It's fast, and the way dogfighting is set up provides the maneuverability needed to line up and gun down bogies in rapid succession. There's a specific button for designating your current target, and that can be switched on the fly. When following a targeted plane, you can hold down a separate button to make aiming your reticule at their lead that much easier.

While the speed and ease of gunning down targets is appreciated, there is a downside to how simplified everything is. It's easy to accidentally switch targets, or get attached to an unintended bogie, such that hitting the button to focus on them will swing the camera back to an enemy fighter you didn't even realize you had unintentionally lined up. It's a small gripe, and one that eases up once a greater familiarity with the combat system sets in, but it can lead to some frustration early on. Thankfully there's not too much of a price to pay even if you're being peppered with enemy fire, because *Dogfight 1942* is a fairly lenient game on Normal difficulty. Energy replenishes gradually once you're out of the heat, it's pretty easy to zip around to a better tailing angle, and checkpoints come often enough.

The only other mild complaint about combat is that *Dogfight* frequently triggers a "kill cam" when you successfully shoot down a plane. This is a fun little cinematic diversion, but that's the issue ... due to the sudden switch in angles it almost always caused me to think I had been killed for a split second. Not a big deal, naturally, but it goes to show how a lot of attempts to be superfluously stylish in games can end up coming off as confusing.

In addition to a decently sized campaign, there's some multiplayer that offers incentive to stick around after closing out the main story. There's Dogfight Mode, which is essentially a one-on-one deathmatch; Survival Mode, which pits you against wave after wave of enemy planes; and Campaign Co-op Mode, which puts you and a friend though some of the campaign against the Axis. Interestingly, multiplayer is local only, so while that is kind of disappointing, the split-screen does offer a bit of a throwback to simpler times, sitting on the couch with friends and blasting away at or with one another in person. To some this won't be a viable option, but it's fun if you have some folks nearby to join you.

*Dogfight 1942* has over 40 planes from World War II, from the P-38 Lightning to the Messerschmitt Me-109, and they all handle differently enough. While they're accurate and well designed, how much one digs *Dogfight* is ultimately going to land on the preferred style of flight. Those looking for a budget-priced downloadable WWII flight game that offers an experience comparable to that of a full retail game should have a great time with this. □

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# The Myth of "Settlements"

## Are they indeed the "root cause" of violence in the Middle East?

One of the enduring myths about the Arab-Israeli conflict is that the "settlements" in Judea/Samaria (often called the "West Bank") are the source of the conflict between the Jews and the so-called "Palestinians." If that problem were solved—in other words, if Israel would turn Judea/Samaria over to the "Palestinians"—peace would prevail and the century-old conflict would be ended.

### What are the facts?

**Erroneous Assumptions:** Various fallacies and erroneous assumptions underlie that belief, so often repeated that even those who are friendly to Israel, even many Jews in Israel and in the United States, have come to accept it. Our government, generally friendly to and supportive of Israel, has bought into the myth of the "settlements;" it has regularly and insistently requested that the "settlements" be abandoned and, one supposes, be turned over lock, stock, and barrel to those who are sworn to destroy Israel.

The very designation of the Jewish inhabitants of Judea/Samaria as "settlers" is inappropriate, because it connotes something foreign, intrusive and temporary, something that is purposefully and maliciously imposed. But that is nonsense of course. Why would the more than quarter-million Jews who live in Judea/Samaria be any more "intrusive" or any more "illegal" than the more than one million Arabs who live in peace in what is called "Israel proper" or west of the so-called "green line"? Nobody considers their presence as intrusive; nobody talks of them as an obstacle to peace.

Most of us, regrettably perhaps, are too worldly and too "sophisticated" to put much stock in the argument that the territories in question, Judea and Samaria, are indeed the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people and that they were promised by God to Abraham and his seed in perpetuity. Jews have lived in that country without interruption since Biblical times. There is no reason why they shouldn't live there now. Why should Judea/Samaria be the only place in the world (except for such benighted countries as Saudi Arabia) where Jews cannot live?

**Legal Aspects:** But how about the legal aspect of this matter? Isn't the "West Bank" "occupied territory" and therefore the Jews have no right to be there? But the historic reality is quite different. Very briefly: The Ottoman Empire was the sovereign in the entire area. In 1917, while World War I was still raging, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration. It designated "Palestine"—extending throughout what is now Israel (including the "West Bank") and what is now the Kingdom of Jordan—as the homeland for the Jewish people. In 1922, the League of Nations ratified the Balfour Declaration and designated Britain as the mandatory power. Regrettably, Britain, for its own imperial reasons and purposes, separated 76 percent of the land—that lying beyond the Jordan River—to create the kingdom of Trans-Jordan (now Jordan) and made it inaccessible to Jews. In 1947, tired of the constant bloodletting between Arabs and Jews, the British threw in the towel and abandoned the Mandate. The UN took over. It devised a plan by which the land west of the Jordan River would be split between the Jews and the Arabs. The Jews, though with heavy heart, accepted the plan. The Arabs virulently rejected it and invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of five countries, so as to destroy it at its birth. Miraculously, the Jews prevailed and the State of Israel was born. When the smoke of battle cleared, Jordan was in possession of the "West Bank" and Egypt in possession of Gaza. *They* were the "occupiers" and they proceeded to kill as many Jews as they could and to drive out the survivors. They systematically destroyed all Jewish holy places and all vestiges of Jewish presence. The area was "judenrein"—free of Jews.

> Here is a thought: How about a deal by which the "settlements" were indeed abandoned, all the Jews were to move to "Israel proper" and all the Arabs living in Israel would be transferred to Judea/Samaria or to wherever else they wanted to go?

In the Six-Day War of 1967, the Jews reconquered the territories. The concept that Jewish presence in Judea/Samaria is illegal and that the Jews are occupiers is bizarre. It just has been repeated so often and with such vigor that many people have come to accept it. Even our president seems to have bought into that.

How about the "Palestinians," whose patrimony this territory supposedly is and about whose olive trees and orange groves we hear endlessly? There is no such people. They are Arabs—the same people as in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and beyond. Most of them migrated into the territories and to "Israel proper," attracted by Jewish prosperity and industry. The concept of "Palestinians" as applied to Arabs and as a distinct nationality urgently in need of their own twenty-third Arab state, is a fairly new one; it was not invented until after 1948, when the State of Israel was founded.

But here's a thought: How about a deal by which the "settlements" were indeed abandoned and all the Jews were to move to "Israel proper." At the same time, all the Arabs living in Israel would be transferred to Judea/Samaria or to wherever else they wanted to go? That would indeed make Judea/Samaria "*judenrein*," and what are now Arab lands in Israel would be "*arabrein*." The Arabs could then live in a fully autonomous area in eastern Israel and peace, one would hope, would descend on the holy land. What is wrong with this plan is that very few if any Israeli Arabs would accept it—life is too good for them in Israel.

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## militaria

*Continued from page 29*

order," said O'Mara. "So if you collect Italian World War II fezzes, you will find home-made to private purchase, with government-issue in between. However, these types of private purchase fezzes were not worn by civilians."

As with any collectible the best place to start is to look at period photographic evidence to see what shape the fez was. Did it have a tassel or not? How tall was it, were badges used, what color was it, and where was it used? "The tassels on military fezzes were used to great effect and denoted regiment and status," noted O'Mara. "You can see this on Ethiopian, British, and French fezzes. On Zouave fezzes, rank was expressed on the tassel and also in the fez construction, with some fezzes having blue rings in the fabric which indicated rank."

Where it gets more confusing for collectors is that the majority of military fezzes from Egypt, Turkey, and Eastern European armies are similar to those worn by the civilians. In these cases, best judgment may be necessary. Fortunately, the prices are reflected by this, and most Egyptian and Turkish fezzes are seldom more than a couple of hundred dollars. Even colonial fezzes are typically found for around the same amount due to limited collector interest. Waffen SS fezzes, however, can often run more than $1,000, and unfortunately these are now among the most commonly faked as well.

Again, it comes down to knowing what to look for. "There are about three different types of Handschar fezzes," said O'Mara. "Green and red short-cut soft fez with distinctive tassel, conical fez with no tassel. You will find them in different shades, but generally it is easy to tell a real one. You see many concoctions being sold—hard-shell fezzes with metal badges and so on. I personally think the best way to start is look at the photographic evidence and then visit museum collections as your starting point."

In most cases with European fezzes and their respective colonial forces, it is worth noting that the military fezzes are not the same shape, construction, weave, or material as a civilian fez. "Just looking at and understanding the material weave can help you tell where the fez was from and which army it belonged to," noted O'Mara. "That is why it is very easy to spot fake Handschar fezzes. But the main point of difference in 90 percent of military fezzes—with the exceptions noted—is that the shape and tassel will not be the same shape, size or construction as a civilian fez. So avoid your standard fez with a badge stuck on it unless you can get some history of its origin." □

## chateau-thierry

*Continued from page 57*

bursts, the Germans were soon in full flight back across the Marne.

Had the Germans been aware of the true situation—a usable bridge not covered by fire—they would no doubt have crossed in force, and the course of the battle would have changed dramatically. Investigating the whereabouts of his two missing platoons, Mendenhall discovered that his runners, exhausted and with nerves on edge, had delivered the wrong message. Instead of telling the platoon leaders to hold their positions, they had told them to withdraw immediately to the second line.

On June 2, both sides reorganized and resupplied. In the evening, the Germans made an attempt to cross the East Bridge but were repulsed by the coordinated fire of both companies. On the 3rd, the Germans moved more Maxims into Chateau-Thierry and the ensuing machine-gun duels forced the Americans to reposition some weapons. During the afternoon, the battalion was notified that it would be relieved that night. In early evening, German fire increased in intensity, and the Americans responded. By 11 PM, the barrels of some guns glowed cherry red.

The relief was not completed until dawn, and firing continued throughout the night. When the 7th Battalion left the line, some of its guns were so hot that they could not be dismounted from their tripods and instead were exchanged for guns in the relieving force. The 7th Machine Gun Battalion's defense of Chateau-Thierry had ended.

Although the 7th had made mistakes, it had performed remarkably well in its first combat action, conducting a tactical road march with few maps, inadequate support, and inexperienced drivers on roads choked with the detritus of war. It had entered Chateau-Thierry with no combat experience and with two months less training than AEF regulations required. It had faced tough, combat-experienced adversaries that far outnumbered the battalion in terms of men, machine guns, and artillery. It had fought its battle with little support from the French, who were still reeling from the initial German assault. The greatest compliment paid to the 7th came in an official citation prepared by General Pétain, who said the unit "in the course of violent combat disputed foot by foot with the Germans [and] covered itself with incomparable glory." If the Germans harbored any doubts about American combat effectiveness, the professionalism of the 7th MG Battalion at Chateau-Thierry did much to dispel them. □

## towton

*Continued from page 51*

easier because many Lancastrians pulled off their helmets and threw away their weapons to allow them to run faster. The routed Lancastrians were hounded for 10 miles, all the way to the gates of York.

Disagreement remains over how many men died at Towton. Some chroniclers put the body count as high as 38,000, while modern historians put the number at 8,000 killed for the Lancastrians and 5,000 for the Yorkists. Whatever the number, it was undeniably a bloody day, especially among the nobles who died on the battlefield. The latter included Andrew Trollope, who had defected from the Yorkists at a crucial moment two years previously. Forty-two Lancastrian knights were executed after the battle.

When news of the defeat reached King Henry VI and his wife, they and their son fled northward along with Somerset, making their way to safety in Scotland. Edward returned in triumph to London and assumed the crown as Edward IV. The great victory at Towton had broken the back of organized Lancastrian resistance, but matters in England were far from settled. For the next nine years, Margaret regularly crisscrossed the English Channel, seeking aid from French King Louis XI to continue the struggle. In the meantime, the feckless Henry VI managed to get himself recaptured and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

In 1470, Margaret formed an unlikely alliance with Warwick, who had fallen out with King Edward IV and offered his sword to the deposed queen. To cement the agreement, Margaret's son, Edward, Prince of Wales, married Warwick's daughter, Anne Neville. Faced with the threat of a new Lancastrian force, Edward IV abandoned London and fled to safe haven in Burgundy. Warwick arrived in the capital and restored Henry briefly to the throne.

Recovering his nerve—if he ever lost it—Edward IV returned to Yorkshire and recruited another army, defeating and killing Warwick at the Battle of Barnet on April 14, 1471. Three weeks later, on May 4, the Yorkists defeated Margaret and her remaining allies at the Battle of Tewksbury. The Prince of Wales died in the fighting. His father, Henry VI, came to a mysterious end on May 21, when he was found dead in the Tower of London after a visit from Edward's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester (the future King Richard III). Margaret would eventually return to France and die in exiled poverty. The English crown now sat firmly atop the white rose of York. □

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