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Cover: Paratrooper James Conboy, Jr., 17th Airborne Division, prepares to board a transport plane for the jump across the Rhine, March 23, 1945. See story page 36. Photo: Robert Capa © International Center of Photography/Magnum Photos.

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Editorial

Hitler's food taster breaks her silence.

SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS AFTER HIS SUICIDE IN THE FÜHRERBUNKER BENEATH THE smoking rubble of Berlin, the life of Adolf Hitler remains an enigma. Lingering questions and conjecture surround his psyche and just what drove the Nazi dictator to undertake a world war and commit genocide on a scale unsurpassed in human history. Other topics of continuing interest to historians and to the casually curious include his sexual orientation, relationship with his neice Geli Raubal and the possibility that the young woman was murdered, the idea that he actually had Jewish ancestors, and even his dietary habits.

With respect to his diet, the Führer has long been known as a teetotaler and strict vegetarian. Hitler reportedly never partook of alcohol and shunned meat entirely. It has been suggested that he might even have intended to turn Germany into a vegetarian nation after victory was assured during World War II.

A few months ago, Hitler's daily dietary demands came to the fore once again when 95-year-old Margot Woelk, a food taster for the Führer for 2½ years during World War II, finally spoke out about her role in preventing the assassination of the Nazi leader by poisoning his food. Woelk told the *Times, Daily Telegraph* and other news organizations in the United Kingdom that she was a German whose husband had been inducted into the Army. Following his departure, she was living in the home of her mother-in-law.

Margot Woelk, top, photographed with Hitler during the war, and, below, today.

Members of the SS came to the door one day, and she was sent to East Prussia, where Hitler's Wolf's Lair headquarters was located. There, she joined 12 other women who tasted his meals prior to their being served.

"Between 11 and 12 o'clock, we had to taste the food, and only after all of us had tried it was it driven to the headquarters by the SS," Woelk remembered. "It was all vegetarian, the most delicious fresh things, from asparagus to peppers and peas, served with rice and salads. It was all arranged on one plate, just as it was served to him. There was no meat, and I do not remember any fish."

Woelk admitted that she feared for her life. A mouthful of poisoned food might have spelled her demise. However, there is no evidence that such an attempt on Hitler's life was ever undertaken. "Of course, I was afraid," she said. "If it had been poisoned I would not be here today. We were forced to eat it; we had no choice."

Despite confirmation that Hitler was a strict vegetarian, it has been reported by his prewar chef, Dione Lucas, that at some point during his life Hitler indulged in the occasional sausage, stuffed pigeon, or even a slice of ham. Nevertheless, some historians have concluded that Hitler viewed vegetarianism as a component of the Aryan lifestyle. An instruction manual published for the Hitler Youth promoted the consumption of soybeans and called them "Nazi beans." The Führer was also said to have referred to beef or chicken stock as "corpse tea."

Hitler abandoned Wolf's Lair in November 1944, as the Soviet Red Army advanced into Germany. Today, Woelk is believed to be the sole survivor among her group of food tasters. She was helped to escape from East Prussia to Berlin by a kind German soldier.

"He put me on Goebbels's [Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels] train, and I got out," she recalled, still asserting that the other members of her group were captured and executed by the Red Army.

As the war progressed, Woelk gave up hope of ever seeing her husband, Kurt, again, believing that he had been killed in action. However, in 1946 the two were reunited. They remained married until Kurt passed away in 1990.

Michael E. Haskew

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CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Kelly Bell, Jon Diamond, Al Hemingway, Michael D. Hull, Victor Kamenir, David H. Lippman, Alexander G. Lovelace, Joseph Luster, Christopher Miskimon, Eric Niderost, Allyn Vannoy

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

MARK HINTZ
Chief Executive Officer

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

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

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By Kelly Bell

Richard Taylor / The Military Gallery

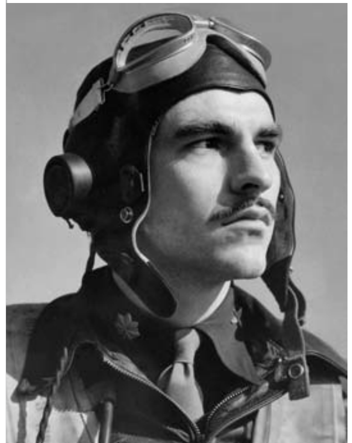
In this painting by artist Richard Taylor, American ace George Preddy leads aircraft of the 352nd Fighter Group against German planes during a mission escorting Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers over the city of Merseburg, Germany, on November 21, 1944. BELOW: Major George Preddy cuts a dashing figure with his thin moustache and flying gear.

Mustang Wrangler

Major George Preddy became the leading P-51 Mustang fighter ace in the European Theater.

DARWIN, AUSTRALIA, WAS HOT EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MID-WINTER. ON THE afternoon of July 12, 1942, four newly deployed pilots of the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) 49th Fighter Group climbed into the cockpits of their Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk single-engine fighters and lifted off for a training mission. The youngsters were 1st Lt. J.B. "Jack" Donalson and 2nd Lts. John Sauber, Richard Taylor, and George Preddy, Jr.

National Archives



Japanese air raids had recently plagued the area, and this quartet of airmen was being groomed to do something about it. Preddy and Taylor peeled off and played the role of Imperial Japanese bombers while Donalson and Sauber rehearsed their intercepting skills by making dummy attacks on their comrades, but something went wrong. The sun may have blinded Sauber or, rookie that he was, he may simply have misjudged the distance between his and Preddy's planes. He waited too long to pull up and crashed into Preddy's tail at 12,000 feet, sending both machines tumbling.

Preddy managed to bail out at the last moment, but Sauber's cockpit was apparently jammed shut. He was killed on impact. Preddy's chute cracked open seconds before he came down in a tall gum tree that shredded the parachute and sent him crashing through the branches to the ground.

Lieutenant Clay Tice happened to be passing by in his own P-40 and saw the mishap. He radioed its coordinates to the nearby airfield, and ground crewmen Lucien Hubbard and Bill Irving jumped in a truck and raced to the critically injured Preddy's aid. The young man had a broken leg and deep gashes in his shoulder and hip. He was bleeding as the mechanics rushed him to the infirmary. After a long session in the operating room, the base surgeon reported that if not for his comrades' prompt response Preddy would quickly have bled to death. It would not be the last time he would be victimized by his own side's mistakes.

Following a lengthy recovery, Preddy was transferred to the 352nd Fighter Group, which the liner *Queen Elizabeth* delivered to Scotland's Firth of Clyde on July 5, 1943. Despite still being green he was one of the most experienced men in the outfit. Virtually all the other pilots were fresh from flight school, and Preddy's modest experience meant little because he had to forget his work with the P-40 and begin learning to fly the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter. After being indisposed a full year, he was chafing for action and already knew what he was going to call his new war-

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plane. A habitual gambler, he believed yelling "Cripes A' Mighty!" brought him luck when he tossed the dice. This crap game cry would be painted on every machine he flew.

Assigned to Bodney airfield, the 352nd started out flying cover for ammunition- and fuel-bereft Thunderbolts of the 56th and 353rd Fighter Groups as they returned from escort missions. This gave Preddy and his buddies little action, but the Allied strategic bombing offensive was just reaching a serious and costly stage.

October 14, 1943, is still known as "Black Thursday." It was the day Preddy was among 196 frustrated Thunderbolt pilots whose near-empty fuel tanks forced them to turn back for Britain just as swarms of experienced, opportunistic Luftwaffe airmen tore into Eighth Air Force bomber formations approaching the Schweinfurt ball bearing works. The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers fell like snowflakes, making it clear the fuel-guzzling Thunderbolt was not suitable as a long-range escort fighter. For the time being, though, it was the best plane available.

The autumn of 1943 was pivotal in the air war over Western Europe as the Allies tried to pour bombers into the skies over the Third Reich faster than the Germans could shoot them down. Despite its high kill rate versus the big birds, however, the Luftwaffe was also suffering mightily. On December 1, Preddy got his first victory when he flamed a German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter attacking a bomber returning from a raid on Solingen. *Cripes A'Mighty*'s eight .50-caliber machine guns virtually disintegrated the interceptor. Preddy's 487th Fighter Squadron was the only one from the 352nd Group to score any kills that day, but many more were coming.

On December 22, the group lifted off to meet 574 bombers returning from immolating the marshaling yards in Munster and Onabruck. Preddy's wingman was a talented young concert pianist named Richard R. Grow. The pair became separated from the rest of their flight when they plunged into a massive, confused dogfight in a huge cloud bank just east of the Zuider Zee. Emerging from the bottom of the cumulus they found themselves alone and began climbing to rejoin the bomber formation.

Entering a break in the clouds they spied a gaggle of 16 Messerschmidts attacking a smoking B-24. Preddy torched the German closest to the bomber and then plunged back into the overcast. Surprisingly, the rest of the interceptors turned away from the bomber and took off after the pair of Thunderbolts. The 13,000-pound *Cripes A'Mighty* easily outdove its pursuers, but they evidently did catch up with Grow. He never made it out of the clouds. Still, the crippled Liberator, *Lizzie,* made it home. Preddy was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross for this episode but instead received America's third highest decoration, the Silver Star.

National Archives

The top scoring P-51 Mustang fighter ace of World War II, Major George Preddy describes the action upon his return from a successful mission.

After Christmas massive ice storms bracketed the European Continent, aborting major air operations by both sides. On January 29, 1944, the weather cleared long enough for a shoal of 800 bombers to target Frankfurt-an-der-Main's industrial complexes. When the 487th flew out to meet the returning formations, Preddy shot down an FW-190 over the French coast but passed too low over a flak pit and suffered a direct hit. He managed to coax the smoking *Cripes A'Mighty* up to 5,000 feet, but then the heavy plane began to lose altitude.

Reaching 2,000 feet, Preddy realized he would soon be too low to bail out, so he jumped and inflated his pressurized dinghy. His wingman, 1st Lt. William Whisner, risked running out of fuel by circling over Preddy and repeatedly radioing his coordinates until air-sea rescue could triangulate the position. A Royal Air Force flying boat arrived, but in the rough, freezing seas it ran over Preddy, severely bruising and almost drowning him. When the British pilot tried to take off, a wave hit the plane and broke off one of its pontoons. This made it impossible to get airborne in the huge swells, so the crew had to call for a Royal Navy launch to tow the crippled flying boat to port. The Englishmen had some contraband brandy aboard, however, and by the time the launch arrived Preddy and his rescuers were well thawed.

Soon after his frosty baptism, Preddy and the 352nd began switching over to the new North American P-51 Mustang fighter and immediately fell in love with it. On April 22, the group flew a protracted escort mission for bombers attacking Hamm, Sost, Bonn, and Koblenz. Between bombing runs Preddy and two other pilots strafed the Luftwaffe airfield at Stade. They simultaneously opened their guns on a Junkers Ju-88 twin-engine bomber that had just taken off, tearing it apart. After making their report back at Bodney, the three were amused to be awarded a .33 kill credit apiece.

On April 30, Preddy, newly promoted to major, accepted combat with an FW-190 at 17,000 feet over Clermont, France, quickly flaming his opponent. From this point his kill total mounted steadily as he and *Cripes A' Mighty II* became better acquainted. It came at a good time.

The Normandy invasion was in the offing, and the USAAF was concentrating on neutralizing Luftwaffe opposition in northwestern Europe. From April 30 until the D-Day landings on June 6, Preddy downed another 4.5 planes. By this point he had already completed a standard 200-hour tour of duty along with two 50-hour extensions. He could have returned home but was thinking only of what he could do to end the

war. He acquired a third 50-hour extension. As northern France convulsed with the massive land battles of the summer of 1944, he scored nine kills from June 12 to August 5. His greatest adventure was at hand.

After returning to base on the evening of August 5, he read the meteorologist report forecasting widespread thunderstorms for the next day, and announcing no flights were scheduled. It was the night of the 352nd's war bond drive party, and the combat-weary Preddy had a merry time until almost dawn. During the night's revelry nobody noticed the skies clearing. The young hero went staggering off to bed just before daybreak. Twenty minutes later an aide woke him with the news that a bombing raid had been scheduled, and he was slated as flight leader for the escort elements.

During the preflight briefing, Preddy was so drunk he fell off the podium. For want of anything better, several pilots propped him in a chair and held an oxygen mask over his nose as he slowly and somewhat sobered. After he got to his feet, his comrades threw a glass of ice water in his face, slapped him with a wet towel, and led him to his plane. After they helped him into the cockpit he lifted off normally and led his squadron on a maximum effort mission to Berlin. The weather turned out to be beautiful with cloudless skies and unlimited visibility. The Luftwaffe was also up in force.

Before the Americans reached their target, 30 German Me-109s assailed the B-17s Preddy's squadron was escorting but did not seem to notice the accompanying Mustangs. Leading an attack from astern, Preddy opened on an interceptor and apparently killed the pilot. The blazing plane spun earthward, and no parachute blossomed. Preddy next sent a flurry of bullets into another 109's port wing root, igniting it as its pilot bailed out. As the Mustang pilots waded deeper into the enemy formation, picking off one German plane after another, those in front continued to fire on the bombers, seemingly oblivious to the trailing menace.

Preddy downed another two Me-109s before the remaining interceptors suddenly realized they were under attack. When these survivors dove to escape, the Americans followed. Preddy torched his fifth victim of this battle, and as the flock of fighters descended to just 5,000 feet he latched onto the tail of yet another. The German yanked his plane to the left in an attempt to get on his pursuer's tail, but Preddy reacted too quickly, also shearing left and passing over the Messerschmitt. Using the speed he had built up in his dive, he dropped astern of the Me-109 and opened fire from close range. This pilot, too, bailed out.

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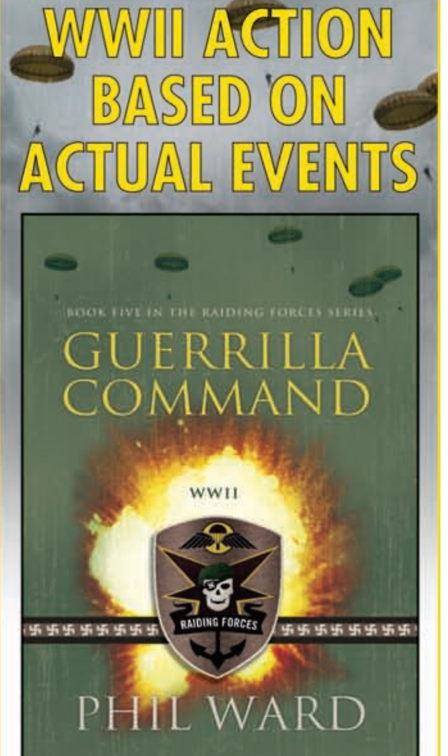

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U.S. Air Force

Painted in alternating black and white D-Day invasion recognition stripes, the P-51 Mustang that Major George Preddy flew while scoring most of his kills sits on a runway. Preddy's planes were named *Cripes A'Mighty,* a reference to his favorite exclamation while gambling.

After Preddy landed back at Bodney, combat photographer 1st Lt. George Arnold photographed the pale, sick-looking hero climbing from *Cripes A'MightyII*'s vomit spattered cockpit. Not bothering to report his kills, Preddy let his gun camera footage and comrades speak for him. Over the next few days the press descended in droves on the airfield as Major George Preddy, Jr., sleek and handsome as a movie star, became the toast of Allied Europe. It all seemed to embarrass him. His commander, Lt. Col. John C. Meyer, recommended him for the Medal of Honor for his six-kill flight and was angry when, on August 12, Brig. Gen. Edward H. Anderson instead pinned a Distinguished Flying Cross on Preddy's tunic. Typically, the young major did not seem to care.

Combining aerial, ground, and partial kills, Preddy now had 31 victories, and his third 50-hour combat extension had expired. This time he did consent to return home on leave and would never again fly *Cripes A'Mighty II*. The 352nd's senior officers erroneously assumed he was leaving for good and assigned the plane to another pilot.

While home in Greensboro, North Carolina, Preddy told his pastor, "Reverend, I must go back." There was little room for ego in this selfless young soldier. Awards, medals, and adulation did not interest him. All he really cared about was bringing the war to a victorious conclusion, and he figured this would happen sooner if he were flying combat missions.

Preddy spent seven weeks in the States before securing yet another 50-hour extension. When he returned to England he was given command of the 352nd Group's 328th Squadron. He was also presented with a brand-new P-51D-15NA fighter that he refused to fly until the name Cripes A' Mighty III was painted on its fuselage. Preddy was placed in command of the 328th Squadron because it had the worst kill tally in the group, and he was expected to do something about this. He did his best in the time he had remaining.

On November 2, he led his pilots on a mission to guard bombers headed for Merseburg. When he spied a number of suspicious contrails at 33,000 feet, he realized a flight of interceptors had leveled off at their altitude ceiling in hopes of attacking the bombers from above. The Mustangs could fly as high as the Messerschmidts, though, and Preddy led his formation to the Germans' rear and was first to attack. Although this was the first time he had ever looked through the new British-designed K-14 gunsight, he used it expertly, quickly downing an Me-109 as he and his men scattered the enemy formation before it could molest the bombers.

The next day he shot down an FW-190. This was his last victory for more than a month as the thinly stretched Luftwaffe, overburdened by a war on three fronts, essentially disappeared for several weeks. This also helped lull the Allies' air and ground units into a dangerous overconfidence as Nazi Germany coiled to strike one last time.

Ghastly devastation was wrought on the Third Reich during 1944. Also, every military historian knew the German Army traditionally did not launch major offensives during winter, especially when it was already and obviously beaten. Therefore, not since Pearl Harbor was the U.S. military so totally taken by surprise as

at 5 AM on December 16, 1944, when 600,000 undetected German soldiers exploded from the frozen Ardennes Forest in what would be known as the Battle of the Bulge. The worst weather in months cloaked Western Europe and protected the surging Wehrmacht from Allied air power.

Like the rest of the USAAF, the 352nd was socked in by the overcast and blizzards. Billeted in a forest clearing outside Asche, Belgium, the 328th Squadron gamely lifted off on December 23 in hopes of strafing enemy ground units, but after a fruitless patrol during which the cloud ceiling was so close to the ground the pilots had to dodge trees, they returned to base without firing a shot. Without reconnaissance flights, they did not know where to look for targets, and radio reports from ground units in the confused forest fighting contradicted each other. For the next two days the frustrated airmen wrote and read letters, played cards, and shot dice in their freezing forest encampment.

On Christmas Day, Preddy was one of 10 pilots who took off in hopes of supporting their infantry and armored units that were trying to stem the enemy stream grinding westward. They found nothing for three hours, then got a radio report of a flight of hostiles just to the southwest of Koblenz. Heading to the sector they found the bandits and attacked from above. Typically in the lead, Preddy flamed two Me-109s and led his men in pursuit of the rest of the Germans as they turned toward Liege.

Closing in on an FW-190, he opened fire at close range at the same time an American antiaircraft crew opened up on him. The ground gunners quickly realized they were shooting at one of their own planes and ceased fire, but it was too late. One of the .50-caliber bullets had gone through Preddy's right thigh, severing his femoral artery. He crash landed near the flak pit, and infantrymen carried him to a field hospital, but he bled to death before reaching it.

Major George Preddy was never defeated in combat. At age 25 he had fallen prey to human error. With 27.5 confirmed kills, he was the war's top-scoring Mustang ace despite having flown this magnificent aircraft for less than one year. All of this crystallizes his standing as one of America's greatest war heroes.

On April 17, 1945, Preddy's 20-year-old brother, William, a Mustang pilot with two victories, was killed by antiaircraft fire over Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. □

Author Kelly Bell writes regularly on various aspects of World War II, including the air war in Western Europe. He resides in Tyler, Texas.

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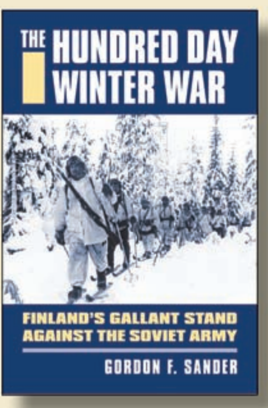

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By Alexander G. Lovelace

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Patton's Last Command

Prior to his untimely death, General George S. Patton, Jr., commanded the Fifteenth Army.

THE OCTOBER LIGHT WAS BEGINNING TO FADE AS THE U.S. ARMY LIMOUSINE sped along the autobahn in the American Zone of Occupied Germany. Inside rode the supreme commander of the Allied armies in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, accompanied by his son, Lieutenant John S.D. Eisenhower. The trip was not unusual since occupation duty in 1945 allowed ample time for the supreme commander to see his son; yet later John would remember his father's mood that evening as "pensive." Finally, Ike turned to John and said sadly, "I had to relieve General Patton from the Third Army today."

George Patton, the brilliant and outspoken commander of the Third Army, who had liberated more territory than any other American general in Europe, had finally gotten himself into a controversy his old friend Eisenhower was unwilling to tolerate. When the war ended, Patton had been put in charge of occupied Bavaria, making him responsible for implementing the U.S. policy of rebuilding the country and purging the institutions of anyone who had been a member of the Nazi Party. However, under Hitler most Germans had been compelled to join the party to keep their jobs. Realizing this, Patton concluded that Germany could not be rebuilt without using former low-level Nazis.

The greatest threat to Germany, Patton believed, was Soviet expansionism, not a revival of Nazism. He reasoned that the sooner Germany was rebuilt, the sooner it could act as a U.S. ally against the Soviets. However, in the middle of 1945 the Cold War had not yet fully begun, and Patton's opinions were ahead of the times since many Americans, including Eisenhower, hoped that the Soviet-American wartime alliance would continue.

At a press conference near the end of September, Patton, goaded by reporters, stated, "The Nazis are just like the Republicans and Democrats." At least that is what appeared in the next day's headlines. During the war, Eisenhower had saved his old friend when he was attacked by the media for slapping two hospitalized soldiers and again when he made anti-Soviet remarks, but now that the war was over Eisenhower saw little point of keeping Patton in a job he was clearly unsuited to hold. As Ike mused to John that October evening, "I'm not moving George for what he's done—just for what he's going to do next."

Eisenhower's solution was to transfer Patton to the Fifteenth Army, which was then documenting the history of the European war, and where John was serving as a staff officer. Sandwiched between the momentous events of Patton's firing from the Third Army and his death two months later, the time he spent at Fifteenth Army is usually glossed over by historians.

Since the Fifteenth Army left few postwar primary sources, historians have found it difficult to investigate this part of the general's life, which, at first glance, seems of little importance. This is unfortunate since not only was Patton's time at the Fifteenth Army a success, but it also gave him a chance to influence how history would remember him.

General George S. Patton, Jr. rides a stallion that Hitler intended to give to Japanese Emperor Hirohito. The patch on his shoulder representing Third Army would soon be replaced by a red and white octagonal patch representing the Fifteenth Army.

Patton arrived at the Fifteenth Army on October 8, feeling the hurt and anger only friendship can cause. He was convinced that Eisenhower had sacrificed him for political expediency and a desire to please future Ameri-

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can voters. Patton wrote his wife on October 15, "Ike is bitten with the presidential bug and is also yellow." Yet Patton was certain that his actions in Bavaria and his fear of the Soviets would soon be vindicated. Until then, his new assignment gave him time to plot his next move.

The Fifteenth Army was very different from Patton's previous command. Most of the troops had been shipped back to the United States, leaving only the headquarters staff and housekeeping units. A report given to Patton at the time of his arrival gives the strength of the army at 367 officers and 3,090 enlisted men, with two-thirds of the officers working directly at the headquarters. At that time, the Fifteenth Army's assignment centered around the general board, which comprised the Army's headquarter staff, tasked with researching and writing reports on how different sections of the U.S. Army had performed during World War II.

Patton, as the new commander, would act as the board's president. Eisenhower wrote later that he had established the general board at the end of the war so "the War Department might have permanently available all the facts ... and the opinions of the men most experienced in the actual business of fighting...." It was hoped that these reports would provide sources for historians and lessons for the War Department on future conflicts. Instead of an army, Patton was really taking command of a regiment of historians and their support staff.

Before Patton's arrival, service on the general board was, in John Eisenhower's words, "pleasant indeed." The headquarters was located at Bad Nauheim, Germany, which had been a resort town before the war. Since their mission was primarily academic, there was little urgency among the staff to finish the reports. It was with trepidation that they awaited the arrival of their new commander, who had built his controversial reputation on hard work and strict discipline.

Patton's arrival at the Fifteenth Army was both dramatic and reassuring. According to his diary, he arrived early and spent the day reviewing the various historical sections. At lunch Patton, immaculately dressed, strode into the officer's mess hall and grimily looked around. The officers shot to attention, Patton's stern appearance confirming their worst fears. As Patton's former aide Robert Allen wrote later, the general and his new staff eyed each other warily for a few moments, then Patton relaxed and said, "There are occasions when I can truthfully say that I am not as much of a son of a bitch as I may think I am. This is one of them."

The officers roared with laughter. The general then assured his new staff that he would not make any changes to how the headquarters was managed for at least one week. John Eisenhower recalled that later in the evening there was a reception, which Patton opened by announcing, "I have been here and studied your work today." Then, raising his high-pitched voice, continued, "I have been shocked," dramatic pause, "by the excellence of your work."

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General Geoffrey Keys (left), the commander of Patton's old Seventh Army, visited Patton for a dinner hosted by the Fifteenth Army.

However, one change that Patton did institute in the first week was to speed up production. He had received a report dated September 30, 1945, which showed that after three months of work only 10 out of 137 reports were more than 50 percent finished. Patton announced that he wanted to be home by March and all of the reports must be finished by then, which caused, as John Eisenhower remembered, everyone to begin working frantically. Privately, Patton told United Press correspondent John McDermott that he planned to have the general board's mission finished by January 31, 1946. He had good reason to hurry. At that time, the Army was being reorganized to fit the postwar world. The general board's reports had the potential to influence how the new military would function.

According to his diary, Patton informed the heads of the historical sections, "The best is the enemy of the good, by which I mean that something now will be better than perfection when it is too late to have any influence."

Many of the Fifteenth Army officers, who began to work furiously to meet their new commander's timetable, must have wondered why Patton was any more qualified to write history than he had been to run Bavaria. However, as Patton explained to John McDermott, the job was "right down my alley because I have been a student of war since I was about seven years old. Up until that time I studied the Navy."

Indeed, under his carefully cultivated brash warrior image, Patton's study of history went something beyond that of the gifted amateur. His use of history was so central to his actions on the battlefield it has been the subject of numerous articles and one excellent book by Roger Nye titled *The Patton Mind.* Since childhood, Patton had loved reading ancient and modern military history. In later life, Patton authored numerous articles on warfare, which drew heavily on historical examples to answer current problems. As historian Carlo D'Este concludes in an essay on Patton's reading habits, the general "was a complete student of history who should be remembered as one of the few American commanders prepared to fight the German army in World War II."

At first, life as a historian seemed to agree with Patton. He told McDermott, that the general board had "a great historical and educational value.... I think anyone who is fortunate enough to have his name connected with it is very lucky because people will study what he says...."

Nor was Patton shy about using the Fifteenth Army for self-serving ends. Reading *The Strategy of the Campaign* report, which told of the Allied armies' liberation of France, John Eisenhower was shocked to find that Patton's Third Army was mentioned three times more than any other Allied army.

Despite an outward show of enthusiasm for his new job, it did not distract Patton from the anger he felt toward Eisenhower, the media, and all the others he believed were responsible for his removal from the Third Army. He wrote his wife on October 10, describing the general board as "very much like ... the old Historical section in Washington. We are writing a lot of stuff which no one will ever read." He devoted his diary not to his day-to-day work but to castigating his supposed tormentors and worrying about the spread of communism.

Unofficially, Patton was doing a great deal of writing to preserve his reputation for posterity. As historian Ladislas Farago noted, Patton's "few weeks of 'moonlighting' as a historian did no damage to his fame as a fighter."

Rather, it was a golden opportunity to preserve his legacy in a book that would describe his experience in World War II and convey his philosophy on warfare. The book went through

a number of proposed titles including *War as I Knew It* or, *Helpful Hints to Hopeful Heroes*, then, *War and Peace as I Knew It,* and finally, back to *War as I Knew It*. Patton wrote the book hoping it would redeem his reputation, while sharply criticizing Eisenhower along with other Allied leaders for what he saw as mistakes made during the war, culminating in the ultimate folly of disagreeing with him over de-Nazification and the Soviet menace. *War As I Knew It* was published after Patton's death with most of the controversial statements about Eisenhower and other Allied leaders removed by his widow. The book was thus not the political bombshell Patton had hoped but nevertheless became a best seller; it is one of the classics of World War II.

As time passed, Patton grew increasingly restless. He began to travel around Europe accepting awards and seeking out people who agreed with him about the Soviets. He also debated with friends whether he should resign from the Army so he could speak his mind. Robert Allen quotes Patton telling his chief of staff, General Hobart Gay, in December that he intended to leave the service "with a statement that will be remembered a long time."

On December 5, Patton wrote his wife that he would be home for Christmas and "don't intend to go back to Europe. If I get a really good job I will stay, otherwise I will retire…." By that point, the mission of the Fifteenth Army was nearing completion well ahead of the March deadline.

Patton would not live to see his fears of the Soviets vindicated by the Cold War. On December 9, Patton was going hunting when his car collided with an Army truck. He was taken to a hospital with a broken neck. The general passed away on December 21, 1945.

Today, the general board and the historical reports it produced are almost totally forgotten. However, the Fifteenth Army was Patton's last, and least remembered, victory. He had rejuvenated the general board and greatly increased productivity. Three months before his arrival only 10 of 137 reports were even close to completion. Three months after he took command all 137 reports were finished.

The Fifteenth Army also gave Patton time to finish *War as I Knew It,* which embodied his legacy and principles on war and is still available in bookstores. It is one of the ironies of history that Patton's last victory came not with the sword but with the pen. □

Author Alexander Lovelace is a first-time contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Pasadena, Maryland.*

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By Michael D. Hull

Imperial War Museum

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FAST, GRACEFUL, AND DEADLY, THE BRITISH SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE WAS ONE of the most recognizable and famous fighter planes of World War II.

The Spitfire, a single-seat monoplane, was the only Allied fighter to see continual frontline service from 1939 to 1945. With its sister, the sturdy Hawker Hurricane, it flew in every theater of operations, defeated the Luftwaffe in the 1940 Battle of Britain, and more than once turned the tide of war in the Allies' favor.

Besides Royal Air Force personnel, Spitfires were flown by pilots of all nationalities in the Allied war against fascism. Polish fliers racked up high scores in the Battle of Britain, and American Eagle Squadron pilots flew Spitfires in the ill-fated raid on the French port of Dieppe. All of its pilots loved the elegant and responsive "Spit."

Descended from a line of thoroughbred racing seaplanes, the Spitfire was the brainchild of Reginald Joseph Mitchell, a schoolmaster's son and dedicated, tireless aircraft designer. A well-built, square-jawed man with an engaging smile, he tragically never lived to see his last and most outstanding creation used in action.

Born on Monday, May 20, 1895, in the village of Talke near Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, Mitchell—known as "RJ"—left high school at the age of 16 and became an apprentice in a local locomotive factory. He showed great engineering talent, delighted in making things, and even built his own lathe. Working in the firm's drawing office, he attended night school to study mechanics, higher mathematics, and technical drawing. He became interested in aviation and went to work in 1917 at the Supermarine Aviation Works plant in Southampton, Hampshire, which was setting out in the infant business of constructing seaplanes and flying boats.

RJ advanced quickly to chief engineer and designer, working primarily on military flying boats. Beginning in 1922, seaplanes designed by Mitchell won the prestigious Schneider Trophy and set speed records for a decade. His sleek S-6B floatplane won the 1931 race without competition, retaining the trophy for Britain.

In 1934, the Air Ministry announced requirements for a new Royal Air Force fighter. Sydney Camm, the chief engineer of Hawker Aircraft Co., designed the Hurricane, and Mitchell submitted a blueprint of his F-7/30, an open-cockpit, single-seat monoplane with a fixed undercarriage, Rolls Royce Goshawk engine, and four machine guns. But Mitchell was not satisfied with this plane, and he worked on another prototype.

The sleek Supermarine Spitfire became a legend while dueling the fighters of the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain. This Spitfire Mark IIA is shown flying above the coastline of southern England in April 1941.

During a trip to Austria in the winter of 1934-1935, Mitchell was hosted by some German pilots who boasted about their planes. Sensing that another

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Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Supermarine Spitfire pilots and crewmen slog through the mud at their airfield somewhere in Burma. The Spitfire flew in every theater of combat during World War II, and a carrier-borne version, the Seafire, was also introduced. RIGHT: The gun camera of Squadron Leader J.A.F. McLachlan captures the last moments of a German Junkers Ju-88 bomber flying over France in June 1943. McLachlan scored this aerial victory while flying a Supermarine Spitfire.

European war might be on the horizon, the British designer rushed home. Puffing on a pipe, he spent hours staring at his drawing board, working out complex problems. A shy man with a slight stammer, Mitchell was a martinet in his office, and Supermarine employees learned to avoid him when he was deep in thought. He sometimes displayed flashes of temper followed by moody silences.

Hawker Co. was the first to produce results. The Hurricane made its first flight on November 6, 1935, and was hailed as a winner from the beginning. It set standards for speed and armament and proved to be one of the world's great fighters.

The Spitfire was slower in coming, and only a dream for a time. But Mitchell was busy perfecting prototypes. Finally, on the morning of March 5, 1936, his masterpiece, K-5054, featuring a hand-built airframe, made its maiden flight. With chief test pilot J. "Mutt" Summers at the controls, the plane drifted into the air at Eastleigh Aerodrome, near Southampton, Hampshire, and zoomed around at an altitude of 3,000 feet.

After modifications and the sealing of some oil leaks, K-5054 was evaluated at Martlesham Heath in Suffolk by the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment on March 26. During high-speed trials, the plane reached a speed of 430 mph in a dive. Early in June 1936, the Air Ministry placed an order for 310 models of the new Supermarine fighter to be delivered at a cost not exceeding 4,500 pounds. The prototype had just begun its acceptance trials, and no test reports had been issued at the time of the order.

The Air Ministry wrote to Supermarine on June 10, 1936, approving the name Spitfire, which was what the company chairman, Sir Robert McLean, called his feisty daughter, Ann. The no-nonsense Mitchell was appalled. Eight days later, the K-5054 prototype returned to Eastleigh to be demonstrated for 300 officials of the aircraft industry. The flight was again impressive but had to be cut short when an oil connection broke. More modifications and trials followed early in 1937 at Martlesham Heath and the Royal Aircraft Establishment in Farnborough, Hampshire, the cradle of British aviation.

Initial production was slow, not helped by the complex structure of the plane. The first Mark I Spitfire flew on May 14, 1938, and the first production models were delivered to the No. 19 RAF Squadron base at Duxford, Cambridgeshire, that August. The Mark I had a maximum speed of 355 mph at 19,000 feet. Its initial rate of climb was 2,530 feet a minute, its service ceiling 34,000 feet, and its range 395 miles. It mounted a 1,060-horsepower Rolls Royce Merlin II engine, and its armament comprised eight .303-inch Browning machine guns. The Merlin II was eventually replaced by the even more powerful Rolls Royce Griffon engine, increasing the plane's performance by 100 percent. This made it one of the world's fastest piston-engined aircraft, with a final maximum speed of 454 mph.

The fighter's design was revolutionary. It featured thin, elliptical wings, a sliding cockpit canopy to give the pilot all-around vision while reducing drag, and a retractable undercarriage. The only drawback was its limited range.

Meanwhile, the ailing Reginald Mitchell would depart before he could see his revolutionary fighter enter RAF service. Suffering from rectal cancer, kept secret from all except his family and a few close friends, he knew that his time was running out.

He finally stopped working, though he worried that he was letting people down. Colleagues assured him that he had done all he could. RJ made one last effort to live and flew in a private plane to a cancer clinic in Vienna. But five weeks of treatment did not work, and the doctors sent him home to die. Mitchell sat in his peaceful suburban garden, often with his local vicar, before dying of tuberculosis rather than the rapidly advancing cancer at the age of 42 in June 1937.

Imperial War Museum

Mitchell, who designed 24 aircraft during his career, left his wife, Florence, and son. The popular notion that RJ virtually worked himself to death to finish the Spitfire design was a myth.

By the time Britain and France declared war two days after the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, a total of 1,960 Spitfires were on order. Of this number, 306 Mark I machines had been delivered—enough to equip 11 squadrons of RAF Fighter Command. Spitfires first saw action on October 16, 1939, when nine twin-engined Junkers Ju-88 bombers attacked Royal Navy ships in the Firth of Forth, Scotland. Squadron Nos. 602 and 603 of the RAF, based at Drem and Turnhouse, respectively, scrambled to engage the Luftwaffe raiders. Two Junkers were destroyed, and a third damaged. These were the first victories chalked up for Reginald Mitchell's fighter.

In the months that followed, Spitfire units had sporadic encounters with individual German bombers, minelayers, and reconnaissance

planes. The RAF lost its first Spitfire to enemy action on April 3, 1940, when Flight Lieutenant Norman Ryder of No. 41 Squadron encountered and shot down a Heinkel He-111 medium bomber off the northeastern English coast. The Spitfire's engine was hit, and Ryder was forced to ditch in the sea. He was picked up by a trawler.

For the most part, the period of inactivity enabled dour Air Marshal Hugh "Stuffy" Dowding's Fighter Command to expand and train for the battles to come. Through the eight-month Phony War and by May 1940, another eight squadrons had received Spitfires, bringing the strength up to 19 squadrons with 1,400 aircraft. Meanwhile, 2,309 Hurricanes had been delivered, forming the 32-squadron backbone of Fighter Command in the first years of the war. They outnumbered the Spitfires by almost two to one.

For the officer and sergeant pilots who climbed into Spitfire cockpits, it was a matter of love at first sight. The beautiful plane was fast, maneuverable, and easy to handle.

On May 12, 1940, two days after German forces started a lightning blitzkrieg offensive against Holland, Belgium, and France, Spitfires mounted their first operation over continental Europe. Six Spitfires of No. 66 Squadron and six Boulton-Paul Defiant night fighters of No. 264 Squadron flew sweeps over Holland. They downed four Junkers Ju-87 dive bombers and an Me-109 in exchange for five Defiants and a Spitfire.

Spitfires first encountered large groups of German aircraft on May 21. By then, the swift enemy advance into the Low Countries had brought the war within range of the Fighter Command squadrons based in Kent on the southeastern English coast. During the following days, Spitfires and Hurricanes flew numerous sorties to cover British and French troops in their fighting retreat to Dunkirk. When the evacuation of Allied troops there ended on June 3, Fighter Command had lost 72 Spitfires—almost a third of this aircraft's frontline strength.

After the fall of France, Hitler was determined to threaten Britain with invasion because she had shown no willingness to come to terms. As evidence of intent, he opened an aerial offensive on the island nation on July 10, 1940, with the aim of destroying its fighter defenses. British air power had to be crushed before the Führer's Operation Sea Lion—a cross-Channel amphibious assault—could be attempted.

The air battle—the first and biggest of its kind in history—would last until the end of October 1940. Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring, the corpulent commander of the Luftwaffe, assembled 2,800 fighters and bombers, whereas the RAF could now call on only about 700 fighters. But the RAF had the inestimable advantage of an early warning system, radar, a British invention, while the shrewd Dowding had largely created highly effective air defenses and carefully husbanded his precious Spitfires, refusing to expend them in the doomed Battle of France. Though greatly outnumbered, Fighter Command was poised and primed for the Battle of Britain, which would decide the fate of Western freedom.

Imperial War Museum

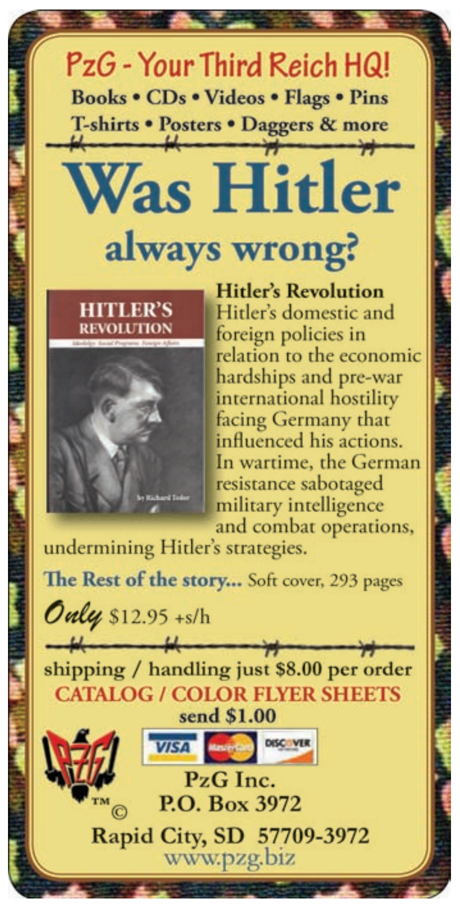
The distinctive butterfly wing silhouette of the Spitfire is clearly visible in this view a Mark VB. This photograph was taken in May 1941, and the plane was shot down in combat a month later.

Early in July, Göring ordered his bombers to begin attacks on English ports and ships in the English Channel. His twofold aim was to inflict serious losses on British merchant shipping and lure Fighter Command into unequal combat over the Channel. When the British halted the Channel convoys on August 10, Göring switched to hitting airfields along the southern coast, with tentative attacks on radar towers at Rye, Pevensey, Swinggate, and Ventnor on the Isle of Wight.

The German assaults increased, and Dowding's Spitfire and Hurricane pilots were ready. When the word came, they dashed to their warmed-up fighters and took off. The Spitfires took on the enemy fighter escorts, while the slower Hurricanes weaved in to attack the incoming bombers.

The 3,000 Spitfire and Hurricane pilots, later revered as "The Few," were 80 percent British. The rest came from all over the world. More than 500 of them would give their lives in the desperate dogfights above the checkered countryside of southeastern England.

The German raids intensified further, with 1,500 Luftwaffe planes hammering two frontline RAF airfields on August 15. A German intel-



WWII HISTORY

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ligence summary asserted on August 16 that since July, Fighter Command had lost 372 Spitfires, 179 Hurricanes, and 12 Defiants, that it had only 300 fighters left, and that the Luftwaffe was well on its way to fulfilling Göring's order to "wipe the British Air Force from the sky."

Actually, the Luftwaffe had lost 602 planes to the RAF's 260. Nevertheless, the reality was alarming for the hard-pressed Fighter Command. Fighter losses were exceeding the number available in storage units and were mounting. Miracles of repair were worked by RAF mechanics and salvage squads, and fighter production was accelerated.

Rugged enough to be effective against the enemy bombers and maneuverable enough to survive against Me-109E fighters, Hurricanes destroyed more German planes than all other British aircraft types combined during 1940. With increased armament and their standard "bubble" cockpit canopies, hundreds of Mark I Spitfires fought successfully in the Battle of Britain. They proved marginally faster at high altitudes and considerably more maneuverable than the Me-190E, but the German fighter could outdive and outclimb its sleek British foe.

The embattled Fighter Command gained a breather in the late summer of 1940 when Göring again switched targets. Using the pretext of a threatened British raid on Berlin, he launched a full-scale bombing offensive against London. Hundreds of bombers appeared over the British capital on September 7, demolishing buildings and starting fires. Spitfires, Hurricanes, and antiaircraft batteries mauled the raiders, but still they came. The attacks reached their height on September 15 (commemorated as Battle of Britain Day), when 56 German planes were shot down.

On September 17, Hitler privately instituted an indefinite postponement of the invasion of England. Daylight raids on British cities continued to the end of the month, but losses were so high that the Luftwaffe switched to less militarily effective night bombing at the beginning of October. During the course of the battle, the RAF had lost 790 fighters, mostly Spitfires and Hurricanes, while the Luftwaffe lost 1,389 aircraft of all types.

RAF Fighter Command had defeated Göring's Luftwaffe and scotched Hitler's invasion plans, and its Hurricane and Spitfire pilots (average age 20) were national heroes. After a series of sobering defeats from Norway to France, and from Crete to the Western Desert, British morale had received a welcome lift.

After the Battle of Britain, Spitfire squadrons continued defensive patrols and also went on the offensive. They flew countless escort and "rhubarb" strafing sweeps over France and the Low Countries. They escorted RAF bombers on daylight raids across the Channel. American volunteers of three RAF Eagle Squadrons flew Hurricanes and then Spitfires on coastal patrols, convoy escort, and sweeps across the Continent.

While Bomber Command was pounding German cities and industrial centers by night, U.S. Eighth Air Force bombers increased daylight missions over the Continent in the summer and fall of 1942. Spitfires flew escort for the American bombers, but they could go only part of the way because of limited range.

Fighter Command entered 1942 with 60 squadrons of Spitfires, a threefold expansion achieved in just over 18 months. More squadrons were formed as new demands arose in North Africa and the Far East. As more Spitfire groups arrived, they came into their own when Allied troops landed in Morocco and Algeria on November 8, 1942, during Operation Torch.

At the start of the war, the Fleet Air Arm lacked an adequate carrier fighter, so Spitfires were modified for carrier use. Seafires became operational in June 1942, and joined the Mediterranean Fleet in time for Operation Torch.

Two squadrons of Mark VIII Spitfires arrived

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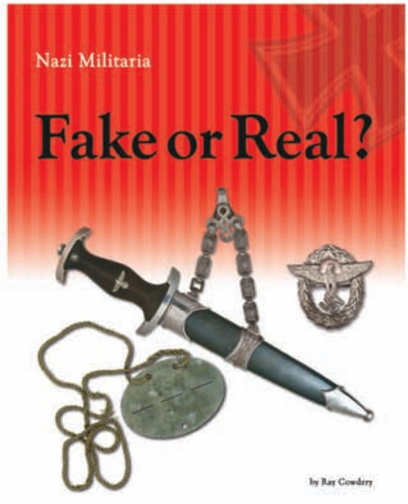

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in Southeast Asia in late 1943. Based initially in India, they flew offensive patrols and escort missions on the India-Burma border. Spitfire squadrons also flew from Malaya and Ceylon, took part in the New Guinea campaign, and helped to defend Australia against Japanese air attacks.

Spitfire squadrons were kept busy in many ways as the war progressed. Besides continuing to defend Britain and flying sweeps and escort missions, specially equipped Spitfires made numerous photographic reconnaissance sorties over Nazi-occupied Europe. Then, when Allied forces landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944, Spitfires of the Second Tactical Air Force provided top cover over the five beachheads. As the Allied troops began pushing inland, faster and more heavily armed Spitfire variants joined Hurricanes, rocket-firing Typhoons and Hawker Tempests, De Havilland Mosquitoes, and U.S. aircraft hitting enemy targets.

In mid-June 1944, the Germans began launching pilotless V-1 flying bombs against the London area, and fast Mark XIV Spitfires were pressed into service to intercept them. Of the 9,521 "doodlebugs" fired on London and southern England, 4,621 were shot down by Spitfires and antiaircraft batteries. The V-1s were followed by about 5,000 V-2 rockets, launched between September 1944 and the end of the war. These caused much damage and killed thousands of people, yet were less destructive than the V-1s.

National Archives

A flight of Supermarine Spitfire fighters is a breathtaking sight in the sky above Europe. The Spitfire received tremendous credit for defeating the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain.

Meanwhile, from airfields in France and Belgium, Spitfire squadrons flew in close support of the Allied armies pushing eastward toward the River Rhine and into the Third Reich. On October 4, 1944, a Mark XIV Spitfire of No. 401 Squadron was the first Allied fighter to shoot down a jet-propelled Messerschmitt Me-262 fighter. The Mark XIV was the RAF's primary high-altitude fighter type at the close of the European war in May 1945.

After the war, Spitfires remained in service until January 1951. They operated against communist insurgents in Malaya in 1948-1949, and Seafires flew ground attack missions from Royal Navy carriers in the early months of the 1950-1953 Korean War. Spitfires also served with the air forces of many countries, including Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Portugal, Greece, Yugoslavia, and warring Egypt and Israel. The Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948-1949 was the only war in which Spitfires fought against Spitfires. During its career, Spitfire production totaled 20,334 aircraft in 21 marks, while Seafire production amounted to 2,556 planes in eight marks.

Reginald Mitchell and his Spitfire were immortalized in the sensitive 1942 film, *The First of the Few* (also known as *Spitfire*), starring Leslie Howard, David Niven, Rosamund John, and Roland Culver. □

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

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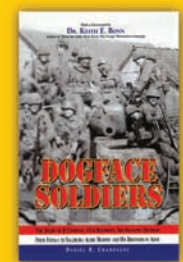

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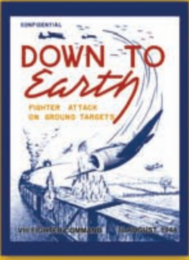

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By Jon Diamond

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Magic in the Desert

Jasper Maskelyne used his talents in deception to trick the Nazis on several occasions.

IN JULY 1939, ARCHIBALD WAVELL WAS NAMED GENERAL OFFICER COMMAND-ing-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of Middle East Command with the rank of full general in the British Army. Few great commanders have been given the task of campaigning across a vast stretch of territory with a military apparatus that was both antiquated and underdeveloped.

These were the daunting tasks facing Wavell, who between June 1940 and June 1941 was the only British theater commander actively engaging the Axis forces. His Middle East arena comprised the Western Desert (Egypt and Cyrenaica), East Africa, Greece, Crete, Syria, and Iraq. No other Allied commander during World War II would have such a list of often simultaneous operations occurring.

To combat the Italians, Wavell had to devise new tactics. Wavell integrated the art of military deception into his tactical repertoire and sought assistance in the form of Dudley Clarke and, thereafter, Jasper Maskelyne, the famous London stage magician.

On November 13, 1940, Wavell informed London of his intent to form "a special section of Intelligence for Deception of the enemy" and requested an officer who had served under him in Palestine in the 1930s and in whom he had "recognized an original, unorthodox outlook on soldiering," coupled with "originality, ingenuity, and a somewhat impish sense of humor." Dudley Clarke was Wavell's man for this deception mission, and Jasper Maskelyne would help the former accomplish his task.

The art of military deception driving Clarke's operation was centered on the principle that one must not focus on what you want the enemy to think but what you want him to do. Maskelyne's role was to trick the Axis forces into doing what Wavell and subsequent Middle East Theater commanders wanted them to do.

On March 28, 1941, Clarke's pioneering deception organization was officially designated A Force. On April 8, 1941, A Force moved into 6 Kasr-el-Nil, a building that also housed a brothel, and it remained there until the end of the war in Europe. While Dudley Clarke was to become known as the "Master of Deception," Jasper Maskelyne would herald himself as a "Master of Camouflage."

ABOVE: Smiling broadly, Jasper Maskelyne of A Force led an effort to deceive the Axis forces in North Africa through tricks he had learned in the magician's trade. LEFT: The driver of a British flatbed truck attempts to negotiate the desert sands in March 1942 carrying a Crusader tank covered by the innovative sunshield.

Jasper Maskelyne was born in 1902 into a family of magicians, the Maskelynes having become Europe's first family of conjuring, and he eventually achieved fame as a magician on the British stage during the 1930s. Jasper had grown up learning how to make objects materialize or vanish. Given the proper equipment, anything was possible.

Maskelyne was adept in the fields of optics, applied mechanics, and electronics as well as some practical skills such as counterfeiting and forgery. Upon meeting Churchill's scientific adviser, Professor Frederick Alexander Lindemann, an Oxford don, Maskelyne informed him that "given a free hand, there are no limits to the effects I can produce on the battlefield."

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By Steven Wuzubia, Health Correspondent

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ABOVE: Located at Helwan, Egypt, the Middle East Command Camouflage Development and Training Center was a think tank and laboratory for the deception efforts of A Force. Taken in 1941, this photo shows a British tank with its sunshield split during vehicle servicing on the workshop floor. RIGHT: Photographed in June 1942, this Crusader tank has been fitted with the sunshield camouflage scheme to resemble a truck. Early testing of the sunshield system was highly successful.

Maskelyne was soon ordered to report to the Royal Engineers Camouflage Training and Development Center at Farnham Castle in Surrey. After completing the course, Maskelyne sailed from the Liverpool docks aboard the converted ocean liner *Sumaria* on January 19, 1941, with 12 other camouflage officers all with the rank of captain. They were under the command of Major Geoffrey Barkas, director of camouflage.

After sailing around South Africa and up the Red Sea, the ship docked at Suez. Maskelyne and his fellow camoufleurs arrived in Cairo on March 10, 1941.

In May, Maskelyne was given permission to form his own unit. In return, he would produce a number of variety shows for British troops in Egypt. Officially, the unit was designated a "Camouflage Experimental Section" and still under the overall command of Major Barkas.

After one such show, General Dudley Clarke met Maskelyne, who had incorporated one of Clarke's team members, Kathy Lewis, into his variety show. Clarke asked Maskelyne if he had considered adapting his skills to the world of espionage. Maskelyne agreed to work for Clarke.

The MI9 section of A Force had been asked to conduct a series of escape and evasion lectures for soldiers and airmen. Clarke approached Maskelyne for his participation. Maskelyne's escape and evasion lectures achieved fame in both the Middle East and, later, the Far East.

Maskelyne worked at MI9 on a part-time basis for almost three years. Clarke allowed Maskelyne to operate as a spy on only one occasion, just prior to Operation Crusader, and it almost cost the magician his life. It seems that from an espionage perspective, Maskelyne's magic shows created a near-perfect cover for Clarke's undercover agents to move about various locales without fear of making anyone suspicious of their presence.

Wavell had another request for Maskelyne's group to create an illusion for the upcoming Battleaxe campaign. The new tanks from Churchill would need to appear in place out of thin air.

Wavell wanted to disguise his armor's intentions to confuse Rommel and delay his concentration of panzer forces. Maskelyne was shown a page "torn out of Wavell's ubiquitous field notebook" showing a sketch of the profile of a tank surmounted by a large flat board. A second sketch showed that an aerial view of a truck had been drawn on the board. This was Wavell's seminal idea for a "sunshield." Wavell hoped that a Luftwaffe observation plane would look down on this and erroneously conclude that it was only a British truck.

Maskelyne had some reservations but went to work to modify Wavell's concept into a workable sunshield. Maskelyne's final sunshield was made by stretching a painted canvas over two collapsible wooden frames. Each wooden frame would cover half the tank from front to back and weighed only 30 pounds. Maskelyne's concept was quickly approved, and he built a prototype for 7th Armored Division's commander, General Michael Creagh. On June 2, 1941, Maskelyne's Magic Gang presented its sunshield to General Creagh.

A contingent of trucks rumbled by without any of the 7th Armoured Division officers picking out a single disguised tank. A British reconnaissance pilot flying overhead radioed, "I can't spot the tank. Deception from here is excellent. I'm taking photos for the air reckky boys now."

Wavell immediately ordered the Magic Gang sunshield put into mass production. Operation Battleaxe commenced on June 15, 1941.

Despite the sunshields working well, Battleaxe ended badly. Wavell was replaced by General Sir Claude Auchinleck.

Maskelyne was then asked by Barkas to perform an almost impossible feat to camouflage Alexandria Harbor from air attack. Maskelyne immediately realized that "the harbor is simply too big for us to do anything with it.... We've got to move it."

Maskelyne further elaborated his ruse to his Magic Gang. "All we've got to do is lay down a network of ground lights and structures at Maryut resembling those at Alex. When we know Jerry's on the way, we just turn out the harbor lights, turn them on at Maryut Bay, and blow off some explosives we've planted. The fires'll draw them like bees to honey." To complete the illusion, Maskelyne requisitioned both the searchlights and antiaircraft batteries protecting Alexandria Harbor to be moved up to his decoy harbor at Maryut Bay.

The Luftwaffe attacked Alexandria Harbor the next night; however, with Maskelyne's decoy in place, "the bombers flew, after some initial confusion, to the dummy harbor" and dropped their payloads on Maskelyne's creation. Bonfires ignited by Maskelyne's group made an enticing target for the succeeding waves of bombers.

To complete the deception for any after-attack Luftwaffe reconnaissance planes, as soon as the bomb run on Maryut Bay was com-

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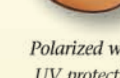

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pleted, others in Maskelyne's group tore through Alexandria Harbor removing tarps off piles of phony rubble while also spreading papier-mâché wreckage and creating scarred buildings with painted dropcloths. The ruse continued for eight successive nights. After that, the Luftwaffe suddenly lost interest in Alexandria Harbor.

With the camouflaging of Alexandria Harbor rated as a great success, Middle East Command wanted Maskelyne to make the entire Suez Canal disappear. Maskelyne utilized a chain of 21 searchlights to cover the Suez Canal for its entire length. When illuminated, they created a curtain of swirling light over more than 100 miles of Egyptian sky. This device, termed "Whirling Spray," enabled the Canal Defense Force to prevent German aircraft from penetrating the curtain of light, and the Suez Canal remained open to Allied shipping throughout the war.

This British Grant tank has been fitted with the innovative sunshield camouflage to resemble a truck. German reconnaissance aircraft were repeatedly fooled by the effective scheme.

Under Auchinleck, General Alan Cunningham of East Africa fame became the Eighth Army's commander, and for his upcoming Operation Crusader Cunningham wanted a dummy army similar to the one that Wavell created to deceive Rommel. Maskelyne's Magic Gang set about making dummy lightweight, rapid-assembly, and foldable artillery pieces and tanks, which when added to "dense real troop concentrations and when observed from high in the air, forward platoons became phantom companies and so on."

With surface losses and convoy responsibilities, the Royal Navy became increasingly reliant on its submarine arm to interdict the Axis supply line from Italy to Tripoli. With the submariners' whereabouts closely followed by Luftwaffe reconnaissance, Admiral Andrew Cunningham of the Mediterranean Fleet also wanted dummy submarines. Maskelyne located rusting sleeper railroad cars, and with a wooden frame along with nailed and welded beams and tubing, a prototype dummy submarine was created.

Admiral Cunningham was so delighted with Maskelyne's dummy submarine fleet that he wanted a 720-foot battleship to replace those in dry dock. The Magic Gang labored over converting a dilapidated cruiser that was decaying on a salt lake in the Suez. Crews trucked in from Magic Valley began converting the aging cruiser into a modern warship. The sham battleship was completed in mid-February. It was named HMS *Houdin,* but it could not pass for a battleship in the eyes of Admiral Cunningham.

However, Maskelyne would find a use for *Houdin*. He explained to Cunningham that it could serve as a Royal Navy attempt to camouflage a real battleship. Maskelyne told the admiral, "If we take obvious pains to camouflage our boat but do a bad job of it, their intelligence people will be quite happy to discover a real battleship beneath all our canvas and papier-mâché…." Cunningham was so delighted with the audacious plan that he immediately agreed to implement it.

In the winter of 1942, Air Marshal Arthur Tedder, air officer commander-in-chief, knew of the marvels the Magic Gang had produced for the Army and Navy and wanted them to "hide" the island of Malta from devastating Luftwaffe attacks. Unlike Alexandria Harbor or the Suez Canal, Malta could not be moved or hidden or made invisible.

The two parts of the Malta camouflage plan presented by Maskelyne were based on deception at night and decoys during the day. The deception plan would be based on the Maryut Bay ploy where dummy airstrips would be lighted at night to draw enemy bombers away. Maskelyne's associate, Professor Knox, proposed the plans for various decoy airplanes to be employed during the daylight hours.

After the Eighth Army's crushing defeat of at Gazala and the grueling slugfest between Auchinleck and Rommel in July 1942, Churchill conducted his August purge, replacing "the Auk" with General Sir Harold Alexander and ordering General Bernard Law Montgomery to assume command of Eighth Army after the accidental death of "Strafer" Gott in a fiery air crash. Major Barkas informed his camofleurs of their next objective, Operation Sentinel. They had to use their talents to delay Rommel until the 51st Highland Division and 25 Sherman tanks in British service arrived.

The graduates of Buckley's classes at Farnham would now be given ample supplies and manpower to "put into the field all the techniques and tricks they'd mastered during the two years in the desert." Montgomery was an enthusiast of "war magic," and all he wanted from Barkas's men was that they make two motorized divisions appear on the barren sands north of Cairo. These notional camps expanded each day as more and more notional troops and weapons arrived. Then, after reaching the assigned strength of two motorized divisions, it began to thin out as the notional men and guns were trucked forward to bolster the Alamein line. The ensuing Battle of Alam Halfa saw Montgomery win his first battle using both tough defensive tactics and military deception.

On September 16, 1942, Montgomery held a meeting at his advance headquarters at Bug-el-Arab. Montgomery wanted to convince Rommel's intelligence section that the main thrust of Eighth Army's attack would be made at the southern end of the Alamein line, while everyone expected the main thrust of the assault to be in the north. If this ploy was successful, Rommel would be forced to hold back his reserve divisions until he was certain the British were attacking in the north.

Bertram required a large group of seemingly harmless transport and supply vehicles assembling in the north, while the armored force would appear to be headed south.

An artificial pipeline heading in a southerly direction was laid out on the desert floor at a rate of five miles per day. At night the pipeline, which was made of flattened fuel cans laid end to end was picked up and laid down alongside the following day's five-mile stretch. An even greater piece of deception was incorporated into this feint since the pipeline at its current rate could not reach the southern terminus until early November, and German intelligence would undoubtedly assume that the offensive would not begin until it was completed.

Despite all the deception, the first few days of the Battle of El Alamein were a slugfest for the armored formations of Eighth Army as they struggled through the northern minefields. However, General Ritter von Thoma, one of Rommel's top commanders, who had been captured during the fighting, admitted to Montgomery that the Afrika Korps had been led to believe the attack would be made in the south, and they prepared for that.

Maskelyne's Magic Gang split up soon after the Battle of El Alamein. By the end of the war, Maskelyne had been promoted to the rank of major and served in 16 countries. As testimonial to his success, Maskelyne's name was added to a Gestapo "Black List," and a bounty was placed on his head by the Nazis.

Maskelyne returned to England in 1946. In 1948, he and his family migrated to Kenya. He died there in 1973.

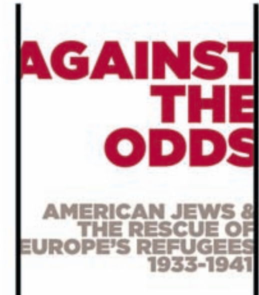
Recently, controversy has developed around Maskelyne's exploits as scrutiny of his deceptions and illusions has heightened with the release of declassified documents and Maskelyne's missing private scrapbook, *Deceptive Camouflage Ideas 1941-1945*.

In Terry Crowdy's book, *Deceiving Hitler,* the author commented that a fellow Farnham alumnus, Julian Trevelyan, was sent from Britain to investigate the deceptions being carried out in the Middle East and concluded, "Maskelyne's actual involvement in military deception appears to have been a bit of a sham."

However, Crowdy goes on to comment, "Curiously enough, people appeared much more confident with the dummy vehicles when they were told they had been devised by a well-known illusionist. And yet illusionists and stage magicians do catch people's imaginations. This is one reason why Dudley Clarke employed Maskelyne in A Force." □

Jon Diamond practices medicine and lives in Hershey, Pennsylvania. His biography of Field Marshal Archibald Wavell is part of the Osprey Publications Command series.

Prospective immigrants line up outside the U.S. consulate in Vienna after the German annexation of Austria, 1938 (detail)
Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum



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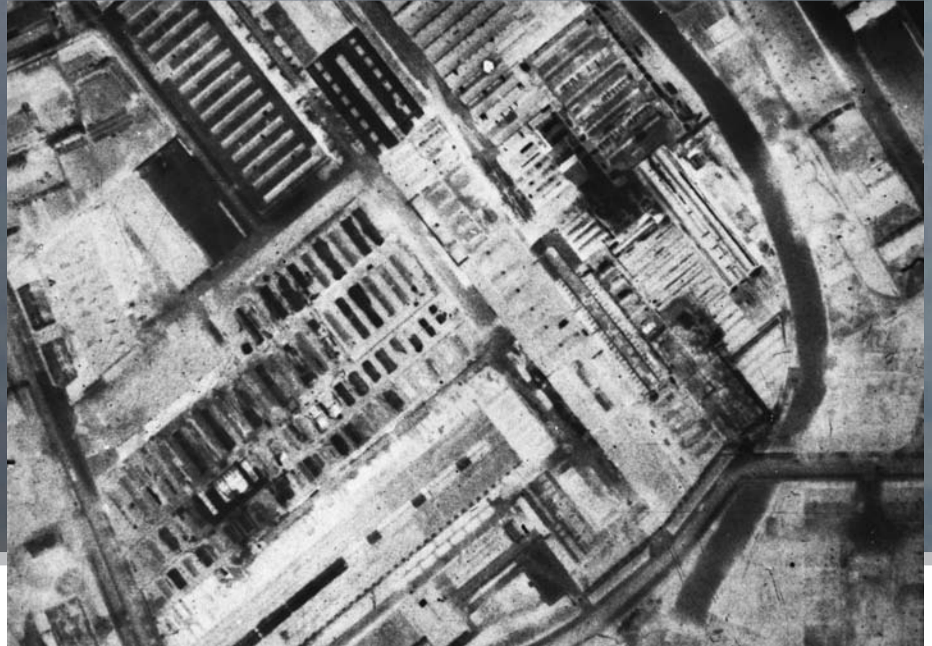
DEEP STRIKE on AUGSBURG

IN THE SPRING OF 1942, the Allies were hard pressed battling German U-boats in the Atlantic as Britain was struggling to feed its people. The German subs were sinking thousands of tons of Allied shipping each week, causing American and British planners to seek any means possible to deal a blow to the German war machine.

Because of the havoc being wrought by Hitler's U-boats, the MAN (Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg) factories at Augsburg, in Bavaria, were high on the list of priority bombing targets. MAN's diesel engine manufacturing plants produced roughly half of Germany's U-boat engines. But reaching the target and returning involved a flight of 1,250 miles over



BY ALLYN VANNOY

Three Avro Lancaster heavy bombers fly in a loose formation in September 1942. The availability of the four-engine Lancaster made the low-level raid on the MAN diesel engine assembly plant at Augsburg possible. These aircraft are from No. 44 Squadron, one of the units that executed the Augsburg raid five months earlier. INSET: This Royal Air Force reconnaissance photo of the MAN diesel engine plant at Augsburg was used by the planners of the dangerous low-level raid by RAF Avro Lancaster bombers against the facility in the spring of 1942.

enemy territory. With the navigation and bombing aids then available, it was determined that the chances of a night attack pinpointing and destroying such an objective, given the relatively small target area of the facilities, were remote, and a daylight precision attack, based on experience, was considered too costly.

In early 1942, the Avro Lancaster bomber became available. The aircraft was powered by four Rolls-Royce Merlin engines, manned by a crew of seven, and outfitted with a defensive armament of 10 .303-caliber Browning machine guns. If there was a problem with the bomber it was that the range of the .303-caliber machine guns was too short to provide sufficient protection for the aircraft, though these were later upgraded, in part, with .50-caliber guns. The aircraft had a cruising speed of 210 miles per hour, a top speed of 287 miles per hour at 11,500 feet, and could carry a bombload of 14,000 pounds.

The prototype Lancaster had been delivered to the Royal Air Force for operational trials with No. 44 Squadron at Waddington in September 1941. The unit was dubbed the "Rhodesian" squadron since some 25 percent of the squadron's ground and air crewmen were from Rhodesia.

With the aircraft's relatively high speed and defensive armament, it was considered possible that a force of Lancasters could reach Augsburg if they went in at low level, underneath the German early warning radar. It was also felt that Lancasters flying on the deck could not be subjected to attacks on their vulnerable underbellies.

With the availability and increased capability of the Lancaster, consideration was again given to the idea of conducting a precision attack in daylight on Augsburg. But much would depend on the route used to reach the target.

The RAF had compiled a reasonably accurate picture of the disposition of enemy fighter units across Western Europe. In early 1942, half the Luftwaffe's fighter force was deployed to the Eastern Front and a quarter to the Balkans and North Africa. Most of the remaining squadrons, if not earmarked for Germany's defense, were stationed in Norway or the Pas de

All photos: Impreial War Museum

An RAF Lancaster bomber of No. 97 Squadron flies at low level during preparations for the costly raid on the diesel engine assembly facility at Augsburg, Germany. This Lancaster was piloted by Squadron Leader J.D. Nettleton, who led the Augsburg raid and received the Victoria Cross for heroism. OPPOSITE: Flying low across the French countryside, an RAF Avro Lancaster heavy bomber participates in a daylight raid on a German engineering facility in October 1942. The RAF later switched to night bombing to help minimize losses to flak and German fighters.

Calais area. Royal Air Force Bomber Command sought to find a weak spot along the French coast for the raiders while diversionary attacks were used to decoy the German air defensive system.

Bomber Command's new chief, Air Marshal Arthur Harris, was generally opposed to small precision raids, being a strong advocate of large-scale area strikes on enemy cities. But the situation in the North Atlantic, the heavy losses of Allied shipping, compelled him to authorize the Augsburg operation. If it succeeded, it might help to reduce the number of operational U-boats while at the same time silencing critics who were clamoring for the RAF to devote more resources to hunting them.

The operation was to be carried out using six aircraft from each of No. 44 and No. 97 Squadrons, the two most experienced Lancaster units.

Starting on April 14, 1942, the squadrons carried out training operations over a three-day period, flying at low level, making 1,000-mile flights over Britain, and conducting simulated attacks on targets in northern Scotland. The work was extremely taxing, flying the heavy bombers at low altitudes in close formation while avoiding ground obstacles. But the crews were all composed of highly experienced personnel, most on their second operational tour.

Early on April 17, the crews received their mission briefing.

Speculation had been running high among the crews as to the precise nature of the target. To veteran crewmen a low-level mission signified an attack on enemy warships, a long, straight run into heavy flak. But at the briefing a map of Western Europe was marked with a long red ribbon indicating the route to Augsburg.

The members of No. 44 Squadron were at first shocked and then in disbelief, while in a separate briefing the crews of No. 97 Squadron responded with a roar of laughter. No one believed that their commanders would be so stupid as to send their newest four-engine bombers all that distance inside Germany in daylight.

The six aircraft from each squadron were to proceed in two sections, each of three aircraft flying in a V-formation. The interval between each section was to be just a few seconds with visual contact to be maintained so that the sections could lend each other support if attacked by enemy fighters.

From the departure point, Selsey Bill, a headland jutting into the English Channel just east of Portsmouth, the bombers were to cross the Channel flying at approximately 50 feet, making landfall at Dives-sur-Mer on the French coast about midway between Le Havre and Caen, thus maximizing time over the Channel. While the primary group was over the Channel, a second group, under the protection of a fighter umbrella, was to make a series of diversionary attacks on Luftwaffe airfields in the Pas de Calais, Cherbourg, and Rouen areas.

After flying a short way inland, the Lancasters were to turn east and cross France and the Rhineland, reaching the Rhine River at Ludwigshafen near Mannheim, then change course southeast to make for the northern end of the Ammersee, a large lake about 20 miles south of Augsburg and just west of Munich. The planners believed that if the planes followed this route the German air defense system would think that Munich was the target. Upon reaching the Ammersee the bombers would then make a hard turn to the north toward the target.

Approaching the target the bombers were to spread out so that there was a three-mile gap between each section. The sections were to bomb from low level in formation, each Lancaster dropping four 1,000-pound bombs. The bombs were fitted with 11-second delay fuses, giving the aircraft enough time to get clear and the bombs to detonate well before the next section arrived.

With takeoff set for approximately 1500 hours and a flight time of a little over five hours, the Lancasters were to reach the target at 2015 hours, just before dusk, providing them with the protection of darkness on the homeward leg of the operation.

The Lancasters of No. 44 Squadron were to form the first two sections of the flight. The mission leader was a 25-year-old South African, Squadron Leader John Dering Nettleton. Nettleton had joined the RAF in 1938, and in April 1942 was just completing his first operational tour, having spent much of the war to that time as an instructor.

At 1512 hours Nettleton's Lancaster lifted off the Waddington runway, followed by six others of No. 44 Squadron. Once the formation was airborne and beginning to close up, the last Lancaster to depart, a reserve bomber, circled and returned to base. The six aircraft flew low across Lincolnshire heading south. At the front of the formation Nettleton had the

aircraft of Warrant Officer G.T. Rhodes to his left and Flying Officer John Garwell to starboard. The second V, close behind, was led by Flight Lieutenant N. Sandford with Warrant Officer J. E. Beckett on the left, and Warrant Officer H.V. Crum on the right.

Ten miles to the east, at Woodhall Spa, the six Lancasters of No. 97 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader J.S. Sherwood, were also lifting off and forming up. The other five aircraft in the group were piloted by Flight Officers Hallows, R. Rodley (Wing Commander), Penman, E.A. Deverill, and Warrant Officer Mycock.

The Lancasters departed Selsey Bill on schedule. The April sky was clear, the day warm.

As the bombers hugged the waves Nettleton's sections began to draw ahead of Sherwood's formation, flying slightly off the intended flight path. Sherwood made no attempt to catch up; the briefing had allowed for separate attacks if circumstances decreed such, and Sherwood was highly conscious of the need to conserve fuel on such an extended sortie.

Ahead of the strike group a force of 30 Douglas Boston bombers and almost 800 fighters were busy bombing and strafing targets away from the Augsburg bombers' planned route in the hope of drawing off Luftwaffe fighters.

As the bombers approached the French shoreline the pilots lifted their planes over the coastal cliffs, roaring inland, low over the Normandy countryside. The mission planners felt that if the bombers could survive the first hour over enemy territory and if the diversionary raids could draw off German fighter units, then the Lancasters might have a good chance of reaching their target.

But maybe the planners had placed too much hope in good fortune.

The bombers were flying over wooded, hilly country near Breteuil when they encountered antiaircraft fire. Lines of tracers reached up to meet the speeding Lancasters, and black shellbursts dotted the sky around them. Shrapnel from the flak bursts ripped into two of the aircraft, but they held their course. Warrant Officer Beckett's Lancaster was the most seriously damaged, its rear gun turret put out of action.

Whatever luck No. 44 Squadron might have had was about to run out.

As Nettleton's six aircraft, now well ahead of the 97 Squadron formation, skirted the boundary of the Beaumont le Roger airfield, just 60 miles from the coast, they ran into trouble. As the bombers appeared a group of Messerschmitt Me-109 and Focke-Wulf FW-190 fighters of 2 Gruppe/Jagdgeschwader 2 "Richthofen," one of the most experienced fighter units in the Luftwaffe, were returning to base after an engagement in the Cherbourg area with some of the diversionary RAF aircraft. For a moment the Lancaster crews thought they had not been spotted, but then several German fighters were seen to turn in their direction.

An Me-109 singled out Warrant Officer Crum's Lancaster. Bullets tore through the cockpit canopy, showering Crum and his navigator, Rhodesian Alan Dedman, with razor-sharp slivers of perspex. Although blood was streaming down Crum's face, he continued to pilot his bomber.

The Lancasters tightened up their formation as a swarm of Messerschmitts pounced. This was the first time that German fighters had encountered Lancasters, so they showed a certain amount of caution until they got the measure of the new bomber's defenses. As soon as they realized that defensive armament consisted of .303-caliber machine guns, they began to press home their attacks, coming in from the port quarter and opening fire with their cannon at about 700 yards. At 400 yards, the limit of the .303's effective range, they broke away sharply and climbed to repeat the process.

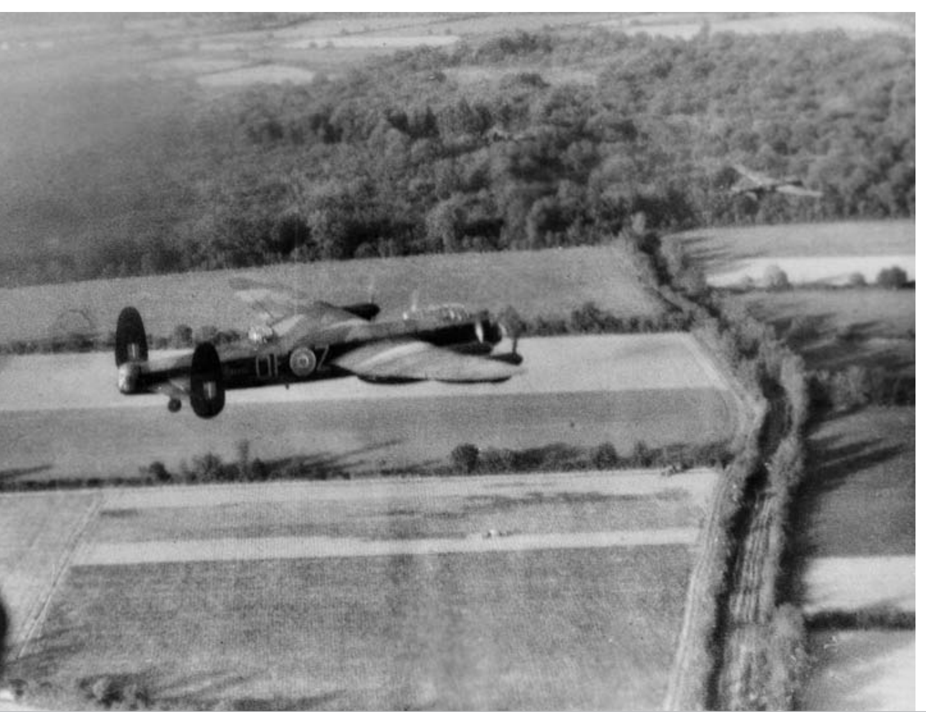
Warrant Officer Beckett was the first to go down. Near Le Tilleul-Lambert, his plane was hit by a hail of fire from Hauptmann Heine Greisert, resulting in a great ball of orange flame ballooning from a wing as cannon shells tore into a fuel tank. Seconds later the bomber was a mass of fire. Slowly, the nose went down spewing burning fragments. The shattered Lancaster then hit a clump of trees and disintegrated.

Crum's Lancaster, its wings and fuselage already ripped and torn, came under attack by three enemy fighters. Both the mid-upper and rear gunners were wounded, and then the port wing fuel tank burst into flames. The bomber wallowed on, almost out of control, as Crum, half-blinded by the blood streaming from his face wounds, fought to hold the wings level and ordered Dedman to jettison the bombs. The 1,000-pounders dropped away, and a few moments later Crum managed to put the crippled aircraft down on her belly. The Lancaster tore across a field and came to a stop on the far side. The crew, badly shaken and bruised but otherwise unhurt, made a rapid exit from the wreckage, believing that it was about to explode into flames. But the fire in the wing went out, so, in accordance with prior instructions, Crum used an axe from the bomber's escape kit to make holes in the fuel tanks and lit the pool of gasoline. Within minutes the aircraft was burning and reduced to a charred carcass.

Crum and his crew were eventually captured.

With Beckett and Crum gone, only Flight Lieutenant Sandford was left of No. 44's second section. Sandford was one of the most popular officers of No. 44 Squadron. His plane was attacked by Feldwebel Bosseckert. In a desperate bid to escape, Sandford attempted to guide his bomber beneath a set of high-tension cables, but the Lancaster dug a wingtip into the ground causing it to cartwheel and then exploded, killing everyone on board.

The fighters now started to attack Nettleton's section. By then they had been joined by Major Walter Oesau, a 100-victory ace who had officially been forbidden to fly more operations,



but who had jumped into a fighter and taken off on first sight of the Lancasters, followed by his wing man Oberfeldwebel Edelmann. Oesau selected Rhodes's aircraft. The Lancaster's port engines both erupted in flames, which spread quickly to the starboard engines. Near Vieil-Evreux, Rhodes's aircraft went into a steep climb and seemed to hang in the air on the bomber's churning propellers for a long moment before it flipped over and dived into the ground.

There were now only two Lancasters remaining in the No. 44 Squadron formation, Nettleton and his number two, John Garwell. Both aircraft were badly shot up, and their survival seemed to be in doubt.

Then, the situation suddenly took a dramatic turn as individually or in pairs the fighters suddenly broke off and turned away, probably low on fuel or ammunition. Whatever the reason, their abrupt withdrawal meant that Nettleton and Garwell were spared, for the moment. But they still had more than 500 miles to go before they reached their target.

Flying almost wingtip to wingtip, Nettleton and Garwell swept on in their battle-scarred planes. There was no further enemy opposition, and the two pilots were free to concentrate on handling their bombers. This task grew considerably more difficult when, two hours later, they penetrated the mountainous countryside of southern Germany and the Lancasters were forced to fly through turbulent air currents.

In contrast to No. 44 Squadron, the flight of Squadron Leader Sherwood's No. 97 Squadron had been generally uneventful, Frenchmen waving berets as the bombers passed overhead. Wing Commander Rodley reported that as his group proceeded south of Paris he spotted a twin-engine German Heinkel He-111 bomber. It in turn spotted the Lancasters but made a 90-degree bank and turned back toward Paris. The British bombers continued on at an altitude of 100 feet.

As the Lancasters reached the Ammersee and turned north, they climbed a few hundred feet to clear some hills and then dropped down again into the valley on the other side. There, directly ahead of them under a thin veil of haze, was Augsburg.

As they reached the outskirts of the town, a curtain of flak burst across the sky in their path. Shrapnel pummeled their wings and fuselages, but the pilots held their course. The models, photographs, and drawings they had studied at their briefing had been astonishingly accurate, and they had no difficulty locating their primary target, a T-shaped shed where the U-boat engines were manufactured.

With bomb doors open and light flak continually hitting and passing all around the Lancasters, they thundered over the last few hundred yards. The bombers jumped as their loads were released. Nettleton and Garwell were already over the northern suburbs when their bombs exploded.

In Garwell's aircraft, a flak shell turned the interior of the fuselage into a roaring inferno. Garwell realized that this, together with the severe damage the bomber had already sustained, might cause her to break up at any moment. There was no time to gain altitude for the crew to bail out, so Garwell put the ailing aircraft down as quickly as possible. Blinded by smoke pouring into the cockpit, Garwell eased the Lancaster gently toward what he hoped was open ground. All he could do was try and hold the bomber steady as she sank.

A long, agonizing minute later the Lancaster hit the ground and skidded across a field. The plane slid to a stop, and Garwell and three members of his crew scrambled out. Two other crew members were trapped in the burning fuselage, and a third, Flight Sergeant R.J. Flux,

WITH BOMB DOORS OPEN AND LIGHT FLAK CONTINUALLY HITTING AND PASSING ALL AROUND THE LANCASTERS, THEY THUNDERED OVER THE LAST FEW HUNDRED YARDS. THE BOMBERS JUMPED AS THEIR LOADS WERE RELEASED.

had been thrown out on impact. Flux had wrenched open the escape hatch just before the bomber touched down, his action giving the others a few extra seconds in which to get clear, but it had cost him his life.

As Nettleton turned for home, alone now, the leading section of No. 97 Squadron bore in across the hills toward Augsburg. The target was now well marked by smoke from the initial attack, but the flak barrage was even more intense than what had greeted the two previous planes. In addition to 20mm cannon, a battery of 88mm guns, their barrels depressed to the minimum, joined in, their shells doing far more damage to the buildings of Augsburg than to the bombers. The leading three Lancasters released their loads on the target and flew on, their gunners spraying antiaircraft gun positions as they departed. The bombers were flying so low that, on occasion, they dropped below the level of the rooftops, finding some shelter from the murderous flak.

The first trio had almost made it away safely, but then Sherwood's aircraft, probably hit by a large-caliber shell, began to stream white vapor from a fuel tank. A few moments later flames erupted from the tank. The bomber went down out of control, a mass of fire, to explode just outside the town. Sherwood alone was thrown clear and survived. The other two pilots of the section, Flying Officers Rodley and Hallows, escaped the flak and returned safely to base.

The second section, with Flight Lieutenant Penman, Flying Officer Deverill, and Warrant Officer Mycock, saw Sherwood's plane go down as they passed over Augsburg in the gathering dusk. The sky above the town was a mass of light as the German flak gunners hurled shells into the path of the Lancasters. Mycock's aircraft was hit and caught fire, but the pilot held doggedly on his bombing run. By the time he reached his target the Lancaster was little more than a plunging sheet of flame, but Mycock held on long enough to release his bombs. Then the Lancaster exploded, its burning wreckage cascading into the streets of the town.

Deverill's aircraft was also badly hit, its starboard inner engine set on fire, but the crew managed to extinguish it after bombing the target and made it back to base on three engines, accompanied by Penman's Lancaster. Both crews expected to be attacked by night fighters on the flight home, but it was uneventful. It was just as well, as every gun turret on both Lancasters was jammed.

Nettleton eventually landed at Squire's Gate aerodrome near Blackpool just before 0100 hours and telephoned Waddington to report on the mission and ask about survivors. On April

ABOVE: Squadron Leader J.D. Nettleton, awarded the Victoria Cross for heroism during the Augsburg raid, sits second from left with his crew shortly after the raid. Nettleton was killed in action during a raid on the Italian city of Turin a year later. OPPOSITE: Squadron Leader J.D. Nettleton's Lancaster bomber flies low over RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, with its bomb bay doors open. This photo was snapped during practice runs for the Augsburg raid, which occurred three days later. The MAN diesel engine assembly plant at Augsburg was a prime target for RAF bombers since it supplied engines to the German U-boat fleet.

28, the *London Gazette* announced the awarding of a Victoria Cross to John Nettleton and the Distinguished Flying Cross, Distinguished Flying Medal, or Distinguished Service Order to the other survivors of the raid.

Nettleton was promoted to wing commander, and the following year he was flying his second tour of operations. On the night of July 12, 1943, he was shot down over the English Channel by a German night fighter and killed while returning from a raid on Turin.

Tragically, the sacrifice of seven Lancasters and 49 men out of the 85 crewmen that participated produced little effect. Although post-strike reconnaissance showed that the MAN assembly shop had been damaged, the full results were not known until after the war. It appeared that five of the bombs had failed to detonate. The others caused severe damage to two buildings, the forging shop and the machine tool store, but the machine tools themselves suffered only slight damage. The effect on production was negligible, especially given that MAN had five other factories building U-boat engines at the time.

Never again would the RAF send out its four-engine bombers on a daylight mission of this kind.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated: "We must plainly regard the attack of the Lancasters on the U-boat engine factory at Augsburg as an outstanding achievement of the Royal Air Force. Undeterred by heavy losses at the outset, 44 and 97 Squadrons pierced and struck a vital point with deadly precision in broad daylight. Pray convey the thanks of His Majesty's Government to the officers and men who accomplished this memorial feat of arms in which no life was lost in vain."

Air Marshal Harris noted: "Convey to the crews of 44 and 97 Squadrons who took part in the Augsburg raid, the following; the resounding blow which has been struck at the enemy's submarine and tank building program will echo round the world. The full effects on his submarine campaigns cannot be immediately apparent, but nevertheless they will be enormous. The gallant adventure penetrating deep into the heart of Germany in daylight and pressed home with outstanding determination in the face of bitter and unforeseen opposition takes its place among the most courageous operations of the war. It is moreover yet another fine example of effective cooperation with the other services by striking at the very sources of the enemy effort. The officers and men who took part, those who returned and those who fell, have indeed served their country well."

One can now only speculate on what other options the RAF might have considered for such a deadly mission.

Interestingly, Bomber Command had also taken delivery of the twin-engine De Havilland Mosquito IV Series II bomber in the spring of 1942. The first raid using the Mosquito was made with four aircraft on May 31, 1942, in a daylight attack on Cologne. The plane could outpace enemy interceptors, and, in consequence, could be sent on long flights over enemy territory to conduct pinpoint attacks with extreme accuracy. It had a maximum speed of 380 miles per hour at 17,000 feet, could carry a maximum bomb load of 4,000 pounds, and could operate at a range of 1,370 miles.

It would seem that the planners should have been aware of the Luftwaffe fighter airfields across northern France, especially along the flight path of their bombers. Rather than launching a series of diversionary attacks to draw off German fighter forces, it would have seemed prudent to send a couple of squadrons ahead of the Lancasters to sweep the point of entry and another to follow in their wake, at least as far as Paris.

The raid was notable for being the longest low-level penetration during the war as the Commonwealth pilots were brave beyond words, steady in their course, though their aircraft were badly damaged, and focused on completing their mission, whatever the cost. □

Author Allyn Vannoy has written extensively on a variety of topics related to World War II. He resides in Hillsboro, Oregon.

ACROSS THE RHINE

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery meticulously planned the 21st Army Group crossing of the mighty Rhine.

"I am busy getting ready for the next battle," Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery wrote his son David in early March 1945. "The Rhine is some river, but we shall get over it."

The Rhine was more than a river. It was a sacred waterway to the Germans, the source of most of their legends and myths. Now it was the last barrier between the advancing Allied armies and the conquest of Germany. If the Germans could hold their beloved river, they might be able to stand off the Allies.

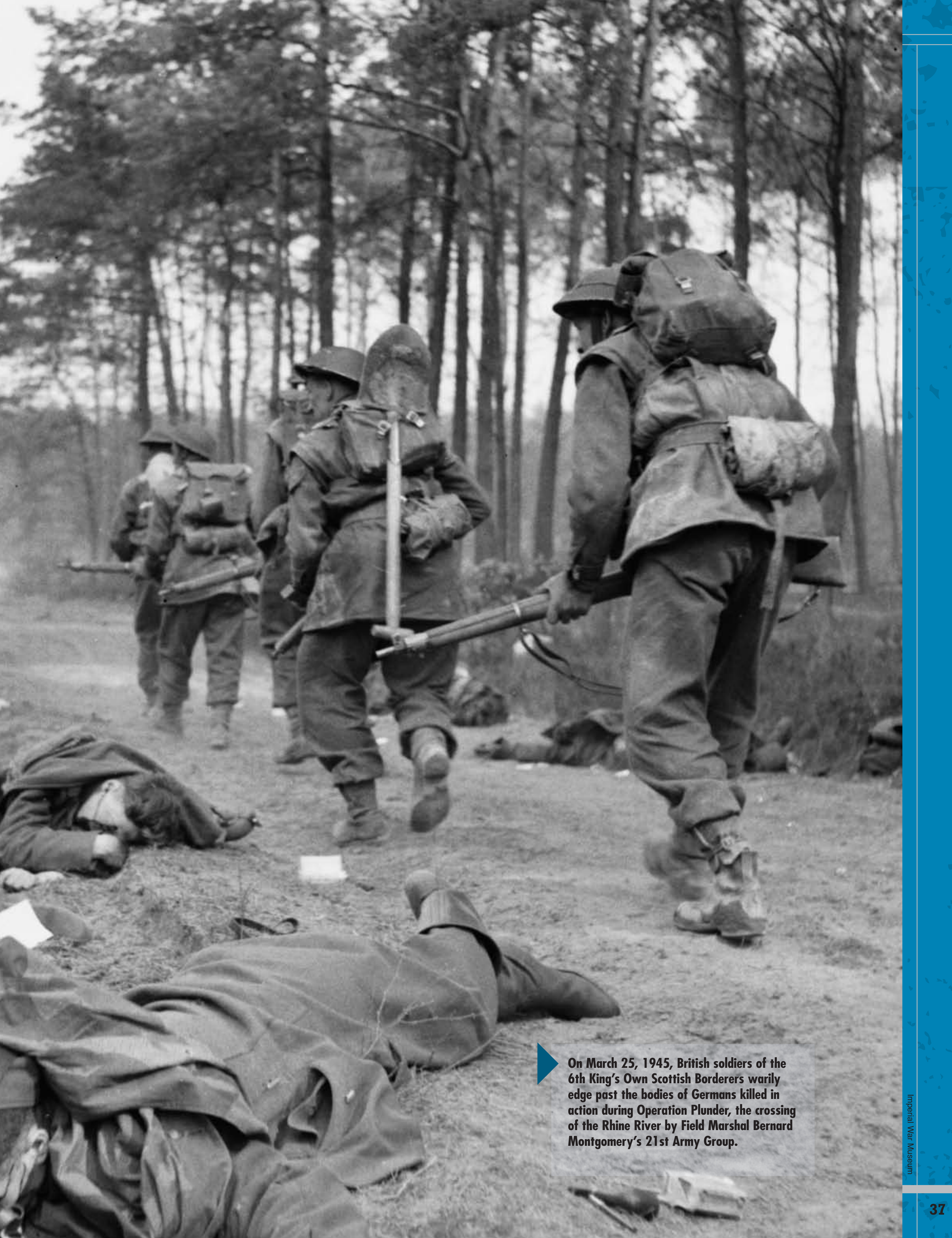
General Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme Allied commander in Europe, had chosen to advance on Germany on a broad front, but the main axis of advance would be in the north, to pinch off and surround the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland. The primary advance was to be led by Montgomery's 21st Army Group, which consisted of the 1st Canadian Army, the 2nd British Army, and the 9th U.S. Army, by now all veterans of hard campaigns.

Monty's original plan called for the British 2nd Army to launch the main assault at three places: Rees, 25 miles upstream from Arnhem; near Xanten, seven miles upstream and close to Wesel; and at Rheinberg, 16 miles farther upstream at the northwest corner of the Ruhr. The U.S. 9th Army commander, Lt. Gen. William Simpson, and the 1st Canadian Army's boss, General Harry Crerar, both objected.

After some back and forth between the three commanders and staffs, Montgomery agreed to include the 9th Army in the initial assault as well as the 9th Canadian Brigade, veterans of Normandy. The 9th Army took over the Rheinberg crossing.

Montgomery's preparations for the attack across the Rhine, code-named Operation Plunder, were described as elephantine. With 1.2 million men under his command, Montgomery was launching the greatest assault river crossing of all time.

The Rhine was 400 yards wide at the Wesel crossing point, and to defeat the river and the heavy German fortifications, the 2nd Army alone collected 60,000 tons of ammunition, 30,000 tons of engineer stores, and 28,000 tons of above normal daily requirements. The 9th Army stockpiled 138,000 tons for the crossings. More than 37,000 British and 22,000 American engineers would participate in the assault, along with 5,500 artillery pieces, antitank and antiaircraft guns, and rocket projectors.



On March 25, 1945, British soldiers of the 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers warily edge past the bodies of Germans killed in action during Operation Plunder, the crossing of the Rhine River by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group.

Imperial War Museum

Preparations were elaborate. Montgomery would leave little to chance. The invading armies were elaborately camouflaged. A world record 66-mile-long smoke screen along the western side of the Rhine concealed preparations. Dummy installations were created to fool German intelligence. Coordinated patrols and artillery fire added to the deception measures. Civilians were evacuated from their homes for several miles west of the Rhine. Railheads were pushed forward, and new roads were built. The 9th Army would issue more than 800,000 maps.

Above all, Montgomery would not be hurried. Even though two American Rhine crossings preceded his main effort, Montgomery rightly observed that the Germans would fight hard for their sacred river, and his troops needed heavy training for the attack. Major John Graham, who commanded an infantry company in the 2nd Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, noted that many British troops were raw recruits, drawn from training establishments by the shortage of manpower.

"Our men were not sufficiently well trained at this stage in the campaign to be able to exploit against the professional German soldier in a hasty impromptu crossing," he said. "We couldn't overcome the shortage of leaders. By that time in the war the experienced corporals and sergeants had disappeared, been killed, and we were left with people who were really privates who had been promoted. (It still seems absurd that I was 21 and a major). I think it would have been a pretty unwise commander who launched them into battle without the most thorough preparations."

The Germans were also preparing. The only strategy Adolf Hitler had on the Western Front since the failure of the Ardennes offensive of December 1944 was to hold the line, and to do so he brought in Luftwaffe Field Marshal Albert "Smiling Al" Kesselring to take over the front.

Kesselring, despite his Luftwaffe background, had made a name for himself commanding the German defenses in Italy, which had exacted a massive price while withdrawing slowly up the boot.

On March 11, Kesselring met with the top subordinates who would defend against Monty's assault, Colonel General Johannes Blaskowitz, who commanded Army Group H, and General Alfred Schlemm, the tough paratrooper who commanded 1st Parachute Army near Wesel.

Despite taking heavy losses on the eastern bank of the Rhine, Schlemm assured his superiors that 1st Parachute Army was ready to hold the Rhine. He reported, "First Parachute Army succeeded in withdrawing all of its supply elements in orderly fashion, saving almost all its artillery and withdrawing enough troops so that a new defensive front [can] be built up on the east bank." Schlemm guessed correctly that the focal points of an Allied attack across the Rhine would be at Emmerich and Rees and that there would be an airborne assault as well.

To defend against these threats, Schlemm strengthened his antiaircraft defenses near Wesel, with 814 heavy and light guns and mobile anti-airborne forces covering all the likely drop zones. Gunners had to sleep fully clothed at their posts.

Schlemm disposed his limited forces carefully. General Erich Straube's 86th Corps defended Wesel. On Straube's right was the 2nd Parachute Corps consisting of the 6th, 7th, and 8th Parachute Divisions, some 10,000 to 12,000 fighting men, who prided themselves on the elitism of being paratroopers, even if none were jump trained. The area south of Wesel was guarded by Schlemm's weakest corps, the 63rd, under General Erich Abraham. Schlemm's reserve was the 47th Panzer Corps, under Lt. Gen. Freiherr Heinrich von Leuttwitz, with the 116th Panzer Division and 15th Panzergrenadier Division in reserve. The two divisions had outstanding records but only 35 tanks between them.

Behind that, Schlemm had two more reserve formations—one was Volkssturm, the People's Militia, made up of men over the age of 60 and boys under the age of 16. Trained hurriedly on Panzerfaust antitank weapons, Schlemm had 3,500 of these questionable troops at hand.

The second formation was even more questionable. Joseph Goebbels's propaganda machine and Henrich Himmler's Gestapo had created a resistance movement in the style of the

Imperial War Museum

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-579-1962-23; Photo: Girik

ABOVE: Luftwaffe General Alfred Schlemm commanded the tough German 1st Parachute Army located in the vicinity of Wesel. LEFT: Heavy artillery supported the Allied 21st Army Group crossing of the Rhine during the predawn hours of March 24, 1945. In this photo, 5.5-inch guns fire on the Germans across the river during the bombardment that preceded the jumping off of units involved in Operation Plunder. OPPOSITE: Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery was known for his meticulous planning and concern for logistics when developing a major offensive action. When he finally unleashed Operation Plunder, British forces struck the German lines along the Rhine River at multiple points.

French Underground, if not in their numbers. So far their most notable accomplishment had been to kill the pro-Allied mayor of Aachen, Franz Oppenhoff. They were tasked with sabotage missions, which included stringing cable across German roads to decapitate drivers of Allied jeeps advancing as they often did with the windshields down. In theory they were a considerable threat to the Allied advance, but as matters developed they would fizzle.

The overall picture for the Germans was bleak. They were short of everything. The Allied air forces dominated the skies. Morale was poor. To bolster it, the Germans tried a variety of measures—handing out medals galore, giving out autographed pictures of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, and warnings that failure to resist would lead to a Soviet victory, which would follow with all of Germany being hauled off to Siberia as slave labor.

If that did not work, Hitler and his minions always had the favorite tool of dictators—the death penalty. Capital punishment was prescribed for a variety of offenses: failing to blow a bridge on time, being related to a deserter, withdrawing without orders, or failing to fight to the end. On February 12, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel signed an order warning that any officer who "aids a subordinate to leave the combat zone unlawfully, by carelessly issuing him a pass or other leave papers, citing a simulated reason, is to be considered a saboteur and will suffer death."

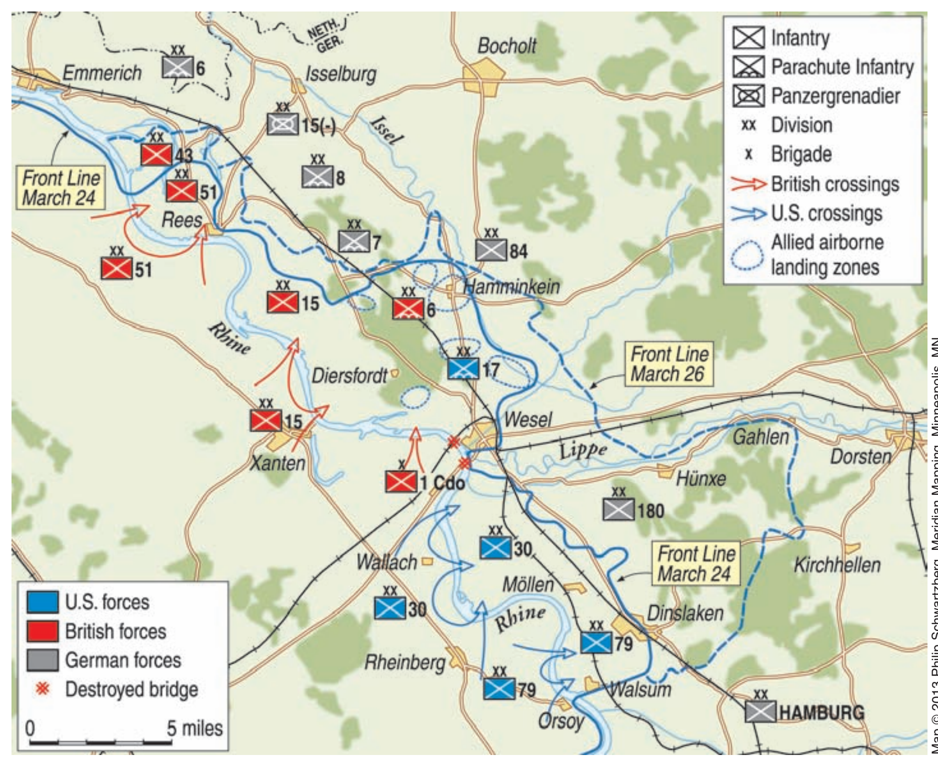
Blaskowitz doled out death to stragglers: "As from midday 10 March, all soldiers in all branches of the Wehrmacht who may be encountered away from their units on roads or in villages, in supply columns or among groups of civilian refugees, or in dressing-stations when not wounded, and who announce that they are stragglers looking for their units, will be summarily tried and shot."

Himmler topped them all on April 12 with a decree that read, "Towns, which are usually important communications centers, must be defended at any price. The battle commanders appointed for each town are personally held responsible for compliance with this order. Neglect of this duty on the part of the battle commander, or the attempt on the part of any civil servant to induce such neglect, is punishable by death."

Kesselring put the situation simply: "My orders are categorical. Hang on!"

Still, German hopes were high. Schlemm told his bosses that if he was given eight or 10 days to reequip, prepare positions, bring up supplies, and rest," he could stave off the attack.

Montgomery gave him those 10 days—he



Map © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

even made it 12—as he continued his preparations. He needed the time, too. After setbacks against determined German defenses in Holland in September, the Ardennes in December, and the Reichswald in February, Monty was leaving nothing to chance. His plan called for hurling two British (15th Scottish and 51st Highland) and two American (30th and 79th) Divisions against the Germans. They would be reinforced by Canada's 9th (Highland) Infantry Brigade, under the 51st Division, and the 1st Commando Brigade, veterans of Dieppe and Normandy.

The focal point of the assault was the rail and road center at Wesel. Simpson's 9th Army would cross an 11-mile sector of the Rhine south of Wesel, code-named Flashpoint, in the early hours of March 24.

At that point, the Rhine was "a large slow river, slow of current, with ideal launching and landing sites, in which a mass of assault craft could be employed," said 9th Army's planning report.

With the Lippe River as the Army boundary, from Wesel north to Rees would be the 2nd Army's attack area. Operation Turnscrew would be on the left at Rees and Operation Torchlight on the right at Xanten.

Turnscrew would go in first, at 9 PM on the 23rd. It called for the ebullient Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks's 30th Corps to storm the Rhine with Maj. Gen. T.M. Rennie's 51st Highland Division and the 9th Canadian Brigade. As soon as these two forces were over the river, they would be reinforced by the 43rd Wessex Division, the 3rd Division, the Guards Armored Division, and two armored brigades.

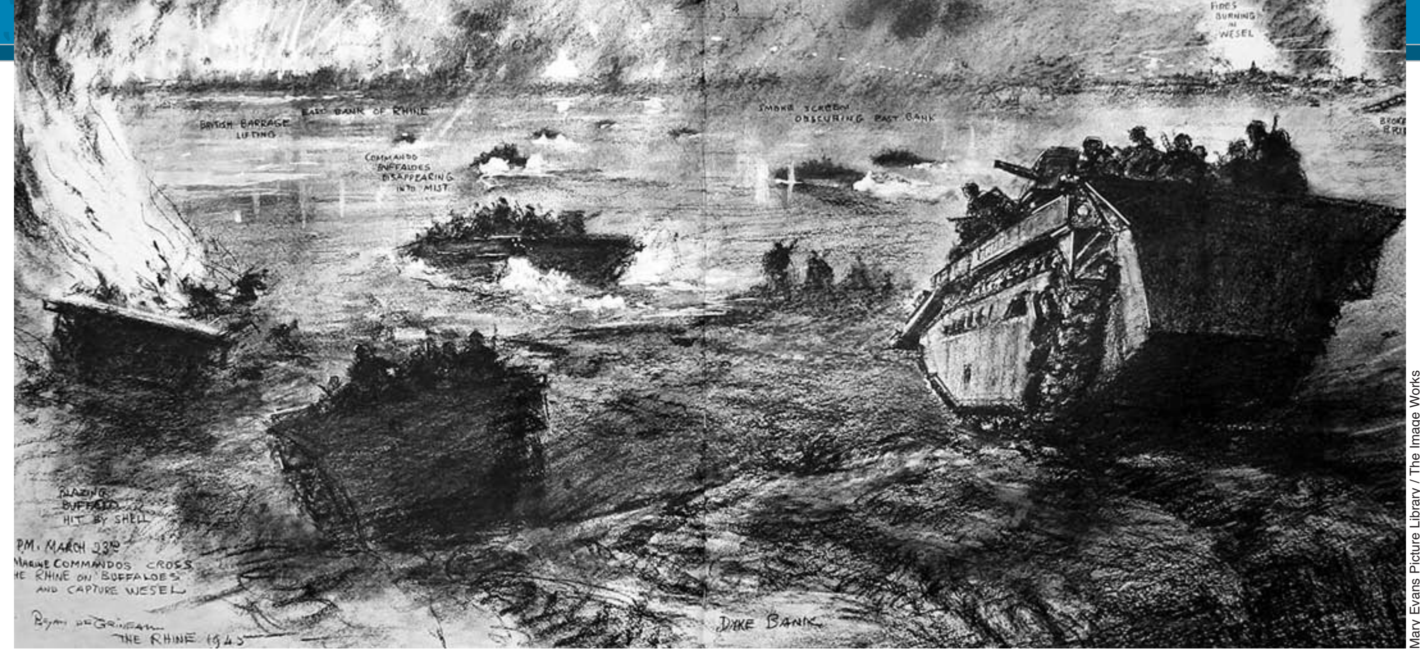
One hour after the 51st crossed the Rhine, Operation Widgeon would commence, with 1st Commando Brigade making a silent river crossing behind Wesel and seizing the town after a massive air raid.

At 2 AM on the 24th, the 15th Scottish Division would cross the Rhine at Xanten midway between Rees and Wesel. For Operation Torchlight, the 6-foot, 6-inch General C.M. "Tiny" Barber commanded the 15th Scottish, under Lt. Gen. Neil Ritchie's 12th Corps. As soon as the Scots erected a Class 40 Bailey bridge across the Rhine, the 11th "Black Bull" Armored Division would rumble over for the breakout.

Finally, at dawn on the 24th, two airborne divisions, the British 6th and the American 17th, would parachute and glider assault onto the high ground near Wesel in Operation Varsity.

The British and American troops continued to build up supplies. More than 250,000 tons were concentrated. The British alone stockpiled 60,000 tons of ammunition and 30,000 tons of engineer stores. The key to the invasion would be Buffaloes—a British version of the American amphibious personnel carrier called the Weasel, and Duplex Drive Sherman tanks, which had worked in the Normandy invasion. These tanks came with inflatable air tubes that made them amphibious for water crossings. The troops called them Donald Ducks.

Thirty Corps alone was assigned 8,000 engineers, supplied with 22,000 tons of assault bridging that included 25,000 wooden pon-



Mary Evans Picture Library / The Image Works

ABOVE: On the night of March 23-24, 1945, British soldiers cross the Rhine River near the town of Wesel. Their amphibious craft, nicknamed Buffaloes, were capable of transporting a number of infantrymen across broad streams like the mighty Rhine and engaging treads to carry the troops onto the shore. OPPOSITE: Exiting their flimsy storm boats, these soldiers of the 15th Scottish Division have just completed a successful crossing of the Rhine on the morning of March 24, 1945. The storm boats were less than popular with the troops, particularly in swift moving waterways.

toons, 2,000 assault boats, 650 larger storm boats, and 120 river tugs. Eighty miles of balloon cable and 260 miles of steel wire were hauled to the Rhine's banks.

The engineers had a tough job ahead of them—throwing bridges across the Rhine as soon as the attacking armies had consolidated their objectives on the far bank. The first Rhine assaulter, Julius Caesar, in 55 BC, had taken 10 days to construct a bridge across the river. The U.S. 9th Army was tasked with erecting an 1,152-foot treadway bridge nine hours after the attack was launched. Each division would have 9,000 engineers (sappers in British parlance). The engineers were responsible for bringing up not only all bridging equipment, but also all storm boats and rafts, tugs, landing craft, pontoons, anchors, and winches.

"The usual Hollywood words, such as colossal, stupendous, and unbelievable, would have been of little use in describing the situation as seen here," said Royal Canadian Engineers Company Quarter Master Sergeant Samuel Alexander Flatt. "Nothing had been left to chance and a timetable had been worked out that reminded us of the detailed planning for the D-Day assault."

The air support was also gigantic. Starting in early February, the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Forces began to isolate the Ruhr by blasting 18 bridges on the most important routes leading to the area from central Germany. No targets were spared. The famous RAF No. 617 "Dam Busters" Squadron hit the Bielefeld rail viaduct with the new "Grand Slam" 22,000-pound "earthquake" bombs, whose heavy force and vibrations brought the massive rail bridge crashing down. By the time Plunder was ready to go, the Allies had dumped 31,635 tons of explosives in the area, and only three bridges remained standing.

Next the airmen hammered crossroads and communications centers to prevent German troop movements. While these attacks took place, fighters roared on armed reconnaissance missions to locate and destroy Luftwaffe fighter bases, particularly those used by the new German jet fighters. Fighter bombers pounded known German antiaircraft positions to suppress them.

The bombing had a major impact on March 22. One raid on Schlemm's tactical HQ severely wounded the general and forced him out of the battle just before its start. Schlemm was replaced by General Gunther Blumentritt, a man who had seen and coped with numerous retreats as chief of staff to Field Marshal von Rundstedt.

The day before the attack, the British assembled 3,411 artillery pieces and the Americans 2,070 at the Rhine banks. The code message to launch the offensive harkened back to an earlier but less successful British offensive: "Two if by sea."

While the gunners shoved their pieces into position, the invading troops got their final briefings and pep talks from their bosses. Field Marshal Montgomery told his men very simply, "21 Army Group will now cross the Rhine. The enemy possibly thinks he is safe behind this great river obstacle. We all agree that it is a great obstacle; but we will show the enemy that he is far from safe behind it. This great Allied fighting machine, composed of integrated land and air forces, will deal with the problem in no uncertain manner. And having crossed the Rhine, we will crack about in the plains of Northern Germany, chasing the enemy from pillar to post. The swifter and the more energetic our action, the sooner the war will be over, and that is what we all desire; to get on with the job and finish off the German war as soon as possible. Over the Rhine, then, let us go. And good hunting to you on the other side."

With all the rehearsals completed, there was nothing more to do but wait for the order to attack. The 5th Black Watch held a night rehearsal and their Buffaloes got lost in the fog, landing at the wrong place. The 105th U.S. Engineers worried about keeping the Evinrude engines on their storm boats warm—they wrapped them in blankets obtained from their medical staff.

As in all military operations, there were still problems. The 44th Royal Tank Regiment was ordered to use DD tanks. Most of the tankers had never even seen one before, and they underwent 10 days of intensive training. Brigadier Derek Mills-Roberts was convinced the storm boats would be useless and took the 2nd Army commander, General Miles Dempsey, out on one for a trial run. Sure enough, the Army commander wound up adrift in the middle of a stream.

Security was tight. The 9th Army men removed shoulder patches, and unit identifications on vehicles were painted over. Patrolling was intensified to keep enemy saboteurs away from ammunition and bridging dumps. So secret was the troop buildup that the men of

the 52nd Lowland Division, holding the Rhine riverbank, had no idea of the big offensive being heated up behind them.

Finally, on March 22, the generals began giving orders. The top brass came to watch. Prime Minister Winston Churchill joined Monty at the latter's tactical headquarters. Churchill wanted to go up to the battlefield in a tank, but Montgomery was able to talk him out of it. Eisenhower strolled through the nervous men of the 29th Infantry Division, a 9th Army follow-up division, dispensing bonhomie.

The artillery bombardment began at 5 PM, under a precise schedule. Canadian Highland Light Infantry Private Glen Tomlin, aged 21, from Clinton, Ontario, described "an awful noise, the ground just shook, everything shook.... The guns started off and then you heard the shells come over, and they whistle different sounds for different shells." As the guns increased their tempo, the sound became a "continuous roar."

Canadian artillery units joined in the barrage, including their 17-pounder antitank guns, and the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa Machine Gun Regiment, with their powerful Vickers machine guns, chattered with their two-mile range. British and Canadian gunners hammered predesignated ground targets, which included German bunkers dug in on the riverbank, with a massive volume of fire. The 4th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment alone fired 13,896 rounds.

The first troops to attack would be some of Britain's toughest, the 1,600 Army and Royal Marine Commandos of 1st Commando Brigade.

At one minute before 10 PM on March 23, the first Buffaloes, jammed with 46th Royal Marine Commando, rumbled over the dike in front of the Rhine River and into the waters. Operation Widgeon was going in under a three-quarter moon and heavy smoke screen.

As the Buffaloes clattered across the Rhine, 5,500 heavy guns opened fire in a single, solid roar. Shells and explosions lit up the night. The Buffaloes coursed across the Rhine, battling heavy current, submerged with only a foot of freeboard. It took the amphibious vehicles only three and a half minutes to cross the river, and then they nosed up on the enemy shore. German mortars fired at the advancing Buffaloes. A phosphorous round went off in one Buffalo, and flames shot 15 feet into the air. Nine men were killed. The well-trained Commandos swept past the carnage and stormed onto the beach, overrunning the German trenches and gun emplacements, churning through mud.

Brigadier Mills-Roberts had chosen this muddy site as a landing beach because of its seeming unsuitability. He knew his Commandos could overcome it. However, they could not make a frontal assault on Wesel and its defenses. His men were to slip in from the side and surprise the German defenders.

As soon as 46th Royal Marine Commando was deposited on the beach, the Buffaloes headed back and another wave of invaders arrived, 6 Army Commando, with orders to exploit the new bridgehead. Six Commando crossed the Rhine in storm boats, which proved temperamental in action. Six Commando's commander, Lt. Col. A.D. Lewis, recalled, "One boat was overladen. When the driver took off, the thing dove straight into the water. Many of the men had their rucksacks still on their backs (instead of loosening them as they were meant to once they got aboard), and some were drowned with the weight of them.

"My second-in-command happened to be in that boat. Fortunately, he had taken off his rucksack so he was rescued. He used to wear a monocle quite frequently, so the *Daily Mirror* came out with a headline: 'Monocled Major Swims the Rhine.'"

The 45th Royal Marine Commando was next, and Marine Tom Buckingham recalled the crossing: "On the evening of 23 March the barrage opened up and we set off in single file for the bank of the Rhine. Finding the way was easy because the Royal Artillery had a pair of Bofors guns firing two lines of red tracers to mark our route. We marched under the tracers and thousands of shells screamed over our heads and hit the enemy positions on the far bank. Before we crossed, the RAF had a part to play. Spot on 2045 hours, the artillery fire ceased and precisely on time the Pathfinders dropped flares over the town of Wesel, marking the target. More than 200 heavy bombers then plastered the place."

Some 250 Avro Lancaster bombers from Bomber Command hammered Wesel that evening, turning the town to rubble with 1,100 tons of high explosive. The leading Commandos were just a half-mile behind the bomb line.

Buckingham recalled, "We must have had the best ever view of RAF heavies doing their stuff. The ground shook with exploding bombs, but we were surprised to see the Germans fighting back, sending up a barrage of antiaircraft fire. Then it was our turn. We embarked in Buffaloes, tracked vehicles which could traverse ground or water, and set off across the Rhine.

"It was like fireworks. First a rain of golden sparks as the leading aircraft dropped the markers right over an enormous fire that already lit the town like a beacon. Then we heard the main force. It was a terrific sight. All colors of sparks flying everywhere, red, green, yellow and the fantastic concussion as the bombs went down."

Imperial War Museum

There was little resistance, and although some German fire came our way and one craft received a direct hit from a mortar bomb, the landing was relatively unopposed."

Royal Engineer Corporal Ramsey, with a bridging party on the west bank, said, "It was like fireworks. First a rain of golden sparks as the leading aircraft dropped the markers right over an enormous fire that already lit the town like a beacon. Then we heard the main force. It was a terrific sight. All colors of sparks flying everywhere, red, green, yellow and the fantastic concussion as the bombs went down. On our side of the river the ground shook and we could see waves of light shooting up into the smoke. It was like stoking a fire, the dull red glow burst into flames and it was like daylight."

Many boats were hit by fire. Six Army Commando's Regimental Sergeant Major Woodcock had three boats shot from under him before he could make a successful crossing.

Buckingham and the rest of the 1st Commando Brigade began moving in on Wesel. The British troops circled around and hit the town from the side with Commando infiltration tactics. The entire brigade advanced in single file following a trail of white tape laid by the lead Commando team. "It was a major operation, laying 5,000 yards of tape," Lt. Col. Lewis said. "The tape was on reels. As we moved forward in single file, the man ahead carried the reels on his back. The soldier behind him would pull the tape out and stamp it in the ground.

"Seventy men were involved, some protecting the tape party and some being the tape party. One of the major problems was that, being in the lead, we had to cope with enemy opposition while at the same time staying on direction with map and compass and laying the tape.

"Luckily the opposition was fairly feeble. The Germans were stunned. All the fight had been taken out of them by the aerial attack. I can remember going down to a cellar to establish my HQ and finding 17 German soldiers down there, all lying in their bunks. There was no sort of control or command at that stage. The people fought as individuals."

British Commandos took Germans prisoners and put them to work carrying equipment. "I've got a big bugger here, he's doing grand," one Commando said to his pal. The pal replied, "My little bugger isn't doing too bad neither."

The Commandos arrived in Wesel around midnight and found the 13th century Hanseatic city in ruins but small battles exploding everywhere. "The streets were unrecognizable," Mills-Roberts said. "Many of the buildings were mere mounds of rubble. Huge craters abounded and into these flowed water mains and sewers, accompanied by escapes of flaming gas."

In the dark, Buckingham ran into his brigade commander, Mills-Roberts, who was standing on a pile of rubble illuminated by a burning building, urging his brigade to "get a bloody move on."

The men of 6 Commando led the way into swirling smoke, sparks, and dirt. The defenders of the 180th Infantry Division reeled under the bombing but began to recover with their quick-firing MG42 machine guns. But the British were too much for the Germans.

By dawn, the Commandos had taken 400 POWs, and No. 45 Royal Marine Commando was dug in at a large factory full of hundreds of thousands of lavatory pans. A brigade signals group "swinging from girder to girder several hundred feet above the Rhine, under spasmodic fire," managed to lay a telephone line across the river.

Lewis's headquarters was across a small garden from the headquarters of the German garrison commander, Maj. Gen. Friedrich Deutsch, commander of the 16th Flak Division. Sgt. Maj. Woodcock led a charge into the underground shelter and found Deutsch himself shooting back. "Deutsch became very aggressive, quite dangerous," Lewis recalled. "He had to be shot."

Woodcock and his men found a map revealing all the German flak dispositions. This would be of inestimable assistance in knocking out the German flak defenses before the morning airborne drop.

By 1 AM, the entire Commando brigade reached the center of Wesel, finding their maps useless—the town was a pile of rubble. Forty-five Royal Marine Commando joined the attack, and as Mills-Roberts stopped to talk to Lt. Col. Nicol Gray, their CO, a "dead" German SS soldier suddenly leaped to his feet clutching a Panzerfaust, which he fired at point-blank range. The blast knocked everyone off their feet as it exploded, wounding Gray, killing two of the HQ men. British Sten guns opened up, killing the SS man. After being assured he was dead, the British Commandos blasted every enemy corpse in sight, just in case.

National Archives

The German town of Wesel was virtually obliterated by concentrated Allied artillery fire during the opening phase of Operation Plunder. British soldiers who entered Wesel found their maps useless because the streets of the town were unrecognizable.

Later in the morning, the Germans began counterattacking. "It got a bit rough towards 9:45 AM," Ward figured. "Our airborne were coming in at 10 AM, so at 9:50 our artillery had to stop. We weren't even allowed to fire a two-inch mortar. And that is when the Germans came back."

For the next few hours the Commandos held off German counterattacks. Then, at 1:30 PM, the British artillery opened fire again. "This was the turning point in the whole battle and now I felt the brigade was secure in Wesel."

Next, the 51st Infantry Division began its Rhine crossing in the Rees area. The 51st Division faced a river between 300 and 450 yards wide.

The 1st Gordons drew the job of capturing Rees, landing left of the town and swinging right in their advance to assault the enemy defenses. Major Martin Lindsey described "a tremendous rumble of guns behind us, their shells whistling overhead, and the nice, sharp, banging, bouncing sound of our 25-pounder

shells landing on the far bank. But a mortar was still smacking down right in the loading area, and one dreaded the thought of a mortar bomb landing inside of a Buffalo with 28 Gordons inside."

At 11:15 PM, the Gordons began to cross the river in their Buffaloes. The big vehicles trundled across the fields, past the dike, and dropped into the water. "The Buffaloes became waterborne, and then we had the feeling of floating down out of control, yet each Buffalo churned without difficulty out of Germany's greatest barrier."

was in a state of ruin and defended by two understrength battalions of paratroopers. The 1st Gordons attacked Rees, capturing a strongpoint in the cathedral at dawn and clearing the riverbank and town center later.

Part of the 51st's assault, the first Canadians over the Rhine were Acting Captain Donald Albert Pearce's nine men of the Highland Light Infantry's Bren carrier platoon, whose job was to guide the rifle companies to their predesignated assembly areas. At 3:45 AM, the rest of the battalion followed in Buffaloes. The Canadians came under German shelling as their Buffaloes careened across the Rhine. Rumbling up onto a grassy mud flat two and a half miles west of Rees, the Canadians were dead on target, meeting Pearce's party.

ullstein Bild / The Granger Collection, NY

A teenage German soldier practices throwing a stick grenade. The British were aghast at the youthfulness of many of the enemy troops who opposed them.

National Archives

Canadian soldiers make their way forward through the ruins of destroyed buildings in Germany. After crossing the Rhine the Canadians fought a pitched battle with determined defenders in the town of Speldrop, on March 24, 1945, and eventually captured the town.

Pipers led the Cameron Highlanders to their marshalling area, and General Rennie moved among his men, telling them they would make history in the crossing. Major Thomas Lansdale Rollo, commanding 7th Black Watch, made sure his signaler knew to immediately send out the message that the battalion was the first British battalion to cross the Rhine. When Rollo's signaler sent the message, Horrocks shouted excitedly with relief.

The 51st's leading attackers crossed in Buffaloes, but the follow-up battalions had to ride the despised storm boats. Only a dozen of the 30 available were serviceable. As each boat took only 10 men, the riflemen were delayed by as much as two hours in crossing. Fifty sappers were killed or drowned ferrying them across.

Despite this delay, the 51st moved quickly across the Rhine. The 7th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders took 100 POWs. The 5th Black Watch and 1st Gordons headed for Rees, clearing a housing estate and taking 70 POWs. Rees

The Canadians stormed across the mud flat to secure the dike and ran smack into a group of Volkssturm armed with 1913 vintage rifles, all ready to surrender. By the time Lt. Col. Phil Strickland's HQ party came ashore at 5:45 AM, the riverbank was secure. But the village of Speldrop was not. The Canadians were told to stand by to support the 1st Black Watch, which was battling the tough men of the 8th Parachute Division in the village, which controlled the breakout route from the Rhine bank.

The 51st's battle grew hotter, and Maj. Gen. Thomas Rennie, who commanded the division, went across the Rhine to check on his men and congratulate 7th Black Watch on being first over the river barrier. As he dismounted from his jeep, a mortar round landed. Rennie's aide-de-camp asked, "Are you all right, sir?" but there was no reply. After 45 days of almost continual action—and five years of continual war—Rennie had been killed while leading his division to its final objective.

Major General Gordon MacMillan took over, but Rennie was beloved by his men, and shock waves pulsed through the 51st.

So did German counterattacks. The Germans reinforced the defenders of Speldrop with the 115th Panzergrenadier Regiment, which left the Anglo-Canadian forces outnumbered. The 1st Black Watch was forced out of Speldrop by repeated counterattacks, losing 81 casualties including five officers. By late morning, the Highland Light Infantry was told to relieve the Black Watch and take over the fight. The Black Watch withdrew behind a smoke screen, leaving its wounded sheltering in place.

The Canadian CO, Phil Strickland, was highly regarded by his brigadier, John "Rocky" Rockingham, as being "terribly clever, full of courage and ability. I admired him most in the world." He was a good tactician, meticulous and methodical.

Strickland's plan to win Speldrop "relied strongly on artillery support to cover the troops into the town. All approaches were covered by the enemy with self-propelled guns, making it impossible to use tanks during the initial stages." The ground was flat for the 1,200-yard approach and lacked cover. Strickland would overcome that with six field regiments of artillery, two medium regiments, and two 7.2-inch heavy batteries. Among them was Canada's 14th Medium Regiment under Lt.

Col. Gordon Browne, the first artillerymen to cross the Rhine.

The artillery provided smoke and creeping barrages ahead of the Canadian attack. By hugging the artillery barrage, Major Joseph Charles King's B Company was able to cross the open terrain, which was swept by German machine guns and artillery. All three platoon leaders were hit—Lieutenants Bruce Frederick Zimmermann and Donald Arthur Isner were both killed and the third officer incapacitated. NCOs took over, and Major King ran from one farm building to another, directing the lead platoon while exposing himself to heavy machine-gun fire. Canadian troops advanced against farm buildings defended by German troops with machine guns and Panzerfaust antitank projectors.

King realized his company might get torn up. He called for the Highland Light Infantry's antitank platoon and its troop of three Wasp Mark II Bren carriers, which were rigged up as flamethrowers. These deadly little vehicles' flamethrowers had a range of about 150 yards.

While the Bren carriers hustled up, B Company's No. 12 Platoon punched in among the buildings and came under withering fire from 20mm antiaircraft guns. The platoon's commander fell, and Lance Sergeant Cornelius Jerome Reidel "immediately took command of the platoon, ordered the men to fix bayonets, and taking a Bren gun, led the platoon into the orchard in the face of heavy small-arms fire. The platoon captured the orchard, and cleared the buildings beyond, killing 10 Germans and capturing 15 prisoners and three 7.5 centimeter infantry guns.... The success of the platoon action enabled the battalion to gain a foothold in the town," Reidel's Military Medal citation read.

Major John Alexander Ferguson led the column of Wasps and Bren carriers towing the four 6-pounder antitank guns into action. Ferguson earned a Military Cross in the action by riding ahead of his Bren carriers in a jeep checking for mines in the road.

The Canadians set up their antitank guns under heavy German fire. Sergeant Wilfred Francis Bunda calmly sited each gun and urged the gunners to dig in quickly. When several men were wounded, he ensured they were placed under cover and then oversaw their evacuation.

With the supporting weapons up, King led one B Company platoon forward and quickly cleared the fortified buildings. The Germans fought fanatically, but the Canadians showed ample determination. Lieutenant George Oxley MacDonald led his No. 8 Platoon in an attack across a 200-yard stretch of open ground to take one building, then charged forward under covering machine-gun fire toward the next building. There they laid down covering fire to enable another section to clear the remaining houses in their area. MacDonald's "courageous and brilliant action" was recognized with a Military Cross.

When the Wasp flamethrowers finally were able to trundle into the village, the German defenses cracked. German troops surrendered rather than face the flamethrowers. Antitank guns blasted open enemy positions at close range and wrecked buildings. By dusk, the village was shattered and so were the German defenses. Around midnight, the Canadians caught up with the wounded Black Watch men, who had been huddling in cellars to avoid capture.

Savage fighting continued. "Houses had to be cleared at the point of the bayonet and single Germans made suicidal attempts to break up our attacks," the Highland Light Infantry's War Diary reported. "Wasp flamethrowers were used to good effect. It was necessary to push right through the town and drive the enemy out into the fields where they could be dealt with." Some 35 dead Germans were counted around one farmstead.

While the battle for Speldrop raged, Rockingham and the rest of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade crossed the Rhine. Rockingham set up his tactical HQ in the same building as the 154th Brigade to keep the Canadian relief seamless. At 2:05 PM, he briefed his two

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Men of the 1st Commando Brigade fire a pair of British Vickers machine guns against German positions on the outskirts of Wesel. BELOW: Giving a lift to a few infantrymen from the 6th Kings Own Scottish Borderers, a duplex drive (DD) Sherman tank rolls forward on March 25, 1944. The DD Shermans were designed to use drive systems that traversed both land and water, while a canvas shield was raised to assist with buoyancy. OPPOSITE: During Operation Flashpoint, an American mortar crew fires on German positions along the banks of the Rhine River on March 24, 1945. The Americans fired more than 65,000 rounds of numerous calibers during efforts to soften the Germans up prior to crossing the Rhine.

remaining battalion commanders on their duties. The Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders would relieve the 7th Black Watch, while the North Nova Scotia Highlanders would take over for the 7th Argylls in their attack on Bienan, which had so far proved futile. They would put in a night attack.

Meanwhile, the rest of Operation Plunder rolled on. While the 51st Highland Division launched its attack, so did the veteran 15th Scottish Division. The lead unit was Brigadier the Hon. H.C.H. Cummings-Bruce's 144th Lowland Brigade, which sent two battalions across the Rhine, one in Buffaloes, the other in storm boats. The Germans were dug in behind a dike, ready to open fire on the invaders as soon as they scrambled from the river. Cummings-Bruce sited his guns around a bend in the river where they could "see" behind the dike and opened fire with a heavy barrage of Bofors 40mm and machine guns, thoroughly demoralizing as well as destroying the German defenders.

Major B.A. Fargus, the 8th Royal Scots' adjutant, reported: "The principal memory of the Rhine crossings is the complete confidence we all had in the success of the operation. This was the result of the detailed and competent planning and the two rehearsals we had all taken part in on the Maas."

The 8th Royal Scots crossed in Buffaloes in three waves punctually at 2 AM. The battalion suffered no casualties under light German fire.

On the other hand, the brigade's other battalion, the 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers, crossed the Rhine in storm boats. Lt. Col. Charles Richardson reported, "I recommended that the storm boat not be used again. A lot of my men had to paddle with their rifle butts or hands, landing hundreds of yards downstream."

Even so, the 6th KOSBs formed up and headed for their objective, the village of Bislich, where they faced the German 1,062nd Grenadier Regiment. While the Scots and Germans battled, Royal Engineers began building pontoon bridges across the Rhine, which enabled the 44th Royal Tank Regiment to cross the Rhine and back up the attack.

By dusk, 44 Brigade had taken more than 1,000 POWs for a loss of fewer than 100 casualties.

The 15th Division's other brigade, the 227th, under Brigadier R.M. Villiers, faced tougher opposition in the form of German paratroopers and a few female snipers. The 10th Highland Light Infantry loaded into its Buffaloes at 11 PM and drove to the river. Three hundred yards from the bank the Buffaloes fanned out and headed into the Rhine illuminated by a bright glow from the fighting at Wesel. The 2nd Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders also crossed in Buffaloes.

Brigadier Villiers wrote, "Everybody was keyed up for this great enterprise. There was the sound of firing on the far bank, but the river mist precluded us from seeing exactly what was happening. Everyone had been told to get their heads down below the waterline, except commanders, who could look out when they wanted. The mist was extremely thick; it was a combination of the river mist, the smoke screen which had gone on to the last moment, and the bursting of artillery shells. During the last five minutes before H-hour our artillery had plastered the edge of the far bank."

The two Scottish battalions ran into heavy resistance, and it was not until 6:30 AM that the Highland Light Infantry swept the enemy from their strongpoints at Overkamp.

Now it was the Americans' turn. At 1 AM on the 24th, 40,000 American artillerymen and 2,070 guns opened up with a terrific bombardment of the Rhine's far bank at Walsum opposite 16th Corps. Maj. Gen. John Anderson's attack was codenamed Operation Flashpoint. The Americans hurled 65,261 rounds at the German defenses, backed by 1,500 heavy bombers.

Ninth Army commander Lt. Gen. Simpson and Eisenhower himself watched the attack from an observation post in a church tower. All three regiments of the 30th Infantry Division participated in the assault, the 119th on the left, attacking Buedrich, near the confluence of the Lippe and Rhine Rivers, while the 117th hit the center at the village of Wallach with the 120th Infantry two miles to the southeast near a big bend in the river just northeast of Rheinberg.

The regiments each used one battalion in the assault, and each battalion used 54 storm boats and 30 double assault boats. American covering fire was intense—German fire desultory. They knocked out two of the 119th Infantry's storm boats, killing one man and wounding three.

Private Ralph Albert recalled the assault. "We got the boat over the dyke and seemed to have mastered the technique, but then someone tripped and we dropped the damn thing down the other side. It was a bit flustered for a few minutes but eventually we got the boat onto the water and piled in."

Albert and his pals saw a panorama of red tracer, smoke, and small boats motoring across the river. "We all got as low as we could," Albert said, "because there was a lot of enemy fire coming across, as well as water spraying over us which made it difficult to see. A boat alongside us was hit by a burst of gunfire, which killed the engineer steering it, and slammed into us, almost capsizing our own boat before it rocked away and turned over. I think it was hit by a cannon shell."

In minutes the Americans came charging from their assault boats on the far side of the Rhine and charged the big dike. The Germans fought back at only one point, hammering G Company of the 120th with machine-gun fire, but the Americans silenced them without loss. "There was no real fight to it," said Lieutenant Whitney O. Refvem, commander of the 117th Infantry's Company B. "The artillery had done the job for us.

"We captured a German soldier at the dyke and used him as a guide through the minefields.

National Archives

We reached the town without encountering any mines, taking prisoners as we went."

"There could be no question from the first that the 30th Division had staged a strikingly successful crossing of the sprawling Rhine," wrote official historian Charles B. MacDonald. "Within two hours of the jump-off, the first line of settlements east of the river was in hand, all three regiments had at least two battalions across, and a platoon of DD tanks had arrived to help the center regiment. In the assault crossing total casualties among all three regiments were even less than for the one regiment that had made the Third Army's surprise crossing 28 hours earlier at Oppenheim."

The last crossing was made by the 79th Infantry, which sent two regiments over in the first wave, using only storm boats initially. The 79th's assault went in at 3 AM, and the major problem for the invaders was fog and smoke, not German defenses. Some boats lost their way in the smoke and mist and landed their troops on the western bank. Men in one boat charged forward in a skirmish line, only to meet other Americans coming down to the water to load.

But with German opposition slight, the Americans reassembled quickly and began heading across the Rhine and inland, collecting German POWs. Prisoners said they had never encountered anything like the artillery barrage, and it completely stunned them. The two divisions had crossed one of the greatest water obstacles in Europe at a cost of 31 casualties.

Sergeant William L. McBride of the 311th Field Artillery Battalion took time to scrawl "300,000" on a shell, marking the 300,000th shell the Americans had fired off in the space of one hour. During the artillery barrage, mortars fired 1,000 rounds on the far shore to detonate mines.

As the sun rose, the Americans headed inland. The 79th Division's 315th Infantry headed for the city of Dinslaken with its population of 25,000, against spotty resistance. The 79th did not even call upon air support, instead relying on a weapon borrowed from the enemy—captured Panzerfaust launchers. The 79th had captured several hundred of them and passed them out to the assault battalions. The Americans found them very handy at blasting open buildings and convincing even the most diehard occupants to surrender. More than 700 POWs were taken, and American casualties were few. The 313th Infantry lost one man killed and 11 wounded.

As the 24th rolled on, so did the 79th. By nightfall, the division held a bridgehead more than three miles wide and deep, which included Dinslaken. The 30th Division had a tougher time, striking into the center of the 180th Division. The Americans rolled tanks across the Rhine on Bailey rafts and tank destroyers on landing craft to hook up with the offensive, and the 30th was soon rolling again. As night fell on the first day, the 30th had taken 1,500 prisoners, twice those taken by the 79th.

Meanwhile, the British continued to advance and consolidate their gains, which were heavily covered by the press. During the first four days, 79 radio photos were sent from London to New York for coverage in the American papers. Ninth Army Press Camp had 39 accredited correspondents who filed 226 stories totaling 74,510 words, including broadcasts.

By the early hours of March 24, the British were moving inland. The Germans were overwhelmed. To make matters worse for the defenders, they would soon have trouble moving up reserves as Operation Varsity, the airborne component of the assault, would take place, delivering thousands of paratroopers behind the German lines. Many German troops had to stay in place to guard against further airborne assaults.

Otto Diels, with the 146th Panzer Artillery, recalled, "My battalion was at readiness from about midnight, but to our surprise no more orders came and we waited until the morning."

With a massive British offensive in motion, the Germans could not decide where to counterattack.

While the Germans dithered, the British advanced. Mills-Roberts's Commandos, facing German counterattacks, called down heavy artillery fire, which silenced the Germans.

At Rees, the 51st Highland Division's 2nd Seaforths moved out to seize the main road. The Seaforths brushed aside German resistance, filled in an antitank ditch, then faced a counterattack. The Seaforths shoved a Bren gun in position and stitched up the Germans. The Seaforths called for a troop of tanks to clear out a factory, but there were none available. For the next few hours they held out while the Germans moved due east, calling down artillery fire on them.

At 4 AM, the 44th Royal Tank Regiment rumbled across the Rhine in its DD tanks "looking like floating baths drifting downstream," according to their CO, Lt. Col. G.C. Hopkinson. "One tank was hit as it left the shore and sank like a stone, all the crew abandoning ship and making shore safely. This crew later carried a swastika flag emblazoned 'First to the bottom of the Rhine, 2 Baker.' The last tank of A Squadron was hit as it was going down the runway to the water, but it managed to reverse out and retired for patching. Regimental HQ nipped in while the enemy was adjusting for range and, except for a few splashes in midstream, had no trouble."

The 44th RTR emerged from the Rhine to support the 1st Gordons, which needed the help under heavy shelling as it struggled to take a

Imperial War Museum

housing estate on the outskirts of Rees, held by the tough 19th Parachute Regiment. The tanks rumbled into action with their 75mm shells blasting through German defenses.

At 9 AM, the Germans counterattacked in bright sunshine near Wesel with waves of panzergrenadiers backed by Mark IV tanks and assault guns storming the Commando positions. The Commandos opened fire with automatic weapons, gunning down the attacking infantry, leaving the tanks unsupported. The Germans, unsure about the British defenses, did not know that the only antitank weapons the British had were captured Panzerfausts and PIAT projectors. The Germans decided to attack anyway, and Easy Troop let the Germans come to near point-blank range. Then the lead tank stopped and retreated. All the Commandos let out sighs of relief.

Another battle took place in a factory that made lavatories. German troops tried to cross open ground but Commando fire was deadly accurate. Number 3 Army Commando reported, "One patrol came down the railway lines and we waited until we could literally see the whites of their eyes before killing them with Bren and Tommy guns. Later a section of Germans came across the fields ... we just picked them off like sitting birds. They had no idea where the fire was coming from and simply lay on the ground ready to be shot."

Now all the advancing Allied soldiers looked to the sky to watch the massive airborne operation take place. Trooper Bob Nunn recalled the rumble of guns stopping. "Then we heard it, and the Germans too; we could see them staring up at the sky. The air filled with the drone of thousands of aircraft. We couldn't see them at first but then they were there, huge lines of Dakotas. It was a marvelous sight and everyone stopped to cheer them. Somebody started yelling 'Here come the Airborne!'"

As the day turned to afternoon, the American and British engineers took over, hurling pontoon bridges across the Rhine, enabling tanks, heavy vehicles, and reserve forces to cross the river with ease. British bridges drew names like Blackfriars and Whitechapel. The Americans had a 1,152-foot treadway bridge across the Rhine by late afternoon. Three hours later, a raft with a tank aboard smashed into it. Undeterred, American engineers had the bridge rebuilt by 2 AM on March 25.

Late that evening, the last major attack of the day went forward, the Canadian Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders relieving the 7th Black Watch in the dark, on the extreme left flank. Lieutenant J.C. Kirby wrote, "It is a bright moonlit night, and a very noisy one. Our artillery is putting up a terrific barrage and Jerry is tossing over the odd shell, some of which land uncomfortably close to this HQ. We lend a cynical ear to the commentators who babble about the light resistance offered by the Jerries to our landing across the Rhine, and who talk about our great advances. From where we sit it looks rugged.... The SDG (the Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders) have the unique position of being on the left of the whole Allied push."

National Archives

ABOVE: Paratroopers of the American 17th Airborne Division inspect the area and warily approach a German Sdkfz 251 half-track they knocked out minutes earlier. The vehicle still belches smoke after taking a direct hit from a bazooka on the morning of March 24, 1945. OPPOSITE: An American Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber flies low over infantrymen operating on the east side of the Rhine River on March 24, 1945.

That push would not come until 6:30 AM the following day, and the Canadians would attack up sodden roads, backed by artillery and Wasp flamethrowers.

By then, the Allied victory was fairly complete. As night fell, the 51st Highland Division and the 9th Canadian Brigade fought hard against German paratroopers, but the rest of the German situation was precarious. The Anglo-American outpouring of artillery and airpower combined with overwhelming infantry and tank force was too much for the German defenses. With paratroopers now in their rear, the Germans could not hold.

By March 28, the bridgehead was 35 miles wide and extended to an average depth of 20 miles. All opposition had virtually collapsed. The three Allied armies were fanning out, the Canadians toward Holland, the British toward the German ports, the Americans to surround the Ruhr. British historian Hubert Essame wrote, "Judged purely as a military operation, it is impossible to fault Montgomery's plan and its execution—the linking together of the land and air operations, the achievement of concentrated firepower both from the ground and the air, the foresight devoted to tactical and administrative planning and the exploitation to the full of the characteristics of the many components of the land and air forces. It was Montgomery's final masterpiece, executed in a manner soon to be outmoded, but nonetheless, like a Constable, a work of art."

Among the connoisseurs of the artwork that morning of March 24 was Winston Churchill himself, watching the massive assault at the 9th Army's crossing point at Rheinberg. He saw it all—the artillery barrage, the airborne forces fly overhead, the American and British infantry go across the Rhine. Later in the day Churchill himself crossed the Rhine with Montgomery in a U.S. Navy craft, touring the battlefield, avoiding German artillery fire.

But before he went across the Rhine, Churchill delivered a simple and accurate analysis of the situation to Eisenhower. Watching the offensive go forward, Churchill repeated to Eisenhower, "My dear general, the German is whipped. We have got him. He is all through." □

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

Perilous

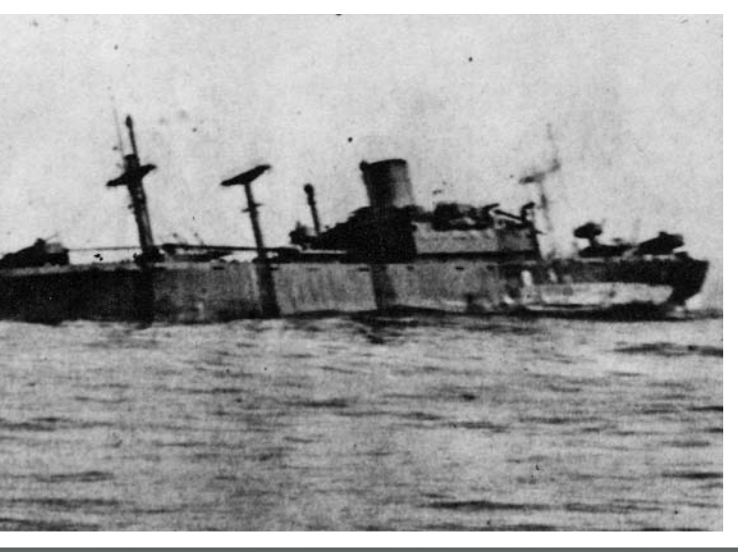
BY ERIC NIDEROST

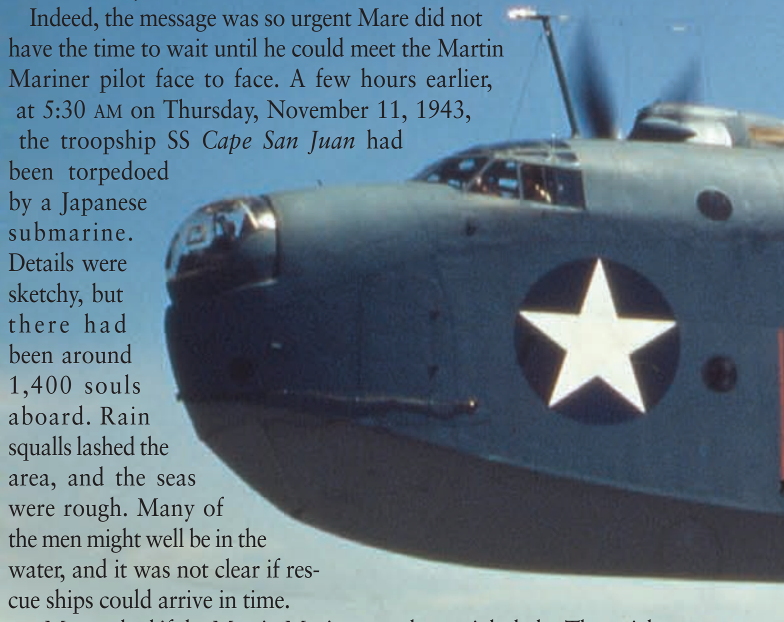
THE SINKING OF THE SS *CAPE SAN JUAN* BROUGHT ABOUT A DANGEROUS RESCUE TO SAVE CREW AND PASSENGERS.

THE GIANT MARTIN PBM-3R "Mariner" landed with a kind of swanlike grace, its stubby bow parting the waters, transforming them into a series of white and foamy ripples that radiated from the seaplane's wake. Captain William W. Moss Jr. was at the controls, and once the initial landing was completed he taxied the Mariner over to the dock area. Moss had landed at Fiji in the South Pacific, part of a supply and transport assignment that originated in Hawaii.

The Martin PMB-R, formally designated Flight V2163, was part of the Naval Air Transport Service (NATS), whose mission was to keep the U.S. armed forces well supplied over the vast reaches of the broad Pacific. The seaplane's ultimate destination was Noumea, New Caledonia, where medical supplies and personnel would be offloaded.

National Archives





ABOVE: Photographed the day after it was attacked by the Japanese submarine I-21, the troopship SS *Cape San Juan* lists sharply to port. Soon after this photo was taken, the ship slipped beneath the waves. RIGHT: The U.S. Navy Martin PBY Mariner flying boat was a versatile aircraft capable of carrying a heavy payload in ordnance or a large number of passengers and crewmen. The flying boat played a critical role during the war in the Pacific, performing a variety of duties.

It was just after 10:30 in the morning, but at that moment Fiji did not look like the tropical paradise depicted on colorful postcards and celebrated in Hollywood movies. The weather was bad, with rain-laden, slate-gray clouds hovering over Fiji like harbingers of doom. Before Moss could complete his taxiing maneuvers a message crackled from the plane's radio phone. It was a call from Lt. Cmdr. A.L. Mare, who commanded at Fiji.

Indeed, the message was so urgent Mare did not have the time to wait until he could meet the Martin Mariner pilot face to face. A few hours earlier, at 5:30 AM on Thursday, November 11, 1943, the troopship SS *Cape San Juan* had been torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. Details were sketchy, but there had been around 1,400 souls aboard. Rain squalls lashed the area, and the seas were rough. Many of the men might well be in the water, and it was not clear if rescue ships could arrive in time.

Mare asked if the Martin Mariner seaplane might help. The stricken vessel was about 300 miles south of Fiji. Moss quickly agreed but felt he could take volunteers only among his own crew. In the 1930s and 1940s, flying boats were objects of adventure and romance, but behind the glamorous image there was a hard truth: seaplanes were not designed to land and take off in the rough seas of the open ocean.

Moss assembled his crew and told them what he knew. "I'm not ordering anyone to go," he declared. "The weather's foul—we'll be lucky if we even find the ship…." His crew listened intently, taking in every word. "The Navy tells me," he continued, "the seas are running 12 to 15 feet out there, and I've never set one of these tubs down in that kind of water. If we do get down in one piece, remember we still have to get back into the air."

The whole flight crew volunteered, but to save weight three junior officers were left behind. After that was settled, the crew worked feverishly to convert the Martin Mariner from a cargo plane into a rescue aircraft. All possible running gear was stripped from the cabin and the cargo was quickly put ashore. The seaplane's fuel tanks were topped

Rescue

off, and extra life jackets, life rafts, manila line, blankets, and medical supplies were stored aboard. Some hot soup was also carried, since the ship survivors were bound to be chilled after being immersed in the cold Pacific water.

Just before the final departure, a Navy captain asked Moss if he could go along on the rescue mission. The chief pilot had to respectfully decline because the officer's extra weight might mean one less survivor would be rescued. Undaunted, the captain handed Moss five bottles of I.W. Harper Kentucky Straight Bourbon whiskey. This top-grade liquor was originally destined for none other than Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, commander of the Third Fleet.

The Navy officer, pressing the bottles into Moss's hands, said, "If you need it, use it." But now it was time to take off, and the Martin PBM-3R left Fiji at 12:39 PM. Minutes into the flight Moss was ordered to abort the mission, but he requested that they be allowed to proceed. At 12:44 permission was granted, and the flight continued. Every man aboard the Martin Mariner knew the risks involved, but the mood was nevertheless upbeat.

The stricken ship and the Navy seaplane coming to its rescue had much in common, in spite of the obvious differences. Both performed services that were vital to the war effort, namely ferrying personnel, medicines, machine parts, and other supplies to battle fronts across the globe. Human nature and human history tend to focus on great battles and grand strategies. But without supplies— the vital sinews of war— victory would be impossible.

Frank Knox, Roosevelt's Secretary of the Navy, once said that World War II was "a war of supply." This was especially true of the Pacific Theater, where logistics were complicated by geography. The Pacific is the greatest body of water on the planet, encompassing some 64 million square miles of open sea. Islands speckle its surface, from the continental vastness of Australia to tiny atolls barely rising above the water.

The NATS was founded a few days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. At the time, the United States had few long-range cargo/transport aircraft. In fact, the only aircraft that did the California to Hawaii run on a regular basis, some 2,400 miles in all, were the civilian flying boats of Pan American Airways. Pan Am's Boeing 314s and Martin 130s, generi-

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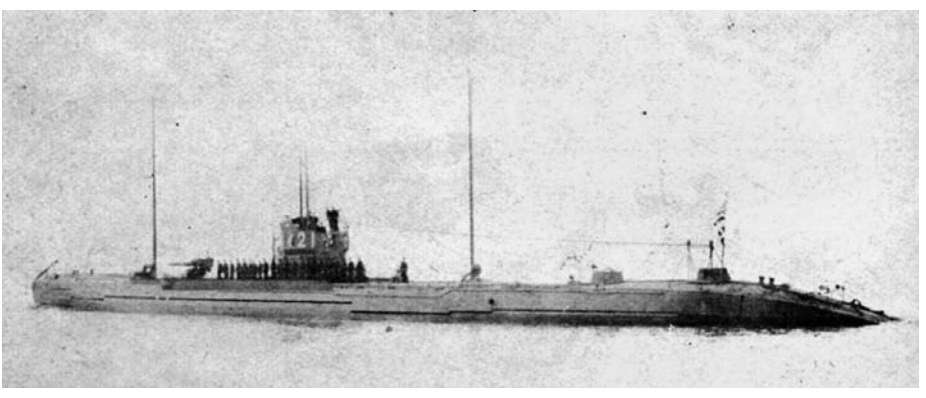
cally remembered as the China Clippers, were quickly pressed into service for the duration.

Other seaplane types were added to the NATS's fleet, including the Consolidated PB2Y-3 Coronado and the Martin PBM-3R Mariner. The "PB" designation stood for "Patrol Bomber," a name that was retained even when the aircraft was used solely for transport. "Y" was the Navy's code for Consolitated-Vultee, and M, of course, stood for "Martin."

The NATS grew rapidly, and by 1943-1944 it had 200 planes and 8,000 men. The service spanned the globe, transporting 22,500 priority passengers and 8,300,000 pounds of cargo

Both: U.S. Navy

ABOVE: Shown while in port in 1943, the troopship SS *Cape San Juan* was to later meet a tragic fate, torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. Survivors of the sinking were rescued after a harrowing ordeal. BELOW: The Japanese submarine *I-21*, which torpedoed the SS *Cape San Juan,* is shown before the war. Note the deck gun forward of the conning tower and the crew of the submarine, turned out on the deck for review.



a month. Shipments might include periscope elements for submarines, generator parts, aircraft engines, plasma, or drugs.

The U.S. Maritime Commission, founded in 1936, played a crucial part in building cargo ships for the war effort. Perhaps the most famous type of cargo vessel was the Liberty Ship, created under the direction of industrialist Henry J. Kaiser. Thanks in large part to prefabrication, construction times were reduced from 250 days to a mere 25 days.

The SS *Cape San Juan* was not a Liberty Ship but a dry cargo freighter type known as a C1-B. The C1-B was about 24 feet shorter, three feet wider, and 3,000 deadweight tons smaller than a Liberty Ship. The basic design had to be modified for war use. This included adding additional external deck structures, defensive armament, lifeboats, and rafts. Cargo holds were converted into living space with multi-tier bunks to accommodate troops. With these various additions, a typical C1-B could accommodate between 1,300 and 2,000 passengers.

The *Cape San Juan* was a new ship, delivered to the Hawaiian-American Steamship Co. on June 10, 1943. It completed only one trip before setting out on its fateful voyage. *Cape San Juan* departed San Francisco on October 28, 1943, its scheduled destination Townsville, Australia, a distance of roughly 7,000 miles.

There were some 1,464 people on board, a number that was still below the ship's maximum carrying capacity. The roster included the 57 civilian seaman crew, three radio operators, 42 Naval Armed Guardsmen (they operated the defensive guns), and 1,340 passengers. The passenger list was composed of three units of the Army Air Corps: the 885th "All Negro" Engineers (Aviation) Battalion, the 1st Fighter Control Squadron, and the 253rd Ordinance (Aviation) Company.

The 855th Engineer Aviation Battalion, 811 officers and enlisted men, was a segregated unit typical of World War II. In keeping with a racially motivated tradition that dated from the Civil War, African Americans could only serve in "all Negro" units under the direction of white officers. In any event, the 855th's main mission was to build and repair landing strips. As soon as Pacific islands were secured, such sites often became bases for fighters and bombers.

The 1st Fighter Control Company, with a complement of 367 officers and men, was a ground radar unit. They were among the very first formations to hit the beach during amphibious landings on Japanese-held islands. Once in place, they set up radar, cryptographic, and radio connections between land, sea, and air forces. Among other vital missions, they provided early warnings if the Japanese attempted to launch air strikes on Allied forces.

The passenger roster also included the 23rd Ordnance (Aviation) Company, 182 officers and men in all. Ordnance men were responsible for the maintenance of guns, bombs, torpedoes, and other munitions. They would also be on hand to stow munitions. They also serviced airplane bomb racks and performed other similar duties. The list was rounded out by 21 Army personnel, three officers and 18 enlisted men commanded by transport officer Major R.A. Barth. There was one civilian aboard as well.

The first two or three weeks of the voyage were fairly uneventful. *Cape San Juan*'s route was considered behind the lines, though the ship was always alert for danger. The ship faithfully followed all the precautionary rules, such as night blackouts and steering a zigzag course. Allied air patrols frequented the area, providing an additional measure of safety, or so it seemed. There was a relaxed mood aboard the ship, and there was even the opportunity to perform the time-honored "induction" ceremony for those who were crossing the equator for the first time.

Certainly, *Cape San Juan* was lucky to have an experienced sailor at the helm. Captain Walter Strong, 58, had been a seaman for most of his life. Like many sailors of his generation, he had started in sailing ships, and he knew the ocean's many moods. He was not one to panic and was seasoned enough to know what to do

in an emergency.

In fact, Strong was anything but complacent. The blackout was rigorously maintained, zigzagging proceeded as usual, and the armed guard gun crews were at general quarters. *Cape San Juan* was protected by three 3-inch 50-caliber guns, one 4-inch 50-caliber gun, and eight 20mm guns.

In the predawn hours of November 11, 1943, *Cape San Juan* was moving south at a speed of 14.7 knots. Though it was November, at 5:30 AM it was still light enough to see clearly. Suddenly, lookouts saw a periscope and at the same time spotted the telltale wake of a torpedo. It was the Japanese submarine *I-21,* commanded by Hiroshi Inada, but the lookouts could do nothing in the few seconds before torpedo impact.

The torpedo stuck at the aft end of the No. 2 hold just as the ship was executing a turn to starboard, part of the usual zigzag pattern. Tragically, this was exactly where the men of the 855th were lodged. There was a terrific explosion, a blast that sent a gray-white plume of oily water high into the air, higher, in fact, than the stricken ship's bridge.

The force of the blast carried No. 2 hold's hatch covers high into the air, but then they collapsed into the hold itself, killing several men. The Japanese submarine fired a second torpedo, which narrowly missed the *Cape San Juan*. The explosion was so powerful *Cape San Juan* was actually slightly lifted out of the water. The vessel began to take on a list and to go down slightly by the bow.

The ship's armed guard sprang to life, aiming its guns at the submarine's last known position, about 3,000 yards out. The 3-inch and 4-inch guns fired round after round, great spouts of white smoke pouring from their muzzles with each discharge. As soon as a gun fired, wisps of smoke curling from its breech, the gun crew rammed in another round with clockwork precision. The 20mm guns also opened up, firing a total of 1,000 rounds at the elusive foe.

Immediately after the ship was hit the order was given for "all stop." For the moment, *Cape San Juan* was dead in the water with a pronounced 15-degree list to starboard. Within about 15 minutes Captain Strong ordered "abandon ship." The events of the next hour or so are controversial, with some survivors claiming Strong's evacuation order was premature.

Some of the controversy is hindsight; at the time, there was a real fear that the submarine might try and finish the vessel off with additional torpedoes. The weather was far from perfect, and the seas were running a rough 15 feet with periodic whitecaps. About an hour

National Archives

The pilot of a Martin Mariner flying boat sits in the cockpit of the aircraft. The crewmen that rescued survivors of the SS *Cape San Juan* put their lives on the line during the event.

and a half after the first torpedo hit, a dull thud was heard, followed by an underwater explosion that caused the ship to vibrate. In retrospect, this probably was another torpedo strike, which was fortunately only a glancing blow. This ricochet apparently did no further structural damage.

Initial casualties from the blast and debris fall will never be adequately known. Most estimates place the number at about 16 to 20 killed, relatively light considering the ship's full passenger and crew complement. A number of men showed extreme courage trying to save the wounded at the risk of their own lives. Several officers, including the 855th's commander, Captain Herbert Edward Bass, lent a hand in rescuing or aiding wounded men in No. 2 hold.

By this time, No. 2 hold was a fearful place, a labyrinth of oily water and twisted steel, where weakened bulkheads, pipes, and other obstructions might well give way. Unwary divers might have their legs caught by unseen underwater debris, but danger was forgotten when lives were at stake. Bass and an enlisted man, Private Monroe Barkeley, dove into the shattered hold to tie a rope around wounded soldier Theodore Harris. Once the rope was in place, rescuers hauled the injured man to relative safety.

In the meantime, *Cape San Juan* was being evacuated. There were six lifeboats (in peacetime the standard was two), four wooden rafts, and 36 Carley floats of various capacities. The Carly float was essentially an oval ring of kapok or cork covered in canvas, the ubiquitous life raft of many World War II ships.

The Army personnel did not panic, and the evacuation was later described as "controlled." Nevertheless, in such situations things can and do go wrong. Some jumped ship in full combat gear and drowned. Apparently, some were killed when, once in the water, some of the lifeboats were launched in error on top of them. It is human nature to seek safety in a bigger, seemingly more stable vessel, so too many men made for the lifeboats. Lifeboat No. 4 became overcrowded and was swamped. Another came close to capsizing.

Some of the rafts, perhaps as many as six, drifted away in the high seas. Many of the men found themselves floating all but helplessly in the water with little to support them but their own personal lifejackets. Even the lifejackets provided little real comfort. Several of the men noted the lifejackets were stenciled with the warning "For Inland Waterways Only."

There was little to do now but wait for help, and to the hundreds of men bobbing about in the shark-infested waters it must have seemed like an eternity. The moment *Cape San Juan* was hit an SOS was dispatched, but then the radio officer inexplicably ordered that the radio be destroyed. Though listing badly, the ship was still afloat, much to the chagrin of the survivors who were in the sea. Many were coated with oil, and some were half-blind from the sticky, viscous substance.

A Royal New Zealand Air Force Lockheed Hudson coastal reconnaissance bomber arrived at 7:40 AM, some two hours after the torpedo struck. After circling *Cape San Juan*'s position, it left, then returned to radio the ship that help was on the way. The Hudson was a conventional fixed-wing land plane that could not be of immediate assistance, but the sight of the hovering aircraft must have been heartening to the survivors in the water.

The Liberty Ship *Edwin T. Meredith* was the first surface vessel to arrive on the scene at 11 AM, five and a half hours after the Japanese attack. The vessel combed the waters, circling *Cape San Juan* and pulling out as many survivors as possible. The *Meredith* crew did an outstanding job, but many survivors were drifting away in the white-capped seas and strong currents.

In the meantime, Captain Moss and his Martin Mariner seaplane were en route to the *Cape San Juan* site. The 300-mile journey was a long one, and they hit a tropical storm (Moss called it a "squall") about halfway to their destination. Lightning crackled through the sky, rain pummeled the Mariner's fuselage, and high winds buffeted the seaplane.

Throughout this rollercoaster ride the crew made final preparations for the attempted rescue. Pharmacist's Mate A.C. Burress, a last-minute addition to the crew, was particularly busy. It was a rough ride, described by First Officer Frank Saul as "tornado tough," but at last the battered seaplane emerged from the tur-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A U.S. Navy Martin PBM Mariner flying boat lands in calm Pacific waters. During the daring rescue of the SS *Cape San Juan* survivors, conditions were much different. The plane was eventually loaded with 55 passengers, including 48 men plucked from the water. BELOW: Aboard the minesweeper *YMS-241*, men of the 1st Fighter Control Company appear relieved. Several U.S. Navy vessels, as well as aircraft, participated in the rescue of the survivors of the SS *Cape San Juan,* torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on November 11, 1943.

bulence. Having literally weathered the storm, the Martin Mariner found itself about 10 miles from its objective.

Captain Moss and Second Officer Saul were at the controls trying to peer through thick cloud cover that partially reduced visibility. Saul later recalled, "We dropped down below the cloud cover and—boom!—there they were. The ship was listing to starboard, obviously sinking. We went around, circling three or four times...."

There were men still aboard *Cape San Juan*, perhaps 200 out of the original 1,464 men originally with the ship. The ship was obviously badly damaged but did not seem as if it was going to sink immediately. Since the ship seemed stable for the moment, Moss thought of the survivors bobbing helplessly about in the rough seas. But there did not seem to be anyone in the water. Currents and waves had scattered lifejacketed survivors for miles.

Then Moss spotted two RNZAF Hudsons circling a patch of ocean about eight miles away. The captain decided to investigate. At first all Moss and Saul could see was a thin black ribbon that stretched for three or four miles. This was an oil slick from the ship. When they looked closer, they could see that the slick was speckled with black dots, the *Cape San Juan* survivors.

It was a moment for careful reflection. Moss turned to Saul and said, "Well, what do you think?" Saul answered, "Well, what do YOU think?" Both men, veteran pilots, knew the problems they faced. The seas were rough, running at a good 15 feet. If the seaplane landed into the wind as it normally did, the Martin Mariner would be hitting the white-capped waves.

The effect would be, in Moss's words, like that of a "bucking bronco." The only alternative was to land cross wind, which violated every rule in the book. Moss hoped he could "stick one wing into the side of a wave" and thus have a relatively safe, if not smooth, landing. Time was running out. A decision had to be made. Moss courageously opted for the cross-wind landing.

Moss took the controls and guided the seaplane in at 70 knots. For one breathless moment it seemed the captain's gamble paid off, and then the Mariner hit a wave that rudely bounced it back into the air a good 50 feet. Moss manhandled the throttles and held the elevators back as the plane collided with a series of waves. The Mariner shuddered violently as wave after wave slammed into the plane's rounded nose.

The sledgehammer blows tested the endurance of both seaplane and pilot; Moss later said he was certain he heard glass breaking, and in his mind's eye could imagine seawater pouring into the interior. The Mariner successfully came down, with a relieved Moss admitting, "It was a pretty rough landing."

Moss ordered a structural check, and all seemed okay. But there was no guarantee that the seaplane could take off again, especially if loaded with survivors. For the moment, Moss and his crew set aside any doubts and fears and prepared to rescue as many *Cape San Juan* survivors as possible.

But Captain Moss was confronted with a new set of problems. The survivors were scattered in every direction, and if the Mariner taxied after them they might well be hit by one of the seaplane's spinning propellers. The survivors had been in the water for nine hours by then and were too exhausted to swim. Radio operator Don McKay and steward Kennie Taylor inflated a life raft and attached it to a 100-foot rope.

Next, they tossed the lifeboat into the sea, playing out the line to its maximum length.

"We zigzagged upwind," Moss remembered, "trailing [the line] behind us, and all survivors who came in contact with the line worked their way down to the raft." When the life raft was full, the Mariner crew hauled the rope in like a fishing line and collected the men on the raft. When the last survivor was hauled in, the raft was returned to the sea for another load. Once aboard, survivors were given first aid if needed, then supplied with blankets, hot coffee, hot soup, or even a shot of the admiral's whiskey.

The Mariner continued hauling in survivors for about two hours. It was exhausting work because the survivors were dead weight from weakness and slippery because they were covered in oil. Then, as Moss later recalled, "Suddenly, I saw one of the New Zealand planes fire two red Very shells. I didn't know why—but red means danger. We were a nice target for any lurking submarine."

It was time to go in any case. The air crewmen were exhausted, and there were 48 survivors aboard the seaplane. Counting the crewmen, there were 55 people on the Mariner, twice the maximum load. Moss was the son of Supreme Court Associate Justice William Moss, and as a jurist the father was used to handing down important decisions. Now the son was faced with his own decision, this one a matter of life and death.

How was he going to get the overloaded Mariner into the air again in rough seas? First, Moss jettisoned the auxiliary gas tanks to lighten the load. As it was, the seaplane was still overweight, with an estimated 45,258 pounds. Moss's flight path was also relatively narrow, with little margin for error. Another rain squall threatened on the right, and on the left more survivors bobbed about.

Moss took the controls and started forward, bringing the Mariner to 55 knots, but as the seaplane lifted off it hit the top of a wave, a collision that bounced it into the air 50 or 60 feet. The heavy seaplane was still not airborne but continued to bounce the ocean swells like a thrown rock skipping over a pond. After five or six bounces the plane finally was airborne at a speed of 70 knots. The whole takeoff took only 50 seconds, but it must have seemed like an eternity to the men aboard.

It was still a near-run thing, and at one point the wing had dropped 20 degrees before being righted again. Captain Moss later recalled that it was the "hairiest takeoff of my life." Second Officer Saul concurred, saying, "It was the longest 50 seconds of my life."

The Mariner successfully made it to Suva, Fiji, where the survivors were offloaded and given medical care. As a civilian pilot of the NATS, William Moss's employer was actually Pan American Airways. Since he was technically a civilian, he was not eligible for a medal, but his heroic flight did not go unnoticed and the Navy did give him a warm commendation letter.

National Archives

Pulled from the Pacific by sailors of the destroyer USS *McCalla,* men of the 855th Engineer Aviation Battalion leave the warship after it has made port. The survivors exhibit the strain of their ordeal following the sinking of the troopship SS *Cape San Juan.*

The saga of *Cape San Juan* was not over yet. Other ships came to the scene to conduct search and rescue operations. The destroyer USS *McCalla* (DD-488), the minesweeper *YMS-241,* and the destroyer escort USS *Dempsey* (DE-26) were all involved at one time or another. Each of these vessels picked up what survivors they could find.

It was nearly 8 PM, over 14 hours after the Japanese attack, when the final crew members were taken off *Cape San Juan* by *Edwin Meredith*. In keeping with the ancient tradition of the sea, Captain Strong was among those last few people to leave the ship. Once aboard the rescue ship, Strong requested that the now abandoned vessel be finished off by naval gunfire.

The request was granted, and the *Edwin Meredith*'s aft 3-inch deck gun fired 12 rounds into *Cape San Juan*'s hull. The next day, November 12, the submarine chaser *SC-1048* reported that Holds 2 and 3 were flooded and the ship was gutted by flames. It is not certain if the flames were ignited by the *Edwin Meredith*'s deck gun or by an earlier Japanese torpedo.

The battered *Cape San Juan* could take no more and started going down by the bow. Within minutes it was all over, the ship plunging some 1,400 fathoms to the bottom of the Pacific. It was the only ship of its type lost to a Japanese submarine.

The total number of casualties is difficult to assess. There were multiple commands aboard *Cape San Juan*, and several vessels picked up survivors. Some died aboard rescue ships and were buried at sea. When injured survivors did reach land, they were segregated according to race, a common practice of the period.

When all available evidence is examined, probably about 130 men were killed, died of wounds, or drowned. A further 200 or so were injured but recovered and returned to duty. The prompt action and heroism of both the rescue ships and the seaplane crew had prevented a much larger catastrophe.

The sinking of *Cape San Juan* was a short-lived triumph for the Japanese submarine *I-21*. A little over two weeks later, on November 27, 1943, Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers from the escort carrier USS *Chanango* (CVE-28) sank a B-1 type Japanese submarine. *I-21* had been in the area, and after November 27 it was never heard from again. Presumed lost, it was struck from the Japanese Imperial Navy roster in 1944.

When his Mariner returned to Fiji, Captain Moss dutifully returned what was left of the admiral's whiskey to the naval officer who had sent it. There were two full bottles and one that was half full. The officer, eyeing Moss, impulsively gave the half-full bottle back to the seaplane pilot. "Here," he declared. "You look like you could use it."

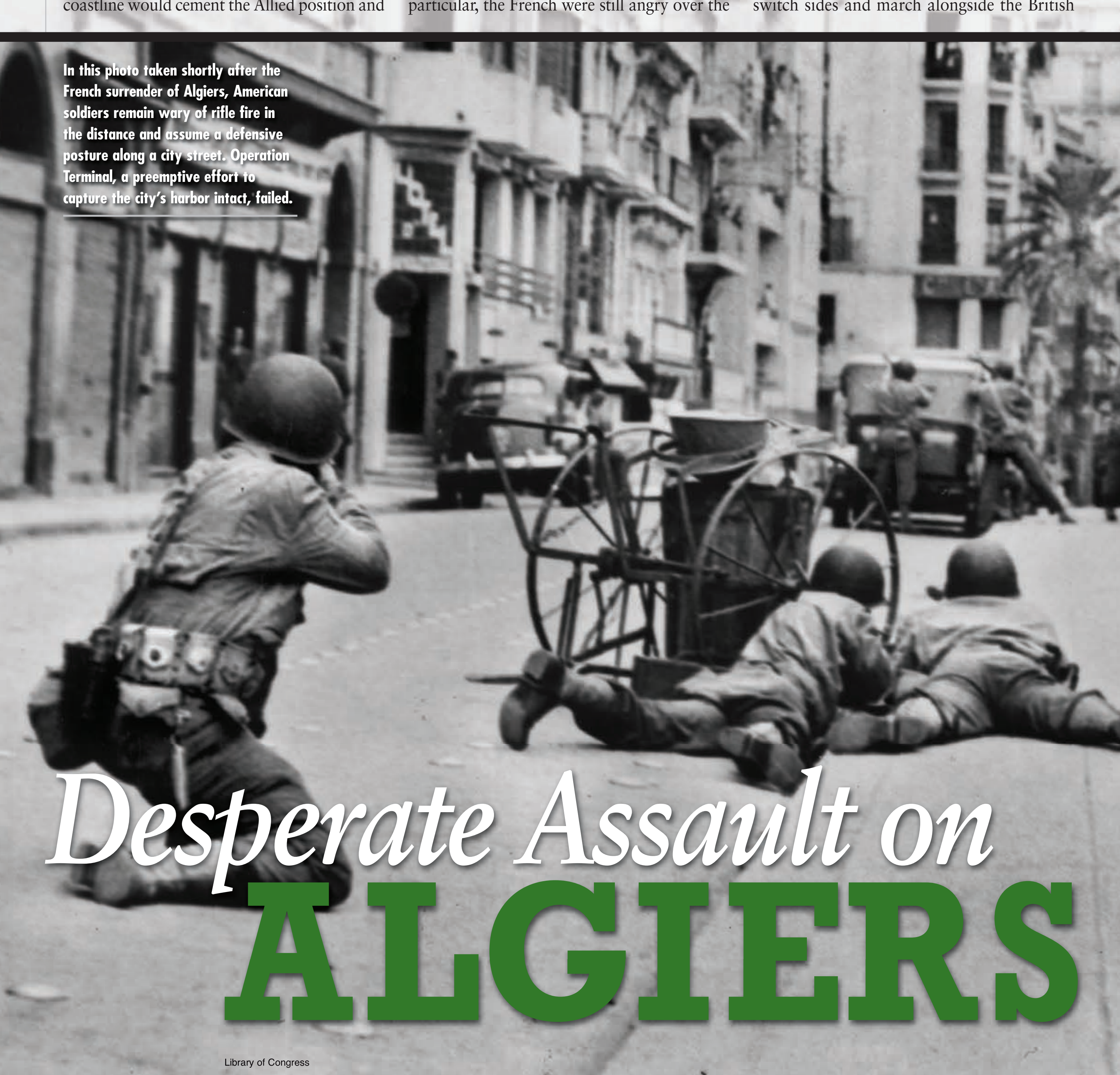
Moss gratefully accepted, intending to share the gift with his flight crew. But by the time he was debriefed, his crew had all gone to get something to eat. Wearily Moss went to his quarters in a Quonset hut and sat down at the end of his bunk. Wasting no time, he finished the admiral's whiskey himself. At that moment, he probably appreciated the drink more than a medal. □

Eric Niderost is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He writes from Hayward, California, where he is also a college professor.*

Desperate Assault on ALGIERS

IN NOVEMBER 1942, the Anglo-American invasion of North Africa, Operation Torch, caused a short but intense conflict with French forces loyal to the Vichy regime in power on the European mainland. The Allies sought to finish the Axis presence not only in Vichy-controlled areas but also to eliminate the Italian-German forces to the east in Libya. The British Eighth Army, fresh from victory at El Alamein, was steadily pushing those forces westward. Taking control of the entire North African coastline would cement the Allied position and make follow-on operations in the Mediterranean Theater possible.

It was hoped the French in the area would quickly come over to the Allied cause rather than side with the collaborationist Vichy government based in occupied France. Much intelligence work and political maneuvering occurred behind the scenes to ensure just such an outcome. Still, it was by no means certain which way the French troops would go when American and British soldiers came ashore. In particular, the French were still angry over the British attack on their navy at Mers-el-Kebir in July 1940. The British, afraid the French ships would be surrendered to the Germans as part of the armistice, had attacked a French force when it refused an ultimatum to either join the British or be interned in neutral territory. The British also supported or conducted attacks on French colonial bases in other parts of Africa. Despite the presence of Free French forces allied to the British, it was unclear whether the French in North Africa would be willing to essentially switch sides and march alongside the British



In this photo taken shortly after the French surrender of Algiers, American soldiers remain wary of rifle fire in the distance and assume a defensive posture along a city street. Operation Terminal, a preemptive effort to capture the city's harbor intact, failed.

Library of Congress

and Americans. In light of this uncertainty, the invasion force had to be prepared to fight.

Part of these preparations included seizing Algiers Harbor intact. The invading armies required functioning ports to remain well-supplied with fuel, ammunition, food, and all the necessities of modern warfare. If the French stayed loyal to Vichy and wrecked the port facilities, it would render the Allied logistical effort much more difficult, delaying the advance eastward against the Axis. To this end, a risky plan to seize the harbor by coup-de-main was proposed. It would use a battalion of American soldiers and a pair of British destroyers in a joint operation code-named Terminal.

Terminal was one of a pair of operations designed to seize intact harbors. The other, named Reservist, was a similar plan to capture the port facilities at Oran. Both were the ideas of British planners based on a prior, successful mission in the same vein. In May 1942, British forces invaded Madagascar, another Vichy French territory, to keep its maritime facilities out of Axis hands. During the assault on the port of Diego Suarez, a British destroyer rushed through the French defenses and landed a force of Royal Marines, who caused such havoc in the town the French defense was quickly defeated. The British hoped to repeat their success with such daring attacks on the North African ports at Oran and Algiers, both necessary to Allied objectives.

Both plans were essentially the same. A pair of British naval vessels would carry a force of American troops into the harbor. Upon landing the troops would spread through the port, cap-

A JOINT U.S. ARMY AND ROYAL NAVY FORCE ATTEMPTED A COUP DE MAIN ON ALGIERS HARBOR IN THE OPENING HOURS OF OPERATION TORCH.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

HARBOR

turing key facilities such as fuel depots and docks for unloading supplies. They would hold their positions until the main landing forces fought their way into the city and linked with them. If things went well, it was hoped the local French might even surrender to the American soldiers without a shot fired.

Many of those involved held strong reservations about the success of these plans. There were doubts the French would give up so easily, especially since they had fought fiercely at other places, such as Madagascar and Dakar. Also, many questioned how the French would know whose troops were coming ashore in the dark or whether they would trust what they saw even with large American flags flying prominently.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill himself said, "In the night, all cats are grey," in reference to the idea. Some thought the idea bold and aggressive, a worthy notion. Others considered it tantamount to suicide for the assigned men. Even so, after deliberation, American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, senior Allied commander in the Mediterranean, approved the plan despite the varied opinions about it. For Operation Torch to succeed, the Allies needed those port facilities intact, and he deemed the risk, although high, worth the potential result.

Algiers was the target of Operation Torch's Eastern Task Force. The assault force for the actual invasion was composed of the British 11th Infantry Brigade along with the U.S. 39th and 168th Regimental Combat Teams from the 9th and 34th Infantry Divisions, respectively. Each unit was assigned its own beach to land on with follow-on missions to seize vital objectives and move into the city proper. Two battalion-sized groups of British Commandos were also assigned to go ashore and capture vital coastal gun emplacements and forts.

Many of the British troops would wear American uniforms as it was thought the local inhabitants would be more favorably inclined toward Americans. Overall command of the Eastern Task Force fell to British Lt. Gen. Kenneth Anderson. However, the amphibious phase of the operation would be led by American Maj. Gen. Charles Ryder, again an attempt to soften French reaction to the landings.

Two World War I-era destroyers were selected for the Terminal operation. The first was HMS *Malcolm,* commissioned in 1919. Armed with a pair of 4.7-inch guns, a suite of lighter antiaircraft guns, and torpedoes, *Malcolm* was just over 332 feet long and displaced 1,530 tons. Her Latin motto, *In ardua tendit,* "He strives in difficulties," would prove apt. The second ship, HMS *Broke,* was begun in 1918 but not completed until 1925. Displacing 1,480 tons and 329 feet long, *Broke* had a heavier main armament of five 4.7-inch guns. There was not enough room in quarters aboard the two ships for hundreds of infantrymen, so most would have to stay on deck.

To provide a modicum of protection during the assault, both destroyers had sheets of iron a quarter-inch thick welded all the way around the deck to form a makeshift shield against small-arms fire. The entrance to Algiers Harbor was protected by a steel boom, so both ships had their bows reinforced to allow them to break through it.

National Archives

The British destroyer *Malcolm* is shown with a complement of American soldiers aboard. *Malcolm* was severely damaged during Operation Terminal and did not enter the harbor at Algiers until November 10, two days after the commencement of Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa.

The unit selected to go ashore was the 3rd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment, a standard U.S. infantry battalion of the 34th Division. The entire division was training in the United Kingdom. Though the unit had no specialized training for such a mission, it was chosen and ordered to move from its training site in Northern Ireland to a camp near Belfast. Since the choice had been a last-minute affair, counterintelligence agents spread rumors through the rest of the regiment that 3/135th was sent on maneuvers in the Sperrin Mountains.

The battalion was a unit of the Minnesota National Guard, activated in 1940 as part of the 34th Division, a "pure" National Guard formation composed of units from several states brought together. At this early stage of the war, most of a National Guard regiment's troops were still from their home state. Only after the infantry took casualties in combat did such units absorb replacements from across the United States. For its first mission 3/135th was a Minnesota battalion. Many of its soldiers sported Nordic surnames, and the regiment had a tradition going back to the Battle of Gettysburg, where it earned its motto, "To the last man." Third Battalion had also earned the sobriquet "The Singing Third"; its men had a wide range of barracks songs, some of them considered rather bawdy.

The commander, Lt. Col. Edwin T. Swenson, a native of Stillwater, was described by one subordinate as dynamic and aggressive. Reportedly possessed of a generous nature and a quick sense of humor, Swenson also had a tough side; before the war he had been assistant warden at the Minnesota State Penitentiary. After arriving in Britain he had bragged that his battalion's top sergeant had to be able to best him in a fight. He was also known for his excellence at swearing.

With little time to prepare for the new assignment, the battalion threw itself into intense training including some specialized techniques for assaulting a harbor, though neither officers nor men knew where they were training to go. Around 40 British naval personnel joined the battalion; once ashore they would help form joint boarding parties to seize ships docked in the harbor. To help maintain the illusion of English noninvolvement, they were also issued American uniforms.

Every day, the battalion would be trucked to

Rue des Archives / The Granger Collection, NY

British troops conducted a successful occupation of Madagascar in May 1942, wresting control of the island from the Vichy French. In this photo, Tommies rush ashore from landing craft to occupy key objectives.

Belfast Harbor for training. Just before training ended, the entire battalion went to the harbor and practiced loading and unloading from the *Malcolm* and the *Broke*. A small detachment from M Company remained on the destroyers at the end of the night. Finally, on the morning of October 26, the rest of 3/135th, 634 soldiers, embarked on the cruiser HMS *Sheffield* for their journey to the Mediterranean. Luckily for the ship and passengers, the trip was uneventful and the weather good. Two nights later, *Sheffield* joined a convoy headed for the shores of North Africa via Gibraltar.

The next night, October 29, the Americans were briefed by Captain Henry Fancourt of the Royal Navy. A veteran of Jutland, Fancourt would take command of the *Malcolm* and *Broke* for the mission. It was the first time the U.S. officers were given detailed information about what was expected of them. After they had gathered in *Sheffield*'s wardroom, each was given a detailed map of Algiers Harbor, though none knew it was Algiers; all reference to the city's name had been removed. Fancourt told them the combined Anglo-American group had been designated Terminal Force. After *Sheffield* passed through Gibraltar, the U.S. troops would transfer to the destroyers for the rest of the voyage.

Lieutenant Colonel Swenson was aware of the general plan and continued the briefing. After leaving Gibraltar, *Sheffield* would speed ahead of the convoy to rendezvous with the destroyers. Company K along with two platoons of Company I would go aboard the *Malcolm,* while Company L and the rest of Company I would transfer to the *Broke*. Those soldiers from Company M (the battalion's heavy weapons company) not already aboard the destroyers would be divided among the two ships along with a party of medical troops attached for the mission.

With the transfer complete, Terminal Force would proceed to the unnamed French city and take part in the landings. The destroyers would break through the harbor's boom, *Broke* in the lead followed by *Malcolm* 15 minutes later. Once in the harbor they would land the American soldiers, who would seize the harbor installations to prevent sabotage.

The officers studied their maps closely. The city was located along the shoreline on level ground that soon turned into hills and ridges to the west that overlooked the harbor. That harbor was crescent shaped and opened to the east. There were a number of concrete jetties or breakwaters extending from the shore to protect the inner harbor. The steel boom was strung between two of them. A number of coastal gun emplacements surrounded the area and seemed able to place fire on the harbor itself. This concerned a number of the American officers until Captain Fancourt told them British Commandos were assigned to capture the emplacements, which in any event probably could not depress their guns far enough to effectively fire on the port.

The Americans were also concerned about the number of French gun emplacements. This concern was abated when the Americans, totally ignorant of how to interpret aerial photographs, realized some of the positions they had identified as gun emplacements were actually latrines. The total area the battalion was expected to occupy ran some 3,000 yards from the port offices in the north to a jetty called the Brise Lames Est, to which one end of the boom was attached. Terminal Force would make its assault two hours after the main element of the Eastern Task Force began its landing. It was hoped this would give the French time to redeploy troops to meet the other landings and make taking the harbor easier.

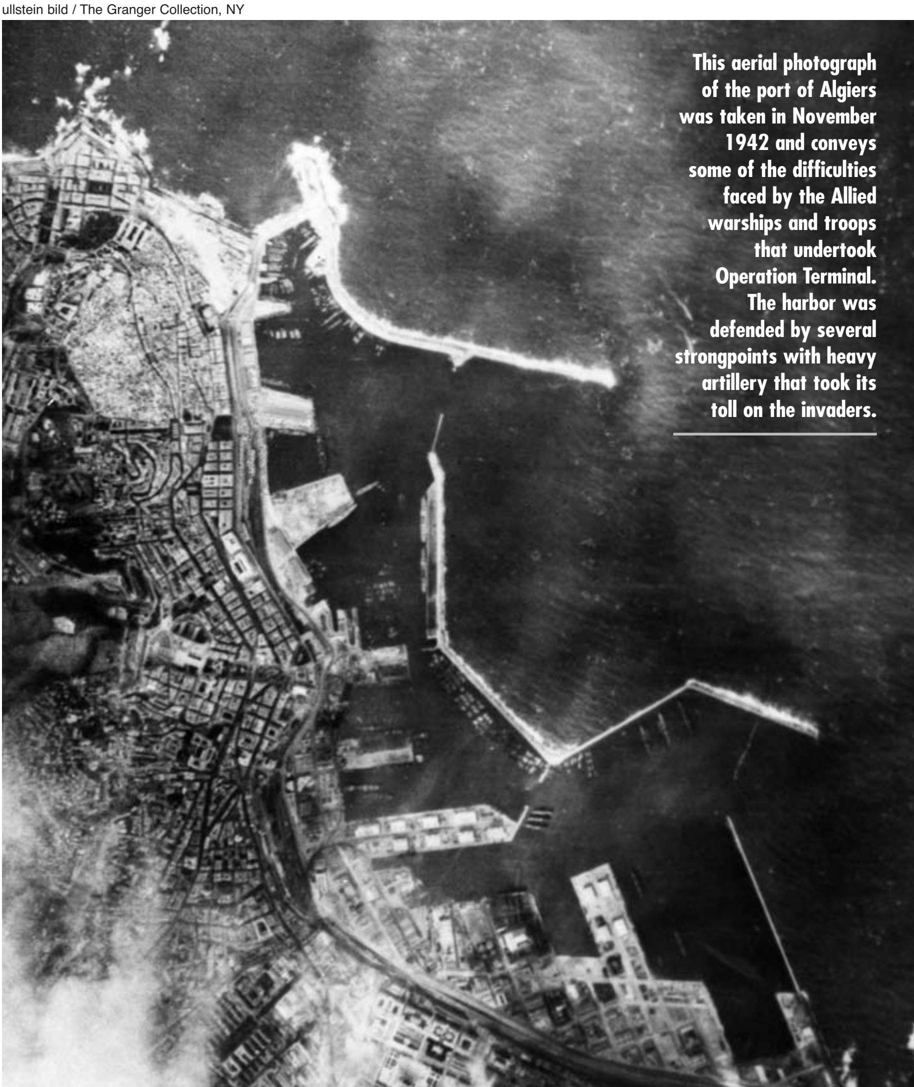
The Americans came up with three variations of their plan to capture the port. Plan A assumed both destroyers were able to land their troops and each platoon was given specific objectives, such as the electric power station, oil depot, and seaplane base. The mixed Anglo-American boarding parties would take over any ships docked in the harbor. Plans B and C assumed one or the other destroyer did not make it and the troops on the ship that succeeded would have to assume the entire mission. A fourth plan covered the complete failure of the mission, in which case the destroyers would sound three blasts from their sirens to recall all the landed troops for withdrawal. The naval vessels offshore, including *Sheffield,* would be ready to give fire support with their heavy guns.

After a brief stop at Gibraltar, the *Sheffield* sped on its way to rendezvous with the *Malcolm* and *Broke*. Once clear of its final stop, the need for secrecy abated, and the Americans learned they were going to Algiers. The plan, along with additional copies of the map, were given to all the noncommissioned officers. On the afternoon of November 6 (some sources say November 7), the three British ships met for the transfer of personnel. *Malcolm* came alongside first at 1630 hours, and those Americans assigned to her went aboard without difficulty. An hour later the *Broke* did the same. Swenson went aboard the *Broke* with Captain Fancourt while the battalion's executive officer, Captain William Snellman, went aboard *Malcolm*.

With all the Americans aboard their respective ships, Terminal Force set out for Algiers and the rest of the Eastern Task Force. There was no moon that night, and clouds blocked out the starlight. Since there was not enough room below to berth the soldiers, most had to stay on the main deck with little room to move around. Luckily, the weather was warm and the men experienced little discomfort. Swenson had his men lie down early in the evening of November 7; they would awake at midnight and make ready to go ashore.

Midnight arrived and with it November 8, 1942, the day of the landings. The troops were roused and told to prepare themselves. With

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY



This aerial photograph of the port of Algiers was taken in November 1942 and conveys some of the difficulties faced by the Allied warships and troops that undertook Operation Terminal. The harbor was defended by several strongpoints with heavy artillery that took its toll on the invaders.

everyone already gathered, only an hour passed before one and all, U.S. Army and Royal Navy alike, were ready. Tension was heavy in the air as the men awaited the order to proceed. Captain Fancourt received that order at 0220 hours. The landings around Algiers were a success; Terminal Force was to carry out its mission.

Malcolm and *Broke* sailed east through the waters off the North African coast for another hour before the lights of the city of Algiers shone like a beacon just a few hundred yards off the destroyer's starboard side. Lieutenant Leslie Bailey, a platoon leader in 3/135th, recalled what he saw that night: "Upon closer approach we could see at irregular intervals the orange flashes of artillery fire to the rear of Algiers but not from the batteries within the city limits. Suddenly all lights were extinguished, leaving only the dim outline of the higher buildings visible through the dusky gloom."

Whether the French had spotted Terminal Force or whether they had simply taken a long time to black out the city, the Allied troops could not be sure. They had their answer moments later when searchlights from the harbor defenses snapped on and began questing through the darkness. The destroyers came up to full speed for their runs at the boom. For a time they stayed hidden in the night, but even though the beams of light did not touch them both ships' crews were partly blinded by the lights. This threw them off course, outside the eastern jetty the boom was attached to. Both ships had to come around for another try, *Broke* in the lead.

As they turned sharply to line up on the boom, the searchlights finally found *Malcolm,* which came under fire from the Batterie des Arcades, situated south of Algiers on a hill overlooking the city. The destroyers began making smoke to obscure themselves from the French gunners, but this only made the boom harder to find. *Broke* missed on her second attempt and turned again for another run. By now, the French had found her too and she began taking fire from shore batteries to the north and south.

Malcolm came around as well, and Fancourt signaled her from the *Broke* to get into the harbor if she could. Again *Malcolm* missed the boom and heeled off to come around. As she turned, the French found the range and Batterie des Arcades hit her several times. A fire started amidships, revealing *Malcolm* to every gunner ashore. One of the incoming rounds hit the ship's smokestack; shrapnel flew everywhere, slashing into the helpless infantry crouching upon the deck below. A second shell went through the destroyer's center hatch and exploded below decks, disabling three of the ship's four engines. Simultaneously, a large supply of American mortar ammunition, stored amidships, was set afire by the explosions. The ammunition was packed in tarred pasteboard boxes, which now burned brightly. *Malcolm* was an easy target for French guns.

Realizing the danger the fire posed, American 2nd Lt. William Muir took action and likely saved the ship. He ran to the burning ammunition boxes, heedless of the danger, and began throwing them overboard. Other soldiers saw this selfless act and were inspired to join him. Together they flung all the burning ammunition overboard into the dark waters of the harbor, extinguishing the fire that threatened not only to further damage the ship but exposed her to her foes. Still, the destroyer was badly damaged and her captain decided to withdraw. Listing badly and her speed reduced to four knots, *Malcolm* slowly made her way out to sea where she took up position outside the harbor mouth.

With half the force now out of action, Captain Fancourt decided to continue the mission with just the *Broke.* A third attempt on the boom was thwarted by the angry fire of the shore batteries, now able to concentrate on the single remaining ship. Determined, Fancourt ordered another pass. The fourth try was a success, and *Broke* sliced through the boom at high speed.

Lieutenant Bailey recalled there was almost no sensation they had even struck the boom. Now inside the harbor, the destroyer made for the Grande Mole dock in the center of the port. As they approached, however, it became clear that the dock was already jammed with ships, so the attacking ship was diverted to a nearby quay just to the south, the Quai de Falaise. HMS *Broke* pulled alongside the quay and prepared to disembark her American troops.

Before the Americans could get ashore, several of the ships tied up at the Grande Mole began pouring machine-gun fire at the *Broke*. More fire came from warehouses near the oil depot just west of the ship's berth on the Quai de Falaise. Several British sailors were wounded

before their comrades manning the ship's 20mm Oerlikon cannon returned fire, hosing the enemy with cannon shells. Within moments the French weapons were silenced.

With the way now clear, the American infantry dashed off the *Broke* and began seizing their nearby objectives. Swenson shouted to his men to "light out like stripey-assed baboons up the wharf until you can get some cover, then fight like hell."

Within minutes the entire area of the quay, the oil depot, and the power station were all in U.S. hands. It was now about 0520 hours. More objectives lay to the north, but it was not clear that the Americans ashore had the numbers to effectively occupy them. For the time being, they took up defensive positions around what they had already secured and attempted to gain intelligence about French intentions. Would the French fight or surrender? Sporadic machine-gun fire raked the streets and intersections around the U.S. positions, but it was incredibly inaccurate.

The next few hours passed without any major fighting. The GIs observed that the city smelled like a barroom; the locals had little gasoline and powered their vehicles with alcohol, leaving an odor hanging over the town. At 0800 hours, four Frenchmen, two civilians and two policemen, approached the American lines to parley. They were taken to Lt. Col. Swenson to confer.

The French wanted to arrange the surrender of the city to the Americans and asked for a representative to return with them to negotiate. It would have been welcome news, but at the same time one of the British officers from the boarding parties reported a meeting with a French Army officer. This Frenchman told the British officer the American force was surrounded and the local French troops had no intention of giving up the fight. It was a confusing situation.

As Swenson pondered his next move, artillery fire began crashing around them from a French battery to the north. The *Broke* was struck by the third round, which passed completely through the ship's bow. The destroyer moved slightly west to place the docks and buildings of the Grande Mole between the ship and the battery. More artillery roared in, blanketing the entire area between the American defenses and the British destroyer. The Batterie des Arcades to the south now zeroed in on *Broke* and after six ranging rounds hit her five times. One shell hit the destroyer in the sick bay, killing one of the ship's doctors and blowing off the other's arm. Self-administering a shot of morphine, the wounded doctor gave an American medic advice on how to perform several amputations before he passed out.

Broke was now the main target of the French batteries, which had apparently not been seized by the commandos and were indeed able to depress their guns to engage targets in the harbor. Fancourt decided he had to withdraw the destroyer before she was sunk. Accordingly, he sent the withdrawal signal of three blasts from the ship's siren at 0930 hours.

Swenson heard the signal but decided to stay. He reasoned the incoming artillery would wreak havoc on his soldiers as they fell back to the *Broke* and force the destroyer to remain a still target longer. The main landing forces had been ashore almost 10 hours and should be arriving in Algiers soon. He was certain 3/135th could hold out a few more hours. Sixty of the Americans did get aboard the *Broke* and left with her.

Since the rest of the Americans were determined to stay, Fancourt immediately got *Broke* underway. The wounded destroyer pulled away from the dock and made for the open sea, French shells falling all around her. One wounded American, Pfc. Harold Cullum, had crawled out to the destroyer but could not get aboard before it left. He lay on the dock's edge, pulled out his canteen and some sulfa tablets, and watched the ship leave. More of the incoming fire struck, and soon the hapless warship was disabled.

Another destroyer risked coming in and soon took the *Broke* under tow, pulling her out of the harbor to the open Mediterranean amid a flurry of falling shells. The destroyer had been hit some 22 times; water rushed in through shellholes far faster than it could be pumped out. *Broke* was doomed. Captain Fancourt ordered

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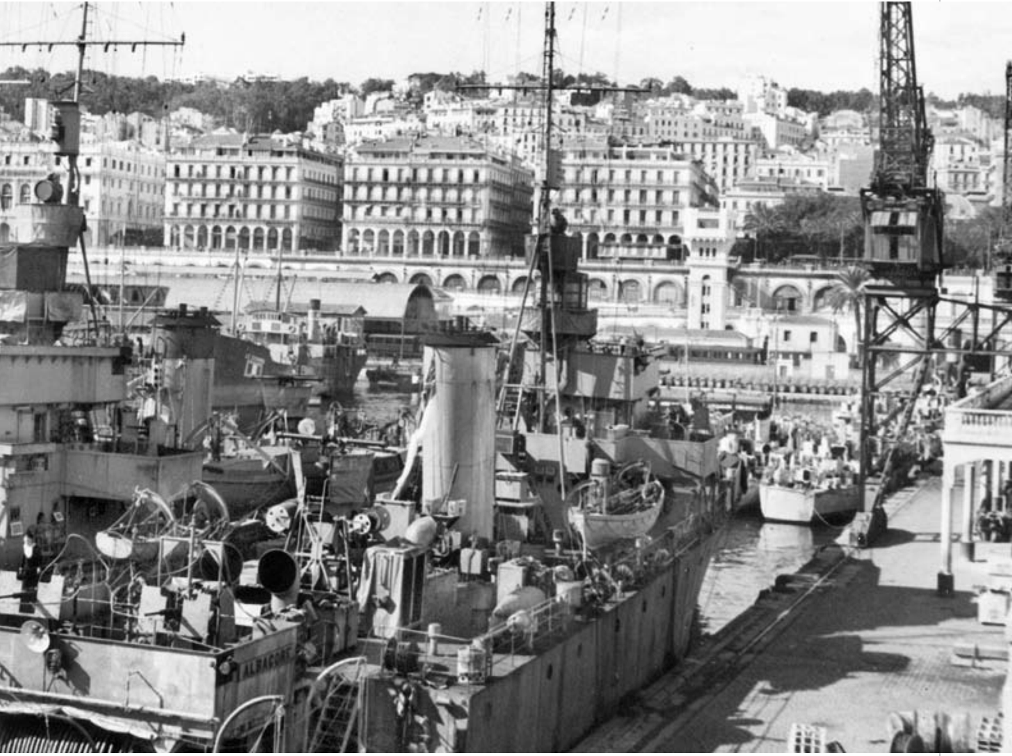


ABOVE: This obsolete French Renault tank was photographed shortly after the capture of Algiers. Although the Vichy French garrison put up spirited resistance for a while, hostilities eventually ceased and the Allies gained control of the city and its harbor. RIGHT: A week after the failed American attempt to capture the harbor at Algiers from the sea, the vital port is nevertheless crowded with Allied shipping. Operation Terminal failed; however, Operation Torch, the major effort to secure an Allied foothold on the western coast of North Africa, was successful.

SOVIET NAVY OVER BERLIN

Efforts to bomb the Nazi capital from Baltic bases met with limited success. BY VICTOR KAMENIR

ON JULY 22, 1941, exactly one month after invading the Soviet Union, German aviation conducted its first air strike on Moscow. Squadrons of German bombers fought through the swarms of Soviet fighters, searchlights, and air defense artillery barrages to drop over 100 tons of bombs on the Soviet capital. Even though the damage to the city was minor, Soviet Premier Josef Stalin could not allow the attack on his capital to go unanswered.

The war was going badly for the Soviet Union, and Stalin needed some symbolic act to raise the morale of his people. With this in mind, he ordered a retaliatory air attack on the German capital of Berlin to demonstrate to the Soviet population and the rest of the world that the Soviet Union was still very much in the war.

However, as the Red Army continued steadily retreating under the German onslaught, the distance from the front lines to Berlin stretched to over 600 miles. With the airfields of the Red Air Force relocating farther and farther east, this placed the German capital just out of reach for the majority of Soviet long-range bombers. The Soviet Navy turned out to be in a unique position to carry out Stalin's orders, and headquarters staff of the Naval Air Forces under Lt. Gen. Semyon F. Zhavoronkov came up with an ambitious and extremely dangerous but marginally workable plan.

Since the annexation of the small state of Estonia in 1940, Soviet forces had garrisoned the Moonzund Archipelago, located in the Baltic Sea west of the Estonian capital city of Tallinn. From Saaremaa, the main island of the Moonzund Archipelago, Berlin was roughly 550 miles and under four hours of flight time away. With precise planning and preparation, Naval Ilyushin DB-3 medium

Colonel Evgeniy N. Preobrazhenskiy, commander of the Soviet 1st Torpedo Bomber Regiment, inspects one of the bombers under his command prior to the first Operation B raid against Berlin on August 7-8, 1941. OPPOSITE: Petlyakov Pe-2 dive bombers are shown flying in formation toward an enemy target. The Pe-2 was a highly successful light aircraft used throughout World War II and into the 1950s.

All photos: Sovfoto / Eastfoto

bombers could fly to Berlin and back, with less than 20 minutes of fuel remaining upon return. Any deviation off course, equipment malfunction, or extension of flight time could force the bombers to land in the water or in occupied territory.

The closest friendly territory on the mainland was a small and rapidly shrinking Soviet beachhead around Tallinn, a major base of the Soviet Baltic Fleet. Saaremaa Island featured two dirt airstrips. One was located roughly in the center of the island near the village of Kagul, and a second, smaller strip was near the village of Aste to the southeast. A squadron of old Polikarpov I-153 "Chaika" biplane fighters was stationed at Kagul. Neither runway was long enough at the time to accommodate the long-range bombers but could be extended without much difficulty.

General Zhavoronkov presented his plan to his superior officer, commander of the Soviet Navy Admiral Nikolay G. Kuznetsov, who approved the proposal and set up a meeting for the two of them with Stalin. At the meeting on July 26, 1941, Stalin approved Zhavoronkov's plan and placed the general in command of the effort dubbed Operation B for Berlin.

General Zhavoronkov selected the 1st Torpedo Bomber Regiment from the Baltic Sea Fleet to provide the majority of personnel and aircraft for the mission. Additional aircraft and personnel would come from an Army aviation regiment. At the start of the war, the Red Air Force was not an independent service, but a subordinate force with the Army and Navy. Hence, its full name was the rather cumbersome Military Air Forces of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (VVS RKKA).

The 1st Torpedo Bomber Regiment was an

experienced unit with many of its pilots having participated in the Winter War of 1939 with Finland. After the German invasion, the regiment had been constantly engaged since June 24, the third day of war, and had suffered heavy casualties in the process. Flying sometimes three to four missions a day, mainly against ground targets, the regiment experienced heavy strain on men and machines. Ironically, the regiment's home base near Leningrad was close to a small village called Bezzabotnoye, meaning "carefree place" in Russian. Its commander, Colonel Evgeniy N. Preobrazhenskiy, an experienced pilot and officer, was placed in charge of flight operations, with General Zhavoronkov in overall control.

The 1st Torpedo Bomber Regiment was equipped with several models of DB-3 medium bomber, mainly upgraded DB-3F and torpedo adapted DB-3T versions. Depending on a particular aircraft's configuration, it carried a crew of three or four consisting of pilot, navigator, and one or two gunners, one of whom doubled as radio operator. A further improved version of this aircraft, Dal'niy Bombardirovschik, meaning "long-range bomber," was redesignated IL-4 in 1942 in honor of its designer, Sergei Ilyushin. This twin-engine aircraft, comparable to the German Heinkel He-111 bomber, remained the workhorse of the Red Air Force's long-range aviation during World War II, with over 6,200 machines produced.

Colonel Evgeniy N. Preobrazhenskiy, who led the 1st Torpedo Bomber Regiment, talks with navigator Pyotr Khokhlov, who flew on Operation B's daring first mission against Berlin on August 7-8, 1941.

The aircraft's two M-87B radial engines had a service life of up to 150 hours before an overhaul was needed. However, the regiment's high tempo of operations prevented adequate maintenance from being performed on its engines. This, coupled with the distance involved in the round-trip flight to Berlin, reduced the aircraft's lift capacity to only 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds) of bombs, half their nominal payload of 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds).

Colonel Preobrazhenskiy, his political deputy Grigoriy Z. Oganezov, and chief navigator Captain Pyotr I. Khokhlov, selected a task force of 30 crews and 20 aircraft plus approximately 200 technical support personnel for Operation B. After three days of hasty preparations and last-minute repairs, the task force took to the air on August 4, on the way to Saaremaa Island.

Planning for the mission was conducted in conditions of such utmost secrecy that the pilots and navigators did not know their destination at takeoff but were required to follow Preobrazhenskiy's instructions while in flight. General Zhavoronkov was on board the lead aircraft to oversee operations in person at Saaremaa. Technical support personnel, along with their equipment, aircraft fuel, and bombs, were ferried over by ship.

Kagul airfield, the new home of Preobrazhenskiy's task force, had just been completed in the spring of 1941. Its grassy runway was located in a large meadow surrounded on three sides by Estonian homesteads and bordered on the fourth by an elm forest with many large boulders scattered in front of the tree line. Situated in an exposed forward position, the airfield was vulnerable to German air attacks, defended only by four antiaircraft batteries.

The Moonzund Archipelago, which consists of four large islands and scores of smaller ones, was garrisoned by roughly 25,000 Soviet troops who guarded nearly 500 miles of shoreline. Multiple west-facing strongpoints were established to control the passage between the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga. Some of the defensive works featured large-caliber artillery, including 406mm guns mounted in naval turrets.

The fighter squadron already based at Kagul had also been heavily engaged since the beginning of the war, with only 15 aircraft remaining of the original 27. Surviving machines were redirected from supporting ground operations on the mainland to flying combat air patrol over Saaremaa Island to protect the long-range bombers. In addition, two Chyetverikov Che-2/MDR-6 floatplanes were assigned to Preobrazhenskiy's command for reconnaissance and the rescue of pilots downed in the water.

Planners of the upcoming operation understood that once the bombing of Berlin commenced, the Germans, knowing the technical capabilities of Soviet long-range bombers, would quickly figure out where the attacks had originated. Therefore, safeguarding the bombers on the ground became an issue of paramount importance. Merely dispersing aircraft around the airfield perimeter and hiding them under camouflage netting would be insufficient.

By late July 1941, the Moonzund Islands were in an exposed position, within easy reach of German tactical aviation from the Estonian mainland across the shallow and narrow straights. To reduce aircraft vulnerability at Saaremaa, individual shelters covered with camouflage nets would be built next to Estonian homes around the airfield. Two construction battalions immediately set to leveling taxiways to each shelter, filling potholes, and cutting down trees. Once the bombers at Kagul airfield were sheltered and the airstrip extended to 3,600 feet, construction battalions moved to the Aste airfield to similarly prepare and expand an airstrip there to receive the second group of long-range bombers, which would come from the Army aviation regiment. One of the four available antiaircraft batteries was reassigned to Aste airfield as well.

Soviet fliers knew that on approaching Berlin they would face a dense ring of antiaircraft defenses with crews experienced in battling British air raids. A vast array of flak artillery,

fighter aircraft, and powerful searchlights reaching to almost 20,000 feet, defended the German capital. Therefore, the heavily laden bombers would have to make the majority of their journey in darkness, placing them over Berlin at the optimal time of between 0100 and 0200 hours. To meet this schedule, the bombers would have to take off between 2100 and 2200 hours and return between 0400 and 0500 hours. To avoid German fighters, the majority of flight time would be at the altitude of 23,000 feet.

Skilled navigators would be crucial for this mission. Flying largely over water at night, they would be denied the use of pilotage, the method of determining the aircraft's position by visual reference to the ground. Between Saaremaa and the port of Stettin, navigators and pilots would have only the Gotland and Bornholm islands to visually confirm their courses. Therefore, the flight would navigate by dead reckoning, the method of determining position by maintaining a careful account of the time and distance from last known position or point of departure.

Each aircraft was to be assigned a primary target over Berlin and secondary targets over other locations. The main targets consisted of factories involved in war production as well as electrical stations and railroad facilities. Secondary targets were ports along the Baltic coast, such as Stettin, Danzig, and Memel. However, only in the event of technical difficulties resulting in an inability to reach Berlin were the Soviet pilots allowed to divert to their secondary targets.

By early August, as preparations and training were almost completed, five aircraft conducted a trial run over northern Germany. They penetrated enemy territory to within 70 miles of Berlin and turned back without being spotted. On August 3, they conducted a successful practice bombing run on the port of Svinemunde in northern Poland, taking off with the same bomb and fuel loads they would be carrying to Berlin. Now, they just needed a break in the bad weather.

Finally, on August 7 the weather improved sufficiently for General Zhavoronkov to give the go-ahead for the first mission. I-153 fighters took off first to clear the path of any German fighters near the archipelago. Finally, at 2100 hours, 12 aircraft led by Preobrazhenskiy took to the sky.

As the bombers steadily gained altitude, the temperature began to drop and the men put on their fur coats and gloves. By the time they reached the altitude of 21,500 feet, the temperature inside the unsealed cabins had fallen to minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit. Frost covered goggles and instrument displays so quickly that pilots and navigators had to constantly wipe them clean. Two of the three compasses aboard Preobrazhenskiy's aircraft malfunctioned.

The Soviet bombers that attacked Berlin during Operation B flew a long, arduous route from their bases near the Baltic Sea to the German capital. The planes were blacked out and often flew at high altitudes, stretching the limits of human endurance.

The blacked-out planes flew in total darkness surrounded by extremely thick cloud cover. This was tremendously nerve racking for navigators, who had to rely on their gauges alone to guide the pilots who were flying blind. Thin, oxygen-depleted air at high altitude caused many men to experience bouts of nausea and breathing difficulties, forcing them to put on their oxygen masks. Colonel Preobrazhenskiy himself recalled his ears bleeding.

Navigator Pyotr Khokhlov remembered: "Head and arms feel heavy; apathy. It is difficult to make an extra turn, move an arm. This is the sign of lack of oxygen. We opened the oxygen valve to the fullest. It became better right away."

Finally, the aircraft approached the German coastline near Stettin. Guided by the city lights, Soviet pilots turned their aircraft south on the final leg to the German capital. As the bombers droned on to Berlin, all the men aboard, knowing of the extensive German air defenses, were anxious about the reception they were to receive.

By this time not only had visibility improved, but the Soviet aircraft were also aided by Berlin's layout. Multiple easily identifiable natural and man-made terrain features stood out from the air: the Templehof Airport, the Tiergarten Park in the heart of the city, lakes, and several bends of the River Spree snaking through the city. Upon reaching Berlin, the pilots were amazed to discover that the German capital was not blacked out. Instead, the Soviet fliers were able to easily pick out their objectives and orienteering marks in the well-lit city. Captain Khokhlov recalled seeing cones of light from headlights of German cars moving on the streets below.

The planes split up over Berlin, each proceeding to its individual objective. Colonel Preobrazhenskiy's personal target was one of the railroad stations, and he was able to drop his bomb load without being fired upon. However, tail-end planes had to fly in the face of stiffening flak from awakened air defenses. After each aircraft released its deadly cargo, gunners pushed out bundles of propaganda leaflets as well.

In accordance with mission planning, raider aircraft were to maintain radio silence until they crossed the German coastline on the return leg. However, knowing that the people back at the Kagul airfield were anxiously awaiting information about the attack and not wishing to chance being shot down without reporting their mission's success, Preobrazhenskiy authorized his radio operator to transmit the news. Sergeant Krotenko sent a short message: "I'm over Berlin. Mission completed. Returning."

As Preobrazhenskiy's aircraft was crossing from land to water, he saw fires at Stettin harbor. It appeared that one of his aircraft had to abort on the way to Berlin and select a secondary target at Stettin.

Once back at the base, Colonel Preobrazhenskiy eagerly discovered that all aircraft had returned safely to base. As the exhausted fliers climbed out of their machines, they were surrounded by cheering friends. Shortly after their arrival, the results of their raid were telephoned to Stalin's office. Stalin issued a congratulatory communiqué to participants of the raid, announcing forthcoming awards and granting 2,000 rubles to every crew member.

The Germans, completely discounting the possibility of the Soviets bombing Berlin, reported the next day that the air raid was conducted by the British. Naturally, the British denied this, stating that no British aircraft operated during the night due to unfavorable weather conditions. Only after the Soviet press agency Informburo announced the raid later on August 9 did the Germans learn the identity of their attackers.

Before the war, Herman Göring, the bombastic head of the Luftwaffe, boasted that no enemy bomb would fall on Berlin. His claims were dispelled in 1940 by numerous British retaliatory attacks on the German capital. Even one French aircraft, a converted Farman NC 223.4 mail plane, managed to drop 1,700 pounds of high explosive and incendiary bombs

on Berlin on June 7, 1940.

The slap in the face by the Soviet aviators, which Göring already claimed to be wiped out, was a hard pill for Adolf Hitler to swallow. On August 12, a paragraph in supplemental orders to Hitler's Directive No. 34 stated: "As soon as the situation allows, enemy air and naval bases at Dagö and Ösel will be eliminated by a combined operation by Army, Naval and Air Forces. It is urgently necessary that enemy airfields from which attacks on Berlin are evidently being made should be destroyed."

The second Soviet air raid, during the night of August 8-9, did not go as well as the first one. After 12 aircraft took off for Berlin, several planes developed mechanical problems and had to turn back long before coming within reach of secondary targets. Crossing over water to land at Stettin, Soviet bombers encountered heavy antiaircraft fire from German shore and naval batteries. Once over Berlin, they were met with heavy flak and night fighters equipped with powerful searchlights. One of the aircraft exploded over the city, cause unknown.

Parallel to Preobrazhenskiy's task force, an Army aviation unit had been prepared for similar missions. The 81st Long-Range Bomber Division under Kombrig (brigade commander) Mikhail V. Vodopyanov was a brand new unit, formed in mid-July of 1941 and composed of two regiments, one equipped with Petlyakov TB-7 four-engine bombers and the other with Yermolayev Yer-2 aircraft. Men and machines were scraped together from various sources to form this unit.

After Colonel Preobrazhenskiy's naval fliers conducted their first successful mission, Vodopyanov's unit was rushed to join Operation B before it had a chance to get completely ready. On the night of August 10, a flight of 10 TB-7s and 16 Yer-2s from Vodopyanov's division prepared to take off from two grassy airfields at Pushkino near Leningrad. Vodopyanov's route was to skirt the coastlines of Estonia and Latvia and then fly on to Stettin, along a route similar to Preobrazhenskiy's, a distance of almost 1,680 miles.

The mission went wrong immediately. As aircraft began taking to the sky, one TB-7 bomber lost both engines on one side and cartwheeled into the ground, exploding and killing all aboard. At the other airfield, due to a short runway, two Yer-2s crashed while attempting to take off with loss of life aboard both. Faced with more potential for disaster, General Zhigarev ordered the rest of Vodopyanov's aircraft grounded, and only those aircraft already in the air, seven TB-7s and three Yer-2s, proceeded toward Berlin.

An Ilyushin Il-4 twin-engined bomber, a workhorse of Soviet military aviation, sits on the tarmac at a naval air base near the Baltic coast. The Il-4 began service as the DB-3, and its name was changed in 1942.

However, their troubles were only beginning. Due to secrecy, no one advised Soviet air defenses along the Baltic coast about the mission. With unfamiliar four-engine aircraft above, air defense artillery opened fire on Vodopyanov's aircraft, and several I-16 fighters closed. Vodopyanov's plane was stitched by friendly machine-gun fire, but no one was hurt. His gunners had to open fire to keep their own fighters at bay.

Of Vodopyanov's 10 aircraft, only six reached Berlin and dropped their bomb loads, the rest turning back due to mechanical difficulties. With his own plane damaged by German flak over Berlin and fighting for control of his wounded machine on the way back, Vodopyanov was forced to land in German-occupied Estonian territory. It took two days, but Vodopyanov's entire crew made it safely to Soviet lines.

Not all the crews were so fortunate. On the return leg, Soviet air defenses were still not notified of the bombing mission. As the surviving planes neared Leningrad, they were again met with antiaircraft fire and fighters. Once more, bomber crews had to fire on their own fighters to keep them away. Still, one TB-7 was shot down by Soviet flak and crashed, killing six crew members. A Yer-2 bomber was shot down by a Soviet I-16 fighter. However, all 11 men parachuted to safety. Another Yer-2 was lost without a trace. A TB-7 damaged over Germany lost two engines on the way back and was forced to crash land in Finland. Five crew members died in the crash, and the rest were captured.

After the first disastrous attempt, the 81st Long-Range Bomber Division did not fly any more missions to Berlin. Called to Moscow to account for his poor showing, Vodopyanov was critical of the diesel engines his planes were outfitted with. After barely a month in command of the 81st Division, Vodopyanov was replaced on August 17, 1941, by Colonel Aleksandr Golovanov. Embarrassingly, Vodopyanov was kept in the unit and continued flying missions as a common pilot. Eventually, taking into account his distinguished prewar career as an Arctic pilot, he was promoted to major general and quietly moved to a rear echelon administrative posting.

On August 10, the same day as Vodopyanov's ill-fated raid, 12 DB-3 aircraft from another Army aviation regiment under Major Schelkunov touched down at Aste airfield on Saaremaa, greatly bolstering Preobrazhenskiy's force.

Shortly after Soviet aircraft took off for Berlin on the third raid, a small group of German planes arrived over Kagul. They dropped several bombs and departed after making several sweeps over the airfield. Luckily, no Soviet aircraft were damaged or personnel hurt, and only minor damage was inflicted on the airfield's infrastructure. However, the Germans returned shortly after the fourth raid departed and bombed Kagul again, concentrating mainly on the air defense positions. This time, almost 30 ground personnel were killed or wounded with a majority of the casualties coming in the air defense company. One I-153 fighter was also destroyed on the ground. Additionally, Soviet personnel now had to endure occasional sniping from the woods by Estonian nationalists.

The flights to Berlin continued, with detailed

accounts of ordnance dropped on the German capital reported directly to Stalin. The monetary award for crewmen became standardized. Unlike the first raid, when every participant received 2,000 rubles, now only those crew members who actually dropped bombs on Berlin were granted the money. Although it was everyone's patriotic duty to fight well, monetary incentive awards were given for destruction of enemy equipment or number of missions flown from 1941. For example, a fighter pilot received 1,000 rubles for shooting down an enemy aircraft. Likewise, bomber crews received 500 rubles for bombing important strategic objectives. Crews of naval ships received awards for sinking enemy ships, proportionally divided by rank and duty position between crewmen.

A knocked-out German tank could be worth 200 to 500 rubles to a Soviet tanker, depending on his job. A soldier who knocked out a tank by himself using a grenade received 1,000 rubles. These were significant sums. In comparison, a colonel received approximately 2,100 rubles per month, including combat pay. A private received 17 rubles. Exceptional non-combat performance could also earn monetary rewards.

Despite the tremendous efforts and resources expended, Soviet raids were not inflicting significant damage. Too few aircraft carrying relatively small bombs were getting through to Berlin. After the fourth raid, Stalin wanted heavier bombs to be dropped on the German capital.

Upon receiving the new orders, Admiral Kuznetsov attempted to dissuade Stalin, rationally arguing that with the increased weight, the overtaxed DB-3s could not reach Berlin. Stalin was not convinced. During his next meeting with Kuznetsov, the Soviet premier brought in the famous test pilot Colonel Vladimir K. Kokkinaki, who was intimately familiar with the DB-3 aircraft. At the time, the distinguished flier served as the chief test pilot and chief of the main inspectorate of the aircraft industry.

Colonel Kokkinaki was an accomplished pilot, holding multiple records for altitude, payload, distance, and speed utilizing both fighters and bombers. On April 20, 1936, Kokkinaki actually flew a loop piloting a DB-3 bomber. Having worked in the design bureau that created the DB-3, Kokkinaki was considered an expert on the plane. In vain, Admiral Kuznetsov attempted to convince Stalin's expert that while Kokkinaki was indeed knowledgeable about the DB-3 aircraft, as a test pilot he dealt with the planes in good repair and under optimal conditions. It was quite different with Preobrazhenskiy's overworked aircraft with worn-out engines.

Soviet ground crewmen load a torpedo onto the versatile Ilyushin Il-4 twin-engined bomber. The Il-4 served as the backbone of the Soviet bomber corps throughout World War II.

While the tug of war over increased bomb loads continued at headquarters, the combat routine went on at Kagul airfield. Returning from the fifth raid on August 16, a bomber piloted by Lieutenant Aleksandrov crashed upon landing due to fatigue and oxygen deprivation. Three crewmen, including the pilot, died, and the tail gunner was severely injured. Anther DB-3, its engines damaged by flak, crashed within sight of Kagul, killing all aboard. After this raid the Germans once again bombed the airfield, destroying two more I-153s and heavily damaging the runway.

Shortly after the sixth raid on August 18, Colonel Kokkinaki arrived at Kagul to check the progress of preparations for missions with 1,000-kilogram bombs. Many senior pilots, including Preobrazhenskiy, attempted to convince him of the futility of even attempting to take up the heavy FAB-1000 bomb or two FAB-500s. A heated discussion ended up in a shouting match. In the end, Stalin's wishes could not be ignored, and Zhavoronkov ordered the mission to proceed.

For trial runs, two planes at Kagul were outfitted with one 1,000-kilogram bomb, and the third was loaded at Aste with two 500-kilogram bombs. The lead aircraft at Kagul, under Captain Grechishnikov, could not initially take off. When it finally did, it quickly began to lose altitude. Worried that the large bomb mounted on an external rack under the aircraft would detonate if the plane hit the ground, Grechishnikov ordered his navigator to jettison it.

The navigator, Captain Vlasov, barely had time to eject the deadly cargo before the bomber hit the ground, skidded on the grass, and caught on fire. With the fire approaching the fuel tanks, the three crew members in the front section of the plane quickly bailed out. As they sprinted away, they heard cries for help from the fourth crew member, tail gunner Sergeant Burkov, who was injured and pinned in his cupola. Without hesitation, the three aviators returned to the burning aircraft to rescue their comrade. Breaking the plexiglass cupola, they retrieved the injured man and were able to drag him to safety before the aircraft exploded.

Things went more tragically at Aste. Air Force Lieutenant Bogachev, on his first mission to Berlin, was piloting the DB-3 carrying two 500-kilogram bombs on external racks. His plane could not lift, and as it rapidly approached the end of the runway its brakes failed to stop the heavy aircraft. Running out of runway, the plane crashed into the trees.

Continued on page 74

National Archives

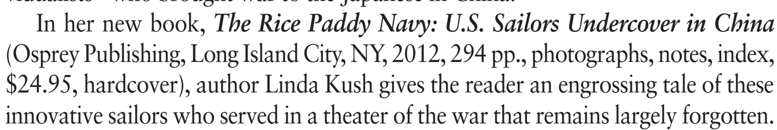
Chinese recruits receive instruction on radio use from Americans at Happy Valley. RIGHT: General Dai Li and Captain Milton Miles, Chongqing, Christmas 1942.

Bringing the War to the Japanese in China

U.S. Navy SACO units carried out clandestine operations in occupied territory.

WHEN CHIEF AEROGRAPHER'S MATE RICHARD KLOS VOLUNTEERED FOR "prolonged and hazardous" overseas duty, he had no idea what he was in for. However, when he was questioned about his ability to live on vermin or if he could tell the difference between edible and toxic lice, he knew he had signed on for something special.

And special it was. Klos and thousands like him were to play an important part in the U.S. Navy's efforts to gather pertinent data from behind enemy lines in China. The top secret group was known as the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, or SACO, a bunch of 2,500 "individualists" who brought war to the Japanese in China.



In her new book, ***The Rice Paddy Navy: U.S. Sailors Undercover in China*** (Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2012, 294 pp., photographs, notes, index, $24.95, hardcover), author Linda Kush gives the reader an engrossing tale of these innovative sailors who served in a theater of the war that remains largely forgotten.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were eager to learn more about weather conditions, troop movements, and the size of enemy units throughout China. This information would prove to be extremely valuable when the time came for Allied forces to invade China and defeat the Japanese forces stationed there. As the war progressed, China was put on the back burner, so to speak, and instead the Allies placed much emphasis on the island-hopping campaigns of Admiral Chester Nimitz and General Douglas MacArthur, that would include the latter's triumphant return to the Philippines in 1944.

Nevertheless, SACO's members were resourceful when requisitioning supplies, equipment, food, and anything else they needed throughout the war. That ingenuity came right from the top with SACO's commander, Captain Milton "Mary" Miles, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate who had served in China during the 1920s and 1930s on the river patrol boats scurrying up and down the Yangtze River. Miles developed a sincere interest in the Chinese people and their traditions. When he was given command of SACO, he fought against having any of the old "China Hands" included in his group because he witnessed firsthand their disdain for the land and its people.

U.S. Navy

The lack of supplies and personnel was not the only problems Miles faced. The constant bickering between the Army, Navy, and the newly formed Office of Strategic Services led by the World War I hero and hard-charging Brig. Gen. William J. Donovan, was a thorn in Miles's side. Miles constantly circumvented the command structure, risking his career, to provide for his men.

Miles formed an unlikely alliance with General Dai Li, the leader of Nationalist China's Military Bureau of Investigation Services and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's right-hand man. Dai Li learned to trust Miles while Miles, had to overcome his fears that his counterpart was a diabolical executioner based on reports he had read prior to assuming command of SACO.

Kush delivers a readable and exciting story of a military unit that truly had to fight to maintain its existence. The sailors, often dressed in worn-out Army fatigues, were responsible for transmitting top secret messages to Allied planners, participating in raids on Japanese vessels traveling along China's many rivers and training Chinese guerrillas who performed behind-the-lines forays that kept the enemy off balance.

Known for its irreverent "What the Hell?" banner, a pennant with three question marks, three asterisks, and three exclamation points

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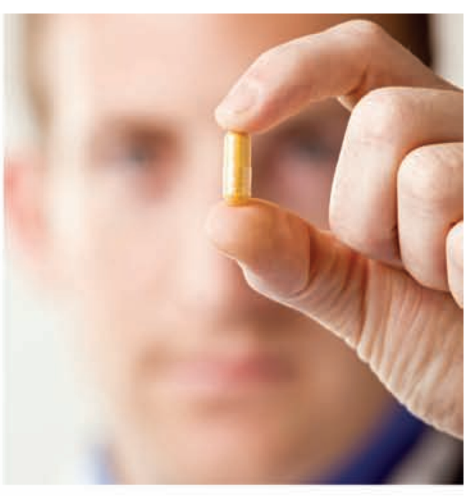
New Prostate Pill Helps Relieve Symptoms Without Drugs or Surgery



Combats all-night bathroom urges and embarrassment...
Yet most doctors don't even know about it!

By Peter Metler, Health Writer

Thanks to a brand new discovery made from a rare prostate relief plant; thousands of men across America are taking their lives back from "prostate hell." This remarkable new natural supplement helps you:

- **MINIMIZE** constant urges to urinate
- **END** embarrassing sexual let-downs
- **SUPPORT** a strong, healthy urine flow
- **GET** restful nights of uninterrupted sleep
- **STOP** false alarms, dribbles and underwear drips
- **ENJOY** a truly empty bladder & unblocked flow

More men than ever before are dealing with prostate problems that range from annoying to downright EMBARRASSING!

But now, urological research has discovered a new solution so remarkable that helps alleviate symptoms associated with an enlarged prostate (sexual failure, lost sleep, bladder discomfort and urgent runs to the bathroom). Like nothing before!

Yet 9 out of 10 doctors don't know about it! Here's why: Due to strict managed health care constrictions, many MD's are struggling to keep their practices afloat. "Unfortunately, there's no money in prescribing natural products. They aren't nearly as profitable," says a confidential source. Instead, doctors rely on toxic drugs that help but could leave you sexually "powerless" (or a lot worse)!

On a CNN Special, Medical Correspondent Dr. Steve Salvatore shocked America by quoting a statistic from the prestigious Journal of American Medical Association that stated, "...about 60% of men who go under the knife for a prostatectomy are left UNABLE to perform sexually!"

HERE ARE 6 WARNING SIGNS YOU BETTER NOT IGNORE!

- ✓ Waking up 2 to 6 times a night to urinate
- ✓ A constant feeling that you have to "go"... but can't
- ✓ A burning sensation when you do go
- ✓ A weak urine stream
- ✓ *A feeling that your bladder is never completely empty*
- ✓ Embarrassing sputtering, dripping & staining

PROSTATE PROBLEM SOLVED!

But thanks to this astonishing new natural discovery, you can now beat the odds. The secret? You need to load your diet with essential Phyto-Nutrients, (traditionally found in certain fruits, vegetables and grains).

The problem is, most Phyto-Nutrients never get into your bloodstream. They're destroyed by today's food preparation methods. (Cooking, long storage times and food additives)

YEARS OF RESEARCH

Thankfully, a small company (Wellness Logix™) out of Maine, is on a mission to change that. They've created a product that gives men who suffer with prostate inflammation new hope. They call it ***Prostate IQ***™. And it's fast becoming the #1 Prostate formula in America.

Prostate IQ™ gives men the super-concentrated dose of Phyto-Nutrients they need to beat prostate symptoms. It's taken Wellness Logix, 2 long years of R&D to understand how to capture the prostate relieving power of this amazing botanical. But their hard work paid off. Experts say ***Prostate IQ***™ is the most effective prostate supplement ever developed.

DON'T BE FOOLED BY CHEAP FORMULATIONS!

A lot of prostate supplements fall embarrassingly short with their dosages. The formulas may be okay, but they won't do a darn thing for you unless you take 10 or more tablets a day. ***Prostate IQ***™ is different. It contains a whopping 300mg of this special "Smart Prostate Plant". So it's loaded with Phyto-Nutrients.

Plus, it's 100% bioavailable (which means it gets inside your bloodstream faster and stays inside for maximum results).

MEN RAVE ABOUT PROSTATE IQ™!

"***Prostate IQ***™ works! It really works! Thank You!"

- *Christopher R.*

"A buddy at work told me about this product and it DOES work great!

- *Augustus L*

TRY IT RISK-FREE

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR READERS

We've made special arrangements with the distributor, to supply our readers with a risk-free trial supply of ***Prostate IQ***™ just for asking! But you must act now, supplies are limited!

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emblazoned on a white background, SACO did an incredible job despite its many setbacks.

This is a wonderful tribute to a group of mavericks who did not play by the book and performed a remarkable job in helping to defeat the Japanese in China in World War II.

Leyte 1944: The Soldiers' Battle by Nathan N. Prefer, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2012, 424 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $32.95, hardcover.

Finally, a definitive account of the battle that wrested the island of Leyte in the Philippines from the Japanese in 1944 has emerged. Although much has been written about the U.S. Navy's role at Leyte, the savage, bloody fighting that took place on land has been overlooked.

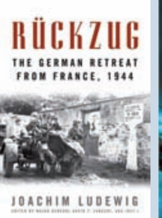
Fulfilling his pledge to return after he had been forced to leave the Philippines by PT-boat in early 1942, General Douglas MacArthur pushed the idea of a return to the Philippines with the Joint Chiefs and President Franklin Roosevelt. MacArthur's persistence paid off as soldiers from the Sixth Army, aided by Filipino guerrillas, fought the Japanese from late October 1944 until the beginning of 1945. More than 200,000 Americans not only fought a seasoned enemy but had to endure harsh tropical weather with its incessant monsoon rains and typhoons as well.

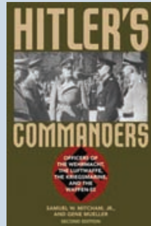
Two prominent officers who deserve the lion's share of the accolades are General Wal-

ter Krueger, commanding the Sixth Army, and General Robert Eichelberger, leading the Eighth Army. Both had battlefield experience and did a marvelous job as their troops fought at places with names such as Breakneck Ridge, Shoestring Ridge, and Ormoc Valley. In a highly unusual move, the Japanese used airborne infantry to parachute behind the American lines to disrupt the flow of supplies and conduct raids.

Prefer has penned a meticulous book, complete with the order of battle for each side, a breakdown of U.S. casualties, detailed maps,

Short Bursts





The Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond: The 95th Bomb Group in War and Peace by Rob Morris and Ian Hawkins, Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2012, 367 pp., photographs, notes, index, $39.95, hardcover.

Credited with three Presidential Unit Citations, the 95th Bomb Group was the "most highly decorated bomb group of World War II," flying the famous Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress from 1943 until the completion of the conflict in 1945. Its feats included being the first group to bomb Berlin. It lost an estimated 600 men during a three-year tenure in the European Theater.

However, there is more to this book than just the incredible aviation achievements of a bomb group. It is also about a friendship among the men of the 95th and the residents of Horham, England, where the 95th was stationed during the war. The bond between the civilians and the brash, daredevil aircrews has lasted for decades. So much so that years after the end of the conflict the 95th veterans raised $20,000 to assist in restoring the eight bells in the local church that had not rung since 1911.

The emotional attachment remains as strong today as it was 70 years ago. A quote from one of England's greatest novelists, Charles Dickens, will attest to the esteem that each held for the other: "If I know anything of my countrymen … the English heart is stirred by the fluttering of the Stars and Stripes as it is stirred by no other flag except its own."

Ruckzug: The German Retreat from France, 1944 by Joachim Ludewig, edited by Maj. Gen. David T. Zabecki, U.S. Army (ret.), University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2012, 435 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $40.00, hardcover.

Although stunned by the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944, the German Army quickly recovered and staged an incredible comeback to stabilize its defensive lines and put up a stiff resistance to the Allied juggernaut that was penetrating deep into France. Hitler firmly believed that full victory could be achieved on the Western Front and ordered additional reinforcements to bolster his defenses.

German troops engaged the Allies in fierce fighting and, despite the fall of Paris in late August, the Wehrmacht did not cede ground easily. Although the Germans did an exceptional job of maneuvering forces to stop the Allies from creating a second front along the Seine River, the outcome was inevitable. Despite the fact that many German units had been decimated at the Falaise Pocket in late August, they were still able to retain cohesiveness and threaten the Allies.

This is a compelling book that examines the critical months following the D-Day invasion and Germany's ultimate retreat from France.

The Fear in the Sky: Vivid Memories of Operational Aircrew in World War II by Pat Cunningham, Pen & Sword, South Yorkshire, England, 2012, 234 pp., photographs, glossary, $39.95, hardcover.

This is a wonderful oral history that focuses on the pilots and ground crew members of the Royal Air Force, who sacrificed so much to ensure that England's skies were free from the Luftwaffe threat. The author, an aviation historian, states an incredible fact. Of the more than 55,000 RAF men lost, 8,300 were due to accidents. That is nearly 15 percent. This is remarkable and tragic at the same time. Because of Great Britain's need for air crews, many of these men had only 500 hours of flight time under their belts.

Many of these individuals saw extensive action in every theater of operation. Cunningham has done a yeoman's job researching their stories so that future generations can read of their incredible adventures and near-death experiences while flying with the RAF.

Glider Infantryman: Behind Enemy Lines in World War II by Don Rich and Kevin Brooks, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2012, 272 pgs., maps, photographs, notes, index, $19.95, softcover.

This is an emotional account of one man's journey in World War II from the beaches of Normandy to the bloody combat at Carentan to Operation Market-Garden, Bastogne, and the war's end. Infantryman Don Rich served with the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment. He saw extensive action, suffering a wound at Carentan, but survived the war. He still suffers today from post-traumatic stress disorder from his wartime experiences but struggles to carry on with his life.

Co-author Kevin Brooks, who has known Rich since childhood, has captured the pain and misery of a combat veteran. He has taken Rich's story and fashioned a top-notch tale of the insanity of war and the honor that Rich and his fellow dogfaces felt at being a part of something special,

and 16 photographs. It is a fitting story chronicling the bravery and sacrifices of the dogface GI, and the nearly 3,500 killed and another 10,000 wounded, who beat the very best that the enemy could throw at them and freed the inhabitants of Leyte from a brutal occupation.

Letters from Berlin: A Story of War, Survival, and the Redeeming Power of Love and Friendship by Margarete Dos and Kerstin Lieff, Lyons Press, Guilford, CT, 2013, 358 pp., photographs, notes, $24.95, hardcover.

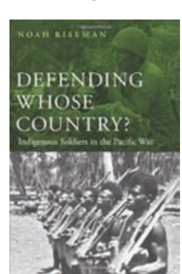
This is a truly moving story of a German woman who survived the war while residing in Berlin. Margarete Dos was born in Germany in 1924 and was just a young child when Hitler rose to power. She eventually migrated to the U.S. but refused to talk about the years she spent in Germany during the conflict. After some prodding, Dos related those horrific years to her daughter, Kerstin Lieff, who spent hours with her mother recording her incredible story of survival.

As a teenager growing up in Berlin, Dos witnessed firsthand the growing Nazi menace. At first it was subtle, as the SA arrogantly paraded through the streets. Their condescending attitude only drew laughs from Dos and her friends. However, as the years crept by, their antics turned deadly. Dos explains what she saw during that turbulent period in German history—the Night of the Broken Glass when Jewish businesses were ransacked and looted, the Allied bombings, and the fear of the Russians—in graphic detail.

This is another fascinating side of World War II told through the eyes of an innocent young girl growing up amid the chaos and savagery of war.

Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War by Noah Riseman, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2012, 336 pp., photographs, notes, index, $50.00, hardcover.

This is a thought-provoking look at the role the indigenous tribes played in helping the Allies defeat Japan in World War II. To the theater commanders, it made perfect sense to utilize these indigenous people because of their intimate knowledge of the countryside, their fighting skills, and their ability to withstand hardships that many of their white counterparts had never experienced before.



Ironically, many Australians and other white "mastas" residing on New Guinea were not keen on allowing indigenous people to serve. It was only when the Japanese posed an imminent threat to the region that this stand was eased, and numerous tribes served as guides, coastwatchers, and in units led by Allied officers.

The United States, on the other hand, encouraged Native Americans to enlist in the armed forces. Although many tribes had been mistreated and lied to by the government, they joined to fight willingly. Probably the most notable group was the Navajos, whose unique language was used to transmit messages and confuse the Japanese. Many of the Navajo have become popularly known as the Code Talkers.

The author has tackled a complex issue and has done a masterful job of explaining the relationships between Caucasians and the indigenous people who served with them. The book is a nice tribute to their largely forgotten contributions to the war effort, which assisted in the ultimate defeat of the Japanese Empire.

From Brittany to the Reich: The 29th Infantry Division in Germany, September-November 1944 by Joseph Balkoski, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 412 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $26.95, hardcover.

Historian Joseph Balkoski has written a marvelous account giving long, overdue praise to

Continued on page 71

saving the world from tyrannical despots and serving in one of the most prestigious units in the war—the famed 101st Airborne Division.

Hitler's Commanders: Officers of the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe, the Kriegsmarine, and the Waffen-SS by Samuel W. Mitchham, Jr., and Gene Mueller, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, 2012, photographs, notes, index, $19.95, softcover.

Many of the leaders of the German Army, Navy, Air Force, and the dreaded SS are featured in this book, a follow-up to Professor Samuel W. Mitcham, Jr.'s, earlier account of the German field marshals of World War II. The men he selected, Wilhelm Burgdorf, Gotthard Heinrici, Baron Hasso von Manteuffel, Gunther Luetjens, and Gustav Knittel, to name a few, are a diverse group. They were tank commanders, pilots, and infantry commanders who fought and led troops on both the Eastern and Western Fronts.

This is a provocative insight into the soldiers who led the Nazi war machine into combat. Not all were fanatical followers of Adolf Hitler; some put their country ahead of everything else — including their own reputations—and lives.

US Army Paratrooper in the Pacific Theater, 1943-45 by Gordon L. Rottman and illustrated by Brian Delf, Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2012, 64 pp., photographs, illustrations, $18.95, softcover.

There is one thing that can always be counted on from Osprey Publishing: high-quality, glossy series on different units, weapons, strategy, personalities, and battles in any conflict. World War II is no exception. This current release traces the training and deployment of the three main U.S. airborne units assigned to the Pacific Theater: the 11th Airborne Division, the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team. Thanks to Brian Delf, the book has numerous detailed drawings of paratroopers in action.

Gordon L. Rottman, who served with the 5th Special Forces in Vietnam, gives a good, concise account of the major battles that the paratroopers participated in during their duty in the Pacific. He describes perhaps the toughest combat air assault of the war, when the 503rd RCT jumped into Corregidor in February 1945. Despite the operation's difficulty, the soldiers quickly landed and fought the fanatical Japanese until the island was secured in early March. This is a must read for those interested in the campaigns of U.S. Army paratroopers in the Pacific.

Messerschmitt Bf109E by Rudolf Hofling, Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 2012, 50 pp., photographs, $14.99, softcover.

This is a good overview of the life of aircraft designer Willy Messerschmitt and his entry into the field of aviation. The book traces his life and the evolution of his famed fighter aircraft until 1941. The text is accompanied by some great black and white and color photographs of the plane deployed in the European and North African campaigns. The center of the book has a foldout showing nine different models of the Messerschmitt Bf-109.

From its initial use during the Spanish Civil War in 1938, the fighter saw extensive service during the war and was the backbone of the Luftwaffe. It served in a variety of capacities for the Germans and was certainly well respected by Allied pilots. In the hands of a skilled pilot, the Messerschmitt Bf-109 was a deadly weapon.

Give *Ace Patrol* a spin and see how quickly you get hooked on its streamlined strategy action.

PUBLISHER
2K Games

DEVELOPER
Firaxis Games

SYSTEM(S)
iOS (iPhone/iPad)

AVAILABLE
Now

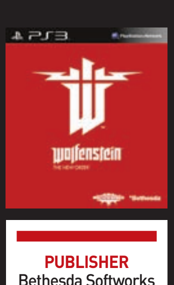
SID MEIER'S ACE PATROL

We're dialing things back a few years this time around by diving into *Sid Meier's Ace Patrol,* which puts World War I dogfighting in the palm of your hands on the iOS device of your choosing. *Ace Patrol* is a deceptively simple turn-based strategy game that offers up plenty of excitement for both newcomers and vets of the genre, and best of all, the base game is free for anyone to download and try out.

Strategy games can be mightily imposing to the uninitiated, but *Ace Patrol* does a great job of concisely teaching players the basics of its mechanics, while providing plenty of room to grow and develop more advanced strategies. Combat is set on a battlefield of hexagonal grids, and early missions have you testing the skies out with a single plane. Touch-based controls are simple enough without need for too much explanation in the tutorial. Tapping arrow buttons causes your unit to maneuver in that direction—banking left or right, rising in altitude, or even pulling off expert moves like the Immelmann turn—and the name of the game is getting within range of the enemy and blasting them out of the clouds.

The single moves might seem sluggish at first, but the pace of *Ace Patrol* is pretty spot-on. As you advance, missions will have you controlling up to four planes at once in your squad, but it never gets to the point of being overwhelming, and you never need to zoom out for a more expansive view of the battle area. Missions are kept short and sweet, and before you know it you'll be planning a few moves in advance rather than puttering along one at a time. The strategy then becomes noticing the enemy's telegraphed maneuvers, where they'll be at a disadvantage a few turns down the line, and how you can stay in their blind spot and come out guns blazing at just the right moment.

This isn't the first time that Firaxis Games has found the sweet spot in simplifying something that could have otherwise been a slog. Civilization Revolution made a similar move with *Sid Meier's Civilization* series, cutting the fat and making it a more briskly paced experience. Of course, some



PUBLISHER
Bethesda Softworks

DEVELOPER
Machine Games

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Q4 2013

WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER

It's been a while since we talked about *Wolfenstein 3D* in these pages, and now the seminal first-person shooter is preparing to make a return to con-

soles and PC later this year. *Wolfenstein: The New Order* is bringing alternate history action to PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, and Microsoft Windows, marking the ninth installment in the series when it drops in the fourth quarter of 2013.

In this alternate history—which is set in 1960—the Nazis won World War II. Original protagonist William "B.J." Blazkowicz is back, saddled with the unenviable task of launching an "impossible counteroffensive" against the Nazi forces stationed in Europe. Things could change between now and the time the game launches but, surprisingly, developer Machine Games has announced that *The New Order* will only be a single-player experience. In a time that sees multiplayer shoehorned into every possible game, it might be refreshing to see what happens when a team has the rare luxury of working on a more tightly focused project.

people like the fat, so something like *Ace Patrol* isn't going to be for everyone, but as a pick-up-and-play iOS game it does a good job of scratching that impulsive itch.

The colorful, somewhat cartoony visuals belie what is otherwise pretty faithful to the world of dogfighting. Despite the fact that you can spend plenty of time tinkering with the look of your pilot and aircraft of choice, the actual combat doesn't stray too far from reality. If a plane is banking right it can't suddenly bank left out of nowhere, hence the strategic hook of plotting moves in advance.

Ace Patrol also packs some multiplayer, with two players able to dogfight on a single device. Hopefully you can find someone to play with who isn't tempted to peek at your strategizing prior to his or her turn. There's asynchronous multiplayer that can be initiated through Game Center, as well, but we weren't able to test it out at the time of this writing. Keep in mind, if you want to play with other people over Game Center, you'll need to throw down some cash on additional campaigns.

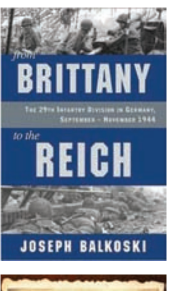
What's that? You thought all this action came free of charge? While it was previously mentioned that the "base game" is free, that doesn't mean the whole thing can be yours for nothing. Consider the free download of *Ace Patrol* a sampler platter to see if this is precisely the type of fun you're looking for. You'll be able to dig into a few missions before it asks for $0.99 to unlock the rest of the British campaign. From there you can shell out $1.99 each for the German, French, and U.S. campaigns, or drop $3.99 for all three.

So yes, *Ace Patrol* has its fair share of microtransactions, but you can control how much you end up spending, and can at least nab all the regular campaigns for around five bucks total. It's not a bad deal if this is the type of strategy that gets you going. I know I wasn't able to resist unlocking additional campaigns, so give *Ace Patrol* a spin and see how quickly you get hooked on its streamlined strategy action. □

books

Continued from page 69

the infantrymen of the "Blue and Gray," the 29th Infantry Division, in World War II. This is his third book, covering the period from September to November 1944, with two more to follow covering the division's exploits to the end of the war.



The dogfaces of the 29th Division suffered horrendous casualties after spearheading the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. From there, they saw extensive combat in the hedgerows and St. Lo and fought fanatical German paratroopers in the city of Brest so the Allies could use its important port facilities for resupply.

Balkoski traces the unit's operations into Holland and eventually western Germany. In mid-November, the 29th drove to the Roer River, where the soldiers tangled with German soldiers in numerous intense, bloody battles within what would later become known as the "Roer Triangle." Little has been written about this part of the European Theater, and the author gives the reader a good overview of the precarious world of a rifleman in the 29th Division and the dangers he faced day in and day out while helping to defeat a tenacious enemy.

The Star of Africa: The Story of Hans Marseille: The Rogue Luftwaffe Ace Who Dominated the WWII Skies by Colin D. Heaton & Anne-Marie Lewis, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012, 224 pp., photographs, notes, index, $30.00, hardcover.

This is a fascinating biography of one of Germany's top guns during the North African campaign early in World War II. Hans Joachim Marseille downed 25 Allied aircraft and was awarded the coveted German Cross in Gold. He had joined the Luftwaffe prior to the war and was a skilled aviator. He loved the ladies, drinking, and staying out until the wee hours of the morning, which did not sit well with his commanding officers.

Dashing and handsome, Marseille was a charmer. However, he was transferred on several occasions when his antics proved to be too much. It was not until he was reassigned to North Africa that he really emerged as a top notch pilot. He quickly earned the sobriquet of the "Star of Africa."

His endearing ways earned him many friends. He never joined the Nazi Party and, instead, waged his own chivalrous style of warfare. This was indeed ironic. Here was a man like Marseille, who personified everything that was not Nazi and avoided persecution or imprisonment for his beliefs. He was killed when his plane developed engine trouble in September 1942. Although he was able to escape, he could not open his parachute.

This is an entertaining book dealing with a unique and complex person. As the subtitle suggests, Marseille was certainly a rogue who earned the respect and admiration of his fellow aviators.

Why Germany Nearly Won: A New History of the Second World War in Europe by Steven D. Mercatante, Praeger, Santa Barbara, CA, 2012, 409 pp., maps, notes, index, $58.00, hardcover.

Most people will agree that Hitler's misguided invasion of Russia in 1941 was Germany's undoing. The German Army paled in comparison to the Soviets, numerically speaking, and historians believe that this brought about the downfall of the Third Reich.

Or did it? The author, Steven Mercatante, editor-in-chief of The Globe at War, a website that examines World War II, thinks otherwise. In this book, he attempts to explain why Germany came within a "whisker" of winning not only the conflict but creating a vast European empire for the Nazi regime. One of the major reasons that Germany lost, states the author, is that military commanders did not seize the region of the Soviet Union rich in economic resources, such as oil. Because of this, the Wehrmacht "lost much of the preexisting qualitative advantages that it held over its enemies."

Although the Allies outnumbered the German Army in terms of manpower and machinery, the Wehrmacht had racked up some impressive victories early in the war, but when it needed to deliver the knockout punch in Russia it failed to do so.

This is an intriguing book that will surely be of great interest to students of World War II. It offers a fresh analysis of why Germany was beaten and poses reasons why it should have won. □

algiers harbor

Continued from page 59

the ship abandoned, and the crew transferred to the towing ship. Some time later the valiant little destroyer slipped beneath the waves for good, taking with her 3/135th's reserve ammunition and the soldiers' personal effects and equipment.

Ashore, the American situation was deteriorating. The infantrymen had been busy fortifying their perimeter with shipping crates and hay bales stored in the nearby warehouses. Now they had an all around defense. At 1100 hours a half dozen Allied dive bombers arrived overhead and furiously bombed two of the French batteries to the north, knocking both out of commission. This was a break the Americans needed, as a French force was apparently gathering for an attack. The Americans sent a fusillade of small-arms fire at them. It worked, but the Americans were gradually running low on ammunition.

Casualties began to mount. Pfc. Melvin Lein, one of the attached medics, was told a wounded officer lay nearby. A French machine gun fired continuous bursts across the path Lein had to take to get to the casualty. Braving the heavy fire, the medic got to the man and rendered aid. As he returned to his assigned position the machine gun zeroed in, killing Lein. For his courage he was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross. A second DSC would be awarded to Staff Sergeant Robert Rooney. As he led his squad through an intersection under heavy machine-gun fire, one of his men, Private Lawrence Fonder, was hit. The young soldier fell to the ground completely exposed to the enemy fire. Despite the bullets snapping all around, Rooney ran back to Fonder and carried him out of danger.

At 1130 hours, the French decided to push again. This time a company of 10 Renault tanks took up positions all around the U.S. perimeter and deluged it with cannon and machine-gun fire. This started fires among the hay bales and detonated some of the dwindling supply of mortar shells. All the Americans possessed were a few antitank rifle grenades. They promptly used them but scored no hits. Afterward, the beleaguered Minnesotans grimly fixed bayonets and waited for the impending assault.

The overall situation had now turned against 3/135th. There was no sign the other landing forces were nearing the harbor. The French forts were still active except for those eliminated by air strikes, and there was no naval gunfire support from the Allied task force offshore. Swenson was reluctant to use his remaining mortars and machine guns for fear of hitting the French civilians he could see moving around nearby. The Americans had no more antitank weapons to fend off the Renaults, and with their backs to the sea there was nowhere to retreat. The commander with a gift for swearing decided there was no reason to extend the fighting and cause further casualties. At 1230 hours the Minnesotans surrendered to the French.

With fighting now over at the port, the Americans marched out of their positions into captivity. A company of French naval personnel and three companies of Senegalese colonial soldiers took custody of the U.S. troops, a dozen tanks and armored cars supporting them. Stretcher parties gathered all the wounded from both sides and carried them off for treatment. As they did so the Senegalese lined up the Americans in the street and proceeded to loot them of every watch, piece of jewelry, and wallet the Yanks were carrying. The theft incensed Lt. Col. Swenson, who immediately complained to the French officer commanding the group.

The Frenchman had a simple way to deal with it. He lined up a few of the Senegalese and announced he would shoot them in two minutes if the valuables were not given back. The rest of the Senegalese immediately relinquished the stolen property. Afterward, the U.S. enlisted men were marched away to a nearby barracks under guard. As they left a sniper fired a last shot at the unarmed Americans, killing Corporal Alvin Ronning.

A van arrived, and the American officers were loaded aboard. A short drive took them to the French naval headquarters at the north end of the port. There, a French Navy officer with the rank of commander put a .45-caliber pistol to Swenson's stomach and demanded details of the Eastern Task Force landings, threatening to put them all in a dungeon if they did not cooperate. It was a tense and frightening moment, fortunately broken by the arrival of a French Navy captain who immediately took control of the situation and admonished his fellow Frenchmen to give full courtesy to the Americans. Whether this was from a true sense of courtesy or a realization that Allied forces were poised to take Algiers and would not react well to prisoner abuse is unknown, but afterward the U.S. officers were well treated and even ate at the officer's mess.

As the fighting around Algiers gradually wound down, the courteous treatment of the French officers continued. Though a number of them made it clear they were opposed to the invasion and the Allies, others seemed to support the landings, likely realizing siding with the Anglo-Americans was the surest way to a free France. The latter group even gave the Americans updates on the progress on the landing forces as they closed on the city. Some of the French naval officers even complimented the Royal Navy crew of the *Broke,* saluting their skill and bravery at slicing through the boom under such heavy fire.

As 3/135th went to its temporary captivity, offshore the crew of the *Malcolm* tried to get back into the harbor but the warship was too severely damaged to complete the attempt. Most of the soldiers aboard were later transferred to an LST that put them ashore. By the time they reached Algiers, the fighting was over. Those who remained on the *Malcolm* were taken into the harbor aboard her on November 10, the same day their fellow Americans taken prisoner by the French were released.

Though the mission ended in apparent failure, there was some victory to be pulled from the ordeal of Terminal Force. The French were so busy dealing with it they had no time to demolish the port, which sat largely intact despite the shelling by the French forts. These facilities would be of great use to the Allied armies in the months to come as they pushed east into Tunisia and the awaited confrontation with the Axis.

It came at a stiff cost, however. Casualties in 3/135th came to 15 dead and 33 wounded while the crews of the *Malcolm* and *Broke* lost another 25 killed and an equal number wounded. One estimate put French losses at 70 killed and 100 wounded. By comparison, however, it was worse for Reservist, the similar force assigned to assault Oran harbor. It failed utterly, suffering 90 percent casualties.

Lieutenant William Muir later received a letter from the Admiralty that he was to be mentioned in despatches for his gallantry in flinging the burning mortar ammunition overboard. He later earned a Silver Star for rallying his soldiers during a defensive battle in Tunisia. Promoted to captain, he died in Italy in October 1943, struck down by malaria and jaundice.

To honor the unit for its actions, the 3rd Battalion, 135th Infantry was appointed the Honor Guard for 34th Division formal functions and ceremonies. The 34th would go on to fight its way across Tunisia, Italy, and France, and into Germany, ending the war as part of the U.S. Seventh Army. It endured 500 days in combat, a total exceeded by only one other division in the U.S. Army; all this began with a single battalion and a desperate assault in Algiers. □

Christopher Miskimon is a regular contributor to WWII History. *He is an officer in the Colorado National Guard's 157th Regiment.*

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Who—and How Many—Are the Palestinian Refugees?

How, under the auspices of the UN Relief and Works Agency, can their numbers have exploded from 650,000 in 1948 to more than five million today?

In 1948, some 650,000 Arabs fled from Israel during Israel's war of independence against six invading Arab armies. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was then formed to provide humanitarian aid to those Arab refugees. Sixty-five years later, UNRWA has grown into a huge, half-a-billion-dollar-a-year bureaucracy that claims a constituency of five million Palestinian-Arab refugees. How has the number of Palestinian refugees grown so dramatically? Is UNRWA helping resettle the refugees, or is it exacerbating the problem? Finally, why would the Palestinian Authority in negotiations for a Palestinian state insist that these refugees be moved to Israel?

What are the facts?

UNRWA's original definition of a refugee was someone "whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict." UNRWA began by providing emergency assistance, temporary shelters and basic relief. Soon after, UNRWA helped resettle the refugees in permanent housing and create educational and health institutions. But, unlike the treatment of refugees in all other wars, UNRWA dramatically and inexplicably expanded the definition of "refugee" to include *descendants* of Palestinian refugees.

Today, UNRWA claims more than five million Palestinian refugees, most of whom are in fact descendants and have never lived in Israel. UNRWA currently employs 30,000 people, mostly Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank. The organization receives more than $600 million annually to serve these people, almost 40% of which comes from the U. S., and the Palestinian economy has become absolutely dependent on this aid.

By contrast, the UN's High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR)—formed in 1950—serves all the world's refugees *except* the Palestinians, and has successfully resettled 50 million refugees. Yet UNRWA, with its strange definition of refugee, has actually increased the number of Palestinian refugees by more than 700%—several million of whom are citizens of Jordan, and millions more of whom are living in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza. By 2030, the number of Palestinian "refugees" is expected to hit 8.5 million.

UNHCR, which currently serves about 34 million refugees, employs only 7,685 staff—about one for every 4,424 refugees. UNRWA, however, employs one worker for every 172 refugees, and their staff budget per head is *double* that at UNHCR.

After 1993, when an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians gave broad authority for self-governance to the Palestinian Authority (PA), many donor nations argued that UNRWA's purpose should be taken over by the PA and refugee host governments, such as Jordan and Lebanon. UNRWA argued vehemently against this move, however, and won out.

> The Palestinians insist that millions of "fake" refugees "return" to Israel—though 98% of them have never set foot there.

How many true refugees from Israel are left? In May 2012, Senator Mark Kirk introduced and Congress passed a bill known as the Kirk Amendment, requiring the U.S. State Department to specify the real number of refugees who meet the original UNRWA definition. That number is estimated to be no more than 30,000 Palestinians—a far cry from the five million claimed by UNRWA. The actual number is critical because the U.S. is the single largest donor to UNRWA—contributing about $240 million annually. Surely U.S. citizens have a right to know whether they're supporting legitimate refugees from Israel's 1948 war of independence or whether they're paying to support millions of descendents of refugees and thus creating a new category of Arab welfare dependents.

Why does the Palestinian Authority want millions of "fake" refugees moved to Israel? One of the greatest obstacles to an Israeli-Palestinian peace has been the insistence by Palestinian leadership of the "right of return" of Arab refugees to Israel. Of course there is no inherent right of legitimate refugees, let alone their descendants, to move to Israel. But in every peace negotiation, the Palestinians have stubbornly insisted that millions of "fake" refugees—descendants—"return" to Israel, though 98% of them have never set foot in Israel. This poses an obvious question: Why would Palestinian leaders who are determined to create a Palestinian state want their people now living in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan to move to Israel instead of to their own new state?

There can be only one explanation: They want a Palestinian state *and* they want to conquer the Jewish state. For surely, if Israel, with a population of eight million—six million Jews and two million Arabs—were to agree to such peace terms, it would be tantamount to suicide. An influx of five million Arabs would swamp Israel demographically, and it would instantly cease to be a Jewish state.

It's clear that UNRWA is an organization that has outlived its usefulness. Rather than working to help stateless Palestinian-Arabs assimilate into other societies, it encourages refugee camps. Rather than promoting Palestinian self-determination and self-reliance, the agency is nurturing a new, rapidly growing welfare class. Rather than working to eliminate the problem of Palestinian refugees, UNRWA has become a bloated bureaucracy whose goal seems to be its own perpetuation and the demise of Israel—a mission that costs American taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

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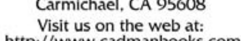

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operation berlin

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The two bombs detonated, tearing it apart.

An eyewitness remembered: "A deep crater from the two exploded FAB-500s, burning debris from the bomber spread around to tens of meters and among them, on the grass dampened by dirt, bloody dismembered head of Senior Lieutenant Bogachev, mangled unrecognizable corpses of navigator Lieutenant Shevchenko, radio operator and gunner…."

The third aircraft's attempt was aborted. In the aftermath of these unsuccessful trials, General Zhavoronkov was called to Moscow to report directly to Stalin for debriefing. Anticipating a bad outcome, Zhavoronkov told a friend: "I'm being called in to make a report. I came to say good-bye." Fortunately, Stalin accepted the explanations, and the general kept his head. Nonetheless, he was recalled to his regular duties, and Colonel Preobrazhenskiy replaced him as the head of operations at Kagul.

As August drew to a close, operations began to wind down. The Army Air Force detachment, its aircraft in severe need of maintenance, returned to the mainland. Only three naval bombers participated in an eighth mission. Of these, two had to turn back before reaching Berlin due to engine problems. The third returned late and crashed with no survivors in full view of the airfield.

At a staff meeting held on September 1, 1941, Colonel Preobrazhenskiy's senior advisers agreed that the overworked engines could no longer carry the planes all the way to Berlin. Reluctantly, Preobrazhenskiy gave orders to switch to secondary targets such as Stettin, Memel, and Königsberg. Khokhlov wrote: "Some of the aircraft were out of service. There were shortages of spare parts. Some damaged planes could fly only without the bomb load. Another mission was found for them—air reconnaissance." Several of the still functional aircraft were reconfigured as torpedo bombers.

On September 6, the Germans hit Kagul with a well-coordinated heavy air attack. After first suppressing air defense batteries, German bombers shifted their attention to the Soviet aircraft shelters near Estonian houses. Wave after wave of German planes hit the airfield, destroying six Soviet bombers and damaging another.

The following day, with only three operational aircraft remaining, Preobrazhenskiy's task force was recalled to the mainland. Crammed full with over 100 support and technical personnel, the three departing bombers still had to leave many soldiers behind. Several days later, the bomber damaged during the September 6 raid was repaired, and more men were flown out. The rest joined the garrison of Saaremaa Island.

On September 14, units from the German 42nd Army Corps and Brandenburg Commandos, supported by air and naval assets, launched Operation Beowulf II aimed at capturing the Moonzund Archipelago. Tallinn had fallen on August 28, and there remained no way to evacuate the 25,000 men of the Moonzund garrison. The Germans systematically cleared island after island of Soviet defenders. Saaremaa fell on October 5, with the remaining Soviet naval aviation personnel destroyed near the lighthouse on the southwest tip of the island.

By the time Operation B ended, Soviet bombers had flown 86 individual sorties, with 33 aircraft actually reaching Berlin to drop over 36,000 kilograms (79,200 pounds) of bombs on the German capital. Seventy crewmen and 17 aircraft were lost, including two during the unsuccessful endeavor to lift heavier payloads. Nine pilots and navigators, including Colonel Preobrazhenskiy and Captain Khokhlov, were named Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Aviators of the 1st Torpedo Bomber Regiment continued fighting with distinction throughout the war, paying a heavy price. On September 16 alone, while attacking ground targets, Colonel Preobrazhenskiy's command lost six aircraft. For its accomplishments in combat, the regiment received the honorific title of "Guards Regiment" in January 1942. Both General Zhavoronkov and Colonel Preobrazhenskiy survived the war, with Zhavoronkov retiring as a Marshal of Aviation in 1950, and Preobrazhenskiy, promoted to major general, replacing Zhavoronkov as commander of Naval Air Forces.

Despite the relatively minor damage inflicted on the Germans during Operation B, this mission was a tremendous boost to Soviet morale at home. This operation could be well summarized by General Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, head of British Royal Air Force Bomber Command: "The Nazis entered this war under the rather childish delusion that they were going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb them…. They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind." □

Victor Kamenir, a former U.S. Army sergeant, was born in Ukraine. He is now a police officer in Hillsboro, Oregon. Victor is the author of numerous articles and one book, The Bloody Triangle: Defeat of Soviet Armor in Ukraine, June 1941.

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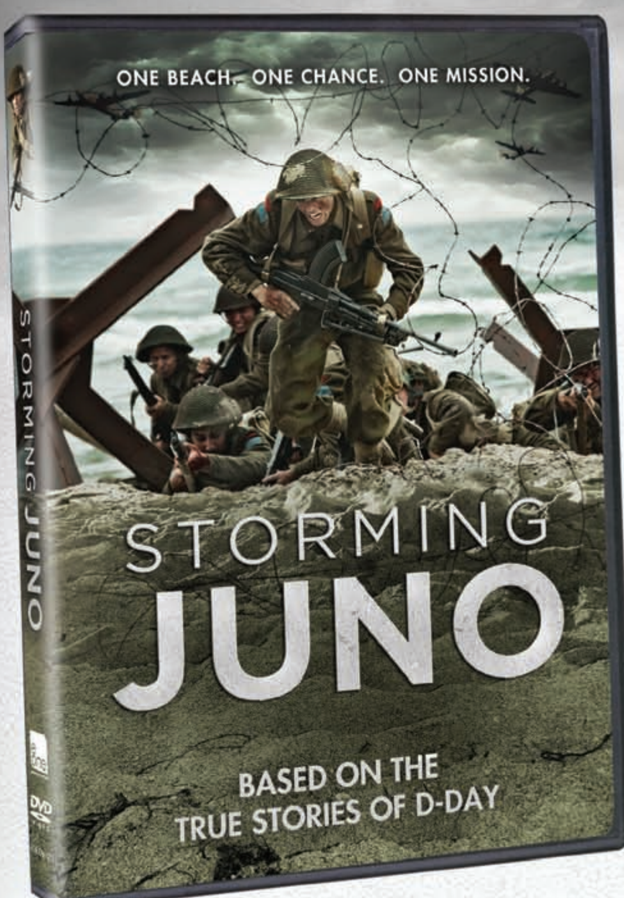

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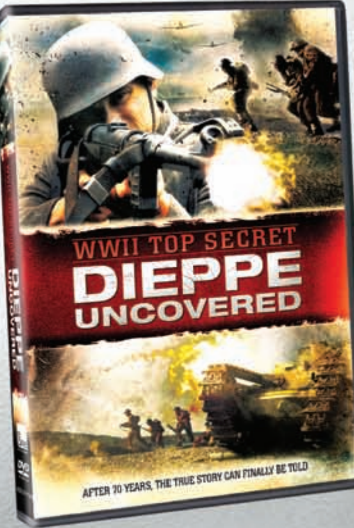

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