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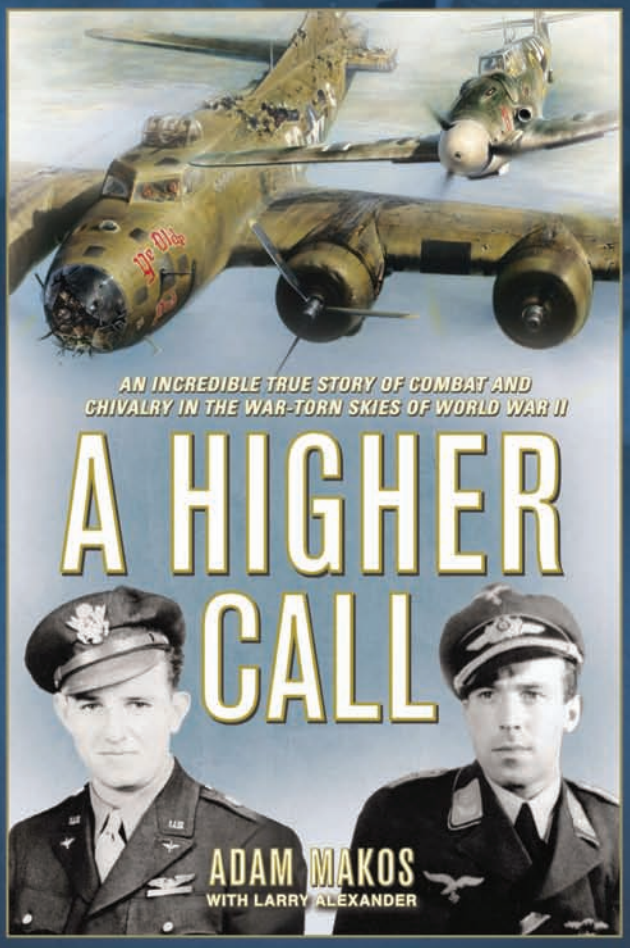

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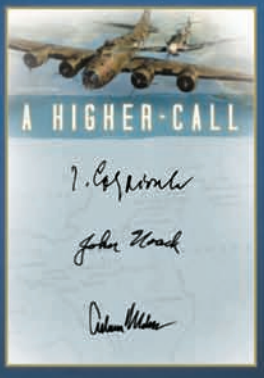

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Contents

WWII HISTORY

Features

Columns

Cover: A Soviet sniper takes aim at enemy during the invasion of Russia in August 1941. See story page 60.

Photo: Getty Images

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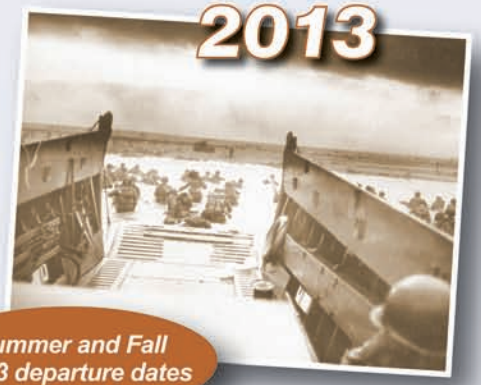

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Editorial

What did FDR know about the Katyn Forest Massacre?

MONTHS AFTER THE RED ARMY STORMED ACROSS THE POLISH FRONTIER from the east and occupied approximately half of Poland in the autumn of 1939, the Soviet secret police (NKVD) rounded up thousands of Polish Army officers and summarily executed them at various locations around the war-torn country. All told, more than 20,000 were murdered.

The most infamous of these mass murders took place in the Katyn Forest, near the Russian city of Smolensk. These officers the backbone of the Polish military; the reservists among them were teachers, politicians, doctors, and lawyers—the core of an intelligentsia that could oppose Soviet rule in the future. For Josef Stalin, NKVD head Lavrenti Beria, and the politburo the solution to the threat was to execute the victims with a single gunshot to the back of the head.

No admission of responsibility for the massacre or apology occurred until Mikhail Gorbachev owned up to it in 1990 as the sun was beginning to set on the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe.

Officially, the United States had stopped short of accusing the Soviets of a cover-up concerning the massacre. Openly accusing the Cold War adversary of mass murder would only serve to heighten the tensions of the half-century ideological and military standoff.

Early outrage over the official silence prompted a Congressional investigation in the early 1950s, and the 1952 report called Katyn "one of the most barbarous international crimes in world history" while acknowledging that the Roosevelt administration had knowledge of the true perpetrators, the Soviets rather than the Nazis, as early as 1943.

The source of renewed interest in the Katyn Forest Massacre and the evidence of Soviet culpability available to the Roosevelt administration is a trove of 1,000 pages of documents that the National Archives released last September. According to an Associated Press report, Roosevelt received confirmation from two American prisoners of war who had been specially trained to gather and submit intelligence information to Washington, D.C., through coded messages.

In the spring of 1943, the Nazis took a group of American and British prisoners to the Katyn Forest. There they were shown row after row of badly decomposed bodies wearing Polish Army uniforms. The intent of the Germans was clear—to potentially drive a rift between the Western Allies and the Soviets as the noose tightened around the collective Nazi neck. The two Americans, Lt. Col. John H. Van Vliet, Jr., and Captain Donald B. Stewart, confirmed that German propagandists accusing the Soviets of the atrocity were indeed correct.

According to the AP, one message from Stewart read, "Content of my report was aprx (approximately): German claims regarding Katyn substantially correct in opinion of Van Vliet and myself." The documents further reveal that in 1950 Stewart was instructed not to discuss Katyn with the Congressional committee before it convened.

Although much of the new evidence has yet to be assessed, it appears virtually certain that Roosevelt and high-ranking members of his administration suppressed information regarding the Katyn Forest Massacre due to military necessity and political expediency. Roosevelt needed good relations with the Soviets to finish the fight against the Nazis and potentially to enter the war against Japan, particularly if an invasion of the Japanese home islands was required.

However, in failing to inform the world—particularly the American people—of Soviet guilt in the massacre some scholars argue that Roosevelt went too far in his efforts to garner favor with the Stalin regime. How does the historical perspective on Roosevelt change with the knowledge that a sitting U.S. president was aware that his country's ally had innocent blood on its hands?

Actually, the AP report contends that the U.S. government was "maintaining that it couldn't conclusively determine guilt until a Russian admission in 1990—a statement that looks improbable given the huge body of evidence of Soviet guilt that had already emerged decades earlier…."

Had the American people known much sooner about the true depths of Stalinist evil, would the negotiations that divided Germany and resulted in Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe have worked out differently? Then again, how would postwar Japan have emerged if Red Army troops had occupied Hokkaido and portions of Honshu and Tokyo had been divided into occupation zones similar to Berlin? These are tantalizing questions.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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By Robert F. Dorr

The Blitz Jet

Germany's Arado Ar-234 proved a great surprise for Allied airmen in the skies.

WHEN THE ARADO AR 234 BLITZ JET BOMBER FIRST APPEARED IN THE SKIES OF Europe, most Allied airmen did not know what it was. Many had never heard of jet engines, let alone a jet bomber. Fewer still knew that the Ar-234 was a shining star in Adolf Hitler's constellation of wonder weapons, the super-secret and super-technology arsenal that the Führer hoped would reverse the Reich's declining fortunes.

Hitler certainly never asked for an opinion from Don Bryan. At high altitude east of the Rhine bridgehead on March 14, 1945, American fighter pilot Captain Bryan was on his way home from a bomber escort mission when he spotted an Ar-234 making a bombing run on the pontoon bridge at Remagen.

At this juncture, the American fighter pilot may have known more about Hitler's secret jet than anyone else on the Allied side. While most Allied pilots never even glimpsed one, this was Bryan's fourth encounter with an Arado. In December 1944, he became, he asserted, the first Allied pilot ever to see one in the air.

After studying drawings of the jet in a Group Intelligence document, Bryan spotted Ar-234s on two more occasions later that month. During his third sighting, the Luftwaffe warplane crossed his flight path beneath him, flying from left to right. Bryan went after the Arado, but it pulled away. That was when he realized that while his North American P-51 Mustang fighter was fast, the Ar-234 was almost 100 miles per hour faster.

"I'm not letting one get away from me again," Bryan thought out loud.

Oberleutnant Erich Sommer pilots an Arado Ar-234 V7 jet bomber over Normandy in this painting by Barry Spicer. Sommer was involved in the development and testing of the advanced jet aircraft.

The usual soup over Germany has been transformed into brilliant sunshine on March 14. Eleven of the German jet bombers from flying unit KG 76 (Kampfgeschwader 76) were attacking the newly constructed floating engineer bridge south of the Ludendorff Bridge, which was the last traditional bridge standing on the Rhine when it was captured by soldiers of the U.S. 9th Armored Division on March 7, 1945.

Bryan, of the 352nd Fighter Group, the Bluenosed Bastards of Bodney, was an air ace and commander of the group's 328th Squadron. Bryan saw the Arado pulling off the bridge and maneuvering into a tight turn to evade a formation of American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters. This maneuver compromised the jet bomber's strongest asset, its superior speed, and Bryan was able to position himself so the German would have to fly toward him.

Bryan dived at the bomber and fired a burst of .50-caliber gunfire that disabled its right engine. Now, Bryan was able to stay behind him and continue firing. "I don't know what the hell was on his mind," said Bryan in an interview, "but he should have gotten out of that airplane while he was

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

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

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

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high enough. I think he was afraid I would shoot at him in his parachute, which I would never do."

The Arado pilot, Hauptmann (Captain) Hans Hirshberger, waited too long to jettison his roof hatch and attempt to escape from his cockpit. He went down with the aircraft. It was his first and only combat mission.

Able to reach a speed of 540 miles per hour, the Arado Ar-234 Blitz was the fastest combat aircraft in the world, slightly faster even than its cousin, the Messerschmitt Me-262 jet.

It was the world's first operational jet bomber, and in many ways the most advanced of the Third Reich's secret weapons. It was important enough that Hitler referred to it several times in staff meetings with his military leaders. Hitler was especially annoyed that Britain's De Havilland Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft, constructed largely of wood, was speedy enough to zoom over Germany with near total impunity. The Führer often boasted to his staff that the Ar-234 jet was even faster than the prop-driven Mosquito.

The Ar-234 was a product of the German company Arado Flugzeugwerke. It was the Arado response to a 1940 German Air Ministry requirement for a fast reconnaissance aircraft. Walter Blume headed the Arado engineering team.

Blume had been a fighter ace during World War I with 28 aerial victories and had been gravely wounded on a combat mission. Blume could appear absent-minded at times, prickly at others, but he had studied aeronautical engineering for more than two decades and was up to date on the jet engines that some touted as the wave of the future. He was responsible for all of the key design features of the Ar-234, assisted by engineer Hans Rebeski and others.

On their drawing boards, they conceived an aircraft that was extraordinarily clean. It had smooth, flush-riveted exterior skin. It had rakish lines and eventually tricycle landing gear. Where most planes needed a bulge or a step for the cockpit windshield, the Ar-234 had a completely smooth, glass-covered nose in the manner of the American Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber. The engine arrangement was similar to that of the better-known Me-262, with long, deep-throated nacelles slung beneath the inboard portion of the wing.

The design was code-named the E370, and the new aircraft was built for a projected maximum speed of 485 miles per hour, which it eventually exceeded with ease. Its projected range of about 2,000 miles was a little less than what the Air Ministry wanted, but officials in Berlin liked the design and ordered two prototypes, known as the Ar-234 V1 and Ar-234 V2.

An early version of the Arado Ar-234 jet bomber is assisted by a trolley during takeoff. The apparatus fell away as the plane became airborne. Note the skids that were utilized for landing purposes.

The success of the new plane would be dependent on the engine intended for it. The engine was the Jumo 004 axial-flow turbojet designed by a team headed by Dr. Anselm Franz of the Junkers aircraft company. It eventually became the world's first jet powerplant to enter production and become operational. But early jet engines being developed by the Germans and the British, with the Americans lagging a distant third in jet engine development, were cantankerous, unreliable, and trouble prone.

Design work on the Ar-234 airplane went smoothly. The Junkers Jumo 004 turbojet engine was another matter. Tests that began in October 1940 were delayed by constant technical problems, including vibration of the compressor blades. Steel blades had to be developed to replace the original alloy blades. Still, early versions of the engine sputtered, smoked, and died. One blew up on a test bench. The vibration problems continued until a second overhaul was made of the stator blade design. These and other problems delayed the engine and that, in turn, delayed both the Messerschmitt Me-262 jet fighter and the Ar-234—for reasons unclear, the latter more than the former.

Once it became workable, the production version of the engine, the 004B-1 was rated at 1,980 pounds of thrust, which was comparable to the turbojet Frank Whittle was developing for the British. Even then, the Jumo typically had a service life of only 10 to 25 hours. Like all turbojets, it was sluggish in responding to the pilot's hand on the throttle.

The plane's landing gear was not part of the original design. Blume's design team was very much aware that the Luftwaffe was not fully satisfied with the plane's range and endurance. To increase internal fuel capacity, they initially dispensed with wheels. Early Ar-234 versions took off using a three-wheeled trolley and landed by means of skids that worked well on a grassy surface. For increased thrust during takeoff, Ar-234s used Hellmuth Walter designed liquid-fueled, rocket-assisted takeoff (RATO) boosters, one mounted beneath each wing.

The Ar-234 was not as large as it looked. When American ace Don Bryan first spotted one, he thought it was an American A-26 Invader. But the A-26 had a wingspan of 71 feet and was intended for a crew of three. In contrast, the Ar-234 had a wingspan of just over 46 feet. Its crew consisted of just a single pilot who, as Bryan later said, "had to be a very busy and very lonely man."

The pilot got aboard by pulling down a retractable step on the left side, climbing up kick-steps, and entering via the roof hatch. This hatch could be discarded, but there was no ejection seat and a pilot's prospects of getting out of the Arado under any circumstances were never good.

The pilot operated conventional throttle and rudder pedals, and clear plexiglas gave him a superb view in all directions. Between the pilot's legs was the complex Lofte 7K tachometric bombsight. At the start of a bombing run, the pilot was expected to swing the control yoke out of his way and fly the aircraft using the bombsight control knobs, looking through the optical sight. Alternately, he could fly the aircraft using the yoke and use a periscope sight, derived from the type used on German tanks, mounted on the cockpit roof and associated bombing computer to make a diving attack. Despite the very narrow landing gear that became standard after the skids were aban-

doned, the Ar-234 performed well when taxiing, taking off, and landing and was not unduly vulnerable to crosswinds.

Although Arado began construction of the Ar-234 prototype at its factory in Warnemunde in the spring of 1941, almost two years elapsed before the manufacturer received its first engines. No one seems to know why Willi Messerschmitt's aircraft company was able to get Jumo 004 engines for its Me-262 in June 1942, while Arado was forced to wait for its first engine until February 1943. For months, Blume and his engineers looked at the unfinished shell of the first plane, called the Ar-234 V1, and followed reports of Messerschmitt's aircraft undergoing flight tests.

The Ar-234 V1 prototype made its first flight on June 15, 1943, not at the factory but at the company test facility at Rheine Airfield. At the controls was Arado chief test pilot Flugkapitän (flight captain) Selle, whose first name seems to be lost to history. By September, four prototypes were flying. The second prototype, the Arado Ar-234 V2, crashed on October 2, 1943, at Rheine near Munster after suffering fire in the port wing, failure of both engines, and various instrumentation failures. The aircraft dived into the ground from 4,000 feet, killing pilot Selle.

Robert F. Dorr Collection

Taken on March 15, 1944, this frontal view of an Arado Ar-234 V9 reveals the placement of a 1,000-pound bomb carried externally along the center line of the plane's fuselage.

In flight tests, there were constant problems with the takeoff trolley and the landing skids. On one flight, the pilot correctly jettisoned the trolley at an altitude of 200 feet, but its parachute failed to deploy and it was smashed. The skids often stayed in the extended position when they should have retracted, or collapsed when they should have been extended. At this rate, Arado experts and Luftwaffe officers agreed, during mass operations a typical airfield would become cluttered with disabled Ar-234s and following aircraft would be unable to land at all. Another drawback was that the Ar-234 could not taxi on the skids. It had to come to a halt and then be moved using a crane. Recognition of the need to change the landing arrangement prompted cancellation of a planned production version called the Ar-234A.

Despite the problems, the Ar-234 V7 prototype became the first jet aircraft ever to fly a

Photographed at an airfield in Germany, this Arado Ar-234 V13 is representative of the 13th prototype of the aircraft and the variant that set the production standard for the twin-engine jet bomber.

reconnaissance mission. On August 2, 1944, Lieutenant Erich Sommer whizzed over the Normandy beachheads at about 460 miles per hour and used two Rb 50/30 cameras to take one set of photos every 11 seconds. Although the Allies supposedly had air superiority over the beaches, Sommer's warplane returned with unscathed.

The Ar-234B Schnellbomber, or "fast bomber," introduced a widened fuselage that permitted conventional landing gear, albeit with a very narrow track. The B model, first flown on March 10, 1944, piloted by civilian test pilot Joachim Carl, who replaced Selle, was slightly heavier than reconnaissance versions at 21,720 pounds. Because the Ar-234 was slender and entirely filled with fuel, it had no room for a bomb bay. Its bomb load had to be carried on external racks.

The added weight and drag of a full bomb load reduced the speed, so on the B model two 20mm MG 151 cannon with 200 rounds each were added in a remotely controlled tail mounting to give some measure of defense. Since the cockpit was directly in front of the fuselage, the pilot had no direct view to the rear, so the guns were aimed through the periscope. No record exists of anyone ever hitting anything with these guns. Many pilots removed them to save weight.

It was not until June 1944 that 20 Ar-234Bs were produced and delivered. Some of these were diverted to the Luftwaffe test center at Rechlin. From October 1944, the German air unit known as KG 76 began to convert to the Ar-234B-2 bomber. The group began flying missions during heavy fighting in the Ardennes. In March 1945, coming in at low level and slinging bombs almost horizontally, after several attempts KG 76 finally succeeded in collapsing the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, but by then the loss of the bridge had little effect.

"I liked the Arado very much," said former Luftwaffe pilot Willi Kriessmann, who lives today in Burlingame, California. "It was a wonderful plane. I thought it was designed better than the Messerschmitt Me-262. It was a single seater, so we didn't have time to practice much, so we had some 'dry classes.' Landing and taking off was very different from a prop plane." Kriessmann noted that the RATO units often did not work properly.

Two different configurations for a four-engined version of the Ar-234 were built and flown. The sixth and eighth planes in the series were powered by four BMW 003 jet engines instead of two Jumo 004s, the sixth (Ar-234 V6) having four engines housed in individual nacelles, and the eighth (Ar-234 V8) flown with two pairs of BMW 003s installed within "twinned" nacelles underneath each wing. These were the world's first four-engined jets. They offered no performance advantage over the twin-engined version.

An improved Ar-234C was the final production version. This model introduced an improved pressurized cockpit and larger main wheels. A "crescent-wing" Ar-234, foreshadowing Britain's Handley Page Victor bomber of the 1950s, was under construction but never flown.

Kriessmann was assigned to ferry Ar-234s from the factory "to different places where they installed optical equipment and bombing equipment. I flew the first one on December 12, 1944, from Hamburg to Kampfgeschwader 76 and the last on May 1, 1945." KG 76 flew the final Ar -234 sortie of the war against advancing Red Army troops near Berlin.

Plans existed for the manufacture of 2,500 Ar-234 Blitz bombers, but they were cut short by the war's end. Total production was 224

examples of all versions of the Ar-234.

Today, the only surviving aircraft in this series is an Ar-234B-2 bomber (werke number 140312) on display at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, at Dulles, Virginia, replete with RATO units.

This survivor was among nine Ar-234s surrendered to British forces at Sola Airfield near Stavanger, Norway, after operating with KG 76. A technical team led by U.S. Colonel Harold Watson and known as Watson's Whizzers collected this and other German high-tech aircraft to be shipped to the United States for flight testing. The aircraft was flown from Sola to Cherbourg, France, on June 24, 1945, where it joined 34 other advanced German aircraft shipped back to the United States aboard the British aircraft carrier HMS *Reaper*.

Reaper departed from Cherbourg on July 20, arriving at Newark, New Jersey, eight days later. Watson's pilots took two Ar-234s from *Reaper* to Freeman Field, Indiana, for testing and evaluation. The fate of the second Ar-234 flown to Freeman Field is unknown. A third Ar-234 was taken off *Reaper* and assembled by the U.S. Navy for testing, but was found to be unflyable and was scrapped.

After receiving new engines, radio, and oxygen equipment, werke number 140312 was transferred to Wright Field, Ohio. Flight testing was completed on October 16, 1946. After a period of time in storage, during the early 1950s the Ar-234 was moved to the Smithsonian's Paul Garber Restoration Facility at Suitland, Maryland. The Smithsonian began restoration in 1984 and completed it in February 1989.

Some aviation experts believe that the Jumo 004's technical problems could have been overcome earlier, that other reasons never fully explained were responsible for delays with this aircraft, and that hundreds of Ar-234Bs could have been in service by the time of the fighting in the Ardennes. The Arado jet bomber, they say, could have substantially delayed the Allies' victory.

Others insist that while the Ar-234 was a technical marvel, the only jet bomber used in World War II, the Allies had the enormous advantage of sheer numbers of men and machines. By this reasoning, the Ar-234, despite its high-tech qualities, could not have delayed the war's inevitable outcome. □

Robert F. Dorr is a U.S. Air Force veteran, a retired diplomat, and author of the book Air Force One, *a look at presidential aircraft and air travel.*

By Michael D. Hull

All images: Imperial War Museum

Battle Against an Ally

Firing on the French Fleet at Mers-el-Kebir was horrific but necessary for British security.

WHEN THE ARMISTICE BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY WAS PUT INTO FORCE on June 25, 1940, the fate of the powerful French Navy—the fourth largest in the world—was of critical importance to the British.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his government dreaded the prospect of the French Fleet falling into enemy hands while Britain stood alone against the Axis powers. The odds were already heavy against the island nation's main line of defense, the Royal Navy. Facing both the German and Italian navies, it was stretched thinly in the North Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, the Far East, and the Mediterranean Sea.

The terms of the infamous armistice at Compiegne stipulated that the French Fleet would not be used by Germany or Italy, but would be immobilized under their control. Also, the Vichy French naval minister, Admiral Jean Darlan, though no friend of the British, instructed his captains that under no circumstances were their ships to be made available to the Germans. But the British were not aware of the full text of Darlan's directive and feared that France's battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines might soon be deployed against them.

Most of the main French naval units were scattered among various Mediterranean ports, while others were in British harbors and the French West Indies. Anchored at the Mers-el-Kebir base in Algeria were the modern 26,500-ton battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg*; two aging battleships, the 22,189-ton *Bretagne* and *Provence*; the 10,000-ton seaplane carrier *Commandante Teste;* and six large destroyers. The ships formed the main French naval squadron in the Mediterranean.

In the nearby port of Oran were seven destroyers and four submarines. The new, uncompleted, 38,000-ton battleships *Jean Bart* and *Richelieu* were tied up respectively at Casablanca in French Morocco and Dakar in French West Africa, while the aging 22,189-ton battleship *Lorraine* and four cruisers lay under the guns of the British Mediterranean Fleet in Alexandria harbor.

The French battleship *Richelieu* takes a hit from a British torpedo during the tragic destruction of much of the French fleet at Dakar, Senegal, in 1940. The Royal Navy attacked the French ships to prevent their falling into the hands of the Nazis.

It was a situation that Churchill and his ministers could not permit, so it was decided that the French Fleet must be put permanently out of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler's reach. The prime minister noted that the German government had "solemnly declared" that it had no intention of using

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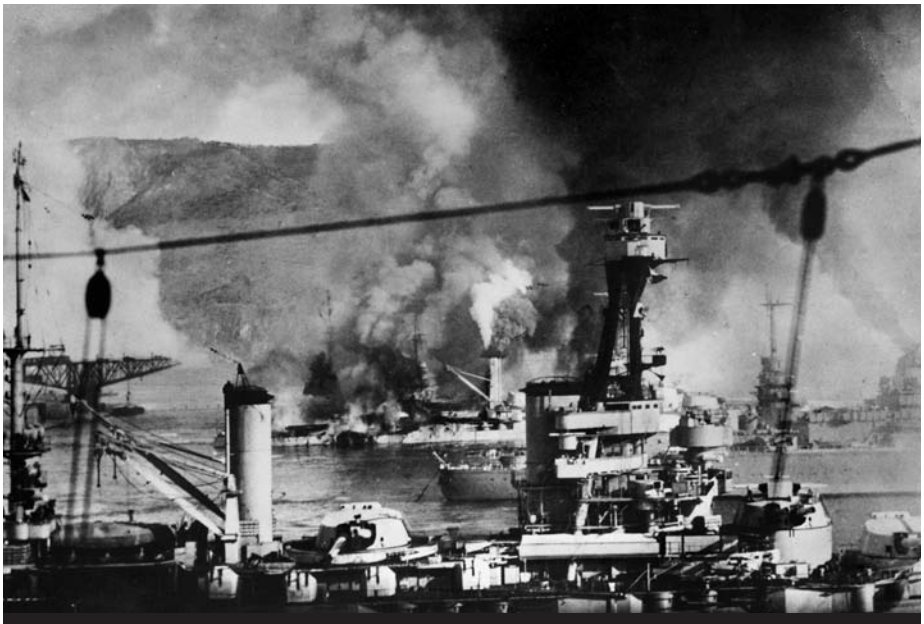


The elderly French battleship *Provence* is shown under fire in the foreground, while the modern battleship *Strasbourg* escapes toward the open sea at right, and another old battleship, *Bretagne,* burns furiously in the background during the Royal Navy attack on the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir.

the French vessels. "But who in his senses would trust the word of Hitler after his shameful record and the facts of the hour?" said Churchill. He believed that the Compiegne armistice could be voided at any time. "There was in fact no security for us at all," he said. "At all costs, at all risks, in one way or another, we must make sure that the navy of France did not fall into wrong hands, and then perhaps bring us and others to ruin."

The solution devised by Churchill and the Admiralty was the hasty creation of a powerful squadron to fill the vacuum left by the French Navy in the Mediterranean, and, if necessary, destroy it. The War Cabinet did not hesitate, Churchill reported later. "Those ministers who, the week before, had given their whole hearts to France and offered common nationhood, resolved that all necessary measures should be taken," said the prime minister. "This was a hateful decision, the most unnatural and painful in which I have ever been concerned. It recalled the episode of the destruction of the Danish Fleet in Copenhagen harbor by Nelson in 1801; but now the French had been only yesterday our dear allies, and our sympathy for the misery of France was sincere. On the other hand, the life of the state and the salvation of our cause were at stake. It was Greek tragedy. But no act was ever more necessary for the life of Britain and for all that depended upon it."

So, Force H was formed at Gibraltar on June 28, 1940. Code-named Operation Catapult, its mission was a painful and distasteful one—to neutralize or destroy the French Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Though based at the British bastion guarding the western entrance to the strategic Mediterranean, Force H was to be an independent operational command. The squadron comprised the 22,000-ton carrier HMS *Ark Royal*; the 42,100-ton battlecruiser *Hood*; two battleships, 29,150-ton *Resolution* and 30,600-ton *Valiant*; the cruisers, 5,220-ton *Arethusa* and 7,550-ton *Enterprise;* and the screening destroyers *Faulknor, Foxhound, Fearless, Forester, Foresight, Escort, Keppel, Active, Wrestler, Vidette,* and *Vortigern.* Force H was then the main Allied task force in the Atlantic and western Mediterranean.

The first commander was trim, square-jawed, 57-year-old Vice Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, a descendant of the famous Hood naval family. He flew his flag in HMS *Hood,* which between the wars had been revered as the most powerful ship afloat and the symbol of British naval might.

A decorated veteran of the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign in World War I, Somerville had been invalided out of the Royal Navy with tuberculosis in 1938. Recalled to service at the outbreak of war in September 1939, he helped Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay organize Operation Dynamo, the epic evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in June 1940. Somerville was regarded by Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, commander of the British Mediterranean Fleet, as "a great sailor and a great leader."

Operation Catapult was launched on July 3,

French sailors work feverishly on the deck of their damaged ship in an attempt to aid wounded countrymen.

1940. That night, more than 200 French vessels in British ports, most of them anchored at Portsmouth and Plymouth, were impounded. The ships included the battleships *Courbet* and *Paris*, the supply ship *Pollux*, destroyers, minelayers, minesweepers, submarines, submarine chasers, motor torpedo boats, tugs, trawlers, sloops, and harbor craft. The action was sudden, and overwhelming force was used.

The transfer was amicable, and the French crews came ashore willingly, Churchill reported. However, there were scuffles during the transfer of the destroyer *Mistral* and the 3,250-ton submarine *Surcouf*. Two British officers were wounded, a leading seaman killed, an able seaman wounded, and a Frenchman killed. "But the utmost endeavors were made with success to reassure and comfort the French sailors," said Churchill. "Many hundreds volunteered to join us. The *Surcouf*, after rendering distinguished service, perished on February 19, 1942, with all her gallant French crew."

On July 3, 1940, Force H was dispatched to Mers-el-Kebir. There, Admiral Somerville was to open negotiations with Admiral Marcel Gensoul, commander of the French squadron. Gensoul would refuse initially to meet with Somerville's emissary, and the negotiations were conducted in writing.

The Admiralty had drafted four options for the French admiral: (1) to put to sea and join forces with the Royal Navy; (2) to sail with reduced crews to British ports, where the vessels would be impounded and their complements repatriated; (3) to sail with reduced crews to the base at Dakar, where the ships would be immobilized; or (4) to scuttle his ships within six hours. The Admiralty had instructed Somerville that should Gensoul refuse all of the offers, the French ships were to be put out of action in their present berths, using "all means at your disposal."

Early on the morning of July 3, 1940, with

Prior to the devastating British attack that sank and disabled numerous French warships, these French vessels lie at anchor in the harbor at Mers-el-Kebir in Algeria.

the sea calm and a warm haze in the air, Force H steamed toward the Algerian coast. The 15-inch guns of *Hood, Resolution,* and *Valiant* were trained fore and aft, and Admiral Somerville hoped that they would not have to be fired that day in the fulfillment of his task. He blanched at the prospect of killing French sailors, who were comrades in arms of the Royal Navy. On the evening of July 2, Somerville had received a message from Prime Minister Churchill, relayed by the Admiralty, telling him, "You are charged with one of the most disagreeable and difficult tasks that a British admiral has ever been faced with, but we have complete confidence in you and rely on you to carry it out relentlessly."

At 9:10 AM on July 3, the British squadron arrived off Oran and Mers-el-Kebir. Despite the morning haze, "the upper works of the French heavy ships were clearly visible over the breakwater," reported Somerville, "although only the actual tops and masts could be seen from a position northwest of the fort (guarding the entrance to the base)." His French-speaking emissary, Captain C.S. Holland, a former naval attaché in Paris, had gone ahead aboard the destroyer HMS *Foxhound* to rendezvous with Admiral Gensoul's flag lieutenant outside the Mers-el-Kebir defensive boom.

Captain Holland was met at 8:10 AM by Gensoul's barge bearing his flag lieutenant, "an old friend of mine," the British officer reported. The French admiral refused to meet with Holland, so the flag lieutenant delivered the British War Cabinet's ultimatum to Gensoul in his flagship, *Dunkerque*. "At this point," recorded Holland, "it was observed that the battleships were furling awnings and raising steam."

Now, as the day grew hotter, Admiral Somerville could only steam back and forth outside Mers-el-Kebir and Oran, waiting anxiously for Captain Holland to signal back reports on the progress of his negotiations with the French. Two and a half hours passed while Holland, Admiral Somerville, and the War Cabinet in distant London all waited for Admiral Gensoul's response. It was a tense, impotent time, particularly for the Force H commander.

At noon, Somerville signaled the Admiralty that he would give Gensoul until 3 PM to reply to the British terms. Half an hour later, Somerville was signaled that if he thought the French ships were preparing to leave the harbor, he "should inform them that if they moved, he would open fire." The Force H commander then signaled to Holland and asked if he thought there was now any alternative to bombarding the French squadron. The emissary urged that the French should be asked for a final reply before any hostile action was taken. Holland told Admiral Somerville that his knowledge of the French character suggested "an initial refusal will often come around to an acquiescence." Holland said he "felt most strongly that the use of force, even as a last resource, was fatal to our object." So, he used "every endeavor to bring about a peaceful solution."

At last, around 3 PM, Admiral Gensoul agreed to meet Holland on board *Dunkerque,* and this encouraged Somerville to again postpone action. "I think they are weakening," he signaled to the Admiralty. At 4:15 PM, Holland was piped over the side of the French flagship and ushered into Gensoul's cabin. The admiral was angry and indignant and had come to believe that the British might actually use force against his squadron. He played for time; British decrypts of French cipher traffic that afternoon revealed that Gensoul could expect support from other naval units and was to "answer fire with fire." Passing the intercept on to Admiral Somerville, the Admiralty added, "Settle this matter quickly, or you may have reinforcements to deal with."

Somerville awaited news from Captain Holland, who was now convinced "we had won through and he [Gensoul] would accept one or other of the proposals." But Holland was unaware of what London had omitted to pass on to Somerville. Its decrypt of the French Admiralty signal to Gensoul indicated that he believed he had only two options: to join the British squadron or scuttle his ships. The tension mounted as the situation came to a head.

Around 5:15 PM, as Gensoul was deciding to reject the British ultimatum, he received a signal from Admiral Somerville stating that Force H would sink his ships unless he accepted the terms by 5:30. The dejected Holland observed that the French battleships were in "an advanced state of readiness for sea." Control stations were being manned, rangefinders were trained on Force H, and tugs were fussing

round the sterns of the French battlewagons. Action stations was sounded, but there was little bustle among the crews, Holland noted. He took a "friendly" leave-taking from *Dunkerque* as he made his way back to HMS *Foxhound*. The officer of the watch aboard the battleship *Bretagne* saluted him smartly. It seemed to Captain Holland that the French could not believe that they were about to be the targets of British gunners. At 5:55 PM, HMS *Foxhound* got clear after laying magnetic mines across the entrance to Mers-el-Kebir harbor.

Then the dreaded hour of reckoning came as the battlecruiser *Hood* steamed at 17 knots ahead of Admiral Somerville's line. Her eight 15-inch guns thundered at a range of 17,500 yards, closely followed by those of *Resolution* and *Valiant*. It was the first clash of battle fleets in World War II, but hardly the kind of engagement expected by Admiralty planners in the prewar years; the enemy was not the German, Italian, or Japanese fleets. By a fateful, tragic irony, Force H was attacking the Royal Navy's 18th- and 19th-century foe and 20th-century ally.

Because of haze and smoke billowing from the French ships raising steam, the targets of Force H were obscured. *Hood*'s target, a Dunkerque-class battleship anchored abeam to the harbor mole, was indistinct. So the three British capital ships had to use the nearby Mers-el-Kebir lighthouse as an aiming mark and make "a general shoot into the area of the anchorage." It was difficult for the British crews to observe the results of their volleys, but a Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber from No. 810 Squadron aboard HMS *Ark Royal* reported from an altitude of 7,000 feet that *Hood*'s first salvo had exploded in a line across *Commandante Teste, Bretagne,* and the quarterdeck of *Strasbourg*.

The second salvo, according to the Swordish crew, "hit the *Bretagne,* which blew up immediately and enveloped the harbor in smoke." Hit in her after magazines, the French battleship died at 5:58 PM, with a thick mushroom cloud of smoke rising high behind the breakwater. When the smoke cleared, *Bretagne* was no longer visible to the Swordfish crew, but they observed a fire aft on the seaplane carrier. *Dunkerque* appeared to have hit a mine, with the loss of 210 dead, and grounded her bows on the shore opposite her berth. It was learned later that the badly damaged *Provence* also had beached herself. Meanwhile, a direct hit blew off the stern of the large destroyer *Mogador,* killing 42 men.

Cornered in confined waters and with limited fields of fire because of neighboring ves-

sels, the French warships fired back as best they could. With a crushing 10-minute bombardment, Force H had struck a grievous blow against Gensoul's squadron. At 6:04 PM, Admiral Somerville ordered a cease-fire in to give the French sailors an opportunity to leave their ships in the smoking harbor. By this time, more than 1,250 seamen lay dead, 977 of them in *Bretagne*. The cease-fire was welcomed in the British capital ships, where temperatures in the magazines and shell rooms had risen to more than 90 degrees, adversely affecting the crews.

At 6:20 PM, HMS *Hood* received a signal from the *Ark Royal* Swordfish crew saying that the battleship *Strasbourg* and five escorting destroyers had left the Mers-el-Kebir harbor and were heading along the coast. When the report was confirmed at 6:30, Admiral Somerville ordered *Hood* to steer eastward in pursuit. The British battlewagon increased speed to 25 knots in an attempt to challenge *Strasbourg*, but then veered away to avoid a torpedo attack by the French destroyers. Somerville, who had decided against a night action, reported later that his Operation Catapult instructions "did not make sufficient provision for dealing with any French ships that might attempt to leave harbor."

But Force H had not finished with *Strasbourg,* and six lumbering Swordfish torpedo bombers from *Ark Royal* went after her. At 8:55 PM, they approached the French battleship at a height of 20 feet (????) and loosed their torpedoes into a calm sea. The Swordfish crews believed that they might have scored two or three hits, but *Strasbourg* was able to steam away in the darkness and eventually reach haven at the big Toulon naval base in southeastern France.

Three days later, early on July 6, 1940, Swordfish planes from *Ark Royal* flew back to Mers-el-Kebir to finish off the grounded *Dunkerque.* Diving out of the rising sun from an altitude of 7,000 feet, the "stringbag" biplanes dropped six torpedoes, sinking the 859-ton auxiliary ship *Terre Neuve,* berthed alongside the battleship. The supply ship's cargo of depth charges exploded, ripping open the side of *Dunkerque.* Another 150 French sailors were killed. Meanwhile, Force H was also battling surface units and submarines of the Italian Fleet elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

On July 7, the British turned their attention to the French naval base at distant Dakar in West Africa, where the battleship *Richelieu,* cruiser *Primauguet,* a sloop, and destroyers were anchored. Commanded by Captain R.F.J. Onslow, a small force comprising the 10,850-ton carrier HMS *Hermes* and the cruisers *Australia* and *Dorsetshire* stood off the harbor. Onslow was given an Admiralty ultimatum for the French, similar to that given at Mers-el-Kebir, but the commander of the Dakar squadron refused entry to a sloop carrying a Royal Navy emissary.

During the night of July 7-8, a fast launch from *Hermes* sneaked through the harbor booms, dropped depth charges under the stern of *Richelieu,* and escaped. The charges failed to detonate, but three hours later six Swordfish from the British flattop pounced on the battleship. They achieved only one hit but distorted a propeller shaft and flooded three compartments.

At Alexandria, meanwhile, Admiral Cunningham was able to persuade the French squadron there to disarm, avoiding more bloodshed. Its fuel and ammunition were surrendered to the Royal Navy. On July 18, all French merchant ships in the Suez Canal were seized.

The British had largely eliminated the French Navy as a strategic factor in the war, and it was, said Prime Minister Churchill, "the turning point in our fortunes." Inevitably, the clash at Mers-el-Kebir created lingering tension and bitterness between the two nations, even as Free French soldiers, sailors, and airmen were rallying to General Charles de Gaulle and the Allied cause. Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain's Vichy government broke off diplomatic relations with Britain and moved closer to active collaboration with Germany, and French planes dropped a few retaliatory bombs on Gibraltar. Vichy resistance to the British and Free French in North Africa and Syria stiffened.

But the Royal Navy's actions had made clear to the world—and in particular to America, which recognized the Vichy regime—that Britain, on the apparent brink of defeat, was determined to win the battle of the Mediterranean and secure eventual victory.

On the afternoon of July 4, 1940, as his country braced for a possible invasion and imminent major aerial assaults, Prime Minister Churchill spoke for an hour in the House of Commons on "the measures we had taken" to remove "the French Navy from major German calculations." The House was silent during his recital, but at the end he received a standing ovation. All members, Churchill reported, "joined in solemn stentorian accord."

He declared later, "The elimination of the French Navy as an important factor almost at a single stroke by violent action produced a profound impression in every country. Here was this Britain which so many had counted down and out, which strangers had supposed to be quivering on the brink of surrender to the mighty power arrayed against her, striking ruth-

lessly at her dearest friends of yesterday and securing for a while to herself the undisputed command of the sea. It was made plain that the British War Cabinet feared nothing and would stop at nothing. This was true."

Churchill noted, "The genius of France enabled her people to comprehend the whole significance of Oran, and in her agony to draw new hope and strength from this additional bitter pang."

He was touched by a story about the aftermath of the July 3 destruction of the French squadron. "In a village near Toulon dwelt two peasant families, each of whom had lost their sailor son by British fire at Oran," related the prime minister. "A funeral service was arranged to which all their neighbors sought to go. Both families requested that the Union Jack should lie upon the coffins side by side with the Tricolor, and their wishes were respectfully observed. In this we may see how the comprehending spirit of simple folk touches the sublime."

After the fateful actions at Oran, Mers-el-Kebir, and Dakar, Force H was active in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Led by Vice Admiral Sir Neville Syfret and then Vice Admiral Algernon U. Willis after Somerville departed early in 1942, the task force took part in the dramatic pursuit and destruction of the 42,000-ton German battleship *Bismarck*, the invasions of Madagascar, northwest Africa, and southern Europe, and provided the main escort for vital convoys to Malta. Its fighting strength fluctuated, but the ships most associated with Force H were *Ark Royal*, the 32,000-ton battlecruiser *Renown*, and the 9,100-ton heavy cruiser *Sheffield*. Force H was disbanded in October 1943, when Allied naval supremacy in the Mediterranean Theater was no longer in dispute.

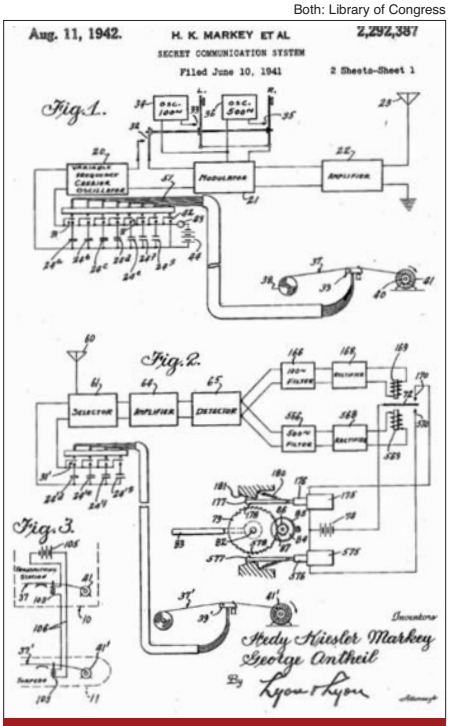
Most of the remaining French Fleet had been scuttled at Toulon on November 27, 1942, following the Allied invasion of North Africa, to prevent its seizure by Germany after the Nazi takeover of Vichy France.

The initial commander of Force H, Admiral Somerville, was knighted in 1941 and appointed commander in chief of the Royal Navy's hastily created Eastern Fleet in the Indian Ocean in February 1942. Acknowledged as a highly successful surface commander, he served until August 1944, when he was replaced by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. Somerville then headed the Admiralty mission in Washington. He was promoted to admiral of the fleet in May 1945 and died in 1949. □

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

By Eric Niderost

Both: Library of Congress



A page of from the patent application submitted by Hedy Lamarr and George Antheil reveals the complexity of the radio frequency system that the two proposed to the U.S. Navy.

Beauty with Brains

Actress Hedy Lamarr was an inventor for the Allies.

HEDY LAMARR WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ACTRESS OF HER GENERATION, A celluloid diva who was the epitome of Hollywood glamour, sensuality, and sophistication. But there was another side of Lamarr that has only been revealed in recent years. The screen goddess was also a brilliant inventor who devised an early form of spread-spectrum communications to prevent Axis transmitters from jamming Allied radio-controlled torpedoes. The digital version of this concept is employed in all our modern cell phones.

Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler was born in Vienna, Austria, on November 9, 1913. Her father, Emil Kiesler, was a prominent banker, and young Hedwig enjoyed all the privileges of the upper classes in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even as a child she showed an intellectual curiosity far beyond her years. Once while examining her father's watch, she asked, "Why does this in front go around? How does this work?"

The striking young beauty learned all the basics from a series of tutors, then was sent to a succession of private schools. But these schools were meant to add polish, not prepare a woman for a career. As she entered her teen years, her future seemed predictable and hardly different from any other young Viennese society girl.

It was generally expected that she would marry well and spend the rest of her life as the perfect mother and hostess. Hedwig had other ideas. Becoming an actress seemed a good way to both make a living and free herself from the shackles of convention. Luck was with her; she attracted the notice of German director Max Reinhardt, who took her to Berlin for training in the dramatic arts.

Striking an alluring pose in the 1949 Cecil B. De Mille film *Samson and Delilah*, actress Hedy Lamarr was both beautiful and intelligent. Her drawings initiated a revolutionary concept in radio frequency management.

After a modest stint as a script girl she began acting in 1930. Her screen debut was a bit part in the German film *Geld auf der Strasse* (*Money on the Street*). More films followed, forgettable productions that did little to enhance her reputation or further her career. But then Czech director Gustav Machaty cast her in one of the most controversial movies of all time, *Extase* (*Ecstasy*). The 1932 opus was one of the most sexually frank films ever made, though perhaps tame by 21st-century standards.

Ecstasy featured Hedwig as a young woman trapped in a loveless marriage with an older man. At one point the 19-year-old beauty goes for a nude swim, a 10-minute sequence that showcases Lamarr's naked form. Later, Hedwig's character meets a young soldier and they soon make love. The camera lingers on Hedwig's face in tight close up during the encounter.

Lamarr soon discovered that fame is a two-edged sword. *Ecstasy* cemented her reputation as a screen "goddess" of great beauty and sensuality but made it harder for people to accept the fact that there was real intelligence behind the lovely façade. At the time, though, it seemed that *Ecstasy* was Lamarr's farewell to the cinema. Her par-

ents thought it high time for her to marry and take her place among Vienna's social elite.

Leaving nothing to chance, her parents insisted that she marry Fritz Mandl, the head of Hirtenberger Patronenfabrik, a leading armaments firm. Though it seems incredible in retrospect, the independent-minded beauty did as she was told and married Mandl on August 10, 1933. On the surface, it seemed a fairy tale union. She had social position, money, jewels, and literally dined off gold-plated dishes. The couple lived in a chateau and had an army of servants to cater to their every whim. But the image of fairy tale happiness was more fiction than real.

Mandl was a man who placed profit over morality and was favored by the new crop of right-wing dictatorships that were springing up across Europe like malevolent mushrooms. Hedwig found herself playing hostess to a steady succession of arms dealers, manufacturers, and political figures. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was a dinner guest, and it was said that Hedwig also met the new German Führer, Adolf Hitler.

Her husband made no secret of his right-wing fascist leanings and was ready and willing to sell to the Germans or anyone else who would pay his price. Mussolini was a regular customer, and it was said the Italian Army was largely equipped with Mandl weapons during its invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

Hedwig was passionately anti-Nazi but had to keep her feelings hidden beneath her dazzlingly beautiful façade. Mandl was insanely jealous, domineering, and possessive, even ordering servants to spy on his young and beautiful "trophy" wife. The arms manufacturer also made a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to buy up all existing prints of *Ecstasy.* Mussolini personally owned a copy of the film and politely but firmly refused to sell it to his friend.

Mandl's possessiveness had a positive side, at least in retrospect. Hedwig was constantly at his side when he attended business or development meetings and kept her eyes and ears open, absorbing much technical data in the process. After four years of marriage, she finally could not take a minute more of what had become a gilded prison. Hedwig drugged the maid who had been assigned to watch her, donned the servant's uniform, and slipped away to freedom.

Hedwig, now Hedy, found herself in London, where she resumed her acting career and found work on the stage. Though she did not realize it, her timing was perfect and probably saved her life. In 1938, barely a year after her escape,

Hitler took over Austria. Austrian Jews were persecuted, and later many died in the Holocaust. Hedy had Jewish blood, and it is highly unlikely that her estranged husband would have done anything to help her.

As luck would have it, Hedy caught the attention of Louis B. Mayer, head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film studios, who was in England at the time. One of Hollywood's major power brokers, Mayer loved to groom new actors and was always on the lookout for people to add to his stable of stars. The movie mogul had discovered Greta Garbo and Greer Garson while on European trips, and this excursion was no exception. Mayer offered Hedy a $500 a week contract to start but cautioned her that she would have to change her name.

Mayer was a man who passionately espoused what would today be called family values. An odd combination of hardheaded businessman and mushy sentimentalist, Mayer loved to have a good cry at the movies. He loved preachy, saccharine films, especially those that involved children, idealized teens (Andy Hardy), or cute animals (Lassie). This was, of course, light years away from Hedy's steamy, continental brand of sensuality—but in this case, Mayer the businessman overcame Mayer the guardian of American morality.

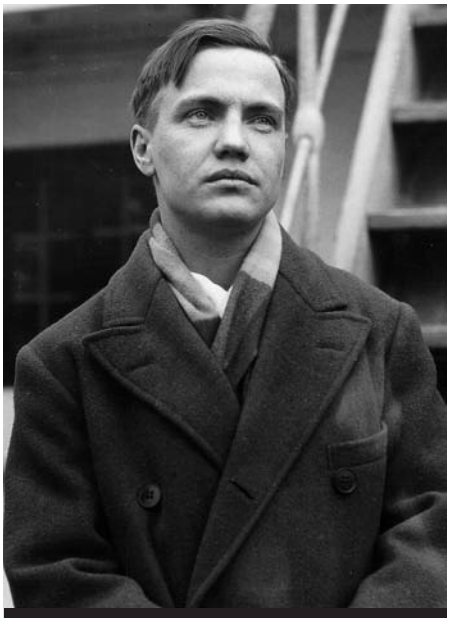
Hedy accepted Mayer's offer and boarded the French liner *Normandie* to begin her new career as an American movie star. During the voyage MGM publicist Howard Strickland handed Hedy a list of possible last names to choose from. Hedy picked Lamarr, the surname of an MGM star who had died of drug abuse in the 1920s.

The newly christened Hedy Lamarr arrived in Hollywood at the peak of its Golden Age. Movie attendance was at an all-time high. In 1939, 50 million Americans went to the movies at least once a week. Adding occasional moviegoers to these totals, weekly attendance figures were boosted to some 80 million people. When one considers that the population of the United States was around 130 million, the impact of the movies becomes readily apparent.

Hedy's first American film was *Algiers*, released in 1938 and co-starring French actor Charles Boyer. Boyer is Pepe Le Moko, underworld king of the exotic native quarter known as the Casbah. Lamarr is Gaby, a sultry Parisienne who reminds him of home. Boyer complained that Lamarr could not act, but most of the problem came from the fact she simply did not know English well. She had to learn her lines phonetically, but she quickly mastered the new language.

Algiers was a hit, leading to other starring roles.

National Archives



A film score composer, George Antheil worked with actress Hedy Lamarr to develop a radio frequency hopping system that was the forerunner of technology that remains in use today.

She was a beautiful cypher at first, but as time went on she matured into a good, if not great, actress. MGM tended to cast Lamarr as an exotic temptress, fiery wanton, or "other woman." In *White Cargo* (1942) she was memorable as Tondelayo, slinky native girl, and in *Boom Town* (1940) she was Clark gable's mistress.

By 1940, she was an established member of the Hollywood community. War had broken out in Europe, and it was clear to Hedy that it would only be a matter of time before the United States would become involved. She was not a citizen yet (she became one in 1953), but she wanted to do something for her adopted country. Lamarr remembered how she had accompanied Mandl to screenings of torpedo field tests in the mid-1930s. Far from boring her, such technical exercises actually stimulated her to think about torpedoes and the delivery of warheads to a target.

In spite of very real successes in World War I, submarine warfare was still an infant science in the 1920s and 1930s. Submarines could only stay submerged for a comparatively short time. There were problems with weaponry as well. Once a torpedo was launched, its direction could not be altered or adjusted. There was no guarantee a torpedo would hit its intended target; currents could alter its course, or a ship might take evasive maneuvers. Radio control was one possible answer. If a torpedo was remote controlled by radio, there was a much better chance of achieving its objective.

But there was a complication. If the enemy detected the frequency of the torpedo signal, the transmission could be jammed or blocked. Without radio guidance, a new torpedo would be just as "blind" as the old. This was the problem that Hedy decided to tackle.

It began in 1940, when Hedy Lamarr attended a dinner party at the Hollywood mansion of actress Janet Gaynor. During the course of the evening she started to chat with George Antheil, a film score composer. Lamarr did not suffer fools gladly, and she was drawn to Antheil's obvious intellect. Here was a kindred spirit so different from the shallow Hollywood types she was used to dealing with. At one point they were sitting at a piano, Antheil pounding away and Hedy playfully following his notes.

Then, in a flash of brilliance an essential truth suddenly came to her. Even though Antheil was hitting different keys, she could hear them and respond in kind. Each pressed key had a different sound—in a sense, a different tonal frequency—yet Hedy was receiving the message with crystal clarity. Wanting to pursue the matter further, Hedy told the composer to give her a call. She quickly scribbled her phone number in lipstick on his car windshield, a number many male fans would have loved to receive.

Antheil called the next day and was invited for dinner in her Benedict Canyon home. Lamarr got a note pad and started jotting down her ideas in rapid fashion. A torpedo guided by only one radio frequency could be easily jammed. But what about 10 frequencies? How about 40 or 50 frequencies? What then?

In Hedy's concept a signal would be broadcast to a launched torpedo over scores of frequencies, the transmission jumping from frequency to frequency seemingly at random and at split-second intervals. The effect would be like spinning a radio dial; by the time the enemy honed in on one frequency, the signal would have already moved on to several others. Frequencies would be changing at such a mind-numbing pace they would be next to impossible to pin down.

It sounded good on paper. But what mechanism could be placed inside a torpedo that would keep it in sync with the radio transmitter's frequent changing commands? Antheil was known as an avant-garde composer who was famous—or notorious—for his musical innovations. In 1926, his "Ballet Mechanique" was so powerful it blew away the audience, almost literally. He managed to synchronize no less than 16 player pianos, four xylophones, four bass drums, a siren, and two airplane propellers. It was the latter, when revved up to full power, that almost knocked the audience out of their seats.

Antheil took a leaf from his own book and suggested perforated paper rolls, not unlike

those in player pianos, to synchronize the various jumps in frequency. The slotted holes in each transmission roll would parallel those of the roll placed in the torpedo, a carbon copy that would ensure both transmitter and torpedo receiver would be exactly on the same page at all times as a steady stream of frequencies was quickly changed. It is no coincidence that the invention called for 88 frequency changes, the exact number of keys on a piano.

Antheil and Lamarr called their invention "Secret Communications System" and began drawing up detailed descriptions and diagrams. In December 1940, they formally submitted their plan to the National Inventor's Council, a government clearing house of ideas sent in by the general public. Though some council members were lukewarm, the invention had enough merit to warrant further exploration. Some of the bugs were worked out, and the concept further refined.

On August 11, 1942, a patent for the Secret Communications System was jointly granted to Lamarr and Antheil. Formally titled Patent No. 2,292,387, the document is signed under Lamarr's legal married name at the time, Hedy Kiesler Markey. Unfortunately, the U.S. Navy rejected the idea, claiming the perforated roll concept was clumsy and unworkable. It might well have worked, but the Navy simply was not interested and shelved the concept.

Lamarr accepted the Navy's verdict and began helping the war effort in more traditional ways. She sold war bonds and auctioned off kisses for the cause. In one memorable rally, she is said to have sold no less than $7 million in war bonds. She remained a popular actress and continued her career after the war. Perhaps her most memorable postwar part was in the Cecil B. DeMille biblical epic *Samson and Delilah*. As Delilah, she was once more the raven-haired temptress, only this time her feminine wiles were photographed in splashy Technicolor.

The 1950s saw many changes in the film industry, including increased competition from television. She remained beautiful as ever, but the "exotic" type of persona was less popular in the Eisenhower era. Her last major film of note was *The Female Animal* (1957). That same year engineers at the Sylvania Electronics Systems Division in Buffalo, New York, developed a frequency-hopping system that replaced piano rolls with transistors. Two years later, the Lamarr-Antheil patent expired.

In 1962, the transistorized frequency-hopping system was placed aboard the U.S. Navy ships that were blockading Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. As technology evolved, Hedy's frequency-hopping concept, now called spread spectrum technology, changed with it. With the digital revolution of the 1990s, Hedy's idea became the basis of wireless Internet transmission and cellular phones.

Today, frequency hopping is also widely used in GPS mapping and in Wi-Fi systems throughout the world. Like many stars of Hollywood's golden age of the 1940s, Hedy Lamarr's star slowly began to fade by the 1960s. She also largely lost her looks, partly because of botched plastic surgery. Her beauty mostly gone, Lamarr became a semi-recluse.

On March 12, 1997, she was finally honored with an award for her contributions to frequency-hopping technology. The award was given by the Electronic Frontier Foundation in recognition for her contributions to science. Hedy Lamarr died on January 19, 2000, at her home in Florida. She was 86.

Hedy did not receive a penny for her invention, much less a government thank-you for her efforts. The actress graciously accepted the tardy accolades, but when pressed by a reporter admitted, "It's about time!" □

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By Michael W. Williams

Citizen Spies

A father and daughter conducted espionage operations for the Third Reich in the United States.

Both: Author's Collection

ABOVE: In these photos, Marie Koedel (top) is charged with conducting espionage activities, and Simon Koedel, at center in the lower photo, leaves the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, in company with two law enforcement officers. LEFT: This colorful propaganda poster warns Allied military personnel to refrain from discussing sensitive topics even with the most charming of company. In truth, Marie Koedel gleaned a significant amount of intelligence from unsuspecting suitors.

BURIED IN THE OCTOBER 24, 1944, EDITION OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES* WAS THE headline: "German Ex-Officer Held as Nazi Spy: Captain in Kaiser's Army, 62 and Foster Daughter Accused of Sending Ship Data Before U.S. Entered War." The article sketched a portion of the espionage careers of Simon Emil Koedel, a U.S. Army veteran, and his native-born foster daughter Marie Hedwig Koedel.

© David Pollack/Corbis

Born in Wurzburg, Germany, Simon Koedel immigrated to America in 1904 and traveled across the country before volunteering for the U.S. Army in October 1908. Soon after his 1911 discharge Koedel found work as a projectionist in movie houses. In November 1912, he became a U.S. citizen, taking the final oath in New York City. He met and married a fellow immigrant from Germany named Anna.

Koedel had been secretly sending shipping information to Germany when he decided he could contribute more by spying in England. He booked passage to Holland in April 1915, obtained an emergency passport, and sailed for England.

After snooping in Scotland and England he was arrested on suspicion of espionage in Liverpool and detained. British authorities deported him to the United States. Koedel sailed for Holland again in 1916 and made his way to Germany where he was commissioned as a captain in the German Army. Back in the States he bolstered his credentials as a loyal citizen by volunteering as a "Four Minute Man" to give talks to encourage patrons to buy Liberty Bonds.

In the 1920s, Koedel and his wife took two orphaned siblings into their home, a five-year-old boy named Philip and a three-year-old girl, Marie. Koedel and his wife separated but did not divorce until 1933, when Koedel married Hulde Nelson.

Although Koedel's mother had died, he and Hulde traveled to Germany in 1934, ostensibly to attend the Oberammergau Passion Play. Shortly after returning home, Koedel sent documentation of the services he had performed for Germany to Ernst Hanfstaengl. Known as "Putzi," Hanfstaengl was a German-American and Hitler confidant who became Germany's foreign press chief. Koedel followed this with a letter to Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels proclaiming that he and his family would remain loyal to Germany.

In 1935 Philip was sentenced to 7½ to 15 years in prison for robbery. Koedel turned to Marie, an attractive 18-year-old, to further his espionage efforts. She sailed to Germany in July 1936 for Abwehr training.

After six months in Nazi Germany, Marie returned to New York. The Abwehr enrolled Simon Koedel as Agent A2011, the "A" indicating Koedel was a foreign agent. The "2" identified him with the Bremen sub branch soon to be headed by Johannes Bischoff, and the number "11" meant he was one of the first agents recruited for that network.

After Hitler's 1936 occupation of the Rhineland, the head of Abwehr's Section I, Major Hans Piekenbrock, reorganized his agents and designated the United States as a target of secondary importance. At the time America was a decidedly soft target. Koedel made good use of his time and his $200 monthly stipend. He recognized his lack of formal education in American English, written English in particular. Here is where Marie could help. She completed two years of high school and was a native speaker.

Library of Congress

The Lyric Theater in Manhattan is shown in this 1937 photograph. Simon Koedel used his employment as a projectionist at the theater as cover for his spying on behalf of Hitler's Third Reich.

Koedel applied for membership in the Army Ordnance Association (AOA), a trade organization for contractors for the U.S. military. AOA members had access to so much sensitive information that the FBI screened its candidates, but Koedel had not yet appeared on the agency's radar screen. In August 1939 the AOA accepted Koedel.

A few weeks later, Koedel received the cablegram he eagerly awaited. The message from "Hartmann" contained the word "alloy," the coded combination that activated the Koedels as spies. As a projectionist, Koedel rarely worked a shift of more than five hours, and his work hours alternated, enabling him to vary his routine. Each day he brought to work a pair of pearl-handled binoculars, used to help sharpen the focus of films. They also came in handy during ferry boat rides if he wanted to read the names of ships.

Another factor that made Koedel an effective spy was his ability to glean valuable intelligence from mundane sources. One of Nazi Germany's greatest intelligence coups had its origin in an article Koedel clipped from the *New York Times*. The story explained that a "scrambler" phone had been set up in a soundproof room in the White House basement to protect President Franklin D. Roosevelt's transatlantic conversations. Roosevelt had used the phone since September 1. The enterprising Nikolaus Bensmann, one of Koedel's Abwehr handlers, passed this information on. By March 1942 the Germans had a system that produced transcripts of transatlantic calls hours after an intercept.

The most crucial use of this technology took place on July 29, 1943, when British Prime Minister Winston Churchill phoned Roosevelt to discuss developments in Italy. The bloody Allied advance up the Italian boot can in part be traced Koedel's work.

Koedel aggressively exercised his privileges as a member of the AOA. Members had to right to visit any U.S. munitions plants simply by showing their cards. However, when Koedel was turned away twice at the Army Chemical Warfare Center at Edgewood Arsenal near Baltimore, he called AOA headquarters, which protested to the War Department. On December 7, 1939, Koedel received a guided tour of the Edgewood Arsenal.

Attending AOA meetings allowed Koedel to meet administration officials and members of Congress. Senator Robert Rice Reynolds, a populist Democrat from North Carolina, had a seat on the Military Affairs Committee. Koedel convinced Rice to send him weekly reports from the State Department Munitions Board listing permits issued for exports of war materials to Britain.

Over 600 of Koedel's reports got through to Bremen. Often Koedel walked into the German Consulate in New York and handed a white envelope to Robert Raehmel, an official who joined the consulate in 1939. Either Koedel sensed danger or Bremen warned him to discontinue this practice. His visits to the consulate ceased in early 1941. The Koedels mailed the bulk of their finds to overseas drops in Italy, Spain, and Portugal.

To a great extent Koedel's success as a spy was due to the fact that he did not act like one. He

did not employ aliases or false addresses; he often acted with boldness, and above all, he made no attempt to hide his love for Germany.

In the fall of 1939, Marie Koedel met John R. Walters. Likely, she was more attracted by Walters's job at Republic Aviation than by his personal charms. In January 1940 Walters proposed. Shortly afterward, Marie broke off the engagement saying she and her father were German agents gathering information and that she could not interrupt their work.

Walters went to the FBI and was interviewed three times between February 14 and May 28, 1940. The FBI did not believe that his fiancée was a waterfront Mata Hari. In desperation, Walters telephoned the German Consulate in New York declaring he had told the FBI the Koedels were spies.

Koedel himself contacted the FBI in May 1940, when he strode into the New York field office to complain that a stranger told him that the FBI had a file on him. If this bluster was intended to show he had nothing to hide, Koedel overplayed that impression, penning several pro-German letters that were forwarded to the FBI by recipients.

Between June 1940 and May 1942, concerned citizens sent 14 of Koedel's letters to the FBI. Unlike the typed, sober-minded letters in

Both: Library of Congress

Senator Robert Rice Reynolds (left) was persuaded by Simon Koedel to share sensitive weekly reports from the State Department Munitions Board, while Assistant U.S. Attorney Wendell Berge (right) requested a wider probe into Koedel's activities.

Koedel's correspondence with the AOA, members of Congress, and defense contractors, these handwritten missives were riddled with errors in syntax and spelling.

In October 1941 the FBI put Koedel under surveillance, assigning Special Agent C. Lester Trotter to tail him. Koedel proved a slippery customer, changing transportation and loitering for long stretches of time.

On Saturday the 25th, Trotter followed Koedel from the Lyric Theater with a rolled up newspaper tucked under an arm. He took the subway to Brooklyn and walked past dockyard warehouses before he stopped at a vacant store on Van Brunt Street and began fumbling with the latch. When Koedel turned back to the street the newspaper was gone. Trotter found the door locked. When Trotter returned to the abandoned storefront he found the door open with a man inside and two more outside dusting off an old automobile seat.

Despite Koedel's manner, his inordinate interest in shipping, and his use of a mail drop, the FBI did not pursue him aggressively until after Pearl Harbor. The FBI put Koedel under surveillance again because an interview of a former German Consulate employee had triggered renewed interest. The employee recalled a "Simon Coettel" who had visited the consulate and always left an envelope for Robert Raehmel. A 30-day cover of Koedel's mail turned up nothing of interest. During eight days of surveillance, he never set foot near the waterfront. Abwehr records retrieved in Bremen after the war prove that Agent A2011 continued to submit reports through 1943.

Koedel revived the case against himself by writing Maj. Gen. Thomas A. Terry, head of the Second Service Command of the Eastern Defense Frontier. Koedel took issue with Terry, quoted as saying America's cunning enemies would gladly use prostitutes to spread venereal disease among Allied soldiers. This letter

prompted Terry to convene a meeting. He goaded the FBI into action, informing the agency of his efforts and forwarding a copy of Koedel's letter.

Assistant Director P.E. Foxworth assembled typed transcripts of all the Koedel letters sent to the FBI and recommended that the Attorney General's office determine if his letters violated laws against sedition. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sent the request to Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge. Berge asked for additional investigation into Koedel's activities.

In the fall of 1942, the FBI conducted a series of interviews with Simon Koedel, his family, co-workers, neighbors, and anyone who had reported his activities. The picture that emerged was of a tough man to pin down. Koedel denied that his activities had anything to do with spying.

Koedel carried what he called "a small pair of opera glasses" to keep projectors at the Lyric Theater in focus. His letters were written to provide "constructive criticism" and not to slander the U.S. Army.

Koedel agreed to an FBI search of his apartment, which turned up nothing. Instead of appearing for his next interview Koedel sent his lawyer, Charles Meisel, who said he had advised Koedel to cooperate because Meisel believed Koedel had not done anything wrong.

Agent Lawrence Brown again interviewed John Walters, who repeated what he had told the FBI in 1940. Walters produced several handwritten and one typed letter he had received from Marie. However, the FBI laboratory was unable to identify a match with any confirmed espionage correspondence.

Saddled with witnesses deemed reluctant or unreliable and lacking documents to reinforce extensive circumstantial evidence of espionage, the FBI investigation stalled. Terry took matters into his own hands. On November 23, 1942, he informed the FBI that he planned to target Simon Koedel for exclusion from the Eastern War Frontier.

Following Koedel's exclusion hearing in January 1943, Terry's G-2 asked U.S. Attorney John F. Sonnett to charge Koedel with perjury for statements made during the hearing. Meanwhile, the FBI put the Koedel investigation on hold for three months.

There is an undertone of exasperation in Berge's letter to FBI Director Hoover on March 17, 1943. Brushing aside Hoover's request for further investigation of Koedel's seditious activities, Berge insisted, "All possible investigative attention should be given to the strong indications that he has engaged in espionage." Furthermore, he asked Hoover to send an FBI report referenced in Brown's October report "and any other reports in this case not yet furnished to this Division." Nearly a month passed before Hoover complied.

Berge reviewed the facts of the case and provided the FBI with a set of leads, which Hoover then forwarded to E.E. Conroy, special agent in charge of the New York office.

By the time Conroy's agents began to follow up Berge's leads, Lt. Gen. Hugh A. Drum, Terry's superior, issued an Individual Exclusion Order banishing Koedel from the Eastern Defense Command. Koedel left New York City for Martinsburg, West Virginia. Unable to obtain work in Martinsburg, he moved to Harpers Ferry.

The FBI investigation inched forward. Otto Borsdorf, the former German Consulate employee, identified Simon Koedel as the man who had provided Robert Raehmel with information. Nevertheless, on January 10, 1944, Conroy informed Hoover he was placing Koedel's case in the inactive file.

Two and a half months slipped by, and then in his newspaper column Walter Winchell reminded his readers of the exploits of Walter Morrissey, a janitor at the German Consulate in New York City who had saved bundles of documents he had been ordered to burn. Turned over to the FBI, these papers helped convict seven Nazi spies. The day of the Winchell column, Tom C. Clark, Berge's replacement as head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, sent Hoover a memo asking for developments in the Koedel case. In fact, the FBI was on the verge of two breakthroughs.

Just four days later, Conroy sent Hoover 17 documents from the German Consulate in New York. They included copies of letters to or from Simon and Marie Koedel, messages from the German Foreign and Propaganda ministries, and memos that referenced the Koedels.

Perhaps the most important document was an unsigned letter whose author claimed the Koedels were spies and that he and Marie made up some replies to recent inquiries. This document corroborated Walters's testimony and explained why Borsdorf noted that Koedel's visits to the consulate ceased in 1941.

The second breakthrough occurred in Los Angeles, where Special Agent Roy Barloga filed a report that established a link between Koedel and his German paymasters. Following the arrest of Abwehr agent Frank Jordan in Brazil, the FBI served a search warrant for papers owned by Ludwig Bischoff and stored in his father-in-law's garage in Dallas. Agents found four checks issued to Koedel, the first marked "by order of Johannes Bischoff, Bremen." The

FBI knew Bischoff had briefed Jordan and sent him to Brazil.

What did not make sense was the timing of these revelations. The FBI had searched Bischoff's papers in 1943. Five months ticked by before the FBI exploited the link established between a suspected spy and a known spymaster.

In late September, Conroy pointed out that if the Justice Department wanted to bring a charge of peacetime espionage it had to indict Simon Koedel by October 25, 1944, three years after Trotter observed Koedel on the Brooklyn waterfront and when the statute of limitations would expire. While Justice Department officials wrestled with whether or not to indict the Koedels, a third break came from an unexpected source.

Three painters were cleaning in the Lyric Theater when they came across some letters. One painter placed the items in an envelope, enclosed an anonymous letter, and mailed it to the FBI. The documents provided crucial evidence to bolster a case against the Koedels: a memo corroborated Walters's testimony that the Koedels were gathering information on shipping; a letter signed "Nick" matched the signature of Herman Nicolaus Bensmann, anotherspymaster; and the address of an R.A. Hambourg in Milan, Italy, was a mail drop used by Waldemar Othmer, a convicted Abwehr spy. The evidence convinced Assistant Attorney General Clark to indict Simon Koedel. He left the decision to charge Marie to T. Vincent Quinn, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

Quinn decided to charge Marie, and the indictment named Bischoff, Bensmann, and all other suspected spies named in the Koedels' correspondence. One target proved too well connected to prosecute. The father of Bischoff's wife was an Internal Revenue Service official, and her uncle's brother-in-law was Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn.

Agents arrested Simon and Marie Koedel on October 23, 1944, and accused them of violating the federal statute against peacetime espionage, a charge that carried a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of $10,000. Both Koedels pled not guilty.

Koedel named Andrew Portoghese as his lawyer, but on November 9 Marie dropped her court-appointed lawyer in favor of Sanford H. Cohen. The trial was postponed for a week, but then on November 20 Marie changed lawyers again. Her new advocate, the blind John L. Coyle, got the trial rescheduled to give him time to prepare his case. Coyle's new strategy was to question the sanity of Simon Koedel.

Justice Department prosecutors may not have minded the delays because their case was troubled. Two captured and convicted German spies refused to testify. That left the government with Trotter, the agent who tailed Koedel's suspicious waterfront excursions; Borsdorf, the clerk who witnessed Koedel's deliveries at the consulate; and Walters, Marie's spurned lover whose stories the FBI had discounted as fantasy.

The prosecution was constrained by the decision not to call Bischoff into the courtroom. Furthermore, a crucial set of documents from the consulate, including a copy of Koedel's letter to Goebbels, had been declared off limits.

The FBI tracked down the three painters who made the find. Sidney Rosen, the man who sent the materials, admitted he mailed them anonymously because he feared losing time from work if called to testify.

The trial began February 7, 1945. Assistant U.S. Attorney Albert V. DeMeo put Walters on the stand first. He claimed the FBI had asked him to "string along" with Marie to trap the defendants. If true, it was a subtle trap that took over four years to spring. Two witnesses testified to seeing Simon Koedel observing shipping.

On February 15, Portoghese announced that his client Simon Koedel was changing his plea to guilty, explaining it was in response to the testimony of the painters who had found letters in the Lyric Theater.

Marie's lawyer was now free to portray Koedel as the evil stepfather. A weeping Anna Koedel testified that her ex-husband had been "very brutal." Marie claimed Koedel beat her. Marie admitted she had written things for her father under duress.

The jury did not entirely buy her story. On February 20 it found Marie guilty of conspiracy to commit espionage. After returning the verdict the foreman told the judge that all the men on the jury and one of the women favored clemency for Marie.

On March 1, Simon and Marie Koedel stood before Judge Robert A. Inch. Looking dazed, Simon stared at the floor. He was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison. Marie was sentenced to 7½ years.

The information the Koedels had sent lay for decades in the National Archives, a stone's throw from FBI Headquarters, which contained files on a man named Walters who had walked into the New York FBI office in February 1940 with incredible tales about his lover and her stepfather. □

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Bitter Fight AT GELA

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

THIS SMALL ITALIAN VILLAGE ON THE SICILY COAST HOSTED A STIFF BATTLE TO REPEL ALLIED LANDINGS IN JULY 1943.

THE SMOKE HAD BARELY CLEARED FROM THE BATTLEFIELDS OF North Africa when the victorious Allies turned their attention northward to Europe. American planners were eager for the decisive battle against Nazi Germany in Western Europe, which could only happen after a successful invasion across the English Channel.

The British high command felt otherwise, unconvinced their combined forces were yet ready to face the Wehrmacht. Instead, they advocated more action in the Mediterranean Theater, where the Germans were weaker but still able to interdict the necessary shipping traffic Britain needed for its war effort. Attacking this "soft underbelly" in either Italy or the Balkans would relieve pressure on the British Empire as well as further blood the Allied troops for the eventual showdown against Germany. It would also draw enemy forces from the Eastern Front, where at great cost the Soviets had the bulk of the German ground forces occupied.

Additionally, Italian resolve was wavering; if they could be taken out of the war it would ease Allied efforts considerably.

After much debate the decision was made to invade the Italian island of Sicily, only 90 miles north of the African coast. Seizure of the island would provide a steppingstone toward the Italian mainland. There were about 250,000 Axis troops defending Sicily, most of them Italians with a stiffening of German troops and a large number of Luftwaffe personnel. Roughly half the Italians were organized into infantry divisions while the rest formed either coastal defense or rear-echelon support units.

The coast defense formations were relatively immobile and were intended to act as a delaying force against any invaders, giving time for the regular divisions and the Germans to react decisively. The largest German units present for the landings were the Hermann Göring Panzer Division and the 15th Panzergrenadier Division. Between them they possessed about 150 tanks along with infantry and supporting artillery. Included in the totals were 17 heavy Tiger tanks, originally earmarked for North Africa but retained in Sicily after the Axis forces surrendered in Tunisia some two months earlier.

On the Allied side, two armies were scheduled for the invasion. The British Eighth Army chose four infantry divisions and a separate brigade for its landings along the southeastern coast of Sicily. The U.S. Seventh Army selected three infantry divisions for the landing with an armored division as a floating reserve. Both nations had additional airborne contingents for landings behind the beachheads.

The Americans also brought along their new light infantry/commando force, the Rangers. Formed in the beginning of 1942, the Rangers were to be a Yankee version of the famed British Commando forces used for raids and special operations missions. The two groups had worked together in training, and a 50-man detachment had accompanied the Canadian/British force that raided Dieppe in August 1942. Commanded by Lt. Col. William O. Darby, by the time of the Sicily invasion the 1st Ranger Battalion had expanded into a three-battalion force composed of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th (2nd Battalion was formed in the United States).

The 32-year-old Darby was an Arkansas native who had graduated from West Point and was beloved of his men, who had nicknamed him "El Darbo." Darby officially commanded 1st Battalion with two majors running the others, though Darby was considered the entire Ranger force's nominal leader. Now two battalions of Rangers would have a chance to make their own amphibious assault on the coastal town of Gela in the center of the American landing area.

During the war Gela was a fishing town of about 30,000 people. It had seen war before, having been sacked by the Carthaginians in 405 BC during a war against Greece. The city itself

Lieutenant Mitchell Jamieson, a U.S. Navy combat artist, captured this bird's-eye view of American infantrymen crowded into a landing craft churning toward the invasion beach at Gela, Sicily, during the opening hours of Operation Husky.

U.S. Navy

sat directly on the shoreline just west of the mouth of the Gela River. A concrete pier extending some 900 feet into the sea split the town almost directly in half. The shore in the area sloped out to sea gradually, so in many places a force landing there would have to wade a considerable distance from their landing craft, risking enemy fire all the way.

Sandbars dotted the area, further impeding the approach of amphibious vessels. There was a crossroads at Gela where two branches leading generally north joined with a coastal road. Intelligence showed the presence of enemy coastal guns near Gela as well. Aerial photographs showed several fishing boats sitting on the beach, indicating an absence of mines.

To seize this vital objective, two battalions of Rangers were selected, the 1st and 3rd. They were combined to form Force X for the Gela operation. Reinforcing them would be three companies of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, equipped with the 4.2-inch (107mm) mortar, capable of firing either smoke or high-explosive ammunition. Because of their origins in World War I as weapons for firing gas and smoke rounds, they were generally referred to as "chemical mortars" by U.S. soldiers. The mortar's high rate of fire and portability made it a perfect weapon for supporting the fast-moving Rangers, and the 83rd would become practically a dedicated fire support unit for Darby's men, earning the nickname "Artillery of the Rangers" for its service throughout the Italian campaign.

Also joining Force X was the 1st Battalion, 39th Engineer Regiment, a combat engineer unit that could clear mines, create obstacles and defensive positions, and fight at need. Together Force X was essentially a small ad hoc regimental combat team.

The entire force would be attached to the 1st Infantry Division for the invasion. That division, commanded by General Terry Allen, was composed of the 16th, 18th, and 26th Infantry Regiments along with supporting artillery, attached armor, and other reinforcing units. The landing beaches for the division itself were to the east of Gela.

Darby and the 4th Rangers commander, Major Roy Murray, formulated a plan for taking the town by splitting it in half. The long pier that jutted into the Mediterranean from nearly the center of Gela made a perfect boundary marker for the two battalions. Darby's 1st Battalion would land on the west side of the pier and seize that side of the town while Murray's troops would land east of the pier and seize the other half. The coastal guns were west of the pier and would be taken by Darby's men. The 39th Engineers would come ashore and begin clearing mines and obstacles. Lastly, the chemical mortar companies would set up positions and be ready to give fire support.

U.S. Navy

The Luftwaffe made its presence felt, deadly at times, during the Allied invasion of Sicily. In this photo, German bombs fall perilously close to Allied ships supporting the landings on the Mediterranean island in July 1943.

Darby organized his force to land in successive waves. As each came ashore they would attend to their specific mission, sometimes passing through the wave ahead of them. The first wave would consist of Companies C, D, E and F (Ranger battalions were organized with six rifle companies). These Rangers were to clear the beach and move into the town as far as the main street. Following in the second wave were A and B Companies, which were to pass through the first wave and move west to knock out the coastal battery on the edge of Gela.

The engineers were in the third wave with the chemical mortars in the fourth. The landing craft were to be guided in by a submarine that would surface and display a red light on its stern for them to steer by. The 4th Battalion did not have any coastal guns or other large objectives to worry about, so Murray's Rangers would land in two waves. Companies A, B, and C would constitute the first group, accompanied by a detachment of headquarters troops, while D, E, and F would land in the second echelon.

With the basic plan created, training and rehearsals followed. Since the two Ranger battalions were to be attached to the 1st Infantry Division for the Gela operation, they left their training areas in Algeria's Atlas Mountains to join the division a few miles west of the city of Algiers. There, they practiced for the amphibious assault using mock-ups of the primary objectives around Gela. Luckily, planners had the foresight to assign the same Navy landing craft personnel and shore parties who would be with the Rangers for the actual mission. The soldiers and sailors were thus able to train with their actual counterparts, which later helped immensely in dealing with the myriad problems that arose not only in training, but also during the actual invasion.

Two full-scale practice landings were carried out, including live fire from the naval support ships offshore. Overall, the training went well with one exception: the submarine that would guide them ashore was not present. Darby and his fellow leaders worried the absence would cause problems in coordination during the real landing.

On June 30, 1943, the bulk of Force X boarded ships in Algiers harbor to begin its journey to Sicily. First was a stop in Bizerte, Tunisia, a few hundred miles east of Algiers. There, Force X joined other embarked American troops for the voyage to their objective. They quickly crossed the short distance to Sicily, but on the night of July 9 nature interrupted their efforts. A fierce storm blew in, waves battering the hulls of the invasion fleet. Many soldiers, unused to enduring such weather at sea, were overcome with seasick-

tore open the young officer's chest. He collapsed next to his first sergeant, Randall Harris, telling him, "I've had it, Harry." Harris recalled he could see Wojciak's heart beating in the wreckage of his torso before he died.

All the other officers in D Company quickly became casualties as well. The NCO found himself leading the company. He moved forward again only to set off another mine. This one blasted his legs and stomach. Despite his wounds, Harris moved up to a group of pillboxes overlooking the beach and silenced them with some hand grenades. Only then did he pause to dust his wounds with his packet of sulfa powder and adjust his belt to hold in his now-protruding intestines. He led his Rangers for two more hours until he felt the job was done; only then did he walk back down to the beach in search of the medics. This act of selflessness earned him a battlefield commission and an award of the Distinguished Service Cross, America's second highest decoration for valor.

Moving in from the beach, the Rangers began a slogging, house-to-house fight for Gela itself. Companies A and B moved toward their assigned objectives, two shore batteries and a mortar position at the northwest edge of town. Captain James Lyle was in joint command of the two units. He told his men that if they wanted to be alive tomorrow, they had better shoot everything they saw today.

Wary, they moved down the streets with columns on each side, ready to cover each other against attack from ahead or above. The first sergeant from Company A spotted a group of four Italians running toward a bunker built to block a road. The muzzles of a 47mm antitank gun and two machine guns protruded menacingly from its embrasures. Acting quickly, the American ran after the Italians and caught them just as the last man was trying to close the bunker's door. With a heavy kick, the first sergeant forced the door back open and sprayed the interior with his Thompson submachine gun before tossing in a hand grenade.

Elsewhere, a small group of Italians made a stand in a cathedral near the town square in the 4th Rangers' area. The Americans went after them, engaging in a vicious firefight among the pews. The last Italians died clustered around the altar. In the 1st Ranger zone, Captain Lyle could not call upon the chemical mortar unit landing behind him; the necessary radio had been dropped into the ocean during the confusion of landing.

The first gun position was surrounded by wire. The Rangers crawled up a ditch to get close, blew the wire with explosives and rushed the Italians, throwing grenades as they went. The position fell quickly, and three 77mm field guns fell into their hands. The sights were missing, but several of the Rangers were former artillerymen and quickly formed a gun battery. The nearby enemy mortar platoon was likewise dispatched with grenades and small arms fire.

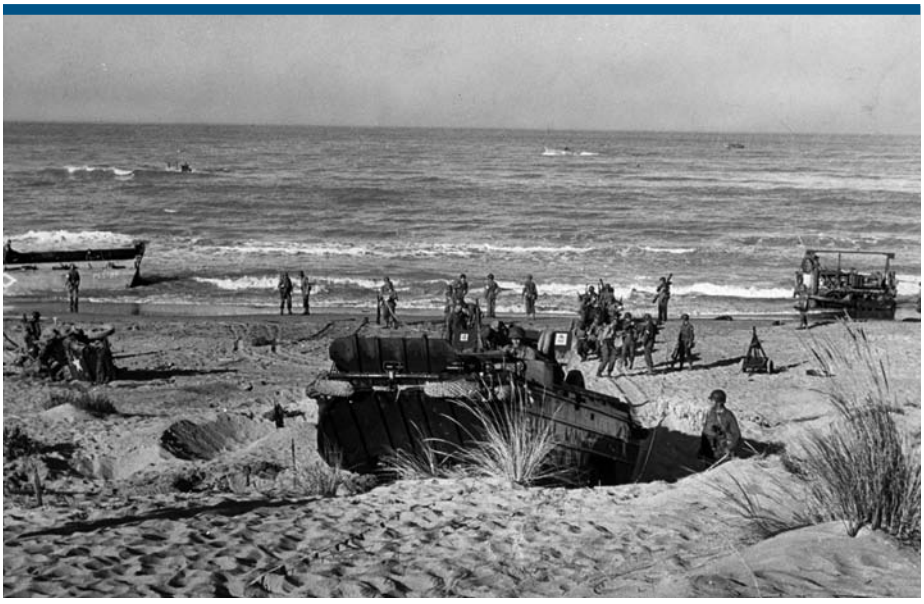
The engineers were also meeting their share of enemy resistance. As the 39th's A and B Companies began to move off the beach a pair of bunkers opened a murderous machine-gun fire, pinning both companies down. After a harrowing few minutes, Sergeant Harold Gilbert of Company B decided to take action. He sprinted to the closest bunker and threw in a grenade. The dull crump of the explosion was enough to silence both enemy positions; the other bunker's occupants decided to surrender after seeing what happened to their comrades. They poked a white flag out of their tiny fortification, and eight Italians were led into captivity by Sergeant Gilbert. The engineers met only slight additional resistance until Gela was taken a few hours later. Aside from a few snipers, many of the remaining bunkers capitulated without a shot fired.

Several hours had now passed since the landing. The 1st Rangers set up their battalion headquarters near a schoolhouse that turned out to be full of Italian soldiers. Machine-gun fire pelted the Americans as they scrambled to mount a counterattack. Darby and his driver, Carlo Contrera, joined the Rangers against the schoolhouse. Darby noticed Contrera was shaking and asked if he was scared. The young driver casually retorted, "No, sir. I'm just shaking with patriotism." The assault on the schoolhouse succeeded, and over 50 Italians were taken prisoner.

By 0800 Gela was firmly in American hands. Both Ranger battalions had penetrated to the edge of town and were weaving their lines into those of the 1st Infantry Division troops landing on their flanks. The 39th Engineers were ashore and with them the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion was digging in and getting ready to provide fire support, though the mortarmen were having trouble getting the two-wheeled carts carrying their weapons and equipment over the soft sand.

The engineers set up a temporary prisoner of war pen made of wire, but it quickly filled to capacity. Before long over 200 Italian POWs

These tanks were without infantry support and had just entered a town filled with aggressive, offensive-minded Rangers.... The battle against the tanks quickly turned into a swirling melee.



Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

Once the beachhead at Gela was firmly in American hands, supplies were offloaded and the pace of troop movements picked up. An amphibious DUKW rolls across the Sicilian sand in the foreground of this photo.

had arrived, more than the pen could hold. The Americans had no choice but to allow some of them to stay outside the wire. It made little difference; the Italians were not inclined to make trouble or try to escape. Some seemed quite content to eat American C-rations and await evacuation.

In just a few short hours Gela had been seized. The initial resistance was spotty and had allowed Force X to quickly overwhelm the defenders. This fast assault was about to pay dividends, for the Italians and Germans had wasted little time preparing their riposte against the landings. Despite Allied distraction attempts elsewhere, General Guzzoni had realized where his enemy's main effort was falling and ordered his troops to respond appropriately. Italian infantry and armor were moving toward Gela by mid-morning, with elements of the German Hermann Göring Division not far behind.

The first Italians to move on Gela set out from Niscemi, roughly eight miles northeast. Some 32 light tanks reinforced with infantry moved south on the main road. The tanks were actually French Renaults captured during the German invasion of France and subsequently passed on to the Italians to bolster their comparatively weak armored forces. By mid-1943 the Renaults were hopelessly obsolete, but at this early stage in Operation Husky there were no Allied tank forces to oppose them. The Renaults could still make themselves felt supporting Italian infantry against Force X, a lightly equipped, infantry-heavy unit.

The Italian unit found its work cut out for it, however. As they moved down the road to Gela a 100-strong contingent of paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division attacked them from a house they had fortified.

Further punishment came screaming in from the USS *Boise*. The light cruiser's 15 six-inch guns were equivalent to more than a battalion of 155mm howitzers. The heavy shells crashed around the Italian tanks, sending heavy chunks of shrapnel tearing through the air and into the Italian troops. Many of the Renaults were knocked out as well, too light to withstand such heavy fire.

Still, perhaps 20 Italian tanks kept going toward Gela, racing through all the Americans could throw at them. It was a brave act, but the remaining tanks were now even more vulnerable, for the Italian infantry was stopped, leaving its armor unsupported. They blundered into an area defended by the 1st Division's 16th Infantry. The Americans poured fire against the Italian tanks, inflicting heavy casualties and stopping them cold. The remainder withdrew to the north.

National Archives

ABOVE: The cathedral in the central area of Gela was one of the first buildings captured by U.S. Army Rangers during operations on the island of Sicily. American troops can be seen moving around outside the cathedral near an abandoned Italian antitank weapon. BELOW: Their mine detectors still aboard ship, these U.S. Army engineers gingerly use their bayonets to probe for and disarm land mines. The effort of the engineers was a key element in speeding the American grip on Gela because it allowed tanks to offload directly onto the beach and roll into action the first day of the invasion.

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

A short time later a second force of 24 Renaults appeared on Highway 117, approaching from the nearby Ponte Olivo airfield. Once again the destroyer *Shubrick* went into action, firing repeated salvos of 5-inch shells at the desperate Italian force. Over half the enemy tanks were stopped, many of them burning along the roadway, but 10 of them continued toward Gela. Captain James Lyle of the 1st Rangers reported four of them stopped in a grove of trees while the remainder continued into the town itself. These tanks were without infantry support and had just entered a town filled with aggressive, offensive-minded Rangers.

The battle against the tanks quickly turned into a swirling melee. Rangers climbed to rooftops and dropped grenades and satchel charges. Captain Jack Street put together 15-pound charges of high explosives and dropped them from his rooftop vantage point. Other

Rangers ducked through alleys and behind stone walls to strike at the Italian armor with bazookas and more explosives.

The tanks moved toward Gela's central piazza, and Darby raced to the area in his jeep. While Contrera drove the jeep into alleys and side streets to make them a difficult target, Darby manned the jeep's .30-caliber machine gun and fired bursts at the tanks whenever he could. Even the Renault's thin armor was proof against mere bullets, however, so the resourceful Darby directed Contrera back to the beach. There, El Darbo commandeered a 37mm antitank gun recently brought ashore. A sealed crate of ammunition sat nearby. Seizing an axe, Darby smashed it open and grabbed a metal box of armor-piercing ammunition.

Hitching the gun onto their jeep, Darby and Contrera rushed back to the fighting, where

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, NY

A truck carries German troops toward the fighting around Gela and tows a heavy antiaircraft weapon as well. The presence of German soldiers made the stabilization of the Gela beachhead a much greater challenge for the Allies.

Captain Charles Shunstrom joined them. As they hurriedly set up the cannon, an Italian tank rumbled around a corner and advanced on them. Darby jumped onto the jeep and let loose two bursts from his machine gun, but they had no effect. In return, the Italian tankers fired two shells at the American officers. Both rounds went high, exploding against the building behind them in a crash of dust and masonry. Darby jumped off the jeep and loaded a shell into the breech of the 37mm gun. Shunstrom peered through the sights and took aim. The round struck the Renault's turret.

Without hesitation, Darby threw another round into the gun's breech, and Shunstrom fired again. This round struck the hull, and the tank was actually sent backward about three feet as a sheet of flame rolled over it, though the tank did not apparently remain afire. Darby went over to the Renault and set a thermite grenade on one of the hatches. As the grenade heated up the metal, the screaming crew leaped out with hands up in surrender.

Some of the engineers joined in on the tank hunt. Lieutenant Dee Baker of B Company/39th led a squad of men against another Renault, pelting its tracks and road wheels with rifle grenades and bazooka rockets until it was immobilized. More rockets and grenades destroyed the tank. After this victory the engineers repeated their feat on a second tank. The remaining tank crews decided they had taken enough, pulled back, and retreated out of town.

The four tanks in the grove were fired on by 4.2-inch mortars at the direction of Captain Lyle. One was knocked out, and the rest fled north, a column of black smoke wafting from the wrecked tank.

The Italians still had a few units left to throw at the Americans. One was a group of infantry. Perhaps unaware of the invaders' exact location, they came striding in from the west in a marching column more suited to the parade field than a tactical formation. Well-place mortar and naval gunfire crashed around them, killing and wounding many and driving the rest away in a disorganized rout.

Yet another group of tanks appeared and drove toward the 1st Rangers' area. Captain Lyle now called in his three-piece artillery battery, the Italian guns manned by Rangers. Another Ranger was situated in front of the advancing tanks in an observation post directly between the American guns and the enemy armor. He called in a fire mission. The Ranger gun crews took careful aim and let fly a salvo, which landed directly on the observation post. The observer replied with a stream of curses as the gun crews quickly elevated their tubes.

Afterward, the cannon were quickly sighted in using "Kentucky Windage" and the tanks were driven back. To the Americans' surprise, their artillery fire also caused the retreat of a previously unseen company of Italian infantry who were well concealed around a farmhouse. Apparently thinking they had been spotted, the Italians fled along with their tanks.

By late morning a lull in ground action ensued. The Hermann Göring Division was having problems assembling its tanks and infantry together for a coordinated attack. The Italian attacks had come in piecemeal and were repulsed relatively easily. The German commander had no wish to make the same error. Action continued offshore and in the air, however.

Lieutenant John Pacer of the 39th Engineers was charged with seeing to the unloading of the LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) carrying the battalion's equipment and vehicles. When the Gela pier was destroyed these ships were diverted to a beach in the 1st Infantry Division's landing zone. He set off to find them but the mass confusion had turned the beach into a parking lot of jammed vehicles and piles of supplies. Pacer finally found one of his ships, *LST 388*, which carried some of the battalion's M2 half-tracks. As he worked to get the needed vehicles unloaded, a trio of German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters appeared overhead. Two bombs straddled the LST, unleashing a torrent of blast and fragments. Pacer escaped injury but was shaken for a few minutes. Finally, he got his half-tracks unloaded only to have them get stuck in the sand mere yards from the LST.

Another engineer officer, Captain Harold Hansen of Company A, had worked all morning to clear mines from the beach. A group of tanks waited in a nearby LST, unable to disembark for fear of the minefields the planners had not counted on. The unit's mine detectors were loaded aboard another LST and could not be found. Hansen had no choice but to order the slow, tedious process of clearing the mines with bayonets. When the Italian armored attack began later in the morning, Hansen real-

ized they would have to accept some risk to get the American tanks into the fight.

He and his men began checking the placement of the mines they had found, looking for a pattern in how they were laid. After a short while a regular pattern was indeed found. Measuring the distance between the mines, Hansen had his engineers pace off that distance and check for mines at the expected intervals. The plan worked; the Italians had laid their minefields in the same pattern over and again. All the mines were marked and removed without any casualties. Another area of beach turned out to be blissfully empty of mines because the locals who were ordered to plant them quit after two of them were blown up in the attempt.

As the engineers worked to clear the beaches and unload their equipment, the Rangers dug in and prepared for the expected counterattacks. While they did so, the battlefield remained mostly quiet. The same could not be said offshore. The naval battle off Gela began just as dawn crept over the eastern horizon. A squadron of Luftwaffe planes appeared at 0458 and quickly spotted the destroyer USS *Maddox*. The American ship was on antisubmarine patrol some 16 miles offshore.

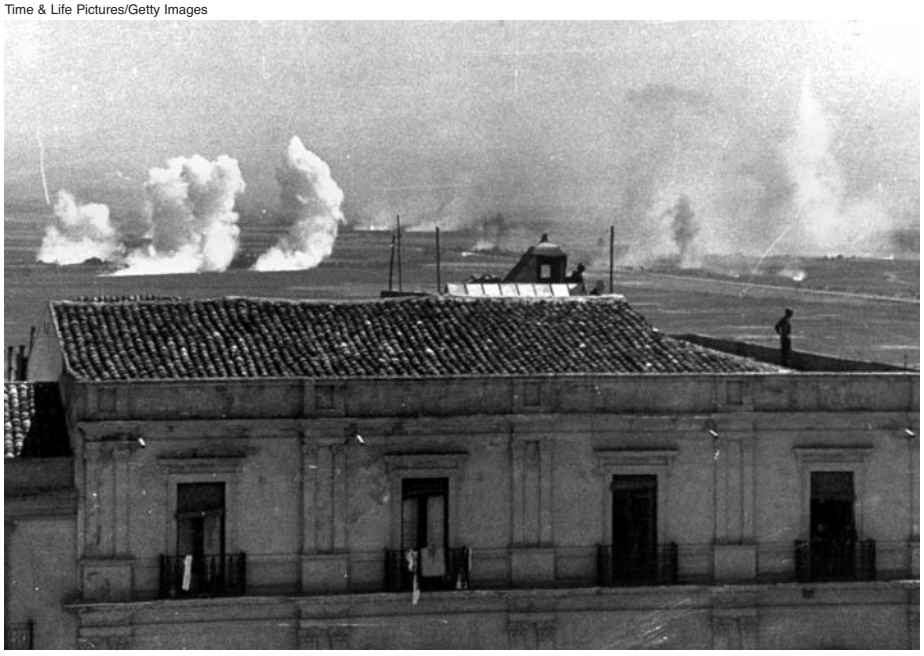
One of the German planes dove on the hapless destroyer, which responded with its antiaircraft guns as the aircraft released a bomb. The projectile exploded by the ship's starboard stern, wrecking the entire stern and probably causing the aft magazine to explode.

An officer on another ship noted: "A great blob of light bleached and reddened the sky ... followed by a blast more sullen and deafening than any we have so far heard." Two minutes later *Maddox* was gone along with 211 of her crew. The tug *Intent* later rescued 74 survivors.

For the rest of the afternoon occasional Axis air attacks took place against the naval forces offshore. Only the destroyer *Murphy* received minor damage. Several cruisers launched their seaplanes to provide scouting and fire direction. Repeated attacks by Me-109s drove them back or shot them down, though not before some of them provided timely data on the Italian tank movements, allowing the ships to fire on them. They also helped the cruisers to concentrate on nearby shore batteries before they were used up by early afternoon. By 1320 the *Shubrick* alone had fired over 500 rounds of 5-inch ammunition.

A few more attacks came in against the transports and LSTs, which were having a hard time unloading after the destruction of the Gela pier. General Allen sent an urgent request for tanks and artillery to be offloaded. After the Italian counterattacks there was concern about what would come next. The extensive confusion only delayed the process.

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images



ABOVE: Visible in the distance, American infantrymen have engaged enemy tanks with 37mm antitank guns and bazookas, while the guns of U.S. Navy cruisers find the range against the enemy. BELOW: One of the first American M4 Sherman tanks to land in Sicily hits the beach near Gela.

National Archives

At 1835 another Me-109 appeared, flying out of the setting sun. The pilot chose *LST 313* as its target. Its bomb exploded under the tank deck and started a huge fire, which engulfed the ship. Soldiers and sailors swam out to the stricken ship to help wounded off its bow ramp. The captain of *LST 311*, Lieutenant Robert L. Coleman, pulled his ship around so his bow connected with the stern of *LST 313*. This allowed 80 trapped men to escape the flames. Still, 21 were lost.

Darkness removed the threat of further air attack, but the situation was still full of tension. There were scant hours until a new dawn brought renewed combat. More Axis armor was sure to hit the beachhead, and continued air attacks were a certainty. Allied fighter cover had been scant and ineffective due to problems

in coordination and inexperienced air support liaisons. There was no promise of anything better the next day. All that could be done was to continue trying to offload tanks, artillery, and other equipment and get it all into action against the enemy. The crews and shore parties had been working all day and were exhausted. Some dropped to sleep wherever they were; others continued their struggle to reinforce their comrades throughout the night.

With the sunrise came a further rash of air attacks. At 0635 a dozen Italian bombers appeared over the invasion beaches. They concentrated on the transports but had little luck after the ships scattered in all directions. Axis planes would continue their raids all day and into the next night.

National Archives

American paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division lie camouflaged in a field outside Gela on July 11, 1943. Paratroopers attacked a sizable force of Italian troops sent to disrupt the Allied landings and performed well during Operation Husky despite a tragic incident of friendly fire that occurred during their drop.

The fears about a renewed armor attack in the morning were well founded. By 0640 on July 11, over a dozen German tanks were met by American infantry of the 26th Regiment, 1st Division, as they advanced north toward Ponte Olivo airfield. Other German forces were advancing from the area of Niscemi and from Biscari, east of Gela. An Italian force from the Livorno Division was also spotted advancing on Gela from the northwest.

The tanks moving against the 26th Infantry left the road and set out across the wheat fields separating them from the beachhead. Observing their advance was Brig. Gen. Theodore "Ted" Roosevelt, assistant division commander of the 1st Infantry Division. Son of famed President Teddy Roosevelt, he had come forward to observe conditions on the battlefield just in time to see the Hermann Göring Division arrive. The German tankers knew their business and immediately pressed the Americans. Two PzKpfw. IV tanks moved across open ground at high speed, trying to draw the fire of any opposing tanks or guns in the area. The rest advanced in short bursts, sprinting from one fold in the terrain to another, making themselves difficult targets while ready to fire on anything that revealed itself.

Roosevelt called back to the division command post for support, especially tanks. The infantry had little to throw at the enemy armor, which infiltrated into the 3rd Battalion, 26th's rear areas while the 2nd Battalion, following, tried to plug the gaps. The tanks were still unavailable, however, and the infantrymen were gradually pushed back until they were forming hasty defensive lines on the outskirts of Gela itself.

Roosevelt called back again, telling Allen, "Situation not so good." Undaunted, Roosevelt bolstered his men by walking along the American lines aided by his trusty cane, in full view of the enemy, bragging, "They can't hit me!"

To the east, the 16th Regiment's 2nd Battalion was attacked by a force including 40 tanks. After a stiff fight the Germans pushed them back to Piano Lupo, seven or eight miles east of Gela on Highway 115, the coastal road. By 1010 German tanks had appeared at the crossroads connecting Gela and Niscemi. The regimental antitank company, still equipped with the obsolete 37mm cannon, had lost two-thirds of its guns. One of the battalion commanders was killed while personally manning one of the weapons. By 1030 many of the infantrymen were fleeing in retreat past artillery pieces that were firing at the pursuing Germans less than a mile behind. Still no American tanks appeared.

Despite their apparent success, the German had problems of their own. One regiment of infantry had gotten lost overnight and was not in position to support the dawn armored thrust. Many of the fearsome Tiger tanks were breaking down along the road, blocking it since there were no recovery vehicles that could move them. Communication with the Italians had completely broken down. While the Livorno Division had been ordered to attack Gela as well, the Hermann Göring Division did not know it. Confusion reigned on both sides, but neither could do more than to keep fighting, keep feeding men and machines into the struggle.

Northwest of Gela, the Italians were indeed attacking. Tanks and infantry were only a mile from the town. Darby and his Rangers were defending, but they were hard pressed. Despite heavy fire from the chemical mortars, the enemy continued to advance.

Captain Lyle was directing his men when General George Patton, the Seventh Army commander, appeared behind him. Patton had come ashore to see how the fighting was progressing and immediately immersed himself in the action. After admonishing the young Ranger for having an unbuckled chinstrap, Patton was briefed by Lyle. Patton told him: "Kill every one of the .... bastards!" before leaving.

Patton also came across a naval gunfire liaison officer in Gela and told him to get some fire on the advancing Italians. The sailor wasted no time; within minutes salvos of six-inch shells from the cruiser *Boise* were crashing all around the Livorno soldiers. White phosphorous bombs from the mortars raised clouds of burning smoke, causing panic and retreat among the survivors. One Ranger officer recalled seeing the bodies of Italian infantry hanging from the branches of trees. The Italian portion of the attack had been stopped.

Captain Hanson, who had discovered the pattern in the Italian minefields, now showed up in Gela with a few half-tracks that managed to get off the beach. Patton immediately ordered him to scout out the Italian positions

outside Gela. Hanson took four men and one half-track and started up the road. Almost immediately they stumbled into a group of Italians hiding in a gully. A sharp firefight ensued where the half-track's .50-caliber machine gun saw good use. Continuing forward, the vehicle took a hit from an antitank gun, forcing them to fall back. Hanson told Patton the enemy was disorganized but digging in.

A second reconnaissance mission was dispatched with three half-tracks and a pair of M4 Sherman tanks. This group attempted to flank the Italian position and ran into an enemy field hospital. When the Americans stopped to question the hospital personnel, a large number of Italian soldiers surrendered, unwilling to endure more of the hellish bombardment they had received. The patrol returned to American lines with a long ragged line of 450 Italian prisoners following.

All morning naval gunfire poured forth from the destroyers and cruisers offshore. The *Shubrick* and its compatriot *Jeffers,* having exhausted almost all their ammunition the day before, were replaced by two destroyers, *Glennon* and *Butler.* The cruisers *Savannah* and *Boise* remained on station, ready to rain six-inch shells wherever needed. On July 11, the struggle for Gela was as much a naval battle as a ground one. The U.S. Navy would not disappoint the American soldiers ashore this day.

By 1100 the situation was at its most critical. Though the Italians to the west were no longer attacking, the Germans were still pressing hard. German artillery and tanks were able to fire on the beaches and Gela, and their infantry was getting so close even Navy personnel in shore parties armed themselves with rifles. From Patton's command post in town, he saw Italian civilians running to and fro in panicked frenzy as 88mm shells landed. He sent MPs to restore order, using rifle butts when necessary.

At times the two sides were so closely intermingled the ships offshore could not shoot for fear of fratricide. Finally, with 14 of their tanks burning or destroyed, the Germans nearest Gela began falling back. With some distance between the two combatants, the Navy was able to join in again. Hundreds of 5- and 6-inch rounds peppered the retreating Germans, continuing for several hours.

East of Gela the 16th Regiment gave orders no one was to fall back. Troops could take cover from tanks but were told to push back anything else that came near. Many fought as isolated groups in small, desperate struggles. Soon only two of the regiment's antitank guns were still operational. Finally, help arrived shortly after noon. The regimental cannon

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Axis tanks nearly broke through the thin American lines at Gela; however, individual acts of heroism and superior naval gunfire took a heavy toll on German and Italian armor. This German PzKpfw. III raises a cloud of dust as it moves toward the fighting. BELOW: Hit by three bombs from a German Junkers Ju-88 bomber, the ammunition ship SS *Robert Rowan* erupts in a spectacular explosion on the Sicilian shore near Gela on July 11, 1943.

National Archives

company got its weapons off the crowded beaches and went into action.

Joining them were a handful of Sherman tanks, which quickly added their firepower to the battle against the Germans. Following them were several more battalions of artillery. The crews of one "Long Tom" 155mm battery fired directly at approaching German tanks. A lieutenant walked along the gun line, pistol in hand, threatening to shoot anyone who ran.

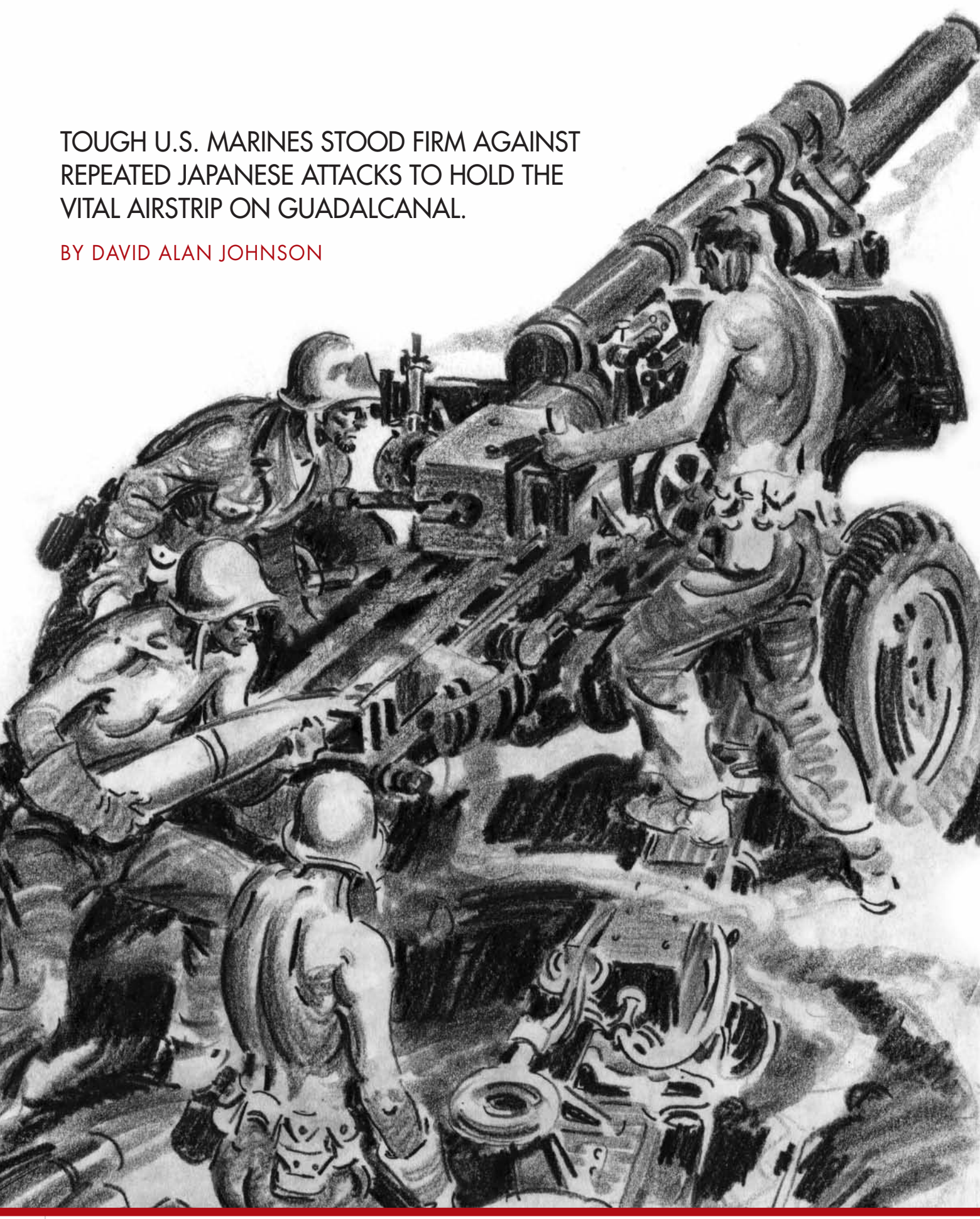
Again the Navy plunged into the action. One of the cruisers came in so close her sailors had to take constant depth readings to ensure the ship did not run aground. Both *Boise* and *Savannah,* joined by four destroyers, savaged the Germans. *Boise*'s shells carried variable time fuses that caused them to detonate in deadly airbursts above their targets. Trees were shredded, grapevines torn apart, wheat fields ripped away. Amid all this devastation, human flesh was only too vulnerable, and German soldiers were killed and wounded in scores.

Within minutes over a dozen German tanks were reduced to wreckage. American soldiers could actually hear the screams of tank crewmen trapped in the fires of their burning vehicles. It was an eerie and disturbing sound,

Continued on page 78

TOUGH U.S. MARINES STOOD FIRM AGAINST REPEATED JAPANESE ATTACKS TO HOLD THE VITAL AIRSTRIP ON GUADALCANAL.

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON



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Harrowing Fight for Henderson Field

"Colonel, there's about 3,000 Japs between you and me."

Sergeant Ralph Briggs telephoned the command post of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment at about 9:30 on the night of October 24, 1942, to report what he had just seen. The telephone was picked up by Lt. Col. Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, the battalion commander. Sergeant Briggs and 46 other Marines had been sent 3,000 yards in front of the American lines to warn of any movement by enemy troops.

Colonel Puller asked the sergeant if he was certain that the Japanese were on the move. "Positive. They've been all around us, singing and smoking cigarettes, heading your way."

The Japanese had been trying to retake Guadalcanal's airfield, which the Marines had named Henderson Field, ever since the Marines had captured the half-finished runway on August 7. The airstrip was named in honor of a Marine flier, Lofton R. Henderson, who had been killed at the Battle of Midway.

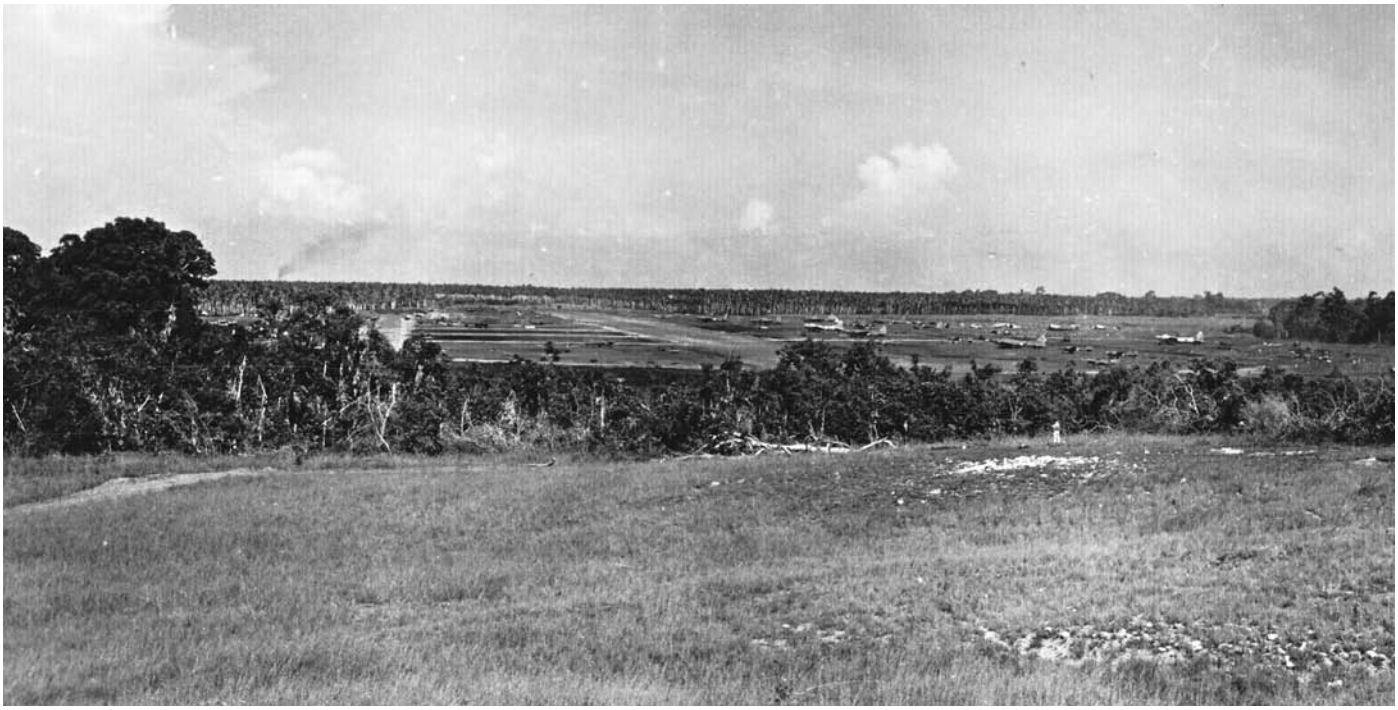
During the past 2½ months, Japanese warships had bombarded Marine positions, and reinforcements had attacked the dug-in Marines throughout August, September, and October. The Marines always managed to hold off the Japanese attacks—at the Battle of the Tenaru, at the Battle of Edson's Ridge, and in several other vicious encounters along the Matanikau River, which formed a natural defensive barrier protecting the western approaches to the airfield.

But the Japanese refused to be deterred and kept sending reinforcements by way of the nightly runs by Japanese destroyers, which the Marines nicknamed the Tokyo Express. Another convoy of reinforcements had come ashore on October 15. Everybody knew that it would just be a matter of time before the enemy launched yet another attack against the Marines defending Henderson Field.

The new Japanese offensive would be personally commanded by Lt. Gen. Harukichi Hyakutake, commander of the Japanese 17th Army. He had been on Guadalcanal for the past two weeks and had brought the 17th Army's artillery with him, including 100mm cannon and 150mm howitzers. He was determined that this attempt to capture Henderson Field would succeed and intended to use all the forces at his disposal to overwhelm the Americans.

TOP: A Japanese soldier rises up to hurl a grenade while his comrade faces the enemy to his front. This photo was taken during the six months of bitter fighting on the island of Guadalcanal. LEFT: Sergeant Howard Brodie drew this sketch of brawny U.S. Marines servicing their 105mm howitzer on Guadalcanal. The 105mm howitzer was the backbone of the Marine artillery, and its accurate fire took a heavy toll against the Japanese during their efforts to dislodge the Americans from critical positions surrounding Henderson Field.

National Archives



ABOVE: Henderson Field lies east of the photographer's position where this image was snapped, and the Lunga River runs through the treeline in the foreground. When the Marines captured Henderson Field, the Japanese had been laboring to complete it before the fighting started on Guadalcanal. RIGHT: In a still shot from a captured film, Japanese soldiers, camouflaged to blend in with the dense jungle of Guadalcanal, advance stealthily toward American positions on the island in the Solomons.

Library of Congress

"The time of the decisive battle between Japan and the United States has come," Hyakutake said on October 22. He was so certain that he would win this battle that he assigned his staff to begin preparations for accepting the surrender of all American forces on Guadalcanal. He wanted the surrender ceremony to be the envy of every unit throughout the Japanese Army.

Hyakutake's first attack began at dusk on October 23. An artillery barrage lit up the sky, prompting a Marine officer to remark, "It looks like this is the night."

After the artillery came the tanks, nine or 10 of them, depending on which source is consulted. The Marines could hear them before they actually caught sight of them, clanking and clattering eastward along the coast toward the river. The first tanks that came into view were two Type 97s. One of them was stopped by a 37mm antitank gun. The second managed to make its way through the Marines' barbed wire, where it overran a machine gun position. But luck was with the Marines. The tank ran up on a tree stump and came to a complete stop, making it a stationary target.

A Marine private reached out of his foxhole and slipped a hand grenade under one of the treads. The explosion blew the tread right off, sending the tank reeling into the surf of the Sealark Channel. A half-track went after it and destroyed the tank with its 75mm gun.

The remaining tanks did not fare any better. A barrage of flares gave the Marine antitank gunners a clear view of the approaching armor. Every one of the advancing tanks, including two 7½-ton Type 95s, were knocked out before they could do any damage to the defensive perimeter. In the morning, their burned-out hulks littered the sandbar.

According to plan, two battalions of the 4th Infantry Regiment were to start their attack on the Marine lines behind the tanks. But the Marine artillery had the Japanese infantry zeroed in. A total of 40 howitzers supported by mortar fire had the range and dropped more than 6,000 rounds on the Japanese before they had the chance to mount any attack. The Marines could hear the screams of the Japanese during short lulls in the firing. Losses among the Japanese units were not detailed, but Marine patrols discovered about 600 dead when they examined the area the next day.

The attack of October 23 was over by midnight, a complete failure. The Marines knew that the Japanese were not about to give up and would almost certainly try again on October 24. This suspicion was confirmed when a Japanese officer was spotted studying the American lines through binoculars. The Marines spent the rest of the day repairing barbed wire around the perimeter and digging their foxholes a little deeper.

With the approach of dusk, General Hyakutake began moving again. He planned this attack to the west of the previous night's action. The sector he had targeted was under the command of Lt. Col. Puller.

By the beginning of World War II, Chesty Puller was already something of a legendary figure throughout the Marine Corps and had already won two Navy Crosses. He had fought in more than 40 engagements during the "Banana Wars" in Haiti in the 1920s. Puller received his commission as a second lieutenant in 1924 and served two tours of duty in Nicaragua—in 1930 and again in 1932. In 1930, he was awarded his first Navy Cross. Two years later he received his second for showing "great courage, coolness, and display of military judgment." He was called Chesty because of his massive barrel chest, although his most visible feature was his prominent chin,

which one writer described as looking like "a bulldozer blade."

The Japanese force consisted of two wings that had a combined strength of three rifle battalions. This meant that Puller's force was outnumbered three to one. The left wing, commanded by Maj. Gen. Yumio Nasu, passed within hailing distance of Sergeant Briggs's outpost. The Japanese came so close that one soldier tripped over a Marine's helmet. The right wing veered off to the west, and only one of its battalions made contact with the Marines. This unit, the 1st Battalion, 230th Infantry, began shooting at about 10 PM. After that, the firing was almost incessant.

Shortly after Colonel Puller spoke with Sergeant Briggs about the 3,000 Japanese, the telephone rang again. A company along the line reported that Japanese troops were cutting through the barbed wire along its front. Puller now knew that the enemy had made contact with his men, but he also knew that he had a problem. Sergeant Briggs and his detachment were still in position 3,000 yards to the front and would be directly in the line of fire when Puller's Marines started shooting.

Puller telephoned Briggs to take his group to the left and to keep moving until they passed through the American lines. "Don't fail, and don't go in any other direction," Puller warned. "I'll hold my fire as long as I can."

Briggs brought most of his men through the Marine lines the following day. Of the 46 men in his detachment, three were killed and 10 wounded. The last member of the unit turned up two weeks later.

While Puller held his fire, a shouting match broke out along the perimeter. A Japanese voice yelled, "Blood for the Emperor! Marine, you die!"

An American voice shouted back, "To hell with your Emperor. Blood for Franklin and Eleanor!" A tirade of insults and obscenities followed in two languages.

Finally, Puller decided that he had waited long enough. "Commence firing!" he called over the telephone. Machine guns and rifles immediately opened up all along the perimeter, and artillery began firing from behind the lines. By this time, Japanese engineers had already begun snipping their way through the Marine barbed wire while infantrymen crawled toward the perimeter. In the excitement of the moment, some of the men stopped their silent crawl through the high grass and stood up. Others began shouting an edgy war cry.

This was exactly what the Japanese company commander did not want to happen. The shouting may have raised morale among the men, but it also called American mortar fire down on them. Machine-gun crews were also alerted by the noise. Blasts and fragments from the mortar shells combined with the massed machine guns killed most of the men before they could get near the barbed wire.

Both: National Archives

General Harukichi Hyakutake (left) commanded the Japanese garrison on Guadalcanal. Lieutenant Colonel Lewis 'Chesty' Puller (right) led the gallant U.S. Marine defense of Henderson Field.

The machine guns that did the most damage were commanded by Sergeant John Basilone, who actually learned the finer points of handling the weapon during a stint in the Army. Because of his Army training, he was acknowledged as one of the outstanding experts of the .30-caliber machine gun in the Marine Corps. On this particular night, Sergeant Basilone needed every bit of his expertise and training. After the attack had been beaten off, Basilone had to send men beyond the perimeter to reduce the pile of Japanese bodies. The dead were stacked so high that they were blocking the line of fire of his machine guns.

The attack had been stopped. It was about 1 AM when the firing slackened, if anyone had the time to look at their watches, but General Hyakutake was not about to give up.

A second attack began within the hour and lasted a frenzied 15 minutes. Captain Regan Fuller, commanding a battery of three 37mm antitank guns and two .50-caliber machine guns on the Marine left, could see Japanese troops massing for a charge, keeping close to the jungle for cover. His antitank guns fired one round of canister each, and the massed troops disappeared.

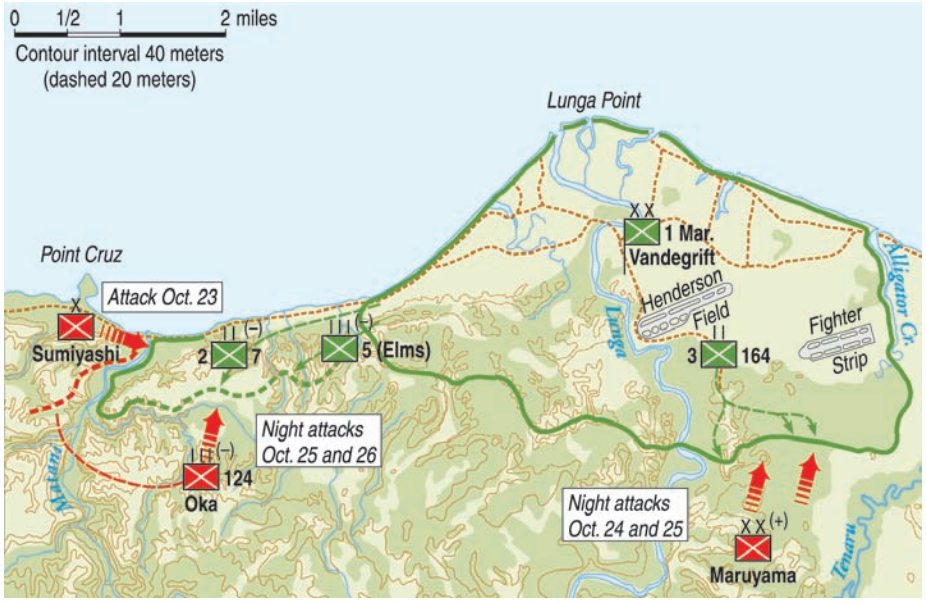
This was just the beginning of the Japanese attack. By this time, Puller realized that a major attack by seasoned, well-disciplined troops was under way. He telephoned the 11th Artillery several miles down the coast and told them, "Give us all you've got. We're holding on by our toenails."

"I'll give you all you call for, Puller," the artillery officer replied, "but God knows what'll happen when the ammo we have is gone."

"If we don't need it now, we'll never need it," Puller insisted. "If they get through here tonight, there won't be a tomorrow."

"She's yours as long as she lasts," came the reply.

Artillery fire helped to keep the enemy attacks at bay for a short time, but the Japanese kept coming. The Japanese 29th Infantry Regiment, or what was left of it, kept up its attack against the men behind the barbed wire. Basilone made hurried visits to Puller's command post several times during lulls in the fighting. Marines in the command post noticed that



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

The Japanese launched ferocious counterattacks on Guadalcanal from October 23-26, 1942, attempting to dislodge the Americans from their defensive positions and retake their airstrip. The Marines had captured the unfinished airstrip and renamed it Henderson Field in honor of a pilot who was killed during the Battle of Midway.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: On the night of October 23, 1942, the Japanese attacked Marine positions on Guadalcanal with lightly armored tanks. The Japanese tanks fell victim to American anti-tank weapons. Nine of them were lost, and this photo of the battle scene was taken the next day. BELOW: Ready for action against an unseen enemy, a U.S. Marine patrol moves out near the Matanikau River on Guadalcanal.

Basilone was barefoot. He reported that some of his machine guns were burning out from the almost constant firing and that his men were urinating into the water jackets to keep the guns from seizing up. When he left to rejoin his men, Basilone carried machine-gun parts and ammunition with him.

At about 2 PM, Colonel Puller sent out a call for urgently needed reinforcements. After a brief delay at regimental headquarters, the 3rd Battalion, 164th Regiment—actually an Army National Guard unit with no combat experience—reached Puller's area. A Navy chaplain, Father Keough, who had often visited the Marine positions and knew how to find them in the dark, escorted the men to the Marine lines through a tropical downpour. The Army troops were dispersed into the Marine lines by squads and platoons. By about 3:45 AM, all of the reinforcements were in position.

Colonel Puller walked out of his CP in the rain to meet the incoming replacements. He did not have to go very far before the head of the relief column made himself known. Puller immediately recognized Father Keough and shook hands with him. "Here they are, Colonel," Keough announced.

"Father, we can use them," Puller drawled in his unmistakable Virginia accent.

Puller was not nearly as cordial with the 3rd Battalion's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Robert K. Hall. "I don't know who's senior to who right now, and I don't give a damn," he told Hall. "I'll be in command until daylight, at least, because I know what's going on here, and you don't."

Hall understood. "That's fine with me," he said. "You lead on."

"I'm going to drop 'em off along the road," Puller explained about the incoming troops, "and send in a few to each platoon position. I want you to make it clear to your people that my men, even if they're only sergeants, will command in those holes when your officers and men arrive."

Once again, Hall had no objection. "I understand you. Let's go."

Puller, Keough, and Hall made their way along the road in the dark and rain with the sound of gunfire on their left. Every 100 yards or so, a runner came up from the lines. Puller would assign a squad of men to go with the runner, who led the new men to the Marine lines. Within a short time, all the troops had been positioned to help fend off the next enemy attack.

When Puller returned to the command post, he was informed that regimental headquarters had telephoned. He immediately contacted the regimental commander. The officers in the CP heard Puller's side of the conversation.

"What d'ya mean, 'What's going on?' We're neck deep in a fire fight, and I've got no time to stand here bullflinging," Puller shouted into the receiver. "If you want to find out what's going on, come up and see." He turned to the other officers and said, "Regiment is not convinced that we are facing a major attack."

The attacks kept coming with as much determination as before. The new arrivals got on well with the Marine veterans and were instrumental in holding off two or three more attacks. Their joining the battle was timely. Puller estimated that his battalion was down to about 500 men. When the 1st Battalion landed on Guadalcanal in September, it had a full complement of about 900 men. Before the attacks started, about 700 men had been available.

Some of the Marines relieved the new soldiers of their M-1 Garand rifles, which were semi-automatic and more suited to jungle fighting than the rifles they had been issued. The Marines had been equipped with the Springfield Model 1903, a bolt-action rifle. The Marines had not seen the M-1 before and immediately fell in love with the way the rifle fired and handled.

The colonel commanding the Japanese 29th Infantry Regiment led yet another charge against the Marine barbed wire. Machine-gun fire took its toll on the advancing Japanese. Marines armed with bayonets finished off most of the Japanese who had survived the machine guns. Another group, this time in battalion strength, began to mass for another attack, but by the time the troops were assembled, the sun had risen. Marine machine-gun fire stopped this charge at the edge of the jungle before the Japanese could even get close to the Marine lines. This was the seventh and last attack that Puller and his men had to endure on this long and brutal night.

A small contingent of Japanese troops, fewer than 100 men, had managed to break through the Marine lines. They punched a hole about 150 yards across and scattered in small groups behind the American machine guns and rifle positions. During the daylight hours of October 25, Marine patrols killed 67 of these stragglers.

Sergeant Briggs and his platoon had taken cover in the woods overnight, where they were surrounded by Japanese troops. "We gained cover in the woods where it was as cold as hell, and the Japs seemed to be all around us," he later recalled. "We could hear them jabbering and walking so close that one Jap stepped on a Marine's bayonet."

When daylight finally came, Briggs and his men came under heavy Japanese mortar and machine-gun fire. Private Robert Potter jumped up and began running back and forth, deliberately drawing the fire of the enemy gunners.

Most of the other men escaped while the Japanese were distracted by Potter, who was killed.

The commander of the Japanese 2nd Division, Lt. Gen. Masao Maruyama, had heard conflicting stories about the fighting. The first news he received was what he wanted to hear. "The right flank attacked the airfield," an officer reported by field telephone. "The night attack is a success!"

As the night went on, Maruyama could hear the firing of American mortars and artillery, and the volume of fire seemed to be increasing. If the attack had succeeded, the enemy fire should be diminishing, not increasing. The general feared that something had gone wrong. These fears were confirmed by a telephone call from the same officer who had reported a victory earlier.

"It was a mistake about the success of the right flank," the officer reported. "They haven't reached the airfield yet. They crossed a large open field and thought it was the airfield. It was a mistake."

Another officer heard about this mistake and said that he was struck with "an omen of doom." As time passed and there were no more reports from the front, everyone's feelings of foreboding increased.

Finally, around dawn, Maruyama received the news he had been dreading. Most of the 29th Regiment had been wiped out, and its regimental flag was missing. "That's it," Maruyama said.

During the daylight hours of October 25, Puller's Marines counted 250 Japanese dead inside their lines. One of the officers, a major, had committed suicide. He felt that he had disgraced himself and his regiment. "I do not know what excuse to give. I apologize for what I have done," he wrote in his diary, agonizing over the loss of his men and his regimental flag. "I am going to return my borrowed life today with short interest."

A few days after the battle, with the bodies of the dead Japanese decomposing in the tropical heat, Puller convinced division headquarters to perform a body count. The detail that carried out the grisly assignment tallied 1,462 bodies as they buried the dead. Bulldozers dug trenches, and then the burial crew loaded the bodies into the ditches after they were counted. Finally, the bulldozers covered the trenches with fresh earth. This went on for two days.

There were also some happier moments for Puller. On the morning after the battle, the commander of the 164th Regiment gave Puller some words of encouragement. "Colonel Puller, I want you to know how happy I am to have my men blooded under you," the officer said.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Following their abortive attack of October 23, the bodies of dozens of Japanese soldiers lie unburied along the beach at Guadalcanal. BELOW: Camouflaged with palm fronds and reinforced with sandbags and coconut logs, a machine gun position on Guadalcanal is manned by alert Marines. During several massed attacks, waves of Japanese soldiers were mowed down by American machine guns.

"No man in my outfit, including me, had ever seen action, and I know our boys couldn't have had a better instructor. I wish you'd break in my other battalions."

If Puller was flattered, he did not let it show. Instead, he replied with a left-handed compliment. "They're almost as good as Marines," he told the bemused officer.

Puller was awarded a third star for his Navy Cross for the night's action. According to the citation for his decoration, "He prevented a hostile penetration of our lines and was largely responsible for the successful defense of the section assigned to his troops."

Puller would receive two more Navy Crosses—at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, in January 1944, and at Koto-Ri, Korea, in December 1950. When he retired in 1955 with the rank of lieutenant general, Puller was the most highly decorated Marine in the history of the Corps.

Sergeant John Basilone received the Medal of Honor for keeping his machine-gun crews supplied with ammunition and for manning a machine gun himself. He was credited with stopping a Japanese charge singlehandedly and "gallantly holding his line until replacements arrived." Basilone was killed on Iwo Jima in February 1945.

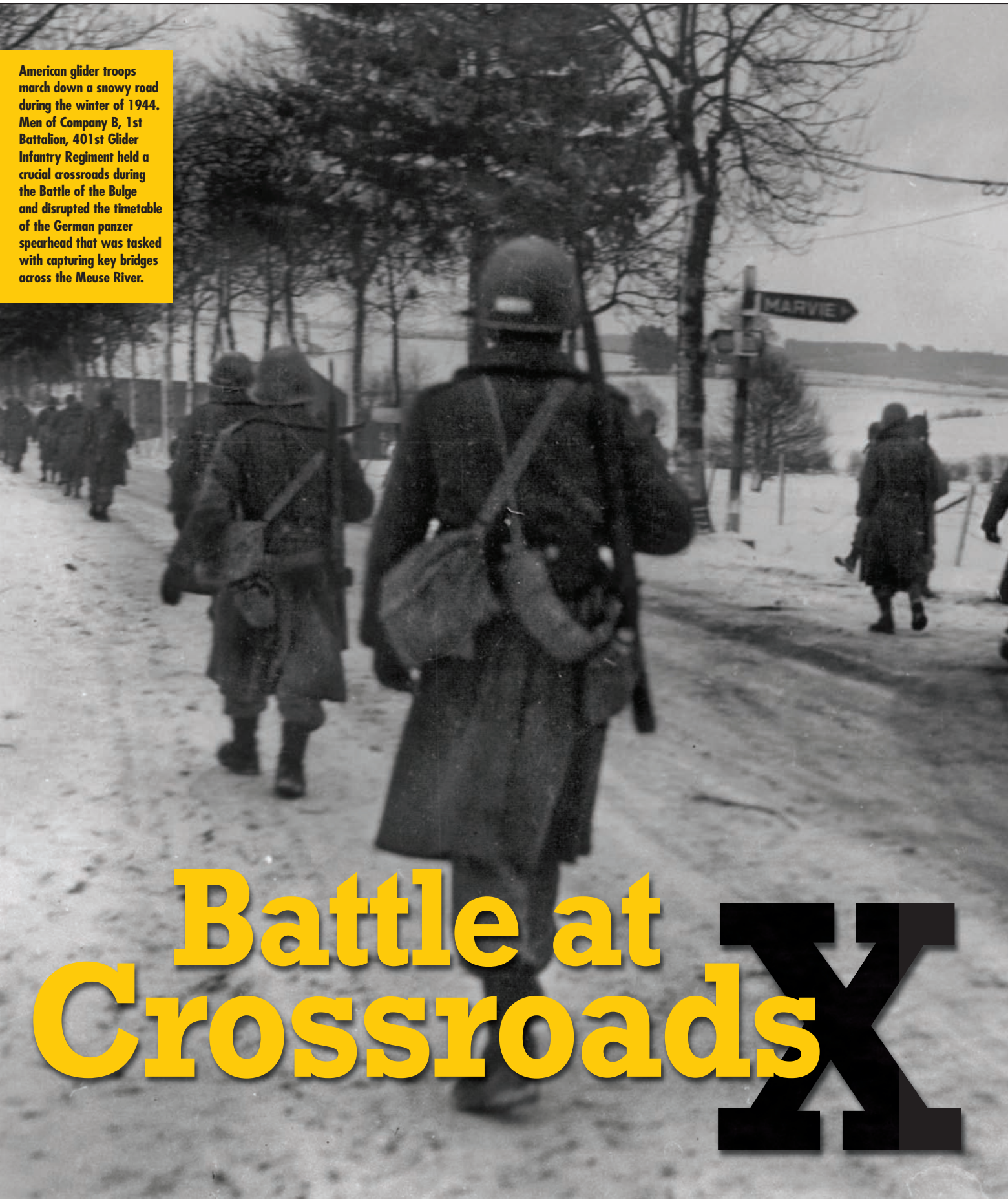
The night had been a complete disaster for the Japanese. Not only had every attack failed to capture Henderson Field, but the failure of so many determined charges made by veteran troops began to wear away at morale throughout the Army. Reports that Guadalcanal was an "island of death" began to circulate even in remote outposts.

An interrogation session held after the battle gave a pointed indication of why Japanese troops had no success against the Marine positions in spite of their determination. "Why didn't you change tactics when you saw you weren't breaking our line?" Puller asked a prisoner. "Why didn't you shift to a weaker spot?"

"That is not the Japanese way," the prisoner replied. "The plan had been made. No one would have dared to change it. It must go as it is written."

The inflexibility of the Japanese officers contributed to their loss of Guadalcanal. In February 1943, less than three months after Hyakutake's disastrous attempt to capture Henderson Field, Japanese forces evacuated the island, abandoning Guadalcanal to the Americans. □

Author David A. Johnson has written extensively for WWII History. *He resides in Union, New Jersey.*



American glider troops march down a snowy road during the winter of 1944. Men of Company B, 1st Battalion, 401st Glider Infantry Regiment held a crucial crossroads during the Battle of the Bulge and disrupted the timetable of the German panzer spearhead that was tasked with capturing key bridges across the Meuse River.

Battle at Crossroads X

A COMPANY OF GLIDERMEN DISRUPTED THE TIMETABLE OF THE GERMAN 2ND PANZER DIVISION AND INFLUENCED THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE.

National Archives

FOR THE COLD AND HUNGRY GIS OF COMPANY B, 1/401ST GLIDER Infantry Regiment, holding the western approach to Bastogne would push the men to the limits of their endurance. During several frigid days in December 1944, the young glider fighters of the 101st Airborne Division fought over a bleak intersection outside the Belgian town. The intersection, nicknamed Crossroads X by the men, quickly became the focus of bloody struggle between the Americans and Germans, as the might of Adolf Hitler's armored forces desperately sought a way into besieged Bastogne.

Private First Class Carmen Gisi of B Company remembers the contested landscape as if it was yesterday. "After the battle at the Crossroads we found out that we were fighting the first elements of the Germans' 2nd Panzer Division," Gisi recalled years later. "We were told we held up the offensive for two days, which was very critical to the Germans."

Due to the stubborn actions of Gisi's single company, the might of the 2nd Panzer Division would be stymied in its attempts to break into Bastogne's "back door" during the early days of the famous siege. The contest for Crossroads X would become brutal and desperate as seasoned Americans faced German armor. In the bigger picture, the valiant holding action by B Company would help put an end to Hitler's last great offensive in the West, the Battle of the Bulge.

When the glidermen of Company B, 1/401st Glider Infantry leaped from the tailgates of the trucks that brought them to the outskirts of Bastogne on the night of the 19th, many of them had no clue where they were. The hours spent in the exposed trucks had been cold and miserable, and the men were happy the trip had come to an end. Initially, Lt. Col. Ray Allen, the commander of 1/401st Glider Infantry, ordered his companies to take up positions straddling the Marche Road and to prepare to defend the ground past the town of Mande St. Etienne. This location would help protect the road and was closest to the original assembly area, which grew increasingly quiet that night as the last groups of Screaming Eagles marched off to their positions.

Bad news had arrived earlier that evening. The division's 326th Medical Company had set up a field hospital in an open area to the west of Crossroads X (the intersection of the Marche Road and the Barriere Hinck). It was the 101st's farthest position west of Bastogne. Almost as soon as they had pitched their tents, the hospital crew, believing they were in a safe rear area, had been attacked by advance elements of the 2nd Panzer Division. Rumors quickly reached the high command that the hospital had been wiped out. In the Heinz barracks headquarters back in Bastogne, the acting division commander, Brig.

BY LEO BARRON AND DON CYGAN

Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, looked visibly shaken when he heard the news, even if the particulars were unknown at the time. Not only would the division now find itself woefully short of corpsmen, medical officers, and supplies, but McAuliffe was concerned that the Germans had managed to get behind the growing American defensive perimeter so quickly.

The news of the attack was a wake-up call for McAuliffe. He now realized how fast the Germans were moving. He needed to move immediately to regain control of the situation and secure the rear of his defenses around Bastogne.

The man leading the mission to recapture the vital crossroads was Captain Robert J. MacDonald, the no-nonsense commander of Baker Company, 1/401st Glider Infantry Regiment. Like many World War II commanders, MacDonald was young. A reporter who knew MacDonald described him: "When young MacDonald stood up straight, he towered over his battalion commander like a beanpole: six feet, three inches tall; soaking-wet weight, 145 pounds. His flesh was so sparse that his shoulders were rubbed raw by the strap when he carried a pack. Only 23 years old, MacDonald had learned his lessons well in combat in Normandy and Holland."

That night, MacDonald received a warning order around 2230 hours. Shortly afterward, the patrol, led by MacDonald himself, crossed the line of departure and headed west. MacDonald recalled how his company had ambushed a German infantry column marching down a road in Holland several months earlier. He vividly remembered how exposed the Germans were when he ordered his machine guns to open fire. He ordered his men to approach stealthily in the foggy dark, keeping strict noise discipline. MacDonald also divided Baker into two columns. Sneaking through the ditches on either side, each group moved cautiously, purposely keeping off of the Bastogne-Marche Road. As the men approached the crossroads they could see the orange reflection of burning vehicles in the night sky. An even more troubling clue as to the fate of the hospital soon reached their ears.

MacDonald's men heard the strangest of sounds. It was a loud, continuous wail. Gisi, the young gliderman from New Jersey, remembered how eerie and shrill the noise was in the damp night air. When the Americans climbed a ridge overlooking the crossroads, they viewed a scene of utter devastation.

Laid out in front of them were 16 burning 2 1/2-ton trucks. The vehicles had been abandoned by the roadside, still in convoy along the Salle-Barriere Hinck Road. A driver's body had slumped forward in the cab of one of the trucks, lying on the horn and producing the wailing noise. Several bodies lay strewn about the fields near the hospital tents. MacDonald surveyed the scene and quickly began to formulate a plan. First, he sent two scouts down the slope to reconnoiter the area. The GIs crept stealthily away and after several minutes returned to report the Germans were still milling around the area. MacDonald breathed a heavy sigh. He knew Baker Company was about to go into battle again. This time, instead of the dikes and wet fields of Holland, it would be over a misty road junction in Belgium.

As MacDonald and his men prepared to recapture the crossroads, the radio operators at the 327th Regimental Headquarters tracked their progress. As the reports came in, they scribbled messages on radio logs to keep their commanders informed. It had been a busy morning so far. One of the men taking notes belonged to Captain William L. Abernathy's S2 section. For him, the news was not good. At 0045 hours, reports filtered in that the Germans had sent half-tracks mounting heavy machine guns to guard Crossroads X. In addition, the Germans supposedly had captured an American armored vehicle and were using it to defend the same crossroads.

Both: Carmen Gisi

ABOVE: Glider infantryman Carmen Gisi, kneeling in the center of this photo, took possession of a camera lost at a shattered field hospital and took numerous photos around the operations area of Company B, 1/401st Glider Infantry Regiment near Crossroads X. BELOW: Another photo taken by Carmen Gisi shows men of Company B in their snowy foxhole near Bastogne. Gisi is at far right in this group.

Moreover, if there was any doubt about the fate of the medical company, the report at 0115 confirmed the Americans' worst fears. A jeep driver had escaped and reached one of the security patrols on the perimeter. The lucky paratrooper was from the 326th Medical Company and reported that indeed the Germans had captured the entire company, including the wounded on litters. As the Germans herded the prisoners together, several of the machine gunners in an African American transport company opened fire with their heavy machine guns. Chaos ensued as men on both sides dove for cover. Bullets zipped and zinged everywhere, slaying friend and foe alike. Within a few moments however, the Germans killed the brave truckers, ending the fight.

During the ensuing chaos, the plucky jeep driver had escaped, frantically making his way back to American lines. The information he provided was quickly relayed to McAuliffe's headquarters. According to the driver, close to 100 Germany infantrymen had occupied the crossroads. With them were two half-tracks and multiple small arms, which seemed to confirm the earlier report. According to other survivors of the attack, many of the Germans were wearing civilian clothes and American uniforms as a ruse. However, unlike the soldiers, the officers wore the standard German field uniforms. Survivors stated that the German unit had machine-gunned the tents and trucks, even though many were clearly marked with red crosses.

In short, the Germans were at Crossroads X in force. It began to look like Baker Company would have a major fight on their hands.

Meanwhile, Gisi could not believe the Germans were being so loud and careless. As one of the pair of scouts that MacDonald had sent to the crossroads to investigate the situation, he and a comrade crouched on their knees just below the short incline to the road, hidden from the Germans by the dark. Cautiously, the two men had snuck up to the road, clutching their M1 Garand rifles, fingers hovering over the triggers.

"It was a miserable night. Dark. Snow flurries," Gisi recalled. "Sergeant [Mike] Campana [Gisi's platoon sergeant] instructed me and Charlie Sawyer to head out first, since we were scouts."

Campana told Gisi and Sawyer to fire two shots, which would be the signal to commence the attack. The rest of the company would then come down firing in an extended line, parallel to the road. As Gisi waited, he still could not believe the Germans were so close and so blatantly violating the military doctrine of noise discipline.

"We could actually see them [the German soldiers] pretty well. Geez, even in the dark, I was 4-5 feet away, and Charlie and I were crouching on our knees behind that little rise there. We could hear them talking in German and their hobnails on their boots as they walked back and forth on the road."

The Germans had let their guard down. They had not pushed out local security elements to ensure their area was safe. MacDonald's glidermen were about to teach them a fatal lesson for their military indiscretions.

MacDonald's plan was similar to a double envelopment. He quickly gathered his platoon leaders and platoon sergeants and, like a kid outlining a complex play on a sandlot football field, explained his plan. On the northeast side, Campana's 3rd Platoon would occupy a blocking position to prevent Germans from escaping down that road. On the southwest side, 1st Lt.

Selvan E. Shields would establish another blocking position. Meanwhile, 1st Platoon, under 1st Lt. John T. O'Halloran, and weapons platoon, under Technical Sergeant Robert Dunnigan, would set up a support position in the middle, facing almost directly at Crossroads X. Awaiting the signal from the scouts, the officers and senior NCOs moved out to their platoons.

Lieutenant O'Halloran returned to his platoon and quickly briefed them on the operation. The glidermen of 1st Platoon moved out. When they were close to the objective, O'Halloran gave the order and the men lay down on their stomachs, as if to slither their way toward the burning trucks. While they waited for the signal, and though they were a little farther away than Gisi and Sawyer, the men of 1st Platoon could also hear the Germans chatting and laughing, oblivious to the impending attack.

Patricia A. O'Malley

Carmen Gisi

ABOVE LEFT: Lieutenant Clarence "Gus" Ryan was in the thick of the fighting at Crossroads X with Company B, 1/401st Glider Infantry Regiment. ABOVE RIGHT: Private First Class Carmen Gisi of Orange, New Jersey. RIGHT: American control of Crossroads X seriously impeded the progress of the German 2nd Panzer Division. A key to the defense of the road junction at Bastogne, Belgium, Crossroads X was held by glider troops during the most critical phase of the Battle of the Bulge.

To 1st Platoon's right, 3rd Platoon edged forward into its attack position. It was at that moment that Gisi fired the two shots, splitting the night like thunder.

Suddenly, over 100 slivers of light shattered the darkness. The steady rat-tat-tat of M1919 machine guns and the heavy chugging sound of Browning Automatic Rifles echoed across the rolling fields. For the Germans trapped in the crossfire, it was direct-fire death. The Germans scattered in all directions like cockroaches. When 1st Platoon heard Gisi's rifle shots, the men stood up and opened fire. While they were firing, they marched forward to the trucks like gunslingers in an old Western film. When they reached the burning vehicles, some of the men then tossed hand grenades into the wood line just beyond the crossroads to kill any retreating Germans. Meanwhile, some of the German soldiers tried to escape down the northern and southern roads only to find the Americans waiting for them. For many of those Germans, it was their last decision. For the Americans, it was easy pickings. Only a handful of Germans managed to escape westward on the road to Tenneville.

Nearby, Gisi and Sawyer saw shadows rapidly approaching. The two men quickly aimed their M1s at the dark blobs. They called out to make sure the targets were German before they opened fire. The reply was in German. Campana's platoon was still coming down from the ridge behind them, but Gisi knew they could not wait for them. They had to act now. As fast as they could squeeze their triggers, the two men shot round after round into the shadowy shapes.

Gisi remembered: "Those Germans were close. They came right in front of our company when we hit them. I know when we [he and Sawyer] fired we killed a few of them. We even threw some grenades, but it was a short fight."

If any Germans had remained, Gisi felt sure the grenades had killed them. By the time the platoon reached the two scouts by the road, the fighting had ended. Gisi was thankful he had dodged death again. Fortunately, Baker Company suffered only one casualty. Gisi's buddy, Frank Almovich, suffered a minor wound when a bullet grazed his left ear. Campana also had a close call when a German rifle round ricocheted off the buckle of his ammo belt. Other than that, Baker Company had successfully recaptured the crossroads intact.

Captain MacDonald instantly informed Allen that the crossroads was in American hands. It was now 0445 hours. Even in the dark, MacDonald could make out the wreckage that was once the hospital in the field beyond the road. His men cautiously approached the tents, searching for comrades. They found no survivors. Allen called back and ordered MacDonald to set up a battle position with his company to defend the crossroads from any subsequent German attacks. MacDonald acknowledged the order and went to work. He knew he was out on a limb, far from the rest of his battalion. He could only hope the Germans did not know how vulnerable his position truly was.

As dawn broke on the morning of the 20th, MacDonald and his men continued to explore the crossroads. The dead were everywhere. To the relief of everyone present, someone finally pushed back the body of the dead driver from the wailing truck horn. According to Gisi, the only sound after that was the eerie crackling of the flames in the burning vehicles.

When he entered the abandoned field hospital, Gisi discovered two dead paratroopers. The

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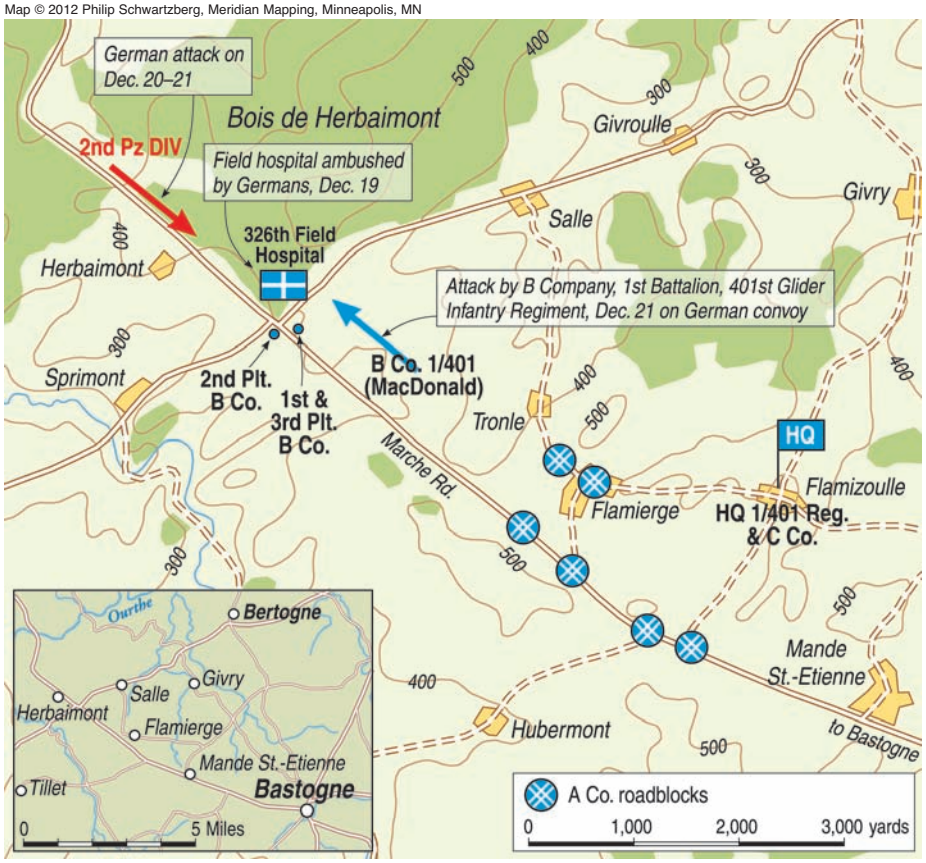


Germans had slit their throats. One of the luckless paratroopers was still on a stretcher with his arm attached to a bag of blood plasma on a stand. Still, Gisi is not sure to this day that what he witnessed was the result of an execution. "I think the Germans did that because they were too badly injured—to put them out of their misery."

Gisi began to rummage through the wreckage and debris left behind. Reaching down in a hastily dug foxhole, he found a camera that still had some film. He turned around and snapped a photo of the abandoned field hospital. The empty tents, flapping in the breeze, were a reminder that the fortunes of war could turn on anyone at any time. The medics working in the hospital probably thought they were well behind friendly lines and protected from an enemy attack. Tragically, they were mistaken.

National Archives

A half-track leads a column of German panzergrenadiers toward the front during the Battle of the Bulge. Veteran troops such as these took on the lightly armed men of Company B, 1/401st Glider Infantry Regiment at Crossroads X and failed to dislodge the plucky Americans in a timely manner.

MacDonald's company salvaged whatever supplies and equipment they could find, including ammo, gas, rations, and medical supplies. The biggest haul was two .50-caliber machine guns removed from the trucks. The glidermen were thrilled to have these pristine weapons that were still caked with the waxy Cosmoline from the original packaging. The heavy barreled machine guns would come in handy in the further fighting for Bastogne.

By 0800 hours, Captain MacDonald radioed Allen that his position was secured. Looking over his shoulder toward Bastogne, MacDonald could barely see where the next American unit was, even with the gradual rising of the fog and daylight. In fact, it was over 4,000 yards away near the town of Flamierge. Baker Company was an island. Despite this isolation, orders were orders. Allen had told him to defend the crossroads, and that was that. To make matters worse, MacDonald had no artillery support. A forward observer from the 333rd Artillery Group would show up later that day, but even he had no way to call back to division artillery. All MacDonald could do was hope the Germans did not press the issue and try to recapture the crossroads. If they did, Baker Company could end up like the field hospital.

Later that morning, the ever-present fog rolled back in and blotted out the sun. MacDonald knew what that meant. The Allied fighter-bombers were not flying, and when the P-47s could not fly, the Wehrmacht would take advantage, moving its tanks out in the open. Sure enough, within a few minutes MacDonald and the rest of Baker Company could hear the clanking of metal tracks from the direction of the little town of Salle to the north. MacDonald's GIs jumped into their foxholes and waited. Soon, they could see the steel monsters—two German Panther Mark V tanks from the 2nd Panzer Division. They were only 50 yards up the road from Crossroads X when they rolled to a stop.

With a great grinding of gears, the two metal leviathans turned and moved off the road. MacDonald probably swore to himself. Earlier, he had two tank destroyers from 3rd Platoon, Baker Company of the 705th under his command, but they had left not long after they had arrived, believing the glidermen had things under control. The tank destroyer commanders did not think any German armor was about. They were wrong.

There was a moment of nervous waiting on both sides, perhaps as the tankers were sizing up the situation from inside their steel hulls. Suddenly, the Panther crews opened up with machine-gun fire spraying the crossroads with bursts of 7.92mm bullets. Luckily, because they were firing blind, the bursts went over the heads of the glidermen hunkered down in their foxholes.

MacDonald's men were smart enough to realize this was more than they could handle without proper antitank support. No one shot back at the Panthers. With no reaction, the tank crews probably thought the Americans had left. The two tanks gunned their engines and headed back toward Salle. MacDonald and his men breathed a sigh of relief. Possibly, this had been some sort of armored reconnaissance, but they knew the Germans would return to push the issue. It was only a question of when.

On the 21st, Captain MacDonald awoke to another miserable, cloudy morning. This morning, the fog seemed to be at its worst, virtually surrounding his men. It seemed he would never see the sun again. Each day at Bastogne was like living in a London fog bank.

MacDonald knew that once again the fog meant there would be no air support. He shook his head. Logically, the Germans also realized it was another chance to try something against his position, probably with armor.

He looked outside his command post, watching some of his glidermen chomping on K rations while huddling in their foxholes, trying to stay warm and dry. Others were up and moving around, conducting their morning rituals. In their positions astride the Marche Road and on the heights above Crossroads X, it had been quiet for most of the morning. The only action so far had occurred when his forward observers detected some enemy tanks firing at them from northwest of the crossroads. In response, an observer requested a fire mission from the 463rd, which responded with a brief but apparently effective barrage. Other than that, the morning had passed uneventfully.

Suddenly, explosions and gunfire tore through the stillness of the cold morning, as if a thunderstorm had burst among them. In his position to the right of the line, Sergeant Campana of 3rd Platoon heard the Germans vehicles before he saw them emerge from the mist. Without waiting for orders, he told his squad leaders to hold their fire. He wanted to know what was rolling down the road before firing

on it. Even in the thick fog, Campana could tell that the vehicle sounds seemed to be coming from the town of Salle to the north, once again, most probably Germans.

The glidermen checked their weapons, making sure they were loaded and ready. As they waited in their foxholes and the vehicle noises increased, the anticipation began to build. MacDonald's men could hear the humming of German engines. Finally, after waiting for a couple of interminable minutes, the vehicles emerged from the murky clouds like Viking ship prows in the Norse Sea. Lined up in a row were several German Kubelwagens and a truck. The truck was towing some type of artillery piece.

Luckily, 3rd Platoon had more than just machine guns and rifles. Campana had brought up one of the 57mm guns from the regiment's Anti-Tank Weapons Company, and the crew quickly sighted the gun at the lead Kubelwagen. Campana gave the signal. Fire erupted along the entire line as the platoon targeted the lead car. The Kubelwagen exploded as round after round tore through its thin steel plating. As a result, the entire German column sputtered to a halt, but before they could back up, Campana's men turned their attention on the trail vehicle. Within seconds, it, too, was a burning wreck.

Now, the entire column was trapped between the two destroyed vehicles. One Kubelwagen managed to weave its way through the maelstrom and escaped, frantically driving away at full speed. The others were not as fortunate. As the German soldiers jumped down from their vehicles, Campana's riflemen blasted away at them. It was a textbook linear ambush. Deadly and sudden, within few short minutes it was over.

Carmen Gisi recalled what happened after the ambush. "Well, we went down to see what we'd hit. I think all of the Germans were killed. We killed about 50, I think. Several got away. I don't recall any prisoners, no—I'm pretty sure they were all either killed or ran off. I remember searching this one officer, I'm sure he was SS—a tall guy. We found American cigarettes and candy that had been taken off our guys from the field hospital. That made us mad, you know."

Hearing the action, Captain MacDonald rushed to the scene in time to witness the death throes of the German column as the last few vehicles were stopped by 57mm rounds. MacDonald nodded with grim satisfaction. His men had performed like the seasoned veterans that most of them were. They acted independently, like good troopers who did not rely on a call to their higher headquarters for orders and decisions. MacDonald was pleased that independent-minded NCOs like Mike Campana were

National Archives

ABOVE: Armed with bazookas, soldiers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division man a roadblock along the defensive perimeter at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. BELOW: This modern view of the battlefield at Crossroads X near the Barriere Hinck shows the gentle ridge that Company B troops used as concealment prior to launching their devastating attack on a German column traversing the Salle Road, seen in the distance.

Don Cygan

the backbone of his company, and this morning they had shown their commander why Baker Company was one of the best in the regiment. After the firing died down, MacDonald called Colonel Allen to inform him of the good news. By 0900, regiment knew that Baker Company had destroyed an entire enemy column. It did not take long for Abernathy to determine the column belonged to the 2nd Panzer Division.

Several days before, the 2nd Panzer Division, part of the XXXXVII Panzer Corps, had burst through the Allied lines along the Our River as part of Hitler's final offensive in the West. The division, commanded by Colonel Meinrad von Lauchert, was to execute the decisive operation for the Fifth Panzer Army. Its mission was to secure the crossings along the Meuse River near the city of Dinant.

For the first few days, the 2nd Panzer Division had tasted the fruits of victory. It had fought a bitter and tough battle to cross the Our River, but after it had penetrated the crumbling defenses of the 110th Infantry Regiment,

it roared westward like an unleashed lion. Its next victim was elements of the 9th Armored Division near Hamiville on the 19th. After a brief but one-sided battle during which the 2nd Panzer Division destroyed over two dozen tanks from the 9th Armored, it pushed through the forces of Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division and the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Noville. To the Americans, it seemed no one could stop them.

Farther south, the Panzer Lehr Division, 2nd Panzer's partner in the offensive, failed to capture Bastogne through a coup de main. The 101st Airborne Division had won the race to the town and secured the vital road hub. As a result, the supply lines of the 2nd Panzer Division had to circle around Bastogne from the north and then to the west. Overextended and vulnerable, this logjam created unforeseen problems, including increasing the amount of time it took vital supplies, such as gasoline and ammunition, to reach von Lauchert's forward units. One such problem was the nondescript crossroads west of Bastogne, Crossroads X, where MacDonald and his men were stubbornly holding out, depriving the Germans of this vital road junction.

Baker Company's action on December 21 had an important effect on the Germans. For von Lauchert, the ambush at Crossroads X forced his hand. He could no longer afford to ignore the American presence there since his forces and supply train were transiting so close to the nearby roadway. Now, he had to commit a Kampfgruppe, or battle group, to isolate and contain the American forces at Crossroads X, which he assumed to be a large task force. Had he known it was only a company, he might not have allocated so much combat power.

The Germans, however, could not take any chances. It was becoming essential that none of the American units in Bastogne be permitted to use the roads and push out, potentially recapturing the bridge crossing at the Our River, which would interfere with the German objectives to the west. In short, because of the aggressive actions of MacDonald's men at the crossroads, the Germans believed the resistance meant a sizable U.S. unit was holding the area. The skirmishes at the intersection had grown from a nuisance to a serious threat to the German line of communication westward to the Meuse River.

For the Americans, it had been a job well done, even if they did not know how they had already disrupted the German plans for taking Bastogne and continuing to the Meuse River. For MacDonald's men, however, their battle was just starting.

Carmen Gisi

The abandoned and wrecked American field hospital discovered by troops of B Company. This eerie photo is another taken by Private First Class Carmen Gisi with the camera he found lying in a nearby foxhole. The medical personnel and patients at the hospital were either killed or captured by the Germans.

That afternoon, MacDonald's 3rd Platoon continued to occupy its positions north of the highway looking west toward Marche. In front of them were the smoldering remains of the German column they had destroyed over an hour earlier. The glidermen were still pretty juiced up from the successful ambush, and it helped that it had been so one-sided. They had not lost a single man, but they had slaughtered scores of Germans. Regardless, many of the men guessed that the Germans were not going to give up so easily. Plenty of MacDonald's men were veterans of Holland and Normandy. They had seen enough war to realize that their luck was probably not going to last. Fate could easily fall the other way.

MacDonald knew that anticipating the next German move could pay dividends yet again, saving the lives of soldiers and guaranteeing success for his small company. Early warning was one way to prevent an ambush. Therefore, he placed two bazooka teams forward of Campana's 3rd Platoon and the crossroads. An hour after the Kubelwagen ambush, the bazooka teams bore fruit.

Around 1230 hours, the bazooka men again heard the clanking of treads coming from the direction of Marche. Two tanks from 2nd Panzer were rapidly approaching, feeling their way up the road. Removing the safety pins, the American loaders slid the 2.36-inch rockets into each tube and wrapped the tiny wires from the back of the rockets into the magneto clamp on the back of each bazooka tube. They then patted the gunners on the back as a signal that they were loaded. The gunners readied themselves for action, fingers hovering over the large triggers. Private Joe Karpac was one of the gunners. He squinted, trying hard to peer into the misty gloom. Suddenly, he could make out two German Mark IV tanks heading straight down the road.

Long before, Karpac and the other team had worked out a system where they would draw the tank's fire, and after the tank fired, shoot before the tank could reload. It was a risky system if the gunner had the guts to expose himself. This would be even riskier today, since Karpac noticed they had only a frontal shot, the place where a tank's armor is thickest.

The gunners tensed as the metal beasts edged closer to their positions. Finally, the lead tank fired its main gun, shattering the silence. Karpac dashed into the road before the tank could get off a second shot. He had only seconds to look down the sight of his bazooka at the lead tank and pull the trigger. The M6 HEAT (High-Explosive, Anti-Tank) projectile whooshed from the barrel. Karpac could only watch helplessly as the round missed. Before the other enemy crew could get a bead on Karpac, he dove for cover.

With a great blast, the trailing tank shot its main gun at the elusive bazooka gunner. Now, it was the second bazooka gunner's turn. Like Karpac, he jumped out to engage the tank, and like Karpac, he missed. Again, the trailing tank blasted its gun at Karpac's comrades, but it missed too.

Amazingly, Karpac summoned up the courage to try this little stunt again. He felt confident he would not miss a second time. After the second tank had fired, he dashed back into the street. His heart was beating faster than a snare drummer on parade. Karpac took a deep breath to steady it. He peered down the tube sight again. The tank seemed to grow in his sights like some great charging beast. Finally, he pulled the trigger. In less than a second, the rocket sailed over the road and slammed into the German tank, which began to shudder and stall. Thick, oily smoke rose up from within it like a sputtering stove.

The effect was contagious. The crew of the other tank retreated. Shifting to reverse, the German driver began to back away from the surviving vehicle. The tank left the smoking wreck to its fate, clanking off to where it had emerged out of the fog.

Once again, MacDonald's glidermen had successfully defended the crossroads. The men took a break, smoked cigarettes, congratulated each other, and breathed a sigh of relief. They knew it would probably be only a brief pause before the next German attack.

While Karpac and company were chasing off tanks near Crossroads X, their battalion commander, Lt. Col. Ray Allen, sensed it was time to rethink his plan. Baker Company's little combat outpost had certainly disrupted Wehrmacht

movements around the crossroads as well as holding off multiple enemy probes over the last 24 hours, but it was isolated and dangerously exposed. The crossroads was getting harder and harder to defend. Allen knew that if the Germans decided to press their numbers, they would easily overwhelm MacDonald's tiny force.

As the morning drew to a close and he received the reports, Allen was becoming more convinced it was time to bring back MacDonald and his boys. At 1130 hours another straggler from the 28th Infantry Division arrived at the command post. He was tired, haggard, and sullen. Still, he provided some valuable but troubling information to Allen: the Germans were in Sibret. In fact, the straggler said he had seen two tanks and 30 Germans there. If that was the case, it meant the Germans had finally cut the road to Neufchateau and Bastogne truly was surrounded.

The news became worse in the afternoon. One of Allen's own patrols reported back at 1220 that the Germans had occupied the town of Chenogne with 30 soldiers. According to Allen's map, Chenogne was a mere 1½ miles northwest of Sibret, and Sibret was only three miles from his own CP near the town of Flamierge. He gritted his teeth. If he did not pull Baker Company back soon, the Germans would likely come up from the south and cut off MacDonald's men. If that happened, Allen would be unable to do anything to support or rescue the lone company. After all, his other two companies, Able and Charlie, were having troubles of their own. Both were busy defending other parts of the sector.

As a matter of fact, the entire battalion was out on a limb with only a thin stream of supply and communication to Allen's headquarters. Allen knew that division headquarters wanted them out there, and no other orders had come down from Harper or anyone higher to relinquish the crossroads and pull B Company back. The whole situation was making Allen anxious. He knew that with each passing hour, as the Germans continued to move through the fog banks groping to find gaps or the flanks of the his lines, the situation for MacDonald and his men grew more and more precarious.

By midafternoon, Baker Company's situation was beginning to deteriorate. MacDonald's stubborn glidermen had not suffered any significant losses, but the Germans were pushing hard on three sides, and it was merely a matter of time before they broke through the lines somewhere around the 1/401st salient. Since Baker was the most extended company, Allen felt it was the one unit most in peril at the time. This was confirmed at 1350 when Allen heard the radio crackle as MacDonald reported that they were under attack again. It was the third push the Germans had attempted that day.

Allen made sure his command post forwarded every report to regiment as quickly as possible. He knew that Harper's regimental headquarters would pass this information along to division headquarters. McAuliffe had left Allen the discretion to withdraw when he felt his battalion was in danger of being cut off. Pulling B Company back a bit would help him consolidate his already thin line of defense around Mande and Flamierge.

Welcome news finally arrived that afternoon. McAuliffe had discussed the situation with his staff, and after careful consideration McAuliffe had agreed to withdraw Baker Company from Crossroads X. The signal was coded and sent to Allen. Almost immediately, and with a certain measure of relief, Allen had his radio operator instruct MacDonald to pull back in the manner prescribed. Allen then looked at his watch. It was now 1400 hours. He hoped that it was not too late.

Several hours later, Captain MacDonald stomped the mud off his boots as he entered the battalion headquarters to report that his company had safely returned from Crossroads X. Thankfully, the company's withdrawal went smoothly. The men had commandeered some of the trucks from the abandoned field hospital and used the vehicles to transport the company and its support elements almost three miles back to friendly lines. As a result, the whole process took very little time to complete. Within a half hour the men of Baker Company were digging in on a new line of defense near the town of Flamizoulle.

Still, MacDonald was fuming. He realized how shaky his position had truly been. He felt his entire company had been fighting off Germans with little support from the rest of the battalion, much less the division. Frankly, he had no idea why he was out there hanging onto the crossroads by his fingernails. Any commander knows that it is hard to get his men to fight for something when he, himself, could not see the purpose behind their mission. MacDonald, who by nature was a bit volatile, struggled to control his anger and frustration when he went to see Allen.

National Archives

In the aftermath of a fight during which they knocked it out, American soldiers inspect the hulk of a German PzKpfw. V Panther tank. Troops of B Company stood their ground against several German tanks at Crossroads X during the height of the Battle of the Bulge.

Several years after the war, MacDonald recalled his feelings that night: "From a company commander's position up to this point I frankly could see no sane reason for our having been out on the mission that we had just completed for such an extended period of time. This is a dangerous state of mind for any commander to be in."

Allen could see that his subordinate was angry. In a fatherly fashion, Allen immediately calmed his company commander. "It's good to see you back, Robert. You probably wondered why you were out there for so long," Allen said, shaking MacDonald's hand.

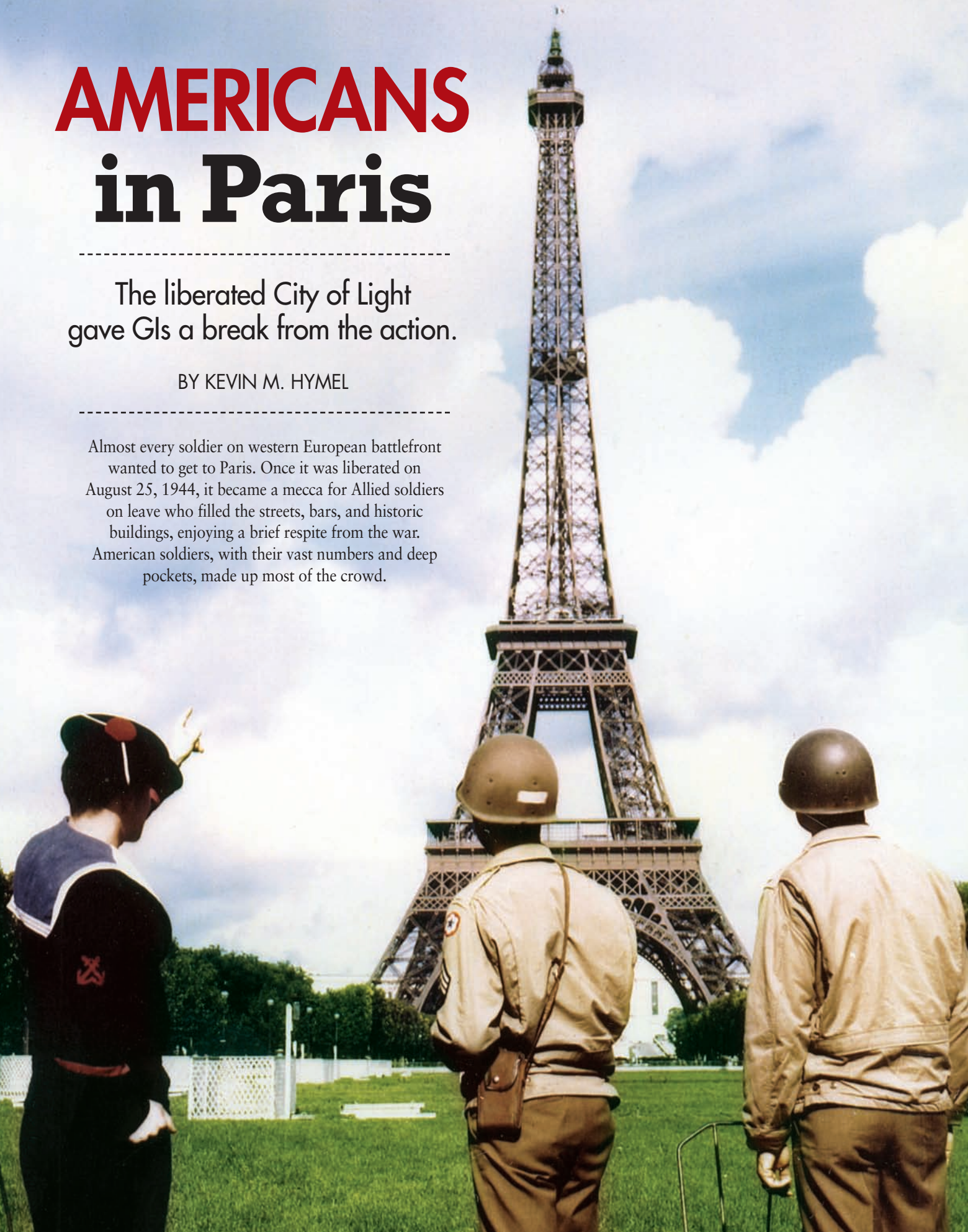
Continued on page 77

AMERICANS in Paris

The liberated City of Light gave GIs a break from the action.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Almost every soldier on western European battlefront wanted to get to Paris. Once it was liberated on August 25, 1944, it became a mecca for Allied soldiers on leave who filled the streets, bars, and historic buildings, enjoying a brief respite from the war. American soldiers, with their vast numbers and deep pockets, made up most of the crowd.

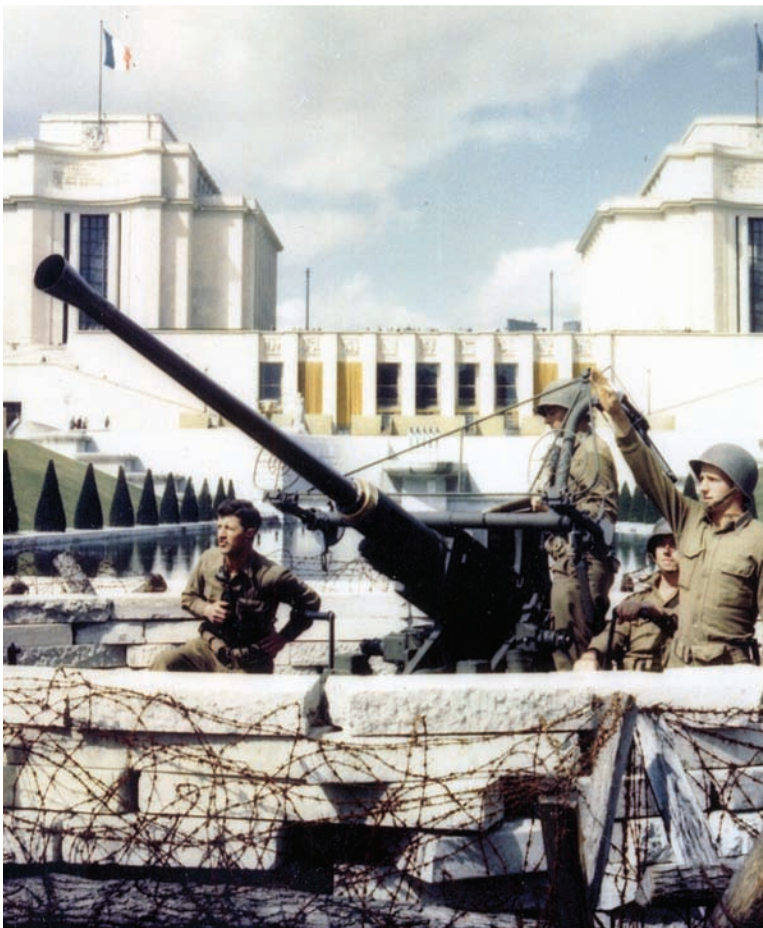


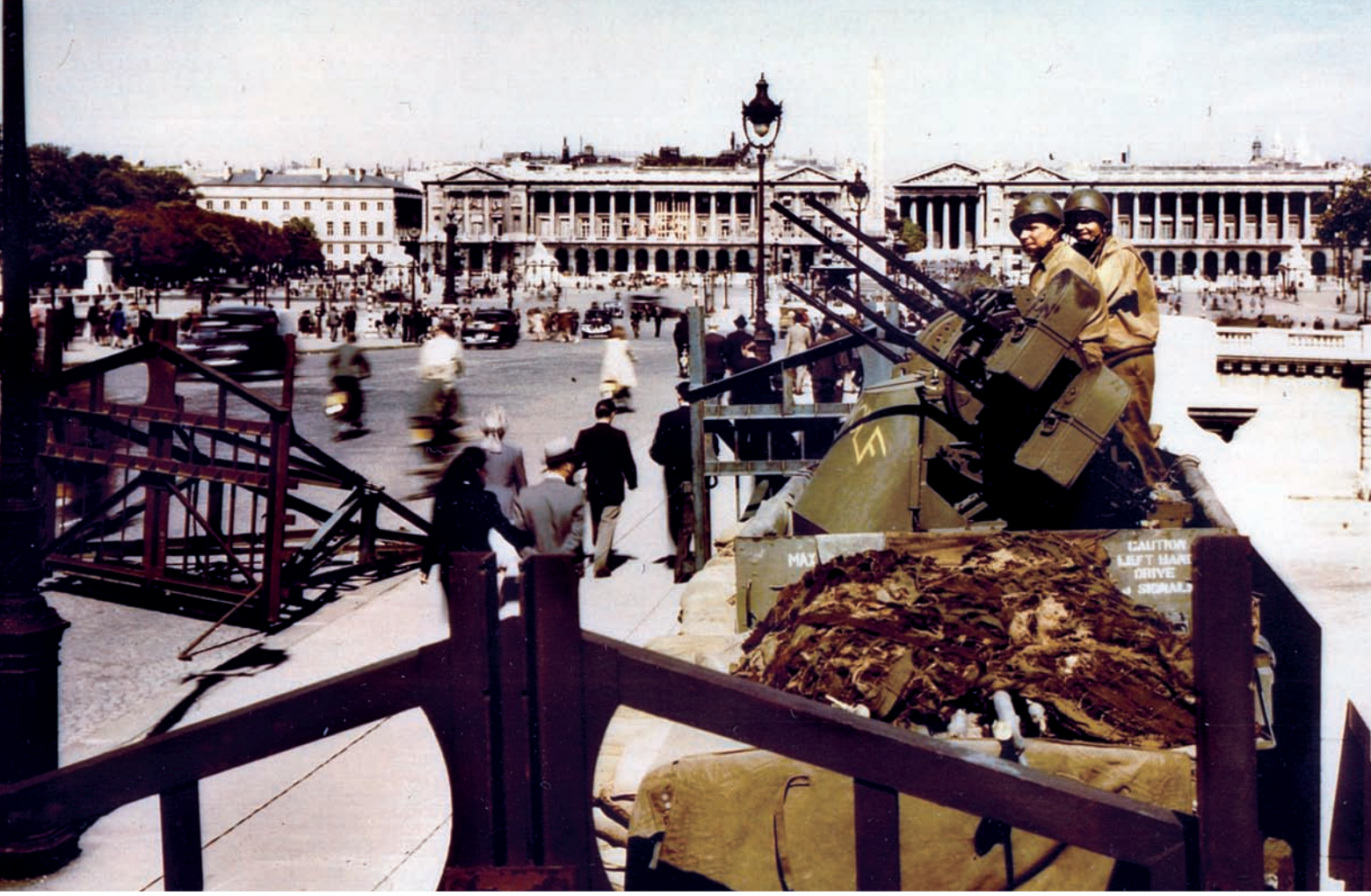
American men and women from farms, small towns, and big cities enjoyed strolling down the Champs Elysees, touring Notre Dame, watching the exotic dancers of the Follies Bergère, or riding an elevator to the top of the Eiffel Tower. Some shopped in the open-air markets, others were content to sip coffee at an open-air café. Nights were filled with dancing and drinking some of finest wines and champagnes the country had to offer.

One GI referred to his time in Paris as "a glorious world of wine, women and song." Another remembered, "The women danced on piano tops, we all got high and kept singing the 'Marseilles' even though we didn't know the words." Lieutenant Andrew Tuck, a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division, wrote his family about drinking cognac in a café: "result: mild paralysis."

But there were still signs of war: Antiaircraft guns throughout the city pointed skyward; military policemen moved traffic, secured military buildings, and maintained order; and buildings still bore the scars from the street fighting. Of course, every night, when the sun went down, the whole city was blacked out. The lights would not come on in the City of Lights until the end of the war, when everyone could enjoy a truly free Paris.

LEFT: Accompanied by a French sailor, two American soldiers enjoy the view of the Eiffel Tower. ABOVE RIGHT: Two soldiers buy flavored ice in front of Notre Dame Cathedral. ABOVE LEFT: A First Army soldier helps a female sergeant into bicycle-drawn carriage. Because of fuel shortages during the long German occupation, bicycles were the main form of transportation for the city. RIGHT: American anti-aircraft gunmen site their 40mm gun in front of the Trocadéro's Palais de Chaillot.





ABOVE LEFT: Soldiers man a quad .50 antiaircraft gun on the Place de la Concorde. Behind them stands the Hôtel de Crillon on the left, the Obelisk of Luxor in the center, and the Church of the Madeline, to the immediate right of the Obelisk, and the French Naval Ministry on the far right. Belgian gates—German antitank obstacles—surround the gun nest.

ABOVE CENTER: Two women NCOs from the Army's supply service headquarters examine some renaissance lithographs from at an open-air art market.

ABOVE RIGHT: On a crowded street, a French Army officer and a French woman help two American NCOs find themselves on a map.

LEFT: Two American soldiers watch a street painter complete his canvas, while a third enjoys a different view.

RIGHT: In front of the Obelisk of Luxor, American, French, Canadian, and British WACs (Women's Army Corps) prepare to parade down the Champs Elysees in honor of the WACs' third anniversary.

Adolf Hitler was obsessed with Leningrad. When planning his invasion of the Soviet Union, the Führer demanded that the capture of the city, which he regarded as the cradle of Bolshevism, be one of the top priorities of the campaign, giving it precedence over the capture of Moscow.

Therefore, when the OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht—the German Armed Forces High Command) issued Directive No. 21, also known as Operation Barbarossa, it included instructions for Army Group North to attack out of East Prussia, destroy Soviet forces in the Baltic area, and then drive forward to capture Leningrad.

To accomplish that mission, Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, the army group commander, had two infantry armies, the 16th and 18th, and Panzer Group 4, which would be his mailed fist. The approximately 700 kilometer thrust to the city would take von Leeb's army group through country that was dotted with marshes and forests and was crisscrossed with streams and rivers.

PANZER GROUP 4 OF GERMAN ARMY GROUP NORTH DASHED FOR LENINGRAD DURING THE OPENING WEEKS OF OPERATION BARBAROSSA.

One of the first objectives for von Leeb was the Daugava River (also known as the Dvina), which rises in the Valdai Hills in Belarus and flows 1,020 kilometers to the Gulf of Riga. Securing crossings on the river was vital for von Leeb, especially because they also sat on some of the few good roads in the area.

General Erich Hoepner's Panzer Group 4 was given the task of taking the bridges spanning the river intact. This would involve a mad dash across Lithuania to the Latvian cities of Daugavpils (Dvinsk to the Russians and Dünaburg to the Germans) and Jekabpils. The Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia had been "liberated" and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940.

Hoepner's forces consisted of two motorized corps—the XLI, commanded by General George-Hans Reinhardt, and the LVI, under General Erich von Manstein. Reinhardt was to take the Jekabpils crossing, while von Manstein was to take the Daugavpils bridges. On Panzer Group 4's right flank, General Ernst Busch's 16th Army would move on Kaunus. General Georg von Küchler's 18th Army, positioned on the left flank, would push toward Riga.

Facing von Leeb were the forces of Lt. Gen. Fedor Isadorovich Kuznetsov's Baltic Special Military District, which would become the Northwest Front the day the war started.

Armored Stri

Maj. Gen. Petr Petrovich Sobennikov's 8th Army, five infantry, two tank and one mechanized division plus two frontier regiments, was anchored on the Baltic coastline. On his left was Lt. Gen. Vasili Ivanovich Morozov's 11th Army, eight rifle, two tank, and one mechanized division plus three frontier regiments. They were backed up by Maj. Gen. Nikolai Erastovich Berzanin's 27th Army of six rifle divisions.

The Soviet High Command (Stavka) knew that a German attack was imminent from German defectors crossing the line. Stalin, however, remained unconvinced, but he did allow his front line commanders to be issued a warning of a possible surprise attack. The warning was worded in a way that caused most commanders more consternation rather than giving them direction. For example, "The assignment of our forces—not to give way to provocations of any kind which might lead to major complications." They were also told them to man forward positions but "no other measures are to be taken without special authorization."

Upon receiving the rather innocuous warning early on June 22, 1941, Kuznetsov ordered his men to "secretly man the defenses of the basic zones." In the forward areas, sentries were

In this stylized painting by a German war artist, several panzergrenadiers ride atop a tank while others advance alongside the armored vehicle and aircraft roar overhead during the opening hours of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Panzer Group 4 headed for Leningrad as the offensive gained momentum.

U.S. Army Art Collection

ke North

BY PAT McTAGGART

moved to guard pillboxes, but units assigned to occupy the forward zones were to be held back.

He added, "In the case of provocative action by the Germans, fire is not to be opened. In the event of flights by German aircraft over our territory, make no demonstration, and until such time as enemy aircraft undertake military operations, no fire is to be opened on them."

The order, no doubt, must have caused many commanders to wonder what the difference was between provocation and military operations. At any rate, only a few of the frontline commanders had received the order by 0300 hours, and by that time it was too late.

Across the border, the western sky suddenly lit up. The brilliant flashes were swiftly followed by the howl of shells overhead. Seconds later, massive explosions rocked pretargeted positions along the Russian lines. Operation Barbarossa and the race to Leningrad had begun.

Both von Manstein and Reinhardt knew speed was essential in reaching the Daugava. Because of the poor road system, both generals would have to rely on armored spearheads smashing through the Soviet line while disregarding their flanks, but before the mechanized units could move the infantry would have to

take the forward enemy positions along the Neman River, which ran along the border between East Prussia and Lithuania.

There was little resistance as assault troops rolled over the surprised Soviets. Crossings on the Neman were secured, giving von Manstein and Reinhardt the openings they needed to begin their dash to the Daugava.

By 6 AM, von Manstein reported that Brig. Gen. Erich Brandenberger's 8th Panzer Division had taken Jurbarkas and Maj. Gen. Theodore Freiherr von Wrede's 290th Infantry Division was advancing through the village of Mitua, 12 kilometers northwest of Brandenberger's unit. In Reinhardt's sector, the 6th Panzer Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Franz Landgraf, was already four kilometers south of Taurage, and Maj. Gen. Friedrich Kirchner's 1st Panzer Division was directly west of the city.

The initial German bombardment and aerial attacks had made a shambles of the Soviet communications network. Morozov's 11th Army had received no orders at all as Hoepner's panzers continued to push deeper into Russian territory. Colonel Fedor Petrovich Ozerov, commanding the 5th Rifle Division in Maj. Gen. Mikhail Mikhailovich Ivanov's 16th Rifle Corps, watched as German forces overran his forward positions. Radioing corps headquarters, he was told, "We advise you not to engage in combat operations. Otherwise you will answer for the consequences."

By midafternoon, Brandenberger's 8th Motorcycle Battalion, under Lt. Col. Rudolf Kütt, had created a bridgehead across the Dubysa River at Seredžius, and by early evening a combat group under Lt. Col. Wilhelm Crisolli had secured vital crossings at Ariogala. Without those crossings, the advance to Daugavpils could not have continued. Elements of the 8th Panzer were thus able to continue their advance reinforced by units of the 290th, which was, in von Manstein's words, "marching at record speed."

Ozerov managed to pull back most of his division behind the Dubysa and had taken up positions near Zasinai, about two kilometers northeast of Arigola. Advance elements of the 8th Panzer moved into the area and were met with antitank fire and harassing attacks from light Soviet tanks. The first day's action ended for the 8th Panzer at 11 PM when the Germans pulled out of range.

Meanwhile, the 290th kept filtering units across the Dubysa, and Maj. Gen. Kurt Jahn's 3rd Motorized Division was coming up fast. To the southeast, Brig. Gen. Theodor Eicke's 3rd SS Totenkopf (Death's Head) Division was also coming up to join the fight.

In Reinhardt's sector the going was slower. Launching his attack from the Tilsit area in East Prussia, his four divisions hit a single Russian division, which fought a desperate delaying action at the frontier. The Russians eventually crumbled, opening the way to Taurage. Local counterattacks, however, made the initial advance of the Germans difficult.

On the Soviet side, Kuznetsov was frantically trying to marshal his forces for a counterattack. During the evening of the 22nd, Stavka issued orders for both the 8th and 11th Armies to stop the German advance. As Reinhardt moved toward Raseiniai, about 55 kilometers northeast of Taurage, Sobennikov's 12th Mechanized Corps (23rd and 28th Tank Divisions and 202nd Mechanized Division), commanded by Maj. Gen. Nikolai Mikhailovich Shestpalov, and Morozov's 3rd Mechanized Corps (2nd and 5th Tank Divisions and 84th Mechanized Division), under Maj. Gen. Aleksei Vasilevich Kurkin, moved into the area to intercept and destroy the Germans.

The Soviet forces seemed to be cursed from the start. To avoid Luftwaffe detection, Kuznetsov ordered the armored units to advance toward Raseiniai in small detachments. That did not stop the fighters and bombers of General Alfred Keller's 1st Air Fleet from savaging the Russian units. Heavy air attacks hit the 12th Mechanized Corps southwest of Siauliai, about 100 kilometers northeast of Taurage. Colonel T.S. Orlenko, commander of the 23rd Tank Division, watched in horror as 40 of his vehicles were blown apart by low-flying bombers. Soviet fighters were nowhere to be seen.

Other units suffered a similar fate, but the survivors kept moving on. As both German and Russian forces moved toward Raseiniai, the opening shots of a four-day battle rang out. The Germans were about to get the first of many nasty surprises of the war in the east as they ran headlong into the surviving elements of the Soviet mechanized corps.

Although the main tanks of the Soviet Army at the time were the T-26 and T-28, the Russians were also producing the heavier T-34s and the KV I and KV II. On June 23, Maj. Gen. Egor Nikolaevich Soliankin's 2nd Tank Division, which had some KVs in its inventory, overran elements of the 6th Panzer Division near Skaudvile, about 20 kilometers west of Raseiniai. The Germans' Czech-made Panzer 35s, equipped with 37mm guns, proved ineffective against the 45-ton monsters, as did German antitank guns.

Soviet tanks roamed the battlefield at will, often crushing antitank guns under their treads when they ran out of ammunition. The Soviet behemoths were finally destroyed by first immobilizing them with concentrated fire at their treads. Once that occurred, teams of tank-killers moved in, blowing them up with explosive charges. Soliankin lost much of his armor and was killed in action on June 26. However, those tanks that remained continued to be a thorn in the 6th Panzer's side.

A single KV I cut the 6th Panzer's supply route to its bridgeheads on the Dubysa. It held out against everything the Germans could throw at it for a day. Finally, an 88mm gun was moved into position while the KV was distracted by a panzer platoon. The 88 was able to destroy the Russian, opening the supply route and allowing other elements of the 6th to advance.

Major General Kirchner's 1st Panzer was similarly surprised. "The KV I and KV II which we first met here were really something," wrote a member of the division. "Our companies opened fire at about 800 yards, but it remained ineffective.…Very soon we were facing each other at about 50 to 100 meters.... The Russian tanks continued to advance, and all armor-piercing shells simply bounced off them."

Eventually, the Russians were stopped with special purpose shells fired from 30 to 60 meters. A counterattack forced the Soviets back, leading to further advances by the division. By June 26 Kirchner's division had linked up with Brig. Gen. Otto Ottenbacher's 36th Motorized Division, encircling the main body of the 3rd Mechanized Corps. Many of the Russian tanks were out of fuel, making them easy targets for the Germans.

The 2nd Tank Division was decimated. Only one tank and 400 men made it back to the Russian lines. Colonel F.F. Fedorov's 5th Tank Division and Maj. Gen. Petr Ivanovich Formenko's 84th Mechanized Division were greatly understrength, and the 12th Mechanized Corps, which had escaped the trap, was in similar straits. Soviet tank losses were estimated to be in the hundreds.

While Reinhardt was slugging it out with the Soviet armor, von Manstein kept moving forward. His corps had hit a relatively weak part of the Russian line, and after the first lively encounter with Red Army frontier forces his armored units were able to break uncoordinated enemy counterattacks and continue their advance. By June 24 the LVI Motorized Corps had reached the Daugavpils highway near Ukmerge, about 170 kilometers inside Lithuania.

Von Manstein was now within striking distance of the bridges over the Daugava, about 130 kilometers away. Disregarding the fact that he had outpaced his neighbors, he kept his units moving, ignoring flank protection. Short, sharp engagements were fought against reserve Soviet

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German PzKpfw. IV and PzKpfw. II tanks pause momentarily during their rapid advance into the Soviet Union during the opening days of Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941. German pincers encircled hundreds of thousands of Red Army troops, and the initial successes were greater than even the most optimistic war planners had believed possible.

tank units sent to intercept him, but his orders were simple—"Keep going at all costs."

With the spearhead of the 8th Panzer Division was a special unit commanded by 1st Lt. Hans-Wolfram Knaak. In the early hours of June 26, the 26-year-old Knaak detached his men from the spearhead and sped toward Daugavpils in two captured Soviet trucks. Knaak and his troops were members of the Lehr (Training) Regiment "Brandenburg"—commandos trained in sabotage and subterfuge that were part of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris's Abwehr (Intelligence Service).

Many of Knaak's men were fluent in Russian, and the two trucks were able to make it through the Soviet defenses unmolested. The drivers, in Red Army uniforms, joked with sentries and disseminated false information concerning the German positions. Driving into Daugavpils, the trucks headed for the precious bridges. The first truck almost made it to the eastern side before sentries fired on it. Driving down an embankment, the men in the rear of the truck jumped out with weapons firing.

The second truck, caught in the middle of the bridge, came under heavy fire that resulted in several casualties. The survivors pushed forward to link up with their comrades on the other side, and their combined fire forced the Soviets back before engineers could arrive to blow the bridge. Some of them were then able to make it to the nearby railroad bridge and succeeded in cutting the detonation wires on that structure.

Holding off attempts to recapture the eastern side of the bridge, the Brandenburgers were soon reinforced by the 8th Panzer spearhead, which had sliced through the Russian lines. Following units took control of the city, and armor was soon massing to meet the main body of Maj. Gen. Dmitri Danilovich Leliushenko's 21st Mechanized Corps, which was on its way to help the Russian defenses.

Knaak's unit had won the day, but Knaak himself did not live to see it. He had been killed during the fight for the crossing. For his actions that day, he was posthumously awarded the coveted Knight's Cross on November 3, 1942.

As the German armor crossed at Daugavpils, the foot units of von Wrede's division followed in its wake. Although the 290th could not possibly hope to keep up with the panzers, its advance served to widen the hole punched through the Russian lines and guaranteed relative safety for von Manstein's supply lines.

Hearing of von Manstein's success, Hitler began meddling in the affairs of Army Group North. In his war diary, General Franz Halder, the chief of the General Staff of the Army, wrote, "Führer wants to throw the whole weight of Armored Group Hoepner on Dvinsk. Possibilities of a crossing at Jakobstadt (Jekabpils) problematic."

Von Leeb would have none of it. Reinhardt had defeated the bulk of Kuznetsov's armored forces, leaving the way open to the bridge at Jekabpils. The movement to von Manstein's sector would entail traveling through wooded areas where few roads existed and would take days to accomplish. He simply ignored any suggestions to change the original plan, giving Reinhardt free rein to continue.

On June 27 the XLI Corps moved forward again. With a battle group under the command of Brig. Gen. Walter Krüger, the 1st Panzer smashed the remnants of the 12th Mechanized Corps, which were desperately trying to form a line on the Musa River. At the same time, Stavka Chairman Marshal Semen Konstantinovich Timoshenko ordered Kuznetsov to pull his remaining forces back to join up with Berazin's 27th Army, which was occupying positions along the Daugava.

Battle Group Krüger moved on, spearheaded by the I/113th Rifle Regiment under the command of Major Josef-Franz Eckinger. By 2300, the battalion was 10 kilometers southwest of Jekabpils. At 0415 on the 28th, the fight for the crossing began.

As at Daugavpils, a unit of Brandenburgers tried to take the bridge by deception. This time the plan did not work, and the commandos

found themselves involved in heavy fighting. Soon the main elements of Colonel Hans-Christoph von Heydebrand und der Lasa's 113th Rifle Regiment joined the fray. The Soviets were slowly pushed back, but Red Army engineers stood at the ready. As the Germans advanced toward the Daugava, a series of explosions shook the area. The bridges had been destroyed.

Assault boats were brought forward and, as German artillery from Artillery Regiment 73 hammered Soviet positions on the north shore, Major von Kittel's II/113 was able to cross and establish a bridgehead. By midnight, the south bank of the Daugava at Jekabpils was firmly in German hands, and engineers were building a bridge to funnel reinforcements to von Kittel.

akg-images

Russian partisans gather to listen to an address delivered by a political commissar near the town of Pskov prior to embarking on an operation against the invading Germans.

Both Reinhardt and von Manstein were now coming under attack by the 27th Army. The 21st Mechanized had also arrived, and Russian units managed to occupy the northern suburbs of Daugavpils, setting off a round of savage house-to-house fighting. The Germans also received reinforcements as the first elements of the Totenkopf entered the city.

Leliushenko's units were driven back with heavy losses, but Soviet bombers were able to make it through German air defenses to hammer German positions. Arriving Totenkopf soldiers noted, "The greater part of the city has been totally destroyed."

Reinhardt had also been able to hold his bridgehead as more German forces arrived at Jekabpils. The first great objective on the road to Leningrad had been achieved. Most of the Soviet forces in Lithuania had been destroyed, and the Germans had their crossings in Latvia. With his mechanized forces chomping at the bit, von Leeb was ready for the next stage, but once again, Hitler intervened. This time the order could not be ignored or conveniently "lost."

Hitler had suddenly become nervous about his army's success in the north. The enemy was in disarray and the lightning advances in Poland and France had proven the panzers' ability to strike deep into the enemy's rear, but he became jittery when looking at the long narrow arrows on the map showing Reinhardt and von Manstein far to the north of the slowly advancing infantry armies on their flanks.

After his success at Daugavpils and the smashing of Leliushenko's mechanized corps, von Manstein was ready to continue north to prevent the Soviets from regrouping. Instead, he was told to wait until the bulk of Reinhardt's corps could be brought up to Jekabpils. The wait lasted until July 2, precious days that Kuznetsov used to scrape together the remnants of his command to make another stand. A trickle of reinforcements also made it forward, braving Luftwaffe attacks and bolstering Kuznetsov's forces. When Reinhardt and von Manstein were finally given orders to resume their attack, they moved on Pskov, about 275 kilometers northeast of Daugavpils and 240 kilometers northeast of Jekabpils.

The initial advance of both German corps was marked by sharp clashes with the mechanized forces that had survived the initial June onslaught. Under heavy pressure, the 12th Mechanized Corps and its 35 remaining tanks were forced back by the 1st and 6th Panzer Divisions while the 21st Mechanized Corps fought hard to stall the advance of von Manstein's corps.

While the mechanized forces grudgingly retreated, reserve divisions were being moved to Pskov to man the so-called "Stalin Line." Maj. Gen. Mikhail Lvovich Cherniavskii's 1st Mechanized Corps was on its way from Leningrad and his 3rd Tank Division, commanded by Colonel K. Yu. Andreev, had already occupied woods about 16 kilometers northeast of the city. The 27th Army's 22nd Rifle Corps (180th and 182nd Rifle Divisions), under Maj. Gen. Mikhail Pavlovich Dukhanov, was moving into Porkhov some 75 kilometers to the east, and Maj. Gen. Kuzma Maksimovich Kachalov's 24th Rifle Corps (181st and 183rd Rifle Divisions) was in the vicinity of Ostrov, about 55 kilometers south of Pskov. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Ivan Stepanovich Kosobutskii's 41st Rifle Corps (111th, 118th, and 235th Rifle Divisions) was taken from the strategic reserve and sent to Pskov itself.

The command structure of the Northwest Front was reshuffled. Kuznetsov was relieved of command for his failures during the first week of the war. Sobennikov took over command of the Front, while Lt. Gen. Fedor Sergeevich Ivanov, the former Deputy Commander of the Southwest Front, took the reins of the 8th Army.

German forces were hampered more by the terrain than they were by the Red Army as they moved off. Instead of advancing solely along the few roads and railways in the area, the panzer and motorized divisions advanced on a broad front through heavily wooded and marshy areas. Despite those difficulties, the Germans were able to keep pushing the 8th, 27th, and 11th Armies back.

Reinhardt's corps sector contained the main road to Ostrov, which did allow armored spearheads to advance at a greater pace. Von Manstein was to cover Reinhardt's right flank and advance toward Sebezh and Opochka in an attempt to outflank the Stalin Line. The going was so bad that Maj. Gen. Kurt Jahn's 3rd Motorized Division had to halt, change direction, and fall in behind Reinhardt in order to move forward. Eicke's Totenkopf Division made better progress, but it was slowed by a fortified line in front of Sebezh.

On July 4 Reinhardt's units were fighting for Ostrov. At 1300, elements of the 1st Panzer Division crossed the old Latvia-Soviet border, and by 1700 the 1st Panzer Regiment was fighting in

the streets of the city. The rest of the division was stretched along a wide front, and Soviet columns south of Ostrov were caught unaware as more of the 1st moved forward. Southeast of the city, units of the division reached the Velikaya River and were faced with the bunkers and antitank ditches of the Stalin Line.

While the fight for Ostrov and the Stalin Line was under way, the Soviets were building yet another defensive line along the Luga River. Stavka ordered that the line consist of antitank ditches, strongpoints, and minefields and have a depth of 5-6 kilometers. Lt. Gen. Markian Mikhailovich Popov was assigned to command the overall defenses, and his deputy Lt. Gen. Konstantin Pavlovich Piadyshev was given command of the "Luga Operational Group," which was centered on the city of Luga, some 95 kilometers south of Leningrad.

At Ostrov, the 1st Panzer Division fended off attacks from Colonel I.M. Ivanov's 111th Rifle Division and what was left of Andreev's 3rd Tank Division, and it also came under air attack from Soviet bombers. The divisional history reports that KV I and KV II heavy tanks caused severe damage to the 1st Company of the 37th Anti-tank Unit, whose 37mm shells bounced off the giants as they rolled forward. The situation was saved by the timely arrival of Major Wilhelm Söth, the commander of the III/Artillery Regiment 73, who ordered the field guns of his 9th Company to fire at the Soviet tanks at point-blank range. Söth's guns destroyed 12 tanks, forcing the others to retreat.

In von Manstein's sector, the panzers continued to slog forward. The 8th Panzer Division finally reached the Velikaya early on July 8, hoping to take several key bridges by storm. As the Germans approached, sappers of the 1st Mechanized Corps' 50th Motorized Engineer regiment blew them up one by one. The final bridge was destroyed along with several panzers that were attempting to cross it.

The day before, Reinhardt, having overcome the defenses of the 24th Rifle Corps at Ostrov and having the advantage of a somewhat decent road, was ready to hit Pskov. The 36th Motorized Division advanced on the corps' left flank, with the 1st Panzer going up the middle and the 6th Panzer on the right flank. Facing them in front of the city was what was left of the 41st Rifle Corps supported by remnants of the 1st Mechanized Corps.

While the panzers of the 1st and 6th fended off attacks from Soviet mechanized units, Ottenbacher led his 36th into Pskov and became involved in heavy house-to-house fighting. The Soviets were tenacious in their defense, and artillery had to be used along with Luftwaffe bombers to break their positions. After taking severe losses, the remaining Russians abandoned the burning city on July 9. Another step toward Leningrad had been taken.

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After the retreating Soviets have destroyed a bridge across a stream near the coast of the Baltic Sea, this German tank of the 8th Panzer Division fords the waterway in July 1941.

The OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres—German Army High Command) finally realized the futility of trying to flank the Russians from the east, so von Manstein was ordered to disengage and head to Ostrov. With von Manstein on the way and Reinhardt consolidating his positions along the Velikaya, Hoepner received a new directive. Panzer Group 4 was to launch a two-pronged attack, with Reinhardt driving to Luga and von Manstein heading toward Lake Ilmen in a flanking movement.

The odds for success looked good. The Northwest Front, which had started the war with 23 divisions, had lost about 74,000 men killed or missing with another 130,000 wounded. Of the original divisions, only seven were near full strength, while 11 had only 2,000 to 3,000 men fit for combat. Some of the 14 new divisions that had been released to the Front also suffered heavily.

Material losses had been horrendous. More than 2,500 tanks, 3,500 artillery pieces, and 900 aircraft had been lost.

Reinhardt jumped off on July 10 supported by General Wilhelm von Chappius's XXXVII Army Corps, which had moved from the 18th Army to Panzer Group 4. The 118th Rifle Division, which had come from the Moscow Military District, was hard hit. It retreated toward Gdov, a town on the shore of Lake Peipus. This retreat opened a gap in the Soviet line, leaving the road to Luga open.

To stop the Germans from exploiting the breach, Colonel I.M. Golubev's 90th Rifle Division was ordered to plug the hole. Stationed around Strugi-Krasnoye, about 65 kilometers northwest of Pskov, Golubev's division was caught on the march by the Luftwaffe, totally disrupting the movement.

The 1st and 6th Panzer Divisions fought their way through scattered Soviet units and headed toward Luga. To their right, the 58th Infantry 36th Motorized Division moved on Gdov. On July 12 the 1st Panzer ran into the 90th Rifle Division and a running battle ensued, ending with the 90th finally giving way. By evening, the 1st Panzer was 30 kilometers southwest of Luga but was stalled by a strong defensive line guarding its approaches.

To Reinhardt's right, von Manstein moved toward Lake Ilmen. The 3rd Motorized Division took Porkhov after a particularly fierce battle and then turned north, while the 8th Panzer headed toward Soltsy, a town about 50 kilometers southwest of Novgorod. Fighting both Russians and bad terrain, Brandenburg's panzers and armored infantry finally captured Solsty on July 14.

In the Luga sector, Reinhardt had hit a stone wall. Repeated attacks failed to pierce Luga's forward defenses, and the Luga Operational Group had received reinforcements in the form of Maj. Gen. Ivan Gavrilovich Lazarev's 10th Mechanized Corps (21st and 24th Tank Divisions and 131st Mechanized Division) and the remnants of the tenacious 41st Rifle Corps.

Frustrated, Reinhardt turned his forces toward Sabsk and Kingisepp. Northeast of

Luga, the 1st Panzer Division's Battle Group Krüger with a battle group of the 6th Panzer under Colonel Erhard Raus, moved around the swampy land southeast of Lake Samro and fought off Russian attacks along the highway leading to Sabsk. Defensive positions were established by the Germans around key villages such as Lyady and Alexino, which the Soviets strove to recapture. The 36th Motorized Division followed in the wake of the battle groups.

By July 15, Major Eckinger's I/Rifle Regiment 113, the spearhead of Battle Group Krüger, was fighting its way through the village of Osmino. Reinforced by following elements that threw up a defensive perimeter around the village, Eckinger headed north once again with the II/Rifle Regiment 113 close on his heels.

In the early evening, the spearhead entered Sabsk and established a small bridgehead on the opposite bank of the Luga. As with most panzer generals, Maj. Gen. Kirchner liked to be at the forefront of the battle. On his way to Sabsk, Kirchner was wounded by a shell splinter. He relinquished command of the 1st Panzer to Krüger, who oversaw the defense of the bridgehead and the protection of his flanks.

With more units arriving, Reinhardt ordered the 36th Motorized Division to expand the defensive flank to the west of Lake Samra. The division's 118th Motorized Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Carl Caspar, took up positions in the villages of Borki and Zaruch'e on the western side of the lake to await the inevitable Soviet counterattack.

Moscow realized that the weakened and raw divisions along the Luga could not do anything but buy time. Therefore, formation of a new line of defenses was begun. Worker battalions from Leningrad joined children and the elderly to build a new line between the mouth of the Luga and Chudov, located about 125 kilometers southeast of Leningrad on the Moscow-Leningrad Highway. Thousands toiled to construct miles of trenches, pillboxes, minefields, and antitank positions, but the question remained whether a strong line could be built in time.

While Reinhardt worked on consolidating his bridgeheads across the Luga, von Manstein was slugging his way toward Novgorod. With the 8th Panzer in the lead, the LVI Corps fought off attacks from Morazov's 11th Army around Soltsy and, even worse, the corps was in danger of becoming isolated. Russian forces took advantage of the long, mostly undefended flanks of the corps.

At 0300 on the 15th, von Manstein received the following message at his headquarters west of Soltsy: "Rear areas of the 8th Panzer Division, three kilometers east of Borovichi, are defending against an enemy attack with machine guns and mortars."

That attack and others along the 8th Panzer's supply lines effectively isolated the bulk of the division's combat forces. Meanwhile, Soltsy was being attacked from the north, while other Russian forces crossed the Shelon River and attacked the town from the south. Von Manstein decided that Soltsy was to be abandoned, with German troops establishing defensive positions south of the town.

Janh's 3rd Motorized Division was also facing heavy enemy attacks as it attempted to move north. In effect, the Soviets were striving to isolate and destroy the entire corps.

To alleviate the situation, elements of the Totenkopf were sent north. Within hours lead elements of the division were on the move. Eicke had been wounded when his command car hit a mine on July 6. His replacement, Brig. Gen. Georg Keppler, wasted little time in getting the rest of his division going. Moving up the Dno-Soltsy road, the division slammed into Russian infantry, pushing them back toward the southeast. It also sent a reinforced battalion to help Jahn, who was fighting off repeated Soviet attacks.

Von Manstein's corps was fending off attacks from several Soviet rifle divisions as well as Maj. Gen. Nikifor Gordeevich Khorudzenko's 220th Motorized Division, Andreev's 3rd Tank Division, and Colonel L.V. Bunin's 21st Tank Division. Once the Totenkopf had cleared the supply route, the situation was much better with ammunition, fuel, and food making their way northward once again. With the news that General Hans Kuno von Both's I Army Corps (11th and 21st Infantry Divisions), which had recently been subordinated to Panzer Group 4, had cleared Soviet units from Dno and was advancing on Soltsy, it seem as if the advance on Leningrad could continue.

The Russians had other plans. Maj. Gen. Herbert von Böckmann's 11th Infantry Division retook Soltsy on the 21st, but was immediately counterattacked by the Russians while the 11th Army, which had been reinforced with two rifle divisions, hit other parts of von Manstein's line.

On July 23, the Russians on the Luga received a new commander. For his previous week's failure, Piadyshev was relieved and later executed. His former commander, Lt. Gen. Popov, assumed the position of commander of the Luga Operational Group while still holding his overall command of the Northern Front.

While the new fighting had stalled the Germans for the moment, the toll of Russian dead and wounded grew. Sensing a chance for a breakthrough, both von Manstein and Reinhardt proposed that their corps be united for a concentrated action. Von Manstein wanted to move his corps to Reinhardt's sector, where the better road network would allow both corps to advance side by side instead of having his corps move through the swampy wooded area surrounding Lake Ilmen. Reinhardt concurred, but Berlin did not.

Hitler worried about his precious panzer divisions' supply lines, which had shown themselves to be open to attacks and raids by Soviet units. He therefore ordered the halt of offensive operations in von Manstein's sector until the infantry of the 16th Army could be brought up to secure his right flank.

Von Leeb was tempted to order Reinhatdt's corps to resume the attack on his own, but instead he told Hoepner to use the corps to finish clearing the south bank of the Luga. After a bitter struggle, Reinhardt succeeded in clearing the Soviet bridgehead at Kingisepp, although the town, located on the opposite bank of the river, was still in the hands of the Red Army.

During the next few days, the 16th Army arrived, taking up positions along the Shelon. To the east, the 18th Army was clearing out the rest of Estonia and was advancing toward Narva, securing Reinhardt's left flank.

In the interim, Hitler decided that the terrain around Lake Ilmen was indeed not suitable for armored operations. On July 30, Halder noted in his diary: "It is becoming evident that OKH is revising its erstwhile notions and no longer insists on the impossible demand for Army Group North to cut off the eastward retreat route (Manstein's mission) of the enemy around Leningrad."

Consequently, it was decided that von Manstein should join forces with Reinhardt for a renewed thrust to Leningrad. While pleased, von Manstein ran up against a new set of orders that reshuffled his corps. The Totenkopf would be attached to the 18th Army, while the 8th Panzer would go into the Panzer Group Reserve. In their place von Manstein received Brig. Gen. Ernst von Leyser's 269th Infantry Division and Maj. Gen. Arthur Mülverstedt's 4th SS "Polizei" Infantry Division. That left von Manstein with only one motorized unit—Jahn's 3rd.

The Soviets still held onto the town of Luga. While Reinhardt was clearing out Kingisepp, which would hold out for a while longer, and established a bridgehead on the northern bank of the river near the city, part of his corps rushed toward Narva to secure a connection with the 18th Army. At the Luga bridgehead itself, the Russians had rushed two divisions to the area by rail along with some brand new KV I and II tanks, fresh from the factories of Leningrad.

Reinhardt was still furious that the opportunity for a joint attack with von Manstein had been frustrated by Berlin for so many days. In his diary he noted: "Time and again our corps urged a speedy resumption of the attack and asked that some units, at least of von Manstein's corps, should be switched over to us, especially as they were bogged down where they stood. But it was all in vain.... More delays. It's terrible. The chance that we opened up has been missed for good, and things are getting more difficult all the time."

With Reinhardt occupied in the east, it was up to von Manstein to take Luga. The continuous march and countermarch of his corps took up precious time, leaving the Luga front virtually stagnant for several days. That time was used by the Soviets to funnel more reinforcements to the Northwest Front in the form of nine rifle and two cavalry divisions. I.I. Pronin's 34th Army (five rifle and two cavalry divisions) was detached from the Reserve Front, and Lt. Gen. Stephan Dmitrievich Akimov's 48th Army (one militia, one tank, and three rifle divisions plus a mountain brigade) would also soon be sent to bolster the line.

While von Manstein marshaled his units for the assault on Luga, things were going fairly well in other sectors of the northern front. Elements of the I Army Corps reached Schimsk on July 30, and around Lake Ilmen the X Army Corps was moving toward Staraya Russa while encountering heavy resistance from the 11th Army. By August 6, both Staraya Russa and the city of Kholm were in German hands, strengthening a German line along the Lovat River.

The sky had opened up early on August 8, bringing a heavy downpour, when Reinhardt and von Manstein were finally set to renew their drive toward Leningrad. The assault was to be three-pronged with a southern group composed of von Both's I Army Corps and General Mauritz von Wiktorin's XXVIII Army Corps, both from the 16th Army, attacking Akimov's 48th Army along a line running from Schimsk-Novgorod-Chudovo, rolling up Leningrad's southeast flank. Von Manstein was to attack directly up the Luga Road while Reinhardt, supported by Von Chappius's XXXVIII Army Corps, would attack toward Leningrad from his bridgehead near Kingisepp, while the battle for the city still went on.

In pouring rain, which prevented any Luftwaffe support, Reinhardt moved out with the 36th Motorized Division in the lead. Instead of the relatively weak Soviet forces that had faced them a week ago, the Germans found a line of newly constructed field positions manned by Maj. Gen. Pavel Patrovich Bogaichuk's 125th Rifle Division and Colonel Sergii Vasilevich Roginskii's 11th Rifle Division. What was supposed to be a swift German advance soon turned into a brawl as Reinhardt pushed forward while the Soviets fought for every meter of ground. Reinhardt was still struggling to break out from his bridgeheads the following day.

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Pausing for a moment during offensive operations on the Eastern Front, battle-hardened panzergrenadiers of the Waffen SS take a moment to rest in July 1941. These troops, belonging to the 3rd SS Panzergrenadier Division Totenkopf, or Death's Head, joined the advance on Linengrad in late June.

By the 9th the I and XXVIII Army Corps were in a bitter fight with the 48th Army around Novgorod. Meanwhile, von Manstein, plagued with parrying Soviet spoiling attacks, finally moved on Luga on August 10 when his 3rd Motorized Division launched a frontal assault on the town. The Soviets put up a spirited resistance, and the 4th SS and 269th were called in to support the motorized units.

The wooded area around the town provided excellent cover for the Russians. The 4th SS ran into a line of bunkers west of Luga, and in the bitter fighting that ensued Maj. Gen. von Mülverstedt was struck by a shell fragment and killed. Around the city itself, the fighting continued unabated.

On August 11, Reinhardt pierced the Luga River defenses and established new bridgeheads southeast of Kingisepp at Bolshoi Sabsk and Ivanovskoye. For the next couple of days, the bridgeheads were reinforced as the forces inside them fought off several Soviet attacks. The road to Leningrad seemed to be opening up again, but before Reinhardt could continue he had to secure his left flank, which was threatened by Soviet units retreating toward Leningrad from Estonia.

Hoepner pleaded with von Leeb to release one or two divisions to protect Reinhardt. After a heated discussion, von Leeb finally agreed to pull the 3rd Motorized Division out of the Luga battle and send it to Reinhardt. On August 15 the 3rd, along with von Manstein's corps headquarters, was ordered to join Reinhardt. Responsibility for taking Luga now fell to General Georg Lindemann's L Army Corps.

With the LVI Corps Headquarters in the lead, von Manstein moved out with the 3rd Motorized Division trailing. Von Manstein had hardly

akg-images

Red Army artillerymen lie in wait for the advancing Germans during the summer of 1941. At times, antitank units and artillery were effective in slowing the German juggernaut that advanced into Russia.

reached his new headquarters position when he received orders for the 3rd to turn around and head toward Staraya Russa, where the X Army Corps had been encircled by the 34th Army. He reached Dno on the 16th and received word that the Totenkopf Division would again be placed under his command for a relief attack. Meanwhile, Reinhardt had finally taken the city of Kingisepp while von Both and von Wiktorin's corps entered Novgorod amid heavy fighting.

While von Manstein waited for the 3rd Motorized and the Totenkopf to arrive at their jump-off positions, Reinhardt continued to press the Soviets. With the Luga Line crumbling, he ordered elements of his corps to push forward to Narva, flank protection or not. That city fell on August 17, cutting off stragglers from the 8th Army who were trying to flee to Leningrad.

On August 19, von Manstein struck the 34th Army, coordinating his attack with the encircled forces that hit the Russians from within the pocket. The Soviets were taken completely by surprise. In three days of fighting, von Manstein stated that 12,000 prisoners were taken and 1,412 tanks and 246 guns were either captured or destroyed.

Hoepner's armor was now scattered across the front, with Reinhardt pushing toward Krasnogvardievsk from his positions east of Narva, the 8th Panzer still near Luga, and von Manstein, with the 3rd Motorized, helping the infantry push the Russians back to the Pola River toward Demyansk. There was, however, some good news for Hoepner when he heard that General Rudolf Schmidt's XXXIX Motorized Corps was being transferred from Army Group Center to Army Group North. The corps, consisting of the 12th Panzer and 18th and 20th Motorized Divisions, would be attached to the 16th Army, but it would give Army Group North an added armored punch for the drive on Leningrad.

Even though Panzer Group 4 could not concentrate its armor in one place, the individual units kept up pressure on the enemy, but they did run into some roadblocks. In the Krasnogvardievsk area, Reinhardt ran into a strong set of defenses. Backed up by antitank positions, the Soviet infantry kept the Germans at bay for several days.

At Luga, the Polizei Division mounted a frontal attack on August 24. The fighting was extremely savage, with both sides taking horrendous casualties. Colonel Hans-Christian Schulze, leading elements of his Police Rifle Regiment 2, pressed into the town from the east after finding a bridge that had not been destroyed by the Russians. By 1700 he reported the town had been captured.

As the Soviets were pushed back, the 8th Panzer, down to a third of its original strength, reached Siversky on the Luga-Krasnogvardievsk rail line. It then turned south to meet the retreating Russians coming out of Luga. In heavy rain, the division's rifle regiments set up a line in the forest to intercept and destroy the Russians, often engaging groups of 500 to 1,000 as they tried to escape.

By now, with his corps basically chopped apart, von Manstein was out of the Leningrad operation. Instead, his corps headquarters and the units still with him were heading toward Demyansk, some 285 kilometers southeast of his original objective. Bogged down by torrential rains, the corps eventually lost the 3rd Motorized Division to the 9th Army. Von Manstein stayed in command of the corps until September 12, when he was given command of the 11th Army, which was fighting near the Crimean Peninsula far to the south.

Hoepner's Panzer Group 4 was now reduced to the 1st and 6th Panzer and the 36th Motorized Divisions of Reinhardt's corps and the 269th and Polizei Infantry Divisions of Lindemann's corps, with the battered 8th Panzer once again in reserve. While Lindemann's divisions were fighting their way toward Krasnogvardievsk, Reinhardt was looking for a way to outflank that position.

The stubborn Russian defense of Luga and the line at Krasnogvardiesk had cost the Red Army thousands of casualties, but each day they held bought Stalin precious time to strengthen the defenses outside Leningrad. Tens of thousands of civilians labored day and night, building antitank ditches, artillery and machine-gun positions, and trenches and strongpoints for the infantry that was now pouring into the city.

The race to the Daugava, breaching the Stalin Line, and the advance to the Luga had seemed too good to be true for the Germans. Now, the chances of taking Leningrad with another lightning attack seemed nothing more than a dream —a dream that had been shattered with Russian blood.

Reinhardt was finally on the move again during the last days of August. With the 36th Motorized again in the lead, his corps took Izhora, about 18 kilometers south of Leningrad, on the 28th while German infantry strove to break the defenses at Krasnogvardiesk. The panzers were literally on Leningrad's doorstep. To the east, Schmidt's corps took Mga on the 30th but was forced back by a fierce counterattack from the 48th Army. It was recaptured by the 20th Motorized Division on September 1. With the fall of the city, the last rail link between Leningrad and the rest of the Soviet Union was severed.

Rain began to fall again during the first days of September, hindering the movement of the German mechanized units. While waiting for the roads to dry, von Leeb made his final plans for the assault on the great "White City" on the Neva.

By now, however, Hitler had another change of heart. Instead of conquering Leningrad outright, he ordered that the city be encircled and besieged. Von Leeb was furious and he would resign a few months later, partly due to that decision.

Nevertheless, he went forward with plans that would now give his forces the most favorable positions to bombard the city and starve it into submission. His first aim was to capture crossings on the Neva with a two-pronged thrust.

The first group consisted of von Chappius's XXXVIII Army Corps (1st, 58th, 254th, and 291st Infantry Divisions), Reinhardt's corps (1st and 6th Panzer and 36th Motorized Divisions) and Lindemann's L Army Corps (269th and SS Polizei Infantry Divisions). Its job was to take Krasnogvardievsk and cut off Soviet forces west of Leningrad. The 8th Panzer was held in reserve behind Reinhardt.

A second group was made up of von Wiktorin's XXVIII Army Corps (96th, 121st, and 122nd Infantry Divisions) and elements of the 12th Panzer. Its objectives were the cities of Slutsk and Kolpino. Farther to the east, Schmidt's corps (20th Motorized and the rest of the 12th Panzer) was tasked with widening the Lake Ladoga corridor and then fanning out to protect its eastern flank.

While the Germans were deploying, the Soviet command structure underwent another change as the Northwest Front was disbanded, its forces being absorbed by the Leningrad Front. Marshal Klement Efremovich Voroshilov, who had overseen the catastrophic attack on Finland in the 1939-1940 Russo-Finnish War, was placed in command of the combined forces on September 5, a day after the German assault began.

In Leningrad itself, divisions of Red Militia were formed from the city's industrial workers to augment the Red Army troops manning the defenses. There was an outer defensive line running from Petrodvortsovyy, about 19 kilometers west of Leningrad, through Krasnogvardievsk and then to the Neva River at a point about 20 kilometers east of Leningrad. The inner line ran from just west of Leningrad and then east with the town of Mozhayskiy and its surrounding hills and Kolpino as its strongpoints.

According to the German plans, Reinhardt's corps would head toward Mozhayskiy, while Lindemann's corps would crack the Krasnogvardievsk defenses. The area in front of Reinhardt contained hundreds of field fortifications connected by an elaborate network of trenches. Strong gun emplacements and wide antitank ditches also peppered the area, so it would be up to Ottenbacher's 36th Motorized Division to make the first assault. Once the infantry had breached the forward enemy defenses, the 1st Panzer would follow with the 6th Panzer standing ready to advance and widen the breach.

On September 4, German 240mm guns placed north of Tosno opened fire on Leningrad. To the east, Schmidt and von Wiktorin began an assault aimed at Shisselburg, a city on the mouth of the Neva about 30 kilometers from Leningrad's suburbs. A weakened 48th Army held positions in front of the town, and its line crumbled under attacks from the 12th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions. Shisselburg was captured on September 8, closing the last land route out of Leningrad.

Hoepner began his assault on September 9. Reinhardt, supported by von Chappius's infantry, cut through the Soviet lines and advanced almost 10 kilometers with the 1st Panzer and the 36th Motorized in the lead.

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

German infantrymen pick their way through a heavily wooded area north of the town of Luga as they advance toward the city of Leningrad in September 1941. Although initial progress was promising, the Red Army and Russian civilians prepared defenses that eventually ground the German effort to capture the great city to a halt.

Recovering from the initial shock, the newly formed 42nd Army put up a stout resistance.

The Soviet divisional commanders were ordered to fight for every meter of land, and their men did so magnificently. Landgraf's 6th Panzer became bogged down in heavy fighting in front of Krasnoe Selo, while the 1st Panzer and 36th Motorized sat astride the Krasnogvardiesk-Krasnoe Selo road, fending off Russian attacks. Von Chappius's infantry was also halted by the Soviet defense, which was helped by fire from the Baltic Fleet anchored around Kronstadt Island.

Later in the day, Colonel Carl Casper took his 118th Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 36th Motorized Division and, backed by divisional engineers and elements of the 1st Panzer, breached the enemy line. He then headed toward the Mozhayskiy Hills. The Soviet defenses there were manned by fanatical units of Young Communists, battalions of Leningrad Workers Militia, and units of the 55th Army that had so far been held in reserve. They were backed up by Red Army artillery, which had pretargeted every meter of ground so that artillery observers could call in a strike within seconds of seeing the enemy.

Casper's men moved forward under a rolling barrage from guns of Artillery Regiment 73 and XLI Corps artillery, while the 1st Panzer units engaged pillboxes at point-blank range. The Soviet bunkers were solidly built, and a call was sent for Luftwaffe support. In about half an hour, Stukas from General Wolfram Freiherr von Richtofen's (a cousin of the famous Red Baron) VIII Air Corps arrived on the scene. Diving almost vertically, the dive bombers hit the Soviet positions with devastating effect.

Before the smoke cleared, German assault groups leaped forward. Using flamethrowers, grenades, and machine guns, Casper's men took one enemy position after another. The fighting finally ended when it was too dark to see.

On the morning of the 10th, Casper ordered the assault to continue. Once again, progress was somewhat slow for the men of the 118th. To their right, Landgraf's 6th Panzer was hit by a Russian counterattack that caused many

Continued on page 76

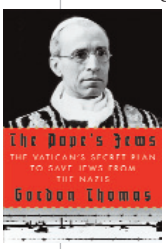
By Al Hemingway

Getty Images

Hitler's Pope

During World War II, the Vatican initiated a secret plan to save Rome's Jewish population from Nazi persecution.

HISTORY HAS NOT BEEN KIND TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH DURING World War II, especially Pope Pius XII, who was the spiritual leader of the church during that period. Many have accused him of ignoring the plight of the European Jews who were being deported to Nazi death camps and turning his back to their fate. Some have even gone so far as to refer to him as "Hitler's Pope." But did Pius and the church sit idly by as millions of Jews were put to death, including those in Rome's Jewish Ghetto?



In his newest book, *The Pope's Jews: The Vatican's Secret Plan to Save Jews from the Nazis* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 320 pp., 2012, photographs, notes, index, $26.99, hardcover), author Gordon Thomas has written a taut and thrilling account of a secret plan devised by Pius complete with a network of clergy and private citizens who risked death to save thousands of Jews from the Nazis.

Thomas has done extensive research and has uncovered a fascinating story of priests, nuns, and a former British prisoner of war who performed James Bond-type duties to provide Jewish families with passports and visas and whisk them across the border into neutral Switzerland. From there, many went to the United States and South America to escape Hitler's diabolical scheme to rid the world of the Jewish people. Pius ordered that his cardinals in Germany were to "channel money to those Jews in need and issue baptismal certificates for their protection." A secret code was used to communicate with this underground system of spies, informers, and agents. The pope even authorized some of the church's money, and his own, to finance some of these operations.

Pope Pius XII leaves the Presidential Palace in Berlin in 1939. Author Gordon Thomas presents evidence that Pius worked secretly to rescue Jews persecuted by the Nazis.

Within the Vatican, however, were a few individuals who actually sided with the Nazis and harbored strong anti-Semitic feelings. One such person, Bishop Alois Hudal, was dubbed "Our Scarlet Pimpernel" by his Nazi friends. He provided papers to many, including such infamous officers such as Adolf Eichmann, Franz Stangel, and Gustav Wagner, to make good their escape to South America at war's end. He remained in Rome until his death in 1962, severely criticizing the pope as well as the Catholic Church.

The Nazis also employed several of Rome's notorious gangs to help them ferret out the Jewish population for deportation to the death camps. A bounty was given to gang members for each Jew they identified. The most notorious was a female, Celeste di Porto, the mistress of one of the group's leaders. She sent dozens of Jews to their deaths. Even her father went to the police station after the Allies liberated Rome and told the police to arrest him to "atone for his daughter's crimes and save the family's honor." She served seven years of a 12-year sentence and died in 1981.

Because of his pro-Jewish stance, Pope Pius himself was in danger. Disgusted with his policy of helping the Jews, Hitler developed a plan to have him kidnapped and held for ransom. Realizing this would be foolhardy, several German officers in Rome secretly devised ways to see that it failed.

If Pope Pius XII worked behind the scenes to rescue the Jews, why not tell the world after the war? One reason was the issue of neutrality. The Vatican was a city unto itself, and its official position was to remain apolitical and neutral throughout the conflict. Pius had to walk a dangerous political tightrope. The church had to be extremely careful. But as Princess Enza Cortes said, "But his Holiness cannot say much, if anything at all. Yet his silence must not be misunderstood. I know he will do everything to help the Jews."

Cortes was correct. The Pope's clandestine organization worked feverishly to aid not only the Jews, but also Allied POWs as well to escape the confines of Italian camps. The Vatican itself was a sanctuary to some individuals of Rome's Jewish community and Allied diplomats. Within its hallowed walls, Pope Pius XII oversaw a vast array of talented people who exposed themselves to danger,

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be "wiped off the map." That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination "to Jerusalem" is clearly stenciled on them.

What are the facts?

A death wish for Israel. Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the "supreme leader" have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state. When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long "cold war," with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However "evil" the leaders of the Soviet Union (the "Evil Empire") may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

> "An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense."

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

What is to be done? In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osiraq had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force) accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obdurate that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for "peace in our time." We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal — six months. six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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FLAME is a tax-exempt, non-profit educational 501 (c)(3) organization. Its purpose is the research and publication of the facts regarding developments in the Middle East and exposing false propaganda that might harm the interests of the United States and its allies in that area of the world. Your tax-deductible contributions are welcome. They enable us to pursue these goals and to publish these messages in national newspapers and magazines. We have virtually no overhead. Almost all of our revenue pays for our educational work, for these clarifying messages, and for related direct mail.

imprisonment, torture, and death.

The author vehemently argues that Pius was not "Hitler's Pope" but rather a man who was determined to defeat Hitler—not with traditional weapons—but with words.

Pacific Time on Target: Memoirs of a Marine Artillery Officer, 1943-1945 by Christopher S. Donner and edited by Jack H. McCall, Jr., Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio, 2012, 145 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $29.95, hardcover.

Christopher Donner did not have to go to war. Married, with an infant son born less than two weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Pennsylvania native was teaching at a prestigious private school and could have easily obtained a deferment. Instead, like many of his generation, Donner opted instead to march off to the sound of the guns. Successfully completing Officer Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia, newly minted U.S. Marine 2nd Lt. Donner was assigned to the 9th Defense Battalion in the Pacific Theater.

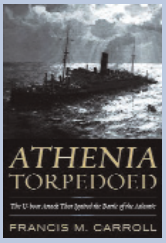
After duty in the Solomon Islands and on Guam, Donner was transferred to H Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines, landing with them on D-Day, April 1, 1945, Easter Sunday, to commence the three-month struggle for the Japanese bastion on Okinawa.

Okinawa, as it turned out, was one of the costliest battles of World War II. It was during this battle that Donner had the dubious assignment of forward observer, one of the most dangerous jobs in an infantry unit. He narrowly escaped death when a Nambu machine gun opened up on his position and several mortars landed nearby, wounding Donner and several others.

Donner wrote his memoirs in 1946, shortly after his return from overseas. His account is crisp, clear, and well written. For personal reasons, as editor Jack McCall points out, he refused to publish it and only wrote it for personal use. McCall believes that his reluctance to do so may have been because of his criticisms of fellow Marines and the deaths of those around him that may upset their families. Donner passed away at the age of 99 in 2011, never seeing his manuscript in print.

Through the efforts of McCall, whose father

Short Bursts



Athenia Torpedoed: The U-boat Attack That Ignited the Battle of the Atlantic by Francis M. Carroll, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2012, 256 pp., photographs, notes, index, $29.95, hardcover.

Late on the afternoon of September 3, 1939, a lone German U-boat, *U-30*, was patrolling the waters about 250 miles northwest of Ireland when she spotted a lone ship. The U-boat captain, Oberleutnant Fritz-Julius Lemp, thought it might be a passenger liner, which was off limits, but his suspicions were aroused because the boat was painted black and was zigzagging, indicating it might be a merchant vessel. Lemp ordered two torpedoes fired. One struck the vessel and the other veered off target. However, only one was needed. The missile had stopped the ship dead in the water, and it began to list.

What Lemp did not know was that the boat was a passenger liner, the SS *Athenia*, a 1,350-ton British ship carrying more than 1,000 passengers, 311 of whom were American citizens. The ship eventually sank, causing 112 deaths. The incident created a furor in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. The battle for the North Atlantic had begun. The sinking of the *Athenia* had sparked the beginning of the Battle of the Atlantic, a campaign that would last nearly six years. The author sheds light on a tragedy that has gone largely unnoticed for decades.

Catch That Tiger: Churchill's Secret Order That Launched the Most Astounding and Dangerous Mission of World War II by Noel Botham and Bruce Montague, John Blake Publishing, London, 2012, 278 pp., photographs, $24.95, hardcover.

When it first appeared on the scene during the bitter fighting on the Eastern Front, the 60-ton German Tiger tank was an awesome weapon. With its accurate 88mm gun, the vehicle could destroy enemy tanks from up to a mile away. When Prime Minister Winston Churchill first saw a crumpled photograph of it, he dismissed it until the Tiger began wreaking havoc on the British Army and its allies in North Africa.

Determined to discover more about the tank's capabilities, Churchill ordered Major Doug Lidderdale of the Engineer Corps to travel to Tunisia in 1943 and told him to "catch me a tiger." The resourceful Lidderdale did just that. With a hand-picked team of NCOs, Lidderdale and his men managed to snare a Tiger tank that had its turret damaged by a British shell. Killing most of the crew, they commandeered the massive vehicle.

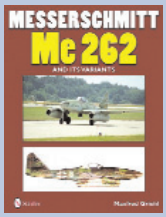
Churchill, accompanied by King George VI, flew to North Africa to personally inspect Hitler's new killing machine. The tank, number 131, was taken to London. It is now on display at Bovington Tank Museum in Dorset, England, and it remains the only working model in the world.

The authors have written a great tribute to Lidderdale and his men and describe how they captured the tank in an intense firefight. For many years their exploits have been kept under wraps. Lidderdale's son has kept his father's dairies and papers to substantiate this truly remarkable story.

Metz 1944: Patton's Fortified Nemesis by Steven J. Zaloga, Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2012, 96 pp., maps, photographs, index, $19.95, softcover.

Accompanied by detailed maps and photographs, this book follows the efforts of General George S. Patton's Third Army to wrestle the strategically important city of Metz from the Germans following the Normandy breakout in the summer of 1944. What transpired was a bloody three-month struggle that ended in a victory for the Allies in December 1944. U.S. troops had to breach a heavily fortified region that had seen numerous wars since ancient times. Intense fighting erupted at Fort Driant, five miles southwest of Metz, which resulted in a setback for Patton's soldiers. On December 13, 1944, the German garrison at Fort Jeanne d'Arc, the last French fort, surrendered to the Allies.

This is another little gem of a book from Osprey, which excels at publishing excellent accounts of World War II battles and personalities.



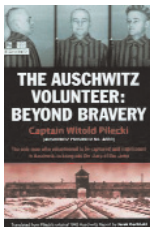
Messerschmitt Me-262 and Its Variants by Manfred Griehl, Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 2012, 51 pp., illustrations, photographs, $14.99, softcover.

There is no doubt that the Luftwaffe was far ahead of the Allies when it came to the design and production of the first jet aircraft in aviation history. This book traces the lineage of that first jet aircraft, the Messerschmitt Me-262, from the drawing board, to testing, to actual combat missions. Messerschmitt Me-262 A-1a, flown by Lieutenant Alfred "Bubi" Schreiber, scored the first aerial victory for a jet plane in history. The author has photos of Schreiber after he landed being congratulated by a member of the ground crew. The book is chock full of photographs and color drawings of various Me-262s and illustrations showing the cockpit with its instrumentation, armament, and engine.

The author also writes about the efforts of aviation enthusiasts all over the world who have restored and flown these historic planes. □

also served in the 9th Defense Battalion in World War II, the book is now a reality. It is a rare story of a forward observer in combat. Because of their high casualty rate, they were considered "cannon fodder." Not many survived or wrote about their experiences. This book is a treasure trove for historians and military history buffs eager to grasp what war is really about.

The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery: The Only Man Who Volunteered to Be Captured and Imprisoned in Auschwitz to Bring Out the Story of the Camp translated by Jarek Garlinski, Aquila Polonica, Ltd., Los Angeles, CA, 2012, 460 pp., photographs, index, $42.95, hardcover.

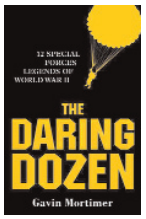


Here is a truly incredible story of one man who volunteered to be captured and incarcerated in the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp. During a harrowing period of three years, Witold Pilecki, a 39-year-old former Polish Cavalry officer, allowed himself to be snared in a German "roundup" and transported to the camp to obtain information for the Polish anti-Nazi underground. Although the Nazis had overrun the country in September 1939 and occupied the western half while the Soviet Union seized the eastern portion, the Poles continued to resist. Pilecki realized that his countrymen had to defeat both invaders or Poland would cease to exist as a free, independent nation.

Jailed from 1940, Pilecki was able to secretly get reports out of the prison to his comrades in the resistance. He and a few others engineered a daring escape in 1943 and made their way to safety. He wrote another report telling not only of the inhumane treatment of prisoners at Auschwitz, but the camp's newer and more sinister purpose–the extermination of the Jewish population by means of newly constructed gas chambers.

Although a staunch Roman Catholic, Pilecki felt enormous compassion for the plight of the Jewish people and fought heroically in the Warsaw Uprising. After the war ended, he returned to Poland to spy on the Russians but was captured and executed in 1948. Pilecki's vivid descriptions of the horrors of Auschwitz are clearly written in spite of the fact that he could have been a victim at any time. His report is fascinating and terrifying, but it is a story that must be told. Pelicki was indeed a true hero—a patriot—and gave his life for his beloved Poland.

The Daring Dozen: 12 Special Forces Legends of World War II by Gavin Mortimer, Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2012, 303 pp., photographs, notes, index, $24.95, hardcover.

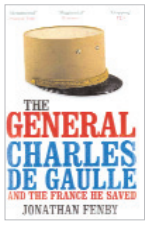


The advent of World War II saw many advances in tactics, technology, and weapons. One important aspect that emerged from the conflict was the creation of specialized units that could operate behind enemy lines to harass the enemy and obtain valuable intelligence. The author has selected a dozen individuals that he feels made major contributions to this effort.

Although the author has included two well-known figures, Marine Lt. Col. Evans Carlson and British General Orde Wingate, the others are not as familiar to most readers outside the Special Forces community. One such person is Anders Lassen. Danish by birth, he became a member of the Special Boat Squadron, was killed in Italy in 1945, and was awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military decoration. Also included is Blair "Paddy" Mayne of the Special Air Service, an officer who took part in and planned numerous clandestine operations.

Perhaps the least known is Colonel Charles Hunter, second in command of Merrill's Marauders. For most of their time in the China-Burma-India Theater, he commanded the unit after Merrill himself suffered a heart attack. Hunter never did get along well with his superior, Lt. Gen. Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, an irascible individual who made sure Hunter was rarely mentioned in his dispatches. This book sheds light on soldiers who personified what it meant to be in Special Forces.

The General: Charles De Gaulle and the France He Saved by Jonathan Fenby, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2012, 707 pp., photographs, notes, index, $32.95, hardcover.



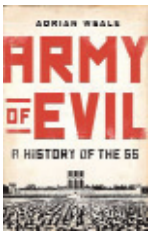
Best-selling author Jonathan Fenby has written a masterful account of the life of Charles de Gaulle who was one of France's greatest generals. During World War I, de Gaulle was cited for bravery after being wounded, gassed, and captured by the Germans until December 1918. He could speak fluent German, and he would entertain his fellow prisoners by reading them German newspapers. Instrumental in defeating the Nazis in World War II, de Gaulle went on to create the French Fifth Republic in 1958 and served as the country's president for a decade until his retirement in 1969.

De Gaulle was a colonel when Germany invaded France, and he fought heroically, halting a German advance with little or no tank support prior to Dunkirk. When the Vichy government was formed, the furious de Gaulle made his way to Great Britain and established a provisional government. As a general, he worked tirelessly to free his country.

The towering figure of De Gaulle (he stood 6-3) made him appear almost god-like as if, the author writes, he "appeared as a monument carved out of some ancient rock." Underneath this, however, de Gaulle was an extremely complex individual who had to endure mood swings throughout most of his life. Despite this, he staunchly believed that through his leadership he could catapult France onto the world stage as a superpower alongside the United States and Great Britain.

"His complex individuality meant that he stood alone, but also represented a common sense of destiny shared, in testing times, by his fellow countrymen and women," Fenby writes. "This made him unique in his time. The world would not see his like again."

Army of Evil: A History of the SS by Adrian Weale, North American Library Caliber Books, New York, 2012, 464 pp., notes, index, $28.95, hardcover.



No other organization could strike terror into the hearts of people in World War II than the Schutzstaffel, or simply the SS. A small, seemingly ineffective and disorganized group at the outset, the SS mushroomed into one of Hitler's most efficient arms of government. Its myriad duties included overseeing the local and political police, militarized Waffen-SS units that consisted of nearly a million men in uniform and, the most notorious of all, the units that guarded the concentration camps and were responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews and other enemies of the state.

British historian Adrian Weale has penned an authoritative but easy to read account of this infamous group of fanatics and thugs who enabled Hitler to seize power and, more importantly, keep a stranglehold on Germany for nearly 12 years.

The one man, Weale writes, who had the most effect on the SS was Heinrich Himmler, "an outstanding organizer" who took charge in January 1929 and personally shaped its rise to become the most feared organization in Germany. Weale does a good job of weaving into his story the principal players who, through lies, deceit, and murder, propelled the SS into the forefront of Hitler's totalitarian government. This is a fascinating must-read for those who want to learn more about this "elite order" which became, as the author says, "an instrument of genocide." □

By Joseph Luster

CLOSE COMBAT: PANTHERS IN THE FOG IS A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED 2D WAR STRATEGY GAME.

IRON SKY: INVASION

One question has loomed over mankind for decades: What if the Nazis have been hiding out on the dark side of the Moon ever since the end of World War II? It's a fair concern, and one that's addressed with proper camp in the Finnish-German-Australian film *Iron Sky,* directed by Timo Vuorensola (the *Star Wreck* movies). The sci-fi flick isn't sticking to that format alone, though, as developer Reality Pump Studios whipped up the what-if future war concept into a space fighter sim called *Iron Sky: Invasion.*

PUBLISHER
TopWare Interactive

DEVELOPER
Reality Pump

SYSTEM(S)
PC, Mac, Android, PS3, Xbox360

AVAILABLE
Now (PC & Mac)

The plot of the film kicks off when an American mission has us returning to the Moon in 2018, only to discover that Nazis have been hanging out there planning for revenge since 1945. After they capture astronaut James Washington, the current Führer discovers a more reliable means to power the space battleship *Götterdämmerung*: Washington's smartphone. Next thing you know, we find ourselves in a bonafide space battle against the Nazis, which serves as the perfect jumping point for a game of ship-to-ship dogfights.

Iron Sky: Invasion ties in with the film closely enough that it features actors from the movie in its cutscenes, including Stephanie Paul, who plays the President of the United States. Ship models are also taken straight from the movie. Players can hop in the British Spitfire or the Japanese Banzai to take on menacing ships like the *Rheingold* and *Valkyrie,* and the massive Nazi Zeppelins that carry them into battle. Sounds like a tall order, but there's strategy to pre-dogfight deployment. A real-time star map allows for tactical decision making in regard to jump locations, after picking the right ship class for the job, of course.

At the time of this writing the PC and Mac versions are the first out the gate, with the rest of the platforms following shortly thereafter. Readers who haven't seen the film and feel like they might be missing something special can pick up the "Götterdämmerung" collector's edition to net a bundled copy of *Iron Sky.*

CLOSE COMBAT: PANTHERS IN THE FOG

PUBLISHER
Matrix Games, Slitherine

DEVELOPER
Matrix Games

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Now

The *Close Combat* series has been running for quite a while on PC and Mac, with the occasional console release over the years. The series has largely stuck to computers, though, and the same holds true for the latest, *Close Combat: Panthers in the Fog.* Like the add-ons and sequels that preceded it—from *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* in 1997 to more recent entries like 2007's *Close Combat: Cross of Iron* (remake of *The Russian Front*) and 2010's *Close Combat: Last Stand Anthem* (itself a remake of *A Bridge Too Far,* bringing things nearly full circle)—*Panthers in the Fog* is good old fashioned real-time tactical war strategy, and it's set to be the final 2D game in the franchise.

Panthers in the Fog is divided into a few different modes, giving players the option to jump in single battles, linked operations, or just take on the Grand campaign, which simulates all six crucial days of fighting. The setting is the German counterattack at Mortain, aka Operation Lüttich, the Wehrmacht's last chance to emerge from Normandy victorious. The chance to

change history, for better or worse, is there, with a focus on historically accurate formations and units mixed with the realism of hindering weather and strategic battlefield placement.

While *Panthers in the Fog* keeps the classic top-down style of its predecessors, the visuals are properly revamped and enhanced; fitting since it appears this one will be the last hurrah for the series' long-standing aesthetics. The satellite-level viewpoint serves to show off Panthers' dedication to depicting everything from environments to individual units with extreme attention to detail, and that attention goes beyond surface aspects like vehicle, equipment, and artillery models.

One of the more interesting strategic facets is the psychological model, which influences the behavior of your troops during a conflict. Your men can be affected by a variety of factors, and will gain or lose morale, become tired, net experience, and more after the curtain draws on each battle. As such it becomes a game of effectively managing your troops and keeping everyone from new recruits to the seasoned veterans mentally and physically fit for war.

Ultimately, much of *Close Combat: Panthers in the Fog*'s long-term enjoyment will stem from the creativity that pours from the community. An enhanced Scenario Editor allows for the creation of "What If?" scenarios, so the possibilities are endless for those who fancy themselves inventive gamers. There will also no doubt be a wide variety of mods coming out of the community, so *Panthers in the Fog* could very well live on for quite some time; at least until the series' next proper evolution comes marching along. □

Continued from page 69

casualties and momentarily stopped the division in its tracks. When Landgraf got moving again, Reinhardt, seeing an opportunity, ordered him to attack the Soviet flank farther to the east. He then moved most of the 1st Panzer into the gap left by Landgraf, bringing more pressure on the Russian defenses. Late in the evening, the Germans had reached a trench line on the northern ridge of the hills.

With the 1st Panzer in the line, the attack moved forward again on the 11th. Eckinger's I/113th Rifle Regiment, reinforced by a company of the 1st Panzer Regiment and a platoon of engineers, was in the lead. Von Richtofen's Stukas arrived right on time and blasted a path through the Soviet positions. With Colonel Westhoven's 1st Rifle Regiment providing flank support, Eckinger headed for Hill 167, known as "Bald Hill." The 6th Panzer Company, commanded by 1st Lt. Wolfgang Darius, and the leading company of Eckinger's battalion hit a naval artillery battery and succeeded in destroying the guns before the surprised Russians could fire a shot at them. At 1230 Darius sent the following message to his battalion headquarters: "I can see St. Petersburg (Leningrad) and the sea." Hill 167 had finally fallen.

While the Germans consolidated their positions in the Mozhayskiy Hills, the main elements of the 36th Motorized, backed up by units of the 1st Panzer, attacked Krasnoe Sela, which fell on September 12. Leningrad's defenses were nearly broken now that the 1st Panzer and 36th Motorized had outflanked Krasnogvardiesk, putting the rear areas of the Soviet units defending Slutsk and Kolpino in peril.

On September 13, Stalin ordered General Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov to fly to Leningrad. With him were Lt. Gens. Ivan Ivanovich Fedyuniskii and Mikhail Semenovich Khozin. When his aircraft landed, Zhukov went straight to Voroshilov. He handed him a note from Stalin appointing Zhukov commander in chief of the Front. It was brief. "Hand over the Front to him and come back by the same plane," it said. The note was simply signed "Stalin."

The same day, Reinhardt and von Chappius breached the lines of the 42nd Army north of Krasnoe Sela and advanced toward Uritsk. Krasnogvardiesk was also taken by the L Army Corps which was supported by elements of Reinhardt's corps.

Zhukov sent Fedyuinskii to the 42nd Army Headquarters where he found Ivanov, its commander, "sitting with his head in his hands, unable even to point out the location of his troops." Reporting the situation to Zhukov, Fedyuinskii received a simple order: "Take over the 42nd Army—and quick."

While Panzer Group 4 continued to press Leningrad's defenses, Zhukov worked tirelessly to stop the entire German advance. On the 14th he reached into his reserves and sent a rifle division to Fedyuinskii to help defend Uritsk. He planned to use the 42nd Army as a defensive bulwark while forces behind it dug into new positions. He also ordered the recently formed 55th Army under Maj. Gen. Ivan Gavrilovich Lazarev to defend the Kolpino and Pushkinskiy sectors at all costs and for Marshal Grigorii Ivanovich Kulik's 54th Army to recapture Mga and Shisselburg.

September 15 saw heavy fighting at Uritsk, while Kulik struggled to take his objectives. In the end, Kulik would fail and he was demoted to major general. Hoepner lost another armored unit that day when the 6th Panzer was pulled out of the line in preparation for the move to Army Group Center, which was preparing the assault on Moscow.

Units of the 1st Panzer, Polizei, and 269th Infantry Divisions entered Pushkinskiy on September 16, with the Soviets fighting for every block of the town. New battalions rushed to help defend the area, but the Germans continued to push forward, finally capturing the town two days later. The 1st Panzer then turned toward Leningrad again but was halted by units of the 42nd Army in front of the city.

The following day, Zhukov basically stabilized the front at Uritsk, although fighting in the city's suburbs was still raging. German forces still had a ring around the land approaches to Leningrad, but the city's defenses had held. Reinhardt began pulling the 1st Panzer and 36th Motorized out of the line that day. Along with his corps headquarters, the units would soon follow the 6th Panzer to deploy for the Moscow offensive. Panzer Group 4 Headquarters also prepared to move southeast for the offensive.

Schmidt's XXXIX Corps with its armored and mechanized divisions would remain with Army Group North for a few more months, but it would now be up to the infantry and Luftwaffe to force Leningrad's surrender. They would not succeed. For Panzer Group 4, which had started the war with great victories and high hopes, there would be no triumphal panzer parade through the streets of the "White City" on the Neva. □

Author Pat McTaggart is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front and has contributed numerous articles on the subject to WWII History *magazine. He resides in Elkader, Iowa.*

Continued from page 55

MacDonald nodded and replied, "As a matter of fact, sir, I did wonder why we were out there for so long."

"I realize you were out there with no one on your flanks. However, your little outpost really disrupted the German panzer division trying to sweep around to the north," Allen explained. "Anyway, since Bastogne appears to be cut off there was no need for you to keep the road westward open anymore. Hence, division decided to pull you back. You're going to be the reserve for now."

The young captain, hearing his new orders, snapped a quick a salute and left the room. He would eventually learn that his commander was right. For three critical days, his lone company of glidermen had seriously disrupted the German line of communication around Bastogne. In fact, tactically, Crossroads X had become a microcosm—a tiny version of Bastogne. Because it was denied the road junction, the 2nd Panzer Division had to travel farther out of its way to reach its next objective.

As early as December 20, the 2nd Panzer Division was already experiencing a fuel shortage that slowed its operations. In addition, the division eventually had to commit an entire Kampfgruppe to recapture the vital road junction so that the Americans could not threaten the critical bridgehead at Ortheuville to the west. Together with the roadblock obstacles around Champlon, which were the handiwork of U.S. Army combat engineers, the Germans were forced to slow their advance.

In the end, the constant disruptions and tiny battles sapped the strength of the 2nd Panzer Division. As a result, it ran out of gas within sight of its ultimate destination, the crossings at the Meuse River. Had von Lauchert's division been able to reach the Meuse, the Battle of the Bulge might have ended differently. Thanks to the efforts of men like Robert MacDonald, Carmen Gisi, Mike Campana, Joseph Karpac, and the other members of Baker Company of the 1/401st, the German tanks sputtered to a halt and fell victim to Allied armor and the U.S. Army Air Forces on Christmas Day, 1944. □

Leo G. Barron served two tours during Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 101st Airborne Division as a rifle company executive officer and as a battalion intelligence officer. An avid historian, he resides in Sierra Vista, Arizona, where he teaches at the U.S. Army's Intelligence Center. Don Cygan is a first-time contributor who conducted personal interviews for this article.

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gela

Continued from page 41

ending when the tank's ammunition detonated from the heat, killing anyone left inside. At 1316 an observer called for naval gunfire against a group of German tanks trying to regroup for another attack. The destroyer *Butler* responded with 48 rounds. One of the heavy Tigers was hit on the turret by a shell, though it is unknown whether it was naval gunfire or Army artillery. The round did not penetrate the Tiger's thick armor, but the tank's commander recalled how rivets inside the behemoth broke off and flew around the compartment.

Around 1400, the Hermann Göring Division commander, General Paul Conrath, called off the attack. German troops and tanks pulled back gradually, chased by artillery and naval shells. One German officer planted a story with some Sicilian farmers he passed, hoping to discourage American pursuit. "Naval gunfire forced us to withdraw, but if the Allies pursue too far inland they will be engaged by superior German forces and destroyed!"

It was a weak bluff; in reality, some of the defeated German troops had discarded or abandoned their equipment and according to the U.S. 16th Regiment's journal, were "running to the rear hysterically crying." Nearly half their armored strength had been lost.

At 1545 another air raid struck. This time the transport *Robert Rowan* was targeted. It was hit, and fires started aboard the hapless ship, which was loaded with ammunition. The ship burned until about 1700 when the load of ordnance finally exploded after the crew had abandoned her. The enormous explosion raised a huge cloud of smoke into the air, tossing pieces of the ship around the landing area. The *Robert Rowan* settled in shallow water where she burned into the night, providing a beacon for further air raids.

The battered Italians tried another sortie at 1700 that afternoon, an infantry force coming down from the town of Butera to the northwest. The advancing Axis troops ran into the Rangers who, assisted by salvos from the *Savannah*, turned away this last effort without much difficulty. Other ships fired on troop or vehicle concentrations until 2057, when the shore party controlling a 165-round barrage by USS *Glennon* signaled, "Cease fire, good shooting!" Sporadic fighting continued until darkness fell over the battlefield, bringing weary soldiers and sailors a welcome breather.

The battle for Gela was essentially over; the morning of July 12 would see American troops take the offensive, advancing on the Ponte Olivo airfield, Butera, and other objectives inland. The battle had been a close-run thing. At times the Germans had been close to reaching the invasion beaches, but never quite got there thanks to dogged American infantry, the firepower of the U.S. Navy, and the gunners of the artillery.

Savannah, Boise, and the seven accompanying destroyers offshore had fired 3,766 rounds of 5- and 6-inch ammunition on July 10-11, 1943. Overall it was a stellar example of a joint operation, Army and Navy assets working together. Soldiers, including Patton, who doubted the utility of naval gunfire support, had a change of heart. In this regard Gela was a harbinger of how amphibious assaults would occur in the future at places such as Salerno, Anzio, and Normandy.

Those actions were for another day, however. At Gela there was one more battle to be fought. Ranger Sergeant Marcell Swank was assigned the duty of guarding a bakery in Gela. Run by a Polish baker, the facility had been commandeered by the U.S. Army to make bread for the hungry troops. As the Pole went about his work, the warm smell of fresh loaves no doubt wafted down the street, attracting the attention of a number of nearby Sicilian women. Soon a crowd of them gathered outside the bakery, shouting for a portion of the bread. They had children to feed, they protested, hungry and ragged from the battle that had swirled around the town's civilians.

Sergeant Swank refused them access; he had his orders. The women retired across the street, muttering. After conferring among themselves, they turned from a crowd into a mob, advancing in a group toward the bakery. Swank responded by pointing his Thompson submachine gun into the air and rattling off a sharp burst. The Sicilian women quickly retreated to the other side of the street, but they were not afraid to make a number of rude gestures and hurl insults and curses at the perturbed Ranger.

Minutes later the mob advanced again to be greeted by another burst over their heads. Again the women stopped, but in the middle of the street this time. Apparently some of them sized up the young sergeant and decided he would not likely gun down a horde of hungry ladies, so they went forward a third time and now nothing would stop them. The women rushed into the bakery. Sergeant Swank and the baker ran away. The Rangers won the battle for Gela but lost the Battle of the Bakery. □

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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