Military Heritage Presents:

WWII HISTORY

www.wwiihistorymagazine.com

FUTILE GERMAN DEFENSE AT ASCHAFFENBURG

Japanese Defeat on Guadalcanal

ROMANIANS AT STALINGRAD

IRAQ IN WWII
Battle for Baghdad

ELUSIVE *ATLANTIS*
Hitler's Merchant Raider

+ BRITAIN'S CANOE COMMANDOS, MULBERRY HARBORS, ADVENTUROUS GENERAL MESERVY, COMBAT DIVISIONS, BOOK & GAME REVIEWS, AND MORE!

JANUARY 2011

$5.99US $6.99CAN

01

0 74470 02313 5

RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL FEB. 7

WWII HISTORY ■ JANUARY 2011 Volume 10, No. 2

It stays forever in your heart

Unfortunately, it also stays forever in your lungs

Are you or a loved one a Navy, Merchant Marine or Coast Guard veteran who suffers or has died from asbestos-related

Mesothelioma or Lung Cancer?

Know your rights, and know what you're entitled to from the asbestos companies.

Few firms have the track record of Weitz & Luxenberg in securing **over $3 Billion in verdicts and settlements** for asbestos victims and their families.

For a free consultation with the law firm to which *other lawyers* refer their asbestos cases, call the Weitz & Luxenberg client relations department at **1-888-411-LAWS (5297)** today.

WEITZ & LUXENBERG P.C. LAW OFFICES

ASBESTOS • DRUGS/MEDICAL DEVICES • ENVIRONMENTAL • NEGLIGENCE

700 Broadway • New York, NY 10003

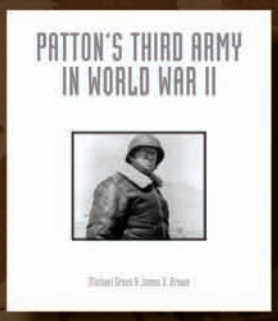
BRANCH OFFICES IN NEW JERSEY, CALIFORNIA & COLORADO

1.888.411.LAWS • www.weitzlux.com

Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. We may associate with local firms in states wherein we do not maintain an office.

From the Battle of Britain to Tokyo Bay

New Perspectives on the War that Shook the World

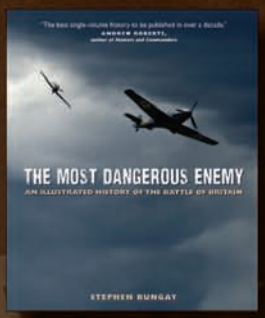


Patton's Third Army in World War II

By Michael Green & James D. Brown

978-0-7603-3691-5, $50.00

This book covers Patton's command of Third Army with a focus on the armor, the use of which he had championed since his assignment to the U.S. Tank Corps in World War I. Over 450 archival photos and frequent quotes complete the portrait of Patton and his men as they fought their way across the Third Reich.



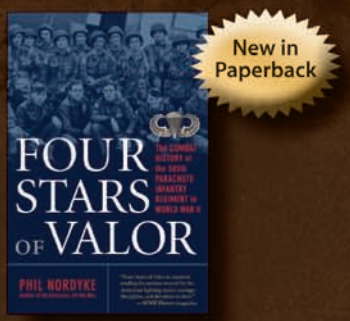
The Most Dangerous Enemy

An Illustrated History of the Battle of Britain

By Stephen Bungay

978-0-7603-3936-7, $40.00

With over 150 gripping photographs (including rare color photos), full color maps and diagrams, sidebar features, and enthralling interviews, Stephen Bungay's *The Most Dangerous Enemy* provides the ultimate retelling of one of history's most furious battles from both the British and German perspective.



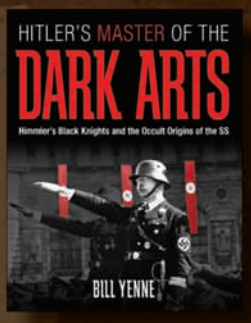
Four Stars of Valor

The Combat History of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment in World War II

By Phil Nordyke

978-0-7603-3905-3, $19.99

Drawing on veteran interviews, oral history recordings, official archives and unpublished written accounts from over 300 veterans, Phil Nordyke brings the history of the 505th PIR to life—from the first American mass combat jump in Sicily to some of the fiercest fighting at the forefront of six major campaigns across Europe.



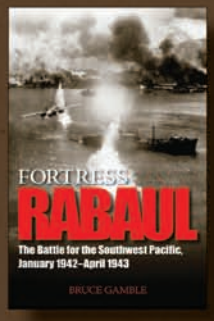
Hitler's Master of the Dark Arts

Himmler's Black Knights and the Occult Origins of the SS

By Bill Yenne

978-0-7603-3778-3, $30.00

This is the first history of the SS and its leader to focus on the mystical cult aspects of the organization. Author Bill Yenne follows Himmler's transformation of the SS from a few hundred members in 1929 to over fifty thousand black-uniformed Aryans bent on using whatever means necessary to bring about the Final Solution.



Fortress Rabaul

The Battle for the Southwest Pacific, January 1942-April 1943

By Bruce Gamble

978-0-7603-2350-2, $28.00

Drawing upon an extensive array of Japanese and Allied sources, author Bruce Gamble details Rabaul's transformation from a peaceful South Pacific port into the ultimate twentieth-century fortification. A compelling story of military strategy and might, it is also a critical and, until now, little understood chapter in the history of World War II.

Tales from a Tin Can

The USS Dale from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay

By Michael Keith Olson

978-0-7603-3826-1, $17.99

Written in the words of those who ate, slept, and fought aboard the USS *Dale*, *Tales from a Tin Can* tells the complete story of the ship and her crew from the morning of December 7, 1941 to America's Pacific Offensive to the Japanese surrender in August of 1945.

QUAYSIDE PUBLISHING GROUP

ZENITH PRESS

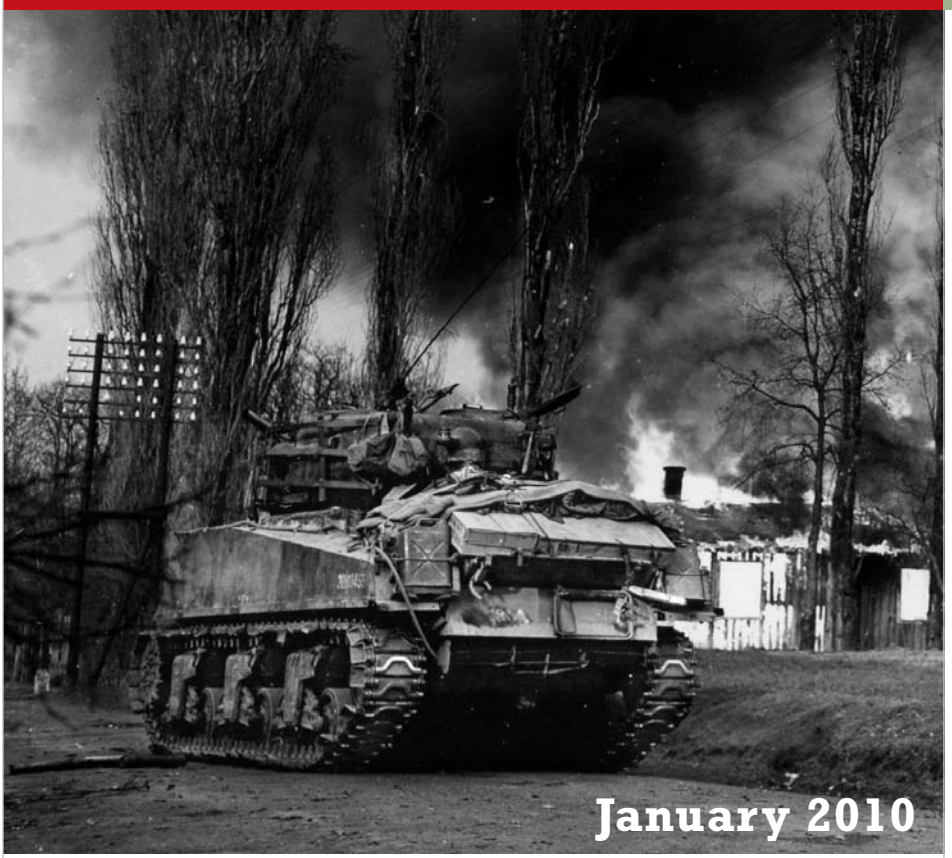
800-328-0590 • www.zenithpress.com

Zenith Press, an imprint of the Quayside Publishing Group

In bookstores and online retailers everywhere.

Contents

WWII HISTORY



Features

Columns

Cover: Romanian soldiers keep watch on the heavily defended Soviet perimeter at Sevastopol in June 1942.
Photo: akg-images.

WWII History (ISSN 1539-5456) is published seven times yearly by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at Herndon, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History*, Volume 10, Number 2 © 2010 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** (800) 219-1187 *or* write to ***WWII History*** Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703. Single copies: $4.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $21.95; Canada and Overseas: $35.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII History*, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101. *WWII History* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

The Filthy Thirteen

BY ARTIST JOEL ISKOWITZ

THE BRAND NEW ART PRINT HONORING WORLD WAR II'S LEGENDARY PARATROOPERS

For the first time ever this famous band of renegades, from which the movie *The Dirty Dozen* was made, comes together in a full life art print as these men prepare for their D-Day jump into Normandy, June 5th, 1944.

Never before has there been a presentation of this famous squad together as a unit prior to their jump. By the next morning, more than half of this stick would be killed or captured during their D-Day mission.

Limited edition prints are now available for purchase, signed by the four remaining members, including their original leader Jake McNiece, along with Jack Agnew, Jack Womer, and Bob Cone. This is the first print ever offered which will bear all four signatures. Contact Victory Art Gallery today to order, and ask about our special "Elite Package" with one-of-a-kind rare items.

TO ORDER, VISIT WWW.VICTORYARTGALLERY.COM
OR CALL: (845) 629-2864 OR (410) 598-8020.

Editorial

Eileen Nearne was the war heroine next door.

TO THE NEIGHBORS, SHE WAS AN ELDERLY WOMAN WHO LIVED AN UNASSUMING life, loved her cats, kept to herself, and seemed even somewhat reclusive.

"Whenever we saw her, she was just very, very quiet," observed Father Jonathan Shaddock, who presided over her funeral at the Catholic church in Torquay, England. "Just said her prayers and then slipped away at the end of mass without having much to do with anybody."

In reality, National Public Radio and other news sources have reported that Eileen Nearne, who died of a heart attack on September 2, at the age of 89, was actually an agent of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) who risked her life in a perilous mission during the Allied buildup of men, matériel, and resistance organization during the months preceding the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944.

Her contribution to the Allied war effort had dimmed with the passing years, and little had been revealed publicly relating to the mission Nearne undertook in March 1944. At the age of 23, she was parachuted into France under cover of darkness to establish a wireless radio transmitting station that would exchange information between leaders of the French Resistance and British military staff members planning Operation Overlord in London. The Associated Press reported that she posed as a French shop girl and helped to coordinate the air drops of supplies and weapons that would be used by the French resistance in support of the Allied landings in Normandy.

Some reports have identified Nearne with the codename of Agent Rose; however, another agent, Andree Peele, may also have used this designation. Shrouded in secrecy from the beginning, some confusion remains on this point.

Born in France, Nearne spoke the language fluently and operated during four crucial months before her arrest by the Gestapo and imprisonment at Ravensbruck concentration camp. After that, she was transferred to a prison camp in Silesia and managed to escape in April 1945. Apprehended shortly afterward, Nearne and two companions were then released by the Germans, having talked their way out of trouble by convincing their enemies that they were not involved in clandestine operations.

When she returned home, Nearne was honored as a Member of the Order of the British Empire and received other decorations and citations for her service. For a while, she lived with her sister Jacqueline, who also had worked for the SOE during World War II. By the time of her death, she was living alone and it was not known whether she had any living relatives. Therefore, Reuters News reported, authorities stepped in several days later and searched her apartment for potential contacts. In the process, medals such as the French Croix de Guerre awarded decades earlier and documents and personal papers yellowed with age revealed Nearne's exploits as a young woman.

"Isn't it ironic that this lady, with her Special Operations Executive training, carried this through for the rest of her life and remained under cover, so much so that we're talking about her with such surprise just after her death," commented John Pentreath of the Royal British Legion, an organization that sees to the welfare of veterans and members of the nation's armed forces. "We began to realize that a large bit of our history has just left us and it is hugely important to us that even now, after she's died, we do something about it, which is what we're going to do at her funeral. We will pay her the honor and respect that she deserves."

A niece did step forward eventually and noted that she had visited her aunt regularly. She also related that Eileen had requested that her body be cremated and her ashes scattered at sea.

The Legion took the lead in organizing the memorial service for Nearne. According to the *New York Times,* her body had not been discovered for several days and had been destined for a pauper's grave, or council burial, as they are called in Britain.

To the end, Eileen had demonstrated what it means to be a good spy. She did her duty during wartime and kept her secrets always.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

Volume 10 ■ Number 2

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100
McLean, VA 222101-4554

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE
AND BUSINESS OFFICE:
1000 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 300
Williamsport, PA 17701
(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

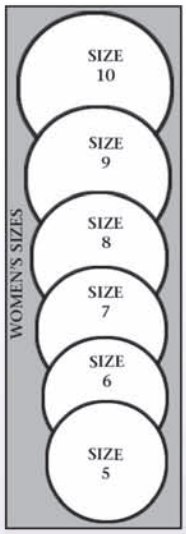
"...classic! The [Stauer] tanzanite are a beautiful shade of violet blue...full of color!"
— Praise for Stauer Tanzanite from C. of Missouri

Endangered Gem Disappearing

Tanzanite is found in only one remote spot on Earth, and it's 1,000 times rarer than diamonds. Experts say the mines will soon run dry forever, but today you can own more than 1 carat for ***Better Than FREE!***

Time is running out. Geological experts predict the world's supply of tantalizing tanzanite will disappear in a matter of just a few years. Maybe sooner. High-end retailers are raising prices on this rare stone. And gem dealers are in a mad scramble to secure their claim before it's too late. Let them scramble.

Our buyer recently secured a huge cache of beautiful rare tanzanite, the precious stone loved for its vivid violet-blue color. Today you can own over 1 carat of this rare stone (1,000 times rarer than diamonds) in our spectacular ***Tanzanite Cluster Ring*** with a suggested retail of $795 for only **$95**. Want to learn how to get this magnificent ring for **Better Than Free**...read on.



USING THE RING SIZE CHART
Place one of her rings on top of one of the circle diagrams. Her ring size is the circle that matches the inside diameter of the ring diagram. If her ring falls between sizes, order the next larger size.

Order the exclusive ***Tanzanite Cluster Ring (1 1/5 ctw)*** for $95 and we'll give you a ***$100 Stauer Gift Coupon***. That's right. You pay $95 and you get the Tanzanite Ring AND $100 toward your next Stauer purchase. This is our impossible **Better Than FREE** offer.

It started with a lightning bolt. One strike set the African plains on fire and uncovered a secret that was buried for more than 585 million years. Tanzanite naturally occurs in only one place on Earth: Tanzania's remote Merelani Hills, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro.

World's most endangered gem. Top-quality tanzanites can often fetch higher prices than diamonds. But, once the last purple gem is pulled from that remote spot beneath Kilimanjaro, that's it. No more tanzanite.

Reserve your piece of gem history. If you go online right now, you'll find one of the largest retailers selling tanzanite rings for well over $2,000 each. Ridiculous. Instead, you can secure your own piece of limited-edition tanzanite history at the right price.

Better Than FREE and Guaranteed. Our **Better Than FREE** offer is so consumer friendly that we have earned an **A+ Rating** with the Better Business Bureau. But, why a $100 Gift Coupon with your $95 purchase? It's simple. We want you to come back to Stauer for all of your jewelry and watch purchases. If you are not 100% delighted with your ring, send it back within 30 days for a full refund of the purchase price. Just remember that the odds of finding this stone at this price ever again is like waiting for lightning to strike the same place twice.

JEWELRY SPECS:
- 1 1/5 ctw tanzanite
- Rhodium-layered .925 sterling silver setting
- Ring sizes 5–10

Tanzanite Cluster Ring (1 1/5 ctw)—~~$795~~ **$95** + S&P *PLUS*

***Better Than FREE*—Receive a $100 Stauer Gift Coupon with the purchase of the Tanzanite Cluster Ring.**

Call now to take advantage of this limited offer.

1-888-870-7339

Promotional Code CTR232-01
Please mention this code when you call.

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS Stauer has a **Better Business Bureau Rating** of A+

Stauer® 14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. CTR232-01
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337
www.stauer.com

Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices

Dispatches

Value of World War II History

Dear Editor:

I am an eighth-grader. I am also a Boy Scout in Troop 456 in Wildwood, Missouri. I read your magazine a lot. I think World War II history is important to know because a lot of soldiers fought and died for freedom in our country. I also like your magazine because I like learning about the weapons, ships, different tanks, and different vehicles used in World War II.

Thank you for publishing *World War II History*.

Dan Underwood
Eureka, Missouri

A-26 Invader vs. B-26

Dear Editor:

I was very surprised to read the article, "Doolittle Raiders Return to Combat" (December 2010 issue).

I flew with the 319th Bomb Group in World War II. I was actually a late comer to the group, not flying a B-26 or a B-25, but rather an A-26 Invader. Colonel Holzapple was our group commanding officer—I flew with the 437th Squadron. I recall vividly how the older members bragged about the B-26s, but before the war was over, they acquired a new respect for the Invader.

By the way, the B-26s were made for the most part right here in Maryland at the Glen Martin plant where all my family worked.

Irving Distenfeld
Baltimore, Maryland

Communist Rules for Revolution

Dear Editor:

I believe Joseph Kavacic's story about the killings after the war (Dispatches, October 2010 issue). I wasn't there, but his story rings true.

I served in Austria during the occupation for all of 1946. Here we had no problems, no trouble. I served with our 3/4 Cav, changed to the 24th Constabulary. After serving in the U.S. Army for 26 years, I retired on August 1, 1972. I have read and learned much about our military history.

One reason I agree with Kavacic is because of a document I received from an old lady in the 1980s. Entitled "Communist Rules for Revolution," the document was captured in Dusseldorf in May 1919 by the Allied Forces. It lists nine steps to attaining that goal:

1. Corrupt the young: get them away from religion. Get them interested in sex. Make them superficial; destroy their ruggedness.

2. Get control of all means of publicity. Get people's minds off their government by focusing their attention on athletics, sexy books, plays, and other trivialities.

3. Divide the people into hostile groups by constantly harping on controversial matters of no importance.

4. Destroy the people's faith in their natural leaders by holding the latter up to contempt, ridicule and obloquy.

5. Always preach true democracy, but seize power as fast and as ruthlessly as possible.

6. By encouraging government extravagance, destroy its credit, produce fear of inflation with rising prices and general discontent.

7. Foment unnecessary strikes in vital industries, encourage civil disorders, and foster a lenient and soft attitude on the part of government toward such disorders.

8. By specious argument cause a breakdown of the old moral virtues: honesty, sobriety, continence, faith in the pledged word, ruggedness.

9. Cause the registration of all firearms on some pretext with a view of confiscation of them and leaving the population helpless.

Today, here in America, it appears all but one have been completed, or mostly. The only one left is the confiscation of all guns.

Russia may have been the birthplace of communism, but it has spread like a cancer.

Jack L. Daniels
DeRidder, Louisiana

Mausers in Ireland

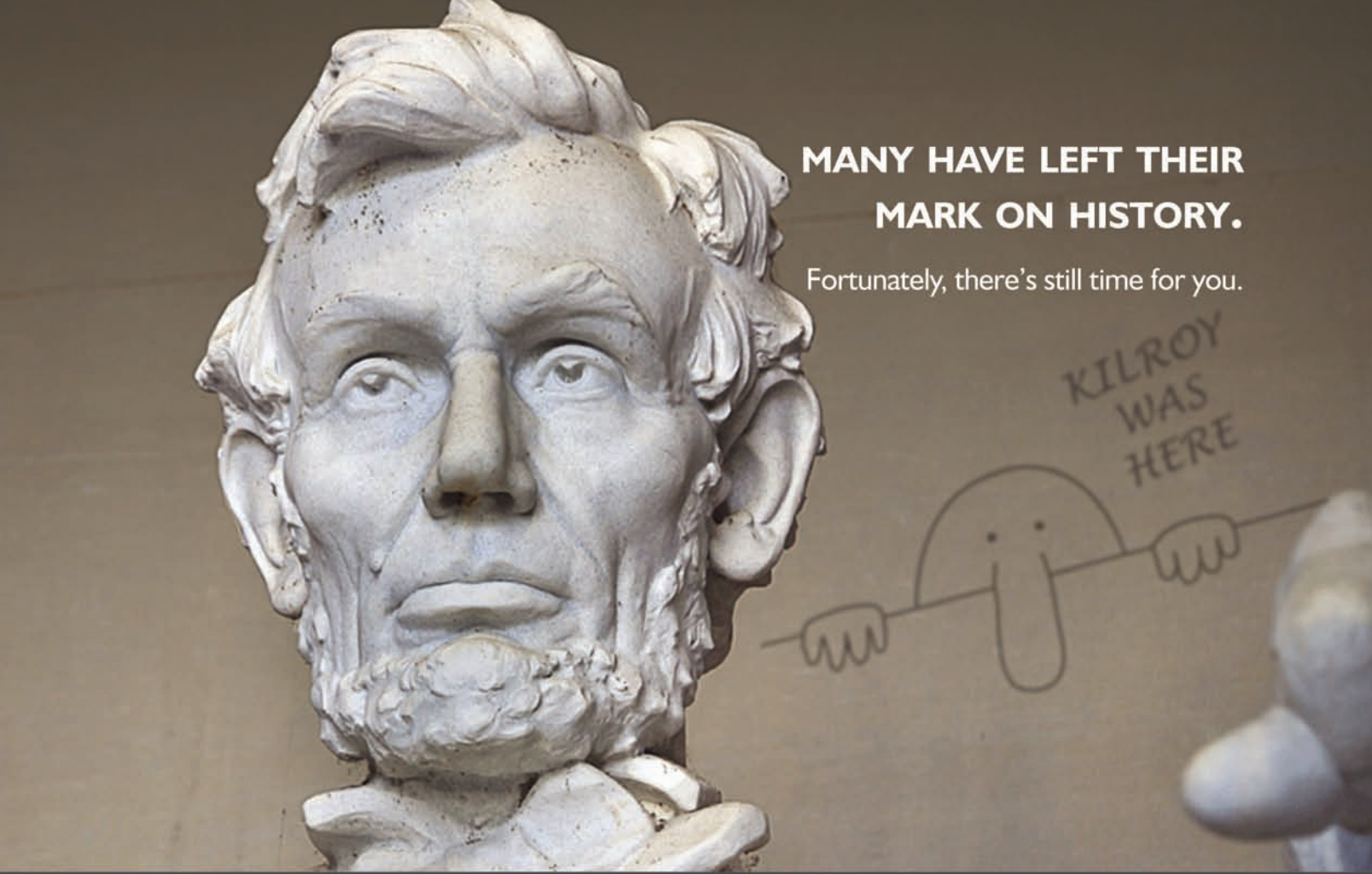
Dear Editor:

Mauser rifles (Ordnance, May 2010) were never used by the Defense Forces of the Irish Republic from the time of their inception in 1922. Initially they were armed with the Mk III .303 in. Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifle before progressing to the .303 in. No. 4 rifle which replaced it. In the 1960s bolt action rifles were replaced by the 7.62mm FN semi-automatic rifle which remained in service until the 1980s when it was replaced by the Steyr AUG 5.56mm rifle which is the current one in use by both the Permanent Defense Force and the Reserve Defense Force, formerly known as the F.C.A.

The writer is perhaps thinking of the 1500 single shot M1871 Mauser rifles landed at Howth, Co. Dublin and Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, in July and August 1914 along with 42,000 rounds of ammunition by the Irish Volunteers at the height of the "Home Rule Crisis." The Irish Volunteers used most of these rifles during the 1916 Easter Week Rising with the majority being seized by the authorities when the surrender order was issued.

James M. Scannell
2/Lt (Ret) 21 Inf Bn FCA
Dublin, Ireland

Note: Opinions expressed in "Dispatches" do not represent those of the writers, editors, or staff of WWII History *or Sovereign Media.* WWII History *welcomes your letters which must be signed and include a telephone number for verification. Letters must be brief and of general interest to our readership. Write to: WWII History, 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101-4554; fax to 703-964-0366, or e-mail: dispatch @wwiihistory magazine.com.*



American Military University offers 100% online undergraduate and graduate degree programs in history and military history that allow students to choose from a general program of study to areas of concentration ranging from "Ancient and Classical History" to "War Since 1945." These affordable programs are designed for working adults who seek to balance academic study with work and family commitments without sacrificing the quality of their education.

Convenient & Affordable

- 100% Online, with flexible weekly schedules
- 8 and 16 week courses start monthly
- Small class sizes—no cohorts
- No on-campus residency requirements

SLOAN-C AWARD WINNER

2009 & 2010 Effective Practices Award
2009 Ralph E. Gomory Award for Quality Online Education

AMU

LEARN MORE AT amuonline.com/history

OR CALL 877.777.9081

American Military University **Push your mind. Advance your career.**

By Michael D. Hull

Library of Congress

An American half-track with a field artillery piece in tow hits the beach in Normandy, while a jeep follows closely behind. The mass movement of men and supplies for the Allied armies in Normandy was facilitated by the artificial Mulberry harbors.

D-Day's Concrete Fleet

The Mulberry artificial harbors proved a logistical wonder along the beaches of Normandy.

NO ALLIED AMPHIBIOUS INVASION IN WORLD WAR II LEFT SUCH A BITTER legacy as Operation Jubilee, the ill-fated British-Canadian raid on the northern French port of Dieppe on Wednesday, August 19, 1942.

Despite partial successes to the west and the east, the main assault on the shingled beaches by 5,000 men of General Pip Roberts's Canadian 2nd Infantry Division, 1,000 British Commandos met resistance far more fierce than expected. Many of the Canadians in the landing craft were casualties before they reached shore, and the troops and Churchill tanks that did land were pinned down by heavy German fire and blocked by obstacles. They never reached the town itself.

Almost none of the enemy installations marked for destruction was reached, and only a portion of the landing force—which included a handful of Free French soldiers and U.S. Rangers—could be evacuated. Many Allied prisoners were taken. The losses were heavy: 3,600 men dead or captured and 30 tanks, 33 landing craft, a Royal Navy destroyer, and 106 aircraft destroyed. The "reconnaissance in force"—devised to provide battle experience for the untried Canadian troops and to learn about German port defense methods—was classified a disaster that tarnished the reputation of its architect, the handsome, dashing Lord Louis Mountbatten, chief of Combined Operations.

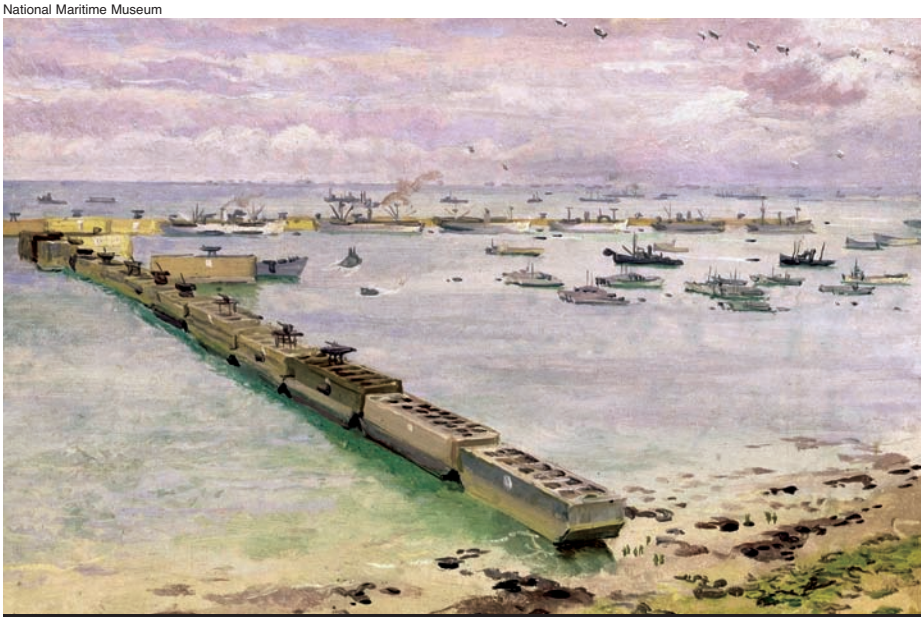
Yet Operation Jubilee provided important lessons for Allied planners about the difficulty of capturing a defended port and the necessity for a preliminary bombardment and adequate equipment for beach landings. Whether the lessons were worth the price paid for them has been debated ever since.

The first and most important lesson drawn from the Dieppe assault was that the Allies could not be confident of seizing a usable port in the early stages of a future—and inevitable —invasion of the European continent. Although the British Army had long experience in expeditionary warfare, it was generally believed that a port was needed to disembark forces. The Germans, with little experience in amphibious tactics, remained convinced that any Allied invasion armada would be directed on a port so that its facilities could be brought into early use. Thus, German thinking remained focused on defending harbors and, should their capture seem likely, destroying such facilities in order to deny them to invaders. Even long after Dieppe, the Germans concluded that the Allies, when they came, would land near a port and then envelop it.

Returning from Dieppe on that fateful August 19, Royal Navy Commodore John Hughes-Hallett, a member of Mountbatten's staff, was heard to comment, "Well, if we can't capture a port, we will have to take one with us."

Soon, stimulus was given to an ingenious strategic concept that would increasingly concern the Allied planners working on a second front. It was the concept of an artificial harbor, an intriguing idea but not a new one. As early as 1917, First Sea Lord Winston Churchill had considered the possibility of a prefabricated harbor for seizing the German Frisian Islands. Guy Maunsell, an engineer, showed Hughes-Hallett plans for an artificial breakwater as early as 1940; Tipperary-born Professor John D. Bernal, known as "The Sage" at Cambridge University, devised a plan for a floating harbor;

National Maritime Museum



ABOVE: In this painting by artist Stephen Bone, the Mulberry harbor at Arromanches, France, is the scene of a flurry of activity. BELOW: In this aerial view of a Mulberry harbor, the breakwaters and piers of the artificial harbor are plainly visible.

National Archives

and in December 1941, staffers at Mountbatten's Combined Operations headquarters were studying a scheme for creating sheltered water.

Three months before the debacle at Dieppe, the fertile-minded Churchill, now the British prime minister, resurrected his 1917 plan in a secret May 30, 1942, minute entitled, "Piers for Use on Beaches." He wrote, "They must float up and down with the tide. The anchor problem must be answered…. Let me have the best solution worked out. Don't argue the matter. The difficulties will argue for themselves."

Thus, from the carnage of Dieppe would be developed the concept of the two "Mulberry harbors" which would play a crucial role in Operation Overlord, the great Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander who would lead the British, American, and Canadian Armies on the European continent, recalled, "The first time I heard this idea [Mulberry] tentatively advanced was by Admiral Mountbatten in the spring of 1942. At a conference attended by a number of service chiefs, he remarked, 'If ports are not available, we may have to construct them in pieces and tow them in.' Hoots and jeers greeted his suggestion, but two years later it was to become reality." The code-name, Mulberry, was chosen because it would not reveal the character or purpose of the secret project.

The concept was discussed in detail by Lt. Gen. Frederick E. Morgan, Eisenhower's able top planner, and his COSSAC (chief of staff to the supreme Allied commander) team, and it was agreed that the invasion would require the facilities of a harbor the size of Dover, Kent. COSSAC envisioned an assault on lightly held beaches "bringing a couple of artificial harbors with us." An important factor considered by the planners was the critical Allied shortage of landing craft.

The building of the Mulberry harbors presented an enormous challenge to the British midway through the war. "The whole project involved the construction in Britain of great masses of special equipment, amounting in aggregate to over a million tons of steel and concrete," said Prime Minister Churchill during the early stages. "This work, undertaken with the highest priority, would impinge heavily on our already hard-pressed engineering and ship-repairing industries. All this equipment would have to be transported by sea to the scene of action, and there erected with the utmost expedition in the face of enemy attack and the vagaries of the weather." High winds and ferocious gales can whip up in a few hours in the English Channel, and the spring tides there have a play of 30 feet.

"The whole project was majestic," said Churchill. "On the beaches themselves would be the great piers with their seaward ends afloat and sheltered. At these piers, coasters and landing craft would be able to discharge at all states of the tide. To protect them against the wanton winds and waves, breakwaters would be spread in a great arc to seaward, enclosing a large area of sheltered water. Thus sheltered, deep-draught ships could lie at anchor and discharge, and all types of landing craft could ply freely to and from the beaches. These breakwaters would be composed of sunken concrete caissons known as 'Phoenixes' and blockships known as 'Gooseberries.'"

But there was much skepticism for the Mulberry harbors, particularly from the Americans on the Operation Overlord planning staff, and it was not until a Combined Operations conference, code-named Rattle, at Largs in central Scotland early in 1943 that acceptance first came for the ambitious concept. There, Commodore Hughes-Hallett and Royal Navy Captain Tom Hussey provided the necessary "ray of hope" as they argued the case and outlined the whole scheme. Many bright ideas were studied in wrestling with the problem of beating the English Channel and the German defenders of northern France at the same time. One of the most original suggestions was to create an artificial breakwater from a wall of bubbles released from the seabed, but this was abandoned as being far too risky.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: On the day after the successful Allied landings in Normandy, 23 old freighters were towed to the French coast and sunk bow to stern to form the outer breakwater of a Mulberry harbor. BELOW: In the wake of the savage storm that struck the Mulberries, small craft, vehicles, and components of the harbors themselves lie in shambles. One Mulberry was rendered completely useless by the violent weather.

The final plan called for a breakwater created by sunken blockships and the construction of an outer sea wall comprising huge concrete boxes—Phoenixes—some the size of three-story buildings. There would also be floating roadways, called Whales, made of articulated steel sections capable of moving with the 23-foot Normandy tide. At the end of each roadway would be a pier known as a Spud. In addition to the two Mulberry harbors, even more blockships were to be used to create five Gooseberries, which were sheltered anchorages for landing craft, one off each of the five assault beaches.

Among the planners, according to Churchill, "imagination, contrivance, and experiment had been ceaseless," and by August 1943 a complete design had been drawn up for two full-scale temporary harbors that could be towed across the Channel from southern England to France and put into use within a few days of the initial Overlord landings. The project was demonstrated that month for the British Chiefs of Staff as they and Churchill crossed the Atlantic Ocean aboard the liner *Queen Mary* for the Quebec summit conference in September 1943.

Senior officers crowded into one of the vessel's luxurious bathrooms for a simple demonstration by Professor Bernal and one of Lord Mountbatten's scientific advisers. Standing on a toilet seat, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, invited his colleagues to imagine the shallow end of the bath as a beachhead. With the assistance of Navy Lt. Cmdr. D.A. Grant, Professor Bernal then floated a fleet of 20 little ships made from newspaper. Grant used a back brush to make waves, and the fleet sank.

Then, a Mae West lifebelt was inflated and placed in the bath to represent a harbor. The paper fleet was placed inside it. Once again, Commander Grant applied his brush vigorously to create waves, but they failed to sink the paper ships. The experiment convinced the officers of the importance of sheltered water and Mulberry harbors.

The proposal was outlined in Quebec before Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The British pressed the idea, and the Joint Chiefs eventually agreed to the construction of two such harbors—"Mulberry A" for the American landing forces and "Mulberry B" for the British and Canadians. The latter harbor was nicknamed "Port Winston." In a memorandum, the Joint Chiefs wrote, "This project is so vital that it might be described as the crux of the whole [Normandy invasion] operation. It must not fail."

The specifications were formidable. By D-Day plus 21 days, the two harbors were to be capable of shifting 12,000 tons of cargo and 2,500 vehicles a day. They would have to cope with the full 26-foot draft of Liberty ships and provide a shelter for landing craft in foul weather. Furthermore, each harbor had to have a minimum life of 90 days in order to funnel ashore as much manpower and matériel as possible before the Allied armies could secure a port. The artificial harbors were to be ready by May 1, 1944. The mammoth undertaking was to be completed in a mere eight months.

The Gooseberries were the brainchild of Rear Admiral William Tennant, who from January 1943 onward was in command of the planning, preparation, towing, and placement of the Mulberry harbors. He had a stormy relationship with the Admiralty, which was reluctant to release any usable ships to be sunk as blockships to protect the artificial harbors. Tennant determined that he needed 60 old merchant vessels and warships. At one stage, his deputy said of their lordships at the Admiralty, "We came here to get a Gooseberry, and all we seem to have got is a raspberry!" Admiral Tennant eventually got his 60 blockships. Among them were the 1911 French battleship *Courbet* and a Dutch cruiser. Assembled in Scotland and loaded with explosive charges, the blockships were to be sunk off the Normandy beaches.

Building the Mulberries strained the administrative capabilities of the senior British Army officer, Maj. Gen. Sir Harold Wernher, who reported, "Perhaps the greatest difficulty in getting the project underway after the plan was approved was the vast number of interested parties who had to be consulted or thought they

ought to be consulted." A team was assembled comprising "three of the best brains from the consultant engineers in Britain, and alongside them were placed leading contractors in naval installation together with British and American officers." At first, the team was in almost continuous session trying to solve the critical problem of designing the outer breakwater.

The largest type of Phoenix caisson that the contractors eventually designed was 200 feet long, 60 feet high, and weighed more than 6,000 tons. More than 213 of all types were built, which required more than a million tons of reinforced concrete and 70,000 tons of steel reinforcement. The piers, code-named bombardons, were attached to massive steel pylons that rested on the seabed. In accordance with Churchill's directive, the piers did indeed "float up and down with the tide"—assisted by an ingenious system of hydraulic jacks. Linking the piers to the land were the floating roadways made up of steel pontoon bridges (the Whales). The floating roadways and Mulberry anchor systems were designed by Lieutenant Allan Beckett of the Royal Engineers.

Dozens of construction companies and 200,000 workers toiled at London, Tilbury, Woolwich, Barking, Portsmouth, Southampton, Middlesbrough, and other ports all over England to complete the artificial harbors in time for D-Day. In all, the two Mulberries required about two million tons of concrete and prefabricated steel. There were about 623,000 tons of reinforced concrete in 147 caissons. Huge excavations were carved out in the banks of the Thames and Medway Rivers to allow the great Phoenix units to be built, and 200 tugboats were deployed to haul the harbor parts to their moorings. The whole project was estimated to cost 25 million pounds for the eight-month period.

Led by Sir Bruce White, a World War I Army veteran and former harbor builder, the Royal Engineers supervised the construction phases, while the Royal Navy took care of planning, delivery, and assembly operations. Various segments of the Mulberry structures were stockpiled in streams and inlets around the English coast before their assembly, some within range of German long-range guns at Calais, France. This was a deliberate deception to confuse the enemy about the planned invasion route.

The great project went ahead under tight security. The harbors were built in sections ready for towing to the French coast. One of the Mulberries was to be set up off Omaha Beach at St. Laurent-sur-Mer in the U.S. V Corps landing area, and Port Winston was to be assembled at Arromanches in the British-Canadian-Free French sector of the Normandy beaches. Although the concept appeared simple, the execution was complex and required the skills of many engineers to put the harbors in place. That the entire project took only eight months to complete was signal testimony to the capacity of British industry, already stretched to the limit by four years of war.

Secrecy was so stringent that many of the Mulberry component builders did not know what they were working on. When a rumor circulated in the assembly yards that the concrete monoliths were in some way merely destined for the postwar building trade, a senior British officer was sent from Whitehall to reassure the workers that they were in fact doing vital war work. German intelligence did not know what was happening in the southern English ports, although it was certain that the concrete structures must be floating moorings or fuel storage tanks for use in the coming invasion.

Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce), the sardonic-voiced, Brooklyn-born German broadcaster, confidently told British listeners in May 1944, "We know what you're doing with those caissons. You intend to sink them off the coast when the attack takes place. Well, chaps, we've decided to help you. We'll save you trouble and sink the caissons before you arrive."

A week before the day of the long-awaited invasion, the blockships were scheduled to sail from Scotland to rendezvous with the rest of the Mulberry components. The invasion would be dependent on the successful functioning of the harbors, but until there was the chance to test one in action, none of the planners, engineers, or builders knew just what their capabilities were. That test would not happen until the Mulberries were actually positioned on the other side of the English Channel.

A fortunate accident to one of the Mulberry units averted what might have been a major disaster for the Allies at Normandy. One of the hulking concrete Phoenixes went aground at the Brambles near the southern English port of Southampton. Engineers started to pump it out in order to refloat it, but discovered that they could not raise it because the pumps were not strong enough. A salvage expert was found, along with additional heavy-duty pumps.

Marshaling sufficient tugs powerful enough to pull the giant caissons against the Channel currents proved a major headache for the Royal Navy, but eventually 150 boats were found to be suitable for the crossing and were moved from sites at Portland, Poole, Plymouth, Selsey, and Dungeness. The tugs were distinguished by a large "M" on their funnels, and their crews took great pride in the designation. The British

tugs were to be assisted by U.S. Army towing launches.

Finally, D-Day arrived, and early on the gray, chill morning of Tuesday, June 6, 1944, British, American, Canadian, and Free French assault troops waded ashore on Gold, Juno, Sword, Utah, and Omaha Beaches at Normandy. The Mulberry harbors and associated Gooseberries were ready to play their part in the massive, meticulously planned Allied crusade. Each harbor, built of two million tons of steel and concrete, enclosed an area the size of Dover, two square miles.

The first convoy of 45 blockships arrived in the assault area at 12:30 PM on June 7, and the sinking of the vessels was started at once. The rest of the Mulberry harbor sections followed in a round-the-clock effort. Convoys of eight Phoenixes, eight bombardons, four pierheads, 10 Whale roadways, and two miscellaneous units were towed across the choppy Channel by the tug fleet. The planned speed of three and a half knots was increased to four and a half to reduce the turnaround time. Losses of 20 to 25 percent were expected on the crossing, but few units sank, apart from half of a floating roadway. The Mulberries were in use even before they were fully assembled. Almost from the moment that the first Gooseberries settled into the sand, ships were unloading behind them, protected from the Channel waves.

Great skill was required in assembling the two harbors on the Normandy coast. A key blockship had first to be sunk precisely in position. The initial attempt to do this at Mulberry B failed; the tugs at the stern of the first ship, the *Alynbank,* let go early. As she was settling down more slowly than planned, the tide turned and swung the *Alynbank* at right angles to the required position. But this turned out for the best because she formed a useful shelter from the west. At Mulberry A, the positioning of blockships went ahead at a faster pace. At the end of the first week, it was decided to plant an extra Phoenix there. But this was undertaken in failing light and falling tide, and the result was a large unit positioned too close to the main harbor entrance.

The objective of the Mulberry harbors was to disembark 3,000 tons of stores a day by D-Day + 4; 7,000 tons of stores and 2,500 vehicles daily by D-Day + 8, and finally 12,000 tons of stores and 2,500 unwaterproofed vehicles a day. Men, vehicles, equipment, and supplies rolled through the two harbors, and within the first two weeks after D-Day, 20 fighting divisions and more than a million men were ashore.

From June 15 to 18, a total of 15,774 British and 18,938 U.S. troops were landed every day, along with an average of 2,000 vehicles and 25,000 tons of stores. The enemy defenders on the Normandy shore were outnumbered locally, but they were still formidable and put up stiff resistance in front of the Allied armies. Reinforcing these men was crucial, but the weather was about to throw a wrench in the works. Channel storms had delayed the invasion by a day, and they were to play havoc again with Allied operations.

On June 16 and 17, the seas became too rough for towing operations, and on the 18th a special effort was made to make up for lost time. Four Phoenix caissons and 23 Whale tows set out from England, but the weather worsened and 11 of the Whales were lost on the way to Normandy. One of the caissons ran aground.

The American Mulberry appeared to be well protected, and on June 18, the day that it opened for business, the weather was fine. But that evening, the barometer began to fall. Next day, the wind and waves increased, and a major Channel gale erupted at 3 AM on June 19. By early afternoon, the wind was blowing at 30 knots and whipping up eight-foot breakers that pounded Mulberry A and the incomplete British Mulberry B. The bombardons were designed only to resist winds up to this strength, while the Gooseberries could withstand even less. Mulberry A and the incomplete British Mulberry B began to break up.

Fearing that a further deterioration in the weather might destroy the harbors, British Lt. Col. Raymond Mais, who was in charge of the piers and pierheads, issued emergency orders. Moorings were doubled, ships outside the harbors were moved clear of the breakwaters, and the tugboats were provisioned. Five hundred landing craft rode out the storm inside the Arromanches Mulberry, where the blockships had been strengthened with a row of caissons. Major Ronald Cowan of the Royal Engineers reported that it was a storm "such as had not been seen in the Channel for 80 years—second only to the one that smashed the Spanish Armada in 1588."

For four days, the winds screamed like a banshee as the great waves crashed into the harbors, damaging pierheads, washing over and sinking pontoons, twisting piers, dragging anchors, and casting landing craft and other vessels adrift. Six caissons were lost, and piers and roadheads were badly mauled. But the main breakwaters held. Royal Engineer bridge parties and British and U.S. Army tug crews struggled valiantly day and night to keep the harbors intact and corral out-of-control craft. Meanwhile, some unloading continued despite the wind and waves. At Arromanches, British sappers managed to offload vital stores and much-needed ammunition, and even on the worst day they landed 800 tons over the piers. During the four-day storm, 7,000 tons of stores were discharged through Port Winston. Some of the men toiled for more than 40 hours without sleep as the storm raged. None of them would ever forget those four days.

The Americans' harbor was harder hit than Port Winston. The Utah Beach Gooseberry lost several blockships that were torn open, and the Mulberry harbor off St. Laurent was devastated. The breakwaters were overwhelmed by waves, two blockships broke their backs, and only 10 out of 35 Phoenix caissons remained in position. The piers and bombardons were wrecked, and the harbor was eventually abandoned. When the gale finally blew itself out on June 23, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, commander of the U.S. 12th Army Group, went down to the beach to see the damage for himself. "I was appalled by the desolation, for it vastly exceeded that on D-Day," he said.

Port Winston was not much better off. At first light on the day after the storm died, Colonel Mais walked along the battered piers and pierheads, smartly saluting the weary, unshaven soldiers who greeted him. He said nothing, but they understood what he meant and what he felt. Mais reported later, "It was an appalling scene—corpses, smashed equipment, stores strewn everywhere."

Yet, four days after the storm the overall daily discharge at Arromanches had risen to 40,000 tons. The Royal Engineers' official history reported, "The Allied beaches were a sorry and disheartening sight; hundreds, almost thousands, of craft and small ships—some up to 1,000 tons deadweight—were lying on the beaches at and above the high-water mark in a shambles which had to be seen to be believed; craft were actually piled on top of each other two and three deep."

The calamity seriously affected the Allied buildup in the Normandy beachhead, and the arrival of men and supplies fell to a fraction of what the daily average had been before the storm. Bradley's army now had only three days' supply of ammunition left, and Lt. Gen. Miles Dempsey's British Second Army was three divisions behind in its landing schedule.

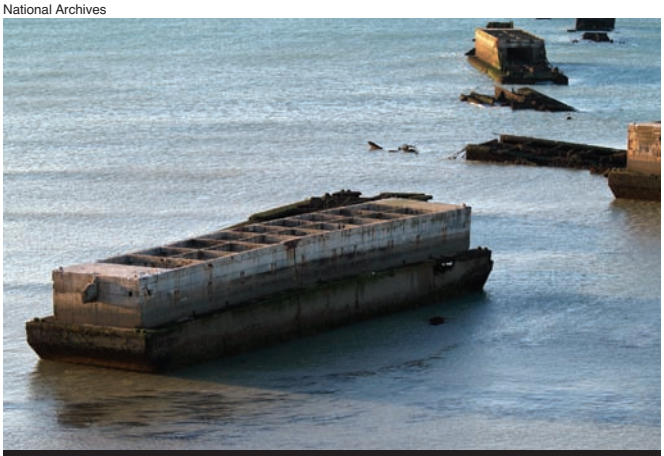
Yet the buildup went on. In 100 days, 2,500,000 men, 500,000 vehicles, and four million tons of supplies were landed at Port Winston. Although planned to operate for only three months that fateful summer of 1944, Mulberry B was still in use eight months after D-Day. By the end of October 1944, when the

Allied armies had broken out into open country—beyond the bocage and the crucible of Caen—and were pressing the Germans eastward through France, 25 percent of the supplies, 20 percent of reinforcements, and 15 percent of vehicles were landed through the Arromanches harbor.

Mulberry A, meanwhile, continued to be used as a sheltered haven without working piers. All matériel was landed by DUKWs (amphibious cargo carriers) and ferries. The rest was either landed on beaches protected by the blockships or went through harbors at Port-en-Bessin, at the junction of the British-U.S. invasion beaches, and Ouistreham at the extreme left of the British sector, and later in the Pas de Calais.

By the end of 1944, Sir Bruce White reported that 220,000 Allied troops and 39,000 assorted vehicles—heavy and medium tanks, tank destroyers, supply trucks, towed artillery, half-tracks, Bren gun carriers, personnel and weapons carriers, armored cars, jeeps, mobile workshops, ambulances, and command cars—had landed dryshod in France.

National Archives



Decades after the D-Day landings, remnants of the Mulberry harbors lie along the beaches of Normandy, mute monuments to the great events of World War II in Western Europe.

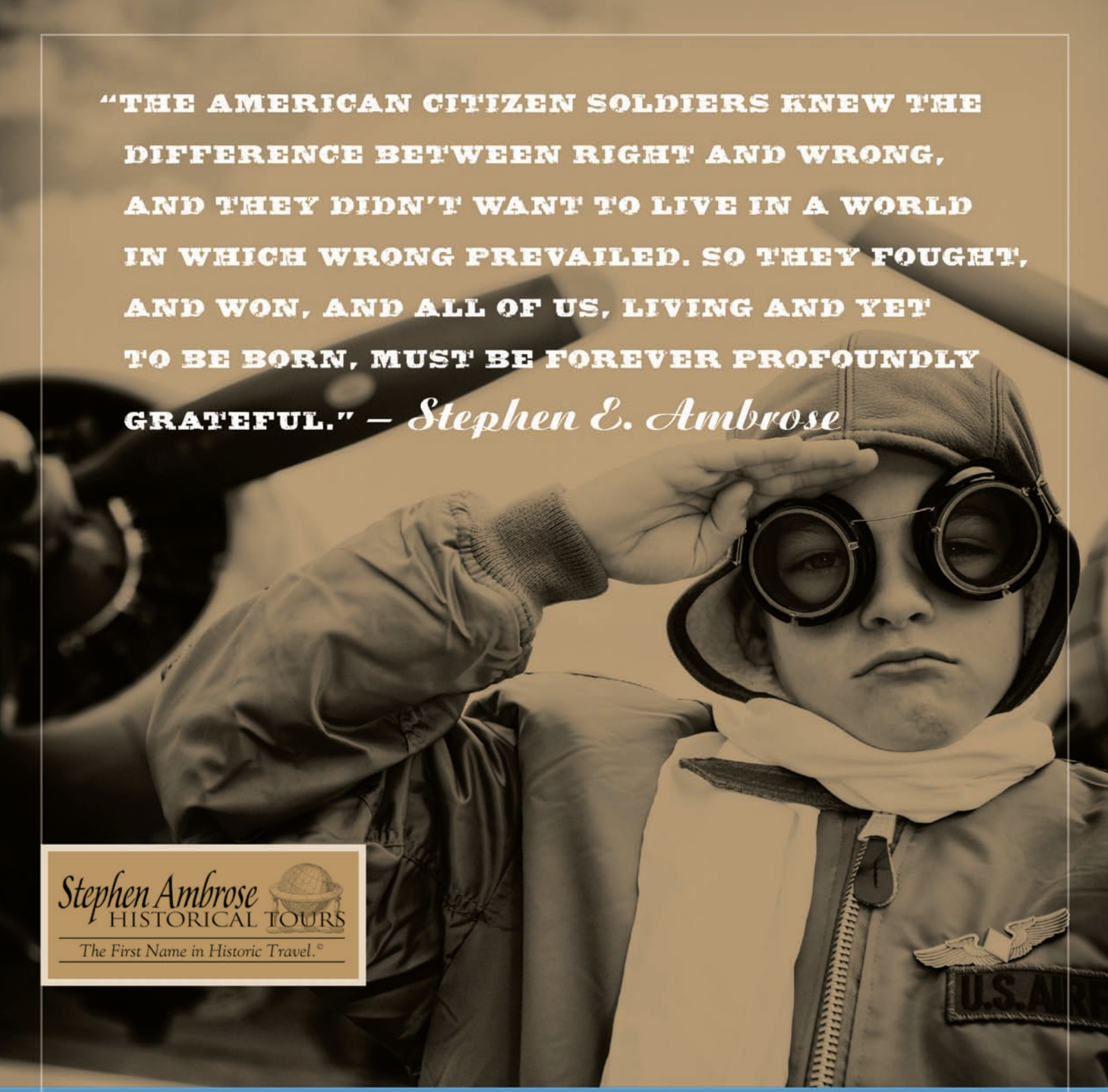
He said, "The invasion of Europe, impossible without the artificial harbors, had been accomplished by British engineering skill."

General Eisenhower declared, "Mulberry exceeded our best hopes," while General Bradley described the project as "one of the most inventive logistical undertakings of the war."

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower's trusted, pipe-smoking deputy, concluded, "The whole question of the invasion of Europe might well have turned on the practicability of these artificial harbors," while the German war production minister, Albert Speer, admitted that the Allies made the Nazis' Atlantic Wall irrelevant because they bypassed it "by means of a single, brilliant technical device."

The Normandy invasion was a "brilliant success" that owed much to the Mulberry harbors, as President Roosevelt pointed out. "You know," he told Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, "that was Churchill's idea. Just one of those brilliant ideas that he has. He has a hundred a day, and about four of them are good. When he was visiting me in Hyde Park, he saw all those boats from the last war tied up in the Hudson River, and he said, 'By George, we could take those ships and others like them that are good for nothing, and sink them offshore to protect the landings.' The military and naval authorities were startled out of a year's growth, but Winnie was right. Great fellow that Churchill, if you can keep up with him." □

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

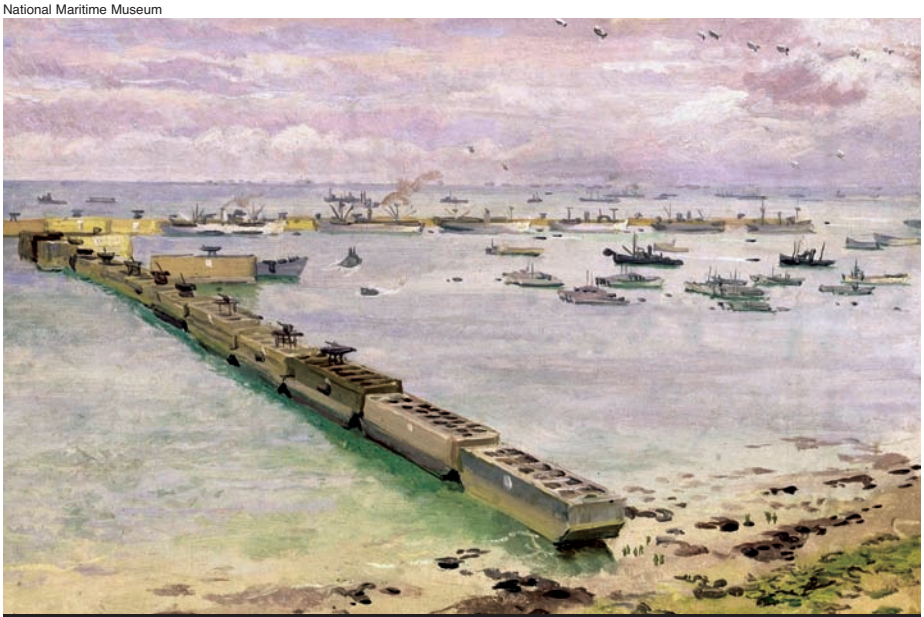


BAND OF BROTHERS | D-DAY TO THE RHINE | IWO JIMA: WAR IN THE PACIFIC | ITALIAN CAMPAIGN | WWII IN POLAND AND GERMANY

Our historians are experts in their field of history and have spent years extensively researching and interviewing hundreds of World War II veterans on the very battlefields on which they fought. To hear them tell these harrowing tales of bravery and courage of America's heroes at the very places where they occurred is the experience of a lifetime.

Visit StephenAmbroseTours.com or call 1.888.903.3329

National Maritime Museum



ABOVE: In this painting by artist Stephen Bone, the Mulberry harbor at Arromanches, France, is the scene of a flurry of activity. BELOW: In this aerial view of a Mulberry harbor, the breakwaters and piers of the artificial harbor are plainly visible.

National Archives

and in December 1941, staffers at Mountbatten's Combined Operations headquarters were studying a scheme for creating sheltered water.

Three months before the debacle at Dieppe, the fertile-minded Churchill, now the British prime minister, resurrected his 1917 plan in a secret May 30, 1942, minute entitled, "Piers for Use on Beaches." He wrote, "They must float up and down with the tide. The anchor problem must be answered…. Let me have the best solution worked out. Don't argue the matter. The difficulties will argue for themselves."

Thus, from the carnage of Dieppe would be developed the concept of the two "Mulberry harbors" which would play a crucial role in Operation Overlord, the great Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander who would lead the British, American, and Canadian Armies on the European continent, recalled, "The first time I heard this idea [Mulberry] tentatively advanced was by Admiral Mountbatten in the spring of 1942. At a conference attended by a number of service chiefs, he remarked, 'If ports are not available, we may have to construct them in pieces and tow them in.' Hoots and jeers greeted his suggestion, but two years later it was to become reality." The code-name, Mulberry, was chosen because it would not reveal the character or purpose of the secret project.

The concept was discussed in detail by Lt. Gen. Frederick E. Morgan, Eisenhower's able top planner, and his COSSAC (chief of staff to the supreme Allied commander) team, and it was agreed that the invasion would require the facilities of a harbor the size of Dover, Kent. COSSAC envisioned an assault on lightly held beaches "bringing a couple of artificial harbors with us." An important factor considered by the planners was the critical Allied shortage of landing craft.

The building of the Mulberry harbors presented an enormous challenge to the British midway through the war. "The whole project involved the construction in Britain of great masses of special equipment, amounting in aggregate to over a million tons of steel and concrete," said Prime Minister Churchill during the early stages. "This work, undertaken with the highest priority, would impinge heavily on our already hard-pressed engineering and ship-repairing industries. All this equipment would have to be transported by sea to the scene of action, and there erected with the utmost expedition in the face of enemy attack and the vagaries of the weather." High winds and ferocious gales can whip up in a few hours in the English Channel, and the spring tides there have a play of 30 feet.

"The whole project was majestic," said Churchill. "On the beaches themselves would be the great piers with their seaward ends afloat and sheltered. At these piers, coasters and landing craft would be able to discharge at all states of the tide. To protect them against the wanton winds and waves, breakwaters would be spread in a great arc to seaward, enclosing a large area of sheltered water. Thus sheltered, deep-draught ships could lie at anchor and discharge, and all types of landing craft could ply freely to and from the beaches. These breakwaters would be composed of sunken concrete caissons known as 'Phoenixes' and blockships known as 'Gooseberries.'"

But there was much skepticism for the Mulberry harbors, particularly from the Americans on the Operation Overlord planning staff, and it was not until a Combined Operations conference, code-named Rattle, at Largs in central Scotland early in 1943 that acceptance first came for the ambitious concept. There, Commodore Hughes-Hallett and Royal Navy Captain Tom Hussey provided the necessary "ray of hope" as they argued the case and outlined the whole scheme. Many bright ideas were studied in wrestling with the problem of beating the English Channel and the German defenders of northern France at the same time. One of the most original suggestions was to create an artificial breakwater from a wall of bubbles released from the seabed, but this was abandoned as being far too risky.

Time travel at the speed of a 1935 Speedster?

The 1930s brought unprecedented innovation in machine-age technology and materials. Industrial designers from the auto industry translated the principles of aerodynamics and streamlining into everyday objects like radios and toasters. It was also a decade when an unequaled variety of watch cases and movements came into being. In lieu of hands to tell time, one such complication, called a jumping mechanism, utilized numerals on a disc viewed through a window. With its striking resemblance to the dashboard gauges and radio dials of the decade, the jump hour watch was indeed "in tune" with the times!

The Stauer *1930s Dashtronic* deftly blends the modern functionality of a 21-jewel automatic movement and 3-ATM water resistance with the distinctive, retro look of a jumping display (not an actual jumping complication). The stainless steel 1 1/2" case is complemented with a black alligator-embossed leather band. The band is 9 1/2" long and will fit a 7–8 1/2" wrist.

True to Machine Art esthetics, the sleek brushed stainless steel case is clear on the back, allowing a peek at the inner workings.

Try the Stauer *1930s Dashtronic* Watch for 30 days and if you are not receiving compliments, please return the watch for a full refund of the purchase price. If you have an appreciation for classic design with precision accuracy, the *1930s Dashtronic* Watch is built for you. This watch is a limited edition, so please act quickly. Our last two limited edition watches are totally sold out!

Not Available in Stores

Stauer 1930s Dashtronic Watch **$99** +S&H ***or***

3 easy credit card payments of $33 +S&H

Call now to take advantage of this limited offer.

1-800-859-1602

Promotional Code DRW621-02
Please mention this code when you call.

Stauer
Heritage of Art & Science

14101 Southcross Drive W.,
Dept. DRW621-02
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337
www.stauer.com

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: On the day after the successful Allied landings in Normandy, 23 old freighters were towed to the French coast and sunk bow to stern to form the outer breakwater of a Mulberry harbor. BELOW: In the wake of the savage storm that struck the Mulberries, small craft, vehicles, and components of the harbors themselves lie in shambles. One Mulberry was rendered completely useless by the violent weather.

The final plan called for a breakwater created by sunken blockships and the construction of an outer sea wall comprising huge concrete boxes—Phoenixes—some the size of three-story buildings. There would also be floating roadways, called Whales, made of articulated steel sections capable of moving with the 23-foot Normandy tide. At the end of each roadway would be a pier known as a Spud. In addition to the two Mulberry harbors, even more blockships were to be used to create five Gooseberries, which were sheltered anchorages for landing craft, one off each of the five assault beaches.

Among the planners, according to Churchill, "imagination, contrivance, and experiment had been ceaseless," and by August 1943 a complete design had been drawn up for two full-scale temporary harbors that could be towed across the Channel from southern England to France and put into use within a few days of the initial Overlord landings. The project was demonstrated that month for the British Chiefs of Staff as they and Churchill crossed the Atlantic Ocean aboard the liner *Queen Mary* for the Quebec summit conference in September 1943.

Senior officers crowded into one of the vessel's luxurious bathrooms for a simple demonstration by Professor Bernal and one of Lord Mountbatten's scientific advisers. Standing on a toilet seat, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, invited his colleagues to imagine the shallow end of the bath as a beachhead. With the assistance of Navy Lt. Cmdr. D.A. Grant, Professor Bernal then floated a fleet of 20 little ships made from newspaper. Grant used a back brush to make waves, and the fleet sank.

Then, a Mae West lifebelt was inflated and placed in the bath to represent a harbor. The paper fleet was placed inside it. Once again, Commander Grant applied his brush vigorously to create waves, but they failed to sink the paper ships. The experiment convinced the officers of the importance of sheltered water and Mulberry harbors.

The proposal was outlined in Quebec before Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The British pressed the idea, and the Joint Chiefs eventually agreed to the construction of two such harbors—"Mulberry A" for the American landing forces and "Mulberry B" for the British and Canadians. The latter harbor was nicknamed "Port Winston." In a memorandum, the Joint Chiefs wrote, "This project is so vital that it might be described as the crux of the whole [Normandy invasion] operation. It must not fail."

The specifications were formidable. By D-Day plus 21 days, the two harbors were to be capable of shifting 12,000 tons of cargo and 2,500 vehicles a day. They would have to cope with the full 26-foot draft of Liberty ships and provide a shelter for landing craft in foul weather. Furthermore, each harbor had to have a minimum life of 90 days in order to funnel ashore as much manpower and matériel as possible before the Allied armies could secure a port. The artificial harbors were to be ready by May 1, 1944. The mammoth undertaking was to be completed in a mere eight months.

The Gooseberries were the brainchild of Rear Admiral William Tennant, who from January 1943 onward was in command of the planning, preparation, towing, and placement of the Mulberry harbors. He had a stormy relationship with the Admiralty, which was reluctant to release any usable ships to be sunk as blockships to protect the artificial harbors. Tennant determined that he needed 60 old merchant vessels and warships. At one stage, his deputy said of their lordships at the Admiralty, "We came here to get a Gooseberry, and all we seem to have got is a raspberry!" Admiral Tennant eventually got his 60 blockships. Among them were the 1911 French battleship *Courbet* and a Dutch cruiser. Assembled in Scotland and loaded with explosive charges, the blockships were to be sunk off the Normandy beaches.

Building the Mulberries strained the administrative capabilities of the senior British Army officer, Maj. Gen. Sir Harold Wernher, who reported, "Perhaps the greatest difficulty in getting the project underway after the plan was approved was the vast number of interested parties who had to be consulted or thought they

ought to be consulted." A team was assembled comprising "three of the best brains from the consultant engineers in Britain, and alongside them were placed leading contractors in naval installation together with British and American officers." At first, the team was in almost continuous session trying to solve the critical problem of designing the outer breakwater.

The largest type of Phoenix caisson that the contractors eventually designed was 200 feet long, 60 feet high, and weighed more than 6,000 tons. More than 213 of all types were built, which required more than a million tons of reinforced concrete and 70,000 tons of steel reinforcement. The piers, code-named bombardons, were attached to massive steel pylons that rested on the seabed. In accordance with Churchill's directive, the piers did indeed "float up and down with the tide"—assisted by an ingenious system of hydraulic jacks. Linking the piers to the land were the floating roadways made up of steel pontoon bridges (the Whales). The floating roadways and Mulberry anchor systems were designed by Lieutenant Allan Beckett of the Royal Engineers.

Dozens of construction companies and 200,000 workers toiled at London, Tilbury, Woolwich, Barking, Portsmouth, Southampton, Middlesbrough, and other ports all over England to complete the artificial harbors in time for D-Day. In all, the two Mulberries required about two million tons of concrete and prefabricated steel. There were about 623,000 tons of reinforced concrete in 147 caissons. Huge excavations were carved out in the banks of the Thames and Medway Rivers to allow the great Phoenix units to be built, and 200 tugboats were deployed to haul the harbor parts to their moorings. The whole project was estimated to cost 25 million pounds for the eight-month period.

Led by Sir Bruce White, a World War I Army veteran and former harbor builder, the Royal Engineers supervised the construction phases, while the Royal Navy took care of planning, delivery, and assembly operations. Various segments of the Mulberry structures were stockpiled in streams and inlets around the English coast before their assembly, some within range of German long-range guns at Calais, France. This was a deliberate deception to confuse the enemy about the planned invasion route.

The great project went ahead under tight security. The harbors were built in sections ready for towing to the French coast. One of the Mulberries was to be set up off Omaha Beach at St. Laurent-sur-Mer in the U.S. V Corps landing area, and Port Winston was to be assembled at Arromanches in the British-Canadian-Free French sector of the Normandy beaches. Although the concept appeared simple, the execution was complex and required the skills of many engineers to put the harbors in place. That the entire project took only eight months to complete was signal testimony to the capacity of British industry, already stretched to the limit by four years of war.

Secrecy was so stringent that many of the Mulberry component builders did not know what they were working on. When a rumor circulated in the assembly yards that the concrete monoliths were in some way merely destined for the postwar building trade, a senior British officer was sent from Whitehall to reassure the workers that they were in fact doing vital war work. German intelligence did not know what was happening in the southern English ports, although it was certain that the concrete structures must be floating moorings or fuel storage tanks for use in the coming invasion.

Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce), the sardonic-voiced, Brooklyn-born German broadcaster, confidently told British listeners in May 1944, "We know what you're doing with those caissons. You intend to sink them off the coast when the attack takes place. Well, chaps, we've decided to help you. We'll save you trouble and sink the caissons before you arrive."

A week before the day of the long-awaited invasion, the blockships were scheduled to sail from Scotland to rendezvous with the rest of the Mulberry components. The invasion would be dependent on the successful functioning of the harbors, but until there was the chance to test one in action, none of the planners, engineers, or builders knew just what their capabilities were. That test would not happen until the Mulberries were actually positioned on the other side of the English Channel.

A fortunate accident to one of the Mulberry units averted what might have been a major disaster for the Allies at Normandy. One of the hulking concrete Phoenixes went aground at the Brambles near the southern English port of Southampton. Engineers started to pump it out in order to refloat it, but discovered that they could not raise it because the pumps were not strong enough. A salvage expert was found, along with additional heavy-duty pumps.

Marshaling sufficient tugs powerful enough to pull the giant caissons against the Channel currents proved a major headache for the Royal Navy, but eventually 150 boats were found to be suitable for the crossing and were moved from sites at Portland, Poole, Plymouth, Selsey, and Dungeness. The tugs were distinguished by a large "M" on their funnels, and their crews took great pride in the designation. The British

tugs were to be assisted by U.S. Army towing launches.

Finally, D-Day arrived, and early on the gray, chill morning of Tuesday, June 6, 1944, British, American, Canadian, and Free French assault troops waded ashore on Gold, Juno, Sword, Utah, and Omaha Beaches at Normandy. The Mulberry harbors and associated Gooseberries were ready to play their part in the massive, meticulously planned Allied crusade. Each harbor, built of two million tons of steel and concrete, enclosed an area the size of Dover, two square miles.

The first convoy of 45 blockships arrived in the assault area at 12:30 PM on June 7, and the sinking of the vessels was started at once. The rest of the Mulberry harbor sections followed in a round-the-clock effort. Convoys of eight Phoenixes, eight bombardons, four pierheads, 10 Whale roadways, and two miscellaneous units were towed across the choppy Channel by the tug fleet. The planned speed of three and a half knots was increased to four and a half to reduce the turnaround time. Losses of 20 to 25 percent were expected on the crossing, but few units sank, apart from half of a floating roadway. The Mulberries were in use even before they were fully assembled. Almost from the moment that the first Gooseberries settled into the sand, ships were unloading behind them, protected from the Channel waves.

Great skill was required in assembling the two harbors on the Normandy coast. A key blockship had first to be sunk precisely in position. The initial attempt to do this at Mulberry B failed; the tugs at the stern of the first ship, the *Alynbank,* let go early. As she was settling down more slowly than planned, the tide turned and swung the *Alynbank* at right angles to the required position. But this turned out for the best because she formed a useful shelter from the west. At Mulberry A, the positioning of blockships went ahead at a faster pace. At the end of the first week, it was decided to plant an extra Phoenix there. But this was undertaken in failing light and falling tide, and the result was a large unit positioned too close to the main harbor entrance.

The objective of the Mulberry harbors was to disembark 3,000 tons of stores a day by D-Day + 4; 7,000 tons of stores and 2,500 vehicles daily by D-Day + 8, and finally 12,000 tons of stores and 2,500 unwaterproofed vehicles a day. Men, vehicles, equipment, and supplies rolled through the two harbors, and within the first two weeks after D-Day, 20 fighting divisions and more than a million men were ashore.

From June 15 to 18, a total of 15,774 British and 18,938 U.S. troops were landed every day, along with an average of 2,000 vehicles and 25,000 tons of stores. The enemy defenders on the Normandy shore were outnumbered locally, but they were still formidable and put up stiff resistance in front of the Allied armies. Reinforcing these men was crucial, but the weather was about to throw a wrench in the works. Channel storms had delayed the invasion by a day, and they were to play havoc again with Allied operations.

On June 16 and 17, the seas became too rough for towing operations, and on the 18th a special effort was made to make up for lost time. Four Phoenix caissons and 23 Whale tows set out from England, but the weather worsened and 11 of the Whales were lost on the way to Normandy. One of the caissons ran aground.

The American Mulberry appeared to be well protected, and on June 18, the day that it opened for business, the weather was fine. But that evening, the barometer began to fall. Next day, the wind and waves increased, and a major Channel gale erupted at 3 AM on June 19. By early afternoon, the wind was blowing at 30 knots and whipping up eight-foot breakers that pounded Mulberry A and the incomplete British Mulberry B. The bombardons were designed only to resist winds up to this strength, while the Gooseberries could withstand even less. Mulberry A and the incomplete British Mulberry B began to break up.

Fearing that a further deterioration in the weather might destroy the harbors, British Lt. Col. Raymond Mais, who was in charge of the piers and pierheads, issued emergency orders. Moorings were doubled, ships outside the harbors were moved clear of the breakwaters, and the tugboats were provisioned. Five hundred landing craft rode out the storm inside the Arromanches Mulberry, where the blockships had been strengthened with a row of caissons. Major Ronald Cowan of the Royal Engineers reported that it was a storm "such as had not been seen in the Channel for 80 years—second only to the one that smashed the Spanish Armada in 1588."

For four days, the winds screamed like a banshee as the great waves crashed into the harbors, damaging pierheads, washing over and sinking pontoons, twisting piers, dragging anchors, and casting landing craft and other vessels adrift. Six caissons were lost, and piers and roadheads were badly mauled. But the main breakwaters held. Royal Engineer bridge parties and British and U.S. Army tug crews struggled valiantly day and night to keep the harbors intact and corral out-of-control craft. Meanwhile, some unloading continued despite the wind and waves. At Arromanches, British sappers managed to offload vital stores and much-needed ammunition, and even on the worst day they landed 800 tons over the piers. During the four-day storm, 7,000 tons of stores were discharged through Port Winston. Some of the men toiled for more than 40 hours without sleep as the storm raged. None of them would ever forget those four days.

The Americans' harbor was harder hit than Port Winston. The Utah Beach Gooseberry lost several blockships that were torn open, and the Mulberry harbor off St. Laurent was devastated. The breakwaters were overwhelmed by waves, two blockships broke their backs, and only 10 out of 35 Phoenix caissons remained in position. The piers and bombardons were wrecked, and the harbor was eventually abandoned. When the gale finally blew itself out on June 23, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, commander of the U.S. 12th Army Group, went down to the beach to see the damage for himself. "I was appalled by the desolation, for it vastly exceeded that on D-Day," he said.

Port Winston was not much better off. At first light on the day after the storm died, Colonel Mais walked along the battered piers and pierheads, smartly saluting the weary, unshaven soldiers who greeted him. He said nothing, but they understood what he meant and what he felt. Mais reported later, "It was an appalling scene—corpses, smashed equipment, stores strewn everywhere."

Yet, four days after the storm the overall daily discharge at Arromanches had risen to 40,000 tons. The Royal Engineers' official history reported, "The Allied beaches were a sorry and disheartening sight; hundreds, almost thousands, of craft and small ships—some up to 1,000 tons deadweight—were lying on the beaches at and above the high-water mark in a shambles which had to be seen to be believed; craft were actually piled on top of each other two and three deep."

The calamity seriously affected the Allied buildup in the Normandy beachhead, and the arrival of men and supplies fell to a fraction of what the daily average had been before the storm. Bradley's army now had only three days' supply of ammunition left, and Lt. Gen. Miles Dempsey's British Second Army was three divisions behind in its landing schedule.

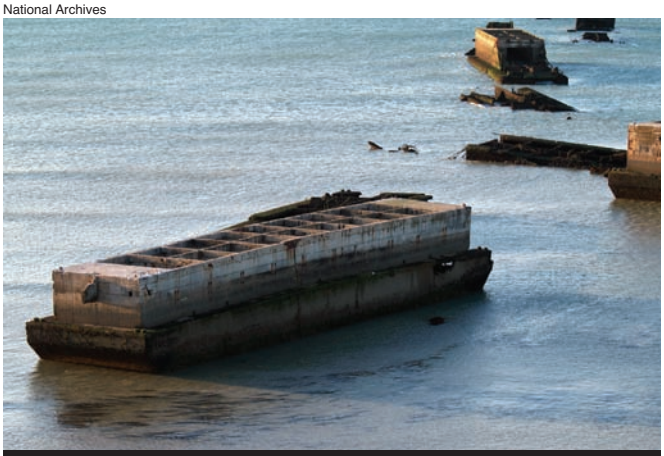
Yet the buildup went on. In 100 days, 2,500,000 men, 500,000 vehicles, and four million tons of supplies were landed at Port Winston. Although planned to operate for only three months that fateful summer of 1944, Mulberry B was still in use eight months after D-Day. By the end of October 1944, when the

Allied armies had broken out into open country—beyond the bocage and the crucible of Caen—and were pressing the Germans eastward through France, 25 percent of the supplies, 20 percent of reinforcements, and 15 percent of vehicles were landed through the Arromanches harbor.

Mulberry A, meanwhile, continued to be used as a sheltered haven without working piers. All matériel was landed by DUKWs (amphibious cargo carriers) and ferries. The rest was either landed on beaches protected by the blockships or went through harbors at Port-en-Bessin, at the junction of the British-U.S. invasion beaches, and Ouistreham at the extreme left of the British sector, and later in the Pas de Calais.

By the end of 1944, Sir Bruce White reported that 220,000 Allied troops and 39,000 assorted vehicles—heavy and medium tanks, tank destroyers, supply trucks, towed artillery, half-tracks, Bren gun carriers, personnel and weapons carriers, armored cars, jeeps, mobile workshops, ambulances, and command cars—had landed dryshod in France.

National Archives



Decades after the D-Day landings, remnants of the Mulberry harbors lie along the beaches of Normandy, mute monuments to the great events of World War II in Western Europe.

He said, "The invasion of Europe, impossible without the artificial harbors, had been accomplished by British engineering skill."

General Eisenhower declared, "Mulberry exceeded our best hopes," while General Bradley described the project as "one of the most inventive logistical undertakings of the war."

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower's trusted, pipe-smoking deputy, concluded, "The whole question of the invasion of Europe might well have turned on the practicability of these artificial harbors," while the German war production minister, Albert Speer, admitted that the Allies made the Nazis' Atlantic Wall irrelevant because they bypassed it "by means of a single, brilliant technical device."

The Normandy invasion was a "brilliant success" that owed much to the Mulberry harbors, as President Roosevelt pointed out. "You know," he told Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, "that was Churchill's idea. Just one of those brilliant ideas that he has. He has a hundred a day, and about four of them are good. When he was visiting me in Hyde Park, he saw all those boats from the last war tied up in the Hudson River, and he said, 'By George, we could take those ships and others like them that are good for nothing, and sink them offshore to protect the landings.' The military and naval authorities were startled out of a year's growth, but Winnie was right. Great fellow that Churchill, if you can keep up with him." □

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

By Jon Diamond

National Archives

Britain's Frontline General

Frank Messervy evaded capture in more than one close call.

THE STYLE OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICED IN BRITAIN'S EIGHTH ARMY DURING the early years of the Desert War left much to be desired. During this time, the majority of British field commanders preferred to exercise command far behind the lines. One factor causing this was the limitations on signals technology and communication equipment.

Also, after the capture of Lt. Gen. Richard O'Connor, the architect of the spectacularly successful Operation Compass, the first major Allied military operation of the Western Desert Campaign during World War II, in April 1941, Middle East senior British commanders and staff officers exercised considerable care to avoid becoming unnecessary casualties or captives of the Axis forces.

General Sir Frank Walter Messervy, the son of a bank manager, was born in Trinidad on December 9, 1893. A graduate of Eton College and Sandhurst Military Academy, he was commissioned into the Indian Army in 1913. During World War I, he joined the 9th Hodson's Horse in 1914. From 1914 to 1918, he served in France, Palestine, and Syria. In 1919, he was transferred and served in Kurdistan.

A British Crusader tank and a pair of American-built Sherman tanks churn through the ruins of a town in North Africa. British General Frank Messervy commanded the British 1st Armoured Division from the front and risked capture on more than one occasion.

From 1932 to 1936, Messervy was appointed an instructor at the Command and Staff College, Quetta. In 1938, he became commander, 13th Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers, in India. When World War II broke out, he was serving as the General Staff Office (GSO) 1 of the 5th Indian Division. In the middle of 1940, the division was sent to the Sudan to counter the threat from Mussolini's forces in Italian East Africa.

In the autumn of 1940, Messervy was appointed commander of Gazelle Force, which was a mobile reconnaissance and strike force created from components of the 5th Indian Division, and his troops enjoyed much success against the Italians. In early March, Messervy was promoted to command the 9th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Indian Infantry Division and played a significant role in the Third Battle of Keren. Elevated to brigadier for only six weeks, Messervy was promoted to command the 4th Indian Infantry Division.

Messervy's first exposure to German captivity occurred as commander of the 1st Armored Division. The division's previous commander, Maj. Gen. Herbert Lumsden, had been wounded within a few days of the completion of Operation Crusader (the successful relief of the 1941 Siege of Tobruk), and Messervy replaced him. Messervy found himself with a division that for nearly a year had suffered frustration and fragmentation and was in a highly unsatisfactory state as a result.

Messervy's new division was surprised and nearly shattered by German forces of the Afrika Korps under General Erwin Rommel at Antelat on January 22, 1942, setting in motion the loss of territory gained by the Eighth Army's costly victory in Operation Crusader. On January 24, Rommel decided to advance toward Msus and trap the remaining armor of the 1st Armored Division. Messervy opted to make a stand against Rommel for two reasons. First, Messervy's command was cut off from its main supply base at Msus, and, second, since the Eighth Army's forward supply depot was also at Msus, Messervy correctly feared that if Rommel captured it intact it could be used as a springboard from which he could repeat his famed offensive of the previous April.

If the 1st Armored Division could hold the Afrika Korps, then with reinforcements there was a possibility that Rommel could be pushed back to his start line in Tripolitania. Unfortunately for Messervy, the

IT'S NOT JUST A BRICK. IT'S THEIR STORY.

WITH A BRICK AT THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MUSEUM, you can create a lasting tribute to loved ones who served their country. These fathers and grandfathers, sons and daughters, friends and neighbors overcame a once-in-a-generation challenge and they deserve a memorial that will last for generations to come.

Learn more at www.nationalww2museum.org.

THE ROAD TO VICTORY BRICK CAMPAIGN

WWII THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

(Please Print Clearly)
BRICK TEXT

18 characters per line including spaces

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (Day) _____ (Evening) _____

PLEASE RESERVE MY PERSONALIZED BRICK(S)

Number _____ @ $200 each Total $_____

Please make check or money order payable to: The National WWII Museum.

○Check/Money Order ○MasterCard ○VISA ○Discover ○AMEX

Card # _____ Exp. _____

Signature _____

The National WWII Museum reserves the right to refuse to engrave any message or material that it determines to be inappropriate, such as telephone numbers, political messages and suggestive wording. If you need additional information, please call 877-813-3329 ext. 500 or email bricks@nationalww2museum.org. Fax orders to 504-527-6088 or mail to: The National WWII Museum, Road to Victory Brick Program, 945 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Several still wearing their distinctive helmets, a group of British soldiers taken prisoner following a defeat at the hands of the German Afrika Korps marches toward captivity. RIGHT: General Frank Messervy receives the Legion of Merit from American General Thomas Terry, commander of U.S. forces in the China-Burma-India Theater. Messervy served heroically in the CBI following his North African tenure.

troops under his command were not up to the task. Early on January 25, German panzer divisions moved north against Messervy's division and literally drove it from the field. According to Afrika Korps General F.W. von Mellenthin, "At times the pursuit of the British tank units attained a speed of 15 miles per hour, and the British columns fled madly over the desert in one of the most extraordinary routs in the war."

When Lumsden had recovered and resumed command of 1st Armored Division, Messervy took over the 7th Armored Division (Desert Rats), which lost its commander, Jock Campbell, in a fatal automobile accident. On February 26, 1942, the day of Campbell's accident, Messervy was en route to India to assume command of the 1st Indian Armored Division. Despite being ordered to return expeditiously to the Western Desert, Messervy instead continued his trek to Calcutta to visit his hospitalized daughter, who had suffered a traumatic spine injury. It had been rumored that Messervy had India on his mind during the upcoming Gazala battle, with his daughter nearly crippled in Calcutta and the Japanese advancing west on India with the somber anticipation that Calcutta was soon to be bombed.

Messervy, the Desert Rats' new general, was brave and personable. He was described as "tall, athletic looking, with a facial expression that clearly showed his strong sense of purpose." Messervy was known as the "Bearded Man" because he tended not to shave prior to a battle. His reputation was one of a frontline officer known for his dash and bravery. Strong religious faith contributed to his courageous demeanor. However, he had the dubious distinction of being an Indian Army officer commanding a British division during World War II. In the tradition-bound British Army, this was more than a trivial circumstance.

Further adding to his drawbacks as commander of the 7th Armored Division was that he had no training and very little experience with tanks despite his cavalry background. Some of Messervy's junior officers, trained in mechanized warfare, found this fact frustrating and frightening. These circumstances did not augur well for Messervy during the spring and summer of 1942.

By 9 AM on May 27, 1942, the Retma "box" in the Gazala line had been destroyed and the German 90th Light Division was driving toward Bir Bemid, setting into motion Messervy's actual brief stay in Nazi captivity. Shortly after 10 AM, the command post of the 7th Armored Division was overrun by German armored cars. Messervy and his staff failed to appreciate how rapidly the Germans were advancing.

Messervy and a few members of his staff tried to escape in his armored command vehicle, but a German armored car spotted it and fired several 30mm shells into its side. Then another attacked it from the front and fired several shells into the engine. The driver was killed. One of Messervy's staff edged open the door and told the general that vehicles all around were on fire and that a German armored car had its guns trained on them. Messervy and several officers began to set the cipher code books on fire, and the Desert Rats' commander tore off his badges of rank as they all exited the vehicle with their hands raised. The Germans had rounded up a group of astonished British officers and administrative personnel who proved to be none other than the advance headquarters of the 7th Armored Division.

In their excitement, the German captors failed to attach any importance to the graying hair of one of the "privates." In fact, this "private," passing himself off as the officers' batman, was Messervy minus his badges of rank.

When asked by a German officer, "Aren't you a bit old for a private?" Messervy replied, "You're right! It's a bloody disgrace they've called me up at my age."

The prisoners were put into captured British trucks and driven east with one of the advancing German columns. Initially, they thought to overpower their driver; however, this became unnecessary when their captors came under heavy British artillery fire. When the German driver leaped out of the truck's cab, Messervy escaped with some of his staff and hid under an artillery tarpaulin in a wadi until nightfall. The group walked eastward throughout the night. In the morning, the escapees were approached by some British vehicles, and their liberation was complete. For hours, the 7th Armored Division had been without a command structure.

A third potential capture of this British general occurred on June 12, 1942. Messervy wished to concentrate his division by moving the 4th Armored Brigade to join with his 7th Motor Brigade. His brigadiers disagreed with the plan, and in a furious state he set off to confer with General Willoughby Norrie, the XXX Corps Commander, at his headquarters. En route, Messervy lost contact with his division and was almost caught by an enemy patrol, forcing him to spend the entire day hiding at the bottom of an abandoned well in the desert.

In the meantime, the disobedient brigadiers sat in position and waited for further orders, although Messervy attempted to direct the battle by radio from his hiding place. Norrie and Lumsden were ignorant of Messervy's whereabouts and issued contradictory instructions. It was apparent that no commander was in control of the battlefield.

As the Gazala battle raged, Messervy began to have some disagreements with the Eighth Army commander, Lt. Gen. Neil Ritchie. Some of this discord stemmed from earlier events during Operation Crusader. During the Crusader battles of January-February 1942, Messervy said, "Ritchie was all haywire by then. All for counter-attacking in this direction one day and another the next. Optimistic and trying not to believe that we had taken a knock. When I reported the state of 1st Armored Division to him at a time when he was planning to use it for counter-attack, he flew to see me and almost took the view that I was being subversive."

Messervy's profound doubt as to Ritchie's intellectual and personal grasp of war in the desert did not prevent the Eighth Army commander's subordinates from admiring him as a man. Messervy summed it up. "He was an absolutely honest, downright soldier who was put into a position which at the time was beyond his capacity. Although he had leadership and powers of command, he was thrown into a very difficult position before he had had time to develop methods of command."

Specifically in regard to Rommel's attack at Bir Hacheim on May 26, 1942, Messervy was not convinced that the German attack was going to come from the north. Messervy stated to his superiors, "I gave it as mine that Rommel would come round our left flank, and that therefore we should dispose the armor to fight as a corps and not piecemeal."

Ritchie, among others, thought it was impossible for Rommel to come around the left flank; rather he would try to break through the center of the British line. The eventual disposition pinned the 7th Armored Division on the left flank of the British line with the other armored division miles away on the northern flank. When Messervy began to receive information proving a major German attack on the left flank, he asked permission to take up battle stations that had been planned in the event of such an Axis assault, as he had predicted. Ritchie refused. He wanted to wait until Rommel's main blow was known. By morning it was too late. In the early hours of May 27, 1942, Rommel drove toward Bir Hacheim with 500 tanks.

On the afternoon of June 9, 1942, contradicting Ritchie's exhortations to hold out,

Messervy, as overall commander of the 1st Free French Brigade, had signaled to ask its brigadier, Pierre Koenig, if it now seemed advisable to pull out of Bir Hacheim. Koenig replied that if transport could be brought close enough to evacuate his wounded, he would. Unfortunately, Messervy could not organize such a complicated maneuver in less than 24 hours, and the ordeal of the polyglot French defenders of Bir Hacheim continued throughout June 10, 1942.

Ritchie himself continued to display that curious personal blend of sangfroid and indecision. He still could not hit upon a basic battle plan, and this want of purpose began to be appreciated more widely in the ranks of Eighth Army, with damaging effects on morale. Messervy believed that after Bir Hacheim fell on June 11, 1942, British and Commonwealth forces should have fallen back immediately to a strong position. But Ritchie's intentions were not evident.

About this time, in the desert Messervy met one of his brigadiers, who asked, "What is the main idea in the battle now?"

Messervy answered, "I wish I knew—the only real order is to fight Germans wherever you see them."

On June 17 another disastrous tank action occurred, ending the hope of supporting the garrison defending the major Libyan port city of Tobruk. With cavalry pennants fluttering in the breeze, Messervy ordered the 4th Armored Brigade to attack the German 21st Panzer Division. It was the last charge of British armor in the Gazala battle.

After losing 32 of 90 tanks, Eighth Army no longer possessed a battleworthy tank arm. This defeat rendered Eighth Army helpless, prompting Ritchie to relieve Messervy of command of the 7th Armored Division. In telling Messervy of this decision, Ritchie did display courtesy and generosity: "Well Frank, I'm afraid I've lost confidence in you. You seem to be out of luck. Nothing seems to be going right with you."

After receiving this news, Messervy informed one of his staff officers, Peter Vaux, "I've come to say goodbye, Peter, and thank you for all you and your chaps in there have done for me. The army commander says that he has lost confidence in me. I've got to leave you."

Messervy, although brave and decent, was considered by some to be unsuitable for command of an armored division. His instinct to lead from the front was a good one, and it was partly bad luck that evading capture had kept him from headquarters at crucial times. It is ironic that soon Ritchie was to be removed from command of Eighth Army.

Messervy was transferred to Cairo as the deputy chief of General Staff, GHQ Middle East Command. A few months later, he was sent to India to raise the 43rd Indian Armored Division as its commander. This division was originally intended to serve in Persia but was disbanded in April 1943 after the threat to Persia disappeared.

Messervy was made director of armored fighting vehicles (AFV), General Headquarters, India Command in 1943, where ironically, in light of his perceived failure as a tank division commander in the Western Desert, he argued successfully to include heavy tanks in Burmese operations. This led to a significant advantage for General Sir William Slim's Fourteenth Army in 1943 and 1944 against the more lightly armored Japanese tanks.

In July 1943, Messervy was appointed to command the Indian 7th Infantry Division, which was sent to the Arakan, a coastal province in Burma, to join XV Corps in September. As Slim wrote in his memoirs, "Some weeks later another division, the 7th Indian, joined XV Corps. It had not been tried in war, but there was a freshness and a keenness in all it did, which received an imaginative lead from its new commander, Major-General Frank Messervy.... He had had his ups and downs as a divisional commander in the Middle East, but I welcomed him as an offensively minded leader, steadied by experience and misfortune in a hard school."

In concert with Brigadier Orde Wingate's Operation Thursday, a deep penetration behind Japanese lines in northern Burma, the second Allied offensive into the Arakan started. The 5th Indian Infantry Division attacked down the coastal plain, while in the east, the 7th Indian Infantry Division, commanded by Messervy, was to secure a mountain road crossing. However, the Allied advance also coincided with the start of the Japanese HA-GO offensive to capture eastern India.

On February 5, 1944, a Japanese composite group, the Sakurai Force, infiltrated the front lines of the 7th Indian Division, which was widely dispersed. The next day the Sakurai Force attacked the headquarters and reserve brigade of Messervy's 7th Indian Division at Launggyaung. Messervy's divisional headquarters was smashed and scattered, reminiscent of his close calls in the Western Desert against the Afrika Korps.

The Japanese had cut the Ngakyedank Pass road. There was heavy fighting with the 7th Division's signalers and clerks, who were pressed into combat service and eventually had to destroy their documents and equipment and begin a retreat. Messervy led one group out himself, followed by several of his

headquarters personnel who had made their way in small parties through Japanese forces, ultimately reaching the Admin Box, an administrative area at Sinzweya, which was converted into a defended area much like a defensive "box" in the Western Desert.

The Admin Box was commanded by Brigadier Geoffrey Evans, and among a variety of battalions from different regiments were two troops of M3 Lee Tanks of the 25th Dragoons. It must be remembered that it was Messervy, who as director, AFV Headquarters, successfully argued to include heavy tanks, such as the M3 Lee and M4 Sherman, in the Allied armored contingents.

Allied transport aircraft dropped rations and ammunition to the cut off troops defending the Admin Box. Every Japanese attempt to overrun the defenders was thwarted by the tanks, against which the Japanese had no effective ordnance except for a few mountain guns, which were out of ammunition. By February 22, the Japanese, who were starving, were forced to withdraw. British forces from XV Corps reserve divisions broke through the Ngakyedauk Pass to relieve Messervy's 7th Indian Division.

National Archives

Standing head and shoulders taller than the officers of his IV Indian Corps, General Frank Messervy attends a gathering in the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1945.

Messervy was promoted to command the Indian IV Corps, which played a pivotal role in the seizing of Meiktila and the taking of Rangoon. In a poignant moment, Messervy, after being knighted on July 5, 1945, handed over command of IV Corps to Lt. Gen. Francis Tuker, former commanding general of the 4th Indian Division, an old command of Messervy in North Africa. Messervy also led the troops that captured Malaya from the Japanese and took the surrender of 100,000 enemy troops at the Victoria Institution, Kuala Lampur.

Just prior to the partition of India, Messervy was made general officer, commander in chief, Northern Command India in 1946. Finally, when the nation of Pakistan came into being, he served as commander in chief of Pakistan's army from 1947 to 1948. He retired from the British Army as a full general in 1948.

Frank Messervy died in Midhurst, Sussex, on February 2, 1974, almost 30 years to the day after his fourth and last harrowing action to avoid capture by an enemy force, thereby being the true embodiment of a frontline general. □

Jon Diamond practices medicine and resides in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History *and is currently working on a book titled* Britain's Military Pariahs.

By Colonel James W. Hammond, Jr. USMC (Ret.)

National Archives

U.S. Divisions of World War II

Combat divisions fielded by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps comprised regulars, recruits, and draftees.

THE DEFINITIVE COMBAT UNIT OF COMPARABLE STRENGTH AMONG THE forces of the world during the 20th century was the division. Not all divisions, however, have been of the same size. The number of men in Allied and Axis divisions during World War II varied considerably. The number of men in an American division also varied depending on the type of division, for example, infantry, airborne, light, mechanized, armored, or Marine Corps. Manning of American divisions even varied as the war progressed, and reorganizations were made to ensure the most efficient use of manpower and to reflect the tactical deployment in the various theaters of the world. Although a standard division might be desirable, it was not always viable. Tanks, for instance, were suited to the plains of Europe but of less use in the steaming jungles of New Guinea.

A division has been defined as "a major administrative and tactical unit/formation which combines in itself the necessary arms and services for sustained combat, larger than a brigade/regiment and smaller than a corps." Inherent in such a definition is that a division is a combat unit that contains maneuver elements, infantry, or armor; fire support elements, mainly artillery but also tank or antitank units; and logistical or service support elements. The last includes motor transport, engineer, maintenance, supply, medical, and communications units. These three legs— maneuver, fire support, and logistics—enable a division to conduct sustained combat operations.

Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 2nd Division file ashore from Omaha Beach several days after the D-Day landings in Normandy. During the course of World War II, the Army and Marine Corps changed the configuration of their combat divisions to make them more efficient.

Although the Civil War armies and the army sent to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in 1898 had units called divisions, they were mainly infantry or cavalry and lacked the other organic elements that constitute a modern division. The first real divisions of America's armed forces were those sent to France in 1917-1918. They numbered more than 28,000 men and were more than twice the size of those of the other Allies or Central Powers. American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) divisions consisted of two infantry brigades of two regiments each; three artillery regiments, two of medium and one of heavier artillery; an engineer regiment; plus the various housekeeping units of supply, transport (some truck but mostly horse-drawn), medical, sanitation, supply, and signal. The rifle companies, of which there were four in a battalion, were more than 250 strong. There were three squads of eight men in each platoon, but the companies had seven platoons apiece. The infantry regiments had three battalions. Due to their composition of four regiments of two brigades, this organization was known as the "square division."

The square division was the standard Army formation for most of the period between the world wars. Although mostly paper formations and vastly undermanned, the Regular Army (RA), National Guard (NG) and Organized Reserve (OR) divisions were square divisions. The difference between the NG and OR divisions was that the former were multistate units whose regiments were under the governors of their respective states until called to federal service while the latter were cadres of Reserve officers and noncommissioned officers for mobilization. This was consistent with the reforms made by Secretary of War Elihu Root after the difficulties of the Spanish-American War, which then provided for an orderly, expandable Army.

In the mid-1930s, there was a public reawakening concerning the armed

LOW AS $44.95!

Actual size is 11.6 mm

Who said kangaroos aren't found in America.

These Australian Gold Kangaroos are one of the most affordable gold coins in the world. They're struck in 99.99% pure gold.

They're also a first-year-of-issue coin *and* a one-year-only design, making them highly sought after by gold-coin collectors.

Gold coins of similar size are offered elsewhere for as much as $99.99 each.

You get the exclusive benefit!

We're the exclusive distributor for Australia's newest 2010 Gold Kangaroo coin. You can't get these anywhere else in the U.S.—not at any price!

Order now—Risk free!

Best of all, you own your 2010 Gold Kangaroos risk free, with our 30-day unconditional-return privilege. If you're not satisfied, return your coins within 30 days for a full refund (less s & h).

Don't wait! Get your affordable Gold Kangaroos before they leap out of your grasp!

Buy more and save *more*!

One Gold Kangaroo coin for only $59.95 + s/h
Three for only $54.95 each + s/h **SAVE $15**
Five for only $49.95 each + s/h **SAVE $50**
Ten for only $44.95 each + s/h **SAVE $150**

Toll-Free 24 hours a day
1-888-870-8530

Offer Code GKC143
Please mention this code when you call.

GovMint.com
YOUR ONE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE

14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. GKC143
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

www.GovMint.com/kangaroo

All photos: National Archives

A division of the U.S. Army is shown on parade at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in 1939. By that time, Army divisions such as this one were composed of three regiments.

forces. The administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a measure to get the Depression-stalled economy going again, decided that deficit spending to fund public works would be a prudent move. Included in such public works were warships for the Navy. The Army also benefited in that installations throughout the country were improved and even some air bases were constructed for the Army Air Corps.

The thinkers in the Army had never been idle, and they welcomed the opportunity to "get their nose under the tent" and share in the renewed interest in the armed forces. Although the Army was still saddled with the weaponry of World War I, a decade and a half had brought technical improvement. The biggest was in motor transport. Infantry could be given greater mobility moving to the battlefield, and units could be supplied more quickly. The reduction in time for movement could be translated into a reduction of manpower to provide the cutting edge. Firepower had been improved to include semiautomatic rifles, mortars, artillery, tanks, and aircraft.

A word about tanks is appropriate. Tanks had been an Allied innovation in World War I to break the stalemate of trench warfare. The AEF had formed a Tank Corps. It was disbanded after the war and what were formerly "tanks" were transferred to the infantry as "combat cars." Since tanks had a connotation of offense, the euphemism was a way of appeasing a public, which would support an armed force for defense but abhorred any hint of its use offensively.

Army thinkers began to reappraise the tactics of the battlefield and the type of units that would have to fight. In the world war, infantry regiments attacked in a column of battalions in linear waves. Battalions of a regiment would move successively across no man's land to take the enemy trenches after artillery had neutralized the defenders. The two lead battalions suffered relatively high casualties, but the breakthrough could be exploited by the third, or reserve battalion. A concept of "two up and one back" emerged. It was just a short step to applying this concept at all levels within a division. Thus was born the "triangular division."

The factor of three was applied at all levels in the new, albeit experimental, division. Three squads made up a platoon. Three platoons were a rifle company. Three rifle companies with a weapons and headquarters company made up an infantry battalion. Three infantry battalions with a headquarters and service company were an infantry regiment. The division had three infantry regiments. Field artillery in the division consisted of three light battalions of three four-gun batteries and a medium battalion of four-gun batteries. In the initial artillery regiment of the first triangular division, circa 1936, the light battalions had 75mm howitzers and the medium battalion had 105mm howitzers. By the time war came, the light howitzers were 105mm and the mediums were 155mm.

These were two of the three legs of the triangular division. The third leg was rounded out by a reconnaissance troop, an engineer battalion, a medical battalion, and companies of ordnance, quartermaster, signal, and division headquarters personnel. There was also a military police platoon and a division band. Medical detachments were with the infantry and artillery to provide forward support on the battlefield.

The 1936 triangular division had 13,552 officers and men, of which 7,416 were in the three infantry regiments. After an initial field test, the recommended division in 1938 was reduced to 10,275, of which 6,987 were infantry. In June 1941, the division had risen in strength to 15,245, with 10,020 infantrymen. Fourteen months later, in August 1942, the division had increased to 15,514, but the infantry had been reduced to 9,999. A further reduction was proposed in early 1943, to 13,412 with 8,919 infantrymen.

The organization that fought the war (beginning in August 1943) was one of 14,255 officers and men, with 9,354 in the infantry. During the last year of the war, the standard infantry division had a strength of 14,037, with 9,204 in the infantry regiments. During all the reorganizations and changes, a triangular division was about half the size of the square division it replaced.

In addition to increased mobility there were other reasons for the fine-tuning of the infantry division during the war. The primary one, of course, was combat experience. Weaknesses were determined and remedied. Strengths were evaluated and reinforced. There were mundane reasons as well for tinkering with the size of an infantry division. Reducing the size from 15,514 (August 1942 level) to 14,255 (July 1943 level) meant a savings of 1,259 men. Thus for every 11 divisions, the savings in manpower would generate a 12th. Another reason was the wartime shortage of shipping. Slightly smaller divisions took up fewer "boat spaces." This was important since the Army had to cross the oceans to fight the enemies. When the forces for D-Day and beyond were being built up in the United Kingdom, the two largest transoceanic liners, Britain's *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth,* could "comfortably" carry a U.S. infantry division every other week. This was no minor factor. Another reason to keep the infantry division to the smallest size consistent with projecting its combat power offensively was the finite manpower pool in the United States.

While the number of American men of com-

bat age who were physically fit for induction was between 20 and 25 million, there was competition for the pool other than the Army's infantry. Service troops, such as engineers, supply men, and others were needed to make frontline infantry effective. The Army Air Corps, by then the Army Air Forces, had a large claim on manpower. The Navy and Marine Corps needed men. And, in addition to its fighting forces in the field, the United States was both the "arsenal of democracy" and the breadbasket of the Allies. Although many women labored in the factories and the fields, a large body of men was needed to turn out the weapons for the United States and its Allies.

In late 1942, the government took control of manpower. The draft, which had been instituted in 1940 for one year for selected 21-year-olds and older inductees, was extended to 18-year-olds, and voluntary enlistments for all those over 18 were suspended. All males subject to the draft were inducted and assigned to each service according to the needs at the time. Since the Navy and Marines had been enlisting 17-year-olds long before the war, some found this a way to avoid the draft before their 18th birthday. Last, by completely controlling manpower, the draft boards could defer skilled workers and farmers, often only temporarily. This last point was important because workers could be gainfully employed until the Army was ready to use them in uniform. More than one GI in the last years of the war encountered a truck, tank, or howitzer that he had helped build on the assembly line.

In 1917-1918, the AEF sent 43 divisions to France. Eight were RA, 17 were NG, and 18 National Army (NA) or divisions raised from regiments that had not existed before. These were all square divisions, but three NG and three NA divisions were converted into depot divisions for the Services of Supply. Likewise, two NG and one NA division were disbanded to replace casualties. After the war, the RA had three numbered infantry divisions and a cavalry division. There were two unnumbered divisions in the insular possessions: the Hawaiian and Philippine Divisions. The NG units returned to their respective states as regiments. As previously noted, the Tank Corps was disbanded. The Army had a maximum authorized strength, but this was never reached because the real limiting factor was paltry funding.

When war came to Europe in 1939 and the Axis ran wild in 1940, America saw the need to rearm quickly. The Navy was well on its way to building a two-ocean navy after the fall of France in 1940. The Army Air Corps was given similar priority. Both of these were Roosevelt's darlings. For two decades the Army had been the poor relation.

ABOVE: Replacement soldiers shed their heavy gear and packs during a rest period. Such troops abandoned their gear before deploying overseas and were then issued new accoutrements when they arrived in theater. BELOW: A pair of National Guard soldiers fires their weapons during maneuvers in Manassas, Virginia. The soldier on the right fires a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR).

This was changed. Five more RA infantry divisions were activated during 1939-1941. An additional RA cavalry division was activated. Reorganization revived the Tank Corps as the armored force. The NG was called into federal service, and 17 divisions were activated between September 1940 (when the first draftees also were inducted) and March 1941 as camps were built to quarter them. Four RA armored divisions were activated. The Hawaiian Division was split into a RA division and an additional Army of the United States division (AUS). AUS meant that no previous cadre organization existed as a framework for the new divisions.

As would be expected, the pre-Pearl Harbor divisions were the "old" divisions and those subsequently organized were the "new" divisions. The NG divisions entered active service under the square division organization and were converted to triangular. One of these, the

Continued on page 84

By Michael D. Hull

Top Foto/The Image Works

Courageous Canoes of 1942

Britain's Cockleshell heroes executed one of the most daring raids of World War II.

EARLY IN WORLD WAR II, THE BRITISH WAR OFFICE AND THE ADMIRALTY WERE shocked by daring small boat attacks, some of them suicidal, on Allied shipping in the Mediterranean Sea.

Several Royal Navy ships anchored in Egyptian ports were sunk or damaged by Italian explosive motorboats and manned torpedoes. The cruiser HMS *York* was crippled and a tanker sunk by a modified Italian touring boat off Crete in March 1941, and Italian midget submarines sank the proud battleships HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Valiant* in Alexandria harbor in December 1941.

The Germans and the Japanese also used such small craft with varying success. Casualties were heavy, but the results startling. In the Italian and German versions, the single crewman bailed out before the explosives-packed boat hit the target. The British responded by developing a small, fast, explosive motorboat, but it was never used in action.

However, other ideas for small craft attacks were germinating in fertile British minds, as in the case of Major Herbert G. "Blondie" Hasler of the Royal Marines, a peacetime small boat sailor. He dreamed up a bizarre plan for using small teams of two-man canoes to sneak up on moored enemy shipping under cover of darkness, plant limpet mines on their hulls below the waterline, and then paddle away as fast as possible.

A man of considerable courage and resolve, Hasler served as the fleet landing officer at Scapa Flow in 1940, and fought at Narvik with the French Foreign Legion during the ill-fated Norwegian campaign. He was named to the Order of the British Empire, mentioned in dispatches, and awarded the Croix de Guerre.

Early in 1942, at the age of 28, Hasler sent a paper on his small boat attack concept to Lord Louis Mountbatten's Combined Operations headquarters. Combined Operations directed hit-and-run raids on enemy coastal installations by British Commandos and specialized naval teams. Hasler's paper was turned down.

But the news of Italian sneak attacks on British ships in the Mediterranean made Combined Operations planners think again, and Hasler was appointed to one of Mountbatten's brainchildren, the

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: British Commandos endured rigorous physical requirements in order to participate in operations along the coast of occupied France. TOP: Two commandos handle a limpet mine during traing for Operation Frankton.

Combined Operations Development Center at Southsea, Hampshire. From there, he was sent to form his own unit. When the concept of explosive motorboats was shelved, Hasler was free to promote and refine his canoe plan.

He went to the Royal Marines small arms course at Gosport, Hampshire, in August 1942, and rounded up volunteers. He emphasized the need for knowledge of small boats and light mechanical engineering, and the ability to work as an individual in a small team. Formed at the big Portsmouth Royal Navy base, Hasler's 24-man unit was initially called the RM Beach Patrol Detachment, and then the RM Boom

NORMANDY WEEKEND
WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE

2011

with an Experienced Historian

Follow the Greatest Generation from Normandy to Bastogne to Bavaria

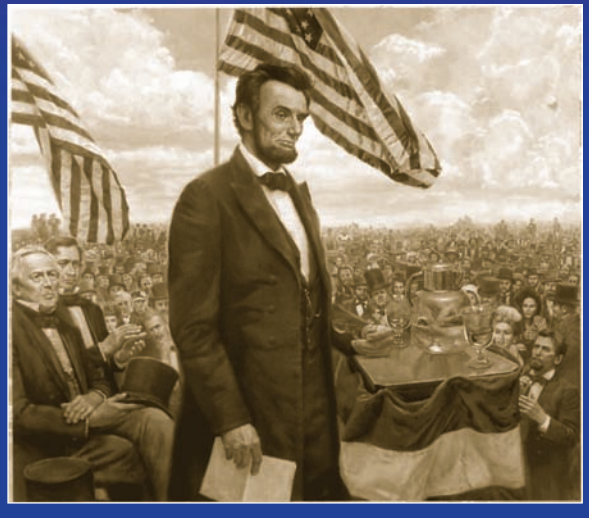
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THIS HALLOWED GROUND

A Journey Through the Civil War In Virginia and at Gettysburg

2011

with an Experienced Historian



MATTERHORN TRAVEL
Established 1966
44 years of successful group holidays

For detailed brochures with 2011 dates and prices, please contact:

MATTERHORN TRAVEL

3419 Hidden River View, Annapolis, MD 21403
(800) 638-9150 or (410) 224-2230

www.matterhorntravel.com • Email: holidays@matterhorntravel.com

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Paddling in calm water, British Commandos engage in stringent training exercises in preparation for a clandestine mission against German shipping moored in French harbors. BELOW: A stone tablet erected near the harbor at Bordeaux, France, commemorates the valor of the British Cockleshell Heroes.

Public Domain

Patrol Detachment as a cover name.

Based at Southsea, the unit trained in the area of the boom that protected the Solent, the channel between southern England and the Isle of Wight. Purportedly guarding the boom, Hasler's men trained in the River Thames and in Scotland in underwater attack, canoe handling, and night navigation. They practiced with limpet mines, trained with submarines, and received instruction in escape and evasion procedures. Folbots—small folding boats made of canvas—were used, but soon they were found to be unsuitable for launching in rough water or being lifted into a mother craft or submarine. They were replaced by Mark 2 semi-rigid, two- and three-man collapsible canoes.

Hasler's paddling crews were a close-knit unit. The Royal Marines—traditionally nicknamed "Jollies"—lived in billets and knew each other well. By the time their first operation, code-named Frankton, was conceived by Combined Operations headquarters in the autumn of 1942, their morale was high. The canoeists were about to embark on one of the boldest and most extraordinary combat missions of World War II and to gain fame in military annals as the "Cockleshell Heroes."

Targets for Major Hasler's "Cocklemen" were picked out by British intelligence officers reading signals transmitted from the Japanese Embassy in Berlin to Tokyo. The targets were to be German merchant ships running the British blockade and carrying rubber and raw materials to the Third Reich, as well as other vessels hauling special manufacturing equipment to Japan. The ships all started from the Bordeaux-Bassens docks, about 75 miles up the River Gironde in southwestern France. An attack by British Commandos had been ruled out as too costly in effort and investment. The area was defended by an estimated 20,000 German troops.

After the disastrous raid on the northern French port of Dieppe by Commandos and Canadian infantry in August 1942, Mountbatten's planners shied away from large-scale assaults on well-defended targets of this type, especially because Bordeaux was so far inland. And a bombing raid would have caused too many civilian casualties. So, Combined Operations gave the task to Hasler and his canoeists.

Six Cocklemen in three canoes would be launched from a submarine nine miles from the Cordouan Light on the southwestern coast of France. They were to head inland up the River Gironde, paddling by night and laying up during the day. The journey would take several days. Then, after navigating the Gironde estuary to the Bordeaux-Bassens docks area, the canoeists were to attach limpet mines on the German ships and escape overland, using an established network for downed Allied aircrews set up by British MI-9 intelligence agents working with the French Resistance. An approach up the Gironde was dependent on a precise combination of tide and moon, which occurred at the end of November.

After an addition of manpower and training exercises in the Thames estuary and in Scotland, Major Hasler's team—a dozen men and six Mark 2 canoes—was mustered and equipped for the raid. Besides double paddles, cargo bags, sounding reels, log pads, tide tables, dim torches, six-magnet limpet mines, hand grenades, assorted tools, light weapons, and rations and water for six days, each man was issued a .45-caliber Colt automatic pistol, a Commando fighting knife, and even toothpaste and a brush.

The chosen Cocklemen were Hasler and Marine William E. Sparks in the canoe *Catfish*; Corporal A.F. Laver and Marine W.H. Mills in *Crayfish*; Corporal C.G. Sheard and Marine David Moffatt in *Conger*; Lieutenant Jack W. MacKinnon and Marine James Conway in *Cuttlefish*; Sergeant Samuel Wallace and Marine Robert Ewart in *Coalfish*; and Marines W.A. Ellery and Eric Fisher in *Cachalot*. The 13th member of the team was Marine Norman Colley, in reserve. He would not be called upon.

After a final briefing, Major Hasler and his handful of Jollies clambered aboard the T-class submarine HMS *Tuna* and sailed from Holy Loch, Scotland, on November 30, 1942. After a long voyage down the western coast of Europe and into the Bay of Biscay, the submarine stood off the mouth of the River Gironde. Hasler and his paddlers were primed and eager for their hazardous mission, with the captain of HMS *Tuna* observing that they were "a magnificent bunch of black-faced villains."

All was ready, but a snag prevented one of the canoes from taking part in the operation. The canvas hull of *Cachalot* was ripped in the torpedo hatch of *Tuna* and could not be launched. Crewman Ellery was dismayed, and

All photos: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Major Herbert "Blondie" Hasler (left) and Marine William Sparks survived the hazardous Operation Frankton and were decorated for their bravery. BELOW: British Commandos train with a collapsible folbot on board a British submarine in preparation for operations in 1942.

his boatmate, Fisher, broke down and wept.

The five remaining canoes disembarked from *Tuna* at 5:30 PM on December 7, 1942, and their crews headed toward the River Gironde as daylight faded. The Cocklemen managed to keep out of sight of two German armed trawlers stationed at the river mouth, but the mission got off to a bad start. After three hours' paddling with the flood tide under their tails, the Cocklemen saw the white water of a tide race ahead of them—short, steep waves breaking on shallows as the flood tide pushed in. This was an unforeseen hazard, so Hasler rafted everyone together to discuss how to deal with it.

Coalfish failed to negotiate the tide race on the first attempt and was never seen again. It was learned later that Sergeant Wallace and Marine Ewart actually paddled through the tide race on that first night but were swept inshore and capsized in surf. While still in uniform, they were captured at daybreak on December 8 by men from a German flak battery. After several days of interrogation, during which they refused to reveal their objective, they were shot in Bordeaux early on December 11.

Wallace and Ewart were executed under the terms of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler's infamous "Commando Order" of October 18, 1942. It read in part, "From now on, all men operating against German troops in so-called Commando raids in Europe or in Africa are to be annihilated to the last man. This is to be carried out whether they be soldiers in uniform, or saboteurs, with or without arms; and whether fighting or seeking to escape; and it is equally immaterial whether they come into action from ships or aircraft, or whether they land by parachute. Even if these individuals on discovery make obvious their intention of giving themselves up as prisoners, no pardon is on any account to be given."

The canoe *Conger* capsized on the second attempt to negotiate the tide race in the River Gironde. Corporal Sheard and Marine Moffatt were each towed by *Catfish* and *Crayfish* to within a mile of the shore on Pointe de Grave, where a lighthouse marked the entrance to the river. The light had suddenly been switched on, and it was so bright that the canoeists were sure they had been spotted. Sheard and Moffatt set off to swim ashore but never made it. Moffatt's body was washed ashore, but Sheard's body was never found.

After seven tiring hours of paddling and with daylight approaching, *Cuttlefish* became separated from *Catfish* and *Crayfish,* which had found a laying-up position for the day amid riverbank reeds. During the first night's journey, the Cocklemen—shivering and with exhausted limbs—had been paddling for 11 hours, covering 20 nautical miles.

Lieutenant MacKinnon and Marine Conway pressed on for three nights until *Cuttlefish* was sunk by an underwater obstacle. The two men swam ashore to make their way home through Spain. The crews of the two remaining canoes, *Catfish* and *Crayfish,* meanwhile, spent the daylight hours of December 8 in a hide under camouflage nets. They slept in their canoes and were visited by friendly Frenchmen.

That night, after spending three and a half hours hauling their fully loaded canoes across almost a mile of sandy mud, the two weary crews started paddling again up the River Gironde. The weather turned colder, freezing the spray on the cockpit covers and numbing the Marines' hands and fingers. They covered 22 miles in six hours that night.

On December 9, Major Hasler's canoeists lay up for the day in a hide. In order to take advantage of the remaining three hours of flood tide at the end of that day, the crews took a risk and set off at dusk. They were spotted by a French farmer, and they hoped and prayed that he would not betray them to the Germans.

That night, the two canoes traveled 15 nautical miles. By dawn on December 10, the Cocklemen were still too far away to find a makeshift base from which they could attack the enemy ships. By 6:45 PM, the resolute paddlers had covered only nine miles because of the thrust of an ebbing tide, so Hasler decided to change the plan of attack from that evening to the night of December 11. This entailed another 20 miles of paddling to the objective.

The canoes *Catfish* and *Crayfish* stealthily approached the Bordeaux-Bassens docks, where several German ships were moored. Because of a clear sky and with the moon not yet set, the planned time for launching the attack had to be delayed. Major Hasler and his small team set the time fuses on their limpet mines for 9 PM, and the two crews separated. *Catfish* headed for the west bank quays, and *Crayfish* for the east bank.

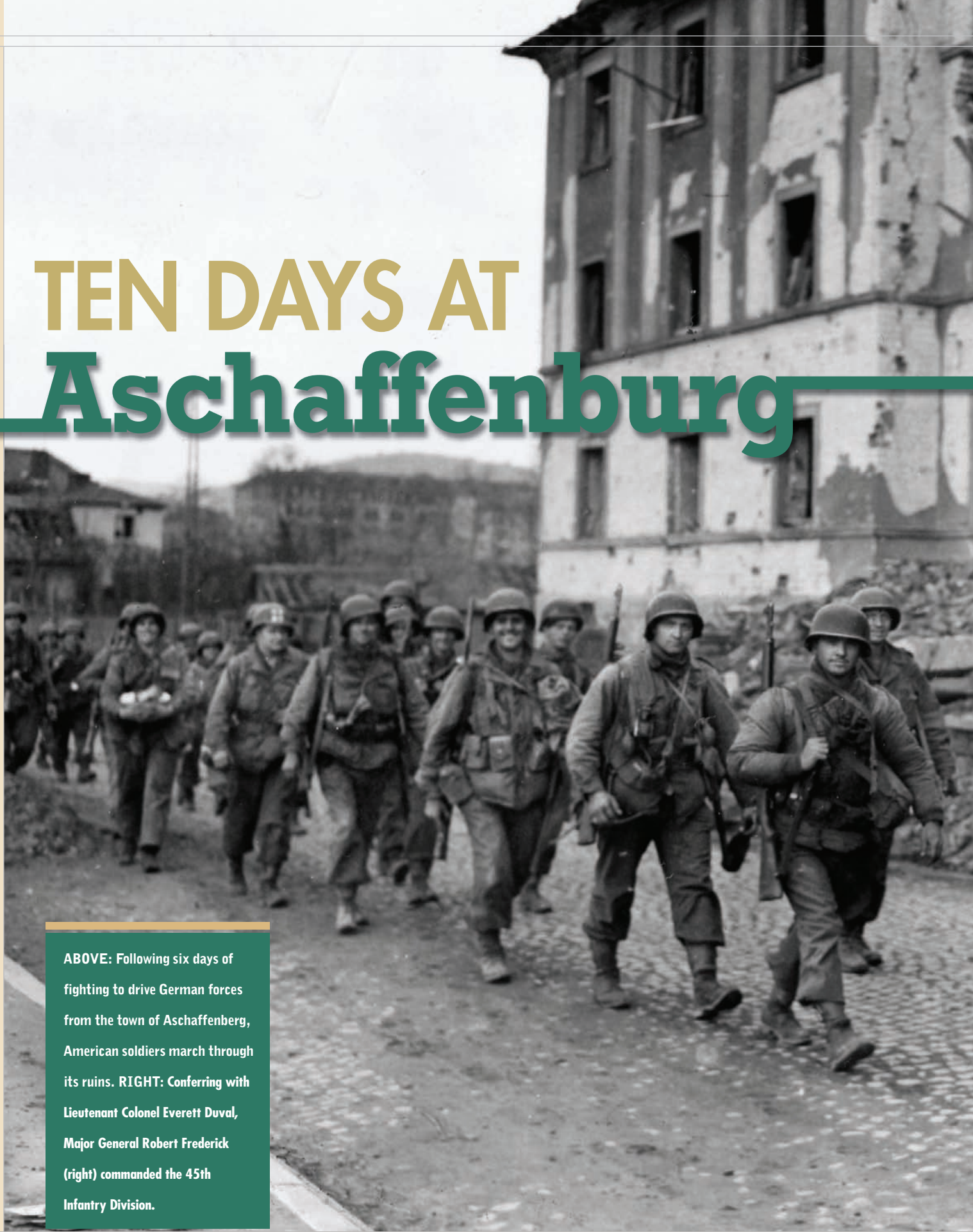
Drifting with the flood tide after the moon had set, Hasler and Sparks in *Catfish* attached three limpet mines to the hull of a 7,000-ton cargo ship, two on a mine-laying destroyer, two on a smaller merchant vessel, and one on a tanker. These were tense moments, and the two men hardly dared to breathe. At one stage, their canoe was almost crushed between the bows of the cargo ship and the tanker in the ebbing tide. As Hasler and Sparks drifted, a German sentry swung the beam of his torch on them, holding it steady for what seemed like an eternity until the tide floated *Catfish* behind another ship. Perhaps thinking that the canoe was a floating log, the sentry switched off his light and turned away.

Eight hundred yards across the river, Corporal Laver and Marine Mills in *Crayfish* found the east quays empty, so they floated down on the ebbing tide to place four limpet mines on each of two cargo vessels they had spotted earlier from their advance base. Then both crews paddled downstream as fast as they could go, beached well before first light, and set off in their pairs on separate escape routes. Since leaving HMS *Tuna,* the surviving Cocklemen had paddled 91 miles.

The four Royal Marines were heartened to hear explosions erupt in the Bordeaux-Bassens docks, but the results of their bold and costly efforts were less than spectacular. Some of the limpet mines had failed to explode, and some had fallen off the enemy hulls before detonating. Four ships were damaged enough to keep them in dock for several months. Germans claimed that the vessels were empty at the time of the attack, though one of the ships holds

Continued on page 86

TEN DAYS AT Aschaffenburg



ABOVE: Following six days of fighting to drive German forces from the town of Aschaffenberg, American soldiers march through its ruins. **RIGHT:** Conferring with Lieutenant Colonel Everett Duval, Major General Robert Frederick (right) commanded the 45th Infantry Division.

National Archives

Determined German resistance led to the virtual destruction of this Bavarian city in 1945.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

As the winter of 1944-1945 slowly gave way to spring, the combined Allied armies ground their way into Germany. Years of fighting in Europe, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean had culminated in these final months of bitter loss, surrender, and annihilation for the Nazi Reich.

In the East, Soviet armies approached Berlin itself while Hitler stood over a map in his bunker, issuing orders to armies that no longer existed. In the West, the Allies had crossed the Rhine and were moving into the German heartland. Large numbers of German troops, once the masters of Europe, now bowed to the inevitable and surrendered en masse, while many civilians adorned their towns with white flags, bedsheets, tablecloths, anything that would spare their towns the destruction the advancing Allied troops could mete out. The pace of this advance was often so fast that reconnaissance units and advance forces captured entire towns and villages with hardly a shot fired. At times it resembled the lightning movement across France in the days after the breakout from Normandy.

National Archives

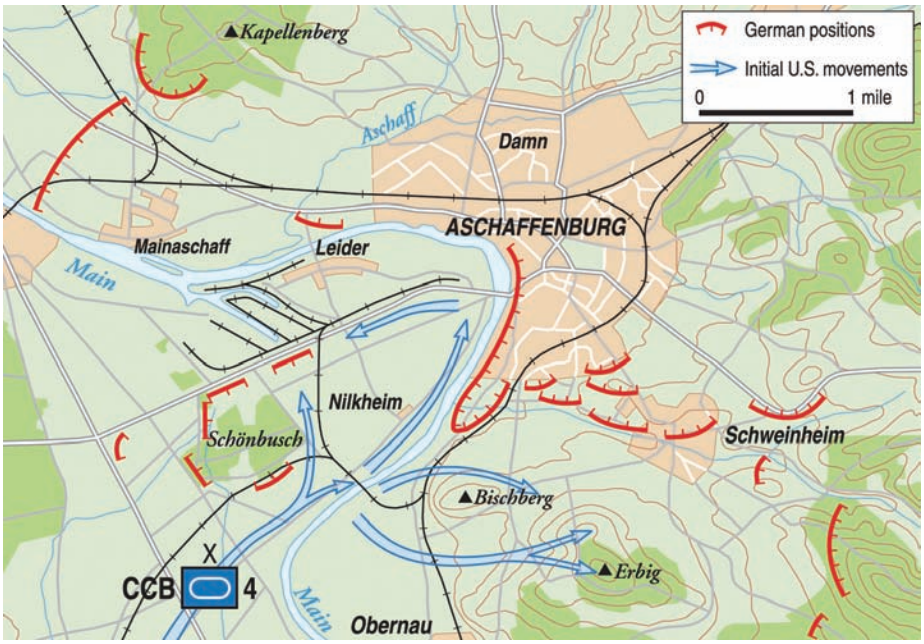
This was not always the case, however. The Nazis could still put up a spirited, dogged, and determined resistance, making Allied troops pay for every foot of the Fatherland they seized. One such place was Aschaffenburg, a city of about 38,000 nestled on the east bank of a large bend in the Main River some 40 miles from Frankfurt. Here, a German major named Lamberth, using a motley collection of SS troops, replacements, convalescing wounded, officer candidates, and civilians, would turn the city into a fortress of resistance. Unexpectedly, for over a week, they held off American efforts to take it. In the end the city would be all but destroyed, with thousands of dead and wounded, pounded by the combined arms of the U.S. 45th Infantry Division.

The history of Aschaffenburg dates to Roman times. By the time of the Third Reich, it was a major hub for water and rail transport, and the city also boasted extensive industry. In addition, there was a substantial military presence, as Aschaffenburg was home to the 106th Infantry Regiment. Engineer and artillery units were also stationed there, along with a reserve officer's training school. Finally, a large number of wounded soldiers were recovering in local hospitals from either battle wounds or illnesses, awaiting return to their units.

The terrain in and around the town favored the defender. To the north, south, and east are the wooded foothills of the Spessart Mountains, dotted with smaller towns and villages. The Main River, while not particularly large, would be a fearsome obstacle to cross if the attackers were under fire. The city itself had rail lines and two roads converging into it.

Two large buildings dominated the city, the Stiftskirche, a 10th-century church that sat on the city's highest point, and the Schloss Johannesburg, a stout 17th-century palace that sat nearly in the city center close to the riverfront. The military barracks were clustered mostly in the southeast portion of Aschaffenburg, with training areas farther south. These barracks, along with a military warehouse nearby, were

akg - images



ABOVE: American armored and then infantry units encountered stiff resistance at Aschaffenberg, where soldiers of the German Army and the Volkssturm home defense forces opposed the capture of the city for nearly a week. TOP: The body of a German lieutenant, convicted of desertion and hanged by his own troops, was found in Aschaffenberg by the Americans.

stoutly constructed, and several would become strongpoints during the fight. With the river to one side and mostly high ground surrounding it, Aschaffenburg sat in a depression with a number of small towns and villages in the immediate vicinity.

The German forces available for the defense were a disparate collection representing the qualitative mix of troops available to the Third Reich this late in the war. Since Aschaffenburg was home to the 106th Infantry Regiment, its small replacement and training unit was in the city. Added to this was a group of officer candidates undergoing training in the area. Unlike the U.S. system wherein men with a certain educational level were admitted to officer training regardless of experience, many of the German candidates were men with up to three years of military experience.

The soldiers in the convalescent hospitals, while perhaps not up to full fighting condition, were also combat experienced. The 9th Engineer Battalion and 15th Artillery Regiment with a few guns were present to support the defenders. These, along with a small SS contingent, represented the better troops available. There were no tanks, and only a handful of artillery, mortars, and Nebelwerfer rocket launchers were on hand.

Reinforcing these men were seven companies of Volkssturm, essentially militia troops with limited training and equipment. Nevertheless they would fight. Last, the civilian populace played its part in the battle as well. Shortly after contact with the advancing Americans, the city leadership ordered the elderly, women, and children out of the city, stating that anyone who remained would be expected to take up arms or assist in the fight. Those who stayed had no choice but to participate to some degree. While very few actually fought, many more tended casualties, carried supplies, and worked as runners during the coming fight. The Americans would later report fighting with numbers of civilians.

About 5,000 men formed KampfKommando Aschaffenburg, a battle group designation pulling all the city's units under one command. This label came directly from Hitler, establishing the city as a fortress requiring a supreme effort in its defense. Reinforcements received during the fighting would bring the total strength of the garrison to some 8,500.

The man selected to lead this battle group was Major Emil Lamberth, a World War I veteran. He had arrived in the city to take over the 9th Engineers in June 1944. On January 30, 1945, he was appointed senior garrison commander. He had assisted in planning the defenses of the city, tying them in with the larger defense line along the Main River. On March 5, he was appointed combat group commander and swore an oath to defend the city, placing himself under Hitler's direct command. A small SS delegation came to Aschaffenburg to oversee the diligence of the battle group's effort. Despite Nazi Party interference, Lamberth was able to pass muster with his defensive scheme.

The overall plan was designed to be a link in the chain of defenses along the Main. A number of positions were created along the river's east bank, using the Main itself as a natural obstacle. A line of bunkers had been created for this defensive belt, and the Aschaffenburg garrison would make use of some of them. Additional strongpoints were set up both to establish a perimeter around the city and to create a defense in depth.

Several of the outlying towns, such as Schweinheim and Mainaschaff, would be heavily defended. In Aschaffenburg itself, the waterfront and the central section around the Schloss Johannesburg were fortified. In truth, most of the town was composed of stone or masonry buildings packed closely together with the relatively narrow streets common to older European cities. On their own these buildings provided good cover that was resis-

tant to small arms and, to a limited extent, tank and artillery fire. The bridges on the Main would naturally be blown.

The main German unit outside the city was the 36th Volksgrenadier Division, with a strength of perhaps 6,500, only a third of them trained. It had three half-strength battalions of artillery and two assault guns.

The Aschaffenburg command would have been tied more firmly into the overall defense of the region, but time ran out when the Americans arrived. On Palm Sunday, March 25, at 9 AM, Lamberth received word that the Americans were only nine miles west of the city at Babenhausen. By noon sentries on duty in the towers of the Schloss Johannesburg sighted the lead U.S. elements. Combat Command B (CCB) of the 4th Armored Division was leading the way for General George S. Patton's Third Army to cross the Main River while the bridges still stood.

Commanded by the now-famous Colonel Creighton Abrams, CCB plunged straight down the road from Babenhausen to Aschaffenburg toward the primary road bridge over the river. This bridge crossed the Main directly into the city from an area on the west bank known as the Nilkheim salient, which was named for the town at its southern end.

CCB reached the bridge and immediately tried to cross. Intense German small-arms fire poured into the Americans, but they pressed on. The lead U.S. tank nosed onto the span and started across. Instantly it took numerous hits; antitank rounds, hand-held *panzerfausts*, and mortar fire all pummeled the hapless Sherman, and it exploded. Seconds later, the Germans demolished the bridge, sending the span and the Sherman into the river below.

CCB pulled back from the bridge toward Nilkheim. As this was happening, the commander of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, Lt. Col. Harold Cohen, received word from his reconnaissance platoon that a railroad bridge south of Nilkheim was still standing as well. Though prepared for demolition, the Germans had failed to defend it as heavily as the road bridge. Cohen ordered his scouts to seize the bridge, grabbing any armored vehicles nearby for fire support.

Despite taking heavy fire, the scouts rushed across and quickly started disabling the aerial bombs mounted on the bridge, pushing them into the river and cutting any wires they found. Cohen then sent three of his infantry companies across to form a bridgehead. The infantry's half-tracks and a few tanks from Abrams's 37th Tank Battalion quickly followed. Within a mere half hour of the German sentries spotting them, CCB had crossed the river and was fighting its way up two hills known as the Erbig and the Bischberg south of Schweinheim. It had all happened so fast that the Germans had not had time to destroy the bridge as planned. The German officer in charge of the bridge later claimed there were no detonators for the explosives on the span.

Lamberth ordered several counterattacks, but these were repulsed and the Americans expanded the bridgehead. As the afternoon ground on, additional counterattacks were launched, and a number of air attacks by Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters occurred; however, the Americans were by now firmly established on the east bank. General Hans-Gustav Felber, commander of the German Seventh

A number of German civilians took part in the Battle of Aschaffenburg.

During the fight for Aschaffenburg, American soldiers reported seeing civilians fighting alongside German troops. Such reports were common during the battle, as were a number of reports of German troops shooting their own civilians as they tried to flee the city. The German commander's plan of defense for the city certainly made use of those civilians who had not evacuated.

Volkssturm units were present, which may account for some of the reports. These militia troops often had only bits of uniform or a black armband issued to identify them as combatants; in the din and confusion of battle, an armband could easily go unnoticed and a soldier's *feldgrau* overcoat might be indistinguishable from a civilian coat covered in the dust of broken masonry and brick.

The fact that some German civilians fought while others were killed by their own countrymen is a certainty, however, borne out by witness accounts. One such witness was Rifleman Harry Eisner of the 157th Regiment, who wrote of his experiences with German civilians during the fight. Though lacking details of exact times and places, he nevertheless vividly describes what he saw.

Moving forward with his fellow soldiers, Eisner saw a group of civilians standing on a train overpass; they smiled at the Americans, who smiled and waved back. Soon afterward, mortar fire plunged down onto the GIs. The civilians had been spotters. As he and his fellow soldiers took cover to endure the barrage, Harry's fear grew even more intense; only 50 yards away lay an unexploded aerial bomb. Two of his friends were wounded.

Not long afterward, Eisner saw another group of about 100 civilians come over a hill, walking away from the town. As he watched, German rifle fire began to topple some of the civilians. A few of the Germans broke into a run, but curiously some continued walking as if they were on an afternoon stroll rather then being shot at.

Eisner's gaze was suddenly drawn to a young girl walking toward him. Her eyes locked with his, and she came straight to him, clutching her arms around her stomach, her expression one of sadness. She reached him and stood there looking up. It was then Eisner noticed she had been shot. A bullet had grazed her across the front, opening her entire stomach. Her folded arms were all that held her organs in her tiny body. Grabbing the girl and holding her flat across his arms, Eisner ran back to a medical jeep 200 yards to the rear. Other soldiers and medics rushed to assist.

National Archives

Seeking cover during the fighting at Aschaffenberg, a terrified young girl runs for her life.

They quickly put the girl on a stretcher and drove her away. The girl's eyes never left his until the jeep pulled off.

Eisner went back to the fight, never knowing the fate of the child. Years later, on a ferry back in New York, Eisner looked up from a crossword puzzle and saw the girl standing by the railing. He was so shocked by the sight he could not even get up to approach her. When the ferry docked, the girl left without the two ever sharing a word. □

Army, personally came to Aschaffenburg to see what was happening. He immediately ordered all available reinforcements to the area.

Trying to keep its momentum going, CCB tried to push into Schweinheim in mid-afternoon. Defending it were several units composed of replacement troops and officer candidates, well dug-in and with an engineer platoon attached. American tanks and infantry moved across open fields toward the town and stiff resistance. In places the combat became hand to hand. Several tanks were lost before the Americans pulled back to the hills. Some U.S. troops had moved north along the river to the outskirts of Aschaffenburg, while others mopped up isolated German pockets in the area.

As the first day of the battle ended, the Americans had seized a valuable bridgehead but had failed to get enough forces across to exploit it before the Germans began reinforcing. At midnight a boundary change was to take place with the lines delineating the responsibility of the local American units changing. That boundary line shifted north, and Aschaffenburg would then be in the zone of the 45th Infantry Division, a unit of the XV Corps of the U.S. Seventh Army. Lacking sufficient infantry for an urban operation, 4th Armored prepared to hand over the battle. German reinforcements continued to arrive, and Lamberth strengthened the defenses in Schweinheim and to the east of the American bridgehead.

Then began a strange episode, known generally as the Hammelburg Raid. Although it was separate from the battle of Aschaffenburg, it certainly influenced it. General Patton dispatched a task force of tanks, armored infantry, and artillery past Aschaffenburg toward the town of Hammelburg, the location of a prison camp holding Allied officers, including Patton's son-in-law, Lt. Col. John Waters, who had been captured in Tunisia some two years earlier.

Much of March 26 was spent preparing a force of 294 men, commanded by Captain Abraham Baum, to break through enemy lines, advance to Hammelburg, liberate the camp, and bring back the POWs. A 30-minute artillery barrage preceded the attack, which had to move through the southern end of heavily defended Schweinheim to reach the road to Hammelburg. Baum and his men did not get through the town until midnight, but they pushed on. Once through the main defensive line, they advanced rapidly toward the POW camp, shooting up several trains carrying reinforcements and supplies along the way. Baum's force reached the camp where there were far too many POWs to evacuate, tried to fight its way back with a portion of them, and was essentially hunted down and all its men killed or captured.

The initial reports of an American column penetrating so deeply caused confusion among German commanders, who feared a U.S. breakthrough. Additional reinforcements were sent to the area. Much effort was spent over the next several days containing and capturing Baum's force, diverting some attention away from Aschaffenburg itself. Still, several company- and battalion-sized training units began to arrive around Aschaffenburg to reinforce the defenders.

"I got information from a civilian that there were several thousand Germans in the town. I radioed that information back to the division, and I don't think anybody believed me." —Lt. Col. Felix Sparks

With a portion of its strength now detached for the raid, CCB withdrew to the high ground south of the city. Even the hard-won foothold in Schweinheim was abandoned. Early the next morning, March 27, CCB started withdrawing across the Main, being replaced in the bridgehead by the 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry Regiment of the 26th Division, which had been attached to the 4th Armored.

With the area now in the zone of the XV Corps, the 45th Infantry Division was ordered to Aschaffenburg. The 45th, commanded by the former head of the First Special Service Force, Maj. Gen. Robert Frederick, was a veteran force that had been in combat since the invasion of Sicily in 1943. It had served in Italy, including the hell of Anzio, and had taken part in Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France. More recently it had fought in the Vosges Mountains of France, enduring hard fighting near Reipertswiller. At Aschaffenburg, the unit was at about 90 percent strength and had attached tank, chemical mortar, and tank destroyer units to support its three infantry regiments.

Frederick ordered the 157th Regiment, commanded by Colonel Walter P. O'Brien, to take the city. The regiment's third battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Felix Sparks, was ordered to lead the way and occupy the hills in the bridgehead. The men of the third battalion, indeed the entire regiment, were told the town had been cleared by the Third Army, which of course it had not. Sparks received a cryptic warning about not firing on any American tanks he saw to his front but otherwise was not informed about Captain Baum's task force or its mission. Sparks would not even know of the raid until years later.

The battalion reached the railroad bridge by 2 PM on March 27 and began to cross. Mortar and rifle fire immediately began to fall upon them. Sparks found a company of reconnaissance troops equipped with jeeps and armored cars guarding the bridge. The lieutenant commanding the recon troops told Sparks that his orders had been to hold the bridge until relieved. Sparks relieved him and sent his battalion across the river into defensive positions.

Two attacks from Schweinheim were beaten back. From the high ground, Sparks looked through his binoculars at Schweinheim and Aschaffenburg; the streets were devoid of movement, and no white flags or bedsheets hung from the windows.

Lieutenant Colonel Sparks recalled, "I got information from a civilian that there were several thousand Germans in the town. I radioed that information back to the division, and I don't think anybody believed me."

The area was not secured, and the 157th would have to fight for it. This led to some enmity on the part of the 45th, which now had a fight on its hands in a city they had been told was already taken. Contemporary news accounts make much mention of the troops' disgust at this. Some of them quite sarcastically criticized the U.S. high command for errors in their dispatches.

Two rifle companies supported by an attached tank destroyer platoon and an artillery battery from the 158th Field Artillery Battalion were sent into Schweinheim. This attack succeeded in taking a few prisoners and regaining the lost foothold vacated by CCB of the 4th Armored. On the German side, efforts continued at organizing an assortment of units into a cohesive force. The commander of the German 36th Volksgrenadier Division began planning a counterattack to throw the Americans back across the Main using what infantry and artillery were available.

On the morning of the fourth day of the battle, the rest of the 157th Regiment arrived and began crossing the river. The only enemy activity was a series of Me-109 sorties against the bridge area. A plan was devised to take Aschaf-

National Archives

ABOVE: An American Sherman tank fires on a building near Aschaffenberg where German snipers are suspected of hiding. RIGHT: Cautiously working their way through the debris of the shattered town, American soldiers slowly take control of Aschaffenberg.

National Archives

fenburg using the three battalions of the regiment with its attached supporting units: the 158th Field Artillery Battalion equipped with 105mm howitzers, Company A of the 191st Tank Battalion, Company B of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company C of the 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion.

Sparks's 3/157th began assembling east of Erbig Hill, preparing for an attack on Schweinheim. The 2/157th, under Major Gus Heilman, would attack to the north along the river into Aschaffenburg itself. Company F would move north along the riverbank with its right flank protected by Company E, while the battalion's Company G trailed in reserve. This unit would receive some additional support from Company D of the 191st Tank Battalion equipped with the M-5 Stuart light tank. Lt. Col. Ralph Krieger's 1/157th would take up position between the two other battalions; it was to essentially sit in reserve until Schweinheim was secure and then take the ground northwest of it.

The attack began with an artillery prepara-

tion. Sparks's troops attacked into the eastern end of Schweinheim, I Company on the left, K Company on the right, L Company in reserve. German resistance was immediate and fierce. Despite the heavy artillery fire and air support the Americans threw at the town, only the outskirts of Schweinheim were in U.S. hands when the attack was halted at nightfall.

The 2/157th started north toward Aschaffenburg and likewise met heavy German resistance from the outset. Despite punishing machine-gun and *panzerfaust* fire, Company F pushed forward some two kilometers before it too stopped for the night. Company C of the 1/157th moved into the gap between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions to fill the vulnerable separation between them. The day's advance had been bitterly contested by the German defenders, and overall there had been minimal progress. German mortar fire fell on the Americans, prompting them to reply with counterbattery fire throughout the night of March 28.

During the day, soldiers of the 1/157th found a warehouse full of liquor. Apparently vintages confiscated from all over Europe had been brought to Aschaffenburg for storage. This bounty was quickly distributed around the regiment, and the unit's unofficial history includes a recipe for a drink the troops concocted using their spoils of war. Called the "157th Zombie," it consisted of "¼ Cognac, ¼ Benedictine, ¼ Contreau and ¼ of any other bottle handy, followed by a champagne chaser." The history went on to note, "… many days passed before some canteens carried anything so tasteless as water."

After combat engineers laid planking to improve the railroad bridge, the other regiments of the 45th, the 179th and 180th, crossed the Main and headed south to link up with the 3rd Infantry Division. The 179th tied in with the 157th's flank, while the 180th continued southward to make contact with the 3rd Division.

For the German defenders and residents in the city, March 28 was a day of decision as well as combat. Two citywide proclamations were issued, one by Major Lamberth and another by the Kreisleiter, a local-level Nazi Party official, Wilhelm Wohlgemuth. Both proclamations essentially made impassioned pleas exhorting the defenders of Aschaffenburg. Wohlgemuth, besides ordering the noncombatants to leave, warned that any who remained would be required to take part in the fighting "because we know that Germany will live if we are prepared to give our lives." Lamberth's order called on the defenders to "send as many of [the enemy] as possible to the devil."

Any evacuation would have to be done quickly. Aschaffenburg's flanking units were being pushed back by the 3rd Division in the south and the 26th Division in the north.

As the battle entered its fifth day, the struggle for Aschaffenburg focused around the southern end of the city, including Schweinheim. The fight centered on the advance of the 157th Regiment. The high ground between Schweinheim and Aschaffenburg had to be kept out of American hands as long as possible. The airstrikes and artillery bombardment had already reduced portions of both areas to rubble.

The German officer candidates positioned themselves in various strongpoints throughout Schweinheim. Many of these fortified houses had been connected by a series of underground tunnels through which the Germans would reoccupy positions already cleared by the Americans. This would come as a nasty surprise to GIs trying to clear the next house, only to be fired on from the last one taken. Snipers used their knowledge of the town to constantly infiltrate into the American rear areas.

While these clever tactics did greatly hamper the U.S. advance, they also contributed to the massive destruction Aschaffenburg eventually suffered. The veteran troops of the U.S. 45th Division, not having expected to fight here in the first place and fully aware of the risks of urban combat, did not hesitate to use every bit of firepower at their disposal to blast the Germans out of their positions. The infantrymen of the 157th knew how to coordinate with tanks, artillery, and air support after almost two years of fighting; now every bit of that knowledge would come into play at Aschaffenburg.

At 7:30 AM on March 29, both attacking American battalions resumed their assaults. The 2/157th once again ran into immediate and heavy resistance and had to call up Sherman tanks to pour direct fire into the fortified houses. In Schweinheim, Sparks attacked with two companies advancing side by side, the third in reserve. Company C, on the left flank, took an hour to reach the first street of the town as bitter house-to-house fighting slowed the advance to a crawl.

Determined resistance caused the Americans to pull back and dig in while artillery and mortar fire softened the German positions. To try and break the enemy line, O'Brien sent his reserve battalion against the center of the German line. The resistance there proved just as stiff as the rest of the line, and the attack gained little.

In Schweinheim, Sparks's battalion continued to push forward block by block. To assist

In the confines of the German town, vicious combat was the rule. At short range, two Shermans of Company A, 191st Tank Battalion were lost to antitank fire.

National Archives

Walking past armored vehicles that have momentarily paused, American soldiers march down the road toward their next objective. The fight for Aschaffenberg was bitter and in the end futile for the Germans.

this effort, all available artillery was concentrated on the town. Tanks and tank destroyers fired directly into enemy strongpoints. Buildings had to be cleared one at a time. The tanks and tank destroyers directed their fire on a targeted building, giving the infantry a chance to storm it while the Germans inside were pinned. In the confines of the German town, vicious combat was the rule. At short range, two Shermans of Company A, 191st Tank Battalion were lost to antitank fire.

Approximately 3,000 civilians were still in the town, many of them casualties whom the German medical staff was hard-pressed to care for. Major Lamberth ordered an officer from among the convalescent soldiers to be hanged when he was accused of desertion. The officer, a Leutnant Heymann, had been told on March 26 to register with the local command so he could be assigned to the defense. Later that day he was arrested for not having registered and for allegedly making an English sign found hidden in a basement. He was court-martialed, convicted, and on the 29th, taken into the street in front of a café, and hanged from a lamppost. A sign calling him a coward was placed on the body, and the corpse was left hanging.

Just after midnight on March 29, the counterattack by the 36th Volksgrenadier was set in motion. Aimed at the high ground around Erbig Hill, the 165th Grenadier Regiment broke through the American perimeter on the south and east sides of the bridgehead. Four hours later they had reached the area between the Erbig and Bischberg Hills while the 87th Grenadier Regiment had penetrated on the southern end of the perimeter. Along with a battalion of the 179th Regiment, heavy counterattacks by the 157th, again using coordinated tank and artillery support, drove back the Germans to their starting points by noon.

The German position was becoming untenable as the divisions around Aschaffenburg were steadily pushed back, leaving the city further isolated. By the afternoon, the German LXXXII Corps conceded and issued orders for its units to withdraw, leaving Aschaffenburg cut off.

To complete this isolation, General Frederick ordered his 179th and 180th Regiments to push to the east and position themselves to flank Aschaffenburg. While they did so, the 157th continued to slowly gain ground into Schweinheim and the southern outskirts of the city. The defenders launched a series of five counterattacks, each company sized. Although the Americans took some casualties, they repulsed each of them while inflicting serious and unrecoverable losses on the enemy.

In Schweinheim, 3/157th was able to cut the town in two, with small pockets of defenders remaining in the northeast and northwest corners. In an attempt to flank the German line, two companies (A and B) went around Schweinheim to attack the high ground to the southeast. Though under fire, they were able to advance 1,000 yards. The American commanders were now seeing that a direct assault would not work and that enveloping their enemy was the better option. All the German counterattacks had failed, and now they could do little but grimly hold on and inflict the maximum possible loss on the attackers.

Again the 45th Division maximized the firepower of its support assets. More armor from the 191st Tank Battalion was brought into play. The Americans also brought in additional

National Archives

Crouching behind a stone wall for protection, an American infantryman advances along a dirt path at Aschaffenberg. The rear of the tank this soldier is accompanying may be seen on the road to the right.

artillery. The four artillery battalions of the neighboring 44th Division were attached to the 45th. Five corps-level battalions, some with massive 8-inch howitzers, were likewise given to the 45th. So much artillery now pounded the city that some Germans likened it to machine-gun fire. Overhead, P-47 Thunderbolts of the 64th Fighter Wing began pelting Aschaffenburg with napalm, rockets, and .50-caliber bullets.

The defenders were now on their own, but they fought on. They lacked the troops or artillery to either retake or destroy the bridge, and a sortie by a pair of Messerschmitt Me-262 jets failed to down it. But there was still one more attack to be attempted. After dark on March 30, four German Navy frogmen tried to place an explosive charge on the bridge by floating down the Main from Aschaffenburg. They had tried the night before, but the mine got held up in the ruins of the road bridge that had been destroyed. During this subsequent attempt, the Germans had gotten over that obstacle, but they were spotted by alert sentries. Mortar fire was called down upon them. One of the mortar rounds detonated, killing all four.

On the last day of March, the envelopment of the city continued. While 2/157th continued to press into the southern end of Aschaffenburg and 3/157th mopped up in Schweinheim, 1/157th struck north along the city's eastern side. The 179th Regiment, to the right flank of the 157th, pressed north as well to help complete the envelopment. In the air the P-47s reappeared and continued to rain destruction on the garrison. If the planes were not overhead, massed artillery, often firing time-on-target missions, pounded the remaining buildings into rubble. The enemy headquarters in the Schloss Johannesburg was hit repeatedly. White phosphorous rounds from the 4.2-inch mortars started fires here and there, while self-propelled guns were brought up to support the GIs directly.

The Germans responded with intense mortar fire—one barrage dropped 200 rounds in 15 minutes—and continued sniping and infiltrating back into lost ground. Near Schweinheim, two tanks—one identified as a German Mark VI Tiger and the other a captured Sherman hastily painted with German crosses and the word *beutepanzer* (captured tank)—fired on the Americans, halting their advance. An M36 tank destroyer of the 645th destroyed the Sherman with its 90mm gun. The body of a German crewman hung out of one of the hull hatches, burned and blackened. The Mark VI was quickly destroyed as well.

At noon the 157th's adjutant, Captain Anse Spears, flew over Schloss Johannesburg and dropped a message. This ultimatum demanded the garrison's surrender, guaranteed observance of the Geneva Conventions, and threatened to level the town if the Germans continued the fight. The note ended ominously, "The fate of Aschaffenburg is in your hands." Additional surrender flyers were dropped around the city.

In the afternoon American attention focused on the barracks just north of Schweinheim. By nightfall Company K of 3/157th had won a small foothold in the Artillerie Kaserne nearest Schweinheim, but otherwise let fire support begin the process of wearing down the entrenched enemy.

Was Major Emil Lamberth a fanatical Nazi villain or a beleaguered officer trying to do his duty?

The German commander at Aschaffenburg, Major Emil Lamberth, was a World War I veteran who had arrived in the city in June 1944 to assume command of the 9th Pionier (Engineer) Battalion. Before the war he had been a schoolteacher who maintained his reserve commission. He was apparently a diligent officer because within a few months he was also working as the deputy to Lt. Col. Kurt Von Huenersdorff, the city's garrison commander. At the end of January 1945, Lamberth took over that position himself.

As the Allied armies approached, Lamberth prepared the city to take its place in the local defensive line. He was made the Aschaffenburg combat commander despite the presence of higher-ranking officers, most likely because of his combat experience and apparent dedication to duty. His command required him to work with various party and municipal officials.

When the battle began, Lamberth's battle group consisted of a widely varied and largely untrained body of troops. That the defense of the city was conducted with such vigor and for so long is in part a testament to his leadership. There are two different views of this man, however. Not unexpectedly, one view is mostly that of the American veterans of the battle while the other comes largely from the German side.

In the first case, many characterize him as an ardent Nazi who ruthlessly pushed his soldiers to fight a hopeless battle, with the full backing of his SS comrades. Some Hungarian POWs captured during the battle told their captors that more Germans wanted to surrender but their officers and SS overseers would not allow it. To discourage defeatism and surrender, he executed one officer, a Lieutenant Heymann, and another, a Luftwaffe man who felt he did not have any skills to bring into the fight. Troops and correspondents reported seeing a number of bodies swinging from lampposts.

There is other evidence that Lamberth was not in complete control of the fight. According to some independent accounts and Lamberth's own postwar statement, SS and Nazi Party men constantly interfered with his conduct of the battle. Rather than acting as comrades in arms, these Nazis were more like overseers.

Lamberth was tried for manslaughter after the war; at his trial he stated that Heymann had offered no defense to the charges against him. This caused the major to consider him guilty. Lamberth was found guilty himself and sentenced to four years in prison although the sentence was reduced because the court found Lamberth to be under pressure from the SS commission and Nazi officials.

A 1949 Aschaffenburg newspaper article states that Lamberth was drunk at the time he condemned Heymann, not an excuse for his conduct, certainly, but not something one would expect from an ardent Nazi intent on maintaining control in order to exact maximum casualties from his foe.

The truth is likely somewhere in the middle and will be colored by the point of view of the observer. The Americans understandably were biased against Lamberth. He had forced them to fight a tough battle they did not expect and did not want. While he was within his authority to execute soldiers for cowardice, this was not something Americans generally did, and the concept would have repulsed them. Many of the American news statements about Lamberth were written with a dramatic flair. On the German side, many certainly made efforts after the war to distance themselves from the Nazis and to emphasize the fear and coercion they lived under during the Third Reich.

What can be said is that Lamberth seemed a skilled and experienced officer, given the 10-day defense he conducted. With his skills not in question, identifying the motivation for his actions remains problematic. □

Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945, was not a day of peace in Aschaffenburg. The 1/157th and 3/179th continued their envelopment by seizing the surrounding towns of Gailbach, Halbach, Goldbach, and Hoesbach. The first two towns fell quickly; the last two held out until the next afternoon. This move completed the encirclement.

To exploit this flank, the barracks area had to be taken. Sparks's Company K, 3/157th attacked again at 1 PM following six hours of artillery preparation. Small-arms fire from some 100 convalescents drove the attack back. Now tanks moved up and fired white phosphorous shells into the enemy positions. The GIs stormed the building and took it in hard room-to-room combat. The next enemy position, the Bois-Brule Kaserne across the street, was taken the same way. Within four hours both were in American hands. The fighting was so intense that every defender of the second building was wounded.

The last barracks to be taken was the Pionier Kaserne, northwest of the previous two and much larger. This mission fell to the 2/157th, which planned ahead and took note of the fight for the previous two strongpoints. Besides the usual artillery barrage, two M12 self-propelled 155mm howitzers were brought up to a hill overlooking the target. They fired more than 100 rounds directly into the Kaserne while the American troops struggled to take it. By day's end, half of it had fallen.

The incessant pounding of the artillery, air support, mortars, and armor were now taking their toll on the Germans. While many of their positions were so well fortified that they were relatively safe from the physical effects of the fire, it was now affecting them mentally, depriving them of rest and making movement of supplies hazardous.

The will of the defenders to resist was crumbling. More and more Germans surrendered, including some 300 just in the 2/157th sector alone. Even Major Lamberth was beginning to crack. When some of his men asked to surrender, instead of making an example and executing them, he simply told them to go back to the line and fight. At this point only 800 defenders were left.

The last full day of fighting came on April 2. Resistance continued, but it was no longer organized. The 157th's sister regiments finished seizing the surrounding towns and established additional roadblocks. After mopping-up operations, 1/157th moved north and linked up with the 324th Infantry Regiment of the 44th Division, which had moved into position north of Aschaffenburg. Late in the morning most of the German defenders of the Pionier Kaserne pulled out, leaving only a few strongpoints that fell by mid-afternoon.

National Archives

National Archives

TOP: Two wounded soldiers, one American and one German, are evacuated from Aschaffenberg in a jeep speeding toward a field hospital. ABOVE: A pair of Sherman tanks trains its heavy guns on sniper positions at Aschaffenberg. German snipers were capable of holding up large formations of American troops unable to leave cover.

As night fell, 2/157th had fought its way into the city's heart while 3/157th broke into the eastern suburbs, occupying a wooded park that extended into Aschaffenburg's center. The artillery and air strikes continued as more and more Germans surrendered. Over 1,100 were captured on April 2. The remaining defenders clustered around the Schloss.

Fortunately, Major Lamberth had decided to end what was now a hopeless battle. At 7 AM he sent a Volkssturm officer with a captured American to seek terms. Colonel O'Brien refused to negotiate and demanded Lamberth surrender by 8 AM or the fighting would continue.

On the American side, unaware of the possible surrender, GIs readied artillery, tanks, and planes. O'Brien sent two German-speaking lieutenants with the surrender party to make the message clear. Lamberth agreed to capitulate but would not personally surrender to an

Continued on page 80

1941 REGIME CHANGE

Imperial War Museum

THE BRITISH ARMY MARCHED ON THE IRAQI CAPITAL OF BAGHDAD TO REMOVE A PRO-AXIS GOVERNMENT.

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

A dangerous outlaw regime sits in power in Baghdad; the leader of one of the world's superpowers decides it has to be removed at all costs; an army marches across the desert to topple it. The situation may sound familiar. The events of 2003 were in some ways similar to that of 1941. Sometimes history does seem to repeat itself.

Great Britain's World War II march on Baghdad effectively began with its march on the city during World War I in 1917. After the war Britain was assigned responsibility by the League of Nations for what was then called Mesopotamia. Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill wrote, "We accepted before all the world a mandate for the country and undertook to introduce much better methods of government in place of those we had overthrown."

Ever the realist, though, Churchill added: "The fact that we shall be calling into being an Arab administration in Baghdad makes it indispensable that we should treat the Arab question as a whole so far as it concerns British interests."

The one solution to both problems was found in T.E. Lawrence's old ally in Arabia, Prince Faisal. Churchill pressured British officials "to get Faisal on the throne as quickly as possible." Although he was completely unknown in Mesopotamia, the British announced he had received 96 percent of the vote in a plebiscite. Then, in a dawn ceremony on August 23, 1922, with hardly a native in sight, the British installed him as king of a renamed Iraq (meaning well-rooted country).

"Much has been written," comments Christopher Catherwood in *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq*, "with what is probably a great deal of accuracy about the highly questionable way in which the referendum was conducted. Many chiefs simply gave the British the answer they wanted, and since ordinary people had next to no say in the process, we cannot say through a democratic process Faisal was the overwhelming and genuine choice of the Iraqi people."

Nuri as-Said, who fought with Lawrence and Faisal in Arabia, was the country's dominant political figure as minister of defense (1923-1930), prime minister (1930-1932), foreign minister (1933-1936), then again briefly prime minister (February-April 1940). But support for the British in Iraq extended nowhere beyond him and the monarchy. Nationalists were particularly incensed by the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty London forced on Baghdad as a precondition for ending the League Mandate. Under it, the British had effective control of Iraqi oil production and foreign policy, military

Roused to a frenzy, Arabs who have been recruited by the pro-Axis regime in Iraq gather before organizing to fight the invading British. Regime change in Iraq ended the threat of a direct Nazi offensive from east of the Mediterranean. LEFT: Artist Anthony Gross created this image of six soldiers of the Arab Legion preparing for a meeting. Traditionally garbed, the troops of the Arab Legion were equipped by the British, and their senior leadership consisted of British officers.

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

TOP: Charging through a grove of date palm trees, Iraqi insurgents attack British positions. ABOVE: Iraqi artillerymen service an obsolete field weapon in shelling a British position near the town of Ramadi.

bases for 25 years, and the right to transit troops from India during wartime. British power in Iraq was built on a foundation of desert sand, and when it suddenly shifted in 1941 a British army was again marching on Baghdad, including a politician and a new Lawrence to write about it.

As the fateful year began, the monarchy was led by Emir Abdul Illah, regent since April 1939 for his six-year-old nephew, the namesake grandson of King Faisal. His father had died crashing his car after a late night of partying and drinking. The prime minister since April 1940 was Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani, a hardline nationalist who had opposed the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. Even more dangerous for the British was the group behind him, a quartet of powerful colonels known as the Golden Square. Their leader, Colonel Salah ad-Dinn as-Sabbagh, made plain their sentiments: "There is no more murderous wolf for the Arab and no deadlier foe of Islam than Britain….The Arabs have no future unless the British Empire comes to an end."

Rashid 'Ali refused to break diplomatic relations with Fascist Italy when it went to war with Britain as Nuri as-Said had done against Nazi Germany during his second brief term as prime minister. He held meetings with the Italian Minister, Luigi Gabbrielli, keeping out Nuri, who was foreign minister again. Colonel Salah ad-Dinn had his own meetings with Gabbrielli to request arms.

The regent finally reacted to such intrigues by dismissing the government on January 31, 1941. The Golden Square struck back two months later, seizing Baghdad in a bloodless coup, reinstating Rashid 'Ali, and sending soldiers to kill Emir Abdul. They were too late. He had already fled, disguised as a woman, to a relative's house. From there he phoned the American legation and the next morning was being driven west out of town under a rug in the American minister's car. He reached the British air base at Habbaniya, 55 miles from Baghdad, and was flown to the British base at Basra, 300 miles to the south. From there, he reached final sanctuary with his own uncle, King Abdullah of Transjordan.

To the British ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, Rashid 'Ali reaffirmed the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. Secretly, he asked Gabbrielli about possible air support and arms from the Italians and Germans. Cornwallis had not believed Rashid 'Ali and, at his appeal, London reinforced Habbaniya with 400 men of the King's Own Royal Regiment, and Basra with 3,000 Indian troops. Rashid 'Ali let the challenge pass, not yet ready for a confrontation until assured of Axis support. Pressure from the Golden Square forced him to change his mind, though, and he warned Cornwallis no further troops would be allowed in Iraq until the newest arrivals had passed through.

The British response was to send 2,000 more Indian soldiers to Basra. Rashid 'Ali's protests to Cornwallis were such that the ambassador ordered the evacuation of British subjects in Baghdad to Habbaniya; only 230 got through before the main road was closed for military traffic, trapping Cornwallis and 500 others on the grounds of the British and American legations. At dawn on April 30, 1941, Iraqi forces began placing artillery and antiaircraft guns on the 200-foot plateau just a half-mile south of the Habbaniya base. By noon 9,000 troops had taken up positions, and armored cars had rolled to within 500 yards of the gates.

Blocked by the plateau and backed into a loop of the Euphrates River, Habbaniya was "the worst defensive position in the world," according to the official history of the Iraq campaign published by the British government after the war. The British, though, were responsible for the base's situation as much as its geography. "It is notorious," wrote John Glubb, a former British officer commanding the Transjordan Arab Legion, "that when the Germans occupy a new station, their first task is to build defenses around it, whereas the British in similar circumstances lay out cricket and football

National Archives

ABOVE: Emir Abdul Illah served as regent of Iraq for his six-year-old nephew, the namesake of King Faisal. BELOW: Air Vice Marshal H.G. Smart commanded the Royal Air Force units in Iraq, displaying daring and courage in the process. BOTTOM: British Brigadier John Bagot Glubb commanded the Arab Legion during the fight against the pro-Axis forces of Iraq.

National Archives

National Archives

fields ... Playing fields, cinema and garrison church were there—but no defenses."

The base had become a training facility for the Royal Air Force rather than an operational field, and its military resources were minimal. Of its 1,000 personnel just 35 were pilots, older instructors who would have to rely on students for aircrew. Of its 80 aircraft the most modern were only a single Bristol Blenheim bomber and nine Gloster Gladiator fighters; the remainder were obsolete Audax and Oxford trainers, Gordon bombers, and Valencia transports with hastily attached makeshift bomb racks for 20-pound bombs.

The ground forces available were 1,550 infantry, 1,200 Iraqi and Assyrian Levies, and 18 armored cars. There were 9,000 dependents and enough food for just a month. Every bathtub, bottle, cup, and bowl was kept filled to the brim in case the base's water tower was hit. The nearest help was in Basra, 600 miles east in Britain's Mandate. "There was no possible avenue of escape," wrote Glubb, "and resistance or surrender were the only courses open."

From London, Prime Minister Churchill left no doubt about his choice: "If you have to strike, strike hard. Use all necessary force."

The base commander, Air Vice Marshal H.G. Smart, sent up a flight of aircraft to test the Iraqis, who did not fire on the planes. Smart put his men to work digging trenches, manning machine guns, and pushing or towing aircraft as far as possible from Iraqi artillery range.

After a second day's standoff, Smart decided on a predawn air strike and ordered a squadron of Vickers Wellington bombers to fly from Basra to join in. The result was an aerial traffic jam in the darkness above Habbaniya.

"As the daylight got stronger we could see that the air above the plateau was like the front of a wasp's nest on a sunny morning," wrote Wing Commander Peter Dudgeon. "The 10 Wellingtons were there from Basra making a total of 49 aircraft of five different types and speeds, clustering and jockeying over an area not much bigger than a minor golf course. It was a hairy experience. In my Oxford I would peer down into the dusk, trying to distinguish a juicy target like a gun emplacement—and an Audax would sail past at some crazy angle. Or a Wellington would sail majestically across my bow, giving me heart failure and leaving my machine bucketing about in its slipstream. Luckily, no one hit anybody else, but there were some very close shaves indeed."

The RAF flew 193 sorties over 14 hours, dropping 30 tons of bombs along with low-level strafing runs on the Iraqi positions. The Iraqis responded with heavy antiaircraft fire, shelling, and air raids using their superior American Northrop fighters. British losses for the day were heavy—13 killed, 29 wounded, 22 aircraft downed or destroyed on the ground—but Habbaniya still held out.

Base personnel mocked the Iraqi shelling, placing bets on when the water tower would be hit. "It did not seem possible that there were any gunners in the world who could fail to hit it—the slow death of the station would have started," recorded the official history.

As Churchill ordered, Habbaniya struck back hard. "The garrison lived, worked and fought as if all the advantage were on their side, as if the rout of the enemy were only a matter of energy and time…," the official history recalled. "Aircraft were fueled, loaded and started up behind the hangers; as soon as they were ready they taxied around the corner to the runways and took off under the enemy's nose…. Methodically, the airmen attacked the gun positions, swooped on airfields from which hostile craft were already joining the fight, played havoc with supply columns moving up to the plateau from Baghdad."

Wing Commander Dudgeon reported the British "dropped well over 3,000 bombs, totaling over 50 tons, and we had fired 116,000 rounds of ammunition. The ops-room had recorded 647 sorties, but we had completed, unrecorded, many more than that…."

On the ground, the King's Own and the Levies joined in with nightly grenade-tossing raids into the Iraqi positions.

After four days, the Iraqis were finished. At dawn on May 6, 1941, the British could see them heading down the plateau to the east toward Baghdad, abandoning guns and ammunition. The British were not finished with the Iraqis. Five miles away, those who were retreating got entangled with a column of reinforcements.

"At about the same time, every available Oxford, Audax, Gordon, and Gladiator in Habbinya was let loose," wrote Dudgeon. "We

"THE FANTASTIC ODDS AGAINST THE GARRISON OF HABBANIYA PROBABLY SAVED THEM, FOR THE GOLDEN SQUARE WERE OVERCONFIDENT." —BRIGADIER JOHN GLUBB

made 139 sorties and, when the last aircraft left, its pilot reported that the road was a strip of flames, several hundred yards long. There were ammunition limbers exploding, with cars and lorries burning by the dozen. We lost one Audax shot down."

The Iraqis answered with a final air raid late in the afternoon, killing seven, wounding eight, and destroying two Oxfords, a Gladiator, and an Audax.

In London, Churchill cabled Smart: "Your vigorous and splendid action had largely restored situation."

Habbaniya had not merely held but had inflicted over 1,000 casualties on the Iraqis, including 26 officers and 408 soldiers captured, and destroyed most of the Iraqi Air Force of 56 planes. As Glubb saw it, "The fantastic odds against the garrison of Habbaniya probably saved them, for the Golden Square were over-confident."

The official history saw it more heroically: "The miracle of Habbaniya was achieved by coolness, by violent, unflagging labor, and by a measureless impudence."

In restoring the situation, Churchill had more in mind than merely holding Habbaniya. He was determined to overthrow the Rashid 'Ali regime in Baghdad. Even while the siege at Habbaniya went on, the prime minister and the chiefs of staff in London began a long-distance argument over invading Iraq with the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, General Sir Archibald Wavell, in Cairo.

On May 3, Wavell told the chiefs, "I have consistently warned you that no assistance could be given to Iraq from Palestine in present circumstances, and have always advised that a commitment to Iraq should be avoided…. My forces are stretched to the limit everywhere…."

The chiefs of staff responded the following day: "A commitment in Iraq was inevitable…. There can be no question of accepting the Turkish offer of mediation. We can make no concessions."

Wavell then fired off a scathing retort. "Nice baby you handed me on my 58th birthday…Your message takes little account of realities. You must face facts. I feel it is my duty to warn you in the gravest possible terms that I consider the prolongation of fighting in Iraq will seriously endanger the defense of Palestine and Egypt.... I, therefore, urge again most strongly that a settlement should be negotiated as early as possible."

"Settlement by negotiation cannot be entertained except on the basis of a climb down by Iraqis, with safeguard against future Axis designs on Iraq," said the chiefs of staff. "Realities of the situation are that Rashid 'Ali has all along been hand-in-glove with the Axis powers, and was merely waiting until they could support him before exposing his hand. Our arrival at Basra forced him to go off at half-cock before the Axis was ready. Thus there is an excellent chance of restoring the situation by bold action, if it is not delayed."

Wavell finally bowed to the inevitable, cabling on May 13, "We will try to liquidate this tiresome Iraq business quickly."

Even while opposing the invasion, Wavell readied for it. On May 3, he handed preparations over to the commander in Palestine, General Henry Maitland Wilson. He was no more enthusiastic than Wavell. "More trouble, gentlemen, I am afraid!" he had announced to his staff. However, he quickly patched together a 5,800-man Habbaniya Relief Force (HABFORCE) under Maj. Gen. George Clark. To London, Wavell warned he could "only regard [HABFORCE] as [an] outside chance…."

Clark whittled HABFORCE to a 2,000-man spearhead called Kingstone Column (KINGCOL). Despite its small size, KINGCOL had several unusual attributes. There were no fewer than three members of Parliament in it, one of whom, Somerset de Chair, in 1945 published an account of its march on Baghdad, *The Golden Carpet*.

KINGCOL's commander, Brigadier Joseph Kingstone, "added to the colorfulness of the expedition," wrote de Chair, by wearing a blue pajama top over khaki shorts at breakfast. Adding even more color were 250 men of the Arab Legion of Transjordan, a bedouin foreign legion led by seconded or retired British officers under contract. One of these was its commander, John Glubb, who wrote of the invasion in *The Story of the Arab Legion* in 1948.

Despite his blimpish appearance and name, Glubb had spent almost 20 years living among the bedouin and helping them police themselves, first for a decade during the Iraq Mandate, then in Transjordan's service since 1930. De Chair described Glubb's men as "dark faced, with long black shiny hair, wrapped about in buff robes and pantaloons, wearing gingham head-dresses with the Emir's silver crown on the forehead and swathed in bandoliers of ammunition….We called them Glubb's girls on account of their flowing robes."

The Arab Legion's primary role in the invasion was reconnaissance, and Glubb led it across the Transjordan border into Iraq a week ahead of the rest of KINGCOL, even while Wavell was quarreling with Churchill and the chiefs. The Arab Legion would take part in the invasion's first action, at the fort at Rutbah 200 miles west of Habbaniya.

Glubb surrounded the fort on the morning of May 8, 1941, called in RAF support, then watched as aircraft passed over dropping a few bombs and circling. Then one plane flew lower,

Imperial War Museum

Obsolete Gloster Gladiator biplane fighters are guarded by soldiers of the Arab Legion.

dropping a message that a white flag was raised in the fort. "This war was too easy," wrote Glubb. "We had not yet fired a shot."

The Legion would get its chance to fight. Glubb and his men advanced 200 yards. "But the gate remained obstinately closed, the high stone walls frowned upon us in silence," Glubb later wrote. "Armed as we were with only small arms, there was nothing we could do against its high masonry wall. As I was standing with a few others looking at the fort from a hillock some 300 yards away, a machine gun suddenly stuttered from the ramparts, and the bullets whistled around. A man standing by me was wounded in the hand. We dropped into a wadi behind the hill. The campaign had begun."

Glubb called again for air support. It took two hours for a single plane, then hours later for another, to return and drop a single bomb— which missed. "We lay down to sleep in disgust—this was not such fun, after all," he remembered.

The next day passed in similar fashion with lackadaisical RAF bombing and desultory fire from the fort. That night, a relief convoy of 40 trucks rushed from the darkness into the fort before the Legionnaires had time to substantially react.

"To engage an enemy twice our strength, in the middle of the desert, with no support for 300 miles, seemed to me to be an unnecessary risk," Glubb wrote. "We sent a few men to fire bursts at the fort for half an hour to keep the enemy employed, and we pulled out in the dark and set off westward across the desert."

In the morning, at Pumping Station 3 of the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline, Glubb met up with an RAF armored car squadron that had just finished a two-day, 1,000-mile crossing from the Libyan desert. While the Legion refitted, the squadron rushed ahead. Early the next day, just as the Legion was catching up with the armored cars, it was found that the fort had been abandoned during the night. On May 12, KINGCOL crossed the frontier between Transjordan and Iraq, about 470 miles from Habbaniya and 55 miles east of Baghdad. The column reached Rutbah unopposed in 36 hours, set off again on May 15 and covered 160 miles that day, and finished just 40 miles from Habbaniya. Then Kingstone sent Glubb and the Legion to scout northward while he veered south by compass.

The result was recorded by Somerset de Chair: "The great supply monsters were everywhere floundering in soft sand. Those which had driven up the crisp ridges were now bedded down to the axles, while their crews labored in the desperate heat to dig them out…. The monstrous vehicle would lurch forward only to embed itself deeper into the sand 10 yards farther on. And the men would have to begin again."

Imperial War Museum

The Iraqi rebel stronghold at Rutbah is photographed from the cockpit of a Royal Air Force Bristol Blenheim aircraft. The RAF harassed rebel bases effectively throughout the campaign.

They got little sympathy from John Glubb, who wrote, "I have always found that one of the most noxious weapons in the desert is the prismatic compass. The fatal inclination of British officers to travel the desert on a compass bearing more often than not results in disaster."

Kingstone finally admitted defeat, telling Glubb, "I shall want your dusky maidens to help us find an alternative route."

They did, and the column reached Habbaniya on the evening of May 18, de Chair speeding ahead, "eager to catch my first glimpse of our first objective. At the edge of the plateau I came abruptly upon the cantonment. From the foot of the red sandstone spurs, a level mud aerodome stretched to the settlement itself, where hangars gave way to a maze of leafy avenues and the red roofs of bungalows."

Passed without fanfare through the gate, de Chair later recorded, "Soon we were driving along smooth metalled roads, between pink-flowering oleanders. It was difficult to realize that I had entered a besieged settlement, as the spear of the relieving force."

However, before KINGCOL had reached Habbaniya, a dangerous new participant had entered the campaign in Iraq. "Just as the tail of the column had been moving off from the camp, four black fighters had roared across the desert drilling the lorries on the ground with bullets and cannon fire. They had disappeared as abruptly as they had come," wrote de Chair. One of Glubb's Legionnaires was killed, another wounded, as they stood firing back.

The fighters were not from the Iraqi Air Force, already mostly put out of action. They were Messerschmitt Me-110s of the Luftwaffe. The attacks continued daily at Habbaniya. While de Chair was working in an office on an intelligence report, "machine-gun bullets from a raiding Messerschmitt 110 were slapping against the walls outside in fine style."

Bivouacking outside the base, Glubb wrote, "The Arab Legion, who had at last been persuaded to dig slit trenches, seemed almost to enjoy these breaks in the monotony. They would greet the tearing fighters with steady aimed bursts of automatic fire, and as the enemy roared away into the distance grinning faces would launch imprecations and shouts of defiance behind them."

Two days into the siege at Habbaniya, Rashid 'Ali's brother, the Iraqi minister to Turkey, had formally requested military assistance at the German embassy. Hitler recognized the regime the next day. German aid got off to a bad start when the transport carrying Major Alex von Blomberg, leading the Luftwaffe liaison mission with the Iraqis, flew over Baghdad into an air battle between Iraqi and British fighters and landed dead in his seat with a stray bullet in his head. With the help of the collaborationist Vichy French in control of neighboring Syria, the Germans shipped 15,500 rifles with six million rounds of ammunition to the Iraqis and flew 28 fighters, bombers, and transports into northern Iraq.

On May 23, Hitler signed Directive No. 30. "The Arab Freedom Movement is, in the Middle East, our natural ally against England. In this connection the raising of the rebellion in Iraq is of special importance…. I have decided to push the development of operations in the Middle East through the medium of going to the support of Iraq."

By then, almost all of the Luftwaffe aircraft had been destroyed on the ground by RAF raids from Basra. With the battle of Crete raging and the invasion of Russia weeks away, Hitler quickly lost interest in Iraq. Too late, Rashid 'Ali came to realize this, telling Italian Minister Gabrielli that Iraq is "regarded as a pawn by Germany."

There were still 55 miles to Baghdad, but the Iraqis worked to make the trek as difficult as possible for the British and their allies. As they were fleeing Habbaniya, the British opened the dikes on the Euphrates and flooded the surrounding area. Base troops had rehearsed for a crossing in the base swimming pool with skiffs and canoes from the base boating club. On the night of May 18, they crossed the river to take the main obstacle on the road to Baghdad, the town of Fallujah.

Beginning at 5 AM on May 19, the RAF flew 134 sorties against Fallujah, dropping surrender leaflets along with 10 tons of bombs. Then the loyal Levies made a mid-afternoon shooting rush across a bridge into town and took Fallujah without a single casualty. Those Iraqi soldiers attempting to escape in civilian clothes stood out in army boots. They had not been able to find shoes.

The real battle for Fallujah came four days later, with a 2:30 AM counterattack by an Iraqi brigade. When the Iraqis' approach was spotted, Lt. Col. C.J. Hodgson of the King's Own led a patrol to investigate and died holding them off single-handed with a haversack of grenades. Despite Hodgson's heroism, the Iraqis were soon in control of the northeastern corner of town, planting machine guns on rooftops.

At Habbaniya, Clark ordered Kingstone across the Euphrates to take charge of the battle. Reinforcements were rafted across, and the Iraqis were cleared one house at a time by evening.

On May 28, Clark split the rest of KINGCOL for the final drive on Baghdad, advancing from two directions. One column, 500 men under Lt. Col. Andrew Ferguson along with Glubb and his Arab Legion, swept north to the Tigris River to flank the city. Leading the column, Glubb and his men reached Iraq's second great river on the morning of May 29.

"We set out at dawn and drove across the flat open fields nearly to the banks of the Tigris," he wrote. "Then we dismounted and infiltrated through the tall date gardens until we came out on the bank of the Tigris. The great river rolled past like a vast flood, forming swift eddies below the bank at our feet…. The rays of the sun filtered through the palms and threw a lacework of sun and shade on the ground. For a moment we forgot our month in the shadeless glare of deserts. The anxieties of war fell from us. We feasted on the magic scene."

They were quickly shaken from their revelry. "Away to our right, on the main road, spurts of smoke and dust marked the bursting of shells," wrote Glubb. "The hollow crump of the explosions came to our ears dimly on the scene."

Ferguson was being held up by stiff resistance in the brickfields of Kadhimain, five miles from Baghdad, with one killed and five wounded. He ordered Glubb to continue north and cut the Mosul-Baghdad railway at the Meshahida station. He did, after meeting resistance of his own.

"The enemy's fire seemed to be coming from a ditch lined with willows, about 200 yards away on the right of the road," Glubb recalled. "I ran down our ditch and found Corporal Ferhan. I told him to follow an irrigation ditch which seemed to lead from our position to behind the enemy's right, and to shoot him up from there. He looked around to where I was pointing, nodding his head and ran off down the ditch, picking up half a dozen men as he went. We now had two Vickers guns and 15 or 16 rifles in action. The enemy's fire seemed to be petering out. Only now and then a single bullet came over with a whitt. Soon Corporal Ferhan appeared near the end of the row of willows. We stood up in our ditch. Some of the enemy climbed out of their trench and advanced toward us. They had two killed and two wounded. The remainder surrendered."

When they reached the station the next morning, the Legion found it deserted.

The main column, including Clark, Kingstone, de Chair, and 750 men, struck eastward up the road from Fallujah. Along the way, de Chair rounded up a crashed Italian pilot and came upon an abandoned agricultural station with 10,000 chickens clucking about. On May 30, just three miles from Baghdad, the column came under heavy artillery and machine-gun fire. An Iraqi shell ricocheted off the mudguard of de Chair's car without exploding, though shaking up his interpreter and driver.

From prisoners, Clark and Kingstone learned that Baghdad was in a state of panic with wild rumors that the British force was 50,000 strong. In a bluff, an interpreter called Iraqi headquarters to report British tanks. As night fell, Iraqi shelling continued, the RAF was

Imperial War Museum

RIGHT: On June 11, 1941, British soldiers sporting pith helmets contemplate the sprawling ancient city of Baghdad from across the expanse of the Tigris River. OPPOSITE: During the course of armistice negotiations, the crew of a British armored car awaits instructions on the outskirts of Baghdad.

bombing Iraqi positions north of the city, and Clark and Kingstone were faced with the grim prospect of house-to-house fighting with just 2,000 men against an estimated 13 infantry battalions and five artillery regiments.

Then, as suddenly as it began, the Iraqi crisis ended. Shortly after midnight on May 31, 1941, an aide awakened Kingstone: "An odd sort of message has just come in. Two delegates from the Iraqi Army will appear on the Iron Bridge at 2 o'clock in the morning. Will we send two officers to meet them to discuss terms of Armistice?"

Having lost their gamble with Hitler and their nerve along with it, Rashid 'Ali and the Golden Square were at that moment on the only road still open out of Baghdad, heading east to Iran. Rashid 'Ali made it all the way to Berlin. Except for a brief return in the late 1950s, he spent the rest of his life in exile, dying in Beirut in 1965. The colonels of the Golden Square got no farther than Iran and Turkey. Over the next four years they were tracked down, returned to Iraq, and publicly hanged.

To initiate the terms of surrender, de Chair was driven blindfolded into Baghdad to get Ambassador Cornwallis. He, Clark, and two delegates from the office of the mayor of Baghdad negotiated a simple armistice while crammed in a car. As de Chair noted, Baghdad was "so far the only city of renown captured by ourselves during the opening hazards of the Second World War."

To de Chair's annoyance, British forces were kept out of Baghdad pending the regent's return. "Having fought our way, step by step, to the threshold of the city, we must now cool our heels outside. It would, apparently, be lowering to the dignity of our ally, the Regent, if he were seen to be supported on arrival on British bayonets."

In the resulting vacuum, anti-Semitic rioting and looting broke out, with 150 Jews killed.

Despite the finish, de Chair, noted of KINGCOL: "For it is no ordinary army that can cross a waterless desert for the first time in history and deliver at the end of 700 miles of desert a punch which sends a well-equipped army of four divisions reeling into armistice." He later directed British vehicles when they finally rolled into Baghdad, displaying his celebrated dented mudguard to the regent and young King Faisal II, who had spent the coup and campaign quietly on a royal estate outside Baghdad with his British governess.

Glubb preferred to rush home. Like an executive or salesman back from a business trip, he had to persistently knock at his own door at 3:30 AM to be let in. Two months to the day he fled, Emir Abdul Ilah returned to Baghdad. In October 1941, Nuri as-Said was reinstated as prime minister and Iraq declared war on the Axis. The British followed up by driving the Vichy French out of Syria. Glubb and the Arab Legion would fight again, and de Chair was critically wounded.

In July 1941, Churchill told Parliament: "If anyone had predicted two months ago, when Iraq was in revolt and our people were hanging on by their eyelids at Habbaniya and our ambassador was imprisoned in his embassy in Baghdad, and when all Syria and Iraq began to be overrun by German tourists, and were in the hands of forces controlled indirectly but none the less powerfully by German authority—if anyone had predicted that we should already, by the middle of July, have cleaned up the whole of the Levant and have reestablished our authority there for the time being, such a prophet would have been considered most impudent."

The latter-day Lawrence, John Glubb, saw it differently: "After all, I could not get myself to regard all this business as a genuine war."

History tends to agree with Glubb. Despite the threat that a pro-Nazi Iraq would have been for the British position in the Middle East in World War II, the Iraqi campaign was squeezed from memory between the legends of the Desert Fox and the Desert Rats of the Battles of Tobruk and El Alamain.

In 1958, there was another coup in Baghdad. King Faisal, former Regent Abdul, and every member of the royal family down to infants were murdered. Nuri as-Said, still prime minister, tried to escape dressed as a woman like Abdul had but was killed by a mob and his body dragged through the streets behind a jeep. The coup began the chain of events that led to the rise of Sadaam Hussein and ended with another army marching on Baghdad. □

"FOR IT IS NO ORDINARY ARMY THAT CAN CROSS A WATERLESS DESERT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY AND DELIVER AT THE END OF 700 MILES OF DESERT A PUNCH WHICH SENDS A WELL-EQUIPPED ARMY OF FOUR DIVISIONS REELING INTO ARMISTICE."

—SOMERSET DE CHAIR

Imperial War Museum

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is a resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He previously wrote for WWII History *on the Spanish Blue Division and the Long Range Desert Group.*

THE Last Corsair

IN HER PREVIOUS LIFE, she had been the Hansa-line freighter *Goldenfels*. She was launched in 1937 and displaced 7,862 tons. With her single stack, she looked like many other freighters traveling the world's sea lanes.

When the German Navy requisitioned her as *Hilfskreuzer 16—Auxiliary Cruiser 16*—the Hansa crew just had time to unload her last cargo before the Bremen dockworkers started to tear her insides apart. They had to increase her fuel capacity from 1,268 tons to 3,000, water tanks to 1,200, and coal bunkers for her condensers to 1,000.

Hilfskreuzer 16 also required space to hold 92 mines, sand ballast, prisoners, live chickens, refrigerators, crew quarters, a seaplane, artificial ventilation, four torpedo tubes, six 5.9-inch guns, pigpens, potatoes, cabbages, charts of every ocean in the world, radio transmitters, and toilet paper. The guns were secondhand, coming from the old battleship *Schlesien* complete with pre-World War I rangefinders.

The ship also required a variety of camouflage devices. The guns had to be hidden behind flaps that could drop at seconds notice. At the touch of a lever, heavy steel flaps would slide upward to reveal the 5.9-inch guns. The rangefinder was hidden inside a water tank above the wheelhouse. Collapsible ventilators, removable posts, telescoping funnels, and masts all helped the ship change its identity.

When the work was done, only one thing remained, and that was her name. On December 14, 1939, Kapitan zur See Bernhard Rogge provided that at the ship's commissioning ceremony, naming her *Atlantis*. Under that title, *Hilfskreuzer 16* would set out on the longest ocean voyage in history and become the most successful disguised mer-

Minutes after the predawn attack by the German raider *Atlantis* against the Egyptian liner *Zam Zam*, passengers from the stricken vessel are seen crowding into lifeboats, while the ship itself is listing heavily to port. *Atlantis* became the most successful of the German surface raiders during World War II.

The German commerce raider *Atlantis* became the stuff of legends during World War II. BY DAVID LIPPMAN

chant raider in the history of warfare.

Rogge needed men who could withstand a variety of climates, long hours and days of boredom, months at sea, and provide unquestioning obedience. Fortunately he could veto the Navy's choices. More fortunately for Rogge, the personnel desks sent him capable men. Kapitanleutnant Erich Kühn, the executive officer, was a regular Navy man with strong character and leadership style. Rogge had known Kühn since 1936. Oberleutnant Lorenz Kasch, the gunnery officer, was another career man. Radio officer Oberleutnant Adolf Wenzel and demolition officer Johann-Heinrich Fehler were less experienced but impressed Rogge with their military bearing.

But Rogge vetoed other officers, demanding men from other warships and commands. Korvettenkapitan Fritz Lorenzen came aboard as administrative officer, Dr. Wolfgang Collmann as weather officer. The latter was a family friend.

Other officers were called up from the merchant navy. Navigation officer Kapitanleutnant Paul Kamenz had commanded merchant ships. The other merchant officers given commissions held master pilot's or first mate's certificates. Doctors Georg Reil and Hans-Bernhard Sprung were assigned to provide quality medical care.

Finally, an adjutant. Rogge rejected the Navy's choice, an art professor, in favor of Leutnant Ulrich Mohr, a cheery chemistry Ph.D. who spoke a number of languages and had traveled in America, China, and Japan.

Rogge was told to proceed to sea to attack unescorted British shipping, sailing Friday, March 13, 1940. To avoid bad luck, he gained

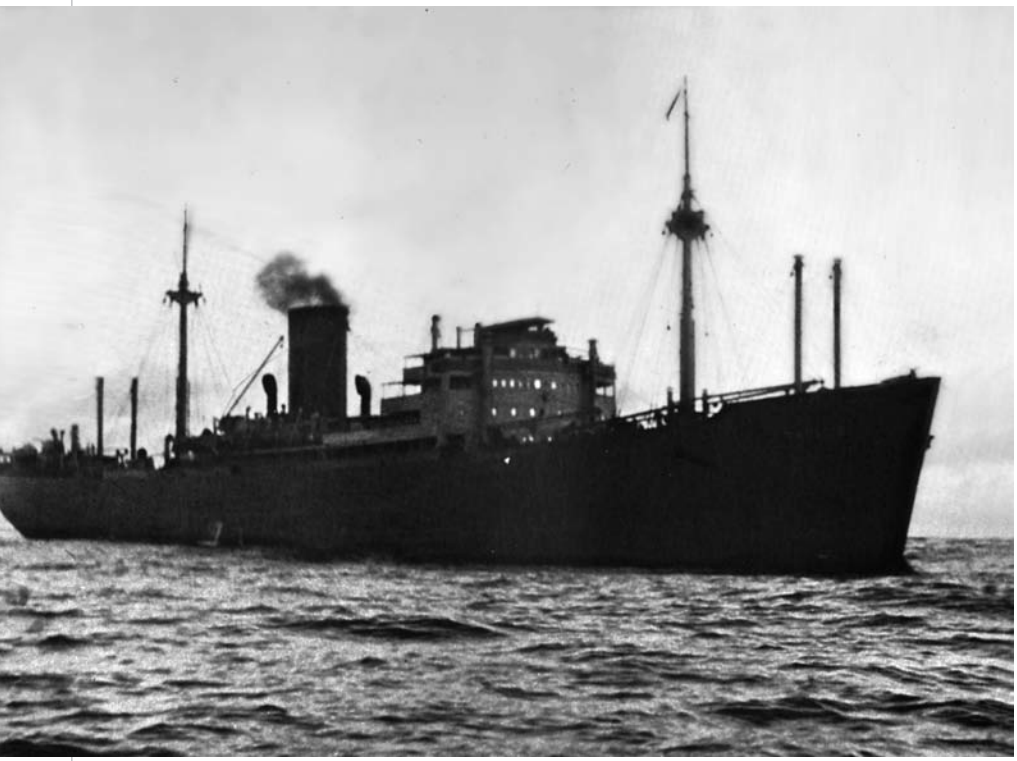
Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

permission to weigh anchor at 11:55 PM on Thursday the 12th.

Amid darkness and cold, *Atlantis* sailed for Süderpiep in the North Sea right on time. To preserve secrecy, a sailor was left behind to pick up the ship's mail every day and store it in an unused back room. At Süderpiep, *Atlantis* sailors repainted their ship to resemble a Norwegian freighter, *Knute Nelson*, and held a last gunnery drill. To scare off snoopers, *Atlantis* flew a yellow quarantine flag, while Rogge awaited bad weather for his breakout.

On March 31, Rogge's men turned *Knute Nelson* into the Soviet Navy fleet auxiliary *Kim*. Rogge inspected his ship from a launch. He returned to report that everything looked fine, but the Soviet flag was flying upside down. A crewman changed that, and *Atlantis* sailed off to war amid gathering drizzle and heavy seas escorted by two S-boats and the submarine *U-37*.

National Archives



A *Life* magazine photographer aboard the doomed *Zam Zam* snapped this image of the German surface raider *Atlantis* posing as the Norwegian merchant ship *Tamesis*. The photograph eventually reached the British Admiralty and was distributed to Royal Navy forces hunting the German vessel.

The warships steamed into the Denmark Strait, evading floating ice chunks, amid water temperatures of 27 degrees Farenheit and air temperatures of minus 20. *U-37* finally reached her point of departure and signaled "Best of luck and a safe return" before heading back to the Reich.

Atlantis changed disguises once again. Mohr broke out Lloyd's Register of International Shipping and studied profiles. He needed a ship of about 8,000 tons with a cruiser stern, built after 1927. He eliminated those with white waterlines—impossible to paint at sea—and those that regularly worked with the Royal Navy or operated in the area. Of all the world's shipping, there were only 26 candidates. Five were American, and Mohr did not know American call signs. Greek ships had far too specific a paint scheme to replicate. Rogge eliminated British, French, Belgian, and Dutch ships, whose locations were well known to the British. That left eight ships of Japanese registry.

Mohr disguised *Atlantis* as the Kokusai Company's *Kasii Maru*, a four-year-old, 8,408-ton passenger freighter. On April 27, Kühn sent his petty officers into action, and *Atlantis* sailors converted the raider's disguise. The Germans slapped yellow paint on the masts, black paint on the gray hull, and a large white K on the red-and-black smokestack. To paint the waterline properly, Rogge stopped his ship, pumped fuel from one side to another, and exposed the hull down to the waterline. Sailors scrambled down ropes and scaffolds to repaint the exposed surfaces.

On April 30, *Atlantis* entered her patrol area on the Cape Town-Freetown shipping lane. On May 2, a lookout spotted a contact. Crewmen in kimonos, some pushing prams, wandered the deck trying to look Japanese. At the last minute the ship turned out to be an Ellerman liner, the *City of Exeter*, which mounted guns and carried more than 200 passengers. Rogge declared there would be no attack.

The crew was disappointed, but Rogge's reasons were simple. *Atlantis* could not accommodate 200 women, children, and elderly prisoners. Keeping its Japanese disguise, *Atlantis* watched the 9,654-ton liner rumble past, expecting a courtesy flag dip. None came. The Germans thought the British were being snooty. In fact, they were suspicious of seeing a Japanese ship in the South Atlantic and reported that fact, giving a full description of the "Japanese ship."

The next day at 2 PM, about 500 miles off Cape Frio in Portuguese West Africa, *Atlantis*' coxswain spotted a thin smoke cloud. Rogge cranked up his engines and cut the range quickly. The ship was clearly British. At 2:55 PM, Rogge dropped his false walls and camouflage, hoisted the German battle ensign and signaled with flags, "Heave to or I will fire," and "Do not use your radio." The transformation took two seconds. The British kept sailing on, so Rogge opened fire to warn the ship. It answered, "I understand your signal." It then blew off steam as if to stop, faked a stop, and took off to starboard at flank speed.

Rogge opened fire and smashed the ship's stern. Then *Atlantis* radiomen heard the ship broadcasting "QQQ," the signal for a ship being stopped by a raider. *Atlantis* began broadcasting gibberish on the same frequency. Rogge ordered Kasch to resume firing. Finally, the British ship stopped.

At 3:26, Mohr, Fehler, and 10 men in Kriegsmarine uniforms went over in boats to seize the 6,199-ton freighter *Scientist*, under Captain Windsor, one of three men left aboard. The rest had abandoned ship. Fehler set charges to sink *Scientist*, but the ship refused to go down. Rogge tried 150mm guns to no avail and finally sank *Scientist* with a torpedo.

The next stop was the tip of Africa and the Cape of Good Hope. On Friday, May 10, 1940, at 8:30 PM, *Atlantis* began laying mines 30 miles from the visible Cape Agulhas light. Lookouts could see car headlights on a coastal road. On an exceptionally calm and flat sea, Fehler laid neat rows of 92 Type-C electric mines, finishing the task at 1:17 AM on May 11. Then *Atlantis* steamed off to the Indian Ocean at 10 knots to avoid British minesweepers.

Rogge ordered Mohr to hit the books again and find a new disguise. Mohr recommended and Rogge approved the year-old Dutch two-

master *Abbekerk*, 7,906 tons. On May 21, Rogge massed his crew. Despite a squall, they whipped up the scaffolding. Japanese bright colors gave way to the Dutch browns and olive drab of the "*Abbekerk*."

On June 10, lookouts spotted mastheads off the starboard beam. Rogge accelerated to 17.5 knots and a converging course, guns manned. At 11:35 AM, the range was down to 5,400 yards and Rogge ordered the camouflage dropped. The guns trained out, and signalmen hoisted the German battle flag and signaled the order "Heave to." The target ignored the command, so Rogge ordered Kasch to open fire. The target kept running. The chase finally ended with the Norwegian motor ship *Tirranna* surrendering, the crew trapped on their ship by splintered lifeboats.

The boarding party found shattered decks covered with blood, five dead, and many injured. The two-year-old 7,230-ton fast merchant ship *Tirranna* was sailing from Melbourne to Mombasa under Captain Gundersen and British Admiralty orders.

Rogge decided to keep *Tirranna* as a prize ship, hoping to capture a tanker that could fuel its voyage home to the Reich and put Lieutenant Waldmann, 12 Germans, seven Norwegians, and eight lascars aboard as a prize crew. They were to sail to a rendezvous point and wait for *Atlantis* until August 31. If *Atlantis* did not show up by then, they were to sail to the closest port sympathetic to Germany.

The two ships sailed off, *Tirranna* south, *Atlantis* north, in loose zigzags, hunting for Britons until they learned *Tirranna* had been seized. With that, Rogge had his men repaint their ship as if it was sailing under British orders, in accordance with papers found on *Tirranna*. *Atlantis* now masqueraded as the Norwegian 7,229-ton motor ship *Tarifa*.

Rogge sailed toward the Sunda Strait-Mauritius route, cruising back and forth along it with no luck until 6:43 AM on July 11, when lookouts reported smoke ahead. At 7,500 yards, the vessel sailed across *Atlantis*'s bow. It had one funnel, dark hull, dirty brown upper works, no flag … but an aft gun platform. It was British. But Mund, *Goldenfels*'s old first officer, said the ship looked like a former Hansa line ship. Mohr boarded the 7,506-ton *City of Baghdad*, an Ellerman liner, formerly the Hansa liner *Geierfels*, a British World War I reparation gain. Captain Armstrong White had not had time to destroy his secret papers.

On July 13, at 9:43 AM, smoke was seen to the misty gray portside, a ship abaft. *Atlantis* turned 20 degrees to starboard, slowed to seven knots, and forced the other ship to pass astern.

ullstein bild/The granger Collection, New York

Bernhard Rogge, captain of the *Atlantis*, was respected by friend and foe alike.

When the range dropped to 5,400 yards, Rogge opened fire with his 150mm guns. Four straight salvos missed. Salvos five and six hit the target just below the bridge and just above the waterline. The enemy hoisted, "I am stopping."

It was the British 7,769-ton liner *Kemmendine* sailing from Cape Town to Rangoon. As the two ships stopped, Rogge saw women and children and felt relieved that the gunfire was over, hoping he could take a prize. Suddenly a lookout shouted, "She's opened fire!" and a 75mm shell whizzed from *Kemmendine* toward *Atlantis*.

Enraged at this duplicity, Rogge opened fire, setting *Kemmendine* ablaze. Kamenz yelled, "There's only one man on the gun. Some bloody lunatic who doesn't know what's going on."

To complete the fiasco, *Kemmendine* sent up blazing piles of smoke, refusing to sink. Kasch put two torpedoes into the liner, and it finally broke in half, sinking in a classic V. Fortunately, nobody was injured, but there were 147 prisoners to care for: 26 officers, 86 lascars, and 35 passengers, which included five women and two children, the families of British servicemen and Indian merchants.

After the POWs were squared away, the next order of business was a court of inquiry on why *Kemmendine* fired on *Atlantis* nine minutes after surrendering. The board included *Kemmendine's* skipper, Captain R.R. Reid, and *City of Baghdad's* captain, Armstrong White.

The court determined that when *Kemmendine* was hit a steam pipe ruptured, which drowned out all communications to the stern gun. The gunner was a peacetime London window cleaner who simply ran up to the gun and pulled the lanyard on his own initiative.

"What can you expect from a window cleaner," Rogge said, shrugging, as he endorsed and logged the report, ending the matter.

The following day, Berlin ordered Rogge to break radio silence and report his activities. He did so on July 15, saying he had sunk 30,000 tons of enemy shipping and had provisions for 85 more days. The British picked up the message but did not get a good fix.

On July 29, *Atlantis* hooked up with *Tirranna* and Rogge transferred his POWs and 420 tons of fuel to the captured Norwegian ship. Both *Tirranna* and *Atlantis* continued needed refits on August 2. Everyone was taking a break when *Tirranna's* lookout blew the warning siren—mastheads approaching out of a rain cloud 400 yards away. *Atlantis* had only one working engine. *Atlantis* sailors dropped tools, brushes, and buckets. Crewmen in small boats raced over to their home ships and accommodation ladders.

On the bridge, Rogge ordered Kasch to open fire before realizing Kasch was on *Tirranna*. Kasch's leading petty officer opened fire and missed the target by 400 yards. Rogge bellowed at the petty officer, and the second shots were near-misses. The third and fourth shots hit the target, and it stopped.

The visitor turned out to be the 13-year-old, German-built, 6,732-ton liner *Talleyrand*, now a Norwegian freighter. Captain Mathias Foyn said that he had seen *Tirranna's* silhouette near another ship and thought his identical sister Norwegian had stopped to assist another vessel with engine trouble. *Talleyrand* had sailed over to help and was sunk with scuttling charges. Rogge continued the refit and ordered *Tirranna* home to St. Nazaire in France.

On August 11, *Atlantis* was on the move, heading east toward Colombo, Singapore, and the Sunda Strait. For two weeks, nothing. At 2:45 AM on August 24, *Atlantis* was 200 miles north of Rodriguez Island when smoke was sighted. Rogge headed at 14 knots on a course abaft of the enemy ship and closed in.

At 5:30, the enemy's black-banded red funnel was clearly in view, and Rogge ordered Kasch to launch a torpedo. It ran wild, and Rogge ordered gunfire. Three direct hits, a wall of flame, and the enemy crew immediately abandoned ship. The enemy turned out to be an ordinary merchant ship, the 1928-built, 4,744-ton *King City*. The battered ship rolled over and slid to the bottom, leaving patches of coal burning on the oil-covered water.

Rogge kept moving around the Indian

Ocean, and on September 9 at 9:30 AM a lookout spotted a yellow funnel 14 miles away. It was a British tanker, and *Atlantis* changed course to intercept, running up to 17 knots, approaching the enemy through a rain squall. When the rain ended half an hour later, Rogge was 8,500 yards away and the tanker's gun was trained on *Atlantis*.

At 8:01 AM, the Briton raised his red ensign and hauled it down, requesting *Atlantis* to identify herself. *Atlantis* hoisted her battle flag and flipped out her guns, opening fire. The shots missed. The British sent out a QQQ message. Two minutes later, *Atlantis* lost electric steering and got locked into a starboard turn. The Briton tried to wriggle away, but Rogge sent men to the after steering flat. In minutes, *Atlantis* was answering helm orders and charged after the Briton, finally scoring hits.

The British QQQ messages stopped, and it signaled by flag, "I require medical care."

Ulrich Mohr

In this photograph taken by *Atlantis* adjutant Leutnant Ulrich Mohr, survivors from one of the raider's victims draw alongside the German ship as ropes are lowered to their lifeboats. *Atlantis* conducted an epic voyage and destroyed a tremendous amount of tonnage in Allied shipping.

Rogge ceased fire. The British radio seemed to start up again, and *Atlantis* hurled more shells into the British ship, setting it ablaze and silencing the radio.

Mohr headed over to find the British ship a mess. Hot fuel oil was leaking everywhere. Mohr brought back 37 survivors from the 9,557-ton *Athelking*. Her skipper, Captain A.E. Tomkins, had been killed and the ship was subsequently sunk.

At noon the next day, *Atlantis* spotted another ship off the port quarter, 18 miles away. The two ships sailed on slightly converging courses for half an hour until the target spotted *Atlantis*. Then it headed north. Rogge, to fool the target, headed south. The target saw that and returned to its original heading. When *Atlantis* tried a converging course, the target sailed off.

Rogge summoned Pilot Officer Bulla and told him to attack and destroy the enemy ship's radio antenna, using his trailing hook to swoop down between the masts and yank it away. If that failed, he would shoot up the funnel to scare the lascar crewmen.

Bulla's attack did not work. He landed his plane next to *Atlantis*, but Rogge left the floating plane there, racing through a rain squall at 17 knots to attack. Battle flags snapping, Kasch fired warning shots at 3,400 yards. The Briton ignored them. The next shots went directly over the bridge of the ship, which then stopped.

As Mohr and his boarding party sailed over, the ship transmitted, "QQQ SS *Benarty* bombed by plane from ship…" Kasch opened fire and blasted open the ship's number three hatch cover abaft of the bridge, setting the cargo on fire.

Just as Mohr arrived, *Benarty's* crew was abandoning ship. Mohr ordered the British back aboard to help put out the fires. *Benarty* was a 5,800-ton coal-burner sailing from Rangoon to Liverpool under Captain Watt. Three scuttling charges sent *Benarty* to the bottom.

Atlantis sailed south-southeast toward the Australian trade routes at nine knots. At 10:33 PM on September 19, the port bridge lookout spotted a thick cloud of smoke. At 12:08 AM on September 20, *Atlantis* attacked the British steamer *Commissaire Ramel*. As Mohr got ready to go over, *Commissaire Ramel's* radio operator began sending an RRR report. Then 56 German shells shredded *Commissaire Ramel* and set her ablaze. Bad news came later when it was reported that *Tirranna* had been sunk by a British submarine, HMS *Tuna*, while anchored off Cap Le Ferret on the French coast, waiting for an escort of German patrol craft.

On October 22, just before dawn, Rogge saw a ship flying a neutral Yugoslavian flag. He decided to check its cargo. If it carried contraband, he could capture it and use it as a prison ship.

The ship turned out to be the 5,623-ton tramp *Durmitor* with a crew of 37 and a cargo of 8,200 tons of salt. Rogge decided to claim *Durmitor* as a prize. Lieutenant Emil Dehnel and 12 Germans went aboard the ship and were ordered to sail to a rendezvous point 200 miles south of Christmas Island.

The next day, *Atlantis* and *Durmitor* hooked up, and Rogge explained to his officer prisoners that conditions on *Durmitor* were bad. But if they put up with it, *Durmitor* would take them to the safety of Italian East Africa. More than 300 prisoners transferred to *Durmitor* that day. With Dehnel in command, the vessel completed an arduous trek to safety in Italian Somaliland.

Meanwhile, *Atlantis* stayed in Sunda Strait until November 1 and then sailed for the Bay of Bengal. On the night of November 8, she spotted an eastbound ship against the moon on the Colombo-Singapore route. The target identified itself as the Norwegian tanker *Teddy* from Oslo and asked *Atlantis* for its identity. Rogge flashed back as HMS *Antenor*, a British armed merchant cruiser that closely resembled *Atlantis*. *Teddy* stopped, and Mohr sailed over in his cutter, wearing a Royal Navy jacket. As he stepped onto the *Teddy*, Mohr ripped open his jacket, slapped on a German Navy officer's cap, and said, "I am an officer of the German Navy! You are my prisoners!"

The 6,748-ton tanker was captured without firing a shot. Aboard were 10,000 tons of fuel oil and 500 tons of diesel fuel. Rogge took *Teddy* as a prize and sent it to "Point Mangrove."

Late on November 10, the He-114 seaplane spotted another tanker, and Rogge moved to intercept that night. The tanker spotted *Atlantis* and got off a QQQ with its location. Rogge let the broadcast continue but once again posed as HMS *Antenor*, hoping to seize another tanker through deception.

Mohr and Kamenz went over with 10 sailors clutching MP-40 submachine guns concealed under a tarpaulin. The tanker's crew manned the rail in British helmets.

Mohr clambered up the accommodation ladder, ripped off his Royal Navy jacket, charged a Norwegian sailor, grabbed his rifle, and yelled "Hands up!" That did it. The Norwegians surrendered. Mohr raced up to the bridge, where Captain Leif Christian Krogh yielded the 8,306-ton tanker *Ole Jacob* and its 11,000 barrels of high-octane aviation fuel.

Rogge put Kamenz and a prize crew aboard. He sent *Ole Jacob* to "Point Rattang" 300 miles south and sailed away, listening to British shore stations calling for *Ole Jacob*.

On November 11, *Atlantis* held a memorial for Armistice Day. Later, 250 miles southwest of Achin Head, *Atlantis* spotted a thin smoke cloud against the blue sky—an enemy ship 18 miles away. Rogge raced in.

The two ships converged at 9:04 AM. The Briton broadcast a QQQ report, and *Atlantis* fired 5.9-inch shells into its bridge and radio room, killing everyone there. Mohr and his boarding party found blasted bodies all over the bridge of the 7,528-ton *Automedon*. They also found 15 bags of secret mail, including British merchant decoding tables, fleet orders, gunnery instructions, and naval intelligence reports. Next to the shattered radio console Mohr found a bag marked "Highly Confidential … To Be Destroyed." Inside was a report addressed to "C-in-C Far East … To Be Opened Personally."

Back on *Atlantis*, Mohr and Rogge broke open the bags. Mohr easily translated British merchant ship codes, Admiralty instructions, sailing orders, and a real prize, the War Cabinet Planning Division's latest appreciation of the British Empire's strength in the Far East. He gaped at deployments of Royal Air Force units and naval strength in Malaya, along with vast notes on the Singapore fortifications.

Having bagged three ships in four days, running his total up to 13, Rogge decided to head south. Two days later, *Atlantis* hooked up with *Teddy*, and Rogge decided to sink the ship. Despite her valuable fuel, he had no way of locating other German ships that could benefit from it.

Atlantis met *Ole Jacob* on November 14. Rogge ordered this ship to Japan, knowing the oil-thirsty Japanese could use her cargo of aviation fuel as well as the top secret documents on British Far East defenses. After taking on most of *Ole Jacob's* diesel fuel, Rogge unloaded his latest prisoners on her.

Ole Jacob reached Kobe, Japan, on December 6. The Japanese took the secret British documents and at first could not believe them. Then, on April 27, 1942, they presented Rogge with a jeweled samurai sword, making him one of three Germans—the other two being Hermann Göring and Erwin Rommel—to receive such an award from Japan.

Rogge decided to give his crew a break for Christmas, sailing south to the desolate Kerguelen Islands. The Germans had surveyed the islands as part of their late 1930s Antarctic surveys and determined it had fresh water and no human beings.

On the way down, *Atlantis*'s radiomen picked up a signal from their sister raider, *Pinguin*, to Berlin, reporting she was sending the captured tanker *Storstadt* back to the Reich with 400 prisoners and 10,000 tons of diesel fuel. Rogge fired off a quick request for a rendezvous and was given grid square "Tulip."

That evening, *Storstadt* arrived to fuel *Atlantis* and take on her 124 prisoners as well as food and water. During the fueling, a signal came from Berlin. Rogge had been awarded the Knight's Cross. The next day was one of celebration.

Then *Atlantis* sailed for the Kerguelens. All hands took a break to celebrate Christmas, complete with artificial trees, caroling, Rogge reading the nativity, 14 more Iron Crosses, and bags of presents for the crew. These consisted of socks, ties, and tobacco from *Atlantis*'s various prizes.

On January 10, 1941, *Atlantis* ended 26 days in Gazelle Bay and put to sea with tanks full of fresh water and engines reconditioned. Rogge picked the Norwegian 7,256-ton freighter *Tamesis*, just one year old, as a new disguise for his ship.

On January 23, Bulla's plane spotted a new target 60 miles north. *Atlantis* steamed after it. At nightfall, Rogge set course to intercept and found nothing. At dawn, he shot off Bulla's seaplane again. Ten minutes later, the Briton was located 25 miles to the north. Bulla, armed with 110-pound bombs and a grappling hook to rip out the ship's radio antenna, swooped in. He ripped the aerial from its mountings, then dropped his bombs and scored two direct hits.

At noon *Atlantis* began hurling 61 shells and scored eight hits. Blazing, the 5,144-ton *Mandasor* stopped engines. Mohr and Fehler sailed over to take off her crew. Fehler's scuttling charges went off, and *Mandasor* slid into the water bow first, leaving a patch of debris and floating tea on the surface.

Now *Atlantis* steamed in circles on the Persian Gulf's tanker routes. At 6:11 PM on January 31, Matrose Willi Freiwald spotted the 5,154-ton *Speybank*. The Briton also spotted *Atlantis* and swung away. In three minutes, Rogge opened fire. Mohr and his team took *Speybank* as a prize.

On February 2, *Atlantis* lookouts spotted an enemy ship heading west at 16 knots. *Atlantis* struck a parallel course, and the enemy sent off a "suspicious ship" report with her name, the Blue Funnel liner *Troilus*, a sister to *Autome-*

Ulrich Mohr

In this photograph taken by *Atlantis* adjutant Ulrich Mohr, a pair of the raider's crewmen have donned pith helmets and paused at the deck railing to observe the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* during a mid-Atlantic rendezvous.

don. *Troilus*'s Captain R.S. Braddon kept his lookouts sharp, and they reported *Atlantis*'s movements at the horizon's edge. Braddon's radio crew fired off reports. Studying the reports, Rogge decided not to attack, a very wise move as the British aircraft carrier *Formidable* and the cruiser *Hawkins* were racing to answer the call.

Instead, *Atlantis* headed south and spotted another tanker. Rogge worked up a heading that would bring *Atlantis* and the tanker together just after nightfall. *Atlantis* and other German ships operating in the Indian Ocean badly needed fuel.

Rogge's officers suggested making up a big sign that would read "Stop, Don't Use Radio" in English, and draping that over *Atlantis*'s side, fully lit by searchlights as the crew unveiled its guns. Kasch would fire a warning shot. The British would fear their volatile cargo might explode and would surrender. Rogge agreed to try it, and the action was successful. Mohr ran

National Archives

Passengers rescued from the sunken liner *Zam Zam* sit or stand among their salvaged luggage aboard *Atlantis* and await instructions from their German hosts. The majority of the *Zam Zam* passengers were eventually delivered to the supply ship *Dresden*.

up a ladder to find 43 Chinese and nine Norwegians on the 7,031-ton tanker *Ketty Brovig* racing around in terror. With a prize crew aboard, *Ketty Brovig* steamed off after makeshift repairs.

Rogge fired off a message to Berlin reporting 111,000 tons captured or sunk to date. He also asked to send *Speybank* home and rendezvous with the raider *Kormoran* and the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*, both operating in the Indian Ocean, so the other ships could refuel from *Ketty Brovig*. Berlin ordered *Atlantis* instead to meet the supply ship *Tannenfels* and the Italian submarine *Perla* at "Nelke." Both were short on fuel after fleeing Italian Somaliland one step ahead of the advancing British Army. Then *Atlantis* could meet *Kormoran* and *Scheer*.

On February 8, *Atlantis* hooked up with *Speybank* and *Ketty Brovig*. The 7,480-ton *Tannenfels*, a sister to *Atlantis* in peacetime, showed up on the 10th, three days late due to a navigational error. She brought Lieutnant Dehnel and his *Durmitor* prize crew back to *Atlantis*. Dehnel took over *Ketty Brovig*, *Tannenfels* took over 103 prisoners, and everyone passed around food, sextants, charts, water, signal gear, even lifeboats.

On February 12, *Atlantis* and its flotilla puffed southward into worsening weather. Rogge did not tell anyone they were about to rendezvous with a German battleship. At noon, a lookout spotted a ship heading straight for them across heavy gray seas. When the 13,660-ton *Admiral Scheer* under Captain Theodor Krancke steamed up, it was the largest gathering of German warships outside European waters in the entire war. Soon enough, the ships parted.

A few days later, after an aborted attempt to rendezvous with *Scheer* for a second time, Rogge sent *Speybank* home, and she reached Bordeaux on May 12. Berlin ordered Rogge to send *Ketty Brovig* to rendezvous with the German ship *Coburg* and act as support for the raider *Pinguin* operating off Antarctica. *Ketty Brovig* was soon detached to rendezvous with *Coburg*; however, both were sunk by Commonwealth cruisers.

Atlantis sailed on through muggy heat. In his cabin, Rogge noted that he had so far captured or sunk 16 enemy ships, captured 919 prisoners, and caused 33 deaths. *Atlantis* was disrupting British trade routes as planned.

In the Atlantic, *Atlantis* met with the supply ship *Dresden*, which was supposed to bring fresh food. She did not. An idiotic German naval attaché in Brazil had loaded the fresh food on another ship, which lacked a refrigerator. Rogge was enraged. He ordered *Dresden* to stand by in case he picked up some prisoners.

A few hours after midnight on April 17, Rogge spotted a blacked-out ship with four masts. Rogge recognized it as a British Union Castle liner. He followed the ship as it zigzagged erratically. After nine minutes of gunfire, the ship blew off steam, started spewing lifeboats full of women and children, and ran out its flag—the banner of the neutral kingdom of Egypt.

Once the British troopship *Leicestershire*, the 8,299-ton ship was now the Egyptian liner *Zam Zam*, and she was carrying a passenger list of 202 that reflected the craziness of war, including American missionary families, 24 American ambulance drivers for a Free French brigade in Libya, 100 clergymen of 20 different denominations, 76 women, five of whom were pregnant, and 35 babies. The haul included several elderly Britons, four Belgians, two Greeks, one Italian, one Norwegian, six North Carolina tobacco merchants headed for Rhodesia, *Fortune* magazine editor Charles J.V. Murphy, and *Life* magazine photographer David E. Scherman.

The German 5.9-inch shells caught the liner by surprise and the ambulance drivers hungover. One shell maimed ambulance group leader Frank Vicovari and British chiropractor Dr. Robert Starling. Another splinter landed in the brain of tobaccoman "Uncle Ned" Laughinghouse. He later died on *Atlantis*.

On *Atlantis*'s bridge, Rogge realized he was sitting on a major diplomatic disaster, and there was a writer and photographer from the Luce empire to record this whole affair for the American press. Rogge summoned his officers and ordered the entire crew to be on their best behavior and to treat the civilians with maximum generosity and kindness. Already, *Zam Zam's* passengers were asking, "When is tea time?" "Where is the baby food?" and "When will the bar be open?"

At 2 PM, Mohr was done, *Zam Zam* was ready for scuttling, and Mohr gave Scherman special permission to photograph the sinking, showing him where to stand.

The three charges on *Zam Zam* went off in

quick succession, providing Scherman with dramatic images of the liner rolling over on her side. Then Rogge cranked up his engines and headed straight for *Dresden*. *Zam Zam's* passengers complained about the sinking, and Rogge answered that *Zam Zam* had been sailing without lights on Admiralty orders and her $3 million worth of cargo was all for British troops fighting Germany from bases in Egypt.

The following morning *Atlantis* met up with *Dresden* and the 2,729-ton supply ship *Alsterufer*, which had a complete load of supplies for *Atlantis*, including three new Arado Ar-196A seaplanes and a load of personal mail for the crew.

The *Zam Zam* passengers went to *Dresden*. *Atlantis* then steamed back to war. For nine days, *Dresden* meandered the Atlantic with the passengers fighting tension and boredom. On April 26, the two German ships regrouped, and Rogge ordered *Dresden* to the nearest neutral port to release the captives. *Atlantis* kept the wounded *Zam Zam* passengers, including the American Vicovari.

Atlantis then plodded off with *Alsterufer* to meet the tanker *Nordmark*, while *Dresden* sailed for France. As *Dresden* sailed away, Scherman snapped a perfect bow-quarter, full-length shot of *Atlantis*.

On May 21, 1941, *Dresden* sailed into Saint-Jean-de-Luz in France, one day after the British Admiralty announced that *Zam Zam* was a month overdue and considered sunk. The Germans interrogated all aboard, held the Britons and Allied nationals, and freed the Americans, following direct orders from Hitler and Grand Admiral Erich Raeder not to enflame American public opinion. The Germans grabbed 1,000 frames of Scherman's film to censor in Berlin, but he kept four rolls in a tube of toothpaste, another of shaving cream and two boxes of surgical gauze in a missionary doctor's bag until they reached neutral Portugal.

From there, Murphy and Scherman flew to New York with their exclusive and their photograph of *Atlantis*, which the Royal Navy eagerly circulated to all of its commands.

Atlantis's crew gave its ship yet another identity change. As *Tamesis*'s cover had been blown, *Atlantis* now became the four-year-old Dutch motor ship *Brastagi*. Just after midnight on May 14, *Atlantis* spotted a merchant ship on the Cape Town-Freetown route. *Atlantis* signaled the ship to stop, but it refused. Rogge swung a searchlight on the ship but it sailed right on. He opened fire with a warning shot, and the ship tried to escape. Further rounds hit home, and the ship began to sink. Mohr's boarding party had no time to do anything but pull survivors out of the water. Within 30 minutes, the 25-year-old British steamship *Rabaul*, 5,618 tons, had gone down.

Ulrich Mohr

German naval officer Ulrich Mohr took this photo of the *Atlantis* riding at anchor off the Vana Vana atoll in the Pacific, where Captain Bernhard Rogge rested the fatigued crew of the surface raider.

Atlantis had drifted along the Cape Town route for two days when Steuermannsmaat Rudolf de Graff spotted two ships on the horizon at 10 minutes past midnight on May 17, sailing on calm seas under a brilliant moon. Rogge sounded action stations. The British battleship HMS *Nelson* and the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* steamed by without incident.

On the 24th, Rogge launched his seaplane, and it found a British merchant ship. He steamed up to attack just after nightfall, and *Atlantis*'s first shot blasted open the radio room. The Briton tried to run, and Rogge hurled 10 more salvos, setting off massive explosions. The merchant headed right for *Atlantis*. Rogge ordered a torpedo attack. The torpedo malfunctioned and headed back to *Atlantis*. Kasch fired another one, which also did not work. The first torpedo swept past *Atlantis*'s bow. The second shot went wide. The third stopped the 4,530-ton SS *Trafalgar*. Mohr had time to rescue the crew before *Trafalgar* went down.

By now morale on *Atlantis* was sagging. Sixty percent of the crew were reservists with wives and families back home. By June 11, the ship had been at sea for 445 days, setting German and world records for consecutive days at sea.

On June 17, there was a break in the gloom when Bulla spotted the 4,762-ton British steamship *Tottenham*. *Atlantis* hurled a shell across her bow, but *Tottenham* sent out an RRR call and fired a shell back in defiance. Rogge opened fire and sank the Briton.

On June 22 Rogge spotted another ship and swooped in to attack right after dark. Only four of Rogge's 100 rounds fired were hits. Rogge's guns overheated and jammed. He was ready to give up the fight—and then the Briton surrendered. Mohr steamed over to grab the 21-year-old 5,372-ton motor vessel *Balzac*. Mohr brought back 47 of *Balzac*'s crew, and the ship sank.

On July 1, *Atlantis* met up with the raider *Orion*. Berlin signaled *Atlantis*, giving Rogge authority to stop in Dakar and to sail home. Heading home to Germany in mid-summer was dangerous. Instead, *Atlantis* would sail into the Pacific, continue to operate until mid-winter, and then head home for Germany under cover of cold and storms.

The crew accepted the order without complaint, which impressed Rogge. He made a note of that fact in his war log, calling their conduct "exemplary." The raider headed east, and Rogge marked *Atlantis*'s 500th day at sea with a full-dress inspection. After that *Atlantis* swung around Australia and New Zealand.

On September 10, lookouts saw a poorly blacked-out ship popping out of a squall 700 miles north of Kermadec Island. The ship had

a British silhouette, and Rogge raced after it. The Briton fired off a stream of QQQ radio messages, identifying it as the Norwegian 4,793-ton *Silvaplana*.

Rogge sent his latest prize to a rendezvous point 400 miles south of Tubusi Island. Hopefully, he could capture a tanker. He had no luck, so he sailed back to the meeting point. Meanwhile, Berlin informed him that the supply ship *Munsterland* was to cross paths with *Atlantis*. Rogge decided to meet *Munsterland* and then transfer stores to *Silvaplana*.

On September 21, Rogge reached the rendezvous point to find another German raider, the *Komet*, under Rear Admiral Robert Eyssen, along with its Dutch prize, the *Kota Nopan*, lining up for fuel. *Munsterland* was late, delayed by a typhoon.

When *Munsterland* turned up, Eyssen demanded the bulk of the supplies. Rogge presented charts showing his men's dietary requirements. *Atlantis* had not received a supply of fresh vegetables in 540 days. His men had only eaten a potato dish 16 times, and none for four months. *Komet's* sailors had eaten potatoes three days ago.

Ulrich Mohr

Captain Bernhard Rogge and crewmen of the *Atlantis* were returned to the French port city of St. Nazaire aboard U-boats and Italian submarines. Rogge later became a high-ranking NATO officer. This photo was taken by his adjutant, Ulrich Mohr.

Eyssen caved in but insisted that *Komet* get the bulk of *Munsterland's* beer supply. Rogge transferred all but one of his 64 prisoners on *Atlantis*, the wounded American Vicovari, to *Munsterland*.

Then Rogge and Eyssen discussed their next moves. Rogge could not keep his men at sea much longer. He intended to operate in the Pacific until October 19, then sail into the South Atlantic. He planned a few more days of raiding there, and then home to Germany, arriving on December 20.

Atlantis then headed off still seeking enemy shipping. Nothing. Rogge proposed to stop off at an empty tropical island, give the men shore leave there, and use the seaplane for some air search. Mohr picked out an atoll named Vana Vana. On October 18, after a few days of rest, *Atlantis* hoisted anchor for the last time and headed for Cape Horn. Once past the South Shetland Islands, Rogge cranked *Atlantis*'s diesels to flank speed for the dash home. On Halloween, the crew marked its 600th day at sea.

Now that *Atlantis* was headed home, it had excess fuel, and Berlin ordered the raider to act as a supply vessel for U-boats. Rogge also told Kuhn to do one more quick change—turn *Atlantis* into the Dutch motor ship *Polyphemus*.

Rogge was not happy to resupply U-boats on his way home. He believed such missions would only alert the British. He was right. The British knew that German U-boats were using that area as a rendezvous. A hunter group centered on the heavy cruisers HMS *Dorsetshire* and HMS *Devonshire*, which packed 8-inch guns, had been sent to the area.

On November 22, *Atlantis* lay waiting for *U-126*. Nobody noticed a speck in the sky. It was a British seaplane operating from *Devonshire*. The aircraft spotted *Atlantis* and reported her location to *Devonshire*'s Captain R.D. Oliver. The 9,750-ton cruiser moved to investigate.

Meanwhile, *U-126* arrived and working parties connected fuel hoses and turned to. Whaleboats hauled supplies to the U-boat, while its skipper, Kapitanleutnant Ernst Bauer, and seven of his crewmen came aboard *Atlantis* for breakfast. Kielhorn asked permission to disassemble the *Atlantis*'s portside engine for repairs to a seized piston. Granted.

At 8:16 AM, an *Atlantis* lookout shouted, "Enemy cruiser in sight! Enemy cruiser in sight!" *Devonshire* was bearing down from port. *Atlantis*'s crew severed and capped the fuel lines, and *U-126* crash dived, leaving its commander aboard the raider.

Rogge put *Atlantis* into a hard turn, intending to show *Devonshire* his stern and putting the U-boat between him and *Devonshire*. Rogge studied *Devonshire*'s three funnels through his binoculars. He knew the Briton could do 32 knots. *Atlantis*'s only chance was if *U-126* could torpedo the Briton first. Rogge ordered all hands into life jackets and hoisted the Dutch flag, hoping to buy time.

Oliver hurled two 8-inch shells over *Atlantis*'s bow as a warning. Rogge got the message. He turned his ship broadside to the Briton and stopped engines. Using a captured British signal lamp, an *Atlantis* crewman signaled, "*Polyphemus*." Rogge's radiomen also tapped out a report, "RRR ... SS *Polyphemus* ... Unidentified ship has ordered me to stop."

Oliver fired off a radio message to Freetown asking for the whereabouts of the real *Polyphemus* and kept his guns trained on *Atlantis* while zigzagging to avoid a torpedo attack. Meanwhile, in the aircraft the observer broke out his identity books, which included Scherman's photograph of *Atlantis*, fresh from *Life* magazine. The plane reported to Oliver that the ship in the photo and the one in his binoculars had identical sterns, masts, and superstructure.

At 9:34, Freetown had an answer for Oliver: the ship under *Devonshire's* guns was not *Polyphemus*. Her 8-inch shells blasted open the raider, starting fires, punching out the electricity and electrical steering. Rogge finally ordered: "All hands to the lifeboats and abandon ship."

Buried under a smokescreen and fires, the crew calmly evacuated the ship. All were off by 9:43 AM except Rogge, Mohr, Fehler and a demolition team, and Chief Petty Officer Wilhelm Pigors. Fehler and his men were planting demolition charges, while Mohr raced to his cabin through blazing wreckage to retrieve his camera. He saved it and returned to the boat deck as Fehler was climbing out. Fehler and his crew jumped into the water, leaving Mohr, Pigors, and Rogge aboard.

Rogge told Pigors to jump overboard and leave him alone. Pigors refused, saying that if Rogge went down with *Atlantis* so would he. That punched Rogge back to reality. As Mohr stepped over the rail, Rogge asked Pigors if

everyone was off the ship. Pigors said that was the case. They leaped into the water. Amazingly, one man was left, Leading Seaman Heinz Muller, who had stayed at his radio until the ship was sinking beneath him.

At 9:36, *Devonshire* checked fire. At 10:02, *Atlantis*'s ammunition magazines exploded, and the ship heeled over. At 10:16, *Atlantis*'s bow rose out of the water and slid below the waves.

Oliver, aware that a U-boat was present, declined to rescue the survivors. He turned around and headed northwest to recover his seaplane. He asked Freetown to send rescue ships, and two corvettes were immediately dispatched. The 350 shipwrecked *Atlantis* seamen—which included the only prisoner, the American Vicovari—floated or clung to wreckage.

With five rubber rafts, three steel cutters, two motor launches, and a lot of lashed-together debris, *Atlantis*'s crew had assembled a motley flotilla, with many wounded men. Only five were dead. Rogge and Bauer huddled to discuss what to do, and Bauer decided to tow the lifeboats to the nearest landfall. Unfortunately, one was Freetown, which meant POW status. Rogge chose a 12-day voyage to neutral Brazil, and Bauer reported this plan to Admiral Karl Dönitz, the boss of all U-boats.

The next day was hell. Eyes and lips began to swell and crack. Towlines broke and had to be repaired. At least they had gone 150 miles, which meant a five-day trip instead of a 12-day voyage. And the *U-126* cook turned up trumps with two hot plates in creating hot meals for all. Berlin reacted, sending the 3,664-ton U-boat tender *Python* to meet *U-126* and pick up the *Atlantis* survivors after 76 hours in the water.

Rogge puttered around the bridge, keeping an eye on the ship's position and writing his after-action report. He closed it, "After successfully carrying out her mission and covering 102,000 miles in 622 days at sea, *Atlantis* was located and destroyed when on the point of returning home and while engaged on a supply operation which was not included in her operational orders…. Our bitterness at the loss of our ship has been intensified by the thought that we had to abandon her without a fight."

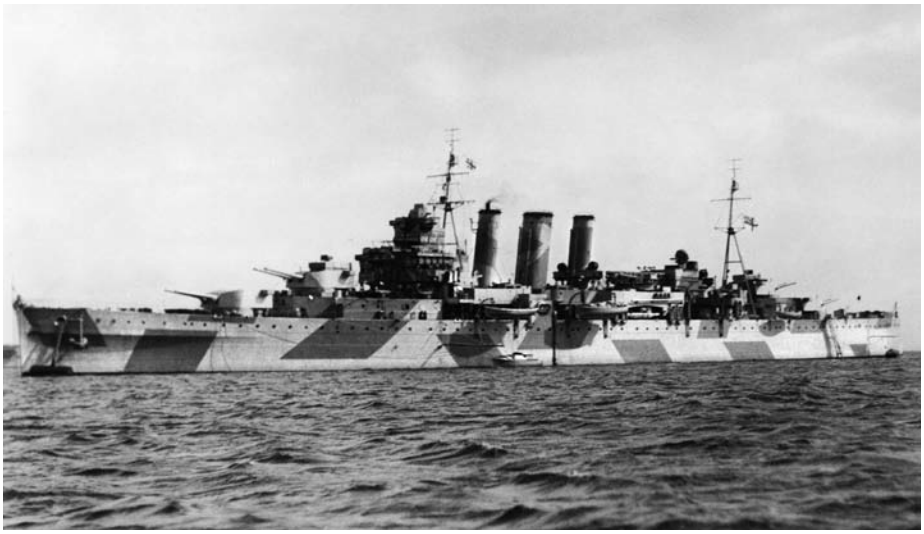
Then *Python* was ordered away from Germany to refuel four U-boats. On November 30, *Python* met *U-68* south of St. Helena. *U-A* turned up the next day. *Atlantis* crewmen, out of a job for once, stood around watching while *Python* and U-boat men hauled boxes or shifted torpedoes by crane. Then at 3:30 an *Atlantis* lookout spotted a three-funnel ship closing from 19 miles away. The U-boats executed crash dives.

Rogge was keenly aware of the situation. The attacking British cruiser, HMS *Dorsetshire* under Captain A.W.S. Agar, was *Devonshire's* sister. *Dorsetshire* had already sunk *Atlantis*'s sister raider, *Pinguin*.

Dorsetshire signaled *Python* to identify herself, and *Python's* captain ignored the request. *U-A* set up a firing solution and launched five torpedoes, but the range was too great. *Dorsetshire* closed to 11 miles and then hurled a warning salvo at *Python*. The German captain ordered his ship abandoned and scuttled.

Dorsetshire held fire while the *Python* was abandoned. At 6:05, a scuttling charge went off and the former liner listed to port, rolling over for good at 6:21 PM. With the aid of several U-boats and Italian submarines, the survivors were eventually picked up. In late December, they arrived at St. Nazaire. Rogge himself came ashore on Christmas Day and assembled his crew on December 29 in a local cathedral. There he held muster and passed out the mountain of mail due to the men before giving them two days of liberty.

Imperial War Museum



During a brief and one-sided naval encounter, the British cruiser *Devonshire,* shown here painted in a camouflage scheme, ended the astounding career of the German surface raider *Atlantis* after her crew had spent a record 622 days at sea.

Rogge had his men muster at the train station on New Year's Eve in new dress blues to take a special train to Berlin. There they received their actual decorations from Grand Admiral Erich Raeder himself, including a Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves for Rogge. All hands got a special Auxiliary Cruiser War Badge, but Rogge's was 90 percent silver, holding 15 small diamonds in its swastika.

Rogge's work for *Atlantis* was not done yet. He had to write his official report on the cruise, which became a training manual for future German disguised merchant raiders. Rogge reported that he had sunk 16 enemy ships and captured six others, eliminating 145,697 tons of Allied shipping and war materials. *Atlantis* had been away from home for 655 consecutive days, a new German record. Rogge had circumnavigated the globe on a voyage of 110,000 miles and survived 1,000 miles in lifeboats and 5,000 more miles in submarines before returning home. It was a fantastic achievement.

On March 1, 1943, Rogge was promoted to rear admiral and given responsibility for the selection and training of officer candidates. In September 1944, he took a command that included the 1st Naval Battle Group in the Baltic, which consisted of the pocket battleships *Lützow* and *Admiral Scheer* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. After the war, he was investigated as a possible war criminal and cleared. He went into civilian shipping work.

When the German Navy was reconstituted in 1957, Rogge was one of the first officers recalled to duty, serving as commander of Military District I, and then all North Atlantic Treaty Organization ground, sea, and air forces defending northern Germany. He retired in 1962. When Rogge died in 1982, he was one of the most successful naval captains in history, warmly regarded by his former crewmen and his former enemies.

Rogge wrote two books on his journey aboard *Atlantis*, one of which was made into a movie, that told his story in simple and unemotional language. □

Author David H. Lippman has been writing on World War II topics for years. He maintains a daily website on the topic and resides in Newark, New Jersey.

In this painting by Russell Clarke, Japanese prisoners rounded up on Guadalcanal show the strain and privation of war. Starving and without a sustainable supply line, the Japanese troops who had fought on Guadalcanal for six months were withdrawn in early 1943. RIGHT: Japanese prisoners on Guadalcanal were starving and in rags.

National Archives of New Zealand

AFTER MONTHS OF DIFFICULT FIGHTING, THE JAPANESE WITHDREW FROM THE VITAL ISLAND OF GUADALCANAL.

Abandoning the ISLAND *of* DEATH

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON

The first Japanese general officer to suggest abandoning Guadalcanal to the Americans was probably Maj. Gen. Kenryo Sato, the War Ministry's chief of its Military Affairs Bureau. More important, General Sato was also an adviser to General Hideki Tojo, Japan's prime minister. At Army headquarters in Tokyo, Sato advised Tojo not to send any more men and supplies to the island and that he should "give up the idea of retaking Guadalcanal."

"Do you mean withdrawal?" Tojo wanted to know.

"We have no choice," Sato replied. "Even now it may be too late. If we go on like this, we have no chance of winning the war."

Tojo listened to what Sato had to say and recognized the truth of his argument. Japan had already overextended itself in men and equipment for the Guadalcanal campaign. But many senior officers, as well as Emperor Hirohito himself, were not yet ready to give up. During a special meeting of his cabinet on December 5, 1942, Tojo agreed to send 95,000 tons of supplies to the starving troops on Guadalcanal. This was in addition to 290,000 tons that had already been agreed upon. The subject of abandoning Guadalcanal had been raised, however. It would come up again in the very near future.

The exchange between General Sato and Tojo had also taken place in early December 1942, when the Japanese War Ministry and the Army General Staff were already beginning to talk about withdrawing from Guadalcanal. It was a subject that would have been unthinkable even a month earlier, but after nearly four months of brutal fighting, the realities of the costly and frustrating campaign were beginning to sink in.

National Archives

Japanese forces had been trying to retake Guadalcanal and its airfield, named Henderson Field by the Americans, since August 7, 1942, when U.S. Marines first landed on the island. During the next several months, Japanese and American forces fought six major naval battles in the waters around Guadalcanal and engaged in almost continual ground fighting. Both sides endured serious losses in men, ships, aircraft, and resources. The major difference was that the Americans could afford the losses; the Japanese could not.

The Japanese Army General Staff had never intended to give up even though all its efforts had ended in failure and insisted that the troops on Guadalcanal be resupplied. The Navy came up with an improvised method of delivering food, ammunition, and medical supplies, a system that would employ the use of metal drums. These would be partially filled with whatever they were carrying, leaving enough air inside to keep the drum afloat. They were then sealed and strung together necklace fashion and loaded aboard a destroyer.

Destroyers had been used to deliver troops and supplies to Guadalcanal for months. They had made their runs down the channel separating islands of the Solomons archipelago, which had come to be known as the Slot, with such regularity that they had been nicknamed the Tokyo Express. The only new twist was the use of floating drums.

Several destroyers would be dispatched to Guadalcanal to unload their cargoes. The strings of drums were to be unloaded over the side and towed as close to shore as practical. When the destroyer came as close to the beach as possible, the drums were released. While the destroyer headed back to sea, swimmers from shore would pick up one end of the string and pull the drums toward the beach.

The plan looked good enough on paper. Rear Admiral Tamotsu Tanaka was given the job of seeing if it would work. On the night of November 29, Admiral Tanaka's flagship, the destroyer *Naganami,* led a column of seven other destroyers toward Guadalcanal. Six of the destroyers were loaded with the supply drums. At about 11 PM, the column steamed past Savo Island and turned southeast toward Tassafaronga Point. The six supply destroyers were preparing to cast off their drums when American warships— actually five cruisers and six destroyers—were sighted. Tanaka ordered the supply destroyers to stop unloading, rejoin the column, and prepare for battle.

In the engagement that followed, sometimes referred to as the Battle of Tassafaronga, the Americans had the advantage of radar. But Admiral Tanaka had the Long Lance torpedo, which turned out to be even more of an advantage. Radar-directed gunfire from the American cruisers smothered the destroyer *Takanami* with a wall of water splashes and soon turned the destroyer into a flaming wreck. The gun flashes provided a very nice aiming point for Tanaka's torpedomen, who proceeded to launch their Long Lances at the bursts of light.

Aboard the cruiser USS *Minneapolis,* the men on deck cheered as they watched *Takanami* absorb close to a dozen hits and burst into flame, but their cheering stopped abruptly when two torpedoes hit their own ship. In short order, the cruisers *New Orleans, Pensacola,* and *Northampton* were also jarred by torpedo hits. *Northampton* actually took two torpedoes and sank stern first. After launching his torpedoes, Admiral Tanaka reversed course and headed back to base in the Shortland Islands.

Tanaka had certainly gotten the better of the larger American force. In about half an hour and without benefit of radar, his destroyers had sunk one cruiser and badly damaged three others at the cost of just one of his destroyers. As one historian put it, "An inferior, cargo-entangled and partially surprised destroyer squadron had demolished a superior cruiser-destroyer group." In spite of this success, Tanaka had not done what he had set out to do—deliver supplies to the troops on Guadalcanal. Not a single drum of much-needed food or medicine reached the starving Japanese soldiers.

Admiral Tanaka tried again a few nights later and succeeded in unloading about 1,500 drums at Tassafaronga Point. Only about 300 of the drums were actually hauled onto the beach, however. The others floated out to sea. The third attempt was a total failure. Air strikes and aggressive attacks by U.S. PT boats forced the Japanese destroyers to turn back without delivering any supplies.

By mid-December, the Japanese Navy was ready to cut its losses and cede Guadalcanal to the Americans. Senior naval officers were not prepared to lose any more ships or men in what had become a totally futile campaign. Also, the drum method of supplying the garrison had turned out to be another waste of time and another drain on their overtaxed resources.

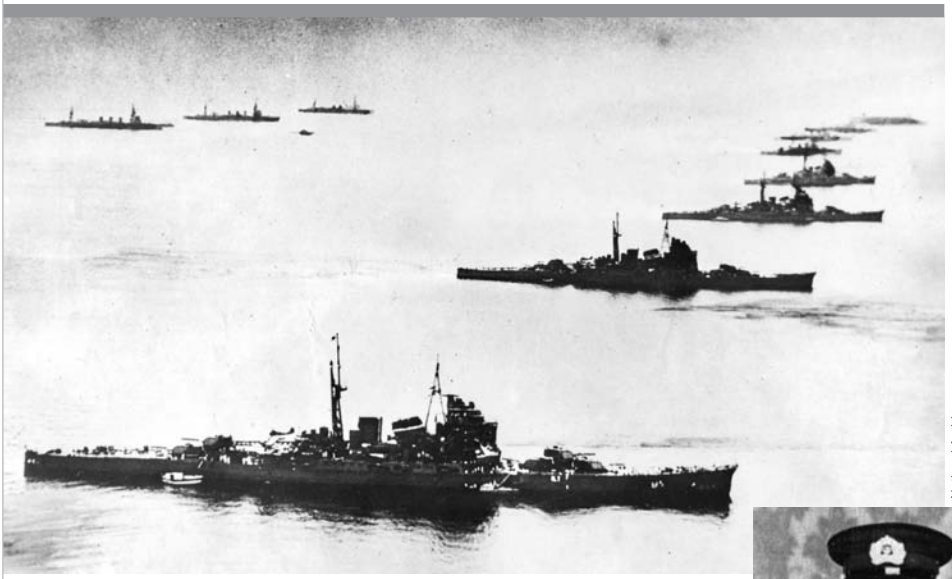
The Army General Staff did not agree. The generals still hoped that a new offensive would dislodge the Americans from the island, although some of the more realistic leaders were trying to concoct a way of withdrawing without making it seem like a defeat.

A communiqué from Lt. Gen. Harukichi Hyakutake, the commander of the Japanese Seventeenth Army on Guadalcanal, seemed to bring the matter to a head. On December 23, Hyakutake informed Tokyo of the desperation on Guadalcanal. "No food available and we can no longer send out scouts. We can do nothing to withstand the enemy's offensive. Seventeenth Army now requests permission to break into the enemy's positions and die an honorable death rather than die of hunger in our own dugouts."

The General Staff finally faced the reality of what the men on Guadalcanal were suffering on a daily basis. Hyakutake's men had drawn up their own method of determining how long a man might survive on Starvation Island:

"He who can rise to his feet—30 days left to live

"SEVENTEENTH ARMY NOW REQUESTS PERMISSION TO BREAK INTO THE ENEMY'S POSITIONS AND DIE AN HONORABLE DEATH RATHER THAN DIE OF HUNGER IN OUR OWN DUGOUTS." —LT. GEN. HARUKICHI HYAKUTAKE



National Archives

National Archives

ABOVE: Japanese destroyers such as these were formidable opponents of the U.S. Navy during the night battles off Guadalcanal. RIGHT: Admiral Tamotsu Tanaka was a planner of the innovative effort by the Japanese Navy to resupply the beleaguered troops on Guadalcanal.

He who can sit up—20 days left to live

He who must urinate while lying down—3 days left to live

He who cannot speak—2 days left to live

He who cannot blink his eyes—dead at dawn."

Two days after Hyakutake's sobering message arrived, senior Army and Navy officers held an emergency meeting at the Imperial Palace to work out the details of the withdrawal from Guadalcanal. The Navy blamed the Army for not making better use of the men and equipment they had been given. The Army blamed the Navy for not supplying enough food and ammunition for the troops.

"You landed the Army without arms and food and then cut off the supply," one officer complained. "It's like sending someone on a roof and taking away the ladder."

The arguing went on for four days, until a staff officer named Colonel Joichiro Sanada arrived from Rabaul with a recommendation regarding Guadalcanal. The recommendation was that all troops should be taken off the island as soon as possible, and it had been endorsed by every Army and Navy officer in the Solomons who had been consulted. To examine the situation even further, war games were held to explore what might happen if an attempt to strengthen the Guadalcanal garrison was carried out. War gaming reached the same conclusion—in the course of the games, American air and naval forces destroyed any convoys attempting to resupply or reinforce Guadalcanal.

The participants were convinced that the island could be recaptured from the Americans only by a miracle. Colonel Sanada's report, when added to the weight of Hyakutake's communiqué and the results of the war games, ended the bickering between the Army and the Navy. Both sides jointly decided that Hyakutake's men should be evacuated from Guadalcanal by the end of January.

Before anything else could be accomplished, Emperor Hirohito would have to be informed of the planned evacuation. An audience with the emperor was arranged for December 31. This was a job that no one relished. His Majesty was not at all happy to hear that his Army and Navy had been unable to drive the detested Americans from Guadalcanal in spite of more than four months of exhausting effort. One item that particularly irked Hirohito was why Japanese construction units needed more than a month to build an airfield while the Americans had completed their unfinished work in just a few days.

It was an especially pertinent question, the emperor thought, because American airpower was largely responsible for the impending Japanese loss of Guadalcanal. The enemy always seemed to have more planes, both carrier based and land based, than the Japanese. The Americans had an advantage, Hirohito was told. They used machines, while their own construction units were forced to use manpower to do the job. The emperor did not seem to be satisfied by this explanation and continued to ask pointed questions for another two hours.

The cruiser USS *Minneapolis* was seriously damaged during an engagement with Japanese destroyers on the night of November 29, 1942. Her bow was blown off by a Japanese torpedo.

National Archives

The interview eventually came to an end, to the relief of everyone present. Hirohito concluded the meeting by urging both the Army and Navy to do better in the future. Reluctantly, but realizing that there was not much else he could do, the emperor approved the withdrawal of all Japanese forces from Guadalcanal. It was now official and sanctioned by His Majesty. Guadalcanal would be relinquished to the Americans.

Throughout December, American intelligence was becoming increasingly convinced of one thing: the Japanese were preparing for another major offensive to retake Guadalcanal. On December 1, an analyst at CINCPAC (Commander in Chief Pacific) observed, "It is still indicated that a major attempt to recapture Cactus [Guadalcanal] is making up."

It certainly looked as though some sort of attack was in the offing. Admiral Tanaka's attempts to reinforce the Guadalcanal garrison appeared to be strong evidence. Also, Japanese warships and cargo vessels were congregating at Rabaul, a clear sign that an attack was imminent. Seventy ships had anchored in the harbor by late December.

There were other telling signs. On New Year's Day 1943, Japanese cryptanalysts changed their radio codes, making it difficult for intelligence to gather information regarding enemy intentions—at least until the code was broken again. Also, the volume of radio traffic had increased dramatically. Evidence of an enemy buildup was unmistakable, and it was not taking place just at Rabaul. Truk and the Shortland Islands were also receiving significantly larger numbers of ships and aircraft.

Throughout December and January, intelligence enthusiastically gathered information on Japanese activities, making detailed notes on the increased enemy movements and reaching their conclusions—and the conclusions being reached were absolutely, totally wrong. An intelligence communiqué dated January 26, 1943, informed all Allied forces that Japan was preparing a new assault in either the Solomons or New Guinea. This new campaign would be called Operation KE and would probably begin in the next few weeks.

Actually, the communiqué was not totally incorrect. Imperial general headquarters in Tokyo had created an operation code-named KE, but it had nothing to do with recapturing Guadalcanal. In fact, Operation KE was the codename for the evacuation of all Japanese troops from Guadalcanal, which was to take place beginning in mid-January. Allied intelligence analysts had completely misread Tokyo's intentions.

Basically, Operation KE was divided into two

parts. First, an infantry battalion would be landed on Guadalcanal in mid-January. These men would serve as a rearguard unit to keep American forces pinned down while Seventeenth Army escaped. Provisions and supplies for about three weeks were to be landed at about the same time. When the rearguard unit was in place, phase two, the evacuation itself, would begin. Most of the men would be taken off the island by destroyers—the Tokyo Express in reverse. Some of the troops would be transferred to landing craft. Submarines would stand by to pick up anyone left behind.

While all this was taking place, several diversions would keep the Americans guessing as to the Japanese Navy's real intentions. Port Darwin in Australia was to be bombed in a night air raid, the cruiser *Tone* and submarines were to shell American bases east of the Marshall Islands, and fake radio traffic in the Marshalls would fool American eavesdroppers into thinking that some sort of action would take place there. The target date for the completion of Operation KE was February 10, 1943.

The Japanese Navy continued its Tokyo Express runs throughout the month of January and had some successes in spite of interference from American aircraft and PT boats. The run of January 3, for instance, landed about five days of supplies that were brought ashore in drums and rubber bags. On January 14, nine destroyers carried the Yano Battalion to Guadalcanal—750 men and a detachment of artillery under the command of Major Keiji Yano to serve as the rear guard.

One of the officers who accompanied the Yano Battalion was Lt. Col. Kumao Imoto. Imoto had also been given an unenviable job—delivering the evacuation orders and plan to General Hyakutake in person. The assignment turned out to be just as distasteful as he had thought. He disembarked near Cape Esperance after dark and found dead bodies throughout the area.

"The trail that led to Seventeenth Army headquarters was a trail of corpses," Imoto said. At around midnight, after a harrowing walk from the beach, he finally arrived at Hyakutake's camp.

The two officers whom Imoto first met expected to be given an attack plan, not orders to evacuate, and were surprised when they were told of the command to pull out. At first, they refused to accept the orders, and only grudgingly accepted after being told that they had come from the emperor himself. After this unpleasant exchange, Imoto was taken to see General Hyakutake.

Hyakutake was sitting on a blanket under a large tree when Imoto found him. He stared wordlessly for a minute or so after being given the withdrawal order; he had obviously been taken completely by surprise as well and needed time to recover. "The question is very grave. I want to consider the matter quietly and alone for a little while," he slowly said to Imoto. "Please leave me alone until I call for you."

National Archives

Following a failed charge against U.S. Marine positions on Guadalcanal, the bodies of Japanese soldiers lie in heaps. When Lieutenant Colonel Kumao Imoto delivered the news to General Hyakutake that his troops would be evacuated from Guadalcanal, Imoto followed a similar "trail of corpses."

For the next several hours, Hyakutake thought about Operation KE and what it meant. He also conferred with General Shigesaburo Miyazaki, one of the officers who met Imoto when he arrived at the camp. Miyazaki did not like the idea of abandoning Guadalcanal and preferred an all-out attack against the Americans instead. Hyakutake had a choice to make: order an attack or obey the emperor's orders. At around noon, he sent for Imoto to give his reply.

"It is very difficult for the Army to withdraw under existing circumstances," he said. "However, the orders of the Area Army, based upon orders of the Emperor, must be carried out." He went on to say that he could not guarantee that the withdrawal "can be completely carried out." Hyakutake agreed to obey Hirohito's command but did so reluctantly.

The details of Operation KE were given to the various units of Seventeenth Army on January 18. Many officers and men were almost violent in their opposition to the operation; they had no wish to leave wounded and sick comrades behind while they left Guadalcanal for their own safety. But senior commanders realized that the order would have to be obeyed, no matter how they opposed it personally.

According to the directive, the first unit to withdraw was the 38th Division, but the 38th had been fighting an American offensive, ordered by Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, the commander of all forces on Guadalcanal, since January 10. General Patch had resolved to force the enemy off Guadalcanal and drive him into the sea at about the same time that Tokyo had ordered Operation KE. The goal of the attack was to capture Galloping Horse Hill, a position so called because on the map it resembled a running horse, and two other positions called the Sea Horse and Gifu. All of these objectives were south of Point Cruz.

The defenders of Gifu put up the most determined resistance, including a suicide charge at the Americans on January 17. In spite of this, American troops overran the position the next day. The Sea Horse had been taken on the 16th, and Galloping Horse Hill on January 13. General Patch next set his sights on the Japanese base at Kokumbona.

A column of four U.S. destroyers, *Radford, DeHaven, Nicholas,* and *O'Bannon,* had been sent to bombard enemy positions near Kokumbona in advance of the attack. Among them, the destroyers fired several hundred rounds of five-inch ammunition throughout the night of January 19, while engineers built a road past Galloping Horse. Units of the 25th Division began advancing toward Kokumbona via the Galloping Horse road, while a composite Army-

Marine unit moved along the coastal road.

Japanese defenders did their best to stop the Americans, but the combination of the attacking troops, artillery support, destroyer gunfire, and air bombardment proved to be too much. American troops fought their way through and reached Kokumbona on January 23, but when they arrived they discovered that most of the Japanese had left. None of the Americans, from General Patch to the lowest private, had any idea that the retreating Japanese troops were on their way to Cape Esperance, where they would wait to board destroyers and evacuate Guadalcanal.

Because he feared that a major Japanese attack was in the offing, General Patch would not commit all of his forces in the area to pursuing the retreating Japanese west of Kokumbona. The combined Army-Marine unit ran into the Yano Battalion. The rear-guard unit certainly did its job. Yano and his men stopped the Americans, at least temporarily, and continued to withdraw westward toward Cape Esperance. On January 29, the battalion crossed the Bonegi River and dug in. The defenders held off American troops at the Bonegi for another three days before pulling back. American units cautiously pursued them.

By this time the Japanese Navy had already begun its evacuation effort. Twenty-one destroyers left their base in the Shortland Islands on January 31 to start their first evacuation run to Guadalcanal. Rear Admiral Shintaro Hashimoto commanded the destroyers, which had been given the misleading name "Reinforcement Unit" in case any American eavesdroppers became aware of them.

Besides Admiral Hashimoto's destroyers, a support unit made up of the heavy cruisers *Chokai* and *Kumano* along with light cruiser *Sendai* would be standing by. Floatplanes served as a sort of aerial advance guard for Hashimoto's destroyers, attacking any American ships threatening to interfere during daylight hours. The entire 11th Air Fleet would also be on hand if needed.

After the destroyers sailed, the first non-Japanese who saw them were the coast watchers on the islands north of Guadalcanal. During the early afternoon hours of February 1, word was sent that a column of Japanese destroyers, a dozen or more, was coming south down the Slot at high speed. It looked as though this was the major Japanese attempt to land more troops. Nicknamed the Cactus Air Force, U.S. planes based on Guadalcanal reacted aggressively. A force of 17 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bombers and seven Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers escorted by 17 Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters took off from Henderson Field and headed for the Japanese destroyers.

Japanese fighters shot down four of the attackers, but one of the SBDs put a bomb close alongside Hashimoto's flagship, *Makinami*. The near miss did not sink the destroyer, but it did slow her down and put her out of action. Hashimoto transferred his flag to the destroyer *Shirayuki* and detached *Fumikaze* and another destroyer to escort *Makinami* back to base.

The rest of the Reinforcement Unit continued toward Guadalcanal at a steady 30 knots. At about 10:10 PM, two PT boats in the vicinity of Savo Island attacked the destroyers. A short while later, another five PTs came after Hashimoto's force. With a bit of luck and some help from floatplanes, no damage was done. Three of the torpedo boats were sunk.

At 10:40, the transport destroyers reached their objective. Boats were lowered to ferry troops from the beach to the ships. The ships were filled just before 2:20 AM on February 2, and the destroyers set a course for Bougainville with 4,935 men aboard.

Crew members on board the destroyers were horrified by the condition of the evacuees. An officer reported that the men "wore only the remains of clothes … so soiled [that] their physical deterioration was extreme. Probably they were happy but showed no expression. All had dengue or malaria … diarrhea sent them to the heads. Their digestive organs were so completely destroyed [we] couldn't give them good food, only porridge." The reason that Guadalcanal was known as Starvation Island was readily apparent.

The first evacuation run had been a success in spite of the fact that one of the destroyers had been struck by either a PT torpedo or mine and had to be scuttled. Thousands of troops remained on Guadalcanal.

A second evacuation run set sail from the Shortland Islands at 11:30 PM on February 4. Hashimoto's Reinforcement Unit consisted of 20 destroyers, including two replacements. Once again, coast watchers warned Guadalcanal of the approaching destroyers and, once again, the Cactus Air Force came out to stop them. Zeros flying defensive cover shot down 11 of the attackers in exchange for one of their own destroyed and three damaged. Admiral Hashimoto also had his flagship shot out from under him for the second time and was forced to transfer his flag. His new flagship was the destroyer *Kawakaze*.

The destroyers reached the coast of Guadalcanal without any interference from American PT boats. Everything seemed to go right, and only two hours were needed to embark 3,921 men aboard the transport destroyers. Among the evacuees were General Hyakutake and his staff. The trip to Bougainville was just as fast and efficient as the loading had been. Hyakutake and the entire Reinforcement Unit reached the safety of Bougainville on February 5 without incident.

So far, Operation KE had not only been successful but was also still a secret. American officers on Guadalcanal were convinced that the

National Archives

During a nighttime training exercise, the crew of a U.S. PT-boat sharpens its night-fighting skills. These small, agile craft attacked the Japanese resupply effort known as the Tokyo Express, which consisted of destroyers rushing down the Slot with food, ammunition, and reinforcements.

Japanese activities in early February were reinforcement actions. In fact, General Patch gave his opinion that the last two Tokyo Express trips had landed a full regiment along with their supplies and equipment. Because he was convinced that the Japanese forces had been strongly reinforced, Patch ordered his troops to proceed cautiously. He had no intention of falling into a trap and was not upset by the fact that his men were advancing only about 900 yards each day.

The 161st Regiment was only about nine miles from Cape Esperance on February 7. If Patch had been aware that Hashimoto was evacuating Japanese troops, he would certainly have ordered a full-scale attack on what was left of Hyakutake's forces.

While General Patch was worrying that more Japanese troops were being put ashore, Hashimoto was beginning his third evacuation run. Hashimoto had worries of his own as he prepared for this run to Guadalcanal. Even though the second venture had been fairly straightforward and uneventful, Hashimoto decided to set a course along the southern rim of the Solomons instead of steaming directly down the Slot. He did not want to tempt the gods of war or the Cactus Air Force.

The precaution did not prevent harassment by American bombers. Hashimoto's Reinforcement Unit came under attack by 36 aircraft—SBDs and fighters—but the air strike was once again intercepted by Zeros. The dive-bombers did manage to damage one of the destroyers. Isokaze was rattled by two near misses and was escorted out of the area by another destroyer. The other 16 ships reached Guadalcanal without further mishap and began taking aboard the remaining Japanese troops. Embarkation went quickly and efficiently. Just after midnight on February 8, 1943, boarding was completed. A total of 1,972 men were taken aboard the destroyers. Some of the soldiers were too weak to climb the rope ladders and had to be pulled aboard by sailors.

Before departing Guadalcanal, sailors from the destroyers rowed small boats just offshore, shouting and calling out to anyone who might have been left behind. This went on for an hour and a half, until Admiral Hashimoto was satisfied that every Japanese soldier who was able and willing had been evacuated. Finally, at about 1:30 AM, all the boats had returned to their mother ships.

Hashimoto ordered the Reinforcement Unit to set course for Bougainville by the most direct route, straight up the Slot at 30 knots. Eight and a half hours later, after a completely uneventful trip, the 16 destroyers arrived at their base. The officer in charge of the rearguard echelon, a Colonel Matsuda, reported the formal end of Operation KE to General Hyakutake.

A total of 10,828 men had been taken off the island in three evacuation runs. This was far more than Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo had expected or even hoped for. Senior officers, both Army and Navy, greeted the news with relief. But the good news was tempered with some misgiving. It was pointed out that the troops were in such poor physical condition that many months of training and rehabilitation would be needed before they would be fit for duty again. Some of them would never be able to return to duty. The physical and mental strain of their time on Guadalcanal would take a permanent toll.

A few hours after Hashimoto left Guadalcanal for the last time, the U.S. 161st Infantry resumed its cautious advance toward Cape

Getty Images

National Archives

LEFT: Abandoned or shot down, the remains of a Japanese Zero fighter lie on the beach at Guadalcanal. TOP: Scarcely able to walk, the Japanese soldiers were taken prisoner in late February 1943, after the bulk of the Japanese forces had been withdrawn from Guadalcanal.

Bombed repeatedly by American aircraft from Henderson Field, this Japanese freighter lies beached at Guadalcanal.

National Archives

Esperance. The GIs met virtually no resistance; the Japanese rear guard was already halfway to Bougainville. Only troops who could barely walk, let alone fight, stood between the Americans and Cape Esperance. The officer in command took stock of the situation and reached the conclusion that the enemy had abandoned Guadalcanal.

When reports from western Guadalcanal reached General Patch, the truth finally dawned on him. The Tokyo Express had been removing troops from the island, not replacing them. On the following day, February 9, two units of the 161st met at the village of Tenaro, a few miles southeast of Cape Esperance. If any further proof was needed to show that all able Japanese troops had left the island, this link-up provided it.

Patch informed Admiral William F. Halsey, U.S. Commander in the South Pacific Area, "Total and complete defeat of Japanese forces on Guadalcanal effected 1625 today ... 'Tokyo Express' no longer has terminus on Guadalcanal."

The skill and cleverness with which the Japanese forces had been withdrawn, right under the noses of American troops and naval forces, became the subject of praise even from the Americans. In his official report, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, was forced to state his admiration for Operation KE.

"Until the last moment, it appeared that the Japanese were attempting a major reinforcement effort," Nimitz wrote. "Only skill in keeping this plan disguised and bold celerity in carrying it out enabled the Japanese to withdraw the remnants of the Guadalcanal garrison. Not until all organized forces had been evacuated on 8 February did we realize the purpose of their air and naval dispositions."

"UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT, IT APPEARED THAT THE JAPANESE WERE ATTEMPTING A MAJOR REINFORCEMENT EFFORT.... NOT UNTIL ALL FORCES HAD BEEN EVACUATED ON 8 FEBRUARY DID WE REALIZE THE PURPOSE OF THEIR AIR AND NAVAL DISPOSITIONS." —ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ

Very little criticism was ever leveled at American commanders for allowing Hyakutake and most of his army to escape. Hyakutake was convinced that an attack by Patch's forces would probably have wiped out Seventeenth Army. Admiral Halsey did receive some criticism for not taking stronger measures to stop Hashimoto and his three sorties with the Reinforcement Unit. The main reason that neither Patch nor Halsey received an official reprimand for letting Operation KE succeed is that Japanese intentions had been so completely misinterpreted. They simply acted on the information they had been given.

The *New York Times* lead story on February 10, 1943, fairly crowed, "Every American heart must have thrilled yesterday at the news that the battle of Guadalcanal was over and the victory was ours." After six months of fighting, America had won. The country was in the mood for celebrating, not for placing blame or finding fault.

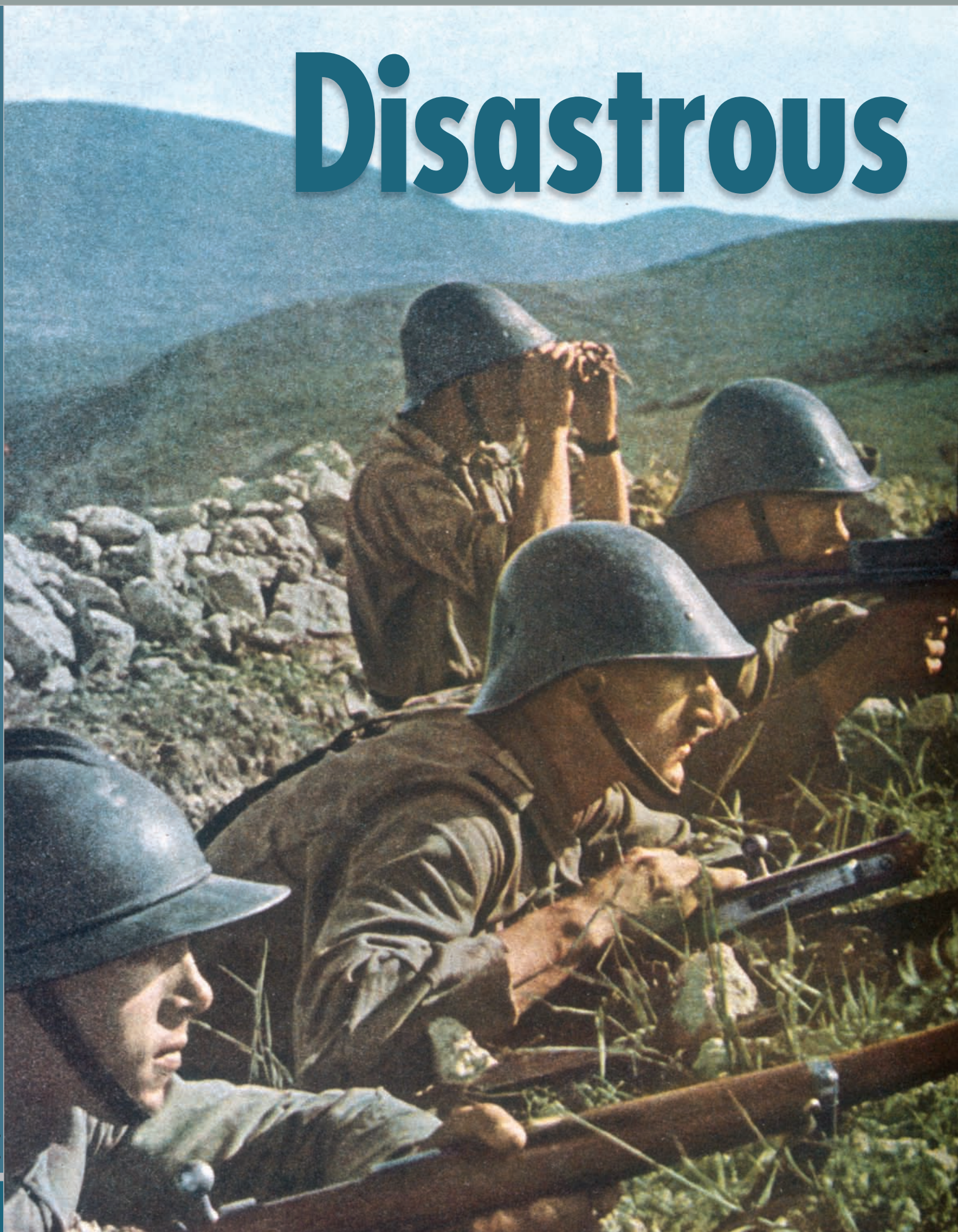
On the other hand, the Japanese struggled to make the best of a bad situation. The Japanese public was given the story that all troops had been withdrawn from Guadalcanal because "their mission had been fulfilled." Japanese soldiers on Guadalcanal were portrayed as having an indomitable spirit for holding on so long under such adversity. Although this line did keep Japanese civilians from learning the truth, Tokyo was not able to turn Guadalcanal into a great moral victory.

Senior Japanese military officers knew all too well that Guadalcanal had been a military failure of the first order, but they also did their best to look at the positive side of the campaign. The success of Japanese destroyers against American warships in combat and as the main components of the Tokyo Express was seen as a victory. Hashimoto rightly received high praise for the way he managed the evacuation.

Japan never recovered from the losses of men and ships suffered at Guadalcanal. A former Japanese naval officer told author Richard B. Frank, "There were many famous battles in the war—Saipan, Leyte, Okinawa, etc. But after the war we talked about only two, Midway and Guadalcanal." □

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

Disastrous



akg-images

Alliance

National Archives

German and Romanian forces at Stalingrad failed to stem the tide of the resurgent Soviet Red Army.

BY TOM W. MURREY, JR.

World War II involved some of the most complex alliance systems in the history of warfare. During the course of the conflict, former antagonists became allies and former allies became foes. Of all the alliances struck during the war, the German-Romanian alliance is the one least studied despite the enormous significance of the relationship.

Romania was Nazi Germany's largest ally on the Eastern Front, providing over 300,000 troops in the conflict against the Soviet Union. Despite the Romanian contribution, the German military took its ally for granted. Consequently, the German Army made serious mistakes and miscalculations that led to the catastrophe at Stalingrad, a debacle from which Nazi Germany never recovered.

Prior to its entry as a belligerent into World War II, Romania suffered an extremely complex and unenviable geopolitical situation. Romania fought on the side of the Allies in World War I and after the war received territorial concessions from the newly formed Soviet Union and Hungary. During the interwar years, Romania continued a close relationship with its former allies, Great Britain and France. When Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia in early 1939, Romania received an Anglo-French security guarantee.

By the summer of 1940, Romania found itself surrounded by hostile neighbors with territorial ambitions. Its neighbor to the north, Hungary, laid claim to the northern half of the Romanian province of Transylvania. To the east, the Soviet Union coveted Romania's eastern provinces of Bessarabia and Bucovina. To make matters worse for Romania, in May and June 1940 Germany inflicted a crushing defeat on Britain and France. Situated between the military powers of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and with its closest friends defeated, Romania lay ripe for ravaging.

The Soviet Union moved first. On June 26, 1940, the Soviets issued an ultimatum to Romania, demanding that the Romanians hand over the entire province of Bessarabia and the northern portion of Bucovina. To make matters more difficult, they gave the Romanian government only four days to evacuate the two territories. On June 28, Romania responded that it would acquiesce to the Soviet demands but that it would need more time to vacate Bessarabia and Bucovina. The Soviets reacted by immediately invading the two provinces, and the Romanians avoided a military conflict by quickly withdrawing from the two regions.

The Hungarians victimized Romania next. Since the end of World War I, Hungary had sought the northern region of Romania known as Transylvania. On July 15, 1940, the German and Italian governments ordered Romania and Hungary to negotiate a settlement. The conference took place in Vienna, but negotiations and military threats failed to pry the region from Romanian control. On August 30, 1940, the Germans and Italians unilaterally awarded northern Transylvania to Hungary. The Romanians were given two weeks to evacuate. Known as the Dictate of Vienna, this land grab further increased the bitter enmity between Romania and Hungary.

The final territorial indignity came at the hands of Romania's neighbor to the south, Bulgaria. Once again, the Germans forced Romania to cede territory, giving the Bulgarians southern

LEFT: During the siege of Sevastopol in June 1942, Romanian soldiers maintain a vigil against a heavily defended Soviet perimeter. Although its performance during the war has been criticized, the Romanian Army was underequipped and poorly led from the outset. ABOVE: Following Operation Citadel, the unsuccessful offensive to reduce the Kursk salient, Romanian soldiers stand at attention beneath the flags of their own country and Nazi Germany. Many of these troops were awarded the German Iron Cross for valor.

Dobruja on September 7, 1940. In a period of less than three months, Romania lost over 100,000 square kilometers of territory, home to 6.7 million Romanian citizens. The immediate result was the collapse of the Romanian government led by King Carol II, who had proclaimed himself dictator in January 1938.

In one of his last acts as regent, Carol appointed Marshal Ion Antonescu of the Romanian Army as prime minister. Antonescu immediately forced Carol to abdicate and then assumed the king's authoritarian powers. Although Antonescu had leaned toward the British and French, in September 1940 France was a conquered nation and Britain could not offer aid to Romania. In an act based more on pragmatism than political belief, Antonescu requested that Germany send a military mission, and on October 12, 1940, the first German troops began arriving in Romania.

As Germany prepared to invade Russia in 1941, Romania faced a momentous decision. Antonescu traveled to Munich where on June 11 Hitler informed him of his plans to invade the Soviet Union. Antonescu pledged Romania's support in liberating Bessarabia and Bucovina but made no promises as to further operations. At this point, the liberation of Romanian territory was the first and only war aim of the Romanians.

As the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies stood ready on the Prut River, now the new boundary between Romania and the Soviet Union, Marshal Antonescu issued a proclamation to his men: "I am ordering you: Cross the River Prut. Crush the enemy in the east and north. Release your brothers overrun and enslaved by the red yoke of Bolshevism. Restore to Romania's body the traditional land of the Bassarab dynasty and the forests in Bucovina, your own grain fields and pastures. Soldiers, today you are taking the road of Stephen the Great's victory in order to conquer by your sacrifices what your ancestors possessed by their struggle. Forward! Be proud that centuries have left us here as guards to justice and as a wall of defense of Christendom."

With these words the Romanians joined the German Eleventh Army in the invasion of Bessarabia and Bucovina. Despite the presence of over 400,000 Soviet troops, 700 tanks, and some difficult fighting, the two regions were liberated within a month. By mid-August, the Romanian troops arrived on the western bank of the Dnestr River, the former border between Romania and the Soviet Union.

The arrival at the former border forced another decision upon Marshal Antonescu. His choices were to advance into Russia alongside the German Army or declare Romania's war goals complete with the liberation of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina and advance no further. Hitler sent Antonescu a formal request asking the Romanians to continue their advance alongside the German Army. Hitler enticed Antonescu with an offer of the Russian region of Transnistria, which Antonescu refused.

Ultimately, however, Antonescu decided to send his forces across the Dnestr River and into the Soviet Union. He reasoned that if the Germans failed to destroy the Soviet Army, the Soviets would return and reoccupy Romanian territory. Further, Antonescu feared that if Romania did not continue as Hitler's ally it would be unable to argue for a reversal of the Dictate of Vienna or, worse, that Hitler would award the Hungarians the remainder of Transylvania as punishment. Since the Hungarian Second Army was marching farther into Russia alongside the Germans, Antonescu's concerns over Transylvania were well founded. Believing he had little choice, Antonescu ordered his armies to cross the Dnestr.

National Archives

One captured Romanian officer told his Soviet interrogators that his troops despised Antonescu for "having sold their motherland to Germany." Between a political rock and a military hard place, Antonescu reluctantly continued the war alongside his German allies.

The Romanians spent the remainder of 1941 campaigning in southern Russia and conducting siege operations at Odessa. In the spring and summer of 1942, the Romanian armies engaged in heavy fighting in the Crimea while to the north the German Army attempted to capture Stalingrad. As Hitler funneled more and more German units into Stalingrad, a need arose to protect the German flanks. The task fell to the German allies, the Romanians, Italians, and Hungarians.

By October 1942, the Romanian Third Army moved from the Crimea to the north of Stalingrad to protect the German left flank while the Romanian Fourth Army held the southern flank. The Italian Eighth Army held the line to the north of the Romanian Third Army. On the Italian left the Hungarian Army was dug in. Because of the long-standing antagonism over Transylvania, the Germans used the Italians as a buffer between the Hungarians and the Romanians to keep them from fighting each other.

The Romanian Third Army consisted of 10 divisions totaling 171,256 men. It held a line anchored on the southern bank of the Don River with the exception of bridgeheads the Soviets had established at Kletskaya and Serafimovich. Each division was assigned to defend a line approximately 20 kilometers long, about twice the recommended distance. The Third Army contained the only Romanian divisions trained by the Germans and consequently was a significantly better fighting force than the Fourth Army, which defended the open steppes south of Stalingrad.

By mid-November 1942, the Fourth Army could boast only 75,380 troops assigned to hold a line over 200 kilometers long. Poorly trained and even more poorly equipped, the men of the Fourth Army lived in holes in the ground covered by canvas as the temperatures dropped to minus 20 degrees Celsius. These living conditions combined with inadequate clothing and supplies of ammunition led to very low morale. Reserves for both the Third and Fourth Armies were limited.

In October and November 1942, Soviet General Georgi Zhukov began assembling more than a million troops for the Soviet counteroffensive code-named Operation Uranus. Zhukov's plan called for an attack on the German flanks held by the Romanians. The offensive was to slice through the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies and break through to the rear and encircle the German Sixth Army inside

National Archives

In September 1941, a Romanian cavalry unit crosses the Pruth River. OPPOSITE: Romanian Marshal Ion Antonescu wears the German Knights Cross at his throat while greeting troops.

Stalingrad. The pincer movement was to meet at the strategic bridge at Kalach, thereby cutting off the Axis line of retreat.

On November 19, the Soviet offensive began with attacks all across the Third Army's front. After initially tough resistance from the Romanians, the Soviet armor broke through and began the trek to Kalach. On the next day, the Soviets attacked the Romanian Fourth Army, quickly sweeping it aside. On November 23, the Soviet forces met at Kalach, sealing the fate of a quarter million Axis troops. While the Germans blamed the Romanians for this disaster, the real blame belonged to the Germans. The Germans had taken their ally for granted, ignoring Romanian goals and limitations as well as Romanian warnings and pleas for help.

The first and most glaring strategic mistake the Germans made was their failure to recognize the limited war aims of the Romanians. Romania was not a natural ally of Germany and had in fact fought the Germans in World War I. During the 1920s and 1930s, Romania maintained a close relationship with France and Great Britain. The relationship went beyond just military and political influence. In 1938, foreign investment accounted for roughly 25 to 30 percent of the Romanian economy, and British and French investment accounted for about 70 percent of that total. British and French interests also controlled five of Romania's major banks. The defeat of Great Britain and France combined with territorial seizures by the Soviet Union forced the reluctant Romanians into the Nazi fold. But the Romanians did not share Nazi Germany's dreams of conquest.

Antonescu's decision to cross the Dnestr River and continue the war into the Soviet Union was not popular with the Romanian people. The president of the Romanian National Agrarian Party, Iliu Maniu, expressed this sentiment when he said, "We do not have one Romanian soldier to sacrifice for foreign purposes. We have to spare our army for our Romanian goals."

Most Romanians thought that their army should follow the example of Finland and fight only to recover territory seized earlier by the Soviets. One captured Romanian officer told his Soviet interrogators that his troops despised Antonescu for "having sold their motherland to Germany." Between a political rock and a military hard place and with little support on the home front, Antonescu reluctantly continued the war alongside his German allies and pushed farther into Russia.

Instead of being sensitive to Marshal Antonescu's precarious position, the Nazis engaged in intrigue. Antonescu was considered one of the most loyal of the minor Axis leaders, but this meant little to the Nazis. Heinreich Himmler's SS openly supported Romania's indigenous fascist movement, the Iron Guard. The SS even supplied the Iron Guard with submachine guns and in January 1941 tacitly supported the Iron Guard's coup against Antonescu.

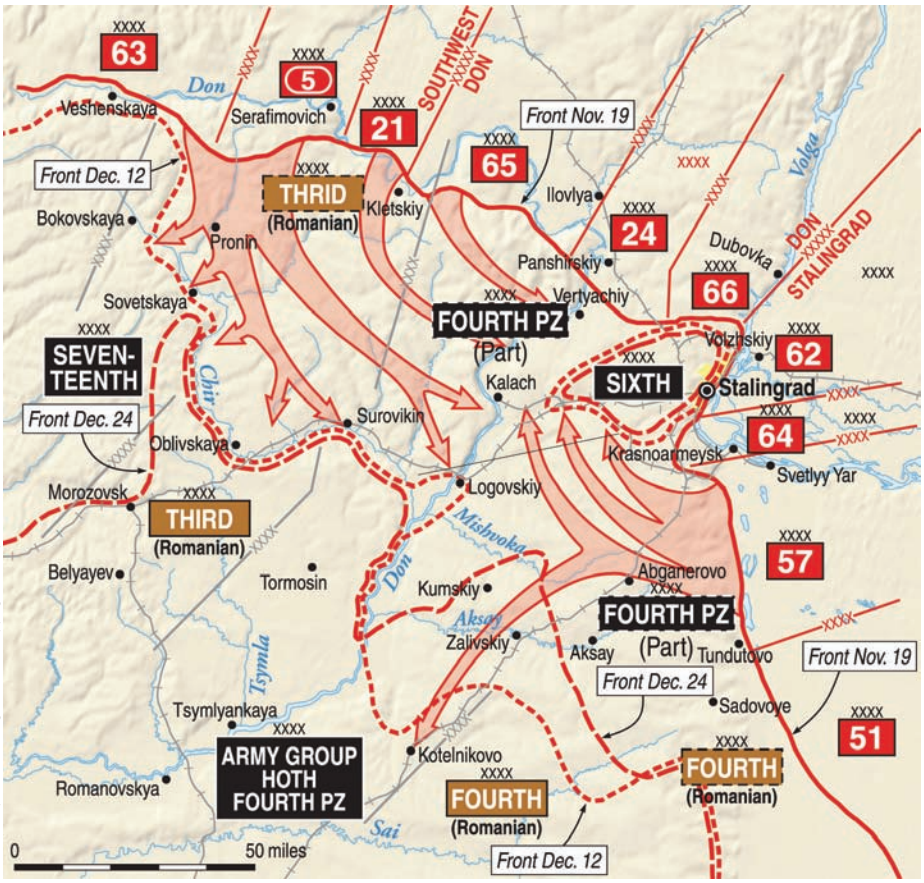
After Antonescu suppressed the coup, the Germans allowed the Iron Guard's leader, Horia Sima, and 300 followers to take refuge in Germany. Himmler kept Sima and this core of the Iron Guard in Germany as an implied threat to Antonescu's power for the remainder of the war.

The Germans made another strategic mistake when they failed to properly assess the capabilities of the Romanian military and the individual Romanian soldier. Because of its geopolitical situation and the influence of the French, Romania developed a defensive philosophy for its military. The Romanian military was not designed for sustained offensive operations along the German model.

Throughout the 1930s, the leadership of the Romanian military designed its forces and theories around a national defense strategy. This strategy led to the general staff creating a circular defensive line intended to defend against

Romania's primary enemies, Hungary and the Soviet Union. Prior to the war, one of Romania's leading military theoreticians, General Alexa Anastasiu, wrote that the "policy of our country is not aimed at a conquering war."

With the defeat of Britain and France in 1940, Romanian leaders realized that they had to modernize their air force and armored units. However, time and Romania's lack of financial and industrial resources limited the extent of modernization.



Inadequate numbers of Romanian troops were charged with securing a lengthy front during the decisive fight for Stalingrad. The Red Army took advantage of the thinly spread Romanians when its major offensive against Axis forces was launched.

The Romanian military had other limitations as well. The German soldier of World War II was on average, well educated, highly trained, well equipped, and well led. The Romanian soldier by comparison was poorly educated, poorly equipped, and sometimes poorly led. Part of the problem was that approximately half of the educable Romanian population was illiterate. Romania was an agrarian nation, and approximately 75 percent of Romanian conscripts were peasants. As a result, many Romanian soldiers suffered from extreme fear of armored attacks as they had spent little time around mechanized vehicles.

Leadership was also a liability in the Romanian Army. Unlike the Wehrmacht, the Romanians did not have a strong noncommissioned officer corps. While members of the German officer corps generally had a close relationship with their men, the opposite was true with the Romanians. German officers often noted that their Romanian counterparts seemed to care little about the well-being of their troops, but instead treated them like vassals. One German soldier noted that the Romanian field kitchens prepared three different meals: one for the officers, one for the NCOs, and one for the enlisted.

The German Army trained a few of the Romanian divisions, and these units usually performed at a much higher level than the Romanian divisions that were not German trained. The Romanian soldier was not without admirable qualities. Perhaps because of his peasant background, the Romanian soldier was an excellent marcher, often covering distances that seemed remarkable to his German counterpart. But because of his cultural and educational background, the Romanian soldier had limited capabilities.

Perhaps the greatest limitation of the Romanian Army was a lack of modern equipment, a limitation of which the Germans were acutely aware. During the fighting around Stalingrad, German Maj. Gen. F.W. von Mellenthin inspected some Romanian Third Army units that had been placed under his command. He observed: "The Romanian artillery had no modern gun to compare with the German and, unfortunately, the Russian artillery. Their signals equipment was insufficient to achieve the rapid and flexible fire concentrations indispensable in defensive warfare. Their antitank equipment was deplorably inadequate, and their tanks were obsolete models bought from France. Again my thoughts turned back to North Africa and our Italian formations there. Poorly trained troops of that kind, with old-fashioned weapons, are bound to fail in a crisis."

In his memoirs, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein made similar comments about the Romanians, "… the Romanians, who were still the best of our allies, fought exactly as our experiences in the Crimea implied they would." Although the Romanians fought bravely against the Russians, bravery alone was no match for Soviet T-34 medium and KV-1 heavy tanks.

The Romanians had begun a rearmament program in 1935 in an attempt to upgrade their World War I-era equipment. The biggest challenge facing the Romanians in this effort was the absence of a Romanian armaments industry. This situation forced Romania to acquire most of its weaponry abroad, which led to standardization issues. Despite the rearmament efforts, when Operation Uranus fell upon the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies some Romanian soldiers were fighting with the same weapons their fathers had used in World War I.

In virtually every aspect, the Romanian Army lacked the proper preparedness for modern warfare on the Eastern Front. The Romanian soldier did not want to fight deep inside Russia. Lacking proper training, leadership, organization, but most of all modern equipment, the Romanian Army had little chance to survive.

The most serious operational problem for the Axis at Stalingrad was an untenable command-and-control situation. Army Group B was the main Axis force fighting in and around Stalingrad. It consisted of eight separate armies, specifically the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies, the Italian Eighth Army, the Hungarian Second Army, and the German Second, Sixth, Fourth Panzer, and Sixteenth Motorized Armies.

Manstein addressed this problem in his memoirs. "No army group headquarters can cope with more than five armies at the outside," he

said, "and when most of these are allied ones, the task invariably becomes too much for it."

The Germans recognized the problem in the autumn of 1942 and proposed to remedy the situation by creating a new army group by dividing Army Group B. The new army was to be called Army Group Don and placed under the command of Romania's Marshal Antonescu. However, Hitler insisted on the capture of Stalingrad before creating the new army. Thus, when the Soviet avalanche fell on the Romanians on November 19-20, Army Group B had the difficult task of controlling eight armies that spoke four different languages. To make matters worse, in October 1942 Hitler issued a bizarre order that armies were not to liaison with their neighbors in the line.

An inadequate supply system was another huge problem for Army Group B. The supply line to Stalingrad relied on a single railroad crossing over the Dneiper River. This single line supplied Army Group A fighting in the Caucasus and most of Army Group B. Only six pairs of trains per day could traverse this rail system. The supply of the Romanian armies was a low priority, as most material carried over this rail line went to the Germans fighting inside Stalingrad. The Germans also failed to deliver food, fuel, ammunition, and supplies to build defensive positions in the quantities promised, placing the Romanians in an untenable position.

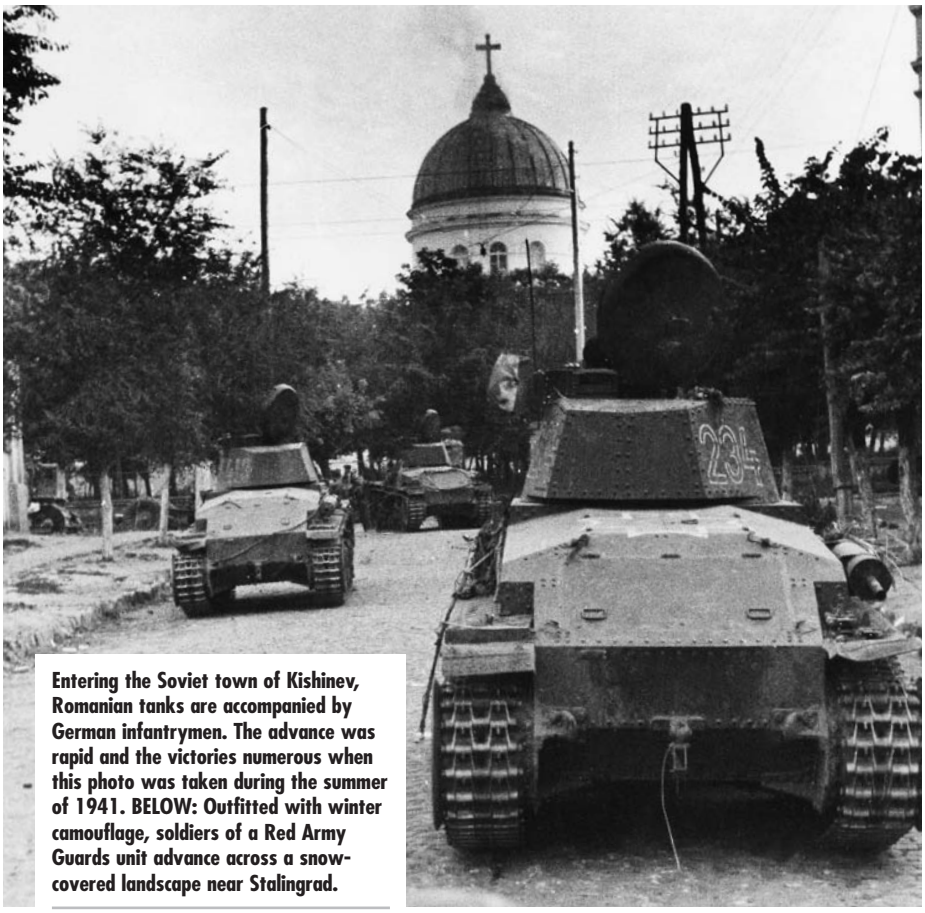
The Germans also failed to ensure that an adequate reserve force backed up the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies. The Third Army was supported by the XLVIII Panzer Corps. This reserve force consisted of the German 22nd Armored Division and the Romanian 1st Armored Division. When the Soviet offensive fell on the Romanian Third Army, the 22nd Panzer Division had 104 tanks. As the division moved toward the front to halt the Soviet advance, tanks began to catch fire and stop running. The Germans quickly found the problem. In an attempt to keep their tanks warm, the Germans had placed straw in and around them. Russian field mice, also trying to stay warm, invaded the tanks and chewed on the electrical wiring. The Russian mice reduced the 22nd Panzer Division to 42 operable tanks and antitank guns.

The Romanian 1st Armored Division consisted mainly of 84 Czech-built R-2 tanks and 19 German Panzerkampfwagen IIIs and IVs. The R-2s were completely obsolete by November 1942. In October of that year, the Romanian 1st Armored Division conducted an exercise in which R-2s test-fired their 37.2mm guns into captured Russian T-34 tanks with no effect. The guns were totally incapable of penetrating the armor of the T-34s. When the massive Soviet attack came, the reserve XLVIII Panzer Corps had little chance of reversing the tide.

Prior German knowledge of the superiority of the Soviet T-34 makes the German inaction even more difficult to understand. In 1941, on the second day of Operation Barbarossa, the Germans began running into the Soviet T-34 in combat. The T-34's thick armor and sloped design made it impervious to the German 37mm antitank guns. The Soviet KV-1 heavy tank carried even thicker armor than the T-34 and was even more difficult to destroy.

By November 1942, the Germans had 17 months of experience fighting T-34s and KV-1s. The Germans were well aware of their capabilities and which antitank weapons could and could not destroy these Soviet tanks. The Germans did take some small steps to rectify the Romanian antitank problem. Realizing that the Romanian guns could not stop the T-34 or KV-1, the Germans gave the Romanians some heavier 75mm antitank weapons. But the number of 75mm guns provided by the Germans amounted to only six weapons per Romanian division. Since each division of the Third Army had to cover a 20-kilometer front, this equated to one 75mm antitank gun for every three kilometers of defensive line.

Two of the Germans' greatest errors were made when they ignored the warnings and requests of their Romanian allies. The Romanian Third Army sat dug-in on the south bank of the Don River, with the exception of Soviet bridgeheads at Serafimovich and Kletskaya. At Serafimovich, the bridgehead was six miles deep, which allowed the Soviets to bring in reinforcements outside of artillery range. The Sovi-



ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

Entering the Soviet town of Kishinev, Romanian tanks are accompanied by German infantrymen. The advance was rapid and the victories numerous when this photo was taken during the summer of 1941. BELOW: Outfitted with winter camouflage, soldiers of a Red Army Guards unit advance across a snow-covered landscape near Stalingrad.

National Archives

ets had launched an offensive across the Don in August 1942, and although the offensive had been halted by the Axis, the bridgehead was not completely reduced.

These bridgeheads, approximately 100 miles from Stalingrad, created a dangerous situation for the Romanians. Because the Romanians lacked sufficient antitank weapons and had no armor in the front lines, the Don River served as a tank obstacle in case of a Soviet armored attack. In October 1942, the commander of the Romanian Third Army pleaded with Army Group B for help in reducing the two bridgeheads. The Romanian commander argued that his troops could maintain their positions only if they held the entire southern bank of the Don River. While his German allies expressed sympathy to his position, they responded that nothing could be done until Stalingrad fell, an event they believed was imminent.

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

Stuck in the mud of the Russian steppes, a wagon is manhandled by German soldiers.

In what amounts to one of history's biggest intelligence failures, the German intelligence service on the Eastern Front, Fremde Heere Ost, ignored overwhelming evidence of an impending attack. Some of the evidence came in the form of information from Russian deserters who told their interrogators of the buildup of Soviet divisions both north and south of Stalingrad. German intelligence officers forwarded reports with this information as well as reports of visual sightings and radio intercepts. Luftwaffe Col. Gen. Freiherr von Richthofen repeatedly warned his superiors of aerial reconnaissance sightings of the Soviet buildup opposite the Romanian Third Army, but to no avail.

Richthofen even noted in his diary on November 12, one week before the attack: "The Russians are resolutely carrying on with their preparations for an offensive against the Romanians.... Their reserves have now been concentrated. When, I wonder, will the attack come?... Guns are beginning to make their appearance in artillery emplacements. I can only hope that the Russians won't tear too many big holes in the line!"

Throughout October 1942, the Russians made repeated probing attacks out of their Don River bridgeheads. These attacks were obvious attempts to test the Romanian defenses and expand the bridgeheads. On November 2, German aerial reconnaissance photographed several new bridges over the Don River into the Serafimovich bridgehead. The Germans even identified a division of the Soviet Fifth Tank Army, previously thought to be farther north in the Orel sector, in positions opposite the Romanian Third Army.

To the south of Stalingrad, the Romanians were also reporting a buildup of Soviet forces in a bridgehead over the Volga River known as the Beketovka Bell. Despite this information, German intelligence was convinced that any Soviet attack would fall on Army Group Center to the north.

On November 12, one week before the start of the Soviet offensive, Fremde Heere Ost surmised that if the Soviets tried anything of an offensive nature it would be a limited operation against the Romanian Third Army. Two days earlier, the Romanians estimated that their Third Army was facing four armored divisions, two or three motorized divisions, seven to eight infantry divisions, and 40 artillery battalions. The Romanians correctly assessed their troubling predicament and warned their German allies, but with their focus completely on the capture of Stalingrad, the Germans ignored the warnings.

The last and most ominous warnings came on the evening of November 18 when the Romanians reported hearing hundreds of Soviet tanks starting their engines. Visual sightings of Soviet troops in the Serafimovich and Kletskaya bridgeheads drawn up in formation behind armor and thousands of artillery pieces on the move were also reported, but by this point it was too late for the doomed Romanians.

After November 19, remnants of the Third Army, known as the Lascar Group because they were led by the Sixth Division commander, Mihai Lascar, formed a defensive hedgehog and repelled repeated Soviet attacks. The Romanians requested permission to break out of the encirclement while they still had the strength to do so. Hitler continuously rejected these requests until several days later, when he relented. At this point, however, a full-scale breakout was no longer possible. Only a handful of the men of the Lascar Group eventually made it back to Axis lines.

Afterward, the Romanians did not hesitate to express their displeasure to their German allies. On November 25 at a German-Romanian meeting in Rostov, the Romanian Army chief of staff, General Ilie Steflea, expressed his anger to the Germans, stating, "All the warnings, which for weeks I have been giving to the German military authorities—to Supreme Command, to General v. Weichs and General Hoth and the head of the German Military Mission—have passed unheeded. My warnings that the Romanian forces had been allotted too broad a front have all been in vain, and in fact, the enemy has succeeded in breaching the line only at those points where battalions have been called upon to hold a five- or six-kilometer front ... I repeated my warnings to Fourth Panzer Army ... I warned General Hoth on all these points in good time when he visited the Romanian forces.... German Army headquarters failed to meet Romanian requirements, and that is why two Romanian armies have been destroyed."

In short, the Germans failed to listen to the urgent warnings of the Romanians, and as a result both the Germans and Romanians paid a terrible price. Manstein's "best of allies" were now angry and bitter about the catastrophic losses they had suffered.

In dealing with their Romanian allies, the Germans made numerous unnecessary mistakes. To protect their vital flanks outside Stalingrad, the Germans positioned the Romanians even though they were incapable of

withstanding a Soviet armored offensive. The Romanian Third and Fourth Armies were assigned defensive positions that they did not have the manpower or armament to defend. They were put in these positions after continuous campaigning in the Crimea, which left some units at less than 50 percent strength.

The Romanian request to reduce the Soviet bridgeheads over the Don and the Volga were denied. Despite signs that an attack on their flanks was imminent, the Germans ignored the repeated warnings of the Romanians and their own troops. Even without the warnings, a study of the map would have revealed that the Romanian armies were in danger. A Sixth Army operations officer, Captain Winrich Behr, received a prediction from the officer he replaced in October 1942. Behr was shown a situation map, and the officer traced the expected lines of a Soviet attack, then pointed to Kalach and said, "They will meet around here." If a company-grade operations officer could read a map and foresee the coming catastrophe, certainly generals and field marshals could do the same.

After the war, Manstein was interviewed by his Allied captors and questioned about the German victory over France in 1940. Manstein responded, as if surprised at the inquiry, "We just did the obvious thing, we attacked the enemy's weakest point. The hopeless French reconnaissance won us the Battle of France." In one of the great ironies of military history, the Soviets followed this simple strategy and did to the Germans what the Germans had done to the French two years earlier. Why the Germans did not recognize their predicament and take appropriate action is inexplicable.

The destruction of two Romanian armies at Stalingrad increased the unpopularity of the war in Romania and exacerbated the already strained relations between the Romanian and German militaries. By August 1944, the Soviet Army had advanced to the eastern borders of Romania. Antonescu begged Hitler to allow the German and Romanian armies to abandon their positions in Bessarabia and pull back to a more defensible line incorporating the Danube River and the Carpathian Mountains, but Hitler refused.

When the Soviets launched an offensive in August 1944, the Romanian and German armies were quickly driven back. The reaction in Romania was swift. Two days into the Soviet offensive, Romanian government and military officials deposed Antonescu, seized control of the government, sued for peace with the Soviet Union, and then declared war on Germany.

The battle for Romania cost the Germans 250,000 men. With the Romanians now fighting at their side, the Soviets advanced quickly across Romania and into Yugoslavia and Hungary, sealing the defeat of Germany in the Balkans. Although the Romanians did not switch sides until 1944, the seeds of the defection were sown in 1942 with the mishandling of the German-Romanian alliance on the banks of the Don River. □

akg-images

National Archives

ABOVE: After Romania officially became a Red Army ally on September 12, 1944, a Soviet tank rumbles through the streets of Bucharest, the Romanian capital. TOP: In August 1944, Red Army troops march through Romania. As the Soviets advanced, Marshal Ion Antonescu was overthrown and Romania changed sides, declaring war on Germany.

Tom W. Murrey, Jr. is an attorney in Memphis, Tennessee. He also is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserves. As a Reserve officer, he teaches at Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. While on active duty and stationed at HQ European Command, Murrey traveled to Romania five times to negotiate an international agreement with the Romanian military.

By Al Hemingway

Stalin's Wartime Paranoia

Did Nazi Germany nearly defeat the Soviet forces on the Eastern Front?

IT HAS LONG BEEN COMMON KNOWLEDGE TO MOST HISTORIANS AND followers of World War II history in the European Theater, that the Soviet Union defeated Nazi Germany on the Eastern Front. Initially surprised when German troops pushed deep into Russia in 1941 during Operation Barbarossa, the Red Army quickly reorganized and drove the invaders from their country.

However, Loyola University Professor John Mosier presents an entirely different view of the turn of events that began in 1941 and continued for three bloody years, in his new book *Deathride: Hitler vs. Stalin: The Eastern Front, 1941-1945* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2010, 470 pp., notes, index, $30.00, hardcover).

Mosier claims that events of the Great Patriotic War, as it is referred to in the Soviet Union, would eventually lead to the downfall of communism. It was through Russian leader Josef Stalin's insecurities, jealousies, lies, and paranoia that his army was nearly beaten by a superior German force.

Prior to the onset of World War II, Mosier points to two relatively unknown individuals, one Russian and one German, whose premature deaths had, in his opinion, a profound impact on the outcome of the fighting on the Eastern Front.

First noted is German Walter Wever, who was recognized as one of Adolf Hitler's premier generals. After a stellar career in World War I, Wever rose rapidly within the ranks of the German Army. Although fascinated by airplanes, he was not a pilot. Nonetheless, he transferred to the Luftwaffe and, amazingly, was promoted to chief of staff of the air force. His concept of strategic and long-range bombing was innovative and way ahead of its time. Wever was killed in a plane crash when he was learning to become a pilot. His ideas were ignored, and his strategic bomber force never came to fruition.

Likewise, Russian General Mikhail Tukhachevsky also died an early death. He graduated from the prestigious Aleksandrovskoye Military Academy and rapidly rose through the ranks because of his military ability. He spent the time after World War I attempting to organize a modern army and relying heavily on education, training, and logistics. He quickly realized that war with Germany was inevitable and went about trying to implement his plan.

Unfortunately, Stalin's fears and deep-rooted suspicions of anyone trying to improve the Russian Army prompted him to arrest, imprison, torture, and eventually kill Tukhachevsky. One of the Soviet Union's brilliant military minds who might have played a decisive role on the Eastern Front was gone.

After the war, Stalin perpetuated the myth that his superior numbers and advanced technology defeated Hitler's juggernaut. According to Mosier, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, Stalin was ready to sacrifice 27 million of his countrymen to be the victor.

"In the main, Hitler lost the war against Stalin because of decisions that he himself made, not because he was overwhelmed and defeated on the field of battle by a superior enemy," writes Mosier.

Although Stalin bragged about the prosperity of his country, the charismatic leader had Western officials,

Russian soldiers and civilians at Stalingrad. According to John Mosier's new book, it was Hitler's dilusional leadership that defeated the German Army, not Stalin or the the Russian Army.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Myth of "Settlements"

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

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

What are the facts?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But here's a thought: How about a deal by which the "settlements" were indeed abandoned and all the Jews were to move to "Israel proper." At the same time, all the Arabs living in Israel would be transferred to Judea/Samaria or to wherever else they wanted to go. That would indeed make Judea/Samaria "*judenrein*," and what are now Arab lands in Israel would be "*arabrein*." The Arabs could then live in a fully autonomous area in eastern Israel and peace, one would hope, would descend on the holy land.

This message has been published and paid for by

FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159
Gerardo Joffe, President

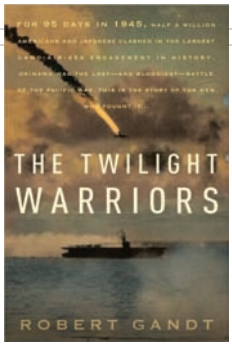
FLAME is a tax-exempt, non-profit educational 501 (c)(3) organization. Its purpose is the research and publication of the facts regarding developments in the Middle East and exposing false propaganda that might harm the interests of the United States and its allies in that area of the world. Your tax-deductible 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.

reporters, and others bamboozled. Russia's agricultural collective farms were in shambles, its electrical grid nonexistent, its technology was at a virtual standstill, and its army nothing more than a mob.

Because of his fear and mistrust of anyone who disagreed with him, Stalin sent millions to slave labor camps, and to their deaths. Many of these individuals were the cream of the crop of Russian engineers, military strategists, doctors, and teachers. His delusional behavior nearly allowed Hitler victory on the Eastern Front—causing the death of an estimated 30 million on both sides—and eventually bringing about the collapse of the Soviet Union decades later.

The Twilight Warriors by Robert Gandt, Broadway Books, New York, 2010, 400 pp., notes, glossary, photos, $24.99, hardcover.

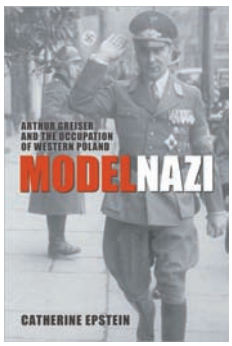
As the Allies inched their way closer to the home islands of Japan in early 1945, the top planners were still unsure of the route they wanted to take. With the exception of General Douglas MacArthur's insistence on returning to the Philippines to fulfill his "I shall return" promise, Admiral Chester Nimitz had pushed for the invasion of Formosa. However, it was the straight-laced, mild-mannered Vice Admiral Raymond Spruance who convinced the irascible Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ernest King to bypass Formosa and instead strike at the island of Okinawa. Spruance explained that by seizing it, the Allies could then block all of Japan's supply lines in the East China Sea. Spruance's superiors listened to him, and the bloody 90-day struggle for Okinawa would prove to be the worst in naval history in terms of casualties and loss of ships and aircraft.



The author, a former U.S. Navy fighter pilot, not only highlights the major events of the epic struggle but also focuses on Carrier Air Group 10 which flew Vought F4U Corsair fighter planes from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid*. He spent many hours interviewing the survivors who flew during the battle. He also talked to the sailors who experienced the terrible kamikaze attacks that struck the "Fighting I" on April 16, 1945. Eight men were killed and another two wounded when the enemy aircraft plunged into the flight deck. Due to the herculean damage control efforts of the crew, the fire was extinguished and the Corsairs were once again landing on the deck of the *Intrepid*.

When the battle was over in mid-June 1945, a total of 768 U.S. aircraft had been lost, 28 Allied ships were sunk, and another 368 were damaged. The U.S. Navy sustained nearly 10,000 casualties during the three-month operation. Many of the young, inexperienced pilots in the air group would taste their first combat during the struggle for Okinawa.

"Nearly two years of waiting and training and worrying that the war would end before they got there were behind them," writes Gandt. "The moment would remain fixed in their memories for the next half century."



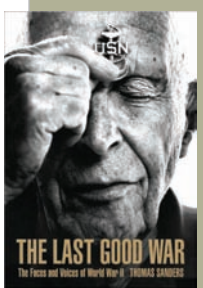
Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland by Catherine Epstein, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, 451 pp., notes, index, photos, $45.00, hardcover.

With the fall of communism, the historical floodgates were swung wide open, including the availability of information dealing with the battles, strategies, and personalities of World War II. Prior to this, historians were in the dark and often had to speculate on subjects that related to the Eastern Front during the conflict.

One such individual who has remained something of a mystery until now was Arthur

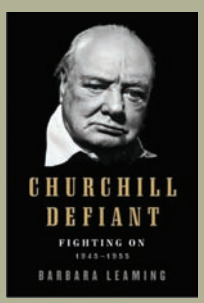
Short Bursts

The Last Good War: The Faces and Voices of World War II photographs by Thomas Sanders, text by Veronica Kavass and introduction by Hampton Sides, Welcome Books, 2010, 224 pp., index, photos, $45.00, hardcover.



Thomas Sanders was on a mission. The young photographer scoured the country looking to photograph veterans of World War II. As he took their photos, they began to tell tales of their service during the conflict. Sanders became fascinated and decided to gather his photos for a book and tell their stories so people would never forget the tremendous sacrifices made by the men and women of that era.

Writer and interviewer Veronica Kavass joined Sanders as they sought those who not only fought in all the theaters of the war but also those on the home front who performed other important tasks for the war effort. Some of the 200 black-and-white and color photos are quite compelling. Etched in the faces of the subjects are more than six decades of memories and experiences of a generation of Americans who saved the world for democracy.



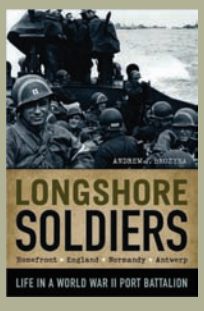
Churchill Defiant: Fighting On, 1945-1955 by Barbara Leaming, HarperCollins, New York, 2010, 384 pp., index, notes, $26.99, hardcover.

At the end of World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was defeated and tossed from power. However, the elder statesmen was certainly a man to be reckoned with. It was not the first time that the old warhorse had been unceremoniously rejected by the British people or by the nation's government.

The author describes in detail how Churchill clawed his way back into the political limelight. His return prompted him to convince the U.S. to attempt to negotiate with the Soviets. Churchill did not want a repeat of World War II, this time in the nuclear age.

Chuchill was also involved in political infighting within his own party with individuals such as Anthony Eden, who wanted to succeed him as prime minister. The last 10 years of his political life, in many ways, may have been the most important of his career. When he finally resigned from office, he was met by a throng of well-wishers.

"His eyes filled with tears as he gave the V-sign," writes Leaming of his temporary return to 10 Downing Street. "Then he disappeared inside and the door closed after him."



Longshore Soldiers: Life in a World War II Port Battalion by Andrew J. Brozyna, Apidae Press, Longmont, CO, 2010, 185 pp., index,

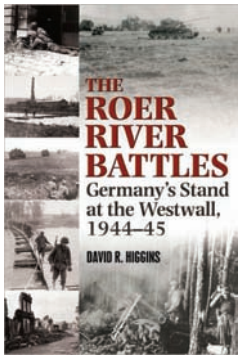
Greiser, a prominent Nazi leader in Poland. An extremely vain and ambitious man, Greiser was the territorial leader of an area of Poland known as the Warthegau, or simply the Gau, a portion of western Poland that had been annexed to Germany in 1939. His ruthless edicts included the transportation and deaths of thousands of Jews and Poles from the region.

Greiser also implemented a radical plan that would make the region totally German, wiping out any vestiges of Polish culture. He wanted his Gau to be the blueprint for other countries and "show the way to the Third Reich's future." His "virgin territory" soon became noted for its industrialization, utilizing Poles and Jews as the slave labor. It also witnessed the very first concentration camp at Chelmno, where gas chambers were first used to kill Jews.

The author paints a picture of a ruthless and insecure individual, filled with an insatiable desire to serve Adolf Hitler and the Nazi state. Ironically, to his close friends and family he projected a kind, fatherly image. Indeed, Greiser was a very complex man.

After the war, 15,000 Poles gathered at the Citadel in Poznan to witness his execution. It remains a mystery why he, or others in the same situation, commit horrible crimes against humanity.

"Precisely because it was so far from the Nazi ideal, Greiser's Gau did become a model," writes author Catherine Epstein, "a model of Nazi brutality."



End Game Burma: Slim's Masterstroke at Meiktila by Michael Pearson, Pen & Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2010, 150 pp., notes, index, photos, maps, $32.00, hardcover.

By early 1945, a plan had been set in motion to trap and destroy the Japanese forces in Central Burma, seize the capital of Rangoon, and eventually retake the entire country with little or no opposition. To achieve this, British Lt. Gen. William Slim split his 14th Army and sent his IV Corps 300 miles over treacherous terrain to destroy Japanese railroads and the enemy's main supply depot at Meiktila.

Slim kept his plan under wraps so the Japanese would believe they were being attacked by his entire army and not just a single corps. Like any operation in the Burma campaign, the volatile weather always played an important factor in the outcome. Thick jungle, disease, and the incessant downpours wrecked havoc on men and material.

As soon as the Indian 19th Division made its way across the Irrawaddy River, it came under attack from the Japanese 15th Division. Despite these constant engagements and a shortage of assault boats, Slim's forces crossed the river and moved toward Meiktila.

"[This] was the longest opposed river crossing attempted in any theatre of the Second World War," Slim wrote later write in his memoirs. By the end of March, the siege of Meiktila was over. Weakened by months of jungle combat, the Japanese army had virtually ceased to be a cohesive fighting unit. By May 1945, the city of Rangoon had fallen into Allied hands. Slim's "masterstroke" had paid off.

The Roer River Battles: Germany's Stand at the Westwall, 1944-45 by David R. Higgins, Casemate, Havertown, PA, 2010, 264 pp., notes, bibliography, photos, $32.95, hardcover.

Optimism for a rapid Allied victory ran high after the successful landings at Normandy in June 1944, but quickly dissolved in the ensuing months as retreating German forces began to reorganize and put up a stiffening resistance to the Allied advance across Western Europe. Ger-

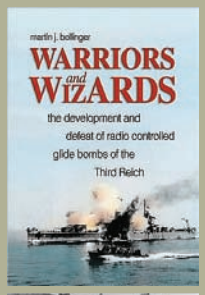
---

notes, photos, $20.00, softcover.

People often forget that it takes 10 men in the rear areas to support one infantryman on the front line. However, for the men of the port battalions, there were no front lines on June 6, 1944, and, at times, they found themselves under heavy fire as well.

The author is the grandson of one such soldier, Cortland "Corty" Hopkins, from Schenectady, New York. Hopkins had a difficult time getting into the service because his job was considered essential by the War Department. However, after many attempts, he was successfully inducted into the Army in 1943.

Brozyna does a good job in describing the duties and experiences of his grandfather's unit during the D-Day landings, the fighting in Belgium, and the Ardennes Offensive. Without a doubt, the port battalions made numerous contributions in supporting the soldiers in the field.



Warriors and Wizards: The Development and Defeat of Radio-Controlled Glide Bombs of the Third Reich by Martin J. Bollinger, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2010, 320 pp., notes, index, photos, $39.95, hardcover.

This book is yet another absorbing account of the behind-the-scenes work by scientists and researchers to defeat Nazi Germany. Much to the horror of the Allies, the Germans had perfected a radio-controlled guide bomb that ultimately sank one battleship, damaged another, struck two cruisers, and wreaked havoc on merchant ships.

Fortunately, Allied scientists won the battle with their German adversaries to counter the bombs through the use of sophisticated equipment. The Allies were able to jam the radio links for the guide bombs. The author has used declassified documents, new archival sources and interviews with participants to write an interesting book about this unknown and fascinating subject.

Berlin at War by Roger Moorhouse, Basic Books, New York, 2010, 592 pp., notes, index, photos, $35.00, hardcover.

It is difficult to imagine looking at old photographs of Berlin prior to the outbreak of the World War II, and believe that such a beautiful city could, by the spring of 1945, lie in utter ruins. Adolf Hitler had taken his 1,000-year Reich down the path of death and destruction, transforming the once thriving metropolis into an urban shambles. The author traces the life of the city through the eyes of Hitler, his cronies, and its citizens, to tell the tale of its destruction.

However, although Berlin was just a shell of its former self by war's end, the citizens still had hopes for a bright future. One German wrote in his diary how pleasant it was not to hear gunfire and the sounds of bombs exploding. The fact that Berlin had endured such a catastrophic event did not dampen the spirits of its people. It would rise like a Phoenix out of the ashes and become whole again. □

Ten Days

Continued from page 41

inferior-ranking officer. Lt. Col. Sparks was the nearest ranking officer, so O'Brien sent him to the Schloss.

As Sparks recalled, "So I got word and I was a few blocks away. So I drove up there in my jeep and got out, went up to the building, and told this major, 'I'm a Colonel and now I want you to surrender.' So this major gave an order, and all of his officers came out of the building single file. They took off their pistol belts and dropped them at my feet. I knew there were still some strongpoints the Germans had left, so I told the major that he had to tell them to give up too. He said, 'all right.' So I put him in a jeep with me and we drove around and he pointed out where the strongpoints were and I'd make him go up and yell to them in German to surrender. There were three or four of them [strongpoints]. And that was the end of Aschaffenburg."

Sparks recalled seeing the body of the German lieutenant still hanging from its lamppost. The surrender took place at 9 AM. With the city declared cleared by 1 PM, the weary troops of the 157th Regiment moved to the towns of Goldbach and Hoesbach to reorganize. Ahead of the 45th Division lay two more German cities, Nuremberg and Munich, with a brief but terrifying descent into the horrors of the Nazi regime when elements of the 3/157th led by Felix Sparks would enter and liberate the Dachau concentration camp at the end of April. Though there were several days of fighting at Nuremberg, neither of the final major cities to fall would resist as Aschaffenburg had. GIs would later say that the fighting in Munich was only 10 percent of what they had faced on the Main River.

The fate of Aschaffenburg was the destruction of some 70 percent of the city, lost in a determined but ultimately wasted struggle. Of the 8,500 defenders, 1,600 were wounded or killed and 3,500 more became prisoners of war. The Americans suffered around 300 wounded and 20 killed. As the unofficial history of the 157th stated, "…the city itself now lay shattered as an example of the futility of resistance. It had been pounded to rubble, its occupants had been slaughtered, and those who survived were punch drunk from the day and night hammering by air, artillery and infantry." □

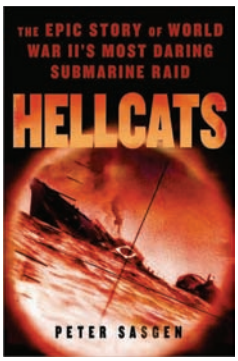
Christopher Miskimon is a regular contributor to WWII History. *He is an officer in the Colorado National Guard's 157th Regiment, which fought at Aschaffenburg. Chris is currently writing his first book about the battle.*

man General Walther Model, often referred to as the "Lion of Defense," did a masterful job in blocking the Allied advance into France and Belgium.

Like the Allies, however, the Germans also overstretched their supply lines, but not before dealing devastating losses to Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges's First Army in the bloody fighting at the Hürtgen Forest. The battleground was an infantrymen's nightmare—50 square miles of thick undergrowth and towering trees—that had been meticulously prepared with machine gun emplacements, mines, mortars, and artillery fire.

It would be mid-December 1944 before the Allied forces reached the west bank of the Roer River. In early February 1945, the Roer River dams were finally seized, marking the end of the brutal struggle that claimed 24,000 dead and wounded and another 9,000 casualties from disease and combat fatigue.

One of the main reasons for Germany's surrender in May 1945 would be the pressure applied by Allied forces that finally pushed their way to the Roer River.



Hellcats: The Epic Story of World War II's Most Daring Submarine Raid by Peter Sasgen, NAL Caliber, New York, 2010, 352 pp., notes, bibliography, $26.95, hardcover.

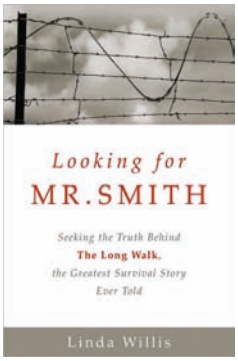
With the release of declassified World War II documents, a plethora of new books have been published dealing with the numerous secret operations, equipment, and strategies including details that had not been disclosed in the past because of their secrecy.

Peter Sasgen, a Navy veteran himself and son a World War II submariner, has written an intriguing account of the Hellcats, nine submarines equipped with a new sonar system that would guide them past the mines that encircled the Sea of Japan, allowing them to sink or destroy as many Japanese supply ships as they could. Many who participated believed their first war patrol was a suicide mission, but they also felt that if it could shorten the war and save lives it was worth the risk. The top secret mission was code-named Operation Barney.

Vice Admiral Charles Lockwood, a dedicated sub commander, forged ahead with the plan, not knowing that the atomic bomb was ready for use.

Tragically, one of the vessels, the USS *Bonefish* and its crew of 85 were lost in the Sea of Japan. The author was able to obtain letters from the captain of the *Bonefish*, Commander Lawrence Lott Edge, which he wrote to his wife Sarah. Many of them contain poignant passages that illustrate a more human side to the men of the submarine service.

Sasgen has penned a fascinating book that describes one of the lesser-known operations of World War II. Operation Barney was shrouded in secrecy but has now been brought to light to pay tribute to those who were involved in it and to those who paid the supreme sacrifice.



Looking for Mr. Smith: Seeking the Truth Behind the Long Walk, the Greatest Survival Story Ever Told by Linda Willis, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2010, 272 pp., index, $24.95, hardcover.

When *The Long Walk* was first published in 1956, it became an instant bestseller. It describes the traumatic 1941 escape from a Russian slave camp by seven prisoners—three Poles, one Latvian, a Lithuanian, a Balkan clerk, and a mysterious American known only as Mr. Smith. During their trek through the bone-chilling Siberian countryside, they encounter a young Polish girl who joins their ranks after she has fled a collective farm after one of her bosses attempted to rape her.

The group's unbelievable adventures in avoiding capture, surviving the weather, and obtaining food, are the stuff of movies. In fact, Colin Farrel and Ed Harris are starring in a film based on the book to be released in the fall of 2011.

Willis has done some meticulous and incredible research to corroborate the stories of Slavomir Rawicz, a Polish Army veteran, and the others who survived their arduous trek all the way to India and freedom. She also became a modern-day Sherlock Holmes in attempting to uncover the true identity of the illusive Mr. Smith. Was he an American-born communist sympathizer who had been betrayed or an innocent worker who had been falsely arrested and imprisoned?

The author has written a gripping account of her research to uncover the truth. The combination of this astonishing tale of human courage and strength against overwhelming odds and Willis's years of painstaking research make it a real winner. □

By Joseph Luster

MAKING WAR ON THE Wii

Two new games take on reality sniping and airborne fighting.

Options for World War II-related gaming run pretty thick if you do the majority of it on PC. The same can be said, albeit it to a lesser (and more action-oriented) extent, across most of the major consoles. I say "most of" because the original motion-control innovator, Nintendo Wii—having since begat both Playstation's Move and 360's Kinect—often gets left out of all the war-time action its high-end competitors enjoy. Even when Wii does get major releases, they tend to be neutered to some extent. Take the *Call of Duty* games for instance; I'd wager most people choosing to play those on Wii rather than Xbox 360, Playstation 3, or PC are doing so because, well, there's no choosing involved. It's their only option.

So does that leave those with Nintendo's system as their primary platform completely bereft of ways to wage their own personal take on World War II? Not entirely. While you may never see in-depth strategy simulations on the aim-and-click tip, there are still some current and upcoming titles appropriate both for those with thoughtfully itchy trigger fingers, and silicon soldiers that just want to take to the skies.

PUBLISHER
Reef Entertainment

DEVELOPER
Rebellion

SYSTEM(S)
Nintendo Wii

AVAILABLE
Q4 2010

SNIPER ELITE

The premise of *Sniper Elite* takes the player to the tail end of World War II, with the Soviets and Germans locked in a fierce conflict. As Karl Fairburne, your mission is to stop the Soviet Union from seizing Germany's nuclear secrets at any cost. Those behind Karl's mission haven't left him to fend completely for himself, with help coming from the German resistance in his fight against Soviet forces and the Nazis.

This adds up to something quite unlike the kind of white-knuckle run-and-gun war shooter most are accustomed to. It's often a game of stealth and patience, the latter especially coming into play when it's time to go to work and prove you're worthy of such a laudatory title. Realism is a major component to *Sniper Elite,* making it more than simply lining up shots and pulling the trigger from great distances. You also have to take things like wind, gravity, and even your breathing into account before squeezing out that killing shot. And what a killing shot it will be, with the camera tailing the bullet all the way to its gruesome but necessary destination.

It should be clear now that *Sniper Elite* is a fairly deep game as far as its genre goes, but that doesn't make it any less strange a choice for a 2010 revival. The original performed an admirable tour of duty in 2005 across multiple platforms. Playstation 2, PC, and that old black beast known as the Xbox were all home to *Sniper Elite,* and it's been distributed by the likes of Atari, Namco, and Ubisoft. Despite the decently high level of quality seen in the title's past ports, it's still difficult to ignore the fact that this is a five-year-old shooter, and a lot has happened across the gaming landscape since. Even on Wii, there are plenty of fresh franchises that downsize their triple-A titles and repurpose them for motion control, including the recently-released blockbuster, *Call of Duty: Black Ops.*

Things become less strange when you take the system's track record into account. If there's ever an aspect of a particular title that can be adapted into a remote-friendly setup, you can bet a publisher is going to capitalize on it. So now we have what is essentially the same title many people played five years ago, but updated to support both the standard Wiimote—point and aim at the screen as you would any other game—and the far clunkier Wii Zapper. Any-

one out there who hasn't tried out the Zapper yet may be considering picking one up for a game such as this, but let me stop you right there: stick to the Wiimote as is. CTA actually produces a Wii Sniper Rifle, but I can't personally comment on the quality. I would be all over it, however, if it had a built-in scope screen like Konami's arcade shooter Silent Scope! Needless to say, if you do have one, *Sniper Elite* is likely already a large blip on your radar.

Preferred method of blasting aside, individual enjoyment of *Sniper Elite* is ultimately going to hinge on how realistic you like your shooters. This makes for an interesting conundrum for Wii owners when you think about it. On a console primarily geared toward either a more forgiving or arcade-oriented style play, *Sniper Elite* fills in a sparsely populated niche. Its realistic and patience-testing take on the shooter could serve as a welcome alternative to the *Call of Duty*s and *Medal of Honor*s out there, so consider giving it a hawk-eyed look when it's time to choose your next battle.

PUBLISHER
City Interactive

DEVELOPER
City Interactive

SYSTEM(S)
Nintendo Wii

AVAILABLE
March 2011

COMBAT WINGS: THE GREAT BATTLES OF WORLD WAR II

Well, here we are again with the elusive *Combat Wings*. It's been quite some time since we last talked about this title in these pages, but with a U.S. release date now well into the early months of 2011, it's definitely something that should remain on everyone's watch list.

As the title implies, *Combat Wings* is all about experiencing the greatest airborne battles of World War II, from the Battle of Britain to the Pacific Theater. With those battles comes the assortment of mission types one would expect from a high-flying excursion through history. There are your straightforward dogfighting sorties, of course, as well as bomb runs and escorts, all spread out across more than 20 missions. The 25-plus aircraft in the game can be upgraded as you progress, and flown via two distinct styles of control: arcade or simulation.

Nintendo could use more ace examples of air combat on their console, as those that have graced it thus far have fallen into mixed camps. Motion control in flight games can be finicky unless the utmost care is provided, but conceptually it's a no-brainer. Hopefully *Combat Wings: The Great Battles of World War II* will fill that aching void. □

Continued from page 27

27th Infantry Division, was deployed to Hawaii before it was converted. The ranks of all the old divisions were brought up to strength by draftees and new recruits finishing basic training. They were "fillers" in Army parlance.

Equipment for the old divisions was a problem. Factories were turning out arms for Britain, which had evacuated its expeditionary force from the European continent at Dunkirk but had abandoned most of its equipment. Roosevelt had assured arms production for Britain with the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941. Hitler's attack on Russia in June 1941 brought Russia under the Lend-Lease provisions as well. Thus, there developed competition between the Allied forces fighting Hitler and the emerging U.S. Army preparing to fight if necessary. In the meantime, training went on in the United States. Newspaper photographs and newsreels of the time showed GIs in the field with wooden mock-ups labeled "howitzer" or trucks with "tank" emblazoned on their sides.

In the meantime, the Army planners and logisticians were systematically setting about raising the new divisions. It was methodical and orderly at first.

When a division was designated for activation, the War Department selected its key officers about three months in advance. These included the commanding general, his assistant division commander, and his artillery commander. All were general officer billets, but the selectees did not necessarily have those ranks initially. Promotion came with performance. In addition, key staff officers and commanders were designated shortly after the commanding general was assigned. This enabled him to choose his subordinates from a slate prepared by the War Department. The criterion for the slate of eligibles was based on records of performance.

In addition, the small RA of the interwar years included that intangible known as "service reputation." Most officers knew most others. The key officers of the division to be formed were assigned special schooling such as the Command and General Staff Course (C&GSC), Advanced Artillery Course, and even condensed courses in automotive maintenance, logistics, and communications.

Just before actual activation, a cadre of key junior and middle-grade officers and noncommissioned officers was assigned. These came from the old division that had been made parent division to the new outfit. This could have been a weak point because of human nature. A commander would be reluctant to give his best people to someone else. Owing to the high state of professionalism of commanders, this did not occur in the raising of the initial new divisions. Commanders of old RA divisions took pride in the cadres they sent. It was not until later in the war that some commanders of the new divisions that in turn had been made parents to newer divisions forming began to send newer castoffs to cadres.

Upon the activation of a division, the key commanders and staff plus the cadre were joined by fillers and new officers mostly from Officer Candidate School (OCS). The division thus began a training cycle that was to last almost a year before it was deemed deployable. There were three distinct phases—individual training, unit training, and combined arms training. Appropriate testing by the Army Ground Forces (AGF) headquarters was conducted at all phases to ensure the division was up to standard. This continued well into mid-1944 when divisions committed in Europe began to take casualties. Then divisions in training in the United States were raided for their infantrymen who had completed individual training to serve as replacements overseas. Fillers had to start the cycle over again. Many of them came from disbanded antiaircraft battalions in the United States and from discontinued programs.

There were other types of divisions in the AGF. Some were experimental and either discarded or retained in limited number. One of the two cavalry divisions, still a square division, was sent overseas to fight as infantry. The other was disbanded, reactivated, and deactivated in North Africa, its personnel being made service troops overseas.

The German blitzkrieg of 1940 alerted the U.S. Army to its need for armored formations, mechanized formations, and airborne units. Divisions of all three types were formed. Only two survived as viable units. The mechanized concept, which envisioned infantry riding to battle swiftly in trucks and half-tracks, was abandoned after troop testing. Those divisions reverted to standard infantry divisions. This decision was made for several reasons. The increase in vehicles placed a maintenance burden on the division, which enlarged its size out of proportion to its combat capability. Transportation to combat or the exploitation of a breakthrough could be furnished by mobile units of higher headquarters. Further, the deployment of a special mechanized division overseas took up more shipping than an infantry division. Standard infantry divisions could have all the advantages of mobility when reinforced by vehicles.

The trend moved away from specialized divisions. Exceptions were the armored division and the airborne division. There were to be 16 of the former and five of the latter. From the organization of the first two armored divisions in July 1940 until September 1943, these were heavily weighted with tanks. A minor modification occurred in January 1945 as a result of combat experience in France.

The initial armored division was 14,620 strong. It had a division headquarters with two subordinate commands capable of forming task forces for tactical employment. These were Combat Commands A and B. The tank component contained 4,848 men in two armored regiments. The regiments had one light and two medium tank battalions, with a total of 232 medium tanks and 158 light tanks. The infantry component was an armored infantry regiment of 2,389 men in three armored infantry battalions of three companies each. The 2,127 artillerymen were in three battalions of three batteries each. The latter served six 105mm self-propelled howitzers.

There were a division headquarters and a division service company, signal company, reconnaissance and engineer battalions, and division train. The last had three battalions—maintenance, supply, and medical plus an MP platoon. The tactical concept that generated this formation was that the armored division, wreaking havoc, would punch through the enemy defenses and speed into the enemy's rear. Fighting in North Africa as well as British experience in the Eastern Desert showed that tanks unsupported by infantry were vulnerable to antitank ambushes and minefields. Thus, the tactical employment of armored divisions was rethought.

In September 1943, the armored division was reduced to 10,937 men. The two armored regiments were eliminated and replaced by three tank battalions of three medium and one light tank company each. There were now 186 medium and 78 light tanks. The two combat commands were kept, but a headquarters reserve command was added. The infantry component was increased to 3,003, with the regiment eliminated and the three armored infantry battalions each increased to 1,001 men still with three companies. Artillery units remained essentially the same. The concept now was for the armored division to exploit the breakthrough of enemy lines made by the infantry divisions. To this end, separate tank battalions were formed from the tanks saved from the armored divisions. These could be used to reinforce an attacking infantry division as needed.

The U.S. airborne division was conceived in 1942 as a miniature division of 8,500 men. There was a parachute infantry regiment of 1,958 and two glider regiments of 1,605 men each. The artillery included three battalions of three four-gun batteries of 75mm pack howitzers. The vehicles were mostly jeeps and trailers with approximately 400 jeeps and 200 trailers. The Army Air Corps provided the lift for the paratroopers and towed the gliders.

In December 1944, in response to recommendations from a battle-experienced airborne division commander, the size and composition of the airborne division was beefed up. It had 12,979 men in two parachute regiments and one glider regiment. A battalion of 105mm howitzers replaced the 75s. Supporting units were also increased. Only the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific remained under the old organization.

Experiments were made in light, jungle, and mountain divisions, but all except the last were discarded when it was determined that the standard infantry division could fill the bill in any theater. The 10th Mountain Division was sent to Italy in December 1944 to let its muleskinners and skiers try their hand.

Two major concerns remained regarding U.S. Army divisions prior to the invasion of France in 1944. One was the total number of divisions required in the Army to ensure victory. The second was how to transport the personnel and equipment to Europe when a trained division was ready to deploy.

The first U.S. Army units sent to the European Theater of Operations (ETO) were an NG infantry division in January 1942 and an RA armored division in March. They debarked in Northern Ireland. In April, an Army infantry division replaced a contingent of Marines in Iceland. In October, combat-loaded divisions sailed from the the UK and the United States for Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. Later, divisions were deployed to North Africa for operations in the Mediterranean theater in 1943. Their equipment had been moved separately.

Meanwhile, the buildup for the return to France was ongoing in the UK. A unique logistics concept solved a myriad of problems. The men of a division sailed for camps in England on a deployment schedule. At the same time, equipment was steadily being moved to the UK and stored in depots. Before leaving camp in the United States for a port of embarkation, a deploying division turned over its equipment to a new division being activated in the camp. On arrival in the UK, a complete equipment outfit of organizations, not individuals, was issued to the division.

The question of the number of divisions was more complicated. There was a minimum of one year of lead time before a division was ready for deployment. After the fall of France there was also a question of Britain and its armed forces being able to hold out. Would the United States have to face the Axis threat alone? Then, when Russia was invaded there was the question of its survivability. If Russia and Britain were knocked out of the war, more U.S. divisions would be needed. As many as 200 divisions were estimated for the worst case scenario.

As the course of the war became clearer, a decision was made in early 1943 on the number of Army divisions needed to win the war. It was called the "90-division gamble." The Philippine Division had surrendered in 1942. The 2nd Cavalry Division was later to be deactivated, reducing the total of Army divisions to 89. The last Army division was activated in August 1943 and deployed at the end of 1944. All 89 Army divisions went overseas. Only two, an infantry division in Hawaii and an airborne division in France, did not see combat.

In addition to the 89 Army divisions, there were six Marine divisions—all of which fought in the Pacific. Marine divisions used the triangular organization of the Army but had units peculiar to their amphibious mission. These included, eventually, a shore party battalion to organize the supplies coming over the beach and an amphibious tractor battalion. The standard Marine division could be tailored for a specific operation by being reinforced with specific units such as naval construction battalions (SeaBees). A reinforced Marine division could run to about 20,000 men. With the opening of the drive across the Pacific, Marine rifle companies came up with an innovation called the fire team. A fire team was a four-man unit built around the Browning Automatic Rifle. Three fire teams led by a sergeant formed a squad, one of three in a platoon, placing heavy firepower in the assault waves which struck Japanese-held islands.

By the end of the war, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps had deployed 95 divisions around the globe. Ninety-eight percent of these had engaged in combat, and the success of their deployment and combat experience was due in large part to reorganization and preparation efforts by higher-echelon commanders. □

The late Colonel James W. Hammond, Jr., graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1951 and was awarded three Purple Hearts for wounds received during service in Korea and Vietnam. During his writing career, he authored more than 50 articles for military journals.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation PRIVATE 1. Publication Title- WWII History Magazine 2. Publication Number- 1539-5456. 3. Filing Date- 9/30/10. 4. Issue Frequency- 8x 5. Number of Issues Published Annually 8. 6. Annual Subscription Price $24.99. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known office of Publication- 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Fairfax County. Contact Person: Mark Hintz. Telephone 703-964-0361.8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher- 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170. 9 Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor- Publisher-Mark Hintz, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Editor Michael Haskew., 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Managing Editor- Carl Gnam, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170. 10. Owner- Sovereign Media Inc, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon Va 20170, Mark Hintz, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Carl Gnam-453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, 11. Known Bondholders, mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. None.12. Tax Status: Has not changed during preceding 12 months. 13. Publication Title- WWII History Magazine. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below- January 2010. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months. a. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run) 79,519. b. Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 43,876. 2. Mailed In-County Subscriptions 0. 3.Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS 21,982. 4. Paid Distribution by other classes of Mail Through the USPS 0. c. Total Paid Distribution 65,858. d. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541 0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS form 3541 0. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Mailed through the USPS 0. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail 0 e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution 0. f. Total distribution 65,858. g. Copies not distributed 13,661. h. Total 79,519. j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation 100%. Actual No Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to filing Date. a. Total Number of Copies 81,397. b. Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 43,143. 2. Mailed In-County Subscriptions 0. 3.Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS 36,205. 4. Paid Distribution by other classes of Mail Through the USPS 0.c. Total Paid Distribution 79,348. d. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541 0.(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS form 3541 0. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Mailed through the USPS 0. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail 0 e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution 0. f. Total distribution 79,348. g. Copies not distributed 2,049. h. Total 81,397. j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation 100%. Publication of Statement of Ownership Publication required will be printed in the Jan 2011 issue of this publication. 17. Signature and Title of editor, Publisher, Business Manager or Owner, Mark Hintz. Date 9/30/10.

Continued from page 31

contained 5,000 tons of copper. The damage to the mine-laying destroyer was minor because her sides were designed to withstand underwater explosions.

Nevertheless, the Cocklemen's feat shocked and angered the German naval authorities, and Hitler himself was informed of it. The Germans were convinced for a time that the so-called untouchable ships safely moored in Bordeaux had been the victims of drifting underwater mines. Some incredulous Germans even wondered if Italians were responsible for the deed, rather than four Britons in humble canoes.

It was not until the missing canoes were discovered that the Germans surmised what had happened. Countermeasures were taken. Booms were installed in harbors as part of a new defensive grid, heightened security precautions were ordered, and a new sport for German sentries emerged because of the raid—taking potshots at floating logs.

Meanwhile, Major Hasler and Marine Sparks went ashore near Saint-Genes-de-Blaye. After trying to scuttle their canoe, which would not sink, they made their way to the town of Ruffec on December 18, 1942. A signal to the French Resistance had not been successful, so no one was there to meet the two men. Hasler and Sparks asked for help at the Hotel de la Toque Blanche, which proved to be friendly, and were then taken to Armand d'Breuille's farm on December 19. The two Royal Marines spent the next six weeks in hiding. In March 1943, they were guided across the Pyrenees into neutral Spain and on to the British consulate in Barcelona. Major Hasler was flown to England and arrived on the afternoon of April 1.

Corporal Laver and Marine Mills were less fortunate. After being on the run for two days, they were picked up by the French police and turned over to the Germans. Lieutenant MacKinnon and Marine Conway of *Cuttlefish*, meanwhile, had managed to travel incognito about 30 miles from Bordeaux. They were about to be hidden in a hospital when they, too, were arrested by gendarmes and handed over to the enemy. All four Royal Marines—Laver, Mills, MacKinnon, and Conway—were in civilian clothes when captured. They were shot in Paris in March 1943. The Third Reich tried to hide the truth of the raid, and the burial certificates of the executed men read "found drowned in Bordeaux harbour." They were buried at Bagneux Cemetery in Paris.

The gallant Sergeant Wallace and Marine Ewart, who foiled Gestapo agents for several days before being shot, were eventually memorialized at Chateau Magnol in the Bordeaux suburb of Blanquefort, where many bullet holes remain in the end wall of a large bunker. A plaque, placed there by a caring French citizen, bears their names and the famous opening lines from *The Soldier,* Rupert Brooke's World War I poem:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.

Of the surviving Cockleshell Heroes, Major Hasler was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. He was recommended for the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest decoration, but was deemed ineligible because his actions were not "in the face of the enemy." Sparks was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, and Laver and Mills received the oak leaves of mention in dispatches.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill believed that the Bordeaux mission shortened the war by six months, while Lord Louis Mountbatten called it "the most courageous and imaginative of all the raids ever carried out by the men of Combined Operations commands." Although the results of the Cocklemen's exploits were disappointing, the operation proved to be a significant morale booster for the British people.

Many of Blondie Hasler's concepts led to the postwar formation of the Special Boat Service, one of Britain's elite specialized combat units. Hasler himself returned to his first love, sailing, and became a noted international yachtsman and father figure among single-handed mariners. He invented the first practical wind-powered, self-steering gear for yachts. In 1960, he competed in the first OSTAR (observer single-handed transatlantic race) from Plymouth, Devon, to New York, and finished second in 48 days to Sir Francis Chichester, Britain's most famous long-distance sailor.

Hasler returned to Bordeaux in the early 1980s to pay respects to the executed members of his Cockleshell Heroes. He died on May 5, 1987, at the age of 73.

The 1942 raid by Major Hasler and his few Royal Marines was celebrated in two books, *Cockleshell Heroes* (1957) by C.E. Lucas-Phillips and *The Last of the Cockleshell Heroes* (1971) by William Sparks and Michael Munn, and a 1955 British film, *The Cockleshell Heroes.* Directed by Jose Ferrer, it starred Ferrer, Trevor Howard, Christopher Lee, Anthony Newley, Dora Bryan, Beatrice Campbell, and Peter Arne.□

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

CASEMATE

The world's leading publisher and distributor of military history books

From the dusty plains of the ancient world through to modern day conflict, Casemate brings history to life and presents a unique view of every aspect of warfare.

NEW BOOKS

www.casematepublishers.com