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Cover: A German infantryman hurls a grenade in an apparently posed photo taken during the invasion of Poland, September 5, 1939. See story page 22.

Photo: ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York.

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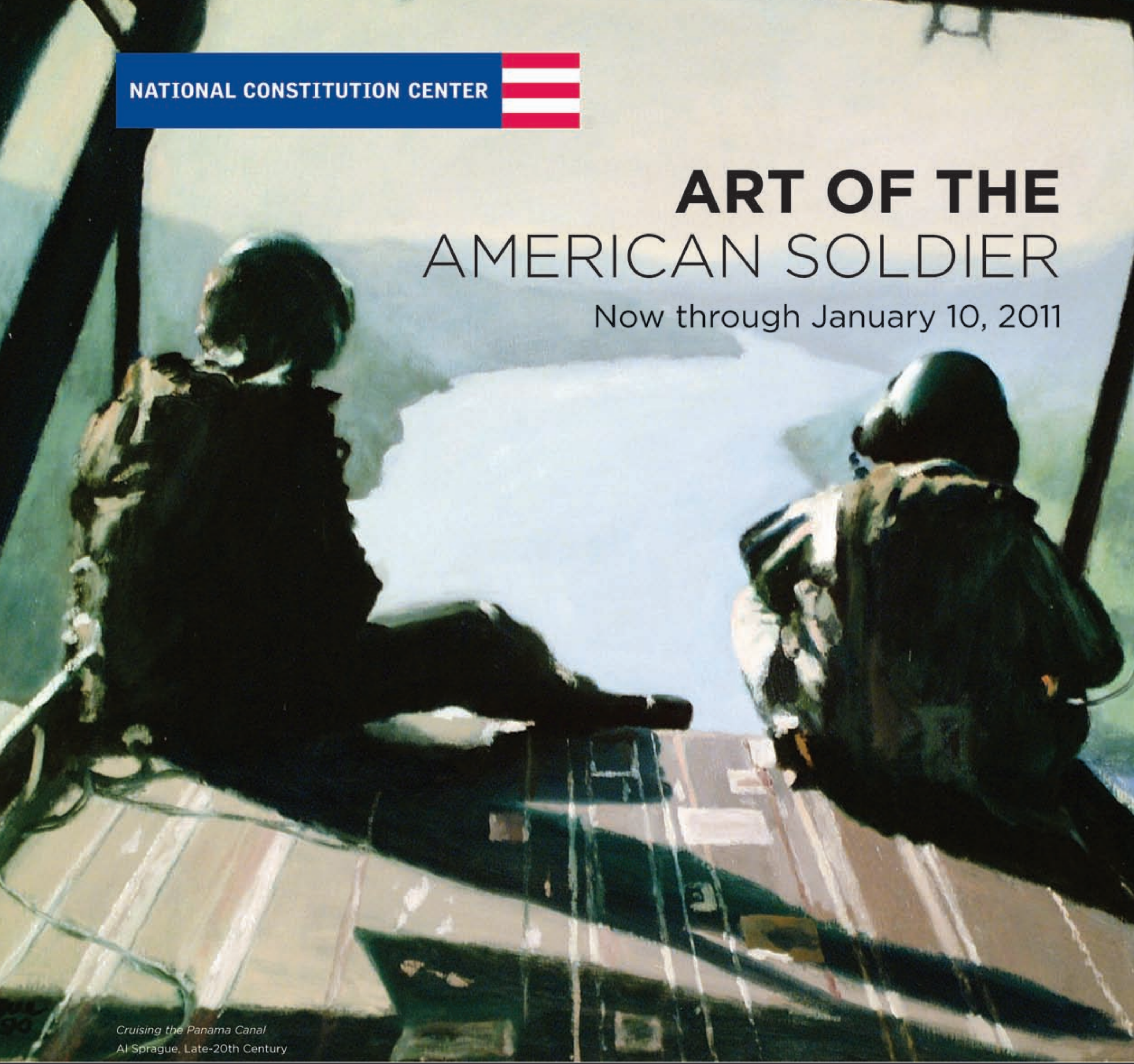

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Editorial

Hitler's prison time was something of a holiday.

WHEN THE NAZI PARTY ATTEMPTED TO SEIZE POWER IN THE BAVARIAN capital of Munich in November 1923, a number of Hitler's brown-shirted ruffians were killed or injured when the right-wing marchers were confronted by troops loyal to the government. With the outbreak of violence, rumors swirled that Hitler himself had been killed during the abortive Beer Hall Putsch.

Actually, the Nazi leader survived the street brawl. He was, however, arrested, charged with treason, and put on trial. By 1924, he was a guest of the state, incarcerated at Landsberg Prison, and serving a sentence of five years. During his trial, Hitler had taken advantage of the sensationalism, railing against the government and established authority. "History will tear to tatters the verdict of this court," he declared.

In the days to come, Hitler leveraged the failed coup attempt to influence the German people as the Nazis rose to power. Taking over the government through violent means appeared to be a daunting task; therefore, the Nazis determined to assume power through free elections. The dead of the Putsch became martyrs to the cause, Hitler became the first seeker of public office to utilize the airplane as a means of travel between cities and therefore was able to communicate his campaign platform swiftly and efficiently throughout the country. The Nazi rise to power was complete with his assumption of the chancellor's office in 1933 and then consolidated with the death of President Paul von Hindenburg, after which Hitler combined the powers of chancellor and president into one and became virtual dictator of the country.

Historians have long known that Hitler served only nine months of his five-year sentence, that he received favorable treatment during his imprisonment, and that he utilized the time to write his manifesto for world domination, *Mein Kampf,* with his dutiful scribe, Rudolf Hess, taking the future Führer's dictation. However, a recent discovery of more than 500 documents relating to Hitler, the prisoner, indicate that the days spent in the lock-up were almost a pleasant diversion.

According to an Associated Press report, the documents surfaced when the 55-year-old son of a Nuremburg man was going through his father's personal possessions after the father had died. Seems that during the 1970s the elderly gentleman had purchased a stack of books on World War I at a flea market, and the documents were tucked inside.

An auctioneer, who estimated the value of the papers at approximately $30,000, stated that the father probably had no idea that they existed among the old books. The son certainly did not.

Vastly more intriguing than the monetary value of the papers, they reveal some interesting events concerning Hitler's prison term. For example, it was noted that nearly 40 people were allowed to visit the prisoner to celebrate his 35th birthday on April 20, 1924. Between 300 and 400 additional cards indicate that various dignitaries called upon Hitler at Landsberg. Among them was World War I hero General Erich Ludendorff, who visited several times and spent lengthy periods with Hitler.

According to the AP, Otto Leybold, the Landsberg warden, complimented the Nazi leader on his good behavior in a memorandum dated September 18, 1924. Leybold wrote that Hitler was "sensible, modest, humble and polite to everyone—especially the officers of the facility."

Another fascinating glimpse reveals that Hitler also had time to consider the purchase of a new automobile while in prison. He wrote to a car dealer in Munich describing his dilemma as to whether to purchase a new Benz 11/40 or an older model 16/50 because he was concerned that higher rpms might cause the 11/40 to have engine problems.

In the letter, Hitler requested a discount, pointing out that he had court costs to pay. "I can't get a new car every two or three years," he wrote. "In any case, please reserve the gray car that you have in Munich until I have clarity about my fate."

To date, the Bavarian State Archives has stopped short of thoroughly authenticating the documents, although a review of images indicates that they contain proper stamps, signatures, and other identifying marks. One of them is signed by Hitler.

Undoubtedly, there will be more discoveries related to the Nazi era in the future. Through these, even mundane events take on a fascinating aura.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

Volume 9 ■ Number 7

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BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

Lieutenant Creswell Garlington

Dear Editor:
I would like to commend you, your staff, and Mr. Frank Chadwick on the excellent article entitled "King Company at Bloody Lindern" in the June/July edition of *WWII History.*

At that time I was a second lieutenant with Company A of the 334th Infantry and had some firsthand knowledge of the battle for Lindern.

Company K of the 335th Regiment did an outstanding job and secured a Presidential Unit Citation, which your article did not mention.

I would also like to point out a couple of small errors in the depictions of Lieutenant Creswell Garlington of Company L. He was not a graduate of The Citadel and was not the class valedictorian. Both Lieutenant Garlington and myself were members of The Citadel Class of 1944. This was the class that never graduated. When we started our third year of school in September of 1942 we were automatically enlisted in the Army Reserve. In April of 1943, just prior to the finish of our third year, the entire class was called to active duty.

Those of us who were enrolled in Infantry ROTC were sent to basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama—about 15 strong. After completion of basic training we were assigned to the ASTP program at The Citadel to await an opening for OCS. In late December 1943 we were enrolled in the Second Company, Third Student Training Regiment of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Twenty-eight of us graduated from the program and became second lieutenants on May 2, 1944. I believe all of us were assigned to the 84th Division, then in training at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.

Creswell Garlington was one of the finest men I have ever known. In addition to being an outstanding scholar (he would undoubtedly have been valedictorian), he was a fine soldier. He had been appointed as Cadet First Sergeant of Company E at The Citadel and would probably have been the company commander as a senior.

With these facts about the Class of 1944, perhaps Mr. Chadwick can find the makings of another good article.

Arthur R. Knowles
West Covina, California

The Citadel Alumni Association website gives the following information on Lieutenant Garlington: "Attended The Citadel for three years before being called to duty in the U.S. Army during WWII in 1943. Lieutenant Garlington was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism for action against the Germans 1 December 1944. Garlington sacrificed his own life while saving four of his comrades during combat operations during the Battle of the Bulge. Carrying, at different times, four wounded men to safety, he received a mortal wound yet refused orders to be evacuated until others were cared for. His actions resulted in the ultimate sacrifice for his comrades and country."

The Bushmasters

Dear Editor:
I just received my August 2010 issue of *WWII History,* which contained a story on New Guinea ("Jungle Warriors Against Long Odds"). I have been a subscriber for several years. I'm 89 and a World War II veteran.

My outfit was the 158th Bushmasters. We sailed from Panama to Australia in 1942, then proceeded on to Port Moresby and on up through New Guinea. At Sami and Wadkee we fought the tiger Marines from Japan, Tojo's finest. We won that battle and I was the body guard for our commander. I won the Bronze Star in that battle.

My question is, have you done any stories on our unit?

This unit joined the 5th Infantry in the Panama Canal. They were National Guard and had Indians from 17 tribes. Roosevelt gave us the name "Bush Masters" in Panama; it's a deadly snake. Our unit has quite a history.

Thanks for all the other stories you give us every issue.

George S. Mixell
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Al Hemingway wrote about the 158th in "Bushmasters' Baptism of Fire" in the January 2004 issue of WWII History.

Italian Military History

Dear *WWII History,*
I am an Italian Army officer posted in Fort Monroe (VA) as liaison for the Italian Army with HQ US Army TRADOC. Since I arrived in the USA, being an enthusiast reader of military history I began to read your magazine that I soon appreciate because of the interesting and professional depiction of past history events.

Nevertheless I am writing to you to criticize a generally negative approach that common Anglo-American historiography has about Italian Army performance in WWII. The general idea that Italian troops in WWII were able only to retreat and surrender is a myth so deeply embedded in Anglo-American psyche that to challenge it seems sacrilegious. By the way, Field Marshal Harold Alexander, in his official report about the North Africa campaign, writing about the fights between the British 8th Army and the Italian 1st Army says, "It was noticed that the Italians fought particularly well, outdoing the Germans in line with them."

One of the main problems for a correct depiction of WWII events by Anglo-American historiographers is that, even in theaters where the Italian Army played a major role, they rely mainly on German sources, disregarding almost completely the Italian ones. The award-winning book *An Army at Dawn,* which portrays Italian soldiers in North Africa only to ridicule them, has a huge 28-page list of sources at the end of the book (545 books, 136 articles, 21 newspapers, and 142 manuscripts), among them only two have Italian authors (an article and a book about the Italian Navy). This example epitomizes how an amateurish approach to history can drive to misjudgment. Trying to give an account of the events of the North Africa campaign without considering Italian sources is a clear historiographical mistake that results in partial and biased reconstruction of the events.

Emanuele Canale Parola

Postwar Killing in Europe

Dear Editor:
Your article in the September 2010 issue, "Himmler's Recruits," reminds me of the terrible killings that happened in Europe *after* World War II. Thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions were killed after the cessation of military operations in Europe. Some of the people in these SS formations may have been for Hitler's Germany, but many if not the majority of these people were killed by the communists. The communists were known in Europe much before the war as the most vicious, murderous organization. During the war, thousands of people in Europe were fighting the communists. These people wanted to fight the communists, not for anybody else.

Not much has been said or written about these postwar killings. More mass graves and caves filled with bones are found even today. In Slovenia alone more than 200,000 people were killed by communists. That number included my brother, less than 19 years old, who was thrown in a cave, and no one has ever known where he died, where his bones are.

It is time for more to be written about these atrocious postwar killings in Europe.

I practically miraculously escaped that murder, as did a few others.

Joseph Kovacic
Colonial Heights, Virginia

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Dream of the Polish Eagle

Marshal Jozef Pilsudski recognized the threat the Nazis posed to peace in Europe and sought to protect his country from a coming war.

"THE SUBJECT OF POLAND IS BY FAR THE MOST COMPLEX OF ALL THE PROBLEMS to be considered," the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference at Versailles was told in 1919, as it was preparing to sort out the incredible mess in European affairs following the end of World War I.

Indeed, it was. Partitioned, carved up would be a better description, by neighboring Prussia, Russia, and Austria in 1772, again in 1793 (by the first two powers only), and by all three yet a third time during 1795-1796, the once formidable Polish state had ceased to exist by the time of the Napoleonic Wars.

For the next century plus, Polish patriots— from the famous Polish Legions that served in the French emperor's armies to the Polish troops who fought for both the Allies and the Central Powers during the Great War of 1914-1918—fought to free their nonexistent country from foreign occupiers.

Between these colossal, continentwide conflagrations a century apart, ever-resilient, struggling Poles conducted numerous and always brutally suppressed uprisings against their all-time, permanent betes noires, the Russians. Through unceasing warfare, the dream of the Polish eagle, still seen today in the red-and-white national colors, emblazoning a Polish flag flying over a free, united Polish state never died.

It was into this churning milieu of fierce patriotism that Jozef Kiemens Pilsudski was born in 1867. A native Lithuanian, the noble-born Pilsudski was the person who, more than anyone else, was responsible for the re-creation of an independent Poland in 1919, when the new Polish state emerged from the Allied postwar deliberations at Versailles.

Pilsudski, whose name today is known to few non-Polish Americans, was a figure of truly epic proportions. His pre-1914 career included being a Socialist editor of an anti-Russian underground newspaper in Warsaw. He forged the modern Polish Army during and after World War I and led it to the greatest victory in Polish history when he defeated the Red Army outside Warsaw in 1920.

Between 1914 and his death at age 68 in 1935, Pilsudski's titles changed many times—commandant, first marshal, president, chief of state, and minister of war—but always he was the guiding light of Poland's national life.

Despite the fact that he helped maintain Poland as a democratic republic, Pilsudski was, in actuality, its virtual dictator, especially after 1926, when he launched a successful military coup to overthrow the legally constituted but, in his view, ineffective government.

Like General Dwight D. Eisenhower later, Pilsudski considered himself above politics, and, like France's Charles de Gaulle, who was an adviser to the embryonic Polish Army during 1920-1921, he haughtily disdained politicians themselves.

Pilsudski was a complex man whose burly-browed, walrus-moustached countenance continued to dominate his associates long after his death and, indeed, until the demise of the Pilsudskiite state itself in 1939. That demise came in a war he knew would someday be started by Adolf Hitler, whom Pilsudski wanted to crush in a preemptive strike soon after the Nazi leader came to office in 1933. But his French allies balked.

The secondary figures during this crucial period in Poland included the marshal's civilian counterpart in creating the Polish state, the famed, quirky pianist, Ignace Padrewski, and Pilsudski's ill-fated foreign minister, Colonel Jozef Beck, along with General Eduard Rydz-Smigley, whose

Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, who assumed political and military power in the reconstituted Polish state following the armistice that ended World War I, reviews troops of the newly formed Polish Army in 1920.

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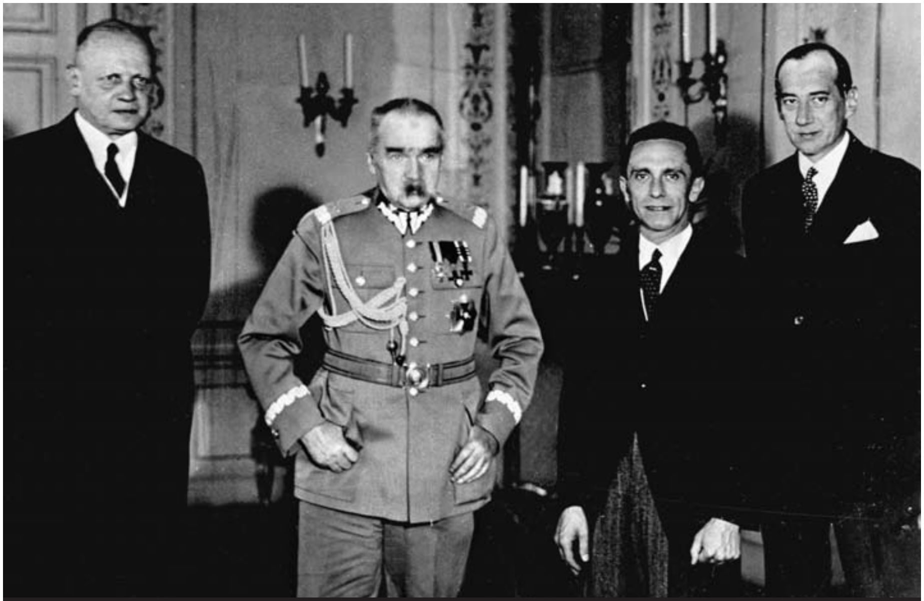

ABOVE: Following a lecture by Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels in 1934, Polish Marshal Jozef Pilsudski posed with German dignitaries. Shown left to right are: Hans-Adolf von Moltke, German ambassador to Poland, Pilsudski, Goebbels, and Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck. BELOW: German tanks roll triumphantly through the outskirts of Warsaw on October 3, 1939, a month after the Nazi juggernaut crossed the border and ignited World War II. The Soviet Red Army also invaded Poland from the east.

post-Pilsudski policies helped destroy Poland a mere 21 years after its tormented rebirth.

In a very real sense, the newly reconstituted Poland was doomed from its inception. Created out of lands confiscated from the earlier partitionist German and Russian powers, the fate of the new Polish state was constantly in a precarious balance. Beset by enormous domestic problems such as abysmal poverty, lack of land reform, an inexperienced parliamentary system characterized by corruption, and an army based on infantry and Napoleonic-era cavalry, Poland's existence depended on external factors.

These were a strong alliance with France and Great Britain, both of which militarily deserted Poland in 1939 despite their declarations of war on Hitler; some sort of understanding with the neighboring Versailles-created state of Czechoslovakia (which nevertheless included a dispute over the small, adjoining Duchy of Teschen); and keeping Russia and Germany apart at the end. It was this apparently unlikely German-Russian détente, as formalized in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, that wiped out Poland. Quite simply, the Polish eagle was crushed in the Hitler-Stalin nutcracker.

When a new Poland emerged in 1945, the Pilsudskiite eagle was gone forever, and in its place was a communist puppet. During the intervening years, Poland suffered more than any other nation proportionate to its wartime population—Auschwitz, the Warsaw ghetto and uprising revolts, as well as the Katyn Forest massacre mark its tragic tombstones.

In 1939, Hitler offered Colonel Beck an anti-Russian alliance. When the Poles refused, the Führer switched gears and concluded an anti-Polish pact with the Kremlin's Josef Stalin instead. The rape of Poland followed within a week. All this, though, was in the future during Pilsudksi's own career, but this was his extended legacy to Poland nonetheless.

Pilsudski was first a medical student who became a socialist at age 19, as well as being a rabid Polish nationalist, for which the Russians sent him into exile in Siberia for four years. His escape electrified the Polish masses: a "doctor" entered a psychiatric ward for madmen where the future first marshal was being held, then strolled out with a "friend" in tow. The patient had exchanged his hospital garb for civilian clothes brought in the "doctor's" medical bag!

The man who would be a chain smoker by age 40 then organized a terrorist group of bank robbers who also freed imprisoned gunmen, and in 1908 he made off with a purloined $100,000. This was used to help finance the creation of a Polish national army during 1910-1912 to fight in the coming general European war, which young Pilsudski accurately predicted would occur.

The first action of this new Polish Legion occurred on August 6, 1914, when Pilsudski staged a coup that left him as the commandant of all Polish forces. Ironically, though, more Poles joined the Russian and German forces in World War I than the official Pilsudskiite legion.

When his troops refused to take a loyalty oath to the German kaiser, Pilsudski was again arrested, but he survived this as well. After 15 months, he was released from prison and returned to Warsaw during the German revolution that overthrew the Hohenzollern dynasty in late 1918. Pilsudski took over supreme power in Poland on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918.

A man always meticulous about his dress, Pilsudski refused to appear in public out of uniform and without a dress sword at his side, much as Hitler refused ever to be photographed in a bathing suit as lacking dignity.

At this time, states author Richard Watt, "Strong, silent, having no close friends but many close followers, Pilsudski enjoyed the respect of practically every Pole. Above all, Pilsudski looked the part of a leader. He invariably wore a plain, gray military uniform without insignia. He was a handsome man of medium height, close-cropped gray hair ... and piercing blue-gray eyes. His figure was sturdy without being too heavy ... Pilsudski was notably reserved and impenetrable ... Pilsudski was indisputably Poland's greatest military hero."

Within a week of his arrival, Pilsudski had convinced 80,000 German soldiers to leave Poland peaceably and voluntarily and took power during the period of the typhus and Spanish flu epidemics that swept the country along with the rest of Europe. His grand idea was that Poland would one day be Europe's premier power, but this was never achieved.

On April 3, 1920, Jozef Pilsudski was created first marshal of the Polish Army, a title he cherished above all others. That same year, he would defeat Soviet Marshal Semyon Budenny's Cossacks in the first great military victory since the Battle of Vienna in 1683, and return in triumph to Warsaw, a living legend among his people and throughout Europe.

Hitler was wary of the marshal in 1933, and the following year he concluded his very first non-aggression pact—with Poland. It would last for more than four years after Pilsudski's death.

By 1923, Poland was the sixth-largest state in Europe, a fact due mainly to Pilsudski's efforts. The previous year, he had declined to run for the presidency of the Polish republic, despite the fact that he would have won overwhelmingly, as German Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg did in 1925.

"For Pilsudski not to have been elected President would have been considered a national scandal," notes Watt.

The elected Polish president was assassinated five days after his inauguration, and there were rumors that the first marshal was a target as well. By age 58, the commandant was in retirement. His language was coarse, and he was also susceptible to flattery as a good orator, author, and lecturer. It seemed that there was nothing he could not do, and do well.

Pilsudski came out of retirement in 1926 to lead a coup that floundered at a bridge in Warsaw named for the drowned marshal of the Napoleonic Wars, Poniatowski. The first marshal lost his nerve after he was fired upon by troops loyal to the government, but he rallied his forces in time to take over the government's Belvedere Palace headquarters and so win the day after all.

His wife later wrote, "I was appalled at the change in him. In three days, he had aged 10 years.... Only on one other occasion did I ever see him look so ill, and that was within a few hours of his death."

In the early 1930s, the first marshal's health

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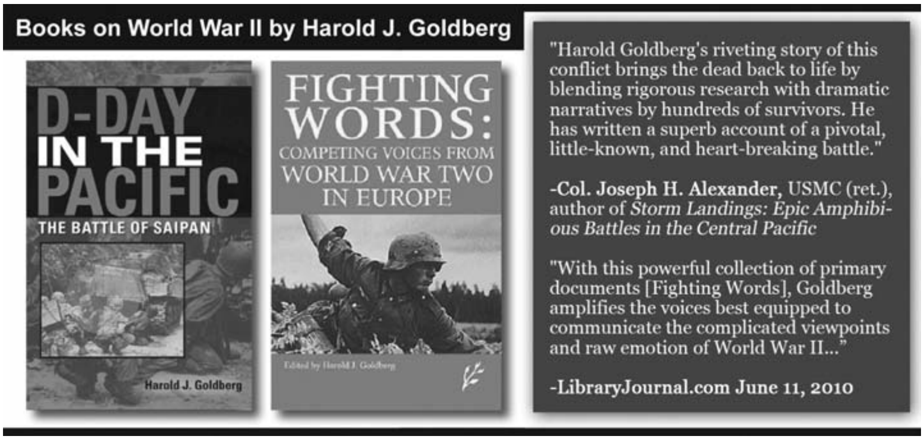

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steadily deteriorated; he was a victim of the flu he suffered annually since his youthful exile in Siberia. Still he ruled Poland from the confines of the Belvedere, where he played his endless, but famous, card games of solitaire.

Notes Watt, "Pilsudski now took frequent and lengthy vacations for his health. With a very small entourage, usually only his doctor and an adjutant, he visited Madeira, Rumania, and Egypt. He stayed in rented villas and occupied himself by writing short works on military history. When he was in Warsaw, he no longer attended cabinet meetings. It became increasingly difficult for his subordinates to meet with him....They generally lacked initiative—they were terrified of inadvertently displeasing the marshal. Many of them simply took refuge in craven subservience."

He was notorious for the abruptness of his governmental appointments. Once he told a summoned general, who found him playing solitaire alone in a massive ballroom of the Belvedere, "Now, then, you will become minister of the interior," in charge of all the police.

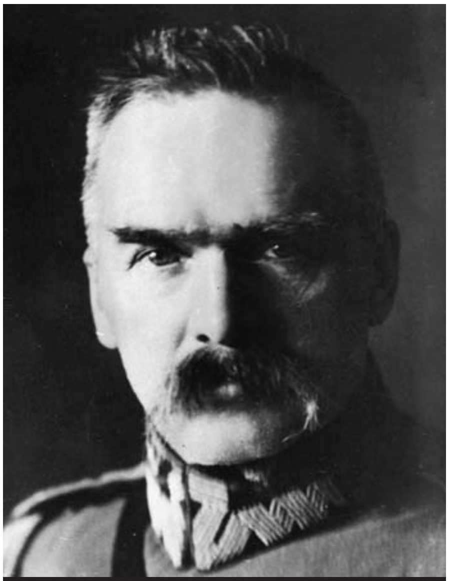
One of these appointments was 38-year-old Colonel Jozef Beck as the new Polish foreign minister on November 2, 1932. Pilsudski, like the Pope, felt himself infallible in his judgments and hated all criticism. His appointment of Beck he felt was inspired. The colonel in 1914 had enlisted in the Polish Legion, was interned by the Germans, escaped, and went underground in Ukraine. After the war, he served as an artillery battery commander and then was appointed to the Polish General Staff.

After service as the military attaché in Paris, Beck was sent to the Polish War College, from which he graduated with distinction. As a lieutenant colonel close to the first marshal, Beck played a prominent role in the May 1926 coup d'état and served in the War Ministry and later as Pilsudski's deputy prime minister in the cabinet. In late 1930, he was sent to the Foreign Ministry as deputy minister before receiving the top post.

This was the man the first marshal had placed in charge of Poland's foreign affairs, who had to deal with the governments of Hitler and Stalin over the next seven years. Arrogant, he acted superior to the other members of the cabinet and was disliked by many foreign diplomats as well. His appointment, however, was seen to herald a new course in Polish diplomacy, one that had the marshal's personal stamp of approval.

Typical of the new Pilsudski-Beck approach was the *Wicher* affair of June 1932, which had been planned and executed by Deputy Foreign Minister Beck with the first marshal's blessing. A squadron of three British Royal Navy destroyers was set to visit the free city of Danzig (today's Gdynia) that had been contested by both Germany and Poland since 1919. The incident occurred six months before the Nazis took control of the German government and was designed by Poland to send a message.

National Archives



Pilsudski exhibits a fierce countenance in this photo taken in 1916. During World War I, he was taken prisoner by the Germans and held for a number of months.

The Poles suggested to London that the visit was inopportune. The suggestion was ignored. Pilsudski thereupon ordered the Polish destroyer *Wicher* to enter Danzig harbor on the day the British squadron arrived. The *Wicher* was not to request permission from the free city to enter the port, and its captain was to exchange courtesy calls only with the Royal Navy vessels; further, the captain of the *Wicher* was secretly instructed that, in the event the Polish flag was in any way insulted by Danzigers while he was in the harbor, he was immediately to open fire upon the closest public building.

This didn't happen, as it turned out, but the visit of the *Wicher* caused a public furor both in Danzig and in Germany, as Pilsudski intended, with the free city also protesting to the League of Nations that its sovereignty had been violated by her cruise there.

Ironically, it was also at Danzig seven years later that the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* fired the opening salvo of World War II by shelling the Polish fortress of Westerplatte. In the 1980s, the city also spawned the Solidarity movement that eventually overthrew communism in Poland, but this was all in the future as the first marshal entered the last phase of his eventful life.

Like Hitler later, Pilsudski maintained bizarre working hours, attending to government business from noon to 3 AM daily, with even the last constitution of his lifetime tailored to meet his particular needs and habits.

"The Marshal was no longer the person he had been during the Polish-Soviet War in 1920," noted Watt. "Pilsudski had always loathed detail, despised political conflict, and deeply disliked dealing with people whose duty it was to bring these matters before him. Over the years, the necessity of performing distasteful bureaucratic tasks had made him extremely nervous, impatient, and sometimes very unreasonable. He was not emotionally equipped to deal with the demands of the day-to-day business of government. Pilsudski realized this."

His office desk was perennially a mess, and the man who had been twice elected president of Poland virtually ignored domestic affairs altogether, interested as he was only in foreign and military matters, such as the buildup of the Polish Army by 1926 to a strength of 300,000 men with 18,000 officers, three times that of Weimar Republican Germany at that time. Fair-minded, Pilsudski refused to purge it of the anti-coup officers that he had defeated that year. His moral authority and public esteem was such that he needed no bodyguards during his later years, and no known assassination was ever attempted, even by his direst enemies.

The Great Depression hit Poland particularly hard, but still the regime overcame it, with a single concentration camp for political prisoners appearing only in 1934, in the final year of Pilsudski's life. His chose to ignore his political opposition. He chose to ignore, not persecute, opponents, unlike his contemporary dictators Hitler, Stalin, and Benito Mussolini.

Asserts Watt, "It goes without saying that Pilsudski's death tore an immense hole in practically every part of Polish political life," after he fell victim to a sudden coma on May 12, 1935. "Even though at the time of his death he occupied only two official posts—Minister of War and Inspector General of the Armed Forces—Pilsudski had provided a sort of supreme moral authority that was basic to the organization of the government of independent Poland.

"Regardless of how great or how little a role he played in day-to-day affairs, Pilsudski was the cement that held the whole structure of government together. Now he was gone, and the Polish leaders left behind were devastated."

Even his greatest real enemy, Hitler, both recognized and publicly acknowledged his foe's place in history from afar, as noted by German author Max Domarus in his epochal 1992 compilation *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations 1932-45*: "In response to the news of Marshal Pilsudski's death, Hitler sent the following telegram to his widow, Alexandra Pilsudski, on May 13th: 'The sad news of the decease of your dearly beloved spouse, His Excellency Marshal Pilsudski, has pained me to the quick. I may bid you, my dear madam, and your family accept my offering of deeply felt sympathy. My thoughts of the departed will always be those of gratitude. Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor.'

"[Hermann] Göring was sent to attend the funeral services in Warsaw and Krakau as Hitler's proxy, while the dictator himself went to a requiem mass held for Pilsudski in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Hedwig's in Berlin."

One of the distraught post-Pilsudski era leaders left behind in Warsaw was his inspector-general of the Army, 49-year-old General Eduard Rydz-Smigley, a Polish peasant born in the former Austrian Galicia. A penniless orphan, he had great charm and an ability to paint and draw. He joined the Polish Legion in World War I and was then designated by the commandant as its leader while Pilsudski languished in German jails. After the war, he held senior commands under the first marshal during the Polish-Soviet War.

Totally uninterested in politics, the pleasant Rydz-Smigley rose to top command mainly through the marshal's favor, although his peers felt he was an able corps commander but out of his depth as commander in chief of the entire Polish Army in wartime, as proved to be the case in practice against the Germans in September-October 1939.

Following the first marshal's demise, though, the Polish government built him up as the new Pilsudski, even promoting him to the rank of marshal in peacetime; thus Pilsudski, in effect, continued to run the Polish Army from the grave.

Under Rydz-Smigley's direction, the Poles expected that they could hold up the Germans in southern Poland until the French and British armies invaded West Germany and together the three forces could defeat Hitler and take Berlin. The Poles even talked of taking Hitler's capital alone. It was a flawed strategy that failed, and Pilsudski's Free Poland instead was destroyed, its Jewish population virtually wiped out in the bargain.

Neither Beck nor the marshal survived the war. Rydz-Smigley died of a heart attack in 1941, and Beck died of tuberculosis three years later. □

Towson, Maryland, freelance writer Blaine Taylor is the author of numerous books on the World War II era. He is also an expert on the photographic history of the war.

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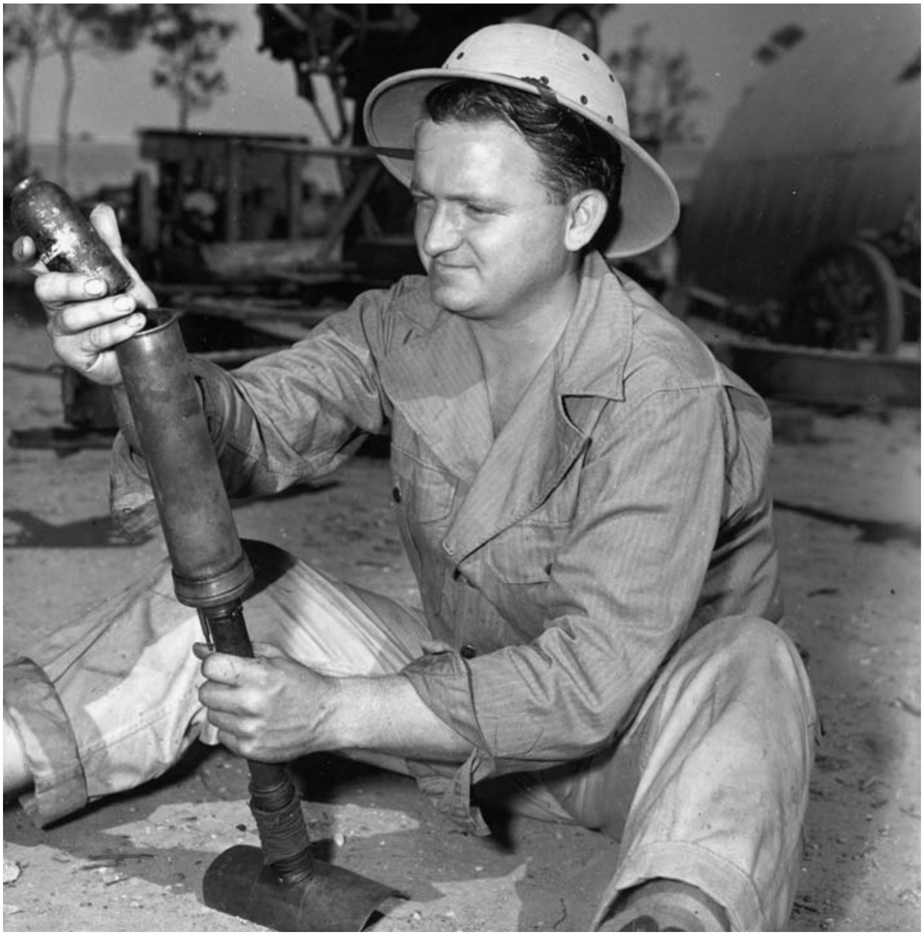


The Dreaded Knee Mortar

Actually misnamed, this Japanese light infantry weapon earned the respect of the American soldiers who encountered it.

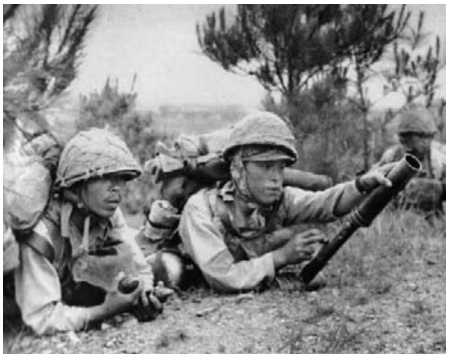
ALTHOUGH JAPAN HAD ACHIEVED A MAJOR REVAMPING OF ITS INDUSTRY AND entered World War II with weapons, aircraft, and ships, in particular, that were often superior to those of the Allied forces, Japan's manufacturing capacity still remained insufficient for the task at hand.

When it came to weapons production, the Imperial Japanese Army's requirements often came in second to the needs of the Imperial Japanese Navy. The Army was an infantry-heavy organization that lacked much in the way of the modern heavy weaponry other armies enjoyed. Their antitank capabilities were extremely limited; artillery was often lacking and sometimes restricted to small, outmoded pieces; and its armored forces included obsolescent tanks that were greatly inferior to their opponents' armor.

To help compensate for the lack of heavy weapons, the Imperial Japanese Army worked hard to develop large numbers of what were probably the best light infantrymen in the world at the time. Their creed stressed relentless offensive action seeking a quick decision and emphasizing spiritual factors including zealous dedication and fighting spirit. Night attacks were a true specialty, and their weaponry reflected their light and fast doctrine.

To offset their frequent lack of artillery, the Japanese augmented their firepower through the extensive use of mortars, the best and most cost-effective substitute for industry-intensive heavier artillery.

Technically, Japanese light "knee" mortars at first merely bridged the gap between hand grenades and true mortars and were more properly referred to as grenade dischargers. The weapon first developed was adopted in 1921, a 50mm grenade discharger, and it was an almost painfully simple smoothbore muzzleloader. Although it could fire signal and smoke rounds, this discharger was primarily used with the infantry's standard 19-ounce Type 91 hand grenade, which could be lobbed to only about 75 yards maximum range. This discharger was known as the Model 10.



Japanese weapons used a year-based nomenclature that was often quite confusing to Westerners and requires some explanation. Initially, weapon model numbers were based on the year of the reign of the various emperors. For instance, the 6.5mm light machine gun was adopted in 1922, the 11th year of the Emperor Taisho era; thus it became the Model 11.

After the death of Emperor Taisho, the model numbers were calculated from the last two digits of the year since the date of the founding of the Japanese Empire. Thus, when a new and improved 50mm knee mortar was adopted in 1929, it became the Model 89, with 1929 being the

TOP LEFT: Misnamed by the American GIs who opposed it in combat, the Japanese Type 89 knee mortar was actually a light grenade launcher fired from a position on the ground. Here, an American Marine demonstrates a preferred firing position for one of the weapons after its capture. TOP RIGHT: A pair of Japanese soldiers fires a Type 89 grenade launcher in combat.

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2,589th anniversary of the Japanese Empire.

The Model 89 was by far the most prolific of the grenade dischargers and the weapon most commonly encountered by Allied Marines and soldiers throughout the various theaters of the Pacific War. Technically known as the Hachikyu Shiki Jutekidanto, or 89 Model Heavy Grenade Discharger, the new weapon featured a wide variety of improvements over the old Type 10 and had almost universally replaced the former weapon by 1941. To the frontline Japanese infantryman, the Type 89 was most often referred to as the Juteki.

Still a relatively simple weapon, the Type 89 consisted of a steel pipelike barrel with enough rifling to spin stabilize the new projectiles, a trigger housing, a range-adjusting assembly, and a small curved base plate. Designed to be braced against a log, tree trunk, or the ground, this odd-shaped base plate helped give the Type 89 its deceptive nickname.

For whatever reason, Allied soldiers dubbed the weapon the "knee mortar" and some even tried to fire the Type 89 with the base plate braced against the thigh. The 1943 U.S. Army manual on Japanese weapons reported that a Marine on Guadalcanal attempted to fire a knee mortar in such a fashion and the recoil had broken his thigh bone.

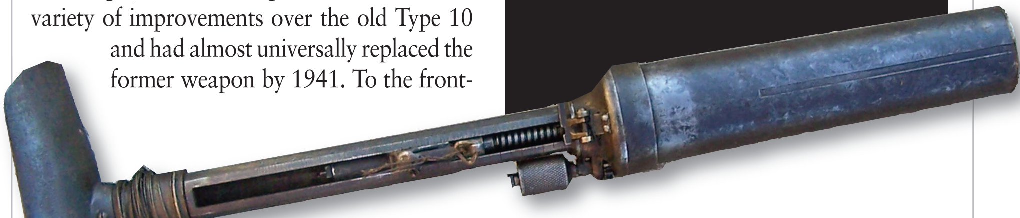
Although it had a barrel length of only 10 inches and was just two feet long overall, the Type 89 still weighed a rather hefty 10 and a quarter pounds. Although the Type 89 was fully capable of firing the Type 91 infantry hand grenade used in the Type 10 grenade discharger, it was designed for the new 1-pound, 12-ounce Type 89 50mm high-explosive shell. Smoke, incendiary, practice and flare projectiles were also available.

This new Type 89 shell engaged the mortar barrel's rifling for increased stability and accuracy and boasted a greatly improved maximum range of 770 yards. The shell consisted of a point detonating fuse, a grenade body filled with about one-third of a pound of high explosive, and a propellant assembly that screwed onto the bottom of the grenade body prior to firing.

To fire, the gunner removed the fuse's safety pin and dropped the bomb tail first down the muzzle of the knee mortar. A pull on the leather lanyard attached to the trigger then fired the also caused a copper driving band on the charge body to push out and engage the rifling of the barrel. The force of discharge also set back and armed the fuse in the nose projectile and recocked the mainspring inside the mortar.

The weapons were almost always fired at

BELOW: A close-up view of the Type 89 grenade launcher reveals its simple, rather primitive construction. CENTER: In the heat of battle, a Japanese soldier pulls the lanyard to fire a Type 89 grenade launcher. BOTTOM: An American soldier holds a captured Japanese Type 89 grenade launcher. Firing from such a position, however, often resulted in serious injury.



National Archives

45 degrees elevation. Sighting capability, as such, consisted of only a line marked on the barrel itself, although some models captured by the Americans on Attu Island in the Aleutians also featured a small bubble level.

Adjusted by a knob connected to a worm screw on the bottom of the barrel, the firing pin assembly could be moved up or down to increase or decrease range. Graduated range scales for the two main types of projectiles were etched onto the stem of the tube that housed the trigger assembly. The Type 89 shell could be adjusted to ranges of 393 to 2,132 feet. This method of adjustment allowed the mortar man to change range while still holding the weapon in place to fire through small overhead holes in the jungle canopy.

Despite these relatively crude controls, a soldier could quickly and easily be trained to fire the Type 89 knee mortar with impressive accuracy. While it could be fired by one man, a knee mortar with a three-man crew could maintain an effective rate of fire of 25 rounds per minute.

Being triggered rather than drop fired, the knee mortar could also be braced against a tree trunk and fired almost horizontally. It was often used in such a way to shoot through the firing slits of bunkers. Some theorize that using the Type 89 in this fashion with a dedicated antitank round could have proven to be an effective tank killer, but there is no reason to believe it would have been any more effective or ineffective than the similar caliber rifle grenades fielded by various armies in World War II.

The fragmentation rounds did their work well enough. Postwar U.S. Army medical studies concluded that approximately half of all Allied battle casualties were caused by mortars, and of those roughly 80 percent came from knee mortars. Technically, the Type 89 shells had too much explosive and not enough metal, producing a lesser amount of relatively small shrapnel much more likely to wound than kill. This was not any consolation to men hit by these flying shards of steel.

Probably the main reason for the knee mortar's reputation for deadly effectiveness among Allied soldiers resulted from the sheer numbers of the weapon employed in the field. Every Japanese rifle platoon consisted of three squads of riflemen and a fourth grenade discharger squad fielding three or four knee mortars. A single Japanese rifle company could field as many as 12 grenade dischargers. Conversely, the standard American infantry rifle company had only three 60mm mortars in a separate weapons platoon.

Allied soldiers who met the knee mortar in combat were universally impressed by it and hated being on the receiving end of it. In the aftermath of the Battle of Guadalcanal, Lt. Col. Merritt "Red Mike" Edson, leader of the famous Marine Raiders, critically evaluated the knee mortar and insisted American forces badly needed an equivalent. He listed the following reasons:

"1. It is a one man load.

2. A man can carry ten rounds on his person besides his weapon.

3. It has a high rate of fire.

4. It gives to the platoon commander a weapon of this type which is immediately available to him.

5. This mortar uses the Jap all-purpose hand grenade...."

A Marine Corps legend, then-Lt. Col. Lewis M. "Chesty" Puller seconded Edson's opinion. "I consider it imperative that the Army and Marines be equipped with knee mortars and only carry one type grenade."

Army Sergeant C.W. Arrowood completely agreed: "The Jap knee mortar gives us hell. They come in fast, thick, and accurate. Can't we have one?"

The answer to Sergeant Arrowood's question was a resounding no. United States forces soldiered on with the little loved rifle grenade until the advent of the M79 40mm grenade launcher during the early stages of the Vietnam War.

British and Commonwealth forces came close to having a knee mortar of their own with the excellent Ordnance ML two-inch mortar. A 51mm weapon, it too was fired with no bipod and a lanyard trigger. It was so effective that it continued to equip troops around the world for decades after World War II. An updated version, the L9A1 51mm mortar, is in use today. The two-inch mortar, however, was issued only at the rate of one per platoon.

Today, the visage of the knee mortar lives on in the form of the "commando mortar," models of which are currently being manufactured in Austria, Chile, Spain, Turkey, South Africa, and elsewhere. These new, lightweight 60mm mortars are designed for much the same purpose as the venerable Japanese Type 89. They are fired by hand without a bipod, make use of simple sights, and are specifically intended to give small groups of light infantry or special forces immediate indirect fire of their own.

The knee mortar itself may be gone, but the concepts it pioneered live on today. □

Author Robert Cashner resides in Philipsburg, Montana. He has previously written for WWII History *on the Boys Anti-Tank Rifle.*

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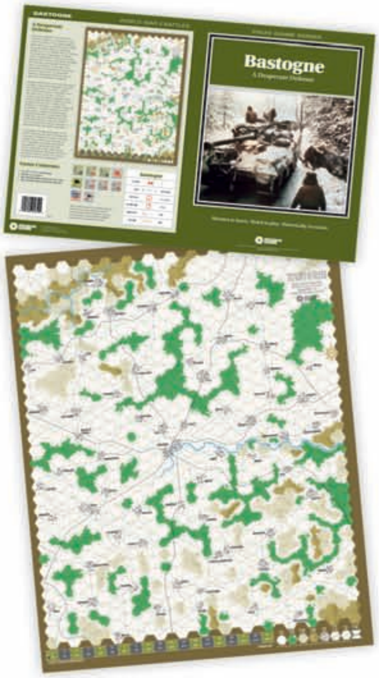

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By Michael D. Hull

All photos: National Archives

The dome of St. Paul's Cathedral looms in the background as a British aircraft spotter scans the skies over London from a rooftop. False air raid alarms were common during the Phony War. Within months, however, London would endure the Luftwaffe's Blitz

Curious Interlude

The lull in the fighting on the Western Front in 1940 came to be known as the Phony War.

WITHIN HOURS OF THE ENTRY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE INTO WORLD War II on September 3, 1939, the British liner SS *Athenia* was sunk by a German U-boat off the northwestern coast of Ireland, with the loss of 112 dead, including 28 American citizens.

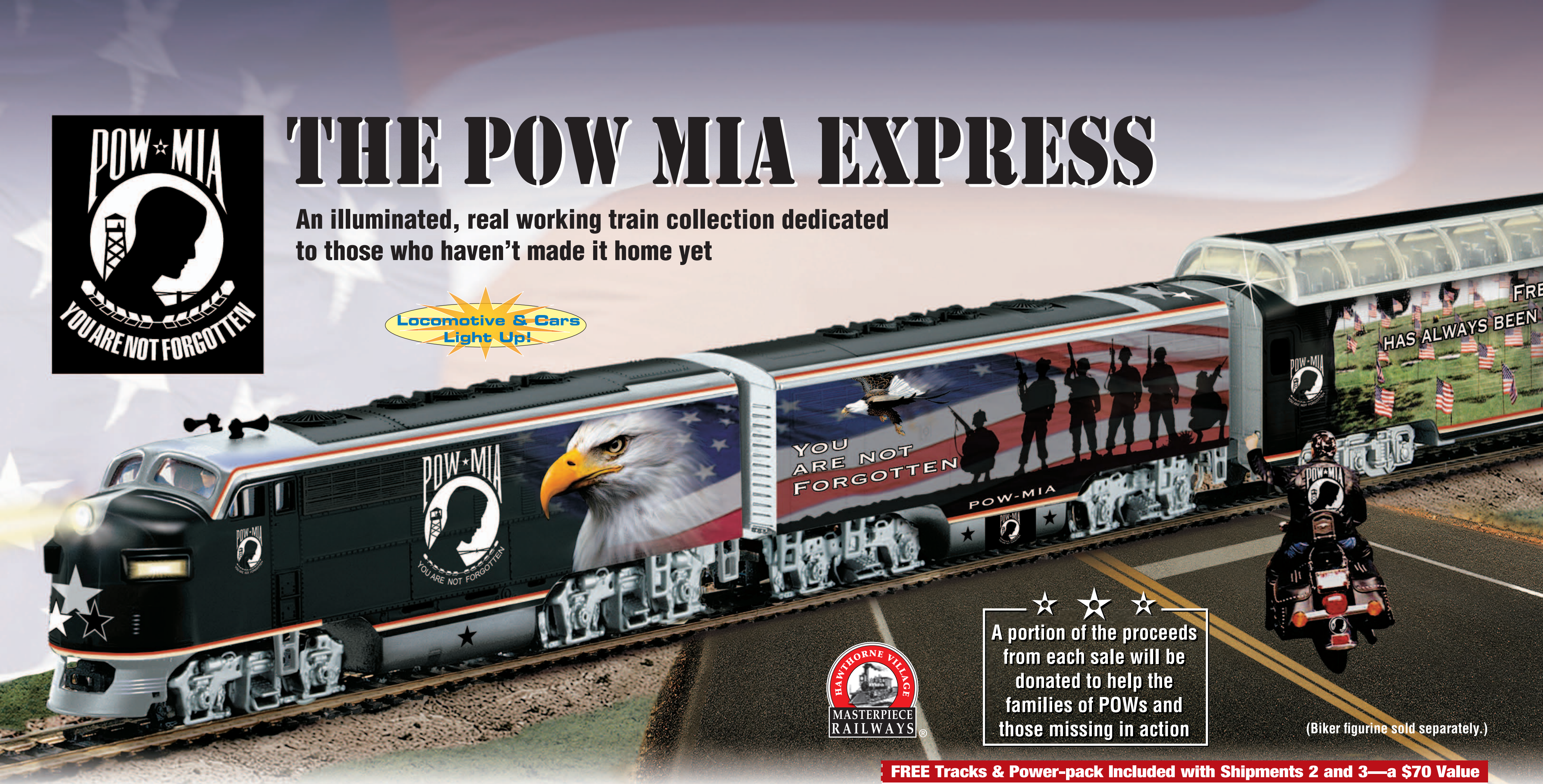
The Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS *Courageous* was torpedoed by a U-boat off the southwestern English coast on September 17 with the loss of 515 lives; the venerable, 29,150-ton battleship HMS *Royal Oak* was sunk at anchor in the British Home Fleet base at Scapa Flow, Scotland, early on October 14, and the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* was scuttled just outside the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay, on December 17, after the Battle of the River Plate. As German auxiliary cruisers and U-boats made their presence known, hostilities started on the high seas from the war's beginning.

In Britain, after Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had quietly and sadly announced the declaration of war at 11:15 on that sunny Sunday morning, it seemed to his listeners that peril was upon them already. Half an hour after the BBC broadcast, air raid sirens wailed across London and the southeastern counties. "There was not the slightest sign of panic," reported one London newspaper. "The air-raid wardens repeated the warning on their whistles, and the people proceeded at once in the most orderly fashion to their shelters. Auxiliary firemen put on their uniforms in readiness for any emergency."

After a few minutes, the "all-clear" sirens sounded, and several hours later the Air Ministry announced that the warning had been given because an unidentified aircraft was observed approaching the south coast.

The British people found themselves at war again only two decades after the end of the bloody 1914-1918 conflict. Chamberlain's brief announcement stunned them, but did not come as a shock. What did surprise them was the period of relative calm that followed. Except for the naval actions, the brutal German invasion of Poland, and the Finnish people's epic struggle against Soviet invaders, World War II got off to a slow start. Elsewhere in Western Europe there came an uncanny seven months of military inactivity that lasted until the Nazi invasion of Norway on April 9, 1940.

This bizarre period was dubbed the "Phony War" by American correspondents, referring to the lack of any offensive action by the British and French. Within weeks, the phrase had become commonplace in Britain and around the world. To some Britons, it was the "Bore War"; to Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, it was the "Twilight War"; to the French it was "La Drole de Guerre" (joke war); and to the Germans it was "Sitzkrieg" (sit-down war).



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Great Britain and France had honored their August 25, 1939, treaty with Poland by declaring war against Germany, but the two nations were not sufficiently prepared to fulfill their obligation and lend military support to the Poles. In fact, they did little to distract Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler during the five weeks his forces took to complete their Polish campaign. Meanwhile, 800,000 Red Army troops had invaded Poland from the east in flagrant disregard for supposed Moscow-Warsaw peace treaties.

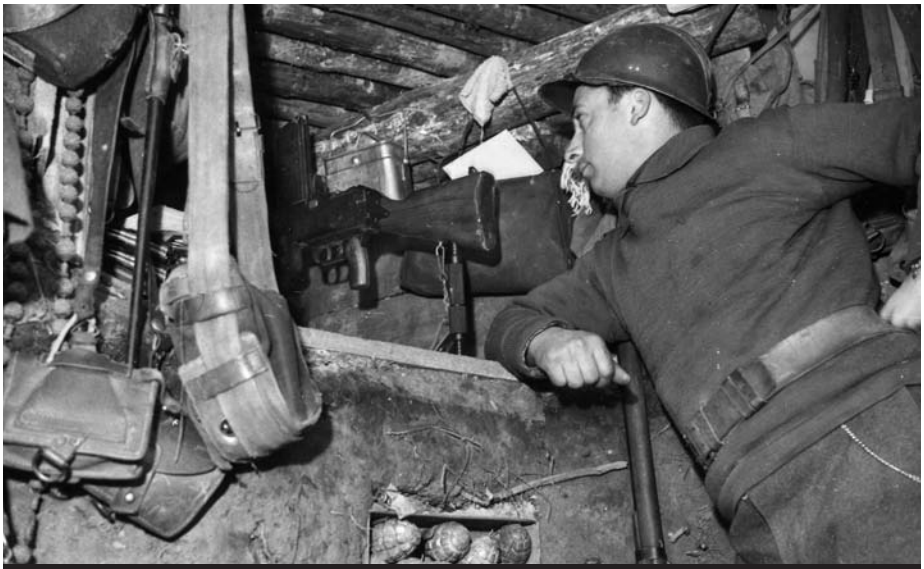
Inevitably, after a heroic but futile struggle, Poland was defeated by September 29. And still the Western Allies made no move against Germany.

The reason for the relative lack of action was strategic. For the military planners on both sides, the key problem was the fact that the Franco-German border was the most heavily fortified strip of land in the world. On the French side, running northward from the Swiss border to Montmedy, stretched the Maginot Line, a string of concrete and steel underground forts and artillery emplacements impervious to both shells and bombs. Behind this line, the French and British began lethargic mobilization. Along Germany's western border, the Siegfried Line (West Wall) was a complex mesh of concrete obstacles and interlocking zones of fire several miles deep. Supporting mobile troops had been stripped to a minimum to the benefit of the Polish front. Both opposing lines of defense were impregnable, and both sides knew it.

Along the Allied and enemy defense lines, soldiers stood tensely by their big guns and waited while observers peered through binoculars and telescopes for any sign of activity. All were ready for action, but there was none.

The formidable French Army under General Maurice Gamelin was locked into a defensive posture, and no attempt was made to shell Germany's industrialized Saar region, which was well within range of French artillery. While the German Army was preoccupied with vanquishing the hapless Poles, a strong Allied thrust could have broken through and conceivably ended Hitler's grandiose scheme of global conquest. Instead, the only overt move was a tentative probe by Gamelin toward the German defenses around Saarbrucken. There, it was reported that captured enemy soldiers did not know that France and Britain were at war with their country. The inactivity undermined the morale of the French Army, which worsened when the fighting started in earnest in the spring of 1940.

In the early months of the Phony War, French government officials considered invading Germany by way of Belgium, striking a knockout blow at the Ruhr Valley, the industrial heartland of the enemy war machine. But the British vetoed the idea when Belgium announced its neutrality. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's government ruled out any move that would violate a nation's neutrality. The French also proposed fanciful schemes for fighting in southeastern Europe and bombing Russian oil wells in the Caucasus, but reason prevailed.



Maintaining watch toward German positions, a French soldier occupies an underground position on the Maginot Line during the Phony War. The line was built at great expense to France but was of little value against mobile German divisions when the shooting war began. Note the cache of hand grenades at center.

So, the Allies relied on a policy of naval blockade (instituted by Britain just after the outbreak of war), economic strangulation, and defensive fortification to exhaust German strength.

The British leaders were as hesitant as those in France. In the first month of the war, 160,000 men and 24,000 tanks and assorted transport of General Sir John V. Gort's British Expeditionary Force had crossed the English Channel to support the French. But the BEF found its offensive operations confined to patrolling in the Arras-Lille area during the Phony War.

The small but professional BEF went to France with confidence and cheery songs, but it was not trained, supplied, or equipped for full-scale combat. Like the French Army, it was not ready for the kind of lightning onslaught the Poles had faced. The British Matilda infantry tanks, thick-skinned but undergunned, would prove no match for panzers. The Royal Tank Corps crews were half-trained, and their tanks lacked radios and even armor-piercing ammunition.

Air raids on British cities were feared, but many politicians in Whitehall were still dominated by peacetime attitudes. When it was suggested to Sir Kingsley Wood, the secretary of state for air, on September 5, 1939, that British bombers set Germany's Black Forest alight, he vetoed the idea on the grounds that it would conflict with the spirit of the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions governing the conduct of war.

"There was no question," said Wood, "of our bombing even the munitions works at Essen, which were private property." Royal Air Force planes were dispatched to attack German shipping at Wilhelmshaven, but no bombs were dropped on German territory while Chamberlain was prime minister. Initially, RAF air crews were ordered not to bomb German-held airfields, but only to machine-gun them.

At the Admiralty, Churchill was frustrated by the lack of offensive activity. He suggested floating air-dropped fluvial mines down the River Rhine (Operation Royal Marine), but the French Supreme War Council adamantly opposed it. Prime Minister Edouard Daladier told Churchill that the "president of the republic himself had intervened, and that no aggressive action must be taken which might only draw reprisals upon France."

It was generally believed that Hitler would have no scruples about breaching a neutral country, and a German assault through Belgium—as had happened in 1914—was expected sooner or later. But the Western Allies were confident that they could block such a threat on a line running from the port of Antwerp to Dinant in the Ardennes Forest region. It was predicted, therefore, that the new conflict would settle down to a grim attritional stalemate, as in the early months of World War I.

The Phony War was not created by the Allies alone; it was also encouraged by the Germans. The first bombs dropped on Britain fell on the

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remote Shetland Islands on November 13, 1939, but it was not until the following month that the British suffered their first service fatality in France (while leading a patrol, Corporal Thomas W. Priday was killed on December 9). In contrast, 50,000 British servicemen had been lost during the first three months of World War I. It was not until March 16, 1940, that the first British civilian was killed, during an air raid on Scapa Flow.

Initially, the Phony War gave Hitler time to finish the Polish campaign undisturbed. Although he then wanted to attack westward before the end of 1939, the German High Command, which included several conspirators against him, lacked such enthusiasm. Some high-ranking German officers did not think the Wehrmacht was ready for such an offensive, and General Alfred Jodl, the chief of operations, believed that the war would die a natural death if the Germans kept quiet in the West. It was mainly bad weather, rather than Hitler's opponents, that allowed the Phony War to continue through the winter of 1939-1940, one of the coldest and most severe on record.

Wavering by the erratic Nazi leader also contributed to the Phony War's inactivity. In a major speech to the Reichstag on October 6, Hitler spoke of his desire for peace with France and Britain and claimed that up until then he had done nothing more than try to correct the unjust 1919 Versailles peace treaty. He said he had no war aims against France or Britain and blamed the present state of affairs on "warmongers" like Churchill. The Führer's dream had been for Germany to rule Europe and for the British Empire to rule the rest of the world.

Hitler suggested calling a conference to resolve remaining differences, but Prime Ministers Daladier and Chamberlain swiftly rejected the offer. The latter said that to consider such terms would be to forgive Germany for its aggressions. On October 9, the Führer issued a directive with a simple message: "Should it become evident in the near future that England, and, under her influence, France also, are not disposed to bring the war to an end, I have decided, without further loss of time, to go over to the offensive."

Meanwhile, the defense-minded British and French converted their factories to war production and waited for something to happen. The September 3, 1939, declaration of war had not come as a complete surprise, but the period of relative calm that followed did. The French, for the most part, carried on with their normal lives and entrusted their fate to their army, almost the equal of the Wehrmacht, and the Maginot Line. The British put their faith in the RAF and the Royal Navy, which ruled the seas.

DOUANES FRANÇAISES

French border guards inspect a sign from inside Germany. Hostile gunfire was a rare occurrence as both sides went about their business until Hitler launched his assault on France and the Low Countries on May 10, 1940.

In Britain, where several steps had been taken in the event of air attacks, the initial determination of the civilian population changed to boredom, bewilderment, and resentment at disruptions in daily life. Blackout regulations were enforced, children were evacuated to the countryside from cities threatened with air raids, and food, clothing, gasoline, and other necessities were severely rationed. Queues outside grocery stores soon became a regular sight on the streets of cities, towns, and villages. More emergency laws were enacted in the first two weeks of World War II than had been passed during the first year of World War I.

After drifting through the unfortunate appeasement era, British leaders had awakened in the late 1930s to the increasing threat of militant fascism, particularly the powerful German war machine. Some retaliatory plans were put in place before the outbreak of war. In July 1939, Parliament introduced the conscription of young men into the reserves. As soon as war was declared, the scope of conscription was expanded dramatically, with all men aged 19 to 40 made liable for full-time war service.

Within weeks, it was announced that women would also be conscripted—not for the firing line, but to free men for uniformed service. As they had done in World War I, the nation's eligible females would work on farms, drive trucks, ambulances, buses, and even trains, and toil on assembly lines in aircraft and munitions plants. A government poster of the time exhorted, "Women of Britain, come into the factories."

As far as the war threat was concerned, most Britons were sure that the first German attacks would come from the air. They knew only too well what had happened in 1937, when German planes devastated the Spanish town of Guernica inflicting massive casualties in less than an hour of concentrated bombing. Since then, Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring had been proudly showing off his air force at shows and displays.

By 1939, Göring's air force was widely regarded as the finest in the world. But Britain, which had created the world's first independent air force in 1918, was proud of the RAF and considered it a match for the Luftwaffe. So, in 1939 a flag-waving film, *The Lion Has Wings*, starring Ralph Richardson and Merle Oberon, was released in a bid to encourage the British public. It was well received, but most citizens still feared that within hours of a declaration of war the skies would be darkened by German bombers.

Reflecting a measure of official foresight, community air raid shelters had already been constructed in many British cities and towns, and families with gardens were encouraged to build their own shelters, using plans and equipment supplied by local councils. People without backyards were advised to take shelter in cellars, under sturdy tables, or beneath stairways in the event of air raids.

Daily life was affected by the rounding up of foreign nationals to sift out Germans and potential spies, and a billeting system whereby families with spare rooms were required to accommodate factory workers, officials, or servicemen who needed to stay away from home. The most famous example of billeting was the evacuation of three and a half million women and children to safe rural areas, away from major cities likely to be targeted by the Luftwaffe.

The evacuations started from London in August 1939. Many children whose parents were in the services or engaged in war work had to set forth on their own, shepherded by social workers or volunteers. Poignant scenes were played out on the platforms of urban railway stations as crowds of small boys and girls, nervously clutching bundles of possessions, boarded trains that would take them to new lives in Devon, Yorkshire, or Scotland.

But the expected bombing raids did not materialize in the early weeks of the war; the Luftwaffe was kept busy bombing Poland and preparing for a coming ground support role.

Although German planes did not fly over Britain in large numbers during the Phony War, the blackout was strictly enforced. It was expected that the enemy bombers would come at night, so street lights were switched off and thick curtains went up in British homes to deprive enemy air crews of beacons. A light showing from a window could be seen clearly from 20,000 feet up. Nothing short of complete blackness could frustrate the bombers.

Helmeted air raid wardens patrolled the

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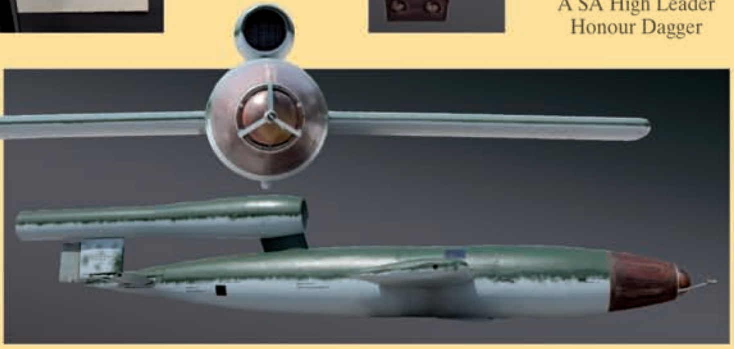
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streets by foot or bicycle nightly to make sure that no lights were visible. Anyone guilty of allowing a chink of light to escape received a stern reprimand. Railway stations, trains, and buses were unlit, and the headlights on cars, trucks, and other vehicles painted black until only a slit of light showed.

The blackout caused petty irritations among the British public and also dangers. *The London Daily Telegraph* reported on September 18, 1939, "Sir Philip Game, Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, takes a grave view of the accident figures for the first 10 days of the blackout. During that period, 38 people were killed and 975 injured in road accidents in the London area, compared with eight killed and 316 injured in the preceding 10 days." On January 15, 1940, the government announced that twice as many people had been accidentally killed in accidents during the blackout as by German bombs.

While the country was not yet fully engaged in hostilities, many defensive measures were taken in the early weeks of the Phony War. Royal Navy battleships and cruisers patrolled the sea lanes, RAF fighters and bombers stood ready, the Army intensified recruiting and training, and the Territorial Army (militia) was brought up to full strength and then doubled. Long columns of tanks, field guns, trucks, personnel carriers, and Bren gun carriers became common sights on highways and country lanes as maneuvers were staged across the rolling heathlands of southern and southwestern England.

Soldiers guarded installations and key junctions, concrete pillboxes sprouted on hills and roadsides, antiaircraft guns were emplaced in parks and on golf courses, barrage balloons were hoisted to foil enemy planes, fire watchers kept nightly vigil on city rooftops, sandbags were piled around public buildings, and Army gun crews and volunteers of the Royal Observer Corps stood watch along the coastlines.

The shooting war was still far off, yet there were many reminders for Britons that harder times were coming, sooner or later. Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, presented his first war budget, and the rationing of meat, bacon, butter, and sugar followed. In France, the government announced that Friday would be a "meatless day" and that no beef, veal or mutton would be sold on Mondays or Tuesdays. The need for rationing was a result of the naval actions in the Atlantic, where German U-boats and surface raiders preyed increasingly on Allied merchant shipping. In October 1939, the shipping losses were 196,000 tons; in November, 51,600 tons, and in December, 189,900 tons. The British had begun the convoy system on September 7, but the losses would continue to mount until halfway through the war.

Despite rationing hardships, blackout irritations, and the fear of air raids and possible invasion, the British generally tried to stay cheerful and optimistic with newspaper cartoons, music hall songs, and jokes poking fun at "Herr Schickelgruber" (Hitler). The people's morale was lifted as growing numbers of fighting men from the far-flung dominions rallied to help defend the motherland. Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa sent contingents, Indian troops joined the BEF in France, and 7,500 men—all volunteers—of the 1st Canadian Division arrived in England just before Christmas 1939. They would be followed by soldiers, airmen, and sailors from France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, and Poland.

As their first wartime Christmas neared, Britons prepared for a merry respite, realizing that worse times lay ahead. They cheerily hung up stockings, decorated trees, sang carols, and made ready to feast on traditional roast turkey or goose, heavy fruit puddings, and mince pies. But outside, the holiday was muted. Blackout regulations meant that store window displays

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were unlit by night and obscured with antiblast tape by day. Because of the defense budget, money was tight, taxes were up, and prices had increased on sugar, beer, whiskey, tobacco, and cigarettes.

Most of Britain and much of Western Europe was carpeted in deep snow, and that December was cold. An eight-mile stretch of the River Thames froze, and London's Serpentine Swimming Club was forced to postpone its Christmas morning handicap.

British leaders had agreed that a radioed yuletide message from the monarch would boost the people's morale, so, at 3 PM on Christmas Day, the shy, gentle King George VI spoke hesitantly into two large microphones at his estate in the village of Sandringham, Norfolk.

"A new year is at hand," he declared. "We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall all be. If it brings us continued struggle, we shall remain undaunted…. May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all."

The speech stirred all who heard it. Listeners huddling around living room radio sets applauded, and many veterans stood to attention while the king spoke.

Across the English Channel, men of the BEF sang Christmas carols, played soccer, sipped wine with French families, enjoyed chocolates and cigarettes sent by the royal family, and cheered visiting Prime Minister Chamberlain. In front of the Maginot Line between the Rhine and the River Moselle, soldiers numbly fingered their Bren guns in chilly dugouts, waiting. And the Phony War continued.

Meanwhile, shipping losses mounted in the Atlantic, and Field Marshal Carl Mannerheim's Finnish Army—outnumbered and outgunned—battled on against the Soviet armies. Mounted on skis and sweeping out of the snow-clad forests, the hardy Finns ambushed and outmaneuvered Soviet armor and infantry columns and repeatedly turned back enemy offensives. But promised French and British support did not arrive, and the defenders were eventually overwhelmed and forced to sign a treaty with Russia in mid-March 1940. The Finns had lost 25,000 dead and 45,000 wounded.

Hitler and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass on March 18, and the latter said he was ready to join Germany and its allies in the war against France and Britain. Ten days later, the Anglo-French Supreme War Council decided to make a formal agreement that neither would seek a separate peace. It was decided to mine Norwegian coastal waters and, if necessary, to send a military expedition there. Hitler had decided in February to occupy neutral Norway and use its North Sea ports.

So, early on the morning of April 9, the Phony War came to an abrupt end when five German divisions led by Col. Gen. Niklaus von Falkenhorst landed at Oslo, Kristiansand, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik. Airborne troops and a powerful naval armada supported the invasion. Simultaneously, two German divisions invaded neutral Denmark and captured the capital, Copenhagen, within 12 hours.

The Germans succeeded brilliantly in getting their forces ashore in Norway and in seizing and holding the strategic Stavanger airport. As more ports fell quickly to the invaders, King Haakon VII and his government managed to escape while British battleships, aircraft carriers, destroyers, and cruiser transports rushed reinforcements to Norway. Contingents of British and French troops 13,000 strong—including British Commandos and French mountain infantry—landed at Namsos and Andalsnes to support the Norwegian Army, a largely militia force.

The Allied units fought gallantly against superior odds, but they were poorly equipped and led, uncoordinated, and had little or no air support. They tried to recapture Trondheim but were defeated, and by May 3 central Norway was in German hands. The focus of the fighting then shifted to Narvik, where the German Navy had suffered severe defeats at the hands of the British. The Allies managed to recapture the northern port but were withdrawn on June 7 as a result of the German successes in France. The staunch Norwegians continued to resist the Nazi invaders until June 9.

When the British and French pulled out, they took King Haakon, his ministers, and many Norwegian troops with them. Sailing from Tromso to England aboard the cruiser HMS *Devonshire,* the monarch set up a Free Norwegian government in London while his soldiers joined the growing legion of exiled patriots there.

The ill-fated Norwegian campaign had resulted in a stormy debate in the British House of Commons on May 7-8, the resignation of the principled but broken Chamberlain, and the appointment of Churchill as prime minister on May 10. That same day, powerful German army groups under Generals Gerd von Rundstedt, Fedor von Bock, and Ritter von Leeb started their lightning "blitzkrieg" offensive into Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France.

Western Europe found itself engulfed in a shooting war, and the Phony War was now just a curious memory. □

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

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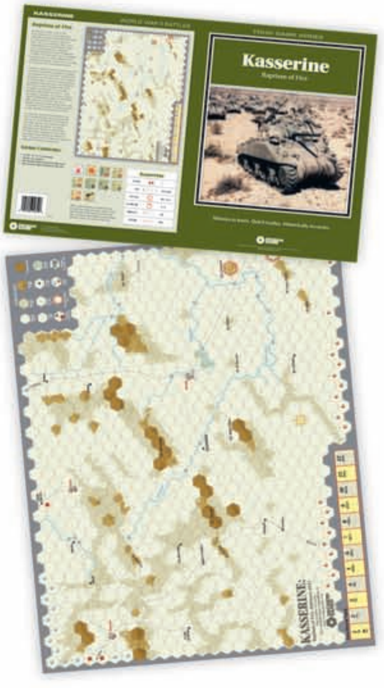

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German Military's Emissary for Peace

Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin undertook a secret prewar mission to Great Britain.

MANY ACCOUNTS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE PEACE MISSION FLIGHT OF Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess and his parachute landing in a farm field in Scotland in May 1941 to discuss with the Duke of Hamilton a proposal to end hostilities. Hess was also Reich minister without portfolio and leader of the Nazi Party, among other titles. He piloted his own plane from Augsburg and bailed out over the duke's estate.

In sharp contrast, very little is known about the secret mission to England by Baron Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin that preceded the one by Hitler's henchman. At the behest of the head of the Abwehr (German intelligence), Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, this Prussian nobleman met in mid-August 1938 with Lord Lloyd, chairman of the British Council; future prime minister Winston Churchill, a vocal critic of the current British government; and Sir Robert Vansittart, an ardent antiappeaser in the Foreign Office. This clandestine operation was orchestrated by the Abwehr as the German military's anti-Hitler resistance movement sought British support of the German General Staff's plan to mount a coup d'état against the Nazi regime as the Czechoslovakian crisis was escalating.

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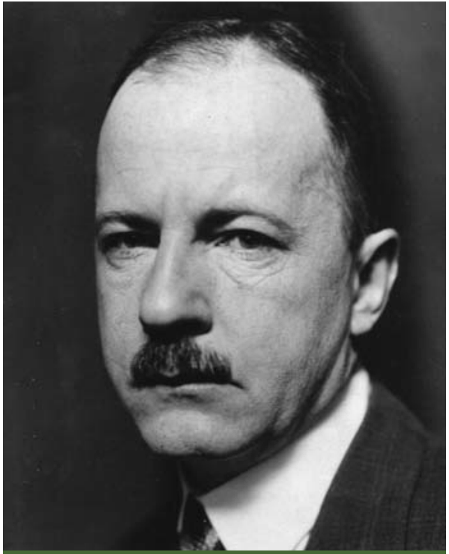

ABOVE: Baron Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin conducted a clandestine mission to Great Britain in the summer of 1938 at the request of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the German Abwehr. TOP: German tanks cross the Czech border on March 15, 1939. The previous autumn, Britain and France had signed the Munich Pact with Germany, essentially selling out Czechoslovakia to the Nazis.

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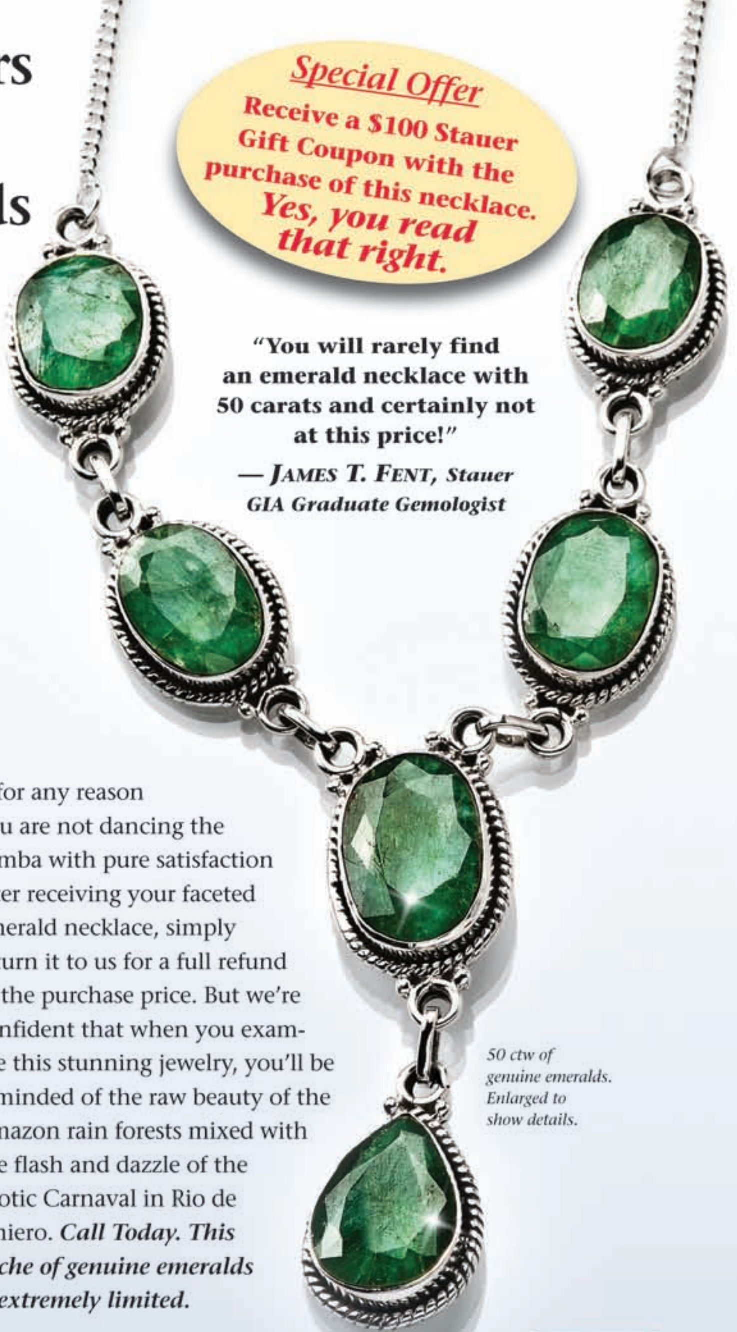

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FAR LEFT: Sir Robert Vansittart of the British Foreign Office was a staunch opponent of the Chamberlain government's appeasement policy toward the Nazis. CENTER: General Ludwig Beck, who was later involved in the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler, is shown in a photo dated 1937. Beck was head of the German general staff at the time of Kleist-Schmenzin's mission. LEFT: British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain bargained away the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia at Munich in exchange for the hollow promise of peace from Hitler and the Nazis.

Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin was born on March 22, 1890, in Pomerania and had all the trappings of a typical Junker, which included owning a vast tract of land beyond the Elbe River. He was a political conservative who was an active participant in the German National People's Party. He also supported the concept of a return to a monarchy and harbored devout Christian ideals. In the decade of 1923-1933, he was a staunch opponent of Nazism before Hitler assumed dictatorial power. In 1929, he published a manuscript on the dangers of National Socialism, thereby allowing him to take a prominent place in the ranks of the opposition to Hitler. In 1934, his political party was disbanded by Hitler; however, he still had a prominent place among Germany's industrialists and entrepreneurs. After 1934, all opposition political parties, the Catholic Church, the Wehrmacht, the financial and industrial sector, and the entire apparatus of the government became dominated by Hitler.

Although seeming very odd at first glance, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris greatly admired Kleist-Schmenzin's courage and political convictions. Secretly, Canaris was dubious about the future of the Third Reich, and he recruited the baron into his unofficial intelligence network. The Abwehr director believed that war should be avoided at all costs, and Kleist-Schmenzin had strong connections with England, especially, among some journalists. One such journalist was Ian Colvin, a biographer of Vansittart who worked for the *London News Chronicle*. Kleist-Schmenzin met Colvin in July 1938 to ask him if he thought Britain would fight in defense of Czechoslovakia.

The German resistance movement began to plan for an envoy to Britain in April 1938. In May, Canaris knew of Hitler's plan for an invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the opposition needed to know if the British would come to the defense of the Czechs. A member of the German General Staff said, "If the Allies energetically alert Hitler to the fact that they will oppose any aggression against Czechoslovakia, or any intervention whatsoever, then Hitler is certain to pull in his claws."

At this juncture, Canaris introduced Kleist-Schmenzin to General Ludwig Beck, head of the German General Staff, who was an active conspirator and in need of aligning the Western Allies against the Nazi regime and its intentions to seize Czechoslovakia by force. Beck was soon to resign—in early August 1938—as a protest against Hitler's plans.

In the meeting among Canaris, Kleist-Schmenzin, and Beck, the general said, "If the British allow Hitler freedom of action, they will be losing their two principal allies in Germany: the General Staff and the German people. If you can bring back some concrete proof that Great Britain will go to war in the event of aggression against Czechoslovakia, then I will put an end to this regime."

All that remained now was for Canaris to get the baron to England without the knowledge of either the Gestapo or Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). On August 13, 1938, Canaris informed Kleist-Schmenzin of his plans for the clandestine trip to London. Canaris had provided Kleist-Schmenzin with a false passport.

On August 18, the baron boarded a Lufthansa Junkers-52 that would carry him to the British capital. Accompanying the baron was an Englishman, H.D. Hanson, who solicited the customs officers at Croydon airfield to let the "civilian in the gray suit" pass without interference. Hanson then notified the SIS, "Our visitor from Germany has just arrived."

Kleist-Schmenzin first met with Sir Robert Vansittart at the Foreign Office. On January 1, 1938, Vansittart was "kicked upstairs" and given the empty or honorary title of chief diplomatic adviser to the government of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Prior to that Vansittart was the permanent undersecretary for foreign affairs at the Foreign Office. Vansittart, though, was still an avowed enemy of the Nazi regime.

Kleist-Schmenzin's message to Vansittart was simple. Hitler was planning to invade Czechoslovakia in mid- or late September. If Britain made it public that it was prepared to go to war with the Nazi dictator, even at the risk of starting another world conflagration, Hitler would have to shelve his plan or, perhaps, even be overthrown by anti-Nazi German officers, who would then form a new government.

Kleist-Schmenzin assured Vansittart that he spoke for "all the generals in the German Army who are friends of mine. They are all dead against war, but they will not have the power to stop it unless they get encouragement and help from outside. As I have already told you, they know the date and will be obliged to march at that date."

Vansittart asked which date it was, and in a rare moment of laughter between the two men, Kleist-Schmenzin responded, "Why of course you know it. Well anyhow, your prime minister knows it. After the 27th September."

As the ill-defined chief diplomatic adviser, Vansittart maintained contact both with British opponents of Chamberlain's appeasement policy and with anti-Nazi opponents in Germany. Out of protocol and loyalty, Vansittart briefed both Lord Halifax, the foreign secretary, and Chamberlain about Kleist-Schmenzin's mission. In his letter to Halifax, Vansittart noted Kleist-Schmenzin's observations concerning Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop.

"Herr von Ribbentrop keeps telling him [Hitler] that when it comes to the showdown neither France nor England will do anything," he said.

He also informed Halifax that Kleist-Schmenzin's recommendations for stopping the invasion of Czechoslovakia were twofold. "Firstly, since Hitler now believes that the attitude of France and England in May was entirely bluff, you must make him understand that this is not the case," he said.

Kleist-Schmenzin's second recommendation was, "A great part of the country [Germany] is sick of the present regime and even a part that is not sick of it is terribly alarmed at the prospect of war, and the conditions to which war will lead them. I have already told you that the army, including [Field Marshal Walther] Reichenau, is unanimous against it if they can get any support. I wish that one of your leading statesmen would make a speech which would appeal to this element in Germany, emphasizing the horrors of war and the inevitable general catastrophe to which it would lead."

At the conclusion of his meeting with Vansittart, Kleist-Schmenzin added, "There was no prospect whatever of any reasonable policy being followed by Germany as long as Hitler was the head of affairs but … if war was avoided on this occasion, it would be a prelude to the end of the regime and a renascence of a Germany with whom the world could deal."

Lord Halifax sent the Vansittart memorandum over to the prime minister.

After the meeting with Vansittart, Kleist-Schmenzin arrived at the Park Lane Hotel on the evening of August 18. Kleist-Schmenzin met with Lord Lloyd, chairman of the British Council and former high commissioner in Cairo, and they dined at Claridge's that night. Lord Lloyd was receiving information from his contacts that elements within the German General Staff were becoming more **threatened** about Hitler's bellicose ambitions. Lord Lloyd spoke no German, Kleist-Schmenzin no English, so they conversed in French. Kleist-Schmenzin made it clear to Lloyd that the mobilization plans for the Czechoslovakian invasion were all in place. Lord Lloyd, too, wrote a memorandum of his meeting with the baron to Halifax.

The next day Kleist-Schmenzin arrived at Chartwell to meet with Winston Churchill. Randolph Churchill, Winston's son, took notes as the baron and the backbencher conferred. On the previous day, Churchill had warned in the *London Daily Telegraph* that any German attempt to crush Czechoslovakia would ultimately involve "all the greatest nations of the earth."

Churchill repeated this warning to Kleist-Schmenzin, who asked for a letter from Churchill to be given to the German General Staff.

After meeting with Kleist-Schmenzin at Chartwell, Churchill sent a memorandum to the Foreign Office, apprising them of the

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baron's case for standing up to Hitler. Receiving official endorsement to do so from Halifax, he also wrote von Kleist-Schmenzin a letter of encouragement to show to his German generals and monarchist allies. Churchill also sent copies of his discussion with Kleist-Schmenzin to Chamberlain and to the French prime minister, Edouard Daladier.

Churchill strongly urged both the British and French leaders to admonish Hitler to leave Czechoslovakia unmolested. Churchill also wanted the Soviet Union to endorse such a letter. This was all part of a scheme to encourage U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt to ultimately intervene in the European crisis and pressure Hitler to cease his warlike posture. However, Halifax and Chamberlain were not keen to participate in Churchill's multilateral plan, especially since they did not believe the Russians would participate in such a joint declaration to Hitler. Chamberlain was not going to risk war with Germany based solely on Kleist-Schmenzin's visit at the behest of anti-Hitler German generals.

In addition to alerting his London hosts about the mobilization plans, Kleist-Schmenzin further elaborated, "If Great Britain, in concert with France and Russia, adopts an energetic attitude toward Hitler, if she issues a warning that he will be held solely responsible, we can expect that the generals will put Hitler under arrest if they see him persist in his policy of aggression. In addition, a British statesman should make an open declaration, aimed especially at German public opinion, which would make it clear that an attack on Czechoslovakia will bring down all the calamities of a second world war on Europe."

He firmly stated that without such a strong statement by the British policymakers the General Staff "would be incapable of carrying out any action designed to put an end to this reign of terror, and it will be impossible to establish any kind of rational world order with this regime in place."

In his subsequent meeting with Churchill, Kleist-Schmenzin offered his opinion that, if Hitler were overthrown, then the monarchy would be restored; however, he repeated his request that he receive a letter addressed to General Beck to take back to Germany. Kleist-Schmenzin told Churchill that his generals were "all for peace and if only they could receive a little encouragement they might refuse to march. Some gesture was needed to crystallize the widespread and indeed, universal anti-war sentiment in Germany."

Kleist-Schmenzin posited that with senior British political support the German General Staff would "insist on peace and there would be a new system of government within 48 hours." Churchill, although out of the cabinet for years, did everything in his power to assist the baron in his mission and to stiffen the resolve of the German opposition group. Later that month, Churchill publicly railed in his constituency against the proposed invasion of Czechoslovakia as "a crime against civilization and against the liberty of mankind."

But Churchill's statements to Kleist-Schmenzin and to his constituents were from a man still in the "political wilderness."

The political leverage to challenge the Nazis was firmly wielded by Prime Minister Chamberlain. In a letter to Halifax, Chamberlain characterized Kleist-Schmenzin as a political enemy of Hitler, who was blinded by personal hatred. He wrote, "There are certainly a great many arguments which might be brought to bear against his allegations. We have recently heard other voices from Germany claiming that Hitler's warlike intentions are to be taken seriously and, consequently, this suggests that we should respond to them with gestures of conciliation."

Thus, the prime minister, for fear of offending Hitler, would not take a public stance in regard to Kleist-Schmenzin's visit and request. Chamberlain dismissed the Kleist-Schmenzin visit after reading Halifax's and Vansittart's memoranda.

He commented, "I take it that von Kleist-Schmenzin is violently anti-Hitler and is extremely anxious to stir up his friends in Germany to make an attempt at its overthrow. He reminds me of the Jacobites at the Court of France in King William's time, and I think we must discount a good deal of what he says."

Chamberlain did show some capriciousness. After negating Kleist-Schmenzin's visit, he sent another note to Halifax conveying an "about face." He said to Halifax that he thought perhaps they ought to do something. As a result, Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson was summoned from Berlin, informed of the nature of Kleist-Schmenzin's message, and instructed to warn Hitler that Britain would stand firm. Henderson dissuaded his prime minister from this approach. Instead, the ambassador was to see Hitler to find out whether friendly Anglo-German talks could be started. Clearly, this is not what Kleist-Schmenzin and his cabal wanted from the British government.

Henderson, a known appeaser, also disavowed the opposition stance of the German General Staff and stated, "Their information is one-sided, partisan, and intended solely as propaganda."

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True to form, he was not neutral in regard to Kleist-Schmenzin's London mission. On August 16, Henderson telegraphed London that, according to information given to the British military attaché in Berlin, a Herr von Kleist would come by air to London on August 18 as an emissary of the moderates in the German General Staff. Henderson also mentioned that von Kleist carried letters to leading politicians and would seek "material with which to convince the Chancellor of the strong possibility of Great Britain intervening should Germany take violent action against Czechoslovakia."

Henderson did not want Kleist-Schmenzin's visit to offend Hitler, so he advised Halifax, "It would be unwise for him to be received in official quarters."

Kleist-Schmenzin left London on August 23. He was deeply disappointed. He told Canaris, "I found no one who would be willing to take advantage of this opportunity to risk waging a preventive war. It is my impression that the English want to avoid the outbreak of war this year, and at almost any price."

But Kleist-Schmenzin did receive Churchill's promised letter a few days later by a secret courier, Fabian von Schlabrendorff, an Abwehr attorney. What Churchill wrote was quite prophetic, "I am sure that the crossing of the frontier of Czechoslovakia by German armies or aviation in force will bring about a renewal of the world war. I am as certain as I was at the end of July 1914 that England will march with France and that … the spectacle of an armed attack by Germany upon a small neighbour and the bloody fighting that will follow will rouse the whole British Empire and compel the gravest decisions. Do not, I pray you, be misled upon this point. Such a war, once started, would be fought out like the last to the bitter end, and one must consider not what might happen in the first few months, but where should all be at the end of the third or fourth year."

Unfortunately for Kleist-Schmenzin, Canaris, and Beck's General Staff, Churchill was not the prime minister. To Beck, Churchill's letter was hardly a ringing endorsement of impending hostilities should Czechoslovakian sovereignty be violated. Although Churchill's letter was sincere in both its prose and vision, it ultimately spelled personal doom for Kleist-Schmenzin. During the purge of 1944, the letter was found in Kleist-Schmenzin's desk after the attempt on Hitler's life and used as evidence to condemn him to death.

With his mission concluded, Kleist-Schmenzin was despondent and returned to his Pomeranian estate. In September 1938, the Gestapo informed Canaris that an envoy had recently gone to London and engaged with British politicians in conversations that were no less than treasonable. Canaris was given the charge to find the traitor. He contacted Kleist-Schmenzin, and an alibi was prepared in the event he was questioned.

Also, the Abwehr leader gave a reliable subordinate, Colonel Hans Oster, the task of investigating the Gestapo's claim. Oster was the same officer who had made the baron's travel arrangements. In his instructions, Canaris informed his handpicked investigator, "Of course, our man has nothing to do with any of this. You will be searching elsewhere. I don't want his name brought up in this inquiry."

Throughout the war, Kleist-Schmenzin was still in favor of Hitler's overthrow. He conspired to concoct a number of assassination attempts against Hitler. One such plan involved his son, Lieutenant Ewald-Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin, who was to blow himself up, along with Hitler, as the Nazi dictator inspected new uniforms. Because the facilities storing these new uniforms were destroyed, Hitler canceled the visit.

The baron also supported Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg's briefcase bomb attack on Hitler at the Wolf's Lair in East Prussia on July 20, 1944. The Prussian aristocrat was so deeply involved in the Operation Valkyrie conspiracy that Stauffenberg appointed him political representative in the Stettin military district in preparation for the coup.

After the failure of Stauffenberg's attempt to assassinate Hitler, Kleist-Schmenzin was arrested the next day. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death on February 23, 1945, and ultimately hanged at Plotzensee Prison in Berlin on April 9, weeks before the collapse and surrender of the Third Reich that he had sought to dismantle diplomatically in August 1938.

Canaris, too, was apprehended after the July 20 assassination attempt. When his five volumes of diaries were discovered in a safe in Zossen early in April 1945, the tempo of his demise accelerated. These tomes listed in detail all of Canaris's contacts with the British and his consistent attempts since 1938 to come to an understanding with London. Days after the discovery, a summary trial occurred, and Canaris was sentenced to death by hanging. His execution occurred the next day, along with his loyal subordinate, Colonel Oster. □

Jon Diamond lives and practices medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History *and is currently working on a book about Field Marshal Archibald Wavell.*

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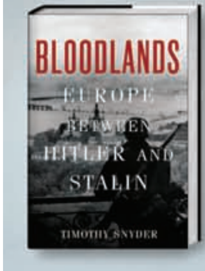

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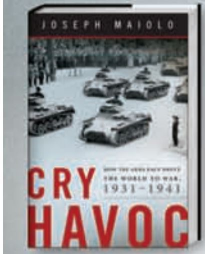

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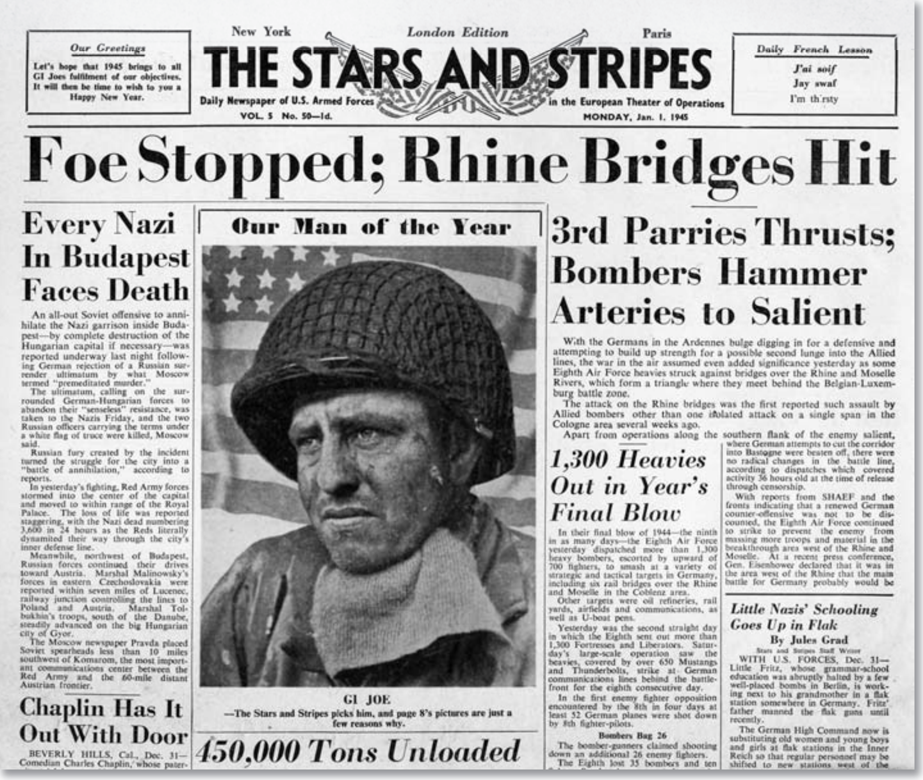
The Face *of* Battle

SERGEANT JOHN PARKS OF THE 4TH ARMORED DIVISION PERSONIFIED THE HARDSHIPS ENDURED BY THE FIGHTING MEN IN WORLD WAR II.

BY BILL WARNOCK



Our Greetings

Let's hope that 1945 brings to all GI Joes fulfilment of our objectives. It will then be time to wish to you a Happy New Year.

New York · *London Edition* · Paris

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces in the European Theater of Operations

VOL. 5 No. 50—1d. · MONDAY, Jan. 1, 1945

Daily French Lesson

J'ai soif
Jay swaf
I'm th'rsty

Foe Stopped; Rhine Bridges Hit

Every Nazi In Budapest Faces Death

An all-out Soviet offensive to annihilate the Nazi garrison inside Budapest—by complete destruction of the Hungarian capital if necessary—was reported underway last night following German rejection of a Russian surrender ultimatum by what Moscow termed "premeditated murder."

The ultimatum, calling on the surrounded German-Hungarian forces to abandon their "senseless" resistance, was taken to the Nazis Friday, and the two Russian officers carrying the terms under a white flag of truce were killed, Moscow said.

Russian fury created by the incident turned the struggle for the city into a "battle of annihilation," according to reports.

In yesterday's fighting, Red Army forces stormed into the center of the capital and moved to within range of the Royal Palace. The loss of life was reported staggering, with the Nazi dead numbering 3,600 in 24 hours as the Reds literally dynamited their way through the city's inner defense line.

Meanwhile, northwest of Budapest, Russian forces continued their drives toward Austria. Marshal Malinowsky's forces in eastern Czechoslovakia were reported within seven miles of Lucenec, railway junction controlling the lines to Poland and Austria. Marshal Tolbukhin's troops, south of the Danube, steadily advanced on the big Hungarian city of Gyor.

The Moscow newspaper Pravda placed Soviet spearheads less than 10 miles southwest of Komarom, the most important communications center between the Red Army and the 60-mile distant Austrian frontier.

Chaplin Has It Out With Door

BEVERLY HILLS, Cal., Dec. 31—Comedian Charles Chaplin, whose pater-

Our Man of the Year

GI JOE

—The Stars and Stripes picks him, and page 8's pictures are just a few reasons why.

450,000 Tons Unloaded

3rd Parries Thrusts; Bombers Hammer Arteries to Salient

With the Germans in the Ardennes bulge digging in for a defensive and attempting to build up strength for a possible second lunge into the Allied lines, the war in the air assumed even added significance yesterday as some Eighth Air Force heavies struck against bridges over the Rhine and Moselle Rivers, which form a triangle where they meet behind the Belgian-Luxemburg battle zone.

The attack on the Rhine bridges was the first reported such assault by Allied bombers other than one isolated attack on a single span in the Cologne area several weeks ago.

Apart from operations along the southern flank of the enemy salient, where German attempts to cut the corridor into Bastogne were beaten off, there were no radical changes in the battle line, according to dispatches which covered activity 36 hours old at the time of release through censorship.

With reports from SHAEF and the fronts indicating that a renewed German counter-offensive was not to be discounted, the Eighth Air Force continued to strike to prevent the enemy from massing more troops and material in the breakthrough area west of the Rhine and Moselle. At a recent press conference, Gen. Eisenhower declared that it was in the area west of the Rhine that the main battle for Germany probably would be

1,300 Heavies Out in Year's Final Blow

In their final blow of 1944—the ninth in as many days—the Eighth Air Force yesterday dispatched more than 1,300 heavy bombers, escorted by upward of 700 fighters, to smash at a variety of strategic and tactical targets in Germany, including six rail bridges over the Rhine and Moselle in the Coblenz area.

Other targets were oil refineries, rail yards, airfields and communications, as well as U-boat pens.

Yesterday was the second straight day in which the Eighth sent out more than 1,300 Fortresses and Liberators. Saturday's large-scale operation saw the heavies, covered by over 650 Mustangs and Thunderbolts, strike at German communications lines behind the battlefront for the eighth consecutive day.

In the first enemy fighter opposition encountered by the 8th in four days at least 52 German planes were shot down by 8th fighter-pilots.

Bombers Bag 26

The bomber-gunners claimed shooting down an additional 26 enemy fighters.

The Eighth lost 35 bombers and ten

Little Nazis' Schooling Goes Up in Flak

By Jules Grad

Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

WITH U.S. FORCES, Dec. 31—Little Fritz, whose grammar-school education was abruptly halted by a few well-placed bombs in Berlin, is working next to his grandmother in a flak station somewhere in Germany. Fritz' father manned the flak guns until recently.

The German High Command now is substituting old women and young boys and girls at flak stations in the Inner Reich so that regular personnel may be shifted to new stations west of the

Bill Warnock

ABOVE: The originally misidentified photo of John Henry Parks was the focus of the front page of the January 1, 1945, issue of *Stars and Stripes,* London edition. His tanker helmet, shown in the original photo at right, was replaced with an infantry helmet by photo lab artists. RIGHT: The original photo of John Parks, taken at Mittersheim, France, on December 10, 1944, profoundly reflects the toll the seemingly endless stress of combat takes on a man. Photo by Don Ornitz. RIGHT INSET: Hobart Drew was also photographed by Don Ornitz at Mittersheim, France, on December 19, 1944. Drew was originally identified as the subject of the *Stars and Stripes* photo. He died in 1980 at the age of 59.

DURING THE CLOSING days of 1944, editors at the London edition of *Stars and Stripes* decided to select a frontline GI as "Our Man of the Year."

Staff members sorted through hundreds of photographs before finding the right face. They finally came across one that conveyed all the misery of the frontline soldier and all the courage, too. The soldier's glassy eyes had an absent, faraway look. His stubbled chin, unwashed face, and mud-spattered uniform added to the appearance of a man who had endured a gnawing diet of terror and death.

The editors decided to withhold all personal information, intending for the picture to represent all GI Joes. The art department retouched the image by painting out the tank helmet worn by the soldier and replacing it with a steel helmet. The editors felt the tank helmet would suggest only the armored force, and the steel helmet would better represent all American soldiers.

On New Year's Day 1945, the picture appeared on the newspaper's front page. The gravity of the photograph revealed so much about the soldier, yet it left *Stars and Stripes* readers wanting to know more.

Letters poured into the London office of the newspaper. The respondents demanded more information about the anonymous soldier. One soldier expressed the overall sentiment, "We've got names, and we want 'em used."

In response to the barrage of mail, one of the editors went back through the hundreds of pictures and found a photo caption with the name Hobart Drew, a tank driver from Bloomingdale, New Jersey. His name subsequently appeared in a follow-up article.

Newspapers in the United States jumped on the story, interviewed Drew's mother, and published pictures of him taken before he departed for European battlefields. But *Stars and Stripes* had made a mistake. The editor had pulled the wrong photo caption. The face actually belonged to a tank commander named John H. Parks.

One other fact remained unknown to anyone at the newspaper. The soldier's unit had reported him missing in action.

This is his story.

John Henry Parks was of humble origin. His mother, Ella, had immigrated to the United States at age 21, leaving behind her family in

National Archives / Bill Warnock

National Archives

National Archives

American armored troops engage in combat maneuvers in the United States in November 1942. The M3 Lee medium tanks depicted were obsolete by the time the Allies invaded the European continent in 1944. Their characteristically high silhouette made them extremely vulnerable. The 37mm cannon in the small turret was virtually ineffective, while the 75mm hull-mounted cannon had extremely limited traverse capabilities.

Longton, England. She arrived at Ellis Island in 1910 with only a suitcase full of belongings. The young woman had a maternal uncle living in Cleveland, Ohio, and she traveled there to live with his family.

Ella married, divorced, and remarried during World War I. Her second husband was Mathew Parks, a man 30 years her senior and a widower. The couple wed in 1917, less than one month before Ella gave birth to a baby girl they named Marie. The family lived in a tiny apartment above a pool hall. Mathew, or "Massey" as everyone called him, was an ex-sailor who now worked as a night watchman at a local factory.

Ella gave birth to John on March 10, 1919, at City Hospital in Cleveland. The expanding family moved out of the apartment and into a small wood frame house that Massey rented. It sat in a working class neighborhood alongside the foundries and steel mills in the treeless industrial valley of the Cuyahoga River.

The family expanded again on Christmas Eve 1920, when Ella bore a third child, Lester. They moved to another home in the same neighborhood but eventually departed for Michigan, home state of John's father.

As a small child, John watched his parents' marriage crumble. His dad often struck his mom, blackening her eyes. On several occasions he choked her and knocked her to the floor, all the while cursing her. John's parents separated in March 1925. His father drifted to Detroit where he took up residence in a hotel. By year end he had stopped contributing to the financial support of his three children. John's mother lost no time moving on and already had a new man in her life.

She and her kids took up residence with Milo Harness, an illiterate trapper and farm laborer from Mill Creek, Indiana. The tiny community lay in the Hoosier backcountry bordering Michigan. The place took its name from the black ribbon of water that snaked through the marshes west of town.

Milo rented a shanty on three acres, most of it swamp and cattails. He and John's mother had their first child there in late 1926, a boy. The couple later married and had a daughter.

The economic calamity of the Great Depression soon visited havoc on John and his family. Unable to support five children, his mother and stepfather reluctantly cast off the three Parks children, sending them to Brightside orphanage near Plymouth, Indiana. Brightside, also known as the Julia E. Work Training School, included 226 acres of farmland, a schoolhouse, administration building, dormitories for the children, and all the necessary outbuildings for livestock and farm equipment. Boys learned farming skills. Girls learned housekeeping essentials, everything from sewing to milking cows.

In March 1930, John's father died at age 70. His children had not seen their absentee father in five years.

John's older sister, Marie, had by now left Brightside, tearfully departing her brothers to live with a foster family. John too left Brightside to live with a foster family. He moved in with Evans Garrard and his wife Coraellene, who owned a farm near Hamlet, Indiana. The couple had no children of their own. John attended Union Township High School and played on the school's basketball team. He never graduated from Union High, completing only two years.

The teenager eventually returned to his mother in Mill Creek as did his brother Lester. While living there, John worked on the Leo Stephani farm in nearby Kingsbury. He also operated Mill Creek's only pool room, a hole-in-the-wall joint where he sold bottled beer. The young proprietor drank an occasional beer with his customers and smoked Camels. He also played a harmonica and could imitate train whistles.

John never owned an automobile. He purchased a blue Indian motorcycle and a cloth riding hat. Town residents often saw him on the bike, zooming along the dusty roads that crisscrossed the rolling hills around Mill Creek. At age 20 he lost a finger while helping cut lumber at a sawmill in Kingsbury. He came home with his left hand bandaged and caught his mother's wrath.

That same year, John's older sister married, the first of his siblings to wed. He became an uncle two years later when his sister gave birth to a baby girl. John had no family plans and no girlfriends. As he often said, "I have a mother and two sisters. That's enough."

In 1941, he landed a job at the newly constructed Kingsbury Ordnance Plant, a sprawling facility that produced ammunition of almost every caliber and employed workers from all over northern Indiana and points elsewhere. Despite his missing finger and war-industry essential job, John never sought a draft deferment, though eligible. He entered the Army on January 31, 1942, less than two months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

His decision to waive a deferment caught his family by surprise. His little sister said to him, "You crazy fool!" He just grinned.

John reported to the armed forces induction station at Fort Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis. He underwent a physical, and the doctor judged him fit for active duty. After a short furlough to return home and set his affairs in order, he reported back to Benjamin Harrison and received uniforms, service shoes, dog tags, and a battery of inoculations. He and a trainload of other fledgling troops then rode south to the Armored Force Replacement Training Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

The men began basic training. The first couple of weeks introduced them to the profession of arms and taught them how to look and behave like soldiers. The remainder of the training focused on the fundamentals of operating and maintaining armored vehicles. John had ample experience with farm tractors and mechanical equipment, and he made a natural tank crewman, the very reason the Army had sent him there.

Toward the end of the training period, a crowd gathered around typewritten papers pinned to a bulletin board. As the men edged their way forward to see them, John read that he and many of his fellow trainees had orders to report to the 4th Armored Division at Pine Camp, New York. The group journeyed there by train. At 7 PM on April 15, 1942, John and 16 other men became members of Company E, 37th Armored Regiment.

During the summer months, John earned two promotions in quick succession, rising to private first class and then corporal. In early autumn, the 4th Armored Division moved to the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee to participate in large-scale maneuvers. Mock battles helped the men master the instruments of killing.

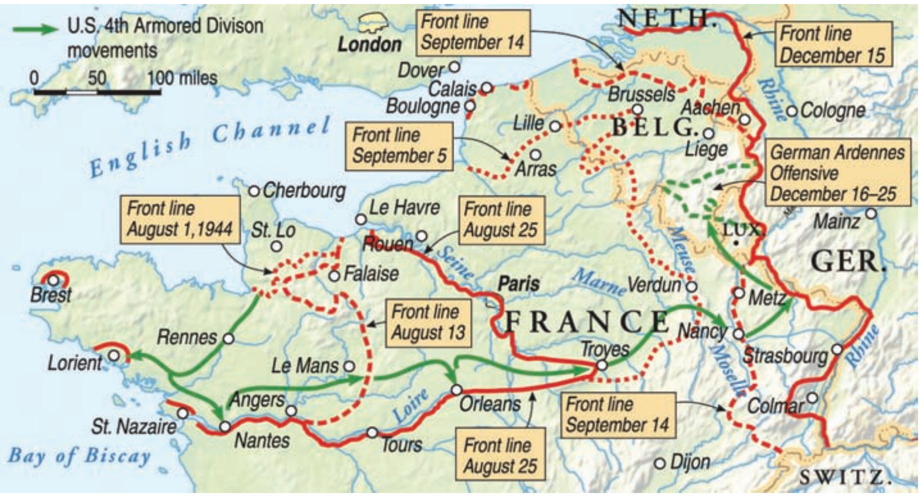
John and other men received time off when the maneuvers ended in November. Later that month, they returned to duty and, along with the rest of their unit, boarded Pullman cars bound for the Desert Training Center at Camp Young, California. There, amid shimmering waves of heat, the tank crews ranged across the dead and defeated Mojave Desert landscape. Sandstorms, frigid nights, and blazing daytime temperatures challenged their fighting skills as did a lack of vegetation for shade and camouflage.

The calendar flipped to 1943, and halfway into the new year orders came for the 4th Armored Division to pack up and depart for Camp Bowie, Texas. By now John held the rank of technician fourth grade and was a tank driver.

During the first couple of months at Bowie, his company commander doled out furloughs. John received 15 days, and he traveled home to Indiana. He returned to duty on September 9, the very day his armored regiment disbanded. Portions of it formed the 37th Tank Battalion. John's Company E became Company B of the new battalion. Camp Bowie remained his duty station until December when the 4th Armored moved to Camp Myles Standish near Taunton, Massachusetts, a staging area for units headed overseas. All tanks and trucks remained behind in Texas. New ones waited abroad.

Just after Christmas, John and the men of Company B journeyed to the Boston port of embarkation. Weighed down with backpacks, bedrolls, and overstuffed duffel bags, John and his buddies filed up the narrow gangplank of the USS *Santa Paula*. This converted cruise ship would carry them across the North Atlantic.

Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



The U.S. 4th Armored Division, a core unit of General George S. Patton's Third Army, was heavily engaged during the Allied push toward the German homeland. The 4th Armored may be best remembered as the spearhead of Patton's column which relieved the besieged town of Bastogne, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge. Here, the fighting trek of the 4th Armored is depicted.

On January 10, 1944, the *Santa Paula* docked at Swansea, Wales. John and the soldiers of his company (five officers and 111 enlisted men) squeezed into undersized train cars and rode 100 miles through the night to Devizes, England, a small city complete with a castle. The men took quarters outside the city in wooden huts at Waller Barracks. Their new turf lay on the fringe of the Salisbury Plain, the great chalk downs that served as the main peacetime maneuver area for the British Army.

Company B procured new tanks and trucks from an ordnance depot at nearby Tidworth Barracks. Most of the armor consisted of older model M4 Sherman medium tanks, each packing a stumpy 75mm cannon and powered by a Wright Whirlwind aircraft engine.

One member of the company painted artwork and nicknames on all the tanks, each name beginning with the letter B, signifying Company B. John was the driver of "Brooklyn Boy," commanded by Staff Sergeant James N. Farese from Jersey City, New Jersey. Farese, known as Gentleman Jim, served as platoon sergeant for the Third Platoon. Besides John, three other men crewed the tank. Ernest O. Ritland of Radcliff, Iowa, served as the assistant driver and operated the bow machine gun. Sherman Troxell and Harry A. Bordner manned the 75mm cannon. Like John, Troxell hailed from Indiana.

John learned the feel of Brooklyn Boy's clutch, accelerator pedal, and two steering levers. He got to know the tank just as in bygone days the cavalryman knew his horse. John and the entire 37th Tank Battalion drilled from dawn to dark on the Salisbury Plain. The countryside reverberated with their thunder. The tank crews persisted no matter how foggy the weather or how hard the skies poured rain.

Razor sharp and keyed up, the men received orders to depart Devizes and relocate to a bivouac area a dozen miles away. Three days after their arrival, the Normandy invasion began. They sat on the sidelines living in pup tents. The wait lasted until July 7, when the 37th Tank Battalion moved to Camp D-12, a short drive from Portland Harbor. Two days later Company B motored to the harbor in two groups and rolled aboard four U.S. Navy LCTs (landing craft, tank). The vessels sailed after dark, bound for the sandy shores of France.

On July 11, 1944, John Parks and the crew of Brooklyn Boy landed at Utah Beach. They and the other tanks crews initially sat idle on the Cotentin Peninsula, waiting for their part in a massive attack designed to catapult American forces from the peninsula. The attack erupted on the Germans during the final week of July and within days reduced them to defeat and retreat.

John's company broke out of the Cotentin and raced toward the Brittany Peninsula along with the rest of the 4th Armored Division. As they stormed ahead, the attackers left a trail of German corpses bloating in the summer sun. The hard-driving Americans kept their enemy off balance, unable to strike back. They side slipped the Germans and slashed through them, all the while driving to reach the sea and cut off the peninsula.

Near the coast on August 7, John came upon an improbable sight: enemy horse cavalry. This force belonged to Ost-Reiter-Abteilung 281, a White Russian unit fighting for the Germans. The riders dismounted their steeds and stampeded them toward the oncoming tanks. The road became a slaughterhouse as horses collided head-on with the tanks. Animals fell, bellowing and writhing. Tank treads ground fallen horses into pulp and produced rivers of blood. Amid the butchery, enemy bullets killed a tank commander and seriously wounded the lieutenant in charge of 2nd Platoon.

Unimpeded by the carnage, the armored vehicles rolled on toward the port city of Lorient. Near the city, the tank company and the entire 4th Armored Division received new orders. They wheeled around and blitzed headlong into the interior of France. John and his comrades liberated territory as fast as tanks could travel, rolling through cities and villages, one after another.

Dust churned up by the long file of tanks coated John's face, invaded his nostrils, and choked him. At night he pressed ahead with nothing for guidance but two winking blackout lights on the tank ahead. Sleepiness fogged his brain. He strained to hold the tank on course, both hands gripping the steering levers. Day and night, the powerful airplane engine mounted at the rear of his vehicle created a steady roar, which drowned out all conversation.

The drive across the French countryside continued at a relentless and exhausting pace. The enemy could not be allowed to catch his breath. On the last day of August, John's company pushed forward despite a torrential downpour. The tanks vaulted the Meuse River on a bridge the enemy had no time to destroy. The advance ended a day later when the tanks ran dry of gasoline. Germany lay only a day's drive ahead.

After a 700-mile rampage across France, the 4th Armored Division had outpaced its supply chain. The tank crews succumbed to their own success. The crews rested and had their first hot showers since July. More than a week passed before they received fuel and returned to the road and crossed the Moselle River.

But the Germans had regrouped during the gasoline shortage. They stiffened up in the hills east of the Moselle and punched back at their attackers. The first jab occurred on September 18.

John entered the fray the next morning when a dozen enemy tanks, all factory-new Mark V Panthers with high-velocity 75mm cannon, threatened to overrun a 4th Armored command post. John's company stormed toward the intruders, guns blazing. The enemy battlewagons withdrew, unscathed, over a hill. One of them returned fire at long range and knocked out an American tank, killing a man inside. John's company girded itself for an enemy assault, but nothing followed.

Later that day, the company helped track down the Panthers, which had gathered in a low area. John and the others flanked the German tanks and charged downhill toward them. The enemy crewmen had their eyes and guns turned toward another threat.

Hearts pounding and brows sweating, John and his colleagues ripped through the enemy formation, gunning down nine Panthers at close range. The others fled. John's group suffered no losses. They remained in the area until nighttime dropped its black veil over the battlefield. The nocturnal sky glowed with the wild orange flames of burning German tanks.

Tank-versus-tank combat continued for days afterward. The Americans shredded two panzer brigades, testimony to the skill of crewmen like John Parks and the ability of their leaders to outthink the enemy and turn circumstances to their advantage. The tank duel became known as the Battle of Arracourt.

After the win at Arracourt, another gasoline shortage hobbled the victorious forces. Amid the shortage, John's unit took time to rest, reorganize, and perform vehicle maintenance. John received a promotion to sergeant on October 17 and became a tank commander in 2nd Platoon.

National Archives

Wheeled vehicles of the U.S. 4th Armored Division speed past a destroyed German artillery piece and the dead crew sprawling beside it. German troops and equipment that dared to move in daylight were often the targets of Allied fighter-bombers, which wreaked havoc and caused heavy casualties during the final months of the war in Europe.

Privates Herman R. Coffy of Carrollton, Ohio, and Edward H. Clark of South Portland, Maine, joined the sergeant's crew as gunner and loader, respectively. Coffy and Clark had arrived earlier that month as replacements. Two other less recent replacements also joined the crew. Private Joseph E. Caisey of Chelsea, Massachusetts, became the driver, and Private Harold A. Kleintrop of Allentown, Pennsylvania, became the assistant driver and bow gunner.

John's old tank commander, Jim Farese, accepted a battlefield commission and became a second lieutenant. He had assumed temporary leadership of 2nd Platoon prior to Arracourt. Now he took permanent charge of the platoon.

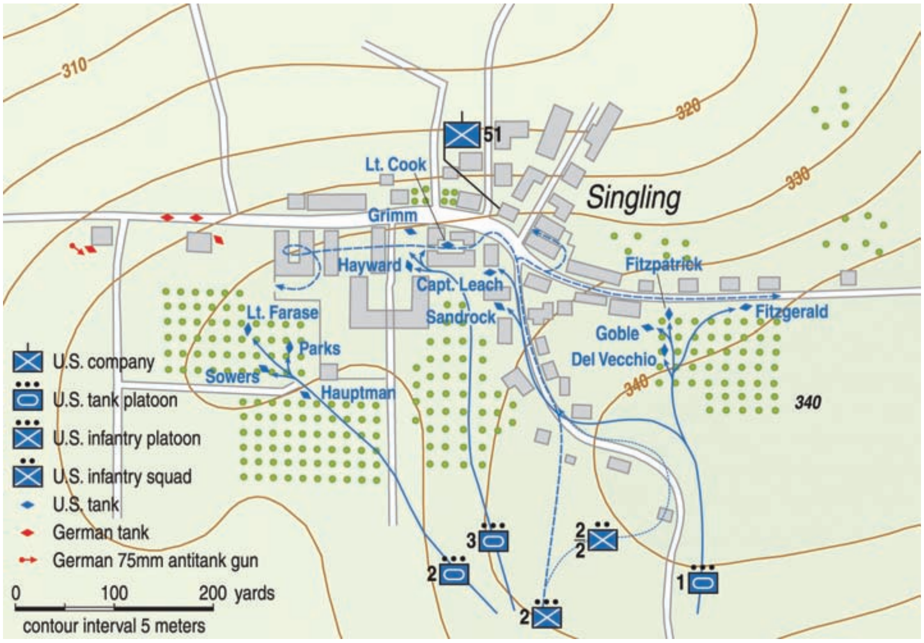
Slanting gusts of rain fell while John's outfit camped near Serres, a French hamlet. When the tank soldiers returned to battle in November, their vehicles churned spongy fields and pastures into mud. The morass frequently barred passage, restricting the Americans to road surfaces. This meant operating on a front no wider than the lead tank.

The GIs carried the war into the Franco-German borderland. This region of divided loyalties marked the cultural boundary where Latin Europe and Germanic Europe collided. John discovered French towns with German sounding names like Obreck, Rodalbe, and Durkaster.

He and his comrades rumbled forward and sometimes backward against persistent German shelling and counterattacks. These attacks wrecked tanks and snuffed out American lives and kept the Graves Registration troops busy putting up wooden crosses. November became a campaign of mud and blood, but John and his crew dodged injury.

As the weather grew colder, the rains turned to sleet and flurries. By the first of December, John's company had moved to a rest area near Mittersheim, France. Three days later, the tank crewmen returned to the front line. Quiet prevailed until the unit joined an attack into enemy-infested terrain. One day into the operation, John's company received orders for an impromptu assault against a hilltop village named Singling.

Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: Elements of the 4th Armored Division were ordererd to assault the town of Singling and penetrated into its center. House-to-house fighting erupted, and German armor and artillery became engaged as well. The attempt to capture the town ended in failure, and the Americans lost several tanks in the assault. BELOW: Camouflaged against a potential Allied air attack, a German armored vehicle moves into position in a village along the Moselle River. This photo was taken in October 1944, and by that time German forces had been decimated during the rapid summer advance of the Allies.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

The tanks lumbered uphill toward the village, firing as they moved. American artillery hit the place, too. Fires burned in the town. On the village outskirts, John's tank swung into an apple orchard and followed Farese's vehicle. The tanks wove between the leafless trees as they neared the crest of the hill. Farese led by about 50 yards and drew enemy fire the instant he reached the crest. An armor-piercing shell drilled his machine. The German gunner polished off his handiwork with two more rounds. These hammering blows killed Farese and one other crew member. Three survivors bailed out.

John backed away from the crest, as did another tank to his side. A third tank joined them in the orchard, all of them unable to push beyond the crest. Elsewhere, tanks and armored infantry penetrated Singling and slugged it out house to house with the Germans. Enemy armor in the form of assault guns posed the toughest obstacle.

The tanks in the orchard stayed put until receiving a radio call to attack the assault guns. The tanks motored out of the orchard, but antitank fire thwarted their mission, and they returned to the grove of fruit trees.

German artillerymen pummeled the orchard in hopes of smashing the tanks. John and his comrades backed into a cabbage patch and avoided the drubbing. But minutes later an armor-piercing shell caromed off the crest of the hill and penetrated Sergeant Joseph B. Hauptman's tank, killing a man inside. The other crew members, including Hauptman, abandoned the wrecked machine.

The surviving tanks received instructions to move to the shelter of a building at the edge of town and await further orders. Panther tanks joined the fray as the enemy intensified pres-

National Archives

Its star insignia painted dark, an American M4 Sherman tank takes up a position in the snow near the town of Bastogne, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge. Note the high-velocity 75mm cannon that replaced the less potent main weapon on the earlier Sherman models. RIGHT: Captain James Leach served as John Parks's company commander and inspected the tank in which Parks died following the battle at Flatzbourhof.

sure on Singling. As the fight continued, another tank unit relieved John's company. The German squeeze tightened and forced the Americans to abandon their foothold in the village. All U.S. forces withdrew after dark.

The abortive effort to capture Singling resulted in the destruction of four tanks from John's company, two from his platoon. The losses carried a greater human toll, seven men wounded and five names in Death's ledger. The company had never suffered that many dead in one day.

The tank crews fell back to Schmittviller and a couple of days later returned to the rest area at Mittersheim.

Shorthanded, the unit reshuffled tank crewmen since no replacements were available. John gave up his driver and assistant driver and gained one man in return, Technician Fifth Grade Russell K. Holland. The former Chicago taxi driver and longtime veteran of the unit had been injured at Singling when enemy shells knocked out his tank and killed or wounded the entire crew. He had not required hospitalization and took over as John's driver.

During the respite at Mittersheim, a team of Signal Corps photographers arrived on December 10, 1944, to capture images of the battle-worn tankers. One of the Signal Corps visitors, Private First Class Donald R. Ornitz, carried a bulky Speed Graphic camera. The short, slender cameraman traipsed through the mud taking pictures. Raised in Los Angeles, the 24-year-old had become enthralled with photography as a teenager and never considered anything else for a career. In 1942, he voluntarily joined the Army to serve as a photographer.

At Mittersheim, many tank crewmen he encountered looked straight at him but seemed unaware of his presence. He sometimes found it impossible to read age on their pale, dirty faces. Wrapped in weariness, these tired soldiers wanted nothing more than to lie back and live.

Ornitz approached John and framed a portrait through the camera's peep-sight. The young photographer had a gift for knowing just when to squeeze the shutter release. He caught all the agonies of war crystallized in John's eyes.

After the Signal Corps team departed, the soldiers had more visitors. Two Army historians arrived on December 12. They intended to write a detailed study of the battle at Singling. John and 13 other men reported to the company command post where the historians questioned them.

The tank crews spent another three days at Mittersheim before heading back to the front, eventually reaching a German village called Walsheim. The armor helped garrison the recently captured town. It was the company's first excursion into Germany. As the men waited for attack orders, enemy shells claimed one life and injured half a dozen other men. Then, inexplicably, John's company received an urgent directive to return to Mittersheim.

Details slowly emerged. German forces had cracked open the front line to the north and surged into the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg. Against this onslaught, numerous American units had fallen back in retreat, some in a horror of disarray. Other units had ceased to exist, bowled over like tenpins. The titanic scale of the German operation became clearer with each passing hour. In an effort to help blunt the attack, the 4th Armored Division received instructions to disengage from its present area and rush north.

John's company pulled out of Mittersheim at 8:30 AM on December 20, 1944, and motored all day and well into the night. The march halted after 120 miles. The company spent the next day conducting vehicle maintenance while higher headquarters formulated an attack plan. The 4th Armored pulled a formidable assignment: break through to encircled U.S. forces at the crossroads town of Bastogne, Belgium.

National Archives

On December 22, John's company drove 13 miles north and sat in reserve while other elements of the 4th began the push toward Bastogne.

Laagered in a field, the tanks sat idle as snowflakes swirled down upon them. The temperature hovered around the freezing point as the snow continued to fall. John and his four-man crew spent the night in their tank, a 75mm M4 built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works.

Before sunrise on December 23, the tank crews fired up their engines and plowed through the snow along the main road to Bastogne. Surrounded by a gray curtain of fog, these veteran soldiers once more headed out to pit themselves against the enemy. They had orders to capture a town in Luxembourg called Bigonville.

The reconnaissance platoon of the 37th Tank Battalion led the way in jeeps and a half-track. John and his comrades followed behind. They had only seven tanks and an assault gun. Armored infantry half-tracks trailed them.

Ice covered the road beneath the snow, and the tank tracks would not bite into the slick surface. Vehicles in the armored column fishtailed left and right as they struggled for traction. The column turned onto a secondary road and slid across the border into Luxembourg and the village of Perlé, which had fallen into American hands the previous day.

The most direct route to Bigonville lay over open high ground. The reconnaissance platoon avoided that route and followed a more protected route that cut through a large forest. After passing through Perlé, the column descended ever so slowly into a valley. Tanks skated out of control on the ice. John's driver, Russell Holland, put one track into the earthen shoulder of the road to gain better traction. The column reached the valley bottom and then inched uphill. Nobody had ever experienced driving this treacherous.

At the top of the hill, the column reached the outskirts of Holtz, a drab-looking hamlet already under American control. Daylight now filtered in through the fog. The recon men guided the column toward the large forest. They navigated a snowy road that passed over rolling hills. Near the forest, the head of the column reached a group of parked jeeps and armored cars. The recon men pulled off the road and joined the vehicle gathering. The leader of the recon team saluted John's company commander, Captain James H. Leach, and waved the tanks onward. They were on their own.

The company commander's radio crackled. "Enemy at Blue!" said the voice on the other end. An artillery spotter aircraft had sighted Germans on the other side of the forest at a crossroads called Flatzbourhof (designated Phase Line Blue).

John's company pushed into the forest and battled the icy road. Snow on the road bore fresh track impressions from a German tank. He and the others would soon be fighting more than weather conditions.

The young man with sergeant's stripes on his sleeve stood in the turret of his tank, his body exposed from the waist up. Tank commanders in the 37th always stood exposed that way. Their battalion commander, the bold and brilliant Creighton Abrams, insisted that no tank commander could perform his job without seeing what was going on all around, and that required looking out of the turret instead of using periscopes. Abrams himself did so in battle. Turret hatches "rusted open" in the 37th, the men used to say. The advantages of all around visibility and quick target acquisition outweighed the risks.

Fresh snow clung to the tree limbs. The morning fog had burned off, and the day shone blue and bright. Each tank commander stood bolt upright, jaws clenched, eyes darting. The road beneath them, like so many previous roads, promised to lead somewhere they would want to forget.

The company commander led the way and emerged first from the forest. He pulled his tank off the road and surveyed the terrain ahead. Flatzbourhof consisted of a café, two grubby farmhouses, a sawmill and attached home, and a tiny railroad station. The captain also observed a block of spruce trees no bigger than a football field. The stand of conifers occupied the highest terrain point.

The captain soon caught glimpses of ghostly looking figures dashing around in white camouflage, the enemy for certain.

Jimmie Leach deployed his tanks. He sent John's tank to the left of the road followed by Staff Sergeant Bernard K. Sowers, Staff Sergeant John J. Fitzpatrick, and Sergeant Emil DelVecchio. And to the right, Leach sent First Lieutenant Robert M. Cook and Staff Sergeant Max V. Morphew. The tanks maneuvered across snow-covered fields. Enemy eyes had long since spotted them, and the Germans responded with small-arms fire.

Bullets beat a tattoo against the hull of John's tank. Much of the firing emanated from the block of spruce trees. John and his crew pressed ahead. Holland circumvented a swampy area and drove toward the spruce trees, but a railroad embankment blocked the way. They could not climb it, but Parks spied a solution. He directed the driver to follow a narrow country lane that passed over the embankment at a graded crossing.

The tank lumbered over the crossing and into a pasture. Nobody followed John over the embankment. The other tanks pulled alongside it and gave covering fire as John advanced alone. Rows of soldierly spruce trees stood in tight ranks, and, among them, German paratroopers crouched low and fired at John. His gun crew, Herman Coffy and Edward Clark, answered back with high explosive shells. Enemy shots chimed off the turret.

John's tank crept closer and closer to the trees.

The sergeant suddenly fell into his tank, landing on the turret seat and on Coffy's backside.

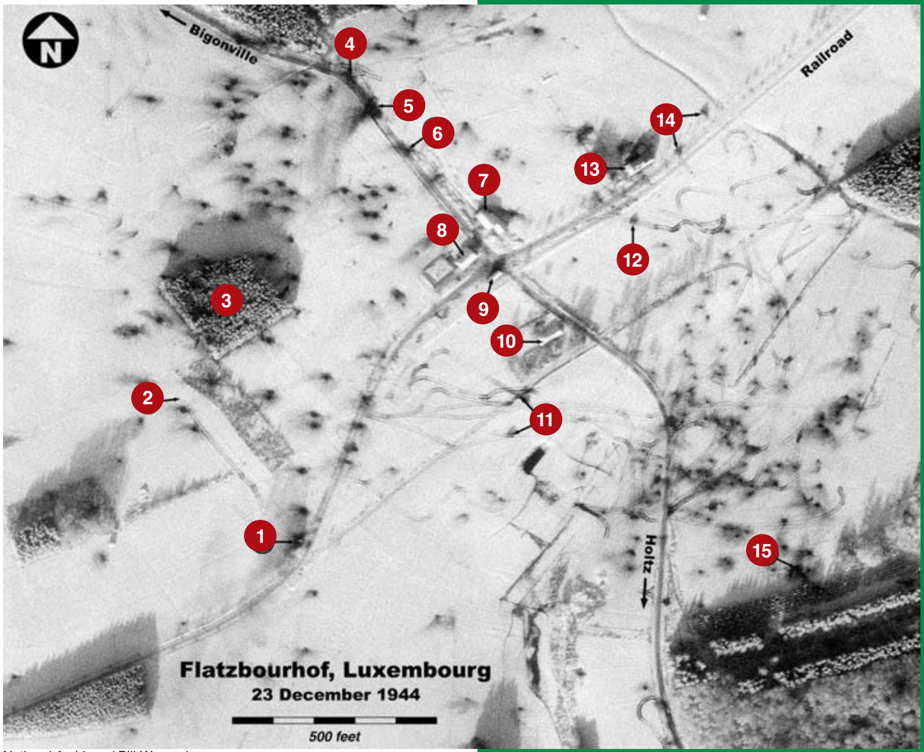
National Archives

During the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, an American Sherman tank, accompanied by an M10 tank destroyer, advances steadily across open ground. Such terrain was dangerous, as German antitank teams and hidden guns lurked along the edges of fields and roads.

"What's the matter with you?" Coffy thought. He turned and saw a large hole above John's right eye. The sergeant had a blank stare, his eyes wider than in life. He was dead.

Coffy reacted without panic or grief and pushed the lifeless body off him. Blood and butchery had become too commonplace to provoke emotion, and in the pitch of battle there was no time for it. Coffy took command of the tank. The driver threw the vehicle into reverse and backtracked.

At the edge of the pasture, near the railroad crossing, the tank shuddered. Fire and white-hot steel blew through the crew compartment. Coffy had the presence of mind to bail out through the turret hatch, and Holland sprang out through his driver's hatch. Both men narrowly dodged German bullets. Clark never emerged.



National Archives / Bill Warnock

Another enemy shot (perhaps from a Panzerschreck, the German bazooka) slammed into the tank's right sponson. The tank interior became an orange chamber of fire, a crematorium.

The two survivors clambered into a nearby ditch and ducked down. Both men had injuries and were bleeding. Everybody in John's company looked in the direction of his tank and saw a black column of smoke smeared against the blue sky.

After the battle, Jimmie Leach searched John's destroyed vehicle. A formal report later described the investigation: "Captain James H. Leach, commanding officer of Company B, inspected inside of the tank by flashlight but could see no bodies, but the tank was com-

AMERICAN TANKS AND ARTILLERY EVENTUALLY TURNED THE TIDE AT FLATZBOURHOF.

Besides John Parks, enemy gunners also picked off two other tank commanders, Emil DelVecchio and John Fitzpatrick, at Flatzbourhof, but neither man lost his life.

After being hit in the head, Fitzpatrick climbed out of his tank and hustled back to his company commander. The injured soldier spit blood and broken teeth. He had been shot through the mouth. One of the company medics shoved a Carlisle bandage in his mouth and wrapped a dressing around his head to hold the jaw closed.

The Germans fired more than bullets, launching mortar and artillery shells at their attackers. One of the projectiles struck an armored infantry half-track in a field to the rear of the tanks. The half-track became a torch.

An artillery observer had accompanied the American force in a tank of his own. He called for shell fire on the Germans ensconced in the block of spruce trees that sat atop the high ground. The combatants at Flatzbourhof heard the dull crump-crump of distant artillery. Shells soon flew and burst in the treetops. The detonations flashed and cracked like lightning strikes. Steel fragments took German lives in an instant. Barrage upon barrage hit the trees and surrounding fields.

Shells were still dropping when the Germans counterattacked with three armored vehicles from Fallschirm-Sturmgeschütz-Brigade XI. The attack force included two Sturmgeschütze III assault guns and an American M4 the enemy had seized days earlier from the U.S. 707th Tank Battalion. The captured tank led the file of vehicles.

Captain Jimmie Leach had moved his tank forward and sat in hull defilade behind the railroad embankment. The tanks commanded by Bob Cook and Max Morphew were his nearest neighbors. They had crossed the embankment and sat in the lee of a farmhouse.

Leach's gunner tracked the enemy machines as they moved toward Flatzbourhof along the road from Bigonville. The gunner aimed a 76mm armor-piercing shell at the captured M4 but hit the embankment instead. Leach ordered the driver to move up. The gunner tried again and clipped the railroad track itself. Leach again ordered the driver to move up, and the gunner loosed a third shell. It struck the right side of the M4 and stopped it dead. The German crew abandoned their tank and dashed back toward Bigonville.

Cook and Morphew maneuvered on the two assault guns and walloped both in the right side. Leach fired at them, too. One of the guns caught fire, and its crew had no chance to escape.

None of the enemy machines ever fired a round. German resistance faded as the enemy fell back to Bigonville. Armored infantry troops mopped up the area and cleaned out the block of spruce trees.

As the fight for Flatzbourhof ended, an American Lockheed F-5 Lightning zoomed overhead at 19,000 feet on a photo-reconnaissance mission. The plane captured an image of the battlefield. It is published here for the first time. ■

KEY TO PHOTO:

1. **Parks's burning tank**
2. **Parks's farthest point of advance**
3. **Spruce woods**
4. **Sturmgeschütz**
5. **Burning Sturmgeschütz**
6. **Captured M4 destroyed by Leach**
7. **Etienne Schroeder sawmill**
8. **Cafe Hoffmann (Nicolas Hoffmann)**
9. **Train station**
10. **Marie Wolter farmhouse**
11. **Three tanks: Sowers, DelVecchio, Fitzpatrick (two are parked nose to tail)**
12. **Captain Leach's tank**
13. **Nicolas Kettel farmhouse**
14. **Two tanks: Cook and Morphew**
15. **Burning half-track (53rd AIB)**

Numerous shell impacts are visible in the image as well as track prints from armored vehicles. Photo by 31st Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron.

pletely burned. Nothing but ashes remained inside the hull."

Unable to locate bodies, Leach followed procedure and reported John and Ed Clark missing, though he knew both men had almost certainly perished. Coffy and Holland had verbally reported the fatalities. As for Coffy and Holland themselves, aid men evacuated the pair from Flatzbourhof for medical attention.

John's mother received a War Department telegram declaring him missing in action. She had not heard from her son in six months, but there had been news of him shortly before the telegram arrived. She had seen the portrait that Don Ornitz made at Mittersheim.

After leaving Mittersheim, Ornitz had turned in his exposed film and photo captions to his unit, the 166th Signal Photographic Company, which sent the material to an Army Pictorial Service laboratory in Paris. There, technicians developed the negatives and made prints for distribution.

Newspapers in the United States, including the one serving John's hometown, received the photo and published it, correctly identifying him as the soldier pictured. *Stars and Stripes* also received the portrait, as well as a portrait of Hobart Drew. Both men served in the same tank company, and Ornitz photographed them the same day.

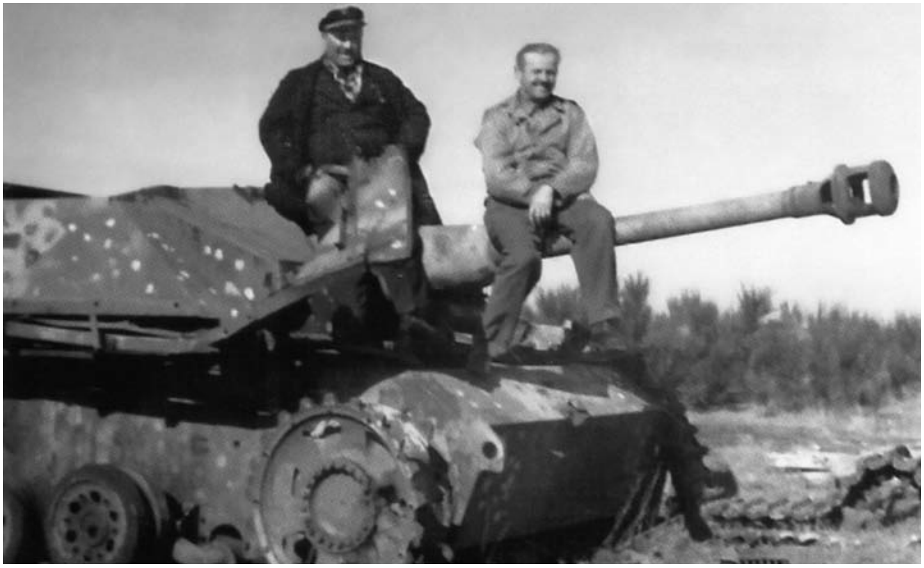
In London, the picture editor inadvertently mixed up the captions that resulted in the misprint. The newspaper published a lengthy retraction on February 14, 1945, and identified John Parks as the man in the photo and stated he was missing.

The retraction also included more information on Drew. The newspaper had tracked him down at a U.S. Army hospital near Oxford, England. The editor interviewed him there. Drew had been wounded in the leg by shell fragments before the Flatzbourhof battle. The newspaper published the Ornitz photo of Drew and a photo of him on crutches in a hospital robe. Drew knew little about John's fate, and he told *Stars and Stripes* that he looked forward to seeing his buddy again.

In the United States, a reporter visited John's mother in Mill Creek. The reporter found a heavyset woman in a baggy housedress. She wore a hearing aid in one ear and spoke about her sons John and Lester. Lester had flown 25 missions over Europe as a B-17 tail gunner and had returned to the United States in January 1944 to become an aerial gunnery instructor.

The proud mother told the reporter that she prayed her two sons would soon return to her. She clung to the hope that John still survived. The men he served with at Flatzbourhof knew the truth, none more so than his surviving crew members.

Bill Warnock



This Sturmgeschütz III assault gun was knocked out during the fight at Flatzbourhof. It belonged to Fallschirm-Sturmgeschütz Brigade XI commanded by Oberstleutnant (lieutenant colonel) Georg Hollunder. On the right is Etienne Schroeder, owner of the Flatzbourhof sawmill. The other man is unidentified.

Russell Holland never came back to the unit after being wounded. Herman Coffy returned and finished out the war as a tank commander. On April 21, 1945, he signed an affidavit detailing the circumstances of John's death. A week later, the commanding general of the 4th Armored Division sent a typewritten letter to John's mother. The first sentence read, "By this time I am sure you have received the official notice of your son's death."

She had received no official word, at least until a telegram arrived several days later. Upon receiving the general's letter, John's mother wrote to her son's friend John Fitzpatrick with whom she had recently corresponded. Fitz was convalescing from a mouth wound he suffered at Flatzbourhof.

The injured soldier responded: "Received your letter today, the one I was expecting, more or less. Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, Mrs. Harness, but I knew John was dead all the while, but I was afraid to tell you. Please try to understand why I couldn't tell you. My heart aches for you, and I had an awful time trying to write my previous letters to you."

He went on to describe John's death (based on information gleaned from Coffy and Holland). Before closing, Fitz added, "This is the hardest letter I have ever tried to write, Mrs. Harness. Maybe I am wrong in telling you what happened, but I figured you would want to know … Take good care of yourself and keep your chin up high. I am sure that's the way John would want it."

After the war, the Army sought to recover John's remains and those of Ed Clark. In 1947, a War Department investigator visited Flatzbourhof, but he found no trace of John's tank. Salvagers had already removed it from the battlefield.

The Army declared John's remains "nonrecoverable" in 1949 and informed his mother. Clark's widow received the same news about her husband. The American Battle Monuments Commission later engraved their names on the Tablets of the Missing at the Luxembourg American Cemetery.

Fate dealt a losing hand to John Parks and all the missing men commemorated on the wall. Many of them passed through history leaving scant trace of themselves beyond a name carved in stone. John stands as an exception.

Though the cruel wheel of fortune burned him to ashes, the soldier from Mill Creek has never receded from sight. Publishers have reprinted his portrait countless times since the war, and the original negative now resides in the National Archives.

Across all the years, John still stares back at us. We cannot plumb his thoughts or know in any real sense the horrors he witnessed. But we can see the misery in his eyes, the eyes of a young man whose life was nearly behind him.

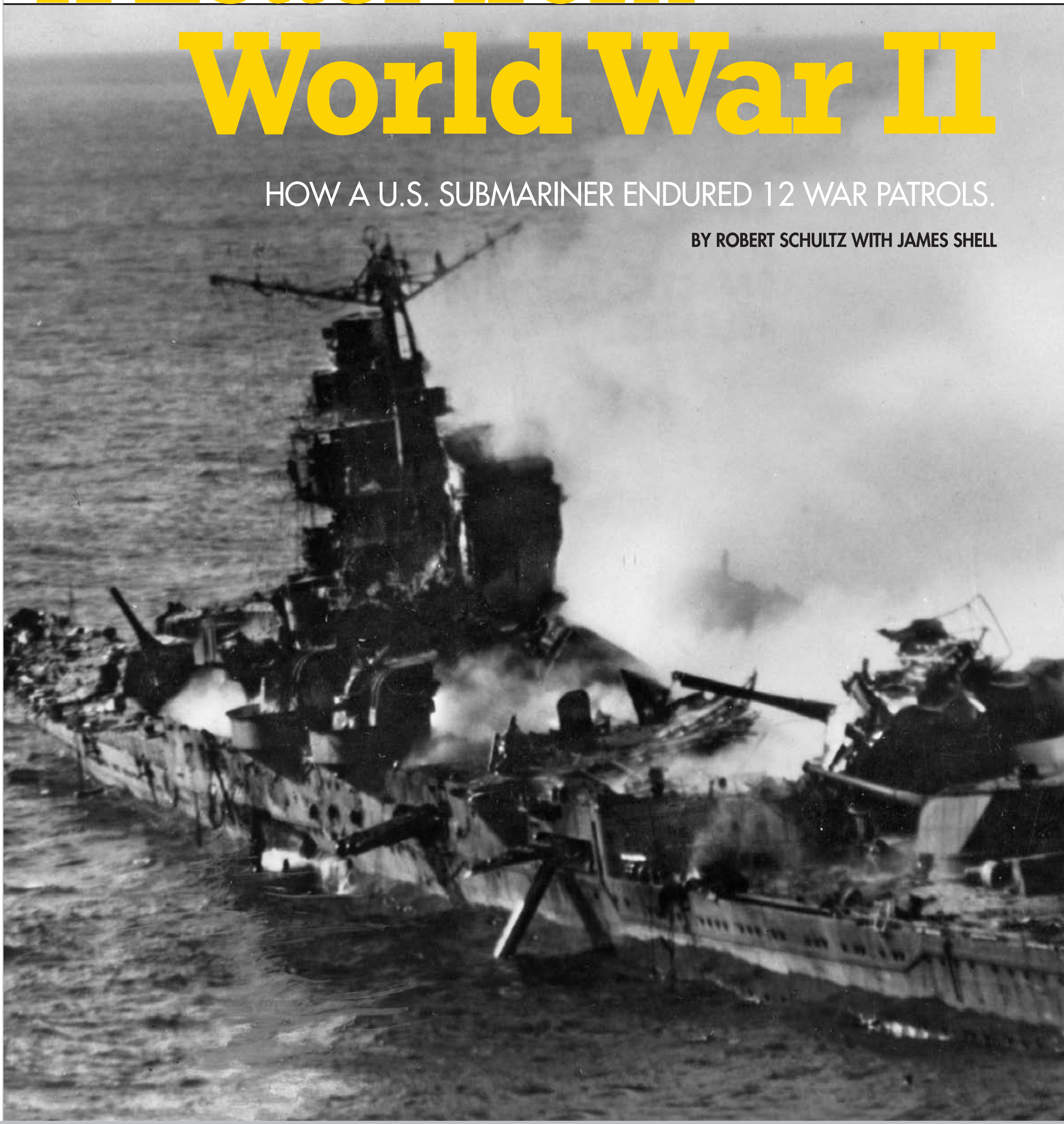
That is the legacy of John Parks. □

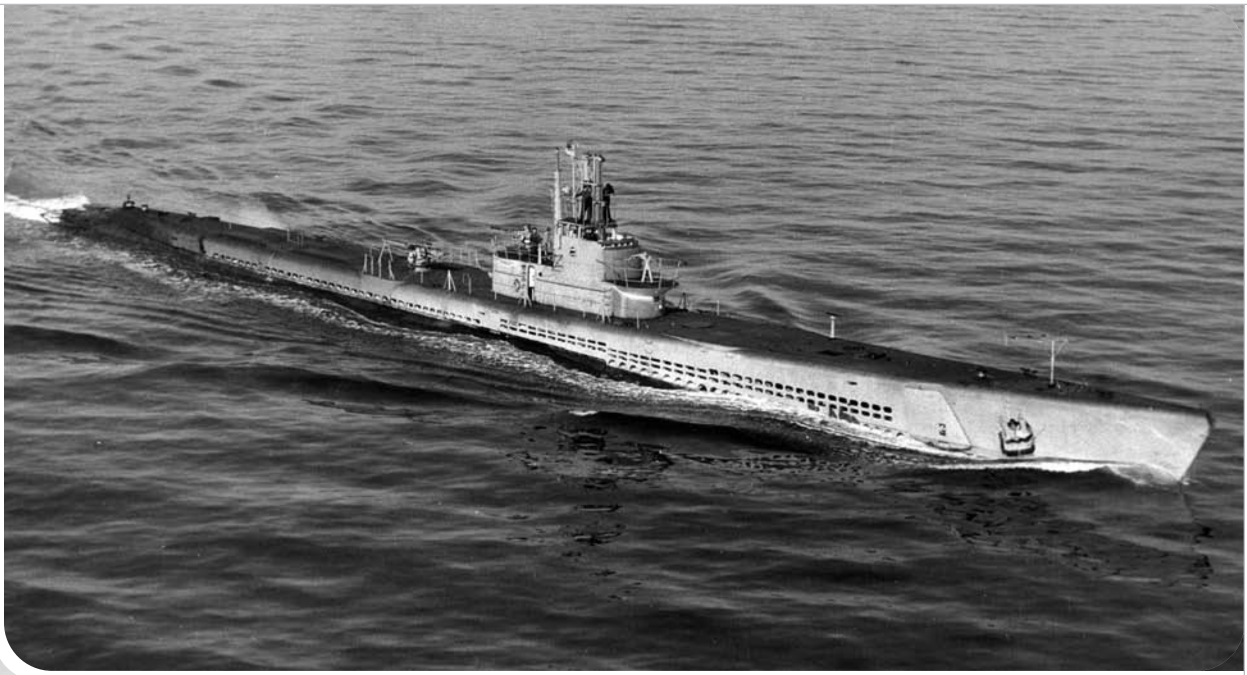
Author Bill Warnock authored The Dead of Winter, *a book chronicling present-day efforts to recover the remains of missing U.S. soldiers killed during the Battle of the Bulge. He is currently writing a history of the U.S. 741st Tank Battalion. He resides in Strongsville, Ohio.*

A Letter from World War II

HOW A U.S. SUBMARINER ENDURED 12 WAR PATROLS.

BY ROBERT SCHULTZ WITH JAMES SHELL





U.S. Navy/National Archives

National Archives

BY CHRISTMAS 1941, Robert Hunt, torpedoman on the submarine USS *Tambor*, had witnessed the Japanese bombing of Wake Island, had slept in the *Tambor*'s forward torpedo room on the way back to Pearl with a bomb-induced leak bubbling in the corner, and had stood on his sub's bow and seen the devastation of Battleship Row as debris in the oil-slicked harbor bumped against the hull.

Five days later he wrote a letter to his brother Dick, who was stationed at the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas. Hunt mailed the letter from San Francisco, where the *Tambor* had been sent for repairs before its war-long service throughout the Pacific. In it he mentioned Dick's performance in a play, girlfriends, and, with sadness, the death of sister Marge's newborn child. The letter was filled with bravado and euphemism (and colorful spelling), and for later generations it evokes the American 1940s as surely as a Benny Goodman swing tune or a Bob Hope road movie. But its purpose is clear. The letter, typed and signed with Hunt's full name, is a last will and testament.

Dec. 30 [1941]

Dear Dick—

I received your last letter o.k. and it was about time you wrote. Bet you made quite a leading man in that play—maybe the movies will put in a bit for you when you get out. Guess they could use a few men in the picture business eh'. Can't tell you much because of the naval censors—guess it's a good idea. We all get the news out of the papers anyway.

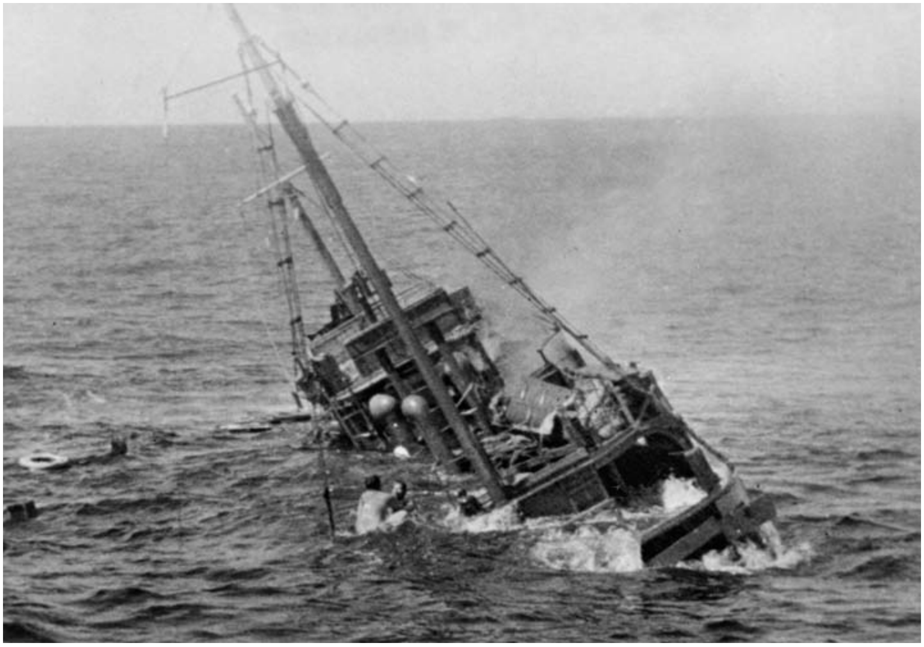
My little red head went back last month so think I'll have to get busy again and find another. Sure hated to see her go as we really had a good one planned for the holidays.

The baby was a boy as you probably know and only lived a couple of weeks. Marg sure can take it as I received a letter from her shortly after and she seemed all-right. I sure wanted that kid to live and be a boy for her sake, but guess that's the way it goes. Maybe she'll have another and we can be uncles anyway. See that you don't knock out any down there—maybe you'd have to marry the gal, she may be a queen, but that family of hers maybe don't want any of those war babies. From the way you talk you must have several standbys for when you get hard up—not bad if they stack up as nice as you say and I imagine they do.

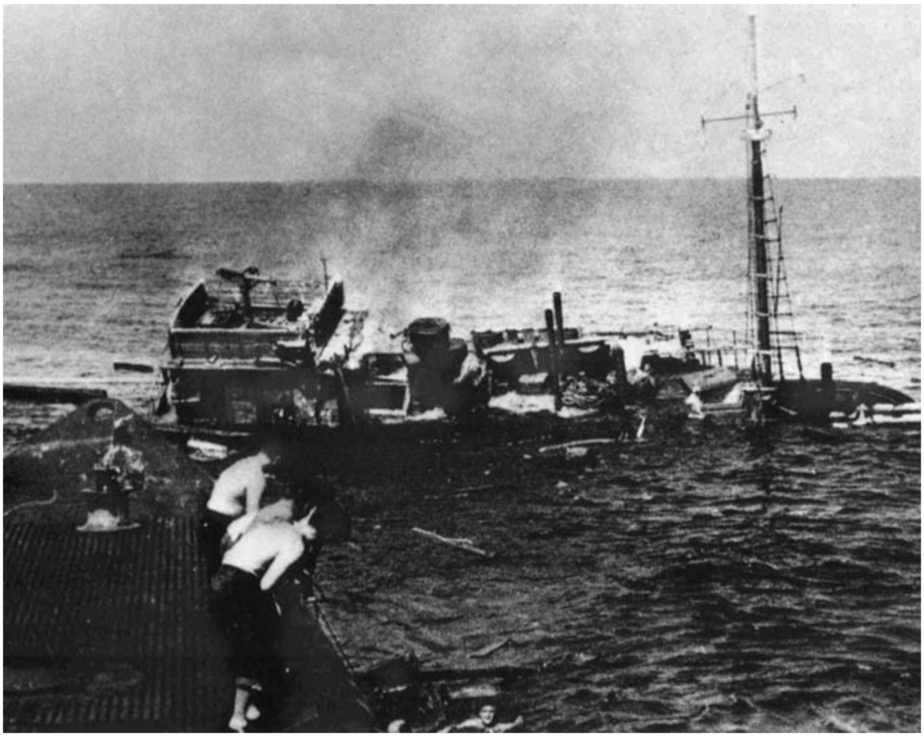
By the way—if I should get a heart attack and kroke one of these days I want you to get half my dust. Marg gets the other half. I didn't tell Marg so don't mention it to her, but Dad knows

The Japanese heavy cruiser *Mikuma* smolders prior to sinking during the Battle of Midway on June 6, 1942. *Mikuma* and her sister ship, *Mogami,* were attacked by U.S. carrier-based dive-bombers as the Japanese fleet withdrew from the vicinity of Midway Atoll. The USS *Tambor* had created confusion and caused the two heavy cruisers to collide earlier in the battle. INSET: The veteran submarine USS *Tambor* (SS-198) was photographed in April 1945, as the Japanese Empire was being strangled.

Australian War Memorial



ABOVE: Panicked Japanese sailors cling to the rigging of the freighter *Chiyo Maru* as it settles beneath the waves. The USS *Tambor* had engaged the merchant ship with its deck gun in the South China Sea. BELOW: As the *Chiyo Maru* sinks beneath them, Japanese sailors are helped aboard the USS *Tambor.* U.S. submariners were often able to pick up survivors until reports of possible enemy activity forced them to withdraw.



U.S. Navy/National Archives

about it. Take half my insurance and my savings account is in the bank at home—Dad has a record of it in his safety deposit box. I guess if you get nocked off you have six months pay coming too so get that for you and Marg too. You can do what you want with it—get married—raise hell—or just throw it away. If gram is still living see that she gets something, but you take care of it yourself. All this is just in case my heart goes bad or if I stub my toe and get poisoned or something—maybe my red head will shoot me when she sees me again. I'll sign this letter and you save it in case you'd have trouble collecting. I figure if Dad had any more money he really wouldn't need ... anyway you guys is me pals.

Don't expect too many letters as all I can say in a letter isn't very interesting. Give em hell Dick—and pick off a few of those little guys for me. I think I received your last letter—written about a month ago. I'll write more later.

Your bro—
Robert Russell Hunt

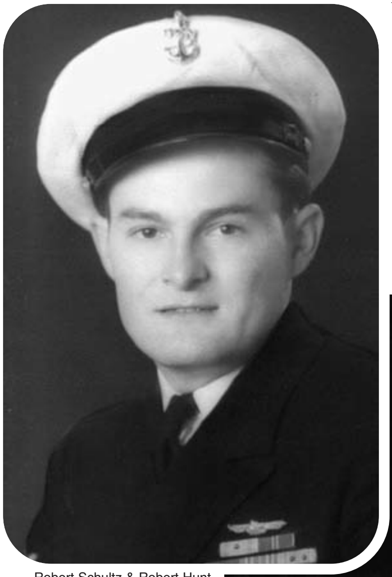
Beneath the swagger and self-deprecation, the letter reflects Bob's state of mind after his first wartime patrol. "I didn't figure I was going to make it," Bob told me. We were speaking on the phone one afternoon in 2006. I was in Virginia and he was in Iowa, resting in his apartment after cataract surgery that morning. "I was a poker player," he said. "I knew the odds."

By mid-war, as submariners heard of lost subs and the deaths of buddies on other boats, the common wisdom said that after four patrols you were pushing your luck. The common wisdom was not far off. Twenty-two percent of submariners who went to war died, the highest rate of any service. Eventually it became standard practice to transfer to a land-based support crew after your fourth patrol, then later, perhaps, go out with a different boat that needed your specialty. So Bob Hunt's 12 straight patrols on a single boat are rare, if not unmatched.

His survival, a statistical anomaly, was often in jeopardy. During the Battle of Midway he was on night watch at the port lookout when the *Tambor* signaled an unidentified convoy, received an incomprehensible reply, and dove. The two Japanese cruisers that had spotted the sub took evasive action, collided, and were both damaged. The next day the *Mikuma*, trailing oil, was sunk by American planes, and the *Mogami* was ravaged. One of the most famous photographs of the Battle of Midway shows the *Mikuma* smoking under the wing of a circling Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bomber. On the *Tambor*'s eighth patrol Bob was in the forward torpedo room when they sank a freighter off the coast of China, then had to apply right full rudder to dodge one of their own torpedoes that had run in a circle and come back at them. Then it came around a second time and they dodged it again. About the incident he wrote in his diary: "It wasn't half an hour ago so am still a little shaky—first time really scared."

On the boat's tenth mission the *Tambor* made a night surface attack on a Japanese convoy, was silhouetted by a burning tanker it had torpedoed, and was almost rammed by a Japanese patrol boat. Lookouts, without the aid of binoculars, saw Japanese sailors running to their deck guns, but a crew member saved the sub with extremely accurate 20mm fire along the length of the patrol boat's deck. The boat missed the *Tambor* by a mere 20 yards, close enough for the captain to read the numbers on the Japanese hull by the light of the machine gun's tracers.

Days later, after the *Tambor* sank another freighter and tanker, Bob and the crew sat on the bottom at 270 feet and time and again listened to the screws of a destroyer passing over, emptying its racks of depth charges. Even sitting on the bottom, the *Tambor* sagged and hogged, shaken by close explosions. Throughout the boat, crew members worked to stop leaks and keep vital equipment running. As the attack wore on, a lack of oxygen made for laborious breathing. And when the *Tambor* finally tried to make a run for it, the boat was mired in sludge and sand stirred up by the explosions. More hours of shifting ballast, blowing tanks, and reversing props drained the sub's batteries to dangerously low levels before the boat finally broke free.


Robert Schultz & Robert Hunt

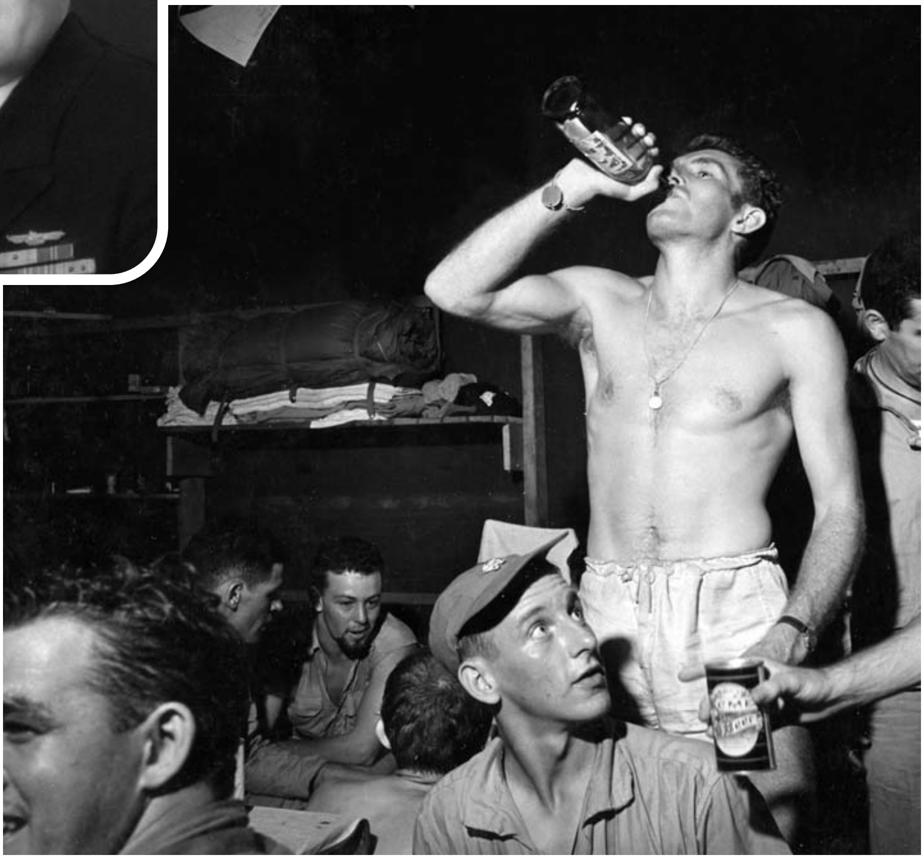
After 17 hours submerged, severe damage included the destruction of its radio antennae, so all communications were cut off until temporary repairs could be made. Only when they returned to port did the crew learn that Tokyo Rose had reported the *Tambor* destroyed with all hands.

Luck, certainly, was involved in Hunt's survival. But physical survival is one thing, mental endurance another, and Bob knew many crewmates who went quiet near the end of a patrol, then were never seen again. What in his makeup allowed him to persist? And why, in an all-volunteer service, did Bob go out again and again, his home from December 1940 to September 1944 a bunk in the forward room between reload torpedoes?

Bob met this final question with a practiced series of evasions, but one day I pressed him. We sat in his small bedroom-study with photos of the *Tambor,* crewmates, friends, and his Great Lakes training class hanging on the walls. A single bed was tucked into a nook in the wall across from our two chairs and a desk with a computer. The room was smaller than most compartments on Bob's sub, and we sat almost knee to knee. In similar spaces men endured patrols of 60 days or more. I wanted to understand what motivated Bob to keep going out. At first he made jokes.

"After a mission we'd come in and had two weeks off. We might get hammered for two or three days, but we always knew when we were going to leave. We were partying so much the night before we went, the first thing I know is I'm on the boat and I feel a swell. We're going out on war patrol, and I said, 'Shoot, I've done it again!'" He laughed and I laughed with him. I asked again.

RIGHT: In this photograph taken at the end of the war, Torpedoman Robert Hunt manages a hint of a smile. Hunt survived 12 war patrols aboard the USS *Tambor.* BELOW: Blowing off steam after the stress of a patrol into enemy waters, U.S. Navy personnel celebrate their return to port. Submarine duty was among the most hazardous in any branch of the service.


U.S. Navy/National Archives

"Well, you got pay-and-a-half and nobody bothered you. It wasn't regular Navy. We didn't pay a lot of attention to the officers. Besides the captain and the navigator, they were mostly a box of rocks." We laughed again.

He paused, and we let the quiet settle in the tiny room. "They were killing my buddies like crazy," Bob said. "I was mad as hell at them. I wanted to get out there and fight back."

"So it was very personal," I said.

"Yes," Bob agreed. "Guys I worked with—guys who were my friends—would transfer to another boat and get killed." Then he thought some more. Finally, he arrived at what I took to be his bottom line.

"When it came time to go," he said. "I wasn't not going to do it."

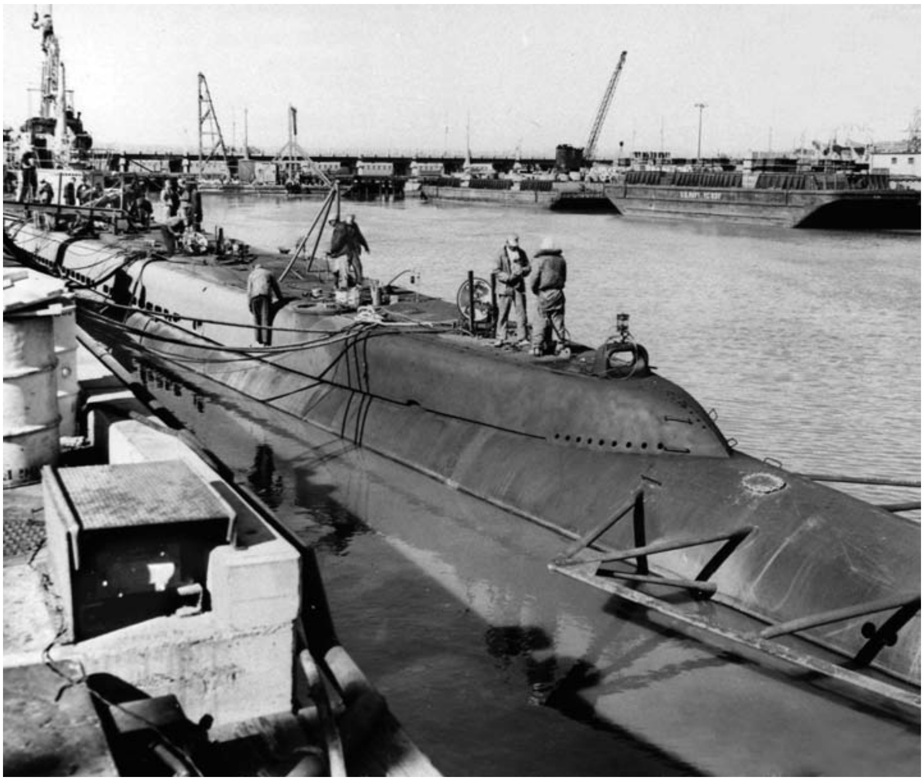
The double negative expressed the obdurate point of decision, and Bob experienced it as a recurring challenge. Had he reached the point where he could step off the boat and not go out to the fight? The answer was never yes. Only once was he almost persuaded to stay behind. His hands had been shaking for a long time, but now it had gotten so bad he had to grip a cup of coffee tightly with both to keep from spilling. Then his friends, Ole John Clausen and Harry Behrens, before a morning departure, took him to the base hospital to get a medical leave. Bob told the Navy doctor his hands wouldn't stop shaking. The physician ordered a urine test that came back "90 proof." The three men had been drinking hard since the night before.

Then the doctor told Bob to stretch out his arms and lean with his hands pressed against the wall. When Bob did, he said, "See, your hands aren't shaking now." Bob reported to the boat, served on his 11th patrol, then one more after that. He finally left the boat before its 13th and final patrol and was sent to Hunters Point, San Francisco, where he organized and taught a torpedo tube school.

Alcohol was an important way that Bob cut loose during two-week liberties between patrols that routinely lasted two months. Something needed to be obliterated. Brooding was dangerous, and members of the "silent service" were forbidden to talk about their missions to those outside the club. Well-lubricated parties in Hawaii or western Australia amounted often to group purges that ancient devotees to Dionysus, god of wine and self-abandon, would have understood perfectly. Drinking on patrols was limited to the occasional shot of brandy doled out to the crew from the pharmacist's cabinet after a successful attack or a severe depth-charging. But in Bob's forward torpedo room a hand-made still sat in the bilges and transformed unneeded torpedo fuel stored in two 50-gallon barrels into drinkable alcohol. The fuel was called Pink Lady because of the oil that tinted it and made you sick if you didn't remove it with the still fashioned by mechanics out of copper tubing, tin cans, and a hot plate. During leaves the still was transferred to a hotel room in a crewmate's sea bag and kept running in a bathtub.

In my conversations with him, Bob was equally candid about the war patrols and the liberties. He recounted the alternation of confinement and release, of deprivations and desperate compensations. When these men in their teens and early twenties returned to base, they popped ashore like corks out of champagne bottles. Pale and haggard, often plagued by prickly rashes because of the *Tambor*'s faulty air conditioners, the crew headed for the beaches, the bars, and the brothels. They had survived, and they knew they would go back to sea as soon as the sub was ready, so they made the most of their few days of R & R at the Royal Hawaiian in Honolulu or, later in the war, at the Ocean Beach or the King Edward in Perth, Australia. The women, too, seemed desperate, thrown by world war into a time apart in which they took their chances as they came along.

U.S. Navy/National Archives



This photo was taken while the USS *Tambor* was anchored at the Mare Island naval facility from December 1944 to March 1945. During her stay in port, the submarine received much-needed repairs to damage sustained during several successful combat patrols.

Bob and his crewmates were young, and they had been flung across the globe to live and die. They lived hard when they could, and Bob lived as hard as any, drinking and womanizing and brawling. The fight against the Japanese at sea depended upon discipline and strict adherence to the routines instilled by rigorous training. In the forward room the torpedoes were serviced periodically—a delicate operation—and the tubes were complicated machines with banks of switches and valves to operate in precise, wild choreography during an attack. Confined as much by the concentration their tasks required as by their watertight compartments, the men cut loose pent aggression on leave, using their fists. After a fight with another sailor outside a bar on Pearl, Bob was taken in by the women in a house he frequented, who bathed him, put him to bed, washed the blood out of his clothes, and hid him from the MPs until morning. From that point on, according to time-honored custom, the man he fought, another submariner, was a lifelong friend.

And then there was sex. Before the brothels in Hawaii turned to assembly-line service stations, Bob visited a particular woman—a White Russian he was told by older crewmates—between patrols. It was a great relief, he told me, to lie in her arms. "I remember we would be in bed and she would say, 'Was it bad this time, Bob?' She was a real friend."

There were other wartime companions in Hawaii and western Australia. Bob told me about a girl in Australia who thought he was an American cowboy and whose neighbor, a sheep rancher, asked him to ride an unbroken horse. The girl was a beauty, so he jumped on the horse, despite misgivings, and crashed it into the house. But in keeping with a firm resolve, based on the assumption that he would not survive the war, Bob made no commitments, wrote few letters, and made no dates that assumed a return he knew was always in doubt.

On board, Bob credited the nearly nonstop poker games as a source of his endurance. "Boy, the poker—that was real important. It kept me going." He served his watches, slept, and played poker, sitting always with his shoulder leaning against the galley bulkhead below the pinup that overlooked the crew's mess. In the game within the game of war, he found a place where he could play the odds and win. For many of the crew, including Bob, playing became compulsive. Sometimes they had to pause, not because the heat and humidity of a long dive stopped them, but because the cards became too damp and thick to shuffle. Bob found few equals at the poker table and sent his winnings home to his dad between patrols, enough to buy a small Iowa farm.

William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* famously described the disciplines of the saintly life as "the moral equivalent of war," referring to the devotion of one's entire self—and disregard for the body's fate—required by the committed warrior. Robert

Hunt, by his own candid admission, was no saint, but James's description of devotion fits Bob, his fellow submariners, and many others who committed themselves wholly to winning a desperate war, the outcome of which often appeared very much in doubt.

Then, when the war was won and Bob had survived, he changed his life utterly. Before his discharge he wrote to his brother and dad, making plans for the afterlife. He returned to Iowa, went into the hardware business with Dick, and began dating Barb Parrish, a girl he had known in high school. They married and moved to Decorah, where Barb edited the newspaper and Bob ran the Hunt Variety Store. Bob and Barb went fishing and drove the countryside for the sheer pleasure of it. "After the war it was liberty with no going back. Just driving a car with the windows down was a great thing. Sometimes I even sang when I drove, or Barb and I sang together. It was something I'd never done before."

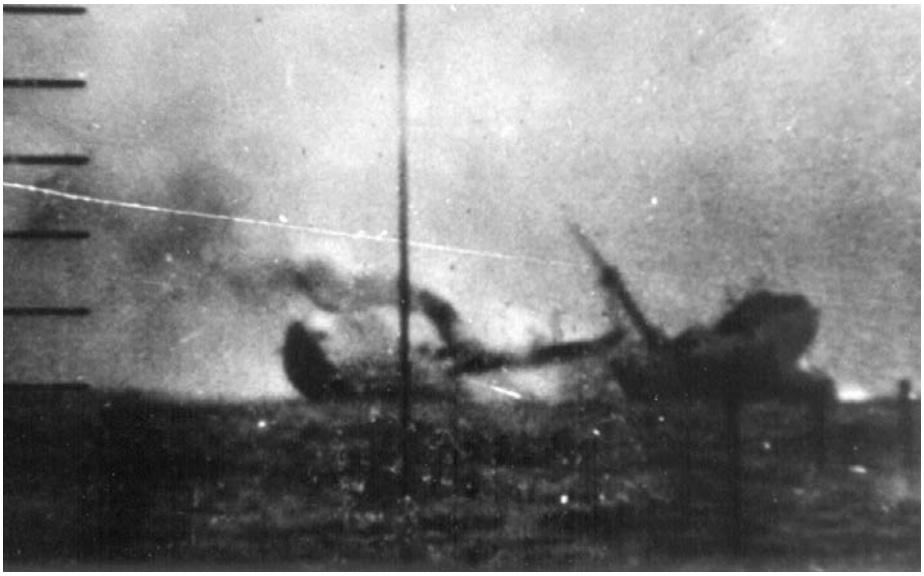
They raised two boys, and the oldest, David, told me, "I know all the stories. Dad's told me all about it. But I never knew that man. He'd drink a beer once in a while—one, maybe—and he and Mom were devoted to each other."

When the couple celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 2006, Barb was confined to a wheelchair and living in the Aüse Haugen Home, and Bob had taken a small apartment across town. Every day he went over, riding his bike when the weather was good, and ate breakfast and lunch with her. "She needs some help, and it's nicer if I can do it," he told me.

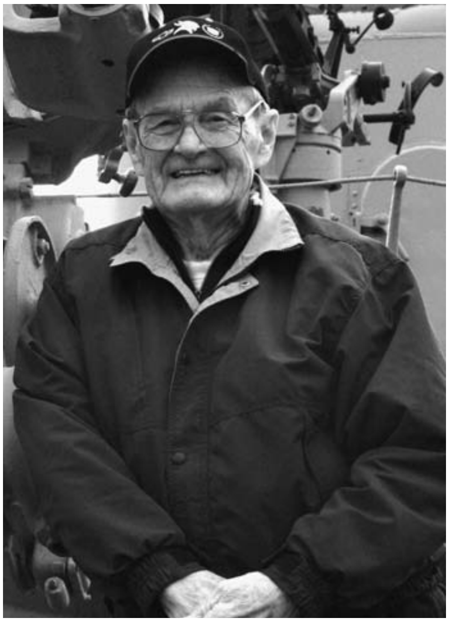
"Between us, she was always the brains of the outfit," Bob said. "And she was beautiful. Not like a cover girl. I mean, during the war I went out with girls that were beautiful. And Barb was good looking. But she was—she still is—a beautiful person." Barb died in 2008.

When I met Bob in 1985 he and Barb still lived in the tidy, ranch-style house with the white siding and red brick front. In the summer I would see him in his yard, wearing a sweat suit in the 90-degree weather, something I understood only after hearing about the 130-degree temperatures inside the *Tambor* when it operated in tropical waters without air conditioning. Then it seemed to me that his body's thermostat had been permanently readjusted during the war.

Robert Schultz & Robert Hunt



Robert Schultz & Robert Hunt



ABOVE: Its back broken by a torpedo from the USS *Tambor,* a Japanese freighter begins its plunge to the bottom of the Pacific. Note the rising bow and stern sections of the large vessel as smoke billows from its funnel. LEFT: U.S. Navy veteran Robert Hunt poses aboard the submarine USS *Cobia,* which is on display as a floating exhibit at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc. Hunt survived 12 combat patrols with the USS *Tambor* and recorded his impressions of war at sea in numerous letters.

When we spoke of making a book together, Bob took me to his basement study, an unfinished room with concrete floor, exposed pipes and wires, bookshelves, and a desk lit from above by bare light bulbs. Outside the sunken window wells and the tiny basement windows, the upper Midwest stretched all around, a vast inland sea. Perfectly at home, he pulled binders from the shelves and opened them on the desk. They were filled with photographs ranging from his enlistment to the present, with clippings from *Polaris,* the sub vets' newsletter; with drawings and documents; and with letters from former crewmates or their wives, sons, or daughters. As I flipped the pages the men aged.

We paged together through the *Life* magazine that came to Bob and Barb's house in 1946, bringing an article on the Battle of Midway that included images mocked up to represent its key moments. One of them depicted the *Tambor* surfacing near the Japanese heavy cruisers. "That's when I learned that the two ships had collided because of us," Bob said. "That's the first I knew about it."

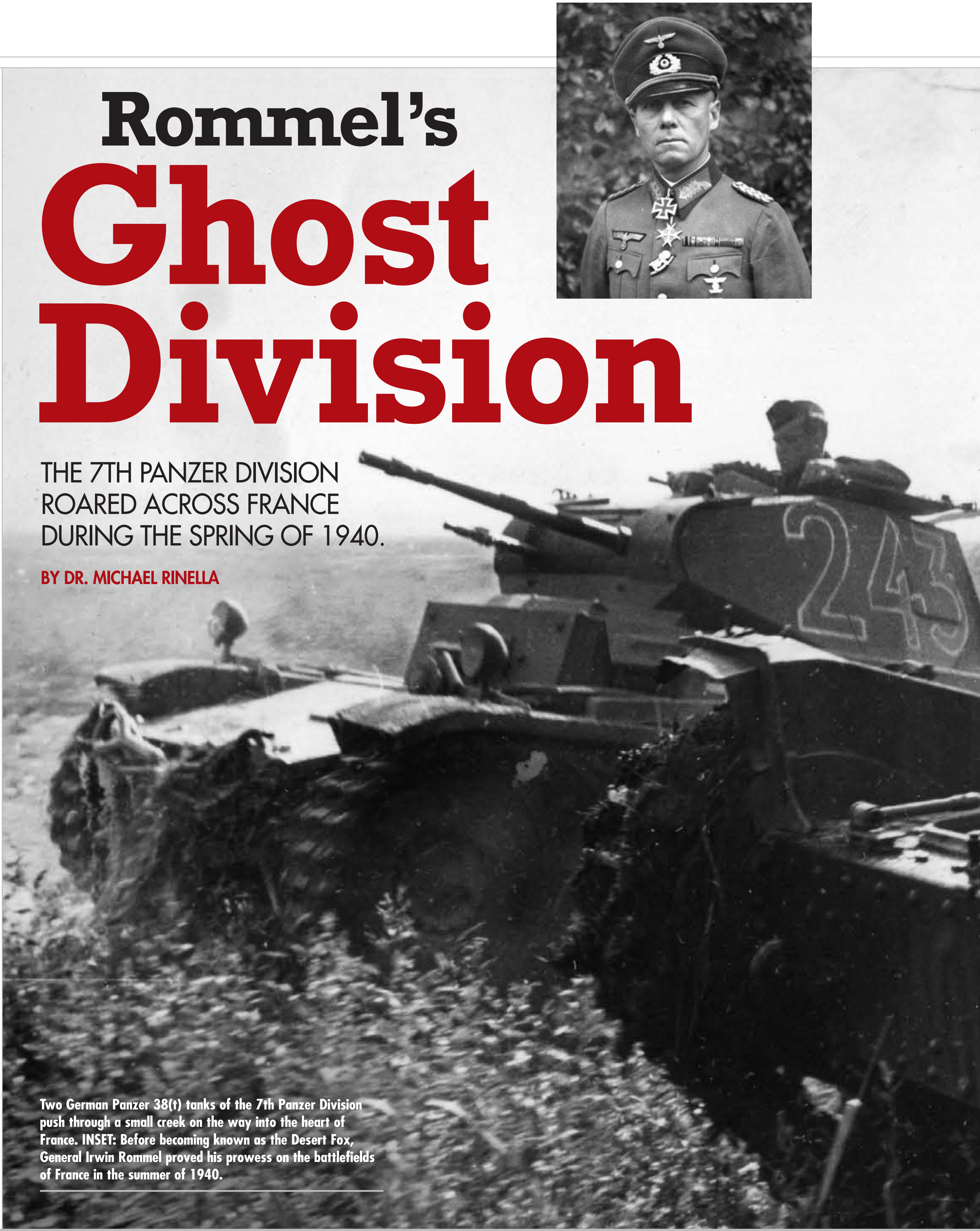
Even as Bob had lived his postwar life as businessman, husband, and father, he had reached back in a sustained act of memory, eager to fill gaps in his knowledge of what he had lived through. These acts of reconstruction informed the yearly visits Bob made to area schools to talk with students about the war in the Pacific and his role in it. Some of the binders on the shelves around us contained materials for these visits, and he always took along a big map charting the *Tambor*'s missions, noting with color-coded dots the sites of depth chargings, aerial bombardments, sinkings, and surface battles. If repetition eventually outweighed analysis, it was because the magnitude of remembered events eclipsed the view of more distant causes. And Bob's wartime experiences could hardly have been more mind filling: living in a metal pipe in the middle of the ocean, a small boat alone thousands of miles from home, men confined together in cramped compartments for two months at a time, hunting and killing, literally under pressure ("Pressure in the boat," the diving officer would call). And then two weeks of utter freedom in a strange place, cut loose from normal time, awash in gratitude for sunlight and touch, for another survival, at first exhausted but then effervescent with bottled-up

Continued on page 86

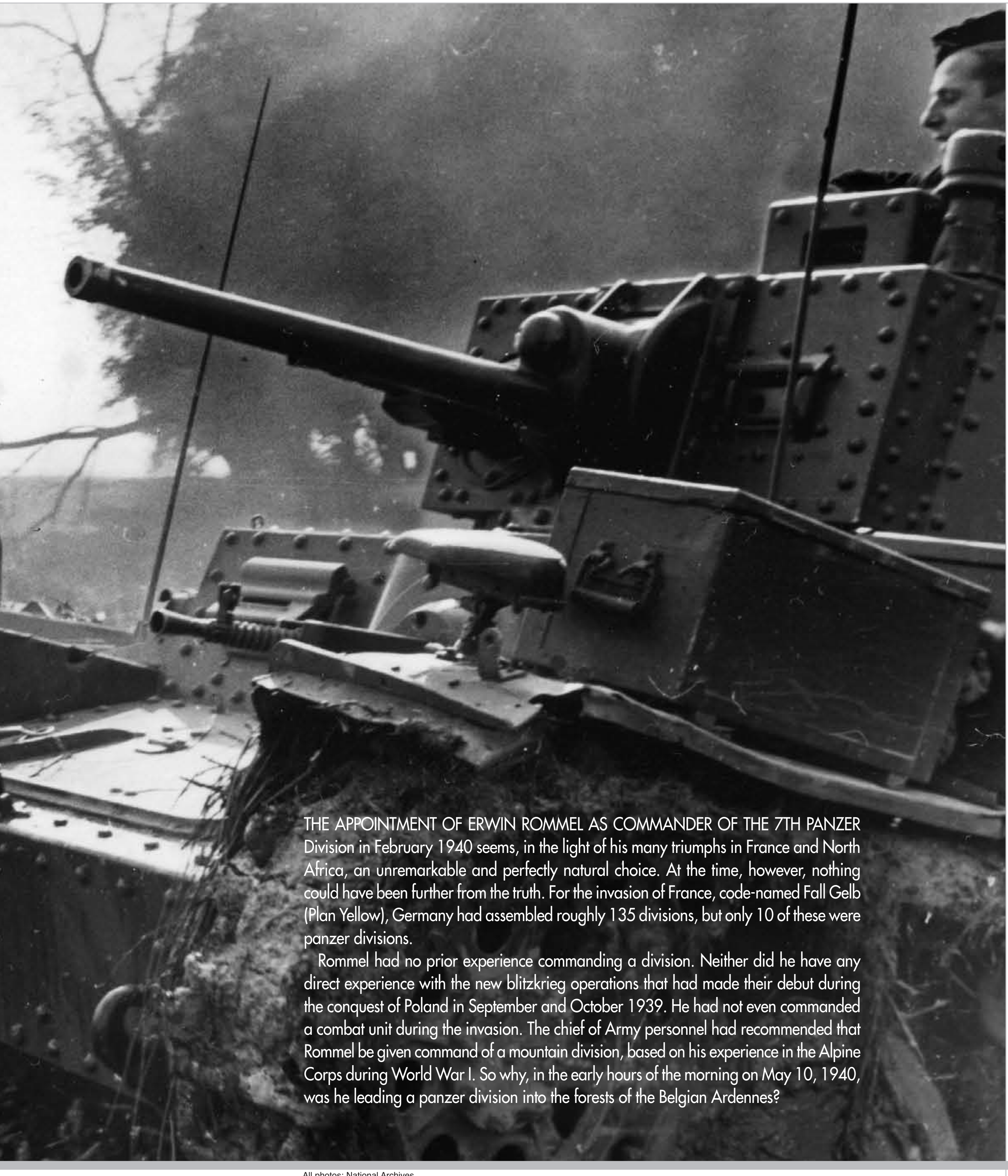
Rommel's Ghost Division

THE 7TH PANZER DIVISION ROARED ACROSS FRANCE DURING THE SPRING OF 1940.

BY DR. MICHAEL RINELLA



Two German Panzer 38(t) tanks of the 7th Panzer Division push through a small creek on the way into the heart of France. INSET: Before becoming known as the Desert Fox, General Irwin Rommel proved his prowess on the battlefields of France in the summer of 1940.



THE APPOINTMENT OF ERWIN ROMMEL AS COMMANDER OF THE 7TH PANZER Division in February 1940 seems, in the light of his many triumphs in France and North Africa, an unremarkable and perfectly natural choice. At the time, however, nothing could have been further from the truth. For the invasion of France, code-named Fall Gelb (Plan Yellow), Germany had assembled roughly 135 divisions, but only 10 of these were panzer divisions.

Rommel had no prior experience commanding a division. Neither did he have any direct experience with the new blitzkrieg operations that had made their debut during the conquest of Poland in September and October 1939. He had not even commanded a combat unit during the invasion. The chief of Army personnel had recommended that Rommel be given command of a mountain division, based on his experience in the Alpine Corps during World War I. So why, in the early hours of the morning on May 10, 1940, was he leading a panzer division into the forests of the Belgian Ardennes?

All photos: National Archives

ABOVE: To counter the heavy French artillery fire during his crossing of the Meuse River, Rommel ordered local houses burned to provide a smoke screen. BELOW: The river crossing stalled when a Panzer IV blocked the way over a railway bridge. Once the tank was moved, the Germans moved steadily across the span despite French artillery fire.

What Rommel did have was regular, personal access to Adolf Hitler. Rommel and Hitler first met briefly in Goslar at a Reichsbaurentag, a traditional fair for farmers and landowners that the Nazis had elevated to a political event. It was at this meeting in Goslar that Rommel also met the Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels. He made a favorable impression and would henceforth enjoy his patronage.

Rommel was given a three-year appointment as instructor at the War Academy in Potsdam in October 1935, his teaching duties interrupted to perform security arrangements, such as at the summer 1936 Nuremburg rally, and acting as the War Ministry's liaison officer to the Hitler Youth beginning in February 1937. He was picked to command Hitler's escort battalion, the Führerbegleitbataillon (FBB), during the occupation of the Sudetenland in October 1938, and he repeated the task again twice in March 1939 during the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia and the Baltic port of Memel. In August he was the obvious choice to perform the same duties during the invasion of Poland. He was promoted to major general on August 22 (backdated to June 1). As headquarters commandant during the Polish campaign, he traveled on Hitler's special train, named *Amerika*, and often shared the same car or light plane.

By 1940 the two had developed a liking for each other, sharing both humble origins and a deep dislike for the snobbery and elitism of the old German aristocracy. Rommel was neither a member of the Junker class of Prussian aristocrats nor a product of the General Staff (who denied him entry), both of which were essential prerequisites for military advancement prior to the rise of Hitler. Rommel desired command of a panzer division, and he received it, the objections of the Army personnel branch being overruled quite possibly by Hitler himself.

The appointment capped a truly rapid ascent through the ranks. Rommel had begun the month of November 1938 as a major who occasionally commanded an escort battalion. By February 1940 he was a major general in command of one of the 10 panzer divisions that would spearhead the campaign in the West. Hitler's decision apparently raised more than a few eyebrows in the senior military hierarchy because, in a letter to his wife Lucie dated February 17, Rommel wrote, "Jodl [chief of the Operation Staff of the Armed Forces High Command, the OKW] was flabbergasted at my new posting."

From the start it was clear the 7th Panzer Division would be receiving high-level political attention and preference. Goebbels gave Rommel, an avid amateur photographer, a Leica camera to chronicle the campaign. Rommel intended to use the photos in the book he planned to write to follow up his popular *Infantry Attacks*. Manfred Rommel, his son, wrote, "… he planned to write on the Second World War ... [my father] took literally thousands [of photos] ... including a large number in color."

Rommel himself mentioned, "I've taken a lot of photographs" in a letter to his wife written on May 27. A few of these photos that Rommel took during the campaign in France (or that were taken with the same camera while Rommel posed) are reproduced in *The Rommel Papers*. Most, unfortunately, were evidently lost in the in the aftermath of Germany's defeat in 1945.

Attached to Rommel's division as a second aide-de-camp was Lieutenant Karl August Hanke, a favorite of Goebbels who may have provided a special link to Berlin. The division's officers included other Nazis such as Karl Holz, who had been editor-in-chief of the anti-Semitic weekly tabloid *Der Stürmer* [The Stormer or, more accurately, The Attacker]. In addition, one of Rommel's former students at Wiener

Neustadt, a Lieutenant Hausberg, was tasked with the duty of flying from the division to Hitler's headquarters every evening to present a map showing Rommel's progress that day.

The 7th Panzer Division was then, in a sense, no ordinary division but a showpiece of the Nazi government. While Rommel himself was not a member of the Nazi Party, he was no stranger to ambition and possessed a thirst for glory that, especially in the heat of a campaign, bordered on the unquenchable. At this early stage of the war he was not above exploiting the political connections he had built to advance his military career to the utmost.

Rommel's division, along with the 5th Panzer Division, would be the nucleus of XV Panzer Corps, which was part of the Fourth Army commanded by Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge. In addition to the XV Panzer Corps, Fourth Army had three infantry corps, the II, V, and VIII. The 5th and 7th were the only panzer divisions in the entire Army. Fourth Army itself, along with Twelfth Army and Sixteenth Army, was part of Army Group A, led by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock. It was the principal German strike force, the *Schwerpunkt,* for Fall Gelb.

Army Group B to the north would advance through Holland and Belgium in a feint to convince the Allies that the main German drive was in the north, while Army Group C to the south would demonstrate against the fortifications of the French Maginot Line. In contrast to Army Group A, Army Group B had but three panzer divisions, while Army Group C had none at all.

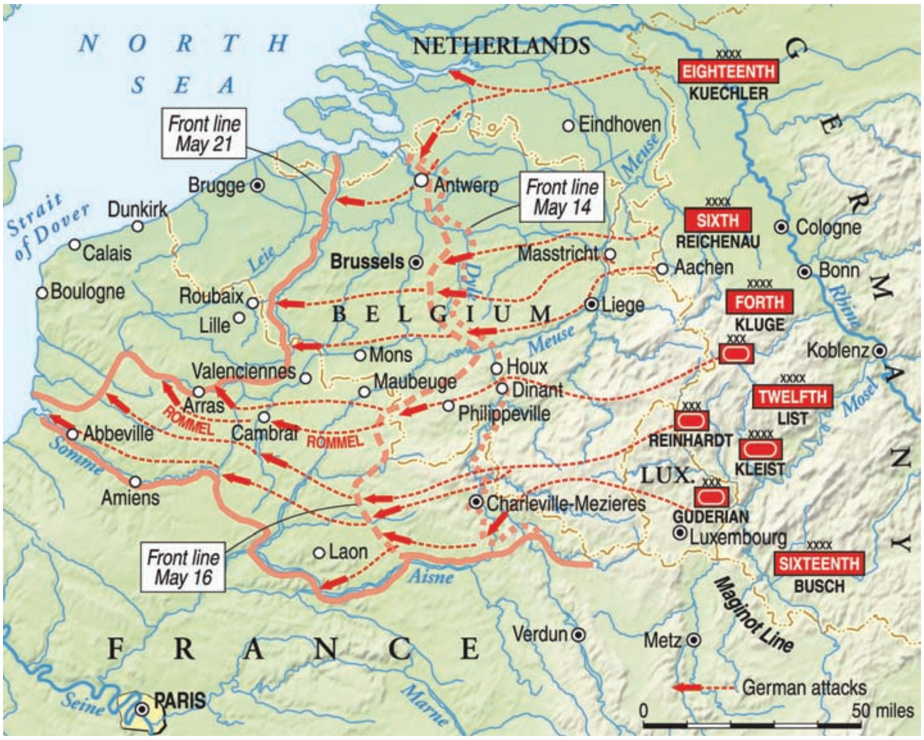
The code word for the launch of Fall Gelb, "Danzig," was received late in the day on May 9. Rommel wrote a last quick letter to his wife as he was packing; there would be no communication between them in the coming days. The 7th Panzer rolled forward at 4:35 the next morning, crossing the border between Germany and Belgium east of St. Vith. The 5th Panzer Division was on its right.

The initial objectives were the crossings on the Meuse River around Dinant, some 65 miles to the west. Overhead flew Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters from Luftflotte III. Initially resistance was light. The bulk of the Belgian Army was concentrated to the north on the plain of Belgium to defend the country's major cities. The Belgians would be joined by some of the best French formations and the British Expeditionary Force, which advanced east to join them. Under this strategy, known as Plan D or the Dyle Plan, the Allies would defend a line from the French frontier to Antwerp.

The Belgian Army had conducted extensive demolitions in the Ardennes, but because few of the obstacles were covered by defensive fire German engineers had little difficulty clearing the obstructions. Where they could not be removed, the blockages were bypassed using side roads or, where possible, by moving cross country.

Navigating the limited road network, 7th Panzer encountered its first serious Belgian opposition during the early hours of May 11, brushing aside elements of the 3rd Regiment of the Chasseurs Ardennais at Chabrehez. The role of the Chasseurs Ardennais was to fight a delaying action until the French could cover the flank toward their own border.

Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN


NORTH SEA
NETHERLANDS
GERMANY
EIGHTEENTH
KUECHLER
Eindhoven
Meuse
Front line May 21
Brugge
Antwerp
Front line May 14
Strait of Dover
Dunkirk
Calais
SIXTH
REICHENAU
Cologne
Masstricht
Aachen
Bonn
Brussels
Dyle
Leie
Boulogne
Roubaix
Lille
BELGIUM
Liege
FORTH
KLUGE
Rhine
Meuse
Koblenz
Mons
Houx
Valenciennes
Maubeuge
Dinant
TWELFTH
LIST
Mosel
Arras
Philippeville
ROMMEL
Abbeville
Cambrai
ROMMEL
REINHARDT
KLEIST
Somme
LUX.
Amiens
Charleville-Mezieres
GUDERIAN
Luxembourg
Front line May 16
Laon
Aisne
SIXTEENTH
BUSCH
Maginot Line
FRANCE
Verdun
Metz
Seine
PARIS
Marne
German attacks
0
50 miles

Operation Fall Gelb began on May 9 with the Germans blazing across France, with Rommel leading the way.

That task would belong to the French 9th Army, led by General André Corap. Corap, aged 62, had spent most of his career in French North Africa. He was, perhaps, as much an adherent to the old French school of military thought as Rommel was to the new lightning war employed by the Germans.

The French had sent their best armies into central and northern Belgium. The armies that had been detailed to cover the Ardennes, including Ninth Army, were much weaker. Corap's army comprised two motorized and seven infantry divisions. Of the latter divisions only two were regular units, while two others were reserve divisions. To make matters worse, Ninth Army had been assigned a sector of the front 80 kilometers long, longer in reality because the Meuse River is not a straight line, but full of twists and turns.

The Ourthe River was crossed by the 7th Panzer Division at three locations—Beffe, Marcourt, and La Rouche. Soon thereafter, at Marche, French troops were encountered for the first time. These were elements of the 4th Armored Car Regiment of the 4th DLC (Division Lègére de Cavalrie). After just two days, 7th Panzer had advanced 40 miles. Another 18 miles would be covered on May 12. The 5th Panzer Division, however, had been slowed by the difficult terrain and thick forest of the Ardennes. Rommel alluded to this fact when he wrote to his wife that day that he was "way ahead of my neighbors."

It would not be the last time Rommel's division raced well ahead of the rest of the German Army. The French cavalry divisions, on Corap's orders, methodically retired behind the Meuse River during the course of the day, with the Germans gradually following up. The cavalry was originally intended to delay the Germans for five days but Corap had felt it necessary to recall them after only two and a half when infantry support failed to materialize rapidly enough.

The need for Rommel to capture a bridge intact was critical. The Meuse was deep and wide, with steep and escarped banks. The French, however, were successful in blowing up the crucial bridges in front of the advancing XV

Corps, including a railroad bridge at Houx, the road bridge at Dinant, and the road bridge at Bouvigne. In addition, the defenses had been bolstered by the transfer of the 2nd Battalion of the 39th Regiment, 5th Motorized Division, from General Bouffet's II Corps to General Martin's XI Corps. The new battalion took up a position on a hill opposite Houx, near the village of Grange.

Matters were not well in hand, however. The French had assumed they would have five days to reinforce and reorganize their defense if the Germans launched an attack out of the Ardennes, but Rommel was not about to allow them that sort of luxury. To make matters worse for the Allies, communications were poor, both among French units and between the French and Belgians. Allied morale on this part of the front was already showing signs of being unsteady. Rommel arrived at the Meuse in an armored car, examined the far bank with field glasses, and seeing it was well defended declared the job was one for infantry. His motorized infantry moved up and were "firmly in control of the east bank of the Meuse between Dinant and Houx" by the time the sun set on the 12th.

The German attack got under way in the early hours of the next morning. The western bank of the Meuse opposite the Germans was held by two French Infantry Divisions, the 18th and 22nd DI (Division d'Infantrie). Both divisions were still in the process of arriving after a lengthy foot march. Soldiers from Rommel's 7th Motorized Infantry Regiment began to cross the Meuse at Dinant, and infantry from his 6th Regiment began to cross between Leffe and Houx. It was at Houx, in fact, rather than at Sedan, that German units first crossed the Meuse, at roughly 11:30 in the evening of May 12. A motorcycle battalion, leaving their bikes behind, crossed under cover of darkness, utilizing an old dam connecting a small island to both sides of the river bank.

There is some dispute over whether it was the motorcycle battalion of the 7th or 5th Panzer Division that crossed the Meuse at Houx, and the matter is further confused by the fact that the corps commander, General Hermann Hoth, had temporarily transferred control of elements of the 5th Panzer Division to Rommel, who was making faster progress. The dam and the lock had not been blown up by either the Belgians or the French for fear it would lower the river and actually make it fordable in some places. But it should never have been left as unguarded as it was. The Germans were lucky. The island at Houx lay right at the boundary of two French corps, the II Corps and the XI Corps, and for a single, fatal, moment no one was sure who was responsible for its defense.

The water crossing on the morning of the 13th was made largely in inflated rubber boats. Well-concealed French machine guns and artillery took a heavy toll. Observing that the crossing of the 6th Regiment was opposed by heavy fire and lacking a smoke unit, Rommel ordered houses in the Meuse valley set on fire "to supply the smoke we lacked."

The attack at Houx was also fortunate in the sense that the 18th DI was still in the process of arriving and only a portion of it had reached the Meuse, and the units that were already in position were exhausted from a forced march of more than 50 miles. Even worse was the fact that, although German units had been over the Meuse since shortly before midnight the night before, General Martin was not informed until 7 AM. He tried to contact General Corap, his army commander, but could not reach him by phone. Corap was not aware until the evening of the German bridgehead at Houx and the threat it posed.

Returning to the 7th Regiment, Rommel found that while it had formed a company-sized bridgehead on the opposite bank their crossing equipment had been destroyed by enemy fire, and things had come to a halt. Tanks and artillery, finally arriving, were used to silence the enemy fire up and down the point of crossing, allowing additional troops to cross and the wounded on the opposite bank to be retrieved. Rommel then personally took command of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment, leading it across the river and linking up with the units already on the opposite bank. French tanks approached. They were unaware the German position lacked an antitank screen. Rom-

mel ordered small-arms fire poured onto the enemy armor, and the ruse was sufficient to convince the French to withdraw.

By the morning of the 14th the advance guard of the 7th Motorized Infantry Regiment had reached Onhaye, two miles west of Dinant. Communicating by radio that he had "arrived" (*eingetroffen*), Colonel Georg von Bismarck was misunderstood as having announced he was "encircled" (*eingeschlossen*). Radio communication then failed, setting off a crisis that rippled all the way up the chain of command. Kluge, the army commander, spoke of an "Onhaye crisis" and diverted units in its direction. Rommel immediately organized all the tanks then available on the west bank of the Meuse to rush to von Bismarck's aid.

The attack was led by Colonel Karl Rothenberg, commander of the 25th Panzer Regiment, with Rommel following close behind in one of the division's few Panzer III tanks, so closely, in fact, that Rommel's tank came under fire from French antitank and artillery guns, suffering two hits. Attempting to escape, the tank slid down a steep embankment where it became immobilized. Rommel bailed out with the crew and escaped with only an ugly gash on his chin. It had been a close call, and it would not be the last time Rommel's life would be in danger during the campaign. An attack launched that evening reestablished contact with von Bismarck, ending the "crisis."

For the French Army, however, the crisis was only beginning. During the 13th and 14th all three German panzer corps had formed bridgeheads on the western side of the Meuse, though Reinhardt's at Monthermé was precarious and encountering stiff resistance while Guderian's at Sedan was only marginally better, having become the target of intense air bombardment. It was at this fateful moment on the 15th of May that Corap ordered a withdrawal of his Ninth Army westward to a new line. This had the effect of "uncorking the bottle," allowing both Reinhardt's and Guderian's corps to pour out of their bridgeheads, through and around the slowly reacting French units and into open country. The French line now had a breach 60 miles wide, with nothing to plug the gap.

Opposite Hoth's XV Corps, Corap's new line included the railway that ran to the east of Philippeville, 15 miles west of where Rommel's division had breached the Meuse. Before the new line could be occupied it was penetrated by the 25th Panzer Regiment. Rommel's panzers, now with air support from the Luftwaffe, were striking deep into the rear of Ninth Army and forestalled an intended counterattack toward Dinant by the newly arriving French armored division, the 1st DCR (Division Cuirassee Rapide).

ABOVE: Soldiers of the 7th Panzer Division paddle across the Meuse River, while others scamper over a thin bridge. OPPOSITE: French armor pulled out of their positions near the Meuse River, when Rommel poured small-arms fire on them.

The 1st DCR had roughly 150 tanks to Rommel's 218, but over half of these were the heavy B models that outclassed anything in the German inventory. The French medium tank, the Somua S35, was the best all-around tank on the battlefield in the spring of 1940, fast, well protected, and with heavier firepower than the Panzer III. A disadvantage of both the B models and the Somua was that a single individual had to load, aim, and fire the turret gun, while inside a German tank multiple crewmen could coordinate a heavier rate of fire. The 75mm gun on the B models was also hull mounted, which meant the gun could be redirected only by moving the entire vehicle.

Had the 1st DCR appeared on Rommel's right flank unexpectedly it could have given him a nasty surprise. Instead, near Flavion, the Germans came upon the French just as their tanks were in the process of taking on fuel. Another disadvantage of the French heavy tanks was their rapid fuel consumption, which limited their operations to fewer than six hours before they had to refuel. Their fuel tankers, many of which were civilian models lacking tracks capable of operating on off-road terrain, had been delayed for hours.

A sharp engagement ensued at close range. The German panzers hit the heavier French tanks in their more vulnerable flanks. Their best bet was to shoot off the treads because the German guns lacked to the power to penetrate the French tanks' thick frontal armor. Only about one-third of the tanks in the 1st DRC were operational at the end of the day. By the morning of the 16th, only 17 were still operational. During this same time period the 7th Panzer Division completed the destruction of another crack French unit, the 4th North African Division, which had been plugged into the line at Onhaye.

Reaching the French frontier just west of Sivry, Rommel now was faced with attacking the Maginot Line extension. The Germans did not make a distinction between the "true" Maginot Line, which ended at Longuyon, and its northern extension, which was made up only of a shallow belt of pillboxes and antitank obstacles, something that explains Rommel's caution on reaching these less formidable fortifications.

There appears to have been some confusion on the morning of the 16th. Rommel received a message to remain at divisional headquarters for some unknown reason. It was not until 9:30 AM that he was given permission to return to his advance headquarters. After moving forward and discussing the attack with his chief of operations, Major Otto Heidkaemper, Rommel was visited by Kluge, who expressed surprise that the attack was not yet under way. Rommel explained his plan, a careful set-piece assault, and it was readily approved.

The French defenses were successfully pierced as the sun set, and the panzers found themselves in open country by the early evening. At the head of the division, riding in Rothenburg's command tank, Rommel now drove the vanguard of the 7th Panzer relentlessly. The advance continued, as planned, in the moonlight. The rout of the 1st DCR was completed at the town of Avesnes, with only three French tanks escaping. Unable to reach Hoth on the radio, Rommel refused to stop. On his own initiative he ordered the panzers to continue west, to Landrecies, wreaking havoc in the French rear.

Sunrise the following morning, the 17th, found Rommel's forces eight miles west of Landrecies on a hill just east of the village of Le Chateau, exhausted and nearly out of fuel and ammunition. Two panzer battalions were now nearly 50 miles farther west than they had been the day before. The action was audacious to say the least. Rommel's Avesnes raid had driven a long narrow "tongue" barely a mile wide into enemy territory. It was, according to author Alistair Horne, "the most spectacular German exploit of the day—possibly of the whole campaign—and one which, more than any other, was to establish Rommel's reputation."

ABOVE: French Poilus march to the front. Rommel's blitz so unnerved the French that their divisions became disorganized and demoralized. OPPOSITE TOP: The 7th Panzer artillery opens up on French positions near a destroyed bridge. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Panzer IVs and a T(38) roll through another small French town, past a wrecked civilian car. Rommel himself took this photograph.

The rest of the division was now far behind, dangerously so in the minds of some, including individuals on the divisional staff such as Heidkaemper. He later wrote a memorandum, submitted to both Rommel and Hoth, complaining that a divisional commander ought to remain to the rear, at or close to his headquarters. Rommel was still learning the fine points of commanding a panzer division on the move and when the situation became a bit frayed he would improvise solutions. This sort of improvisation, Rommel noted derisively, was mistaken by a frightened "General Staff major" as a sign "the command of the division [was] no longer secure."

But in this case at least Rommel had judged correctly. The effects of his aggressive night advance on an already shaken French Ninth Army had been decisive. The French units became more disorganized and more demoralized the deeper Rommel drove into their lines. Now Martin's XI Corps and Bouffett's II Corps had been all but destroyed. Corap's army had virtually ceased to exist. Of the 70,000 troops it began the campaign with, only 7,000 remained. For his actions during these days after crossing the Meuse, Rommel was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. Rommel mentions Hanke presenting him the decoration on May 26 "on behalf of the Führer" and relaying Hitler's regards, rather unusual duties for a junior officer. Rommel later returned the favor, recommending Hanke for the Iron Cross.

The 17th was spent consolidating his rather precarious position. Rommel left the panzer battalions at Le Câteau in a defensive hedgehog and hastened back toward Avesnes with a single tank providing escort. The tank broke down, leaving Rommel in the midst of many French troops, still bewildered and shocked by recent events. He was lucky to escape capture. Eventually some 10,000 prisoners would be rounded up. The rest of the division, to Rommel's probable frustration, was only just arriving in Avesnes. He personally led the remaining panzer battalion and the 37th Armored Reconnaissance battalion westward to link up with Rothenburg's hedgehog, but not before fighting a sharp engagement with French tanks of a light mechanized division, the 1st DLM (Division Légère Méchanique), that had taken up blocking positions between Landrecies and Le Câteau.

Finally reaching Rothenburg, who had been fending off attacks by French tanks himself, Rommel was surprised to learn that for some unknown reason a supply column had not made it through with him. There was no choice but to dispatch units back to Avesnes again to ensure the supply columns could get through. Rommel recorded that the situation was not cleared up until 3 PM.

After this pause Rommel received orders from Hoth shortly after midnight on May 18 to push on to Cambrai, some 15 miles west of Le Câteau. Apparently the panzer regiment would not be ready to move until much later in the day, but Rommel was not about to wait. A composite battle group named Battalion Paris and consisting of mostly motorized infantry along with a few tanks and self-propelled flak guns, was dispatched. Throwing up a cloud of dust and firing occasionally, the column of mostly soft-skinned vehicles managed to convince the defenders they were facing a major armored assault. By nightfall on the 18th the town had been captured.

The 19th was spent regrouping and allowing the exhausted panzer crews to rest. Rommel, meeting with Hoth, demanded that he be allowed to make another night attack to seize the high ground south of Arras. Hoth did not think the troops sufficiently rested but was persuaded by Rommel's reasoning that a successful night attack would mean fewer casualties.

In the early morning darkness of the 20th, the panzers were again on the move with Rommel characteristically in the lead. They reached the village of Beaurains, about two and a half miles south of Arras, at about 5 AM. As had happened during his daring Avesnes raid, the motorized infantry regiments did not maintain contact with the panzers, falling well behind. Rommel again retraced his steps, attempting to make contact with them, and again was nearly captured.

Horne wrote, "French cavalry tanks [were] infiltrating across his lines of communication. These knocked out Rommel's accompanying tanks and for several hours he and his Signals Staff were surrounded." The rest of May 20 was spent clearing up the situation and bringing the infantry and artillery forward.

Units of the SS Totenkopf (Deaths Head) Division were coming up on his left to help cover that flank. The 5th Panzer Division would be coming up on his right, but for the moment he decided to cover that flank with infantry and artillery. The armored reconnaissance battalion was in the rear, most likely for the division's logistical "tail," given the problems of the previous days.

There were rumors of British and French divisions concentrating near Arras, but given all that had transpired so far Rommel dismissed them and continued with his own plans. The 25th Panzer Regiment would lead the advance around Arras to the northwest. Meanwhile, the tanks of Guderian's and Reinhardt's corps were pacing Rommel's troops. Guderian's 2nd Panzer Division reached the English Channel at Noyelles-sur-Mer around 8 PM. A narrow panzer corridor now split the Allies in two.

Some 250,000 British and French soldiers had been cut off from their main supply bases in the interior of France. Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, had been on the job less than two weeks. Even so, he instinctively grasped there was an opportunity. He likened the German panzer divisions, far out in front of the forced-marching infantry, to a tortoise sticking its head out of its shell.

At his behest, Sir Edmund Ironside, chief of the Imperial General Staff, arrived at British Expeditionary Force (BEF) headquarters in northeastern France on the morning of May 20. Meeting with Lord Gort, the commander of the BEF, he indicated that in spite of recent events the British government was completely hostile to the idea of withdrawing from the Continent. Instead, he suggested Gort ought to stage a breakout to the southwest of a town named Arras.

(It is worth pointing out that Gort himself had held the position of CIGS prior to the outbreak of the war in 1939 and his appointment to command the BEF. Up until this point in his career he had never commanded a force larger than a brigade.)

Gort was skeptical. He could ill afford to draw off any of the seven divisions currently occupying the main front on the Escaut, lest he create a gap and lose contact with the already shaky Belgian Army on his left. He agreed the panzer corridor must be cut before the German infantry could catch up to reinforce it, but, he insisted, it would have to be a predominantly French operation. The best he could do at the moment, he told Ironside, was continue with an already planned counterattack by two divisions advancing south of Arras. The attack he envisioned, to be led by Maj. Gen. H.E. Franklyn, commander of 5th Infantry Division, was to cut German communications and block the roads south from Arras.

Major General Giffard le Quesne Martel, commander of the British 50th Infantry Division, had been selected to lead the attacking troops. As planned by Martel, the advance would be carried out by two mobile columns, each to consist of a tank battalion, an infantry battalion from the 151st Brigade, a battery of field artillery, and a battery of antitank guns, with a company of motorcyclists for reconnaissance. Fifty-eight Mark I and just 16 Mark II tanks were all it could muster for the attack. Many were in urgent need of a thorough overhaul, particularly their treads, which would crack and break after only limited use.

The attack was destined to be severely handicapped. According to author George Forty, it "suffered from a complete lack of air support, had little artillery support, no infantry/tank radio communications, [the units had] never operated together before meeting in the concentration area and worst of all, had left in such a hurry that proper orders had never been passed down to individual tank commanders." French participation would be limited to about 60 tanks from a cavalry corps covering the western flank of the right-hand column.

Rommel had given orders for the 25th Panzer Regiment to advance northwest of Arras toward Lille via Acq, a small village on the north bank of the Scarpe River. Observing the panzers forming up, he had no doubt this new thrust into enemy territory would be as successful as all those the regiment had launched in the preceding days. He wished to accompany it in person but, once again, the infantry had been slow to follow up, so he hastened back in search of von Bismarck's 7th Motorized Infantry Regiment. It was nowhere to be found.

Instead, Rommel came across a portion of the 6th Motorized Infantry Regiment on the road between Ficheux and Wailly. Accompanying it he arrived in Wailly only to find the German forces in the streets in chaos. Tanks from the 7th Royal Tank Regiment, part of Martel's right-hand column, were closing on the northern edge of the village from two directions, and their fire was creating havoc.

ABOVE: The five-man crew of a short-barreled Panzer IV ride on the outside of their tank, confident that the German Luftwaffe had cleared the skies of Allied fighters. OPPOSITE: British General Victor Fortune (right) surrenders the 51st Highland Division to Rommel and his staff.

The situation, Rommel wrote, was an "extremely tight spot," the retreating infantry sweeping up gun crews along with them. Immediate action was required. With the help of his aide, Joachim Most, Rommel rallied the gun crews and brought every available weapon into action. It was Rommel's opinion that only heavy and rapid fire from every available gun, both antitank and antiaircraft, could reverse the situation.

Rommel's life was certainly in great danger at this time. Most was killed only a few feet away just as the British began to withdraw. At another point Rommel and his telegraphist were cornered in a shell hole by a British tank. Instead of killing or capturing him, the tank crew exited the tank and gave themselves up. The driver had been killed, and the tank was crippled.

Rommel was deeply involved in deploying the 20mm antiaircraft guns at his disposal to repulse Martel's right-hand column. He had no influence on the halting of the left-hand column, which was stopped in its tracks by 105mm and 88mm guns firing over open sights as the tanks of the left-column broke into the open country at Beaurains. One 88mm battery claimed to have destroyed nine tanks. Rommel spoke by radio at 7 PM with the 25th Panzer Regiment, which had reached its objectives and was waiting for the rest of the division. He ordered it to turn southeast and attack both Walrus and Duisans during the evening. It ran afoul of the infantry and antitank guns that had been detached there, eventually broke through them, and then engaged in a fierce tank duel south of Agnez as it pulled back to its start line. Seven British tanks were knocked out at a cost of nine German.

The war diary of the 7th Panzer Division admits the following losses on May 21: 89 killed, 116 wounded, and 173 missing. This was four times as many losses as the division had suffered during the breakout from the Meuse. The 25th Panzer Regiment had lost as many as 30 vehicles, including six Czech PzKpfw 38(t) and three PzKpfw IV tanks. The Totenkopf Division recorded losses of 39 dead, 66 wounded, and two missing. The British claimed 400 prisoners, a total that does not match German figures. It is possible the number of German missing was deliberately under-reported.

British and French casualties had, however, been just as heavy, particularly in equipment. Of the 58 Mark I tanks only 26 remained, and of the 16 Mark II tanks only two remained. The rest, many of which needed maintenance, were harassed by German Ju-87 Stuka dive-bombers.

In the days following the engagement at Arras, Rommel continued to push north, crossing the la Bassee Canal west of Lens, and at midday on May 26, he was given temporary command of the tanks in 5th Panzer Division for the assault toward Lille. Between May 27 and June 1, Rommel helped establish defensive positions outside Lille, fending off French attacks before being relieved by German infantry.

Summoned to see Hitler on June 2 while his division refitted for the second phase of the campaign, Rommel proudly wrote his wife that during the meeting on June 3 he was the only divisional commander who had been allowed to accompany Hitler. For his part, Hitler told Rommel, "we were all worried for you during the attack."

The 7th Panzer Division would enjoy another run of virtually uninterrupted success the moment the German invasion was resumed on June 5. The French had adopted a defense in depth by this time and occasionally inflicted sharp losses on the advancing Germans, but they had lost most of their best troops and equipment

and the BEF had been evicted from the Continent. German victory was only a matter of time. Breaching the French line at the Somme River between Abbeville and Amiens, the rapid advance quickly transformed into a rout.

Rouen was reached on June 8; St. Valéry, between Le Havre and Dieppe, on the 11th; and Cherbourg on the 18th. Rommel, writing home to his wife from Rennes on June 21, described the second phase of the campaign as resembling a pleasant "lightning tour of France." When the armistice between Germany and France went into effect on the 25th, the 7th Panzer Division was fewer than 200 miles from the Spanish frontier. During the execution of Plan Gelb, at the cost of less than 2,500 casualties and 42 tanks destroyed (highest of Germany's 10 panzer divisions), Rommel's division had captured 97,648 prisoners, 277 field guns, 64 antitank guns, 458 tanks and armored cars, and more than 4,000 trucks in addition to enormous amounts of supplies.

Germany's campaign in France and the Low Countries in May and June 1940 has been characterized—both at the time and since—as "the greatest battle of annihilation of all time."

Author John Ellis wrote that the German Army "had defeated a highly rated enemy, superior in both numbers and equipment, in just 46 days."

The armies of Holland, Belgium, France, and Britain had been routed by a German Army lacking both material and numerical superiority and in spite of their having been allowed nine months in which to prepare their defenses in a theater of operations large enough to have afforded ample opportunity to buy time through a considered strategic withdrawal.

Germany, for its part, misunderstood the basis of its astonishing victory and underestimated the willingness of the Allies to fight on. Hitler became convinced that his armies could not be beaten.

Rommel, who at the time had no idea Hitler's thirst for conquest was nearly unquenchable, probably expected the war to be over in 1940. He wrote, "How wonderful it's all been."

The exploits of the Gespensterdivision (Ghost Division), as the Germans called 7th Panzer, or *la division fantôme* (the phantom division), as the French referred to it, during the stunning conquest of France delighted Rommel's benefactors and virtually assured further advancement. To drive the point home Rommel spent part of the summer of 1940, at Goebbels' request, assisting in the production of the propaganda film *Victory in the West*. The counterattack at Arras is the only Allied offensive action mentioned in the entire film.

Time was also spent preparing for the crossing of the English Channel and the invasion of Great Britain, code-named Operation Sea Lion, but the invasion was canceled when the necessary precondition—air superiority over the Channel and southern England—was never achieved.

Rommel also published the war diary of the 7th Panzer Division in book form, a copy of which was presented to Hitler by Rommel's friend, Rudolf Schmundt. Hitler was impressed to the extent that he wrote a letter, dated December 20, 1940, telling Rommel, "You can be proud of your achievements."

Promotion came in January 1941, when Rommel was elevated to the rank of lieutenant general and sent to Libya to spearhead Operation Sonnenblume (Sunflower) as commander of the Afrika Korps. There, in North Africa, he would eventually earn his field marshal's baton and cement his reputation as the Desert Fox. □

Dr. Michael A. Rinella has published numerous works on military topics. He most recently served as senior acquisitions editor for the State University of New York Press. He resides in Albany, New York.

An American M4 Sherman tank, armed with a high-velocity 75mm cannon, climbs the bank of Suicide Creek near Cape Gloucester on the island of New Britain during an attack on Japanese strongpoints. American armor proved superior to Japanese tanks in the Pacific. Japanese military planners had neglected the value of armored vehicles during the prewar years.

All photos: National Archives

The Incessant Rains of the Green Inferno

THE HORRIFIC WEATHER AND TERRAIN OF CAPE GLOUCESTER PROVED AS DANGEROUS AS THE ENEMY.

BY AL HEMINGWAY

AS DAWN BROKE ON DECEMBER 26, 1943, THE UNMISTAKABLE SILHOUETTES OF American warships could be easily seen by the Japanese defenders on New Britain Island. Likewise, the combat-laden infantrymen of the 1st Marine Division could make out the outline of Mount Talawe, a towering mile-high mountain that was located on the northwestern end of the island in a region known as Cape Gloucester, the main target of the U.S. invasion force.

For 90 minutes, U.S. and Australian destroyers pounded suspected Japanese positions. Because of the thick jungle, it was impossible to see if the naval bombardment had any positive effect. Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) rocket ships let loose a fusillade to further harass the enemy.

Soon after, U.S. Army Air Corps B-24 Liberator and B-25 Mitchell bombers roared overhead and swooped down on the area, dropping 500-pound bombs on selected targets. At least one bomb scored a hit as a huge fiery mushroom cloud billowed skyward after an enemy fuel dump was struck. When the heavier bombers had completed their work, Douglas A-20 Havoc aircraft flew in to strafe additional targets.

By 7:45 AM, Colonel Julian N. Frisbee's 7th Marines were the first to head to shore. His battalions hit Yellow Beach 1 and 2 against no opposition from the Japanese—but plenty from the viscid undergrowth that was situated at the water's edge. About 30 minutes later, the 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines arrived on the right flank. Their mission was to disembark and move westward along a coastal road and capture the airfield. The 1st Marine Division was about to begin its second major amphibious operation of World War II—but this time under the command of the inimitable General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Southwest Pacific Area.

The New Britain campaign was the first combat operation since the division returned from Guadalcanal in early 1943 after six months of bitter jungle fighting. While the Marines recuperated in Melbourne, Australia, the high command was busy planning its next move against the Japanese.

MacArthur was in the midst of retaking New Guinea from the Japanese. His staff had devised a multiphased plan dubbed Operation Cartwheel. The first objective was Chronicle, the occupation of Kirwina and Woodlark Islands. Next was Postern, which would seize Lae, Salamaua,

ABOVE: Lieutenant General Yashushi Sakai led the largest contingent of defending Japanese forces on New Britain, a single infantry division located in the central and western portion of the large island. TOP: A landing craft carries U.S. troops toward the invasion beach at Cape Gloucester. The great Japanese base at Rabaul was also located on the island, however, U.S. forces did not attempt a direct assault on the fortress.

Finschhafen, and the Madang area, in New Guinea. Last was Dexterity, which called for the occupation of western New Britain.

Since the 1st Marine Division was in Australia, it fell under MacArthur's jurisdiction. The egotistical officer was extremely pleased and often referred to the unit as "my Marines." He urgently needed a highly trained unit to capture the all-important airstrip at Cape Gloucester on New Britain and protect his flank from enemy air strikes that emanated from there. The operations collectively were code-named Backhander.

In addition to their role in the Gloucester campaign, MacArthur had bigger ideas for his Marines. He wanted to stage an amphibious assault against the enemy fortress at Rabaul. Situated on the northeast point of New Britain, the sprawling base was the hub for resupplying Japanese units in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It was also utilized as a naval base. The enemy had landed there in January 1942 and had quickly transformed the once sleepy community into a huge installation that boasted airfields and barracks with more than 100,000 defenders.

Since leaving the Philippines, MacArthur had eyed Rabaul as one of the main objectives that stood in the way of his triumphant return to the Philippines. He opted to pummel the stronghold from the air. While this was transpiring, he attacked eastern New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to move closer to the base.

By October 1943, however, plans to assault Rabaul were scrapped. Military strategists were keenly aware that attacking such a well-defended position would be costly in terms of time and, more importantly, human lives.

While devising the upcoming operation to seize Cape Gloucester, MacArthur's planners had split the Marine units, something that the irascible Maj. Gen. William H. Rupertus, commanding the 1st Marine Division, had vehemently opposed. Also, the U.S. Army's 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment was scheduled to be dropped thousands of yards inland to link up with the advancing leathernecks. "Jungle-conscious" Marine Guadalcanal veterans contested this maneuver. The movements of these widely dispersed forces, they believed, would prove extremely difficult in such rugged terrain.

On December 14, MacArthur and Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, Sixth Army commander, visited the 1st Marine Division command post to discuss the operation. After a briefing by Division Operations Officer Colonel Edwin Pollock, MacArthur asked if they approved of the plan.

Pollock disregarded his superiors and informed MacArthur "that the Marines did not like any part of it." He then proceeded to explain their objections to a proposal that looked good on paper but, in reality, was strategically unsound. Although taken aback by Pollock's frankness, MacArthur listened and "after another perfunctory remark or two he strode from the meeting."

The strong protest from the Marines paid off. Shortly after the discussion, a memo was received stating, "as a result of the conference held ... on 14 December, decision was made to eliminate paratroops from BACKHANDER operation." The leathernecks would also remain intact as a division.

General Hitoshi Imamura, the highest ranking Japanese officer on New Britain, had his headquarters at Rabaul. His command, the Eighth Area Army, contained the 17th and 18th Armies, which were scattered throughout the Southwest Pacific. Three of his divisions from the 18th were fighting on northern New Guinea, while units from the 17th were operating on Bougainville in the northern Solomons.

Not much was left for New Britain. One lone division was in the central and western portion of the massive island, led by Lt. Gen. Yasushi Sakai, and one solitary brigade was responsible for the defense of the region from Iboki in the north to Arawe in the south. Designated the 65th Brigade, it was commanded by Maj. Gen. Iwao Matsuda, whose expertise was in transportation, not infantry tactics. His polyglot force consisted of the 141st Infantry, which was combat tested in the Philippines, headed by Colonel Kenshiro Katayama. The other unit, the 53rd Infantry, was commanded by Colonel Koki Sumiya. Colonel Jiro Sato's 51st Reconnaissance Regiment completed the main force.

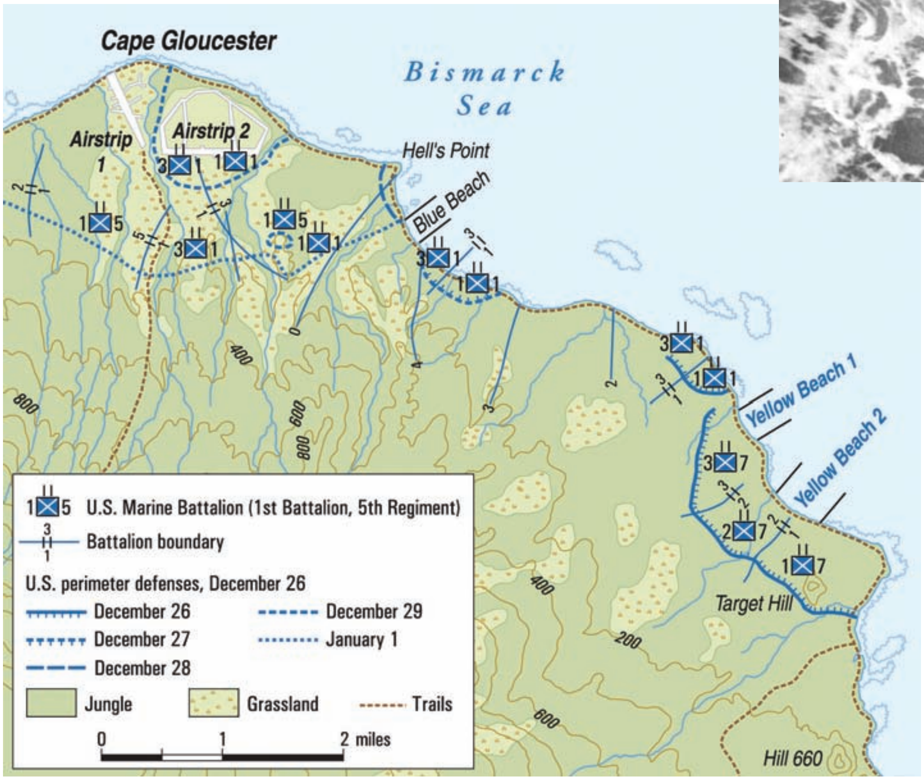
Thousands of support personnel were recruited to fill the ranks of these depleted commands. These orphan units were handed the difficult assignment of defeating the Marines in western New Britain. In all, the Japanese totaled a little more than 12,000; however, many were noninfantry with no combat experience.

To make matters worse, the terrain that Matsuda's troops occupied was far-reaching and exceptionally demanding for maneuver because of the swampy morass and dense rain forests that dotted the land. A variety of insect life, reptiles, and other creatures inhabited these jungles as well. According to the official records: "Decay lies everywhere just under the exotic lushness, emitting an indescribable odor unforgettable to anyone who has lived it. Insect life flourishes prodigiously: disease-bearing mosquitoes and ticks, spiders the size of dinner plates, wasps three inches long, scorpions, centipedes."

Matsuda, however, was a resourceful leader and deployed his men to the west and south where, he felt, the enemy posed the greatest threat. The 53rd Infantry, about 4,000 strong, established positions near the airdrome and adjacent to Borgen Bay. The 141st was scattered in the south and east.

Although morale was sinking, these men still considered themselves superior to any American soldier. They were imbued with the warrior spirit, known as the Bushido Code, the way of the Samurai. Their honor was at stake, and they would fight to the death no matter how many leathernecks came ashore.

BELOW: U.S. Marines hit the beaches at Cape Gloucester on the day after Christmas 1943. They moved rapidly to isolate and capture airstrips constructed by the Japanese and high ground on the island. RIGHT: Laden with combat gear, U.S. Marines hold their M-1 rifles high above their heads and wade ashore in the pounding surf at Cape Gloucester on December 26, 1943. Days of difficult fighting lay ahead for the Americans.



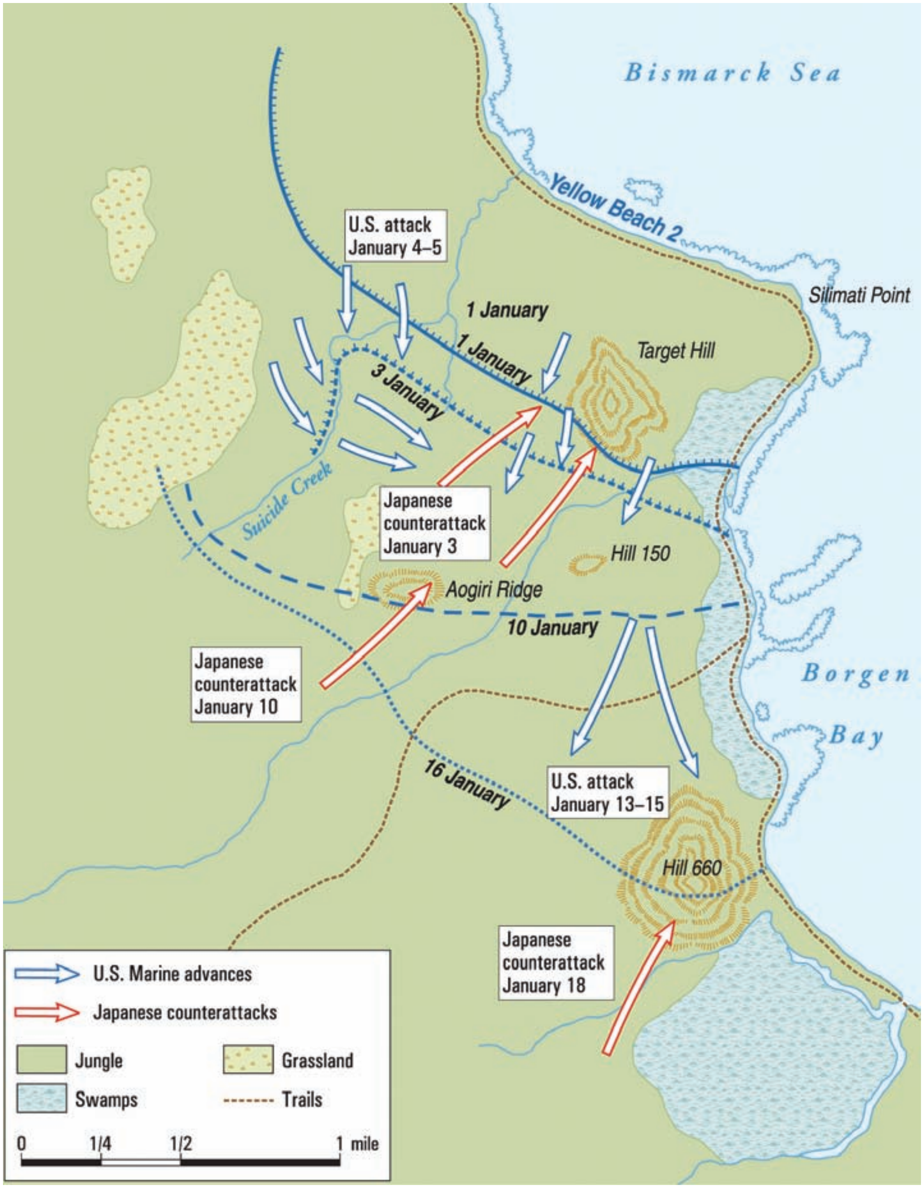
Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

A week and a half prior to the invasion of Cape Gloucester, the U.S. Army's 112th Cavalry Regiment disembarked at Arawe on New Britain's southwest shore. Originally, its objective was to clear the area to erect a radar site and a PT boat base. Both of these objectives would prevent Japanese air and land forces from coming to the aid of the units defending the Cape Gloucester region to the north.

Ultimately, both of these goals were scrapped. The landings were simply a distraction for the main one at Gloucester. Reinforced by the 158th Regimental Combat Team and the Marines of Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, the cavalrymen nevertheless drove the enemy from the nearby airfield. By February, Arawe was secure.

Meanwhile, the Japanese did not have long to wait for the arrival of the Marines. As the

Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



Thrust and counterthrust marked the first weeks of operations at Cape Gloucester. Japanese attempts to contain the American beachhead failed, but counterattacks continued as the U.S. troops moved inland toward Hill 660, Aogiri Ridge, and Target Hill.

sun's first rays peered over the horizon, one of Colonel Sato's forward observers saw the American flotilla near the northern coast of the island; their obvious objective was Cape Gloucester with its all-important air strip. Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey had taken his Task Force 76 northward from Buna harbor in New Guinea, through the narrow Vitiaz Strait, and moved eastward to approach Cape Gloucester from the northwest.

The Japanese 53rd Infantry would bear the brunt of the initial assault of the "butchers of Guadalcanal," the name given to the Marines by Tokyo Rose, the female mouthpiece of Radio Tokyo.

As the riflemen splashed ashore, they encountered little or no resistance due in large part to the plant life and shrubbery that encroached on the entire area right to the water's edge. Matsuda had established positions on either side of the dense jungle. The Marine landings had fortuitously separated the two enemy forces and cut them off from each other.

About 7:45 AM, Lt. Col. William R. Williams's 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines hit the beach. Several minutes later the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, under Lt. Col. John E. Weber, did likewise. It was not the familiar chatter of Japanese Nambu machine guns that greeted them but a wall of solid green foliage. Soon, the noise of men hacking away at the underbrush with machetes could be heard—a sound that would become all too familiar during the ensuing weeks. Before long, the Marines began calling Cape Gloucester the Green Inferno, and for good reason.

The advancing columns soon came upon an open stretch of ground referred to as the "Damp Flats." Said one disgusted infantryman: "Time and again members of our column would fall into waist-high sink holes and have to be pulled out. A slip meant a broken or wrenched leg."

Marines were swallowed up by the oozy muck that resembled quicksand. Heavily laden leathernecks could not pull themselves up if they were unlucky enough to become stuck. They would have to rely on their fellow Marines to assist. Another hazard were giant trees that were rotted or had been struck by shrapnel from the naval gunfire or aircraft that had strafed the area earlier. The slightest tremor would cause them to topple over with a resounding crash. Sadly, the first casualty at Cape Gloucester was produced by a falling tree.

As the 1st Marines pushed forward, Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines seized Target Hill. Company A knocked out a 75mm gun emplacement that luckily could not be swung around so it could pour fire on the landing craft when the leathernecks had come ashore. As the 1st Battalion set up positions, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines advanced 900 yards inland, establishing a defensive perimeter in the center of the line.

As the 7th Marines were involved in minor skirmishes, the 1st Marines made their way to the airdrome. Company K, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines spearheaded the attack. As the riflemen moved toward their objective, they ran headlong into a series of rifle pits and interlocking trenches. The assault, unfortunately, did not go according to plan. The shells from the bazookas just bounced off the bunkers, which were covered with soft dirt, inflicting little or no damage. Flamethrowers were brought up but failed to ignite no doubt due in part to the excessive dampness.

An Amtrac drove forward to resupply the men with ammunition. With its .50-caliber Browning machine guns blazing, it pushed ahead to provide covering fire. Unfortunately, the tracked vehicle became bogged down when it lodged itself between a pair of trees. The Japanese emerged from their bunkers and piled on the Amtrac, killing the two machine gunners. The driver, however, managed to extricate himself and rushed forward, driving over one of the enemy positions. The weight of the vehicle caused the bunker to collapse, and the leathernecks swarmed over the emplacement, killing all of its occupants with grenades and

Thick jungle and heavy rains impeded the American advance at Cape Gloucester. However, tanks were employed despite the deplorable conditions and rugged terrain. Here, a group of advancing Marines is covered by a tank that uses its .50-caliber machine gun for suppressing fire.

small-arms fire.

While the infantry was gaining ground, the artillery of the 1st and 4th Battalions, 11th Marines was lumbering off the LSTs (Landing Ship, Tanks). Aerial photographs taken prior to the landing had discovered a large swath of kunai grass that would be an ideal place to set up the 105mm howitzers. As the big guns moved forward, the Marines were horrified to learn that a 40-yard patch of seemingly impassable swampland hindered their advance.

To help pull the cumbersome howitzers through the thick mire, an extra set of wheels had been placed next to the guns' original tires. Once again the ubiquitous Amtrac, together with TD-9 International Harvester diesel tractors, also assisted in getting the artillery to the dry ground so the gunners could register their weapons to support the infantry. Even with the help of the tractors, equipment became trapped in the unforgiving mud.

"One of the guns and its TD-9 tractor bogged down while crossing the swamp and all that remained above the mud was five inches of the gun shield and the driver's seat, exhaust pipe and a few levers of the prime mover," recalled one Marine.

At mid-afternoon on D-day, the enemy conducted its only air strike of the campaign. Two dozen bombers and 60 fighters suddenly emerged from the clouds with their guns blazing, strafing everything in their path. At the same time, a number of Army Air Corps B-25 bombers were en route to bomb enemy positions when they became entangled with the Japanese aircraft. Navy antiaircraft gunners aboard LSTs just offshore regrettably shot down several American planes and seriously damaged two others.

The enemy planes, which had flown from Rabaul, did score some hits on a few of the ships anchored off Cape Gloucester. One American destroyer suffered extensive damage and later sank amid geysers of water caused by her exploding depth charges. An estimated 100 sailors died, and numerous others suffered from agonizing injuries. Despite this tragedy, the enemy had lost most of its aircraft in the daring daylight raid.

On the afternoon of the first day, the torrential downpours arrived. The incessant rains lasted for hours and would occur nearly every single day for the next 90 days or so that the leathernecks remained on the island. Hurricane winds blew in like a maelstrom, and bolts of lightning cracked, temporarily blinding the troops if they struck ground close by. The raucous claps of thunder were so loud it was hard to distinguish them from the sound of gunfire.

The horrible climate was proving to be as detrimental to the Marines as the Japanese. The 1st Marine Division after-action report gives a vivid description of the hardships the men faced: "Rains continued for the next five days causing the ground to become a sea of mud. Water backed up in the swamps in the rear of the shore-line making them impassible for wheeled and tracked vehicles. Amphibian tractors were the only vehicles able to transport ammunition and food to troops in the forward areas. The many streams that emptied into the sea in the beachhead area and along the route of the advance toward the airfield became raging torrents and increased the difficulties of transportation. Troops were soaked to the skin and their clothes never dried out during the entire operation."

Despite the torrential downpours, Sumiya hurled his 2nd Battalion, 53rd Infantry against the center of the Marine perimeter. Fixed upon the concept of "annihilate-at-the-water's edge," he was so sure he could defeat the leathernecks that he did not postpone the attack until the 141st Infantry could arrive on the scene to bolster his forces.

From 3 AM until daybreak, the banzai assaults struck the lines of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. Amid the crashes of thunder and the occasional flashes of lightning, the fighting, at times, was surreal. The rain came down so heavy it quickly filled the defenders' foxholes. The Marines had to get out to meet the enemy on level ground. Many of the weapons malfunctioned because of the dampness and mud. The mortar teams fired virtually by dead reckoning to support the infantry, although one officer later remarked that it was "invaluable." Augmented by Company D of the Special

Weapons Battalion, the Marines fought off the Japanese, who left 200 dead sprawled on the battlefield when the fighting was over.

Rupertus pushed his men to continue their quest to capture the airfield. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Marines met stiff opposition at a place they named Hell's Point. Here they encountered a dozen massive bunkers occupied by 20 or more enemy soldiers. Using combined tank-infantry tactics in atrocious weather conditions, the leathernecks easily destroyed the emplacements and killed most of their inhabitants. Although the Japanese had 75mm cannon, they proved ineffective against the tanks. The Marines suffered light casualties but once again the enemy sustained nearly 300 dead.

ABOVE: Heavy equipment such as this bulldozer was used to clear areas for supply depots and aid stations and to cut primitive roads through the jungle. At times, bulldozers were used in combat to silence particularly stubborn Japanese strongpoints. BELOW: During action on the first day of fighting at Cape Gloucester, three U.S. Marines take cover from Japanese fire among fallen palm trees. Two of the Marines are armed with M-1 rifles, while the man on the right carries a Thompson submachine gun.

During the battle, the Marines had a stroke of good luck. They discovered a lone enemy soldier buried up to his neck in the thick mud. This fortunate individual, although wounded in the shoulder, willingly informed them of his unit's whereabouts, size, and impending plans, which included being reinforced by the 141st Infantry. Instead of continuing the assault, it was decided to await the arrival of the 5th Marines when intelligence officers heard this information. When the fresh battalion landed, Colonel John Selden immediately conferred with Rupertus, Pollock, and 1st Marine regimental commander William J. Whaling on their next move.

The 1st Marines were ordered to press forward along the road as they had been doing. Selden's men would proceed to the left to stop any enemy that might be retreating in that direction. Both the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 5th Marines ran headlong into the miserable terrain the rest of the division had come across during the previous two days. One stream in particular varied in depth from several inches to more than five feet, hampering their progress.

Fortunately, to the Marine's amazement, the enemy offered a lackluster defense. As the 11th Marines' howitzers roared, the tanks and infantry emerged from a large stretch of rain forest to commence their move upon the airfield. As this happened, the rain miraculously halted and a brief interlude of sunshine appeared through the clouds. The tracked vehicles churned ahead with their 75mm cannon and machine guns firing, the riflemen walking

behind them for protection. During the attack, an Army amphibious DUKW with a rocket launcher mounted on it let loose a barrage of the projectiles. Soon, the 1st Marines had overrun the airfield. When the 5th Marines arrived, they immediately set up positions on its western end that extended all the way to the beach area.

With the seizure of this vital section of the island, General Rupertus wasted no time in firing off a message, dated December 31, to Krueger at Sixth Army Headquarters: "First Marine Division presents to you as an early New Year's gift the complete airdrome of Cape Gloucester. Situation well in hand due to fighting spirit of troops, the usual Marine luck and the help of God ... Rupertus grinning to Krueger."

So far, the Marines had punished the Japanese on New Britain at every action. Part of the problem for the Japanese was the ineffectiveness of their leader who was far removed from the scene. Matsuda had prepared a comfortable headquarters for himself. Situated about five miles from the beachhead, it was well equipped with all the amenities, including sake, beer, and even bottles of American Coca-Cola.

Taken by surprise at the landings, Matsuda nonetheless moved piecemeal in attempting to thwart the Marines' movement. Being so distant from the action certainly did not help the situation, and his intelligence reports had grossly underestimated the U.S. strength. He dispatched Katayama's 141st Infantry to oust the leathernecks from Target Hill, near Borgen Bay. Unknown to Matsuda, Rupertus had ordered his assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, "to clear the enemy from the Borgen Bay area." It seemed the two forces were on a collision course.

The following day, January 3, the 5th Company from the 141st Infantry, led by a Lieutenant Abe, smashed into the Marine perimeter on Target Hill. Although the Japanese had plenty of supporting fire to cover the infantry attack, it proved largely unproductive. One errant mortar shell did score a direct hit on a machine-gun emplacement, immediately killing two of the men manning the weapon. Fortunately, the gunner survived and continued firing 20 belts of ammunition to impede the enemy's progress.

At dawn, the assault weakened and died. After investigating the ground in front of their position, the leathernecks found 40 or so dead Japanese. It was later estimated that as many as 200 were killed in the botched attempt to penetrate their lines.

The body of Lieutenant Abe was also discovered. "He appeared to have all his worldly possessions with him," commented Captain Marshall W. Moore. "As well as I can remember he had on two pairs of pants, two or three shirts, a raincoat, and was carrying a heavy pack with a coat strapped to the pack. This was in addition to his sword, pistol and entrenching tool. He carried all this equipment while leading the attack up this steep hill."

ABOVE: Identified as a Corporal Shigeto, this Japanese soldier was pulled from the remains of his bunker and taken prisoner following intense fire by American guns. TOP: A dead Japanese soldier lies sprawled on the floor of the New Britain jungle. Although he was killed in action, the soldier appears to have been starving. Reports of shortages of food and water among the Japanese defenders were widespread.

Once again, the enemy had bungled an effort to deal a devastating blow to the Marines. Instead of utilizing all of his force and his supporting fire in a more effective manner, Katayama launched an all-out stab at the perimeter with an understrength company. It would be the trademark of the Japanese defense at Cape Gloucester and would ultimately prove to be their downfall.

While the Japanese were being ousted from Target Hill, Shepherd sent units swinging to the right as his left flank held firm. His riflemen soon encountered a small stream where, unknown to them, the enemy had built positions to counter their movement. The meandering river ran in a north to south direction, and here the Japanese established some extremely formidable fortifications.

As the infantrymen splashed across the stream and ascended its bank, elements of the 2nd Battalion, 53rd Infantry let loose a broadside of firepower. Unable to see their assailants, the leathernecks shot blindly into the thick underbrush hoping to hit something. It was as if "the jungle exploded in their faces," described one war correspondent. The stream was given the name "Suicide Creek."

The men quickly retreated across the stream, dragging their wounded with them. Throughout the day, patrols attempted to find a soft spot in the enemy's bulwarks. With each probe, however, they only ran into heavy automatic weapons fire. Air and artillery support were fruitless.

For the next several days, engineers from Company C, 17th Marines feverishly toiled to construct a small causeway across the coastal swamp so tanks could get across to aid the beleaguered riflemen. When the log road was finally finished, another serious problem arose. The Sherman medium tanks could not maneuver over the 12-foot-high bank of the river that blocked their way.

To remedy this, a bulldozer drove up to level the bank. Upon seeing this, the enemy concentrated its firepower on the vehicle, eventually hitting the driver. When a second Marine jumped in the driver's seat, he, too, was cut down by enemy bullets. Finally, one innovative engineer remained on the ground and controlled the dozer by using a shovel and an axe handle to complete the dangerous work. The following morning, three of the tanks cautiously made their way across the causeway and obliterated the Japanese gun emplacements with their 75mm cannon. Infantrymen shot any retreating soldiers as they scampered from their fighting holes. Forty Marines died and another 200 were wounded during this two-day battle, a high cost to pay for a small stream in the middle of a fetid jungle.

The Marines were not the only ones finding the weather and terrain of Gloucester unforgiving. In his journal, Major Shinjiro Komori, commanding a unit near Arawe, scratched these words: "Our losses to date are 65 killed, 57 wounded, and 14 missing. Ten men have perished from fever. Malaria is our main problem, with dysentery a close second. I do not know of a man who does not have one or the other, or both. Air drops become less frequent, possibly because of the loss of our airfield at Cape Gloucester. Most of our supplies are coming in under cover of darkness by barges. I am sending our most critical hospital cases of sick and wounded out with these barges. The enemy has been shelling us continually now for the last two days."

Even though they were suffering terribly, the soldiers of the emperor would not cease in their determination to hold Gloucester. A message was uncovered from the body of an officer slain during the action at Target Hill. It contained a line that baffled the Marines: "It is essential we conceal the fact that we are maintaining positions on Aogiri Ridge." Although Aogiri Ridge was not marked as such on their maps, Shepherd realized it had to be one of the hills adjacent to Target Hill. He was determined to discover where it was situated and why it was so vital to the enemy.

The assault jumped off on January 6. U.S. Army B-25s saturated the terrain with bombs while the howitzers of the 11th Marines lobbed shell after shell into the area. As the riflemen of the 7th Marines pressed forward on a front that spanned 2,500 yards, they ran into heavy fire from the center of the line. The ground "rose precipitously and terrific machine-gun fire covered every avenue of approach," according to a 1st Marine Division action report. The Japanese were defending this tract of land to the death. The leathernecks had stumbled upon an enemy supply route from the Cape Gloucester headquarters to the Borgen Bay region. "The trail was well defined, with a bridge in excellent condition crossing the swamp inland of the beach area," stated the official USMC monograph on the campaign.

Lieutenant Colonel Lewis "Silent Lew" Walt brought his 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines into the fray to reinforce the lines. Walt was no stranger to combat. As a young captain he had led a company of Raiders on Tulagi and Guadalcanal. As the men ascended the hill, many became casualties to an unseen foe. The jungle was so thick, the infantrymen could only see a few yards in front of them.

By late afternoon, Walt's battalion had miraculously managed to gain a foothold on the slope. During the fighting a 37mm cannon, the lone heavy weapon for the unit, was pushed upward to be placed into position to aid the infantry.

According to the battlefield report: "It was then that Lieutenant Colonel Walt's leadership and courage turned the tide of battle. Calling forward the 37mm gun he put his shoulder to the wheel and with the assistance of a volunteer crew pushed the gun foot by foot up Aogiri Ridge. Every few feet a volley of canister would be fired. As members of the crew were killed or wounded others ran forward to take their places. By superhuman effort the gun was finally manhandled up the steep slope and into position to sweep the ridge."

ABOVE: Looking upward, a Marine holds his rifle at the ready. Japanese soldiers, with .25-caliber Arisaka rifles, were known to have tied themselves high in the branches of trees to fire at American troops.

RIGHT: Outfitted in jungle camouflage uniforms, U.S. Marines rapidly fire a 75mm pack howitzer artillery piece on New Britain. The pack howitzer proved decisive during fighting in difficult terrain. It could be disassembled and transported where heavier artillery pieces could not be utilized.

The battle lines of the Marines and the Japanese were only 10 yards apart in certain spots. A total of 37 log and earthen bulwarks, equipped with automatic weapons and interconnecting tunnels, reached for more than 200 yards along the crest of the ridge. Exhausted from the climb (Walt himself had pulled both of his arms out of the sockets), the leathernecks dug in awaiting the inevitable banzai attack.

The Marines did not have long to wait. Just after midnight, the enemy descended upon their lines like a horde of locusts, screaming at the top of their lungs and brandishing swords over their heads.

Pharmacist Mate 1st Class Herman Billnitzer was situated near the 37mm howitzer that the Japanese wanted to eliminate. "We cut loose with all the firepower we had," he remembered. "Artillery shells were exploding and men were hollering, crying and dying. The noise was so intense you could not hear yourself scream.

"The cries, groans, screams of the dying and wounded were beyond human description—we were in the very jaws of death and hell," Billnitzer continued. "The cry for corpsman was clear … and [I moved] from one to another giving shots of morphine; few battle dressings were put on as it was totally dark. I could only feel the warm blood and give pain relief."

In all, the Japanese human waves smashed at the perimeter five times during the night. During the fourth attempt, a major and several other officers made their way behind the lines near Walt's position. As Walt knelt in the darkness, prepared to kill the Japanese officer, a burst from a mortar shell struck him down.

"The Jap major … was about 50 yrs of age and medium build," Walt later wrote. "He actually died three paces from where I was crouched .45 in hand waiting for him."

For his exceptional bravery, Walt would be awarded a Navy Cross, and Aogiri Ridge would be renamed Walt's Ridge, in his honor.

A saddle located between Hill 150 and Walt's Ridge was attacked on January 11 by the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. Once it was in their hands, Lt. Col. Henry W. Buse, Jr., and his 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines assaulted Hill 660. Supported by a special weapons task force consisting of tanks, half-tracks, 37mm field pieces, and an Army DUKW with rocket launcher, the combined arms team took the hill in three days.

With these two objectives in Marine hands, the Japanese had shot their bolt. Rupertus decided to send patrols out to cut off the retreating Japanese before they could reach the safety of Rabaul. Matsuda and a small contingent of survivors took a boat and maneuvered around the Williaumez Peninsula. The party eventually landed at Cape Hoskins, approximately 150 miles from Rabaul.

Colonel Sato and Major Komori, with about 300 men each, took different trails to make their way to Rabaul. The trek was a nightmare for the Japanese. Many were suffering from disease and fatigue. Food supplies soon ran out,

Continued on page 86

THE BATTLE OF COFFIN CORNER

As the assault troops of the 1st Marine Division were hitting Yellow Beach on D-day, December 26, 1943, the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, with attached units, were disembarking on Green Beach, southwest of the Cape Gloucester airstrip. During this phase of the operation, code-named Stoneface, the leathernecks were ordered to cut the coastal trail that snaked its way west of Mount Talawe, preventing reinforcements and supplies from reaching the airdrome.

Encountering no opposition, the riflemen hurriedly established a beachhead about 1,200 yards wide and 500 yards deep. As they pushed inland, the infantrymen discovered fortifications that had been recently occupied. It was evident from the abandoned weapons, ammunition, and packs that the Japanese had retreated when the naval bombardment began.

Lieutenant Colonel James M. Masters, Sr., the battalion commander, ordered extensive patrolling in front of the perimeter to determine the whereabouts of their elusive adversaries. Except for a few brief exchanges, one that included several Japanese officers being shot and the capture of some documents, nothing noteworthy transpired. The enemy, it seems, was nowhere to be found. In fact, when Marines did encounter them, they were usually sleeping or meandering down one of the trails, rifles slung over their shoulders, as if they were on a Sunday stroll.

On December 29, however, the Japanese awoke from their lackadaisical mood and became more aggressive. "Master's Bastards," as the 2nd Battalion Marines referred to themselves, prepared for an enemy attack on their lines. The artillerymen of Battery H, 11th Marines were quickly reorganized into an infantry platoon when they discovered that their 75mm howitzers were unsuitable to the rugged jungle terrain.

In the wee hours of December 30, the Japanese onslaught commenced. It appeared the enemy had struck at the most vulnerable part of the perimeter, the nose of the salient guarded by Company G, and the position was dubbed Coffin Corner.

"The perimeter defense was located on top of steep ridges, the approaches to which were almost perpendicular," noted Captain T.R. Galysh. "But at Coffin Corner, a natural causeway connected the defended ridges with the opposing ridges and the defense line at that particular location came to a point and consequently the defense was handicapped since a rounded front could not be presented."

Mortar teams were dropping their shells to within 15 yards of the lines as the screaming enemy pushed forward. Driven back initially, the Japanese returned, this time overrunning part of the perimeter. Lieutenant Jim Paulos led Marines from Company G plus elements of the artillery provisional rifle company in a counterattack to regain the exposed position.

Gunnery Sergeant Guiseppe Guilano, Jr., from Company H, picked up a .30-caliber Browning machine gun and fired it from his hip. The intrepid noncommissioned officer was everywhere on the battlefield with his machine gun cradled in his arms. The cry of "Guilano! Guilano!" was heard above the ear-shattering noise of the battle as the rifleman would call him when they needed extra firepower. Soon, the Japanese were hollering his name as well.

"Guilano fired for about 10 minutes until I pulled him down," wrote Paulos years later. "He was a perfect target and I needed him. The Japs made four attacks. They were in our front position in the second."

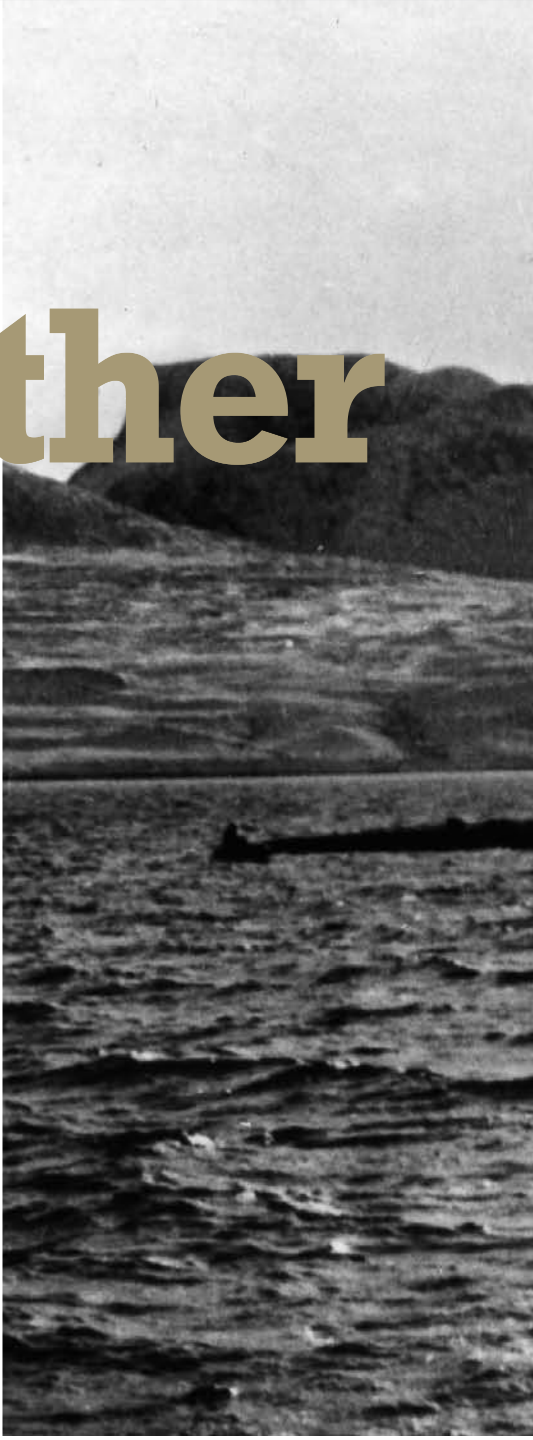
For his outstanding bravery during the action at Coffin Corner, Guilano would receive a Navy Cross. By dawn, the Marines had beaten back the attackers. They had lost six killed and 17 wounded. The enemy had sustained 89 dead, and five were taken prisoner.

For the next week or so the Marines patrolled the area extensively but had no significant encounters with the Japanese. It appeared that the Battle of Coffin Corner had broken their backs, and they eventually withdrew. Although short in duration, as with most of the action on New Britain, the skirmish was savage and bloody. By mid-January, the Stoneface Group rejoined the rest of the division in seizing the remainder of Cape Gloucester. □

To Watch the Weather

NAZI GERMANY MADE A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A WEATHER STATION IN A REMOTE REGION OF CANADA.

BY MARTY MORGAN

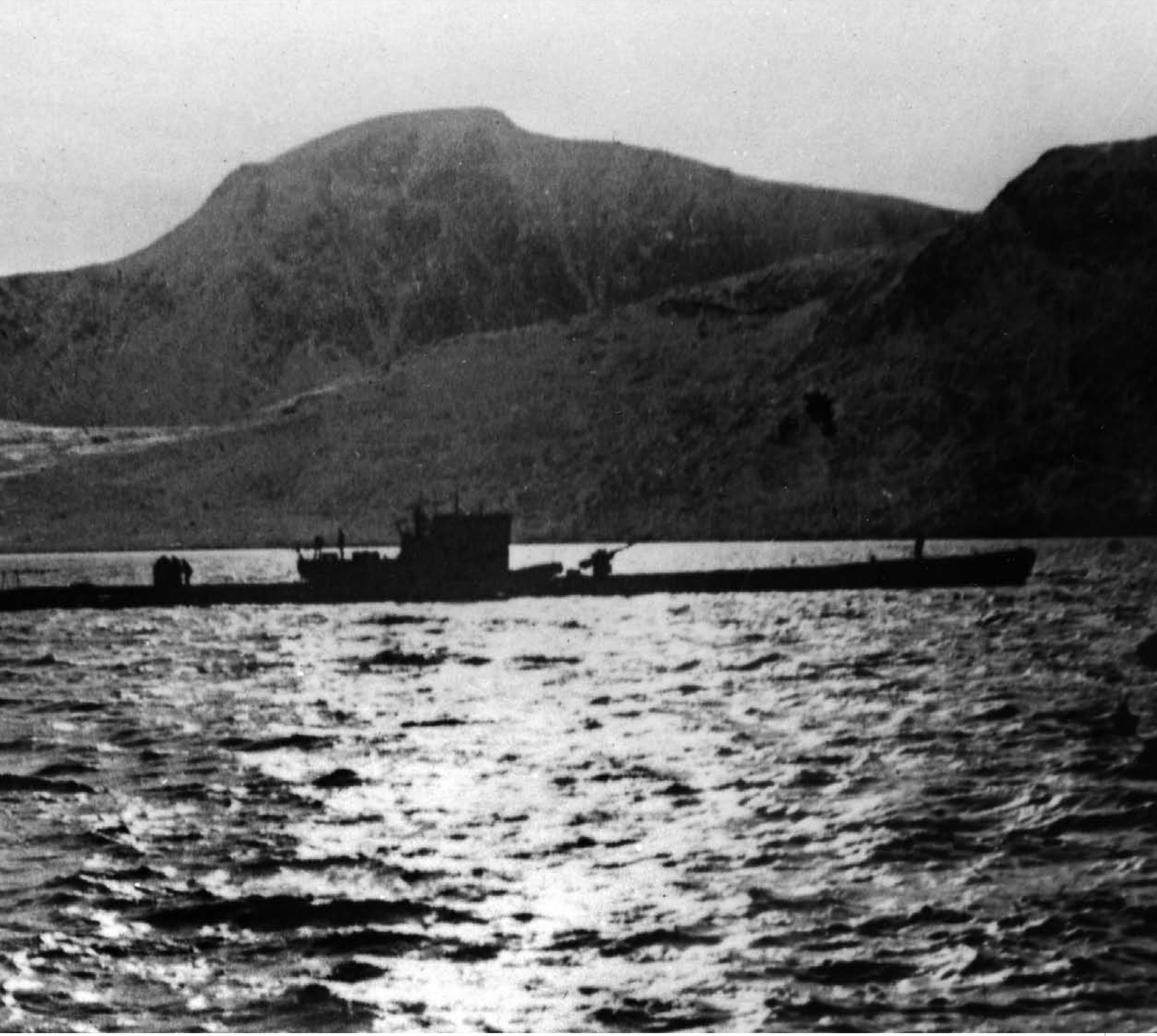


THROUGHOUT WORLD WAR II the Allies enjoyed a certain advantage over the Axis that was purely the product of geography. Because the Allied nations occupied real estate on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, their meteorologists were able to benefit from communicating with one another about weather patterns.

Prevailing weather patterns in the Northern Hemisphere generally move from west to east. During World War II this meant that a weather station in Canada could observe a particular weather event and then pass that information on to a station in Iceland, which would in turn pass it on to British meteorologists on the other side of the Atlantic. Thus, the Canadians could tell the British what kind of weather was on its way to Europe.

On countless occasions, this information was decisive in helping the Allies operate with valuable information as to climatic conditions. Conversely, the German Navy, or Kriegsmarine, enjoyed no such advantage since its meteorologists could reach no farther west than France's Bay of Biscay coastline. During the early years of the war, this issue did not present such a problem because Kriegsmarine U-boats and surface vessels all over the world enjoyed a terrific operational advantage and were capable of sending in weather reports.

The German Navy's dominance slipped as the war developed; and, as the hunter became the hunted, it transitioned from the offensive to the defensive. In the defensive and reactive mode, accurate weather forecasting became more critically important than ever to Germany.



The need to fill this weather gap led the German military to explore the idea of establishing secret weather stations on the North American continent. During the latter half of 1943, the German Meteorological Service developed the design for a weather station that could be deployed to remote Arctic islands around Greenland. Produced by the Siemens Corporation, the design was completely automated, portable, and capable of being packed through the narrow hatches of a U-boat.

After tests of the prototype resulted in an initial success, the Abwehr, German intelligence, decided to deploy a station to a remote area of northern Canada. Shortly thereafter, the submarine *U-537* departed Kiel on Germany's Baltic coast with a station aboard. After calling briefly in Bergen, the U-boat departed on September 30, 1943, and continued toward its destination, the Labrador coast of Canada. The timing of this mission was critical and called for the station to be deployed in late October while the coastal inlets near Cape Chidley remained unfrozen. Shortly after the mission

The German submarine *U-537* rides at anchor in Martin Bay on the Labrador coast of Newfoundland near Cape Chidley. Note the absence of the U-boat's Flakvierling 38 flexible quadruple 20mm antiaircraft gun, which had been torn from its mount during rough weather en route.
OPPOSITE: The automated weather station Wetter-Funkgerät Land-26 (WFL-26) was placed in North America by the Nazis during World War II and discovered by Canadian authorities in 1981. After nearly four decades of exposure to the elements, the equipment appeared in relatively good shape.

All photos: Author's Collection

When the Kriegsmarine shore party landed on the beach on the Martin Bay side of the Hutton Peninsula, it represented the one and only time that the military forces of National Socialist Germany conducted an armed landing in the Americas.

ABOVE: Outfitted against the cold, German sailors and officers of *U-537* gather on deck and atop the conning tower of the submarine as it rides in Martin Bay on the Labrador Coast of Newfoundland on October 23, 1943. BELOW: Making preparations for the landing on the Hutton Peninsula near Cape Chidley, German sailors ready rubber rafts to carry men and equipment ashore.

was to be completed, those inlets would freeze over with the coming winter, making it all the more unlikely that the Canadian authorities would either locate or dismantle the station.

The area chosen for the weather station was so extremely remote that it had only recently been surveyed. In 1931, the National Geographic Society had launched a program to survey coastal Labrador. According to the society, the survey also sought "to carry out the field work necessary for testing the new method of producing topographical maps from oblique aerial photographs."

Using a Fairchild seaplane equipped with the most modern cameras available at the time and a supporting research ship, the survey crew began working each summer season when the weather cooperated. Working its way north with each season, the survey's ultimate destination was Killiniq Island where the Labrador Sea meets Ungava Bay.

The east coast of the Labrador Peninsula is dominated by hundreds of fractured fjords, inlets, and treacherous shoals. Cape Chidley itself was later described as being "steep and bold on all sides," by a member of the team. To a large degree, the intense nature of this coastal geography was responsible for the lateness of an official and organized survey expedition. Even before the National Geographic team reached as far north as Killiniq Island and the infamous rocky cape located there, an interesting discovery was made.

In 1934, a ship captain anchored in "an excellent and probably hitherto unexplored harbor about seven miles south of Cape Chidley." Locating and charting that harbor was one of the many objectives of the National Geographic survey because it could serve as a safe anchorage for the regular shipping traffic traveling between the St. Lawrence River and the commercial markets of Europe.

In 1935, the survey team explored and charted the area near Rowland Point, the Hutton Peninsula, and the mouth of the Ikkudliayuk Fjord. What the survey found there was an anchorage with a natural depth of as much as 42 feet between the east coast of the Hutton Peninsula and the lee of Oo-olilik Island. It was called Attinaukjuke Bay or Martin Bay, and it was the "excellent and probably hitherto unexplored harbor" identified in 1934. It was also the destination of *U-537* in October 1943.

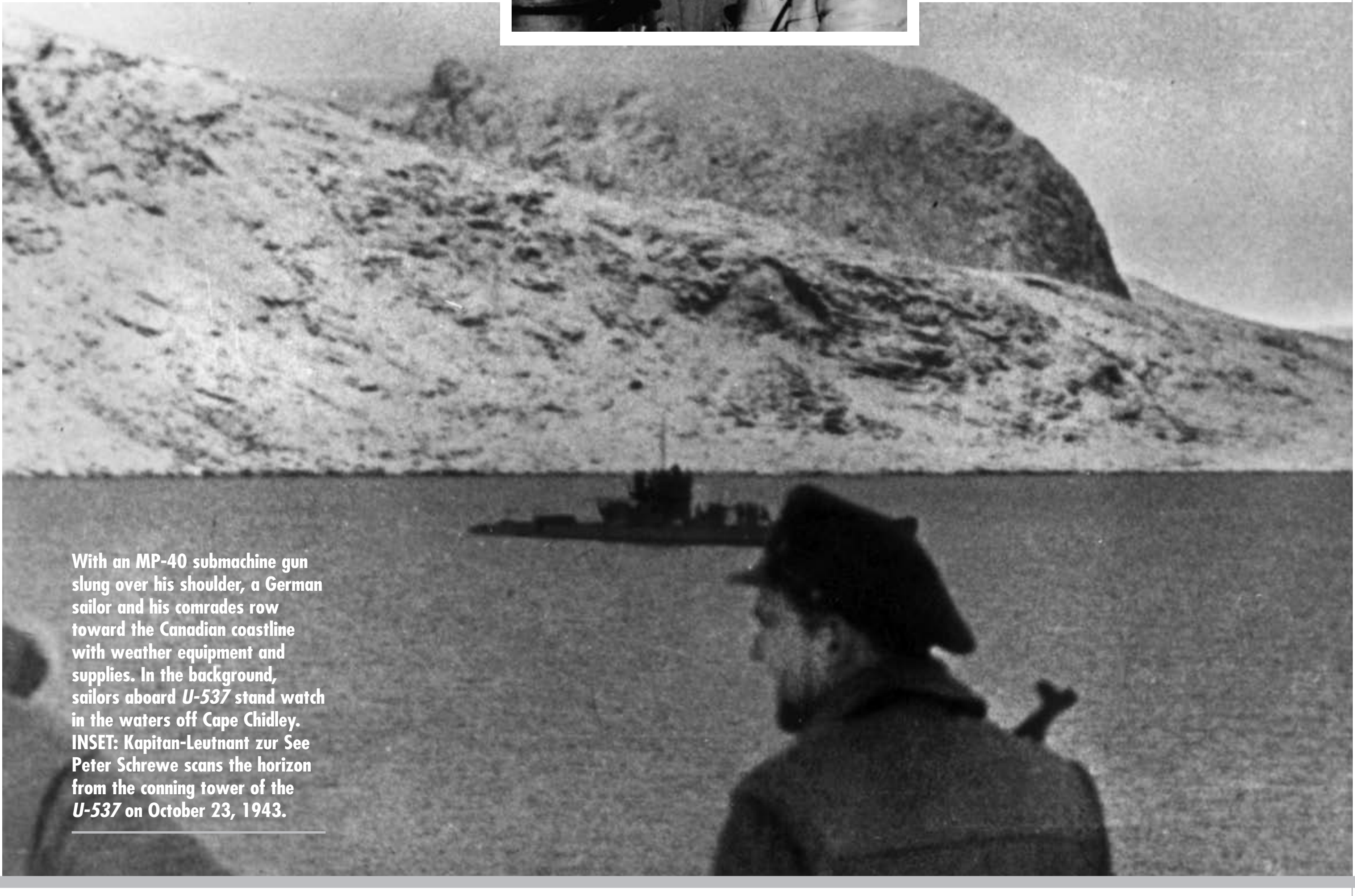
When Kapitanleutnant zur See Peter Schrewe steered *U-537* out of Bergen at the beginning of that month, he had no way of knowing what danger and excitement the next three weeks would hold. He was in command of 48 men on a Type IXC/40 U-boat, which had been manufactured by Deutsche Werft AG in Hamburg between April 1942 and January 1943. The 87 IXC/40 U-boats commissioned into Kriegsmarine service during World War II represented an improvement over the earlier Type IXC boats.

The improvements largely related to increased fuel-carrying capacity, which increased overall cruising range to approximately 13,850 nautical miles, and enhanced antiaircraft armament. In addition to the single-mount 20mm Type 30 flak gun on the tower superstructure, the IXC/40s were upgunned with the addition of a platform aft of the tower that accommodated a Flakvierling 38. This weapon was a flexible quadruple 20mm antiaircraft gun mount that more than doubled the Type IXC's ability to defend itself against aerial threats. With four weapons simultaneously firing 20mm projectiles at a cyclic rate of 450 rounds per minute, the Flakvierling 38 was capable of a practical cumulative cyclic rate of fire of over 1,800 rounds per minute. In other words, it was a weapon that could put a lot of lead in the sky at one time against an attacking airplane, and it made the IXC/40 an extremely dangerous target.

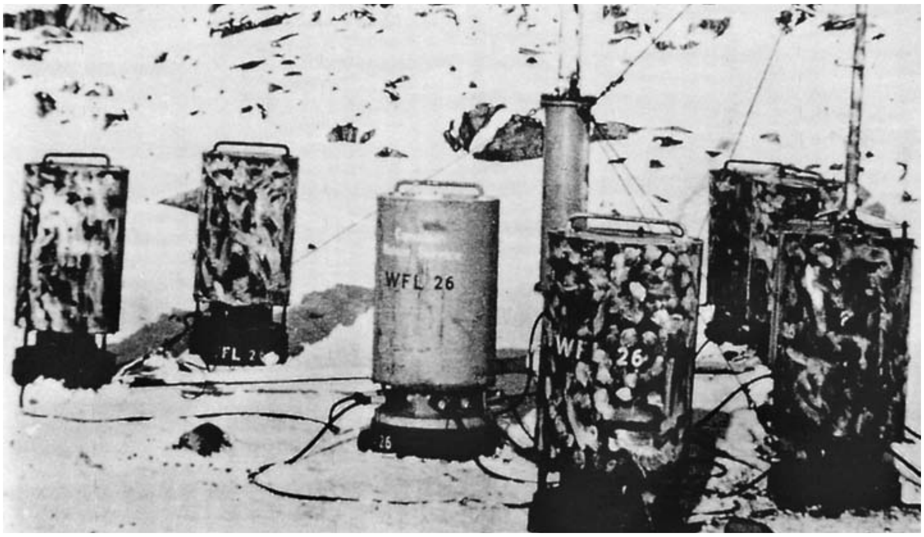
When *U-537* departed Bergen, the submarine's route took it west across the North Sea. Between the Faroe Islands and Iceland, the U-boat entered the northern stretches of the Atlantic Ocean. This route was far less traveled and promised a somewhat safer Atlantic crossing than the more heavily patrolled shipping lanes farther to the south. Dutifully, *U-537* transmitted a message to U-boat headquarters announcing that it had crossed 20 degrees west longitude.

British cryptanalysts at Bletchley Park near London intercepted that message and a series of others that followed. In connection with the mission to deliver the weather station to the Labrador coast, Schrewe had been ordered to radio in at prescribed points along the way to receive instructions. One of those points was 20 degrees west.

The following afternoon, Schrewe was instructed: "onward passage in accordance with special task." Once again, although the British intercepted and read the message, they had no idea what the "special task" was. The "onward passage" part of the message meant that *U-537* was to continue en route to Canada. The U-boat then entered a truly wretched patch of foul weather characterized by high winds, strong rain, and extreme cold temperatures, resulting in several of the crew becoming terribly seasick. The storm also had the effect of slowing the progress of the boat to a crawl.



With an MP-40 submachine gun slung over his shoulder, a German sailor and his comrades row toward the Canadian coastline with weather equipment and supplies. In the background, sailors aboard *U-537* stand watch in the waters off Cape Chidley. INSET: Kapitan-Leutnant zur See Peter Schrewe scans the horizon from the conning tower of the *U-537* on October 23, 1943.



ABOVE: Deceptively marked with the words "Canadian Weather Service" the 10 cylinders containing equipment for gathering weather data sit where they were placed by the Germans on the Labrador coast of Newfoundland in 1943. TOP: Crewmen from *U-537* rest on the rocks and serve as lookouts during the installation of the weather station. The sailors are armed with a 7.92mm MG-15 machine gun and a 9mm MP-40 submachine gun. RIGHT: Silhouetted against the northern sun, crewmen of *U-537* stand on deck as their submarine rides at anchor in Martin Bay.

Schrewe also received a rather complicated set of instructions directing the U-boat "to simulate a battle group" in a specified area by surfacing intermittently and broadcasting false wireless transmitter traffic in the form of daily weather reports. After sending one wireless message, he was ordered to submerge and move to another location and repeat the process a few dozen times. The whole ruse was designed to create the impression of a large Kriegsmarine naval task force operating in the area.

Obediently following orders, Schrewe completed the mission as instructed despite the fact that conditions were appalling for all aboard each and every time the U-boat surfaced to send the radio report. When *U-537* surfaced just after 2 PM on October 14, large swells pounded the boat. One of those swells struck with such power and violence that the Flakvierling 38, a 3,300-pound weapon, was ripped from its mounts and swept overboard.

When Schrewe transmitted a message informing U-boat headquarters of the incident, the reply questioned where the weapon had broken loose and whether or not it had been properly stowed. Schrewe responded to the questions, and the transmission was intercepted by Bletchley Park. The British, therefore, knew that *U-537* was in the North Atlantic on a "special task" and that it had just lost its primary antiaircraft gun. It was valuable intelligence, but nothing could be done about it.

At 11:49 AM on October 17, Schrewe surfaced in the North Atlantic at a prearranged location and transmitted his position as 59 degrees north, 48 degrees west, which placed *U-537* in the Labrador Sea just off the southwestern tip of Greenland. The reply came at 11:53 AM the following day and said simply, "onward passage to execute special task." This represented the final order for the U-boat to approach to the Canadian coast. Schrewe and the crew of *U-537* then continued on toward Cape Chidley.

Because of the continuing foul winter weather, progress was slow and it took another four days for the U-boat to cover the distance. Early in the evening of October 22, 1943, *U-537* anchored in Martin Bay. The crossing had been time-consuming and arduous, but it had been brought to its successful conclusion. Though the Flakvierling 38 had been lost, *U-537* rode at anchor in protected water in North America, and it was time to complete the "special task" so cryptically mentioned in the trans-

missions from headquarters.

Schrewe immediately sent a party ashore to post a lookout and scout a site for the weather station. When the Kriegsmarine shore party landed on the beach on the Martin Bay side of the Hutton Peninsula, it represented the one and only time that the military forces of National Socialist Germany conducted an armed landing in the Americas. A machine gun was placed on the heights overlooking the bay to provide some measure of protection and early warning for the U-boat riding at anchor in the cove below. A clear spot on the summit of a 170-foot hill 400 yards inland from the beach was selected for the site of the station.

At dawn on October 23, the daylong process of installing the device began. The package was a Wetter-Funkgerät Land-26 (WFL-26), nicknamed Kurt by its designer. It consisted of several pieces, including a 10-meter-tall mast mounting an anemometer, a tripod for the mast, and 10 cylinders containing other weather instruments as well as a 150-watt transmitter and dry cell, high-voltage batteries. Once assembled, Kurt would record temperature, humidity, air pressure, wind speed, and wind direction data and transmit that information to receiving stations in northern Europe every three hours. The assembly and installation of Kurt was not completed by U-boat sailors but by Professor Kurt Sommermeyer from Siemens.

Along with two technicians, Professor Sommermeyer had accompanied *U-537* on its rather uncomfortable and unpleasant Atlantic voyage. First thing in the morning on the 23rd, the team went to work with the help of several sailors, getting the apparatus ashore and up to the top of the hill. Because each piece weighed 220 pounds, it took time and muscle to bring the cylinders up from the submarine and place them aboard the launch. which then delivered them ashore. More time and muscle were needed to move the cylinders from the beach to the hilltop site where Kurt would be assembled.

As soon as all of the pieces of the Kurt package were in position, Professor Sommermeyer and his technicians spent the rest of the day assembling and testing it. Each of the pieces of the WFL-26 station were marked "Canadian Weather Service," which is noteworthy only because no such government entity existed at the time.

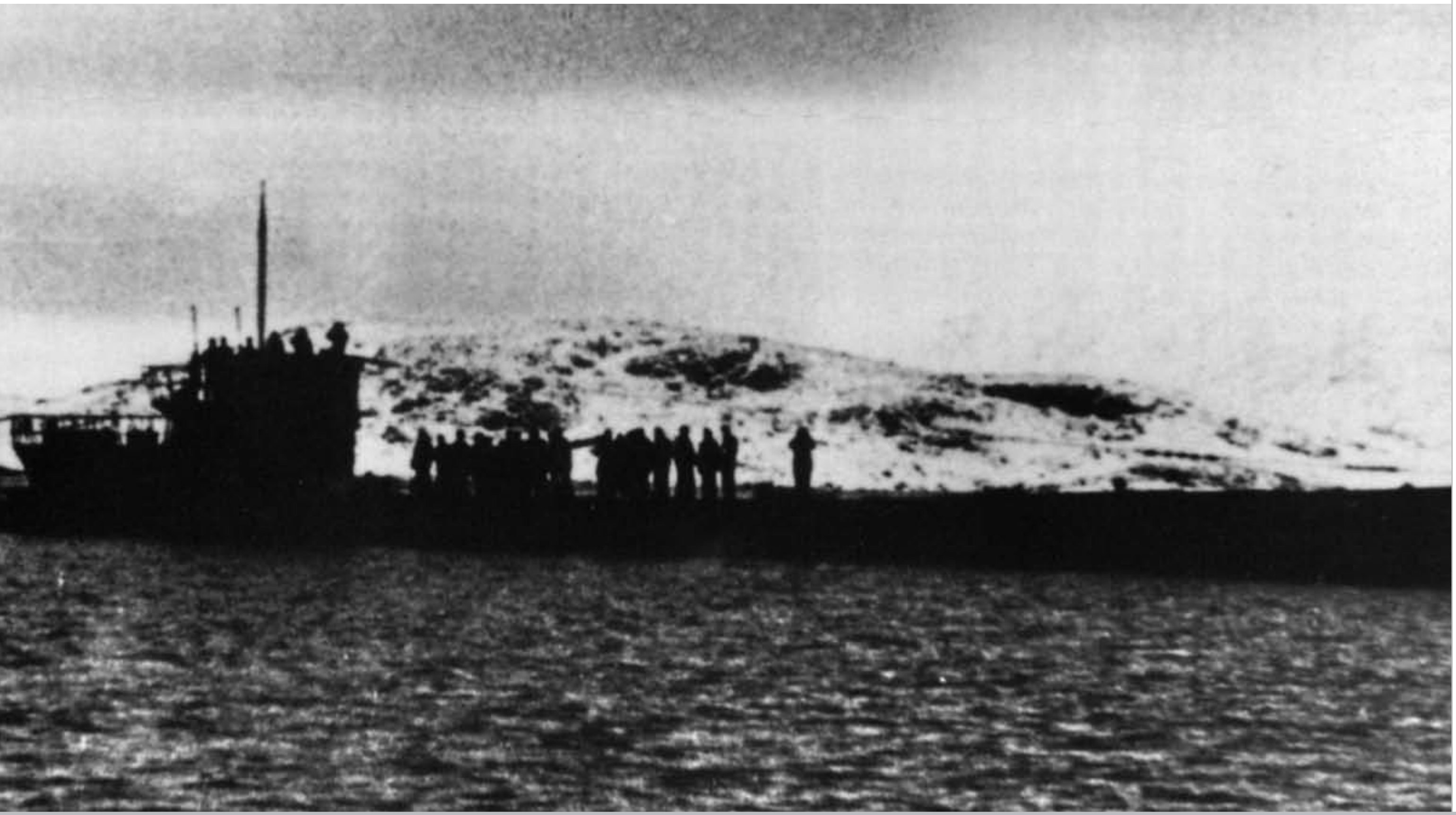
By late afternoon everyone was back aboard ship, which allowed *U-537* to weigh anchor and depart at 5:40 PM. *U-537* cruised out to sea far enough to submerge completely and then paused on the bottom long enough to confirm that the 150-watt Lorenz FK transmitter was broadcasting. Kurt was in place and functioning. Earlier that morning, Schrewe received a message from headquarters that instructed him as to what to do next: "On completion of task move off 300 miles and report execution by short signal. Then freedom of action in square Gruen UE and to eastward thereof."

Schrewe insisted on periodically surfacing to check for a signal from Kurt, but there was nothing. Once again, Germany's best efforts to gain an advantage had met with frustration. Not willing to accept defeat, the Kriegsmarine made another attempt the following season when a second Kurt was loaded aboard *U-867* in early September 1944. With the plan that it would be installed in roughly the same area on the Labrador coast as the first Kurt, the U-boat would follow the same basic track that *U-537* had the previous year. But *U-867* never reached its destination. A Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber from Royal Air Force No. 224 Squadron sank it northwest of Bergen on September 18.

The Abwehr seemed to be cursed with a run of very bad luck.

U-537 did not survive the war. The U-boat was sunk with all hands by torpedoes from the submarine USS *Flounder* in the Java Sea on November 9, 1944. It was later reported that Canadian authorities did not locate the remnants of the Kurt weather station until 1981. □

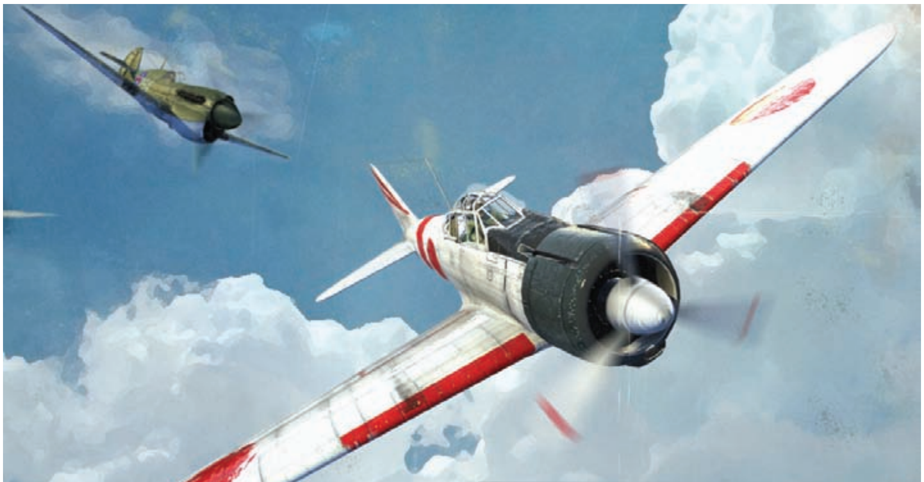
First-time contributor Marty Martin resides in New Orleans, Louisiana.

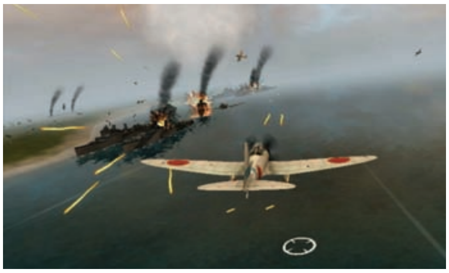


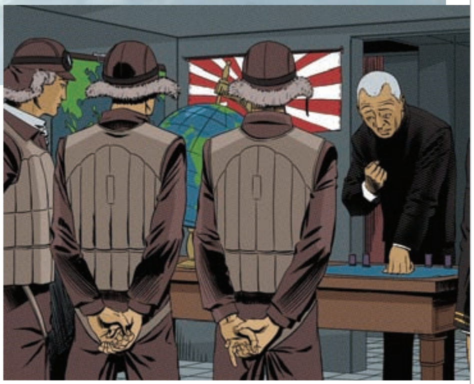
By Joseph Luster

PEARL HARBOR TRILOGY: RED SUN RISING

This dogfighting game takes advantage of the Wii's motion controls.







The concept of a beefy but downloadable Wii dogfighting series seems like a surefire bet. Though visual flare isn't necessarily one of the strong suits of Nintendo's console, there are other more valuable assets that work well for the genre: namely, motion controls. However, the line between functional and finicky is notoriously thin when it comes to something that can be little more than a tacked-on gimmick in the wrong hands, and that's precisely the case with the latest offering from Legendo.

PUBLISHER
Legendo Entertainment
DEVELOPER
Legendo Entertainment
SYSTEM(S)
Nintendo Wii (WiiWare)
AVAILABLE
Now

Red Sun Rising is the first entry in the *Pearl Harbor Trilogy*. How a trilogy of games will be eked out of this—especially when there's already a heaping serving of missions in various historical locations here—is anyone's guess. The series actually stems from a 2007 PC title, *Attack on Pearl Harbor,* out of Swedish publishing and development house Legendo Entertainment. Think of this as an upgrade specifically designed to take advantage of Wii's unique control scheme.

It may be billed as flight simulation, but its roots are fairly arcade-oriented, dashing realism for the most part in favor of speedy sorties that fill the screen with the defeating cloud of black smoke quickly without the aid of extensive practice. That's because these missions are hard—not "sort of difficult" or whatever other complaints more impatient pilots would levy toward a challenging title; it's genuinely hard. The fact that the PC version's Casual setting isn't available in the Wii iteration is frankly kind of baffling. This is, after all, a platform based almost entirely on being more accessible than the competition. *Red Sun Rising* holds the opposite of that mentality. The first mission—scratch that, the zeroth mission—is an exercise in frustration, and will no doubt force even the most capable of gamers to retry it a handful of times before success is within their grasp.

The simple way to write this off is to blame the game's controls, which come in three distinct flavors. The most vanilla option is playing with the classic controller. While there are definitely a handful of games on Wii I prefer to play using traditional means—mostly 2D or classic titles—this isn't one of them. It seems to defeat the purpose of porting it here in the first place. So, scratching that we have Wiimote-only controls, which task you with holding the remote horizontally and tilting it in different directions to pitch up and down and turn left and right. The final option transfers the responsibility of motion control to the attached Nunchuk, leaving the remote to handle shooting and bombing on its own. It's the same idea, it just takes a little bit longer to adjust to it.

No matter what aircraft is in your control—from a P-40 Warhawk to an A6M2 Zero—the motions are sensitive and tricky at first. This is to be expected, and it honestly doesn't take too long to get the hang of balancing speed adjustment and maintaining steady aim on the enemy. With that initial issue out of the way, *Red Sun Rising* still manages to be unforgiving in other aspects. It seems no matter how you go about maneuvering and positioning yourself to attack, someone is always riding right on your tail and absolutely riddling you with bullets. Without frantic movements and fire-and-retreat tactics, it's not long before your fighter plummets into the sea and it's back to square one for that mission.

Compounding that annoyance is the fact that a lot of the objectives are based around escort or protection. Those are practically dirty words in the arena of gaming, but they don't always have to be as arduous as their reputation paints them. Unfortunately, they live up to it here, as the only thing more irksome than failing a lengthy mission in a glorious plume of choking death is the abrupt realization that some fleet's damned energy bar was depleted before you could shoot down all the enemies. Proper checkpoints could have been a lifesaver. For instance, on a bombing mission, after successfully destroying all of my targets at sea, the objective switched to clearing the rest of the targets in the air. By this point I was already swiss cheese, and the prospect of starting all over loses its appeal exponentially.

On the upside—yes, there is an upside—this is a pretty darn snazzy-looking game considering both the console and the fact that it's download-only. It's probably not going to wow anyone accustomed to HD offerings on PC, Xbox 360, or Playstation 3, but it does its job

nicely and the environments and lighting serve to enhance the battles without being distracting.

Another positive is the fact that Legendo wisely elected not to weigh the entirety of their product on the lackluster and periodically maddening campaign. Though most of the same caveats remain, there's time much better spent in Dogfight Mode, which itself has three sub-modes: Avenging Ace, Survival, and Free Flight. The latter is self-explanatory and more or less just for show, allowing the player to fly around and explore the Pacific without the hassle of dying repeatedly. The other two have to do with destroying enemy aircraft to complete objectives and simply lasting as long as possible, respectively.

While for some it may end up coming down to whether or not $7 is the right price for this particular WiiWare offering, there are better ways to get a dogfighting fix on the system. Sure, they may cost more money in the long run, and the temptation to download a new game from the comfort of the couch is strong, but *Red Sun Rising* was probably better off sticking to its PC roots. If the follow-ups change up the campaign and work on balancing things, they may have a chance, but for now I know I'll be looking elsewhere to scratch my aerial itch. □

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

COMMAND OPS: BATTLES FROM THE BULGE

DX
PC CD
COMMAND OPS
BATTLES FROM THE BULGE

PUBLISHER
Matrix Games

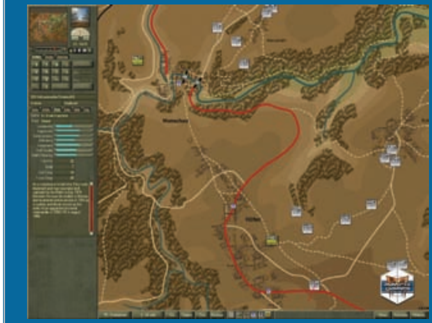
DEVELOPER
Panther Games

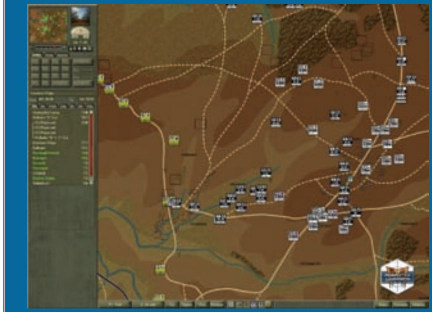
SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Now

Matrix Games is no stranger to the fields of war, as even a quick gander at its catalogue reveals titles focusing on pretty much any era of global or concentrated contention one could imagine. *Command Ops: Battles from the Bulge* comes from developer Panther Games (*Airborne Assault: Conquest of the Aegean, Airborne Assault: Highway to the Reich*), which strives to give this particular campaign an unprecedented level of historical fidelity.

There's an appropriately high level of strategic depth to go along with that, all wrapped up in the winter of 1944 in the context of the titular battle. *Battles from the Bulge* is absolutely reserved for those most serious about their war games. There's attention to detail here specifically catered to the grandiosely strategic player—one more fond of overseeing the fight on a macro level on a scale that most titles don't provide. With command at the player's disposal, a lot of the power behind *Battles* rests on the shoulders of its AI, which has a ton of work to do and manages to be one of the game's most widely revered achievements.





The 27 scenarios, which run the gamut from German offensive to American counterattack, act as the main course, but there's quite a bit of customizability beyond. Most of this comes in the form of various construction sets: editors that allow for the creation of maps, units, and scenarios. Even if the modding aspect of *Battles* only appeals to a small subset of those interested in the game, the fact that it's there on top of the beefy campaign makes for a well-rounded product that should keep the most intense of strategy gamers occupied for some time.

The proof, however, is in the pudding, so be sure to check out the demo for yourself at www.matrixgames.com before dipping into the full experience.

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By Al Hemingway

Signal

General Erich von Manstein, who formulated the plan to drive into the Ardennes, to the Meuse River, and finally to the English Channel, confers with staff members in the field.

Top German Strategist

Erich Van Manstein was considered the top military mind of the Third Reich by many of his peers—and even his enemies.

WHEN BRITISH MILITARY HISTORIAN AND STRATEGIST B.H. LIDDELL HART interviewed high-ranking German Army officers after the World War II had ended, almost to the man they agreed that one individual stood head and shoulders above everyone else—Field Marshal Erich Von Manstein. Sadly, most of von Manstein's military accomplishments took place on the Eastern Front, while battling Soviet forces, and have been sorely neglected by historians.

In his new book, ***Erich Von Manstein: Hitler's Master Strategist*** (Casemate Publishers, Philadelphia, 2010, 528 pp., notes, index, photos, $32.95, hardcover), author Benoit Lemay successfully creates the image of a three-dimensional figure who, although brilliant on the battlefield, also had his flaws, especially when it came to politics. Lemay goes into great detail on Manstein's trial after the war, when he was accused of cooperating with the SS and committing war crimes. Whether he was guilty or innocent is an argument that continues to this day.

Von Manstein was born Erich von Lewinski in 1887. Since he was the tenth child in that family, he was adopted by his mother's younger sister, who had married Lieutenant General Georg von Manstein, because they could not have children. Both von Manstein's biological father and his adoptive one were Prussian officers. He was destined to lead a military life and graduated from the Prussian War Academy just prior to the outbreak of World War I.

As a young lieutenant, von Manstein served on both the Western and Eastern Fronts in the Great War. In November 1914, he was wounded, and later promoted to captain. After the German defeat, he remained in the Army and assisted in the creation of a new military. He was appointed a battalion commander in 1922 and promoted to major.

With the meteoric rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933, von Manstein's role in military matters also rose. As the head of the operations branch of the Army General Staff, he developed a self-propelled assault gun for the infantry. Many consider this one of the most innovative military inventions of the period.

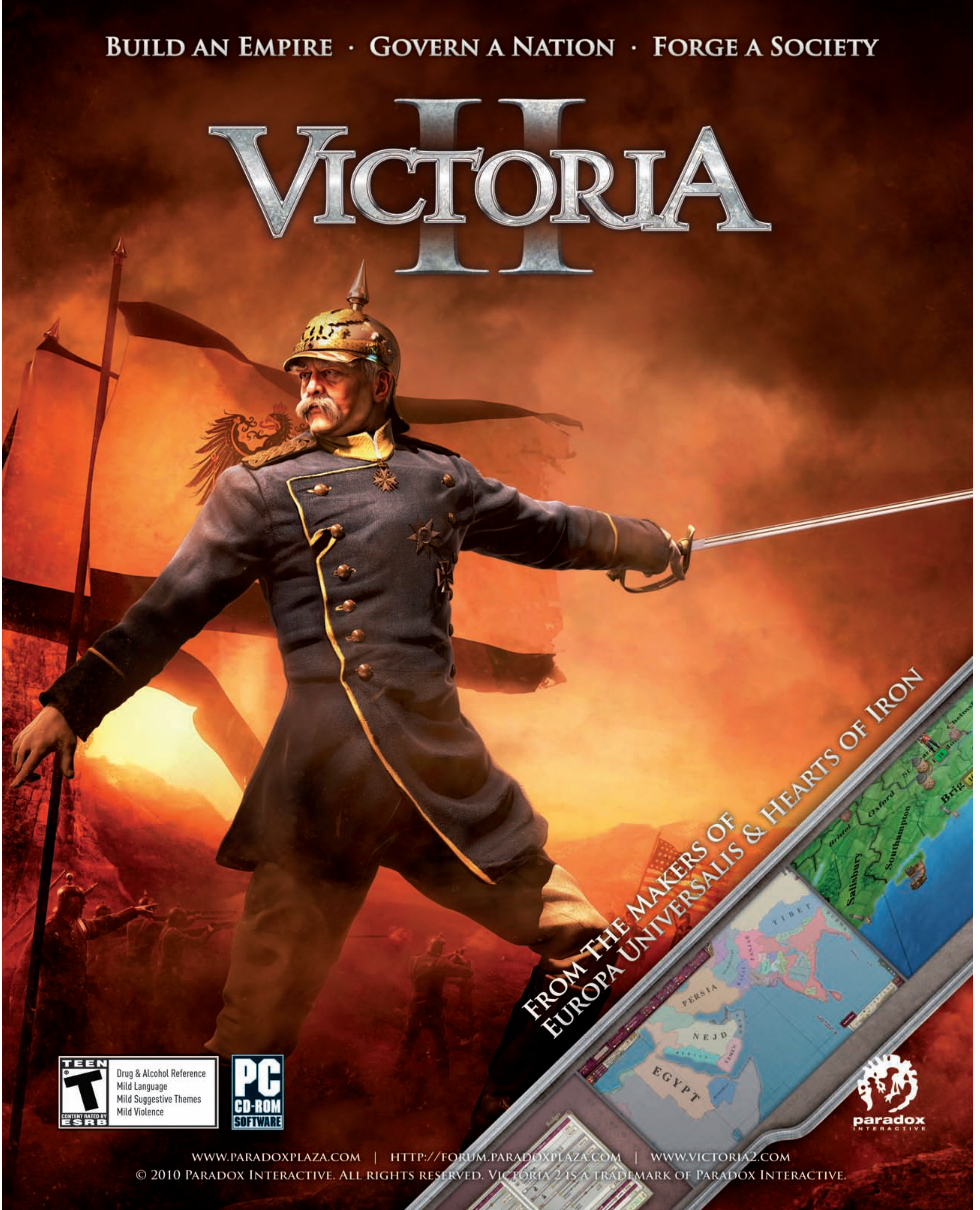
However, it was also during this time that von Manstein clashed with his superiors, especially General Ludwig Beck, chief of the general staff, dealing with the political views of the Nazi Party and its growing influence within the Army. He believed that the military should undertake the planning and actions to achieve Hitler's aims but remain neutral in political affairs.

When war erupted on September 1, 1939, von Manstein was chief of staff of Army Group South. It was his aggressive actions that encircled the Polish Army and contributed to its eventual surrender less than a month later. He then formed what would come to be known as the Manstein Plan, which called for a rapid drive into the Ardennes Forest, to the Meuse River, to finally arrive at the English Channel, cutting off great numbers of Allied troops in the West. A second phase would have the German Army circumvent the Maginot Line. Hitler liked the plan but eliminated the second push and proceeded with the invasion of France. During the operation, von Manstein was awarded a Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross and promoted to full general.

It was on the Eastern Front where von Manstein really shined. When Sevastopol finally fell, his 11th Army fought a series of pitched battles against Soviet forces. Although outnumbered, his group managed to cleverly outmaneuver the Soviets. His army group participated at the bloody battles of Stalingrad, Leningrad, Kharkov, and Kursk.

Throughout the campaign on the Russian Front, von Manstein publicly disagreed with Hitler on strategy. It would be a scene that has been repeated very often in history, when politicians attempt to intercede and fight a war, ignoring the advice of military professionals. As in most cases, von Manstein lost his plea, was relieved of command in March 1944, and went into retirement.

After the war, the Soviets wanted von Manstein extradited to be put on trial for war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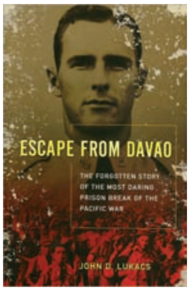
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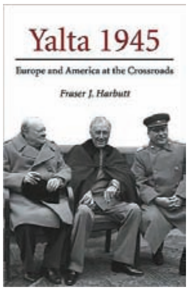
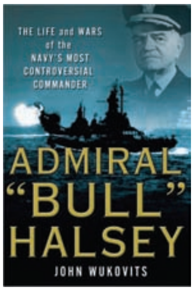
JOHN D. LUKACS




THE LIFE and WARS of the NAVY'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL COMMANDER
ADMIRAL "BULL" HALSEY
JOHN WUKOVITS

crimes committed against their people. Instead, his trial was held by the British in 1949 with many prominent British leaders, including Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, coming to his defense. Although he was cleared of most of the charges, he was found guilty of several others. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison but was released in 1953, after serving just four.

Historians today argue that von Manstein must have known about atrocities being committed in his territory and about the infamous concentration camps. No one who reaches such high rank could have been oblivious. He was a brilliant tactician, but a "lame politician," some claim.

"In this case, Field Marshal Manstein most likely erred out of naiveté by not entirely grasping the implications of his actions," writes Lemay, "which is to say the consequences of his key military role in favor of the National Socialist regime, and by becoming, without truly wanting to admit it, an obedient instrument in a criminal enterprise."

Escape from Davao: The Forgotten Story of the Most Daring Prison Break of the Pacific War, by John D. Lukacs, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2010, 464 pp., index, notes, photos, maps, $27.99, hardcover.

Here is a gripping account of the only prison camp breakout made by Americans in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Ten U.S. service personnel and two Filipino convicts engineered their escape from the infamous Davao Penal Colony, located about 10 miles northwest of the port city of Davao on the island of Mindanao.

One of the Americans who masterminded their flight to freedom was William Edwin "Ed" Dyess, a Texas-born fighter pilot. After flight training at Kelly and Randolph Fields, he was commissioned a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was sent to command the 21st Pursuit Squadron in California, and was then shipped to the Philippines in the fall of 1941, where the unit was stationed at Nichols Field, in Manila.

When the Japanese attacked the Philippine Islands and the Americans surrendered in April 1942, Dyess endured the 85-mile Bataan Death March. He witnessed firsthand the horrific atrocities the Japanese inflicted upon defenseless soldiers, sailors, and Marines during their arduous trek. After several months at Camp O'Donnell, they were sent to Davao in early November 1942.

On April 4, 1943, the dozen prisoners made good their escape and avoided capture, linking up with guerrilla forces. For several months, the group fought alongside the indigenous troops, until Dyess and two others were extracted from the area by submarine in July 1943.

While recuperating in West Virginia, Dyess spoke with Charles Leavelle, a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune,* to tell the American people of the brutal treatment Allied prisoners were receiving at the hands of their Japanese captors. Government officials, however, would not allow the story to be printed for fear that it would anger the Japanese and that they would deny the delivery of American Red Cross relief packages to the POWs in retaliation.

After his recovery, Dyess was promoted to lieutenant colonel and assigned to fly the Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter. Sadly, just before Christmas 1943, the Texan was killed in an airplane crash in Burbank, California, as he attempted to land his burning aircraft in a vacant lot to avoid harming innocent civilians. Ironically, a short time after his death his account of what he and the others endured while captives was finally released.

Dyess was awarded two Distinguished Service Crosses for his heroism while in the Philippines and the Soldiers Medal posthumously for his actions while trying to land his plane. In his honor, Abilene Army Airfield was renamed Dyess Air Force Base. Here was a truly remarkable man—with a truly remarkable story.

Yalta 1945: Europe and America at the Crossroads, by Fraser J. Harbutt, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2010, 442 pp., notes, bibliography, $36, hardcover.

Much controversy still surrounds the Yalta Conference held in February 1945 by the Big Three—U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin. The trio met to discuss what would become of postwar Europe, now that the Allied forces were on the cusp of capturing Berlin and defeating Nazi Germany.

To this day, numerous historians steadfastly believe that Franklin Roosevelt sold out to Stalin. However, historian Fraser Harbutt has taken a fresh look at what transpired at the talks and how they affected world politics.

From this conference, the U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged as the preeminent world powers. Great Britain wanted desperately to return to her status prior to the conflict, but with an economy in tatters and an illustrious empire crumbling, the British realized that they were no longer the influential force they had been in world politics.

The distrust and bickering at Yalta marked a real beginning to the Cold War, which spanned half a century and heightened world tension during the Nuclear Age.

Admiral "Bull" Halsey: The Life and Wars of the Navy's Most Controversial Commander, by John Wukovits, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010, 304 pp., notes, index, $27.00, hardcover.

Military historian John Wukovits has penned a wonderful book focusing on the career and exploits of Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey. Halsey's exploits during the dark, early days of World War II in the Pacific, where he outfought and outmaneuvered the Japanese, are the stuff of legends. Unfortunately, it would be his action at the Battle of Leyte Gulf that would spark much controversy, especially after the war had ended.

Blunt, outspoken, and a fighter, Halsey took the reins of command in the South Pacific from his old Naval Academy friend Robert Ghormley and immediately set to work to shore up the battle-weary Marines on the island of Guadalcanal with added naval support.

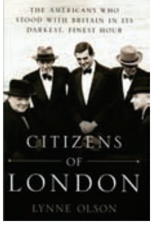
"This won't be another Bataan," he exclaimed to everyone under his command. Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift, 1st Marine Division commander on Guadalcanal, called Halsey a "breath of fresh air" when he learned that he had taken command.

As the Allied offensive began to pick up steam in the Pacific and the island-hopping campaigns began to reap benefits, Halsey went on the offensive. It was his actions at Leyte Gulf that historians discuss in great detail. He took Task Force 34 and steamed northward after Japanese Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa's fleet, leaving Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid's 7th Fleet without support.

The argument heated up after the war, when Ozawa told interrogators that his ships were bait to lure Halsey away from San Bernardino Strait. When Halsey's book was criticized by a reviewer about his lack of judgment during the battle, he again went on the offensive, in true Halsey fashion. Kinkaid broke his silence after one of Halsey's articles appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and essentially placed the blame on Halsey for allowing Kinkaid's escort carriers to be trapped. It was not until Halsey's former chief of staff, Robert Carney, persuaded him to back down that the arguing between the Navy top brass finally ceased.

Despite the Leyte Gulf debacle, Halsey still deserves an esteemed place in U.S. naval history. His aggressiveness and fighting spirit were sorely needed during those early, uncertain months after Pearl Harbor.

Citizens of London: The Americans Who Stood with Britain in its Finest Hour, by Lynne Olson, Random House, New York, 2010, 471 pp., index, notes, photos, $28.00, hardcover.


THE AMERICANS WHO STOOD WITH BRITAIN IN ITS DARKEST, FINEST HOUR
CITIZENS OF LONDON
LYNNE OLSON

No two countries were so alike yet so different as the United States and Great Britain at the onset of World War II. Although the Yanks had wrestled their independence from their British rulers some 160 years earlier, many Americans felt a kinship with the island nation, especially when England went to war in 1939.

Olson's story concentrates on a handful of Americans who traveled to that war-torn country and gave their support during what Prime Minister Winston Churchill called "their finest hour." She concentrates on the events that were transpiring in London as the setting for her book and focuses on three key individuals who were instrumental in persuading not only President Franklin Roosevelt, but also the American people, that Britain should be saved from Nazi tyranny. If not, Hitler's juggernaut would soon reach U.S. shores.

The reports by correspondents such as Edward R. Murrow concerning the London Blitz and the courageous efforts of the Royal Air Force pilots to defeat the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain kept U.S. citizens riveted to their radios. The all-important Lend-Lease Program was headed up by Averell Harriman, an influential businessman who went on to have a distinguished career in politics after the war. Lastly, there was the little-known ambassador to Great Britain, John Gilbert Winant, who played an important role to end American isolationism and assist England during those dark days of 1940-1941.

This is a brilliant book about the creation of a much-needed but fragile alliance to help rid the world of a maniacal despot. It concentrates on three Americans, whose efforts made it all possible.

War Beneath the Waves: A True Story of Courage and Leadership Aboard a World War II Submarine, by Don Keith, Caliber Books,

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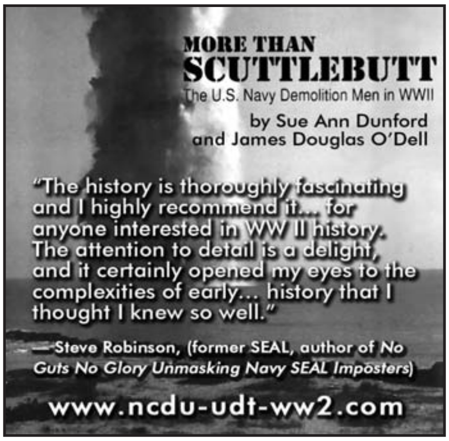
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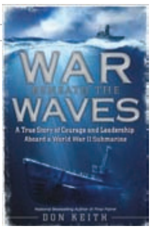
New York, 2010, 295 pp., notes, index, $24.95, hardcover.



When men in combat are faced with extraordinary circumstances, some rise to the occasion, performing incredible deeds. Sadly, many of these individuals are forgotten and their bravery neglected.

Such a man was Charlie Rush. As a young officer aboard the USS *Billfish* (SS-286), a submarine commissioned in 1943, he took command of the vessel while it was under a horrific depth-charge attack.

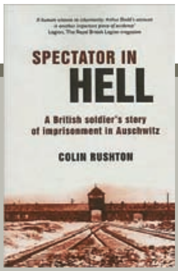
While on combat patrol in the Makassar Strait near Borneo, the *Billfish* was spotted by Japanese warships. As a diving officer, Charlie ordered the sub to dive, and for the next 15 hours the crew endured horrendous depth-charge explosions that rocked the vessel. When the captain and the other senior officers were injured or sick, he took charge and ordered the severely leaking boat to dive an additional 250 feet below her test depth.

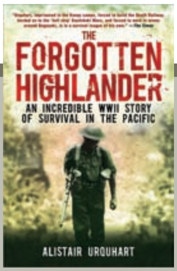
Leaking oil from the fuel tanks left a clear trail for the enemy to track the *Billfish*. Realizing this, Rush had the sub go in reverse along the same course to fool the Japanese, using the oil slick as a cover to make good the submarine's escape.

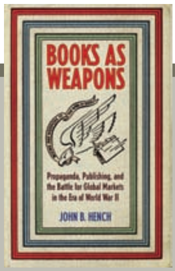
While all of this was transpiring, Chief Electrician's Mate John D. Rendernick was frantically repairing the engine and one of the torpedo tubes so the vessel could make it back to Pearl Harbor for repairs. For their remarkable actions, Rush was finally presented with a Navy Cross in 2002 and Rendernick was awarded a Silver Star posthumously.

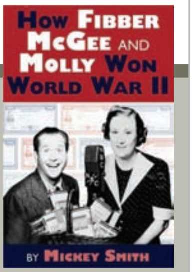
"Without courage, you might as well not be in it," said Rush. "You've got to have courage—moral courage, physical courage—and honor. Honor means telling the truth even when it might not be to your advantage."□

Short Bursts









Spectator in Hell: A British Soldier's Imprisonment in Auschwitz, by Colin Rushton, Pelican Publishing Company, Gretna, LA, 2010, 272 pp., $15, softcover.

Here is a fascinating story of a lesser-known fact of the infamous death camp at Auschwitz. Not only did it contain Jews, Soviets, Poles, and other inmates slated to be murdered in the infamous gas chambers, but the camp also included a sector that housed British POWs.

One such British prisoner was Private Arthur Dodd, a member of a supply unit, who had been captured while serving in the North African campaign. He was shipped to various prison camps until his internment at Auschwitz. Dodd and other British prisoners were witnesses to the horrendous atrocities committed by the fanatical SS to eliminate the Jewish population.

Dodd himself endured a brutal beating at the hands of the SS guards. Amazingly, they spared his life. He was liberated by U.S. forces and returned to England only to be shunned by his domineering stepmother and weak-minded father. He overcame his depression to marry and survive the nightmares that had persisted since the war ended.

When he returned to Auschwitz years later, he recalled where each building was situated, although many of the structures were now gone or had been overgrown by weeds. One thing that totally amazed him was the number of swallows that circled above the camp. There had been none during his incarceration from 1943 to 1945. To Dodd, the birds were symbols of victory. As the author states, "Good had triumphed over evil."

The Forgotten Highlander: My Unbelievable True Story of Survival, by Alistar Urquhart, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2010, 336 pp., index, photos, $24.95, hardcover.

Here is another truly incredible tale of one man's incarceration by the Japanese, surviving three and a half years as a "guest of the emperor." When Singapore fell in February 1942, Alistar Urquhart was a member of the Gordon Highlanders of the British Army. After almost two years of laboring as a slave on the infamous "Death Railway" that spanned the River Kwai in Thailand, he was transported by ship to Japan.

Unfortunately, Urquhart's vessel was sunk by an American submarine, and after escaping certain death he was afloat on the South China Sea for nearly a week. He was rescued, not by Allied forces but by the enemy, and sent to Nagasaki, where he toiled in a mine for another year. Amazingly, the former British soldier was just 10 miles from where the second atomic bomb was dropped.

After all these harrowing ordeals, Urquhart developed a sense of inner peace. He learned patience, which was extremely beneficial when his wife and daughter were very ill and required constant care. A very inspirational book—written by a very remarkable individual.

Books as Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets in the Era of World War II, by John B. Hench, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2010, 264 pp., notes, bibliography, $35.00, hardcover.

The written word can be a powerful weapon—as controlling as any rifle, howitzer, or bomber. No one knew this better than Joseph Goebbels, propaganda minister for Adolf Hitler, who used words, books, pamphlets, etc., to convince an entire country that the 1,000-year Reich was on the path of glory and was unbeatable.

The U.S. government also realized the importance that books played in persuading the Europeans that the Allies were the good guys, and not Hitler's regime. General Dwight D. Eisenhower's psychological unit immediately went to work after the D-Day invasion to distribute written material that highlighted the virtues of the American way of life. Not to be outdone, the Soviets soon grasped the importance of the propaganda arm of their government and promoted their agenda.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt understood the pivotal role they played in winning the conflict, when he stated: "In this war, we know, books are weapons."

Hench provides a glimpse of the role propaganda and the powerful written word played in winning the hearts and minds of the people of Europe.

How Fibber McGee and Molly Won World War II, by Mickey Smith, BearManor Media, Albany, GA, 2010, 267 pp., index, bibliography, $21.95, softcover.

During World War II, millions of Americans sat by their radios and listened to the progress of the Allied advances in Europe and the Pacific.

Fibber McGee and Molly, aka Jim and Marian Jordan, went above and beyond during the war years. Of the dozens of shows they did from 1941 to 1945, every single one had a war-based theme. Everything from planting victory gardens to donating to the local scrap metal drive was mentioned on their radio program.

The author has written a synopsis of every show and its reference to the war. Fibber McGee and Molly did their utmost to entertain the American public—and helped win the war in the process. □

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The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

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

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

What are the facts?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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robert hunt

Continued from page 51

sex and fear and anger. For two weeks they would purge and rebuild themselves, seeking what they felt they needed. Then out again and back to the fight, because this was the work of their time, the time of their youth.

When I still lived in Decorah and when Bob and Barb still lived in their house two doors up, I would go for walks, climbing the Pine Street hill, descending the other side to the edge of town, passing the small pasture where two horses grazed. If I had stuck a carrot in my back pocket they would come to the fence to eat it from my hand. Then I would climb again to hilly Phelps Cemetery and circle among the headstones before returning home.

Coming and going, I passed Bob's house, and often in the year when, at my instigation, he was writing down his memories I saw through the tiny basement window a single bare light bulb burning in what I knew to be Bob's room. I always pictured him there, in that unfinished space, its exposed pipes, wires, and insulation, surrounded by his maps, notebooks, and photos, submerged again in that past time.

I did not stop to go in and see him, but as I walked on part of me stayed there, wondering at the submariner at home, underground in Iowa, remembering. And I wondered myself at a life so marked by early experience. When the war ended Bob was 26, and everything that followed—even love, marriage, children, career—would be aftermath. He might disagree, arguing for the primacy of his postwar life, and he would not use the word "aftermath," but when I spoke to him and he told me one of the stories that stood so clear in his mind, his eyes widened and his voice took on a wondering tone, as if neither one of us should credit such a tale. And when he began, at my urging, to record his memories, he wrote in the third person about "Bob" and what "he" did.

It seemed as though the Robert Hunt that I knew, Decorah's retired director of parks and recreation, looked back and saw another man, a self so distant now he could not claim him with the pronoun "I." It was another life, strange to remember, and when he spoke of it his face took on a grin of disbelief that it had all really happened—hunting ships and men across the Pacific, being hunted, escaping into booze and women and fights on shore, his hands shaking from too much drinking, too little sleep, or something else.

He stood before me, the longtime husband of Barb, the fit retiree who rode his bike around town with a tennis racket strapped to the back, the man who, a few years earlier at the age of 75, had shown my daughter how to downhill ski at the rope-tow hill over by the college. Here he stood, in the shade of a big walnut tree beside my driveway, telling me stories from another life 60 years in the past.

His past had become the great romance—they set ships on fire in the middle of the sea; they had parties all over the world. I wondered that he had emerged from those years on the boat so apparently unscathed. When he wrote down his memories the blunt sentences seemed unshadowed, one story leading to the next in an associative flow in which cascading events left no room for reflection. Once, when he used the word "flashback," I asked him what flashed back, expecting a patch of darkness. But he said, "The things that come back are the things I like to remember—the parties, the sex."

The darkest aspect he ever showed me was the set jaw and straight gaze when he spoke of his friends who had been killed. Then I glimpsed the resolve and simmering anger that saw him through, that kept him going out, and that provided the big story his generation shared. America had been attacked, they had set all aside to avenge the wound and defeat the aggressor, and then they had gone back to live their lives. The war was an interruption, and they had put it behind them with a resolve like that with which they had fought.

But Bob kept going back. Eleven times during the war he returned to that forward room, to the bunk that pulled out from under a torpedo, where he heard water rushing past and the bow plane motors, and felt secure. At home in Iowa he went downstairs to the archive room and back in time. And lately, in his snug apartment, in the blue bedroom where we huddled for our interviews, he remembered again, descending once more into the past. □

Robert Schultz is the Fishwick Professor of English at Roanoke College in Virginia. His books include We Were Pirates: A Torpedoman's Pacific War; *a novel,* The Madhouse Nudes; *and two collections of poetry. He has received a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Award in Fiction, Cornell University's Corson Bishop Poetry Prize, and the Emily Clark Balch Prize for Poetry from* The Virginia Quarterly Review.

James Shell has had fiction, nonfiction, and poetry published in The Roanoke Times, Jazz, College Poetry Review, Single Living, Ideas at Work, Artemis, Raconteur, GlennGould, *and the* University of Toronto Quarterly. *A resident of Salem, Virginia, he is currently working on a family memoir.*

green inferno

Continued from page 71

and the men were reduced to eating roots and tree bark to stay alive. Physically and emotionally drained, some wandered into the jungle never to be heard from again.

"The stench of death hung over New Britain's north coast like a miasma," one Marine later recalled.

On March 26, the leathernecks finally caught up to Sato's group. Although on a stretcher, the officer bravely stood to meet his attackers. He was instantly gunned down. The remaining enemy soldiers scattered into the jungle. When the firing had stopped, 55 of the detachment lay dead.

Komori met the same fate a few weeks later. His men were so emaciated that they resembled human skeletons. Ironically, his party was a mere 20 miles from safety when he encountered a Marine ambush where he and many of his countrymen were slain. His journal was uncovered by the patrol and eventually given to the Marine Corps historical archives section as one of the prized trophies of the campaign.

Although some historians claim that the Cape Gloucester operation was needless, it did reap tremendous benefits for the Marines in future amphibious assaults. Despite its rocky beginnings, the planning phase went very smoothly. The landings caught the Japanese completely by surprise as well. Also, the use of tanks in jungle fighting was a significant factor in the defeat of the enemy. Engineers and shore party personnel were also cited as providing excellent support in spite of the horrible weather conditions that hampered them.

Despite the valuable lessons learned, 310 Marines paid for them with their lives and another 1,083 were wounded. Japanese losses, although unknown, were in the thousands. Rabaul, situated on New Britain's Gazelle Peninsula, had, in essence, been neutralized for the remainder of the war. One coastwatcher would later jokingly comment: "And now 40,000 Japanese were held in that same Gazelle Peninsula by 29 coastwatchers and 400 armed natives."

On January 6, 1945, aboard the aircraft carrier HMS *Glory*, formal surrender ceremonies were conducted. Australian Lt. Gen. Vernon A.H. Sturdee accepted the sword of Gen. Hitoshi Imamura, signaling the end of hostilities. The war was finally over for the Japanese on New Britain. □

Frequent contributor Al Hemingway is a Vietnam veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps.

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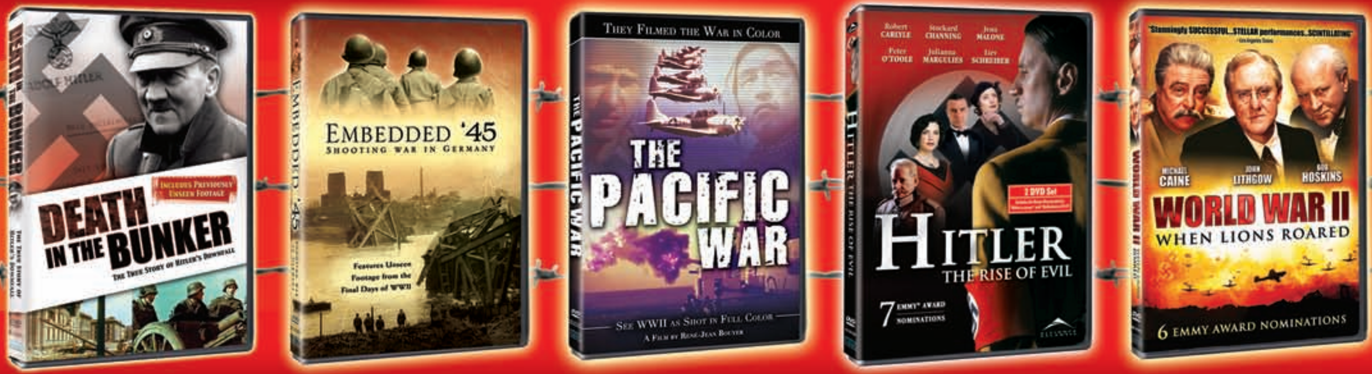
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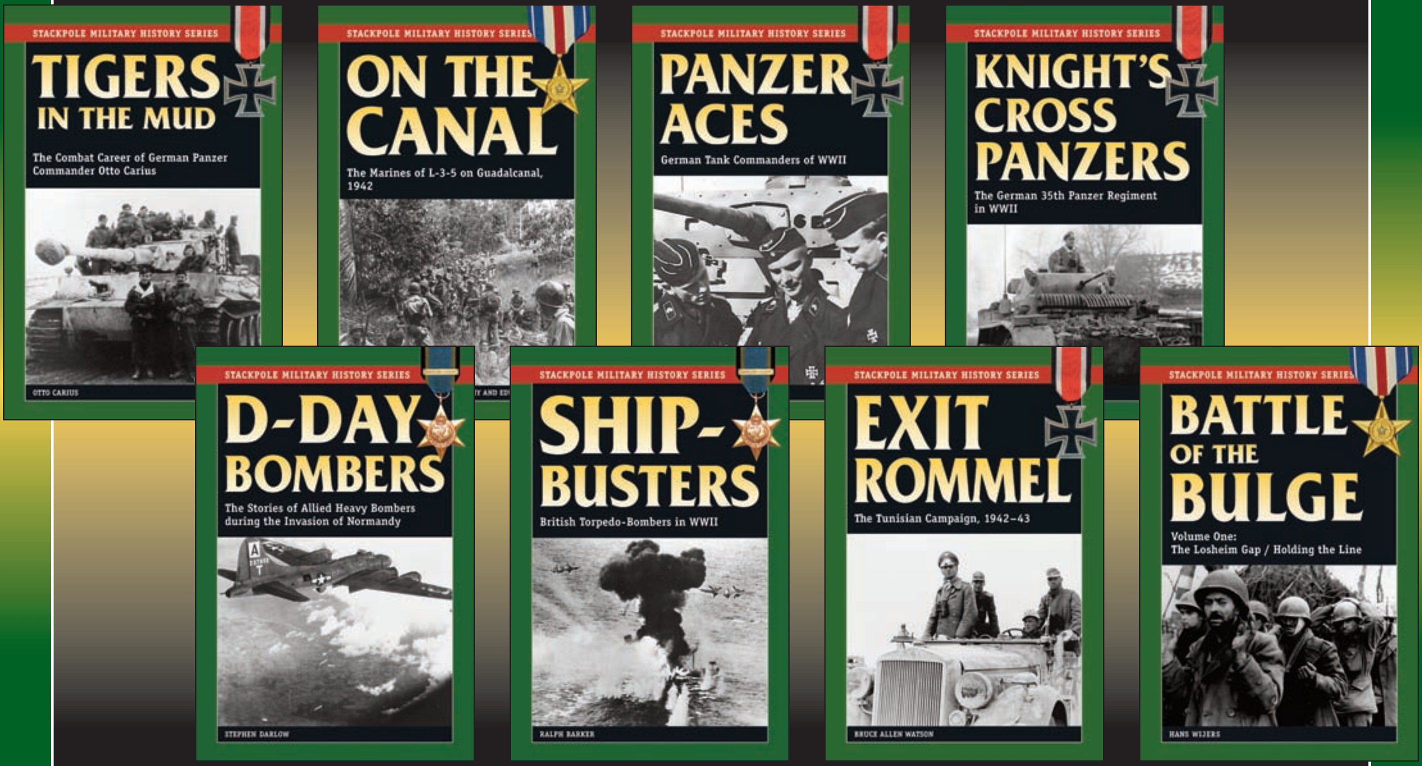
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