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KING & COUNTRY'S

BBA026
Wounded Sherman

BBA029
G.I. Drinking

Enjoying a coke and sipping some hot coffee BBA028 and 029. There's also some work to be done... BBA026 "*Wounded Sherman*" shows a pair of tankers inspecting their mine-damaged M4 and getting ready to call up the mighty DD104(SL) *M26 Armoured Recovery Vehicle*.

Finally, there's this year's very special Christmas set... XM008-01. Two GI's share their rations with a pair of hungry Belgian children and their even hungrier dog!

"So What's New... Are We Winning?" BBA027

DECEMBER 15, 1944... Somewhere in Belgium... up near the forest of The Ardennes. It's cold, almost freezing and it sure looks ready to snow... probably going to be a white Christmas...

Last Christmas of THE WAR

Along 90 miles of front facing the frost-covered trees of the Ardennes 83,000 American soldiers stand guard... *bitterly cold and bored!*

It was a place where nothing much happened. Occasionally, infantry patrols were sent out see what the enemy were up to and, if possible, bring back a prisoner or two. Most times they returned from patrolling these strangely quiet, cold and thickly wooded hills and valleys... empty-handed.

Occasionally they might see a few enemy troops in the distance and exchange some fire but usually it was "*All Quiet on the Western Front*". It seemed that the "*real*" action was definitely elsewhere.

XM008-01
Last Christmas of the War

BEHIND THE LINES

With only these occasional patrols... kp or guard duties to perform... break. For the older guys this was their first respite from action since D. Day six months before. For the young reinforcements, many of them fresh from the 'States, this was an easy introduction to the "*shooting war*".

K&C's latest *Battle of The Bulge* GI's and vehicles sets the scene in the early quiet calm before the storm. These new sets show U.S. servicemen "*at ease*"... BBA027 Catching up with the news in "*Stars 'n' Stripes*"...

As all of these figures relax and take it easy little do they know that their peace is about to be shattered by a huge German onslaught that is about to descend upon them in less than 24 hours!!!

BBA028
Takin' it Easy

DD104(SL)
M26 Armoured Recovery Vehicle

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Cover: The horrors of the battle on Peleliu Island are evident in this U.S. Marine's face. Photo © CORBIS.

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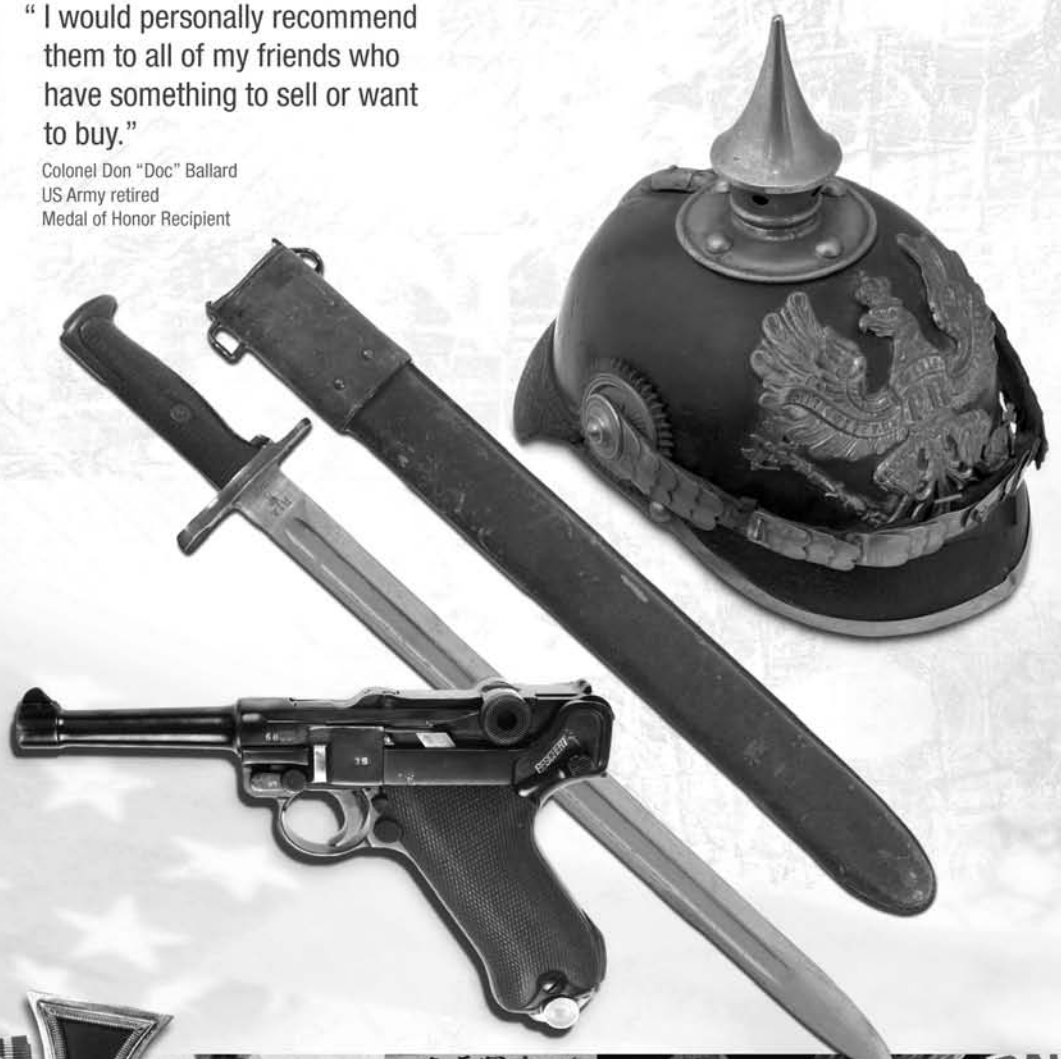

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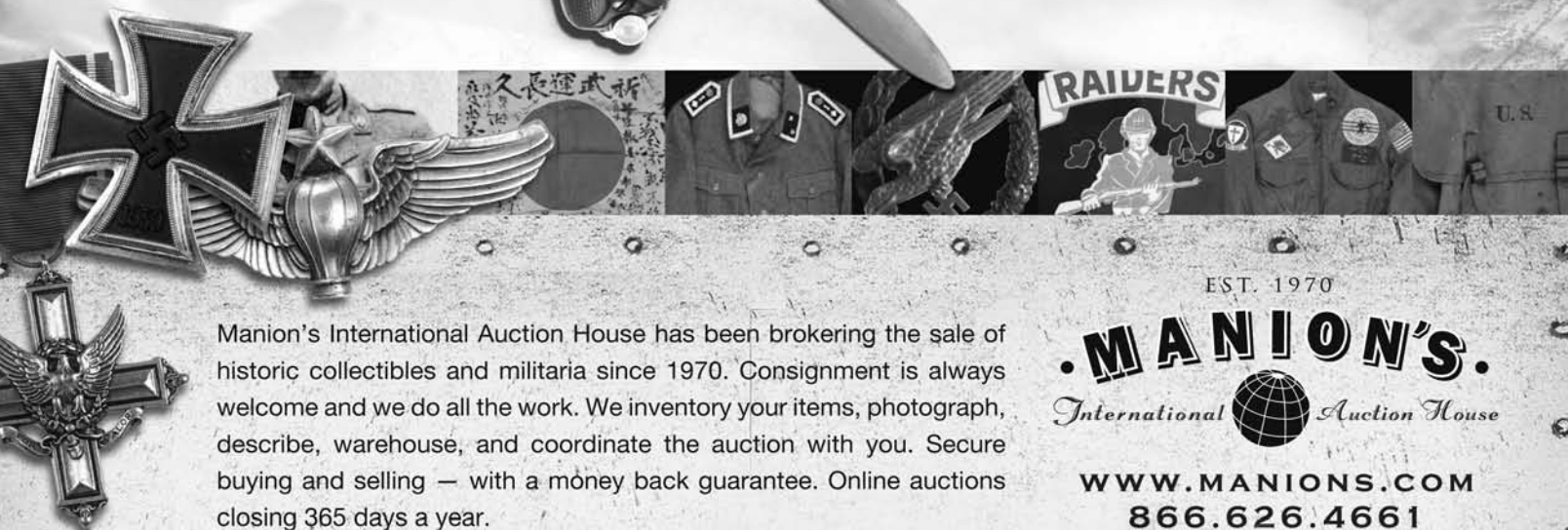

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Editorial

Marshal Georgy Zhukov was a victim of Soviet political paranoia.

THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR, AS WORLD WAR II CAME TO BE KNOWN IN THE Soviet Union, provided the stage upon which Marshal Georgy Zhukov achieved lasting fame. The architect of the Red Army's offensive against the Third Reich, Zhukov and his armies had occupied the Nazi capital of Berlin and completed a massive military campaign against a formidable German military machine. Although his service in the Far East is less familiar, it is nevertheless important as well. Zhukov's victory over the Japanese at Khalkin-Gol in Mongolia in 1939 was a deciding factor in keeping the expansionist regime in Tokyo from prosecuting a full-scale war against the Soviet Union.

At the end of the war in Europe, Zhukov embodied the will and the power of the world's largest land army. He was a national hero. As such, he was also considered a threat by the paranoid leader of the Soviet Union, Premier Josef Stalin. On June 24, 1945, as a tumultuous victory parade rolled through Red Square, Stalin was already planning the exile of the military man. For less than a year, Zhukov served as military commander of the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany. During the summer of 1946, he was deputy defense minister and commander of all Soviet land forces.

Biographer Viktor Anfilov points out that Zhukov's tenure in both posts was short-lived. The machinery of political intrigue was in motion, and Stalin began an effort to systematically destroy his reputation. A number of Zhukov's colleagues were coerced into bringing false charges against him, and Stalin denounced the hero. Zhukov was relegated to command of the Odessa Military District.

By the end of 1947 Zhukov was again in Moscow—this time with the KGB shadowing him. A heart attack and an uncharacteristic moment of mercy on the part of Stalin probably saved him from prison. "They sank to such obscene and disgusting depths as to accuse me of masterminding a military plot against Stalin," Zhukov wrote of the charges being leveled against him. He was exiled again, this time to the Urals Military District.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, Zhukov again gained political prominence. He was appointed defense minister in 1955 by Premier Nikita Krushchev, himself a veteran of the Great Patriotic War. A Stalinist faction of the Soviet Central Committee became disenchanted with Krushchev's leadership and attempted to depose him, but a strong stand by Zhukov proved critical. "[Foreign Minister Vyacheslav] Molotov and his supporters want to bring back the Stalinist methods of leadership," Zhukov told the assembly. "We cannot stand for that. If you continue to oppose the Party line I will be compelled to turn to the army and the people."

While his stirring words helped Krushchev retain power, perhaps they contributed to his political undoing once again. Accused a second time of attempting to establish a military government with himself as its head, Zhukov was forced into retirement by Krushchev.

"From autumn 1957 to May 1965 he was in total disgrace," writes Anfilov. "He was now labeled a 'Bonapartist' and the slanderous articles that appeared about him in the press frightened off some of his old comrades-in-arms. It was now forbidden to hang his portrait in military establishments and his name was heard only rarely. None of this, however, affected his popular image as the national hero who had saved his country from the Nazis, and when on 8 May 1965, for the first time since being ostracized, he appeared on the podium at the Kremlin Palace of Congresses for the victory celebrations, he was greeted by a storm of applause and shouts of 'Hurrah for Zhukov!'"

During his lifetime, Georgy Zhukov was four times awarded the medal of Hero of the Soviet Union. His military accomplishments are among the greatest in the history of armed conflict. He penned his memoirs and lived his last years in relative comfort.

Like many other military heroes before and since, Zhukov was better able to cope with the maneuvering of large armies than the web of political intrigue.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

Volume 8 ■ Number 2

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Victory Was Beyond Their Grasp
With the 272nd Volks-Grenadier Division from the Hürtgen Forest to the Heart of the Reich
by Douglas E. Nash

As the Allies arrived at the frontiers of Germany itself in the last autumn of WWII, the Germans responded with a variety of initiatives designed to regain the strategic advantage. While the Wonder Weapons such as the V-2 missile are widely recognized, the Volks-Grenadier Divisions (VGDs) are practically unknown. Often confused with the Volkssturm, the Home Guard militia, VGDs have suffered the undeserved reputation as second-rate formations, filled with young boys and old men suited to serve only as cannon fodder. This ground-breaking book shows that VGDs were actually conceived as a new, elite corps loyal to the National Socialist Party and equipped with the finest weapons available. After delving into a trove of recently discovered documents from the 272nd VGD's Füsilier Company, author Doug Nash has deftly woven the company and division history with the first-hand accounts of its soldiers. Follow the füsiliers from their first battles in the Huertgen Forest to their final defeat in the Harz Mountains, learn the enormous potential of VGDs, and feel their soldiers' heartbreak at their failure.

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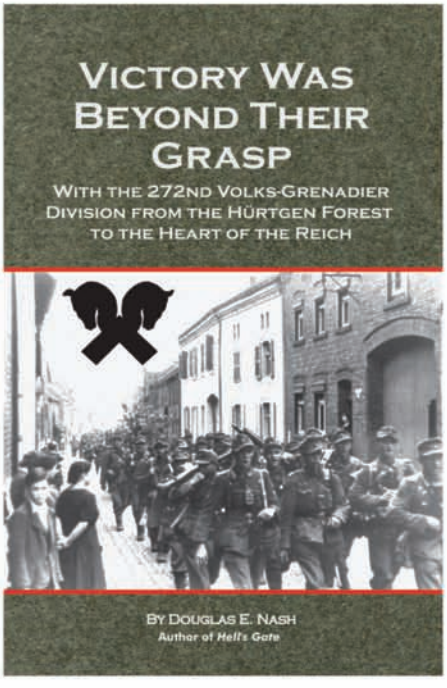

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Japanese Carrier at Yokohama

Dear Editor:

In the October/November issue of *WWII History,* I was very interested in the article "Carrier Construction Thwarted." My ship, the USS *Benevolence* (AH-13) was in Tokyo Bay when the surrender ceremony took place. My ship was involved in picking up our guys that had been prisoners of war and processing them before they went home—"Pappy" Boyington being one of them. It was interesting to note that the guys I talked to did not have any kind words for General MacArthur. We stayed there for three months, leaving on Thanksgiving Day. For a while we were tied up to a pier in Yokohama Harbor and immediately forward of us was a Japanese carrier that had been bombed. It was obviously not even finished. We were told that as the ship was being launched, our planes came over and bombed it as it slid down the ways. Whether this the true story of what happened, this carrier never made it out of the harbor. (See the photo above.)

Jack Jerome
Cooleemee, North Carolina

Buchenwald Horrors

Dear Editor:

In "Horrific Discovery at Buchenwald" (October/November 2008 issue), Flint Whitlock talked about how the Army was unprepared for what they would find in the camps even though newspapers had regularly reported on atrocities committed by the Nazis to Jews and other "undesirables." One reason for this was that most of the negative propaganda about Germany during World War I was either exaggerations or lies; many thought that the atrocities reported in the press were similar to the propaganda they heard during World War I. Many could just not believe what they read about the Nazis. It was something so horrific that it could not be believed. At the time it was something that no rational, sane person could conceive of let alone prepare for. It took the shock of actually finding the camps and discovering what the Nazis had done for it to be believed. One sad legacy of this is that those of us born after World War II just are not shocked or horrified like our parents and grandparents were when faced with the tragedies of our time, i.e., the killing fields of Cambodia or Rwanda. The unconceivable has become conceivable.

James Boiko
Humble, Texas

WWII Veteran Portraits

Dear Editor,

I read, with interest, the article about Tom Sanders's photos of WWII veterans in the December 2008 issue. I met a WWII veteran

who served in the China-Burma-India Theater. I also met a veteran who participated in the Normandy invasion (he was my aunt's brother-in-law). He wouldn't talk about his experience because it was so horrible. I applaud Mr. Sanders's efforts. I see many WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans when I go the the VA for my medical care. We owe them all a debt of gratitude for their service, but even more so to the WWII vets because so many of them are dying each day.

Thank you for a fine magazine recounting many stories of service, sacrifice, and eventual triumph in the face of adversity.

Richard Simmons
Chicago, Illinois

Who Is That G-Man?

Dear Editor:

I always look forward to your magazine's arrival and I read it cover to cover. There are just a couple of pictures in the January 2009 issue in which the captions are not accurate. On page 53 "Holding the Line at Smolensk," the tank is a German Panzer Aus.III, not a Panzer Aus.II. The Mark II had a 20mm gun and a co-ax MG. On page 55, the armored

vehicles appear to be Sturmgeshutze III (technically, an assault gun and not a true tank).

On another note: The photo on page 62 depicts (an obviously staged) photo of Japanese troops and the caption describes the array of weapons. It would have been interesting to note that the third soldier from the top of the photo holds a Type 89 grenade launcher, mistakenly called a "knee mortar" by U.S. troops. The weapon was meant to be braced on the ground, and not on one's knee as the concussion would break bones.

Finally, on page 73 ("Hoover and the Nazi Saboteur"), a photo caption describes the men in it as Louis Buchalter and J. Edgar Hoover. I've seen this photo cited as being of Hoover in other sources too, but I fail to see the resemblance. Hoover had more of a pug face. Perhaps, you can run this photo again and ask your readers who they think this "unknown" G-man is (see photo).

Ron Huppert
Walnut Creek, California

We agree, Ron. On closer inspection the man on the left of the photograph (shown at left) does not resemble Hoover. If anyone knows who it might be, we would all like to know.

Note: Opinions expressed in "Dispatches" do not represent those of the writers, editors, or staff of WWII History *or Sovereign Media.* WWII History *welcomes your letters which must be signed and include a telephone number for verification. Letters must be brief and of general interest to our readership. Write to: WWII History, 453 B Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170; fax to 703-964-0366, or e-mail: dispatch @wwii history magazine.com.*

By William E. Welsh

The Marauding Marder

Cobbled together from existing weapons, the motorized Marder plugged a dangerous gap in German antitank capability.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF ADOLF HITLER'S BOLD INVASION OF RUSSIA IN JUNE 1941, the Germans were confronted with one of their most glaring shortcomings in weapons and armament. It occurred when General Mikhail Kirponos unleashed the formidable Russian T-34 medium tank as part of a determined counterattack in the Ukraine against a portion of General Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group South.

When the pack of T-34s bore down on elements of the German 197th Infantry Division in the Ukraine, the foot soldiers of the Fatherland were stunned with disbelief as the shells they were firing from their 37mm antitank guns glanced harmlessly off the thick, sloped armor of the T-34s. It was a discovery that other German forces the length of the Eastern Front would make in the coming days and weeks. Something had to be done to correct the situation—and fast.

The overwhelming victories that Germany won in the early campaigns of World War II were largely the result of the superior training of its forces and the superb tactics used by commanders at all levels. Although it may have seemed in the blitzkrieg attacks on Poland, France, and the Balkans that the Germans had superior equipment, a number of shortcomings were clearly evident in the quality and quantity of their war material when facing Britain, the Soviet Union, and later the United States.

The Germans were well aware in the years leading up to the war in Europe of the need to provide self-propelled armor to assist infantry in capturing enemy strongpoints and surviving enemy tank attacks. As early as 1935, General Eric von Manstein had drafted a memo to the chief of the General Staff urging that each infantry division should contain its own assault gun battalion for these purposes. The result was the stout, reliable Sturmgeschutz, which began field trials in 1937. As it was readied for service, a major squabble broke out among the inspectors general of the German infantry, artillery, and tank services as to who would be responsible for the vehicles.

The panzer men, who saw such a vehicle encroaching on their production resources, wanted nothing to do with it. Almost by default, responsibility for the assault gun landed in the lap of the German artillery. Although the design of the Sturmgeschutz was approved, crews were not trained quickly enough, and predictably it took a backseat to tank production. Thus, when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the assault guns had not yet entered full production.

The principal weapon with which the Germans countered enemy tanks in the opening days of the war was the 37mm Pak gun that was towed by truck or by a team of horses. Von Manstein was not the only visionary general who foresaw the need for self-propelled artillery. Col. Gen. Heinz Guderian pushed for the development of a self-propelled gun that would accompany advancing Panzers. Unlike tanks with turrets that rotate to allow the gun to fire in different directions without repositioning the vehicle, early self-propelled German artillery featured fixed superstructures housing guns with very limited traverse. Rather than being a liability, the fixed superstructure allowed for the installation of a larger caliber gun than on tanks, which had to strike a balance between firepower and mobility.

Whereas motorized assault guns such as the Sturmgeschutz were intended primarily for use against infantry targets, the job

A German Marder self-propelled antitank gun churns across the Russian steppe as SS soldiers occupy a defensive position recently held by Red Army troops. (Signal)

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This self-propelled gun, a variant of the Marder, includes the Czech-designed 38(t) chassis. It mounts a powerful 75mm cannon and a 7.62mm machine gun for defense against infantry attack.

of what Guderian envisioned as tank destroyers, or Panzerjägers, was to lie in wait and use their substantial firepower to penetrate the thick armor of enemy medium and heavy tanks, something that existing antitank guns of smaller caliber simply could not do.

Although the Germans made many improvisations, the only officially sanctioned effort to field a tank destroyer before the war began was to outfit the Panzerkampfwagen (PzKpfw) I light tanks with the 47mm L43 Czech gun, an invention dubbed the Panzerjäger I. This early tank destroyer saw service in 1940 and 1941, but the gun lacked sufficient punch to be truly effective. The need for the Panzerjägers became acute when the Germans came face to face in 1941 with the Russian T-34 medium and KV-1 heavy tanks on the Eastern Front as well as the British Matilda II medium tank in North Africa.

The Germans realized after invading Russia that they had no panzers, either in the field or in the planning stages, that could compete with the T-34 or KV-1. Indeed, German industry was struggling to keep pace with the demands of an army engaged on multiple fronts. To help remedy the situation, the German high command issued an order on December 22, 1941, to develop a tank destroyer that could defeat the best enemy tanks. Since time was of the essence, weapons developers were given the leeway to cobble together whatever parts of existing weapons systems deemed necessary. The intent was to field, in a relatively short time, a formidable Panzerjäger on an interim basis until a more comprehensive design could be tested and manufactured. The result was the Marder series.

The idea that the Germans hit on was to take a large, formidable antitank gun and fit it onto the chassis of an obsolete armored fighting vehicle. For the first Marder to enter production, the Marder II, they chose the Panzer II chassis. As for the gun, some models of the Marder would use the German-made Pak 75 while others would shrewdly make use of the Soviet 76.2mm antitank gun captured in abundance during the opening weeks of Operation Barbarossa.

The Germans would produce during 1942 and 1943 six main variants of the Marder, marrying different guns to either the Panzer II chassis, the Czech-built 38(t) chassis, or the French-built Lorraine tractor chassis. Two additional variants, technically raising the number to eight, were produced in small numbers using the chassis of the French Hotchkiss light tank and the French FCM 36 medium tank. The informal classifications of Marder I, II, and III that came into being probably arose from the fact that each of the three types used a different chassis. Yet, from a chronological standpoint, the numbering system is misleading as the Marder II was the first to enter service.

The Marder II Ausf. (model) A, B, C, and F entered service in April 1942 and were equipped with the German-made 75mm L46 Pak 40/2 gun, which was capable of hurling a 12.6-pound projectile at 1,800 feet per second. The official designation of this model was the SdKfz 131. The other models, the Marder II Ausf. D and E, employed the captured Russian Model 36 76.2mm antitank gun rechambered to take the German 75mm round. Packing an even greater punch than the L46 Pak 40/2, the Russian cannon could hurl rounds at 2,430 feet per second. This vehicle was designated SdKfz 132.

At the assembly plant, workers fitted the gun carriage minus the wheels onto the chassis using a specially made mounting plate. The plate was shaped like a bridge and attached to the top of the chassis in the front and back with large bolts. The superstructure surrounding the gun was open at the top and consisted of a moveable gun shield in front that was thick enough to protect the gunner and loader from small-arms fire. The fixed armor plate used on the sides was thinner than the shield on the front and therefore provided less protection. Whereas the Marder II hull had protective armor ranging from 14.5mm to 35mm in thickness, the superstructure plating was only 8mm to 10mm thick.

All Marder IIs were powered by a six-cylinder Maybach HL 62 gas engine that had six forward gears and one reverse gear. In mild temperatures, the driver cranked the engine using an electric starter, but the vehicle was equipped with an inertia starter for sub-freezing temperatures. The A, B, C, and F used a five-wheel, quarter-elliptical leaf spring suspension, while the D and E employed a torsion bar suspension mounting four large road wheels without return rollers.

The Marder II A, B, C, and F each weighed about 11 tons and, not counting the barrel,

The high silhouette of the Marder III presented an excellent target for enemy antitank guns, while the open turret often exposed the gun's crew to dangerous fire.

Amber Books

were 15 feet long with a width of about seven feet and height of slightly more than seven feet. The crews were made up of a driver and wireless operator who were positioned as they normally would have been in the Panzer II, and the gunner and loader who rode atop in the superstructure. The Marder II had a top speed of 25 miles per hour. It carried 44 gallons of fuel in two tanks and could travel 93 miles on the road and 62 miles offroad.

The two types of Marder IIs were markedly different in appearance. The D and E featured a higher superstructure positioned slightly further toward the rear of the vehicle than the A, B, C, and F versions. The Marder II could carry up to 37 shells, and most crews stored a 7.92mm MG34 machine gun in the fighting compartment to engage enemy infantry when necessary.

The Germans assembled 531 of the Marder IIs armed with the Pak 40/2 antitank gun and 185 of the Marder IIs equipped with the Russian Model 36 antitank gun. The Marder design was not without its drawbacks. For one, the crews fighting on the Eastern Front were exposed to the extreme temperatures typical of the Russian steppe in colder months. What's more, the high superstructure made the vehicle top-heavy and difficult to drive in rugged terrain. The Marder's high profile also made it highly vulnerable to enemy artillery, antitank guns, and tanks. The Marder IIs were issued to Panzerjäger Abteilung (tank destroyer battalions) integral to elite infantry and panzer divisions, as well as other units, and served primarily on the Eastern Front.

The Marder IIIs, which were considered the best of the Marder family, were built in three different styles. Each of the three styles used the extremely well designed Czech-built 38(t) chassis rather than the Panzer II chassis. The first of these entered production in March 1942 designated as the SdKfz 139 and were equipped with the Russian Model 36 76.2mm gun, again rechambered to accept German 75mm ammunition. In the first three months of production, the Germans managed to roll 120 out of the Bohemian-Moravian Machine Factory AG of the Praga Works in Prague. They would eventually produce 344 of this variant, 117 of which were sent to North Africa between March 1942 and May 1943. Their appearance in combat jarred the British, who initially mistook the 76.2mm gun for the dreaded German 88mm cannon.

The first Marder IIIs produced had a suspension comprising four large road wheels on each side that hung in pairs from leaf springs attached to the hull. They were powered by a

125-horsepower Praga EPA water-cooled gas engine that could reach a top speed of 26 miles per hour. Some of the later Marder IIIs were retrofitted with twin carburetors that allowed drivers to accelerate to 30 miles per hour on good roads. Like the Marder II, the early Marder IIIs had a high superstructure with a relatively small fighting compartment located in the center of the vehicle.

The later Marder IIIs, designated as the SdKfz 138, featured the improved German 75mm L46 40/3 gun. The SdKfz 138 Type H entered production in May 1942 and had a forward fighting compartment and a rear engine, while the SdKfz 138 Type M had a much larger fighting compartment placed at the rear of the vehicle and the engine located in the middle. By putting the fighting compartment at the rear, the designers not only improved the vehicle's overall handling on and off road, but also placed the gun crew in a safer position during combat. Altogether, the Germans produced 1,577 of the late-model Marder IIIs.

In the summer of 1942, the Germans also began converting captured French vehicles into tank destroyers that were dubbed the Marder I and had the official designation SdKfz 135. This was possible because the Germans captured in good condition a large number of French Tracteur Blinde 37L personnel carriers, better known as the Lorraine, that were used to tow artillery. Captain Alfred Becker, commander of Sturmgeschutz Abteilung 200, used his pre-war industry connections to arrange to have as many as 184 of these vehicles converted. The work was done not only in Germany, but also in Paris.

To convert the tractors, workers removed the existing transport compartment and replaced it with an enclosed superstructure that ran almost the entire length of the vehicle. The Marder I using the Lorraine chassis employed the 75mm Pak 40/1 L48 gun behind a large armored shield. Initially deployed to Russia, they were deemed inferior to the Marder IIs and IIIs and eventually were shunted back to France and other static fronts to bolster occupation units. They would see action in the Normandy campaign in 1944 when the 21st Panzer Division took two dozen of them into action.

Other vehicles that shared the Marder I designation married the 75mm Pak 40/1 L48 gun to either the French Hotchkiss H-39 light tanks or the FCM 36 medium tanks that were captured by the Germans during the fall of France. Although there is no definitive record of how many of these alternative versions were built, it is estimated that as few as 24 Hotchkiss chassis and 10 FCM chassis were converted into tank destroyers.

National Archives

An American soldier inspects the hulk of a Model M Marder that has been disabled by a direct hit against its chassis from an Allied artillery shell.

As the war progressed during 1942 in Russia and North Africa, the Marders were loaded onto rail cars and shipped to the fronts. Organized into battalions to support both infantry and armor, they served different functions depending on which units they were assigned to support. Their role on the battlefield was to lie in wait for enemy armor to attack or counterattack the units they were supporting. Rather than being parceled out to small units, they were generally concentrated so that they would have a telling effect on enemy armor.

The crews of the Marders would scour the battlefield for protected positions in which to deploy their vehicle when the battle began. A battle-tested crew would look not for just one position but for several different positions to which they might shift. The nature of the terrain would dictate the type of obstacles they could hide behind that would make it more difficult for enemy armor to reach them during combat. The tank destroyers preferred concealed positions behind rivers, marshes, minefields, or hedgerows. In areas where there was abundant foliage, the crews were known to cover the entire vehicle, including the open-topped superstructure, with foliage to make them difficult for the enemy to spot at a distance.

Marder crews supporting infantry would provide fire during the initial advance and lumber forward once the infantry had seized its objective. At that point, they would provide close support until the objective was firmly secured before retiring to the rear. When assisting friendly armor on the attack, Marder crews would secure the flanks and also lend their long-range fire to the overall weight of the attack. Although these were the optimum tactics, circumstances of a given campaign would

often dictate how the Marders were used. For example, in von Manstein's Kharkov counteroffensive of February and March 1943, Marders transported combat engineers and even panzergrenadiers into battle. During that campaign, Marder IIs and Marder IIIs were used by both the 1st SS Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich. In Kharkov and other battles on the Eastern Front, the panzergrenadiers relied heavily on the Marders for support when Soviet tanks attacked in force.

The Panzerjäger I, the Marders, and the Nashorn were all improvised, first-generation tank destroyers built to temporarily fill a void until the Germans could design and produce a more sophisticated second generation of tank destroyers with enclosed superstructures and lower silhouettes. When the advantage on the fronts in Russia and North Africa shifted to the Allies in late 1942, Marders and other tank destroyers took on the growing burden of stopping or delaying enemy offensives. It was during this period that the Germans mastered the art of luring enemy armor into traps. The German tanks would purposely retreat through a well-established line of tank destroyers. When the enemy armor pursued them, the tank destroyers would devastate the pursuing enemy armor from well-concealed positions.

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Crewmen scramble around the turret of a Marder III as the vehicle prepares to move out of the close quarters of an occupied town. The Marder was not well suited to urban combat.

The production of Marders continued through 1943 and, for some variants, into 1944, although by that time the Germans were producing a number of other tank destroyers, including the Nashorn with its powerful 88mm gun, as well as a second generation of tank destroyers that were fully enclosed, such as the Elefant, Hetzer, Jagdpanzer IV, and Jagdpanther.

The fact that so many tank destroyers were fielded reflected the difficulties the German tank industry was having in determining which armored fighting vehicles merited priority. Because it was easier and cheaper to produce a tank destroyer than a tank with a movable turret, large numbers of tank destroyers were produced toward the end of the war. In addition to the Waffen SS divisions, other units fortunate to have a Panzerjäger Abteilung were the Grossdeutschland Division and the 1st Paratroop Panzer Division Hermann Göring.

Despite its shortcomings, the Marder added weight to the German war machine as it advanced to the Volga River and into the Caucasus Mountains in late 1942. When the initiative on the Eastern Front shifted firmly to the Soviets in the second half of the conflict, the Marders and other tank destroyers became a staple of the German defensive efforts, blunting Soviet tank attacks. The more than 2,800 Marders fielded during World War II were a proven counterweight to enemy armor. □

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By Michael D. Hull

Top Flying Tiger

General Claire Chennault led the Flying Tigers of the American Volunteer Group against the Japanese.

LADEN WITH 500-POUND BOMBS AND INCENDIARIES, 10 JAPANESE TWIN-ENGINE Mitsubishi Ki21 Sally bombers took off from the Hanoi airfield in Indochina on the morning of Saturday, December 20, 1941.

Beginning a 300-mile flight to Kunming, the China terminus of the Burma Road, the Japanese pilots anticipated a routine mission. They had been bombing the Chinese city on clear days for a year. The bombers had no fighter escort and had never needed one because the Chinese had neither fighter planes nor antiaircraft guns with which to oppose them.

On this day, the Japanese crews planned to fly unopposed over Kunming at an altitude of 6,000 feet in a stately, deadly procession. But, unknown to them, a highly effective "jing bao" early-warning system had been developed, and observers huddling in caves several miles out around Kunming were listening for enemy planes.

When the Japanese pilots were about 30 miles southeast of Kunming, they suddenly saw something they had not expected— four fast fighter planes bearing down on them. Nicknamed the Panda Bears and led by Lieutenant "Scarsdale Jack" Newkirk, they were shark-nosed Curtiss P-40 Tomahawks of the newly formed American Volunteer Group, the Flying Tigers.

The Pandas and a few more P-40s closed on the enemy formation, raked it with machine-gun fire, and shot down four bombers. The surviving Mitsubishis jettisoned their bombs and turned back for Hanoi. No Tomahawks were lost, and the young American pilots zoomed back to Kunming, where they triumphantly did slow victory rolls over their airstrip.

A squadron of Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk fighters belonging to the famed Flying Tigers soars in formation above the rugged mountains of China.
(Photo by R.T. Smith)

It was the first combat sortie for the Flying Tigers, and their spirits were raised further when they learned from later reports that three more of the enemy bombers had failed to return to base. The American volunteer fliers listened to words of both praise and criticism from their jut-jawed, craggy leader, Lt. Col. Claire L. Chennault, and then he added dourly, "Next time, get them all."

Three days later, on December 23, 1941, a dozen Tomahawks of Lieutenant Arvid Olson's Hell's Angels squadron joined stubby, antiquated Brewster Buffalo fighters of the British Royal Air Force's No. 67 Squadron to tangle with a formation of Japanese bombers heading across the Gulf of Martaban to Rangoon, Burma. Five bombers and four enemy fighters were downed, but one Flying Tiger was shot down and another forced to bail out. Chennault considered it a bad trade, for he had too few pilots and P-40s at his disposal.

On Christmas Day, 1941, the 12 operational Hell's Angels and 18 RAF Buffaloes encountered 71 Sally bombers escorted by between 30 and 40 fighters. The Tigers had learned well their lessons from Colonel Chennault and sliced methodically through the enemy force

in pairs. One after another, Japanese bombers were shot down. That day, 32 enemy planes were claimed for the loss of two Tomahawks and no pilots. Seven of the claims were made by RAF Buffalo pilots. The AVG produced three aces in the process, setting a record for kills in one day that they would not surpass.

Aerial action continued around Rangoon, so Chennault dispatched his Panda Bears to relieve the Hell's Angels. In the first 10 weeks of combat, the Flying Tigers dueled with enemy planes 31 times over Burma. They claimed 217 Japanese aircraft downed and another 43 probably destroyed, for the loss of 16 P-40s and six pilots. Chennault rotated his Adam and Eve Squadron to Mingaladon to share in the action as the RAF, meanwhile, replaced its tattered Buffaloes with more deadly Hawker Hurricanes.

In action for only seven months, from December 1941 to July 1942, and with never more than 50 pilots on call at a time, Chennault's Flying Tigers outfought their Japanese foes in the skies over southern China and Burma and racked up an extraordinary record of victories. During those frenzied months, the American fliers claimed 297 enemy planes destroyed, up to 240 unconfirmed kills in the air, and 40 planes destroyed on the ground. Four Tigers were lost in air combat, six died from ground fire while strafing, three perished in training accidents, three to enemy bombing raids, and three were taken prisoner. Twelve Tomahawks were destroyed in the air, and another 61 were written off in training mishaps, were destroyed on the ground by the enemy, or were set afire when the Tigers had to hurriedly evacuate their airstrip at Loiwing on the Burma-China border.

In the few months while their unprepared nation was recovering from the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the men of the AVG—the only mercenary air force in World War II—grabbed the public imagination and held it. Daring in the sky and flamboyant on the ground, Colonel Chennault's Tigers found their exploits being amplified in newspapers, radio broadcasts, magazines, comics, and eventually books and motion pictures. They were the Lafayette Escadrille or Eagle Squadron of the Far East, providing a major lift to home-front morale when American fortunes were at their lowest.

But the fact that so much well-timed morale-boosting and effective combat flying was being done so early in the Pacific war had nothing to do with American foresight—quite the opposite. Strategic policy in the U.S. Army Air Corps during the 1930s had been dominated by the

General Claire Chennault found new life in his military career as commander of the fabled Flying Tigers in China.

(All photos: National Archives)

"invincibility" of the heavy bomber, and Chennault—an original thinker in pursuit aviation—spent more than five frustrating years working to build an air force for Nationalist China after leaving the Air Corps in 1937. He maintained that well-led squadrons of fighters could stop a large force of bombers, as Royal Air Force Fighter Command would prove in the skies over southeastern England in the summer of 1940.

Claire Lee Chennault, the founder and leader of World War II's most colorful air unit and one of the engaging, egocentric characters in which the China-Burma-India Theater abounded, was born in Commerce, Texas, on September 6, 1890. He was of French Huguenot descent and was a distant relative of Texas hero Sam Houston and Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Claire spent an idyllic and Tom Sawyerish boyhood in Louisiana, studying for 18 hours a week at a one-room school in the bayou town of Gilbert. Slender, dark-haired, and with an olive complexion, he was a quiet, reserved boy and a good student.

In January 1909, he matriculated at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He drilled with the ROTC, competed in track, baseball, and basketball, and farmed a cotton patch to earn money for his sophomore year. But when his beloved stepmother died, he dropped out of LSU and went to the Louisiana State Normal College (later the Northwestern State College) at Natchitoches. In September 1910, the ruggedly handsome young man started work as the teacher-principal of a school in Athens, near Shreveport. He was a dedicated outdoorsman on his days off and spent so much time hunting and fishing that his skin became weathered and cracked from the elements. In China later, his pilots nicknamed him "Old Leatherface."

The young man became fascinated with aviation when he saw a Curtiss biplane at the Louisiana State Fair in Shreveport. Meanwhile, Chennault fell in love with Nellie Thompson, a buxom, pretty, high school valedictorian. They were married on Christmas Day and began to start a family. They would have six sons and a daughter.

When America entered World War I in April 1917, the young father resettled his family in Gilbert and went off to the Officers Training Camp at Fort Benjamin Harrison, an infantry school, in Indiana. Applying himself diligently to training and tactics, he was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Infantry Reserve in November 1917. But he failed to get overseas duty.

Instead, a new career opened up that would change his life when he was transferred to the Army Signal Corps Aviation Section. He earned his wings in April 1919, but his only flying assignment was a stint on the Mexican border. When his tour ended in 1920, he was routinely discharged and returned home to Gilbert. He planted a field of cotton, but he was restless. Aviation had taken hold of him. "I have tasted of the air," he told his father in a letter, "and I cannot get it out of my craw."

Chennault took a Regular Army commission later in 1920 and resumed his flying career. But his star did not rise. A prickly individualist with a sharp mind, he was an outspoken critic of outdated Air Corps doctrine.

He was stationed at a number of airfields for several years, including three years (1923-1926) as commander of the 19th Pursuit Squadron based at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. It was a pleasant billet for Chennault and his family, and, while proving himself to be a first-class pilot and squadron leader, he found time to begin a deep and detailed study of pursuit tactics. He bristled regularly at the belief of Air Corps "bomber generals" that planes like the new Martin B-10 bomber—a fast aerial pillbox—made fighters obsolete. Chennault remained an insistent, vocal proponent of the pursuit plane.

In his view, the perceived ineffectiveness of fighters in combat stemmed not from inherent

limitations, but from pursuit tactics devised over the Western Front in 1914-1918. "There was too much of an air of medieval jousting in the dogfights," he wrote, "and not enough of the calculated massing of overwhelming force so necessary in the cold, cruel business of war." He believed that combat aviators, like infantrymen, won engagements by fighting as teams.

Clinging tenaciously to his belief at a time when the Army Air Corps was still teaching dogfighting tactics, Chennault was promoted to captain in 1929 and graduated from the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, Virginia, in 1931. Remaining there as an instructor, he published in 1935 an influential and much-used textbook, *The Role of Defensive Pursuit,* in which he emphasized the role of the fighter plane in aerial superiority. He also advocated, in an era before the advent of radar, a defensive warning system based on a network of trained spotters.

Meanwhile, to demonstrate that a group of planes could operate effectively as a tightly knit team in combat, Chennault led two other Air Corps fliers—Lieutenant Haywood "Possum" Hansell and Sergeant John "Luke" Williamson—in forming a precision flying team known as the "Three Men on a Flying Trapeze." The so-called Army Air Corps Exhibition Group performed breathtaking aerobatics in formation—loops, spins, and turns—from 1932 to 1936.

But the Air Corps hierarchy was unmoved. Its Tactical School at Maxwell Field, Alabama, where Chennault, now a major, was instructing, stopped teaching fighter tactics in 1936. The following year, the 47-year-old Chennault left the service with partial deafness and chronic bronchitis. He was physically exhausted and unpopular, with his gruff manner diluting the impact of his innovative ideas. He retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel, and many of his superiors were glad to see him go.

The hidebound Army Air Corps was not ready to embrace such visionaries as Chennault and General William "Billy" Mitchell before him. But the Chinese, then threatened by the aggressive Japanese, had heard of Chennault and his expertise with pursuit tactics and asked him to advise their government. He went to China in May 1937 and met Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the wife of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who was also a lieutenant colonel in the Chinese Air Force. Assigned to upgrade the tottering air arm, she gave Chennault the forbidding task of training and organizing air defenses. The two hit it off from the start. The craggy American colonel was captivated by the charming, shrewd Madame Chiang, and he wrote in his diary on the day they met, "She will always be a princess to me." In the troubled years ahead, she was Chennault's patron and steadfast champion.

Later in his career, General Claire Chennault commanded the U.S. Fourteenth Air Force. Here, he is shown talking with a sergeant who is working to repair a fighter plane engine at an airstrip somewhere in China.

At that time, the Chinese Air Force was in a pitiable state, with 500 aircraft on the books but only 91 serviceable. Within weeks of Chennault's arrival, the Sino-Chinese War broke out, and he found himself overseeing a motley collection of Chinese pilots and international mercenaries that was outclassed by the Japanese Air Force. Chinese fliers who were supposedly combat ready left their airfields strewn with the wreckage of cracked-up planes. By October 1937, the Chinese had only a handful of Curtiss Hawk IIIs left.

Without delay, the energetic and resourceful Chennault set about transforming the Air Force into an effective fighting unit. He revised the training system, taught new tactics, and established a wide-ranging radio and telephone warning network.

Chennault's tireless efforts paid off, and in the ensuing months his pilots began to put up a spirited defense against the ruthless Japanese raiders then bombing and strafing Chinese cities. But the Chinese fliers were no match for the superior numbers and higher performance of the enemy planes. The deadly Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighter was introduced to combat, and by the summer of 1940, the key city of Chungking was being bombed by 100 Japanese planes a day. The situation was hopeless, so the Chiangs decided to try to secure aircraft and pilots from America.

Early in 1941, Chennault was back in his neutral homeland, aided by chubby, bespectacled T.V. Soong, Madame Chiang's brother, minister of foreign affairs, head of the Bank of China, and China's chief lobbyist in the United States. Soong gained President Franklin D. Roosevelt's reluctant permission for Chennault to hire American pilots and mechanics for the Chinese Air Force. Madame Chiang, meanwhile, provided Chennault with $8,900,000 under a private corporation—named China Defense Supplies and chartered by the state of Delaware—to purchase the necessary hardware.

Through export representative William D. Pawley of Curtiss-Wright Aircraft Corp., Chennault was assured delivery of the fighter planes he needed. These were 100 single-engine, single-seat P-40 Tomahawks earmarked for the Royal Air Force but rejected as obsolete. Colonel Chennault discussed with Navy Secretary Frank Knox, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and presidential adviser Thomas Corcoran the formation of an American Volunteer Group in China, and on April 15, 1941, Roosevelt signed an unpublicized executive order authorizing the recruitment of reserve military personnel for it.

Recruiting got under way immediately at Army and Navy bases, and volunteers came forward from fleet aircraft carriers and Army Air Corps pursuit and bombardment groups. About half of the men recruited were Navy or Marine Corps pilots, about a third came from the Air Corps, and the rest were commercial or test pilots. "Here's an opportunity for real experience, combat experience," said an AVG recruiter in 1941. "And, besides, there's good dough in it." The recruits signed one-year contracts, with the pay ranging from $250 to $750 a month, plus travel expenses, free quarters, and valet-interpreters. In addition, the Chinese government promised a $500 bonus for each Japanese plane shot down.

By mid-May 1941, the crated Tomahawks began to find their way to Rangoon harbor, and on July 7, the first contingent of AVG personnel—110 pilots, 150 mechanics, and a few support men—sailed from San Francisco. Because of neutrality laws, they carried bogus passports and posed as bankers, actors, clergymen, and even circus performers. By way of Singapore, they reached Toungoo, a primitive former RAF airstrip, on July 28. The AVG's intended base at Kunming was not ready. The fighters were assembled at the Mingaladon airfield near Rangoon and were tested between August and December.

Chennault arrived on August 22 to find his recruits living in grass huts and suffering from

suffocating heat, bad food, and fierce mosquitoes. He wasted no time in teaching the theories of fighter combat, showing the volunteers how to exploit the Tomahawk and deny the Japanese superiority in climbing and maneuverability. The P-40 was a heavy, durable plane with thick armor to protect the pilot. It was relatively fast in straightaway flight and could achieve great speed in a dive, but its weight made it sluggish in climbing and clumsy to maneuver by comparison with the lighter, more agile enemy fighters.

Defensive tactics were geared to the Hawks' strengths and weaknesses. The pilots were advised to fly in pairs and never to engage the enemy Zero fighters or Nakajima "Kate" torpedo bombers in single duels. Chennault told his men, "Never, never, in a P-40, try to outmaneuver and perform acrobatics with a Jap Kate or Zero. Such tactics, take it from me, are strictly non-habit-forming."

Alert to a coming Japanese air raid, American pilots rush to their P-40s parked at the ready on a Chinese airfield.

The main reason for the Flying Tigers' later success lay in the unorthodox hit-and-run tactics laid down by Chennault. "Use your speed and diving power to make a pass, shoot, and break away," he told his men. He emphasized his points by drawing diagrams of tactics on a chalkboard like a football coach, and he scrutinized the pilots' aerial progress through binoculars while perched on a rickety bamboo tower. At least half of the pilots had never before seen a P-40, and the training was slow. Three men died in training accidents, and others gave up and went home. Torrential rains and mishaps kept the Tomahawks on the ground for long periods.

The Tigers were ready to commence operations at the time of the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor. Colonel Chennault split his forces between Burma, where one group supported the hard-pressed British defenders of Rangoon, and Kunming, where the other group set up a protective air screen for western China. From the outset, it was a makeshift operation waged by a ragtag outfit. The Tigers used chewing gum

to plug bullet holes in their planes' fuel tanks and patched riddled fuselages with adhesive tape. Because their Tomahawks had no bomb racks, the pilots experimented with incendiaries made of gasoline-filled whiskey bottles.

Yet, for all of their improvised operations, the fliers of Chennault's "Scalper Squadrons" caused such havoc with Japanese formations over Burma that Tokyo radio announced, "The American pilots in Chinese planes are unprincipled bandits. Unless they cease their unorthodox tactics, they will be treated as guerrillas (meaning they would be executed if captured)." The AVG never numbered more than 200 aircraft, but Chennault's training and guidance made it highly successful in combat.

Going into action outnumbered against enemy formations, and sometimes flying up to eight sorties a day, the Flying Tigers sought to deceive their foes as well as outshoot them. They would alter their voices over the radio and give orders to imaginary squadrons to create the impression of superior force. On February 25, 1942, the Japanese sent 166 planes to bomb and strafe Rangoon. Nine P-40s swooped on them, bagged 24 aircraft, and lost three. On the next day, about 200 enemy planes raided the city. Six Tomahawks downed 18 Japanese aircraft without loss. After the fall of Rangoon on March 7, 1942, Colonel Chennault withdrew his last few fighters from Burma to China. There, they defended the cities of western China and made raids over Burma, primarily to protect Allied supply convoys toiling along the winding, tortuous Burma Road.

Because war matériel entering China amounted to a trickle, Chennault faced awesome logistical problems. Spare parts and other supplies had to be hauled thousands of miles by sea, rail, and air. "It was as though," he said, "an air force based in Kansas was supplied from San Francisco to bomb targets from Maine to Florida." After he established forward bases in China from which to attack enemy lines of communication, his supplies had to be transported 400 to 700 miles from Kunming by trucks and donkey carts that traveled over makeshift roads.

The AVG was less than a spit-and-polish outfit. Military formalities were dispensed with, and discipline was lax. All that mattered was destroying as many Japanese aircraft as possible. The pilots often wore high-heeled cowboy boots, caroused with native girls in smoky Rangoon bars, composed bawdy ballads, and donned full uniforms only for funerals and formal celebrations.

They painted fearsome, toothy sharks on the noses of their P-40s, a design calculated to have a psychological effect on the Japanese and one that was borrowed from No. 112 Squadron of the Royal Air Force based in Egypt. A Walt Disney Studios artist designed an insignia for the Tigers' tailplanes—a winged Bengal tiger leaping through a V-for-victory symbol. Thus, Chennault's fliers became widely known as the Flying Tigers.

A group of Flying Tigers discusses an upcoming mission. Recognizing their P-40s could not outmaneuver the Japanese fighters, Chennault instructed his flyers to use unorthodox hit-and-run tactics. "Use your speed and diving power to make a pass, shoot, and break away," he told his men.

Twenty-six aces emerged from the AVG ranks, and two later earned the Medal of Honor. These were former Navy pilot James Howard, who later distinguished himself in the European Theater, and Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, who shot down six Japanese planes while with the AVG and later led the famous Marine Corps "Black Sheep" Squadron in the Solomon Islands campaign.

The gallant service of the Tigers was noted in a special order of the day by Air Vice Marshal Donald F. Stevenson, the RAF commander in Burma. He stated, "The high courage, skillful fighting, and offensive spirit displayed mark the AVG as a first-class fighting force." Later, in August 1943, Great Britain awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to three AVG pilots—Charlie Bond, Tex Hill, and Ed Rector—for their services in the defense of Burma.

Much of the Tigers' success depended on their resourceful ground crews, who minimized the enemy's numerical advantage by keeping the patched-up, bullet-riddled P-40s operational. They labored in sub-zero temperatures on the Kunming Plateau and in 115-degree heat in the Burma lowlands. The mechanics, armorers, propeller specialists, radio technicians, and parachute riggers toiled for long hours, and they operated with precision. They often made repairs during enemy air raids. Spare parts were in such short supply that the ground crews had to scavenge in jungles and rice paddies to find what they could where planes had crashed. They used ingenuity to improve the performance of the Tomahawks, even rubbing wax on the fuselages to increase speed by as much as 10 miles an hour. The mechanics' efforts were readily acknowledged by the pilots, one of whom told a war correspondent, "Save some big words for our ground crews. They have gone through strafings, dodged bombs, and have always been out there working on our planes at all hours."

The AVG fought until July 4, 1942, when it was disbanded and formed into a regular Army Air Forces unit called the China Air Task Force, with Chennault in command. The Flying Tigers' operations were absorbed by the 23rd Fighter Squadron.

Chennault, meanwhile, had returned to U.S. service as a colonel in April 1942. After ranking as a brigadier general in the Chinese service, he was promoted to the same grade in the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF). He organized the China Air Task Force to carry on the air war against the Japanese. Prodigious feats were performed by his transport plane crews in ferrying supplies 500 miles from Assam, India, over the forbidding Himalayas—the Hump—to Kunming. Violent storms and high winds

made every trip a nightmare, and monsoon downpours reduced visibility to zero.

In March 1943, Chennault was promoted to major general and given command of the Fourteenth Air Force, which, from bases in southern China, fought a war of attrition and tactical support for Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell's Chinese and U.S. ground forces.

Chennault's tactical leadership was masterful, though he continued to be plagued with logistics limitations. Besides feuding with the acerbic "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, he complained loudly about the lack of support he was getting. He resorted to dealing directly with Chiang Kai-shek and President Roosevelt, and this earned him the distrust of General George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff, and General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, commander of the USAAF. Chennault remained in command of the Fourteenth Air Force until August 1945, and retired from the service the following October.

Critical of the failure of U.S. authorities to support the Nationalist Chinese government against the Communist threat, Chennault rejoined Chiang Kai-shek in 1946 to organize the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Air Transport Service. He served as its president and also headed other aviation organizations in Formosa (later Taiwan) until 1950. He returned to his homeland in January 1958 and died of lung cancer in New Orleans on July 27 that year. One of his last bedside visitors was Madame Chiang Kai-shek.

Chennault was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Nine days before his death, the U.S. Air Force bestowed upon him the honorary grade of lieutenant general. An Air Force base at Lake Charles, Louisiana, was named for him, and a bust was erected at a park in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. Chennault was the only Westerner so honored in the Republic of China. He was posthumously inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio, in 1972, and a 40-cent postage stamp was issued in September 1990 to memorialize Old Leatherface.

The exploits of the Flying Tigers were related by one of their members, Captain Robert L. Scott, winner of the Silver Star, in his books, *God Is My Co-Pilot, Flying Tiger,* and *The Day I Owned the Sky,* and in two motion pictures, *God Is My Co-Pilot* (1945), starring Dennis Morgan, Dane Clark, and Raymond Massey, and *Flying Tigers* (1942), with John Wayne, John Carroll, Paul Kelly, and Anna Lee.

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By L. VanLoan Naisawald

Perched among the Bavarian Alps, Hitler's Berghof offered panoramic vistas of the surrounding mountains. (National Archives)

Berchtesgaden and Its Bunkers

The elaborate system of underground quarters and hallways in the mountains of Bavaria was never fully completed.

THE SWINGING BEAMS OF SEARCHLIGHTS AND THE WAIL OF AIR RAID SIRENS had preceded the crash of the guns. Then had come the rain of bombs. It was the night of August 25, 1940, and Berlin was undergoing its first air raid. It was not a heavy air raid by later standards, but it told Berliners, and indeed all Germans, that Reichsmarshall Hermann Göring's prewar boast of the impregnability of the skies over Germany was simply not true. This raid was the first of hundreds of Allied bombings that would shatter Berlin. It was but a pale shadow of what was to come. But Göring, no doubt smarting from his earlier boast about changing his name to Meyer if a single bomb fell on the Fatherland, then quickly began building an air-raid complex for himself under his personal country chalet at Berchtesgaden in southern Bavaria.

The aerial war over Germany grew in intensity in 1943-1944. The Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the U.S. Eighth Air Force pounded away around the clock, and the German Luftwaffe struggled to blunt the ceaseless hammering. In the face of this, Martin Bormann, Hitler's de facto personal chief of staff, decided in August 1943 that Hitler's house and personal compound area in the southern Bavarian town of Berchtesgaden should also have an adequate air-raid shelter. But the fierce, jealous backbiting that plagued the Nazi hierarchy quickly came to the fore when Bormann decreed that Göring's complex would not be allowed to connect with Hitler's.

The Berchtesgaden compound in a magnificently picturesque section of southern Bavaria had become by 1943 the site of the secluded and intensely guarded homes of Hitler and a select few of his Nazi cronies, including Göring, Reich Minister of Armaments Albert Speer, and of course Bormann, possibly the most evil, sinister, and ruthlessly powerful man in the entire tribe of evil men who surrounded Hitler. There were, however, a handful of necessary housekeeping buildings, SS barracks, and guard buildings. There was even a confiscated hotel called the Platterhof, originally designed to allow adoring Germans to visit for a night for the low cost of a single Reichsmark and see their Führer at home.

The compound was situated atop a low mountain plateau called the Obersalzberg, meaning an area over a salt rock mountain. In fact, the entire region was of very porous rock and salt mines. Hitler had first visited there in 1922, fallen in love with its gorgeous view of the surrounding Alps, and ended up buying a small chalet atop the Obersalzberg. As his power grew, so did his dwelling as it was enlarged to better reflect his political position in the world to visiting dignitaries. However, the fiction of modesty was continued by calling it the Berghof—a name that denoted a modest mountain chalet. The money for its construction came largely from royalties from his book, *Mein Kampf,* as Bormann, for all of his evil, was an extremely able manager of Hitler's personal finances.

The house that became known as "Das Berghof" stood at the foot of the Hohen Göll Mountain whose towering 7,000-foot peaks provided a spectacular backdrop. Over the years of Hitler's rise to power, the chalet was slowly enlarged into a true country mansion that certainly impressed military leaders and foreign dignitaries. Access to it was rigidly controlled by Bormann. All entry was barred except for a limited few with special passes, and for those granted other than routine entry a pass was issued on a one-time basis and required Hitler's or Bormann's written approval.

Enlargement of the residence as well as the entire Obersalzberg compound was strictly controlled by Bormann. Earlier, he had ruthlessly uprooted longtime residents, arbitrarily seizing their property with little or no compensation and often with but 24 hours notice. Some 400 people were summarily evicted and an area of some three square miles was enclosed in a seven-foot high barbed wire fence. The outer ring stretched about nine miles, and an inner ring of some two miles was also wired and guarded. Guard posts and sentry boxes were everywhere, and the foundations of some of these exist today, grim reminders of a past many would like to forget. The outer posts were manned by the Nazi Gestapo, the dreaded secret state police. Stalwart SS troopers manned the inner lines and served as Hitler's white-jack-

The main tunnel at Berchtesgaden is partially accessible and provides a glimpse of life at Hitler's retreat during World War II. LEFT: This corridor leading to Hitler's living quarters has collapsed after decades of neglect.

(Author's Collection)

eted personal servants.

By 1943, the Führer's residence was a white stucco and stone structure, really a split level, with the front the highest part. The lower level of the front contained an underground garage, the ruins of which are all that remain today, and a bowling alley, storage rooms, and the heating plant. To the left as one faced the house, was the main entry, a set of wide stone steps that led up to the main floor. From here, one entered to the right into a Gothic-style reception hall with marble pillars. At this point, one entered a large conference room with its breathtaking great picture window overlooking the towering Alps. This massive window had an electrical wind-down mechanism to allow the fresh mountain breezes to flow in. But it was quickly discovered that instead of cool mountain breezes entering came the fumes from the garage below. The rolling down was soon dispensed with.

As the war for Germany dragged gloomily on and the bombing intensified, Bormann foresaw the need to construct not only an air-raid shelter for his Führer and himself, but to provide an extensive bombproof tunnel system to accommodate an overall command post for Hitler complete with a communications center, Nazi party headquarters, and SS offices. It is obvious today that what Bormann had in mind was the alpine redoubt that the Allies feared would exist in the closing days of the war. The compound continued to expand as the war wnt on, to include SS barracks, secret police detachments, and personnel to man the Platterhof hotel. Additionally, in the village itself was another hotel, the Berchtesgadener Hof, designed to house invited party and VIP guests and personnel to man Bormann's own guest house. In all, Bormann built a tunnel system almost two miles long, some 200 feet under the Obersalzberg. It was a typical work of German thoroughness and skill.

Hurriedly, plans were drawn, then redrawn, and redrawn again before work at last began. Completion was scheduled for December 1943 for the Führer's personal tunnel and shelter. As German labor was in very short supply owing to the demands of military drafts and the construction of the so-called Atlantic Wall, most laborers were Czech and Italian. Only the supervisory personnel were German. As planned, the initial work began on the tunnel to protect Hitler and his mistress, Eva Braun, and Hitler's personal staff. An entryway was dug from the basement of the Berghof, running roughly southeast for several hundred yards. At this point it would connect with the main tunnel system. The main tunnel ran roughly northeast.

It was quickly discovered that the rock through which they were digging was frequently ruptured and streaked with loam, so unplanned bracings had to be installed. As it turned out, a 30- to 60-centimeter concrete lining had to be installed. Over this went a layer of cement. Next came a layer of a material that seems to have been synthetic rubber. This, in turn, was protected by another layer of cement. Water seepage was carried off by an ingenious canal system of trickle-stone paths in the lining. This design was carried out throughout the entire tunnel complex.

Hitler's private bunker rooms were in the main tunnel just to the left, or east, of the junction of his tunnel and the main tunnel, with lateral rooms branching off to each side of the main passageway. Here were Eva Braun's and Hitler's rooms, guest rooms, Hitler's doctor's quarters, and a guard room with toilet area and bath. Beyond, where the tunnel turned slightly northward, was the kennel for Hitler's two German shepherds, a machine-gun alcove, and an emergency exit that some say still exists, albeit welded shut. In this branch tunnel were more toilets and baths for the guards and another machine-gun alcove.

Beyond the emergency exit tunnel, the main passageway continued past a second hotel—the Hotel Zum Türken. This hotel had been seized for use as the barracks for the dreaded RSD, the SS security police. It is now back in private hands and still in operation. From the Zum Türken came another tunnel that exists today, and part of the tunnel complex may be entered from the hotel.

Beyond the hotel, the system seems to have been a series of additional corridors that led to Bormann's house and to the residence of the SS administrative officer of the Obersalzberg. Again, there were lateral rooms off these corridors, and it appears that there were tie-ins with the communications center and the SS barracks. But petty jealousy prevented Bormann from allowing any connection to Göring's complex. While some existing drawings illustrate the entire complex, the unstable rock formations have over the years caused some collapsing and

rendered much of what remained as unsafe for visitation.

From the point where Hitler's tunnel joined the main one, a right turn into the main tunnel led roughly southwest. Along here were the record rooms of the Foreign Affairs Office, the kitchen, a telephone switchboard, and the rooms of the Berghof servants. Beyond these came the entry tunnel from the Platterhof. This hotel was damaged by an RAF bombing raid on the compound in April 1945. After the war, the U.S. Army took it over, repaired it—naming it the General Walker—and used it for a recreation center for military personnel and their families. After decades of use, it was found to be in severely deteriorating condition, and in the early 1990s, it was abandoned by the U.S. Army and returned to the Bavarian government, which found the cost of repair excessive. It was destroyed except for a small portion that is maintained as a tourist attraction.

Just off the lobby of the Platterhof was an entry to the bunker system used for years by visiting U.S. personnel to see the vast tunnel complex. A protected machine-gun post stood at the top. From here, one descended 190 steps into the cave-like bunker system. All entries were carefully built to include manned guard posts also designed to deflect bomb blasts and concussions as well as gas. Heavy steel ported doors could seal off entry when needed, and interior pillbox guard posts were constructed with good fields of fire. Several emergency exits were built, and there was a domed observation post atop a shaft that extended upward to the top of the plateau. The entire complex was self-sufficient, with a highly technical control system for heat, power, water, sewage, and ventilation. Altogether, there were 69 rooms and more than one and a half miles of tunnel.

The original completion date had been December 24, 1943, but work was constantly delayed by changes in plans and the discovery of ruptured rock. Finally, just six weeks remained to complete the job on time, so Bormann ordered maximum effort around the clock. One participant described what followed as having one worker every meter spanning the arches of the tunnel while other laborers crawled on their hands and knees between the legs of the standees, hauling loads of stone and mortar. Craftsmen of every skill intermingled, and miraculously a 125-yard stretch of tunnel and adjacent rooms was ready for the Führer's anticipated arrival.

Originally, Bormann had specified simplicity and functionality in the planning, but as work progressed special interests reared their muddling heads. Security people insisted additional guard posts were necessary; a kennel was needed for Hitler's dogs; and Eva Braun demanded her own private bathroom. Even the cooks got into it with requests, as did the telephone people. Then Bormann himself threw a new mix into the cake with a requirement that his headquarters should be deeper than originally planned. Further, he demanded a special dining room for himself. These and other demands had a rippling effect on the entire planning and construction efforts.

Formerly used as headquarters for the RSD, the SS security police, the Hotel Zum Türken is now part of the lure for tourists to Berchtesgaden. (Author's Collection)

The demands continued without letup. No sooner were the tunnels completed than the antiaircraft headquarters detachment put in a demand for more room. Then an emergency power plant was deemed necessary and two huge U-Boat diesel engines were acquired. Space needed to be carved out of the rock for their installation. These locations were once visible, and one of the two engines still can be seen on a standby power basis at the nearby Eagles Nest or Kelstein Tea House, now a public restaurant atop a nearby towering peak.

While the tenor of the bunker system had originally been austerity, Bormann himself was probably the worst violator. First, he claimed he did not have enough space and thereupon confiscated room from the antiaircraft people. Next, he decreed his rooms were to be provided with inlaid floors—as were Hitler's, and covered with heavy oriental rugs. Wainscoting of the finest quality decorated his walls, and door frames glistened with lacquered finish. Lavish appointments extended throughout his personal lodging and office. Fine hardwood furniture and upholstered chairs were brought in. Nothing was spared for the grandeur.

At the war's end when American troops seized the area, Bormann's personal holdings in the bunker were found to be incredible. Squirreled away in his various rooms was a vast collection of silver and jewelry and a wardrobe that would be the envy of one of Hollywood's best-dressed actors—some 36 tailored suits and uniforms. As if this were not enough, his food closets were found to contain enough nonperishable goods to provide for himself and his family far beyond their life expectancy.

The corridors and domed ceilings of the bunker system were whitewashed or covered with some sort of white paint. Many floors were tiled. But lavishness was not for those outside Hitler's and Bormann's immediate entourages. Less than 1,300 square feet of bare earth was allocated for emergency space for ordinary employees and construction workers, and this part of the complex was never completed. Water is said to have dripped continuously, and the floor was always muddy. An inadequate number of plain wooden benches were all that provided comfort during air-raid warnings.

Legend says that because of this, a number of workers stayed outside during alerts rather than suffer the discomforts of the dank tunnel. For totally different reasons, Hitler rarely entered during alerts, preferring to stay outside and watch. These alerts were caused mostly by raids headed for the marshalling area of nearby

Salzburg. The only real bombing of the Obersalzberg occurred on April 25, 1945. On that day RAF Avro Lancaster bombers paid a pulverizing visit with their immense "Tall Boy" bombs. Just about everything was hit, and damage was extensive. An exception was the Platterhof, which took a hit from one of the Tall Boy bombs that failed to detonate, though it suffered peripheral damage. Also escaping was the nearby VIP guest house and Bormann's office. Records reflect that only six people were killed out of some 3,500 present or near the bunker at the time. During the raid, Hitler was in his Berlin bunker. Five days later, he committed suicide.

The infrequency of bombing of the Obersalzberg was due to the concentration of effort on known industrial and military targets as well as the complete lack of intelligence as to Hitler's whereabouts throughout the war—always a closely guarded secret. In the early days of the war, Hitler had visited the Berghof frequently for periods of rest, but as the war intensified, particularly on the Eastern Front, his visits became less frequent. He did happen to be there on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Through a misinterpretation of orders, he was not awakened when the initial reports of the Allied landings reached his headquarters. That blunder provided the Allies with a tremendous tactical advantage as nearby German reserve units were not permitted to move toward the beachhead.

In the postwar years, the bunkers had none of their former splendor and amenities. Deterioration was rampant from natural causes, mostly leakage through the porous rock walls, and lack of maintenance. Looting had been a way of life from the earliest moments of U.S. seizure. Over the years, the place was stripped bare of everything that could be carried away—woodwork, plaster, flooring, stonework, and fixtures of every kind.

Mostly bare rock remained from 1960 to 1990, much of it still oozing and dripping. Many portions were sealed off by the U.S. Army as being too dangerous because of potential collapse. For a while, licensed guides were provided for military visitors to the Berchtesgaden area in that portion from the Platterhof or General Walker Hotel. Similarly, access to a part of the bunker complex is still available to guests at the Zum Türken. It is said that for a small fee a few old residents know ways to enter through less-known emergency exits.

The only relic of the Hitler era that remained in the bunker was an immense steel safe resting on its back, its front pierced by a hole allegedly made by an American bazooka round as GIs sought to open it. History does not tell us what was found within, but legend says it was empty. Another story tells of a party of some two dozen GIs attempting unsuccessfully to raise the safe to an upright position.

For many American World War II buffs and veterans, the Obersalzberg is still a fascinating place. Sadly, most of the remains of Hitler's house and others of that era are long gone. The U.S. and Bavarian governments, in an attempt to eliminate any potential shrine to Hitler and his cronies, bulldozed away the remains of the badly bomb-damaged homes of Hitler, Göring, and Bormann in the 1950s. Even their rubble was carted away and dispersed. Gone, too, are the SS barracks. All that remains of the Hitler era are the concrete foundations of the guard posts along the roadway and the growth- covered ruins of the garage beneath Hitler's house. All that remains today of these opulent homes are some open spaces and woodlands. The Bavarian government has forbidden any subsequent structure to be built on the Obersalzberg.

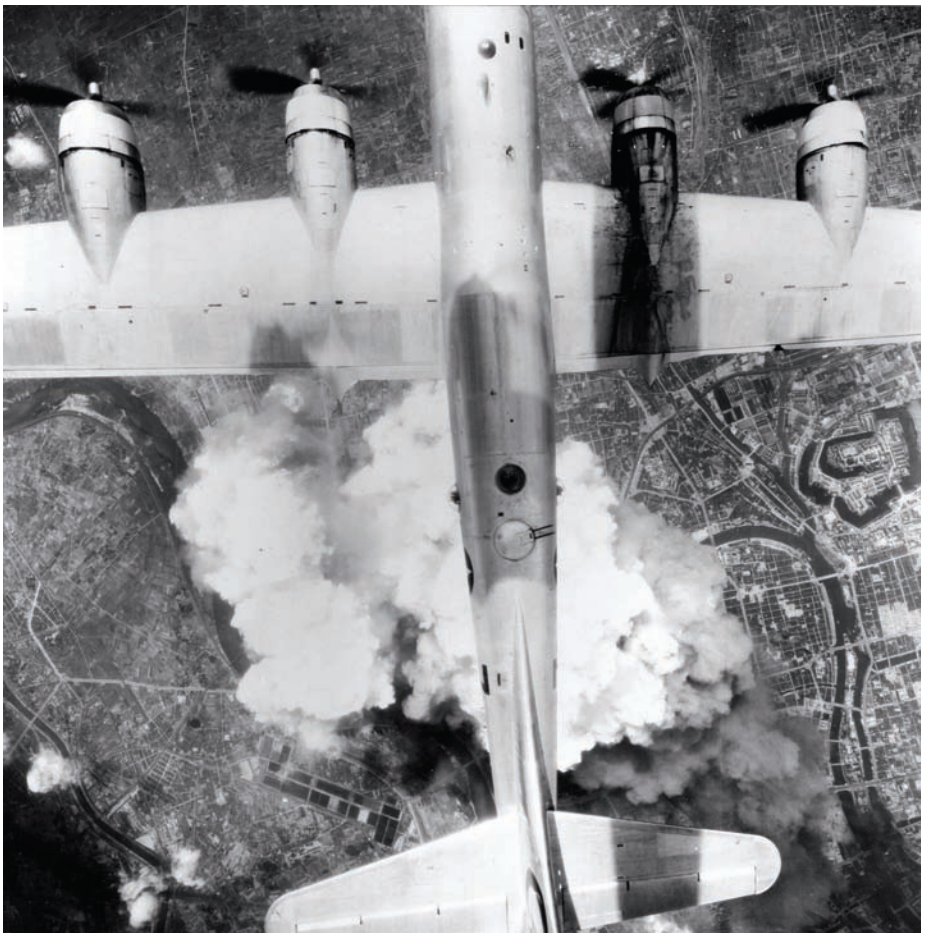
Today, a small part of the Platterhof, the former General Walker Hotel, remains as an official museum of the Bavarian government. The Obersalzberg Documentation Center is dedicated to displaying and telling the sad story of the Nazi era and the area. As a part of the story, visitors may, for a fee, enter a portion of the bunker system.

The Obersalzberg area and the nearby Kelstein Tea House, or Eagle's Nest, are still very popular tourist sites. The Kelstein Tea house is often referred to as Hitler's Tea House, which it was not. His so-called tea house was a small building atop the Obersalzberg plateau a short walking distance from his house. The Eagle's Nest was built by Bormann at immense cost as a birthday gift to Hitler, but Hitler never liked it, contending its altitude was too high for him to think well. Mistress Eva Braun adored it but was rarely able to coax the Führer there.

Today, the Kelstein House is owned by the Bavarian government but leased to a concessionaire. It is open during the spring and summer when access by buses specially designed to navigate the extremely sharp curves carry visitors upward to a small turn-around area. From here, one enters a 300-meter tunnel. At the end is an extravagantly ornate elevator that carries the visitor up 123 meters to the Kelstein House and its awe-inspiring view. It is difficult to realize, amid its current splendor, that the Eagle's Nest was once at the center of a truly evil empire. □

First-time contributor L. VanLoan Naisawald is a writer and historian who resides in Lynchburg, Virginia.

By Todd Raffensperger



A Gamble for Peace

U.S. Navy officer Ellis Zacharias attempted to end the Pacific War, saving lives in the process.

"I SUBMIT THAT IT WAS THE WRONG DECISION. IT WAS WRONG ON STRATEGIC grounds. And it was wrong on humanitarian grounds." It could be assumed that such a statement, pertaining to the decision by President Harry S. Truman to order the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would come from an academic studying the whole issue of the atomic bomb, or perhaps part of a speech given by a peace activist. But the fact that it was a United States naval officer, a rear admiral in fact, is what makes the career of Ellis M. Zacharias intriguing.

He had made this statement in an article he wrote for *Look* magazine in 1950, five years after the bombs had been dropped, four years after he had retired from a career that spanned more than three decades. He was a hero, but a sad one of sorts. A hero for doing what he did to try to compel the Japanese government to surrender and stop a futile, unwinnable war, but sad because he could not do so in time to stop the horrific bloodshed that would mark the final days of the crumbling Japanese Empire. Sad that he could not curb the suffering of a people he had come to know, admire, and love.

A U.S. Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber rains destruction on a Japanese city as billowing smoke from bombs dropped earlier rises upward.

(All Photos: National Archives)

Ellis Zacharias could remember, as he wrote in his memoirs, how he first decided to join the Navy, as an 8-year-old son of a tobacco grower in Jacksonville, Florida, watching the gray vessels of the U.S. Naval Patrol fleet steaming off Florida's shores in 1898, ready just in case the Spanish, with whom the United States was at war at the time, should decide to randomly shell the American coastline. It was an exaggerated threat, but one that helped to implant the idea of serving on the high seas in the mind of the young Zacharias. At 18, he got the chance to follow his dream of attending the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.

It was on his posting as an engineering officer aboard the battleship USS *Virginia* in 1913 that he made the first choice that would guide his career. The young ensign struck up a friendship with a lieutenant named Fred Rogers who at the time had the distinction of being the only officer in the U.S. Navy who was fluent in Japanese. Their lunchtime conversations ignited a fascination with the Far East and with Japan in particular. Eventually, both men completed their tours on the *Virginia* and were reassigned elsewhere, but Rogers kept the name of Ellis Zacharias in his head.

Seven years later, as Zacharias was stationed in Honolulu, he received a dispatch from Rogers, who by then was working for the Office of Naval Intelligence, with an offer that Zacharias could not turn down. "The Navy has decided to send two language officers to Japan," read the dispatch. "Do you still desire to go?" His reply was prompt and without hesitation. "Your message, affirmative."

In October 1920, Zacharias arrived in Tokyo to serve with the American embassy as a naval attaché, but his responsibilities went beyond just naval matters. The truth was that by the 1920s naval planners in Washington, D.C., were considering the possibility of war with the Japan. Zacharias's assignment was not only to learn the Japanese language, but also to learn as much as he could about Japanese culture and society. Zacharias tackled this assignment with both zeal and fascination, learning as much about the Japanese as he could and developing a deep admiration for a nation that he someday would be called upon to fight.

On September 1, 1923, Zacharias found himself in the middle of one of the most horrific natural disasters in Japan's history. The Kanto earthquake hit Tokyo and the Kanto region just before noon and ruptured

water mains and natural gas lines throughout Tokyo and Yokohama. Hundreds of fires broke out but the fire department was powerless to stop the flames. In one horrific day, 104,000 Japanese lost their lives. Zacharias worked throughout the night doing what he could to help the survivors.

In his memoir, *Secret Missions,* he wrote, "The greatest weakness of the Japanese was their inherent psychic inertia in the face of disaster." He observed this inertia in how Japanese officials acted or failed to act during the height of the disaster of September 1. With the city government in chaos, the earthquake and subsequent fires did more damage and claimed more lives than they should have. As a naval intelligence officer, Zacharias concluded, "This would also be the pattern of Japanese behavior in a supreme crisis of war when the unexpected happened." Even then he could not have imagined how right he would be.

Zacharias left Japan with a deeper understanding of the Japanese culture, with a commanding knowledge of the Japanese language, and friendships with several Japanese officials, both civil and military. The extent of his connection with the Japanese government was apparent in 1931 when he was selected as aide to Emperor Hirohito's brother, Prince Takamatsu, when he came to the United States on a goodwill tour.

As war became more likely during the 1930s, Zacharias's duties had less to do with goodwill than with analysis and assessment. He spent a good deal of his time at sea monitoring the communications and movement of the Japanese Navy. The friendships he maintained with various Japanese officials enabled him to assess the growing strength of militarism in Japan and the near impotence of the moderates and even the emperor himself to keep the militarists in check. By the end of the decade, while Japan invaded China and war had broken out in Europe, Zacharias was posted stateside as an intelligence officer with the 11th Naval District, which covered the southwestern United States.

On February 7, 1941, Zacharias got the chance to meet an old friend, Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, Japan's new ambassador to the United States. It was not just a social call. Zacharias was to pry out of Nomura any information that he could about the Japanese perspective. It did not take much prying. At this point, the United States and Great Britain were imposing an oil and steel embargo on Japan in response to its invasion of China, and nerves were fraying on both sides of the Pacific.

Nomura confided to Zacharias that his purpose was to try to lift the embargo and get the United States to help Japan extricate itself from China without any loss of face. Nomura also believed that unless the embargo was lifted war between America and Japan was inevitable and that such a war would almost certainly mean the destruction of Japan as a major power. Zacharias felt for his old friend, but he knew that the chances of the embargo being lifted were slim.

As he considered what Japan's next move would be, Zacharias remembered a Japanese proverb: "Hear three times, believe." He concluded that the Japanese would send three emissaries with three messages to Washington—three warnings about the consequences of maintaining the embargo. If nothing were to change by the third emissary, the Japanese government would decide to go to war. Nomura was the first of these emissaries. Nine months after Zacharias's conversation with Nomura, the newly appointed Japanese prime minister, General Hideki Tojo, sent another emissary to Washington, Ambassador Saburo Kurusu. At the end of November 1941, Japan's ambassador to Peru, Tatsuki Sakamoto, arrived in Washington. He was in fact that third and final emissary, as Zacharias had predicted.

The final days of peace for the United States found Zacharias at sea, commanding the heavy cruiser USS *Salt Lake City.* On December 7, 1941, the *Salt Lake City* was in company with a task force under the command of Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey.

Zacharias was in his cabin, but he was far from asleep. He already knew of a Japanese submarine sighting off the southern coast of the Hawaiian islands. The ship's radio equipment had picked up scrambled, but unmistakable to his trained ear, Japanese messages being exchanged. He knew something was up. Shortly after 8 AM, he found out what was going on when his communications officer burst into his cabin exclaiming, "They're bombing Oahu!"

The radio reports were sketchy, and no one in the fleet had any clue as to the true extent of the damage that had been done to the Pacific Fleet. It became apparent soon enough when Halsey's task force entered the burning harbor. Zacharias noted that from the very beginning of the war, and in spite of its meager resources, the Japanese fleet was imbued with a spirit of the "ruthless offensive," to attack and seize the initiative by whatever means possible.

On February 1, 1942, Zacharias's command was involved with the raids by carrier-based aircraft against the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. The *Salt Lake City* shelled Wojte Atoll although she inflicted little damage. In April, Zacharias was part of the first attack on the Japanese mainland as his cruiser provided escort for the air carrier USS *Hornet* as she launched Lt. Col. James Doolittle's B-25 bombers against Tokyo.

ABOVE: Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura served as Japanese ambassador to the United States during the months leading up to Pearl Harbor. TOP: Captain Ellis M. Zacharias played a key role with U.S. Naval Intelligence during the war and commanded the heavy cruiser *Salt Lake City.*

While Zacharias's leadership and command skills were outstanding, it would be his knowledge of the Japanese language and of the Japanese people, as well as his background in intelligence, that would prove to be far more valuable to the War Department. In June 1942, he was reassigned to Washington as deputy director of Naval Intelligence with OP16W, the code designation for the ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence. While many of his fellow naval commanders may have disagreed, Zacharias had come to believe that the dastardly art of intelligence and psychological warfare could prove to be decisive in winning this war, and winning it with a minimal loss of life. But he would have more than the Japanese to contend with. The American military bureaucracy sometimes seemed to be a foe as well.

When Zacharias was appointed to the position, Admiral Ernest J. King, the chief of naval operations, had tasked him with the job of creating a first-class intelligence-gathering organization that coordinated all the efforts of various agencies in the United States government. Getting the resources to build up this organization was not the problem; wartime Washington was abundant with funding and personnel. The trick was finding the right people with the right qualifications, and doing so would require someone who would not be intimidated by the oppressive bureaucracy. Zacharias filled the bill.

Through hard work and determination, Zacharias was central to the creation of the Joint Intelligence Collection Agency (JICA), whose purpose was the gathering of reconnaissance and tactical intelligence information that could be used by all the branches of the military. Such teams were assigned to North Africa and the Mediterranean to collect information helpful in planning the invasion of Europe. Before JICA, it had been extremely difficult for the Navy and the Army to share information from their intelligence agencies.

With an American naval officer personally doing the broadcasts under the pseudonym of Commander Robert Lee Norden, Naval Intelligence and the Office of War Information (OWI) ran a series of radio programs specifically targeting the officers and crews of German U-boats. Such programs would report the statistical odds of a German sailor being killed aboard a U-boat or broadcast that the shipping tonnage being sunk was grossly inflated by the German high command. Some programs went so far as to give advice to sailors on how to fake certain ailments that would get them out of sea duty.

Naval Intelligence also sought to use the programs to water the seeds of distrust between the Germans and Italians. When the North African campaign was coming to an end, Commander Norden gleefully reported that Italian ships were being directed by the Germans to evacuate the remnants of the Afrika Korps, giving the remaining Italian troops secondary priority. Just as Zacharias was making plans for a

similar propaganda operation in the Pacific, he went to sea again.

His new assignment was command of the battleship USS *New Mexico*. With Zacharias in command, the old battleship participated in operations to capture Makin Atoll in the Gilberts and the islands of Guam and Saipan in the Marianas. Throughout the bloody months of 1943 and 1944, Zacharias paid close attention to Japanese radio broadcasts and took note of the fact that Tojo himself seemed to be conceding the possibility that the Japanese could lose the war.

On September 14, 1944, Zacharias was relieved of his command after just over a year. For his actions, he was awarded the Navy's Gold Star. He had reason to be proud of his service, but now events convinced him that it was time to play a different role in winning the war in the Pacific. Shortly after the fall of Saipan, Tojo's government was dismissed by Emperor Hirohito. Tojo's dismissal was the first indication that Japanese morale was beginning to crack.

At this time, Zacharias was assigned once again to the 11th Naval District, and as 1944 drew to a close, it became apparent to almost everyone in the intelligence community that there were those in the imperial government who were looking for a way out of the war. Zacharias believed that the time was ripe to help those in the antiwar camp in Tokyo to finally convince the rest of the government that the time had come to surrender. His ideas to achieve this result were encapsulated in a comprehensive, two-part strategy of psychological war that he drew up in December to submit to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal. Its official designation was Operational Plan No. I-45, titled "A Strategic Plan to Effect the Occupation of Japan."

As Zacharias described it, the plan proposed to hit the Japanese government from two directions, above and behind. No bombs, bullets, or troops would be needed. From the air, he proposed a deliberate and overt psychological campaign that would consist of everything from radio broadcasts to air-dropped leaflets that the average Japanese could read in order to understand the American position and to promote the arguments of the pro-peace members of the government. From behind, the plan called for the use of clandestine operations and back-channel overtures to compel Japan's leaders to surrender.

The idea of a plan to bring the Japanese to surrender without a shot being fired did not endear itself to most officials in Washington. Americans were aware of some atrocities that

the Japanese had committed, and Pearl Harbor was still a bitter memory. Nobody in Washington was in any mood for a peaceful settlement of the conflict with Japan. Forrestal, however, believed in Zacharias's plan, not only because he was open-minded enough to consider its possibilities, but also for global political reasons. Forrestal knew that the Soviet Union was going to declare war on Japan with the goal of seizing key territory in Asia and having a foothold in the Pacific. He was hoping that Zacharias's plan could shorten the war before the Russians joined in. Forrestal formally approved the plan on March 19, 1945.

The voice of Captain Ellis M. Zacharias came over the airwaves on May 8, 1945. In this and in every subsequent broadcast, he would describe himself as the "official spokesman" of the United States government, and while he was never officially designated as such, no one in Washington objected to his using the term. On the day that Nazi Germany officially surrendered unconditionally, he used the occasion as a springboard for what would be a continued psychological campaign that would target the decision makers in the Japanese government. His broadcasts were carried on the Saipan transmitter once each week on the Radio Tokyo broadcast band to ensure that they could not be censored and that every Japanese citizen with a radio would hear them and understand exactly what was being said to their leaders.

Unlike most other propaganda programs, Zacharias's tone and approach were much more civil, sometimes even informal. It was not uncommon for him to mention the names of Japanese friends and acquaintances that he had made during his time in Tokyo. He sent regards to them or expressed condolences to the families of those he knew had been killed in action. However soft or civil the tone, the basic message to the Japanese was the same—that the time had come for the leaders of Japan to bring the increasingly bloody and useless war to an end. He argued that the only real option was to surrender.

The two words "unconditional surrender" proved to be major stumbling blocks to peace in the Pacific. While the peace faction in Tokyo was pushing for an immediate end to the war, the war faction was very much afraid of the implications of this phrase, which conjured up images of an entire nation enslaved, helpless, crushed under the conqueror's boot, and of an emperor dishonored, humiliated, and even imprisoned.

Zacharias believed there was still a chance to convince the hawks in the Japanese government that surrender was an acceptable alternative. The Japanese, he argued, could accept the idea of an unconditional surrender, but only if the implications and specifics of such surrender were made clear to them. They had to understand that an unconditional surrender did not mean enslavement or annihilation of the Japanese people.

It was not just by radio that Zacharias intended to make this point. As the air war phase of Zacharias's plan went on week by week, his team was pursuing a back channel to Tokyo. One of the more off-the-wall ideas was to deposit the naval officer and Hollywood film star Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., onto the shores of Japan to contact those in the government willing to negotiate. Fairbanks was no stranger in Japan, especially to the imperial court, with which he had established many friendships. The idea was bizarre and extremely dangerous, but it appealed to Fairbanks. Admiral King nixed the plan as being too dangerous.

Another idea involved using General Hiroshi Oshima, who had been the Japanese ambassador to Nazi Germany until his capture by American troops. Zacharias felt that Oshima, the highest ranking Japanese prisoner of the Americans, could help persuade his more reluctant comrades to accept unconditional surrender. Oshima had been one of the staunchest supporters for Japan's adherence to the Axis, but when contacted by Zacharias he was willing to cooperate. Before arrangements could be made to bring him to the United States, the Army moved Oshima to an undisclosed location and kept him beyond the reach of ONI. The Army never explained why it took this step, but after the war Zacharias expressed his belief that it was an attempt to sabotage his plan, which it effectively did.

The most serious and promising effort to find a back channel was actually started by Emperor Hirohito himself, when he made a direct appeal to Pope Pius XII to intervene and mediate negotiations between Japan and the Allied powers. While this first effort came to no avail, Zacharias and his team still saw the possibility of using the good offices of the Vatican. ONI contacted Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi as a possible intermediary. It seemed that the Allies and the Japanese were getting close, but it turned out to be a forlorn hope. Not long after agreeing to help Zacharias, Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi told ONI that he had been warned by "certain people" in Washington not to take part in this endeavor. This effectively ended the last effort by Zacharias to open indirect negotiations. In early 1945, Zacharias was unaware of the atomic bomb, but he did know that the last act of the Pacific War was at hand. Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers were conducting massive raids on Japanese cities.

The men guiding America's foreign policy had concluded that there was no viable way to end the Pacific War with a minimal amount of bloodshed. Backing down from the position of unconditional surrender was never an option, not with all that had happened in the past four years, and the Japanese, they believed, should not be treated any differently from their erstwhile allies, the Germans.

But Zacharias believed that there was an alternative. His knowledge and experience with the Japanese led him to believe that it was possible to compel the Japanese government to surrender without compromising Allied principles and without ending the drama of the Pacific War with a last bloody episode. The key to his hope was the Atlantic Charter, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill early in 1941.

The Atlantic Charter stated eight basic points concerning the rights of nations and their peoples and was in many ways a precursor to the United Nations Charter. The document notes the intention of the United States and Great Britain to seek "no aggrandizement, territorial or other," in the struggle against Nazism. Nor did they seek any territorial changes of any state or nation. They called upon the nations of the world to denounce the use of force in solving their problems. While the charter had been intended for the struggle in Europe, Zacharias saw a chance to apply its provisions to the Pacific Theater.

If, as Zacharias hoped, the Japanese believed that such terms could apply to them, that unconditional surrender would not mean the destruction and enslavement of the Japanese people nor the end of the status of the emperor, then they might agree to unconditional surrender. All that needed to be done was to communicate this point to Tokyo. But to do so entailed a certain degree of risk to Zacharias and his career.

July 21, 1945, was the date selected. It would be his 12th broadcast to the Japanese people and their leaders; it also was the date that President Truman would meet with Churchill and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin for the first time at Potsdam. As the leaders sat down to hash out their differing visions for a postwar world, Zacharias went on the air with the bluntest delivery he had made yet to the Japanese. "Japan has already lost the war. Your progressive defeats and our progressive victories have brought the war to Japan's very doorstep," he said.

But Zacharias went further, laying blame for Japan's misfortunes on the government itself and stating that they, the leaders of Japan, from the emperor on down, were "entrusted with the salvation and not the destruction of Japan."

For his climactic statement, Zacharias put forward the basic choice, the only choice that Tokyo had left at this point: "The Japanese leaders face two alternatives. One is the virtual destruction of Japan followed by a dictated peace. The other is unconditional surrender with its attendant benefit as laid down by the Atlantic Charter." As he admitted later, he had no authorization to say it and had no clearance on any level to say it. He did not even let anyone beyond his team know that he would say it.

Like everything else he had said, these words were to have a calculated effect, and what an effect it was. The day following the broadcast, almost every major newspaper in the United States covered the story that Ellis Zacharias, the "official spokesman" for Washington, had given the Japanese a way out. The *New York Times* ran the headline, "Japan Is Warned to Give-Up Soon: U.S. Broadcast Says Speed Will Bring Peace Based on the Atlantic Charter." The *Baltimore Herald* ran a similar headline, "Japan Told to Surrender Unconditionally or Face Inevitable Destruction: Official Broadcast Bids Enemy Leaders Yield Under Atlantic Charter." But support for this move was not universal. While some people cheered Zacharias's statement, others condemned him for weakening the American position on unconditional surrender. Some were of the opinion that Zacharias had overstepped his authority and should be relieved of his duties.

Forrestal spread the word that Zacharias's actions met with his approval, merely articulating the established policy of the president of the United States. Then Forrestal telephoned Potsdam to get Truman's belated authorization for the broadcast. He followed this up by flying to Potsdam himself to confer with the president. Eventually, his persuasion worked, and Truman authorized the Associated Press to report that he "tacitly" approved of the July 21 broadcast.

There was no immediate word from Tokyo about the broadcast. Then, on July 24 the airwaves crackled with the first official statement from the Japanese government. It was delivered not by a propagandist or a military officer, but by an intellectual, Dr. Kiyoshi Inouye, a professor considered one of Japan's foremost authorities on international relations and an acquaintance of Zacharias.

In reference to the offer of surrender on the terms of the Atlantic Charter, Inouye replied, "Should America show any sincerity of putting into practice what she preaches, as, for instance, in the Atlantic Charter, excepting its punitive clause, the Japanese nation, in fact, the Japanese military would automatically, if not willingly, follow in stopping the conflict. Then and then only will sabers cease to rattle both in the East and the West." Whether Inouye's statement would truly be met with support, albeit reluctantly by the Japanese Army, is still in question. But the statement itself, carried on Japanese government radio, was extraordinary.

TOP: Captain Ellis Zacharias presents a Distinguished Flying Cross to Harrison D. Miller for heroism in action aboard the battleship USS *New Mexico*. ABOVE: Zacharias, fluent in Japanese, made numerous broadcasts on behalf of the U.S. government in an attempt to convince the Japanese to surrender.

On July 26, 1945, the Allied leaders produced their first statement of intentions for the postwar world in the Potsdam Declaration. Sure enough, the Allied powers expressed their assertion that the Japanese people would not be enslaved or destroyed, but beyond this there was no assurance about the status of the emperor or of Japan's status as a nation. What was apparent in the document was that the United States was not about to deviate from the Allied terms of unconditional surrender.

The document stated that the Allies would maintain a military occupation of Japan until there was "convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed." Freedom of speech, religion, and respect for fundamental human rights would be established in postwar Japan. The Allies declared their determination to punish all those in the Japanese government responsible for the war. The document concluded with a final stern warning that Japan surrender unconditionally. Its only alternative was "prompt and utter destruction."

Years later, Zacharias wrote with more than a tinge of bitterness, "The Potsdam Declaration, in short, wrecked everything we had been working for to prevent further bloodshed and insure our postwar strategic position."

After Potsdam, Zacharias made two more broadcasts to Japan, a last-ditch bid to persuade the Japanese government that they had to agree to the terms laid down at Potsdam, that time was running out, and that the threat of "utter destruction" was not idle rhetoric. On August 4, 1945, he delivered his last broadcast, warning the Japanese to "plan for their inevitable defeat, and for Japan's future, with whatever loyalty, intelligence, and courage they can still command."

In a final touch of irony, following the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese government agreed to surrender only if the Allies promised to spare the emperor, which surprisingly the Truman administration did. Ultimately, the "unconditional surrender" that the Japanese finally accepted was not unconditional in the purest sense of the word.

Ellis M. Zacharias retired with the rank of rear admiral in 1946, concluding a 30-year career with the United States Navy. He received a second Gold Star for his radio broadcasts. He never stopped advancing the case for the importance of psychological warfare programs as a means of both shortening a war and winning it with a minimal amount of bloodshed.

Until his death in 1961, he believed that Japan might have surrendered without an invasion or the use of the atomic bomb. □

Todd Raffensperger is a first-time contributor who resides in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania.

"This is

BY ROY MORRIS JR.

AS WAR CLOUDS GATHERED OVER EUROPE IN THE LATE 1930S, A NEW KIND OF JOURNALIST—THE RADIO BROADCASTER—BEGAN TRANSMITTING NEWS TO THE ANXIOUS AMERICAN HOME FRONT. TAKING THE LEAD WAS EDWARD R. MURROW.

On the evening of August 7, 1937, two neophyte radio broadcasters went to dinner together at the luxurious Adlon Hotel in Berlin, Germany. Edward R. Murrow and William L. Shirer had never met before that night. Murrow, newly arrived in London as the European director for the Columbia Broadcasting System, was looking for an experienced reporter to cover the growing unrest on the Continent sparked by the bristling reemergence of Germany as a military power. In the unprepossessing, Chicago-born Shirer, Murrow had found just the man he was looking for, although other CBS executives did not know it at the time.

Murrow and Shirer were physical opposites: Murrow was tall, dark, handsome, and impeccably groomed; even his hair looked shellacked into place. Shirer was mid-sized, bespectacled, balding, and rumpled. He constantly smoked a pipe and gave off the air of a vaguely distracted English professor at a small Midwestern university. In both cases, looks were deceiving. Murrow was no mere pretty-boy broadcaster, as Shirer first thought, but a tenacious and instinctive newsman with a first-rate mind and a quick grasp of political realities. Shirer, for his part, was no airy academic, but a savvy professional journalist who had covered news events from Paris to Afghanistan for more than a decade. In the course of his career, he had written about such luminaries as Mahatma Gandhi, Charles Lindberg, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Isadora Duncan, and the glowering new strongman of Europe, Adolf Hitler. He spoke fluent French and German and could get by in Spanish and Italian.

Despite his background, Shirer was out of a job when Murrow asked to meet him. After five years as chief Berlin correspondent for William Randolph Hearst's Universal Service, Shirer had been let go in a belt-tightening move by the company. With a pregnant wife and a dwindling bank account, he was preparing to return to the States to look for work in New York City when Murrow's telegram arrived unexpectedly on his desk like a gift from the gods. At their meeting, Murrow offered Shirer a new job on the spot, at the same $125 a week he had earned with Universal Service.

Shirer accepted—he had little choice if he wanted to remain in Europe—and Murrow mentioned casually that he would have to do a voice test for the CBS brass before the job became official. A week later, in a makeshift Berlin studio, a nervous Shirer alternately squeaked and mumbled through a disastrous audition, made more difficult by the fact that he had to climb onto a packing crate in order to reach the microphone dangling seven feet in the air. CBS balked; Shirer sounded less like a broadcaster than a bookkeeper who had been caught with his hand in the company safe. Murrow stood firm—he needed Shirer's mind and experience, he argued, not his voice. Eventually, the executives caved in. The most fortuitous and influential journalistic partnership of the era had begun.

Murrow's handling of the Shirer affair revealed his innate ability to identify talent, act quickly and decisively, and exert

The ruins of a London street continue to burn after a December 14, 1941, raid. INSET: Edward R. Murrow, photographed in 1946.

ABOVE: National Archives; INSET: The Granger Collection, New York

London...”

an irresistible but not overbearing charm on others to get his way. Born dirt-poor in rural North Carolina in 1907, Murrow moved with his family across the country to the Pacific Northwest, settling in the lumber town of Blanchard, Washington. The youngest of three boys, he excelled both academically and athletically, putting his six-foot-two-inch height to good use on the championship Edison High basketball team. Summers spent working as a lumberjack enabled the ambitious youth to save enough money to put himself through Washington State College in Pullman.

Once again Murrow excelled, getting elected student body president, starring in amateur theatricals, and attracting the attention of the school's talented and formidable—if physically stunted—speech professor, Ida Lou Anderson. With the help of Anderson, who had been crippled by polio as a girl, Murrow honed his speaking skills to the point that he was twice elected president of the National Student Federation of America (NFSA). After graduation, he parlayed that position into a full-time job with the NSFA in New York City. His radio career (and lifelong CBS connection) began when he spearheaded the NSFA-sponsored "University of the Air," an educational program that featured such celebrated guests as Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, German President Paul von Hindenburg, and British Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald. This, in turn, led to Murrow's hiring by CBS as "director of talks" in 1935.

Two years later, CBS executives decided to put out to pasture their chief European correspondent, Cesar Saerchinger, a music critic by trade whose greatest accomplishment as a journalist involved the live broadcast of a nightingale's song in a Kentish garden. In April 1937, Murrow and his sophisticated wife, Janet, who could trace her ancestry back to the Mayflower, moved into an apartment at 84 Hallam Street in London, four blocks from Broadcasting House, the Art Deco-style headquarters of the British Broadcasting System.

The former Pacific Coast lumberjack settled easily into his new surroundings, buying his suits from expensive Savile Row tailors and immersing himself in English culture. He moved away from Saerchinger's pretentious coverage of the Royal Family, fancy horse races, and promenades, and instead introduced the American public to colorful Cockneys from the East End docks, fiery speakers at Hyde Park, and pub-crawling dart throwers in Essex. At the same time, he was turned down for membership by the American Foreign Correspondents Association, who did not consider radio broadcasters legitimate newsmen. Murrow worked hard to change that perception.

It did not take long for his hiring of Shirer to pay dividends. In early March 1938, Shirer's first scoop fell literally into his lap. Austrian-born Adolf Hitler had been demanding for months that his homeland become part of a greater Germany. When the Austrians scheduled a referendum to vote on the issue, Hitler strong-armed Austrian chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg into canceling the vote, resigning from office, and, in effect, handing over his sovereign nation to the ungentle embrace of Nazi Germany. Shirer happened to be in Vienna at the time, arranging for a radio broadcast of a children's choir, when the long-threatened Anschluss (annexation) of Austria began. The first inkling he had of the move was a shower of propaganda pamphlets dropped from circling airplanes. On the streets below, mobs of Swastika-wearing thugs paraded through the city, shouting "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!" and "Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer." Shirer knew immediately what it all meant.

"I'D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO FORGET THE HAUNTED LOOKS ON THE FACES OF THOSE LONG LINES OF PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE BANKS AND TRAVEL OFFICES. PEOPLE TRYING TO GET AWAY.... I'D LIKE TO FORGET THE SOUND OF THE SMASHING GLASS AS THE JEWISH SHOP STREETS WERE RAIDED, THE HOOTS AND JEERS AT THOSE FORCED TO SCRUB THE SIDEWALK."

Rushing to the office of the state-run radio, Shirer attempted to file an on-air report, but bayonet-wielding Nazis turned him away. He tried again two hours later—still no luck. In despair, he telephoned Murrow, who was on his own talent-scouting trip to Warsaw, Poland. Murrow advised Shirer to fly to London and broadcast his scoop from the CBS studio there. Meanwhile, Murrow chartered a Lufthansa flight—he was the only passenger on the 27-seat plane—and flew in to Vienna to cover Hitler's expected triumphant arrival. The next night, March 13, 1938, at 8 PM, CBS made broadcasting history when Murrow, Shirer, and a quickly organized team of correspondents in Paris, Rome, and Berlin went on the air with the first-ever multilocation live broadcast, reporting on the Austrian Anschluss and the reaction to it in other European capitals.

Murrow had not intended to go on the air personally, but he could not find anyone else to appear on such short notice. Speaking in a clipped, staccato baritone that would quickly become his trademark, Murrow told listeners that Vienna was in a festive frame of mind. "Many people are in a holiday mood; they lift the right arm a little higher here than Berlin and the 'Heil Hitler' is said a little more loudly," he reported. "Young storm troopers are riding about the streets, singing and tossing oranges out to the crowd." It was the first radio broadcast of Murrow's soon to be legendary career.

In Vienna, Murrow observed firsthand the growing power of the Nazis and what it meant for the Jewish residents of Austria and, by extension, the rest of Europe. He paced the streets restlessly as mobs smashed and looted Jewish stores, dragged men and women into the streets, and savagely beat anyone who attracted their malign attention. One night in a Viennese bar, he personally witnessed a young Jewish man cut his own throat with a razor. Returning to London, Murrow sounded a cautionary tone on the air. "It was called a bloodless conquest, and in some ways it was," he told listeners. "But I'd like to be able to forget the haunted looks on the faces of those long lines of people outside the banks and travel offices. People trying to get away. I'd like to forget the tired futile look of the Austrian army officers, and the thud of hobnail boots and the crash of light tanks in the early hours of the morning in the Ringstrasse. I'd like to forget the sound of the smashing glass as the Jewish shop streets were raided, the hoots and jeers at those forced to scrub the sidewalk."

For the next few months, Murrow's warnings seemed overly dire. After the Anschluss crisis faded from public consciousness, American radio listeners grew bored with the European status quo. Once again, CBS focused its broadcasts on such harmless pastimes as orchestra concerts, children's choirs, and royal parades. Murrow and Shirer spent much of their time crisscrossing the Continent booking lightweight entertainment; the nightly news roundups were discontinued. When Shirer went to Prague in September 1938 to report on the impending crisis between Germany and Czechoslovakia over the disputed Sudetenland, a mountainous bor-

der province that was home to thousands of German-speaking Czechs. CBS executives made him promise to give up his five-minute broadcasts if there was not enough news to fill them out.

"My God," Shirer remembered later. "Here was the old Continent on the brink of war—Hitler might start it within twenty-four hours, Prague might be wiped off the map overnight by the big bombers—and the network was most reluctant to provide five minutes a day from here to report it!"

Events would force the network to rethink its initial reluctance. Shuttling back and forth between Prague and Berlin, Shirer filed daily reports, beginning each one with a jaunty opening: "Hello, America. This is Berlin calling." The greeting may have been jaunty, but the news was not. Emboldened by his grab of Austria, Hitler now insisted on great swaths of Czechoslovakia as well. Shirer observed the German Führer closely and saw what many others at the time did not: a morose, high-strung dictator who walked with a noticeable tic and sported dark circles under his eyes.

"This man is on the edge of a nervous breakdown," Shirer confided to his diary. Hitler was playing a high-stakes game, but in the end it was British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain whose nerves gave out first. Shirer reported the series of meetings between Hitler and Chamberlain at the Rhine resort of Bad Godesberg, where local buildings were decorated with thousands of Swastikas and Union Jacks. "Mr. Chamberlain is a pretty popular figure around here," he noted dryly.

For weeks, the world waited as Hitler upped his demands and threatened war. At CBS headquarters in New York, veteran announcer Hans von Kaltenborn, now going by the slightly less German-sounding name H.V. Kaltenborn, slept on a cot in the office and delivered some 102 broadcasts and news bulletins on the worsening situation. Murrow, in London, coordinated reports from the various European capitals, noting that in the English capital "trucks loaded with sandbags and gas masks were to be seen. The surface calm of London remains, but I think I notice a change in people's faces. There seems to be a tight strained look about the eyes."

When Chamberlain returned to London from Munich after negotiating the sellout of Czechoslovakia, waving the infamous piece of paper above his head that guaranteed "peace in our time," Murrow went to the Czech embassy to seek out his friend, Jan Masaryk, the foreign minister. Together, they sat all night waiting for a call from the British government that never came. "As I rose to leave," Murrow recalled later, "the gray dawn pressed against the windows. Jan pointed to a big picture of Hitler and Mussolini that stood on the mantel and said: 'Don't worry, Ed. There will be dark days and many men will die, but there is a God and He will not let two such men rule Europe.'"

BOTH: National Archives

ABOVE: Neville Chamberlain stands in front of a welcoming crowd upon his return from negotiating with Hitler in Munich. TOP: A subdued crowd in Prague watches as Germans roll into the Czech capital.

Winston Churchill, a leader of the opposition to Chamberlain in the House of Commons, was not so sure. Characterizing the agreement as "sordid, squalid, sub-human, and suicidal," he told the prime minister: "You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor and you will have war."

While the world waited for Germany's next demands, Murrow returned to New York to discuss expanding his staff. He returned to London in the spring of 1939, having gotten network approval to add more correspondents to his team. First hired was Thomas Grandin, a Yale-educated academic with a wispy voice but a firm grasp of European politics. Murrow installed Grandin in Paris and tabbed Eric Sevareid, a 26-year-old, North Dakota-born reporter for the *Paris Herald,* as Grandin's assistant.

Meanwhile, William Shirer continued broadcasting from an increasingly militant Berlin, where Hitler was beginning to make noises about annexing part of Poland to ensure German access to the Baltic Sea. Unlike Czechoslovakia, Poland had been assured by the British and French governments that they would come to Poland's defense in the event the

Nazis attacked, and Shirer correctly inferred that war was inevitable. In the midst of the darkening situation, CBS Vice President Paul White, a longtime foe of Murrow's, ordered the European correspondents to produce a change-of-pace broadcast, "Europe Dances," from various continental cabarets. Murrow, risking his job, refused outright. One week later, on September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. World War II had begun. The question of dancing was suddenly moot.

A hasty decision by NBC and Mutual Broadcasting to suspend their European broadcasts left CBS with an open field. Murrow moved into the void, hiring additional staff to report from various capitals. Among those coming aboard that fall were Mary Marvin Breckinridge, an old college friend of Murrow's who would become the first female national broadcaster; Cecil Brown, a journalist and former merchant mariner; Larry LeSueur of United Press; Winston Burdett of Harvard by way of the *Brooklyn Eagle*; Charles Collingwood, a Cornell alumnus; and Howard K. Smith, a champion hurdler from Tulane. They fanned out across the Continent while Shirer held down the fort in Berlin, harassed by no fewer than three Nazi censors before each broadcast. He got around the censors, to a degree, by using colloquial American phrases and an ironic tone in his voice. Sometimes he would simply quote directly from Hitler's speeches, confident that the audience back home would read into them the same brutish posturing that Shirer did.

CBS President Willam Paley complained that Shirer was becoming too noticeably anti-Nazi in his broadcasts, but the journalist was unrepentant, then or later. "Nobody could have lived in that country as long as I and not have hated the Nazis," he reasoned.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1939-1940, the so-called Phony War dragged on, with German, English, and French troops watching each other warily across France's supposedly impregnable Maginot Line. That changed suddenly on May 10, 1940, when Germany launched a simultaneous invasion of France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. A new word, blitzkreig, was introduced to the world. Eric Sevareid, returning to Paris from Cambrai, heard German artillery and saw flashes of explosions like lightning in the distance. It was, he told listeners, "truly a lightning war, a war of sudden sounds and flashing machines. It comes and is gone before you can move, and the men you rarely see."

Shirer, in Berlin, took a broader view. "The blow in the West has fallen," he announced. "The battle which will decide the future of Germany for a thousand years caught everyone here completely by surprise."

As the German Army rolled relentlessly toward Paris, Mary Marvin Breckinridge reported on the steady stream of refugees in the French countryside: "Baby carriages full of quilts, and bicycles with boxes tied all over them with bits of string. One little girl carried a black cat, and several families brought their dogs with them. One woman, who arrived alone and looked less tired than the rest, was questioned by a little group of people: 'What happened to my town? Was my home bombed?'" Breckinridge, who was engaged to an American diplomat, soon left CBS to join her fiancé in Berlin, her place in journalism history—as the only girl among "Murrow's boys"—assured. In London, Murrow described a somber mood. "I saw more grave solemn faces today than I have ever seen in London before," he told listeners. "Fashionable tea rooms were almost deserted; the shops in Bond Street were doing very little business; people read their newspapers as they walked slowly down the streets. I saw one woman standing in line for a bus begin to cry, very quietly. She didn't even bother to wipe the tears away."

In Paris, Eric Sevareid drove up an eerily deserted Champs Elysees; normally bustling cafés sat empty, their wicker chairs turned upside down on tabletops. One final customer sat alone at his table finishing his wine, while a waiter, with true Parisian savoir faire, stood by patiently, towel over his arm. Sevareid barely made it out of town ahead of the Nazis in an endless line of escaping cars, trucks, and wagons. Refugees trudged along the roadside on foot, he reported, "like a stream of lava flowing past, the unstoppable river which came from the unimaginable eruption somewhere to the north."

Larry LeSueur hitchhiked 150 miles from Belgium to Paris, then attempted to board an English troopship that was evacuating Nantes. Stopped literally on the gangplank—there was no more room—LeSueur turned and walked away. A few minutes later, a German dive-bomber dropped a bomb neatly down the ship's smokestack, killing hundreds of soldiers. LeSueur shuddered at his near escape.

Shirer, to his immediate regret, accompanied

"I HAVE SEEN THAT FACE MANY TIMES AT THE GREAT MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE. BUT TODAY IT IS AFIRE WITH SCORN, ANGER, HATE, REVENGE, TRIUMPH. HE GLANCES BACK AT THE MONUMENT, CONTEMPTUOUS, ANGRY—ANGRY, YOU ALMOST FEEL, BECAUSE HE CANNOT WIPE OUT THE AWFUL, PROVOKING LETTERING WITH ONE SWEEP OF HIS HIGH PRUSSIAN BOOT."

National Archives

SS troops round up Polish Jews the day after Poland surrenders.

National Archives

Hitler reviews victorious German troops in Warsaw, October 5, 1939. "He made a speech to his soldiers," recalled William L. Shirer, "the speech of a conquering Caesar."

the German Army when it entered Paris on June 17. Along the way he noted in his diary: "Verdun taken! Verdun, that cost the Germans six hundred thousand dead the last time they tried to take it. This time they take it in a day. What has happened to the French?" Coming into Paris with the victorious Nazis, Shirer recalled, "was no fun for me. As we drove down the familiar streets where I had spent the gold years of my mid-twenties (in the mid-twenties) I felt a gnawing ache in the pit of my stomach, and I wished I had not come. To make it worse, my German companions were in high spirits at the sight of the beautiful city." The defiantly named Paris newspaper, *La Victoire,* carried the headline, "Days of Pain and Mourning," and concluded its final editorial: "Vive Paris! Vive la France!"

More humiliation was coming for the French. Two days later, Shirer accompanied the Nazi high command into the countryside 45 miles north of Paris for a surrender ceremony orchestrated for maximum insult by Adolf Hitler. At Compiegne, the site of the German surrender in November 1918, German engineers tore down the museum wall housing the railway car in which the armistice had been signed. Hitler insisted that the same car, desk, and chair be used for the French surrender. Shirer observed Hitler with opera glasses through the train window.

"I have seen that face many times at the great moments of his life," Shirer reported. "But today it is afire with scorn, anger, hate, revenge, triumph. He glances back at the monument, contemptuous, angry—angry, you almost feel, because he cannot wipe out the awful, provoking lettering with one sweep of his high Prussian boot." Hitler did the next best thing; after the surrender ceremony, he had his troops dynamite the French memorial. The infamous railway car was dragged back to Berlin and put on public display. Ironically, it would be destroyed by Allied bombing later in the war.

The actual signing was slated to occur the next afternoon. Hitler had ordered all foreign correspondents back to Berlin, where he intended to announce his triumph to the waiting world, but somehow Shirer was overlooked. Within 90 minutes of the signing, his matter-of-fact account of the most humiliating French surrender in its history went out live via short-wave radio to New York and across the United States and Europe. Murrow, picking up the broadcast in London, immediately called newly installed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill with the news. Churchill, staying at his country home at Chequers, at first refused to believe it; his government had received no prior warning of the surrender, he said. But it was true. Shirer heard later, through confidential sources, that the German high command had allowed his surrender broadcast to go out over the airwaves unimpeded as a way to prevent Hitler from taking sole credit for the army's extraordinary victory in France. Returning to Berlin, Shirer wondered if he would be arrested for his scoop.

England braced for immediate invasion. It didn't come. Hitler, in a colossal misjudgment, postponed plans for a cross-Channel attack, opting for a more limited air war that bombastic Field Marshal Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe, assured him would quickly bring the British to their knees. For six weeks in the late summer of 1940, German pilots slugged it out in the skies over England with the remarkably young pilots, average age 21, of the Royal Air Force.

Despite staggering losses, the RAF held its

own, helped immeasurably by a pioneering system of radar that could pick up enemy planes approaching from 150 miles away. Mainly, however, it was the sheer bravery and pluck of the young English pilots in their Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire fighters, who sometimes had to fly six sorties in one day. By the time Hitler called off the air war on September 17, they had saved the home island from invasion. "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few," Winston Churchill said of the pilots, with eloquent simplicity.

The shining success of the British pilots (along with a perhaps misguided decision by Churchill to bomb Berlin) provoked Hitler to shift his attention from the pilots and their airfields to the British home front. Ed Murrow, who recently had begun a nightly broadcast, "London After Dark," to describe the air war to American listeners, was as surprised as anyone when Nazi bombers began heading straight for London on September 7. That morning, a Saturday, he had driven out into the English countryside with two other journalists, Ben Robertson of *PM,* a left-wing New York newspaper, and Vincent Sheean of the North American News Alliance, to get a better vantage point of the fighting.

Parking his Sunbeam-Talbot convertible on a plateau overlooking the Thames estuary, Murrow and his friends walked to the edge of a turnip field to watch the smoke rising from two burning oil tankers set on fire by German raiders the night before. Suddenly, air raid sirens began wailing, and the newsmen looked up to see wave after wave of German bombers, flying in tight V-formations of 20 to 25 planes each, sweep up the river, headed for London. Diving behind a haystack to escape the shrapnel that had begun raining down on them like hail from British antiaircraft guns, they watched the endless procession of enemy planes in the skies over England. After 12 straight hours of bombing, the East End of London was in flames, 3,000 city dwellers were dead or injured, and Edward R. Murrow was about to become a legend.

Returning to London, he filed his first report of what immediately became known as "the Blitz" on September 8, from Studio B4 in the basement of Broadcasting House. "There are no words to describe the thing that is happening," Murrow began. "A row of automobiles, with stretchers racked on the roofs like skis, standing outside of bombed buildings. A man pinned under wreckage where a broken gas main sears his arms and face. The courage of the people, the flash and roar of the guns rolling down streets, the stench of air-raid shelters in the poor districts."

For the next 56 days, as Nazi bombers mercilessly pounded the city, Murrow patrolled the rubble-strewn streets, painting (as he said) "pictures in the air" for the American public. He chain-smoked three packs of Camels per day, drank endless cups of coffee, and got by on little or no sleep. On the advice of his old speech teacher, Ida Sue Anderson, he began each broadcast with his dramatic, half-second pause between his opening words: "This … is London." It instantly became his catchphrase.

From the first, Murrow concentrated on the average British man and woman on the street. He sensed instinctively that Americans would identify with ordinary people who were undergoing an extraordinary trial. Avoiding the underground bomb shelters because he was afraid he would get too used to them Murrow and his favorite sidekick, daredevil CBS correspondent Larry LeSueur, sped down the blacked-out avenues of London in search of telling vignettes for the people back home.

"One becomes accustomed to rattling windows and the distant sound of bombs, and then there comes a silence that can be felt," Murrow said. "You know the sound will return—you wait, and then it starts again. The waiting is bad. It gives you a chance to imagine things." One night he found himself standing in front of a smashed grocery store. "I heard a dripping inside. It was the only sound in all London. Two cans of peaches had been drilled clean through by flying glass, and the juice was dripping down onto the floor." Another time, he went to buy a hat. "My favorite shop had gone, blown to bits. The windows of my shoe store were blown out. I decided to have a haircut; the windows of the barbershop were gone, but the Italian barber was still doing business." He went to buy batteries for his flashlight; the storekeeper told him he didn't have to buy so many at once, they would be open all winter. "What if you aren't here?" Murrow asked. "Of course we'll be here," the storekeeper replied. "We've been in business here for a hundred and fifty years." On another occasion, he came

National Archives; INSET: The Granger Collection, New York

Germans inspect the French memorial at Compiegne, the site of Germany's surrender in 1918. Hitler demanded that French forces surrender at the same site, in the same railway car used in 1918. INSET: William L. Shirer reported from Berlin in the early days of the war. OPPOSITE: A German bomber over London during the Blitz.

upon a man sitting calmly at a desk in a pile of bombed-out rubble. "He was paying off the staff of the store—the store that stood there yesterday," Murrow reported, noting signs he had seen that read stoically: "Shattered But Not Shuttered" and "Knocked But Not Locked."

Murrow used every trick he could think of to bring the war into American living rooms. He broadcast from ground level, holding his microphone down to the street to catch the sound of bombs hitting the pavement or the unhurried footsteps of London residents walking—not running—to underground shelters. "The girls' light, cheap dresses were strolling along the streets," he reported admiringly. "There was no bravado, no loud voices, only a quiet acceptance of the situation. To me those people were incredibly brave and calm."

One night he went onto the roof of Broadcasting House, where he broadcast under fire during a Nazi air raid. "The searchlights now are feeling almost directly overhead," he recounted. "Now you'll hear two bursts a little nearer in a moment. There they are! That hard, stony sound, that faint-red, angry snap of antiaircraft blasts against the steel-blue sky, the sound of guns off in the distance very faintly, like someone kicking a tub."

He even found time to look in on a well-to-do Mayfair hotel, where he observed "many old dowagers and retired colonels settling back on the overstuffed settees in the lobby. It was not the sort of protection I'd seek from a direct hit from a half-ton bomb, but if you were a retired colonel and his lady, you might feel that the risk was worth it because you would at least be bombed with the right sort of people, and you could always get a drink." Following the example of BBC reporters, he did not write out his scripts in advance, but merely dictated what he was seeing to his secretary, Kay Campbell, as it was going on. The effect was electric. This, indeed, was London during the Blitz.

Often, the bombs fell too close for comfort. One unexploded projectile, a hitherto unknown German airborne time bomb known as a UXB, flew through the seventh-floor window of Broadcasting House and crashed into the music library, where it lay inert for over an hour. Murrow was in the sub-basement at the time, and after the bomb exploded, killing or wounding four men and three women, he unflappably resumed his broadcast. Another night, Murrow and his wife were returning home from a broadcast; Ed wanted to stop in at the Devonshire Arms, a popular pub favored by reporters, but Janet persuaded him to keep walking. A moment later, "a tearing, whooshing shriek seemed to be coming down on top of them. They wrapped their arms around their heads to protect their eyes and ears. The blast flung them against the wall." A bomb had landed directly on the pub, killing 30 people inside.

The Murrows' apartment on Hallam Street became a de facto clubhouse for CBS broadcasters, rival journalists, political exiles, visiting Americans, and bombed-out friends. Czech foreign minister Jan Masaryk was a regular house guest.

While Murrow was riding out the Blitz in London, William Shirer continued broadcasting, albeit under heavy censorship, from Berlin. "We're over here to try to get the truth if possible, a very difficult assignment these days," he told listeners. Censors forbade him from using such words as "aggressive," "militaristic" or "counterattack." "Please remember it was Poland which attacked us first," they said. One night they quibbled so long over his use of the word "reprisal" that he missed the broadcast altogether.

German officials telegraphed Shirer's bosses in New York: "REGRET SHIRER ARRIVED TOO LATE TONIGHT TO BROADCAST." Shirer complained bitterly, but executives urged him to stay on, "even if only reading official statements and newspaper texts." This was too much for the proud newsman, who replied that he could hire a Nazi-American student for $50 a week "to read that crap." After receiving word from a confidential source that the Nazis were building a trumped-up case against him as a spy, Shirer left Berlin for good in December 1940, smuggling out his private diaries in a stack of censor-stamped radio broadcasts. A few months later, safely in New York, he published *Berlin Diary*, an instant bestseller that afforded American readers their first close-hand view of Hitler, Göring, and their henchmen during their decade-long rise to power. It made Shirer famous, but it effectively ended his friendship with Murrow, who felt with some justice that Shirer had deserted the home team in the middle of the game.

By then, the German bombing of London had subsided to sporadic, if still deadly, attacks. Murrow's tireless broadcasts had become legendary, and no less an authority than Winston Churchill credited him with personally rallying American public opinion to the British side. Statistics bore out Churchill's belief, revealing that only 16 percent of Americans had favored sending aid to Great Britain before the Blitz began, while the number had risen to 52 percent one month later. Returning to New York for a brief visit in November 1941, Murrow was feted by 1,100 well-wishers at a dinner at the Waldorf-

"THE SEARCHLIGHTS NOW ARE FEELING ALMOST DIRECTLY OVERHEAD. NOW YOU'LL HEAR TWO BURSTS A LITTLE NEARER IN A MOMENT. THERE THEY ARE! THAT HARD, STONY SOUND, THAT FAINT-RED, ANGRY SNAP OF ANTIAIRCRAFT BLASTS AGAINST THE STEEL-BLUE SKY, THE SOUND OF GUNS OFF IN THE DISTANCE VERY FAINTLY, LIKE SOMEONE KICKING A TUB."

National Archives

Astoria Hotel. Poet Archibald MacLeish paid tribute to the broadcaster, telling Murrow: "You laid the dead of London at our doors, and we knew that the dead were our dead. You have destroyed the superstition that what is done beyond three thousand miles of water is not really done at all. There were some people in this country who did not want the people of America to hear the things you had to say." Murrow received a standing ovation.

Without a doubt, Murrow's reporting of the Blitz was the high point of his career, but he returned to London in the spring of 1942 with a new purpose in mind—to direct the news coverage of America's recent entry into the war. His young staffers, including Larry LeSueur, Eric Sevareid, Richard C. Hottelet, and Cecil Brown, went into the field to report on the progress of the war, often at great personal risk. Brown was torpedoed aboard the British battlecruiser *Repulse* in the South China Sea, 50 miles north of Singapore, but used his experience as a merchant mariner to leap to safety and remain afloat for an hour before being fished out of the water by rescuers.

Sevareid parachuted out of a nose-diving C-46 cargo plane while flying "the Hump" over Burma and endured a harrowing 120-mile jungle trek to safety, helped by Burmese headhunters who were "some of the world's most primitive killers." Hottelet, a German-American from Brooklyn, was arrested in Berlin by Gestapo agents for espionage and held for several weeks before being exchanged for two Nazi spies in custody in the United States. Although proud of his ancestry, he understandably admitted that he "hated the Nazis' goddamn guts."

Murrow himself ventured into the field in March 1943 to cover the American campaign in Tunisia, code-named Operation Torch, where he came upon a knocked-out enemy tank in a stream bed. "Two dead [were] beside it, and two more digging a grave," he reported. "A little farther along a German soldier sits smiling against a bank. He is covered with dust and he is dead. On the rising ground beyond a British lieutenant lies with his head on his arms as though shielding himself from the wind. He is dead too."

Returning to London, Murrow was surprised and flattered to be offered the directorship of the British Broadcasting System. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was behind the offer; he considered Murrow nothing less than the voice of Anglo-American cooperation. Murrow gave the offer serious thought but opted in the end to remain at CBS.

Although saddened by the death of his young colleague Ben Robertson of *PM,* who had died in a plane crash in Lisbon Bay, Murrow lobbied to ride along with the Royal Air Force on a night bombing raid of Berlin. On December 2, 1943, he got his wish, climbing aboard a Lancaster bomber named somewhat prosaically *D for Dog.* His subsequent broadcast became a classic of wartime journalism, winning him the second of five Peabody Awards from the Overseas Press Club.

Entitled "Orchestrated Hell," the account began in Murrow's characteristic low key: "Last night some young men took me to Berlin." It proceeded to paint an intense and sharply focused portrait of what it was like to fly through the pitch-black skies over the Nazi capital. "The small incendiaries were going down like a fistful of white rice thrown on a piece of black velvet. The cookies—the four-thousand-pound high explosives—were bursting below like great sunflowers gone mad. I looked down, and the white fires had turned red. They were beginning to merge and spread, just like butter does on a hot plate. It isn't a pleasant kind of warfare. The job isn't pleasant; it's terribly tiring. Men die in the sky while others are roasted alive in their cellars. Berlin last night wasn't a pretty sight. This was a calculated, remorseless campaign of destruction."

Despite pleas from CBS executives to leave the flying to professionals, Murrow eventually made 25 sorties over Europe. Given the odds, he should have been killed—as was the pilot of his first mission, Jock Abercrombie, who went down in flames one month later. Airmen said later that Murrow's presence on a mission was considered lucky.

Murrow reluctantly agreed to stay behind on D-Day, when the Allies launched their long-anticipated invasion of Europe. He was personally selected to read Supreme Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower's order of the day announcing the invasion and concluding: "We will accept nothing less than full victory. Good luck. And let us beseech the blessing of almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking." After that, he coordinated the confused first reports from CBS correspondents Larry LeSueur, Charles Collingwood, and Richard C. Hottelet, who came ashore at Utah Beach, and Bill Downs, who landed with British forces at Sword Beach.

Collingwood, lugging a 55-pound tape recorder, sent back the first eyewitness report to London: "The first craft onto the beaches was a little LCT. They came in doggedly looking very small and gallant with their heads up. Offshore several miles loomed the silhouettes of the big ships." Although resistance was light, he continued, "This beach is still under considerable enemy gunfire. These boys are apparently having a pretty tough time in here on the beaches. It's not very pleasant."

After D-Day, the Allied forces drove steadily through France toward Nazi Germany. Murrow joined the others on the Continent after Paris was liberated on August 25, 1944. (Collingwood prematurely announced the liberation two days before it occurred, a journalistic catastrophe that would have resulted in his immediate firing if Murrow had not supported him and blamed the mistake, erroneously, as it turned out, on military authorities.) At Aachen, Germany, Hottelet got a more legitimate scoop, recording for the first time the actual sounds of combat. "Right down below us," he reported, "the houses still are in German territory, and if anybody is leaning out of a bay window and draws a bead on this recorder, you will probably never hear it." Distorted but jarring machine-gun fire punctuated his broadcast.

Murrow hopped back and forth between London and the Continent as the Allies withstood the German surprise attack at the Battle of the Bulge and drove deeper into Germany, crossing the Rhine on March 24, 1945. He was with General George S. Patton's Third Army when it liberated Buchenwald concentration camp, a few miles outside the city of Weimar, two weeks later. It was Murrow's last scoop of the war and the most personally wrenching. Although he had been among the first newsmen to broadcast rumors of the Nazis' infamous Final Solution more than two years earlier, nothing could have prepared him for the firsthand sights of the death camp itself.

"If you are at lunch, or if you have no appetite to hear what the Germans have done, now is a good time to switch off the radio, for

"IT ISN'T A PLEASANT KIND OF WARFARE. THE JOB ISN'T PLEASANT; IT'S TERRIBLY TIRING. MEN DIE IN THE SKY WHILE OTHERS ARE ROASTED ALIVE IN THEIR CELLARS. BERLIN LAST NIGHT WASN'T A PRETTY SIGHT. THIS WAS A CALCULATED, REMORSELESS CAMPAIGN OF DESTRUCTION."

ullstein bild

The corpses of hundreds of concentration camp inmates lie on the ground at Buchenwald. Murrow accompanied elements of the Third Army into the camp and broadcast some of what he saw there. "I have reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it. For most of it I have no words."

I propose to tell you of Buchenwald," he warned listeners on April 15. It had taken him three days to process the experience.

"There surged around me an evil-smelling horde," he continued. "Men and boys reached to touch me; and they were in rags and the remnants of uniform. Death had already marked many of them, but they were smiling with their eyes." He entered a prison barracks—"the stink was beyond all description"—and ran into the wraithlike former mayor of Prague, whom he did not recognize at first. "As I walked down to the end of the barracks, there was applause from the men too weak to get out of bed. It sounded like the hand clapping of babies. As we walked out into the courtyard, a man fell dead. Two others—they must have been over sixty—were crawling toward the latrine. I saw it but will not describe it."

Inside a small garage, Murrow saw "two rows of bodies stacked up like cordwood. They were thin and very white. Some of the bodies were terribly bruised, though there seemed to be little flesh to bruise. Some had been shot through the head, but they bled very little. All except two were naked. I tried to count them as best as I could and arrived at the conclusion that all that was mortal of more than five hundred men and boys lay there in two neat piles." He concluded his broadcast: "I have reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it. For most of it I have no words. If I've offended you by this rather mild account of Buchenwald, I'm not in the least bit sorry."

He noted that many of the inmates had praised Franklin Roosevelt, who coincidentally died that same day at Warm Springs, Georgia. "To them the name 'Roosevelt' was a symbol, the code word for a lot of guys named 'Joe' who are somewhere out in the blue with the armor heading east. At Buchenwald they spoke of the president just before he died. If there is a better epitaph, history does not record it."

Fittingly, Murrow was back in London for V-E Day, May 8, 1945. He reported several times, from various parts of the city, noting with his quick eye for detail that some of the people were strangely quiet. "They appear not to be part of the celebration," he said. "Their minds must be filled with the memories of friends who died in the streets where they now walk." He made his own pilgrimage down Hallam Street, where he remembered: "Your best friend was killed on the next corner. You pass a water tank and recall, almost with a start, that there used to be a pub, hit with a two-thousand-pounder one night, thirty people killed." He closed reflectively: "Six years is a long time. I have observed today that people have very little to say. There are no words."

Tapped by CBS President William Paley to head the postwar network back in New York, Murrow gave his last London broadcast on March 10, 1946. In it, he thanked the British people for their hospitality, courage, and commitment to democratic ideals. "They feared Nazism but did not choose to imitate it," he said. "I am persuaded that the most important thing that happened in Britain was that this nation chose to win or lose this war under the established rules of parliamentary procedure [with] no retreat from the principles for which your ancestors fought."

When he finished the broadcast, the BBC engineers in the studio presented him with the microphone he had used during the war, inscribed: "This microphone, taken from studio B4 of the Broadcasting House, London, is presented to Edward R. Murrow who used it there with such distinction for so many broadcasts to CBS New York during the war years 1939 to 1945." In his hands, that microphone had been as much a weapon in the fight against Nazi tyranny as any rifle, pistol, or bayonet, and in the end, it had proved just as effective. □

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A battle-hardened German panzergrenadier makes his way through the town of Zhytomyr, Ukraine, in December 1943. Around Nikopol, the Wehrmacht and the Red Army fought for control of some of the richest mines in the world.

ullstein bild

The Soviet Red Army fought the Nazis for control of some of the world's richest ore deposits.

Bridgehead of Death

At first, it was all about the ore. Magnesium, iron, and manganese ore were the lifeblood of German industry, especially the armaments industry, which used the iron and manganese to produce steel for Hitler's war machine. Magnesium was one of the main aerospace construction metals and was used extensively in German aircraft production. It was also used as a lining for the massive furnaces in the iron and steel works.

Located in the southern Ukraine, the town of Nikopol was the center of one of the largest manganese ore basins in the western Soviet Union. Some 50 miles northwest of Nikopol, the town of Krivoi Rog sat atop an equally large iron ore basin. The entire area had been developed under the czars, and after the Communist takeover the ore taken from its mines served to build up the Red Army, Air Force, and Navy.

When German forces crossed the Soviet border on June 22, 1941, the forces of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group South smashed through Russian frontier defenses and fanned out across the steppe, taking hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers and leaving thousands more dead on the battlefield.

One of the units in von Rundstedt's army group was General Werner Kempf's XLVIII Panzerkorps. In August, Kempf's armored and motorized forces were moving toward the ore-rich areas at Krivoi Rog and Nikopol. As the Germans advanced, Soviet troops and civilians worked frantically to dismantle entire factories and transport them to locations east of the Ural Mountains. Kempf's Panzerkorps stood on the west bank of the Dnieper River by the end of the month, having taken both towns as his troops drove further eastward.

Close on the heels of the victorious German troops came teams of engineers tasked with repairing the devastation left behind by the Russians. They were part of the Hermann Göring Werke, an organization formed by Luftwaffe chief Göring and some industrial cronies in the early days of Hitler's regime. A Reich-owned enterprise, the Hermann Göring Werke operated mines, steel works, and other industries in conquered countries across Europe.

Once the Krivoi Rog and Nikopol operations were running again, Russian iron ore and magnesium fueled the German war machine. A huge factory in Nikopol was adorned with the Hermann Göring Werke logo, and trains filled with ore left the town daily, headed west toward the furnaces of the Reich.

The waning months of 1943 saw German fortunes in Russia turn dramatically from those heady days of 1941. After the massive battle at Kursk in July, the Soviets launched a series of attacks in southern Russia that sent the Germans reeling westward. By late August, Red Army forces were nearing Smolensk on Army Group Center's right flank.

Farther south, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's Army Group South was forced to give up Kharkov on August 23. The wily field marshal immediately ordered General Hermann Breith's III Panzerkorps to counterattack the Soviet forces that were pushing west from Kharkov. In a series of sharp, bloody engagements, the III Panzerkorps hit the 1st Tank and 6th Guards Armies near Bododukhov, stopping them dead in their tracks. The commander of the Voronezh Front, General Nikolai Fedorovich Vatutin, was forced to move his 5th Tank Army into the fray, effectively bringing plans for a quick thrust westward to a halt for several days.

When Vatutin resumed his offensive, the III Panzerkorps kept nipping at the Russian flanks like a terrier. Meanwhile, Hitler flew to meet von Manstein at Vinnitsa, which had once been the Führer's headquarters in the Ukraine. Von Manstein, blunt as ever, gave Hitler the cold, hard facts. His army group had suffered 133,000 casualties in August alone but had received only 33,000 replacements. The Soviets, while suffering greater casualties, could replace them with men pressed into service from the newly liberated areas and by transferring units from other sectors.

"Summing up the present situation, I insisted that while the Donetz [River] could not be held with the forces now available, the far greater danger for the German southern wing as a whole lay on the northern wing of our Army Group," von Manstein later wrote in his memoirs. "[The] 8th and 4th Panzer Armies would

BY PAT MCTAGGART

be unable in the long run to prevent the enemy from breaking through to the Dnieper [River]."

The field marshal then gave Hitler a choice—send at least 12 new divisions to the Army Group immediately and replace worn-out divisions with ones from quieter sectors on the front or abandon the Donetz Line. Hitler agreed with von Manstein and promised more forces. The promise was never kept.

While the Führer and his field marshal talked, the Soviets were once again on the move. During the final days of August, the Forty-Fourth Army of General Fedor Ivanovich Tolbukhin's South Front took Taganrog, a port on the Sea of Azov. Battered elements of the German XXIX Armeekorps, ordered to hold the city, managed to make their way through the Soviet lines while suffering heavy casualties in the process.

As August drew to a close, Soviet forces on the southern wing of the Eastern Front outnumbered the Germans about two-to-one in manpower and had an even larger ratio advantage in tanks, aircraft, and artillery. While von Manstein continued to plead with Hitler for freedom of movement, his divisions were being bled dry by the Russian juggernaut. Worse was to follow.

During the first week of September, Army Group South was forced to give up the towns of Putivl (severing the Bryansk–Konotop rail line and breaking the communications line between Army Group Center and Army Group South), Artemovsk, Konotop, Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, and Konstantininovka. At the same time General Erwin Jaenicke's Seventeenth Armee, which held a bridgehead on the Kuban Peninsula, was given permission to begin withdrawing across the Kerch Strait to the Crimea. Later in the war, a Soviet general would refer to the Crimea as "our largest prisoner-of-war camp." When the Crimea was cut off by the Soviets later in the month, the Seventeenth Armee would be effectively out of the battle for good.

There seemed to be no stopping the Red Army as it continued to surge forward in the second week of September. First, the cities of Stalino and Krasnoarmyansk fell, followed by Mariupol and Barvenkovo. On the Kuban Peninsula, the 250,000 soldiers of the Seventeenth Armee continued their successful evacuation, giving more than half the coastline of the Sea of Azov to the Soviets.

During the second week of September, while city after city was being liberated by Russian troops, von Manstein met with Hitler at Zaporozhye. Von Manstein once again stressed the serious situation that Army Group South was facing. "I emphasized that the position on the Army Group's right wing could not be restored forward of the Dnieper," he wrote in his memoirs.

Once again Hitler listened, and once again he refused to face reality. He did, however, order Army Group Center to send von Manstein four divisions that would start moving south on September 17.

Before those divisions arrived, the situation in the south grew even worse. General Rodion Iakovlevich Malinovsky's Southwest Front's Sixth Army captured Lozovaya on the 16th and Tolbukhin's South Front's Forty-Fourth Army took Berdyansk on the 17th, forcing General Karl Hollidt's Sixth Armee back to defenses near Melitopol. By September 21, the First Panzerarmee had been pushed back to the Dnepropetrovsk bridgehead and Sinelnikovo had fallen to the Southwest Front.

The final week in September saw the Germans in southern Russia lose even more ground. Although the Soviets paid a heavy price for their success, Poltava and Dnepropetrovsk were taken and Kremenchug was liberated after a bloody fight. Von Manstein was able to establish a tenuous line behind the Dnieper, but his army group had been severely mangled, with many of his divisions reporting a combat strength of less than a reinforced regiment.

At the beginning of October, von Manstein moved his headquarters from Kirovograd to Hitler's former headquarters at Vinnitsa as the Red Army continued to push westward. By October 5, General Vasilii Ivanovich Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army was involved in heavy fighting near Dnepropetrovsk. In the Kuban, the final elements of the Seventeenth Armee evacuated the Taman Peninsula, making the short journey across the Kerch Strait to the Crimea.

On October 10, Malinovsky's Southwest Front unleashed a three-pronged attack on the Zaporozhye bridgehead, about 20 miles northeast of Nikopol. While Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army hit the center of the bridgehead, supported on his left flank by General Dmitrii Danilovich Leliushenko's Third Guards Army, General Aleksei Ilich Danilov's Twelfth Army attacked from the north. As the Soviets pressed forward, they were met by a steel curtain of fire from the Germans.

Defending the bridgehead were the men of General Ferdinand Schörner's XL Panzerkorps and the XVII Armeekorps commanded by Maj. Gen. Hans Kreysing. An early Soviet penetration of the bridgehead's perimeter was eliminated by a German counterattack. Regrouping, the Russians pounded the Ger-

Once again Hitler listened, and once again he refused to face reality.

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ABOVE: Pausing briefly during their retreat from the Red Army, exhausted soldiers of the German 18th Army may appear to be demoralized. However, plenty of fight remained in these veteran troops. OPPOSITE: Wheeling a field artillery piece into position, Soviet soldiers begin the famous "mud offensive' against the German salient at Korsun on the Dnieper River. The offensive was directed by General Ivan Konev.

man positions with a massive barrage.

The Soviet artillery was grouped into division-sized units that augmented regular army divisional artillery batteries. The results of the massed artillery division fire were a clear indication that the Red Army now had the upper hand in guns and ammunition.

By October 11, General Eberhard von Mackensen, commander of the First Panzerarmee, told von Manstein that the bridgehead could no longer be held. Red Army attacks and Soviet artillery were causing unacceptable casualties for the Germans defending it. The next day the German line began to crumble, and by the 13th Soviet forces were involved in heavy fighting around the large hydroelectric dam that spanned the Dnieper.

On October 14, von Manstein contacted the German Army High Command, saying he was ordering the bridgehead to be abandoned. This was a moot point since Soviet advance units had already fought their way into Zaporozhye and street fighting was occurring inside the city. Rearguard German units held the Russians at bay in other sectors until the battered divisions inside the bridgehead could start pulling back to the west.

Heavy fighting was also taking place around Melitopol, where Hollidt's Sixth Armee was engaged with General Vasilii Filippovich Gerasimenko's Twenty-Eighth Army. By October 18, the Russians had fought their way to the center of the city and were still pushing forward. Hollidt reported to von Manstein that his depleted units could not possibly hold the city. While Soviet artillery blasted German positions with devastating effect, the Twenty-Eighth Army, supported by General Iakov Grigorevich Kreizer's Fifty-First Army, took the city on October 28.

Meanwhile, Stavka (Stalin and the Soviet High Command) went through a redesignation process with its fronts. Vatutin's Voronezh Front was renamed the 1st Ukrainian Front, while General Ivan Stepanovich Konev's Steppe Front became the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Malinovsky's Southwest Front was redesignated the 3rd Ukrainian Front, and Tolbukhin's South Front became the 4th Ukrainian Front.

The loss of Melitopol put Hollidt's Sixth Armee in full retreat. Stubborn rearguard actions slowed the Soviets, but they could not hold them back. By the end of October, the Sixth Armee was trying to reestablish a tenuous line about 50 miles east of the Dnieper, but the terrain was totally unsuitable for forming a cohesive defense.

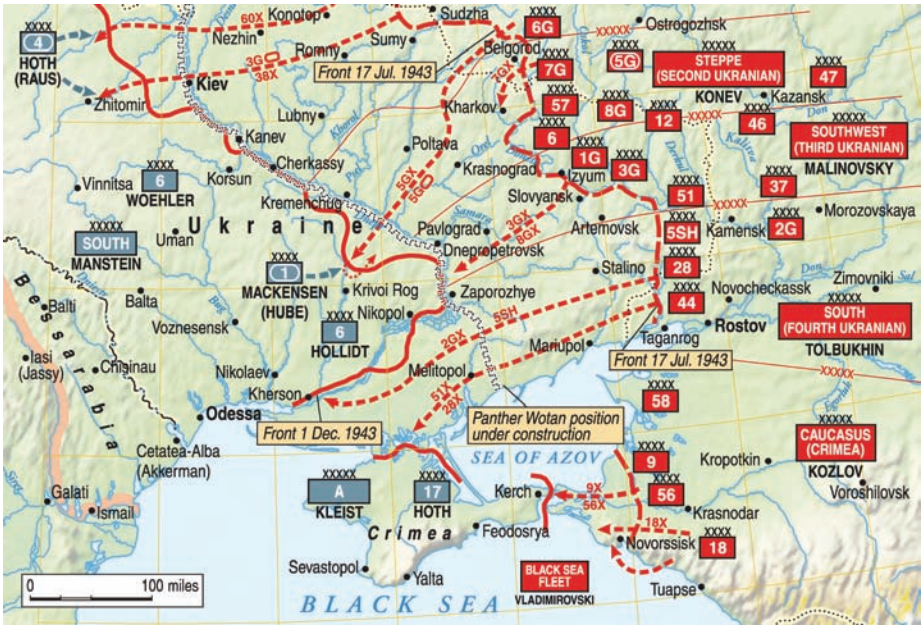
While Tolbukhin's troops advanced in the south, General Pavel Aleksevich Rotmistrov's Fifth Guards Tank Army, with General Mikhail Nikolaevich Sharokhin's Thirty-Seventh Army in support, started a headlong rush to reach Krivoi Rog. Rotmistrov's armored and mechanized forces sliced through the German line, but a counterattack by Colonel Wend von Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer Division hit the Soviet advance forces as they moved into the town. Von Wiethersheim's Panther tanks, supported by Panzer IVs and assault guns, smashed into the Soviet flank, leaving a trail of burning Russian tanks in their wake and causing Rotmistrov to hastily order his forward elements to retreat.

For the moment the threat to Krivoi Rog, and consequently to Nikopol, was contained, but the following day Dnepropetrovsk fell. Once again Rotmistrov ordered his tanks forward as Soviet forces poured across the Dnieper through the newly liberated city. The depth of the Russian penetration was considerable, and while Rotmistrov's Fifth Guards Tank Army rolled toward Krivoi Rog, Soviet infantry spread out across the steppe.

Coupled with advances farther south, Field Marshal Ewald von Kleist, commander of Army Group A, ordered his Seventeenth Armee to evacuate the Crimea before the peninsula was completely cut off by the 4th Ukrainian Front. The order was immediately countermanded by Hitler, leaving the 17th to rot until Russian forces were able to turn their attention to that forlorn army.

Near Krivoi Rog, heavy rains forced Rotmistrov to slow his advance. While Hollidt's Sixth Armee formed a bridgehead east of Nikopol, Schörner's depleted XL Panzerkorps launched a fierce counterattack against Rotmistrov. Meanwhile, General Friedrich Mieth's IV Armeekorps burst out of the Nikopol bridgehead to hit the right flank of the 4th Ukrainian Front, sending the Soviets reeling back.

By the end of the month, the Soviet commanders, while not achieving all their goals, could be satisfied with their gains. The Dnieper had been crossed north of Nikopol, and the Germans were barely holding on in their improvised positions west of the river. In the far south, Russian tanks reached Perekop, sealing the land bridge to the Crimea and effectively isolating the Seventeenth Armee. October had been a good month for the Red Army in south-



Map © 2009 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: The Soviet Red Army committed substantial forces to a series of bitter battles in order to wrest the rich magnesium mines of Nikopol from the invading Germans. OPPOSITE: Early in 1944, camouflaged German field artillery positions are poised to offer support for advancing Wehrmacht troops.

ern Russia, but there was still more to do.

Hitler was determined to hang on to the mines, depriving the Red Army of their wealth. On October 25, he entrusted the defense of the bridgehead to Schörner.

Born in Munich in 1892, Schörner volunteered for the Bavarian Army when he dropped out of school at the age of 18. He completed his schooling after his service period and rejoined the army as an officer when World War I broke out, being assigned to the Alpine Korps. In the bloody battles on the Western Front, including the Battle of Verdun, Schörner showed his personal courage. When the Alpine Korps was transferred to the Italian Front, Schörner earned the Pour le Mérite (Blue Max) in the campaign during which a young Erwin Rommel earned the same award.

After the war he served in the Freikorps (Free Corps) battling communist militants. In 1920, he joined the Reichswehr (post-World War I German Army) and was posted to a mountain regiment. His unit was involved in smashing Adolf Hitler's 1923 putsch, but when Hitler was released after a short prison term Schörner became an enthusiastic member of the Nazi Party.

During the first part of World War II, Schörner served in Poland, France, and Belgium as commander of the 98th Gebirgs (Mountain) Regiment. After he was given command of the 6th Gebirgs Division, he was awarded the Ritterkeuz (Knight's Cross) for action in Greece. He fought in the Arctic sector on the Eastern Front from 1941-1943 before being given command of the XL Panzerkorps.

Schörner had the reputation of being a tough and ruthless commander. An average tactician, he was known for pursuing his mission with the tenacity of a bulldog, but his membership in the Nazi Party and his loyalty to Hitler also gave him an edge that many German commanders did not have. When the occasion demanded, he was able to persuade Hitler to change his mind about total defense or no retreat orders. At times he had disobeyed direct orders from the Führer and suffered no consequences in doing so.

When Schörner took command of the bridgehead, the Soviets had already occupied the Dnieper Line from north of Zaporozhye to west of Cherkassy. Red Army forces held a large area in Army Group Center's sector. The cost had been high on both sides, but the Red Army still held a remarkable advantage in men and equipment.

Von Manstein's Army Group South had 44 infantry divisions with about 140,000 combat troops, 2,200 artillery pieces of varying calibers, and 270 tanks and assault guns. Von Kleist's Army Group A consisted of 17 infantry divisions (many of them bottled up in the Crimea) with 54,000 combat troops, 800 artillery pieces, and about 100 assault guns and tanks. The Panzer divisions in the two army groups were in no better shape.

Facing the Germans were the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Ukrainian Fronts and the North Caucasus Front. The rifle units in the combined fronts totaled 899,000 combat infantry and were supported by 4,250 tanks and 9,300 artillery pieces.

The Nikopol bridgehead was a tenuous position at best. With a perimeter of about 75 miles, the deepest portion of the German bulge was only about nine miles from the eastern bank of the Dnieper. Inside the bridgehead were two armee korps—Mieth's IV and General Erich Brandenberger's XXIX—both subordinated to Schörner's command. A third korps, the XVII under command of General Hans Kreysing, would later be added to what became known as Gruppe Schörner.

Elements of Malinovsky's 3rd and Tolbukhin's 4th Ukrainian Fronts were given the task of eliminating the bridgehead. The Soviets had superiority in the air and on the ground, but they faced what was left of the German defenses known as the Dnieper Line. Although the Germans had good field fortifications within the bridgehead, the land itself favored neither attacker nor defender. Much of the area within and in front of the bridgehead consisted of extensive marshy lowlands known as the Plavna, which was crisscrossed by several waterways. Due to the relative warmth of the winter in southern Russia, the marshes were hardly ever frozen.

Getting into and out of the bridgehead was a problem for the Germans. The Dnieper was between 650 and 1,300 yards wide in the area. To supply the troops on the east bank the Germans had constructed a temporary bridge east of Nikopol. On the southern end of the bridgehead near Bolshaya Lepatikha, two single-lane pontoon bridges had also been constructed by German engineers. These three bridges, which were guarded by flak (antiaircraft) companies, would be the lifeline for Schörner's troops.

Getting material to the Nikopol sector presented another problem to the already taxed German supply system. The so-called Road IV, the only all-weather road in the entire sector, was of little use as it was already under Soviet artillery fire. There was one railroad line in the area not under Russian control, but that supply source was also in peril. An advance of a mere 30 miles by Malinovsky's front would take the town of Apostolova and the vital rail spur that branched off to Nikopol.

Hitler had now become obsessed with holding the rich ore deposits at Nikopol and Krivoi Rog. He also envisioned the Nikopol bridgehead as a springboard for an attack to relieve the Crimea once the Soviets had been defeated trying to overcome Schörner's defenses. No one in Berlin dared to shatter that illusion, but com-

manders at the front such as von Mackensen and von Manstein knew the task set before them was next to impossible. The colored pins on maps at the Führer's headquarters represented full divisions. At the front, those same pins represented nothing more than brigades or reinforced regiments. Fiction and reality were separated by 1,000 miles.

There was one spot of good news for Gruppe Schörner. In the first week of November, Brig. Gen. Maximillian Freiherr von Edelsheim's 24th Panzer Division arrived inside the bridgehead after taking part in late October counterattacks around Krivoi Rog. The 24th had been destroyed at Stalingrad and was reconstituted about a week later around a cadre of support units and those who had been wounded and evacuated or flown out of the dying city.

The division was headquartered across the Dnieper from Nikopol in the village of Znamenka. From there, its 60 tanks and three motorized infantry battalions could send combat groups to any part of the perimeter that was in danger. Known as the "Stalingrad" Division, the 24th would be Schörner's "fire brigade" in the coming months as the Soviets slammed into the German defenses again and again.

The Soviet Front commanders facing the bridgehead did not have many options open to them as they planned to eliminate the Germans. It was obvious that the supply bridges would have to be the main goal of any attack, and the low cloud cover combined with the flak batteries defending the bridges meant that it was improbable that the Red Air Force could effectively destroy them. That left only frontal attacks on the German defenses—a slow and costly business considering how Schörner's men were dug in.

Neither of the Russian generals would flinch at the idea. Tolbukhin was born in 1894, the son of a peasant. Participating in the massive battles of World War I, he joined the Red Army in 1918 and served in a number of positions during the Russian Civil War. Tolbukhin graduated from the prestigious Frunze Academy in 1935 and went on to perform staff duties during the first part of World War II. He commanded the Fifty-Seventh Army during the Battle of Stalingrad and was promoted to a front commander in March 1943.

Malinovsky was cut from the same cloth as Tolbukhin. The illegitimate son of a railroad worker and a hospital cook, he was born in Odessa in 1895. He was a veteran of World War I, served in the Red Army during the Civil War, and graduated from the Frunze Academy in 1930. After fighting in the Spanish Civil War he went on to command a corps and two armies before becoming a front commander.

The first days of November brought a lull to the Nikopol area, as late fall rains made the maneuver of large units next to impossible. Both sides continued to send out patrols to ascertain their opponent's strengths and weaknesses, and sometimes those patrols ran into each other, causing short, sharp firefights.

On November 6, the commander of the Forty-Fourth Army, Lt. Gen. Vasilii Afanasevich Khomenko, and his senior artillery commander were on one such reconnaissance mission. Khomenko wanted to get a closer look at the defenses of Brig. Gen. Erich Gruener's 111th Infanterie Division. His reconnaissance vehicle inadvertently crossed into German territory and came under fire, which left Khomenko severely wounded. The Soviet general died the same day. Inside his vehicle, men of Gruener's Grenadier Regiment 50 found a trove of maps and documents detailing plans of attack and Soviet troop displacements that allowed the Germans to make defensive adjustments for the coming Russian attack.

As the Germans waited for the Soviets to

Hitler had now become obsessed with holding the rich ore deposits at Nikopol and Krivoi Rog.

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strike, work continued on three defensive lines inside the bridgehead. The primary line was called the Adele I Line. Secondary positions to the rear were dubbed the Sigrid Line, and a third line near the Dnieper, nicknamed Ursula, would be used in case of a major Soviet breakthrough or as a final barrier in case the order was given to abandon the bridgehead.

The lull did not last for long. Along Mieth's IV Armee Korps' front, the Soviets tried a frontal attack with a combined armor-infantry force. The attack hit Brig. Gen. Friedrich-August Weinknecht's 79th Infanterie Division and its neighboring divisions on November 5. Antitank fire destroyed some of the Russian tanks, but there were always others to take their place to continue the attack.

To Weinknecht's left, Brig. Gen. Eugen Bleyer's 258th Infanterie Division had a portion of its forward position overrun. On the 79th's right, Brig. Gen. Paul Schrecker's 17th Infanterie Division also experienced heavy frontal attacks. The Soviets hoped to bludgeon their way through the German lines by throwing waves of tanks and infantry against the enemy defenses. It proved to be a costly tactic.

The attack lasted for two days. Red Army artillery pounded the German lines, lifting only when the ground troops were perilously close to the impact points. Such bombardment caused Soviet casualties from friendly fire, but it also forced the Germans to remain under cover instead of firing at the oncoming Russians.

The Soviets managed to break through in some areas, but elements of the 24th Panzer Division were used with great effectiveness in destroying the enemy penetrations. One of the keys to the German success was the lack of Russian armored infantry units, which could have been used to advance with the tanks when the German defenses had been breached.

At Nikopol, once the Soviet tanks were through the German forward line, they fell prey to tank or antitank fire in defenses further to the rear. The advancing Red Army infantry could not keep up with their tanks, leaving both armor and infantry unable to support each other. Therefore, each formation could be engaged by the combined arms of German battle groups, forcing the surviving Soviets to retreat and allowing the lines of the bridgehead to be restored.

On November 8, the 111th Infanterie Division fought off two attacks. Switching tactics, the Russians launched a night attack in battalion strength that was able to penetrate the German line. The following day, the understrength batteries of German Assault Gun Battalion 209 counterattacked. Supported by some scattered infantry units, the assault guns decimated the Russians and sealed the breach before Soviet reinforcements could arrive.

After licking their wounds, the Russians began another assault on the IV Armee Korps. On November 19, Soviet artillery hit the German line with a particularly heavy barrage. Holding a front of about 10 miles, Weinknecht's 79th Division struggled to hang on as waves of Red Army infantry advanced. The 79th had few reserve forces, and the German general knew that any help he received would have to come from neighboring divisions if a dangerous breakthrough occurred.

By November 20, the Russians had pierced the line of the division's Grenadier Regiment 212. Pushing forward, the Soviets managed to take the villages of Veselyi and Nezamoshnik behind the main line. An ad hoc battle group, led by Captain Walter Elflein, hit the Russian flank with a vicious counterattack. Hand-to-hand fighting occurred as the surprised Soviets tried to regroup to meet the threat. Elflein's men advanced without letup, using bayonets and hand grenades to keep the Russians at bay until a unit of the 24th Panzer arrived on the scene.

By the time the Russians regained their momentum... the attack was stopped by a hail of German fire.

The panzers faced strong antitank fire from guns dragged forward by the Russian infantry. Soviet reinforcements were also being funneled into the area, making the elimination of the breakthrough force even harder for the Germans.

The villages were retaken on November 23, and the front line was once again restored. Severely wounded, Elflein was flown to a hospital in Krakow. Having already won the Ritterkreuz on October 10, 1943, Captain Elflein received the oak leaves to the award from Hitler's hand at the Führer's Berghof "Tea House" on May 31, 1944. His award was dated December 5, 1943—about two weeks after his almost suicidal counterattack.

After their failure, the Soviets switched to another sector of the 79th's front. Lt. Col. Fritz Müller's Grenadier Regiment 208 became the target of a strong frontal assault after the usual pounding from Red Army artillery. Aided by elements of the 24th Panzer and Assault Gun Detachment 277, Müller's men held firm. As the Russian attack increased in ferocity, a battalion of Grenadier Regiment 570 from the neighboring 111th Division was also thrown into the line, blunting the Soviet assault.

On the morning of November 25, the Russians attacked again and were driven back. During the afternoon, however, Soviet forces managed to make a mile-and-a-half deep penetration at the junction of the front linking Müller's regiment with Grenadier Regiment 212. Fighting raged through the night and into the next day. Help from the 24th Panzer and German artillery finally made the difference, and by 0900 on the 26th the original front line was restored yet again.

Another Russian attack hit outpost positions of the 3rd Gebirgs Division. In the early morning, a large group of tanks supported by infantry hit the flank of 1st Lieutenant Horst Heinrich's 2nd Kompanie/Gebirgs Engineer Battalion 83. In the bitter fighting the Russians broke the line and drove to a depth of 1,000 feet, threatening to cut off the entire company.

Heinrich gathered members of his signal unit and led a counterattack that destroyed three enemy antitank guns. They then used flamethrowers to attack the Russian tanks, allowing the survivors of the company to retreat to the main line of defense some half mile away. Picking up stragglers along the way, Heinrich led 17 men back to the relative safety of the bridgehead defenses. By the time the Russians regained their momentum, the main line had been fully alerted and the attack was stopped by a hail of German fire.

By now it was clear to the engineers at the mines around Nikopol and Krivoi Rog that it would be only a matter of time before the Soviets captured the area. It was a simple equation. Russian losses were replaced and German losses were not. Production had dropped to almost nothing as the precious refining and mining equipment was dismantled and shipped to other Hermann Göring Werke operations farther west.

With the ore output a nonissue, the correct military move would have been to abandon the bridgehead and fall back behind the Dnieper.

Shortening the line would free up forces and form a much needed reserve of divisions that could be used to counter any Soviet attack. Von Manstein had been pushing for such a withdrawal for the past two weeks.

Adolf Hitler had other ideas. He became more obsessed with the idea of using the bridgehead as a springboard for an attack to free the divisions bottled up in the Crimea. Little thought was given to where divisions for such an attack would come from. Hitler had convinced himself that once the Russians attacking the bridgehead were shattered by the German defenses, von Manstein could slice through them, link up with the 17th Armee, and then regain the territory that had been lost during the previous two months.

On December 2, the Soviets hit the 79th Division again. Achieving a breach in the German line, Russian forces drove deep into the inner bridgehead. As they pushed forward toward the Dnieper they were met by several German "alarm units" that had been hastily sent to stop them.

Arriving piecemeal, the German units were ground up by the Russians. On December 3, the Alarm Company of Panzerjäger Regiment 656, commanded by Lieutenant Marec, was swept aside with most of its 194 men lost. Members of the staff of Engineer Battalion 179 and Panzerjäger Detachment 179 suffered the same fate as they fought from hastily prepared defenses.

Those sacrificed in slowing the Russians made it possible for a combat group from the 79th and another from the 3rd Gebirgs to move in and hit the Russian flanks. The Soviets were caught off guard by the German attack and were sent reeling back. What could have been a major setback for the bridgehead defenders was averted as the surviving Russian assault troops scurried eastward toward their own lines.

Casualties during the Soviet assaults had been high, and for the next two weeks the Russians conducted small probing attacks while their forces were replenished. One thing the Soviets still had enough of was artillery ammunition, and German positions both on the front and inside the bridgehead took a tremendous pummeling daily while the armor and infantry regrouped and were resupplied.

By December 19, the Soviets were ready to try it again. Mieth's IV Armee Korps received a drum fire artillery barrage as the Russians moved forward. Trenches collapsed, and men were buried alive or were blown to pieces as they tried to make it to secondary defenses. Those who survived stared out of their shattered positions to see a vast wave of Russian tanks and infantry moving toward them.

The Soviets hit Mieth's Korps with seven or eight infantry divisions, three tank brigades, the IV Guards Mechanized Corps, and the XIX Independent Tank Corps. Incredibly, the Germans held out in most places, but the Russians managed to break through a section of Bleyer's 258th Division and then widen the breach, allowing tanks and infantry to gradually create a three-mile-deep pocket.

Alarm units from the 258th were augmented by elements of the 111th Division's Grenadier Regiment 50 as they battled to keep the Soviets from advancing. Antitank guns were shifted and brought into play while a "fire brigade" from the 24th Panzer moved toward the broken sector. As the opposing forces fought at near point-blank range, Soviet ground attack aircraft swooped down to strafe German positions.

To help counter the Soviet air superiority, Schörner ordered antiaircraft units to move closer to the combat area. He also scraped together additional ad hoc units to stop the Russian drive. Soldiers in the midst of the battle were amazed to see the general's Kübelwagen cross just behind the front line with Schörner encouraging the men to hold firm.

With the help of 24th Panzer, the Germans prevented the Russians from reaching the Dnieper. Artillery from the 111th and 258th blasted the Soviet infantry while the panzers, antitank guns, and infantry tank killer units turned the Soviet tanks into blazing infernos. For the next few days the Russians slowly gave ground. When the front line was finally restored, 81 Soviet tanks lay destroyed on the battlefield.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day the Red Air Force launched numerous bombing raids against the bridgehead front line to keep the Germans guessing about where the next major breakthrough would take place. On December 31, about 50 Russian tanks hit the 111th Division. A small breakthrough was sealed off, and the attackers retreated after inflicting only minor damage.

Meanwhile, events to the north were threatening to break the entire southern sector of the Eastern Front wide open. By the end of December, the 1st Ukrainian Front's 1st Tank Army was pushing along the road to Vinnitsa. Around Korsun, a sizable part of the First Panzerarmee was in danger of being encircled by the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, while another encirclement threatened German forces around Kirovograd.

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ABOVE: During a visit to the field headquarters of Army Group South on February 19, 1943, Hitler and his field marshals confer over a map of the current tactical situation. From left, the group includes, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, Hitler, Field Marshal Theodor Busse (behind).

Von Manstein played a brilliant game of chess, sending his meager reserves racing here and there along the front to stop a catastrophic breakthrough. He had grown weary of begging Hitler for permission to withdraw to save threatened troops, and in a few cases he authorized withdrawals himself, presenting Hitler the facts after the action had already occurred.

At Nikopol, however, there would be no such covert withdrawal. With Schörner in command of the bridgehead, von Manstein knew it would be futile to even suggest circumventing the Führer's orders. Although Schörner was completely loyal to Hitler, even he would have been astounded at the fairy-tale world that was Hitler's headquarters. As his divisions lay battered and bleeding inside the bridgehead, a December 28 Führer conference found Army Chief of Staff General Kurt Zeitzler telling Hitler that most of the divisions inside the bridgehead, with the exception of the 258th, 294th and the 302nd, were rock solid.

Buoyed by reports such as that, Hitler became more fixated on keeping the bridgehead as a future attack position for a linkup with the Crimea. He continued to ignore von Manstein's pleas to give up positions on the Dnieper bend, which would have shortened the line, or to evacuate the Crimea, which would have freed an entire army to use in the main line. Instead, he preferred the status quo, arguing that the loss of the Crimea would have an adverse effect on the political front in Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey.

By the beginning of 1944, Stalin had become increasingly frustrated with the lack of success at Krivoi Rog and Nikopol. He demanded results from Malinovsky and Tolbukhin, and he wanted them soon. At Nikopol, Tolbukhin opted to cease his frontal attacks and to concentrate on the bridgehead's flanks. During the first few days of January, Maj. Gen. Kurt Rüdiger's 302nd Division, occupying the area around Novo Dneprovka, was the focus of several attacks from General Leliushenko's Third Guards Army. It seemed that Leliushenko's men were on the verge of turning Mieth's flank, but then Mother Nature intervened.

Constant changes in temperature, coupled with alternating rain and snow showers, brought an early onset of the *rasputitsa,* the Russian muddy season, throughout the western Ukraine. The effects of the thaw were immediate, and movement on both sides quickly ground to a halt.

On the Soviet side, Colonel N.A. Grylev wrote, "Rain and melting snow aggravated the difficulties. Rivers overflowed their banks. Roads and tracks became impracticable for vehicles, as was the terrain for infantry. These various factors had a considerable effect on our military activities, limiting the possibility of maneuver and hampering supplies of food, fuel and munitions."

Major General Nikolaus von Vormann, writing from the Krivoi Rog sector, echoed Grylev's words. "The *rasputitsa,*" he wrote, "had set in astonishingly early; everywhere it is spring mud …Worked on by the sun, the rain and the warm winds, the heavy black Ukraine earth turns into thick sticky mud during the day. There is not one metalled road in the country. On foot you sink down to your shins and after a few steps lose shoes and socks there. Wheeled vehicles stall and get stuck. Suction by the mud tore away the too-narrow tracks of our all-purpose vehicles. The only machines capable of making any headway were the tractors and the tanks, which rolled their way forward at a maximum speed of three miles an hour, but at a cost of tremendous strain on the engine and huge petrol consumption."

Stalin refused to accept excuses from Tolbukhin and Malinovsky. He wanted the Dnieper bend at any cost. The liberation of the Ukraine was just as politically important to him as the retention of the area was to Hitler. Turkey would certainly distance itself from Germany once the Ukraine was in Soviet hands, and Hitler's allies in southeastern Europe would be threatened by powerful Red Army forces at their borders. Therefore, he kept pressure on the two front commanders to continue their attacks despite the horrific difficulties on the ground.

January 10, 1944, saw Sharokhin's Thirty-Seventh Army and General Vasilii Vasilevich Glagolev's Forty-Sixth Army (3rd Ukrainian Front) smash into the LVII Panzerkorps in a bid to sever the rail line at Apostolovo. The following day, Tolbukhin launched Leliushenko's 3rd Guards Army and General Viacheslav Dmitrievich Tsvetaev's Fifth Shock Army against the IV and XVII Armeekorps with the objective of linking up with Malinovsky's forces.

Mieth's and Leliushenko's divisions were locked in bloody combat as the Soviets struggled to penetrate the German positions. Both sides knew a Russian success would threaten to encircle the left flank of the Sixth Armee, which would make the bridgehead untenable.

Artillery fire killed friend and foe alike as observers called in strikes almost on top of their own positions. As the Russians bent the German lines, Mieth's men fell back to their secondary positions. Mobile units of the 24th Panzer, stationed closer to the front because of the weather, proved their worth once again as they made their appearance at critical points during the battle. Suffering appalling casualties, the Soviets finally called off their attack on January 16 to receive replacements and regroup for the next assault.

The Russians continued to probe the German line while the bulk of their forces refitted. In one such probing action, the popular commander of the II/Panzergrenadier Regiment 26/24th Panzer Division was severely wounded. Captain Georg Michael, known for his audacity and his fearlessness, was at the front with his battalion when he received his eighth wound.

Michael had been awarded the Ritterkreuz while serving as a cavalryman in the 1940 French campaign. Leading a small reconnaissance unit, he captured more than 500 French and colonial troops through sheer bluff, convincing them that they were surrounded by superior forces. Seri-



All: National Archives

LEFT: Marshal Rodion Malinovsky commanded the Southwest Front of the Red Army. CENTER: Marshal Fedor Tolbukhin led the South Front of the Red Army during heavy fighting around Nikopol. RIGHT: German General Ferdinand Schörner defended the bridgehead at Zaporozhye. OPPOSITE: During a lull in the fighting on the steppes of Russia, a pair of German soldiers smoke a cigarette and eat a quick meal at their somewhat exposed position.

ously wounded near Stalingrad, he was flown out of the cauldron while his division was being annihilated. For his actions during the Stalingrad campaign, he became the 187th soldier of the Wehrmacht to receive the oak leaves decoration to his Ritterkreuz.

At Nikopol, Michael's luck finally ran out. Although he was flown to a hospital in Odessa, he died of his wounds on January 19. Within days of his death, the 24th Panzer received orders to leave the Nikopol bridgehead and move northeast to counter a Soviet armored thrust aimed at Uman. With the departure of the division, the bridgehead defenders knew that their days on the eastern bank of the Dnieper were numbered.

As the Soviets prepared for yet another assault, Schörner was making his own plans for the bridgehead. The Russian advances in the north, coupled with the loss of the 24th Panzer Division, had made holding the Nikopol position impractical. Even if Berlin could not see it, Schörner knew that the time was fast approaching when the bridgehead defenders would have to retreat to the western bank of the Dnieper or be annihilated.

Artillery fire killed friend and foe alike as observers called in strikes almost on top of their own positions.

ullstein bild

When put in motion, the plan called for withdrawal to the Sigrid Line, with German divisions on the main front leapfrogging through those divisions already occupying the position. The Sigrid Line defenders would then perform the same maneuver through the Ursula Line and cross to the relative safety of the western bank, followed by the Ursula defenders. Artillery, already sighted, would cover the retreating Germans every step of the way.

The forces comprising the Sixth Armee, which included the Nikopol defenders, had suffered casualties during the past few months that had turned most divisions into nothing more than understrength regiments. In late January, Hollidt had 20 divisions under his command. They averaged a frontline strength of 2,500 men. After the transfer of the 24th Panzer to the Eighth Armee, his only reserve was the 9th Panzer Division, which had 13 serviceable tanks and was also severely understrength in artillery and infantry.

Between them, Malinovsky and Tolbukhin had a total of 51 rifle divisions, at least half of them at full strength. They also had two mechanized and two tank corps as well as six tank brigades and a massive amount of independent artillery units.

On January 30, the two Soviet fronts struck. At Krivoi Rog, Malinovsky used his Forty-Sixth and Eighth Guards Armies as a battering ram to pave the way for a breakthrough. For the moment, the front held, but this time the German commanders knew they could not halt a Soviet advance for long.

After a heavy bombardment, Malinovsky threw his Fifth Shock, Third Guards, and Twenty-Eighth Armies against the Nikopol bridgehead. Schörner, ever watchful, kept in close communication with his frontline commanders. Reports indicated that a strong Soviet assault force had breached the lines of the 97th Jäger and 9th Infanterie Divisions, driving an eight-mile wedge pointing toward Bolshaya Lepatikha. For the next two days the Russians tried to make a final push to grab the precious pontoon bridges located near the town.

By February 2, Schörner had had enough. At command posts throughout the bridgehead, radio operators received the message "Ladies, excuse Me"—the code to begin evacuation. Upon receipt of the signal the 3rd Gebirgs Division, which was wedged between the 17th and 302nd Divisions, began to fall back while the neighboring divisions extended their flanks to cover the narrow front left by its departure. Because it held such a narrow front the divi-

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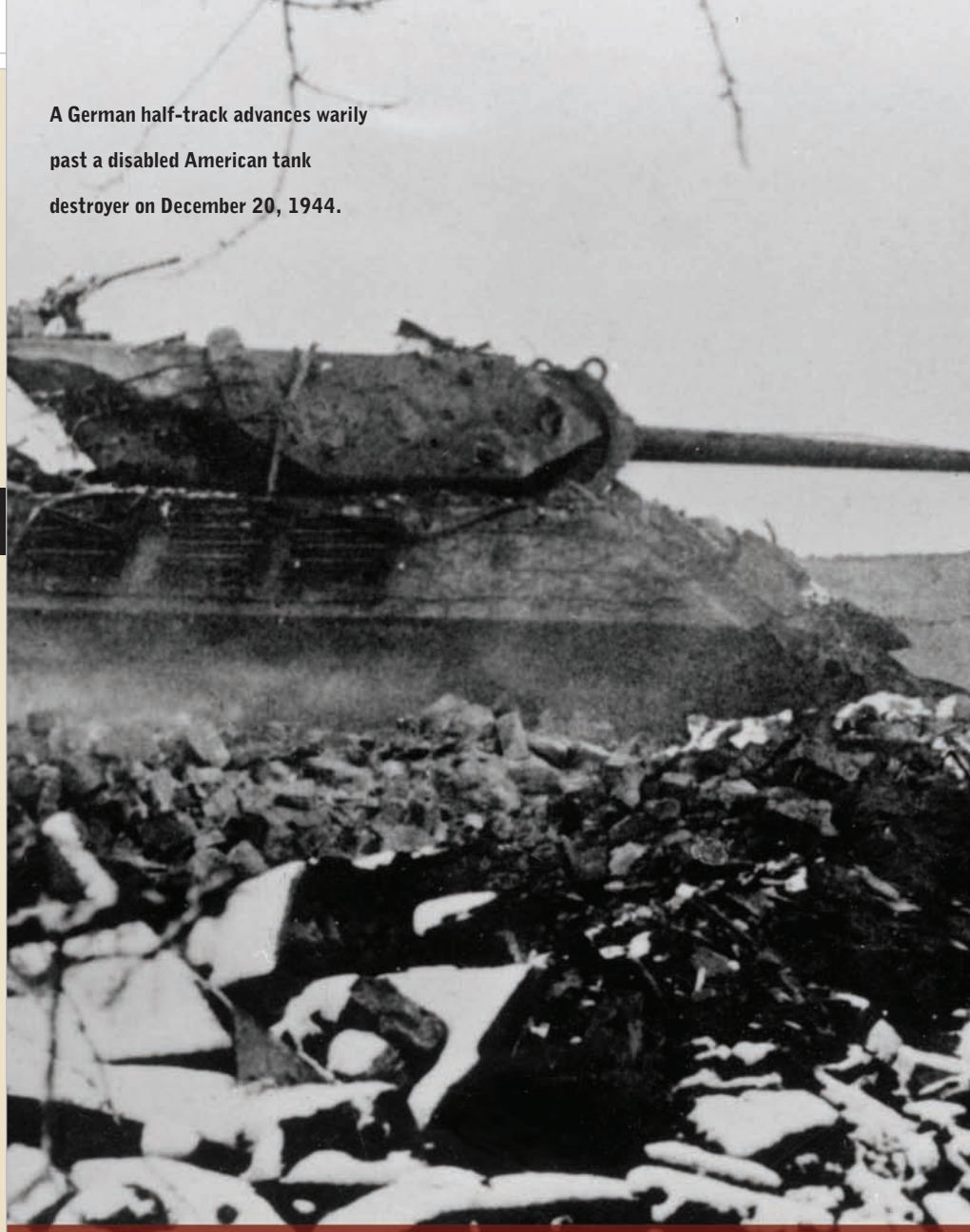
Blood

Combat Command RCCR of the U.S. 9th Armored Division sacrificed heroically to win precious time for the defense of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

BY CHARLES GUTIERREZ



A German half-track advances warily past a disabled American tank destroyer on December 20, 1944.

ullstein bild

In December 1944, the Ardennes front or "ghost front" was an area where either veteran Allied units rotated in to rest and recover from terrible combat losses or where new, untested units arrived to gather some combat experience from the minor skirmishes that would occasionally flare up. Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton's U.S. Army VIII Corps was such a unit.

Three infantry divisions, the 28th, 4th, and 106th, comprised VIII Corps. The 28th and the 4th had been severely mauled in the bloody battles of the Hürtgen Forest. The 106th Infantry Division was newly arrived at the front, replacing the 2nd Infantry Division, and had yet to see combat. The three VIII Corps infantry divisions were responsible for an approximate 88-mile front that was just about three times that normally assigned an equivalent defending force. Although the Germans were on the ropes and expected to capitulate soon, General Middleton still worried about the thin spread of his on such a wide front.

When General Omar Bradley, 12th Army Group commander, visited Middleton at his headquarters in Bastogne, Middleton expressed concern about the overall defensive situation, only to be told, "Don't worry Troy, they won't come through here." Middleton replied, "Maybe not, Brad, but they've come through this area several times before." To help assuage his fears, General Bradley provided VIII Corps with the newly arrived 9th Armored Division.

Major General John W. Leonard's 9th Armored Division was, like most armored divisions of the period, divided into three separate combat commands (CC): A, B, and R (Reserve). Each combat command was a combined arms military organization of comparable size to a brigade or regiment and loosely patterned after the German combined arms approach to mechanized warfare. Each combat command usually consisted of one armored battalion and one armored infantry battalion. In addition, smaller units of tank destroyers, engineers, and mechanized cavalry were assigned as needed to accomplish any given mission.

In mid-December 1944, the three combat commands of the 9th Armored Division were scattered throughout the Ardennes front. CCA was placed just south of the confluence of the Our and Sure Rivers wedged between the 109th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division to its north and the 12th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division to its south. CCB found itself near the village of Faymonville and recently attached to V Corps to support the U.S. Army's effort to capture

for Time

or destroy the Roer River dams. CCR, under the command of Colonel Joseph H. Gilbreth, was stationed at Trois Vierges, roughly 20 miles northeast of the crossroads town of Bastogne, Belgium, in support of VIII Corps' left and center.

Unknown to the Americans, the Germans were planning a major offensive code-named Operation Watch on the Rhine. According to the German plan, the offensive would cut across the Ardennes front, capturing Bastogne, one of three critical communication/road network centers in Field Marshal Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Army sector. The other two were St. Vith to the northeast and Marche-en-Famenne to the northwest. Thus, Bastogne, like St. Vith and Marche-en-Famenne, needed to be dealt with quickly to achieve Hitler's goal of capturing the Belgian port city of Antwerp and splitting the Allies—both politically and geographically.

Bastogne lay in the sector of advance that Manteuffel assigned to XLVII Panzer Corps and its commander, General Heinrich von Luttwitz. General Luttwitz's corps consisted of the 2nd Panzer Division, the Panzer Lehr Division, and the 26th Volksgrenadier Division (VGD) with the added strength of the 15th Volks Wer-

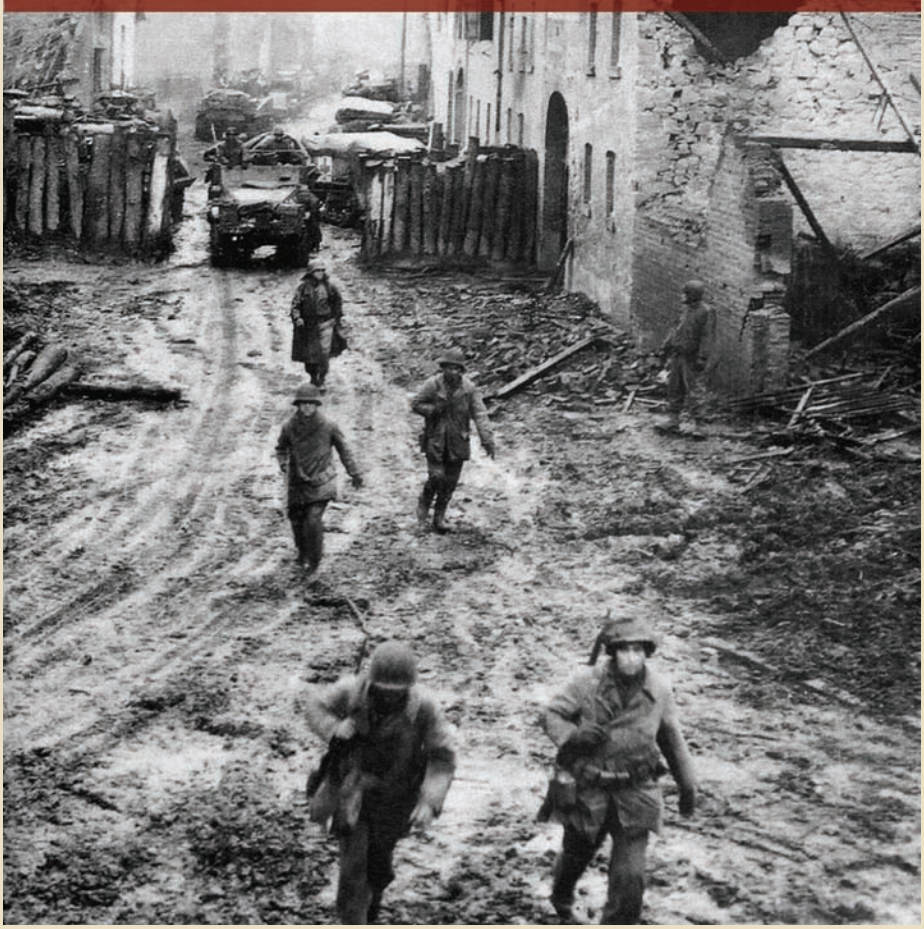
fer (rocket launcher) Brigade, the 766th Volks Artillery Corps, the 600th Army Engineer Battalion, and the 182nd Flak Regiment.

Manteuffel's instructions to Luttwitz were direct: "Panzer Lehr Division holds itself ready to advance by order of the corps following behind the 26th VGD by way of Gemund-Drauffeld toward Bastogne and the Meuse in the sector of Namur-Dinant. It is essential for the division to take up positions … close to the 2nd Panzer Division advancing over Noville. In the case of strong enemy resistance, Bastogne is to be outflanked, its capture is then up to the 26th VGD…."

Since the primary mission of the Fifth Panzer Army was to reach and cross the Meuse River by day three of the offensive in flank support of Sixth SS Panzer Army's drive to capture Antwerp, the 2nd Panzer and the Panzer Lehr Divisions were to rapidly move beyond Bastogne regardless of who held it.

The area of the Ardennes designated for the XLVII Panzer Corps' breakthrough was held by the 28th Infantry Division's 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 110th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Hurley F. Fuller. Fuller's regimental front stretched approximately 10 miles, and anything even remotely resembling a continuous line of defense was far beyond the manpower capabilities of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. The best that could be done was a system of village strongpoints, each defended by troops in the approximate strength of a rifle company. The 26th VGD commander, General Heinz Kokott, was given the mission of forcing crossings at the Our and Clerf Rivers on the left of the Panzer Corps, holding them open for the armor of the 2nd Panzer Division, then following it to Bastogne. Panzer Lehr would follow directly behind the 26th VGD. Once Bastogne was secured, the 26th VGD would be responsible for covering the left flank of the Panzer Corps, allowing the two armored divisions to cross the Meuse unmolested.

Control of Bastogne would not only ensure an easier and swifter advance toward the River Meuse but would also ensure firmer control of the entire southern Ardennes region.



Slogging down a muddy road through a devastated Ardennes village, American soldiers and armored vehicles move toward the advancing Germans. (National Archives)

In the early morning hours of December 16, 1944, all along the Ardennes front from Monchau in the north to Echternach in the south, American forces awoke to the sound of German artillery. In the 9th Armored Division's CCR sector, the 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion seemed to be the primary target of the shelling. Lt. Col. Robert M. Booth, commander of the 52nd AIB, was informed at a midday briefing that there was nothing to worry about. The entire front was being subjected to similar bombardment, and the Germans were probably just putting on an artillery show or involved in some spoiling operation.

With reports of German assaults and penetrations coming in throughout the day from his entire VIII Corps sector, General Middleton realized that what was occurring was no simple spoiling attack but a major German offensive. Middleton understood that with the number of enemy units involved and with the speed at which they were attempting to move they would need more road available. Middleton therefore planned to hold his original VIII Corps positions as long as possible while building strong defenses in front of the road network hubs of St.Vith, Houffalize, and Bastogne. It was Middleton's reasoning that a strong American concentration within these transportation centers would force the Germans to come to him and, in any case, American forces would be in strength on the enemy's flank and rear. On December 16, however, the forces available to Middleton to implement this plan were not nearly enough.

Middleton conferred with his immediate boss, Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges, commander of First U.S. Army. Hodges agreed with Middleton's assessment, and on the morning of December 17, Hodges was trying to reach General Bradley to have the only two SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) reserve divisions left on the European continent, the 101st and the 82nd Airborne divisions, released to VIII Corps for the immediate defense of Bastogne. Almost immediately after speaking to General Hodges, General Bradley put in a call to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, requesting the release of the two reserve airborne divisions. It was not until 7 PM on December 17 that Eisenhower, reluctant to part with his last reserve divisions, gave permission.

Middleton, believing that he would eventually be granted the two reserve divisions, still had one major problem: how to slow down the German advance long enough to allow for the arrival and deployment of the paratroopers. Aside from a couple of engineer units, Middleton had only one combat unit in reserve and that was the newly arrived and untested 9th Armored Division. Moreover, because of the breadth of the German assault he could not even use the entire division in the Bastogne sector. CCB of the 9th Armored was immediately needed in St. Vith to shore up the 106th Infantry Division, while CCA was badly needed in the Wallendorf-Echternach area to support the 4th Infantry Division. Essentially, the only uncommitted combat unit he had left was CCR of the 9th Armored Division.

By midday on December 17, Luttwitz's 2nd Panzer Division, after crushing American resistance in Marnach, was pushing west toward Clervaux and its bridges across the Clerf River. The Clerf crossings lay only about 17 road miles from Bastogne. The German advance toward Bastogne took on an added urgency when, during late evening of the 17th, Fifth Panzer Army headquarters intercepted an Allied command message ordering the two American airborne divisions to Bastogne.

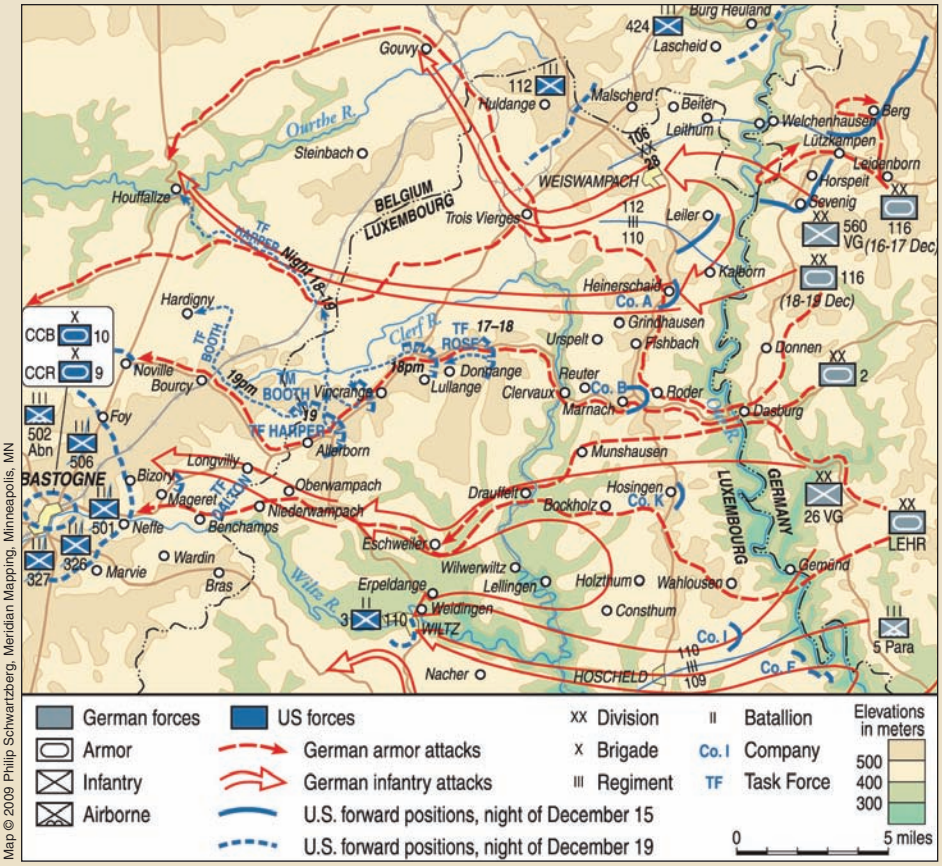
General Manteuffel had planned that Bastogne would be taken on the first day of the offensive. Although unexpected stiff pockets of American resistance had delayed Bastogne's capture by at least a full day, all was far from lost. Manteuffel and Luttwitz believed that the two airborne divisions would reach Bastogne either during the night of December 18 or early on the 19th. Once Luttwitz's XLVII Panzer Corps crossed the Clerf, Bastogne could be reached no later than midday of the 18th, thus allowing German command and control the use of its vital road network. Control of Bastogne would not only ensure an easier and swifter advance toward the River Meuse but would also ensure firmer control of the entire southern Ardennes region. Although the plan called on German armor to bypass Bastogne should immediate capture prove unfeasible, investment would still tie down German forces needed elsewhere. In addition, an American occupation of Bastogne would provide Allied forces with a base from which to hamper the German flanks and rear as well as cause major resupply problems for Luttwitz's fuel-hungry tanks. The Germans did not expect this to happen.

At about 9:40 AM on the 17th, approximately 10 minutes after word came that the Germans had captured Clervaux and crossed the Clerf River, General Middleton ordered Colonel Gilbreth to establish two roadblocks between Clervaux and Bastogne in an effort to delay the Germans. Colonel Gilbreth's Combat Command R consisted of the 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion, the 2nd Tank Battalion, the 73rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion, the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and other conventional task force attachments. However, prior to Middleton's roadblock order, desperate fighting on the morning of the 16th by elements of the 28th Infantry Division had already drawn off portions of Colonel Gilbreth's command. The 112th Infantry Regiment drew off a platoon of tank destroyers, and the 110th Infantry Regiment was sent a platoon of tank destroyers as well as a company of tanks.

Combat Command R, unlike its two sister combat commands within the 9th Armored Division, would not be given a chance to prove itself as an independent unit in combat. The decisions about where to place CCR's individual components were to be made elsewhere—some by Maj. Gen. Norman Cota, commanding the 28th Infantry Division, some by his regimental or battalion commanders, and some even by the corps commander himself. Colonel Gilbreth would have very little independent command and control over his unit. CCR would be treated as a true reserve force from which units and men could be drawn as needed, a holding unit for a heterogeneous collection of troops and equipment. Colonel Gilbreth's as yet untested command, within this framework of parceling, separation, and external control, was expected to stop the advance of a formidable Wehrmacht armored division.

Luttwitz's 2nd Panzer Division was formed in 1935. Its first commander was General Heinz Guderian, the father of the Blitzkrieg tactic. Prior to its participation in the Ardennes offensive, the division participated in the invasions of Poland, France, the Balkans, and Russia. It

Originally conceived in response to the highly successful Soviet T-34, a German Panther medium tank, with a high velocity 75mm cannon, rolls rapidly through the Ardennes Forest in December 1944. Pockets of U.S. resistance upset the German timetable during the Battle of the Bulge. (National Archives)



Map © 2009 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

The deep penetration of German armored spearheads during the Ardennes offensive fell just short of the primary objective of crossing the River Meuse. One key element in the eventual defeat of the Germans was the ability of the U.S. forces to hold the Belgian crossroads town of Bastogne.

was the first German division to reach the Atlantic and the first to reach the Swiss frontier. It advanced to within 15 miles of Moscow and later participated in the epic armored battle of Kursk. Prior to its commitment to the Ardennes offensive, 2nd Panzer was supplied with the newer model Panther medium tanks equipped for night fighting with the new infrared sighting apparatus and high-velocity 75mm cannon. Its two tank battalions were about at full strength with 27 Mark IVs, 58 Panthers, and 48 armored assault guns.

Also, within hours of the division's commitment to battle, it was appointed a new commander, Colonel Meinrad von Lauchert. The German high command felt that its former commander, General Henning Schonfeld, lacked the aggressive spirit required for the forthcoming offensive. A half hour prior to the launching of the Ardennes offensive, Colonel Lauchert received a personal phone call from Hitler instructing him that in directing his forces, "The battle must be fought with brutality and all resistance shall be broken in a wave of terror."

In compliance with Middleton's order, Colonel Gilbreth established two roadblocks. The first and northernmost was at the intersection near the village of Lullange where the road from Clervaux entered Highway N-12. Clervaux was only a scant five miles from this junction and only about 13 road miles from Bastogne. The second roadblock was at a junction where a secondary road from the valley of the Clerve at Drauffelt joined Highway N-12 near the village of Allerborn. This second roadblock was only about eight miles from Bastogne. Middleton ordered that these two roadblocks be held "at all costs."

CCR, 9th Armored was now split into two task forces. The northernmost roadblock near Lullange, under the command of Captain L.K. Rose (Task Force Rose), consisted of a company of Sherman tanks (A Company, 2d Tank Battalion), one armored infantry company (C Company, 52nd AIB), and a platoon of armored engineers. The second roadblock near Allerborn, under the command of Lt. Col. Ralph S. Harper (Task Force Harper), consisted of a company and a half of Sherman tanks (C and D Companies, 2nd Tank Battalion), one company of armored infantry (B Company, 52nd AIB), and a platoon of armored engineers. What was left of CCR was placed under the command of Lt. Col. Robert M. Booth (Team Booth) and occupied the high ground immediately north of Allerborn. It consisted of a company of armored infantry (minus one platoon), one platoon of tank destroyers, and one platoon of light tanks and had the mission of protecting the left flank and rear of Task Force Harper. CCR's 73rd Armored Field Artillery provided artillery support from a small village called Buret just northwest of Task Forces Rose and Harper.

Captain Rose placed a platoon of infantry facing north of the junction and another platoon facing east on the road coming from Clervaux. All three platoons of his tank company (15 Sherman tanks) were positioned about 300 yards to the rear of the infantry. At approximately 8:30 AM on December 18, the infantrymen of Task Force Rose facing Clervaux reported that three enemy tanks accompanied by infantry were approaching. Approximately a half hour later the tankers saw the three German tanks emerge from the cover of the woods. These enemy tanks and infantrymen belonged to the reconnaissance battalion of Colonel von Lauchert's 2nd Panzer Division whose infantry elements were eliminating the last of the American defenders in Clervaux. The Sherman tanks of A Company opened fire and counted hits on all three German tanks. Due to German superiority in armor, however, only one enemy tank was disabled while the other two turned back for cover.

Shortly after this initial engagement, four enemy tanks supported by infantry emerged from the woods just northeast of the American forward positions. A few minutes later an entire German tank column barreled down on Task Force Rose from the north. The enemy tanks first turned their guns on Task Force Rose's armored infantry posts, forcing the infantrymen to withdraw to the Shermans. As the lead panzer came into view, it was turned back by fire from the American tanks.

To assist with the destruction of enemy armor, Captain Rose called for artillery support on the Germans' suspected assembly area. While the 73rd Armored Field Artillery (AFA) was busy shelling suspected enemy assembly points, the Germans were busy bringing up their own artillery. After a brief shelling of Task Force Rose positions, the German guns placed a smoke screen in front of the American task force. After about 15 minutes the smoke cleared with no immediate action on the part of the Germans. The German reconnaissance battalion was still carefully feeling out this rather unexpected mix of enemy armor and infantry and had decided to wait for the arrival of the main body. At about 11 AM, the first Mark IVs of the

2nd Battalion, 3d Panzer Regiment appeared.

Within minutes after the arrival of the its 2nd Battalion, 2nd Panzer artillery shelling started to pick up once again and another smoke screen was laid down in front of the Americans. This time it took nearly 90 minutes for the smoke to lift, and when it did the GIs of Task Force Rose discovered that the German panzers had moved to within 800 yards of their position and the Shermans were taking direct fire from approximately 16 German tanks. In addition to the direct fire coming from the German panzers, the infantry and Shermans of Task Force Rose were also coming under indirect fire from 88mm antiaircraft guns estimated to be about 2,500 yards to the east. The time was about 1 PM on December 18. According to Lauchert's timetable, his reconnaissance battalion should have been in Bastogne well over an hour earlier.

In the exchange of fire, A Company knocked out three Mark IVs with one Sherman destroyed, the main gun of a second was disabled, and a third Sherman threw a track, forcing its crew to destroy it. While Task Force Rose's complement of Shermans was slowly dwindling, 2nd Panzer Division tanks kept multiplying as more of the division rolled up from Clervaux. The sounds of enemy tanks could be heard to Task Force Rose's right, and since the armored infantry's antitank platoon could not cover the task force's right flank, a platoon of Shermans was dispatched. The Shermans came upon three enemy tanks, one of which was quickly destroyed with the other two withdrawing into defilade. One Sherman became bogged down in the mud and had to be evacuated.

Since the bulk of 2nd Panzer was coming up from the east along Highway N-12, the bulk of Task Force Rose was facing east. This left only one tank platoon to defend to the north. Realizing this, the German commander shifted his force to allow a stronger attack to the north and northwest of the Americans. Task Force Rose's commander, seeing that his command was quickly dissolving against the overwhelming strength of the enemy, dispatched two Shermans along Highway N-12 to the Allerborn roadblock along with a plea for immediate assistance. The two Task Force Rose Shermans would be able to lead reinforcements back and guide them into position.

At the Allerborn roadblock Task Force Harper was then in command of Major Dalton, the executive officer of the 2nd Tank Battalion. The sound of battle had not been lost on the Allerborn defenders, and when the tanks of Task Force Rose showed up with the disturbing news of the desperate fight just up the road, Major Dalton immediately dispatched an assault gun platoon and a platoon of Shermans under the command of Captain Baird, the Battalion's S-3. However, no sooner had Captain Baird's force started to move out when Lt. Col. Harper appeared and canceled the mission. As much as Harper wanted to assist Task Force Rose, Middleton was not allowing him independent control of Task Force Harper, and Middleton would not allow any part of Task Force Harper to assist Task Force Rose. The two Shermans sent by Task Force Rose to lead the relief force had to return alone to the battle.

At approximately 2 PM, Task Force Rose's supporting artillery at Buret came under fire from German tanks emerging from the northeast. These enemy forces were the lead elements of the 116th Panzer Division, which were on their way to Houffalize after taking Trois Vierges. The 73rd AFA batteries were immediately pulled back to Longvilly.

Also at about 2 PM, Colonel Gilbreth called General Middleton to request permission to withdraw Task Force Rose from the Lullange roadblock and move it back to the Allerborn roadblock. Middleton not only refused to assist Task Force Rose, but he further refused to let it retreat south. The do-or-die circumstance meted out to Task Force Rose at Lullange exemplifies the desperate situation facing VIII Corps command during the first days of the offensive. With only a few troops, tanks, and tank destroyers available to VIII Corps to stem the German onslaught, Middleton believed that only through total commitment and sacrifice would his scant forces be able to hold off the far superior Germans until such time that SHAEF could muster enough strength to permanently repel the invaders. At approximately 3 PM on December 18, CCR headquarters at Longvilly received the final message from the northern roadblock that the defenders had been overrun.

Next, the Germans turned their attention to Task Force Harper near Allerborn. Although the advance elements of the German assault reached the southern roadblock in late afternoon it was not until after dark that the Germans launched their first major attack. In the opening onslaught, the Germans swept the first line of defense with machine-gun fire to clear out any infantry that might be protecting the tanks. After this, the Mark IVs and Panthers destroyed two tank platoons of Company C, 2nd Tank Battalion as well as a number of infantrymen being silhouetted by the burning vehicles. The German tanks were effectively aided by their infrared night-sighting devices with an effective range of 400 meters. By 9 PM, Task Force Harper ceased to exist as a unified, cohesive fighting unit. Lt. Col. Harper ordered the survivors to fight their way to Longvilly.

Harper, finding his way to Longvilly blocked, headed cross country with an assault gun platoon in the direction of Houffalize where, along the way, he met up with a retreating body of Task Force Rose tanks and soldiers directed by a Lieutenant DeRoche. Harper ordered five of DeRoche's Shermans to remain with him and sent DeRoche with what was left

Continued on page 74

These retreating soldiers and tankers were not a bunch of dispirited, demoralized, and undisciplined panic mongers. The great majority of these men had given it all.

On alert for a coming attack, an engineer holds position with his .30-caliber machine gun near a camouflaged tank.

U.S. Marines in amphibious tanks and amtraks head for the beach at Peleliu, September 14, 1944, after an American bombardment of the island. BELOW: Marines of the 1st Division are pinned down by machine-gun fire from hidden Japanese positions across Orange Beach 3 at Peleliu. Amtraks that were struck by Japanese shells burn in the background.

BY ERIC NIDEROST

Unnecessary HELL

IN THE PREDAWN HOURS of September 15, 1944, a powerful fleet of U.S. Navy warships trained its guns on Peleliu, a small coral island in the Palau chain. The ships included the battleships *Pennsylvania, Maryland, Mississippi, Tennessee,* and *Idaho,* supported by a host of heavy and light cruisers. When H-hour arrived the guns opened fire, their muzzles spouting great sheets of smoke and flame, and the thunderous noise was so great a man had to shout at the top of his lungs to be heard.

The men of the 1st Marine Division were already in their landing craft, waiting for this preliminary bombardment to further soften up the island's Japanese defenders. Most of the men were veterans and had earlier breakfasted on helpings of steak and eggs. Even so, the sour smell of diesel oil, combined with the acrid stench of expended cordite from the naval bombardment, must have nauseated the most battle-hardened leatherneck.

Some of the men had daubed their faces for jungle camouflage, and war correspondent Tom Lea recalled that he saw one painted warrior looking over a gunwale with grim determination, "his big hands … in the last moments before the tough tendons drew up to kill."

These first waves were in a variety of craft, most particularly LVTs (Landing Vehicle, Tracked). They were also called amphibious tractors, or amtrack. Some marines called them "alligators."

Just ahead, Peleliu was being pummeled by a steady rain of shells. Flames shot high into the air with every ear-shattering detonation, and thick coils of smoke rose to form a pulsating black curtain that enveloped the landing beaches like a dark shroud. The approaching Marines could hope that the Japanese defenders were obliterated by the very intensity of the bombardment. After all, this was the third consecutive day of shelling, and the Japanese had not replied with their own guns.

But such hopes proved far too sanguine. Soon Japanese artillery opened up on the

In the autumn of 1944, U.S. forces fought a costly and questionable battle on the Pacific island of Peleliu.

All Photos: National Archives

approaching landing craft with a vengeance, the near misses marked by towering geysers of water. It was the first hint that Peleliu might not be the relative walkover that some commanders had predicted. Peleliu was to prove a difficult nut to crack, and indeed, some later called it the hardest campaign of the Pacific Theater.

Peleliu is a small island about six miles long and two miles wide, shaped something like a lobster's claw. It is part of the Palau chain, which forms the westernmost "tail" of the Caroline archipelago. In fact, Peleliu was one of the smaller islands of Palau, but its airfield gave it enormous strategic importance—or so it seemed at the beginning of 1944.

By 1944, the Japanese were clearly on the defensive. The United States had gained the initiative, and the technique of island-hopping, while costly, was proving effective. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's forces were battling their way though the vast stretches of the central Pacific. In 1943, Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands had fallen to American forces, then Kwajalein and Eniwetok in the Marshalls a few months later.

The Marianas were the next target, and Tinian, Saipan, and Guam were secure by the summer of 1944. There was particular satisfaction in the liberation of Guam, which had been an American possession before the war. Ultimately the goal was the invasion and conquest of the Japanese Home Islands. But how would the Americans achieve this objective? The Pacific was vast, and possibilities endless. The debate grew, sharpened by the differing opinions and conflicting personalities of America's top commanders.

While Nimitz island-hopped to the north, General Douglas MacArthur was making steady progress though the South Pacific. It had been a long, tough slog since August 1942, when America launched its first major offensive at Guadalcanal. Since then MacArthur had made his way through the Solomons, then seized control of the greater part of New Guinea. It was no secret that MacArthur wanted to liberate the Philippines, but some of his Navy colleagues did not concur.

To resolve the impasse, President Franklin Roosevelt met with MacArthur and Nimitz in Hawaii in July 1944. Each man presented his plan and his vision to the commander in chief. MacArthur wanted to liberate the Philippines, using it as a springboard to go on to Okinawa and then to Japan. Nimitz wanted a more direct, "rapier-like" thrust that would bypass the Philippines entirely.

Nimitz suggested that Okinawa and Formosa (Taiwan) be the primary targets instead. They would serve as admirable staging areas for the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands. The admiral also thought that American forces should invade the Chinese mainland. A large part of the Japanese Army was stationed in China, and at times the Americans' Chinese allies under Chiang Kai-shek were hard-pressed.

After careful deliberation Roosevelt accepted MacArthur's ideas. The Philippines would be a major stepping-stone on the way to Japan. But MacArthur's plans for the Philippines suddenly thrust the Palau chain, and most particularly Peleliu, into the limelight. The Palaus were about 600 miles east of the Philippines, and Japanese airfields there might threaten MacArthur's right flank. It was decided that Peleliu must be taken and the danger neutralized.

The Peleliu operation was code-named Stalemate II, a name that seems ironic in hindsight, because initially the campaign was viewed with relative optimism. The main task of securing the island was given to the 1st Marine Division, a largely veteran unit that had seen action at Guadalcanal and New Britain. The 1st Marine Division consisted of the 1st, 5th, and 7th

THE MARINES WERE TOLD THEY WOULD MAKE SHORT WORK OF THE ENEMY. AFTER ALL, THE 1ST MARINE DIVISION WOULD BE A REINFORCED ONE, LARGER THAN MOST.

The U.S. landings on Peleliu took place at beaches in the southwest of the island. As they fought their way across the narrow spit of land, the Americans were forced to root out Japanese defenders determined to fight to the death.

Marine Regiments (infantry) and the 11th Marines (artillery support).

The campaign's secondary objectives would be handled by the U.S. Army's 81st Infantry Division. The 81st was going to take Angaur Island, a part of the Palau chain that was just to the south of Peleliu. The division had been reactivated in 1942, and the Palau effort was going to be the first taste of battle for what were essentially green troops. But their primary mission encompassed more than just Angaur. They were also to provide a reserve for the 1st Marine Division if needed.

ABOVE: Major General William Rupertus commanded the veteran 1st Marine Division during the costly campaign for Peleliu. TOP RIGHT: Peering cautiously from the cover of an embankment on Peleliu, A U.S. Marine raises his Thompson submachine gun while a companion scans the horizon in another direction.

It all depended on the Marines. If the Marine effort bogged down or faced unexpected resistance, the 81st would be ready to come to their aid. If, however, the Marines had the situation well in hand, then the 81st would be free to pursue its own mission at Angaur.

Major General William Rupertus, commander of the 1st Marine Division, was optimistic about the coming campaign and confident his Marines could secure the island in a few days. An old-school leatherneck, he was steeped in Corps tradition and fiercely territorial when it came to other branches of the military. He frankly did not want any part of the 81st, lest the Army steal away some of the Marines' glory.

The Marines were told they would make short work of the enemy. After all, the 1st Marine Division would be a reinforced one, larger than most. Yet a few officers had doubts, doubts that were not assuaged by the prevailing optimism around headquarters. The rule of thumb, born of long and bloody experience, held that a successful amphibious invasion should outnumber the enemy by three to one. On paper, the division would number around 28,000 or so, while enemy numbers were known to be about 10,000 at Peleliu.

It sounded like the three-to-one ratio was being maintained, but these soothing figures were somewhat less than accurate. Colonel Lewis "Chesty" Puller, commander of the 1st Marine Regiment and a growing legend in the Corps, pointed out that the numbers included artillery and other specialists. There were only 9,000 riflemen in the division—and it was the foot-slogging, long-suffering rifle companies that would ultimately mean the difference between victory and defeat.

Puller's objections were ignored or downplayed by his superior officers. General Rupertus dismissed Puller's concerns and continued to exude a kind of cheery confidence. Rupertus thought that the island would be secure within five days or so of the initial landings. As events unfolded, Puller and his 1st Marines would suffer the consequences of the general's dogged optimism.

In the meantime, the Japanese were far from idle. In fact, Peleliu was going to be the proving ground for a major shift in Japanese tactics. In the early months of the Pacific War the Japanese military was infused with a zeal that often became fanatic. Bushido—the way of the warrior—was the ideal, an embodiment of the samurai spirit of old. Rabid nationalism fed by shrill propaganda made Japanese soldiers look with contempt at the American "red-haired barbarians."

In the first years of the war it was customary for Japanese troops to contest every inch of soil. Samurai swords waving, Japanese officers would lead human-wave banzai attacks, only to be cut down by machine guns, rifles, artillery, and mortars. It soon became clear to even the most tradition-bound Japanese that the old assumptions had to be changed. Samurai spirit could not overcome the enemy's modern weapons.

In March 1944, Lt. Gen. Sadae Inoue met in Tokyo with Japanese Premier Hideki Tojo to discuss future operations. Tojo, who was also war minister and a noted hard-liner against the United States, was realistic enough to see changes had to be made. It was plain that Japan simply did not have the resources to decisively defeat America. The best that could be hoped for was a negotiated peace.

Tojo advocated what later became known as *fukkaku* tactics. This envisioned a war of attrition that would make the Americans pay dearly in blood and treasure for every position they gained. The Japanese would use natural features to their advantage by constructing pillboxes and bunkers amid coral ridges and rock outcroppings. They would also make use of natural caves, enlarging them to provide cover for hundreds of soldiers.

Peleliu was part of the Absolute Defense Zone, literally a last-ditch protective cordon guarding the Japanese Home Islands. Tojo hoped that the United States would have no stomach for a long, drawn-out contest. Bled

white, the Americans would be eager to come to the negotiating table. They might even acquiesce to Japan's brutal conquest of China and Southeast Asia.

General Inoue was appointed commander, Palau District Group, and soon flew to his new assignment. The Palau chain actually consists of about 100 islands scattered in a wide arc running from southwest to northeast across 100 miles of the Pacific. The Japanese administrative center for Palau was located on Koror, roughly 25 miles from Peleliu. Koror was Inoue's headquarters, but survey flights of Palau convinced him that Peleliu and neighboring Anguar would be the main enemy targets. The islands were small and relatively isolated, but their airfields made them important.

Inoue was an experienced officer who knew he needed a good man on Peleliu. His choice fell on Colonel Kunio Nakagawa, well known to be courageous and a superb tactician. To all intents and purposes Nakagawa would have full operational control at Peleliu, with little or no interference from superior officers. It was an excellent decision from the Japanese point of view because it was Nakagawa who was largely responsible for Peleliu's tenacious defense.

Accounts vary slightly, but Colonel Nakagawa was expected to have around 10,000 defenders under his command. Nakagawa probably placed greatest reliance on the men he knew best, his own 2nd Infantry Regiment (Reinforced). The 2nd Regiment had fought in China, and its the noncommissioned officers, always the backbone of any army, were tough and experienced. There were also naval personnel and some Korean construction workers.

The island's geography greatly helped Japanese strategy. The southern end of the island was fairly level and covered with scrub, while the proposed Marine landing beaches to the southwest were shaded by coconut palms. Nakagawa posted one battalion of troops there, but they were expendable, meant only to delay and bloody the enemy.

Nakagawa's real defense would center on the Umurbrogol Mountains, a rocky chain of craggy hills, draws, and ravines that formed the island's backbone. "Mountains" is a misleading term, since the highest peaks only reached around 300-500 feet, but the Umurbrogols dominated Peleliu and provided an excellent vantage point from which to observe enemy movements.

The Japanese made Umurbrogol even more formidable by expanding its maze of natural caves, blasting out galleries in the sharp-edged coral and rock that could accommodate anywhere from a dozen to 1,000 men. Many of the caves had openings that concealed firing embrasures, and some were protected by sliding steel doors. These caves not only bolstered the defense, but also provided protection from the American naval bombardment that Nakagawa knew always preceded amphibious assaults.

The Americans had little inkling as to what was in store for them. Aerial reconnaissance photos, usually reliable, proved deceptive in hindsight. From the air Umurbrogol seemed a gently undulating series of hills, green and lush with tropical vegetation. But the jungle vegetation muted Umurbrogol's sharp coral ridges, sinkholes, and craggy peaks. Only after this jungle mask was removed by naval bombardment was the full labyrinthine horror revealed.

The assault on Peleliu began when Navy warships initiated a three-day artillery barrage of the tiny island. In addition to the shelling, aircraft from nearby carriers dropped 500-pound bombs. It is estimated that the Navy fired 519 rounds of 16-inch shells and 1,845 rounds of 14-inch shells during this preliminary softening up of the target. But in the end it was all sound and fury signifying nothing. The Peleliu caves made excellent bomb shelters, so all the Japanese had to do was hunker down and wait out the bombardment.

To American observers scanning the beaches with field glasses, watching great pulsating pillars of smoke rise high into the sky, the bombardment was a success. In fact, Admiral Jesse Oldendorf soon declared he had "run out of profitable targets." The illusion was reinforced by superb Japanese fire discipline. Not one of Nakagawa's guns replied to the bombardment, which fostered the illusion that most if not all of the defending artillery had been knocked out.

Chesty Puller's 1st Marines were assigned the northern (left flank) beaches, which planners code-named White Beach 1 and 2. Once ashore, they were to guard the 5th Marines' flank and at the same time push inland. At a

THE AMERICANS HAD LITTLE INKLING AS TO WHAT WAS IN STORE FOR THEM. AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE PHOTOS, USUALLY RELIABLE, PROVED DECEPTIVE....

ABOVE: Covered by a Sherman tank and its 75mm cannon, American Marines move cautiously forward during an assault on a Japanese bunker. Resistance was unexpectedly tenacious at Peleliu and caused some observers to question the benefit of the operation. OPPOSITE: During the slogging advance across Peleliu, U.S. Marines blast Japanese soldiers manning a strongpoint. The island's natural caves were often fortified and reduced the American advance to a crawl.

certain point the 1st Marines would pivot, striking northward into the Umurbrogols, which planners merely called "high ground."

In contrast, the 5th Marines would be in the center, landing on Orange Beach 1 and Orange Beach 2. Their initial mission would be to secure the airfield, which was one of the main reasons why the Americans were trying to take the island in the first place. The 5th Marines were commanded by Colonel Harold "Bucky" Harris. He was new to the regiment but was also a career officer with extensive prewar experience.

The 7th Marines, Colonel Herman "Hard-Headed" Hanneken commanding, would anchor the left (southern) part of the assault on what was code-named Beach Orange 3. They would cut across the island, isolating and eventually securing Peleliu's southern reaches.

The Marines landed at 8:32 AM on September 15, 1944, just two minutes behind schedule. The first wave was preceded by armored amphibian tractors (LVTAs) mounting 75mm howitzers. Their main mission was to engage and ultimately neutralize artillery positions or other strongpoints missed by the naval and air bombardment.

The LVTAs and following LTVs plowed through wire-controlled mines lurking around the island like a lethal necklace. These devices were not true mines, but aerial bombs adapted for the purpose. Luckily the naval bombardment had cut many control wires, rendering them useless. Even those that were still intact failed to detonate, mainly because their operators had been blinded by smoke.

It was the last bit of luck the Marines would experience for many a long day. As soon as the LVTAs and LVAs came within range, they were hit by a deadly barrage of 47mm fire supplemented by sprays of 20mm machine-gun bullets. Much of the fire came from the right and left flanks, where Nakagawa had built concrete emplacements.

The landing craft had to run a gauntlet of enfilade fire, and many shells tragically found their mark. Twenty-six LVAs took direct hits within the first 10 minutes, and no less than 60 were destroyed or damaged within the first hour and 40 minutes. The beaches and shallow reef waters were littered with burning wreckage, and some Marines abandoned their crippled alligators and waded ashore carrying water and ammunition.

The 1st Marines ran into trouble almost immediately. A Japanese 47mm shell scored a direct hit on Colonel Puller's LVT, nearly killing him. Another Japanese shell wiped out his entire communications section, hampering his command capabilities. Worse was to come.

Fighting was heavy all along the landing beaches, but the flank units, the 1st Marines on the left and the 7th Marines on the right, took the most punishment. Combat artist Tom Lea recalled, "I saw a wounded man near me ... His face was half bloody pulp. He fell behind me, in a red puddle on the white sand." Private First Class E.B. Sledge of the 5th Marines grimly remembered, "Shells crashed all around. Fragments tore and whirred, slapping the sand and splashing into the water a few yards behind us."

Puller's 1st Marines started inland but had advanced only 100 yards from shore when they encountered a 30-foot-high coral ridge. The ridge, soon christened "the Point" by the Marines, was honeycombed by numerous Japanese defensive tunnels and emplacements.

Japanese engineers had opened holes on the coral, then resealed them, leaving just enough room for the snout of a machine gun or other weapon to poke out.

The 1st Marines could scarcely believe their eyes; the Point was not on any map and apparently had not been even targeted by U.S. Navy guns. Quite apart from holding up the advance, the Point also was raking the landing beaches with fire. It had to be taken, but frontal assaults were proving costly. The only way to get the job done was to move around the flank and take it from behind.

Colonel Puller assigned this daunting task to Captain George P. Hunt of K Company, a veteran officer who had seen active service on Guadalcanal. K Company moved off at once, but the going was anything but easy. There were many reinforced concrete pillboxes that seemed to spring up on every side like malevolent mushrooms. The men of Company K knew their business and resorted to a simple but effective formula. Pillbox embrasures were blanketed by small-arms fire and smoke, enabling Marines to get close enough to throw explosive satchels or rifle grenades into the slits.

The Point was finally won when its principal fortification, a large reinforced concrete blockhouse mounting a 25mm gun, was finally taken. A Corporal Anderson launched a rifle grenade into the blockhouse, which ricocheted off the 25mm gun muzzle and landed deep into the casement, setting off the ammunition stored there. A series of spectacular explosions gutted the blockhouse, flames and smoke rising into the stifling tropical air. Some of the defenders, their uniforms ablaze, tried to escape the holocaust. They were cut down by Marine bullets.

Hunt had taken the Point, but he was isolated and night was falling. For the next 30 hours Company K clung to its hard-won prize against furious Japanese counterattacks. The Japanese assaults were flung back, though at heavy cost. When Hunt and his men were relieved, Company K was a decimated shadow of its former self. The captain had only 18 men remaining at the Point, clinging to real estate made precious by its cost in lives. In overall numbers Company K, once numbering 235 men, had only 78 survivors.

In the center, the 5th Marines were making good progress, though the Japanese contested every inch of rock and coral. By the afternoon of the first day, the 5th Marines had reached the airfield, one of the major objectives of the campaign. But Nakagawa was not going to give up the airfield without a fight, so he launched a major counterattack with tanks and infantry.

This was not a crazed banzai charge but a serious and disciplined effort led by around 15 Type 95 Ha Go light tanks. Unfortunately for the Japanese, the tanks got too far ahead of the infantry, save for a handful of soldiers clinging to the outside of the hulls. The Americans were expecting just such an attack and were ready for it. Marine artillery soon found its mark, the effort supplemented by the firepower of M4A2 Sherman tanks. All the Japanese armor was soon knocked out, and the supporting infantry slaughtered or forced to fall back.

The Americans were on Peleliu to stay, but it was obvious to anyone who opened his eyes that the conquest of the island was not going to be the cake walk everyone expected. Yet, General Rupertus continued to be almost pathologically optimistic in the face of slow progress and mounting casualties. By D-day plus three, the 1st Marines had suffered 1,236 casualties, but Rupertus was still urging Puller to "maintain momentum," as if this oft-repeated mantra would itself bring victory.

Although there was hard fighting all over the island, the Umurbrogol "meat grinder" was probably the worst. On the second day, temperatures reached 105 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, and later soared to as high as 115 degrees. Intermittent rains brought no relief—only a muggy, steam bath atmosphere that sucked the moisture out of every pore and wilted the toughest leatherneck. Heat prostration became as deadly as enemy bullets.

Rupertus continued to insist that the situation was well in hand and that Peleliu would fall in a few days. Yet, casualties were getting so high almost anyone who was able-bodied enough to carry a rifle was being put into the battle line. Engineers, pioneers, and even headquarters personnel were sent up to fight.

African American Marines also came forward to volunteer for combat duty. They were

Was it necessary?

The debate continues decades after the fight for Peleliu.

If Peleliu was one of the bloodiest campaigns of the Pacific Theater, it was also one of the least known until recently. There are many reasons for this. The Peleliu invasion took place in the fall of 1944, when the war grew in such intensity that stories competed for newspaper space. In Europe, eyes were riveted on Operation Market-Garden, the abortive Allied airborne offensive into Holland. Allied armies were sweeping to the very borders of the Third Reich, and there was talk the war in Europe would be over by Christmas.

In the Pacific the main focus was on MacArthur's imminent return to the Philippines. It was natural to want to erase the bitter memories of earlier defeats and liberate the Filipino people from the Japanese yoke. There were also thousands of American POWs and civilian internees there, slowly dying in captivity. This was a major operation because there were 270,000 Japanese troops in the Philippines, and the capture of the islands would be a major stepping-stone to the Home Islands of Japan.

But the very immensity of the Philippine operation meant that, once started, it tended to dominate Pacific news. When epic struggles like the Battle of Leyte Gulf unfolded, little Peleliu seemed a sideshow. Only six reporters landed with the 1st Marine Division, in part because General Rupertus assured them that the island would fall in four to five days. Why waste ink on a secondary, even insignificant, action?

Over time, the invasion of Peleliu itself was called into question. In textbook terms, the Palau Island chain, which includes Peleliu, would be on MacArthur's eastern flank and had to be neutralized. There were 30,000 troops stationed in the Palau chain, most of them tough, first-line fighters. The Peleliu and Angaur airfields were also deemed very dangerous to American plans because Japanese fighters and bombers might launch attacks from them.

The Palaus were closest to Mindanao, the southernmost Philippine island and original target for American invasion. That, too, made the taking of Peleliu a vital and necessary task. But conditions change, and war cannot be fought with the predictability of a West Point classroom exercise.

Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, commander of the Western Pacific Task Force, was assigned to conduct supporting operations before the Philippine

men of the 16th Field Depot, support troops who brought up supplies and ammunition. At the time, African Americans were in segregated units, in this case specifically the 11th Marine Depot Company and the 7th Marine Ammunition Company. It was a time of widespread racial prejudice within the military, but because of the crisis their services were readily accepted. The black Marines also helped evacuate critically wounded men under heavy fire.

General Rupertus's misplaced optimism gave the green light for the Army's 81st Division to begin its invasion of Anguar on September 17. The Anguar operation was a success, secured with relatively light casualties, at least by Pacific War standards. Its mission essentially accomplished within a few days, the 81st stood ready to assist the Marines in securing Peleliu. Rupertus continued to refuse all assistance.

By September 23, the 5th and 7th Marines had finished their assigned tasks. The airfield was secured and the southern end of the island in American hands. After that date Marine fighter aircraft began to arrive on the island, where they provided air support for their beleaguered comrades on the ground.

But the 1st Marines continued to take heavy casualties, enduring some of the heaviest and most brutal fighting of the entire Pacific War. Umurbrogol's steep valleys, narrow ravines, and rocky draws were death traps where every inch of coral was paid for in blood. Days of bloody, ceaseless combat were scarcely relieved by a few hours of fitful sleep at night.

Some leathernecks found their emotions numbed by the sheer horror that surrounded them in this living hell. Love, honor, and friendship were rendered meaningless, and before long nothing was left, not even basic human decency. One 1st Marine Regiment veteran recalled, "I resigned from the human race. We were no longer human beings. I fired at anything in front of me, friend or foe. I had no friends. I just wanted to kill."

Surrounding the mouth of a cave on October 13, 1944, Marines fire at the Japanese soldiers who have taken positions there. Often, flamethrowers, explosive charges, or armor were required to silence the steady fire that came from such natural defensive positions.

On September 19, Puller's 1st Marines were still battling their way into the Umurbrogol, also called "Bloody Nose Ridge." Around noon, Captain Everett Pope of Company B, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines was ordered to take Hill 100, a knob of high ground that dominated a path called the East Road. Company B had landed with 242 men and was now down to 90 effectives, but this was typical for the 1st Reg-

invasion. Halsey went to work at once, scheduling air raids on Peleliu and Mindanao. The admiral was surprised to learn that Japanese air defenses were weak on both islands. American raids had inflicted heavy damage against little opposition.

Halsey began to rethink things in light of new realities. Maybe the Peleliu and Angaur airfields were not such a threat, after all. Why spend American lives when Peleliu might simply be isolated and skipped over? Halsey felt so strongly about the matter he ordered his chief of staff, Rear Admiral R.B. Carney, to go to Admiral Nimitz with an urgent message to halt the Peleliu invasion.

Nimitz was the commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet and commander in chief, Pacific Ocean Area (CINCPAC), and as such he had the power to abort the operation. In the meantime, there had been a change of plan. Leyte, not Mindanao, was going to be the site of the first American landings.

Admiral Nimitz disagreed with Halsey and adamantly refused to stop the Peleliu invasion. Initially, all Nimitz said was that the invasion forces were already at sea and it was too late to call off the operation—a lame excuse. As a result, the 1st Marine Division was virtually destroyed and the 1st Marine Division and the 81st Infantry Division would suffer over 9,500 casualties.

To this day, Nimitz and his decisions are endlessly debated. No one questions that Admiral Nimitz was a fine naval commander, far from being uncaring with the lives of his men. He certainly did not have the ego or flamboyance of a man like General MacArthur. A more colorful, egotistical officer might have stuck with an idea against all logic because of an all-too-human pride. But Nimitz never really explained his rationale, and his subsequent biographers have uncovered little to explain his actions.

There was some suggestion that the Palau chain's Japanese troops might in essence be ferried over to the Philippines and reinforce that hard-pressed garrison. Halsey was of the opinion that the Palaus, Peleliu included, could have been sealed off by air and sea. Carrier-based air strikes combined with surface ships and even submarines could have prevented any Palau troops from getting to the Philippines. Few if any Japanese troop transports, or any Japanese ships for the matter, could have survived a 700-mile gauntlet.

Were there any positive aspects to the ill-conceived, bloody mess at Peleliu? It certainly proved the fighting qualities of the average Marine and soldier, though at an obscenely high cost. □

iment, which was being bled white.

After hours of hard and bloody fighting, Pope and his men managed to reach the summit of Hill 100 only to realize that existing maps were wrong. Hill 100 was not an isolated knob, but part of a ridge that connected to a higher knob 50 yards away. The Japanese held that higher knob, and they soon began pouring fire down on Company B.

attacks on the rest of the battalion below.

Pope and his men set up a defensive perimeter that the Marine captain later recalled was about the size of a football field. Company B did have some mortar support, but since they were surrounded they only had what ammunition they originally took with them. There were about two dozen Marines left to hold Hill 100.

"WE WERE NO LONGER HUMAN BEINGS. I FIRED AT ANYTHING IN FRONT OF ME, FRIEND OR FOE. I HAD NO FRIENDS. I JUST WANTED TO KILL."

ABOVE: The cost of taking Peleliu to secure the southern flank of General Douglas MacArthur's advance against the Philippines is questioned to this day. Here, the bodies of dead Marines bear mute testimony to the cost and ferocity of the battle. OPPOSITE: Gathering souvenirs after overrunning a Japanese command post on Peleliu, U.S. Marines reflect the strain of intense combat in their faces. Japanese flags, often emblazoned with slogans and good wishes from the home towns of enemy soldiers, were highly prized.

The Japanese also opened up from a parallel ridge to the west, exposing Company B to a deadly cross fire. Pope knew he was in a perilous situation; he was completely surrounded by the enemy and cut off from help. He might have attempted a breakout, but in the end elected to stay. This ground had been bought at a heavy price, and the exposed position of Company B might actually blunt Japanese

The sun went down, beginning a new phase in the battle for the hill. The Japanese launched a series of counterattacks that lasted all night. It was a time when the sounds of men screaming for help or crying in pain mingled with the staccato chatter of gunfire, a terrible cacophony that echoed and re-echoed through the darkness.

Fighting became hand to hand. At one point Lieutenant Francis Burke and Sergeant James McAlarnis were attacked by some Japanese soldiers at close quarters. One Japanese thrust a bayonet into Burke's leg, but the lieutenant pummeled his assailant with his fists. While Burke was occupied, McAlarnis used a rifle butt on a second attacker. The two Marines then pitched the Japanese bodies down the slopes.

Dawn came, probably the most beautiful morning the survivors had ever seen. Toward the end of the fight Company B's ammunition was so low the men were pitching rocks at the enemy—not that they expected to hit anybody hard enough to do damage. The captain later explained that the Japanese would delay an attack for a moment, thinking the rocks were grenades. To keep the enemy off balance the Marines occasionally threw a real grenade, part of their ever-dwindling supply.

At last, even courage had to give way before superior numbers. The Japanese were getting ready for yet another attack, but Pope received orders to withdraw from Hill 100. In the end only nine men, Pope included, successfully made it back to American lines. For his heroism, the wounded Everett Pope won the Medal of Honor. Hill 100 was not retaken until October 3, almost two weeks later.

General Rupertus continued to reject any notion of help from the Army's 81st Division. Rupertus would fall back on the same shopworn optimism that the Marines would take Peleliu "in a few days." But Rupertus's superior was not so sure. Maj. Gen. Roy Geiger, commander of the III Amphibious Corps, landed and personally inspected the 1st Marine Regiment's positions.

General Geiger was appalled. It was plain to see that the 1st Regiment was a regiment in name only, chopped up and pulverized by the Peleliu meat grinder. Even Chesty Puller was exhausted, worn down by the constant strain of trying to achieve nearly impossible objectives with dwindling manpower.

Geiger had seen enough. The Corps commander made his way to Rupertus and told him that the Marines were going to get support from the 81st Division. By some accounts the interview was heated because Rupertus refused to accept the fact that his division was being decimated. Interservice rivalry also played a role, because Rupertus stubbornly considered Peleliu to be a Marine operation exclusively. It was almost as if he did not want the Army to share the "glory."

The 81st Division's 321st Regimental Combat Team landed on Peleliu's western beaches on September 23. The 1st Marine Regiment

was withdrawn entirely from the campaign. It would take some time for the men to rest and recuperate and for the shattered regiment to rebuild. Estimates vary, but the Japanese inflicted roughly 1,672 casualties on the 1st Regiment in less than 200 hours. The 1st Battalion of the 1st Regiment suffered a 71 percent casualty rate; only 74 men from nine rifle companies were left standing.

By the end of September, the Japanese were confined to the Umurbrogol Mountains, their last-ditch redoubt. Once again, it was a matter of clawing though heavily defended ridges and underground caves. Fighting was so heavy that General Geiger decided to withdraw the decimated 5th and 7th Marine Regiments, in other words, what remained of the original 1st Marine Division. They were withdrawn the third week of October.

It was now an Army show, but the fighting did not lessen in intensity. The Umurbrogols were surrounded, and the Japanese defensive perimeter slowly shrank to a pocket about 400 by 900 yards. By the end of September, Peleliu's airfield—dubbed MAB (Marine Airbase Peleliu)—was fully operational. Grumman F6F-3N Hellcats and Vought F4U Corsair fighter-bombers provided close air support for the advancing Americans.

The island was so small that it took less than 15 seconds to arrive on target after takeoff, not even enough time for the Corsairs to retract their landing gear. At one point there was a bombing run on a Japanese strongpoint only 1,000 yards from MAB, close enough for bomb fragments to pepper the airfield.

The contest dragged on into November, though it was plain the Japanese were fighting a losing battle. Japanese forces in the northern Palaus had tried to reinforce Nakagawa's dwindling garrison, but with limited success. A convoy of approximately 15 Japanese barges loaded with troops attempted to run the American gauntlet of ships and airplanes. They were discovered, and most were sent to the bottom. Some 600 bedraggled Japanese made it ashore, but without most of their equipment.

The last weeks amounted to what was essentially a siege. American forces used flamethrowers and napalm to great effect, and heavy artillery and air attacks provided essential support. Eventually, armored bulldozers collapsed cave entrances, entombing Japanese soldiers within the bowels of the earth.

Peleliu was finally secured by the end of November 1944, when organized Japanese resistance ceased. Colonel Nakagawa committed suicide after ordering his regimental flag burned. Virtually the entire Japanese garrison of 11,000 was wiped out. The record shows that 202 prisoners were taken in the campaign, and only 19 of these were Japanese. The rest were Korean or Okinawan laborers.

The Peleliu campaign was one of the bloodiest of the entire Pacific War, but it had a curious postscript. On April 27, 1947, Lieutenant Tadamichi Yamaguchi led 26 survivors out of hiding and handed over his samurai sword in a token of surrender. Yamaguchi and his men made the last formal capitulation of World War II, a conflict that had ended 20 months before in 1945. □

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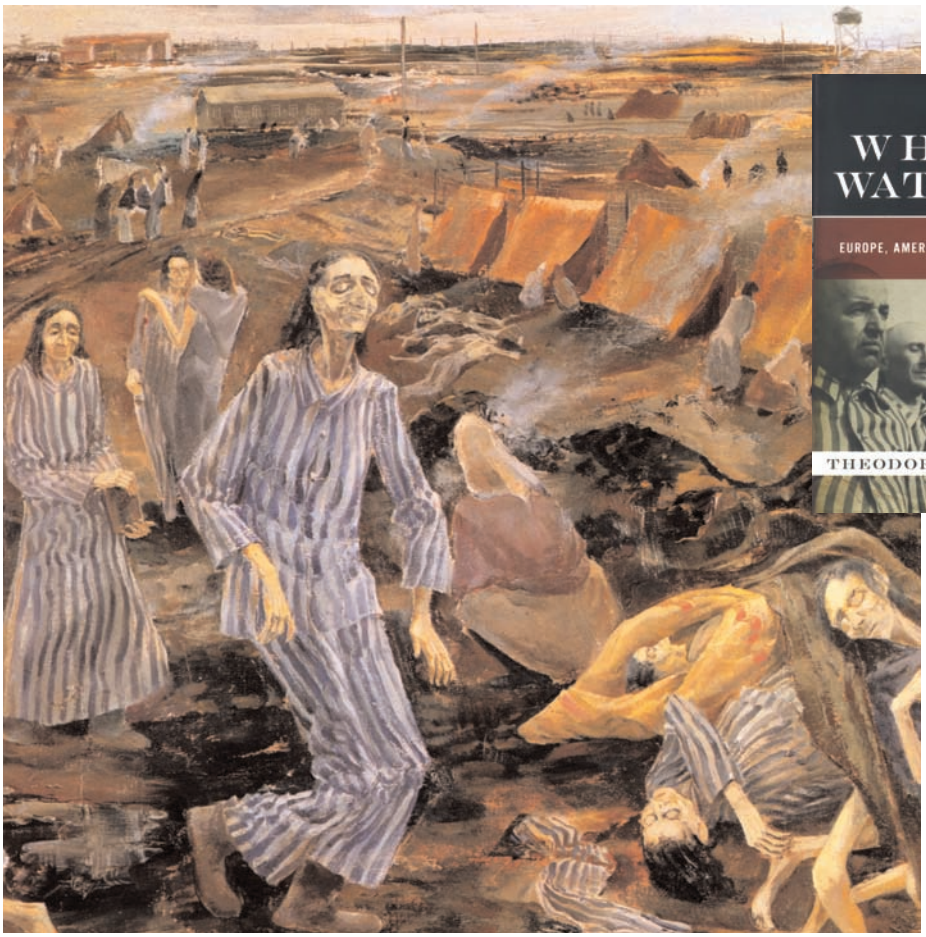
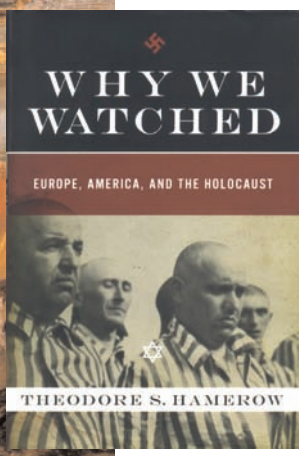
By Mason B. Webb





Questions on the Holocaust

A new book raises disturbing issues relating to the Allied response to Nazi genocide.

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON BELIEFS THAT HAS ARISEN SINCE THE END OF World War II is that America and her allies had as one of their primary goals for fighting the war ending the systematic slaughter of Europe's Jews. Such a belief, undoubtedly, has stemmed from all of the books, articles, documentaries, and Hollywood films that have been produced about the Holocaust over the past six decades.

Yet, the common belief is wrong. As Theodore S. Hamerow, the author of ***Why We Watched: Europe, America, and the Holocaust*** (W.W. Norton, New York, 2008, 520 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, $35.00) and a professor emeritus of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison points out, the U.S., Britain, and other allies did very little to stop the genocide as it was being perpetrated. Anti-Semitism in America and elsewhere, while not as horrendous as that which was taking place in Germany, was alive and well on American and British shores.

While pro-Nazi, anti-Jewish organizations such as the German-American Bund and anti-Semitic spokesmen such as Father Charles Coughlin kept up a stream of homegrown hatred, the U.S. State Department and Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long were doing everything in their power to restrict the number of Jewish refugees allowed into the United States. Despite the "official" line that to permit vast numbers of immigrants to enter the country would exacerbate the already difficult, Depression-caused unemployment scene, it was a pernicious strain of American anti-Semitism that led to the extinguishing of Lady Liberty's lamp for those most in need of it. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who secretly sympathized with the plight of the Jews, was compelled to do little to change the situation for fear that an anti-immigrant Congress would derail some of his pet legislative programs.

Once America entered the war, the Nazis' persecution and killing of the Jews accelerated and, despite pleas from Jewish leaders who knew what was happening in the death camps, it was years before the U.S. mounted any military actions against the camps.

Only two air raids late in the war—against Auschwitz and Buchenwald—were carried out by the Allies, but they were insignificant in terms of slowing down the deaths and persecutions. Only when the Red Army overran Auschwitz in January 1945 did the full horror of the camps become public knowledge. By then, it was too late to save millions of human beings who had already been exterminated.

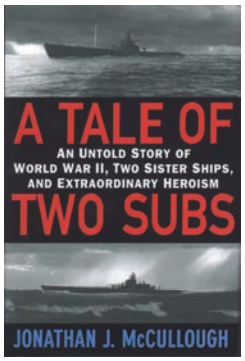
Why We Watched is a big, important book that asks—and answers—some disturbing questions. It is an uncomfortable read, but one that is essential if we are to understand the full meaning of World War II and the Holocaust.

Leslie Cole's painting, *Who Are These Soldiers?*, depicts the liberation of the women's compound at Bergen-Belsen just as the British troops entered. (Imperial War Museum)

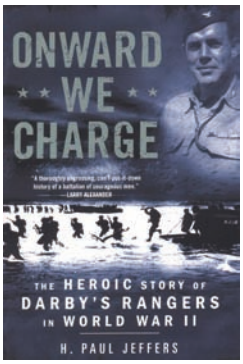
A Tale of Two Subs: An Untold Story of World War II, Two Sister Ships, and Extraordinary Heroism, by Jonathan J. McCullough, Grand Central Publishing, New York, 2008, 294 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, $26.99.

One of the most moving stories of hardship, courage, and personal sacrifice in World War II is revealed in McCullough's *A Tale of Two Subs*.

On November 19, 1943, Navy Captain John Philip Cromwell, a high-ranking officer aboard the stricken U.S. submarine *Sculpin,* under attack by Japanese forces, chose to go down with the sub rather than try to escape.



The reason for his decision: he knew that U.S. Naval Intelligence had broken Japan's secret codes and feared that, if he were captured and tortured, he might reveal that information and endanger the entire codebreaking operation. For his selfless courage, Cromwell was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Fortunately, 21 of *Sculpin*'s crew managed to escape from the sub and were picked up by a Japanese ship.



Sculpin's sister sub, the USS *Sailfish,* was involved in a tragedy of a different sort. Her captain, Bob Ward, caught sight of a Japanese convoy and opened fire, sinking the aircraft carrier *Chuyo,* aboard which the *Sculpin* survivors were being held.

Basing his riveting book on official records, recently declassified sources, and interviews with the few survivors still alive, the author provides a detailed picture of day-to-day life aboard the submarines, the palpable fear when they underwent depth charge attacks, and how the survivors were treated by their captors. The twin stories of the *Sculpin* and *Sailfish* are examples of extreme wartime heroism coupled with terrible tragedy.

Onward We Charge: The Heroic Story of Darby's Rangers in World War II, by H. Paul Jeffers, NAL Caliber, New York, 2008, 312 pp., photographs, softcover, $15.00.

The name William Orlando Darby is legendary, for few military units in history were as closely associated with their commander as were the U.S. Rangers to Colonel Darby. In Jeffers's sparkling biography of the man, we come to know the Fort Smith, Arkansas, native as a flesh-and-blood human being, not just a wartime hero. Delving into Darby's past as a teenager who himself had confidently predicted his own greatness, Jeffers takes the reader off to West Point and into the Army's last horse artillery unit, where the young officer greatly impressed his superiors.

Seeing in their British allies the effectiveness of commando units, the U.S. Army decided to form one of their own. General Dwight D. Eisenhower personally sent Brig. Gen. Lucien K. Truscott to Britain to study the commando training methods.

Soon, Truscott ordered the 34th Infantry Division to form a "commando-like unit" made up of volunteers. Only the most rugged individuals were selected. Training placed considerable emphasis on close-in, hand-to-hand combat, stamina, aggressiveness, and self-reliance, as well as on a broad variety of skills: the use of various firearms, mountaineering, boating, scouting, electrical engineering, demolitions, and even the ability to repair radio equipment.

Those who passed the rigorous standards were admitted to the battalion, which was formed in Northern Ireland. Major William Darby was selected to command the outfit, which Truscott had named "Rangers." Thus was born one of the most storied military units in American history.

The superbly trained unit soon experienced its baptism of fire. In October 1942, Darby's 500 Rangers left Northern Ireland and were shipped to Scotland to prepare for Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. Leading the 1st Infantry Division's landings at Arzew, the Rangers softened up the Vichy French-held beachhead and secured an entry point onto the African continent. Much of Operation Torch's success can be attributed to what the daring Rangers accomplished.

In May 1943, the Ranger concept was expanded to add two new battalions, and Ranger training for the volunteers was conducted in North Africa. Additional battalions would later be added to bolster the Allied landings in Normandy.

Jeffers goes on to describe the other battles that would follow, at Gela in Sicily, Monte Difensa in Italy, the Anzio beachhead, and the harrowing fight for Cisterna. It was at Cisterna in late January 1944 that the Ranger force was cut to pieces.

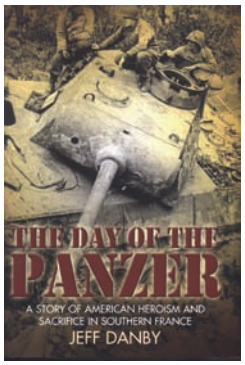
Distraught over the annihilation of his 1st and 3rd Battalions, Darby became a commander without a command. He was soon picked up by the 10th Mountain Division and made assistant division commander, helping to spearhead the Fifth Army's lightning drive into northern Italy.

The war in Italy was within a day or two of ending when, on April 30, 1945, while standing with a group of officers and enlisted men in a town at the northern end of Lake Garda, Darby was struck by a tiny piece of shrapnel from a shell fired by a German 88. The fragment pierced his heart, killing him nearly instantly.

Although Darby was dead, his creation lived on. Today, U.S. Army Rangers are among America's elite fighting forces. And they continue to carry on the traditions that Darby began over six decades ago.

The Day of the Panzer: A Story of American Heroism and Sacrifice in Southern France, by Jeff Danby, Casemate, Philadelphia, 2008, 365 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $32.95.

As author Danby says in the preface, "An entire American army stormed the French Riviera one hot summer day in August 1944. Accompanied by British paratroopers and supported by a vast air force, the army was augmented with French infantry and armored divisions.... Up until that moment, it was the second largest amphibious landing of the war."

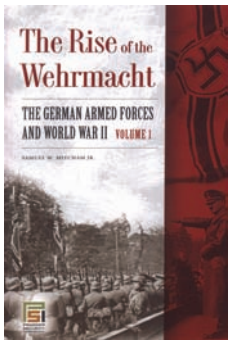


Yet, this campaign, dubbed Operation Anvil, has been maligned and minimized by some historians who have disparagingly tagged it the "Champagne Campaign," as though it were a lark compared to the "real" fighting taking place across northern France.

As Danby makes clear in this, his first book, nothing could be further from the truth. Carefully chronicling the entire operation that was to have supplemented the Normandy invasion, Danby pays special attention to the role played by his grandfather's unit, the 756th Tank Battalion, attached to the 3rd Infantry Division. Through his well-wrought prose, Danby paints a detailed picture of deadly fighting and stunning victory.

Expecting a stalemate on the beaches akin to that which marred the Anzio operation in Italy, the Allied planners were pleasantly surprised at the ease of landing and the swift victories that followed. But as the Allies moved northward all the way to the Maginot Line along the French-German border, they encountered a stubborn, skillful enemy who fought bitterly for each village, town, and bridge. Each mile of success was paid for in blood by the attackers.

In *Day of the Panzer,* the reader will gain a new appreciation for the grand sweep of Operation Anvil and the hard fighting that took place at company and platoon levels.

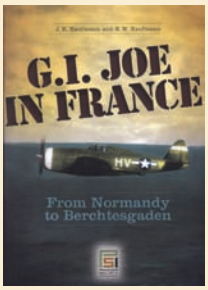


The Rise of the Wehrmacht: The German Armed Forces and World War II, by Samuel W. Mitcham, Jr., Praeger Security International, Westport, Conn., 2008, 2 volumes (724 pp.), photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $125.00.

Covering the spectacular ascendancy of the Wehrmacht from October 1934 through the end of the Battle of Stalingrad in January 1943, Samuel Mitcham's detailed

SHORT BURSTS

G.I. Joe in France: From Normandy to Berchtesgaden, by J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Praeger Security International, Westport, Conn., 2008, 235 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $49.95.



Although neither the title nor the cover photo of a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter convey it, this is a book about American paratroopers, pure and simple. And a fine book it is, too.

Concentrating primarily on the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the authors take the reader from the units' stateside training, deployment overseas, and into their various operations and battles from, as the subtitle suggests, Operation Overlord to the Nazis' alpine hideout at the end of the war.

But the march to victory was no walk in the park. The problems of supply and relief often exacerbated difficult conditions in the field, while incompetent line officers raised doubt and fear among the men in the ranks.

Using interviews and memoirs in addition to primary and secondary sources, the authors shed light on what an emotional shock the strain of combat was on the paratroopers. Although an incomplete telling of the paratroopers' story (the history of the 17th Airborne Division is curiously overlooked, and airborne operations in Sicily and Italy are given only passing reference), *G.I. Joe in France* is still a worthwhile look into the minds and personal lives of the men who dropped from the sky to tackle the enemy.

Gazala 1942: Rommel's Greatest Victory, by Ken Ford, Osprey, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2008, 96 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, softcover, $19.95.

For the British, German, and Italian Armies, the first major battles of World War II began in June 1940 in an unlikely place, the inhospitable sands of Libya, in North Africa.

Back and forth across this wasteland battled the forces of General Sir Archibald Wavell and Erwin Rommel, with each, at the end of a very long supply line, trying to gain the upper hand. Although both victorious and defeated in several engagements, Rommel and his Afrika Korps (later enlarged to become Panzerarmee Afrika) refused to give up, even when it appeared he had no chance of winning.

In May 1942, Rommel assaulted the British positions on the Gazala Line, pinning down the British in the north and outflanking French positions at Bir Hacheim. The "Desert Fox" secured his reputation as being a wily and dangerous opponent when he encircled the main British positions and then destroyed their counterattacks, eventually driving the British back and inflicting heavy losses.

It was a devastating defeat for the Allies and led to the surrender of the fortress of Tobruk and the eventual arrival of the Americans in North Africa six months later. Ford's book is a brief but masterful study of Rommel at the height of his powers as he swept the British Eighth Army back to the site of their decisive stand at El Alamein.

and exhaustive study of the Germany military is an essential two-volume work for anyone wanting to know how a country half the size of Texas nearly conquered the world. The book does not confine itself to the German Army, but also presents in-depth analyses of the German Navy, air force, and SS, and their roles in creating the most powerful war machine the world had seen up to that time.

Mitcham begins by dealing with German post-World War I rearmament in greater detail than has been done before and discusses the importance of German police forces and their role as a vital component of the military reserves. Also addressed are the previously overlooked contributions to the war effort by

The U.S. Home Front, 1941-45, by Alejandro de Quesada, Osprey, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2008, 64 pp., photographs, illustrations, bibliography, index, softcover, $18.95.

When one thinks of World War II, the common image is of combat on far-flung battlefronts. But there was another equally important front—the one at home.

Virtually the entire United States was united in a common goal to do whatever was necessary to ensure victory. Millions of ordinary citizens supported national preparedness and contributed unselfishly to the total American effort to win the war.

In this compact, highly interesting book, Florida-based writer Alejandro de Quesada describes the wide range of auxiliary, patriotic, humanitarian, and other organizations that sprang up all over America during the war years, everything from Cadet Nurses to the Civil Air Patrol to volunteer submarine hunters and air raid wardens, and the nearly forgotten Women's Land Army, the Victory Corps, and Relief Wings, Inc.

Also featured are some of the less honorable aspects, such as the internment of Japanese-American citizens and the rise of homegrown fascists such as the German-American Bund.

De Quesada's snapshot of the American home front fills in the blanks and reinforces the idea that a nation's total commitment and undivided support is vital if it wishes to win a war. ∎

the Hitler Youth, which provided essential services (postal workers, farm workers, nurses, etc.) to the German infrastructure and freed up more men for the combat formations.

Of great interest, too, is the author's detailing of German military doctrine and the concepts of Kesselschlacht (the encirclement and annihilation of the enemy) and Blitzkrieg (lightning war).

He also explains the problems faced by the Wehrmacht because of its too-rapid expansion. This expansion was far swifter than the German generals intended and resulted in a host of problems, especially in terms of shortages of equipment and qualified officers.

Besides being a valuable reference work, *The Rise of the Wehrmacht* makes for fascinating reading about how a mighty force was raised and then brought to ruin.

U.S. Marines in World War II: Tarawa and the Marshalls, by Eric Hammel, Zenith, Minneapolis, 2008, 128 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $35.00.

Eric Hammel continues his pictorial tributes to the U.S. Marine Corps with this handsome, large-format volume that captures the struggle, sacrifice, and determination required to wrest these important Pacific islands from a dedicated enemy. As Hammel, the skilled author of 30 books of military history, points out, some of the biggest battles fought by the Marines during World War II took place on tiny islands scattered throughout the Western Pacific. Among these, the battles for Tarawa and the Marshalls stand out as some of the fiercest and most decisive of the Pacific campaign.

One of Hammel's hallmarks is to somehow find photographs that have not been published elsewhere, and in *U.S. Marines in World War II: Tarawa and the Marshalls* he does not disappoint. Some 300 photographs, many never before seen, are packed into this book's 128 pages—photos that graphically depict the close-

SIMULATION GAMING | By Eric T. Baker

Look down the barrel of a sniper's gun and "hold breath."

When considering whether to buy **Sniper Art of Victory** from City Interactive for the PC, it is worth remembering that the game only costs $20.00. You can't go into it expecting the polish and depth you'd find in a $60 title from Electronic Arts. This game sets its sights a little lower and much more narrowly than something like *Medal of Honor,* but the target is the same. The designers want to put you into WWII, staring down the barrel of a gun.

In this case, the gun is one of a variety of sniper's rifles. You take the role of an Allied sniper, cut off behind German lines, who must nevertheless complete a variety of missions in relation to various battles. Not surprisingly, the mechanic in all of these missions is to creep across the map, pausing in auspicious spots to take head shots at any enemy soldiers who happen to be in the way. Close combat is discouraged since the enemy guns will usually kill in a single shot. Stay hidden and kill at range is the winning strategy.

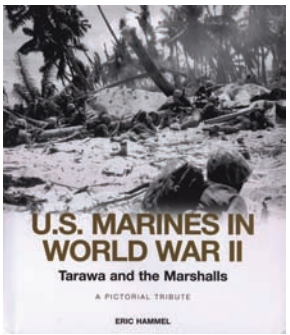
The game models breathing, bullet drop, and wind in its shooting mechanic. The view in the sight actually undulates unless you hold down the "hold breath" key. On Harder difficulties, you must guess at wind and bullet drop, but on Easy the game displays a dot that shows where the bullet is actually going. Overall, this is pretty familiar ground; lots of WWII games have included sniping missions, but if you really enjoyed those, here is a game that is all about them and at a bargain price.

When it comes to WWII tank battles, everyone knows of Kursk. Less well known is Operation Bagration, the Soviet offensive of 1944 where the Russians unleashed 4,000 tanks against the German Army which had only half as many tanks to stand against them. The result was the worst German defeat of the war as the Soviets recaptured all their territory back to their 1941 borders. It is amid this battle that **WWII Battle Tanks: T-34 vs. Tiger** from Lighthouse Interactive for the PC is set.

The focus of the game is

ness of comradeship and the savagery of combat.

The first half of the book is devoted to the 2nd Marine Division's landing on Betio Island in the Makin and Tarawa atolls on November 20, 1943, in an operation known as Galvanic. Assured that the island's defenses had been pounded into dust by naval and aerial bombardment, the Marines discovered to their dismay that the enemy was alive and well and waiting for their amphibious approach. Three days of incredibly intense fighting secured the island for the Allies, at the cost of 600 Marines and sailors dead and more than 2,000 wounded. The Japanese paid an even heavier price: some 5,000 dead, with only a handful of survivors.

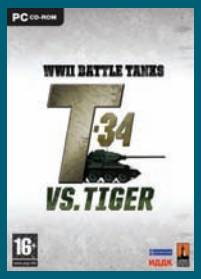


Then it was on to the Marshalls. Ninety-six islands make up the chain, and the Japanese had installed 28,000 troops to defend them. Learning that the enemy had stationed most of his troops on Wotje, Mille, Maloelap, and Jaluit Atolls, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, decided to bypass them and strike at the less defended islands of Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Majro, Roi, and Namur.

Although fewer enemy soldiers occupied these specks of land, they did not defend them with any less determination. After days of intense and brutal close combat, the defenders were finally overwhelmed by Marine firepower and sheer guts. The United States was one more atoll closer to Japan and the end of the war.

Hammel's superb book captures all the horror and heroism that have made the Marines' unrelenting march across the Pacific legendary.

tank vs. tank combat. There is no attempt to have you command that battle at a strategic level. Instead, you can choose either the Russian or German campaign. In each, you take on various missions while commanding a single tank. The tanks in the game are T-34/85, T-34/76, Tiger, Sk.Kfz.251, M3A1,ZIS-5, Opel Blitz, ZIS-3, Pak. 40, IL-2, and FW-190. In each, you can switch between a third-person view of the tank and three different first-person views: driver, gunner, and commander.



While the graphics and animation of the game are good, the AI is not all that you will want. Enemy tanks don't always maneuver as they should for best effect and Allied tanks don't always support you when they should. Fortunately there is a multiplayer mode for up to 16 players that is much more challenging. The game also supports the TrackIR game accessory which gives you hands-free control over the view from all three first-person locations.

WWII General Commander is a new game engine from Games GI for the PC. The first release to use this game engine is **Operation: Watch on the Rhine** which models the Battle of the Bulge at the battalion level. You can take either side and fight either short, medium, or long scenarios modeling the historical events of the battle. The geographic scale of the game is close to accurate and the game is played in real time. There is no "foraging" as in a traditional RTS, but supply plays a large role in the game.

One of the things that sets *WWIIGC* apart from other video games is that for each battalion it tracks both its strength and its efficiency. Strength is how much of the unit is still physically intact and efficiency is how much of that strength it can actually use. Units that have been beaten up are at lower efficiency and those that are out of supply can't recover efficiency. Attack a unit that is at 20% or less efficiency and it retreats to a rally point you have set. Attack a unit that is at zero efficiency and it surrenders. This is an ambitious and interesting take on a strategic modeling of the war.

Bridgehead

Continued from page 51

sion was able to cross the Dnieper in good order and cover Schörner's flank west of Grushevka, which was experiencing heavy attacks from Chuikov's Eighth Guards Army. The Seventeenth soon followed, taking up positions near Maryinskoye.

With Schörner's withdrawal already under way, Sixth Armee headquarters gave approval for the evacuation on February 4. Hollidt had made the case to Berlin, noting the potential for encirclement of Gruppe Schörner if the Russians broke through the Apostolovo sector—something that seemed imminent. Finally, even Hitler saw the impossibility of holding the bridgehead, although he did mention that he would like to see a small bridgehead maintained around Bolshaya Lepatikha, which proved impossible.

By the time Sixth Armee approved the evacuation, the other divisions of Mieth's Armeekorps had completed falling back to the Sigrid Line while Brandenburger's three divisions did the same in the southern sector of the bridgehead. The Soviets pursued, taking heavy casualties in the process from the presighted German artillery. As more troops crossed to the west bank of the Dnieper, the remaining German forces inside the bridgehead retreated to the Ursula Line.

As his divisions crossed the river, Schörner was in the thick of things, shouting orders and making certain that all who could, made it across. At one point he was seen taking charge of an antiaircraft gun, directing fire on the pursuing Russians. The evacuation was successful, but it was only the beginning of a longer retreat.

Pressure in the north from General Ivan Timofeevich Schlemin's Sixth Army made further defense of the Nikopol arc impossible. As the battered German divisions retreated, part of an overall withdrawal from the Dnieper bend, Soviet troops finally entered Nikopol on February 7.

Marching westward, Red Army battalions passed the hulking wreckage of the Hermann Göring Werke. The massive complex that symbolized the military and industrial might of the Third Reich in the southern Ukraine was now just a smoldering shell. In little more than two years, Hitler's capital of Berlin would look the same. □

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

blood for time

Continued from page 57

to St. Hubert for fuel and ammunition. Harper next tried to set up a defensive line at Houffalize to stop the Germans and during the night engaged the forward elements of the 116th Panzer Division. In the ensuing battle, Harper was killed and his scratch force of armor and infantry cut to pieces.

The 116th Panzer Division logs for this date report a number of skirmishes with American armor. Just after midnight, in a message to its corps headquarters, 116th Panzer reported heavy resistance and the taking of prisoners from the American 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion. Although the 116th Panzer Division was making progress against stiff and unexpected opposition, its corps headquarters was unhappy with its slow progress and the commanding general of the 116th Panzer was instructed to assume personal leadership of his advance elements. The corps commander informed his division commander that the order came down from the highest level of command.

In Longvilly, Colonel Gilbreth and the remnants of Task Forces Rose and Harper waited for the expected arrival of the enemy force that had annihilated his two roadblocks; however, it was nearing midnight on December 18 and still there had been no direct assault upon their position. The reason for the reprieve was that the 2nd Panzer Division, in keeping with the XLVII Panzer Corps operational plan, turned off the main road, bypassing Bastogne to the north and heading for the Meuse River. Shortly after midnight, Gilbreth ordered his forces to prepare to withdraw to Bastogne. At about the time Colonel Gilbreth was readying his force to withdraw, the first units of the 101st Airborne Division began arriving in the assembly area near Bastogne and, before night fell again on the 18th, the 101st Airborne would have all four regiments unloaded from their trucks and deployed in and around Bastogne.

With its primary mission now canceled with the destruction of Task Force Harper, Team Booth weighed its options of either defending in place or heading for Bastogne. Lt. Col. Booth's outposts had reported the presence of enemy armor on the Bourcy-Noville road and a platoon of the 52nd AIB discovered enemy units to the west, northwest, and south. Based upon all available information, Booth estimated that his team was up against at least one armored division. On the morning of December 19, Booth decided to move what was left of his team plus about 100 stragglers, even a few from the 106th Infantry Division, to Bastogne.

Lieutenant DeRoche, after turning five of his Shermans over to Lt. Col. Harper, led his small force toward St. Hubert where they found supplies of fuel and ammunition. After stocking up, the DeRoche force proceeded to Neufchateau where General Middleton had relocated his command post. Once in Neufchateau, DeRoche located Captain Walter M. Meier, who was busy gathering and regrouping retreating CCR men and armor. After acquiring DeRoche's small force and a few others, Captain Meier called 9th Armored Division headquarters in Mersch and received permission to take his force into Bastogne.

Captain Meier's force, like most of CCR, 9th Armored and 28th Infantry Division soldiers and tankers retreating from the roadblock battles, eventually made it to Bastogne. However, many other retreating soldiers never made it, having fallen to the gauntlet of sporadic enemy artillery fire, snipers, and engagements with concealed enemy infantry and tanks. Men and armor retreating into Bastogne from the battles that preceded the arrival of the 101st Airborne Division continued to stream in throughout the day with valuable information concerning German deployment and strengths.

These retreating soldiers and tankers were not, despite some postwar accounts, a bunch of dispirited, demoralized, and undisciplined panic mongers. The great majority of these men had given it their all. They came through the 101st defensive lines having had very little sleep or food for three days and in almost constant battle with an enemy that not only had the full advantage of surprise but was also far superior in numbers, the quantity and quality of its armor, and in its battle experience. The personnel of CCR, 9th Armored Division who managed to make it to Bastogne and regroup were able to assist the 101st Airborne Division by acting as either mobile emergency relief strike forces, armored support for the lightly armed paratroopers, or direct infantry augmentation to the defense line.

After the war, General Manteuffel wrote: "On the whole the delaying action of the withdrawing American Army was a success. It slowed down the German advance, though it could not prevent the pursuing German spearheads from coming within 4 km from the Meuse near Dinant without any major engagements. But the resistance by delaying actions gained the time needed to bring up their tactical reserves at the correct moment." □

Charles Gutierrez has previously written on World War II in the West for WWII History. *He resides in Oxford, Michigan.*

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The Champagne Campaign – *May 2009*
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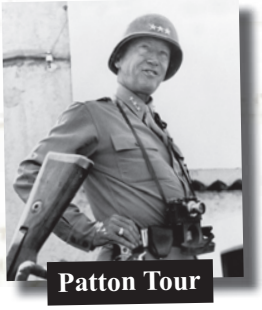
Civil War: The Mississippi Campaign – *TBA*
Iwo Jima: War in the Pacific – *March 2009*
Israel – *May 2009*

Poland & Germany Tour

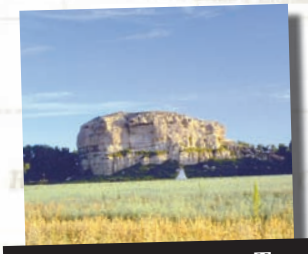
Italian Campaign Tour

Civil War Tour

Champagne Campaign Tour



Patton Tour



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