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# MILITARY HERITAGE

**Bloodbath at Inkerman:  
The Soldiers' Battle**

**Middle East Assassins:  
Al Qaeda Forerunners**

**Japanese Triumph at Tsushima Strait**

**Marines at Con Thien:  
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FEBRUARY 2006



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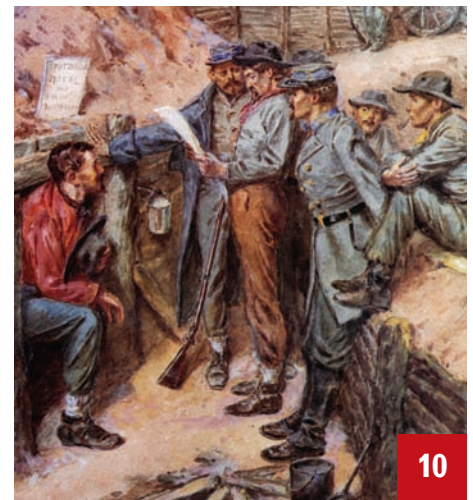
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## For one young Russian, the siege of Sevastopol was a major step toward literary immortality.

**O**F THE THOUSANDS OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS AND civilians pinned down by Allied forces during the 11-month-long siege of Sevastopol, one in particular chafed at the monotonous, mind-numbing routine. Twenty-six-year-old Leo Tol-

stoy, a high-born young count who could trace his aristocratic roots back to the reign of Catherine the Great, had joined the czar's army three years earlier mainly as a way of removing himself from the temptations of the royal court at Moscow and the ruinous addiction to gambling that was steadily reducing his family inheritance. His firsthand accounts of the siege and fall of Sevastopol, collected and published as *Sevastopol Sketches*, started Tolstoy on the road to literary fame, and ultimately, to artistic immortality.

Tolstoy arrived in the Crimea in the fall of 1854, too late to take part in the great battles at Alma and Inkerman. Prior to that, he had served a brief apprenticeship with Cossack troops in the Caucasus before joining the personal staff of Prince Michael Gorchakov (a friend of his late father) in Bucharest, Romania. He had seen no actual combat, with the exception of one narrow brush with death at the hands of Chechen horsemen while serving on escort duty, and he glumly took stock of himself in his diary at the time: "What am I? One of the four sons of a retired lieutenant-colonel...without any great fortune or any solid position in society, and above all, without principles; a man who has mismanaged his affairs to the last degree, wasted the best years of his life in futile and joyless agitation and finally expatriated himself to the Caucasus to escape from his creditors, and even, more from his habits." Disgusted with his cushy staff position, Tolstoy requested a transfer to the Crimean front, "partly," as he explained it to his brother Sergey, "to see this war at first hand."

He soon got his wish. As a newly promoted second lieutenant in the 5th Light Battery of the 12th Artillery Brigade, Tolstoy found the besieged city "one huge bivouac," crowded with soldiers, sailors, camp followers, and refugees. Military funerals for fallen officers passed frequently through the crowded streets, while flat wagons loaded with the corpses of less-exalted soldiers wound their way to any-

mous graves on the edge of town. Allied cannon fire was incessant, and the young lieutenant noted that "when the shell has gone past, you revive, and an inexpressible thrill of joy and relief surges through you." A tour of the front-line defenses filled Tolstoy with a brief surge of patriotic fervor. "The heroism of the troops beggars description," he wrote home. "When passing the troops in review, [Vice Admiral Vladimir] Kornilov said not, 'Hello there, my lads!' but 'If it has to be death, my lads, are you willing to die?' And the soldiers cried out, 'We'll die, Your Excellency! Hurrah! These are noble days!'"

But Tolstoy's admiration for the common soldiers soon gave way to disgust at the conduct of the war by his superiors. Between dodging enemy shells and continuing—despite his best intentions—to lose large sums of money at cards, Tolstoy roamed Sevastopol, storing up images of suffering, dismemberment and death that he conveyed to the reading public back home in a series of intense, vivid sketches. The new czar, Alexander II, ordered Tolstoy's sketches translated into French, the official language of court, and freely distributed. For the first time, the Russian people could read about the awful reality of modern war. The czarina, it was said, wept at his prose. By the time Sevastopol fell in August 1855, Tolstoy was well on the way to literary fame. His fellow writer Ivan Turgenev spoke for many when he told the author: "You have shown sufficient proof of your bravery, but the military life is not for you. Your weapon is the pen, not the sword." For the remainder of his long, incomparable career, Tolstoy used that weapon—forged in the fires of Sevastopol—to speak out for peace. Almost overnight, the aimless and dissolute young soldier had become a towering and humane artist.

*Roy Morris Jr.*

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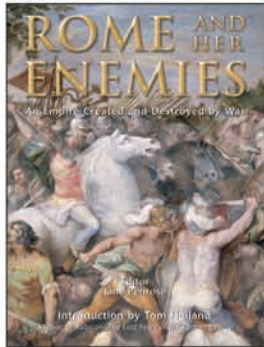
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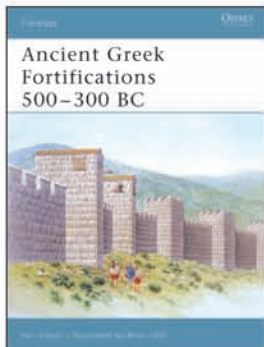
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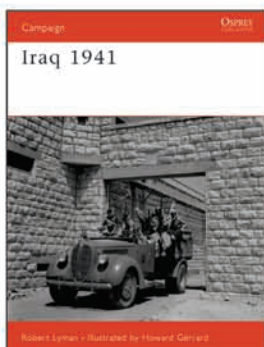
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## Charlemagne

Dear Editors:

I am writing to point out a small flaw in the June 2005 issue. I was highly impressed by Ludwig Heinrich Dyck's "Charlemagne: Warlord of the Franks." The article was well done.

On page 64, the article states that in the year 476 AD, a barbarian general, King Clovis, deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, thus ending the Western Roman Empire. Even though Clovis was undoubtedly very powerful, being the man who consolidated the Frankish realm, the fact is that Odoacer, son of Edeco, an important German follower of Attila, and also a possible Scirian, became the king of Italy in 476 AD when he deposed Romulus Augustulus, thereby ending the Western Roman Empire.

Odoacer was a mutinous mercenary captain who served under Roman commanders before rebelling in 476 AD.

Odoacer recognized the sovereignty of the eastern emperor, Zeno, and supported the Roman senate. He was an Arian, but still had good relations with the Catholic Church, which made his governing of Italy trouble-free until he was overthrown after 489 AD by Theodoric and murdered while attending a banquet in Ravenna.

For reference, see *History of Rome* by Cory and Scullard, and *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition.

Thank you and I anticipate reading your excellent periodical.

Donald Traub  
Houtzdale, Pennsylvania

## Admiral Canaris

Dear Editors:

First, let me thank you for an excellent historical magazine. I usually enjoy and admire all the articles. One exception was in the December 2005 issue with the article addressing the supposed anti-Nazi activities of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Canaris was always regarded by Allied intelligence as a Nazi—even after his supposed "conversion." As the author of *A Man Called Intrepid*, the official biography of Sir William Stephenson, I can tell you that Stephenson noted, "Admiral Canaris was known as 'K' within the British Foreign Intelligence Office. His attempts to change sides once Hitler was doomed were treated with contempt by INTREPID, who remembered that Canaris's agents had posed as peacemakers or anti-Nazi

Germans to disarm influential British and American personalities before the war. K was executed on Hitler's orders, giving rise to speculation long afterward that he was never fully committed in the secret war against the West. Yet, until the tide turned against Nazi Germany and he fell from Hitler's favor, K was never regarded as a cunning and formidable foe." Most of the article contains no verifiable historical evidence—only surmise and conjecture that Canaris was an anti-Nazi. Canaris and men like him helped Hitler and one of the most vicious regimes in history to come to power, plunge a world into war, and commit crimes against humanity on an unprecedented scale. He was not a hero or a patriot.

Aaron R. Woodard  
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Dear Editors:

I really enjoy every issue of *Military Heritage*. I especially appreciated the December 2005 issue with its Militaria section on tank helmets.

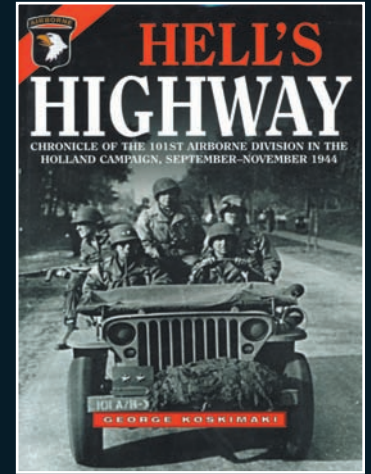
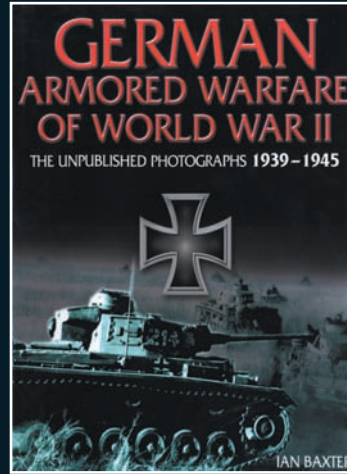
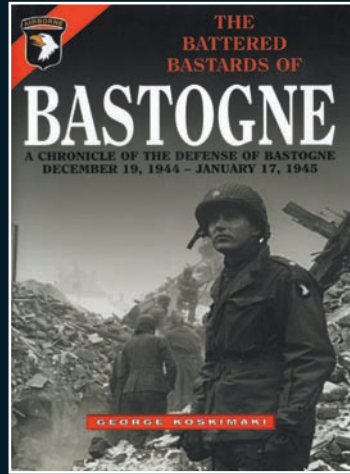
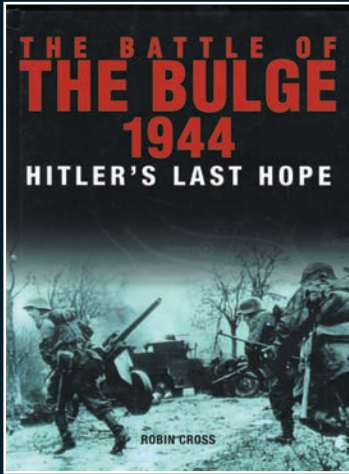
People forget the complexities in the development of the ordinary equipment that enabled men to wage war on each other. This was a fine example of one of those pieces of equipment.

I was glad to see the author included General George S. Patton's contribution to the history of the helmet by buying football helmets for his tankers in 1938. Just to add to the Patton story: he liked the football version of the helmet so much that he donned one in 1943 when he was promoted to lieutenant general in North Africa. It was gold with a red-white and yellow stripe over the top to represent infantry, artillery and cavalry—the traditional colors of the tank corps (they also made up every armored patch). He had three stars welded to the helmet and posed for pictures of himself in front of a Stuart tank.

Patrick O'Malley  
Tribeca, New York

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By Edward L. Bimberg

## Marine Corps legend Smedley Butler battled enemy soldiers, career diplomats and his own superiors.

**T**HE ANNALS OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS ARE FILLED with the names of mavericks known not only for their fighting skills, but for their offbeat personalities as well. Not the least of these was Maj. Gen. Smedley D. Butler, who in the course of a contentious, adventure-filled 33-year career in the

Corps garnered 16 decorations, including two Medals of Honor, while also gaining a

well-earned reputation for battling higher authority—often in public.

Butler was born into a prominent West Chester, Pa., Quaker family on July 30, 1881. His father, Thomas S. Butler, was a U.S. congressman and chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee. While there is no evidence to suggest that the elder Butler ever used his considerable influence to promote his son's career, the Navy Department was certainly aware of his powerful position and may well have taken steps to protect the headstrong

Smedley in his many future altercations with his superiors.

When war was declared with Spain in 1898, Butler was just 16 and still in school. Determined to take part in the great adventure, he heard that the Marine Corps had openings for a few new second lieutenants. Since he was still under age (although he looked older), he asked his father to help him enlist. When his father refused, he went directly to Marine Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he introduced himself to Colonel Charles



National Archives

Heywood, the commandant of the Corps. The colonel, of course, knew Congressman Butler, and he also knew that Smedley was lying about his age, but he signed him up anyway. Then and there, Butler became an officer in the Marine Corps.

When his father discovered Smedley's deception he was understandably upset, but he also admired his son's patriotic determination and ultimately gave him his blessing. There was no Officer's Candidate School or Platoon Leader's Class for young Butler. His military education was left entirely in the hands of a grizzled sergeant major. It only lasted a few weeks, then he was off to Guantanamo, Cuba, where he first heard the whine of enemy bullets and felt the fear and excitement of combat. One minor skirmish was all Butler saw of the Spanish-American War, but it led to a major decision in



Lt. Col. Donna Neary, U.S. Marine Corps

BELOW: Major Smedley Butler leads the 13th Company against Fort Riviere in Haiti, in this painting by Lt. Col. Donna J. Neary. RIGHT: Butler was one of only two Marines to receive two Medals of Honor for separate acts of heroism.



**ABOVE:** U.S. Marines take on insurgents in the Philippine Islands during 1901. **OPPOSITE:** Butler earned his first Medal of Honor commanding Marines in Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1914.

his life. He made up his mind to remain in the Corps after the war and make military service his lifelong career.

After the war Butler was ordered to the Philippines, where Filipino rebels were waging a brutal guerilla campaign against their American occupiers. The Philippine insurrection may not have been a major war, but like all such affairs it got plenty nasty, and Butler was soon embroiled in his first real firefight. Following a relatively quiet period of garrison life in Manila, Butler's battalion was ordered to the naval station at Cavite, where some heavy fighting was taking place. Recently promoted to first lieutenant, Butler took over command of his company when the original commander was promoted and soon found himself leading a mission against rebels entrenched outside a nearby town.

In the face of heavy rifle fire, and in spite of his own admitted panic, Butler rallied his company and drove the insurgents out of their positions and through waist-deep rice paddies. It took a while, but the rebels were finally defeated, and the teenage lieutenant could feel that he was a real fighting Marine at last. That was the end of the Philippine campaign for Butler. His battalion returned to the soft garrison life at Cavite, an existence highlighted by cock-fights, riding lessons, and visits to a local tattoo parlor. Butler had a huge Marine Corps globe-and-anchor insignia tattooed painfully on his chest, a visible sign of his loyalty and devotion to the Corps.

In 1900, the Boxer Rebellion erupted in far-off China. The Boxers were a fanatical, well-

armed movement that had arisen in the cities to oppose the corrupt Dowager Empress and her equally venal government, and they were also ferociously antiforeign. The Marines were sent from the Philippines to join an international expedition to protect their nationals from the depredations of the dangerous zealots. Butler was still young, but he matured rapidly as an officer in China, where he was wounded twice while fighting the Boxers. In Tientsin he was shot in the thigh while helping to rescue a wounded Marine under heavy fire. The wound put him in a field hospital, and while he was recuperating there a promotion board advanced him to the rank of captain—at the still tender age of 18.

Later, during the vicious street fighting in Peking, Butler was hit again. This time the bullet struck him a glancing blow that flattened a button against his chest, causing a nasty bruise and knocking him down. The only medical attention he received was hasty field dressing. Although he was in pain much of the time, he remained on duty until the end of the Boxer Rebellion.

His service in China was a decisive experience in Butler's life. It proved once and for all that he had the right stuff and gave him the confidence he needed to carry on with his military career. Although he had little formal military education, while many of his peers were graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Butler now had the courage to disagree openly with his superiors, a characteristic that quickly became the hallmark of—and sometimes a

major stumbling block to—his later career. Much of Butler's professional life was divided between daredevil exploits in minor "banana wars" in Central America and the Caribbean, and quarrels with the Marine brass over a variety of issues, from the proper amount of rations for his men to their misuse as laborers on various government projects.

The pattern for the little wars was set in 1910 when Butler, now a major, was sent ashore in Nicaragua to ensure that Americans were not endangered during the current revolution in that perennially unsettled country. American consular officials left little doubt that the U.S. State Department favored the rebels, and Butler had no hesitation in taking a decisive role in the rebellion. As he later admitted, he took "unofficial command" of the revolt at the point of his men's bayonets. With the help of Butler and his Marines, the rebels ultimately triumphed and Butler's battalion returned to its base in Panama.

The Marines' chief focus in Panama was on safeguarding the ongoing construction of the canal, and Butler's main role was playing host to a succession of visiting political bigwigs. He also managed to acquire a wife, a Philadelphia society girl named Ethel Peters. For a time, life was good, but the political pot was always simmering in that part of the world. At the beginning of 1914 it boiled over in Mexico, where a nasty little contretemps had arisen between American business interests and the provisional government of President Victoriano Huerta. The Americans complained that Huerta was not doing enough to protect their interests; Huerta, in turn, accused the Americans of trying to foment a revolution against him.

The situation worsened in Mexico and an American fleet under Admiral Frank Fletcher was dispatched to Mexican waters. Butler was ordered to report to Fletcher on his flagship lying off the port of Veracruz. Butler's first job for Fletcher was a spy mission to Mexico City in civilian clothes and under a false name. The mission, although difficult, dangerous, and not to Butler's liking, was a success. He was back in Veracruz in two weeks, the false bottom of his suitcase filled with valuable information on Mexican troop dispositions in the capital. Butler had proven himself as good a secret agent as he was a fighting Marine.

Diplomacy failed to solve the issues between the United States and Mexico. By April there was desultory firing in the streets of Veracruz that soon escalated into full-scale combat. It was urban warfare of the worst sort and Butler, back in uniform, was right in the middle of it. He played a spectacular part in the fighting, leading the Marines personally and exposing

himself to enemy fire again and again. The young major's valor did not go unnoticed; for his service at Veracruz, Butler was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration. Once again, however, Butler demonstrated his penchant for annoying the Navy brass. He declined the honor, saying it was undeserved. The Navy Department responded to this extraordinary challenge by ordering him to accept the medal and wear it on all appropriate occasions. That was that.

The little war with Mexico ended in 1914 with the defeat and exile of Huerta and the election of a new president who was friendlier to the United States. The peace proved short-lived. Another crisis popped up in the Caribbean the very next year. The Republic of Haiti was, as usual, ablaze with revolution. Haiti was much too close to the United States for comfort, as far as the administration in Washington was concerned. The Marines, including Butler and his battalion, were dispatched to suppress yet another Latin American revolt.

The area around Port-au-Prince, the capital, was quickly pacified, but remnant bands of revolutionaries roamed the mountainous north. Calling themselves "Cacos" after the local bird of prey, the revolutionaries were terrorizing farmers in the lowlands. The Marines were given the task of bringing the Cacos under control. Once again, Butler was in his element. At every opportunity he volunteered to lead expeditions into the mountains in often futile attempts to find and disperse the elusive bands. On those occasions when he met with some success, Butler seldom failed to let his superiors know what should be done. This did not win him any points with the higher-ups.

Eventually, after Washington had dispatched enough troops to Haiti, things quieted down, even in the north. There was just one more tough nut to crack: Fort Riviere on Black Mountain, the last bandit stronghold in Haiti. Built by the French when they occupied the country in the latter part of the 18th century, the fort was a real stronghold, with thick stone walls and crenelated battlements, situated at the summit of a 4,000-foot-high mountain. To ensure its impregnability, three sides of the fort's wall had been built into the nearly vertical cliffside. The fourth side, where the only sally port was located, could be approached along a gentler slope. The official viewpoint was that it would take at least a regiment with strong artillery support to capture the position.

Butler disagreed. He told his peers he could take Fort Riviere with just 100 picked men. When Colonel Eli K. Cole, his regimental commander, heard of his boast, he surprisingly gave



National Archives

Butler the opportunity he desired. Cole told Butler to pick the men he wanted and go to it. Butler, of course, was delighted. His plan for the assault on the fort was to split his group into four small companies, three of which would approach it from the steep side. There they would find positions as near to the walls as they could and open fire, drawing the defenders' attention away from the vulnerable fourth side. Butler and the rest of the men, with two machine guns covering them, would then charge through the sally port.

It was a plan typical of the man—bold to the point of rashness. It might have worked, except for one thing. When Butler and his party actually reached the sally port, they found it completely blocked with stones and bricks. Now what? With the machine guns forcing the enemy to keep their heads down, Butler, his senior NCO, and his orderly scouted around the walls until they found the secret entrance used by the Cacos. It was a drain opening, only about four feet high and three feet thick, tunneling back for 15 feet into the interior of the fort. The lone guard outside the wall scurried down the tunnel after he saw the three Marines approaching and took up a position at the other end of the fort's courtyard.

It was the moment of truth for the Marines. With the Haitian firing into the tunnel, it seemed suicidal to enter the passageway. Butler later admitted that he hesitated momentarily, but the sergeant, named Iams, took one look at the uncertain major and cried, "Oh, hell, I'm going in!" As Iams ducked into the narrow opening, Butler snapped out of it and tried to follow, but the orderly, Private Gross, elbowed

past him and went in next. Butler was third. Bullets went whizzing down the crowded drain.

Miraculously, none of the Marines was hit by the wildly firing rifleman, and Sergeant Iams shot the bandit dead. When Gross and Butler followed, tumbling out of the drain into the courtyard, a large crowd of Cacos was milling about, armed with firearms, machetes, clubs, and knives. The three Marines held off the Cacos for a short but critical time, allowing the rest of Butler's party to follow the three leaders through the tunnel. There was a wild melee, but Marine firearms and discipline had the situation soon under control. Those Haitians who weren't put out of action by American firepower either scrambled over the walls and disappeared into the bush, or surrendered. By the end of the morning, Butler had lived up to his boast—Fort Riviere was his.

Fort Riviere was the last of Butler's hand-to-hand, eye-to-eye battle adventures, but not the last of his battles with higher authority. In World War I he pulled every wire he could to get a combat command, but ended up in France as commandant of Camp Pontzenen, a huge swamp riddled with influenza and meningitis that served as the U.S. Army's reception center for the port of Brest. Long before the war was over, he had turned the notorious hellhole into a model base, and he managed to do so without ruffling too many official feathers—an astonishing accomplishment for the peppery Marine.

After World War I, Butler was promoted to brigadier general and served as commandant of the Marine Corps base at Quantico, Va. Then, on leave from the Marines, he did a stint

*Continued on page 73*

## Civil War soldiers on both sides learned the life-saving value of fieldworks as a defense against the enemy.

**E**VER SINCE JULIUS CAESAR'S LEGIONS CONQUERED GAUL, OPPOSING armies have built temporary fortifications, or fieldworks, during campaigns in the open countryside. In the modern age, such fieldworks were perfected first during the Civil War. By the spring of 1864, Americans on both sides of the conflict had discovered the life-saving nuances of trench warfare, something that would cost their European counterparts hundreds of thousands of lives to learn for themselves half a century later.

When no one was actively shooting at them, Civil War soldiers despised the hard physical labor required to construct fieldworks. As

one officer of the 2nd Michigan Infantry recalled, "Soldiers would rather march all day than shovel for an hour." Another Union soldier, Sergeant George Tipping of the 155th New York, wrote to his wife from Petersburg, Va., in September

1864: "We now handle the spade and shovel in place of the musket. There are 3,000 of us [who] go out every day to build forts and rifle pits. Twenty men would do more work in one day than the whole 3,000 men." Another Yank, James Ford, grumbled about building fieldworks at Pipe Creek, Md., during the Gettysburg campaign. "Well we tried what you call soldiering for two days. I think that I should like it very well nothing very bad about it only that spades come trump pretty often."

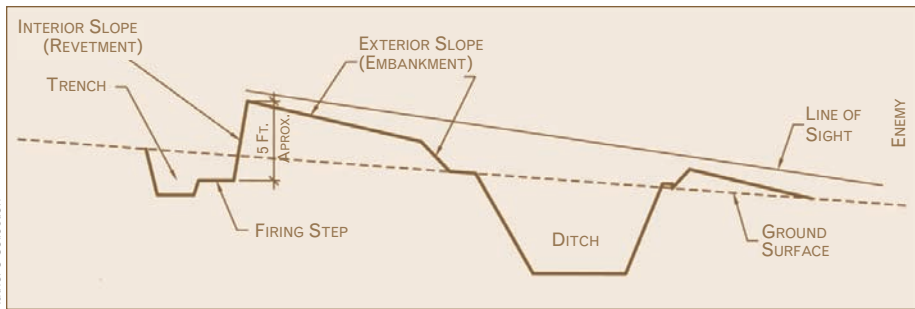
Enemy bullets, however, were a terrific motivator of men, as related by a bluecoat named Van Dyke in the aftermath of skirmishing along the Rapidan River in November 1863: "It is hard to get the men to dig for 10 minutes when we are not at the front. But when the shot and shell begin to fly, they dig like woodchucks, even though they do not carry spades. [I]n a short time they are safe behind strong works."

Regardless of their dislike for constructing fieldworks, soldiers certainly preferred fighting behind them, as New Yorker Richard T. Van Wyck noted of his regiment's works on Culp's Hill at Gettysburg. "Our position there was of a most favorable kind," Van Wyck wrote. "We were little exposed and did terrible execution upon the Rebs." And a member of the Union 2nd Corps recalled after the Battle of the Wilderness: "The rapid fire of the foe

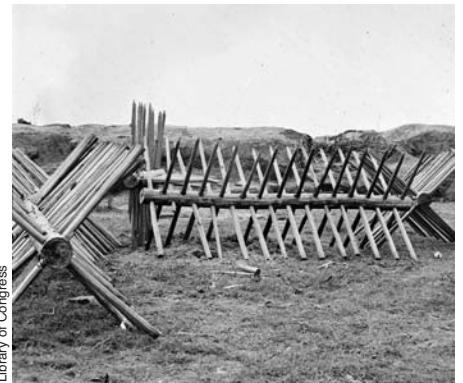
A group of Confederate soldiers study a newspaper at Petersburg in a painting by Confederate veteran William Sheppard.



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**ABOVE:** Terms and dimensions for a typical field work trench. **RIGHT:** Sections of the chevaux-de-frise before the Confederate main works at Petersburg.



had but slight effect on our line, behind its bullet proof cover, over the top of which we, with deliberate aim, hurled into [the Confederate] regiments an incessant and most deadly fire.”

Civil War fieldworks were actually trench systems, and were much more complex than a mere trench made by excavating material and tossing it out in front of the trench. Fieldwork systems included cleared fields of fire, obstructions, and barricades, and outer works in front of the breastwork proper, together with gun positions, redoubts, covered ways, and other protective features on the defenders’ side of the line.

When built under fire, the initial line of fieldworks was often selected by regimental field and line officers, and construction was supervised directly by them. It was not uncommon for engineer officers to later adjust portions of the line to better positions. Non-engineer officers also sited works at isolated posts. The majority of fieldworks were constructed by rank-and-file enlisted men wielding a variety of specially designed and improvised hand tools. A small number of men in each company might be designated as pioneers, temporarily assigned to fatigue duties such as fieldworks construction and road work. Pioneers were not permanent units, and men were selected for such details because they were good ax-men or possessed other construction-related skills.

Some common—but not the only—features of a Civil War fieldworks system included rifle pits, abatisses, chevaux-de-frise, ditches, embankments, parapets, breastworks, trenches, revetments, head logs, traverses, sally ports, redans, lunettes, and redoubts. Rifle pits varied in size, from what might be called a foxhole to complete fieldworks. Most were advanced fieldworks meant for pickets, usually hundreds of yards in front of the main line.

An abatis was an obstruction placed in front of the breastworks, well within the defenders’ rifle range. The abatis included the tops of pine trees stripped of leaves and smaller branches and sharpened to points using hatchets and axes, with the points placed towards the enemy.

It was usually about breast-high, and was low enough for its defenders to shoot over and into. The obstructions were interlocked with each other to create a formidable barrier.

Chevaux-de-frise were X-shaped, movable obstacles consisting of a horizontal beam about 10 to 12 feet long and one foot in diameter, with two opposing, diagonal rows of sharpened, 2-inch-wide, 10-foot-long wooden rods inserted it. Chevaux-de-frise were placed at important positions in front of fieldworks and could be used to temporarily obstruct sally ports. Because they took some effort to construct, chevaux-de-frise were only used when an army remained in location for an extended period of time.

The main line of works had several components, typically including a ditch on the enemy side; an earthen embankment or parapet that sheltered the defenders; a revetment, or retaining wall, on the inside of the embankment, against which defenders stood to fire their muskets; head logs, installed several inches above the revetment to protect soldiers’ heads as they fired; and traverses, or walls of log, timber and dirt extending 15 to 30 feet from the parapet back into the defenders’ line to prevent the enemy from enfilading the entire line.

A ditch, similar to a castle moat in principle, sometimes included obstructions like fraise (closely spaced, sharpened timbers driven into the earth and angled toward attackers), a palisade, or other obstructions. If the earthworks did not have a defenders’ trench, often an earthen platform called a banquette was built a few feet above the ground to allow defenders to fire downward on their foes. Similarly, an earthen platform—often reinforced with a timber floor—called a barbette was constructed for artillery.

Breastworks were arranged in straight lines runs called curtain walls, and commonly included redans, advanced works used to cover a sally port or defend a blockhouse along a railroad. Redans were usually not much more than a V-shaped breastwork, often with a ditch in front, with the point of the V facing the enemy

and an open back, or gorge, to the rear. They were placed along the main line of works to permit the defenders to enfilade enemy troops that approached the curtain wall. While redans varied greatly in size, most were between 30 and 60 yards line. An inverted redan was called a tenaille. Lunettes were similar to redans, but instead of being V-shaped, they had two faces and two flanks.

Redoubts were polygonal, redan-type structures. Unlike redans, Federal redoubts were usually enclosed on all sides, and usually were larger than redans, including underground powder magazines and bombproofs to protect the garrison. Redoubts were local strong points, and famous forts such as Fort Stedman were, strictly speaking, redoubts.

Embrasures were trapezoidal-shaped openings in earthworks used by artillery. The artillery could be positioned as single pieces, as sections (two guns), or as four-to six-gun batteries. The ground immediately behind the works was termed the terreplein. If time allowed, an army sometimes constructed more than one main line of earthworks so that if the first line fell, the secondary defense could hold the line and serve as a launching point for counterattacks. Man-made and natural features were almost always incorporated into fieldworks, including high ground, marshes, watercourses, and buildings. Most army-sized fieldworks were securely anchored on impassable terrain features such as a wide river, large swamp, or steep ridge.

The main line of earthworks was not the initial line of defense. Out in front were rifle pits manned by vigilant pickets and their supports. Closer in, portions of the main line were preceded by obstructions, including natural barriers like streams and man-made defenses such as abatis, palisades, fraise, chevaux-de-frise, and horizontal “nets” of telegraph wire strung about 18 inches above the ground. In addition, there would be advanced works such as redans and lunettes. Indeed, an enemy had to pass a number of formidable defenses before reaching the main line of works.



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**ABOVE:** Abatis made of tree limbs can be seen in the foreground as part of the fortifications at Fort Brady on the James River, Va. **TOP RIGHT:** The breastworks at Fort Mahone, Petersburg, are seen in this 1865 photo. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Federal troops occupy a line of simple breastworks on the north bank of the North Anna River in Virginia.



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The main line of works—ditch, breastworks, trenches, etc.—was typically located at or near the military crest or a rise in the terrain (the topographical crest or highest point was not where fieldworks were constructed), which allowed the defenders good sight-distance and the advantage of height to fire down on their attackers. The extent of fieldworks behind the main line depended on the terrain and on how long the army occupied the position. The areas behind the works could include additional lines of fieldworks, artillery emplacements on higher ground, zigzagging communications trenches to the main line, encampments, field hospitals, headquarters, and wagon train parks.

The complexity and use of fieldworks increased as the war progressed, and by late 1863 the opposing armies were doing more digging than shooting. However, some fieldworks were used throughout the war. Extensive, siege-type works were built near Washington, D.C., in 1862, at Yorktown, Va., in 1862, and Suffolk, Va., in early 1863. Natural fieldwork-like terrain features figured prominently in such battles as Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Bristoe Station.

To be sure, 1863 was a pivotal year for fieldworks in the eastern theater of the war. Federal troops constructed many slight to moderate works during the Chancellorsville campaign that May, and moderate works were built on Culp's Hill, Little Round Top, and along Cemetery Ride at Gettysburg. By November of 1863, fairly extensive fieldworks were constructed during the Kelly's Ford, Rappahannock Station and, Mine Run campaigns. In the spring of 1864, the Battle of the Wilderness saw extensive construction of moderate works, and fol-



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lowing the Battle of Spotsylvania that May, the opposing armies of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee perfected the art of fieldworks during the 10-month siege of Petersburg.

One problem for both armies was storm water drainage. In many Civil War fieldworks there was not a suitable location for drainage, as evidenced by a South Carolina defender of Spotsylvania's Bloody Angle who recalled, "The trenches, dug on the inner side [of the works] were almost filled with water." In fact, during very heavy rain, troops were sometimes driven out of their own works by rising water, such as occurred when some Confederate units abandoned their works at Cold Harbor during the night of June 2-3, 1864, making their line vulnerable to attacking Federal troops. Fortu-

nately for the soldiers, much of the soil in the eastern theater of the war a clay-sand mix that usually drained fairly quickly.

When sited under fire, the first line of main works was usually excavated under the direction of field and line officers, or in dire situations by the men themselves, either in positions of military advantage such as the top of a rise in the ground, or simply where the advance halted. Typically, the soldiers constructing fieldworks would stack their muskets and form details for excavation and construction. While most of the manpower was used in earth-moving, other details cut down trees for revetments and head logs. Sometimes other handy materials such as fence rails and rocks were gathered and incorporated into the line, and old logs were often

tossed in and made part of the embankments. The tops of trees used for revetments were cut off and used for agates. Other men cleared brush from the forward field of fire.

The entire process was neatly summarized by Union soldier Edward Tillinghast in a letter to his father in November 1863. "I will tell you how the breastworks are made," Tillinghast wrote. "The first works will be made along the line of the regiment, usually short of the crest of a hill. Fence rails and stones are piled in front, and then we cover this with dirt which is loosened with bayonets and moved in our plates. All this is done in a twinkling. After a while the axes, spades, and picks will arrive, along with an officer who will usually make us move parts of the works to create embrasures &c. Last we will cut away the brush and trees in front of our works and lace them together to create a sort of hedge that is difficult to pass [abatis]."

Union Colonel Theodore Lyman wrote of the troops after Cold Harbor: "They are throwing up dirt as hard as they could. No country could be more favorable for such work. The soldiers easily throw up the dirt so dry and sandy with their tin plates, their hands, bits of board, or canteens split in two, when shovels are scarce; while a few axes, in experienced hands, soon serve to fell plenty of



Men of the 77th Pennsylvania Regiment construct fascines and gabions for breastworks.

straight pines that are all ready to be set up, as the inner face of the breastworks."

While a sturdy revetment was preferred, in an emergency almost any available material was used, as one Pennsylvanian, Daniel Chisholm, recalled during the Battle of the

Wilderness: "We fell back to the road (100 yards) and commenced to pile up old rotten logs, dry brush, &c. We had no shovels and we had to dig with our bayonets and throw up direct with our hands. We worked all night, and then our works were poor." Similarly, George

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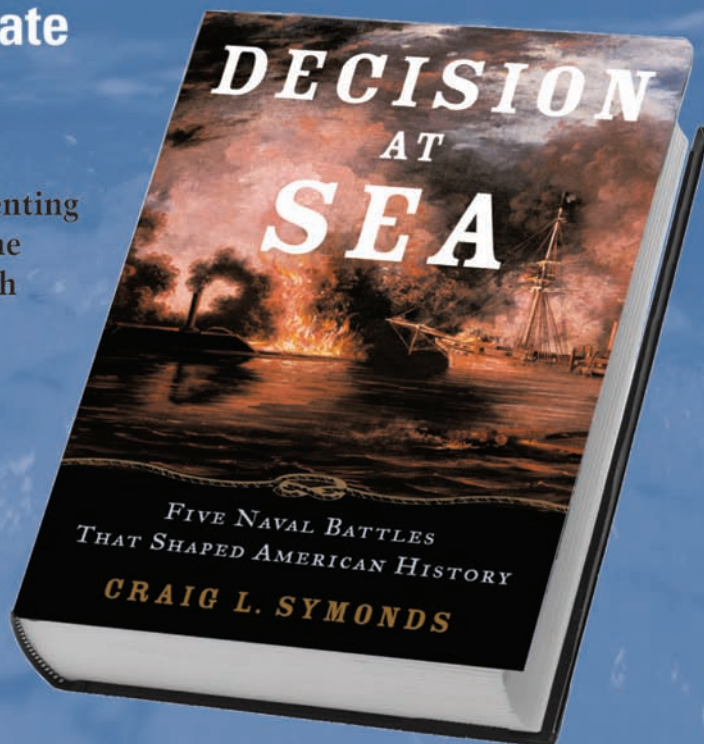
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K. Collins recalled the works at Culp's Hill: "The men grumbled a little and said it was the old trade of building works never to be used; nevertheless they brought sticks, stones, and chunks of wood, and felled trees and shoveled dirt for three or four hours."

Sometimes the contested ground was not conducive to fieldworks, and the soldiers made do with what was available. On the beaches off the Carolina coast, revetments to hold the sand in place were necessary. In elevated areas, brush and sod had to be removed to erect works. In some areas, ground was not readily "digable," forcing the soldiers to look for other means of protection. Minnesotan James A. Wright recalled of the hard, rocky soil on Gettysburg's Cemetery Ridge: "We gathered rails, stones, sticks, brush, &c., which we piled in front of us, and loosened the dirt with our bayonets and scooped it onto these with our tin plates and onto this we placed our knapsacks and blankets. Altogether it made a barricade from 18 inches to 2 feet high that would protect us from rifle bullets."

Most soldier accounts reported that trench life was a miserable experience, with the men exposed to the sun, rain, thirst and privation—not to mention enemy fire. One unhappy Wisconsin soldier wrote of life in the trenches during the fight for Globe Tavern, near Petersburg: "Saturday 20th [of August 1864], in breastworks; sat around all day in rain and mud; everything soaking wet; no fires; no coffee; lived on condensed milk and hardtack. Sunday 21st, clear and bright; hung our blankets and things to dry."

Sometimes the men managed small cooking fires in the works to boil coffee, but usually the soldiers reported being hungry in the forward trenches, where both cooking fires and hot food were rare. When not under direct enemy fire, the men went to the rear to relieve themselves. An irate Union soldier, Frank Wilkerson, recalled that at the North Anna River in May 1864, "There was an unwritten code of honor among the infantry that forbade the shooting of men while attending the imperative calls of nature, and these sharpshooting brutes were constantly violating that rule." During times when a visit to the sinks would probably have meant injury or death, men simply relieved themselves in their own works—making a bad situation even worse.

When the opposing lines were in close proximity to one another, particularly in 1864-65, sniper fire made life in the trenches miserable. As one Confederate related at Cold Harbor in June 1864: "Sharpshooters [of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery] were so vigilant and expert at their business that a head could hardly show itself above our earthwork without getting a ball

through it. A hat put on a ramrod and raised a little would be perforated in a jiffy."

Entire regiments usually manned a line of works. Typically, entire brigades or larger units were kept as a reserve, and it was uncommon for a regiment to be split, with a portion in the line and the balance in reserve. However, it was common for a portion of a regiment to be on picket in front of the main line of works, with the rest manning the trenches.

Fieldworks were defended with everything their occupants possessed. Officers would order the men massed in the works to fire when the enemy was well within range—typically at less than 300 yards. Musketry at that range was murderous, particularly later in the war. After an opening volley, most of the firing was at will, as fast as each defender could load and fire. If the enemy was able to reach the works and the defenders stood their ground, close-in combat took place with bayonets, clubbed muskets, and even fists. Because traverses were a common component of fieldworks, breakthroughs were often contained to a fairly small area.

Troops ordered to attack a fortified enemy line usually experienced strong feelings of trepidation—this was true both for "fresh fish" as well as veterans. A member of the 1st Minnesota wrote of the regiment's dread the night before it was to assault the Confederate fieldworks at Mine Run in November 1863. "We could plainly see the line of earthworks on the crest of the gentle slope rising before us," noted William Lochran. "We could hear the incessant sound of entrenching tools in the enemy's works. We knew that it was expected that we should charge those works, and earnestly wished that the order would come to do so in the darkness, before they were made stronger and reinforced."

Often, it appeared to the attackers that the enemy works were deserted—not a man could be seen in them as the assaulting force approached. But as soon as the enemy skirmishers disappeared back into their own lines, hundreds of flashes from enemy muskets became visible, followed by puffs of smoke and whizzing bullets. Troops attacking stoutly defended earthworks were often unable to reach them at all, and were pinned down in no-man's-land until they were able to withdraw. Troops pinned down sought cover by any means possible, placing their knapsacks or blanket rolls in front of them, hiding behind cover—including dead bodies—and digging shallow rifle pits. If the assaulting columns were able to penetrate the enemy position, the resulting fighting was typically brutal and bloody. In the end, attacking Civil War fieldworks was almost always an extremely costly enterprise. □

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## Counterfire platoons in the Korean hills pinpointed enemy gun locations by means of a skillful combination of sophisticated electronics and the human ear.

**I**N MARCH 1953, A BATTLE-SCARRED UNITED NATIONS OUTPOST CALLED “Old Baldy” was attacked by elements of the Chinese Army and captured from the Colombian soldiers occupying it. Among the casualties of the battle was an artillery forward observer from the U.S. 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Lt. Albert De La

Garza, Jr., who had been trapped in his bunker, wounded, and taken prisoner. A month later, peace negotiators agreed to an exchange of wounded prisoners, and De La Garza was included in the exchange. Before being evacuated back to the United States, the young lieutenant recounted persistent interrogations by his captors. One of the questions they had badgered him to answer was, “What makes your counterfire so effective?”

It is said that no compliment is quite so rewarding as one given by the enemy. Certainly, that was how the news of De La Garza’s debriefing was received when it trickled

down to the men in the 31st Infantry Regiment’s counterfire platoon, the unit responsible for locating enemy artillery and mortar positions in the battle sector including Old Baldy. Although they received little credit for their critical contributions to military operations, the men of the 31st and their counterparts in other infantry regiments probably did more to limit the enemy’s ability to prosecute the war than other units of their size in the UN command.

Regimental counterfire was an intelligence operation during the

Korean War. Its mission was to provide information on the locations of enemy weapons positions so that those positions could be neutralized by return fire. Whenever an enemy mortar or artillery piece was fired, two things were aimed in the direction of the target—the projectile itself and the sound of the muzzle blast. Both became essential sources of intelligence for the sound-ranging specialists who manned counterfire observation posts along the regimental front during the war. When the projectile exploded on its target, the specialists recorded the coordinates of its impact, the time of the impact, and the kind of weapon that had fired it. Then, using sophisticated (for the time) electronic equipment, they traced the sound of the muzzle blast back in the precise direction from which it had originated.

Even with all of the electronic equipment needed for the work, the success of counterfire operations ultimately hinged on a trained human ear. The equipment came into play only when—and if—the specialist himself had heard and identified the muzzle sound of an enemy weapon. The principles involved in sound-ranging were relatively simple. Three quite sensitive microphones were arranged in a precisely measured triangular array near the observation posts (OPs). One side of the triangle, perhaps 20 feet in length, was

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An artillery battery stationed in the Korean hills provides support fire for forward-positioned infantry units.

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A set of merged photos show the rugged terrain surrounding a former observation post in the Korean hills.

pointed in a specific direction. Ideally, it would have had the direction established by a prior survey. However, in practice that was rarely possible. Observation posts were always placed on a hill where they could have a good view of enemy territory, and the microphones had to be as open as possible to sounds coming from that direction. Thus, they were necessarily in full view of the enemy, and it was not a good idea to set up surveyor's instruments where the enemy could get a clear shot.

In order to avoid inviting enemy fire, some precision had to be sacrificed in setting up the key azimuth of the microphone array. Usually,

a GI compass handled by a sound-ranging specialist lying on his stomach in half light had to serve as the survey instrument establishing the azimuth. A survey by compass was not the most precise way of doing things, but it was usually good enough for the counterfire platoon.

Each of the microphones was connected to a separate recording head on a machine that imprinted the sounds on a continuous steel band. When the recorder was turned on, it cycled the band every five seconds. All sounds, whatever their origins and directions, were continuously recorded and erased on the rotating steel tape. The skill of the specialist

lay in identifying the muzzle blast of an enemy gun and then stopping the recorder before the five seconds had elapsed. To do so, the recording machine was equipped with a push-button stop switch at the end of a long cord. Using the cord, the specialist could do his listening from an open trench outside the observation post bunker and still stop the machine immediately when he felt he had captured a good sound. If he had recorded a valid muzzle blast, the rest of the sound-ranging process

was relatively simple. The electronic equipment in the bunker determined where the sound had reached each of the three different microphones. From this time difference, the specialist could calculate the direction from the observation post to the gun that had made the sound.

In principle it was a very straightforward process. In practice, however, it was often a monumental challenge to the observers' skill, patience, and physical endurance. Background noise was a perpetual problem. Counterfire observation posts had to be located as far forward as possible to minimize the distance to

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the weapons they were trying to detect. Thus, the OPs were all located in front-line bunkers. In a battle zone, the human ear could often isolate a specific sound from accompanying noise—the equipment could not. The sound rangers had to wait patiently for a clean sound to record.

Unfortunately, even if they had been willing to wait forever, the equipment never afforded them that option. The electronic devices used to record and analyze the sounds required a good deal of electric power. Since front-line bunkers did not come equipped with electric service from the local power company, the considerable electric current required by the equipment had to be supplied by six-volt lead storage batteries. The charge from one of the batteries could keep the equipment operating for less than an hour of total running time, so a machine was turned on only when the specialist was reasonably certain he had a chance to score a clear fix on an enemy gun. Even then, it was only left running long enough to pinpoint the azimuth.

The storage batteries had to be taken back to the rear for recharging—no small task in itself. Each observation post was located on or near the highest possible point in the immediate area of the front lines, typically on the top of a hill or ridge. Seldom were there roads that went anywhere near those locations. The batteries had to be carried on backpacks from the closest stopping area below the posts. Often, that required a long walk and a steep, exhausting climb. With six observation posts in operation and the need to replace the batteries every few days, effective counterfire depended almost as much on pure muscle as it did on technical skill.

Luck was also a crucial element. The listeners had to avoid having their microphone arrays uprooted by an errant GI taking a shortcut across their hill or blown up by a lucky enemy blast. Despite the obstacles, most of the OPs were remarkably effective.

Sound-ranging, however, was only half the business of effective counterfire. The rest took place several miles to the rear, at the fire direction center of the supporting field artillery battalion. There, the counterfire platoon maintained its plotting center, immediately adjacent to the desk of the artillery fire direction officer. The plotting center consisted of a switchboard connected to all of the frontline OPs, and had a large map table with two acetate overlays. The map table had to be large in order to accommodate conjoined contour maps covering the entire division front, including all enemy territory from which mortars or



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artillery could be fired on friendly positions. Each of the overlays had a facing surface that could be marked on with a pencil. On the first overlay were plotted the locations of each of the observation posts and a semicircular scale of compass points from that position in the direction of the enemy. The second overlay showed the map locations of every known or suspected enemy gun position in the entire sector. This overlay was updated every few days, as often as new information became available from division intelligence.

Counterfire OPs were organized in pairs. The apparatus was designed so that if two recorders were connected by means of a land line, a specialist in one location could control the equipment in an adjacent observation post. In this way, the same muzzle sound could be captured on two separate recorders at the same time. Then, when the two posts reported their respective azimuths to the gun that had created the sound, those same two azimuths should intersect at or near the location of the enemy weapon. In principle, this arrangement made perfect sense. In practice, however, the effort required to maintain the equipment in this way was not worth the minimum results achieved. This limitation was not a significant obstacle to the effectiveness of counterfire, however. The tactical situation at the time made it possible for other sources of intelligence information to be used to help pinpoint the locations of active enemy weapons, even when only a single azimuth was determined.

No information was insignificant. The OPs reported everything they saw or heard. Every round of incoming artillery or mortar fire was reported, whether or not it had come from an identifiable direction. The only exception was when incoming fire was so heavy that it became impossible to distinguish among the various impacts. The OP report always included time, coordinates of impact, and caliber of projectile. Whenever an azimuth to the gun could be calculated, it was also included in the report. Sometimes, a muzzle sound was heard and an azimuth calculated, but the impact occurred where it could not be seen or heard. In these cases, the time and azimuth were reported, along with an estimate of the caliber determined from the muzzle sound. Frequently, one post would report the impact and another would report the azimuth, making it imperative that the precise time be entered in every report.

At the plotting center, each of the reports was recorded on a columnar form that made report items easy to compare. If an azimuth was included in a report, it was immediately



Counterfire officer Richard Ecker (left) poses with his replacement Lieutenant John Nisbet.

plotted on the map table, using the overlay showing the OP positions. The plotting specialist drew a line on the overlay from the reporting post through a point on the compass scale corresponding to the reported azimuth. Sometimes, a second OP would report the same impact and an azimuth to the weapon. On rare occasions, more than two OPs would report azimuths to the same weapon. In general, such intersections were considered to be conclusive evidence for the location of an active enemy gun position, and they were given priority in decisions whether or not to recommend return fire.

Most often, however, only a single azimuth to the enemy gun was reported. At these times, three other sources of information came into play. The first was the map itself. The elevation contours on the map provided a picture of the terrain along the azimuth line to the gun. The second was the intelligence data on the second overlay—the locations of known or suspected enemy gun positions. The third bit of information was a fan-shaped piece of acetate on which had been drawn a series of arcs, each representing the maximum range of various kinds of enemy weapons.

If the azimuth line crossed a known or suspected enemy position of the reported caliber, the location was usually as reliable as an intersection of azimuths. However, the enemy tended to move their gun locations frequently, and the azimuth line would often pass over terrain in which no enemy weapon of that caliber was known to exist. At these times, the other two information sources were put to use. Placing the vertex of the acetate fan at the coordinates of impact, the maximum range of the weapon was marked on the azimuth. This limited the terrain along the azimuth line that had to be inspected for possible enemy gun locations. Frequently, because the line of sight from

frontline positions limited where the enemy could place their weapons without being seen, such a weapon could only be fired from one point on the azimuth.

When there was a high probability that an enemy weapon had been located, the weapon's caliber and map coordinates were written on a slip of paper and handed to the artillery fire direction officer. Depending upon the availability of guns, he made the decision whether or not to return fire. Normally, that decision had to be made promptly, as enemy gun crews seldom remained in position for more than a few minutes. In spite of that, enemy gunners were often caught in their tracks. It required as little as three minutes from the time the enemy round impacted for counterfire to locate the gun in question and splash six rounds on it from their 105mm howitzers. Observers seldom reported continuing activity from a location that had been the target of such return fire.

The ability of American artillery to hit a target so quickly and accurately with only the help of map coordinates was made possible by the fact that the artillery units never moved. After months of firing into the same terrain from the same position, gunners knew exactly where to aim their guns to hit any location on the map. They were a highly trained, dedicated, and well-coordinated team of fire direction specialists and gunners.

Like the artillery, the regimental sound rangers also remained in one place. There were two primary tactical advantages to this arrangement. First, it increased the number of counterfire OPs on the division front by 50 percent, because counterfire platoons from all three regiments were always deployed, even though only two regiments were committed to frontline positions at any one time. Second, the deployment guaranteed that the men on any given OP were always familiar with the area for which they were responsible.

The Chinese soldiers who hounded Lieutenant De La Garza to tell them what made friendly counterfire so effective missed the simple answer—dedicated and vigilant sound rangers who had acquired and cultivated a remarkable sensitivity to the muzzle sounds of enemy guns and an unexcelled proficiency at interpreting sound data. Combined with artillery teams that were extraordinarily efficient and deadly accurate and the intelligent use of hard-won field observation, the counterfire teams saved countless American lives and ultimately forced the enemy to seek an end to hostilities by making the cost to enemy gunners too great to endure. □

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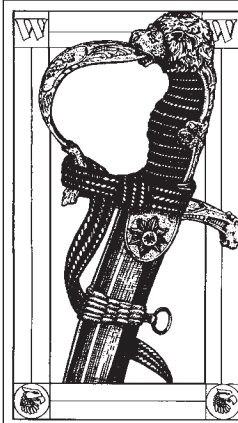
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By Blaine Taylor

## A visit to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy charts the Guard's 215 years of colorful and dramatic service to the nation.

**O**N AUGUST 4, 1790, AT THE URGING OF SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY Alexander Hamilton, the United States Congress authorized the construction of 10 armed revenue cutters. These cutters, to be captained by tough, experienced “war hawks,” would have the primary mission of enforcing the

fledgling nation’s new protective tariff and cutting down on the endemic smuggling that had been almost a patriotic duty during the original 13 colonies’ long subjugation by Great Britain. Faced with an eighty-million-dollar debt, the United States could not afford to keep losing such much-needed revenues. Hamilton and his new Revenue-Marine Service would remedy that.

The first 10 cutters of the Revenue-Marine Service were stationed in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Long Island Sound, New York Harbor, Delaware Bay, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and the Chesapeake Bay. Two-masted

schooners, 50 feet long, the cutters were of the type known as Baltimore Clippers. Quick to come about and sharp to windward, the cutters were swift enough to catch much larger ships and shallow enough to sail into waters where deeper-hulled vessels could not go. By 1796, thanks in large part to the cutters, the nation’s entire foreign debt had been paid off.

As the country grew, more cutters joined the fleet in time to fight in the first war of the new nation—the quasi-war with Republican France.

Despite being allies in the Revolutionary War, the United States and France increasingly had grown apart, and France had begun seizing American vessels bound for England. In 1796, Congress authorized the president to order the revenue cutters to defend the coast and protect American shipping from French threats. At the same time, a new Navy Department was set up to direct the conflict, and the Revenue-

BELOW AND RIGHT: The U.S. Coast Guard Museum contains dozens of examples of small boats, uniforms, and lifesaving equipment used by the service over the years.



Marine was placed under Navy control during times of war. (It would remain under the Treasury Department during times of peace.) A distinctive new flag was prepared, consisting of 16 perpendicular stripes, alternately red and white, and a dark-blue ensign on a white field. Fourteen new cutters were turned out between 1798 and 1801, and eight other smaller ships were built or purchased, including a captured French schooner. In February 1801, a new treaty with France ended the quasi war, and the Revenue-Marine returned to Treasury service.

All photos courtesy the Coast Guard Museum

Throughout the nineteenth century, the revenue cutters fought successively in the War of 1812, the Barbary Coast War, the Seminole War, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War. Besides its wartime duties, the Revenue-Marine Service undertook new activities in the bustling 1800s, including the prevention of alien-smuggling and exploration of the newly acquired Alaskan territory. At the same time, the Bureau of Navigation and Steamship Inspection Service and the Life Saving Service were formed.

In 1915 the Life Saving Service joined with the Revenue Cutter Service to form the United States Coast Guard. Subsequently, some 8,835 members of the Coast Guard saw action in World War I, and 201 lost their lives—the highest fatality rate of all the American armed services. A bill to make the Coast Guard a permanent member of the Navy was defeated, and the Coast Guard was returned to the Treasury Department in 1919.

After passage of the Volstead Act in 1920, the Coast Guard became active in combating liquor smuggling on the seacoasts and on the Great Lakes, the Rio Grande and the St. Lawrence River. It was a return to the Guard's original mission, but the nation's literal thirst for whiskey made the duty both perilous and unpopular. On shore, guardsmen were routinely cursed as "sneaks and snoops," and at sea they were in ever-present danger of being shot. One of the most sensational episodes came in 1927, when three Coast Guardsmembers were shot and killed off the Florida coast between Miami and the island of Bimini. The perpetrator, a well-known smuggler named James Horace "Red" Alderman, was hanged in the Coast Guard hangar at Fort Lauderdale a few months later.

The repeal of prohibition in 1933 was met with much relief by Coast Guard members, who had been forced to carry on the service's other duties—including enforcing Alaskan game laws, patrolling the North Pacific halibut trade, and backing up anti-pollution measures in American harbors and navigable waters—short-handed. In 1939, the Coast Guard took on another duty when the Lighthouse Service became part of the Coast Guard. And in 1942, the Bureau of Navigation and Steamship Inspection became absorbed into the Coast Guard as well.

World War II found the Coast Guard combating German U-boats in the waters off the east coast, from Maine to Florida, and Japanese submarines on the Pacific coast from the Aleutians to the Pacific. At the same time, the Coast Guard was tasked with providing port

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**ABOVE:** This medieval samurai sword, made by noted swordsmith Hisashi Nito, was given to General Douglas MacArthur. **TOP RIGHT:** This Grumman JF-2 Duck is painted in pre-WWII colors. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The collection also contains ship's wheels from various cutters. **OPPOSITE:** Captain Joshua James served as a lifesaver for the duration of his adult life until his on-duty death at age 74.



security for more than 40 ports, including inland ports such as Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland, Chicago, and Duluth, and harbors in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In addition, the Coast Guard had to protect waterfront oil and utility installations, ship-loading facilities, and beaches. Coast Guard vessels took part in the Allied landings at North Africa, D-Day, and the Italian campaign, as well as the Navy's island-hopping campaign in the Pacific.

By the end of World War II, the Coast Guard had become a truly multi-mission service. On the Great Lakes and the rivers of the United States, the service broke ice, marked channels, and helped with flooded areas. Ocean patrols became a major mission from 1940-76, as the Coast Guard helped ships and planes in their navigation, as well as providing weather information that was vital for coastal regions.

During the 1970s, a series of oil tanker disasters expanded the Coast Guard's marine safety mission, and oil pollution strike forces were created within the service to fight such spills. In the 1980s, several dramatic cases emphasized the service's strict professionalism. During the Cuban boatlift in the early eighties, over 225,000 Cubans were assisted by the Coast Guard in their attempts to reach the U.S mainland. In addition, Coast Guard and Canadian helicopter pilots helped save over 500 passengers from the cruise ship *Prisendam* without any injuries or loss of life.

Protecting ports and waterways and breaking ice continue to be Coast Guard missions. Search and rescue remains a constant duty, with the service handling over 70,000 calls each year and saving an average of 5,000 lives annually. At the same time, the Coast Guard maintains its defense readiness capabilities—a task that gained paramount importance after

the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001—as part of the Department of Homeland Security. (One of the major points the Coast Guard protects is the Potomac River's waterway approaches to the nation's capital, Washington, D.C.)

The United States Coast Guard Academy, established in 1877, is located on the west bank of the Thames River in New London, Conn. Its red-brick, white-trimmed Georgian colonial buildings are the home to the Coast Guard's Corps of Cadets, the Leadership Development Center, the 295-foot training ship *Eagle*, the Coast Guard Band, and the Coast Guard Museum. The smallest of the nation's service academies, the Coast Guard Academy is also unique in that it accepts cadets without recourse to political appointments or geographical considerations, basing admittance on nationwide aptitude tests.

Each July, more than 250 young men and women arrive at the Academy to begin the intense indoctrination program known as "Swab Summer." During the next four years, the cadets' undergraduate education, as well as their professional and military development, are supported and enhanced in an environment that stimulates a high sense of integrity, commitment, respect, discipline, and camaraderie. Following graduation and the receipt of a bachelor of science degree, the newly commissioned ensigns begin their five-year service obligation with a tour of duty aboard a Coast Guard cutter.

In 1998, the Coast Guard Academy added the Leadership Development Center (LDC), creating an educational center of excellence for the entire Coast Guard—military and civilian, officers and enlisted. It supports individual, unit, and organizational training to ensure that graduates are well prepared to

lead and carry out the Coast Guard's multiple missions. By building teamwork and individual leadership skills and emphasizing commitment to lifelong learning and professional development, the Academy is the wellspring of the service's leadership and character development. The LDC consolidates into a single, rich learning environment, prominent schools from around the country, including Officer Candidate School, Chief Warrant Officer Indoctrination School, Chief Petty Officer Academy, Command and Operations School, Officer in Charge School, Key Civilian Orientation Program, and the Leadership and Quality Institute.

Waesche Hall is the home of the Coast Guard Museum, and houses some 6,000 works of art and artifacts. Among the holdings are a 13-foot, first-order Fresnel lens from the Cape Ann Lighthouse in Massachusetts; signatures of Presidents George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy; and some 200 ship models. The admissions offices to the Academy are also located there. Current exhibitions include many of the highlights from the collection. Featuring everything from models of a series of early steamships to the 270-foot cutter that plies the water today, the exquisite craftsmanship of its artifacts captures the changes in ship design over the last 200 years. "For figurehead buffs and wood carvers alike, the museum offers a small but choice collection of carvings," notes museum curator Cindee Herrick. "Of special value is the figurehead from the Coast Guard's training ship *Eagle*. One of the largest figureheads displayed

in an American museum, it hangs as if mounted on the bow of a ship.” Cannons, paintings, uniforms, and medals round out the museum’s displays.

A stroll through the grounds of the Academy, watching the flag raising and lowering, attending a chapel service, reading the memorial in the park overlooking the Thames River, walking the deck of the *Eagle*, and reviewing the Corps of Cadets, immerse those who visit the Academy in the Coast Guard and its many predecessors—the Life Saving Service, the Steamboat Inspection Service, the Lighthouse Estab-



lishment, and the Revenue Cutter Service.

There are several other points of interest on the Academy grounds. Bertholf Plaza, completed in 1992, is named after Ellisworth P. Bertholf, the first commandant of the modern-day Coast Guard. The plaza is the site of several plaques commemorating Coast Guard personnel who served in the Second World War. Chase Hall, the largest Academy building, serves as the barracks for some 900 cadets and officer candidates. It is named after Civil War Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. Hamilton Hall, named after the nation’s first secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton, houses the offices of the superintendent, the dean of academics, and other administrative offices of the Academy.

On the flagpole across the street fly the national and Coast Guard ensigns, first displayed by the Coast Guard in the 1790s to identify them as federal law enforcement vessels.

Satterlee Hall is named for Captain Charles Satterlee of the Class of 1898, commanding officer of the *Tampa* during World War I, a vessel sunk by a German U-boat with the loss of all hands. It contains the Humanities, Mathematics, and Management departments.

The Coast Guard Memorial Chapel, located on the highest point of the Academy grounds, serves as a reminder of the sacrifices that Coast Guard members have made to their country. The lighthouse lantern installed in the chapel’s spire flashes the Morse code symbol for alpha, the traditional guide to refuge in a safe harbor. Beneath the lantern is the fencing reminiscent of the widow’s walk, where many years ago the wives of seafaring men paced while anxiously looking seaward.

Next to the chapel is the crypt of Hopley Yeaton, the first commissioned officer of the Revenue Cutter service, who originally was buried in Lubec, Maine. In 1975, when his burial site was threatened by construction, the Corps of Cadets sailed the *Eagle* to Lubec and brought his remains home to the Academy. Behind the chapel is Robert Crown Park, home to several Coast Guard monuments, among them the Wars and Conflicts memorial, a black granite obelisk depicting maritime scenes. Further down Tampa drive is the Coast Guard Academy Visitor Center.

Roland Hall is named after Admiral E.J. Roland, Class of 1929, who once served as commandant of the Coast Guard. The building was completed in 1967 and is still one of the most modern and well-equipped athletic facilities in all of New England. The Cadet Memorial Field is a football stadium named for cadets who have died in the line of duty. Jacob’s Rock, the seamanship center by the Thames River, is visible from the stadium. It was completed in 1984 and is used for teaching sailing and seamanship skills.

Leamy Hall is named after Rear Admiral Frank Leamy, Class of 1925, who earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for a daring rescue of a critically injured man from a fishing trawler. The 1,500-seat building contains the auditorium where the Coast Guard Band performs seasonal concerts that are open to the public. The large ballroom in Leamy Hall, where all cadet formals are held, also offers a spectacular view of the lower fields and the Thames River. Johnson Hall is the home of the Exchange and Souvenir shops.

The Coast Guard museum is open daily except on federal holidays. Admission is free to all. The hours of operation are Monday-Friday 9 AM to 5 PM, Saturday 10 AM to 5 PM, and Sunday noon to 5 PM. □

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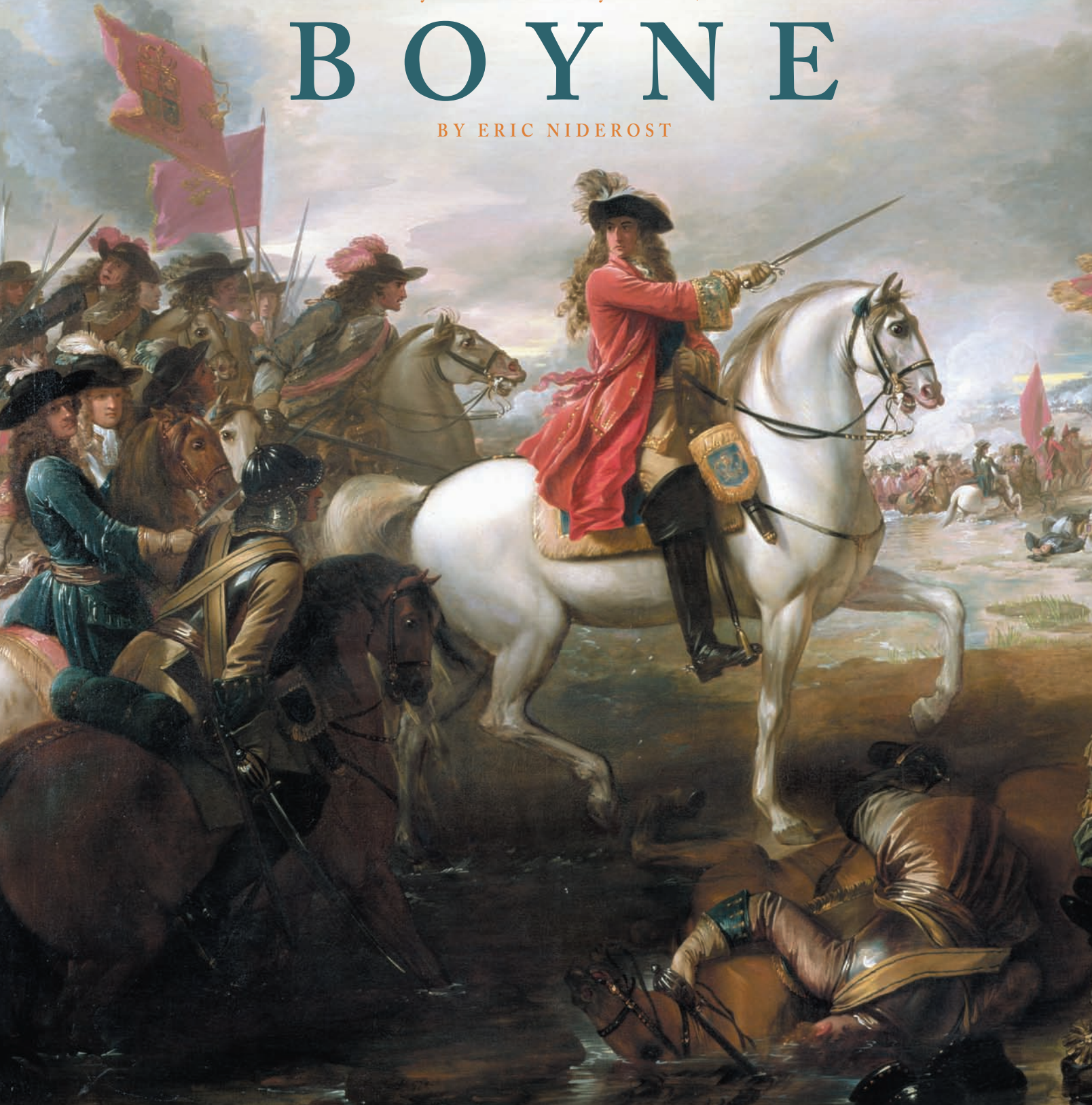
With the help of Catholic mercenaries on both sides, the fate of the English crown

## AT THE

would be decided on the marshy banks of the Boyne River, in ever-troublesome Ireland.

# BOYNE

BY ERIC NIDEROST



Resplendent atop a white war horse, William III leads his expeditionary force against his deposed uncle, King James II, at the Battle of the Boyne in this 18th-century painting by Benjamin West. RIGHT: Catholic monarch James II was backed by his fellow Catholic, King Louis XIV, in his bid to reclaim his crown.



ON MARCH 12, 1689, JAMES II, recently deposed king of England, landed in Ireland in a last-ditch attempt to regain his throne. His arrival at Kinsdale was greeted with a fair amount of enthusiasm, and he was accompanied by an impressive array of French officers and shiploads of military stores. Catholic Ireland had suffered political repression under Protestant English rule, and many Irishmen hoped that James, as a fellow Catholic, would be the means of throwing off the English yoke once and for all.

James had been deposed in 1688, in what the English were calling “the Glorious Revolution,” after a reign of only three years. The trouble began when James, brother of the late Charles II, attempted to assert his absolute authority under the widely discredited divine



Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

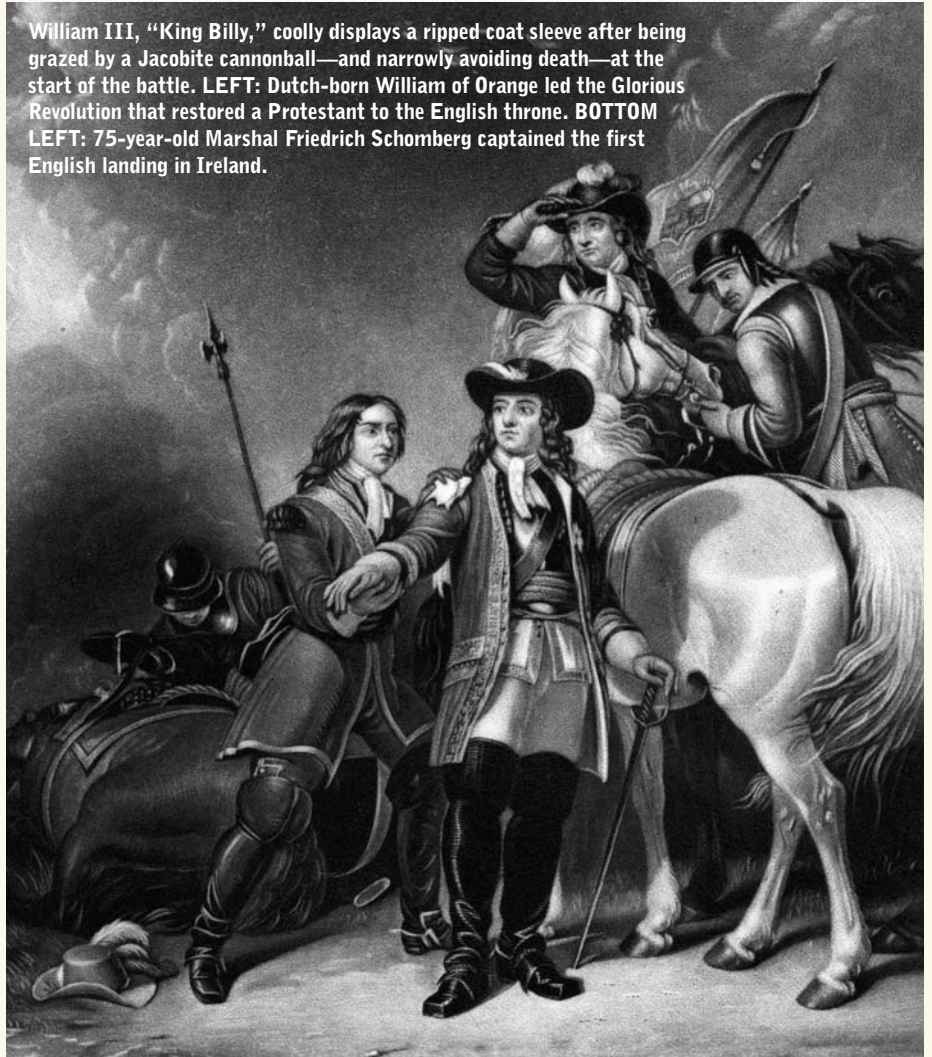
right of kings. This assertion of religious and political autonomy quickly caused James to run afoul of Parliament, which had already deposed and executed one king—his grandfather, Charles I—for just such prideful effrontery. To make matters worse, the king began appointing Catholics to various positions of power in the government and the army—actions which were in violation of the Test Act. When Parliament demanded that the Test Act be enforced and Catholics dismissed from their new posts, James abruptly disbanded the lawmakers, leaving him to rule in the absolute manner to which he believed himself entitled.

For many Englishmen, the last straw came when Queen Mary gave birth to a son. This prince, later known as the “Old Pretender,” would be raised in the Catholic faith, and many of the nation’s Protestants feared that Stuart absolutism would continue indefinitely into the



All images: Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection

William III, "King Billy," coolly displays a ripped coat sleeve after being grazed by a Jacobite cannonball—and narrowly avoiding death—at the start of the battle. LEFT: Dutch-born William of Orange led the Glorious Revolution that restored a Protestant to the English throne. BOTTOM LEFT: 75-year-old Marshal Friedrich Schomberg captained the first English landing in Ireland.



future. English political leaders privately invited James's Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch consort, William of Orange, to come over from the Continent and depose the king. The treasonous invitation was accepted with alacrity.

William of Orange, the Stadtholder of the United Provinces, commonly known as Holland, had strong claims to the English throne—at least from the Protestant point of view. William's mother had been a Stuart; in fact, James was William's uncle, and his wife was his own first cousin. On November 5, 1688, William landed in Torbay in Devon. James, abandoned by all but his loyal Catholic retainers, fled into exile in France.

The Glorious Revolution had been successfully accomplished, and William and Mary accepted the crown of England as joint monarchs. There were, however, certain strings attached. The royal couple had to agree to a Bill of Rights mandating, among other things, that Parliament be summoned regularly and that taxes not be levied without its prior consent. The Bill of Rights limited kingly power

and, in effect, established parliamentary rule.

King Louis XIV of France, as the most powerful Catholic monarch in the world, welcomed James with open arms. Every courtesy was extended. The deposed monarch was given a handsome allowance of 200,000 francs a month and granted the Palace of St.-Germain-en-Laye, 11 miles northwest of Paris, as his permanent residence. James, for his part, seemed tired of the political fray and eager to accept the delights of a well-deserved—if forced—retirement. But the king of France had other things in mind.

Louis XIV was *le roi soleil*, the Sun King, whose power and magnificence was admired as well as hated throughout the Continent. France was at the height of her power, both politically and culturally. French fashion, architecture, and art were slavishly copied. The French language was the *lingua franca*, the language of diplomacy, of Europe, the language of diplomacy. But Louis XIV was not content with mere cultural dominance—he also desired French political hegemony. The Sun King wanted France to expand to the Rhine, its "natural borders," and

also to bring the Netherlands into the Gallic orbit. The Dutch, with characteristic hardheadedness, were playing David to the French Goliath, at one point opening the dikes and flooding their own homeland in an effort to prevent the passage of rampaging French armies.

It was against this backdrop of European rivalries and power politics that Louis suggested to James that he go to Ireland and win back his throne. Conditions there seemed favorable for an armed revolt, and Ireland was the traditional "back door" to Britain. Gradually, James warmed to the idea. Ireland could be a stepping stone to an eventual return to Scotland and, ultimately, to England. The more he thought of it, the more he was convinced that the plan could succeed.

James had a major ally in Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel, who still controlled the recently disbanded English army in Ireland. Tyrconnel, James's former viceroy in Ireland, began sending a stream of letters to James urging immediate military action. Tyrconnel felt that if an attempt was made soon, all Ireland—even

Protestant Ulster—would fall into the king's hands like a ripe plum. Louis XIV, in turn, promised to be generous, and proved true to his word. James's Irish expedition consisted of 10 ships laden with arms, ammunition, and equipment for 20,000 men. At this point, no French troops were requested, only the tools to create an indigenous army. Tyrconnel promised James that thousands of Irish-Catholic gentry and peasants would provide the raw material for such a force.

James was provided with a war chest of 200,000 livres a month to pay for his troops, as well as a personal allowance of nearly 2 million livres. Louis XIV, playing the role of *le grand monarch* to perfection, magnanimously gave James his own personal cuirass and weapons so that he would "appear on the field as a king should appear." He bade James a fond farewell, telling him, "I am deeply grieved at parting with you, but I hope never to see you again." In other words, Louis hoped that James would not return to France as a failure.

James was accompanied by a hundred or so French military officers, including engineers and artillerymen. They would form the professional foundation upon which James—at least in theory—would build an Irish army. It is significant that Louis made no effort to assign his top generals to the Irish enterprise. To him, Ireland was a sideshow to his greater continental ambitions. The French king knew that his recent aggression against Germany was bound to create an alliance against him and that William of Orange would more than likely be the architect of such an alliance. Trouble in Ireland might well distract and divert William from intervention on the Continent. How could William concentrate on France when there was a threat in his rear from his own father-in-law, the previous king of England?

James landed on the southeast coast of Ireland with no opposition and was greeted warmly by Tyrconnel and forces loyal to the Stuart king called Jacobites, after the Latin form of "James". In the early weeks after James's arrival, Protestant opposition collapsed like a house of cards, although there were pockets of stubborn resistance. James moved north to Dublin, where he was greeted with wild acclaim as the first English monarch to visit the Emerald Isle since the ill-fated Richard II some 300 years earlier.

Almost immediately, there were differences of opinion over how James should best proceed. The king was a man in a hurry, eager to reclaim the English crown as quickly as possible. He wanted to press on and secure Ulster, the largely Protestant part of Northern Ireland, then send troops over the Irish Sea to Scotland. Once in Scotland, he could count on support from the

fierce Highland clansmen. James then intended to ask for French troops to invade England from the south. Acting in concert with his Gallic allies, James would move into England and cause a rising of English Jacobites. Caught between two fires, the Williamite cause would soon be immolated—or so James hoped. Tyrconnel took an opposing view. He felt that Ireland should be firmly secured first. Above all, the Irish Jacobites needed a trained army, and that would take time. James balked at Tyrconnel's suggestions, and plans went forward for an immediate advance on Ulster. James's inherent vacillation—first hasty and bold, then slow and overly cautious—would prove to be his ultimate undoing.

The port of Londonderry (now Derry) was the main center of Protestant and Williamite resistance. When James appeared in all his regal majesty, the city refused to open its gates to him, even after promises of pardon and religious freedom. A prolonged siege began, one that quickly became part of a powerful Protestant folklore that still resonates to this day. Besieged by land and blockaded by sea, Londonderry began to starve. Soon, residents were reduced to eating dogs and cats, but their will to resist was stiffened by the fiery exhortations of Protestant cleric George Walker, who coined the timeless catchphrase, "No Surrender!"

After a four-month siege, three Williamite supply ships managed to break the blockade and bring food to the beleaguered city. The relief of Londonderry boosted the Protestant cause and handed James his first major setback. Not long after the siege was lifted, William dispatched a 10,000-man army to Ireland under the command of 75-year-old Marshal Friedrich Herman Schomberg, a veteran campaigner who had seen service in the Thirty Years' War half a century earlier. Schomberg had been a marshal of France until he was exiled during the recent pogrom against French Huguenots (Protestants). He was a competent if not overly energetic general, but seemed reluctant to come to grips with the enemy, at least with the troops at hand, whom he found to be ill-trained, badly armed, and poorly led. "The lions in Africa are not more barbarous," he said of his new officers. Soon winter descended, effectively shutting down all military operations until the coming of spring, and both sides retired into their disease-ridden winter quarters.

The two armies rested and tried to build up their forces for the looming contest. On the whole, James frittered away his precious time. The Jacobite army only had around 4,000 trained soldiers in its ranks. The rest were raw recruits, scarcely better than a rabble in arms. The Jacobites were strong, sturdy peasants,

inured to hardship and brave as lions, but they sorely needed training, discipline, and proper equipment. Most of the equipment came from France and not all of it was good. François Michel, Marquis de Louvois, was the French minister of war, directly responsible for supplying arms to the Jacobites. Wanting to reserve the best weapons for French troops, Louvois sent shiploads of pikes and matchlock guns to Ireland. By 1690, matchlocks were slowly being replaced by flintlocks, which had a more reliable method of igniting a gun's powder charge. Pikes were also becoming obsolete, replaced first by plug, then later, socket bayonets. Even then, some of the Jacobite soldiers were forced to arm themselves with farmer's scythes and wooden stakes instead of pikes.

Captain John Stevens, an English Jacobite serving in Ireland, was puzzled at the army's lack of discipline. Speaking of the Irish recruits, Stevens commented: "They will follow none but their own leaders, many of them as rude, as ignorant and as far from understanding any rule of discipline as themselves. This [will be] the utter ruin of the army." National jealousy and ethnic prejudice tore at the fabric of the Jacobite force. The Irish and English nursed deep prejudices against the French, which all too often came to the surface and caused friction. James made things worse by appointing far too many English Catholics to the best civil and military positions to suit Irish taste. French officers were pushed into the background, lest they gain distinction over their Irish and English colleagues.

Nevertheless, in the winter of 1689-1690 the Jacobite cause in Ireland seemed bright. Jean Antoine de Mesmes, Comte d'Avaux, was Louis XIV's representative at James's court. At first, D'Avaux was pessimistic, noting the king's lethargy and the periods when, mesmerized by his own dreams of regaining the English throne, he seemed out of touch with reality. But D'Avaux still saw how valuable James could be to the overall French cause against William. He urged Louis to continue his support, and acting on D'Avaux's advice, the king dispatched five regiments of crack French troops to Ireland. (Actually, only three regiments were French; the others were mainly—and ironically—Protestant Walloons from Belgium. Nevertheless, they were welcome additions to the Jacobite army, providing much-needed backbone to the green and unwieldy force.)

From the French point of view, things were going particularly well. William's campaign plans against the French had been put on hold, much to the new monarch's frustration and chagrin. James was a threat that had to be dealt with first, whatever the cost. William could not attend

In the battle's opening sequence, opposing artillery units exchange volleys across the Boyne River valley near the village of Oldbridge.



© Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London/Bridgeman Art Library

to affairs in Europe when James might invade England in his absence. William admitted as much when he wrote to an old friend, the prince of Waldeck, one of the few people in whom he confided. "I am in despair," the English king wrote, "when I think I can be of no use to the common cause [the Grand Alliance] while I am in Ireland." William professed himself deeply dissatisfied with Schomberg's performance thus far. The old man was competent and loyal, but reluctant to give battle. He was always complaining, William said. The king would have to go to Ireland himself. He hoped that his physical pres-

ence would serve as a talisman of victory and give new life to the Protestant cause.

Events soon proved William correct. He landed at Carrickfergus on June 14, 1690, with an armada of some 300 ships carrying 15,000 troops, 1,000 horses, and 40 pieces of artillery. William also had a war chest of some 200,000 pounds to finance the expedition. The new troops, when added to the ones already serving under Schomberg, boosted the Protestant forces to 36,000 men. Included among the reinforcements were 6,000 mercenaries from Denmark, led by the German-born Duke of Wurttemberg-

Neustadt. In another irony, many of the mercenaries were Catholics, and some were even Irish.

Immediately after his arrival, William hurried north to Belfast, where he was greeted with wild acclaim. As word spread, bonfires were lit throughout Antrim and Down. The dour Dutchman William was transformed into a rallying point and symbol of the Protestant cause in Ireland.

James, of course, realized that William's arrival constituted a grave threat, but he was typically unsure how to deal with the situation. One of his new advisers, General Antonin



Nompar de Caumont, Comte d’Lauzun, counseled caution and retreat. Tyrconnel, usually more aggressive, also advised caution. They suggested that James follow a long-standing Irish policy of trading space for time. If the Jacobites retreated to the south, they could leave fortified towns and castles in their wake. William would have to besiege each town in turn, wasting precious time and resources.

But James was an inveterate gambler who liked to chance everything on one throw of the dice. He decided not to retreat, but to give battle as soon as possible. The Jacobite army

would meet William in defensive positions along the south bank of the Boyne River, the last major natural obstacle barring William’s progress to the southern part of Ireland. The river, running east to west, was influenced by tides from the Irish Sea, making some points fordable at low tide. Nevertheless, the Boyne would serve as a “moat” to protect the Jacobite army and prevent William from capturing Dublin, 30 miles to the south.

James positioned his army along a loop of the Boyne, about four miles west of Drogheda. The Jacobite center rested in the village of Oldbridge,

in the uppermost top of the loop. River lines are not always so secure, and positioning the army behind the river’s concave arc left it exposed to enemy enfilade fire. Moreover, Oldbridge was not the only ford in the area—something James was about to discover to his chagrin. The Jacobite army’s greatest disadvantage was James himself. In his youth he had been a competent soldier, having served with both the French and Spanish armies, but as a general he was weak-willed and indecisive, more willing to respond to events than to force them. This indecisiveness and passivity was a sure prescription for failure.

The Protestant army arrived at the north bank on June 29. William and his staff reconnoitered the position and trained their glasses on the Jacobite host just across the river. When one officer dismissed the Jacobites as a “petite army,” William replied that there were dips and folds in the surrounding countryside—James no doubt had more men than was readily apparent with the naked eye. Nevertheless, William was happy to bring James to bay at last. “I am glad to see you, gentlemen,” he said, half to himself, speaking to the enemy across the way. “If you escape me now, the fault will be mine.”

The fighting began with an artillery duel between the opposing forces. Cannon were relatively crude, cumbersome pieces in the 17th century, massive bulks of iron and bronze that were difficult to transport. Williamite six-pounder cannon began firing at Oldbridge, the rain of solid shot damaging several buildings in the village. Jacobite artillery flamed in counterbattery. During a lull in the cannonade an incident occurred that nearly altered the course of European history. William and his staff decided to have lunch along the river bank, even though the enemy was just across the Boyne. William, usually clear-headed and not one to take undue risks, may have consented



**The Boyne River, running east to west, was the last major natural obstacle barring William III from taking Dublin and the south of Ireland.**

to the picnic as an act of bravado and defiance to set an example for his men.

On the other side of the river, near rubble-strewn Oldbridge, the Jacobites had two 6-pounder cannon concealed behind a hedge. When the artillery officers trained their glasses

across the river, William’s entourage could be plainly seen. In the middle of the cluster of men they spied a stooped figure wearing an elaborate wig that fell in great curls to his shoulders. Looking closer, they caught the sparkle of a metal star on the man’s coat, the Order of the Garter. They could scarcely believe their eyes or trust their luck—this was William himself, within easy range of their guns.

The two cannon fired a salvo of solid shot just as William and his entourage mounted their horses. The first cannonball struck the horse of Prince George of Hesse, while the other grazed William’s right shoulder, ripping the sleeve as it hurtled past. The king, surprised and momentarily shaken, slumped over the neck of his horse. His courtiers were transfixed with horror—had the king been mortally wounded?

Word spread rapidly that William was dead, but the monarch had been only slightly wounded. Once he recovered from the shock, he made light of the incident. “No nearer,” he joked as his wound was dressed and his injured arm put into a sling. Had the cannonball passed a few inches to the left, William would have been killed and the entire history of Ireland, Britain, and perhaps all of Europe would have been profoundly altered.

## WAR IN TRANSITION

The Battle of the Boyne took place during a time of profound change in military technology and tactics. It was a transitional period, when both new and old were mixed together, even in the same army. The age of firepower, where gunpowder weapons dominated the battlefield, had finally and irrevocably arrived. The medieval world of heavy armor, pike, and sword was gone forever.

The change was as rapid as it was profound. Around 1650, infantry soldiers came in two categories—pikeman and musketeer. The basic weapon for the musketeer was the matchlock musket. It was a heavy, clumsy weapon that needed a stand to hold it up while a soldier fired. Matchlocks were also slow to load, even in the hands of an expert. Each musketeer wore a leather bandolier that had 12 small, wooden powder contain-

ers suspended from it like a “fringe.” These powder flasks, nicknamed the “twelve apostles,” contained rough gunpowder to pour down the barrel of the musket.

After a lead bullet and powder were rammed down the smooth-bore barrel of the matchlock, a musketeer prepared the ignition system—the means by which the powder would ignite and fire the bullet. Finer powder would next be placed in the musket’s pan. A long, snaking length of matchcord, carefully lighted on the end, was fixed to an “S”-shaped metal holder called a serpentine. When the trigger lever was pulled, the serpentine brought the lighted tip of the cord down to the pan, which ignited the powder and propelled the bullet. The matchcord was clumsy, hard to carry and easily extinguished. Some soldiers wrapped lighted

matchcords around their hats. Adverse weather conditions could extinguish the match, and the glowing embers could be seen at night.

The musketeer was vulnerable to cavalry during the slow and painstaking reloading process, so he had to be protected by the pikeman. Pikemen safeguarded the musketeers by presenting a “hedgehog” of long, bristling spears to attacking enemy horsemen. Pikes varied in size, but they were usually long—13 feet or so. Pikemen often wore body armor, including helmets, breastplates, and little armored skirts called corselets.

The flintlock rifle, when it came along, was a much better weapon than the matchlock, lighter and easier to load and fire. The clumsy burning matches were rendered obsolete, as were the dangling “twelve apostles.” Now

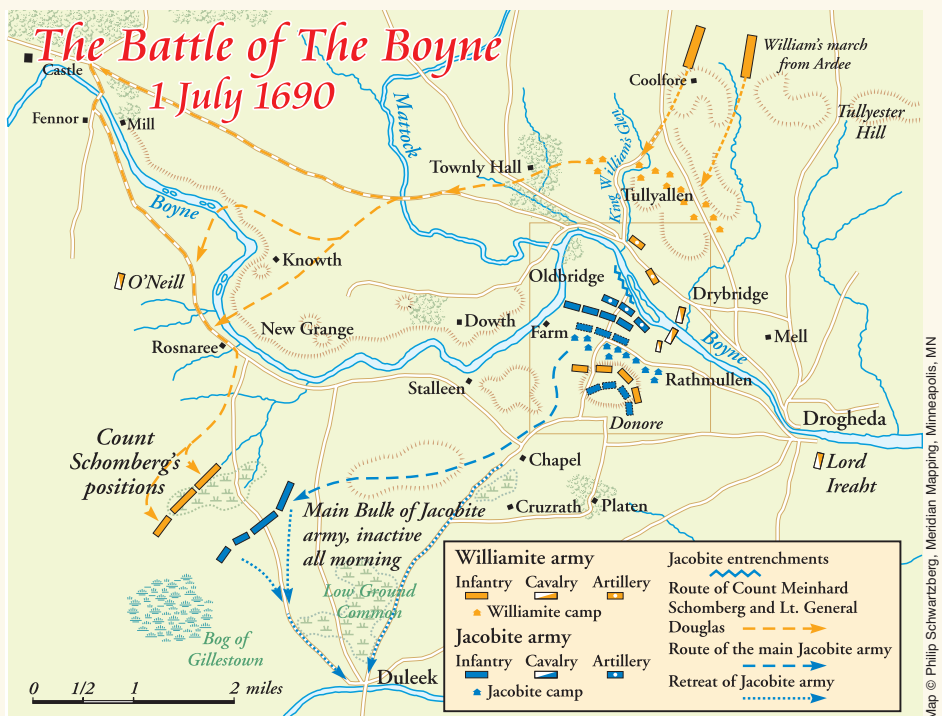
infantrymen had leather cartridge boxes that contained several rows of paper cartridges. Each cartridge contained a musket ball and an amount of powder. The soldier simply bit off the end of the cartridge to get at the powder and ball.

The problem of enemy horsemen was solved by the adoption of the bayonet, said to have been made first in Bayonne, France. In the late 17th century, the plug bayonet was the first to see widespread use. In essence, it was a long knife stuck into a musket’s muzzle—all well and good, except that when the plug bayonet was in the barrel the weapon, it could not be fired.

The flintlock was fired by means of a small, hammer-like cock that held a piece of flint. When the trigger was pulled, the hammer would go forward, striking a pivoting “L”-shaped piece

Following his close call, William convened a council of war to discuss the battle plans for the next day. After much wrangling, a simple plan was decided upon. The main Williamite attack would be on the enemy positions at Oldbridge. Meanwhile, a strong diversionary attack would take place at Rosnaree, on the Jacobite left, in an effort to distract James from the main effort. With any luck, the Stuart monarch would split his force and weaken his center.

The Battle of the Boyne began in earnest in the early morning hours of Tuesday, July 1. A spectral mist clung to the green earth, but soon burned off to reveal a pleasantly warm summer's day. Count Meinhard Schomberg, the 49-year-old son of the old marshal, was dispatched with 3,000 men to make a diversionary attack on the Jacobite left at Rosnaree ford. Rosnaree was held by only one regiment of Jacobite dragoons under Sir Neil O'Neil. The dragoons were dismounted, standard practice for the period. Dragoons were mounted infantry, not cavalry, and the men used their horses primarily for mobility. Meinhard's advance guard of grenadiers came under fire as they deployed and attempted to cross the ford. The younger Schomberg followed up by sending a company



of dragoons and a regiment of Huguenot horse to support the grenadiers. Seeing the rival horsemen, O'Neil remounted his men and ordered a full-blown charge.

It was a brave but futile gesture. O'Neil's dragoons were quickly overwhelmed, their formations broken by the sheer weight of enemy numbers. Over 50 Jacobite troopers were dumped

of steel. A spark would be created in turn that ignited the powder and fired the bullet. The flintlock was a smooth-bore, inaccurate beyond 60 yards or so, but it was a definite improvement over the matchlock.

Increased firepower on the battlefield resulted in large, dense masses of dirty-white powder smoke. Uniforms in the modern sense were created around the 1660s, but the adoption of the flintlock made them all the more necessary. Bright colors—red, blue, green, white—enabled soldiers to distinguish friend from foe on the battlefield. At the Boyne, military uniforms were still a relatively new concept, and recognizably “national” hues were still in the future. The lone exception was the English, who could trace their celebrated red coats back to Oliver Cromwell's troopers in

the 1640s. By the 18th century, the color confusion was largely sorted out, with the British having predominantly red coats, the French gray or off-white, the Prussians dark blue, and the Russians green.

When muskets became more common, armor finally vanished—or almost vanished—from the battlefield. Since virtually no armor was protection against a musket ball, it was universally abandoned. There was one major exception. Simple armor, mainly a helmet and cuirass (breastplate, with backplate), continued to be used by certain specialized cavalry troopers well into the 19th century. Royalty and high-ranking officers might still wear a breastplate, more as a status symbol than actual protection. Even if they didn't wear armor in the field, 17th-century royalty were

often seen in portraits wearing elaborate breastplates. Many paintings of James II, William III, and Louis XIV show them in armor, sometimes in an allegorical Roman or Greek style.

The identification problems encountered at the Boyne were compounded by the multinational nature of both armies. King William himself was almost killed by a soldier who mistook him for the enemy. At the Boyne, Jacobite troops wore little white ribbons in their hats, the celebrated “white cockade” made famous a half-century later when “Bonnie Prince Charlie” came to Scotland. Williamite troops wore leafy green sprigs in their hats, which must have been hard to see in the smoke and swirl of battle.

Some regiments were still armed with pikes and matchlocks, but even there, some tactical innovations could

be seen. There were fewer pikemen, and they were often drawn up behind the musketeers, ready to play their part when and if cavalry appeared. The Jacobite army had more regiments equipped with pikes and matchlocks, but they existed in William's army as well.

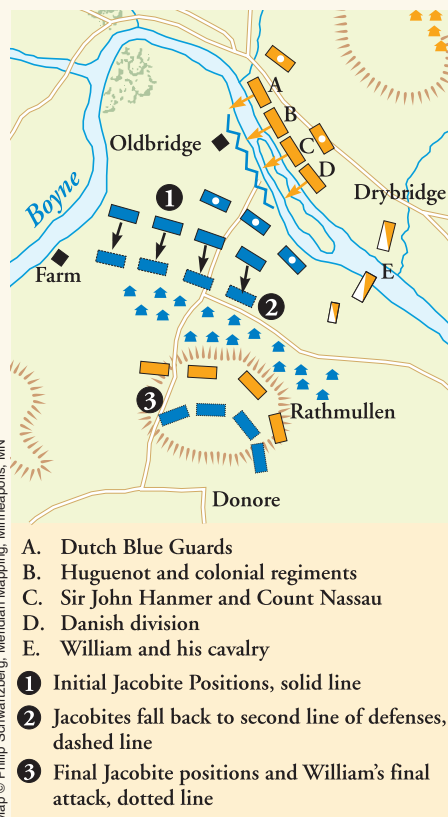
The period saw the introduction of a new kind of infantryman, the grenadier. These were large men, usually taller and stronger than the average soldier, who lobbed primitive hand grenades. Because broad-brimmed felt hats got in the way when throwing a grenade, they started wearing tall, miter-shaped headgear. These became the celebrated grenadier caps of cloth and, later, of bearskin. Even after the grenade fell into disuse the grenadiers remained elite troops in every sense of the word. □

from their saddles, including the mortally wounded Sir Neil. The Jacobite dragoons were destroyed, but they had gained some time—about an hour—for James to react to the threat. Unfortunately, the king overreacted to the threat on the left. It was James's only direct contribution to the battle, and it proved a fatal decision. Worried that the Rosnaree attack was William's main effort, James sent the entire French Brigade, troops under Colonel Patrick Sarsfield, and six guns to plug the perceived break in his lines. About two-thirds of James's army was dispatched to Rosnaree, including some of his best fighting units. Eventually, James rode over to the left himself, in effect abandoning the remaining third of his army to its fate.

Meinhard Schomberg, his diversionary task succeeding beyond his wildest dreams, sat tight for the rest of the day, guarding the southern bridgehead over the Boyne but doing little else. The ground at Rosnaree was too marshy for any major action, but James was too obtuse and befuddled by the sudden weight of military responsibilities to realize this obvious fact. To all intents and purposes, James and the bulk of his army had taken themselves out of the strategic picture. While James waited for something to happen on the left, the battle was going to be decided at Oldbridge.

At 10 AM, William launched the main attack across the Boyne at Oldbridge. The assault was spearheaded by the elite Dutch Blue Guards. They moved forward, drums throbbing and fifes squealing a rousing tune. Many recognized the music as "Lilibulero," the signature tune from William's 1688 invasion of England. The Blue Guards were a magnificent sight, dressed in blue coats with wide orange cuffs, orange breeches, and bright orange stockings—the color, both literally and figuratively, of William's House of Orange-Nassau. The Blue Guards were armed with the latest flintlock muskets, topped by socket bayonets. They were all tall men, but as they waded into the Boyne, the deepening water and swift currents forced them to raise their muskets above their heads. Eight to ten abreast, they thrashed across the waist-high river and reformed on the south bank. Two French Huguenot regiments followed them across.

Inside the village of Oldbridge, the Jacobite regiments dug in behind the houses, hedges, and low walls of the battered hamlet. The Duke of Tyrconnel, left in charge of the center in James's absence, sent the Royal Regiment and Foot Guards to Oldbridge in support. The Catholic defenders opened a heavy but ineffectual fire. Part of the problem lay in the fact that



Map © Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

most of the Jacobite defenders were armed with matchlocks, inaccurate even by 17th-century standards. The matchlock's rate of fire was slower than the flintlock, and the coils of match cords were cumbersome and confusing to men ill-trained in their use.

The Blue Guards, having emerged from the water, quickly got into formation to charge. When all was ready, they leveled their flintlocks and delivered a powerful volley into the Catholic ranks. Muskets gouted smoke and flame, and before the acrid cloud could dissipate, the Guards launched a bayonet charge against the Oldbridge defenders. The front ranks were held by pikemen, but their long, unwieldy weapons were not designed for close-quarter combat. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting ensued, with little quarter asked or given. The Blue Guards found themselves grappling with the Jacobite Foot Guards. At one point, Jacobite Major Thomas Arthur seized a pike from one of his men and plunged the weapon into the body of a Dutch officer. As the Dutchman crumpled to the ground, impaled and bleeding profusely, a Blue Guardsman avenged his officer by firing point-blank into Arthur's chest.

After a hard and bloody fight, the Jacobites gave away and were forced to fall back. The Blue Guards secured Oldbridge, then moved onto the fields just beyond. Additional Williamite units forded the Boyne in the footsteps of the Blue Guards. One English regi-

ment crossing that day, Herbert's Regiment, won its first battle honor on the Boyne. Later, this regiment would become the famous Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

The Duke of Tyrconnel saw what was happening and ordered the Jacobite cavalry forward to stem the Williamite tide. Leading the charge was 19-year-old James FitzJames, the duke of Berwick, who was the illegitimate son of James II. The young man would distinguish himself at the Boyne and go on to carve out a successful career in the French army. The Dutch Guards reacted coolly to the cavalry assault, unleashing a series of disciplined volleys into the oncoming horsemen, then forming squares that bristled with bayonets. The Blue Guards fired by platoons, a rolling wave of lead that emptied many saddles. For a time the Guard squares were blue-and-orange islands in a seething Jacobite sea, prompting William to exclaim, "Oh, my poor Guards! My poor Guards!"

It may have look bad from across the Boyne, but the danger was more apparent than real. The Blue Guards sent the Jacobite horsemen packing with heavy losses, and more and more Williamite regiments continued to cross the Boyne every minute. Richard Hamilton, one of the Jacobite commanders, led a squadron of 60 men forward, the sheer gallantry of the effort seeming to augur success. The Jacobite troopers briefly disordered a couple of Dutch line regiments, but soon fell prey to enfilade fire. Hamilton withdrew to his own lines, returning with only 12 of the original 60 men.

The Jacobite cavalry refused to give up, and more squadrons rode into the fray. They enjoyed a few local successes; at one point the aged Marshal Schomberg was unhorsed and fell heavily to the ground, badly wounded by several saber cuts. A young Jacobite officer rode up and discharged his pistol into the back of the old general's head, killing him instantly. Hearing of Schomberg's death, William decided to commit the Danish Division, 7,000 well-equipped troops, procured from King Christian V of Denmark. The addition of these splendid soldiers was sure to tip the scales in William's favor. William also decided to cross the river himself, an act that almost cost him his life.

The multinational nature of the conflict produced much confusion within the acrid clouds of dirty-white powder smoke. The Danes wore green coats, the Dutch wore gray and blue coats, and the English wore red coats. This was bad enough, but the Jacobites were clothed in similar fashion. The kaleidoscope of colors produced many casualties from friendly fire, despite the fact that both sides wore special "field signs" that day—green sprigs for the

Protestant forces, white slips of paper for the Catholics. William himself was almost a victim. At one point, a battle-crazed trooper approached the king of England, aiming a pistol directly at his head. William coolly knocked the weapon aside, exclaiming, “What! Do you not know your own friends?”

For all its dangers, the battle was a tonic for William, making him seem like an entirely different person. The normally taciturn monarch grew animated and loquacious, exhorting and inspiring his men with his presence. After three hours of hard and bloody fighting, the Jacobite army around Oldbridge could take no more. Outgunned and outgeneraled, they began to give way. About 2 PM, James, still near Rosnaree, received a message that his soldiers at Oldbridge had been defeated. His advisers urged him to withdraw before his own avenue of escape was cut off. He heeded their warning, galloping ahead to Dublin with an escort of 200 men. The unbroken Jacobite left soon followed, retreating toward Duleek in good order. Casualties were relatively light for such a major battle. The Jacobites lost around 1,500 dead and wounded, the Williamites around 1,000. Some regiments, particularly those heavily engaged at Oldbridge village, were decimated, while others did not lose a single man.

James arrived in Dublin and made his way to Dublin Castle to spend the night. Lady Tyrconnel met the deposed king and asked him what he would like for supper. James briefly filled her in on the battle, then added something to the effect that what he had received for breakfast—a catastrophic defeat—had left him with little appetite for supper.

When he went on to criticize the Irish troops, the doughty Lady Tyrconnel gave him a piece of her mind. James complained that the Irish had run away from the battlefield, adding caustically, “Your countrymen, Madame, can run well!” Lady Tyrconnel replied, tongue firmly in cheek, “But not so well as Your Majesty, for I see you have won the race!”

Realizing that his cause was dead, James urged his followers not to continue the struggle, but to surrender and get the best terms they could. He urged that Dublin be spared pillaging and burning—he wanted no scorched-earth policy to mar his departure. He traveled to Waterford, then boarded a frigate at Kinsdale and sailed for France. William entered Dublin in triumph a few days later. Ignoring their departed leader, Irish Jacobites continued the fight, more for Irish nationalism than for the Stuart cause. Colonel Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan, reorganized Jacobite resistance and continued the struggle. Lucan, a strong and charismatic leader,



Mary Evans Picture Library

**After receiving word of his soldiers’ defeat at Oldbridge, a crestfallen James II, at the urging of his advisors, fled the battlefield and took refuge in Dublin Castle where Lady Tyrconnel mocked him for “winning the race” to the rear.**

managed to hold out for another year. In the meantime, William left Ireland, absorbed in his continuing campaign to curb the growing power of Louis XIV on the European continent.

The ensuing Pacification of Limerick, signed on October 13, 1691, was a just peace, guaranteeing the rights and property of Irish Catholics in return for a pledge of loyalty to William and Mary. Unfortunately, the liberal terms were altered by Irish Protestants, who enacted a rabidly anti-Catholic penal code. The Catholic gentry were dispossessed, stripped of all rights and rendered politically impotent. The mass of the Irish peasantry, poor and Catholic, sank into utter destitution, oppressed by high taxes and absentee British landlords. To the Catholic Irish, the defeat at the Boyne meant continuing exploitation and alien Protestant rule. Thousands fled their homeland and became soldiers in foreign armies, particularly in France. As the famed “Wild Geese,” these exiled Irishmen built a formidable reputation as soldiers in far-flung battlefields across Europe.

The Protestant Irish and Anglo-Irish of Ulster saw things quite differently. To them the Battle of the Boyne was their salvation, a miraculous liberation from a tyrant king and the false “popish” religion. Over the years Boyne legends grew, and the event entered the realm of mythology. The real William III of England, a hard-headed Dutch statesman and implacable enemy of Louis XIV’s France, became transformed into the legendary “King Billy,” champion of Protes-

tant rights and bulwark against the perceived evils of the Catholic Church. William, who was a Protestant but also a tolerant man, would have been surprised at his mythic alter-ego.

The myth resonates to this day. In Northern Ireland, thousands of self-proclaimed Orangemen parade in orange sashes and full regalia, honoring the “glorious and immortal memory” of their beloved King Billy. Each July 12, under the new calendar, scores of painted banners and murals appear, all showing a heroic “Billy,” curled peruke and all, eternally crossing the Boyne on a noble white charger, his famous victory forever looming before him in the white smoke beneath a smudged blue sky. □

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# HELL ON THE HILL OF



# ANGELS

BY AL HEMINGWAY



FOR THE U.S. MARINES WHO ENDURED CONSTANT SHELLING AND GROUND ATTACKS TO DEFEND THE ISOLATED FIRE-BASE AT CON THIEN, THE EXPOSED POSITION WAS A VIRTUAL “MEAT GRINDER.”

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEWIS WALT WAS not a happy man. The burly III Marine Amphibious Force commander had just been ordered by Commanding General William C. Westmoreland to assist in the construction of a barrier to stem the flow of men and materiel coming into South Vietnam from the north. To professional military men like Walt, the concept was a foolish one. Washington, as usual, had other ideas. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara had been convinced by Harvard Law School Professor Roger Fisher that a “conventional mine and wire barrier to be backed up by monitoring troops” was the key to halting the estimated 15 enemy battalions crossing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into the south. The proposed barrier was to run from the South China Sea westward across the northern part of South Vietnam, all the way to Laos and eventually into Thailand.

From the outset, McNamara met resistance to his plan. Navy Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, commander-in-chief of all American forces in the Pacific, objected vehemently. He pointed out that the scheme would put a tremendous strain on the logistical community. The gigantic construction endeavor and massive amount of manpower required to maintain and protect it weren’t worth the effort, in Grant’s opinion. Walt and his Marines could not have agreed more. “To sum it up,” said one Marine officer, “we’re not enthusiastic over any barrier defense approach to the infiltration problem. We believe that a mobile defense by an adequate force would be a more flexible and economical approach to the prob-

Marines of Company D, 3rd Platoon, rush to take defensive positions around Con Thien as they encounter heavy North Vietnamese gunfire. TOP RIGHT: The red clay of Con Thien was clearly visible for miles against the lush green countryside.

National Archives

lem.” Another Marine put it even more bluntly: “With these bastards, you’d have to build the zone all the way to India, and it would take the whole Marine Corps and half the Army to guard it. Even then they’d probably burrow under it.”

Still, McNamara persisted. In September 1966, the JASON Group, a self-described “university think tank,” presented their new, improved barrier design. This time they added air support to the mix. Determined to implement the plan, McNamara chose Army Lt. Gen. Alfred D. Starbird to lead Task Force 728. He directed him to “provide an infiltration interdiction system to stop (or at a minimum substantially reduce) the flow of men and supplies from North to South Vietnam.” Westmoreland also wanted the barrier put in place. Instead of an actual fence, a path would be hewn out of the jungle just below the DMZ and anchored by strongpoints. Phase one of the so-called Strong Point Obstacle System (SPOS) would extend from Gio Linh, on South Vietnam’s east coast, to Con Thien, an abandoned French fort located near the DMZ.

In April 1967, the Marine 11th Engineer Battalion quickly cleared a 200-meter swath of land between the two bases dubbed the “Trace.” Those who participated in its construction called it a “firebreak.” Others referred to it more pessimistically as a “death strip.” The SPOS plan called for six eventual strongpoints. Alpha 1, near the South China Sea,

would be occupied by ARVN (South Vietnamese) soldiers. Alpha 2 would be located at Gio Linh. Con Thien would become Alpha 4. (Alphas 3, 5, and 6 would not come along until later.) These strongpoints would be backed by fire-support bases located several kilometers to the south. The Marines were to build one strongpoint halfway between Cam Lo and Con Thien. A dirt road identified on the maps as Route 561 would become the main supply route between them. The four Marine positions at Con Thien, Gio Linh, Dong Ha, and Cam Lo formed a rough square. Soon, “Leatherneck Square” would assume a permanent place in Marine Corps lore.

Of all the strongpoints along the DMZ, the most important was Con Thien. It was a low hill mass, the highest being just 158 meters, that nevertheless commanded an unobstructed view for miles around. The isolated Marine firebase was a mere two miles from the DMZ. In Vietnamese, “Con Thien” loosely translates as “a small mountain with heavenly beings.” It was also called the Hill of Angels. Visitors to Con Thien could look back at the vast logistical complex of Dong Ha and know instantly why the Marines had to hold the hill. “If the enemy occupied it he would be looking down our throats,” warned Colonel Richard B. Smith, commanding officer of the 9th Marines.

To defend the remote outpost and keep a watchful eye on the enemy’s activities in and around the DMZ, infantry battalions from the

3rd Marine Division rotated into Con Thien on a regular basis. Soon, the Leathernecks began referring to the grueling duty as their “time in the barrel.” Other, more grisly names would soon enter the lexicon—“meat grinder” and “hellhole.” As casualties mounted, infantrymen began calling the DMZ the “Dead Marine Zone.”

All the activity around the DMZ did not escape the watchful eye of the North Vietnamese. Until then, the Communists had enjoyed a sanctuary in the southern half of the region. Now the Americans were getting too close for comfort, and Hanoi intended to do something about it. In the early morning hours of May 8, 1967, North Vietnamese sappers from the 4th and 6th Battalions, 812 NVA Regiment crept toward the northeast and southeast sections of the perimeter at Con Thien. The area was thought to be manned by ARVN troops and a small contingent of Chinese Nungs from the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG). This time, however, the North Vietnamese had erred. Unbeknownst to them, the ARVN soldiers had departed and the perimeter was now manned by Companies A and D of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, along with a platoon of engineers and several tanks from Company A, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division.

Just before 3 AM a flare lit up the night sky, the signal for the NVA attack to commence. Enemy guns showered Con Thien with shells and mortars as sappers rushed the razor-sharp concertina wire. Blasting gaps in the line with bangalore torpedoes, the scantily clad shock troops began tossing satchel charges into all the bunker openings. About 4 AM the main NVA force charged the perimeter. The Nungs were forced to retreat and linked up with a small force of U.S. Navy Seabees to hold off the hordes of enemy troops. In addition to their explosive devices, the enemy used flamethrowers to burn alive any unfortunate occupants remaining in the bunkers—the first reported use of flamethrowers by the Communists since the war began.

Despite the suddenness of the assault, the Leathernecks fought back heroically. Sergeant David Danner was struck by white-hot shrapnel when an NVA gunner scored a direct hit on his tank with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. Ignoring his wounds, Danner managed to carry the remainder of his crew members to the battalion aid station. He then returned to his tank and commandeered its .30-caliber machine gun to help repulse the attackers. Ignoring heavy enemy fire, he rushed to assist a wounded Marine, carrying him to





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**ABOVE:** Wary of ever-present danger, members of 3rd Platoon's E Company keep on the alert as they move through a trench before crossing a bamboo bridge near Con Thien. **OPPOSITE:** Along with Khe Sanh, Con Thien was a key stronghold in Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's grandiose scheme to dam the influx of North Vietnamese fire.

safety. Danner would ultimately be awarded a Navy Cross for his heroic actions that night.

Corporal Charles D. Thatcher was another Marine who performed heroic service during the attack. Thatcher was peppered by shrapnel in his back and neck, but continued to give a wounded comrade medical aid. He then climbed back into his tank and fired its machine gun until his ammunition was expended, killing an NVA soldier attempting to launch an RPG round at another tank. For his bravery, Thatcher would also receive a Navy Cross.

As the NVA moved toward the airstrip, the 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion accompanied by an Army M-42 Duster and several Marine amphibious tractors, or amtracs, struck at the enemy. One of the amtracs was hit by an RPG round, turning the vehicle into a flaming coffin. As it burned, the terrifying screams of those trapped inside could be heard. Soon, all three vehicles were destroyed by enemy fire. From out of nowhere, Lance Cpl. Michael P. Finley fired several rounds

from his M-79 grenade launcher. Both 40mm grenades landed on an NVA machine-gun emplacement. Finley was struck by enemy gunfire, but managed to dash to another Marine's aid. He was shot and killed attempting to reach his wounded squad leader. Finley was posthumously awarded a Navy Cross for his service.

By dawn the fighting had subsided and the NVA had been beaten back. The enemy had sustained nearly 200 killed; only eight were captured. The Marines suffered 44 killed and 110 wounded. The battle to seize Con Thien taught Hanoi valuable lessons. General Vo Nguyen Giap, commander of the Communist forces, realized that he could not effectively confront the Marines openly in such clashes because of their devastating firepower. Instead, he opted to play a hit-and-run game, staging ambushes and hammering Con Thien with artillery and mortar barrages to keep the Marines off balance.

The May 8 attack finally convinced Washington that something had to be done about

the NVA positioned in the southern portion of the DMZ. Westmoreland instructed the Marines to flush the Communists from their hideouts in the region. The Leathernecks conceived a three-pronged operation to thwart the NVA. The 3rd Marine Division's part was named Operation Hickory; Lam Son 54 was the codename for the ARVN part of the plan. Marines from Special Landing Forces (SLF) Alpha and Bravo, situated on vessels in the South China Sea, also participated. Beau Charger was the name for SLF Alpha, Belt Tight for Bravo.

On May 18, Operation Hickory commenced with a huge artillery bombardment. Nearly 700 rounds of 105mm and 155mm shells pounded suspected enemy fortifications near the hamlet of Phu An. This region was considered vital to the Marines because of its close proximity to the Communists' main staging routes. Immediately following the shelling, fighter jets delivered 750- and 1,000-pound bombs and saturated the area with napalm. Elements from the 1st Battalion, 9th

Marines quickly moved in and secured the area, counting nearly 30 enemy dead and 75 shattered bunkers.

Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines advanced into the southern half of the DMZ with the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, covering their right flank. Before the morning was over, the Leathernecks found themselves in a fierce firefight with NVA regulars shooting from well-concealed fighting holes. Corporal Robert Moffit of Company G delivered a heavy volume of rifle fire at a bunker complex concealed in a hedgerow, then advanced on a trench line and killed several enemy soldiers. The next day Company G was involved in another firefight. Once again, the fearless Moffit crept toward a machine-gun nest and tossed grenades into it to silence the weapon. He would live to receive a Navy Cross.

By late afternoon, dozens of 82mm mortar rounds had fallen in the headquarters area. The ensuing barrage wounded nearly 20 Marines,

While Lam Son 54 was enjoying some success, the Beau Charger part of the operation was not. Right from the outset, the Marines were in trouble. Lt. Col. Edward Kirby's HMM-263 (Helicopter Marine Medium) ran into a vicious crossfire as his UH-34 Sea Horse helicopters tried to land the lead assault group from Company A, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine, at Landing Zone Goose. Flying the lead chopper, Kirby ran into a hail of automatic-weapons fire as he hovered less than 50 feet from the ground to dislodge the infantrymen. The Communist gunfire disabled the helicopter's radio and wounded most of the crew, along with three riflemen from Company A. Another Marine was killed instantly and fell from the chopper. Kirby managed to maneuver out of the precarious situation while the wounded door gunner kept up a steady stream of machine-gun fire. Kirby said later that the return fire "saved our bacon."

Kirby flew his badly damaged chopper back

By 11:00 AM, relief forces began to reach the surrounded infantrymen, but the NVA chose to stay and fight instead of retreating. Company B, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, supported by several M-48 tanks, attacked a trench line holding numerous enemy soldiers. Soon, the Marines were entangled in hand-to-hand combat with the tenacious enemy. Corporal Russell F. Keck of Company A instructed his M-60 machine-gun squad to pour fire at the NVA trench line. As Communist mortars began to fall on their position, Keck ordered his team to relocate the weapon while he remained behind to provide covering fire for the rest of the company. He was killed while doing so and was posthumously awarded a Navy Cross. Nearly a dozen jets screeched overhead, dropping their ordnance and napalm. Companies A and B, supported by the tanks, overran the Communist trench line. In all, the Marines found 67 enemy bodies strewn over the area.



including the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Charles R. Figard. While the Leathernecks were heavily engaged, Operation Lam Son 54 began with two battalions of the 1st ARVN Division moving toward the Ben Hai River in the DMZ and advancing southward. While this maneuver was transpiring, three ARVN airborne battalions began a sweep on the western flank. The following day, May 19, the ARVN units encountered the 31st and 812th NVA Regiments. The South Vietnamese troops fought well, killing 342 enemy soldiers, capturing another 30, and capturing 51 weapons.

to the USS *Okinawa* and immediately informed SLF commander Colonel James A. Gallo, Jr., of the desperate situation at LZ Goose. Gallo quickly canceled all flights and redirected them to LZ Owl, 800 meters south of Goose. This, unfortunately, did not help those Marines who already had landed at Goose. The enemy struck the perimeter of 2nd Lt. Dwight G. Faylor's 2nd Platoon, which was thinly spread over an 800-yard area. The enemy moved so close to the Leathernecks' lines that naval gunfire could not be delivered to support them.

By the end of May, Operations Hickory, Lam Son 54, Beau Charger, and Belt Tight were finished. The invasion of the southern half of the DMZ netted 789 enemy killed and another 37 captured, along with 187 various weapons. The Marines, for their part, sustained 142 dead and 896 wounded.

Although it had failed to destroy Con Thien, Hanoi had no plans of easing up on the fire-base. Additional thrusts at the old fort were being planned, using long-range artillery pieces to harass the Marines. Realizing that the NVA were not going to go away, Marine strategists

developed Operation Buffalo to strike at the enemy along the DMZ. Operation Buffalo kicked off on July 2 with Companies A and B, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines sweeping north-northeast of Con Thien. Two companies, unfortunately, were not enough to cover the large area. As Colonel George E. Jerue, commanding officer of the 9th Marines, pointed out, “The TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility) assigned to the 9th Marine Regiment was so large that the regiment could not enjoy the advantage of patrolling any particular sector on a continuing basis. As a result, an area would be swept for a few days and then it would be another week or so before the area would be swept again. Consequently, it became evident that the NVA, realizing this limitation, would move back into an area as soon as the sweep was concluded.”

This time, however, the NVA had no intentions of moving back. They had set up a cleverly concealed ambush and waited for the

were struck from all sides as the Communists, hidden among waist-high hedgerows, hammered the Marines with automatic-weapons fire and mortars. The NVA employed flamethrowers, igniting the hedgerows and forcing the riflemen to flee the burning death-trap. As they emerged into the open, the enemy slaughtered them.

The 2nd Platoon tried to reach the besieged 3rd Platoon, but was driven back. Soon, they were also cut off and found themselves fighting for their lives. Enemy artillery and mortar fire scored a direct hit on the command group, killing Coates, the radio operator, two platoon commanders, and the artillery forward observer. Hearing the loud crack of the gunfire, Staff Sergeant Leon R. Burns, 1st Platoon commander, attempted to reach the other two platoons, but NVA troops swarmed against the platoon’s flanks. Burns quickly radioed for air support. “I asked for napalm as close as 50 yards from us,” he recalled

manage to break through and join Radcliffe’s relief force.

As the small relief column made its way down 561 and moved northward, the NVA began peppering the Marines with small-arms fire. Helicopter gunships worked over the area, and 90mm rounds from the tanks scattered the enemy troops. Company C began chopping in, and Radcliffe told his rescue team to secure the LZ. Charlie Company set out to relieve Company B, but was met with Communist artillery fire that wounded 11 Marines. As they moved forward, Radcliffe found the remnants of Burns’s platoon—all that remained of Coates’s company. Radcliffe was stunned at the sight of so many lifeless bodies along the road. First Lt. Gatlin J. Howell, who had commanded the platoon for eight months before being reassigned, was also rendered speechless, but together with Corporal Charles A. Thompson of Company D, he helped to evacuate at least 25 Marines.

As the Marines made their way back to Con Thien, Major Darrell C. Danielson, the battalion executive officer, met the dazed survivors. Some of the less seriously wounded were put on trucks, while others were loaded on CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters. Even as the wounded were carefully placed about the choppers and vehicles, Communist gunners targeted Con Thien and Gio Linh with over a thousand rounds of heavy artillery. Slater’s Company A was also in dire straits, with enemy soldiers



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**OPPOSITE LEFT:** Entrenched NVA soldiers take aim on American positions near the DMZ. Many NVA lost their lives on the Ho Chi Minh trail south before ever setting foot in South Vietnam.

**OPPOSITE RIGHT:** PFC Jack Hartzel of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines.

**LEFT:** Marine Corps helicopters open fire at night on suspected enemy movements on the perimeter of Con Thien.

Marines’ arrival. The 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, given the ghoulish nickname the “Walking Dead,” would soon encounter its toughest assignment to date. Captain Sterling K. Coates’s Company B and Captain Albert C. Slater’s Company A moved north of the Trace to commence their sweep of the area. The Leathernecks endured the grueling heat and humidity as they pressed forward on Route 561. With the 3rd Platoon in front, followed by the command group, Company B began to encounter sporadic sniper fire. Suddenly, the air was filled with enemy gunfire. Coates’s men

later. “Some of it came in only 20 yards away, but I’m not complaining.”

Listening to the radio traffic at Con Thien, Lt. Col. Richard J. “Spike” Schening, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines commander, wasted no time in ordering Company C into the battle. It was now evident that Company B had run into at least two NVA battalions. Captain Henry J.M. Radcliffe led a platoon from Company D, augmented by four M-48 tanks, to the scene. Meanwhile, Slater was running into difficulty linking up with the besieged Company B due to heavy enemy fire, although one platoon did

moving to within 50 meters of their lines. Air and artillery strikes, and the arrival of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, forced the NVA to withdraw. Alpha’s men gave their relief an emotional welcome. They knew that they would not have survived the night—the NVA would have overrun them and coldly executed them where they lay.

On July 4, while people back in the United States was celebrating Independence Day with fireworks and picnics, the Marines from the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines and the 3rd

*Continued on page 74*

# INKERMAN:



A company of exhausted and wounded members of the English Coldstream Guards and 20th East Devonshire Regiment stagger down from the heights of Inkerman in this 1877 painting, *The Return From Inkerman*, by Lady Elizabeth Thompson Butler.

# THE SOLDIERS' BATTLE

SEEKING TO LIFT THE SIEGE OF SEVASTOPOL, RUSSIAN COMMANDER ALEXANDER MENSHIKOV LEFT THE CRITICAL PLANNING IN THE HANDS OF HIS LESS THAN BRILLIANT UNDERLINGS. IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, IT WAS TRULY "A BATTLE WITHOUT A MAP."

WHEN ARMED HOSTILITIES FLARED UP BETWEEN THE Russian and Ottoman Empires in 1853 over control of holy places in Turkish-ruled Jerusalem, Great Britain was quick to throw its weight behind the Ottomans. For many years the British had been warily observing the Russian influence creep farther and farther south toward India, the crown jewel of the British Empire. When an opportunity to put the Russians in their place presented itself, the British did not hesitate to send in their troops. Not to be outdone, the French readily offered military contributions of their own.

BY VICTOR KAMENIR

The allies selected the Crimean Peninsula in southern Russia as their main objective. The port city of Sevastopol housed the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and its capture would virtually destroy Russia's ability to project its power into the Mediterranean Sea. Before the Allies could establish iron-tight siege lines around the city, the Russian commander-in-chief in Crimea, Admiral Prince Alexander S. Menshikov, slipped the bulk of his ground forces out of Sevastopol. The British, French, and Turkish allies had barely enough troops to maintain porous siege lines around the city and keep Menshikov's formidable field army at bay.





**LEFT: British commander Lord Raglan meets with Maréchal Pélissier (center) and Omar Pacha (right) during a council of war at Raglan's headquarters. MIDDLE: Hard-fighting Brig. Gen. John L. Pennefather (center) commanded 3,000 men of the British 2nd Division during the bloodletting at the Home Ridge. RIGHT: General Pierre Bosquet commanded the French Corps of Observation at Inkerman.**

At the same time, the pressure from St. Petersburg was mounting on Menshikov to launch an attack on the allied forces and raise the siege of Sevastopol. Russian units from the Danube theater of operations began shifting to the Crimea. At the end of October 1854, two infantry divisions from the Russian IV Corps, under General Pavel A. Dannenberg, arrived to reinforce Menshikov. Unfortunately, Menshikov had little confidence in Dannenberg, who had lost a major battle to the Turks exactly one year earlier at Oltenitsa, Romania. Menshikov promptly wrote the commander of the Danube army, General Prince Nikolai Gorchakov, requesting Dannenberg's recall. Gorchakov, however, wanted to be rid of the talentless Dannenberg as well. His reply to Menshikov was polite, but firm: "My dear Prince, you must take the good [reinforcement of two divisions] with the bad [Dannenberg]."

Considering himself sufficiently strong, Menshikov began planning an assault on allied lines in the vicinity of Mount Inkerman—although calling it planning would be a stretch. Menshikov's headquarters staff could best be described as an entourage of courtiers rather than a collection of military officers. Headquarters did not even have any maps of the vicinity where the combat operations were to take place, giving upcoming events the less than flattering nickname, "the Battle Without a Map."

Prince Menshikov held court over his glittering menagerie of hangers-on and military non-entities. It had been almost two centuries since Czar Peter the Great plucked the Menshikov family from its peasant obscurity into the highest strata of the Russian society. Immensely wealthy, well-educated, and narcissistic, Menshikov by his own admission was neither a

politician nor a military commander. He began his military career in the Russian Army, fighting in the Napoleonic Wars. After reaching the rank of lieutenant colonel, Menshikov transferred to the Navy. On the eve of commencement of hostilities in 1853, he was appointed the czar's emissary to the Ottoman Empire. It was a poor appointment, considering that Menshikov had been emasculated by a Turkish cannonball in 1828 and harbored understandable ill will toward the Ottoman Empire. His arrogant behavior during negotiations in Istanbul so infuriated and insulted the Turkish cabinet that it drove the Turks ever closer to war with Russia.

Menshikov considered being appointed commander-in-chief of all the Russian forces in the Crimean Peninsula as something merely due to one of his high stature. It appeared that his main goal in planning the operation was not to

achieve success, but to avert blame in case of failure. After jotting down the bare outlines of the upcoming battle, Menshikov appointed the newly arrived commander of the IV Corps, Dannenberg, as the overall commander for the upcoming battle. When asked why he chose Dannenberg over other generals, Menshikov replied airily, "Aren't they all the same?"

While the Russians planned, however desultorily, for the campaign, there was a strange feeling of lethargy within the British Army, particularly its commander, Fitzroy James Hewry Somerset, Also known as Lord Raglan. Despite numerous warnings about a major Russian attack, the British command did not expend much effort fortifying Mount Inkerman. A minor Russian attack on October 26 against the location was viewed as a mere skirmish, when in fact the Russians were probing the allied lines for a weak point. Unfortunately for everyone involved, they thought they had found one at Inkerman.

Located directly southeast of Sevastopol, Mount Inkerman was bordered by Careenage Ravine on the western side and the Chernaya (Black) River on the east. Quarry Road ran north from Balaklava across a dominating terrain feature called the Home Ridge. The British put up a four-foot-high stone wall somewhat grandly called the Barrier at the point where Quarry Road began descending Home Ridge. Another stone wall, this one approximately two feet high, ran along most of the northern face of the Home Ridge. Approximately a quarter of a mile north of the Home Ridge and slightly to the east, another stone barricade, this one nine feet high, was built. Called the Sandbag Battery, it was supposed to mount two cannon, neither of which was present at the time. As a

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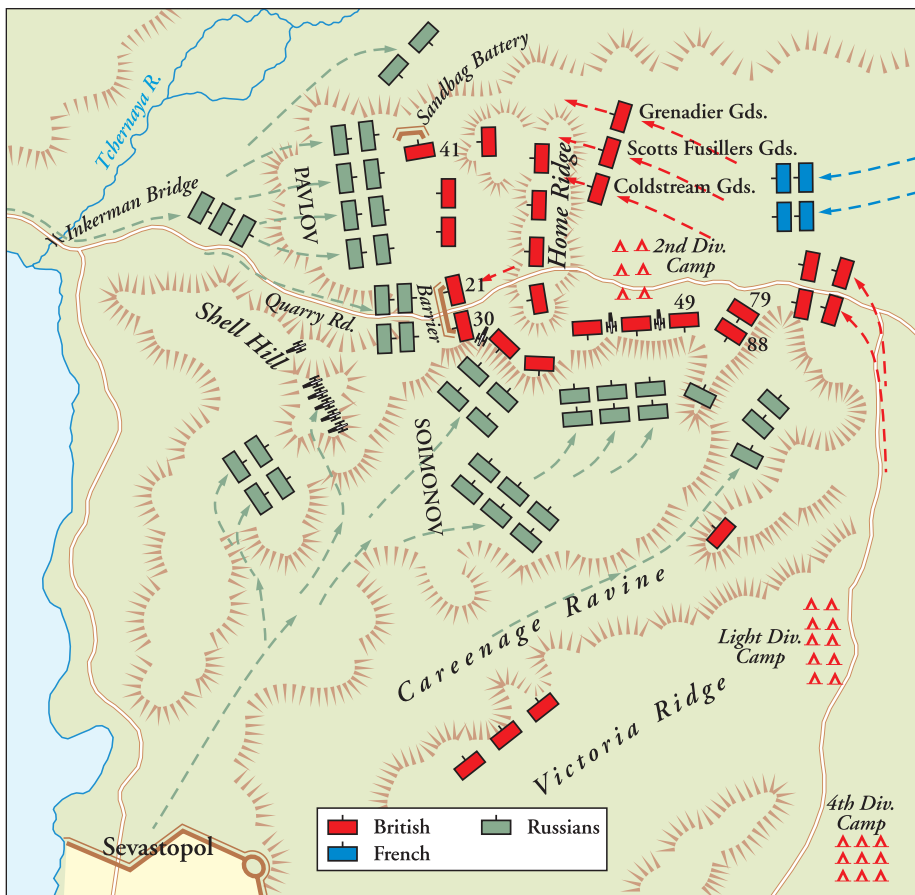
further oversight, the builders of the Sandbag Battery had neglected to build firing steps for the infantry. About three quarters of a mile opposite the Home Ridge and slightly to the west was an elevation called Shell Hill, occupied by a few British pickets. Between Home Ridge and the Careenage Ravine to its west was the Careenage Plateau, criss-crossed with numerous shrub-covered gullies.

Menshikov had selected this area for his attack because he believed that by piercing the allied lines there and threatening enemy communications with their base at Balaklava, he could force the allies to lift the siege. Neither Menshikov nor Dannenberg prepared detailed plans for the upcoming attack—they merely offered suggestions. Generals F.I. Soimonov and P.I. Pavlov, who were to command the two main Russian assault columns, were left to make preparations largely on their own. “Attack the English position,” they were told, without being told exactly where to attack.

Instead of conducting a personal reconnaissance, Dannenberg, who was the overall commander of the upcoming assault, twice chose to visit Admiral Pavel S. Nakhimov, commander of the Russian naval forces. During the first visit, when Dannenberg apologized for not calling on him sooner, Nakhimov replied pointedly, “Think nothing of it, Your Highness. It would be better if you would have visited Mount Inkerman instead.” When Dannenberg showed up at his headquarters for the second time, Nakhimov had to practically kick him out to get his mind on the business at hand.

Considering that they were fighting in their own country, the Russian commanders seemed strangely unfamiliar with the area where the battle was to take place. On October 26, the day after the famous Charge of the Light Brigade through the “Valley of Death” at Balaklava, the Russians made a probing attack against Mount Inkerman. For some reason, the officers who participated in that attack weren’t even consulted in planning the attack on November 5. All dispositions were made as if they were to be conducted on the level ground—a ridiculous oversight. In truth, a multitude of small ravines, gullies, steep slopes, and large boulders clogged the area.

The overall Russian plans were fairly straightforward. Soimonov’s column, advancing from Sevastopol along the Careenage Ravine, was to ascend the Mount Inkerman plateau and rendezvous there with Pavlov’s column. Pavlov’s troops from Menshikov’s field army were to descend the Inkerman Heights on the north side of the Chernaya River, cross the river over the Inkerman Bridge, and climb the plateau. After



**Despite being outnumbered, British forces took advantage of the rugged terrain at Inkerman to force the Russians into small, localized skirmishes and reduce their ability to exploit the numerical advantage.**

the link up, Soimonov and Pavlov were to attack together and sweep aside the British by sheer weight of numbers. To support them, General Prince M.D. Gorchakov, the older brother of the Danube army commander, deployed near the ruins of the old Turkish Inkerman Fortress opposite the French. He was to make a diversionary attack to prevent the French from supporting the British. General N.D. Timofeyev, sallying out from Sevastopol, was to make a diversion on British left flank.

Mount Inkerman seemed like a good place to make a try at the allied lines since the numbers of British troops deployed there were small. The immediate area of the Home Ridge was defended by some 3,000 men of the British 2nd Division. After the division’s commander, Sir De Lacy Evans, fell ill one of the brigade commanders, Irish-born Brig. Gen. John L. Pennefather, took over command. Approximately one mile south of them was the 1,350-man Guards Brigade. Another mile farther south was the French Corps of Observation, commanded by General Pierre Bosquet and numbering approximately 10,000 men. Its mission was to protect

the road junction leading to Balaklava. Almost 7,000 more British troops in parts of three divisions, the 3rd, 4th, and Light, were posted just west of the 2nd Division, but separated from it by multiple ravines and brush-covered slopes.

Around 5 AM on November 5, Soimonov’s column slipped out of Sevastopol. This force of roughly 19,000 men and 38 guns began climbing the muddy slopes, its right flank secured by the Careenage Ravine. At approximately the same time, Pavlov’s column of 16,000 men and 96 guns advanced on Mount Inkerman from the northeast. Gorchakov, with his 22,000 men and 88 cannon, was already in place on the far right of the allied line, facing the French.

Incredibly, no one had bothered to check the Inkerman Bridge over which Pavlov’s column was to cross. The bridge was in such a state of disrepair that two valuable hours had to be wasted repairing it before large bodies of troops could safely traverse it. Soimonov, attacking almost on schedule, went in unsupported by Pavlov. It had rained almost nonstop for the previous 24 hours, and the slopes of Mount Inkerman were muddy and slippery, making the

Russian ascent slow and difficult. Dense fog clung stubbornly to gullies and thickets. Nearly invisible in their gray overcoats against the background of gray fog, the Russian columns were almost on top of the the British outposts before they were spotted. First shots announced the coming of a long and bloody day. British soldiers, armed with quick-firing Minié rifles, put up a large volume of fire as they grudgingly gave ground under the weight of the Russian columns.

Alerted by the commotion, British commander Lord Raglan rode up to the Home Ridge around 7:30 AM. Even though the thick fog largely obscured the majority of the developing battlefield, he quickly appraised the situation and ordered up reinforcements from the 4th Division and the Guards Brigade. Raglan could see that the Russians were already on Shell Hill and became concerned about the Russian guns that would surely be emplaced there. To counteract the Russian guns, the British commander ordered two 18-pounder guns from the siege park moved to the Home Ridge.

Raglan was correct to worry. Soimonov immediately placed 22 12-pounders on Shell Hill and opened fire in the general direction of the British positions. Even though the fog largely obscured the British dispositions, numerous

Russian shells soon began exploding among the tents of the 2nd Division's base camp. The Russian artillery created havoc among British supply train horses and pack mules, killing scores of the animals. To minimize his casualties, Penefather moved the bulk of the 2nd Division down the forward slopes. Seeking to buy time for reinforcements, he began feeding his companies piecemeal into the forward skirmish line. "Whenever you see a head, hit it," he advised somewhat unhelpfully.

After placing approximately half of his force in reserve behind Shell Hill under Maj. Gen. O.P. Zhabolyutski, Soimonov personally led the rest forward. Encountering rough terrain, large Russian battalion-strength columns began to fracture into small elements, each crawling independently through numerous ravines up to the British positions. Even though Penefather's men were outnumbered 3-to-1, they unleashed such a furious and deadly fire that the Russian columns were brought to a halt. Within the first 30 minutes of the fight, both Soimonov and his second-in-command fell dead, picked off their horses by British sharpshooters. Throwing the disorganized force into confusion. The Russian officers customarily led from the front, and this reckless bravery resulted in disproportionate numbers of officers becoming *hors de combat*. Wavering without

instructions, Zhabolyutski would not commit any of his reserves without Dannenberg's personal approval.

At first, only two British 9-pounders supported the infantry. Soon, however, a six-gun British battery deployed at the head of a large gully and added its weight to the chaos. A small Russian column, charging out of the dead ground, rushed the battery and captured three cannon. British gunners bravely fought with swords and rammers to defend their pieces, but were cut down almost to a man near their guns. Bulling forward, the Russians began forcing back part of the 49th Regiment, only to be attacked in turn by four companies of the Connaught Rangers, the largely Irish 88th Regiment of the Light Division. Another British regiment with more guns, the 77th Foot, arrived to help restore the British line on the Home Ridge. By 8 AM, Soimonov's column, now a mob of intermixed units, began to ebb back to Shell Hill.

Thirty minutes later, Pavlov's column appeared on the scene, having been delayed at Inkerman Bridge for two hours. His forward unit, the Taroutin Jaeger Regiment, quickly captured the Sandbag Battery after driving off a small picket from the British 55th Regiment. Another Russian Jaeger regiment, named after the famous battle at Borodino, ran into more

## CAPTAIN MINIÉ'S DEADLY INVENTION

THE FORCE MULTIPLIER THAT allowed the outnumbered British to stand up to the overwhelming numbers of Russian attackers at Inkerman was the Minié bullet (not ball). The Russian soldiers, still armed with smooth-bore muskets, faced the daunting task of advancing into the muzzles of British Minié bullet-firing Enfield rifled muskets. The rapid-firing, deadly accurate British musketry literally mowed down the Russian ranks.

Since the Napoleonic Wars, European infantry had faced the dilemma of choosing between slow-firing but accurate rifles and faster firing but less accurate muskets. The ball fired by a smooth-bore musket did not have a tight fit, and upon leaving the musket's muzzle it often went astray. On the other hand, the grooves inside the rifle barrel tightly gripped and spun the bul-

let, giving it range and accuracy.

In 1849 a French armory captain, Claude-Etienne Minié, an inspector of musketry at the military academy at Vincennes, found the solution to merge the two.

The Minié bullet, made out of soft lead, was not really a ball, but rather a cylindrical bullet. Being smaller than the diameter of the barrel, the Minié bullet could be easily dropped inside the barrel. Shaped like a cone with a cavity in its base, the Minié bullet had three angular grooves on its body. When the powder charge exploded against the cavity in its base, the bullet would expand the grooves and create a tight fit in the rifled barrel. The cavity in the bullet's base also helped to a degree in cleaning out the barrel of the black-powder fouling.

Before the advent of rifles, the artillery was the primary arm used to strike an enemy at a dis-

tance. The numbers of rifle-armed specialists were too few to seriously alter the makeup of the battlefield. But when regular infantry units became armed with rifled muskets firing Minié bullets, the artillery suddenly found itself within the range of hostile infantrymen. At the Battle of Inkerman, Russian artillerymen suffered greatly from British infantry fire.

The invention of the Minié bullet also changed the way infantry was employed in battle. The dense infantry columns of Napoleonic times were replaced with troops fighting in loose line formations and volley fire gave way to fire-at-will. To their dismay, the large Russian columns were decimated by British rifle fire during the Battles of Alma and Inkerman. Similar weapons were also



These Civil War-era Minié bullets are similar to the type fired by the British Enfield rifles at Inkerman.

used with devastating effect during the American Civil War a decade later.

Minié bullets significantly helped in removing cavalry as a decisive force on the battlefield, as well. During Napoleonic times, the infantry had to form a bayonet-bristling square to protect itself from cavalry. Now, the infantry was able to bring fire on the advancing cavalry at much longer distances and with much greater accuracy. The advent of the Minié bullet thus signified a turning point in military technology, marking the end of massed formations and the beginning of more decentralized operations by smaller units. □



Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

**Clouds of gunsmoke dot the rolling countryside at Inkerman during the height of the battle. The British, armed with quick-firing Minié rifles, were able to offset the Russian weight of numbers in bitter close-quarter fighting.**

men of the 55th and part of the 30th Regiment. The British tried to pour a volley into a dense Russian column, but damp cartridges misfired in their Minié rifles. Undeterred by the weak volley, the 30th Regiment led a bayonet charge that forced the Russians to retreat down the slope. Another British regiment, the 41st, smashed into the Taroutin Jaegers and forcibly ejected them from the Sandbag Battery.

The second echelon of Pavlov's column, composed of the Okhotsk, Selenginsk, and Yakoutsk Regiments, bore hard on the British right, retaking the Sandbag Battery. In turn, the Russians were counterattacked by riflemen from the Light Division and one of their regiments, Yakoutsk, was driven back. As the ebb and flow of battle developed, an undefended breach began opening in the British line. Reformed, the Yakoutsk Regiment began advancing into the gap between the Sandbag Battery and the Barrier. A brigade from the 4th Division plugged the gap in the nick of time. The British Guards Brigade attacked the Sandbag Battery and retook it after some heavy bayonet work. The Russian Okhotsk and Selenginsk Regiments, losing men at every step, continued launching themselves

against the British Guards. Manchester-born Timothy Gowing of the 7th Royal Fusiliers described the action around Sandbag Battery: "On came the Russians," he wrote. "The bayonet was used with terrible effect by all regiments. The enemy, driven on by their brave officers, had to—and did literally—climb over heaps of their slain countrymen and ours to renew this bloodthirsty contest; but they had to go back time after time much quicker than they came."

As the British casualties at the Sandbag Battery mounted, the commanding general of the 4th Division, General Sir George Cathcart, personally led elements of two British regiments against the Russian left. Descending into a narrow ravine, Cathcart's force suddenly saw a body of men appear on the slope above them. The thick fog prevented their identification until they poured down a musket volley into the British ranks. Thinking that they were being fired upon by their own side, Cathcart ordered his men to remove their greatcoats so that their red coats would be visible. Still, the fire from above continued to rain down upon them. Without further hesitation, Cathcart turned his

men around and led them up the slope at the Russians. Now the muddy slopes handicapped the British. The withering fire decimated the British ranks, with Cathcart being among the first to be killed, shot through the heart. His adjutant Charles Seymour, son of a former British ambassador to St. Petersburg, fell dead at his side. A few pitiful survivors of Cathcart's force managed to fight their way to safety.

At this critical juncture, elements of two more British regiments arrived to reinforce the beleaguered Guardsmen at the Sandbag Battery. On their heels came two full French regiments led by Bosquet himself. The two heavy 18-pounder cannon that Lord Raglan had ordered up earlier finally went into action around 9:30 AM. Soon, the heavy British cannon began silencing the Russian guns on Shell Hill. The combined force of British and French began pushing the Russians down the ravines, rescuing some of the British troops who had been cut off earlier.

Around 10 AM, Timofeyev launched his pre-arranged sally from Sevastopol. Even though his force consisted of only four battalions of the Minsk Regiment and four light cannon, they



**Attempting to rally the 4th Division up a muddy slope, General Sir George Cathcart was among the first to fall on the treacherous ascent.**

attacked with such élan that strong French reserves had to be shifted to meet them. Stubbornly giving way, Timofeyev retreated back toward Sevastopol. The French troops, impetuously pursuing him, came within the range of Russian guns in the city and had to fall back after losing a number of men, including one general killed.

While the fight with Timofeyev raged, Bosquet was told that an attack was developing against the road to Balaklava. With the Russian troops crawling all over the Inkerman Plateau, a strong attack toward Balaklava would have shattered the British positions. When the French commanding general on the scene, General François Canrobert, conferred with Raglan in person and relayed to him the rumored new development, Raglan said in no uncertain terms, “We are [screwed].”

Luckily for the allies, the Russian attack on the far right of the French position in the Balaklava valley was only a feint. While not budging with his main force, Gorchakov released his advance guard under Maj. Gen. Pavel Liprandi to make a diversionary attack against the French forward positions. Consisting of only a few regiments, Liprandi’s attack was no more than a pinprick. However, it did delay movement of further French reinforcements while Bosquet sorted things out. The hard-pressed British, seeing the French forces falter, almost lost hope. Colonel Somerset Calthorpe, Lord Raglan’s nephew and aide-de-camp, described the scene: “I cannot describe to you the sinking sensations one felt on observing our allies give way,” Calthorpe recalled. “Our first impression

was that they had retired, beaten back by the overpowering masses of Russian infantry. I confess myself that I thought the day was lost.”

The heavy pressure on the Home Ridge continued. Dannenberg again and again personally led his regiments against the British position. Casualties were heavy on both sides. The British Minié rifles proved to be the great equalizer. Their higher accuracy and faster rate of fire allowed the British to negate the larger numbers of their Russian foes. The thick fog equally hampered and aided the both sides. The British did not realize just how severely they were outnumbered, and the Russians did not know just how few British were opposing them. The irregular nature of the terrain broke up larger formations into small groups, each fighting individual battles among the rain, fog, and thickets. The narrow gullies and ravines limited the number of men that could face each other at one time, and the larger numbers of Russians could not be effectively brought to bear on the British.

It was truly a soldiers’ battle. The units became splintered, intermixed, and confused. In some places there were no cohesive battle lines, only pockets of British and Russians furiously hacking at each other in the mud. Officers were effectively reduced to commanding the immediate vicinity around them. Generals commanded battalions, colonels led companies, lieutenants and captains fought sword in hand alongside their men. Lt. Col. Edward Hamley of the 1st Division described the weltering confusion: “On our part it was a confused and desperate struggle. Colonels of regiments led on small parties, and fought like subalterns, cap-

tains like privates. Once engaged every man was his own general.”

The 2nd Division was leaking its lifeblood onto the rocky, muddy slopes. The British 41st and 95th together could only muster 64 men after the battle. The whole of the 2nd Division had less than 300 men remaining in ranks at the end of the day, commanded by a major. The Guards Brigade’s casualties ran almost 50 percent. The Russian units were suffering appalling casualties as well. Soimonov’s column lost over half of its officers. Every time a disordered Russian unit would pull back, its officers would rally the men and fling them back at the British. Shockingly, almost Dannenberg held back 12,000 men from Soimonov’s and Pavlov’s columns in reserve behind the Shell Hill. These fresh regiments might well have shattered the British line, which was cracking in many places. Instead, they stood motionless, listening to the furious battle raging within arm’s reach. Similarly inexcusable, Gorchakov’s 22,000 men stood idle as well. A man of unquestionable personal bravery, Gorchakov proved incapable of independent command. Had he exerted even some pressure on the French, they would not have been able to help the British.

While Gorchakov’s column did nothing, the French began shifting more and more units to reinforce the British line. One such regiment, the 7th Light, came up to reinforce Pennefather, but immediately came under concentrated fire from Russian artillery and had to fall back. The Russian infantry pressed hard against them, and a breach began to develop in the allied line. Parts of several British regiments rushed forward to stabilize the line along the Barrier. The Russians reformed and charged again, but the scratch force of British regiments stood their ground. The dead were stacked in heaps several high, a grim testimonial to the bravery and tenacity of both the British and Russian soldiers. The British line held.

Meanwhile, the British 18-pounders were proving successful in their use of counterbattery fire against the Russian guns on Shell Hill. The rate of fire of the Russian guns slackened as more and more guns were knocked out by the heavier British cannon. A number of British infantrymen also turned their fire on Russian gunners. The Superior range and accuracy of British rifled muskets played havoc on the Russian gun crews.

Reluctantly realizing that nothing more could be done, Dannenberg ordered the army to retreat. Around noon, the Russian infantry began disengaging everywhere and retreating to their starting positions. Several French artillery batteries set up on a small hillock and began blasting gaps in the calmly retreating Russian



Although the British Guards fighting around the much-disputed Sandbag Battery managed to drive off their Russian opponent, they still suffered nearly 50 percent casualties in the process.

ranks. Two Russian steamships, *Vladimir* and *Khersona*, armed with cannon, moved up to Inkerman Bridge and engaged the French guns. Their effective fire forced the French artillery to pull back. At the same time, engineering Colonel E.I. Totleben, who had designed the defenses at Sevastopol, organized a scratch force of parts of two Russian regiments to keep back the aggressive French skirmishers.

Bloodied, beaten, but not demoralized, the Russians pulled back in good order. By 2 PM, the Russian forces had disengaged at all points. The firing petered out. The bloody battle, perhaps the last purely hand-to-hand battle in military history, ended up not with a bang but a whimper. Both sides resumed the long siege of Sevastopol, which lasted another 10 months until the Russian garrison finally surrendered on September 8, 1855.

Almost immediately after the last shot was fired at Inkerman, the discredited trio of Menshikov, Dannenberg, and Gorchakov began pointing fingers at one another. Fortunately for them, Soimonov had conveniently gotten himself killed, and a large portion of the blame was heaped on the one man among them who had made the supreme sacrifice. This was the last time during the Crimean War that the Russian forces would achieve numerical superiority over their opponents. However, the

excellent opportunity to dramatically change the course of events was wasted due to timidity and disorganization on the part of the senior Russian commanders. While all of the available British troops, just short of 12,000 men, and approximately 5,000 Frenchmen were committed into the fight, less than 30,000 men out of available 60,000 Russians directly participated.

In British military history, the Battle of Inkerman quickly took its place as a shining example of the famed tenacity of the British soldier fighting against overwhelming odds. Had the Russian commanders committed all their available forces, the odds against the British would have been simply daunting. As it was, the “thin red line of heroes” once again had held fast. Meanwhile, the stoic Russian soldiers were unfairly maligned after the battle by Menshikov, who claimed that his men did not fight bravely enough. Almost immediately, the senior Russian commanders who had fought at Inkerman came to the defense of their men, disavowing any claims of their cowardice. But the Russian rank-and-file did not need anybody to tell them how well they had fought. They knew.

As for the British soldiers in the ranks, Queen Victoria uncharacteristically exerted herself to praise their efforts. The Duke of Newcastle, the English secretary of war, passed along word to

Lord Raglan that “the Queen desires that you will take measures for making known her no less warm approval of the services of all officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers who have so gloriously won by their blood, freely shed, fresh honors for the army of a country which sympathizes as deeply with their privations and exertions as it glories in their victories and exults in their fame. Let not any private soldier in those ranks believe that his conduct is unheeded. The Queen thanks him—his country honors him.”

The night after the battle was clear, the fog and the rain which for so long had tormented the combatants having finally dissipated. The moonlit slopes of Mount Inkerman were covered by mangled bodies of Russian, British, and French soldiers. Over 12,000 Russians had fallen, dead or wounded, along with 3,400 British and 950 Frenchmen. The medical personnel and stretcher parties of both sides who roamed the area said later that it seemed as though the mountain itself was groaning. French General Bosquet, no stranger to combat, summed up the battle most fittingly. Looking down at the British, French, and Russian bodies piled atop each other around the Sandbag Battery, he covered his nose with a handkerchief and muttered, “*Quel abattoir!* [What a slaughterhouse!]” □

SKILLED IN THE MURDEROUS ARTS TO WHICH THEY GAVE THEIR NAME, THE EARLY SHIITE SECT KNOWN AS THE ASSASSINS PREDATED MODERN-DAY TERRORISTS SUCH AS AL-QAIDA BY A THOUSAND YEARS.

# Blood in the Sand

BY MARK S. LONGO

Italian traveler Marco Polo, shown in this medieval painting leading his 13th-century caravan across Asia, crossed paths briefly with the much-dreaded Assassins. Unlike many, Polo lived to tell about it.

The Art Archive / Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



Their name has been synonymous with murder for almost a thousand years, but few people know the full truth about the enigmatic organization known as the Assassins. Long considered a cult of wanton, drug-crazed killers, the Assassins in reality were far more than a fringe group of political murderers. Devout Muslims who controlled a large domain in the Middle East, their daggers struck down Christians and Muslims alike with equal ferocity. Although their empire was destroyed in the 13th century, the controversial legacy of the Assassins remains alive and well in the modern world.

The Nizari Ismailis, otherwise known as the Assassins, were a splinter sect of Shiite Muslims. Their name derived from their adherence to the teachings of two radical Shiite leaders: an 8th-century Imam named Ismail and a 12th-century Imam named Nizar. The Nizari Ismailis were founded in 1090 AD by the legendary Hasan-i-Sabah. Like the organization he founded, Hasan was a deeply controversial figure, portrayed as both a devout religious scholar



and the father of modern terrorism. Under his leadership, the Assassins grew into an influential religious and political power. In the process, they unleashed a wave of murder that terrorized the Middle East for centuries.

Hasan-i-Sabah was born to a devout Shiite family in Persia (modern-day Iran). In the early years of his life, Hasan traveled widely

through the Middle East and studied under various Islamic scholars. Along the way, he managed to earn the enmity of a wealthy and powerful Turkish vizier named Nizam al-Mulk. Exactly how this happened remains a mystery. Some scholars say Nizam and Hasan were friends until Hasan betrayed him. Others say that Hasan was a political dissident

who conspired against Nizam and the ruling Seljuk Turks. In either case, Hasan was forced to flee to Egypt to escape the vizier's wrath. He stayed on the run for years, preaching his devout Shiite beliefs to converts in wild regions where Nizam could not reach him.

It was during this period that Hazan came across the mountain fortress of Alamut in north-



The Old Man of the Mountain, displaying his power of authority, orders two of his Assassins to kill themselves.

ern Persia—the perfect place to base his Nizari Ismaili movement. The fortress was isolated and virtually impregnable to outside forces. Unfortunately, it was already occupied by a Seljuk official. According to Assassin lore, Hasan spent two years infiltrating his followers into Alamut. When the time was right, he smuggled himself inside and offered to purchase the castle from its owner. Realizing that he was outnumbered and had little choice, the Seljuk official took the offer and departed. This marked the beginning of the Assassins as a separate and independent entity.

Once he had taken control of Alamut, Hasan wasted no time in expanding the Assassins' influence throughout the region. He sent his followers out to convert the surrounding tribes to the Nizari brand of Islam. What could not be taken through conversion was taken by force, and Assassin garrisons were established throughout Persia. The remarkable growth of the sect drew the attention of the ruling Seljuk Turks, who quickly moved to destroy the upstart Assassins. They besieged Alamut in 1092, but were driven off in a bitter battle. Hasan followed his military victory with his first foray into the Assassins' future hallmark—political murder. He dispatched several of his trained killers (known as *fidais*, meaning faithful) to the court of his old enemy, Nizam-al-Mulk. Using

disguises, they managed to get close enough to plunge their ceremonial daggers into the vizier. The Assassins' trademark style of murder was born. In later years, some historians would question the role of the Assassins in the death of Nizam-al-Mulk, attributing his murder to political rivals within the Seljuk court. However, even if the murder was committed by Nizam's rivals, the belief that it was committed by the Assassins showed how far their power—and the fear they inspired—already had spread.

The killing of Nizam and the military victory at Alamut established the Assassins as a force to be reckoned with in the region. Through a combination of military conflict, religious conversion, and political murder, Hasan continued to expand his influence throughout Persia. As the Assassins grew, they encroached ever deeper into Seljuk territory. This led, in turn, to an ongoing state of war between the Ismailis and the Seljuks. The Assassins took control of several fortresses and towns, only to be driven out by the Turks a few years later.

The fortress of Shahdiz in the modern Iranian province of Esfahan was a good example of the back-and-forth struggle between the Assassins and the Seljuks. After successfully converting many of the surrounding towns, the Assassins seized the fortress in 1100. It remained under

their control for seven years, during which time the Ismaili converts in the region suffered under a withering barrage of Seljuk attacks. In 1107, Seljuk Sultan Muhammed Tapar launched a concerted effort against Ismaili strongholds in his territory. The sultan personally led a massive force against Shahdiz and slaughtered the entire garrison. The local leader of the Assassins was skinned alive and his head preserved as a grisly trophy of the sultan's victory.

In that same year, the Seljuks made another concerted effort to destroy the heart of Assassin power at Alamut. This time they sent an army bent on vengeance, led by the son of the murdered vizier Nizam-al-Mulk. Another epic siege unfolded, during which many Ismailis in the surrounding area were killed. The Assassins once again managed to break the siege, but the sultan refused to quit. He sent a third army to Alamut in 1109. This time the siege would last eight years and devastate the entire region around the fortress. However, just when things looked worst for Hasan and his followers, fortune turned in their favor. Sultan Muhammed Tapar died, and his army was recalled. Once again, the Assassins had survived against overwhelming odds.

The fact that the Assassins managed to hold their own for so many years against the Seljuk Turks was a testament to their unwavering belief in the righteousness of their cause. Like modern extremist groups, the Assassins had little in the way of a formal military arm. Instead, they relied upon zealous radicals who believed that death in battle led to paradise in the afterlife. The noted traveler Marco Polo described the selection and training of the Assassin *fidais* in his book, *The Travels of Marco Polo*: "At his court, likewise, this chief entertained a number of youths, from the age of twelve to twenty years, selected from the inhabitants of the surrounding mountains, who showed a disposition for martial exercises, and appeared to possess the quality of daring courage. When the Sheikh desired the death of some great lord, he would first try an experiment to find out which of his Assassins were the best. He would send some off on a mission in the neighborhood at no great distance with orders to kill such and such a man. They went without demur and did the bidding of their lord. Then, when they had killed the man, they returned to court—those of them that escaped, for some were caught and put to death and the Sheikh knew very well which of them had displayed the greatest zeal, because after each he had sent others of his men as spies to report which was the most daring and the best hand at murdering."

Polo's account, while colored by centuries of anti-Ismaili prejudice, is a fascinating depiction of these shadowy historical figures. In many

ways, Assassin *fidais* were similar to modern-day suicide bombers. They carried out their missions with no regard to escape or personal safety. However, instead of using an indiscriminate explosive device, the *fidais* were quite precise in their executions. Armed with only a dagger, they relied on stealth and disguise to get close to their enemies. Patience was a highly regarded virtue among the *fidais*. Only when the right moment availed itself would they attack, striking down political and military leaders with deadly proficiency.

The death of Sultan Muhammed Tapar threw the Seljuk Empire into chaos and ushered in a period of uneasy peace with the Assassins. Hasan used this time to rebuild his shattered forces and consolidate his power. A latter-day biographer described Hasan as “perspicacious, capable, learned in geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, magic, and other things.” Ascetic and abstemious, Hasan banned the drinking of wine in his kingdom, and even executed one of his own sons for violating the ban. A second son was put to death for allegedly plotting the murder of a local missionary. The Assassins also expanded their influence into Syria and other nearby countries. With the Seljuk Empire embroiled in civil war, the Assassins took advantage of the respite to establish themselves as a stable political force in the region. They rebuilt their fortresses, opened trade relations with nearby powers, and even levied taxes on the territories under their control. After two decades of relative calm, Hasan attempted to heal the wounds between the Assassins and the Seljuks, but his efforts fell on deaf ears.

Hasan-i-Sabah, the father of the Assassins, died peacefully at Alamut in 1124. He was followed by a succession of leaders as the Assassins continued to expand throughout the Middle East. Outside of Alamut, the greatest center of Ismaili power was in Syria. It was there that the Assassins encountered the crusading armies of the Christian West. The relationship between the Crusaders and the Syrian Assassins was the foundation for many of the popular myths about the sect. The sect’s early years in Syria did not go well. Caught between the rampaging Crusaders and the vengeful Seljuk Turks, the Syrian Ismailis paid a high price in both gold and blood. In their early engagements, the Crusaders conquered several Assassin strongholds and captured a high-ranking Assassin leader. They even forced the sect to pay an annual tribute. At the same time, the Seljuks began another crackdown on the sect. Thousands of Ismailis were either driven from Syria or put to the sword.

Despite these hardships, the Assassins still managed to establish a sizable presence in

Syria. By the middle of the 12th century, they had taken control of a number of fortresses and created a loyal base of converts. It was also around this time that the relationship began to change between the Syrian Assassins and the Crusaders. The two groups of violent religious extremists should have been mortal enemies. Indeed, they continued to war on each other sporadically throughout the 12th and 13th centuries. Yet by the mid 12th century, there also appeared a distinct spirit of cooperation between the two groups. The main cause of this newfound friendship was the rise of Imad ed-din Zengi. Zengi controlled the Seljuk sultanate in Syria, but eventually became so powerful that he spawned his own dynasty, known as the Zengids. Zengi was a bitter foe of both the Crusaders and the Assassins, and his son Nur ad-Din would lead the Zengid dynasty to great victories against both groups. The threat posed by the Zengids led the Syrian Assassins and the Crusaders to join forces against their common enemy. One of the most famous examples of this came in 1149, when the Assassins combined with Raymond of Antioch against Nur ad-Din. This unprecedented collaboration was a failure, and both Raymond and the Assassin leader were slain.

The bizarre relationship between the Crusaders and the Assassins is perhaps best exemplified by the alternating friendship and animosity between the Syrian Assassins and the Knights Templar. Both the Knights Templar and the Assassins were legendary for their religious devotion, proclivity for violence and extreme secrecy. Although diametrically opposed in belief, the two groups were actually very similar in practice. Both adhered to a severe form of religious asceticism, both had a hierarchical command structure, and both believed that death in battle led to rewards in the afterlife.

The many similarities spawned a number of wild theories about the exact nature of the relationship between the two groups. Some historians have even suggested the Templar Rule was derived from the Assassins, and that their exposure to the sect was the reason behind the later charges of heresy against the Templars. However, not all was peaceful between the Templars and the Assassins. Three years after joining forces with Raymond of Antioch, the Assassins turned on their former allies. Assassin *fidais* murdered Count Raymond III of Tripoli, a prominent leader of the Crusaders. This prompted a swift, violent reprisal by the Templars. They defeated a local Assassin garrison and imposed a steep annual tribute on the sect. The notion that the devout Templars would accept tribute from infidel murderers

was scandalous and would later be used to impugn them at their trials for heresy.

The Syrian branch of the sect underwent a massive transformation when Rashid al-Din Sinan became its leader in 1162. By the time of Sinan’s ascension to power, the Syrian Assassins were operating as a virtually independent entity. They received occasional instructions from Alamut, but all the essential leadership functions were carried out in Syria. Sinan is widely believed to have been the inspiration for the infamous Old Man of the Mountains depicted in *The Travels of Marco Polo*. He presided over the sect during an extremely dangerous period for the Ismailis. Their annual tribute to the Templars kept them safe from Crusader attack, but Nur ad-Din continued his assaults on the group. At the same time, another threat was emerging in the form of the legendary Saladin. Both Saladin and Nur ad-Din were Sunnis, and they saw the austere Shiite beliefs of the Assassins as heresy. As such, both leaders thought little of slaughtering Ismailis wherever they found them. The Assassins were caught between three hostile enemies.

In 1173, Sinan, alarmed by the growing power of Saladin, took steps to reinforce his tentative peace with the Crusaders. What happened next has been the subject of debate for over 800 years. Some sources, including the renowned William of Tyre, believed that Sinan sent emissaries to King Amalric I of Jerusalem to propose an alliance. Sinan even offered to convert to Christianity as a sign of their newfound cooperation. A key condition of this alliance was the end of the Assassins’ tribute payments to the Templars. Amalric accepted these terms, but the furious Templars slaughtered the Assassin envoys on their way back from Jerusalem. Other sources claimed that Sinan never sent the envoys, or else that their intent was misconstrued by William of Tyre. They also claimed that a devout Shiite like Sinan would never offer to convert to Christianity. In any event, thanks to the brutality of the Templars, no formal alliance was ever enacted between the Assassins and the Crusaders.

Nur ad-Din and Amalric died in 1174, leaving Saladin as the primary threat to the Assassins. Sinan sent a number of *fidais* to murder the Muslim leader. These *fidais* succeeded in injuring Saladin in 1176, but his armor saved him from a mortal wound. The fact that Saladin was wearing armor under his robes shows the effectiveness of Sinan’s terror campaign. The ability of Assassin *fidais* to penetrate even the most elaborate security measures was well known throughout the Middle East. It soon became standard practice for leaders opposed to the Assassins to wear armor at all times,

even in private. One tale claims that Saladin became so paranoid about the Assassins that he traveled inside a large wooden box. He also reportedly slept in a high wooden tower and refused to let anyone approach him whom he did not personally know. Such precautions, if true, were clear examples of the perceived power and threat of the Assassins.

After the attempts on his life, Saladin decided to rid himself of Sinan and his followers. He led a large force into Syria in 1176 and besieged the main Ismaili fortress at Masyaf. However, once again the Assassins were miraculously saved from certain destruction. After a short siege, Saladin mysteriously abandoned his assault and left Syria. Assassin lore is filled with reasons for his abrupt departure. One story says that Sinan dispatched a *fidai* to Saladin's tent. The *fidai* plunged a dagger into Saladin's bed, along with a threatening note. When Saladin awoke in the morning, he was so terrified that he ordered his army to withdraw. Another story says that Sinan sent a messenger to Saladin's court. When the messenger arrived, he asked Saladin's two most loyal bodyguards if they would kill their master for Sinan. The bodyguards nodded yes and drew their swords. Terrified by Sinan's influence, Saladin ordered his armies to abandon the siege of Masyaf.

The true reasons for Saladin's actions may never be known, but the impact of his experience in Syria was readily apparent in his later policies. After the siege of Masyaf, his forces coexisted in relative peace with the Assassins. Sinan ceased his attempts to murder the Arab

leader, and Saladin never again attacked an Ismaili stronghold. This truce freed both groups to resume their attacks on the Christian kingdoms. Saladin's battles with the Crusaders and his rivalry with Richard the Lionheart have been well documented. However, the Assassins' role in these conflicts is not as well known.

Sinan struck his greatest blow against the Crusaders in April 1192, when two Syrian *fidais* disguised as monks murdered the king of Jerusalem, Conrad de Montferrat, in Tyre. The killing of Montferrat was the most infamous of all Assassin political murders. It was recounted by Western troubadours and bards for centuries and helped shape the modern image of the Ismailis as cold-blooded killers. Yet, as with many of the sect's murders, the role of the Assassins in Montferrat's death remains questionable. Conrad de Montferrat and Richard the Lionheart were political rivals, and some sources claimed that it was Richard's henchmen, not the Assassins, who actually carried out the deed and blamed it on the sect. Others claimed the Assassins were acting on behalf of Richard the Lionheart or even Saladin himself, giving credence to later rumors that the Assassins were killers for hire. The Moorish traveler Ibn Battuta passed along the rumor, writing, "When the Sultan wishes to send one of them to kill an enemy, he pays them the price of his blood. If the murderer escapes after performing his task, the money is his; if he is caught, his children get it. They use poisoned knives to strike down their appointed victims. Sometimes their plots fail, and they themselves are killed."

Sinan died a few months after the murder of Montferrat, bringing to an end a remarkable period in Assassin history. After his death, the Syrian Assassins lost much of the independence they had gained under his dynamic leadership. Saladin died in the following year, ending the brief period of truce with the Ismailis. His death plunged the region into chaos as various factions struggled to seize control of his vast empire. The Assassins were once again forced to navigate stormy political and religious seas in order to survive. Their extreme Shiite beliefs continued to alienate them from the orthodox Sunni Muslims who dominated the region.

After a series of disastrous military encounters, including several raids on Alamut itself, a new Assassin grand master named Hasan III emerged. In 1210, Hasan III decided to end the political isolation of the sect by renouncing his Shiite beliefs and embracing Sunnism. During his tenure, the library at Alamut became a renowned center of learning for Sunni scholars. The Assassins even allied themselves with various Sunni governments and fought alongside them in military engagements. Their long history as pariahs in the eyes of the Sunni establishment had finally come to an end, but the reprieve was short-lived. In 1219, a new threat emerged that would soon eclipse all others—the Mongols had invaded the Middle East.

Hasan III, realizing the danger posed by the Mongols, sent emissaries to treat with Genghis Khan. This resulted in a period of truce between the Mongols and the Assassins. However, Hasan died in 1221, and with him ended

## HOW THE ASSASSINS GOT THEIR NAME

How the Nizari Ismailis came to be known as the Assassins is still the subject of much debate. Popular mythology maintains that their ominous name derived from their use of drugs such as opium and hashish to induce a fanatical frenzy in their killers. This myth was first carried back to Europe by the Crusaders, but did not become widely known in the West until it was published in the travelogues of Marco Polo. Polo discussed the workings of the Assassins in his book and even claimed to have visited Alamut. However, it should be remembered that he wrote his travelogues in the late 13th century, well after the Assassin

period had come to an end.

According to Polo, the Assassins were led by a shadowy figure called the Old Man of the Mountains. The Old Man constructed a secret area inside Alamut that he called the Garden of Paradise. The garden supposedly was filled with exotic food, drink, and scantily clad women. His young recruits were taken there and drugged into a stupor. They would awaken inside the garden and be overwhelmed by its delights. Polo continued: "At certain times he caused opium to be administered to ten or dozen of the youths; and when half dead with sleep he had them conveyed to the several apart-

ments of the palaces in the garden. Upon awakening from the state of lethargy, their senses were struck with all the delightful objects that have been described, and each perceived himself surrounded by lovely damsels, singing, playing, and attracting his regards by the most fascinating caresses, serving him also with delicate viands and exquisite wines; until intoxicated with excess of enjoyment amidst actual rivulets of milk and wine, he believed himself assuredly in Paradise, and felt an unwillingness to relinquish its delights."

After a short time, the Old Man would remove them from the

garden, give them a ceremonial dagger and order them to murder a selected target. He promised them that, if they were successful, they would be allowed to return to the garden. If they died carrying out their mission, they would be rewarded with even greater delights in the afterlife.

The 14th-century German priest Brocardus left behind an even more hair-raising description of the Assassin sect. Describing the dangers of travel in the Middle East, Brocardus specifically cited the Assassins: "I name the Assassins, who are to be cursed and fled. They sell themselves, are thirsty for human blood, kill the innocent for

the Assassins' acceptance of Sunni beliefs. His son Mohammed III returned the sect to its Shiite roots. This shift could not have happened at a worse time. The Assassins became isolated from their former Sunni allies just as the Mongols descended upon the region. The Khwarazmian Empire in modern Uzbekistan was the first to fall to the Mongol hordes. As the Mongols conquered more territory in the Middle East, conflict with the Assassins became inevitable.

Over the next 25 years, the Great Khan and his descendants swept through modern-day Iran. The Assassins became so desperate that they put aside old animosities in an effort to forge an alliance against the Mongols. They even sent ambassadors to Europe in the vain hope that the Christian monarchs would join them against the pagan invaders. However, the European leaders, many of whom believed that the Mongol Khan was the mythical Christian king Prester John, were already attempting to forge an alliance of their own with the Mongols. Without outside assistance, the Assassins had little chance of surviving the onslaught of the Golden Horde.

The final act in the history of the Assassins begins in 1252 with the rise to power of Mangu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan. One of Mangu's first official acts was to charge his brother Huelgu with destroying the Assassins once and for all. The reasons for Mangu's hostility against the Assassins are not entirely clear. One story claims that a Muslim official complained to the Great Khan about having to wear armor under his robes to protect against

Assassin attacks. Ismaili lore claims that it was Mangu who did the complaining, responding to multiple Assassin attempts on his life. However, if these attempts on the life of Mangu Khan took place, they only succeeded in provoking his rage. One by one, the Assassins' strongholds fell to the Mongols. In 1256, Huelgu's soldiers razed Alamut to the ground. Even its prized library was burned, destroying much of the recorded history of the Assassins. The last grand master of the sect, Mohammed III's son Khurshah, was taken to the Great Khan's court in chains and beaten to death.

The Syrian branch of the Assassins survived the initial Mongol onslaught. In 1260, they allied with the Mamelukes and helped to drive the Mongols out of Syria. However, without the power and influence of Alamut, the isolated Assassins had little chance of survival. Their Mameluke allies soon turned on them and conquered the last remaining Ismaili strongholds in Syria, ending the main period of Assassin history.

Although they had been destroyed as a functioning power in the Middle East, scattered groups of Ismailis still survived. Some groups remained under Mameluke control, where they degenerated into killers-for-hire for the Mameluke sultans. Others blended into the broader Islamic community while still maintaining their Ismaili heritage. The descendants of these groups have survived into the modern day. The leader of the modern Nizari Ismailis, the Aga Khan, is a direct descendant of Khurshah, the last Assassin grand master.

The reemergence of Islamic extremism has once again brought the Assassins into the spotlight. They have been widely denounced in the media as the first Islamic terrorists and the spiritual forebears of such modern terrorist groups as Al-Qaeda. While much of this is political rhetoric, there are some similarities between the Assassins and today's Islamic extremist groups. Like modern terrorists, the Assassins sought to instill fear and uncertainty in their enemies. They made frequent use of suicide attacks and believed that their actions would earn them rewards in the afterlife. They also employed sleeper agents who would penetrate enemy groups and wait for months or even years before striking their target. In addition, they were not afraid to shed the blood of fellow Muslims in order to advance their cause.

There are, however, significant differences between the Ismailis and modern extremists. Unlike the terrorists of today, the Assassins limited their targets to military and political leaders. There are no records of their engaging in the indiscriminate killing of civilians. Also, while the Assassins used terror tactics, the method in which they employed them was far different. While modern extremists seek to terrorize civilian populations, the Assassins sought to terrorize their leaders. They believed that one well-placed dagger could succeed where an entire army could not. In today's world, with the threat of biological and nuclear terrorist attacks looming over entire civilian populations, the targeted killings of the Assassins seem almost quaint by comparison. □



AKG-Images

The Old Man of the Mountain administers a drugged wine to three young men chosen to be Assassins.

a price, and care nothing for either life or salvation. Like the devil, they transfigure them-

selves into angels of light, by imitating the gestures, garments, languages, customs and acts of

various nations and peoples." Polo's and Brocardus's fanciful tales of drugs and murder, while exciting, have little basis in reality. There is no evidence to suggest that the Assassins used drugs in their ceremonies. Indeed, the use of alcohol and other intoxicants was prohibited by the austere Islamic sect. Despite such prohibitions, the myth that the Assassins were drug-crazed killers has persisted into the modern day. Part of the confusion stems from the terms *hashishim* and *hashishiyya*, two names commonly used by early Muslim sources to refer to the Nizari Ismailis. These names would later become the roots of

the word "assassin." Both of these terms loosely translate to "users of hashish," prompting many later historians to assume that the Nizaris used the drug. However, since hashish was considered to be the drug of the immoral and disenfranchised, it is more likely that the names were meant in a derogatory manner. It must be remembered that many contemporary chroniclers of the Assassins were Sunnis, and they had a vigorous dislike for the Shiite sect. This dislike colored their accounts and prompted them to brand the Assassins with a fearsome name that would be dreaded and reviled for centuries. □

# RISING SUN AND RUSSIAN BEAR

BY MICHAEL  
E. HASKEW



Peter Newark's Military Pictures

**AT TSUSHIMA STRAIT, THE JAPANESE NAVY COLLIDED HEAD-ON WITH THE RUSSIAN FLEET IN A MIGHTY SEA BATTLE THAT WOULD SET THE UPSTART ISLAND NATION ON THE PATH TO GLOBAL EMPIRE.**

**TOP:** Sporting the blood-red "Rising Sun" flag of Imperial Japan, a Japanese torpedo boat scores a direct hit on a Russian battleship at the height of the Battle of Tsushima Strait.



**FOR THREE CENTURIES, FEUDAL JAPAN REMAINED COMFORTABLY ISOLATED** from the rest of the world. By order of the Tokugawa Shogunate, foreigners landing on Japanese shores risked immediate execution. Christian missionaries from Europe were systematically put to death or expelled. All that changed in the summer of 1853, when a flotilla of imposing black warships of the United States Navy, led by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, dropped anchor in Tokyo Bay and demanded that Japan open its doors to the West. Overawed by the show of power, the Japanese hastily agreed, but the ruthless European colonization of its vast neighbor, China, caused Japan to take steps to protect itself from similar exploitation. With characteristic thoroughness, the Japanese embarked on a crash course of modernization and economic growth that soon transformed the island nation into a regional and potentially global superpower.

By the end of the 19th century, modern Japan was ready to emerge onto the world stage. Hand in hand with a more pragmatic world view and burgeoning industrialization came a modern Japanese military. Civil war had erupted in the 1870s, ending with the defeat of the old-line samurai and the emergence of the Meiji monarchy. In the wake of that war, Japan's leaders pursued industrial and economic expansion with renewed fervor, and during the decade from 1895 to 1905 the government's military-related spending approached 40 percent of its budget. The scope of Japanese political interests expanded apace with the country's economy, and establishing an appropriate sphere of influence in the Far East assumed paramount importance in Japanese planning. National security concerns brought about a frank assessment of Japan's strategic strengths and weaknesses,

particularly the need to insure continued access to vital raw materials.

Inevitably, Japanese interests conflicted with those of other countries, both Asian and European. One nation, in particular, posed a worrisome challenge for Japan. For decades, Czarist Russia had pursued a similar campaign of expansion on the Asian continent, and the increased assertion of Japanese influence placed the two countries on a collision course. The Treaty of Shimonoseki, which had followed Japan's swift and convincing victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, gained the Japanese a controlling influence in Korea, then a Chinese satellite, as well as the Liaotung Peninsula in southern Manchuria and the strategically vital harbor of Port Arthur at the peninsula's tip. Russia, with the support of France and Germany, forced Japan to return its recent territorial gains, and subsequently coerced the Chinese into granting them a lengthy lease to Port Arthur. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, Russian troops were deployed in China, and after the revolt was put down these troops proceeded to occupy most of Manchuria.

Although the Russian incursion into Manchuria was troubling to the Japanese, it was Russia's undisguised ambitions to control Korea that Japan found intolerable. Korea, one Japanese diplomat remarked, "was a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." The government moved swiftly to shield itself from such a threat. In 1902, Japan entered into an agreement with Great Britain which guaranteed that if Japan found itself at war, the British would come to their aid if a second country entered the conflict. By the turn of the century, the balance of power in the Far East consisted of Imperial Russia, supported by France and, to a lesser extent, Germany, and Japan, which was supported by Great Britain. The United States also favored Japan in order to counter any expansion that might negatively impact foreign trade or endanger its possessions in the Pacific, particularly the Philippines and the island of Guam in the Marianas. Diplomatic jockeying and military posturing continued unabated during the first years of the new century.

In August 1903, Japan and Russia sat down at the bargaining table in a last-ditch attempt to resolve their Korean differences diplomatically. The Russians refused to entertain the notion that Japan might actually go to war over Korea. Moreover, many Russian officials considered Japan an upstart nation that would certainly not risk armed conflict with an established European power. When asked about the

possibility of war with Japan and what it would take to combat that threat, the Russian foreign minister replied dismissively: "One flag and one sentry. Russian prestige will do the rest." When it had become apparent that Russian stalling tactics would cause the talks to drag on indefinitely, the Japanese formally declared war on February 10, 1904. Two days prior to that, the Japanese launched a sneak attack against the Russian Pacific Fleet anchored at Port Arthur. While the audacious attack achieved only limited success, damaging two battleships and a cruiser, it set the tone for the remainder of the war. The badly shaken Russians refused to commit the balance of their naval power. Russian ships remained sheltered inside the harbor at Port Arthur, protected by the large guns of their shore batteries.

Admiral Heihachiro Togo, the Japanese commander during the Port Arthur engagement, realized that to achieve final victory it would be necessary to negate Russian naval power in the Far East once and for all. To facilitate that day of reckoning, the Japanese must first achieve success on land. Leveraging their advantages of shorter supply lines and combat experience gained during the war with China, the Japanese First Army crossed the Yalu River into Manchuria in May 1904, easily overwhelming the Russian defenders. Meanwhile, the Japanese Second Army landed on the Liaotung Peninsula, 40 miles northeast of Port Arthur, and linked up with the Japanese Third and Fourth armies to encircle the port in a ring of bayonets. A series of Japanese victories followed in central Manchuria later that year, and Port Arthur finally capitulated in January 1905.

A major consequence of the fall of Port Arthur was that the Japanese could train their heavy guns from the surrounding heights on the Russian ships cowering in the harbor. In short order the entire Russian Pacific Fleet was destroyed. Still, the Russian Army had not been withdrawn from Manchuria. Its numbers continued to grow, while Japan's ability to finance a protracted war was being stretched thin. In February and March, the massive Battle of Mukden ended in a Japanese victory after combined casualties of more than 150,000. Given the probability of a continuing stalemate on land, the Japanese high command realized that the decisive battle of the war was destined to be fought at sea. For Japan, time was of the essence. Even before the fall of Port Arthur, Russian Czar Nicholas II had committed his Baltic Fleet to sail 18,000 nautical miles around the globe in an attempt to join what remained



Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

**Admiral Heihachiro Togo captained the Japanese fleet to victory at Tsushima.**

of the Pacific squadron and fight it out with the Japanese Navy in its home waters.

The news that a formidable Russian naval force had set sail presented both great opportunity and tremendous risk for the Japanese. Victory in all likelihood would mean a swift conclusion to the war and favorable terms for Japan. Defeat, while unthinkable, would relegate Japan to second-class status among the world's nations and leave the proud country a vassal of the Russian Bear. When the Russian fleet, now renamed the Second Pacific Squadron, appeared through the mist on the morning of May 27, 1905, in the narrow Strait of Tsushima between Korea and the Japanese home island of Kyushu, Admiral Togo ordered a message signaled to his forces that was consciously reminiscent of Lord Nelson's famous exhortation to the British fleet at Trafalgar, almost exactly a century before. "The fate of the empire depends upon the outcome of this battle," Togo exhorted. "Let every man do his utmost duty." The die was cast for the most decisive naval engagement since Nelson's victory in that other strait—Gibraltar—100 years earlier.

On paper, the Russian Baltic Fleet was more than a match for Togo. In reality, there were stark contrasts between the opposing navies. A veritable colossus on land, the Russian Army commanded the respect of any rival. The navy, however, on the eve of war with Japan, had been allowed to deteriorate both in the quality of its warships and its combat efficiency. While there



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**LEFT: Russian Admiral Zinovi Rozhdestvensky led the ill-fated 2nd Pacific Squadron. RIGHT: An artist's rendering of shell-shocked Port Arthur, shortly before its surrender in January 1905.**

were competent officers in the naval cadre, there were also those who had benefited from political cronyism or aristocratic connections and were completely unfit for command. Many of the sailors were poorly trained peasants with limited experience and, in many cases, little love for the Czarist regime. Admiral Zinovi Rozhdestvensky, who led the Baltic fleet, was a capable if somewhat high-strung commander, but he had never before been in combat.

Organized in five divisions, the fleet under Rozhdestvensky's command had weighed anchor from the port of Reval on the Gulf of Finland on October 15, 1904. The first division included the four new battleships—*Alexander III*, *Borodino*, *Orel*, and the admiral's flagship *Suvorov*—each weighing 15,000 tons with main armament of four 12-inch guns complemented by 6-inch secondary cannons. The modern battleship *Oslabya* led the second division, but the quality of the fleet fell off considerably from there. Two elderly 10,000-ton battleships, *Navarin* and *Sisoi Veliky*, each armed with 12-inch guns, and the slow, 6,000-ton armored cruiser *Nakhimov*, which was more than 20 years old, were hardly fit for use in the coming battle. The remaining divisions consisted of eight armored cruisers and various light cruisers and destroyers.

The fleet commanded by Togo, on the other hand, while outnumbered, included four battleships that were less than a decade old. While some of the warships had been built in the navy yards at Yokosuka and Kure, the

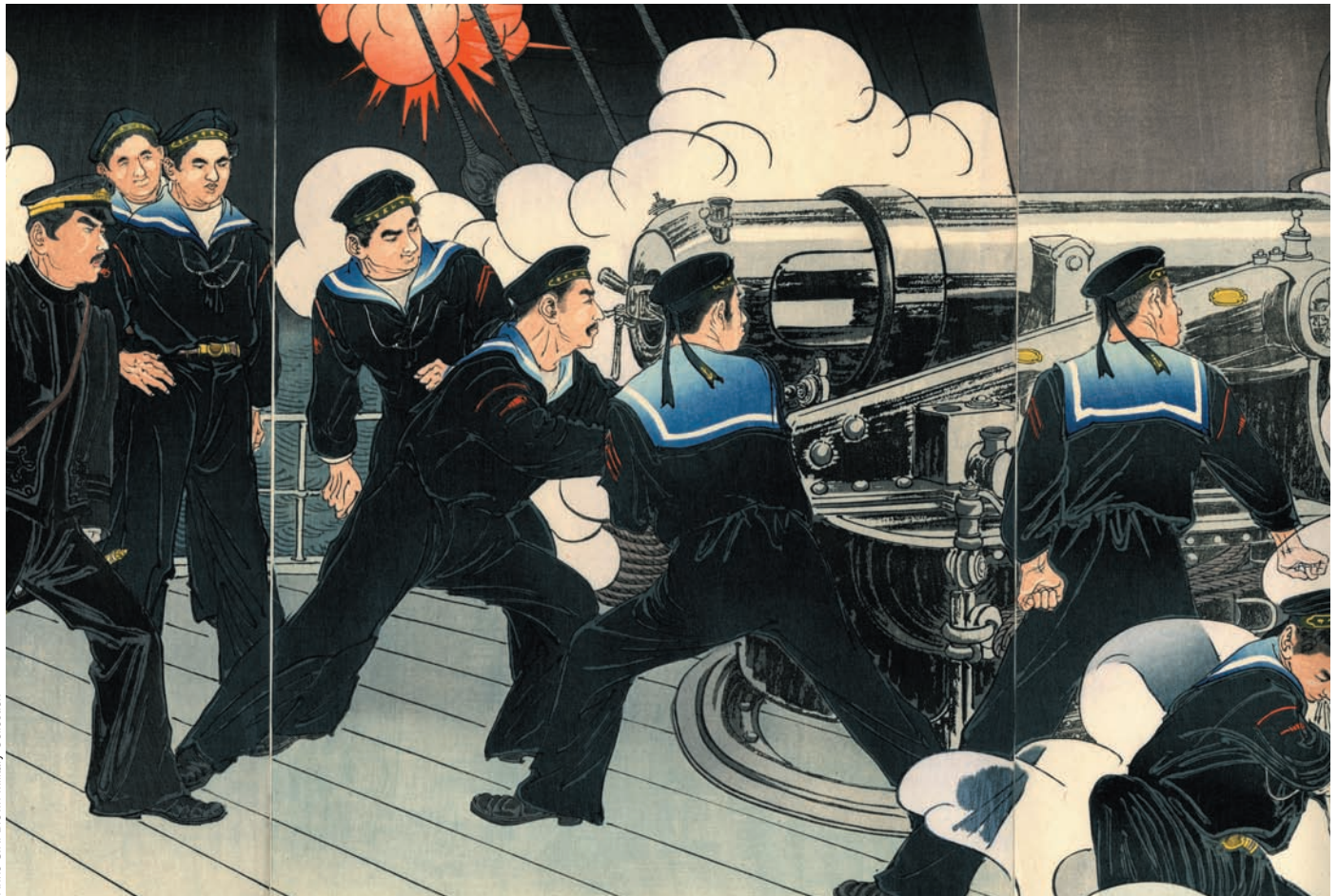
Japanese had also contracted with the British to construct the capital ships and a number of their cruisers. Togo's flagship, *Mikasa*, was joined by two other battleships, *Asahi* and *Shikishima*, each displacing 15,500 tons, with four 12-inch guns and multiple 6-inch secondary armament. The older 12,500-ton battleship *Fuji* was also armed with 12-inch main batteries. The Japanese also employed a pair of fine new 7,700-ton armored cruisers, *Kasuga*, with a 10-inch gun forward and a pair of 8-inch guns aft, and *Nisshin*, with four 8-inch mounts. These were augmented with a number of light cruisers, destroyers, and torpedo boats.

Besides the comparative newness of its fleet, the Japanese enjoyed several other distinct advantages at Tsushima. In general, their ships were considerably faster than their Russian adversaries, and their armament was first class. Russian guns were still fired manually by lanyard, while Japanese fire control was electric, substantially improving both accuracy and rate of fire, which could spell the difference between victory and defeat in a heavy engagement. While the Russians were using advanced armor-piercing shells, the Japanese purchased most of the ammunition from the British. The British shells were more antiquated and were not capable of deep penetration before exploding, but the Japanese compensated for this shortcoming with shimose, an explosive charge that shattered the shell casing into thousands of deadly shrapnel splinters, devastated a ship's

superstructure, and produced clouds of noxious smoke. Large-caliber Japanese shells, particularly the 12-inchers, were heavier than those the Russians fired—850 pounds versus 732 pounds—providing greater muzzle velocity and a flatter trajectory.

The readily adaptable Japanese possessed other advantages as well. When the most advanced Marconi wireless equipment became available, the Japanese quickly purchased it and installed it on the majority of their vessels. The hidebound Russians, by contrast, had opted against the communications upgrade. In addition, the Japanese were defending home waters, well known to them, and the Russian—both men and ships—were exhausted after a marathon seven-month-long voyage around the world. But perhaps the greatest advantage for the Japanese was the high level of esprit de corps within their naval ranks. Overall training, gunnery, and seamanship were superb. Such a premium was placed on perfection that fleet exercises were actually conducted using live ammunition. Isoroku Yamamoto, a young naval cadet who would rise to prominence during World War II, recalled an experience in which his class was required to swim the cold, icy channel between two islands off the coast of northern Japan. Large sharks inhabited the waters, and a substantial number of cadets failed to reach the opposite shore.

For the Russians, simply managing to sail such a great distance was an amazing logistical



**ABOVE:** Fighting in their home waters, Japanese sailors handled their guns with skill and élan. **OPPOSITE TOP:** Admiral Togo's flagship, *Mikasa*, was the largest ship in the Japanese Navy. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The Russian fleet attempted to skirt the islands of Honshu and Kyushu, but ran into an iron wall of Japanese ships.

feat, particularly considering the command challenges faced by Rozhdestvensky. Even before his fleet embarked, the admiral was confronted with the interference of the ruling navy board. With little appreciation for what lay ahead, the board ordered Rozhdestvensky to add several slow, antiquated warships to the squadron. When he protested, the board finally relented. Two months later, however, these same ships were dispatched and eventually joined him. Painfully aware of the lack of training among his crews, Rozhdestvensky's only option was to train vigorously during the voyage. When completely assembled, the Russian fleet numbered more than 40 ships, including non-combatant vessels. Given the wide variance in speed capabilities, the ships were strung out for miles. The government was required to charter 70 colliers from Germany's Hamburg-Amerika Line, and the mechanical reliability of the coal fired ships, particularly the older vessels, was questionable from the outset. At least three ships were deemed unfit for duty and ordered back to port after the journey began.

"Our long voyage was a prolonged and despairing struggle with boilers that burst and engines that broke down," wrote one of the frustrated captains. "On one occasion, practically every ship's boilers had to be relit in the space of 24 hours."

During the voyage, the Russian ships and crews were subjected to extremes of heat, cold and stormy weather. For the sailors, periods of backbreaking work were punctuated by hours of boredom. While traversing tropical areas, those crewmen responsible for the boilers and engines labored in sweltering temperatures that easily topped 100 degrees. Sailing across the North Sea, the Russians turned south and called at the port of Vigo in Spain. At Tangier on the coast of North Africa, a small squadron was detached to pass through the Suez Canal, while the bulk of the fleet continued south to Dakar, Senegal, and several other stops along the coast of West Africa. Rozhdestvensky rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reunited with the other group in Madagascar in January. From there, the Russians crossed the Indian Ocean, anchor-

ing at Cam Ranh Bay and Van Fong in Indochina in April before the last leg of their journey and a final rendezvous with destiny.

The most bizarre event during the transit of the North Sea as the Russian fleet sailed through the Dogger Banks, a heavily trafficked and well-known fishing ground. On the foggy night of October 24, the transport vessel *Kamchatka* was sailing some distance astern of the warships. For no apparent reason, the ship wired the rest of the fleet that she was under attack by torpedo boats. The relative quiet was shattered by flashes of gunfire, and soon the entire Russian squadron was firing wildly in the darkness. There actually were unknown vessels in the area, but the phantom torpedo boats were in fact trawlers of the British owned Hull fishing fleet. In the confusion, the Russians began shooting at one another, and the cruiser *Aurora* took five hits from friendly fire. One trawler was sunk, and several others were damaged. The hair-trigger response by the Russians was undoubtedly fueled by a rumor that the

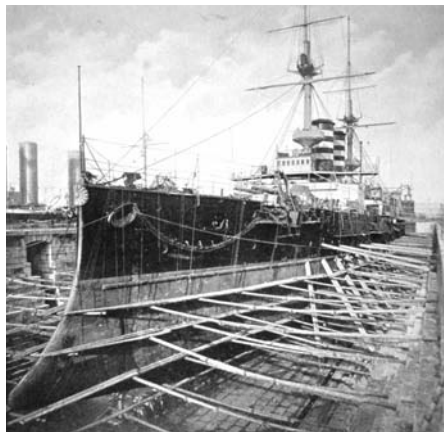
Japanese had positioned torpedo boats along the route. The jittery Russians were roundly criticized in the world press, and their government later paid reparations to the British.

Although Rozhdestvensky had intended to join forces with the Pacific Squadron, he received the disheartening news of the fall of Port Arthur while in Madagascar. He was also informed of civil unrest at home, which signaled the beginning of the revolution of 1905. With Port Arthur in Japanese hands, the only option for Rozhdestvensky was to sail for the Russian port of Vladivostok to the north. Togo realized his adversary's predicament and considered the possible Russian routes for reaching the safety of Vladivostok. One choice was through the Tsugaru Narrows, which lay between the home islands of Honshu and Hokkaido. The Japanese, however, had already sown mines there, and the Russians would be vulnerable as well; to attacks by torpedo boats stationed at nearby Japanese bases. A second northern route was through the La Perouse Strait between Hokkaido and Sakhalin Island. Narrow and approachable only after negotiating a tangle of reefs in the nearby Kurile Islands, this route was dismissed by Togo.

The Japanese commander correctly judged that the Russians would choose the southernmost route through the Korean Straits, sailing west of the home islands and into the 100-mile-wide channel separating Japan from Korea. In order to block the enemy's path, Togo moved his battleships and their escorts to Masan, on the southern coast of Korea, and stationed a cruiser force at Osaki on the island of Tsushima, which was located squarely in the center of the strait. He also deployed cruisers, fishing vessels and armed merchant ships as pickets to provide early warning of the Russians' approach. This last precaution soon paid huge dividends. At approximately 2:45 on the fog shrouded morning of May 27, the merchant ship *Shimano Maru* was on patrol 150 miles south of the entrance to the Korean Straits. Visibility was poor, just a few hundred yards at best. Captain Ki Narukawa peered through his binoculars to catch any glimpse of the Russians, whom he knew must be close by. Suddenly, a twinkle of red-and-white lanterns caught his eye. Nearly two hours later, Narukawa had maneuvered close enough to see that the lights were dangling from the masthead of a Russian hospital ship that unaccountably had failed to adhere to Rozhdestvensky's absolute blackout order. Narukawa snapped off a short wireless message: "Enemy fleet in sight in square 203. Is apparently making for the eastern channel" Minutes later, Togo issued orders for his ships to

get underway and cabled the emperor in Tokyo: "I have just received news that the enemy fleet has been sighted. Our fleet will immediately put to sea to attack and destroy him."

Shortly after dawn, the Japanese cruiser *Idzumo* began shadowing the Russians as they proceeded northward. At various times other cruisers drifted in and out of the mist amid the growing swells of the angry sea, sometimes provoking the Russians to lob a few shells in their direction but not bringing on a general engagement. The main body of the Japanese



Peter Newark's Military Pictures



Map © 2005 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

fleet, with its heavy guns, was on the way. Togo sailed out of Masan just before 6 a.m., with his flagship *Mikasa* leading the line, followed by his three other battleships, *Shikishima*, *Fuji* and *Asahi*, and the cruisers *Kasuga* and *Nishin*. His original plan to engage the Russians initially with swarms of torpedo boats had to be scrapped. The weather was too rough for them to operate until later in the day. Instead, it was apparent that the first major contact between the opposing forces would be the

clash of capital ships. The Japanese commander made haste for a station adjacent to the island of Okinoshima.

When the Russian fleet began to pick up increasing Japanese radio chatter, Rozhdestvensky knew that his force had been discovered. At first light, the shadowing Japanese cruisers confirmed his assumption. Sometime later, he ordered his ships to move from line ahead to line abreast in preparation for the coming engagement. This required the captains of the four leading battleships to turn in succession 90 degrees to starboard, followed by a simultaneous 90 degree turn to port. Rozhdestvensky had probably hoped to position himself to execute the classic naval combat maneuver known as "crossing the enemy's T." However, poor Russian seamanship caused the complex maneuver to be botched, and the ships formed two unequal columns line ahead. Rolling waves, some four feet high, buffeted both forces, while mist and fog made identification of friend or foe difficult at times. Finally, around 1:15 p.m., Togo spotted his shadowing cruisers, which had been skillfully commanded by Admiral Shigeto Dewa. Just a few minutes later, the black hulls of the Russian battle fleet began appearing on the horizon. Curiously, the Russian color scheme included funnels painted bright yellow with a black strip covering the top quarter. These would prove to be excellent aiming points for the Japanese gunners once the battle was joined.

When Rozhdestvensky saw the Japanese approach, he again attempted to reorganize his line. For a second time, the maneuver was executed improperly. Two of the battleships, *Oslabya* and *Orel*, narrowly avoided a collision. Meanwhile, Togo decided to take a calculated risk of his own. Confused by the odd Russian alignment, he intended to make the most of it. His ships were at a slight disadvantage downwind of the Russians, and his gunners would have difficulty tracking their targets in the swirling spray if he continued on his present course which would carry him parallel to the enemy and in the opposite direction. Undaunted, Togo issued a bold order—his ships were to turn to port in succession, each executing the turn at the same point. The maneuver was extremely dangerous because the Japanese ships would be exposed to Russian fire for a period of time while their own guns could not be brought to bear. However, once the maneuver was completed, the Japanese would be crossing the Russian T, bringing their heavy broadsides slamming into the enemy while only a few of the forward guns on the Russian ships could reply.



Peter Newark's Military Pictures

A Japanese artist captured the last moments of a Russian battleship, hit amidships by a deadly torpedo at Tsushima Strait.

The experienced Japanese sailors executed the turn with absolute precision, but for several minutes they ran a gauntlet of Russian shells. *Mikasa* turned first, and at 2:08 p.m., the battle began in earnest as *Suworov* fired a 12-inch salvo at the enemy flagship. The ranging Russian gunners' shells came within 20 yards of *Mikasa*, raising the ship's stern from the water and sending huge geysers skyward. During the first five minutes of the battle, *Mikasa* was hit a dozen times, two of the shells causing extensive damage. One hit destroyed the ship's compass and the bridge ladder, wounding 15 officers. Togo himself narrowly avoided serious injury, but showed no emotion as the fight began. A second shell slammed into one of the battleship's 12-inch turrets. Other Japanese ships were also damaged, the cruiser *Asama* falling out of line after taking three hits near the stern and the cruiser *Yakumo* losing her forward gun turret to a direct hit from the Russian battleship *Nikolai I*. Rozhdestvensky had been ill served by his subordinates. Had his orders been executed properly, the damage inflicted on the turning Japanese line would undoubtedly have been much greater.

When the Japanese ships came out of their turn, which had seemed agonizingly slow, their gunners began ranging the Russian warships from a distance of only 5,000 yards. By 3 p.m., the Japanese were completely across the Russian T. Concentrated and accurate fire

set the *Suworov* ablaze from stem to stern. A shell struck the flagship's bridge, killing six sailors and seriously wounding Rozhdestvensky, who fell unconscious and was later evacuated to a destroyer. Had not been rendered hors de combat, Rozhdestvensky might have salvaged the situation while the faster Japanese fleet, making 15 knots, continued its eastward course. A turn to port could have put the Russians in position to hammer the tail of the Japanese line from the rear. Instead, the confusion resulted in the entire Russian line continuing to starboard. *Suworov's* helm jammed, and the doomed battleship began turning in circles. A sitting duck, she was pounded in a crossfire by Togo's battleships and several Japanese cruisers and finished off by Japanese torpedo boats. Simultaneously, *Oslabya*, at the head of the second Russian line, had taken such tremendous punishment that she capsized and sank an hour after the fighting began.

Following *Suworov* in line, *Alexander III* began to turn in a circle with the flagship. When the battleship's captain finally comprehended what was happening, he ordered a course back to the east and then to the north. Togo responded with a pair of 90 degree turns by the main body of his battleships and cruisers, herding the hapless Russians back into the Japanese gunsights and cutting off their route of escape toward Vladivostok. Third in line, the battleship *Borodino*, had been burning

furiously since early in the one-sided contest. Briefly, the battered Russians found refuge in a fog bank, but about 4 p.m., they were spotted once again. During the same exchange that reduced *Suworov* to a smoking ruin, *Alexander III* was pounded and drifted out of the fight with fire gushing amidships. While his cruisers stalked the Russian transport ships to the south, Togo allowed the Russians, with the defiant *Borodino* in the lead, to turn southward as well. Rather than following immediately, he took the opportunity to move northward, assessing his own damage and resting his tired crews.

Less than two hours later, Togo regained contact with what was left of the main Russian fleet. With her fires somewhat under control, *Alexander III* had once again assumed a position at the head of the Russian column. Within a short time, however, the ship was once again blazing and listing heavily to port. As a huge fire raged near the conning tower, sailors crowded into the battleship's forecabin. Abruptly, the ship rolled over and sank, trapping hundreds of sailors beneath her. Only four of her complement of 830 men survived. As *Suworov* slipped beneath the waves and *Alexander III* was in her death throes, the Japanese began to concentrate their fire on *Borodino* and the nearby battleship *Orel*, which was set ablaze. With daylight fading, Togo decided that he would reorganize his force. He ordered his ships to disengage and

assemble early the following morning near Matsushima. Just before Togo's order to cease fire, the battleship *Fuji* loosed the day's last salvo of 12-inch shells at the stricken *Borodino*. At least one of these penetrated the Russian battleship's magazines, and she virtually vaporized in a horrific explosion. A single sailor survived the disaster.

Dewa's cruisers, joined by a second squadron, had taken hits from their Russian adversaries, which guarded the transports. *Kisagi* was seriously damaged and withdrew from the fight, while *Naniwa* and *Matsushima* were also pounded. In exchange, the Russian cruiser commander, Admiral Oskar Enkvist, tried to direct damage control efforts aboard his flagship, *Oleg*, and *Zhemchung*, both of which now were on fire. Three transport ships were sunk, and the two Russian hospital ships captured. Eventually, Enkvist veered out of the fight and retired southward to Manila, where American authorities interned *Oleg*, *Zemchung* and *Aurora*, along with their crews.

With Rozhdestvensky still unconscious aboard the destroyer *Dedovy*, command of the shattered Russian fleet devolved to Admiral Nikolai Nebogatov aboard the battleship *Nikolai I*. In a vain attempt to resume a course for

Vladivostok, Nebogatov ordered his fleet to turn from its southeast heading and take a northerly course. In the darkness, dozens of Japanese torpedo boats and destroyers lay in wait. Several Russian ships were unable to join up with Nebogatov, and they bore the brunt of the nocturnal attacks. The cloak of darkness failed to save the Russians from further calamity. For several hours, the small Japanese craft dashed to within 100 yards to launch torpedoes, frustrating the Russian gunners, who could not depress their heavy weapons low enough to return fire. *Sisoi Veliky* took a torpedo aft and sank sometime after daylight near the island of Tsushima, while four torpedoes smashed into *Navarin*, which carried all but four of her crew to the bottom around 10 p.m. Two Japanese torpedo boats had been sunk and six damaged in the melee.

The Russian cruisers were luckless as well, with the damaged *Svetlana* cornered by three Japanese cruisers the next day and sunk with no survivors after a heroic three-hour fight. *Nakhimov* and *Monomakh* were both damaged and scuttled after daylight to prevent their capture. The old cruiser *Dmitri Donskoi* sank off Matsushima after fighting for several hours with Japanese cruisers and destroyers, damaging sev-

eral of them. The next morning, Nebogatov, with only the battleships *Nikolai I* and *Orel* and the aged armored defense ships *Apraxine* and *Seniavine*, found himself hemmed in on three sides by Japanese cruisers and Togo's main force again moving across the Russian T. The Japanese stood out of range of the most powerful remaining Russian guns and began shelling the survivors from 12,000 yards. Nebogatov recognized the futility of continued resistance. He ordered his flag lowered to half staff aboard *Nikolai I* and then hoisted the signal flags XGH, asking for a parlay with the Japanese. As the shelling continued, other Russian vessels began to strike their colors. Some ran the Japanese rising sun emblem up their masts in surrender. Finally, Togo relented and ordered the firing to stop. "I am an old man of 60," Nebogatov reportedly told his crew before leaving *Nikolai I* to meet with the Japanese commander. "I will be shot for this, but what does that matter? You are young, and it is you who will one day retrieve the honor and glory of the Russian navy. The lives of the 2,400 men in these ships are more important than mine."

Only the cruiser *Izumrud* and two destroyers escaped the clutches of the Japanese and

*Continued on page 73*

## YAMAMOTO'S INITIATION

When the Japanese fleet went into action against the Russians at Tsushima, a young sub-lieutenant named Isoroku Takano was serving aboard the cruiser *Nisshin*. During the course of the great victory, Takano was seriously wounded in the leg and lost the index and second fingers of his left hand when struck by an enemy shell hit or one of the ship's own malfunctioning guns. Takano was hospitalized for some time, but following his recovery he resumed his naval career. Born of samurai stock, Takano was the son of a sword-maker living in the mountains of northern Honshu. In 1916, the young officer was adopted by a prominent naval family—a fairly common practice for those whose surname would die out without taking such action.

Destined to play a major role in the future of his country, Lieutenant Commander Isoroku

Yamamoto traveled extensively in the United States during the 1920s, attended Harvard University, played a great deal of contract bridge, and became proficient in the English language. Yamamoto observed firsthand the industrial might of the United States and concluded that war with the Americans would be national suicide for Japan. During the factionalism of the 1930s, he sided with those naval officers who opposed a confrontation with the United States. Among those who favored Japanese expansion, ironically, was aging Admiral Heihachiro Togo, the hero of Tsushima.

Although his country eventually pursued a policy he did not support, Yamamoto became the father of Japanese naval aviation, the foremost expert in the country on the use of aircraft carriers, and the most knowledgeable officer on the United States

in the entire Japanese armed forces. He even found time, at the age of 40, to become a pilot. Yamamoto subsequently held several prominent command and diplomatic posts and participated in a number of international conferences on equitable naval tonnage among various world powers.

In August 1939, Yamamoto was named commander in chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet. By that time, he was resigned to the fact that his country was preparing for war with the United States. While he held out little hope for the ultimate Japanese victory, Yamamoto believed that the only real possibility for a favorably negotiated peace rested with a bold, preemptive strike at the American Pacific Fleet. No doubt, he remembered Togo's attack on Port Arthur more than three decades earlier. In the event of

war with the United States, Yamamoto prophetically told Prince Konoye, the prime minister: "For the first six months, I will run wild. After that, I make no guarantees."

Yamamoto was right. Following a virtually unbroken string of victories, in the first week of June 1942, the Imperial Japanese Navy suffered a major defeat at the hands of the United States Navy at the Battle of Midway. It had been nearly six months to the day after the sneak attack at Pearl Harbor. Yamamoto did not live to see the eventual destruction of the Japanese Navy and his nation's total defeat. In April 1943, U.S. intelligence discovered that he was traveling to the naval base at Rabaul on the island of New Britain. American fighters pounced on the admiral's plane and sent the brilliant commander crashing to his death in the jungle below. □

By Lt. Col. Harold E. Raugh, Jr., Ph.D., U.S. Army (Ret.)

## From Lake Erie to the Persian Gulf, key naval battles helped shape American history.

**T**HE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN CALLED A COUNTRY MADE BY WAR. Its history has been influenced and shaped by pivotal land and sea battles.

To reinforce this theme, prominent Civil War and naval historian Craig L. Symonds has written *Decision at Sea: Five Naval Battles that Shaped American*

*History* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, 378 p., illustrations, maps, notes, index, \$30.00 hardcover). In this well researched and elegantly written study, aimed at a general audience, Symonds dissects and analyzes five watershed naval battles. These reflect not only the changes in warfare but highlight how war is also a vehicle of social, cultural, and technological change.

The first engagement described is the Battle of Lake Erie, September 10, 1813, during the War of 1812. U.S. Navy Commodore Isaac Chauncey constructed a small fleet on the shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Chauncey delegated com-

mand on Lake Erie to Captain Oliver H. Perry, who was in charge of two brigs, six schooners, and a sloop. Perry sailed forth to meet an approaching British squadron on September 10. When his flagship was put out of action, he transferred to another vessel, and after breaking the British line, the American ships closed in and defeated the British. This solid victory secured the American claim to the Northwest Territory and enabled future expansion.

The Battle of Hampton Roads, March 8-9, 1862, pitted the U.S.S. *Monitor* (the “cheesebox on a raft”)

against the Confederate ironclad *Virginia* (*Merrimack*). After four hours of pounding each other, the *Virginia* returned to Norfolk and the *Monitor* kept control of Hampton Roads. Even though this battle was inconclusive, it was significant as being the world’s first engagement between ironclad ships, ushering in “the age of machine warfare.”

The United States emerged as a nascent world power after achieving victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898. A decisive factor was the American naval defeat of the Spanish armada at the Battle of Manila Bay, May 1, 1898. Symonds considers this naval encounter “the nation’s first that involved the oceangoing steam and steel warships of what historians have labeled the ‘New Navy.’”

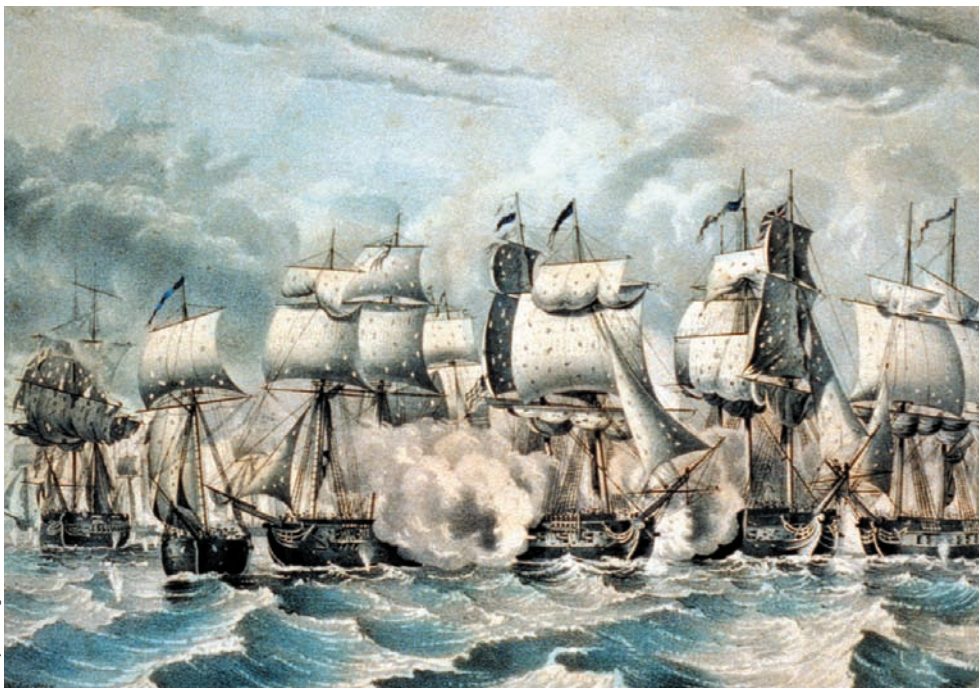
At the Battle of Midway, June 4-6, 1942, American ships and carrier-based aircraft achieved, assisted by knowledge of Japanese secret codes and the Japanese dispersal of its ships, a resounding victory over the Japanese fleet. All four Japanese aircraft carriers, and hundreds of planes, were destroyed; American losses paled in comparison. After this decisive naval victory, the psychologically scarred Japanese were on the defensive, and the Americans gained the initiative in the Pacific.

The last naval battle covered is the little-known Operation Praying Mantis in the Persian Gulf, April 18, 1988. After the U.S.S. *Stark* was

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Releasing thunderous  
broadships upon the  
enemy, the American brig  
*Niagara* charges the  
British line during the  
Battle of Lake Erie.

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struck by missiles in 1987, American strategic attention centered on the Persian Gulf. This was also the result of Cold War rivalry in the area, and because of America's concern for its oil supply, it began re-flagging and escorting oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. After increased confrontations, on April 18, 1988, U.S. forces destroyed Iranian oil platforms, and in the ensuing battle, numerous Iranian gunboats were destroyed. This naval action demonstrated the precision of electronically integrated missile systems. It also, according to Symonds, "marked the emergence of the United States in its new role as the world's policeman"—not necessarily a good thing.

This excellent book shows how key naval battles have influenced American history. Even more importantly, each of the battles described "provides insight into the essential features of naval combat and command at sea" and highlights the importance of the fighting spirit and the warrior ethos.

#### Recent and Recommended

*The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, by Bernard Norling, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2005, 284 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index, \$19.95 softcover.

After the fall of Bataan (April 9, 1942) and the surrender of Corregidor (May 6, 1942) in the Philippines, the majority of U.S. Army and Philippine Army soldiers serving in the Philippines became prisoners of war. This interesting book focuses on the World War II activities of Troop C, 26th Cavalry Philippine Scouts, which was separated from its parent unit and decided to continue resistance against the Japanese. It was later expanded and became the guerrilla Cagayan-Apayao Forces (CAF) in two of the northernmost provinces of Luzon. Troop C, under the command of Captain Ralph Praeger, was thereafter active in hostilities against the Japanese. Ambushes, raids, and other combat patrols were conducted, and intelligence was relayed to higher headquarters.

The daily operations, trials, and tribulations of Troop C soldiers and their guerrilla counterparts, until Praeger's capture on August 30, 1943 and the disintegration of the CAF, are chronicled in rich detail. The CAF contribution to the war effort was noteworthy and commendable. *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon* (in spite of concerns about sources and documentation) is important and timely in that it again brings attention to the diminishing group of stalwart American soldiers who refused to surrender at Bataan or Corregidor and their intrepid Filipino allies who for years

# NORMANDY WEEKEND

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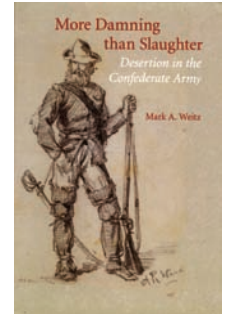
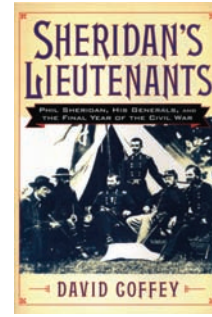
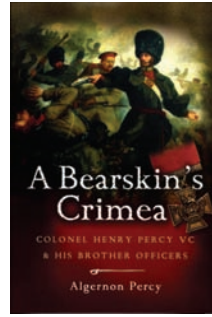
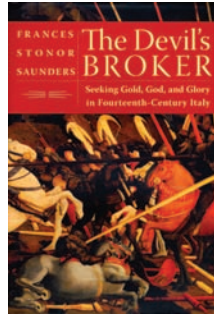
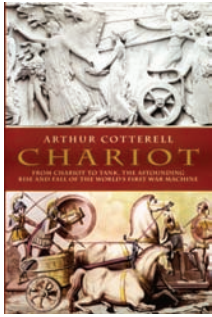
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harassed and fought the Japanese invaders until victory was achieved.

**Chariot: From Chariot to Tank, The Astonishing Rise and Fall of the World's First War Machine**, by Arthur Cotterell, Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, New York, 2005, 352 pp., illustrations, maps, notes and references, index, \$29.95 hardcover.

The invention of the chariot and its use as a war machine was instrumental in changing the dynamics of the battlefield from the ancient to the modern world. In this absorbing study, Arthur Cotterell, an expert on ancient civilizations, traces the development, rise, and fall of the chariot in Europe, West Asia, Egypt, India, and China. This volume begins with an examination of the role of the chariot in notable ancient battles. These include Kadesh (1274 BC), where the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II was surprised by some 3,500 Hittite charioteers and almost defeated; Megiddo (1460 BC), where 1,000 Egyptian chariots unexpectedly traversed a narrow pass and surprised the enemy Canaanites; and two battles in China (Chengpu, 632 BC, and Bi, 595 BC) where chariots played an important role. The development of the chariot, explains Cotterell, was dependent on three critical components: the spoked wheel, domesticated horse, and compound bow. These innovations are also assessed. In the penultimate chapter, "Survivals, Ritual, and Racing," Cotterell narrates the later Roman practice of celebrating the "triumphal chariot," chariots in funerals, and finally, the popularity of chariot racing, a la *Ben Hur*. Filled with anecdotal information and numerous illustrations, this fine book is interesting as well as entertaining to read.

**The Devil's Broker: Seeking Gold, God, and Glory in Fourteenth-Century Italy**, by Frances Stonor Saunders, Fourth Estate, HarperCollins, New York, 2005, 396 pp., illustrations, maps, source notes, select bibliography, index, \$25.95 hardcover.

Armed bands of avaricious freebooters ravaged and looted Europe during lulls in the

calamitous Hundred Years' War between England and France (1337-1453). One of the most prominent, successful, and ruthless of these mercenaries was the Englishman Sir John Hawkwood. In about 1360, Hawkwood formed his own company and moved from France southwards to the rich city-states of Italy. On the way, Hawkwood successfully extorted the pope and began a pattern of extracting money from principalities for protection. He fought for the highest bidder: at various times for or against Milan, Pisa, Florence, Naples, Padua, and the pope. In 1377, his force massacred some 6,000 inhabitants of the city of Cesena. Shortly thereafter, he entered the service of Florence and fought for it, in spite of bribes to switch allegiance, until his death in 1394. This chronicle of life and military activities of the once prominent and now little-known Hawkwood is nicely written; The book is fascinating and a pleasure to read.

**The Trafalgar Companion**, edited by Alexander Stilwell, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2005, 224p., illustrations, maps, endnotes, bibliography, index, \$29.95 hardcover.

The legacy of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson and his fabled naval victory at Trafalgar on October 21, 1805, are essential components of the spirit and identity of the British people. In this perceptive anthology, prominent naval historians examine Nelson's life and leadership and the significance of his success at Trafalgar, where he died at the hour of victory. After an introduction providing the political and military context and strategy of the Napoleonic Wars by John B. Hattendorf, Peter Padfield describes the governments and cultures of the British and French opponents. Edgar Vincent, in one of the book's most interesting essays, assesses the physical and psychological Nelson and his "kaleidoscopic character." In another chapter, Vincent studies "Nelson the Commander." The French and Spanish perspective is provided by Admiral Remi Monaque, and other chapters describe naval tactics, Nelson's flagship H.M.S. *Victory*, the Battle of Trafalgar, and the evolution of Nelson's iconic repu-

tation. Published to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Trafalgar, this interesting, profusely illustrated, and handsomely produced volume makes a valuable contribution to Nelson studies.

**A Bearskin's Crimea: Colonel Henry Percy, VC, and His Brother Officers**, by Algernon Percy, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, UK, 2005, 238 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, references, bibliography, index, \$36.95 hardcover.

Henry Percy was an officer in the British Army's Grenadier Guards who fought in all four major battles—Alma, Balaklava, Inkerman, and Sevastopol—of the Crimean War, 1854-1856. Percy, born into an aristocratic family in 1817 and commissioned into the bearskin-hat wearing Grenadier Guards in 1836, was a company commander when the Crimean War began. He was wounded at the Alma and demonstrated outstanding leadership and gallantry in action at the Battle of Inkerman, November 5, 1854. On that foggy morning, the Russians launched a major assault against the British. The Guards Brigade, including the Grenadiers, engaged the enemy in fierce hand-to-hand fighting at the Sandbag Battery. Percy and a number of other soldiers were cut off and nearly surrounded. Even though wounded, Percy led the soldiers to safety and continued the fight. For his intrepidity, Percy received the newly instituted Victoria Cross, Britain's highest decoration for bravery in action, and eventually retired a knighted lieutenant general. This book is woven around Percy's voluminous correspondence, which highlights "the progress of the war, the failings of the generals, the sufferings of the men, the lack of supplies, the appalling medical arrangements," and other factors that characterized the Crimean War. This is a highly readable, outstanding book.

**Sheridan's Lieutenants: Phil Sheridan, His Generals, and the Final Year of the Civil War**, by David Coffey, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2005, 168 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliographical essay, index,

\$22.95 hardcover.

Major General Philip Sheridan's rise during the Civil War was nothing short of meteoric—from lieutenant in 1861 to major general in 1864. In April 1864, 33-year-old Sheridan emerged from relative obscurity, handpicked by General U.S. Grant, to command the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Sheridan gathered a group of courageous, innovative, and talented subordinates who assisted him in audaciously prosecuting the Union war effort. The Cavalry Corps was divided into three divisions. General ATA Torbert commanded the 1st Division, and its brigades were commanded by General GA Custer, Colonel TC Devin, and General Wesley Merritt. The 2nd Division was commanded by General D. McM. Gregg; General HE Davies and Colonel J. Irvin Gregg were its brigade commanders. General JH Wilson commanded the 3rd Division, with Colonels JB McIntosh and GH Chapman commanding brigades. More than an operational history, this book is about military leadership, focusing on Sheridan as mentor and his subordinate commanders as protégés. The dynamics of command and professional and personal relationships are assessed to ascertain their contributions to unit effectiveness and battlefield victory. Sheridan's "martial brotherhood" dominated the U.S. Army until the turn of the century. This absorbing book on military leadership and cavalry operations leaves the reader yearning for even more.

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*More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army*, by Mark A. Weitz, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2005, 346 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, \$49.95 hardcover.

According to Professor Mark A. Weitz of Gettysburg College, desertion was a problem that "plagued the Confederate military for most of the [Civil] war." In this scholarly study, Weitz examines this phenomenon to ascertain reasons, patterns, and timing of military desertions and to determine its impact on the overall Confederate war effort. Official Confederate records admit to 103,400 military desertions, but these figures are problematic. Weitz looks at numerous state, unit, and hospital records, plus participant letters and memoirs, within the chronological framework of Confederate military operations. These strongly suggest many motives for desertion, including low and irregular pay, inadequate food and supplies, disease, poor medical care, the need to perform agricultural tasks on home farms, and weak discipline, especially early in

## SIMULATION GAMING *By Eric T. Baker*

▶▶▶ Battlegoat Studio's *Supreme Ruler 2010* for the PC has the look of an old school, tabletop, map-and-counters-



wargame, but it has the video game smarts that make it vastly more playable than a board game with this much detail would be. Set in a fractured future where no nation of any size survives, the player's goal is to reunite people. Whether this takes the form of something relatively simple like getting the new nations of the British Isles back together, or something tremendously difficult like conquering the whole world, is up to the player.

The big rule book and long, non-interactive tutorial make *SR2010* seem, at first glance, harder than it is. In practice, the player recruits ministers to run six departments in the government: defense, military operations, state, treasury, commerce, and interior. If the ministers, who have their own personalities and political leanings, are chosen with care and if the priorities are assigned to them realistically, the player can

almost sit back and let their country go. *SR2010* is a strategy game at the highest level. Micromanaging is possible, but the best results come from picking the right people, charting them a course, and then letting them steer it.

A completely different strategy game that is set at the other end of history is the expansion of last year's *Rome: Total War*. Where the first game modeled the creation of the Roman Empire, *R:TW: Barbarian Invasion* models the Empire's fall. When the game opens, the Empire is already split into east and west. Players can take command of one or the other, or they can manage one of the many barbarians surrounding the divided Empire, including the Huns.

The biggest difference between the original game and *BI* is the improved artificial intelligence. In the *R:TW*, the AI would travel the map in historically plausible but tactically inadequate armies. Players who kept together large forces were almost never in danger of losing a battle. Now the AI plays the game on the same terms, forcing the players to spend more thought on battlefield tactics. At the same time, managing the Empire between battles has gotten easier as the cities are now less likely to riot. *R:TW*

was a terrific game, and *BI* gives players ample reason to return to it.

A new game this month with no strategy element at all is **SOCOM 3: US Navy SEALs**. This is the third version of the premier on-line shooting game for the PS2. The PS2 is not really known as a platform for on-line gaming, but players who enjoy pitting themselves against other humans in shooting games will find *SOCOM 3* a blast. The map size has been



increased, vehicles have been added, and the number of players allowed has doubled to 32. There are new multi-player game modes, but most of the interest is in the traditional modes that have been made fresh and shiny by the all the new toys.

*SOCOM 3* has three single-player campaigns in addition to its on-line play. In these games, players take the role of a squad leader and command a team of Navy SEALs in missions that span the globe and include everything from simple search and destroy to kidnapping enemy officers. With the new, larger maps, the game now has save points and restocking points so that players don't have to replay entire huge levels when they die. The new vehicles also allow players to get around the new levels with more speed—and more fire power. The miniguns on the gunboats are particularly satisfying to shoot, but all the guns in the game give good feedback, both in controller vibration and the graphic results of the shots. □



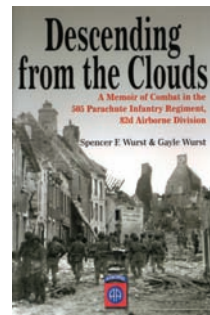
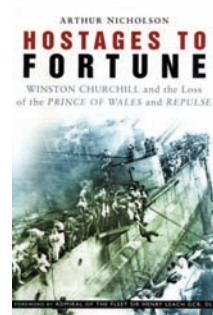
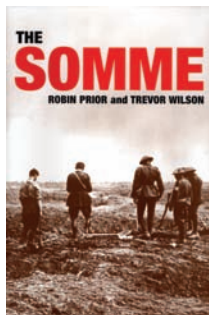
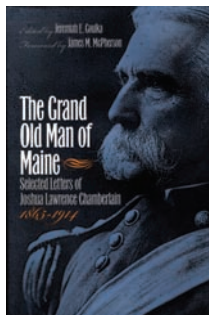
the conflict. As the war progressed and ravaged the South, the soldiers' concerns for their frequently destitute families overrode military necessity, unit allegiance, and loyalty to the Confederate States of America. Weitz concludes that desertion, along with other problems, "truly crippled the Confederate war effort and in the end hurt much more than slaughter."

*The Grand Old Man of Maine: Selected Letters of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, 1865-1914*, edited by Jeremiah E. Goulka, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2004, 384 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, \$39.95 hardcover.

Colonel (later General) Joshua L. Chamberlain was, for most of the twentieth century, a relatively obscure and little known Civil War commander until he was thrust into the limelight in Michael Shaara's 1975 novel *The Killer Angels*. Chamberlain commanded the 20th Maine Infantry, and by audaciously leading a bayonet assault at Little Round Top, probably saved the Union left flank at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. He was wounded six times, commanded a brigade, and emerged from the Civil War a veritable hero. This is a collection of Chamberlain's post-war letters, from a period of his life little examined. Chamberlain served as governor of Maine (1866-1871), president of Bowdoin College (1871-1883), railroad executive, and surveyor of customs at Portland, Maine. Chamberlain's fascinating, deftly edited, and voluminous correspondence reveals what a tremendous impact the Civil War had on him. His letters also show the importance of memory and commemoration of the Civil War, and the politics of veterans, pensions, and recognition, with "the theme of Victorian manhood and masculinity" intertwined throughout. This valuable collection of well-edited letters sheds light on the life and times of Chamberlain, Civil War hero and "the Grand Old Man of Maine."

*The Somme*, by Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2005, 352 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index, \$35.00 hardcover.

The Battle of the Somme during World War I has come to represent the futility of war and the incompetence of British generals. The bloodiest battle in British history, some 432,000—or about 3,600 per day—became casualties from July 1 to mid-November 1916. The battle kicked off on July 1, and the British suffered 60,000 casualties that one day while attacking well-established German defenses.



In mid-July, a British night attack pierced the German second line, with cavalry riding into the gap. The horsemen, because other reinforcements were delayed, were mowed down by German machine guns. After an enemy counterattack, the offensive was reduced to a series of small but costly attacks that were called off in mid-November. Australian military historians Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson have mined official documents and private-paper repositories in England and Australia to reconstruct authoritatively relevant aspects of the higher direction of the war, theater leadership and decision-making, and the tactical execution of the offensive. Their considered conclusion is that the British civilian leadership played a large role in the conception and direction of the British battle, British fire support was inadequate, and Haig (British commander-in-chief) "performed badly" in command, failed to coordinate his armies, and "was in denial about the reality of warfare on the Western Front."

*Hostages to Fortune: Winston Churchill and the Loss of the Prince of Wales and Repulse*, by Arthur Nicholson, Sutton Publishing, Phoenix Mill, UK, 2005, 224 pp., illustrations, maps, chapter endnotes, appendix, select bibliography, index, \$34.95 hardcover.

As the Japanese continued to make bellicose moves in Southeast Asia in 1941, the British decided to send a powerful "yet unbalanced and vulnerable" naval task force to the region to deter further Japanese aggression. The main ships of Force Z, as it was called, were H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* (a 35,000-ton King George V class battleship) and H.M.S. *Repulse* (a 26,000-ton Renown class battlecruiser). After the Japanese landed troops in northern Malaya on December 8, 1941, these two ships and four destroyers steamed from Singapore to find and strike the enemy. After a fruitless search, Force Z, with no air cover, was attacked by a strong Japanese torpedo plane and high-level bomber force. Both heavy ships were hit several times and sent to the bottom. These were the first capital ships to be sunk by air attack while

operating on the high seas. Their sinking further stunned a naval world reeling in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack only a few days earlier. Author Arthur Nicholson has scrupulously researched primary source documents to examine the decisions behind the dispatch of Force Z to Singapore (including Churchill's dominant role) and its conduct of operations at "the Battle off Malaya." The result is a tightly argued and balanced portrayal of "a tale of momentous and difficult decisions, great and heroic men, powerful and graceful ships, [and] cruel twists of fate."

*Descending from the Clouds: A Memoir of Combat in the 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division*, by Spencer F. Wurst and Gayle Wurst, Casemate, Havertown, PA, 2005, 256 pp., illustrations, maps, \$32.95 hardcover.

"The first time I went up in a plane," writes Spencer F. Wurst in this interesting memoir, "I jumped out of it." Wurst was a soldier in the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, in World War II. He jumped out of airplanes many more times and participated in three of his regiment's four combat jumps. Lying about his age, 15-year-old Wurst enlisted as a private in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in 1940, and his unit was federalized in February 1941. He requested a transfer and attended Parachute School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, in 1942. Assigned to the 505th, Wurst made his first combat jump at Salerno in September 1943 and fought in Italy. He made the chaotic "big jump" into Ste. Mere-Eglise on D-Day and was wounded during the vicious hedgerow fighting in Normandy. He jumped into Holland during the ill-fated Operation Market Garden, received the Silver Star for his gallantry in action, and later fought in the Battle of the Bulge. In this fascinating wartime memoir, Wurst shows great attention to detail as well as humanity and sensitivity. His keen observations of training and small unit combat in the fabled 82nd Airborne Division make a significant contribution to World War II historiography. □

## Soldiers

Continued from page 13

as public safety director for the city of Philadelphia, before returning to take charge of 5,000 troops who had been sent to China to protect American lives and property during the 1927 revolution. Unlike their long-ago Boxer experience, the Marines were kept out of the fighting this time. Butler played the role of diplomat to perfection, an unexpected reversal of his usual role of short-tempered fighter. When the Marines left China in 1929 all was quiet and Butler, whose men had helped in reconstruction and humanitarian projects, was treated as a hero by the Chinese.

Butler's persona as a diplomat did not last very long after he returned to the States. Although he was promoted to major general and resumed his old duties as post commander at Quantico, he was soon involved in petty quarrels with Secretary of War Charles F. Adams. Butler thought the problem was that Adams did not like Marines—he certainly did not like Butler. The squabbles with Adams soon paled in importance when Butler was arrested on January 29, 1931, on charges of “conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline” and “conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.”

The charges stemmed from a speech Butler had made at a private club in which he repeated a derogatory story he had heard about Italian Premier Benito Mussolini, who was an ally at the time. When the story leaked, the State Department was embarrassed and Butler was arrested. The diplomats had miscalculated, however. Butler was hailed as a national hero by the American public, while Mussolini was seen as a brutal dictator. The charges were dropped and Butler's rank and privileges were restored. His major general's flag was raised again over Quantico.

But Butler was to endure one more snub. When Maj. Gen. Wendell Neville, the commandant of the Marine Corps, died in office, it left Butler as the senior ranking officer in the Corps. He was thus next in line for commandant, but a brigadier general far down the seniority list was chosen instead—with Secretary Adams' enthusiastic recommendation. Butler had seen enough. On October 1, 1931, he retired after 33 years of high drama and heroic service. The senior officers he had annoyed may have breathed a sigh of relief, but those who had served under him hailed Butler as an authentic American hero. His two Medals of Honor and 14 other battle decorations were more than enough proof of that. □

## Tsushima

Continued from page 67

reached Vladivostok. Scattered remnants of the Russian fleet were rounded up, and the wounded, bed-ridden Rozhdestvensky became Togo's prisoner. For the Russians, Tsushima had been a disaster of epic proportions. They had lost 34 ships, 4,830 dead, 5,917 wounded and captured, and nearly 2,000 interned. Many high-born sons of the Russian aristocracy found an icy grave in the East China Sea. The Japanese, by comparison, lost only three torpedo boats, 110 killed and 590 wounded. The totality of the Japanese victory stunned the world, and Togo became a national hero. The normally reserved Japanese people danced in the streets when they heard the news.

Although the Russian and Japanese armies still confronted one another on land, Japan was the undisputed master at sea. The sheer magnitude of the victory was enough to bring the shocked and despondent Russians to the negotiating table. American President Theodore Roosevelt offered to mediate the peace talks, and the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the Russo-Japanese War, was signed on September 5, 1905, in New Hampshire. Under the terms of the treaty, Russia recognized the preeminent influence of Japan in Korea and ceded Port Arthur and a second port city, Dairen, on the Liaotung Peninsula to the Japanese. The victors also received the southern half of Sakhalin Island and other concessions, including the right to use railroad lines in southern Manchuria.

With the demise of Russian naval power in the Far East, a number of nations began to raise questions about continued Japanese expansion. Roosevelt was among those who voiced concerns. A year after the end of the war, he wrote to a friend: “In a dozen years the English, Americans and Germans, who now dread each other as rivals in the trade of the Pacific, will each have to dread the Japanese more than they do any other nation. If we try to treat them as we have treated the Chinese, and if at the same time fail to keep our navy at the highest point of efficiency and size—then we shall invite disaster.” Roosevelt's words proved prophetic. Their victory at Tsushima did much to bolster the confidence of Japan's military and promote their notion of invincibility. Less than half a century later, this myth would lead them to mount another sneak attack—at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii—and ultimately envelop them in the ruinous inferno of World War II. □

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## Hill of Angels

*Continued from page 45*

Battalion, 9th Marines moved back to the area that was the scene of so much death. The fighting increased in intensity and by nightfall, the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines from SLF Bravo was helicoptered in to reinforce the battalions.

The next day, aerial observers spotted NVA troops crossing the Ben Hai River. Climbing a tree to observe any enemy movement, Captain Burrell H. Landes, commanding officer of Company B, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, received word that a large Communist force was heading in his direction. Landes inquired about the size of the NVA unit. The aerial observer radioed back: "I'd hate to tell you." As the 400-man NVA battalion, part of the elite 90th NVA Regiment, approached the Marine lines, nearly 600 130mm and 152mm rounds impacted near the Marines.

This time, however, the Leathernecks had a surprise for them. Captain Slater, whose Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines had endured the nightmare of July 2, had been attached to the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines and was waiting for them. "When the point of the enemy column was brought under fire, the NVA alerted their unit with a bugle call," Slater said. "Their initial reaction was one of confusion and they scattered, some of them toward Marine lines. They quickly organized and probed at every flank of the 360-degree perimeter. Concealed prepared positions and fire discipline never allowed the NVA to determine what size unit they were dealing with. When the enemy formed and attacked, heavy accurate artillery was walked to within 75 meters of the perimeter. The few NVA that penetrated the perimeter were killed and all lines held."

The battle was a brutal one. NVA sappers got near enough to toss satchel charges and blocks of TNT at the Marines. When he observed several Chicom grenades land near him, Lance Corporal James L. Stuckey quickly picked up each one and began flinging them back. One of the projectiles went off, severing Stuckey's hand, but he remained with his squad throughout the battle. For his actions that night, Stuckey would be presented a Navy Cross.

Operation Buffalo ended on July 14. Nearly 1,300 NVA were reported killed; only two were captured. The Marines lost 159 killed and 345 wounded. "The most savage aspect was the heavy employment of supporting arms by both sides," noted the official Marine

Corps history of the operation. "Of the known enemy killed, more than 500 came from air, artillery, and naval gunfire. In addition, supporting arms destroyed 164 enemy bunkers and 15 artillery and rocket positions, and caused 46 secondary explosions. To accomplish this, Marine aviation used 1,066 tons of ordnance, Marine and Army artillery consumed more than 40,000 rounds, and ships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet fired 1,500 rounds from their 5- and 8-inch naval guns. On the other hand, enemy artillery accounted for half of the Marine casualties during the operation and posed a constant threat to Marine logistical support installations."

Throughout the summer months and into the fall, the enemy kept up the pressure on Con Thien. Hanoi had plans to make the Marines' stay along the DMZ, especially at the Hill of Angels, as miserable as possible. Their heavy artillery was to play a major part in the plan. In early September 1967, the Marines launched Operation Kingfisher to once again strike at NVA positions near the DMZ. On September 4, Captain Richard K. Young's Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines ran into an NVA unit about 1,500 meters from Con Thien. Company M, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines moved on the left flank of Company I and overran the enemy force. A few days later, riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines fought what seemed to be the entire 812th NVA Regiment. For several bloody hours, the infantryman clashed with the enemy.

Sergeant David Brown of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines was everywhere on the battlefield. The physically and mentally tough Tennessean kept shouting encouragement to his men as he moved up and down the line. Captain Richard D. Camp, Lima Company's leader, recalled Brown's heroics that day: "He was just standing there, cool as you please, in the offhand position, with his M-16 tucked into his shoulder, shooting at NVA soldiers who were making their way up the trail. At that moment, the leading NVA were no more than thirty feet away from him. He was shooting them, one right after the other. By the time I looked up, he must have laid out about six or eight of them, all in a nice little pile."

The firefight lasted into the night, with American fighter planes dropping napalm as close as possible to the perimeter. NVA gunners, in turn, unleashed numerous RPG rounds, striking several tanks and causing their ammunition to detonate. All through the night, the sounds of '50-caliber rounds "cooking off" permeated the air. At dawn, the NVA

withdrew and the Marines counted 140 enemy soldiers scattered around their perimeter. The Leathernecks had suffered 34 killed and 192 wounded.

Throughout September, the occupants of Con Thien endured heavy shelling from NVA artillery. From across the Ben Hai River that separated North from South Vietnam, NVA artillery targeted the Marines bases dotting the DMZ, especially Con Thien. "Almost daily we would receive at least 200 rounds of incoming," recalled PFC Jack Hartzel of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines. "The constant pounding every day could make you go nuts. You would sit there on the edge, wondering if the next round that came in would have your name on it. I remember lying there at night trying to sleep, but sleep was impossible. I was too nervous. I remember I could hear the enemy rounds when they were taking off in the distance. We could actually hear them taking off. We were that close!"

Con Thien was subjected to some of the heaviest shelling of the war. Communist gunners would lob mortar and artillery rounds at the base, then quickly move their weapons before the Marines could locate them. Between September 19-27, an incredible 3,077 shells battered the Marine positions. September 25 was the worst day—some 1,200 rounds crashed into the fire base. "The thing about September 25th that really sticks in my mind," said Hartzel, "is a Marine sitting in a pool of blood, his legs blown off. He was numb from morphine and in shock from loss of blood. He was smoking a cigarette very calmly as if nothing had happened." Of the 45 men who reported for duty from Hartzel's platoon, only 12 walked out unscathed.

By the end of 1967, the imminent threat toward Con Thien had finally subsided. Attention would soon be focused on the besieged Marine base at Khe Sanh, and Con Thien quickly faded from memory. The barrier and SPOS plan that Secretary of Defense McNamara had envisioned would prove to be a dismal failure. Those who survived the hell of Con Thien would never forget their "time in the barrel." The torrential monsoon rains that transformed the red dirt around the base into a quagmire, the constant shelling that could leave one totally demoralized and the threat of being overrun and killed would be indelibly etched in their minds for all time. As for the hundreds of Marines and U.S. Navy corpsmen who died defending that seemingly worthless piece of land—their spirits would remain forever on the Hill of Angels. □

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