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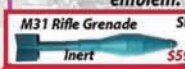

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Cover: A German soldier performs maintainance on his rifle during a break in the fighting around Stalingrad in late 1942. See story page 44. Photo: CPA Media Pte Ltd. / Alamy Stock Photo

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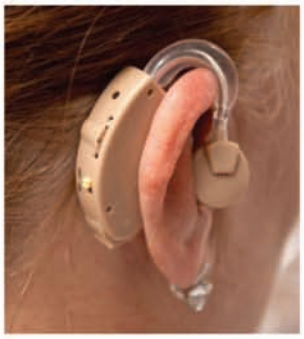

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WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK

An Execution That Lingers

THE PHOTOGRAPH IS BRUTAL, HARSH, AND UNSETTLING. THE DEATH OF Sergeant Leonard George Siffleet occurred on October 24, 1943. Eighty years ago, Siffleet was bound and blindfolded, transported to the beach at Aitape, New Guinea, after two weeks of torture and mistreatment at the hands of his Japanese captors.

Moments later, Japanese naval officer Yasuno Chikao raised a samurai sword and beheaded the Australian Commando before an audience of fellow military personnel and native tribesmen who were in league with the Japanese. The stark image of Siffleet's last moment on Earth has become an iconic representation of the inhumanity man often has for man. Chikao had ordered a private to take a photo of the execution, probably as a macabre personal memento of the event.

Sergeant Leonard George Siffleet of the Second Australian Imperial Force just before he was beheaded by Japanese naval officer Yasuno Chikao on October, 24, 1943, on the beach at Aitape, New Guinea.

Siffleet was 27 years old at the time and had served with the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Born on January 14, 1916, in Gunnedah, New South Wales, Australia, he had hopes of becoming a police officer but was denied due to problems with his eyesight. He was summoned to join the militia in 1940 and served briefly. Less than a year later, Siffleet volunteered for the Second Australian Imperial Force.

After training in radio communications, Siffleet was detailed to the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD), a component of the Allied Intelligence Bureau. Stationed in Melbourne, he soon transferred to Z Special Unit, working with the Dutch section of the SRD. In May 1943, he was promoted to sergeant and transferred to M Special Unit, perhaps specifically to participate in a hazardous mission behind Japanese lines in New Guinea to establish a coastwatching station.

The mission, codenamed Operation Whiting, was destined for the hills surrounding the town of Hollandia. Sergeant H.N. Staverman of the Royal Dutch Navy led the group of infiltrators that included Siffleet and two native Ambonese enlisted men, H. Pattiwal and M. Reharing. For two months, the group attempted to avoid contact with the Japanese or natives that were possibly assisting them. At one point Staverman and Pattiwal separated from the others and were captured. Pattiwal managed to escape, but Staverman was apparently killed.

Siffleet radioed a warning to a nearby Commando group, conducting concurrent Operation Locust, that there were natives sympathetic to the Japanese in the area. In early October the remaining members of Operation Whiting were taken prisoner, and no further communication was received from them. Reports indicate that the men were assaulted by 100 pro-Japanese natives, and in the brief fight that took place Siffleet shot and wounded one of the attackers.

After they were turned over to the Japanese, Siffleet, Pattiwal, and Reharing, were repeatedly questioned and beaten severely. On the afternoon of October 24, the prisoners were relocated to Aitape beach, where all three were beheaded. Rear Admiral Michiaki Kamada, commander of the 8th Japanese Fleet in the area, had given the execution order.

In the spring of 1944, the photo of Siffleet's execution was taken from the body of a dead Japanese major by an American soldier, and records indicate that it is the only existing photo of a prisoner of war from a Western country being executed by a member of the Japanese military. Yasuno Chikao's fate is unknown. Admiral Kamada surrendered to Australian forces on September 8, 1945. He was tried for war crimes, and hanged on October 18, 1947.

The fate of Siffleet, Pattiwal, and Reharing is but one of many such tragic wartime endings.

—Michael E. Haskew

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THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM
NEW ORLEANS

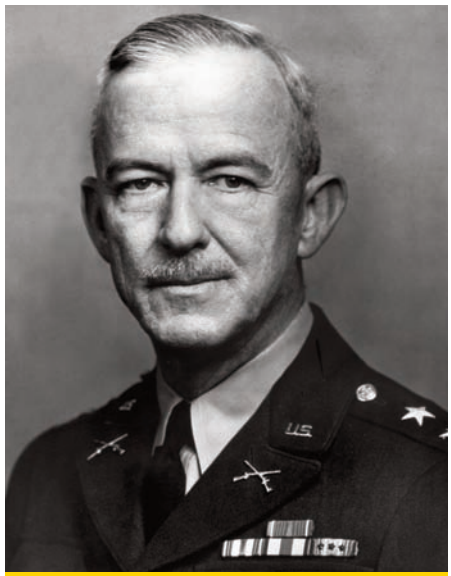
WWII History

By Nathan N. Prefer

Both National Archives

Up through the Ranks

Commander of the U.S. First Army in Europe, General Courtney Hodges compiled an impressive record in senior combat leadership.



TOP: Men and equipment pour onto Omaha Beach in Normandy on June 8, 1944, two days after the Allied D-Day landings. General Courtney Hodges, commander of the U.S. First Army may have gone ashore at Omaha on D-Day, although the record is unclear. Hodges did go ashore the next day and supervised the linkup of the V and VII Corps. INSET: General Courtney Hodges rose through the ranks to command a U.S. field army in World War II.

HE WAS ONE OF ONLY TWO SOLDIERS IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO rise from private to four-star general and to command one of the largest armies in America's biggest conflict. Yet even during World War II, he was overshadowed by the more flamboyant leaders including General George S. Patton, General Omar N. Bradley and, of course, General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Even General Eisenhower would complain to the U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall that General Courtney H. Hodges was not getting the "credit in the United States for his great work."

Courtney Hicks Hodges was born on January 5, 1887, in Houston County, Georgia. The son of a local newspaper owner, he became a writer on his own, paying particular attention to proper English grammar. His childhood was filled with hunting trips, baseball games, fishing, and swimming. Enthralled by his neighbor's tales of the famous Revolutionary War "Swamp Fox" Francis Marion, young Hodges was soon interested in becoming a soldier.

After graduating from Perry Public School in 1903, he enrolled in North Georgia Agricultural College. Here he became a bugler, joined a fraternity, and drilled with the college's cadet group. Soon he received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, from his local congressional representative. There he found himself in some difficulties.

Exactly what Cadet Hodges' difficulties were at West Point vary by account. Some family members believe it was the hazing which drove him from the academy, while others think he was covering for the misdeed of another cadet—which some believe was George S. Patton. Officially he was found "deficient" in mathematics and dropped from the academy.

Hodges left West Point and enlisted as a pri-

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vate on November 4, 1908. Almost immediately he distinguished himself as a marksman, winning several shooting medals and contests. At the National Marksmanship contest at Fort Niagara, New York, Private Hodges came in second place.

Hodges' first overseas assignment was to the Philippines. That same year (1909), he received a commission as a 2nd lieutenant. He made the acquaintance of fellow lieutenants George C. Marshall and Henry H. "Hap" Arnold.

Hodges' unit, the 13th Infantry Regiment, was rotated back to the United States. There he was transferred to the 6th Infantry Regiment at El Paso, Texas, and applied for the Army's Aviation Section of the Signal Corps. He was turned down because of poor hearing. But Hodges had other successes, winning the Florida State Rifle Com-

All National Archives

petition with a perfect score.

Then came the Mexican Punitive Expedition, and Hodges was soon hunting Mexican bandits with Lieutenant George S. Patton and future Ninth U.S. Army commander, Lieutenant William H. Simpson. Other than rescuing a downed aviator and commanding a machine gun company, then an infantry company, the expedition was uneventful for Hodges. He did pass the examination for 1st lieutenant and soon after was promoted to Captain.

With the outbreak of war in Europe, the 6th Infantry Regiment was transferred to Georgia, where Captain Hodges earned rapid promotion to company and battalion commander. By 1917, he was a temporary lieutenant colonel commanding the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 10th Infantry Brigade, 5th Infantry Division. It was in this assignment that he went

ABOVE: An American self-propelled gun rolls through a street in the French city of Carentan. As of June 11, 1944, General Hodges was monitoring the progress of the American effort to eject the Germans from the important road junction there. LEFT: General Courtney Hodges was accepted at West Point but left the military academy before completing the curriculum. He returned later as an instructor.

overseas to France and fought in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives, earning a Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, and Bronze Star.

During the battle for the town of Brieulles, France, on November 2-4, 1918, Hodges earned his Distinguished Service Cross. He went forward to find the best place for his command to cross the Meuse River. On finding one, he organized a storming party and attacked the Germans not 100 yards from the crossing site. Hodges fought for over 20 hours to gain the bridgehead and get his command across and up the heights east of the river.

With the armistice, the 6th Infantry Regiment was assigned to garrison Trier, a German city of 50,000 inhabitants. Hodges enjoyed the sights, food and people while reviewing the tactical performance of his battalion over the last several months. He also indulged in his favorite pastime, shooting. He won a medal for winning a rifle match while in France and was on the Army team for the Inter-Allied Competitions held in Le Mans, France, in June 1919. The next month the 6th Infantry Regiment was returned to the United States under the command of temporary Colonel Hodges.

After several months in Georgia, Hodges was ordered to the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In Washington, meanwhile, Congress was busy reducing the Army to a bare minimum and reducing most temporarily promoted officers to their permanent ranks. But during this post-war period a World War I hero, General Douglas MacArthur, was appointed Superintendent of West Point. Coming back to his former academy, MacArthur was determined to remake the academy. He brought in new and generally younger instructors. One of these was Courtney Hodges.

Hodges' next posting was to the prestigious Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He graduated in 1925, number 94 of 258. From Kansas, Hodges was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, to teach tactics at the Army Infantry School. There he renewed his acquaintance with Bradley and met future generals Matthew B. Ridgeway and Mark Clark.

With the permanent rank of major, Hodges was next sent to Langley Field, Virginia, on loan from the Infantry School, where he taught at the Air Corps Tactical School. Over three years, he logged more than 250 hours flying. He developed his appreciation for air power while he worked at Langley. During his time at Langley, he met the widow of an Air Corps officer, Mildred Lee Buchner of Montgomery, Alabama. The two got along well, and after she had shot her first bullseye on the target range Courtney asked her to marry him. They remained together for the next 35 years.

In August 1929, the Hodges were transferred to Fort Douglas, Utah, but their stay was brief. Before leaving Langley, Major Hodges had again met Lieutenant Colonel Marshall and had said that he would like to return to Fort Benning. The call to return to Fort Benning came in November. He was assigned as an instructor under Colonel Joseph W. "Vinegar

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An American Jeep rolls down a muddy road into Germany, passing a sign that is both a greeting and a warning. The U.S. First Army, under the command of General Courtney Hodges, entered Germany initially in November 1944, during the fighting in the Hurtgen Forest.

Joe" Stilwell. He served on the Infantry Board, whose job was to come up with new and improved weapons. In this capacity Hodges was instrumental in adapting the new M-1 Garand semi-automatic rifle, the new standard helmet, the Jeep, and improved combat rations. He also developed a two-week course for National Guard general officers.

The next move was to Washington, D.C., and a year at the Army War College where he studied strategic planning for the western Pacific. Graduating in June 1934, he was sent to Vancouver Barracks in Washington State as lieutenant colonel and executive officer of the 5th Infantry Brigade.

Then came another summons, this time to the Philippines, where Hodges trained the fledgling Philippine Army. As operations officer, Hodges organized the famous Philippine Scouts. He also first worked alongside Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower, also on MacArthur's staff at this time. Like Eisenhower, Hodges did not care for MacArthur, but did their best.

By 1938, General Marshall had become the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division. He asked Hodges if he would like to return to work with the Illinois National Guard. But world events were moving so fast that the transfer was to Fort Benning, not Illinois. The Hodges' returned to Georgia in August 1938, where Courtney was appointed assistant commandant of the Infantry School. After 19 months, he was promoted to full colonel and made the commandant of the Infantry School. He was promoted to brigadier general in May 1940.

In May 1941, Hodges was promoted to major general and appointed Chief of Infantry. Bradley took command of the Infantry School. Hodges saw the implementation of many ideas he had championed while on the Infantry Board. Hodges made repeated inspections of the massive maneuvers in Louisiana, Texas, and the Carolinas.

Hodges also oversaw the re-arming of the Army. Everything from the new anti-tank rocket launcher (bazooka) to the bayonet had to be redesigned and tested. He was particularly proud of the work he did developing the Jeep. Hodges was also personally involved in the development of the new 6X6 truck.

Three months after Pearl Harbor, the posts of branch chiefs were abolished. Hodges then became the commander of all 10 of the army's replacement centers. Once again, his good work earned Hodges promotion to lieutenant general and command of X Corps. But already Hodges was getting impatient for a combat command, opining that he would have loved to take the Third Army to the Far East.

But there were problems while he held this command. The army at the time was segregated, and some units of African Americans had been assigned to his area. This caused friction with both white soldiers and local citizens. Several incidents arose, including the killing of one African American soldier by a Mississippi sheriff, but Hodges worked tirelessly to alleviate the friction.

Marshall then sent Hodges to inspect the fighting fronts in North Africa and Italy. During this trip Hodges went up to the front lines, spending nights at a regimental command post under artillery fire. Then it was back to Third Army.

At the end of 1943, Third Army headquarters was being prepared to go overseas. Hodges looked forward to seeing combat.

Unknown to Hodges, Marshall believed that he would command the invasion of northern France and was preparing a list of generals to serve under him. He wanted Lieutenant General Lesley McNair to command an army group with generals Bradley and Jacob Devers commanding armies within that group. But McNair had a hearing problem, so Marshall revised his scenario to Devers commanding the army group while Bradley and Hodges commanded the armies under it.

Early in January, Third Army received orders to sail to England. But these orders did not include Hodges. Nor was he summoned to Washington for the usual talks before a major

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headquarters departed. Even more strange, he was not included in the shipping orders when the headquarters sailed. He stood outside as Third Army left for New York.

Instead, he was summoned to Washington and criticized for his selection of some senior staff officers in Third Army. Much later he learned that General Marshall had become so indispensable at the War Department that President Franklin D. Roosevelt forbade him to leave. This made Eisenhower the supreme commander of the cross-channel invasion and resulted in a wholesale shifting of senior officers.

Marshall wanted Hodges to command First U.S. Army, but Eisenhower preferred his friend Bradley. Eisenhower got his wish. Hodges learned that he had lost his beloved Third Army when a letter addressed to Patton as commander, Third Army, mistakenly arrived at his old Third Army headquarters. It was Hodges' greatest disappointment since West Point.

At some point, Eisenhower would move up to senior command and Bradley would command an army group. There would be two, later three, subordinate armies. With Bradley leaving, Hodges would command First Army once Bradley moved up. In the interim, he would be its deputy commander.

Hodges appears to have gone ashore on D-Day at Omaha beach, although the record is unclear. He went ashore the following day and supervised the linkup of V Corps and VII Corps.

On June 11, Hodges was ashore again monitoring the attack toward Carentan when the group came under sniper fire. Hodges was frequently at the front trying to learn what was going on, the opposition's strength, and what opportunities existed for advance. He acquired a Piper Cub artillery liaison plane and pilot, often flying over the front to gain better perspective.

By the end of July, First Army was stymied in the thick bocage country of Normandy. Bradley had developed Operation Cobra, intended to break out of Normandy. The plan required a massive bombing effort before the infantry and tanks were released to break through. Hodges was up front to observe the bombings, and when these fell short, was nearly killed. Several others, including McNair, were killed. Despite the tragedy, Cobra succeeded, and First Army renewed its advance.

As of July 27, Bradley delegated most of First Army's operations to Hodges, allowing Bradley to take over Twelfth Army Group. On August 1, 1944, Hodges signed four pieces of paper, officially taking command of First Army.

Although he was supposed to command from his desk, Hodges often went into the field. He preferred to see things for himself.

National Archives

U.S. Marine General Roy Geiger, left, commander of the Fleet Marine Force, chats with General Courtney Hodges, commander of the U.S. Eighth Army, following the surrender of Japan aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945.

A typical day at First Army headquarters usually began at 6:30 a.m. with the general and staff meeting. A review of two large maps was conducted, and Hodges listened quietly, interrupting to ask the occasional question. Hodges would turn to his operations officer, Brigadier General Truman C. Thorson, and say, "Tubby, let's brew some medicine. Let's just think this out loud." And from these talks came the daily plan.

The French resistance uprising in Paris caused a problem for Hodges. He called in Gerow and put together a V Corps task force to rush to Paris and, despite disputes with French commanders, seize the French capital. When supplies began to run short and the Red Ball Express was proposed, Hodges came up with hundreds of trucks for First Army's contribution to the supply highway. By September, the Allies approached the Siegfried Line, or Westwall, on the German frontier. First Army's VII Corps first crossed the German border and attacked the Westwall.

Meanwhile, Hodges seized vital road junctions along the French-Belgian border, forcing the Germans to withdraw. At one point in September, First Army had troops in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg.

By November 1944, First Army was pushing deeper into Germany. Hodges was directed to attack into the Huertgen Forest. Here developed one of the most enduring controversies involving Hodges. Despite fierce enemy resistance, he continued to push his exhausted units forward, ignoring opportunities to capture several dams which would have forced the Germans to withdraw. But it should be noted that Bradley, Hodges' superior, later remarked, "To put it mildly, my plan to smash through to the Rhine and encircle the Ruhr had failed…."

First Army was fighting toward the Rhine when the Battle of the Bulge began. When the German offensive struck, senior Allied leaders were surprised. But Hodges was quick to realize that this was a serious threat, ordering countermeasures before noon on December 16. He requested troops from both the Ninth Army to his north and Third Army to the south. He sent the 101st Airborne Division to hold the vital crossroads town of Bastogne, a major factor in delaying the Germans.

To better coordinate operations, First Army was placed under Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group. Despite suffering from

influenza, Hodges led the defense and later counterattacks as ordered by the field marshal.

With the defeat of the Bulge counterattack, First Army went back on the offensive, overrunning the Huertgen Forest, capturing the dams, and moving to the Rhine. Hodges rushed troops across the Rhine bridgehead at Remagen established by the 9th Armored Division. Bradley sent more troops to First Army.

Once across the Rhine, First Army encircled the German industrial area, the Ruhr, from the south while the Ninth Army circled from the north. After the Ruhr was secured, the first American units, from First Army, reached the Elbe River. Eisenhower halted operations.

As the war in Europe ended, the war in the Pacific continued. Hodges was assigned "the big prize of leading all the ground units deploying from Europe to the Pacific." He was highly recommended by both Marshall and Eisenhower and satisfied MacArthur.

First Army was assigned to the second of two major amphibious landings in Japan, Operation Coronet. This was set for the island of Honshu and the seizure of Tokyo. Under Hodges' command would be the III (Marine) Amphibious Corps and the XXIV Corps for the initial landing, followed by additional troops from Europe after the beachhead had been established.

Hodges went home for a brief rest before arriving in the Pacific just as Japan surrendered. He was the only "European" commander present at the surrender aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in September 1945. Hodges was promoted full general in April 1945.

By March 1949, after 32 years, Hodges retired from the Army. He had acquired three Distinguished Service Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, and the Bronze Star among other recognition. Hodges died on January 16, 1966, age 79.

Bradley called him "a military technician whose faultless techniques and tactical knowledge made him one of the most skilled craftsmen of my entire command." Others thought him remote, cautious, and uninspiring. Nevertheless, First Army was the workhorse of the "Great Crusade" and fought the hardest battles, sustained the highest casualties, and gained the most ground of any of Eisenhower's field armies. ■

Nathan Prefer is the author of numerous books and articles on World War II. He received his Ph.D. in military history from the City University of New York and is a former Marine Corps reservist. Dr. Prefer is now retired and resides in Fort Myers, Florida.

| By Arnold Blumberg |

Alamy

Czech Tanks Gave Nazis Early Edge

After annexing Czechoslovakia, the Nazis took advantage of the Czech armaments industry and pressed many tanks into service with the Wehrmacht during World War II.

IN MARCH 1939, ADOLF HITLER DISSOLVED THE REPUBLIC OF Czechoslovak, incorporating its lands into the Third Reich. As a consequence, much military equipment fell into the hands of the Wehrmacht, including 469 armored fighting vehicles. Among these were 298 LT vz 35 and 80 LT vz 38 tanks, which became critical additions to the German Army's armored force during the opening stages of World War II.

The LT vz 35, or Lekhy Tank vzor Light Tank Model 1935, was manufactured by the Skoda and Ceskamoravska-Kolben-Danek (CKD) firms. The innovative pneumatically assisted steering and suspension systems made the 11.6-ton vehicle easy to drive. Frontal armor was 25mm, while side armor measured 16mm. Each tank was armed with a Skoda A3 37mm cannon and two 7.92mm machine guns. Its crew consisted of four members: two in the turret and two in the hull compartment. Powered by a six-cylinder 120hp Skoda T-11 engine, the Model 35 could reach cross country speeds of 15 miles per hour and road speeds of 24 miles per hour. Range was 71 miles cross country and 120 miles on roads.

The LT vz 35's design contained one major flaw: the steering system was unreliable in winter conditions. As a result, CKD created the LT vz 38, replacing the 35's pneumatic apparatus and simplifying the suspension to compensate for the lost pneumatics. This improvement allowed the Model 38 to easily negotiate rugged terrain. Armor and crew complement were comparable to that of the LT vz 35, but the cannon was upgraded to the more powerful Skoda A7 37mm. Fitted with the 125hp Praga EPA six-cylinder engine, the LT vz 38 had a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour. Its road range equaled 120 miles, and cross-country range was 84 miles. These improvements made the LT vz 38 the best light/ medium tank of its day, as events during the first two years of World War II would demonstrate.

During the summer of 1939, the German Army integrated these tanks into its light panzer divisions. These armored formations were created as stopgap operational units with capabilities that fell between powerful but untested panzer divisions and those of the less powerful but proven motorized divisions. The LTs were redesignated by the Germans as PanzerKampfwagen (PzKw) 35(t) and 38(t); the postscript (t) denoting the place of origin as Tschechoslowakei, German for Czechoslovakia. Both vehicles soon gained a reputation for ruggedness; the PzKw 38(t) acquired the moniker "Robuste Fahrzeuge" (Robust Vehi-

Tanks of the German Army's 17th Panzer Regiment, 19th Panzer Division advance through Belarus on June 25, 1941, three days after the launch of Operation Barbarossa. These tanks are Panzer 38(t) models, made in Czechoslovakia and pressed into Nazi service with Hitler's occupation of the country.

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TOP: This Czech-built LT vz.35 undergoes field testing before being placed in service with the German army. With the annexation of Czechoslovakia, the Germans received a windfall of fine military equipment, as well as the Skoda Works, excellent arms production facilities. ABOVE: Fighting near Leningrad in the summer of 1941, German infantrymen advance with the support of a pair of Czech-built Panzer 35(t) tanks. When the 35(t) proved unreliable in the harsh conditions of the Russian winter, the Germans ceased production of the model.

cle) from its German crews.

A total of 202 PzKw 35(t)s were available for Case White, the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939. They were assigned to Panzer Battalion 65, part of the 1st Light Panzer Division, and the Independent Panzer Regiment 11. This amounted to 10.5 percent of the armor deployed by Germany in the Polish operation.

The battle record of the 1st Light Panzer Division was noteworthy. Of the 221 tanks in the unit, 112 were PzKw 35(t)s, the remainder being the less effective PzKw Is and IIs. The division was responsible for trapping more than 60,000 Polish troops near the Bug River during the third week of September 1939.

A remarkable feature of the German conquest of Poland was the low loss of Czech armor. Only seven Czech PzKws, or 2.75 percent of the 218 tank losses reported by the Wehrmacht, were destroyed in the campaign. Another 70 were temporarily put out of action due to mechanical issues. The sterling performance of the 35(t) in Poland brought forth demands for more of them to join the rapidly growing panzerwaffe as quickly as possible.

In October 1939, the 1st Light Panzer Division with the 11th Panzer Regiment was redesignated the 6th Panzer Division. It took 132 35(t)s into the Battle of France. Assigned to XXXXI Korps (motorized), part of Panzer Gruppe von Kleist, these vehicles participated in the attack through the Ardennes Forest. In this operation 44 35(t)s were destroyed and replaced by 35 of that same type. They took part in Case Red, the attack on the remnants of the French Army which commenced on June 4, 1940. During the campaign, 62 PzKws were put out of action and beyond repair.

For the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the 6th Panzer Division had 160 PzKw 35(t)s to support 4th Panzer Group's drive on Leningrad. By September 10, only 102 were operational despite having received two replacement orders from Germany. At the end of October of the same year only 34 were combat fit. A report dated November 30, 1941, stated no 35(t)s were available for action.

By the start of the 1942 campaign season, German production of the 35(t) had been suspended. Creation of spare parts for the vehicle had also been stopped. The reasons for these actions had been made plain by the fighting in Russia: general unreliability in the cold weather conditions, thin armor, and poor firepower. Upon transfer to France in April 1941, the 6th Panzer Division was reequipped with German tanks. The remaining 26 35(t)s in working order were sold to Rumania. Those which could not be put back in the field were converted to ammunition carriers or artillery tractors by using their chassis after their turrets and hull machine gun were removed.

Like the PzKw 35(t) tank, the 38(t) model did very well in the German war against Poland. A good example can be found in the actions of the 3rd Light Panzer Division early in the conflict. Spearheaded by its battalion of 59 38(t)s, the unit made an immediate impact on the operation by destroying the Polish Krakow Cavalry Brigade near the town of Wozniki on September 1, 1939, the very first day of the conflict. Soon thereafter, the division went on to participate in the encirclement and subsequent surrender of the Polish 7th Infantry Division at Czestochowa.

The Pzkw 38(t)s next saw service in the invasion of Norway. Due to seaborne transportation limitations, the Germans were only able to commit one battalion (100 tanks of the 40th

Panzer Battalion), of which 15 were PzKw 38(t)s, to the operation. The remainder were Pkzw 35(t)s. The Czech tanks operated well in the harsh mountainous terrain found in Norway. The unit's principal success was achieved at the Battle of Tretten.

A successful German drive on the cities of Dombas and Trondheim depended on crossing the Lagen River defended by British and Norwegian troops, particularly at the bridge located at the town of Tretten. The bridge was the sole practical crossing point for armor and supplies needed to sustain the Nazi effort to conquer south-central Norway. Allied infantry held the bridge and the hills overlooking it and had defied repeated German attempts to take the span. On April 23, 1940, PzKw 38(t)s from the 40th Panzer Battalion arrived on scene. Able to move over rough country, the tanks flanked the defenders at the bridge and hill positions, forcing the British to retreat that evening toward Dombas. Near that place on April 28, the dug-in Allies resisted a number of German infantry attacks. The impasse was finally broken when once more the tanks of the 40th Panzer Battalion went around the defenders' flanks, forcing an Allied retreat to Dombas. The eventual British sea evacuation from central Norway, April 30 to May 1, soon followed.

Case Yellow, the German invasion of France, beginning May 10, 1940, introduced the newly formed German 6th, 7th, and 8th Panzer Divisions to combat. In the forefront of the assault were Czech tanks: PzKw 35(t)s in 6th Panzer Division and PzKw 38(t)s as part of the 7th and 8th Panzer Divisions. A total of 228 PzKw 38(t)s along with the available 35(t)s made up 13 percent of the tanks fielded by the Panzerwaffe that took part in the conquest of France during the summer of 1940. Under General Erwin Rommel, commander of the 7th Panzer Division, the full capabilities of the PzKw 35(t) and 38(t) were showcased in May and June of 1940.

From the northern fringe of the Ardennes Forest, Rommel and his "Phantom Division" drove for the Meuse River on May 12. There his PzKw 38(t)s easily defeated a force of French H35 and AMR 35 tanks. Bursting out of his Meuse River bridgehead on May 14, Rommel drove west, defeating the French 1st Cuirasee (DCR) at the tank battle of Flavion on May 15. The nimble PzKw 38(t)s ran circles around the heavier and better armed French Char B Tanks, disabling the heavier enemy vehicles by firing lethal rounds into the enemy tanks' ventilator systems and tracks. By May 16, the elimination of France's only mobile reserve north of Sedan was a fact.

After the Battle of Flavion, Rommel continued

These captured armored vehicles were surrendered to the Soviet Red Army in 1945. Among them are several examples of the Panzerjager 38(t) assault gun, popularly known as the Hetzer and built on the Czech 38(t) chassis. Also built on the Czech 38(t) chassis, a Marder III is visible at right. Horse-drawn wagons are shown toward the rear.

his push to the English Channel, engaging the British at the Battle Arras and French forces until he reached the coast. His loss in tanks was minor.

The Western campaign, especially the Battle of Arras, where German tanks were not able to compete against British Matilda I and II infantry tanks sporting 40mm cannon and 80mm frontal armor, showed that a larger gun was needed on German armored fighting vehicles. The PzKw III, with its 50mm and later 75mm gun, became the main German battle tank for the next three years. However, 149 PzKw 35(t)s and 623 PzKw 38(t)s, or 23.2 percent of the entire German tank strength, all part of the complement of the 6th, 7th, 8th, 12th, 19th, and 20th Panzer Divisions, went into battle against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Czech tanks were able to defeat Red Army light tanks of the BT series and the T-26s. But Soviet medium T-34s and heavy KV I and 2 tanks proved more problematic.

By the start of the 1942 summer Russian campaign, production of the 35(t) and spare parts for the machine had ceased. The winter of 1941-42 had shown that the vehicle was unsuitable for the cold conditions in Russia. Further, its armor and fire power were inadequate against the Russian models.

Throughout 1941 in Russia, Czech tanks which had performed so well the year before were by necessity used as mere decoys when facing Soviet tanks like the T-34. The superior tactical skills possessed by German armored crews could not overcome the massive technical advantage held by Russian machines sporting much heavier protective armor as well as heavier-hitting main guns such as the 76.2mm cannon.

In fact, 1941 was the last year the Czech 38(t) tanks would serve in German panzer divisions. By early 1942, they acted as reconnaissance vehicles and were relegated to rear area security tasks such as guarding railways and anti-partisan sweeps. However, hundreds of 38(t)s and 35(t)s were employed by German allies such as Bulgaria, Rumania, and Slovakia in combat roles on the Eastern Front right to the war's end. Over 1,414 PzKw 38(t)s were produced by Czech factories for use by Germany and its allies.

However, the PzKw 38(t) design had a second life when the Wehrmacht used its chassis for several gun mountings between 1942 to 1945. The German Marder III M tank destroyer mounted a German 75mm or captured Soviet 76.2mm gun in an open-topped compartment on PzKw 38(t) hulls. About 1,217 of these were built during the war.

The most effective vehicle based on the PzKw 38(t) chassis was the German Jagdpanzer 38(t), or "Hetzer." Nicknamed the "Bushwacker" by the Americans due to this small well- armored tank destroyer's ability to lie in ambush, this weapon was feared by the Western Allies. Flamethrower and tank recovery versions were also developed. A total of 1,577 Hetzers with 75mm guns were manufactured during the war. Altogether, Czech factories built nearly 3,700 self-propelled guns and 102 ammunition carriers based on the PzKw 38(t) chassis design during the war.

Although most of the Czech built 35(t) tanks which fought in World War II were fielded by the German Army, small numbers saw service with the Reich's wartime allies. Designated R-2/PzFw, Rumanian 35(t) tanks fought beside the Germans on the Eastern Front. The Slovak Army also employed some 35(t) armored fighting vehicles. Their designation was the LT uz. 35. Bulgaria used a small number of 35(t) tanks first as frontline machines and then training vehicles once the Germans delivered to them the PzKw IV medium tank. That nation called its model the T-11. Hungary received some 35(t) models in March 1941 and used them for training purposes until 1943. They were referred to as the LT uz. 35.

Like the PzKw 35(t), the 38(t) model was used in limited numbers by Rumania and Slovakia during the war. The former country received some units in 1943 and designated them T-38s, while the latter nation referred to their consignments as Lt-38.

The impact Czech armored vehicles had on the progress of World War II was twofold. First, they greatly increased the fighting power of the German panzerwaffe early in the conflict far beyond their numbers. Second, the self-propelled guns based on the PzKw 38(t) chassis added both powerful technology and mass to a German Army badly in need of both during the latter stages of the war. ■

Arnold Blumberg is an attorney with the Maryland state government and resides with his wife in Baltimore County, Maryland.

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The 'Good' Göring

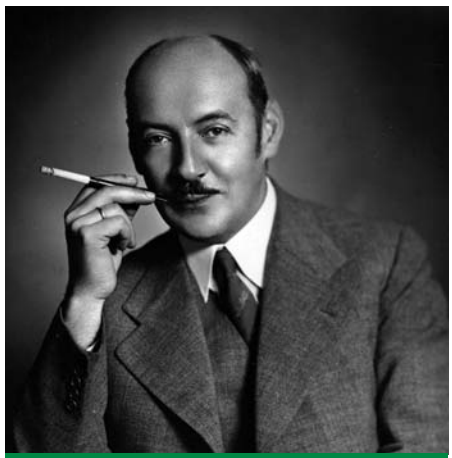
Albert, brother of Gestapo-founder Hermann Göring, was a fervent anti-Nazi who helped Jews escape from concentration camps.

ON MARCH 12, 1938, GERMAN TROOPS ENTERED AUSTRIA, PART OF Adolf Hitler's plan to incorporate that hapless country into the Third Reich. Bullied, browbeaten and ultimately broken by Hitler's rants and endless threats, Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg threw in the towel, in effect agreeing to "Anschluss," unification with Germany. Schuschnigg gave a radio address in which he sadly explained, "We are not prepared … to shed blood" to defend the country against German invasion.

Hitler entered Vienna three days later and celebrated his triumph by making a typical bombastic speech before a crowd of 250,000 people. In the days following the Fuhrer's visit a wave of anti-Semitic intimidation, destruction, and violence swept over the city. Vienna, the cultured metropolis that celebrated Beethoven, Mozart, and Strauss, also had an ugly, darker side that hated the Jews after their numbers increased in the 19th century. When the Nazis took over, this long dormant anti-Semitism sprang to malevolent life.

Viennese mobs roamed the streets, smashing Jewish-owned shops, beating and humiliating every Jew they could find, often forcing them to scrub the streets on hands and knees. There's a story of an SS officer supervising a group of Jewish women scrubbing, when he noticed they had been joined by a man— well dressed, even dapper, balding, with a thin mustache. The puzzled SS officer ordered the stranger to produce an identity card.

The Nazi officer looked at the ID with a mixture of shock and incredulity, handed the document back to the man, and curtly ordered the women to stop working and go home. The officer reasoned that he would be held responsible for the man's continued humiliation, and it was better to release everyone than to risk reprimand.



ABOVE: Adolf Hitler flanked by two of his top lieutenants, Reich Minister of Armaments Albert Speer to his left, and Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe on his right. Göring was sometimes vexed by the activities of his "good" brother, Albert. INSET: Albert Göring, the younger brother of Reichsmarschall Hermann, secured the release of Jews and other prisoners from the camps. He was personally responsible for the rescue of many who would have faced a bleak future without his intervention.

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The man with the mustache was Albert Göring, brother of Luftwaffe chief and Reichsmarshall Hermann Göring. Albert loathed Hitler and despised the Nazis, yet maintained

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a cordial and even loving relationship with his brother, who was considered in the 1930s to be second only to Hitler himself in the Nazi hierarchy. Yet even more amazing is the fact that Hermann knew about Albert's activities, at least in general, but never condemned or abandoned him. Quite the opposite; Hermann went to great lengths to protect his brother from arrest, imprisonment and possible death.

Their father, Heinrich Göring, devoted his life to Imperial Germany's diplomatic service, first as Reichskommisar (administrator) to the colony of German Southwest Africa, later as German Consul General to Haiti. Sometimes his wife, Franziska ("Franny") would accompany him overseas. He was often away from Germany and the family for long periods.

ABOVE: Following the Nazi annexation of Austria, the Jews of Vienna were subjected to ridicule, public abuse, and often deportation to concentration camps. Albert Göring, younger brother of Hermann Göring, stepped in to save many unfortunate detainees and caused complications for his high-ranking Nazi brother. LEFT: Albert Göring posed for this portrait with Mila Klasarova, a Czech beauty and the love interest he pursued after divorcing his wife of 16 years, who was gravely ill and on her deathbed at the time.

Heinrich ended his foreign service career on a note of bitterness and semi-failure. He drank heavily to forget his limited resources, wife and five children. But, out of the blue, a savior arrived in the person of Hermann von Epenstein. Epenstein was an enormously wealthy physician who had an opulent lifestyle. As godfather to the Göring children, he offered to take the whole family under his wing and provide for them for as long as was needed.

Around this time, Fanny Göring became Epenstein's mistress. Apparently, she went into the relationship quite willingly and became the "unofficial" wife/hostess at Epenstein's palatial estates at Mauterndorf and Veldenstein. Heinrich Göring also gave his tacit approval to the affair, which freed the family from financial worries for years to come.

The future Luftwaffe chief was born in 1893, two years before Albert. As they grew older, the boys understood the "special" relationship their mother had with the society doctor but had no problems with it. They grew up in almost royal splendor, where each day at Castle Mauterndorf was a medieval fantasy where hunting horns blew to announce dinner and Epenstein reigned as lord of the manor.

Epenstein was a larger-than-life figure who made a great show of his devotion to the Catholic Church, though he was actually Jewish and had converted probably for social, not spiritual reasons.

As young men Albert and Hermann were polar opposites. Hermann was the risk taker, the overachiever, and the man who aspired to be a great warrior in an almost mythic "Wagnerian" German way. He chose a military career, and when World War I broke out eventually became a pilot with Baron Manfred von Richthofen's famed "Flying Circus" squadron.

Albert was shy and introverted, but did well enough at the Technische Hochschule, a science and technology school whose main emphasis was on innovation to advance German industry. When war came Albert became a signals officer in the trenches, but as soon as peace was declared he went back to civilian life. A military career was not for him. In the 1920s Albert worked for IG Farben, at time the biggest corporation in Europe and a giant in the chemical engineering world. It is not known if Albert and Hermann had much contact in this period.

While Albert prospered, Hermann went through a period of depression and addiction. Wounded in Hitler's failed Munich "Beer Hall" coup in 1923, he eventually became a morphine addict to combat the pain. Hermann did kick the habit, but in the late 1930s he started taking a sedative, paracodine, a mild morphine derivative. By 1945 he was taking 20 pills a day.

When Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933, Hermann's future was assured. By the mid-1930s he was at the height of his power, head of the growing German Luftwaffe and Hitler's right-hand man. Albert loathed the Nazis and wanted no part of his brother's sudden rise to wealth and fame. In fact, he got out of Germany altogether by taking a job as technical director of the Tasha-Sascha Film Industry Ltd., a company that was based in Vienna.

And that is how Albert happened to be on hand when the Nazis took over Austria in 1938. But the street scrubbing incident was only one tiny gesture; Albert wanted to do much more. Almost as soon as German soldiers appeared in the streets Albert swung into action. As a first step, he made efforts to save friends and work colleagues. He knew there was only so much he could do, but he would rather light a candle than curse the darkness. He was going to save as many as he could.

William Szekely was a Jewish-American director working in Vienna on a movie with beautiful German actress Zara Leander. Leander later recalled, "We were stuck in Vienna. All ways of getting the necessary papers had been exhausted. Every day friends were arrested and bank accounts confiscated. Albert Göring helped us out… He organized exit visas… went to the

bank for me and brought the contents of my account so I would not be without funds."

And Albert didn't rest there. Dr. Max Wolfe, his personal physician, was also Jewish and in great danger of arrest, but the doctor's wife gratefully recalled "just to mention his (Albert's) name was protection." Göring not only got exit visas for the doctor and his wife, but also had Wolfe's brother released from prison and "got him an exit visa, too."

Tired of living in a city dominated by storm troopers and Nazi functionaries, Albert finally left for Rome to take a position at the Tobis-Italiano Company. While in Rome he made the acquaintance of a Dr. Kovacs, who was anti-Nazi, anti-Fascist, and eventually would have links to the Hungarian underground that helped the Allies. Kovacs was also Jewish, which made him suspicious of Albert at first.

Albert started giving money to Kovacs "for the assistance of Jews and other refugees from Nazi tyranny." It was said he required "no receipt and no knowledge of who was helped." The funds were used to help Jews and other refugees to escape to Lisbon. Kovacs was reluctant at first to take the money, thinking perhaps that it was a trap, but he came to realize Albert's anti-Nazi stance was real.

In June 1939, Albert got an offer to be the export director at Skoda, the famous Czech armaments factory. The Nazis had taken over the country, and planned to liquidate Skoda, moving the machinery and equipment to Germany. Skoda hoped putting Hermann Göring's brother in the firm would forestall this.

Albert, whose wife had recently died of cancer, accepted and moved to Pilsen. Czech employees were astonished that this brother of the second-ranking Nazi hated Hitler! There was no photo of the Fuhrer in Albert's office, almost mandatory in most places. He refused the Nazi salute "Heil Hitler!"— answering, "Gruss Gott!" (God bless!) in response.

Albert continued to help Jews and others suffering under the Nazi heel. Sometimes, he had to improvise. Dr. Josef Charvat was a Czech resistance leader who soon landed in Dachau. When his wife appealed to Albert, he took a piece of letterhead paper that bore the Göring name and coat of arms and quickly wrote a message ordering Charvat released at once. Albert signed it "Göring" in bold letters, copying his brother's hand.

The ruse worked. Charvat was released as soon as camp authorities read the order; such was Hermann's power at the time. No questions were asked. Albert also regularly asked camps for slave laborers, sending trucks to pick up the workers. In remote areas, the prisoners

would be freed and allowed to escape.

The sheer scale of Albert's activities brought him to the attention of the Gestapo—the secret police, ironically, founded by Hermann. The Gestapo twice issued orders for Albert's arrest that were quashed by Hermann. The Nazi authorities were frustrated by Albert's persistence in helping the Jews. In fact, the Gestapo started asking themselves, "…will this public gangster (Albert) be allowed to continue?"

Sibling affection apart, why did Hermann constantly rescue his brother from imprisonment or death? The key to answering the question lies in Hermann's complex personality.

Hermann Göring possessed a Machiavellian morality, where the end—Nazi triumph at home and abroad—more than justified the means, even if those means condoned atrocities. The Reichsmarshall freely engaged in the persecution and economic exploitation of the Jews and almost certainly knew something about the Holocaust, though during the Nuremberg trials after the war he claimed ignorance.

The extent of Göring's knowledge of the Holocaust is a moot point. In the judgment at Nuremberg, and the judgment of history, he is guilty as charged. But Professor Christopher Browning has identified two strains of anti-Semitism in Germany in the Nazi years: "chimeric" and "xenophobic." The chimeric believed that Jewish people were untermenschen, subhuman vermin responsible for most of the evil in the world. Hitler and Heinrich Himmler were chimeric, determined to rid Germany and Europe from this "pestilence."

By contrast the xenophobic believed the "Jews" were master manipulators who had too much influence in German life. Hermann was of this persuasion, but it seems he did not "hate" Jews in an overtly racial fashion. In fact, the Reichmarshall once said, "I determine who is a Jew!" and occasionally protected people like Luftwaffe Field Marshal Erhard Milch, whose father was Jewish.

That meant that while Hermann tried to dissuade his brother from helping Jews, he wasn't going to actively stop him or disown him as a family member either. In the same situation a racist like SS chief Heinrich Himmler would have abandoned Albert to his fate, and perhaps even personally issued arrest orders.

Albert's job at Skoda became a peripatetic one, with him a kind of "traveling salesman" for the company in Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Greece. But whereever he went, his anti-Nazi activities continued unabated. He did what he could, even though Albert knew the sheer scale of Nazi crimes made his efforts seem almost insignificant. He

Prominent composer Franz Lehar walks arm in arm with his wife Sophie. Frau Lehar was a Jew, and Albert Göring is credited with saving her from the clutches of the Nazis.

was always seeking new ways to release prisoners and, when all else failed, he simply forged his brother's signature on documents.

Toward the end of the war, Albert's loathing of the Nazis caused him to be indiscreet— and conversations were reported to the Gestapo. In one instance, Albert told friends that Hitler was the "greatest criminal of all time." Once again, Hermann stepped in and saved Albert from persecution, but it was getting harder.

In Bucharest, Rumania, Albert was playing the piano and singing Viennese songs with some friends when he stopped a moment and heard someone singing in German across the street. Investigating the noise, he saw it came from two German officers on a nearby balcony.

The two German officers, spotting Albert, asked him his name. "Albert Göring," came the swift reply. "Are you related?" they asked. "Yes, he is my brother," Albert answered, and as soon as they heard the response they stood to attention and shouted, "Heil Hitler!" Bemused by their reaction, Albert told them, "Kiss my ass!"

Hermann Göring still had enough influence to get his brother off the hook, but by 1943—if not earlier—his power was definitely in decline. Göring's boasts that his Luftwaffe could do everything did not coincide with the facts. The Luftwaffe did not win the Battle of Britain in 1940, and in 1942 could not adequately supply the trapped Sixth Army at Stalingrad. But most of all, the Luftwaffe could not stop the Anglo-American bombing raids, which increased in intensity year to year.

Albert was truly the "black sheep" of the family, giving Hermann endless troubles. In fact, there were gasps of horror in Nazi circles when

he declared he was going to marry Mila Klasarova, a very lovely former beauty queen who was over 20 years younger. It wasn't the age difference, but the fact that she was a Czech. The Czechs were Slavs, and therefore untermenschen, sub-humans fit only for slavery or extinction. Though Hermann didn't stop the nuptials, he made sure he did not attend the ceremony.

Finally, Hermann had to tell Albert to be more discreet because it was getting too hard to rescue him. As Albert put it, "He told me that if I wanted to protect the Jews and wanted to help them, that was my affair, but I would have to be more careful and tactful about it because I made endless difficulties for him."

When the war finally ended in 1945, the Allies arrested Albert almost as a matter of course. Because of his family name and blood ties to the Luftwaffe chief, he would be considered guilty until proven innocent. People he had helped came forward, and he was released only to later be arrested by Czechoslovakian authorities. Once again, when it was established that Albert saved lives, he was set free.

But his release from Czech custody did not end his troubles. In fact, the stigma of being Hermann's brother plagued him for the rest of his life. Albert was largely ostracized and barely managed to eke out a living as a writer and translator. For all his genuine heroism in the war, he had faults like any human being. A womanizer, he cheated on his Czech wife so regularly she divorced him and immigrated to Peru with their daughter Elizabeth.

Albert Göring died in 1966 in obscurity and a poverty far removed from his childhood days in his godfather's estates. He was living mainly on a small pension, and in gratitude to his faithful housekeeper, he married her so she would get the money after he died. While Hermann Göring was the subject of many books and articles, Albert was a barely mentioned footnote.

Things began to change around 2000, when a renewed interest in his anti-Nazi activities produced several books chronicling his life and times. Unfortunately, calls for Albert Göring to be officially honored at the Israeli Yad Vashem shrine as one of the Righteous Among the Nations was rejected, at least for now. Yad Vashem cited a supposed lack of primary source documents, though they admitted Albert had a "positive attitude to Jews."

In spite of Yad Vashem's skepticism, the record is clear: Albert Göring actively aided victims of the Nazi regime, even at the risk of his own life. Göring, like Oskar Schindler, should be remembered as a man who took the path of courage and decency over barbarism and evil. ■

FIGHTING 80TH DIVISION AT BASTOGNE

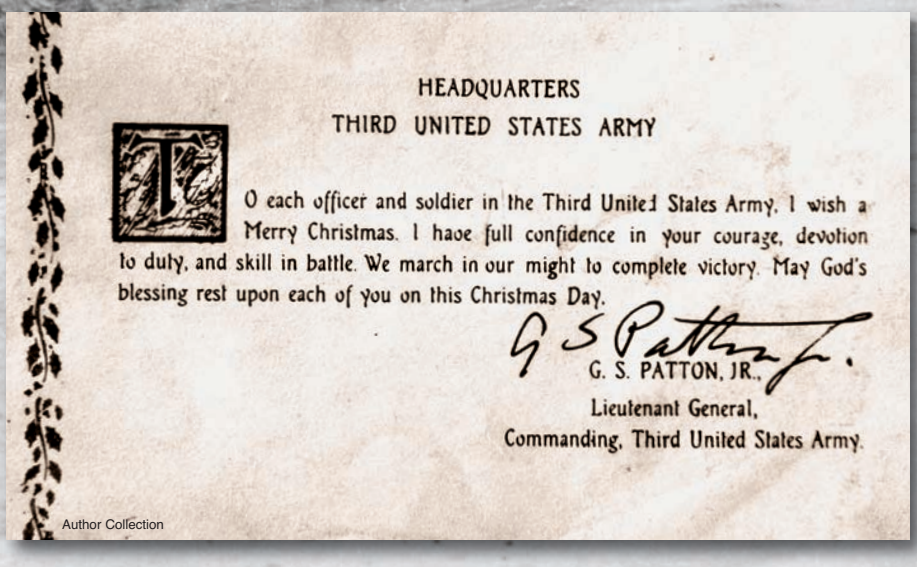
The role of this American infantry division in the relief of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge has been largely overlooked.

By Leon Reed

In a letter to his fiancée, Betty Craig, on December 16, 1944, from Helleringen, France, newly promoted Staff Sergeant Frank Lembo of Company B, 305th Engineer Combat Battalion, 80th Division, wrote of a battalion show the night before, complete with Red Cross girls serving donuts and the division band; an upcoming dance; doing laundry; and other pastimes of a soldier experiencing a period of reserve status.

Things were about to get hectic. It would be another nine days before Frank's next letter, the longest period between letters to Betty

Soldiers of the U.S. 80th Infantry Division slog along a road near the village of Junglinster in central Luxembourg. These troops are moving forward with other elements of General George Patton's Third Army during the relief of the Belgian crossroads town of Bastogne as the Battle of the Bulge rages. INSET: General George Patton, firebrand commander of the U.S. Third Army, issued this Christmas greeting to the troops under his command as they advanced to relieve the 101st Airborne Division and elements of Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division at Bastogne.



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TO each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army. I wish a Merry Christmas. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We march in our might to complete victory. May God's blessing rest upon each of you on this Christmas Day.

G. S. PATTON, JR.,
Lieutenant General,
Commanding, Third United States Army.

Author Collection

during Frank's three years in the army. In those nine days, the 80th commenced its attack into Germany but was ordered to halt, pull back, and redeploy to the north. The division raced 150 miles over clogged, icy roads to a different country, went into defensive positions, and launched an attack on Ettelbruck, Luxembourg, and other towns. Pulling out of combat and executing a 90-degree change of front were not the only challenges. There were no maps, and the Germans had had plenty of time to obstruct the route. The engineers led the way for the division, clearing mines, felled trees, and other obstacles.

First Lieutenant Walter Carr, deputy commander of Company E, 318th Regiment, described this movement in his memoirs. "With headlights blazing for the first time since I had been assigned to the 80th Division in Sept. 1944, we traveled all night. Early the next morning, as we passed through the outskirts of Luxembourg City, many of its residents lined the highway and cheered. We hoped that meant the war was over. North of the city we got jerked back to reality when we met a steady stream of refugees fleeing south to escape the Germans."

Patton's three spearhead divisions—26th and 80th Infantry and 4th Armored—went into

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action on December 22, 1944 at the height of the Battle of the Bulge. The 4th Armored Division was assigned to open a corridor to relieve the embattled garrison at Bastogne, Belgium. The 80th attacked Ettelbruck, southeast of Bastogne which sat on an essential German supply route, while the 26th attacked towns to the west.

Progress toward Bastogne was slow, and the garrison expressed impatience with the progress of the relief column. On December 23, acting 101st Airborne commander Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe commented, "I was disappointed I did not get to shake hands with you today." And a staffer remarked, "A reminder, there is only one shopping day before Christmas."

Finally, on Christmas Eve, Major General John Millikin, commander of the III Corps, ordered the commander of the 80th "Blue Ridge" Division, Major General Horace McBride, to release two infantry battalions, including Carr's company of the 318th Regiment to join 4th Armored. Frank Lembo's platoon was the engineering complement for this detachment. The 44 men in Frank's platoon would be responsible for clearing mines and other obstructions and keeping roads open. Lembo commanded a third of the engineers. As a deputy company commander, Carr had shared responsibility for one-third of the riflemen.

The men of the 318th boarded trucks which followed a circuitous route to avoid German positions, driving carefully because of snow and ice, stopping frequently to ask for directions. Carr said when the convoy passed through Arlon, "We were surprised to see the city lit with Christmas lights and its citizens doing their last minute Christmas shopping. This was the first time in Europe we had seen people engaged in 'normal' life." He added, "The Christmas decorations made some of us very homesick and we wondered if we would live to see decorations at home during later Christmas seasons. Too many wouldn't."

Progress from Niederfeulen, Luxembourg, to Burnon, Belgium, about seven miles south of Bastogne, was slow. The 35-mile trip on frigid roads took six hours.

The convoy arrived in Burnon, the furthest north point currently held by 4th Armored, after midnight. The tanks had advanced further north to Chaumont on December 22 but had been forced to retreat the next day when the Germans brought in five tank destroyers with long-range 88 mm guns. The infantry set about finding a place to sleep, but the engineers had an immediate chore: a preliminary survey of the roads north.

Frank wrote Betty a letter on Christmas Day. "I'm rather tired today, I didn't get to bed until 5 a.m. (business stuff) and I was up at 8:30." He gave a hint of the excitement, "The past week has been jam packed with things to write about, but until a future date it will have to be kept here." Frank knew the censorship rules. There wasn't a single censor mark on any of his 86 letters, so he knew when to be circumspect. "There's fighting going on and over the next hill they are slamming away at each other."

Apparently it was OK to talk about airplanes. "We have seen some good dog fights and yesterday I saw a Heine plane take a nose dive."

Fortunately for the attackers, there were very few rivers and streams in this part of Luxembourg, so bridge building seldom delayed the movement. In general, when the infantry headed into fields the way was relatively clear but on roads mines and felled trees were a problem and the engineers had to clear the way.

The heavily depleted 2nd battalion started with 350 men, about a third of full strength, and had further losses on the way while fighting through the village of Chaumont on Christmas Day. Companies F and G occupied the

Both: Author Collection

ABOVE: While attempting to slow the German penetration during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, American soldiers establish a roadblock. The U.S. 80th Infantry Division played a key role in the relief of Bastogne during the great battle. TOP: Waiting for his laundry to dry, Sergeant Frank Lembo is photographed while serving in Western Europe with the 305th Engineer Combat Battalion, 80th Infantry Division, an outfit of the U.S. Third Army. OPPOSITE: African-American soldiers of a field artillery unit, one of four engaged in support of the defenses at Bastogne, relocate to a new position at left as another truck carries troops and equipment forward. This photo was taken on December 20, 1944.

high ground east of Chaumont, and Co. E fought its way in, clearing the town. The company was fortunate that its strength had been augmented that afternoon by 24 men transferred from the regiment's Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon, formerly led by E Company's new commander.

Carr commented, "The struggle for Chaumont brought tragedy not only to Americans attacking the village but also to its Belgian residents. How well I remember an elderly, heartbroken Belgian couple who huddled in their small basement where some of us had taken shelter Christmas night. A fighter-bomber attack had wrecked everything they owned."

The entire village of Chaumont was almost completely leveled after having exchanged hands at least four times from December 16-25. It was a key village U.S. forces had to control in the corridor being opened into Bastogne. Thirty miles away, Arlon residents were enjoying Christmas lights and last-minute Christmas shopping; here, it was a struggle for food, shelter, and survival.

The next day, the Americans took Grandru. An after-action report noted that they had "ventilated buildings with 57mm," then moved as if to bypassthe town, then doubled back. By that time, Company F was down to 25 men, half a platoon, and was held in reserve the next two days.

About 10 Germans were entrenched in a patch of woods. To minimize excess casualties, the new company commander, Lieutenant Edmund A. Wellinghoff, radioed the battalion commander to ask for a tank "to help us roust the Germans out of their holes."

Carr described, "When [the tank] arrived, Wellinghoff bravely stood beside it in the open space between the two wooded areas and used

the outside mounted tank telephone to plan our attack with the tank commander. The Germans in their foxholes could have picked him off easily. But they didn't because they feared that the tank commander would kill them rather than let them surrender to our infantrymen."

Carr described the move forward. "From my position at the rear of the company, I kept wondering why we were waiting so long to renew the attack now that we had tank support. They didn't stand a chance, and they knew it. But they did nothing until the machine gunner in the tank opened fire. Then they surrendered. Their defense had been unyielding against our infantrymen but not against our tank. They were as scared of an enemy tank as I was. Little wonder."

Afterward, the surviving infantrymen moved without further opposition down a hill to occupy the village of Hompre. As soon as Company E arrived, Carr was summoned to battalion headquarters to receive orders to lead a patrol that night. Carr said, "I feared it would be my toughest and most dangerous mission of the war."

On December 26, a detachment of tanks from Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Abrams's Combat Command R of 4th Armored sprinted through German lines and linked up with the Bastogne defenders. Most historians consider this at least symbolically the end of the siege, though the supply line through Assenois was far from secure. In a show of Army parochialism, a 318th historian made it clear who he thought liberated Bastogne. "Early in the evening of the 26th, tank elements of the 4th Armored Division were able to get into the beleaguered city but unable to return."

"'Carr, we've selected you to lead a crucial patrol,' Captain P.W. Foreman, the battalion S-3 [operations officer] told me. 'Right now we're about 3 miles south of Bastogne. After several more days of fighting, we expect to contact the 101st Airborne. We need to know exactly where their defensive positions are so we won't shoot each other up when we try to make contact.'

"'We want you to take a patrol into Bastogne tonight to bring back information on the positions of the 101st. But you'll have to be very careful. We know you'll have a tough time getting through to the 101st then back to us. But you've accomplished tough assignments before.'"

It wasn't by accident that Carr got this assignment. Ever since October, when he was successful in capturing a German prisoner and bringing him back across the Seille River, he had become a sort of "night patrol specialist" for the battalion. Carr had mixed feelings about his fame. "I wasn't totally happy with this assignment, but I probably did get some perks from it."

On his way back to the company from battalion HQ, Carr analyzed the patrol's mission. "We would have to sneak through the Germans facing us, then through the Germans surrounding Bastogne, contact the Bastogne defenders, then reverse the sequence to get back to battalion before it moved out the next morning." This would require caution, but they couldn't be too slow. "We would have to cover a total of six miles in less than 10 hours."

Carr was sure that the most challenging task would be making peaceful contact with the Bas-

Both: National Archives

togne defenders. It might be possible to hide from the Germans while sneaking through their lines. But there was no way to avoid contacting the Bastogne defenders, and they might shoot at anything that moved toward them across the no-man's land between themselves and the Germans.

Carr concluded, "Surely this was the last night of my life. The odds against success seemed overwhelming. I frankly didn't know how we would make contact with the 101st. The only thing I could do was play it by ear."

The patrol needed to be small. But it needed to be large enough to provide security in all four directions. Carr decided on four members, including himself, so he could use the diamond formation: one person forward and one back, one to the right and one to the left. Carr planned to bring up the rear. If the others got captured in an encounter with the Germans, he would be in the best position to escape to continue the mission alone. He got permission from Wellinghoff to go to his former platoon to get individuals he trusted.

Carr checked in with the platoon leader, Sergeant Virgil Miller. The officer in charge of the platoon had just been wounded that afternoon in the attack on Hompre. Carr was dismayed when Miller told him every one of the 40 members of the platoon Carr had known a month and a half before had been killed or wounded.

Carr quickly decided Miller would be an excellent second-in-command for the patrol, a point Miller further emphasized by volunteering. Carr let Miller pick the other two soldiers for the patrol, figuring he knew his men's capabilities best. In the end, the patrol consisted of Technical Sergeant Virgil L. Miller, Elyria, Ohio, Pfc. Mulford E. Jones, Sarepta, Mississippi, Private

LEFT: German artillery fire knocked out this M4 Sherman medium tank and another vehicle during the bitter fight for control of Bastogne, a village in Belgium and a vital road nexus. American forces held Bastogne, stifling German plans, until relieved. BELOW: Photographed during an advance across open country at the height of the December 1944 Battle of the Bulge, an M4 Sherman medium tank and M10 tank destroyers proceed warily.

Both: National Archives

Eddie Martinez, Houston, Texas, and 1st Lt. Walter Carr, Jr., Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Carr explained the mission and showed on a map how to get to Bastogne. He stressed that if anything happened to him, they must carry on. "I'll bring up the rear of our diamond formation. From that position, I can more easily see and direct you. We need to remain in visual contact at all times. We'll spread out going across the snow-covered fields and close up going through woods. Look at me frequently so I can direct you with arm and hand signals. I don't want to alert the Germans with voice commands. If we tangle with the Germans, whoever survives will continue the mission."

The patrol then set off for Bastogne, and Carr called the town "an objective I considered virtually impossible to reach. But I kept my pessimism to myself. It increased as we started across the huge expanse of open terrain. The snow made the night so bright we felt very conspicuous."

The patrol had walked about a mile when Carr saw a village to the left. He assumed it was Assenois but needed to be sure, so he took over as point man because he could speak a little French, and walked over. The patrol was at first terrified when ordered to "HALT!" but quickly realized the sentry had barked "Halt" with an American accent, not German. After he briefly explained the mission, the sentry pointed to a nearby house where his company commander was located.

The company commander told Carr, "You're in luck. We're about to send a column of tanks and APCs (armored personnel carriers) into Bastogne. We may meet some resistance. But you're welcome to ride in one of the APCs going in and coming back out."

Carr and his patrol thanked their lucky stars and climbed into their assigned vehicle. The column made one lengthy stop, which they learned happened when the lead tanks "had to shoot our way through the Germans."

When they arrived in Bastogne, they made their way to the 101st Division war room. They explained their mission to the division G-3, Colonel Kinnard. He gave them a mimeographed copy of a sketch map showing the perimeter dispositions of the 101st Airborne. Carr thought, "I was surprised he gave me the sketch; he might have been more reluctant if I had been returning on foot through German lines rather than returning by APC in a column protected by tanks."

Folding the map, Carr told the patrol members to observe carefully as he put it in a field jacket pocket. "If anything happens to me," Carr said, "whoever survives is responsible for removing the map from my pocket and getting it back to battalion."

From Assenois the team hiked back across the snow-covered fields toward Hompre. As they approached the battalion's defensive positions they got jittery wondering if their own troops would fire on them. But they arrived safely, as the battalion was getting ready to renew its advance toward Bastogne. Carr concluded, "As I walked through the door of the room where Captain Foreman had briefed me the previous afternoon, I heard a voice say, 'Captain Foreman, it's Lieutenant Carr. He's back.' I saw an expression of disbelief on Foreman's face. I unbuttoned the flap on my jacket pocket. I unfolded the map and said to Foreman, 'Here it is—exactly what you ordered.' He couldn't believe what he saw. It looked like I'd be keeping my job as patrol man for a while."

On December 27, the Blue Ridgers fought almost to Assenois on the outskirts of Bastogne. Frank dashed off another letter: ""We've been away from our company and…today we are having a late meal. We're up here (?) with some infantry and armor, or in other words we're orphans again. The battle that was going on Christmas day is still going on in increasing fury. I guess something has got to give soon, and I doubt it will be us. I guess this damn war will never end."

Early on the morning of December 28, the 2nd Battalion linked up with the Bastogne

defenders. F Company's 25 men, having been held in reserve the past two days, were assigned to outpost duty while E and G Companies got to warm up and get new clothes. Later that day, the task force members enjoyed a belated Christmas dinner in Bastogne. The author of an after-action report identified one benefit of heavy casualties. "Since rations had been drawn for 350 men, there was ample food for all."

The German Bulge offensive shook the homefront and the frontline GI. Normally even-tempered and upbeat, Frank wrote, "I'm pretty darn disgusted with everything over here. We fight like heck and then someone screws up and Heine sets us for a loop, but at home no one seems to care, and here we beat our heads for nothing." Later, he added, "From the looks of things we'll have to fight our way right to Berlin, and I hope we burn that path soon. We all thought this war was over, and I guess the only way to get it over with is to destroy Germany, her soldiers, her civilians, and the ground they live on."

ABOVE: Working in mutual support, M4 Sherman medium tanks of the U.S. 4th Armored Division make their way toward Bastogne while American infantrymen guard their flanks and watch for signs of enemy activity during the Battle of the Bulge. TOP: A cow left to wander when its owner fled the German onslaught during the Battle of the Bulge ambles down a street in the town of Bastogne, a center of intense fighting during the Nazi offensive.

After Bastogne, the 80th Division went into reserve status. Carr summarized, "As survivors of the Bastogne combat action, we were too psychologically battered to be in the front lines. We needed a rest from front line action if we were to be prepared to carry out our next combat assignment successfully. We had suffered a significant number of casualties. We had gone to Belgium in 21 trucks but needed only nine to return."

Frank, too, enjoyed the slower pace, writing Betty on January 1, "Today was a simple GI day for us here, we finished a bridge we started yesterday and late in the afternoon we had a turkey dinner."

Perhaps it was the Bastogne mission fresh in his mind that caused Frank to take stock. On January 2, he wrote Betty, ""I was just thinking about that last day together that we had, and how perfect it was, and how long a way I've come since then. I can remember that boat ride to England, our trip across the Channel, going into action and suffering a thousand deaths when we heard our first artillery shell, the mad dash across France—a ride with its wine, flowers, ripe tomatoes and eggs—the storming of our first river and the fighting beyond, Christmas in Belgium, New Year in Luxembourg… Yes, we've come a long way. We're a little tired, a little older, and a little bitter. We fight hoping each battle is the last one with thoughts of going home and enjoying a peaceful life, our thoughts run to our sweethearts who we long for, each letter being a five minute furlough with the one you love."

After Bastogne, another month of hard fighting remained before the bulge was reduced and the Germans were pushed back to their starting position. And then came the 80th's toughest river crossing of the war—the Sauer/Our—and then spring and the liberation of prison camps. In the end, Hitler's counteroffensive probably did hasten the end of the war, but not in the way he intended. The men and equipment left in the fields and forests of the Ardennes—and the thousands who surrendered—weren't available the following spring to defend the Siegfried Line and the Fatherland. ■

Leon Reed is a former U.S. Senate aide and U.S. History teacher. He is the co-author of (with his wife, Lois Lembo) A Combat Engineer with Patton's Army: The Fight Across Europe with the 80th "Blue Ridge" Division in World War II *(Savas Beatie, 2020) and is currently editing Walter Carr's memoirs and writing a book on army training in World War II. He is the editor of* Bulge Bugle, *the quarterly magazine of the Battle of the Bulge Association.*

B-25 MITCHELL MEDIUM BOMBER: 'Big Gun' of the

There is no disputing what the North American B-25 Mitchell medium bomber contributed to the Allied victory in World War II. While historians point to the April 1942 Doolittle Raid on Tokyo as the B-25's shining moment, the raid itself was more a morale booster than anything else.

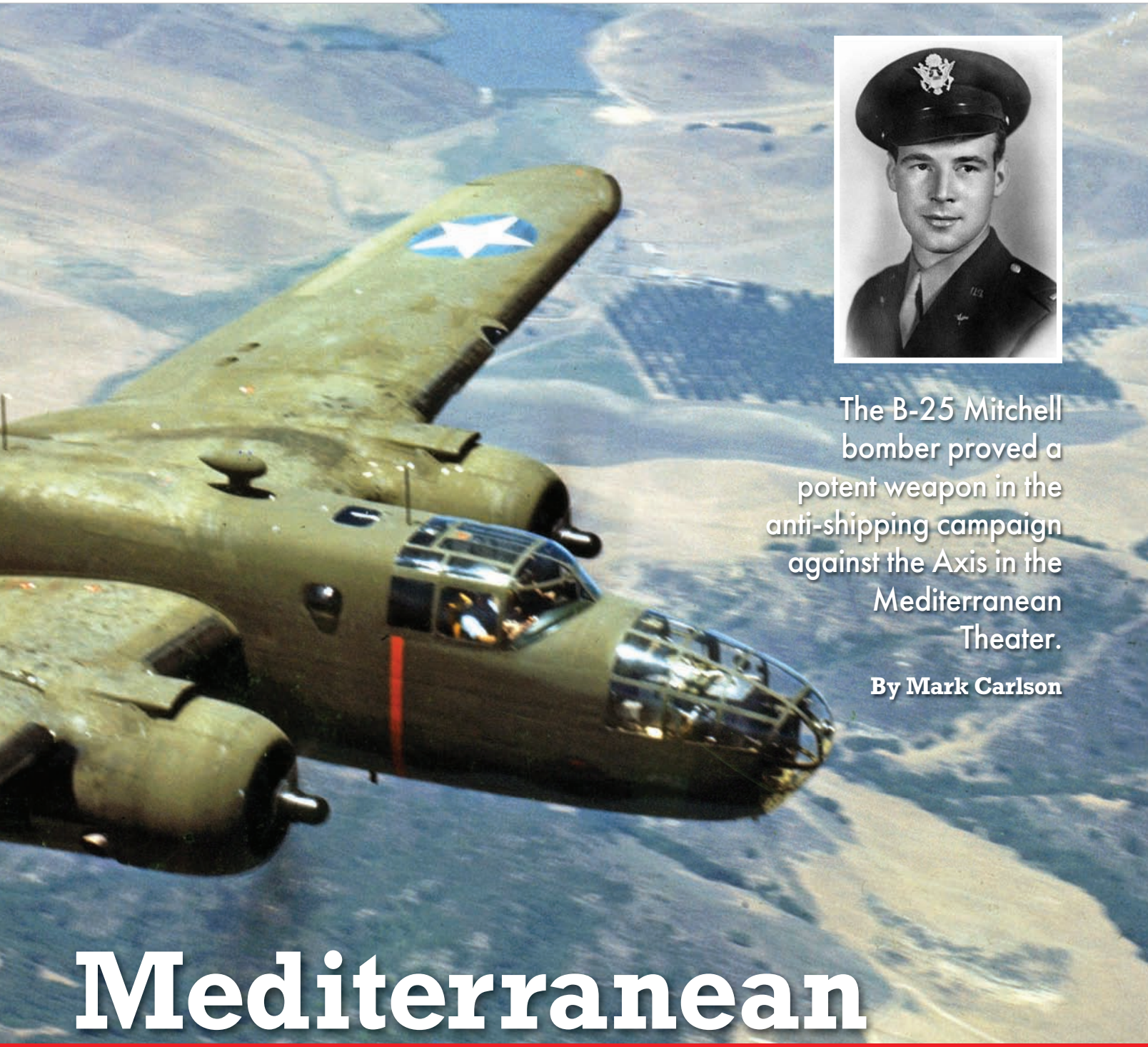
The B-25 Mitchell was one of the best and most versatile aircraft of World War II. Built in more than a dozen factory and field variants, the 20,000-pound twin-engine bomber earned a reputation for speed, ruggedness, and reliability.

The Mitchell had something that the bigger, more glamorous Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress lacked. Airmen felt a greater intimacy with the compact plane. The powerful roar of the twin Wright R-2600 radial engines roaring to life and driving the bomber down the runway was less heard than felt, more experienced than seen.

Thousands of American men flew nearly 9,900 B-25s during and after the war. Many agree with one thing: the B-25 Mitchell was a fun plane to fly. "It handled more like a sports car than a truck," said one Fifth Air Force veteran.

General John K. Cannon's Twelfth Tactical Air Force Mitchells played a crucial role in every major campaign in the Mediterranean from March 1942 to August 1944. The bombers flew from Tobruk, Benghazi, and Corsica, the birthplace of Napoleon.

The versatile B-25s were the scourge of German forces in Tunisia, Crete, Greece, Yugoslavia, Sicily, Italy, and southern France.



The B-25 Mitchell bomber proved a potent weapon in the anti-shipping campaign against the Axis in the Mediterranean Theater.

By Mark Carlson

Mediterranean

A North American B-25 Mitchell bomber flies over the countryside of California in 1942. The B-25 was heavily armed and carried a solid payload of bombs, proving versatile in the attack role in the Mediterranean and Pacific as well. INSET: Lieutenant Truman "Bud" Coble piloted a B-25 Mitchell bomber during operations in the Mediterranean Theatre.

Captain Truman Coble, a retired Sears & Roebuck salesman living in Escondido, California, flew 56 missions with the 379th Bomb Squadron, 310th Bomb Group in the Mediterranean Theater. While flying from Tobruk, Libya, and Ghisonaccia, Corsica, Coble and his crew sank three German ships, destroyed dozens of bridges and railroads, and contributed to the eventual Allied victory in Italy and southern France.

"It was always my ambition to fly in the Air Corps," said the 91-year-old former Pennsylvania farm boy, who goes by the name "Bud." "There was this airfield near our farm near New Cumberland and every day around 3:30 a big plane, I think it was a DC-3, would fly in right over us, maybe 500 feet up. I said 'Man, that's for me.' I wrangled my way into the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program and learned to fly the Piper J-3 Cub. I had about 40 hours in the Cub."

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Coble joined the Air Corps and was sent to Santa Ana, California, for basic training. In Oxnard, he went through basic flight training flying Vultee BT-13 Valiants. Advanced training took place

All photos courtesy of National Archives

in Roswell, New Mexico, where Coble was in Class 43-D and learned to fly the B-25, earning his wings in early 1943.

In Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Coble was made an instructor, a job he, like most instructors, tolerated with reluctance.

During late 1942 in the Southwest Pacific, Colonel Paul "Pappy" Gunn, head of the Fifth Air Force Service Command, had proven the radical technique of skip bombing to sink ships. As seen at Midway in June 1942, dropping bombs on moving ships from high altitude nearly always resulted in wasted bombs and unnecessary risk.

ABOVE: This North American B-25 Mitchell bomber took a direct hit from German flak over southern France but managed to land safely at its base during the harrowing 1944 mission. The damage to the right wing is extensive, as evidenced in the photo. OPPOSITE: A squadron of B-25 bombers speeds its way toward a rail yard, the target of this mission during the Italian campaign. The B-25s regularly bombed rail yards in northern Italy to prevent the movement of German reinforcements and equipment toward the front lines to the south.

Gunn theorized that a medium bomber carrying conventional high-explosive bombs could approach a ship at 230 knots at low altitude, that is less than 100 feet, and drop the bombs 500 yards from the target. The bombs "skipped" along the water like thrown stones and hit the ship's side. It wasn't always necessary to achieve a direct hit. Even a near-miss from a 500-pound bomb would cause a "water hammer" effect, crushing hull plates.

"I was something of a 'hotshot,'" Coble smiled. "The Air Force thought I'd be good at teaching the new pilots to skip-bomb at low altitude. We instructors flew around 50 feet off the water. But those students were nuts! They had to be better and flew 30, 25, even 15 feet. It was scary as hell and some planes were lost when they were struck by their own bombs. I went to my C.O. and said, 'Send me into combat. I want to live!'"

At Greenville, South Carolina, in October 1943, Coble was assigned a brand-new B-25G, T/N 830. "It was painted desert pink and had a big 75mm cannon in the nose. My co-pilot was Lieutenant James Jones. He was a good pilot but a bit of a goof-off. He liked to hit the bars as soon as the engines stopped," Coble chuckled. "But he did his job. My bombardier was Lieutenant Chuck Irvin. I had a navigator, a flight engineer, and two gunners."

The proud new owners of No. 830 flew it to Savannah, Georgia, where the combat equipment was fitted. "They put the flexible guns and fixed guns in, armor plate, all that stuff."

The new plane was christened "Pisonya," a name chosen by the crew.

Coble and Jones flew the new bomber north to Presque Isle, Maine, then on to Goose Bay, Labrador, and across the Atlantic to Greenland, finally reaching Prestwick, Scotland. After resting they flew south around the French and Spanish coasts and east over the Mediterranean Sea. They and the other new crews joined the 379th Bomb Squadron of the 310th Bomb Group (Medium) of the soon-to-be disbanded Ninth Air Force, based in Libya.

The 310th had been formed in March 1942, and consisted of four squadrons. The 379th, 380th, 381st, and 428th, each with six B-25s. The 310th Group had already supported the campaigns in North Africa and Sicily by the time Coble's crew arrived in late October 1943. "We first went to Casablanca," Coble said. "We had some time to get used to the place. We went to the movies. Just a small theater and guess what was playing there? Casablanca!" he laughed.

"The 379th was first based in Tobruk in Libya. It was hot and miserable," Coble commented. "The temperature went up to 120 degrees in the day. We slept in these tents that never got cool until well after nightfall. Then it went down to near freezing. Bugs and sand got into the food, water, hair and clothes"

Staging out of Tobruk, the B-25s patrolled the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean seas. The Mitchells of the 379th flew tactical missions to bomb German ships and patrol craft trying to support the Axis forces on Crete.

"We worked with the RAF who flew Beaufighters out of Tunisia to hit ships," Coble explained. "Some missions took off from Philippeville, Algeria, as well. Our armorers had fitted extra guns on the nose."

Eight Browning .50-caliber machine guns gave the B-25 immense firepower. The Mitchell's excellent forward visibility made it easy to aim, according to Coble. "It looked like an upside-down Niagara Falls when we triggered all the guns while strafing boats on the water. The plane vibrated like you wouldn't believe."

As mentioned, Pisonya carried the granddaddy of all aircraft guns, the powerful 75mm M4 cannon, a derivative of the trusty French 75 of World War I. The American version was also used on the M4 Sherman tank.

Few aspects of the B-25 variants garner more interest than the big gun. A lighter version of the standard M4 with a thinner barrel and modified recoil system was developed for testing in the B-25. It was fitted into the port forward fuselage on the left side of the tunnel into the nose. The muzzle projected from a mild steel fairing.

A February 1944 Popular Science magazine article titled Flying Big Gun stated that North American test pilot Roger Rudd tested the first cannon-armed B-25 off the California coast in November 1942. After several firings, Rudd said it produced a "good healthy jolt." Further tests led North American to conclude the B-25 "could take that and plenty more." The article went on to say the first use of the gun in combat "destroyed a Japanese transport as it was unloading, ending the earthly worries of fifteen Japs."

Five well-placed shots from another B-25 slammed into a Japanese destroyer, causing great damage. A second run on the ship set off internal explosions.

There was no doubt that with high-explosive shells and a muzzle velocity of nearly 2,000 feet per second, the 75mm cannon was capable of doing great damage to enemy vessels or ground installations.

Firing the gun did have an effect on the airframe, however. Research at the San Diego Air & Space Museum revealed accounts that the airspeed dropped by as much as 20 knots from the recoil. Some airmen swore the plane actually stopped for an instant, but this was a physical impossibility.

The cannon was bore-sighted and fired by the pilot with the N-6A gun sight mounted on the top of the instrument panel. It was a more common practice to use the .50-caliber tracers to aim the plane at the target. When the bullets were striking the target, the big gun was triggered.

B-25 pilots had to maintain a straight and steady course in order to achieve a hit at 2,000 yards. The rate of fire depended on how rapidly the loader could open the breech, load the 10-pound shell, and close it.

Some pilots liked the heavy hitting 75, while others preferred having several machine guns instead. "I think we carried about 11 or 12 shells," Coble remembered. "Garvin, my bombardier, loaded them. When it went off, the whole plane just bucked and we heard a big WHUMP!"

German forces in the Aegean Sea were scattered over scores of small and large islands. Hitting them in daily raids was the job for the 379th Squadron.

"The Krauts had a lot of fighter strips on those islands," Coble continued. "On most missions we flew low under their radar. We'd be over their island bases to drop 23-pound parachute fragmentation bombs. They did a lot of damage, wrecking planes, but left the airfields intact. Then we'd fire a couple of shells at whatever looked good."

Coble had one memorable experience with the cannon. "On 18 February we found a German patrol boat about five miles off the Turkish coast. It was about 50 feet long. I squeezed one off and the shell went in the stern of the boat. It blew apart like kindling. One crewman jumped clear. All these years later I can still see him."

Coble at last had his chance to put into practice the art of skip bombing German ships.

"When we saw a Kraut ship, I flew about 50 feet altitude at 220 knots. That was plenty low," Coble smiled. "At that speed the target came up very fast. I adjusted my course as they tried to evade. When we were about 500 yards out, I toggled off the bombs and pulled up to clear the ship's masts. Those 500-pounders skipped a couple of times and slammed into the hull. The trick was to not be right over it when they exploded. Usually my tail gunner told us if we got a hit. We sank three German ships off Crete," Coble said with pride.

By early 1944, the German ships were trying to dash across the sea at night to unload and return before daybreak to avoid the deadly Mitchells. Less than 50 percent returned to their home ports.

"On 22 February, 1944, we sank a small cargo ship and then these Kraut fighters got on our tail and chased our ass the whole way around the eastern end of Crete," recalled Coble. Pisonya's gunners were credited with shooting down a German Me-109 and Ju-88 over the Aegean.

When the Ninth Air Force was disbanded, the 310th Bomb Group transferred to Corsica,

where they were given new B-25Js. The "J" model had the greenhouse nose. Bombardier Garvin finally had the chance to use a bombsight rather than load cannon shells.

The Twelfth Tactical Air Force, under General John Cannon, had close to 2,500 fighters, Douglas A-20 Havoc attack bombers, and medium bombers based on eight airfields. The rocky but idyllic island was perfectly suited for basing American tactical aircraft for operations in Italy, southern France, and Austria. It soon gained the affectionate nickname of "USS Corsica."

"I liked Cannon," affirmed Coble. "He was quiet, very friendly. Not your usual general. I flew him to the officer's resort at Il Rousse, on the northwest corner of Corsica."

On the eastern coast were the three air bases of the new 57th Bomb Wing, massing nearly 300 medium and light attack bombers.

"Our base was in Ghisonaccia, Corsica. That was a nice place compared to Libya. I loved that island. The people were so friendly. When we were grounded for bad weather, some of us went into town to a small restaurant. The food and wine were terrific."

However, the 379th Squadron's airmen at Ghisonaccia had the distinction of being treated to a breakfast to remember. "Our mess cooks had these young Corsican boys helping out," said Coble. "Well, one morning this one kid made a mistake and put air slake lime in the batter instead of pancake flour. We all got so sick, vomiting, diarrhea, just terrible. Lasted for about three days."

That little incident was related in Joseph Heller's bestselling novel *Catch-22* about a B-25 group on the fictional island of Pianosa. Heller was a veteran of 60 missions as a bombardier with the 488th Bomb Squadron, 340th Bomb Group.

Bad food notwithstanding, the 310th Bomb Group flew bombing missions at high and low altitudes against land targets in Italy. "Ghisonaccia was so close to Italy that if we flew straight east, we'd be there in 15 minutes. Why the Germans never came out and bombed us, I'll never know," Coble said.

Operation Shingle, the Anzio landings in January 1944, had bogged down on the beachhead for three months while relentless German counter attacks hammered the American and British positions.

In the spring of 1944, Coble's crew, along with the rest of the 57th Wing, joined in Operation Strangle, a systematic effort to destroy all German communication links and supply lines during the Italian campaign. Fighter bombers and medium bombers attacked German tactical assets, such as shipping, railroads, marshaling

ABOVE: Staff Sergeant Billy Dykes sits near the upper turret of his B-25 bomber at Gerbini airfield, Sicily. German flak damaged the aircraft near his position, and he received minor injuries. Note the point of impact just below his location. BELOW: Posing at a U.S.Army Air Forces base in North Africa, the crew of the B-25 Mitchell nicknamed "Poopsie" has completed 50 missions and is headed home to participate in a War Bonds campaign. Kneeling, left to right: T/Sgt. Joseph R. Toy, 1st Lt. Curtis B. Hasty, T/Sgt. Theophil S. Sidlick. Standing, from left: 1st Lt. Oscar R. Daume, S/Sgt. Charles E. Wray, 2nd Lt. Walter C. Piasecki. Robert B. Kayser, Commanding General of the medium bombardment wing, is in the pilot's seat.

yards, truck yards, fuel storage tanks, supply dumps, tunnels, and bridges. Bombardiers and gunners were told to hit switches, repair yards, locomotives, and other targets that could not be easily repaired or replaced.

"We hit railroad bridges and tunnels from Rome north. That also included a raid on Monte Cassino on 15 March," Coble said, referring to the 6th century monastery which was suspected of being used as a German observation post for the Gustav Line. The destruction of the ancient abbey was considered one of the worst cultural losses of the war.

Coble commented, "We had plenty of Mustangs for fighter cover, so the Luftwaffe wasn't much of a problem."

Coble's own crew and some of the 379th gained a reputation for bombing bridges. "You can approach a bridge by flying along the road or down the valley. But we just flew right down at them from a high angle. We were called 'The Bridge Busters,'" he smiled.

Strangle was succeeded by Diadem, aimed at breaking a hole in the German lines to allow the 70,000 Allied troops to break free of the Anzio beaches and march inland.

Diadem began on May 15 and wreaked such havoc with the Germans they were only able to transport about 500 tons of supplies for the 14 divisions engaged. Without railroads, the German Army was forced to use trucks at night. But this too proved costly, as A-20 attack bombers carrying parachute flares illuminated the supply lines and destroyed the trucks in place.

On May 25, 1944, the German 10th and 14th Armies began the withdrawal from the Anzio region, pursued by Twelfth Tactical Air Force fighter bombers. About 100,000 American troops, preceded by heavy artillery fire, broke free of the beachhead and marched toward Rome.

Coble and his crew were in the air that day. "We flew in from the coast. The sky over the beach and roads were just full of smoke and tracers, explosions and fire. The troops were a mass of men moving inland. It was a sight to behold."

One mission stands out for Coble. "On 10 June, I led six ships on a mission to hit a railroad bridge at Calaforia, Italy. The 88mm flak was terrible. It shot down the third element leader, Ernie Kulik. His plane took a direct hit. We saw four chutes come out, but three were on fire. My co-pilot was hit in the head. The main gas line in the right carburetor was badly hit but that amazing engine kept running. We landed with 145 holes in the plane."

That mission earned Lieutenant Truman

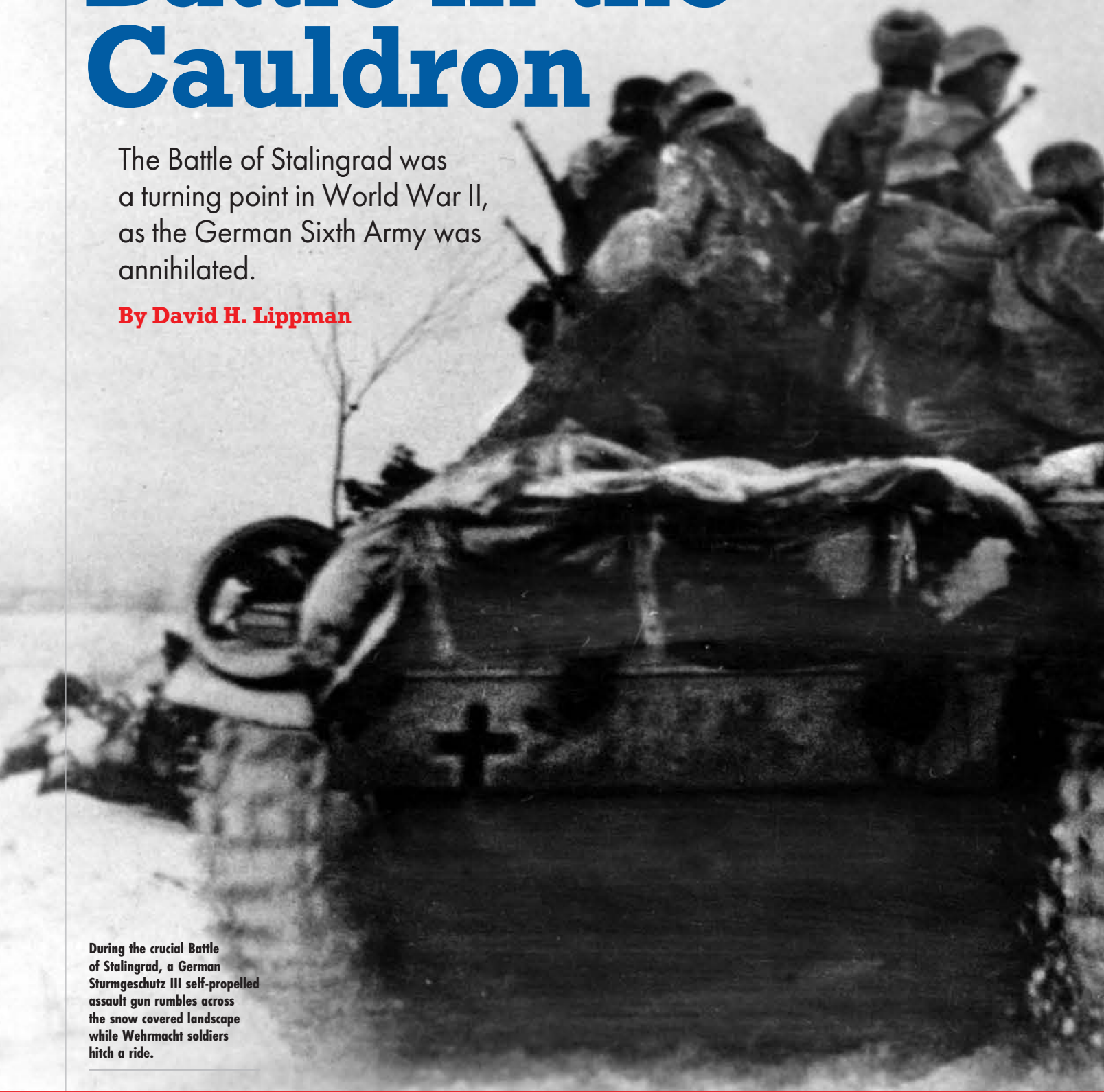
Continued on page 74

ABOVE: Supporting troops the British Eighth Army fighting the Germans near Lake Comacchio, Italy, B-25 Mitchell No. 13 of the U.S. Twelfth Air Force unleashes its bombload on Nazi troop concentrations below. BELOW:Ground crewmen roll a 1,000-pound bomb under the wing of a B-25 Mitchell bomber prior to lifting it into the bomb bay for a mission in Italy. The B-25s of the U.S. Twelfth Air Force provided extensive support for ground troops as they interdicted enemy supply routes along railroads and roadways in northern Italy.

STALINGRAD: Battle in the Cauldron

The Battle of Stalingrad was a turning point in World War II, as the German Sixth Army was annihilated.

By David H. Lippman



During the crucial Battle of Stalingrad, a German Sturmgeschutz III self-propelled assault gun rumbles across the snow covered landscape while Wehrmacht soldiers hitch a ride.

The imperious ringing of a field telephone broke up the meeting that General Vasili Chuikov was holding with his exhausted 62nd Army staff in their dugouts in Stalingrad. Someone grabbed it, and a voice at the other end squawked, "There will be an order coming through shortly. Stand by to receive it."

At the other end of the line was Stalingrad Front (army group) headquarters, and everyone stared at each other, wondering what it meant. Army Commissar Kuzma Gurov struck his forehead, exclaiming, "I know what it is! It's the order for the big offensive!"

Gurov was right. For months, the Stalingrad Front in general and the 62nd Army in particular had been waging a house-to-house battle for the wreckage of the city against Lt. Gen. Friedrich Paulus's German 6th Army. Both sides were bleeding out their men and strength.

Now the Soviets were ready to launch their massive counterattack, under General Georgy Zhukov, their nation's finest soldier. The counterblow was to be a blitzkrieg straight out of the German textbook: a massive Cannae-style double encirclement that would trap the 6th Army in a pocket. Soviet troops of the Southwest Front under General Nikolas Vatutin and the Don Front under General Konstantin Rokossovsky would power the northern pincer, while General Andrei Yeremenko's Stalingrad Front would handle the southern assault.

The 6th Army's flanks consisted of the 3rd Romanian Army on its left and the 4th Romanian Army on the right—which spoke to the heavy demands Hitler placed on his allies to take places in the line. Romanian troops fought bravely but were poorly equipped.

The German-Romanian defenders consisted of a million men all told, 10,290 guns, 675 tanks, and 1,216 aircraft. The Soviets massed a like number of men, 13,541 guns, 894 tanks, and 1,115 aircraft. Zhukov actually had fewer tanks at his command than the British 8th Army at the recent battle of El Alamein.

However, despite the even numbers, Zhukov had the advantages of position, mobility, and most of all, surprise. Soviet troops were not told of their assignments until moments before their attacks. General Reinhard Gehlen, chief of German intelligence for the Eastern Front, told his masters that the Soviets would attack Army Group Center. He was right. They did. The attack was defeated, but it was a subsidiary assault.

Following the order: "Send a messenger to pick up the fur gloves," the big show at Stalingrad opened on November 19 at 7:20 a.m. Moscow time (5:20 a.m. Berlin time). Trumpets ordered a 10-minute artillery barrage through freezing white mist. After an hour of shelling, Soviet infantrymen advanced, while their artillery fired at enemy positions behind the lines on the German left flank.

The Romanians tried to fight back, but it was hopeless. Behind the Soviet infantry thundered hordes of T-34 tanks and cavalrymen. As the fog dispersed, Soviet aircraft were able to take to the skies while fog socked in Luftwaffe bases.

Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy Stock Photo

ABOVE: General Friedrich von Paulus peers through binoculars on the front. He led Sixth Army during the debacle of Stalingrad and surrendered to the Soviets rather than committing suicide. LEFT: Soviet soldiers crouch as they move through a trench during the vicious street fighting that occurred in Stalingrad. The fight for the city lasted for months as the Red Army encircled the German Sixth Army inside it. OPPOSITE: During the siege of Stalingrad in December 1942, Nazi panzergrenadiers trudge through snow and ice past one of their tanks that has paused momentarily. The bitter cold inhibited the operations of mechanized equipment.

The first part of the double-barreled catastrophe fell on Paulus at 9:45 a.m. A traditional officer with a fetish for personal neatness and a stickler for good staff work, he was having a hard time leading the assault on Stalingrad. He had never commanded even a division before he took over 6th Army. Worse, the filthy conditions of the front affected his morale and he was not a charismatic figure. His Romanian countess wife complained to him bitterly about Hitler's treatment of the Jews.

By nightfall Soviet tanks had ripped open a gap 50 miles wide, killing and capturing thousands of Romanians. In Moscow, Stalin messaged his generals to attack harder, but made a public speech referring to the upcoming October Revolution ceremonies, saying, "There'll be a holiday in our street, too."

The Soviets launched the second barrel of the offensive the following day, with Yeremenko's forces—most weary from defending Stalingrad—attacking at 10 a.m., two hours late. Soon the Soviets bagged more than 10,000 Romanians and cut open a 30-mile hole.

The two mighty Soviet pincers were headed for the major German bridge at Kalach that supplied the entire 6th Army, which saw German truck, horse, and camel convoys crossing it, driving through snow and frost, Russia's traditional weather allies. The Soviets moved with such speed that Paulus either could not, or was simply unable, to react. The logical riposte was a counterattack by the 48th Panzer Corps in reserve, but mice had eaten through the tanks' wiring, and the unit had difficulty moving up.

Worse, the Soviet attack was taking place outside 6th Army's area of responsibility, so it was incumbent on General Freiherr Maximilian von Weichs, boss of Army Group South, to address the situation. He and Paulus awaited orders from Adolf Hitler at Berchtesgaden.

While the Germans tried to figure out what was happening, the Soviets advanced. On November 21, the overmatched 20th Romanian Division's soldiers perished in battle while their officers and NCOs drank. On November 22, Soviet ambulances dropped their loads to bring up ammunition.

The 6th Army was facing a catastrophic situation—its divisions had been using up fuel, food, and ammunition almost as quickly as it could be brought up, and there was little reserve. If the Kalach bridge fell, the army would be cut off.

Now the two massive Soviet forces piled in on the bridge and its thin defenses—some supply troops, MPs, 16th Panzer Division's workshops, and a flak battery. Lt. Col. G.N. Filippov's 19th Tank Brigade charged forward with two captured German tanks in the lead to fool the enemy. At 6:15 a.m. on the 22nd, the tanks attacked, driving off the German detachment, preventing them from blowing the bridge across the Don River.

Soviet troops from the two encircling forces fired recognition flares that guided each other toward their positions, and everybody met with bear-hug embraces and exchanges of vodka and sausages. Unfortunately, they beat the Sovfoto news cameras to the link-up, so it had to be recreated again for the newsreels later.

Paulus and his men were stunned. November 22 was "Totensonntag," the "Sunday of the Dead," the solemn Great War remembrance,

Bundesarchiv Bild 101III-Bueschel-090-39; Photo: Büschel

and now it was harder than ever. An entire German army was in peril. As Captain Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven recalled later, "We became very much aware of what danger we were in, to be cut off so deep into Russia on the edge of Asia."

Paulus undertook the only immediate measure he could, withdrawing 6th Army into a pocket based on his airfields near Stalingrad, to maintain cohesion. The most important of them was Pitomnik, which had a proper runway and lighting. In a typical Russian hard-snow winter, the withdrawal was difficult for an army that relied on horse transport and half-starved Soviet POWs as beasts of burden. On top of that, despite the horrors of the Moscow battle, neither the Germans nor the Romanians had been issued winter uniforms.

Paulus signaled Berlin at 6 p.m. on November 22: "Fuel supplies almost exhausted. Tanks and heavy weapons will be immobilized, ammunition situation acute, food supplies available for a further six days."

Weichs recommended that 6th Army break out of the new pocket, even though it might suffer heavy casualties. Col. Gen. Kurt Zeitzler, Chief of the General Staff, said, "It is a crime to leave 6th Army where it is. The entire army must inevitably be slaughtered and starved. We cannot fetch them out. The whole backbone of the Eastern Front will be broken if 6th Army is left to perish at Stalingrad."

Hitler's answer was to say 6th Army was "temporarily surrounded by Russian forces. It is my intention to concentrate 6th Army…(it) must be left in no doubt that I shall do everything to ensure that it receives its supplies and that it will be relieved in due course. I know the brave 6th Army and its Commander-in-Chief, and I also know that it will do its duty." Despite these calm-sounding words, Hitler's reaction seems to have been one of furious anger.

Paulus responded on the 24th, saying that 6th Army "could only hold fast with the necessities of life, fuel, ammunition, and food, and other clearly specified materiel, and if it can be assured of relief from outside the encirclement within a short period of time."

The first move was to hurl the 48th Panzer Corps against the encircling Soviets, which consisted of two German panzer divisions and one Romanian. When the mechanics swapped out the wiring, the tanks clanked ahead and became trapped in the snow. A furious Hitler threw the corps commander, General Ferdinand Heim, in prison.

Hitler further replaced Weichs with one of the war's greatest generals, Erich von Manstein, giving him command of the new Army Group Don and orders to break through to relieve Stalingrad. While Manstein assembled his forces and made his plans, 6th Army had to be armed, fueled, and fed. Hitler turned to Reich Marshal Hermann Goering, head of the Luftwaffe, and ordered him to supply what was officially designated "Fortress Stalingrad" and "Der Kessel"—The Cauldron—by the freezing 6th Army troops.

"Mein Fuhrer," Goering said grandly, "I announce that the Luftwaffe will supply the 6th Army by air."

Zeitzler found that preposterous. "The Luftwaffe just can't do it," he retorted. "Are you aware of how many daily sorties the army in Stalingrad will need?"

"Not personally," Goering replied. "But my staff knows."

"The 6th Army needs 500 tons a day," Zeitzler said.

"I can manage that," Goering said.

"It's a lie!" snapped Zeitzler.

Hitler intervened: "The Reich Marshal has made his announcement, and I am obliged to believe him."

Actually, 6th Army requested a delivery of 750 tons of supplies every day. The Luftwaffe transport officers told Goering that they could only deliver 350 tons per day, and only for a very short period. There were only about 180 Ju-52 transport planes on hand to do the job.

National Archives

Goering had to scrape up the reliable but vulnerable "Tante Jus—or "Aunt Ju"—from nearly every command in the Reich, including those that were ferrying men and munitions from Sicily to Tunisia to stop the advancing British and American armies there. Goering also committed Ju-86 trainers, four-engined FW-200 long-range reconnaissance planes (cargo capacity: six tons) and 100 He-111 bombers to the mix as well. There was some sense in using those three types: all were converted civilian airliners. Now they would be used in their old jobs. None had the cargo capacity of the American C-47 transport plane, and the Luftwaffe had none of the experience the Americans and British had of long-distance air transport.

Even so, when told that Hitler would send clouds of transport planes and Manstein with hordes of tanks to free them, the average 6th Army German "landser"—their word for "Tommy"—believed Der Fuhrer. When one landser told a buddy that they were doomed, his buddy retorted, "You're a real pessimist. I believe in Hitler. What he's said he'll do, he'll stick to."

As November ended, Paulus regrouped his forces, using up most of his fuel and ammunition, to ensure that Soviet forces could not attack his rear. All offensive moves in Stalingrad were stopped. The 14th and 16th Panzer Divisions and the legendary Austrian 44th Hoch und Deutschmeister Infantry Division moved to the west side of the Kessel.

Paulus began taking desperate measures. The lack of fodder meant that all horses had to be slaughtered to feed the men, who were on between one-third and one-half rations. When Zeitzler heard of this, he put himself on "Stalingrad Rations" in a gesture of solidarity with the landsers, losing 26 pounds in two weeks. When Hitler was told of that, Der Fuhrer ordered Zeitzler to resume a normal diet. However, Hitler banned champagne and brandy at Fuehrer Headquarters "in honor of the heroes of Stalingrad."

About 290,000 men were trapped in Stalingrad, including two Romanian divisions and the 369th Croatian Infantry Regiment. The besieged Landsers started digging trenches in the mud. The intense cold turned their coal scuttle helmets into freezers—men replaced them with fur caps wherever possible. Dysentery and influenza spread. Troops, even the fastidious Paulus, who Hitler promoted to colonel general in recognition of his stand, were covered with lice.

The center of German air-supply efforts in Stalingrad was Pitomnik Airfield. Soviet artillery could train their guns on the airfield, and harsh winter weather could shut it down easily—there were many days of zero visibility. One snowstorm followed another. Temperatures were so low it was almost impossible to start engines without lighting fires beneath the tri-motored Ju-52 transports.

When "Die Luftbrücke"—the "Air Bridge"—started, it was an immediate failure. A hundred Ju-52s were promised per day in the first week, but the average was 30 flights per day. Soviet fighters and flak shot down 22 transport planes on November 24 alone. Nine more were lost on the 25th. He-111s were taken off bombing missions to make up for the losses. The 350 tons included only 14 tons of food. Luftwaffe General Wolfram von Richtofen, a cousin of the Great War Red Baron, head of the German Fliegerkorps 8, the main German air force unit in the Stalingrad area, told Berlin that he could not supply Stalingrad. Goering ignored him. The Luftwaffe kept trying, delivering 512 tons on the week of December 6, but it was not nearly enough.

The Luftbrücke organization soon proved chaotic. One day's lift brought in four tons of

marjoram and pepper. An angry supply officer asked if his men were supposed to hurl the pepper in the Russian troops' faces. Another day flew in millions of contraceptives. By December 9, the Luftbrücke was only bringing in about 84.4 tons per day, and Landsers were starting to die of starvation in the Kessel.

The failure seemed academic, as the big plan was not relief by air, but committing Manstein and his panzers to the massive counterattack. Everybody knew it was coming, most of all the Soviets, who developed Operation Saturn, which would use two Fronts to attack the Italian 8th Army to the north of Manstein and leave his anticipated counterattack out on a limb. Meanwhile, Soviet forces would stop Manstein cold on the Myshkova River.

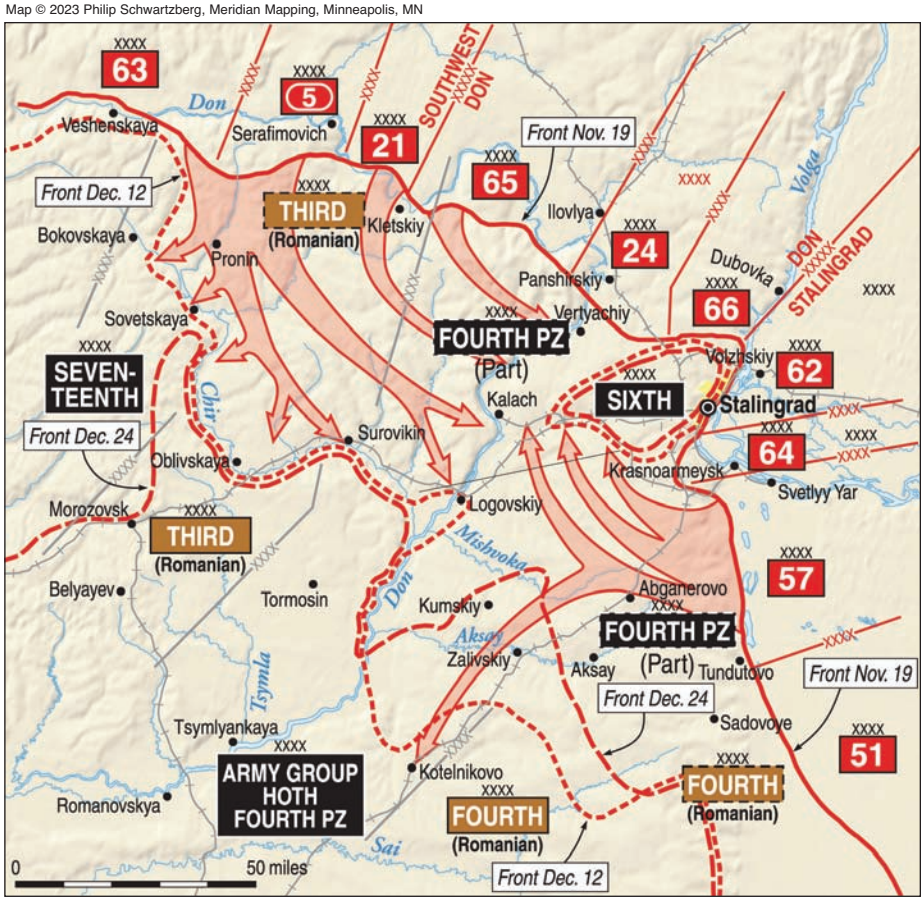
Manstein got down to business on December 12, launching Operation "Wintergewitter"—"Winter Storm"—with three panzer divisions, 17th, 6th, and 23rd, driving north from Kotelnikovo across the frozen steppes to Myshkova, protected on their right by the 4th Romanian Army and on their left by Army Detachment Hollidt and north of that, the Italian 8th Army. General Hermann "Papa" Hoth, leading the 4th Panzer Army, would command the assault. The 6th Panzer Division had a difficult trip to the Eastern Front from its base in France—it endured constant partisan harassment, blown bridges, and torn-up tracks all through its trip through Russia to the front.

While Hitler insisted that "6th Army will still be in position at Easter," the canny Manstein knew Paulus's freezing and starving men could not hold. He drew up "Operation Thunderclap," which would see 6th Army execute a breakout from the Kessel and link up with his forces.

Winter Storm drove to the Myshkova River with the usual Teutonic tenacity. In the Kessel, Landsers defending the pocket's southwest corner could see gun flashes by night and hear, when the wind was right, the rumble of Hoth's artillery. They told each other, "Der Manstein Kommt!"—"Manstein is coming!"—which boosted morale.

Yeremenko, who had defended Stalingrad all through the bloody battle there, now faced Hoth on the Myshkova River. He deployed his T-34s to face the German assault, which included something new—a battalion of Mark V Panther tanks, and another of Mark VI Tiger tanks, which packed 88mm guns. The 6th Panzer Division got into a three-day battle described as "a gigantic wrestling match," amid mud and rain.

While the struggle raged, Manstein sent intelligence officer Major Eismann, into the Kessel to brief Paulus on Thunderclap. What was said remains controversial, but apparently nobody gave Paulus a direct order to commit to Thunderclap and launch the breakout. In addition, Paulus and his staff worried that their increasingly exhausted troops would be unable to physically meet the stress of attacking their way out of the Kessel. Manstein fretted over their condition, too, and passed the buck up to Hitler, who ordered 6th Army to stay in place, holding "Stalin's City."



ABOVE: When the Soviets launched their strategic counteroffensive at Stalingrad, they took advantage of weak Romanian army formations and successfully executed the encirclement of the German Sixth Army within the city. OPPOSITE: The Red October factory was destroyed during the fighting for control of Stalingrad, the industrial city on the banks of the Volga River. Here, Red Army soldiers take cover in the rubble as they prepare to fire on the German enemy.

While Hoth's tanks struggled to cross the Myshkova, the Soviets revved up what was now called "Little Saturn," their attack on Hoth's distant left flank. On December 16, the Voronezh Front slammed into the 200,000-man Italian 8th Army, a force that included some of the best units in that nation's order of battle, like the Savoia Cavalry Regiment and the 3rd "Julia" Alpine Division.

The Italians fought hard, but Soviet numerical, technological, and leadership advantages told the tale—soon the Soviets had surrounded the bulk of the 8th Army. Only 25,000 Italians and 7,000 Germans were able to retreat. The rest of the 8th Army lay in a separate pocket, which was also crushed. The Italians lost between 65,000 and 70,000 dead and 50,000 men fell into Soviet captivity. The Soviet forces wheeled south after the victory to tear into the left flank of "Winter Storm."

Now Manstein faced an agonizing situation. He could no longer maintain the relief drive on Stalingrad, as his left was outflanked —Army Group Don itself was in danger of annihilation. On December 23, Manstein ordered Hoth to cancel "Winter Storm" and withdraw his troops to halt the Soviet drive. A German tank officer stood in his turret and saluted to the north—a final farewell to the 6th Army. In the Kessel, unhappy Landsers watched the gun flashes fade and heard them replaced by silence.

The Stalingrad temperature fell to -25 degrees on Christmas Day with snow flurries. That day saw 1,280 men die in the Kessel, most from wounds, frostbite, typhus, dysentery, and starvation. Paulus gave his men a holiday gift: six ounces of bread, three of meat paste, one of

ABOVE: German aircraft, including a Ju-87 Stuka, He-111 bomber and Ju-52 transports, sit on an airfield that has been overrun by the Soviets near Stalingrad. Luftwaffe chief Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering promised to supply besieged Stalingrad by air but failed in the effort. OPPOSITE: A Soviet gun crew poses in a photograph that was likely staged for propaganda purposes. During a lengthy siege, the Soviet Red Army compelled the German Sixth Army, trapped in the city of Stalingrad, to surrender.

butter, and one of coffee. He did not tell them that the following week their rations would be cut to two ounces of bread, one bowl of soup without fat for lunch, and if it was available, one can of meat for dinner. The 3,500 Soviet POWs still held by 6th Army fared worse. They ate rotting corn. It occurred to nobody to simply release them.

Both sides used propaganda, the Germans to keep up their own morale, the Soviets to wreck it. Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels made broadcasts hailing the courage of the 6th Army, playing their fight song, "Das Volga Lied"—the "Volga Song"—on the radio. The Soviets used loudspeakers and German Communists, including Walther Ulbricht, to promise surrendering Landsers good treatment and hot food. The Germans initially treated these broadcasts to mortar fire, but stopped when ammunition ran short.

The most powerful Soviet propaganda broadcast was a ticking metronome. It was interrupted by a recorded voice that said, "Every seven seconds, a German soldier dies in Russia. Stalingrad is a mass grave." Then the metronome would tick for another seven seconds.

The Soviets delivered artillery barrages and aggressive patrols against the 6th Army, as their own supplies were also short—most of them were going to the battles with Manstein and Army Group Don. However, once Manstein began his withdrawal, it was time to strangle 6th Army.

The job was given to the Don Front under Voronov, who would attack Paulus from the west, over open ground, rather than Yeremenko's men from the east. Operation Ring was presented to Stalin and Zhukov in Moscow on December 27th, and Zhukov immediately objected to Yeremenko's exclusion from the final victory. His men had held Stalingrad for months in bitter fighting against tough opposition.

"Yeremenko will be very hurt," Zhukov said.

"We are not high school girls," Stalin retorted. "We are Bolsheviks and we must put worthwhile leaders in command." Zhukov broke the news to Yeremenko.

The field attack leader would be one of Russia's best generals, Rokossovsky, and he would have 47 divisions mustering 218,000 men, 3,610 field guns and mortars, 169 tanks, and 300 aircraft to finish off 6th Army. The attack date was set for January 10, 1943.

Meanwhile, both sides at Stalingrad marked the new year. The Soviets did so two hours ahead of the Germans, who stuck to Berlin time wherever they went. At midnight Moscow time, the Soviets delivered a massive barrage and fireworks display. Two hours later, the Germans only fired a few star shells. They could not waste ammunition.

Despite their desperate plight, the Germans tried to celebrate. Paulus wrote his wife, "Our will for victory is unbroken and the New Year will certainly bring our release! When this will be, I cannot yet say. The Fuhrer has, however, never gone back on his word, and this time will be no different." He took time to present General Edler von Daniels, who commanded the 376th Infantry Division, with a bottle of Veuve-Clicquot to honor his promotion to lieutenant general. Von Daniels was one of many generals whom Hitler showered with promotions to encourage them to resist.

Ordinary Landsers wrote home confidently, too. "Dear parents, I'm all right," wrote one. "Unfortunately I have to go on sentry tonight. I hope that in this New Year of 1943, I won't have to survive as many disappointments as in 1942."

Hitler sent his greetings to Paulus, too: "The heroic stand of your troops has my highest respect. You and your soldiers, however, should enter the New Year with the unshakeable confidence that I and the whole German Wehrmacht will do everything in our power to relieve the defenders of Stalingrad and that with your staunchness will come the most glorious feat in the history of German arms."

The message went over well. A captain wrote, "We're not letting our spirits sink, instead we believe in the word of the Fuhrer."

Even so, it was clear the Soviets would attack soon, and Paulus had only 150,000 starving, frozen, and exhausted troops to face Rokossovsky's onslaught. Men lacked boots, trousers, and socks. Only one in five defenders were actual frontline soldiers. The rest were rear area paper chasers going through hurried combat training on the windy steppes. With divisions and regiments battered, they were amalgamated into ad hoc battle groups. Fortunately, doing so was a German specialty. Sgt. Maj. Wallrawe's company included redundant Luftwaffe ground personnel and renegade Don Cossacks.

The Soviets had their own problems. Despite warm clothing and hot food, the harsh weather impacted them, too. They also lacked coordination. Voronov went to the front to take a look for himself and was annoyed to see a group of Ju-52s sedately parade 9,000 feet overhead, without anyone shooting back. Soviet fighters arrived too late to catch them, and antiaircraft guns didn't open fire. Voronov terrorized airmen and AA gunners into greater efforts.

Meanwhile, the Luftbrücke struggled on. December 19 was its best day, when 154 aircraft landed with 289 tons. Yet the Pitomnik airfield was soon littered with the wrecks of crashed transports. Soviet bombers—including a squadron of women—pasted Pitomnik by day and night. The combination of cold, horrific sights of starving, wounded men, piles of frozen corpses, and the desperation of the airlift wore down the increasingly exhausted airmen.

The planes hauled out wounded men, but there were often violations, men with self-inflicted wounds or bandages over undamaged arms. Officers who had written their own orders to fly out of the Kessel "for special duties" challenged the MPs, known as "chain dogs" for the gorgets they wore.

The top brass in Berlin had their own worries. Hitler had ordered that senior Nazi vassals could not use their power to get anyone out of the Kessel. Armaments Minister Albert Speer's youngest brother, Kurt, was hospitalized in Stalingrad with a variety of ailments and the best Speer could do was promise him a transfer to France once 6th Army was relieved. Kurt Speer died in the fighting anyway.

When word got around the 6th Army that Winter Storm had failed and they were on their own, morale and temperatures plummeted. Amid -35 degrees temperatures, half-starved ponies hauled rations on sleds to waxen-faced, unshaven, filthy troops. Bread was down to 200 grams a day and often 100 grams. Landsers tried to cut up dead horses, but they were frozen so stiffly it took a pioneer saw to do it. Rumors ran rampant. The 4th Army had reached within a dozen miles of the Kessel but was ordered to stop there.

As January wore on, Landsers began to surrender. The Soviets added incentive by cooking large quantities of tasty food in their frontline trenches and letting the aroma drench German nostrils.

German wounded endured a special nightmare as ambulances were rare—they were targets for shelling—and medicine shortages

dpa picture alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

ABOVE: On January 26, 1943, Soviet soldiers of the 62nd Army and the Don Front meet in Stalingrad, having split the German defenders of the city into two pockets. Within days, Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus, promoted by Hitler, surrendered the remaining German troops of Sixth Army. OPPOSITE: A long line of Romanian prisoners stretches across the windy countryside. These soldiers are on their way to a Soviet prison camp, from which many of them will probably never return.

meant that very few could be properly cared for. All too often a wounded man would be loaded for evacuation on a transport only to see the plane shot down or crash shortly after takeoff, killing all aboard.

Paulus decided a "Frontkämpfer"—"battle warrior"—from his staff might convince Hitler to take strong action, and he sent Captain Winrich "Teddy" Behr out by air. He survived the two-hour flight to Manstein's HQ at Taganrog, where he reported to the field marshal on 6th Army's plight in graphic terms. Manstein responded directly: "Give Hitler exactly the same description you gave me."

Behr flew to Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg in East Prussia, where Der Fuhrer was brooding over his essential maps along with 20 officers.

After proper greetings, Hitler responded by saying, "When you speak with General Paulus, tell him this and that all my heart and hopes are with him and his army."

Behr then gave his report, whose frankness—including accounts of German desertions—annoyed Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel to the point that he shook his fist at Behr. The captain continued anyway, rattling off the miserable Luftwaffe delivery statistics. Were they accurate numbers, Hitler asked.

A Luftwaffe general responded: "Mein Fuhrer, I have here the list of planes and cargoes dispatched per day."

Behr snapped, "For the Army, what is important is not how many planes were sent out, but what we actually receive. We are not criticizing the Luftwaffe. Their pilots really are heroes, but we have received only the figures I have told you. Perhaps some companies retrieved odd canisters and kept them, without notifying their headquarters, but not enough to make a difference."

Hitler's response was to offer sympathetic remarks and promise a new relief effort to be mounted by an SS panzer army being massed at Kharkov. Unfortunately for all concerned, Manstein had told Behr already that the SS army would require several more weeks before it could attack. "It was the end of my illusions about Hitler," Behr said later. "I was convinced he would lose the war."

Instead of hurling SS panzer troops against Soviet troops, Hitler sent Luftwaffe Field Marshal Erhard Milch, one of Goering's cronies, to take over command of the airlift. The field marshal headed for the front to restore order, and Hitler placed all Luftwaffe assets supplying Stalingrad under "Fliegerfuehrer Milch."

Hitler also showered more decorations on Stalingrad, awarding Paulus the Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross and 178 medals to other senior 6th Army officers.

However, Manstein had given up all hope of relieving 6th Army. Its only purpose now was to draw off Soviet forces to enable him to withdraw even larger bodies of German troops from the Caucasus before they, too, were trapped.

Landsers in the Kessel knew they were doomed, too, and their last letters home, posted on January 15, 1943, reflected their fear and despair. "Fate has decided against us," wrote a corporal to his parents. "If you don't receive the news that I have fallen for Greater Germany, then bear it bravely. As a last bequest, I leave my wife and children to your love."

In the first week of January, the Kessel's frontline was quiet. Paulus reduced the bread ration to 75 grams. On January 10, the Soviets began "Operation Koltso"—"Ring"—to crush the 6th Army. Seven thousand Katyusha rocket launchers, field pieces, and mortars blazed away at the Germans. Artillery commander Colonel Ignatov remarked, "There are only two ways to escape from an onslaught of this character—either death or insanity."

The assault went in on the western side of the Kessel against what was left of the 44th Infantry, 3rd and 29th Motorized Division, and von Daniels' 376th Infantry, who said the attack created a "most unpeaceful Sunday."

Landsers could barely fire their weapons—their fingers were frozen from frostbite. T-34

tanks carrying infantry clattered across the snow, blasting apart the defenses. Sgt. Maj. Wallrawe's scratch force of rear area men held on until 10 p.m. on the first night and then pulled back. From there on, Wallrawe wrote, his troops never enjoyed warm food or a safe bunker.

Paulus committed his few working tanks to a counterattack, but they were defeated by every weapon and man the Soviets could muster, from T-34s to Il-2 Sturmovik dive bombers, to mortar fire. The 82nd Romanian Regiment abandoned its positions. By the end of January 11, the Soviets counted 1,600 fresh German corpses, lying in grotesque positions, and acres of abandoned and wrecked vehicles and equipment.

Paulus signaled Berlin: "Munitions coming to an end." His men were barely able to dig trenches, so the emaciated Russian POWs did so. Incredibly, Pitomnik continued to operate, with Ju-52s flying meager supplies in and wounded men—Wallrawe among them—out.

Despite Milch's best efforts, the Luftbrücke was a total failure. The last Me-109 fighters flew out of the Kessel on Richthofen's orders. The transports followed. On January 16, the Germans abandoned Pitomnik. Soviet troops advancing on the airfield were puzzled to see huge shapes in the middle of the steppe—they were wrecked German aircraft.

Now the Landsers knew they were doomed. Soldiers asked superiors for poison. The hospital at the Gumrak airfield was filled with dying men, covered with lice. As soon as a Landser expired, the lice migrated to the man on the next cot. Many German soldiers lay apathetically in basements, awaiting any kind of end.

Milch kept trying, now ordering his planes to parachute supplies, including a Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves for Paulus. The general begged permission to break up his army and let the men flee across the steppe, every man for himself. Hitler vetoed that. Instead, Paulus flew out officers who would make up the nucleus of a new 6th Army. Among those was Freytag-Loringhoven, who described the horrors of Stalingrad to Manstein. Then, still in his lice-covered uniform, he collapsed on a warm bed in the staff train.

The final Soviet offensive faced only spasmodic defenses. Paulus's men were out of everything, including spirit. Paulus begged Hitler for permission to surrender. Hitler retorted: "Surrender is forbidden. The 6th Army will hold their positions to the last man and the last round and by their heroic endurance will make an unforgettable contribution towards the establishment of a defensive front and the salvation of the Western world." It was a sordid lie.

It didn't matter. On January 30, Hitler promoted Paulus to field marshal, the implication being that no field marshal in German history had ever surrendered—Paulus was expected to commit suicide.

That didn't happen. The Soviets overwhelmed exhausted, starving, freezing German troops in the ruins of Stalingrad and their bunkers. None were eager to fight on. Among those wounded was Paulus himself. Filthy and freezing, he and his staff emerged from his Univermag department store basement headquarters to surrender to Voronov. Sovfoto cameras captured the emaciated, unshaven field marshal and his top brass as they yielded 91,000 men, including 2,500 officers and 24 generals. More than 125,000 Germans lay dead. Soviet deaths numbered 485,751 for the entire campaign, but the Germans and their allies lost well over a million men in that same period.

Thousands of the German POWs died in captivity. Paulus himself joined the Soviet-backed German Officers' Bund, headed by future East German leader Walther Ulbricht, recruiting POWs to join the Soviet cause. After the war, he testified for the prosecution at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, infuriating the defendants. Paulus died in East Germany, never seeing his wife again.

That was all in the future on February 1, 1943. At his headquarters, Hitler raged over Paulus's failure to shoot himself. The last 6th Army message came that day at 5:45 a.m: "The Russians stand at the door of our bunker. We are destroying our equipment. This station will no longer transmit." ■

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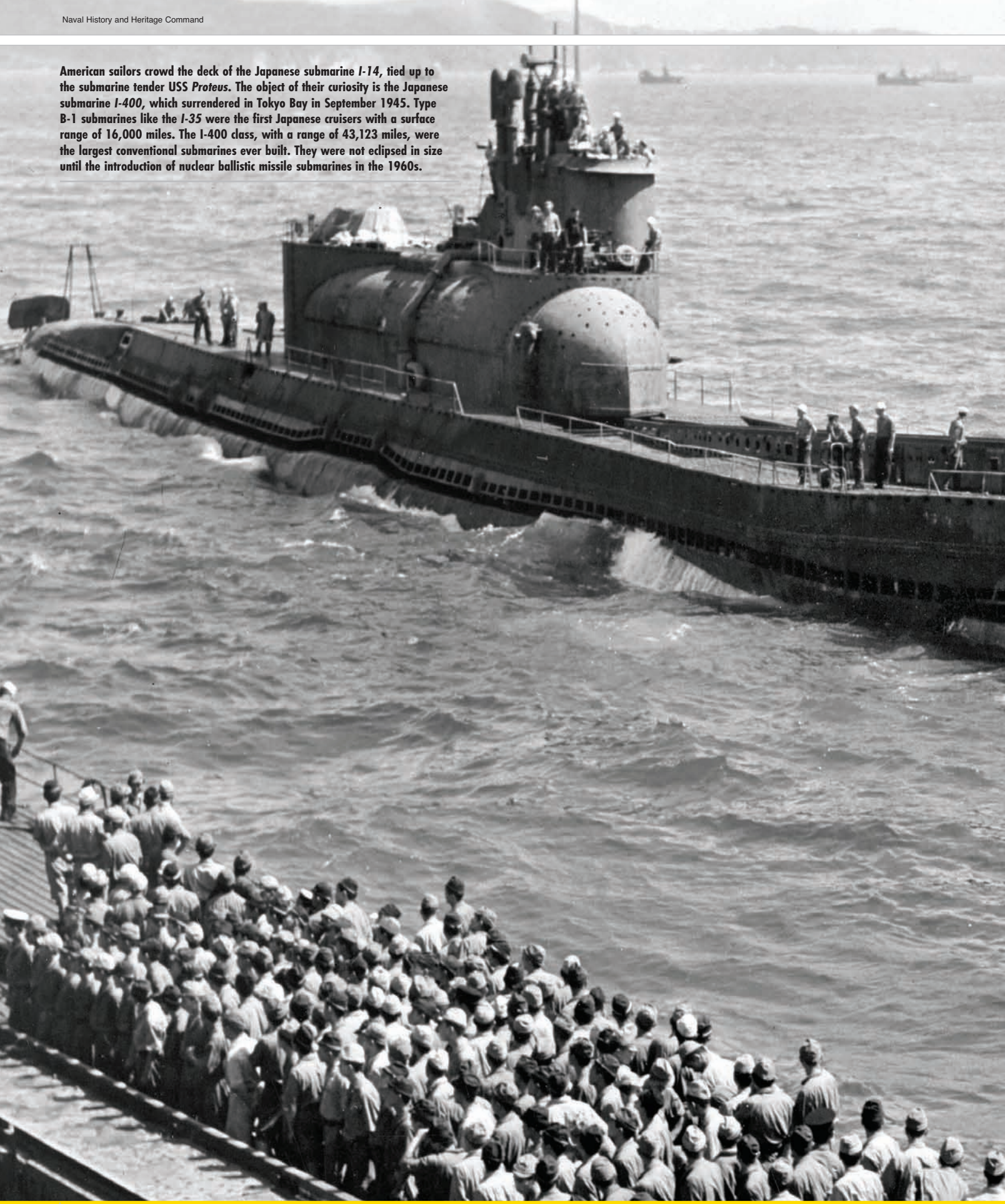

American sailors crowd the deck of the Japanese submarine *I-14*, tied up to the submarine tender USS *Proteus*. The object of their curiosity is the Japanese submarine *I-400*, which surrendered in Tokyo Bay in September 1945. Type B-1 submarines like the *I-35* were the first Japanese cruisers with a surface range of 16,000 miles. The I-400 class, with a range of 43,123 miles, were the largest conventional submarines ever built. They were not eclipsed in size until the introduction of nuclear ballistic missile submarines in the 1960s.

The Sinking of *I-35*

THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY'S SUBMARINE *I-35* WENT DOWN DURING 'OPERATION GALVANIC,' THE AMERICAN SEIZURE OF TARAWA AND MAKIN IN THE GILBERT ISLANDS. | **By Peter McQuarrie**

In the autumn of 1943, the U.S. Navy had regained strength after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and plans were made for a big offensive in the Pacific. Starting in the eastern end of the line of Japanese outposts in the Gilbert Islands and pushing north and east, through the Marshall and Mariana Islands, to the Philippines and continuing all the way to Japan.

The objective of the first move, Operation Galvanic, was to capture the Japanese-held Gilberts and use them to provide strategically located U.S. bases for attacking and capturing the Marshalls and Marianas to the north. It was from their Marshall Islands bases that the Japanese had first invaded the Gilberts and Nauru in December 1941.

If successful, Operation Galvanic would eliminate the risk of the Japanese developing any new bases further to the east or south and ensure secure lines of communication between the United States mainland, Hawaii, and the South Pacific countries of Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand. American bases in the Gilberts would also allow easy bombing access of nearby Nauru and Ocean Island, which were occupied by Japanese forces and difficult to invade from the sea because of high cliffs around their coasts. Regular bombing would prevent the use of the airfield on Nauru and ensure that these islands were neutralized and starved into surrendering.

Operation Galvanic was to involve the concurrent capture of Tarawa, by U.S. Marines, and Makin by U.S. Army troops. The small Japanese military post at Abemama Island would also be captured by the Marines. The Japanese had built an airbase at Tarawa and although they had surveyed Abemama and Makin for airfields, none had been built on those islands. The U.S. wanted to construct bases for aircraft on both islands in addition to Tarawa.

In the preparation for Galvanic, the U.S. needed to have the use of other small islands in the Central Pacific to be the stepping stones to get ships and aircraft, men and equipment across the ocean to the Gilberts.

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The Pearl Harbor attack had placed an urgency on a South Pacific aircraft ferry route, and work had commenced quickly on building airfields on Christmas and Canton Islands for a route: Hawaii—Canton Islands—Fiji—Australia with Christmas Island as an alternative to Canton. The airfield at Canton was completed on December 28, 1941, and the airfield on Christmas Island in January 1942. The route to the Gilberts for aircraft taking part in Galvanic would eventually be from Canton Island to Funafuti in the Ellice Islands, then to Nanumea, the northernmost Ellice Island, and the nearest to Tarawa.

Also in the Central Pacific, in the Phoenix Islands, the Americans completed a runway on Baker Island in September 1943. A small desert island near the equator, Baker could also be used as an alternative to Canton Island as an aircraft refueling stop if required. Howland Island was another island in the Phoenix group which could be used. The U.S. Navy had constructed a runway on Howland in 1937. This had been provided as a refueling stop for Amelia Earhart, in her attempt to be the first woman pilot to circle the globe. She went missing on the long flight between Papua New Guinea and Howland. Howland was a Central Pacific Island, claimed as a possession by the United States.

The Ellice Islands were a vital strategic link situated between British Fiji in the south and the equatorial Gilbert Islands to the north. A chain of nine islands and atolls, spread out north to south over 700 miles of ocean, bases in the Ellices would provide air and naval support as close as possible to the Gilberts. In October 1942, U.S. Marines occupied Funafuti Atoll in the south of the Ellice Group, constructing an airfield suitable for heavy bombers and modifying the atoll's lagoon to make it a safe harbor for large ships.

With more than 200 warships—and 20,000 crewmen—at sea for weeks thousands of miles from their fleet base in Hawaii, Operation Galvanic posed a logistics and support problem for the Navy. Funafuti's large lagoon would form a supply and staging point for the food, medical services, munitions, and fuel. The Navy created Service Squadron 4 (SERVRON 4) as Funafuti's mobile naval base, the first ever floating base in the history of naval warfare. Some Japanese-held islands would be attacked, but the invasion would leapfrog over others, leaving them to "wither on the vine."

In August 1943, U.S. Marines began to construct bases at Nukufetau and at Nanumea, the nearest Ellice island to the Gilberts, 500 miles south of Tarawa. The first American Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers landed on the newly finished airstrip on Nukufetau at the end of October, and Nanumea became operational for bombers on November 12, just eight days before the commencement of Operation Galvanic.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, with the U.S. Pacific Fleet out of action, the only ships able to retaliate were submarines. Their directive was to execute unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan. All submarines were placed under the direct command of the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet (CinCPac), and they acted alone during the first two years of the war while the surface fleet was being repaired.

The fleet submarines were designed as advance scouts, but they had the speed, endurance, and weaponry to attack Japanese shipping throughout the Pacific. For a country with few natural resources of its own, these sea routes were the lifeblood of the Japanese war effort, bringing in oil, coal, iron, and also food and it needed to supply its military outposts throughout the Pacific.

American submarines tightened their grip on these remote outposts as they sank increasing numbers of merchant ships. More than half of all Japanese merchant ships sunk in World War II were as a result of U.S. submarine action. Along with other Pacific bases, the Japanese base at Tarawa suffered when supplies failed to arrive. They did not receive the cement and reinforcing steel they needed to complete their concrete bunkers and so had to make them of sand and coconut logs alone. Their army tanks might have been useful weapons during the Battle of Tarawa, but they did not have enough fuel to power them.

On May 19, 1943, the submarine USS *Pollack* (SS-18), on patrol between the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, torpedoed and sank the Japanese freighter *Bangkok Maru*. The ship was carrying artillery and 1,200 Japanese combat troops to reinforce the Tarawa garrison. Reinforcements never arrived, and the Tarawa garrison of 2,500 fighting men had only con-

struction workers and Korean laborers to assist them against Operation Galvanic. In hindsight, the battle for Tarawa could have been even worse had it not been for the work of the U.S. submarines to Japanese strength there.

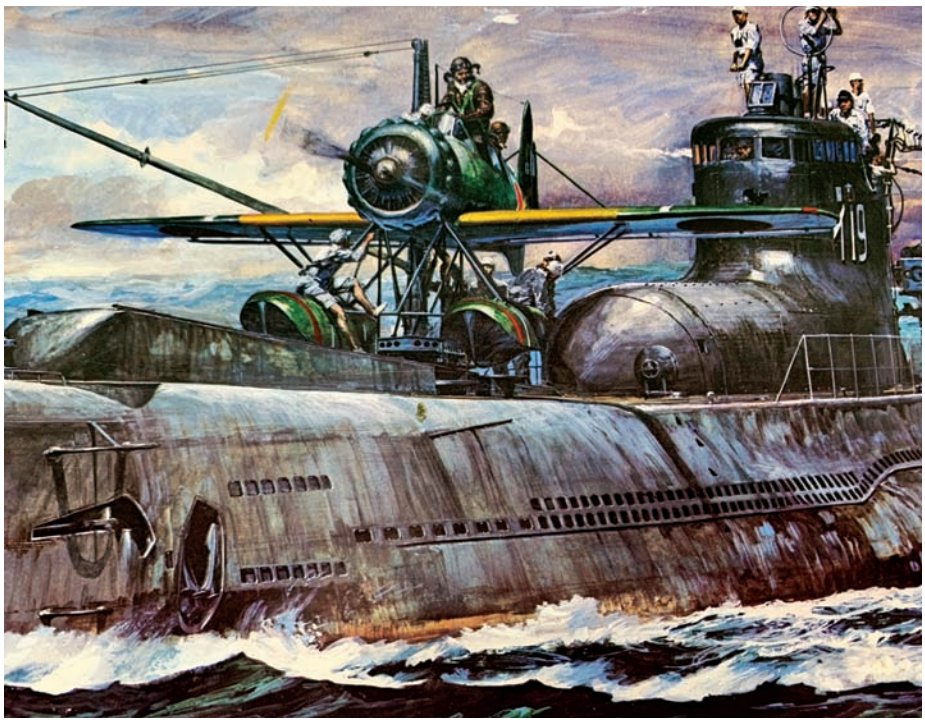
The US had 10 submarines in support of Operation Galvanic. Several were stationed in the Marshall Islands and around the Japanese naval base at Truk in the Caroline Islands. They were to report on and attack any attempt by the Japanese Combined Fleet to react to the U.S. landings in the Gilberts. Two of these submarines, *Corvina* (SS-226) and *Sculpin* (SS-191), were lost to enemy action. *Corvina* was sighted on the surface near Truk by Japanese submarine *I-176* and sunk by torpedoes. *Sculpin* was depth charged by the Japanese destroyer *Yamaguma*. Submarine USS *Apogon* (SS-308) was ordered to patrol around Moen Island and in the shipping lanes between Truk and Kwajalein. There the Americans attacked and sank the merchant ship *Daido Maru*. Other U.S. submarines, such as the *Searaven* (SS-196) were part of a wolfpack of submarines forming a defensive screen around Tarawa. Some of the American submarines had the primary role of lifeguard service, to be available to rescue airmen from downed aircraft. For the duration of Operation Galvanic, USS *Paddle* (SS-263) was stationed off Nauru Island, providing weather and sea condition information for the operation and keeping watch for any reaction from Nauru to the landings in the Gilberts.

Japan sent nine submarines to the Gilbert Islands to oppose Operation Galvanic. Their objective was to sink American warships and prevent the landing of U.S. troops on the islands. Of the nine submarines sent to the Gilberts, only three survived to return to the Marshalls. Three submarines, *I-19, I-35*, and *I-39*, were destroyed by depth charges dropped from U.S. destroyers. Three more submarines, *I-21, I-38*, and *I-40*, disappeared during Operation Galvanic and were presumed to have been sunk by U.S. depth charges or torpedoes.

Of the three submarines that returned safely to the Marshall Islands, *I-169, I-174*, and *I-175*, the last is noteworthy. Led by Lt. Comdr. Sunao Tabata, it had torpedoed and sunk the aircraft carrier USS *Liscome Bay* (CVE-56) while the *Liscome Bay* was taking part in Galvanic off Makin Island on November 24. Lost with the ship were 52 officers and 591 enlisted men.

The *I-35* was a 2,500 ton, 357-foot-long submarine commissioned in August 1942. Classified as a B1 submarine, a "cruiser submarine" with a range of 16,000 miles, the *I-35* normally carried a small seaplane to enhance scouting capability, a Yokosuka E14Y seaplane which was launched by a catapult. A total of 20 of the B1 submarines were produced in the 1940s, starting with the *I-15* which gave the class the alternative name of "I-15 Class." The B1 submarines carried 17 torpedoes and had a crew of 94. They had a maximum diving depth of 330 feet and a maximum speed of 23 knots on the surface and eight knots underwater.

On commissioning, the *I-35* was initially attached to the Kure Naval District and underwent training exercises in Japan's Inland Sea. Here the crew gained experience in torpedo operations and in launching and recovery of the submarine's seaplane. They also took part in joint exercises with other submarines.



ABOVE: This painting depicts the Japanese submarine *I-19*, a *B-1* or *I-15* class submarine, preparing to launch its Yokosuka E14Y floatplane, code named "Glen" by the Allies. The pilot is just dimbing into the cockpit in the open sea. OPPOSITE: An unidentified Japanese submarine is photographed from the air while under attack by an American plane. It was rare to catch an enemy submarine on the surface during daylight hours. This action occurred in 1944.

In November 1942, the *I-35* was assigned to the 5th Fleet for service in the Aleutian Islands campaign, where she was used to transport supplies to the Japanese garrison at Kiska. In October 1943 she had been on patrol in the area between Wake Island and Hawaii, seeking enemy ships to attack. On November 19, the *I-35* was patrolling near Canton Island when Operation Galvanic commenced, and was ordered to proceed to Tarawa to attack U.S. warships there.

In addition to the *I-35*, other submarines in the Central Pacific had been ordered to Tarawa to counter the U.S. invasion. The *I-19* was in near Fiji when called upon, the *I-39* and the *I-175* were at Truk, and the *I-169* was in the vicinity of the Marshall Islands. Coming from Canton Island, the *I-35* was the first of the submarines to arrive. Approaching Tarawa on November 21, the *I-35* reported sighting a U.S. Navy task force consisting of aircraft carriers and destroyers southwest of Tarawa, and in the early morning of November 22, she was attacked west of Tarawa by aircraft dropping bombs and was forced to crash dive.

That same afternoon, while fighting raged on Tarawa Atoll's islet of Betio, the *I-35* was near the west coast of Betio at a depth of 65 feet. One of the submarine's crew, Petty Officer Shingeto Ohata, has suggested that the *I-35* was attempting to enter Tarawa lagoon through the western reef passage. But this seems highly unlikely. There is only one ships' entrance into Tarawa lagoon. This is located on the southwest side of the atoll, four miles north of Betio Islet. The passage is not wide, 200 feet in places and 100 feet deep. It is not a straight run as it turns and changes direction at several places. It would have been very challenging for a submerged submarine to navigate.

During the invasion, large American warships did not attempt to enter Tarawa lagoon and run the risk of grounding. They could actually approach much closer to Betio while still in deep ocean on the western and southern sides of the atoll. Only smaller vessels such as minesweepers did enter Tarawa lagoon, and the problems that

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ABOVE: The destroyer USS *Meade* began the hunt for the Japanese submarine *I-35* off the coast of Tarawa atoll in the Gilbert Islands during Operation Galvanic. This photo shows *Meade* in camouflage paint just after construction was completed in 1942. BELOW: The destroyer USS *Frazier* is shown coursing through San Francisco Bay in August 1942. *Frazier* joined in the pursuit and sinking of the Japanese submarine *I-35* off Tarawa in November 1943.

National Archives

the U.S. Marines had with even the small Higgins boats and landing craft with the reefs of Tarawa are well documented. Had the *I-35* even succeeded in entering the lagoon, it would have been in a maze of submerged reefs and sandbars and would likely have become stranded and trapped.

In addition to these natural obstacles, there were a number of U.S. warships in the area, many of them providing anti-submarine screening. It seems much more likely that the *I-35* was only positioning herself close to the passage entrance, where American ships were entering and exiting the lagoon. The transport ship assembly area for the initial assault of Tarawa was in this area, and the rendezvous area for all boats and landing craft of the Marines amphibious landings was not far away, just inside the lagoon. The *I-35* would likely have found many targets for her torpedoes in this area.

Ships of Destroyer Squadron 14, the destroyers USS *Edwards*, USS *Frazier*, USS *Gansevoort*, and USS *Meade*, were providing anti-submarine screening for U.S. ships in the vicinity of the transport assembly area. At noon, the *Gansevoort* was first to detect the *I-35* from the sound made by her propeller, but this sound contact was soon lost and the submarine escaped.

At 1500 hours, the *Meade*, under Lieutenant Commander John Munholland, which was also providing anti-submarine screening for U.S. warships in the transport assembly area near the entrance to Tarawa lagoon, detected an enemy submarine by sonar. Depth charges were dropped in three stages at 30-minute intervals, but without success, and sonar contact was again lost. The depth charge explosions were, however, felt on board the *I-35* as she dove to 230 feet to escape the attack. The submarine was shaken but not seriously damaged.

The *Meade* requested assistance, and the *Frazier*, under Lieutenant Commander Elliot Brown, left her station as an anti-submarine screen for the battleship USS *Tennessee*, off the southwest tip of Betio, to assist the *Meade*. At 1700 hours, the *Frazier* picked up a strong sonar echo at a range of 2,200 yards and dropped depth charges with a medium depth setting.

At 200 yards, "Lost Contact" was reported, and another depth charge attack was made, again with a medium depth setting. At 1720 hours, the destroyers detected the submarine at a range of only 200 yards and dropped more depth charges. Soon after this, the *Frazier*'s executive officer reported the odor of diesel oil, and a little later an oil slick was seen on the surface of the sea. *Frazier* and *Meade* both made what would be their final depth charge drops, this time with a deep setting.

The *I-35* suffered heavy damage from this depth charge attack. All the lights went out, the crew lost rudder control, and instruments and gauges were knocked out of service. Several leaks appeared, and the fuel tanks ruptured. The submarine began to fill with its fuel oil and sea water, and the captain, Lieutenant Commander Hideo Yamamoto, had no option but to blow the ballast tanks, bringing the *I-35* to the surface at 1750 hours.

At the surface, the sub was trapped between the two destroyers, about a mile from each ship. Both American vessels fired at the *I-35* immediately, preventing any return fire from the Japanese. All 20mm guns and machine guns on the two destroyers were brought into action, and both destroyers also shelled the enemy with their 5-inch main weapons. Four or five Japanese sailors rushed out on deck to man the submarine's guns, one 120mm deck gun and a twin 20mm antiaircraft gun, but all were killed or wounded by machine-gun fire. Men were seen dropping as they tried to reach the gun mounted aft of the conning tower. Some of the wounded were able to retreat back inside the submarine.

The *Frazier* got underway heading toward the *I-35* to ram her. The ship's speed rose to 25 knots, and the bow of the *Frazier* struck a death blow to submarine just aft of the conning tower. The submarine's pressure hull ruptured, causing it to rapidly fill with seawater and sink. As the destroyer backed away, the stern of the submarine began to settle down in the water and the bow rose up 20 feet into the air as she sank by

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: A depth charge explodes astern of the destroyer USS *Meade*, one of the American warships of Destroyer Squadron 14 that sank the Japanese submarine *I-35* near Tarawa atoll in November 1943. Both *Meade* and the destroyer *Frazier* picked up survivors after the sinking. TOP: Photographed from an American aircraft preparing to attack, a Japanese submarine is maneuvering at high speed in this image taken in March 1943.

the stern, nine miles west of Betio, where the ocean is about two miles deep. As the submarine went down, aircraft of an American anti-submarine patrol dropped more depth charges, which landed within 50 yards of the submarine and followed her down. At 1800 hours a loud underwater explosion was heard and felt.

Four survivors were seen swimming in the sea, and both destroyers launched boats to recover them. One of the Japanese in the water fired at his would-be rescuers, and he was shot and killed. One of the surviving Japanese was picked up by the *Meade*'s boat and the other two by *Frazier*'s. All three men had wounds from machine-gun fire, and the next day they were transferred to the transport vessel USS *Monrovia* for transportation to Pearl Harbor.

On Betio, very few of Tarawa's Japanese defenders remained alive after the battle. Only 16 Japanese were captured at Tarawa, and the U.S. Marines' roster of the 16 names includes two of the survivors of the *I-35*, Petty Officer Takashi Kawano and Petty Officer Ichiro Yamashita. The third *I-35* survivor, Petty Officer Shingeto Ohata, has for some reason, not been included in the roster. Six of the Japanese POWs were construction workers and with the two men from the *I-35*, this means that only eight fighting men, Rikusentai of the Sasebo 7th Special Naval Landing Force or the 3rd Special Base Defense Force, out of a total of 2500, were captured alive.

As the *Meade*'s boat made its way back to its ship, it was mistaken for a submarine by a Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber from the escort carrier USS *Suwannee*, which dropped a 500-pound bomb. The bomb exploded close to the boat, lifting it up into the air, but luckily there was no serious injury to those aboard although the boat itself was badly damaged. The aircraft was driven off by gunfire from the *Meade*, whose gunners were not able to identify the aircraft as friend or foe. Fortunately, although the plane was hit, it was not seriously damaged and its crew was unharmed.

The *Frazier* had received damage in ramming the submarine. Several forward compartments were flooded, and the ship's stem was bent concave. The lower four feet of the stem were moved approximately three feet to port from the normally straight and vertical position. Two days after the ramming, the *Frazier* sailed for Pearl Harbor for repairs.

The Imperial Japanese Navy was unaware that there were three survivors of the *I-35*, and in January 1944, it declared the *I-35* presumed lost with all hands." ■

Peter McQuarrie writes about World War II in the Pacific Islands. He has previously written for WWII History, Naval History, The Journal of Pacific History, Pacific Affairs and Pacific Islands Monthly. *His books include:* Gilbert Islands in WWII *(2012) and* Strategic Atolls: Tuvalu and the Second World War *(1994).*

In February 1942, German naval warships passed through the English Channel under the noses of the British Royal Navy and RAF Coastal Command.

By Patrick J. Chaisson

Naval History and Heritage Command

Battleships," said Adolf Hitler, "have had their day."

In a military conference held December 29, 1941, Hitler took time to remind those in attendance that not so many months ago the *Bismarck* went down with all but 115 of her 2,200 crewmen after a 100-hour sea battle. More recently, he added, two British capital ships—*Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*—were sunk by Japanese torpedo planes off Malaya.

To the commander-in-chief of Nazi Germany's armed forces, it no longer made sense to maintain a large fleet of surface vessels. The immense amount of resources required to construct, man, and fuel these warships, Hitler felt, could better be used elsewhere—such as in the

The Kriegsmarine pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* is photographed from the deck of the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* en route to Norway during Operation Cerberus—the "Channel Dash"—in February 1942. Aircraft recognition markings are visible on the deck of *Prinz Eugen*, as is a portable 20mm antiaircraft gun mounted further aft.

vast land campaign against Soviet Russia.

Grand Admiral Erich Raeder listened to his Führer's words with great concern. Raeder, who commanded the Kriegsmarine (German Navy), had devoted the last 14 years to building a seagoing force capable of challenging Great Britain's powerful Royal Navy (RN). His goal was to achieve what the German Imperial Navy in World War I could not do: wrest control of the Atlantic Ocean and starve Britain into submission.

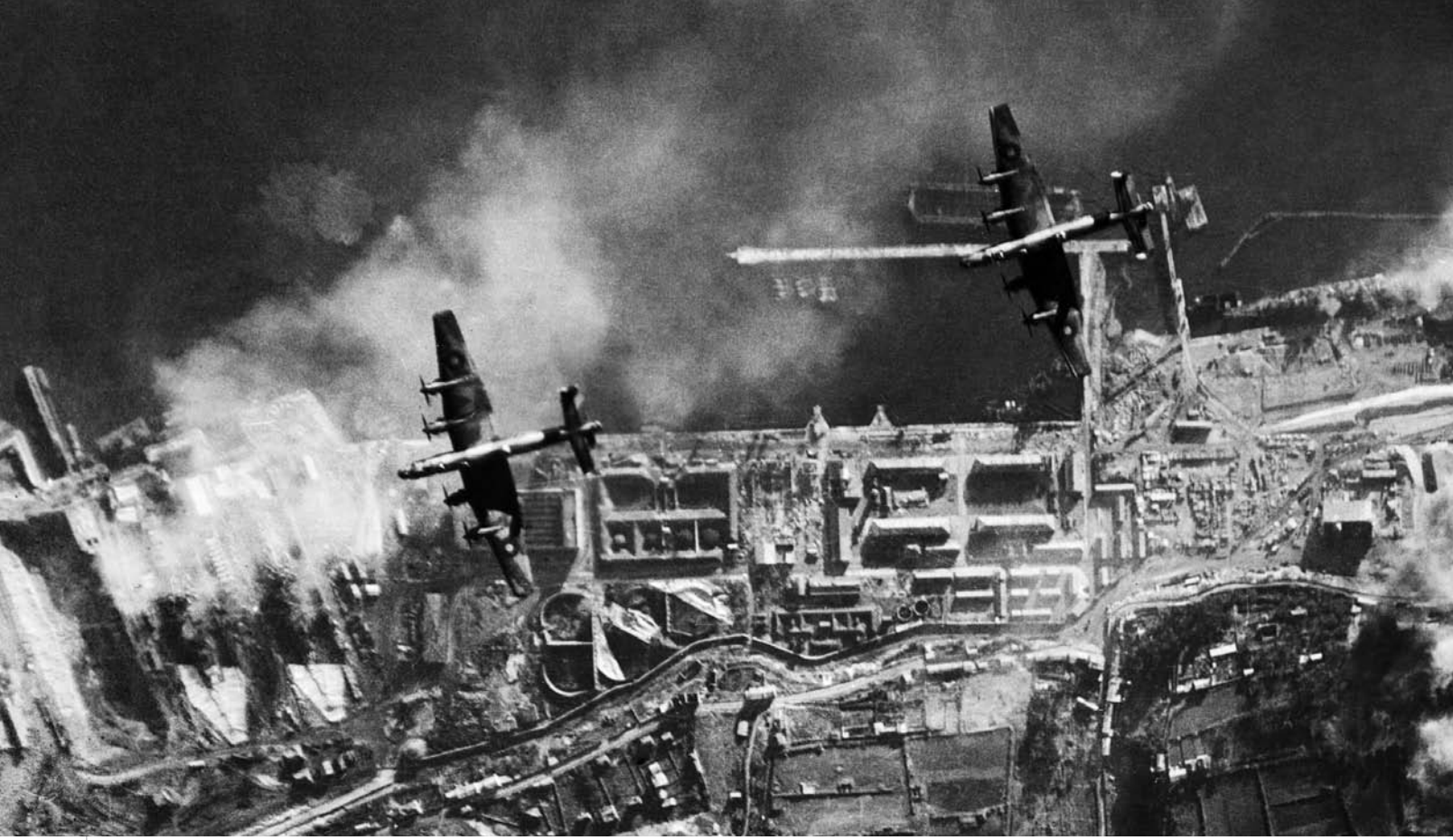
Raeder did not accomplish this ambitious task, however, as the Kriegsmarine never launched a sufficient quantity of new battleships and fast cruisers capable of overcoming its adversaries' potent fleets. And those German surface vessels that did sail into harm's way were often outmatched by the RN's superb tactics, precision gunnery, and aggressive torpedo aircraft.

For some time now, Admiral Raeder had the decidedly uncomfortable feeling that Adolf Hitler was marginalizing him. He watched helplessly as the Führer, a man completely unschooled in naval theory, began taking direct control of Kriegsmarine operations. In the German Navy (as well as the Army and Air Force), sound military logic was being replaced by one man's intuition.

In May 1941, following Bismarck's demise, Hitler directed his surface fleet to adopt a "no unnecessary risk" policy. Germany's capital ships could not attack a vessel of equal or larger size, nor were they to enter combat if a large enemy force was known to be near. All battleships and cruisers required his personal authorization to leave port and were expressly prohibited from venturing into the Atlantic Ocean. Lastly, Kriegsmarine warships had to depart the area of operations any time a British aircraft carrier was reported nearby.

Suffering under these onerous restrictions were three of Nazi Germany's most powerful capital ships: the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* along with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. Docked at the French harbor of Brest for nearly a year, these vessels endured almost daily air attacks by Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF). During that time, several lucky bomb

OPERATION CERBERUS: The Kriegsmarine 'Channel Dash'



and torpedo hits resulted in hundreds of casualties as well as extensive battle damage to all three warships.

Known as the "Twin Sisters," *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were the first capital ships built as part of Nazi Germany's pre war rearmament program. Launched in 1936, each battlecruiser (a British term—the Germans considered them battleships) measured 741 feet, 6 inches at the waterline and displaced 38,700 tons when fully loaded. Capable of 31 knots, these vessels enjoyed a 6,000-mile combat range.

Both *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were armed with a main battery of nine 11-inch guns housed in three turrets. Their secondary armament included another 12 5.9-inch pieces, as well as a suite of antiaircraft weapons and six torpedo launchers. Plans existed to fit them with 15-inch cannon, but these modifications never occurred.

Each warship had an authorized complement of 1,669 men—56 officers and 1,613 enlisted sailors. Captain Kurt-Caesar Hoffmann commanded *Scharnhorst*, while Captain Otto Fein skippered *Gneisenau*.

On March 22, 1941, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* entered the French port of Brest after concluding a successful mid-Atlantic raid. They were joined there on June 1 by the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. With an overall length of 697 feet, this 19,050-ton warship could run at speeds exceeding 32 knots. *Prinz Eugen* mounted eight 8-inch guns in her main battery, along with twelve 4.1-inch cannon and six torpedo tubes as secondary armament. Commanded by Captain Helmuth Brinkmann, her company numbered 42 officers and 1,340 enlisted hands.

Less than a week before, *Prinz Eugen* had narrowly escaped a series of British naval attacks that sank her consort, the battleship *Bismarck*. Arriving at the well-equipped Brest dockyards for repairs, her appearance alongside *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* was quickly noticed by French operatives. This information was then passed on by radio to British Naval Intelligence.

Royal Air Force bombers struck just eight days later, initiating a months-long air campaign against what flight crews jokingly called "The Brest Target Flotilla." Between August 1 and December 31, 1941, British airmen dropped 1,200 tons of bombs over *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Prinz Eugen*. This effort, which resulted in several direct hits on all three vessels, also killed or wounded over 200 seamen.

Despite the RAF's near-constant attention, Admiral Raeder argued there was great value in keeping these warships based at Brest. There, they acted as a "fleet-in-being" that forced British naval commanders to keep on hand a substantial reaction force—ships and planes badly needed elsewhere in a global war that now included Japan as an adversary.

Yet, Hitler had his own thoughts on the future of Germany's surface fleet. On December 29, 1941, the Führer summoned Raeder to his underground "Wolf's Lair" headquarters near Görlitz, East Prussia, to share these ideas. Fearing an Allied invasion of Norway, Hitler declared that nation as a "Zone of Destiny" and demanded the Kriegsmarine send all available capital ships to Norwegian waters. This order included the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Prinz Eugen*.

He then considered how these vessels could make their escape from France. "Only a bold run through the English Channel under advantageous weather conditions," Hitler said, would enable the Brest group to redeploy safely. He then told Raeder that if this Kanalmarsch (Channel march) failed, all three warships were to be decommissioned and their guns turned over to the coast artillery.

Hitler went on to say that Germany now had to use its resources more purposefully, even suggesting that the time for capital ships had passed.

Admiral Raeder knew his Führer's comment about scrapping the mighty Brest group and repurposing its guns into coastal defense weapons was no idle threat. Shaken, he departed the Wolf's Lair determined to produce a comprehensive plan for that force's voyage.

There was much Raeder and his staff needed to consider.

First, when would *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Prinz Eugen* be ready to sail? Assuming they did not suffer any additional damage from RAF bombs, all three vessels could be put to sea not earlier than January 31, 1942. Next, an analysis of the moon and tides pointed to the period of February 11-15 as most favorable for a breakout providing the weather cooperated.

Even though Hitler favored a passage through the Straits of Dover, Raeder felt duty bound to present all alternatives. The Channel transit did have its advantages: a short route, good air and sea escort possibilities, and adequate emergency harbors. Mitigating these factors were the difficulties of navigating and maneuvering in the English Channel's shallow waters, as well as the presence of enemy destroyers, torpedo boats, and strike aircraft. Sea mines, both German and British, posed another major threat.

Admiral Raeder preferred a longer track, one that passed around Ireland's west coast and through the Denmark Strait to reach friendly harbors. This scheme risked an encounter with the RN's Home Fleet at Scapa Flow, but allowed the German vessels more open-ocean maneuver room. Raeder and his staff wanted to keep their "fleet-in-being" where it was, but the Denmark Strait option promised better chances for survival should Hitler insist on redeploying the warships based at Brest.

Raeder outlined these planning considerations in a memo to the Führer dated January 8, 1942. In this document he predicted the Brest group would likely suffer total loss, or at least heavy damage to the ships and their crews should it attempt a run through the English Channel. "I therefore see myself according to my innermost conviction not in a position to propose such a transfer operation," he concluded.

Yet, the admiral understood from long experience that once Hitler determined on a course of action, little could be said to change his mind. Resigned to the inevitable, Raeder and several subordinate naval commanders traveled to Görlitz on January 12 for a coordination meeting regarding the Kanalmarsch.

Also in attendance at the Wolf's Lair were Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, chief of Germany's armed forces; General Alfred Jodl, his chief plans officer; General Hans Jeschonnek, Luftwaffe Chief of Staff; and Colonel Adolf Galland, Inspector of Fighters in France and the man responsible for providing air support over the Brest group during its journey. The conference began once Hitler took his seat.

Vice Admiral Otto Ciliax, who would command the Brest group's breakout, spoke first. A long-serving battleship veteran, Ciliax enthusiastically outlined his plan of action. It emphasized security: no shakedown cruises were authorized, as any unusual pre-deployment activity would surely alert enemy spies or reconnaissance aircraft. The task force was to depart at night, relying on surprise and the Luftwaffe for protection as it made a mid-day run through the Straits of Dover. By passing over deep water most of the way, Ciliax said, his warships might avoid most known British minefields.

This drew comment from Commodore Friedrich Ruge, who commanded the minesweepers charged with clearing Ciliax's path.

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: During Operation Cerberus, the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* transit the English Channel with surface escorts and air cover. British attempts to disrupt the "Channel Dash" were an exercise in futility. OPPOSITE: The battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* are under attack from Handley Page Halifax bombers of RAF No. 35 Squadron in port at Brest, France. A smoke screen rolls in to blanket the two warships during the daylight attack on the naval dockyard. Such perils as this raid prompted the Kriegsmarine to initiate the risky "Channel Dash," Operation Cerberus, to relocate these valuable assets to safer northern waters.

Ruge reported encountering sophisticated new sea mines that defied his trawlers' best efforts to detect and remove them. He could not guarantee safe passage through these obstacle belts.

Speaking for the Luftwaffe, Jeschonnek promised 250 fighters to achieve local air superiority. He also committed 25 or so night fighters that would keep enemy dawn patrols at bay. Jeschonnek further detailed a highly classified radar jamming capability designed to reduce the chances of British forces detecting Ciliax's command during the critical first hours of its voyage.

Hitler had the final word. He acknowledged the naval force at Brest diverted enemy bombers from making attacks upon the Fatherland but went on to say the British naval response would be identical regardless of where Germany's surface fleet was stationed. The strategic situation, he stated, now required all available warships in operation off Norway.

Likening the Brest group to a cancer patient, Hitler claimed these vessels were "doomed without an operation." He recognized that the Kanalmarsch came with great risk but observed, "…an operation, even if it's a drastic one, offers at least some hope of saving the patient's life. The only possibility is a surprise breakthrough with no previous indications that it is to take place. We need total surprise—and a bit of luck to boot." He added, "Most of my decisions have been bold, and only those who accept the dangers deserve luck."

Then Hitler announced, "I have determined to withdraw the ships from Brest." With that statement, the Kanalmarsch became a formal mission. All naval activity fell under the code word Operation "Cerberus," while the Luftwaffe's portion was titled Operation "Donnerkeil" (Thunderbolt). Cerberus would commence at 2030 hours on Wednesday, February 11, 1942.

The assembled air and naval commanders efficiently addressed all necessary coordinating details in an uncommon display of interservice

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cooperation between the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine. For instance, it was arranged that each of Admiral Ciliax's capital ships carry on board an Air Force communications team responsible for direct tactical control of the aerial covering force.

The German Navy took extraordinary measures to mislead British Intelligence, whose network of French informants kept a close eye out for any unusual activity in and around the port. Supplies of tropical uniforms were conspicuously delivered to each warship, while invitations to a large costume ball set for 12 February in the city of Brest went out to all enlisted sailors. None of these seamen knew that by then the fleet would be long gone for decidedly non-tropical waters.

Commodore Ruge's minesweepers started clearing and marking pathways along the Brest Group's route, doing so only at night so as not to alert British patrols. Additionally, a pair of specially modified Heinkel He-111 bombers began operating along the Channel coast with powerful transmitters on board jamming Britain's air and surface radars. This was done gradually so enemy technicians would not immediately notice the signal interference.

These operational security measures did not completely mask all preparations for the breakout. For some time, Britain's service chiefs recognized their adversary might attempt to redeploy its Brest Group through the English Channel. To discuss this possibility, Adm. Dudley Pound, Chief of Naval Staff, met regularly with his RAF counterparts, including Bomber Command chief Air Vice Marshal Jack Baldwin and the head of Coastal Command, Air Chief Marshal Philip Joubert.

Their response, developed in great secrecy at the highest level of command, was code named "Fuller." Operation Fuller called for synchronized attacks by Admiral Pound's small flotillas of destroyers and motor torpedo boats (MTBs), vessels well suited for the Channel's shallow waters, acting in concert with several squadrons of RAF Bristol "Beautorp" strike aircraft. Another six RN Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes, reconstituting after the Bismarck campaign, could also be called upon if necessary.

Bomber Command allocated 300 warplanes for the operation, although RAF flight crews knew the odds of hitting a moving ship with unguided iron bombs were abysmally low. Available as a covering force were nearly 400 Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire fighter planes.

In addition, several Lockheed Hudson patrol aircraft provided electronic early warning with their onboard air-surface radar systems. Finally, the 9-inch coastal batteries positioned near Dover could range far into the Channel—although good visibility was needed in order for these guns to adjust fire.

Meanwhile, the port of Brest hummed with activity as Ciliax's task force prepared to conduct its Channel Dash. Workmen feverishly completed repairs to *Gneisenau* following a bomb hit on January 6 that flooded two compartments. Then, on the morning of February 11, all non-Germans were removed from the dockyard area and the harbor sealed off.

The officers and crewmen aboard *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Prinz Eugen*—most of whom were totally unaware of what was about to happen—went about their normal duties that day. Earlier, however, Ciliax gathered together his ships' captains for a conference on board *Scharnhorst*.

There, the task force commander outlined Operation Cerberus. At 2030 hours, his capital ships would slip their moorings and join six accompanying destroyers for the planned 30-hour transit to port facilities in Kiel and Wilhelmshaven, Germany. Other escort vessels would rendezvous with the Brest group as it sailed up the Channel coast. Continuous Luftwaffe air cover was set to commence at dawn.

"It is a bold and unheard-of operation for the German Navy," Ciliax said of his plan. "It will succeed if [my] orders are strictly obeyed."

By 2030 hours on February 11, the fleet stood ready to cast off. Just then, though, air raid sirens across Brest began to sound. A flight of RAF Vickers Wellington medium bombers passed overhead, dropping their loads well clear of the port. Admiral Ciliax waited impatiently for the "all-clear" signal; finally, at 2214 hours, his task force received permission to proceed.

The Brest group got underway around 2245 hours, led by Destroyer *Z29*. Then, in line-astern formation, came *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Prinz Eugen*. Once clear of the harbor, two more destroyers deployed on each flank while *Z25* fell into the rear. Ciliax and his ships' captains anxiously checked their watches—Operation Cerberus was already more than two hours behind schedule.

Most junior officers still did not know their

destination. On *Scharnhorst*'s bridge, Officer of the Watch Wilhelm Wolf asked his ship's navigator for the course to steer. Helmuth Giessler called for a starboard turn to 340 degrees. Wolf questioned this heading, as it would take the ships into the English Channel. "The course is correct," Giessler smiled. "Tomorrow you'll be at home with your wife."

Making 29 knots, the Brest group passed Ushant by 0200 hours and entered the Channel. At 0212 hours, Admiral Ciliax informed his ships' companies by loudspeaker about the mission's true purpose: "The Führer has summoned us to new tasks in other waters," he began, indicating their difficult mission would demand a supreme effort from every man. "The Führer expects from each of us unwavering duty," he closed. "It is our duty as warriors and seamen to fulfill these expectations."

The sun rose seven hours after Ciliax's warships started their run. The weather, initially characterized by broken clouds and a moderate sea state, began to worsen. Decreasing visibility, along with growing westerly winds, a heavy swell, and intermittent rain squalls, served to conceal the task force as it closed the Cherbourg Peninsula at 0630 hours.

The Luftwaffe appeared around this time. Following a precise plan crafted by Colonel Galland, at least 16 but often many more day fighters flew broad figure-eight patterns over the Brest group. Four schwarme (flights) of four fighters each—one low, one high, one to the east, one to the west—provided continual air cover for 30 minutes at a time before moving on to a forward airstrip where they refueled and rearmed. Ready again for patrol, the fighters then resumed escort duties in accordance with Galland's carefully organized timeline.

A total of 252 Messerschmitt Me-109s and Focke-Wulf Fw-190s participated in Operation Donnerkeil, as the air operation was known. Three full Jagdgeschwader (JG- fighter wings): JG 1, JG 2, and JG 26, as well as the Paris fighter school cadre, maintained dawn-to-dusk coverage. Messerschmitt Me-110 and Junkers Ju-88 night fighters also supported the breakout.

Gerhard Krumbholz, a Ju-88 pilot on dawn patrol, described the Brest group—now swollen to 60 vessels by the addition of auxiliaries and patrol craft—as it looked from his cockpit: "Majestically and calmly they move through the turbulent sea, surrounded by numerous security vessels, destroyers, and minesweepers. Motor torpedo boats hunt protectively on all sides. Often the boats nearly disappear in the heavy breakers. German fighter planes circle over the naval unit heading for the narrow Channel. [Our] hearts… beat faster."

So far as Krumbholz could tell, though, the Channel Dash was proceeding unopposed. "The Tommies," he remembered, "appear to be asleep."

Plagued by poor planning assumptions, bureaucratic inertia, and plain bad luck, the British reaction to Admiral Ciliax's daring Kanalmarsch unraveled rapidly. The senior officers who prepared Operation Fuller strongly believed their opponents would never attempt a daylight run through the Channel, and thus did not pay close enough attention when the Brest group weighed anchor during the evening hours of February 11.

An S-class submarine, HMS *Sealion*, was stationed off Brest to provide early warning of enemy activity but shifted position after midnight to recharge her batteries and missed the task force's passage. Equipment failures onboard three radar-equipped Hudson bomber aircraft patrolling the region enabled Ciliax's command to escape detection a second time.

At 1042 hours on February 12, two Spitfire pilots spotted the German fleet off Dieppe. Under orders to maintain radio silence, though, those aviators did not report their sighting until after they had landed. Further time was wasted in notifying Fighter Command, whose duty officers replied they were only interested in enemy aircraft and not ships.

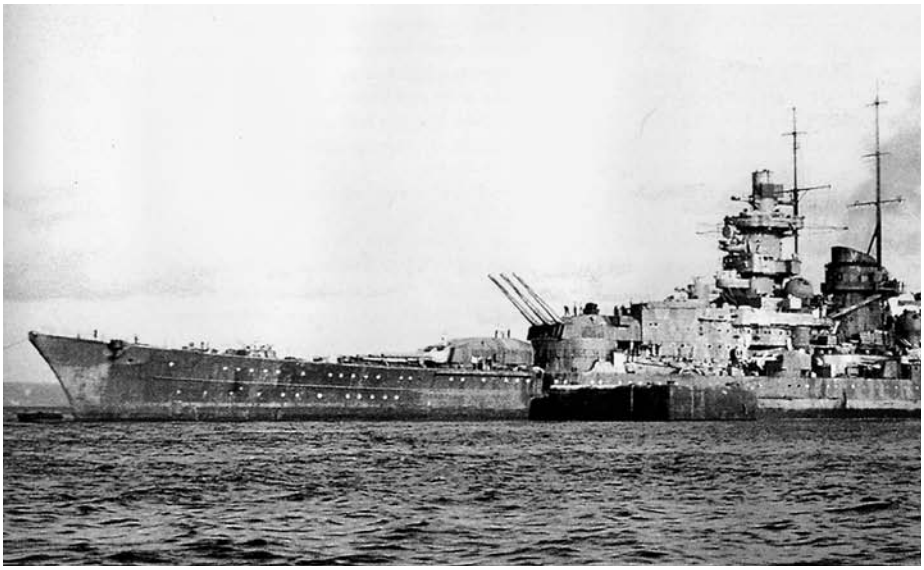
When news of the breakout finally reached naval headquarters in Dover, someone remembered the top-secret contingency plan and removed it from an office safe. Contacting the London-based Air Ministry, that officer barked the word "Fuller" through his telephone to activate the order. Incredibly, the person on the other end said "there is no one of that name here" and hung up.

An excessive focus on secrecy crippled the British reaction. Even after RN and RAF commanders began to grasp the problem at hand, more bad news arrived. A squadron of Beaufort strike aircraft was grounded by snow in Scotland, while six Harwich-based destroyers were on exercise at sea and needed to proceed at flank speed through friendly minefields if they stood any chance of intercepting the foe.

Individual commanders went into action using whatever assets were at hand, hoping to (in the words of a post-battle report) "delay the enemy in any way possible by immediate attack with any force available [rather] than risk losing the opportunity in the effort to arrange coordinated attacks."

At Manston airfield, Lt. Cdr. Eugene Esmonde received orders to take his No. 825 Naval Air Squadron's six Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers aloft against the Brest group. These twin-winged aircraft, capable of just 115 knots at full throttle, required a large escort if they were to penetrate Galland's aerial shield. Royal Air Force liaison officers promised five fighter squadrons in close support, but only 10 Spitfires materialized as Esmonde's "Stringbags" neared the German fleet at 1245 hours.

Naval History and Heritage Command



ABOVE: The battlecruiser *Gneisenau* is photographed from the deck of an escort ship returning to port in December 1941, following Operation Berlin, a mission to ravage British merchant shipping. *Gneisenau* was accompanied by the battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* during Operation Berlin and later in Operation Cerberus, the daring but successful "Channel Dash" of February 1942. OPPOSITE: The sleek battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* is shown at sea during World War II. *Scharnhorst* and its sister ship *Gneisenau* both struck mines during Operation Cerberus but completed the dangerous transit of the English Channel in February 1942 without further damage.

navywings.org.uk

The Swordfish flew into a buzzsaw. Three planes went down before they could launch their payloads; Esmonde and his two wingmen managed to drop a "fish" (all of which missed their target) but were then shot out of the sky. Thirteen of 18 aircrewmen perished, including Lt. Cdr. Esmonde.

A few minutes later, four MTBs from Dover made an extreme-range torpedo attack on the Brest group; no warships were struck. Another three boats out of Ramsgate dueled with the German rear security detachment from 1320 hours to 1400 hours. These vessels could not get past the enemy's destroyers and returned to base without firing their torpedoes.

At 1318 hours, coastal artillery batteries at Dover opened up on the task force as it sailed by. All 36 rounds fell short, and the gunners could not see well enough in the gathering murk to adjust fire. Moving at 28 knots, the Brest group passed out of range at 1333 hours.

So far, the Kanalmarsch was going better than most Kriegsmarine officers could have hoped. This changed at 1432 hours when *Scharnhorst* struck a mine near Ostend, Belgium. The massive battlecruiser shuddered to a halt and lost all electrical power, prompting Ciliax to transfer his flag to a nearby destroyer. By 1450 hours, however, emergency repairs had been made and Captain Hoffmann called for maximum available speed in an attempt to catch up with the fleet.

The six elderly destroyers (*Campbell, Vivacious, Worcester, Mackay, Whitsed,* and *Walpole*) under Captain Mark Pizey's command had been running at full steam toward the Brest group since 1145 hours. It was a risky maneuver, though, involving passage through an unmarked British minefield. Indiscriminate air attacks by RAF Hampden bombers only added to Pizey's woes.

Sometime after *Walpole* fell behind due to mechanical issues, the remaining five warships deployed on line and pressed in. From his flagship, HMS *Campbell*, Captain Pizey sighted enemy vessels dead ahead at 1542 hours. He immediately ordered a torpedo attack.

In response, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* opened fire with their main batteries. Escorting Luftwaffe fighters also dropped down to strafe the British warships. HMS *Worcester*, last in line, got the worst of it. *Prinz Eugen* delivered multiple broadsides that shattered her boiler rooms, ripped off half the bridge, and killed or wounded more than 100 sailors.

On board *Gneisenau*, Captain Fein "watched our heavy guns score direct hits on the English destroyer." His report continued: "It seemed to me that she heeled so far over under the impact that she nearly capsized. I ordered our guns to cease fire, as there seemed no point in wasting shells on a ship already sinking."

According to Fein, no vessel that size could endure such a heavy pounding. Yet somehow *Worcester*'s surviving crewmen managed to keep their destroyer afloat, plugging holes and relighting her engines for a hazardous overnight return to Harwich. *Worcester*'s sacrifice came to nothing, however, as all torpedoes fired by Pizey's gallant little flotilla missed their targets.

For hours, RAF Coastal Command struggled to coordinate a cohesive attack by its Bristol Beautorp strike aircraft. Bad weather and even worse luck conspired against this effort. While some warplanes remained snowbound in Scotland, others flying in from Cornwall waited for hours while torpedoes were located, moved to the proper airfield, and mounted. Poor coordination and appalling weather forced RAF officers to send up their Beautorps one or two at a time, with negligible results.

Bomber Command sortied 242 warplanes in three waves on the afternoon and early evening of February 12. Heading out singly or in pairs, their flight crews braved Luftwaffe fighters, antiaircraft fire, and low visibility over the Channel. The results were disappointing: only

39 aircraft actually dropped on the Brest group, sinking one small gunboat for 22 RAF bombers shot down or gone missing.

Operation Fuller had failed miserably. One British air commander, commenting on his flight crews' experiences that day, said: "They often did not know where they were going and what they would be firing at. Coordination was a joke, communications a farce, and fighter cover unavailable."

As the winter sun set, most of Ciliax's force was off Ijmuiden, the Netherlands. *Scharnhorst*, intent on rejoining the main body, steamed at 27 knots about 30 minutes behind her sister ship and its escorts. At 2055 hours it was *Gneisenau*'s turn to detonate a mine, which opened a hole in her starboard side and disabled the center turbine. Still able to proceed at 15 knots, she limped into the port at Kiel together with *Prinz Eugen* and several smaller vessels shortly after sunrise.

In the meantime, *Scharnhorst* reported hitting another magnetic mine off the Frisian Islands at 2234 hours. Damage control parties quickly shored up the damage, though, and by noon on February 13 she was safely docked inside Wilhelmshaven harbor. Shortly thereafter, Ciliax reported to Kriegsmarine HQ the successful completion of Operation Cerberus.

The Germans suffered remarkably few casualties during this action. Only one vessel—the patrol craft V1302 *John Mahn*—was sunk, while two torpedo boats and a destroyer sustained damage from British bombs. Some 17 Luftwaffe airplanes were shot down, while the casualty count totaled 37 sailors and airmen.

British losses greatly outnumbered those of the enemy. Three dozen RAF aircraft, plus six RN Swordfish torpedo planes, never returned to base. One destroyer, the *Worcester*, and an MTB had been badly damaged. The list of killed, wounded, or missing exceeded 250 fighting men.

For his role in leading No. 825 Squadron's torpedo attack on the Brest group, Lt. Cdr. Esmonde posthumously received a Victoria Cross, the United Kingdom's highest award for military valor.

The Channel Dash became a propaganda triumph throughout Nazi Germany and a source of public embarrassment for the government of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Hitler gained further proof of his infallible intuition, while three capital ships intended for Norway's defense had made it to German ports. For their leadership during the Kanalmarsch, Ciliax and the *Scharnhorst*'s Captain Hoffmann each received a Knight's Cross. Oddly, the captains of *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* were not similarly honored.

The British press excoriated its military for allowing an enemy surface force to transit the English Channel, something that had not been accomplished for 350 years. "Nothing more mortifying to the pride of our sea power had happened since the seventeenth century," scolded one editor. Another (misinformed) newspaperman asked why "did no British naval patrol engage with [the German fleet as it passed through the Straits of Dover?]"

Some people blamed Prime Minister Churchill for the disaster. These accusations grew louder after February 15, when it was learned the British bastion of Singapore had fallen to Japanese troops. "This was the… blackest week since Dunkirk," wrote one Ministry of Information official, adding, "The main weight of public criticism seems to be directed against the government."

Admiral Raeder, who retired from active service in 1943, later claimed the Channel Dash resulted in "a tactical success but a strategic defeat" for the Kriegsmarine. No longer did the Royal Navy need to cover Brest, Raeder noted, while RAF bombers could now focus on targets inside the Third Reich. Regarding Norway, the Allies never did stage an invasion there. Hitler's intuition had failed him.

Ultimately, *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Prinz Eugen* contributed little to the German Navy's combat record following their bold Kanalmarsch. On February 26, 1942, *Gneisenau* suffered catastrophic damage in a British bombing raid, later to be scuttled as a block ship in 1945. *Scharnhorst* went down during the Battle of the North Capes in December 1943, taking all but 35 souls on board under the waves with her.

Only *Prinz Eugen* survived the war. Following V-E Day she was turned over to the Americans, who used her as a target ship for atomic tests off Bikini Atoll. It marked an ignominious end to Erich Raeder's dream of an all-powerful Nazi surface fleet. ■

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: The German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sail in line while firing their main batteries. This photo is believed to have been taken during Operation Cerberus, the "Channel Dash" of February 1942, during which the warships departed the French port of Brest and arrived in Germany at the port of Wilhelmshaven. They were damaged by magnetic mines during the hazardous journey, but British efforts to sink them outright, along with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, proved futile. OPPOSITE: The Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber was a flying anachronism by 1942, and today only two examples of the biplane survive, Mk II LS326 and Mk I W5856. These examples were given to the Royal Navy by Westland Aircraft Ltd. as a memorial to the men who served with the Royal Navy's air service and the Fleet Air Arm from the inception of naval flight in 1909. During the 1960s, the Admiralty authorized the retention and preservation of historic aircraft capable of flight.

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired military officer and historian based in Scotia, New York. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History *on a variety of topics.*

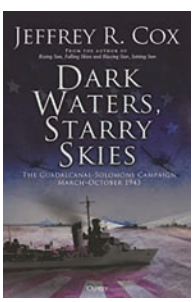
| By Christopher Miskimon |

Naval History and Heritage Command

Pacific Waters: Dark and Dangerous

American naval units learned their lessons quickly during the Solomons Campaign.

THE U.S. NAVY'S TASK GROUP 31.2, UNDER THE OVERALL COMMAND OF Commander Frederick Moosbrugger, had a mission to destroy enemy surface ships on the night of August 6, 1943. The group consisted of six destroyers, including the *Dunlap*, *Craven*, *Maury*, *Lang*, *Sterett* and *Stack*. Night attacks using radar aimed torpedoes were the unit's special skill and could inflict terrible damage on enemy ships if successful. So far during the war, American torpedoes suffered from a bad tendency to malfunction, but less than two weeks earlier Admiral King had given the order to disable the defective magnetic influence feature of the weapon. Now they might work properly.



As the American destroyers sailed through Vella Gulf in the Solomon Islands area, a gloom settled over the waters. Cloud cover was low and even with all lights extinguished and the lookout's eyes accustomed to the dark, no one could see anything. Aboard *Sterett*, its gunnery officer, J.D. Jeffrey, unable to see anything, decided to eat a cheese sandwich the wardroom steward gave him earlier. As soon as he unwrapped it and took a bite, a radar contact appeared. "That must have been the signal," he later joked. It was 11:33 p.m.

The targets were four Japanese destroyers making a transport run to the port of Vila on Kolambangara, where fighting raged for control of the island. They cruised toward their destination, unaware of the presence of the American ships, or that they had been spotted. The Japanese were masters of nighttime torpedo attacks and had roughly handled U.S. Navy ships in the past. The Americans were learning their lessons, however and were ready to return the favor.

The plan was to let the Task Group's first division—*Dunlap*, *Craven* and *Maury*—launch a torpedo attack from the radar shadow of Kolombangara Island. The second division—*Lang*, *Sterett* and *Stack*—would cover their fellow U.S. sailors, turning to cross the enemy's course. The first division's ships launched eight torpedoes each, now with properly functioning

The USS *Sterett* was one of six destroyers of Task Force 31.2 sent to destroy enemy ships in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. On August 6, 1943, at Vella Gulf the Japanese lost three destroyers and 1,210 sailors and soldiers intended to reinforce the army on Kolombangara.

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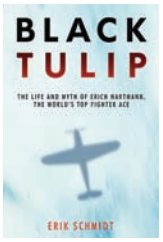
detonators. It took four minutes for the torpedoes to cross the distance to the Japanese ships.

The stealthy attack proved devastating. The lead Japanese destroyer, *Hagikaze*, took two hits. The first started a large fire which was put out by the spray from the second hit, which struck the ship's machinery spaces and brought it to a halt. Two torpedoes struck *Arashi*, which also came to a halt. *Kawakaze* took a hit directly under the bridge in a magazine, causing an explosion that wrecked the ship. *Shigure* escaped damage for the moment as the ship's engines were not working properly, causing her to trail the other ships. Her captain immediately launched his own torpedoes toward the Americans, but the first division immediately turned away to avoid just such a move.

Division two "crossed the T," meaning they sailed perpendicular across the bows of the enemy ships, allowing them to concentrate all their fire on the enemy, who could only reply with their forward guns. Each salvo from the American ships caused new fires and damage to the hapless Japanese. Apparently unsure of where the Americans were, the Japanese fired in all directions, but by midnight all Japanese guns were silenced. *Shigure* torpedo tubes reloaded, it started to advance into battle but as it did so, a massive explosion tore *Arashi* apart. Unable to contact any of the other Japanese ships, *Shigure*'s commander decided to withdraw.

At Vela Gulf the Japanese lost three destroyers and 1,210 sailors and soldiers intended to reinforce the army on Kolombangara. American losses amounted to one cheese sandwich, thrown overboard by Cdr. Jeffrey when the action started. The Americans had learned their lessons well indeed. This account and many more about the actions in the Solomons in 1943 can be found in ***Dark Waters, Starry Skies: The Guadalcanal–Solomons Campaign March– October 1943*** (Jeffrey R. Cox, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 528 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35, hardcover).

This is the third in the author's four-part series on the fighting in and around the Solomon Islands in World War II. Like its predecessors, this work is thorough and well written. The level of detail in the text demonstrates the extensive research done on both combatants. The numerous first-hand accounts bring the actions to life with their vivid descriptions. The book covers land, sea and air campaigns in equal measure to give the reader a very complete picture of how interrelated victory and defeat were in each domain of warfare.



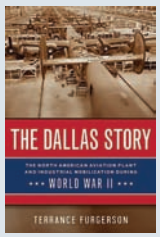
Black Tulip: The Life and Myth of Erich Hartmann, the World's Top Fighter Ace (Erik Schmidt, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2023, 212 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $19.95, softcover)

Erich Hartmann is the highest scoring fighter ace in history, with 352 aerial kills claimed during 1,404 missions, of which 825 involved contacts with enemy aircraft. By contrast, the top-scoring American ace, Richard Bong, could claim 40 victories. This was in part due to Hartmann's frequent air engagements—he served on the Eastern Front against large numbers of Soviet pilots. Also, unlike the American policy of rotating pilots back home after a specified length of time or number of missions, Germany kept its aces on the front line permanently unless they were killed or wounded. Hartmann was a smart fighter; he avoided risky situations and generally attacked only when circumstances were favorable. He also taught new pilots how to function and succeed themselves, an important task as the quality of Nazi pilot training dropped significantly as the war progressed. Hartmann did all this as a young man; he was still only 23 when the war ended.

The author does a creditable job of dividing myth and fact about Hartmann in his work. Stories inevitably arise about those so good at their role, and it takes effort to cut through the exaggerations. This book offers a clear look at a complex figure and the wider world of the Third Reich which surrounded him and used him for their propaganda. It is an interesting and well-done biography.

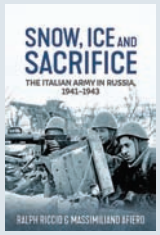
Angels Against the Sun: A WWII Saga of

New and Noteworthy



The Dallas Story: The North American Aviation Plant and Industrial Mobilization During World War II (Terrance Fergerson, University of North Texas Press,2023, $40, HC) The North American Aviation factory in Dallas, Texas built such famous planes as the AT-6 trainer, B-24 bomber and P-51 Mustang fighter. During the war it built almost 19,000 aircraft.

Pacific Profiles, Volume Nine: Allied Fighters: P-38 Series South and Southwest Pacific 1942-1944 (Michael John Claringbould, Avonmore Books, 2023, $42.95, SC) This book examines the P-38s of various Pacific Theater squadrons and their distinctive markings. Well-illustrated with photographs and original artwork.



Snow, Ice and Sacrifice: The Italian Army in Russia, 1941–1943 (Ralph Riccio and Massimiliano Afiero, Helion Press, 2023, $55, HC) Italy sent almost 250,000 men to Operation Barbarossa. This book tells of their experience.

The Human Face of D-Day (Col. Keith M. Nightingale (Ret.), Casemate Books, 2023, $37.95, HC) The author conducted terrain walks and interviewed D-Day veterans. Provides multiple perspectives.

The Plot of Shame: US Military Executions in Europe During WWII (Paul Johnson, Frontline Books, 2023, $42.95, HC) Plot E in the American Military Cemetery in Oise-Aisne contains 94 U.S. servicemen executed during the war. This is the story of those who lie there.

Naval Battle of Crete 1941: The Royal Navy at Breaking Point (Angus Konstam, Osprey Books, 2023, $25, SC) The naval combat around the island of Crete in 1941 was a costly and close-run battle. This book relates how the Royal Navy survived the ordeal.

12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend from Operation Goodwood to April 1945 (Massimiliano Afiero, Casemate Books, 2023, $28.95, SC) This notorious division entered the war fighting in Normandy and ended it in Austria fighting the Soviets. Well-illustrated.

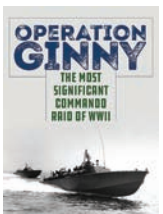
The One-Ship Fleet: USS Boise, WWII Naval Legend 1938-45 (Phillip T. Parkerson, Casemate Books, 2023, $37.95, HC) The light cruiser USS *Boise* earned 11 battle stars and fought in the Solomons and at Sicily and Salerno. This is a full account of the ship's wartime service.

Grunts, Grit, and Brotherhood (James D. Fenelon, Regnery History, Washington D.C., 2023, 484 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.99, hardcover)

Three years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1944, Lt. Col. Edward Lahti's 3rd Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, advanced toward the Mahonag Pass on the island of Leyte in the Philippines. Their task was to seize the pass and destroy any Japanese units in their path. Two hours into the advance, the battalion met the Japanese as they reached the top of a hill. Enemy automatic weapons fire kicked off the action. One American raced for cover by diving over a log. "There was a dead Jap there," he said. "I have no idea who shot him." A lieutenant crept forward to try and spot the Japanese. He fell backward with a bullet wound through his left eye. As quickly as it began, the ambush ended; the Japanese withdrew, leaving behind six dead Americans. The American paratroopers, mostly still new to combat, had a lot to learn and many of them started learning it here on a nameless hill in Leyte.

The soldiers of the 11th Airborne Division learned their lessons well. This new book details the history of the division in detailed prose and the perspectives of those who served in the unit. The Pacific airborne units have received less attention than their European counterparts; this book goes far toward rectifying that omission.

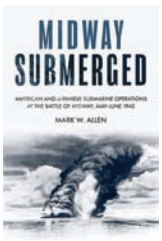
Operation Ginny: The Most Significant Commando Raid of WWII (Vincent dePaul Lupiano, Lyons Press, Lanham MD, 2023, 237 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $27.95, hardcover)



Operation Ginny occurred in two parts; both happened in early 1944 and focused on the destruction of a railway tunnel in Italy. Blowing up the tunnel would interrupt the German line of communications in the region. PT Boats inserted 15 U.S. soldiers in the first attempt, which failed when the team was landed in the wrong place and could not locate the tunnel. A month later they tried again and were caught before completing the mission. All the commandos were executed as spies by firing squad despite being in uniform when captured. After the war the German officer who signed the order, General Anton Dostler, was convicted and executed, though his superior, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, managed to escape blame in this matter.

While the story of the raid is covered in this new book, the narrative is really a crime story, focusing on the murder of the 15 OSS operatives and the subsequent trials against those responsible for the executions, which violated established laws of war. The author uses transcripts from the trials, witness statements and examples of other wartime crimes to effectively show the circumstances which surround the incident.

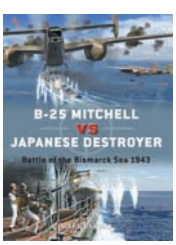
Midway Submerged: American and Japanese Submarine Operations at the Battle of Midway, May–June 1942 (Mark W. Allen, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2023, 226 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)



The USS *Nautilus* was the only American submarine to attack the Japanese strike force on June 4, 1942. Its captain, Lt. Cmdr. William Brockman Jr., intercepted a contact report of Japanese carriers and found them. Raising his periscope between U.S. air attacks from Midway-based planes, *Nautilus* fired two torpedoes. They both missed, but the Japanese response was a furious barrage of depth charges from destroyers. Soon the Japanese fleet turned northward, leaving a single destroyer, *Arashi*, to keep Nautilus pinned in place while they sailed off. When *Arashi* left to rejoin the carrier force, it was spotted by Lt. Cmdr. Wade McClusky, leading the dive bomber squadrons from USS *Enterprise*. He followed *Arashi*'s heading straight to the carriers for his famous attack, which won the Battle of Midway.

Submarines on both sides played an important role in the Battle of Midway, but this aspect of the action is relatively unknown. This book summarizes the submarine operations surrounding the Midway battle. The author covers the doctrines, strategies and tactics of both nations' submarine forces to provide background information on the Midway operations. A set of appendices adds more background detail. The book is a fascinating study of a lesser-known part of the engagement that was the turning point in the Pacific War.

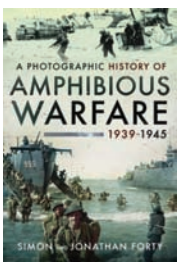
B-25 Mitchell Versus Japanese Destroyer: Battle of the Bismarck Sea 1943 (Mark Lardas, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $22, softcover)



The B-25 bomber saw some its greatest success as a "strafer"—specially modified with multiple .50-caliber machine guns in the nose and carrying a few bombs used in one of two low-level techniques: skip-bombing or mast-top bombing. A well-trained aircrew could achieve very high hit percentages compared to conventional high-altitude bombing. During the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, their main opponents were the Japanese sailors aboard the destroyers escorting the troopships en route to New Guinea. Those sailors were superbly trained, but their ships were optimized for surface combat against enemy warships and lacked sufficient antiaircraft weapons. The B-25s operated in pairs; the first would strafe the enemy ship to clear its decks of antiaircraft crews, and the second would make a bombing run. Afterward, the aircraft would switch roles. The Americans took a fearful toll of Japanese ships during the battle.

This fascinating study of the Bismarck Sea compares the two major fighting forces and explains how the American bomber crews learned to become effective against shipping targets. The book covers each side's training, weapons and tactics in detail. It is lavishly illustrated, including original artwork and good drawings of different weapons. The author does a good job demonstrating how the American bomber crews became such deadly foes through the rest of the war.

A Photographic History of Amphibious Warfare 1939–1945 (Simon and Jonathan Forty, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2023, 240 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

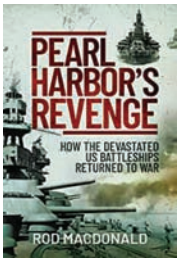


The 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion fought in the Ryukyus campaign using the LVT(A)-4, a vehicle popularly known as the "amtrac." This version, the "amtank," carried a turret with a 75mm pack howitzer, a compact cannon with a powerful high-explosive punch. Long bitter experience of amphibious assaults during the war had taught the value of fire support for the first landing waves. The crews were trained by artillerymen from the 7th Infantry Division, so they could employ their guns effectively. During the fighting on Okinawa, they fired 41,297 cannon rounds. After landing each company in the battalion sent two platoons to help the infantry while the remaining platoons helped cordon off the beachhead against Japanese infiltrators. The 776th reported killing at least 80 such infiltrators. The gun crews helped break up enemy counterat-

tacks and blasted the defender's bunkers.

While this new book proclaims to be a photographic history and is indeed liberally illustrated, it also contains a plethora of after-action reports, diagrams and text which makes the work a thorough and engaging study of amphibious landings during the war. The techniques for such operations were drastically advanced during that conflict through hard-won lessons; the authors bring the fruits of that labor to light in this book.

From Churchill's SAS to Hitler's Waffen-SS: The Secret Wartime Exploits of Captain Douglas Berneville-Claye (Michael Scott, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2023, 174 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, HC)



Douglas Berneville-Claye began his military career in the British Army, serving as a captain in the Special Air Service (SAS) in North Africa. Captured in December 1942, he spent time in a POW camp before betraying his country and joining the Waffen-SS. Donning the uniform of an SS captain, he addressed the British Free Corps, a unit of traitorous British nationals, exhorting them to join in the fight against the Soviets. After the war he faced court-martial, dismissed dishonorably from the army and sentenced to six months imprisonment. After his release he engaged in series of crimes before managing to emigrate to Australia. There he duped people into thinking he was a war hero for years.

The story of this disreputable and disloyal man is brought to light in this new work. War gives rise to both heroism and villainy in human beings and this book reveals how one such villain spent the war. Thoroughly researched and well written, this book astounds the reader as to how its subject managed to get away with all the things he did. The author tells a good story about a bad man and his wartime escapades.

Pearl Harbor's Revenge: How the Devastated U.S. Battleships Returned to War (Rod MacDonald, Frontline Books, South Yorkshire UK,

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

ENJOY A MIX OF TURN-BASED AND REAL-TIME STRATEGY IN THE LATEST WWII GAME HIGHLIGHTS

CLASSIFIED: FRANCE '44

PUBLISHER TEAM17 • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC, PS5, Xbox Series

Publisher Team17 and developer Absolutely Game are keeping the strategy wheels turning with a new World War II themed entry that's on the way to PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, and PC sometime this year. While there's no firm release date at the time of this writing, the latest turn-based outing is *Classified: France '44*, which puts players in the boots of a special-ops team of Allied commandos and French resistance fighters in the months leading up to the June 1944 Allied invasion of France.

Throughout the campaign, players will need to work hard to build the resistance network while dealing with competing factions as they take out key German targets in occupied territory. The goal may be to cause chaos and leave a trail of sabotage and destruction in your wake, but you'll need to be mindful of the fact that doing so will draw the attention of the Gestapo secret police, making your task increasingly difficult as you progress.

Classified: France '44 employs a morale system that highlights the impact of every single shot on your team and the enemy, and the nature of the tough, authentic combat encourages the use of stealth tactics to make it through in one piece. Building up to an eventual ambush as your enemies begin to become aware of your presence is one of the only ways to succeed in an environment that becomes increasingly hostile as your attacks hit their mark. All told, the base game comes with over 45 missions to hone your strategic skills, with further updates and expansions promised down the line.

The developers at Absolutely Game put a lot of energy into building a variety of specialists that you can utilize to form your team, each with their own unique skills and weapons. To make matters more interesting and engaging, it's not just about the attributes they bring to the table, but their stories, as well. You can raise your team's morale with some time around the campfire, learning more about their lives and the fights they took part in before crossing paths with you in the process.

Once you've exhausted all of the content *Classified: France '44* has to offer, a Classified Mission Creator and other modding tools are available to put all the customizability you could ask for right in your hands. As long as the community latches onto this particular portion of the game, there should be plenty of player-created content to dive into well after the full game has launched.

WAR MONGRELS (Console Port)

PUBLISHER DESTRUCTIVE CREATIONS, ALL IN! GAMES SA • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series

Originally released for PC in 2021, World War II real-time strategy game *War Mongrels* is officially available for more players to dive into on PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One and Xbox Series X|S. The isometric game from Destructive Creations focuses primarily on the eastern front of the war, which the team previously cited as an aspect that has been receiving less attention in the gaming world in recent years. *War Mongrels* strives to ride the line between inspiring stories of courage and the evidence war provides of the "darkest parts of the human character," resulting in a campaign

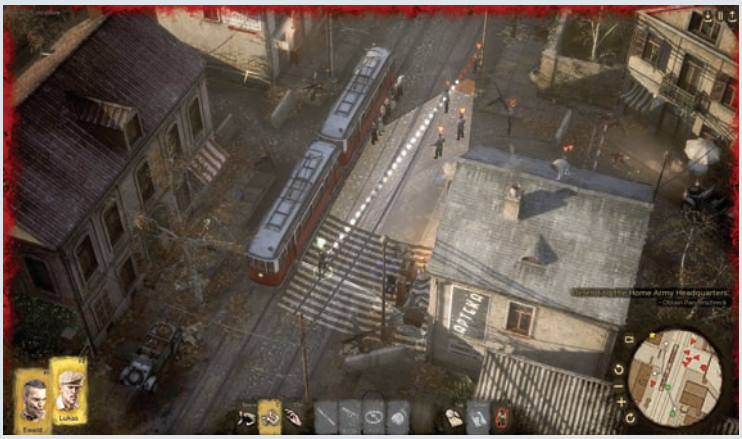
2023, 342 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $37.95, hardcover)

When the Japanese strike group arrived over pearl harbor on December 7, 1941, seven U.S. battleships sat at anchor on Battleship Row, with an eighth in drydock nearby. All took damage to varying degrees, with *Arizona* and *Oklahoma* sunk and irretrievably lost. The rest: *California*, *Maryland*, *West Virginia*, *Nevada*, *Tennessee* and *Pennsylvania*, were repaired, extensively rebuilt and modernized. They rejoined the fleet and while considered too slow and under-protected for naval combat, they provided extensive service as gunfire support ships for amphibious landings and island-hopping operations. At the Battle of Surigao Strait in October 1944, all these ships except Nevada, which had transferred to the Atlantic theater, gained their revenge by taking part in the last battleship vs. battleship action in history. They helped sink a Japanese fleet of two battleships, a heavy cruiser and four destroyers—only one of the destroyers escaped.

This well-organized book neatly lays out the wartime experience of the Pearl Harbor survivors. The initial chapter lays out the damage taken and effects of the Pearl Harbor raid on each ship. Succeeding chapters take an in depth look at each ship individually, describing how they were rebuilt and modernized, before giving a detailed account of their combat service. ■

inspired by a mix of history and original storytelling inspired by these historic events.

The story centers on a pair of Wehrmacht soldiers who start out fueled by propaganda. Before long, they find their new purpose in fighting back against the expanding Nazi forces that got them into their regrettable situation in the first place, opening their eyes to the horrors of war along the way and eventually meeting other like-minded soldiers that have their own unique skills to bring to the table. The variety of attributes at hand are ideal for a real-time strategy game, delivering plenty of opportunities to mix up tactics and choose what works best for each situation, from those who specialize in sneaking and distraction to others who are more action-oriented guerrilla fighters.



The characters of *War Mongrels* don't just grow in terms of realizing their purpose, they also evolve in the way they carry out their own acts of war as the campaign progresses. While they started out simply hoping to get away from the war entirely, their goal changes to one of prevention and preservation when it comes to the unnecessary deaths of innocents who tend to get caught in the crossfire. The team at Destructive Creations worked hard to put together an appropriately grim storyline, from the overall subject matter to details such as the bodies that remain in the trenches long after each skirmish has ended.

Even if the names aren't attributed to real soldiers who served in the war, there are plenty of true stories highlighting the history behind it all. It's not just about the events, dates, locations, weapons, and units scattered about the game; players will also find in-game historical articles and other artifacts of the time, keeping even the most intense of showdowns grounded in real circumstances. Moves like these are a great way to keep games in the genre from coming off as purely sensational or exploitative. *War Mongrels* doesn't want its players to forget that its events all have a basis in reality, they're just shown through a narrative lens unique to this particular outing.

If you already have a couple years of *War Mongrels* under your belt, you won't find too much in the way of incentive for hopping aboard these console ports. If you're just looking for a new place to play, or if you haven't had a chance to check it out for yourself yet, these ports seem like a great place to start. If you're not sure and have access to a PC, you can always download the demo on Steam to see if it's your cup of real-time tea before committing to a console purchase. ■

B-25

Continued from page 43

Coble the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation reads: "For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a pilot of a B-25. On 10 June 1944, Lt. Coble led a six-plane flight in an attack upon a railroad bridge at Calafaria, Italy. Despite intense anti-aircraft fire which heavily damaged his airplane upon the approach to the target, Lt. Coble, displaying great courage and superior flying ability, maintained his crippled plane on course, thereby enabling his bombers to release their bombs with devastating effect upon this vital link in enemy communication lines. On more than fifty-five combat missions his outstanding proficiency and steadfast devotion to duty have reflected great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States."

Bud Coble finished his tour with the 310th and was sent home in late June 1944, after flying 56 combat missions. The 310th Bomb Group, as part of the 57th Wing, participated in more campaigns, including the build-up to Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France in August 1944.

The group earned two Distinguished Unit Citations for action in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. They reached the number of 500 missions sooner than any other group in the European Theater. In 989 missions they were credited with shooting down 121 enemy aircraft, including a captured Curtiss P-40. Skip bombing and cannon attacks on German shipping resulted in the sinking of 206 vessels. Among these were a German cruiser and two destroyers. Over 23,900 tons of bombs were dropped while the B-25Gs fired 1,998 75mm cannon shells.

Bud Coble took a job at Sears, where he worked for 43 years. "I had met Winifred, my future wife, in Cairo while I was recuperating from an illness," he explained. "She was an Army nurse, a 2nd Lieutenant. We were married two years later. I technically outrank her, but she's my wife so her orders stand."

Coble is typical of the decidedly atypical airmen who flew B-25s in the Mediterranean Theater. At dangerously low altitude and face-to-face with German flak, they slowly and effectively ground down the Axis ability to fight. From North Africa to Sicily, Palermo, Rome, Naples, Anzio, the Po Valley, and into southern France, the Mitchells were there. ■

Mark Carlson has written on numerous topics related to World War II and the history of aviation. He resides in San Diego, California.

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