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Military Heritage

WWII
THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM
NEW ORLEANS

MILITARY HERITAGE

Winter 2024

FEATURES

Cover: A German Panzer IV (Pz.Kpfw. IV) medium tank rolls through the Soviet Union. By 1944 Soviet manpower and armor dominated the battlefield, while the outnumbered and outgunned Germans struggled to hold their gains. See story page 26. Photo: Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-216-0434-36; Photo: Lutz Koch.


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COLUMNS

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EDITORIAL

The study of history often puts us in the company of our betters.

AS A WRITER AND EDITOR, IT'S BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF time in the company of my betters: ordinary men and women engaged in the often heartbreaking act of making history. From the safety of my office, I've been able to vicariously witness feats of courage so far beyond my own experience that they almost defy comprehension. In my mind's eye, I've seen men charge across an open field at Gettysburg, climb the craggy slopes at Spion Kop, clamber out of landing crafts at Utah Beach, and ride into the valley of the Greasy Grass on a hazy summer afternoon in 1876. I've thrashed through the scrub brush at Bloody Marsh, climbed Snodgrass Hill at Chickamauga, and stood beside the lonely graves of shipwrecked British soldiers on Ocracoke Island, North Carolina, where, in the words of World War I poet Rupert Brooke, "There is some corner of a foreign field that is forever England."

These various acts of witness, whether they take place on an actual battlefield or at an eye-straining microfilm reader in the corner of a dusty research library, never fail to give us pause. No one can witness the courageous actions of normal people trapped in the most abnormal circumstances without feeling a certain fundamental inadequacy of response. What can one say about the Union soldiers in my hometown of Chattanooga, who climbed to the top of Missionary Ridge in the face of withering fire from Confederates at the top? Or about these same Confederates, who stood on another hillside at Franklin, Tennessee, a few months later, gathering themselves to make an even more suicidal charge, one they knew they could not survive? And what can one add to the words of our great national poet, Walt Whitman, who comforted so many dying young soldiers in the Civil War hospitals in Washington, D.C.? Losing his own health in the process, he never complained about his cruel fate, saying simply, "I only gave myself. I got the boys?" It is an honor just to be in their presence.

In the course of writing seven books and hundreds of magazine articles on everything from the Hundred Years' War to Kasserine Pass, I've attempted to explore the common humanity behind the heroics. As an editor, I've tried to nurture a similar humanistic approach to history. My fellow Southerner William Faulkner once said, "the past is not dead; it's not even past." Faulkner was right; he usually was. It lives within all of us, whether or not we realize it. We would not be who we are without the uncountable, often anonymous sacrifices of the "thin red line of heroes" standing at our backs. They are the ones who could truly say, along with Whitman, "I am the man, I suffered, I was there."

The best way to honor the sacrifices of the past is to ensure that they're not forgotten in the future. That's what we'll continue striving to do at *Military Heritage*, not glorify war, but celebrate individuals. Whether it's the lowly townspeople of Tyre, holding out against the massive power of Alexander the Great, a brand-new division of Canadian troops facing the unimaginable terrors of poison gas in the trenches at Ypres, or the often derided French army of Louis XV rising up to face the British squares at Fontenoy with their backs pressed hard against the Scheldt River. We never want to lose sight of the basic human element behind each story. Ernest Hemingway wrote in *A Farewell to Arms* that the only thing sacred about any war is the places and dates of the specific battles. In *Military Heritage*, we will continue to give you these places and dates, but we will also take pains to supply the names of the ordinary, and extraordinary people who were there at the time. It's our way of being there, too. In the company of our betters.

—Roy Morris Jr.

MILITARY HERITAGE

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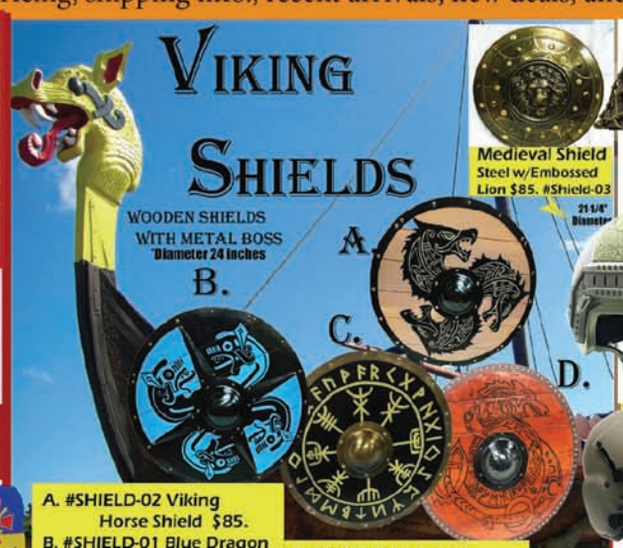

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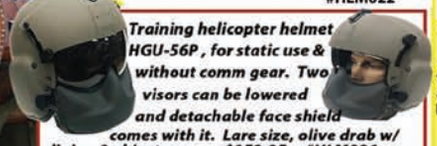

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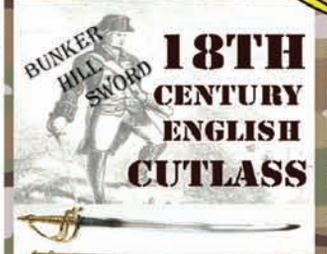

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New

Library of Congress

A technological leap forward, the Spencer Carbine Repeating Rifle was the Union Army's weapon of choice.

By Kelly Bell

Confederate soldiers spoke of it bitterly as "that damned Yankee carbine they load on Sunday, and then fire all week." This seven-shot lever action gun was indeed the first rapid-firing, repeating firearm to make a significant difference on the battlefield. The Confederacy did not have time to devise anything to match it, and captured guns were rarely of use because a shortage of copper made it impossible for the southern states to manufacture ammunition for the Spencer carbine. Used only by the Union, it performed with devastating effectiveness.

Christopher Spencer, 27, was working as a machinist for the Sharps Rifle Company of Hartford, Connecticut, in 1860 when he developed his eponymous rifle in his spare time. The Spencer carbine consists of a wooden shoulder stock with an integral straight grip, metal receiver, wooden forend and a long-running section of exposed barrel with three barrel bands joining it to the forend. The external hammer is offset to the right (to the consternation of left-handed shooters.) There is a flip-up sight ahead of the receiver, with a standard front sight just aft of the muzzle. The trigger is beneath the grip handle, and the lever doubles as a trigger guard. Sling swivels under the shoulder stock and second barrel band permit attachment of a shoulder strap. Barrel lengths of various models of the rifle ranged from 20 to 30 inches.

The gun is chambered for the unique .56-56 rimfire cartridge, which is loaded through the gun's butt and fed from a seven-round internal tube magazine located in the buttstock. The magazine tube is spring-loaded at its rear, with the cartridges aligned in single file and fed into the firing chamber in turn. The magazine is locked into place within the butt by a rotating release/catch. The lever the reloads the chamber while simultaneously ejecting spent casings downwards. The hammer is manually cocked. After familiarizing themselves with the gun, soldiers could consistently maintain the then-

TOP: First Maine Cavalry shown skirmishing with Spencer carbines at an unnamed battle in drawing by Alfred Waud. INSET: Christopher Spencer developed his rifle in his spare time. ABOVE: An original Spencer Carbine.

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National Rifle Association

revolutionary firing rate of 14 to 20 rounds per minute. The Spencer's muzzle velocity of 1,000 feet per second not only gave it impressive stopping power, but an effective range of 500 yards—a substantial battlefield reach.

After patenting his design in 1861, Spencer lobbied to introduce his gun to the Federal military. He first arranged to sell a contract to the U.S. Navy in June 1861 after carrying out a demonstration for Com. John A. Dahlgren, who looked on with growing enthusiasm as the inventor fired his gun after burying it in sand, immersing it in salt water and, over the course of the two-day trial, firing a carbine 250 times without cleaning it and with no drop-off in accuracy. Due to limited funds, however, and the fact that rifles are not in great demand during naval battles, Dahlgren ordered just 700 of Spencer's carbines.

But word of this new weapon was beginning to spread. Federal Gen. James H. Wilson had also attended the demonstration, and in a letter to the Union Army's chief of ordnance he gushed, "There is no doubt that the Spencer carbine is the best firearm yet put into the hands of the soldier, both for economy of ammunition and maximum effort, physical and moral."

A few Federal units at the battle of Antietam had just been issued Spencers, and despite the rifle's performance being generally laudable, some troops reported having trouble with its extractor jamming. Spencer swiftly corrected it.

Finally, on August 18, 1863, he managed to secure a personal audience with President Abraham Lincoln. When the president bench-fired the rifle in a vacant lot outside the White House he was impressed. Lincoln fired seven rounds into a wooden board at 40 yards, hitting the crude bull's-eye with the second shot. His only complaint was that the carbine had to be removed from the shoulder between shots in order to cock the hammer. Otherwise he had nothing but praise, and presented a piece of the shattered board to Spencer as a memento.

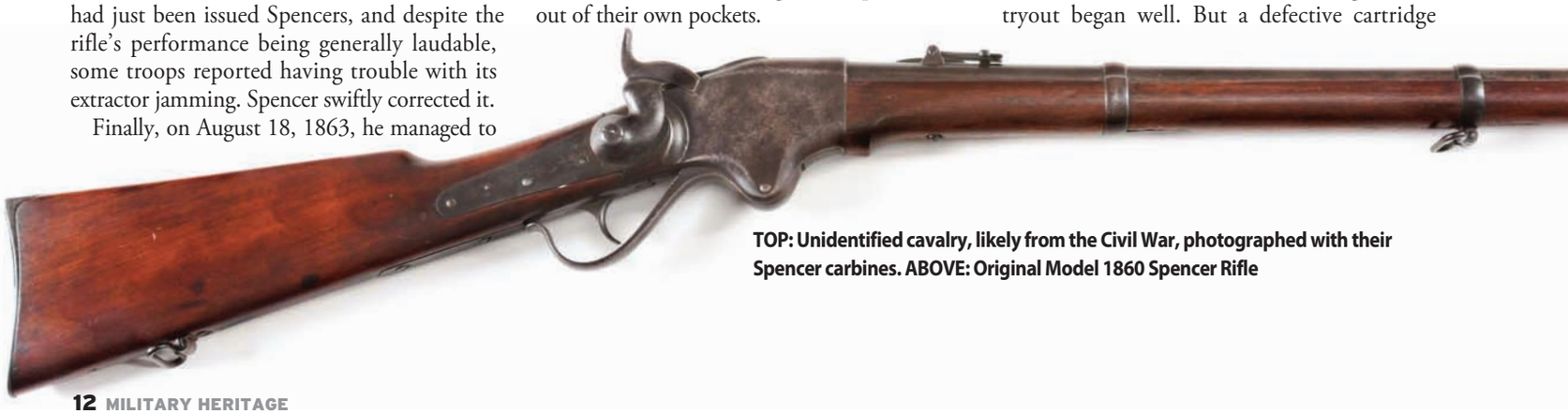
After Lincoln's endorsement, the Union Army bought 13,171 Spencer carbines and set up facilities to manufacture its distinctive ammunition. Adoption of the rifle was unavoidably delayed because manufacturing plants had to be constructed. The tide of battle had already turned against the Confederacy before the Spencer's widespread use, and most Federal forces continued to use older arms. Still, this new carbine was a huge technological leap, and hastened the war's end. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant called it "the best breech-loading arm available." By the end of hostilities 100,000 had been manufactured. This number was too small for the gun to have made the impact of which it was capable. Some officers and enlisted men, unwilling to wait, paid for one out of their own pockets.

By the time the Spencer began circulating within the Federal military the War Department already had outstanding orders for 15 different patterns of breech-loading weapons, some of which (especially the Henry) had also been favorably tested. Like Spencer, most of these inventors and small-time manufacturers had little in the way of production facilities. This was significant considering the wartime demand for firearms. The War Department had a hard time deciding which weapons to focus on. Lincoln's test of the carbine belatedly tipped the scales in its favor.

The cost of the conflict had compelled the War Department to pinch pennies. They were ignorant of the tactical implications of its adoption. By reading its specifications they did, however, learn that it was heavy. It weighed in at over 10 pounds when loaded (on the plus side this weight cut down on recoil.) It also required specialized ammunition not yet available through regular ordnance channels. Most significant for the cost conscious officials, though, was the price. A musket (easy to manufacture, lightweight, accurate, with abundant ammunition and easy to repair) was about $18. Spencer's new gun cost $40. An attachment for a saber bayonet added $3. And there were still more factors delaying the carbine's general adoption by Union forces.

Detractors pointed out that troops using this rapid-fire repeater would tend to use up their stores of ammunition quickly (a problem for armies to this day,) and be left holding empty guns for the bulk of the battle. The clouds of smoke from its black powder cartridges was another problem. Without a stiff breeze, billowing smoke would build up and blind the shooters. These would indeed prove to be valid points, but the carbine's positives outweighed them.

Lincoln's first commander, General George McClellen, was an early convert to the rifle, and convinced the Army to order 10,000 Spencers. This was far too few to make a significant impact on the war's course, so Spencer sought out the prestigious General Hiram Berdan, commander of the 1st and 2nd Sharpshooters Divisions and a renowned rifleman. In December 1861, Spencer had sent a carbine to Berdan for testing and the tryout began well. But a defective cartridge



TOP: Unidentified cavalry, likely from the Civil War, photographed with their Spencer carbines. ABOVE: Original Model 1860 Spencer Rifle

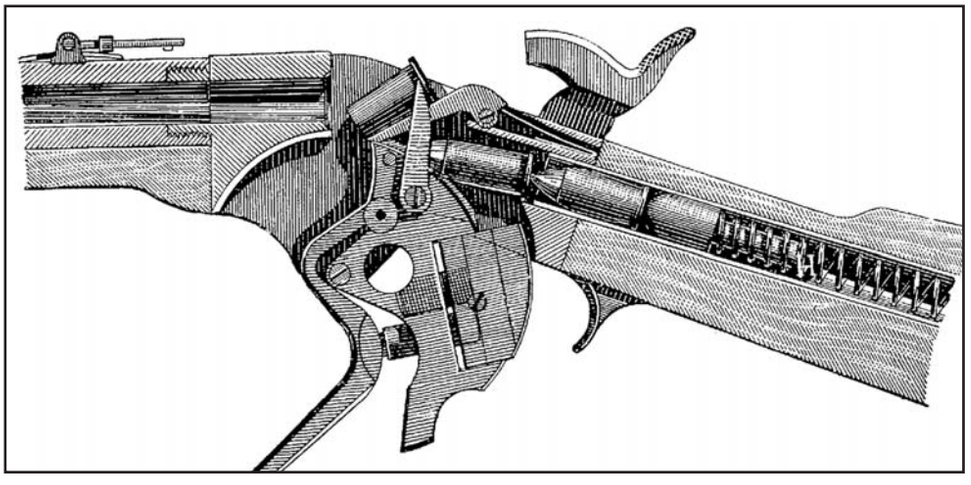
exploded, blowing hot gas back into Berdan's eyes. The famed marksman left the Spencer on the bench rest and stalked off in a huff to order Sharps rifles for his command.

Spencer was a brilliant inventor, but not a businessman and his newly formed Spencer Repeating Rifle Company was in danger of folding until Secretary of War Edwin Stanton renegotiated the firm's contract with the Army. This allowed Spencer to continue operations at a slower pace, gradually building up sufficient stocks to arm a significant percentage of the Union's troops. Spencer tirelessly toiled to open new production facilities and hire (or train) skilled workers while also designing and overseeing the building of construction equipment to make the rifle. By March of 1863, Spencer's main production facility on Tremont Street in Boston was a beehive of activity. In May, the Massachusetts legislature ordered 2,000 rifles to be issued to the state's soldiers. All this and Lincoln's endorsement the following August ensured the carbine would see relatively widespread usage against the Rebels.

Some of the Federal units at Gettysburg had just received the carbine, and used them with devastating effectiveness. On July 1, 1863, General John Buford's cavalry units used the Spencer to shoot down successive waves of Confederate infantry. The following day General John Geary's outnumbered troops shouldered their new guns and repulsed an entire division of charging Rebels.

And this was not the first time. In the battle of Hoover's Gap in Rutherford County, Tennessee, on June 24-26, 1863, Union General William Rosecrans, commander of the Army of the Cumberland, thwarted Confederate General Braxton Bragg's hopes of lifting the Federal siege of Vicksburg by fighting off repeated attempts to break through the Yankee lines. Using just-delivered Spencer carbines Rosecrans' troops held the line and ensured Grant overwhelmed Vicksburg's garrison, thus winning Union control of the Mississippi, splitting the Confederacy and isolating Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas and their vast reservoirs of men and material from the main theater of operations to the East. The role of the Spencer in this one battle and its implications for the war as a whole were overshadowed by the events at Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

During the battle of Chickamauga the following September, Union troops with Spencers thwarted Bragg's efforts to secure the main road to Chattanooga on the battle's first day. The next day Confederate General James Longstreet's assault on the Federal line came to grief under the withering firepower of Colonel John Wilder's



TOP: On the back of his sketch of the Battle of Darby Town Road, artist William Waud wrote "Friday 9th attempt of the Rebels to turn our right flank. The fighting was done in thick woods. Our men shewn[sic]in this sketch are armed with the Spencer Rifle." ABOVE: Drawing shows cartridges in the seven-round internal tube magazine located in the buttstock.

Spencer-armed Indiana "Lightning Brigade." Aside from the heavy toll of men shot down, Wilder's new weapons made so much racket that it deceived Longstreet into thinking he was facing a much larger force. This resulted in his movements being rather tentative, buying time for other Union elements to deploy.

"Hoover's Gap was the first battle where the Spencer repeating rifle had ever been used," said Wilder. "In my estimation they were better weapons [than any] that have yet taken their place, being strong and not easily injured by the rough usage of Army movements, and carrying a projectile that disabled any man who was unlucky enough to be hit by it."

As more Federal outfits received the Spencer, the gun played an increasingly prominent role and by war's end approximately 100,000 of them were in use. Had it been adopted sooner, it's possible the Confederate states might have been forced to surrender considerably earlier.

During the November 19, 1863, battle of Olustee, Captain Ford of the 1st Georgia Regulars came up against the Spencer-equipped 40th Massachusetts Mounted Infantry. Ford later described the Massachusetts soldiers as, "hard to move, as they seemed to load with marvelous speed and never had their fire drawn."

Determined to learn what kind of marvelous firearm his foes were using, Ford had his men

concentrate all their fire on a solitary, isolated Yankee soldier, killing him just so they could capture and examine his gun. This Spencer turned out to be the most prized battlefield trophy ever taken by the 1st Georgia Regulars.

By late 1864, Federal units were familiar with the carbine and expert in its usage. During the battle of Nashville (December 15-16) Union forces under General George H. Thomas used Spencers to route the Confederate Army of Tennessee under the highly regarded generals John Bell Hood and Nathan Bedford Forrest.

The following April, in one of the last major battles of the War, General Wilson saw his early support for the rifle confirmed when he divided his 13,500 Spencer-carrying troops into three columns and set them on Forrest's 5,000 men manning the defenses around Selma, Alabama. Armed with an ad hoc assortment of muskets, pistols and shotguns the old men and young boys of Forrest's command were overwhelmed. On April 2, Wilson secured Selma, losing just 359 men while killing 2,700 hapless Rebels. Days later Lee surrendered. War's end, however, did not see the end of the Spencer carbine's military use.

When the Cheyenne and the Oglala Sioux went on the warpath in the late summer of 1868, Gen. Phil Sheridan made sure his men were armed with the gun when they rode into the Kansas-Colorado border area. On September 17, a small detachment of 50 cavalrymen blundered into a mixed force of 600-700 Sioux and notoriously militant Cheyenne "Dog Soldiers" in western Kansas.

The tribesmen chased the soldiers across the state line into Colorado, where the troopers dismounted and frantically dug in on small Beecher Island in the nearly dry Arikara Fork of the Republican River. Cheyenne Chief Roman Nose immediately sent a mounted charge against the island. When withering volleys broke it up Roman Nose immediately sent a second, which likewise came to grief.

Fearing for his reputation among his men more than he feared death, Roman Nose led a third charge and was also mowed down.

The warriors settled into siege positions. For a week the dwindling, hungry soldiers lived on meat from dead horses and dug in the sand for muddy water. Two couriers had earlier slipped through the Indian lines at night and ridden 90 miles to Fort Wallace. On September 25 a relief column arrived and lifted the siege just as the defenders were running out of ammunition.

Although Sheridan's troops had been issued Spencers, most U.S. Army units fighting the Plains Indians were armed with the Springfield single-shot rifle. This gun appealed to the Army brass because of its long range and the fact that, being a single-shot, troops armed with it would expend

Roman Nose leads Oglala Sioux and Cheyenne warriors in a charge on Major George Forsyth's (wounded, center) 50 cavalrymen armed with Spencers, dug in on Beecher Island. The warriors were shocked by the volume of fire coming from so few cavlrymen.

less ammunition that those bearing repeaters, and postwar budget cuts meant the Army could only afford to spend so much on bullets. To their disgust the troops serving on the western plains often found themselves facing warriors armed with the quick-firing Spencer carbine, which unscrupulous white traders were eager to barter to them in exchange for prized buffalo hides. Many of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's troops (perhaps including Custer himself) went down under the sights of Sioux-aimed Spencers at Little Bighorn. Some of the hapless natives mowed down at Wounded Knee in 1890 were definitely carrying Spencers. The gun's battlefield use was not limited to North America, either.

With the Spencer carbine still in production after the Confederacy's defeat the U.S. government sought out new markets for this splendid firearm, selling large quantities to the French for use in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.

After the Civil War, the demand for the Spencer carbine dried up in a postwar America with a glut of the guns. With low civilian sales, the Spencer Repeating Rifle Company sank into bankruptcy in 1868. Spencer sold out to the Fogarty Rifle Company, and in 1869 the Winchester Repeating Arms Company purchased the Spencer assets, but did not continue production of the carbine. ■

UNIFORM

Troop Sergeant Major, 11th Hussars, "Prince Albert's Own," 1854

Artwork: Keith Rocco

HEADGEAR: He wears a tall Hussar's Busby of dark fur, with a gold cord, white plume, red bag, and gold-trimmed chin strap.

HUSSAR JACKET: Dark blue wool, tailored for a snug fit, with a Prussian collar, and three sets of 16 gold buttons, with gold frogging. Gold lace is shown along the cuffs, and other edges of the jacket.

HUSSAR SASH: Rows of red worsted cord, with alternating gold barrels, plus long red cords with gold ends.

SWORD: 1821 Pattern Light Cavalry Sword.

PELISSE: Short, dark blue jacket with with fur collar, cuffs, and along the lower edge, plus gold buttons and frogging, and hung from the shoulder by a gold braided cord.

TROUSERS: Prince Albert granted the unit the honour of wearing crimson trousers, the color of his personal livery, with a double stripe of gold or yellow lace down the side.

SABRETACHE: Hanging from a belt under his tunic is an embroidered *sabretache*—a large flat, decorative pouch.

This British cavalry unit was raised in 1715 as Honeywood's Regiment of Dragoons and continued in service through the 18th century before being renamed the 11th Regiment of Light Dragoons.

In 1839, James Brudenell, 7th Earl of Cardigan, commander of the regiment arranged for the unit to serve as escort to Prince Albert, soon-to-be husband of Queen Victoria. The Queen appointed Prince Albert colonel of the regiment, thereafter to be known as the 11th Hussars Regiment, Prince Alberts' Own.

The 11th and Cardigan, now commanding the Light Brigade, were sent to Crimea in 1854. After defeating the Russians at the Battle of Alma in September, the combined armies laid siege to the strategic port of Sevastopol.

On October 25, 1854, the Russians attacked the Allied siege lines around Balaclava, driving off Ottoman forces and capturing several redoubts. The Light Brigade was ordered forward to prevent the Russians from withdrawing captured Allied guns, but upon receiving confusing orders, they rode a mile, straight into Russian guns—and infamy. Devastated during the advance, they engaged the Russians before heavy casualties forced them to retire. The reputation of British cavalry soared as a result of the charge, though not so their commanders.

The 11th Hussars continued in service through the 19th century, and served in both World Wars. In 1969 the regiment was amalgamated with the 10th Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales's Own), forming The Royal Hussars.

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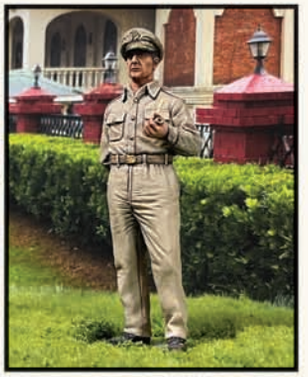

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An enduring symbol of patriotism and self-sacrifice, Nathan Hale paid the ultimate price for his belief in independence.

By Kevin Seabrooke

On the night of September 16, 1776, young Nathan Hale, a captain in the Continental Army, set out across Long Island Sound from his native Connecticut on the armed sloop *Schuyler*. The former school master was to land at Huntington Bay, Long Island, and walk some 50 miles to British-occupied Brooklyn to gather information on troop movements.

Details of Hale's movements in and around New York after this remain sketchy to this day, but one immutable truth remains—he would be dead within a week, hanged as a spy.

And though he never saw combat, Hale displayed such courage and commitment in surrendering his life for his country that, long after his death, his name and final words have come to embody American patriotism itself.

As the first American executed for spying on behalf of his country, Hale is considered the patron saint of American intelligence. A statue of him stands in CIA headquarters with the words "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country" circling its base.

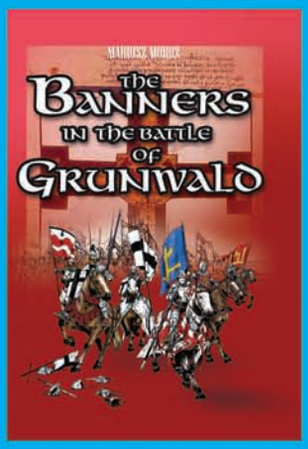
Yet there are no official records of anything Hale may or may not have said.

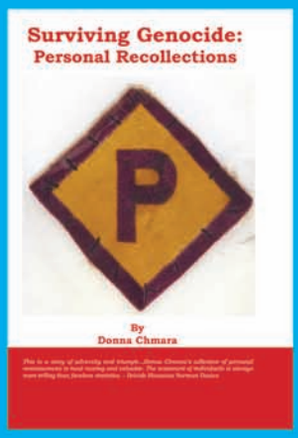
British Lieutenant Frederick Mackenzie recorded in his diary on the day of the execution that Hale acted "with great composure and resolution, saying he thought it the duty of every good Officer, to obey any orders given him by his Commander-in-Chief; and desired the spectators to be at all times prepared

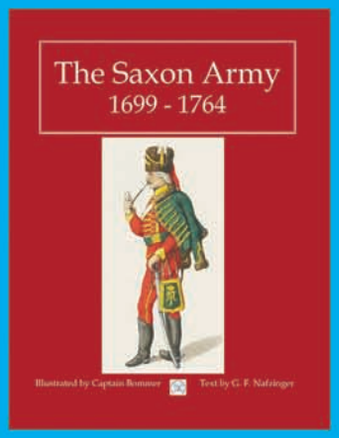
ABOVE: "The Hanging of Nathan Hale , New York 1776" by Don Troiani. INSET: No contemporary likeness of Nathan Hale exists, but there are many statues of him. This one, by Enoch Woods Smith (1889) is outside the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut.

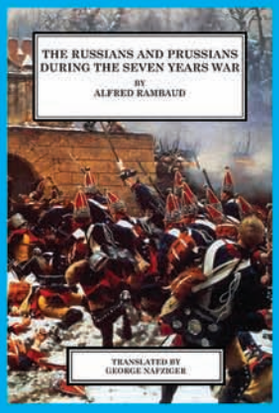
TOP: © Don Troiani / Historical Image Bank

Winged Hussar Publishing









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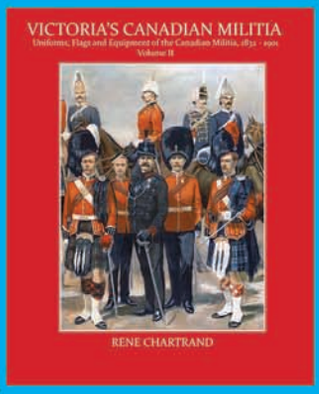

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ABOVE: Engraving of The Battle of Harlem Heights, September 16, 1776, by J.C. Armytage from a painting by Alonzo Chappel. The Continental Army held off the British, giving Washington his first victory of the war.

to meet death in whatever shape it might appear."

It is generally accepted by historians that if Hale did utter those famous words, or anything close to them, he was probably paraphrasing a line from Cato, a play by Joseph Addison: "What pity is it / That we can die but once to serve our country!"

Addison's play was a favorite of Hale's and many of his fellow students at Yale.

Just a year and a half earlier another icon of the American Revolution, Patrick Henry, in a fiery speech to Virginia legislators urging the formation of militias is supposed to have said "Give me Liberty or Give me death!" Whatever his exact words, they are almost certainly another paraphrasing of Addison: "It is not now a time to talk of aught / But chains or conquest, liberty or death."

U.S. Attorney General William Wirt, recreating the speech from eyewitness memories 40 years after the end of the war, attributed the phrase to Henry.

Though later scribes may have improved on these historical sound bites, it is of little importance, especially in the case of Hale.

The sentiment is most likely an accurate reflection of Hale's state of mind. For, as he wrote to his father in 1775 regarding his decision to join the army, he felt that "a sense of duty urged me to sacrifice everything for his country."

Washington learned of Hale's death on September 22 when a group of Continental officers met with General Howe's aide-de-camp Captain John Montresor under a flag of truce to discuss prisoner exchange. Montresor mentioned that a Captain Nathan Hale had been hanged as a spy.

Captain Tench Tilghman, Washington's aide, wrote "General Howe hanged a Captain of ours belonging to Knowlton's Rangers who went into New York to make discoveries. I don't see why we should not make retaliation."

But Washington was locked in battle with Howe, and the Continental Army did not publicly acknowledge Hale's death. Only two newspapers of the day mentioned the execution of the young teacher as Hale's fate was overtaken by other events.

The first version of Hale's famous last words, "I am so satisfied with the cause in which I have engaged, that my only regret is, that I have not more lives than one to offer in its service," came five years after his death.

This was published in the May 17, 1781, edition of *The Boston Independent Chronicle*, as related by Hale's friend and fellow officer Captain William Hull, who claimed to have heard about Hale's execution from Montresor.

It was not until Hannah Adams's 1799 *A Summary History of New-England* that the fate of Hale appeared in a lasting form of print and his story began to be more widely known.

Revolutionary services and civil life of General William Hull, published by Hull's daughter in 1848, 23 years after his death, helped Hale's story grow in popularity.

The absence of facts may be a factor in Hale's endurance as a symbol of selfless love of country.

Hale was born in Coventry, Connecticut, in 1755, to Deacon Richard Hale and Elizabeth Strong, both from highly respected Puritan families in New England, Nathan was the sixth of 10 surviving siblings. At 14, he enrolled at Yale College with his older brother Enoch, 16.

Founded in 1701 by Connecticut ministers to train clergy, Yale College offered a spartan existence and a thorough grounding in religion, mathematics, science, and the classics.

When news of the fighting at Lexington and Concord had reached New London, Connecticut, on April 22, 1775, a militia was immediately formed and set off for Boston the next day.

Hale's friends and Yale classmates, like Benjamin Tallmadge, were heading to Boston and he, too, was enthusiastic, reportedly crying "let us march immediately and never lay down our arms until we obtain independence."

But Hale intended to honor a teaching contract that ended in July. On the 4th, he got a letter from Tallmadge (who would go on to lead Washington's Culper Spy Ring) urging him to enlist.

"Was I in your condition… I think the more extensive Service would be my choice. Our holy Religion, the honour of our God, a glorious country, & a happy constitution is what we have to defend," Tallmadge wrote.

On July 5, 1775, Hale accepted a commission as a lieutenant in Colonel Charles Webb's Connecticut 7th Regiment. The rank was likely due to his Yale education at a time when only about one out of every 1,000 colonists had been to college.

In January, 1776, Hale had been promoted to captain and moved to the 19th Connecticut Regiment as part of Washington's reorganization of colonial forces into the Continental Army.

Reeling from his defeat by General William Howe at the Battle of Long Island (August 27, 1776), Washington had retreated back to Manhattan, surrounded by water that the British Fleet could use to attack his army.

He knew the attack would come, the main question was where the Redcoats would land.

As Washington wrote to General Heath on September 5, 1776, "…every thing in a manner depends upon obtaining intelligence of the enemy's motions…. Much will depend upon early intelligence, and meeting the enemy before they can intrench."

In mid-August, Washington had promoted Major Thomas Knowlton, a veteran of the French and Indian War who had distinguished himself at Bunker Hill and the siege of Boston, to lieutenant colonel. Knowlton was ordered to select 20 officers and 130 men from the Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts regiments to form the New England Rangers to carry out reconnaissance and espionage missions along Westchester and the northeastern shore of Manhattan. When Hale was asked to join the Rangers, he jumped at the chance.

Later known as "Knowlton's Rangers," the Cen-

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: This engraving of New York's Great Fire of September 1776 is attributed to the French artist André Basset. The work is a "cut-out optique view" meant to be displayed in front of a candle. BELOW RIGHT: Robert Rogers, depicted in a period engraving, was a hero of the French and Indian War, but after series of disagreements with Washington and other revolutionary leaders, he formed the loyalist Queen's Rangers. BELOW LEFT: Thomas Knowlton is shown standing over mortally wounded Joseph Warren in this detail of John Trumball's painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

tral Intelligence Agency, Army Rangers, Delta Force, and other such units trace their origins back to America's first special force.

In early September, Knowlton asked for a volunteer to go behind British lines to report on troop movements on Long Island.

Three years out of Yale, 21-year-old Nathan Hale stepped forward eagerly.

First stationed at Winter Hill for the Siege of Boston, Hale had been in the army for more than a year, but had not been in a battle. His company had been building and manning fortifications on Manhattan during the Battle of Long Island, also known as the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, and did not participate in the action. Perhaps Hale saw the spy mission as an opportunity to do something useful for the cause of freedom.

Though no documentation exists, it is believed that Hale was the only volunteer on September 8, 1776. Later accounts of the events report Knowlton's first choice as Lt. James Sprague, who refused, reportedly saying, "he was ready to fight at any time or place however dangerous but never could consent to expose himself to be hung like a dog."

Hale's friend Hull tried to dissuade him from going. Aside from the inherent dangers—if caught, he would be hanged—spying was considered at the time to be a dishonorable activity, beneath the status of a gentleman. But Hale reportedly countered that any task that was necessary for the "public good" was honorable.

As Hale crossed the sound, the British landed at Kip's Bay on the East River (near what is now Midtown Manhattan) and though they were defeated at the Battle of Harlem Heights, they now held the lower part of the island.

It was Washington's first success on the battlefield and it boosted the confidence of the Continental Army, but it had come at a price. Knowlton had been killed in the early stages of the battle on September 16. Ironically, the man who commanded America's first "special forces" unit and the first to be executed as a spy would die within days of each other.

Hale's cover story was that he was a Dutch teacher looking for work. A 1914 biography claims that not only did Hale not use an alias, he also carried on his person his Yale diploma with his name on it as his teaching credential.

The people of Long Island were in general supportive of the rebellion in private, but many Tories had fled there from Connecticut. There was a good chance Hale could see someone that knew him.

Though Hale's mission was now moot, there was no way to get a message to him. When he learned of the events, Hale took it upon himself to go into Manhattan to try to gather information.

Returning from New York City, he was arrested on Long Island on September 21, the day after a fire broke out on Manhattan's lower west side, burning some 20 city blocks. The British suspected arson and reportedly interrogated more than 200 suspects, but no charges were ever filed. There is no evidence that Hale was questioned or suspected of that crime.

A history of the American Revolution written by Tory Connecticut merchant, Consider Tiffany, came to light when it was donated to the Library of Congress in 2000. Tiffany's narrative fits what little facts are actually known about Hale's final days, but its veracity can't be confirmed.

Tiffany wrote that Major Robert Rogers of the Queen's Rangers "detected several American officers, that were sent to Long Island as spies, especially

Continued on page 98

Naval History & Heritage Command

From biplanes to early carrier jets, test pilot Frederick Trapnell was the 'Godfather of Modern Naval Aviation.'

By Mark Carlson

U.S. Navy

Test pilot Commander Frederick Trapnell flew the prototype for this U.S. Navy carrier-based F6F Hellcat and worked closely with Leroy Grumman as the fighter was rushed through production. Navy Hellcats shot down over 5,000 Japanese aircraft. INSET: Frederick Trapnell in a Curtiss F9C Sparrowhawk biplane that was used on the airships USS *Akron* and *Macon* from 1932-1934.

Today, every U.S. naval aviator who straps into a cockpit owes a debt to a man they never met and few have even heard of—Vice Adm. Frederick M. Trapnell, the "godfather of modern naval aviation." Every fighter, attack aircraft, troop carrier, transport, helicopter and aerial surveillance plane in the Navy inventory for the last 60 years has been tested, evaluated and improved by the dedicated graduates of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland. There, hundreds of men and women are the direct inheritors of the legacy that Trapnell began when he first pinned on his wings of gold in 1927.

Born in July 1902, Frederick Mackay Trapnell displayed a love of the sea and ships at an early age. An appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy honed his gift for engineering, a trait that served him well all his life. Serving on battleships and cruisers after his graduation in 1923, the young officer earned the respect of the enlisted men through his willingness to work alongside them and get his hands dirty.

Fascinated by the Navy's early scout biplanes, Trapnell applied for aviation training at NAS Pensacola in Florida. He displayed a natural ability as a pilot and took great pains to familiarize himself with every airplane he flew. When he earned his wings in March 1927, Trapnell was unknowingly situated on the threshold of the most dynamic generation in aviation history.

Lieutenant Trapnell was assigned to the pioneering Torpedo Squadron 1 of the newly commissioned aircraft carrier *Lexington*, flying the three-seater Martin T3M biplane, the Navy's first torpedo bomber. In 1928 *Lexington* joined fleet exercises off Hawaii, where Trapnell began to fly and evaluate the current crop of bombers. He then joined the Navy's first officially designated fighter squadron, VB-1 (later VF-5). The "Red Rippers" would be the longest-serving fighter squadron in the Navy. They flew the nimble and rakish Curtiss F6C Hawk, a carrier-capable variant of the Army's P-1 Hawk. Trapnell loved the agile biplane.

Under the tutelage of fellow pilot and friend Lt. Matthias Gardner, Trapnell practiced the

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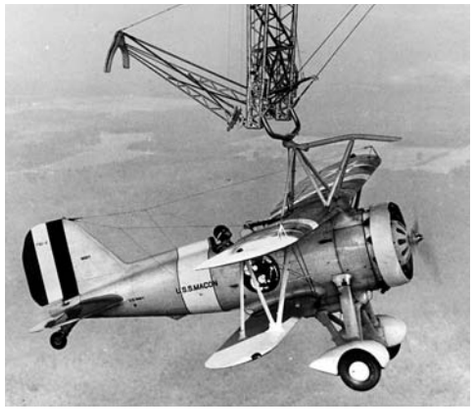

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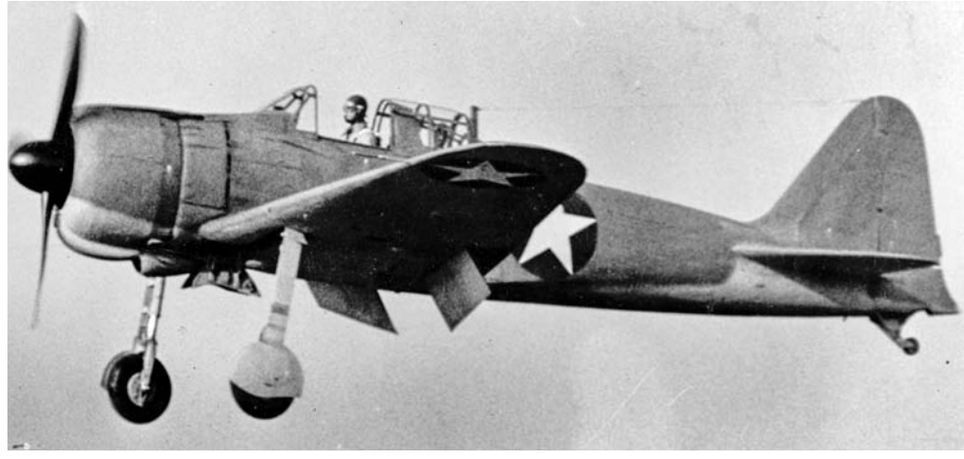

ABOVE: Curtis Sparrowhawk fighter hanging from the trapeze of USS *Macon*. Trapnell provided designs to fix serious flaws with the original trapeze system. RIGHT, TOP: At Naval Air Station Anacostia, D.C., test pilot Frederick Trapnell flew the Vought XF4U-1 Corsair to a then-U.S. record 402 mph. He then suggested changes to make it a better combat aircraft. The redesigned Corsair became a pilot favorite and achieved an 11-1 kill ratio in World War II. It remained in production for 11 years through four wars. RIGHT, BOTTOM: Captured Japanese Zero, discovered crashed in a marsh in the Aleutians Islands, flown by Trapnell's team (with U.S. markings) to learn the aircraft's strengths and weaknesses.

new doctrine of coordinated air attacks with dive bombers, torpedo planes and fighters. Still, he had to prove his skills as a wingman with a more experienced leader, Lt. Jimmy Barner. Virtually every "nugget" pilot required several sessions to become proficient at close-quarters maneuvering and aerobatics. But when Trapnell landed at NAS San Diego after his first trial, Barner simply shook his hand and said, "I'm glad to welcome you aboard."

In early 1929 the Pacific Fleet conducted exercises in the Panama Canal Zone, recognized as a prime target for any oceangoing belligerent power. Trapnell and the other Rippers flew almost daily, fine-tuning tactics that would shape the Navy's future. He flew the new Boeing F4B from August to December of that year. During a test flight over Kearny Mesa north of San Diego, he joined the "Caterpillar Club"—the elite fraternity of pilots who had to parachute in an emergency—when an F4B's fuel line caught fire and he bailed out.

In those early days a manufacturer rarely provided details on the performance envelope of an aircraft, so it was up to the Navy to assess its strengths and weaknesses. Assigned to fly recently repaired planes or new models, Trapnell displayed an knack for recognizing design flaws and making astute recommendations to remedy the problem. It would be a recurring theme during his career.

In December 1929 Lieutenant Barner had Trapnell assigned to the Navy's Flight Test Section at NAS Anacostia in Washington, D.C. There Trapnell found his true calling. His clear and concise notes and performance data stemmed directly from his Annapolis work on hydrodynamics. He was able to fly every single plane on the field, greatly adding to his personal understanding of what qualities the best fighters and bombers possessed.

"Trapnell was the sharpest student of aerodynamics and flight testing that we had," test pilot Robert Pine wrote. "I believe he is the best pilot and probably the best test pilot I have ever been associated with."

In the early 1930s the Navy, particularly Bureau of Aeronautics chief Admiral William Moffett, was dedicated to the dirigible for long-range fleet reconnaissance. In 1931 the USS *Akron*, the world's most advanced airship, was nearing completion at the Goodyear-Zeppelin hangar in Akron, Ohio. The *Akron* was designed to carry small biplane fighters in a bay in the ship's belly. Trapnell evaluated the tiny Curtiss F9C-2 Sparrowhawk, working with *Akron*'s Heavier-Than-Air (HTA) unit to develop procedures and tactics to make the vulnerable airship into a long-range scout aircraft carrier.

A complicated trapeze system lowered the Sparrowhawk into the airstream, from which the pilot would then release and fly off on a mission. Disengaging from and hooking onto the trapeze required deft control and could only be accomplished in ideal weather. When *Akron* was commissioned in late 1931, the trapeze system was still seriously flawed. Trapnell designed a simpler and more automated system that stabilized the fighter without the pilot having to do it manually. The new system was successful, and in a few months *Akron* and sister ship *Macon* were ready.

But there was still controversy as to how the airships should be employed in warfare. "A few of the ship's officers and I of the enlightened heads at BuAer [Bureau of Aeronautics] thought the airship should hang back at the [sight of the] enemy and let her airplanes do the scouting," said Trapnell.

In any case, the airships' moment in the sun would be brief. On April 3, 1933, Rear Admiral Moffett was on board *Akron* for a demonstration

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Vought F7U-1 Cutlass in flight from Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland, in the 1950s. From biplanes to jets, Trapnell flew and improved virtually every Navy aircraft introduced in his 40-year career.

flight of the mid-Atlantic coast in which three Sparrowhawks were to fly out and hook up. Trapnell was tasked with flying *Akron*'s single two-seater "running boat" from NAS Lakehurst in New Jersey to the airship as a ferry plane for the admiral. But the weather delayed takeoff clearance. As the hours passed the weather off the Jersey coast turned vicious, and Trapnell became worried. Many of the 76 men on board the airship were his friends.

As dawn broke the following day the cruel truth emerged: *Akron* had crashed at sea, killing Moffett and all but three of his crew. At the time it was the worst air disaster in history. Trapnell had come within a whisker of being on board when *Akron* took its fatal plunge into the stormy Atlantic.

Named head of the HTA unit, Trapnell worked on *Macon* out of NAS Moffett Field in Sunnyvale, California, After the *Akron* disaster, the pressure was on to validate what proved to be a flawed concept. In 1935 *Macon* crashed, ending the Navy's experiment with giant airships. By then the Consolidated P2Y, the first successful long-range flying boat, was proving capable of doing the airships' job of patrolling the seas with far less vulnerability.

In 1936 Trapnell was assigned to VP-10 in Hawaii, where he helped develop the Navy's search and patrol strategies. He commanded a successful squadron deployment of new Consolidated PBY Catalinas from California to Hawaii in Jan-

uary 1938, setting a record of 20.5 hours for the 2,550-mile flight.

Trapnell was never out of the sky for long. He flew, evaluated and made recommendations for nearly every prototype and production plane in the Navy and Marine Corps inventory. The early torpedo and dive bombers were as much an exercise in theory as in aeronautical technology. The Navy's Northrop XBT-1 monoplane dive bomber pioneered the use of split dive brakes. It was followed by the Vought SB2U-1 Vindicator, which, like its predecessor, was obsolete by the beginning of World War II. Only when the sturdy Douglas SBD Dauntless took to the skies did America field a truly effective dive bomber for carrier warfare.

After the smoke cleared over the shattered battle fleet at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, it was obvious that the outcome of the Pacific War hinged heavily on aircraft carriers. At Anacostia, Trapnell was eager to get into combat but the Navy believed his engineering skills and experience were too valuable to lose. Working 12-hour days six and seven days a week, he strove to perfect the Navy's next generation of warplanes.

Trapnell flew them all, including the Grumman F4F Wildcat and Brewster F2A Buffalo fighters. But it was with the radical and tricky Vought F4U Corsair that he really made a significant contribution to the future of Navy fighters.

The Corsair's inverted gull wings, long nose and powerful engine causeed major problems. After severe delays and accidents, Trapnell went to the Vought plant in Stratford, Connecticut, to test the new fighter. He quickly saw the Corsair's potential, taking it to 402 mph—a world record for production piston-engine fighters. By November he was testing the Corsair at Anacostia, helping Vought and the Navy iron out the design of what became one of the most successful fighters in the Pacific.

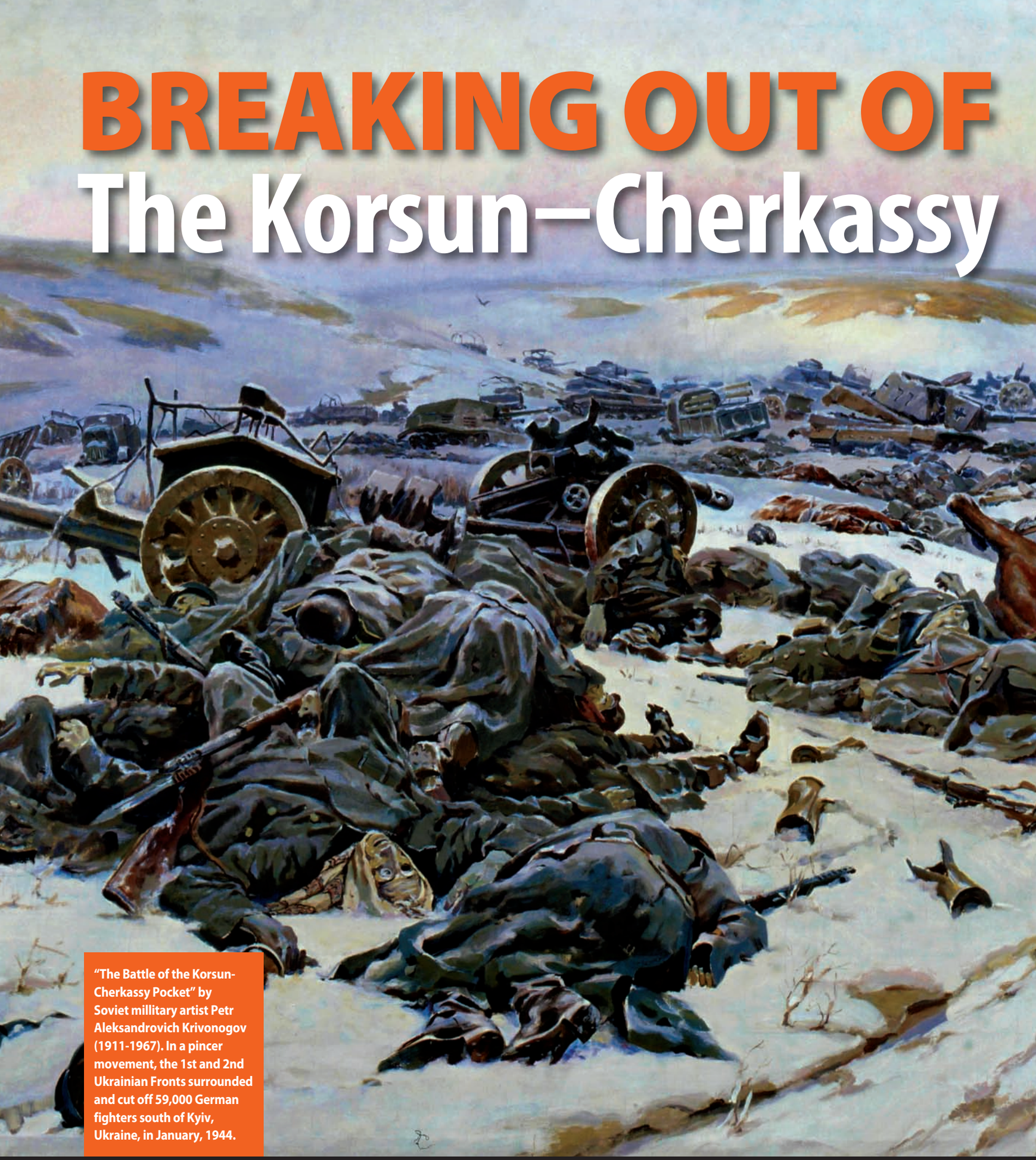
By 1940 Trapnell had logged more than 3,800 hours in 80 types of aircraft. At his suggestion, the Navy collaborated with manufacturers in early flight testing—a radical concept that helped many warplanes quickly enter production.

In mid-1942, with the Pacific War in full fury, Trapnell's skill as a flight test engineer gave him the opportunity to fly the most feared Japanese fighter, the Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero. During the Japanese attack on the Aleutians in the June Midway campaign, Zero pilot Tadayoshi Koga was forced down into the tundra on Akutan Island. Koga was killed but his Zero was nearly intact. The Navy recovered it and took it to San Diego. After being repaired it was turned over to Trapnell, by then a full commander, to assess its capabilities and limitations.

With Trapnell flying a new Corsair and Lt. Cmdr. Eddie Sanders in the Zero, the two pilots dueled off San Diego. They shattered the myth that

Continued on page 97

BREAKING OUT OF The Korsun–Cherkassy

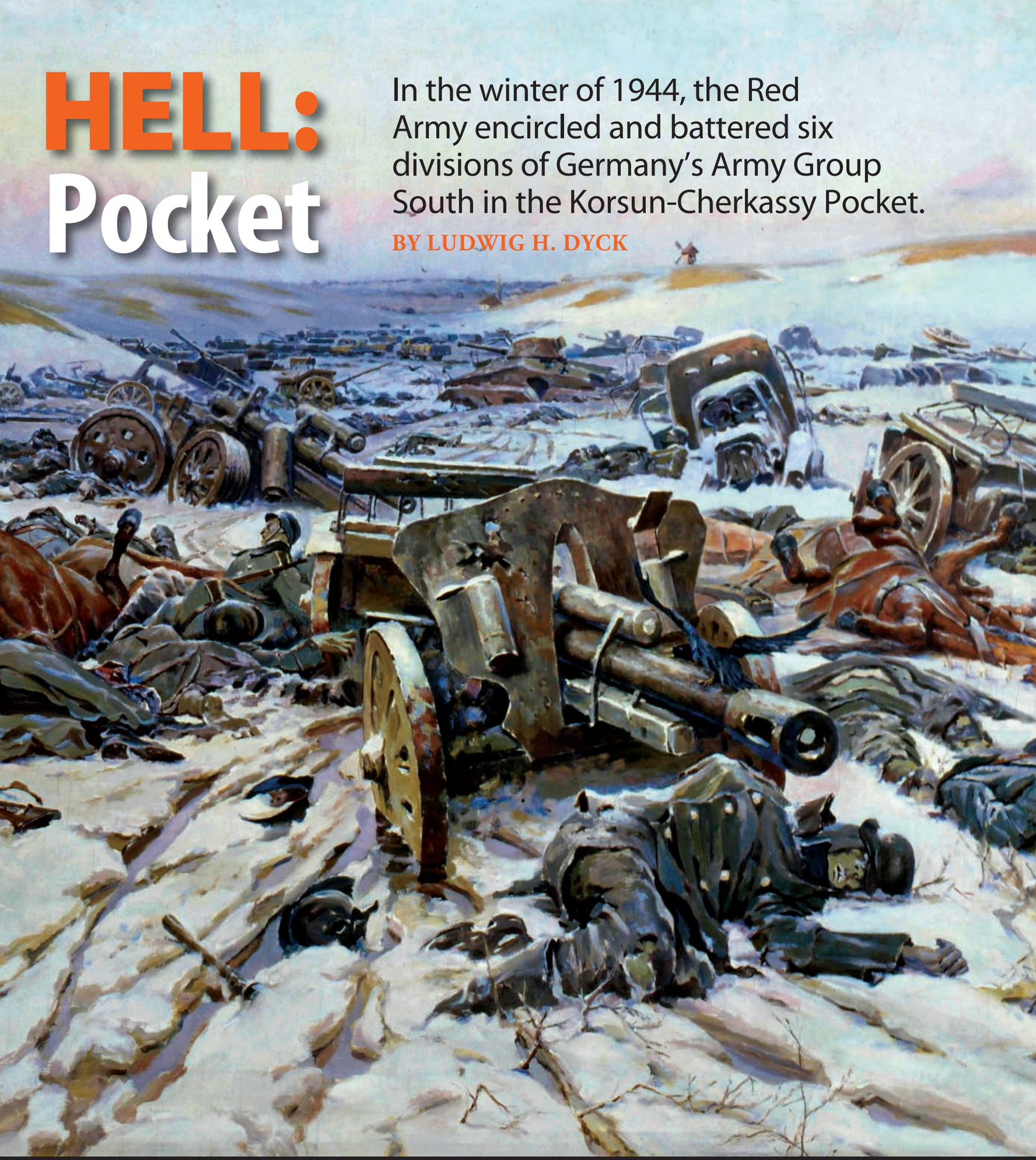


"The Battle of the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket" by Soviet millitary artist Petr Aleksandrovich Krivonogov (1911-1967). In a pincer movement, the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts surrounded and cut off 59,000 German fighters south of Kyiv, Ukraine, in January, 1944.

HELL: Pocket

In the winter of 1944, the Red Army encircled and battered six divisions of Germany's Army Group South in the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket.

BY LUDWIG H. DYCK



Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-708-0298-23; Photo: Scherer

On January 26, 1944, in the midst of the Ukrainian winter, the tanks of Gen. Ivan S. Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front (army group) battered their way through the German defenders of Kapitanovka. Lt. Gen. Nikolaus von Vormann of the XLVII Panzer Corps, summed up the spectacle: "Regardless of the losses—and I mean regardless of losses—masses of Soviets about midday streamed westwards past the German Panzers which were firing at them with everything they had." Two days later, the 2nd Ukrainian Front linked up with Gen. Nikolai F. Vatutin's 1st Ukrainian Front at Zvenigorodka. "We've done it this time, I've got the Germans in the pincers and I'm not letting them slip out again," said Konev.

Centered around the airfield at Korsun, a salient of Army Group South clung onto the western bank of the Dnieper River between Kánev and Cherkassy. Field Marshal Erich Von Manstein, commander of Army Group South, had flown to see Hitler at Rastenburg, demanding to pull back his dangerously exposed right wing. Dreaming of reversing the tide of the war, the Führer of Nazi Germany refused. By doing so, he enabled Marshal Georgy K. Zhukov, Stavka's (Soviet high command) chief director of the Ukrainian theater, to pull off the largest encirclement of German forces since Stalingrad.

Since its defeat at Kursk the previous summer, the Third Reich had lost the initiative to the Soviets. Numerical and material superiority allowed the Soviets to choose when and where to attack. Fire brigades of elite German units contained Soviet breakthroughs, but inevitably the front was pushed back westward. But the withdrawing Germans exacted a heavy toll. Between July 1 and September 30, 1943, the Red Army suffered four casualties for each German one.

Konev had opened the battle on January 25, unleashing an intense artillery barrage on the German lines west of Burtki. Expecting a major attack, the thinly stretched Germans could do little but ready themselves as fog prevented air support. The weather would play a crucial role in the battle, with unseasonable warming alternating with freezing temperatures turning the roads into mud, then ice, and back again.

Seven rifle divisions supported by tanks, overwhelmed the 1,500 men of the 389th Infantry Division at the juncture of XI Corps and XLVII Panzer Corps. Exploiting the breakthrough, the 20th and 29th Tank Corps of Col. Gen. Pavel A. Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army struck towards Zvenigorodka via Kapitanovka. Von Vormann counterattacked from the south with the depleted 11th and 14th Panzer Divisions. During chaotic fighting around Kapitanovka, von Vormann temporarily severed the Soviet penetration. Rotmistrov ordered his spearheads to keep advancing, relying on the 18th Tank Corps and 5th Cavalry Guard Corps to reopen the corridor.

A day after Konev, Vatutin launched his offensive with the 6th Tank Army. The main attack southeast from Tinovka against VII Corps of Gen. Hans-Valentin Hube's 1st Panzer Army quickly bogged down. However, a secondary effort at Koshevatoe shattered the link between the 198th and 88th Infantry Divisions. A wedge was driven between VII Corps, to the west, and XXXXII Corps, to the northeast.

"Waves of 132mm rockets added to the cacophony with their howling noise. We only had a few seconds to get our weapons and our clothes before we jumped down in the narrow ditch we had dug and covered with logs, earth, and hay. A few minutes later only pathetic fragments remained of the hut we had just left," wrote Capt. Georg Grossjohan of the 198th Division.

In savage fighting, the two Ukrainian Fronts closed the encirclement at Zvenigorodka on January 28, trapping two German corps. In the northwest was Lt. Gen. Theo-Helmut Lieb's XXXXII Corps, part of the 1st Panzer Army, consisting of Corps Detachment B (remnants of the 112th, 255th and 332nd Infantry Divisions) and the 88th Infantry Division. The southeast of the oblong pocket was held by Gen. Wilhelm Stemmermann's XI Corps, belonging to General Otto Wöhler's 8th Army. Eleventh Corps consisted of the 5th SS-Wiking Panzer Division, the SS-Assault Brigade Wallonien, and the 57th, 72nd and 389th Infantry Divisions. Dispersed among the two corps were additional artillery batteries, an assault gun battalion and infantry battalions. There were a total of 59,000 men, including 5,000 "Hiwis" (*Hilfswilligen*)—Russians and

Ukrainians who aided the Germans.

Stemmermann was placed in overall command of the encircled troops, referred to as "Group Stemmermann." Its prospects looked bleak, as many of the divisions were so under-strength that they were considered unsuitable for offensive operations. There was a lack of anti-tank weapons and only 40 battle-worthy tanks and self-propelled guns. Stemmermann had wisely set aside what supplies he could. Local horse-drawn sledges (*panjes*) were pressed into service to deliver supplies to the combat groups from 23 Ju-52s that landed at Korsun on January 29. During the weeks to come, VIII Air Corps braved adverse weather, Soviet flak, and fighter planes, to provide critical supplies and evacuate wounded.

Overestimating the number of troops trapped, Zhukov passed up an advance to the Southern Bug River and threw both Ukrainian Fronts against the pocket. Stemmermann shifted forces to the southwest to keep the Soviets from widening their corridor of penetration. Corps Detachment B stiffened the defense of the hard pressed 88th Infantry Division behind the Ros River. Fighting raged in Stebliv, Olshana, Selyshche and Kvitki. At Olshana, four assault guns from SS-Wiking came to the rescue of a replacement battalion and rear service units and routed the Soviets in night fighting. The German defensive successes were offset on the northern perimeter of the pocket, where the 27th Army advanced over territory relinquished by Corps Detachment B.

Relying on infantry at his eastern flank, von Vormann concentrated his armor further to the west and closer to the pocket. From February 1 onward, XLVII Panzer Corps focused on crossing the Shpolka River and closing the gap. The 11th Panzer Division captured a bridge at Iskrene, but it collapsed as the second Panther crossed and engineers worked frantically to repair it. The timely arrival of 3rd Panzer Division defended 11th Panzer's right flank against counterattack by Rotmistrov's 49th Rifle Corps and 29th Tank Corps.

Flying in support of the Panzer Divisions was Capt. Hans-Ulrich Rudel of the "Immelmann" dive bomber wing. West of Nowomyrhorod, Rudel dove his cannon-armed Stuka down upon a formation of IL-2 Sturmoviks—Soviet ground attack aircraft nicknamed "Iron Gustav" by the Germans because of their heavy armor. "It is a longish shot, but I get one of the ungainly birds into my sights and loose off a round of anti-tank ammunition from each of the slow firing cannons. The Gustav becomes a ball of flame and disintegrates into a rain of fiery particles," wrote Rudel. Rudel dodged Soviet fighters until the threat of German fighters drove them away.

Von Vormann anxiously awaited the arrival of the 24th Panzer Division. He planned to launch a major relief attack in conjunction with Hube's 1st Panzer Army. The latter had been busy encircling and destroying part of the 1st Tank Army in the Balabanova area. As a result, Hube had not mounted any meaningful attempt to rescue Group Stemmermann. This was about to change with Operation "Wanda." It took days for the troops to be moved east to the staging area in the sector of VII Corps. Rail-transport was used when possible since the roads only deteriorated further with the movement of the Panzer divisions. Bridges needed to be reinforced to support the 45-ton Panthers and 57-ton Tigers.

In "Wanda," General Hermann Breith's III Panzer Corps was meant to advance north across the Gniloy Tikich River and then sweep east toward the pocket via Medvin. In the process, the 6th Tank and the 5th Guards Tank Armies were to be enveloped between III and XLVII Panzer Corps. Spearheading III Panzer Corps were the 16th and 17th Panzer Divisions, alongside Heavy Panzer Battalion 506, the ad hoc Heavy Panzer Regiment Bäke and StuG. Battalion 249; a total of 126 tanks and assault guns. In addition, Breith counted on reinforcements of another 150 tanks and assault guns from 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte and the 1st Panzer Division. This was a very large armor force for the Germans in 1944.

On February 4, Breith's mailed fist broke through the infantry, antitank guns and minefields of the 104th Rifle Corps north of Novaya Greblya-Bagva. Elements of the 16th Panzer Division captured Kosyakovka on the Gniloy Tikich, but found the bridges blown. Soviet resistance increased by the day, with the 2nd and 6th Tank Armies and the 40th Army hammering at the German penetration. The 34th Infantry Division and units from Leibstandarte were hard put to defend the western flank around Tinovka. Although Lieutenant-Colonel Franz Bäke claimed 31 out of 40 Soviet tanks knocked out in the fighting for Kosyakovka, 16th Panzer Division was forced to relinquish the settlement. Third Panzer Corps was more successful on the eastern flank, where the 1st and 17th Panzer Divisions, Bäke's regiment and the 198th Infantry Division, seized Vinograd and Repki.

The XLVII Corps had a shorter distance to

ABOVE: German Field Marshal Erich von Manstein addresses troops near Cherkassy, Ukraine. Completely surrounded for more than three weeks, Manstein—without Hitler's approval—ordered Army Group South's XI and XXXXII Corps, some 56,000 men, to break out of the Korsun Pocket during the night of February 16–17, 1944. OPPOSITE: In December, 1943, German PzKpfw. IV tanks followed by panzergrenadiers make their way slowly across a bleak Ukranian landscape that might be knee-deep mud one day and ice the next. By the third week of January, the Germans would be completely surrounded by the Red Army. The lead tank has improvised armor to protect its tracks.

Soviet troops accompany a T-34 tank in a night attack in February, 1944. On the morning of February 13, Lieutenant-Colonel Franz Bäke called in an airstrike after two T-34s were spotted taking cover. Stukas attacked the ambush, flushing the Soviet tanks into the open, where Bäke's Tiger battalion knocked out many from 2,000 yards. Bäke's Panther battalion stopped a Russian flanking manuever as the Stukas took out antitank positions. The Germans claimed to have destroyed 70 tanks and 40 antitank guns against the loss of five Tigers and four Panthers.

cover than Breith. However, von Vormann only had 58 operational tanks and assault guns on February 4 and his exhausted men were already engaged against Soviet counterattacks. To top it off, on Hitler's personal order, and despite Manstein's objections, the 24th Panzer Division, which had just completed its laborious journey, was ordered to return to the 6th Army to aid in the fighting around Nikopol. Von Vormann was thus reduced to spoiling attacks.

The mud added to the misery of all. In some places, only tracked vehicles could move. Panthers churned through the muck in low gears. Even the wide tracks of T-34s sometimes got bogged down. Fuel consumption was up to five times higher than normal. Critically wounded died as it took too long to evacuate them. Soldiers marched barefoot, losing their boots the mud. "All logistical tasks had to be carried out by horses, as wheeled vehicles got stuck. Local women and teenagers carried ammo rounds over their shoulders, sinking knee-deep in the mud," remembered Lt. Aleksandr M. Fadin of the 22nd Tank Brigade.

Luftwaffe fighters focused on protecting the Ju-52s supplying the Panzer spearheads. Flying low, the Ju-52s dropped petrol barrels into the mud. Since the barrels often landed 200-300 yards from the tanks, steel wires were attached to winch them in. With ammunition and fuel being prioritized, the Panzer crews and grenadiers received little food. Unlike their machines, the men were expected to go on fighting with empty stomachs.

Fresh reinforcements from the 5th and 7th Guards Armies intensified attacks against the pocket. Group Stemmermann let go of its hold on the Dnieper. On February 6-8, Cossacks from the 5th Guards Cavalry Corps and rifle divisions from the 4th Guards and the 52nd Army, attempted to split the pocket. In house-to-house fighting among burning log huts (*isbas*), the 72nd Infantry Division defended Valiava and, backed up by armor from SS-Wiking, frustrated Soviet efforts to sever the road between Korsun and Dashukivka.

A Soviet envoy arrived under a white flag at the front of the 258th Regiment, Corps Detachment B, and offered surrender terms. The envoy was treated to a glass of French Cognac, told that he would receive an answer in due time, and sent on his way. Further efforts to undermine German morale were made by men of the Free Germany National Committee. Wearing German officer uniforms, they infiltrated the pocket. The committee was made up of exiled German communists and turncoat prisoners of war. Its vice president, Gen. Walther von Seydlitz, addressed the surrounded troops by transmitter. He promised safety, food and shelter. Millions of leaflets bearing the same message were dropped by plane. None had any impact on the steadfastness of Group Stemmermann.

Efforts to split the pocket failed when Stemmermann carried out a timely withdrawal from the southeastern part. By February 10 the pocket had shrunk to a triangle with Moryntsi at the top, Stebliv at the western base and Korsun at the eastern. Although the airfield of Korsun was already under artillery fire, VIII Air Corps continued to fly supplies in at night.

Slowed by the mud and Soviet resistance, III Panzer Corps abandoned its grand north-east sweep in favor of a direct thrust east to Group Stemmermann. Lying in the path was once again the Gniloy Tikich. Battlegroup (*Kampfgruppe*) Bäke, Battlegroup Frank of the 1st Panzer Division and the 16th Panzer Division, established infantry and tank bridgeheads at Bushanka and Frankovka. One of Bäke's Panthers was first to cross over a captured bridge at Frankovka. Its crew

earned themselves eight days of leave. The radio message of "We are coming. Bridgehead at Frankovka 11.00," was sent to Stemmermann.

On the morning of February 13, Bäke, with parts of the 16th Panzer Division on his left flank, advanced across the river in the direction of Dashukivka. When two T-34s were spotted driving suspiciously into a small depression, Bäke called for air support. Alerted by white flares fired from the German tanks, Stukas came screeching down upon more T-34s lying in ambush. Flushed out into the open, the T-34s fell victim to the 88s of Bäke's Tiger battalion firing at a distance of 2,000 yards. More T-34s appeared and attempted to outflank the Tigers, but were engaged by Bäke's Panther battalion and Panthers of the 16th Panzer Division. Stukas smashed Soviet anti-tank gun positions. When it was all over, the Germans claimed to have knocked out 70 Soviet tanks and 40 anti-tank guns for a loss of five Tigers and four Panthers. Dashukivka, Chesnovka and Khizhintsy were captured. An impressed Manstein radioed III Panzer Corps, "Bravo—despite the mud and Russians, already much has been accomplished. Now it is about the last step. Teeth together and forward."

ABOVE: Ethnic Ukrainian troops of the German 14th Waffen Grenadier Division in winter gear with 5cm PaK 38 gun, March 1944. BELOW: StuG 40 Ausf G tank destroyers move over the muddy melting roads in Ukraine in the winter of 1944. During the encirclement, Luftwaffe Ju-52s dropped petrol barrels into the mud, often 200-300 yards away. Steel wires were attached to winch them in. With ammunition and fuel being prioritized, the Panzer crews and grenadiers received little food.

Lieutenant colonel Heinz W. Frank's Battlegroup, cleared heavily defended Lysianka further east on the Gniloy Tikich. Supported by Stukas, the Panthers and grenadiers established a bridgehead over a ford to the northern side. Large elements of Frank's parent 1st Panzer Division were stuck in the mud south of Lysianka. Leibstandarte, the remainder of 16th, and the entire 17th Panzer Division, were defending on the northern flank of III Pz Corps. Meanwhile, the 198th and 34th Infantry divisions were engaged with the 40th Army at Vinograd and Tinovka.

Von Vormann kept attacking to take pressure off of III Panzer Corps. With grenadiers hitching a ride, tanks of the 11th Panzer Division bridged the Shpolka River at Yerky. North of the town, they were hit by mortar shells. As the infantry took cover, Soviet antitank guns opened up. The antitank guns were shot up by the Panthers, which suffered no losses. However, by February 13, only 3 of 20 Panthers were capable of combat due to lack of fuel. The Iskrennoye bridgehead had meanwhile been abandoned. Efforts by the 13th Panzer Division to force another crossing at Yurkivka were frustrated by tenacious Soviet resistance.

Like their machines, the men were getting worn out. Many German soldiers had been affected by the so-called "Volhynian fever," a type of typhoid disease, including Maj. Gen. Gustav von Wietersheim who needed injections in order to keep commanding his 11th Panzer Division. Further adding to their woes, were worn out socks and boots, frostbite, trench foot, and lice.

SS-Wiking captured Shenderivka on February 11. The village became the main base for the anticipated breakout. To further shorten the distance to III Panzer Corps, Stemmermann attacked towards the villages to the southwest. Camouflaged in their snow smocks, the remaining 689 grenadiers of Major Robert Kaestner's 105th Regiment surprised and overcame the first Soviet defensive belt. Around midnight, Kaestner called forth a self-propelled 20mm antiaircraft gun which shot up a Soviet fuel column on the outskirts of Novo Buda. The trucks exploded in huge fireballs. While Kaestner seized Novo Buda, two other regiments of the 72nd Infantry Divisions, alongside elements of SS-Wiking and SS-

Wikimedia Commons/Korsun-Shevchenkivski Historical and Cultural Museum

This Russian diorama depicts Soviet troops overwhelming a German position–most likely Group Stemmermann—in the Korsun-Cherkassy pocket in the final days of the German withdrawal. Soviet mortars, artillery, antitank guns and machine guns raked and blasted the German columns caught in the open and tanks ran over panjes full of wounded. Stemmermann himself, along with his driver, was killed instantly when his half-track was hit by an antitank gun.

Wallonien, took Komarivka and Khylky.

Alarmed by the German advances, Stalin put Konev in command of all forces around the pocket. Group Stemmermann's gains in pushing closer to the relief forces necessitated pulling back from its eastern periphery. On February 13, the Soviets occupied the airfield at Korsun, where the ground had become so soft that planes were hardly able to take off anyway. Now everything depended on reaching III Panzer Corps.

Breith landed in a Fieseler Storch observation plane at Lysianka to personally assess the situation. A small but steeply banked stream impeded Frank's advance northeast to Oktyabr. In the dim light of dusk, Sergeant Hans Strippel's Panther knocked out two camouflaged T-34s guarding a 40-ton bridge across the stream. The capture induced Breith to switch the main effort from Bäke and 16th Panzer Division, who faced unsuitable tank terrain east of Khizhintsy, to Frank.

To oppose III Panzer Corps, the 18th Tank Corps took position at Zhurzhyntsi. In addition, two tank brigades of the 20th Tank Corps advanced toward Lysianka. North of Khizhintsy, Bäke's six Panthers destroyed eight T-34s with a loss of three Panthers. Veering south of Khizhintsy, Bäke's six Tigers brewed up 11 more Soviet tanks. Several Tigers were hit and immobilized. Frank got reinforcements from Leibstandarte; grenadiers piled upon a single StuG, PzKw IV, Panther and Tiger. With such meager forces, the chance for the relief force to reach Group Stemmermann appeared a forlorn endeavor.

Tank battles continued between Zhurzhyntsi and Oktyabr on February 16. With German artillery suppressing the Russian infantry, Strippel and his seven Panthers claimed 27 T-34s knocked out for the loss of one Panther. Columns of smoke arose from where Stukas of Geschwader Immelmann struck Soviet antitank guns on the edge of a forest east of Oktyabr. As the crews scrambled back to the remaining antitank guns, they were hit by Bäke's Tigers. Bäke and Frank set up a defensive screen west of Zhurzhyntsi and Hill 239.

The roar of cannons and flashes of fire lit up the western horizon. For Group Stemmermann, one thought dominated all: *when would the relief forces arrive?* Hitler had rejected a breakout from what he called the "fortress on the Dnieper." Despite this, Manstein radioed Stemmermann on February 16: "Password Freedom, objective Lysianka, 23.00 hrs." "We have no other chance; it is now or never," Stemmermann replied. Wöhler sent the order that Lieb should lead the breakout. Stemmermann would remain with the rearguard. The news re-invigorated the exhausted, mud-caked, German soldiers. No more waiting, now they would have a chance.

Despite the clouds, low flying Soviet U-2 biplanes strafed Shenderivka on the night of February 16-17. The fires of the burning village acted as beacons for Soviet artillery to further pound the densely packed German troops. In a poignant scene, the headless corpse of a staff officer lay beside the door of Corps HQ. The men jotted down a few heartfelt lines, making extra copies and exchanging them with their comrades in case of the worst. Classified documents and vehicles unsuitable for the terrain or lacking fuel were destroyed. The most difficult decision was to leave behind 1,450 critical wounded with voluntary medical staff, at the provisional hospital at Shenderivka. Other wounded were to be transported on carts and sledges. "Violations of international law may under no circumstances occur, or else

enemy acts of cruelty against the wounded are to be expected," ordered Stemmermann.

The bulk of Group Stemmermann had to be funneled through Shenderivka, but the only bridge had collapsed under the weight of a tank. Its repair caused a bottleneck and a field day for Soviet gunners. "The 'Stalin's organs' were inundating this flood of every sort of vehicle with rockets. Gasoline trucks were burning...horses struck down in the snow sounded their death rattles amid fearful convulsions. Near them clusters of soldiers hit by the machine gun fire were coughing, flat on their bellies, or lying on the back. Some still tried to crawl," remembered Major Leon Degrelle, commander of the Walloons.

Four to five miles now separated Breith's spearheads and Group Stemmermann. Heavily laden with ammunition, Kaestner's regiment led the 72nd Infantry Division from Khylky. The time was 11 p.m. on February 16, the sky dark and moonless. The temperature had dropped and cold winds whipped through the snow covered gullies and over the icy hills. To remain as inconspicuous as possible, the men had been forbidden to have fires, to smoke or to speak. Again, the 105th Regiment achieved surprise and dispatched the Soviets of the first defensive belt with close combat weapons. Reconnaissance teams next spotted T-34s guarding the road south of Zhurzhyntsi. Kaestner's men used the terrain to sneak past the Soviet tanks. They reached the second, outward, defensive belt, where Soviet soldiers in foxholes faced west. Caught asleep, the Soviets were killed with knife thrusts, entrenching tools and rifle blows, but managed to get off a few shots. The alarmed Soviet tanks switched on their searchlights, exposing the battalions of the 72nd Infantry Division following the 105th. Kaestner and his men slid away into the dark, only to come across more tank silhouettes. Their hearts leapt with joy when they saw the German crosses–they had reached the III Panzer Corps.

The experiences of Corps Detachment-B and SS-Wiking, on the northern and southern flank of the breakout, respectively, mirrored that of the 72nd Infantry Division. The lead battalions caught the surrounding Soviet positions off guard and had a chance of infiltrating through the tank screen. In contrast, the majority of Group Stemmermann, which lacked sufficient antitank weapons, was deflected south by the alerted tanks along the Zhurzhyntsi-Pochapintsy road. Soviet mortars, artillery, antitank guns and machine guns raked and blasted the German columns caught in the open. Due to the darkness and snow storms, the aim of the Soviets was poor. In the chaos, German unit cohesion soon broke down.

The toughest task fell to the rearguard, which faced an alerted enemy and lost the benefit of

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ABOVE: Operation "Wanda," the drive by General Hermann Breith's III Panzer Corps to rescue Group Stemmermann stalled on the eastern bank of Gniloy Tikich River, some five miles short. Leaving behind their equipment and the most critically wounded, the 72nd Infantry Division, the 105th Regiment, Corps Detachment-B and SS-Wiking were all able to slip through to III Panzer Corps on the night of the February 16. Lacking antitank weapons and the element of surprise, the Stemmermann Group was not so lucky. TOP: A column of Soviet T-34 tanks with winter "tire track" camouflage. The Russian forces held a numerical advantage of nearly five tanks to one over the Germans at the Battle of the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket. In artillery, the ratio was estimated to be about 10-1 in favor of the Soviets.

ABOVE: German pows captured during the Battle of the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket, February 1944. Of the 59,000 men caught in the pocket, 28,000 soldiers and 1,000 Hiwis escaped. Some 11,000 wounded were evacuated by air during the battle or brought out during the breakout. Nineteen thousand were killed or taken prisoner. OPPOSITE: Soldiers with horse and cart retreating in the Ukraine in the winter of 1944. The mud would be a constant problem for both armies. Even tracked vehicles were prone to bogging down, consuming five times the normal amount of fuel. At times, only horses and men marching—sometimes barefoot, having lost their boots in the knee-deep mud—could get through. More of the wounded died during the slow evacuations.

darkness. On the northern corner of the pocket, the 88th Infantry Division held out until 5:15 a.m. The 57th Infantry Division abandoned its positions at Komarivka an hour later. Around the same time, General Lieb led the last infantry column west out of Khylky. Wearing his tall white fur cap and mounted on his gelding, Lieb rode into the snow storm. At Novo Buda, the Walloon platoons disengaged one after another, the last holding on until 10 a.m. Among the last tanks of Group Stemmermann sacrificed themselves on the eastern edge of Shenderivka, fending off T-34s and new Joseph Stalin II's. "They plowed up the snow with their treads as they departed through the tangle of the retreating army. Not one returned," wrote Degrelle. Near Pochapintsy, Stemmermann likewise met his end as his halftrack was hit by an antitank gun.

Nazi atrocities and the scorched-earth strategy of the retreating Germans further inflamed Russian hate. Soviet tankers reaped grim vengeance on German wounded piled on panje wagons. Screaming men and shrieking horses were flattened under tank tracks. Soviet soldiers claimed they found wounded Germans shot in the back of the head and ambulance vans set on fire with the dead inside. Undoubtedly, this was to spare the them torture and mutilation by the Reds.

West of Pochapintsy, Corporal Fritz Hamann of Panzerjäger Battalion 389, alongside his Staff Sergeant, crept up to Soviet tanks on top of the slope. Busy firing on the Germans further downhill, the tankers failed to notice the men carrying three Panzerfausts each. One after another, Hamann and his Staff Sergeant knocked out five tanks. The 5.9 inch bomb projectiles easily penetrated the T-34 armor. The eruptions of fire and smoke provided cover for the Panzerjägers. As the remaining four tanks fled, a way had been open to the beech wood southwest of Pochapintsy.

Although it was defended by Soviet machine gun positions, the wood provided safety from Soviet tanks and made it possible for groups of Germans to fight their way through to Lysianka. Among them were Degrelle and most of the Walloons. Having survived tank fire and Cossack cavalry charges, the Walloons took up position in the woods south of Hill 239. Joined by several thousand stragglers, including Ukrainian civilians fleeing the Russians, the 632 Walloons reached the outpost of the 1st Panzer Division on February 18.

Most of the Germans, including Hamann's Panzerjägers, skirted the wood to end up along the Gniloy Tikich. The men of the 72nd Infantry Division were first to reach the river. Although only 20-30 yards wide, the swiftly moving water was 30 feet deep and the banks were steep. After dawn a Soviet tank appeared, firing on German supply vehicles, but then drove into a deep gully and got immobilized. Throughout the day and into the night, intermingled units of Corps Detachment-B and SS-Wiking arrived at stretches of the Gniloy Tikich. Attempts to create a bridge with panjes, shrubs and small trees, were unsuccessful, as the current carried them away. Soviet artillery blasted the Germans bunched together on the eastern bank. As more T-34s rumbled closer, soldiers tried to swim the river. Weak from cold and exhaustion, hundreds were pulled under by the swirling waters. Lieb urged his horse into the river. The general made it across, but his exhausted horse was drowned.

Hamann tried to cross where the river was frozen almost to the middle, crawling on his stomach as the ice cracked, then gave. After half an hour of clinging to ice floes, he grabbed the butt of a carbine held out to him. Behind Hamann, his staff sergeant succumbed to the current.

The 57th and 88th Infantry Divisions were last to arrive at the river. With them were Ukrainian women who had served the Germans in auxiliary positions and feared Soviet reprisals. Fortunately, by the morning of February 18, foot bridges had been built allowing many, including panjes with 600 wounded, to reach the other side.

Wet and freezing, harassed by sporadic Soviet fire from the other bank, the survivors staggered on toward Lysianka. The first aid station in a large factory building was swamped with thousands of wounded. The stench was overpowering. Discarded field bandages infected with lice littered the floor. Medical staff wraped their boots with bandages drenched in Lysol to keep the lice off. The hardships endured by the survivors meant that most were incapable of combat for months.

On the night of February 18-19, Lieutenant Fadin's gallantry at Dashukivka earned him the recommendation for the Golden Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union. According to Fadin; with his lone T-34, he suppressed German MG positions, squashed a Nebelwerfer rocket launcher and enabled the Soviet infantry to recapture the village. Taking cover behind a hut on the northern edge, Fadin's T-34 set a German vehicle column ablaze, blasted a group of German officers observing him with binoculars, shot up two Mark IV's trying to outflank him, and shot down a German reconnaissance plane. Fadin fired his tank machine gun and fragmentation rounds into counterattacking German infantry. He knocked out a Tiger at 150 yards. "Flame was slowly enveloping the Tiger. One crewman was hanging dead from the turret," said Fadin. His T-34 then took two hits from an assault gun, killing the gun loader and mangling the turret. Fadin jumped out in time and ran for cover just before the T-34 got hit by another round. Seeing his driver still alive, but caught between the lid of the driver's hatch, Fadin ran back under fire. Fadin freed the bleeding driver and carried him on his shoulders to safety.

On February 19, III Panzer Corps pulled out of Lysianka. Out of the 59,000 men encircled in the Korsun pocket at the beginning of the battle, 28,000 soldiers and 1,000 Hiwis made it out unscathed. Eleven thousand wounded were either evacuated by air earlier in the battle or were brought out during the breakout. Nineteen thousand were killed or taken prisoner. Three hundred thirteen guns and howitzers and 50 tanks were lost. In addition, 1st Panzer Army and 8th Army suffered a combined 10,000 casualties, two thirds of which were wounded. Two hundred forty tanks and assault guns had been lost. Only a third of the armor was lost to enemy fire, the majority broke down and could not be recovered.

Mentioning Soviet losses was officially forbidden under the Communists. After 1990, when archives became available, it became possible to determine how severely 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts had paid for their victory. Eighty thousand casualties, including 24,000 killed and missing, had been suffered. Tank and assault gun losses amounted to a staggering 850.

On February 18, 224 guns fired a 20-shot salute in Moscow to celebrate the annihilation of the Korsun pocket. Soviet propaganda boasted of twice the actual German casualties and inflated German tank losses by 200 percent. Stalin credited Konev and the 2nd Ukrainian Front and promoted him to Marshal of the Soviet Union.

The gap between the 8th Army and 1st Panzer Army was resealed by a counter-attack of the Panzer divisions. The Korsun battle had hit the Germans hard. The divisions of Group Stemmermann needed to be rebuilt and refitted. The Soviets had broken the German hold on the Dnieper and pushed the enemy further west. High Soviet losses in exchange for victory would continue until the end of the war. Another nine million Soviet soldiers would die, be wounded, or be taken prisoner, before the Red Army stood victorious in the ruins of Berlin. ■

Close-quarter cavalry clash on Hagerstown streets as Lee retreats from defeat at Gettysburg. BY DANIEL MURPHY

Late in the evening of July 3, 1863, Major General James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart was summoned to the headquarters of Robert E. Lee. Three days of combat had inflicted heavy losses on Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, and Lee needed to discuss his retreat from Gettysburg with the chief of his cavalry. Lee selected two routes—his ambulance train would head west with a heavy escort of cavalry and artillery, cross South Mountain via Cashtown Pass, and turn south for Williamsport, Maryland, on the Potomac River. Lee's main army and the vital grains and livestock secured from the invasion, would head south to Hagerstown, Maryland, crossing South Mountain at Monterey Pass. At Hagerstown, his troops and trains would depart for either the established ford at Williamsport, or a pontoon bridge waiting downstream at Falling Waters. The length of the Confederate trains was staggering—with captured stores and livestock the quartermaster train alone stretched 40 miles, and was given a 15-hour head start for the retreat. Lee needed Stuart to screen his eastern flank and secure the multiple passes over South Mountain. If Stuart could hold his flank, Lee's troops and trains might make it back to Virginia.

A veteran of Stuart's brigades, who spotted Rebel wagons moving south early the next morning remarked, "That looks like a mouse," meaning such a sight never followed a success. These were apt words indeed—Lee's army was turning on its heel.

On the following morning, July 4, General George Meade received word that Confederate wagons were retreating from Gettysburg—proof positive his Army of the Potomac had won a major victory. Conventional military wisdom called for launching an all-out pursuit to destroy the retreating army. But the reality was that, though Meade's army had indeed won a clear and substantial victory, three days of combat at Gettysburg had inflicted nearly 30 percent casualties on Meade's troops and his soldiers needed refitting and ammunition. In addition he'd lost 1,500 artillery horses and nearly 400 mules. The horses that survived had subsisted on little more than grass the prior week, and this, coupled with the recent march up from Virginia, left many mounts depleted and in need of a rest and proper feed. A case in point was General John Buford's 1st Cavalry Division, two-thirds of his horses were in such sad shape that on the second day of the battle they were rotated out of the lines. In short, the Army of the Potomac lacked the ready horse power required to go after Lee's forces.

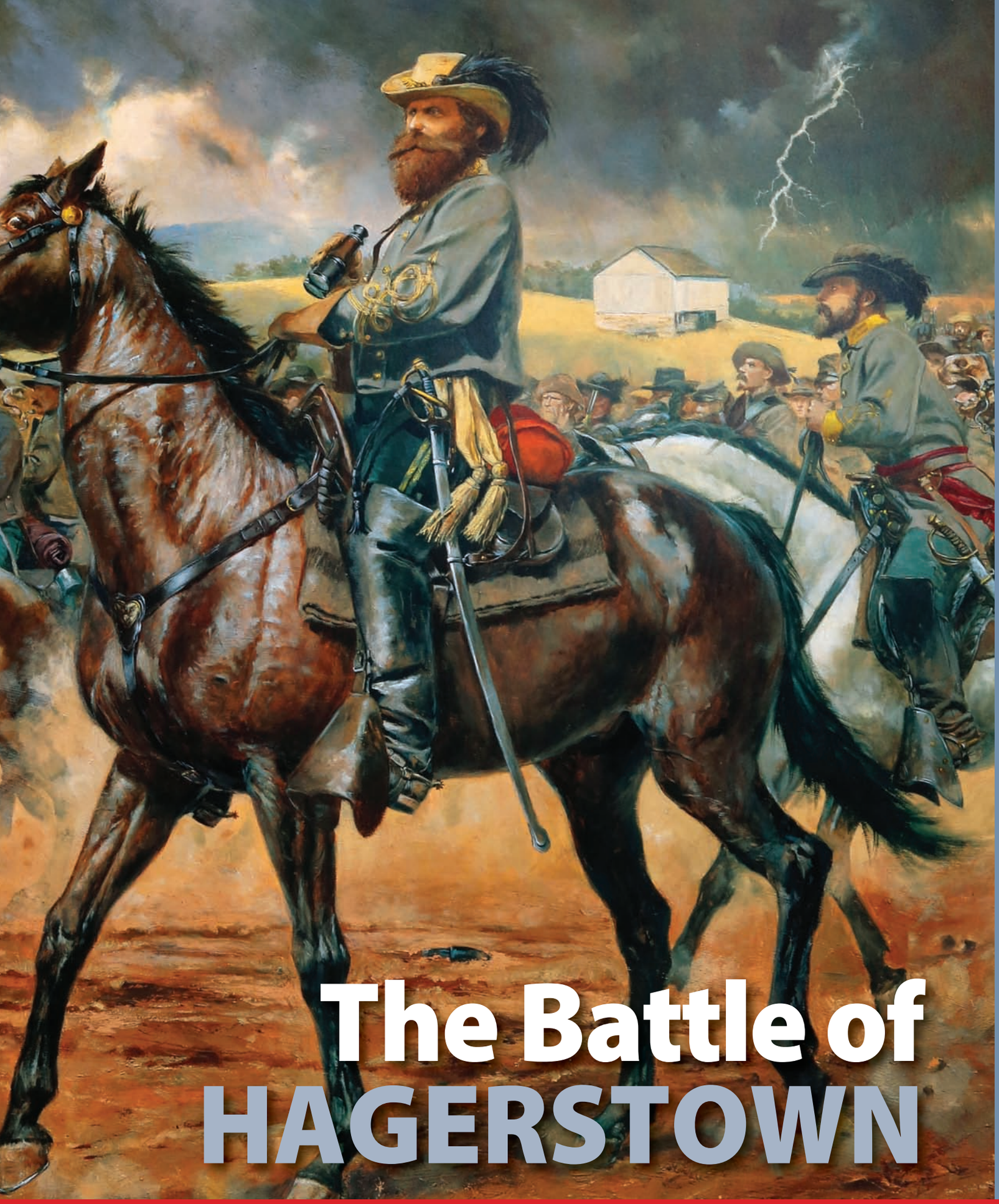
Instead, Meade sent his available cavalry forward to scout Lee's retreat and cut his trains. Judson Kilpatrick's 3rd Division left in a rainstorm on July 4 to strike Confederate wagons rumored to be crossing Monterey Pass. Kilpatrick, 27, was impulsive, acerbic, and a natural brawler. He drove his men through the heavy rain, and captured 300 wagons and 1,000 prisoners in a galling night attack at the mountain pass. Kilpatrick collected his spoils, and rather than turn back for Gettysburg, he moved south for Smithsburg, Maryland, long before the sun came up.

Remarkably, the remainder of the Confederate train went unnoticed by Kilpatrick in the pitch-dark night, and the vital wagon train soon resumed its course for Hagerstown.

Stuart also spent the night of July 4 riding through the rain, along with the brigades of Colonels John Chambliss and Milton Ferguson. Stuart's column arrived at Emmitsburg, Maryland, the next morning, and found it occupied by Federal troops. Stuart and his troopers made quick work of the Federals and captured the town along with some 60 Union soldiers.

Stuart then learned of Kilpatrick's attack at Monterey Pass, and recognized his planned course over the mountains was now blocked. After questioning his prisoners, and sketching a series of local maps, Stuart crisscrossed his way past Wesley Merritt's Federal cavalry, crossed over South Mountain, and came out above Smithsburg, via Raven Rock Pass. The town of Smithsburg controlled two crucial passes through South Mountain, and Kilpatrick's 3rd Division now sat across the key township in a broad arc from north to east. Launching a pair of quick attacks, Stuart gained the ground above the town and ordered a horse battery pulled onto a summit overlooking the enemy position below. Rebel guns soon forced Kilpatrick to retreat to the south, and, after ensuring Kilpatrick's departure, Stuart moved north-

"Major General J.E.B. Stuart Army of Northern Virginia, 1863, " by artist Don Troiani (b. 1949). In the pouring rain on July 4, 1863, Stuart and his cavalry were charged with screening General Robert E. Lee's supply wagons during the retreat from Gettysburg.



The Battle of HAGERSTOWN

"Pursuit of Lee's Army," by Edwin Forbes (1839-1895) depicts Union soldiers marching through the rain on the road near Emmitsburg, Maryland, July 7, 1863. Pursued by U.S. General George Meade after the Battle of Gettysburg, General Robert E. Lee is trying to get his long wagon trains over the Potomac River and back to the relative safety of Virginia. INSET: Private James Byron Holden, Company H, 1st Vermont Cavalry Regiment. The 1st Vermont took part in the chaotic fighting on the streets of Hagerstown, Maryland.

west, to better cover the course of Lee's retreat through Hagerstown.

Bivouacking that evening in Leitersburg, Stuart linked up with the brigades of Beverly Robertson and Grumble Jones, increasing his force to four diminished, but willing, brigades. It had been a long and successful day for Stuart and his horsemen. That night he learned Lee's trains were making steady progress, having already arrived at Williamsport on the Potomac. That was the good news. The bad news was that a massive traffic jam of wagons and wounded Confederates was building on the Potomac's north bank. High water from recent rains meant the wagons had to be pulled across with a small cable ferry in a time-consuming process. Worse still, a Union cavalry foray had destroyed the pontoon bridge downstream at Falling Waters, exponentially increasing the time it would take the Confederates to cross the river—granting Meade's Federal forces even more time to sweep down and pin Lee's retreating army against the rising river.

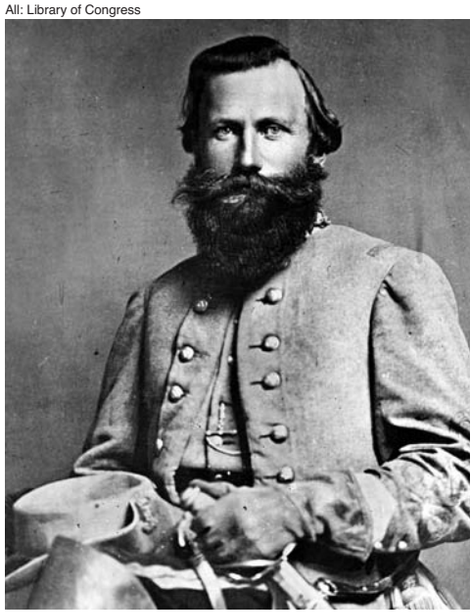
On the morning of July 6, Kilpatrick linked up with Buford near Boonsboro, Maryland. The commanders decided to make a two-pronged attack on the stranded enemy wagons above the Potomac. Buford's rested 1st Division would strike deep for Williamsport, while Kilpatrick's 3rd Division would split north, attack Hagerstown, and screen Lee's main retreat column. With Williamsport isolated from support, Buford stood a good chance of destroying Lee's wagons, capturing thousands of wounded Confederates, and striking a devastating blow against Lee's army.

Kilpatrick would divide his own division in half: Custer's second brigade would hold between Hagerstown and Williamsport, as Kilpatrick's first brigade, under Colonel Nathaniel Richmond would push into Hagerstown and secure the town center. At the start of the war, Richmond gained a field commission in the Federal 1st Virginia Cavalry (soon to be West Virginia) and proved a quick study. In heavy skirmishing prior to the Battle of 2nd Manassas, he led a plunging saber charge against Confederate infantry. Richmond's charge drew earning him considerable praise from his commanders and the respect of his men. Hagerstown would be Richmond's first time leading a brigade, having just taken command upon the death of Elon Farnsworth at Gettysburg.

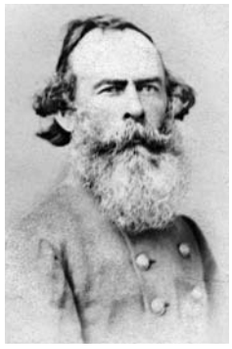
A courier woke Stuart on July 6 with a note from Lee. The commanding general reported his infantry and trains continued to move through Monterey Pass with little trouble from the enemy. In response, Stuart directed Chambliss and Robertson to march on a direct path to Hagerstown that morning, as Stuart wanted to secure this key point as soon as possible. Jones's brigade headed south to the next hamlet of Funkstown, with orders to hold there and cover the southeastern approach via the National Road and Boonsboro. Stuart then joined Ferguson's brigade on their later march for Hagerstown.

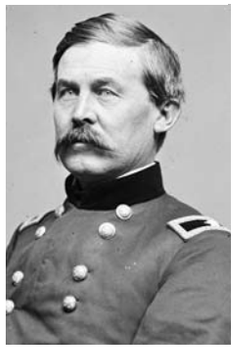
Chambliss arrived in Hagerstown in time to see Lee's wagons passing through the town center on their way to Williamsport. The former

All: Library of Congress



ABOVE: Major General James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart. BELOW LEFT: Colonel James Lucious Davis. BELOW RIGHT: General John Buford.





commander of the 13th Virginia Cavalry, Chambliss, was a West Point graduate who took over W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee's brigade after the younger Lee sustained a wound at Brandy Station. He had since proved a capable commander, and all seemed well in Hagerstown until a report arrived mid-day announcing a large force of Federal cavalry closing from the south. Kilpatrick had passed south of Funkstown on his approach and turned north on the Sharpsburg Road, which ran west of Jones's position, allowing the Federals to gain a hidden approach to Hagerstown. Chambliss sent riders sprinting for Stuart with news of the Federal approach and then ordered Colonel Lucious Davis and his 10th Virginia Cavalry to barricade South Potomac Street below the intersection of Franklin Street. He next ordered pickets from the 9th Virginia and 1st Maryland to support Davis's barricade, and placed the 13th Virginia and 5th North Carolina up at the Zion Reformed Church to act as a mounted reserve. Lee's wagons, in the meantime, halted north of town. When Chambliss's warning reached Stuart, he ordered Ferguson's brigade to take up a gallop.

As Richmond's Federal brigade entered Hagerstown from the south, Ferguson's Confederate brigade appeared from the east. Turning to meet this threat, Richmond deployed Lieutenant Samuel Elder's battery near the Female Seminary on the south-east end of town. The Federal fire forced a quick halt in Ferguson's column, but Jones's brigade, having doubled back from Funkstown, now arrived, and Captain Chew's battery soon came into play as both batteries fired through the narrow town streets. "The artillery fire was severe," recalled a Southern gunner. "[T]he range was short and their ten pound shrapnel whizzed fearfully and exploded all around us." Ferguson dismounted his sharpshooters and sent them forward to open on Elder's guns, forcing Elder and his supporting sharpshooters to shift their position. Elder called for more support, and sharpshooters from the 1st West Virginia came up as the battery shifted position and opened yet again, creating a stalemate in this section of the town.

As Richmond turned his attention to the Confederate barricade on South Potomac Street, Captain Ulric Dahlgren arrived and volunteered to

join the attack. Ulric, the son of Federal Rear Admiral John Dahlgren, had recently been ranging across the countryside with a handpicked group of troopers, raiding wagons and seizing couriers behind enemy lines like a Federal version of John Mosby. With hard work ahead, Richmond readily accepted Dahlgren's offer. Dahlgren's men, plus two squadrons from the 18th Pennsylvania, and one from the 1st West Virginia, would make the attack.

The Federals formed columns and made for the Confederate barricade at a trot. As the Federals increased their pace, pickets from the 9th Virginia rushed back for the barricade and unwittingly masked their comrades' fire. The lead Federals overtook the Virginia pickets, and all arrived at the same instant to crash through the Rebel barrier. Unwilling to retreat, Davis ordered a counter-charge. The Federals shot his horse out from under him, and the 50-year-old West Pointer fell captive as Yankees boiled over the barricade and rushed up the street on the heels of the Rebel survivors.

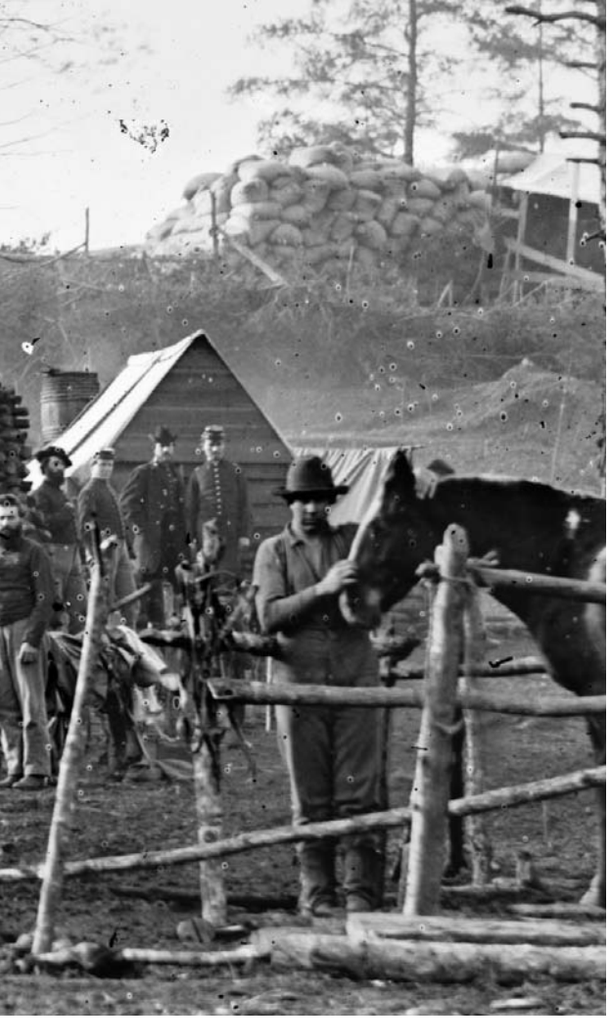
Giving way before the onslaught, Captain Frank Bond turned his 40 1st Marylanders onto a side street and wheeled his men about by section, quickly reversing the column's direction. As the Federals swept by, Bond launched his men back onto the street, and drove into Dahlgren's open flank. Mounted reserves from the 5th North Carolina and 13th Virginia charged the head of the Federals, and the fighting became hand to hand. Bond recalled Sergeant Hammond Dorsey of the 1st Maryland, hewing left and right, cutting down several men. "[T]he last of them was a bugler, by this time in full flight," and as he leaned over his horse's neck, the brass bugle shielded him; "repeated blows were necessary" to bring him down.

Dahlgren and the rest of the Federals now fell back through the town square, and Richmond fed in Company D, 18th Pennsylvania. These troopers rushed forward on foot as sharpshooters, their carbines at right shoulder shift and moving at the quickstep. The Confederates charged forward, and the Pennsylvanians opened fire, clearing a rash of saddles and rushing forward as the Rebels withdrew. This halted the Confederate charge, but the buildings in the town fractured the lines of sight—isolating small pockets of combatants from one another—allowing a victory on one block to be overturned by a reverse on the next as Chambliss rallied his men on the high ground at Zion Reformed Church.

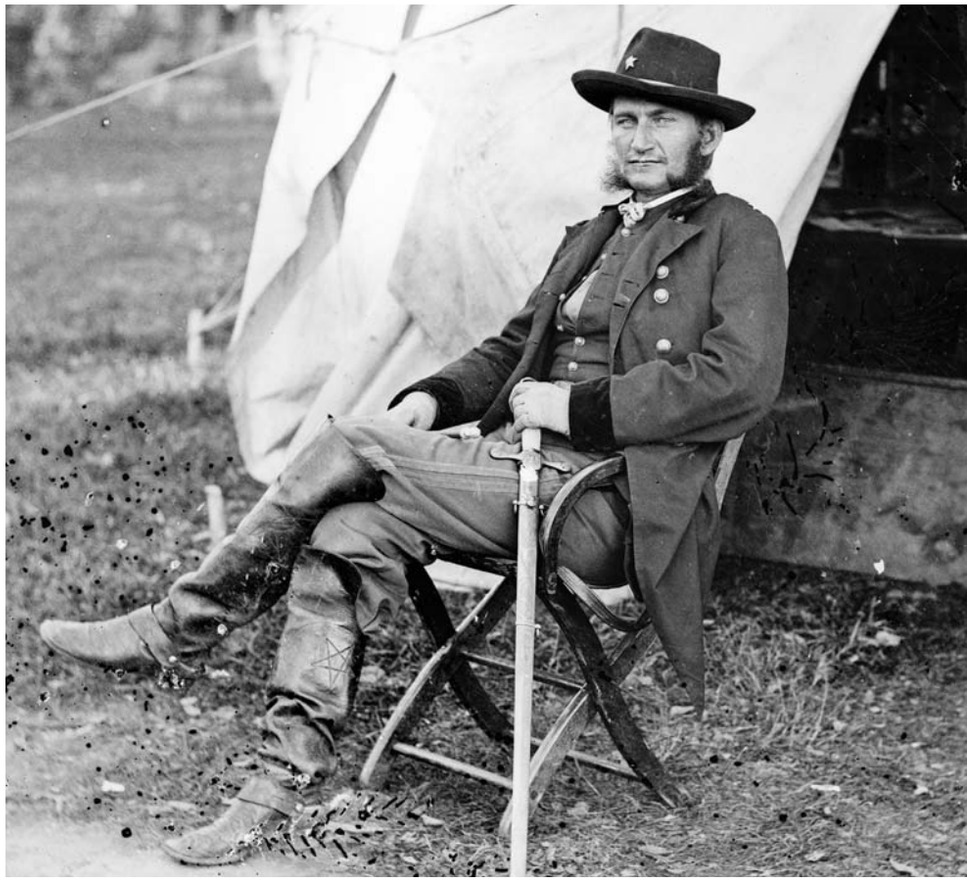
Captain Moorman's Rebel horse battery now arrived at the church. As the gunners went to load, Chambliss placed sharpshooters in the church cemetery, and on either side of the street, where their concentric fire forced the Federal sharpshooters back down the hill. Chambliss pressed after the Federals, and as Dahlgren moved to counter the enemy, he received a bullet through his foot. Rapidly losing blood, Dahlgren retired to the rear, and surgeons later amputated his leg below the knee.

Richmond marshaled another squadron of the 18th Pennsylvania, plus troops from the 1st Vermont, and sent them charging back for Chambliss's line at the church. Quick in reply, Chambliss ordered a counterattack, and troopers from North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland spurred forward with a yell. Civilian W. W. Jacobs watched the chaos from the rooftop of the Eagle Hotel, where he had a bird's-eye view of the fighting: "The cutting and slashing was beyond description ... the steel blades circling, waving, parrying, thrusting and cutting, some reflecting the bright sunlight, others crimsoned in gore…. The contending forces were so intermingled that sometimes two or more men were cutting at one."

Captain Charles Snyder struck down three Confederates, then took a gunshot to the abdomen and a cut across his head that dropped him in the street as more Rebels surged into the fight. Three officers from the 18th Pennsylvania soon joined Snyder on the cobblestones of the square—Captain Henry Potter, Lieutenant



LEFT: Camp of 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry, 3d Division, photographed near Brandy Station, Virginia, six months after the fight at Hagerstown, Maryland. The 18th fought in the streets, from house to house in Hagerstown. Sergeant Joseph Brown of the 18th was killed by a civilian woman firing from inside her house. BELOW: General Judson Kilpatrick, nicknamed "Kill-cavalry" due to his seeming reckless disregard for his own men during the war, rode in a rainstorm on July 4 to strike Confederate wagons rumored to be crossing Monterey Pass. Attacking at night, Kilpatrick captured 300 wagons and 1,000 prisoners, then rode south for Smithsburg, Maryland.



William Lawes, and Captain Pennypacker all fell or were captured in the desperate fighting. Richmond responded by sending forward more sharpshooters. Horace Ide of the 1st Vermont Cavalry recalled moving up through the Hagerstown streets: "We deployed down the cross streets as skirmishers, hiding behind the houses and firing around corners. I saw a squad of them and resting beside a telegraph pole fired [m]y carbine. I didn't know as I hit them, but they dodged mightily sudden. At one time we came on quite a lot of them, three to one, and saved ourselves by running back through [a] house."

Richmond's two-tiered assaults of mounted charges and dismounted sharpshooters finally swept the square clear of the enemy, and Hagerstown's civilians also pitched into the fight. A union trooper later recalled "After we passed the square… an old citizen came out of a house with a musket in his hand and fell in with our boys, loading and firing after the rebels. He was shot down before he crossed the second block." Not all the inhabitants supported the Federal cause, and a woman firing from inside a house shot down and killed Sergeant Joseph Brown of the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry.

Despite Rebel forces perched north and east, Richmond's lone brigade still held the center of town, while Elder's battery kept the Federal east flank secure and continued trading rounds with Chew's gunners. A standoff developed in the center of Hagerstown as each side paused to regroup, and Lee's wagons remained parked above the town with no route open to Williamsport. That changed with the arrival of General Albert Iverson's North Carolina infantry.

As the wagons of Iverson's brigade waited above Hagerstown, his men came forward and began deploying as skirmishers. These men suffered massed casualties on the first day at Gettysburg, and the survivors wanted revenge as they pushed forward and began firing from house to house. The buildings and streets were a hindrance to the cavalry, but these same obstacles were welcome havens for the infantry. Firing from stair steps, porches, and around corners, Iverson's men advanced block by block, alley by alley, and began placing men on rooftops as they went. "We found ourselves being gradually forced back," recalled a New England trooper.

"When we found the bullets coming down the sidestreets we would fall back another street and so continue." The Rebel infantry's rifled muskets were proving too much for the Federal's breechloading carbines. "When we got there, the Yankees had possession of the town," bragged a Tar Heel infantryman, "but we ... soon had the town and the Yankees before us running."

Richmond now ordered a retreat and the Federals pulled back to the edge of town to link with Custer and Kilpatrick. Despite surrendering the town, all was not lost. Kilpatrick and Custer's Wolverines continued to hold the Williamsport turnpike and Lee's wagons still sat trapped above Hagerstown. As the battle noise died out in Hagerstown, cannon fire erupted six miles away from Williamsport.

Buford's brigades had encountered a novel defense built by Brigadier General Daniel Imboden from Stuart's Cavalry Division on July 6. Composed of cavalry, walking wounded, armed teamsters, and 26 pieces of artillery, Imboden's ad hoc line before Williamsport bent but never

broke under Buford's repeated attacks. Kilpatrick eventually sent Custer's brigade to support Buford, but Rebel artillery shattered Custer's advance. With the Wolverines reeling, and the sun approaching the horizon, Buford had little option but to retire. Custer followed suit and turned off the turnpike for the Downsville Road, ending what became known as the "Wagoner's Fight."Colonel Richmond was now standing alone before Stuart's forces in Hagerstown.

After hours of fighting in the streets, Stuart could finally maneuver on open ground and he pressed out of town, hoping to pin Richmond on the turnpike ahead; a straight, macadamized road bordered with tall stone walls. Pastures rolled on either side of the pike and Stuart placed Chambliss in the lead, with Ferguson following through the fields beside the road. Robertson's and Jones' men followed in reserve.

Richmond retired down the pike with the 5th New York and Elder's battery guarding the rear. Lieutenant Elder had served a prior hitch in the 2nd U.S. Artillery before the war and rose to 1st sergeant by 1858. He reenlisted in 1861, gained a commission, and received notice for gallantry at the Battle of Antietam. With the sun now dropping, Elder halted a two-gun section on a ridge a mile out of town and began lobbing shells at the coming Southerners while Richmond dismounted sharpshooters in support. Charles McVicar, a gunner with Chew's Rebel horse battery, wrote, "They are holding their position and we have taken a stand in the pike. Our guns recoiling, bury themselves in the mud. Thought we were done for." McVicar continued, marking the range of the enemy: "Their battery is 400 yards distant. We are under a rapidly advancing line of [enemy] sharpshooters.... We don't mind shell but these little bees zipping by make us nervous. The cavalry charged and we are firing."

As Chambliss and his troopers closed, the Federal sharpshooters withdrew, and Elder redeployed at the next ridge down the road, and again opened fire as the 9th Virginia advanced down the pike in a column of fours. The Union gunners loaded canister, and the 9th Virginia split their column down the middle, forming two separate columns of twos, each wide to either side of the stone fences bordering the turnpike, with a gap between the columns. Elder's guns fired at 20 paces, so close the canister had not spread when the load struck a single trooper square in the chest. "[The] charge of canister, before escaping from the net of wire which enclosed it, struck one of our men.... [He] fell heavily to the ground." The Confederates sprinted over the remains of their comrade and closed on the enemy guns.

A Federal gunner knocked one of the Virginians from his horse with a rammer, and the rest of the Virginians came under fire from Federal sharpshooters posted behind the fences on either side of the pike. The Rebels swerved at this sudden fire and jumped the stone fence bordering the road in

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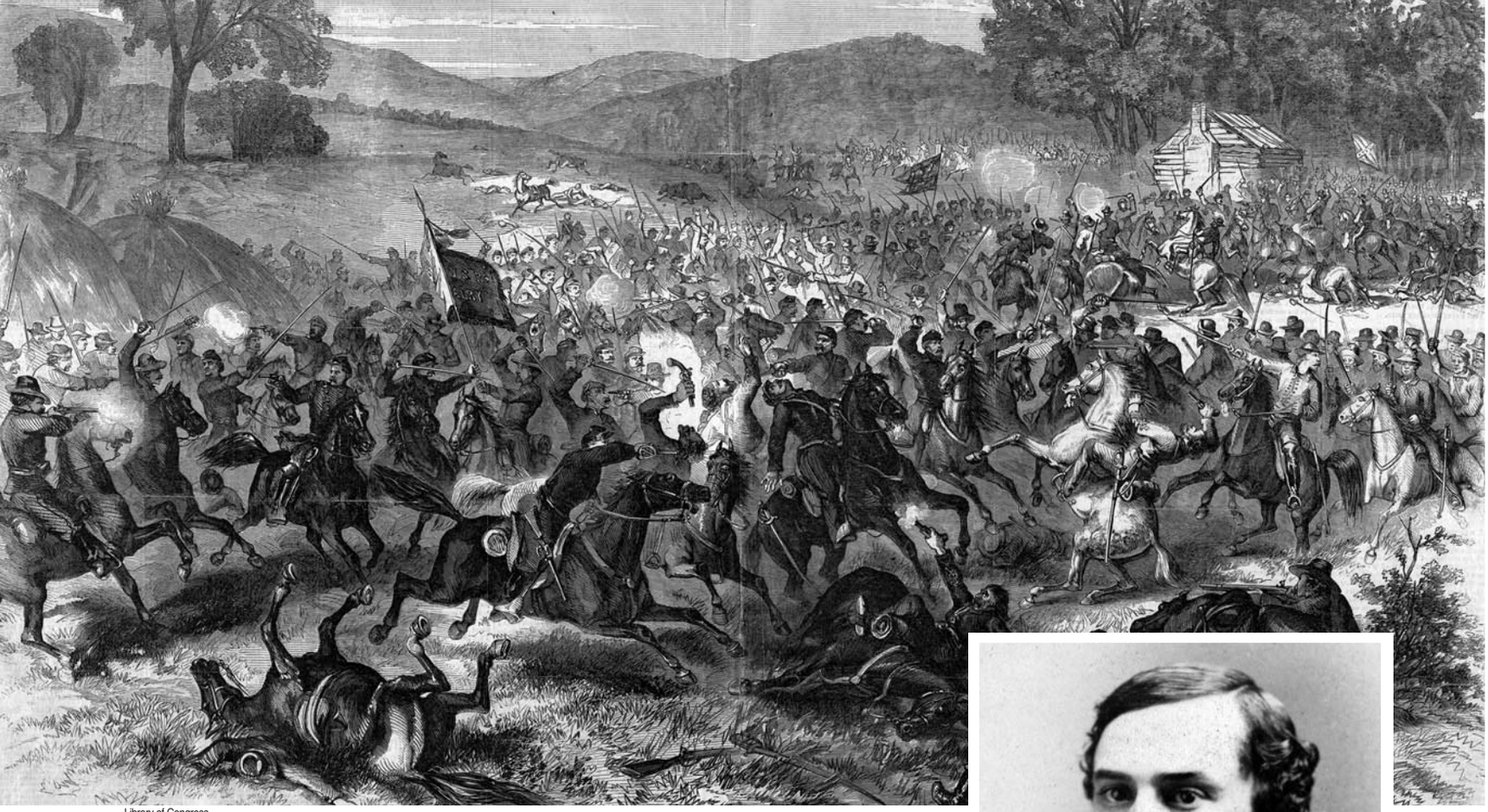
ABOVE: Lieutenant Samuel Elder, far left, with other U.S. Army artillery officers photographed in Virginia. Elder's battery set up near the Female Seminary in the Battle of Hagerstown. The cannon of the two armies filled the narrow town streets with smoke and deadly shrapnel. RIGHT: Union cavalry and horse artillery troops race to set up the guns on the next ridge. First Lieutenant Samuel Elder was commended for the work of his 4th U.S. Artillery, Battery E, (four three-inch ordnance rifles) that covered the Union retreat of Colonel Nathaniel Richmond back to Boonsboro following the Battle of Hagerstown. "Too much credit cannot be given to Lieutenant Elder," Richmond said. The "men of his battery are also deserving of special mention for their bravery and good conduct under fire."

a ragged fashion. Elder's drivers bolted forward in the confusion, limbered the guns, and made their getaway in a brilliant display of horsemanship.

"We fought over every foot of ground from Hagerstown to Williamsport," recalled a Union officer. "Every time they charged, they were met with grape and canister." Richmond also praised his gun teams: "Too much credit cannot be given to Lieutenant Elder.... [T]he men of his battery are also deserving of special mention for their bravery and good conduct under fire."

Stuart responded with Lieutenant Colonel Vincent Witcher's 34th Virginia Battalion from Ferguson's brigade. They dismounted left of the pike and raked the Federals with a deadly fire that cleared a number of Yankee saddles. The rest of Ferguson's men advanced, mounted as the 34th reloaded, and called for the Federals to surrender. Captain Beauman of the 1st Vermont yelled back, "I don't see it," and vaulted his horse over the turnpike's wall with the remains of his squadron.

LEFT: Lieutenant Robert Pryor James of Co. E, 20th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. The 20th was part of Iverson's Brigade that fought house to house in Hagerstown. RIGHT: Private William B. Todd of Company E, 9th Virginia Cavalry Regiment. The 9th fought in Hagerstown, and later rushed Lt. Elder's Union guns during the Union retreat.



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Major General J.E.B. Stuart's orders were to delay the Union cavalry long enough for General Lee to get his army over the Potomac River at Williamsport. The first of Stuart's clashes with U.S. General John Buford took place at Boonsboro, Maryland on July 8, in muddy fields that forced both sides to dismount and fight as infantry. They would meet again at Funkstown, Hagerstown and Williamsport.

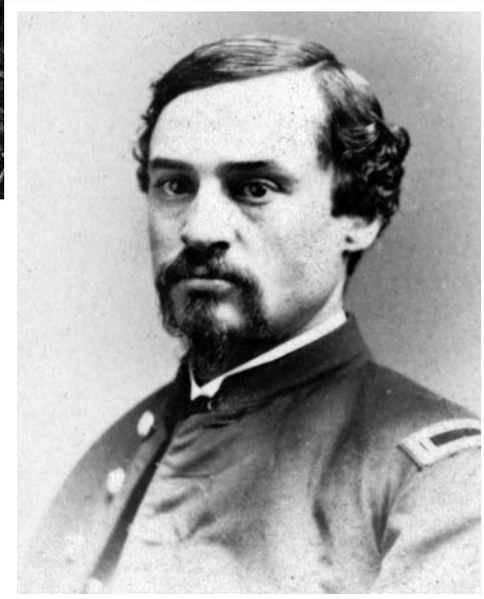
He rode over a crest of rocky ground cut through with fences and vaulted the partitions as if on a fox hunt and Richmond retired down the pike with Elder's guns in tow.

Falling back to the next ridge, Richmond switched tactics and ordered two squadrons from the 5th New York to charge forward, screen the retreat, and stall the Confederate pursuit. Colonel James Gordon's 5th North Carolina saw the Federal attack coming, closed ranks, and spurred ahead. They crashed into the New Yorkers with revolvers blazing and shattered the Federal charge. Captain James Penfield of the 5th New York rode in the front rank. His horse fell dead in the road, and Penfield suffered a hard cut from a saber as the Tar Heels stormed through the Yankee ranks from front to rear. Stuart later wrote Gordon led the charge and exhibited "…individual prowess deserving special commendation."

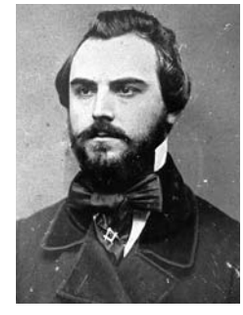
Still determined to buy time, Richmond again rallied his dwindling squadrons east of the road in the last light of the day. He placed two of Elder's guns behind the stone fence bordering the pike, and set a line of sharpshooters across the road. Stuart glassed the imposing new position and called on Jones to send up fresh troops. Col. Lunsford Lomax trotted forward with his 11th Virginia Cavalry, studied the Federal position, and paused. The pair of enemy guns protruded from a tall stone fence that framed a large pasture beside the pike. From there the guns could rake the roadway and support the Federal sharpshooters holding the pike.

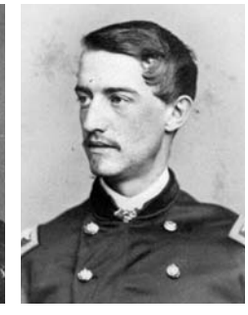
Lomax formed his men and had them check the loads on their revolvers; orders circulated for all to hold their fire until they gained the enemy line. Sergeants squared the ranks a final time, and Lomax turned onto the pike in a column of fours, crested the rise, and started the charge with 200 yards to go. Lieutenant John Blue of the 11th Virginia remembered the Federals crouching behind the wall: "Not a man could be seen, not a gun fired, all was silent as the grave. We well knew what this silence meant and what to expect any moment."

Blue and his troopers rolled on, revolvers pointing skyward, bracing for the storm. "It appeared to me that I was riding on a line with, and looking straight into, the mouth of a twelve-pounder which protruded through the stone fence. It is surprising how rapid thoughts will follow each other when a person expects the next breath he draws may be his last." At one hundred yards, the guns erupted, and canister sprayed down the pike.



ABOVE: U.S. Major Henry Merritt of Co. K, 5th New York Cavalry which charged the 5th North Carolina cavalry to protect Elder's battery during the retreat from Hagerstown. BELOW LEFT: Brigadier General Alfred Iverson commanded the 20th North Carolina Infantry at Hagerstown. BELOW RIGHT: U.S. Captain Ulric Dahlgren was shot at Hagerstown and had his right leg amputated below the knee.





Blue's horse tumbled dead in the road, pinning Blue beneath as his comrades hurtled past.

Rolling on, Lomax's men sprinted for the sharpshooters barring the pike and fired their revolvers. The Federals broke on contact, and the Rebels swept up a number of prisoners and enemy horses. Elder's two guns, however, remained behind the stone fence bordering the pike, and their drivers now sprinted forward to pull them out of harm's way. As Lomax rallied his men, he spotted two squadrons of Union cavalry moving to support the guns in the stone-ringed pasture. The turnpike fence provided excellent cover to the Federals, and the only way through was a gap in the fence along the road. Both parties bolted for the opening, the Virginians determined to take the gap and the guns beyond, and the Federals determined to cover their battery. The two sides met just inside the wall, where "the fight waxed hot and bloody." Pistols flashed close and sabers thudded home in gritty collisions of men and horses. The Virginians managed to take the field, but the outnumbered Federals again won the time for Elder's drivers to limber the guns and make their escape.

Lomax's attack swept up over 100 prisoners, and this proved the last straw for Richmond. "The enemy pressed my command so closely as to throw it into considerable confusion." Worse still, Richmond now began taking fire from a Confederate horse battery, just arriving from Williamsport on the turnpike. Richmond had done all anyone could expect and more. He turned on the Downsville Road and joined Custer and Kilpatrick in the Federal retreat. "I retired with my command in tolerable order in the direction of Boonsborough."

Elder's tireless battery again formed the rear guard, trading fire with Chew's gunners into the evening, the fuses on the shells tracing bright across the twilight sky. "It is 8 1⁄2 o'clock, they are on the run," wrote Rebel gunner Charles McVicar. "We have driven them six miles; this has been a very heavy division and certainly a hard fight…."

The Potomac continued to rise, and Lee's trains still clogged the north bank, but Stuart's brigades repelled two Federal divisions intent on crippling the Confederate retreat, and Lee's troops were again moving south. Veterans on both sides knew the contest was far from over; Meade's army was now marching south, the Confederates remained trapped against the river, and more saddle fights would soon occur above the Potomac.

To read more on the cavalry and the role it played in the Gettysburg campaign, visit the author's website at horsesensehistory.com or pick up a copy of his latest book: Horse Soldiers at Gettysburg: The Cavalryman's View of the Civil War's Pivotal Campaign. ■

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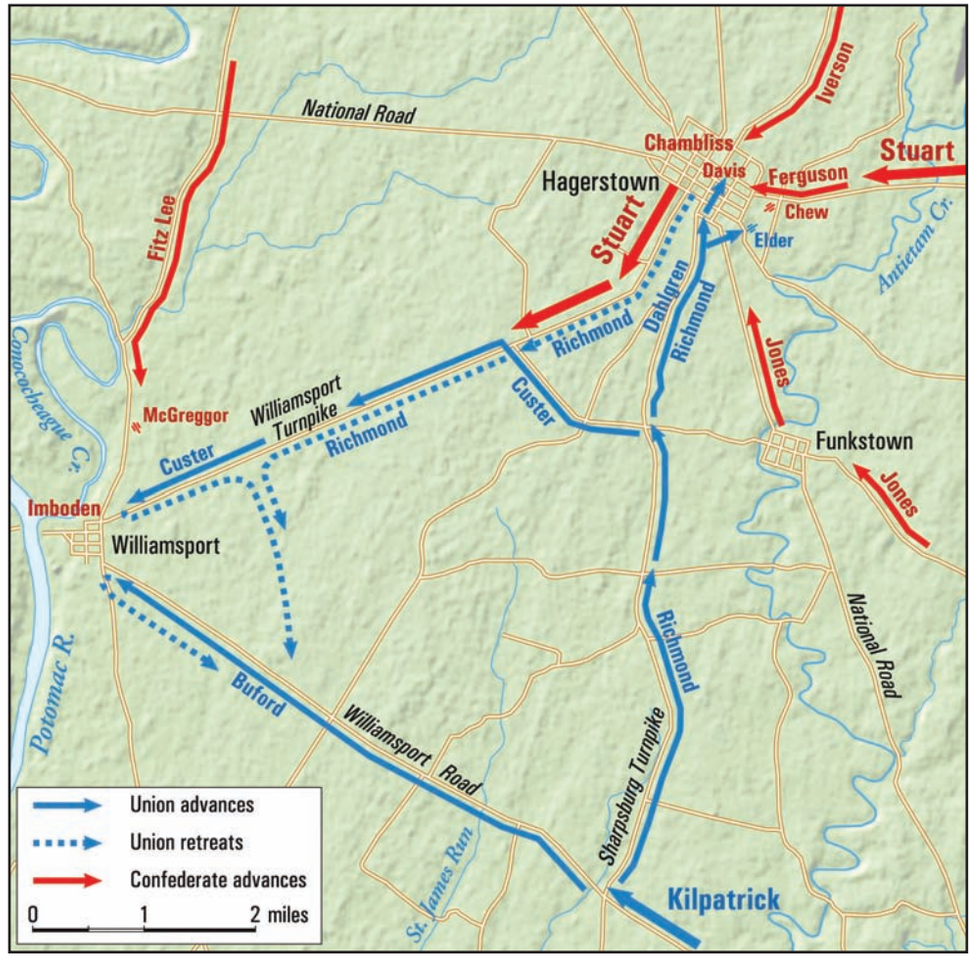
ABOVE: This Edwin Forbes sketch shows General John Sedgwick's 6th Corps crossing Antietam Creek at Funkstown, Maryland, two days after their clash at Boonsboro (July 8). Confederate Major General Stuart would once again delay General Buford and the Union pursuit of Lee after the Battle of Gettysburg. BELOW: Having boldly taken the war into Union territory, General Robert E. Lee, having lost at Gettysburg in what turned out to be the pivotal battle of the Civil War, tries to get his army back to Virginia.



Map © 2024 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

French Revenge at the FIRST BATTLE of the MARNE

Battered for three weeks in the 'Great Retreat' before the Imperial German army, French and British forces counterattacked at the Marne River.

BY JOSHUA SHEPHERD

Germans in their pickelhaube leather helmets and French in red and blue uniforms engage in a brutal skirmish in a wooded section of World War I's Western Front during the early months of the war.

In the early morning hours of September 10, 1914, long lines of gray-clad German infantry formed up in a steady rain that only seemed to dampen spirits. In all, some 100,000 men were preparing for a desperate nighttime assault on French positions near Vaux-Marie. Enemy artillery had been decimating their ranks for days, and revenge was in order. The men were ordered to fix bayonets and silence the French batteries with little more than cold steel.

At 2 a.m., the Germans stepped off for their objective. Drawn from the Fifth Army commanded by Prussian Crown Prince Wilhelm, the men had seen hard fighting for a month. However, nothing could have prepared them for the hellish ordeal that lay ahead.

Almost as soon as they advanced, French artillerymen spotted their movement and opened fire. A whirlwind of shells crashed into the German ranks, bowling over men by the score and leaving the track of the German columns littered with the broken and dying. Confusion reigned in the darkness as the men groped hopelessly forward. When the 38th Reserve Infantry Regiment blundered into a body of troops to their front, they opened fire, inadvertently sending a steady fire into the rear of their stalled and terrified comrades.

Leaderless men wandered in terror as entire companies evaporated. A French counterattack swept through their ranks, ushering in a scene of savage bloodletting as men shouted, struggled, and killed in the darkness. By daybreak, it was apparent that the attack had been a disaster. Thousands lay dead or dying. Not a single French gun had been silenced.

The carnage that would unfold in the fields and villages of eastern France had its roots in old grievances. Since its humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the French Republic had nursed a burning desire for revenge. The war had led to the loss of the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, which were annexed by an ascendant German Empire. For nearly four decades Germany's rapid industrialization and burgeoning population proved an ominous threat to France as it struggled to modernize its army.

For the French, matters only seemed to grow worse. In 1882, a unified German Empire formed the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy, threatening a near encirclement of France. The following decade, France sought to strengthen its hand with a mutual defense pact with Czarist Russia. The Franco-Russian Alliance ensured that in the event of conflict, Germany would face an unsustainable war on two fronts.

The precarious balance of power was maintained in Europe for the succeeding three decades. However, events of the summer of 1914 would unravel that delicate peace and plunge all of

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

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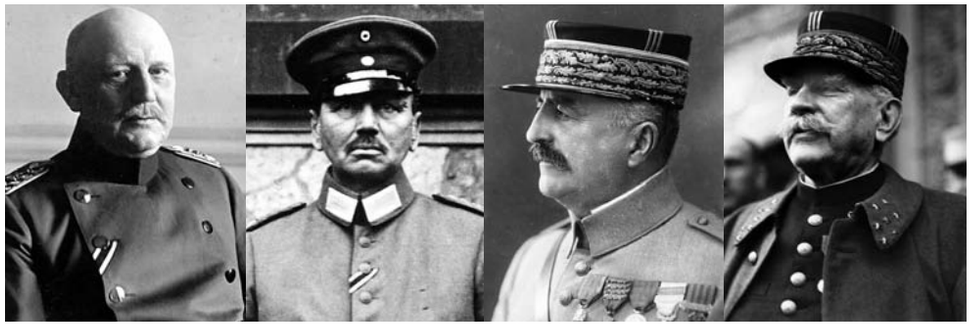

From left: Chief of the German Great General Staff, Helmut von Moltke; General Alexander von Kluck; General Louis-Félix-François Franchet d'Esperey; French commander-in-chief, General Joseph Jacques Césaire Joffre. TOP: Belgian infantry await the invading Germans at an improvised roadblock. Vastly overmatched, the Belgians fought valiantly to defend their homeland.

Europe into bloodletting on a mass scale. On June 28, 1914, Bosnian-Serb nationalists assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, as well as his wife Sophie, during an ill-fated diplomatic visit to Sarajevo.

The murders triggered a tragic chain of events, the July Crisis, which resulted in war. Germany, intent to keep any outbreak of hostilities isolated to the Balkans, nonetheless pledged its support to Austria-Hungary in the event of war with Russia. Armed with the so-called "Blank Check" from Germany, the Austrians issued a humiliating ultimatum to Serbia on July 25.

Hostilities became increasingly inevitable as each of Europe's great powers, in turn, assumed a bellicose stance. Although reluctant to offer overt support to Serbia, a cautious Russia began a partial mobilization of its troops on July 25, and received French assurances of support in the event of war. Despite repeated British offers of mediation, events had spiraled entirely out of control by the end of the month. Europe crossed the Rubicon of history on July 28 as Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. A single voice in Vienna had presciently opposed the move. Hungarian Prime Minister Istvan Tisza warned that war with Serbia "would, as far as can humanly be foreseen, lead to an intervention by Russia and hence a world war."

Tragically, events would prove him correct. Two days after the outbreak of hostilities in the Balkans, Russia began full mobilization. On July 1, Germany declared war on Russia, and, anticipating the inevitable, invaded neutral Belgium on August 3. Predictably, France declared war on Germany the same day. Much of France's military establishment was eager to join battle, keen to clip the wings of an increasingly powerful German Empire before it was too late.

Germany's unprovoked push into Belgium had, in fact, been considered for decades. Beginning in the 1890s, Germany's Chief of Staff, Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen, began developing a plan to outflank France's primary defenses on her eastern border by making a wide swing through Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. It was hoped that by quickly neutralizing France, German forces would then be in a position to confront Russia and thereby avoid a hopeless war on two fronts.

The Schlieffen Plan, which called for a massive German deployment across the Low Countries, was inherited by his successor, Helmuth von Moltke. Constrained by the realities of mobilization and logistics, Moltke was forced to greatly alter Schlieffen's original vision, reducing the number of troops envisioned for an invasion and rejecting a move into the Netherlands, confining initial German operations to Belgium and Luxembourg.

In truth, the German States fielded a dangerously imposing force more than capable of wrecking the armies of the French Republic. While just one German field army was detailed to the country's eastern frontiers, a full seven field armies were poised to strike for the heart of France. Drawn from the Empire's constituent states including Prussia, Bavaria, and Saxony, Moltke fielded 51 active infantry divisions and eleven cavalry divisions; moreover, the high command dipped deep into available manpower reserves, mobilizing an additional 31 reserve infantry divisions which were assigned to the front.

Of equal importance was the German artillery, a solid mix of medium and heavy artillery including 77mm field guns and 105 and 150 mm howitzers. Germany's complement of big guns, considered state-of-the-art in 1914, was widely considered to constitute the finest artillery train in the world.

The far right of the German line was occupied by the First Army, commanded by General Alexander von Kluck. For the crucial assignment of commanding the great hammer blow that would ultimately crush the French, Kluck seemed a suitable choice. A patrician veteran of wars with both Austria and France, Kluck was an old school Prussian soldier. He was 68 at the outset of the war, but possessed an aggressive fighting spirit that would drive himself and his men to the breaking point. For better or ill, Kluck was fond of Julius Caesar's maxim that "In great and dangerous operations one must not think but act."

Despite the overwhelming odds, the Belgians put up unexpectedly stiff resistance when the Ger-

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German soldiers passing the Cafe Rubens as they march in the streets of Ostend, Belgium, on their way to France. Despite the overwhelming odds, the Belgians put up unexpectedly stiff resistance—German troops had seized the city of Liege by August 6, but did not take the fortifications ringing the city until August 16. The Germans marched into Brussels on August 20 on their way to what they thought would be a quick invasion of France.

mans lunged across the border. German troops seized the city of Liege by August 6, but struggled to capture a string of robust fortifications ringing the city, finally reducing the defenses on August 16. The Belgian Army, badly outmatched but mounting a spirited defense of its homeland, fell back to Antwerp. By August 20, victorious German troops marched into Brussels and were poised to sweep across central Belgium and over the vulnerable French border.

The opening weeks of the war brought little more than confusion and disappointment for the French commander-in-chief, General Joseph Jacques Césaire Joffre. A career army man, Joffre had spent much of his career not as an infantry officer but as an engineer, serving in wide-ranging posts from Madagascar to Indo-China. Crucially, Joffre's service as an engineer earned him invaluable experience on the vital military importance of rail networks.

Appointed Chief of the General Staff in 1911, Joffre sought the ouster of "defensively minded" officers who, to his thinking, had been the bane of the French Army for decades. He systematically revised field manuals and French military doctrine emphasizing tactical and operational aggression. By 1914, Joffre was 62, rather rotund, and physically past his prime. But despite appearances, the amiable Frenchman, known affectionately to his troops as "Papa Joffre," possessed a fierce will and a burning resolution to vindicate the arms of France.

Initially convinced that any German move into Belgium would be a limited operation south of the Meuse River, Joffre unleashed his own strategic brainchild, Plan XVII, by which he sought to throw the bulk of his forces against the Germans in Alsace-Lorraine and the southern reaches of Belgium. On August 14, the French First and Second Armies pushed across the border, encountering only sporadic resistance.

For four days the French experienced surprising success as German troops obligingly fell back. The two rapidly moving French armies lost contact, unaware that they were being lured into a German trap and creating a vulnerable gap in their lines that invited counterattack.

On August 20, the Germans struck back as planned with the heavily reinforced Sixth and Seventh Armies. A general French collapse ensued, with the panicked troops of the French First and Second Armies driven back across the border with heavy losses.

Farther north, the French drive toward the Ardennes fared little better. Although intelligence reports had assured the Third and Fourth French armies that "no serious opposition need be anticipated," they ran into disaster. Advancing into the teeth of heavy German resistance, the Third Army was badly handled and broke in confusion. The Fourth Army then received the brunt of German attentions and suffered accordingly.

After a single day of bloody fighting on August 22, the French 3rd Colonial Division, a crack outfit of experienced veterans, was badly chewed up by superior enemy forces, suffering 11,000 killed or wounded.

In a mere three weeks, Joffre's ambitious Plan XVII had failed miserably, and German intentions had become increasingly apparent. No longer able to deny that the German right was moving in force across Belgium, Joffre did what he could to shift troops to counter the threat. He ordered his northernmost troops, the Fifth Army under General Charles Lanrezac, to shift north and cooperate with the BEF in an attack on the German right. But far from striking an exposed German flank, Lanrezac ran into the full force of

Called 'Black Butcher' by the Germans, France's 75mm field gun was deadly at the First Battle of the Marne

The primary French artillery piece used at the First Battle of the Marne was the 75mm field gun. The legendary "soixante-quinze" wreaked havoc on enemy infantry and proved deadly at counter battery fire. German troops would pay the gun grudging respect by nicknaming the dreaded weapon the "black butcher."

Officially designated the Model 1897, the gun was the brainchild of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Albert Deport, a skilled weapons designer working at the French arsenal at Puteaux. Deport was tasked with designing a reliable field gun around an innovative hydro-pneumatic recoil system that combined smooth firing with negligible recoil.

Utilizing an existing breech-loading 57mm design, Deport came up with a functioning prototype '75 in 1894. Deport's prototype was plagued by nagging leaks of hydraulic fluid from the recoil mechanism, but an improved version was completed three years later.

Because of the weapon's remarkably smooth recoil system, the gun could be fired rapidly without necessitating re-sighting the gun in between rounds. The entire firing cycle of the weapon took a mere two seconds.

In planning for potential war with Germany, General Joffre had focused his artillery arm on the deployment of lighter guns. Although the French were consequently at a disadvantage in a sustained fight with heavier German ordnance, they enjoyed greater mobility and an unmatched rate of fire that could quickly be brought to bear at vital points of the battlefield.

In action, the '75 was a marvel; adored by the French, feared by the Germans. With a full crew consisting of six men, the gun could deliver three to four rounds per minute of sustained fire, but in an emergency could rapidly spit out over 15 rounds per minute.

Designed as an anti-personnel weapon, the '75 would utilize multiple projectiles during the course of World War I. The standard shrapnel shell could be timed to explode over the heads of infantry targets, delivering a deadly hail of 290 lead balls. At the Marne, the gun would prove brutally effective against German infantry formations.

Other projectiles included a 12-lb. high explosive shell. When the advent of trench warfare necessitated the deployment of ever larger guns, the flat-trajectory '75 became outclassed but still saw heavy use. By war's end it was routinely used to open gaps in enemy barbed wire by firing high explosive shells. It was also heavily used to deliver some of the war's most notorious weapons: mustard gas and phosgene.

Due to its incredibly reliable design and ease of production, the '75 would see use as a main gun in French tanks, be converted to use as a British anti-aircraft gun, and be utilized as the primary field gun for U.S. forces. When the gun became obsolete following the war, a number of guns were eventually mounted in American M-3 Half Tracks and M-3 Tank Destroyers, ensuring that the faithful French '75 would perform service in yet another world war.

The 75mm Canon Modèle 1897, feared by the Germans, was a symbol of French military technological strength for a decade. With a full crew of six , it could deliver three to four rounds per minute—15 in an emergency.

the German Second Army; on August 21, Lanrezac's troops were repulsed with heavy losses and driven across the Sambre River.

With the French in full flight, the task of stopping the German right flank—Kluck's hard-driving First Army—fell to the newly arrived British Expeditionary Force under the command of Field Marshal Sir John French. Although officials in Great Britain were initially hesitant to involve the nation in any potential clash between France and Germany, the latter's violation of Belgian neutrality proved an unavoidable provocation.

Within a mere two weeks, the nation had mobilized two corps consisting of four infantry divisions and a single cavalry division. Although small, the BEF was composed entirely of volunteers and possessed the makings of a solid fighting force. Hesitant leadership, however, would earn the BEF a reputation for painfully slow movement during the coming campaign.

The British were ordered to dig in behind the Mons-Conde Canal, hoping to stall the German juggernaut and buy time for Joffre's shattered armies. Fighting furiously from an impressive network of trenches, the British unleashed a murderous storm of small arms fire, forcing Kluck's advancing Germans to pay a fearful price. The BEF left the Germans stalled on the north bank of the river.

Despite the impressive British stand at Mons, Joffre was forced to face reality. In a wide arc from Belgium to Alsace-Lorraine, French lines were steadily collapsing in the face of the enormous German pincers. The greatest threat by far came from Kluck's First Army, which was poised like a great sledgehammer to smash the Allied left. Joffre, contrary to every instinct of his aggressive nature, ordered a mass retrograde in the hope of saving his army to fight another day.

"One must face facts," Joffre reported to the ministry of war. The French had suffered badly on the battlefield and were "therefore compelled to resort to the defensive…our objective must be to last out, trying to wear the enemy down and to resume the offensive when the time comes."

Joffre's mortifying decision to order a retreat would nonetheless stave off complete disaster. Over the next two weeks, the French gave ground at an alarming rate, frantically scrambling to escape the path of the German steamroller. Troops from both sides trudged 20 miles per day in blazing August heat, skirmishing as they marched.

Captain Walter Bloem of the 12th Brandenburg Grenadiers recalled that his haggard and exhausted men looked like "prehistoric savages. Their coats were covered with dust and spattered with blood from bandaging the wounded." Undeniably, the Germans had succeeded in bat-

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ABOVE: French dragoons and chasseurs in Napoleonic-style uniforms carry lances on patrol in 1914. BELOW: British troops from the Middlesex Regiment under artillery fire during the opening of the Marne battle. The soldier clutching his head has been badly wounded and his face covered in blood.

Imperial War Museum

tering the Allied front back a staggering 190 miles. The shocking mass retrograde of demoralized French troops came to be known, fittingly, as the "Great Retreat."

In spite of the impressive successes, cracks were beginning to show in an advancing German army notorious for a lack of communication. Adjacent army commanders could rarely directly cooperate with units on their flanks. Worse yet, Moltke was a distinctly hands-off supreme commander who ran the entire war from a rather comfortable office in occupied Luxembourg. Despite the prevalence of phone lines and aircraft, it could take a day or more for his orders to reach the front.

Joffre, however, proved to be a case study in dynamic command. The corpulent general was a storm of activity, personally inspecting his troops, spending much of his time on the telephone keeping tabs on his commanders, and even employing a French race car driver to ferry him around the front. The differing command styles of the opposing generals would have grave consequences to the outcome of the campaign.

Though neither side realized it at first, the strategic landscape was literally changing with every mile marched. The Germans' impressive gains now meant they were struggling with badly stretched supply lines. Moreover, Moltke had pulled vitally needed manpower out of his front lines for detached service in Belgium and East Prussia.

Although such a massive retreat was repugnant to his instincts, Joffre was far from defeated. In contrast to the Germans, every mile advanced into France meant shorter supply lines and a shrinking front line for his armies. Having inadvertently gained the advantage of interior lines, Joffre intended to use them.

An opportunity for the French finally presented itself when Kluck was faced with the choice of swinging his First Army around Paris to the west or of turning east of the city. Feeling that the BEF posed no serious threat to his own right flank and eager to drive into the flank of the French Fifth Army, Kluck chose the latter. The move was approved by Moltke, who ordered his entire army to fix the French in position while General Karl von Bülow's Second Army, supported by Kluck's First, would smash the French Fifth Army on Joffre's left.

Kluck's rapidly advancing troops, however, had already pushed far ahead, and elements of the First Army began crossing the Marne River on September 3. For Moltke, a grand opportunity seemed to present itself. Kluck's First Army would now turn south and east, crush the French flank, and roll up Joffre's lines. Such wishful thinking, however, led Kluck and his senior officers to dismiss alarming reports of French movements to the west. For the next two days, German reconnaissance flights reported massive enemy troop concentrations off First Army's flank. Focused on his own impending attack, Kluck ignored the warnings.

The French, in fact, had been far from idle. On the run for more than two weeks, Joffre had begun to sense an opportunity for a successful counterattack. His first move was to sack a shocking number of senior commanders, whom he had considered as lacking in aggression or determination.

In all, Joffre fired 38 of 80 divisional commanders, 10 of 25 corps commanders, and two of eight army commanders. Among the latter was Lanrezac of the hard-pressed Fifth Army, who was replaced with General Louis Franchet d'Espérey, a hard-headed corps commander who possessed the aggression Joffre was looking for.

Drawing on his experience in building and utilizing rail lines, Joffre proved a shrewd logistician. He had begun shuffling troops to the west, creating two new field armies, the Ninth and the Sixth, in the process. Under the command of General Ferdinand Foch, the Ninth was composed of the IX and XI Corps from the Fourth Army, as well as the 52nd and 60th Reserve Divisions and the 9th Cavalry Division. The new Ninth Army would operate off the right flank of the Fifth.

The new Sixth Army, composed of the VII and IV Corps drawn from the First and Third Armies, was bolstered by the 55th, 56th, 61st, and 62nd Reserve Divisions. Under the immediate command of General Michael-Joseph Maunoury, the Sixth Army was under the nominal command of

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ABOVE: German artillery crew with a 10.5cm Feldhaubitze 98/09 howitzer fires on French positions in 1914. The British referred to these guns and their shells as "five point nines" or "five-nines" as the internal diameter of the barrel was 5.9 inches (150 mm). OPPOSITE: French infantry await an attack from behind a shallow embankment while officers and NCOs command immediately behind during the Battle of the Marne, fought September 5-12, 1914, during the First World War.

General Joseph Gallieni, the military governor of Paris. Virtually under the noses of the Germans, Joffre had succeeded in creating an enormous strike force poised off of Kluck's flank.

Gallieni, 65, was an experienced officer with the foresight to exploit an advantage and proved to be an ideal man for the job of shielding Paris. After a lengthy career across France's colonial empire, Gallieni had been called out of retirement at the outset of the war. Installed as the military governor of Paris, he repeatedly warned that the Germans would reach the outskirts of the capital in two weeks, but was eager to pounce on their flank if the opportunity presented itself.

During the first week of September, Joffre had remarkably succeeded in bringing a preponderance of manpower to the crucial western sector of the battle lines. His plan was to launch the Sixth Army headlong into Kluck's exposed right flank, while the BEF and the Fifth and Ninth Armies completed the destruction from the south.

In fiery orders before the grand assault, Joffre revealed a grim determination to throw back the German invasion. "Every effort must be made to attack and drive back the enemy. A soldier who can no longer advance must guard the territory already held, no matter what the cost. He must be killed where he stands rather than draw back."

Unfortunately for the French, complete surprise proved elusive. On the morning of September 5, Maunoury's Sixth Army began working its way east from Paris, hoping to take up positions near Meaux and smash Kluck's flank the following morning. But German patrols reported on French movement and alerted the commander of Kluck's flank protection, the IV Reserve Corps under the command of General Hans von Gronau.

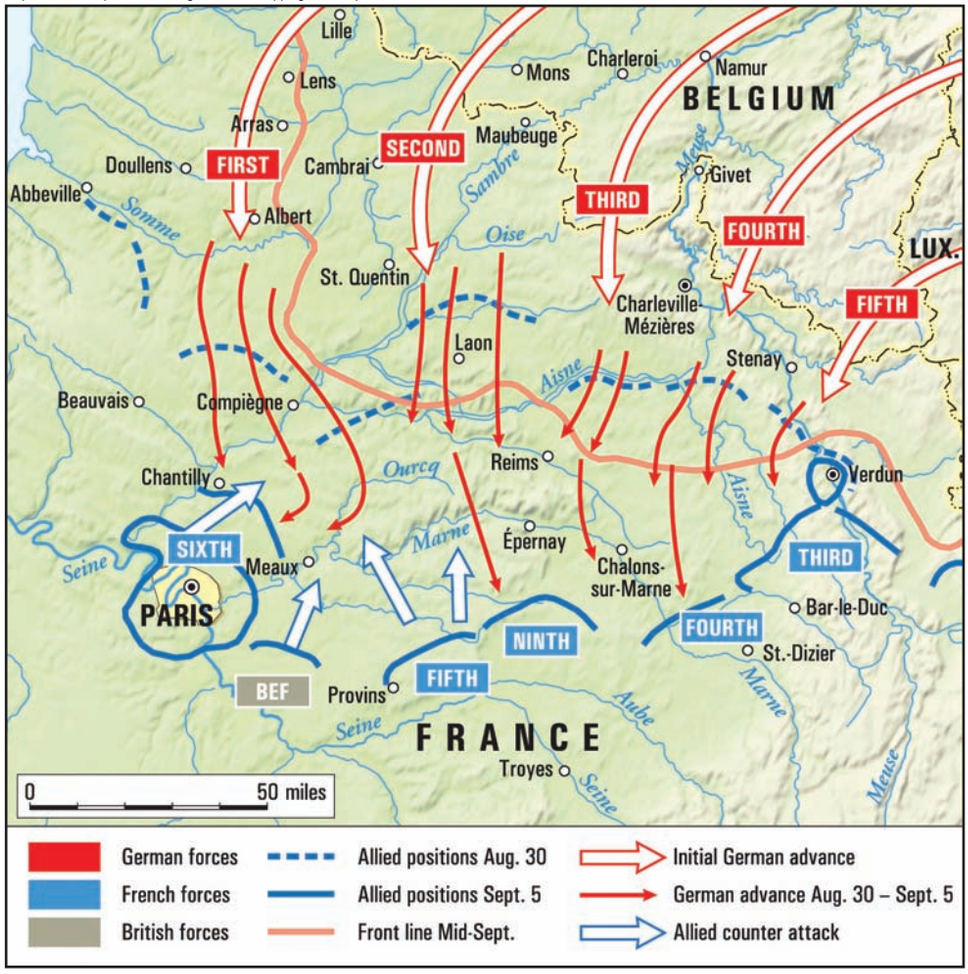
Immediately alarmed by the reports, Gronau suspected that the French were, indeed, preparing to launch a massive flank attack. Realizing that time was off the essence, Gronau made a bold decision on his own initiative. Rather than dig in and fight a defensive battle, he impetuously launched his own understrength corps into the teeth of Maunoury's massive Sixth Army.

Gronau pushed his infantry forward onto a wooded ridge that paralleled the Ourcq River, then opened up on the advancing French with concentrated artillery fire. After overcoming the initial shock, French troops pushed forward, but were stalled by the artillery and stubborn small arms fire. French guns returned fire and Gronau's troops suffered heavy casualties. After taking the worst of the fight against superior numbers, Gronau decided to pull back that night. His gamble had paid off; the French had been stalled and Kluck, now alerted to the danger to his right, had been given precious hours in which to prepare.

Rather than fall back to safer positions, Kluck began shifting forces to his threatened flank. Kluck rushed his II and IV Corps to reinforce Gronau and then launch an attack across the Ourcq. It was a characteristically aggressive move on Kluck's part, but in strengthening his right, Kluck had largely stripped his left—opening a 35-mile gap between his own left flank and Bülow's Second Army.

On the morning of September 6, the two sides fought to a bloody stalemate west of the Ourcq River. Maunoury sent in his 55th Infantry Division, along with a brigade of Moroccan colonials, to smash into Kluck's flank. The French attack, however, stalled in the face of well-directed artillery fire and was then stopped in its tracks by the arrival of German reinforcements.

Maunoury resumed the attack the following



ABOVE: With General Kluck's First Army threatening to smash the Allied left, General Joffre was forced to face reality and retreat to save his army. "Our objective must be to last out, trying to wear the enemy down and to resume the offensive when the time comes," Joffre wrote to the ministry of war. The French gave ground, sometimes 20 miles a day, skirmishing as they marched. OPPOSITE: After retreating 190 miles toward Paris, the French army counter attacked on September 5, 1914, near the Marne River. Defending their homeland, the French, along with a British Expeditionary Force, pushed the Germans back some 40-50 miles over the Aisne River. The German plan to win the war in 40 days by occupying Paris and destroying the French and British armies had failed. Along the north bank of the Aisne, the Germans dug in, beginning the trench warfare that would dominate the conflict for the next three years.

day, but the fighting went badly. When the French 63rd Division was hit hard with artillery followed by an infantry charge, it broke under the pressure, threatening to destabilize Maunoury's line. The French 5th Artillery Regiment leapt into action, tearing up advancing German columns with a hail of 75mm shells.

When Kluck received sketchy reports of the BEF advancing from the south, he was alarmed by the potential threat to his open left flank. He consequently ordered the III and IV Corps, then attached to Bülow's Second Army, to immediately reinforce his own position. But unknown to Kluck, Bülow had already ordered both corps to fall back to safer positions behind the Petit Morin River. Conflicting orders, paired with a woeful lack of coordination between German army commanders, would have fateful consequences.

From Paris, Gallieni continued to funnel all available troops to the front in an effort to stiffen Maunoury's men as they battled it out with Kluck. Although primarily using rail lines for troop transport, Gallieni nonetheless creatively used every available means. Two infantry regiments, the 103rd and 104th, were ferried to the front aboard Paris taxi cabs requisitioned for the war effort. Transporting four or five men at a time, 1,200 Renault taxis endured traffic jams and a harrowing night journey to the front. The efforts of the taxi cab drivers, exploited by French propagandists, would become the stuff of national legend.

As fighting erupted all along the front, it became apparent to the Germans that Joffre had succeeded in marshaling forces for a grand counterattack. In a broad arc from Paris to Verdun, a front of 160 miles, artillery churned the battle lines into dense clouds of smoke and dust. The largest battle yet to unfold in Europe was about to pit 750,000 Germans against 100,000 British and 980,000 vengeful French. Contemplating the prospects of the developing battle, Moltke wrote that "A great decision will come about…should I have to give my life today to bring about victory, I would gladly do it a thousand times."

Although Moltke would remain safely ensconced at his headquarters, his men by the thousands would indeed sacrifice their lives. Bülow's Second Army was hit hard by d'Espérey's Fifth Army, the German front caving in for about three miles. French troops, burning for vengeance, paid little heed to the customary rules of war. When a battalion of the German 74th Reserve Infantry Regiment was surrounded during a mad retreat, French troops ignored white flags and kept up a steady fire. When the shooting finally subsided, just 93 men were taken prisoner; 450 had been shot dead.

For Bülow, the situation only worsened. On September 8, the French 36th Division attacked northwest of Montmirail, driving in the German defenders and rendering German possession of the town untenable. With his III and IV Corps detached for service with Kluck, Bülow ordered his troops to fall back six miles and regroup. Although he temporarily relieved the pressure on his Second Army, Bülow had inadvertently widened the gap between himself and Kluck.

Farther to the east, the Germans would experience a bit of luck. After incessant hectoring from a hard-pressed Bulow, the Third Army's General Max von Hausen decided to make a move. Realizing that the bulk of the French forces were clearly committed to crushing the German right, Hausen felt that the enemy in his front was likely weakened and ripe for a vigorous attack.

In a daring attack on September 8, he ordered his Saxon troops forward with bayonets fixed and rifles unloaded. It was a bold move reminiscent of the 19th century, and Hausen's troops crossed the Somme River and crashed into unprepared elements of Foch's Ninth Army, sending it reeling to the south. Foch's retreat was littered with his dead, and his position at the Saint-Gond Marshes was left in German hands. Hausen's Third Army had likewise paid a heavy price for its gains.

In fact, rapidly mounting casualties were beginning to shock commanders on both sides. Artillery was quickly proving itself a dominant force on the battlefield, far outstripping the infantry tactics of the previous century. Technological advances had rendered the modern battlefield a surreal scene of

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bloodletting on an industrial scale. The artillery of the First World War rained tons of steel from the sky, churning up vast swaths of earth and killing men wholesale. The terrifying experience of artillery bombardment cracked men's nerves, demoralized entire units, and accounted for the majority of battlefield casualties.

As the fighting intensified, Kluck was facing a particularly thorny dilemma. German patrols had confirmed that the BEF was moving directly for the enormous gap between the First and Second Armies, but the general was reluctant to abandon his hard-won gains. Despite the fact that his army was clearly in a tight spot, Kluck, who had recently received fresh reinforcements, made plans to go on the offensive with a bold strike against Maunoury's left flank.

For his part, Bülow was increasingly demoralized by what he perceived as Kluck's refusal to close the gap between their respective armies. On the evening of September 8, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hentsch, a staff officer from Moltke's headquarters, paid a visit to Bülow's headquarters. The simple staff visit, as well as the decisions of a mid-level officer, would contribute to changing history.

Hentsch announced that he was authorized to order, if deemed necessary, a withdrawal from the Marne. From the outset, a pessimistic Hentsch seemed inclined to retreat. Bülow initially resisted such a move, but the following morning, he was rattled by fresh intelligence. Enemy troops were moving in force into the gap between the First and Second Armies. Exasperated by a continued lack of support from Kluck and painfully worried about the safety of his right flank, Bülow made the momentous decision to withdraw his forces behind the Marne.

Proceeding to First Army headquarters, Hentsch met with Kluck's chief of staff and was further discouraged by what he witnessed. Incredibly, Kluck, who was nearby, remained unaware of the meeting. Convinced that Kluck had no chance of success in his current position, Hentsch peremptorily ordered the First Army to break contact with the enemy, retreat to the northeast, and link up with Bülow. In a matter of hours, the entire German offensive that had steamrolled across northern France had been brought to a halt by a single staff officer.

As the order was passed along the front, the common fighting men of the German armies were dumbfounded and outraged by the turn of events. After marching hundreds of miles and fighting a grinding war of attrition, most of the men were optimistic of securing a final victory and hoped to continue the attack. The men of Kluck's First Army, in particular, had felt that their impending attack would finally break Maunoury's army and lead to a great victory. Some men raged, others were seen to weep. General Oskar von Hutier of the Second Army's 1st Guard Division stubbornly refused to comply; when initially given the order to retreat, he angrily snapped at his superiors, "Have they all gone crazy?"

With the Germans falling back all along the front, the Allies edged forward. On September 9, lead elements of the BEF and the French 5th Army crossed the Marne, facing little opposition. Despite the dramatic turn of events, the enormous gap in the German lines would largely, and inexplicably, remain unexploited. To Joffre's consternation, the BEF was extraordinarily slow in moving into the breach, and simply failed to press the attack with resolution.

The two armies nonetheless clawed and badgered each other by the hour, suffering staggering casualties. Moltke made a personal visit to the front on September 11, initially meeting with Hausen at his Third Army headquarters. Despite having suffered 15,000 casualties in the previous 10 days, Hausen was adamant that he could hold his own until the lines stabilized and a new offensive could be undertaken. Moltke, buoyed by Hausen's optimism, agreed. But when word came from Bülow that enemy forces were threatening to turn Hausen's right flank, Moltke once again lost his nerve and ordered the general retreat to continue.

With the enemy falling back, Joffre ordered a

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Marengo:

DEFEAT & VICTORY IN A SINGLE DAY

"The Battle of Marengo" was painted by contemporary French artist Lejeune Louis and hangs in Versailles.

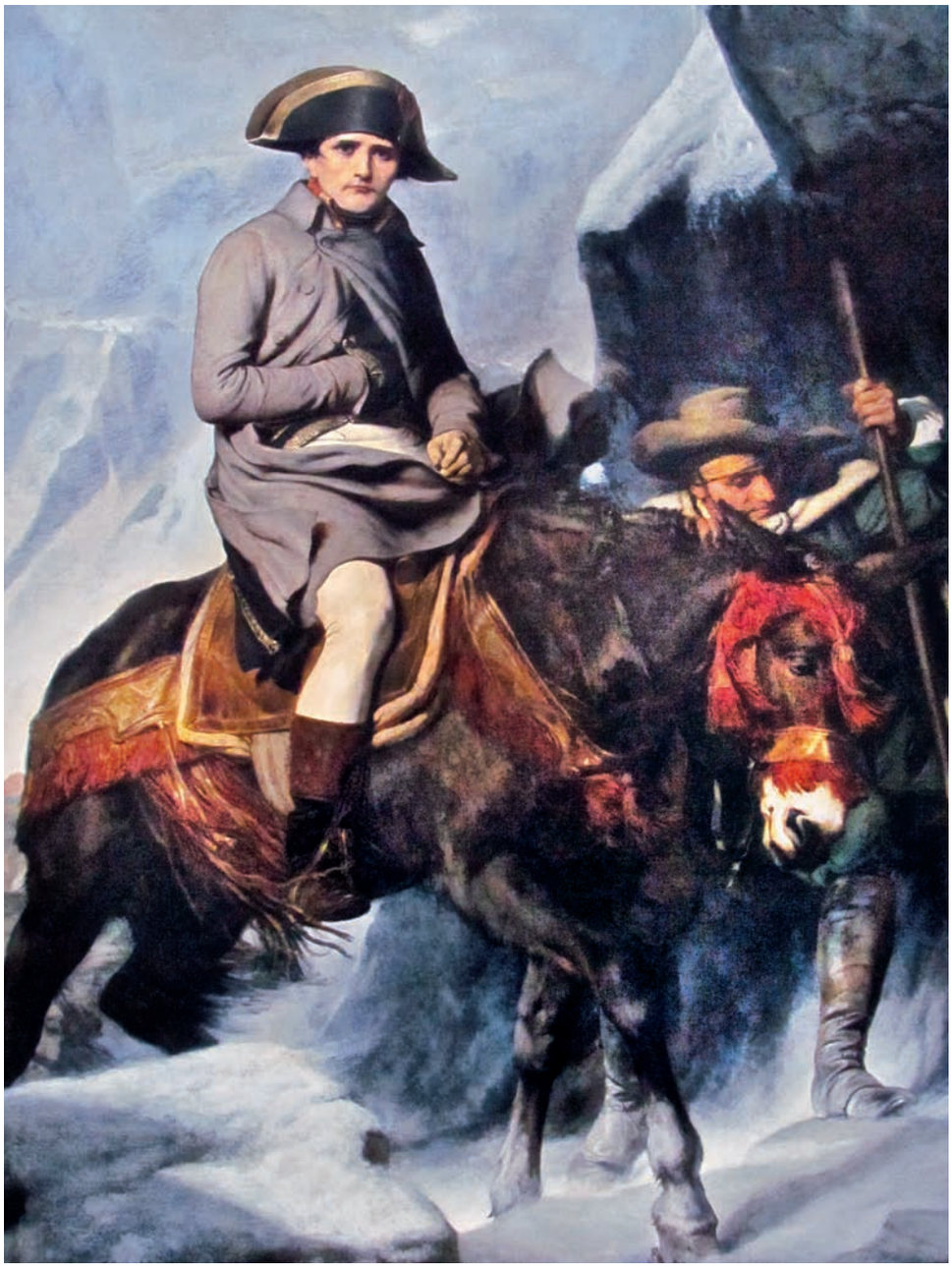
ON March 17, 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte closeted himself in his study at the Tuileries Palace in Paris and ordered his private secretary, Louis Fauvelet de Bourrienne, to unroll a large map of Italy and lay it on the floor. Bonaparte was First Consul of the French Republic, head of a new government that had been installed the previous November, but he was still only 30 and didn't stand on ceremony. Once the map was on the floor Bonaparte lay on top of it; Italy was not only at his feet, it was under his knees.

The First Consul exuded the sure authority of a man born to command. Thin, almost wiry, his uniform fit him well, and the corpulence of his later career was still in the distant future. The aquiline nose and high forehead gave his face an almost Roman cast and his long locks had been recently cut short, earning him the nickname "*Le Tondu*" (the shorn one).

But above all it was his eyes, blue-gray and commanding, that set him apart from ordinary mortals; a mere glance of displeasure could reduce subordinates to abject terror and a look of

After masterful maneuvers, young Napoleon falters badly and nearly loses it all.

BY ERIC NIDEROST



Most of the Army of the Reserve crossed the Alps via the Great St. Bernard pass—steep, clogged with snow in May and impassable for artillery or wagons. Napoleon rode a mule led by a Swiss Guide along much of the route that sometimes narrowed to a mere 18 inches.

approval was better than the highest honor. Right now Bonaparte's eyes were fixed on the map of Italy that was spread before him. After a moment's deliberation he stuck pins in the map. The pins with black wax tips were enemy formations, and red wax pins marked where Bonaparte hoped to place his own troops.

France had been convulsed by a decade of revolution, a period of turmoil and bloodshed, idealism and reform. By 1800 the revolutionary "fever" had broken, leaving the country drained and weakened by its long ordeal. The French economy was in chaos, its ports blockaded, and its roads infested with brigands. The treasury was empty, and its legal system cried out for reform.

But before Bonaparte could even begin to consider rebuilding France he had to deal with the overriding issues of war and peace. The country was war-weary and looked to Bonaparte to secure a lasting peace with its neighbors. In 1800 France was fighting a powerful Second Coalition composed of Great Britain, Austria and Russia. Russia had effectively withdrawn from the fighting late in 1799, but Austria—backed by Britain's powerful Royal Navy and British gold—was still a formidable land adversary. French peace overtures were soundly rebuffed; even Bonaparte's personal appeals to Britain's King George III and Austria's Emperor Francis II fell on deaf ears.

The Austrians, in particular, were in no mood to be conciliatory. They had overrun Italy in 1799 and destroyed the French-backed Cisalpine Republic in the northern part of that country. Dealing from what they thought was a position of strength, the Austrians spurned Bonaparte's proffered olive branch. Great Britain, too, was in no mood for peace. The First Consul had no choice but to turn his thoughts to war.

Poring over his map, Bonaparte could see possibilities in an apparently hopeless situation. In southern Germany a large Austrian army of over a hundred thousand men under General Kray confronted Gen. Jean Victor Marie Moreau's Army of the Rhine. In northern Italy, Austrian Gen. Michael Melas opposed a weak French Army of Italy under Gen. Andre Massena. In fact, thanks to Massena's earlier victory at Zurich, the French still held most of Switzerland, and in Bonaparte's eyes that country was the key to victory.

Switzerland occupied a central position between Germany and Italy, in essence connecting two seemingly disparate fronts. Bonaparte's ultimate objective was the destruction of the Austrians in a great battle: Either Kray's or Melas's armies would suit his plans. As events unfolded, Melas and Italy were to be the main French target, with Moreau's Army of the Rhine in a secondary role as a buffer protecting the French left against Kray's possible intervention.

It was all incomprehensible to his secretary Bourrienne, so Bonaparte motioned him down to the floor to explain. "Where do you think I shall beat Melas?" Bonaparte queried his puzzled scribe.

Bourrienne responded with the honest answer, "How the devil should I know?"

Slightly exasperated, Bonaparte continued, "Melas is at Alessandria with his headquarters… Crossing the Alps here [he pointed to the Great St. Bernard pass] I shall fall on Melas, cut off his communications with Austria, and meet him here on the plains of Scrivia." As Bonaparte explained his concepts he put a red pin at San Giuliano. Other towns and villages in the area included Villanova and Marengo.

It was a typically Napoleonic conception, simple in design, yet brilliant and audacious in the extreme. Yet, was Bonaparte's prediction uncanny foresight, or merely wishful thinking? Only time would tell.

Massena's Army of Italy was hungry, ragged, and weak, and certainly in no condition to take on Melas alone. Its very plight would make it tempting bait, blinding Austrian eyes to French

Crossing the Alps in May 1800, Napoleon's army passes by the Hospice of St. Bernard where monks greeted Napoleon, who had visited them during his first Italian campaign in 1796. Note the dissassembled artillery, with the eight-pounder cannons being dragged in hollowed-out tree trunks in the form of troughs.

movements in their rear. Bonaparte planned to raise and equip a new formation that was to be called the Army of the Reserve. Led by Bonaparte personally, the Army of the Reserve would cross the Alps and fall upon Melas before he knew what was happening.

There were some problems in this budding plan of campaign, but to Bonaparte obstacles were made to be overcome, not fretted over. The Constitution of the Year VIII expressly forbade the First Consul to command armies outside of France, so Bonaparte resorted to a legal fiction: His chief of staff Alexandre Berthier was made the nominal chief of the Army of the Reserve. Raising this new army was no easy task at first because few troops were available. Assembling around Dijon, the Army of the Reserve grew steadily from 30,000 to 60,000 men.

But before Bonaparte's plans could be implemented the Austrians turned the tables by launching a major offensive in Italy on April 5, 1800. General Melas, heavily reinforced, was to sweep down and defeat Massena's scarecrow Army of Italy, capture Genoa, then invade southern France. The ultimate objective was the great French naval base at Toulon on the Mediterranean. On paper the scheme was admirable; certainly, such a Mediterranean strategy would allow the Austrians to be supplied and supported by the ships of the British Royal Navy.

Unfortunately for the Austrians, the Auric Council—their decision-making body for war—took little serious account of the growing Army of the Reserve assembling around Dijon. In Austrian eyes the Army of the Reserve was an amorphous body, seemingly neither fish nor fowl. Since it was scratch-built and had many raw, inexperienced troops, the Austrians tended to dismiss it out of hand.

Nevertheless, in its early stages the Austrian offensive in Italy met with considerable success. General Massena was a tough and talented soldier, but his outnumbered forces were forced to fall back under heavy Austrian pressure. Eventually the Army of Italy was cut in two, with part of it under Massena besieged in Genoa and the remainder under General Suchet pushed westward beyond the Var River.

All now depended upon the doughty Massena. By the third week of April, the general and 24,000 men were holding on in Genoa, the Austrians laying siege on land and the British blockading them by sea. It was a grim situation, and the prognosis was anything but rosy. The Genoese population was restive, even hostile, and so in a sense Massena was beset with enemies inside and out. Yet the general's continued resistance delayed the projected Austrian invasion of France and, better yet, tied down a substantial number of Melas's overall forces.

Bonaparte realized Massena could still play a crucial role in the campaign simply by holding out as long as humanly possible. In fact Massena's resistance was more vital than ever, because he distracted Austrian attention from the Army of the Reserve. The First Consul was going to move his army through the Alps and fall on Melas's rear, just as he had told Bourrienne. But plans, however brilliant on paper, can fail in execution. Everything depended upon timing.

The First Consul needed a victory, not just to end the war but to secure his hold on power. Bonaparte was unproven as a ruler and with one false step his regime could be swept away. A decisive victory would be the bedrock that would help to stabilize his government and assure the continuation of his power.

General Moreau resented Bonaparte's sudden rise to prominence, and it's likely he saw himself as better suited for the role of France's ruler. The First Consul wanted him to attack Kray, but Moreau found plenty of excuses to delay action. The Army of the Rhine belatedly took the offensive on April 25, and by May 3 Moreau had

ABOVE: Napoleon is cheered by his soldiers, somewhat worse for the wear, after the treacherous crossing of the Alps. They had taken eight days to drag themselves and their artillery over the narrow, steep and snowy Great St. Bernard pass under the constant threat of avalanche, from Switzerland and down into Italy. OPPOSITE: On June 9, 1800, General Jean Lannes's army crossed the Po River and encountered a force of 18,000 Austrians under General Ott at Montebello. Though outnumbered, the French fought for five hours, finally forcing the Austrians to withdraw.

defeated the Austrians at Stockach. With Moreau's victory, Bonaparte's left flank was secure from any unexpected Austrian intervention from Germany. Plans to cross the Alps could now proceed apace.

The Alps were a formidable barrier any time of year, but in May the passes were still clogged with ice and snow, rendering them well-nigh impassable. Some of these mountain tracks might just be barely passable by infantry or even cavalry, but certainly not artillery. Yet that is exactly what Bonaparte proposed to do—bring his entire army over the jagged snow-capped peaks and on to the fertile plains of Piedmont and Lombardy.

Quite apart from the sheer physical exertion it would take to climb the mountains, there was the ever-present danger of avalanche. General Marescot, the army's chief engineer, reported, "It is vital to take precautions against avalanches which can bury several battalions in a flash."

Bonaparte had to choose a pass to cross the Alps, and he had several options: From east to west, the St. Gotthard, the Simplon, the Great St. Bernard, and the Little St. Bernard. The St. Gotthard was the most attractive, at least on paper, being wide enough to accommodate an entire army, but it was the farthest east. In the end Bonaparte chose the Great St. Bernard because it was closest to his forward base at Villeneuve on Lake Geneva.

It was a matter of sheer logistics; supplies would be ferried from Geneva to Villeneuve via the lake. Yet the Great St. Bernard seemed the worst of choices—a narrow, steep, and snow-clogged artery that was impassable for regular artillery or wheeled traffic.

The French army was used to living off the land, but there was little in the Alps but ice and snow. It was, therefore, imperative that the Army of the Reserve cross the mountains as quickly as possible. Bonaparte estimated the Alpine trek could be completed in eight days; the soldiers carried nine days' rations in their knapsacks.

To avoid excessive crowding, and also to throw a smokescreen into enemy eyes, some French detachments took routes other than the Great St. Bernard. General Chabran's division, for example, was to use the Little St. Bernard, linking up with the main body at Aosta. But the bulk of the Army of the Reserve would pass through the Great St. Bernard.

General Jean Lannes led the way with an advance guard of 8,500 men. The pass was every bit as formidable as anticipated; sometimes it was only 18 inches wide. And so the Army of the Reserve began its celebrated passage through the Alps. The soldiers marched single file along the rough track, a thin blue ribbon against a looming backdrop of granite peaks. At times the defile was scarcely more than a goat trail—rocky, precipitous, and choked with snow and ice. Yet in spite of the difficulties the sweating, hard-breathing troops made good progress. Higher the soldiers climbed, the massive white-mantled mountains growing ever larger, until their pinnacles seemed to spike the sky. The granite behemoths were awesome to behold, but survival, not contemplation, was paramount in the French soldiers' minds.

In some places the track grew so steep its sides fell away into deep gorges. The infantry gingerly picked its way over the rocky defile, and the cavalry led its frightened mounts on foot. But the toughest job was reserved for those infantry who were selected to carry the artillery over the mountains. There were two methods of transporting artillery. First, the gun carriages were disassembled, and then the eight-pounder cannons themselves were put in hollowed-out tree trunks in the form of troughs. Mules were scarce, and according to some accounts the local peasantry took to their heels, so there was nothing to do but enlist the soldiers as beasts of burden.

Private Jean-Roche Coignet of the 96th Demi-Brigade was a young soldier just starting out on a distinguished military career. In his memoirs he recalls what it was like to drag cannon through the Alps. There were "forty grenadiers to each gun; twenty to drag the piece, and twenty others who carried the others muskets and the wheels and caissons of the piece." Each drag-team of soldiers was commanded by a cannoneer. It was a grim and back-breaking journey, and Coignet was on the edge of a deep cliff, "next to the precipice."

The army snaked its way up to the Col, some 8,120 feet above sea level, then continued on the downward slopes. Their fatiguing journey was refreshed by a brief stop at the Monastery/ Hospice of St. Bernard. The monks set up tables laden with cheese and wine, which were gratefully consumed by the French troops as they trudged past. The good monks were famous for their alpine rescues via their celebrated St. Bernard dogs. According to the memoirs of Constant, Bonaparte's valet, some young soldiers strayed from the main trail and floundered in the snow, where "they were discovered, almost dead with cold, by the dogs … transported to the Hospice … and speedily returned to life."

The French were making excellent progress, but then their descent into the valley of Aosta was blocked by Austrians at Fort Bard. Bard was virtually impregnable to direct assault. Commanded by an officer named Bernkoff and manned by 400 grenadiers of the Kinsky Regiment, this tiny garrison held up 10 times its number of Frenchmen and effectively corked the narrow "bottleneck" of the valley.

Lannes bypassed Fort Bard by blazing a trail that climbed around the brooding bulk of Mount Albaredo. It was a tough trek, but the advance guard infantry and cavalry managed to clamber up and around the slopes and skirt the fort. Once past Bard, Lannes pushed on, but some forces remained to besiege the stubborn Austrian garrison. The fort had to be reduced, the "cork" removed from the "bottle," or Bonaparte's timetable was in serious trouble. The bulk of the Army of the Reserve was held up, stalled in the mountains and forced to consume its precious rations. There was a real danger that the army, as Bonaparte put it, would be "exposed to dying of starvation in the valley of Aosta."

Meanwhile Bonaparte and his staff had started up the Great St. Bernard pass on May 20, a few days behind the advance guard. The First Consul crossed the Alps on a sure-footed mule, not the painter David's romantically rearing charger. At times he went on foot, gray greatcoat buttoned against the cold. Once or twice the French soldiers had to slide down snowy slopes like children, and Bonaparte was no exception. Rolling, tumbling, sliding from side to side, the First Consul of the French Republic careened down the icy slopes like a human toboggan, his entourage following suit. Far from being embarrassed by the episode, Bonaparte wrote an account of it in his official dispatches.

Lannes reached Ivrea by May 22, so the advance elements of the Army of the Reserve were through the Alps and spreading through the plains of Piedmont. Although French infantry and cavalry were just managing to squeeze past Fort Bard, the artillery and ammunition wagons were effectively blocked. During the night of May 26-27 six cannons sneaked past Bard, the hoofs of the gun team

Napoleon was convinced that the Austrian commander Melas was going to retreat, rather than fight. However, the Austrians began the battle by attacking early on the morning of June 14, waking the slumbering French with gunfire.

horses wrapped in straw to muffle sound. But the bulk of the artillery was still held up.

Bonaparte pushed on, and he proudly wrote to his brother Joseph, "We have fallen like a thunderbolt." The First Consul had every right to be pleased: The 40,000-man Army of the Reserve, though very weak in artillery, was safely in Italy. But there was not a second to lose, because Massena's heroic defense of Genoa could not last much longer. Rations were so scanty they barely sustained human life. The garrison and townspeople ate horseflesh and a nauseating "bread made from sawdust, bran, straw, and a tiny trace of flour."

When there were no more rations, horses, pigeons, cats, and dogs were consumed—anything to assuage the terrible hunger pangs. Rats became a staple, and even grass. Only Massena's iron will kept the French going, yet it is said that the strain of those terrible weeks of famine left its mark on the general, and his hair turned gray. Starving citizens threatened to revolt; only harsh martial law kept them in check.

Massena was doing his job. He was distracting the Austrians from the approaching Army of the Reserve, and in the process also tying up a good portion of Melas's troops. Melas began to sense that something was afoot, and by May 19 realized the Army of the Reserve really did exist. But where was it? There seemed to be French activity along a broad front, from the Var River to the St. Gotthard Pass. On May 24 Melas received a dispatch from Fort Bard that thousands of French troops were on the march through the Great St. Bernard. But the intelligence was too late, because the Army of the Reserve was already well ensconced in Italy.

Melas had lost a great opportunity. If he had not been so preoccupied with the Genoa siege and his own projected invasion of southern France, he could have easily blocked all the Alpine passes with heavy concentrations of troops. Bonaparte's great plans would have been neutralized, his army stuck in the mountainous valleys of the Alps. Once Massena was forced to capitulate, the Austrian invasion of France might continue with little opposition. It was a frightening scenario for the French, but luckily it did not come to pass.

Bonaparte now ordered his forces to Milan, the great metropolis on the Lombardy plain and the former capital of the Cisalpine Republic. Milan was astride Melas's line of communications as well as a major Austrian base bursting with stores. There were also political advantages to consider; the capture of Milan would be a bloodless victory that would not go unnoticed in Paris. The First Consul's political stock would rise and his fledg-

ling rule given a boost that it really needed.

When Bonaparte entered Milan on June 2, the populace thronged the streets and acclaimed him with tumultuous cheers. There was more good news when word reached Milan that Fort Bard had finally fallen on June 1. Artillery and supplies could now flow through the St. Bernard unimpeded. During his six-day sojourn in Milan, Bonaparte the general seemed replaced by Bonaparte the First Consul and consummate politician. He addressed the catholic clergy and even attended an opera at the famed La Scala. But beneath the surface Bonaparte was acutely aware of his military responsibilities. The great Po River was between him and Melas; it was essential that the French establish a bridgehead across the river.

Genoa finally capitulated on June 4, but Massena managed to procure very favorable terms. The French garrison was not to be taken prisoner, but instead would be allowed to withdraw beyond the Var, there to reunite with their Army of Italy comrades under General Suchet. Once beyond the Var, Massena would be free to resume operations again.

In the meantime Melas was busy concentrating his forces at Alessandria, a movement that had begun as early as May 31. Bonaparte's anxiety was increasing, but on June 7 Gen. Joachim Murat crossed the Po and seized Piacenza on its southern bank. Once Piacenza was secured the French lost no time in building a pontoon bridge over the river. Soon other bridges were completed, and by June 10, long columns of Frenchmen were trudging across the Po. Lannes, in the forefront as always, encountered a force of 18,000 Austrians under General Ott at Montebello and defeated them.

Lannes had gained a notable victory, but the clash was only the curtain-raiser of the unfolding drama. By nightfall of June 11, around 28,000 men had gathered at the concentration point at Stradella, but the French columns were finding it slow going due to heavy rains. A campaign that had begun with such promise was literally bogging down, diluted by the incessant downpour. Even the First Consul was "under the weather," complaining to his wife Josephine, "I have a wretched cold."

But Bonaparte's spirits were lifted when General Louis Desaix joined the Army of the Reserve. Desaix had been in Egypt and had been recently repatriated to France. Bonaparte's joy in seeing him was real, not feigned; he looked on Desaix as a true friend, not a rival for power. The First Consul at once created a *Corps d'Armee* (Army Corps) for Desaix composed of Boudet's and Monnier's divisions.

But satisfaction was soon replaced by new anxiety: Where was Melas? So far, apart from one or two isolated clashes such as Montebello, the Austrians seemed to be playing will-o'-the- wisp. The whole object of the campaign was to gain a decisive victory—but how could that victory be achieved if there were no enemy to fight?

Determined to come to grips with his elusive foe, Bonaparte ordered Lannes, Victor, and Murat across the Scrivia river and to head east in

the direction of Alessandria. The Austrians seemed to be withdrawing, deliberately avoiding contact. Melas was probably around Alessandria, but Bonaparte reckoned the Austrian had no more than 22,000 men under his command. Melas was indeed in Alessandria, but with 33-35,000 men. It was a miscalculation that would lead to a series of near-fatal errors.

The First Consul became convinced the Austrians were trying to give the French the slip. If so, there were two possible escape routes: Melas could fall back on Genoa, which could be supplied by the British Royal Navy, or he could try to slip northward and cross the Po. Once over the river, he could march home or even resume the offensive with a thrust at Milan and French communications.

Bonaparte was certainly human and capable of mistakes, even self-delusion. He now knew Melas was in Alessandria, but Austrian units still were falling back. Melas was abandoning the plain of Scrivia (sometimes called the plain of Marengo). This seemingly trivial fact took on significance, since the plain was almost the only one in Italy where masses of cavalry could charge at full speed. The Austrians had superior cavalry forces; if Melas had wanted to fight, why give up this ground?

The Austrian quarry was escaping, or so it seemed to a worried Bonaparte. Melas had to be trapped, cornered, and forced to fight. The First Consul had posted units along the banks of the Po, at Piacenza, Crema, Milan, and Turin, in an effort to "cover all bases" against Austrian moves. Now, he weakened his field army further by dispatching General Desaix toward Rivalta and Novi, with a thought of eventually cutting the road to Genoa. Bonaparte still felt Melas would try to bolt toward the Mediterranean port. Thanks to this delusion, the First Consul violated one of his own precepts of war: Concentrate your forces for a decision in the field.

It continued to rain throughout the 13th, the deluge punctuated by thin veins of lightning and booming claps of thunder. Bonaparte visited the village of Marengo, climbed a tower, and anxiously scanned the western horizon. There, in the distance just beyond the Bormida River, lay Alessandria and the Austrian army. He couldn't shake his firm conviction that Melas was about to slip the net.

Evening came, and the French settled down to a thoroughly wet, cold, and miserable night. Rations were as sodden as the men's spirits; Private Coignet of the 96th Demi-Brigade recalled years later how they had to choke down damp and moldy bread. Even the elite Consular Guard was having a rough time of it, the grenadiers soaked to the skin and their feet ankle-deep in glutinous muck.

Bonaparte still thought he had the initiative, but he was living in a dream world that was aided and abetted by sloppy staff work. It was reported that the Austrians had retired beyond the Bormida River, destroying the bridge behind them. This was not true. Bonaparte dispatched a staff officer who not only confirmed the earlier report, but failed to notice the Austrians had built a second pontoon bridge over the waterway. The night had been dark and rainy, but this was a serious lapse.

In fact Melas was going to attack, not retreat. At 71 the old "fox" was not about to be cornered by the French "hounds." If he retreated to Genoa and the British fleet, he might be trapped by Bonaparte on the one hand and Massena on the other and not reach his destination. A northward escape also held little interest. No, the prey was going to the predator, and Melas was determined to attack.

The Austrian offensive began in the early-morning hours of June 14, 1800. The Battle of Marengo was about to begin, a contest that would not only decide the outcome of the Italian campaign, but also determine Napoleon Bonaparte's

ABOVE: A charge by 400 of François Kellerman's heavy cavalry dispersed Christoph von Latterman's Austrian grenadiers. General Louis Desaix, whose arrival with 5,000 troops as the French appeared defeated, changed the course of history. Desaix, Napoleon's close friend, was killed leading his troop at about the same time. OPPOSITE: First Consul Napoleon Boneparte on a white horse, center, has drawn his sword as he confronts French troops beginning to retreat in the face of Austrian pressure. By 2:30 p.m. the conflict was looking like a French defeat and Austrian General Melas left the field, assigning his chief of staff General Zack to finish the job.

future as ruler of France.

The French center rested at Marengo, variously described as a farmstead or village, but generally a cluster of rural stone buildings. The area was generally flat, but on closer inspection some variety was provided by pockets of willow, chestnut, and poplar trees. Other farms dotted the landscape, which favored the defense. Fontanone Creek fronted Marengo, but what was normally a little vein of water was now an engorged artery choked by the recent rains, its banks steep and slippery with mud. Generals Gardanne and Chambarlhac of Victor's corps held Marengo supported by only five guns.

The sleeping French were rudely awakened by a "reveille of gunfire" and taken by almost complete surprise. Melas marched his army across the Bormida bridges in three columns. General O'Reilly was the first over the river and turned south to form the Austrian right wing. General Melas and his chief of staff General Zack were in the second column of some 18,000 men; they were to form the main attack at Marengo. A third column under General Ott wheeled north to form the Austrian left.

Melas, too, was capable of making mistakes, and made some major errors at Marengo. The third column was particularly strong because Melas thought the French had the bulk of their forces at Castel Ceriolo, an erroneous assumption. He also did not add Alessandria's large garrison to his field army, which could have boosted his advantage even further. Finally, Melas detached about a third of his cavalry from the center and sent them south because there was information General Suchet's cavalry was at Acqui. The report was false.

Bonaparte spent the night at Torre di Garofoli, a splendid castle crowned by a bell tower (*campanile*). For several hours he refused to believe the Austrian attack was anything but a feint, a smokescreen thrown up to cover their withdrawal. It was at about 10 a.m. that Bonaparte realized his error. Couriers were dispatched to call back scattered units, most particularly to General Desaix.

In the meantime the Battle of Marengo was evolving into a series of seesaw attacks and counterattacks. Momentarily the Austrians would gain the upper hand, followed by a French riposte. Bonaparte had about 22-23,000 men under his immediate command, Melas about 33,000. Marengo and the Fontanone stream became a firestorm of shot and shell, with Austrian regiments advancing with bands playing and flags flying. French officers barked commands over the din; musket volleys crashed out in sheets of smoke, flame, and lead; and cannonballs plowed bloody lanes into the packed ranks.

Melas had 100 guns, the French—depending on what authority you consult—had about 23. Austrian artillery created a terrible havoc; cannonballs were bad enough, but shells spun and sputtered within ranks. When a burning fuse reached the charge, the resulting explosion did terrible execution. Private Coignet, whose 96th Demi-Brigade was part of Victor's corps engaged at Marengo village, says "a shell burst in the first company, and killed seven men."

The shot and shell grew so heavy it apparently

unnerved Gen. Jacques Chambarlhac. When an orderly was killed nearby, Chambarlhac dug in his spurs and galloped off in panic. Coignet records he disappeared for the rest of the day. When Chambarlhac did show his face after the battle, one of his soldiers fired a shot at him. They could forgive almost anything but cowardice.

Lannes and Murat came up in Victor's support, but the French were still very hard pressed. Bonaparte arrived on the battlefield and saw the right was in extreme danger: If Ott took Castel Ceriolo unopposed, the French flank might be turned and disaster would ensue. He called up his remaining reserves, including the Consular Guard and Monnier's division. In particular Monnier was to deny Castel Ceriolo to the enemy.

In the center Victor's division was nearing the end of its rope. Bloodied and exhausted, it had held for the better part of five or six hours. They had begun the battle somewhat bedraggled; now they were muddy and sweat-stained, their lips and faces powder-blackened from biting their cartridges to tear off the end to load their muskets. By around noon ammunition was almost gone—soon there would be nothing left to fight with but bayonets and clubbed muskets. Luckily there was a pause around noon when the Austrians regrouped for the final push.

The Consular Guard came forward, 900 grenadiers and chasseurs with bristling mustaches and tall bearskin caps marching in perfect order. They had left Torre di Garofoli at about 11:30 a.m., covering the approximately three miles to the battlefield in about an hour and a half. Their first task was to act as couriers, bringing up ammunition to Victor's decimated corps. Coignet was one of the recipients of these cartridges, and he gratefully recalled that this act "saved our lives."

Victor's men doggedly blazed away, but the heavy fighting produced another problem. Coignet remembered "those cursed cartridges could no longer go into our fouled and heated musket barrels." The muskets were hot from frequent use, and black powder residue was clogging the barrels. The soldiers cooled the barrels and washed away the fouling by the only method they had on hand. Coignet unblushingly reports that "we had to piss into them."

In the meantime the Consular Guard marched to the French right in support of Lannes's corps. When Austrian cavalry appeared, officers shouted the command "Horsemen! Form square!" (*Cavaliers! Formez la carre!*) The four-sided formation was usually proof against cavalry, and once in place the guard coolly poured a hail of musket balls into their attackers.

The Austrian Lobkowitz dragoons were shredded by the musket fire and broke off the attack.

But the guard was in a vulnerable position, and General Ott now ordered artillery and infantry fire to be directed at their square. Cannonballs smashed into the guard and Austrian musket fire peppered the ranks. Within a half hour 260 of the 900 men were dead or wounded.

Bonaparte himself was in the thick of the fighting, conspicuous in his gold-braided dark- blue uniform, gray greatcoat, and the black cocked hat that was soon to be his distinctive trademark. At one point he stood on the bank of a ditch, his horse's bridle in one hand, a riding crop in the other. Suddenly mounting, and disregarding the scores of cannonballs that flew all around, Bonaparte galloped over to nearby troops and shouted "Courage, soldiers! The reserves are coming! Stand firm!" The bloodied survivors responded with a hearty "Vive Bonaparte!"

By about 2:30 p.m., it was clear the French had lost the Battle of Marengo. The Army of the Reserve was giving way, falling back before superior enemy numbers and a grueling artillery barrage. Flesh and blood could stand no more; in Coignet's unit, only 14 grenadiers of the original 170 were still standing, the rest being dead or wounded. Coignet himself was badly shaken up when he received a heavy Austrian saber slash that cut off his hair queue and an epaulet. Stunned by the blow, he fell headlong into a ditch, only to be ridden over by cavalry. When he came to his senses he saved himself by grabbing the tail of a dragoon's horse as the trooper retreated. Even Coignet freely admitted that the French were "quite ready to give up, but for the encouragement of the officers."

General Melas was so certain he had achieved a major victory over Bonaparte that he assigned the pursuit and "mop-up" duties to a column under his chief of staff General Zack. Melas had a long, exhausting day, and was slightly wounded. The Austrian commander in chief felt justified in leaving the field as the French were plainly crushed.

But had he achieved a victory? An exultant shout arose from the battered French ranks, "Here they are! Here they are!" Desaix had arrived in the proverbial nick of time with some 5,000 troops. There are several versions of how he managed to come to the rescue. Some hours earlier Bonaparte had sent him an urgent message of recall, the text of which supposedly ran, "I had thought to attack Melas. He attacked me first. For God's sake come up if you can." Some say Desaix was within reach because he had been held up by flood waters, others that he was already marching "to the sound of the guns" when Bonaparte's frantic missive reached him.

Whatever the case, Desaix was there—but was

ABOVE: Napoleon, in the thick of the fighting, is cheered by his men, "Vive Boneparte!" Nearly a third of the 900-member Consular Guard was killed in half an hour by the 100 Austrian cannons as Boneparte rode among the men urging them to stand firm and await the reserves. OPPOSITE: Napoleon is shown the body of General Louis Desaix. Grief-stricken Napoleon reportedly exclaimed, "Why am I not allowed to weep?" He later errected two monuments in Paris to honor Desaix

he in time? He galloped up to Bonaparte, his uniform muddy and his horse lathered in sweat, for a quick consultation. Cool as ever, Bonaparte asked, "Well, what do you think of it?" According to most sources Desaix replied, "This battle is completely lost, but it is only two o'clock [some sources say three]; there is time to win another."

Desaix was as good as his word, leading his men and the shattered remnants of Victor's corps over to the attack. Victory or defeat hung in the balance as the French smashed into General Zack's column. Many of these Austrians were grenadiers, tall men picked for their toughness and resolve, and conquering them would be no small matter. As the French went forward, General Marmont brought up four guns that poured salvo after salvo of case shot into the Austrians, tearing bloody lanes into their ranks with every discharge.

An ammunition wagon exploded, momentarily stunning the Austrians. It was at this precise moment that Gen. François Kellermann led a charge against the Austrian flank. He had only 400 troopers, but had no hesitation in ordering "At the gallop! Charge!"(*Au galop! Chargez!*). The French cavalry plunged into the Austrian grenadiers like furies, sabering left and right. Gen. Jean-Baptiste Bessieres, seeing Kellermann's charge, moved the horse grenadiers and chausseurs of the Consular Guard forward with the command,"Squadrons—forward—march!" (*Escadrons…en avant…marche!).*

Kellermann's cavalry charge, coupled with Desaix's bold advance, proved too much for the Austrians. French defeat was turned into victory as the Austrian right wing collapsed in headlong flight back to Alessandria. General Zack and several thousand troops were taken prisoner, stunned that their apparent triumph had turned to ashes. The Austrians left under General Ott retreated in good order, but no one could deny the French had won an incredible 11th-hour victory over heavy odds. Bonaparte had lost the first Battle of Marengo, only to win a second Battle of Marengo a few hours later.

The fighting died out about 9 p.m., allowing the victors to take stock of the situation. The Austrians lost 15 colors, 40 guns, and 8,000 prisoners; a further 6,000 were casualties on the field. French casualties were put at some 7,000. General Desaix was dead, shot and killed almost instantly at the head of his men near Vigna Sancta. Bonaparte was genuinely grief-stricken when he heard the news; he knew how much the fallen general had contributed to the final victory. Indeed, Bonaparte might have toppled from power had he been defeated at Marengo. The whole course of French, and even European, history was affected by Desaix's timely return. A shocked Melas asked for an armistice, which was granted. Eventually the Second Coalition fell apart, and there was a general—if temporary—peace in Europe by 1802.

Marengo had a curious culinary epilogue, something that keeps its memory forever green. Durnand, Bonaparte's cook, knew that the First Consul was bound to be famished after the long and hard-fought day. There was little food to be had, so foragers were sent out to scour the countryside. All that they could come up with was a scrawny chicken, four tomatoes, three eggs, a few crayfish, and a little garlic.

Durnand had to improvise, so he cut up the skinny fowl with a saber and fried it in olive oil, garlic, and a splash of cognac. The crayfish were also fried and placed on top of the chicken as a kind of garnish. When Bonaparte ate the dish, he found it so delicious he commanded it be served after every battle, or so the story goes. And thus was born "Chicken Marengo" (*Poulet á la Marengo*), an edible commemoration of a great battle. ■

Marcus Crassus, Alexander and the BATTLE OF CARRHAE

BY GLENN BARNETT

Alexander of Macedon, called "the Great," died in June of 323 BCE having conquered the mightiest empire yet seen on earth. At his birth, the Achaemenid Empire of Persia ran from the Danube River in the West to the Indus River in the east. By the time he died it was all his.

More than 250 years later, Alexander's exploits were legendary in the growing Roman Empire and its emperors and generals idolized Alexander. In 54 BCE, the Roman general Marcus Licinius Crassus would attempt to emulate Alexander's life and duplicate his conquests to achieve greatness.

He was not the first Roman to seek comparison to Alexander. Scipio Africanus, who defeated Hannibal and destroyed Carthage, was often likened to the Great Macedonian. So was Pompey, called "the Great" in his own lifetime. Plutarch also compared Julius Caesar to Alexander in a work that, unfortunately, has not come down to us. But Crassus was the first Roman to face a resurgent Persia with an army at his back.

Crassus' father, Publius, was elected consul, the highest office in the Roman Republic, in 97 BCE. The following year he held the proconsul governorship (an office given to a recently serving consul) of Roman Spain. There he fought to extend Roman control over the Lusitanian peoples of today's Portugal. It is likely that Marcus would have served alongside his father in Spain while gaining military experience.

Publius took sides in a civil war between the followers of Gaius Marius and Lucius Cornelius Sulla. He and his eldest son fought for Sulla and were killed by followers of Marius in 87 BCE. Alexander the Macedonian also had been the son of a powerful man who was murdered by political opponents. Marcus was now the heir to his father's name. Fearing the same fate as his father and older brother, he fled back to Spain where he was hidden and protected by his father's friends.

While in Spain, Crassus raised a small army of about 2,500 men to support Sulla against Marius and avenge his family. Joining Sulla for his invasion of Italy, Crassus was assigned to raise Italian troops for the Sullan cause and performed the task well enough for Sulla to give him command of the right wing of his army in what would be the climactic Battle of the Colline Gate in 82 BCE when the forces of Sulla decisively defeated the Marians.

Crassus likely delighted at being on the right because Alexander fought his two most important field battles against the Achaemenid Persian King Darius III from that position. He commanded his elite cavalry, including his household mounted unit known as "The Companions," on the right wing of his army. In the Battle of Issus in 333 BCE, Alexander, and much of his cavalry took charge of the right flank. As the battle progressed, his left wing was in danger of collapsing.

He then led his mounted troops directly at the chariot of Darius in the center of the Persian line and forced him to flee. The sight of the king speeding away caused panic among his troops and they followed their king in great chaos.

Alexander's next battle was on the wide plain at Gaugamela in 331 BCE, near the city of Erbil in modern Iraq, east of the Tigris. This time, Alexander moved his cavalry to the far right and Darius' cavalry attacked him there stretching the Persian line to leave a portion undefended. On the left, the Macedonian line shifted to allow a Persian chariot charge to race through unchallenged, causing another gap in the Persian line. Alexander rushed through one opening, while troops on the left flank of his line rushed through the second gap in Darius' line. The hard charging Macedonians once again caused Darius to flee. The Persian line and empire collapsed.

Much later, during the battle between the Marians and Sulla, the left wing of Sulla's army collapsed and the situation was in doubt. Sulla rushed to their aid and tried to rally them, leaving Crassus in charge of the right flank. While Sulla struggled to get the troops fighting again, Crassus mimicked the charge of Alexander and maneuvered his right wing to smash into the middle of the Marian line, snatching victory from defeat for Sulla.

With his first taste of Alexandrian-like victory Crassus was rewarded by a grateful Sulla who put him in charge of taking vengeance on supporters of his enemies. In his new role he was to seize the property of aristocratic followers of the doomed cause of the Marians properties and resell them to raise money for Sulla's veterans.

How Marcus Crassus' pride, greed and hero-worship of Alexander the Great lead to the tragic end of the richest man in Rome.

Marcus Licinius Crassus, left, known as "the wealthiest man in Rome," sought glory on the battlefield by following in the footsteps of his idol, Alexander III of Macedon "Alexander the Great" (right). It all came crashing down at Carrhae (in modern-day Turkey) at the hands of the Parthian Empire in 53 BCE.

AKG IMAGES

Crassus sold the property, taking a large commission or secretly keeping some of the properties. In this way he began the process that would make him the wealthiest man in Rome.

Crassus continued to increase his real estate holdings until 73 BCE, when a disgruntled Thracian gladiator named Spartacus led a slave revolt against his Roman masters. His army of escaped slaves, centered on combat proven gladiators, defeated successive Roman forces sent against him. In the process, more slaves rallied to his cause and a great number of weapons were captured for their use and turned against the Romans.

A year later, the runaway slaves were the scourge of Italy, defeating three Roman armies sent against them. Then, the victorious slaves turned south to ravage the peninsula, enrich themselves and hopefully escape to Sicily.

The consuls were defeated and humiliated while Rome's best generals were stationed far from Italy. Pompey was in Spain putting down a rebellion while Lucius Licinius Lucullus, (a friend of Sulla) was in Thrace. A young Julius Caesar was not yet known for his fighting skills. Crassus, seizing the moment, made an extraordinary offer to the Senate. If he was given command of the Roman armies in Italy he would pay for the newly raised army from his own great wealth.

The desperate Senators accepted. Crassus immediately began recruiting, not raw recruits, but the seasoned veterans of Sulla's army. After inheriting two legions from the now docile consuls, he soon had an army of over 40,000 battle hardened legionnaires in eight legions. They were armed, equipped and paid for by Crassus himself.

At the start of the campaign, a commander disobeyed orders and led his forces against Spartacus and was defeated. Worse, the legionnaires broke and ran. Crassus punished them as Alexander had once done—through decimation, in which every tenth man in the disgraced unit is killed by his peers. Discipline was restored.

This theory stems from Alexander's Roman biographer Quintus Curtius Rufus, who wrote that Alexander put to death 600 out of 6,000 soldiers that had abused their authority over a subject province. Rufus lived a generation or two after Crassus and the decimation story can't be conclusively proven—but if it were true, then Crassus would have been following the lead of his hero.

While Crassus recruited, trained and punished his newly formed army, Spartacus had reached Calabria in the toe of Italy, seeking transport to Sicily where the spirit of rebellion smoldered among slaves working the farms and mines of the island.

Spartacus offered locals money for transport to Sicily, but the ship owners feared Rome more than they did the desperate slave leader. They took his gold but never provided the boats.

While Spartacus waited in vain, Crassus brought his army in behind them. In a wonder of Roman engineering, his men and locally conscripted civilians built a trench with periodic ramparts along the entire 37-40 mile neck of Calabria and trapped the doomed slaves.

In their first encounter, Spartacus was desperate to escape the trap that Crassus had made for him. In the middle of the night, he broke through the Roman line and most of his army escaped. But internal dissention was fracturing the unity of the slaves along nationalistic lines.

About 12,000 Gauls and Germanic people had split with Spartacus and did not participate in the breakout. Crassus discovered the schism and set his larger army on the Gauls and destroyed them.

Spartacus and his main army however were still on the loose. What's more, Crassus had persuaded the Senate to recall Pompey and his army from Spain and Lucullus and his army from Thrace to help put down the slave rebellion. But now, with victory within his grasp, Crassus realized his mistake. The two better known generals might arrive in Italy and crush Spartacus before he could. They would get the glory. He couldn't allow that and so went at the rebels with a terrible purpose.

Spartacus meanwhile had taken up positions in mountainous ground. Crassus, in his haste, sent his vanguard straight at them before the rest of his army could arrive. They were repulsed, giving the slaves a false hope of future victories. When

Crassus had brought his army up and all was ready, he charged the slave redoubt and crushed them, killing Spartacus in the process.

The slaves that escaped their Calabrian confinement were unable to bring their supply wagons, leaving the army of Spartacus, worn down by continual marching and fighting, was in a weakened position. Crassus' victory was overwhelming.

Only one event spoiled Crassus' victory. About 5,000 slaves had escaped the slaughter on the mountain side and made a dash northward to flee Italy. They were stopped by an arriving Roman army from Spain under the command of Gnaeus Pompeius who is known to us through the anglicizing pen of Shakespeare as "Pompey." Pompey wrote to the Senate that though Crassus had defeated the slave armies, it was he himself who had ended the rebellion.

The Senate awarded Pompey a Triumph and gave Crassus a lesser sign of victory known as an ovation. The two men then were named co-Consuls for the following year (70 BCE). Crassus and Pompey had been rivals before. Pompey's bravado took their rivalry up a notch.

In reality, the two most powerful men in Rome had mutual interests in different spheres of influence. Pompey was the most powerful Roman general while Crassus was the wealthiest and most influential senator and politician. The men found common ground when they served as consuls.

Following their joint consulship, Crassus remained in Rome amassing his fortune and building political alliances. Pompey went to war. First, he systematically vanquished piracy from the Mediterranean and Black Seas and then assumed command of a mutinous army in Rome's war against Mithridates VI of Pontus.

Pompey reinvigorated the new army. He now commanded Anatolia and defeated the armies of Pontus. After his defeat, Mithridates fled to Armenia where his son-in-law was king. That man, Tigranes the Great, now opposed the Romans. To aid his cause Pompey negotiated with the Parthians, who then controlled Persia, for a joint invasion of Armenia. However when the Romans were victorious, without the aid of Parthia, he canceled the deal. By that time however, Parthia had sent cavalry into the Armenian occupied territory of Gordyene (in southwestern Turkey) which had only recently been a Parthian territory before Armenia seized it.

Pompey restored Tigranes to his throne as a Roman client king and sent his legate, Aulus Gabinius, the length of Armenia to the banks of the Tigris River as a show of force. He sent another legate, Lucius Afranius, to evict the Parthians from their re-conquest of Gordyene. The small Parthian force there left without a fight.

Afranius followed up this insult to Rome's

From left, busts of Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey), Gaius Julius Caesar. TOP: The gladiator Spartacus led a slave rebellion in 73 BCE, defeating militia and soldiers sent to capture him and his growing number of followers. After two years, Marcus Crassus led eight legions (40,000 men) to end the revolt, though Spartacus' body was never found. As a warning, 6,000 recaptured slaves were crucified along a 100-mile stretch of the Apian way. This color engraving made from the 19th century illustration "Death of Spartacus," by H. Vogel. OPPOSITE: Lucius Cornelius Sulla and his army fight their way into Rome in 82 BC. Sulla's victory made him a virtual dictator, and he extracted a bloody revenge on his opponents..

would-be ally with another. He marched his army across the Mesopotamian plain to Antioch on the Mediterranean coast. In doing so he crossed the formerly Seleucid territory claimed by Parthia since 141 BCE. Significantly he passed through the town of Carrhae on his westward march. As a final insult, Pompey annexed Parthian-claimed Pontus and Syria to the growing Roman Empire.

As Pompey fought in the east, Crassus made money financing up-and-coming politicians of both the aristocratic and equestrian classes. The most famous of these was a young Julius Caesar to whom he loaned a good deal of money and supported his early political and military career.

When Pompey returned to Rome under a cloud of suspicion from the Senate for stepping outside the bounds of the mandate he had been given, Crassus backed his rival. Their uneasy alliance would culminate in their mutual support of Julius Caesar to be consul in 59 BCE. Caesar shrewdly balanced his financial obligation to Crassus by arranging a marriage between his daughter Julia and Pompey, securing his ties to both men. Soon Crassus would secure another link to Caesar by sending his son Publius to serve in Caesar's army as a cavalry captain.

As consul, Caesar adroitly arranged for measures benefiting both his patrons to be passed by the Senate. As his reward, Caesar was given the proconsul governorship of Cisalpine Gaul, which

at that time consisted of northern Italy. Caesar would use that base to build his own personal fiefdom. He would use Transalpine Gaul (France) as a springboard to eclipse his mentors.

With Caesar away from the capital, two conflicting gangs controlled by Pompey and Crassus fought each other in the streets of Rome. The people divided their political loyalties between the two men. By 55 BCE, with Caesar's blessing and support, the two giants reconciled and were once again elected joint consuls as they had been in 70 BCE.

During this consulship, the proconsul governor of Syria, Pompey's man Gabinius, was in Judea to stop a civil war when he received a petition from a man named Mithradates, the brother of the Parthian king Orodes II, requesting his support in the struggle for the Parthian throne. Gabinius agreed and got his army across the Euphrates River before being recalled by Pompey to restore the deposed King Ptolemy XII Auletes (the father of Cleopatra) to the Egyptian throne. Among Gabinius' soldiers at this time was a young cavalry captain named Marcus Antonius, who Shakespeare would rename, Mark Antony.

GALLERIE DELL'ACADEMIA, VENICE

ABOVE: Crassus sacked the Temple of Jerusalem in 54 BCE as a way of forcing the Jews to contribute to his military campaign, in much the same way that Alexander required conquered people to contribute to his. OPPOSITE: Crassus, who tried to parlay with the Parthian commander Surena, was killed when the fighting suddenly resumed. He is shown falling dead from his horse (lower right) as Parthians assault the Romans.

Back in Rome, an uneasy alliance between three men, Crassus, Pompey and Caesar, informally controlled Roman politics from 60 to 53 BCE. This alliance is known to historians as the First Triumvir. When they divided up the pie, Caesar was given another five years to subdue the vast territory of Gaul. Pompey was given the governorship of Spain and Crassus was given the governorship of Syria and allocated seven legions–.

Crassus craved military greatness like that achieved by Pompey and Caesar. He had won only one battle under Sulla's command and Pompey had won the praise for Crassus' victory over the slaves. He wanted victories of his own without interference from his rivals and peers.

Plutarch, writing over a century later, recorded that Crassus was, "altogether exalted and out of his senses, he would not consider Syria nor even Parthia as the boundaries of his success, but… flew on the wings of his hopes as far as Bactria and India and the Outer Sea." In other words, he sought to emulate the great Alexander.

He arrived in Syria in 55 BCE and relieved his predecessor Gabinius. Crassus was in a strong position as he, like Gabinius, backed the Parthian pretender Mithradates, who was now in a strong position as he held the wealthy cities of Babylonia under Parthian control. In addition, the king of Armenia sought to align his country with Rome and offered up to 40,000 Armenian infantry and cavalry for the allied effort against the Persian enemy. Local Arab tribal leaders also offered to support Crassus.

In addition to these advantages, Crassus could reflect that he had considerably less work to do than Alexander had done to accomplish his dreams of empire. The Macedonian had to fight his way across Asia Minor, Syria, Judea and Egypt before crossing the Euphrates River to get at Darius and his army. By Crassus' time all those territories were either Roman provinces or client kingdoms. The Alexandrian battlefields of Granicus and Issus were already under Roman control and Crassus could begin his campaign from the banks of the Euphrates River.

Crassus quickly crossed the river and marched on local towns, finding local Parthian forces easily dealt with and dispersed. There was little opposition from most of these Greek inhabited towns, save one. With the campaign season nearly over, Crassus left a garrison on the east bank of the river and returned to Syria for the winter.

Crassus spent that winter governing his province, training his soldiers and raising funds for the coming showdown with the Parthians. It was the custom for ancient armies to split up during winter to several different garrisons. This was done to prevent the hardship that would be felt by a single city if it had to feed and house an entire army.

It was also in keeping with the norms of ancient armies to collect taxes from allied or conquered territories before beginning a new campaign. According to Arrian who did his writing between 146 and160 AD, when Alexander returned from Egypt to Syria he set a "levy of tribute in Phoenicia (western Syria)" and other kingdoms. Crassus now did the same. His grasp reached as far as the Temple of Jerusalem which was also forced to contribute. The Jews would view his coming disaster and untimely death as God's just punishment for his confiscation of Temple funds.

Crassus also had to choose the route of his invasion. The first route, once used by 10,000 Greek mercenaries in 400 BCE, as recorded by Xenophon, led down the Euphrates river valley to the wealthy cities of Seleucia and Babylon (near today's Baghdad). This would allow him to meet up with his Parthian ally Mithridates III, who anxiously awaited his arrival.

Whichever route was taken, the rich, Greek-populated city of Seleucia was the Roman goal, as Crassus informed a Parthian negotiator named Vagises. It is said that when informed of Crassus' intentions, Vagises pointed to the palm of his hand and said to him, "Hair will grow here before you reach Seleucia." His words were prophetic.

Yet that winter, while Crassus rested, the strategic situation changed. The Parthian king Orodes sent a force against his brother Mithradates. This

army was led by a nobleman we know by his clan name, Surena. He defeated the Parthian pretender and sent him in chains to his brother Orodes for execution. Crassus, deprived of a valuable local ally, had no more reason to take the first route to confront his enemy.

The second route that Crassus could take would be through the mountains of Armenia to Media on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. In 209 BCE, the powerful Seleucid King Antiochus the Great had used this route to temporarily defeat the growing power of the Parthians.

Crassus was urged by Artavasdes, the Roman client king of Armenia, to use this route while repeating the offer of 40,000 soldiers for the joint effort. But Crassus had his doubts about the loyalty of this ally whose father had once been the client king of Parthia and who, when summoned with his army to Syria, was very late in arriving and even then with only 6,000 cavalry. Crassus snubbed the invitation to march through Armenia to get at the Parthians. Insulted, Artavasdes took his army and returned to his own country to await the outcome and embrace the victor. It was another change in the strategic situation. Crassus did not heed the warning signs.

The third route that the Romans could take in 53 BCE was through the Mesopotamian plateau. The ancient sources tell us of an Arab chieftain named Ariamnes (by Plutarch) or Abgarus (by Dio) who advised Crassus to take this route rather than march southward along the Euphrates to Babylonia. Plutarch suggests that Crassus was easily swayed by this argument. But the Roman general had long ago decided to go this way.

It was the route that Alexander the Great had used in his invasion of Persia. He, like Crassus, wanted to head straight toward the enemy and destroy his army before occupying the rich cities between the rivers. When Alexander defeated Darius III at Gaugamela, the cities of Babylonia fell to him like ripe fruit. Crassus could expect the same outcome when he, too, was victorious against the Persian army.

As we know from Alexander's experience, he would ultimately want to occupy Seleucia and the rest of Babylonia to tax its wealth. When he received the Parthian ambassador Vagises who asked him his intentions, Crassus, not giving away which route he would take, replied that he would give him an answer in Seleucia.

According to Plutarch and others, Crassus would have seven legions (approx. 35,000 infantry) under his command as well as 4,000 auxiliary infantry and 4,000 cavalry. The estimates given by ancient sources for Alexander's army are roughly the same number of men when he began his invasion of Persia.

Arrian, a biographer of Alexander, says the Macedonian and his army crossed the Euphrates River at the town of Thapsacus. The precise location or name of this town today isn't known. In the early part of the third Century CE, Cassius Dio writing between 165 and 235 CE, wrote that Crassus crossed the river where Alexander had. Historians continue to debate this, but Dio at least, saw Crassus consciously pursuing the course of Alexander's invasion.

Across the river, Alexander was confronted by a Persian Satrap named Mazaeus who commanded 3,000 horsemen. Mazaeus fled the oncoming Macedonians. Crassus had a similar experience. Plutarch wrote that, "Some of his scouts now came back from their explorations, and reported that…they had come upon the tracks of many horses which had wheeled about and fled from pursuit." He goes on to say that when Crassus heard of it he became more confident of victory. He pushed on in the path of Alexander. Everything was playing out for Crassus just as it had for Alexander.

An Arab chieftain named Ariamnes, who had once sided with Pompey, arrived at the Roman camp and was remembered by some of the veterans. Plutarch has the man telling a gullible Crassus that he should rush forward to meet the forces of the Persian king before they could form defensive lines on the Tigris River against him. Plutarch faults him for this. But in all likelihood, this is what Crassus had in mind anyway.

Alexander, fearing that Darius III might fortify the Tigris River against him, had rushed his army

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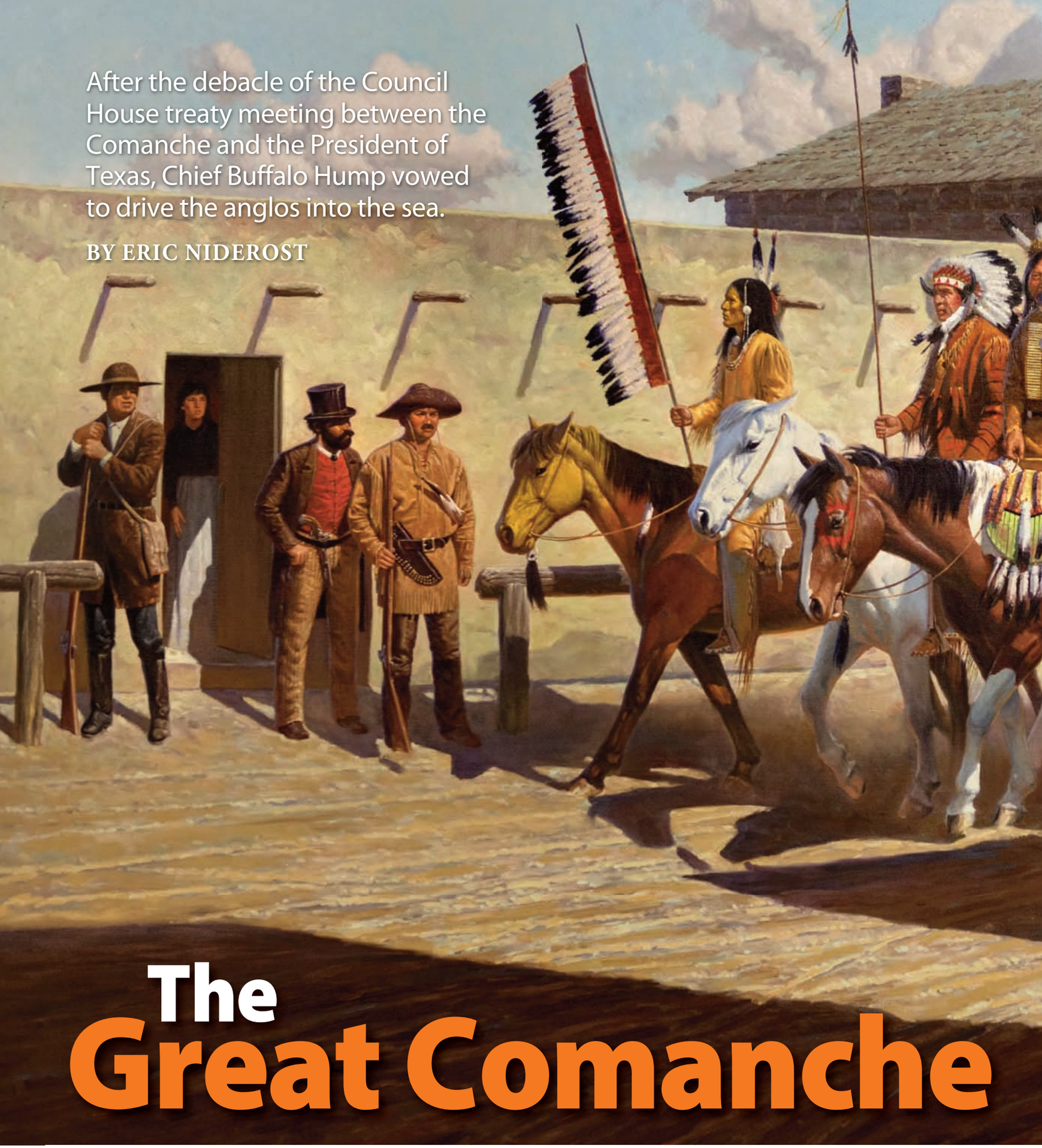
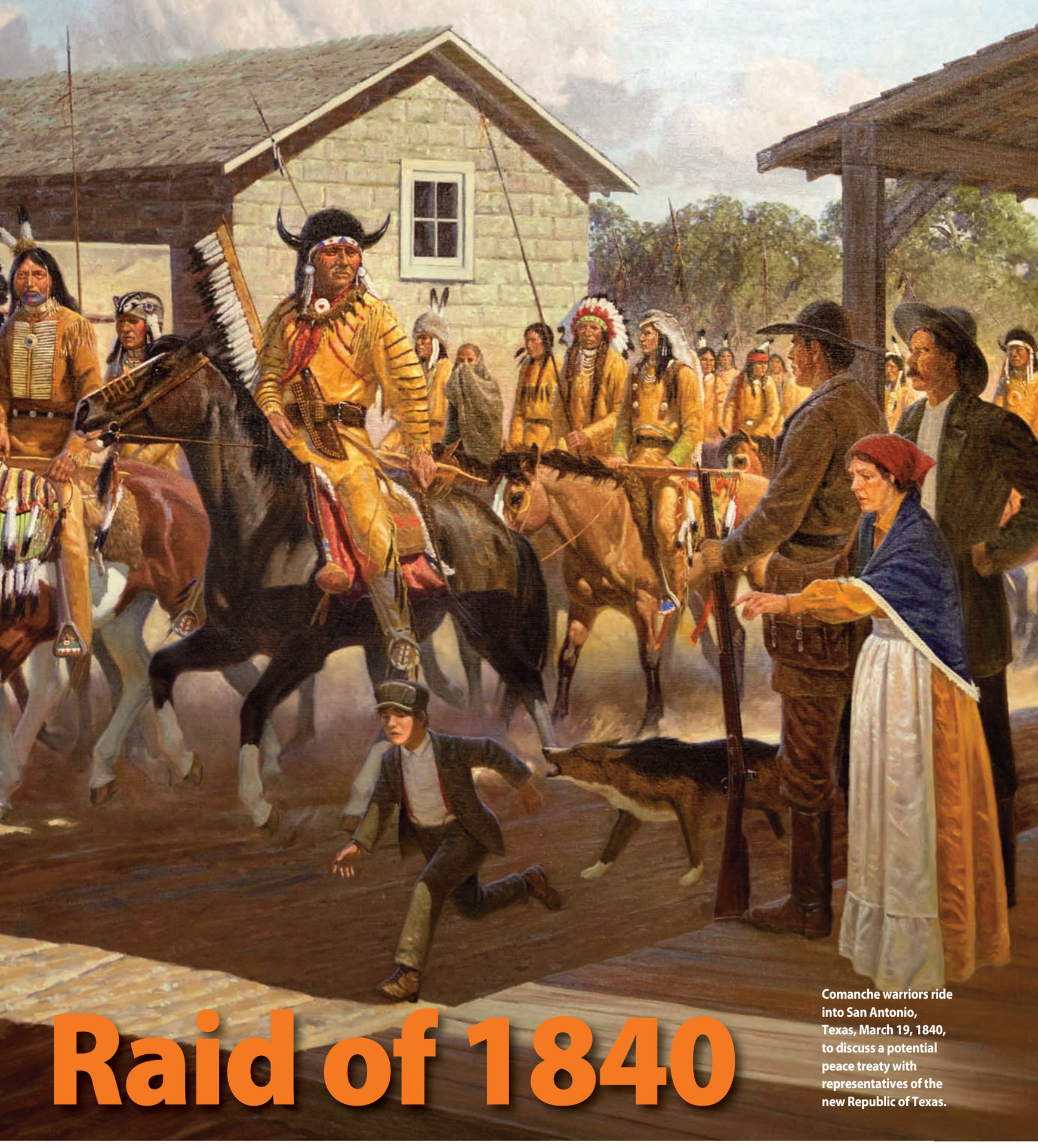


After the debacle of the Council House treaty meeting between the Comanche and the President of Texas, Chief Buffalo Hump vowed to drive the anglos into the sea.

BY ERIC NIDEROST

The Great Comanche



Raid of 1840

Comanche warriors ride into San Antonio, Texas, March 19, 1840, to discuss a potential peace treaty with representatives of the new Republic of Texas.

It was a colorful spectacle few citizens in San Antonio, Texas, had ever expected to see: a large delegation of Comanches coming in to discuss terms of a possible peace treaty. The date was March 19, 1840—*dia de San Jose*, or "Saint Joseph's day" in a city that was still largely Hispanic in custom as well as outward appearance. It was a large delegation, headed by 12 chiefs, along with 35 warriors. The Penateka Comanche mission also included 32 women, children, and old men, a large collection of furs, and a small herd of horses. These were clear signals of the Comanche's peaceful intentions—women and children would not accompany a war party; and furs and horseflesh were common items of trade.

The chiefs were especially splendid, looking every bit like the "Lords of the Plains" they would later be called. Mounted on wiry Indian ponies, they were dressed in their finest, another signal that their intentions were not hostile. Some chiefs had ornate headdresses of splayed eagle feathers, while others wore buckskin shirts decorated with long ribbons acquired from trade with the whites. Faces were daubed in paint, colorful red vermillion stripes alternating with darker shades.

The meeting would be held in the Council House, a one story, flat roofed, limestone building that, along with the adjoining jail, was located at the Main Plaza and Calabozo streets. The chiefs dismounted, and were directed to enter the Council House. Once inside, they sat on the hard packed earthen floor—most natives did not like chairs—while the Texas peace commissioners sat on a raised platform facing them.

A large crowd of San Antonio citizens had gathered outside, perhaps a bit apprehensive but still curious about the new visitors. The Comanche were arguably the most powerful tribe in Texas, with a well-deserved reputation for striking without warning in brutal, bloodthirsty raids that had set the frontier aflame well before the coming of the Anglo Texans.

One of the main issues in this conference was the return of white captives taken in various raids. This was not a request, but a demand, and part of the hardline policy promoted by Texas President Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar. His predecessor, Sam Houston, genuinely appreciated Indians and sought peace with them. But Lamar, like his namesake Napoleon, dreamed of empire—only his version was an all-white empire devoid of native peoples.

Lamar was the brutal, uncompromising face of westward expansion. Gone were the diplomatic niceties, the high flown rhetoric of brotherhood and assimilation. Lamar's policy was ethnic cleansing, where native peoples had two choices: expulsion or extermination. The Cherokee were his first targets; in the summer of 1839 a village was attacked and many Indians, including Houston's friend Chief Bowles, were killed. Corn fields were torched and villages destroyed. Other tribes also felt Texan persecution, including the Delaware, Shawnee, Kickapoo, and Creeks. Survivors went north to what is now Oklahoma.

But Texans would soon find the Comanche were a people every bit as determined, warlike, and ruthless as themselves. Part of the unfolding tragedy stemmed from the vast, and ultimately irreconcilable, differences in values, assumptions, and cultural norms. The Comanche shared a common language and culture, but were otherwise completely autonomous. There were five major bands; the group closest to white settlements were the *Penateka* ("Honey Eaters"). The settlers never seemed to grasp that a chief did not have absolute power over his people. A chief might be respected and followed in battle, but there was no obligation to listen to what he had to say—or follow his orders.

In the first quarter of the 19th century the Comanche had carved out a huge territory that might well be described as an empire. Called the *Comancheria*, its borders were imprecise, but very real, about 250,000 square miles of plains that stretched from the Arkansas River in the north to

the Balcones Escarpment in the south. The escarpment is a fault line that features a rise of tree-covered limestone hills that are pierced by the Brazos, Colorado, and Guadalupe Rivers

South of the escarpment was the coastal plain that held Anglo-Hispanic settlements like San Antonio. The rivers that cut through the escarpment were highways for raiding and war, but also for trade. The Penatekas were the southernmost Comanche band, and despite the raiding and occasional bloodshed, the near proximity to white culture was slowly but inexorably changing them, in good ways and bad.

White clothing made of cotton or wool became more desirable than skins, and metal pots and kettles were better than clay for cooking. Many knew Spanish, and some even learned English. But as the white settlements encroached on Penateka lands, the buffalo were scared away, and soon even smaller game grew scarce. As Chief Muguara ("Spirit Talker") once lamented, "The white man comes and cuts down the trees, building houses and fences, and the buffalo get frightened and leave and never come back…"

Worst of all, the white settlers brought epidemics of disease. The Americas had been isolated from the rest of the world for thousands of years, so indigenous peoples lacked any kind of natural immunity. The Comanche were regularly decimated by outbreaks of smallpox. The Penatekas decided the best thing to do was to make peace. Perhaps, if all went well, some kind of a recognized boundary between the Comancheria and the Republic of Texas could be established once and for all.

The Texas Secretary of War, Albert Sydney Johnston, was another official who thoroughly agreed with Lamar's extinction or expulsion policy. He was willing to send representatives to San Antonio for a parley, as long as the Comanche fully understood that "our citizens have the right to occupy any vacant lands of the government, and they must not be interfered with by the Comanche." In other words, there was no such thing as tribal lands—all was open to white settlement.

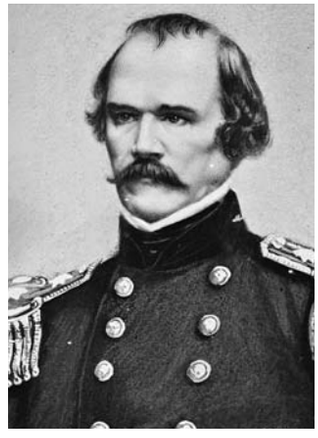
Johnston also made it clear that the Comanche were to immediately return all white captives that they might be holding. If they did not immediately comply, Comanche negotiators would be held hostage until such prisoners were freed. One would think that in such a parley some kind of safe conduct would be granted, but not in this case. To Johnston and many Texans, natives were savages that were beneath contempt, so civilized rules and courtesies did not apply to them.

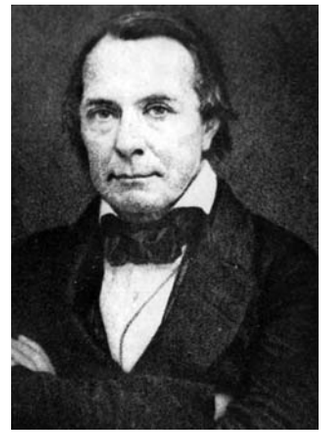
Lamar appointed Colonel Hugh McLeod, Adjutant General, and Col. William G. Cooke to be the San Antonio Conference commissioners. Expecting trouble, Company A, I, and E of the First Regiment of the Army of the Texas Republic would also go to San Antonio in case the Comanche proved uncooperative. The three companies totaled about 175 men, more than enough to handle the situation if the need arose.

After the chiefs dismounted and entered the Council House the rest of the delegation—younger men, women, and even a few children waited outside. Young Comanche boys of 8 or 10 demonstrated their skill with the bow and arrow, much to the delight of the curious San Antonians gathered to witness the event. When coins were tossed into the air, the boys shot them out of the sky in full flight.

Mary Maverick, wife of a San Antonio merchant, and another woman resident peeked through a picket fence nearby to watch the "performances," marveling at the skills displayed by children so young. There was no inkling of the, as Mary later put it, "horrors" to come.

Inside the council house the atmosphere was initially cordial, but a palpable sense of unease began to fill the room. The Comanche had earlier promised to return all white captives, but had brought in only one girl, 16-year-old Matilda Lockhart. Her condition was shocking, because the teenager had been raped and systematically





LEFT: General Ed Burleson fought in the War of 1812, and later in the Texas Revolution. CENTER: Albert Sydney Johnston served as the Texas Secretary of War, and later in the Confederacy. RIGHT: The Texas Republic's second President, Mirabeau Lamar, wanted to drive all Native Americans out of Texas. TOP: This early photograph is believed to be the Council House, a one-story 18th century stone building directly across from San Fernando Cathedral on the east side the Main Plaza in San Antonio, Texas. The building, which served as the courthouse with the local jail adjoining it, was the site of the 1840 meeting between Texas representatives and the Comanche delegation. OPPOSITE: In 1838, Comanche chiefs Eswacany and Essomanny meet with Texas officials in San Antonio to negotiate the establishment of territorial boundary lines. The Texans refused to discuss the matter.

ABOVE: Mary Maverick, shown with three of her children,witnessed the Council House fight. She is believed to be the first Anglo woman to settle in San Antonio. RIGHT: A Comanche war party, painted by George Catlin. Buffalo Hump's raiding party of 1840 has been estimated to include as many as 1,000 Comanches, including 500 warriors. Catlin began a journey through the west in 1830, visiting 18 tribes, and eventually completing over 500 paintings of what he witnessed.

tortured during her months of captivity. Mary Maverick recalled that Matilda's "head, face and arms were full of bruises and sores" from constant beatings. She had no nose, just two nostrils wide open like a skull, surrounded by a large scab.

The girl's nose had been burnt off by Comanche women, who took fiendish delight in waking her up by shoving a burning piece of wood in her face. The laughter was general as she screamed in pain. Privately she confessed she was "utterly degraded," a Victorian euphemism for rape. In spite of her suffering, she was a quick learner who picked up the Comanche language. Understanding their tongue, she knew that some 13 captives were still prisoners.

The Commissioner confronted Muguara who, through a translator, was the chief spokesman of the Comanche delegation. The commissioners demanded to know why more captives were not brought in as promised. Muguara explained that they were held by different camps, and although he was a chief, he had no authority over those other Comanches. But Spirit Talker, in a conciliatory tone, suggested that if the whites produced a large ransom in the form of goods, ammunition, blankets and vermillion, he was sure a deal could be worked out.

Who was telling the truth? Perhaps the other groups really were autonomous, and Muguara had no authority over them. The commissioners likely believed Matilda, who had earlier told them that the Comanche planned to release the captives one at a time in a ploy to get an ever increasing number of goods.

After explaining his version of why no further captives were brought in, Muguara smugly added "How do you like that answer?" Enraged by what they felt was Comanche duplicity, and the sight of the noseless, battered girl, they did not like what he had to say. As the conversation continued, Colonel William Fisher gave the order for Captain George Howard's Company I to come into the room. As they filed in, a second order was dispatched to Captain William Redd's Company A to assemble outside in the rear of the building, where many of the younger Comanche warriors were waiting.

The Texans had already decided on a course of action, and Fisher told the chiefs "Your women and children may depart in peace, and your braves (warriors) may go and tell your people to send in the (white) prisoners." This was not yet translated, so the chiefs looked at the commissioners with neutral expressions on their painted faces.

But the follow-up was even more dangerous: "Those soldiers you see," Fisher continued, "are your guards. You are prisoners of Texas until our prisoners are returned." The interpreter hesitated to translate this, knowing full well that the Comanches would make an immediate effort to escape. "Tell them!" Fisher ordered, and the interpreter had to comply.

In response, the Comanches let out a collective unearthly howl of rage and the 12 chiefs sprang up and dashed in every direction, each seeking a door or window or any possible avenue of escape. One chief tried to burst through the back door, the portal guarded by Private Martin Kelly. The sentry tried to present his musket, but the Indian's knife was faster. As Kelly staggered and seemed about to fall, the door now seemed unguarded, an inviting avenue of escape.

Captain Howard grappled with another chief, who stabbed the officer in the side. "Shoot him!' a bleeding Howard ordered, and a nearby soldier felled his assailant with a well placed bullet. There seemed to be a pause, however brief, while the surviving chiefs drew their knives and notched

arrows into their bows. Colonel Fisher ordered his men "Fire if they do not desist!"

The whole scene now dissolved into chaos, a bloody nightmare of grappling, wrestling, shooting, stabbing men fighting each other at close quarters—Indian war whoops mingled with shouts and curses of the combatants, and the screams and moans of the wounded and dying only added to the horror. Before long the acrid stench of black powder smoke mingled with the sweet and nauseating smell of blood.

No quarter was asked or given. This was the frontier; even townsfolk were armed and knew how to defend themselves. As the fight progressed John Hemphill, a lawyer who had recently been confirmed as a judge, found himself battling for his life with a chief determined to escape. It was a struggle, but Hemphill managed to use his bowie knife to disembowel the Comanche.

As soon as the Comanche outside heard the first war whoop from the Council House they sprang into action. The Indian boys, so charming a few minutes before, now started to aim their arrows in earnest. Judge Hugh Thompson and George Cayce were pierced by the "toy" arrows and died immediately. Ironically Thompson had supposedly been one of those who had playfully tossed money for the boys to shoot.

Other Comanche fled through the town frantically seeking to escape. Mary Maverick raced home and bolted the door seconds before a Comanche warrior grabbed the outside handle. Mathew "Old Paint" Caldwell, a veteran Indian fighter, was wounded in the leg early in the fight and found himself hobbling around the streets looking for a gun. When a Comanche warrior raised his bow to shoot an arrow in him, a quick-thinking Caldwell took a rock and flung it, hitting the native's head with such force it stunned him. Old Paint hurled more rocks, spoiling the Comanche's aim, till another Texan shot the bowman.

It was all over within half an hour. All Comanche were allowed a chance to surrender—if they did not, they were gunned down or otherwise dispatched without mercy. As might be expected, casualty counts vary, but it seems that 30 warriors, three women, and two children were dead. The rest of the Comanche party, 30 women and children, were in custody. Seven settlers were dead and 10 wounded.

A Comanche woman was released, given a horse, and was told to act as a messenger. The surviving Comanche were now hostages, pending the release of the remaining white captives. But when the Comanches heard the news they were immediately plunged into paroxysms of despair and grief. The loss of so many was a catastrophic, almost apocalyptic event.

They grieved in Comanche fashion, cutting their hair, in some cases mutilating themselves by chopping off fingers, and sacrificing horses owned by the dead chiefs. Then, as anger replaced grief, they turned on the 13 white captives with a vengeance. They were all staked out and slowly tortured to death by burning and painful mutilation. No captive was spared; even Matilda Lockhart's six-year-old sister was tortured to death.

After a few weeks another chief, Buffalo Hump, had a vision in a dream. For many indigenous tribes, dreams were another world, every bit as concrete and physically real as the reality of everyday existence. Spirits would often communicate via dreams, and a powerful dream was good "medicine" whose message the dreamer would be ill advised to ignore.

Buffalo Hump's dream was of a Comanche sweep through Anglo Texas, a great raid that would push the white invaders into the sea. It

would be a cleansing on a vast and irrevocable scale, so thorough that even the memory of white people and their works would be erased forever. This would be no ordinary raid, but a real invasion of territory far from the Comancheria.

The next step was to recruit warriors for the incursion. The northern bands—the Yamparika, Kotsoteka, and Nokoni—were unenthusiastic and Buffalo Hump only got a few recruits from them. These northern bands had their own problems, including fighting the Cheyenne and Arapahos for the prime buffalo grounds between the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers. Besides, white lands seemed to be full of mysterious diseases like smallpox.

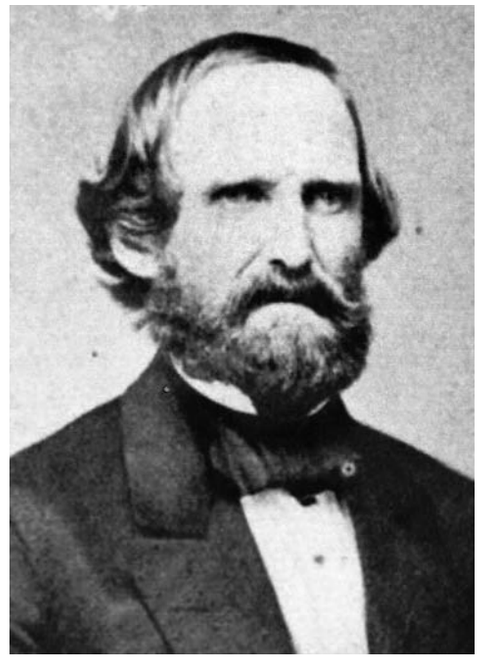
Nevertheless Buffalo Hump's own band, the Penateka, seemed more than willing to fulfill what amounted to a kind of prophecy. Penateka chiefs like Isimanica, ("Little Wolf"), and the curiously named Santa Anna were always ready for a good fight with the hated whites, especially after the San Antonio massacre. To the Comanche, captives might be adopted into the tribe, but torture, abuse, and rape of such prisoners were well within their cultural norms—behaviors that had been accepted long before the whites ever came to the plains.

They could not understand why the Texans were so outraged over Matilda Lockhart. On the other hand, the Comanches felt that peace negotiations involved a kind of safe conduct for all parties. In their view the whites had treacherously broken this truce. The wide chasm between white and Comanche cultures was too great for mutual understanding.

After weeks of preparation, Buffalo Hump was ready to launch the great raid. He had something like 400 to 500 warriors, and perhaps 600 women and children. The women and children would provide a kind of logistical support. It was hoped, for example, that many horses would be captured, and these prize herds would be driven by younger Comanches.

The great raid began on August 1, 1840, with Buffalo Hump leading no less than 1,000 Comanches. They passed the rocky limestone cliffs of the Balcones Escarpment, then rode down the tree lined Blanco River to its confluence with the San Marcos stream. The Comanche host pressed on, until they were into the blackland prairie of south-central Texas.

The goal for Buffalo Hump and his army was the very heart of Anglo Texas, a scattering of towns and villages that clustered around the rivers and creeks, and continued through grassy plains to the Gulf coast. To escape detection the Comanche started to travel only by night, and by August 4 their nocturnal journey was aided by a full moon. Such lunar aid was a staple even on smaller raids, so much so that the full phase of the moon was called "Comanche moon."



Ben McCulloch served in the U.S. Army during the war with Mexico, was a Texas Ranger, and later a Confederate general.

A rural mail carrier was the first to stumble upon the Comanches' trail, and he spurred his horse to the town of Gonzales to raise the alarm. Ben McCullock of Gonzales was a legend in his own time, a seasoned scout, able frontiersman, and captain of Texas Rangers. A friend of the celebrated David Crockett, he had commanded the "twin sisters" artillery pieces at San Jacinto, the battle which won Texan independence from Mexico.

McCullock responded with alacrity, even though he was partly disabled, his arm in a sling from a duel some time before. He managed to muster 25 rangers and volunteers and immediately set out to locate, and ultimately follow, the Comanche caravan. More men joined as time went on, but even with these additions McCullock only had 125 men, a combination of rangers, militia, and volunteers from nearby farming communities.

In the meantime, the Comanche invasion was amply fulfilling Buffalo Hump's prophetic vision. At first the depredations were random, the killings a matter of the victims being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Joel Ponton and Tucker Foley were on horseback not far from the town of Hallettsburg on their way to Gonzales. As soon as they caught sight of the Comanches they dug in their spurs and launched into a furious gallop to escape their pursuers.

The Comanches gave chase, and Ponton was hit by an arrow with such force he was knocked from the saddle. Being unhorsed proved his salvation, because he was not badly hurt and could successfully play dead. Foley tried to elude the Comanches by dismounting and hiding in a creek. Unfortunately they discovered him, threw a rope around him, and dragged him from the water.

As soon as Foley was secured, they cut off the soles of his feet, then forced him to walk over rough ground. When they tired of the cruel sport, the Comanches killed and scalped him. Ponton managed to survive and make good his escape—he was lucky that the natives didn't decide to come back and scalp him, too.

Victoria was a small town of a few hundred residents located on the Guadalupe River about 50 miles from the Gulf Coast. The sudden appearance of hundreds of Comanche took the townspeople completely by surprise, and at first they were mistaken for Lipan Apaches, natives who were friendly and sometimes came in to trade. When the Victorians realized their mistake, they rushed back to their homes and businesses to close doors and "fort up" as best they could.

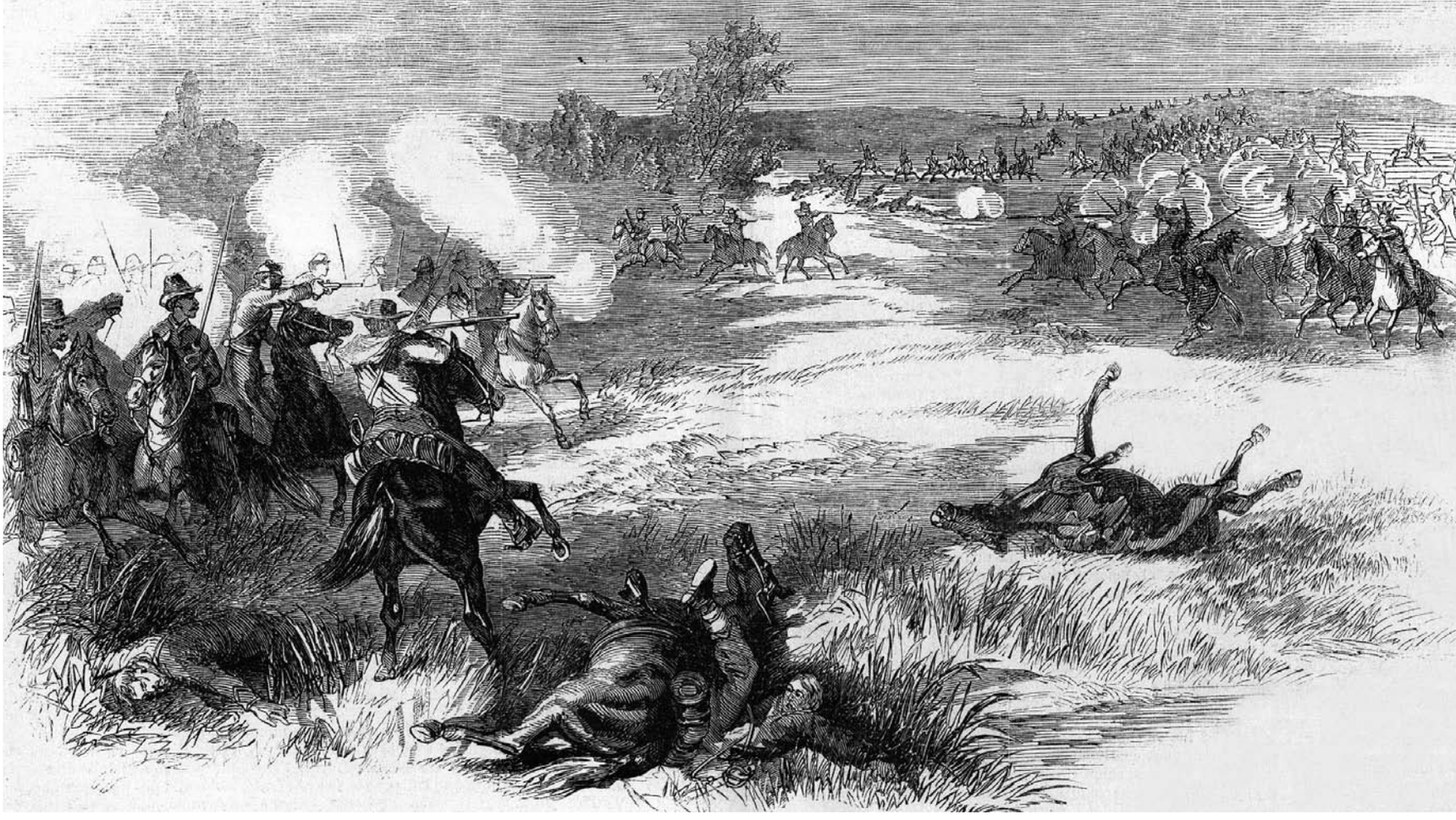
After the first shock, about 50 townsmen rallied in an effort to prepare for an all-out Comanche assault. Fortunately for the town, Mexican traders had been visiting and their herd of 500 horses were nearby. The horse was a form of wealth to the Comanche, and the sight of so much prime equine flesh was irresistible. The town was momentarily forgotten while the warriors gathered up all the horses they could find.

After some skirmishing and the burning of a house on the outskirts of town, the Comanches withdrew to Spring Creek about a quarter of a mile from Victoria and camped for the night. Grateful for this lull in the fighting, the citizens elected John Polen, an old Indian fighter as their leader to organize a defense.

Most of the Comanche killings were on the outskirts of Victoria. Two black slaves had been killed while cutting hay in the fields, and a black girl kidnapped. A Mexican riding a mule was caught and quickly dispatched, but two other riders, Joseph Rogers and Jesse Wheeler saw the Comanche in time to gallop away and escape.

The Comanche did some skirmishing the next day, but out-and-out assaults were simply not their style of fighting. Mrs Nancy Crosby, said to be the granddaughter of Daniel Boone, was taken prisoner with her baby son in a farmhouse not far from Victoria. Some sources say she had two children, but all versions agree on her tragic fate. When her baby cried too loudly a Comanche snatched the infant from her arms and smashed its head against a tree, instantly killing him. When the second son, a toddler, also cried, he was killed with a spear in front of his horrified mother.

Linville was a small coastal port town of about 200 residents. It may have been physically small,



In August, 1840, Chief Buffalo Hump led a band of 500 Comanches that looted the coastal towns of Victoria and Linnville, Texas, burning the latter to the ground. As the Comanche were heading back west, a posse of Texas Rangers and militia caught up with them as they crossed Plum Creek, near present-day Lockhart, Texas. An estimated 25-80 Comanche were killed, the rest fled to West Texas. The pursuers reported one dead, and seven wounded.

but it loomed large as a link to the outside world via sea trade. Its warehouses were bulging with goods, including clothing, that were otherwise hard to obtain on the frontier. The Comache burst into the town like avenging furies, once again taking the inhabitants by surprise. Greatly outnumbered, the citizens fell back to a lighter—a small coastal craft—that took them to a schooner anchored in the bay.

A few did not make it to the safety of offshore boats. Customs inspector H.O. Watts was caught and killed, and his wife—a "remarkably fine looking woman" according to one witness, was taken captive. The Comanches tried to strip her, but were both baffled and frustrated by her whalebone corset. Unable to take the contraption off, they simply strapped her on a horse and took her with them.

The townsfolk in the schooner and other craft—some sources say they were a few boats anchored in the shallows 100 feet from shore—watched as helpless spectators to the destruction of their town and their livelihoods. The Comanches turned their attention to the town warehouses, which were bugling with all sorts of interesting things from the white man's world. Businessman John J Linn recalled that "in my warehouse were several cases of hats and umbrellas belonging to Mr James Robinson, a merchant of San Antonio. These Indians made free with…"

After each warehouse was thoroughly looted, it was put to the torch. Private homes were also ransacked then burned. Comanches decorated their ponies with ribbons, and wore Texan clothing as they shouted triumphantly and galloped up and down the smoke-darkened streets. Comanche women participated, carrying armfuls of loot to waiting pack horses, and native children raced up and down the street laughing and screaming as youngsters do when they play.

It became a sartorial saturnalia, as the Comanche reveled in the splendor of their frock coats, hats, and umbrellas. While they paraded with gleeful abandon, orange flames consumed the buildings, sending up coils of black smoke into the sky. Judge John Hays was so incensed at helplessly watching the conflagration he jumped overboard—it was only 3-4 feet deep at his location—and waded ashore with a gun.

Surprisingly the Comanches gave him a wide berth. It was so foolhardy for a single man to confront 500 warriors. The Indians must have felt he was either crazy or had special "medicine," so it was best to leave him alone. Only later did Hays realize how lucky he was to be spared—the gun had not been loaded.

From the Comanche point of view, Buffalo Hump's vision had been fulfilled. They had killed perhaps 20 people—maybe a few more—but now could come back to the Comancheria with what to them was an enormous amount of booty. First and foremost, they now had perhaps 3,000 captured horses, each mount more valuable than gold in their eyes.

But the Comanches were now a long way from home, and the sheer immensity of their caravan meant it was relatively slow and easy to track. The element of surprise was gone, and the Texans were rapidly marshaling their forces to confront them. Initially the Comanches, perhaps dazzled by all the loot, seem to have given little thought as to what might happen on the return journey. Perhaps they thought the whites were cowed; certainly there had been relatively little resistance up to then.

The emergency brought out all of the men—Ansome with Texas Ranger experience, some not—who were veterans in Indian warfare. "Old Paint" Caldwell, so-called because the white specks in his dark beard matched his mottled paint horse, was one of these. Other former ranger captains included John Tumlinson, Adam Zumwalt and General Ed Burleson. Burleson brough 87 volun-

teers with him and his command included Chief Placido and 12 Tonkawa Indians on foot.

Caldwell and his men reached Plum Creek the evening of August 11, and were greeted by a company of men under Captain James Bird. Ben McCulloch and his brother Henry were with Bird, but now serving in the ranks, not as independent scouts. Major General Felix Huston of the Texas Republic Militia was also on hand.

The clash now known as the Battle of Plum Creek began the next morning, August 12, 1840. The Comanche caravan had been spotted lumbering across Plum Creek. At one point the tribal column's advance elements were anchored in a stand of oaks, but the rest of the caravan were exposed and stretched out on open ground, the whole no less than three quarters of a mile long.

There was a pause while the senior ranking officers sorted out who was going to assume overall command of the Texan force. General Huston moved forward to a ravine on the edge of the prairie, and prepared to attack, only to halt when a message gave him word that General Burlson was only three miles away.

The Comanches now realized they had been discovered, and immediately started to organize defensive measures. To a novice the warriors seemed haphazardly armed—with bows and arrows, trade muskets, and a few modern guns taken at Linville. The trade muskets were notoriously inaccurate, and the modern guns were too few in number to tip the scales in the Comanches' favor. However a warrior could launch five arrows before a Texan could reload his gun, a decided advantage before the Colt "Walker" revolver was introduced later in the 1840s.

Huston formed the Texan command into three elements, with a fourth in the rear as a reserve. They dismounted about 200 yards from the Indians, and firing between the two opposing sides became general and very brisk. Several Texans were wounded in the exchange, presumably mostly from arrows, though the few looted guns might have scored hits.

But then the Comanches put on a show of horsemanship that produced a grudging but sincere admiration. As scores of warriors circled around the space between the two sides, James Wilson Nichols remembered them "Lying flat on the side of their horse with nothing to be seen but a foot or a hand, they would shoot their arrows under the horse's neck, run to one end of the space, straighten up, wheel their horses, and reverse themselves, always keeping on the opposite side (hidden) from us."

The Comanches pumped up the adrenaline and prepared for the fight by blowing eagle bone whistles and singing war chants, a blend of surreal music to the whites, but a means of bolstering courage to the assembling Comanche warriors.

ABOVE: Comanche warriors were skilled horsemen, able to hang off the side of their mount as they shot their arrows, as depicted in this painting by George Catlin. OPPOSITE: Chief Buffalo Hump, wearing a stolen top hat, rides a white horse during the battle of Plum Creek in this painting by Lee Herring. The pursuing Texas Rangers and militia are visible in the distance.

As they blew their whistles and chanted rhythmically, they fanned out and imposed themselves between the Texans and the Comanche caravan.

In spite of the deadly fusillade of arrows and bullets, the scene had an almost festive air, with the Comanches arrayed in mixed-culture costumes never seen on the plains before or since. Nichols wrote that there was one chief with a traditional horned buffalo head cap, but with "ten yards of red ribbon" streaming from each horn. Another chief had "red top boots, blue cloth pants," and a coat worn in reverse with "the hind part before and buttoned up behind."

It was a dazzling array of both horsemanship and "fashion," but there was one chief who outshone the rest in sartorial splendor. "He was riding an American horse…with a red ribbon eight or ten feet long tied to the tail of his horse. He was dressed in elegant style…with a high silk top hat, fine pair of boots and leather gloves, an elegant broadcloth coat, hind part before, with brass buttons shining up and down his back. When he first made his appearance he was carrying a large umbrella stretched."

About 30 Texans remained mounted while the others fought on foot, and it was these riders who dashed forward to exhibit their own brand of

superb horsemanship. The fighting continued, as bullets and arrows filled the air, and at one point Henry McCulloch dismounted near a mesquite tree in order to take a better aim and, as he colorfully said later, "git a fair pop at one of those fine dressed gentlemen."

But he was too far forward, and Nichols alerted Henry's brother Ben that his sibling was in a dangerous position. As Ben rode forward to rescue his erring brother, a chief wearing a buffalo headdress spotted Ben and approached at a gallop. Seeking to give Ben covering fire, Nichols was just in the process of pulling the trigger when an Indian bullet slammed into his hand, ruining his aim. The bullet from the Nichols gun, thus deflected, killed the chief's horse and buried itself deep in the native's thigh. Undaunted, the chief rolled from under his horse and tried to hobble to safety, but another Texan finished him off.

But Comanche men nearby saw what happened and tried to reach the body of their dead chief to carry him off. The attempt resulted in a furious clash within the larger battle, as Texan and Comanche horsemen maneuvered their mounts and fought at close quarters. This time the Comanche got the worst of the encounter; about a dozen warriors were killed, and the chief's body still lay where he fell.

It was at this stage that one of the Texans, a man named French Smith, had had enough.

"Boys, let's charge" he declared in a loud voice that could be heard over the din of battle. The men around him responded with alacrity, and soon other Texans mounted up and went forward in a headlong advance. Hit in the front and in the flank, the warriors began to waver and fall back.

As the Comanche protective screen began to melt away, the Texans started to reach the rear elements of the actual horse herd and pack horse caravan.

Panicked by the Texan horsemen, who were not only shooting but screaming at the top of their lungs, the captive horse herd began to stampede. This tidal wave of frightened horseflesh slammed into the column of pack animals, beasts of burden already mired in muddy ground. The result was pandemonium that sent the panicked Comanches fleeing.

The Texans had held their fire until the last moment, then unleashed a broadside of bullets so effective no less than 15 Comanches were killed and wounded within seconds. Elated by this turn of events, the Texans refused to draw rein, declare victory, and call it a day. Determined to teach the Indians a sanguinary lesson for all time, they followed the retreating Comanches for a further 15 bloody miles.

The battle of Plum Creek was over, and with it, the Buffalo Hump great raid. Texan losses were given at one dead, seven wounded, but as always Indian deaths were much harder to tally. Estimates of Comanche dead are given at 25, 50, 80, but these are only guesses. Depending on sources, from 12 to 25 Indian bodies were reportedly found. Lurid stories circulated about the Texan's Indian allies. Some versions say the Togawas enjoyed a cannibal feast on one Comanche body, or—even more grisly—killed live Comanche prisoners, then ate portions of them.

Some "hundreds" of horses were recovered, and much of the booty, but there is evidence the Comanche didn't leave the area empty handed. But Buffalo Hump's dream had become a waking nightmare. The Anglo Texans were not pushed into the sea, and white numbers would increase as the years wore on. The Texan's claim of a decisive victory also proved illusory. The 1840 fights were just the curtain raiser on a bloody war that would carry on intermittently for the next 35 years. ■

French man-at-arms Pierre Terrail presents King Charles VIII with an enemy standard he has captured during the Battle of Fornovo. Terrail, knighted after the battle, took the title of Chevalier de Bayard, and continued to serve in the French army until his death in battle in 1524. "Bataille de Fornoue, 6 juillet 1495," oil on canvas by Éloi Firmin Féron, 1837.

Rising to Crush an Invader

Hoping to expel the French, a host of Italians sound the charge at Fornovo, only to confront a result they had not expected.

BY JONATHAN NORTH

Fifteenth-century Renaissance Italian political life was a heady mix of intrigue, provocation and dispute, backed by limited wars and border raids. Yet, for all that, the major Italian states—Venice, Milan, Florence, the Papacy, and Naples—managed to maintain a balance of power. But in September 1494, that equilibrium was shattered forever when the king of France, the 24-year-old Charles VIII, crossed into Italy determined to assert his claim to the throne of Naples—recently vacated by the death of King Ferrante.

In an ironic twist, Charles's quest was funded by Italian bankers—and by the jewels of the widow of the Duke of Savoy, pawned for 12,000 ducats. He marched south against little opposition and though he suffered a bout of smallpox at Asti, he entered Florence in triumph.

"The armoured horsemen presented a hideous appearance, with their horses looking like monsters because their ears and tails were cut quite short," wrote an Italian chronicler who witnessed the scene. "Then came the archers, extraordinarily tall men from Scotland and other northern countries, and they looked more like wild beasts than men."

Despite this rather unfortunate and xenophobic description, Charles and his army continued to meet with little resistance from the Italians and were, on a few occasions, well received. They managed to live off the land—although an officer in the French army complained that the wines of Italy were sour that year. After extorting 120,000 ducats from the Florentine government, Charles swept triumphantly into Rome on the last day of 1494 and entered Naples in February 1495. The subjugation of Naples was straightforward, as the opposition fled. The French were warmly received and settled down to a semi comfortable occupation.

But their stay was brief. Alarmed by such brutal foreign intervention in the cloistered realm of Italian politics—with the nominal support of Maximilian the Holy Roman Emperor and Ferdinand of Spain—Venice, Milan and Rome formed the so-called Holy League on March 31, vowing to defeat the French and drive them from Italy. Giovanni Francesco Gonzaga, the 27-year-old, bug-eyed Marquis of Mantua and a mercenary in the pay of Venice, was chosen to assemble and command the army of the League and paid the handsome amount of 44,000 golden ducats to do so.

Charles, in Naples, was shaken by the news that his one-time allies Milan and Venice had rounded so abruptly against him and made hasty preparations for departure, calling in his garrisons, packing his loot, and making arrangements for the care of the sick—many of whom had succumbed to the "French Disease" (syphilis), then ravaging his army. On May 20 the French left Naples, white silk banners fluttering over the twisting column of troops, guns and wagons. Charles left 500 men-at-arms and 2,500 of the vaunted Swiss mercenary infantry to contain the Neapolitans and the encroaching forces of Spain. These troops, too few to be of use in the south, would be sorely missed as Charles pushed northward and prepared to force his way through his enemies and back to France.

The French marched north through Rome—the Pope, his Holiness Roderigo Borgia, had fled to Orvieto in fear of his life—and pushed on to Tuscany. Charles then dangerously weakened his army yet again by detaching a number of men in a quixotic bid to aid Pisa in its attempts at liberation from Florentine rule.

Charles continued north up into the Apennine Mountains, entering Milanese territory, and began to negotiate the surrender of Pontremoli. Here, something terrible happened, as recorded by Philippe de Commines, Lord of Argenton and a veteran officer in Charles's army: "The Swiss, contrary to their articles, now put all the men of

Musée du Louvre

Châteaux de Versailles

LEFT: Giovanni Francisco Gonzaga was a career soldier, placed in command of the army of the Italian Holy League before the Battle of Fornova. RIGHT: Charles VIII, crowned king in 1483 at age 13, built up a large French Army, including powerful artillery.

Châteaux de Versailles

Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Palazzo Pitti

the town to the sword, plundered the town, set fire to it, and burned it and all the magazines, with about ten of their own men who, being drunk, could not escape. After they had committed this outrage, they besieged the castle in order to do to those who were in it after the same manner. Neither would they give over their attack until the king himself sent to command them to desist. The destruction of this place was a great inconvenience to the king, as much for the dishonour it brought on us as for the provisions that were spoiled, of which there was great plenty, and we were in extremity of want."

The next day the Swiss, now penitent and sober, made amends by hauling gun after gun of the artillery manually over mountain passes. Artillery for the French was a key arm and their guns were vital. Charles's artillery had reduced town after town in record speed and sown horror and dismay in Italy as recorded by the Italian chronicler Guicciardini: "The French had a great quantity of artillery of a sort never before seen in Italy and which rendered ridiculous all former weapons of attack. These were called cannon and they used iron cannon balls instead of stone as before. Furthermore, they were hauled on carriages drawn not by oxen as was the custom in Italy but by horses."

Meanwhile, the League was finding coalition warfare and the raising of a multistate force problematic, finally getting its army under way on June 21 after many delays. The Italian commander, Gonzaga, was hampered by lack of information on enemy movements, political interference (the Venetians, who had hired Gonzaga, were keen that he only shadow the French and not commit to a major confrontation that would endanger their army), and the reluctance of the Milanese (the Duke of Milan feared a French army based in northern Italy under the rash Duke of Orleans and only sent 2,000 men). Nevertheless, reassured by sheer weight of numbers, Gonzaga felt prepared enough by the end of June to offer battle and closed in on the French as they moved toward the river Taro near the castle of Fornovo. Here he hoped to bring his overwhelming mass of cavalry into play as the French were in the process of crossing the river, cutting them to pieces and ending forever French intervention in Italian affairs.

It is something of a myth that Italian armies of the period were ineffective. Machiavelli and other Italian humanists, casting their eyes back to the glorious days of Rome, exaggerated the weaknesses of the Italian mercenary system. Yet, Italian commanders from the *condottieri*, or mercenary companies, were renowned across Europe and had been employed by all the major European armies; their arms and armor were celebrated across the continent. Venice, in particular, was a state experienced in fighting many different types of enemy and employing many different types of tactics. Charles was to face no soft option in his coming clash with the great Italian condottieri.

The armies drew within striking distance. There was a sharp skirmish on July 1 as Gonzaga sent his stradiots—stradiots recruited by Venice along the Adriatic and in its Balkan provinces. They were adept at skirmishing, being lightly armored and carrying scimitars—"terrible weapons, much to be dreaded" according to a French eyewitness—and rode small but swift horses—to probe the French lines and attempt to unsettle their columns. Commines records the results: "Our troops were charged by the stradiots and one of our men (called Lebeuf) being slain, the stradiots cut off his head, put it upon the top of a lance, carried it to their commander and demanded a ducat. These stradiots are horse and foot, and dressed like the Turks, only they wear no turbans on their heads. Their horses are all Arabs and very good; the Venetians put great confidence in them. They are stout, active fellows and will plague an army terribly when they once undertake it.

"The stradiots having beaten our party, pursued them to the marshal's quarters, where the Swiss were posted and killed three or four and car-

ried away their heads. They did it on purpose to terrify us, and indeed they did, but the stradiots were no less terrified by our artillery; for a shot from one of our guns having killed one of their horses, they retired with great haste taking, in their retreat, one of our Swiss captains."

The League's soldiers did indeed capture a Swiss captain, called Hederlein, but inflicted little damage on the French whose morale was unshakeable and who were resolved to fight their way back to France.

The stradiots attacked again on the night of the 5th as the French were devouring a store of hard black bread they found in Fornovo. Again, little damage was done. That night was also marked by terrible storms, as Commines relates: "We had great rains that night also, and great claps of thunder and lightning, as if heaven and earth were coming together, or that this was some omen of impending mischief. But we were at the foot of a great mountain, in a hot country, and in the height of summer, so that the thing was natural enough."

Yet the persistent rain added to the misery felt by many in the French ranks, a disquiet exacerbated by want and fear of the impending battle against a more numerous foe while far from home. That Sunday night few slept well as the rain swept down, wind extinguished the campfires, and men trembled in the cold and went hungry.

At dawn on Monday, July 6, the French army, now just 9,000 strong according to Commines, crossed the rain-swollen Taro and continued its march which, inevitably, would mean that it would have to march across the front of the Italians on the far bank of the river. Charles divided his army into the traditional three "battles." His vanguard, commanded by Rohan Gian Trivulzio (an Italian formerly in the pay of the King of Naples but now contracted to serve the kings of France) and Francesco Secco (a 72-year-old veteran)—both Italian mercenaries and sworn enemies of the Duke of Milan.

This vanguard was composed of 6,000 men, including 1,600 French, 400 Italian horsemen, and 3,000 of the redoubtable Swiss infantry under Antoine de Bessey, the bailiff of Dijon—who promised his men triple pay if they managed to get the king out alive. In addition, there were some Scottish guard archers, Gascon crossbowmen, and German infantry under Engelbert of Cleves. The latter were "a collection of people from all the countries on the Rhine, Swabia, the Pays de Vaux and Guelderland," according to a French officer.

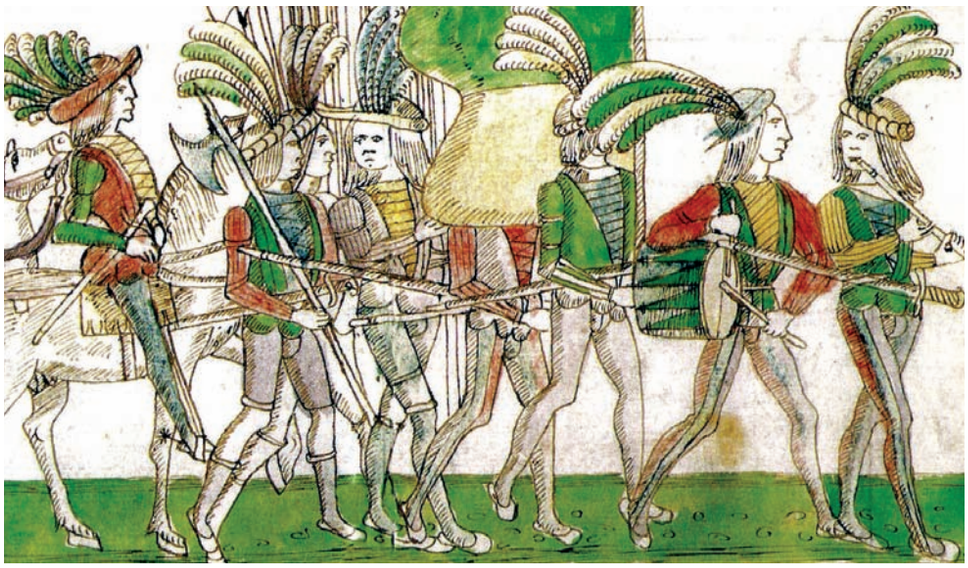
Behind the vanguard came the main "battle," commanded by Charles in person with the Viscount de Lautrec. Here Charles, sporting beautiful armor and riding on his superb charger, Savoy, placed 1,500 French horsemen, "the best mounted men I had ever seen," according to one Italian, 250 mounted crossbowmen and 100 Scottish archers of the king's guard.

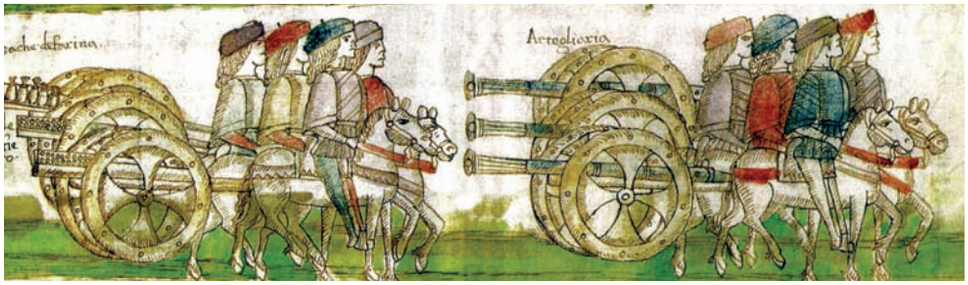
Behind them came the rear guard—1,800 horsemen under the Count of Guise. The French placed their artillery, 37 guns, 14 of them of substantial caliber, next to the river and to the right of the vanguard.

The final element of Charles's army was the baggage train, which would play an important

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: This woodcut from 1492 shows Swiss mercenaries entering a town. While negotiating the surrender of the Milanese town of Pontremoli, the Swiss accompaning Charles VIII army plundered the town, murdered all the men, and then burned it to the ground, destroying provisions needed by the French. OPPOSITE: Led by Charles VIII, the French enter Florence, Italy. Charles invaded Italy in September 1494, using his powerful artillery to reduce fortifications where he met resistance. The Army arrived at Pisa in November, followed by Florence, before reaching Naples in February 1495.





ABOVE: The French Army enters Naples accompanied by artillery as shown in this period drawing. The Italians were shocked by the destructive power of the French guns that fired iron cannon balls instead of stone. OPPOSITE: The French Army, estimated to include about 9,000 men, deploys for battle as they position their heavy cannon. Facing the French in the distance, Gonzaga prepares to send a force of some 2,300 cavalry, and 2,000 infantry to attack across the Toro River, swollen by rain the night before.

role in the coming struggle and, as the rest of the French army deployed, the heavy wagons were having difficulty getting forward. Despite the urging of the officer in charge, Captain Odet, and its Breton and Gascon escort, the drivers were refusing to move. When the battle opened, the train was poorly protected, a little up the hillside to the French left (i.e., on the far side of the French position from the Italian viewpoint) and spread the whole length of the battle line making it easy prey for the League's soldiers.

The French, with just over 9,000 troops and 5,000 camp followers and drivers, were confident of fighting their way out. Disturbed by rumors that Venice had offered 100,000 ducats for the king, dead or alive, they had prohibited the taking of prisoners and were sworn to sell their lives dearly. On the far side of the river the League, too, was making preparations for the battle. Gonzaga commanded 20,000 men officered by some of the best mercenary captains of the day—Rodolfo Gonzaga, a veteran of the Burgundian wars; Bernardino Fortebraccio, grandson of the famous Venetian mercenary; Alessandro Colleoni; Antonio Urbino, bastard of the Duke of Urbino; and Gianfrancesco Sanseverino, Count of Caiazzo, one of three exiled Neapolitan brothers in the League's army.

Gonzaga's force was centered on select men-at-arms serving in the condottieri. He could also count on the stradiots, some of the best light cavalry of the day. Infantry, whether pikemen, crossbowmen or scopettieri (hand-gunners) were despised and called "fanti" (boys) in derision and, despite their numbers, Gonzaga would not be relying on his foot soldiers in the coming clash.

At Venetian insistence, Gonzaga left 6,000 Venetian infantry, 400 light cavalry and 280 horsemen under Carlos de Melita to guard the League's camp. He ordered Sanseverino with 2,320 horsemen and 2,000 infantry (300 German mercenaries and 1,700 Milanese and reluctant Bolognese soldiers) to attack across the river and strike the French vanguard with the aim of stopping the French as they pushed along the riverbank. Colleoni's men-at-arms, 250 horsemen, were to support the Milanese and formed up behind them.

The main attack was to come from the Italian center where Gonzaga himself commanded. Under his orders were 510 superb men-at-arms—the army's best troops and largely commanded by members of Gonzaga's own family, including his uncle Rodolfo Gonzaga—supported by 5,000 infantry under Gorlino da Ravenna and 700 light cavalry (200 stradiots and 500 mounted crossbowmen). In support of them rode Antonio of Urbino 500 men-at-arms from the Romagna and Papal states. These had been ordered to remain in reserve and to await Rodolfo Gonzaga's orders.

On the far left of the Italian position Bernardino Fortebraccio commanded 500 Venetian men-at-arms with orders to attack the French rear guard. Again, as was customary in Italian armies, these were supported by a second line—in this case Venetian cavalry under Benzone da Cremona. In addition, the League had sent an advance force across the Taro with orders to strike the French vanguard and main battle from the left. This force consisted of 600 of Piero Duodo's stradiots and Beccacuto's 500 mounted crossbowmen.

After saying Mass at around 6 a.m., the impressionable Charles donned his gilded armor, made a brief speech to his main battle, stating: "I shall lead you back to France with honour, praise, and glory for us and our kingdom." At 9 a.m. the French artillery opened up and rained shot on the weaker Italian guns and Sanseverino's infantry. The noise caused considerable disquiet along the entire Italian line and the bombardment terrified the Milanese and Bolognese infantry.

During the artillery duel, the League's stradiots and crossbowmen came down from the hills and fell on the French vanguard's left flank. They were beaten off with loss, two of their leaders being wounded, and made off to loot the poorly protected baggage train.

At around 10 a.m., with many of the Italian guns, which had been firing with little effect, already disabled, the rain, which would now continue throughout the day, came down in force and wet the French powder, forcing the artillery to fall silent.

It was then that the League began the attack. Sanseverino's troops pushed forward and, although shaken by the bombardment they had just endured, crossed the Taro and advanced against the French vanguard. As they drew nearer they saw that the Swiss were drawn up ready for them—3,000 superb troops formed up in a huge square, bristling with 12-foot pikes and surrounded by crossbowmen, arquebusiers, and picked men wielding formidable two-handed swords.

The League's troops continued to advance but began to waver, now suffering losses from crossbows, and only a few of the Milanese closed with their enemies only to be pulled from their horses and slain by the Swiss. The rest of the Italian force

broke and fled back across the river, most of the Bolognese making off the field of battle, throwing their weapons away, and fleeing for Parma some 15 miles away. Sanseverino called upon Colleoni's troops to launch a second attack, this time aimed more at the French artillery but this, too, was beaten off with the Swiss knocking the Italians down with their lethally effective halberds.

As Sanseverino's troops were losing the encounter with the vanguard, the League launched its main attack in the center. Rain had swollen the Taro, which ran in three main channels, and Gonzaga's troops could only cross by moving a little to the right and finding shallow water. There was chaos in the muddy water; a number of Italian men-at-arms drowned when their horses slipped, and the crossing both delayed the decisive confrontation and badly tired the Italians. More of an obstacle was the far bank, which quickly became muddy with the passing of armored men and threw Gonzaga's squadrons, and also those of Fortebraccio as they were endeavoring to cross, into disorder.

As they gained the bank, horses clambering noisily over mud and gravel and rearing and swerving to avoid ditches and hedges, they found themselves calmly opposed by the French rear guard under the Count of Guise. Somewhat overawed by the mass of Italian cavalry and supporting infantry, Guise could not profit from the disorder, but he was soon supported by the arrival of French troops from the main battle. This was the crisis of struggle; Charles had committed all his available men and was to pit them against the best troops Italy had to offer. Crucially the Italians had only a portion of their troops up, the rest remained in reserve, when Gonzaga launched his squadrons forward.

Gonzaga launched four waves of horsemen against the French despite being unsupported—the Italian light cavalry, stradiots, infantry, and even a few men-at-arms having been lured away to the left by the French baggage train. The attack, led by Gonzaga in person, came across rough terrain broken by dangerous waterlogged ditches forcing the horsemen to huddle together. The Italians, all-professional mercenaries and hardened soldiers, were a fine sight, yelling "Marco! Marco! Italia! Alla Morte!" and brandishing their Bourdonnasses (hollow lances, painted in bright colors). The dark, menacing masses of horsemen spurred on, shaking the ground under the weight of their attack. The French, tough gens d'armes eager for the fight and not given to the maneuvering enjoyed by Italian warriors, did not wait but closed ranks and advanced to meet the Italians shouting, "Montjoie! Saint Denis! France!" in an attempt to overawe the Italian horsemen.

The fight was savage but lasted just 15 minutes. The French, with lighter armor, more practical swords, lethal maces, and more effective lances were at the advantage and managed to sweep around the right flank of Gonzaga's and Fortebraccio's battle groups, causing havoc in the Italian ranks. The melee cost the Italians dearly. Rodolfo Gonzaga was among the first to fall; his corpse was found after the battle and sent in state to Mantua. Fortebraccio was wounded 12 times before falling from his horse. He was to survive, despite being wounded again, in the neck, by looters pushing their swords through his armor in an attempt to slit his throat.

Before long, the Italians turned about and made their way back across the river, some stampeding in panic and throwing supporting infantry into disorder. Their reserves had not moved forward, having received no orders to do so. The French, astonished by their success, warmly pursued and even contemplated crossing the river to decide the battle. As they did so, they left their king isolated, as Commines relates: "The king remained in the same place, and so ill-protected that of all his squadron he had none left but Anthony des Aubus, a little man and but poorly armed; the others were all dispersed and they ought to have been ashamed of themselves. A small party of the enemy coming along the road and perceiving it so thin of men, fell upon the king and the aforesaid gentle-

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man; but the king, by the activity of his horse, kept them at bay until the others came up and then the Italians were forced to fly."

Meanwhile, as the Italians fell back, the French infantry swarmed over the scene of the clash of the Italian and French men-at-arms, the whole area of which was covered in dead, wounded and dismounted stragglers. The French, contrary to the rules of Italian warfare, spared none, as Commines relates: "We had a great number of grooms and servants with our wagons, who flocked about the Italian men-at-arms, when they were dismounted, and knocked most of them on the head. The greatest number of them had their hatchets (which they cut their wood with) in their hands, and with them they broke up the helmets, and then knocked out their brains; otherwise they could not easily have killed them, they were so well armed; and to be sure there were three or four of our men to attack one man-at-arms. The long sword which our archers and servants wear also did great execution."

Gonzaga and what little remained of his battle group crossed the river in good order and rallied a number of troops. Fugitives followed, although many were again drowned in the muddy and slippery river; those who survived passed through the ranks and swelled the number of fugitives heading for Parma or Reggio and shouting that they had been betrayed. Venetian officers stationed by the camp did a good job in rallying some of the fugitives as did Count Orsini, a prisoner of the French recently released from the baggage train. Orsini even urged Gonzaga to attack again as, despite the casualties, the Italians still outnumbered the French. Gonzaga did not, fearing a complete rout and an end to his own military career (and therefore to his Duchy and title of Duke).

Neither did the French follow up on the victory, despite the urgings of the Italian mercenaries Trivulzio and Vitelli to cross the river and finish the business. Charles and his French officers, however, felt they had done enough and were content as they had reopened their route to safety. The rain was still falling, the river still rising. Charles felt it was enough to re-form his ranks and face the enemy, come what may.

That afternoon the two armies faced each other as though preparing for a renewal of the struggle, although the prescient Charles and 500 communicants knelt and celebrated Mass that night, joyful in their deliverance. Charles, who spent the night in a cottage or farmhouse, was very cheerful but spent a most uncomfortable night, as did Philip de Commines: "For my part, I remember lying in a little pitiful vineyard, upon the ground and without any shelter; for the king had borrowed my cloak in the morning and my baggage was not to be found. He that had anything to eat kept himself from starving; but very few had victuals more than a crust of bread or so, which they took from their servants." Meanwhile, the French valets and infantry thoroughly stripped the dead and wounded, and peasants from the surrounding area flocked in to help themselves to anything of value including armor, saddles, horseshoes, rings, money and even clothes and blankets.

Toward evening the French sent their artillery on, fearing the Italians less and less as time wore on. In the morning a truce was arranged to collect the wounded and, under cover of Commines's detailed negotiations, the French army slipped away toward safety.

The Italian pursuit was feeble. Gian Sanseverino, brother of the Count of Caiazzo, shadowed the French with 500 Venetian light cavalry despite the League still having overwhelming superiority in numbers. Only on the 10th did the League's main body break camp and advance. Less than a week later, Charles was safe in friendly territory and enjoying rich supplies in Asti.

The campaign dragged on for another few months. Then there was a brief lull and the direct intervention of fate. Charles, busy intriguing with the Venetians and planning a second invasion of Italy, passed the spring of 1498 in his castle at Amboise. On his way to watch a game of tennis he knocked his head against the frame of a door and died the next day.

So ended the campaign that was to decide Italy's fate for the next half century. Gonzaga at first announced a complete victory. The Italians had, it was true, remained on the field and the French retreated, hounded out of Italy by the victorious League and leaving behind them considerable booty.

And indeed a vast amount of booty fell into Italian hands. Gonzaga's troops had thoroughly looted the French baggage wagons and found, among other treasures, such riches as Charles' gilded tour-

nament helmet (which, according to Italian propaganda, belonged to Charlemagne), his ceremonial sword, cloth of gold, the golden seal of France, a piece of the Holy Cross and a Sacred Thorn, a limb of St. Denis, maps and charts, the Royal Library and, so the League alleged, a book containing pictures of all the Italian beauties Charles had known on his Italian expedition.

These trophies were paraded through Parma and Gonzaga was appointed captain-general of the Venetian army in token of his "victory." Gonzaga in turn celebrated his own personal triumph by building a chapel in Mantua and commissioning Andrea Mantegna to decorate it with a painting showing Gonzaga himself thanking the Virgin Mary for victory. (Ironically this painting now hangs in the Louvre in Paris, stolen in 1797 by that other French adventurer in Italy, Napoleon Bonaparte.)

Yet, before long, reality set in. The French had escaped. More than that, they had inflicted a check on an army of 30,000 with just 10,000 men. Figures vary but it seems that the French lost very few prisoners and had some 1,000 casualties at most. The League lost much more heavily—Gonzaga's mercenary company alone lost 250 men, or half its original strength—some 4,000 men, most of them killed during the rout. The dead included Ridolfo Gonzaga, Giovanni Maria da Gonzaga, Alessandro d'Este, Giorgio Arozzi, Giovanni Picinnino, Galleazzo da Correggio, Alessandro Beraldo and Roberto Strozzi—great names in Italian warfare. Many men had drowned, and for the next two weeks bodies could be seen floating down the Taro from the walls of Parma. Most of the dead received a common burial, although some were burned, but the bodies of members of the Gonzaga family were sent to Mantua for burial.

The French seemed to have lost but few men. About 200 cavalry were killed along with 800 infantry, mostly from those guarding the baggage train. Few men of note were killed, although casualties included Guinot de Louviers, commander of the artillery; Julien Bourgneuf of the Guard; Captain Odet; and the Italian Francesco Secco.

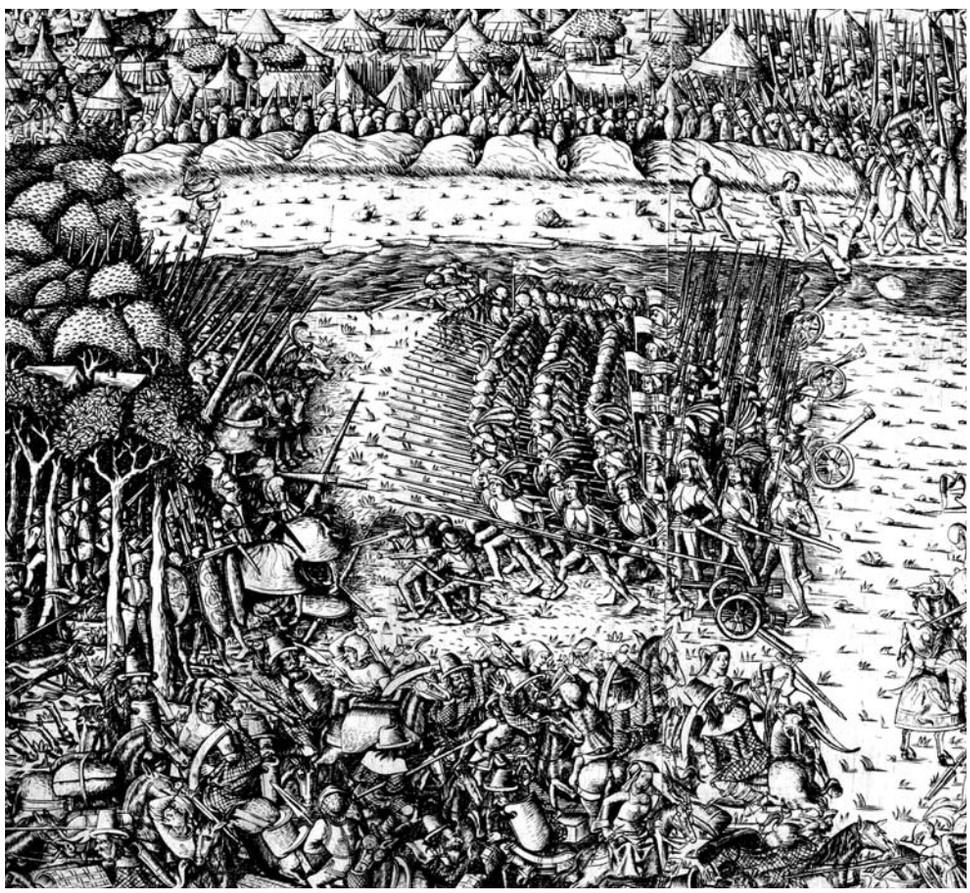
Before long, the recriminations began. Gonzaga blamed the stradiots for not doing their job and for falling on the baggage, and he reprimanded Duodo for not deploying his troops to the best advantage. With hindsight the stradiots had behaved badly but so too had Sanseverino's men, Gonzaga's infantry and light cavalry, and the whole second line, which had not budged in support of their comrades. Gonzaga himself was later accused of having led more like a squadron leader than the commander of an army—leading from the front and failing to appreciate the wider picture. As his former teacher wrote to him after the battle: "I am horrified by the risks that you personally ran. Behave like a commander on a battlefield and don't play the mercenary or squadron leader."

The truth was spoken, too, by the wounded Bernardino Fortebraccio, who addressed the Venetian Senate in the following terms: "I have to say this, for I cannot keep it back. We could have defeated their army, or even a larger one, if our people had attended to the battle and not to the baggage train."

Fornovo was a short and bloody encounter with serious consequences. The French were surprised by the poor showing of troops raised by such sophisticated and rich political systems. The Italians acted without unity and without firm resolve. Gonzaga, when he did strike, concentrated on launching his own attack and did not take account of the larger picture. At the key moment, the French outnumbered the Italians.

A secondary reason for the defeat was the lure of the baggage train and the ineffective use of the League's infantry and light cavalry. Even when the main assault had been rebuffed, the Italians still had more troops on the field than the French; thus their reluctance to attack again or pursue the French with energy was inexcusable. Well did Guicciardini write that, "On the banks of the Taro, with more bravery than reflection, we lost the Italian reputation for warfare."

The combination of rich pickings for foreigners and poor military resolve made Italy a tempting target for future intervention, not just by France but by such other powers as the Holy Roman Empire and Spain. The stage was set for the Italian Wars—a half-century of destructive warfare with Italy, having given a sign that she was weak in 1494-95, now lying prostrate before foreign powers vying for control of the rich rewards on offer in the peninsula. Italy was embarking upon 300 years of foreign domination and a brutally enforced subservience to belligerent northern powers. ■



ABOVE: Engraved only a year after the battle, this much-detailed rendition by a German artist is thought to be based on Swiss eyewitness accounts and is considered remarkably accurate. It shows the Swiss pikmen, right, facing Italian knights, while in the foreground the Swiss and Balkan stradiot skirmishers engage in fierce hand-to-hand combat. OPPOSITE: By the time Italian commander Giovanni Francesco Gonzaga (seen in the upper left corner) launched his main attack, the Toro River was rain swollen, and his mounted troops struggled to cross. In the distance, Italian knights struggle to ride up the muddy banks, while the French wait for them with cannon, archers, pikemen and knights.

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The opening days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 proved chaotic for both sides.

By Christopher Miskimon

At 4:15 a.m. on February 24, 2022, a prerecorded television segment played in which Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a "Special Military Operation" against neighboring Ukraine. It was, in effect, a declaration of war. Within 45 minutes, the Russian military commenced jamming operations against Ukrainian radars and communications and launched cyber-attacks on government sites, power facilities and U.S. satellite communications provider Viasat. The attack on Viasat severed links between the Ukrainian high command and its units.

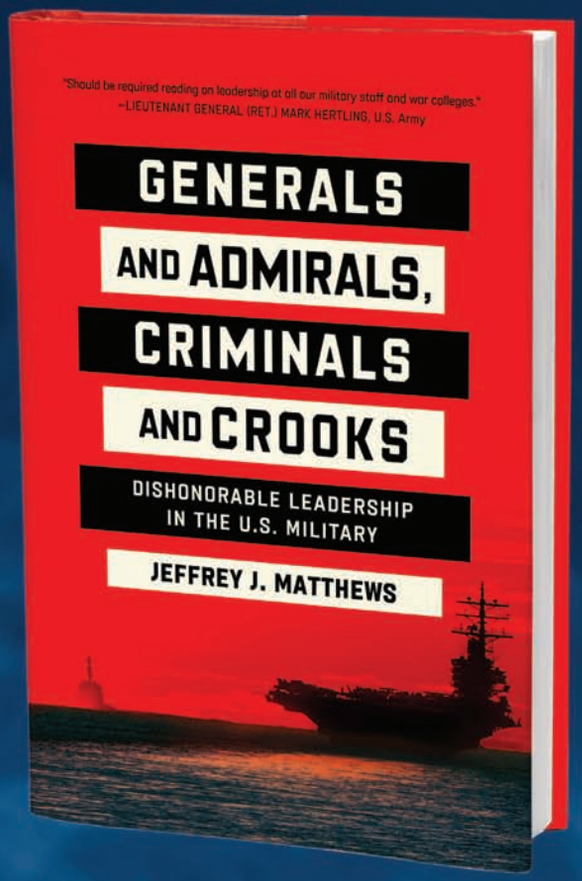
Waves of conventional ballistic and cruise missiles followed, targeting airports, air bases and a few air defense sites. Since those air defenses were not on alert, 60 percent of the missiles got through. However, many of them malfunctioned, striking empty fields. Only a few Russian strike aircraft sortied at this stage, targeting radars and command posts. One Ukrainian SU-27 interceptor was destroyed in the air and another on the ground.

A primary goal of this effort was to isolate Kyiv for an attack by ground forces. A road column advanced from Belarus while a heliborne assault team went to occupy Antonov Airport on the outskirts of Kyiv. These airborne soldiers would secure the facility so aircraft carrying follow-on troops could land. In Kyiv, infiltrated Spetsnaz special forces units were to capture or kill Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

It was a good plan. Properly executed, it could have worked. It didn't. The Spetsnaz failed, as Ukraine's own special forces protected their leadership. While Russian interceptors shot down two Ukrainian MiG-29s, the heliborne assault force lost two aircraft and another took severe damage. The Russian paratroopers who reached the airport were able to inflict extensive damage; they had intelligence from the traitorous son of an airport employee. However, the Ukrainians formed ad hoc units from military schools in the city and volunteers reinforced the few regular units in the area.

Destroyed Russian military equipment are paraded down Khreschatyk Street in the capital of Kyiv for a celebration of the 31st anniversary of Ukraine's Independence Day in August 2022.

Some of those units attacked the Russians at the airport. The defending paratroopers were able to hold their ground and maintain their perimeter around the airport. The Ukrainians had to fall back in the afternoon when their ammunition ran out. While the attack failed to dislodge the Russians, it succeeded in buying the Ukrainians time to bring in artillery and air power. Two battalions of 2S7 Pion 203mm howitzers were available. They shelled the runway, blasting large craters along its length. At dusk, a pair of Ukrainian SU-24Ms roared over the airport and dropped 500kg runway-cratering bombs. While the Russians held the airport, they could no longer fly in the reinforcements needed to expand their control. Four Ukrainian soldiers were cut off during the fighting and hid at the airport,



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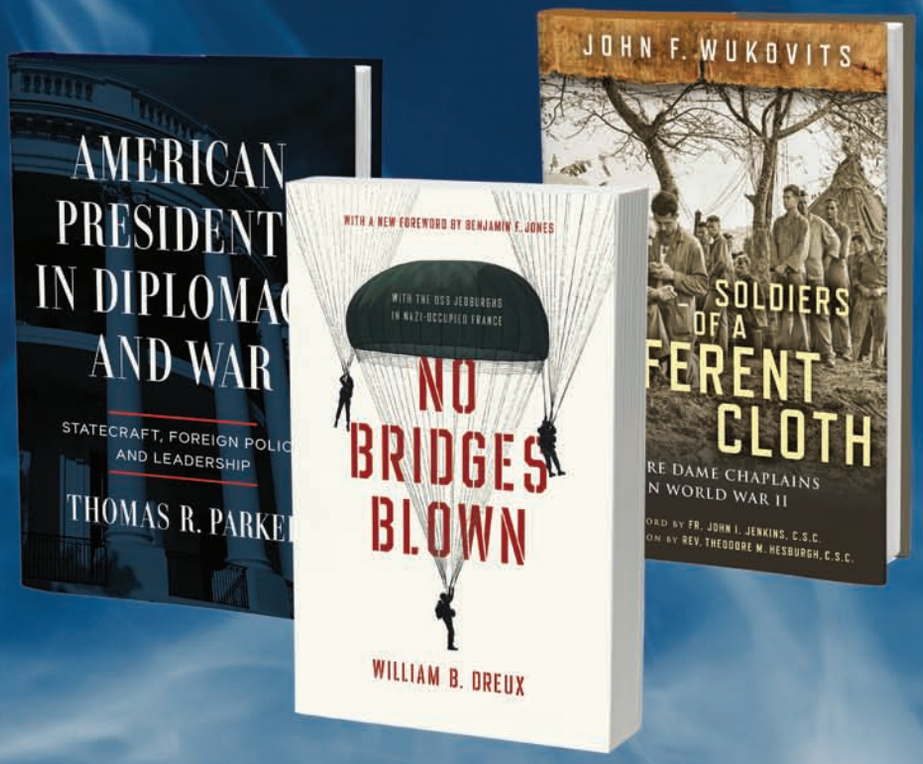

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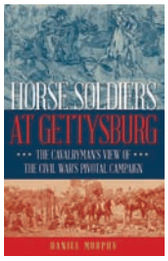
watching Russian movements.

The Russian road column, made up of units from the 35th Combined Arms Army, made good initial progress, but soon became tangled in a long traffic jam as different subunits tried to move on the same road. The problem was made worse by roving bands of Ukrainians armed with anti-tank weapons and small arms. There were many short-range firefights which impeded Russian progress, though some units continued to advance. The Russian 31st Airborne Assault Brigade, approaching Kyiv mounted in a convoy of armored vehicles and trucks, managed to reach the airport but were low on fuel. Russian commanders placed them between two large hangers in a hasty refueling point.

Tragically for them, the four Ukrainian soldiers hiding nearby saw the tightly packed Russian column. A few Ukrainian UAVs spotted them as well. Soon a massive artillery barrage fell on the refueling point, destroying almost all the vehicles and killing 60 Russian troops. This was only one of the problems facing Russian commanders on the ground in the first two weeks of the Ukraine Invasion. For a detailed accounting of the fighting, read ***War in Ukraine Volume 2: Russian Invasion, February 2022*** (Tom Cooper, Adrien Fontanellaz, Edward Crowther & Milos Sipos, Helion Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2023, 76 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $29.95, SC)

This book, while short, is our lead review for this issue because of its very thorough coverage of the Ukraine War's initial weeks. The authors deftly provide information on how Ukraine rebuilt its forces after the disasters of 2014-15. Their accounting of the military aid Ukraine received is very informative. They also lay out the preparations of both sides as far as is reliably known, give orders of battle and describe the action along the various Russian lines of advance. The reader will be hard pressed to find another book providing this sort of detailed information. It is liberally illustrated with battlefield photographs and good maps.

Horse Soldiers at Gettysburg: The Cavalryman's View of the Civil War's Pivotal Campaign



(Daniel Murphy, Stackpole Books, Essex CT, 2023, 435 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, HC)

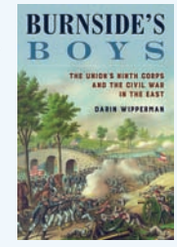
On the evening of June 30, 1863, Union General John Buford's 1st Division of cavalry prepared to meet advancing Confederate troops, the next day. Speaking to his brigade commanders, Buford told them, "They will attack you in the morning, they will come booming – skirmishers three deep. You will have to fight like the devil to hold your own until supports arrive." Buford realized his command had to hold the Confederates at bay long enough for the Federal I Corps to arrive and secure Gettysburg, which contained an important crossroads. Delay was his only option, since his troops were too badly outnumbered to repulse their foes completely. Buford's troops were liberally armed with breech-loading carbines, which increased their rate of fire and would even the odds as long as their ammunition held out. The Union horsemen could also use natural cover provided by the ridges west of town. When Confederate General Henry Heth's men came marching down the Chambersburg Pike the next morning, Buford's cavalrymen were ready.

This new book provides an excellent account of the cavalry operations of both sides at the most critical battle of the Civil War. The first few chapters inform the reader of how cavalry were organized, armed and employed during this period before the work goes on to enlighten about the particular actions leading up to and during the battle. The author's experience as a horseman adds value to the account as he is able to effectively explain the nuances of 19th Century mounted operations.

SHORT BURSTS

War in Ukraine Volume 1: Armed Formations of the Donetsk People's Republic, 2014-2022 (Edward Crowther, Helion Books, 2023, $29.95, SC) This book details the military forces created by the self-proclaimed Donetsk Peoples Republic after the Russian-supported invasion of Crimea up to the current war.

The U.S. Army Combat Historian and Combat History Operations World War I to the Vietnam War (Kathryn Roe Coker and Jason Wetzel, Casemate Books, 2023, $34.95, HC) Since World War I, U.S. Army historical personnel has gathered information about its various conflicts while memories and information is still fresh. This book chronicles that service.



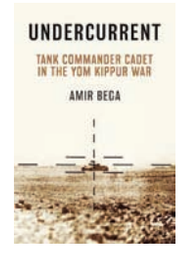
Burnside's Boys: The Union's Ninth Corps and the Civil War in the West (Darin Wipperman, Stackpole Books, 2023, $34.95, HC) Veterans of many of the war's major campaigns, Ninth Corps is one of the few Union units to serve in both the eastern and western theaters.

Tempest: The Royal Navy and the Age of Revolutions (James Davey, Yale University Press, 2023, $35, HC) As the Royal Navy fought republican France in the 1790s, it also struggled with internal dissent and mutiny.

Billy Mitchell's War with the Navy: The Interwar Rivalry over Air Power (Thomas Wildenberg, Naval Institute Press, 2023, $34.95, SC) After WWI, Billy Mitchell argued for an independent air force. His efforts ran against the navy as the armed services argued over defense budgets.

A People's History of the Cold War: Stories from East and West (Colin Turbett, Pen and Sword Books, 2023, $42.95, HC) The average lives of people on both sides of the Iron Curtain as they dealt with the enormous events of the Cold War.

Undercurrent: Tank Commander Cadet in the Yom Kippur War (Amir Bega, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2023, 177 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, $34.95, hardcover)

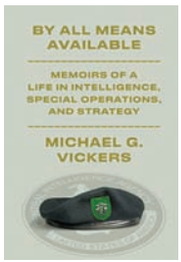


As Amir Bega prepared to go on leave for the Yom Kippur holiday, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel, plunging him into war before his training was finished. His tank battalion is destroyed at the beginning of the war, torn to pieces by new Soviet-supplied anti-tank weapons such as the Sagger missile. Surviving the defeat, Amir joins a reserve unit to continue the fight and hold the line against the Egyptian advance. He joins the crews of one tank after

another as each is destroyed or damaged, but he begins to acquire a reputation for bad luck. Hounded by feelings of guilt at having survived, Amir volunteers for a dangerous mission to rescue a trapped Israeli unit surrounded by Egyptian commandos.

This fascinating memoir recounts the experiences of Amir as a young soldier, caught up in the chaos and violence of the Yom Kippur War of October 1973. It vividly retells the constant fighting throughout the entire war as the initially overconfident Israeli military learns hard lessons and regains its balance to take the fight to its enemies.

By All Means Available: Memoirs of a Life in Intelligence, Special Operations and Strategy (Michael G. Vickers, Knopf Books, New York NY, 2023, 559 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35, HC)



Michael Vickers served his country during the Cold War in a variety of roles. He began as a non-commissioned officer in the US Army's Special Forces, enlisting in June 1973. He later gained a commission and served in a number of Special Forces and counter-terrorism roles until leaving the army in 1983 to join the Central Intelligence Agency. There, Vickers assumed the leading role in the CIA's secret operations to support the Afghan resistance to the Soviet invasion. He was directly responsible for helping defeat the Soviet Union in that conflict. Later, Vickers held several civilian posts in government during the War on Terror.

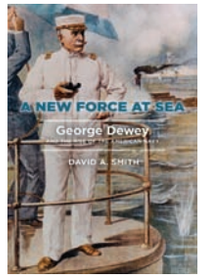
This memoir outlines Vicker's service during the last decades of the Cold War and the tumultuous years afterward. The narrative is clear and engaging while adding fascinating details to many of the major events of recent history.

Dogfight: Mig-21 "Fishbed" Opposing Operation Rolling Thunder 1966-68 (István Toperczer, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $23, SC)

The MiG-21 served as the primary fighter of the Soviet Bloc during the 1960s. During the Vietnam War the Soviet Union distributed this inexpensive, durable interceptor to North Vietnam and trained hundreds of its pilots. In 1966, the MiG-21s first saw combat against American airstrikes aimed at North Vietnam under the umbrella name Operation Rolling Thunder. The MiG-21 flew alongside the older MiG-17 and soon pilots of each were cooperating against incoming American attacks. The plane was armed with a 30mm cannon and two heat-seeking R3S missiles, Soviet copies of the American AIM-9 Sidewinder. The US F-4 Phantom was the opposing fighter most often acting against the MiG-21 in the air-to-air role. A combination of aggressive American tactics and North Vietnamese inexperience caused heavy casualties in planes and pilots, but over time the Vietnamese developed new tactics and ground control techniques which allowed them to achieve greater success.

This is the author's fifth book on the North Vietnamese Air Force and his expertise shows in this latest work. It is a very thorough look at the MiG-21's service and effectiveness in the first few years of the air war. The original artwork is excellent and the photographs are rarely seen items from Vietnamese air force archives. The book provides an interesting look at the air war over Vietnam from a new perspective few Western readers will likely have seen.

A New Force at Sea: George Dewey and the Rise of the American Navy (David A. Smith, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2023, 356 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $44.95, HC)



George Dewey proved one of the most important naval officers of the last half of the 19th Century. Graduating from the then-new U.S. Naval Academy in 1858, he served with distinction in the American Civil War. After the war, the US Navy suffered from budget cuts and the general disinterest of the American public. Dewey stayed in the navy and by 1898 commanded a squadron of ships in the Pacific. During the Spanish American War, his victory at the Battle of Manila Bay brought him instant fame and recognition. The relatively easy success of that war also encouraged the United States to take a more active role on the world stage, which required naval expansion. Dewey made an abortive effort to become the Democratic nominee for president in 1900, but instead remained in the navy and became chairman of its new General Board. This board studied issues of interest to a navy whose roles were quickly widening. In 1903 he was given the rank of Admiral of the Navy, which he held until his death in 1917.

This new biography of an important naval officer is both well-detailed and readable, with a smooth narrative. While Manila Bay was Dewey's famed moment, he had wider effects on the navy and this work brings those often-ignored facts to light. ■

GAMES

CALL OF DUTY RETURNS WITH SOME SOLID MODES AND A TACKED-ON CAMPAIGN FOR GOOD MEASURE

By Joseph Luster

Call of Duty Modern Warfare III

Genre: Shooter • Platform: PC, PlayStation, Xbox • Publisher: Activision • Available: Now

Folks, we're officially back to the third *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* game, and no, this isn't a review of 2011's *Modern Warfare 3*. Confusingly enough—at least to those who don't follow this series as fervently as others—the latest entry in Activision's global smash war shooter saga is *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III* (note the roman numerals), the third part in the rebooted *Modern Warfare* sub-series that started in 2019. It's also the 20th overall *Call of Duty* game, and yet another glaring signal that it might be time to take a step back and figure out what works and how best to pace out this utter juggernaut of a franchise.

Let's start with what works here. Multiplayer is, for the most part, where you'll want to spend your time in *Modern Warfare III*. There are some standout maps to choose from—including the likes of Invasion, Skidrow, and Terminal—with a few working better in some modes than others. Some of the returning maps suffer, though, mostly due to the fact that they don't mesh well with the thrilling new movement system. *Call of Duty* plays faster and more versatile than ever before, thanks in no small part to new additions like Tactical Stance, or "Tac Stance." This is a way to aim your weapons that serves as an essential maneuver in both standard multiplayer and Warzone showdowns. It's somewhat of an advanced move, but it's another indicator of the smart ways in which developer Sledgehammer clearly endeavored to improve and expand upon the online aspects of the series.

Another feature that continues to keep these games afloat is the one most separated from reality. There is still a lot of fun to be had with Zombies mode, and this year's iteration ups the enemy threat and gives players even more to do in Operation Deadbolt. This follows the act of *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* in that it's set in the Dark Aether Saga, taking place within Zaravan, Urzikstan and challenging players to complete contracts and traverse a large map to complete a series of objectives. It's an impressive piece of the package and yet another question mark asking why they're even bothering with a campaign at this point.

Speaking of which, you'll be done with the single-player aspect of *Modern Warfare III* before you know it. This entry may boast around 15 or so missions in total, but it should take your average player three to five hours to see it all. That's either indicative of a rushed development cycle, lack of focus and prioritization, or both. One can't help but feel that the entire thing was tacked on just so they could say they did it.

The campaign may not have much to it, but there are at least a few decent ideas at play. One of the most interesting concepts is the addition of open combat missions, which drop players into areas to secure loot and take on the mission in their own unique way. The freedom offers up something you don't normally get from the typically rigid missions found in *Call of Duty* games. Heck, the series—or at least the campaigns therein—have long been known for their scripted, cinematic nature. Big, bombastic set pieces are part and parcel for Activision's cash cow, but veering into a more open scenario doesn't mean you have to do away with all that big budget flair.

Ideally, in future installments we'll see more of this, or at least something iterative of it on top of the expected multiplayer. If that comes to pass and the devs are able to take more time to release a less issue-prone online affair, the *Call of Duty* series may eventually spring back to a level of pedigree above just noting its sales numbers. As it stands, moving away from the annual nature of these games would be the wisest decision. That might not happen, however, until the day wisdom becomes a currency that can help fund multi-billion dollar acquisitions and mergers.

Arma Reforger

Genre: Shooter • Platform: Xbox Series, PC • Publisher: Bohemia Interactive • Available: Now

Arma Reforger has been cooking in Early Access on PC and Xbox Series since May 17, 2022, and it recently made its full exit. The open-world first-person multiplayer shooter takes place during the Cold War and sets the stage for *Arma 4*, so players can finally dig into Version 1.0 for a better idea of what developer Bohemia Interactive has been working on.

As stated at the time of the 1.0 launch, the team at Bohemia Interactive doesn't consider development finished by any means. This just means the technical state of the game—including its blend of technical and accessible action—has "reached a level that we consider ready to leave Early Access." The devs previously set a tentative roadmap for the game, so now the focus will be to adhere to that as more players hop into the action.

Beyond the main Conflict multiplayer mode, one of the standout elements of *Arma Reforger* is Game Master, a real-time editor that lets players create their own scenarios. This is the key aspect that makes *Arma* a unique entry in the military sim genre, offering a fully-moddable platform that opens up possibilities for those willing to invest the time in creation.

At the time of this writing, *Reforger* is in an interesting state, with some players unhappy at concessions that have been made to make this entry something that plays nicely on consoles as well as PC. There are still some kinks to be worked out for sure, especially with the overall Game Master interface, but there's a lot of promise in *Reforger*, too. The new Enfusion engine looks fantastic, and if you don't mind battling a few bugs you'll find a lot to dig about its take on multiplayer combat. As long as Bohemia Interactive continues to iron things out while traversing that roadmap, the future is bright for this shooter. ■

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it could fly rings around anything in the sky and proved that the Zero did have serious shortcomings, notably its high-speed and high-altitude performance. In his report, Trapnell wrote, "The Zero was faster and had a faster climb rate than the Wildcat, but was more vulnerable and less maneuverable at high speed."

Meanwhile, Trapnell read Pacific combat reports and made recommendations to improve the next generation of fighters, including the Grumman F6F Hellcat. "He came to the factory and flew the prototype F6F," said Leroy Grumman. "It suited him, as I remember, except for the longitudinal stability—he wanted more of that. We built it in, and rushed into production without a Navy certificate on the model—we relied on Trapnell's opinion. His test flight took less than three hours. I'm not sure that we ever got an official O.K. on the Hellcat design. I think it finally came through after V-J Day. By that time Hellcats had shot down 5,155 Japanese planes—and that's over half of the Navy's total bag for the war."

Trapnell was still itching to get out to the Pacific, finally making it into the war in the spring of 1944 as executive officer of the escort carrier *Breton*, which was ferrying planes to the war zone from the West Coast. He earned a Bronze Star for developing a method for Hellcats to take off from a carrier deck in just 190 feet, thus increasing the number of planes that could be carried on the small ships.

After participating in the invasion of Saipan, Trapnell was assigned as chief of staff to Rear Adm. Arthur Radford, whom he had known since the 1930s, on the flagship *Yorktown* in Task Group 38.1. There he played a role in the huge campaigns in the Carolines and later the Philippines. Trapnell witnessed kamikaze attacks and in December survived the fury of Typhoon Cobra, the worst tropical storm of the war. He coordinated every aspect of *Yorktown*'s air operations, from fuel to ordnance, targets and after-action reports.

Trapnell continued testing new aircraft after the war. He felt that "full spectrum testing" within their operational environment was the best way to evaluate new designs. In June 1943 the Flight Test Section had moved from Anacostia to NAS Patuxent River. There the Navy put each new prototype and production plane through rigorous tests of speed, rate of climb, high-altitude performance, maneuverability, carrier suitability and several other criteria. Each plane was evaluated on its armament, electronics and maintenance requirements.

Naval aviation changed radically duringTrapnell's career. The speed and power of the new jets meant carrier operations needed major refinement. Reinforced flight decks and new approach, landing and launch procedures were developed. The pressure to put jets on carriers in a reasonable schedule reinforced the need for early testing.

Vice Admiral Radford, now deputy chief of naval operations for air, tagged Trapnell to head up the new Naval Air Test Center (NATC) as coordinator. Trapnell would have full creative control of the center, including the selection and training of the new crop of naval test pilots. By February 1947 he had begun a vigorous recruiting campaign to fill out the ranks with the most talented, experienced and educated aviators he could find. The learning curve was steep, as the early jets were unforgiving of errors. They required test pilots who also had the engineering background to understand the finer points of each testing program.

By the early 1950s the NATC was turning out dozens of new test pilots eager to make their mark evaluating the hottest new planes from Grumman, Vought, McDonnell, Douglas and a dozen other companies. Some of the new planes, such as the Convair XF2Y Sea Dart and Vought XF7U Cutlass, proved to be colossal failures, but others, like the Grumman F9F Panther, Vought F-8 Crusader and Douglas A-4 Skyhawk, took the Navy into the jet age. Trapnell oversaw every test program and recommendation with the same zeal and skill he had displayed in the past. He also played a small role in the testing of transonic and supersonic research aircraft, getting a chance to fly the Douglas D-558 Skystreak to a speed of Mach 0.86.

In 1950 Trapnell was granted his fondest wish, command of an aircraft carrier. As captain of *Coral Sea*, he would miss the highly dynamic world of flight testing but was back in his element. *Coral Sea* was the first U.S. carrier to deploy with jets and the first to carry a plane that Trapnell personally considered the best, the McDonnell F2H Banshee. During his time on the carrier, he developed the concept of "double-line" launching, greatly increasing the carrier's ability to rapidly deploy aircraft.

Trapnell was 49 when he was diagnosed with a heart ailment in January 1952 ending his flying career. He had flown 6,272 hours during 5,012 flights in 162 airplane types. After a heart attack, he retired in September 1952 with the rank of vice admiral. In 1957 the Society of Experimental Test Pilots elected him one of its first honorary fellows.

A year after his death in 1975, the airfield at NAS Pax River was officially named Trapnell Field. In 1986, he was posthumously inducted into the U.S. Naval Aviation Hall of Honor.

Trapnell's legacy is evident in the past, present and future of naval aviation—from the earth to the moon. All the Navy and Marine aviators who joined NASA in the late 1950s and 1960s were NATC graduates, including Alan Shepard, John Glenn, Wally Schirra, James Lovell, Alan Bean, Dick Gordon, Pete Conrad and John Young. ■

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Valor

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Captain Hale, who was improved in disguise, to find whether the Long Island inhabitants were friends to America or not. Colonel Rogers having for some days, observed Captain Hale, and suspected that he was an enemy in disguise; and to convince himself, Rogers thought of trying the same method, he quickly altered his own habit, with which he Made Capt Hale a visit at his quarters, where the Colonel fell into some discourse concerning the war, intimating the trouble of his mind, in his being detained on an island, where the inhabitants sided with the Britains against the American Colonies, intimating withal, that he himself was upon the business of spying out the inclination of the people and motion of the British troops."

Hale believed he had found an ally, according to Tiffany, "one that could be trusted with the secrecy of the business he was engaged in; and after the Colonel's drinking a health to the Congress: informs Rogers of the business and intent. The Colonel, finding out the truth of the matter, invited Captain Hale to dine with him the next day at his quarters, unto which he agreed. The time being come, Capt Hale repaired to the place agreed on, where he met his pretended friend, with three or four men of the same stamp, and after being refreshed, began the same conversation as hath been already mentioned. But in the height of their conversation, a company of soldiers surrounded the house, and by orders from the commander, seized Capt Hale in an instant. But denying his name, and the business he came upon, he was ordered to New York. But before he was carried far, several persons knew him and called him by name; upon this he was hanged as a spy, some say, without being brought before a court martial."

No official record of Hale's capture exists and his final words or thoughts are lost to history—he was permitted to write two letters, "one to his mother and one to a brother officer," according to Montresor, but the letters were never delivered and presumed destroyed.

Additional theories and narratives of those final days exist, some have suggested Hale's mission was sabotage and he was the one who set the Manhattan fire. Others have suggested Hale was on his third mission, not his first. One account has a Tory relative turning him in.

His body was reportedly left hanging for three days, as a warning to others, and then buried in an unmarked grave that remains unknown.

In 1846, a memorial was erected in Nathan Hale Cemetery in the Village of South Coventry, Connecticut.

The state legislature officially designated Nathan Hale as Connecticut's state hero in 1985. ■

Marne

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pursuit, snatching up prisoners and supplies and regaining precious ground. By September 14, the Germans halted on high ground north of the Aisne River and dug in. Repeated French attacks resulted in bloody repulse, and both sides commenced a futile attempt to outflank their opponent. The famed Race to the Sea ensued, as both sides extended their lines to the north, ultimately anchoring the lines on the North Sea Coast.

Ultimately, the First Battle of the Marne would tragically result in a senseless four years of bloodletting on a global scale. By the time the lines had stabilized in October, a new era of modern conflict – trench warfare—had been ushered in. For the subsequent four years, the lines would remain largely static; the fighting at the Marne would constitute the last mass maneuver of armies on the Western Front. Aggressive commanders such as Joffre and Kluck, schooled in the grand tactics of the Napoleonic era, had become obsolete.

Due to the sheer number of men involved and the confused nature of the fighting along the Marne, precise casualty figures for the September 5-12 battles remain elusive. The scale of bloodletting, however, shocked the civilized world. The 160-mile-long front between Paris and Verdun was left a smoking charnel house, littered with the shocking destruction wrought by modern warfare: the vast wreckage of two great armies, thousands of dead horses, and the human slain carpeting miles of the countryside.

Estimates vary widely, but during the first half of September, it is thought that each side individually suffered 250,000 overall casualties in killed, wounded, and missing, numbers which were unimaginable before the outbreak of the war.

Despite such horrific losses, the struggle that unfolded in early September of 1914 became, for the French people, the "Miracle of the Marne." It had, indeed, constituted a providential turning of the tide in a war that had initially seemed to auger disaster for the French. Paris had been saved, and the German drive into the heart of the French homeland had been turned back.

For the common soldiers who struggled and died at the Marne, the grand sweep of history was far removed from the grisly horrors they had faced in the killing fields of France. Penning a letter to a hometown newspaper in the aftermath of the Marne battles, an anonymous German soldier summed up the nightmarish ordeal.

"My opinion about the war has remained the same," he wrote. "It is murder and slaughter, and it is still incomprehensible to me today that humankind in the twentieth century could commit such slaughter." ■

Battle of Carrhae

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forward to prevent it. Crassus did not need persuading to do the same, seeing it as more evidence he was following in Alexander's footsteps.

It should be noted that, for their part, the Parthians had conquered and inherited the bulk of the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucids revered their founder, Alexander. The Parthians, the new masters of Persia, would have known of the Macedonians' exploits against Darius III, and took advantage.

Rather than retreating behind the Tigris River as Darius had done, they let Crassus advance to a remote spot, favorable for cavalry, and unleashed a mounted attack from all sides. Just before this happened, the Arab tribal leader Ariamnes, having performed his part in the Parthian play, led his men hastily out of the Roman camp.

Surrounded by cavalry, the Romans formed a hollow square with shields, bristling swords and spears—a sound tactic against infantry, but not mounted Parthian archers, whose arrows pierced Roman shields and bodies from a distance.

The Parthians confounded Roman expectations that they would exhaust their quivers, then attack their impregnable square. Instead, the Parthians retreated to refill their quivers from a camel caravan of supplies, then returned to the attack, wounding and killing more legionaries. It is one of the few accounts of a coordinated logistics plan among ancient non-European armies.

When Crassus sent out his own cavalry commanded by his son Publius, who Caesar had sent to him from Gaul as a token of his support, the Parthians fled, leading them into a trap of heavy cavalry known as cataphracts— horses and riders covered in armor the likes of which the Romans and their Gallic cavalry had never seen. The end was swift and Publius' severed head was thrown into the Roman square as his father despaired.

Crassus retreated that night—when the Parthians did not like to fight—to escape to the town of Carrhae. News of the Roman defeat had preceded the haggard soldiers of Rome and the fearful city would not open its gates to the losing side.

The next morning, the Parthians followed, killing the Roman wounded. When Crassus tried to negotiate with Surena, he was also killed.

Some of the infantry survived to reach the safety of the west bank of the Euphrates River by forced marches at night and hiding during the day. Many of the remaining Roman cavalrymen also escaped. They were led by an officer named Gaius Cassius Longinus who would later be one of the assassins of Julius Caesar.

For Crassus, his name would live in infamy for as long as Roman or Byzantine historians wrote the history of their country. ■

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