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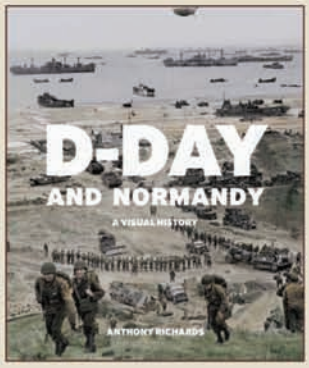

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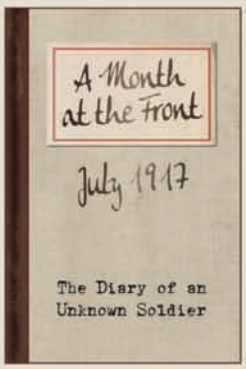

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Cover: German grenadiers file past a damaged Elephant tank destroyer during fighting near Nettuno, Italy, shortly after the Allied landings at Anzio. Photo: Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-311-0940-35; Photo: Lutz Koch

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EDITORIAL

The Grande Armee Suffered During Winter War in Poland

The splendid days of conquest in which France's Grande Armee had marched along well-constructed roads through wealthy and densely populated areas of Europe came to a close when Emperor Napoleon's army entered Poland in late 1806. The advent of winter brought hardship in the encampment of the Grande Armee.

Once the elation at having crushed the Prussian army at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt wore off, the spirit of the Grande Armee plummeted. Soldiers, worn out from campaigning, longed for the comforts of home. Those in the ranks griped and grumbled, for it seemed to them as if there were no end to Napoleon's thirst for military campaigning. Stomachs growled incessantly at the food shortages that plagued the Grande Armee. Desertion and looting were rampant.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Napoleon enters Warsaw, November 28, 1806.

"Our soldiers were less satisfied; they showed a lively distaste to crossing the Vistula," wrote General Count Rapp. "Misery, the winter, bad weather, had inspired them with an extreme aversion to this country."

Napoleon was fixated on replacing the losses in his ranks in preparation for a campaign against the Russians the following year. He called up the Class of 1807 ahead of schedule. These conscripts would begin arriving the following summer. Additionally, he ordered recruiting drives in Holland and Switzerland.

To equip his army, Napoleon levied heavy taxes on the 16 member states of the newly created Confederation of the Rhine and requisitioned uniforms and equipment from them. In a bid to boost morale, Napoleon not only ordered a sizeable pay bonus for all of his soldiers, but also issued three pairs of shoes for each infantrymen and new boots for each cavalryman.

Still, he could neither change the weather nor improve Poland's poor roads. Heavy rains in October turned the roads into quagmires, and the hard frosts that followed in November did not improve matters much. The onset of winter in December brought blinding snowstorms. The road conditions, combined with the harsh winter weather, negated the war of maneuver at which Napoleon's army excelled.

Napoleon had distributed orders to his marshals in which he said that they were not to undertake forward movements until spring. Marshal Michel Ney chose to disobey the order. His unauthorized sweep through the Polish lake region in search of supplies may have precipitated the winter campaign of 1806-1807 by forcing the Russians into action. The supply situation had become so desperate that French corps commanders were not above commandeering another corps' supply wagons.

In its march through Austria and Germany, the French army had largely lived off the land, but this became difficult if not impossible in Poland. Napoleon tried to establish a depot system through these regions, but an effective one required large numbers of wagons to move supplies from one depot to the next, and there was never an adequate supply of draft animals and wagons. Making matters worse, Russian General Levin August von Bennigsen practiced a scorched-earth strategy that left little forage for the French operating east of the Vistula River.

Many of these factors, particularly the low morale, lack of adequate food stores, and abysmal road conditions, played into the lackluster performance of Napoleon and the Grande Armee at Eylau. It would not be until the sunny summer of 1807 that the Grande Armee was its old self.

—William E. Welsh

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The Soviet-made MiG-17 met North Vietnam's need for a nimble interceptor to engage U.S. strike aircraft during the Vietnam War.

By William F. Floyd, Jr.

The heavily armed and highly maneuverable subsonic MiG-17 challenged U.S. strike aircraft in the skies over North Vietnam.

The American pilots did not see the North Vietnamese Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-17 fighter jets approaching their strike aircraft as they zeroed in on Than Hoa Bridge on April 3, 1965. Visibility was good for the American aircraft at their high altitude but became hazy below 5,000 feet. The MiG-17s, flying at 1,000 feet, closed in on the pair of Vought F-8E Crusader fighter-bombers just as they pulled up after bombing the bridge. As the MiGs closed on the Crusaders, Lieutenant Pham Ngoc Lan began his attack, scoring a number of hits with his 23mm cannon.

One of the F8s appeared to explode as it veered downward. Phan's wingman opened fire on the second F-8. While the North Vietnamese pilots claimed two victories that day, neither Crusader had actually been shot down. But the engagement marked North Vietnam's first attempt with its MiG-17s to intercept U.S. strike aircraft flying over the communist country.

The MiG-17 was a modernization of the earlier MiG-15 model featuring improved aerodynamic characteristics. This was achieved without giving it a single additional pound of thrust. On the basis of the MiG-17, the first Soviet interceptor, the MiG-17PFU, was built; its armament consisted of four air-to-air guided missiles. Although by the mid-1960s Soviet Air Forces considered the MiG-17 to be obsolete, it performed almost perfectly for North Vietnam during the Second Indochina War.

The first MiG-17s furnished by the Soviet Union to North Vietnam were strictly day fighters, but the communist Vietnamese People's Air Force (VPAF) would later receive versions that had some capacity for all-weather and night operations.

The VPAF also received MiG-19 and MiG-21 fighter-bombers, but Hanoi carefully guarded these valuable, advanced aircraft; for that reason, MiG-17 pilots bore the burden engaging the majority of American fighter-bomber aircraft conducting bombing missions over North Vietnam.

The single-seat MiG-17 was heavily armed and highly maneuverable. It boasted three 23mm Nudelman-Rikhter cannon and had provisions for two under-wing packs of eight 55mm air-to-air rockets or 1,100 lbs. in gravity bombs.

In spite of ongoing military aid from both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, the VPAF had just one regiment of MiG-17 fighters in 1964. The American fighter jets, which were superior in both num-

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U.S. Air Force

ABOVE: The gun camera on a U.S. aircraft shows a MiG-17 during an air battle. RIGHT: North Vietnamese MiG-17 pilots such as Luu Huy Chao (left) and Le Hai received training in Communist China that enabled them to successfully engage well-trained U.S. aircraft. The pair of pilots downed six U.S. aircraft.

bers and technology, dominated North Vietnamese air space. Although American pilots enjoyed clear advantages—which resulted in their downing many VPAF aircraft—they always had to beware of the three types of MiGs possessed by North Vietnam coming in to press an attack.

Fifty-two North Vietnamese pilots went to China and the Soviet Union in 1960 to train on the MiG-17. They began returning to their country two years later. To mark this achievement, Moscow sent 36 MiG-17s, along with an unspecified number of MiG-15 two-seat trainers, to Hanoi on February 3, 1964. These aircraft constituted the 921st Sao Do Fighter Regiment.

Given the frequency of U.S. bombing missions flown against North Vietnam, the communist country desperately needed automatic direction-finding radar. As war with the United States heated up, the North Vietnamese had to build up their air-defense system from scratch. Because of the peculiar shape of North Vietnam, which was only 43 miles wide in some places, there was often little warning of incoming attacks. Moreover, the dense jungle terrain made it difficult to transport radar equipment throughout the country.

The North Vietnamese radar system was also limited in the distance at which it could detect enemy aircraft. Due to these limitations, the job of spotting incoming aircraft fell to observers located across the country. The system was far from foolproof, given that the number of outposts was limited, and large flights of inbound American aircraft often went undetected. Without proper direction from the radar units, North Vietnamese pilots often had to locate enemy aircraft using just their own eyes.

North Vietnamese pilots found the MiG-17 capable of swift manuever at low altitudes. With the proper training and experience, they were eventually able to turn inside the heavier American fighter-bombers and use their 23mm cannon to good effect.

The North Vietnamese scored their first aerial victory on February 16, 1964. The previous day, North Vietnamese radar personnel had spotted an American plane approaching Con Cuong, in Nghe An province. They tracked it flying over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The next morning, North Vietnamese jets downed an American C-123 Provider near the North Vietnam-Laos border.

In the wake of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident—in which North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the destroyer USS *Maddox* on a signals-intelligence patrol on August 2, 1965—Hanoi called home the remainder of its pilots who were training abroad in China and Russia.

U.S. President Lyndon Johnson authorized Operation Pierce Arrow, a reprisal air raid, shortly after the incident. The first wave of sorties launched in the early afternoon of August 5. Air wings from the USS *Constellation* and USS *Ticonderoga* flew a total of 67 sorties against North Vietnamese patrol-boat bases, destroying eight boats and damaging 25.

Once all of the 921st Fighter Regiment's planes returning from the Soviet Union and China had landed in North Vietnam on August 6, 1964, each pilot was personally congratulated by senior military officials. Later that day the North Vietnamese placed two pairs of MiG-17s on alert to scramble for aerial combat with the Americans.

VPAF commanders were fully cognizant that their branch of military service was still far from ready to take on U.S. aircraft on anything approaching an equal basis. They had few trained pilots and few aircraft in comparison with the more technologically advanced U.S. aircraft and the better-trained American pilots. The Vietnamese pilots did have one advantage, though: they would be flying over their own country. One VPAF pilot suggested suicide attacks to overcome the American advantage, but Hanoi preferred tactics that would ensure victory with the lowest number of lost aircraft.

Following the beginning of Operations Flaming Dart I-II and the Rolling Thunder American air campaigns, the North Vietnamese sent their MiG-17s aloft on April 2, 1965, to engage the Americans. At 7:00 AM the following day, North Vietnamese radar operators reported a group of American fighters in North Vietnamese airspace. At 9:40 AM the American aircraft were spotted attacking bridges at Tao, Do Len, and Ham Rong.

In the ensuing air battle, the North Vietnamese claimed they had shot down two F-8Es, but U.S. sources claimed that all four F-8Es returned, with one badly damaged and having to land at Da Nang. Although the MiG-17 pilots had failed to score any kills on this first intercept mission, their primary goal had been met: enemy aircraft had been successfully engaged.

Events took a turn for the worse for the VPAF during summer 1965 as the nascent air force was decimated in aerial battles with highly skilled U.S. pilots flying the most advanced aircraft available to them. Hanoi attributed its heavy losses in MiGs to lack of combat experience, inferior hardware, and over-confident air defense units.

Making matters worse for the North Vietnamese, the Americans had begun using Lockheed EC-121D Warning Star airborne early-warning and control aircraft to prevent surprise interceptions. The North Vietnamese scrambled their fighter aircraft 156 times in 1965, but only recorded 15 kills.

Throughout 1966 and 1967, as the Americans exponentially increased their forces in South Viet-

Balon Greyjoy / Wikimedia

MiG-17s saw heavy action against U.S. aircraft during Operation Linebacker in 1972. North Vietnam's comprehensive air defense system, which also included powerful surface-to-air missiles from the Soviet Union, took a heavy toll on U.S. attack aircraft.

nam, U.S. Air Force and Navy aircraft continued their relentless attacks on power plants, industrial sites, major transportation routes, and military installations around Hanoi and Hai Phong. The American strategy was to cut off Hanoi from Hai Phong and isolate the two cities from other parts of the country.

To make the best use of their limited number of fighter aircraft, the North Vietnamese concentrated on defending Hanoi and the system of dikes around the Red River. The VPAF could not respond to every attack, so the pilots had to choose their targets carefully.

In 1971, Hanoi began working on a special mission against the Americans. Ten pilots of the 923rd Squadron were chosen to conduct attacks on ground and maritime targets.

The first maritime attack by MiG-17s, which was known afterwards as the Battle of Dong Hoi, occurred on April 19, 1972. Several MiG-17s, operating in conjunction with North Vietnamese torpedo boats, engaged a powerful task force from the U.S. Seventh Fleet that included the guided-missile cruiser USS *Oklahoma City*, guided-missile frigate USS *Sterett*, and destroyers USS *Lloyd Thomas* and USS *Higbee*. It was the first time that American warships had to defend themselves against aerial attack since World War II.

One of the MiG-17s scored a direct hit on the *Higbee* with a 550 lb. bomb. The explosion knocked out the destroyer's aft 5-inch gun mount, which had been evacuated after a shell had become hung up in one of its barrels. Another MiG-17 made several bombing runs against the *Oklahoma City* but missed its target. One MiG-17 was downed by a surface-to-air missile from *Sterett*. Another may have been downed as well, but there was no visual confirmation.

One of the largest aerial battles of the war occurred on May 10, 1972, on the first day of Operation Linebacker. As part of the 414 sorties flown by U.S. aircraft that day, McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantoms, Grumman A-6 Intruders, and LTV A-7 Corsairs attacked Hai Duong and the bridges at Lai Vu and Phu Luong. Four MiG-17s from the 923rd Squadron scrambled to protect the bridgehead at Lai Vu and engaged the American fighter-bombers. Over the course of the long day, VPAF put aloft four MiG-21s and seven MiG-17s, and the communist interceptor pilots succeeded in downing two U.S. Air Force F-4s.

On January 27, 1973, the warring parties signed the Paris Peace Accords, ending direct U.S. military involvement in South Vietnam. American air strikes ended almost immediately, allowing the North Vietnamese to begin repairing their air bases near Hanoi and Hai Phong. Within days of the of the ceasefire, the 923rd moved its MiG-17s to Tho Xuan, where it kept two fully armed jets on constant alert. A handful of fighters were left at Kien An to defend the strategic port of Hai Phong.

MiG-17 pilots from the 921st and 923rd squadrons claimed 71 aerial victories against a wide range of U.S. aircraft from 1965 to 1972. In contrast, the Americans downed 61 MiG-17s. Two North Vietnamese MiG-17 pilots, Luu Huy Chao and Le Hai, each were credited with six aerial-combat victories against U.S. aircraft.

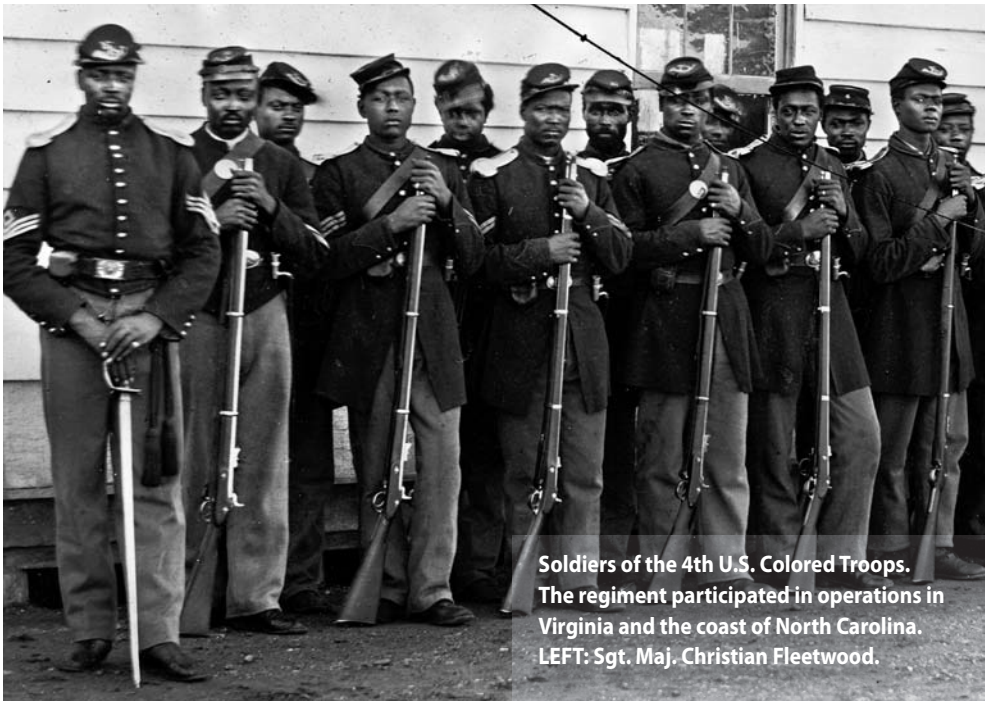
The MiG-17 remained in frontline service in North Vietnam until the late 1970s. The 923rd was then designated solely for ground-attack and maritime strike missions, leaving fighter interception to other regiments equipped with more advanced MiG-21s. Eventually employed as a fighter trainer, the Vietnamese retired the last of the venerable MiG-17s in the early 1980s. ■

VALOR

Fourteen black soldiers received the Medal of Honor for feats of valor at Chaffin's Farm on the outskirts of Richmond, Va.

By William E. Welsh

Both: Library of Congress



Soldiers of the 4th U.S. Colored Troops. The regiment participated in operations in Virginia and the coast of North Carolina. LEFT: Sgt. Maj. Christian Fleetwood.

Union soldiers streamed across the pontoon bridge at Deep Bottom on the tidal portion of the James River in the early morning hours of September 29, 1864. Among the troops that tramped north towards the Confederate position at New Market Heights on the Chaffin Farm east of Richmond, Virginia, were three regiments of U.S. Colored Troops. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler, commanding the Army of the James, had attached the black soldiers to Union Maj. Gen. David Birney's X Corps for the military operation that day.

The black troops felt a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Their excitement stemmed from the opportunity they would have to do battle with a Confederate army that defended a society determined to keep them in bondage as it had for the past 240 years. The anxiety was a response to the knowledge that some of them would perish in the assault on the enemy's heavily fortified position.

Seven months after the battle, 14 men from five regiments of U.S. Colored Troops would receive the Medal of Honor for feats of valor shown that fateful day.

The U.S. Army began enlisting black troops into its ranks in May 1863. But they were expressly forbidden from gaining officer commissions; instead, those went to white officers who led them into battle. By the time the war ended, the army had created 145 black regiments of infantry, seven of cavalry, 13 of artillery, and one of engineers.

The attack at New Market Heights in late September 1864 constituted part of Union Army General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant's strategic plan to wear down General Robert E. Lee's 60,000-strong Confederate Army of Northern Virginia defending Richmond-Petersburg sector in late 1864. Grant had besieged Petersburg with 100,000 Federal troops of the Armies of the Potomac and James in mid-June 1864 in an effort to strangle the Confederate Army by cutting off the provisions flowing into the Confederate capitol over the railroads that converged in Petersburg. Since the siege of Petersburg began, Grant had ordered alternating, and

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sometimes simultaneous, attacks on both cities to stretch the Confederate defenses.

Maj. Gen. Winfield Hancock and Birney, commanding the II and X corps, respectively, had assailed the Confederate positions north of the James in a series of unsuccessful assaults known as the Second Battle of Deep Bottom between August 14 and August 16 at the cost of 3,000 men. Grant was keen to launch another attack in the same sector.

Lincoln had saddled Grant with Butler, a general with few skills appointed for political reasons, when he established the Army of the James in April 1864 from occupation forces in Suffolk, Va., and coastal footholds in the Carolinas. Lincoln's decision to support Butler stemmed from the president's appreciation for the support of the former Massachusetts democrat, who had abandoned his party in1860 and joined the ranks of the radical Republicans.

Butler had approached Grant for an opportunity to attempt to fight his way into Richmond. Although Grant was skeptical he could achieve that objective, he gave Butler permission in mid-September to proceed because it would pull some Confederate troops out of the trenches in Petersburg. Butler's plan called for a two-pronged assault against the right and center of the Confederate defensive lines east of Richmond. Birney's reinforced X Corps would strike the Confederate right, while Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord's XVIII Corps would assault the Confederate center. Brig. Gen. August V. Kautz's Cavalry division was to accompany them to exploit any successes.

Ord's troops would cross the James River on a pontoon bridge to be constructed on the eve of the attack at Aiken's Landing. They were to march north to assail Fort Harrison. Once the fort was in Union hands, Ord would isolate any Confederate outposts south of the fort. Birney had orders to cross at the pontoon bridge situated at Deep Bottom and advance north to attack New Market Heights. If all went well, Birney was to advance into Richmond via the New Market Road, while Ord and Kautz pushed into Richmond along the Osborne Turnpike. The notion that Butler would capture Richmond was overly optimistic; nevertheless, Butler's troops were bound to make some gains against the Confederate defenses east of Richmond.

The area where the X Corps would be fighting was a large expanse of open ground southeast of Richmond known as Chaffin's Farm. To add extra weight to Birney's attack, he would have the 3,800 black troops of Brig. Gen. Charles Paine's Third Division of the XVIII Corps. Butler specifically instructed Birney to have the black troops spearhead the attack against New Market Heights because he wanted to know whether the blacks could capture a position that other Union troops had failed to capture in previous attacks.

The Confederates had constructed three concentric lines of earthen defenses to protect the Confederate capital from attack. Fort Harrison, where 1,750 troops were deployed, was the strongest of the 25 earthen forts on the intermediate defense line. As for the Confederate defenses on New Market Heights on the outer defenses, they consisted of a double line of abatis to slow an attack and multilayered breastworks. The infantry force posted at New Market Heights numbered 2,000 muskets and consisted of the veteran Texas Brigade led by Brig. Gen. John Gregg and Brig. Gen. Martin Gary's dismounted cavalry brigade.

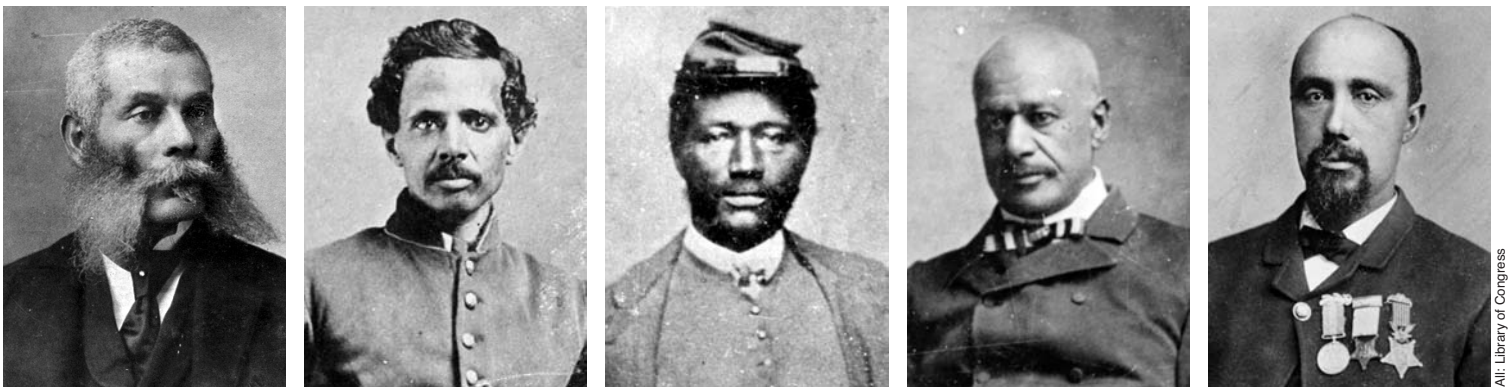
Under cover of darkness, the long columns moved over the bridges and proceeded north to their respective points of attack. Ord's troops attacked first. The burden of the assault fell to the 4,150 muskets of Brig. Gen. George Stannard's division. "They formed in line of battle, and moved up steadily toward the work," wrote war correspondent Henry Winser of the *New York Times*. With drums beating and colors flaunting, they made a superb charge, carrying the fort under a severe fire. Ord was wounded in the thigh, and Hiram Burnham of Maine, one of the three brigadiers participating in the assault, was cut down by Rebel fire.

A short distance to the west, Birney ordered Paine to storm the Rebel defense on New Market Heights with his black troops while the rest of the X Corps stood by in reserve. The attack began at dawn in a heavy fog when a line of skirmishers advanced. Colonel Samuel Duncan's 3rd Brigade, which was composed of the 4th and 6th U.S.C.T. regiments, led the assault alone. This was because Colonel John Holman's 1st Brigade and Colonel Alonzo Draper's 2nd Brigade both had fallen behind trying to get through the thick marshes along Four Mile Creek.

Confederate fire pinned down Duncan's men as they tried to force their way through the abatis. The officers did their best to spur their men on, but most of them were quickly killed or wounded by Confederate fire. At that point, it fell to the black sergeants of Draper's two regiments, the 4th and 6th U.S. Colored Troops, to lead the attack.

"When the charge was started, our color guard was full; two sergeants and 10 corporals," wrote Sgt. Maj. Christian Fleetwood of the 4th U.S.C.T. "Only one of the 12 came off that field on his own feet."

The attackers faced a withering fire from Colonel Frederick Bass' 1st Texas Regiment. Sergeant Alfred Hilton, who was carrying the 4th regiment's U.S. flag into battle, also grabbed the unit's blue regimental flag when its color bearer was shot. Hilton struggled forward with the two flags until he was severely wounded as well. Before either of the colors could fall to the ground, Sgt. Maj. Fleetwood grabbed the U.S. flag and Sergeant Charles Veale grabbed the regimental flag. Twenty-two year-old Hilton perished from his wounds three weeks later, but both Fleetwood and Veale survived the war. All three were among the 14 black soldiers from Paine's division that would receive the Medal of Honor for their valor during the battle.



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Some of the soldiers who received the Medal of Honor for their actions at Chaffin's Farm include Sergeant Alexander Kelly, Sergeant Powhatan Beaty, Sergeant James H. Harris, Private James Daniel Gardner, and Sergeant Robert A. Pinn.

Painting © 2021 Don Troiani

TOP: Lieutenant Nathan Huntley Edgerton, Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Hawkins, and Sergeant Alexander Kelly of the 6th Regiment U.S. Colored Troops carry forward the regiment's colors as it presses its attack at Chaffin's Farm in a painting titled "Three Medals of Honor" by artist Don Troiani.

"We struggled through two lines of abatis, a few getting through the palisades, but it was sheer madness," Fleetwood recalled. Because the attack of the 4th U.S.C.T. was unsupported, it temporarily stalled. The Texans sallied forth from their breastworks and rounded up some of the Yankees who were closest to their lines. Fleetwood evaded capture and brought the U.S. colors back to where the reserves were positioned. The attack of the 6th U.S.C.T. met with the same results; the Texans had destroyed the first wave of the attack in just 40 minutes.

Draper's 2nd Brigade, which was deployed to the left of Duncan's 3rd Brigade, was the next to close with the Confederates. Draper sent his 5th regiment forward in the first rank to spearhead the attack, with the 36th and 38th regiments following in the second rank. Fleetwood and the survivors of the first attack from Duncan's brigade went forward a second time. The men of Draper's brigade did their best to hack their way through the abatis, but they became bogged down for 30 minutes in the sharpened stakes while under heavy fire.

"All of the officers were striving constantly to get the men forward," Draper wrote in his battle report. "The efforts of the white officers and black noncoms yielded success." When the Confederate fire slackened, Draper's men broke free of the abatis and surged forward to fight hand-to-hand with the Rebels at their breastworks.

Sergeants James H. Harris and Edward Ratcliff, both of the 38th U.S.C.T., and Corporal Miles James and Private William Barnes of the 36th U.S.C.T., each of whom would receive the Medal of Honor, were among the first to fight their way into the Rebel trenches. Although these men were wounded in the attack, they refused to quit the fight. One valiant soldier, Private James Gardiner of the 36th U.S.C.T., had the distinction of killing a Confederate officer. Rushing ahead of his unit, Gardiner shot and bayoneted a Confederate officer atop the parapet rallying his men. He also received the Medal of Honor.

The battle was over before Holman's 1st Brigade could get into action. When it became evident to Gregg that his force was too small to hold its ground against a Federal corps, he ordered his troops to fall back to positions around Fort Gilmer, which was situated north of Fort Harrison.

The U.S.C.T. brigades took possession of New Market Heights at 8:00 AM. Duncan's 3rd Brigade suffered 368 killed and wounded casualties, while Draper's Brigade recorded 429 killed and wounded. A subsequent attack on Fort Gilmer resulted in 100 more casualties for the 5th U.S.C.T. of Draper's 2nd Brigade.

Lee was not about to let the fall of Fort Harrison go uncontested. He ordered Lt. Gen. Richard Anderson to launch a counterattack with his two divisions the following day, but by that time Ord's men had entrenched. Anderson failed to retake Fort Harrison; however, Lee established a new position equally strong just east of it.

Butler's troops failed to capture Richmond, but they had driven the Confederates from key positions. The total butcher's bill for the two-day battle: 3,300 Union killed and wounded, and 2,000 Confederate casualties.

On April 6, 1865, the War Department announced the recipients of the Medal of Honor for heroism at New Market Heights. In addition to the eight aforementioned recipients (Barnes, Fleetwood, Gardiner, Harris, Hilton, James, Ratcliff, and Veale), the other six recipients were Sergeant Powhatan Beaty of the 5th regiment, Sergeant James Bronson of the 5th regiment, Sgt. Maj. Thomas Hawkins of the 6th regiment, Sergeant Milton Holland of the 5th regiment, Sergeant Alexander Kelly of the 6th regiment, and Sergeant Robert Pinn of the 5th regiment.

Maj. Gen. Butler desperately wanted to reward the black soldiers who had shown extraordinarily valor at Chaffin's Farm. He could not promote the black sergeants to lieutenants because they were not allowed to become commissioned officers. Instead, he decided to use the Medal of Honor, which had been established in 1862. At that time the requirements for the Medal of Honor were less stringent than modern standards, yet it was still an award of great distinction. Morris Chester, a black reporter with the Philadelphia Press, waxed eloquently about the achievements of all the troops of Paine's division. The division "had covered itself with glory and wiped out effectively the imputation against the fighting qualities of colored troops." ■

UNIFORM

By William Welsh

Prussian Grenadier of the 12th Regiment, 1755-1756

MITER HELMET: The tall miter design dated from the 17th century, when grenadiers threw grenades and needed a hat that would not impede their throwing arm. The Prussian eagle was the centerpiece of the ornate brass front plate.

BAYONET: The Potsdam musket used a triangular cross-section bayonet. It was carried on a buff waist belt with a grenadier sword.

MODEL 1740 MUSKET: The .72-caliber smoothbore flint-lock musket made in Potsdam featured a decorated walnut or maple stock and had a 41-inch-long steel barrel and an overall length of 56 inches. Sturdy iron ramrods were introduced in 1730 to replace fragile wooden ones. The 1723 and 1740 patterns became the first standardized firearms of Prussia and many other German states in the 18th century.

UNIFORM: The grenadier wears a dark blue coat with red "facings" (lapels, collar, cuffs), brass buttons, and white buttonhole tape. His waistcoat, and breeches are yellow and he wears a red wool "neck stock" over his shirt collar.

CARTRIDGE BOX: The black leather cartridge box was worn with a buff white shoulder sling. The front flap of the box is decorated with a brass plate in the center (not visible) and flaming bombs in each corner. The box could carry as many as 80 rounds.

SHOES AND GAITERS: The square-toed shoes were made of blackened leather and were treated with wax and oil not only to waterproof them but also to offer a smooth exterior suitable for polishing. They were held securely in place with a leather strap through a brass buckle. The grenadiers wore gaiters made of white cloth over wool socks.

In 1735, a single grenadier company was raised for each infantry battalion, and this was later expanded to two grenadier companies per battalion. When King Frederick II "The Great" ascended to the throne five years later, he reduced the grenadier-only Crown Prince's Regiment to a Grenadier Guard Battalion. Five regiments of the Prussian Guard were designated as guard grenadiers, and there were an additional fourteen regiments among the line infantry of the German empire.

Frederick the Great had a need for units that were aggressive and steadfast in combat, and the grenadiers were among the most dependable in this regard. During Frederick the Great's reign the grenadiers were selected not for their size—as they had been previously—but for their robust nature to ensure that they could endure grueling marches. Like other Prussian infantrymen, Prussian grenadiers could fire three to four rounds per minute. On the field of battle, four grenadier companies could be combined to form a 700-man grenadier battalion.

One of their most splendid attacks occurred when they spearheaded the assault against the Austrian left flank at Leuthen on December 5, 1757. During the assault, they were the first troops to fight their way into Leuthen's fortified church. ■

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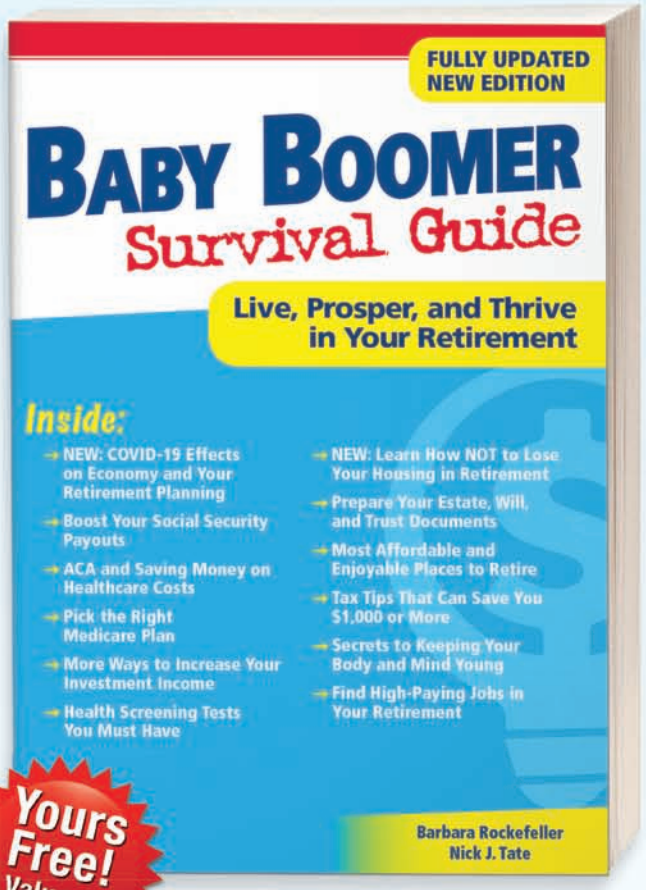

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Lennart Torstensson used gunpowder artillery in revolutionary ways to win victories for the Swedish army during the Thirty Years War.

By William E. Welsh

ABOVE: The Swedes proved it was possible to deploy artillery more than once in battle to support their musket and pike troops. LEFT: Lennart Torstensson.

Thousands of Protestant Swedish and German soldiers struggled up the rain-slickened slopes of a high ridge in southern Germany on September 3, 1632. The Protestant pikemen and musketeers struggled to breach obstacles and trenches fiercely defended by Catholic soldiers on the high ground surrounding an old fortress known as Alte Veste overlooking the Rednitz River in Franconia.

Although shells from their heavy guns blasted the fortifications, the troops of Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus could not make any headway against the formidable fieldworks constructed by Count Albrecht von Wallenstein's Imperial army. As the Protestants withdrew, leaving several thousand dead soldiers on the muddy hillside, the Imperial troops surged forward capturing large numbers of them. One of the captured men was Lennart Torstensson, the Swedish artillery commander who was one of Gustavus' most trusted generals.

The Catholics imprisoned 29-year-old Torstensson in the Bavarian city of Ingolstadt on the Danube River. The Swedish army obtained his release through a prisoner exchange in August 1633, and he returned to Sweden to convalesce. His health had sharply declined during his incarceration under poor conditions, and complications would not only afflict him during the remainder of his military service, but ultimately cut short his life.

The son of an aristocratic Swedish family, Torstensson became a page to King Gustavus II Adolphus at the age of 15 in 1618. The Swedish king had undertaken the reform of Sweden's military forces building upon the tactical concepts of Maurice of Nassau, the Prince of Orange, who sought to elevate the Dutch army to the point that it could successfully take on the crack troops of the Spanish army, whose soldiers were the best in Europe in the 16th and early 17th centuries.

Torstensson's first experience in battle came in the service of the Swedish king while he was campaigning in Livonia. Having seen that Torstensson had the aptitude to become a skilled commander, the king sent him in 1624 to The

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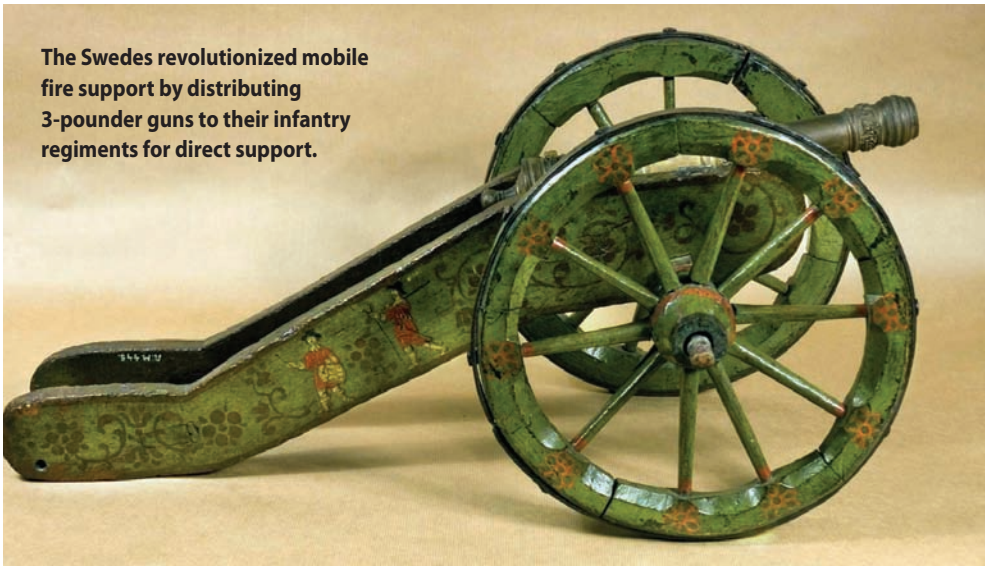


The Swedes revolutionized mobile fire support by distributing 3-pounder guns to their infantry regiments for direct support.

Netherlands to study under Maurice. During that time, Maurice imparted to him his knowledge of artillery and how it might be used effectively on the battlefield.

After gaining substantial success in Livonia against the Poles at the Battle of Wallhoff in January 1626, Gustavus invaded Polish Prussia by sea four months later. Torstensson joined the Swedish king for the campaign in Prussia. The war dragged on for three years, at which time the combatants concluded a treaty that gave the Swedes Livonia. Gustavus completed many of his key military reforms during the Polish Wars.

Gustavus made Torstensson his artillery chief. With the king's assistance, Torstensson consolidated the army's heavier guns into batteries, redesigned the 12-pounder gun giving it a lighter carriage, and distributed four 3-pounder guns to each regiment. Torstensson not only commanded the gunners of the Swedish field army, but also its miners and pioneers. Although he had overall command of the artillery units, he only had direct control of the heavier guns, for the king had directed that regimental infantry commanders were to be allowed to use the 3-pounder guns as they saw fit.

Gustavus Adolphus' expeditionary army landed in western Pomerania at Usedom on July 6, 1630, to support the German Protestants against the armies of the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II. Gustavus' powerful army consisted of 43,000 Swedes and Finns, as well as 30,000 foreign mercenaries.

Although Danish King Christian IV had fared poorly against the combined Imperial and Bavarian forces, Gustavus would use revolutionary tactics against the Catholic armies of Austria and Bavaria that fought in tercio formations like the Spanish. Rather than fighting in dense tercios with files up to 50 men deep, Gustavus' infantry would fight in linear fashion with batteries of 24-pounder and 12-pounder guns furnishing direct support.

European powers began using gunpowder cannons in the 14th century, but it was Gustavus' Swedish army that established the first regular artillery units. As the Swedes began fighting pitched battles with the Imperial Catholic armies, it became evident that they had the best artillery in Christendom. Only the artillery of the Ottoman Turkish armies could rival that employed by the Swedes during Gustavus' campaign in embattled Germany.

The first major test of the Swedish artillery came at Breitenfeld in Saxony on September 7, 1631, when Gustavus offered battle to Johann Tserclaes, Count of Tilly, who commanded the combined Imperial and Catholic League forces. During the hard-fought contest, Torstensson skillfully directed the Swedish batteries, and these units exhibited superior firepower in comparison to their Catholic counterparts. The well-trained Swedish gunners proved at Breitenfeld that they could fire as many as four shots a minute in the heat of battle.

After wintering in the Rhine Valley, Gustavus' Protestant army swept into Catholic Bavaria in April 1632. Tilly's army had a strong position behind the Lech River, a right tributary of the Danube River, but Torstensson brilliantly used his heavy guns to create a diversion by bombarding the Imperial center on the opposite bank, while Finnish pioneers constructed a pontoon bridge six miles to the south to gain a foothold for the Swedish troops on the east bank of the river. Once the bridge was in place, the Finns dug artillery pits for guns that rumbled across the bridge to furnish direct support for the troops advancing against the Imperial left wing. The ensuing battle was a decisive Protestant victory. The loss of Tilly, who was mortally wounded by musket fire, was a major loss to the Catholics.

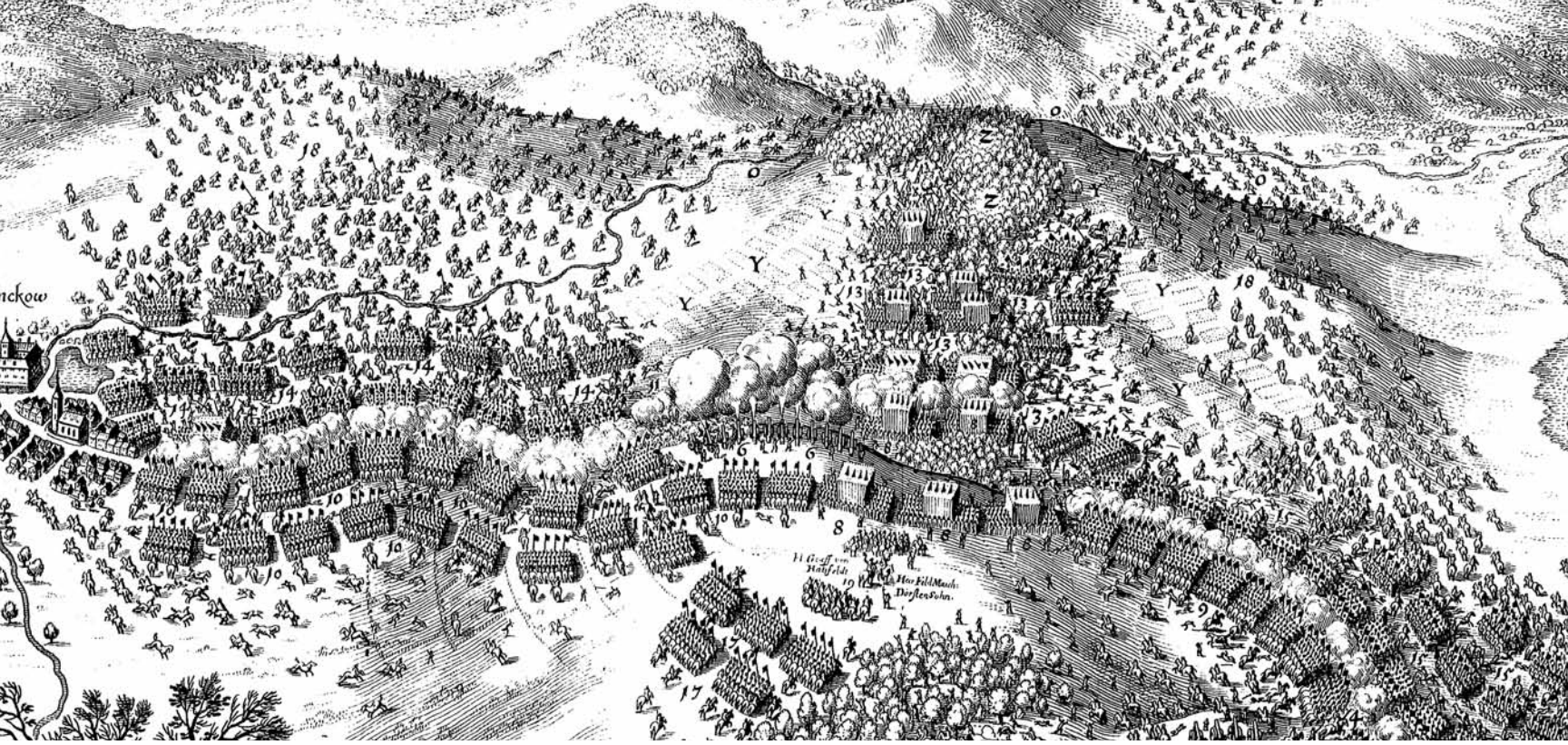
After securing southern Bavaria, Gustavus occupied the strategic city of Nuremberg on the northern frontier of Bavaria. Count Albrecht von Wallenstein, a reliable commander of Imperial forces, established a fortified camp nearby on the grounds of the old hilltop fortress at Alte Veste. During Gustavus' unsuccessful assault on the camp, Torstensson was captured and interred in Ingolstadt south of Nuremberg. While Torstensson was imprisoned, Gustavus was slain in battle at Lutzen that November.

After Lutzen, the Swedish army suffered a major defeat in September 1634 at Nordlingen in Bavaria against an Imperial army heavily reinforced by Hapsburg Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand's Spanish army, which was on its way overland from Italy to the Spanish Netherlands. Count Gustav Horn, who led the Swedish component of the Protestant army at Nordlingen, was captured. At the time of the battle, Marshal Johann Baner, who had succeeded Gustavus as supreme commander of the Swedish forces, was campaigning in Silesia with a secondary Swedish army. After a brief convalescence, Torstensson became Baner's chief of staff, with the rank of major general.

The Swedes felt a keen desire to avenge their humiliating defeat at Nordlingen. In a stroke of good fortune for the Protestants, Emperor Ferdinand II ordered his troops to assassinate Wallenstein in 1634 for alleged treason. A leadership vacuum occurred after his death, for the Catholics possessed no general who was comparable to either Tilly or Wallenstein. When the Imperialists under Melchior von Hatzfeldt invaded Brandenburg, Baner attacked them at Wittstock in October 1636. He defeated them by dividing his forces and sending one group on a wide flanking maneuver that caught the Imperialists by surprise. Torstensson directed the powerful Swedish artillery, which pinned the Imperialist army in place and prevented Hatzfeldt's troops from launching any successful assaults.

Over the course of the next five years, the advantage shifted back and forth, but the Swedes found themselves still not able to inflict a final defeat on the Catholic armies of Bavaria and Austria. Emperor Ferdinand II died in 1637 and was succeeded by his eldest son Ferdinand III. Baner's health declined substantially, and he died in Halbertstadt in May 1641.

Swedish Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, who directed the military forces of Sweden on behalf of Queen Christina, picked Torstensson to succeed Baner. Torstensson faced a herculean task: He would have to fight his way into to the frontier of Austria. To keep his army in supply, he would have to capture and garrison a string of fortified cities between the Swedish-controlled Baltic ports in Pomerania and the



Torstensson defeated the Hapsburg Catholics at Jankau in Bohemia in 1645 by advancing his field artillery against the enemy as it fell back in the face of a powerful Swedish attack.

emperor's seat of power in Austria.

Torstensson began his 1642 campaign by capturing major fortresses in Silesia to serve as way stations for troops and supplies on their way south to future operations in Saxony, Moravia, and Bohemia. Next, he besieged Leipzig, the capital of Saxony, with his 20,000-strong army to compel the Imperial army to attempt to relieve it. As expected, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm arrived in Saxony with 26,000 Imperial troops to fight the Swedish army.

The two opponents squared off in October at what became the Battle of Second Breitenfeld. The battle began with the Swedish right wing advancing towards the Imperialist left wing. At the same time, Ottavio Piccolomini's crack cuirassiers and Croatian irregulars attempted to turn the Protestant army's left flank, but the Swedish cavalry checked their advance. When Swedish troops streamed out of the woods to attack the Imperial left wing, it crumbled. Many of the Imperial troops surrendered. Torstensson's victory at Second Breitenfeld gave the Swedes control of Saxony, and they garrisoned its capital for the rest of the war.

The following year, Oxenstierna summoned Torstensson to Sweden to prosecute a new war against Sweden's long-time foe, the Danes. His opponent during the conflict was General Hannibal Sehested, Danish King Christian IV's son-in-law. The conflict was known afterwards as Torstensson's War. Torstensson overran the Danish defenses and wintered in Holstein in 1643-1644.

Christian IV appealed to Ferdinand III for military assistance, and the emperor dispatched untalented general Count Matthias Gallas with 15,000 troops to assist the Danes. The inept Gallas tried to bottle up the Swedes in Holstein the following year, but Torstensson slipped out of the trap. Fearing that the Imperial troops might try to capture Swedish ports in Pomerania, Torstensson marched east to Brandenburg to block such a move. He skillfully outmaneuvered Gallas, who soon found his army encircled by the Swedes at Juterbog south of Berlin. Although the Imperial foot soldiers succeeded in breaking out, the Swedes wiped out all 4,000 of the Imperial cavalry troops.

Torstensson pressed the offensive against Emperor Ferdinand III in 1645 by invading Bohemia, where the war had begun in 1618. The emperor had replaced Gallas with Field Marshal Melchior von Hatzfeldt. To compensate for the loss of the Imperial cavalry, a Bavarian cavalry force under General Johann von Werth had arrived to reinforce Hatzfeldt.

The two armies collided in wooded and broken terrain at Jankov south of Prague on March 6. Torstensson fielded 9,000 horse, 6,500 foot, and 60 cannon, while von Hatzfeldt arrived on the field of battle with 11,500 cavalry, 5,000 infantry, and 26 guns. The battle began badly for the Imperialists when General Johann von Goetz, one of the Imperial generals, advanced his troops from a ridge into a valley without requesting permission to do so. While Hatzfeldt tried to sort things out, Werth made a spirited attack with his horsemen, but the Swedish artillery broke up their charges.

Swedish troops skillfully conducted a turning manuever against the Imperial left that forced Hatzfeldt and Werth to withdraw their troops north to a second position. In a move not previously seen on Thirty Years War battlefields, the Swedish artillery kept pace with the advance. Imperial pike and shot troops tried desperately to construct breastworks, but the second Swedish assault came too quickly for them to entrench. The Swedes smashed the Imperial center and destroyed most of Hatzfeldt's army. The Imperial army suffered 9,000 casualties, while the Swedes lost only 3,000 men.

Jankau became Torstensson's tactical masterpiece. The victory was made possible in large part because of the crack Swedish artillery, which swept rapidly over streams and marshes still frozen in the late winter. Jankau earned Torstensson a place in the pantheon of great Swedish commanders of the Thirty Years War.

But it was to be his last hurrah. Torstensson's chronic gout had grown nearly unbearable by the time of Jankau, and he retired the following year, just two years before the end of hostilities. While serving as the commander-in-chief of Swedish forces, he displayed great talents as a tactician. But he is best remembered for his artillery achievements. With the exception of Gustavus Adolphus, no other Swedish general came close to rivaling Torstensson for an understanding of the capabilities of gunpowder artillery on the battlefield. ■

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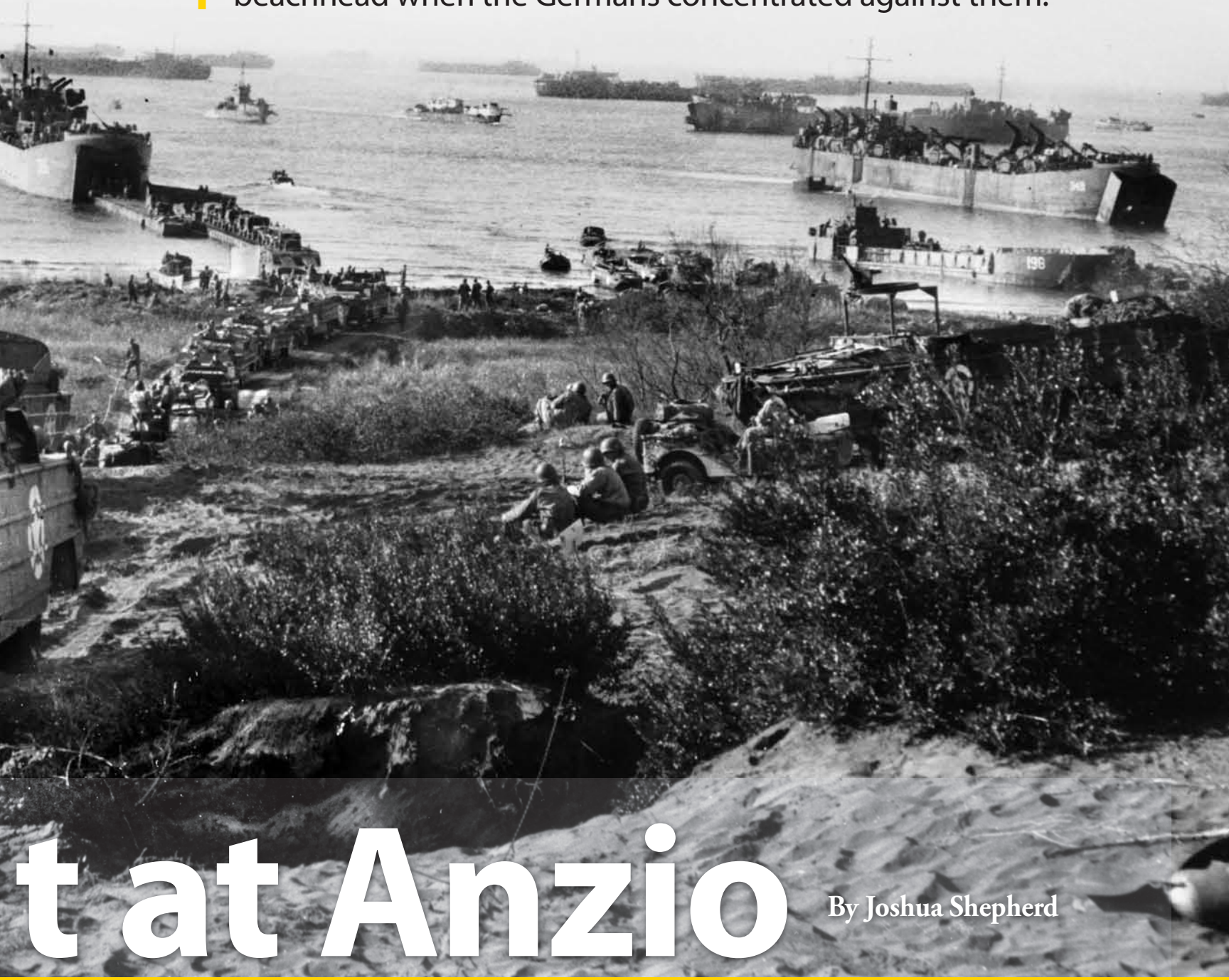
Allied forces achieved complete surprise when they stormed ashore 40 miles south of Rome on January 22, 1944, but they failed to exploit their advantage with a rapid advance inland.

Brutal Slugfes

For the Americans of 2nd Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment, their arrival at Anzio in early May 1944 was anything but heartening. The U.S. VI Corps had hugged the Italian coastline below Rome since January of that year in a steadily shrinking perimeter. The beleaguered Allies faced daily artillery bombardment from well-placed German artillery. In a desperate bid to break the stalemate, Allied supplies and reinforcements poured into the harbor on a daily basis. But after four months of bloodletting, the front lines had barely moved.

The tank crews of the 13th Armored Regiment, which was attached to the 1st Armored Division, arrived among a batch of fresh reinforcements. Allied senior commanders hoped that the influx of reinforcements would be sufficient to enable the Allies to break out of the German encirclement. Although the men of the regiment had seen hard fighting in North Africa and Italy, the sight that greeted them as they rumbled toward

The Allies undertook a daring amphibious invasion in January 1944 to outflank the Germans along the Gustav Line. But they found themselves fighting for survival on the beachhead when the Germans concentrated against them.



t at Anzio

By Joshua Shepherd

the front lines was a grim reminder of their deadly assignment. Peering from the turrets of their M-4 Shermans, the tankers stared quietly at tidy rows of freshly painted white crosses, which seemed to stretch to the horizon. "Our first sight as we drove inland was a shockingly large United States cemetery," recalled Lt. Col. Henry Gardiner, the 2nd Battalion's commander.

The costly fight for Anzio had unfolded as the Allies sought to bring the war to the European mainland. Following the liberation of Sicily in summer 1943, the Allies set in motion their plans to invade the Italian mainland. British Lt. Gen. Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army crossed the narrow Straights of Messina on September 3, 1943, but his advance ground to a halt in the face of stiff German resistance.

The U.S. Fifth Army, under the command of Lt. Gen. Mark Clark, stormed ashore at Salerno on September 9 in an amphibious assault known as Operation Avalanche. Although Clark suc-

Navy History and Heritage Command

ceeded in establishing a foothold on the Campanian coast, Generaloberst Heinrich von Vietinghoff's 10th Army soon pinned down Clark's two corps in a narrow beachhead. After desperate fighting that barely averted disaster, the Allies switched to the offensive after the Germans began disengaging on September 16. U.S. troops on the right of the beachhead linked up with the vanguard of the British Eighth Army advancing from the south. The Allies succeeded in capturing Naples on October 1.

These incremental successes revealed that the fight for Italy would prove to be a grinding war of attrition as German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's Army Group C waged a fierce fight contesting every inch of ground on the peninsula. The Allies paid dearly as they slowly battled their way north. The Allies were hampered in their use of armor by the mountainous terrain of the Italian peninsula. In many respects, the Italian campaign became a brutal slugfest between veteran forces.

The Allied advance ground to a halt in December at the formidable 100-mile Gustav Line, a belt of German fortifications that ran along the Garigliano and Sangro rivers and included the citadel of Monte Cassino, perched on a rocky crag. Making use of the dizzying warren of steep ridges, plunging ravines, and jagged peaks, German forces, among them elite German paratroopers, rendered the imposing position nearly impregnable. Facing a bloody debacle in the rugged mountains of central Italy, the exhausted Allied armies found themselves fought to a standstill.

Imaginative plans for breaking the bloody stalemate came from the highest levels. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill became the primary champion of an audacious amphibious landing behind the German lines. Both Clark and his superior officer, General Sir Harold Alexander, the commander of the Allied 15th Army Group in Italy, had considered the idea but dismissed it as an ill-advised strategic concept. However, Churchill remained committed to the idea.

Despite the reticence of his senior commanders, Churchill wielded his considerable influence in pushing for the operation. British and American strategic doctrine was likewise at loggerheads. Although Churchill favored a policy of confronting the Axis forces in the Mediterranean, the Americans preferred to save resources and manpower for a direct confrontation against the Germans in France. Not to be dissuaded, Churchill continued pushing for an invasion of Italy. "The stagnation of the whole campaign on the Italian front is becoming scandalous," he said.

With the pending invasion of France not scheduled until summer 1944, a compromise was reached. Naval resources, including vital landing craft, would be allocated for an amphibious landing on the Italian coast before their transfer to the English Channel. Rather than batter themselves in futile frontal attacks against the Gustav Line, the Allies would launch a daring seaborne landing that would threaten German lines of communication and unhinge enemy defenses.

Discussion centered on the number of troops to be allocated for the mission. Alexander initially had thought it would take five divisions, but this number of troops, as well as the number of vessels that would be needed to transport them, was not available. Clark pushed to have at least three divisions for the amphibious operation, but in the end it was decided that just two would go ashore.

Planners settled on a somewhat unlikely locale for the landings, near the coastal town of Anzio. The town, as well as the nearby village of Nettuno, constituted an idyllic Mediterranean resort situated 34 miles southwest of Rome. The locale offered the prospect of ideal landing beaches. There were no hills overlooking the beach for the enemy to fortify. The nearest high ground, the Alban Hills, was 20 miles inland. The countryside consisted of vast, level farm fields suitable for the rapid movement of troops and armor.

The final plan called for landing Maj. Gen. John Lucas' VI Corps, composed of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, the British 1st Division, and various paratrooper, ranger, and commando units. A total of 47,000 men and 5,500 vehicles would go ashore at Anzio during the first days of the invasion. The VI Corps would be reinforced by elements of the U.S. 45th and 1st Armored Divisions.

Alexander harbored serious reservations about Lucas' suitability for such an assignment. Although Lucas possessed a sterling service record and an unquestioned reputation for personal bravery, he was a cautious tactician. Yet the operation required a hard-driving, audacious commander if it were to succeed.

For his part, Lucas was less than enthusiastic about the entire plan. With an initial landing force of two divisions, he feared that VI Corps was far too large for a simple raid, but not nearly large enough to punch through German positions and advance inland from the coast. "They will end up by putting me ashore with inadequate forces and get me in a serious jam," he wrote in his diary.

An embarrassing pre-invasion training exercise only served to further dampen enthusiasm. Landing craft failed to hit the beaches in proper order, or landed on the wrong beach entirely, or showed up over an hour late. A dumbfounded Lucas watched from the landing beaches in mounting consternation.

Maj. Gen. Lucian Truscott, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, sent an angry protest up the chain of command in which he voiced his objections. Clark brushed the warning aside. The landings at Anzio, codenamed Operation Shingle, had been ordered from the highest levels. The invasion would proceed as planned.

In the early morning hours of January 22, the Allied invasion fleet of 400 ships constituted an impressive sight. It comprised cruisers, destroyers, two liberty ships, 84 LSTs, 96 LSIs, and 50 LCTs. A pair of British ships pushed out from the fleet and launched a barrage of rocket fire intended to soften up German defenses.

South of Anzio, the main American landings went off without a hitch. Three regiments from Truscott's 3rd Infantry Division struck the coast along a stretch of shoreline codenamed X-Ray Beach. To the south, the 15th Infantry Regiment veered off to the right in order to anchor the American flank near the Astura River. While the 30th Infantry pushed directly inland about three miles, the 7th Infantry Regiment swung left in order to make contact with British troops farther north.

Little more than scattered gunfire greeted the elite troops tasked with seizing Anzio and Nettuno. The paratroopers of the 509th Parachute Infantry occupied Nettuno after walking unopposed into the village. Elements of the 6615th Ranger Force, commanded by Colonel William Darby, seized the port of Anzio.

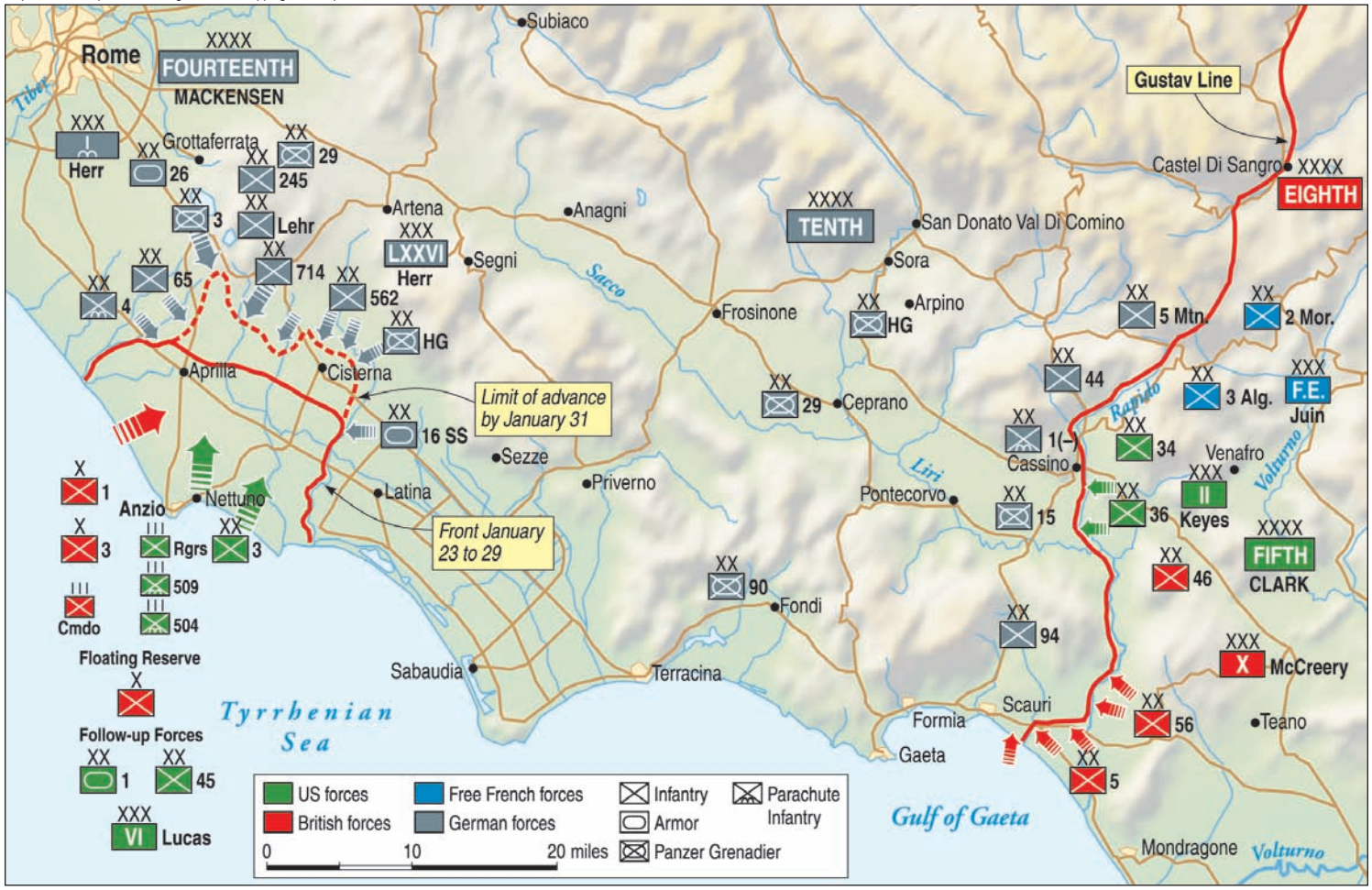
Five miles to the north, the troops of the British 1st Division faced light opposition but met with unforeseen delays. After encountering an unwelcome belt of minefields, the troops balked at moving forward. Fortunately, no German counterattack was forthcoming, and the British eventually moved out after paths were cleared through the minefields. British commandos pressed forward to the Padiglione Woods, where they linked up with elements of the U.S. 7th Infantry.

The landings had been a relatively easy affair. Lucas' forces had succeeded in securing the beachhead and capturing 200 Germans at the cost of 13 killed and 97 wounded. By nightfall on the first day, the Allies had landed 36,000 troops, as well as 3,200 tanks and trucks.

Despite the relative ease of the initial landings, the enemy had been far from idle. The number of German troops in Italy was inadequate to defend the entire coastline, but Kesselring moved with remarkable speed to funnel reinforcements to the area once it was clear that a major landing had occurred.

To contest the Allied landing at Anzio, the German High Command sent reinforcements from as far away as France, Germany, and the Balkans. Direct command of the defenses was assigned Generaloberst Eberhard von Mackensen, commander of the German Fourteenth Army. Although Mackensen had a polyglot collection of forces, some of these units included tough veterans.

The Allies pushed inland on the second day of the invasion to expand their perimeter. In the succeeding days the two sides sparred. Lucas was wary of becoming overextended. Amid an omi-



ABOVE: By failing to push forward quickly once ashore, Maj. Gen. John Lucas forfeited the initiative to his opponent, Generaloberst Eberhard von Mackensen, the commander of the German Fourteenth Army. Mackensen had at his disposal a formidable array of veteran units that bedeviled the Allied invasion force for four months. OPPOSITE: German aircraft struck LCI-20 at left on the first day of the invasion with a 500-pound bomb. On the whole, Allied aircraft gave good cover to both the fleet and the ground forces that came ashore.

nous buildup of German forces, the Luftwaffe launched a series of air attacks on Allied shipping and ground forces.

Luftwaffe attacks on Allied shipping in the waters off Cape Anzio increased as reinforcements were offloaded on the beachhead. The Luftwaffe sent Messerschmitt and Focke-Wulf fighters, as well as Heinkel, Dornier, Junkers, and Stuka bombers against the Allied warships and transports. The USS *Plunkett* was sunk on January 24 by a direct hit from a Ju-88, with the loss of 53 hands. One of the most tragic events was the sinking of the hospital ship *St. David*. Luftwaffe bombers scored a direct hit that sunk the ship at the cost of 96 lives.

By January 25 the Germans had moved three divisions into place to block Allied forces advancing inland. From left to right were Generalmajor Paul Conrath's Panzer Division Hermann Goring, Generalleutnant Fritz-Hubert Graser's 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, and Generalmajor Hellmuth Pfeifer's 65th Infantry Division.

Despite heavy shelling from German artillery, elements of the British 1st Division began to push inland that day, making good progress towards the hamlet of Aprilia. The village's bleak industrial architecture earned it the nickname of "The Factory," a moniker soon rendered notorious for the bloodletting that would take place there. The British seized the village, but suffered badly the next day. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, whose crack soldiers were veterans of the Eastern Front and Salerno, backed up by a column of Panzers, regained control of Aprilia after a furious counterattack.

By the end of the first week, Lucas had 61,000 men at his disposal, but the Germans had 71,000 men organized into 33 battatlions backed by 238 guns to oppose him. Clark began to fret that the VI Corps commander was overcautious. "Lucas must be aggressive," wrote Clark in his diary. "He must take some chances."

Relenting to pressure from his superiors, Lucas took his chances on the evening of January 29, implementing an ambitious plan that he hoped would crack open the German defenses. The plan called for Truscott's 3rd Division, on the Allied right flank, to strike out for Cisterna, a crossroads that controlled Highway 7 leading to Rome. Allied intelligence had reported that the German defenses at Cisterna were tantalizingly weak and ripe for exploitation.

Lucas detailed the 1st and 3rd battalions of Rangers to spearhead the attack. They were to infiltrate enemy lines by quietly slipping up an undefended drainage ditch in order to soften up German troops in Cisterna before the main body arrived. The 4th Ranger Battalion was to seize the main road to Cisterna. The 7th and 15th infantry regiments on the left and right, respectively, would provide the main thrust for taking the town.

The clandestine infiltration of the Pantano Ditch was an operation for which the elite Rangers were uniquely suited. At 1:30 AM the two battalions entered the ditch and quietly trudged through frigid muck that rendered movement agonizingly slow. Due to the difficult marching conditions, they were lightly armed with small arms, bazookas, and hand grenades. Their approach went well, though, and they crept forward undetected through the ditch.

As the first streaks of dawn lit the horizon, the Rangers had arrived at the Conca Road, about a mile from the town. Major Jack Dobson, commanding the 1st Battalion, was not encouraged by what he saw. In addition to large numbers of German infantry, it was obvious that armor was on hand as well. Unable to reach Darby by radio and with the sun coming up fast, Dobson had little choice. He issued orders for an attack toward Cisterna.

When the Rangers crossed the Conca Road, bedlam erupted. They had unknowingly walked into an enemy camp. Scattered gunfire broke the silence. Rather than easily overrunning an understrength German garrison, they had inadvertently stumbled into elements of Panzer Division Hermann Goring.

The chaotic struggle that ensued was a grim

American tanks and troops press forward following white tape that marked safe routes through enemy minefields.

National Archives

COMMANDERS AT ANZIO —William E. Welsh

ALLIED COMMANDERS

General Harold Alexander: His post as commander of the Allied 15th Army Group in Italy gave him control of all Allied forces on the peninsula. Alexander was a courageous, resourceful, and energetic commander. He was willing to compromise in the face of opposing opinions. Yet his failure to draw up precise and detailed plans led to tactical confusion.

Maj. Gen. John Lucas: Given command of the U.S. VI Corps in the amphibious assault at Anzio, Lucas was well liked by his colleagues and considered a capable logistician. But his excessive caution when swift action was needed prompted Alexander to order Clark to replace him.

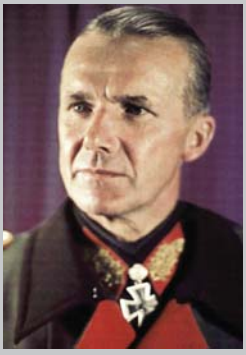
Lt. Gen. Mark Clark: The commander of the U.S. Fifth Army was energetic, ambitious, and strong willed. He shone when it came to managing multinational forces and devising strategies for defeating the Germans in the Mediterranean theater. Finding his army bogged down at Anzio, he did his best under trying circumstances against one of Germany's greatest field marshals.

Maj. Gen. Lucien Truscott: One of the finest U.S. combat commanders in the war, Truscott was confident, demanding, and aggressive. Both his soldiers and his superiors had confidence in his abilities. Having led the U.S. 3rd Division ashore at Anzio, Clark selected him in late February 1944 to replace Maj. Gen. John Lucas as commander of the U.S. VI Corps.

GERMAN COMMANDERS

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring: Possessing great skill for strategic defense, Luftwaffe Field Marshal Kesselring succeeded in slowing the Allied advance up the Italy Peninsula with limited manpower and equipment resources. Throughout his tenure as commander of the southwestern front, he showed himself to be competent, flexible, and resolute.

General of Panzer Troops Traugott Herr: One of the Wehrmacht's legendary panzer leaders, Herr led the newly formed LXXVI Panzer Corps. Before Anzio, he had fought a skillful delaying action against the British Eighth Army in Calabria and also led a major counterattack against the U.S. Fifth Army at Salerno. His skillful direction of German counterattacks, as well as his astute use of the German reserve divisions under his command, contributed heavily to the German success in containing the Allied beachhead at Anzio as long as possible.



Generaloberst Eberhard von Mackensen: Possessing broad combat experience as a panzer leader in Poland, France and Russia, Mackensen was entrusted with command of the German Fourteenth Army deployed against the Allies at Anzio. He moved quickly to contain the Allied units on the beachhead. A German victory proved elusive when his panzer forces were unable to pierce the Allied perimeter.

General of Paratroops Alfred Schlemm: As commander of the 1st Parachute Corps, Schlemm and his staff played a crucial role in organizing and managing the initial defensive operations until Mackensen arrived to assume overall command. He continued to play a pivotal role throughout the operation, since he commanded one of the two German corps engaged against the Allies at Anzio.

Both: National Archives

TOP: British soldiers in the beachhead's northern sector fought tenaciously against the Germans in a desperate bid to break out into the open, but the Germans launched heavy counterattacks against their narrow bulge. ABOVE: An American soldier fires from a concealed position in the ruins of Cisterna. The Germans inflicted dreadful casualties on the Americans in the see-saw fighting at Cisterna.

fight for survival. German fire pinned down the Rangers in a triangular olive grove that offered little cover. A half-dozen German machine-gun crews on the field's perimeter opened up a murderous crossfire. The large-caliber bullets shredded the olive trees and killed or wounded many of the Rangers.

The situation only got worse. With little warning, a Mark IV Panzer and several self-propelled guns clanked onto the scene and opened fire. While shells crashed through the trees and machine-gun fire swept the field, the Rangers opted for the only course of action left to them: They launched a desperate counterattack into the teeth of the enemy armor.

Rushing toward the enemy armor, Rangers swarmed over the tanks. Dobson shot an enemy tank commander with his sidearm at point-blank range and then dropped a phosphorous grenade down the hatch. The explosion killed the crew inside. When a bazooka round exploded against the side of the tank, Dobson crumpled to the ground with shrapnel fragments in his hip.

The desperate fight was far from over. The Germans drove back the Rangers, who split up into small groups as unit cohesion broke down. As the Americans slowly ran out of ammunition, isolated knots of demoralized men began to surrender. But on a chaotic battlefield with a fluid front line, more horrors awaited.

When a column of captured men trudged toward Cisterna, die-hard Rangers concealed nearby opened fire on the German guards. Some prisoners were bayoneted, others cut down by friendly fire. Startled and furious German troops dove for cover, and then opened fire on the prisoners.

The final Ranger holdouts, fortified in an Italian farmhouse, fought on into the afternoon. In the final terrifying moments, Darby was finally able to reach his beleaguered men by radio. Speaking to Sgt. Major Robert Ehalt, Darby encouraged his troops as best he could, advising Ehalt to gather as many men as he could and cut their way out. It was far too late for such an attempt, however. As German troops began to overwhelm the last defenders of the farmhouse, Ehalt resigned himself to whatever fate held for him. "So long, colonel," he said, "maybe when it's all over I'll see you again."

When his staff left his office, a devasted Darby lay over his desk and wept. And for good reason; the crack force of rangers that he had trained and served with since North Africa had been virtually wiped out. About 450 men had been captured, the balance killed or wounded. Of the 767 rangers who had gone into action behind German lines, only six made it to the safety of American lines.

The main American thrust, which was intended to link up with the rangers at Cisterna, fared almost

A German kampfgruppe uses camouflage in an attempt to conceal itself from Allied aircraft. German armor assets included the formidable Panzerkampfwagen VI Tiger I (at right) with its deadly 88mm gun.

as badly. The 4th Ranger Battalion, which moved out to relieve their fellow Rangers, was badly mauled against stiff German resistance and suffered 50 percent casualties. The Germans also chewed up the 7th and 15th infantry regiments during their advance. After all the bloodletting, the Allied frontline had advanced barely a mile.

While the Americans met with disaster, the British 1st Division in the beachhead's northern sector drove hard along the Via Anziate. But the British advance stalled in the face of the German 1st Parachute Corps' determined defense of Aprilia. Bloody fighting ensued over the next two days, each side bludgeoning the other in a brutal clash that saw the British take Aprilia but come up short in seizing the vital road junction at Compoleone. To their credit, the British succeeded in plunging over two miles deep into the German lines, tenuously occupying a narrow bulge that was badly exposed to a German counterattack.

Both sides were left badly shaken by the fierce fighting, but there would be little rest. Reinforcements were funneled to the beachhead to replace battle losses. The British received an additional brigade of infantry, and the Americans were assigned the 1st Special Service Force to fill the gap left by the Rangers. Although Alexander and Clark had both hoped for a renewed push inland, it was obvious that Lucas' demoralized VI Corps would have to entrench and brace for the inevitable German counterattack.

That attack fell with grim fury on February 3. The German target, not surprisingly, was the badly overextended British bulge known as "the thumb." In the midst of a driving rain, a determined German attack nearly cut off the British 3rd Brigade at the tip of the thumb. Although the troops were extricated from the trap, the British were forced to pull back and consolidate around the shattered ruins of the factory of Aprilia. In a single day's fighting, the British suffered 1,400 casualties.

Mackensen opened a fresh attack on the evening of February 7, throwing even greater weight at Aprilia. During two days of horrific fighting, the Germans succeeded in capturing the town and driving the 1st Division out of the thumb. The fighting had decimated both sides. The British were down to 50 percent effectives, and the Germans had captured a staggering 2,500 men.

With the British in desperate need of relief, Lucas sent in American troops to take over the fight. On the morning of February 11, the 1st Battalion of the 179th Infantry Regiment, part of Lucas' reserve 45th Infantry Division, attacked the German defenders of the factory, ushering in two days of bloody combat. Backed up by Shermans of the 191st Tank Battalion, the Americans succeeded in prying the enemy loose from the edge of Aprilia. But dogged German counterattacks proved impossible to beat off, and the 179th was forced to abandon the town, by then reduced to rubble, to enemy hands.

With the Allies pushed south of Cisterna and Aprilia, Lucas' beleaguered troops were penned into a compact salient surrounding Anzio. Mackensen possessed a preponderance of heavy guns, and he would make the most of it. The Germans ringed Anzio with 370 pieces of artillery, dropping an unrelenting hail of iron on the beachhead. Allied artillery replied in kind, but with so many troops crowded into the Anzio perimeter, German gunners enjoyed a plethora of exposed targets.

Terrified Allied troops dug crude bunkers as best they could, and the beachhead soon resembled a vast maze of burrows. German artillery fire, including massive rounds fired from a 283mm Krupp K5 railway gun that the Allies named "Anzio Annie," continued to range the beachhead.

Having seized the initiative from Lucas, Mackensen was eager to maintain pressure on the hard-pressed defenders of Anzio. Although the general preferred a measured approach, he was compelled

to develop a more aggressive plan. At German leader Adolf Hitler's insistence, a major attack was launched in an attempt to smash Allied defenses and drive them all the way to the coast.

Codenamed Operation Fischfang (Fish Haul), the German offensive aimed at nothing less than the destruction of the VI Corps. Kesselring and Mackensen considered such an ambitious attack impractical, for their units could not afford the heavy casualties that would be incurred. Despite their reservations, the attack was carried out on February 16. Under the cover of an enormous artillery barrage, Mackensen's 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division pushed west along the Via Anziate into positions occupied by the 45th Infantry Division. At the initial point of attack, Mackensen had effectively massed his assault formations and enjoyed a three-to-one numerical advantage.

Although sorely pressed, the Americans gave a good accounting of themselves. Allied artillery possessed vast stockpiles of ammunition that was used to brutal effect. American gunners worked feverishly to lay down a deadly wall of fire in support of the foot soldiers of the 157th and 179th infantry regiments holding on at the front. The two regiments occupied either side of the Via Anziate at the center of the maelstrom.

American armor, including tank destroyers, also moved up in support. German units were forced to operate in the open and paid dearly for it. The sharply dressed troops of the Infantry Lehr Regiment, a training outfit favored by Hitler, broke in confusion and scattered for the rear. German tanks, which struggled to move due to excessively muddy conditions, also suffered heavily after bunching up on available roadways.

Despite heavy casualties, the Germans got the better of the fight, driving a hole in the American front line nearly a mile deep. Mackensen also launched diversionary attacks all along the front, probing for weak spots in Truscott's 3rd Division and the British 56th Division. Such halfhearted attacks proved costly, though, and Mackensen's infantry suffered dearly. The Germans sustained 1,600 casualties in the costliest day they had yet experienced at Anzio.

But the bloodletting was far from over. Once committed to the offensive, Mackensen was obligated to see it through. Small German teams succeeded in infiltrating the American lines that evening, and in the morning they were followed up with another infantry attack that targeted the battered troops holding the Via Anziate. Three German regiments and about 60 tanks drove a wedge in the American lines and plunged through the gap for another mile.

In order to plug the dangerous hole in his line, Lucas responded with everything he had, ordering artillery, air strikes, and naval guns to hammer the advancing Germans. He also sent in three reserve companies from the 1st Armored Division. In the event of disaster, Lucas placed the remains of the British 1st Division in a last-ditch defensive line behind the hard-pressed Americans.

Senseless killing continued for days, but a determined American defense increasingly took the starch out of the German offensive. Some of Mackensen's lead assault columns suffered 70 percent casualties. Consistent and effective Allied artillery was a key ingredient to fending off the enemy attacks. One advancing German unit, thought to exceed 2,500 men, was caught in the open and virtually annihilated by a devastating artillery barrage.

As the strength of the offensive slowly subsided, both sides were eager for a respite from the killing. The two sides had savaged each other during four days of unrelenting carnage, and during the wake of the battle, fatigue parties warily scoured the field in search of the dead and dying. The muddy landscape was a macabre spectacle of churned earth and wrecked bodies. Mackensen's operation had resulted in 5,389 German casualties, which were losses that the Nazi war machine could ill afford. The Allies suffered 3,500 casualties in the fight.

After nearly a month of frustrating and costly reverses, the VI Corps command structure was in for a sudden shakeup. Clark arrived at Anzio on February 22 to carry out an extremely disagreeable mission. Due to prodding from the highest levels, Clark had been ordered to sack Lucas.

Clark had argued in vain to keep Lucas on the job, but with mounting casualties and little to show for it, his removal became inevitable. Lucas was stung by the decision but not surprised. True to his fears from the outset of the campaign, Lucas had paid the price for decisions that had been made from the comfortable vantage point of London.

Alexander and Clark at least made a good choice in selecting Lucas' replacement. They chose Truscott. As the new commander of the VI Corps, he had direct control of all of the Allied forces at Anzio. Although Truscott confessed, in his words, "his own inadequacy" for such a responsibility, he was well suited for the assignment. Truscott was an aggressive field commander who remained mindful of the welfare of his men.

But for Truscott there would be no honeymoon period at the head of the VI Corps. Mackensen, with few choices available, decided to launch another all-out attack before the Allied buildup of men and materiel rendered the outcome of the campaign all but inevitable. Having tried his luck unsuccessfully against the Allied center, the general opted to strike the Allied right, primarily targeting the 3rd Infantry Division, which was anchoring Truscott's flank near the Mussolini Canal. For the attack, codenamed Operation Escapade, Mackensen scraped together five understrength divisions.

Mackensen unleashed his troops yet again on February 29 in the hope of overwhelming the fatigued Americans. Truscott, though, anticipated

All: National Archives

An American soldier readies his Springfield M1903A4 sniper rifle for action.

the attack and marshaled all available Allied artillery against it. Trudging forward through fields rendered nearly impassable due to unrelenting heavy rains, German columns were rent by the overwhelming bombardment. German troops were stopped cold. Maj. Gen. John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, who had succeeded Truscott as commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, was pleased to note that his men did not yield an inch.

Farther to the left, though, Panzer Grenadier Regiment 1028, which had been attached to the 715th Infantry Division of the I Parachute Corps, succeeded in breaching the American line, caving in the front of the 509th Parachute Battalion and plunging nearly 900 yards into the rear areas. Startled American mortar crews grabbed small arms and fought back, stalling the Grenadiers.

By the following morning, Americans from the 2nd Battalion of the 30th Infantry Regiment counterattacked the Panzer Grenadiers, driving them off and regaining the lost ground. To their right, lightly armed foot soldiers from the 7th Infantry Regiment waged a desperate fight against Panzer IVs and Panzer VI Tigers from the 26th Panzer Division. Despite an overwhelming advantage in firepower, the German tanks made little progress. Muddy conditions, paired with a curtain of American artillery fire, kept the Germans at bay. By the end of the second day's fighting, Mackensen was forced to call off major offensive action.

In the aftermath of the failed attack, strategic initiative had clearly slipped from Mackensen's grasp. After the horrific losses sustained in three major offensives, the Germans were in no position to supply more reinforcements. Truscott sensed a turning of the tide, but realized that any breakout from the Anzio beachhead would be an agonizingly slow process. Mackensen's 14th Army was a badly wounded but still dangerous foe.

With neither side in a position to launch a major attack, both Mackensen and Truscott attempted to rebuild their shattered armies. Two of Mackensen's most reliable outfits, Panzer Division Hermann Goring of the LXXVI Panzer Corps and the 114th Jager Division of the I Parachute Corps, were sent to rear areas in order to refit. The Fourteenth Army was increasingly reinforced with raw conscripts or even Italian auxiliaries. But Mackensen's force still contained a solid core of seasoned veterans, and his ranks swelled to 135,000 men.

Truscott's VI Corps also experienced a dramatic reshuffling. O'Daniel's battered 3rd Infantry Division was rotated to the reserve and replaced on the front lines by the newly arrived 34th Infantry Division. British commandos and paratroopers were pulled out of the beachhead, and the British 5th Division took the place of the exhausted 56th Division. Truscott was left with a half dozen divisions and a comfortable numerical superiority.

National Archives

TOP: American personnel examine the 283mm Krupp K5 heavy railway gun known as Anzio Annie that shelled the beachhead from 20 miles away. ABOVE LEFT: A dead German officer of the Luftwaffe's crack Hermann Goring Division. ABOVE RIGHT: An American engineer attaches an antipersonnel mine to a barbwire fence.

Unfortunately, Truscott would be unable to actually wield those forces to good effect. Amid a terrain transformed into a morass by heavy spring rains, both sides were unable to consider a major fight and continued to dig in. The horror of major combat operations temporarily subsided, but the common soldiers would endure a miserable existence in flooded trenches, where they remained under the constant threat of artillery fire and enemy raids.

Not surprisingly, morale plummeted among the Allies. For nearly three months, the troops at Anzio endured some of the most dismal field conditions of the war. The experience was hauntingly reminiscent of the hellish trench warfare of the Great War. With a measure of biting sarcasm, American wags invented a new term, "Sitzkrieg," to describe the tactical lethargy that gripped the beachhead.

Plans for a renewed offensive, however, were in the works. The landings at Anzio had initially been carried out in order to precipitate an Allied breakthrough of the Gustav Line farther south. Allied senior planners had hoped that the Germans would be so alarmed by the Anzio landing that they would withdraw north, but Kesselring had used his reserves wisely in the first part of 1944 to not only hold the Gustav Line, but also pin the Allies on the Anzio beachhead. Ironically, it would take Allied success at the Gustav Line in order to facilitate a breakout at Anzio.

As the Allied senior commanders studied the maps, they developed a strategy that was mutually supporting for the troops at Anzio and those confronting the Gustav Line. While Allied troops smashed their way through the Gustav Line and drove north, Truscott would strike the lightly defended German lines on his right. After seizing

Continued on page 98

After decisively crushing Austrian and Russian armies in the 1805 campaign, French Emperor Napoleon became the undisputed master of Central Europe. One of his first acts was to dissolve the antiquated Austrian-led Holy Roman Empire and reform smaller German states into the Confederation of the Rhine, with himself as its protector. Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III, who did not join the 1805 campaign, watched with a jaundiced eye Napoleon's growing power and influence. Napoleon, who treated Friedrich Wilhelm with a thinly veiled contempt, attempted to play Prussia against England—his implacable enemy—by offering each the Principality of Hanover, which he had occupied in 1803. The affront to Prussian pride became too much when Napoleon ordered the kidnapping and execution of Prussian nationalist Johann Philipp Palm in August 1806 for publishing a pamphlet strongly critical of Napoleon and conduct of his army in occupied German territory.

Friedrich Wilhelm haughtily demanded that Napoleon dissolve the Confederation of the Rhine and withdraw his troops from all German territory. When Napoleon rejected

French Emperor Napoleon's attempt to destroy the Russian army in the snow-covered ground of East Prussia in February 1807 nearly ended in disaster. | By Victor Kamenir

Napoleon's COSTLY VICTORY at Eylau

the demands, a new anti-Napoleon coalition was formed on September 15. The Fourth Coalition was composed of Prussia, Russia, Saxony, Great Britain and Sweden. Young officers of the Prussian Royal Guard arrogantly sharpened their swords on the steps of the French embassy in Berlin, and the Prussian army, which was by then past its prime, marched off to war.

Rashly advancing on its own without waiting for its Russian allies to come up, Friedrich Wilhelm's overconfident and outdated Prussian army was soundly defeated by Napoleon on October 14, 1806, at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt in Thuringia. In the aftermath of the battle, only Lt. Gen. Anton L'Estocq's corps survived. It marched east to link up with the Russian army, which was just beginning to assemble for a campaign against the French.

By the close of October the Russians had arrived in Poland. To prevent the Russians from reaching the Warsaw on the Vistula River and prevent them from linking up with L'Estocq's corps, Napoleon set his Grand Armee on a course towards the Polish capital. French cavalry entered Warsaw on November 28 after brushing aside a screen of Cossacks the previous day.

Facing superior numbers, the four leading Russian divisions that constituted the Russian First Army under Field Marshal Mikhail Kamensky began falling back to link up with the Russian Second Army under Maj. Gen. Karl Gustav von Bagovout, which included L'Estocq's Prussians.

Bridgeman Art Library

French Colonel Louis Lepic reproaches the elite troopers of the Light Cavalry of the Imperial Guard for ducking when cannonballs whistled overhead as they formed up for battle at Eylau.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

French Emperor Napoleon's victory over King Friedrich Wilhelm's Prussian army at Jena in 1806 showed the world that the Grande Armee was superior to the renowned army led by Frederick the Great a half century earlier.

After a month of marching, countermarching and a several sharp skirmishes, Kamensky's First Russian army withdrew to Pultusk. Kamensky, the 72-year-old overall commander of the Russian forces, was stricken by illness and incapacitated by old age. He therefore turned over command of the army to Bagovout. Before departing the army, Kamensky ordered General of Cavalry Levin von Bennigsen, the second-in-command of the First Army, not to engage the French army until he was reinforced.

Bennigsen and Bagovout despised each other. Refusing to acknowledge Bagovout's authority, Bennigsen staked his career on a bold move in which he decided on December 26 to fight the French army at Pultusk on his own. Although the fight was indecisive, Bennigsen claimed victory. In the aftermath of his apparent success, Tsar Alexander I gave Bennigsen overall command of the Russian forces.

Russian withdrawal continued the next day, with the French in close pursuit. But heavy rains turned the roads into an impassable sea of mud, bringing operations to a close for the time being. "The terrible roads and bad weather have persuaded me to enter winter quarters," wrote Napoleon.

The two armies that settled into their winter cantonments were hungry, exhausted, and poorly clad from constant marching and fighting. "Our army was in dire need of provisions," recalled Russian Colonel Aleksey Yermolov. "Frequently, troops were sent not where they were most needed, but where it was possible to find better food." Supply situation on both sides deteriorated to such extent that Napoleon estimated at least 40 percent of his troops were absent from their units. Many of those absent were marauding through the countryside.

Despite a temporary loss of discipline, Napoleon's Grand Armee was in its prime as a result of hard training. The Grande Armee was composed of corps d'armee, each a miniature army commanded by a marshal, composed of two or more divisions of infantry and a brigade of light cavalry, with attendant artillery, engineers, and supply troops. The Grande Armee also had a large cavalry reserve and an Imperial Guard, which also was part of the reserve. The army was still homogenously French. By 1806 it was not yet diluted by foreign conscripts from Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and other occupied areas. Senior leadership was skilled and confident, and the rank-and-file was capable and eager. Most importantly, the officers and rankers had an unshakable confidence in Napoleon.

In contrast, the Russian army had its share of problems despite recent reforms. On the whole, it was a cumbersome organization drowning in minutiae. The soldiers were hardy and stoic but virtually illiterate and discouraged from showing initiative. The officer corps was brave and willing, but aside from aristocratic members of the high nobility was poorly educated. Some of the best officers were of foreign extraction, Germans of all stripes in particular. Russian divisions, a corps in all but name, were not permanent organization, but ad-hoc formations formed and reformed at the commander's whim. Lacking the brigade-level command element, each regiment had to be issued orders separately, complicating command-and-control function. One of the Russian army's strengths was its cavalry branch, which was well mounted. Similarly, the artillery was of good quality although not quite as well drilled as the French. The administrative and commissariat functions were abysmal. For these reasons, Russian soldiers often had to fend for themselves, marauding through both friendly and enemy countryside

with equal enthusiasm.

In the last week of January 1807, Bennigsen launched a surprise attack in the dead of winter against the French left flank. His attack might have succeeded had the Russians not encountered French troops from Marshal Michel Ney's VI Corps, which moved forward from their bivouacs in search of supplies and better bivouac areas. Leaving L'Estocq with his 9,000 Prussians to hold the allied right flank, Bennigsen decided to fall upon Marshal Jean Bernadotte's I Corps, which was in an isolated position on the French left. After defeating the French I Corps, he would then cross the Vistula River in order to sever Napoleon's supply lines.

But Bernadotte slipped away. Napoleon, who learned of the Russian movements on January 27, initiated a maneuver in which he sought to encircle and destroy the Russian army. Bernadotte was ordered to continue the retreat so that the other corps could come up against the Russian flank in a manoeuvre de derrière. Napoleon typically used this maneuver, which translates to "move onto the rear," when he was numerically superior to the enemy.

The main force of Napoleon's Grand Armee marched in three columns. The right column consisted of Marshal Nicholas Davout's III Corps. The center column was composed of Marshal Joachim Murat's Reserve Cavalry, Marshal Jean-de-Diu Soult's IV Corps, Marshal Pierre Augereau's VII Corps, and the Imperial Guard. The left column consisted of Marshal Ney's VI Corps. Ney had orders to keep steady pressure on L'Estocq to prevent him from linking up with the Russians.

The success of the French offensive depended on maintaining operations security. However, Cossacks intercepted a copy of the orders being carried by courier to Bernadotte. The Russians initially thought the captured dispatches were part of a ruse. But when a second rider with an identical copy of orders was captured, Bennigsen immediately began withdrawing.

Russian rearguard detachments under Lt. Gen. Prince Pyotr Bagration and Maj. Gen. Barclay de Tolly were constantly engaged to keep the French at bay. Bennigsen ordered Bagration to withdraw as slow as possible to buy the army time to fall back to the town of Preussisch-Eylau which Bennigsen selected as the place to give battle. After successfully delaying the French, the rearguard caught up with the main army on February 7 just east of Eylau, which lay 30 miles south of Konigsberg.

Napoleon arrived shortly behind the Russians, but decided not to occupy Eylau that night, his troops exhausted from constant marching and fighting. "I was advised to take Eylau tonight, but besides the fact that I do not like night fighting, I don't want to move my center too far forward until Davout's arrival, who is my right flank, and Ney, who is my left," Napoleon told Marshal Augereau. Accordingly, Napoleon dispatched messengers to Ney and Marshal Nicholas Davout, who commanded the III Corps, with urgent orders to hasten forward.

Napoleon's caution came to naught. A small convoy carrying Napoleon's personal baggage had entered Eylau unaware that the emperor did not intend to occupy the town that night. A Russian patrol happened upon the lucrative target and only the bravery of a small detachment of Imperial Guard cavalry prevented the emperor's personal effects from falling into Russian hands. Hearing the sound of fighting, Marshal Soult's pickets hurried forward to engage the Russians. "The enemy generals, thinking that the French wished to take possession of Eylau, sent up reinforcements on their side, so that a bloody engagement took place in the streets of the town," wrote Captain Jean-Baptiste Marbot, who was Augereau's aide-de-camp.

Bagration's rearguard, which was composed of six infantry regiments, four cavalry regiments, and 40 artillery pieces, became fully engaged. Bennigsen reinforced Bagration with troops from the 8th Division with orders to push the French out of Eylau. General Yevgeni Markov led two infantry regiments in a bayonet charge into the town, while a dragoon regiment clashed with the French outside the town on a frozen lake.

Augereau and Soult fed more troops into the action, which was reciprocated by Bennigsen. Both sides continued to feed more men into the expanding fight. The town changed hands several times, with darkness bringing a halt to the fighting and leaving eight thousand French and Russians dead and Eylau in French possession. Barclay de Tolly, who was one Russia's most capable commanders, suffered a severe wound to his arm and was evacuated to Konigsberg, thus denying Bennigsen his considerable talents the next day. At nightfall, Bennigsen placed the 4th Division and 40 more cannon between Eylau and the main Russian position to prevent a sudden attack by

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Napoleon's battle plan called for the Grand Armee to assail the Russian center in the morning while waiting for marshals Nicholas Davout III Corps and Michel Ney IV Corps to arrive and crush the enemy's flanks.


Château de Versailles

the French before the daybreak.

During the night the temperature fell below freezing and soldiers on both sides shivered in their bivouacs. The misery of the snowstorm was made worse by a shortage of supplies when the supply columns became bogged down as the marched along snow-choked roads.

At dawn on February 8, the opposing commanders peered through the falling snow in an attempt to discern their opponent's positions. Bennigsen deployed his 67,000 troops on a three-mile-long front. They arrayed themselves for battle in two lines along a low ridge east of Eylau, within a cannon shot of the town. Each regiment in the first line was deployed with two battalions in line and the third in column 100 paces to the rear. This allowed the third battalions of the first line to quickly reinforce the rest of the regiment. The second line was in battalion columns, where several regiments could quickly form a large column to reinforce the first line or to counterattack.

Lt. Gen. Nikolai Tuchkov was in charge of the north, right, flank near the Schloditten village with his own 5th Division and Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Markov's light cavalry brigade in reserve. In the center was Lt. Gen. Baron Fabian von der Osten-Saken with his own 3rd Division, as well as Lt. Gen. Count Peter Essen's 8th Division, with a reserve consisting of Maj. Gen. Andrei Somov's 4th Division. In front of the Russian center, two jaeger regiments deployed as skirmishers. The Russians also deployed several 12-pounder artillery batteries on the hills opposite Eylau.

Lt. Gen. Count Aleksandr Ostermann-Tolstoi's 2nd Division took up a position farther down the line. Bagovout's 6th Division under anchored the Russian left flank near the village of Serpallen, with Maj. Gen. Count Nikolai Kamensky's, the Field Marshal son's, 14th Division in reserve. Bennigsen placed Lt. Gen. Dmitri Dokhturov's 7th Division in reserve behind the center.

In addition to divisional artillery deployed along the line, as well as in reserve, three grand batteries were established to anchor the first line. The Russians established a battery of forty 12-pounders and twenty 6-pounders on the right flank to cover the road to Konigsberg. They placed a second battery of seventy 12-pounders in the center and another battery composed of forty 12-poundes near Klein-Sausgarten. A total of 430 Russian cannons faced 300 French guns. Bennigsen expected that L'Estocq's 9,000-strong Prussian corps would arrive on the field of battle from the north.

Bennigsen entrusted Cossack Lt. Gen. Matvei Platov with command of all 10 Cossacks regiments in the army. This gave Platov a total of 2,500 sabers. Normally, a Cossack regiment numbered 500 men, but hardships of campaigning had reduced their numbers by half.

The ground between the two armies was cut by narrow streams and dotted with small ponds. Deep snow covered the frozen ponds, giving an appearance of level ground.

Napoleon had 45,000 French troops facing the Russians. Well aware of the paucity of his numbers, he scanned the horizon to the north and south anxious for the arrival of both Ney's 14,500 men and Davout's 15,000 troops.

Napoleon planned a double envelopment of the Russian army. He placed Soult's corps minus one division on the left flank, Augereau's corps in the center, and Soult's third division under General of Division Louis St. Hilaire on the right. Augereau's two divisions deployed in two echelons with General of Division Jacques Desjardins in front and General of Division Etienne Huedelet behind him. The left flanks of the two divisions rested on the church where Napoleon established his command post. Napoleon placed brigades of light cavalry on each flank. The cavalry force on the left flank included the 5th Hussar Regiment, as the Infernal Brigade. The Imperial Guard deployed near the Eylau cemetery, and

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: The valiant musketeers of the French 14th Line Regiment fight to the death on a knoll in the face of a determined Russian bayonet charge that overran their exposed position. LEFT: Nine-thousand French muskets of Marshal Pierre Augereau's VII Corps advance in echelon on Eylau Cemetery on the morning of the battle. Losing their way in the swirling snow, Russian massed artillery devastated the two divisions.

Murat's Reserve Cavalry behind Augereau.

Napoleon's plans for the morning of February 8 called for Soult to pin down the Russian right until Davout's arrival. Upon Davout's arrival, Augereau's corps and St. Hilaire's division were to link up and crush the Russian left flank. Meanwhile, Murat's Reserve Cavalry would stand by ready to exploit any breach. As usual, Napoleon held his valuable Guard in reserve for any unexpected developments. Ney's expected arrival on the north end of the field would complete the French double envelopment. Napoleon wanted the Russians to believe that he had more troops on hand than he actually had that morning, so he positioned his Imperial Guard units farther forward than he normally did.

A sharp firefight erupted at dawn between French skirmishers and Russian jaegers in the center, shortly followed by Russian bombardment of Eylau and the French columns around it. A full-scale artillery duel was in progress by 8:00 AM with cannonballs slashing through the falling snow.

"Devil knows, what clouds of cannonballs flew by, droned, showered us, jumped around me, were digging in all directions around closely formed masses of our troops and what clouds of shells were exploding over my head and under my feet," recalled Captain Denis Davydov, Bagration's aide-de-camp.

Despite the Russian army's numerical advantage in artillery, their gunners were getting the worst of it. Although in many respects Russian artillery crews were as good as the French, the Frenchmen shot faster and more accurately at the exposed massed Russian formations, which were deployed devoid of any appreciable cover. Unlike the exposed Russians, many of the French troops were stationed behind the villages of Eylau and the Rottenen. Because of this, many of the Russian cannonballs either struck homes and buildings in the villages or simply fell short of their mark.

The vanguard of General of Division Louis Friant's division of Davout's III Corps was seen at mid-morning approaching from the south in the distance. Wishing to draw Russian attention from Davout, Napoleon ordered Soult to advance a short distance and occupy the windmill opposite Tuchkov's position. Triggered by the French advance, Tuchkov advanced his infantry units. Heavy fighting erupted around the windmill-topped hill. In the ensuing clash of infantry, Soult's troops were driven back almost to Eylau. Two Russian dragoon regiments were hot on the heels of the retreating French foot soldiers.

Noticing significant Russian reserves concentrating against Davout, Napoleon ordered Augereau's VII Corps and St. Hilaire's division to advance against Ostermann-Tolstoi in the Russian center. St. Hilaire was then to link up with Friant's division in rolling up the Russian left flank. Augereau's two divisions, which totaled 9,000 men, formed up south of the Eylau cemetery and bravely advanced into the swirling snow.

General of Division Jacques Desjardins troops were on the right and General of Division Etienne Huedelet's men were on the left. A brigade in each division advanced in line, while the trailing brigade remained in column behind it. The columns could at any time shift into a square if suddenly attacked by Russian cavalry. Artillery from the VII corps unlimbered 400 yards in front of the cemetery to support the infantry.

Augereau's divisions quickly lost their way in the blinding snow. Instead of striking Ostermann-Tolstoi's division head on, they veered left into the waiting barrels of Sacken's 70-gun grand battery. Cannon balls and grape shot tore into Augereau's tightly formed divisions from pistol-shot range, knocking down whole files of men at a time. In several moments, Augereau's corps lost thousands of men killed and wounded. Huedelete was wounded and Desjardins killed, with Augereau suffering a light wound. Crossfire from French and Russian artillery tore into the flanks of

Château de Versailles

Augereau's columns, heaps of dead bodies piling up in small mounds.

Following on the heels of the Russian artillery salvos were Russian infantry with lowered bayonets. A vicious fight that lasted for half an hour flared up in the Russian center. At close range, once their muskets were fired, men tore at each other with bayonets, clubbed muskets, rocks, and fists.

"Bayonet and sword played, luxuriated and drank their fill," wrote Davydov. Bloodied units reeled back, reformed and rushed into the maelstrom again. The Moscow Musketeer Regiment, which spearheaded the counterattack, suffered 668 men killed and 173 wounded, according to its battle report. Disproportionate number of killed versus wounded attested to the ferocity of the fighting.

Following close on the heels of the Russian infantry were massed charges of Russian dragoons and cuirassiers. These in turn were followed by Cossacks with lances lowered, which attacked in line instead of their typical swarms. In an impetuous charge, the Russian cavalry reached Augereau's starting positions where several French artillery batteries were left unprotected. Some gunners cut the traces of limber horses and were able to get away, while the rest were put to the sword. Unable to take the guns with them, a number of Russian troopers chopped up the wheels of several of the guns, which rendered them unusable for a time.

Taking advantage of Augereau's rout, Russian reserves under Dokhturov advanced into a gap that had opened in the French center. Dokhturov's attack drove Augereau even further back, toward the Eylau cemetery where Augereau attempted to rally several thousand men. In the confusion, the musketeers of the French 14th Line Regiment found themselves cut off on a small hillock. The regiment's color guard defiantly waved the Eagle-topped flag to show that the regiment was still in action and needed immediate aid.

"The Emperor, touched by the devotion to duty of these brave men, decided to attempt their rescue," wrote Marbot. "He told Marshal Augereau to send an officer with orders to them to quit the hillock, form a small square and withdraw towards us." The Cossacks intercepted and killed two officers sent to the beleaguered regiment. With no one else to go, Marbot set off on the mission. Putting his spurs to his mare, he miraculously made it to the 14th Line unscathed.

When Marbot relayed Napoleon's orders, the regimental commander sadly shook his head, "I can see no way of saving the regiment," he said. "Return to the Emperor and give him the farewells of the 14e Regiment de Ligne which has faithfully carried out his orders, and take him the Eagle he gave which we can no longer defend; it would be too terrible to see it fall into enemy hands during our last moments."

Reverently taking the regiment's French Imperial Eagle standard, Marbot rushed back, but was wounded and fell off his horse unconscious. He came to hours later, stripped naked by the Cossacks and with the Eagle gone. The remaining soldiers of the 14th Line Regiment perished in the wake of a Russian bayonet charge.

A strong Russian column had reached Eylau. Napoleon had established his command post near a church tower. To protect the emperor, two Guard battalions rushed forward to engage the Russians. Their sacrifice saved Napoleon.

By that time, Russian artillery fire was threatening the serried ranks of the Guard. An exploding shell showered Colonel Louis Lepic with a mixture of snow and dirt. Wiping his face, the colonel looked back to discover his elite troopers of the Grenadiers a Cheval de la Garde Imperiale regiment ducking their heads under cannonballs whistling just above their tall bearskin hats. "Heads up, gentlemen," shouted Lepic. "These are cannonballs, not turds!"

The Grand Armee's situation had grown

increasingly dim by late morning. On the left, Soult was entangled with Tuchkov, unable to make progress. In the center, Augereau's corps was severely mauled and its bloodied survivors were being rallied at Eylau. St. Hilaire's division reached Ostermann-Tolstoi, but was unable to dislodge him by itself. In addition to the Imperial Guard, the only uncommitted troops available to Napoleon were Murat's Reserve Cavalry.

Pointing at the sea of glittering Russian bayonets, Napoleon asked his brother-in-law, "Will you let those men devour us?" Murat rode off to assemble his cavalry for an attack. Thirty minutes later more than 10,000 troopers moved forward. Murat waved his riding crop in the air as he led them towards the Russians. Each regiment formed into line. They made a stirring sight. Armored cuirassiers under generals Jean-Joseph d'Hautpol and Emmanuel de Grouchy, dragoons under Brig. Gen. Louis Klein with their horsetail-crested helmets, and green-coated chasseurs a cheval. As they charged, Russian artillery fire and musket fire emptied many saddles and sent countless horses tumbling to the ground.

Murat's troopers fought their way through Dokhturov's frontline troops, who were withdrawing from Eylau, but was brought up short by the Russian second line and artillery. The veteran cavalry commander rallied his men. They turned around and cut their way back through the first Russian line again, hotly pursued by Russian cavalry. During the confused fighting in this sector, two squadrons of French cuirassiers became separated. Russians shouted for them to surrender, but they cut their way out with the Cossacks following close behind.

Napoleon directed the light cavalry of the Guard under Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bessieres and Lepic's heavy cavalry to cover Murat's withdrawal. The gallant cavalry charge cost the French more than 1,500 troopers. Among the dead was General of Division Jean-Josef d'Hautpoul, the commander of the 2nd Cuirassier Division, who had been killed by a cannonball. The sacrifice of these elite cuirassiers allowed the beleaguered infantry of Augereau and Soult to reform. It also bought time for Davout to bring up the bulk of his corps. Although the moment seemed right to send in the infantry of the Imperial Guard, Napoleon hesitated for he knew that the Prussians might arrive at any moment and fall on the French left. What is more, Ney's VI Corps was yet to arrive on the field.

By 1:00 PM Davout had deployed his III Corps. Napoleon ordered the veteran commander to attack Bagovout's exposed left flank near the villages of Klein-Sausgarten and Serpallen. St. Hilaire's division formed on Davout's left flank. Behind them were the rallied survivors of Augereau's Corps and the reformed ranks of Murat's Reserve Cavalry.

Russian cavalry launched repeated harassing attacks against Davout's advancing columns of infantrymen. This forced the French foot soldiers to halt and form squares to repulse the enemy cavalry. With great effort, Davout's troops, which were supported by the corps artillery, drove the Russians from the heights overlooking Klein-Sausgarten. They then ejected the Russians from the village. Davout's corps artillery played a crucial role in the success of the attacks.

The fighting near the villages of Klein-Sausgarten and Serpallen shifted back and forth throughout the early afternoon. The villages exchanged hands multiple times. Although his divisions suffered heavy losses, Davout pressed on towards the Anklappen Woods. In so doing, he threatened to get behind troops in the Russian center.

Bennigsen shifted troops to his left flank to avoid encirclement. The stakes were high, for if he did not take immediate action, the Russian army would be cut off from the retreat route to the Russian border.

As the troops on Bagovout's left flank slowly fell back to Kutschitten, the youthful artillery commander Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Kutaisov rode to the right flank to gather guns to bolster the left flank. On his own authority, Kutaisov ordered two horse artillery companies under Colonel Aleksey Yermolov to follow him. On their way south Yermolov ordered another horse artillery company to join him. Arriving in the nick of time, Yermolov's gunners unlimbered 36 guns. These Russian guns fired at point-blank fire into Davout's foot soldiers. To show his men that there would be no retreat, Yermolov ordered all the horses to be taken to the rear.

BELOW: Murat's cavalry punched through the Russian frontline, only to have to grapple with their Russian-mounted counterparts in a swirling melee. OPPOSITE: Napoleon answered the Russian counter-attack that threatened his center by hurling Marshal Jean Murat's 10,000 cavalrymen in an epic charge that bought him valuable time for reinforcements to arrive.

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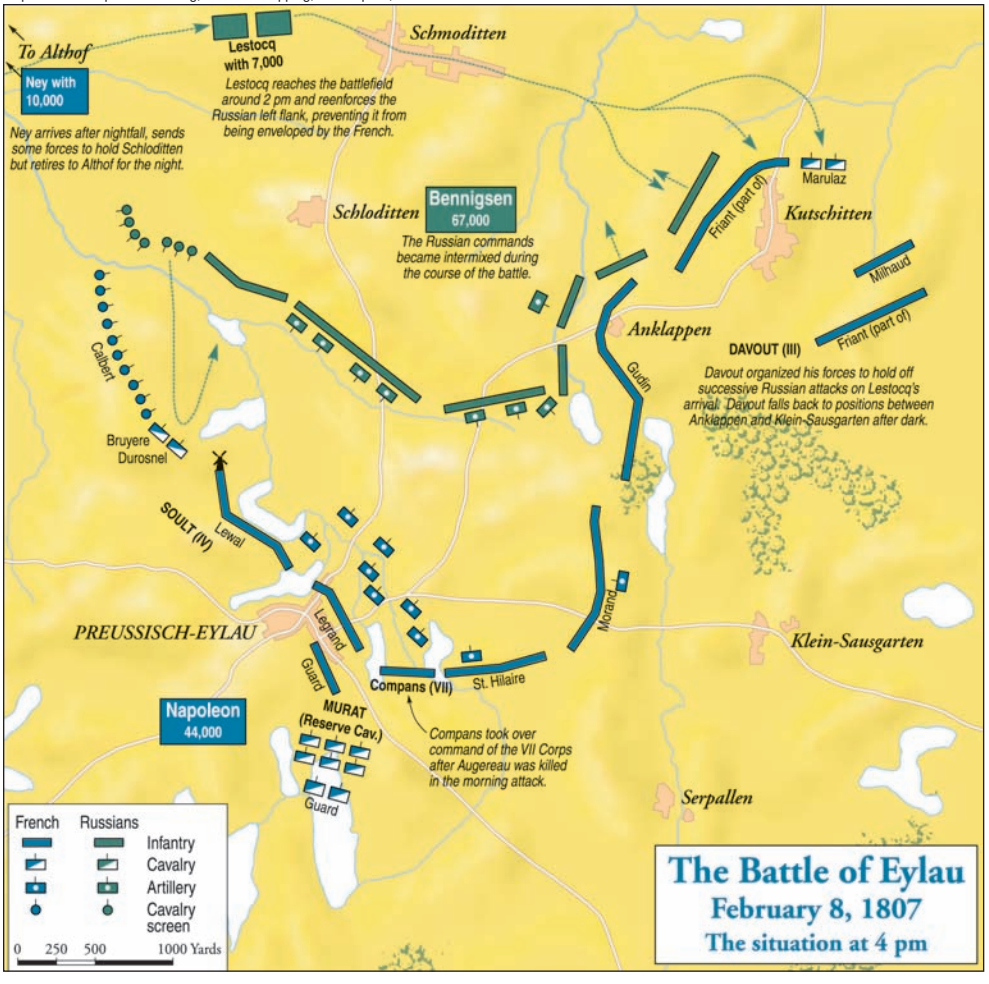

TOP: Marshal Davout's troops nearly tipped the battle in favor of the French, but the arrival of Prussian troops in the nick of time stopped Davout's advance. BOTTOM: By late afternoon, Marshal Davout had forced back the left wing of Russian Marshal Levin August von Bennigsen's army. Under cover of darkness, Bennigsen withdrew his forces, conceding control of the battlefield to Napoleon.

The troops on the Russian front line were barely hanging on by mid-afternoon. Because of the French attacks, their line was by then L-shaped. The soldiers of the Russian divisions on the left flank fell back past Anklappen. The Russian center, held by the troops of Dokhturov and Essen, also began falling back.

Bennigsen rushed off to find the Prussians and hurry them along. In his haste, the Russian commander failed to advise the generals of his divisions of his departure. The bewildered subordinate commanders did the best they could without direction from above for nearly an hour as the crisis facing the Russian army deepened. After capturing the villages of Klein-Saustargten, Anklappen, and Kutschitten, Davout placed his artillery to rake the Russian left flank and rear. Just at that moment, the Prussians arrived on the battlefield from the direction of Althof. They had succeeded in breaking contact with Ney's vanguard in order to reinforce the collapsing Russian line. Bennigsen directed the Prussians into action where they were most needed

Traversing the battlefield behind the Russian right flank, the Prussian columns struck Davout's exposed right flank near Kutschitten. When Davout's artillery turned on L'Estocq, Yermoolov engaged them in counter-battery fire, Russian gunners advanced the guns by pulling ropes after each volley. Exhausted troops, who were emboldened by the new arrivals under Kamensky and Bagovout, found strength to attack alongside the Prussians.

Under the weight of the combined assault by Russian and Prussian forces, Davout was forced to cede the ground for which he had paid so dearly. The Iron Marshal, as he was known, fought for every inch of the ground, having turned Anklappen into a bastion ringed with musket fire. The French fought fiercely and abandoned the Anklappen after Yermolov's guns fired at point-blank range into the burning village.

The situation for the French grew increasingly grim when Ney's VI Corps, having brushed aside L'Estocq's rearguard, finally appeared to the northwest at 7:00 PM. The fiery red-headed marshal immediately hurled his troops into action. They succeeded in ejecting the Russians from Schloditten. But Tuchkov, who was reinforced by Essen's division, counterattacked and retook the village at the point of bayonet.

Desultory cannonade continued sporadically until 10:00 PM and the fighting all along the line ground down to a halt after 14 hours of bloodletting. Tens of thousands of dead and wounded lay on the battlefield, steadily being covered by the falling snow. "What a massacre and without any good!" Ney said as he observed the blood-soaked field.

Battered units on both sides settled into their

Department of Paintings of the Louvre

Both sides suffered heavy casualties at Eylau. Although Napoleon's reputation was tarnished in the wake of Eylau, he restored it by his masterful victory over the Russians at Friedland four months later.

bivouacs, listening to the pitiful cries of the freezing wounded in the no-man's land. As the survivors lit their camp fires, thousands of wounded men began crawling toward them and fleeting warmth. Adding to the misery of the wounded, local peasants came out of their hiding to loot the dead and the dying.

During the night Bennigsen held the council of war in the ruins of Anklappen. Despite several generals proposing to renew the struggle in the morning, Bennigsen made the decision to cede the field to the enemy and during the night the Russians units began departing the field. The French finally discovered the Russian retreat before dawn, but there was no chance the exhausted and blooded French could pursue. "Marshal, the Russians have done us great harm," Napoleon said to Soult the following morning. "And we them, our bullets were not made of cotton," Soult retorted.

Losses were almost crippling and it took both armies almost three months to recover and reorganize before hostilities flared up again. As was common, both sides undercounted their own loses and overestimated that of their enemies. The battle had been particularly costly for Napoleon. The French lost 25,000 men, while the Russians lost 15,000 soldiers.

But both Napoleon and Bennigsen deliberately misrepresented their losses to the respective nations. Napoleon remained on the battlefield for 10 days. "My Dear; I am still at Eylau," he wrote on February 14 to his wife, Empress Josephine, "The country is covered with dead and wounded. It is the worst aspect of war. It is heartbreaking and my soul is oppressed at the site of so many victims."

The two-day clash at Eylau was over. While it was a French tactical victory given that Napoleon had retained possession of the battlefield, it was strategically inconclusive. In the aftermath of the battle, though, both Napoleon and Bennigsen claimed victory.

For his part, Bennigsen considered fighting to a draw one of the greatest commanders in history as a success. "If I called myself the victor at Eylau, it was only because you chose to retreat," Napoleon said two years later to Russian Military Attaché Colonel Aleksandr Chernyshev.

Tsar Alexander I was of a similar opinion. "It was your destiny to earn glory by defeating the one who has never been defeated," he wrote to Bennigsen shortly after the battle. Not everyone was so charitable. General Osten-Sacken described Bennigsen's after-action report as "extremely contradictory, [and] includes everything except the truth."

Bennigsen's time to bask in glory was short. When hostilities resumed, Napoleon smashed Bennigsen at the Battle of Friedland on June14. This brought the War of the Fourth Coalition to a close. Still, the ruling houses of Europe took careful note that Napoleon had been fought to a standstill for the first time at Eylau. This gave them hope, for they sensed that the Grand Armee was not invincible after all. The bloody struggle continued for eight more years, culminating at the titanic clash at Waterloo which brought the Napoleonic era to a close. ■

Heroic Stand at VERDUN

Erich von Falkenhayn intended the powerful German attack at Verdun in World War I to shatter French morale. But despite the hellish German firepower, the French stood their ground.

By Mark Carlson

The morning of June 23, 1916, dawned over the broad crenellated valley of the Meuse River in northeastern France. The weather was warm with breezes coming down from the north, but they did not carry the scent of wildflowers or grapevines. Instead, the soldiers of 3 Company of the French 137th Infantry Regiment smelled only death on the wind. The stink of expended cordite, scorched wood, and rotten corpses permeated the air around them. Their trench, wreathed in barbed wire and surrounded by shell craters was in a salient a short distance from what had once been the most heavily fortified bastion in France, Fort Douaumont. That stronghold was now in German hands. Two battalions of the 137th had been ordered to hold their lines against the German Fifth Army.

But there was little doubt that the soldiers, clad in the characteristic horizon blue jackets and trousers, helmets, and leather belts with ammo pouches, had no illusions about their ability to hold off a determined German infantry assault, especially those that carried flamethrowers and grenades. Yet there was no talk of retreat or surrender. These were French soldiers, sworn to defend their sacred homeland to the death against the vile Boche. They would fight every German who showed his pointed helmet to the 137th Infantry. They had reliable Lebel 8mm rifles tipped with 20-inch bayonets, and they knew how to use them.

The real worry was artillery. The Frenchmen all knew what concentrated heavy guns could do to an entrenched position. They were very exposed on high ground, well within sight of German artillery in the woods east of the Meuse River. Ordered into the hastily dug trenches on June 10, the officers tried to place their companies to min-

Alamy

French soldiers launch a ferocious bayonets assault against German defenders inside Fort Douaumont in a successful counterattack against the strongpoint in October 1916.

National Archives

French infantry comes under intense artillery fire as the Germans grind away at fortified enemy positions in spring 1916. A series of bitter battles unfolded as the Germans chipped away at French defenses on the high ground on the east bank of the Meuse River.

imize the effects of a direct hit. Only God and luck would play a part in survival or slaughter.

Shortly after sunrise a series of deep booms, like distant thunder rumbled over the quiet valley. Then several dozen sharp bangs split the air. The Germans were beginning their prefatory bombardment, just as they had done in February when they had hammered the French positions with nearly a million shells. The ground around the huddled soldiers shook with dozens, then hundreds, then thousands of detonations. Towering fountains of dirt and flame erupted into the sky, turning the air into a haze of brown and gray dust and smoke. Every blast seemed to be right on top of them. The explosions split their world with stunning noise that made their ears ring.

There was no point in trying to see what was happening, and certainly it would be useless to shoot back with rifles. All they could do was wait and pray. Every day, deadly barrages fell on the French. More valiant defenders were blasted and shredded in an instant. They held their ground and waited.

By that time, the French battalions had been under fire for two solid weeks. It was obvious the Germans were determined to kill them all. Whole stretches of the trench were immolated by successive concussions. Direct hits by mortars collapsed the trench walls and killed and maimed scores in an instant. But worse was to come for the men of 3 Company. Of the original 164 men, only 73 were still alive on the morning of June 23.

Then it happened. They had been huddled down behind the forward wall, facing east. Their rifles were ready, leaning up against the trench wall and fire step. They heard the whining moan of another falling mortar coming in. Instinctively every man ducked, but it was too late. Fate had dealt 3 Company's shell-shocked survivors a deadly hand.

The huge German mortar, designed to destroy concrete dugouts, exploded at the edge of the trench in a titanic detonation that must have been like a lightning strike. Every single man died where he stood. The walls of the trench crumbled and fell in, entombing them. When the smoke cleared, only the bayonets remained out of the soil.

This was typical of Verdun, the longest and bloodiest single campaign of the Great War. Unlike the rapidly shifting lines of World War II, the Western Front between France and Germany centered on the great river valleys of the Somme and Marne. Following the Schlieffen Plan, the Germans invaded Belgium on August 4, 1914, and fought their way into northeastern France towards Paris. But a determined and desperate counteroffensive by British and French troops held the Germans along the Marne River. Their lines remained in that location. Miles of trenches, dugouts, listening posts, communication lines, and artillery batteries grew ever more complex as the months passed with little ground gained or lost by either side.

The war then entered a long and terrible phase in which artillery barrages and doomed infantry attacks did little more than fill graveyards across Europe. German Kaiser Wilhelm II berated his generals, demanding that they explain to him the reason his troops were not already in Paris.

The Battle of Verdun was conceived by the aristocratic German Chief of the General Staff Erich von Falkenhayn. By early 1916 Britain's army consisted of 70 fully armed, albeit hastily trained, divisions under arms. The French had 96 divi-

National Archives

sions, with more being trained and deployed each month. Each infantry division numbered 7,000 troops, including artillery batteries. The British Expeditionary Forces were crossing the English Channel in ever greater numbers.

With Germany already fighting on two fronts, Falkenhayn had few reserves. Realizing that Germany would soon lose the advantage, he devised an audacious plan to destroy the French army as a fighting force. Once this was achieved, Germany could throw its entire effort on the Western Front toward the British.

"Britain's continental partners should be destroyed," Falkenhayn wrote in a December 25, 1915, letter to the Kaiser. Although Italy was of no real consequence, Russia was a constant drain on German forces. An attack on Russia would result in the same debacle that Napoleon had faced in 1812. Falkenhayn was certain that while Russia's internal political unrest would cause Tsar Nicholas II to sue for peace, France was another matter.

"The strain on France has reached breaking point," he continued. "If we succeed in opening the eyes of her people, that in a military sense, they have nothing to hope for, that breaking point would be reached. England's best sword would be knocked out of her hand." In short, Falkenhayn was counting on the spirit of the French people to revolt and demand an end to the war. A major offensive directed at Verdun would, he wrote "compel the French command staff to throw in every man they have."

The intent of the Verdun offensive was to break French morale. "The forces of France will bleed to death," Falkenhayn told Kaiser Wilhelm, "whether we reach our goal or not." The Kaiser concurred. "This war will end at Verdun," he said

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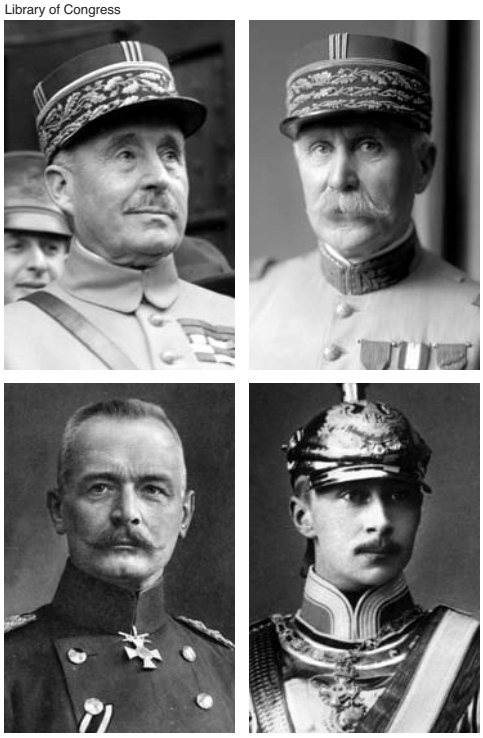


TOP: A German assault group advances into a shattered French trench. The Germans committed more than half of their heavy-caliber artillery on the Western Front to their opening bombardment. LEFT: Clockwise from left are French General Robert Nivelle, General Henri Philippe Pétain, Crown Prince Wilhelm, and German Chief of the General Staff Erich von Falkenhayn.

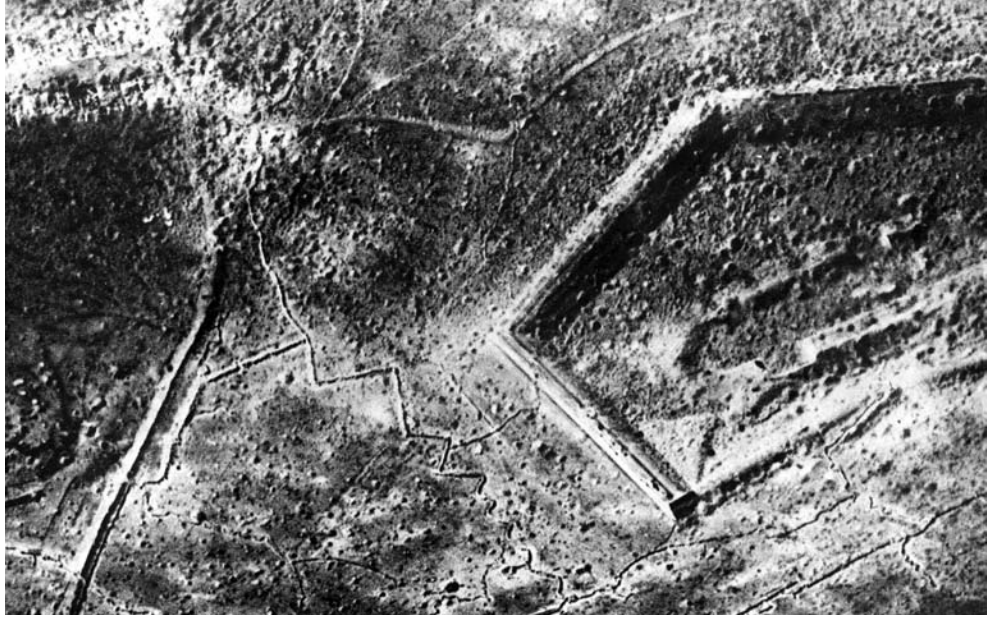
confidently. The Germans called their Verdun offensive Operation Gericht, meaning place of judgment. It was a portentous name for a campaign of slaughter on an unimaginable scale.

What Falkenhayn did not know was that the Allied High Command had at the same time agreed on a massive drive on the German lines to take place in summer 1916. The plan, suggested by commander-in-chief of the French army, General Joseph Joffre, to Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the newly installed commander of the British forces, was to make a massive combined assault on the center of the Western Front. The two senior commanders agreed that the campaign would be in the Somme Valley.

The city and citadel of Verdun had a long history that stretched back to the time when the region was under Roman rule. Situated 80 miles from the German border to the northeast, Verdun endured a long and savage siege during the Franco-Prussian War that began in July 1870 and ended in a German victory in January 1871. Verdun had only surrendered after Paris had fallen. Spread around the historic citadel on the east bank in a deep loop of the Marne, Verdun was a small city of 20,000 people.

The French built a ring of forts to support Verdun and command the Meuse Valley. Fort Douaumont was the most heavily fortified position in the world at the time. Constructed between 1886 and 1913 at a cost of six million gold Francs, Douaumont had heavy stone and concrete walls 30-feet-thick to withstand the largest-caliber siege artillery. Virtually a self-contained underground city, Douaumont garrisoned 500 troops and dozens of long-range guns that dominated the area for a radius of 10 miles.

Five miles from the city center, Douaumont was the cornerstone of the ring of 18 forts including its smaller neighbors, Forts Vaux, Souville, and Tavanne. A complex maze of barbed wire, trenches,



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TOP: An aerial view taken of Fort Douaumont and the trenches surrounding it shows hundreds of shell craters. BOTTOM: General Philippe Petain established a supply corridor known as the Sacred Way in the left side of the photo by which trucks could shuttle ammunition and other materials to the French forces around the clock.

and mutually supporting machine-gun posts protected the fort from infantry assault. In the woods east of the Meuse River, more trenches, observation posts, dugouts, and machine guns lurked behind still more barbed wire. The French intended these fortified lines to act as a tripwire to warn the garrison of an impending German attack.

But after German siege artillery had reduced the Belgian fortress of Liege in August 1914 with amazing ease, Joffre concluded that such big and heavily armed emplacements were of no real value. Joffre ordered a sharp reduction in August 1915 of the number of troops garrisoning Fort Douaumont. Moreover, he recommended that 54 of the large-caliber batteries and more than 100,000 shells be removed to where they might be more effective. By February 1916 Verdun was defended by just one regular division, the 14th Division, two French reserve divisions, the 51st and 72nd, and the 37th Algerian Division.

The French 56th and 59th Chasseur Battalions had driven the Germans out of the Bois des Caures woods north of the city in 1914. Seventeen months later the French battalions still held that position. Their commander was a popular Member of Parliament, 61-year old Lt. Col. Emile Driant, who had repeatedly protested Joffre's orders to weaken Verdun's defenses.

Verdun had no real strategic value. There were no major rail lines or roads, no munitions factories or warehouses full of supplies. But to Falkenhayn, the city was worth every German life it took to reach it. He was adamant that his armies not capture the city itself, which would be of no use to him. He believed the threat to the sacred city would make the French throw themselves into repeated attacks against his lines. He calculated that five Frenchmen would die for every two Germans. If the defenders gave up, they would lose Verdun. If they remained to fight, the whole French army would be destroyed.

Falkenhayn assembled an initial force to supplement the 70,000-strong German Fifth Army commanded by 33-year-old Crown Prince Wilhelm, the Kaiser's son. He received the cooperation of the German Air Service, which agreed to commit 138 fighters to rid the skies of French observation planes. He brought in 850 artillery pieces and an initial supply of 2.5 million shells for the first assault.

Fortunately for Falkenhayn, a rail line came to within 12 miles of the city. The superb German railroads were in constant operation, transporting 1,300 cars worth of troops, guns, shells, and supplies. Of the 542 heavy guns assembled for the offensive, 13 were 420mm howitzers and 17 were 355mm howitzer. These giant howitzers had pounded the Belgian forts into submission in 1914.

But even more than mortars, machine guns, and artillery, the chief of the general staff had raised the bar of cruelty with hand grenades, poison gas, and flame throwers. These weapons of barbarity were intended to kill as many French soldiers as possible.

The Germans constructed more than 100 concrete dugouts in the eastern woods of the Meuse Valley for the rapid emergence of their best assault troops. By this time their army consisted of veterans who had already endured countless battles. They were issued the new Stahlhelm, the now-familiar German helmet instead of the outdated pickelhaube. Made of heated steel, the Stahlhelm better protected the neck and head. The soldiers received specific instruction in how to use hand grenades effectively and how to breach barbed-wire defenses.

What Falkenhayn had assembled was a powerful army in which each mile of the French defensive line faced a full German division with 150 guns. "Not a single line is to be [left] unbombarded, no possibility of supply unmolested, nowhere should the enemy feel safe," Falkenhayn decreed.

The one thing Falkenhayn could not control was the weather. The bombardment and assault had been scheduled for February 10. But in order to direct the critical artillery barrage, the observation balloons, tethered far behind German lines,

Although the Germans made headway and initially frustrated French counterattacks, they did not deeply penetrate the French defenses. Kaiser Wilhelm wanted the Verdun offensive to destroy the French army defending the sector, but Falkenhayn failed to achieve such a difficult objective.

needed clear skies to report the fall of artillery rounds on the French lines. Cold rain persisted until February 19. Falkenhayn waited one more day for a warm sun to dry out the mud.

Joffre received intelligence that a major build-up of German forces was approaching Verdun, but he was unimpressed as there seemed to be no strategic objective. He was convinced it was a diversion. But he did move the VII and XXX Corps into the area. Verdun's defenses had less than one-third of the strength of what was about to hit them.

On the morning of February 21, 1916, Falkenhayn had all of his chess pieces in place on the vast board that would become the battlefield of Verdun. Upon his order, the Germans unleashed their initial artillery barrage on the unsuspecting defenders. German guns and howitzers arrayed on an eight-mile front roared in one continuous orgasm of fire and fury. From the heavy bark of 5.9-inch heavy field howitzers to huge railway guns that hurled two-ton shells at the city, Falkenhayn watched his grand plan unfold.

The first salvoes slammed into the city's cathedral, bridge, and railway station. The impact of the giant shells caused major damage. The stunned French defenders endured a constant barrage of shells that seemed to go on forever. Not a second went by without the scream of falling shells, the detonations of mortars, and whizzing shrapnel that laced the air with hot death. The stunned Frenchmen could only huddle in their dugouts and trenches. German mortar shells collapsed trench walls, burying entire battalions of French troops. The lucky ones who survived the ordeal were left stunned and deafened.

For nine solid hours, the rain of deadly explosives tore the defensive lines apart. Thousands of smoking craters marked the valley. The rain of artillery shells leveled entire villages. The shells reduced mature forests to a sea of splintered stumps and burning brush. Farmhouses and barns became blazing pyres of hay and dying animals. Shredded bodies of men and animals watered the once-fertile soil of the Meuse Valley with blood and gore.

In the forest known as the Bois des Caures, where Driant's two battalions of Chasseurs hunkered down during that first day, an estimated 80,000 shells fell in an area 1,000 yards by 500 yards. It was like "peering into Dante's Hell," recalled a German pilot flying who flew over the

National Archives

Wounded French soldiers receive treatment inside Fort Vaux. The Germans found life difficult within the fort in the face of relentless shelling by French heavy artillery, and abandoned it on November 1.

area afterwards. Even though nearly a million shells had been fired, Falkenhayn' plan to totally destroy the French lines before the infantry attack did not come to fruition. As bad as it had been, some French units survived to meet the German attack.

Worse lay in store for the French who survived the devastating artillery bombardment. The German infantry assault began at 4:00 PM. On a 19-mile front, 140,000 German troops charged out of the forests, quickly overwhelming the dazed and wounded French soldiers. Phone wires had been torn apart, cutting off all communication with Joffre's headquarters. Rifle fire and machine guns cracked in the dense smoke reeking with the stink of cordite. Hand grenades burst in the trenches and dugouts, killing and maiming dozens in seconds.

The avalanche of Germans swept through the outer defenses and killed without mercy. Ninety-six flamethrower teams shot searing hot jets of pure fire into the defenders. The French 51st Division was routed by the terrifying weapons, running pell-mell to the rear with their clothes and hair aflame. Citizens hid in their cellars and waited for their brave troops to fend off the Germans.

Falkenhayn's initial objective was to capture the outer ring of forts, from which he could repel the expected French counterattacks. All through the night the Germans fought ever closer to the forts. Driant's two battalions held the Bois des Caures near the farming village of Flabas. He had repeatedly warned Joffre that Verdun was vulnerable and ripe for attack. Now he was proven correct in the most shocking way. With his 1,200 reservists, Driant faced 10,000 determined and well-trained Germans. Only 118 of his men were able to escape the slaughter. Driant was not among them. He had been struck in the head by a German bullet.

A lieutenant of the French 72nd Division managed to get a call to Joffre's headquarters. "The commanding officer and all the company commanders have been killed," he said. "My battalion is reduced to 180 men. What am I to do?" He had lost 420 men in two days. It was only then that the French High Command realized the full extent of the calamity.

The following day, February 24, the entire eight miles of the outer French trench lines had collapsed. As the Germans surged closer to forts Douaumont and Vaux, thousands of civilians huddled in cellars or gathered their possessions and embarked on a panicked flight. They clogged the roads and bridges the army needed to bring up fresh troops. Falkenhayn had hoped for this. If his men could take the forward slope of the heights over the Meuse, the German artillery could employ direct fire on the important bridges and roads leading north and west.

The once-mighty polygonal fortress Douaumont, nearly a quarter mile across, was defended by only 58 reservists under the command of a warrant officer. On February 25, a single sergeant of the 24th Brandenburg Regiment was found alone by the fort's inner walls. He was astounded after carefully peering into a window, to see no defenders. He waved for a unit of pioneers to accompany him through the window. They were dumbfounded that no one was shooting at them. They entered through a window and captured the fort without a shot being fired.

The news of the fort's fall was cause for celebration all across Germany. Schools were let out while church bells rang. When the French troops learned of their supposedly impregnable bastion's capture, panic began to spread like chain lightning. Rumors that the bridges over the Meuse, their only escape route, were to be demolished heightened the fears. Food stores were being looted and the promised reinforcements were hesitant to enter the meat grinder at Verdun.

General Noel de Castelnau, Joffre's chief of staff and a veteran with the Second Army at the Marne, reconnoitered the battered lines and made the fateful recommendation that they must be held at all cost. As a member of an old aristocratic family with a long history of military service, de Castelnau decided that Verdun was the place to prove the real test of French mettle.

Unfortunately, there were no rail lines leading to Verdun for the French to rush reinforcements to the sector. The south line had been cut off by the Germans in 1914, while the rail line to Paris had been under constant attack by the German Third Army from the Argonne Forest. All that were still open were roads, most of which were little more than dirt trails.

The youthful Crown Prince Wilhelm commanded the German Fifth Army in the first assault. "The moral effect of [our bombardment] was immense. Everywhere the infantry encountered only slight resistance."

Wilhelm was one of the most experienced and respected generals in the German army. From the start he had opposed Falkenhayn's plan to assault, but not capture, the city of Verdun. Wilhelm reasoned that an assault of that nature would demoralize his troops. Yet Falkenhayn wanted to use the captured French defenses to threaten the city and force the French to die in a series of bloody counterattacks.

But any bitterness among the German generals was of little interest to the French soldiers who were dying in ever-greater numbers. They needed

reinforcements; even more, they needed someone to reverse the rapidly deteriorating situation.

General Henri Philippe Pétain, the sexagenarian commander of the French Second Army, took command of the deteriorating situation. A cantankerous and obstinate commander who had his share of enemies within the French high command, he was a genius at logistics and the use of concentrated artillery fire. Joffre personally despised Pétain, but he had little choice but to work with him.

"Cannons conquer, infantry occupies," was one of General Philippe Pétain's maxims. Pétain was suffering from pneumonia and arrived at Verdun on a litter. He quickly began assembling the force needed to defeat the German onslaught. He telephoned the commander of the newly arrived XXX Corps. "I have taken command," he said. "Tell your troops to hold fast." After assessing the immediate situation Pétain issued the famous order, "They shall not pass!"

Pétain faced two daunting tasks if he were to effectively counter the Germans at Verdun. First, the French needed a reliable line of supply to support their troops. Second, they needed more heavy guns and observation posts so that the fire from their guns would inflict substantial losses on the Germans.

The supply line became known as the Sacred Way. It was a corridor through which trucks shuttled key supplies to the French forces around the clock. The French employed 12,000 vehicles on the Sacred Way and detailed a division of engineers and support personnel to keep the road in good repair. The laborers filled shell craters and removed damaged vehicles that obstructed traffic.

Officers received orders that their foot soldiers were to march through fields or woods flanking the supply corridor, and that empty trucks carried wounded to the rear. At least one vehicle passed every 15 seconds. The Sacred Way carried approximately 2,000 tons of guns, ammunition, food, and medical supplies to the battlefront at Verdun. It also enabled regular resupply of gas masks, barbed wire, and communications equipment.

Pétain assembled 632 heavy and medium guns. The largest fired shells in excess of 15 inches in diameter and weighed more than a ton each. While the largest French guns were sited on fixed positions, German mobile artillery had to be moved ever closer to support the infantry advances. But with the frequent rains of winter in France, the fields and roads turned into sodden quagmires of mud. More horses had to be brought in to move the guns, which were quickly identified and hit by French artillery. Losses among the horses were horrendous.

By March German casualties had reached 82,000. French casualties were even higher, totaling 88,000 killed and wounded. Despite the horrifying casualties, French spirits remained high. One captured French officer was brought before the Kaiser himself, who had come to view the battle. "You will never enter Verdun," he told the German leader.

This boast seemed to be supported by the fact that although the Germans had advanced to within four miles of the city itself, they could go no further. Falkenhayn, after conferring with Crown Prince Wilhelm, who was his most effective army commander, decided to change his plans. Attacking only on a narrow front on the east bank of the Meuse River had been a costly mistake. He subsequently ordered a two-pronged attack on the west bank of the river on March 5.

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TOP: French troops used 370mm Filloux mortars to pound the German defenses of Fort Douaumont for the final assault carried out by three infantry divisions. BOTTOM: A German artilleryman prepares to fire a heavy artillery piece at the enemy. Direct hits by the big guns could collapse trench walls and sometimes even bunker roofs.

National Archives

German stormtroopers at Verdun carried stick grenades and wore Stahlhelm steel helmets as they battled their French foes. The battle became even more ghastly in late June when the Germans resorted to firing phosgene gas shells on the French artillery positions.

In that location the terrain was better suited to an attacking army.

Falkenhayn's first objective was for the German assault troops to capture or drive off the French artillery batteries that were shielded by a line of hills on the west bank. His second objective was the capture of Fort Vaux. The shattered village of Vaux, which lay in the shadow of the fort, had changed hands 13 times during March. But Fort Vaux remained in French hands, mocking Joffre's opinion that fixed forts were obsolete. With a determined garrison of men who trusted their stone and concrete walls, the defenders of the old stronghold refused to allow the Germans to take permanent possession of it.

By early April Falkenhayn's forces had made two major assaults. The first took place on the east bank, and the second unfolded on the west bank. Yet his weary and battered troops were no closer to taking Verdun itself. Wilhelm persuaded his commander to abandon the original strategy and order a full-scale attack along the 20 miles of the Verdun lines.

The Germans scheduled a major assault for April 9. On that fateful day every German division deployed around Verdun went forward in the wake of a massive artillery bombardment. What followed was four solid days of savage hand-to-hand fighting that left the crater-pocked landscape blanketed with thousands of dead and wounded.

Once again the resolute French held their ground. The weather aided the French. Heavy spring rains brought the fighting to a standstill. Other than artillery attacks by both sides, the remainder of April was relatively quiet. Both armies licked their wounds and caught their breath. The living shared their trenches and dugouts in the company of cold, rotting corpses. French troops suffering in icy cold and water sodden trenches did not see a single German. Yet the battle was far from over.

The German assault on Le Mort Homm, or Dead Man's Hill, proved to be far more arduous

SOME SCARS OF WAR JUST WON'T HEAL AT VERDUN

Verdun is a pleasant place to visit, but it is also a dangerous place to visit. Tourists drive and stroll the quaint streets and enjoy the beauty of Northern France, yet the scars inflicted on the landscape by the savage battle in 1916 make it impossible to ignore or forget what happened there.

The land is dotted with memorials and monuments, cemeteries, and statues. The entire valley is one vast cemetery, not only of the 600,000 dead, but of a lovely past that lies forever buried under the butchery of the Great War.

More than a century after the guns fell silent, Verdun still bears obvious scars of carnage and destruction. The land has forever changed. Millions of eroded shell craters still pockmark the valley. Many villages and homes are obliterated from the map. Those villages are said to have "died for France."

Hulking, broken, and pitted concrete walls still dominate the hills as they overlook the land they once protected. None of the trees is older than a

Wikimedia

TOP: The terrain around Verdun is still marked by large craters from the relentless artillery fire during the long campaign. BOTTOM: Ordnance expert Guy Momper works to disable a large bomb found outside Verdun near Metz.

when they realized that a higher and more heavily defended crest lay beyond. When the weather improved Wilhelm's bedraggled and exhausted troops slowly fought their way up Le Mort Homm, at last taking the trenches held by the remnants of the 146th Regiment, which lost 144 of 175 men. But it was a small victory that had no effect on the integrity of the defenses. By this time Falkenhayn had lost more than 100,000 men.

Verdun had forced the French to divert 35 of the 40 divisions slated for the Somme offensive. The British would have to carry the burden of the assault. While Pétain recycled his troops to bring in fresh men on a regular basis, Falkenhayn refused to pull back his drained troops. This caused even more bitterness between himself and Wilhelm.

French artillery barrages had begun to take a heavy toll on the Germans in May. On average one died every 45 seconds. French deaths were even higher. Inside captured Fort Douaumont the German garrison endured the heavy French bombardment. Fort Douaumont had been employed for munitions storage. A battalion of troops were resting in a room on May 8 in which flamethrower fuel and hand grenades had been stored. One of the men whose was smoking accidentally touched off an explosion that killed as many as 679 German soldiers. Unwilling to take the time to bury the dead, the Germans simply walled up the room and continued the fighting.

The French incorrectly assumed that the explosion had decimated the German garrison. A common tactic of the French was to seize any opportunity to retake positions lost to the enemy. The French stormed the fort on May 22, but the Germans counterattacked the following day and retook the lost ground.

In early June Fort Vaux was again the German objective. The divisions of three German corps attacked on a three-mile front with one yard of space between each man. The ferocious attack was preceded by a barrage of 600 guns. The fort fell on June 7 after a determined defense led by Major Sylvain-Eugene Raynal, who kept headquarters informed by carrier pigeon. After savage close-in fighting in the underground tunnels, he only surrendered when they ran out of water. In an age where chivalry still had value, Crown Prince Wilhelm gave Raynal a sword to replace his lost one. With the Germans at last looking directly down into the city of Verdun just two miles away, victory seemed assured.

Although Pétain had done well, his indifference to the shocking casualties was too much for Joffre. He was replaced by General Robert Nivelle, who was a skilled artillery officer, and even more important, better respected than the taciturn and inflexible Pétain. Nivelle's command of the French artillery soon overshadowed the German guns at last turning the tide in favor of the French.

The battle took an even more ghastly turn on June 22 when the Germans fired 116,000 phosgene gas shells on the French artillery positions, killing and wounding 1,600 men. This deadly bombardment was followed by an attack by the elite mountain troops of the Alpenkorps, but they had to withdraw when their line of supply was cut.

The high-water mark of the Verdun offensive occurred on June 23. Nearly 20 million shells on both sides had been fired by that time. The once-beautiful and peaceful terrain of the Meuse Valley resembled the pock-marked surface of the Moon. Thousands of shell craters stretched in every direction. Forests and towns, farms, and roads were nothing but memories. More than 200,000 men had been killed or wounded on each side.

Events on other fronts and in other sectors ultimately derailed Falkenhayn's Verdun offensive. He was forced in June to transfer some of his troops to the Eastern Front to deal with the offensive masterminded by Russian general Aleksei Brusilov. The real turning point, though, came on the first day of July when the British unleashed their massive assault on the Somme. The Somme Offensive put Germans on the defensive.

The German Fifth Army forced its way closer to Fort Souville on July 11, which had been hit by more than 38,000 shells since April. Although they came to within just two miles of the city, Falkenhayn's exhausted forces could advance no closer. The French defenses had held. Indeed, by that time the French had switched to the offensive.

Falkenhayn had lost the initiative. His grand plan had led only to another slugging match

Continued on page 97

century, having been planted after the war. Rusted barbed wire, gun emplacements, trenches, and dugouts crisscross fields and woods.

Hundreds of thousands of bodies are interred under memorials. They are there to tell the gallant deeds of the French 72nd, 51st, and 14th divisions, 54th and 59th Chausseur battalions, and 3 Company of the 137th Regiment. The trench where the company was obliterated in an instant is today the Tranchée des Baionnettes, a memorial to the gallant men who refused to surrender.

More than 23 million artillery shells rained on the Verdun sector, an average of two shells a second over a 10-month period. There are places where 1,000 projectiles of all sizes struck every square yard of land. At least 15 percent failed to explode, instead burying themselves in the muddy soil like malevolent beasts waiting to be awakened.

The fields and forests around Verdun are home to more than 12 million shells and bombs. Portions of the old battlefield cannot be walked on even to this day. Following World War I, France

prohibited human habitation in large swaths of the northeastern part of the country because the land was deemed too environmentally damaged for human habitation. The non-contiguous area, known as Zone Rouge, includes parcels of land that hold hundreds of thousands of live shells and deadly gas canisters. The entire region is a vast graveyard of the weapons of the Great War.

After a century, the casings are corroded and many of the gas canisters leak their deadly toxin into the soil. Fuses are delicate and touchy, requiring careful handling by experienced demineurs, who are the French government's highly skilled bomb disposal experts. At deadly risk to their lives, the brave demineurs find at least 900 tons of grenades, bullets, bombs, mortars, and gas canisters each year.

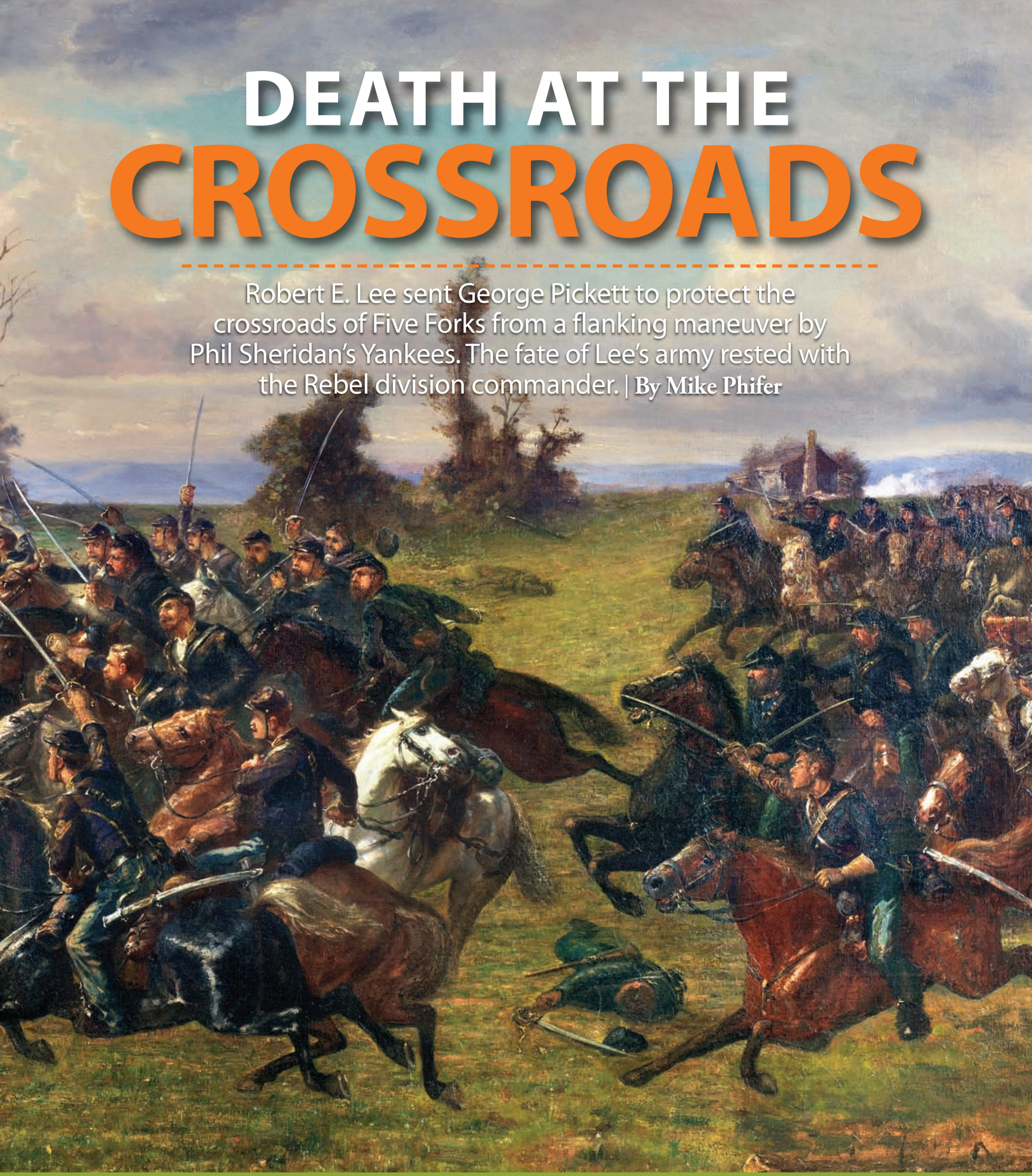
Villagers and farmers frequently find live bombs and projectiles on their land. Unexploded ordnance kills and maims people every year. Demineurs work year-round to find and dispose of the deadly harvest. It's a painstaking process that will take years. Indeed, French ordnance experts believe that many places will not be safe for at least another century.

—Mark Carlson

Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan in his trademark pork-pie hat leads a charge against the Rebel breastworks at Five Forks in a painting by 19th-century French artist Paul D. Philippoteaux.

DEATH AT THE CROSSROADS

Robert E. Lee sent George Pickett to protect the crossroads of Five Forks from a flanking maneuver by Phil Sheridan's Yankees. The fate of Lee's army rested with the Rebel division commander. | By Mike Phifer



An unrelenting rain soaked the gray-clad troops of Maj. Gen. George Pickett's reinforced division of Confederate soldiers on the morning of March 30, 1865. Following along with the foot soldiers was Colonel William Pegram and six guns from his artillery battalion, which were being pulled by mud-caked horses. The weary Confederates did their best to ignore the miserable weather as they tramped west on White Oak Road away from the main body of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia defending Petersburg, Virginia.

Pickett's force was bound for the vital road intersection known as Five Forks a few miles away. The mud and sheets of rain were not the only obstacle impeding Pickett's progress. Federal cavalry shadowed the Confederate column. "Instead of pushing on, [Pickett] stopped, formed a regiment in line-of-battle, and awaited some attack," wrote Captain W. Gordon McCabe, Pegram's adjutant. "Much valuable time was lost in this way."

Pickett's men reached Five Forks in the late afternoon. Waiting for them was Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee and his two brigades of Virginia cavalry, who had done their best to keep back the enemy cavalry throughout the day. General Robert E. Lee, who commanded the Confederate army, had ordered Pickett and Fitz Lee to launch a pre-emptive strike against a large force of Federal cavalry massing six miles to the southeast at Dinwiddie Court House on the Boydton Plank Road.

It was critical to the survival of Lee's army that Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan's cavalry force at the court house should be driven off, for they threatened the South Side Railroad, the last Confederate-controlled rail line entering Petersburg. If the Federals succeeded in cutting the railroad, it would precipitate the fall of both Richmond and Petersburg.

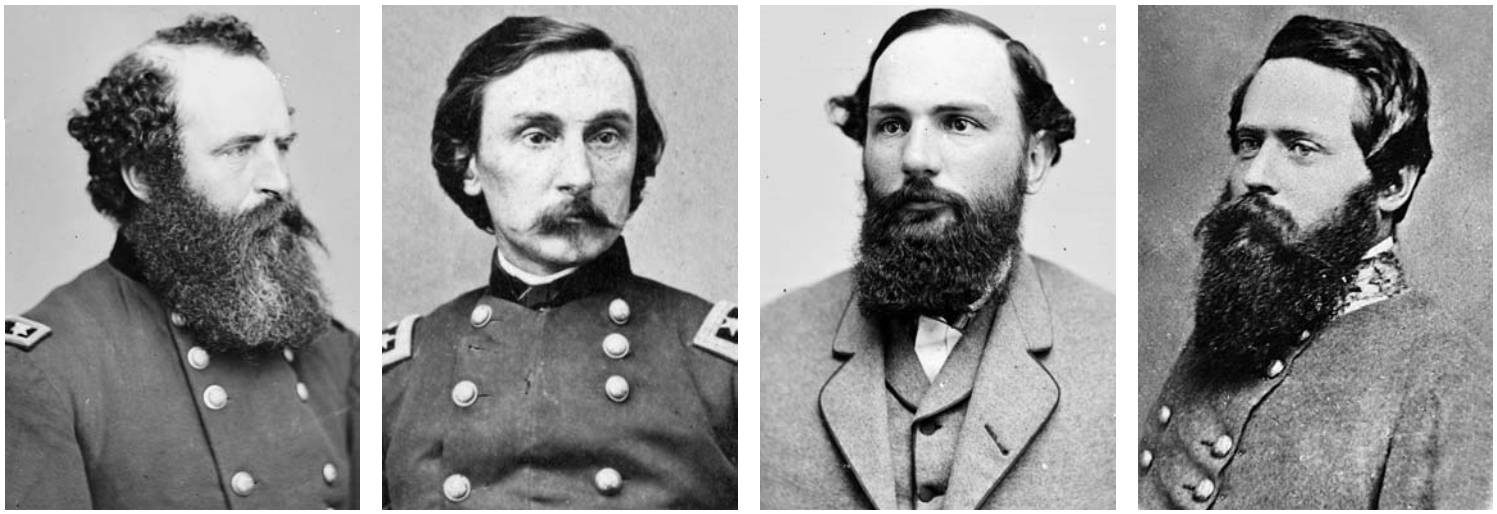
With nightfall fast approaching, Pickett decided to remain at Five Forks for the night. He ordered his men to construct breastworks, which they did to the best of their abilities, before bivouacking with the rain still falling. The fate of Lee's army rested on Pickett's shoulders.

By late March 1865, the situation facing Lee was decidedly grim. For the past 10 months his army had been enduring a withering siege at Petersburg in their desperate attempt to defend the capital of the Confederacy at Richmond. Field works stretched for more than 30 miles from Richmond south to Petersburg and continued for another six miles southwest to Hatcher's Run.

Lt. Gen. General Ulysses S. Grant, the general-in-chief of Union army, had succeeded in wearing down his nemesis. In February 1865 Lee's army numbered 55,000 troops, but by late March the number of men under arms had decreased owing to desertion and battle attrition. Facing Lee's army were 128,000 Federal troops in two armies. Maj. Gen. George Meade's commanded the larger Army of the Potomac, Maj. Gen. Edward Ord led the smaller Army of the James. In addition, Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah had arrived in the tidewater region from the Shenandoah Valley to augment Grant's forces.

In late March Grant drew up plans for Maj. Gen. Gouverneur Warren's V Corps and Maj. Gen. Andrew Humphrey's II Corps to march around the Confederate right flank at Hatcher's Run. Once around the Confederate right flank, the forces were to turn north. Grant intended by these moves to draw the Confederates out of their trenches by forcing the Rebels to defend the South Side Railroad. Lee would have to take some of his forces out of line to counter the movements, and that would weaken his fortified line sufficiently for other Union forces to pierce it.

Sheridan had a key role to play in the movement to cut the South Side Railroad. His cavalry corps was to swing to the left of the two Union infantry corps and occupy Dinwiddie Court House, which was situated 15 miles southwest of Petersburg. Once there, Sheridan was to use the court house as a base for further operations. His next objective was to secure the strategic intersection of Five Forks. Ford's Road, one of the main roads that passed through Five Forks, led directly to the South Side Railroad.



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Pictured (left to right) are Union Brig. Gen. Romeyn B. Ayres, Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, Maj. Gen. W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee, and Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee. Fitz Lee's troopers could not stop the Yankee horsemen who earlier in the war were no match for them.

If the Confederates abandoned their trenches and came out into the open, Sheridan had orders to pin them down while the rest of Grant's forces moved to reinforce the attack at Five Forks; however, if the Confederate remained in their Petersburg trenches, then Sheridan's troopers were to tear up track along the South Side Railroad, as well as the Richmond and Danville Railroad. The two railroads joined in Burkeville, VA, with the Richmond and Danville leading into the Deep South.

In the early hours of March 29, Maj. Gen. Romeyn Ayres' Second Division of the V Corps began its march to outflank the Confederates. Maj. Gen. Charles Griffin's First Division and Maj. Gen. Samuel Crawford's Third Division followed Ayres. Ayres' troops reached Rowanty Creek in the late afternoon. The Union II Corps followed the V Corps.

After constructing a pontoon bridge across the creek, they continued their march. Warren ordered Griffin to turn north onto the Quaker Road, which it did at noon. The vanguard of Griffin's division consisted of Brig. Gen. Joshua Chamberlain's 1st Brigade.

As for Sheridan's Cavalry Corps, it embarked from its camp before sunrise on March 29. Maj.

Gen. George Crook's Second Division, on loan from the Army of the Potomac, struck out along the Jerusalem Plank Road. Brig. Gen. Thomas Devin's First Division and Brig. Gen. George Custer's Third Division followed Crook. Custer's troops, at the rear of the column, accompanied the army's wagon train. Sheridan, who remained the commander of the Army of the Shenandoah, had placed his cavalry corps under the direction of Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt. The cavalry forces reached Dinwiddie Court House that night.

Confederate scouts reported to Lee that the Federal cavalry was on the move. Lt. Gen. James Longstreet suggested the creation of a task force to address the threat that they posed to the South Side Railroad. Longstreet suggested to Lee that the task force consist of Pickett's Division of Longstreet's Corps based at Richmond, a substantial cavalry force, and several artillery batteries.

Lee concurred with the proposal and ordered Pickett to prepare for the mission. Lee ordered his nephew, Fitz Lee, to bring his cavalry division to Petersburg, where it arrived on March 29. This gave Fitz Lee a total of seven cavalry brigades.

By that time, Lee had learned that Federal infantry had crossed Rowanty Creek and that Sheridan's initial destination was Dinwiddie Court House. Lee correctly surmised that the Federal cavalry would attempt to ride through Five Forks on its way to the South Side Railroad.

When Fitz Lee arrived at Petersburg, Lee ordered him to ride to Sutherland Station, where he was to join forces with Pickett and two more cavalry divisions, one of which was led by Lee's son, Maj. Gen. William "Rooney" Lee, and the other by Maj. Gen. Thomas Rosser. Lee gave command of the cavalry corps to Fitz Lee. Since Fitz Lee was now the cavalry corps commander, Colonel Thomas Munford assumed command of Fitz Lee's cavalry division.

Pickett's three brigades converged on Petersburg. They were commanded by Brig. Montgomery Corse, Brig. Gen. George Steuart, and Colonel Robert Mayo, who commanded Brig. Gen. William Terry's Brigade. Pickett's division entrained at Richmond on March 29 bound for Sutherland Station.

Grant soon revised his orders to Sheridan on the eve of Little Phil's advance, instructing him to "push around the enemy if you can, and get on his right rear," wrote Grant. The next morning, March 30, with the rain still coming down hard, Sheridan set out to follow Grant's orders. Sheridan ordered Merritt to take Devin's First Division and reconnoiter north towards Five Forks.

Not long after Devin's horsemen set out towards Five Forks, Grant sent Sheridan another message telling him to call off the operation due to the heavy rains and poor condition of the roads. Believing this was a serious mistake, Sheridan rode to Grant's headquarters, where he convinced the general-in-chief to continue with the operation.

Lee arrived at Sutherland Station on March 30 to confer with the senior officers in that sector. He met with Lt. Gen. Richard H. Anderson, Pickett, and a few other generals regarding how to counter Sheridan's threat. Lee soon learned that Fitz Lee was on his way to Five Forks with a large cavalry force. Lee decided to reinforce Pickett with the brigades of Brig. Gen. William H. Wallace and Brig. Gen. Matthew W. Ransom of Maj. Gen. Bushrod Johnson's Division of Anderson's IV Corps, as well as six guns from Colonel William Pegram's artillery battalion.

Lee directed Pickett to take his reinforced division of 6,400 infantrymen and Fitz Lee's 4,200 troopers and secure Five Forks. In so doing, Pickett would be able to block Sheridan's advance towards the South Side Railroad, as well as the Confederate rear. Pickett set out west on White Oak Road in the late morning for Five Forks. His infantry bivouacked in the pouring rain at Five Forks that night. By the next morning, all three Confederate cavalry divisions were assembled at Five Forks.

On the morning of March 31, Pickett prepared

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"Little Phil" Sheridan, a relentless fighter that Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant brought to the East with him, established a forward base at Dinwiddie Court House on March 29, 1865, for operations against the South Side Railroad.

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The highly stylized representation of the battle by lithographer Currier and Ives fails to capture the odds facing the Union army. Union forces surmounted poor intelligence, bad weather, and confused orders to prevail over their foe.

for a move against Sheridan. The vanguard of Pickett's force consisted of the cavalry troopers from Rooney Lee's and Rosser's divisions with Pickett's infantry division forming the main force. Pickett's foot soldiers swung west to strike Sheridan left flank.

By mid-morning, the rain had stopped falling. Just then Brig. Gen. Rufus Barringer's troopers of Rooney Lee's Division ran headlong into the 2nd New York Mounted Rifles of Brig. Gen. Charles Smith's Cavalry Brigade. In the ensuing skirmish, the Rebels drove the Union cavalrymen back across Fitzgerald Ford, which was the southernmost crossing of Chamberlain's Creek, the closest ford to Dinwiddie Court House.

Once on the east side of the crossing, the New Yorkers, with the support of the 6th Ohio Cavalry, poured a hot fire into the Rebel cavalrymen on the opposite side of the stream. When the Confederate horsemen fell back, Smith sent a detachment from the 1st Maine Cavalry across the stream in pursuit.

After wading through the rain-swollen ford, the Mainers encountered Barringer's main force of Tarheel cavalry and were driven back across the ford. Enduring a hot fire, dismounted troopers of the 5th North Carolina Cavalry splashed through the ford in pursuit of the Yankees. It was a risky proposition, and they soon found themselves in dire need of assistance.

A squadron of the 13th Virginia Cavalry of Brig. Gen. Richard Beale's Brigade crossed the ford. The 2nd North Carolina Cavalry followed the Virginians. A short distance to the north, the 1st North Carolina Cavalry also crossed the stream. Troopers of the 1st Maine and 6th Ohio Cavalry fired their carbines into the squadron of Virginia troopers and drove them back across the ford, where they took refuge with Barringer's horsemen.

At mid-afternoon Barringer attacked again. The 2nd North Carolina Cavalry encountered strong resistance from dismounted Federal cavalrymen who had by that time entrenched. The 1st North Carolina Cavalry crossed north of the ford and ran into a wall of fire. At that point, Rooney Lee decided to commit all four of the regiments of Brig. Gen. Richard Beale's brigade to the battle in a bid to overpower the Yankees. The weight of two Confederate cavalry brigades, those of Baringer and Beale, was enough to put the Federals to flight.

Meanwhile, at Danse's Ford, which was the northernmost crossing of Chamberlain's Creek, Pickett's infantrymen and Rosser's cavalrymen attempted to ford the stream. A detachment of troopers from Maj. Gen. Henry Davies' First Brigade of Crook's Second Division was guarding the ford. Most of Davies' troopers had ridden south to assist Smith's troopers, but finding that their help was not needed, they were returning to Danse's Ford when they heard fighting erupt at the ford. Davies urged his troopers forward to assist the detachment that had remained behind.

At that time, Corse's brigade, at the head of Pickett's long column of infantry, was approaching the ford. The Virginians waded through the ford and brushed aside the detachment of cavalry guarding it. Just as they did so, Davies reached the crossing. He sent Colonel Matthew Avery's 10th New York Cavalry to slow the Rebel infantry's advance. Avery ordered his troopers to dismount. Corse's soldiers unleashed a few well-directed volleys that forced the New Yorkers to hastily remount. Davies ordered his troopers to fall back.

Just to the east, Devin's two cavalry brigades were approaching Five Forks by mid-afternoon when they heard a battle raging to their southwest. With a regiment of Michigan cavalry, Devin rode in the direction of the gunfire. He ran headlong into Davies's troopers, who were in full retreat. Unable to rally them, Devin sent a message for Colonel Charles Fitzhugh to bring his 2nd Brigade forward to assist in checking the Rebel infantry's advance.

Just at that time, Munford joined the battle, pressing south on the Dinwiddie Court House Road. As he did so, Corse continued his advance. Realizing that he had collided with a large body of enemy infantry, Devin ordered both Fitzhugh's 2nd Brigade and Colonel Peter Stagg's 1st Brigade to fall back before they were overwhelmed. Both Union cavalry brigades took up positions on John Boisseau's farm, where they formed a new line.

With Confederate forces having successfully wedged themselves between Devin's vanguard at the Boisseau Farm and the rest of the Union cavalry at Dinwiddie Court House, Merritt ordered a general retreat. The brigades of Davies, Stagg, and Fitzhugh all reached the protection of Dinwiddie Court House by nightfall on March 31.

With the Union situation deteriorating rapidly, Sheridan ordered Brig. Gen. John Gregg's 2nd Brigade of Crook's Division and Gibbs' 3rd Brigade of Devin's Division to counterattack the Confederates advancing on Dinwiddie Court House. The two Union brigades slowed the Confederate juggernaut but could not stop it. Sheridan then sent an urgent dispatch to Custer instructing him to leave one brigade with the wagon train and hurry forward his two other brigades. Leaving Brig. Gen. William Wells' 2nd Brigade to guard the wagons, Custer rushed to Dinwiddie Court House with Colonel Alexander Pennington's 1st Brigade and Colonel Henry Capehart's 3rd Brigade.

Custer's troopers deployed a half mile north of Dinwiddie Court House. Custer ordered his brigadiers to have their troops dismount and entrench. Lieutenant James Lord's 2nd U.S. Light Artillery, Battery A, unlimbered behind Custer's cavalrymen. Gregg's 2nd Brigade and Smith's 3rd

Brigade, both of Crook's Division, deployed on opposite ends of Custer's line.

Despite the growing darkness, Pickett hurled his Confederate foot soldiers at the entrenched Union cavalry. The Union cavalrymen blazed away with their breech-loading carbines while the artillery roared in support. Stunned by the firepower, Pickett's line reeled under the heavy fire. Fitz Lee's gray-clad troopers assailed the Union left but were soundly repulsed by Smith's cavalrymen. At that point, Pickett decided it was too dark to continue his attack. Pickett's pre-emptive strike against Sheridan constituted the Battle of Dinwiddie Court House.

A separate battle that would be known as the Battle of White Oak Road had raged to the east the very same day between Confederate and Union infantry. Warren, whose troops were positioned just south of the White Oak Road, ordered Aryes to make a reconnaissance in force towards the road to determine whether the Confederates were nearby. Aryes in turn ordered Brig. Gen. Frederic Winthrop, who held the extreme right of the division, to perform the task with his 1st Brigade.

On the morning of March 31, Lee had personally inspected the Confederate positions along White Oak Road. He learned from scouts that Ayres' Division was advancing northwest towards the White Oak Road and ordered Johnson to attack Ayres.

For the task at hand, Johnson had his remaining brigades, those of Brig. Gen. Henry Wise and Colonel Martin Stansel (commanding Moody's Brigade), as well as temporary command of the brigades of Brig. Gen. Eppa Hunton and Brig. Gen. Samuel McGowan. Johnson ordered Hunton to deploy his brigade in a tract of forest just north of the White Oak Road. Stansel and McGowan moved into position to support Hunton's attack.

Winthrop's brigade was struggling in the late morning through a ploughed field headed for the forest where Hunton's men were stationed. As the Yankees came within range, the Confederates fired a tremendous volley at the Yankees. To their surprise, the Yankees continued their advance.

Hunton's troops came crashing out of the forest. As they did so, they screamed the blood-curdling Rebel Yell. The Confederates following Hunton joined the attack. Winthrop soon found his brigade taking fire from three directions.

Although Ayres' other two brigades came to Winthrop's assistance, they were unable to check the Confederate advance. Demoralized Yankee foot soldiers began streaming towards the rear with the Confederates hot on their heels. After routing the greater part of Aryes' Division, the Confederate juggernaut smashed into Crawford's

Artillery Colonel Willie Pegram stood his ground at Five Forks

"Whenever the enemy takes a gun from my battery, look for my dead body in front of it," Captain Willie Pegram told his artillerymen after the Battle of Cedar Mountain in August 1862. He made his remark after barely escaping with the guns of his Purcell Virginia battery in the desperate clash that opened the Second Manassas Campaign. Pegram's bold statement was no hollow boast as events would prove at Five Forks on April 1, 1865.

Pegram was only 19 when his militia unit in which he served was called up for duty in April 1861. At the time Pegram was studying law at the University of Virginia. The following month the bespectacled youth volunteered for the newly formed six-gun battery called the Purcell Artillery of Richmond, where he was to be a drillmaster. Pegram was soon elected by the men to second lieutenant. When the battery's commander, Reuben Lindsay Walker, was promoted to lieutenant colonel and given the command of an artillery battalion in late March 1862, Pegram was promoted to captain and given command of the battery.

Pegram and his gunners would earn a reputation for their boldness and skill serving in the Army of Northern Virginia. They routinely sought out the hottest action on the battlefield. For example, ay the Battle of Mechanicsville during the Seven Days Battle, he rushed the guns of his battery to within 800 yards of the enemy, where he found himself engaged with five Union batteries. Pinned in a deadly crossfire, his battery lost four of its six guns to counterbattery fire. Although 47 of his 75 artillerymen were either killed or wounded, Pegram and his surviving gunners kept their two remaining guns blazing as night fell.

At the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, Pegram's battery went into action with Walker's battalion on the extreme right of the Rebel line. Experiencing a savage fire from Union rifled artillery on the opposite bank of the Rappahannock, Pegram found a clever way to bring his men back to their guns when they fled into the woods to escape the storm of Union shells: Pegram snatched up a Confederate flag and draped it around his shoulders. He then strode calmly around the deserted guns as Union shells plowed into the ground around him. Ashamed of their flight, the gunners soon returned.

Other than Maj. Gen. James Ewell Brown Stuart, Pegram "had probably been under fire oftener than any man in the Army of Northern Virginia," contended Captain W. Gordon McCabe, a fellow artilleryman and close friend of Pegram. The young battalion commander was promoted to major on April 4, 1863. He found himself in temporary command of the five batteries of Walker's battalion at the Battle of Chancellorsville the following month.

When the Confederates marched north to Gettysburg, Major Pegram was in command of an artillery battalion in Lt. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill's Third Corps. He continued to receive regular promotions. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on February 27, 1864, and received a promotion to full colonel on February 18, 1865.

WIKIMEDIA

Willie Pegram, who died commanding his guns at Five Forks, rose from private to the rank of colonel in command of an artillery battalion in Robert E. Lee's army.

At Five Forks, Pegram tried desperately to shore up the Confederate line, but fell mortally wounded that day while commanding his guns. Taken by an ambulance wagon to Ford's Depot, Pegram had McCabe at his side when he died the following morning. A steadfast and loyal friend, McCabe dug a grave for Pegram. He was eventually interred at Hollywood Cemetery in his beloved Richmond.

—Mike Phifer

Division. Crawford's men also joined the retrograde movement.

"Let them through or they will break our line!" Griffin shouted when he saw panicked Yankees from the other two divisions sweeping towards his own troops, which were deployed along Gravelly Run. Griffin ordered his brigades into position and braced for the enemy's onslaught. Union batteries wheeled into position, unlimbered, and opened fire. Their rapid fire helped slow the momentum of the attacking Confederates. The Confederates, who were winded from their attack, eventually received orders to regroup at the captured enemy breastworks along the White Oak Road.

By this time, Warren had rallied his two broken divisions and had sought support from the II Corps. Humphries ordered Brig. Gen. Nelson Miles to attack on Warren's right with his division. They struck Wise's Brigade, who had been sent in by Lee to support the initial Confederate success, and drove them back toward their lines.

In the early afternoon, Warren and Griffin rode to the left of their line to confer with Chamberlain. Warren ordered Chamberlain to retake the ground lost to the Rebels. Moving across Gravelly Run, Chamberlain's Yankees moved cautiously forward. Supporting him were the Gregory's 2nd Brigade and Bartlett's 3rd Brigade.

Chamberlain flung his troops headlong at the Rebel position. The Confederate fire was so devastating that the men of the 198th Pennsylvania began to waver. With the support of Gregory's troops on his right flank, Chamberlain's Yankees drove the Rebels out of their position. The Rebels withdrew north across the White Oak Road to their fortified lines.

The Confederates lost 800 men, and the Federals suffered 1,900 casualties at the Battle of White Oak Road. It might have been a tactical draw, but the Union V Corps emerged from the battle able to proceed west along White Oak Road to Five Forks.

Warren received orders from Grant at 5:00 PM to secure his position and watch his left flank. Despite being told by army headquarters that Sheridan was advancing, the rumble of battle from his direction indicated otherwise. Believing Sheridan in need of assistance, Warren dispatched Maj. Gen. Joseph Bartlett's 3rd Brigade to render aid to the Union cavalry.

Although Sheridan was in need of infantry support given that Pickett's reinforced division was too strong for him, he also saw an opportunity. Sheridan explained to Lt. Col. Horace Porter, Grant's aide-de-camp that "[Pickett is] in more danger than I am; if I am cut off from the Army of the Potomac, he is cut off from Lee's army, and not a man in it should ever be allowed to go back to Lee."

Due to a barrage of confusing and conflicting orders throughout the evening from both Grant and Meade, it was not until 2:00 AM on April 1 that Ayres's Division was on the march to Dinwiddie Court House. By early morning, Warren also had his two other divisions in motion as well to support Sheridan.

Shortly after dawn on April 1, Sheridan greeted Chamberlain by asking if he knew Warren's location. Chamberlain told Sheridan that Warren was probably at the rear of his division. "That's just where I should expect him to be!" snapped Sheridan with evident disgust. Yet Warren was more than justified to be in that location because he was assisting Crawford in disengaging quietly from the Confederates. Warren was concerned that if they Confederates knew Crawford was disengaging, they might take advantage of the situation and renew their attack.

Pickett became aware that morning that Warren was marching to aid Sheridan. Pickett reasoned that if he kept his infantry in a forward position between Five Forks and Dinwiddie Court House, he might be exposing it to attack from the rear. He therefore ordered his troops to reoccupy their breastworks at Five Forks. As the Confederate infantry withdrew, Custer's cavalry followed. Lee weighed in on the situation, warning Pickett to "hold Five Forks at all hazards."

When they returned to Five Forks the Confederate foot soldiers set to work expanding their breastworks. When they finished, their fortified line extended for nearly two miles along White Oak Road. At its east end, the line turned north for 150 yards to protect the flank most likely to be attacked by the Federal forces. From east to west, the five infantry brigades were Ransom, Wallace, Steuart, Terry, and Corse.

Three guns of Colonel Willie Pegram's artillery battalion were positioned on the right of the line,

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The Maltese Cross badge signifying the Union V Corps is visible on the battle flag at center as Union troops assail the Confederate position at Five Forks.

while the remaining three were posted in the center of the line at the Five Forks intersection. The eight guns of Major William McGregor's horse artillery also strengthened the Rebel line.

To Rooney, Lee posted his three brigades of cavalry on the right of the Confederate line. Munford posted his two brigades of cavalry behind the infantry on Ford's Road in the center behind the Confederate infantry. Rosser's two brigades of cavalry took up a position deep in the Confederate rear on the north bank of Hatcher's Run.

To attack the Confederate position, Sheridan had 12,000 troops in the V Corps, as well as 10,000 troopers in the three cavalry divisions of Devin, Crook, and Custer. As part of his strategic plan, Custer's troopers were to make a feint against Pickett's right, while Devin's troopers attacked the Confederate center. Sheridan intended the Federal cavalry to pin Pickett's troops in place so that Warren's V Corps could roll up Pickett's left flank.

Although he met with Sheridan at 11:00 AM, it was not until two hours later that Warren received orders to have his divisions assemble at Gravelly Run Church in preparation for the attack. With word sent to his division commanders to get their men moving, Warren rode over to Sheridan's command post, where he was informed of the plan and how the Rebels were posted. Sheridan would later claim that he concluded the meeting with Warren by telling the V Corps commander that he wished Warren's troops to form up on the Gravelly Church Road. Sheridan said he had specifically told Warren to form his corps for battle with two divisions to the front, aligned obliquely to the White Oak Road while one held in reserve.

As the afternoon wore on, Sheridan grew increasingly impatient with Warren. His main concern was that Warren was not moving his troops fast enough against the Confederates at Five Forks. Sheridan again met with Warren and told him that he was concerned that his cavalry forces might exhaust their ammunition keeping the Confederates occupied while Warren's infantry moved up to make its attack. Little Phil also was concerned that the sun might set before the infantry attack began. Sheridan believed that Warren did not want the attack to begin that afternoon.

The V Corps was formed up and ready to advance at 4:15 PM. Munford, who had been watching the Federal infantry array for battle, sent a courier to inform Pickett, but neither Pickett nor Fitz Lee had expected a major Federal attack that day, and so they both accepted an invitation from Rosser to join him on the north bank of Hatcher's Run for a shad bake. Unfortunately, neither Pickett nor Fitz Lee had informed their subordinate commanders where to find them in case of an emergency.

ALAMY

Phil Sheridan leaps a Confederate log breastwork in a dramatic charge at Five Forks, yet it was Union infantry that overwhelmed the Confederate defenders.

With its battle flags fluttering in the wind, Warren's V Corps stepped off to the attack with Ayres' Division on the left and Crawford's Division on the right. Griffin's Division followed Crawford's Division. Warren and Sheridan rode with Ayres as he moved towards the Confederate left flank. Sheridan's plan was to have Crawford strike the angle of the Rebel line that was refused to the north, while Ayres assaulted the Confederate main line facing south along the White Oak Road. Griffin would be in reserve behind Crawford.

As Ayres' three brigades crossed over the White Oak Road, Ransom's Tarheels raked their left flank with a heavy volley. It soon became evident to the division commanders of the V Corps that the Confederate angle they were supposed to strike was not where they had expected it, but much further to the west. Because of this, they nearly overshot the Confederate flank.

Ayres reoriented two of his brigades to face the Confederates' refused line, which was partially veiled by thick woods. At the same time, Crawford continued his advance. The soldiers of Griffin's Division, which was following closely behind Crawford, could hear musket fire both to their left and front. Although Bartlett's 3rd Brigade

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Carrying their knapsacks and bedrolls, Maj. Gen. George Pickett's defeated Confederate troops are marched into captivity after their defeat at Five Forks.

continued to follow Crawford, Griffin's other 1st and 2nd brigades turned to the west.

Chamberlain, whose brigade formed the vanguard of Griffin's division, halted his brigade so that he could conduct a personal reconnaissance. He rode towards the sound of the firing on his left. From the vantage point of a low rise, he observed Ayres's bluecoats engaged in a confused, swirling melee. Not waiting for orders, Chamberlain led his troops west toward the fighting. Brig. Gen. Edgar Gregory, commanding Griffin's 2nd Brigade, followed Chamberlain.

Ayres ordered his two repositioned brigades forward at the double quick. Sheridan rode back and forth along the Federal line rallying his men. "Go at 'em with a will!" he shouted. At the first sign that the Confederate line was breaking, he yelled for his troops to pursue the enemy.

Just at that time, Brig. Gen. James Gwyn's 3rd Brigade, which was going into action north of Ayres' 1st and 2nd brigades, began to waver. Seeing Gwyn's bluecoats hesitating, Sheridan galloped over to the brigade, waved his battle flag, and directed them forward.

With blue-coated infantry about to overrun their position, McGregor's artillerymen limbered up their four guns and drove their guns out of the earthworks as quickly as their horses could pull them. Some of Ransom's North Carolinians continued to blaze away at the rushing wave of bluecoats, while others fled or surrendered.

Ayres held his sword aloft and led his 1st and 2nd brigades over the breastworks, while Gwyn's 3rd Brigade took them in the flank. Always in the thick of the fighting, Sheridan jumped his horse over the enemy works and began directing Confederate prisoners to the rear.

Ayres' troops had seized the key part of Pickett's line and had rounded up hundreds of prisoners. Although there was not much daylight left, Sheridan desperately wanted to press on towards the South Side Railroad. This was because he believed the tactical situation might change dramatically overnight given that Lee liked to make immediate counterattacks.

Warren had established a command post several hundred yards behind Ayres's division, from which he could direct his forces and receive dispatches from his subordinate commanders. The V Corps commander observed Crawford's division was moving north, rather than northwest towards Five Forks, and he dispatched an aide to redirect the division. When he did not hear back from the aide, Warren rode off to find Crawford himself. By that time, Crawford had advanced far enough that he was in the rear of the Confederate position. When Warren caught up with Crawford, he directed him to turn south on Ford's Road to come in behind the Confederate line.

While Warren was conferring with Crawford, the Confederate line was unraveling. Ayres' attack shattered Ransom's Brigade, which uncovered the flank of Wallace's Brigade. When Wallace's troops fell back, they jeopardized the position of Steuart's Brigade in the center of the Confederate line.

To protect the Five Forks intersection and Ford's Road, Steuart tried to establish a new line facing east to check the advance of Ayres and Griffin, while Mayo attempted to form a new line facing north to check Crawford's advance. The result was a new line at a right angle from the main line of breastworks. The Confederates desperately tried to entrench their new line, but their position had completely crumbled. By that time, Pickett's division was facing attack from four directions at once.

The Federals surged forward, sensing victory. Griffin and Bartlett cooperated with each other and succeeded in routing the left wing of the Confederate line. The Federals were soon rounding up prisoners from the brigades of Ransom, Wallace, and Steuart.

While the Confederate disaster at Five Forks was unfolding, Pickett, Fitz Lee, and Rosser enjoyed their shad bake unaware of the battle unfolding a short distance away owing to an acoustic quirk. A thick growth of cedars between the two positions may have buffered the sound. Pickett learned of the disaster unfolding at Five Forks when his dispatch riders reported running into large numbers of Federal troops. There was little that Pickett could do at that point anyway because the Confederate line at Five Forks was already broken and most of the troops were too demoralized to rally.

Unaware of the extent of the disaster, though, Pickett mounted his horse and asked Colonel Thomas Owen's 3rd Virginia Cavalry to open a path for him through the Yankees. With his head down behind his horse's neck, Pickett galloped unscathed through a hail of bluecoats' bullets to the Confederate line. Since Fitz Lee was unable to get through, he remained with Rosser's division.

With a new threat coming from the north, Pickett ordered Mayo to pull his brigade out of the

main line. Mayo rushed his foot soldiers, along with a section of artillery, to Ford's Road to stop Crawford's westward advance. They put up valiant resistance, but the Yankees hurled them back. Crawford's foot soldiers sensed victory was near, and they continued their relentless advance.

As soon as firing erupted to the east, Devin's dismounted troopers and those of Colonel Alexander Pennington's 1st Brigade of Custer's Division struck the main Confederate line. Small arms and artillery fire initially drove them back, but the troopers reformed and attacked anew. With the bulk of the Confederate infantry brigades being pulled out of the line, the detachments left behind to fight rearguard actions found themselves hard pressed to hold back the advance of the dismounted Federal cavalrymen.

Three of Pegram's guns helped to cover the Five Forks intersection. "Our officers were as cool as on parade, and the men were serving their guns with a precision and rapidity beyond all praise," recalled McCabe. Pegram was amid the storm of iron and mini balls, calmly sitting on his horse. He directed his artillery crews to fire canister at the dismounted Federal troopers. "Fire your canister low, men," he instructed. At that moment, a Federal bullet knocked him out his saddle. "Oh Gordon! I am mortally wounded, take me off the field," exclaimed Pegram. McCabe rushed to his side. With the help of some of the artillerymen, the devoted aide loaded Pegram into an ambulance wagon, which rattled off toward Ford's Depot on the South Side Railroad.

It was none too soon, for Federal troopers were soon clambering over the earthworks, and the foot soldiers of both Ayres' and Griffin's divisions were advancing from the east. The Confederate left wing at Five Forks collapsed. Despite the disaster befalling them, the Confederate troops posted on the extreme right had some success. The mixed force of cavalry and infantry under Rooney Lee and Corse, respectively, repulsed repeated attacks by Custer.

Pickett ordered Corse to establish a new line in a field near the White Oak Road. His job was to form a rearguard that would buy enough time for the five shattered Confederate brigades to escape the clutches of the Federals. His men took up their new position and hastily threw together makeshift breastworks.

Continuing to advance with Crawford's Division, Warren observed the Rebel attempt to establish a new line. He quickly ordered Crawford to position his troops for an attack against the new line. When Crawford's Yankees hesitated to attack, Warren grabbed the corps flag and rode forward with his staff officers to spur the men into action. This did the trick, and Crawford's men surged forward.

The Confederates could not stop the blue tide. Warren had his horse shot from under him just a few yards from the Rebel works. The Federals overran Corse's position. Corse's men joined the retreat as night fell over the battlefield. Despite Lee's stern words to hold Five Forks at all hazards, Pickett had lost the crucial intersection to the Yankees.

To his great shock and dismay, Warren was informed at nightfall by Sheridan's Chief of Staff Colonel James Forsyth that he was relieved of command. Earlier in the day, Sheridan had received permission from Grant to relieve Warren if he deemed it necessary. Sheridan, who considered Warren's performance that day as lackluster at best, replaced him with Griffin. Warren sought out Sheridan and asked him to reconsider his decision.

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With Richmond in flames behind them, Robert E. Lee's Confederate troops march west for Lynchburg. They were just 20 miles from their objective when forced to surrender less than a week later at Appomattox Court House.

"Reconsider, hell!" shouted Little Phil. "I don't reconsider my decisions. Obey the order!" Sheridan directed Warren to report for follow-up orders to Grant. Warren reached Grant's headquarters at Dabney's Mill at 10:00 PM. His presence put a momentary damper on the celebration in progress over Sheridan's glorious victory at Five Forks.

Following the battle, Grant put Warren in charge of the City Point sector, a depot on the James River far from the front lines. A court of inquiry in 1879 deemed Sheridan's action unjustified. But there was a long delay before the findings were published, and Warren passed away before they became public.

As for Pickett, he would undoubtedly have been defeated, even if he had never attended the shad bake, because Sheridan outnumbered him by more than two to one. But Lee was in no mood for forgiveness given the high cost of the defeat at Five Forks. He relieved Pickett of duty and told him to report to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. "Pickett ought to have been shot," said one of the artillery commanders serving under him. "I saw him at the close of the fight, thoroughly rattled, and telling his officers in disarrayed tones to get out the best they could."

Munford called the Battle of Five Forks the Waterloo of the Confederacy. The battle had been a decisive victory for the Union Army. The Confederates lost 600 killed and wounded, and 4,500 captured. Lee could ill afford to incur such heavy losses at that point in the war. As for the Union V Corps, it recorded 103 killed, 670 wounded, and 57 missing. Union cavalry losses remain unclear.

With Five Forks in Federal hands, Lee's position quickly became untenable. Lee's army abandoned Petersburg and Richmond on April 2 and began a week-long march west with Grant in full pursuit. The two commanders met at the McLean House in Appomattox Court house on April 9, where Lee agreed to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia. The Confederate debacle at Five Forks had hastened Lee's surrender. ■

Oneida warriors Han Yerry and his wife, Two Kettles, fight alongside the Patriots during the height of the ambush at Oriskany in a modern painting by Don Troiani.

Ambush at ORISKANY

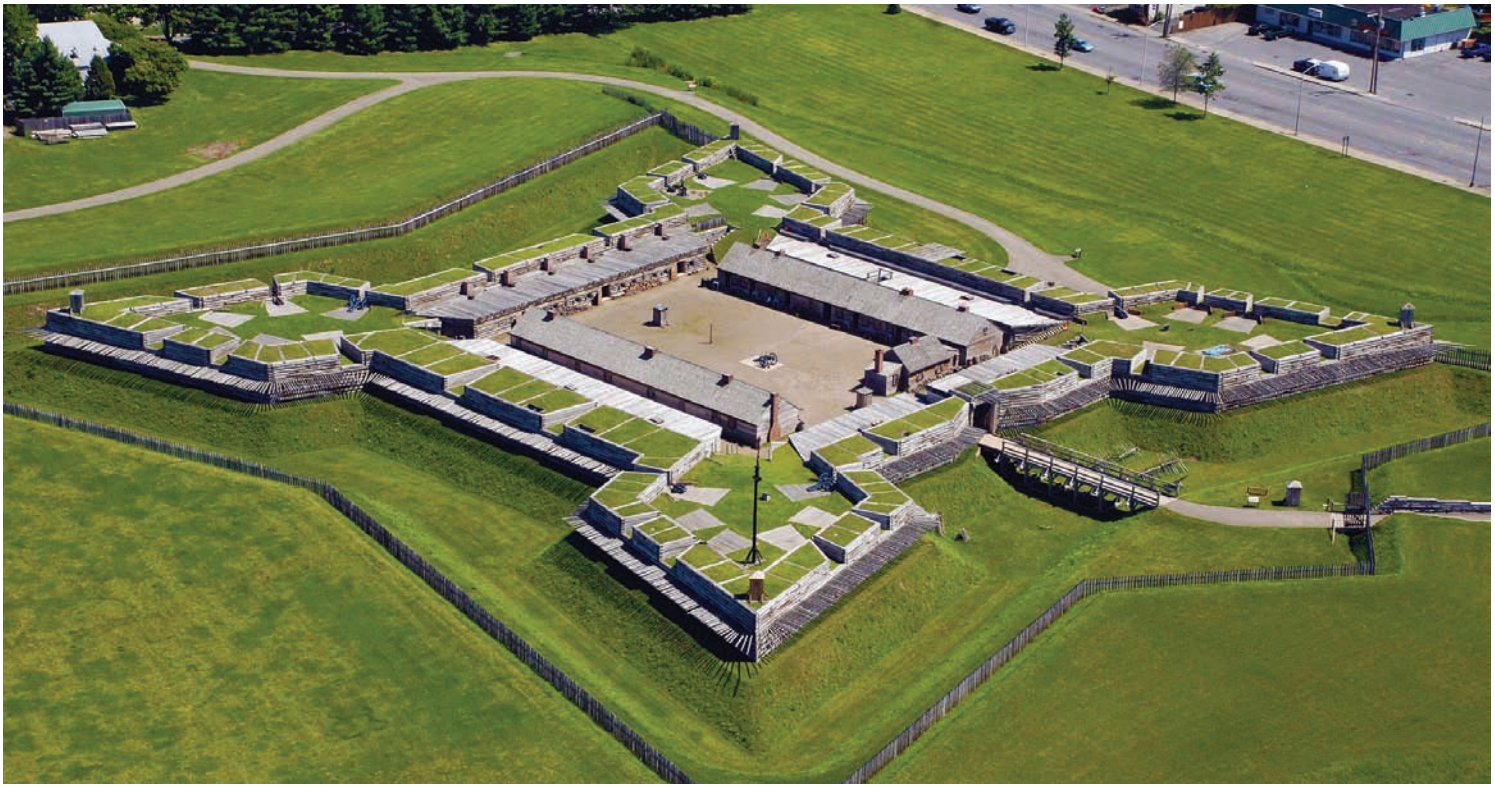
Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer set out to relieve the beleaguered colonial garrison at Fort Stanwix, only to stumble into a deadly trap set by a picked force of British troops and their Iroquois allies six miles downstream at Oriskany.

By Eric Niderost

The young Oneida warrior paused, tensing as he spotted some activity in the forest just in front of him. His name was Paul Powless, and he was one of several Indian scouts sent out from Fort Stanwix in upstate New York. It was August 1777, and the Thirteen Colonies of Great Britain had declared their independence the summer before, but the developing American Revolution showed no sign of ended soon. A mixed force of British regulars, American loyalists, German mercenaries, and British-allied Indians under Brig. Gen. Barrimore Matthew "Barry" St. Leger were on their way to capture the fort.

Powless could see the advancing figures clearly now, standing out in high relief against the more muted forest colors of brown and green. They were Indian warriors like him, muscular men who either sported shirts or displayed bare chests covered in tattoos and war paint. Their faces also were daubed in war paint, with red and black designs that boldly proclaimed the wearer's personal taste. Powless noted they had shaved heads, much like him, save for a braid of hair called a scalp lock.

National Park Service



ABOVE: When the Patriots occupied French and Indian War-era Fort Stanwix in 1776 they had to overhaul its dilapidated defenses. The reconstruction of the fort shows its formidable bastions that provided interlocking fields of fire. RIGHT: EFT Mohawk War Chief Joseph Brant (left), whose Indian name was Thayendanegea, fought with the British, while Patriot Colonel Peter Gansevoort led the American defense of Fort Stanwix.

Both: National Archives

They were members of the alliance of six tribes that the French called the Iroquois League and the British called Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Oneida, Powless' tribe, was one of the six, and although they were politically autonomous they were cultural and linguistic brethren. The approaching Iroquois were obviously going to fight for the British; as for the Oneida, they were on the Patriot side.

Seventeen-year-old Powless decided it was time to get back to the fort and report his findings. He was turning on his heel when he heard someone yell for him to stop. The young man halted, turned around, and saw a fair-skinned Indian warrior. The warrior assured Powless that he would not be harmed or detained. Powless stood his ground and motioned for the man to advance. But to protect himself in case the man was trying to deceive him, Powless raised his musket and told the warrior to stop a few feet away.

The young Oneida kept his musket trained on the warrior, his finger on the trigger, ready to shoot at the least sign of treachery. It was then that Powless realized who he had in his sights. It was Thayendanegea, whom the whites knew as Joseph Brant, the war chief of the Mohawks. Powless knew of Brant, for the chief was already a legend.

Brant was a gifted speaker, and he used all his powers to persuade the younger man to switch to the British side. He promised Powless great rewards if he did so. He also made veiled threats of dire consequences if Powless persisted in his steadfast loyalty to the Americans. Feigning sympathy, Brant expressed sorrow at the Oneida tribe's impending ruin if it refused to switch sides.

Brant was a man of growing fame and prestige, but Powless was cowed neither by his physical presence nor by his slick tongue. Standing up straight and summoning all the confidence he could muster, Powless told Brant that the Oneidas would persevere, if need be, until such time as they were annihilated. The Oneidas had joined their fortunes with that of the American Patriots, and they would share with them whatever good or ill would come. Brant's descriptions of the great and restless power of British King George III would not sway them.

There was nothing more to be said, but with the parley over, Powless knew his life was at risk. As a declared enemy, he might be killed and his scalp taken. The young warrior sprinted back to Fort Stanwix, the enemy Iroquois at his heels, but he finally managed to outdistance his pursuers and reach the safety of the stockade. Shots rang out; they were the first of many that would be heard in the coming days.

The siege of Fort Stanwix and the subsequent battle at Oriskany that unfolded on August 6, 1777, marked the beginning of the end of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, sometimes called the Great League of Peace and Power. The dates are disputed, but the confederacy likely was founded in the 15th century. Its main goal purpose was to stop the bloody tribal internecine warfare that had plagued the region for decades. Although the original alliance had religious overtones, by the 18th century it had developed political and diplomatic skills of great subtlety and effectiveness.

The lands of the Iroquois lay athwart the northern reaches of the New York Colony. These lands constituted a broad band of territory that stretched roughly from the Great Lakes to the Hudson River. It was an accident of history that their geographic location developed great strategic importance in the 17th and 18th centuries,

for it was literally in the middle of the two great colonial rivals in eastern North America, which were France and Great Britain. The French were in Canada, north of Iroquois lands, while the British colonists were to the west and south.

There were five original tribes in the Confederacy, but they were joined by the Tuscaroras following the conclusion of the Tuscarora War in 1713. The Tuscarora had completed their migration north from the Carolinas and became the sixth tribe of the Iroquois League. The Iroquois collectively called themselves Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse). It was a reference to the common multifamily dwelling that could house as many as a dozen families and ranged from 50 feet to 150 feet in length.

To the Iroquois, their territory was a symbolic longhouse. The western door, or gateway, was guarded by the Seneca tribe, and the eastern door by the Mohawks. The Onondagas dwelled in the center, where they were keepers of the League's Great Fire—literally and figuratively symbol of the League's unity. The Cayugas, Tuscaroras, and Oneidas filled in the rest of the longhouse, with the latter having settlements near Oneida Lake.

The Iroquois had a system of government that was matriarchal, or close to it. An Iroquois traced his or her ancestry from the female line and was at birth a member of a female clan. Mature women wielded substantial power. The clan mother was a senior woman who, in consultation with other clan women, picked the tribal sachems. These sachems were special chiefs that formed a delegation to represent their tribe in the Great League Council at Onondaga.

The breakup of the Iroquois Confederacy can be traced to the elegant salons, watering spa, and gaming tables of Bath, England. That is where Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne was relaxing after military duty in America in the winter of 1776-1777. Burgoyne was a jack of all trades, but it remained to be seen if he was master of any of them. A man of fashion and an aristocrat who loved his champagne and women, Burgoyne also was a playwright and a Member of Parliament. London society knew him as "Gentleman Johnny" in tribute to his notorious penchant for high living and his mad passion for gambling.

Burgoyne conceived of a plan whereby he would crush the American Revolution in one glorious campaign. The idea was not new, but he dusted it off and made it his own. America was a wilderness with few roads, and the ones that did exist were scarcely more than primitive trails. That made lakes, rivers, and navigable streams essential for both trade and war.

His basic plan called for seizing control of the Hudson River in order to separate New England from the rest of the Thirteen Colonies. The British had long felt New England, particularly Massachusetts, was the heart of the rebellion. If the British controlled the Hudson corridor, New England would be cut off from the rest of the colonies. It was, for all intents and purposes, a matter of divide-and-conquer.

Burgoyne's plan was approved, and preparations were put in motion at once. The campaign would consist of three separate elements, all converging on Albany in upstate New York. Burgoyne would lead an 8,000-man army down from Canada, going south from the St. Lawrence River. From there, the army would continue south down the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain and

Wikimedia

Benjamin West's painting may depict Sir William Johnson or his nephew Guy Johnson; both worked to retain the Six Nation Confederacy's allegiance to the crown. William Johnson served as the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern District until his death in 1774, at which time Guy Johnson took the post.

onward to the Hudson. The second element would be commanded by General William Howe, who was already in New York City with a large army. Howe would press north. By the time he met Burgoyne in Albany, the Hudson River would be under British control.

But there was a third element that is sometimes overlooked. St. Leger was to lead a mixed force of British regulars, American Loyalists (Tories), Canadians, German mercenaries, and Indians in this effort. The expedition would start at Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario and then proceed down the Oswego River, travel to the Seneca River, and eventually reach Oneida Lake. On the eastern end of the lake, boats could find Wood Creek, but after Wood Creek there was a dry-land portage of one to six miles (the distance depended on the season) called the Oneida Carry. Once past the carry, St. Leger's army would travel down the Mohawk River to reach the Hudson.

St. Leger knew that success or failure of his expedition hinged on the active participation of the Iroquois. But his route was going to cross through the very heart of Oneida lands. In the weeks and months before the Burgoyne launched his campaign, the Oneida and other League tribes debated whether they should abandon their neutrality and raise the hatchet for the Great Father, King George III of England.

The Oneida had suffered substantial population losses because of war and disease, and they probably numbered no more than 1,600 people in the 18th century. That meant they could field about 300 warriors. Captives from other tribes, and even whites, were often adopted to replace dwindling numbers, and sometimes there was intermarriage as well. It was a common belief among Indians that a person's heart and mind meant more than his birth origins or previous ethnicity.

The British government had declared a proclamation line in the 1760s. It was a western boundary that in theory protected Indian lands from white colonial encroachments. The line could be adjusted, and the Oneidas were not pleased when Sir William Johnson, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern District, negotiated a line that took away some of their lands. There was insult to injury when Johnson took some of these lands as his own.

The Oneida received word in January

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

TOP British Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger besieged Fort Stanwix on his march east across central New York towards Albany. BOTTOM Patriot forces moved into blocking positions in upstate New York to prevent three British columns from converging on Albany. The campaign ended in October 1777 with surrender of the remnants of Maj. Gen. John Burgoyne's army at Saratoga.

1777 that a terrible epidemic, in all likelihood smallpox, had decimated the Onondagas. Reports claimed that 90 were dead, including three important sachems. But the news was even worse than that: Because of the catastrophe, the Iroquois League Grand Council fire had been extinguished and would not be rekindled anytime soon. The fire was highly symbolic, the guiding light of unity and the beacon of consensus within the Six Nations. The implication of the extinguished fire was that, both in theory and in fact, each of the member tribes would follow its own destiny.

St. Leger was at Oswego in July of that year making the final preparations for his campaign. Brant also was on hand, his chief function at the moment to try and persuade as many Iroquois as he could to join the expedition. Brant's silver-tongued oratory was supplemented by a shipload of British gifts, including ostrich feathers, small jiggling bells, gun barrels, and kegs of rum. A large number of Iroquois warriors decided to join up, but not all were convinced. There were some Senecas who, while agreeing to go along, insisted they would be there strictly as observers, to watch their brothers whip the rebels.

The one major obstacle in St. Leger's journey to Albany was Fort Stanwix, which guarded the Oneida Carry portage. Built in 1758 during the French and Indian War, Fort Stanwix was allowed to fall into decay following the conflict. When the Americans reoccupied it in 1776, it was in a seriously dilapidated state. Fortunately for the Patriots, the Oneidas were firmly on their side. They had urged the Americans to prepare the fort so that "nothing might pass and repass to the hurt of our country."

The Americans heeded the warning, and every effort was made to repair and strengthen the fort. Stanwix was a typical fort that incorporated the basic ideas of the great seventeenth-century engineer Vauban. It was made of timber, the material most readily available in a forested country, with a starburst pattern of four pentagonal bastions projecting from each corner of the square curtain walls. The fort was also surrounded by a grassy embankment known as a glacis, a deep ditch, and a parapet wall of six-foot high wooden stakes.

The fort's builders had topped the ramparts with parapets, and the boundaries

between them were marked by a line of fraise, sharpened wooden stakes that jutted out horizontally. Among other things, fraise made the use of scaling ladders problematic at best. The defenders had placed embrasures on the parapets at fixed intervals. These gaps allowed the black snouts of artillery pieces to poke through. Their fire would have a deadly effect on any attacking force.

Fort Stanwix's artillery consisted of three 9-pounders, four 6-pounders, two 3-pounders, and four Royal mortars. The name of each gun referred to the weight of the solid shot it fired. The 9-pounders had an effective range of one mile. The garrison was composed of 500 Continentals from the Third New York and Ninth Massachusetts regiments. The morale of the troops was high, in no small part because they were led by Colonel Peter Gansevoort, who was popular with his men.

Gansevoort, who was just 28 years old, hailed from a prominent Albany family of Dutch origin. The young officer had seen some active service in 1775 but was inexperienced as an independent commander. Yet Gansevoort was resourceful and utterly fearless. With these qualities, he was not going to be intimidated by British threats.

St. Leger departed Oswego on July 26, 1777. His force had a core of professional soldiers that included 100 infantry of the 34th Foot, 100 of the 8th Foot, and 80 Hessian mercenaries from Hesse-Hanau. In addition, there were 380 men of the King's Royal Regiment (Loyalists) of New York, 70 Loyalist rangers, 50 Canadians, and 700 Iroquois warriors.

The British brigadier general's own arrogance and overconfidence was going to play a major role in the coming campaign. Initial intelligence described Fort Stanwix as out of repair, a dilapidated ruin. These reports had been true, but they were now out of date. St. Leger did receive updated information, but for some reason he chose to ignore it. Because of this lapse of judgement, his artillery train was woefully inadequate for the task at hand.

The British expedition set off in good spirits,

SULLIVAN EXPEDITION DEVASTATED IROQUOIS LANDS

The Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy had fought on the side of the British during the nine-year French and Indian War that ended in 1763, but their resources as a military force were diluted the American Revolutionary War, with some tribes supporting the British and other tribes supporting the Colonists.

At the outset of the conflict in 1775, both the British and the Americans urged their Native American allies to remain neutral. This unrealistic expectation went by the wayside as hostilities spread and grew more intense. By the second year of the conflict, both sides sought to augment their numbers by gaining Native American tribes as their allies.

As events played out, the Seneca, Onondaga, Cayuga, and the majority of the Mohawks sided with the British, whereas the Tuscarora, Oneida, and a small number of Mohawks supported the colonists.

The opposing factions of the Iroquois Confederacy battled each other at Oriskany, Saratoga, and Bennington in 1777. The following spring and summer, the pro-British tribes of the Confederacy joined forces with Loyalists to raid a handful of settlements in eastern New York. In addition, Tory Rangers and Seneca and Cayuga Indians raided Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley that same summer, where they drove out settlers and captured a number of stockade forts. A sharp skirmish unfolded on July 3 at Forty Fort in Pennsylvania in which Lt. Col John Butler's British-Iroquois force decisively defeated Lt. Col. Zebulon Butler's force of militia, inflicting 227 casualties on it. The Iroquois played a key role in the successful ambush on August 6 of Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer's relief force bound for Fort Stanwix in New York.

In November 1777 Butler's Rangers augmented by Seneca and pro-British Mohawk Indians inflicted substantial casualties on Patriot militia and colonists in a frontier settlement 50 miles west of Albany in what was known afterwards as the Cherry Valley Massacre. Colonel Ichabod Alden, whose 7th Massachusetts Regiment was defending a fort built under the direction of the Marquis de Lafayette, had failed to post pickets along the trail by which the Indians attacked.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Brig. Gen. John Sullivan's punitive expedition in 1779 against the pro-British tribes of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy earned the gratitude of the Continental Congress.

In response to the attacks by Butler's Rangers and his Iroquois Allies, General George Washington, commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, drew up plans for a three-pronged invasion of the Confederacy's lands. He directed the forces involved to destroy the Iroquois tribes' capacity to wage war on the colonists in New York and northern Pennsylvania.

The invasion plan called for Brig. Gen. John Sullivan to lead a column north along the Susquehanna River. Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. James Clinton would a second column southwest from Albany to rendezvous with Sullivan's column. Colonel Daniel Brodhead would lead a third column north from Fort Pitt in western Pennsylvania.

Sullivan, who was the senior commander of the expedition, had a keen respect for the Native Americans he was to face on his expedition. They are "capable of seizing every advantage which the ground can possibly afford, inured to war from their youth, and from their manner of living, capable of enduring every kind of fatigue," he wrote. After their forces united, Clinton and Sullivan soundly defeated a much smaller Loyalist-Iroquois force at Newtown on August 29, 1779.

Brodhead's column destroyed longhouses, crops, and orchards of the Senecas and Iroquoian-speaking Mingos, but it was the 4,000 troops participating in the Sullivan Expedition that wrought the most destruction against the pro-British Iroquois tribes.

The Patriot forces left a swath of devastation in the Finger Lakes region and the Genesee Valley. At the conclusion of the campaign, Sullivan claimed to have burned 40 villages and destroyed 160,000 bushels of corn.

While Washington's campaign was impressive from a strategic standpoint, the devastation wrought by the Patriots failed to stop raids by vengeful Iroquois.

—William E. Welsh

Library of Congress

and made good progress in their travels, with advance elements arriving at Fort Stanwix on August 2. St. Leger was surprised to discover Fort Stanwix was far from the ruin he'd expected to see. Some of the reconstruction had not yet been completed, but the fort was still a very formidable obstacle to British plans.

St. Leger sent Captain Gilbert Tice under a flag of truce to demand an immediate surrender. If the rebel garrison proved obstinate, Tice was to look around the fort and bring back what intelligence as he could. Unfortunately, British hopes of gleaning intelligence from Tice were dashed because the Patriots blindfolded him before he entered the fort, and he was forbidden from removing the blindfold until he was inside one of the fort's buildings.

Gansevoort rejected any notion of capitulation, so St. Leger was forced to prepare for an extended siege. To test the mettle of the defenders, Hessian Jagers began to snipe at anyone who exposed himself even for a moment. The Jagers were armed with rifles, which were far more accurate than the standard smoothbore muskets of the day.

Approximately 200 Senecas came to join the British the following day. They were accompanied by an unspecified number of additional warriors from the Wyandot, Ottowa, Potawatomi and Chippewa tribes from the Detroit region. They broke up into small groups, placed themselves around the fort, and then began a constant and steady fire on the defenders. Some of the natives had rifles, others muskets, but all copied the Jagers to the best of their ability in maintaining sniper fire that killed one defender and wounded several others.

The Indians supplemented their harassing fire with loud war whoops, fearsome ululations that often lasted through the night. The war whoops sent shivers of fear down the spines of the uninitiated but also deprived the more experienced of much-needed sleep. In the meantime, St. Leger had to solve some logistical problems. Just before the British arrived, the Americans had purposely felled trees and dumped them into Wood Creek. The result was log jams that either blocked the waterway or at the very least created major hazards to navigation.

Since vital supplies and the artillery train were coming by water, this problem demanded immediate attention. The Loyalists and Canadians were assigned the arduous task of clearing the creek, while Colonel Sir John Johnson's King's Royal Regiment was tasked with building a road that would bypass the stream altogether.

The Fort Stanwix garrison might have been confident, but it was obvious the siege would not be broken until they received help from a relief force. An Oneida woman, Tyonajanegen (Two Kettles Together), the wife of Oneida chief Hanyery, slipped out of the fort and successfully stole through British lines to spread word of the ongoing siege. She stopped at Oriska, her home vil-

lage, before proceeding on to Fort Dayton.

Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler of the Continental Army was the ranking officer in the region. As head of the Northern Department, he had his hands full with the developing invasion under Burgoyne. He could spare no regular troops to confront St. Leger, so the best option was to call out the local militia. Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer issued an order for the Tryon County Militia to gather at Fort Dayton for the relief of Stanwix, 28 miles to the west.

Herkimer was a prosperous and well-liked landowner of German stock. This was not unusual, for most of his neighbors either hailed from the Palatine region of Germany or were first-generation German American. Herkimer was born in America but spoke English with a thick German accent. When the militiamen turned out, they probably used German when conversing among themselves.

The Tryon County Militia was formed into a brigade of four regiments. The First Regiment (Canajoharie) was under Colonel Ebenezer Cox, the Second (Palatine) Regiment under Colonel Jacob Klock, the Third (Mohawk) Regiment under Colonel Frederick Visscher, and the Fourth (Kingsland/German Flats) Regiment under Colonel Peter Bellinger.

Many militiamen were reluctant to leave their homes and families, as hostile pro-British Indians had been frequently staging bloody raids. Terrible stories fueled the fear. Before the siege, two young girls had been killed and scalped while picking berries near the Fort Stanwix. Nevertheless, 800 members of the Tyron County militia assembled at Fort Dayton as ordered.

The militia started its march on August 4, marching west along the Mohawk River. The following evening, they reached the Oneida village of Oriska, from which the place name Oriskany is derived. At Oriska they were joined by 60 Oneida warriors led by chiefs Cornelius and Hanyery Tewahangarahken. Although relatively few in number, they were going to be invaluable allies in the coming days.

Chief Hanyery, who was in his 50s, was a respected member of the Oneidas. Although he was getting too old for combat, he had a reputation for going fearlessly into battle. His wife, Two Kettles Together, who was the same woman who brought word of the Fort Stanwix siege, accompanied him on the warpath, as did his grown son Cornelius Doxtader. Chief Hanyery was on horseback and wore a sword—not tomahawk—as a symbol of his importance.

LEFT: Although severely wounded in the leg by a musket ball at the outset of the British ambush at Oriskany, Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer continued to direct his troops in an exposed position while propped up against a beech tree. BELOW: Colonel John Johnson, the son of Sir William Johnson, journeyed to Canada at the outbreak of the American Revolution, where he raised the King's Royal Regiment that saw service in the campaign of 1777.

The Herkimer relief column, comprising 800 men and 15 baggage wagons, was too large a body of men to go undetected for very long. Molly Brant, as fiercely pro-British as her brother Joseph, relayed intelligence to St. Leger that Herkimer was coming and was due to arrive at Fort Stanwix shortly.

The British general received this news with some consternation; most of the men were busily engaged in clearing Wood Creek and constructing the military access road, and they could not be spared. As a makeshift measure, St. Leger decided to dispatch 80 men, some of whom were rangers, as well as the whole of the Indian corps. The Indian contingent included Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Mohawk, as well as handfuls of warriors from other, non-Iroquois tribes.

In consultation with other officers, St. Leger decided the best option was to ambush the Herkimer column as they marched towards the fort. Tory Major John Butler, who would later become the infamous leader of Butler's Rangers, had a hand in the planning, as did Seneca chief Cornplanter and Sir John Johnson.

After some debate, a section of the Albany-Oswego road was selected for the ambush. It was an area where the ground rose into a plateau that overlooked the Mohawk River, but the road itself dipped down to follow a ravine that was about thirty feet lower than the higher terrain. A small stream wandered into the ravine, bisecting the road and making the ravine bottom a swampy, viscous muck. A corduroy road made of felled trees should have helped, but it was apparently in disrepair. A thick forest of hemlock, beech, birch, and maple crowded all around, making prefect cover for any ambushers.

When Herkimer's relief column camped at Oriska, they were only about eight miles from Fort Stanwix. Herkimer sent three scouts ahead to the fort to let Gansevoort know that they were in the vicinity and would arrive soon. The relayed message told Colonel Gansevoort to fire three cannons as a signal that the scouts had arrived safely and that the militia should advance. Herkimer also asked Fort Stanwix to stage a kind of diversionary attack.

The morning of August 6 dawned warm, promising that a hot day lay ahead. But tempers as well as temperatures were soon rising. Herkimer was in no real rush to get underway because he wanted to hear the signal cannons

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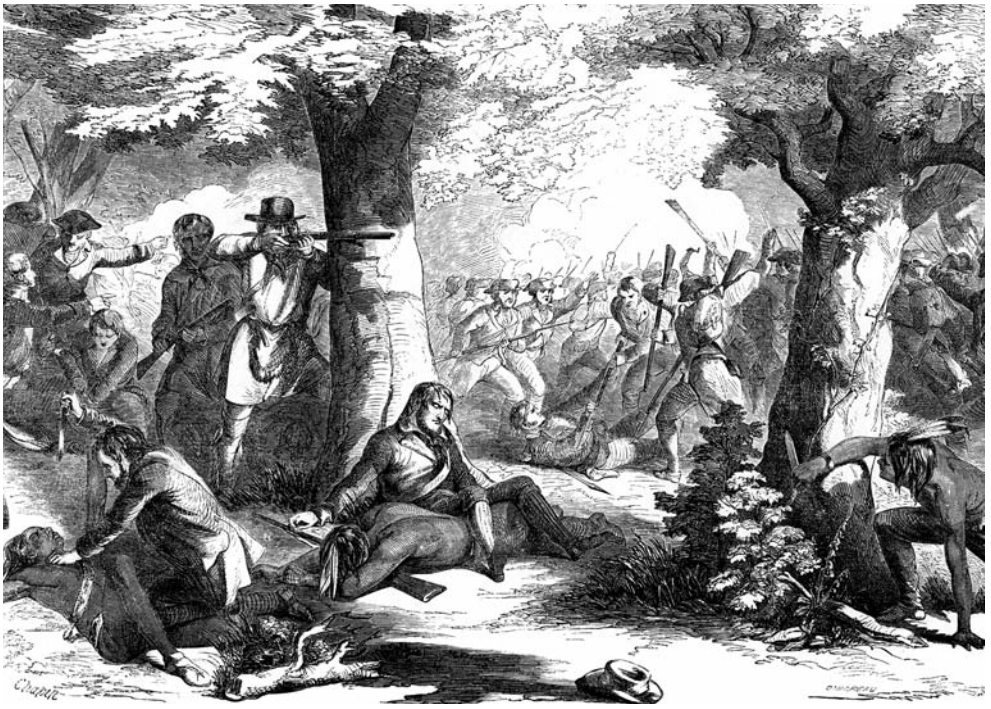


Both sides suffered heavy casualties in the desperate, close-quarters fighting at Oriskany. Although the British won a tactical victory at Oriskany, they suffered a strategic defeat when St. Leger failed to capture Fort Stanwix.

from Fort Stanwix first. During an officer's call that morning, most of his subordinates were eager to move on. When Herkimer showed reluctance to leave, he was accused of cowardice and having Loyalist sympathies. After all, his own brother was a notable loyalist.

Stung by these accusations, Herkimer ordered an immediate advance on Fort Stanwix. He placed himself at the head of an advance guard and then formed a column of the First, Second, and Fourth Militia Regiments. The wagons were next in line, followed by the Third Regiment as a rear guard. The sixty Oneida warriors were apparently marching in clusters, a few with each militia regiment and the wagon train. The issue is disputed, but apparently Herkimer did not make any attempt to use the Oneida, who were expert scouts and woodsmen, as flankers. It would prove to be a near-fatal error.

The British ambush was simple and effective, making full use of the ravine and the forested areas around it. The forest also had underbrush, ideal for concealment and enabling large numbers of Brant's men on both sides of the road to escape detection. When virtually the entire relief column was within the ambush zone, the signal would be given for the trap to be sprung. Brant's warriors were positioned to cut off any escape from the rear.

It was 10:00 AM on August 6 when Herkimer and the Tryon County Militia entered the ambush zone. All seemed peaceful, with rays of sunlight filtering through the trees to form dappled patterns on the ground. The only noise was the shuffling sound of men walking, the jingle of harnesses, and the creaking groans of axles as the wagons negotiated the boggy ravine.

Herkimer passed through the ravine and was guiding his horse to higher ground when he heard popping sounds—the unmistakable sounds of rifles and muskets being discharged. Some of the pro-British Indians, impatient and eager to engage the enemy, had started a premature attack. Most of the rear guard and wagon train had not yet entered the trap, but unnerved by the surprise, their resistance was brief. Most took to their heels, followed by Brant's Mohawk warriors armed with guns, hatchets, and knives. Fleeing militiamen were dispatched without mercy, until their dead and scalped bodies formed a bloodied detritus that stretched for miles.

Herkimer tried to rally his men, but as he approached Colonel Klock's 2nd Regiment a musket ball hit his horse, going through the animal and shattering Herkimer's leg. The horse fell and pinned the general to the ground, but some militiamen managed to drag him out. The men carried him to a nearby beech tree, where he propped himself up and continued to guide his troops as best he could.

The battle became a confused and bloody melee with no rhyme and less reason to the terrified militiamen. Gouts of white smoke erupted from muskets, marking where assailants were firing, but it was hard to find a target when the enemy hid behind massive tree trunks or leafy branches and undergrowth. The Indians fighting for St. Leger sometimes waited until the militia fired a volley, and then rushed in with knives or hatchets before the militiamen could reload.

The Oneida warriors distinguished themselves in this battle, fully living up to their Iroquois heritage. Chief Hanyery was in the thick of the fight, with Two Kettles Together standing by his side, sharing the danger as she loaded and reloaded his musket. When a bullet smashed his wrist and he was unable to effectively use his gun, he wielded a tomahawk with his other hand. Two Kettles Together also fought, using a pistol with good effect. Their son, whose name was Philip, also was credited with killing two enemy warriors.

In the midst of the melee, Louis Atayataronghta noticed one Indian on the British side who seemed to be something of a sniper. "Every time he rises up, he kills one of our men," Atayataronghhta said to another member of the militia. "Either he or I must die." Atayataronghhta then waited patiently until the sniper raised his head, then drew a bead and squeezed the trigger. The Indian was hit, and his lifeless body sprawled over a tree limb. Atayataronghhta, who was a Mohawk but fighting on the Patriot side, let out a war whoop, sprinted over to the body, and took his scalp.

After about three hours of intense fighting, rain clouds darkened the skies, and before long friend and foe alike were soaked by a drenching rain. It seemed as if the very floodgates of heaven had opened up, but the deluge was a blessing because the fighting stopped, giving the Americans time to reorganize and regroup. Herkimer, badly wounded but still alert and very much in command, organized defensive circles and saw to it that the men fought in pairs. That way one could reload while his partner held off any attackers with his own musket.

The battle resumed, this time with the loyalist New York King's Royal Regiment attempting a ruse. Johnson knew that the battered militia survivors were hoping for help from Fort Stanwix, so he told his men to turn their green jackets inside out to pretend they were Americans. Militia Captain Gardiner saw through the trick and warned his men. The captain was bayoneted by a loyalist soldier, but the militia now heeded his warning, and the subterfuge failed.

Herkimer lost about half his command, and the survivors were bloodied and exhausted. The surviving militia and their Oneida allies were holding their own, but the stalemate could not last forever, and the odds seemed stacked against them. But the high-pitched and piercing war whoops from Brant's warriors were soon replaced

by shouts of "Onenh! Onenh!" which was the signal for departure or withdrawal.

The pro-British Indians started to disengage and fall back as the cries to withdraw grew louder over the din of battle. Word apparently had gotten out that something was amiss at Fort Stanwix, and the Indians pulled out to investigate. Without native support, the Hessians and Loyalist troops had no choice but to follow suit.

The Indian retreat was justified, because Gansevoort had staged a major sortie at Fort Stanwix against a nearly empty British and Indian camp. Lt. Col. Marinius Willett, Gansevoort's second-in-command, was in charge of the operation, which totaled 250 men. The raiders quickly killed the few guards that were stationed in the camp, at the same time scaring off the Indian women, who fled to the woods. Two more Indians soon died of camp sickness and four were taken prisoner.

The sortie took "fifty brass kettles, and more than one hundred blankets … with a number of muskets, tomahawks, spears, ammunition, clothing, deerskins, a variety of Indian affairs, and five colors," wrote Willetts, who was proud of the accomplishment. Even better, confidential British papers were discovered, including letters to St. Leger and Johnson's orderly book.

When Brant and his warriors returned to their plundered camp, they were angered and outraged. There wasn't much that the raiders had overlooked, and clothes, weapons, and blankets were going to be keenly missed. Many of the warriors had stripped to just a breechcloth for battle, and now they found that was the only thing, except for some weapons, that they possessed.

In terms of the numbers engaged, Oriskany was one of the bloodiest battles of the American Revolution. The militia had started the day with 800 effectives, but as evening fell only 150 walked away, taking with them about 50 wounded. The rest were dead. At least 200 had died in battle, and possibly many more. Scores had been taken prisoner, but the pro-British Iroquois were so enraged at their own losses that the lives of these captives were forfeit.

There was little alternative but for Herkimer to retreat back to Fort Dayton. The Tryon Militia had been effectively destroyed, but events were to prove that they had achieved a kind of victory, even if it was a pyrrhic one. The heavy losses that the Brant Indians had sustained made them sullen and resentful, and certainly less enthusiastic about the British cause. Returning to a plundered camp did not lighten their mood.

Brant's warriors also had suffered heavy casualties. As many as three dozen Senecas had been killed, including six chiefs. That figure does not include the British-allied warriors from other tribes, or the Mohawks. The Hessians and Loyalists suffered lightly, losing just 25 killed. St. Leger, knowing that much depended on their continued presence, decided to use the Indians' growing anger as a bargaining chip.

St. Leger penned a message on August 8 to Gansevoort under a flag of truce. The missive demanded surrender but added an ominous postscript: the Indians were seething with anger at their Oriskany losses and were eager to take revenge. If the garrison did not surrender, every man, woman, and child would be slaughtered without mercy. And that was not the end of it, for the Brant warriors wanted to raid the American settlement at German Flats. Once there, they intended to kill everyone they found regardless of his or her age or sex.

It was the Americans' worst nightmare, but Gansevoort would not yield to bullying or threats. "It is my determined resolution with the forces under my command to defend this fort and garrison to the last extremity," he said.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold, who had not yet become a traitor to the Patriot cause, assembled another relief column. Rumors were deliberately spread that exaggerated the size of his forces, hearsay that got back to the Indians at the Fort Stanwix siege. It was the last straw: Brant's native warriors started leaving in droves. St. Leger soon had virtually no Indians under his command. There was little the colonel could do to stop the manpower hemorrhage, and he believed the Arnold rumor as well. The British general reluctantly lifted the siege and withdrew to Canada.

By that time Burgoyne's three-pronged offensive was in shambles. The Americans soundly defeated his army at Saratoga in October 1777. The major victory brought France into the war on the American side. The campaign of Saratoga stood as a major event in the birth of the United States, but it could be said that the birth of one nation occasioned the destruction of another. The Iroquois League was permanently broken, never to rise again, although the individual tribes survived and ultimately prospered into the 21st century. ■

Colonel Peter Gansevoort's American troops celebrate their victory at Fort Stanwix. Unable to convince the warriors of the Six Nations to continue the siege, and threatened by the approach of a fresh column of Americans under Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold, the British withdrew in defeat.

ROMAN DISASTER AT CARRHAE

Gigantic clouds of dust rose from the sun-baked plain. The ground shook under the hoofs of thousands of cavalry. The young Roman commander Publius urged on his steed. Ahead of him fled the Parthian cavalry that had assailed the army of his father, Marcus Licinius Crassus. In 54 BC, the elder Crassus had led his legions into Parthian-held Mesopotamia. Despite having been shook by civil wars, the Roman Republic continued to expand. Empires and kingdoms, fierce barbarian tribes, all had succumbed. Publius heartily shouted that the enemy fled in fear. His bold words raised the spirits of his men, fierce barbarians from Gaul, allies of Rome, alongside cavalry levies from Syria. To Publius it looked as if the Parthians were destined to fall against the might of Rome just like all other foes.

Although the Parthian Empire had been around for centuries, relations with Rome had remained peaceful for a long time. The rise of Parthia began in the mid-3rd century BC when the Parni, a nomadic tribe related to the Persians, settled on the northern edge of the Persian plateau. The region they settled in was known as Parthia. The Parni nobles, the Arsacids, built Parthia into a powerful kingdom. The Arsacids were fortunate that the dominant power in Persia, the Seleucids, was in decline.

One of the successors of Alexander the Great, the Seleucid kingdom became fatally weakened in a war with Rome early in the 2nd century. But since Roman interests in the Middle East remained limited, the Parthians were left free to wrest Persia from the Seleucids. In 129 BC, the Arsacids set up their royal residence at Ctesiphon, across the River Tigris from Seleucia, the kingdom's former capital. By the end of the 2nd century BC, the Parthians lorded over Mesopotamia. By subjugating vassal states, the Arsacids had built an empire.

In 66 BC Parthia allied itself with Rome against the common foe of Armenia; however, after Armenia's defeat, the Roman commander, Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey), rescinded on his promise to restore Mesopotamian lands occupied by Armenia to Parthia. From that point on there was bad blood between Rome and Parthia. In 56 BC, Gabinius, the governor of Roman Syria, supported a rival claimant to the Parthian throne but undertook no military intervention. But in 54 BC a new governor arrived in Syria, one who was eager for military laurels. Marcus Licinius Crassus, one of the most powerful men in Rome, had come to conquer Parthia in a bid to burnish his reputation as a commander and further his personal glory.

In 115 BC, the elder Crassus was born into the old and respected plebeian gens *Licinia*. Crassus had a distinguished career and was a gifted political orator but his chief asset was his immense wealth. In the First Civil War, Crassus had sided with Lucius Cornelius Sulla against his rival Gaius Marius. The latter unleashed a killing spree in Rome that claimed the lives of Crassus' father and brother. Crassus hid out in a Spanish seaside cave, and then rejoined Sulla in the Second Civil War. At the Colline Gate, Crassus clinched Sulla's decisive victory over the Marian faction.

During Sulla's dictatorship, Crassus profited from those despoiled of their possessions. Crassus bought property on the cheap, which had been destroyed by fire or which had collapsed. Controlling a fire brigade made up of his slaves, Crassus let buildings burn until the owner agreed to sell. Cras-

Parthian cataphracts armed with long spears known as kontos assail Roman legionaries at Carrhae.

Bridgeman Images

Roman Triumvir Crassus marched into the Mesopotamian desert bent on crushing the rival Parthians. The ensuing battle pitted Rome's heavy infantry against Parthia's horse archers.

By Ludwig Heinrich Dyck

sus made a fortune through land speculation, silver mines, and immense farms. Crassus' greatest material assets were his slaves. His slave holdings included not only countless laborers, but also hundreds of architects, artisans and other skilled professionals. Upon receiving the consulship in 70 BC, Crassus sacrificed one-tenth of his wealth to Hercules, gave public feasts and paid the basic expenses of every Roman for three months. The vast expenditure hardly dented Crassus' fortune, which still amounted to 7,100 talents.

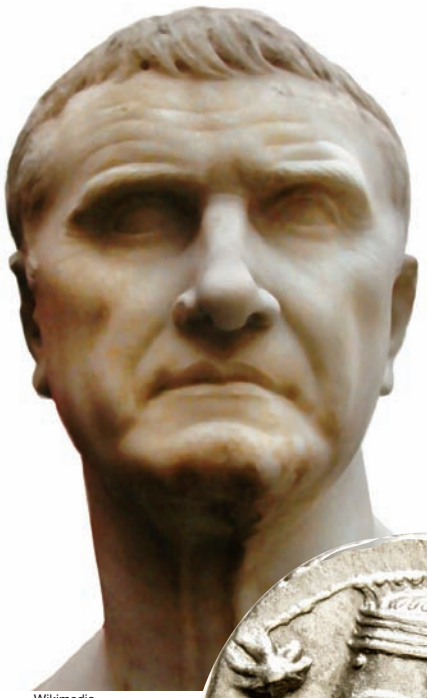
Crassus crushed the slave uprising of Spartacus in the Third Servile War, but it was Pompey who, after carrying out mop-up operations, got most of the credit. Crassus was frustrated that Pompey, to whom he otherwise bore no malice, had become known as *Magnus* while Crassus was unable to attain the same martial renown. In 60 BC, Crassus joined Pompey and the rising political star, Gaius Julius Caesar, in the First Triumvirate. For seven years, the triumvirs practically ran the Senate and the course of the empire. At the conference of Luca in 56 BC, the triumvirs agreed to extend Caesar's pro-consulship in Gaul for five more years. Pompey and Crassus in turn would share the consulship in 55 BC and thereafter receive pro-consular appointments over Spain and Syria, respectively.

To Crassus, command over Syria seemed the best fortune he had had in his 60 years of life. Great riches were to be found in the East, where the Parthians drew wealth from trade routes and from the agricultural lands of Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Crassus boasted that he would capture the Parthian King Orodes II. He also bragged that he would make Pompey's campaign in the Third Mithridatic War "seem [like] mere child's play," wrote Plutarch. Caesar wrote from Gaul, approving of Crassus' intentions. Yet many condemned the idea that Rome should wage war on a people with whom they had treaty relations. When Crassus set out for Syria in the late winter or early spring 54 BC, he was confronted by an angry crowd of citizens barring his way out of Rome. Crassus had to call on Pompey to open a way through the mob. At the city gate, the chief agitator, the tribune Aetius, lit a brazier and invoked curses against Crassus. Aetius summoned "strange and dreadful gods," Plutarch said.

Crassus continued on to Brundisium, from where he set out by ship despite warnings of stormy weather. The rough seas forced Crassus to disembark prematurely and complete his journey overland, through the Roman provinces and protectorates of western Anatolia. Arriving at Antioch, the capital of Roman Syria, Crassus promptly led his army into Mesopotamia. He defeated the paltry troops of satrap Silaces near Ichnae. Wounded in battle, Silaces escaped to alert Orodes. Unfortunately for Orodes, his army depended on feudal levies and would take time to muster.

In the meantime, Crassus took possession of the cities along the Euphrates River and its tributary, the Balissus. Many of the Hellenistic cities, including Nicephorium, switched to the Roman side on their own accord. Settled by colonists after Alexander's conquests, the Greek cities had no love for their Parthian overlords. At Zenodotia, though, 100 Roman soldiers were treacherously killed after being invited as friends. Crassus punished the city by looting it and selling its population into slavery.

Triumvir Marcus Licinius Crassus (top) sought fame and fortune at the expense of the Parthians. Parthian King Orodes II, sent his renowned general Surena to conduct raids, reconnoiter the Roman garrisons, and harass Crassus' army.



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Saluted as *imperator* by his soldiers, Crassus left 7,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry to garrison strategic strongpoints and returned to Syria for the winter. Crassus' first campaign had allowed him to secure supply bases and to build local alliances. Crassus was looking forward to having his son join him in the decisive campaign the next summer. Freshly decorated with military honours in Caesar's Gallic wars, Publius was coming from Gaul. He was bringing with him 1,000 cavalry from allied Gallic tribes. To help finance war expenses, Crassus spent the winter of 54-53 BC extorting money from towns and ransacking the temple of Jerusalem.

In spring 53 BC, King Orodes sent his renowned general Surena into Mesopotamia. Surena was to carry out raids, feel out the Roman garrisons and harass any further offensives by Crassus. The main Parthian army would in the interim be led by Orodes against Armenia. Envoys were sent to Crassus, who had just assembled his army from its winter quarters. The envoys told Crassus that there could be no truce if Rome had declared war on Parthia. Yet if Crassus' personal ambitions were to blame for the hostilities, then King Orodes might be more forgiving. Crassus retorted that he would give answer when he stood victorious in Seleucia. The envoy pointed to the palm of his hand and replied, "O Crassus, hair will grow there before thou shalt see Seleucia," wrote Plutarch.

Standing in Crassus' way would be Surena. Second only to the king, the Parthian nobleman Surena hailed from one of Parthia's most esteemed families. It was his hereditary privilege to carry out the king's coronation. Statuesque and handsome, Surena was just under 30 years old. His valor and skill in battle were reckoned unequalled. Surena was first on the walls when he recaptured Seleucia from Orodes' brother and rival. It was on the open plain, though, where Surena would be able to use the Parthian army to its greatest advantage.

In keeping with their steppe heritage, the Parthians grew to manhood in the saddle. They were attuned to the heat and adept at conserving and finding water. Parthian armies brought with them droves of extra horses so that they had access to fresh mounts. The mainstay of the Parthian army was light archers mounted on Arabian-like steeds. Plutarch claimed that only the Scythians surpassed the Parthians in shooting their bows while riding. The Parthian elite made up the heavy cavalry, the *cataphracts*, whose horses were bred for weight and strength. The main cataphract weapon was a long pike or spear known by the Greek name as the *kontos*. The infantry of the Parthians was typically small and of lesser quality, mostly archer serfs from the estates of the lords. Parthians were averse to undertaking offensives in the winter, when the moister air loosened bowstrings. They also avoided cavalry actions at night.

Surena's force consisted of his personal retainers and levies. Made up entirely of cavalry, it was ill-suited to retaking cities, but it excelled at making

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In keeping with their steppe heritage, the Parthians grew to manhood in the saddle. They brought with them droves of extra horses while campaigning so that they had access to fresh mounts when needed.

the countryside unsafe. Behind their walls, the Roman garrisons in Mesopotamia remained secure, but it was another matter if they ventured outside. Those that brought news to Crassus did so at great peril. They told of a Parthian army so swift that there was no escaping or catching them, of arrows that struck from afar and pierced everything, of armor-clad horsemen who could break through, or hold back, anything. Such talk demoralized the Roman soldiers. They had expected to deal as easily with the Parthians as the late Lucius Lucullus had done with the Armenians and Cappadocians. Now instead of easy plunder, it looked like a real war. Many counselled Crassus to call off the campaign, including one of his chief commanders, the *quaestor* Caius Cassius Longinus.

His determination unshaken, Crassus set forth for Mesopotamia in late April 53 BC With him were 36,000 fighting men organized into seven legions, each numbering around 4,000 men. The legions were not at their full strength because some of their numbers remained in garrisons in Syria and in Mesopotamia. Crassus also had with him 4,000 cavalry and 4,000 light infantry, including 500 archers. Most were likely Syrian levies, but among them were also the 1,000 Gallic horsemen of his son Publius.

The Roman army had not reached the Euphrates yet when a large body of Armenian cavalry rode up to Crassus' camp. King Artavasdes of Armenia had come with 6,000 mounted guards, offering to summon another 10,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry to fight beside the Romans. Artavasdes seemed to have an inkling of the imminent Parthian invasion of his kingdom. Accordingly, he tried to coax Crassus into making a united stand in Armenia, where the hilly country favoured infantry over cavalry. Crassus, though, was set on capturing Seleucia and Ctesiphon. Advancing through Mesopotamia along the Euphrates would also make it easier to supply the army. Furthermore, the Roman garrisons in Mesopotamia awaited relief. Upon hearing his, Artavasdes and his cavalry returned to their lands.

Crassus entered Mesopotamia through Zeugma (Birecik) on the western bank of the Euphrates. During the crossing of the river a thunderstorm blew up. Lightning flashed, and wind and waves caused serious damage to the pontoon bridge. The storm continued to lash the Roman army as it set up its camp on the eastern bank. To make it clear that there would be no retreat, Crassus gave orders for the bridge to be dismantled. Crassus then made the customary purification sacrifice for the army. Accidentally dropping the viscera handed to him by the seer, Crassus smiled and blamed his old age. He assured the distressed bystanders that no weapon shall fall from his hands.

The Roman army headed south along the left bank of the Euphrates. Scouts reported that the land was devoid of men, but there were tracks of a large cavalry force, which had turned about as if pursued. To Crassus this proved the timidness of the Parthians. Around this time, Abgar II, an Arab sheik of the Osroeni and King of Edessa, visited the Roman camp. Abgar had aided Pompey and was known as a friend of Rome. Abgar enticed Crassus with a strategy that would see the Romans turn away from the river and venture eastward into the plain towards the Balissus. The gist of Abgar's argument was that Surena was nearby, gathering up his loot and was preparing to flee. No one had heard of the king, so it was best to strike before he could gather his forces. Why waste time marching for Seleucia, reasoned Abgar, when the decisive blow could be struck now against Surena?

Heeding Abgar's advice, Crassus sought out the enemy away from the Euphrates River. The change in plans must have necessitated a transfer of supplies from the river transports to the legions. However, the bulk of the equipment, especially the heavier items such as siege engines, and the majority of the camp followers, would have remained behind. This way Crassus' army could order a forced march if needed. Presumably, Cras-

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Crassus' son Publius commanded 1,000 Gallic horsemen that formed the backbone of the Roman cavalry.

sus planned to reconvene with the transports after defeating Surena.

As the Romans marched on, trees and shrubs became scarcer and eventually even grasses disappeared. The merciless sun sapped the spirits of the men. Cassius berated the Arab king for leading Crassus into an "abysmal desert ... following a route fit for a nomad robber chief," wrote Plutarch. Messengers arrived from Artavasdes, bringing the news that Orodes had invaded Armenia and that no Armenian reinforcements could be expected for Crassus. Enraged, Crassus refused to reply. Abgar then rode away from the army, having convinced Crassus that he was leaving in order to manipulate Surena in Crassus' interests. Abgar had lied; he was spying for Surena.

Several days after leaving the Euphrates, the Romans entered the arid Urfa Harran (Edessa-Carrhae) plain. On the morning of May 6, many of the scouts failed to return. Those that did fearfully reported of brazen enemy cavalry approaching in great numbers. A major engagement appeared imminent. Cassius recommended that the army be deployed in a wide and narrow front with cavalry on the wings. Crassus at first gave orders for Cassius' plan, then changed his mind and reformed his army into a hollow square. Twelve cohorts protected each side, leaving a score of additional cohorts inside; alongside the baggage, carts and draft animals and remaining followers. Crassus commanded the front and back of the square, with Cassius and Publius on either side, and advanced in tight formation.

Late in the morning, the Roman army reached the Balissus. To the thirsty, sun-burned soldiers, the stream must have been a welcomed sight. The officers thought the army should now make camp and scout out the position and strength of the enemy. After spending the night by the stream, they would then set out fresh in the morning. Urged on by his son, who could not wait to engage the enemy, Crassus thought otherwise. The men were to eat and drink while standing in the ranks and then continue at the same relentless pace as before.

Twenty miles south of Roman-held Carrhae (Harran) and away from the Balissus, the enemy came within sight around noon. Aware that he was vastly outnumbered, Surena sought to confuse and intimidate his opponents. At first the Romans spotted only a small vanguard. Surena had his men cover up their armor and spear points, so that from afar the Parthian army disappeared into the haze of the heat. Having closed in, the Parthian commanders signalled to troops to prepare for battle. The Parthians let out "a deep and terrifying roar," wrote Plutarch, noting that "a low and dismal tone, a blend of wild beast's roar and harsh thunder peal," reverberated from the Parthian ranks, where drummers beat on hollow drums of hide covered in bells.

The Parthians now unveiled their weapons and armor. Their Magianian steel glittered in the sun. The Romans beheld some 10,000 archer light cavalry and 1,000 cataphracts. The horse archers wore their hair long, bunched over their foreheads, in the style of the Scythians, to look taller and more intimidating. Most impressive of all, in their gleaming armor, were the cataphracts. Leading them was Surena, tall and fair, "although his effeminate beauty did not well correspond to his reputation for valour ... he was dressed more in the Median fashion, with painted face and parted hair" wrote Plutarch.

The cataphracts dipped their long kontoi and thundered upon the Roman lines, intent on splitting them asunder. However, the legionaries remained steady behind their wall of shields. Horses will only with difficulty be driven to hurl themselves upon a solid wall of infantry. Seeing how deep the Roman ranks were and that they were not about to break in panic, the cataphracts swerved. After them came the rest of the Parthian cavalry, a tumultuous wave of dust, horses, and men, breaking on the rock of the Roman square and flowing around its sides.

Crassus sent forth his light troops, but they were met by a storm of arrows. Shot from powerful composite reflex bows, made of wood, horn, and sinew, whose limbs bent forward when unstrung, the iron arrowheads struck with deadly velocity. The Roman light troops fled back to the legionary lines and nearly threw them into disorder. In their *testudo* formation, a wall and roof of shields, and further protected by bronze helmets and mailed tunics, the legionaries were nearly impervious to arrows. Arrows stuck quivering into the ground, thudded into wooden shields, or glanced off armor. Still, the sheer number of arrows ensured that a good number hit exposed eyes, faces, throats, hands, and limbs. The arrowheads were barbed and when pulled out ripped apart flesh, sinews and veins.

The Romans hoped that their foes would run out of arrows and then be either forced to fight at close quarters or flee. To prevent such an occurrence, Surena had brought camels carrying loads of ammunition. With no end in sight to the missile barrage, Crassus sent forth Publius with his 1,000 Gallic cavalry, supported by another 300 cavalry, probably Syrians auxiliaries. In addition, 500 foot archers and eight infantry cohorts of roughly 3,200 legionaries would follow the cavalry, to lend support once the enemy was engaged.

When the Parthians took to flight, Publius heartily pressed on in pursuit. The lighter Parthian horsemen appear to have scattered. Publius carried on after the cataphracts. The armored horses of the cataphracts not only were slower than those of the Gauls, but Surena was among them. After the last of the legionaries following Publius had disappeared from Crassus' sight, the chase came to an end.

At that point, the cataphracts suddenly wheeled

The mainstay of the Parthian army was its light archers mounted on Arabian-like steeds who were nearly unsurpassed in shooting their bows while riding. Groups of horse archers could retreat, regroup, and charge again, whereas the Roman infantry had no respite once the fighting began.

around while Parthian light cavalry galloped in from different directions. The Parthian retreat had been a feint. Publius reigned in his cavalry and waited for the infantry to catch up. Bows twanged and arrows swooshed as the Parthians concentrated their fire on Publius' legionaries. No longer mentioned in the sources, the Roman archers were probably hopelessly outmatched. The horses raised a tremendous cloud of dust, obscuring the vision of both parties.

The Romans were so densely packed that the Parthians could scarcely miss. Riding by at close range, the Parthian arrows even penetrated shields and mail. The Romans fell back upon each other, stumbled, and dropped to the ground transfixed by arrows. Alarmed, Publius sent messengers to his father for urgent reinforcements.

Once again, Publius charged his cavalry at the cataphracts. This time a savage fight ensued. Maneuvering their horses with their knees, the cataphracts gripped their kontoi in a two-handed underarm fashion. The 12-foot-long lances took a terrible toll on the unarmored horses of the Gauls. In contrast, the Parthian steeds were protected with caparisons of iron or bronze scales and head and neck armor. The cataphracts sported bronze or iron helmets and body armor of either scale, mail, or lamellar. They also had neck, arm, and thigh guards and wore mailed gauntlets.

Not all of the cataphracts could afford the whole panoply of protective equipment, though, and those in the rear ranks probably made due with less. The Gauls appear to have fought in their traditional style, making use of round shields, spears, swords, and axes. Given their extensive combat record, a fair number had likely equipped themselves with helmets and mail shirts. Tall and powerful, the Gauls seized the shafts of the kontoi with both hands. Despite the heavy Parthian armor, the Gauls grappled their foes and pushed or pulled them off their horses. Other Gauls leapt off their own steeds and stabbed the horses of their foes in the bellies. Mortally wounded horses lurched and toppled, crushing both their rider and the attacking Gaul.

Heat and thirst combined to weaken the northern tribesmen so that the cataphracts gained the upper hand. Publius was heavily wounded and

broke off the engagement. The decimated cavalry rejoined what remained of the infantry and pulled back to a nearby sandy hillock. They secured their horses in the centre at the top of the knoll. The Romans likely kept their wounded here as well, as far out of the range of the arrows as possible. Around the sloping sides of the hillock, the legionaries reformed their shield wall. The legionaries thought that the high ground would give them an advantage; instead, it further exposed the rear ranks, which were higher up on the slope, to the Parthian archers.

Publius could see his legionaries succumbing to the enemy arrows. The end was only a matter of time. Among Publius' followers were some local Greeks, who knew the lay of the land. They offered to safely guide him out while his men remained behind. Publius answered that no death held such terror as to make him abandon his men. He would not be taken alive. An arrow had pierced his hand, making it difficult for Publius to carry out his final act. Presenting his side to his shield-bearer, Publius ordered him to strike. Most of the other notable Romans with Publius followed his example. When the onslaught of arrows finally abated, there were no longer enough battle-worthy Romans left to resist the pikes of the cataphracts. Only 500 of Publius' men survived to be taken captive.

With the Parthians having set off after Publius, Crassus was able to retreat up some nearby sloping ground. Most of Publius' messengers had been killed, but a few barely got through. Hearing of Publius' plight, Crassus was torn between the life of his son and the survival of his army. He chose his son and ordered the advance when the enemy returned in great numbers. The Parthians hollered war cries, brandished their weapons, and beat their drums. A Parthian herald rode up, holding high a spear with Publius' head transfixed on it. Surely, this head could not be Crassus' son, said the herald, for it belonged to one noble and valorous, while Crassus was the basest of cowards.

Crassus rose to the occasion. After all, even after Publius' losses he retained most of his cavalry and light troops, alongside the bulk of the legions. Riding up and down the ranks, Crassus implored the men to avenge the death of his son. He reminded them that Rome had been in perilous situations in the past and through valour had triumphed all the more gloriously. But Crassus' oration, usually so effective in the Senate, failed to rouse the confidence of his soldiers. When Crassus called for a war cry, their voices were feeble.

The Parthian mounted archers again drew back their bow strings and sent their arrows screeching at the Roman lines. The cataphracts joined in the attack, steadily advancing then thrusting their long kontoi at the Romans. Designed to slay horses, the kontos easily sundered the links of Roman mail. At times, the long pikes skewered up to two Romans at once. The two *pila* javelins typically carried by the legionaries appear to have been quickly used up. Their remaining *gladius* short swords were ineffective against either the archers or against the kontoi. Gripped by fear, the Romans in the front ranks pushed back upon their comrades behind them. The broken Roman formations were then hit hard by missile fire. Although the sources are conflicted, the Romans may have also been set upon by Abgar's Osroëni, who now appeared and attacked from the rear.

Outfought and outnumbered, Crassus' light infantry and cavalry were unable to defend the vast perimeter of the legionary lines from missiles and enemy cavalry. The withering Roman ranks were slowly pushed into an ever tightening area. Roman corpses littered the ground. Dying wounded gushed blood and gasped for air. At nightfall the Parthians called off their attack. Quivers were empty, bow strings had snapped, and blades had become blunted. Men and horses were exhausted. A Parthian herald shouted at the Romans; Crassus was to be granted one night to lament his son's death. The next day, he could either surrender and be brought to their king or be taken to him as a corpse.

The Parthians set up camp nearby. The Romans could hear the boasting of their warriors. An estimated third of the Roman army had been lost. The demoralized legionaries left their dead where they had fallen and even neglected to help their wounded. Although the men blamed Crassus, they wished he would offer them a glimmer of hope. But Crassus was sprawled out on the ground in his tent in utter despair.

With Crassus wallowing in despair, Cassius and a legate named Octavius assembled the officers. It was agree that anyone able to walk would silently depart for Carrhae under cover of the night. A general panic nearly erupted when the cries of the heavily wounded, pleading not to be abandoned, were thought to have alerted the Parthians. The Parthians, though, were loath to pursue in the dark, giving the Romans a head start.

The first contingent to reach Carrhae at midnight consisted of 300 Roman cavalry under the command of Ignatius. He called to the sentinels on the walls, telling them of a great battle between Crassus and the Parthians but little else. Ignatius then rode off to Zeugma, saving his own skin and that of his men. Coponius, the garrison commander of Carrhae, discerned that something bad had happened. He therefore set out at once to find Crassus and Roman survivors and escort them back to Carrhae.

At the break of day, the Parthians slaughtered the 4,000 wounded at the Roman camp. They then set off after the fleeing Romans, killing and capturing many. Other Romans died in their tracks, too weak or wounded to continue. Four cohorts of legate Vargonteius got separated from the main body and lost their way. Caught by the Parthians, Vargonteius' cohorts made a last stand on a rise of ground. All were slain but 20 men, who tried to force their way through. The Parthians were so impressed by their bravery that they let these soldiers reach Carrhae unmolested.

When Surena learned that Crassus had survived and had reached Carrhae, he demanded that both Crassus and Cassius be handed over in chains. In turn, Surena offered a truce. But the legionaries were not about to give up their commanders. Crassus was hoping that help would arrive from the Armenians, but his men convinced him that their best chance lay in another escape attempt.

Marching west over the open plain to Syria would make the Roman infantry easy pickings for the Parthian horse archers. Accordingly, Crassus decided to strike for Armenia to the north. Only a night's march away, the plain of Carrhae ascended to what was known as the Sinnaca hill country. This was likely the Tektek Mountains to the northeast, where the rough and steep ground was ill suited for cavalry. Unbeknownst to Crassus, his guide, a certain Andromachus, was conspiring with Surena. Setting out in the dark, Crassus and a small number of men got separated from the main column. Andromachus purposely led Crassus astray into wetlands and irrigation ditches.

Cassius, who was with Crassus, became suspicious and returned to Carrhae during the same night. Like Ignatius, Cassius then made for Syria, taking with him 500 cavalry. Meanwhile, the bulk of the legionaries under Octavius had climbed into the Sinnaca hills before day break. Crassus had found the road to Sinnaca only in the day light. He had almost reached the point where the road led up to Octavius' position when he was set upon by Parthian cavalry. Crassus and his men made a stand on a nearby knoll.

Looking down from the heights, Octavius could see Crassus and the Parthians one and a half miles down the ridge on a low adjoining hill. Led by Octavius' example, the legionaries hastened down to aid their commander. Like an unstoppable whirlwind, Octavius' men swept the Parthians from the low hill. "[They] covered him [Crassus] with their shields," wrote Plutarch, "boldly declaring that no Parthian missile should smite their imperator until they had all died fighting in his defense."

Surena realized that the legionaries had a real chance of retreating up the broken ground. Because of this, Surena pulled back his forces and released a number of Roman prisoners. These had been made to overhear that the Parthian king

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After the Parthians outfought his troops, Crassus tried to negotiate with Surena, but he was cut down in a scuffle. The Battle of Carrhae stands as one of the most disastrous defeats Roman history.

desired friendship. Figuring that the prisoners had told Crassus of his purported sentiments, Surena calmly rode up the slope. Reaching the outskirts of the Roman lines, Surena admitted that he had attacked them against the wishes of his own king. Safe passage would be given if the Romans withdrew and abandoned the land east of the Euphrates. Crassus ended up agreeing to meet Surena, with an equal number of men, halfway between the two armies. Crassus and his entourage, among them Octavius, walked down the slope to where Surena and followers came riding towards them. Surena informed Crassus that King Orodes would accept a truce if it were ratified in writing.

Seeing that Crassus had come on foot in the Roman fashion, Surena presented him with a splendidly caparisoned horse. Crassus mounted the steed, but Parthians ran alongside and hit the horse, urging it to bolt. Octavius seized the bridle to get the animal under control and was joined by the other Romans who crowded in to protect Crassus. A scuffle ensued, becoming more violent. Octavius drew his sword and slew one of the Parthians, but then was cut down from behind. Crassus was also killed, either by the enemy or by his own men trying to prevent his capture. The Romans fighting around Crassus were slain as well. Crassus' corpse was decapitated and his right hand also was cut off. The Parthians allegedly later poured gold down Crassus' mouth to mock his greed for wealth.

Surena announced to the Romans on the hill that Crassus had met his just deserts, but that they could surrender without fear of being killed. Some did and were taken into captivity; others fled during the night. Although a few reached friendly territory, most were hunted down by Arabs. Approximately 20,000 Romans perished in the whole campaign and another 10,000 were captured, according to Plutarch. Some of the latter settled in northeastern Parthia at the oasis of Margiana (Merv).

Surena sent the hand and head of Crassus to King Orodes in Armenia. At the same time, Surena sent false word to Seleucia that he was bringing Crassus back alive. Upon Surena's arrival at Seleucia, a captive who resembled Crassus was forced to act the part and dress in a woman's royal robe for a mock procession. Behind Crassus followed captured *lictors* to whose axes were fastened severed Roman heads. Musicians sang songs of Crassus' effeminacy and cowardice.

Meanwhile, Orodes had reached a settlement with Artavasdes and sealed it with the marriage of Orodes' son to Artavasdes' sister. The two kings were enjoying a festive banquet when, in the midst of applause for an actor, Surena's messengers arrived and cast forth Crassus' head. The Parthians hollered in joy as the actor picked up the head, singing and gesturing as if the head was singing the verses of a female character in the tragedy. With such ridicule, Crassus' tale came to an end.

Surena recaptured the Roman-held towns between the Balissus and the Euphrates, but his achievements did not gain him Orodes' favor. Orodes became jealous of Surena and wound up putting his greatest general and potential rival to death. Fortune then turned against Orodes, whose body was ravished by disease. A Parthian invasion of Syria that he conducted in 51 BC ended in failure. Thwarted by the walls of Antioch, the Parthians were lured into an ambush by Cassius, the veteran of Carrhae. In 38 BC another Parthian

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Richard the Lionheart's iron discipline sustained the Frankish army during the final phase of the Third Crusade. When Saladin committed his entire army to battle at Arsuf, Richard led a savage charge that swept the field.

By William E. Welsh

CRUSADER TRIUMPH *at Arsuf*

The advance of long ranks of scimitar-wielding Nubian and robed Bedouin archers on foot signaled a dramatic change in Ayyubid Muslim tactics against the Frankish army marching south along the Palestinian coast from Acre towards Jaffa. Behind the auxiliary foot soldiers came swarms of Muslim horse archers crowded together on the plain south of the Forrest of Arsuf.

Frankish crossbowmen fired bolts as fast as they could into the advancing Muslim skirmishers, while the spearmen formed a protective wall in a valiant effort to hold the approaching hordes of Muslim warriors at bay. Behind the crusader infantry, mail-clad knights donned their helmets and took up their lances.

The bright summer sky soon darkened as clouds of arrows arced towards the Frankish troops who stood with their backs to the Mediterranean Sea. The epic clash that would pit the cream of Sultan Salah al Din (Saladin) Yusuf ibn Ayyub's army against English King Richard I's crusader army had just begun at mid-morning on September 7, 1191. Desperate to crush the Frankish host before it could secure the port of Jaffa for a drive on Muslim-held Jerusalem, Saladin had dispensed with the harassing tactics of the past two weeks in an attempt to destroy once and for all the multinational crusader army of the Third Crusade in a pitched battle.

Saladin was 49-years-old when he won a decisive victory over the Frankish army of the Kingdom of Jerusalem at the Horns of Hattin four years earlier on July 4, 1187. That day his Egyptian and Syrian troops had captured the Frankish commander-in-chief, King Guy of Jerusalem. This left the fate of the largest crusader state in the hands of Bailin of Ibelin, Lord of Nablus, one of the few high-ranking knights fortunate enough to have evaded capture that day.

In the aftermath of the disaster at Hattin, the three remaining Latin crusader states—the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, and the County of Tripoli—were left with only a small number of warriors to defend them. If they were to remain in existence, these Latin states would need a rapid infusion of men and materiel from Western Europe.

AKG Images

English King Richard I wields a broadsword against his Muslim foes in the Holy Land. His leadership in the Third Crusade ensured his place in the pantheon of great medieval commanders.

Well aware that crusader reinforcements would soon be arriving, Saladin moved quickly to capture as many Christian-controlled cities, towns, and castles as possible in the Kingdom of Jerusalem while it was in a weakened condition. Within a week after his victory at Hattin, Saladin captured Acre, the kingdom's largest port. He then compelled Bailin to surrender Jerusalem on October 2.

News traveled slowly in that age. Genoese merchants returning from the Levant brought news of the disaster at Hattin to Rome in early autumn 1189. Pope Urban III was heartbroken upon receiving the news of the disaster at Hattin. When he died on October 20, he was succeeded by Pope Gregory VIII. Gregory issued a papal bull on October 29 that established the Third Crusade. The purpose of the new crusade was to retake Jerusalem while rolling back other Muslim gains. Over the course of the next year, papal emissaries preached the crusade throughout Latin Christendom.

An influential Italian nobleman, Conrad of Montferrat, who had been residing in Constantinople with his Byzantine bride, arrived in the island-city of Tyre north of Acre just 10 days after the clash at Hattin. Conrad, who had sailed to the Holy Land on a personal pilgrimage, set to work immediately shoring up Tyre's defenses to withstand an anticipated Muslim attack. Most importantly, he supervised the construction of a fortified trench across the causeway connecting the island to the mainland.

Saladin besieged Tyre, as expected, on November 12. The Muslims pounded the city's walls with as many as 17 stone-throwing mangonels. Several efforts to carry the trench by storm failed. After a last-ditch failed assault against the trench on January 1, 1190, Saladin raised the siege and moved off.

While King Guy of Jerusalem remained in Muslim captivity in Damascus throughout the winter of 1187-1188, Conrad helped filled the leadership void. He sent letters to numerous Christian rulers in the West imploring them to send troops.

One of the first to respond to Conrad's pleas was King William II of Sicily, who sent 50 ships and 200 knights to the Outremer in spring 1188. The Sicilian fleet played a crucial role in supplying the remaining Christian strongholds on the Levantine coast during Saladin's continuing offensive.

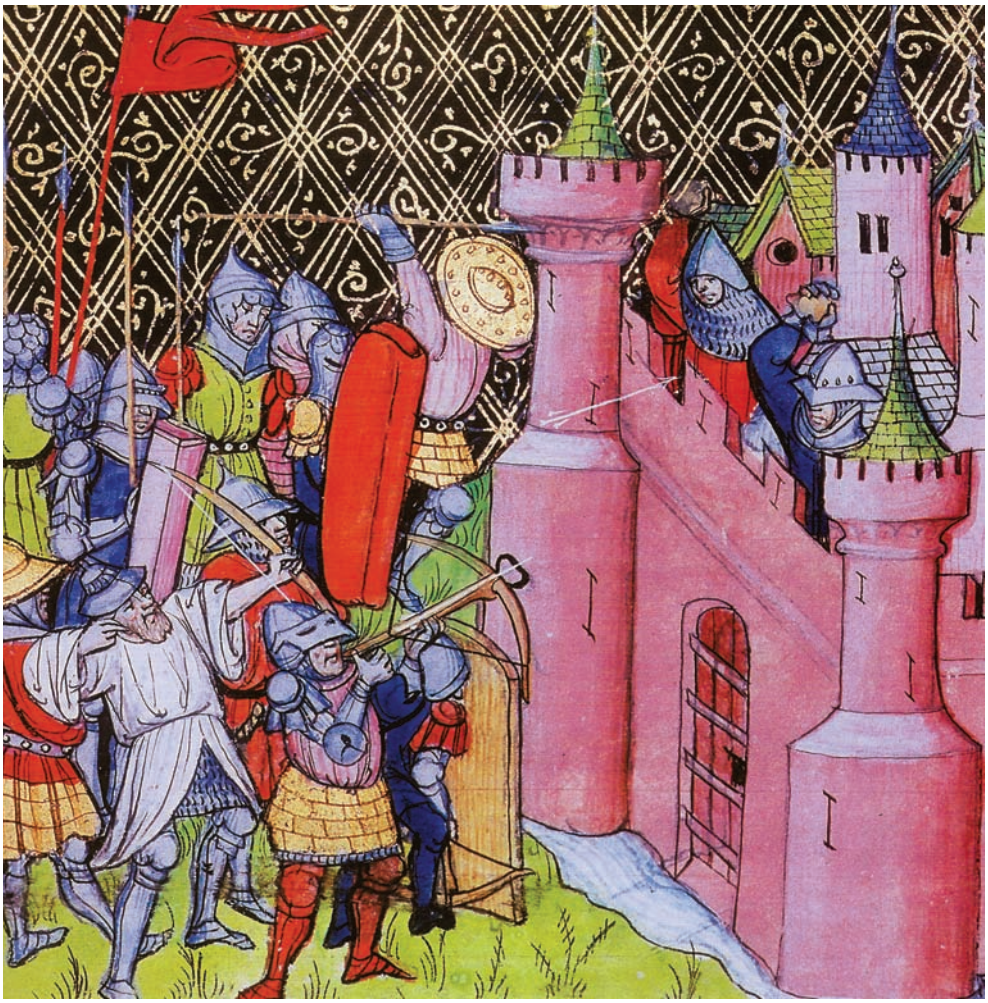
Another one of the rulers to take the cross was 66-year-old Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I "Barbarosa." A veteran commander, he departed Regensburg in May 1189 with 12,000 German troops. He planned to march overland to the Holy Land by the same route as the Christians of the First Crusade. One of his vassals, Duke Leopold of Austria, planned to follow by sea with another German army at a later date.

Tragedy struck the German crusaders on their trek through Anatolia. The emperor drowned in the swift waters of the Saleph River in the Taurus Mountains on June 10, 1190. Sources are conflicted as to whether he was trying to ford the river on his horse or merely swimming its cool waters as a respite from the broiling summer sun. Many of Frederick's German troops turned back for home. Of those who continued east, many succumbed to disease in the last leg of their journey. The small number that survived joined Duke Leopold's German army when it arrived in Acre the following year.

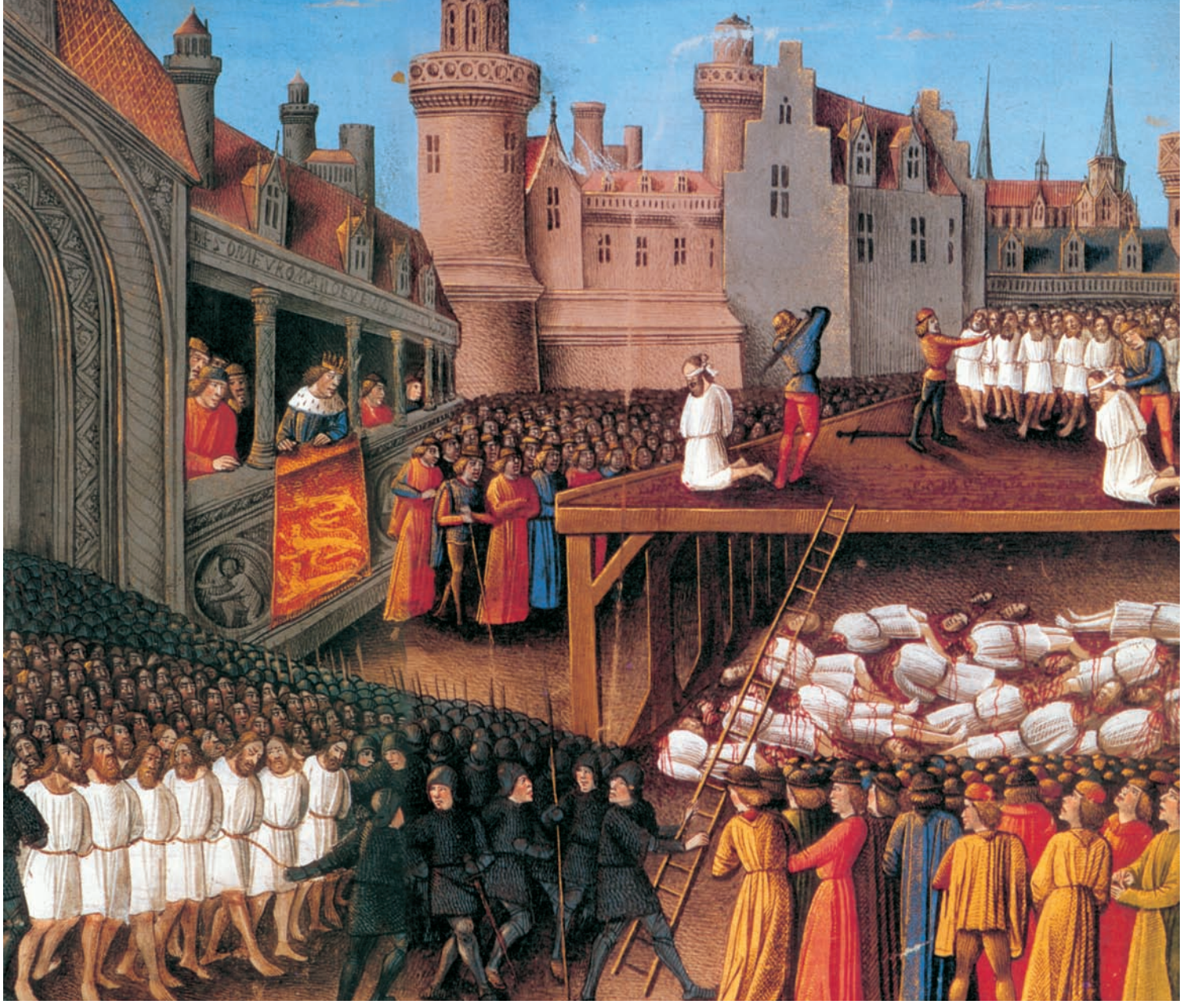
At the time the crusade was being preached, King Philip II of France and King Henry II of England, who was more than twice Philip's age, were at war with each other. Henry's so-called Angevin Empire included not only England, but also parts of western and northern France. Philip was desperate to annex some of Henry's lands in France, particularly in Normandy.

As a result of ecclesiastical mediation, both Henry and Philip agreed to conduct a joint expedition to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. When Henry died in July 1189, his son and successor, Richard I, agreed to eventually lead an English army to the Holy Land. The planning and preparations took a great deal of time because the two monarchs had to put their affairs in order before their departure. Philip and Richard wintered with their armies in Messina, Sicily, in 1190-1191. Some of their vassals led contingents to join the siege of Acre ahead of the arrival of the two monarchs.

Philip and Richard joined the siege of Acre with their large armies on May 20, 1191, and June 8, 1191, respectively. Over the course of the two-year siege at Acre, the crusaders investing the city fought nine major battles with the garrison and with Saladin's relief army encamped nearby. The



ABOVE: King Guy of Jerusalem initiated the siege of Acre in 1189 so that it could serve as a base for the Third Crusade. The arrival of the armies of English King Richard I and French King Philip II in summer 1191 sealed the fate of the Muslim garrison. OPPOSITE: While Richard's mass execution of upwards of 2,000 Muslim prisoners at Acre shocks modern sensitivities, it was an atrocity that was common in medieval times.



crusaders forced the surrender of the garrison on July 12, 1191.

Shortly after the capture of Acre, both Philip and Leopold returned home. The crusaders took 2,700 Muslim troops from the Acre garrison into captivity. Richard, who by then had become the commander-in-chief of the Frankish army at Acre, set harsh terms for the release of prisoners. He gave Saladin until August 20 to pay 20,000 gold dinars, release 1,500 Christian prisoners, and return the True Cross captured at Hattin.

Although Saladin was poised to pay half of the ransom by the deadline, as well as meet the other terms, Richard had no intention of extending the deadline. Since Richard planned to take nearly all of the crusaders south in a bid to retake Jerusalem, he could not risk leaving behind several thousand Muslim prisoners. The English king therefore decided to have the prisoners put to death when Saladin was unable to raise the rest of the money.

After retrieving the prisoners from Tyre where they were being detained, Richard ordered the massacre of the majority of the prisoners on August 20. Approximately 100 officers were spared in order to be ransomed at a future date. When Saladin's troops tried to stop the butchery, they were driven back by the crusaders.

The crusaders enthusiastically slaughtered the Muslim prisoners for they believed it was suitable retaliation for the death of so many of their comrades during the two-year siege of the port city. "Thus was vengeance taken for the blows and crossbow bolts [during the siege]," wrote Norman chronicler Ambrose of Normandy, an eyewitness to the events of the Third Crusade.

Kurdish historian Baha ad-Din Shaddad, who would one day write Saladin's biography, gave a sobering and graphic description of the massacre. "The crusaders brought out the Muslim prisoners bound in ropes," he wrote. "Then as one man they charged them and with stabbings and blows with the sword slew them in cold blood."

With no more impediments to his departure south towards Jerusalem, Richard prepared to evacuate Acre leaving behind a small force to hold it. Guy planned to accompany Richard on his march to capture Jerusalem. He did so in the capacity of a vassal and subordinate commander because a previous agreement ensured that Western monarchs had authority over the King of Jerusalem when campaigning in the Holy Land. Richard not only would have the assistance of Duke Hugh of Burgundy, who would lead the French forces in Philip's absence, but also of the Hospitaller Master Garnier de Nablus and Templar Master Robert de Sable.

Richard immediately drew up plans to lead his veteran army south to secure ports in lower Palestine for a subsequent expedition to capture Jerusalem. The King of England carefully weighed the advantages and disadvantages of two different routes to Jerusalem. The inland route went from Acre to Nazareth to Jerusalem, while the coastal

Both: Wikimedia

ABOVE: Crusader knights wore knee-length mail hauberks (left), while the foot soldiers wore padded gambesons. Both furnished good protection from the light arrows fired by Saladin's Turkic horse archers. OPPOSITE: Saladin's Turkic Muslim horse archers showered Richard's foot soldiers with arrows and tried to provoke the knights into charging them prematurely. But Richard's leadership and tactics in open-field battle enabled the crusaders to outfight the Muslim light cavalry.

route when from Acre to Jaffa to Jerusalem.

Richard foresaw many drawbacks to the inland route. First and foremost, if the crusaders took the inland route, they would have to march through many valleys, which would give the Ayyubid Sultan Saladin's army multiple opportunities to ambush it. Second, the supply line back to Acre would have been incredibly long and easy for Saladin's Muslim army to interdict. Whichever route he took, his men would have to carry rations and water with them for there was a strong possibility that Saladin's troops would scorch the earth and poison the wells to deny them food and water.

Richard did not make his decision quickly. While he might have been reckless and impatient in battle, he was focused, purposeful, and cautious when it came to assessing the strategic situation. In the end, he resolved that they would take the coastal route to Jaffa. Once he had secured the small anchorage at Jaffa, Richard also intended to capture the larger Muslim-held port of Ascalon 30 miles further south. With both ports in crusader hands, he hoped to be able to sustain his army during a siege of Jerusalem.

As for the dangerous march south through enemy territory, Richard knew that he must draw up meticulous orders regarding the provisional load each soldier must carry, the organization of his foot and mounted forces, and the length of the daily marches if he were to succeed in getting his army intact and with minimal losses to Jaffa.

His plan called for the crusader fleet to sail south alongside the army as it marched down the coast towards Jaffa. In late August sailors began loading biscuits, meat, wine, and water onto their ships for the expedition. The king instructed the ship captains to stay close to the shore so that smaller boats could ferry supplies to the soldiers when practicable.

Richard's 1,200 knights and 10,000 foot soldiers set out from Acre on August 25, 1191. The fleet had sailed three days earlier to get into position. The coastal route would afford him an excellent opportunity to protect his mounted knights and his baggage train. The troops would march in three parallel columns while the crusader fleet followed closely along the shoreline to resupply the army at regular intervals on its 80-mile march.

Half of the infantry would march on the outside to shield the cavalry and supply train. The mounted knights would move in three divisions in the center. The other half of the infantry would march along the shoreline with the baggage train. One section would march on the outside fending off the Turkic horse archers who would undoubtedly harrass the column, while the other section of infantry marched with the baggage train. Richard planned to rotate the two groups of foot soldiers regularly to prevent exhaustion.

Since the army would be marching under the scorching summer sun, Richard planned to march in the morning and make camp at midday. He also planned to rest his army in camp on some days.

The Franks' destination for the first day was Haifa. Richard gave strict orders to his subordinate commanders that under no circumstances were any of their knights to break ranks and charge the enemy. He told them that he was the only one who could authorize a charge.

On the first day of the march, King Guy led the vanguard, Richard led the middle guard, and the Duke of Burgundy commanded the rearguard. Saladin's horse archers wasted no time in harassing the rearguard. The Muslim horse archers were armed with a light shield and lance, a sword or club, and light bows. Their advantage lay in their speed and mobility. They swooped down to hurl javelins and fire arrows at the crusaders attacking in waves.

The crusader column soon became too extended and some of the Muslim light cavalry even reached the baggage train where they caused havoc. Realizing that a dangerous situation had developed, Richard and his retinue rode to assist the Duke of Burgundy. The English reinforcements helped the Duke of Burgundy and his French troops repulse the Muslims.

Realizing that he could ill afford to have the Muslims routinely disorder his rearguard, Richard decided that night that it would be better if the highly disciplined Templars and Hospitallers led the vanguard and rearguard, respectively, for the remainder of the march. As for the Duke of Burgundy, he naturally led the French contingents in the middle of the army.

Al-Adil Sayf ad-Din, one of Saladin's brothers who the Franks called Safadin, directed the forces that would harrass the Christian rearguard. The harassing attacks were intended to provoke the knights in the rearguard into making piecemeal charges that would leave gaps in their ranks that could be exploited.

While Safadin directed the attacks against the crusader rearguard, Saladin shadowed the crusader army further inland with his main force and baggage train. If Safadin succeeded in separating the rearguard from the rest of the crusader army, Saladin planned to quickly reinforce him.

Each morning Safadin's mounted archers congregated in the dunes from where they launched repeated assaults against the Frankish rearguard in an effort to separate it from the main body of the Frankish army. "You would have seen them

coming like rain from the mountains, twenty here, thirty there," wrote Ambroise.

As the march continued, the crusaders in the rearguard came under relentless pressure from the Muslims every day that they were on the march. The mounted archers showered them with arrows. Although the mail-clad knights did not suffer much, they soon began to lose a fair number of horses. Often the foot soldiers protecting the rear of the column had to march slowly backwards so that they could fend off the relentless Muslims troops.

Safadin decided on August 31 to launch a larger attack than he previously had. "The Muslims sent in volleys of arrows from all sides, deliberately trying to irritate the [Frankish] knights and force them to come out from behind the wall of infantry," wrote Baha ad-Din ibn Shaddad. "But it was all in vain. The knights kept their temper admirably and went on their way without the least hurry."

The crusader infantry had only gambesons to protect them as they could not afford mail hauberks. These padded jackets were sufficient to stop the light Muslim arrows. On the days the rearguard was under attack, it was a common site to see Christian infantrymen with as many as a dozen arrows stuck harmlessly in their sturdy gambesons as they went about their duty of shielding the knights and baggage train from attack.

Unlike the light Turkic arrows, the bolts fired by the Frankish crossbowmen were deadly when fired at close range. In many instances, the crossbowmen were able to hold back the Turkic horse archers. But for those times when the foot soldiers were in dire need of assistance, Richard would allow small groups of knights to engage the Muslim cavalrymen. Yet the knights were under strict orders to promptly return to the safety of the column. Richard loved to fight, and he was often reckless in regard to his own personal safety. During one spirited skirmish with the enemy, a Muslim warrior stabbed Richard in the side with his spear, but the wound healed.

One of Saladin's most renowned and fearsome warriors, Ayaz the Tall, was slain in another dust up on September 2. The spirited clash that day between the Muslims horsemen and the crusader infantry unfolded in low ground between two streams. Both sides incurred substantial casualties. The crusader spearmen who killed Ayaz brought back the slain warrior's spear as a trophy.

Richard rested his army for two days beginning September 3. During that time, the crusader fleet resupplied his troops. While the Franks were resting, Saladin ordered his army to bivouac in the Forest of Arsuf while he spent the daylight hours reconnoitering the area for a suitable place to launch a full-scale attack against Richard's army. Since his previous attempts to draw the crusader army into a pitched battle had failed, Saladin intended to force the issue when the crusader army set out again on its march.

The crusader army resumed its march on September 5, halting that day at Wadi al-Falik within a short march of the town of Arsuf. That night Richard ordered his troops to make camp between the sea and an expansive marsh that shielded it from attack.

Earlier that day Richard had sent a messenger to Safadin requesting a parlay. Saladin, who learned of the request, ordered his brother to prolong the talks as long as possible in order to buy time for Muslim reinforcements to arrive. But when Safadin met with Richard's envoys on September 6 while the crusaders remained in their

camp, he flew into a rage when they proved recalcitrant on certain points. In defiance of Saladin's wishes, he broke off the talks before anything had been achieved.

That same day Saladin arrayed his army on the plain just south of the Forest of Arsuf. He had a total of 25,000 troops from Egypt, Syria, Jazira, and northern Iraq, as well as auxiliary Bedouin and Numidian foot soldiers. Saladin planned to send the foot soldiers forward first as skirmishers the following morning to engage the crusader column. They would be followed closely by a great multitude of horse archers. When a major fight was afoot, some of the horse archers preferred to move in close and dismount in order to fire with greater accuracy.

The Muslim left wing, which was commanded by Ala al-Din Ibn Izz-al Din of Mosul, consisted of units from Jazira and northern Iraq. The center was nominally commanded by Saladin's eldest son, al-Malik al-Afdal Ali, and was made up of Syrian units. The de facto commander of the center was veteran general Sayf al-Din Yazkuj al-Qadi. The right wing, which was led Safadin, consisted of Egyptian units. Saladin's reserve consisted of his elite Mamluk guard division led by Sarim al-Din Qaymaz al-Najmi, which was held in reserve. Saladin typically held back the Mamluks until the enemy's formations were disrupted and its troops exhausted; at that point, the Mamluks went in to finish them off.

Richard expected a large-scale attack on September 7, and therefore carefully organized his column so that it could go into battle if necessary. The Templars held the vanguard, followed by the Bretons and Angevins in the second division, the Poitevins in the third division, the Anglo-Normans in the fourth division, and the Hospitallers in the rearguard. The Anglo-Normans were responsible for guarding the dragon standard that was mounted on a large cart so it could be seen from afar. "Their banner proceeded in their midst on wheels like a huge beacon," wrote Muslim chronicler Baha al-Din.

Although the Franks expected that Saladin would engage them as they marched through the hilly terrain of the Forest of Arsuf, he allowed them to pass through unmolested. Once the army had emerged onto the plain of Arsuf, the sultan intended to launch an attack against the center and rear of the crusade army.

Richard's army resumed its march at dawn on September 7. His scouts reported that Saladin's army was arrayed for battle and likely to attack once the crusaders began to cross the plain. As if on cue, the Bedouins and Nubians advanced as skirmishers at mid-morning to begin the attack. Trumpets blared and kettle drums beat as the full weight of Saladin's army surged across the plain. The crusaders braced themselves for the attack. Safadin's Egyptian cavalry bore down on the Frankish rearguard from the north, while al-Afdal's Syrian horsemen struck the rearguard from the east. The Hospitallers, and the infantry guarding them, soon found themselves under attack from two sides.

At the same time the Muslim center and right corps struck the Frankish rearguard, the northern squadrons of the left division assailed the crusader center in an effort to pin it down and prevent it from reinforcing the rearguard. Meanwhile, Saladin advanced his guard troops to a position behind al-Afdal's corps. From that position, the heavily armored guard troops would be ready to exploit any gaps in the crusader line and engage Richard's fearsome knights.

The foot soldiers shielding the crusader rearguard fought fiercely to hold back the Turkic mounted archers. Although the crossbowmen downed many of the enemy's mounted archers, these casualties were quickly replaced by fresh troops so that the Frankish foot soldiers were not able to blunt the Muslim attack. A large number of Muslim horse archers decided to dismount in

order to fire their arrows more accurately. As the fighting wore on, the Muslim archers succeeded in killing or maiming a significant number of the Hospitallers' precious mounts.

The Christian foot soldiers soon grew weary from the unrelenting cavalry attacks. Their casualties began to pile up and gaps opened in their ranks. Meanwhile, the mounted Hospitallers behind them suffered through a steady rain of enemy arrows.

Saladin made his presence known to his troops, and because of this they fought with great ferocity and determination. The sultan, attended by two pages and with two spare mounts, rode back and forth along his line of battle exhorting his troops to slay the infidels. "The sultan was moving between the left and right wing, urging the men on to the jihad," wrote Baha al-Din. "I met his brother in a similar state, while the arrows were flying past both of them."

When some of Safadin's Egyptian horse archers began to turn the left flank of the Frankish rearguard and gain the rear of Richard's army, a group of crusader infantry raced to towards the shoreline in an effort to block them.

Hospitaller Grand Master de Nablus directed the defense of the rearguard. He sought out Richard twice to request permission to charge against the Muslim cavalry in an effort to eliminate it as a threat, but the English king refused him both times. Richard told him that when the moment was right, he would order all of the knights to charge at once. The King of England passed word to his division commanders that the signal for the charge would be six trumpet blasts.

Richard had no intention of allowing the Hospitallers to charge alone. He had to time the charge perfectly for maximum effect. He was waiting for the Muslim mounted archers to exhaust themselves before ordering a charge. If the Muslims scattered before the charge could strike home, the Frankish knights would lose their cohesion and their horses would be winded, thus leaving them vulnerable to destruction. But if timed just right, the Muslim cavalry would not be able to withstand a headlong charge by the heavily armored Frankish knights on their warhorses.

The weight of the crusader cavalry charge was such that no enemy could withstand it. They went into action with their lances gripped tightly under their right arms. When their lances shattered, they drew their broadswords and continued fighting on horseback.

As the battle wore on, De Nablus was having trouble holding his Hospitaller knights in check. Frustrated with the loss of some of their most valuable horses, they were eager to crush the enemy opposite them. Saladin's mounted archers launched three major assaults against the rear of the crusader army.

During the last of these attacks, two mounted knights in the rearguard broke ranks to charge the enemy. One of these was Hospitaller Marshal William Borrel, and the other was one Richard's household knights, Baldwin le Carron, who apparently had joined the rearguard to assist it. The exact reason they charged is not known. The two men may have mistaken Muslim trumpet blasts for those announcing Richard's signal for a charge or they may simply have acted on their own.

Shouting the English battle cry, "St. George!" the pair thundered through the crusader infantry. Each bore down on a Muslim horseman and drove their lance into his body. Seeing the marshal

Both: Wikimedia

ABOVE: Ayyubid Sultan Saladin (left) rode back and forth along his lines exhorting his troops to defeat the infidels at Arsuf, while King Richard I succeeded in keeping his army under control during the initial waves of the Muslim attack. OPOSITE: King Richard I was a fearsome and brave warrior who put himself in the thick of the fighting at Arsuf.

ride out, De Nablus ordered the rest of his knights to join the charge. At the same time, some of the French knights nearby also charged. "Then the long-suffering Hospitallers advanced in order," wrote Ambroise. "[The charge] took the Turks by surprise, for our men came down on them like lightning. All of the Muslims who had dismounted to fire their bows, which had hit our people hard, had their heads cut off."

When Richard saw the Hospitallers ride forth, he ordered all of the other mounted squadrons in the center to join the attack, except for the Anglo-Norman troops. The Anglo-Normans had standing orders to remain in place guarding the dragon standard. The standard served as a rallying point for the entire army in the event of a crisis.

At the time of the first crusader charge, the crusader vanguard had reached the orchards on the northern outskirts of the town of Arsuf. The Templars, who were far from the fighting, stood by until such time as they received further orders. As for Richard, he and his household troops enthusiastically joined the charge.

To the Muslims it seemed as if the crusaders had made a well-coordinated charge. "I saw them grouped together in the middle of the foot soldiers," wrote Baha al-Din. "They took their lances and gave a shout as one man. The infantry opened gaps for them and they charged in unison along their whole line."

Seeing the Franks charge, Saladin committed his Mamluk heavy cavalry in an effort to keep the crusaders from destroying his army. Only the Mamluks could engage the knights on anything close to equal terms. In the interim, the charging Frankish knights overran the Muslim foot soldiers and slammed at full force into squadrons of light cavalry that were unable to withdraw in time to avoid contact.

As the Frankish knights drew close to the forested hills beyond the plain, Richard ordered them to halt for fear that if they attempted to fight their way into the hills and ravines that lay beyond. The king anticipated that they might be ambushed in the broken terrain.

After sending forward his Mamluk reserve, Sal-

adin gathered his staff, standard bearers, kettle drummers, and a small contingent of bodyguards and led them to a prominent hill near the edge of the forest where they deployed. The beating of the kettle drums was a signal to rally on his position. The Frankish knights reformed once behind their infantry and charged forth anew to clear the plain of the Muslims and ensure that their foe was beaten.

The Muslims "were so thoroughly repulsed, so that for two full leagues around you could see only fugitives of those who before were so cocksure," wrote Ambroise. With the crusader heavy cavalry charges having broken the Muslim formations the entire length of Saladin's battle line, all of his troops fell back to the relative safety of the Forest of Arsuf. Although his army was on the verge of rout, Saladin by his presence was able to reform them and stave off what might have been a disaster. Taking a cautious approach to the situation, he issued orders for those still mounted to lead their horses to water from nearby streams and also directed the extraction of the wounded for medical care.

This left Richard and his exhausted soldiers to march unhindered into Arsuf. Jaffa lay only 15 miles beyond Arsuf, and Richard's troops arrived at their destination on September 9. In a campaign that culminated in the clash at Arsuf, Richard had shown that the crusaders could defeat Saladin's army in a pitched battle. Because Saladin's army remained intact, Richard had achieved only a marginal victory. Frankish cavalry losses were minimal, but the Frankish foot soldiers suffered 700 casualties. The Muslims were believed to have lost 7,000 men, although their losses might have been substantially less.

Although Richard had achieved a tactical victory at Arsuf, he did not gain much from a strategic standpoint given that his ultimate goal was the capture of Jerusalem. That goal would elude him over the course of the next year. Twice he advanced his armies towards Jerusalem during that time, only to withdraw because he knew he lacked the resources to capture the heavily fortified, well-defended city in what likely would have been a siege comparable to the one fought at Acre. Although they failed to retake Jerusalem, the senior leaders of the Third Crusade, among which Richard the Lionheart was undoubtedly the most distinguished, had succeeded in reversing most of Saladin's conquests after the Battle of Hattin.

After protracted negotiations with Saladin, as well as a great deal of time spent mediating disputes among the senior leadership of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Richard departed for home on October 9, 1192. His return journey was a long odyssey. When the galley in which he was sailing shipwrecked on the Dalmatian coast, Richard and a handful of companions set out disguised as pilgrims returning from the Holy Land to travel home on foot through Austria and southern Germany.

In a cruel twist of fate, Richard was captured and imprisoned first by his former rival Duke Leopold of Austria, who bore a grudge against Richard from the siege of Acre, and then by Leopold's sovereign lord, Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI. Held for a large ransom, he finally made it back to England in March 1194. He received a tumultuous welcome, as befitted a hero of the crusades. ■

SIEGE OF ACRE TESTED CRUSADERS' COURAGE

The dust had hardly settled from the battle of Hattin when Ayyubid Sultan Saladin captured the port of Acre on July 9, 1187. Upon his release from Muslim captivity in June 1188, King Guy of Jerusalem began making plans to besiege Acre. His initial force of 7,000 infantry and 400 knights besieged Acre on August 28, 1189. His army soon swelled to 20,000 with key reinforcements from France, Frisia, and Denmark.

Situated in northern Palestine, Acre was the chief port of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Franks needed to control Acre in order to prevent the collapse of the entire Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Guy faced a daunting challenge. The 3,000 Muslim troops inside Acre were well led by Baha al-Din Qaragush, one of Ayyubid Sultan Saladin's best lieutenants. To make matters worse, Saladin arrived with additional troops to thwart the Frankish siege. The sultan established a fortified hilltop camp in mid-September just west of Acre.

Guy's army launched a major attack against Saladin's camp on October 4, 1189. The crusaders succeeded in punching through the Muslim center when Saladin pulled out some troops to reinforce his right flank. The Franks poured through the gap and ran straight towards Saladin's tent. "It was only by God's grace that they did not cut down Saladin's tent, for if they had [it] would have led to a general flight," wrote Ibn al-Athir. The battle drew to a close when the Muslim garrison sallied forth and assailed the crusader ranks from behind. The crusader army lost 4,000 troops with nothing to show for it.

The crusaders battered the walls of Acre with great catapults and brought down key sections by mining underneath them.

The crusaders launched a particularly grand and memorable attack on the walls of Acre in late April 1190 by rolling several giant siege towers up to the walls, but the Muslim garrison ingeniously used Greek Fire to destroy the wooden towers on May 5.

King Philip's French army joined the siege of Acre on May 20, 1191, and Richard's English army arrived at Acre on June 8. The arrival of the two large armies and their charismatic leaders gave the Franks the manpower, resources, and morale boost to see the siege through to the end.

Philip and Richard worked well together. Philip initially directed the assaults against Acre's landward walls, while Richard's troops contained Saladin's relief army. The two kings also put their soldiers to work building stone-throwing mangonels that when completed battered the walls so hard some sections crumbled. In addition, Frankish miners brought down the Accursed Tower on July 2 that anchored a key section of the landward walls.

With the crusaders poised to breach the walls, Qaragush sent a delegation on July 4 to discuss terms with the crusaders. English and Pisan troops established a toehold in the city on July 11. Fearing that they would be put to the sword if they continued to resist, the Muslim garrison surrendered the following day.

—William E. Welsh

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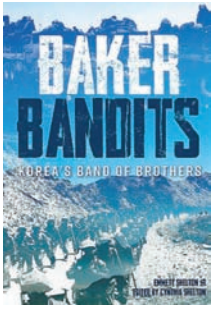
The Marines of Baker Company of the 5th Marine Regiment fought with great valor in some of the most desperate battles of the Korean War.

By Christopher Miskimon

Marines watch as close air support by F4U-5 Corsairs hit approaching Chinese troops during fighting around the Chosin Reservoir in December 1950.

The men of Baker Company of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines endured a freezing truck ride to Yudam-Ni, near the soon to be infamous Chosin Reservoir, on November 27, 1950. They arrived at 9:00 PM to discover the advanced party had set up only one tent per platoon in their assigned bivouac area. The tired Marines unrolled cold sleeping bags and warmed them the only way they could—by crawling into them. Some were hungry enough to eat a frozen can of meat and beans before dozing off. Their sleep proved short-lived, though: from the nearby perimeter soon came a crack of rifle fire and the crump of hand grenades. The Chinese were attacking, and they were awfully close.



Many of the Marines of the company, which had the nickname the Baker Bandits, grew restless in their sleeping bags. Their commander, Lieutenant John Hancock, noted his men did not like bullets cracking overhead when they could not do anything to fight back. It was easier for most of them to be in the line rather than behind it. In the line, they would ignore the sort of near misses that now bothered them. Orders soon came from above: Baker would remain in reserve under the battalion commander, Colonel John Stevens. The company stayed where it was, frustrated and edgy.

The Chinese began to overrun the perimeter. Several platoons from A Company went up to reinforce it. Soon Charlie Company sent men up as well, many of them laden with extra ammunition to keep the Marines on the perimeter firing. Mortar fire landed around them, but Baker remained in reserve. If the Colonel committed them, everyone would know the situation was dire. All Hancock's men were out of their bags, ready to move at a moment's notice. They knew they were the last card the battalion had to play. When the dawn sun rose, the perimeter still held, though the Chinese refused to retreat, staying within grenade range of the Marines on the hilltops.

Now, in full daylight, Baker is ordered to relieve another company on the perimeter, a mile away. Some of the Marines express dismay: how do you relieve a company on a perimeter in full daylight? They always carried out such moves under cover of darkness. Hancock's account of the day ends there. Before he could add to his journal, he was killed. Another officer, Lieutenant Bud Kohler, recalled occupying their new position under fire. The marines immediately called in airstrikes on nearby enemy concentrations, which seemed to quiet things down for a time.

The next day, they plastered another enemy-held hill with airstrikes and artillery before First Platoon leader Lieutenant Austin "Swede" Jensen led his men up the hill in an attack. Jensen stayed in the

front, firing from the hip and throwing grenades. As Kohler watched from the perimeter, Jensen reached the top of the hill with eight Marines. Suddenly a hail of grenades landed on the First Platoon men, knocking them all down. The Chinese enveloped the attacking men, killing two more of them. Kohler recalled they were unable to even recover the bodies of the dead. They never did take the hill back. Later in the day Kohler learned there were at least four Chinese divisions attacking them, and two more divisions attempting to outflank them and cut them off.

The Marines of Baker Company were in for a horrible ordeal at Chosin, but it was not their first or last battle in Korea. They had already fought at Pusan, Naktong, and Inchon, and would go on to fight at numerous other places after they took part in the fighting withdrawal from Chosin to evacuation at Hungnam. Their experiences are covered in ***Baker Bandits: Korea's Band of Brothers*** (Emmet Shelton, Jr., edited by Cynthia Shelton, Casemate Publishing, Havertown PA, 2020, 350 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, index, $34.95, hardcover).

The author's father was a Baker Bandit and gathered the experiences of the Marines in the company, many of them published in the unit's postwar newsletter to its veterans. Rather than create a standard narrative from these sources, the author organized them logically and chronologically and left each account in its original form—the veteran's own words.

The accounts include writings by officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted men, all of whom shared the terrible experiences of the Korean War together. This method of organizing the book is unusual, but it works well here, with a natural flow to the narrative due to careful editing and ordering. The veterans of the Korean War are almost all gone now. While their war was smaller in scope, their actions and service deserve to be remembered.

The Long Shadow of Waterloo: Myths, Memories and Debates (Timothy Fitzpatrick, Casemate Publishers, Havertown PA, 2021, 256 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $44.95, hardcover)

Waterloo ranks as one of the pivotal battles of European history, putting paid to Napoleon's ambitions and setting the stage for the continent's next century. Different nations attached varying meaning to the battle's significance, however, as did the participants. The victorious Duke of Wellington portrayed it as a British victory over great odds against a vastly more numerous foe. Napoleon blamed his subordinates for failing to carry out his genius, particularly Marshal Grouchy,

SHORT BURSTS

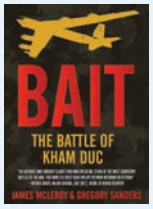
The Mighty Warrior Kings: From the Ashes of the Roman Empire to the New Ruling Order (Philip J. Potter, Pen and Sword, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) This new book profiles nine kings who ruled in post-Rome Europe. Their accomplishments and legacies are covered in detail.

Armies of Celtic Europe 700 BC – AD 106: History, Organization and Equipment (Gabrielle Esposito, Pen and Sword, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) Though composed of many diverse groups, the Celt nevertheless enjoyed a distinctive culture. This work details their military forces.

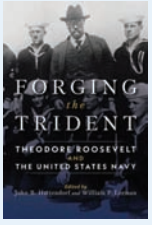
Fighting for Spain: The International Brigades in the Civil War 1936-1939 (Alexander Clifford, Pen and Sword, 2020, $42.95, hardcover) The International Brigades were composed of thousands of foreign fighters attracted to the socialist cause. This book eschews their politics to discuss their performance as soldiers.

Gunship Ace: The Wars of Neal Ellis, Helicopter Pilot and Mercenary (Al J. Venter, Casemate, 2021, $24.95, softcover) Ellis served as a pilot in the South African Air Force and then went on to become a mercenary pilot, usually flying old Soviet helicopters. The author is a journalist who accompanied Ellis on some of his missions.

Winning Wars: The Enduring Nature and Changing Character of Victory from Antiquity to the 21st Century (Edited by Matthias Strohn, Casemate Publishing, 2020, $65.00, hardcover) Strategic victory can be markedly different from winning at the operational and tactical levels. This collection of essays studies different concepts of victory throughout history.



Bait: The Battle of Kham Duc (James D. McElroy and Gregory W. Sanders, Casemate, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) This attack on an isolated Special Forces camp in May 1968 is largely considered an American defeat. The authors argue the battle was successful in causing extensive North Vietnamese casualties.



Forging the Trident: Theodore Roosevelt and the United States Navy (Edited by John Hattendorf and William Leeman, Naval Institute Press, 2021, $48.00, hardcover) Theodore Roosevelt is famous for being a soldier and U.S. president, but he also served as an assistant secretary of the navy. This book highlights his work to modernize and expand U.S. naval forces.

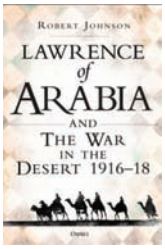
Elizabeth's Sea Dogs and their War Against Spain (Brian Best, Frontline Books, 2021, $34.95, hardcover) English privateers waged an undeclared war against Spanish merchantmen during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Their success helped make England a wealthy nation.

US Soldier Versus British Soldier: War of 1812 (Gregg Adams, Osprey Publishing, 2021, $22.00, softcover) American and British regular troops fought several battles during the war. Three of these engagements are covered, along with details of each side's training, weapons, and equipment.

Leading the Roman Army: Soldiers and Emperors 31 BC – AD 235 (Jonathan Eaton, Pen and Sword Publishing, 2021, $34.95, hardcover) The Roman Empire depended on its military to control its citizens and conduct foreign wars. This new work presents ways in which the emperors kept their soldiers loyal over the course of centuries.

who spent decades telling the world Napoleon's account was false, written to cover his own mistakes. Great Britain used their triumph as a symbol of Imperial might, downplaying the contributions of their allies. For France, it was nothing short of a complete disaster. Throughout Europe, the memory of Waterloo served political and personal needs.

Rather than a simple retelling of the battle, this new work explores its effect on the minds and memories of those involved. The authors gathered information on how Waterloo was remembered politically, culturally, through literature and even tourism. The battle figured prominently in the 19th-Century mind, and the book effectively presents how that hold on the imagination was used and even exploited.



Lawrence of Arabia on War: The Campaign in the Desert 1916-18 (Rob Johnson, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2021, 368 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)

Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence, famous as "Lawrence of Arabia," was an eccentric and unconventional British officer. As such, he had unusual ideas about warfare and how to conduct it. Unusual, however, does not mean ludicrous or ineffective. He developed concepts on guerrilla fighting and tactical theory which are still studied closely a century later. Lawrence began his education on the subject at university but perfected it in the harsh cauldron of combat in the Middle East during World War I. He possessed the ability to achieve victory even when outnumbered by a better-equipped enemy. His experience in the desert both before and during the war allowed him to conceive how best to conduct irregular warfare in such a sparse and unforgiving environment. Most of the war was viewed by the public as industrialized and impersonal slaughter. Lawrence emerged as a romantic hero, achieving success in an exotic locale against long odds.

This examination of Lawrence and his operations exposes his knowledge of strategy and politics in the context of the Middle Eastern Theater. The author traces how his subject's ideas evolved over time into a usable method of fighting the Ottomans in conjunction with the Allied Armies active in Palestine. The book also presents studies on how Lawrence is studied by modern soldiers conducting counter-insurgency campaigns around the world.

Three War Marine Hero: General Raymond C. Davis (Col. Richard D. Camp, Jr., USMC (Ret), Casemate Publishing, Havertown PA, 2021, 231 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

Lt. Col. Raymond Davis already had one war under his belt when he led a battalion in Korea during the frozen hell of the Chosin Reservoir. For four days in December 1950, he led his Marines to take and hold a pass that provided the only avenue of withdrawal for two regiments in danger of being cut off by attacking Chinese troops. Davis advanced at the front of his men up a steep hill under heavy fire and engaged in hand-to-hand combat to seize high ground. Afterward his Marines followed him in three more attacks on enemy-held ridgelines until they finally secured the mountain pass and relieved a rifle company that had been surrounded.

Throughout the ordeal, Davis brought his wounded with him, held the pass against enemy counterattacks, and kept his men inspired and encouraged to keep up the fight. Only after the two regiments got through did Davis lead his own men out to their embarkation area. For these four days of constant heroism, Davis was awarded the Medal of Honor. He later served in Vietnam as a general officer commanding the Third Marine Division.

Davis was truly an extraordinary Marine, and this biography reveals his equally extraordinary life. The Navy Cross and Silver Star were among his other decorations, revealing him as a man of action, though he was also a devoted husband and father. The author was Davis' aide-de-camp during the Vietnam War and writes with a personal knowledge of his subject. The work shines a well-deserved light on Davis and his service to his country.

Bosworth 1485: The Downfall of Richard III (Christopher Gravett, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2021, 96 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $24.00, softcover)

The Battle of Bosworth is one of the most important military engagements in British history, the culminating battle of the Wars of the Roses. Yorkist King Richard III went into battle against the forces of Lancastrian Henry Tudor, but he did not survive. His death altered the course of English history. Originally buried on church ground, Richard's body was discovered in 2012 beneath a modern parking lot.

The author wrote the original account of this battle for the publisher in 1999, but so much new information has arisen, including the discovery not only of Richard's remains but of the battle's location, a new edition was warranted. This newly released work is updated with the latest historical research and archaeological information. The book thoroughly covers origins of the campaign, the phases of the battle, and its consequences. It is well-illustrated, includng several original pieces of art created just for the book.

Teutonic Titans: Hindenburg, Ludendorff and the Kaiser's Marshals and Generals 1847 – 1955 (Blaine Taylor, Fonthill Press, South Yorkshire UK, 2021, 413 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $55.00, hardcover)

Kaiser Wilhelm's army entered World War I with a range of marshals, generals and senior officers who satisfied every stereotype of the aristocratic Prussian officer. Men such as Field Marshal August von Mackensen, who was a talented, vigorous, and resourceful general, did indeed come from the aristocracy. A few commoners, such as Erich Ludendorff, also rose to high positions through competence and skill. There were also men mostly unknown today, such as Georg von der Marwitz, the leader of Prussian Horse, who began the war leading a cavalry corps but later commanded armies on both fronts. There were two generals named Von Below. The first, Otto Von Below, co-commanded the armies that achieved victory at the Battle of Caporetto in 1917. The other, named Fritz Von Below, began the war in the east but later commanded troops on the Western Front, including at the Somme, where he won his second award of the Blue Max.

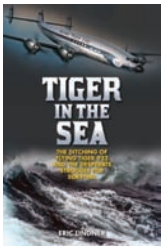
The stories of these officers, those of many of their colleagues, and the men they fought are all covered in this new work. The book also contains vast information on the weapons, tactics, and units of the period. Best of all, the volume contains more than 500 images of these men and the lives they led. The author excels at producing well-illustrated essay books such as this and has several others to his credit. While a number of the subjects of this book later sided with the Nazis, the work presents a picture of Germany's military leadership before the nation's descent into fascism.

Mars Adapting: Military Change During War (Frank G. Hoffman, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2021, 350 pp., maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover)

When a soldier in Iraq asked U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld why his unit lacked needed equipment, Rumsfeld had a quick answer. "You go to war with the army you have," he said. While the comment earned criticism for its insensitivity, he was correct in a literal sense. Militaries enter a conflict with the equipment, weapons, training, and doctrines they believe are, or have

been, effective. Times and circumstances change, however, and during war they can change brutally fast. As a result, those same militaries usually end the conflict with forces vastly different in organization, armament, and operational capability.

This new book reveals how the United States military adapted to new and changing conditions during four conflicts, including how the United States conducted its submarine offensive in World War II, how airpower evolved during the Korean War, how the U.S. Army adapted to the conditions of the Vietnam War, and how the U.S. Marine Corps adapted to the fighting in Al Anbar province in Iraq. The author demonstrates how these military forces were compelled to change, and how the need to change can be difficult for the military to perceive and act upon in a timely fashion.



Tiger in the Sea: The Ditching of Flying Tiger 923 and the Desperate Struggle for Survival (Eric Lindner, Lyons Press, Guilford CT, 2021, 304 pp., photographs, notes, $26.95, hardcover)

In September 1962, a chartered plane crossed the Atlantic Ocean carrying a mixed group of civilians and military personnel on their way to Europe: an army colonel and his wife traveling from West Point, a bunch of newly graduated paratroopers just leaving airborne school, some air force personnel, and even a disabled D-Day veteran.

At night over a stormy sea, the plane developed engine trouble. Soon three of its four engines were out, and the aircraft was going down. The pilot, veteran John Murray, had to belly-land the plane at sea, with 80 passengers and crew at risk. Somehow, he got the plane down without losing anyone, but their ordeal was just beginning as they all struggled, and some failed, to survive in the frigid waters with just a few rafts and their life preservers to keep them afloat. NATO warships, including a Canadian aircraft carrier, searched for them as the world waited for news of either loss or triumph.

A story of heroism, endurance, and teamwork, the story of the flight known as Flying Tigers 923 is one of the unknown aerial dramas of the 20th century. The author's in-depth research and follow-up on the lives of the survivors fills the narrative with the authenticity of human experience, giving the book life beyond a dry retelling of events.

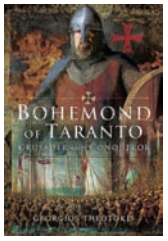
American Artillery From 1775 to the Present Day (Michael Green, Pen and Sword Publishing, South Yorkshire UK, 2021, 257 pp., photographs, bibliography, $34.95, hardcover)

General George Patton was always outspoken. "I don't have to tell you who won the war, you know

our artillery did," he said at the conclusion of World War II. The first militia unit in the continental United States was an artillery unit formed in the 1600s. From there, it was a long, gradual evolution from a few scattered batteries of cannon into the well-coordinated, hard-hitting force it became in the mid-20th Century. Gun and rocket batteries became coordinated through a sophisticated system of fire-direction centers, forward observers, and spotter planes that brought immediate, massed fire down on a target.

Since that time, U.S. artillery has become even more precise, hard-hitting, and long-ranged. In Korea and Vietnam, artillery support caused massive casualties among enemy troops. During Operation Desert Storm, American artillery proved so terrifying and effectivethat surrendering Iraqi soldiers pleaded, "No more steel rain!"

Artillery weapons and their supporting systems are the subject of this new work. It is liberally illustrated and full of technical details on cannon, rocket and missile launchers, munitions, and fire-direction equipment. There is also considerable information on how new ordnance was developed and adopted into service over time. The book is a good reference volume.



Bohemond of Taranto: Crusader and Conqueror (Georgios Theotokis, Pen and Sword Publishing, South Yorkshire UK, 2021, 196 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover)

Prince Bohemond of Taranto was the Lord of Antioch and the unofficial leader of the First Crusade. He possessed enormous ambition, even trying to obtain the Byzantine throne. While that attempt failed, he succeeded in founding one of the Crusader states. He began his military career leading Norman armies in battle across Southern Europe and the Middle East, achieving military success in Italy, Sicily, the Balkans, and Anatolia. Bohemond gained a reputation as a capable leader who could see beyond tactics into the realm of strategy.

There have been few works about Bohemond in English, and this work helps bring him back into the light of historical study. The author focuses not only on Bohemond as a soldier but also as a commander and strategist, and it places him in the context of the 11th-century world. Though he's best known for his role in the First Crusade, the book widens this focus to cover his campaigns across the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The writing is clear and easy to follow through the complexities of the medieval world. ■

CHIVALRY ISN'T DEAD, AND TOY SOLDIERS HD REEMERGES FROM THE ASHES OF XBOX LIVE ARCADE TO BATTLE AGAIN

By Joseph Luster

Chivalry II

Genre: Action/Strategy • **Platform:** PC
Publisher: Tripwire Presents, Deep Silver
Available: Now

Publishers Tripwire Presents and Deep Silver have been busy bringing developer Torn Banner Studios' latest release to the world, and they recently put together an impressive cross-play open beta for *Chivalry II*. Available for a limited time, the beta allowed players to face off against one another regardless of their platform of choice, with matches going live across the PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, and PC platforms, the latter of which was through the Epic Games Store. The results were a handful of competitive and team-based maps and modes that served to showcase how the medieval multiplayer action will unfold in the final product.

Chivalry II tells the tale of Argon II, King of the Agatha knights, who is fighting against King Malric of the Mason Order. Both the Masons and Agathians have their own unique sets of personalities that make the in-game factions play against each other well. While the Mason order will do whatever it takes to emerge victorious, the Agathians act the part of the more noble opposition. That's on the surface, at least, but a sprawling story uncovers the reality simmering behind these personalities and the soldiers and leaders that make each faction special.

There's just as much humor as there is brutal action in *Chivalry II*, further highlighting the emphasis that Torn Banner Studios placed on making this the kind of game you kick back with over the weekend while still finding yourself engrossed in the story. Players can choose from different characters with their own voice options and quirks that make them stand out on the battlefield, from an absolute sadomasochistic maniac to a squire that is most definitely out of his element. The squire is particularly endearing, especially when he expresses a mixture of surprise and relief whenever he accomplishes the daunting feat of staying alive to fight another day.

Among the Team Objective maps included in the beta was The Slaughter of Coxwell, which centers on a town the Mason Order aims to make a violent example out of after its people declared their support for Argon II. The objective for the Masons, then, is to breach the gate, steal the gold, and kill all the soldiers, all while burning the village to ash. The Battle of Darkforest has the Agathian forces preparing to ambush the Mason army that aims to kill the Duke of Fogbern Keep, and the Siege of Rudhelm plays out a vicious final assault upon a Mason stronghold, with the Mason heir helming the defense and standing as the Agathians' final objective.

While Team Deathmatch options include traditional open battlefields like the one found in The Battle of Wardenglade, there's also the Tournament Grounds map, which pits elite warriors on both sides against one another before the backdrop of a crowd of spectators eager for bloodshed. The open beta also provided welcome samples of the new Free-for-All mode, in which

everyone is on their own against everyone else in a brutal contest to be the last player standing.

With in-depth customization options and the type of scale that paves the way for a real feeling of epic medieval battles, *Chivalry II* is showing a ton of promise in the time leading up to its full launch. The final version of the game should be available by the time this issue is in your hands, so give it a spin, and maybe we'll see you on the battlefield ourselves.

Toy Soldiers HD

Genre: Action/Strategy • **Platform:** PS4, Xbox One, Switch, PC • **Publisher:** Accelerate Games
Available: Now

If you were playing games on Xbox Live Arcade back in 2010, you likely at least tried *Toy Soldiers* at some point. The action/strategy hybrid went on to be nominated for the 2011 D.I.C.E. strategy/simulation game of the year award, and while it didn't take home the prize, it still managed to be one of the best-selling titles on the service before eventually making its way to PC in 2012. Now the fun is making a comeback via Accelerate Games in the form of *Toy Soldiers HD*, which is due out on PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Switch, and PC this August.

As the updated title suggests, *Toy Soldiers HD* features enhanced high-definition graphics, as well as improvements to the sound and camera. All of the previously released downloadable content is included from the start, and Accelerate Games promises never-before-played content that offers up something fresh for those who have worn out their copies of the original.

For those who *haven't* spent countless hours pounding around in the boots of little plastic infantrymen, *Toy Soldiers* is essentially a tower defense game with a twist. Once you've strategically constructed your defenses and put together all the necessary counterattacks in your grand strategy, you'll be able to move down into third-person perspective to take part in the battle yourself. The way *Toy Soldiers* highlights both the overhead strategy and the up-close-and-personal action on the ground makes battles more interesting, whether you're dashing across the map on foot, mounting your trusty steed, or piloting a bomber and dropping shells on the enemy below.

Toy Soldiers is basically exactly what it sounds like. It's a childhood war game where you're smashing toys together and making explosion sounds with your mouth along the way, and it's even better if you can get some friends together for multiplayer. If Toy Soldiers HD keeps the spirit of the original alive, it'll be one worth revisiting this year and beyond. ■

VERDUN

Continued from page 53

between entrenched armies. Kaiser Wilhelm demanded to know when the Verdun offensive would destroy the French army. But his general could only insist that his plan would soon succeed. He was wrong.

Verdun was no longer the focus of the Western Front. Falkenhayn cancelled the assault on July 12 and held his ground. But the pugnacious Kaiser had at last had enough. He ordered Falkenhayn relieved of command by the general staff. Disgraced by his association with the worst debacle in the history of the German army, the proud but still arrogant general left the field. He was sent to command the Ninth Army in Transylvania to capture the capital city of Bucharest.

The Kaiser demanded that the new chief of the general staff, Paul von Hindenburg, find a way to withdraw from Verdun in the least costly way. The fighting continued for another four months, with the French slowly regaining ground and re-taking the forts. The French retook Fort Douaumont on October 24 with surprisingly little effort. A larger attack, preceded by heavy artillery fire on December 15 re-captured much of the ground lost since the opening of the battle.

The French revenge was total. The shattered German troops were pushed back to the lines from where they had moved out in February. The Kaiser's demoralized troops threw down their arms. The French rounded up 11,000 prisoners. From that point on, the Supreme Army Command committed nearly all its reserves on the Western Front to the Somme sector.

The Battle of Verdun had been an unremitting fight from February 21, 1916, to December 18, 1916. Verdun had changed the course of the war, but not in the way Falkenhayn had predicted. It proved to be a costly defeat for Germany, and an even more costly victory for France. Falkenhayn's pledge that only two Germans would die for every five Frenchmen turned out to be nothing more than an empty boast. As events turned out, the ratio was closer to four to five.

When the battle drew to a close, more than one million men had died or been maimed in the great battle. To this day only 290,000 bodies have been recovered, with less than two-thirds identified. More than 700,000 dead soldiers are unaccounted for at Verdun.

The outcome of the Battle of Verdun stands as a metaphor for the stagnant trench warfare of World War I. By the time the terrible battle drew to a close in mid-December, the French had returned roughly to their position before the battle began. Little had been gained by either side, and so much lost. ■

ANZIO

Continued from page 33

Highway 7 and Cisterna, Truscott would push his way northeast through the Velletri Gap before taking Valmontone, a small town that sat astride Highway 6.

That thoroughfare was a major supply artery, as well as primary escape route, for enemy troops on the Gustav Line. If Truscott could block Highway 6, there was a good chance that much of the German 10th Army retreating from the Gustav Line would be trapped in a deadly pincers and destroyed in detail. Appropriately enough, Truscott's proposed stampede for Valmontone was codenamed Operation Buffalo.

Late on the evening of May 11, Clark's Fifth Army, paired with the British Eighth Army, lunged at the Gustav Line in the largest Allied operation to date in Italy. After a week of heavy fighting, Allied troops broke through the mountains around Cassino and crossed the Garigliano River near the coast. In a desperate gamble, Field Marshall Kesselring shifted some of Mackensen's reserves south in order to shore up defenses there.

By May 23, it was obvious that the time was right for Allied troops to break out at Anzio. Early that morning, Allied guns opened up on German troops defending Cisterna, and Truscott followed up the barrage with an all-out attack. While British troops and the U.S. 45th Division attacked on the left and center in order to keep the Germans off balance, the main thrust targeted Cisterna. Elite troops from the 1st Special Service Force blocked Highway 7 south of the town while tanks from the 1st Armored Division smashed the defending German 362nd Division. Two days later, the 3rd Infantry Division pitched into Cisterna, brushing aside German defenses in savage fighting in the streets that left the town in ruins.

With Cisterna in Allied hands, the 1st Armored Division drove hard for Highway 6, the ultimate target of Operation Buffalo. But just as quickly as he seemed within reach of his objective, Truscott had the rug pulled out from under him.

Clark, without consulting Alexander or Truscott, abruptly ordered Operation Buffalo canceled on May 26. In a brazen move to capture Rome before British troops had a chance to get there first, Clark ordered Truscott to wheel the VI Corps to the left and drive north to the Italian capital. Truscott and his subordinates were flabbergasted by the decision. They vehemently protested the order, but to no avail. Such a maneuver in the face of the enemy was inherently risky, but Clark remained adamant. The massive pivot toward Rome would commence immediately.

By that time, the Allies' overwhelming superiority in men and materiel was at last beginning to bear fruit. As the Fifth and Eighth Armies hammered their way north and the VI Corps threatened their flank, German forces across the peninsula were on the defensive. German defenses began to crumble on June 1 as Truscott's troops forced their way through a gap in the Alban Hills and into the open ground beyond. With Allied armor barreling north along Highways 6 and 7, Kesselring ordered the evacuation of Rome.

Victorious American columns thundered into the city center on June 5 to the cheers of grateful Italian civilians. German rear-guard troops were pushed out of the northern suburbs, and elated G.I.'s were feted with food and wine. It was the first Axis capital liberated by the Allies, but the glory was short-lived. Following the Allied landings in Normandy on June 6, the exploits of victorious American troops in Italy were given short shrift by the press. "They didn't even let us have the newspaper headlines for the fall of Rome for one day," said Clark.

That abrupt exclusion from the limelight characterized the fortunes of the average soldiers who suffered, bled, and died in the nightmarish ordeal known as Anzio. Long overshadowed by more dramatic events in northern Europe and the Pacific, the grinding war of attrition at the Anzio beachhead was perhaps less glamorous but no less heroic.

Months of fighting had taken a grim toll. While in command, Lucas had estimated that he would suffer 9,000 casualties per month. His estimate was not far from the mark. The Allies suffered 7,000 killed and 36,000 wounded or missing. Trench foot disabled thousands of survivors who had endured flooded foxholes and trenches for weeks on end. The Germans fared horribly as well, suffering 5,000 killed and 35,000 wounded or captured.

Lucas would tragically remain a scapegoat for the entire fiasco, but the Allied high command realized that culpability for the disaster lay higher up the chain of command. Alexander glumly admitted that Allied planners had simply hoped for too much too soon, and tried to effect it with too little. "We wanted a breakthrough and a complete answer inside a week," he said, adding that once forward momentum was halted, "it became a question of slogging." British General Charles Richardson, who was Clark's deputy chief of staff, was even blunter in his assessment. "Anzio was a complete nonsense from its inception," he wrote.

In the wake of the bloody debacle, even Churchill was forced to acknowledge that the entire operation had been ill-advised. Although his admission was cold comfort for the American and British soldiers who had endured the horror of the beachhead, Churchill took the responsibility for the debacle. "Anzio was my worst moment of the war," he wrote. "I had the most to do with it." ■

CARRHAE

Continued from page 81

invasion resulted in the death of Orodes' son Pacorus. The Parthians suffered defeat after failing in their assault on a heavily fortified Roman camp. Orodes' other son Phraates then turned against him, first trying to poison Orodes and then, when this failed, strangling him.

At Rome, news of the disaster at Carrhae was shrugged off as the failure of Crassus' own ambitions and not as a national defeat. Crassus' death nevertheless proved disastrous for Roman politics. His removal as a counterpoise to the other two triumvirs unravelled the triumvirate. Caesar and Pompey turned against each other, unleashing another civil war. Caesar emerged the victor and planned to invade Parthia but was assassinated on the Ides of March in 44 BC Cassius was one of Caesar's assassins.

Carrhae revealed the tactical shortcomings of an army dominated by heavy infantry against one of mobile horse archers. The Parthians cavalry could retreat whenever it wanted, while the opposite was true for the Roman infantry. The Roman army addressed its limitations by adding sufficient auxiliary cavalry, slingers and archers. The aura of Parthian invincibility that had grown up after Carrhae was eventually broken. Subsequent defeats suffered by the Parthians caused a shift in their strategy from large battles to skirmishes and raids against supply lines. The Roman standards captured at Carrhae were returned to Rome during the reign of Emperor Augustus.

Emperor Trajan had nearly conquered Parthia when it slipped out of his grasp just before his death. In the Roman-Parthian War during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the Parthians initially wiped out a legion, but Rome countered by sacking Seleucia and Ctesiphon. The greatest obstacle to a Roman conquest of Parthia turned out to be not its horse archers but the massive logistics required for supply lines and garrisons. Moreover, climate and disease also sapped the strength of the Roman soldiers. Weakened by their wars with Rome, the Parthians were overthrown by the Persian Sassanids early in the 3rd century.

Much of the credit for the Parthian victory at Carrhae must be given to Surena. Unfazed by the size of the Roman army, Surena skilfully used a combination of horse archers and heavy cavalry to wear the Romans down and then finish them off. Surena also made use of superior intelligence, being aided by informers that had gained Crassus' confidence. They successfully misled the Romans into situations where the Parthians had the tactical advantage. The result was that at Carrhae, ancient Rome suffered one of the most disastrous defeats in its entire history. ■

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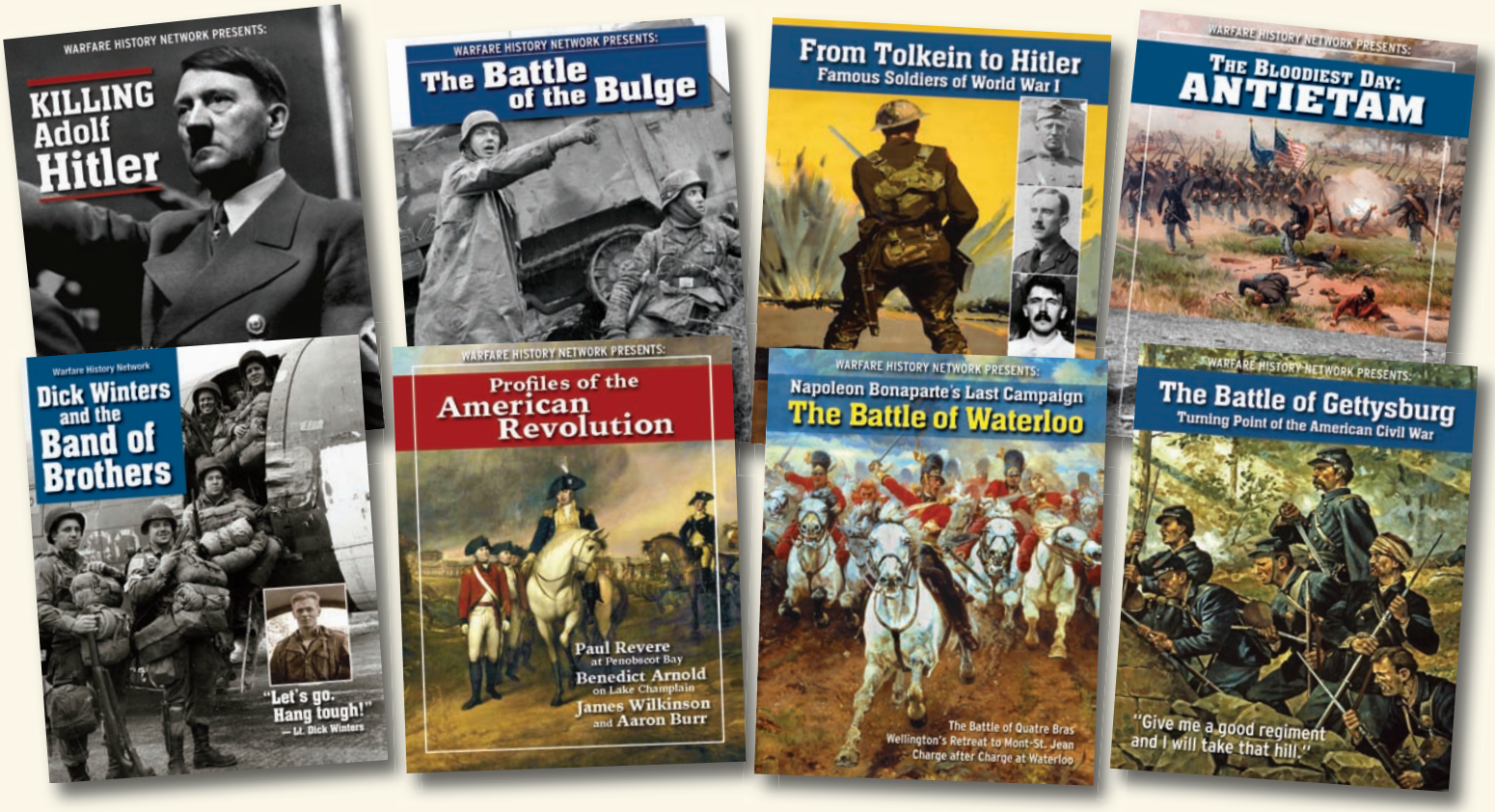

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