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WWII HISTORY - JUNE 2020 Volume 19, No. 4

JUNE 2020

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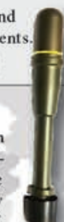

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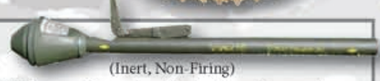

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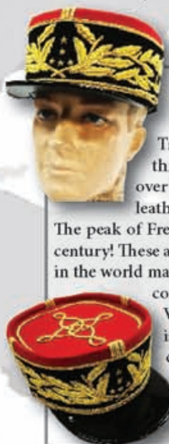
French General Officer's Kepi



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Cover: An American GI armed with a Browning Automatic Rifle takes aim at a German sniper according to the Signal Corps caption that accompanies this photo. National Archives.

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Editorial

A D-Day Theme Park?

IN THE MIDST OF NUMEROUS OBSERVATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE TO commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, the most cataclysmic collective event in human history, comes a puzzling—if not downright troubling—business venture that calls into question just how future generations may perceive the events of the great conflict.

More than five million visitors come to Normandy each year to walk the beaches of the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944, and contemplate the thousands of graves marked by simple headstones, crosses, and Stars of David where those who gave their last full measure of devotion lie. It may scarcely be conceived that visitors to the area where such sacrifice occurred for liberty, freedom and the defeat of Nazi tyranny might one day make it a destination for some type of "Disney style" theme park.

No, not featuring Mickey Mouse and his cohorts, but with some type of Normandy-invasion theme. At first blush, one would consider such an idea to be a joke, and in very poor taste at that. However, it is just what may be in the offing, according to a recent report published in London's *Daily Mail*. According to the story, Mr. Hervé Morin, President of the Normandy region, hopes the attraction may be constructed and open for business before the 80th anniversary of D-Day in 2024. Projected to cost more than $110 million, the park would be built "not on the D-Day beaches themselves," said Morin, "but very close to Juno, Omaha or Utah."

Nicknamed "D-Day Land," the proposed park would be patterned after the Disneyland Paris attraction, which draws up to 15 million visitors each year. Apparently, Morin also noted that he is hopeful a Hollywood director will step forward and help to choreograph a "spectacular" show that would be a permanent fixture in the park, along with actual reenactments of the combat landings, shows featuring lights and sound equipment, theaters, and other venues meant to lure tourists interested in adventure.

Those young men who landed on the windswept Normandy beaches in 1944 were certainly not seeking the kind of ordeal that awaited them. But they went anyway, and the concept of a moneymaking venture that would essentially exploit their life-and-death experience is simply repugnant. Opponents of the project are already mounting an offensive, and according to the Daily Mail a petition seeking to quash the theme park project has gained momentum. A spokesman for the French National Research Group, an organization of historians, condemned the proposed venture, saying, "The Normandy landings is a page in the history of France which should be respected…" Further, the spokesman asserted that the theme park "will seriously harm the ecology of the area, but also lacks the respect for the veterans and those killed during the Normandy landings and the battle that followed."

On D-Day, British paratroopers took heavy casualties during the capture of a battery of heavy German guns near the coastal Norman town of Merville, and today, Mr. Olivier Paz, the mayor of Merville-Franceville, is resolute in his belief that the proposed theme park "should not be allowed to become Disneyland."

For the sake of posterity, it is to be hoped that more discerning leaders will prevail in the prevention of such an ill-conceived enterprise. Those who are advocating the project surely must fail to comprehend the gravity of what took place near their homes more than 75 years ago. They are badly in need of a history lesson, and they need only take a stroll through the cemetery at Coleville-sur-Mer to feel the sense of solemnity that has and must continue to exert its hold on history.

Should any sense of decorum or common decency prevail, the idea of a "D-Day Land" will have come and swiftly be gone—and this column will be the last disgusted gasp of opinion necessary on the subject.

May the honored dead rest in peace and be visited with immeasurable respect and appreciation.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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The Military Gallery

An aged torpedo bomber hit the Axis hard.

Outdated at the start of World War II, the Fairey Swordfish nevertheless contributed greatly to the British war effort.

RADAR, ATOMIC BOMBS, JET ENGINES AND EARLY CRUISE MISSLES WERE among the numerous technological advances of World War II. It was not always high technology that made the difference in battle, however, but rather spirit and spunk, especially early in the war when Great Britain largely stood alone against the combined onslaught of the Axis forces.

One such example was the Fairey Swordfish, a slow-moving, fabric-covered biplane used by the British in the stunning November 1940 attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto. Six months later a venerable Swordfish incapacitated the mighty *Bismarck*, enabling the Royal Navy to close on and sink the pride of Adolf Hitler's navy. Both engagements showed how a determined and outgunned people could, indeed, outmaneuver a fierce foe. The Axis powers were placed on notice that victory was not to be a cakewalk, even prior to Germany's disastrous decision to invade the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.

The Swordfish had its origins in the early 1930s, when it was developed by the Fairey Aviation Company in Middlesex for use in spotting for British naval guns, general reconnaissance, and torpedo and conventional bombing. Powered by a single Bristol Pegasus IIIM radial engine, the biplane had a maximum speed of 138 miles per hour, its 45.6-foot wingspan cross-hatched with bracing wires. That gave rise to its "Stringbag" nickname, referencing the cross-hatched net bag that housewives used to trundle home their groceries.

Technically, the craft was obsolete by the time World War II arrived, having been bypassed by sleeker, more powerful all-metal combat aircraft. But the Swordfish's sturdiness and versatility—as well as its ability to take off and land from the early British carriers—made the biplane still useful to the war effort. With the addition of an auxiliary fuel tank, the Swordfish could range some 1,030 miles, nearly double its usual range.

Early in the war, the British and the Italians were struggling for supremacy in the Mediterranean. Taranto, located at the heel of the Italian boot, housed most of the Italian fleet in 1940 and stood in the midst of the vital sea lanes that linked British interests from Gibraltar to Egypt to India, Australia, and the Far East. The Mediterranean and the Suez Canal were also keys to maintaining Allied ties to the crucial oil-rich Persian Gulf.

A pilot guides his Fairey Swordfish on a torpedo run against the Italian Fleet during the raid on the harbor at Taranto, November 11-12, 1940.

The Italian navy was not to be taken lightly. Strongman Benito Mussolini had poured substantial money and manpower into modernizing the fleet. As early as May 3, 1938, he was able to dazzle

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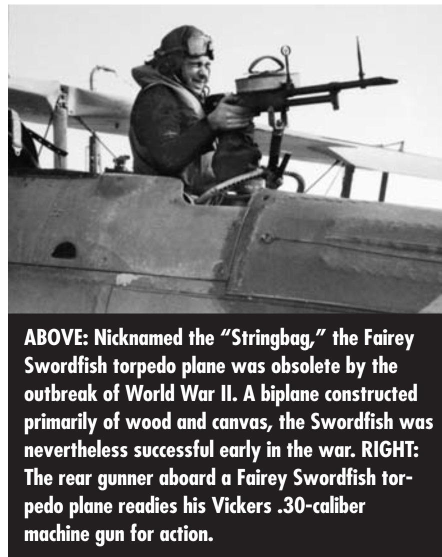
Hitler and other observers with a virtuoso performance off the coast of Naples, where 190 Italian warships, scores of submarines, and an armada of aircraft put on an impressive display. The cruisers *Fiume* and *Zara* topped the show, destroying a target ship 11 miles in the distance.

British admiral Andrew B. Cunningham knew the stakes involved at Taranto. The Royal Navy would have only one shot at overwhelming the Italians in their home port. But the harbor at Taranto was exceptionally well defended. Although the Italians did not have radar, they did have 13 large listening devices that could detect airplanes from miles away. British reconnaissance revealed three rows of barrage balloons with dangling wires to snag the wings and propellers of enemy plans. The Italians were aware that an attack was probable, and their defenses were on high alert. There were some 21 batteries of four-inch antiaircraft guns, 84 automatic cannons, more than 100 light machine guns, and 22 powerful searchlights to blind oncoming pilots. Six Italian battleships, seven cruisers, and 28 destroyers at Taranto bristled with more than 600 antiaircraft guns. Huge antitorpedo nets extended across much of the harbor, adding yet another layer of defense for the Italian fleet.

The British dusted off an old war plan drawn up in 1935 by Admiral Dudley Pound that called for an air-launched torpedo attack on Taranto. As a bonus, Rear Admiral Arthur L. St. George Lyster had served at Taranto in World War I, assisting Great Britain's Italian allies. Between wars, Lyster had trained many of the Swordfish air crews. Lyster updated the five-year-old attack plan and presented it to Cunningham at a September 1940 meeting in Alexandria, Egypt. Great Britain's position was increasingly precarious following the fall of France and the loss of much of the British Army's equipment at Dunkirk. The Blitz was raging at home, and the Italian Army was a short distance from Cairo.



ABOVE: Nicknamed the "Stringbag," the Fairey Swordfish torpedo plane was obsolete by the outbreak of World War II. A biplane constructed primarily of wood and canvas, the Swordfish was nevertheless successful early in the war. RIGHT: The rear gunner aboard a Fairey Swordfish torpedo plane readies his Vickers .30-caliber machine gun for action.

Cunningham pressed on, knowing he had Lyster's trained air crews and reliable reconnaissance photos taken by British planes based in Malta. To confuse the Italians about the scope and nature of the operation, Cunningham had his naval force broken into six components, along with four convoy groups of supply and transport ships. Some came from Gibraltar, others from Alexandria. All were apparently bound for Malta. The carrier force under Lyster, including four cruisers and four destroyers, was able with this naval sleight-of-hand to sneak away from its position between Crete and Malta, and head north.

The Swordfish had been fitted with auxiliary fuel tanks for the long trip, which necessitated reducing the usual three-man crew to two men. This put even more pressure on the men as they navigated through the dark via compass readings and air speed calculations. The biplanes were to take off in two waves from the carrier HMS *Illustrious* on the evening of November 11, 1940. The first flight would split, with part coming in at night from the west and launching torpedoes at the battleship *Cavour,* while the other wave would come in from the northwest, hopefully confusing the defenders, then turning south to attack the battleships while dodging flak and an array of barrage balloons.

The torpedoes were especially rigged for Taranto's rather shallow waters (40-45 feet deep) and carried what the British called duplex pistols, or detonators, that would trigger on contact or in passing under the magnetic hull of a ship. To be effective, the biplanes with the torpedoes had to fly straight and level, making the Swordfish perfect targets for antiaircraft gunners. The aircraft carrying bombs had six 250-pounders, while those with illuminating flares carried only four bombs.

The harbor at Taranto was a scene of confusion and destruction as the sun rose on the morning of November 12. The battleship *Littorio* had sustained three large holes in her hull, and her bow was underwater with an unexploded torpedo found under her. It would take Italian workers some five months to bring the ship back into service.

The battleship *Caio Duilio* had two magazines flooded and had to be beached to be saved. It would be six months before she would see service again. The dreadnought *Cavour* had settled to the bottom of the harbor, her decks awash. The Italians managed to refloat her in July, and she was still under repair in Trieste when the war ended. *Trento,* a cruiser, had sustained ruptured oil tanks, and spilled fuel was afloat in the inner harbor. Months were needed to repair *Trento*'s ruptured bulkheads and ducts. The destroyers *Libeccio* and *Pessagno* were heavily damaged by near misses from the bombs.

Mussolini and his navy had received a black eye at the hands of the British. It was clear for all to see that their best harbor—and the one closest to the sea lanes—was not secure despite all the precautions. The next day, two undamaged battleships, *Vittorio Veneto* and *Giulio Cesare,* were moved up the boot to Naples to keep them out of harm's way. Italian morale sank, and British spirits rose after the battle, which caused many around the world to question the future of battleships.

The action at Taranto triggered the curiosity of one particularly interested party: Lieutenant Commander Takeshi Naito, assistant air attaché at the Japanese embassy in Berlin. Naito was at Taranto within days, closely questioning his Italian allies and taking careful, copious notes. In mid-December, two German officers also appeared on the scene and filed an additional report on the damage. In little more than one year, many of their observations would be put to

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ABOVE: With its torpedo in its sling beneath, a Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber is ready to fly a mission in this image. TOP: A formation of Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers flies above the carrier HMS *Ark Royal* in 1939. An attack by Swordfish delivered the decisive blow against the German battleship *Bismarck*.

use by Japan in the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile, the naval war continued. In late May 1941, the 814-foot-long *Bismarck*, fully loaded at nearly 51,000 tons, and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* broke free from German waters and made for the North Atlantic. In the flight, *Bismarck* managed to rather quickly dispatch the pursuing battlecruiser HMS *Hood,* the epitome of traditional British naval power. There were only three survivors from among *Hood*'s 1,700-member crew. The British battle cruiser went down at approximately 6 AM on May 24, following an eight-minute exchange with *Bismarck*. Seamen on the nearby battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* saw *Hood* torn apart, her bow rising vertically in the air, the twin 15-inch guns of her front turret firing one last defiant salvo.

The stakes had been raised, and the pursuing British were more determined than ever to destroy or drive *Bismarck* and the accompanying cruiser back to port. A Swordfish from HMS *Victorious* managed to damage *Bismarck* on the night of May 24-25, slowing her slightly. Aboard the carrier *Ark Royal,* 15 Swordfish were prepared for flight, with one to be held back for reserve. The ship was pitching wildly, rising and falling on 55-foot waves in the 40-knot wind.

The cruiser *Sheffield* had been ordered to close quickly on the attack. The Swordfish crews had been told that there were no "friendlies" in the attack sector, so in spotting *Sheffield*, the aircrews assumed it was *Prinz Eugen* and went in for the kill. Fortunately for *Sheffield*, six of the 11 torpedoes exploded on hitting the sea, and the vessel managed to evade the other five. The aircrews realized the mistake, with one plane reportedly signaling, "Sorry for the kipper."

Sheffield next caught sight of *Bismarck* in the heavy weather, and she sent out a stream of reports as she shadowed the German ship. The humiliated aviators were determined to make a second run at *Bismarck* to restore their reputation and avenge *Hood*. This time, 17 Swordfish were prepared, with two of them held in reserve.

It was fortunate for the British that they were flying the Swordfish, probably the only aircraft that could have pulled itself into the air during the strong gale that was sweeping *Ark Royal*'s flight deck.

The Swordfish lifted off shortly after 7 PM on May 26, gained altitude, located *Sheffield* and this time used it as a way-finder rather than a target. Once *Bismarck* was spotted, the pilots split into five sub-flights of three aircraft each. In the rising and falling sea, *Bismarck* gunners had difficulty sighting on the planes. In addition, there was a 40 knot northwest gale pushing the slow-moving planes sideways at nearly half their forward speed, presenting German gunners with another confusing calculation as the Swordfish pressed the attack. They scored three hits on *Bismarck*, two forward of the aft turrets that did little damage and a third that wrecked her steering system. In retaliation, *Bismarck* lobbed a series of 15-inch shells at the smaller *Sheffield,* causing the British ship to lay down a smokescreen and make a discreet spin away at full speed. A solitary Swordfish, high above on shadowing duty, continued to track the wounded *Bismarck* for the British fleet.

The damage to *Bismarck*'s steering system enabled the battleships *King George V* and *Rodney* to close for the kill on the morning of May 27, ending a pursuit that had lasted five days and covered more than 1,700 sea miles. In the resulting shootout, *Bismarck* took a number of serious hits as *Rodney* closed to 2,000 yards to finish her off. *Dorsetshire* also closed, firing some 255 eight-inch shells. *King George V,* located five miles off, lobbed shells when she was sure she would not endanger the other British ships.

Someone aboard *King George V* noted that the ship's Polish midshipmen were absent from their stations. They were found below deck sharpening knives and bayonets believing that boarding was imminent and they would have an opportunity to help settle matters personally with the Germans.

A number of torpedoes fired from the British ships had hit home. *Dorsetshire* provided the coupe de grace, firing a round of 21-inch torpedoes into the side of *Bismarck* and sending her to the bottom. German survivors would later claim that they had scuttled the ship and put her down themselves. Either way, *Bismarck* was now below the sea and no longer a menace to Allied navies and shipping, thanks in a large measure to an outdated biplane that initially incapacitated the state-of-the-art German warship.

The Swordfish was used around the world during the remainder of the war. It was pressed into service escorting convoys of merchant ships supplying both Great Britain and the Soviet Union, in addition to providing costal coverage off Allied shores around the world. Two squadrons of Swordfish took part in the British attack on the Vichy French-held island of Madagascar, and others saw action in Greece and Iraq. Like the British people themselves, the Swordfish proved that spirit and spunk could indeed prevail against seemingly overwhelming odds. □

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By Mark Simmons

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Hijacking Hungary: The 1944 Nazi Coup in Budapest

To keep Hungary in Hitler's orbit, a special operation executed a Nazi coup in the capital city in 1944.

"IF YOU WANT TO JOIN THE BANQUET, YOU'LL HAVE TO HELP FIRST IN THE kitchen," Hitler cynically told the leader of Hungary after signing an alliance with him. That alliance ended with a Nazi coup perpetrated as the tide of World War II turned decidedly against Germany.

Hungary in 1944 was a political paradox—a kingdom without a monarch ruled by an admiral without a navy.

Admiral Miklos Horthy was commander-in-chief of the Imperial Austro-Hungarian Navy when the empire's end in the chaotic conclusion of World War I left Hungary landlocked. The Bolsheviks took advantage to seize power, but Horthy quickly led a counter-coup, and ruled Hungary over the next two decades as regent for the ousted Hapsburgs while keeping them out of the country.

Horthy's disastrous drift toward Hitler had less to do with ideology than territory—recovering land lost to Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, including his native Transylvania. The Nazis' Vienna Award, brokered by bullying, returned some of this territory, and on November 20, 1940, Hungary signed Hitler's de facto alliance, the Tri Partite Pact.

The Hungarian Prime Minister, Paul Teleki, realized what this would lead to and killed himself. "We will become a despoiler of corpses," his suicide note despairingly declared.

Hungary instead became a collector of them, some 200,000 Hungarian soldiers falling futility in Russia, including Horthy's eldest son. Stalingrad effectively destroyed the Hungarian Army—100,000 lost there alone—and the Germans pulled what was left from further fighting. The next military action regarding Hungary involved the Germans invading the country after uncovering Hungarian peace overtures toward the Allies and driving unopposed into Budapest on March 19, 1944.

The Prime Minister took refuge in the Turkish Embassy for eight months before voluntarily coming out to end up digging coal at Mauthausen concentration camp. For his part, Horthy chose to stay in office if barely in power. "What was I to do?" he was to rationalize. "It was quite clear that my abdication would not prevent the occupation of Hungary and would allow Hitler to install a government entirely composed of Nazis, as the example of Italy clearly showed." 'Whilst I was still Regent,' I told myself, 'the Germans will at least have to show some consideration.' I could not leave a sinking ship which at that moment had the greatest need of its captain."

The most endangered group of "passengers" in Hungary was the Jewish population—800,000 people, the largest in Europe so far left largely untouched by the war and Hitler. "I have been an anti-Semite all my life," Horthy admitted, though he had tolerated them as necessary to help run the economy. Such cynical considerations counted for nothing to the likes of Nazi Holocaust architect Adolf Eichmann, who descended without warning on Budapest and shipped 437,402 Jews to Auschwitz in only 60 days.

Covert Nazi operations succeeded in seizing control of the Hungarian government in the autumn of 1944. Famed Waffen SS Major Otto Skorzeny, left, was in charge of Operation Panzerfaust.

Protests by the Red Cross and the Vatican, as well as Allied threats of possible war crimes charges, forced Horthy to suspend the deportations on July 9, 1944. With Romania signing an armistice with the Russians and the Red Amy remorselessly dri-

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Admiral Miklos Horthy, left, photographed with Hitler and other high-ranking German leaders in 1938, when the Hungarian leader believed Germany would protect his country from Soviet aggression.

ving toward the border, Horthy sent out peace feelers once more. "I knew that the Germans would do all they could to prevent Hungary from concluding an armistice, which I saw was the only way out," Horthy would write, but even he could not have imagined the series of events that would follow.

Waffen SS Major Otto Skorzeny was world famous—or infamous—as the soldier who had snatched Mussolini from his Allied captors. Now Hitler tasked Skorzeny with the hijacking an entire country.

"You are going to prepare the military occupation of Castle Hill in Budapest, the nerve center of the Hungarian government," Hitler directed him. "You will start this operation as soon as we learn that the regent is about to betray the duties incumbent upon him according to his treaty of alliance with Germany."

With brutal blank-check authorization in hand, Skorzeny was winging his way to Budapest within hours. "The stakes of the game I was about to play were enormous," he realized. Posing as a tourist from Cologne and staying in a modest hotel, Skorzeny diligently walked the streets in civilian clothes, guidebook in hand, seemingly taking in the sights but actually scouting the city while plotting in secret with local Wehrmacht and SS elements.

Word soon came through informants that Hungarian negotiators were on their way to Moscow for an armistice. "Now was the time to act," Skorzeny recognized.

The operation to come was originally codenamed "Margarethe." However, Skorzeny chose to relabel it "Mickey Mouse."

"Sunday, October 15, 1944, a radiant sun shone in a limpid sky," Skorzeny recalled. The son of Admiral Horthy, believing that he was meeting representatives of Tito's Yugoslav Partisans, blundered into a trap set up by the Germans.

Admiral Horthy was under the impression the meeting was taking place in the set-piece safety of the old royal palace, but it was actually set for 10 AM at a boarding house. Skorzeny was driven, still in civilian garb, to the meeting to discover the Hungarian version of secrecy. The younger Horthy's limousine, biggest and flashiest in town, was parked at the curb in plain view, while a trio of army officers sat in a truck behind it as another pair made a suspicious show of strolling in the park across the street.

But Skorzeny had made extensive preparations to spring his trap. Gestapo agents occupied the floor above the meeting room, while two more agents, in military police uniform, were approaching outside seemingly on patrol. Their job was to rush the door and cut off any escape attempt by the building occupants. Both Skorzeny's driver and a trusted sergeant were disguised as Luftwaffe personnel, occupying a bench in the garden apparently idling the morning away, while a squad of SS troopers lay in wait around the corner for Skorzeny's signal.

Skorzeny's car parked in front of Horthy's to block it. He then he put on his own little performance, popping the hood and pretending further to tinker with the engine. On schedule, at 10:15, the Gestapo, in their military police disguises, tromped past Skorzeny with the building entrance in the corner of their eyes.

"All the actors of the drama were now present," Skorzeny later wrote. "The curtain could now rise on Act One." What he went on to describe seemed more appropriate for 1920s Chicago than World War II.

"Scarcely had the first policeman crossed the threshold of the building when a burst of machine-gun fire struck the second. Severely wounded in the belly, he fell close to me. The two Hungarian officers who had been strolling in the gardens came up at a run, revolvers in hand and began shooting. I had just time to take cover behind my car; a second later a fresh burst of fire from the truck made a sieve of the open door of my good old Mercedes."

Skorzeny continued, "Now the game was in earnest. At the first shots, my chauffeur and the noncom had rushed to my aid; the chauffeur was hit in the thigh but remained on his feet. I blew my whistle, the signal for my company to swing into action; then the three of us attempted with our revolvers to answer the intense fire of the Hungarian tommy guns. There was nothing funny about our plight; my car, behind which the three of us were crouched, began to look more and more like a sieve; on every side, bullets ricocheted around us. From time to time we put our heads out, just for a fraction of a second, in order to take at least approximate aim so as to keep our assailants at a distance, if the word can be used when men are firing at you from 10 to 15 yards."

The firing fracas was finished in five minutes with the Hungarians scattering. In the meantime, the Gestapo had broken in on the hapless younger Horthy and rolled him up in a carpet as he struggled and cursed. Then they lugged him out and unceremoniously dumped him in the back of their own truck and roared off to the airport for a waiting plane and quick getaway out of the country.

News of the kidnapping reached Regent Horthy shortly before a scheduled session of the Crown Council later that morning. It left, him, though, undeterred. "That Germany is on the verge of collapse is no longer in doubt," he announced during the meeting. "Should the collapse occur now, the Allies would find that

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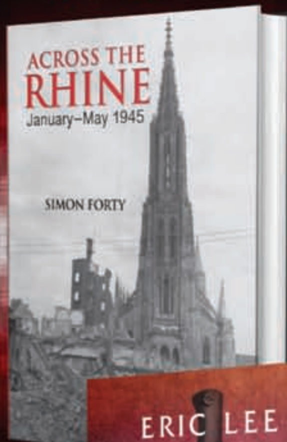

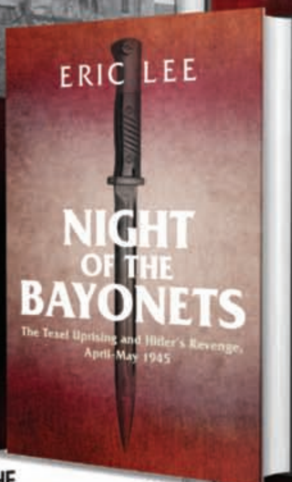

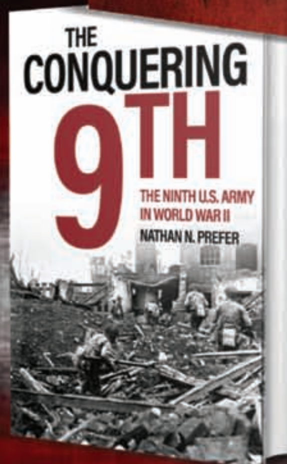

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When Horthy put out peace feelers to the Allies, Hitler took action to execute a coup d'etat. Skorzeny led Tiger II tanks and a contingent of German troops to the Vienna Gates at Castle Hill in Budapest, where the Germans took swift control of the Hungarian government.

Hungary is Germany's only remaining ally. In that case Hungary would cease to exist as a state. We have no alternative. We must decide to sue for an armistice."

The German High Command declared Hungary a Wehrmacht operational area, in which only its orders could be issued and obeyed, while the abominably anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi Arrow Cross of local collaborators was staging a coup around Budapest with German aid. Still, at 1 PM Horthy went on the radio to announce that an armistice had just been signed in Moscow, making the point of quoting former German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck: "No nation is forced by its obligations to sacrifice itself on the altar of an alliance."

Horthy sealed off and fortified the main government Castle District, forlornly hoping for a negotiated settlement with Hitler.

"At a conference late that afternoon, we decided to attack the hill the following morning," Skorzeny related. "I set zero hour at 6 AM, practically at dawn. This moment seemed to me particularly favorable to achieve total surprise, an indispensable factor if I wished to succeed without a pitch battle."

Skorzeny would lead the assault on Castle Hill himself. He later recounted, "At about three in the morning I was at my combat post at the foot of the hill near the drill ground. Having assembled my officers, I unfolded my map and by the faint light of flashlights I explained and clarified the last details while sipping the boiling coffee my orderly had made. My plan of action was partially settled. I would try to climb silently up the hill as though this 'jaunt' was the most natural thing in the world."

With 15 minutes to go, Skorzeny boarded a truck, leading a quartet of fearsome Panther tanks behind him and two truckloads of SS troops bringing up the rear. "Once again," he wrote, "I consulted my wrist watch: 5:55. With my right arm I described a circular motion: 'Start your engines running!' Then, standing up in my truck, I suddenly raised my arm several times: 'Forward!' Slowly, for the hill was a steep one, we moved off."

The column crested the hill, then accelerated to 25 miles per hour. The first test facing Skorzeny came as he passed a barracks with machine guns visible at the windows.

There was no firing.

"The decisive moment was approaching," he recalled. "Now we had passed the Ministry, and Castle Square stretched out before us. Three large tanks had taken positions there. As we passed the first, it pointed its gun to the sky to show t did not intend to fire."

Skorzeny ordered a Panther to burst through Castle gate and roll over a makeshift barricade. He then sprinted to the commandant's office, burst in, and demanded his immediate surrender. The urgency of the situation was heightened by the echoes of shots and machine-gun fire nearby. The appearance of one of Skorzeny's subordinates to announce that all the Castle's entrances were secure settled the issue for the commandant, and he and Skorzeny ended the battle of Castle Hill, such as it was, with a handshake.

It had in fact ended before it had even begun, at Horthy's order.

As Horthy explained years later, "We had nothing to oppose their armored vehicles, a fight that could only lead to the decimation of our faithful guards. Though I had been unable to achieve my aim of bringing peace to Hungary, my radio proclamation had nevertheless proved to the world that Hungary would not willingly submitting to occupation. But I

intended to ask no one to lay down his life for me. I therefore ordered that no resistance should be made. It is easily said we should have engaged in a hopeless struggle rather than submit to Hitler, and such a view reads well on paper. It is in fact total nonsense. An individual can commit suicide—a whole nation cannot."

However, Horthy's order came too late for one guard unit in Castle Park, and the shooting Skorzeny had heard ended with the coup's only casualties—four Germans dead and eight wounded, three Hungarians dead, 15 wounded. After voluntarily arriving at SS headquarters, Horthy heard another shot as his military aide committed suicide.

After 12 hours a virtual prisoner, Horthy was permitted to return to the Castle to pack for what he expected would be a meeting with Hitler. He discovered his rooms had been ransacked by Skorzeny and his military mobsters. Then, Hitler's plenipotentiary appeared to thrust into his hands the decree for his abdication, in a final display of disdain without bothering to translate.

"I see that you seek to give your coup d' etat an air of legality," Horthy responded. "Will you give me your word of honor that my son will be liberated and will join us if I sign?"

"Yes, your highness, I give you my word of honor."

Not believing him but having no choice, Admiral Miklos Horthy, without a navy, without a king, and now out of a country, signed. He would not be surprised by the piece of paper he would get in return. "Ribbentrop [German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop]," he would write, "merely advised my daughter-in-law that he [the younger Horthy] was 'suitably housed,' a cynical description of his residence in the Mauthausen concentration camp."

Admiral Horthy spent the rest of the war comfortably confined with the rest of his family, while over 100,000 Hungarian Jews were slaughtered by maniac Arrow Cross quislings or shipped to Auschwitz. Then, in January 1945, the Red Army battled its way into Budapest to impose Communism for 44 grim, miserable years.

Reunited after the war with his son, Horthy found refuge, appropriately, with another authoritarian right-wing dictator, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar of Portugal, dying in 1957. In neighboring Spain, Otto Skorzeny escaped Allied custody, enjoying exile until his own death in 1975. □

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., has contributed to WWII History *on numerous occasions. He writes from his home in Fort Myers, Florida.*

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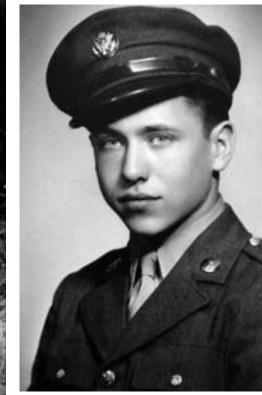

Stephan Lewy

A German-American Teen With a Flair for Psychology

Young Stephan Lewy completed an unlikely tour of duty with the U.S. Third Army after emigrating from his native Germany.

STEPHAN H. LEWY WAS YOUNG, MILITARILY INEXPERIENCED, AND A MOST unlikely American soldier. Yet when he reached Utah Beach 30 days after D-Day, he was all business as a staff sergeant in U.S. military intelligence, attached to the 6th Armored Division that shortly became part of General George S. Patton's hard-charging Third Army.

To all appearances, Staff Sergeant Lewy was yet another fresh-faced 19-year-old called upon to rise to the occasion for his country, but his personal history was far more complex. Lewy, a Jew, had been born in Berlin and managed to escape several times from the proverbial mouth of the lion as the Nazis swept across much of Europe. Against nearly overwhelming odds, he successfully made his way to America in June 1942.

Lewy became one of the nearly 2,000 German-born Jews who were secretly trained in military intelligence work at Camp Ritchie in western Maryland. The "Ritchie Boys" knew the German language and its rich idioms as well as the culture, making them uniquely suited to plumb the minds of Nazi prisoners. And they were exceptionally motivated, because many had lost family and friends to the dark forces that had engulfed Europe.

Lewy's father had suffered physically ever since he was picked up by the Nazis in 1932 and sent to Oranienburg. He was arrested because he was Jewish and was active in socialist circles, two marks against him as far as the Nazis were concerned. He was beaten badly and lost a number of teeth. He was held for about a year, and the Nazis released him after he suffered a heart attack.

Just weeks after Kristallnacht, his father began the paperwork at the American consulate for admission to the United States, where relatives had promised to support the three of them until they were on their feet.

The eight-week Camp Ritchie training program prepared Staff Sergeant Lewy and others in "non-forceful" interrogation techniques that would be used to question the very men who had persecuted them and their families. They served on the front lines to obtain crucial, firsthand information from German prisoners, aware all the while aware that their own capture would almost certainly mean death.

Lewy knew that recently captured soldiers were often disoriented, scared and hungry. He and his compatriots had detailed information on the captured Germans' units—officers' names, the units' battle histories, equipment and the like.

"We used that information to overwhelm prisoners with our expansive existing knowledge. This would often get them talking in the belief that we already knew everything anyway," says Lewy.

And they also worked to establish rapport with the captured Germans, finding common interests to lower their guard. They were taught not to rough prisoners up, but some did resort to putting a pistol in clear view to build some anxiety and help "clarify" a captive's mind.

The Ritchie Boys learned map-reading, how to identify a pris-

An American officer interrogates two recently captured German soldiers somewhere in France. Stephan Lewy (inset), a young Jew born in Berlin, became an interrogator for the U.S. Army.

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Stephan Lewy

Cleaning his rifle in the field, Stephan Lewy became an important intelligence gatherer for the U.S. Army, interrogating captured German soldiers. Lewy was among nearly 2000 German Jews trained in military intelligence work at Camp Ritchie in western Maryland.

oner's unit and rank from his uniform, and the ability to read and analyze captured documents. Every German soldier carried a pay book, which listed where and when he was assigned to each unit and when he was promoted. The pay books proved invaluable.

"Among other things, we could compare the pay books to our existing unit records and update them if necessary. We also were taught to quickly recognize the rather distinctive sounds of different German, Italian and even Russian rifles and machine guns," notes Lewy.

Lewy never physically abused a prisoner, but he did once did ask a recalcitrant SS prisoner to put his name on a piece of wood and nail it in the form of a cross "…so he could later be identified. When that failed to work, I had him taken outside, handed him a shovel and asked him to dig. After a few minutes, I asked him to lie down beside the hole to make sure it fit. He broke at that point and suddenly became very forthcoming," Lewy recounts.

Other men developed their own methods to get prisoners talking. Ritchie Boy Fred Howard headed an effort to obtain bombing information on German industrial targets, such as tank factories, for Allied air campaigns. Prisoners from such areas would obviously be reluctant to provide such information, knowing that it would likely result in the aerial pulverization of their hometowns.

When a prisoner refused to discuss these prime military factories, Howard would apologize. He would then say he had orders that recalcitrant prisoners were to be turned over to Commissar Krukov.

The prisoner would then be taken to Guy Stern, another American interrogator, who was decked out as"Commissar Krukov, Liaison Officer," complete with uniform and medals of the USSR.

Howard and Stern knew the Germans feared being taken prisoner by the Russians. A special interrogation tent had been set up, complete with a photo of Stalin.

After the prisoner's encounter with "Commissar Krukov," Howard would walk the prisoner back to his office, where the German would invariably disclosed the information being sought to his American interlocutor.

Another Ritchie Boy, Martin Selling, was interrogating one particularly arrogant and uncooperative prisoner when the German asked where Selling had learned to speak such perfect German. It was at a small town, Selling reported, called Dachau, where he personally saw how the SS interrogated prisoners. Presumably, the prisoner became far more cooperative after learning that his interrogator had once been a witness to a Nazi concentration camp.

"We were taught not to strike the prisoners; not to even touch them. It made sense anyway, because information obtained through physical means would have been nearly worthless, with a prisoner saying anything to stop torture, as many Nazi interrogators discovered," adds Lewy. "We were not going to be like them. We were Americans and were determined to work at a higher standard."

Lewy served with a fighting unit, an advancing unit, so "I looked primarily for tactical information that could be put to use right away in our drive into Germany. Troop size, location, equipment and enemy morale were all immediately important."

But the Ritchie Boys were also instructed to keep an eye on the bigger picture. One, for example, came across a fellow who had served at Peenemunde, the secret Nazi missile test site on the Baltic Sea. He immediately called in U.S. Army Air Forces intelligence officers to more precisely debrief the man on what he did there and what he knew, according to one report.

Lewy's unit was also involved in the Battle of the Bulge, where "snow, fog, trees and cold were hallmarks of my experience as we forged ahead under Patton's Third Army to help the encircled American troops. Heavy snows, difficult terrain and enemy resistance created frustrating delays."

During the Battle of the Bulge, some English-speaking Germans managed to infiltrate the lines dressed as American soldiers in an effort to sow confusion. "That certainly worked, and it also caused me substantial personal concern as well, because of my rather conspicuous German accent. You can bet that I stuck close to my officer, Lieutenant Szabo, throughout the battle, because he could vouch for me. I was like a bug on flypaper with him for more than two weeks," Lewy adds.

Getting captured would not have been pleasant for Lewy, and while in Europe he was always near the front lines. He had his dog tags changed from H for Hebrew religious affiliation to O for none, but his last name still would have been a giveaway to a suspicious German interrogator. In fact, two of the Ritchie Boys *were* captured, identified as "German Jews," and executed by the Nazis during the Battle of the Bulge, according to reports.

One of Lewy's more interesting experiences involved getting an false American officer arrested as a spy. "We were in Breidfelt having breakfast in a small cafe," he commented. "I noticed an American officer at the next table who never changed his knife from his right hand to his left like Americans do when eating."

Lewy rose and approached a 6-foot, three-inch MP and stated that the man was not an American officer. He looked puzzled as he listened to Lewy speaking with a German accent the distinctive European method of not moving utensils between hands while eating. Intrigued, the MP approached the individual and spoke with him for a few minutes before hustling him out of the restaurant. The impersonator man-

aged to glower at Lewy on the way out, confirming his suspicions.

At one point, Lewy's unit discovered a German bunker just beyond the Siegfried Line. It was deserted, but the telephone system there had been left intact, along with a map on the wall that listed all the telephone numbers in the nearby bunkers which, naturally, Lewy could read.

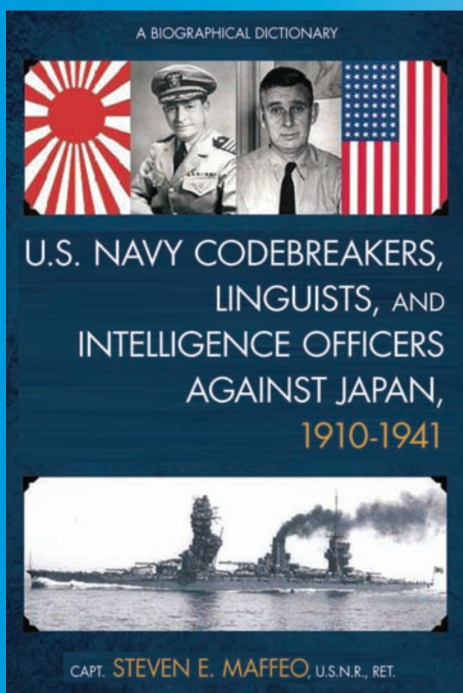
With a go-ahead from American headquarters, Lewy called the Germans and asked for their surrender. A Nazi officer in one bunker vehemently stated they would not surrender, and then Lewy heard a shot. The German enlisted men then started coming out, hands raised. Once inside that bunker, the Americans discovered the German officer's body lying where he had been shot in the chest, killed by his own men who had opted to live.

Despite Lewy's best efforts, the Germans in one bunker refused to surrender. Two bulky Americans, each carrying flamethrowers, were sent over. They went to work, and the Germans were soon running from the bunker with their uniforms and hair aflame. A couple of other Americans vomited, but the two soldiers working the flamethrowers moved on to their next assignment, apparently accustomed to seeing the results of their work.

National Archives

When American troops discovered the horrific Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald, Lewy was one of the soldiers responsible for bringing the townspeople to the camp to view evidence of Nazi atrocities, as well as join work details to bury the numerous victims.

Later, in lower Bavaria, Lewy's unit found extensive police records in the city hall. Reading through the detailed records, he found the names and locations of all the Nazi party leaders living in the city. Lewy was given the go-ahead to round them up and arrest them. Over four or five weeks in the city, he located and turned over more than 170 prisoners to higher authorities. It was one of his most gratifying experiences of the war.



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"I took solace, though, in knowing that the prisoners would not receive the same type of treatment that the Nazis had meted out to their prisoners, including my father a decade earlier in Berlin," he adds.

Lewy's unit liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945. "We were sickened and shocked by the stench and conditions in the camp," he recalled. "The prisoners were like walking skeletons, with the dead lying about in contorted positions. Many of the battle-hardened Americans were overcome and cried like babies."

As Lewy walked through the camp, he quietly murmured Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. "Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will, Amen."

"I felt true anger and rage, especially when I came across piles of human bones lying outside the ovens," he said. "The prisoners who were alive were barely alive, with skin hanging from their emaciated bodies. One officer entered the SS office and saw pieces of tattooed skin apparently taken from prisoners, a lamp shade made from human skin, and even a couple of shrunken heads."

Lewy was ordered to round up local Germans and force them to view the horrors of the camp. The locals were also pressed into service to dig a grave and help clean up human remains lying about the camp. In addition, he drove into nearby Stuttgart every morning to fill two trucks with elderly Germans who were also pressed into service. The old men dragged the corpses and dropped them on top of each other in a large grave.

"I and the other Americans had a hard time even then containing ourselves," said Lewy. One soldier shouted obscenities at an elderly German man. "How could they not have known?" asked another American, speaking almost to himself.

Lewy's unit served under Patton, and he was present at some of divisional briefings given to the general. "His boots were always polished, and his pistols at the ready, but he would invariably ask which plan of attack being proposed would present the fewest causalities," Lewy remembered. "His concern for his men was a side of Patton that was not widely publicized. We also learned that unpacking was often a waste of time because Patton always wanted his men to be on the move."

"You got to get in your mileage for the day," Patton reportedly said to his commanders in half jest.

"He was always on the move. Patton believed that it was better to be on the attack

Stephan Lewy

Years after his World War II experience, Stephan Lewy has visited many school and civic groups to speak about his experiences during the war.

to keep the Germans on the backs of their heels," Lewy adds.

By July 1945, the war in Europe was well over, and Lewy had earned the Bronze Star and five campaign medals. Those, coupled with his service time abroad, meant that he was among the first to head home with the knowledge that he would soon be sent to the Pacific. Shortly after he arrived stateside, he learned that the atomic bombs had been dropped on Japan and that World War II had ended. He was delighted to be reunited with his mother and friends, but his father had suffered another heart attack and had passed away.

In recent years, Lewy has spoken to more than 1,000 school children. "My message has been called simple yet profound," he concluded. "Enjoy the life you have. Make the best of it, even if it seems out of control. Move forward; things will improve. I stress the responsibility of everyone to be respectful and to love their neighbor."

Staff Sergeant Lewy used the GI bill to attend night school at Northeastern University. He graduated in accounting and earned his CPA designation. He married a young American girl, and the couple had two children. Before retirement he worked for two Boston-based hotel chains. The 94-year-old is a widower, who now resides in the Buffalo, New York, area.

Author Phil ZimAuthor Phil Zimmer is a U.S. Army veteran and a former newspaper reporter. He has written on a number of World War II topics.

General Patton's personal report on this battlefield game-changer

NOTES ON BASTOGNE OPERATION

The relief of Bastogne is the most brilliant operation we have thus far performed and is in my opinion the outstanding achievement of this war. Now the enemy must dance to our tune, not we to his.

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Life In a Unique Nazi POW Camp

American prisoners share remembrances of a unique Nazi POW camp, and an on-site museum presenting their experiences is being planned.

ON JULY 28, 2018, AT THE DOUBLETREE HILTON HOTEL NEAR DULLES AIRPORT, outside Washington, D.C., Mariusz Winiecki, a 42-year-old Polish professor, told an audience of Americans about his experiences growing up in the small town of Szubin, 150 miles southeast of Warsaw. Everyone in the audience knew where Szubin was and what it had been during World War II – a Nazi POW camp.

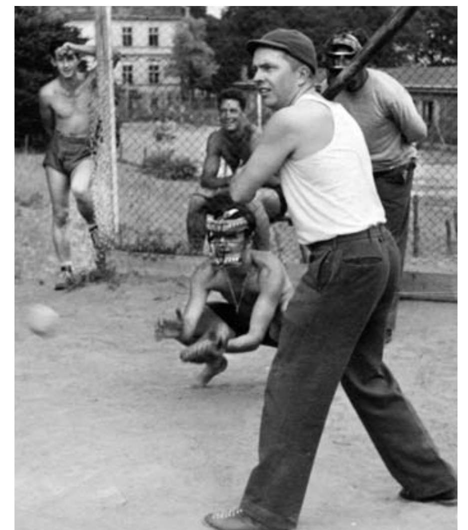
Szubin had been the site of Oflag 64 (an abbreviation of the German term Offizierslager, meaning "Officers' Camp"). Formerly a boys' school, it consisted of a large, white, three-story stucco house surrounded by newly-built wooden, brick, and stucco barracks to house the American POWs. The quarters for the Kriegies, as they called themselves (short for Kriegesgefanganen or "war prisoner"), were among the best to be found in any German POW camp.

High-ranking American officers lived four to a room in the main building; each room had its own toilet and sink, rare items in any prisoner-of-war camp. The rest of the officers lived in the barracks. Lieutenant Brooks Kleber, captured at Normandy, recalled, "We lived in dormitories. We were not overcrowded. We had cubicles made out of beds and lockers. Our mattresses were stuffed with straw, which was tolerable."

Lieutenant Sidney Thal spoke about the camp at age 95 in 2008. He remembered, "We were never abused. We were never mistreated. We operated, acted and reacted solely by the Geneva Convention as much as we could, and so did the Germans."

The Americans ran the camp inside the barbed wire, while the Germans controlled the outside, and Szubin developed the reputation of being among the best of all the German POW camps. Still, no American ever forgot that it was a prison, and none of them knew how long a sentence they would have to serve. Or if the Germans might decide to kill them all when they started losing the war.

The American commander was Colonel Charles "Pop" Goode, who administered the camp of some 1,400 men with strict discipline, just as if it were an army base back home. The men shaved and exercised every day and kept their uniforms as neat as they could. At a reunion in 2011, Annette Nelson, the widow of Lieutenant Richard Secor, one of the POWs, said that her former husband had told her that



ABOVE: POWs at Oflag 64 play baseball to pass the time until liberation. The prisoners at the POW camp were well treated until they were evacuated by their German captors as the Russian Army neared the camp. TOP: German officers and enlisted personnel stand in front of Oflag 64, a former reform school for boys that was converted into a somewhat unique prison camp for American officers during World War II.

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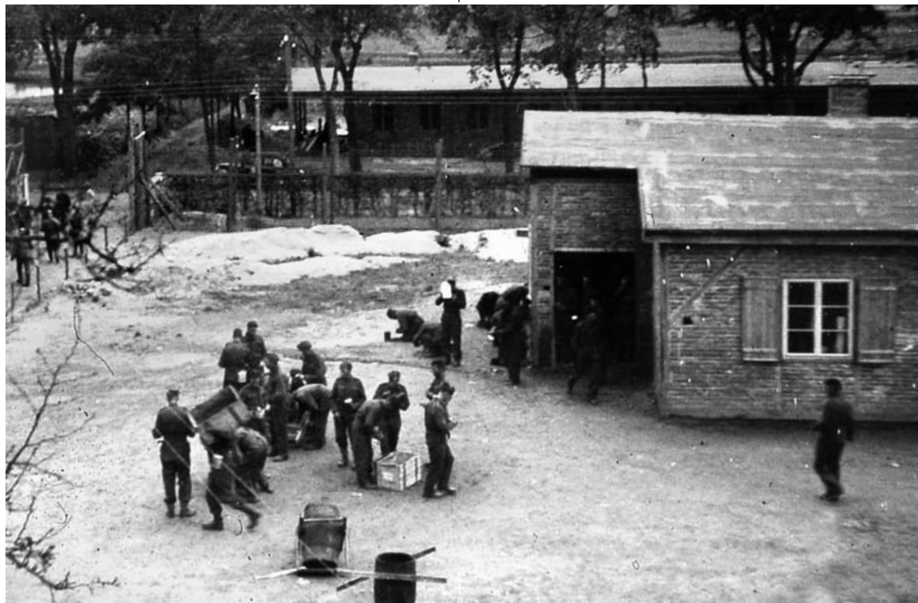

ABOVE: British POWs mill about in the yard of the prison which became Oflag 64. Originally, the prison held captives from several countries. The first American POWs arrived at the location in June 1943, after they were captured in North Africa. BELOW: A Red Cross official stands second from left in this photo taken at Oflag 64. Colonel Thomas Drake is at far left, while Lt. Col. William Schaefer is third from left. At right is Lt. Col. John Waters, son-in-law of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.

the men "wanted to maintain military discipline and create some order to their lives."

Pop Goode's executive officer, Lt. Col. John Waters, had been captured in North Africa in 1943. Waters was the son-in-law of General George S. Patton. Both Goode and Waters worked hard to keep up the soldiers' morale. To this end, Goode acquired a set of bagpipes. Not everyone liked the sounds it made, but each appreciated why he kept playing them—to boost their spirits. In addition, the men acquired a shortwave radio, which was kept hidden and on which they could listen to the BBC news.

The daily lives of the Kriegies were also made more pleasant by a Swedish attorney, Henry Soderberg, known to the Kriegies as "The Welcome Swede," who visited the camp every two to three months as a representative of the YMCA. He brought books, supplies, and equipment to enable the men to have a variety of recreational programs to help pass their time in confinement.

"We had an incredible amount of activities," Lieutenant Kleber said. "We had a 3,000-book library. We had 'Szubin Prep,' in which high-school and college-level courses were taught by the prisoners. We had a jazz band, a classical orchestra. There was a baseball league and a touch-football league." And, of course, there were the never-ending bridge tournaments.

Polish residents from Szubin would hide in the bushes outside the barbed wire to listen to the musical performances. Wilbur Blaine "Bill" Sharpe recalled that the shows the Kriegies put on and the camaraderie they fostered "kept us alive frankly. That's what kept us going."

The Kriegies published a monthly, single-page newspaper, *The Oflag 64 Item*, which was printed by Anna Kricks, the wife of Willi Kricks, who had owned a printing plant before being conscripted into the German Army. The German-camp administration approved of the project and never interfered with its publication. *The Oflag 64 Item* continues as a quarterly publication by the active survivors.

The Red Cross brought a food parcel for each man once a week to supplement the meager rations supplied by the Germans. The packages included meat (shared equally by all in the dining hall), as well as milk, chocolate, cheese, and raisins. Nevertheless, the men were almost always hungry. The Germans provided only a near-starvation diet of thin, watery soups, ersatz coffee that tasted so bad many men used it for shaving, and one-sixteenth of a loaf of bread per person per day.

Lieutenant Jay Drake remembered, "Barley was added to many of our soups. Along with the barley you also got meal worms, which, when soaked, sank to the bottom of your bowl. Since you could not afford to discard any food, you never looked into your bowl as you spooned out the last of your soup."

The lack of food was not the only problem facing the Kriegies in Oflag 64. Despite the programs and activities they set for themselves, their greatest enemies were boredom and apathy, particularly when winter set in. Some succumbed to a type of stupor and lay in bed much of the day throughout the long, cold season, too dispirited to continue trying to be active. Morale plunged with the falling temperatures.

One hardship the Oflag 64 inmates did not have to deal with in Szubin, in contrast to those in other German camps, was brutality on the part of the guards. The Oflag 64 guards left the Americans alone to run the camp, for the most part; some even became friendly.

Lieutenant Colonel Waters said in a 2012 interview that the Americans "could 'tame' almost any German soldier if we gave him a D-Bar (the four-ounce Hershey ration chocolate bar that came in Red Cross parcels) and cigarettes. Those poor bastards were hungry. They were smoking dried blossoms from the basswood trees with a little bit of tobacco mixed in

Doyle. R. Yardley, Home Was Never Like This, Yardley Enterprises, 2002

The only American prisoner to die at Oflag 64 was Captain Richard Hurley Torrence, Jr., who suffered a massive heart attack. In this photo fellow POWs pay tribute to the officer during a graveside service.

with it. They had no decent soap; they had no chocolate bars and with the D-Bar and cigarettes, we could get just about what we wanted from the German enlisted men."

On a day in early June 1944, three German guards burst into the camp to tell the Americans about the Normandy landings. These guards had previously served on the Russian front. Waters described them as "…those poor damn cripples who were guarding us. Frozen feet, frozen fingers. Broken arms and legs, but [they] couldn't get in there fast enough to tell us that the U.S. had invaded. They were so pleased about that; they were fed up with the war."

The Kriegies went wild with excitement when they heard the news, certain that the war would soon end and they would be going home, maybe in only a few weeks. But the fighting dragged on through the summer and into the beginning of winter again. On October 1, 1944, Lt. Col. Waters wrote a cryptic line in his notebook (he called it Remembrances) which echoed the thoughts of most of the men. "And so another month begins. When will this end?" In 2017, Waters' son, George, visited Szubin, carrying his late father's faded notebook.

Soon it was time for another melancholy Christmas. "Morale got lower and lower," Lieutenant Brooks Kleber wrote. "The Red Cross parcels stopped. Weather got colder. The guards told us the Russians were getting closer. Sometimes we thought we heard fighting."

By mid-January 1945, the Americans noticed daily streams of refugees filing past the camp, trudging west through the snow and bitter cold. The Kriegies watched the endless columns with mounting excitement. Then, on January 20, the German authority told them to prepare to

Continued on page 78

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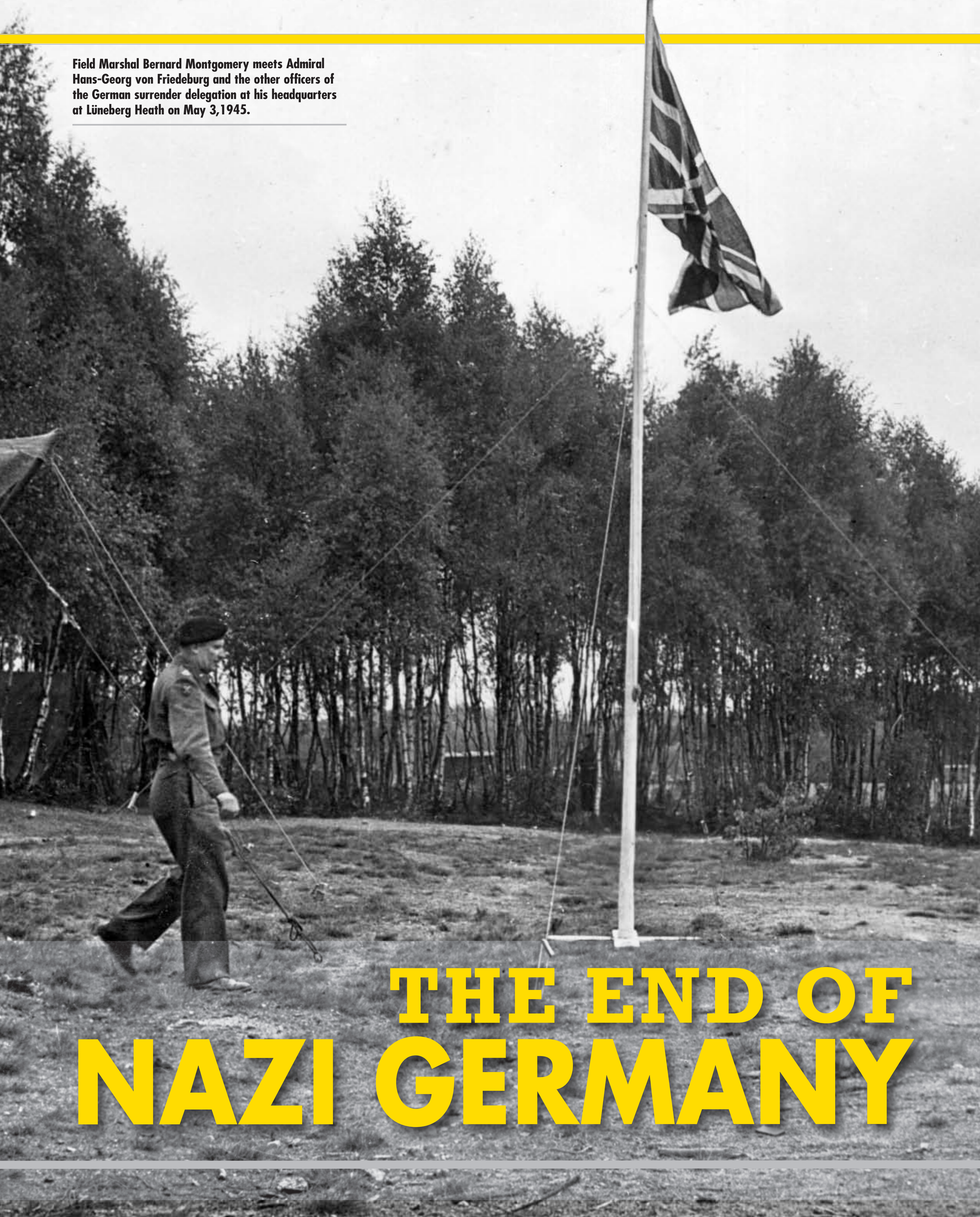
THE END OF NAZI GERMANY



Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery meets Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg and the other officers of the German surrender delegation at his headquarters at Lüneberg Heath on May 3,1945.

The long-awaited coming of V-E Day, signifying victory in Europe, marked the end of Nazi Germany and Hitler's Third Reich.

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

National Archives

"Who are these men? What do they want?" snapped the imperious Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery to the four German officers drawn up in front of his caravan, saluting him under a Union Jack. A reporter from Time Magazine described Monty as acting "like a householder who took his visitors for tradesmen." It was the spring of 1945, and the end of Nazi Germany was approaching, but the field marshal was obviously preoccupied.

Standing before Montgomery on North Germany's Lüneberg Heath were Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg, head of the German Navy; General Eberhard Kinzel, chief of staff to Field Marshal Ernst Busch, commanding the German land forces facing Monty's troops; Rear Admiral Gerhard Wagner; and Major Jochen Friedel. Friedeburg was cadaverous in a leather greatcoat, while Kinzel, at six feet, five inches, looked the picture of Prussian arrogance, with what Montgomery's aide called "the cruelest face of any man I have ever seen."

It was 11:30 a.m. on May 3, 1945, and, despite the arrogance and pomposity in the faces of the Germans, it was the opening scene of the last act of World War II in Europe. The four German officers—a fifth would join them later—were approaching Montgomery to begin the process of Germany's complete and unconditional surrender.

In actuality, Friedeburg and his crew were not there to surrender. They were standing before Montgomery as part of a desperate last-minute strategy by Germany's last Führer, Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz. In his will, Adolf Hitler had named the U-boat legend and head of the German Navy as his successor as Reich president. Dönitz certainly had an outstanding war record, compared to the other services—his U-boats were sinking British ships right up to the last days of the war—but more importantly, despite his postwar memoirs and statements by his supporters to make him appear an apolitical naval professional, Dönitz was a loyal Nazi, telling his junior officers, "The Führer is always right." He supported anti-Semitic measures in Europe and clearing Jews and part-Jews out of the Navy. Dönitz further cast himself as "apolitical" by preventing the top Nazis that Hitler had removed from office from re-joining the new government: SS boss Heinrich Himmler, Luftwaffe chief Hermann Goering, former foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, and a covey of lesser Nazi leaders who had overseen massacres and exploitation across Eastern Europe.

With Hitler's suicide in Berlin on April 30 and that of the newly appointed chancellor Joseph Goebbels the same day, Dönitz inherited control of the Third Reich. The problem was that there wasn't much Reich left. Germany had been cut in two by advancing Allied armies, the Soviets in the East and the Americans and British in the West. The U.S. Ninth Army shook hands with Soviet troops with much celebration on the Elbe River. Lieutenant General George Patton's Third Army was driving into Czechoslovakia, Lt. Gen. Sandy Patch's Seventh Army detonated the ornate stone Nazi eagle atop the stadium where Hitler held his Nuremberg rallies, French troops conquered Stuttgart, and troops of three divisions—the U.S. 3rd

Infantry and 101st Airborne, as well as the French 2nd Armored—all claimed to reach Berchtesgaden, Hitler's alpine retreat, first. Soviet troops had conquered Vienna, were on the verge of conquering Berlin, and continued fighting against last-ditch determined German defenders in Prague.

On paper, the German Army was a powerful force—six million men and 300 divisions on its chinagraph maps. But three of its army groups were trapped: one in Kurland, another in East Prussia, and a third in the Netherlands. Army Group B in the Ruhr had disintegrated; Army Group C in Italy was in the process of surrendering; Army Norway was stuck where it was; Army Group F was fleeing the Yugoslavs, which had pulled together scattered partisan and guerrilla organizations into a mighty army; Army Group Center was facing revolution in its rear in Czechoslovakia; and Army Group Northwest, facing Monty, was about to collapse.

Worse, the Luftwaffe was down to a handful of planes. Propeller-driven aircraft lacked fuel, and the new jets had engine and metallurgy problems that gave them 100-hour lifespans. The Navy was reduced to evacuating refugees from the Baltic to remaining open ports. Virtually all the factories or sources of raw materials had been captured or destroyed.

Dönitz realized he had no way to turn the tide in a war that was clearly lost. His only goal now was to buy time, time for German troops and civilians fleeing the advancing Soviets to reach Allied lines and relative safety. The only way to do that, he and his advisers reasoned, was to offer a series of partial surrenders to the Americans and British, which would include forces facing the Soviets, so that the Americans and British could advance into those sectors and take those surrenders. Indeed, Dönitz himself made that very statement in his proclamation on taking office: the battle against the British and Americans would only continue to save the German people from the Soviets.

The necessity of gaining these truces became greater when Monty's tanks drove across the Elbe to Lübeck, cutting off Army Group Vistula's escape route into Schleswig-Holstein. If that army group and all of the civilians trudging along in its wake wanted to reach safety, the army group would have to surrender to Montgomery. However, its forces faced the Soviets, and the Allies had made it clear that all German surrenders had to be to the forces they faced, not the forces they chose to surrender to.

National Archives

Soviet tanks move through the rubble-strewn streets of Berlin. During the last days of World War II the German capital city was ravaged by the marauding Soviet Red Army.

Nonetheless, Dönitz had to do something from his acting capital, the Naval Cadets' School in Murwik, a suburb of the Schleswig-Holstein town of Flensburg. Despite the reduced circumstances, Dönitz insisted on all the perks of his office. Every morning, a limousine drove him 500 yards from his quarters to his office.

He ordered Friedeburg, his successor as head of the Navy, to start the process of partial surrender, which meant driving to the British-occupied city of Hamburg, now a mass of brooding rubble and stone. From there, he and his crew went on to Monty's headquarters, which had already learned of German intentions.

Montgomery's boss, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, gave firm instructions to his often petulant subordinate that any surrender accepted could only be a tactical one, from the German forces he faced. If Germany as a whole wanted to surrender, that delegation had to report to Ike's headquarters at the College Moderne de Technique des Garcons in Rheims, sometimes called the "Little Red Schoolhouse."

Friedeburg now made his appeal to Montgomery, asking him to accept the surrender of the three German armies retreating toward Mecklenberg from the Soviets and make guarantees to take in these troops and the civilians with them.

"No, certainly not," Montgomery snapped. "These armies are fighting the Russians, and therefore, if they surrender to anybody, it must be to the Russians. It has nothing to do with me, and I am not going to have any dealings with anything on my eastern flank from Wismar to Domitz on the Elbe, on which flank we are now in closest contact with the Russians. A Russian peace, therefore you surrender to the Russians. Now, the subject is closed."

The Germans were taken aback by Montgomery's ferocity. Friedeburg said that surrendering to the Russians was unthinkable. Montgomery shot back, "You should have thought of all these things before you began the war, and particularly before you attacked the Russians." To add further harshness, Montgomery noted how the Luftwaffe had destroyed the British city of Coventry in 1940.

Then Montgomery sprang something else on Friedeburg: an offer to accept the surrender of all Germans between Lübeck and Holland and the northern flank, which would save civilian lives in battle areas facing Montgomery.

The Germans tried again, offering staged retreats while the British advanced slowly toward the Soviet lines.

"No. There is nothing to do. I am not going to discuss any conditions at all as to what I am going to do. I wonder whether your officers know what the battle situation is on the Western Front. In case you don't, I will show it to you," Montgomery answered.

The field marshal whipped out a battle map that showed the situation, which shocked the Germans greatly. "That put them in ripe condition to receive a further blow," Montgomery wrote later.

He decided to let them ponder the harsh reality by offering them lunch—under a British officer's eye. The Germans pronounced the British food excellent, compared to what they had been eating. The British officer, to hammer

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akg images

ABOVE: Red Army artillerymen service their weapon in a Berlin street. The Soviets suffered heavy casualties in the fighting but conquered the Nazi capital after a bitter struggle. TOP: Teenage members of the Hitler Youth armed with Mauser rifles and Panzerfaust anti-tank weapons man a trench as they train to defend Berlin against the approaching Red Army.

home Monty's points about Germany's parlous situation, said it was mediocre stuff, mere field rations.

After lunch, Montgomery summoned Friedeburg and his crew back and told them to understand three points: first, the Germans must surrender all forces in Holland, Friesland, the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, Schleswig-Holstein, and Denmark. Second, once that was done, Monty would discuss the implications of that surrender, including dealing with civilians and the disposition of German forces. Third: "If you don't agree to point number one, I shall go on with the war and will be delighted to do so and am ready. All your soldiers will be killed. These are the three points—there is no alternative—one, two, three, finished!"

Friedeburg told Montgomery he had no power to accept those points, but he could take them back to Dönitz for review. Montgomery wrote them out, then Friedeburg and Canadian Colonel Trumbull Warren, one of Monty's liaison officers, headed back to Flensburg and Dönitz to hash out the situation. Warren went no further than the British front lines.

The following day, May 4, Friedeburg drove through the outposts of the legendary 11th Hussars to accept Monty's demands. Dönitz and his top advisers had argued most of the night over the points, with the military concerned that Montgomery's orders would insult their honor, while the civilians were ready to accept the terms to end the pointless fighting. Emotionally, Dönitz sided with the military, but he recognized that more bloodshed was useless.

Friedeburg returned with Warren to Montgomery's headquarters, arriving at Lüneberg Heath around 5 PM. Montgomery had ordered his artillery to cease fire with surrender so close, so the only sound was wind battering the plain.

The Germans entered a tent full of Monty's staff officers and war correspondents, finding the field marshal sitting at an ordinary Army trestle table, covered with an Army blanket, inkpot, and "ordinary Army pen that you could buy in a shop for two pence," Montgomery wrote. He was relaxed. The Germans were not. One lit up a cigarette. Monty looked at him harshly, and the German put it away.

Montgomery read off the terms in English, slowly and steadily, and then called up each German, in turn, to affix their name. He signed last. In a few minutes, it was all over. Montgomery was supposed to send the original surrender document to Eisenhower in Rheims, but instead sent a photostat. He kept the original, and it is now on display in the Imperial War Museum. The pen, however, disappeared. "I suppose someone pinched it," Montgomery wrote.

With that surrender in hand, more surrenders followed. Up next was the surrender of the German 19th Army in Innsbrück, Austria, on May 5, to the U.S. 44th Infantry Division. Army Group G threw in the towel the same day at Baldham, Germany, to the American VI Army Group. The 102nd Infantry Division took the surrenders of two German armies by itself.

On May 5, the Netherlands' suffering formally ended at Wageningen, where Canadian I Corps commander Lt. Gen. Charles Foulkes and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands took the sur-

National Archives

German General Eberhard Einzel signs surrender documents while Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery looks on at Lüneberg Heath. These proceedings took place on May 4, 1945.

render of Col. Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz in the Hotel De Wereld, 10 miles west of Arnhem, the scene of bloody fighting in September 1944.

As the Allies negotiated food deliveries to the German-occupied areas, Eisenhower's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, met with the sinuous Artur Seyss-Inquart, Germany's civilian ruler of the Netherlands, who refused to accept unconditional surrender, as it would stain his standing in the eyes of future Germans. Smith retorted that he would hold Seyss-Inquart responsible for further useless bloodshed, adding in frustration, "Well, in any case, you are going to be shot."

"That leaves me cold," Seyss-Inquart said softly.

"It will," Smith answered.

A more pleasant encounter between victor and vanquished in the Netherlands area took place when Maj. Gen. Friedrich von Straube, out of touch due to communications breakdowns, surrendered personally to Canadian Brigadier James Roberts on May 5. The Canadian drove von Straube to Canadian 2nd Corps headquarters for the ceremony, after which Roberts took von Straube back to his own headquarters so that he could get started on disarming his troops and forming them up to go into captivity.

After 20 minutes of driving in silence, a German staff officer tapped Roberts on the shoulder and said von Straube wanted to know what he had done before the war. The general himself asked, "Were you a professional soldier?"

Roberts dug deep into his mind all the way back to 1939, and finally remembered. "No, I wasn't a regular soldier," he answered. "Very few Canadians were. In civilian life, I made ice cream."

Back at Lüneberg, signalers tapped out, "All call-signs from Sunray. Cease fire," to advancing British forces. They were followed by messages from Montgomery to his men, thanking them for their service and valor. British troops kept advancing, seizing Kiel and the factories where Germany's latest U-boats were being built. Royal Navy intelligence officers scrutinized newly finished U-boats and rows of midget submarines, fascinated by what they saw.

Monty's aide-de-camp, Colonel Charles Sweeney, was one of the last casualties, killed in a car accident, which devastated "The Master," as Monty's inner staff called him.

Most importantly, Montgomery bundled Friedeburg and his party on a C-47 Dakota transport plane to take them to Eisenhower's headquarters in Rheims to surrender all of Germany.

In Rheims, it was raining when word came in of the surrender at Lüneberg Heath. Time Magazine's Charles Wertenbaker wrote: "The gray-frayed clouds hung so low that they seemed to touch the chimneys … Smoke from locomotives in the railroad yards sped slowly across the street and through the open windows of the École Technique." The wait went on all day: the Germans did not arrive at the school until 5PM.

Despite his exhaustion from the strain of the previous weeks and days, Eisenhower found the energy to send a message to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, honoring the courage and determination of the British people through six years of war.

Ike also wrote a letter to his wife, Mamie, noting the "trying times … The enemy's armed forces are disintegrating, but in the tangled skein of European politics, nothing can be done except with the utmost care and caution where the interests of more than one country are involved … I was wide awake very early with nothing decent to read. The Wild Wests I have been reading are terrible. I could write better ones left-handed."

At the "Little Red Schoolhouse," Eisenhower's top staff set up to receive Germany's surrender in the War Room, a 30-foot-square area with pale blue walls covered with campaign maps. These included the day's air operations, casualty lists, supplies, weather reports, and the mounting total of German POWs accumulated.

Both: National Archives

Admiral Karl Dönitz (left) succeeded Hitler as Führer of the crumbling Third Reich after Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe (right), was stripped of rank and honors by Hitler.

A phalanx of news photographers clutching immense Speed Graphic cameras entered the room now, waiting for the big moment. It turned out to be a bit of an anti-climax. Friedeburg, looking pale and tired, faced Bedell Smith and Britain's Maj. Gen. Kenneth Strong, head of intelligence and a fluent German speaker, to negotiate. Eisenhower refused to meet any German general until they had surrendered. Friedeburg once again asked his counterparts for a partial surrender, so that Germany (hopefully with Allied support) could continue to fight the Soviets.

With Strong interpreting, Smith told Friedeburg that could not happen. The dismayed admiral told Smith that he had no authority to sign a general surrender of Germany. Smith told Friedeburg to get in touch with Dönitz in Flensburg. An equally dismayed Eisenhower hit the sack, having barely slept for days.

Meanwhile, the Americans and British kept

the Soviet leader, Josef Stalin, aware of developments. Knowing his ego and paranoia, Ike recommended that a senior Russian officer on the Allied side sign the surrender for the Soviet Union. In addition, he insisted that the Rheims surrender be quickly followed by another one the following day at Soviet headquarters in Karlshorst in Berlin, as the final, legal surrender of the prostrate nation. Eisenhower agreed, seeing Stalin's point.

Major General Ivan Suslaparov was at Rheims already as Soviet liaison to Allied forces. He had commanded the 10th Army in battle against the Germans and represented the USSR at the surrender in the Netherlands, so he was a veteran of both combat and negotiation with the Germans.

The Soviet high command approved his presence as Russia's signatory, while insisting that the surrender apply to all fronts where the Germans were fighting. As that was precisely Eisenhower's aim, that condition was also not a problem.

Meanwhile, in Flensburg, Dönitz faced the hard facts and the latest message from Friedeburg on the morning of May 6. With destruction continuing with the relentless Allied advance, there was only one option left to save the German people, general capitulation, perhaps in two stages: an end to hostilities that would let German troops move into the Western zones, followed four days later by the surrender of all German troops.

To negotiate this and sign the surrender, Dönitz sent Col. Gen. Afred Jodl, the popeyed but capable chief of the general staff to Rheims. He arrived late on May 6 and strode arrogantly from a staff car into the "Schoolhouse." An American military policeman in white helmet snapped a salute, and Jodl and Friedeburg saluted back in the pre-Hitler style.

The German delegation entered the map room, but there was no salute from any of the Allied military men he outranked. Jodl exclaimed, "Ah hah." Jodl was taken to Smith's office, where the German presented his case to Smith and Strong. They in turn took it to Eisenhower.

Beneath the legendary Eisenhower grin was a man of ferocious temper, and now he showed it. Convinced the Germans were stalling against the inevitable, Ike snapped at Smith, "You tell them that 48 hours from midnight tonight, I will close my lines on the western front so that no more Germans can get through, whether they sign or not, no matter how much time they take."

That proved effective. Jodl contacted Dönitz and was told to surrender. Now preparations moved into full gear. Ike's headquarters already had documents prepared for this occasion. They merely required some re-typing to accommodate the signers' names. U.S. Navy Commander Harry Butcher, a prewar radio executive now serving in Ike's public relations team, was made "supervisor of the fountain pens" and ordered to make sure the two Parker pens were saved. One was to go to President Harry Truman, the other to his Ike's old friend Kenneth Parker of the pen-making dynasty, who had requested months ago that he get one of the pens used in the surrender.

Butcher pointed out to Eisenhower that it might be a good idea to provide a pen to Churchill, and Ike said, "Oh, Lord, I hadn't thought of that." Butcher had to find another pen.

The bigshots assembled in the War Room. General Carl Spaatz, top U.S. airman in Europe; Britain's General Sir Frederick Morgan, who had written the D-Day plan; British Admiral Harold Burrough, commanding all naval forces in Europe; General Francois Sevez, representing France; Smith, Strong, and other top-ranking officers, along with 17 reporters

National Archives

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: After surrendering their weapons, stacked in the right foreground in this photo, disarmed German soldiers march off to captivity. This photo was taken on May 10, 1945, in the Netherlands. TOP: A British naval officer held in a POW camp for four years leads German officers through British lines as they make their way to conclude terms for the surrender of the city of Hamburg, Germany, on May 2, 1945. British troops entered the major port city the next day.

National Archives

ABOVE: Senior Allied officers gather after the German surrender at Reims. General Dwight Eisenhower holds the pens used to sign the surrender documents. At Eisenhower's right is his chief of staff, General Walter Bedell Smith, and to his left is Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder. TOP: Colonel General Alfred Jodl (center), later convicted and hanged as a war criminal at Nuremberg, prepares to sign the instrument of surrender at General Dwight Eisenhower's headquarters in Reims, France, at 2:39 AM on May 7, 1945. Major Wilhelm Oxenius and Admiral Hans-Georg Friedeburg are seated to Jodl's left and right respectively.

from the pool. There was one microphone and one film camera to cover the surrender.

Friedeburg and Jodl took their seats, and Strong stood behind them, presenting them with the surrender documents. Before Smith could speak, Butcher presented the Germans with a solid-gold fountain pen. Smith told the Germans that the surrender awaited signature and asked if they were prepared to sign. Jodl gave a slight nod. With the gold pen, he signed the first of two surrender documents. Butcher grabbed the gold-plated pen and substituted one he had been given by newsman Charles Daly in Algiers to sign the second one. That one would go to Parker, despite the fact that it was made by Parker's competitor, Sheaffer Pens.

After Jodl had scrawled his last name on both documents, he snapped to attention and addressed Smith in English: "I want to say a word."

Smith granted the request. In German, translated by Strong, Jodl said, "General! With this signature, the German people and German armed forces are, for better or worse, delivered into the victor's hands. In this war, which has lasted more than five years, both have achieved and suffered more than perhaps any other people in the world. In this hour, I can only express the hope that the victor will treat them with generosity."

It was 2:41 AM, British Double Summer Time on May 7, 1945. The surrender would go into effect at 11:01 AM on May 8.

Now Jodl was brought to Eisenhower's office, where Ike sternly asked the German if he and his team understood the terms and whether they were prepared to execute them. Jodl answered, "Ja."

Eisenhower then said, "You will, officially and personally, be held responsible if the terms of this surrender are violated, including the provisions for German commanders to appear in Berlin at the moment set by the Russian high command to accomplish formal surrender to that government. That is all."

Jodl saluted and left.

Ike held up the two gold pens and Butcher's Sheaffer in a "V for Victory" gesture, and, surrounded by the men who had taken the surrender, broke out the broad grin that Churchill said was "worth 10 divisions." Eisenhower then made a short broadcast for radio and newsreels to announce the surrender.

Next, Eisenhower sent messages to his army group commanders letting them know of the surrender and ordering them to hold in place. There was no sense in taking any more casualties now. One such recipient, General Omar N. Bradley, got the word at his headquarters that morning of May 7. Five years to the day before, he wrote later, Bradley had been a lieutenant colonel in civilian clothes riding a bus down Connecticut Avenue to his office in the old Munitions Building in Washington, D.C. Now, he commanded 43 divisions in four armies.

One more duty remained: sending a message to the Allied capitals and leaders that Germany had surrendered. Ike's staff played around with a number of grandiose and grandiloquent messages, but Eisenhower dictated his own message in his own straightforward style: "The mission of this Allied force was fulfilled at 0241 local time, May 7, 1945."

Ike's mission was finished, but the Germans who had surrendered were not done yet. On the morning of May 8, they flew to the Soviet headquarters in Karlshorst, just outside of Berlin, for the final surrender. A different cast of senior characters would make and take this surrender. The Soviet representative was 1st Belorussian Front commander Marshal Georgy K. Zhukov, who had driven German troops back from Berlin to Moscow. Representing Britain would be Air Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, the deputy supreme commander. General Spaatz represented the United States, and General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny was there for

France. The Germans sent the Luftwaffe's General Hans-Jurgen Stumpff, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, the head of the Oberkommando Wehrmacht, and Friedeburg again, to sign his third surrender. When what was left of the German government was arrested on May 23, he would commit suicide.

At the ceremony, Keitel was shocked to see a French representative for some reason and muttered, "The French! That's all we need!"

There wasn't much to discuss at this point, beyond punctilio. The Soviets were not happy about having the French sign to accept the surrender, given their lower-level role in the war. It was decided that Zhukov and Tedder would accept the surrenders, as representatives of the Eastern and Western commands, while Spaatz and de Lattre would be "witnesses."

The Soviet headquarters was the former German Army Engineering School, which had somehow remained undamaged in the battle. It would become the Soviet Army's headquarters in the postwar occupation.

At 11 PM on the 8th, Zhukov called the meeting to order and summoned the three Germans with their aides. Tedder asked, "Have you received the document of unconditional surrender? Are you ready to execute its provisions?"

"Ja. In ordnung," Keitel responded, screwing his monocle into his left eye and removing a glove. He placed his immense field marshal's baton on the table and signed the document, his face a mask of disdain, contempt, and arrogance. He wore his National Socialist Party golden emblem as he did so. Once finished, Keitel saw his aide, Lt. Col. Karl Brehm, in tears. Keitel said dryly to Brehm, "You can make your fortune after the war writing a book about this,'With Keitel in the Russian camp.'"

The Allied leaders followed, with a comic moment. Neither Spaatz nor de Lattre had a pen. The war was officially over as of that moment, and the three powers would make the announcement on May 9, making that V-E Day, in theory.

Meanwhile, beyond Ike's headquarters, the war was sputtering out with a mix of violence, horror, and comedy. Allied troops struggled to care for sick and dying ex-prisoners in newly-liberated concentration camps. Defiant SS men hauled other prisoners out of their camps and took them on death marches deep into German lines. Any one of the starving inmates who fell out of the columns was gunned down. Hitler Youth armed with one-shot Panzerfausts—the world's first disposable anti-tank weapon—and filled with Nazi ideology took potshots at passing American and British vehicles, determined to take one GI or Tommy down with them.

All across Europe millions of ex-prisoners trekked hither and thither seeking their lost family members, homes, or just another meal. In most cases, they would find none of the above and wind up in Allied camps as "displaced persons." In a bizarre irony, some of the camps were erected by German POWs and were near the sites of liberated concentration camps. There, workers of the United Nations Recovery and Rehabilitation Agency struggled through linguistic difficulties, supply shortages, and bureaucratic nightmares to provide their charges with basic needs, medical care, connections to missing relatives, and hope for a new life.

Fighting continued in Prague and other Czech cities, where an army of Russian renegades under General Andrey Vlasov switched sides for the second time in the war to support the Soviets and Czechs seeking to defeat the Germans. The Vlasov army of about three divisions was hoping that by joining the Allies they could avoid certain treason trials and execution at the hands of Stalin. They helped defeat defiant Nazi forces, but most of the Vlasov troops and other renegade Russians who had fought for Hitler—in some cases with their families—would be forcibly shipped back to the Soviet Union and the waiting gulags.

In Breslau, besieged by Russian forces, gauleiter Karl Hanke, who commanded German defenses that had been holding out for weeks, delivered a defiant speech and then deserted his

National Archives

French citizens forced by the Nazis to work as slave labor finally begin their trek toward home after the fall of Berlin in the spring of 1945. The Nazis routinely exploited conquered peoples, requiring them to work in deplorable conditions.

troops by plane and was never heard from again. Another German commanding officer told his artillery regiment that it was "every man for himself … Get home as best you can." Everybody took off their rank badges, and those with horses rode off, while gunner Gottfried Selzer walked to American lines.

Another German officer was behind American lines—Reich Marshal Hermann Göring—who surrendered to Maj. Gen. Robert Stack and the 36th Infantry Division. Stack and his senior officers treated the disgraced Luftwaffe chief to liquor and cigars at their officers mess and then presented him to Allied war correspondents at a press conference. At the press briefing, Göring alternated between his prewar joviality and the late-war despair of a man who had lost political power and public support, and was now addicted to codeine.

Imperial War Museum

Eisenhower, infuriated that such a major war criminal was being treated like an honored guest, ordered Göring stripped of his fancy uniform and treated like an ordinary POW, pending transfer for his war crimes trial. Among the items taken were suitcases full of codeine and his immense and unique reich marshal's baton, which became an exhibit in the museum at West Point.

In the village of Niemegle, German troops trudge along in a state of exhaustion and stared at euphoric children dancing in the streets. A local candy factory had given out all its stocks ahead of the Russian advance, and the kids were making the most of the largesse.

The Allies also had the problem of timing the announcement of surrender and peace. They agreed that it should be made by Churchill, Stalin, and Truman simultaneously, so that it would come from the top and emphasize Allied unity on the morning of May 9. To that end, Eisenhower's public relations chief, Brig. Gen. Frank "Honk" Allen, slapped an embargo on the press corps at Rheims, which they all agreed to honor.

All, that is, but the Associated Press's Ed Kennedy, head of the wire service's European war coverage, who regarded his scoop as being greater than an embargo. He got on a line to London and dictated his story, which arrived in AP's Rockefeller Center headquarters in New York at 9:27 on the 8th. It took AP's top brass only eight minutes to decide to send the bulletin on to their 2,500 worldwide clients. It took a little more time for Eisenhower and Allen to explode and declare the story "unauthorized" and strip an unrepentant Kennedy of his credentials, shipping the Brooklyn-born reporter back to the United States.

But the damage was done. For Britain, France, the United States, and many other Allied countries, V-E Day was May 8, even though the Germans had yet to sign the final surrender. Newspapers printed extra editions and radio stations spread the cheering news.

In New York's Times Square, half a million people poured out of office buildings to celebrate before a replica Statue of Liberty that had been placed in the square to sell War Bonds. Londoners jammed Piccadilly Circus, tore down their hated blackout curtains, and enjoyed searchlights illuminating Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, and St. Paul's Cathedral, which aimed their beams into "V for Victory" formations.

The Allied leaders had to follow the wire service's lead. Winston Churchill walked through cheering crowds to Parliament to announce the news, giving his victory sign.

His address was as powerful as ever, in which he exulted, "Finally, almost the whole world was combined against the evil-doers, who are now prostrate before us … Advance Britannia! Long live the cause of freedom! God save the King."

King George VI himself gave a powerful speech at 6 PM, saying, "Today, we give thanks to Almighty God for a great deliverance. Speaking from our empire's oldest capital city, war-battered but never for one moment daunted or dismayed—speaking from London, I ask you to join with me in that act of thanksgiving … Let us remember those who will not come back … the men and women in all the services who have laid down their lives."

After that, he and the royal family, with Princess Elizabeth in her Auxiliary Territorial Services uniform, joined by Churchill himself, greeted crowds from the Buckingham Palace balcony. The future queen and her sister, Princess Margaret, later went through the streets, joining the crowd in Green Park, and then went back to the palace. "I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life," she said five decades later.

The celebration was memorable for future playwright Harold Pinter as well, then aged 15. In that crowd, he pinched the bottom of a girl in front of him, only to be slugged unconscious by her soldier boyfriend.

In Washington, President Harry S. Truman, turning 61 that day, spoke to the American people, saying, "This is a solemn but glorious hour. I only wish that Franklin D. Roosevelt had lived to see this day. General Eisenhower informs me that the forces of Germany have surrendered to the United Nations. The flags of freedom fly all over Europe."

On the Elbe River, GIs and Tommys met Soviet frontoviki for the first time and struggled through language barriers to celebrate. Soviet troops were delighted by Wrigley bubble gum, Mickey Mouse watches, and Players cigarettes. American and British troops were astonished at how Soviets would whip out accordions and start singing and dancing and how the Russians would go into battle wearing no helmets, but all their medals.

At Luftwaffe bases, German "black men"—their name for ground crews—removed propellers and drained fuel from aircraft, lining them up so that the British and Americans could properly inventory them. "That was the end of all our dreams," wrote one fighter pilot. Another fighter commander thanked his men

for their sacrifices for Volk und Vaterland, then led them to a British POW camp.

On the other hand, Lieutenant Hermann Gern, a fighter pilot, got busy hatching a plan with Sergeant Franz Keller to steal a Bf 108 two-seat trainer and fly from their base in Schleswig-Holstein back home to Southern Germany. They talked too much, were court-martialed on May 4, on charges of desertion, and Gern was executed by a 10-man firing squad on May 7.

Another Luftwaffe pilot, Hans-Ulrich Rudel, a Stuka dive bomber ace who had blasted hundreds of Soviet tanks and sunk a Soviet battleship, surrendered himself to the Americans on May 8. Despite surrendering, he showed defiance when he greeted his captors with the Nazi salute, saying that even though he had surrendered, he was still in Germany. Shown photographs of Nazi atrocities, Rudel shrugged them off, saying that such sights were common to war. Unrepentant to the end, he became involved in extreme right-wing politics in postwar West Germany.

Despite Friedeburg's surrender of the German Navy to Montgomery, German U-boats continued operating on the high seas. Dönitz ordered them to surface, show black flags of surrender, and make their way to Allied ports, sending radio messages in the clear.

Some U-boats didn't get the word. U-853 sank the merchant ship Black Point off Long Island on May 5, and U-2336 knocked off two ships off the Firth of Forth on May 8. But on May 9, everybody got the word. Of the 43 U-boats at sea that day, 23 surrendered in British ports, three in Canada, and four in the United States. Seven returned to Kiel or Norway, two were scuttled off the Portuguese coast, one grounded off the western coast of Schleswig-Holstein, another hit a mine while entering the Elbe, and two more headed for Argentina and internment, giving rise to increasingly colorful theories that they carried Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun to safety. The 154 U-boats in Norway and Germany were also surrendered along with the surviving surface ships, headed by the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, light cruisers Nürnberg and Leipzig, and 15 destroyers, mostly in Danish waters. All the rest of the Kriegsmarine's major surface ships were sunk or bombed-out wrecks.

As German troops shuffled wearily into vast POW camps on both sides of the Elbe, another set of POWs started heading home on May 8: American and British prisoners, some of whom had been held since the earliest air raids of 1939. Gaunt and haggard from poor rations, brutality, and forced marches, these ex-POWs were eager to go home and see their families.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Admiral Karl Dönitz, left of the door, was the last Führer of the Third Reich. He was arrested along with other members of the Nazi government on May 23, 1945. The Nazis were subsequently flown to England and imprisoned to await trial on war crimes charges. TOP: German Army officers stand in line for processing after their surrender in 1945. Most officers below the rank of colonel were allowed to go home after a brief period of captivity. OPPOSITE: The crews of surrendered German U-boats unload equipment and supplies along the docks of Lisahally, Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

The British, no longer needing to attack German cities, turned the job over to Bomber Command, whose Avro Lancasters could bring home the exhausted men. Among the RAF units that happily flew ex-POWs home was the legendary Dambusters, No. 617 Squadron.

Operation Exodus flew the Commonwealth POWs from various RAF bases in western Germany back the United Kingdom, where they received new uniforms, got medical checks, and were debriefed by intelligence officers seeking information about subjects ranging from German rocket experiments to suspected war criminals. Most of all, the Women's Voluntary Services made sure the ex-POWs' billets were comfortable, running messes, providing a club for entertainment, and putting flowers in rooms.

The American approach was similar but better organized. All their ex-POWs went to Camp

National Archives

Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 77th Infantry Division, embroiled in a bloody struggle with Japanese troops for control of the island of Okinawa in the Pacific, listen to a radio for news of the surrender of Nazi Germany on May 8, 1945. World War II in the Pacific lasted four more months.

Lucky Strike on the French coast. After processing similar to that run by the British, these ex-POWs boarded ocean liners for the 3,000-mile trip back home.

There was still more mopping up to do in Europe, though. On May 9, two British destroyers steamed into St. Peter Port in Jersey to accept the surrender of the German-occupied Channel Islands. The German delegate enraged his British captors by giving the Hitler salute. On May 10, the isolated German garrisons in the French cities of Lorient, St. Nazaire, and besieged Dunkirk surrendered as well. At the latter, the German general brought his own prepared surrender document to the table. German troops continued to fight their way out of Yugoslavia until May 15.

In Flensburg, German ministries occupied rooms of naval training facilities, pretending to work. One secretary typed up the Wehrmacht's training plan for 1947. Another high-ranking official simply napped in his office. The Minister of Food's sole job seemed to be providing whiskey for cabinet meetings. The Allies ended the farce on May 23 by arresting the whole government and taking over administration of the defeated Reich as planned. Newspaper cameramen took photographs of angry secretaries—some holding poodles—being lined up by British troops of the 11th Armoured Division to go into captivity.

But May 8 remained a day of celebration and news. In the United Kingdom, bonfires were lit in the evening all across the British Isles to mark an end to years of darkness brought on by the blackout.

Sweden broke relations with Germany, and King Gustav sent congratulations to his neighboring Scandinavian states on their liberation. Prince Olav of Norway flew to Oslo with British 1st Airborne Division troops to take the surrender of German troops there. The prince stood on an Oslo pier, saluting as the Norwegian flag was raised again. Norway's leading traitor, Vidkun Quisling, was arrested to face a treason trial and execution.

Free Polish forces in Italy and Britain held masses where priests and senior officers noted grimly that there would be no peace for Poland unless the Communist government the Soviets had installed in Warsaw were removed and free elections allowed. That would not happen for 40 years. Most of the free Poles would wind up living in Britain or the United States.

In Ottawa, ticker tape poured on celebrating throngs in the streets as the Canadian parliament ended conscription. New Zealanders got a holiday. Francisco Franco's Spain tried to gain the support of Britain, America, and France by sending the latter nation's Pierre Laval, their top fascist, back to France for a treason trial.

The Pulitzer committee presented its awards that day, honoring Harold "Hal" Boyle of the Associated Press as the top reporter for 1944 and AP photographer Joe Rosenthal with an award for distinguished achievement for his legendary shot of Marines raising Old Glory over Iwo Jima.

The Army announced that Sergeant Charles H. Coolidge, of Signal Mountain, Tennessee, would receive the Medal of Honor for fending off a German attack in France on October 26, 1944. He was recognized for his coolness and courage in firing off bazookas at nearly point-blank range at advancing German tanks, leading his men, mostly new replacements, and directing their fire, and then conducting an orderly withdrawal amid rain, cold, and dense woods. By 2019, Coolidge, then aged 98, would be the only living Medal of Honor recipient from the European theater, still going to work regularly at his family business, Chattanooga Printing and Engraving.

Democratic party boss Robert Hannegan was confirmed by the Senate to serve as postmaster general, then still a cabinet spot and reward for political chieftains. The House of Representatives investigated shortages of rationed sugar. Americans could purchase complete dining room mahogany furniture sets for $42.50 and women's gowns for $3.95. Hollywood gossip columnist Louella Parsons told her readers that there was talk of a movie about Mussolini's life, with John Considine as Il Duce.

The Soviet Union, irritated by the Western celebrations, used May 9 as their V-E Day, and have done so ever since. In Moscow, Soviet troops dumped captured Nazi banners—the kinds that Nazi stormtroopers brandished at pre-war rallies—disdainfully at the feet of Stalin in Red Square. That evening, antiaircraft guns were fired off, their tracers illuminating the Kremlin.

These events, along with the announcements of victory in Europe, were broadcast around the world almost non-stop. Among the listeners to the excited broadcasters, joyful leaders, and cheering citizens in New York's Times Square was a group of five infantrymen of the US 77th Infantry Division, drawn from New York City. The GIs were huddled around their field radio, wearing helmets and rain ponchos to avoid a downpour. They were on the Japanese-held island of Okinawa, and their faces showed several emotions, none of them happiness.

These 77th Division soldiers would have to attack a Japanese-held position later that day and likely suffer heavy casualties. Their war—and that of British troops in Burma, Chinese forces in their country, Australians in Borneo, New Zealand airmen in the Solomons, American and British sailors on warships off Okinawa, and starving Allied POWs in Manchuria and Japan—wasn't over.

Author David Lippman resides in New Jersey and writes frequently on a variety of topics for WWII History.

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Important: Due to hemp's growing popularity and recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back.

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The Turkey Shoot

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

In part 2 of the story of the epic Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Japanese suffer grievous losses, and an opportunity is missed.

AT 12:30 PM, June 19, 1944, two vast fleets hundreds of miles apart faced off amid cobalt skies and burning seas. On one side, a 30,000-ton aircraft carrier blazed in her death throes, while a second carrier crew battled an immense fire. On the other side, an immense fleet steamed almost unimpeded past the burning wrecks of 130 aircraft sent to sink them. The Battle of the Philippine Sea was almost halfway through its first day, vast destruction had taken place, and even more was yet to come.

All morning, Japan's Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa had hurled the first two of four major airstrikes from his nine carrier decks—the guts of his 1st Mobile Fleet—against 15 American carriers that comprised the strength of the US Fifth Fleet, under Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance. At stake was control of the Marianas Islands generally and the island of Saipan specifically, as the U.S. Marine Corps was storming the rugged volcanic island.

To the Americans, the assault on the Marianas was one more step on the road to Tokyo. To the Japanese, holding those same islands and defeating the U.S. Navy was the "Decisive Battle" dreamed of in pre-war naval planning. But those plans had called for a "fire-away Flanagan," with pagoda-masted battleships flying the Rising Sun ensign slugging it out in battle line against cage-masted American dreadnoughts. While both vintage ships were still in business, the new queen of the seas was the aircraft carrier, and this "Decisive Battle" would be fought by two foremost experts in the subject: Ozawa and Spruance. Ozawa had learned his trade as a theorist and combat commander; Spruance a harder way, by being flung into command of the American carriers just before the Battle of Midway after a career of surface command, and then winning a decisive victory.

But the commanders had different objectives: leading a fleet short of fuel to begin with, Ozawa had to concentrate his ships in Borneo to access their oil wells. The good news was that the crude oil was of such high quality it could be poured straight into his ships' bunkers without refining it. The bad news: it was still crude oil—it damaged those bunkers and could explode easily. And with his oil shortages, Ozawa could only make one massive thrust against the Americans, then retreat from the battle. He was operating on a short leash.

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ABOVE: A Japanese aircraft falls under the guns of a U.S. Navy fighter in this photo taken on June 19, 1944, during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. OPPOSITE: This photo was taken as American planes flew toward their targets, warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy, on June 20, 1944. The aircraft in the center background are Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers. Those in the foreground are Curtiss SB2C Helldiver dive bombers.

In comparison, Spruance was tethered to a different leash—the Marine Corps' Saipan invasion force. He had plenty of fuel and ammunition to maneuver, but could not leave the amphibious ships, landing craft, and their support vessels exposed.

The morning of June 19 saw massive Japanese air strikes on the American fleet, none of which did serious damage. But American submarines spotted the Japanese main force, and USS *Cavalla* became the first American submarine to sink a Japanese fleet carrier, disemboweling *Shokaku*, one of the six that had attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, while her sister *Albacore* torpedoed the brand-new fleet carrier *Taiho*, Ozawa's flagship, creating a damage-control issue. The hit had ruptured oil bunkers, and poorly-trained damage control crews tried to repair ruptured fuel and oil lines or pump overboard fuel from damaged tanks. A lot of the unrefined Borneo crude sloshed around the carrier's hangar deck. At this point, as American submarine historian Ed Beach would write caustically later, one of *Taiho*'s ill-trained damage control officers made a decision that "qualified (him) for the United States Navy Cross," by starting all blowers and fans and opening all ventilation lines and bulkhead doors to reduce the concentration of fuel vapors and clear the atmosphere. This vastly increased the oxygen available to any source of ignition.

Meanwhile, the battle raged on. Ozawa had sent two raids against the Americans. The first had cost him 42 of 69 planes. The second con-

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Japanese planes prepare for takeoff from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier *Zuikaku* in 1942. A veteran of Pearl Harbor, *Zuikaku* was heavily damaged during the 1944 Battle of the Philippine Sea but survived.

sisted of 128 planes—97 fell to American fighter pilots and antiaircraft guns.

Ozawa launched his third raid between 10 and 10:15 AM, hurling 47 aircraft in the attack. It consisted of 15 Mitsubishi A6M5 Zero fighters, 15 Zeros armed with bombs, and seven Nakajima B6N1 Jill torpedo bombers. All came from his Group B, whose carriers were the *Junyo*, *Hiyo*, and *Ryuho*, commanded by Rear Admiral Takaji Joshima. They immediately got lost, failing to track the American movements.

On USS *Lexington*, the flagship of the carrier task force, TF 58, Lieutenant Alex Vraciu, who had just shot down an incredible six planes in one engagement, posed for a grinning victory photograph that became iconic, and then found his port-wing stub's red "barrel" was protruding, which meant that he had flown the best mission of his life with his port wing only partly secured. He had been lucky his wing hadn't folded up in battle. He was lucky in his gunfire, too. He had fired just 360 rounds, averaging 10 rounds per gun per kill.

Up on the flag bridge, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, who commanded Task Force 58, the carrier arm of Spruance's fleet, watched the planes flop down on his decks and saw the Japanese withdraw. A wrinkled man who cared for his sailors, he was only the 33rd naval aviator to earn his wings and gained a Navy Cross for a Trans-Atlantic flight in 1919 from Newfoundland to the Azores. He led with action, not rhetoric.

While he chafed against Spruance's orders to stay on the defensive, Mitscher was determined to bring down every Japanese plane that neared his fleet, and the two keys to that were his outstanding fighter force of Grumman F6F Hellcats and the incredible antiaircraft power of Vice Admiral Willis A. "Ching Chong China" Lee's battleships, operating directly in the path of incoming Japanese planes.

American radar picked out Joshima's strike well north of TF 58 at 12:25 PM, 110 miles off. For the next hour, American sailors in Combat Information Centers watched the radar pulses and used markers to track the planes on glass panes. The Japanese course baffled Mitscher and his chief of staff, Rear Admiral Arleigh "31-Knot" Burke, as it didn't make sense. Were the Japanese going to attack from the north? Was this yet another one of their decoys to draw off American strength while the main punch attacked in a different direction?

Mitscher decided to take action. He sent eight Hornets, four Hellcats, and 12 Langley F6Fs to attack—24 planes against 47. At 1:01 PM, the Hornets gave "Tally-ho" calls. Despite the numbers, eight Hellcats charged into 15 Japanese planes at 16,000 feet, and the Hornet's Fighting 2 Squadron swept the sky with nine unanswered kills.

At 1:20, a handful of Joshima's Zero bombers charged *Essex*, but only one reached an attack point. His bomb fell 600 yards wide. Two Langley planes put the valiant Zero pilot in a Hellcat sandwich, attacking from both sides, and Lt. (j.g.) Jerome D. Keyser gained the kill.

Raid 3 was almost a non-event—most of the Japanese planes gave up, and many returned to their carriers having done no damage.

On the American ships, Mitscher secured from general quarters, setting readiness "One-Easy," which enabled everyone to get some chow, go to the head, and generally take a breather.

That breather ended with Raid 4, launched from *Junyo*, *Ryuho*, *Hiyo*, and *Zuikaku* at 11 AM, consisting of 84 planes: 27 Aichi D3A2 Val dive bombers, seven Yokusuka D4Y1 Judy torpedo bombers, 10 Zero bombers, 32 Zero fighters, and six Jills orphaned from *Taiho*, unable to launch aircraft because of her damage.

Ozawa's carriers turned into the easterly wind. Steam spouted from vents in the flight decks forward so that carrier helmsmen could hold the wind straight down the flight decks. From catwalks, sailors waved their summer white hats in wide circles. Despite the loss of *Shokaku* and the damage to *Taiho*, the Japanese believed they were winning the battle from overstated damage reports by their pilots.

Lieutenant Zenji Abe, one of the few Pearl Harbor veterans, led his bomber division on his second mission of the day. Abe was increasingly nervous—not only was this his second attack, but he felt rusty from 40 days of flying a desk. As the formation droned along, there were the inevitable aborts as two element leaders couldn't retract their landing gear, a Zero suffered engine trouble and headed back, and a dive-bomber and three Zeros simply disappeared.

When Abe's band reached the expected intercept point 60 miles southwest of Guam, they found empty seas.

The orders were to attack the Americans, refuel on Guam, then return to the carriers. But with the vast American fleet present, every Japanese aviator knew that if they didn't bomb an enemy target they would have to slam their planes into that target.

Abe and his pals were now running short on fuel. Eighteen of *Zuikaku*'s planes had to head home, while others flew to Guam and Rota. As it turns out, task Force 58 was north of Abe's force.

Then the Japanese got lucky, with Ensign Nakajima broadcasting "Sir! Big enemy formation, left forward!" Abe wasted no time, ordering his planes to attack and personally leading six Judys and two Zeroes against TF 58.

Down below, the light carrier *Monterey* had picked the enemy up on radar at 1:20 PM. At first, the Americans weren't certain if this was an attack or a returning American group. The planes did not come straight in, and IFF (identification friend or foe) was not reliable. That finally gave Japanese Air Group 652's team of 16 Judys and Zeros time to attack an American carrier group.

The Americans scrambled. Sailors rushed back to battle stations. *Monterey* tried and failed to contact her own fighter group. Fortunately, *Monterey* was able to pass the warning to the carrier *Wasp*, but her Fighter Direction Officer had the same problem, figuring out if the incoming planes were "bandits" or friendly. So the best thing to do was launch fighters. Two groups from the light carrier *Cabot* raced into the sky to join the *Wasp* fighters already on combat air patrol. At 2:13 the "bogeys" were confirmed as "bandits." *Wasp's* group started yelling "Tally-Ho!" at 2:20.

The fighters shot down two Zeroes and a Jill, but the remaining planes nosed over to attack the American fleet. Abe himself charged a fleet carrier—probably the *Bunker Hil*l—against massive flak. "That was dreadful for me," he said later. The barrage and explosions didn't take down many planes, but wrecked their aim—even Abe's. He dropped his bomb amid erupting five-inch shells loaded with proximity fuses and raced off, his bomb missing the carrier.

Abe wasn't the only pilot who had a bad attack. *Bunker Hill*'s lookouts recorded three bombs exploding 50 to 200 yards off her hull. A Judy that attacked *Bunker Hill* survived flak but crashed near the destroyers. Cabot gunners shot off another Judy's tail. A third Judy aimed its bomb at *Wasp* and followed it into the ocean.

The Japanese seemed to have it in for *Wasp*. One near-miss hurled a cascade of water on a catwalk, drenching crewmen. Two more blew up 80 yards off the starboard quarter, and a phosphorous bomb detonated 300 feet overhead, scattering white streamers but only injuring one sailor.

Overhead, Hellcats stormed into the attackers. Four pounced on Zenji Abe, who throttled his engine, studying his fuel gauge. He could not make it home or to Guam, so he headed for Japanese-held Rota Island, where he landed. When he hopped out of his aircraft, he studied all the bullet holes in its tail and said, "I never saw so many Grummans!"

Of the 18 attackers that hit the Americans in Raid 4, only half survived.

Overlooked by many in the wild battle had been the role of Lt. (j.g.) Charles A. Sims, in *Lexington*'s Combat Information Center, who had been listening to the Japanese attack coordinator's radio transmissions and translating them into English for Mitscher's benefit. Mitscher had ordered that one plane be left alone during the battle to gain advantages from knowing his orders. Now as Japan's "Coordinator Joe" signed off and started for home, an officer asked Mitscher, "Should we get him now!?"

"No, indeed," responded Mitscher. "He did us too much good!"

The 49 Japanese planes that headed for Guam neared the island and jettisoned their bombloads in case they crashed, and then faced a worse fate; 27 F6Fs from *Cowpens*, *Hornet*, and *Essex*, with Commander David McCampbell, the Navy's ace of aces, leading the latter group. They plowed into the Japanese, breaking into the landing circle of a string of Val dive-bombers and chopping them up as they awaited their turn. Nineteen Japanese planes managed to survive the hail of bullets, only to be so badly damaged they could not be repaired. McCampbell picked up two more kills.

As the remaining Japanese planes shuffled into formation and headed back to *Zuikaku*, more bad news befell Ozawa, this time beneath his feet. At 3:32 PM, the *Taiho's* damage control officer's earlier order to run the ship's fans and open her ventilation systems to dissipate the Borneo oil fumes finally impacted in dramatic form.

The vapors of the unstable and unrefined fuel set off a massive internal explosion that sent the armored flight deck bulging upward from the blast. Below the waterline, the explosion shot gigantic holes in *Taiho*'s hull, dooming the blazing carrier. She began settling on an even keel. Most of her crew was killed in this explosion. Ozawa, on his flag bridge, was devastated and said he would go down with his doomed flagship. His staff officers talked him out of it.

Two destroyers approached the blazing carrier, and Ozawa, his staff, and the Emperor's portrait were taken by lifeboat to the destroyer *Wakatsuki*. From there, Ozawa transferred to the heavy cruiser *Haguro* to resume command. But there was yet another problem—the cruiser's radio room was not configured to handle the communications needs of the entire task force, and the only set of codes Ozawa had for sending messages to Tokyo was going to the bottom of the Pacific on *Taiho*. It would take hours to get a message through to Com-

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ABOVE: A Japanese plane, shot down by intense American antiaircraft fire, crashes near the stern of the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* (CV-16) during an abortive raid on June 19, 1944, during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. BELOW: The brand new Japanese aircraft carrier *Taiho* served as the flagship of Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa during the early hours of the Battle of the Philippine Sea. However, the carrier was torpedoed and heavily damaged by the U.S. Navy submarine *Albacore* on June 19, 1944. Fumes from ruptured fuel lines throughout the carrier caused a catastrophic explosion that doomed *Taiho* six hours later.

National Archives

bined Fleet Headquarters, which could be disastrous in a battle that was turning into an even bigger disaster.

Taiho was now a fiery hulk, suffering from more explosions. At 6:28 PM, Japan's newest aircraft carrier, sailing on her first combat mission, endured one more blast and then rolled over to port, taking 1,650 out of her 2,150-man crew to the bottom of the Pacific.

So far, Japan had lost two fleet aircraft carriers, while the Americans had suffered minor damage on two carriers, two battleships, a heavy cruiser, and a destroyer that had taken some antiaircraft hits from friendly fire. The damage was anything but serious to the American fleet, except for 30 sailors killed.

More importantly, the Americans had lost a bare 31 aircraft, while Ozawa had suffered a staggering loss of 314 planes. With those losses came the end of Japanese naval aviation.

One survivor, however, sat in Rota, pondering his luck of survival. Veteran Zenji Abe wrote his thoughts later: "I was snatched from the jaws of death."

On the American ships, as the sun set and the constellation Scorpio with its blood-red leading star Antares rose over the ocean, Mitscher released his men from general quarters and set torpedo defense watch. Carrier aviators were offered their two bottles of after-action beer, but fifths of Old Overholt and Jack Daniel's mysteriously appeared in squadron ready rooms. Fighter pilots described their dogfights to each other, pausing occasionally to drink toasts to the 14 fighter pilots and 13 other aviators missing or known dead.

On *Wasp*, the sole casualty was Gunner's Mate Alfred E. Bridges, a 23-year-old New Yorker. His shipmates collected $2,352 for his wife and six-month-old son, to tide them over until the $10,000 GI life insurance kicked in. June Bridges wrote back, thanking the shipmates for the money, saying that it would enable Alfred Jr. to set up a college fund.

Among the celebrants was Lt. (j.g.) Zeigel Neff, on *Lexington*, who claimed four kills—his only score of the war, which meant he missed "ace" status by only one kill. However, his summation of the day's fighting was passed up to the flag bridge: "It was just like an old-time turkey shoot."

Mitscher, Spruance, all of America, and future naval historians would forever remember his quote as "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot," but the admirals still had a battle to fight. The Japanese, minus two carriers, were still out there, but the Americans did not know where.

Now Spruance had the Fifth Fleet head west, with the battleships leading, to locate the Japanese. The big constraint was fuel. If the Americans advanced too far west, they would run out of range of their oilers and tankers. If they paused to fuel, the Japanese might slip away. Mitscher and his staff discussed the situation, and 23 knots west was the best compromise. With that decision taken, Mitscher rose from his admiral's chair, yawned, stretched, and said, "Tomorrow I'm going to get a haircut."

Meanwhile, Ozawa faced total disaster, as well as new orders from Admiral Soemu Toyoda, who commanded the entire Japanese Navy. Toyoda did not have a good picture of the battle because of the communications breakdown, and he exhorted Ozawa to continue "mopping-up operations around Saipan," believing earlier reports that the 1st Mobile Fleet had annihilated the Americans. Just before midnight, Ozawa headed northwest, the Americans 320 miles behind him.

In the dark, the advancing TF 58 ships saw a flashing light in the darkness, three short, three long, three short: an SOS call. The destroyer *Boyd* sprinted over and pulled Lt. (j.g.) William C.B. Birkholm, who had spent 14 hours in his life raft, to safety. He was delighted to be pulled out of the drink and sat in the wardroom, drinking coffee.

Dawn rose on weather that still favored the Japanese—winds from the east, which would force Mitscher to turn east to launch his strikes. At dawn, *Enterprise* entered the fight when she launched four search teams. For five hours, they searched for the enemy but found only Ozawa's own search planes, which were both unsuccessful in finding the Americans or surviving their searches.

Just before noon, Ozawa's ships rendezvoused to refuel from their tankers, and he shifted his flag again to *Zuikaku*, whose radio and coding facilities could handle his communications. The surrounding carriers were able to report their appalling losses to him at last, but based on optimistic reports from his shore-based air units, Ozawa continued the battle.

But at 1:40 PM, Commander William R. "Killer" Kane's search planes from *Enterprise* finally located their quarry. Lt. (j.g.) Edward Laster spotted something American airmen had not seen in 20 months—Japanese carriers at sea. He radioed in the clear: "Enemy fleet sighted." Lt. Robert "Railroad" Jones headed back with the precise position, while Lt. Robert S. Nelson studied a Japanese carrier "leaving a circular wake as it turned after we had been in view for four or five minutes." He reported the enemy fleet's location. The Japanese picked up the message and translated the communication for Ozawa.

On *Lexington*'s flag bridge, Mitscher studied the report and realized they were 250 miles from the enemy. Mitscher ordered at 4 PM, "Expect to launch everything we have. We will probably have to recover at night." Doing so was a gamble—it was hard enough to land a plane on a carrier by day, but doing so by night was a stretch, particularly for planes short on fuel.

Nevermind; everybody was ready to go. For the first time, the Navy would hurl its SB2C Helldiver dive bombers into an attack—great things were expected from this replacement for the reliable SBD Dauntless. In the ready rooms, pilots, radiomen, and air-gunners hunched over their navigation tables and wrote down critical information. After that came pep talks from the

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ABOVE: U.S. Navy aircraft fly above the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* (CV-16) on June 20, 1944, during an attempted Japanese air attack west of Guam. These warships and aircraft belong to Task Group 58.3. They include Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers, Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers, and Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters. Task Group 58.3 was the only group equipped with Dauntlesses during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. OPPOSITE: The Japanese aircraft carrier *Chiyoda* takes a bomb hit aft from an American plane during the late afternoon raid of June 20.

bosses. On *Enterprise*, Commander James D. "Jig-Dog" Ramage, commander of Bombing 10, told his aviators: "We're going to be gas misers." Behind him, an officer wrote in six-inch black letters: "Get the carriers!" It was a sentiment shared in *Monterey's* VT-28 ready room, and by a banner on *Belleau Wood*. Mitscher himself told *Lexington* airmen: "Give 'em hell, boys. Wish I were with you."

While the airmen were briefed, crewmen prepared a deckload strike of 240 planes from 11 carriers. TF 58 turned into the wind, ships cracking on full speed. In the engine rooms, temperatures soared to an almost unbearable 130 degrees. At 4:24, the first planes rolled down the flight decks.

With a few aborts, 226 aircraft headed for the Japanese, 95 F6F fighters, 54 TBF and TBM Avengers, and 77 dive bombers, including 26 SBDs from *Enterprise* and *Lexington*. It was one of the heaviest airstrikes the US Navy had ever hurled.

Led by Lieutenant Red Carmody of *Bunker Hill*'s VB-8, aviators from 25 of the 48 United States, aged 19 to 45, headed west, many clutching lucky charms which ranged from St. Christopher medals to one pilot who carried a pipe, ivory die, screwdriver, and two nuts and bolts.

The planes headed on course 290 true at 12,000 feet. Planes rendezvoused over the carrier decks quickly to group by role, fighters over the bombers, Alex Vraciu and his division doing lazy S-turns to avoid outrunning *Lexington*'s SBDs.

Ramage nursed his elderly *Enterprise* SBDs along, and at 260 miles spotted three dozen planes veering to port. Then he saw the Japanese fueling group and realized it was their top cover. Some of his planes dived on them. He broke radio silence on the VHF "guard" channel and addressed all his buddies: "We will not attack. The Charlie Victor (aircraft carriers) are dead ahead. What are you trying to do? Sink their Merchant Marine?"

Didn't matter. *Wasp*'s Helldivers were low on fuel, and their leader, Lt. Cdr. Jack Blitch, wanted to get a kill somehow. Three Helldivers swooped down on each of the four oilers and four Avengers on a fifth. The attacks were spectacular: one oiler appeared to "explode and disintegrate" from its unstable Borneo crude. Another was set afire to sink, and a third left dead in the water as the fourth shuffled off, leaking oil. The sunken ships were *Seiyo Maru* and *Genyo Maru*.

Ozawa's combat air patrol of six Zeroes swooped in on *Wasp*'s planes, shooting one down, and the *Wasp* group, having done its duty, headed home.

Now the rest of the strike found Ozawa's main force 35 miles west of his slow-moving oilers, under five-tenths cloud cover between 3,000 and 10,000 feet. Many of the American pilots were witnessing a tableau they had never seen before: Japanese warships, from carriers and battleships down to destroyers, maneuvering beneath them to evade attack. Aviators started yelling spontaneous reactions, and Ramage told his men that the outbursts were "completely unwarranted transmissions."

Down below, Ozawa was preparing. Shipboard buglers blared the call to action stations, and he was able to launch 40 Zero fighters and 28 Zero fighter-bombers. Sixty-eight fighters were not enough to defend his forces, which were still scattered across the Central Pacific, and many of the aviators were nearly untrained. But it was all he had.

At 6:03, Japanese radar plotted the incoming Americans, and Japan's Air Group 653 headed for them, spotting the Americans nine minutes later. Seven US air groups charged down into the Japanese fighters, into a wild melee that left 20 American F6Fs and eight of the highly-touted Helldivers shot down. The latter proved exceptionally vulnerable. Seven more F6Fs,

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The pilot of a U.S. Navy Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter is assisted from the cockpit of his plane after a mission. American fighters shot down so many Japanese planes that one pilot dubbed the affair the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.'

four Avengers, and a Dauntless, fleeing the scene with battle damage, were write-offs when they were recovered.

The first set of attackers, from *Hornet*, *Yorktown*, and *Bataan*, stormed down on *Zuikaku*. The aviators from the first two carriers had a score to settle. *Zuikaku*'s aircraft had sent the original American carriers that bore those names to the bottom in 1942.

Dive bombers and fighters raked over *Zuikaku*, treating the carrier to a solid dose of armor-piercing weaponry and .50-caliber bullets, ripping holes in the flight deck and cutting down crewmen, even wounding one of Ozawa's staff officers. Up above, eight *Zuikaku* Zeroes saw that they could no longer land on their ship and had to splash in the water. Few pilots were recovered, further whittling down Ozawa's aviation strength.

The Americans pulled out, believing that "a large hole, rimmed with fire apparently emanating from the flight deck" would send *Zuikaku* to the bottom. *Zuikaku* was heavily hit and suffered the concussion effects of several near-misses, but the carrier, which had already survived three major Pacific battles, was lucky again.

Meanwhile, planes from *Lexington*, *Enterprise*, *San Jacinto*, and *Belleau Wood* attacked *Hiyo*, *Junyo*, and *Ryuho*. The first two were converted ocean liners, which meant that they lacked armor. Lt. Charles W. Nelson of *Yorktown* led the strike and launched his torpedo against *Ryuho*. He kept on, exposing his plane to Japanese gunners, which cut him down. *Ryuho* evaded all five torpedoes from the *Yorktown* pilots.

In the slanting sun, the attacking Americans had a perfect view of *Hiyo* and her pals—which included a battleship, a cruiser, and eight destroyers. Ralph Weymouth, an old-timer at age 27, led the SBDs at 12,000 feet. He owed his veterancy to having flown off *Saratoga* during Guadalcanal. Studying the enemy, he chose *Hiyo* as his target and charged down, Alex Vraciu's fighters accompanying him. The Japanese combat air patrol took advantage of cloud cover to pounce on the Americans, and Vraciu had no idea of the gravity of the situation until he saw Lt. (j.g.) Warren E. McClellan's crew bail out of their burning TBF.

Three Hellcats in Vraciu's group took on eight Zeroes. Vraciu and his wingman, Ensign Homer W. Brockmeyer, attacked. Vraciu scored another kill, but Brockmeyer went down, streaming smoke. Vraciu chased after his wingman to at least see where he would bail out, but two Zeros intervened and Vraciu had to save himself.

The Americans had suffered enough indignities at the hands of Ozawa's combat air patrol and shot back hard. *Torpedo 16*'s Aviation Motor Machinist's Mate 1st Class Jack W. Webb shot down a Zero that got too close, sending it spiraling into the water and earning a Distinguished Flying Cross.

Weymouth' SBDs, lower, slower, and older than the Avengers, drew most of the Zero gunfire. His gunner, Aviation Radioman 1st Class William A. McElhiney, saw "bogeys" approaching astern. He pushed his mid-canopy section forward, folded the rear section down, slammed down on the gun bay pedal to open it, and had his .30-caliber guns ready. Soon everybody was ready, too, and firing on the Zeros approaching from the stern.

Bunker Hill's "Minutemen" dived on *Hiyo* at 7:04 PM, hurling 500- and 1,000-pound armor-piercing and high explosive bombs on their target. Weymouth remembered narrowly missing a similar Japanese carrier at the battle of the Eastern Solomons in 1942. Now he had a perfect setup—down-sun, upwind, along *Hiyo*'s axis, right in his sights. His older SBD Dauntless, with its inherent stability and light control, was proving superior to the new and supposedly better SB2C Helldiver.

Weymouth wasted no time. He pressed the red button on his stick at 1,500 feet, moved the flap selector lever rearward, pulled in his dive brakes, hauled back on the stick, pulled out, and gunner McIlhenney reported a hit right beside the carrier's island. The blast killed most of the senior officers and bridge crew.

With smoke pouring out of *Hiyo*, she seemed doomed, so other planes attacked her sister, *Junyo*, with Lieutenant Cook Cleveland claiming a hit on her stern. The dive bomber pilots scored one hit on *Hiyo* and two on *Junyo*.

Next came Jig-Dog Ramage and his *Enterprise* pilots, the dive bombers attacking *Ryuho* and *Junyo*, Hellcats charging ahead of them to suppress Japanese flak. Ramage followed the training he had been given by Midway hero and fellow *Enterprise* aviator Dick Best to make a near-vertical attack, right through exploding flak shells. At point-blank range, he released his bomb. It fell close astern of *Ryuho*'s wake. Sandwiched by Zeros overhead and flak below, it was a tough attack for *Enterprise*'s VB-10. At least Ramage had the satisfaction of seeing a Zero pilot make a halfhearted pass at his plane and flee. "No guts," Ramage thought.

Enterprise was not finished with Ozawa's carriers yet. Now came VT-10 Avenger torpedo bombers. Having overcome the technical problems of their early-war fish and been provided with the new Avenger, the "Torpeckers" were among the toughest attackers in the fleet. They would tell their rivals at the Royal Hawaiian Bar: "If you want to let air into an enemy ship, drop a bomb on him. If you want to let in water, torpedo him." That, of course, would often lead to pitched brawls.

Now *Enterprise* and *Lexington* torpedo bombers attacked all three carriers and the battleship *Nagato*, which hit back with her massive 16-inch guns, which did no damage. *Nagato* didn't take any, either, despite a lot of attention. The main American targets were the carriers.

Lieutenant George Brown ordered his divi-

sion to execute an "anvil" attack on *Hiyo*, with his planes coming from her starboard, port, and bow. *Hiyo* would have no way to escape. He was right. On *Hiyo*'s bridge, Captain Toshiyuki Yokoi could only look on, unable to thread his 24,000-ton carrier through the knives of torpedoes headed at his ship. At least one tore open *Hiyo*'s starboard quarter.

The last American attack of the day saw *Bunker Hill*, *Cabot*, and *Monterey*'s planes try to hammer the light carriers *Chitose*, *Chiyoda*, and *Zuiho*. Lookouts on the cruiser *Maya* reported 50 incoming Avengers, but there were actually 16. As the Americans attacked, seven Japanese planes trying to land on their carriers were shot up by "friendly fire" from panic-stricken Japanese gunners.

The Americans hurled torpedoes and bombs at *Chiyoda*, which escaped with some good maneuvering, and the 30-year-old battleship *Haruna*, which avoided being sunk despite three 500-pound bombs that struck the aft turret and quarterdeck, killing 15 men and threatening a magazine. But her skipper, Captain Shigenaga Katazuke, flooded the area, and the 31,000-ton battlewagon kept formation at a snappy 27 knots.

Four carriers had suffered damage, but *Hiyo*'s condition was the most serious. Soon, leaking gasoline vapor set off an explosion, and *Hiyo* shuddered. Destroyers were able to rescue 1,000 of her 1,250-man crew as the 20,000-ton carrier sank.

The loss of three carriers in two days shook Ozawa to his core. More bad news was flooding in. *Zuikaku* had suffered a serious bomb hit aft of the bridge, *Junyo* two hits that "crushed" her stack and made her flight deck useless, *Chiyoda* a hit on the flight deck aft, and there was damage to *Ryuho*, *Haruna*, and *Maya*. In addition, the dogfights over his ships had cost him anywhere from 19 to 26 fighters.

Ozawa toyed with turning his battleships, cruisers, and destroyers around and engaging the enemy in a surface action in the night, traditionally Japan's trump card, but he was all too aware that he had only 35 carrier planes left operational. If Ozawa tried a night battleship attack, once the sun rose over the Philippine Sea his entire fleet would be open to a combined air and surface onslaught. The only choice now was to withdraw in defeat.

The Americans, however, had no choice in this situation. They had one mission now, to recover their returning aircraft in the increasing dark.

The combat portion of the Battle of the Philippine Sea was over, but now would come the most difficult portion of the battle for Task Force 58 and its weary sailors, from Mitscher on down to oilers and cooks. Many of these men could barely stay awake, but as the sun set they had to go back to work to recover the strike, doing everything from manning landing signal stations on flight decks aft to preparing dinner meals for famished fliers.

The returning aviators were exhausted, too. They struggled to regroup into their divisions and squadrons in the dark. Sunset was at 7 PM on the dot. It was the first night of a new moon, and visibility was near zero. So was gas in many of the planes. Normally well-disciplined aviators broke radio silence, spouting concerns over disorientation and fuel shortages. Some called for pals. Others even broke into tears from the fear of their damaged planes going down into the ocean. Pilots who had heard enough switched off their radios.

On *Lexington*'s flag bridge, Mitscher and his staff worried about the issue of recovery after dark. TF 58 had moved 90 miles west, which could save a lot of pilots, but likely not enough. In the dark, many planes would have trouble making landings—many more would likely splash into the sea. The only way to make TF 58's location known to the aviators was to illuminate the entire task force. But doing so would reveal the ships to Japanese submarines lurking in the area.

The procedure was simple—show running lights, masthead truck lights, deck-edge glowlights on the carriers. Other ships would illuminate the sky with searchlights, turn on signal lights, and even fire off star shells. The hard part was making the decision.

Mitscher made it. "Turn on the lights!" was the apocryphal order, but it had the desired impact. Powerful lights flashed on from TF 58's ships, which made the fleet visible. Suddenly, the aviators knew where TF 58 was. The problem was that they couldn't tell which ships were carriers and which were not. Destroyers pointed searchlights straight into the sky, which

National Archives

Late on the afternoon of June 20, the Japanese aircraft carrier *Zuikaku,* center, and a pair of escorting destroyers maneuver violently to evade torpedoes and bombs from attacking American aircraft. *Zuikaku* was hit by several bombs during the raid, but managed to survive the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

made pilots think they were carriers.

Flying on fumes, the planes swooped down on whatever ship they saw, ignoring orders from landing signal officers waving them off because two or even three planes were in "the groove" for final approach. The LSOs themselves donned flight suits with fluorescent stripes to increase their visibility.

Alex Vraciu found his fellow *Lexington* fighter pilots Lieutenant Henry M. Kosciusko and Ensign William J. Seyfferle, and they shot each other grins and gestures of relief. The trio headed for *Lexington*, and Kosciusko landed on the first pass. As he stepped out of his cockpit, he heard the crash alarm. Behind him, a brilliant green dye marker was churning up the water while Vraciu was diving on it. Seyfferle had not dropped his fully-fueled belly tank and turned too tight while lining up with the carrier's deck, and his engine had stalled. Seyfferle, age 22, left behind a widow in Cincinnati. The survivors had a tough time, too. VF-16 from *Lexington* launched nine planes and got seven back—all seven landed on a different carrier.

The radar officers on the carriers sweated their planes home. *Lexington* Lt. (j.g.) Richard Moreland plotted the approach of a plane through its IFF, and then it vanished off the scope. He marked the spot on a plotting board and sent the latitude and longitude up to the flag staff. The escorting destroyers already had it and raced over to save the pilot.

On *Enterprise*, night-fighter director Lt. Cdr. Richard E. "Chick" Harmer took off in his radar-equipped F4U Corsair to use its radar to find lost planes and lead them home. Harmer spent two hours guiding exhausted pilots home, along with Pete Aurand in his F6F from *Bunker Hill*. Following radio vectors, he used his radar to locate small groups of returning planes and guide them home.

Some aviators who reached TF 58, wearied from the long trip, made mistakes. They left gun switches on, didn't watch their altimeters, and splashed into the water. Others flew nonstandard landing patterns or crowded other planes out of the groove. Some were wounded. Landings began at 8:45 PM and continued until about 10:52. As the planes approached the carriers, pilots called their home carriers for landing instructions. They were told, "Land on any base."

Some planes reached carriers, only to encounter disaster in the final seconds. A Hornet SB2C ignored a wave-off from *Bunker Hill*—which included a warning flare—and dropped onto the deck, flipping tail over nose and slashing its propeller into the wooden flight deck. A Cabot TBF behind it on final approach ignored a wave-off, smacked down off-center, snagged a gun turret, knocked down six men working on the SB2C, and killed three, including Bunker Hill's air officer.

On *Lexington*, Commander Jimmie Thach, who had invented America's fighter tactics to cope with the Zero back in 1942, studied the crisis carefully, making notes on improving the recovery efforts both now and in the future. He recommended to Burke that the carriers separate and illuminate themselves "like an airport runway."

Overhead, the normally tight and proud formations disintegrated as the planes returned. *Enterprise* recovered 17 planes—seven from its own task group and 10 from other task groups. Lieutenant Horace "Hod" Proulx, an outstanding LSO, broke the rules he had been

Naval History and Heritage Command

taught by his outstanding predecessors, cutting landing intervals thin from 30 to 15 seconds apart. Proulx got a Hellcat aboard on the No. 5 wire, but Lt. (j.g.) Cecil R. Mester had fuel for only one pass at the deck. Proulx got him on the number three wire.

Alex Vraciu also had a hard time coming home. He headed back to *Lexington* alone, aware of the common myth: "Fighter pilots can't navigate." He set his fuel mixture to "max conserve" and plodded along until he heard the "dit-dah" in his headphones for *Lexington*. Vraciu checked his fuel gauge, decided he had time, and waited. He wound up landing on *Enterprise*. He now had 19 kills.

A total of 226 planes had launched from Mitscher's flight decks on the 20th, and 140 of those were back on one flight deck or another now. But 172 pilots and airmen remained stranded across a stretch of ocean as search and rescue efforts began immediately with TF 58 headed directly along the route the planes had taken. Two dozen ships, including four light cruisers, pulled 90 pilots and airmen out that night, all of whom were happy to trade their flight gear (souvenirs for the rescuers) for medicinal alcohol, dinner, and a warm bunk.

As dawn rose on TF 58 on June 21, everybody was beat. Mitscher himself cut everyone possible loose to get some sleep, which wasn't easy—wartime-staffed ships required enlisted and officers to "hot-bunk," which meant that two or three men shared a rack in tight sequence. Worse, many of the ships were poorly ventilated by design or due to being locked down during the battle, and the intense Pacific heat made compartments incredibly hot.

There was no chance now that TF 58's carrier planes or battleships could catch up with the Japanese, who were fleeing at a high rate of speed. At 8:30 PM, Spruance ordered Mitscher to call off the chase 600 miles west of Saipan and head back to the island to support the invasion with guns and planes.

Meanwhile, Ozawa's ships arrived at Nagakasuku Bay, Okinawa, which Americans would a year later rename Buckner Bay after invading the island. Ozawa now faced two major facts of defeat: sorting out the sunken ships' survivors, and preparing his report for Toyoda in Tokyo. The former was easy enough; most went to *Zuikaku* or *Maya* to head for hospitals in Japan.

The second part took time. Ozawa claimed to have sunk or damaged four to five American carriers and a battleship, along with splashing 160 American planes. Actual American losses: no ships, 42 aircraft, 76 fliers, 31 sailors. Despite these exaggerated claims, it was clear that Ozawa had failed. He had lost 446 planes with 445 pilots and aircrew, and three aircraft carriers. The Imperial Japanese Navy still had nine carriers ready or nearly ready for action, but neither pilots nor planes. When four of the survivors of the Philippine Sea reappeared at Leyte Gulf in October, it would be purely to act as decoys, which they did perfectly, while being sunk.

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ABOVE: In the ready room of the aircraft carrier USS *Monterey* (CVL-26), Navy Lieutenant Ronald P. 'Rip' Gift relaxes with other pilots. This photo was taken after the airmen successfully landed their planes in darkness following the hazardous raid against the Japanese. Note the blackboard admonition, 'Get the carriers.' OPPOSITE: Artist Ed Valigursky painted this scene from the Battle of the Philippine Sea on June 20, 1944. As darkness closed in on the American aircraft returning from their raid against the Japanese fleet, the ships of the U.S. Navy's Task Force 58 turned on their lights to help guide the airmen home to their carriers. Many pilots ditched in the sea as they ran out of fuel.

Ozawa offered his resignation after the defeat, but Toyoda said, "I am more responsible for this defeat than Admiral Ozawa, and I will not accept his resignation." There was now nothing Japan could do to save the beleaguered Marianas Islands defenders, and the islands would fall, taking with them the government of Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. Vice Admiral Shigryoshi Miwa, one of the Emperor's closest advisers, warned that the loss of the Marianas meant that the sacred homeland would now be open to massive and destructive aerial bombardment. His admonition said it all: "Hell is upon us."

There was recrimination on the American side, too. Mitscher himself said it simply: "The enemy escaped. He had been badly hurt by one aggressive carrier strike, at the one time he was within range. His fleet was not sunk." Aviation officers in Hawaii blamed that on Spruance, a non-aviator, being put in command of carriers, pointing out that the great naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan himself had said that the main object of a fleet was to destroy the enemy's fleet.

But Spruance, all his life, would defend his actions.

In his cabin onboard the battleship *Yamato*, Admiral Matome Ugaki, who commanded the 1st Battleship Division, reflected on the recent sea fight in the comprehensive diary he kept through the war, ending the day's entry with a poem:

Utterly awakened from the dream of victory,
Found the sky rainy and gloomy.
Rainy clouds will not clear up,
My heart is the same
When the time for the battle's up.

Author David Lippman resides in New Jersey and writes frequently on a variety of topics for WWII History. *This is the second of a two-part article on the Battle of the Philippine Sea.*

American AIRBORNE FOR

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

IN the autumn of 1944, even before the failure of Operation Market Garden, the eyes of Allied commanders were on the great Rhine River, and when the time came to cross the last major natural barrier on the German frontier, American airborne troops would play a key role, while also participating in other operations during the last days of World War II.

Even if Market Garden had been successful, it would have allowed only a fraction of the Allied host to cross the mighty Rhine, and in early September, General Omar N. Bradley had considered an airborne operation to facilitate the crossing of his U.S. 12th Army Group.

During the first three months of 1945, Allied troops advanced toward the Rhine, reducing the "bulge" that had resulted from the ill-fated German Ardennes Offensive, which had shown promise in the beginning but ultimately cost the Wehrmacht irreplaceable resources in troops, tanks, and other equipment while hastening the end of World War II in the West.

By the end of February, the west bank of the Rhine was within reach. Field Marshal Bernard

Two paratroopers sit aboard their transport aircraft awaiting takeoff and insertion during Operation Varsity. The assault on the east bank of the Rhine occurred on March 24, 1945.

All photos: National Archives

Transport aircraft disgorge paratroopers of the U.S. 17th Airborne Division and their supplies during the opening phase of Operation Varsity, the airborne crossing of the great Rhine River. Operation Varsity was the largest airborne offensive action of World War II.

WARD

IN THE WANING DAYS OF WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE, AMERICAN AIRBORNE TROOPS CROSS THE RHINE AND DRIVE DEEP INTO THE GERMAN REICH.

Montgomery's British 21st Army Group was massing in the north, and the successful clearing of the Saar-Palatinate had breached the Siegfried Line and brought Allied forces forward to the Rhine from Holland to the Swiss border. Despite the Market Garden setback, airborne operations were still considered a viable component of concerted efforts to breach the wide river all along the broad Allied front.

However, the electrifying capture of the intact Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen on March 7-8, 1945, by the U.S. 9th Armored Division and the subsequent expansion of a bridgehead east of the Rhine eliminated the need for airborne support in the American First Army sector. On March 22, General George S. Patton's Third Army managed to breach the Rhine at Oppenheim, south of Mainz, without airborne participation.

Patton was delighted to beat his rival Montgomery across the Rhine. Elements of Third Army crossed only hours before Montgomery unleashed his effort in the north, a ground-amphibious operation codenamed *Plunder* and complemented with a spectacular single-day airborne deployment labeled *Operation Varsity*.

Major General William M. Miley (left) commanded the 17th Airborne Division during Operation Varsity; Major General James M. Gavin, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, watched the operation develop.

Overwhelming Allied force was poised to strike deep into Germany in March 1945. A total strength of 85 divisions, including 23 armored and five airborne, were positioned to carry the fight against the Nazis to final victory. In the north, Montgomery's 21st Army Group was tasked with crossing the Rhine, establishing a secure bridgehead north of the Ruhr—the industrial heart of Germany— and, with the Ninth U.S. Army covering its right flank, preparing for further operations to isolate and reduce the vital region.

Montgomery originally set the date for Operations Plunder and Varsity for March 15, issuing final orders on the 9th, the same day that the last German forces withdrew from the west bank of the Rhine. The starting date was pushed back several days due to a supreme headquarters directive that further outlined planned objectives. The ground operation was launched on March 23 with elements of the British Second Army crossing the Rhine at 9 PM. The Ninth Army, commanded by General William H. Simpson, began it own amphibious crossing south of the town of Wesel at 2 AM on the 24th.

Although the planners at General Lewis Brereton's First Allied Airborne Army headquarters had worked on Operation Varsity for several months, the tactical outline was not

finalized until early March. Originally envisioned with three airborne divisions, the number of troops had to be scaled back by roughly one-third when it was discovered that existing ground facilities and transport aircraft were not capable of supporting such a large effort.

The operation was then assigned to the British 6th and American 17th Airborne Divisions of General Matthew Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps. The 6th had participated in Operation Overlord in Normandy, while the 17th had fought as ground troops for five weeks in the Ardennes.

During the counteroffensive to reduce the bulge created during Hitler's failed offensive, the 17th Airborne fought its way through Belgium, forcing enemy troops across the Ourthe River, relieving the 11th Armored Division at Houffalize, and taking Espeler and Wattermal by the end of January. Turning southward toward Luxembourg, the division liberated the towns of Eschweiler and Clerveaux and secured the west bank of the Our River. Prior to being relieved by the 6th Armored Division, troopers of the 17th Airborne had established a limited bridgehead across the Our, near the town of Dasburg, Germany.

Even with its reduced complement of troops, Operation Varsity remained a tremendous undertaking. The last offensive airborne operation of the war in Europe and the largest single-day airlift of the war, Varsity included 21,680 paratroopers and glidermen, 1,696 transport and 1,348 glider aircraft, and a covering air contingent of 3,000 fighter planes. While more than 1.25 million ground troops were positioned to cross the Rhine, the air-transport armada was taking flight. Eventually, the sky train stretched for miles, from horizon to horizon.

Montgomery had provided only limited direction to the airborne planners, asking simply enough that they support the Second Army and conduct independent operations to reduce enemy strongpoints, disrupt communications, and impede troop movements for up to 10 days. Well before that time, the airborne thrust and ground elements of Operation Plunder were to have linked up. The 6th Airborne was to join Second Army, and the 17th was to become part of Ninth Army as soon as practicable, joining the eastward advance on the ground.

Troopers of the U.S. 17th Airborne Division trudge through heavy snow in Belgium in January 1945. The division arrived in England in August 1944 and was held in reserve until December 23, when it deployed during the Battle of the Bulge, experiencing its first combat in the vicinity of Bastogne on January 4, 1945.

General Miles Dempsey, commander of the Second Army, was more specific in terms of Varsity's objectives. He identified the Diersfordter Wald, high ground that sloped gently to about 100 feet above the level of the Rhine from three to five miles east of the riverbank. If the airborne troops could take and hold this area, the Germans would be deprived of artillery positions and observation posts that could threaten the establishment of a secure bridgehead. Implementing a lesson learned during Market Garden, the airborne troops were to be inserted as close to the objective as possible, eliminating a long march such as the British 1st Airborne Division had experienced, contributing to the disaster at Arnhem.

Once the Diersfordter Wald was cleared of Germans, the paratroopers were to link up with the Second Army to the west and push southward toward Wesel, where important rail lines and roads intersected. The airborne troops were to block the roads north from Wesel and form a junction with the Ninth Army. Early plans for a night air insertion were dropped in favor of the accuracy of a daylight operation. Again, the experience of Market Garden influenced the decision to go in daylight, despite concerns about enemy fighter aircraft and intense flak.

The IX Troop Carrier Command, under General Paul L. Williams, again shouldered responsibility for delivering the airborne contingent. Royal Air Force 38 and 46 Groups were attached to the command along with the American troop carrier groups. Their aircraft would take off from fields in England and on the European continent, where engineers had expanded runways and other facilities to accommodate large numbers of transport planes and an influx of troops.

In the midst of the preparations for Operation Varsity, the U.S. War Department issued a reorganization of the standard airborne division. The 17th conformed by disbanding one glider regiment and transferring its troop strength to other formations. Divisional glider artillery was augmented from two batteries to three; however, the valuable third battery was not due to reach the 17th Division until the middle of March, about 10 days before Operation Varsity was launched.

The anti-tank bazooka had received mixed reviews in combat reports, and innovative weapons development debuted during Operation Varsity, including the 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles. About 100 of them were sent to Europe for distribution to the airborne divisions. The light weapons—the 57mm at 45 pounds and the 75mm at 114 pounds—were designed to pack a powerful punch with much less difficulty than the deployment of the 75mm pack howitzer or standard artillery pieces. As their names implied, the guns were easier to handle since their recoil was absorbed internally. The 57mm weapon could even be fired from a trooper's shoulder.

On the morning of Operation Plunder/Varsity, Field Marshal Montgomery was obliged to entertain Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Field Marshal Sir Alan Brook, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Although their presence was annoying, Montgomery endeavored to

keep the high-level visitors close to avoid their interference with the operation or an unfortunate incident that might endanger their lives. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief Allied Expeditionary Force, was a spectator from a separate location, as was General James Gavin of the 82nd Airborne Division, who had not previously witnessed such a large-scale airborne deployment in which he was not a participant.

Gavin called the show "an awesome spectacle." In addition, Generals Ridgway and Brereton watched from the west bank of the Rhine.

Although planners believed that the distance from the amphibious landing zones on the east bank of the Rhine to the anticipated positions of the airborne troops was acceptable, another reason for the airlift to occur during daylight hours was to give the ground assault a head start, compressing the timeframe for a link-up. The first planes in the Operation Varsity airlift were those of the 61st, 315th, and 316th Troop Carrier Groups, which began clawing their way into the air at 7:09 AM on March 24, bearing troopers of the 6th Airborne from Wethersfield, Chipping Ongar, and Boreham.

The Americans got into the air at 7:25 AM, as pathfinders leading the veteran 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) lifted off from Chartres, one of 12 airfields located near Paris that were designated for Operation Varsity.

Just before 10 AM, the first American planes reached their designated drop zones. A thick, drifting haze, much of it caused by the smokescreen laid to cloak the amphibious assault across the Rhine, obscured the ground below the transports. The pilots missed their drop zone northwest of Wesel, and the first paratroopers descended in a widely dispersed area one and three-quarter miles northwest, close to the town of Diersfordt.

Two groups of 1st Battalion, 507th troopers, one under Colonel Edson Raff, the regimental commander, and the other under Major Paul Smith, commanding the 1st Battalion, immediately went into action. Raff's men eliminated machine-gun nests and engaged in sharp firefights with German infantry, taking time to disable a battery of five 150mm guns and capture the enemy artillerymen. By the time they had secured their objective of high ground in the nearby woods, Raff and company had captured 300 Germans, and nearly 100 enemy soldiers were dead or wounded. Major Smith's men silenced several antiaircraft batteries, and the remaining battalions of the 507th hit their drop zones accurately.

The 3rd Battalion, 507th, headed for Diersfordt and the ancient castle that dominated the town. When the paratroopers stepped toward the village, they were confronted by a pair of German tanks rolling out of the castle and down the road with heavy forest on either side. An accurate anti-tank grenade shocked the crew of the lead tank, and these Germans promptly surrendered. In the first successful use of the 57mm recoilless rifle in combat, other troopers set the second tank ablaze with a direct hit.

While two companies of paratroopers kept the Germans pinned down inside buildings in the town, Company G stormed the castle, clearing it room-to- room. Two hours later, around 3 PM, the structure was secured, and 300 prisoners were captured. Private George Peters of Company G had already sacrificed his life in the landing zone, singlehandedly silencing a German machine gun and scattering enemy soldiers that were firing on his fellow troopers before he was killed. He received a posthumous Medal of Honor.

As night fell, the 507th PIR was firmly established, with substantial artillery support along the edge of the forest near Diersfordt, and para-

ABOVE: After one of their comrades has been felled by enemy fire, troopers of the 17th Airborne hug the ground in a field on the east bank of the Rhine River. BELOW: Weapons at the ready, troopers of the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment move out toward enemy positions as Operation Varsity begins.

troopers had linked up with the British 1st Commando Brigade in Wesel.

The last three American paratrooper serials carried the 513th PIR, commanded by Colonel James W. Coutts. By the time the transports carrying the 513th reached their drop zones, German antiaircraft gunners were shaking off the effects of pre-Varsity bombing. Thick fog still shrouded the landscape. The three battalions of the 513th were dropped over a mile from their assigned zones, one of them coming down in the 6th Airborne sector near the village of Hamminkeln.

When Company E attacked a fortified building in Wesel, Pfc. Stuart Stryker ran forward and was cut down by enemy machine-gun fire 25 yards from the German position. Stryker's rush created a diversion that allowed other troops to assault the building, capturing 200 Germans and freeing three American airmen who had been held prisoner. Stryker received a posthumous Medal of Honor.

The troopers of the 513th PIR were subjected to enemy small-arms fire during their descent and while still in their parachute harnesses. Nevertheless, they organized and fought off the Germans, battling southward toward their assigned objectives and taking out two batteries of 88mm guns, a self-propelled gun, and a pair of enemy tanks along the way. While one battalion secured the landing-zone perimeter, the other two swept the wooded area north of Diersfordt and established a line along the Issel River at the eastern edge of the operations zone.

Within half an hour of landing on their assigned drop zone southwest of Hamminkeln, the troopers of the 466th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion were in action against the Germans despite the fact that they had encountered devastating enemy rifle and machine-gun fire as they came down. One battery had lost all its officers killed or wounded, but the troopers had captured 10 enemy 76mm guns by noon.

Glider operations fared better in terms of reaching their assigned landing zones; however, a number of the aircraft were riddled with bullets and shells in the air and after landing. Nevertheless, the action of the 194th Glider Infantry is indicative of the outstanding offensive effort of March 24.

Within two hours of landing, the troopers of the 194th cleared the Issel River and Issel Canal of enemy soldiers, and two glider field-artillery battalions were in action. By the end of the day, the 194th had destroyed or captured 37 enemy artillery pieces, 10 20mm antiaircraft guns, two flakwagens, and 10 tanks while capturing 1,150 prisoners.

The glider pilots of the 435th Group took up their rifles and fought as an infantry company, holding a crossroads northeast of Wesel against an enemy counterattack. With the assistance of two antiaircraft batteries, the pilots waited for the enemy to come dangerously close before unleashing a devastating single volley that broke the back of the advance and left 50 Germans dead and a tank destroyed.

As the American and British airborne units seized their objectives and linked up with ground forces, the contribution of Operation Varsity to the successful crossing of the Rhine was already being evaluated against its cost in men and materiel. Much had been achieved with the elimination of German positions in the Diersfordter Wald, and the enemy had suffered serious casualties. The airborne troops had all been delivered by 12:30 PM, along with more than 100 artillery pieces and nearly 700 vehicles.

Operation Varsity was an impressive logistical achievement, and there was overall agreement that the airborne phase of Operation

ABOVE: Soldiers of the 466th Parachute Field Artillery man their 105mm howitzer during Operation Varsity, firing in support of the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment. These troopers were under heavy German fire before they landed, either by parachute or glider. BELOW: A soldier of the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment stands guard as he watches German prisoners, who surrendered only when their ammunition was exhausted. These enemy soldiers were just teenagers, some of them as young as 14 or 15 years old.

Soldiers of the 1st and 3rd Platoons, Company C, 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment are the first to enter the city of Munster, Germany, on April 2, 1945. Fighting with General William Simpson's Ninth Army, the men are passing a roadblock along a main route into the city.

Plunder had aided the ground advance. In a single day, the 17th Airborne Division had lost 159 men killed, 522 wounded, and 840 men missing in action, while the airmen of the IX Troop Carrier Command had suffered 194 dead and wounded and another 163 missing. The British 6th Airborne had suffered 2,400 casualties.

More than 50 gliders and at least 44 transport aircraft were destroyed, and 332 were damaged. One of the most disturbing aspects of the airdrop had been the performance of the Curtiss C-46 Commando transport aircraft. Substantially larger than the C-47, the Commando was fast and had exit doors on both sides of its fuselage but lacked self-sealing gasoline tanks. When the integrity of the C-46's fuel tanks was compromised, high-octane aviation fuel gushed along the wings and collected at the wing roots and fuselage. A single spark might set off a catastrophic explosion. During Operation Varsity, 19 of the 72 participating C-46s were shot down, and 38 others were damaged.

General Ridgway issued orders that the C-46 was not to be used in future airborne operations. In fairness, it should be noted that the C-46 presented a large, slow-flying target at low altitude in daylight. Under such circumstances, the losses were not necessarily due to the lack of self-sealing fuel tanks. They were the predictable result of a command decision to deploy them in the first place.

While some contemporary observers have concluded that an airborne operation was not necessary to support Montgomery's crossing of the Rhine, Operation Varsity was nevertheless successful. Lingering detractors, however, remain firm in their assertions that ground troops should have been able to capture the objectives assigned to the airborne within a reasonable period and with perhaps fewer casualties. The depth of the bridgehead established by the 30th Infantry Division at Wesel was not substantially enlarged by airborne troops, and the speed of bridge construction was not appreciably enhanced.

During the night of March 24, the troopers of the 17th Airborne Division repulsed sporadic German counterattacks. The next day, they subdued pockets of resistance. In the afternoon, the division crossed the Issel River and advanced to the nearby autobahn. By the morning of the 26th, the division was attacking with artillery and tank support, advancing six miles east of Wesel in two hours, taking a bridge across the Lippe River at Krudenberg, and linking up with the Ninth Army.

On the morning of March 27, General William Miley, commander of the 17th Airborne Division, ordered a broad advance toward Dorsten with the words, "This is a pursuit."

Around midnight, the British 6th Guards Armoured Brigade passed through the 17th Division as Montgomery's spearheads plunged deeper into Germany against crumbling resistance. The troopers of the 17th Division hopped aboard the British Churchill tanks, rode into Dorsten 14 miles east of Wesel, and advanced another 17 miles.

The stark reality of the German collapse and its massive scope is well illustrated by the casualty figures of the 17th Airborne Division. During two days of action from March 24-26, the division lost 231 troopers killed and 670 wounded. In the next five days, losses amounted to only 74 killed and 102 wounded, including 40 who had been previously listed as missing.

With the end of the war only weeks away, the 17th Airborne Division continued its rapid movement, capturing Haltern on March 29 and the city of Münster on April 2. During the fighting to reduce the pocket of German resistance in the Ruhr, the 17th relieved the 79th Infantry Division, crossing the Rhine-Herne Canal on April 6 and establishing a bridgehead as a springboard for the attack on the city of Essen, the center of Krupp steel production, which fell on April 10.

By the end of the month, the 17th Airborne Division had ended active operations and assumed military government duties in northern Germany. Relieved by British troops in mid-June, the division was deactivated, and its personnel reassigned to the 82nd and 13th Airborne Divisions, the latter preparing for possible deployment to the Pacific.

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A WORKHORSE OF THE U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II, THE BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS BECAME A LEGEND.

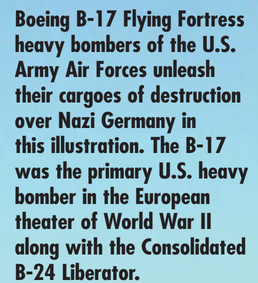
BY SAM MCGOWAN

Boeing's B-17

IN the minds of many military enthusiasts, there was only one bomber in the United States inventory during World War II. This is not true, of course, but historians focusing on the war in Europe have devoted so much paper and ink to the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress that it is often thought of as the only American bomber of the war, at least until the much larger B-29 Superfortress—also designed by Boeing—came along.

In reality, far more Consolidated B-24 Liberators were produced and were used more extensively than B-17s, both as bombers and in other roles. In fact, it was only in the Eighth Air Force that the B-17 was predominant. Thousands of Douglas A-20s, North American B-25s, and Martin B-26s, as well as excellent British bombers such as the Lancaster and Wellington, served in all theaters of war, but the "Fort" has come to symbolize the air war perhaps more than any other bomber.

Ironically, the B-17 was actually already outdated by the time the first Japanese bomb fell on Pearl Harbor, and its initial wartime introduction produced results so dismal that the British, who were the first to test it in combat, decided against the Boeing bomber and instead



Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers of the U.S. Army Air Forces unleash their cargoes of destruction over Nazi Germany in this illustration. The B-17 was the primary U.S. heavy bomber in the European theater of World War II along with the Consolidated B-24 Liberator.

Flying Fortress

opted for the new Consolidated airplane that had been designed to replace it as their four-engine bomber import.

Nevertheless, thanks in large measure to the press, which romanticized the bomber far beyond its actual capabilities and accomplishments, the fame of the Flying Fortress achieved mythical proportions. Even its name allegedly came from a Seattle newspaper reporter, who dubbed the new bomber as a "flying fortress." The young men who flew it in combat added to the myth, claiming it was the best and safest bomber ever built, in spite of the fact that they were enduring heavier losses than their peers in B-24s.

First flown in 1935, Boeing Aircraft Company's B-17 was based on technology of the 1920s and early 1930s and was not the airplane the Army Air Corps actually had in mind for a long-range bomber. Consolidated's B-24 was designed to replace the B-17 and was in many ways a much better airplane, with vastly improved performance due to an aerodynamically shaped wing that afforded higher speeds and greater payloads using engines with the same rated horsepower.

The B-17 was an all-electric airplane, while the B-24—and nearly every large airplane that

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followed—incorporated hydraulically operated landing gear, flaps, and other components that required far less maintenance than the numerous electrical servos that operated the B-17's landing gear, flaps, and turrets. The B-17, nonetheless, was possessed of a design feature that made it able to absorb punishment and created a stable bombing platform: its huge wing possessed an extremely long chord (i.e., diameter between the leading and trailing edges), which produced considerable lift and featured large areas of empty space through which bullets and shrapnel could pass without doing substantial damage. But that same large wing also produced considerable drag, which limited the B-17's speed and severely reduced its operational range.

The combination of the Clark Y wing and its lighter maximum gross weight did endow the B-17 with an ability to climb to higher altitudes than a Liberator, a feature that proved beneficial during the final months of World War II in Europe, when increasingly accurate German antiaircraft guns presented the major threat to bomber formations as German fighter attacks decreased. The big wing also made the airplane easy to fly due to the wing's inherent stability and the light control inputs required to operate the ailerons.

The B-17 was an indirect result of U.S. Army thinking from years following the Great War, when Air Service leaders, led by the controversial Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell, began pushing for the development of a "big bomber" with a 1,000-mile operating range for night missions and a 10,000-pound payload, a mission requirement that would not be met until the advent of the B-29 and Consolidated B-32 in 1942.

By the 1930s, aerodynamics and engine performance had advanced considerably, while U.S. public policy was turning toward using aircraft to defend the North American coasts. The need for long-range bombers capable of intercepting and attacking an enemy invasion force while it was still hundreds of miles out at sea led military planners to again seek a large bomber.

Although the new bomber lacked the performance the Army was actually seeking for a long-range bomber, it had some good qualities, including docile handling characteristics that made it popular with young pilots, whose training had been in biplanes. The Air Corps officers who flew it were convinced the new B-17 was the best bomber in the world, and the service's senior leadership was eager to procure more, since it afforded new capabilities in aerial bombardment. An element within the Air Corps were becoming devotees of the concept of daylight precision bombing, and the B-17 offered a stable bombing platform that allowed bombardiers to drop their bombs with accuracy, at least in training situations from medium altitudes.

National Archives

On July 16, 1935, the prototype B-17 Flying Fortress, the Boeing 299, makes its public debut. Three months later the plane crashed during an air show due to crew error.

Plans were for two combat groups equipped with B-17s, one for each coast. An additional squadron of 13 airplanes had been authorized, and the Air Corps requested 50 more.

But military planning in the mid-1930s was geared toward homeland defense rather than strategic operations, and the purchase of several squadrons of huge land-based bombers was seen as a conflict with the Navy's carrier-based bomber force, which at the time was equal to similar forces around the world. In 1936, no country had an air or sea arm capable of threatening the United States directly, nor was there any likelihood one would in the foreseeable future.

The B-17 was saved from obscurity by the course of world events and the emphasis of President Franklin Roosevelt on building up the U.S. military, especially its air forces. Gathering war clouds over Europe presented an excuse to ask Congress to appropriate money for military projects.

With his party controlling both the executive and legislative branches of government, Roosevelt was able to push through legislation authorizing a massive defense budget, and a military that had been starved for funds suddenly found itself with a blank check to purchase more equipment, particularly aircraft, and to recruit men to equip newly constituted combat units. At the time, only 13 B-17s were in the inventory, but an additional 40 were now ordered.

The B-17 was not, however, the bomber the Army had decided it really wanted. It was lacking in range, speed, and payload, so the War Department put out a new specification for a four-engine bomber with increased performance to replace the B-17 until a true, long-range bomber could be developed. The contract for the new bomber was awarded to Consolidated Aircraft for its new B-24.

Even though the B-17 had been in existence since 1935, production had been limited at least in part due to Boeing and the Army's desires to improve the airplane's performance. This was achieved by the addition of superchargers, which allowed later models to operate as high as 35,000 feet at lighter weights, and the output of the Curtiss-Wright engines was eventually increased to 1,200 takeoff-rated horsepower.

The RAF

By 1940, war had broken out in Europe, and Britain's Royal Air Force was eager to try out the new bomber. The Army Air Corps was anxious to see what the airplane could do under combat conditions, and 20 B-17Cs were diverted from U.S. production under the Lend-Lease Act for delivery to Britain, where they were designated by the RAF as Fortress I and assigned to No. 90 Squadron RAF.

The record of the Fortress I was dismal. During the first mission, the guns froze up and became useless, and one airplane was forced to

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divert due to engine trouble. The second mission caused no damage to the target, and one of the bombers was shot up so badly that it could not be returned to service. It was the second Fortress I to be lost (the first to be delivered ground-looped on landing, ran off the runway, and had to be scrapped for parts).

The third combat mission—against Oslo, Norway—saw the loss of all three bombers on the mission to fighter attack. After just over a month of operations, eight of the 20 airplanes had been lost either in combat or to accident, and the RAF decided it wanted nothing more to do with the Boeing bomber. Although four of the Fortress I's were sent to North Africa, where they operated as night bombers exclusively, the remaining Fortresses were transferred to RAF Coastal Command for coastal patrol.

The RAF decided against accepting any more Fortresses and instead opted for the new Consolidated four-engine bomber that had been designed as its replacement and was beginning to come off the production lines. It was not until late 1942 that the RAF accepted any more B-17s, and they were used primarily for coastal patrol and electronic countermeasures work.

The B-17's failure in combat led to severe criticism of the RAF, even though the RAF had

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Royal Air Force crewmen board a B-17 during operations in England. While they were disappointed with the overall performance of the heavy bomber, the British employed the B-17 in a coastal patrol role. TOP: A formation of early variant B-17 Flying Fortress bombers flies above the Manhattan skyline in this photo taken in September 1937. The B-17 went on to gain fame in World War II.

used them as daylight bombers on unescorted missions depending on their own armament to defend against fighters. just as the U.S. Army planned to do if the country went to war.

Fortunately for the young men who went to war with the Eighth Air Force in England, the shortfalls in the B-17's designs had been recognized, and newer models had been produced with fixes that rectified some of the problems first encountered by the British . Nevertheless, B-17 crews would suffer horrendous losses until suitable escort fighters were developed to accompany them to and from their targets.

The Pacific

Although the B-17 is best known for its service with the Eighth Air Force in England, the airplane's first use in combat by American forces was on the other side of the world, in the Philippines and Southwest Pacific. Under the Rainbow Plan for national defense, the War Department initially wrote off the Philippines as indefensible, but as Japanese aggression in the region increased, President Roosevelt decided that the islands could serve as a base from which to defend against further expansion of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

In the summer of 1941, the War Department began building up military strength in the Philippines, including deploying a large heavy-bomber force made up of B-17s and B-24s. In August 1941, the War Department decided to move the first heavy bombers to Clark Field, and the 19th Bombardment Group was alerted for the move.

War Department plans called for a total heavy bomber force of 165 bombers by the spring of 1942. About half would be B-17s complemented by a similar number of B-24s.

Popular myth has long held that U.S. forces in the Philippines were unprepared when war broke out. "Understrength" is a more appropriate description. General Douglas Mac-

Arthur's Philippines Department was feverishly preparing for war while hoping that it would not come until sometime after the first of the year, by which time military strength in the islands would have greatly increased.

Lieutenant General Lewis H. Brereton, the senior Air Corps officer in the department, took steps to protect his forces by deploying his fighter squadrons at several bases around Luzon. On December 4, with war barely four days away, he ordered two of the 19th Bombardment Group's four squadrons to Del Monte Plantation on Mindanao. Consequently, half of the B-17s in the Philippines were spared when Japanese bombers struck Clark around mid-day on December 8. Even then, the bomber force was not caught by surprise as is so commonly believed, but fell victim to a stroke of bad luck.

Earlier in the day, the two squadrons had been ordered aloft on scouting missions after word came of the attacks on Hawaii but had been recalled to rearm and refuel for an attack on Japanese airfields on Formosa that afternoon. Unfortunately, both squadrons were still on the ground when a Japanese formation bombed and strafed Clark Field, and except for three airplanes, the entire force was damaged beyond repair by strafing fighters.

Maintenance crews worked feverishly to repair the damaged bombers, but freak accidents destroyed all three before they could fly an operational mission. Still, half of the heavy-bomber component in the Philippines was not touched, and the two remaining squadrons would form the nucleus of the air force that would ultimately defeat the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific.

The 16 B-17s at Del Monte continued operating in the Philippines for the next two weeks, until Roosevelt decided to abandon the islands and the remnants of the 19th Group were ordered to Australia, where they took up station at Batchelor Field near Darwin. Before the B-17s departed, several attacks were flown against Japanese ships and landing parties at Viggan with some success, but losses and maintenance requirements took their toll.

One of the B-17s that attacked Viggan was flown by Captain Colin P. Kelly and his crew. After being attacked by fighters, most of the crew bailed out over Clark, except for Kelly and the copilot, who remained on board. Before they could jump, the airplane exploded and threw both pilots out. Kelly's parachute did not open, and he was killed. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and became the first American hero of the war.

MacArthur's orders were to defend Australia, and the growing force of B-17s under his command was put to work attacking Japanese installations in New Britain and the Solomon Islands. The bomber force was reduced, at least on paper, when the 7th Bombardment Group was ordered to India to form the bomber command for the new Tenth Air Force. Only six airplanes and crews made the move, most of them transferred to the 19th.

The 19th Group left Darwin and moved to Townsville, from which it staged airplanes and crews through Port Moresby for attacks against Rabaul, which had become the main Japanese supply and staging base in the Southwest Pacific. A mission required the crews to take off from Townsville and spend the night at Moresby, where ground crews serviced the airplanes while the flight crews attempted to get some sleep either on the ground or on the wings of their bombers.

Eighth Air Force was conceived as the U.S. Army Air Forces element to wage war against Germany from bases in England.

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This cockpit image of the Flying Fortress was originally accompanied by the caption, 'The intricate instrument board of a modern Flying Fortress reveals the great versatility of the huge American bombing planes.'

They would take off in the wee hours of the morning and cross the rugged Owen-Stanley Mountains, then proceed out across the Bismarck Sea to their target. Missions were small, consisting of no more than three airplanes, and were usually timed so that the bombers would arrive over the target before dawn. Damage to the target was probably minimal at best, but at least the crews were striking a blow against Japan.

The B-17's record in the Philippines, Java, and the Solomons was good. Crews came back from missions in airplanes that had suffered considerable damage from fighter attack, although the damage was often more to the skin rather than structure. That B-17s often returned after taking numerous hits in the huge wings and massive tail. giving rise to the myth that the Flying Fortress was "more rugged" than its sister Liberator.

In truth, both airplanes were able to continue flying after absorbing numerous hits from fighters and shrapnel from flak, and both were susceptible to fatal damage from cannon hits in structural areas. The B-17's wide wings and large tail simply offered more surface and were more likely to be hit than the slim wings and smaller twin vertical stabilizers of the B-24.

In late July 1942, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney arrived in Australia to assume the role of MacArthur's air boss. His first act was to ground the entire bomber force for maintenance in anticipation of mounting a large-scale attack on Rabaul in preparation for the impending landings on Guadalcanal.

The V Bomber Command managed to get 15 airplanes over Rabaul the day of the Guadalcanal landings. From then on, missions were scheduled with as many airplanes as possible, although small formations and even single airplanes continued operating against Japanese shipping at night. Shortly after his arrival, Kenney also decided to send the veteran 19th Group back to the U.S. The group had been in constant combat since the previous December 8, and its crews were worn out, both physically and emotionally. The 43rd Group had arrived from the United States and would become the primary heavy bomber group in the Southwest Pacific until the arrival of the B-24-equipped 90th Group. The 43rd was the last B-17 group sent to the Pacific.

The B-17 force continued low-level attacks against shipping at night, but their days in the Southwest Pacific were numbered. War Department priorities combined with the superior range and payload of the B-24 led to the closing of the chapter on the B-17's role in the Pacific War. By the end of 1943, all of the B-17s in the theater had been replaced with B-24s, and all new groups coming in flew Liberators.

Eighth Air Force: Europe

Army Air Forces plans had actually called for the B-24 to be the service's primary bomber, and most of its senior officers preferred the Liberator due to its increased payload, speed, and range. The exception was among the staff of

the Eighth Air Force, which deployed to England in the summer of 1942, and Jimmy Doolittle, who went to North Africa to command the new Twelfth Air Force after returning from the Tokyo Raid.

Eighth Air Force was conceived as the U.S. Army Air Forces element to wage war against Germany from bases in England. Although the original unit was a conventional air force consisting of a full range of bomber components (heavy, medium, and light), as well as a fighter component, it had become solely a heavy bomber organization supported by fighter and troop carrier commands by the time it moved overseas in July 1942.

The first B-17 mission in Europe was flown on August 17, 1942, by a dozen 97th Bombardment Group B-17s against the railroad marshalling yards in the French city of Rouen. The Rouen mission was designed for publicity purposes to announce that the U.S. Army Air Forces were commencing combat operations against German targets in Western Europe.

The raid's main objective was to create newspaper headlines. Escorting Spitfire fighters accompanied the bombers to and from the target, and there were no losses. Surprisingly, bombing results were determined to have been quite good. American B-17 missions were off to a good start, especially in comparison to the early British efforts, but since they were fairly short missions against targets in France, they encountered little opposition. Six missions were flown before the B-17s endured their first fighter attacks. Three more missions were flown without loss, but on the tenth mission, two Fortresses went down.

U-boats were taking a heavy toll on shipping, and the destruction of the pens where the submarines sheltered between sorties became a major objective. After October, the main targets for the heavy bombers were the submarine pens in northern France.

Reports by the B-17 gunners indicated that they were taking a heavy toll on their attackers, but postwar analysis of German records reveals that these claims were greatly exaggerated. Heavy bomber operations from England in the fall of 1942 were designed more to garner publicity than anything else. That began to change with the arrival of more aircraft and crews.

The few winter missions that were mounted were against targets in France and occupied Europe, particularly submarine bases along the Bay of Biscay. The B-17s lacked the numerical strength to go into Germany unescorted, and the escorting Spitfires were only capable of operating a short distance across the English Channel.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: B-17 Flying Fortresses of the USAAF 92nd Bomb Group release their payloads over the city of Magdeburg, Germany, in this September 1944 photograph. BELOW: A B-17 heavy bomber banks away from its target on the Pacific island of Gizo in the Solomons in October 1942. The iconic Boeing heavy bomber was deployed with American forces in all theaters of World War II.

On January 21, 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff issued what is commonly known as the Casablanca Directive, an order for a combined bomber offensive from the United Kingdom, with American bombers attacking by day while their British counterparts continued the night attacks the RAF had been mounting for nearly two years. Up to this point, Eighth Air Force bombers had yet to appear in the skies over Germany.

The experiences of the early missions over France indicated that the heavy bombers were incapable of adequately defending themselves against the hordes of Luftwaffe fighters they could expect to encounter once they started penetrating German airspace. German antiaircraft defenses were known to be formidable, as British losses on their night missions illustrated.

Eighth Air Force commenced operations into Germany in the late winter of 1943 and quickly learned that they could not be conducted without tremendous loss. The deeper into German

airspace a mission went, the greater the losses. Few American fighters were based in England at the time, and the Spitfires with which VIII Fighter Command had equipped its squadrons lacked the range to go further than France.

The lack of an adequate escort fighter led Eighth Air Force to seek to convert a number of B-17s and B-24s into heavily armed escorts. Designated as YB-40s, the modified Fortresses were equipped with additional guns and carried large quantities of ammunition in the bomb bays. While the concept looked good on paper, in practice the YB-40s proved generally ineffective. Their heavy armament made them considerably slower than the already slow bombers, thus reducing combat speeds and making the B-17s more vulnerable to fighters than they already were. The one good thing that came out of the project was the chin turret, which was adopted for all future B-17 production.

To improve its escort capabilities, VIII Fighter Command began receiving Republic P-47 Thunderbolts in the spring of 1943. The P-47s were heavy, and the former Spitfire pilots didn't like them, but they quickly proved to be formidable fighters, and with the addition of external fuel tanks, they were capable of operating far deeper into German-held territory than any other fighter had previously gone. Still, even with additional fuel, the P-47s were only able to go a short distance into German skies. Once the escorts turned away, the bomber formations were left to fend for themselves against ever-increasing numbers of Luftwaffe fighters.

Without adequate escorts, losses among the B-17s were astronomical. The prewar belief that "the bomber will always get through" was proving to be true, but only when the bombers operated in large formations; and even then, losses were high.

A decision was made: All future B-17 production would be sent to Europe to replace combat losses and to equip B-17 groups that were then in the training pipeline; all but two future combat groups would be equipped with B-24s.

In the summer of 1943, the B-17s were left alone in England, as all VIII Bomber Command Liberators were sent to Libya to support the invasion of Sicily and fly the most famous airraid of the war, the daring low-level attack on the oil refineries at Ploesti.

On August 17, the anniversary of the first Eighth Air Force B-17 mission, VIII Bomber Command suffered its worst losses to date. A force of 376 B-17s was sent against Messerschmitt factories at Regensberg and the ball-bearing plants at Schweinfurt. The two-pronged mission was part of a plan that included an attack on aircraft factories at Weiner-Neustadt in Austria by Eighth and Ninth Air Force B-24s in concert with the B-17 missions over Germany.

The Weiner-Neustadt mission went off on August 13, but the Regensberg-Schweinfurt mission was delayed for four days. The Schweinfurt attack was assigned to the 1st Bombardment Wing, which was to return to its bases in England. The B-17s of the 4th Bombardment Wing were equipped with long-range fuel tanks and were to continue on to North Africa to refuel and rest in the first experiment with shuttle bombing.

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This sequence of images depicts the demise of the B-17 nicknamed Vicky in the skies above Italy. In the first frame Vicky releases its bomb load. In the second, the plane is hit by flak, and flames erupt from an engine. In the third, the plane has disintegrated due to a fatal midair explosion as two parachutes open, although they are difficult to see.

Strong fighter opposition was expected, and 18 squadrons of P-47s and 16 of Spitfires were planned as escorts. Once the escorts reached the limit of their range, the German fighters came in. A total of 60 B-17s failed to return from the mission or reach the shuttle bases in North Africa: 36 from the Regensberg force and 24 from the Schweinfurt mission. Nearly all fell victim to fighter attack. It was becoming obvious that unescorted missions into Germany were too costly to continue.

On October 14, VIII Bomber Command returned to Schweinfurt. This time, 291 1st and 3rd Air Division B-17s were joined by 2nd Air Division B-24s, which were supposed to fly a considerably longer, more southerly route to the target. Early autumn thunderstorms over England created problems for the formation. While the B-17s were able to eventually assemble, the B-24 force was restricted due to bad weather, so the formation leader decided to take the Liberators on a diversion toward Emden instead.

The Germans were not fooled by the feint, and as soon as the escorts left the B-17s, fighters pounced on them in force. It was a repeat of the previous mission against Schweinfurt, only worse. Once again, 60 B-17s and their crews were lost, while 17 others returned with major battle damage. As a result of the Schweinfurt mission and other heavy losses during a six-day period that claimed more than 80 additional bombers and their ten-man crews, Eighth Air Force decided to halt further missions into Germany until the escort problem had been solved.

In September 1943, some B-17s were equipped with H2X radar navigational equipment, which allowed blind bombing using radar to mark the release points for bombs. The VIII Bomber Command developed a new lead-crew system that used crews trained in radar bombing to mark the point at which formations released their bombs in synchronization with the lead bombardiers who bombed visually, if possible, but by radar if the target was obscured by clouds.

By early 1944, as weather conditions over Europe deteriorated, radar and synchronized bombing had become a normal mode of operation. Eighth Air Force planners had developed a standard calling for the maximum number of bombs to fall within a 1,000-foot circle around the target, and missions were planned using a "shotgun" method calling for maximum tonnage on the target rather than the precision bombing that had been so heavily emphasized before the war and which had proven impossible under combat conditions.

By early 1944, the escort problem had been solved, as more P-38s became available in England and the effective range of the P-47s was greatly increased. Redesigned North American P-51 Mustangs were also becoming available,

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As summer turns to autumn in wartime England, Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers of the American 381st Bomb Group fly in a practice formation. These bombers are the B-17G variant, and the image was captured in 1944.

although it would not be until mid-1944 that their numbers were increased to the point that they became truly effective in the escort role.

With the escort problem solved, the bombers returned to Germany with a major effort against aircraft manufacturing facilities during the last week of February. Eighth Air Force formations came in from England while Fifteenth Air Force came up from Italy in a coordinated effort. The goal was to destroy the Luftwaffe and gain complete air superiority over Western Europe in preparation for the invasion of Normandy. German aircraft manufacturing was the primary target, with the oil and transportation industries also given high priorities. Another major effort was aimed at the V-1 and V-2 rocket-launching facilities in France.

From February 1944 until the end of the war, the heavy bomber mission was essentially the same: a strategic campaign to destroy German industry. After the Normandy invasion, some missions were aimed at tactical targets, but the strategic campaign continued. With escort fighters able to keep the Luftwaffe at bay, increasing losses to flak as accuracy improved became a major concern.

Bomber formations were forced to fly higher and higher to avoid the flak, and increasingly heavy armor was added to the B-17s and B-24s. Fortunately, the B-17's huge wing allowed the Flying Fortresses to operate at higher altitudes, although their airspeed and range suffered as their weight was increased with the addition of more and more armor. The reduction in fighter attacks reduced the necessity for speed, which had been the B-17s main deficiency, while Allied advances into Europe and ultimately into Germany reduced the need for elaborate routes to and from the targets and the need for excess range.

In late 1943, General Doolittle took command of the new Eighth Air Force. Doolittle, who had achieved celebrity status before the war as an air racer, became popular with the senior British officers on the Allied staff while he commanded Twelfth Air Force in North Africa, and when General Dwight Eisenhower and his staff were ordered back to England, they pressed for Doolittle to go with them.

Doolittle had a special fondness for the B-17 and undisguised dislike for the B-24. The halting of unescorted bomber missions into Germany led to a decline in bomber losses and made more B-17s available. In mid-1944, Doolittle began converting the B-24 groups in 3rd Air Division to B-17s as the first step to converting the entire VIII Bomber Command to the Boeings.

Doolittle's justification for the planned switch was that the B-24s were more vulnerable to antiaircraft fire due to their being forced to operate at lower altitudes as their operational weights were increased with additional armor. His plans were thwarted by the impending end of the war and Headquarters, U.S. Army Air Forces' decision to suspend B-17 production so that the facilities could be used to produce B-29 Superfortresses for the air campaign against the Japanese home islands.

By that time, however, the issue had become moot. Allied ground forces had driven Germany's forces back into the homeland. The need for strategic bombing was decreasing, and the War Department's attention had turned toward the defeat of Japan. It was a campaign in which the B-17 would have no combat role.

When the war in Europe came to an end, most of the B-17s headed for the scrap pile, not to the Pacific. The War Department decided to transfer the Eighth Air Force to Okinawa, but none of its B-17s would take part. Instead, it would become a second heavy bomber force, equipped with B-29s. Although Eighth Air Force Headquarters moved to Okinawa, the war ended before it became operational.

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Allied Royals & The War Effort

Several monarchs made significant contributions to the fight against the Axis powers in World War II.

BY ERIC NIDEROST

Most people are aware of the contributions of King George VI and his consort Queen Elizabeth (later Queen Mother) to the British war effort. Refusing to leave the country even during the darkest days of the 1940 Blitz, the royal pair was a rallying point for the nation in its struggle with Nazi Germany.

The Windsors, though, were not the only royal dynasty swept up in the maelstrom of war. Eventually seven European monarchs found themselves actively or passively promoting the Allied cause against Hitler. Ironically, they were on the Allied side almost by default. The countries they ruled had tried—and failed—to maintain a precarious neutrality. When war came, these kings and queens were taken by surprise, much like their subjects.

The royal list includes Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, King Leopold III of Belgium, King Christian X of Denmark, King Haakon VII of Norway, Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg, King Peter II of Yugoslavia, and King George II of the Hellenes (Greece).

During the invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940, German pioneers complete the construction of a pontoon bridge over a waterway near the city of Maastricht. OPPOSITE: Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands was active in the Dutch government and led it during exile through the years of World War II.

Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands was intelligent, courageous, and utterly devoted to her country. She was a constitutional monarch, but was no figurehead, taking an active role in government. By 1940, she was a matronly woman of 60, but still retained the iron will of her youth.

The Dutch government hoped to stay neutral, but by 1939, Hitler's aggressions proved that no European country was truly safe. Defensive plans were put in place that designated the western part of the country "Vesting Holland" or "Fortress Holland." The area included Rotterdam, The Hague, and Amsterdam. While Amsterdam was the official capital of the country, The Hague was its administrative heart, where the actual Dutch government was located.

The idea was to have a "layered" defense, with certain geographical areas like the wide Maas (Meuse) River incorporated into the overall scheme. Elsewhere, fortifications were dug, and inundations—intentional flooding—could come into play as well. The Dutch army was poorly equipped, partly because of the havoc caused by the Great Depression, and partly because the government foolishly pinned its hopes on neutrality until it was almost too late.

By February 1940, the Germans were finalizing the plans for an ambitious offensive codenamed Fall Gelb, or "Case Yellow." It envisioned nothing less than the simultaneous invasion of France, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Hitler and his generals had nothing but contempt for the Dutch military, but they did respect Netherlands geography. If the Dutch opened the dikes and flooded the country, German plans for a swift campaign might be compromised.

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1969-125-75; Photo: unknown

Necessity, though, is the mother of invention, so the Germans hit upon a bold plan that, if successful, might knock the Netherlands out of the war in a single day. The idea was to use paratroops—Fallschirmjäger—and airborne infantry to penetrate Vesting Holland, take The Hague, and capture the queen, the Dutch government, and the military command center in one fell swoop.

Lieutenant General Hans von Sponeck would be in charge of the operation. He would have five companies of paratroopers from the 2nd Fallschirmjäger Regiment, as well as the 22nd Luftlande Infanterie Division, the latter not jumping but arriving in Junkers Ju-52 transport planes. A special unit was assigned the "tactful" seizure of Queen Wilhelmina, who would be placed under "protective custody."

The main goal of the operation was to seize the airfields around The Hague. The initial airborne assault was successful, but soon the German plan began to unravel. The Dutch had placed machine-gun nests all around the airfields, which took a heavy toll of the German paratroopers. Scores of Ju-52 transport planes were shot down or were damaged and crash-landed. Dutch counterattacks, some with armored cars, forced the Germans on the defensive.

Queen Wilhelmina was initially determined to stay and defend her country to the last. Though more than willing to risk her own life, she was concerned about the safety of the royal family. It was finally decided that Crown Princess Juliana, her husband Prince Bernhard, and their two little daughters, Beatrix and Irene, should be evacuated to Great Britain.

Prince Bernhard zur Lippe-Biesterfeld was a German by birth, and after his death in 2004, it was uncovered that he had actually joined the Nazi party as a young man. By the time he married Juliana, he was anti-Hitler and actually took potshots at passing German aircraft as they flew over the palace.

It was arranged that Juliana, Bernhard, and the children would be taken to Ijmuiden, there to be picked up by the British destroyer HMS *Condrington*. They travelled in a brown armored van that was owned by the Bank of the Netherlands. The crown jewels also traveled with them, kept in a cardboard box. Today, the van, which is now housed in a museum, is showcased as the Vluchtwagen, or "flight vehicle."

National Archives

German Junkers Ju-52 transport aircraft release their cargoes of paratroopers during the invasion of the Netherlands on May 10, 1940.

The evacuation journey was anything but routine. At one point, a German plane appeared, causing the Dutch army escort to open fire. Worse was to come. The royal party reached the docks at Ijmuiden, but just as they were about to board, the area suffered a German air raid. Bombs began falling, and Dutch guns peppered the sky with antiaircraft fire. One German bomb exploded not 200 yards from where the royals were standing, killing one man and wounding another. One German Dornier bomber was shot down, falling in flames like a meteor.

The royal couple reached England safely, and newspaper photos of the time show Princess Juliana and her husband arriving with a curious box-like container. Juliana carried one end, Prince Bernhard the other: no servants were going to carry this precious cargo. Captions explain that nine-month old Princess Irene was in the box, a specially designed compartment to protect infants from poison gas.

By May 13, the Germans had gained the upper hand, and the Dutch were staring defeat in the face. The Dutch cabinet and the government decided to leave the Netherlands and go to England, vowing to continue the fight in exile. The queen was very reluctant to go but was finally persuaded that romantic notions of a last-ditch defense at the palace, or elsewhere, would do her people little good. As a symbol of national unity and independence, she would be a rallying point for the nation. Her death or imprisonment would not help the Dutch cause.

On May 13, Queen Wilhelmina phoned Britain's King George VI, asking for help. Yet even before the call, Operation Harpoon—the rescue of the queen and the Dutch government—was in full swing (this is not to be confused with a later Operation Harpoon).

The Operation Harpoon force insured that Queen Wilhelmina, members of the Dutch government and British embassy staff safely made their escape. It had been a "near run thing," because a special team of German paratroopers arrived at Noordeinde Palace only half an hour after she left.

Wilhelmina's radio broadcasts gave the Dutch people courage and hope at a time when they were needed the most. Prince Bernhard was not initially trusted by the British, mainly because he was German-born. The prince was a pilot, and flew combat missions included bombing German V-1 rocket launching bases.

By late 1940, the royal family was firmly established as the symbol of national freedom and independence from Nazi Germany. On Prince Bernhard's birthday, June 29, 1940, Dutch flags flew everywhere, much to the consternation of the occupying Germans. Many people also wore carnations in their lapels, something that Prince Bernhard often did before the war. The Germans responded by taking down all royal portraits from public buildings.

King Leopold III of Belgium chose not to go into exile like Wilhelmina, a fact that, ironi-

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LEFT: King Christian X of Denmark rides through the streets of the Danish capital city of Copenhagen on his 70th birthday, September 26, 1940. The king remained an opponent of the Nazi occupiers. RIGHT: King Leopold III of Belgium and General Henri Denis, the Belgian Defense Minister, inspect troops during mobilization for the defense of the country against Nazi invasion.

cally, contributed to his abdication in 1951.

When Germany invaded on May 10, 1940, Belgium was also caught off guard. The Belgian army fought hard, but after a week or so, it was clear that courage alone was not enough, especially when their British and French allies were defeated and seemed on the verge of collapse.

In his last meeting with his government ministers, Leopold made it clear he would share the fate of the Belgian army, whatever that fate might be. This caused consternation among Belgian officials, since they had determined to evacuate to England and form a government in exile. The king said something to the effect that he would get along with new ministers, which seemed to imply he might turn collaborationist, though that is probably not what he meant.

The Belgian government fled to London and, once in the safety of the British capital, denounced Leopold and repudiated any actions he might take as king. The bad feelings that developed between the king and his exiled government only grew stronger over the years.

In the meantime, the king unconditionally surrendered to the Germans after an unequal contest that lasted 18 days. The British and French immediately denounced him for having capitulated "prematurely." Even Prime Minister Winston Churchill decried the decision, though there was little more that the Belgian army could do, short of giving themselves over to complete annihilation.

King Leopold found himself essentially a prisoner of war under close German supervision. He was not actually incarcerated, but placed under a kind of house arrest in his Brussels palace.

While still in German custody, Leopold, a widower, further damaged his reputation with the Belgian people by marrying. His Walloon subjects were dismayed—the lady was Flemish—and in general, many Belgians thought the king selfish. After all, so the rationale went, thousands of Belgian men were still in POW camps, and they did not get to see their wives. The image of a lonely king, imprisoned and still pining for his late wife, was shattered forever.

Blackened by Allied propaganda as the man who easily surrendered and excoriated for his "selfish" marriage, the king became a controversial figure. Later in the war, he was removed from Belgium and shipped to Austria. He was liberated after Germany's surrender.

King Leopold returned in 1950, only to be met with demonstrations and civil strife. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, he abdicated in favor of his son, Baudouin, to save the country from possible civil war. A victim of bad judgment and incredibly bad luck, King Leopold III was the only Allied monarch to end the war unpopular with his people.

Denmark is a small country that, geographically speaking, is a kind of northern "appendix" of the European continent. The Danes are Scandinavians whose seafaring Viking ancestors were both the terror and the wonder of the medieval world, but in 1940, the country—small and flat with no natural barriers—was all but indefensible in the face of the Nazi juggernaut. The German onslaught began on April 9, 1940, about a month before France and the Low Countries experienced the blitzkrieg.

Surprised and almost defenseless, the Danes were overcome in a single day. Somewhere between 16 and 100 Danish soldiers were killed (the figures are hotly disputed), but the very real threat of Copenhagen being mercilessly bombed finally caused the Danish government to capitulate.

King Christian X of Denmark turned 70 years old in 1940 and had ruled since 1912. His brother was Haakon VI of Norway. He was not popular in the early years of his reign because of his gruff and somewhat authoritarian manner. But this was to change after Denmark was occupied. From 1940 to 1943, the Danish government was allowed a large degree of autonomy and could manage internal affairs much as before. Danish Jews were not persecuted, were not forced to wear a Star of David armband, and could attend their services without fear.

As king of Denmark, Christian made sure his relations with the Germans were well within the boundaries set by Hitler's regime, but beneath the polite facade, the people soon recognized that the king's inner feelings were distinctly anti-Nazi.

When the main synagogue in Copenhagen was burned by arson in December 1941, King Christian wrote a letter of sympathy to Rabbi Marcus Melchior. The king also helped finance

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ABOVE: Goose-stepping German soldiers parade through the streets of Bergen, Norway, after occupying the country in a swift operation that began on April 9, 1940. BELOW LEFT: Norwegian King Haakon VII inspects a Sten gun with his son Crown Prince Olav at his side. This photo was taken in Britain in 1940 after the royals had reached safety there aboard the cruiser HMS *Devonshire*. BELOW RIGHT: King George II of the Hellenes eventually reached safety in Britain after fleeing to Crete, trekking through difficult country with New Zealand troops as an escort, and boarding a Royal Navy destroyer.

Imperial War Museum

National Archives

the secret evacuation of all Danish Jews—almost 8,000—to neutral Sweden when they were threatened later in the war.

Unfortunately, the king suffered a fall from his horse in 1942, and was a semi-invalid for the rest of his life. In 1943, the Germans staged a kind of coup that completely did away with the illusion of Danish independence, but after the war, Danes honored Christian as the man who kept the flame of Danish nationalism burning bright.

Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg was the last of the 1940 royal refugees to arrive in the British capital. When the Germans invaded her country on May 10, the grand duchess, her husband Prince Felix, and their six children left only when the German Army was perilously close. The royal family initially went to France, then Spain, and Portugal.

Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide, Charlotte's sister, had remained when the Kaiser's army occupied Luxembourg in World War I. Widely perceived as pro-German because of this, Marie Adelaide was forced to abdicate in 1919. Charlotte was determined she would not suffer her sister's fate. She had little appetite for becoming a real—or perceived—German puppet.

The grand duchess accepted President Franklin Roosevelt's offer of refuge for her children, but she herself made her way to England. Once there, she made a series of very effective radio broadcasts to her imprisoned nation, addresses so effective she was called the "propagandist in pearls."

Norway was invaded the same day as Denmark, April 9, 1940. The Germans planned to capture Oslo by using a naval force that included the pocket battleship Lützow and the new heavy cruiser Blücher. Much like the later Holland operation, the idea was to capture King Haakon VI and his entire government before they could react and organize a national defense.

Luckily for the king, the German plan miscarried because of oversights by the planners and the courage of one old soldier. Ships approach the Norwegian capital through the Oslo Fjord, which narrows at a place called Oscarborg. The narrows were guarded by Oscarborg Fortress, which was almost 100 years old. Its artillery dated to about 1900, and so did an underwater torpedo battery. German planners either overlooked or discounted the antiquated fortress.

Colonel Birger Erikson, commander at Oscarborg, had orders to fire a warning shot before any hostilities. Erikson saw the danger the Germans represented and did not hesitate. "Either I will be decorated or court marshalled! Fire!" Shells stuck the *Blücher*, causing damage, and two Norwegian torpedoes finished her off. Some 2,000 Germans were killed or drowned aboard the *Blücher*, including troops, Gestapo agents, and functionaries who were supposed to take full control of the Norwegian capital. The other German ships retired from the scene.

The sinking of the *Blücher* bought the Norwegians precious time. The king, the royal family, the cabinet, and most of the Stortling (Norway's parliament) escaped the city by special train. The next day, Curt Brauer, the German minister to Norway, had an audience with Haakon and demanded he appoint Vidkun Quisling, head of the Nasjonal Samling party (Norwegian fascists), as new prime minister. Brauer also threatened the king with

harsh reprisals on the Norwegian people if he did not agree.

King Haakon had an emotional meeting with his cabinet at the town of Nybergsund. The king said he would follow the wishes of his government, but then continued, "for my part I cannot accept the German demands. It would conflict with all that I have considered to be my duty as king of Norway." Rather than becoming an obstacle to surrender, he would abdicate the throne.

Inspired by his example, the Norwegian government rejected the German ultimatum and vowed to resist German aggression as long as they could. The Nazi response was both swift and predictable. Nybergsund was heavily bombed and virtually destroyed in the process. Haakon and the government officials were forced to seek refuge in a nearby birch forest.

The king became a fugitive in his own country for a time and had to keep moving to avoid capture. German air raids were also a constant menace. Finally, the king, his son and heir Crown Prince Olav, and a few members of the government boarded the cruiser HMS *Devonshire* for transport to England.

Haakon was met at London's Euston Station by Winston Churchill personally, a mark of real respect from the British prime minister. King Haakon took a leading role in the Free Norway movement, organizing its escaped armed forces, holding cabinet meetings, and giving radio broadcasts. During one early visit to the BBC, the receptionist asked, "Where was it that you said you were king of?"

By the spring of 1941, Operation Barbarossa—Hitler's invasion of Soviet Russia—was well underway. As part of the overall scheme, it was important that the various countries of Eastern Europe join the Tripartite Pact. Some joined willingly, some needed coercion, but Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria soon fell into line. Yugoslavia alone tried to maintain its neutrality.

Yugoslavia was a product of political horse-trading after the end of World War I, an uneasy "marriage" of three distinct ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—who had been welded together as a unified nation. The monarchy, originally Serbian, provided the glue that kept the country going, but ethnic rivalries and mutual suspicions were such that Yugoslavia lived up to its reputation as the "Balkan powder keg."

At the time, the country was ruled by a regent, Prince Paul, ruling on behalf of his teenage cousin, King Peter II. Paul cared little for the Germans but was now faced with few viable alternatives. On March 17, 1941, he finally agreed to have Yugoslavia join the Axis.

This was an unpopular move, and a group of Serb officers deposed him, abolished the regency, and placed the 17-year-old Peter officially on the throne. The coup enraged Hitler, who quite simply declared, "I have decided to destroy Yugoslavia." The Führer was as good as his word, and within days, the country experienced the terror of a full-fledged German blitzkrieg. Young King Peter managed to escape to Greece, then Palestine (now Israel), and finally Egypt. The peripatetic young monarch eventually visited the United States, where he met President Franklin D. Roosevelt and took in a Yankees baseball game.

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ABOVE: King George II of the Hellenes (center) stands with Polish officers during an inspection of Greek troops that successfully escaped their occupied country and reached North Africa. INSET: After completing studies in Britain at Cambridge University, King Peter II of Yugoslavia took an officer's commission in the Royal Air Force. The monarch is seen at left in this photo.

King Peter had the air of romance about him, as if he were the chief actor in his own epic tragedy. The image was not far off the mark. The British and Americans were generally cordial, but by 1943, they had started to shift their support to Tito and his anti-Nazi partisan movement. Tito, a communist who hated the monarchy, had plans for postwar Yugoslavia that did not include Peter.

In 1941, Greece was already engaged in a bloody war. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini had tried to emulate Hitler, but his army had little appetite for conquest, and the Greeks proved efficient fighters. Hitler was forced to save his ally from a humiliating defeat, and soon German panzers were rolling into the cradle of Western civilization.

King George II of the Hellenes was a man who seemed to view his crown with a kind of detached amusement. The king's family were not Greek in origin, but had connections to the Danish and Norwegian royal houses, among others. Britain's Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, is George's first cousin.

In the late 1930s, George supported the

Continued on page 78

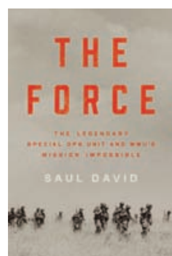
By Christopher Miskimon

During their heroic fight for the summit of Monte la Difensa, soldiers of the First Special Service Force fire their weapons at the German defenders.

The Legendary Special Ops Unit and WWII's Mission Impossible

The First Special Service Force made its reputation through a daring assault against a mountainous Nazi stronghold.

THE WINTER LINE WAS THE GERMAN ARMY'S DEFENSIVE POSITION IN Southern Italy in late 1943. Set into high mountains which dominated the surrounding terrain, numerous Allied attacks against it failed, always with heavy casualties. One of the key positions in this line was Monte la Difensa, held by veteran troops of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division, bloodied in both North Africa and Sicily.



Now, Captain Bill Rothlin, a former metalworker from California, was about to lead 88 men in the first wave of an assault on what seemed an impregnable position. His men took up their weapons, shouldered packs heavy with ammunition and equipment, and began to climb. It was a dangerous mission, and the price of failure would be high, but this was no ordinary infantry unit. These men were part of a new outfit, the First Special Service Force, known colloquially as "the Force," but soon to be known to the Germans as the "Black Devils."

Ten days earlier, two "Forcemen," as they were called, scouted the mountain, looking for a route which would avoid attacking straight into the well-prepared enemy defenses. They found a path around to the northern face of the mountain, where a 200-foot cliff sat behind the German machine-gun nests and mortar pits, which were naturally oriented south toward the Allied lines. The Forcemen were trained mountaineers, able to scale such features. If they could climb the cliff silently, they could surprise the Germans and take a key stronghold in the Winter Line.

Now that plan went into action. Rothlin's company led the way, followed by the rest of his battalion, a total of 291 determined and well-trained men from both Canada and the United States. As they began their arduous trek up the mountainside, a shell exploded on the German positions above. A British attack was going in at the same time, and the artillery preparation was underway. The bombardment provided quite a spectacle for the Forcemen as they went about their task. Shells roared overhead as 925 guns fired 22,000 rounds in the first hour; the Germans responded with counterbattery fire, adding to the tumult. The artillery likely helped, as it masked the noise of the Allied soldiers approaching the cliff.

The Forcemen started ascending the cliff after midnight. The bombardment was over, and men tried not to make a sound, worried that any clattering rock or squeaking piece of equipment might alert the enemy above. The men's burdens weighed heavily as they climbed, using ropes placed earlier by scouts. Reaching the top, they eased their packs off while scouts crept forward, searching out a route to the summit 200 yards away. A pathway was found, and the company moved out just after 4:30 AM. They were almost to the top when a German sentry shouted a challenge out into the darkness. One of the Forcemen shot him, and the attack began. Flares lit the night sky, and the ripping noise of MG-42 machine guns shattered the night's quiet. "All hell broke loose," recalled one Forcemen, and the battle for Monte la Difensa was underway.

The Force proved its worth in the fighting at Monte la Difensa and served as an example for later elite special-forces

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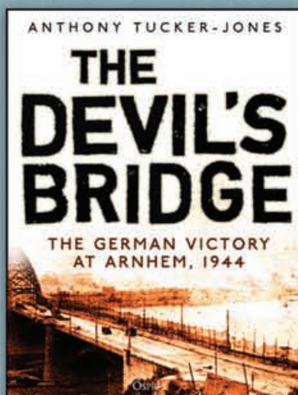

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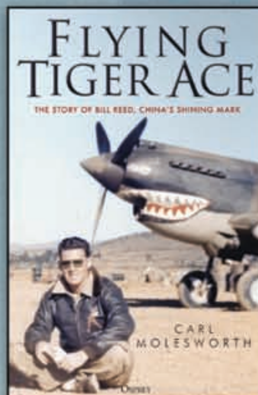

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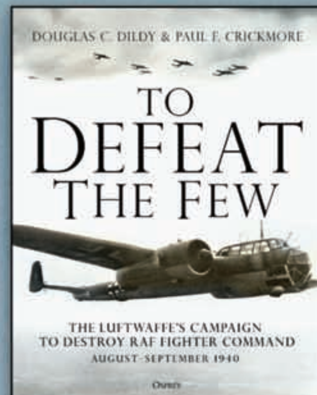

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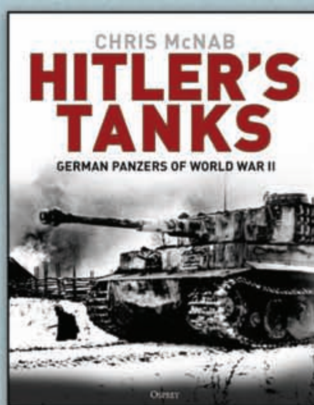

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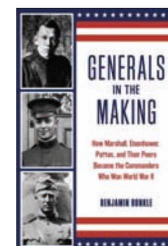
organizations. From its humble beginnings as an inter-Allied experiment to its daring exploits on the battlefield, the unit brought together a rough- and-tumble cast of characters and honed them into a sharp commando-style force able to carry out missions few other outfits could. The story of this unique group and its men is well told in *The Force: The Legendary Special Ops Unit and WWII's Mission Impossible* (Saul David, Hatchette Books, New York, NY, 2019, 360 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover).

This new work is at heart a battle story, less concerned about the actions of generals and field marshals than about the regular soldiers and junior officers who fought on the battlefield. It is well written, with an engaging narrative, placing the reader among the soldiers as he learns about their origins, training, and combat experiences. The author skillfully blends firsthand accounts, memoirs, interviews, letters, and declassified documents into a readable and interesting story. This book is especially relevant to students of the Italian Campaign, special-operations forces, and those who appreciate a good story of men in the crucible of combat.

Vanguard: The True Stories of the Reconnaissance and Intelligence Missions Behind D-Day (David Abrutat, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2019, 400 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $46.95, hardcover)

The Normandy landings of June 6, 1944, were the largest amphibious invasion in history to date. If they failed, the repercussions for the rest of the war would have been enormous. Much was riding on the success of the operation, and extensive intelligence gathering was carried out to support it. For example, American signals-intelligence experts cracked the ciphers for the Japanese embassy in Berlin, allowing them to read the message traffic. After the Japanese ambassador toured the Normandy area at German invitation, he wrote extensive reports on the defenses and fortifications in the area. This provided wide-ranging information to Allied planners. There were also numerous reconnaissance missions carried out by special operations personnel, spies, and resistance operatives to learn about the beaches, tidal conditions, German defensive positions, and plans. Together, these thousands of intelligence and reconnaissance specialists gathered the information needed to get thousands of American, British, and Canadian troops ashore and into the fight against the Third Reich.

The author of this new book is a former British Royal Marine Commando and specialist in reconnaissance. He brings this expertise to bear in the book, detailing the various groups and methods used to collect data before D-Day. The work is well-written and contains many interesting photographs, diagrams, and charts from the period, which effectively complement the text.

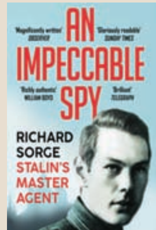


Generals in the Making: How Marshall, Eisenhower, Patton, and their Peers Became the Commanders Who Won World War II (Benjamin Runkle, Stackpole Books, Lanham, MD, 2019, 435 pp., photographs, notes, index, $34.95, hardcover)

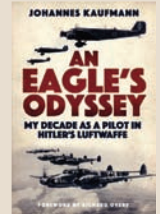
The men who became the United States'

New and Noteworthy

Fighting the People's War: The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War (Jonathan Fennell, Cambridge University Press, 2019, $34.95, hardcover) This expansive book brings together the histories of all the commonwealth armies into one narrative. The work effectively relates the various nations' contributions and efforts to the war's initiatives.

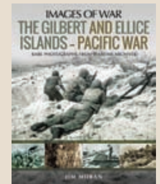


An Impeccable Spy: Richard Sorge, Stalin's Master Agent (Owen Matthews, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, $30.00, hardcover) Sorge was a Soviet Spy serving in Japan. Despite his often reckless and wild behavior, he provided vital information to his masters in Moscow.



An Eagle's Odyssey: My Decade as a Pilot in Hitler's Luftwaffe (Johannes Kaufmann, Greenhill Books, 2019, $32.95, hardcover) The author served as a fighter pilot in the Luftwaffe throughout the war. His memoir is a fascinating look at both his wide-ranging service and the German flying experience.

Creating Hitler's Germany: The Birth of Extremism (Tim Heath, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, $39.95, hardcover) This narrative centers on the experiences of three German families. It takes the reader from World War I through to the final destruction of the Third Reich in 1945.



Images of War: The Gilbert and Ellice Islands – Pacific War (Jim Moran, Pen and Sword Books, $28.95, softcover) This new edition in the *Images of War* series takes a graphic look at some of the hardest fighting in the Pacific. The volume also contains related text and original maps.

Battle of Berlin 1943-44: Bomber Harris' Gamble to End the War (Richard Worrall, Osprey Publishing, 2019, $24.00, softcover) Harris was the chief of RAF Bomber Command; he developed a plan to end the war through the use of airpower. This book examines the strategy and tactics of the attempt and why it ultimately failed.

Panzerfaust vs Sherman: European Theater 1944-45 (Steven J. Zaloga, Osprey Publishing, 2019, $22.00, softcover) After the D-Day landings, American tank crews encountered new and deadly German antitank weapons. This book recounts the use of the Panzerfaust and Panzerschreck and what defense were devised against them.

Six Victories: North Africa, Malta, and the Mediterranean Convoy War November 1941 – March 1942 (Vincent P. O'Hara, Naval Institute Press, 2019, $34.95, hardcover) The Convoy War in the Mediterranean is a classic example of the roles that strategy, intelligence, and logistics play warfare. This book examines that struggle and its outcome.

most important generals during World War II were, with few exceptions, largely junior officers in World War I. Between the wars, they often languished in an army the American public generally ignored or even distrusted. Promotions were slow; it was not unusual for officers to spend 20 years in the service and still be a captain or major with limited chances to move further. The Great Depression and the nation's isolationist tendencies left the army underfunded, and a military career was an almost monastic existence. And yet this small group of dedicated men endured, serving in posts from Washington D.C. to China and the Philippines. They attended military schools together and forged friendships that would later become critical to the war's successful prosecution. It was a difficult life in many ways, but when the flames of war again began to spread across the globe and the United States was pulled inexorably into another war, men such as Eisenhower, Patton, Ridgeway and Bradley did their duty.

The story of World War II's American leaders and their pre-war experiences and educations is revealed in great detail in this new book. The author delves into the personal and professional lives of his subjects in a way that reveals how the sum of their lives prepared them for their future. The book provides an interesting look at how officers are prepared, in some ways inadvertently, for the highest levels of command.

Stalingrad: Letters from the Volga (Antonio Gil and Daniel Ortega, translated by Jeff Whitman, Dead Reckoning Press, Annpolis, MD, 2019, 112 pp., illustrations, maps, $19.95, softcover)

The Battle of Stalingrad was a maelstrom of death and horror. Over a million casualties were suffered by the combatants during the months-long struggle for the city. German troops arrived in August 1942, expecting to quickly overwhelm the defending Soviets. Instead, the fighting turned into a slogging, back-and-forth bloodbath, with quarter rarely asked or given. The battle finally ended in February 1943, with the surrender of the remaining German troops, few of whom ever returned home again. The battle was a turning point that destroyed men at an appalling rate.

This new graphic novel tells the story of Stalingrad through the eyes of the German troops who first invaded and later were trapped in the city. It uses letters home from German soldiers as the basis for each story, and as their situation grows worse, the letters gradually become more desperate. The artwork is clear and accurate; attention is paid to uniforms, vehicles, and weapons to make the story look authentic. It also uses actual battle sites in Stalingrad rather than fictitious locations. Since the book strives authentically to portray the horrors of Stalingrad, some of the artwork and language is disturbing and graphic—a novel better suited for more mature readers.

Fur Volk and Fuhrer: The Memoir of a Veteran of the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (Erwin Bartmann, translated by Derik Hammond, Helton and Company, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, 256 pp., maps, photographs, $29.99, softcover)

By his own admission, Erwin Bartmann fell under the spell of the Third Reich and joined the Waffen SS at age 17. He thought being in the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Division made him part of an elite organization. After training, he was sent to the Eastern Front in late summer 1941. Part of a communications squad, Erwin soon discovered survival was a matter of luck. His luck ran out in July 1943, when a piece of shrapnel pierced his lung at Prokhorovka during the Battle of Kursk. After recovering, he was assigned to the division's training unit near Berlin as a machine-gun instructor. He was there when the Red Army arrived and fought against the Soviets at Seelow Heights. As the war wound down to its inevitable conclusion, he and some comrades made their way west and wound up as prisoners of the Western Allies.

Erwin's memoir is a fascinating look at combat on the Eastern Front and the aftermath of the war. Like most Waffen SS veterans, he denies knowledge of the death camps or other activities of the Holocaust and sees himself as a patriotic young man fighting for his country against the scourge of Bolshevism. Unlike most, he acknowledges he did so in the service of an evil regime that was itself guilty of terrible crimes. The translation is smooth, and the narrative is engaging.

Indestructible: The Unforgettable Memoir of a Marine Hero at the Battle of Iwo Jima

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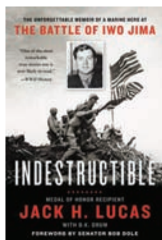

(Jack H. Lucas with D. K. Drum, William Morrow Books, New York, NY, 2019, 288 pp., photographs, index, $16.99, softcover)

Private Jack Lucas was 17 yexars old when he went ashore on Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. He joined the Marine Corps at 14, lying about his age to enlist. Now he was in the middle of one of the worst battles of World War II. The next day, he was with three other Marines, engaged in a close-range battle with Japanese troops. As the fighting raged around him, a pair of enemy grenades landed in the Marines' trench. Lucas jumped on one of the grenades as he pulled the other under his body. The double explosion threw him into the air. There were some 250 wounds in his body; his comrades thought he was dead and moved on. But despite his wounds, he survived and saw the flag flying over Mount Suribachi from the hospital ship Samaritan. He was still carrying 200 pieces of shrapnel in his body after 21 operations. Lucas was also about to become both the youngest Marine and youngest World War II serviceman to receive the Medal of Honor.

This remarkable autobiography was originally published in 2006 but is being rereleased for the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima. It is a lively tale full of stories from both before and after the battle; Lucas' life was an interesting one both in and out of the service. The book is written in an easy, simple style, which makes which makes for fast reading.

Cataclysm: The War on the Eastern Front 1941-45 (Keith Cumins, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2019, 359 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, index, $24.95, softcover)

The Eastern Front, where Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union tore at each other for nearly four years, was by far the largest continuous theater of World War II. The fighting opened with a massive German invasion by three million troops, which at first seemed to carry all before it. Many thought the Soviets would be next in the growing list of nations ground under the Third Reich's boot heel. Instead, Soviet determination, the vast distances, harsh weather, and Allied assistance combined to grind the German advance to a halt. Next came the monumen-

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

ONE CLASSIC RTS EXPERIENCE AND A COLLECTION OF ZOMBIE WAR SHOOTERS MAKE THEIR RESPECTIVE DEBUTS ON NEW PLATFORMS

COMPANY OF HEROES

PUBLISHER FERAL INTERACTIVE • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** IOS

When you think of the classics of the real-time strategy genre, which titles come to mind? For some, it might be a staple of the 90s, like the *Command & Conquer* series, while others might be quicker to namecheck the likes of *Warcraft* or *StarCraft*. If you narrow your focus down to just the World War II-related entries, though, it's impossible to ignore the influence of 2006's Company of Heroes. At a glance, it doesn't seem like it even came out that long ago, but with a 14-year history under its belt, it's had plenty of time to accrue a stalwart fandom of devotees who are more than ready to sing its praises.

Relic's *Company of Heroes* has endured for many reasons, not the least of which is attention to detail. There's something awe-inspiring about the way it takes every little factor into account, from the elevation of weaponry to the way your infantry reacts to falling under attack. In many genre standards, your troops are little more than fodder designed to go where you tell them to regardless of the consequences. Getting pinned down in *Company of Heroes* has always been a different story entirely. Your soldiers might run back to their base if they need to, or they may simply find a good spot to take cover. If the situation goes sideways, it could even lead to a loss of morale.

This type of thoughtfulness is one of the many features that makes *Company of Heroes* so special, and now it's available as an-iPad compatible iOS release, so even more people can discover what it has to offer. The folks behind this conversion are Feral Interactive, boasting previous iPad port credits like *Tropico* and *Rome: Total War*. For the most part, Feral knows how to successfully take these games and make them work on tablets of varying sizes, and the key to this all comes down to the available options.

For instance, if your iPad is big enough to make it work comfortably, you can opt for touch controls that essentially replace the mouse clicks of the original PC game. There's also a new command wheel system that offers something a little more accessible to newcomers, particularly those who are accustomed to mobile gaming. Either way, you'll have plenty of opportunities to learn the basics thanks to the training modes that help ease you into everything from essential controls to more advanced tactics.

Of course, some aspects of *Company of Heroes* have aged more than others. This mostly applies to the cutscenes, which definitely look like they came straight out of 2006, but there's also a certain charm to seeing them just as they appeared the first time around on the iPad screen. For what they are, they look decent enough, and the way they transition straight to gameplay is still really cool.

Keep in mind that what you get here is just the base game of *Company of Heroes*—there's no

British expansion yet at the time of this writing—but at least it's a complete title. Considering how monetization works for mobile games these days, it's actually kind of novel to unlock a full game with a single purchase and be done with it!

ZOMBIE ARMY TRILOGY

PUBLISHER REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** SWITCH

If you're in the mood to blast zombies away in a WWII setting, it doesn't get much better than the *Zombie Army Trilogy*. The cult horror shooter has been kicking it with the undead since *Nazi Zombie Army* first launched as a standalone spinoff of the *Sniper Elite* series back in 2013, and now it's coming to the place all games eventually belong: Nintendo Switch. Sure,

tal task of throwing the Axis armies back, first out of Russia and the Ukraine and finally to the gates of Berlin itself. Before that goal could be met and the war ended, millions of lives were lost and the future of Europe irrevocably altered.

The Eastern Front was so vast and the battles fought there so large it is difficult for many to fully grasp the enormity of events that made up the fighting there. What makes this book stand out is the author's ability to take this huge task and condense it into a usable narrative. He successfully describes the war at its strategic and operational levels and creates a manageable history that informs the reader without requiring a multi-volume set or becoming too complex for easy comprehension. A set of useful color maps accompanies the text, and a short but vivid photo insert contains imagery carefully selected to reveal the heart of the war in the East.

Arnhem 1944, An Epic Battle Revisited 1: Tanks and Paratroopers (Christer Bergstrom, Vaktel Books, Sweden, 2019, 400 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $31.99, hardcover)

Operation Market Garden began as a massive airborne and ground plan to seize a bridge over the Rhine River in German occupied Holland in October 1944. It started with Anglo-American airborne landings to seize the needed bridges. Behind them, the British XXX Corps advanced with its armored formations in the lead, hoping to smash their way through the ground the paratroopers had captured and open a route into the heart of Germany. If successful, the plan could have shortened the war. Tragically, a pair of SS armored divisions had been rotated to the area just before the operation began. This posed a real obstacle to the lightly-armed paratroopers and made XXX Corps' advance immensely more difficult.

This new work is Part One of a two-volume set on Arnhem by a renowned Swedish historian. It is an innovative work, with fresh looks at a battle which has been extensively written about over the years.

Dispersed throughout the book are Quick Response (QR) codes; the reader can use these to link to various online videos that relate to the book's subject matter. Most of these videos are original combat-camera footage and films of the battle area. The book itself contains numerous images and maps to accompany the text.

Voices from Stalingrad: First-hand Accounts from World War II's Cruellest Battle (Jonathan Bastable, Greenhill Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, maps, photographs, glossary, index, $19.95, softcover)

Pulat Gamiyev was a scout in the Soviet Army. During the Stalingrad fighting, his superiors frequently assigned him the job of bringing back a "tongue," which meant capturing a German who could be made to talk and provide intelligence. During the winter of 1942-43, he was looking for a tongue when he stopped in a village to get hay for his horse. Approaching a haystack, he realized someone was inside. He called out, and four armed Germans came out of the stack. He ordered them to drop their weapons, and they complied; they didn't realize Pulat was alone. Continuing his bluff, he brought the Germans forward one at a time to search them. Luckily, a Russian soldier happened to come by and helped take the prisoners in; one of them even had a pistol hidden under his uniform. Pulat was recommended for a medal for that day. Instead of one tongue, he returned with four.

Stalingrad was one of the most horrific and intense battles of the war. The author has cleverly taken a chronological account of the battle and woven in numerous personal accounts from over 100 sources, both German and Soviet. Some of the material, taken from German and KGB archives, is published for the first time in this work. There are also a number of rarely seen photographs alongside good maps and a thorough glossary. □

Switch may not be nearly as powerful as a PC—or even its console competitors—but its portability finally makes it possible to take WWII-era zombie hunting on the go.

The *Trilogy* version first appeared on PS4, Xbox One, and PC in 2015, packing in three story campaigns and a single-player or four-player co-op Horde mode. The Switch version includes the same intense multiplayer action over the course of fifteen missions, with support for local wireless co-op, motion controls, Pro Controller and HD Rumble, as well as a new friend-invite system.

Taking down Hitler's undead army has always had a tongue-in-cheek quality to it, and that's never been more apparent than it is when playing all these missions back to back. Whether you're a fan of this already, or just enjoy the *Sniper Elite* series and other similarly styled shooters, you'll get a kick out of what *Zombie Army Trilogy* brings to the blood-soaked table. All the content previously released on consoles is present and accounted for, and the fan-favorite X-Ray Kill Cams are here in all their gruesomely gory glory.

BARON: FUR IS GONNA FLY

PUBLISHER DOGMELON GAMES • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PC

Now, for something a little lighter—and a little earlier than WWII if we're getting specific—we have *Baron: Fur is Gonna Fly*. This adorable-looking aerial combat game takes place in 1917, where patriotic animals take to the skies to challenge any would-be competitors who think they can out-match them in the quest for dogfighting glory. Short of every single animal *being a dog*, this is about as close to literal dogfighting as one could get.

In *Baron*, players can choose from one of four biplanes with early 20th century inspirations behind them. They all have unique stats, too, from handling to shields and overall-°speed capabilities. Thanks to the fact that an actual aircraft engineer was involved in development, the goal is to hit just the right balance between free and loose arcade fun and more nuanced physics. As for the weapons, all planes have a gatling gun and one of 13 special weapons, including the likes of massive anvils, smelly fish, and a black hole that can suck in any opponent that gets too close.

Baron allows for showdowns of up to eight players, with hyper-stylized visuals backing the action. There are basic multiplayer matches that pit all players against one another, and there are also team-based fights that let you form a high-flying squadron of your own. If you want to test the skies for yourself, you can now pick this one up on Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, and PC. □

Insight

Continued from page 29

move out in the morning; they were going to a new camp. The German guards, too, aimed to get out of Poland before the Russians came.

The next morning, 1,350 Kriegies started their march to the west; only 490 would reach their destination. Some escaped, others made their way back to Szubin, and some died along the way. It took five weeks to travel 362 miles. "We had blizzards," Waters wrote. "We had snow; we had sub-zero weather; we had rain; you name it and we had it. It was bitter."

When they finally reached the new location, Oflag 13-B, near the town of Hammelburg, Germany, the American POWs thought their worst nightmares had come true. Their first sight of the place brought a feeling of oppression; they were about to be locked in like animals. They never imagined they would feel homesick for Oflag 64, but the conditions of the camp at Hammelburg, and of the POWs already confined there, were deplorable, the worst any of the Szubin men had ever seen.

A month after their arrival, on March 27, 1945, an underequipped and undermanned U.S. Army task force of 300 men was sent 60 miles behind German lines. The operation was ordered by General Patton, ostensibly to rescue the POWs at Hammelburg. Patton's real aim, however, was to save his son-in-law, John Waters. General Omar Bradley later wrote that the mission "began as a wild goose chase and ended as a tragedy." The noted British historian Alex Kershaw called it "a tragic fiasco."

Almost all of the men in the task force were killed, wounded, or captured, along with a number of the Kriegies. Colonel Waters was so seriously wounded that it took multiple surgeries over the course of a year before he could return to active duty. The remaining prisoners at Hammelburg, including those who had come from Szubin, were marched to the east in the following days. They suffered from hunger and cold and from the Allies' bombing and strafing raids. The number killed during this agonizing trek remains unknown.

Considering the misfortunes at Hammelburg and its aftermath, it is hardly a surprise that so many of the Kriegies looked back on the Oflag 64 camp as almost more a haven than a prison. They formed an active survivors' association that held reunions beginning in 1947, and many of the men and their families traveled to Szubin in later years to relive their memories.

And that explains why a Polish professor so captivated the audience in the hotel outside Washington, D.C., more than 70 years after the end of the war. The Americans listening to him were the children and grandchildren of former POWs, along with one camp survivor, Bill Sharpe, then 96 years old.

Professor Mariusz Winiecki told them how, as a boy, he had walked through a cluster of rundown buildings partially enclosed by a barbed wire fence on his way to school every day. As he got older, he became more curious about what the place had been. When he found out it had been a German POW camp for Americans, he was eager to learn more.

"My generation does not know what happened in the camp," Winiecki said, "because during the long Russian occupation, the Polish people were not allowed to celebrate, or even recognize, anything to do with the role of American soldiers in World War II." The more he learned about the camp, the more determined Winiecki became to make the residents of Szubin "aware of World War II and the atrocity that war can cause."

Winiecki told his audience in 2018: "I want to tell your stories, your fathers' stories." And how better to do that than by establishing a museum at the site of the camp, to recreate the life of the American POWs who lived there?

The children and grandchildren of the POWs agreed, as did the lone survivor. "I just figured it would be nice to preserve it even though it was a place of adversity," Bill Sharpe said. He recalled that his weight dropped from 150 to 96 pounds during his 19 months in captivity. But he also noted that he had "a lot of pleasant experiences there," such as the theater and the music, and how the prisoners all tried to take care of each other.

And so, as one of the last survivors of Oflag 64, Sharpe volunteered to take the lead role in raising funds for the commemorative museum.

Once he returned to Poland, Winiecki worked with Szubin's mayor and the head of the reform school that now occupies the prison compound, and he persuaded the national government to turn over ownership of one of the remaining prison buildings to serve as the site of the museum. He also started a blog, *OFLAG 64 RECORD*, on which he regularly posts reports of his progress.

His hope is that sometime this year, the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, the memorial to the Kriegies of Oflag 64 will be open as a tribute and a testimony to those who were there.

Duane Schultz has written numerous articles and books on military history, including Crossing the Rapido, Into the Fire: Ploesti, *and* Patton's Last Gamble. *See www.duaneschultz.com.*

The Royals

Continued from page 71

authoritarian, semi-fascist regime of General John Metaxas, yet genuinely admired the British. Though the king seemed to prefer autocratic government, he had little use for Hitler and the Nazis. When the Germans overran mainland Greece, George fled to Crete, where he found temporary respite.

But the king's adventures were only just beginning. He was staying at the Bella Carpina, a Venetian villa two miles southwest of Chahia, when he was warned by British intelligence that the Germans were about to launch a massive airborne invasion of Crete. As soon as he heard the information, King George made his way to the home of Greek prime minister Emmanouil Tsouderos in the village of Perivolia. The king and his entourage had to leave Perivolia the next morning when the German assault began.

As German Fallschirmjägers were descending from the skies, the King's party began an arduous trek into the mountains. Because of the haste, they were ill prepared for the journey, having taken with them little food or water and no climbing equipment.

George's party were protected by men of Company B, 18th New Zealand Battalion under the command of 2nd Lt. W.H. Ryan. They made it to Therisson, but they were well above the snow line, and it was bitterly cold. The party had no heavy coats or blankets and suffered immensely. Worse was to come. The royal party continued to climb, reaching an altitude of 7,000 feet. The Cretan guides, perhaps overcautious, made conditions worse by deliberately avoiding any villages.

The party finally reached a shepherd's hut high in the mountains, where they were given a warm welcome and some Cretan hospitality. The shepherd killed and roasted a sheep, and his wife passed around sheep milk.

The escapees eventually made it down to the coast, where they were rescued by the destroyer HMS *Decoy* and taken to Alexandria, Egypt. The New Zealanders were impressed with King George throughout the journey. As one soldier put it, "With majestic simplicity, he shared with us all dangers, all privations, all hardships."

King George of the Hellenes eventually found himself in Britain. Like the other royal exiles, he was a tireless advocate for his country's liberation from Nazi tyranny. He returned to Greece after the war, an honored symbol of his nation.

Author Eric Niderost is a college professor and lives in the Bay Area of California. He has contributed to WWII History *for many years.*

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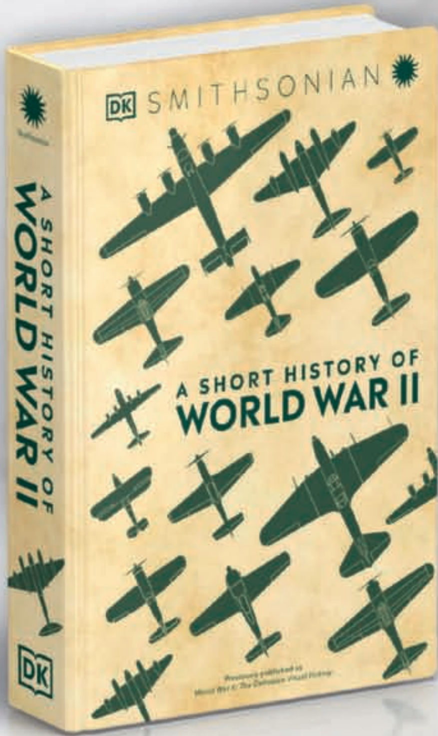

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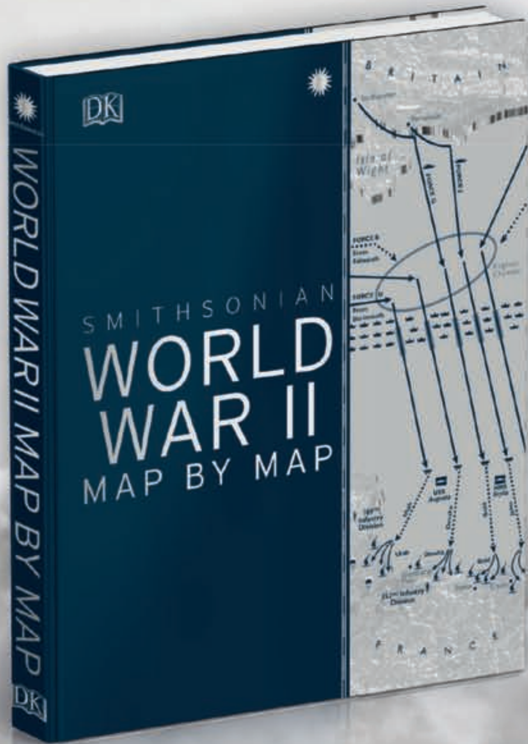

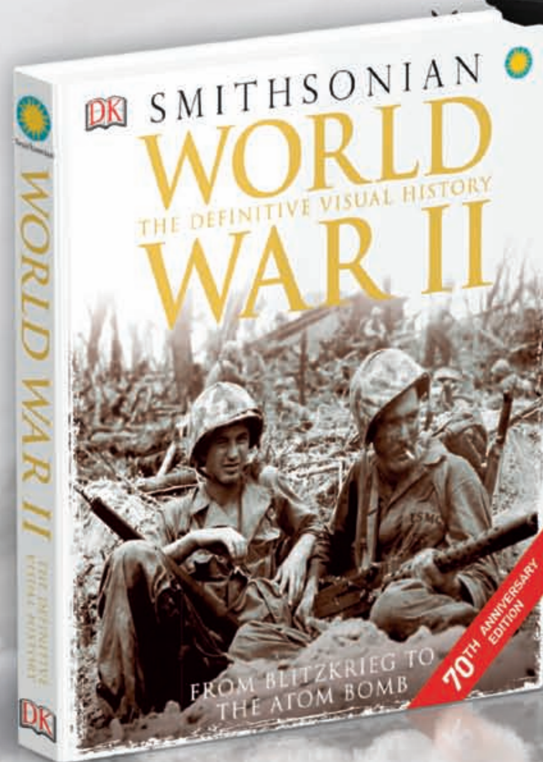

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