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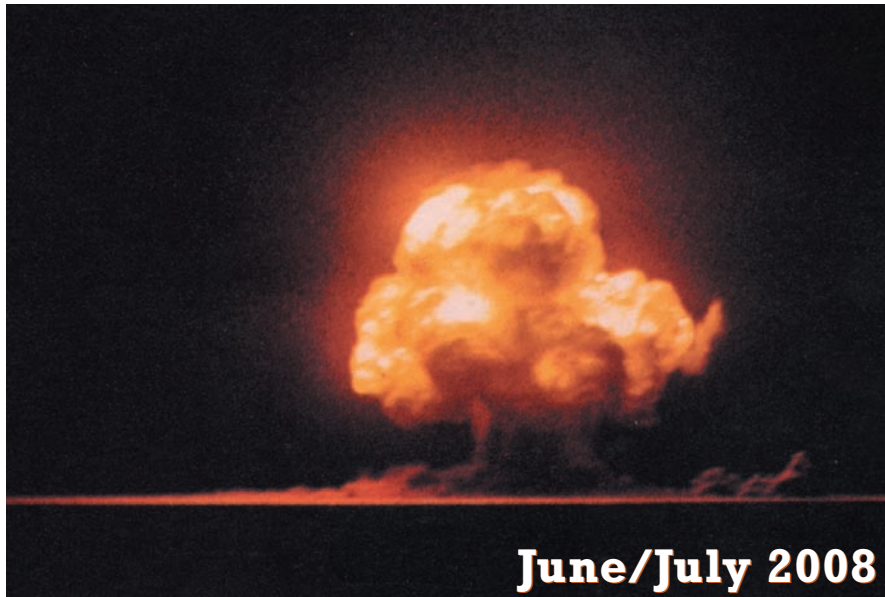
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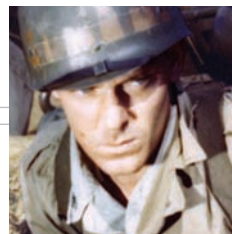
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## Anne Frank's chestnut tree is threatened by disease and the axe.

**MORE THAN 60 YEARS AFTER HER DEATH, ANNE FRANK, THE YOUNG GIRL WHO** was a virtual prisoner in the famous “annex” as she, her family, and others hid from the Nazi Jew hunters in Amsterdam, remains an icon of optimism and belief in the triumph of the human spirit. Aside from *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which has become required reading for many young people around the world and given rise to scholarly studies of the Holocaust, another symbol of the young girl's hope and faith in humanity was a simple, otherwise nondescript chestnut tree.

On February 23, 1944, Anne wrote in her diary, “Nearly every morning I go to the attic to blow the stuffy air out of my lungs. From my favorite spot on the floor I look up at the blue sky and the bare chestnut tree, on whose branches little raindrops shine, appearing like silver, and at the seagulls and other birds as they glide on the wind ... As long as this exists, ... and I may live to see it, this sunshine, the cloudless skies—while this lasts I cannot be unhappy.”

Last November, the Associated Press reported that the venerable, 150-year-old chestnut had been ravaged by fungus and moths, which had caused a large portion of the tree to decay and threatened its survival. The tree itself was in peril, said the report, and the city of Amsterdam acknowledged that it might in fact come crashing down, potentially landing on the warehouse building adjacent to a canal where the annex is located. In March 2007, the city issued a permit for the removal of the tree. Grafts were taken from it, and plans for the site included the future planting of a sapling from the original.

“The state of this monumental chestnut is a real danger for its surroundings,” commented a city official. “Its rapid decay makes it necessary to take action now. From the latest assessment, it appears that only 28 percent of the trunk is still healthy. The risk of the trunk breaking—in which case the 27-ton tree will fall over—is now unacceptably high. Given these results, which preclude the tree's being cured, preventative cutting of the tree is the only remaining realistic option.”

Needless to say, opposition to cutting the tree down was immediate and quite vocal. Objections from such organizations as the country's Tree Institute earned a reprieve by October. However, the following month another date was set for the chestnut's destruction. Then, according to a BBC report, Judge Jurjen Bade intervened just 24 hours before the fateful day, ruling in favor of conservationists that the tree did not pose an immediate threat to surrounding structures or visitors. The judge instructed that cutting the historic tree down should be a “last resort” and that Amsterdam city officials and conservationists should work together in exploring other options.

“We finally get the possibility to have time to look into the alternatives and that is what we have asked for so long already. This is a monumental tree of unusual cultural and historical value. It is a symbol of freedom all over the world, and it summons forth a lot of emotion,” commented Trees Institute spokesman Edwin Koot during an Associated Press interview. The Trees Institute has already proposed the potential for saving the chestnut with a combination of treatment and a system of cables to reinforce endangered limbs and the weakened trunk.

The family of Anne Frank, a young teenager, was sequestered in the annex for more than two years before the hiding place was discovered in August 1944. Seven months later, she succumbed to typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Her father, Otto, was the sole survivor.

It must be recognized that the chestnut tree is a living thing, and like all other living things it does have a finite lifespan. However, such a living link to the life of young Anne Frank and a monument to the tragedy of the Holocaust is worthy of extraordinary preservation efforts. At press time, a final determination as to the fate of the tree has yet to be made.

*Michael E. Haskew*

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## We found our most important watch in a soldier's pocket



It's the summer of 1944 and a weathered U.S. sergeant is walking in Rome only days after the Allied Liberation. There is a joyous mood in the streets and this tough soldier wants to remember this day. He's only weeks away from returning home. He finds an interesting timepiece in a store just off the Via Veneto and he decides to splurge a little on this memento. He loved the way it felt in his hand, and the complex movement inside the case intrigued him. He really liked the hunter's back that opened to a secret compartment. He thought that he could squeeze a picture of his wife and new daughter in the case back. He wrote home that now he could count the hours until he returned to the States. This watch went on to survive some harrowing flights in a B-24 bomber and somehow made it back to

the U.S. Besides the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, my father cherished this watch because it was a reminder of the best part of the war for any soldier—the homecoming.

He nicknamed the watch *Ritorno* for homecoming, and the rare heirloom is now valued at \$42,000 according to *The Complete Guide to Watches*. But to our family, it is just a reminder that nothing is more beautiful than the smile of a healthy returning GI.



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## “Patton and Me”

Dear Editor:

Arguably, I was the smallest first sergeant in the Army during World War II. I held that rank for 39 months, being only 5’3” tall and with a weight of 115 pounds. While in England waiting to be deployed to France, we [Company C, 38th Infantry, 2nd Division] were told that our regiment was going to be inspected by General Patton. After a long wait, and with a worried look on our faces, along came General Patton accompanied by his adjutant and our regimental commander. As he passed in front of my company—being the first sergeant, I had to be in front of the company formation—General Patton stopped in front of me, looked me up and down, and with his gruff and raspy voice asked me, “Who in the name of hell made you a first sergeant?” As can be imagined, I was in awe, dumbstruck, and speechless. As I did not answer, he repeated, “Sergeant, are you deaf? I asked you who in the name of hell made you a first sergeant. I snapped out of my reverie, and without thinking said, “With all due respect, Sir, the same that made you a general made me a first sergeant.” General Patton looked at his adjutant, and then looked at the regimental commander, and then looked at me and muttered, “Hummmph.”

After inspection, I was summoned to regimental headquarters. The regimental commander said, “Knowing General Patton the way I do, he can order me to have you busted for your insolence toward him.” I replied, “Colonel, Sir, I was not insolent. I did tell him, with all due respect, that the same that made him a general made me a first sergeant.” The colonel said, “Well, Sergeant, let’s hope for your sake that we will not hear anything further.” I saluted briskly, thanked the colonel, and was excused. Luckily for me, after all the battles that we were involved in in France, Belgium, Germany, and Czechoslovakia, I never saw General Patton again.

You have a great magazine, and the articles and views also relate to me.

Harold A. Rodriquez  
Anaheim, California

## Voyage to Victory

Dear Editor:

I enjoy your magazine very much and always read every story. I was especially interested in Eric Niderost’s article “Voyage to Victory” in the March 2008 issue.

I was with the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion; we were formed from units of the 1st Infantry Division, The Big Red One, and were attached to the 1st Infantry Division on our trip to Gourock, Scotland, and supported the 1st through the North Africa/Tunisia campaign. So I would have to differ with Mr. Niderost when he stated on page 42 that the 1st Armored was the unit that was crossing on August 2-7, 1942.

Keep up the good work and I will continue to look forward to the next issue.

Bill R. Harper  
Richardson, Texas

Dear Editor:

I found the Eric Niderost’s recent “Voyages to Victory” article dealing with the wartime adventures of RMS *Queen Mary* brought back memories.

I grew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia, during World War II and I recall the arrivals and departures of many famous warships and liners during that time. Once my father, who was involved with troop movements, told me that he was on the pier when a ship arrived from the French West Indies bearing the gold reserved of France, which were deposited for the duration in Canada.

After the war, I remember seeing each year newsreels of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor arriving annually aboard the *Queen Mary* in New York harbor. In his autobiography, the film actor David Niven, then an officer in the British forces, related how he was on the *Queen Mary* when it rammed HMS *Curacao* in June 1942.

My wife and I visited the Queen Mary at its moorage in Long Beach, California, some years ago. There was a building alongside that housed the “Spruce Goose” made famous by Howard Hughes. There was also an English Village which I recall seeing in a horror movie produced by Bing Crosby. I recall seeing the *Queen Mary* in a brief scene of a Hitchcock film starring Sean Connery.

After the war, I remember once going aboard the *Mauretania* in Halifax which, if I remember correctly, was also used as a troop ship. It had not been kept up too well and was scrapped a few years later.

W.J. Curran  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

## Rats Versus Scorpions

Dear Editor:

I found the January 2008 issue of *WWII His-*

*tory* to be very interesting, especially the book reviews and the articles on Ian Fleming and *Fliegen und Siegen*. I did notice one small error, however, in Mason Webb’s review of *Encyclopedia of Elite Forces in the Second World War*, by Michael Haskew. In that review, on page 90, Mr. Webb referred to the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) as the “Desert Rats.” While this term is sometimes used as a general reference to British soldiers who served in North Africa during World War II, it is more properly applied to the British 7th Armored Division, not the LRDG. The emblem of the 7th Armored Division, as you are no doubt aware, was a jerboa, or “desert rat”; hence the nickname. The emblem of the LRDG, on the other hand, was a scorpion, and one of its nicknames—given to it by the SAS—was the “desert taxi service,” not “the Desert Rats.”

Alexander Wilson  
Batesville, Indiana

## 761st Tank Battalion

Dear Editor:

I read with interest the article titled “Patton’s Magnificent Panthers” in the April/May 2008 issue. What a unit of courageous men fighting the Germans and the prejudice of the time.

I must point out one error in the article by Charles W. Sasser. On page 46 the article states in part when speaking of German Tiger and Panther tanks, “German armor was thicker, and the tanks had wider tracks, and they burned diesel rather than gasoline fuel, which made the tanks less likely to explode and burn when hit.”

According to many sources, notably *German Tanks of World War II* by Dr. S. Hart and Dr. R. Hart, the Tiger Ausf E was powered by the Maybach HL 230 P45 V-12 petrol engine and the Panther D by the Maybach HL 230 PV30 V-12 petrol engine. Neither tank utilized a diesel engine.

Steve Roersma  
Ada, Michigan

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for the tank that had put such devastating fire into their position was none other than a German-built Mark V Panther medium tank, captured intact by the British and placed into their service. No doubt some of them would have felt a twinge of anger or even disgust that a tank that epitomized the height of the Fatherland's technical and military prowess had been so effectively turned against them.

Using the captured weapons and equipment of an enemy is commonplace during war. Frontline soldiers often find themselves short of what they need to accomplish their missions and quickly become ingenious at filling these holes in their order of battle with whatever they can find, capture, or pilfer. During World War II, this applied to tanks and armored fighting vehicles (AFVs) as much as anything else. It is well known that the German Wehrmacht made widespread use of captured vehicles of all types. It did so in an organized, deliberate fashion, filling large gaps in its own order of battle first with vehicles seized during the “peaceful” occupations of Austria and Czechoslovakia before the war actually started. Later, after the Nazis had overrun France, the Low Countries, and vast tracts of the Soviet Union, the vehicles of those nations were mixed into German units.

Overall, the use of enemy armor for the Allies was, with a few exceptions, much less necessary than it was for the Germans. The rapid expansion of the German military early in the war coupled with the slower initial expansion of German industry led to thousands of Czech, French, and Soviet tanks and AFVs being incorporated into German divisions. This was made simpler by their early victories as production facilities, military bases, and stocks of spare parts and ammunition were overrun and captured. During the course of the war, entire units were fully equipped with captured enemy armor, notably Soviet T-34 medium tanks on the Eastern Front and French tanks of various types used in security units in Western Europe and the Balkans.

For the Allies, however, there was usually not only less need but also less utility in using Axis fighting vehicles. Allied production capacity was much higher, so the Allies' armies could almost always replace losses and equip new

units without resorting to captured enemy ordnance. This also simplified logistical issues because the Allies never had to incorporate foreign spare parts and ammunition types through their supply pipelines.

## Switching Sides

Outright need and the perceived superiority of German armored fighting vehicles led to some very notable examples of their use—by Allied troops.

**GEIJSTEREN CASTLE SITS NORTH OF THE DUTCH TOWN OF VENLO ON THE BANKS** of the Meuse River. In late 1944, the castle was a strongpoint in the local German defenses and under attack by elements of the British Sixth Guards Tank Brigade. The German troops garrisoning the fortress had held against attacks by infantry and heavy artillery bombardment. Now, the brigade's tanks would try their hand at knocking out the enemy position.

The British crews moved their Churchill tanks to positions within range of the castle and began to fire. Equipped with various versions of the Churchill, the tankers sent rounds from 6-pounder and 75mm cannon, as well as the 95mm howitzers, crashing into the walls of Geijsteren. The smaller tank guns proved ineffective against the stout walls of this fortress with ramparts built to withstand the long bombardments of an earlier era of warfare.

The 95mm howitzers were much more successful, but one tank outdid them all. The crew of this particular tank, which bore the name “Cuckoo” painted on both sides of its turret, methodically pummeled the castle's defenders, selecting a window and then unerringly putting a round right through the opening and into the strongpoint's interior. Cuckoo's crew was lauded for the precision of their fire in the attack.

The defeated Germans, however, had good reason to feel frustration that day,

Shown rolling along a dirt road in northwest Europe on November 29, 1944, a captured German Panther tank is in use by the British 4th Coldstream Guards, 6th Guards Tank Brigade. (Imperial War Museum)

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An Australian tanker waves from the turret of an Italian M13/40 light tank captured by the 6th Australian Divisional Cavalry in Cyrenaica, Libya, on March 4, 1941. The kangaroos were painted on the tank to help distinguish friend from foe. **BELOW:** Nicknamed Cuckoo, a Panther tank engages German positions at Geijsteren Castle on the banks of the Maas River in late 1944. The Panther was captured by the 4th Coldstream Guards.

(Both: Imperial War Museum)



destination, but they were losing power and overheating themselves, leaving only nine operational tanks. By March 31, the 6th RTR reported only 36 of its M13s operational.

By April 5, the regiment had lost so many of its Italian tanks that the decision was made to select the nine best-running ones and destroy the rest after taking anything usable off them. By the next day, the last of these vehicles had been discarded

because of breakdowns and a shortage of vital fuel. It should be noted that some of the losses through breakdowns would probably have been fixable if the British had had access to a proper logistical line capable of supplying parts. Still, the loss of so many tanks in a month's time, with the majority of those losses occurring in noncombat situations, only reinforces the low opinion the British tankers had of their M13/40s.

Of all the Allies, the Soviets were understandably the largest users of captured German armor. The vast scope and length of the fighting on the Eastern Front gave them the greatest opportunity to organize captured tanks into units in useful numbers. This, combined with the desperate need for anything that could be used to resist the Nazi invaders, gave rise to small units, platoons, and companies of captured enemy tanks. The Soviet Army even published orders and translated instruction manuals on their use. These orders specified using them as long as they could be kept running. The larger German Tigers and Panthers were ordered discarded when they broke down or were otherwise no longer battleworthy.

As in the case of Cuckoo, Panthers were particularly popular for their fighting qualities, and crews prized them so highly they often ignored

Because German factories did not fall into Allied hands until the end of the war, adopting the German vehicles that were captured simply did not make sense.

There were a few exceptions, however. In North Africa the British Army, short of modern tanks of its own, used numbers of Italian tanks captured during the initial fighting. In March 1941, the British reported having 365 tanks available (not including light models armed only with machine guns). Of these, some 16 percent, or 60 tanks, were Italian medium models captured at Beda Fomm. All of them were issued to the 6th RTR (Royal Tank Regiment) after being overhauled and fitted with British radios. They were not very popular with British tankers because of their thin armor and poor mechanical reliability.

The 6th RTR arrived at Tobruk on February 22, 1941, with none of its own tanks. The unit was sent to Beda Fomm to take possession of the Italian M13/40 medium tanks there. The three squadrons of the regiment were all equipped with these tanks by March 12. On the 18th, A Squadron was sent forward to join the 3rd Hussars. The squadron started its road march with 15 Italian tanks. Three of them overheated en route and were left behind. An additional three M13s arrived at the squadron's

As in the case of Cuckoo, Panthers were particularly popular for their fighting qualities, and crews prized them so highly they often ignored

the order to discard them upon breakdown, keeping them in service as long as possible. This even extended to requiring captured German tank crewmen and mechanics to work on the tanks to keep them going. Maintaining these vehicles in the field presented many difficulties. Tanks consume spare parts and ammunition quickly, but for captured vehicles there was no steady source of supply, especially when the users were on the defensive and did not expect to overrun enemy supply depots.

Even when enemy stocks were captured, there were significant logistical problems in coordinating distribution to the units that actually needed them. Given the vast distances typical on the Eastern Front, transporting stocks from wherever they were captured to the units that needed them (perhaps hundreds of miles away) would require extensive planning even without the vagaries of combat and weather that plagued all soldiers fighting there.

As for the tanks themselves, they were usually painted with large, easily visible Soviet identification markings to avoid or at least minimize the incidence of friendly fire. A wise commander would obviously want to coordinate with the friendly units operating on his flanks so they would know there were captured enemy tanks in use in the area. It was also common to place flags or other appropriate identification markers on the tops of turrets or engine decks as a signal to friendly aircraft, something many tankers did anyway even if they were not operating captured tanks.

While these small-scale organized uses of German and Italian fighting vehicles went on, there were also uncounted instances of individual units using captured tanks for their own tactical and short-term advantage. Generally these AFVs were also used until they broke down or ran out of ammunition, then they were discarded or destroyed to prevent recapture. A small number would be turned over to various intelligence units for inspection and evaluation, with a few of those eventually shipped back to England or the United States as trophies or for technical testing at places such as Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. Today, museums have many of these vehicles on display. Unfortunately, a number of the captured German tanks at the Aberdeen Proving Ground were destroyed in a scrap metal drive during the Korean War.

The perceived superiority of German tanks and assault guns in particular made them desirable for troops who wanted to make up for the shortcomings of their own issued equipment. The fearsome reputation German armor acquired over time led many Allied troops to identify any enemy tank they saw as a Tiger or

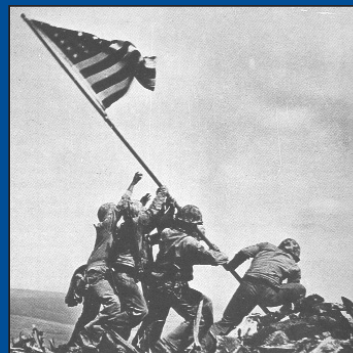
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American soldiers prepare a captured German 88mm gun for firing against its former owners while a half-track that originally belonged to the Germans brings ammunition forward. (National Archives)

Panther, even when the vehicles in question were less capable panzer models. As the war progressed, German troops were also forced to abandon many AFVs for lack of fuel. German half-tracks were used by all the Allied armies, often refitted with .50-caliber and .30-caliber machine guns to ease ammunition resupply. In the American 104th Infantry Division, soldiers found an intact Sturmgeschutz III 75mm assault gun and employed it. In the southern Netherlands, a trio of the dreaded 88mm guns so feared by Allied troops was turned against their former owners. There must have been dozens, if not hundreds, of similar undocumented instances.

The Panther, of course, was one of the most feared German tanks, and soldiers on the Western Front were as happy to get one as their Soviet counterparts, even though no Western units ever appeared to have tried forming captured tank units the way the Soviets did. On the Italian front, in October 1944, the Canadian Seaforth Highlanders captured an intact Panther and gave it to the 145th Royal Armoured Corps, a regimental-size unit. Its new owners whimsically renamed the tank "Deserter" and issued it to the unit's C Squadron.

Deserter's first action came on November 11, when it was used to attack an enemy observation post. During this action the tank's gunner was apparently killed when he dismounted the vehicle and stepped on an antipersonnel mine. Later, the unit conducted tests pitting their pet Panther against Sherman and Churchill tanks in mobility on soft terrain. They also noted frustration that Deserter was too wide to fit onto the famous Bailey bridges built by British engineers to cross river obstacles.

One of the best-documented cases, however,

is that of the previously mentioned Panther renamed Cuckoo. The tank was found abandoned in a barn during the fighting for the village of Overloon. Before its capture, the tank had belonged to the 2nd Battalion of Panzer Brigade 107. The British tankers assigned Cuckoo to the 4th Battalion Coldstream Guards alongside their issued Churchills, apparently to a staff section. These staff tanks were all named after birds, such as Eagle and Vulture; hence, the name Cuckoo. In preparing the tank for its new owners, a new coat of paint was applied, most likely the same khaki as the Churchills. Cuckoo's new operators were impressed and happy with their acquisition; in particular, they admired the high quality of the optics in the tank's sights, something for which the Germans were noted.

Cuckoo participated in the attack on Geijsteren Castle and then took part in Operation Blackcock in January 1945. This attack was designed to push the Germans out of a triangular area of ground between the Dutch towns of Roermond, Heinsburg, and Sittard. Cuckoo was employed in an attack on the town of Waldenrath in the southeastern corner of this triangle. The winter was harsh, and icy conditions made for difficult going. Cuckoo both impressed and angered its new owners. While the Churchill tanks seemed to constantly slide and become stuck on the icy roads, the Panther kept moving with absolutely no problem at all, oblivious to the conditions plaguing the British armor.

The tank was used again during Operation Veritable, a campaign designed to clear the area between the Roer and Rhine Rivers in Germany. During this operation the British were involved in heavy fighting in the Reichswald, which was forested and inhospitable terrain for

tanks. Nevertheless, Cuckoo fought here for its new owners. Unfortunately, during this campaign the Panther's fuel pump failed and could not be fixed or replaced. Abandoning the tank, the Coldstream Guards went on to finish the war with their Churchills.

In a very few instances, even resistance fighters used the Germans' own AFVs against them. French fighters reportedly used a few German tanks during the liberation of France in 1944. In Poland, the resistance fighters of the Polish Home Army used several captured tanks in the desperate fighting of the Warsaw Uprising in August and September 1944. As the Soviet Red Army advanced into Poland and approached Warsaw, the Poles rose up against the Nazi occupation. Expecting the Soviets to come to their aid and quickly liberate the city, they were sorely disappointed when the Red Army instead stopped along the line of the River Vistula. This effectively left the Home Army alone against the might of the Nazis, and during two months of bloody combat the Poles were crushed. The Western Allies were unable to provide any useful assistance to the Poles, and most consider the Soviet halt to have been political, aimed at allowing the Germans to destroy the only group thought capable of resisting the coming Soviet occupation.



**Soldiers of the 57th Antitank Platoon, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry Division, man a captured German Sturmgeschütze III on December 12, 1944** (National Archives)

During this fighting the Polish fighters seized as much German equipment as they could in their desperate struggle. Even German helmets and uniforms were donned, along with armbands to identify friend from foe. Armor, therefore, was eagerly put to use. Photographic and film evidence shows Home Army soldiers manning both Panther tanks and a Hetzer 75mm self-propelled assault gun. The Hetzer itself was built on a Czech-designed tank chassis, which the Germans had themselves commandeered. One of these tanks was used in an assault on a concentration camp the Nazis had set up in the

remnants of the Jewish Ghetto, itself reduced to rubble in the Jewish Uprising the previous year. The tank fired several rounds at the guard towers of the German defenders, enabling Polish fighters to take the camp and free several hundred emaciated Jews held there. Despite such individual tactical successes, the addition of a few armored vehicles to the Home Army's strength could not change the inevitable outcome. They suffered horribly under the Nazi retaliation.

While the Allies were usually blessed with a marked numerical superiority over the Axis forces, Allied troops did not hesitate to use captured AFVs to supplement their numbers still further. The belief that German armored vehicles were qualitatively superior to Allied models only reinforced the desire to use them. This use shows clearly the great capacity for improvisation on the part of soldiers in the field to accomplish their mission with whatever is at hand. □

*Christopher Miskimon writes from Denver, Colorado. He has served in both the Infantry and Field Artillery branches of the U.S. Army and is an avid and longtime student of military history. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland.*

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## “Saber them down!”

| Marshal Semen M. Budenny was the hero of the Red Cavalry in the Russian Civil and Great Patriotic Wars.

**AT 8 AM ON THE COLD, BLUSTERY MORNING OF NOVEMBER 7, 1941, THE 24TH** anniversary of the Russian Communist Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, a dashing lone horseman galloped out of the Spassky Gate of the Kremlin onto snow-covered Red Square. Inspecting the assembled troops waiting to go directly to the front to halt the advancing German Army in its relentless march on the capital, Marshal of the Soviet Union Semen Mikhailovich Budenny (also spelled Budyonny) received their acclamations of “Hurrah!” then spurred his horse to the base of the Lenin Mausoleum, dismounted, and strode up the steps to join his master, dictator Josef Stalin.

The legendary commander of the Red Cavalry during the Russian Civil War of 1918-1920 against the defeated White armies of the fallen Tsar Nicholas II, the colorful, swashbuckling, walrus-moustached Budenny was a sort of latter day Prussian Marshal Gebhard von Blucher, whom he strongly resembled in character.

Wearing a Sam Browne belt over his ground-length greatcoat and the peculiar pixie-type cap that he had popularized, Budenny on his horse at the head of thousands of charging steeds crashing over the steppes of Mother Russia seemed to be the very embodiment of the renowned Soviet cavalry, sweeping all aside with the fury of their thundering hooves. Indeed, this was the actuality until the mechanized warfare of the summer and fall of 1941 put Budenny and his cavalry into partial eclipse, seemingly for good.

As with any controversial wartime commander, later opinions and views of Budenny were mixed, but always spirited. Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov stated in his 1991 memoirs, “Budenny’s conduct was praiseworthy, but at the same time one could not demand too much of him. He was meritorious and popular with the people.”

Soviet military writer Viktor Anfilov characterized Budenny as “a patriot, brave man, talented military leader of the Civil War and a national hero. He had a long record of indiscipline, was ignorant and limited, a man without pretensions.”

Budenny, a former tsarist cavalry sergeant major, was both dashing and a heavy

drinker, to which he added a liberal dose of incompetence, character traits common to many soldier leaders both then and now. The holder of the Order of Suvorov 1st Class and three times a declared Hero of the Soviet Union, Budenny was 62 in 1945 at the end of the Great Patriotic War (the Russian name for World War II). He went on to become deputy minister of agriculture in the postwar Soviet Union. A later foe who knew him in Moscow during 1931-1932, German Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, described Budenny as “entirely natural and uninhibited in his coarseness.”

Budenny’s former subordinate and later commander, Marshal Georgi Zhukov, said of his one-time boss that he was “hot tempered, but always objective. I gave him assignments that he always carried out in good faith.” Their colleague Marshal Ivan Konev was much more harsh, however, calling Budenny “a man with a past, but no future. He never knew much and never studied anything.”

What Budenny did know, however, was how to be slavishly loyal and utterly devoted to Generalissimo Stalin, to carry out his orders ruthlessly, and to inspire others to do the same. Arriving at one embattled position during the

German onslaught of 1941, Budenny yelled, “We shouldn’t be defending ourselves, but defeating the enemy! We’re a strong fist!” During another tense encounter, Budenny screamed at fellow marshal Ivan K. Bagranyan, “I think

**A magnificent anachronism by World War II, a Red Army cavalry charge thunders across the embattled steppes of Russia. These troops belonged to a mounted guards unit.**

(All photos: National Archives)



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**ABOVE: Red Army scouts report the findings of a recent foray to locate the Germans in the northern Caucasus. The Germans were not uniformed against the harsh Russian winter and suffered tremendous casualties as a result. RIGHT: Marshal Semen Budenny, his bushy moustache and medal-bedecked uniform prominently visible, poses on the third anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany.**



courageous horseman who was wounded, he nevertheless remained with his unit until the end of the war. When he was asked if he had heard about the uprising in St. Petersburg against “our little father, the Tsar” as a result of discontent with the war with far-off Japan, Budenny answered, “How could I not, your excellency? Nobody talks about anything else!” Asked his opinion of it, the young dragoon replied, “My job is to serve.”

Unlike many others who deserted the Tsar to join the revolution, Budenny remained true to the colors until they were replaced by the Red banner of the Bolsheviks, then he served them until his death. Thus, the marshal was an apolitical soldier of the state.

Having completed the St. Petersburg Cavalry School in 1907, Budenny was promoted to sergeant, serving with a platoon in the Caucasus Cavalry Division from September 1914 to October 1917. He was awarded four St. George Crosses and the full ribbon of a St. George Cavalryman, the highest decoration he could receive.

After World War I ended and the Germans worked with the White forces at the start of the Civil War, he joined the Reds and served as the

brigadier in command of Special Cavalry Division Budenny in the Tenth Army under his later fellow marshal, Kliment Y. Voroshilov. He also won his first Order of the Red Banner and was soon signing a letter to none other than Vladimir I. Lenin as “Cavalry Corps Commander Budenny.” Such a meteoric military ascent in the span of a few years is exceptional.

On November 17, 1919, Budenny was named commander of the First Cavalry Army of the Soviet Army. Stated Anfilov, “In maneuverability and speed of attack, the Cavalry Army had no equal, and according to former German Chief of Staff Gen. (Franz) Halder, its experience was not lost on the Wehrmacht.” Transferred to the Caucasus, Budenny there began a tendency not to follow the orders of his immediate superiors if he disagreed with them. In addition, Budenny, the former sergeant of the 18th Seversky Dragoons, and Voroshilov have been accused by later writers of being responsible for “cruelty and atrocities” against captured White prisoners of war. Both he and Voroshilov began taking their complaints

we’d better have you shot!”

According to Anfilov, the man who was a serving soldier to both the tsar and Stalin had “beaten the best of the White cavalry” as commander of the 1st Cavalry Corps of the Red Army during the Civil War, and his renowned “cavalry army” was “ready to follow wherever Budenny led.”

Marshal Budenny rose to become the pre-eminent horse specialist in the Soviet Union, and even Stalin deferred to him in all things equestrian. In September 1923, he appointed Budenny deputy commander in chief of Cavalry Forces, then later to the top post of Inspector of Cavalry. Six years afterward, Stalin even went so far as to proclaim, “Aircraft will not replace the cavalry” for reconnaissance purposes as a further sop to Budenny’s vanity. This concept was one of the first mistakes that led to the mammoth defeats of 1941 at the hands of the Germans.

Budenny’s fame hit its peak on November 20, 1935, when Stalin made him one of the first five marshals of the Soviet Union. His appointment led little boys playing in the streets to boast proudly that they were “Budenny’s men.” The bedrock of both his moral authority within the Red Army and his ability to survive the defeats of 1941 was Stalin, whom he served “body and soul,” and

who in turn honored the marshal by seeing him “privately and individually in his own office,” according to Anfilov. Time and again

throughout his long career, no matter what the generalissimo would order him to do, Budenny would snap to attention and answer, “Comrade Stalin, my task is clear!” and then proceed.

The cavalry marshal’s loyalty to Stalin continued long after his death, as reflected in his memoirs, which were published in 1968. He never forgot that his superior would turn to him and say in the middle of conferences, “You are the most competent man in this matter. Let me have your proposals.”

He was also loyal to other old Bolsheviks after their fall, as noted by Molotov in a 1978 interview: “Despite my expulsion from the Party, Budenny would always send me greetings on national holidays. His handwriting grew shaky, and yet he would keep mailing me his postcards.”

Budenny was born into a peasant farm family on April 25, 1883, near Platovskaya on the Don River and was drafted for military service at age 20 in 1903, serving in the Russo-Japanese War in the 46th Dragoon Regiment. A

directly to Stalin, whom Budenny first met in July 1918.

Nor was Budenny always victorious, having been beaten in battles by both the Cossacks and the Poles, two peoples who also boasted some of the finest cavalymen on earth. In August 1920, he also found himself at odds with Stalin's fiercest rival, Red Army organizer Leon Trotsky. Another man who served under Budenny during the Civil War in 1919 was Nikita S. Khrushchev, Stalin's ultimate successor in the mid-1950s.

In July 1967, Budenny wrote, "There wasn't a single small child who didn't believe that the Germans were getting ready to attack" the Soviet Union in the spring of 1941, and yet, apparently, Stalin himself was not one of them, asserting to the end that Hitler would never break the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact signed in Moscow in August 1939.

The Soviet Union found itself badly prepared for the onset of mechanized warfare, a situation that dated back to Budenny's insistence as early as 1920 for cavalry instead of the tanks and planes for which Trotsky and others were clamoring. Even after the Cavalry Army was officially disbanded after the Civil War, some divisions were still kept up to strength at his command.

On June 6, 1937, Marshal Budenny was named head of the Moscow Military District. In March 1940 he was severely criticized for the way his troops had conducted themselves during the defeats of the Russo-Finnish War. Still, he refused to change, as evidenced during a military exercise conducted in July 1940 by the new commissar of defense, Marshal Semen K. Timoshenko, a former divisional commander in Budenny's Cavalry Army.

To direct a tank attack himself, Marshal Budenny leaped onto the lead tank, causing his driver to panic and almost land the vehicle into a ravine full of water. Timoshenko, who had witnessed the scene, admonished his fellow marshal, "I wouldn't advise you to sit on a tank, but rather at the command post where you can control your forces. In the Civil War we used to gallop after you with our sabers drawn, but those days are long gone, and a tank is not a horse!"

Stalin removed his crony as Moscow District Commander and reposted Budenny as deputy defense commissar under Timoshenko, leading the old warhorse to admit sheepishly to his staff, "It is we, the senior officers, who need to study" and thus change. It was in this new capacity that he gave Stalin two pieces of advice—one good and the other fatal—at a council of war the very day before the German invasion of June 22, 1941.

The first was that the ropes that normally tied Red Air Force planes to the ground should be taken off so that they would be on alert in case of attack. The second was to get all troops moving toward the front so that they would be in place no matter what the future enemy did. This had the effect of putting thousands of Red Army men on roads and railways where they could be attacked by the Luftwaffe. Nine hours before the great attack, Marshal Budenny found himself a member of STAVKA (the Supreme Command), with Political Commissar Georgi Malenkov as his joint commander but without any staff, troops, or equipment.

From July to September 1941, Marshal Budenny was in command at Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, and later at Kharkov, with Khrushchev as his political commissar. Their main tasks were to hold the cities while evacuating industrial machinery. Seeing plainly that they were going to be encircled by the Germans, the old cavalryman urged Stalin to allow a retreat, but Stalin forbade it. As a result, on September 21, a staggering 665,000 Red Army soldiers were lost as prisoners to the Germans, a catastrophe that some writers have since blamed on Budenny.

Stalin had relieved Budenny on the 11th, however, and rather than shooting the old horseman, placed him in command of the Reserve and West Fronts where, on October 6 at Vyasma, both he and Marshal Voroshilov lost a combined total of 45 Red Army divisions and 673,000 prisoners to a second German encirclement. Two days later, Budenny was fired once again, but he was not shot.

On May 10, 1942, Stalin sent Budenny to the Crimea, and the following July Budenny took over the North Caucasus Front from the relieved General Rodion K. Malinovsky. Upon returning to Moscow, Budenny ran into Marshal Zhukov who told him in January 1943, "No doubt you're going to have to lead the cavalry again." That spring, after Stalingrad, the marshal was named commander of the Red Army Cavalry once more. Restored to his favorite wartime role, the crusty marshal created "mounted armored groups" and provided aerial cover for his beloved horsemen.

Marshal Semen Mikhailovich Budenny died at age 90 on October 26, 1973, and was buried with full military honors in the Kremlin Wall beside his revered former leader, Josef Stalin. □

*Towson, Maryland, freelancer Blaine Taylor is the author of several books on World War II, including Volkswagen Military Vehicles of the Third Reich and Apex of Glory: Mercedes and Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich.*



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## Hemingway and the Ivy Leaguers

The great American novelist Ernest Hemingway spent time with the 4th Infantry Division in Europe.

**DURING THE SECOND WEEK OF JULY 1944 A YOUNG, SHARP LIEUTENANT** Goldstein of the 4th Infantry Division's 22nd Infantry Regiment was told by his boss, Colonel Buck Lanhan, "Expect a special civilian, a big war correspondent is coming to visit us. He can do some good publicity for the 22nd Regiment."

A little later, the important civilian arrived at the front. Big and burly and wearing a GI helmet, he looked as if he had not shaved since he landed in France and traveled to the 22nd's sector. Goldstein was eyeing the important civilian's pocket. Something that looked suspiciously like a grenade was poking out of it, and civilians were not allowed to carry weapons. He was right. Suddenly, the important civilian pulled out a live grenade.

Then, with a grin he put the grenade aside and offered the officer a canteen of some sort of drink. "I took the drink. Then it struck! I shook for a moment, my head throbbing, my eyes popping.... The gulp I had taken from the canteen was pure unadulterated Calvados," he remembered. Goldstein had just met the man voted America's most popular writer in August 1944, Ernest Hemingway.

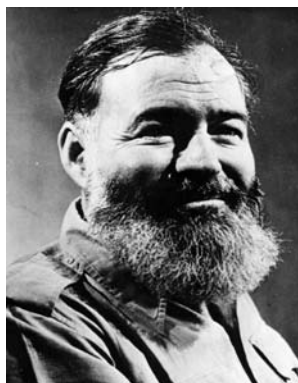
Hemingway had arrived at the front to join what he would later call his favorite division, and he had come with a chip on his shoulder. The 45-year-old writer had made his reputation writing about war. Although America had been at war since 1941, he had still not traveled to one of the American fighting fronts. In the meantime, other writers and correspondents were making names for themselves reporting from Europe and the Pacific. In particular, reporter Ernie Pyle, who was eventually killed in the Pacific, was earning high praise in the United States for his reporting from Italy. For some reason Hemingway took a great dislike to Pyle and in a kind of self mockery began to call himself "Ernie Hemorrhoid."

Now, officially he had come to the front to show the "Great American Public" how the war should really be reported. He would give his readers none of Pyle's

"sentimental guff." He would show them what war was really like—brutal, unsentimental, red-blooded macho. And his chosen vehicle for this

reporting was the unsuspecting 22nd Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division, nicknamed the Ivy Leaguers. He would have plenty of material with which to work. Before the war was over, the Ivy League division would be decimated almost three times, suffering approximately 30,000 casualties.

Not many of those who survived would have ever heard of Ernest Hemingway, but one who did felt that Hemingway was not much better than a cynical fool. The divisional psychiatrist remembered after the war, "I thought he was silly with this machismo thing. I can remember saying to him that if I had his talent and lovely home in Cuba, what the hell would I be doing in this mud? ...You see, he



**ABOVE:** Sporting his characteristic heavy beard, author Ernest Hemingway posed for a photographer in this undated photograph. **TOP:** On January 21, 1945, soldiers of the U.S. 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division move cautiously through the town of Moesdorf, Luxembourg.

(All photos: National Archives)

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American Pfc. Benny Barrow gives a comrade a hand up during the bitter fighting in the Hurtgen Forest on November 18, 1944.



was playing soldier. The general was very concerned because Hemingway wanted to go out on infantry patrol, and this meant other soldiers had to be told to guard him and risk themselves to protect him. The general couldn't tolerate an injury to Hemingway."

But in the beginning it was easy going for Hemingway's favorite division and the 22nd Infantry Regiment. In the second week of September 1944, Colonel Lanham's proud outfit crossed the border river between Belgium and Germany. Opposition was minimal, a mere firefight between the retreating tanks of the 2nd SS Panzer Division and Lanham's men. Then they entered their first German village, Hemmers, where the villagers had emerged fearfully to welcome their new conquerors from the land across the sea. Hemingway set up his headquarters at the village post office and took command. He ordered all women to kill chickens, and collect potatoes and added to this whatever GI fare he could steal. That night, he gave a "victory dinner" for the brass of the 22nd Regiment. As Lanham recalled, "The food was excellent, the wine plentiful, the comradeship close and warm. All of us were as heady with the taste of victory as we were with the wine. It was a night to put aside the thought of the great West Wall against which we would throw ourselves within the next forty-eight hours. We laughed and drank and told horrendous stories about each other. We all seemed for the moment like minor gods, and Hemingway, presiding at the head of the table, might have been a fatherly Mars delighting in the happiness of his brood." It was the last happy day. Now the slaughter would commence.

At 11:30 AM on that Thursday morning, the attack on the 22nd took form. At first everything went well, and by 1 PM that day the 3rd Battalion had reached the Siegfried Line bunkers within 900 yards of their first objective, the town of Buchet. But now the men of the German Kampfgruppe (Battle Group) Kuehne, plus the handful of SS men who were assisting them, had begun to react. Enemy machine-gun fire and mortar shells intensified. There was that old, familiar, frightening ripping sound that the 100-pound 88mm shell made when it zipped through the air. A Sherman was hit and jolted to a stop. The crew bailed out rapidly. They knew the 30-ton tank's bad reputation. They called the Sherman by its derisive nickname, the Ronson. It could ignite just as easily as the well-known cigarette lighter!

The attack began to bog down. Although he was not there, Hemingway described it: "They [the infantry] started coming back down across the field dragging a few wounded and a few limping. You know how they look coming back. Then the tanks started coming back and the TD's coming back and the men coming back plenty. They couldn't stay in that bare field and the ones who weren't hit started yelling for the medics for those who were hit and you know that excites everybody."

Captain Howard Blizzard of the 3rd Battalion, who was with Colonel Lanham observing the battle, said, "Sir, I can go out there and kick those bastards in the tail and take that place." Lanham replied, "You're an S-3 [operations officer] in a staff function and you stay where you are."

The two of them remained there for another

15 minutes with more and more wounded drifting back. Blizzard thought gloomily, "We're going to lose this battle." Lanham must have thought the same, for, according to Hemingway, he said suddenly, "Let's get up there. This thing has got to move. Those chickenspits aren't going to break down this attack."

The two of them, with Lanham carrying a drawn pistol in his right hand, moved up to a kind of terrace on the hillside where his men were lying down, taking cover. "Let's go get these Krauts," he cried. "Let's kill these chickenspitters. Let's get up over this hill now and get this place taken!" Two days later, the attack was called off. All along that front the officers of the U.S. V Corps realized they were not going to break through the Siegfried Line like General S. Patton, commander of the Third Army, had put it, "crap through a goose." There would be no dash to Germany's last great natural barrier—the Rhine. The war would not end by Christmas as the pundits back home predicted.

For Hemingway, the time had come to depart from the Ivy Leaguers. He would return to his "headquarters" at Paris's swank Ritz Hotel and to his current mistress. For the time being, his favorite division would have to look after itself.

The GIs called the Huertgen Forest the death factory, though that name never passed the U.S. Army's censors. It was a great stretch of three wooded areas south of where Hemingway's favorite division had first entered Germany. The veteran U.S. 9th Division had been the first American formation to attack that dark forest. It had been a sorry experience. It was estimated later that the 9th lost one and a half men for every yard of penetration. In the end, the 9th was pulled out decimated. It had gained 3,000 yards at a cost of 4,500 casualties.

The effort of the 9th was followed by division after division of American troops, most of them lasting only two weeks in that deadly forest before being withdrawn. As Technical Sergeant George Morgan of the 25th Infantry Regiment recalled, "Show me the man who went through the Battle of Huertgen Forest and who says he never had a feeling of fear, and I'll show you a liar or a damn fool. You can't get all of the dead because you can't find them and they stay there to remind the guys advancing as to what might hit them. You can't get protection. You can't see. You can't get fields of fire. Artillery slashes the trees like a scythe. Everything is angled. You can scarcely walk. Everybody is cold and wet and the mixture of cold rain and sleet kept falling. Then we attack again and soon there is only a handful of old men left."

At the Ritz Hotel in Paris, Hemingway soon learned that his favorite division was about to

enter the Huertgen Forest. Again, the prospect excited him, and he dragged himself away from the booze, his mistress, and even from Marlene Dietrich who had taken a shine to him.

Dressed in a huge sheepskin coat and carrying the usual canteens filled with liquor, he set off to rejoin the 22nd Infantry. This time his reception was not so enthusiastic. The men knew what they were in for. His friend, Colonel Lanham, could not shake off his mood of depression. He had been ordered to take his main objective, the village of Grosshau, regardless of cost. The night before the attack he sat up all night with Hemingway drinking moodily.

The attack went in, and surprisingly enough the 22nd took its objective—at a cost. Again, the butcher's bill was high. But Hemingway enjoyed every minute of it. In fact, what he purported to have seen during the Grosshau battle he felt was much too good for his newspaper readers. He decided to keep it for the great novel he would write about World War II called *Across the River and Into the Trees*.

In it, his Colonel Cantwell (who is really Lanham) talks about what happened there: "We had put an awful lot of white phosphorus on the town (Grasshau) before we got in for good, or whatever you call it. That was the first time I ever saw a German dog eating a roasted German Kraut. Later on I saw a cat working on him, too. It was a hungry cat, quite nice looking, basically. You wouldn't think a good German cat would eat a good German soldier, would you, Daughter? Or a good German dog eat a good German soldier's ass which has been roasted by white phosphorus."

It is not, we can imagine, what the average GI of the 22nd Infantry would like to recall of that battle—if the incident ever took place. It signified too that Hemingway was still regarding the war as some kind of gruesome game from which he could extract cheap thrills and horror. The average GI of Hemingway's favorite division may well have reflected more that between November 16 and December 3, 1944, Lanham's 22nd Regiment alone suffered 2,678 casualties out of the original 3,000-man regimental strength. The divisional commander General Raymond O. "Tubby" Barton, explained later, "My magnificent command had virtually ceased to exist." What did that matter really to Hemingway? In essence, those young men simply provided him with "material" for a novel.

As the battered survivors of the Ivy Leaguers trailed back to nearby Luxembourg to be rested and reformed yet again, Hemingway did what he always did on such occasions. He returned to the Ritz. In December, he fell ill but not seriously enough to stop drinking and skirt chas-

ing. However, as he planned to return to the United States and write his great war novel, he did return to his favorite division yet again. On Saturday, December 16, 1944, he heard from his influential friends at the headquarters of Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower that the Germans had broken through in the Ardennes. Here, some 80,000 Americans, including the Ivy Leaguers, had been struck by some quarter million Germans in a great surprise attack, which would become known as the Battle of the Bulge.

That day, Hemingway called his brother Lester, who was looking after him in Paris, and told him excitedly, "There's been a complete breakthrough kid ... this thing could cost us the works. Their armor is pouring in, they're taking no prisoners." So he set off for this new front. But this time he was not fated to report from the immediate action, if he had ever actually done so. His "flu-like" illness grew worse, and his friend Colonel Lanham decreed he should take to his bed in the little Luxembourg village of Rodenhausen.

Here, Hemingway was quartered in the local priest's house. The priest was supposed to be a Nazi sympathizer, and Hemingway felt it was only his due to take anything of the priest's he wanted. In particular, he looted the fine wine cellar of this man of the cloth. It was Hemingway's habit to stagger down from his sickbed to knock off the head of a bottle of wine and drink it. Sometimes he took more care with the bottles, using them as a bed pan and labeling them "schloss Hemingstein." Once when he was very drunk, it was said he reopened such a bottle and was unpleasantly surprised by the contents.

So, Hemingway's career at the front in World War II ended. He went back to the States to write his great war novel. At least that was his intention, though he never realized it. As for the survivors and the new boys of the 4th Infantry Division, "the Ivy," they went on to fight to the bitter end, crossing the whole of Germany and fighting all the time until victory was finally achieved. For them there would be no sojourns in the Ritz and fancy mistresses and well-known writers and artists. For them there would only be the foxhole that might turn out to be their graves as well.

Thus ended Ernest Hemingway's war in Europe. Years later, the Nobel Prize winner, one of America's foremost writers, blew his brains out. One wonders what the survivors of his favorite division thought of that. □

*The late Charles Whiting was a veteran of the British Army during World War II and the author of many books on the topic.*



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Who were the two principals in this drama of love and politics? Edward was born on June 23, 1894. His father was to become King George V of England, ascending the throne in 1910. His son, Edward, was in line of succession to be the next king upon his father's death, and the young prince's family called him David, a nickname that he would carry throughout his adult life. As a youth, Edward attended the Royal Naval College at Osborne located on the Isle of Wight. He wanted to be treated just like the other naval cadets, and he was obliged by the other students when they played practical jokes on him. He was soon given the sobriquet of "Sardines" by his contemporaries. Edward was 16 when his father was crowned King of England in 1910 and he conferred on his son the title Prince of Wales. Upon graduation, Edward joined the Royal Navy and in 1912



was admitted to Oxford, the most elite of British universities.

During World War I, Edward served in France at the headquarters of the supreme command, and as a second lieutenant he was given menial tasks to perform, something at which he chafed. His most exciting assignment was to act as an interrogator of captured German prisoners. He also acted as a liaison officer to French headquarters and came away with a less than stellar impression of his French comrades. Before the war ended, Edward was assigned by his father to serve as a liaison between the throne and top officers in the British military, essentially acting as his father's spy.

## A Dark Royal Secret?

The controversial political leanings of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor fueled speculation that they could possibly be spies for the Nazis.

### ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING YET LITTLE KNOWN ASPECTS OF WORLD WAR II

was the role played by the Duke of Windsor, previously King Edward VIII of England, and his covert relationship with Adolf Hitler's Germany. In 1936, Edward abdicated the British throne to marry an American divorcée, Wallis Warfield Simpson. If the scandal of the King's abdication was not enough, many people of the era also allege that both Edward and his new wife were sympathetic to the Nazi cause and, whether intentionally or not, were secretly working with the highest members of the Third Reich.

Over the last few years, formerly top secret files that had been classified for decades regarding the mysterious actions surrounding King Edward VIII of Britain and his wife have been gleaned from both American and British archives. These files, while inconclusive and revealing no smoking gun, have allowed historians and writers to better understand events during the couple's tumultuous lives, particularly given the circumstances of the times. While there is no incontrovertible fact that links the Duke of Windsor directly to the Nazi cause, a good, circumstantial case can be made to portray him as a puppet of the Nazi regime, a man who was, wittingly or unwittingly, being manipulated by the Germans.

The words spoken by the Duke during the war years, at a time when Britain was threatened with outright occupation as the Germans were poised to invade the island nation, gave reason for many of his fellow countrymen to believe that he was at least unaware of the precarious political course he was following.

**ABOVE LEFT: The Duke of Windsor, fourth from right, accompanies the Viscount Gort and a contingent of British Army officers during an inspection of troops in France early in World War II. ABOVE RIGHT: The Duke and Duchess of Windsor gaze happily into one another's eyes following their return to England on September 16, 1939.**

(All photos: National Archives)

The crowned heads of numerous European countries were in some way related to the King of England and his immediate family. Among the relatives of the British royalty were German royals, including the Prince of Hesse and the



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**ABOVE:** British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin leaves the House of Commons in London following the abdication of King Edward VIII on October 12, 1936.  
**RIGHT:** German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, a former champagne salesman, was reported to have been a lover of Wallis Simpson.



endured him to the top men in Berlin. The Nazis believed they now had a sympathetic ear in London and did all they could to cultivate their new advocate. Hitler ordered that German diplomats in England pay special attention to Edward. In June 1935, Edward met with Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. In his subsequent reports to Berlin, Ribbentrop noted to Hitler that Edward was sympathetic to German interests. "After all, he is half German."

Edward further agitated his fellow countrymen by not condemning Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and saying that Germany was in its right as a sovereign power to act as it saw fit. A top-ranking American diplomat in Britain reported to Washington, D.C., that, in his opinion, "The Prince of Wales has become the German protagonist."

In the years before taking the throne, Edward held two important political beliefs which he continually emphasized. Peace, he asserted, was preferable to war at almost any cost. And, Great Britain, he said, was at greater peril from the growing strength of Soviet communism than from German Nazism. It was these two beliefs that his critics would emphasize, essentially making him a pariah to many at home.

If these political problems were not enough, the Duke's new lady friend, Wallis Simpson, was secretly in communication with many of the top leaders of Germany, including von Ribbentrop, with whom she was having an affair.

Bessie Wallis Warfield was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in June 1896. She came from a poor family but rose in social prominence and had her coming-out party, as did many young women of the time. Her first marriage was to a Navy pilot named Earl Spencer, but the bond did not last long, and the couple soon divorced. In 1928, she wed her second husband, a British-American named Ernest Simpson. During the next five years, Edward was seen many times in the company of Wallis Simpson, and soon a sexual relationship developed. By the time Edward ascended to the throne in 1936, the Simpson marriage was history and the new bachelor king was madly in love with his American sweetheart.

In November 1934, Edward brought Wallis as his guest to a party at Buckingham Palace, where she was introduced to his father, King George V, and his mother. Edward's relationship with Mrs. Simpson now blossomed into a full-scale scandal for the royal family, and the King and Queen did all they could to distance

Prince of Coburg Saxe-Gotha. Queen Victoria was, in fact, the grandmother of Kaiser Wilhelm. Other relatives included the ruling family of Russia. Edward held his royal cousins in high esteem, especially those in Germany. It was to be his close association with many members of the post-Kaiser government of the 1920s and 1930s that would lead some people to question his loyalty to England.

Edward's lifelong preparation to become King of England culminated in January 1936 upon the death of King George V. Grief-stricken over the loss of his father, he managed to pull himself together and assume his new responsibilities.

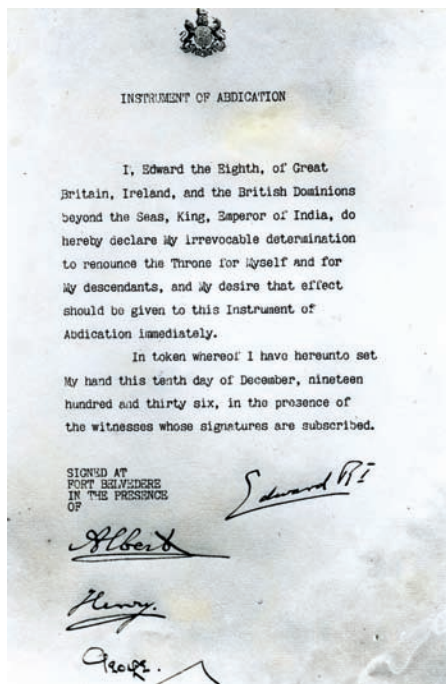
A controversy that had been brewing for some six years now came into full view. In November 1930, the future king had met an American divorcée named Wallis Warfield Simpson at a dinner at one of Edward's country homes. This brief encounter eventually led to Edward's declaration of love for the commoner and his abdication from the throne in December 1936.

When he became king, Edward began to speak out on political events then taking place in Europe. Adolf Hitler had taken control over Germany and was making immediate preparations for war. Disregarding the terms of the Versailles Treaty that ended World War I, Hitler was bent on dominating the European continent and

plunging the world into war once again. Edward, whose Germanic cousins had played an important role in his upbringing, now openly spoke out on behalf of Germany's new, bellicose foreign policies.

Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, the Duke of Windsor's comments regarding Germany would haunt the governments of Prime Ministers Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, and Winston Churchill. Edward did not have a favorable impression of the French government, saying at one point, "The French really are impossible people, and so impetuous." He was most concerned about the rise of communism in Russia, and at the same time began his politically improbable interest in German policies regarding Europe. Speaking openly about internal events in Germany, Edward remarked to Louis Ferdinand of Prussia in 1933, "Germany's internal affairs are its own business," and added, "Dictators are very popular these days, and we might want one in England before long."

The Nazis viewed the Duke of Windsor as a person who could be manipulated to their own devious ends. Like many people in high political office in a mostly Christian Europe, Edward made a number of anti-Semitic remarks that



**This document evidenced the first voluntary abdication by an English king in history.**

themselves from their son and his American lady friend. Edward even brought Wallis to meet Prime Minister Baldwin, who was not very pleased to make her acquaintance.

After receiving the necessary approval from Parliament, Edward officially abdicated on December 11, 1936. The next day, his brother was proclaimed King George VI. Edward and Wallis departed for Austria and were married on June 3, 1937, in France at the home of Charles Bedeaux, a man with close ties to Hitler's regime.

In 1937, Edward and Wallis traveled to Germany where they received a lavish reception from the Nazi leaders, including Hitler and Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess. Their trip was given widespread attention in Britain, and the criticism heaped upon the Duke and his bride made front page news. His enemies at home called the Duke a German pawn, and his many statements regarding his admiration for Hitler's Germany only added to the political firestorm that was swirling uncontrollably around Edward.

In recent years, newly released documents from the FBI and British Intelligence give a rather dark picture concerning the secret life of Edward's new wife. FBI files reveal that a Benedictine monk in a Franciscan monastery in the United States, Father Odo, had once held the title of Duke of Wurttemberg and was close to Queen Mary, Edward's mother. Father Odo told the FBI that Wallis had a long romantic affair with von Ribbentrop when the latter was ambassador to Britain in 1936, and that she

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was constantly passing on information from British sources to von Ribbentrop. Father Odo said that von Ribbentrop “sent Wallis Simpson 17 carnations every day. The 17 supposedly represented the number of times they had slept together.”

In 1935, British Intelligence was keeping a close watch on Wallis Simpson. A memorandum issued during that year states, “Contact with the Simpsons is being maintained but the identity of Mrs. Simpson is apprehensive of losing the affection of POW (Prince of Wales) which she is very anxious to avoid for financial reasons. She has said that she does not want to be treated like Lady Furness (also one of Edward’s romantic interests). She is therefore keeping her secret lover in the background.”

In the United States, the Roosevelt administration kept voluminous files on the Duke and his wife. After the United States entered the war, the FBI sent the following message to President Roosevelt: “It has been ascertained that for some time, the British government has known that the Duchess of Windsor was exceedingly pro-German in her sympathies and connections and there is a strong reason to believe that this is the reason why she was considered so obnoxious to the British government that they refused to permit Edward to marry her and maintain the throne.”

The FBI documents further state, “Both she and the Duke have been repeatedly warned by representatives of the British government that in the interest of the morale of the British people, they should be exceedingly circumspect in their dealings with the representatives of the German government. The duke is in such a state of intoxication most of the time that he is virtually *non compos mentis*. The duchess has repeatedly ignored these warnings.”

A damning sentence in the FBI report further states, “Because of her high official position, the duchess is obtaining a variety of information concerning the British and French activities that she is passing on to the Germans.”

After Britain entered World War II, the Duke, still officially an officer in the military, briefly returned to England and served in a token position as a military liaison official in the city of Vincennes. He did, however, write a well- received report on the feasibility of



**King George V of England poses with his young son, Edward, who later gave up the throne for the woman he loved.**

holding the Maginot Line, France’s system of fixed fortifications along the border with Germany, in modern warfare. When France fell in June 1940, the Duke and Wallis fled for Spain, where, according to the FBI, the communications between the Duchess and von Ribbentrop were apparently facilitated because of the pronounced Nazi sympathies in Spain.

From Spain, the couple traveled to Portugal where they were put up at the lavish home of a pro-Nazi money

man named Ricardo Espirito Santo Silva. It was while they were in Lisbon that a daring, covert plot hatched by German Intelligence was implemented to keep the Duke from sailing to New York—by force, if necessary.

The plot, codenamed Operation Willi, was concocted by von Ribbentrop and called for the Duke’s forcible return to Spain where, in the event of the fall of the present British government, the Duke would assume the throne under German domination. A Spanish diplomat by the name of Don Miguel Primo de Rivera met with the Duke to try and persuade him to return to Spain from Portugal. During their meeting, the Duke once again made disparaging remarks about the British government, calling the King “stupid” and remarking that the Queen was a “clever intriguer.”

When the Duke decided not to return to Spain, a second component of Operation Willi was put in motion. The man in charge of the operation was Walter Schellenberg, a rising star in Hitler’s elite SS. As an inducement to return to Spain, Schellenberg was given permission to pay the Duke up to 50 million Swiss francs, depositing the funds in a Spanish bank account, if he would sever all ties to the British monarchy and repudiate Churchill’s wartime policy.

Schellenberg traveled to Lisbon where he had private conversations with the German ambassador, Baron von Hoyningen-Huene. As a last resort, an abduction scheme called for German agents to grab the Duke during a hunting party and spirit him out of Portugal and into Spain. Schellenberg also planted a rumor that a bomb had been placed on a ship that the Duke was to take to New York via the Bahamas. Unfounded rumors also reached the Duke via the Germans that the British Secret Service was going to kill him. No action was ever taken by the Germans against the Duke and his wife, though.

For Edward, one last chapter in his life was about to be written. While the Duke was still in Lisbon, the British government appointed him as the new governor general of the Bahamas, an out of the way British possession where, they hoped, he would not get into any further trouble. The couple arrived in Nassau in August 1940, finally away from the intrigues of Europe.

Edward adapted easily to his new duties in Nassau, the sleepy capital city of the Bahamas. He soon was introduced to many of the wealthy businessmen and the bevy of local politicians who were of any importance on the island. One of the men with whom the Duke became friendly was a successful Swedish industrialist named Alex Wenner-Gren, the president of the giant Elektrolux Company. He was also a visionary, seeking peaceful solutions to all the world's problems and offering his services to all who would listen to his wild schemes.

Wenner-Gren was also a Nazi sympathizer, however, who attracted the attention of the FBI. The State Department placed Wenner-Gren's company on a blacklist of firms with which U.S. companies were forbidden to do business.



During his short reign, King Edward VIII inspects troops of the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, at Victoria Barracks in Windsor on April 24, 1936.

U.S. Naval Intelligence suspected Wenner-Gren of using his yacht in Mexico to refuel German U-boats sailing in the waters of the Caribbean. Naval Intelligence files reporting on Wenner-Gren's activities stated that they could not understand how the U-boats could remain at sea as long as they did.

In July 1940, Under Secretary of State Sumner Wells wrote about Wenner-Gren, "I haven't got a word of proof, but I have the most violently strong hunch that the man is acting as an agent for the German Government."

Further FBI reports said that the worst they

could find on him with any confidence was that he saw himself as a "high-class middleman" between contacts on both sides, and a seeker of a negotiated peace. Both the British government and the royal family tried to dissuade Edward from having any further ties with Wenner-Gren, but the Duke, finding a soulmate who shared his views on many international topics, disregarded their advice.

After the war ended, Edward and Wallis left the Bahamas. They moved to France in 1952 and remained there for the next 20 years. The Duke

visited his native England only twice in the years following his abdication. He died in May 1972, a man largely forgotten during the passage of time and events. Yet, his role as a Nazi sympathizer and possible traitor to England during World War II is still one of the lingering mysteries of the war. □

*Peter Kross is the author of The Encyclopedia of World War 2 Spies and Spies, Traitors and Moles An Espionage and Intelligence Quiz Book. His new book, Target Fidel, is due out in the fall of 2008.*

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# *Fateful* **DECISION**

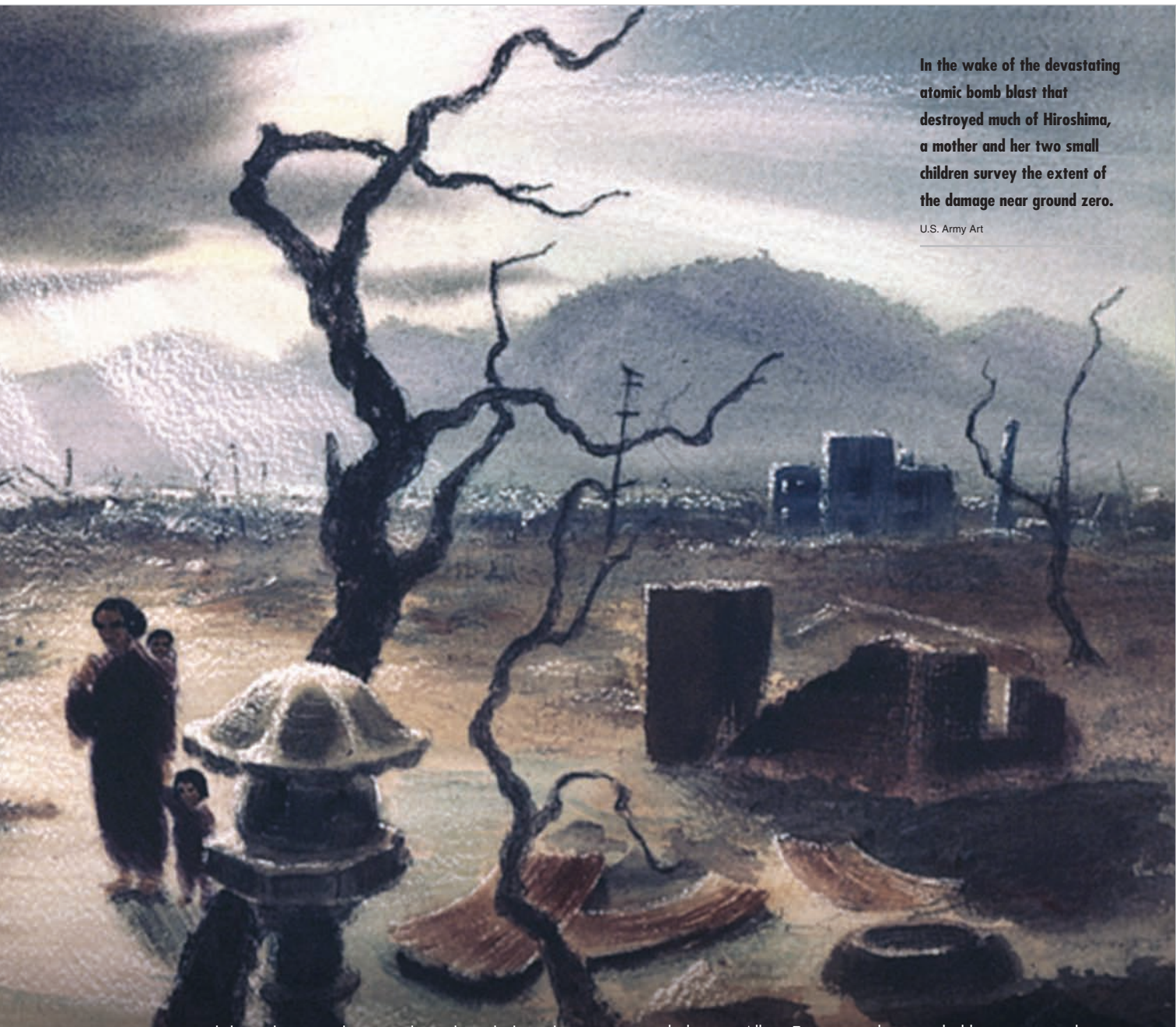
**After more than 60 years, the circumstances surrounding the use of the atomic bomb against Japan remain hotly debated.** **BY SAM MCGOWAN**

The most controversial decision of the 20th century—probably in all of history—was the one reportedly made by President Harry S. Truman, president of the United States and commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces, in the summer of 1945 to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. No other event has affected mankind so dramatically, and no other decision is as controversial.

To the young soldiers and Marines who were in training or moving to the Pacific when “the bomb” was dropped there was no question—many of them survived the war because Harry Truman “had the guts to drop it.” This belief was burned into their young minds

when they heard the news and most never bothered to question whether it was founded on fact. In recent years their sons have sought to reinforce the belief of their fathers, once again without taking a serious look at the facts surrounding the decision to drop the bomb and the events leading up to it. Yet, in reality, Truman never made an actual decision to use the bomb, and it was the one decision made by Emperor Hirohito of Japan to accept Allied surrender terms and end the war that actually spared their lives.

Even while millions of Americans continue to believe that the atomic bomb ended World War II, many, including some in high positions



**In the wake of the devastating atomic bomb blast that destroyed much of Hiroshima, a mother and her two small children survey the extent of the damage near ground zero.**

U.S. Army Art

in government and the military at the time, have long believed it was unnecessary. Previously classified documents released to the National Archives in recent years support their position that the White House knew the end for Japan had already come and that the use of atomic weapons was motivated more by postwar concerns than by preventing an amphibious invasion of Japan. Furthermore, principals such as General Leslie Groves, the officer in charge of the nuclear project, have revealed that there never really was a “decision” as such by President Truman to drop the bomb, but that he simply allowed plans that were already in motion before he was thrust into office to continue. In essence, the decision to use atomic weapons against Japan was made long before Truman even had an inkling of their existence.

American research into the possibility of creating powerful weapons using nuclear fission actually predated the outbreak of World War II by several weeks. In July 1939, three European scientists met with

renowned physicist Albert Einstein and persuaded him to write a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt advising that a bomb designed to produce a nuclear explosion might be under development in Germany. Einstein’s letter is dated August 2, 1939, nearly a month before Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland and World War II officially began. British scientists were already working on such a weapon, and the United States began a similar, although generally unsuccessful, effort in response to the Einstein letter.

In 1941, a group of American scientists visited England, where considerable nuclear research work was being done. Prior to the visit, no American scientist believed that nuclear fission would be of critical importance to the war, but the British work so impressed the visitors that in December they recommended that a full-scale nuclear project commence in the United States. President Roosevelt authorized a research program under the code name Manhattan Engineering Project, and British nuclear experts came to the United States

to work with their American counterparts in research toward the development of a nuclear weapon.

In September 1942, the War Department assumed control of the project and Colonel Leslie R. Groves of the Army Corps of Engineers, who had previously been in charge of the construction of the Pentagon, was appointed as the project head. On December 2, 1942, Dr. Enrico Fermi, an Italian-born physicist working at the University of Chicago, achieved fission, the first controlled release of nuclear energy. Fermi's successful experiment proved that it was indeed possible to develop a nuclear weapon and ushered the world into the nuclear age. The next step was to develop a means of maintaining the nuclear material in an inert state until the desired detonation point.

**Manhattan Project** scientists solved the problem by dividing nuclear material into two masses, then firing one into the other to achieve an explosion. Another method was to place the nuclear material between two masses of conventional explosives. The shock waves of their detonation would cause the plutonium to collapse and then expand again in a powerful explosion. The first method was used for the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, while the second was the mechanism for the first nuclear detonation at the Trinity site in New Mexico and in the bomb dropped on Nagasaki. The nuclear secret was so classified that President Roosevelt did not even inform his vice presidents of it. (Truman was the third of three vice presidents who served with Roosevelt. Truman was not elected until November 1944 and did not take the vice-presidential office until the following January, only a few weeks before FDR's death.)

For any weapon to be effective it has to be delivered onto a target, and in the case of a nuclear weapon it has to be detonated in the air to achieve maximum effect. At the time, guided



**President Harry Truman addresses a joint session of Congress on April 16, 1945, the first such address since the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Truman promised a relentless prosecution of the war.**

(All photos: National Archives)

planned for extremely long-range strategic bombing missions against Germany from bases in North Africa and the northern British Isles. The B-29 program was plagued with birthing problems, but planning for a special combat unit to deliver the new weapons when they were developed began even before the first Superfortress entered operational service.

To command the new unit, which would be designated as the 509th Composite Group, Army Air Forces commander General Henry H. Arnold selected Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., a veteran bomber pilot from Columbus, Ohio, who had seen combat in Europe and North Africa but who had no experience against the Japanese. Lt. Col. Thomas J. Classen, a Pacific veteran who had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for a 1943 mission in a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber, was selected as

other members of the group knew only that when they went into combat, it would be to drop a special kind of bomb. They came to refer to the weapon they knew nothing about as “the gimmick.” Tibbets was in complete charge of organizing and staffing his new unit and with selecting the training base. He chose Wendover Field, a remote base in the Utah desert that had previously been used to train aerial gunners. Wendover's remoteness was a major factor in Tibbets's choice—he thought it would enhance security. The 393rd Bombardment Squadron, a B-29 squadron then in training at Fairmount, Nebraska, would be the combat element of his new command. The 509th Composite Group was activated in September 1944, and by the end of December the men of the 393rd had completed their training and were ready for combat. The question was—where?

Traditional atomic bomb lore records that the Manhattan Project was originally begun with the intent of using the weapon against Nazi Germany. Apparently, this is what the scientists working on the project, many of whom were Jews who had fled Europe, were led to believe. In January 1945, the War Department revealed that Hitler's Germany was nowhere close to developing a nuclear bomb of its own and that the Germans were on the verge of defeat.

By this time some of the scientists involved in the project had begun to have second thoughts about the wisdom of actually using nuclear weapons. They had come to realize their awesome power and the possible implications for a future world. A number of Manhattan scientists signed a letter expressing their opposition to continuing development of the bomb because it was no longer needed to defeat Germany.

**In reality, the bomb was never intended for use against Germany except, perhaps, during the first year or so of research.** The Military Policy Committee, a high-level group—including

## **To those who were aware of the nuclear secret, such power was seen as a means of keeping Stalin and the Soviet Communists in check in the postwar world.**

missiles did not exist and the artillery of the day lacked the range to deliver a nuclear warhead. The only option was delivery from the air in the form of an aerial bomb. In 1943, the only suitable delivery vehicle in the U.S. inventory was the Boeing B-29 Superfortress, a large, long-range, four-engine bomber that was under development at the same time as the bomb itself. Originally conceived in 1940, the B-29 had been

his deputy. Classen was already in command of the 393rd Bombardment Squadron, the operational unit that would actually drop the nuclear device.

Tibbets picked most of his staff officers from members of his former group, while others were chosen because they had special qualifications that made them particularly useful. Only Tibbets himself was privy to the nuclear secret. The

ing Leslie Groves—that was set up to determine how best to use nuclear weapons, decided as early as May 5, 1943, that the proper target for such an awesome weapon was Japan. This decision was made more than two years before the first test of the new weapons. One possibility was the massive supply base at Truk, from which Japanese military operations in the Southwest Pacific were supplied. According to

minutes of the May meeting, the Japanese were selected to be the recipients of the bomb because they “were less likely to secure knowledge from it as the Germans,” possibly in the event of a dud.

Tibbets, a retired U.S. Air Force brigadier general who died in 2007, has been quoted as saying that he was told that the unit would drop bombs on both Germany and Japan, but this is doubtful. The decision to use the bomb on Japan was already made long before it was close to reality and more than a year before Tibbets even knew it existed. Tibbets has revealed that he was briefed on the bomb by Colonel Edward Lansdale, an Army Air Corps officer who had close ties with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and its postwar successor, the CIA, and who evidently served as a kind of special projects officer with the War Department during the war.



Japan was undoubtedly chosen to be the target for the bomb because of Allied policy regarding the Pacific War. In December 1941, only a few days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill decided on a Germany first policy for prosecuting the war. Under the policy, the full focus of the Allied war machine would be directed toward defeating the Nazis, who were considered a more serious threat than Japan, while maintaining a holding action in the Pacific. After Germany was defeated, the full power of the Allies would be redirected against Japan. The timetable agreed on by the senior Allied officials called for Japan not to be defeated until 1947 at the earliest, a gross underestimation as it turned out.

At the time of the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan, the Allies had made only scant progress toward driving the Japanese northward. The battle for Guadalcanal had just ended, and Japanese forces still controlled much of New Guinea and most of the Solomons, while the U.S. Navy was recovering from its carrier losses at Coral Sea and Midway as the Pacific Fleet rebuilt. The use of such a powerful weapon against Japanese installations in the Pacific was seen as a means of holding the line and perhaps advancing. The military situation at the time made the possibility of using of a powerful



**LEFT: General Carl “Tooy” Spaatz headed U.S. Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific at the time of the use of the atomic bombs. FAR LEFT: Major General Leslie Groves served as overseer of the Manhattan Project, which developed the world’s first operational atomic bomb. ABOVE: The Big Three at the Potsdam Conference in 1945 included (seated left to right) Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, U.S. President Harry Truman, and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee.**

White House had come out with a new policy that made the possibility of such a weapon even more attractive.

After the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, President Roosevelt revealed a new policy to the press. The new policy was “unconditional surrender,” a term that did not appear in the communiqué of the conference and that both Roosevelt and Churchill later denied was premeditated. The term was quickly picked up by

the media and soon became a political byword, even though the implication did not set well with many Allied military leaders who believed that depriving the Axis nations of the opportunity to negotiate a surrender or truce would prolong the war and cause needless casualties. In essence, a policy of unconditional surrender left no latitude for any of the Axis nations to negotiate peace terms. It called for complete and total war against civilians as well as military forces. Roosevelt apparently conceived the idea, and Churchill grudgingly accepted it after the American president made it public.

new weapon against Japanese forces seem logical. A few weeks previously the

The third member of the so-called Grand Alliance was Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union, a ruthless totalitarian dictator who basically could not have cared less about what Churchill and Roosevelt thought about anything. Chiang Kai-shek of China was the fourth major Allied leader, but his status was more of a courtesy than anything else. Chiang was not invited to most of the conferences and was usually kept in the dark about plans and policies made by the Big Three. In many respects, Stalin was as bad as and perhaps even worse than Hitler, and he had grand designs for Europe, if not the entire world.

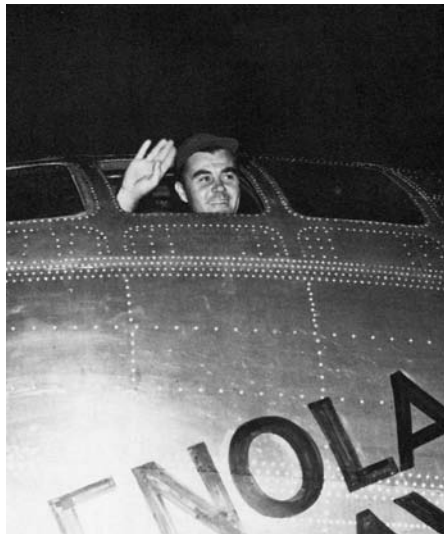
Although the world remembers the Nazi invasion of Poland that started World War II,

many often forget that Stalin's Soviet troops invaded the country from the east in coordination with the German attack and set up an occupation force that was even more brutal than that of the Germans. Soviet troops rounded up thousands of Polish military officers and took them into the Katyn Forest where they were executed and their bodies dumped into trenches. Stalin switched his alliance—but not his allegiance—to the Allies only after Hitler broke their agreement and launched an invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. When the Germans occupied eastern Poland, they discovered mass graves in the Katyn Forest holding the remains of more than 4,000 Polish officers, each with a single bullet in the head. When Germany revealed the massacre, President Roosevelt, who knew the truth, lied to the American public and blamed the atrocity on the Nazis to protect Stalin and the Soviet allies.

In the late summer of 1944, Stalin showed his true colors and revealed his designs for Europe. When the Polish Resistance rose against the Germans, Stalin halted his forces outside Warsaw and allowed the Poles to be slaughtered. In essence, Stalin allowed the Germans to do what he would have done himself once Soviet forces occupied the area. Stalin was a ruthless and wicked ruler, and many of the Allied politicians and military commanders realized this. To those who were aware of the nuclear secret, such power was seen as a means of keeping Stalin and the Soviet Communists in check in the postwar world.

Since the Manhattan Project was classified, President Roosevelt thought the Soviets were in the dark concerning the development of the atomic bomb. Intelligence sources would later reveal that the Soviets knew every detail of the project as it developed. Among the scientists working on the bomb were some with Communist leanings, and nuclear secrets were being smuggled through Red agents to Moscow, where Soviet scientists were doing their own nuclear research. It is likely that Stalin also was well aware that U.S. grand design included the use of nuclear weapons to defend against Soviet aggression after the war.

In 1945, the Allies were winning the war on all fronts. Although the Germans had launched a major counteroffensive in the Ardennes Forest the previous December, their advance had literally run out of fuel and the Allies were able to return to the offensive by the new year. Soviet troops were advancing toward Berlin from the east, and it was obvious that Hitler's Third Reich was in its last days. There was also good news in the Pacific.



**Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, pilot of the B-29 Superfortress *Enola Gay*, waves from the cockpit of the plane that dropped the Hiroshima bomb.**

Although the original Churchill-Roosevelt plan, with Stalin and the Soviets neutral in the war against Japan, had been to hold the line in the Pacific, Allied forces fighting on a shoestring had managed to defeat the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific and were advancing northward toward Japan.

American troops had landed on Luzon in the Philippines after first landing at Leyte in October. While land and air forces under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur advanced through New Guinea toward the Philippines, Marines and soldiers serving under U.S. Navy command moved through the Solomon Islands, then northward in their assigned theater, the Central Pacific. By the end of 1943, the U.S. Navy had rebuilt from its early losses to become a powerful force. The massive Japanese depot at Truk came under air attack from carrier and land-based aircraft in early 1944 and was soon neutralized, thus eliminating it from the list of possible nuclear targets. In the summer of 1944, Central Pacific forces landed in the Marianas, securing land for the construction of air bases from which the new B-29s could launch air attacks on the Japanese Home Islands.

**It is commonly believed that the Japanese** intended to fight to the death, and although this may certainly have been true of the most radical of the Japanese militarists, it was not true of Japan's civilian leadership and the population as a whole. Unlike Germany and Italy, Japan was not ruled by a dictator. Japan's system of government was a monarchy, but the government was actually under the leadership of a prime minister, who in turn governed along

with a cabinet made up of both military and civilians and a parliament known as the Diet. Furthermore, the Japanese population consisted of castes, with the militarists coming from the nobles while the rank and file were from the lower classes.

Prior to the Allied success at Saipan, the Home Islands of Japan had not been seriously threatened. Although the tide of war had turned in favor of the Allies in the Pacific, Allied victories had been in areas that had been occupied by Japan in early 1942. American bombers led by Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle struck Japan in April 1942, but this was a surprise attack launched from a single aircraft carrier and did little damage. As a result, Japanese forces in China went on the offensive and gained control of all areas of China from which Allied bombers could operate against Japan, thus sparing the Home Islands from air attack for more than two years.

With the exception of Guam, which was a U.S. possession, the Marianas were a different story. They were mandated to Japan by the League of Nations immediately after World War I and thus were Japanese territory. The loss of Saipan sent a message to Tokyo that Japan itself was threatened. Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, who had assumed the office in October 1941, was forced to resign, and a new cabinet was formed under Koiso Kuniaki, who, like Tojo, was a general in the Japanese Army.

The invasion of Saipan coincided with the commencement of an American air campaign against Japan, with the first mission directed at targets on Kyushu on the same day as the invasion. The attack was carried out by B-29s based in India and staging through advance bases in the vicinity of Chungking, China. Some of Japan's industrial leaders said after the war that the first B-29 attack caused them to realize that the war was lost. Even though little damage was done to the target, the fact that the Allies were now in bomber range of the Home Islands was ample indication of the threat to Japan itself, a threat that was compounded by the knowledge that Saipan was close enough to Tokyo to allow attacks on the main island of Honshu and Japan's industrialized areas around Tokyo Bay.

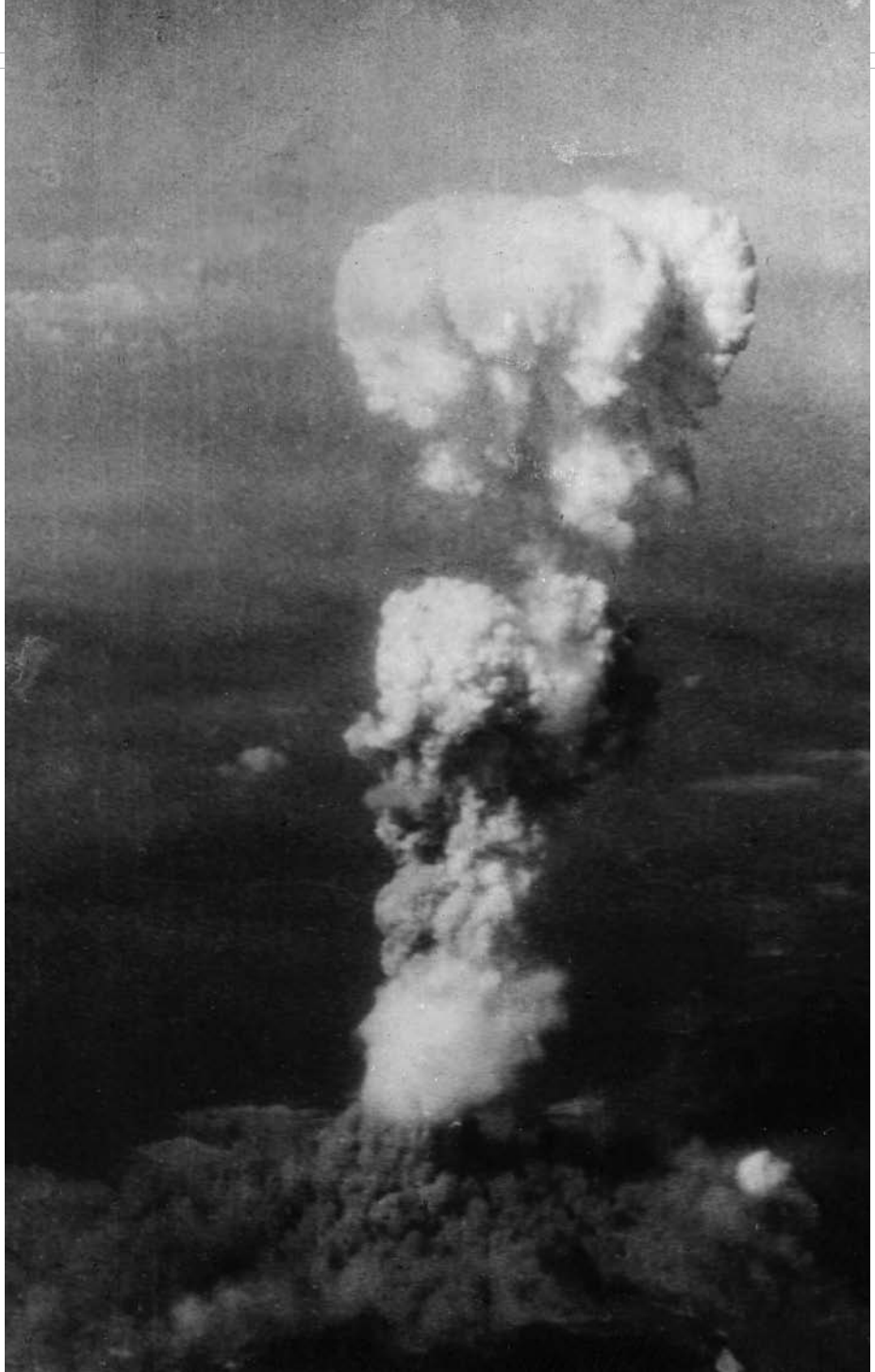
The country was also beginning to suffer as Allied aircraft and submarines began cutting the shipping lanes that brought raw materials and, more important, foodstuffs into Japan from the areas it had occupied elsewhere in the Pacific. Oil fields in the East Indies were still in Japanese hands, but the routes over which the tankers were obliged to sail to bring crude oil and petroleum to Japan were subject to constant attack.

The first strike on the Tokyo area occurred in late November 1944, when B-29s attacked aircraft manufacturing facilities at Mushasino. For the next several months attacks continued, although bombing results were far less than what the Allies had hoped. Initial B-29 operations against Japan were mostly daylight precision raids directed at manufacturing facilities related to the Japanese aircraft industry. Some attacks achieved better results than Allied intelligence indicated, but they would not be known until after the war when the Allies gained access to Japanese records.

**In February, U.S. Marines landed on tiny Iwo Jima, a volcanic island 650 miles southeast of Tokyo.** The island featured an airfield that served as a staging base for Japanese bombers on missions against the new American bases on Saipan, but the main purpose of the invasion was to secure an emergency landing field for crippled B-29s returning from raids over Japan and as a base for escort fighters and B-24 Liberators. U.S. intelligence underestimated the Japanese defenses, and the battle for Iwo Jima turned out to be one of the most intense in Marine Corps history. Although the Japanese defenders knew they were doomed, they determined to sell their lives dearly and kill as many Americans as possible in a last-ditch struggle. The resulting high number of Marine casualties led many Americans to believe that the same attitude prevailed among the Japanese population as a whole. But Japan itself had yet to be subjected to the most destructive attacks in human history.

The lack of success of the B-29 raids led the Twentieth Air Force, the U.S. Army Air Forces command element that controlled the long-range bombers, to try a change in tactics. Oriental construction methods depended largely on bamboo and even paper rather than steel and concrete, and Twentieth Air Force planners believed many structures were susceptible to incendiary attack. An incendiary raid against the Hankow docks in China in December 1944 produced spectacular results, effectively destroying the city as Japan's main supply base in China. Test missions with incendiaries were flown against targets in Japan, but results were inconclusive and attacks continued with high explosives.

In early March XXI Bomber Command launched an incendiary mission against Tokyo, and the results left no doubt. The bombers were sent in at night at altitudes much lower than previous missions, so low that many of the crewmen thought they were suicidal. Guns, ammunition, and gunners were left off the B-



**A mushroom cloud billows 20,000 feet above Hiroshima and spreads 10,000 feet from ground zero. The crewmen aboard the *Enola Gay* were awestruck by the power of the atomic bomb.**

29s to increase payloads, which consisted of napalm and incendiary bombs. Pathfinders went in ahead of the main force and dropped napalm to mark the target for the main force, which followed with incendiaries to spread the fires. The result of the raid was the most destructive event in human history. Winds whipped up by the fires produced a conflagration that destroyed a wide area of the city. The flames were so intense that water in the city's canals boiled.

Japanese records revealed that 83,000 people

were killed and 40,000 injured by the fires. Six firebombing missions were flown against targets around Tokyo Bay before the American landings on Okinawa led to a diversion of the B-29s to attack airfields on Kyushu. Casualties on Okinawa were again heavy as the Japanese defenders fought another stubborn battle designed to produce as many casualties as possible. The effect on morale in the United States was profound, but the loss of Okinawa had an even more profound effect on the Japanese. Once again, the Japanese cabinet was replaced.

The new prime minister, Admiral Suzuki Kantaro, reported after the war that his instructions from Emperor Hirohito were to find a way to end the war as soon as possible.

As the battle for Okinawa concluded, the air campaign against Japan resumed with a vengeance. During the interim, hundreds of additional B-29s had arrived in the Marianas, allowing even larger formations for the fire-bombing. The B-29s were joined by smaller B-24s flying from Iwo Jima, and Liberators were soon operating from airfields on Okinawa and nearby Ie Shima as well. A second B-29 force was preparing to move to Okinawa.

U.S. Navy carrier aircraft were now free to attack targets in Japan, while Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers and light and medium bombers were striking Kyushu. Japan's cities were literally being bombed into rubble, and the Japanese civilian leadership feared that unless the war was brought to an end soon the entire country would be destroyed. Not only that, the Home Islands had been isolated from their normal sources of food as U.S. submarines prowled Japanese waters, cutting sea arteries to the Asian mainland. Food and other commodities were in short supply, and the population was on the verge of starvation.

The Imperial Japanese Navy had been

**“If the bomb were not used in the present war, the world would have no adequate warning as to what to expect if war should break out again.”**

destroyed, and its air forces had been reduced to the point that they were capable only of kamikaze attacks owing to the lack of trained combat pilots and aircrews. Only the land forces on the islands were still intact, and they were made up of men with little combat experience who had been redeployed from Manchuria and Formosa as well as untried



Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

troops who had never left the Home Islands. The Army was depending to a large degree on civilians—including all women aged 16 to 40—who had been impressed into a home guard and equipped with primitive weapons. Civil defense had practically ceased to exist, with the only escape from the incessant air attacks for urban dwellers being to flee to the countryside.

Although the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States were allies in the struggle against Nazi Germany, Moscow maintained a neutral position in the war with Japan. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, Japan elected to stay out of the war. Similarly, when the United States asked Moscow for air bases in the Soviet Far East from which to bomb Japan, the Soviets refused the request, fearing that such an action would bring them into the

Pacific War at a time when they were heavily engaged against the Germans.

As it became apparent to the Japanese that they would lose the war, Japan began sending peace offers to the United States via Moscow. Stalin, who had his own reasons for prolonging the war, elected not to pass the surrender offers on to Washington. Nevertheless, U.S. intercepts of messages made the United States aware of the offers. The messages were decoded and passed on to the highest levels of the U.S. government. Other indications of a Japanese willingness to surrender came in the form of messages sent through the Swiss embassy in Tokyo. When the Swiss ambassador to the United States made the surrender feelers known in Washington, he was told to ignore them and to inform his associates in Tokyo not to accept

any more such messages.

While the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who were fighting the war were preparing to invade Japan and were fearful for their lives, America's civilian leadership was well aware that the Japanese were on the verge of surrender, and many senior military officers believed that a costly land battle would be unnecessary. Senior officers who were not privy to the radio intercepts but were familiar with Japanese capabilities also believed that Japan would surrender without an invasion, especially if guarantees were given that the emperor would be allowed to retain his throne.

**One officer who believed this was General Douglas MacArthur**, the senior Army officer in the Pacific and the man who had been selected for command of all Pacific forces for the impending invasion. MacArthur, who had spent much of his life in the Orient and was well acquainted with Asian philosophy, is reported to have informed Washington of his views that Japan was on the verge of surrender as early as January 1945. It is known that his chief of staff for air, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, informed Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall and President Roosevelt that an invasion of Japan was possible at that time.

On April 12, 1945, Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage, and Vice President Harry S. Truman assumed the office of president. The former senator from Missouri had been in office little more than two months and knew very little about Roosevelt's foreign policies. Roosevelt had not even informed him of the existence of the Manhattan Project, much less of how he intended to use the atomic bomb. As a member of the Missouri National Guard, Truman had served as a captain of artillery in World War I and had risen to the rank of colonel after the war. Shortly after his arrival in the Senate, he was placed in charge of a commission investigating defense purchases. He had come to view the professional military with disdain and believed that he knew as much or more about military strategy and tactics as the Annapolis men and West Pointers who were running the war.

Truman's correspondence regarding the use of the bomb was classified for a period of 50 years and was declassified only in 1995. Truman apologists claimed for decades that the president refused to discuss surrender with the Japanese because the intercepted messages indicated that they were not unconditional—that the Japanese wanted the emperor to remain on the throne. Such, however, was not really the case. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote

in his autobiography, "History might find that the United States, in its delay in stating its position on unconditional surrender terms, had prolonged the war." Stimson did not state that the delay might have been due to the desire to demonstrate the power of the atomic bomb to the world, particularly the Soviets, even though he knew that was the reason. Former President Herbert Hoover wrote a letter to Truman admonishing him to make U.S. intentions regarding surrender clear. In his letter, Hoover stated that if the Japanese understood what the United States wanted they would surrender without an invasion and spare the lives of up to one million Americans.

General Groves added, "There was never from about two weeks from the time I took charge of this project any illusion on my part but that Russia was our enemy and the project was conducted on that basis." Groves had

as these leave little doubt that the primary goal behind the development of the atomic bomb was to put the United States in a preeminent position in the postwar world, and that to demonstrate its power it was imperative for it to be used before hostilities ended.

Groves also wrote that there never really was a "decision" to use or not to use the bomb, but that its use was merely the continuation of a process that had already been set in motion. President Roosevelt had decided before his death that the bomb would be used against a Japanese target at the earliest opportunity and also decided that development of nuclear weapons would continue after the war. Roosevelt's plans were a legacy that Truman merely continued. After the Allied victory in Europe, Air Corps General Carl Spaatz was sent to the Pacific to take command of the strategic bombing campaign against Japan. On the way, he



**Twisted piles of debris were all that remained of much of Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the detonations of the atomic bombs. Heat and shock waves vaporized people and incinerated wooden structures.**

taken charge of Manhattan Project in 1942.

In late 1944, Secretary of War Stimson stated, "Troubles with Russia were connected to the future of the atomic bomb." Arthur Compton, one of the driving forces behind the bomb's development, wrote to Stimson in response to criticism of the project from other scientists in early 1945: "If the bomb were not used in the present war, the world would have no adequate warning as to what to expect if war should break out again." Comments such

stopped in the United States for briefings and a short leave. During his time in Washington, he was informed of the impending availability of the bomb and was told that as soon as it was available he was to use it. Spaatz, who had opposed American involvement in "terror bombing" in Europe, informed Generals Arnold and Marshall that before he would use such a terrible weapon he must have a written order instructing him to do so. An order instructing the 509th Composite Group to drop

an atomic bomb “not later than August 10” was issued on July 25, 1945, nine days after the first successful test. A bomb was already on the way to the island of Tinian in the Marianas, where the 509th Composite Group was based. Truman wrote in his diary that evening that he had authorized the use of the most terrible weapon in human history “only against a military target, not against women and children.”

Years after the war, President Truman would claim that he had decided to use the bomb because he had been advised by General Marshall that an invasion of Japan would cost as many as a million American lives. Marshall made no such claim; the figure most likely came from the Hoover letter. Expected casualties from the initial invasion of Kyushu were a small fraction of that number. American combat deaths in the entire Asiatic Theater amounted to fewer than 93,000 men, roughly one-third of U.S. combat deaths for the entire war. Truman also claimed that he asked Secretary of War Stimson which Japanese cities were devoted exclusively to war production and was advised that Hiroshima and Nagasaki fell in this category.

In fact, neither was a major war production center, and Hiroshima had been taken off the existing target list, along with Kyoto, Niigata, and Kokuru, because they had been untouched as yet by the war and were identified by the War Policy Committee as suitable targets for the new weapon. As Japan’s eighth-largest city,



**Exposure to thermal rays caused the pattern of a woman’s cloth kimono to be seared into her skin following the explosion of an atomic bomb that killed thousands.**

Hiroshima’s main military significance was that the Second Army headquarters was located there. Although there was some war production there, the city was far less important than other metropolitan areas. Had Hiroshima been militarily important, it would not have been restricted from conventional attack.

Nagasaki had been attacked before and was actually selected by XXI Bomber Command chief General Curtis LeMay as an atomic target when Kyoto was stricken from the list by Secretary of War Stimson because of its cultural and religious significance. As a principal city

on Kyushu, it might have been important in the impending invasion. Even then, however, Nagasaki was third on the list and was struck only because Kokuru was obscured by clouds and orders called for the bomb to be dropped visually rather than with radar.

Remarkably, barely three weeks passed between the detonation of the Trinity weapon in New Mexico on July 16 and the appearance of the mushroom cloud in the skies over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. There was no military urgency for such quick use. The battle for Okinawa had ended almost two months before, the Philippines campaign was in its mopping-up phase after the liberation of Manila in March, and the planned date for the invasion of Japan was still nearly three months in the future. Germany had surrendered, and the Pacific War had settled into a sort of lull while Allied forces built up for the planned invasion of Kyushu. In short, there was no justifiable reason for rushing the use of the atomic bomb—unless it was out of fear that Japan would surrender before it could be used.

As it was, the use of the atomic bomb against Hiroshima did not end the war. Nor did the second bomb, which was dropped on Nagasaki three days later. Only silence emitted from Japan in response. Casualties from the two bombs were great—more than 70,000 dead and missing at Hiroshima and at least 40,000 at Nagasaki—but no worse than those caused by the firebombing attacks on Tokyo and other Japanese cities. Although the morale in the two

## The dropping of the atomic bombs evoked varied responses.

On August 7, 1945, the day after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, President Harry S. Truman announced, “The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East. And the end is not yet. If they [the Japanese] do not now accept our terms [of surrender], they may expect a rain of ruin from the air.”

The world was sick of war, commentators said, and many Americans felt that the loss of two cities full of Japanese civilians was a small price to pay in order to halt a war that had already cost more than 50 million lives.

Even before the A-bombs were dropped, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, who had commanded

Task Force 58 in the Pacific, stated that he expected a hundred million Japanese to strap explosives to their bodies and repel the American invaders if an invasion of the Home Islands had been necessary. “A body can stop a tank only if it is attached to dynamite,” he said. “Premier Suzuki has called upon all Japanese citizens to rise up as one suicide corps to stop us. He is not using a figure of speech. Japs take the call to suicide very seriously.”

Author and former Marine William Manchester wrote, “[General Douglas] MacArthur had told Washington that he expected the first stage of that final campaign [i.e., the invasions of Honshu and Kyushu] to ‘cost one million casual-

ties to American forces alone.”

Americans were divided about the moral implications that the use of atomic weapons had brought about. Despite the perceived need to end the war, negative public and political fallout surrounding the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki began almost immediately.

The *New York Times*, calling the A-bomb perhaps “the most stupendous military and scientific achievement of our time,” also editorialized that the explosion that wiped out Hiroshima was heard “morally around the world.”

Hanson W. Baldwin, military editor of the *New York Times*, noted on August 7, 1945, “Yesterday we clinched victory

in the Pacific, but we sowed the whirlwind.”

A Filipino living in New York protested the selection of Hiroshima as the target—it should have been Tokyo, he opined. Another called the use of the bombs “indiscriminate, inhuman, and un-Christian.... It is simply mass murder, sheer terrorism on the greatest scale the world has yet seen.” Another commented, “Man is too frail a being to be entrusted with such power as atomic energy possesses.”

Reaction from overseas, too, was swift and divided. British newspapers reported that many Britons were horrified by the news of the super weapon. “Is there to be no protest against the crime [of bomb-

cities where the bombs were dropped was ruined, elsewhere in Japan news of the detonations had little effect. This was perhaps due to the considerable distances between the two atomic bomb targets and Tokyo. For that matter, the general morale of the Japanese people had already sunk to its lowest levels. After the war almost 70 percent of those interviewed by Allied intelligence said they had reached the point where they could not endure another day of war.

**Meanwhile, the Japanese leaders were engaged** in intense discussions. Emperor Hirohito had wanted to end the war that was destroying his country, and his desires were well known among the Japanese military and civilian leadership. The Japanese government had undergone a major shake-up in July 1944 when Tojo had been forced to resign after Saipan fell to the Allies. Since that time, there had been a rising peace movement within the Japanese government, but the military refused to consider any surrender terms that removed the emperor from his throne. A new government under Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, a former Navy chief of staff, was formed in April after the Allied invasion of Okinawa. Suzuki told interrogators after the war that the emperor had instructed him to seek peace but that he had been fearful of the militarists, who were not above assassination as a means of maintaining power and influence.

The Allied Potsdam Declaration, which

stated that if Japan did not surrender the nation would suffer complete and utter destruction, brought about a major debate among the Japanese leadership. Three of the leaders of the Supreme War Direction Council advocated immediate acceptance of the Potsdam terms, but the other three were opposed on the basis that demands were made to treat Japanese leaders as war criminals and there was no guarantee that the emperor would remain on the throne.

Hirohito was willing to accept the Potsdam demands issued on July 26 (almost two weeks before Hiroshima) as written but was unable to impose his will. Finally, two days after the detonation of the bomb over Nagasaki, Suzuki asked Hirohito to decide the issue in an Imperial Conference, a heretofore unprecedented act as the emperor's traditional role was to approve or disapprove plans put forth by civilian and military leaders but not to advocate decisions himself.

Hirohito decided to accept the Allies' terms, but to satisfy the militarists the Japanese surrender offer was conditional in that Japan would accept only if the emperor's safety and continuation on the throne were guaranteed. Secretary of State James Byrnes recommended that the offer be accepted, and assurances were sent to Japan. On August 14, Hirohito informed the Japanese public of the surrender in his first-ever radio address to the nation. In the end, it was Hirohito, not Harry Truman, who made the decision that ended the war and

avoided an invasion that could have cost thousands of lives.

When news of the Japanese surrender reached the world, Americans automatically and naturally assumed it was due to the detonation of the atomic bombs. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen who were making preparations for an invasion believed that the atomic bomb had spared their lives. Because they were not privy to the information available at the highest levels of government, they had no idea that the Japanese had attempted to convey their wishes to surrender several months before the detonation of the bomb.

In contrast, many U.S. leaders, particularly those closest to the fight against Japan, believed the use of the atomic bomb was unnecessary, that Japan was on the verge of surrender without it. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, members of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey entered Japan and began a systematic survey of the Japanese cities that had been the targets. The survey concluded that even without the two bombs "air supremacy over Japan could have exerted sufficient pressure to bring about unconditional surrender and obviate the need for invasion, probably by November 1, certainly by the end of December 1945." □

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ing Hiroshima]?" wrote one reader. "In the name of humanity, let us stop and ask ourselves where we are marching," wrote another. "Japan has never aroused my sympathy until today," commented a third, "and now my heart goes out to her."

The *Catholic Herald* of London called the use of the weapon "absolutely indefensible, appalling, and immoral." The Vatican City newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, too, condemned the use of the bomb "under the impetus of passions, of hatreds, of conquest.... The last twilight of the war is colored by mortal flames never before seen on the horizons of the universe."

On the other side, a minority of British letter writers agreed with one man who said, "It is our duty

to use the new weapon against Japan," and a British tabloid editorialized that the use of atomic bombs could be justified only if it brought the end of the war.

After Nagasaki, once the Japanese signaled their intention to surrender, immense relief was felt by American fighting men around the world. American servicemen, many of whom were in units that were on orders to take part in the invasion of Japan, had no misgivings. "Thank God for Harry Truman and the atom bomb," was the common refrain. One hospitalized submariner said, "I felt no pity whatsoever for the Japs; we could have exterminated the whole race and it wouldn't have bothered me one bit."

*LIFE* magazine reported that GIs in Germany were "jubilant. They

are all figuring that peace in the Pacific will save them from being sent out for more fighting." The less jubilant Germans were grateful that the bomb had not been developed a few months sooner and used on them.

In a troop-filled C-47 transport aircraft heading home from Austria, a U.S. Army infantry colonel said nothing, but simply looked out the window. "In a little while there were tears running down his cheeks," a correspondent noted.

In Philadelphia, an Army private stopped a U.S. nurse on the street and said, now that the war was almost over, he wanted to kiss every girl he could find. "Well, what are you waiting for, soldier?" replied the smiling nurse.

In London, Winston Churchill celebrated quietly by lighting a fresh

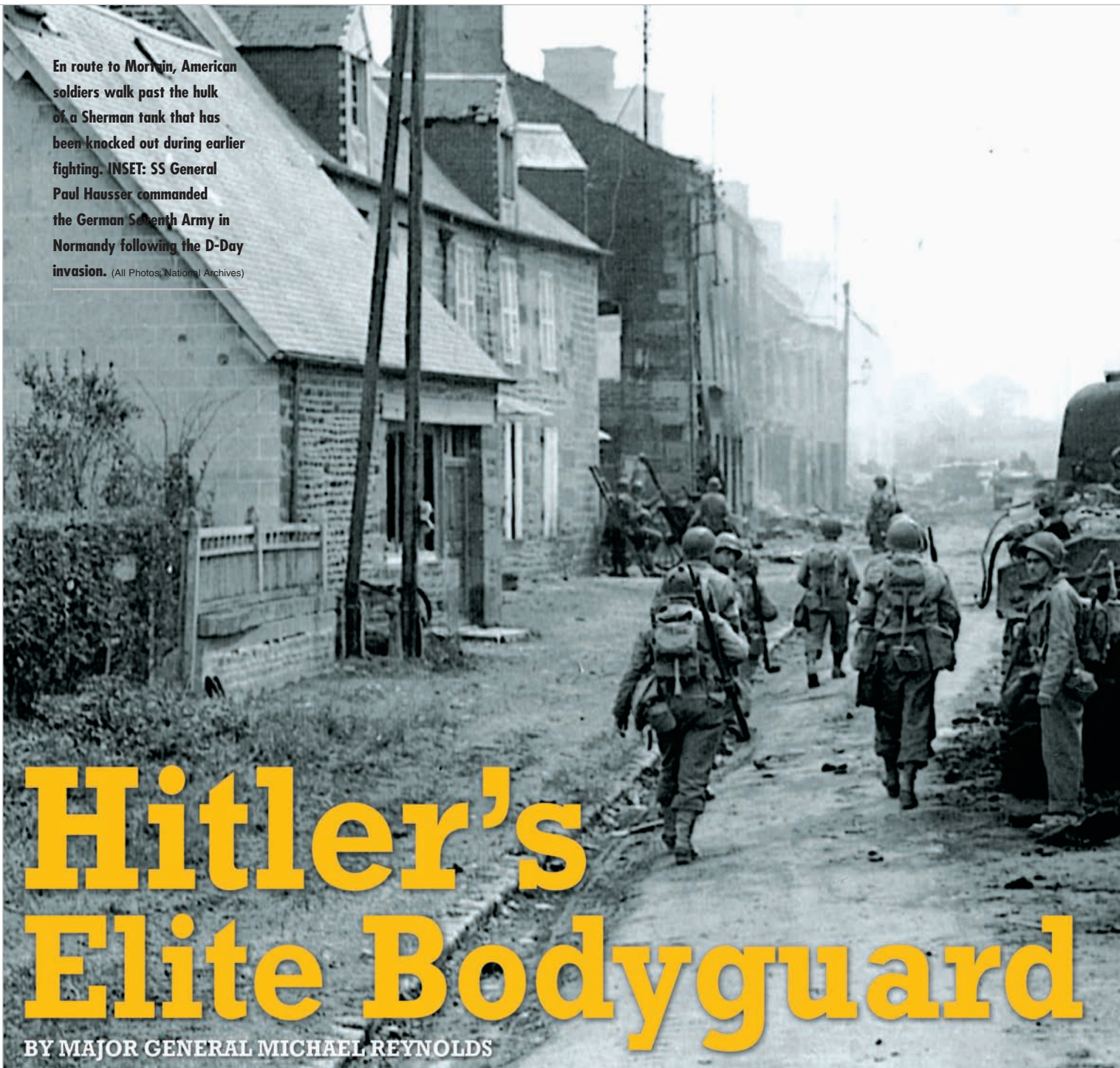
cigar and declaring, "At last the job is finished."

U.S. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson stated, "With the release of atomic energy, man's ability to destroy himself is very nearly complete. The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended a war. They also made it wholly clear that we must never have another war. This is the lesson men and leaders everywhere must learn, and I believe that when they learn it they will find a way to lasting peace. There is no other choice."

General Carl Spaatz, whose air force had dropped the A-bombs, asked rhetorically, "Wouldn't it be an odd thing if these were the only two atomic bombs ever dropped?" ■

**Flint Whitlock**

En route to Mornay, American soldiers walk past the hulk of a Sherman tank that has been knocked out during earlier fighting. INSET: SS General Paul Hausser commanded the German Seventh Army in Normandy following the D-Day invasion. (All Photos, National Archives)



# Hitler's Elite Bodyguard

BY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL REYNOLDS

**The SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, a shadow of its former strength, was further shattered in a failed counterattack against U.S. positions in Normandy.**

By the morning of July 27, 1944, General Omar Bradley's First U.S. Army had won the "Battle of the Hedgerows" in Normandy and stood ready to break out to the south. It had taken four corps, ultimately employing 12 divisions, to do it, and the cost had been appalling—XIX Corps alone had suffered 10,077 casualties.

The forthcoming operation, codenamed Cobra, was designed to outflank SS General Paul Hausser's depleted Seventh German Army and finally rid northern France of the hated Boche.

A day later half a dozen German infantry divisions had been cut to pieces and U.S. columns were pouring down the roads between Coutances and the River Vire. Even the Americans were astonished by their success. Two days later, August 1, General George S. Patton's Third U.S. Army became fully operational, and his 4th Armored Division, after advancing 40 kilometers in 36 hours, reached Avranches. The German Commander in Chief West, Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge, warned Berlin, "The left flank has collapsed."



# at Mortain

Bradley, who was now commanding the U.S. Twelfth Army Group, ordered his successor in First Army, General Courtney Hodges, to seize the Vire–Mortain sector, while Patton was to turn west into Brittany. In a characteristic feat of organization and personal leadership, George Patton funneled seven divisions down one road and across the one bridge at Avranches in 72 hours.

It is not the author's intention to discuss the higher strategy of the Normandy campaign with all the arguments about wasted efforts in Brittany and large and small envelopments. For the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to say that Mortain was captured by August 2, and the following day Bradley ordered Patton to leave minimal forces in Brittany and use his main strength to drive eastward. Rennes was

secured on the 4th, and the overall Allied ground commander, General Sir Bernard Montgomery, issued a directive that ended, "The broad strategy of the Allied Armies is to swing the right flank towards Paris and to force the enemy back to the Seine."

Montgomery was not the only person to issue a new directive on August 4. Hitler did the same. He ordered von Kluge to launch a counteroffensive from the Vire–Mortain area, aimed first at Avranches, with the objective of cutting off all American forces to the south of that line, and then northeast to the Channel coast to drive





**His armored vehicle camouflaged against detection from the air, a tank crewman of the German 9th Panzer Division keeps a skyward watch for Allied fighter bombers. Note the goggles shielding his eyes from the sun.**

the Allies back into the sea. It was a highly imaginative plan, but both von Kluge and Hausser knew that it would be impossible to assemble the forces necessary for such an offensive before the collapse of the entire front to the west of the River Orne. They also knew that there was no point in arguing!

**Hitler insisted that eight of the nine panzer divisions in Normandy should be used in the offensive, along with the entire reserves of the Luftwaffe, but that the attack should be delayed until “every tank, gun and plane is assembled.”** Every detail was specified, including the exact roads and villages through which the assaulting troops were to advance. General Gunther Blumentritt, von Kluge’s chief of staff, complained after the war, “All this planning had been done in Berlin with large-scale maps and the advice of the generals in France was not asked for, nor was it encouraged.” The operation was codenamed Luttich (Liege). The Americans called it the

“Mortain counterattack.”

In accordance with Hitler’s directive, at 1935 hours on August 5, the commander of the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte (Bodyguard) Adolf Hitler—usually shortened to Leibstandarte or LAH—received an order to dispatch his two panzer battalions and two of his panzergrenadier battalions, plus a self-propelled artillery battalion, to the area to the southeast of Vire, that same night. This elite division had already suffered heavy casualties during July and was at this time still heavily engaged southeast of Caen. Nevertheless, within five hours it had been relieved by an infantry division and the designated units had begun their move to the west. For the time being, the rest of the division remained in Army Group B reserve.

When Patton’s tanks approached Le Mans the following day, von Kluge began to panic. It was clear that the German southern flank was wide open, but he was reassured by Berlin

that he “should not worry about the extension of the American penetration, for the delay [in launching the counteroffensive] would mean cutting off so much more.”

Von Kluge and Hausser knew that the Führer Order was sounding the death knell of the German Seventh Army and that any delay in launching the counterattack would only exacerbate matters. They therefore resolved to attack during the night of August 6, long before all the necessary forces could be assembled. They were encouraged in this decision by a visit to Seventh Army on the afternoon of August 6 by a Luftwaffe general, who said 300 fighters could be committed over the attack area on August 7. Although this new plan fell far short of Hitler’s vision of a campaign-winning counterstroke, he surprisingly agreed to the earlier attack.

The Germans had detected only one U.S. infantry division and part of an armored division in the path of their attack. Against this relatively small force von Kluge and Hausser planned to use General Hans von Funck’s XLVII Panzer Corps with the 2nd and 116th Panzer Divisions, 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich with a battlegroup from the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division, and, they hoped, those parts of the Leibstandarte already mentioned. According to Hausser in his postwar interrogation, “The main body of the 1st SS Panzer Division ... was to serve as a second wave in the attack on Juvigny.”

Von Funck’s counterattack was to be launched between the Sée River in the north and the Sélune in the south. Although not significant barriers, these small rivers would at least give the flanks of the offensive some protection. The main German thrust was to be in the center, through St. Barthélemy and Juvigny, initially by General Smilo Freiherr von Lüttwitz’s 2nd Panzer Division. Since his division had suffered some 40 percent casualties to its combat strength, von Lüttwitz was to be strongly reinforced by the Leibstandarte’s 1st SS Panzer Battalion and by another panzer battalion and antitank company from the 116th. This was expected to give von Lüttwitz a strength of about 100 tanks.

It was envisaged that by the time the breakthrough by 2nd Panzer had been achieved, the rest of the Leibstandarte would have arrived and be able to lead the final advance to Avranches. The remainder of the relatively fresh but by now seriously weakened 116th Panzer Division, with only about 25 tanks, was to protect the northern flank by advancing from the area west of Sourdeval to engage enemy forces north of the Sée. Its initial objective was le Mesnil-Gilbert.

SS Brigadier Otto Baum's reinforced 2nd SS Panzer Division was only about 60 percent combat effective and had fewer than 30 tanks. Its task was to capture Mortain by encirclement and then advance west and southwest to St. Hilaire, while Panzer Lehr's reconnaissance elements looked after the southern flank.

Although well under 200 tanks would be available for the assault on August 7, it was hoped that a sufficient number of tank reinforcements and replacements would be furnished during the advance by the arrival of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions and a tank Battalion of the 9th Panzer Division.

At 1630 hours on August 6, SS Major General Teddy Wisch, commanding the 1st SS Panzer Division LAH, reported that his tanks, having driven 70 kilometers, would need refueling and that anyway, they could not possibly arrive in the planned assembly area before 2200 hours.

Two hours before the designated H hour of midnight, von Funck reported to Hausser that the leading elements of the Leibstandarte were still at Tinchebray, some 20 kilometers short of their required positions. The remainder of the route, through St. Clement, was narrow and winding, with high banks skirting the poor roads and a deep valley to be crossed. It was obvious that there was no chance of the 2nd Panzer Division receiving its extra LAH tanks in time for the planned attack. Similarly, Lt. Gen. Graf von Schwerin's 116th Panzer Division had failed to produce its share of extra forces for 2nd Panzer, with the result that von Funck asked that von Schwerin be sacked.

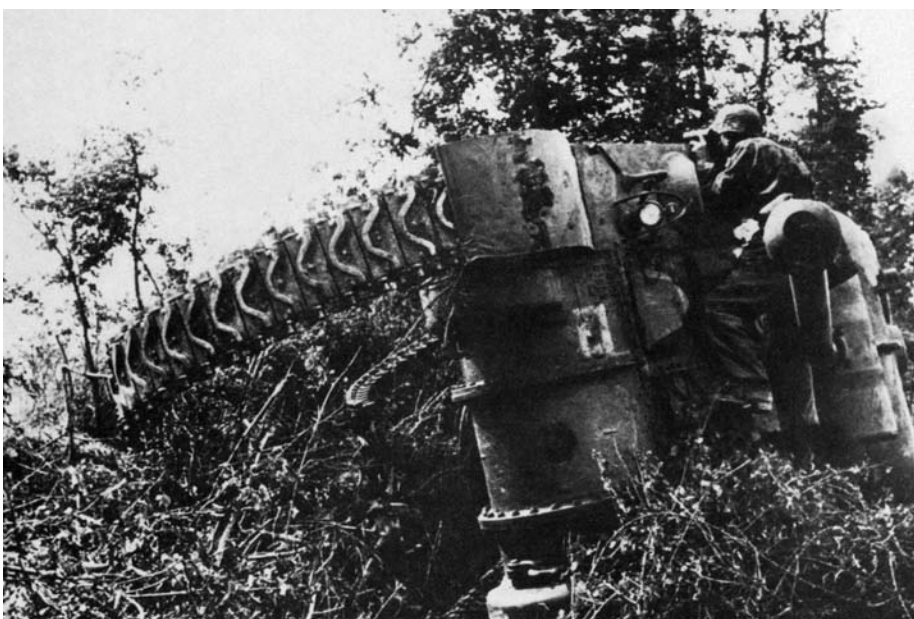
Inevitably, von Funck, Hausser, and von Lütwitz were extremely unhappy with the way things were going—the latter was missing not only his extra tanks but also an assault gun brigade and additional artillery that had been promised from the II Parachute Corps. Hausser is recorded as saying, "I must say this is a poor start. Let's hope that tonight's loss of time will be compensated for by fog tomorrow morning."

Facing the German onslaught, General Hodges had basically just one division—the 30th Infantry, nicknamed Old Hickory. It had already suffered badly in the Normandy fighting. Between July 7 and 13, during the attack on the Vire, it had incurred 3,200 casualties, and on the 25th another 662 fell to "blue on blue" attacks by American aircraft. Its attached tank battalion, the 743rd, suffered 38 tank and 133 personnel casualties during July, but most of these had been replaced.

Old Hickory's move to the Mortain sector on the morning of August 6 was more like a celebration than a move into battle. It was a



**ABOVE:** Cautiously moving through the Bocage, or hedgerow country, of France, infantrymen of the U.S. 30th Division advance toward Mortain where they made a heroic stand against a German counterattack. **BELOW:** Sheltering behind the wreckage of an American tank, a German forward artillery observer directs the fire of his battery against elements of the advancing U.S. First Army.



warm bright Sunday, and the local citizenry thronged the roads to wave, throw flowers, and offer drinks to the passing soldiers. At Mortain itself, hotels and cafés were open and crowded with customers, and when the men of the 1st Infantry Division, whom they were relieving, told the GIs that there was not a German within a hundred miles who wanted to continue the fight, they began to relax and look forward to a few days of rest.

It looked like it would be an easy ride to the Seine and Paris. The only thing to mar their pleasure was when some of the later convoys were strafed by several flights of German fighter bombers. The men had no way of knowing that

within six hours of their commander assuming responsibility for the Mortain sector they would be engulfed by Hitler's latest offensive.

Major General Leland Hobbs deployed the 30th Infantry Division with the 120th Infantry Regiment, less a battalion required for a separate task, in the town of Mortain and on Hill 314 immediately to its east and the 117th Infantry Regiment in St. Barthélemy and the area to its west. He held the 119th Infantry, less a battalion detached to the 2nd Armored Division, in reserve about five kilometers to the west of Juvigny. Each regiment had a tank destroyer company of the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion in support. On Hobbs's right flank the VII



**Intent on repelling a strong German counterattack at Mortain, U.S. soldiers of the 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, service a 57mm antitank gun.**

Corps cavalry was reported to be covering to a point some 14 kilometers south of Mortain, and he was told that the 39th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Division was four kilometers to his north, and the 8th Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division to the west of that. He had no direct contact with any of them. In fact, the 30th Infantry Division was dangerously exposed on both flanks.

The leading elements of the *Leibstandarte* reached Tinchebray just two hours before Operation Luttich was due to be launched. Four hours later, at 0200 hours on the 7th, only the 1st SS Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st SS Panzer Battalion (not more than 43 Panthers and seven Mk IV tanks), and the 3rd Battalion of the 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Regiment in armored personnel carriers (SPWs) had arrived. The Reconnaissance Battalion joined the right wing of 2nd Panzer's thrust toward le Mesnil-Tôve, and the rest of the force, under SS Major Herbert Kuhlmann, formed a major part of the left assault group aimed at Juvigny.

It is interesting to note that although Hausser's chief of staff, Colonel Rudolf von Gersdorff, later used the delayed arrival of the LAH Panzer Battalion as an excuse for the German failures on August 7, the *Leibstandarte* did not accept that it was to blame. It claimed, not unreasonably, that it had only a short summer night to travel 70 to 80 kilometers across the supply routes of two armies engaged in full-scale combat and with three panzer divisions and the entire II SS Panzer Corps moving along the same march route just ahead of it.

The XLVII Panzer Corps attack ran into difficulties from the start. In the northern sector, von Schwerin's 116th Panzer Division got nowhere.

It had been unable to disengage properly before the planned H hour and did not even attempt to advance until 1630 hours. At 2050 hours, its highly decorated commander was sacked. In the south, Baum's 2nd SS Panzer Division was more successful. It encircled Mortain, mainly from the south, and advanced as far as Romagny, two kilometers to the southwest.

When the morning fog lifted, however, U.S. artillery and Allied air power threatened any further advance, and a halt was called. A major factor in this situation was the valiant and undefeated stand by the surrounded 2nd Battalion of the 120th Infantry Regiment of Old Hickory on Hill 314, which was to go down as an epic in American military history. The battalion lost more than 300 men killed and wounded during the siege that followed. No less critical were the actions of a platoon of A Company, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and men of the 120th Infantry at the l'Abbaye Blanche roadblock to the north of the town. They inflicted astonishing casualties against the northern thrust of 2nd SS Panzer and remained undefeated when the Germans finally withdrew four days later.

But how did the *Leibstandarte* fare? There are many misconceptions regarding its status at the time of the attack and how it might have been employed. Most books, and indeed some German reports, talk about "the 1st SS Panzer Division" as though it was a complete entity, and many American writers describe it as one

of the strongest and best-equipped divisions in the German Army. Nothing could be further from the truth. Such statements ignore the fact that the *Leibstandarte* had been virtually destroyed on the Eastern Front less than four months previously, rebuilt using large numbers of draftees from the *Luftwaffe* and Navy, and had lost more than 1,000 men and some 40 tanks and armored assault guns in the three weeks before Luttich.

During the night of August 5, when it was relieved south of Caen for the move to the west, the *Leibstandarte* had only 43 Panthers, 55 Mark IVs, and 29 assault guns combat ready. On the day of the attack it did not even exist as a coherent panzer division. Only three of its subunits reached the concentration area before first light on the 7th, and they had been allocated to another division anyway. Yet another part of the LAH, *Kampfgruppe* (KG) Schiller, with a composite battalion of SS panzergrenadiers, an artillery battalion, a mortar battery, and four or five assault guns, had been subordinated to an infantry division to help stem an Allied attack south of Vire; and the balance of Wisch's division—two SS panzergrenadier battalions, about 20 assault guns of the 1st SS Sturmgeschütz Battalion, and the 1st SS Pioneer Battalion—was still on the move toward the Mortain area. It had not even reached St. Clement when darkness fell on the first day of the attack.

Indeed, some elements, including a company of Mark IV tanks, failed to begin their move west until the night of the 7th and took until the 10th just to get to Domfront. Hitler's criticism of von Kluge for not committing the LAH as an exploitation force through 2nd SS Panzer in the southern sector on the morning of the 7th, with which some historians have agreed, ignored reality.

The right-hand group of von Lüttwitz's 2nd Panzer Division, including the *Leibstandarte*'s Reconnaissance Battalion, made reasonable progress during the early hours of the 7th. Its attack route lay down a narrow, wooded valley as far as

Bellefontaine, but then the country opened up and the way to the west was relatively unrestricted. At 0315 hours the Americans reported an enemy penetration between the 117th and 39th Infantry Regiments in the vicinity of le Mesnil-Tôve.

Further reports said that at least 20 tanks,

**“Continuation of the attack during the midday hours was made impossible because of enemy air superiority.”**

supported by infantry, forced the Cannon Company of the U.S. 39th Infantry to abandon its vehicles and guns in that village. Before 0800 hours this force reached the outskirts of le Mesnil-Adelée, where a company of the reserve 119th Infantry Regiment had established a roadblock. The Germans were 10 kilometers from their start point but still 25 kilometers from Avranches. By then, as with Baum's advance southwest of Mortain, they were vulnerable to Allied artillery and air power and out on a limb. The column halted.

At 0730 hours Combat Command B of the 3rd Armored Division was attached to the 30th Infantry, and one combat team was given orders to restore the situation in conjunction with the 3rd Battalion of the 119th and a company of the 743rd Tank Battalion. The combined force was to strike north from Juvigny to retake le Mesnil-Tôve and if possible cut off the Germans. With the failure of the 116th Division to advance on its right, von Lüttwitz's column was indeed vulnerable on both flanks. The 3rd Armored Division's tank and infantry combat teams advanced shortly after 1310 hours, forcing the Germans to fight hard to hold le Mesnil-Tôve. The Americans lacked the strength to break through, however, and by last light the LAH's Reconnaissance Companies were successfully defending the western and southern approaches to the village.

Despite the delays already mentioned, the Panthers and Mark IVs of Kuhlmann's 1st SS Panzer Battalion were ready to move forward from their assembly area to the east of St. Barthélemy by 0430 hours on the 7th. They had been joined by the 3rd SS Panzergrenadier Battalion in its SPWs, but the forming-up area proved too cramped and the prospect of advancing in thick fog over unseen ground so soon after an exhausting approach march could not have been attractive.

**In fact, had Kuhlmann and his men been able to see what lay ahead of them they would have been appalled.** The initial part of their route was through very close country with high banks along the narrow roads. There was no chance of deploying cross-country, and visibility was restricted, even without the fog, to less than 100 meters. They would therefore have no chance to use their splendid tank guns effectively. But worse was to come. Although the country opened out beyond St. Barthélemy, they were destined to advance along a high, narrow, whale-like ridge toward Juvigny with no cover whatsoever from the dreaded Allied fighter bombers.

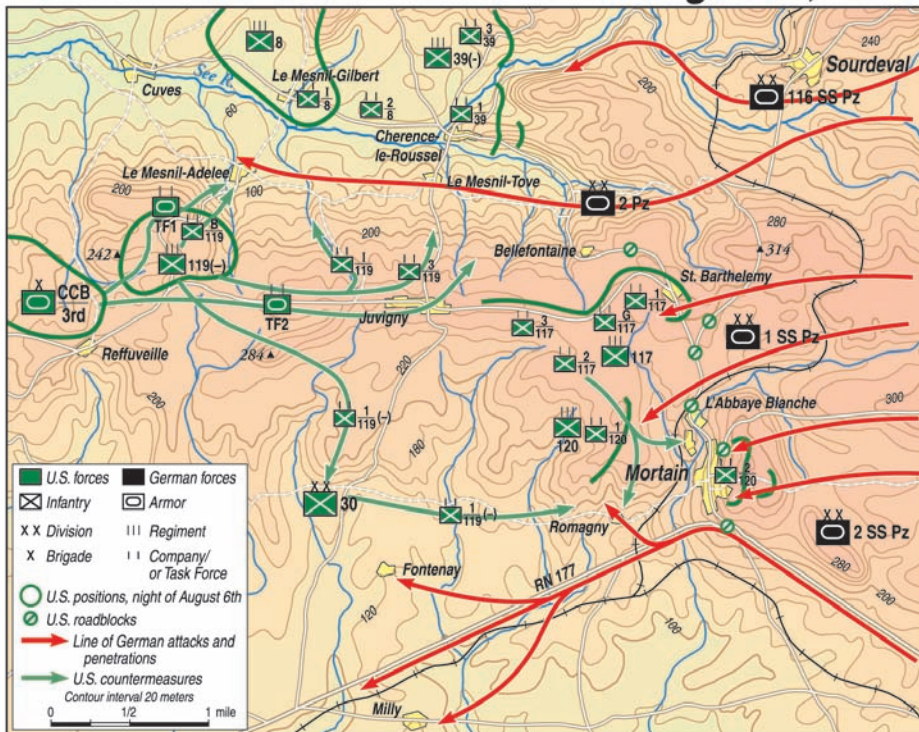
At 0550 hours, following a 45-minute artillery barrage on the American positions in

and around St. Barthélemy that did little damage, the Leibstandarte tanks moved in from the east and southeast and the 2nd Panzer Division's Mark IVs and assault guns from the north and northeast. The village was held by A and C Companies and three 57mm antitank guns of Lt. Col. (later Maj. Gen.) Robert Frankland's 1st Battalion of the 117th Infantry. They were supported initially by four 3-inch tank

towed guns.

Kuhlmann was also in for a surprise. He had been expecting to drive straight through St. Barthélemy, but he soon found that he had to clear the southern part of the village in order to get onto the Juvigny road—the 30 or so Mark IVs and the assault guns and grenadiers of the 2nd Panzer Division had been ordered to attack the northern sector of the village only. The fog,

## The German Attack at Mortain: August 7, 1944



**The American response to counterattacks by the German 1st SS, 2nd SS, and 2nd Panzer Divisions at Mortain is depicted from a southeastern perspective.** © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

destroyers of 3rd Platoon, B Company, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and later by two guns of the 1st Platoon of the same company. Company B of the 117th was in reserve farther along the ridge to the west of the village in an area called le Foutai (known to the Americans as le Fantay).

Frankland had been expecting to move into a simple assembly area and was surprised to find he was required to defend the village. His battalion strength was 828, but 190 of these men had joined the unit only within the previous three days. Everyone was tired from being on the move all day, there were no detailed maps of the area, and some of the foxholes and outposts vacated by the 1st Infantry Division had to be occupied in darkness. This was particularly serious for the tank destroyer crews who found many of the former positions of the self-propelled armored M-10s of the 1st Infantry totally unsuitable for their low-slung,

which rose and fell like a stage curtain, made it difficult for attacker and defender alike, and in chaotic fighting most engagements took place at less than 50 meters. In some cases, the fighting was hand to hand. The tanks were unable to deploy, and conditions generally could not have been more unsuitable for an armored attack. Even so, by 0808 hours the Panthers had broken into the C Company positions. At 0810 hours Frankland gave orders that the panzers were to be allowed to pass through. This tactic caused many casualties to the SS grenadiers as they tried to follow up behind the tanks.

According to the 30th Infantry Division log, the 117th Regiment reported at 0922 hours, "Everything under control..." but it went on to say, "We have no reserve and have to shuttle troops back and forth." Within the hour the picture changed dramatically. The regimental log shows the following entry timed at 1035 hours: "... tanks have broken through A and C Com-

panies and heard [sic] advancing toward B Company.” The log also shows that at 1046 hours the 1st Battalion Command Post (CP) at la Rossaye, 1,100 meters west of the village church, was under attack. The 117th Infantry Regimental CP was only 400 meters to its south.

At 1130 hours the Army Group B war diary placed KG Kuhlmann 1,000 meters west of St. Barthélemy, and this is confirmed by the log of the 117th Infantry, which states that at 1125 hours enemy “tanks and infantry are on the road advancing toward the Regimental CP from St. Barthélemy.” At this time Frankland’s battalion was desperately trying to establish a defense line at la Rossaye, but things were getting so bad that A Company of the 105th Engineer Combat Battalion, supporting the 117th, had to be called in to provide protection for the regimental CP. It claimed a Mark IV tank knocked out at 1200 hours, and this has to be added to the main claim, by B Company of the 823rd TD Battalion, of eight enemy tanks destroyed in the St. Barthélemy sector during the morning, with two more probables. All six tank destroyers were lost in the process, as were the three infantry 57mm antitank guns.

At 1218 hours a temporary defensive line had been built up on the high ground east of the CP, but there were no reserves. The 2nd Battalion of the 117th Infantry had been placed under the command of the 120th Regiment at 0315 hours to help meet the crisis at Mortain. The 3rd Battalion was holding the north flank between Juvigny and St. Barthélemy, and the two remaining battalions of the reserve 119th Regiment were busy trying to hold le Mesnil-Adelée and to recapture le Mesnil-Tôve. No tanks were available to help out because the 743rd Tank Battalion, permanently attached to the 30th Infantry Division, was operating in support of the 119th and 120th Infantry Regiments. The only heavy weapons left were the other five TDs of B Company, 823rd TD Battalion, which had been sited to cover the St. Barthélemy-Juvigny road.

Frankland’s command had by now lost seven officers and 327 men, many of them prisoners, and the TD Company had lost 43 men. In after action interviews made shortly after these events, Lt. Col. Frankland told how about 25 men of A Company, another 55 men of C Company, and a battered platoon of B Company worked their way back to the line finally established that afternoon but then received the heaviest concentration of artillery fire they had ever experienced. Some men fought and hid in isolated bands for two days before they succeeded in rejoining their companies.



**ABOVE: Sprawled alongside the wreckage of an armored vehicle, the body of a dead SS sergeant lies forlornly unattended. BELOW: Members of a Luftwaffe field unit maintain a lookout for Allied fighter aircraft, which dominated the daytime skies above Western Europe by mid-1944.**



Nevertheless, in spite of everything the Americans had delayed the Germans for six critical hours, and there is no doubt that the resistance at St. Barthélemy against both KG Kuhlmann and the elements of von Lüttwitz’s 2nd Panzer Division, during a period when bad weather prevented ground attack aircraft from intervening in the battle, was crucial to the success of the American defense on August 7. The leading elements of KG Kuhlmann were still some three kilometers short of Juvigny when the first British and Canadian Hawker Typhoon ground attack aircraft appeared overhead shortly after 1230 hours.

The 300 aircraft promised by the Luftwaffe had never materialized. On the Allied side it had been agreed that the British and Canadian Typhoons, armed with rocket projectiles, would deal exclusively with the enemy’s armored columns, while the American fighters and fighter bombers of U.S. Maj. Gen. “Pete” Quesada’s IX Tactical Air Command would operate farther afield, preventing enemy aircraft from interfering with the Allied air effort and destroying German transport and commu-

nications leading up to the battle area.

The result of this agreement was that once the morning fog lifted the German armored columns were at the mercy of dedicated ground attack aircraft. August 7 has been called “The Day of the Typhoon” with good reason.

At 1215 hours six Royal Air Force reconnaissance aircraft spotted the German tanks and motor transport at St. Barthélemy. From then on, until 2040 hours, the armored columns of the XLVII Panzer Corps were exposed to a furious and nonstop attack. There were never fewer than 22 Allied aircraft over the Mortain sector during this period, and at the height of the attacks, between 1500 and 1600 hours, no fewer than 88 Typhoons were in the air. A total of 458 individual Typhoon sorties were flown on August 7, of which 271 struck the German forces in the Mortain sector. Of these Typhoons, 247 were armed with anti-armor rockets and 24 with 500- or 1,000-pound bombs. A further 131 sorties attacked targets around and to the east of Vire and for various reasons another 56 failed to find targets. Only four aircraft were lost.

The Americans, who flew some 200 sorties, had rendered the Luftwaffe completely impotent. The daily report of Hausser’s advance CP recorded the following statement for August 7: “Continuation of the attack during the midday hours was made impossible because of enemy air superiority.”

Exact German losses on this day will never be known. RAF pilots claimed a total of 84 tanks destroyed, 35 probably destroyed, and 21 damaged, plus a further 112 other vehicles destroyed or damaged. The IX U.S. Tactical Air Command, which flew 441 sorties during August 7-10, made claims of 69 tanks destroyed, eight probably destroyed, and 35 damaged, and 116 other vehicles destroyed or damaged.

Confirmed results on the ground were somewhat different. During August 12-20, 1944, operational research teams from both the Twenty-First Army Group and Second Tactical Air Force conducted separate investigations in the battle area and then compared and collated their results. They found 34 Panthers, 10 Mark IVs, three self-propelled guns, 23 armored personnel carriers, eight armored cars, and 46 other vehicles. Of the 44 tanks, they concluded that 20 had been destroyed by ground fire, seven by Air Force rockets, two by bombs, four from multiple causes, and 11 either abandoned or destroyed by their crews. It is impossible to say how many damaged vehicles the Germans managed to recover. Seventeen Panthers were found in the area over which the LAH had operated (13 in the vicinity of St. Barthélemy,

with the most westerly pair being found 1,700 meters west of the church) and of these six had been knocked out by Army weapons, four by Air Force rockets, and the rest blown up or abandoned by their crews.

Arguments about who stopped the German advance are futile. Without the stubborn resistance of the 30th Infantry Division and 823rd TD Battalion, elements of von Funck's forces might well have reached the vicinity of Avranches before the arrival of the Typhoons. The consequences could have been dramatic. Equally, had the Typhoons not intervened when



**ABOVE:** In this striking photo taken by the gun camera of a U.S. fighter bomber, a column of German trucks and vehicles erupts in flames as American aircraft press home their devastating attacks. **LEFT:** These members of a heavy weapons company of the 30th Division were among those who stood against six days of intense German counterattacks at the town of Mortain.



not even consider withdrawal, the inevitable order came back to renew the attack as soon as further troops could be made available. In the meantime, the situation was to be improved as far as possible and maintained at all costs.

During the night of the 7th, the remainder of the Leibstandarte, less KG Schiller and some Mark IV tanks, arrived in the St. Barthélemy sector, as did the 3rd Battalion of the U.S. 12th Infantry Regiment (4th Infantry Division), with six tanks and four TDs in support. This new American group reinforced Frankland's depleted battalion, which now had a total strength of 465 but an offensive combat strength of only just over 200.

Sometime after first light, the 1st and 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Battalions of the LAH's 2nd Regiment advanced toward Juvigny and Bellefontaine, with support from tanks and artillery limited owing to early morning fog. The Germans say they captured both locations but could not hold them. There is no evidence to support this claim.

The Americans say their attack in the same area by the 3rd Battalion, 12th Regiment and Frankland's B Company, with tank and TD support, began at 0800 hours. After fighting all day, claiming two enemy tanks and gaining only a few hundred meters, the American force pulled back. The SS Panzergrenadiers in St. Barthélemy were not to be moved easily.

The 2nd Panzer Division's northern group, including the LAH's Reconnaissance Battalion, had a much more difficult time in the le Mes-

nil-Adelée and Mesnil-Tôve sector. It was attacked by Task Force 1 of Combat Command B of the U.S. 3rd Armored Division and the 3rd Battalion of the 119th Infantry Regiment. Task Force 1 comprised the 1st Battalions of the 33rd Armored and 36th Armored Infantry Battalions, and the combined force managed, after heavy fighting, to advance to and capture le Mesnil-Tôve by 1945 hours. This still left the Germans holding the high ground to the east of the village.

Although that same evening von Kluge told Hausser that he must risk everything and attack again as soon as possible, another event was already heralding the end of the German offensive. At 1700 hours on August 8, 100 kilometers southeast of Mortain, tanks of Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV U.S. Corps crossed the Gambetta bridge and rolled into the center of Le Mans. For the moment, however, the Germans in the Mortain sector continued to strengthen their positions, and the following day a Leibstandarte reconnaissance company occupied Bellefontaine while engineers of the 1st SS Pioneer Battalion strengthened the northern part of St. Barthélemy. Elements of the 1st SS Panzergrenadier Regiment also thickened up the line. Consequently, when the Americans launched their attack in this sector with the same force as on the 8th, they got nowhere.

In the east of the le Mesnil-Tôve sector a penetration by the 3rd Battalion of the 119th Infantry was stopped by an immediate counterattack from elements of 2nd Panzer, and

*Continued on page 81*

they did there is a distinct possibility, some would say probability, that the Germans would have broken through to the west. But these are the ifs of history. As with most successful operations in modern warfare, it is cooperation among all arms and between ground and air forces that are the essential ingredients.

Inevitably, in the confused fighting of the day, there were numerous cases of attacks on friendly troops. The 117th Infantry Regimental log records three instances of strikes on its units by Allied aircraft, the first timed at 1505 hours. It asked for further planned missions to be called off!

Friendly fire incidents, however, were not restricted to the RAF; in the fog some troops were hit by friendly artillery and even small arms fire. As one tank destroyer man put it, "We didn't have a friend in the world that day."

The history of Old Hickory makes it clear that the events of August 7 brought the 30th Infantry Division to the brink of disintegration, but incredibly it held and the Germans were prevented from making their breakthrough.

At 1930 hours Hausser presented von Kluge with three alternatives: hold on until annihilated, withdraw toward the east and allow an Allied breakthrough to the northeast, or fall back toward the northeast and allow the Allies a free run toward Paris. Because Hitler would

## A night battle in the Solomons cost the U.S. Navy dearly but reversed a Japanese attempt to shell Henderson Field.

November 13, 1942, was a Friday, which sailors aboard the cruiser USS *San Francisco* noted with anxiety. The ship had already had some bad luck the day before, when 16 torpedo-carrying Japanese Mitsubishi Betty bombers attacked the cruisers and destroyers of Task Group 67.4. Eleven of the Bettys had been shot down, and none of the ships had been hit by torpedoes.

One of the damaged bombers, however, had crashed into *San Francisco's* after fire control station, killing one officer and 23 men. None of the other ships suffered any damage. The sailors hoped that the freak accident had cured the ship from any further bad luck, even though it was Friday the 13th.

The task group would be needing all the good luck it could get. That afternoon, an American reconnaissance aircraft had discovered a Japanese naval force under Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe sailing southeast at 25 knots through the Solomon Islands down New Georgia Sound, nicknamed "the Slot," toward Guadalcanal. Abe's force consisted of two battleships, his flagship *Hiei* and *Kirishima*, along with one cruiser and 14 destroyers. Admiral Richmond K. Turner, commander of the American amphibious landings on Guadalcanal, rightly surmised that the Japanese fleet was coming south either to attack his transports as they withdrew from Guadalcanal or to bombard Henderson Field,

which was vital to the American defense of the island.

Abe's bombardment force was only half of the Japanese attack on Guadalcanal. Following the bombardment of Henderson field, 11 transports were scheduled to land 7,000 troops on the island. Six of the transports were to unload their men at Cape Esperance, the other five at Tassafaronga. With no air cover from Henderson, the U.S. Marines would either be killed or taken prisoner. But first, the American airfield would have to be destroyed by Abe's battleships.

The initial American landings on Guadalcanal had taken place in August 1942, and were the first large-scale offensive land oper-

# Barroom Brawl Off



ation initiated by the United States against the Japanese in World War II. Sent to confront Abe in the waters off the embattled island was a U.S. Navy force of five cruisers and eight destroyers commanded by Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan, who flew his flag aboard *San Francisco*.

Callaghan's task group was heavily out-gunned, but Admiral William F. Halsey's Task Force 64 was too far to the south to offer any assistance. In his definitive account of the fighting in and around Guadalcanal, historian Richard B. Frank pointed out that each American cruiser could fire a broadside of 8-inch shells weighing 2,340 pounds, while each Japanese battleship's broadside of 14-inch shells totalled 11,920 pounds. It was hoped that Callaghan's torpedoes might tip the balance, but even here the American force fell short. Not only did the Japanese ships carry

more torpedoes, but their Long Lances were fast and deadly, while the American Mark 14 torpedoes were inaccurate and unreliable, sometimes failing to explode even when they did hit their targets.

For more than three months, since August, Japanese air, land, and naval forces had been trying to push American troops off Guadalcanal and put Henderson Field permanently out of operation. The first strike came on August 7, when Japanese bombers attacked the transports, just hours after the 1st Marine Division had gone ashore. Allied and Japanese warships came into contact on the night of August 8 in what became known as the Battle of Savo Island. Four cruisers, three American and one Australian, were sunk in that action, while the Japanese force suffered no losses.

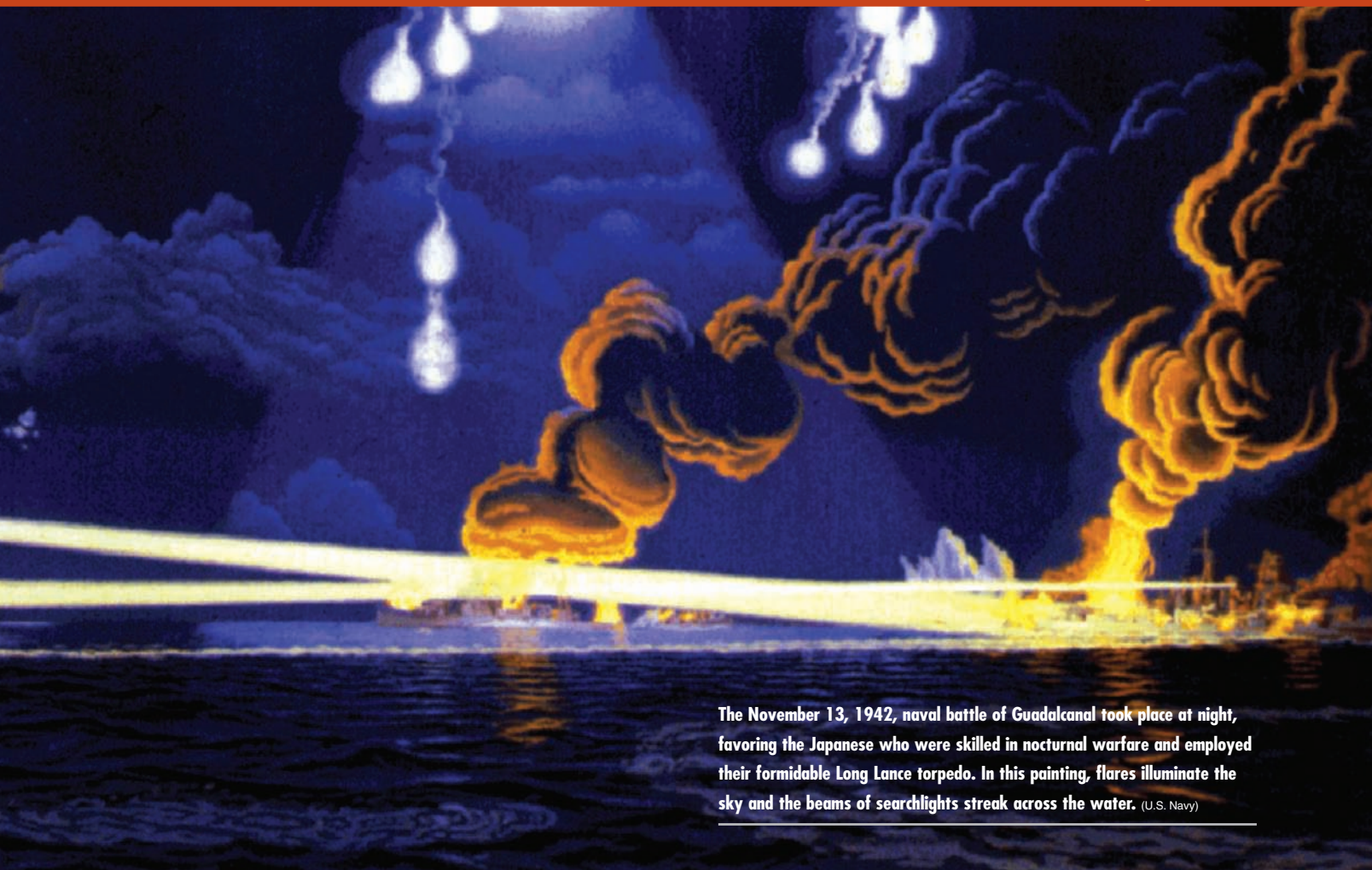
During the Battle of Cape Esperance, on the

night of October 11, American cruisers and destroyers commanded by Admiral Norman Scott caught a Japanese force north of Guadalcanal and executed the classic crossing of the enemy's T, steaming across the bows of the Japanese to deliver broadsides. Scott's force sank one Japanese cruiser and one destroyer, while losing a destroyer in the battle. Two nights later, a Japanese bombardment force led by battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna* shelled Henderson Field for an hour and a half. An American writer said that the airfield "had been blasted almost beyond recognition."

Most of the naval action that swirled around Guadalcanal took place in the Sealark Channel, a stretch of water between Guadalcanal, Savo Island, and Florida Island. So many ships went down in this narrow channel that it had been rechristened "Iron Bottom Sound." More than 40 ships, Japanese, American, and

# Guadalcanal

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON



The November 13, 1942, naval battle of Guadalcanal took place at night, favoring the Japanese who were skilled in nocturnal warfare and employed their formidable Long Lance torpedo. In this painting, flares illuminate the sky and the beams of searchlights streak across the water. (U.S. Navy)

Australian, would be sunk within its confines before the Guadalcanal campaign ended. Tonight's Japanese effort would be the latest and one of the most brutal attempts to shell the Marines on the island into submission.

The American transports anchored off Guadalcanal were ordered to leave the area, even though only about one-third of their cargo, including ammunition, some much-needed artillery, and 6,000 troops, had been unloaded. Callaghan's task group escorted them away from Guadalcanal on the first leg of their journey back to Noumea. Once they were on the open sea and on their way, Callaghan reversed course and headed back toward Guadalcanal.

The American cruisers and destroyers formed a single column as they entered Lengo Channel. Five of Callaghan's ships, the destroyers *O'Bannon* and *Fletcher*, the light cruisers *Helena* and *Juneau*, and the heavy cruiser *Portland*, were equipped with the new SG search radar, which Callaghan hoped would prove its worth on this overcast night. Callaghan has been criticized for not placing his radar-equipped ships at the head of the column. *O'Bannon* was closest to

Cape Esperance. Apparently, Callaghan had been chosen as a flag officer because he had 15 days of seniority over Scott.

However, this complicated situation was forgotten during the early hours of November 13. As *Helena* passed Lunga Point at 1:24 AM, her SG radar first made contact with the Japanese fleet:



**ABOVE:** The transport vessel *USS President Jackson* turns hard to port in the vicinity of the Solomons, while smoke rises from the cruiser *USS San Francisco* after a Japanese plane has crashed into its superstructure. **TOP:** Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan commanded the U.S. Navy task force during the naval battle off Guadalcanal on the night of November 13, 1942. **RIGHT:** Rear Admiral Norman Scott was killed during the battle while on the bridge of the cruiser *USS Atlanta*. (All photos: National Archives)

the front of the line, and she was number four in the formation.

Admiral Callaghan was certainly well liked by just about everyone—his men called him “Uncle Dan”—but Rear Admiral Norman Scott, a classmate of Callaghan's at the U.S. Naval Academy, was also part of the task group, sailing aboard the cruiser *Atlanta*. Admiral Scott had more combat experience than Callaghan and had successfully countered a Japanese force in the night surface action at

“Contact bearing 312 and 310 [degrees], distant 27,000 and 32,000 yards.” The two contacts were the destroyers *Yudachi* and *Harusame*, which were just over 10 miles from the destroyer *Cushing* at the head of the American column. Callaghan ordered the column to turn right to 00 degrees—due north—intending to cross the T with the approaching Japanese force. By the time the column had begun making its turn, the radar blips had become distinctive groups, two battleships, along with the smaller shapes of screening

destroyers and cruisers.

Callaghan had not ordered a sharp enough turn to starboard—instead of crossing in front of the Japanese formation, he nearly collided with it. At 1:42 AM, Commander Thomas M. Stokes aboard *Cushing* reported three enemy destroyers passing in front from port to starboard. Actually, there were only two destroyers, *Yudachi* and *Harusame*. The two Japanese destroyers also saw *Cushing*.

Admiral Abe was taken completely by surprise. None of his ships had radar, and the last thing he expected was a night surface action. Also, ground observers on Guadalcanal radioed that they could see no sign of enemy ships. Abe had already ordered the thin-skinned Type 3 shells—the kind of shell used to bombard enemy ground positions—loaded into the breeches of



the two battleships. At 1:30 AM, he had given the order, “Gun battle. Target airfield.”

*Yudachi*'s report that enemy ships had been sighted changed everything. Aboard the battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima*, gun crews began changing ammunition from bombardment shells to armor-piercing rounds. At 1:45, Abe ordered his captains to shift targets to enemy ships.

*Cushing* turned to port to bring her torpedo tubes to bear. Over the intership radio, appropriately called TBS for “talk between ships,” Commander Stokes asked, “Shall I let them have a couple of fish?” Callaghan gave permission to launch torpedoes. At 1:45 AM, Stokes ordered, “Stand by to open fire,” and minutes later ordered a return to course 00. The quick changes from west then back to due north threw the neat column into confusion. The three destroyers astern of *Cushing*—*Laffey*, *Sterett*, and *O'Bannon*—also turned to port.

*Atlanta*, just behind the destroyers, had to swing sharply to port to avoid collision. *San Francisco* had to turn to avoid hitting *Atlanta*. “What are you doing?” Callaghan asked over the TBS. “Avoiding our own destroyers,” replied *Atlanta*’s captain.

*Atlanta*’s high superstructure made her much more visible than the smaller destroyers. At 1:50, Japanese searchlight shutters clicked open and lit up *Atlanta*’s port side. The cruiser’s gunnery officer shouted, “Commence firing! Counter-illuminate.” The ship’s 5-inch guns shot out one of the three offending lights and scored several hits on an enemy destroyer, possibly *Akatsuki*. But the Japanese ships, now on both bows, concentrated their fire on *Atlanta*, which was the brightest object in sight. One shell hit the bridge and killed Admiral Scott and all but one of his staff. One Long Lance torpedo and possibly a second also hit the ship. *Atlanta* slowed to a stop, dead in the water, and mortally wounded only minutes after the battle had started. Admiral Callaghan ordered, “Odd ships commence firing to starboard, even ships to port.”

At this point, “Japanese and American ships mingled like minnows in a bucket,” according to naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison. Existing records offer some idea of the confusion that took place in Iron Bottom Sound that night, but giving a conclusive, blow-by-blow description of the fighting is all but impossible. One of the participants said that the fight was like “a barroom brawl after the lights had been shot out.”

Leading destroyer *Cushing* opened fire on an enemy destroyer 2,000 yards to starboard, while her 20mm gunners fired at the battleship *Hiei*. *Cushing* was hit several times, all power lines were cut, and speed was sharply reduced. Even in her disabled condition, the destroyer fired six torpedoes at *Hiei*, none of which exploded. A searchlight beam located *Cushing*, and gunfire from both sides reduced her to a sinking wreck. With no power to move or to fight the fires that were spreading throughout the destroyer’s length, *Cushing* was abandoned.

Next in line, the destroyer *Laffey* also launched torpedoes at *Hiei*. These were fired at point-blank range and did not have time to arm before striking the battleship. Following this encounter, *Laffey* came in contact with three Japanese destroyers that hit her with gunfire several times and blew her stern off with a torpedo. A large-caliber salvo from the battleship *Kirishima*, which had managed to avoid contact with American ships so far, completed *Laffey*’s destruction. The crew abandoned ship as the destroyer was sinking, but the burning hull exploded while a number of them were still in

Damaged during the savage naval battles around the island of Guadalcanal, the cruiser USS *San Francisco* arrives at Pearl Harbor to undergo repairs.



the water. Many men were killed, including the destroyer’s captain.

Following in the original line ahead of the formation were the destroyers *Sterett* and *O’Bannon*. *Sterett* was hit by a salvo while she was taking an enemy ship under rapid fire. The shells destroyed her radar and her aft 5-inch guns and disabled her steering gear. The captain, Lt. Cmdr. Jesse Coward, managed to maneuver the ship by use of her engines and also fired four torpedoes at *Hiei* along with several 5-inch rounds. Once again, the torpedoes either missed or failed to explode. With his ship on fire and half of his main battery out of action, Coward then took *Sterett* out of action, nearly colliding with *O’Bannon*.

All of *Hiei*’s batteries opened fire on *O’Bannon*, but the battleship’s guns could not depress far enough and all of the shells passed overhead. *O’Bannon* returned the compliment, opening fire with her 5-inch batteries as well as launching two torpedoes at the battleship. *Hiei* was the largest and slowest target of opportunity and had been hit by a hail of medium- and light-caliber shells. As *O’Bannon* broke off action, her crew could see fires all over the enemy ship.

Admiral Abe not only had been thoroughly alarmed by the American attack but was also taken aback by the intensity of it. The Americans had penetrated his screen of destroyers and attacked his battleships, which were the center as well as the main components of the bombardment group. He had no real idea of what had happened so far during the battle or that his force had sunk two enemy destroyers and had knocked one cruiser out of the fighting. From his position on *Hiei*’s bridge, all that Abe really knew was that his flagship had been

damaged and set afire, sometimes by destroyers firing at what amounted to point-blank range. An American writer said that the distance was “rifle-shot range.”

Admiral Abe’s alarm over *Hiei*’s condition was justified. The battleship’s forward pagoda mast had been hit and set on fire in several places. Eighty-five 8-inch and 5-inch shells had destroyed all of the ship’s light anti-aircraft guns and all radio and signal equipment, and had severed all control circuits for the main battery. The secondary battery’s directors were also put out of action. At one point, *Hiei*’s 6-inch guns opened fire on the Japanese destroyers *Asagumo*, *Murosame*, and *Samidare*. At about 1:55 AM, an 8-inch shell from *San Francisco* jammed her rudders and flooded her steering gear. *San Francisco* broke off with *Hiei* and began firing at two destroyers on her starboard bow, probably *Yudachi* and *Harusame*. After hitting the first target and setting it on fire, Captain Cassin Young ordered gunnery to shift to the second destroyer. In the confusion that followed, it seems likely that the disabled *Atlanta* drifted into *San Francisco*’s line of fire. Two full salvos from *San Francisco* hit *Atlanta*’s superstructure. Some accounts claim that Admiral Scott was killed during this encounter, not in the earlier action against the Japanese.

As soon as Admiral Callaghan realized what had happened, he broadcast, “Cease firing own ships.” Some ships stopped firing. Others either ignored the order or did not hear it. Captain Lawrence Dubose of the cruiser *Portland* asked, “What’s the dope, did you want us to cease fire?” Callaghan replied, “Affirmative.” Callaghan quickly reversed the order, though, and broadcast, “Give her hell!” and “We want the big ones! Get the big ones first!” Unfortunately for *San Francisco* and her crew,

the hell came from the other side. Both *Hiei* and the cruiser *Nagara* opened fire on the American cruiser. *Hiei*'s third salvo of 14-inch shells hit *San Francisco*'s bridge, blowing the navigator over a bulwark and onto a 5-inch gun mount. The gun crew thought he was dead; they picked him up and threw him onto a pile of spent shell casings. The battleship's 6-inch guns also hit *San Francisco* several times.

the bridge itself was filled with bodies and parts of bodies along with the jagged remnants of gear and equipment. The ship had been holed 45 times, was taking water, and had several guns knocked out of action, and damage control reported 25 fires on board. With the remaining guns, crews continued firing at both *Hiei* and *Kirishima* as well as an enemy destroyer that passed along the cruiser's port side. McCandless

badly that the cruiser could only turn in circles to the right. As the ship turned involuntarily, her guns came to bear on the unfortunate *Hiei*. *Portland*'s gunners fired four salvos from her forward turrets and claimed 10 to 14 hits. Captain Dubose did not want to risk firing at any other ships in the darkness. With ships milling about and mingling with each other, it was impossible to tell friend from foe.



The destroyer USS *Fletcher*, namesake of a class of such warships serving with the U.S. Navy, is shown underway. The destroyers engaged during the naval battle off Guadalcanal on November 13, 1942, took heavy casualties.

One of these shells wounded Captain Young, who later died as a result of his injuries. Another hit a steel girder directly above Admiral Callaghan, killing him instantly along with all but one of his staff.

During the fighting, *San Francisco*'s bow had swung around to the south. Commander Bruce McCandless and a quartermaster were the only people alive on the bridge. McCandless ordered a turn to the west, back toward the enemy. But

took stock of *San Francisco*'s situation and reversed course, heading back east along Guadalcanal's northern coast. In spite of the superstitions about Friday the 13th, the ship was a lot luckier than many other members of the task group. She was still afloat and heading out of the area under her own power.

A Japanese torpedo hit *Portland* near the stern on the starboard side, blowing off her starboard screws and bending the hull plates so

*Juneau* was the last cruiser in the column, just astern of *Helena*. She was hit by a torpedo before she had much of a chance to take part in the fighting. The hit disabled her steering and may have broken her keel. She fired very few rounds, possibly as few as 25. Her captain took her out of the battle, hoping to find a place to make repairs, and nearly collided with *Helena*. *Helena*, meanwhile, was having a fairly lucky time of it. Her main batteries and secondary guns had damaged at least two enemy destroyers, and her 40mm guns blazed away at the cruiser *Nagara*. *Helena* was hit five times but suffered only minor damage. One of the hits stopped her bridge clock at 1:48 AM.

The destroyer *Barton* was having a rough time. *Barton* had been one of the four destroyers at the rear of the column before it scattered. Her 5-inch batteries fired at enemy searchlights, and she fired five torpedoes, although there is no indication that any of them hit their targets. At about 2 AM, her captain stopped to avoid collision with another ship. A stationary target, she was hit by two torpedoes almost immediately, broke in two, and quickly sank. Only the men who were topside had any chance of escaping. Over 60 percent of her crew were lost. *Barton* had been commissioned on May, 29, 1942, less than six months earlier, and had a combat life of exactly seven minutes.

## The Japanese Long Lance torpedo proved to be the nemesis of U.S. ships in the Solomons.

The bogey man of the U.S. Navy during the Guadalcanal campaign was not the Zero fighter or the I-class submarine. It was the Type 93 torpedo, called the Long Lance.

During the 1930s, Japan's Imperial Navy invested a great deal of time, money, and resources in developing this weapon. At the time, the most powerful opponent, or potential opponent, of the Japanese Navy was the U.S. Pacific Fleet and its powerful battleships. A component of the Japanese battle plan was to use cruisers and destroyers to attack the enemy with torpedoes.

Torpedo attacks, especially night torpedo attacks, had become a Japanese speciality and had been highly successful in both the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. In the

event of any future wars involving the U.S. fleet, it was decided that night torpedo attacks would again be employed. The crews of Japanese cruisers and destroyers trained extensively in night combat exercises in the 1930s. In 1935, the fully operational Type 93 torpedo made its debut.

The Type 93 was huge—30 feet long and 24 inches in diameter. It was much too big to fit into any submarine's torpedo tubes. The Imperial Navy equipped its cruisers and destroyers with the big torpedoes, which were launched from 24-inch tubes mounted on deck. Most of these tubes could be quickly reloaded, essentially doubling the number of torpedoes that could be used in a skirmish with enemy ships.

Besides its size, the Long Lance—a name attributed to naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison—also had the distinction of being one of the most advanced and efficient weapons of its time. It was oxygen fueled as opposed to air fueled, which left almost no telltale wake of bubbles. Using pure oxygen instead of compressed air also allowed the torpedo to travel faster and farther. Like everything else about this torpedo, its warhead was also outsized—1,180 pounds—and its maximum range

The destroyer *Aaron Ward* had been ahead of *Barton* and was having a difficult time keeping friendly ships and enemy ships separated. Her gunners began firing at the brightly illuminated *Hiei*, but had to cease after only 10 salvos when friendly cruisers entered her line of fire. A few minutes later, her captain was forced to reverse engines to avoid collision with a ship ahead—either *Helena* or *Yudachi*. Two torpedoes then passed directly under the ship. These may have hit *Barton*, which blew up and sank close on *Aaron Ward*'s starboard side.

In less than half an hour, *Aaron Ward* had damaged at least two enemy vessels, including the already battered *Hiei*, but had not escaped damage herself. During all the frenzy, confusion, and frustration that characterized the night action, the destroyer had taken nine direct hits, three of these from 14-inch shells. In about 30 minutes, the fire director, radar, and steering control had all been disabled. At about 2:35 AM, the hits finally took their toll and all power failed. *Aaron Ward* began drifting with the current.

The battle was taking place just off the north coast of Guadalcanal. The gun flashes and resulting fires and explosions were plainly visible to the Marines on the island. Robert Leckie, a Marine private, gave this impression of the fighting: "The star shells rose, terrible and red," he wrote. "Giant tracers flashed across the night in orange arcs ... the sea seemed a sheet of polished obsidian on which warships seemed to have been dropped and were immobilized, centered amid concentric circles like shock waves that form around a stone dropped in mud."

The Marines knew that their existence depended upon the outcome of the fighting that was taking place right in front of them, but they also realized there was nothing they could do

was an incredible 22,000 yards (11 nautical miles) at a speed of 49 knots, or 40,000 yards at 36 knots. The U.S. Navy's Mark 14 torpedo, in comparison, carried a warhead of only 825 pounds and had a range of 6,000 yards at 45 knots or 15,000 yards at 26 knots.

The Americans were taken completely by surprise by the Long Lance. Naval Intelligence knew that the Japanese had torpedoes but thought they must be similar to the American Mark 14. The Long Lance had the speed and the range to sink American warships while they were still trying to get within gun range of Japanese warships. The first encounter between the U.S. fleet and torpedo-carrying Japanese cruisers and destroyers came the day after the landings on Guadalcanal, August 8, 1942. During the Battle of Savo Island, a night action, the Allies lost four cruisers while the Japanese suffered no losses. The cruiser USS *Quincy* was hit by no fewer than three torpedoes. She sank bow first about 20 minutes after the third torpedo hit.

When a Long Lance was retrieved intact from Point Cruz on Guadalcanal in 1943, the Americans were amazed by the torpedo's size and, after performing a series of tests, by its sophistication. To most Americans, "Made in



The destroyers USS *Fletcher*, USS *O'Bannon*, and USS *Strong* participate in gunnery exercises off the coast of the island of Espiritu Santo prior to engaging the Japanese fleet off Guadalcanal.

but watch. They could not have known it, but at about 2 AM Admiral Abe ordered *Hiei* and *Kirishima* to turn north and steam away from Guadalcanal. The bombardment of Henderson Field had been cancelled. Abe's bombardment group had been shot up by an enemy column he did not even know was in the area. He did not want to expose his ships to any further damage. *Kirishima* executed the turn smartly and began making her way north of Savo Island. She had been hit only once, by a 5-inch shell. But *Hiei* could barely turn at all and quickly lagged behind.

While Abe's flagship limped northward behind *Kirishima*, the fighting went on. The destroyer USS *Monssen* launched five torpedoes at *Hiei* at about the time Abe ordered a withdrawal from the area. None

hit their targets. A destroyer then emerged from the darkness on *Monssen*'s port side, her 5-inch gunners fired at the ship, and the torpedo officer launched her remaining torpedoes. Again, there is no record that any of the torpedoes hit.

*Monssen*'s 20mm gunners opened up at another destroyer when a starshell burst overhead "lighting up the ship like a nightclub floor show." The captain thought the shells were friendly and switched on *Monssen*'s recognition lights. At least two enemy searchlights immediately converged on the ship, followed by a torrent of enemy shells. Thirty-seven of them hit the destroyer, reducing it to a burning hulk.

The very last ship in the line was the destroyer *Fletcher*—number 13 in formation. Her crew watched *Barton* blow up and saw



Apparently fired by a Japanese submarine under attack by U.S. forces, this Japanese torpedo failed to find a target or to explode and came to rest on the beach near the entrance to a U.S. naval facility at Guadalcanal.

Japan" had been a synonym for cheap and tinny. But there was nothing shoddy or substandard about the Long Lance, as American sailors discovered the hard way in the waters around Guadalcanal. It would take the Americans two years to develop a torpedo that could compete with it. □

*Monssen* pummeled by gunfire, while her own gunners fired at two enemy ships and had the satisfaction of seeing fires break out on the second target.

Because of the melee of ships in the area, the decision was made to withdraw to the east and get a clearer picture of the situation. With the help of her radar, *Fletcher* picked her way back through the ships, friend and foe, that dotted Iron Bottom Sound. She fired five torpedoes at a large vessel that might have been the cruiser *Helena*. All missed. After firing her remaining torpedoes at other targets, *Fletcher's* captain once again retired eastward, this time out of the battle. Although she had been in the area for as long as the other American destroyers, *Fletcher* had not been hit by enemy gunfire and suffered no damage.

Aboard *Helena*, Captain Gilbert C. Hoover ceased firing at 2:16 AM. The enemy had withdrawn from the area, and nine ships were burning in Iron Bottom Sound. Captain Hoover

action. The communiqué reported the fighting as a “severe mixed battle,” and went on to say that both sides suffered “considerable damage.” Landings of Japanese troops on Guadalcanal that had been scheduled for that night were postponed. The transports reversed course and steamed back to base.

With the morning, Marines on Guadalcanal could see the remnants of the battle they had witnessed the night before. Severely damaged American and Japanese warships, crippled or dead in the water, littered the surface of Iron Bottom Sound. They could not see *Hiei*, which was hidden behind Savo Island. *Atlanta*, however, was still on fire and drifting; *Aaron Ward* was also drifting, struggling to get under way under her own power; *Portland* steamed in circles, her hull bent; and *Cushing* and *Monssen* burned from fires within their hulls and superstructures. *Yudachi* was also still on fire. The tug USS *Bobolink* came chugging out of Tulagi harbor to assist in salvaging the crippled American ships as well as to rescue survivors. Hun-

water and to the Marines on Guadalcanal.

*Hiei's* gunners returned the compliment. At about 6:30 AM, the battleship's after turrets blasted away at *Aaron Ward*, 13 miles to the southeast. The destroyer managed to get under way, but her power failed again less than 20 minutes later. *Hiei's* third salvo straddled the destroyer but did not score any hits. Fortunately for *Aaron Ward*, Marine aircraft from Henderson Field made their first appearance of the day, and the Japanese gunners forgot all about *Aaron Ward*. *Bobolink* was on hand to tow her out of range to the safety of Tulagi harbor.

The American dive-bombers and torpedo bombers of Henderson Field now turned the tables on *Hiei*. Five Douglas Dauntless dive-bombers and four Grumman Avenger torpedo planes attacked the stricken *Hiei*, claiming one bomb and one torpedo hit. Throughout the morning, the Dauntlesses and Avengers continued to hurl themselves at the crippled battleship, which maintained an erratic course to the northwest. At 8:15 AM, Admiral Abe left his flagship and transferred to the destroyer *Yukikaze*.

The air attacks continued, including sorties by Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers. *Hiei's* captain, Masao Nishida, acknowledged three bomb hits and at least four torpedo hits. Admiral Abe sent a communiqué to Captain Nishida, ordering him to run *Hiei* aground on Guadalcanal, but Nishida either did not receive the order or ignored it. He may not have been able to carry it out anyway because the tough old battleship probably could not steam the 14 or so miles to Guadalcanal. By mid-afternoon, *Hiei* had begun listing from torpedo damage. Abe decided that the ship could not be saved. He ordered the battleship scuttled.

While the assembled crew shouted three banzais and the naval ensign was lowered, the Kingston valves were opened. Torpedo planes scored two more hits before the crew, along with the emperor's portrait, could be removed. In spite of all this, *Hiei* did not go quietly, staying afloat until nightfall.

*Hiei* was not the only ship to be scuttled that Friday. The crew of *Atlanta* did its best to salvage the ship, manning the pumps, lightening the ship by throwing gear and equipment over the side, and even by forming a bucket brigade. *Bobolink* appeared on the scene after taking *Aaron Ward* to Tulagi, but there was little that the tug could do—49 shell hits and one torpedo had taken their toll. The foremast had toppled, seven of the eight 5-inch turrets had been hit, and the guns drooped uselessly onto the decks. Fires still blazed in the superstructure. By 2 PM, the cruiser was at anchor off Kukum, where she had been towed by *Bobolink*, but it was evi-



tried to contact both Callaghan and Scott. Receiving no reply and believing himself to be the senior surviving commander, Hoover ordered all ships to retire. It had been just 41 minutes since the battle was joined.

During the fighting southeast of Savo Island, two American destroyers, *Barton* and *Laffey*, had been sunk. One Japanese destroyer, *Akatsuki*, had also gone down, and *Yudachi* was on fire and would soon join her. At 3 AM, *Kirishima* sent a report describing the night

dreds of American sailors dotted the surface of the water north of Guadalcanal.

The ships might have been badly shot up, but they still had their share of fight. Even though *Portland* could not steer a straight course, her guns still worked. As she made one of her endless circles, her main battery came to bear on *Yudachi*, 12,500 yards to the northwest. Her sixth salvo hit the destroyer's after magazine, and *Yudachi* blew up and sank. It was a welcome sight to the American survivors in the

dent that she could not be kept afloat. She was listing 10 degrees to port, and water continued to flood her hull. Admiral Halsey ordered the crew to be removed, and demolition charges were set. The charges did their work, and *Atlanta* went down at 8:15 PM, three miles west of Lunga Point.

Aboard *Portland* the situation was not nearly as bad, although Captain Dubose was not having an easy time regaining steering control. He tried steering with the engines and by using sea anchors without any success. The bent stern continued to turn the ship in a circle. While these maneuvers were being tried, her crew watched as the burning hulks of the destroyers



*Cushing* and *Monssen* sank below the surface of Iron Bottom Sound's oil-covered waters. Finally, *Bobolink* intervened, pushing against *Portland's* starboard bow relentlessly and allowing the ship to strain ahead on a steady course. *Portland* finally arrived within the friendly confines of Tulagi harbor at 1 AM on November 14.

The American ships that had been able to withdraw from the night action took part in a sort of postscript to the battle. Only six ships, commanded by Captain Hoover aboard *Helena*, were seaworthy enough to leave Iron Bottom Sound under their own power. Besides *Helena*, the cruisers *San Francisco* and *Juneau*, escorted by the destroyers *O'Bannon*, *Sterett*, and *Fletcher*, set a southeasterly course toward the American base at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. The formation zigzagged but was limited to 18 knots because of the torpedo damaged *Juneau*.

In spite of the destroyer screen, the Japanese submarine *I-26* was able to get into firing position and launch a spread of torpedoes at *San Francisco*. All the torpedoes missed their targets, but one hit *Juneau*. Sailors aboard *San Francisco* watched as the cruiser exploded. "She didn't sink," Commander McCandless later wrote. "She blew up with all the fury of



**ABOVE:** This painting by Japanese war artist Niwa Chosei, entitled *Tsuragi Night Attack*, was confiscated by American authorities following the surrender of Japan. **LEFT:** The efforts of Navy corpsmen were not enough to save the life of this American sailor, who died during a naval battle in the Pacific.

an exploding volcano. When the smoke of the explosion cleared, no trace remained except oil and debris." *Helena's* action report simply stated, "*Juneau* torpedoed and disappeared lat. 10° 32' S, long. 161° 2' E at 1109." Among those killed were the five brothers of the Sullivan family of Waterloo, Iowa. Because of this disaster, the U.S. Navy prohibited two or more family members from serving aboard the same ship ever again.

"So ended the wildest, most desperate sea fight since Jutland," pronounced Samuel Eliot Morison about the surface engagement of Friday the 13th. The Americans lost more ships and more men than the Japanese—two American cruisers, four destroyers, and 1,439 men (including 683 aboard *Juneau*), as opposed to two destroyers and the battleship *Hiei* and 552 dead and missing on the Japanese side. But Admiral Abe's bombardment of Henderson Field had been stopped, and the Marine air units on Guadalcanal were still as alive and as aggressive as ever. In other words, it had been a tactical victory for Japan but a strategic reversal.

In retribution for the failure to carry out his assigned mission, Admiral Abe was relieved of his command. Abe did his best to give a positive impression of his accomplishments, reporting that his bombardment group had sunk five heavy cruisers, two *Atlanta*-class light cruisers, six destroyers, and one torpedo boat in spite of the fact that he had been taken by surprise. His own losses were accurately given as *Hiei*, along with destroyers *Yudachi* and *Akatsuki*, although he went on to say that other ships in his group suffered only slight damage. This was

not the case, though. The destroyer *Ikazuchi* was put out of action by shell fire and was much more heavily damaged than Abe admitted, while the captain of *Amatsukaze* described his ship as a "floating wreck."

The loss of a battleship was a serious setback to the Japanese, who were all too aware of the fact that they could not replace ships and matériel as readily as the Americans. The chief of the Naval General Staff, Admiral Osami Nagano, told another admiral, "The Japanese navy is different from the American navy. If you lose one ship it will take years to replace." Admiral Abe was ordered to the Naval General Staff on December 21, a face-saving job, and he retired the following March at the young age of 53. Captain Nishida of *Hiei* also retired soon after the loss of his ship.

Admirals Callaghan and Scott did not live to see Abe withdraw from the battle. But the American force had won the day in spite of its losses. Both admirals were awarded the Medal of Honor for their part in the battle, and both also had warships named after them.

When the Japanese abandoned Guadalcanal to the Americans in February 1943, it was a turning point in the Pacific War—and it was due in part to the heroism of the men of the U.S. Navy. □

*David Alan Johnson is the author of the book The City Ablaze, which is an hour-by-hour eyewitness account of the December 29, 1940, fire blitz on London. He resides in Union, New Jersey.*

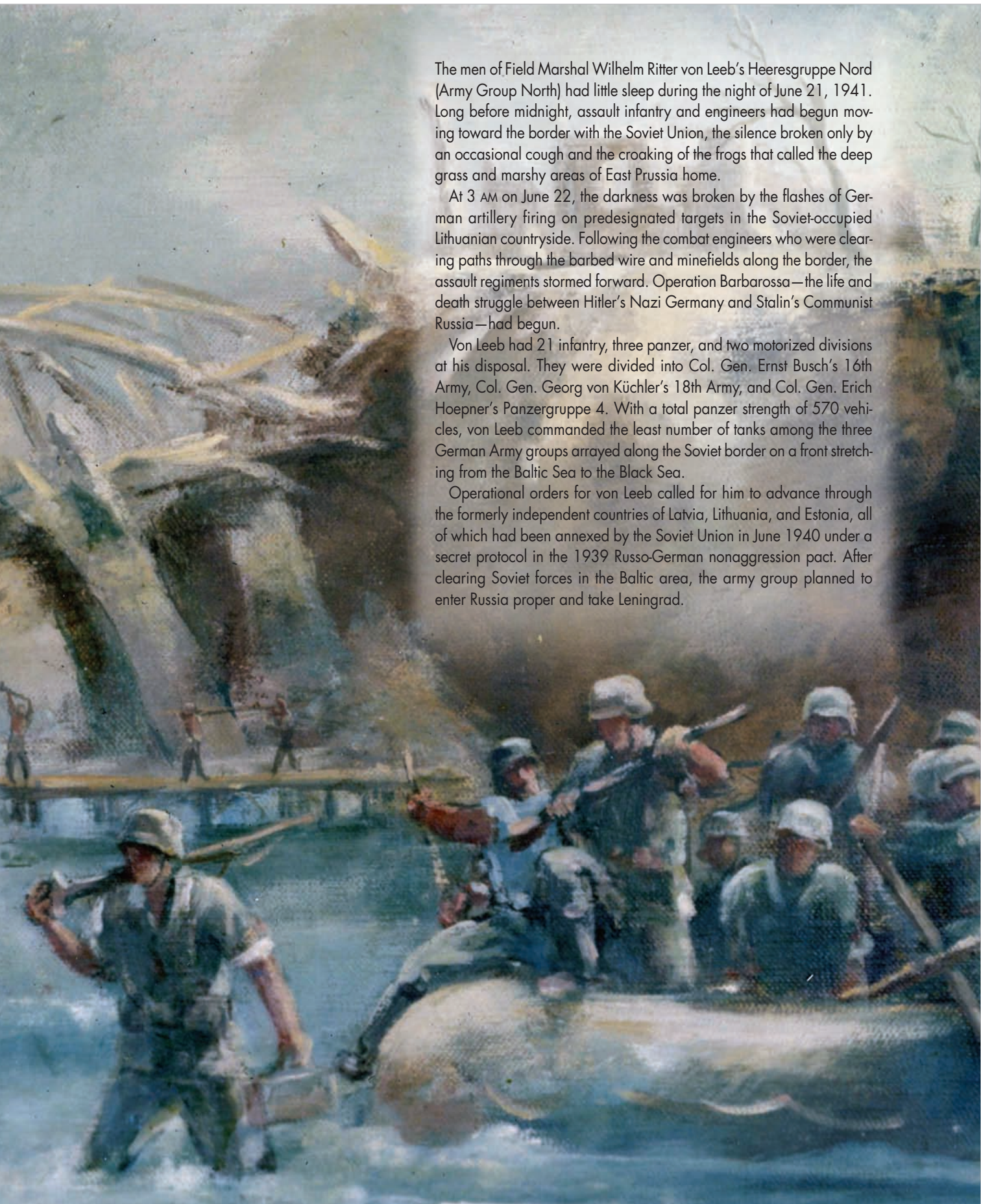
# Nazi Winter Repulse

BY PAT MCTAGGART

The Soviet Red Army blunted a German drive to capture the town of Tikhvin and seal the fate of Leningrad in the first major setback for the Germans during Operation Barbarossa.

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A German war artist created this stark depiction of soldiers crossing a river on the Eastern Front while pioneers work feverishly to construct a temporary bridge to replace the one that has collapsed behind them. (U.S. Army Art)



The men of Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb's Heeresgruppe Nord (Army Group North) had little sleep during the night of June 21, 1941. Long before midnight, assault infantry and engineers had begun moving toward the border with the Soviet Union, the silence broken only by an occasional cough and the croaking of the frogs that called the deep grass and marshy areas of East Prussia home.

At 3 AM on June 22, the darkness was broken by the flashes of German artillery firing on pre-designated targets in the Soviet-occupied Lithuanian countryside. Following the combat engineers who were clearing paths through the barbed wire and minefields along the border, the assault regiments stormed forward. Operation Barbarossa—the life and death struggle between Hitler's Nazi Germany and Stalin's Communist Russia—had begun.

Von Leeb had 21 infantry, three panzer, and two motorized divisions at his disposal. They were divided into Col. Gen. Ernst Busch's 16th Army, Col. Gen. Georg von Küchler's 18th Army, and Col. Gen. Erich Hoepner's Panzergruppe 4. With a total panzer strength of 570 vehicles, von Leeb commanded the least number of tanks among the three German Army groups arrayed along the Soviet border on a front stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

Operational orders for von Leeb called for him to advance through the formerly independent countries of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, all of which had been annexed by the Soviet Union in June 1940 under a secret protocol in the 1939 Russo-German nonaggression pact. After clearing Soviet forces in the Baltic area, the army group planned to enter Russia proper and take Leningrad.

The spearhead of Heeresgruppe Nord was Hoepner's Panzergruppe 4. Its ranks included the LVI Army Corps (motorized), commanded by General Erich von Manstein, the architect of the victory in France and arguably the best strategist in the Wehrmacht.

Von Manstein's first task was to capture the bridges over the Dvina River at Daugapvils, about 225 kilometers east of the border. Slicing through Soviet border defenses of the North-western Front, von Manstein's divisions overran the forward elements of General Petr Petrovich Sobennikov's 8th Army and secured a crossing on the Dubissa River.

Taken totally by surprise, General Fedor

toward the Dvina. He planned to use that surprise to suddenly appear deep in the Soviet rear and take the precious bridges that would allow the advance on Leningrad to continue.

By June 24, von Manstein's 8th Panzer Division, commanded by General Erich Brandenberger, was only 130 kilometers from Daugapvils. Two days later the division took two key bridges in the city and crossed the Dvina. Von Manstein wanted to keep his panzers moving toward Leningrad, but Hoepner overruled him, ordering him to consolidate his bridgehead.

It would be a week before von Manstein was given the order to continue the advance. That

Corps (motorized) to crack the Russian defenses and speed toward the Soviet city, but Hoepner split the two corps, sending them in different directions along the line. Instead of a quick breakthrough, Panzergruppe 4 was forced to hit the Stalin Line along a wide front, while fighting off Soviet counterattacks on its flanks, until the infantry arrived.

The fighting for control of the Stalin Line took up more time that could not be spared. It was only in mid-July that German forces fought their way through the Red Army defenses to the next Soviet barrier, the Luga River Line.

Colonel General Franz Halder, chief of the German General Staff, voiced frustration at the seeming lack of planning between armored and infantry forces when he wrote on July 24 that "(Heeresgruppe) Nord is regrouping for new advances. So far it is still impossible to make out at which point the main weight is going to be concentrated." A July 26 diary excerpt states, "Heeresgruppe Nord. Nothing new."

With the infantry still lagging behind, the mechanized units of Panzergruppe 4 became enmeshed in another grueling battle with the Soviet forces occupying the eastern side of the river. While the Panzergruppe was stalled on the Luga, the Soviets were building yet another defensive line close to Leningrad. Antitank ditches were constructed by thousands of civilians under the watchful eyes of Red Army engineers. Minefields, bunkers, fortifications, and antitank strongpoints seemed to spring up

All photos: National Archives



**ABOVE:** A Soviet reconnaissance tank slogs through thick mud and marshy terrain in search of forward German positions. At Tikhvin, the Red Army rallied to deny the Germans the city of Leningrad. **RIGHT:** With infantry charging alongside, a motorcycle unit of the Red Army roars into action against German positions in July 1942. The submachine gun appears to be the weapon of choice for these soldiers.



Isidorovich Kuznetsov, commander of the Northwest Front, tried to rally his forward divisions. His efforts failed owing to the pounding the border troops were taking from the aircraft of Colonel General Alfred Keller's Luftflotte 1 (1st Air Fleet).

The 16th and 18th Armies followed the initial penetration, mopping up the Soviet infantry and spreading their divisions throughout the countryside. Several Red Army units fought bravely, slowing the advance, but many others just melted away under the fierce German assault.

Disregarding his flanks, von Manstein pushed his corps forward. Knowing that the element of surprise was on his side, he rushed his panzers

precious week allowed the Soviets to reinforce their main line of defense—the Stalin Line—which was located about 125 kilometers to the east. While von Manstein waited and fumed at Daugapvils, he lost his chance to take Leningrad by surprise.

Another chance for a quick drive to Leningrad was lost at the Stalin Line. Von Manstein wanted to join with the XLI Army

overnight as more and more civilians were pressed into service.

A frustrated Halder penned an August 15 entry in his diary that once again concerned Heeresgruppe Nord. "Here we are paying for our lack of courage to take risks," he wrote.

In mid-September von Manstein received orders that would take his corps (minus the 8th Panzer Division) away from Leningrad forever.

Hitler and the Army command in Berlin were at odds as to which objectives would mean collapse for the Soviet Union. The Army pressed time and again for capturing Moscow, while Hitler wanted Leningrad as well as the capital. Indecision and shuffling forces back and forth had already cost the Germans almost a month of good weather as the objectives shifted. Now one of the finest corps in the German Army was being sent to Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army Group Center) to clear out the area around Demyansk in preparation for a massive drive on Moscow.

“In the end, what we felt in those weeks was the divergence between the goals of Hitler and those of the OKH (German High Command),” von Manstein later wrote. “Even as a commanding general, I was unable to make any sense of all this chopping and changing, though I did form the impression that it was all ultimately due to the tug-of-war evidently going on between Hitler and the OKH over whether the strategic aim should be Moscow or Leningrad.”

Part of that chopping and changing included the transfer of General Rudolf Schmidt’s XXXIX Army Corps (motorized) from Heeresgruppe Mitte to Heeresgruppe Nord in mid-August. Born in Berlin in 1896, Schmidt had fought in World War I and had stayed in the Army at the end of the war. In October 1937, he became commander of the 1st Panzer Division, a position he held until February 1940, when he was chosen to lead the XXXIX.

Schmidt’s motorized corps included the 12th Panzer Division and the 20th Motorized Division. Since the beginning of Barbarossa it had been attached to Panzergruppe 3, and it had taken part in the huge battles of encirclement at Minsk and Smolensk. The 12th Panzer Division was commanded by ex-cavalryman General Josef Harpe, while the 20th Motorized Division was commanded by General Hans Zorn.

**As Schmidt’s units were being transported to Heeresgruppe Nord, a concentrated effort was finally under way to take Leningrad.** Enough infantry divisions were now in position to support Panzergruppe 4’s flanks, but the objective had once again been changed. The differences between Hitler and the OKH were somewhat resolved in the new plan. Instead of assaulting Leningrad directly, the city was to be cut off, with the help of the Finns on the Karelian Isthmus, and the population would be left to starve to death or surrender.

Before von Manstein left for the south, his LVI Motorized Corps went into battle near Staraya Russa. The Soviet 34th Army bore the brunt of the attack and lost 12,000 men cap-



tured, along with 140 tanks and 240 artillery pieces captured or destroyed.

On August 24, General Georg-Hans Reinhardt’s XLI (motorized) Corps made it to Krasnogvardiesk, about 32 kilometers from Leningrad, before being stopped in fierce fighting with the Red Army’s 41st Rifle Corps. The same day, Schmidt’s XXXIX (motorized) Corps, now also controlling the 18th Motorized Division, prepared to move out and envelop Leningrad from the southeast.

The men of Heeresgruppe Nord had advanced hundreds of kilometers since the beginning of Barbarossa, destroying several Soviet armies along the way. It was not all one sided however. The army group had sustained 80,000 casualties since the invasion began and its armored formations had an average of 50-75 percent of their authorized strength. Although the Russo-German casualty rate was definitely in favor of the Germans, it seemed to many men at the front that the end was still nowhere in sight.

Schmidt had completed his unit dispositions and had moved into position alongside the I and XXVIII Army Corps for the run to link up with the Finns. On August 25, Schmidt and the XXVIII Army Corps (General Mauritz Wiktorin with the 96th, 121st, and 122nd Infantry Divisions) smashed into Lt. Gen. Stephan Dmitrievich Akimov’s 48th Army, forcing the Soviets to retreat.

The town of Liuban was taken and a rail line running from Leningrad to the southeast was cut. Schmidt then ordered Heerlein’s 18th Motorized Division to advance on Kirishi and

Zorn’s 20th Motorized Division to strike toward Volkhov. Harpe’s 12th Panzer was sent toward Kolpino, while Brandenberger’s 8th Panzer, now in Schmidt’s corps, was kept in reserve.

**The commander of the Leningrad District, General Markian Mikhailovich Popov, sent reinforcements to try to plug the gap.** Schmidt’s units, now reinforced by Wiktorin’s infantry, continued their advance despite Popov’s efforts. Their next objective was the city of Mga, which straddled the last remaining rail line directly connecting Leningrad with the outside world.

Akimov’s 48th Army, reeling under incessant German attacks, was in little condition to stop the German armored and motorized divisions. His shattered units dug in around Mga to meet the German assault, but after extremely heavy fighting Schmidt’s troops captured the city.

In the last days of August, Akimov launched a fierce counterattack against Mga with two rifle divisions, a mountain rifle brigade, and an NKVD division. The attack carried the Russians through the city, dislodging the German defenders and retaking the pivotal rail hub. The victory, however, was short lived.

Zorn’s 20th Motorized Division struck back on August 31 with a vengeance, hitting Mga with heavy artillery fire and calling in Luftwaffe support. The dismounted infantry of the 20th recaptured the Mga station and slowly drove the Soviets back out of the city.

Elsewhere, on August 30 the 5th Company/Infantry Regiment 30 of the 18th Motorized Division fought its way through the ruins

of Kirishi. Its commander, 1st Lieutenant Franz Buchner, gathered his men together as they stared at the great iron bridge spanning the Volkhov River. At any moment they expected the huge structure to vanish as they waited for the Soviets to set off explosive charges that surely must have been placed around the massive piers that supported the bridge.

"We are going to take that thing," Buchner told his men. They glanced at each other, hoping their ears were playing tricks on them, but looking back at their commander they saw that he was deadly serious.

## **As a lull settled over the lines at Leningrad, most eyes switched to the central sector of the Eastern Front. Operation Taifun, the German drive on Moscow, had begun.**

Supported by the 2nd Battery/Artillery Regiment 18, Buchner and his men attacked. Surprised Soviet guards on the western side of the bridge were cut down by gunfire while artillery pounded the Russian forces on the opposite side. Several of Buchner's men fell as the Soviets recovered from their initial shock, but the rest continued to storm across the bridge, spraying the remaining Russians with bullets and lobbing grenades to add to the carnage caused by the artillery fire. They were across and in the midst of the remaining Russian guards before the explosives could be set off, securing the bridge for the rest of the 18th to cross.

On October 2, Buchner received the Knight's Cross for his actions at Kirishi. Less than two months later Buchner was killed leading his men in desperate winter fighting. He was 23 years old.

During the next week, Heeresgruppe Nord slowly tightened its grip around Leningrad. The Soviet 8th Army was bottled up in the Oranienbaum pocket with its back to the Baltic, but von Küchler's 18th Army was stretched too thin to eliminate it. The pocket, located west of Leningrad, would be a thorn in the Germans' side for years to come.

With Mga now in German hands, von Leeb prepared for an attack on the linchpin of the Leningrad Front, the town of Schlisselburg, located east of Leningrad on the shore of Lake Ladoga. If the Germans could take the town, all land communication and supply lines between Leningrad and the rest of the Soviet Union would be cut.

Wiktorin's XXVIII Army Corps was subordinated to the XXXIX (motorized) Corps to

form Gruppe Schmidt. The reinforced command kept up the pressure against the 48th Army, which was trying to defend new fallback positions. Schmidt's divisions once again tore holes in Akimov's defenses, pushing the Russians steadily back to the Neva River.

While the 48th Army suffered at the hands of the Germans, a change of command took place in Leningrad. Popov was dismissed as commander of the Leningrad Front in early September and replaced by Stalin's close friend, Marshal Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov.

Victor of the 1939-1940 Winter War with

Finland, Voroshilov had been an early member of the Communist Party and was a Red Army commander during the Russian Civil War. He survived the 1937-1938 Army purges, and following his victory in Finland he was appointed deputy premier in May 1940. Voroshilov was also a member of STAVKA (Soviet High Command), giving him a special association with Moscow headquarters. The change in command did little to help the immediate situation at Leningrad.

Schmidt's enlarged corps came to the forefront again in the drive to Schlisselburg. On September 6, Luftflotte 1 sent about 300 bombers to pound the 1st NKVD Division, which occupied defenses in front of the town. Schmidt then ordered his units to advance on a narrow front.

The men of the 1st NKVD Division, supported by the 1st Separate Mountain Rifle Brigade, fought furiously to prevent the German assault. Schmidt reinforced his lead division, the 20th Motorized, with elements of the 12th Panzer, which helped the 20th smash through the Soviet line.

Overwhelmed, the Russians were forced to retreat once again. Schmidt's forces advanced, meeting scattered resistance as they moved forward to capture the town of Siniavino on September 7, opening the way for a final push on Schlisselburg.

The 48th Army, now commanded by Maj. Gen. Makrim Antonovich Antoniuk, was in shambles. Its units were spread throughout the countryside and many of its soldiers lay dead on the battlefield. With no coherent forces opposing them, the 20th Motorized and 12th Panzer were able to take Schlisselburg on Sep-

tember 8. The following day, General Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov arrived in Leningrad to replace Voroshilov, who had needed only a few days to show incredible incompetence as commander of the Leningrad Front.

Leningrad was now isolated by the Germans in the south and the Finns in the north. Approximately 2.5 million civilians were trapped inside the city along with the defending Red Army. Hitler's orders were to starve the city into submission, but he also had plans to raze it. On the evening of September 8 the city was subjected to two massive air raids. These were to be followed by many more in the coming months.

The Germans seemed quite content with their success. Three days before the fall of Schlisselburg, Halder noted in his diary, "Our object has been achieved. (Leningrad) will now become a subsidiary operation.... As much infantry as possible must be put across the Neva (River). Investment from the east, junction with the Finns. Armor (Reinhardt's Corps) and Luftwaffe units must be released (for the coming assault on Moscow)."

Hitler was also confident that the main operations against the city were all but over. On September 6 he had issued Führer Directive 35, ordering Heeresgruppe Nord to "also isolate the region of combat operations at Leningrad from the sector along the lower reaches of the Volkhov as soon as forces necessary to perform this mission become available. Link up with the Karelian Army (Finns) on the Svir River only after enemy forces have been destroyed in the Leningrad region."

If the Germans thought the battle for Leningrad was practically over, the Soviets had an opposite opinion. As von Leeb's forces continued to tighten the ring around the city, Red Army units dug in their heels. Schmidt's corps had tough going against the 54th Army, commanded by Marshal Grigori Ivanovich Kulik, which was guarding the approaches to the Volkhov. In other sectors of the front, the cities of Pushkin and Slutsk fell to the Germans only after bitter fighting.

Hitler's orders to clear the lower reaches of the Volkhov led to heavy fighting as the Germans approached the river. On September 12 the decimated 48th Army was disbanded and its remaining troops were transferred to Kulik, who was assembling his army on the Volkhov Line. Zhukov also reinforced the Volkhov defenses with General Vzevolod Fedorovich Iakovlev's 4th Independent Army and General Nicolai Kuzmich Klykov's 52nd Army.

While the Soviets regrouped in front of the Volkhov, Schmidt's XXXIX (Motorized) Corps, occupying the eastern positions at

Leningrad, was performing double duty. Some elements of the 20th Motorized Division occupied a sector facing Leningrad running south from Schlisselburg while other elements of the division faced the Soviets in front of the Volkhov. The 8th and 12th Panzer Divisions were 15 kilometers to the east, strung along a line east of Mga.

**Zhukov saw an opportunity to strike back** at the Germans at the Volkhov and possibly retake Schlisselburg. He therefore ordered Kulik to hit eastern elements of the 20th Motorized and drive them back, hoping to recapture much of the southern shore of Lake Ladoga.

Kulik's men, supported by limited artillery fire, caught the Germans off guard. The 54th Army moved toward the town of Sinyavino, which lay a few kilometers behind the 20th's left flank. Although the attack had begun well enough, the Russians soon found themselves being hit by German artillery as they advanced.

In a series of bloody clashes in the Sinyavino area, the 20th stopped the Soviets cold and Kulik had no choice but to call off the attack on September 20. His men had regained only about seven kilometers of land, which was quickly retaken by the Germans. Kulik was demoted and replaced for his failure. His successor was one of Zhukov's trusted lieutenants, General Mikhail Semenovich Khozin.

As a lull settled over the lines at Leningrad, most eyes switched to the central sector of the Eastern Front. Operation Taifun (Typhoon), the German drive on Moscow, had begun. Resources had been drained off Heeresgruppe Nord for the offensive, and the remaining units of von Leeb's command were nearly exhausted. Equipment was badly in need of repair, and replacement parts were slow in coming because of the rugged terrain and lack of roads.

The Soviets were in similar shape. From July 10 to September 30, the Northwestern Front had sustained 144,788 casualties out of a total strength of 272,000. Of the 300,000 soldiers engaged in the Leningrad Front, 116,316 were killed, wounded, or captured from August 23 to September 30.

While land routes directly into Leningrad had been cut, the city was still receiving some much-needed supplies by way of a rail line that ran through the towns of Tikhvin and Volkhov, ending on the shore of Lake Ladoga at Lednevo. Supplies were then trucked to the port of Novaya Ladoga and shipped across the lake to Osimovets, which was connected by rail line to Leningrad.

Although Moscow was chief among the priorities set by the German High Command,

Leningrad had not been forgotten by Hitler. He was still obsessed with destroying the city bearing Lenin's name. This obsession would take a new turn the following year when he chose to destroy another city bearing a Soviet leader's name—Stalingrad.

His orders in Directive 35 gave von Leeb some direction, and the field marshal and his staff were already working on plans that he hoped would cover the rather vague instructions coming from Berlin. Using Schmidt's corps with infantry reinforcement, von Leeb planned to attack the 54th Army, destroy it, and take Volkhov, cutting the vital rail line.

Von Leeb submitted the plan to Berlin, hoping to start the attack on October 6. The plan was rejected because of the terrain facing the German armored forces. Halder's October 5 entry in his diary includes the following: "In Heeresgruppe Nord the attack against the Ladoga front planned for October 6 has been called off by OKH (Army High Command),



**German soldiers are seen struggling to advance along a Russian road that has been turned into a sea of sticky mud by the winter thaw. German men and equipment were severely tested by the elements on the Eastern Front as well as by the Red Army.**

and an order has been issued to take out the armored divisions, which would needlessly burn themselves out in that terrain. The attack will be launched with infantry as soon as sufficient strength has been built up with newly arrived divisions. Meanwhile, the armored divisions will rest and refit."

While the infantry came forward and Schmidt's armor took time for repairs, von Leeb received another order from Berlin. Instead of following his planned line of advance, Hitler had decided that the attack would proceed northeastward from Chudovo

to Tikhvin. Once the rail line was cut at Tikhvin, the attack would turn to the northwest, advancing to the Volkhov along the Tikhvin-Volkhov road and rail line.

It was a tall order to follow. Hitler's plan sent the German salient much farther than the plan that von Leeb had proposed. With that much more land to take and hold, more units would have to participate in the attack. Now that Operation Typhoon was in full swing and with the withdrawal of several divisions from Heeresgruppe Nord to bolster that attack, von Leeb had little left to spare.

Von Leeb had doubts about the Ladoga operation, but he knew better than to argue with Berlin. Hitler had already shown his absolute faith in himself as a military commander, and there was little doubt that any objections to the plan would be brushed aside.

While the field marshal worked on the new attack plan, another important event occurred in Heeresgruppe Nord's sector. October 14 saw

the first snowfall of the season. Temperatures started to drop, and the mud left by autumn rains started to freeze.

The icy wind from the east cut through the German troops, who were still clad in their summer uniforms. Their hobnailed boots, impressive sounding as they goose-stepped on the cobblestoned streets in parades at home, conducted the cold through the soles, causing the first cases of frostbite.

With the weather growing worse, von Leeb planned to attack on October 16. Schmidt's four divisions (8th and 12th Panzer and 18th



Photographed from the ground, a German Ju-87 Stuka dive-bomber pulls out of its dive against a Red Army tank on the Eastern Front. A number of Stukas were later armed with tank-busting 37mm cannon under the wings.

and 20th Motorized) would drive on Tikhvin, supported by the I Army Corps (11th, 21st, 126th, and 254th Infantry Divisions under the command of General Hans-Kuno von Both). If all went well, the two corps would then swing toward Volkhov.

Meanwhile, Stalin had made some changes of his own in regard to Leningrad's defense. With the Germans advancing on Moscow, Zhukov was recalled to take command of the capital's defenses. He was replaced by another one of Zhukov's protégés, General Ivan Ivanovich Fedunenski.

Heavy snow was falling when the Tikhvin offensive got under way in the early hours of October 16th. As the troops began to move out, a brief artillery barrage hit the Soviet line, churning the half-frozen ground into a sticky mass that was sometimes mixed with bits of flesh and bone.

"*Kompanie vorwärts*," came the command to the initial assault troops. German troops immediately began moving toward the Soviet defenses. The brunt of the attack came along the Volkhov between Gruzino and Kirishi. It was up to von Both's infantry to secure bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the river, paving the way for Schmidt's panzers and motorized troops.

At Gruzino, assault battalions of General Otto Sponheimer's 21st Infantry Division overcame fierce Soviet resistance from the 267th and 288th Rifle Divisions and succeeded in crossing the 300-meter-wide river. By the end of the 16th, Sponheimer had all three of his regi-

ments across the Volkhov, and a heavily defended bridgehead had been established. Probing attacks went on throughout the night and the next day, widening the bridgehead in preparation for the arrival of Schmidt's corps on the eastern bank.

Near Kirsishi, General Hermbert von Böckmann's 11th Infantry Division had similar success. Once Schmidt's corps was across the Volkhov River, the two infantry divisions were slated to begin a combined assault toward the city of Volkhov. The attack was designed to protect Schmidt's left flank while putting pressure on Khozin's 54th Army to prevent him from reinforcing the troops facing Schmidt.

One by one, Schmidt's four divisions crossed the Volkhov at Gruzino and headed to assembly areas behind the main line of the ever expanding bridgehead. By October 18, the corps was across and Schmidt was ready to strike. His first objective on the more than 100-kilometer drive to Tikhvin was the town of Budogosh', some 35 kilometers away.

The Red Army units of Iakovlev's 4th Independent Army would bear the brunt of the attack toward Tikhvin, but Klukov's 52nd Army and Khozin's 54th Army would also enter the fighting as Schmidt expanded his flanks. Because of the extended front, the Soviet forces directly opposing Schmidt's assault consisted of five rifle divisions, a cavalry division, five artillery regiments, one tank battalion, and one antitank regiment.

Although the Soviets were stretched thin, the Germans would not have an easy time of it. As

noted in Halder's diary, von Leeb's earlier plan to send the armored and motorized infantry divisions of Schmidt's corps directly toward Volkhov was rejected because of terrain concerns. Schmidt faced the same difficult conditions, albeit to a slightly lesser degree, in his drive on Tikhvin.

In this area of Mother Russia the terrain was covered with swamps, marshes, and forests. Although the Germans could use railway beds to good advantage, the dirt roads in the region were already nothing but muddy trails because of the rain and snow that had fallen. They became nearly impassable after the first wave of armored vehicles came through, leaving the following forces trying to move forward in mud that could suck the boots right off the feet of the infantry.

Small villages dotted the area, giving the Russians defensive positions on relatively dry land. There were also steeply banked rivers and streams that had to be crossed, adding to logistical problems for any attacker.

As the Germans moved forward on the snow-covered ground, they came up against hastily prepared defensive positions of the 4th Army. The newly fallen snow helped conceal Soviet strongpoints, and rifle and machine-gun fire ripped through the first ranks of German infantry. Calling for panzer and artillery support, the lead German companies forced their way through the Soviets and continued to advance.

It took four days to punch through the Soviet line. When the breach finally occurred, Schmidt had forced Iakovlev's 267th and 288th Rifle Divisions to retreat in a northeasterly direction. Never one to miss an opportunity, Schmidt ordered more forces into the breach to follow the retreating Soviets. The advance exposed the left flank of the 292nd Rifle Division, which was essentially hacked apart by the German panzers and infantry.

Schmidt's maneuver cut the junction of the 4th and 52nd Armies. Iakovlev had little with which to fill the gaps and regain contact with Klykov, although he was ordered by Moscow to do so. The few attacks he was able to mount were easily repulsed as the Germans continued to advance.

The XXXIX Corps used the combined forces of the 12th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions as its spearhead to capture the next objective—the town of Budogosh'. Protecting the spearhead's left flank was the 21st Infantry Division, which was engaging units of Khozin's 54th Army. The right flank was initially covered by the 8th Panzer and 18 Motorized Divisions and the 126th Infantry Division.

While the spearhead advanced on Budogosh', the flanking units fanned out. Khozin's divisions were driven northward by the 21st, which was now supported by the 11th Infantry Division. Against the remnants of the 294th Rifle Division, the 21st was able to take Pokrovskaja on October 22, opening the way for an attack on Kirishi from the south and east.

On Schmidt's right flank, General Paul Laux urged his 126th Infantry Division forward, driving back elements of Klykov's 288th Rifle Division to take the town of Bol Vishera. The 18th Motorized also made steady progress against the 267th and 259th Rifle Divisions, driving them southeastward while further widening the pocket.

Budogosh' fell on October 23. Iakovlev immediately ordered units that were close to Tikhvin to move forward and build a new set of defenses now that it seemed obvious where the Germans were headed. He also exhorted the divisions on his right flank to stop the German infantry advancing north of Kirishi.

Mindful of the dangers presented by the German advance, Moscow reinforced the 4th Army with any units that could be spared. Two divisions (310th and 4th Guards Rifle) came to Iakovlev from the 54th Army. Other units transferred to the area included the 92nd, 191st, and 41st Rifle Divisions as well as the 60th Tank Division.

Urged on by STAVKA, the Soviet Army commanders were ordered to counterattack the German salient from all sides. Although these attacks slowed Schmidt's advance, they cost the Russians dearly. A particularly nasty encounter occurred about 40 kilometers northeast of Budogosh' when three Red Army divisions hit the advance elements of Harpe's 12th Panzer Division near the village of Sitomlia on October 27.

Harpe's reconnaissance battalion made first contact with the Soviets. The battalion commander immediately ordered his unit into a defensive posture and called for reinforcements as the Russians attacked. It should have been over quickly, but the effects of the Red Army purges of the 1930s were still very apparent. Instead of a coordinated attack against the division, the Soviet commanders committed their units piecemeal, allowing Harpe to meet one attack and then shift forces to meet a new threat.

The poorly planned attack did have one benefit, however. It forced Schmidt to halt for the time being, having identified new enemy divisions between the 12th Panzer and its goal of Tikhvin. Not knowing how many more reinforcements Iakovlev had received, Schmidt united his corps by calling the 8th Panzer and 18th Motorized Divisions to reinforce his

spearhead, forcing the 126th Infantry to lengthen its line to protect Schmidt's right flank.

By the evening of the 27th, the front had somewhat stabilized while both sides regrouped. With the Typhoon offensive still in full swing, it seemed as if the OKH had once again relegated the Leningrad Front to the backwaters. Nevertheless, the drive toward Tikhvin was to continue as soon as Schmidt consolidated his armored and motorized forces.

While Schmidt waited for the 8th Panzer and 18th Motorized to make their way to Sitomlia, another harsh blast of cold, rain, and snow struck the area. The 8th Panzer Division reported, "Due to the actions of previous weeks, especially of the last few days, the combat troops' health has turned considerably unfavorable. The troops show they are not ready for the conditions of future fast marches due to the weight of the equipment they must carry. Foot disease and respiratory problems are numerous." Nevertheless, the infantry elements of the division, most of their motorized

on November 4. Supported by tanks from the 60th Tank Division, the 4th Guards Rifle Division made some inroads before being driven back by massed German artillery fire.

After a seemingly endless march, the 8th Panzer and 18th Motorized Divisions finally reached their assembly points for the continuation of the Tikhvin attack, and on November 5 the drive once again began in earnest. Buoyed by the arrival of the two divisions, Harpe was able to use his 12th Panzer to knock gaping holes in the 191st Rifle Division's defenses, opening the way to Tikhvin.

A Siberian blast of winter helped the German advance by freezing the ground and the streams in the area, making it easier for wheeled and tracked vehicles to move. In a desperate attempt to halt the Germans, the Soviets airlifted reinforcements to Iakovlev in a blinding snowstorm. Their arrival did little good as the 12th pressed forward.

Fighting was still heavy on the northern and southern flanks of the salient. On November 6, a unit of the 8th Panzer Division, which was on



**A German machine gun crew of the Grossdeutschland (Greater Germany) Regiment awaits a Red Army attack. This trio appears to have commandeered white bedsheets for use as camouflage.**

transport hopelessly mired in the mud and snow, continued to move.

The Soviets were not sitting idle while Schmidt regrouped. On November 2, the 12th Panzer Division was hit on its northern flank by what amounted to two Red Army divisions. The Russians desperately tried to break the German line but suffered heavy losses as the 12th's artillery pummeled the attackers.

While the fighting was going on in the north, a second Soviet force hit Harpe's southern flank

Harpe's right flank, was attacked by 14 Soviet tanks from the 60th Tank Division. Charging out of a patch of woods, the Russian armor commenced firing on the German column.

The 8th Panzer's after action report stated that the first Soviet tank had been immediately destroyed and that German armor had destroyed one tank after another until only two were left. The lucky survivors of the disastrous attack had retreated into the woods, leaving the battlefield to the Germans.



During the warm days of summer 1942, Soviet artillerymen prepare to fire a field artillery piece against German troops intent on renewing offensive operations.

Even with the Soviets nipping at his flanks, Schmidt kept pushing Harpe to take Tikhvin. By November 7, the lead units of the 12th Panzer were a mere seven kilometers from the town. Iakovlev had his headquarters in Tikhvin, and he urgently called for more reinforcements, which were airlifted in. They were immediately thrown into the line, but they could do little against Harpe's panzers.

As the 12th closed on Tikhvin it was supported by a reinforced regiment of the 18th Motorized Division and a combat group from the 8th Panzer Division. Iakovlev personally led the defense of the town, which was occupied by the remnants of four rifle divisions.

A fierce snowstorm bore down on the area as Harpe launched his assault on the town on November 8. As the panzers rolled forward, the few remaining Soviet antitank guns lay still, waiting for their targets to appear. When the Germans emerged from the blinding snow, the Russians opened up, often at point-blank range. Several of the panzers were destroyed before the accompanying infantry was able to silence the guns.

Approaching the outskirts of the town, Harpe's men were met with a determined defense. The Soviets fought for each house, but the infantry, supported by fire from their panzers, was able to blast its way through.

By midday on November 8, the battle was joined by the combat group from Brandenburger's 8th Panzer Division. Together, Harpe's and Brandenburger's men steadily pushed the Russians back. Iakovlev and his staff barely escaped as the Germans captured block after

block. By the end of the day, Tikhvin was in German hands. The following day, Iakovlev was replaced by General Kiril Afanasevich Meretskov.

Since the beginning of the Tikhvin offensive, Schmidt had taken 20,000 prisoners and had killed thousands more Red Army soldiers. In addition, 96 Soviet tanks, 179 guns, and an armored train had been either captured or destroyed. The butcher's bill was not one-sided. German equipment suffered heavily from combat and the weather, as did the men. In the 12th Panzer Division, rifle companies were down to an average of 35 effectives.

When Hitler received word of Tikhvin's capture, his mind focused farther to the east. Schmidt was shocked when he received a message from the Führer's headquarters asking if it was possible to mount another assault—this time on Volgoda, some 400 kilometers east of Tikhvin. With the condition of his corps, Schmidt could only shake his head in astonishment as he reread the message.

The German offensive had shot its bolt with the capture of Tikhvin. Temperatures had already fallen to 20 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and in a few days they were down to 40 below. Equipment froze, and men literally died at their posts in their threadbare summer uniforms.

While the Germans struggled just to stay alive, STAVKA was continuously funneling reinforcements into the Tikhvin area. The Soviets planned to hit the German flanks with the 52nd Army at Gruzino and the 54th Army at Kirishi. Meretskov's 4th Army would assault

Schmidt's forces in the Tikhvin sector.

Meretskov had one tank, one cavalry, and five rifle divisions that were supplemented by a rifle and a tank brigade and three separate tank battalions. Facing Meretskov were the depleted 18th and 20th Motorized Divisions, the 12th Panzer Division, 61st Infantry Division, and elements of the 8th Panzer Division.

While the 52nd (four rifle divisions) and 54th (eight rifle divisions, two rifle brigades, two tank brigades, two ski battalions, and one tank division without tanks) Armies deployed on the flanks of the Tikhvin salient, Meretskov worked on his own dispositions. His Northern Group (1067th Rifle Regiment, two-thirds of the 44th Rifle Division, the 159th Pontoon-Bridge Battalion, and the 46th Tank Brigade) would hit the 12th Panzer and elements of the 8th Panzer northeast of Tikhvin while the 54th Army struck further to the west.

Meretskov's Southern Group (92nd Rifle and 4th Guards Rifle Divisions and one-third of the 292nd Rifle Division) would strike elements of the 8th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions southwest of Tikhvin with the objective of cutting the German supply line to the town. The Eastern Group (191st Rifle Division, 22nd Cavalry Division, one-third of the 44th Rifle Division, one regiment of the 60th Tank Division, and the 128th Separate Tank Battalion) would hit Tikhvin itself.

On November 12, the 52nd Army struck the infantry divisions guarding the right flank of the salient. Laux's 126th Infantry Division, sta-

**In the subzero weather, Germans and Russians fought hand to hand, the frozen dead dotting the countryside like gruesome fallen statues.**

tioned around Malai Vishera, bore the brunt of the attack and was soon fighting for its very existence. To Laux's right, the 250th Infantry Division composed of Spanish volunteers fought ferociously as the Soviets tried to infiltrate between strongpoints that had recently been completed.

In the Tikhvin sector the new T-34 tanks rolled forward. Although they were few in number, the T-34s sent shock waves through the German panzer and antitank units. Surrounded by obsolete T-26s, which could be knocked out relatively easily, the T-34s shrugged off everything the Germans could throw at them.

Frantic calls to senior commanders pleaded for help as forward positions fell. Only the shoddy Soviet tactics prevented a breakthrough. As the accompanying T-26s were being destroyed by German fire, the T-34s fell prey to hastily formed infantry tank-killer groups that stalked the steel giants with bundles of grenades that could disable the tanks' wide tracks.

While the fighting raged, the XXXIX Corps received a new commander. Schmidt, who was moving on as acting commander of the 2nd Army in Heeresgruppe Mitte, was replaced by General Hans-Jürgen von Arnim. A year and a half later, von Arnim would preside over the surrender to the Allies of German forces in North Africa.

During the next two weeks, the 54th Army attacked the left flank of the salient, creating an even bigger threat to the beleaguered forces at Tikhvin. In the subzero weather, Germans and Russians fought hand to hand, the frozen dead dotting the countryside like gruesome fallen statues.

While the assault continued, the Russians were beginning to construct a road north of Tikhvin that would connect Lake Ladoga with the rail line east of the town. The lake had finally frozen over, and, when finished, the new road would provide a vital supply line to besieged Leningrad.

Severe weather and heavy fighting finally forced the 18th Army's commander, von Küchler, to halt all of his offensive operations and go on the defensive on November 25. In other sectors of the Eastern Front the Germans were still rolling forward, but along the Volkhov Hitler's eastern armies lost the initiative for the first time since Operation Barbarossa began.

At Tikhvin itself the fighting intensified as Meretskov urged his forces to put forth an even greater effort. In waist-deep snow the Red Army soldiers pushed forward against determined German resistance, slowly driving the freezing Wehrmacht troops back. Von Arnim's losses continued to mount owing to the constant combat and harsh weather, while few replacements managed to arrive to reinforce his depleted divisions.

During the final days of November, Meretskov initiated a series of new attacks on Tikhvin. At the same time the 52nd and 54th Armies redou-



**ABOVE: A dead German soldier lies where he fell. Tenacious Soviet defense at Tikhvin held the Germans in check before Leningrad. BELOW: Wounded in combat, a captured Finnish soldier is helped to an aid station by two Soviet soldiers. The Finns participated in the Leningrad siege with their German allies.**



bled their efforts against the salient flanks.

By December 2, the 18th Motorized Division reported that it had fewer than 1,000 combat-effective troops. Other units defending Tikhvin were also suffering unbearable casualties, and the motorized and armored units of the corps were being burnt out in the static defense of the town. On December 3, General Siegfried Haenicke and his 61st Infantry Division took over the town's defense.

Meretskov kept up his attacks, and by December 6 the situation inside Tikhvin was steadily deteriorating. The subzero temperatures were causing numerous deaths among the German defenders, and new Red Army units were being identified as the Soviet attacks intensified. With new reinforcements, Meretskov was able to take Hill 50.2, cutting a vital road linking Tikhvin and supply bases farther west.

December 7 brought new attacks as the Soviets smelled success. Von Leeb had already reported to Berlin that he could not hold Tikhvin under the current conditions. Soviet attacks on the flanks were now so serious that the entire salient was in danger of being cut off, and the Heeresgruppe commander requested an immediate withdrawal.

Hitler gave quasi approval for a limited withdrawal but warned von Leeb that German forces must stay within artillery range of the town. By now other sectors of the Eastern Front were on fire as the Soviet winter offensive swung into high gear, and any dreams of pushing farther eastward were now gone.

Another frantic call from von Leeb finally convinced Hitler of the futility of trying to hold the Tikhvin salient. Finally, in the early hours of December 8, Hitler gave approval to withdraw to the Volkhov.

In driving snow the depleted divisions of the XXXIX Motorized Corps began their retreat. The 18th Motorized Division, along with the 8th and 12th Panzer Divisions, was first off the lines. The 61st Infantry Division, along with elements of the 18th's panzer regiment, provided the rear guard. It was exactly one month since the Germans had taken Tikhvin.

Men from Haenicke's division gathered around the makeshift cemetery in Tikhvin to pay their respects to fallen comrades. Row upon row of rough wooden crosses stood starkly contrasted with the snow-covered ground. Behind the cemetery a multidomed monastery was outlined against the gray sky.

On the front line elements of two Soviet divisions were now fighting inside the town. As combat grew closer, the men at the cemetery started withdrawing westward, leaving their dead buried in the cold Soviet ground.

By December 31, the Soviets were battering at the Volkhov Line. The great snow road to Lake Ladoga was safe, the Tikhvin rail line was once again in Russian hands, and Leningrad's lifeline to the east was secure.

German forces in the north would never again be so close to totally cutting off the city, and no other attempt would be made for a broad assault to reach the Svir River. The combination of Hitler's interference, the Russian weather, and the willingness of the Red Army to carry out attacks despite horrific losses deprived the Germans of what could have been an important step in the defeat of the Soviet Union. □

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*Pat McTaggart is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front and has contributed numerous articles on the subject to WW II History Magazine. He resides in Elkader, Iowa.*

# >> Tragedy at Hong Kong: The Ordeal

**In a misguided mission, almost 2,000 Canadians were sent to the Far East, arriving just prior to the outbreak of a hopeless battle.** BY JEROME M. BALDWIN

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By the 1930s the security Hong Kong had enjoyed since its acquisition by the British Empire in 1842 was a memory. The supremacy of the Royal Navy was seriously threatened by the rise of Japan as a world power in the region; the island was now within range of artillery from the mainland; and the threat of air attack now loomed as well. The British, realizing the precariousness of the colony's position, wrote it off as an indefensible outpost of the Empire and maintained no large defense force there.

The situation grew more precarious in July 1937, when the Japanese invaded China. In December the British authorized two more battalions to be sent to supplement the four infantry battalions already there and, over the course of the following year, considered different options for Hong Kong in the event of a Japanese attack. It was unthinkable to simply give up even a mere outpost without a fight, so the plan called for a delaying action on the Gin Drinkers Line, allowing enough time to destroy the oil storage and dock facilities in Kowloon, followed by a strong defense of the island until a relief force could arrive from Singapore.

The threat continued to grow. When the Japanese captured Canton from the Nationalist Chinese in October 1938, the Chiefs of Staff in London were certain they would attack Hong Kong but did not consider an attack to be imminent. According to them, the Japanese lacked the resources to wage war against the British Empire, they were worried about how the Americans would react if they did attack Hong Kong, and they had to contend with the threat of Soviet Russia from the north.

In September 1941, Maj. Gen. A.E. Grasset finished his tour as commander in chief of Hong Kong, handing the reins to Maj. Gen. C.M. Maltby. Grasset was a Canadian, and he decided to return to England via Canada, where he visited his old friend from Royal Military College, Lt. Gen. Henry Crerar, now chief of the Canadian

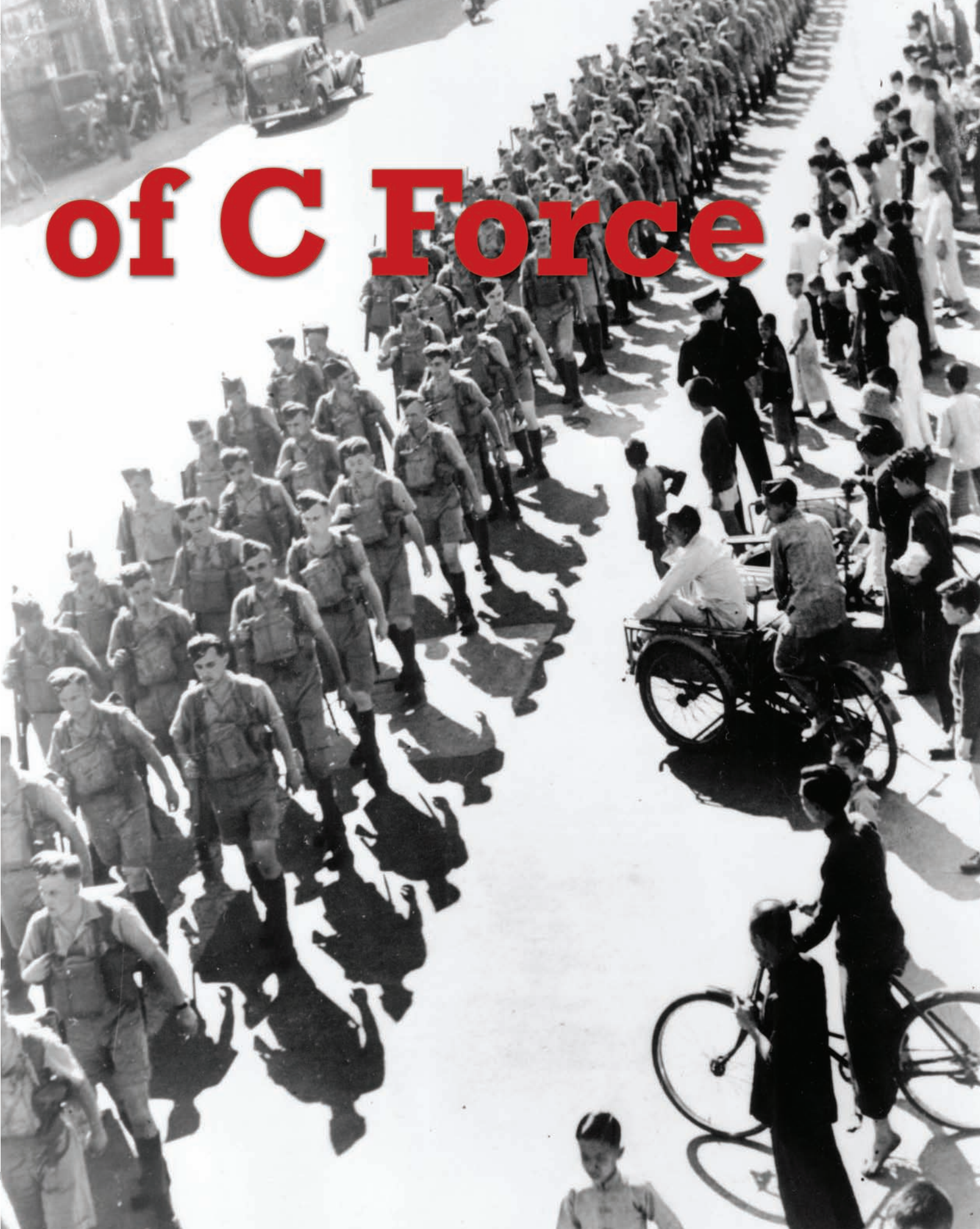
General Staff. While they talked, Grasset mentioned that two more battalions in Hong Kong would enable the colony to hold out for an extended period of time against a Japanese attack. Crerar later denied that Grasset made any outright request for Canada to provide troops, but there can be little doubt that Grasset planted the seed that eventually resulted in Canada providing them.

Arriving in England, Grasset reported to the Chiefs that Hong Kong's defenses were strong, morale was high, and the colony would be a "tough nut to crack." He then reported that if Canada were asked nicely, it would provide another two battalions for the garrison there, which would bring it to the strength authorized, but never implemented, in December 1937. Initially the response was negative, but soon even Churchill, who hitherto had been staunchly against any more troops being sent to Hong Kong for all the sound reasons the British had known for years, came around.

With that the wheels were set in motion, and the Dominions Office submitted a formal request in a cable to Ottawa on September 9. Through misleading words and omissions it gave the unmistakable impression that the colony could be held indefinitely when the plan that required the quick

**RIGHT: Parading past a crowd of friendly civilians in Hong Kong, Canadian soldiers head to their quarters just after debarking from the troop ship that has carried them across thousands of miles of ocean.** (Library of Congress)

# of C Force



arrival of a relief force for the garrison's salvation had not changed. With no intelligence service of its own then, Canada was completely reliant on the British, and that reliance would play heavily on events.

Canadian Associate Defence Minister Major C.G. Power, assuming Crerar thought the mission to be militarily sound but never asking Crerar if he thought it was, gave his approval. Prime Minister William Mackenzie King, an anti-imperialist, was wary of taking Power's word for it and insisted that the matter be submitted to the Defence Minister, Colonel J.L. Ralston, on holiday in the United States.

Upon receiving the message, Ralston sought the advice of Crerar who told him the operation had "no military risk." Ralston then gave the request the green light, after which King did as well. Canada confirmed its agreement in its official reply October 2, and the ill-fated mission got underway.

Had there been more time to prepare, someone might have realized the potential disaster that was looming. Britain, however, wanted the force to set sail by the end of October, a ridiculously short period of time to prepare for such a large operation. The breakneck pace of the mission's organization was the harbinger of serious oversights and mistakes to come.

The two battalions selected were the Royal Rifles of Canada, under Lt. Col. W.G. Home, and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, under Lt. Col. J.L.R. Sutcliffe. The most combat-ready units were needed in Europe, and both units were designated Class C, "not recommended for operational deployment at present." Both had finished tours where no shooting occurred, the Rifles in Newfoundland and the Grenadiers in Jamaica. Although the danger signs were abundant, Crerar fully expected that Hong Kong would require more of the same type of duties they had both been performing. The force was designated C Force and placed under the command of Brig. Gen. J.K. Lawson on October 11, the day Britain requested that a brigade headquarters be sent as well, to which Canada agreed.

C Force sailed on the troopship *Awatea* from Vancouver on October 27. The *Awatea* could not accommodate all 1,975 men, so 150 of them had to be crammed onto the naval escort, the merchant cruiser HMCS *Prince Robert*. Through incompetence, their vehicles did not leave with them and would never reach Hong Kong.



**ABOVE:** After landing in Hong Kong, Canadian troops march to join the garrison and continue training. The political wrangling that preceded the deployment of Canadian troops to Hong Kong is questioned to this day. **LEFT:** Leaving their troop ship HMCS *Prince Robert* on November 16, 1941, infantrymen of C Company, Royal Rifles of Canada, are observed by officers. The Canadians had not seen combat and were not listed as ready for such arduous duty.

(Above: Imperial War Museum / Left: Library and Archives of Canada)

The *Awatea* docked in Hong Kong on November 16, 1941. As they marched to the Shamshui Barracks in Kowloon cheering crowds lined the streets waving Union Jacks. The colony seemed to feel more secure with the Canadians' arrival, even though 50,000 combat-experienced Japanese soldiers of Maj. Gen. Takeo Ito's 38th Division were massed on the border.

With the Canadians' arrival, Maltby decided on a defensive plan of two brigades, one on the mainland and one on the island. The Canadians were assigned to the island along with the 1st Battalion Middlesex Regiment, all under the command of Lawson. The Mainland Brigade consisted of a Royal Scots battalion and two Indian Army battalions under Brig. Gen. Cedric Wallis. Altogether, with the arrival of the Canadians, 14,000 men had been assembled to defend Hong Kong.

Maltby's battle plan called for a delaying force to destroy bridges and culverts, slowing down the Japanese attack force before falling back on the Gin Drinkers Line. It was expected that the Gin Drinkers Line would hold for at least a week, providing ample time to destroy the Kowloon dock facilities and oil tanks, denying them to the Japanese. The Devil's Peak redoubt, on the eastern side of Kowloon, was to hold out indefinitely.

At 8 AM on Sunday, December 8, the meager air defense Hong Kong had was destroyed in a bombing raid. Shamshui Barracks was hit as well, wounding four Canadians and killing sev-

eral Chinese outside. Almost simultaneously, Japanese soldiers crossed the border. The delaying force destroyed culverts and bridges according to plan, but the Japanese spanned the gaps with bridge replacements they had brought with them.

Just before midnight on the 9th, Maltby ordered C Company of the Winnipeg Grenadiers over to the mainland to participate in a counterattack on the Shing Mun redoubt, the lynchpin of the Gin Drinkers Line, which had already been lost. The Royal Scots, badly mauled, could not mount a counterattack, however, and the Canadians were ordered behind the Scots' left flank to cover the Castle Peak coastal road and the southwestern slope of Golden Hill, where the Scots had withdrawn. By 6:30 PM they were beginning the withdrawal to the mainland behind the Royal Scots, slipping away in the darkness to head back to Kowloon. They had only exchanged a few sporadic shots with some Japanese scouts—the first combat action for Canadian soldiers in World War II—before crossing back to the island.

With the sinking of the British battlecruiser *Repulse* and battleship *Prince of Wales* off Malaya on the 10th, all hope of relief in the foreseeable future was gone. Despite this, on the morning of the 12th a Japanese invitation to surrender extended to the colonial governor, Sir Mark Young, was rejected outright.

Meanwhile, Maltby prepared the island defenses for the inevitable assault. The garrison was divided into East and West Brigades, Wal-

lis commanding the East while Lawson commanded the West. Maltby's plan called for shoreline defenses to halt any Japanese landing, with the Canadians just behind in the interior to take care of any breakthroughs the Japanese might make. Demolitions carried out before the withdrawal from the mainland were expected to delay Japanese artillery being brought up for weeks. However, by the 16th the Japanese were hammering the island with heavy artillery and aircraft, particularly the eastern shoreline.

On the 17th another Japanese delegation approached the British with a second offer for them to surrender. It was refused, and the next day, just after dark, the Japanese started crossing over in anything they could find that could float, some even swimming. They struck precisely in the waterfront region that Maltby had said they were least likely to strike, between North and Lye Mun Points. The 229th Regiment landed at Sai Ki Wan and Lye Mun with orders to take Mount Parker; the 228th came ashore at the Tai Koo docks, headed for Mount Butler, while the 230th Regiment landed around North Point and made for Jardine's Lookout.

The Rajputs defending the eastern shoreline quickly collapsed, and the Japanese swarmed ashore, infiltrating quickly inland. Hearing the gunfire north of him, Royal Rifles C Company commander Major W.A. Bishop ordered two of his three platoons to investigate. After unsuccessfully trying to retake the Sai Wan Fort, they withdrew, inflicting heavy casualties on the Japanese as they headed down the coast toward the Tai Tam Gap to keep from being cut off should Mount Parker be captured.

At 9:30 PM, Lt. Col. Home was ordered by Wallis to send a reinforced platoon from Headquarters Company under Lieutenant G.W. Williams to occupy the peak of Mount Parker and "prevent the enemy from doing likewise." The Canadians did reach the peak but were soon overwhelmed in a hopeless fight against superior numbers and driven back. Williams was killed. At 2 PM, another platoon under Lieutenant C.A. Blaver was ordered to reinforce Williams's platoon but was "unable to reach position and was forced to retire at 0900 hours owing to the high ground on Mount Parker being occupied by the Japanese."

Meanwhile, things were not going much better in the West Brigade half of Hong Kong. This territory held the vital Wong Nei Chong Gap, where all roads on the island led, most notably the north-south Repulse Bay road. Sutcliffe, under Maltby's orders, sent a platoon under Lieutenant G.A. Birkett to occupy and hold Jardine's Lookout, which overlooked the Wong Nei Chong Gap. It was the same story that was happening to their comrades in East Brigade. They reached the peak around dawn but soon found themselves facing a Japanese battalion with heavy artillery and were driven off with heavy losses, including Birkett.

Lawson had moved the brigade headquarters from the Wanchai Gap right up to the front line in the Wong Nei Chong Gap, inside some steel-

doored anti-aircraft shelters that were hewn from the rock on each side of the main north-south road. Again, under orders from Maltby at 2:30 AM on December 19, Sutcliffe ordered A Company, Winnipeg Grenadiers to make an attack

on Mount Butler. It is possible that in the chaos of battle Mount Butler was confused with Jardine's Lookout, which was between the Grenadiers and Mount Butler. Attacking Mount Butler would have required Jardine's Lookout to be in Allied hands, but A Company somehow became divided. However, a group led by Company Sgt. Maj. J.R. Osborn was able to capture the summit of what was recorded as Mount Butler by bayonet charge just before dawn.

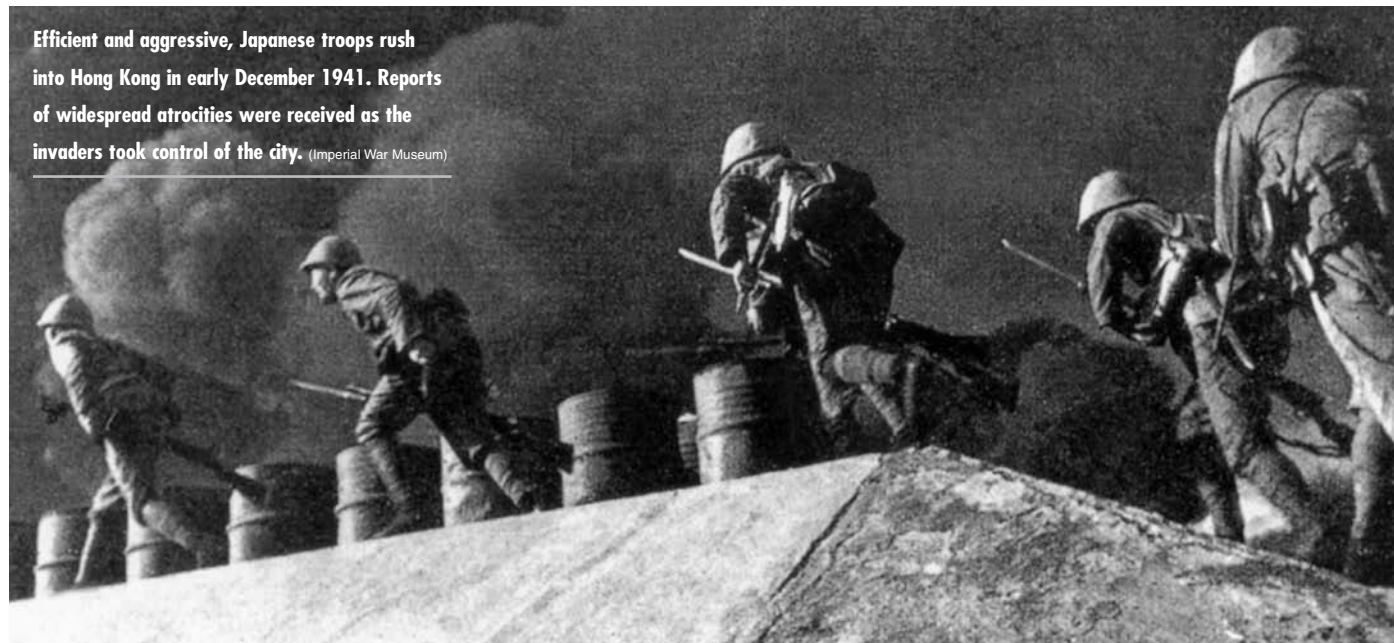
At around 10 PM, Sergeant W.J. Pugsley "noticed our troops on Mount Butler were falling back and almost immediately recognized Japanese troops in large numbers coming over Butler. CSM Osborn now took charge

of two Bren guns of my platoon and directed covering fire of the withdrawal of the party. He was cool and steady at all times and greatly helped the spirit of the men. All this time we were under fire from the right flank and, at about 1300 hours, Captain Tarbuth, who was being carried by Private J. Williams, had to cross a slight rise in the ground and both were killed by machine-gun fire; and the Japs opened up on our right Bren gun, killing the crew and knocking out the gun.



**Sergeant Major J.R. Osborn of A Company, Winnipeg Grenadiers, was killed in action at Hong Kong on December 19, 1941, and received a posthumous Victoria Cross for valor.**

(Library and Archives of Canada)



**Efficient and aggressive, Japanese troops rush into Hong Kong in early December 1941. Reports of widespread atrocities were received as the invaders took control of the city.** (Imperial War Museum)

“We still continued resistance with the one gun and rifle fire, under the direction of CSM Osborn and Major Gresham, trying to get back to Wong Nei Chong, but discovered that numbers of Japs had worked round behind us and that we were cut off. At last, about 1515 hours, Major Gresham decided to surrender, stepped out of the depression with his hands up, and was immediately shot down and killed.

“By this time the Japs had got close enough to throw grenades into our positions, and CSM Osborn and myself were discussing what was best to be done now when a grenade dropped beside him.

“He yelled to me and gave me a shove, and I rolled down the hill and he rolled on to the grenade and was killed. I firmly believe he did this on purpose, and by his action saved the lives of myself and at least six other men who were in our group. This happened at about 1530 hours. Within the next ten minutes the Japs rushed our position and took the remnant of the company prisoners.”

For his selfless act of heroism, 41-year-old Osborn became the first Canadian awarded the Victoria Cross in World War II.

The Japanese closed in on Lawson’s shelters, where, surprisingly, the telephone was still functioning. At 10 AM, Lawson reported to Maltby that the enemy was firing point blank on his shelter and that he and some of his staff were going outside to fight it out. With guns blazing from both hands, Lawson and his men shot it out with the Japanese before he was killed, the area around his shelter littered with bodies of the enemy.

As the C Force war diary recorded, conditions in the gap grew steadily worse. “The position was being fired upon from all sides. It might be compared with the lower part of a bowl, the enemy looking down and occupying the rim. The main road running through the position was cluttered for hundreds of feet each way with abandoned trucks and cars. The Japanese were using mortars and hand grenades quite heavily. Casualties were steadily mounting, but at the same time reinforcements were trickling in the form of stragglers, so that at the end of the day, while the killed and wounded were approximately twenty-five, the effective fighting strength was about the same.”



**The Japanese invasion of Hong Kong overwhelmed the meager Commonwealth defenders and crowned a series of brilliant victories for the Empire of the Rising Sun on the Asian continent. During this difficult period for the Allies, reverses were commonplace on land and sea.** (Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN)

By the 20th, things had gotten very desperate. “Casualties mounting, over 30 wounded in shelters and water very scarce.” Amazingly, the men in the gap managed to hold out until the morning of the 22nd, when the steel doors were blown in with a 2-inch gun. Shortly afterward, they surrendered.

Even before the fall of the Wong Nei Chong Gap, the Japanese had managed to get around it and by nightfall of the 19th were looking down on the Repulse Bay Hotel at the junction of the coast road and the north-south road that ran through the gap. They soon brought artillery to bear, effectively cutting the Allied garrison in two while the gap defenders still fought on.

The end was near for Hong Kong. For the next three days the pattern continued—the wasting of men in futile and useless actions that could never hope to change or even significantly delay the final outcome of the battle, ordered by commanders who seemed to grow more out of touch with reality with every passing hour. On Christmas morning Wallis ordered

a company-strength attack on a ridge above Stanley village, ignoring the protests of Lt. Col. Home that it would be another senseless waste of men. In the action that followed, D Company of the Royal Rifles was wiped out after a bayonet charge and vicious hand-to-hand fighting. Around 6:30 PM, A Company of the Royal Rifles had just begun an attack up the main road in Stanley when the enemy guns fell silent and a car flying a white flag appeared carrying two British officers. They brought the news that the colony had been surrendered about three hours earlier.

The fighting was over, but the killing was not. The horror of Japanese occupation and captivity was only beginning for the defeated at Hong Kong. In St. Stephen’s Hospital in Stanley, the Japanese bayoneted 70 Allied soldiers in their beds and brutally raped the nurses there, many of them to death. It was only one example of numerous savage atrocities committed by Japanese troops against soldiers and civilians alike after the surrender.

The Canadians had suffered badly: 783 men and 59 officers killed or wounded in the battle. Another 195 would die in the mis-

erable conditions behind Japanese wire. Altogether, of the 1,975 Canadians who were sent to Hong Kong 555 would not return, including the Grenadiers’ commanding officer, Lt. Col. Sutcliffe, who died as a POW. Many of those who did make it home were broken in body and spirit for the rest of their lives, which were often shorter than what they would have been because of the years of malnourishment, overwork, and disease.

In Canada, no one ever really had to answer for the tragedy of Hong Kong, including the man who had said it had no military risk, Lt. Gen. Henry Crerar. In the months to come he would be instrumental in pushing ahead Operation Jubilee, the disastrous raid on the French coastal town of Dieppe. Later, he would be promoted to full general and given command of the First Canadian Army in Europe after D-Day. □

*Jerome M. Baldwin is a resident of Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada. He is a veteran of the Canadian Army, having served as a fire control systems technician.*

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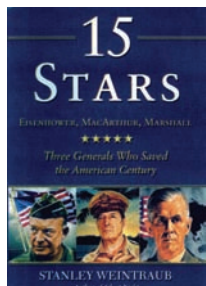
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**ONLY FIVE MODERN AMERICAN ARMY GENERALS HAVE EVER BEEN AUTHORIZED** to wear the five stars denoting the rank of General of the Army. Three of them—Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, and George C. Marshall—have been captured in *15 Stars: Eisenhower, MacArthur, Marshall—Three Generals Who Saved the American Century* (Free



Press, New York, 2007, 541 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$30.00), a fascinating multi-biography by the esteemed historian Stanley Weintraub.

So famous were these three men that, as the author writes, all three “were each featured on the cover of *Time* [magazine], when that accolade, in a pre-television era, confirmed a sort of eminence. All three would appear on postage stamps evoking their signature traits. Their immediately recognizable faces were remarkable indices of personality. MacArthur’s hawklike gaze conveyed his headstrong, contrary tenacity. Marshall’s seamed, inscrutable look suggested the austere middle America portraits

by Grant Wood. Eisenhower’s ruddy, balding head and familiar grin brought to mind less the Kansas of his boyhood than the Everyman which admirers always saw in him.”

In a narrative that weaves the lives of these three generals together—from their early beginnings, their entry into the Army through West Point (in the case of Eisenhower and MacArthur) and the Virginia Military Institute (Marshall), and their careers that intersected, diverged, then intersected again during World War II—Weintraub deftly handles what could have become a morass in the hands of a less skilled author.

As Weintraub points out, World War I forged the unique character of each man, and each man brought his own style of leadership to the task at hand during the second global conflict.

Here is MacArthur, vain and egotistical, yet brave and uncompromising; Ike, friendly, genuine, self-effacing, yet fiercely driven to hold a shaky coalition together and overcome a negative perception that his British allies had of him; and Marshall, cold, aloof, yet quietly efficient and trust-inspiring. Each man would stamp his own personality on the job he was called upon to perform, and each would perform magnificently.

The three generals mentored and competed with one another in the 1930s, then cooperated (but also still competed) during their collective triumph in World War II. All three became harbingers of global peace once the conflict ended.

After the war, MacArthur became the benevolent dictator of Japan and helped her write a new constitution and rebuild her economy. Marshall, too, helped rebuild Europe through the Marshall Plan and oversaw the integration of West Germany into the community of peaceful nations, work that earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. Eisenhower went on to become president of the United States and helped end the Korean War (which MacArthur, as the top U.N. general, nearly turned into a nuclear conflict with Red China) while simultaneously arming the nation to confront the threat posed by the Soviets.

A highly satisfying and intriguing work that every history buff will find of interest.

*Mussolini and His Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922-1940*, by John Gooch, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2007, photographs, index, bibliography, 650 pp., \$35.00, hardcover.

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2 ct tw necklace	\$20,000+	\$129

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## Short Bursts

**African American Troops in World War II**, by Alexander Bielakowski, Osprey, Oxford, U.K., 2007, 64 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, softcover, \$17.95.

Although only 64 pages long, Bielakowski's study of African American troops fills a wide knowledge gap about the contributions to victory made by the U.S. "colored" troops, as they were known then.

Half a million black American soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, Merchant Mariners, and Coast Guardsmen served overseas during the war, almost all of them in segregated, non-combat units. This stricture artificially limited their potential contribution, but their work, especially along the logistic lifelines of the fighting divisions, was vital for victory.

Bielakowski's book summarizes the service of these men and women; it also focuses on the relatively small proportion who overcame barriers of prejudice to reach the battlefield in combat units, such as the 92nd Infantry Division, 761st Tank Battalion, and the 99th Pursuit Squadron (the "Tuskegee Airmen"). Black troops also served with distinction in all theaters of war in segregated artillery outfits and as combat engineers, Seabees, medics, military policemen, and more.

Their story is illustrated with dozens of wartime photos and color plates, including portraits of some of the most outstanding individuals.

*African American Troops in World War II* is a fine book that is sure to open eyes to a class of brave and patriotic Americans who, despite the discrimination they faced at home, gave their all for their country.

**The Library of Congress World War II Companion**, edited by David M. Kennedy,

Simon & Schuster, New York, 2007, photographs, maps, index, 982 pp., \$45.00, hardcover.

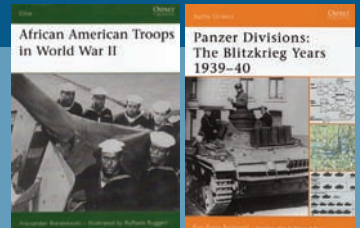
If this massive tome had been titled *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About World War II*, it would have been appropriate. Within its 982 encyclopedic pages, *The Library of Congress World War II Companion* covers virtually every World War II-related topic one can imagine, everything from the causes of the war, the main political figures, organization of the major Allied and Axis armed forces, weapons, major battles, propaganda, espionage, sabotage, war crimes, life on the home front, the aftermath, and much, much more.

As historian John Keegan has written, World War II was "the largest single event in human history," and this book certainly portrays the wide variety of the experience—the ingenuity, industriousness, venality, sacrifice, brutality, and inspiring courage.

A writing team consisting of three senior writers/editors at the Library of Congress Publishing Office, and editor David M. Kennedy, professor of History at Stanford and a Pulitzer Prize winner, did a superlative job of putting together a volume that is at once both concise and detailed. The book is filled with intriguing facts, figures, side-lights, veterans' memoirs, and excerpts from the private papers of some of the most famous personages of the day.

All in all, *The Library of Congress World War II Companion* is a tremendous and valuable reference that deserves to be on every World War II history buff's bookshelf and will be used for many years to come. Worth at least double the \$45.00 price.

**Panzer Divisions: The Blitzkrieg Years, 1939-**

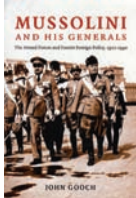


**1940**, by Pier Paolo Battistelli, Osprey, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2007, 96 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, softcover, \$23.95.

At the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, Germany's armored forces were still in their infancy. The restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles meant that German tank production lagged behind that of its enemies, but Hitler, as the world knows, was not one to be restricted by treaties. Soon Germany began turning out vast numbers of highly sophisticated armored fighting vehicles.

Initial armor campaigns in Poland were not particularly successful, however, and it was obvious that major changes were needed before the invasion of France and the Low Countries could be mounted the following summer. In *Panzer Divisions: The Blitzkrieg Years, 1939-1940*, Pier Paolo Battistelli examines the history, the organizational changes, developments in doctrine and tactics, and improved command and control that provided the basis for the spectacular success of Blitzkrieg, or lightning war, in 1940. Achieving tactical and operational surprise, the panzer divisions broke through enemy defenses, enveloped British, French, and Polish forces at Dunkirk, and pushed all the way to Paris and the Cotentin Peninsula. The legend of the Blitzkrieg was born.

Filled with photographs, charts, and maps, plus analytical descriptions of the various operations in which panzers were so effectively employed, *Panzer Divisions* is an invaluable resource for anyone with an interest in armor. □



policy, but, surprisingly since Hitler obtained many of his ideas about fascism from Mussolini, very little has been written about the inner workings of Benito Mussolini's state.

Fortunately, that glaring gap has finally started to be filled with the publication of John Gooch's monumental, 650-page *Mussolini and His Generals*. This work is the first English language study to detail the military policies pursued by Fascist Italy, setting them in the context of the foreign policy advanced by Il Duce during this period. Unlike other recent books on Mussolini, this one is primarily a military history that explores the invasion of helpless Ethiopia and the failed operations against the British in North Africa, and not a biography or a look at life under fascism.

By the time Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, Mussolini had been the leader of Italy for more than a decade. He had been successful improving the Italian economy and bringing stability (albeit with heavy-handed policies) to a country wracked by economic collapse and internal turmoil and was seen as Italy's savior by a large majority of the Italian populace. Mussolini's ambition was to regain for his nation the power and prestige once enjoyed by the Roman Empire, things that Hitler also sought to achieve.

Ever since the inglorious collapse of fascist Italy following the Allied invasion in September 1943, the goals and achievements of Mussolini have been the subject of many studies and debates. Some historians see Mussolini as a buffoonish, inept, and power-hungry dictator whose chosen path to his goal was violence and absolute control, lacking effectual leadership once accomplished, while others have characterized him as a skilled leader who sought to create an Italian empire, but misguidedly allied himself with the genocidal madman Hitler.

Gooch, a professor of history at the University of Leeds in England, shows that while Mussolini bore ultimate responsibility for Italy's fateful entry into World War II, his generals and admirals shared the blame for policies that all too often rested on irrationality and incompetence. *Mussolini and His Generals* is an important book for anyone who wants to understand more about the roots of mankind's most devastating war.

*Flights into History: Final Missions Retold by Research and Archaeology*, by Ian McLachlan, Sutton Publishing, Gloucestershire, U.K., 2007, 224 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, \$36.95.

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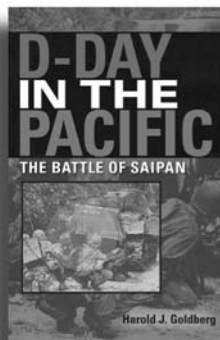
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During wartime, a family can receive no more devastating news than that a loved one is missing in action. Death, while emotionally painful to the survivors, at least brings closure to the family, whereas the designation of "missing in action" and the "subsequent lack of information only exacerbated their misery," writes author Ian McLachlan.

His new book focuses on archaeological detective work that volunteer researchers have performed in an effort to solve the mysteries surrounding long vanished aircraft and airmen. *Flights into History* relates the fate of 14 flights undertaken by British, American, Belgian, and German airmen.

Some of the stories in the book (accompanied by more than 100 photos) record the final flights of aircraft that have disappeared forever, with only tiny fragments or mangled pieces of wreckage surviving. Archaeological evidence is, in many cases, all that now remains of proud aircraft that once soared into the skies, lifting high the hopes and spirits of young men who took them into battle.

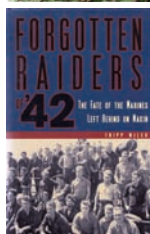
Decades later, these wrecks and relics can reveal their secrets to the expert investigator, and their excavation and preservation can serve as monuments to the bravery of their crews, not to mention healing some of the emotional wounds of those left behind.

McLachlan's book demonstrates how, by reconstructing wartime events from evidence in the wreckage, eyewitness accounts, and contemporary documentation, aviation archaeologists are able to identify the flyers involved and shed new light on the air battles that took place in the skies above Europe. A superb salute to those who gave their lives anonymously for their countries.

*Forgotten Raiders of '42: The Fate of the Marines Left Behind on Makin*, by Tripp Wiles, Potomac Books, Inc., Dulles, VA, 2007, 169 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, \$23.95.

One of the most tragic yet least known episodes of World War II is what happened to a group of U.S. Marines who took part in the 1942 commando raid on Japanese-held Makin Island.

The raid began on August 8, 1942, when two companies of Marines, 211 hand-picked men commanded by Colonel Evans F. Carlson, along with President Roosevelt's son, Marine Major James Roosevelt, crammed themselves into two giant submarines, the *Argonaut* and *Nautilus*, and headed for Makin Island.



Their mission was to create a diversion and siphon off enemy units that could be used to resist the 1st Marine Division, which had just landed on Guadalcanal, nearly a thousand miles to the south.

The raid, a morale boost for the Navy and the American public, which had endured a steady diet of bad war news for eight months, was hailed at home as a smashing success, and made Carlson, his Raiders, and Major Roosevelt national heroes. The truth, however, was something else. The raid was less successful than had been publicly reported, and, in the chaos that developed as the Marines reboarded their rubber rafts under enemy fire on the night of August 17 and returned to the subs lying offshore, nine Marines were inadvertently left behind.

Their fate was not pretty. Taken to the Japanese stronghold on Kwajalein, the nine blindfolded Americans were ceremoniously beheaded on October 16, 1942, by their captors.

After recounting the details of the dramatic raid, author Wiles focuses on the Raiders' withdrawal from Makin and on Carlson's decisions that directly affected the men who were left behind. Wiles also examines the actions, inactions, and conditions that led to the nine Raiders' unintentional abandonment.

Finally, he reviews the Navy's private reactions and, using new documents and interviews, the Raiders' fate, bringing an end to the final chapter in the story of the disappearance and execution of the forgotten Raiders of '42. A thoroughly engrossing and moving book.

*Descending from the Clouds: A Memoir of Combat in the 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division*, by Spencer F. Wurst and Gayle Wurst, Casemate Publishers, Drexel Hill, PA, 2007, 266 pp., photographs, maps, index, hardcover, \$32.95.

There is something about stories by paratroopers and about airborne operations that is of continual fascination to the reading public. It seems that history buffs just cannot get enough of the exploits of derring-do by raiders from the sky. To feed this never-ending hunger for airborne stories comes a remarkable book by Spencer F. Wurst, a member of the 82nd "All-American" Airborne Division.

Wurst (with a little help from his niece Gayle) has crafted a fine memoir about what life was like in the prewar Army. He enlisted in his local National Guard outfit in 1940, when he was just 17, subsequently enduring

airborne training and time in combat.

Wurst made three of the regiment's four combat jumps, dropping into Italy, Normandy, and Holland; the only one he missed was Sicily. Recalling the drop into Ste. Mère Eglise, Normandy, Wurst, a squad leader, writes, "To my surprise, there were fires in the town. Almost immediately after—these things happen in microseconds—I started receiving very heavy light flak and machine gun fire from the ground. This was absolutely terrifying. The tracers looked as if they were actually coming up at an angle. Many rounds tore through my chute only a few feet above my body."

Wurst also remembers being puzzled by explosions below him as his fellow paratroopers descended. At first thinking the Germans were zeroing in with artillery on the 505th's drop zone, he quickly realized that "these

## Featured Publisher: ABERJONA PRESS

This publisher, located in Bedford, Pennsylvania, and specializing in military history, was founded by the late Lieutenant Colonel Keith Bonn, a former Army Ranger, paratrooper, infantry officer, and author/military historian. Since his untimely death in 2005, his wife, Patricia Bonn, with over 26 years in the publishing industry and assisted by a staff of consultants steeped in military history, has taken over the operation of the company.

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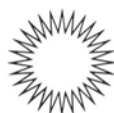
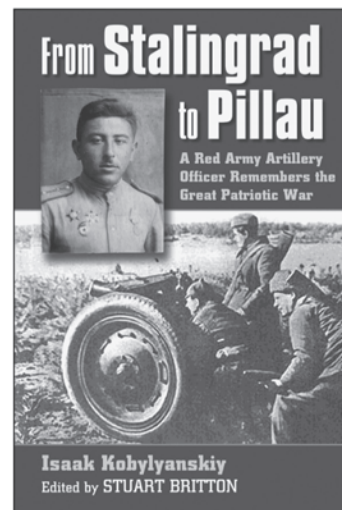
in the postwar Soviet Union, with all of its warts and blemishes, as well as the rationale for his subsequent emigration to the United States."

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—Roger Reese, author of *Red Commanders: A Social History of the Soviet Army Officer Corps, 1918–1991*

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explosions resulted from our mine bundles. Either the speed of the plane pulled the chutes [of the bundles] off, or the bundles dropped faster than expected, and the impact bent the safety clips on the fuses, causing them to explode." Shortly thereafter, he was wounded, but not badly enough to keep him out of further action.

After a month battling through the hedgerows of Normandy, he was wounded again, yet recovered in time to take part in Operation Market-Garden, where he and his unit were swept up in the fierce fighting against SS troops for the highway bridge at Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

One reviewer wrote, "Wurst's book ranks as one of the best war memoirs written by a World War II veteran. Highly recommended."

We concur. Filled with unforgettable tales of combat as seen from the perspective of a very lucky paratrooper, *Descending from the Clouds* is hard to put down and is destined to become a classic of World War II literature.

*Stalingrad: How the Red Army Survived the German Onslaught*, by Michael K. Jones, Casemate Publishers, Drexel Hill, PA, 2007, 270



pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$32.95.

Stalingrad has always been portrayed as one of the pivotal battles of World War II, and now comes a book that portrays all the grim realities of that immense struggle in a new and revealing light.

Using a considerable amount of eyewitness testimony from Russian veterans and fresh archival material from war diaries and official unit histories, Michael K. Jones offers a radical new interpretation of this famous, almost mythical battle that lasted from August 1942 until February 1943 and resulted in 1.5 million combined casualties. His compelling account gives refreshing insight into the thinking of the Soviet command and the mood of the ordinary Red Army fighters.

Jones, known for his innovative and controversial studies of warfare, focuses his story on the Russian 62nd Army, which began the campaign in a state of utter demoralization, yet bravely held off savage attacks by the powerful German Sixth Army, an army which Hitler boasted could storm the gates of heaven itself.

As he recounts the course of the battle and

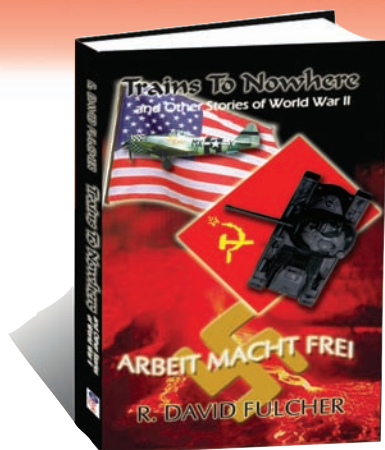
seeks to explain the Red Army's extraordinary performance in inhuman winter conditions and under unrelenting German fire, Jones uses a novel approach—battle psychology, emphasizing the vital role of leadership, morale, and motivation in an eventual triumph that many historians have called the turning point of the war.

Working from extensive interviews with veterans such as Anatoly Mereshko, a staff officer to the 62nd Army's commander, General Vasily Chuikov, Jones presents considerable new and startling testimony about the battle. These accounts show that the oft-repeated stories of Stalingrad's two most crucial days—September 14, 1942, when the Germans broke into the city, and October 14, when von Paulus's men launched a massive attack on the factory district—disguise how really desperate was the plight of the defenders. In their place was a far more terrifying reality.

Understanding this, Jones shows the reader that Stalingrad was more than simply a victory of successful tactics but rather, despite overwhelming odds, an astounding triumph of the human spirit. Very highly recommended.

*The Killing Skies: RAF Bomber Command at War*, by Simon Read, Spellmount Publishing, Gloucestershire, U.K., 2007, 232 pp., pho-

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Long before the United States entered World War II and added the considerable weight of its bombs on German targets, the British Royal Air Force Bomber Command carried the heavy end of the stick against the enemy. While much has been written about the U.S. Eighth Air Force's role in the war against Germany, Americans know little about the RAF Bomber Command's contributions. *The Killing Skies* corrects that knowledge void.

Simon Read, whose grandfather flew on 51 combat operations over Nazi Germany, tells the story well. Currently a reporter for a San Francisco newspaper, Read has captured exactly the bravado and the fear that accompanied every mission into the killing skies. Expertly weaving between official reports and the air crewmen's personal remembrances, he tells the story vividly, as though he had been there.

Read takes the reader along on mission after mission as the RAF switched to night bombing of German urban and industrial centers after daylight bombing proved too costly in terms of men and machines. Facing the ravages of marauding enemy night fighters and freezing temperatures that made skin stick to metal and coated their Lancasters and Wellingtons and Whitleys with thick sheets of ice, thousands of young British and Commonwealth pilots and crews performed their duty with unusual zeal.

Since the end of the war, Bomber Command's efforts to destroy Germany's means and will to continue the fight have been vilified by many as mere acts of wanton terror and destruction. To this day, the veterans of Bomber Command remain without a campaign medal, while present-day critics who did not themselves live through the terrifying "Blitz" equate the veterans' actions with those of war criminals. This book shows that not only was the bomber offensive necessary for Britain's survival, it also played a vital role in the ultimate Allied victory.

As Read points out, "It is impossible to argue that Bomber Command's actions were not brutal, but to categorize the campaign as simply a means to terrorize the German populace is to ignore the greater context of the times in which it was waged."

Of the more than 125,000 airmen who flew with Bomber Command, 55,573 died and 8,403 were wounded along the treacherous aerial road to victory. Read's book is a magnificent memorial to them.

*The Tank Killers: A History of America's World War II Tank Destroyer Force*, by Harry Yeide, Casemate Publishers, D reel Hill, PA,



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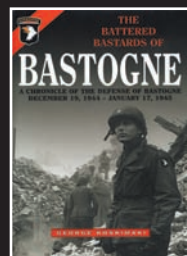
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# Roaring Glory Warbirds

Ever wonder what it's like to sit in the cockpit of a World War II plane and take her up for a spin? The *Roaring Glory Warbirds* DVDs by Digital Software Services, Inc., are the closest you can get without getting a pilot's license. Pilots Jeff Ethell and Steve Hinton put 10 planes through their paces while explaining their attributes and limitations.

The planes include the P-40 Warhawk, P-38 Lightning, P-47 Thunderbolt, F4F Hellcat, F4U Corsair, and P-51 Mustang fighters. The B-17 Flying Fortress and B-25 Mitchell bombers and the TBM Avenger torpedo bomber are also on deck. The only enemy fighter is the Japanese A6M5 Zero.

The videos follow two different styles. Most of those hosted by Ethell combine stock footage, reenactors, and Ethell's preflight check-out and flight to tell the story of planes he presents, while Hinton's videos separate his test flights from the reenactments. Ethell has a certain charisma as he tells stories



to intake and exhaust vents. Using camera helmets, the pilots also explain the knobs, switches, and pedals in the cockpits.

By simply explaining the mechanics of the planes and then flying them, Ethell and Hinton

provide more information than books or movies supply. Fighters had to pull "S" turns while taxiing to the runway because, since the planes' noses were so big, and they rested on a back wheel, the pilots could not see in front of them while on the ground.

Also, each plane had specific steps so a pilot could climb in the cockpit (the P-38 even had a special ladder that popped out of its mainframe).

Most interesting, all World War II planes had to warm up for a few minutes before take-off.

Movies that show planes racing off the tarmac to intercept enemy raiders are just not realistic.

Some discs also include pilot interviews, fact sheets, and multiple camera angles. The real hidden gems of the discs are the training films from the 1940s. They explain the faults of the particular plane and how to recover from such disasters as an engine failure. The films include humorous animated cartoons to explain bailouts and aerodynamics. The Japanese Zero disc includes a fascinating documentary on refurbishing a captured Zero in the 1970s and flying it over Japan.

The 10 DVDs leave the viewer wanting more and hoping Hinton can get into the cockpits of German fighters and bombers. Ethell was killed in 1997 while landing a P-38 (not for this series).

The *Roaring Glory Warbirds* DVDs make an important contribution to understanding the war in the air. Both the casual viewer and the seasoned historian will find these DVDs useful and interesting.

**Kevin M. Hymel**

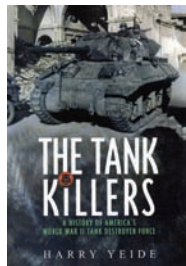


about his planes, while Hinton goes into more detail than Ethell while doing his walk-around and preflight.

The DVDs are a great way to understand what comprises a World War II plane as the pilots explain the function and purpose for all the mechanisms on the plane, from wing flaps

2007, 338 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, softcover, \$16.95.

The tank destroyers battalions of World War II are a good example of the phrase, "Necessity is the mother of invention."



The Allies learned early on that German panzers were virtually unstoppable, and weapons such as the 37mm and 57mm antitank guns were no more effective against superior enemy armor than peashooters. Even the Sherman- and Grant-mounted main guns were of little value against their heavier enemy counterparts.

At first, half-tracks were employed as TDs and equipped with 3-inch (76.2mm) guns, but the thin armor of the half-tracks made them unsuitable for crew longevity. A better solution needed to be found. That solution came in the form of the M10 Wolverine and, later, the M18 Hellcat, and M36 Jackson tank destroyers. The TD—basically a high-velocity gun in an open turret mounted on a tank chassis—was conceived to be light and fast enough to outmaneuver and hunt down Germany's hard-to-kill panzers. Indeed, American doctrine stipulated that the TD's primary role was to fight enemy tanks, while American tanks would concentrate on achieving and exploiting breakthroughs of enemy lines.

By the time the M36 reached the European Theater in September 1944, it sported a 90mm gun that could tear apart practically anything the Germans had to offer. The M36 was also used during the Korean War, where it again proved its value.

Very little has been published about American tank destroyers, however, which is one reason why Harry Yeide's superb new book on the subject is such a welcome addition to the growing library of World War II subjects. Deeply researched and well written, *The Tank Killers* is a dramatic story of the role played by the U.S. Tank Destroyer Force in North Africa, Italy, and Europe, and the men who served in the TD battalions.

Yeide takes the reader through the organization and doctrine of the TD force, the training of the crews, and the continuing development of the vehicles and armament of the TD—changes required by the changing conditions of the battlefield and improvements in enemy armor. Yeide also goes into detail about the many engagements in which the TD battalions fought.

An excellent tribute to an arm of service that has for too long been overlooked. □

## mortain

Continued from page 47

German artillery fire completely crippled attempts by tanks of Task Force 1 of the 3rd Armored Division to support this attack. The divisional history speaks of very heavy casualties.

During the afternoon of the 9th, Hitler replaced von Funck with General Heinrich Eberbach and gave tentative orders for the Avranches counteroffensive to be relaunched on August 11 with the main thrust still through Juvigny—in the LAH sector. The new command, which was to be subordinate to Hausser, was to be called Panzer Group Eberbach and comprised, in name only, two panzer corps, the XLVII and LVIII. Needless to say, most of the officers on Hausser's staff realized that if this last attempt to break through to Avranches failed, the Seventh Army would be encircled and doomed.

During August 10, the Leibstandarte continued to hold its positions in the St. Barthélemy sector. The fighting was bitter and bloody, but the Germans were husbanding their armor for the next phase of Luttich. Although the Americans made some minor dents in the German defenses, they were not strong enough to evict their enemy. In fact, for obvious reasons, a continuation of the status quo suited both Bradley and Montgomery.

By now the American push toward Alençon was causing von Kluge grave concern, and he asked the supreme command for Panzer Group Eberbach to be transferred temporarily from the Mortain area for use against the American spearheads thrusting northward into the underbelly of the Seventh Army. The Führer did not respond; despite this, Hausser gave orders for the 116th Panzer Division and parts of the LAH to be transferred to the LXXXI Corps in the Alençon area.

On August 11, Hitler recognized the inevitable and approved Hausser's Alençon plan. At 2300 hours the Leibstandarte began its withdrawal. The field of battle belonged to the Americans, and Operation Luttich was over. □

*Michael Reynolds is a retired major general in the British Army. He is a veteran of the Korean War and the former director of NATO's Military Plans and Policy Division. Reynolds is a recognized expert on the Battle of the Bulge. He initially directed and later appeared as a guest speaker on some 50 British Army and NATO battlefield tours in the Ardennes. Since retiring from the Army, he has written several well-received books on the subject.*

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## Get three games in one with *Pacific Storm: Allies*.

Some games take a small part of WWII and try to model it very closely. Some games take the whole of the war and try to model it very broadly. **Pacific Storm: Allies**, for



the PC from CDV, is one of that small group of games that tries to do both. To do so, it is basically three games in one. There is the very broad strategic level, the narrower

tactical level, and the down-the-gunsights arcade level. The three modes converge to let players fight out the war however they like.

At the strategic level, players can



command the whole Pacific War effort of the Americans, the Japanese, or the British. They can build bases, then build the buildings and recruit the men for those bases. They direct supplies and also group units at the division, battalion, and squadron level. They can even go out of theater for units, most spectacularly in the case of allying with Germany and bringing the *Bismark* to the Pacific. There is lots of histori-

cal leeway at this level of the game and the diplomacy mechanics can bring in all sorts of deals and treaties between the players and the AI-controlled countries which include Russia and the Netherlands.

On the more tactical level, players take control of the ships, subs, and planes they have maneuvered into place on the strategic map. There are 80 aircraft models and 45 ship types to cover most of the units that actually fought the war. The controls support joysticks, so that players can have a pretty good simulation of actual fighter combat. With the keyboard they can man deck guns or fire torpedo spreads. At this level the game can also be played online with up to 8 players. This multi-player can be either strictly dog fighting planes, or complicated combined arms engagements.

Fantasy Flight Games has made a name for itself over the past few years by combining plastic miniatures with a traditional wargame aesthetic to create games that are both innovative and enjoyable. **Tide of Iron** is their squad-level game set in WWII. It pits American vs. German units in a series of scenarios set in Northern Europe in 1944 and 1945. Two to four players can play, but the game is significantly longer with more than two. Unlike *PS:A* it is an infantry and armor game. There are no ships and planes appear only on air support cards.

The maps in *ToI* are modular with 12 map boards and 23 overlays that are mixed and matched to create the battleground for each scenario. The game also comes with 200 plastic figures and 40 cardboard bases for them, and it is the combining of these two elements that makes the game what it is. Players can customize their squads by mixing and matching the available infantry types on the bases so

that one squad might be straight regulars while another might mix in an elite infantry figure or add an

officer. In addition, bonus counters can be added to the base to give the squad antitank weapons, medical training, or a flamethrower.

With the terrain set and the squads prepared, players deploy their forces and then do battle according to the phases of the game and capabilities of the units. Squads have various options including firing for effect or suppression, moving or waiting for opportunity fire, and activating one of the players' strategy cards. Combat is done by the attacking squads rolling dice vs. the defending squad's defense dice. Firing for effect can eliminate figures from the squad's bases (which can be replaced if the player



player prepares the squads. Also, the American and German sides are more similar in play than they would be with greater detail. These trade-offs are well worth advantages, and even at its \$80 price tag, *ToI* is

terrific game. For players who are at all interested in the simulation of WWII aircraft, having a copy of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* is a must because not only are many classic planes of the war available for it, but more are released every month. One of the latest is Aeroplane Heaven's model of the **Lockheed P-38 Lightning**, probably the most identifiable aircraft of the era. Unlike some modelers, Aeroplane Heaven



has access to reinforcements) while suppression fire can change the unit's status (which can be restored by officers).

The advantage to this combination of dice, bases, and miniatures is that very complex battles can be modeled relatively simply. *ToI* has much of the depth of a complex simulation, but plays faster and its learning curve is less steep. The downside is that set-up takes a while as each

does not create scenarios to fly their models on. Instead they focus on completeness, making sure they cover each skin and every control for all the different versions of the plane. They also including skins for famous individual planes. For example, the P-38 pack includes "Glacier Girl," a plane that was dug out of 260 feet of ice 60 years after it was lost on a ferry mission near the North Pole and can currently be seen for real touring with air shows. □



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