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Cover: A GI advances cautiously along a hedgerow in Normandy, France, in July 1944. Norman terrain favored the German defenders and Allied soldiers had to learn hedgerow warfare on the spot. See story page 38.

Photo: National Archives

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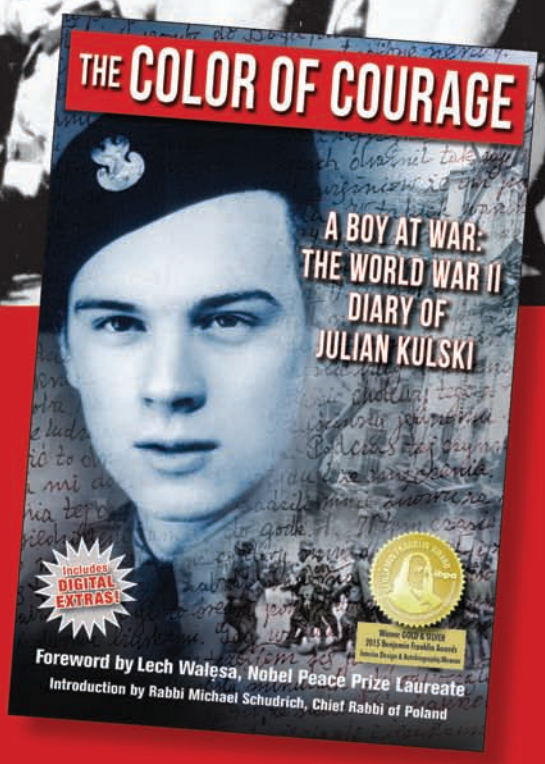

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Editorial

Three quarters of a century have passed since the epic Battle of Midway.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, THE PIVOTAL BATTLE OF WORLD WAR II in the Pacific occurred in the waters surrounding an otherwise obscure atoll, Midway, roughly 1,300 miles from Pearl Harbor, where American involvement in the conflict had begun so suddenly just six months earlier.

The miracle that was Midway is no less astounding today than it was in the aftermath of the stunning American victory June 4-7, 1942. A series of events had to break in favor of the Americans, seriously understrength against the might of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Was it luck? Divine providence? The Battle of Midway has been studied, analyzed, written about, and even refought in cyberspace over the last 7½ decades. No conclusion seems totally satisfying; however, the fact remains that men make fateful decisions—and they make mistakes.

In retrospect, remembering a few of those key decisions and miscalculations along with the heroism and devotion to duty exhibited during those days is fitting as we mark this anniversary. Here is a sampling.

Joe Rochefort was a most unlikely hero. Yet he and his team of cryptanalysts at Station Hypo in Hawaii cracked the Japanese code that led them to conclude the next target of an enemy offensive would indeed be Midway. A message concerning "AF," the Japanese designation for the tiny atoll, baited the enemy into confirming the objective.

The aircraft carrier *Yorktown,* badly damaged at the Battle of the Coral Sea, would require several months of repair, or so it was thought. Admiral Chester Nimitz gave Navy and civilian workmen 72 hours to make the carrier battleworthy—and they did. *Yorktown* sailed with some workers still aboard.

U.S. Navy Task Forces 16 and 17 made their rendezvous northeast of Midway at coordinates aptly named "Point Luck."

Though Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, aboard *Yorktown*, was senior to Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, he deferred to the Spruance, who commanded the carriers *Enterprise* and *Hornet* and was in better position to direct the developing engagement. Spruance was not an aviator and had never commanded a warship larger than a cruiser. Nevertheless, he gambled and turned his two flattops into the wind to launch every plane he had against the enemy.

Under normal circumstances, Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey would have led the American fleet into battle. However, a serious skin condition kept him hospitalized in Hawaii.

Intrepid airman Wade McClusky made the decision to continue the search for the Japanese fleet even as his dive bombers neared the point of no return, their fuel tanks rapidly running dry. He chose to follow a laggard enemy destroyer that was, he hoped, racing to rejoin the enemy force. McClusky was right, and three Japanese aircraft carriers became flaming pyres. A fourth was sunk later.

Elsewhere in the air, fighters based at Midway under Major Floyd "Red" Parks heroically defended against a Japanese air raid, contributing to the fateful decision of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo to switch his attack planes back and forth from torpedoes to bombs. Ordnance and gasoline lines were lying about on the Japanese carrier decks when McClusky's pilots and others appeared overhead to deliver their death blows.

Oh yes ... American torpedo plane crews, set upon by Japanese Zero fighters like wolves shredding a flock of sheep, made their sacrifice count. When the deadly U.S. Navy dive bombers arrived, they were clear to attack the enemy carriers without interference from the Japanese fighters.

Of course, there were many more instances of bravery, miscalculation, and happenstance. But the fortunes of war smiled on the Americans at Midway and changed the course of history.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Christopher Miskimon

Death of a Panzer Ace

Legendary tank commander Michael Wittmann met his end in a fiery ambush on August 8, 1944.

DURING THE LATE MORNING OF AUGUST 8, 1944, GERMAN SS-OBERFÜHRER (Colonel) Kurt "Panzer" Meyer sat in his staff car as his driver made his way toward the town of Cintheaux, France, near the front lines. A British attack was underway, and Meyer commanded the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitler Youth, directly in the enemy's path.

As the two men proceeded north, a dismaying sight greeted them. Scores of German infantrymen were moving southward, retreating in disarray. The scene was one of utter chaos, something Meyer immediately set out to change. Taking up his carbine, the SS officer sprang from the staff car and waded into the midst of the fleeing men. Alone, he exhorted to his men to stop running and rally to him. Making a brave display, his urging succeeded and the men around him were restored to order.

Soon after, Meyer met with Sturmbahnführer (Major) Hans Waldmuller, a member of his unit. They drove to a gently sloping rise in the terrain near the village of Gaumesnil. There they found a barn and climbed to its top carrying their binoculars. What they saw no doubt daunted them. In the distance the spearheads of two British armored divisions were assembling to resume the Allied attack. Tanks, halftracks, and Bren carriers were spread before them like an enormous pride of lions, predators ready to close in for the kill.

Meyer knew there was little behind him to stop this wave of destruction from advancing all the way to Falaise. If they succeeded the German defenses for this entire region might collapse. His troops were too weak to defend, so he decided they would attack instead. Meyer quickly issued orders for all the Hitler Youth forces in the area to counterattack north at 12:30 PM. It was a desperate move, but if it worked the British timetable would be disrupted, allowing time for other German units to arrive and man prepared defensive positions farther to the rear. They had only a half hour to prepare.

All the troops in the immediate area were under Waldmuller's command. There were about 20 tanks from SS Panzer Regiment 12, most of which were Panzer IV models. With them were about 500 infantrymen from I Battalion, SS Regiment 25. However, the force Meyer was most likely depending upon to tilt the balance in his favor were the heavy Tiger tanks of the 2nd Company, SS Heavy Tank Battalion 101, under the command of Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Michael Wittmann, a panzer ace with many tank kills to the credit of

National Archives

ABOVE: The strain of combat appears evident even on the face of German tank ace Michael Wittmann, photographed in Normandy in June 1944, shortly before his death. UPPER LEFT: In this painting by artist Barry Spicer, SS Captain Michael Wittmann's tank, Tiger No. 205, is shown during operations in Normandy. Wittmann was one of the most successful German tank aces of World War II. He lost his life in combat on August 8, 1944.

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Michael Wittmann's PzKpfw. VI Tiger tank, its high-velocity 88mm cannon jutting menacingly from its turret, leads a column of heavy armor along a dirt road in Normandy in June 1944.

himself and his crew. Though Meyer could not have known it, he had just given the orders that would send the famous Wittmann to his death.

Thanks to the skilled machine of Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, Michael Wittmann was a national hero in wartime Germany. He was born just before the start of World War I, on April 22, 1914, the son of a farmer. As a young man he served two years in the German Army before enlisting in the SS, joining the Liebstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, a regiment-sized unit later expanded to division strength. When the war began Wittmann served in the 1939 Polish campaign and the Balkan invasion of 1940. The young soldier was promoted to Oberscharführer (sergeant) during the early months of Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, where he showed a knack for knocking out enemy tanks. Sensing his ability, his superiors sent Wittmann for officer training. He returned to the unit in December 1942 and was assigned to the division's Tiger tank company. As a member of this unit he fought with distinction at the Battle of Kursk.

After the battle his company was used as the cadre of the newly formed SS Heavy Tank Battalion 101. In January 1944, Wittmann was awarded the Knight's Cross for his record of more than 90 enemy tanks destroyed. By March he was in command of his company. The battalion was transferred to France just in time to meet the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. Thrown into the battle, Wittmann's battalion fought hard, and the toughness of their Tiger tanks caused much consternation among Allied troops.

On the morning of June 13, 1944, his company was positioned near the French village of Villers-Bocage in expectation of a British attack there. His company was only at about half strength. When the British attack came sooner than expected, Wittmann and his Tigers went into action, destroying around 30 vehicles and antitank guns; at least 10 British tanks were lost. During the furious battle Wittmann's own Tiger was disabled, so he and his crew fled on foot to the safety of German lines. The panzer ace would continue to fight, amassing a tally of 139 tank kills before his death in August.

The battle in which Wittmann met his doom was part of the larger action surrounding Operation Totalize, a British offensive aimed at capturing the high ground around the city of Falaise. German forces were gradually being trapped in a pocket nearby and seizing Falaise would help seal that pocket. The operation was under the command of Canadian General Guy Simonds, the II Canadian Corps commander. The plan for Totalize involved several phases. In the first, a pair of infantry divisions would attack along the main road leading from Caen to Falaise. Seven mobile columns would infiltrate between the Germans' forward defensive positions toward targets deep in the Nazi rear area. These columns were tank heavy, and the assigned infantry were mounted in armored vehicles to maintain a rapid advance. The bypassed positions would be finished off by more infantry following behind the mobile columns.

The attack went well, and by noon of August 8 the German lines had been pierced to a depth of six kilometers. This gap was particularly bad in the area of the German 89th Division, where Meyer and his Hitler Youth were placed. In front of them the second phase of the offensive was beginning. The Canadians and British were unaware the Germans were in such disarray and were waiting for an airstrike planned for 12:26 PM. This strike was composed of 681 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers hitting six separate targets during the early afternoon. The two British tank divisions Meyer had watched from the barn were only waiting for the airstrike to begin their attack.

While Meyer and Waldmuller planned the counterattack, Wittmann and four of his Tigers were sitting behind a tree-lined hedgerow about 600 meters southeast. Their crews had carefully camouflaged them to protect against the incessantly roving Allied fighter bombers. Within minutes Wittmann received a call to meet with Meyer and Waldmuller in nearby Cintheaux. His own tank, Tiger 205, was undergoing repairs so he was using Tiger 007, the battalion commander's vehicle. It took only a few minutes for the tank to arrive there; Wittmann joined his two superiors as they finished their plans.

As they gave Wittmann his orders for the impending attack, all three saw a sight that spurred them to move even more quickly. A single Allied bomber flew overhead, flares dropping from its bomb bay. Meyer had seen this before; the plane was marking the target area for a massive airstrike. The bomber force was likely less than 10 minutes away. It made the counterattack even more necessary. If the German troops stayed where they were the bombers would decimate them, leaving them an easy target for the advancing British tanks. The attack had to start now. Wittman rushed back to his tank and rejoined the other three. The camouflage was hastily torn away, and soon all four tanks were moving north. Accounts vary, but at least one more Tiger, possibly another three, also moved toward the British from a few hundred meters east.

To the north, the British waited to advance. One of their units, the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, was an armored unit equipped with M4 Sherman tanks. This unit had formed a task force with a battalion of the famous Black Watch. Together they had seized the town of St. Aignan the night before. During the battle the tanks of A Squadron engaged four German self-propelled guns, losing a trio of Shermans from Number 2 Troop. Two of the enemy vehicles were knocked out by the Troop's Sherman Firefly, an up-gunned Sherman mounting a powerful British 17-pounder cannon. After defeating the Nazi armor, the British broke through to St. Aignan, capturing it at around 4:30 AM. The remaining tanks of A Squadron took up defensive positions in a group of orchards southwest of the town

known as Delle de la Roque.

The experienced German troops of the Hitler Youth got their spoiling attack underway quickly. Wittmann's tank and three other Tigers rumbled slowly north-northwest one after another in a column. Artillery fire rained down upon them but did not stop their advance. To the northwest were British tanks of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, another Sherman-equipped outfit with a few Fireflies in their order of battle. The column formation gave them some protection, and the German tanks stopped occasionally in the small low spots of the terrain to return fire at the distant British tanks. The range was long, around 1,800 meters, but that was still close enough for their deadly 88mm cannon to knock out several Shermans. Wittmann's Tigers continued their northwestward counterattack unaware that A Squadron of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry was to their northeast, concealed in the orchards.

Wittmann's movements were being watched by Meyer and his medical officer, Doctor Wolfgang Rabe. They watched their own tanks move through the enemy barrage, exchange fire with the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, and continue their advance. No sooner had they done so than the sky to the north filled with Allied bombers. A German panzergrenadier near Meyer remarked, "What an honor! Churchill is sending a bomber for each of us!" They all began to run north from the village into the surrounding fields. Just as they cleared the village, bombs began raining down on it.

The western side of the Delle de la Roque orchards was occupied by A Squadron's 3 Troop. The unit was led by a Lieutenant James and was slightly understrength, having three standard Shermans and one Firefly, commanded by a Sergeant Gordon. A hedgerow lined with trees provided cover to the troop's tanks as their crews watched for the enemy through gaps in the hedge. Soon they saw Wittmann's Tigers moving generally north at a distance of 1,200 meters. Gordon radioed the squadron headquarters informing them of the sighting. He was told to hold his fire until the squadron's second in command, Captain Boardman, arrived.

Boardman reached 3 Troop quickly in his own tank as sporadic German mortar and artillery fire started falling around the orchard. As they all watched, the Nazi armor continued moving in the same direction, apparently unaware of the British tankers watching them. This emboldened the Englishmen to wait, allowing the Tigers to get closer. Soon the range was down to 800 meters, and the Tigers were moving perpendicular to the orchard, exposing their thinner side armor. The Firefly could destroy a Tiger at this range, but it was still doubtful for the regular Shermans, so Gordon told the other tank commanders to stay put while his Firefly engaged the distant Tigers. It was 12:39 PM.

Gordon had his tank move forward until it was just outside the orchard's southern edge. This gave the Firefly a better field of fire to take on the Tigers. The tank clanked forward, Gordon keeping his head out of the hatch, leaving him more exposed but giving him a better view of his targets. He apparently could see only three of the Tigers and told his gunner to engage the rear vehicle. With a little luck, the other two crews would not notice the destruction of their fellows, giving Gordon and his men more time to fire on them.

The gunner, Joe Ekins, aimed carefully through his sight at the chosen Tiger. He was known in the unit as a crack shot despite the fact he had only fired a half-dozen 17-pounder rounds in his life. The young man was nervous. Despite his fear, he later recalled his thoughts were rather more aggressive: "Get the bastard before he gets you." Ekins took careful aim. The 17-pounder gun created a violent muzzle blast and pressure inside the tank when fired.

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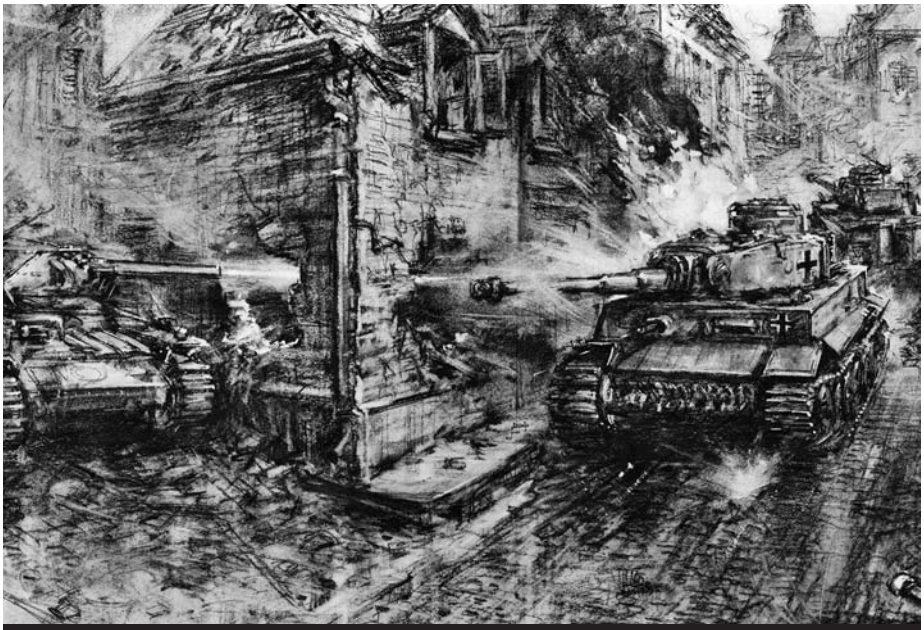

Based on an eyewitness account of the action at Villers-Bocage, this illustration depicts German and British tanks firing at one another in the streets of the town. Wittmann accomplished an incredible feat at the town, destroying a large number of British tanks and armored vehicles singlehandedly.

As Ekins made ready, the crew covered their ears, closed their eyes, and opened their mouths, all to reduce the effect of the gun on their tender human forms.

When Gordon gave the order, Ekins pushed his right foot down on the floor-mounted button for the main gun. With a great noise, flash, and rush of fumes, the cannon fired, sending a projectile toward the Tiger at almost 3,000 feet per second. His loader quickly slammed another round into the cannon's chamber, and Ekins fired again. Both rounds struck true, and within moments flames engulfed the once fearsome Tiger. With its firing position now revealed, Gordon ordered the Firefly's driver to pull back into the orchard to avoid any return fire.

It proved a wise decision. As the British tank backed up, the turret of the second Tiger in line began to swing toward them. As soon as it faced them, the German tank fired a heavy 88mm round. Luckily, the enemy gunner missed, though he sent two more rounds past them as the Firefly disappeared into the cover of the trees. Ekins recalled watching the turret of the Tiger traversing toward him, likening the 88mm gun to something that might sit on a battleship, it appeared so big. Unfortunately, he then realized his tank's commander was gone!

Unbeknownst to the crew inside the tank, Sergeant Gordon's risk in keeping his head outside the hatch had not paid off. As the enemy's last round rushed by the tank, Gordon's hatch had crashed down on his head. No one knows if this was caused by the 88mm projectile striking the hatch, a tree branch, or simply the motion of the tank, any of which can cause an unsecured hatch to swing shut. Gordon was nearly unconscious from the impact and staggered down from the turret. Even worse, the hapless Gordon was almost immediately wounded as German indirect fire adjusted into the orchard. With both a head injury and shrapnel wounds, the Firefly's commander was out of the fight.

The troop commander, Lieutenant James, decided to take command of Gordon's tank and continue the fight. It was a prudent move since the Firefly was the only tank able to take on the remaining Tigers. He dashed to it from his own Sherman, running through the German fire and climbing up the vehicle and into the hatch. Once there he ordered the driver to move to an alternate firing site, something a well-trained crew would have picked out whenever they occupied a new defensive position. It took a few minutes, but at 12:47 the Firefly was ready for another go at Wittmann's tanks.

James told the driver to pull forward so they could fire. He did so, exposing the tank but giving Ekins a chance to engage the Tiger that had fired at them a few minutes earlier. Once again the crew braced for the shock of firing the main gun as Ekins aligned his sights on the second Tiger. Whether he noticed the number 007 painted on the turret sides is unknown, though he was likely concentrating on the side of the hull, where the armor was thinner and there would be more of the tank in the gunsight surrounding his exact aiming point. Ekins received the order to fire and again pushed down his right foot, the sole of his boot depressing the firing button.

The muzzle flash was blinding, and for a second or two Ekins and his fellow crewman did not know if he hit the target. Any fears were allayed, however, when the air in front of the Firefly cleared, showing smoke coming from the Tiger. Even better, within a few seconds a large explosion filled the air with flame and smoke. The Tiger's ammunition had cooked off, throwing the tank's turret high into the air. Though the Firefly crew could not have known it, they had just ended the career—and life—of one of Germany's most famous panzer aces.

Despite Wittmann's death, the battle was not over. James ordered the Firefly to back into the orchard again, away from any fire the remaining Tiger could send their way. According to British accounts, a few Shermans with 75mm guns now tried to engage the last Tiger (these accounts never mention any other Tigers present though it is fairly certain there were more). They moved to close the range so their slower-moving rounds might knock out the Tiger. Numerous rounds pelted the German vehicle like hail. This appeared to rattle the driver as the tank began to move around, changing direction rapidly even though none of the rounds penetrated the armor. One British observer recalled the Tiger seemed to be "milling around wondering how he could escape."

Even Captain Boardman ordered his tank forward to engage the remaining Tiger, and Lt. James soon had the Firefly come back out to shoot at it. At this point the accounts differ; Boardman claims his tank fired a round that stopped the panzer, but Ekins remembers differently. He recalled the Tiger was still in motion when he put two 17-pounder rounds into it. This caused the tank to burst into flame. Ekins did not see any of the crew get out. The time now was 12:52. In less than 15 minutes a single Firefly had destroyed three Tigers with only five rounds of ammunition. Even better, a few minutes later a different Firefly destroyed two Mark IV panzers with only two shots at the extreme range of 1,645 meters. The action ended with the British scoring a lopsided victory while Germany lost one of its war heroes and at least five precious tanks, three of them irreplaceable Tigers.

This short but sharp battle showed the grim reality of tank warfare. While volumes can be written on the technical specifications of various tanks or the training and experience of their crews, warfare is more than just lining up a given number of tanks on each side and having them go at each other. Air and artillery support each had their effect on this fight. When Ger-

man tank units were fighting defensively they caused damage out of proportion to their numbers. When they were attacking, which became increasingly rare in the West as the war continued, their losses grew significantly.

In combat between tanks, the crew that spotted the enemy first and fired first generally had a significant edge over their opponent, technical details or previous crew experience notwithstanding. The skilled use of cover and concealment also factor into battlefield victory along with aggressiveness, terrain, and pure luck. All of these things combined on August 8, 1944, and resulted in the death of one of Germany's greatest tank officers in a few minutes of fighting. Despite their nominally superior tanks and likely greater experience, the Tiger force failed to knock out or even damage a single Sherman. In this instance the German advantages were negated by a skillfully conducted ambush.

The details of the battle as they are conveyed here are contested by some, though this is largely accepted as the most likely version of events. When Joe Ekins opened fire on the rearmost Tiger he could see, there were other tanks firing at them from the Sherbrooke Fusiliers at a range of about 1,100 meters. When he engaged Tiger 007 a few minutes later, those Canadian tanks were still nearby and may have been firing at Wittmann's panzers. Some claim a shot from one of their Fireflies ended the panzer ace's days. Some have even claimed a Hawker Typhoon fighter bomber destroyed Wittmann's tank with a rocket, though a study of the 2nd Tactical Air Force's logs largely disproved this theory.

The confusion inherent to any battlefield renders difficult any conclusive answer to the question of who killed Michael Wittmann. While it could have been someone else, postwar research and the consistency of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry's war diary when it is compared to what is known from the German side make a convincing case that Wittmann met his death at their hands. German accounts denote only one Tiger, Number 007, had its turret blown off when it was destroyed that day.

Doctor Rabe saw several tanks go up in flames. He attempted to find surviving crew members, but British fire kept him back. He waited two hours for any survivors to make their way back to German lines, but none did and he eventually withdrew. After the battle the dead panzer crewmen were buried in an unmarked grave. Decades later they were located and reburied at a military cemetery in La Cambe, Normandy. Wittmann's body was identified, and today his grave is marked with a small tombstone.

Joe Ekins survived the war and returned home to work in a shoe factory and raise a family. For the most part he stayed out of the arguments about who killed Wittmann; he had not even known Wittmann was in one the Tigers he shot up until eight years after the war. He never claimed to be solely responsible for killing Wittmann, and in all fairness the battle was a group effort by several British and Canadian units. In an interview before his death, Ekins did state, seemingly without rancor and matter of factly, that Wittmann, having willingly served Hitler and the Nazi regime, got the fate he deserved. Ekins passed away in 2012.

Certainly, the battle that ended Wittmann's life gained more notoriety after the war. Only in the succeeding decades have the details and controversies of August 8, 1944, arisen. Though it is now seen as a great feat of arms, the war diary of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry summed it up at the time with studied understatement. "Three Tigers in 12 minutes is not bad business."

Author Christopher Miskimon is a regular contributor to WWII History. *He writes the regular books column and is an officer in the Colorado National Guard's 157th Regiment.*

By Mark Carlson

National Archives

Damn the Torpedoes!

From duds to deadly, the Mark 14 torpedo was troublesome in the beginning for American submariners.

LIEUTENANT DAN DASPIT, CAPTAIN OF THE U.S. SUBMARINE *TINOSA* COULD NOT believe his luck. Framed neatly in the periscope eyepiece was a sitting duck. The 19,250-ton Japanese tanker *Tonan Maru No. 3* was all alone, dead in the water. *Tinosa* was on her second war patrol, having left Midway atoll on July 7, 1943. For a week she had been prowling along the Japanese sea routes between Borneo and Truk. On the afternoon of July 24, Daspit spotted a thin trail of gray funnel smoke on the horizon. Remaining submerged, he set up a textbook approach and fired four Mark 14 torpedoes at the ship, which was making only 10 knots. Every one of his "fish" ran true. Thirty seconds later, the sonarman heard the repeated thumps of the torpedoes striking the hull, but no explosions. The tanker turned and increased speed.

Swearing, Daspit turned in pursuit. After a long nighttime chase, he was in position to try again. His torpedomen checked every fish to make sure it was working perfectly. Then, coming at the tanker from the starboard quarter, he fired two more torpedoes. Both hit and exploded. The muted rumble echoed through *Tinosa*'s hull. The crew cheered.

The *Tonan Maru* had been hit in the engine room and coasted to a stop. An experienced submarine commander, Daspit took his time approaching the ship's port side. He would fire one torpedo at a time from 1,000 yards, aimed to strike the tanker's hull at exactly 90 degrees. The 680 pounds of high-explosive Torpex would blast a huge hole in the hull. Two or three fish should send her to the bottom. The tanker could not run. T*inosa* was going to hang the huge *Tonan Maru*'s scalp on her belt.

At 0930 hours, *Tinosa* fired her first torpedo. It ran straight and true. The wake was a long deadly white finger reaching out to touch the helpless ship. Then nothing happened. The torpedo had failed to explode. This was nothing new to the American submarine fleet, so Daspit fired again. No towering column of water erupted from the tanker's hull. No crushing roar echoed through the deep.

Gritting his teeth in frustration, the sub's skipper fired again. And again. Five, then six deadly Mark 14 torpedoes, the most advanced antiship weapons in the U.S. inventory failed to explode. The fifth one appeared to raise a tall plume of white water as a tinny "Phwyinng!" noise came through the hull. Number six broached and leaped after striking the enemy's hull, then sank.

Then the tables turned. The *Tonan Maru* had radioed a distress call. A Japanese destroyer was coming with a bone in her teeth. *Tinosa* had to depart the area fast.

Daspit fired two more torpedoes at the tanker as his submarine turned away. The sonarman reported that both weapons seemed to hit and then stop.

As his sub raced eastward, Daspit wrote of the frustrating hunt in his log. "I find it hard to convince myself that I saw this." He had no explanation for why the torpedoes failed to explode. Out of 15 Mark 14s fired, only two had detonated, and those had been fired from what was considered to be a very oblique angle. The others were so carefully set up as to be right out of the textbook. Yet not one had done its job.

Daspit headed directly back to Pearl Harbor doing what no American sub skipper ever wanted to do, returning with an "empty bag." He was met at the Sub Pier by the new Commander, Submarines, Pacific (COMSUBPAC), Rear Admiral Charles Lockwood, a career submarine officer. Lockwood was a hard-driving, conscientious officer who had the reputation for giving full support to his squadrons, his boats, his commanders, and their crews. He

U.S. Navy sailors load a Mark 14 torpedo aboard a submarine at the New London, Connecticut, base in 1943. Trouble with reliability dogged the Mark 14 and proved frustrating for submarine crews who risked their lives to attack Japanese ships.

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Naval History and Heritage Command

A week after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the submarine USS *Seawolf* fired a total of eight torpedoes at an enemy freighter. Only one of the unreliable torpedoes struck home, and it failed to explode.

took Daspit up to his office where the exasperated sub skipper related what had happened with the *Tonan Maru*.

Lockwood listened, nodding. He later wrote, "I expected a torrent of cuss words, damning me, the Bureau of Ordnance, the Newport Torpedo Station and the base torpedo shop. I couldn't have blamed him. 19,000-ton tankers don't grow on trees. I think Dan was so furious as to be practically speechless."

But when the single torpedo *Tinosa* had brought back to Pearl was examined at the Submarine Base torpedo shop, it was found to be in perfect working order.

Lieutenant Commander Daspit's report was the most recent and extreme case of what had been a growing problem within the U.S. submarine fleet since the beginning of the war. From the first patrols after the Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC), Admiral Chester Nimitz, had ordered unrestricted submarine warfare on all Japanese shipping, submarine commanders had been complaining of torpedoes that failed to work properly. On December 14, one week after Pearl Harbor, the USS *Seawolf* encountered a Japanese freighter near the Philippines and fired eight torpedoes. Seven missed, one hit. And failed to explode.

So began the litany of problems with the Navy's technical marvel. In the first months of war, American subs fired 97 torpedoes at enemy shipping. Only three ships were sunk. Some failed to explode, while others, even though aimed with care, seemed to miss or run under their target. Even worse, several had blown up before hitting the side of a Japanese ship.

Torpedoes were the first totally autonomous guided missile. The German Navy had sunk hundreds of Allied ships in World War I with torpedoes, and by 1925 the latest versions were highly complex machines. The Mark 14 was developed to replace the older, shorter Mark 10 that had been in service during and after World War I.

Designed primarily by engineers at the Navy Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd), the Mark 14 was built at the Newport Torpedo Station (NTS) beginning in 1926. At 21 feet long, 21 inches in diameter, and weighing more than 3,000 pounds, the Mark 14s were large and expensive weapons. Powered by steam, they could run for 9,000 yards (5.1 miles) at 46 knots. They were extremely complex and required the most meticulous machine and assembly work. By 1940, they cost upward of $10,000 each, five times as much as a new automobile.

The most important component was the Mark 6 exploder, without which the torpedo would be useless. The certain way to sink a ship was to break its back at the keel. This often caused a ship to break in two. Obviously, this required a torpedo to explode under the hull. To this end BuOrd had designed the new exploder based on the successful British Duplex and German magnetic mine designs. Its most radical feature was the magnetic influence exploder, Project G53. It was a closely guarded secret, so much so that even though a maintenance and operating manual had been written it was never printed or distributed.

The magnetic exploder was triggered by the influence of a steel hull as it passed directly beneath a ship, where there was no armor. For this reason, the first Mark 14s carried a moderate warhead. BuOrd was under a tight budget and saw no reason to spend money on unnecessary testing. Only one test of the Mark 6 was conducted in May 1926. The target, ironically, was a derelict submarine. Two Mark 14s armed with the magnetic exploder were fired at the sub. One ran under the target and failed to detonate. The second one exploded and sank the sub. What was not being taken into account were variations in the Earth's magnetic field. The Mark 6 was highly sensitive and too likely to detonate with even minor fluctuations. This was not considered a flaw, and in 1934 the Mark 6 was approved for fleet use.

No further testing was done. The U.S. submarine force went into combat with a torpedo with a 50 percent failure rate.

In 1939, the Navy demanded a larger warhead, and BuOrd authorized its increase to 680 pounds, enough to tear open the most sturdy hull. But, as events proved in the first year of the war, the magnetic exploder worked too well. Several sub skippers fired at their targets only to witness premature detonation well before the torpedo was close enough to do serious damage. Often the enemy ship suffered little more than dented plates that were easily repaired.

Naval History and Heritage Command

Rear Admiral Charles Lockwood (left), commander of U.S. Navy submarines in the Pacific, and Commander Charles Momsen (right) conducted tests of the Mark 14 torpedo and found the system inadequate for combat.

The Mark 6 also had a contact exploder, which consisted of a trigger, firing pin, and detonator. In essence it was not much different from a gun's trigger, firing pin, and the primer in a cartridge. When the torpedo struck a ship's hull, the head was rammed backward, driving the firing pin into the detonator over the warhead, causing it to explode. The contact exploder was intended to provide a backup in the event that the magnetic pistol failed to work. But since the warhead exploded even before contact with the hull, it was useless.

By mid-1942, more than 800 torpedoes had been used in the Pacific War. Eighty percent had failed. But at Pearl Harbor, COMSUBPAC Admiral Robert English consistently sided with BuOrd and blamed his sub skippers for their "lack of initiative." But the man who would soon change everything, Rear Admiral Charles Lockwood, then commanding submarines in the Southwest Pacific and based in Australia, was listening to his own submarine skippers.

He undertook an unofficial test of the torpedoes in June 1942.

Lockwood supervised firing torpedoes set to specific depths through a submerged net. This was the first real test of the Mark 14 since 1926. The holes in the net showed that the torpedoes were running far below the set depth, sometimes as much as 10 to 15 feet. This was conclusive proof, but again BuOrd dismissed the findings and said the submarine commanders were not trimming the torpedoes properly.

Finally, under pressure from Admiral Nimitz, himself a former submariner, BuOrd conducted its own tests in August 1942. The root of the depth-setting problem had been the fault of BuOrd. When they increased the size of the warhead, which made the weapon heavier, they failed to make changes in the mechanism that controlled depth.

Yet the erratic depth was only one of three major problems with the torpedoes. Dozens of torpedoes were exploding well before reaching the target. The cause was the hypersensitive magnetic exploder. It was being triggered by a combination of the Earth's magnetic field and the approach to a ship's hull. These problems should have been found and fixed long before the war began.

Rear Admiral Lockwood was appointed COMSUBPAC in January 1943. When his captains turned in numerous reports of premature explosions or duds, BuOrd steadfastly maintained that there was nothing wrong with the torpedoes, but that the problem lay with bad approaches and poor maintenance. This naturally started a furor among the submarine fleet personnel. U.S. sub crews were risking their lives for nothing. The transports and warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy sailed on, unmolested.

Lockwood requested permission to disconnect the magnetic exploders on the torpedoes, but BuOrd would not allow it. The submarine crews were forbidden to do anything beyond regular maintenance to the torpedoes. They were not to touch the Mark 6 exploders. To prevent any unauthorized tampering, BuOrd ordered that the Sub Base torpedo shop apply dabs of paint to the screws that held the exploder mechanism to the torpedo body. Any attempt to remove or tamper with it would mar the paint. With the zeal that American military men sometimes take when going against orders, some torpedomen went into the shop and asked about the color of paint. If they were told it was blue, they found a small can of blue paint to retouch the screw heads after they had personally worked on the exploders. In the event a torpedo was returned to the shop, there was no way for anyone to

Naval History and Heritage Command

This photo was taken during the test of the Mark 14 torpedo off Newport, Rhode Island, on May 26, 1926. This torpedo, one of two fired, missed the targeted submarine hulk and failed to explode.

know the mechanism had been touched.

As the number of duds and premature explosions rose, there could be no doubt something had to change. In the summer of 1943, Lockwood flew to Washington and defended his skippers to BuOrd, demanding that something be done. In June, under pressure from the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Ernest J. King, the order came down to disconnect the magnetic exploders from all the torpedoes. When the *Tinosa* left Midway on her second patrol this had been done. Lt. Cmdr. Daspit had every reason to believe his load of Mark 14s would do the job. This proved to be a forlorn hope. While the *Tinosa*'s patrol was not the incident that broke the camel's back, it was the most appalling. The complaints continued to mount. Lockwood's staff began a systematic examination of the problem.

That is when Lockwood took personal action. In order to convince BuOrd that the problem was not with his subs, skippers, or crews but with the torpedoes, he called in Commander Charles B. Momsen. "Swede" Momsen, whose outspoken habit of going against the official grain had earned him few friends in the Pentagon, was one of the most innovative submarine engineers in the Navy. He had overseen the rescue of the crew of the USS *Squalus* after it sank off Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1939. He was the inventor of the Momsen Lung, the portable breathing device that saved hundreds of submariners from sunken subs. He was also the father of the submarine rescue chamber that had become part of the Navy inventory since 1939. The modern submarine Navy owes the lives of many of its men to Swede Momsen.

Momsen was in command of Submarine Squadron (SubRon) 2. Even after the BuOrd order, the reports of dud hits continued to pour in. Momsen, who had to endure the frustration of his skippers carrying useless torpedoes all the way to Japan for nothing, began to apply his engineer's mind to the solution.

The first step was to find out why the contact exploder did not work, even when fired under optimal conditions. He scoured charts of the waters around the Hawaiian Islands to find a place where sheer vertical cliffs went right down to deep water and a sandy bottom where torpedoes could be recovered after firing. An area on the coast of the small island of Kahoolawe was perfect. Momsen, along with COMSUBPAC's gunnery and torpedo officer, Commander Art Taylor, supervised live firings from the USS *Muskellunge* at the cliffs beginning on August 31.

The first two exploded. The third one did not. Momsen himself went into the water to examine the torpedo. It was broken in two with the warhead split. Taking extreme care, the crew hoisted the unexploded torpedo onto a barge and took it back to Pearl Harbor. After disconnecting the warhead, Momsen and his crew found the reason for the failure. The contact exploder, while a marvel of engineering, was both too ruggedly built and too delicate.

This was further studied by sliding a torpedo warhead filled with sand and a live exploder down a cable from a 90-foot "cherry picker" crane onto a steel plate to simulate different angles and speeds of impact. Seventy percent of the hits failed to explode.

This further proved what Momsen had begun to suspect. Submarine commanders had been told that the best and most certain angle to fire a torpedo at a target was from exactly 90 degrees, or broadside on. Acute angles were less desirable. But as was shown by *Tinosa*'s experience, this was not true. Daspit had fired eight torpedoes at exactly 90-degree angles and not one had gone off. Ironically, the first two he had fired that morning after the long chase both detonated, even though they struck the tanker's hull at a very oblique angle.

Momsen and Taylor realized that the contact exploder's firing pin was being distorted in a head-on impact, and the deceleration forces slowed the pin's motion in its bearings. The spring failed to move it fast enough to set off the explosive charge. Examination of the primer showed hardly a dent, not nearly enough to ignite the warhead.

The drop test showed that a glancing impact did allow the firing pin to act properly. In other words, the best angle to fire was anything other than dead on.

Interestingly, BuOrd had made a small attempt to find the root of the problem by consulting Albert Einstein at Princeton University. The distinguished physicist examined the Mark 6 blueprints and concluded that the firing pin

A group of naval officers stands behind a Mark 14 torpedo at the Navy's Keyport, Washington, ordnance testing facility. Torpedo testing was often inconclusive and time consuming.

was being distorted by the impact. He recommended that a "void" between the outer shell and the firing mechanism would eliminate the problem. But BuOrd did not follow his suggestion. Momsen showed the test results to Lockwood, who then took them to Washington. He returned a few days later, as he said in his official war diary, "madder than hell." BuOrd finally admitted the exploder was at fault and committed to designing a new one. But that would take a year or more.

Then Momsen told Lockwood that it should be possible to rebuild the contact exploder with different materials. The exploder had to be both light and strong. Exotic alloys proved to be the key. The machine shop at the Sub Base obtained light alloys, from, remarkably enough, the melted-down engine of a Japanese fighter that had been shot down during the Pearl Harbor attack. New firing pins, springs, and guide tracks were machined and assembled. The new designs were tested and performed exactly as hoped. Yet, the project needed a lot more metal than one engine could provide. Another source was found at Hickam Army Airfield. Aircraft propellers had to be both light and strong. One Army Air Forces officer supposedly said after being asked for as many damaged propellers as he could find, "A better use for a busted prop could not be found anywhere."

Lockwood insisted on every single new exploder being perfect before allowing them to be installed in the torpedoes and loaded into his submarines. With every machine shop at the Sub Base working on it, by the late fall of 1943 the Pacific Fleet's submarines were finally armed with reliable weapons.

Underruns were still a concern. Taylor and Momsen again supervised tests. Firing torpedoes through a series of evenly spaced nets showed that not only were the Mark 14s running well below their set depth; they were not even running flat. They appeared to wobble, like a sine wave, alternately deep and shallow. This was not something that could be fixed at Pearl Harbor. It would have to go right to BuOrd. But at least Lockwood's skippers could make allowances for the erratic depth settings.

When the first reliable torpedoes were sent to sea, the war had been going on for 21 months. Of the 53 U.S. subs lost in World War II, 20 were sunk prior to October 1943. There is no way to know if any were lost due to faulty torpedoes, but there can be no greater frustration than to die without having been able to inflict damage on the enemy. Dozens of patrols had been wasted, hundreds of American lives lost, and important enemy targets missed. At last the problem for the submarine commanders was what it should have been from the beginning: hitting the target. As Lockwood put it, "From that moment on, all major exploder problems suddenly disappeared."

Momsen was promoted to captain and awarded the Legion of Merit for finding and solving the torpedo problem. He had played a significant but little remembered role in assuring that every U.S. submarine went to war against Japan with reliable torpedoes. By August 1945, 1,178 Japanese merchant vessels were sunk, totaling 5,053,491 tons. Of those, 55 percent were sent to the bottom by U.S. submarines.

Author Mark Carlson has written on numerous topics related to World War II and the history of aviation. His book Flying on Film—A Century of Aviation in the Movies 1912-2012 *was recently released. He resides in San Diego, California.*

By Stephen Ruder

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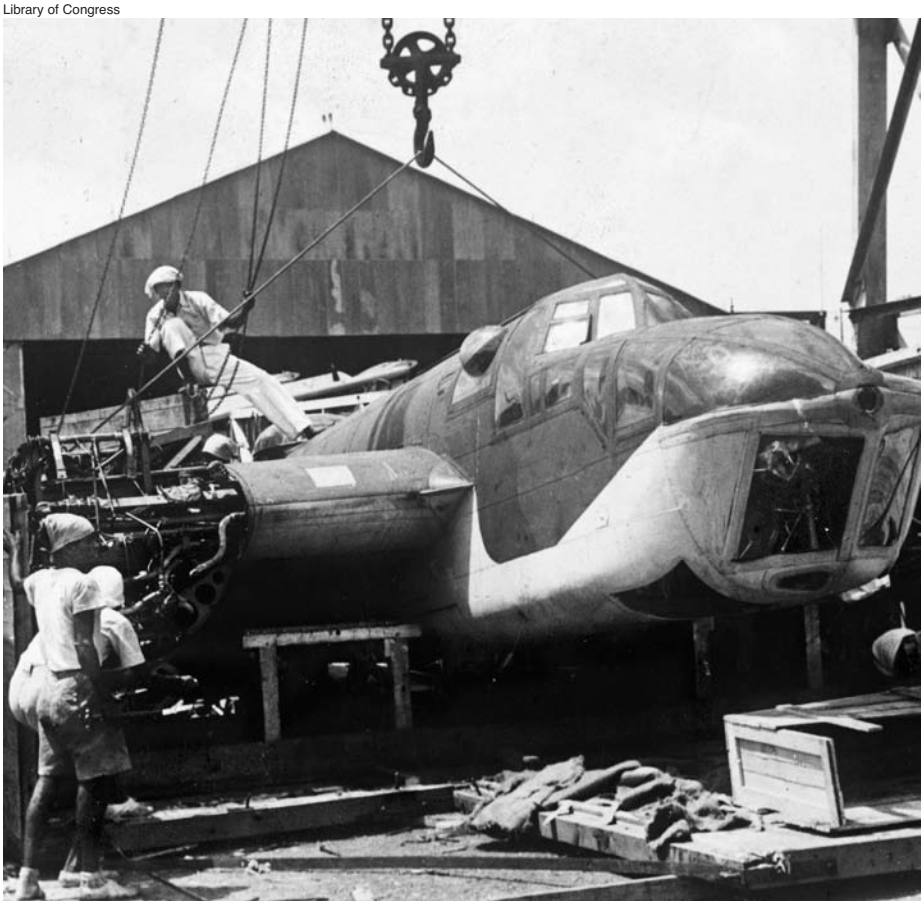

Singapore Double Cross

The strange death of Yoshio Nishimura was explained years after World War II ended.

ON DECEMBER 5, 1934, YOSHIO NISHIMURA, MANAGING DIRECTOR of a major Japanese mining company in British Malaya, collapsed and died in the offices of the Straits Settlements Police Special Branch. A prominent member of Japanese society in Singapore, his death shocked the Japanese expatriate community. Nishimura's death has been shrouded in mystery for over 80 years, and conjecture about his involvement in an espionage ring was rife. However, recently declassified documents from the British National Archives reveal that Nishimura was actually the target of a masterful colonial police double agent operation inspired by the criminal misadventures of an amateur football player turned con man.

Having lived and worked in British Malaya and Singapore for more than eight years, Nishimura was something of an expert on the area just as the Japanese Empire began to look south. After the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1921, the British decided to offset a future Japanese move in the Pacific by building a navy and air force base in Singapore. Work on the naval base only really began to progress in 1932 while the air force base was completed in 1930. As Japanese militarists began to seriously suggest southward expansion, information about the British military buildup in Singapore took on new importance.

Nishimura was a member of the Japanese South Seas Association, a semi-private, semi-governmental organization founded in 1915 to develop and further ties between Southeast Asia and Japan. By the 1920s, the South Seas Association had partially government funded reporters and research centers in cities throughout Southeast Asia, including Singapore. While it openly published much of its information, the South Seas Association also provided information privately to specific businesses and the Japanese government.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Japanese business interests, and increasingly the Japanese government, began looking toward Southeast Asia for new sources of raw materials. In fact, by the late 1920s, Nishimura's employer, the Ishirara Sangyou Koshi (ISY), had become Japan's main source of iron ore, a critical raw material to feed Japan's military buildup. The company grew increasingly closer to the military-dominated government, and by the 1930s it was being used as cover for Japanese espionage in Southeast Asia. The Japanese interest did not go unnoticed as British colonial authorities in Malaya and Singapore became increasingly convinced that Japanese expatriate businessmen like Nishimura were involved in espionage to prepare for an eventual onslaught.

To face the Japanese spies, the British colonial authorities had developed a specialized group of police detectives, the Straits Settlements Police Special Branch. In the early 19th century, Britain expanded its colonial empire into Southeast Asia along the Malay side of the Malacca Straits. The major trading towns of the British colony, Penang, Dinding, Malacca, and Singapore, were collectively known as the "Straits Settlements," and the British colonial police were called the Straits Settlements Police. After Indian and Malay troops refused to be deployed to the Western Front during World War I, the Straits Settlements Police created a Criminal Intelligence Department (CID) in 1917 to detect and neutralize sedition.

To focus on potentially mutinous Indian troops, the Indian colonial authorities transferred a brilliant Indian police officer to the Straits Settlements, Chief

Laborers assemble a British Bristol Blenheim bomber at a Royal Air Force base in Singapore. As World War II approached, Japanese agents, including Yoshio Nishimura (above), were active on the Malay Peninsula, attempting to obtain information on British military installations and other intelligence that could be gleaned.

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Inspector Prithvi Chand. Chand was highly educated and spoke English, Malay, Hindi, and Japanese fluently. He had first joined the Punjab Police in India in 1911. Arriving in Singapore in 1917, Chand was among the first officers in the CID. He set to work investigating unrest among the Indian troops and then, with the worldwide Communist scares of the 1920s, he worked against largely Chinese Communist organizations. In 1933, CID was renamed Special Branch and began to target Japanese espionage in Singapore. Chief Inspector Chand led the way.

Library of Congress

Japanese citizens leave Singapore as war clouds gather. Japanese civilian Yoshio Nishimura became embroiled in espionage activities that eventually drove him to suicide after he was implicated.

While the historical record contains many gaps, we can reconstruct what most likely transpired from the surviving records. Chand was faced with the monumental task of reorienting his agency from investigating Communists to uncovering Japanese espionage. To do it, he would have first scoured the files, looking for a promising lead. He found one. Six years earlier, a Japanese engraver and convicted forger named Hiromichi Kokubo had been reported for attempted espionage. Kokubo, who was doing work for the Singapore naval base, had attempted to purchase sensitive information about the base from another contractor, but the case had been shelved. With new emphasis on Japanese espionage, this report put Kokubo in the crosshairs of Special Branch as a potential Japanese intelligence agent. Chand and his team of detectives decided to see if Kokubo was still interested in military secrets.

Looking through their rosters of snitches and sources, Chand and his men located two likely candidates to play the role of traitors willing to sell secrets. The first was a Javanese con man named Muara Siregar, who had recently been released from prison for running a fake charity and posing as Malayan nobility. With his gift for acting, he would be the "cut-out" responsible for introducing a double agent to Kokubo. The role of double agent was reserved for a local man of mixed European and South Asian heritage, Percy Don. Don was a talented amateur football player who had once worked briefly on the Royal Air Force (RAF) base in Singapore. Chand wanted them to convince Kokubo that Don was a base employee who could secure sensitive military information through a fictitious corrupt RAF sergeant.

In July 1934, Kokubo was plying his trade from a shop on Bencoolen Street in Singapore when he was approached by Siregar, who asked for language lessons. Following the script laid out by Inspector Chand, Siregar, posing as a reporter, casually mentioned he was in a position to sell secrets about the British air base in Singapore through his friend Percy Don, a base employee. Kokubo jumped at the chance and offered the equivalent of approximately $150,000 U.S. (today's exchange rate) for the information.

Chand and his team were probably delighted. Not only did Kokubo take the bait, he immediately began to involve several other expatriate Japanese in Singapore. Kokubo first wrote to a friend in Japan to try to drum up support for the scheme. Then he approached Shoji Ohki, an editor at the local Japanese daily, *The Singapore Nippon*. Ohki joined hesitantly; Kokubo was "in the habit of talking big" and had a bad reputation within the Japanese community in Singapore. Finally, Kokubo approached the prominent Yoshio Nishimura. Despite Kokubo's poor reputation, Nishimura saw the potential value of the information and took what he thought was a calculated risk. Critically, he did not have all the facts. Kokubo had embellished the story, claiming that Don had already displayed a sample classified map of the air base. Without realizing the whirlwind of double dealing and deceit into which he was stepping, the naive Nishimura fronted Kokubo approximately $6,000 U.S. as earnest money for the purchase.

While Nishimura doubtlessly wanted to help Japan, he was no spy, had no military experience, and was unsure if and how to proceed. However, a Japanese merchant marine training ship, the *Giyu Wani Maru,* arrived in Singapore a few weeks later. Nishimura asked the officers aboard the training ship for their opinion of the scheme. While the group was uniformly suspect of Kokubo and his poor reputation, the prospect of obtaining information about the Royal Air Force presence in Singapore proved too tempting to pass up. The training ship officers returned to Japan in October, and within weeks the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) dispatched two intelligence officers to negotiate the sale of the RAF secrets.

Inspector Chand and his detectives were unaware of the details of the Japanese espionage plan, but because they were keeping a watchful eye on Nishimura, Kokubo, and Ohki, they had an inkling. Chand patiently watched and waited.

Armed with the equivalent of approximately $180,000 U.S., secret codes, a camera, and false passports, the pair of IJN intelligence officers arrived in Singapore by ship on November 29, 1934. The leader, Lt. Cmdr. Tetsuhiko Kaseda, posed as an ISY employee. His colleague posed as a reporter.

They were met at the pier by Nishimura and whisked to local hotels, all under the watchful eye of Chand's Special Branch surveillance teams. Over the next five days, Kaseda and the other Japanese met repeatedly with Siregar and Don trying to arrange the exchange of money for secrets.

While Chand was trying to organize a way to lure the Japanese into a trap, Don stalled for time. At the first meeting, on December 1, Don claimed he could not locate the corrupt RAF sergeant with whom he had been dealing and thus could not secure the documents. That evening, Special Branch tried its first lure. Don showed the Japanese documents he claimed had come from the base. However, the two Japanese intelligence officers saw no intelligence value in the information and emphasized to Don that they instead wanted aerial photographs or charts of the RAF base. They showed Don the money they had brought from Japan and sent him on his way.

The following day, December 2, the entire operation almost fell apart when Siregar let slip that Don did not actually work at the base anymore. The Japanese were furious, but Don convinced them to give him one more chance. The corrupt RAF sergeant was still his friend, employment or not. With his double agent nearly exposed, Inspector Chand realized that his entire operation was about to collapse unless he could produce a "corrupt RAF sergeant" in the flesh.

Chand quickly approached the RAF and

arranged for a second double agent to impersonate Don's "corrupt RAF sergeant." The RAF selected Warrant Officer John F. Hall, and on the evening of December 3, he reported for duty with Special Branch. In the meantime, Inspector Chand sent Don back to the Japanese to confidently explain that he would have the information that night.

Late that night, Don, riding in a car provided by the Japanese, picked up Warrant Officer Hall in Paya Lebar near the RAF base in Singapore. The pair pretended to be old friends and used first names while they chatted over a glass of beer with their Japanese driver. Hall then met with Ohki, who was completely fooled by the deception. Inspector Chand had instructed Don to introduce Hall to the two Japanese intelligence officers, but cagily they refused to deal directly with the "corrupt sergeant." Instead, Ohki was to seal the deal. He specifically asked Hall to steal aerial photograph mosaics of the RAF base, the Royal Navy base, and the Straits of Johor, blueprints of the facilities on each base, and communications cypher codes. Hall agreed to do the job for the sum of approximately $150,000 U.S., and he and Don returned to the base early on the morning of December 4. The group agreed to meet later that day for the exchange.

That meeting never took place. Instead, armed with overwhelming evidence, Inspector Chand obtained legal authority to swoop down upon the unsuspecting Japanese.

That evening, police found Lt. Cmdr. Kaseda and his colleague at their hotel. They were detained for immigration violations and their belongings searched. The pair quickly broke down and admitted their mission. Rather than face a diplomatic incident, Special Branch was instructed to escort them to a passenger ship departing for Japan and keep them there under guard until they sailed the next day. As they steamed out of the harbor on December 5, Special Branch quietly arrested Kokubo and Ohki.

In the meantime, Inspector Chand summoned Nishimura for questioning, but when he arrived he was too terrified to speak. Chand took pity and sent him home. The next day, December 5, Chand again summoned Nishimura. Upon arrival, the Japanese businessman almost immediately collapsed and died. A company man to the end, the subsequent coroner's inquiry found that Nishimura had likely committed suicide by taking strychnine.

Described as the most impressive Japanese burial in Singapore for years, the Japanese Association held a grand funeral for Nishimura at the Japanese Cemetery Park in Singapore.

Continued on page 73

By Mike Shepherd

AP Photo/LBJ Presidential Library

The GI Forum

Hector P. Garcia became a voice for equal rights after World War II.

HECTOR GARCIA WAS BORN IN LLERA, TAMAULIPAS, MEXICO, ON JANUARY 17, 1914, to schoolteacher parents, Jose Garcia Garcia and Faustina Perez Garcia. The Mexican Revolution drove them from their homes in 1917 and his family legally immigrated to Mercedes, Texas.

Hector's father, a teacher in Mexico, was not allowed to teach in the United States and went into the dry goods business. Hector attended segregated schools for Mexican Americans and eventually attended college and medical school. Finding no hospital in Texas that would accept him as a resident physician, he took the advice of a staff member at the University of Houston and applied to a hospital in Omaha, Nebraska, where he served his residency.

When World War II broke out, he volunteered for combat duty. He served in the European Theater and earned the rank of major, a Bronze Star, and six battle stars. Unlike African Americans, Mexican Americans and other Americans of Hispanic origin were, for the most part, fully integrated into the United States military. As a Mexican immigrant and patriotic American, Garcia served his country well both in battle and as a medical doctor. The U.S. Army gave him the professional respect he had been denied in Texas. He was put in charge of a field hospital with about 100 staff members, mostly Anglo-American, who saluted him with a "Yes, Sir." Major Garcia married an Italian bride, Wanda Fusillo of Naples, in 1945.

Returning from Europe to the United States, Garcia became a physician in Corpus Christi, Texas, and treated a large number of poor Mexican American patients. He also served as a local chapter president of LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens. As a physician, he began to help veterans with Spanish surnames to obtain services from the Veterans hospitals. Not segregated as soldiers overseas, many Mexican American troops faced segregation or discrimination when returning to the United States, including at the Nueces County War Memorial Hospital in Corpus Christi.

According to Patrick J. Carroll, author of *Felix Longoria's Wake: Bereavement, Racism and the Rise of Mexican American Activism,* Dr. Garcia was able to win a middle of the night victory over racial segregation at the VA hospital in Corpus Christi in 1948.

"An acute shortage of hospital beds for veterans existed in Corpus Christi. While making rounds at Nueces County War Memorial Hospital in Corpus Christi, Dr. Hector encountered one of his Tejano veteran patients lying on a bed in the hall of the facility's Mexican ward. Memorial segregated patients just as other institutions within the city did in 1948. Although the Mexican ward was full, there were several available spaces in the 'white' ward of the institution. Dr. Garcia asked the charge nurse to move his Tejano patient from the hall to a vacant bed in the Anglo ward. She said she could not do this without authorization. It was 2 AM. Despite the hour, he made her call the hospital administrator at home to

ABOVE: Photographed in Tunisia during World War II, Major Hector P. Garcia (left) became a champion of equal rights for Mexican Americans after the war. Pfc. Felix Longoria (right) was killed in action in the Philippines after volunteering for a hazardous mission in 1945.
TOP LEFT: During funeral services for Pfc. Felix Longoria on February 16, 1949, family members pause beside the flag-draped casket. Longoria was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery after a funeral home in his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas, refused to provide services to the Mexican American family.

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seek permission. The nervous and irritated nurse reluctantly did what she was told. When the sleepy Anglo administrator answered, she explained the situation to him and handed the phone to Dr. Hector. After some haggling, the Anglo consented, and ordered the nurse to honor Dr. Garcia's request. That was the end of segregated wards at Memorial Hospital."

As a result of this hospital work and success in changing policies as an outspoken physician in 1948, Garcia founded the GI Forum, a voice for Mexican American veterans who needed help to get medical treatment and other VA benefits. Dr. Garcia was eager to expand his organization and to persuade authorities in Texas and the United States to treat all GIs with the equal respect and honor due them as citizens who served their country.

Garcia found a cause to unite his new organization when he spoke to the sister of Private Felix Longoria, a private first class who had come under fire in Luzon, Philippines, near the end of the war and died from his bullet wounds in May 1945. Longoria, a truck driver with a wife, Beatrice, and daughter, had been drafted in 1944. Seven months later, he was dead after volunteering for a scouting assignment, making good on General McArthur's promise to return to the Philippines. Buried temporarily in the Philippines, his body was finally scheduled to arrive in his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas, in 1948. Private Longoria's widow told Dr. Garcia that she had contacted the local Three Rivers funeral home to hold a funeral and that the proprietor, Tom Kennedy, also a veteran of World War II, severely wounded in Europe, had refused services to Longoria because of local prejudice against Mexican Americans.

Garcia immediately called Kennedy and asked again that he provide funeral services for the slain soldier. Kennedy refused again. Then, Dr. Garcia, in the name of the GI Forum, went into action. He telegraphed 17 public officials and requested assistance with a blatant case of discrimination against a veteran. Senators, congressmen, governors, newspaper columnists, all got the message. One telegram was sent to the newly elected Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas:

"Corpus Christi, Tex., Jan. 10, 1949
Hon. Lyndon Johnson
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

The American GI Forum, an independent veterans organization, requests your department's immediate investigation and correction of the un-American action of the Rice Funeral Home, Three Rivers, Texas in denying the use of its facilities for the reinternment of Felix Longoria, soldier killed in Luzon, Philippine Islands and now being returned for burial in Three Rivers based solely on his Mexican ancestry.

In direct conversation, the funeral home manager, T.W. Kennedy, stated that he would not arrange for funeral services and the use of his facilities because, he said, 'Other white people object to the use of the funeral home by people of Mexican origin.' In our estimation, this action is in direct contradiction of those principles for which this American soldier made the supreme sacrifice in giving his life for his country and for the same people who now deny him the last funeral rites deserving of any American hero regardless of his origins.

The Rice home is the only funeral home in Three Rivers…"

When Johnson, the future president of the United States, received the telegram, he immediately checked out the story with the editors of the *Corpus Christi Caller.* When the editors confirmed by telephone the story of discrimination against a decorated World War II veteran, Johnson made the decision to support the GI Forum and the Longoria family.

Senator Johnson responded to Hector Garcia by telegram the following day:

"January 11, 1949

I deeply regret to learn that the prejudice of some individuals extends even beyond this life. I have no authority over civilian funeral homes, nor does the federal government. However, I have today made arrangements to have Felix Longoria buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery.... I am happy to have a part in seeing that this Texas hero is laid to rest with the honors and dignity his service deserves.

Lyndon B. Johnson"

Senator Johnson also mentioned the possibility of burial in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio if the family wished.

The future president had acted swiftly and decisively. When Dr. Garcia read Johnson's telegram aloud to more than 1,000 people at a protest rally the same evening, it established the physician as an effective spokesman for his people and made the GI Forum a credible state organization that could mobilize Mexican American veterans to act. There was a public vote, and the GI Forum committed itself to supporting the burial at Arlington.

Garcia had a quick victory, but not an easy one. He and hundreds of members of the GI Forum and sympathetic family friends worked hard to raise money for the Longoria family to attend the burial in Arlington, Virginia. Many

donated small amounts (one dollar or less) to a fund to fly family members of the slain soldier to Arlington. Many donations were received by mail from sympathetic Texans and others who heard the story of Private Longoria. Enough money was collected to pay air fare and other expenses so Longoria family members were able to attend.

Johnson, who as president signed several civil rights bills, was not ready for the limelight on this issue. On February 16, 1949, Johnson and his wife, Lady Bird, attended the funeral at Arlington from a distance, according to Patrick Carroll.

"LBJ stuck by his decision not to allow President Truman's office to turn the ceremony into a political photo op," Carroll recalled. "No high-ranking officials found seating next to the Longoria family. They either stood in the wings or sat in chairs reserved for them at the rear. The senator did not except himself from this rule. When he and Mrs. Johnson arrived at the grave site, Horace Busby, his aide in charge of the cemetery arrangements, found a place about twenty yards from the ceremony where the Johnsons could view the proceedings without being photographed. LBJ and Lady Bird stood there throughout the whole event."

Lyndon Johnson was a veteran himself with at least six months of active service in World War II as a lieutenant commander in the Navy. He was an inspector in the Pacific but returned to legislative duties on June 16, 1942, when President Roosevelt ordered members of Congress serving in the armed forces to come back to Washington.

Despite his personal sympathy for Mexican Americans (he served as a teacher and principal in Cotulla, Texas, working with impoverished elementary students of Mexican descent after college) and his long-term relationship with Dr. Garcia, Johnson was not a public civil rights proponent in 1949.

The incident, known as the Longoria Affair, received national attention, embarrassing the white citizens of Three Rivers, Texas. The national news media, including the *New York Times*, noted the prejudicial incident. Columnist Walter Winchell said, "The state of Texas, which looms so large on the map, looks mighty small tonight." Dr. Garcia and his family received many insults and threats. It was an embarrassment for the Kennedy family. Some sources indicate that after all of the bad publicity Tom Kennedy approached the family and offered the use of the funeral home. But it was too late. New arrangements had been made.

Dr. Garcia's GI Forum expanded after the incident, forming chapters in New Mexico and Colorado. As of 2009, the organization included 80 local chapters defending the rights of veterans in 13 states and the District of Columbia. Dr. Garcia and Senator Johnson continued their friendship and collaboration for many years in the pursuit of civil rights for all Americans.

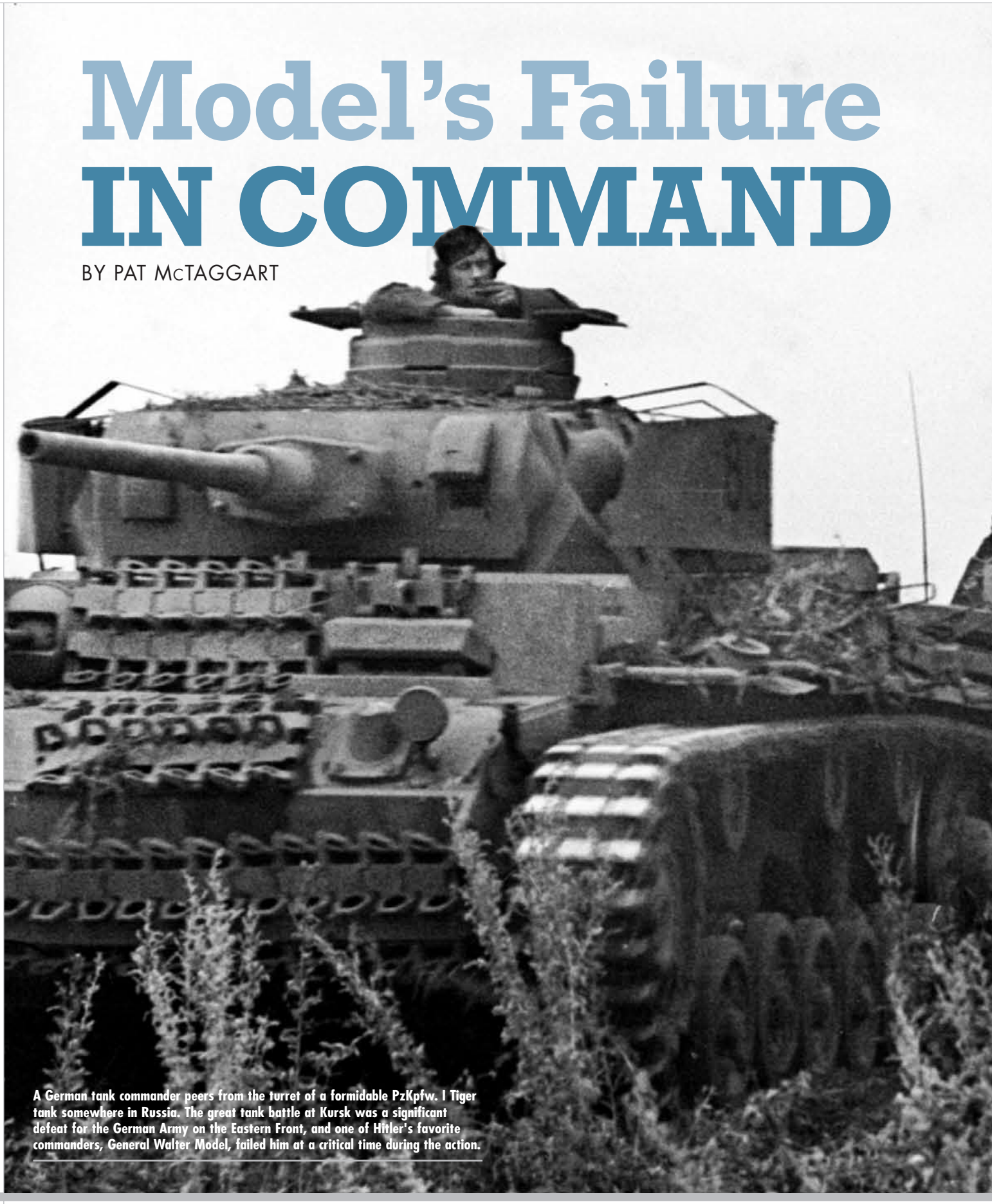
Hector Garcia died on July 26, 1996, after a long career in public service. Lyndon Johnson died in Texas in January 1973, after signing more civil rights legislation than any other president in American history. Recent attempts to rename the post office in Three Rivers, Texas, after Felix Longoria were unsuccessful.

Both before and after World War II, many Mexican Americans felt themselves to be fully American. They served their country as soldiers, fought, and died for the United States of America. They began to demand equal treatment as full citizens when they returned home. The legacy of Hector Garcia lives on in the GI Forum and the broader civil rights movement.

Mike Shepherd is the son of a Marine and a lifelong Texan. He has served as a bilingual teacher in Dallas for 31 years. He lives in Duncanville, Texas, with his wife Dana and his son, Caleb.

Model's Failure IN COMMAND

BY PAT McTAGGART



A German tank commander peers from the turret of a formidable PzKpfw. I Tiger tank somewhere in Russia. The great tank battle at Kursk was a significant defeat for the German Army on the Eastern Front, and one of Hitler's favorite commanders, General Walter Model, failed him at a critical time during the action.

Colonel General Walter Model was a rising star in the German ArFmy in early 1943. The son of a music teacher, Model was born on January 24, 1891, in Genthin, Saxony-Anhalt. In 1909, he joined the Kaiser's army as an officer candidate, but the harsh training almost made him quit. He was dissuaded by an uncle and went on to pursue a military career.

During World War I he served on the Western Front as a battalion adjutant. Severely wounded near Arras in May 1915, he returned to the front and took part in the battles of Verdun and in areas around the Vosges and Champagne sectors. He finished the war as a captain.

Model remained in the postwar German Army and made his way from company to battalion commander. Period photographs show him as a caricature of the archetypal German officer, complete with closely cropped hair and a monocle. By 1938, he was a brigadier general and chief of staff of the IV Army Corps.

The pro-Nazi Model rose to the rank of major general and served as chief of staff of the 17th Army during the French Campaign in 1940. In November of that year, he was given command of the 3rd Panzer Division. Under Model's leadership the division performed admirably during the opening phase of Operation Barbarossa and took part in the battles at the Kiev and Minsk pockets.

On October 1, 1941, Model was promoted to general of panzer troops and was given command of the XLI Panzer Corps. For his successes with the 3rd Panzer Division, Model had been awarded the Knight's Cross in July. The award of the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross followed in February 1942, for his handling of the XLI Panzer Corps.

Model showed a defensive flair during the opening of the Soviet winter offensive in December 1941. When the German 9th Army was nearly surrounded west of Moscow, Model took command of the unit on January 15, 1942. Although the army was forced to retreat, it did not lose its cohesiveness and was able to grind down the Russians as Model anchored his defenses in the Rzhev sector.

Promoted to colonel general on February 1, Model kept his 9th Army in stout defensive positions at Rzhev for the rest of 1942. On September 1, he was severely wounded by an enemy bullet, which cut his pulmonary artery and sent him to the hospital until January 1943. When he resumed command, he was ordered to prepare a withdrawal from the Rzhev salient. In the spring, he conducted a masterful retreat, thoroughly fooling the Soviets and making the 9th Army ready for the next German offensive, which was due to take place in the summer.

The plan was called Operation Zitadelle (Citadel). Following the capitulation of the 6th Army at Stalingrad and the loss of vast tracts of land during the Soviet offensive that followed, Hitler was anxious to regain his prestige and "to get back in the summer what was lost during the winter."

At a February conference among Hitler, the chief of staffs of the Armed Forces and the Army

AT THE PIVOTAL BATTLE OF KURSK, ONE OF HITLER'S FAVORITES LET THE FÜHRER DOWN.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-219-0562A-06; Photo: Scheffler

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-732-0135-22; Photo: Göttert

ABOVE: Fighting under the command of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, panzergrenadiers of the Grossdeutschland Division of Army Group South emerge from trenches and strike out across the Russian steppe during Operation Citadel. One of the soldiers carries a light machine gun over his shoulder. BELOW: A German SS tank commander signals to another tank on his left during the advance toward the showdown with Soviet tanks at Kursk. The tank in the distance appears to be a PzKpfw. V Panther, which first appeared in significant numbers at Kursk and experienced mechanical problems.

BundesarchivBild 146-1973-096-62; Photo: Merz

(General Alfred Jodl and General Kurt Zeitzler), and the commanders of Army Groups Center and South (Field Marshals Günther von Kluge and Erich von Manstein), it was decided that the only way to stabilize the Eastern Front was through offensive operations. One of the areas that caught everyone's eye was the Soviet salient around the city of Kursk, which was approximately 200 kilometers wide and protruded about 100 kilometers into the German line.

"The appreciable Soviet forces inside the salient would be cut off if our attack was successful, and provided that we launched it early enough we could hope to catch them in a state of unpreparedness," Manstein wrote in his memoirs. "In particular, the enemy could have to commit the armored units which had been so severely battered toward the end of the winter campaign, thereby giving us a chance to punish them wholesale."

The eventual operation envisioned an attack by two of Manstein's armies (4th Panzer and Army Detachment Kempf) in the south and Model's 9th Army, from Kluge's Army Group Center, in the north. When the pincers of the attacking forces met and the Soviets inside the salient were trapped, more German units would attack from the west and destroy the enemy. The resulting victory would not only annihilate significant enemy troops and material, it would also shorten the front by 240 kilometers, which would provide the Germans with a reserve force to counter any Soviet threats in other areas.

Zitadelle was slated to begin during the first half of May. By then the ground would be sufficiently dried out from the muddy season. It was also expected that Russian units would still be refitting and rebuilding from the losses they had suffered during the winter.

Against the advice of Manstein, Hitler decided to postpone the attack until June, when he hoped new panzer models would be available for his armored units. The attack was again postponed by the Führer when the new panzers did not arrive on time.

Manstein felt the chances for victory slipping away because of the delays. The respite had given the Soviets time to bring their units, especially their armor, up to strength for the most part. The German buildup in the area could not be hidden, and new Russian positions were popping up every day. Soviet reinforcements were also pouring into the area to serve as reserves for the armies posted inside the salient.

The Russians, now well aware of the impending attack, took the time to lay extensive minefields in front of their strongly fortified defensive lines within the salient. Tens of thousands of civilians were used to dig antitank ditches, and supply and ammunition dumps were being filled to the brim. In a 1971 letter to the author Manstein tersely replied to a question concerning the possible success for Zitadelle. He wrote: "If we had begun the offensive as first planned, we would have achieved the [desired] breakthrough."

Manstein was not the only general who had doubts about the operation. Although the field marshal kept his thoughts to himself at a May 3 conference in Munich, Walter Model had no such qualms. His superior, Kluge, strongly supported Zeitzler's plan for the north-south pincer attack. Bypassing the chain of command, Model met with Hitler the day before the conference took place.

Model laid out his case for either revising or cancelling the attack altogether, showing Hitler aerial reconnaissance photos of the growing Russian defensive positions. He said that he needed at least two more panzer divisions and thousands more infantrymen to even have a

chance of breaking the Soviet lines, which he doubted he could, given the extensive Russian defenses.

At the May 3 conference, Hitler presented Model's objections, much to Kluge's irritation. Kluge pointed out that the delay would give time for the new Panther, Tiger, and Ferdinand tanks to reach the front and that their appearance in the battle would thoroughly outweigh any improvements the Russians could make in their defenses. His argument seemed to influence Hitler.

General Heinz Guderian, the Inspector of Panzer Troops, was never one to keep his opinions to himself. He was against the whole thing. He cited design problems with the new panzers that still had to be worked out. He also wanted to use the tanks to build up an armored reserve to fend off the expected Allied invasion in the West, which he thought would take place within the next year.

The back and forth continued with little being settled. In the end, preparations for Zitadelle continued, almost as if they had a life of their own. Hitler waited for the new panzers, both sides continued to send more men to the front, and the Russians continued to build stronger defense lines. The date for the attack was finally set for July 5. As that date approached, Model continued to pour over reconnaissance photos with his staff. His objective was to smash through the minefields and the three Soviet defensive belts facing him and then head southeast toward the village of Olkhovatka, dozens of kilometers from the jump-off point.

To accomplish this daunting task, Model had five German and one Hungarian corps under his command. There were 16 German and three Hungarian infantry divisions along with one panzergrenadier and six panzer divisions, six Sturmgeschütze Abteilungen (Stug. Abt.—assault gun detachments), a panzer brigade, a schwere Panzer Abteilung (schw. Pz. Abt.—heavy tank detachment) and a schwere Panzerjäger regiment (schw. Pz. Jäg.—heavy antitank).

In all, according to historian David Glantz, Model commanded a force of about 335,000 men, 590 panzers, and 424 assault guns. He would be supported by General Robert Ritter von Greim's 4th Air Fleet. Greim was charged with disrupting enemy movement and command and control, smashing enemy defensive positions, and supporting the ground attack.

For a panzer general, Model's plan of attack was reserved. Instead of an assault using his panzer divisions to open breaches in the enemy line, he planned to use his infantry to batter their way through the defenses. The panzer units that were committed to the initial attack would be closely supported by the infantry, which would fend off Soviet infantry and attack antitank defenses. Once the three Soviet defensive lines were breached, Model would order his panzer reserve to exploit the success and move into the open area behind the Russian positions.

Besides the panzers, the infantry would be supported by the assault gun detachments and the newly formed schw. Pz. Jäg. Rgt. 656, commanded by Lt. Col. Ernst Freiherr von Jungenfeld. The 656th was composed of schw. Pz. Jäg. Abts. 653 and 654 with a total of 89 new Ferdinand heavy assault guns. The Ferdinands had been completed by the end of May and had just arrived before the offensive was to being.

Their 88mm guns would make them excellent tank destroyers, but they lacked any secondary armament, making them vulnerable to enemy infantry attacks. In Captain Karl-Heinz Noak's Abt. 654 some of the crews armed themselves with MG-34 machine guns, which they hoped they could fire through the open gun breech in case they were attacked in close combat.

The third detachment in von Jungenfeld's regiment was Major Bruno Kahl's Sturmpanzer Abteilung 216. Kahl had 45 Sturmpanzer IV "Grizzly Bear" assault guns at his disposal. They sported a 150mm gun for infantry support and, unlike the Ferdinands, had two machine guns for defense. The Grizzlies were also fast tracked into production so that they could participate in Zitadelle.

Model also had two companies of the vaunted Tiger tanks, which had also been rushed to the front. Under the command of Major Bernhard Sauvant, the two companies of schw. Pz. Abt. 505 would be attached to Maj. Gen. Horst Grossmann's 6th Infantry Division for the beginning of the attack.

Facing Model was General Konstantin Rokossovskii's Central Front. Rokossovskii had one tank and five infantry armies, as well as several units directly subordinated to the front for a total force of about 711,000 men and 1,785 tanks and self-propelled guns.

As previously stated, the Soviet defenses consisted of three heavily fortified lines. For months Red Army engineers had sown thousands upon thousands of mines in the area. The minefields were designed to funnel German armor into kill zones. Antitank, or PAK, fronts had been positioned in the killing zones. Numerous antitank guns, under the command of one officer, would fire at one designated tank until it was disabled or destroyed before moving on to the next one.

The Soviet infantry manning the lines had integrated antitank elements armed with the PTRS-41 "Siminov" antitank rifle. A bulky 46-pound weapon, the Siminov fired a 14.5x114mm armor-piercing round that could penetrate 40mm of armor at 100 meters. At close range it could be a deadly weapon, even against the heavy German tanks that were being introduced to the battlefield.

As the hour for the attack neared, Model, his chief of staff, Colonel Harald Freiherr von Elverfeldt, and his chief of operations, Colonel Johannes Hölz, went over the final plans for the assault. On his right flank, General Johannes Freissner's XXIII Army Corps (353rd, 216th, 78th, and 36th Infantry Divisions and Stug. Abts. 185 and 189) would face off against Lt. Gen. Prokofii Romanenko's 48th Army.

The main effort would take place in the center of the line with General Josef Harpe's XLI Panzer Corps (86th and 296th Infantry Divisions, 18th Panzer Division, schw. Pz. Jäg. Abt 656, and Stug. Abts. 177, 244, and 909) hitting Lt. Gen. Nikolai Pukhov's 13th Army. To Harpe's right, General Joachim Lemelsen's XLVII Panzer Corps (6th Infantry Division, 20th, 9th, and 2nd Panzer Divisions, Stug. Abts. 245 and 904, and Kahl's 216th Grizzlies) would

Map © 2017 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

German forces attempted to pinch off the Kursk salient but failed to decisively defeat the Soviet Red Army and eventually called off the offensive.

join in the attack on Pukhov's line. In Lt. Gen. Ivan Galinin's 70th Army sector, General Hans Zorn's XLVI Panzer Corps (31st, 7th, 258th, and 102nd Infantry Divisions) was tasked with opening and widening a breach between the 70th and 13th Armies.

Through the interrogation of German prisoners and accounts from a few German deserters, Rokossovskii knew exactly when Model would come. He therefore ordered his artillery to hit possible German assembly points at 0220 on the morning of July 5, with varied results. Some previously plotted German positions were pulverized, but many of the shells fell on vacant ground.

The bombardment did manage to disrupt Model's opening moves. The attack was postponed for 2½ hours while units sorted themselves out. Even then, some of the initial attacks were uncoordinated.

At 0430 the Germans opened up with their own artillery, and shells rained down on the forward Soviet line as the German infantry prepared to advance. Freissner attacked first at around 0530. His job was to divert Soviet attention from the main axis of advance farther west. With three infantry divisions he struck the boundary between the 13th and 48th Armies with the objective of taking the village of Maloarkhangelsk, about 8 kilometers behind the Russian line.

The Germans ran into a buzzsaw as the soldiers of the 148th, 8th and 16th Rifle Divisions open up a murderous fire that halted Freissner's men almost as soon as the attack started. By the end of the day the Germans had advanced only about 1½ kilometers, even with the help of Stuka dive bomber support and the support of the corps' 72 assault guns.

Harpe and Lemelsen fared somewhat better. Brig. Gen. Mortimer von Kessel's 20th Panzer Division and Maj. Gen. Horst Grossmann's 6th Infantry Division overcame heavy resistance from the 331st Rifle Regiment of Colonel V.N. Dzhandzhgava's 15th Rifle Division and took the village of Bobrik about seven kilometers behind the first defensive line. The Russians had numerous positions in the vast cornfields in the area. First Lieutenant Hans-Werner Deppe, commander of the 3rd Company of Grenadier Regiment (GR) 58/6 I.D., was advancing through one such field. When he came under heavy fire from artillery and an entrenched Soviet rifle company, he ordered his men to engage the enemy in close combat.

Although wounded in the shoulder by grenade fragments, Deppe urged his men forward. Supported by an assault gun, Deppe led his men into the enemy positions. He was

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ABOVE: Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge (left) and General Walter Model confer during Operation Citadel. Model failed to act decisively and contributed to the eventual German defeat at Kursk. BELOW RIGHT: Plumes of smoke rise from disabled tanks and armored vehicles as German tanks move cautiously forward on the Russian steppe during the Battle of Kursk.

wounded again in the arm but refused treatment until the Russian positions were cleared. When it was over about 150 of the enemy lay dead and 20 more were taken prisoner. His men had also destroyed two 37mm antitank guns, a heavy machine gun, and seven vehicles. Loss of blood finally forced Deppe to go to an aid station. Deppe was awarded the Knight's Cross five weeks later for his actions.

Grossman's infantry and Kessel's panzers had broken Dzhandzhgava's defenses and forced the 15th to retreat, but just south of Bobrik they ran into the second Soviet defensive belt on the heights beyond the village, manned by Maj. Gen. Dmitrii Onuprienko's 6th Guards Rifle Division and Maj. Gen. Mikhail Enshin's 307th Rifle Division, which stopped the Germans cold.

Farther east, Grossmann's troops had also taken the village of Butyrki about four kilometers inside the Russian line. Along the way, the 1st and 2nd Companies of Major Sauvant's schw. Pz. Abt. 505 annihilated a defensive screen of Russian antitank guns and T-34 medium tanks with accurate fire from their Tigers' 88mm guns. During the action the commander of the 1st Company, Captain Riedesel, was killed.

The pace at which Sauvant's Tigers advanced came as a surprise to Model, as he had expected that the first defensive belt would be harder to crack. Therefore, he was still holding most of his armor in the rear as a reserve instead of acting decisively and committing them to enlarge the penetration.

Major General Grossmann later wrote, "Far in front of the division was a hill massif on which the movements of the Russians could be identified. If the (reserve) armored divisions had rolled forward at that point, then we might have reached the objective of Kursk. The enemy had been completely surprised and was still weak. Valuable time was lost, which the enemy used to commit his reserves."

To the left of Lemelsen, Harpe's XLI Panzer Corps was also partially successful. With Brig. Gen. Wolfgang von Kluge's 292nd Infantry Division on the corps' right flank and Maj. Gen. Helmut Weidling's 86th Infantry Division on the left, and supported by elements of Brig. Gen. Wilhelm von Schlieben's 18th Panzer Division, the Germans tore into the positions of Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Barinov's 81st Rifle Division. Weidling's 86th also had some heavy backup in the form of Jungenfeld's schw. Pz. Jäg. Rgt. 656.

The initial attack of the 86th got off to a poor start. Some of Jungenfeld's Ferdinands stumbled into an unmarked German minefield, causing significant casualties. Of the 44 Ferdinands that had participated in the initial attacks, almost one-third were lost before they were clear of their own mines, but many were recoverable and would be back in action. Others ran over Soviet mines that the German engineers had missed. The engineers, working under intense Russian artillery and small arms fire to clear the minefields, also suffered heavy casualties.

When they were finally able to properly deploy, the Ferdinands savaged the Soviet

Ullstein Bild

infantry that occupied the first trenchline. Barinov's 410th and 467th Rifle Regiments were shattered by Noack's Abt. 654. During the attack, Noack's Ferdinand was disabled. Climbing down from the vehicle, he was critically wounded by mortar fire and had to be evacuated. Captain Rolf Henning, commander of the 3rd Company, took command of the Abteilung.

In response to the German attack, Pukhov sent Colonel Aleksii Peruvshin's 129th Tank Brigade and the 1442nd Artillery Regiment to help Barinov's division. They were able to stop the Germans four times before being forced to withdraw to prevent encirclement. By the end of the day, the 86th had taken the village of Buzuluk and had formed a line about two kilometers south of the village to a point two kilometers southwest of Semenovka.

Kluge's 292nd failed to take its first day's objective of Aleksandrovka, which was still about 1,300 meters away as night fell. It did have some success east of the village, but enemy counterattacks slowed movement and caused many casualties. The first day's operation cost the division 84 dead, 329 wounded, and four captured.

Just to the right of the 292nd, the 18th Panzer committed its PGR 101 to take Soviet positions in a wooded area dubbed the "Schwarzwald (Black Forest)." Lt. Col. Fleischauer's regiment had 923 men and was supported by a company of Colonel Friedrich von Seidlitz's PGR 52, an engineer company, and a platoon of antitank weapons.

As the regiment approached the village of Ozerki, located north of the forest, it came under heavy mortar and small-arms fire. Casualties mounted as the Soviets continued to rake the Germans, forcing Fleischauer's men to dig in. Schlieben was forced to commit more of the 18th Panzer earlier than he wanted to because of the fierce fighting, and the rest of Seidlitz's regiment was soon moved forward. By 1500, the 101st had captured Ozerki, but it could not continue to advance into the forest. The regiment had lost 50 dead, 16 missing, and 196 wounded during the attack. A total of five enemy rifles and one antitank gun was all the Germans had captured for their effort.

Model seemed content with the first day's results. He had expected a hard fight, and the Soviets did not disappoint him. In some areas his men had been more than successful, while in others they had failed to take their objectives. Plans were worked out to take the Schwarzwald on the 6th, but they proved unnecessary because the surviving members of the 676th Rifle Regiment pulled out of the forest during the night due to threats on both flanks.

That Model failed to commit his armored reserves did not seem that important to him. He would do that the next day, but by then it would be too late to really make a difference. He had lost 20 percent of his armor due to mines, enemy action, or mechanical failure, many of which would be recovered. By failing to let his reserves exploit the gains that had been made, especially in the 6th Infantry's sector, he allowed Rokossovskii to bring up his own reserves. Even as the Germans dug in for the evening, Rokossovskii was already planning a counterattack for the next day.

The Soviet general planned to hit both Lemelsen and Harpe using Lt. Gen. Andrei Bondarev's 17th Guards Rifle Corps (6th, 70th, and 75th Guards Rifle Divisions) and Maj. Gen. Ivan Afonin's 18th Guards Rifle Corps (2nd, 3rd, and 4th Guards Airborne Divisions). They were to be supported by Maj. Gen. Maksim Sinenko's 3rd Tank Corps (50th, 51st, and 103rd Tank Brigades and 57th Motorized Rifle Regiment) and Maj. Gen. Vasilii Grigorev's 16th Tank Corps (107th, 109th, and 164th Tank Brigades and 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade), a total of 224 tanks from Lt. Gen. Alekseii Rodin's 2nd Tank Army.

Major General Semen Bogdanov's 9th Tank Corps (23rd, 95th, and 108th Tank Brigades and 8th Motorized Rifle Regiment) with its 168 tanks was ordered forward from the Front reserve to exploit any breakthrough. To strengthen the right flank of Galanin's 70th Army, Maj. Gen. Ivan Vasilev's 19th Tank Corps (79th, 101st, and 202nd Tank Brigades and 26th Motorized Rifle Brigade) with its 168 tanks was also released from the Front reserve.

Rokossovskii may have been too impatient. Although the Germans had suffered significant armor losses, they were still a powerful force. It may have been better to let them try to batter their way through the PAK fronts, further weakening them, before committing his own tank forces.

At any rate, the attack did not go exactly as planned. Finding paths through the Soviet defensive belts was difficult at night, and neither Vasilev nor Sinenko was in position by the time the attack was to begin. The only ones that

were fully prepared for the attack were Bondarev and Grigorev.

On the German side, Model expected to continue his own attack with Kluge's 292nd driving south-southeast, cutting the rail line at Ponyri Station, and then driving another two kilometers before stopping for the day—a total penetration of about nine kilometers. Kluge would be supported by Weidling's 86th on the left and by von Schleieben's 18th Panzer and Grossmann's 6th Infantry on the right. Model was also ready to commit part of his armored reserves, Maj. Gen. Walter Scheller's 9th Panzer and Maj. Gen. Vollrath Lübbe's 2nd Panzer Divisions, to exploit any success. Therefore, both sides were gearing up for an attack in the same sector and with added reinforcements. It would be a bloody day.

At 0350 on July 6, the one mortar and two artillery divisions of Maj. Gen. Nikolai Ignatov's 4th Artillery Preparation Corps opened up on the German lines while the 17th Guards Rifle Corps and 16th Tank Corps moved forward. The 18th Guards Rifle Corps also began attacking. Vasilev's 19th Tank Corps, arriving piecemeal on the scene, would join in the general assault once it was underway, while Sinenko's 3rd Tank Corps was to occupy a defensive line south of Ponyri Station.

The Germans reacted quickly, and Model threw the 2nd and 9th Panzer Divisions into the fray. Major Sauvant's Tiger detachment was attached to the 2nd Panzer. In the early morning light, Sauvant saw more than 100 enemy tanks approaching. More tanks from both sides were arriving on the battlefield, and as the sun rose higher there were almost 1,000 armored vehicles in action.

A heavy overcast prevented intense air activity, so it was up to the tank crews to fend for themselves. Sauvant's Tigers destroyed several enemy tanks and were able to take the village of Saburovka. As reinforcements arrived, Sauvant was ordered to intercept Lt. Col. Nikolai Teliakov's 107th Tank Brigade, which was headed toward Butyrki. Deploying his panzers in ambush positions, Sauvant waited for the Russians to appear.

As Teliakov's tanks came into view, Sauvant gave the order to fire. Within minutes the deadly 88s had destroyed 48 of the 50 tanks in Teliakov's brigade. On Teliakov's left flank, Colonel N.V. Kopylov's 164th Tank Brigade lost an additional 23 tanks. Sauvant's Tigers had shown their claws, but the real battle had only just begun.

As the Soviets made a fighting retreat in Lemelsen's sector, Harpe's three divisions were trying to sever contact between the 13th and 48th Armies east of Ponyri. Kluge's 292nd ran into heavy fire from the forward regiments of Maj. Gen. Afanasii Slyshkin's 29th Rifle Corps. To Kluge's left the 18th Panzer made painfully slow progress against the 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade and Colonel Georgii Maksimov's 103rd Tank Brigade. It was also held up by the Ochka River, which had to be bridged before it could be crossed. Engineers spent the remainder of the day working on a 24-ton bridge that could handle the panzers, but it was not ready until 0200 on July 7.

Model's insertion of the 9th Panzer to the east of the 6th Infantry bore little fruit. By the end of the day, the vanguard of the division under Colonel Ludwig Schmahk had clawed its way through Soviet minefields and antitank positions and had formed a bridgehead across the Snova River, where the second Soviet defensive belt halted further progress about 1.5 kilometers southwest of Ponyri.

On the far left of Harpe's corps, Colonel Matrtin Bieber, commander of the 86th Division's GR 184, had lost communications with divisional headquarters either from enemy artillery fire cutting the lines or by Soviet soldiers still trapped behind the lines. With his regiment taking substantial casualties, Bieber commandeered five Ferdinands and took 25 of his grenadiers and led them forward. Fire from the Ferdinands scattered several Soviet infantry companies that were in defensive positions.

Bieber managed to reach Hill 256.5, about two kilometers northeast of the 1 Maja (1 May) collective farm and about four kilometers from the Ponyri railway station. With the commanding height under his control, he formed a defensive position with his small force. Communications were restored during his advance, and reserves were sent to assist him. They finally arrived after the Soviets had made several attempts to retake the hill. Upon their arrival, Bieber ordered his men to strengthen the position as night fell.

Although the Russians had been battered, they had foiled Model's original plan for the time being. Pukhov had managed to pull his forces back into a defensive line curving from the northeast to the southwest of Ponyri, with Enshin's 307th Rifle Division holding a line about a kilometer outside the village. To the southwest, Onuprienko's 6th Guards moved into strong positions while letting the shattered 15th Rifle Division pass through its lines. Maj. Gen. Vasilii Goroshnii's 75th Guards Rifle Division was on Onuprienko's left flank.

As Pukhov's forces were coalescing around Ponyri, Model was issuing orders to continue the attack the following day. Although he

planned to widen his front, he would concentrate his main effort in the Ponyri sector. For some reason, the rather insignificant railway station had become a fixation for him, and he was determined to take it.

Rokossovskii recognized the Germans' attraction for Ponyri and deftly started to move some units from the 60th and 65th Armies, whose sectors had seen relatively little fighting, to reinforce Pukhov. Weather reports indicated that the 7th would be clear, and Rokossovskii ordered Lt. Gen. Sergei Rudenko's 16th Air Army to make a maximum effort against the Luftwaffe. To counter the German panzers, Colonel N.P. Sazanov's 13th Antitank Artillery Brigade, consisting of 2,045 men and 40 76.2mm antitank guns, was ordered from the Front reserve to Ponyri. Colonel Nikolai Vasilevich Petrushin's 129th Tank Brigade was held in reserve behind Ponyri, while the 27th Guards Separate Tank Regiment set up positions near Hill 256.9, about 1.5 kilometers south of Ponyri. Another two artillery regiments were also sent to support the forces around the village.

Model's objectives were somewhat more modest than the previous day's. Kluge's 292nd was to take Ponyri and continue on to form a line a kilometer south of the village. Colonel Hans Hahne's GR 507 would first take the northern part of Ponyri, while Colonel Georg Zierhold's GR 508 would take the southern part. The 18th Panzer was ordered to take over


Central Museum, Moscow

This mural, located in the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow, depicts the desperation of the fighting at Kursk as soldiers engage in hand-to-hand combat and tanks fire at one another from close range.

9th Panzer's bridgehead on the Snova River. Once that was done, the 9th would attack Soviet forces entrenched in a forested area about five kilometers east of Ponyri known as the "Birnenwald (Pear Forest)." Northeast of Ponyri, Weidling's 86th Infantry was ordered to support the attack and retake Hill 253.5, which had been reoccupied by Soviet forces during the night.

West of Ponyri the 20th Panzer and 2nd Panzer, along with Maj. Gen. Friedrich Hossbach's 31st and Maj. Gen. Fritz-Georg von Rappard's 102nd Infantry Divisions, were to attack the junction between the 13th and 70th Armies. Model also planned to release Maj. Gen. Dietrich von Saucken's 4th Panzer Division from the 9th Army reserve and send it to support the attack.

Once again Soviet artillery fire blasted German positions before Model's forces moved out. Funneling more reinforcements into Ponyri's flanks, Rokossovskii ordered his commanders to mount strong counterattacks at any point where the Germans threatened to break through.

At 0500 on the 7th, the 9th Panzer moved against the Soviet defenses in the dense cornfields surrounding the Birnenwald. The fighting in the area was brutal with the Soviets laying ambush after ambush before pulling back to new defenses. Red Air Force and Luftwaffe pilots dueled for control of the air, preventing either side from giving supporting fire to ground forces.

Meanwhile, the 18th Panzer was once again painfully slow in moving forward. Leading units of Colonel Friedrich von Seidlitz's GR 52 did not begin to relieve Combat Group Schmahl until 1500, and it took more than an hour after that for Schmahl to begin moving southeast toward Bityug. South of the village he was able to establish another bridgehead across the Snova, where he ran into strong resistance from the 6th Guards. Schmahl was later joined by Combat Group Mummert, which had finally cleared the Birnenwald.

Farther west, the advance of the 20th and 2nd Panzer Divisions was halted by counterattacks from Grigorev's 16th Tank Corps. Captain Wolfgang Darius, commander of 20th Panzer's Pz. Abt. 21, observed a Soviet tank brigade preparing to attack.

"I quickly ordered my 48 panzers to turn toward the enemy," he wrote 44 years later. "As we advanced our forward line would stop and fire two rounds and then let the second line move forward to do the same. The Russians were caught off guard, and we continued to destroy tank after tank until the enemy left the field. From July 5 to July 7 my Abteilung was credited with the destruction of 159 enemy tanks."

Supported by Darius's panzers, Colonel Rudolf Demme's PGR 59 succeeded in advancing a couple of kilometers. Darius was then ordered to support a drive by the II/PGR 112 toward the Swepa Valley. By 1615, the 112th had been able to establish a forward line in the area, but constant Soviet counterattacks made further progress impossible for the time being.

East of Ponyri, the 86th moved out at 0530 in conjunction with the 292nd. Its first objective was to recapture the trenchline that the Soviets now once again occupied. Senior Corporal Heinrich Kaup was in the 3rd Company/GR 184. As the company advanced the Russians opened up with a storm of bullets. Within a few minutes, most of officers had been killed or wounded.

"I realized that I had to act decisively," he wrote decades after the war. "I could not hesitate, so I collected a group of seven men and placed them under my command. We picked up extra grenades from the dead and wounded and then advanced, throwing the grenades as we went. In this way we cleared the trench and then defended it until the rest of the company would join us. For this action I would later receive the Knight's Cross, but it was really the bravery of the men that joined me that deserve the credit."

The 86th continued to advance assisted by the 1st and 2nd Companies of Major Erich Käp-

National Archives

Red Army soldiers crouch as they attack past destroyed German tanks during the defense of the Kursk salient. The soldier on the right carries a heavy antitank rifle, which was woefully ineffective against heavily armored German tanks.

pler's Stug. Abt. 177. Soviet air power hampered the advance, and the division was only as far as Hill 257.1, some six kilometers northeast of Ponyri Station, by 1130. Soviet artillery and antitank guns dug in on the reverse side of the hill stopped the advance in that sector. Farther west, near the 1 Maja collective farm, elements of the 86th, assisted by Pz. Jäg. Abt. 654, ran up against the 1021st Rifle Regiment. A back and forth battle centered on Hill 253.5, about four kilometers northeast of Ponyri Station, that finally ended with the hill in German hands at the end of the day.

At Ponyri itself the German barrage started at 0530. When it lifted, the 507th and 508th advanced. Supported by some assault guns from Stug. Abt. 244, Hahne's 507th moved toward the lines of Enshin's 1019th Rifle Regiment and the dug in antitank guns of the 1188th and 1180th Antitank Regiments. German forward observers were able to pinpoint the main Soviet defenses and called in a steady stream of artillery fire on those positions. By 0900, Hahne was able to report that the northern section of Ponyri was mostly secure.

Efforts to advance farther were stalled by defenses just south of the village. There, the main body of the 1019th occupied heavily fortified positions. Soviet artillery pounded the Germans inside Ponyri and threw counterbattery fire at the German guns, while Soviet aircraft prevented massed Luftwaffe attacks on Enshin's troops.

To Hahne's right, Zierhold's 508th hit the left flank of the 1019th. The attack began the same way as Hahne's had. By 0700, the 508th was advancing on the center of Ponyri, but it ran into heavy fire on its flanks. About an hour later Zierhold's men were battling for the Ponyri Railway Station while being pounded by enemy artillery. Near the station the Germans engaged Soviet infantry and tanks in a fierce battle. Several German assault guns were knocked out in the seesaw, ebb and flow action.

The unrelenting German assault finally forced the Russians to withdraw to the southern part of the village. However, Soviet reinforcements were able to counterattack and force the Germans back to positions around the train station. A report of a large mass of Soviet tanks approaching the area halted the German attack and forced both the 507th and 508th to take a defensive posture. When Harpe heard the report of enemy tanks approaching, he ordered the entire XLI Panzer Corps to go on the defensive.

For the 292nd, taking only a portion of Ponyri was a costly affair. Casualties for July 7 included 106 killed, 413 wounded, and 26 missing. Many of the line companies were down to 70 percent of their July 4 strength. On the Soviet side, Enshin reported 273 dead and many more wounded. The 307th had prevented a German breakthrough, but it too had paid a heavy price.

The tanks reported by Luftwaffe reconnaissance were units of Sinenko's 3rd Tank Corps. Elements of the corps were recognized by German intelligence, and Harpe reaffirmed his previous order by instructing his three divisions to work through the night constructing in-depth defensive positions. A short statement was distributed to all commands down to the company level. It read: "An attack by powerful portions of the 3rd Tank Corps is expected on July 8."

Harpe's commanders wasted no time in preparing for the impending attack. Schlieben's 18th Panzer, located southwest of Ponyri, was put under Kluge's control for tactical purposes. The division's Pz. Abt. 18 would serve as the 292nd's reserve force. Jungenfeld's remaining Ferdinands and Grizzlies were positioned north of the Ponyri Station and would serve as the corps reserve.

While GR 508 defended the southern and middle sections of Ponyri, Hahne's 507th, holding the northern part of the village, was placed under the control of the 86th Infantry. This was necessary to prevent a rupture of the line at the junction of the regiment and Weidling's division.

The Soviets were also shifting forces for the upcoming attack. Onuprienko's 6th Guards was ordered to shorten its line facing the 18th Panzer. Pukhov moved Gorishnii's 75th into positions on Onuprienko's vacated left flank. Enshin's mauled 307th was barely holding onto a portion of southern Ponyri, and Pukhov ordered Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Rumiantsev's 4th Guards Airborne Division to take positions south of the village as a reserve force. Facing Weidling's 86th were the remnants of the 129th Tank Brigade and the 1442nd Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment, while the 27th Guards Separate Tank Regiment occupied positions south of Ponyri.

As Sinenko's 3rd Tank Corps arrived, the units deployed behind the 307th and 4th Guards Airborne. Maksimov's 103rd Tank Brigade was placed on the corps right flank, while Colonel G.A. Kokurin's 51st Tank Brigade and the 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade took positions behind the central and southern sectors of Ponryi. Colonel Fedor Konovalov's 50th Tank Brigade would be held in temporary reserve.

While Model approved Harpe's order to go on the defensive, he still planned to continue his assault west of the village with Lemelsen's XLVII Panzer Corps. Once again, his goal was to sever the junction between the 70th and 13th Armies in the Samodurovka-Teploe area about 20 kilometers west of Ponyri. Lübbe's 4th Panzer and Kessel's 20th Panzer would be at the point of the attack.

Pukhov opened his assault on Ponyri with a heavy artillery barrage at 0400 on July 8. The artillery, ranging up to 203mm guns, was supported by several 300mm Katyusha rocket launchers.

At 0430, Enshin ordered the remnants of his 307th forward. He was supported by the 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade and 20 tanks. Further east about 50 tanks from the 103rd Tank Brigade also rolled forward. They ran into an ambush laid by Käppler's Stug. Abt. 177. Within 10 minutes there were 12 T-34s burning, with the rest hastily withdrawing.

Hahne's 507th took the brunt of Enshin's attack. The 1021st Rifle Regiment, led by Captain S.A. Sukiasian, was supported by the 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade and about 30 of Maksimov's tanks. Red Air Force bombers hit the German positions as the Russians advanced. Sukiasian and his supporting units were able to take the northern outskirts of Ponyri and then move against the 1 Maja collective farm.

The Germans mounted an immediate counterattack with Grosskreutz's Stug. Abt. 244 and part of Stug. Abt. 177 along with some Ferdinands, the 2/Pz. Abt. 18, some self-propelled antitank guns from Pz. Jäg. Abts. 292 and 18, and other units. Stukas were called in to support the counterattack, which began at 0810 under cover of German artillery.

A fierce firefight commenced with the Germans running headlong into the attacking Russians. As the Soviets were pushed back, the 507th regrouped and moved to regain its line. Firing at T-34s that had infiltrated behind his position, Sergeant Willi Zahn managed to destroy seven tanks within 15 minutes with his medium French antitank gun. The commander of the 14/GR 507 recommended Zahn for the Knight's Cross, but Zahn did not live to receive it. He was killed on July 16, just two days before the award was approved.

The Russians continued to press their attack on Ponyri. Switching his attention to Zierhold's GR 508, Enshin ordered his 1023rd Rifle Regiment, supported by tanks and artillery, to drive back the enemy in the southern sector of the village. As artillery shells slammed into Zierhold's line, the Russians struck at selected points in strength, forcing the entire regiment to either retreat or become flanked. Although the Soviets failed to achieve a decisive breakthrough, they did manage to retake several areas of southern Ponyri as well as the water tower just south of the train station.

Zierhold's men counterattacked, and losses on both sides mounted as several efforts to retake the water tower failed. A German combat group finally managed to wrest control of the tower away from the Russians and then had to fend off several Soviet efforts to regain it. The battle continued into the night with the opposing forces silhouetted against the fires raging in the village. Ammunition became a problem for the Germans holding the tower, and they were eventually forced back, giving control of the area back to the Russians.

Model's own attack west of Ponyri began around 0800. Saucken's 4th Panzer moved forward to support the 20th Panzer in the Samodurovka area. Meanwhile, Lübbe's 2nd Panzer attacked Soviet defenses in the Olkhovatka area with the 9th Panzer supporting his left flank. Both assaults ran into extremely heavy resistance from elements of the 17th and 19th Guards Tank Corps.

The Germans threw themselves against the Russian defenses again and again. They captured a trenchline near Samodurovka only to face new lines behind it. The cornfields made unit cohesion difficult, and casualties mounted. A German observer watching the attack noted that all of the officers of the 5/PGR 112/20 Pz. had been killed or wounded within an hour.

All the German assaults stalled in the face of heavy Soviet fire. Russian artillerymen fired over open sights at the advancing German armor while other artillery units pinned down the panzergrenadiers that were supposed to accompany the panzers. The village of Teploe, about three kilometers south of Samodurovka, was captured by the Germans. The move threatened to cut the junction between the 70th Guards and the 175th Rifle Divisions. To counter the threat, Pukhov moved Maj. Gen. Kisilev's 140th Rifle Division and Colonel N.M. Bubonov's 11th Guards Tank Brigade forward to block a further advance.

By the end of the day, the panzer assault had gained little ground west of Ponyri, and Model's troops were exhausted. Model was forced to call off the attack and ordered his armored divisions to regroup for a new attack in the morning. New defenses were hastily dug, and the men settled in for the night, trying to get some sleep in the face of intermittent Soviet artillery fire.

On the morning of July 9, Model once again tried to use his panzer divisions as a battering ram, but Pukhov had reinforced the area west of Ponyri with even more tank and antitank units. As a result, when the panzers and accompanying panzergrenadiers were able to make some headway, they came under increasing fire on their flanks. New minefields were encountered, and the German engineers paid a heavy price trying to clear them. A Soviet attack on the 2nd Panzer threw the division into disarray and forced it to halt. Because of this setback, Model once again stopped the attack to let the division regroup.

In Ponyri the beleaguered 292nd came under heavy artillery fire on the right flank of GR 508 before dawn. The division had been given the

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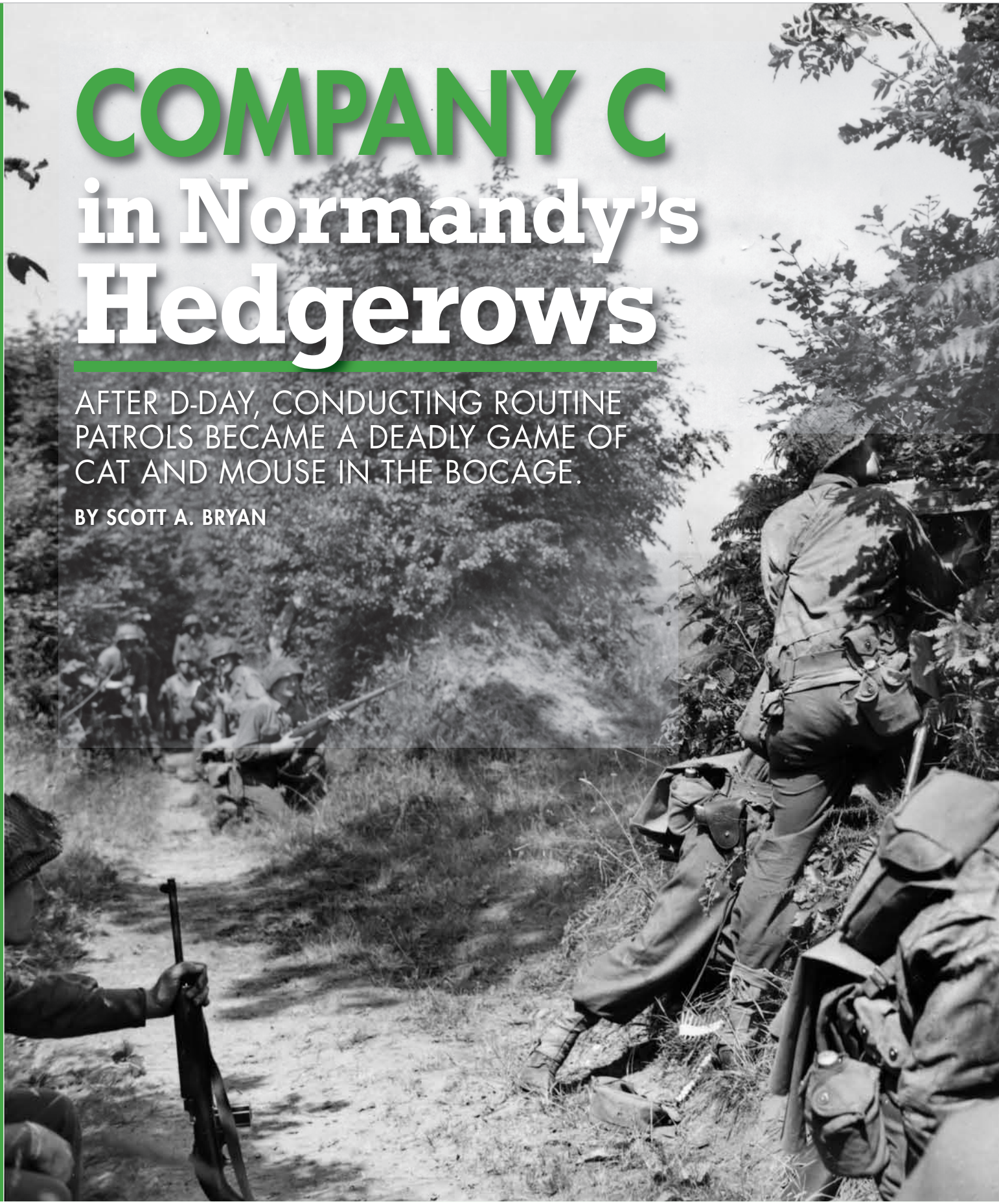
The fighting on the northern shoulder of the Kursk salient was at times a swirl of confusion as the Soviets sought to halt the German advance.

COMPANY C in Normandy's Hedgerows

AFTER D-DAY, CONDUCTING ROUTINE PATROLS BECAME A DEADLY GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE IN THE BOCAGE.

BY SCOTT A. BRYAN



National Archives

Late in the evening on D-Day two German soldiers patrolled the outskirts of Colleville-sur-Mer, about one mile from Omaha Beach, and spotted Company C, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Division resting in a hedgerow field. Standing on opposite corners, the enemy unleashed machine-gun fire and killed seven Americans. The GIs struck back, killing one German; the other got away. More than 200 soldiers, waylaid and bested by two, were introduced to the deceptive nature of hedgerow combat, standard procedure in Normandy during June 1944.

Pushing inland, the 26th primarily encountered open fields, and from June 7 to 12 they marched 20 miles, plowed through moderate resistance, and bagged POWs. But deeper inland enemy-occupied hedgerows abounded, freezing the American momentum on June 13 at Caumont le Repas. Locked in a 30-day stalemate, the GIs soon discovered that the terrain fostered a glaring paradox. They could not see the Germans, but the Germans could see them. The hedgerows reduced visibility and precluded mobility, forcing both sides to exchange mortar fire and conduct reconnaissance patrols.

GIs, combat veterans and raw recruits, however, did not receive any training in hedgerow warfare, making patrols a daunting task. Although Company C could not see the enemy, they could hear them. Hence, using their ears to navigate the meandering terrain, decipher sounds, locate German positions, and garner information, they learned about enemy combat tactics while coping with natural elements and persistent shelling in an odd, slowly paced battle.

Training its .30-caliber machine gun to fire on unseen Germans across a hedgerow, an American crew suppresses the enemy response to a dash into the field beyond, which other American soldiers are preparing to execute. The hedgerow country of Normandy provided excellent defensive ground for the Germans, and the Allied advance from the D-Day beachhead was costly.

Never having encountered land that looked anything like Normandy, American soldiers had to understand its composition. Norman farmers, centuries prior, enclosed their fields with hedgerows to delineate property lines, slow land erosion from English Channel winds, and corral livestock. Hedgerows were composed of solid mounds of earth resembling parapets that surrounded individual land plots and were between three and 12 feet high and one and four feet thick. Growing on top were vines, brush, small trees, thorns, and brambles, which intertwined and grew into solid barriers, extending the height in some cases to 15 feet. The fields had different shapes, but on average were 400 yards long and 200 yards wide, giving the layout across northwestern France an asymmetrical appearance. Entrances to the fields were accessible via sunken lanes used for farm equipment and livestock. These were connected to other hedgerow fields and led to farmers' houses, wagon trails, and roads.

GIs, consequently, perceived the hedgerows as a confusing maze and each field as an impervious citadel. During a skirmish with a German squad, for example, Captain Edward K. Rogers, a chaplain in the 18th Regiment, observed a French "family of about eight sitting in the corner of a field with the hedgerows for protection while our infantry and supporting tanks fired away at the enemy in the next field a few hundred yards away."

The terrain astounded soldiers because it even rendered tanks ineffective. Tanks could neither penetrate nor roll over hedgerows, and those that charged were blasted by panzerfausts, German shoulder-fired antitank weapons. Those bold enough to ride up the parapets exposed their lightly armored undersides, which gave the

Research Center First Division Museum at Cantigny. Donated by Thomas Lane

With the English Channel and the coastline of Normandy visible, this aerial photo of the surrounding countryside reveals the patchwork of fields and hedgerows with which the Allied advance was confronted.

enemy large targets. Tanks could not maneuver down the narrow, sunken trails and were relegated to roads and open fields without hedgerows.

Attacking the Germans was an arduous process. Hedgerow fields were too confining, which made it impossible for platoons to mount an assault with the usual method of two rifle units alongside each other with a third one and a mortar squad in the rear. Fighting in the hedgerows required foot soldiers to focus on one field at a time and ferret out the enemy. It was frustrating and seemed almost futile. One U.S. Army officer told an Associated Press reporter that hedgerows appeared "every hundred yards or so ... when the enemy loses one hedgerow they simply fall back into another."

The Germans organized an in-depth defense. Their positions were interconnected with wired communication and heavily manned with machine gunners, snipers, and explosive booby traps. The enemy's primary tactic was preventing the Allies from gaining mobility, coordinating attacks, and enlarging their beachhead. Using the natural defenses of the hedgerows, they could achieve their objective by containment and engaging in virtually static combat.

Allied senior commanders had been focused on putting troops ashore on D-Day and then linking the Allied beachheads together, but little attention was given to the difficult terrain advancing troops would encounter as they moved inland. Some staff officers even reasoned that the hedgerows would actually help the Allies to secure and maintain their beachheads against the enemy; they did not think their troops could become deadlocked in a costly battle of attrition.

In fact, one week after D-Day, German resistance and the difficult hedgerows, which zigzagged more than 50 miles across northwestern France from Caumont le Repas to the Contenin Peninsula and almost 50 miles inland, slowed the entire U.S. First Army's advance to a snail's pace. A frustrated General Omar Bradley, commanding First Army, deemed the land, "The damndest country I've seen."

On June 11, General Clarence Huebner, commander of the 1st Division, issued Field Order No. 37, orders to assault the village of Caumont Le Repas in support of the offensive of the U.S. VII Corps, under General J. Lawton Collins, against the major port city of Cherbourg on the Cotentin Peninsula. The 26th Infantry would assail Caumont le Repas while the 18th Infantry struck five miles west in Caumont L'Evente and the 16th Infantry remained in reserve.

The following morning at 5:55, the 26th marched out of LaButte and faced heavy rifle fire heading toward their objective. However, they saw no sign of the enemy when their leading elements reached Caumont le Repas, a small farm hamlet; the area, in fact, seemed virtually deserted. Pfc. Edward Duncan Cameron of C Company maintained a journal in combat, and the June 13 entry reads in part, "The people seemed friendly & while we awaited orders we managed to gulp down some milk the farmer offered us." The farmer lent his house to Company C's commander, Captain Allen Ferry, to use as a command post. GIs were ordered to set up a defensive perimeter, and Cameron noted, "Instead of digging foxholes most of the fellows tried to catch 40 winks."

Soon, however, German artillery rounds began falling on the farm, and the men of Company C started digging with renewed purpose. Pfc. Richard Crum recalled, "As we moved into position, a German armed patrol of some strength advanced to our front, and an intense fire fight took place." The Americans held their ground against the German attack, which included small-arms and mortar fire on both the right and left flanks followed by probing assaults that swept toward the farm. The battle lasted almost 12 hours, and the 26th maintained their positons. At 10 PM, the Germans retreated south about 1,000 meters to higher ground across the valley, where they would remain for an entire month.

The enemy units involved included elements of the 3rd Parachute Division and the vaunted 2nd SS Panzer Division, which according to the 1st Infantry Division's G-2, was "one of the best units in the German Army. It fought with great distinction in the Polish, French and Balkan campaigns, and on the central Russian Front." The GIs holding the line were unaware of these intelligence reports and knew little of the big picture. They did realize they would have to learn to fight in the unfamiliar terrain by trial and error.

The valley separating the armies served as an immediate test to Company C's adaptability. A four-man reconnaissance patrol left camp at midnight on June 14 and found open fields, hedgerow fields, and wagon trails along the valley floor. The men became confused and disoriented. After being challenged and fired on, they headed southeast, deeper into enemy territory where they observed infantrymen in the forest. At dawn they went northeast toward the British Second Army's sector. They returned to camp after nearly 19 hours on patrol. The GIs had been surrounded by hedgerows, which, in some instances, skewed their bearing to the point that when looking at a map they could not ascertain their own location.

Improvising when lost, however, was expected duty of any GI. Pfc. Rocco Moretto recalled a four-man night patrol on June 21 that was cut in half, leaving two soldiers without a map. Lieutenant Emory Jones and Sergeant Thomas Shea led the patrol, and Moretto and Pfc. Kenneth Miller brought up the rear as "getaway men." If anything went awry, they were to head back to camp and report. As they reconnoitered the "route and condition" of a nearby stream, the four men walked down the valley, stayed on trails, bypassed hedgerow fields, then went across an open field.

Moretto remembered, "There were a group of soldiers about 20 yards away in a V formation to the left. Shea challenged them. We [Miller and I] hit the ground. Then, the Germans fired a flare. We stayed perfectly still for about 20 minutes. We thought that Shea and Jones were captured. They had the map. We had no idea where we were. So, we crawled and followed the sound of the Germans' mortar fire and found our way back."

After Shea and Jones returned to camp, Moretto learned that the other patrol had actually been from the 1st Division's 3rd Battalion. The hedgerows and thick vegetation restricted visibility, and darkness had made it almost impossible to detect movement. Neither Moretto nor Miller could call out to Shea and Jones, lest the Germans hear.

Patrols often received machine-gun fire when approaching enemy-occupied hedgerows, outposts, and houses, but they had difficulty pinpointing the actual location of the enemy. Most patrols went out after sunset, obviated attention with basic precautions, and did not talk. They did not smoke because lit cigarettes revealed positions. Steel helmets sometimes reflected moonlight. GIs on daylight patrols had to exercise extreme caution, not only near hedgerows but also in open fields. Furthermore, their olive drab uniforms, even the undershirts, drawers, and socks, were chemically treated (to protect against gas attacks) and 100 percent wool. The June heat caused perspiration and produced conspicuous white spots and streaks on their uniforms, making them easier for the enemy to see through field glasses against the verdant landscape.

German soldiers, on the other hand, were seldom visual targets but frequently audible ones. GIs slowly walked through the sunken lanes listening for signs of the enemy, which left one option for immediate offensive action—fire through the thick hedges. Sergeant Russell Werme, a sniper in C Company, remembered, "I always aimed for the head in Sicily and North Africa, but in Caumont I didn't get that chance." Company C was a rifle company, and its only offensive action, shooting blind through hedges, spawned frustration. The terrain, though, dictated their actions, and on patrols GIs learned to listen for enemy activity.

Patrols reported hearing German soldiers eat and talk, but one sound they consistently heard more than any other was "digging in." Enemy shovels were busy behind hedgerows, on trails, and near roads. In fact, the 1st Infantry Division's G-2 on June 14 reported, "The enemy began to dig in, constructing numerous strongpoints, road blocks, wire entanglements, and sowing antipersonnel and antitank mines." German soldiers were inveterate diggers and adept with "field of fire, cover and camouflage."

Sergeant Hans Erich Braun of Panzerjager Abteilung 38 facing British troops southeast of Camount le Repas recalled, "Whenever there was a halt, even if only for a few hours, we instinctively seized our spades and dug as deeply as possible, in order to disappear inside the protective earth."

Camouflaged on all sides of their occupied hedgerow fields, German soldiers allowed Americans to enter so they could ensnare them, which Sergeant Werme found out firsthand when leading Privates Delbert Carey and Robert Brehm on a predawn patrol on June 18. Werme remembered, "We went down a lane, and I slowly opened the gate. It was quiet and the field looked empty. We walked in, I guess about thirty yards or so, and out of my peripheral vision I saw a German soldier aiming a rifle at me. He got me through the neck and the bullet came out of my back."

National Archives

American soldiers dig in along the edge of a hedgerow. The Americans learned quickly to dig in and hug the hedgerows when enemy shelling began.

Unable to see the enemy, Werme's patrol was overwhelmed with a sudden hail of gunfire. The patrol, victims of an enemy combat tactic that pinned down GIs, did not have a chance. The Germans positioned heavy machine guns on opposite corners and light machine guns to the front. Enemy snipers were always in the mix, and pre-sighted mortars targeted American infantrymen who entered an occupied hedgerow field. Werme recalled, "I was on my back and couldn't move. I really thought I was going to die in a damn hedgerow field."

About 6:30 AM, Captain Ferry learned that the patrol was pinned down and deployed reinforcements, but they could not penetrate the enemy's stalwart defense. Lieutenant Marlin Brockette remembered that Werme was stuck "in no-man's land between the armies." Almost eight hours later Ferry heard that Werme's patrol had men wounded and reported it to Lt. Col. Francis Murdoch, his battalion commander. At 10:10 PM, Murdoch ordered a platoon from C Company under a smokescreen and covering artillery fire to bring back the injured soldiers. The platoon retrieved them. Werme was evacuated to a hospital. He lost two ribs and never returned to action. Carey and Brehm were dead.

Entering one of the sunken lanes between hedgerows was like walking into a dark tunnel, and the thick foliage impeded visibility. In the ditches flanking the trails, snipers dug slit trenches for concealment and protection against Allied mortar and artillery fire. Some dug so deep that they maintained well-stocked pantries and wine cellars. Cloaked by the vegetation the enemy set antipersonnel mines that

Research Center First Division Museum at Cantigny. Donated by Thomas Lane

American soldiers appear to have staged the mock capture of a German. Although the 26th Infantry Regiment's intelligence officers requested that GIs capture German soldiers for interrogation, the hedgerow country made grabbing them a difficult proposition.

were often undetectable.

"Those lanes scared the hell out of me," recalled Pfc. Moretto. "You really had to take your time and be vigilant." But sometimes that was not enough. During a patrol on June 28, Pfc. Tauno "Jack" LePisto walked along a trail next to a hedgerow and stepped on a mine. He lost a leg and died from the wound two days later.

Securing information was an integral part of a patrol's task. Noting the coordinates of the enemy's mortar and machine-gun positions was crucial in directing effective artillery fire. Although G-2 reported, "From 17 June on, it became increasingly difficult for our patrols to penetrate the enemy lines," GIs found a way. On June 29, engineers removed "four enemy AP mines From N side of trail to West of hedge." And a Company C patrol reported on June 22 that "6 or 7 Germans moved out of mortar and MG positions" that were "fired on by 81 mm mortar" from GIs in Company D.

The most coveted information source, perhaps, was a German soldier; but, the hedgerows made it difficult to nab a prisoner. During the first week of the Normandy Campaign, the 26th Infantry captured more than 90 German soldiers, finding useful documents that helped intelligence personnel determine the locations of enemy units. In Caumont le Repas, however, enemy prisoners were scarce. From June 23-25, 1st Lt. C.A. Lafley, the 26th Infantry intelligence officer, sent messages to Companies A, B, and C that "a POW would still be highly appreciated." No records indicate C Company captured an enemy soldier.

Cattle, living and dead, were abundant across Normandy and delivered vital information in their own right. A dead cow cautioned that a field or trail might contain mines and acted as a landmark, giving GIs a sense of direction in the confusing twists and turns. Grazing cows were often a sign that an area was free of mines. American and German soldiers monitored the behavior of cattle. Those that stared at a hedge might be indicating that an enemy soldier was hiding in or near it.

On June 22, a Company C patrol experienced a rarity, a direct contact fire fight with the enemy. It started as a routine reconnaissance patrol. Soon enough, the Americans noticed a tripwire on a trail and recorded the coordinates. Then they came across a German patrol estimated to be of platoon strength and killed three enemy soldiers who were armed with machine pistols and hand grenades. As dawn approached, the Company C patrol withdrew. They did not suffer any casualties but could not sustain the fight. As the GIs headed back to camp the Germans followed, stopping their pursuit about 200 yards from the company's outpost and opening up with machine-gun fire on the left flank.

Enemy patrols repeatedly targeted the 26th's weak spot, the eastern sector, or left flank, at Caumont le Repas. General Bradley noted that the British Second Army "only advanced half as far, leaving the 1st Division with a long open flank exposed toward the enemy concentration…." Pfc. Duncan Cameron was often stationed at an outpost and remembered, "It was tedious, but tense. It gave me an eerie feeling because it wasn't face-to-face fighting."

Cameron served on outpost duty for eight consecutive days, June 21-28, looking down the valley at copses of trees, open fields, and hedgerows. He never saw enemy patrols but felt their attacks. His June 22 journal entry reads, "Jerry came up close to our position in the afternoon and opened up with a machine pistol. We couldn't locate them tho [sic]."

The Germans, however, found the GIs with ease. They defended Caumont le Repas before being pushed back on June 13 and knew the lay of the land. They usually held high ground and scanned the farmsteads and fields with binoculars. The days were long, usually with the first streaks of the sun appearing as early as 4 AM and the last rays sinking in the west around 8:30 PM. The Germans watched houses, barns, foxholes, a nearby apple orchard enclosed by a hedgerow, and American soldiers. The enemy probed often as patrols fired at the outposts but were unable to penetrate the farm.

Artillery, though, was another matter.

Having a choice of targets, enemy guns pounded the farm with consistency. Captain Ferry knew the house he used as a command post for a few days would eventually attract German mortar fire, so he moved to a covered foxhole in the orchard. The Germans later blasted holes in the house and other structures. During daylight GIs had to pay careful attention. Moretto recalled, "The old soldiers warned us that we had to be careful in all of our movements because we were under observation."

Two soldiers, Pfcs. David Groden and Carl Schmidt, were not cautious when they cleaned a blanket on June 30. Lieutenant Brockette remembered, "I crawled along the hedgerow to get to them. They had a large foxhole dug with shelves and space to stand up. I told them that if I could see them shake that blanket, then the Germans could too. They needed to stay down. As I crawled back to my position, a German .88 shell hit them and cut one in half."

Groden and Schmidt were killed. They were located where most of Company C's foxholes were, in an L formation bordering the road to Caumont L'Evente, and they provided the enemy with conspicuous targets.

Taking protection from mortar fire in their foxholes, GIs either sat down or curled up. Pfc. Edgar Smith learned a valuable lesson the first day in Caumont le Repas when he stood up after digging a three-foot hole. He recalled, "When those shells hit I was literally thrown backwards out of my foxhole and landed a few feet away. I got back, sat down, and didn't dare

make that mistake again." The high-pitched sound of an enemy mortar shell, which Cameron referred to as a "death whistle," evoked an ominous, restive feeling and forced GIs to dig deeper. They also covered their foxholes with heavy branches and reinforced the walls and top edges with sandbags. Shrapnel ripped into several soldiers in C Company, who were out of their protective hovels during the 30-day battle.

On June 15, the 26th endured a particularly savage attack. The Germans unleashed a frenetic onslaught of shells, knocking out C Company's communication to battalion headquarters. Moretto recalled, "Captain Ferry gave me an order to run to Battalion HQ, and let Colonel Murdoch know that we lost radio contact and that the Captain was expecting a counterattack." As Moretto headed west he found six wounded men sprawled on the ground. Sergeant George Finfrock, who led the 60 mm mortar section in the weapons platoon, looked the worst with blood gushing out of his right leg. A piece of shrapnel had torn into his upper thigh.

Moretto remembered, "He wasn't conscious. I ripped his pant leg, took out my medic pack, sprinkled sulfa powder on the wound and wrapped it tight. Then, I carried him to his foxhole and headed to Battalion HQ to deliver the message to the colonel." Finfrock was evacuated to a field hospital and later said that Moretto saved his life.

Enemy artillery caused the most U.S. casualties, about 75 percent, in the Normandy Campaign. Pfc. Everett Hunt recalled, "All of us young soldiers had questions about the best place to be when the enemy fired their .88 shells. They [old soldiers] would give us textbook advice like dig away from trees to avoid shrapnel." Old soldiers also warned against hiding behind anything standing on the farm. Pfc. Peckham remembered, "I got that advice, but when shells started blasting I ran for cover, and the only thing close was a stone shed." An explosion crumbled the shed onto his legs. Suffering severe bruises and unable to walk, he was evacuated to a hospital.

Old soldiers and combat veterans of North Africa and Sicily advised young ones, new to frontline fighting, about enemy tactics and how to handle attacks. The young respected the old and valued their advice. When an old soldier died, Pfc. Edgar Smith recalled that it was "hard to take and hard to believe. I felt more confident fighting with them. It was like losing a guardian angel."

The young soon discovered that bullets and shrapnel did not discriminate. Sergeant Werme was revered among both old and young soldiers. He possessed excellent marksmanship, and many considered him "the best shot in C Company." On June 18, Cameron wrote in his journal, "If things don't change they'll be the same or vice versa. We still remain in our cozy foxholes listening to 88 shells bursting around us. So this is war! It's still like a bad dream to me. Nothing like I pictured mentally and ... old soldiers do die."

Moretto remembered, "It seemed that everyone talked about Werme for days."

Although young soldiers followed the lead and direction of the old, hedgerows were an equalizer. Experience levels were sometimes meaningless amid them. Together, American soldiers learned how to navigate the meandering labyrinths, maintain their sense of direction, and detect enemy camouflage and booby traps. Patrolling the hedgerows, Company C scored victories and suffered losses in Caumont le Repas. Their missions were fraught with peril and required patient, methodical movement through one field at a time.

Normandy's terrain was the bane of General Bradley's existence, and an enterprising GI helped cope with the challenges of the hedgerows. In early July, Sergeant Curtis G. Cullin, Jr., of the 102nd Calvary Reconnaissance Squadron formed scrap iron from an enemy roadblock into hooked blades and welded them to a tank's forward hull. The blades sliced through the mounds and then plowed with ease across the hedgerows. The tanks were dubbed "rhino tanks." Bradley observed a demonstration in mid-July and then ordered the cutting devices placed on as many tanks as possible.

On July 13, 1944, the 26th Infantry Regiment was relieved by the 11th Infantry Regiment, 5th Division and marched out of Caumont le Repas. The experience the men of Company C acquired would serve them well in phase two of the Normandy Campaign, when they would face more hedgerow combat near the embattled city of St. Lo.

First-time contributor Scott Bryan conducted extensive research in the preparation of this article. He resides in Brooklyn, New York.

Research Center First Division Museum at Cantigny.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-586-2215-25A, Photo: Reich

ABOVE: An American innovation that worked, steel blades were welded on the hulls of tanks to push through the hedgerows. RIGHT: With the body of a dead American soldier lying nearby, three elite German paratroopers wait quietly in a well concealed defensive position along a Norman hedgerow. German machine guns and artillery were often pre-sighted to catch American and British troops as they came into view at the edge of a hedgerow.

THE GERMAN NAVY'S COMMERCE RAIDING POCKET BATTLESHIP CAME TO GRIEF AT THE HANDS OF HER OWN CREW AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE.

When German dictator Adolf Hitler loosed his troops into Poland on Friday, September 1, 1939, he hoped that a lightning conquest would result in a negotiated peace with Great Britain and France.

Hitler's previous territorial moves during the appeasement years had failed to provoke the two nations into action, so he was stunned when the British and French, honoring guarantees to Poland, declared war on Sunday, September 3. Two decades after the end of World War I, another bloodletting was about to engulf Europe.

But neither side was fully prepared. Britain had a small army and a partly modernized air force, and only her formidable navy was ready to confront an enemy. Germany, on the other hand, boasted a powerful army and air force, but her navy was not up to strength because Hitler, having no experience or interest in naval matters, had ignored the advice of his admirals. They knew that their fleet was hopelessly ill equipped for war. The Führer had, in fact, ordered Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, the Kriegsmarine chief, to be ready for war with Britain by 1944 at the earliest.

When the hostilities started, the German fleet comprised three 11,700-ton pocket battleships, the *Deutschland, Admiral Scheer,* and *Admiral Graf Spee*; two battlecruisers; eight cruisers; and 57 U-boats. The force was outmatched by the 23 capital ships, eight aircraft carriers, and 80 cruisers of the British and French fleets. Raeder had decided in May 1939 that the bulk of his fleet would be deployed in the North Sea and the Baltic and that enemy maritime trade would be attacked. As soon as he learned the date of the Polish invasion, he sent his ships to their war stations.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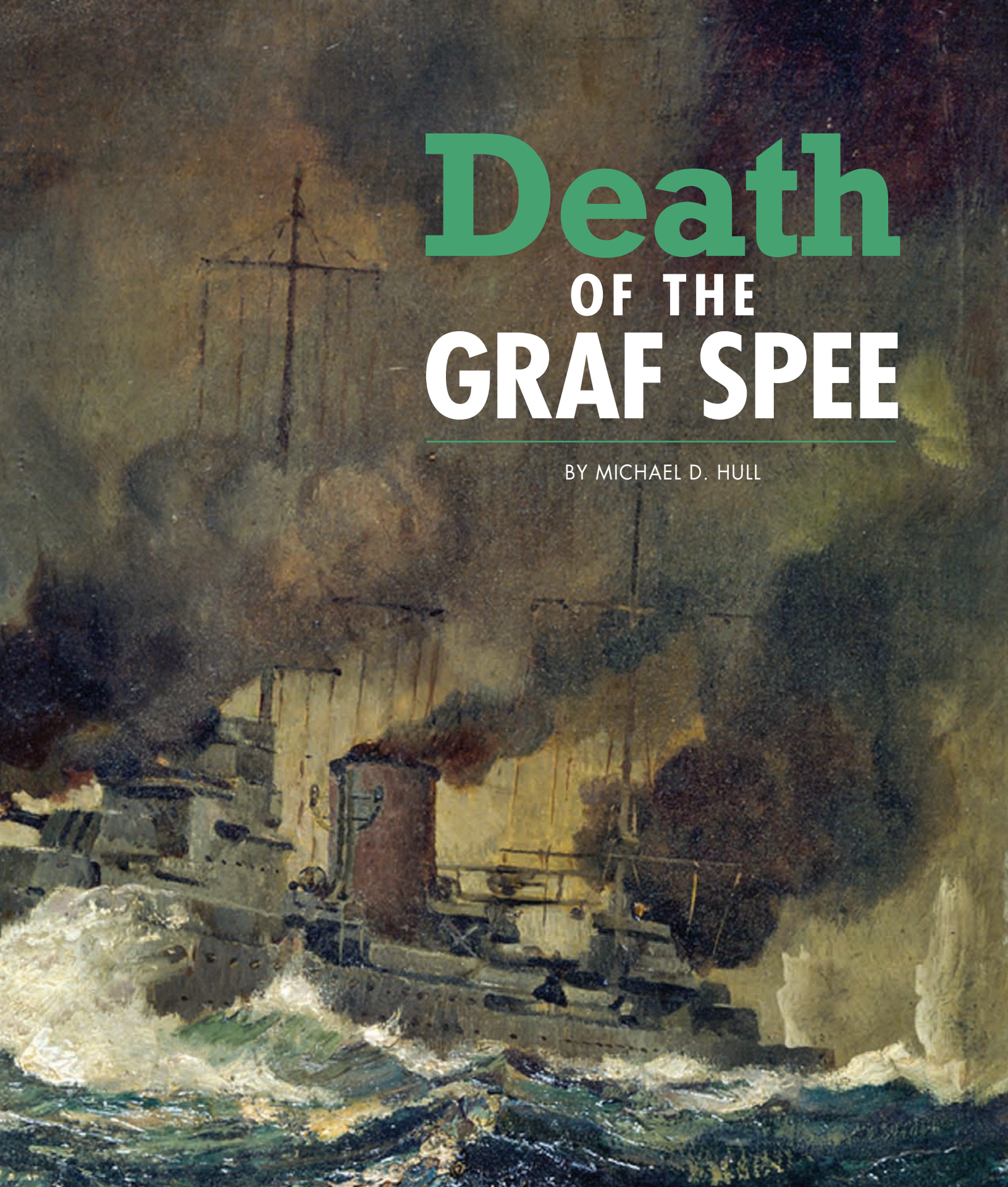
The *Graf Spee*, under the command of 45-year-old Captain Hans Wilhelm Langsdorff, sailed from Wilhelmshaven on August 21, and the *Deutschland* followed her three days later. Undetected by the British Home Fleet or patrol bombers of Royal Air Force Coastal Command, the vessels slipped into the Atlantic, ready to raid merchant ships bound for Britain. On August 23, meanwhile, the British Admiralty ordered all warships in home waters to proceed to their war stations, and on August 29 the fleet was ordered to mobilize.

At 11 AM on that fateful September 3, the Admiralty telegraphed all ships, "Commence hostilities at once against Germany," and at lunchtime Berlin followed suit with a signal to Kriegsmarine units: "Open hostilities with England at once." At the time, the *Deutschland* and her supply ship were stationed south of Greenland, while the *Graf Spee*, with her supply ship and oiler, the *Altmark,* were west of the Cape Verde Islands and heading for the South Atlantic.

The *Deutschland* and *Graf Spee* were initially ordered to refrain from hostile acts, and it was not until September 26, when Hitler gave up hope of a quick peace with Britain and France, that they were released for the "disruption and destruction of enemy merchant shipping by all possible means."

The cruiser HMNZS *Achilles*, manned by its crew of New Zealanders, opens fire on the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* during the early moments of the Battle of the River Plate. The British naval squadron, which also included the British cruisers *Ajax* and *Exeter*, drove the German raider to seek safety in the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay. Inset: Captain Hans Langsdorff of the *Graf Spee* saw to the safety of his crew and then committed suicide after his doomed ship was scuttled.



Death of the Graf Spee

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

National Archives

The raiders went into action, but the *Deutschland* was to prove more of an embarrassment than a help to Germany. After sinking a British freighter on October 5, she committed a major diplomatic blunder by seizing the neutral American merchantman *City of Flint*. She then sank a Norwegian freighter on the 14th. With two neutrals among her three victims in as many weeks, the *Deutschland* was ordered home.

In sharp contrast, the *Graf Spee* proved to be the most destructive of the early naval predators as she preyed on Allied commerce in the South Atlantic. The neutral nations of South America had drawn a 300-mile safety belt that no belligerent warships were supposed to penetrate, but Hitler paid no attention to such restrictions.

Named for Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee, who went down with his flagship, the cruiser *Scharnhorst,* in the Battle of the Falkland Islands on December 8, 1914, the *Graf Spee* was launched at Wilhelmshaven on June 30, 1934, and was the third and last of the pocket battleships designed to circumvent the arms limitations of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. She was the proud symbol of Nazi Germany's resurgent naval power.

Armor plated, three city blocks long, and displacing 16,000 tons with a wartime load of fuel, ammunition, and stores, the *Graf Spee* mounted two triple turrets of 11-inch guns, eight 5.9-inchers, six 4.1-inchers, eight 19.7-inch torpedo tubes, and two small floatplanes. She had a crew of 1,150 men and a range of 21,500 miles without refueling. Able to cruise at 26 knots, she could outrun any ship she could not outshoot.

A man of intellect and social grace, her captain was a graduate of the Kiel Naval Academy and a cruiser torpedo officer before distinguishing himself aboard the battleship *Grosser Kurfurst* at the Battle of Jutland on May 31, 1916. Awarded the Iron Cross, Second Class, he later commanded a minesweeper flotilla and torpedo boats in Spanish waters. A comrade cited his "calm and well balanced personality, together with his keen sense of humor and his tactical and strategic training."

Five days after sinking a British freighter off Pernambuco on September 30, 1939, the *Graf Spee* seized another and then sank two more. After refueling, she dispatched a freighter on the Cape Town-Britain route and then moved into the Indian Ocean. Ten days produced no prey, so Langsdorff headed into the Mozambique Channel and sank another freighter. After respecting the neutrality of a Dutch vessel the next day, he concluded that enough had been done to alert the British of his presence. So he steered back to his refueling area in the South Atlantic.

Leaving the victim ships' prisoners aboard the *Altmark,* Langsdorff headed back to the African coast in November and swiftly dispatched three more merchantmen. By December 7, 1939, in nine weeks of cruising thousands of miles, the *Graf Spee* had sunk nine merchant ships totaling 50,000 tons. To the credit of her captain, a relentless foe yet honorable man, not one life had been lost.

Because of scant news of the merchant ships' fate, it was not until early October that the Admiralty became aware of the mercantile marauding by Raeder's pocket battleships and cruisers. On October 5, the British and French formed nine small hunting groups to track and intercept the raiders, with the deadly *Graf Spee* as the primary target. The first of several dramatic Royal Navy pursuits during World War II was underway.

The squadrons included a French battleship, British and French cruisers, and aircraft carriers. For several critical weeks, the Allied ships were searching for a needle in a haystack. The hunting groups sailed to the last reported positions of merchant ships sending out "raider" distress signals and then raced to the attacker's last reported position. The elusive *Graf Spee*, meanwhile, had slipped back into the Atlantic.

The Allied ships kept searching, and the shrewd Langsdorff continued to elude them. Finally, on December 2, the *Graf Spee* seized the British freighter SS *Doric Star,* which was able to transmit a signal that was picked up. It indicated that the general area of the pocket battleship's operations was off northern Brazil. Vice Admiral Sir G.H. d'Oyly Lyon, the commander of South Atlantic operations, immediately ordered a search northward, while Commodore Sir Henry Harwood, the 51-year-old leader of Force G, surmised that the *Graf Spee* would make for the rich shipping lanes south of Brazil, off the mouth of the River Plate between Uruguay and Argentina.

Navy History and Heritage Command

BELOW: With a number of its crewmen on deck, the *Graf Spee* is shown in European waters in mid-1939. The German surface raider was armed with menacing 11-inch main guns. These had greater range than the guns of the Allied cruisers that faced *Graf Spee* off the River Plate. RIGHT: Only a few days before Great Britain declared war on Germany, the pocket battleship *Graf Spee* is shown underway in the English Channel in August 1939. After the declaration of war, *Graf Spee* amassed an impressive record of enemy merchant tonnage sunk before coming to grief in the waters off Montevideo.

Navy History and Heritage Command

A thickset and brave officer with a flair for innovative tactics, Harwood hoped to deal with the *Graf Spee* himself. He had trained his squadron to divide the pocket battleship's fire, with two divisions attacking from separate directions. Like his foe, Harwood had been a torpedo officer in World War I and served aboard the armored cruiser *Sutlej* and the battleship *Royal Sovereign*. He later commanded the destroyer *Warwick* and the cruisers *London* and *Exeter* before being promoted to commodore. He was described by fellow officers as a man of energy, cool nerve, and cheerfulness. He "had a gift for winning the confidence and esteem of all he met," said one.

Harwood assembled his squadron off the River Plate on December 12. It comprised the 8,390-ton heavy cruiser HMS *Exeter* with 8-inch guns and the 7,270-ton Leander-class light cruisers HMS *Ajax* and the New Zealand-manned HMNZS *Achilles,* each with 6-inch main guns. His fourth cruiser, the 9,870-ton HMS *Cumberland* with 8-inch guns, was refitting in the Falkland Islands.

Shortly after daybreak on Wednesday, December 13, the *Ajax* sighted a plume of smoke to the north. The *Exeter* was sent to investigate, and at 6:15 AM her skipper, Captain F.S. Bell, signaled, "I think it is a pocket battleship!" It was, in fact, the *Graf Spee,* east of the River Plate estuary. The British ships, though heavily outgunned, immediately began to pursue her. The *Exeter* shadowed her from the south, while the *Ajax* and *Achilles* shadowed from the east. Flying his flag on the *Ajax,* Commodore Harwood was implementing a preconceived plan designed to divide his powerful opponent's attention and prevent her from training her big guns on each ship in turn.

Instead of keeping his distance and picking off his attackers at long range, Captain Langsdorff decided to close with them. The British guns opened fire at maximum range, and, as Harwood had hoped, the *Graf Spee* responded by dividing her salvoes against both groups of ships. Soon afterward, the German vessel turned all her fire against the *Exeter*, which was perceived as the most dangerous threat with her eight-inch guns. Grave damage was inflicted.

Struck by seven 11-inch rounds, the cruiser lost the use of two of her gun turrets, suffered damage to her bridge and main steering, and was burning. The gallant Captain Bell decided nevertheless to move in on the *Graf Spee* and attract all of her attention, allowing the light cruisers to attack unnoticed from a different angle. At her maximum speed of 32 knots, the *Exeter* raced toward the pocket battleship to attempt a torpedo attack. Listing badly to starboard, she was forced to withdraw from the action and limp southward to the Falklands for temporary repairs. Of her complement, 61 were killed and 23 wounded.

ABOVE: In this painting of the Battle of the River Plate, a towering geyser rises from the Atlantic Ocean after a near miss from the 11-inch guns of the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* falls close to the cruiser *Achilles*. BELOW: British cruisers patrol the sea lanes of the South Atlantic near the mouth of the River Plate during the early days of World War II.

While the *Cumberland* raced northward from the Falklands to join the action, the *Ajax* and *Achilles* darted in to distract the German ship, firing six-inch salvoes while receiving rounds from the *Graf Spee*'s secondary 5.9-inch guns. Hits were made on the pocket battleship. Confined in her holds were 60 captured British merchant seamen, and when she shuddered violently from the impact of Royal Navy shells they cheered wildly.

However, the two light cruisers were taking a worse beating. Half of the *Ajax*'s main batteries were knocked out, and the *Achilles* suffered serious damage. The casualties were seven dead and five wounded aboard the *Ajax,* and four dead in the *Achilles*. Commodore Harwood then put up a smokescreen to confuse the enemy gun layers and withdrew out of range of the *Graf Spee*'s main guns.

The furious encounter lasted for just over an hour, and when it seemed that the Germans were winning Langsdorff decided to break off the action. A 14-hour running fight ensued when, pursued by the *Ajax* and *Achilles,* he took the *Graf Spee* southwestward for emergency repairs in the neutral waters off the Uruguayan port of Montevideo. It was late at night that Wednesday, December 13, when she limped into the broad River Plate estuary off Montevideo. She had expended most of her ammunition, and her tired engines were in dire need of an overhaul.

The ship, scorched and blackened by shell blasts, had taken two dozen hits in the battle. There were holes at her starboard waterline, her control and fighting towers had been damaged, and a gun tower on the port side had been torn off. Thirty-six of her complement had been killed and 60 wounded. The morale of Langsdorff's crew—away from home for four months—was at low ebb. Neutrality laws permitted the vessel to stay in the port for 24 hours, after which she would be forced to leave and face the British ships.

Harwood's remaining two cruisers, meanwhile, stood off the River Plate mouth while he signaled for reinforcements and waited for HMS *Cumberland* to join the small force. She arrived on December 16, to be followed by the cruisers HMS *Dorsetshire* and HMS *Shropshire* from the Cape of Good Hope on December 19. More British ships also hastened toward the River Plate, including the venerable battlecruiser *Renown,* the carrier *Ark Royal,* the cruiser *Neptune,* and the destroyers *Hardy, Hostile, Hasty,* and *Hereward.*

In Montevideo, meanwhile, after Captain Langsdorff had buried his dead, secured hospital care for the wounded, and freed his British prisoners, his damage control crew started to repair the battered ship. He and German Minister Otto Langmann requested 15 days in which to complete the work. Langsdorff needed his ship to be made both seaworthy and combat ready. The Uruguayan government insisted that Langsdorff leave within two days or be interned with his crew.

The Hague Convention allowed a belligerent warship to stay in a neutral port for more than 24 hours only if she had suffered damage, in which case she might "carry out such repairs as are absolutely necessary to render her seaworthy, but may not add to her fighting force." The repair work started on the morning of Thursday, December 14. Langmann and his aides, meanwhile, tried vainly to win an extension from Uruguay and Argentina, triggering a period of hectic diplomatic wrangling.

While Harwood's cruisers waited patiently outside Montevideo harbor, diplomatic representatives watched every move closely. The British minister, Sir Eugene Millington-Drake, argued that since the *Graf Spee* had steamed at high speed for about 300 miles after the battle she was clearly seaworthy and should not be allowed to remain for more than 24 hours. BBC radio broadcast reports that other naval units were closing in to finish off the *Graf Spee*, and the drama heightened. American commentators and newsreel crews gathered in Montevideo, and the tense standoff captured front page and radio attention around the world.

Through the German embassy, Uruguayan officials eventually granted the pocket battleship an extension of 72 hours, but Langsdorff was frustrated. His sources told him that the River Plate was already blockaded by the *Renown* and *Ark Royal,* and his gunnery officer said he could see these ships from the *Graf Spee*'s control tower. Realizing that the situation was desperate and unwilling to lead his officers and men to almost certain death outside the harbor, the German skipper cabled Berlin on Saturday, December 16, and asked Admiral Raeder for orders. He said that there was "no prospect of breaking out into the open sea and getting through to Germany." He added, "If I can fight my way through to Buenos Aires, I shall endeavor to do so."

Raeder replied, "Attempt by all means to extend the time in neutral waters. Approved [to fight your way through to Buenos Aires if possible]. No internment in Uruguay. Attempt effective destruction if ship scuttled."

As the repairs were going ahead at full speed that Saturday, the hard-pressed Langsdorff faced yet another crisis—the threat of mutiny. Officers protesting the scuttling order called for volunteers to go out and fight, but only 60 stepped forward; the rest stood sullen. Between 3 PM and 7:30 PM, the crew was mustered on deck eight times. The young sailors shouted, broke ranks, and refused to return to duty. The captain intervened, and about 900 officers and men were transferred to the SS *Tacoma*, a Berlin-Amerika Line freighter-tanker lying in the estuary.

Langsdorff's only hope was to fight his way across the River Plate estuary to Buenos Aires. Pro-German sentiment was strong in Argentina, and he could expect benevolent neutrality. Raeder told Hitler of Langsdorff's predicament, and the Führer was irritated by the attention it was receiving. He forbade internment and agreed that the *Graf Spee* should be scuttled if necessary.

Captain Langsdorff accepted his fate early on the morning of Sunday, December 17. Secret documents and equipment aboard the pocket battleship were destroyed, valuables removed, and scuttling charges placed in several of her large compartments. Shortly after 6 PM, the skipper gave the order to weigh anchor.

Manned by a skeleton crew, with her battle colors hoisted, and followed by the *Tacoma,* the *Graf Spee* slid slowly into the powerful stream of the River Plate. Thousands of people lined the riverbanks in silence as daylight faded. Poised in international waters downstream, the cruisers A*jax, Achilles,* and *Cumberland* went to action stations, swung their six- and eight-inch guns, and waited for the German ship. Commodore Harwood was ready to fight a second round.

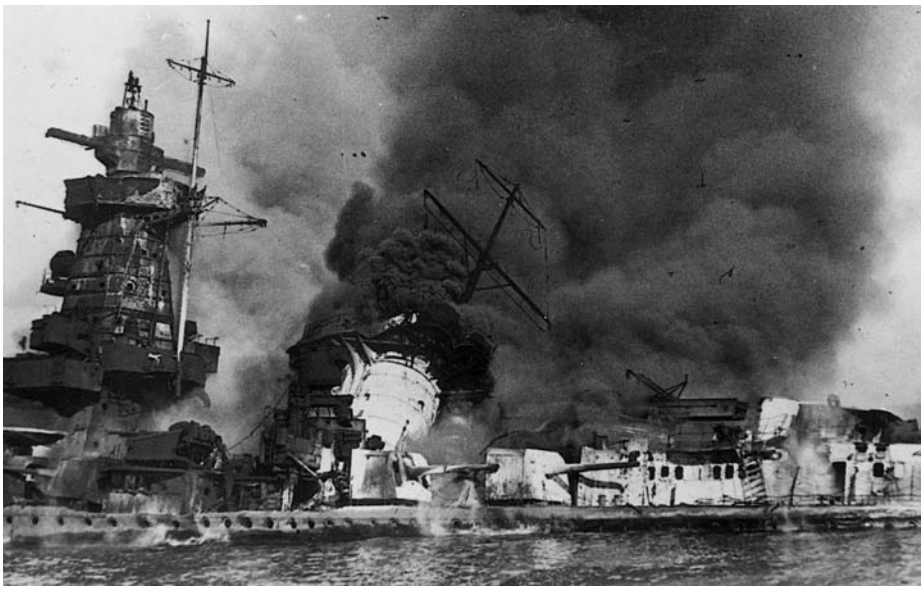
"It was a glorious evening with a vivid sunset," reported the gunnery officer aboard the *Ajax*. "We were closed up and loaded, ready for whatever might come. We received the news that she had sailed. We could hear the Yankee broadcasters describing us as the suicide squadron with their little pop-guns."

Just as the sun began to go down, the *Graf Spee* altered course sharply to the west, stopped on the three-mile boundary, and dropped anchor. The time fuses were set, and Captain Langsdorff and his skeleton crew left in boats

"IT WAS A GLORIOUS EVENING WITH A VIVID SUNSET," REPORTED THE GUNNERY OFFICER ABOARD THE *AJAX*. "WE WERE CLOSED UP AND LOADED, READY FOR WHATEVER MIGHT COME. WE RECEIVED THE NEWS THAT SHE HAD SAILED. WE COULD HEAR THE YANKEE BROADCASTERS DESCRIBING US AS THE SUICIDE SQUADRON WITH THEIR LITTLE POP-GUNS."

Navy History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: After sustaining damage during the Battle of the River Plate, the *Graf Spee* sought temporary shelter in the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay. Local authorities insisted that the Germans abide by the rules of the Hague Convention but eventually extended the ship's time in port to 72 hours. BELOW: Shortly after charges placed to scuttle the pocket battleship in the estuary of the River Plate were detonated, the *Graf Spee* burns and settles in relatively shallow water off the coast of Uruguay on December 18, 1939. News of the German surface raider's demise was welcomed in Britain during the difficult early days of World War II.



Navy History and Heritage Command

to be picked up by the T*acoma*. The skipper was the last to leave the ship.

At 8 PM, the breathless hush along the riverbanks was shattered by the first of a series of explosions as the scuttling charges set off the pocket battleship's remaining ammunition. A great pillar of smoke from amidships shot skyward, and the blasts rose to a deafening crescendo. Burning fiercely, the ship sank within three minutes in 25 feet of water. She settled on an even keel on the riverbed as smoke and fire shrouded her superstructure.

A *London Daily Telegraph* correspondent reported, "At that moment, the sun was just sinking below the horizon, flooding the sky in which small gray clouds floated lazily, a brilliant blood-red. It was a perfect Wagnerian setting for this amazing Hitlerian drama."

Later, after further wrangling with Montevideo officials and interference by a Uruguayan warship, the *Tacoma* carried Langsdorff, head bowed and shedding tears, and his crew to Buenos Aires, where they were interned. The sailors were to remain there until February 1946, when 900 of them who had chosen not to stay in Latin America were repatriated to Germany aboard the liner *Highland Monarch*. She was escorted, in a touch of irony, by HMS *Ajax*.

Shaken and depressed, meanwhile, after having to destroy his ship, and criticized in some newspapers for not going down with her, Captain Langsdorff wrote letters to his wife, his parents, and the German ambassador in Buenos Aires. In the last of these, he explained, "I reached the grave decision to scuttle the *Graf Spee* to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy. With the ammunition remaining, any attempt to break out to open water was bound to fail. Therefore I decided to bear the consequence. A captain cannot separate his own fate from that of his ship. I can do no more for my ship's company.... I am fully content to pay with my life for any possible discredit on the honor of the flag."

Langsdorff addressed his men on the afternoon of Tuesday, December 19, made sure that they were safely interned at the Immigrants Hotel in Buenos Aires, and then had a few drinks that evening with his remaining officers and local German residents in the Argentine Naval Arsenal. Then he went to his room there, draped the ensign of Kaiser Wilhelm's navy around his shoulders, and, in the early hours of December 20, shot himself in the head with his service revolver. He was buried with full naval honors in Buenos Aires.

Hitler's response to the scuttling and Langsdorff's suicide was sour and terse: "He should have sunk the *Exeter*." Americans who had been following the unfolding River Plate drama by radio praised the gallantry of the "little cruisers," and one newspaper called the scuttling "a spectacular admission of defeat."

Walter Lippman wrote in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, "The defeat of the *Graf Spee* is pleasing to all the Americas." But the U.S. government lodged an official protest in London and Berlin against the intrusion by warships of both sides into a neutrality zone.

The Battle of the River Plate was the first significant naval encounter of World War II, and the destruction of the *Graf Spee* was a coup for the Royal Navy. The response of the British, after a number of naval setbacks in the first four months of the war, was one of rapture. In the House of Commons, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain hailed the "very gallant action which has been fought by three comparatively small British ships against a much more heavily armed adversary," while First Sea Lord Winston Churchill said in a BBC broadcast, "The news which has come from Montevideo has been received with thankfulness in our islands and with unconcealed satisfaction throughout the greater part of the world."

It was not British shells that had sent the *Graf Spee* to the bottom, but Royal Navy ships had found her, attacked, and trapped her. Just as the annihilation of Admiral Graf von Spee's squadron by an avenging British force in the Falklands had brought the first good news from the navy early in World War I, so the demise of his seagoing monument provided the first such uplift in World War II.

Continued on page 74

YAMASHITA'S BLUFF TAKES SINGAPORE

Japanese tanks advance across a bridge toward the town of Johor Bahru during their lightning conquest of the Malay Peninsula. This photo was taken in late January 1942, and within weeks the British bastion of Singapore had fallen to the invaders.

In a brilliant campaign, the Imperial Japanese Army captured the British bastion of the Far East.

BY JON DIAMOND

Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto was not the only gambler in Imperial Japan's military hierarchy. Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, appointed commander of the Imperial Japanese Army's (IJA) 25th Army on November 2, 1941, to lead the invasion of Malaya and Singapore, also took risks to capture the prized British territory in less than 100 days after his invasion commenced on December 8.

Yamashita's rationale was to defeat the British and Commonwealth forces there before significant enemy reinforcements could arrive. Yamashita was also aware of his perilous political position in Tokyo and how only a quick, decisive victory could protect him from demotion or worse. When the IJA command offered him five divisions, he stated that he would need only three. With a deadline and a long supply line with limited opportunity for replenishment, the fewer troops deployed to achieve conquest the better.

Yamashita's counterpart, Lt. Gen. Arthur E. Percival, knew how weak Malaya and Singapore's defenses were, having correctly predicted in 1937 the Japanese strategy for seizing Malaya by storming ashore well north on the Kra Peninsula at the Thai ports of Singora and Patani. A rapid drive through northern Malaya and then down the west coast's main trunk road would culminate in an amphibious assault on Singapore across the narrow Straits of Johore rather than a full-scale invasion of the island's fortified southern shore.

Percival, among others, was bluffing that the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), with their limited strength concentrated on northern Malayan airfields, would smash the invasion. There were about 80,000 British Army troops in Malaya; however, less than half were first rate. The stage was set for two competing commanders to use their limited forces and military bluff, the outcome of which would be Britain's largest military disaster since Cornwallis's capitulation at Yorktown in 1781. Poor planning and leadership of British defenses coupled with an under-equipped garrison and Yamashita's military deception during the campaign's climax precipitated Singapore's surrender on February 15, 1942.

The Malay Peninsula measures approximately 450 miles north to south and has numerous east-west running rivers that intersect two coastal plains filled with dense, impenetrable jungle and large areas of swamp. The Japanese wanted to seize Malaya because it produced approximately 40 percent of the world's rubber and 58 percent of its tin. The peninsula's western shoreline, flanked by coastal plain, has many mangrove swamps, while the eastern coast has sandy beaches suitable for amphibious landings. On the western plain is a major motor road trunk, which though built for commerce would afford an invading army a much easier trek down the peninsula to Singapore.

The IJA planners noted that there were about 250 bridges along the main trunk road between Singapore and the Thai border. Japanese logisticians, principally Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, realized that the longer it took the Japanese to repair destroyed bridges the more time was afforded to British and Commonwealth troops to erect new defenses, especially in southern Malaya's Johore Province and on Singapore Island. Thus, an entire engineer regiment for bridge reconstruction would accompany each of the three divisions in Yamashita's army.

At the tip of the Malay Peninsula across the Straits of Johore

Ullstein Bild / The Granger Collection, NY

lies Singapore Island, Britain's defensive epicenter in the Far East. Singapore is a wet, low-lying island of about 240 square miles located just north of the equator. It extends some 27 miles from east to west and 13 miles north to south with a coastline fringed by mangrove swamps, creeks, and small rivers. The Straits of Johore varies in width from 600 to 5,000 yards, and near the narrowest point the British constructed a causeway. Most roads led to Singapore City, located on the southeastern shore of the island, where the approximately 500,000 inhabitants of various ethnicities dwelled. Except for scattered towns and settlements, the rest of the island was rubber plantation and jungle.

The British high command on Singapore Island, believing their position impregnable, had strongly fortified only the southern and eastern coasts of the island against seaborne assault with large-caliber naval guns. In addition to the two 15-inch naval guns firing armor-piercing shells from the Buona Vista and Johore Batteries, Singapore also possessed two batteries of 9.2-inch guns, the Connaught Battery on Pulau Blankang Mati, south of Keppel Harbor, and the Tekong Besar Battery on the island of that name northeast of Singapore Island. There were nine batteries of 6-inch guns scattered across the island; however, no naval gun batteries were situated along the northern coast of Singapore Island despite the expansive naval base located there at Sembawang.

During their autumn 1941 planning, the Japanese were less concerned about the British naval guns than the RAF and RAAF aircraft stationed on Singapore and at multiple airfields in northern Malaya, which could interdict Japanese lines of communications and interfere with scheduled IJA offensives in Sumatra and Java. These RAF and RAAF airfields had to be captured before any subsequent operations could be mounted. This approach was taken despite the reports from Japanese sympathizers that the British air defenses were a paper tiger with only about 30 percent of almost 600 planes actually available. Antiaircraft defenses to protect the airfields were almost nonexistent until the outbreak of hostilities. As December 1941 loomed, the British Army in Malaya still was short two of its requested six infantry divisions, an armored regiment, and additional antiaircraft batteries.

Field Marshal Archibald P. Wavell, commander in chief of British forces in India, noted before Pacific hostilities erupted, "My impressions were that the whole atmosphere in Singapore was completely unwarlike, that they did not expect a Japanese attack and were very far from being keyed up to a war pitch."

This indifferent view was expressed by the local British military service commanders despite the vast Singapore Naval Base, which had been built after years of vociferous debate in Whitehall. The naval base was finally opened in 1938 and cost more than 60 million pounds sterling. Its principal purpose was to serve as a deterrent to Japanese aggression against Britain's Far East colonies. However, the base did not possess its own battle fleet.

In the event of war, Singapore's commanders envisioned that the Royal Navy would sail through the Suez Canal, across the Indian Ocean, and through the Malacca Strait to Singapore Island. Percival and General Sir William Dobbie, commander in Malaya in the late 1930s, postulated that a British fleet could not arrive in less than 70 days. If Japan attacked Malaya and Singapore, it would be left to the RAF and RAAF to protect the naval base at Sembawang, while the British Army and its Commonwealth contingents were to protect the airfields on the Malay Peninsula.

The RAF and RAAF possessed too few front-line aircraft to engage the far superior Japanese planes. Also, the British and Commonwealth troops in Malaya were understrength, poorly trained for jungle warfare, and without a single tank. The military minds in London argued that tanks were unsuitable for jungle warfare. Prime Minister Winston Churchill had committed Britain's armored forces to North Africa and Greece rather than Singapore.

In May 1941, a rancorous debate developed

ABOVE: Indian soldiers cross a river during military exercises near Singapore prior to the Japanese invasion. The quality of the Commonwealth troops available to stem the Japanese tide in early 1942 was questionable, and the enemy invasion met with swift success. BELOW: The 9th Gurkhas train in the jungle of the Malay Peninsula prior to the coming of war. The Gurkhas fought bravely and sustained heavy casualties in the futile defense against the Japanese advance on Singapore.

Both: Library of Congress

between the prime minister and his chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), General Sir John Dill, who favored reinforcing Singapore with some armor. After Operation Barbarossa started the following month, Churchill promised his new ally, the Soviet Union, Britain's older model infantry tanks, which would have been equal or superior to the Japanese armor that was to land on the Malay Peninsula.

Churchill committed only a token naval presence, Force Z, to Singapore in the fall of 1941, comprising the modern battleship HMS *Prince of Wales,* the old battlecruiser HMS *Repulse,* and four vintage destroyers under the command of Admiral Sir Tom Phillips. There was no accompanying air cover against what would soon be waves of Japan's Saigon-based naval bombers that would sink the two British capital ships in the Gulf of Siam on December 10, 1941.

Incredibly, the prewar defense of northern Malaya was left in the hands of the Federated Malay States Volunteers. A newly arrived Indian brigade group was held as a reserve for the defense of Johore Province. Singapore Island was entrusted to five regular battalions, two volunteer battalions, two coastal artillery regiments, three antiaircraft regiments, and four engineer fortress companies. Six air force squadrons had fewer than 100 aircraft, including such venerable models as the Vicker Vildebeest biplane torpedo bomber, Hawker Harts, and Audax biplanes. Some of the other service chiefs had held erroneous beliefs that their meager resources and near obsolete equipment would be sufficient to combat a battle-hardened Japanese war machine, which was honed to a sharp edge by the conflict on the Chinese mainland. Air Chief Marshal (ACM) Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, commander in chief Far East, remarked incredulously, "We can get on alright with [Brewster] Buffaloes out here ... let England have the Super-Spitfires and Hyper-Hurricanes."

The Brewster F2A Buffalo fighter was inferior in virtually every respect to the Mitsubishi Zero but was still thought to be capable of defeating Japanese aircraft.

In the absence of Allied tanks, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders had instead been issued Bren carriers mounting the .55-inch Boys antitank rifle along with Lanchester and Marmon-Herrington armored cars, the former of which was obsolete and the latter rushed into production. The Lanchesters were built in 1927 and were equipped with two 7.7mm Vickers machine guns and a Boys antitank rifle. The South African-made Marmon-Herrington vehicle, built in 1938, carried the same armament. The Boys antitank rifle had limited effect on

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British forces were without armored support during their defense of the Malay Peninsula. Only a few obsolete armored cars were available, and they were of little use against the Japanese tanks. In this photo, soldiers of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlander Regiment patrol in company with a Lanchester armored car.

Japanese medium tanks, while the Japanese 37mm tank gun was adequate against the armored cars, which usually had only 12mm of armor protection.

Upon his arrival in Malaya in April 1941, Percival deployed his three British and Indian Army divisions and three separate brigades in defensive positions near the airfields. The 2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, under Lt. Col. Ian Stewart, had arrived in August 1939 and under Stewart's training regimen became the best trained British jungle fighters in Malaya.

The III Indian Corps, commanded by General Sir Lewis Heath, was charged with the defense of northern Malaya. Its 11th Indian Division was deployed near the Thailand-Malayan border, under the command of Maj. Gen. David M. Murray-Lyon, while the 9th Indian Division was situated along the east coast of the peninsula. Construction of defenses was stalled because of bureaucratic issues. Apart from a few regular British, Australian, and Indian Army battalions, the remaining troops were of low quality.

South of III Corps' area, the 8th Australian Division defended Johore Province at the southern tip of the peninsula. An additional two infantry brigades were charged with the defense of Singapore Island proper, and a brigade remained in reserve. Because he had widely dispersed his divisions and brigades, Percival was unable to concentrate his combat power at any one point until the Japanese had already overrun the peninsula.

At the command level, a vacuum of leadership developed at a crucial stage. Air Chief Marshal Brooke-Popham was replaced by Lt. Gen. Henry Pownall in November 1941. Brooke-Popham did not arrive in Singapore until December 27. Field Marshal Wavell was then appointed to the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) command. One of Churchill's political allies, Duff Cooper, was appointed chairman of the Far East War Council. He had a fractious relationship with the local military leaders and departed for England after Wavell assumed the ABDA command in early January. Thus, Percival's chain of command was initially more illusory than extant.

At the subordinate level, Percival had difficulties with both Heath and Maj. Gen. H. Gordon Bennett, commanding the Australian troops in Malaya and Singapore. Heath was actually senior to Percival, but after fighting commenced in northern Malaya, Percival lost confidence the III Corps Indian commander. However, Percival chose not to relieve Heath. Bennett was a bitter, outspoken subordinate prejudiced against the British military hierarchy. Like all Commonwealth commanding officers, Bennett had the option to discuss orders from Percival with the Australian government if he disagreed with them. Although Percival had the opportunity to sack Bennett as well, he allowed him to continue commanding the Australian contingent.

Yamashita's 25th Japanese Army was composed of three crack infantry divisions, the 5th, 18th, and Imperial Guards, which was to concentrate on the RAF and RAAF airfields in northern Malaya during the initial stages. The

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In preparation for the coming Japanese onslaught, British sappers lay explosive charges to destroy a bridge at Seremban along a probable route of enemy advance near Kuala Lumpur in late 1941. BELOW LEFT: British General Sir Arthur Percival (left) was determined to defend Singapore but ultimately surrendered to an invading Japanese army that was inferior in number. BELOW RIGHT: General Tomoyuki Yamashita executed a brilliant advance along the Malay Peninsula and bluffed Percival into surrendering.

Both: National Archives

5th Division with a tank regiment's support would land at Singora and Patani, both harbors with beaches on Thailand's east coast just north of the Malaya border, and then rapidly drive south into western Malaya to capture the Kedah Province airfields along the northwestern Malayan coast. After crossing the Perak River, the 5th Division was to continue southward and capture Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaya's Federated States.

The 18th Division's 56th Regiment, also known as Takumi Force (after its commander Maj. Gen. Hiroshi Takumi), was to land on the northeastern Malay coast near the key airfield of Kota Bahru, just south of the Thai border, capturing nearby airfields. The 56th Regiment was then to trek southward along Malaya's eastern coast to Kuantan and capture its airfield. Another regiment from the 18th Division was to seize British Borneo while the third regiment landed at Singora-Patani as a reserve.

The Imperial Guards Division would land later at Singora or another port to be selected and follow the 5th Division into Malaya to become part of the reserve after assisting in the seizure of Thailand and the opening of the invasion of Burma. Once the advance south was proceeding, these two divisions would occupy the main trunk road down Malaya's west coast and head southward.

Two of the three division commanders had good relationships with Yamashita and possessed vast experience in opposed landings during the Sino-Japanese War. They were Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui, commander of the 5th Division, and Lt. Gen. Renya Mutaguchi, commander of the elite 18th, or Chrysanthemum, Division. Lt. Gen. Takuma Nishimura, commander of the Guards Division, was an old enemy of Yamashita. Two regiments of heavy field artillery and the III Tank Brigade with more than 230 light and medium tanks supported the infantry divisions.

The total strength of the 25th Army was 80,000 men. Yamashita was also to be supported by the 3rd Air Division and the navy's fleet air wing. The Japanese air presence was intended to first neutralize the threat of the RAF and RAAF in Malaya and then provide the necessary tactical air support against Commonwealth forces on the peninsula.

At 0200 on December 6, 1941, RAAF airmen flying a Lockheed Hudson bomber based at Kota Bahru alerted Brooke-Popham to Japanese convoys heading for Thailand's east coast. Brooke-Popham was not going to start a war with Japan by setting early defensive measures codenamed Matador into motion by himself. In fact, both Whitehall and Churchill shared this same nonaggressive stance as well. Percival was also dithering about ordering Matador to commence. He was of the opinion that an encounter between the Japanese landing force and his 11th Indian Division would be a risky endeavor, especially if the Japanese landed tanks. Percival informed Brooke-Popham that he now considered Matador unsound.

At Singora and Patani, the 5th Division's unopposed landings commenced on December 8 at 0400, just over an hour after the Pearl Harbor raid began. Japanese aircraft quickly occupied the airfields at Singora and Patani and destroyed 60 of the 100 British aircraft on the ground in northern Malaya by December 9, gaining total air domination by the end of the fourth day of the invasion.

Takumi Force was strongly opposed at Kota Bahru by the 8th Indian Infantry Brigade just a few hours later. At 0130, the invaders' local ground commander, Colonel Yoshio Nasu, signaled Takumi, "Have succeeded in landing but there are many obstacles. Send second wave." At 0200, RAF aircraft bombed the supporting convoy, scoring a hit on Takumi's headquarters ship, *Awajisan Maru,* and leading the naval escort commander to suggest calling off the landing and heading out to sea away from the threat of aerial assault.

Takumi refused and continued the second wave's landing despite the need to abandon the *Awajisan Maru* and heavy casualties inflicted by British machine-gun positions. With the surface fleet lending naval gunfire, the Japanese broke through the Indian brigade defending the coastline at bayonet point. By midnight, the airfield at Kota Bahru was firmly in Japanese hands.

Percival sent the 11th Indian Division to Jitra to defend the nearby airfield and preserve the vital link to both Thailand and Burma. However, this division had done little preparatory work on its defensive line until the evening of December 10. Because this division had squandered time awaiting Brooke-Popham's decision on Matador, the Jitra line looked like a rundown construction site. The presence of airfields at Alor Star, 12 miles to the south, made this locale vitally important to both sides. At Jitra the west coast railway and road trunk came together and ran parallel for 50 miles until they separated at Butterworth and the ferry point for Penang Island.

The 5th Division was ordered to move west on Jitra from Singora and Patani. From the first, the Japanese Army had kept the British off balance in Malaya. Murray-Lyon, commanding the 11th Indian Division, had known that his chances of holding the incomplete Jitra line were slim. Mixed with the brigades of the 11th Indian Division were three regular British Army battalions from the Argyll and Suther-

land Highlanders, the East Surreys and the Leicesters. They totaled over 2,000 men and comprised a fifth of the division's infantry. However, despite being outnumbered more than two to one, the Japanese surged down the main roads on the western side of the peninsula on thousands of bicycles and in hundreds of abandoned British cars and trucks.

Because of Malaya's intense heat, the bicycles' tires blew out; however, the resourceful Japanese learned to ride down the paved motor road on the wheel rims. Metal to pavement sounded like approaching tanks, and the peninsula's defenders, notably the inexperienced Indian troops who were terrified of armor, often broke for the rear.

At 0800 on December 11, advance elements of the 11th Indian Division, the Punjabis, were attacked by a Japanese armored reconnaissance unit supported by 10 light and medium tanks. After some of the Indian positions had become compromised, they repositioned themselves; however, while the men were moving their antitank guns and equipment in steady rain another tank assault with truck-borne infantry caught the rear of the column and wreaked havoc on it.

After the destruction of the Punjabis, the Japanese attacked the 2/1st Gurkhas and a battalion, the 2/9th Jats, of the 28th Brigade at 2030; however, stiff artillery and machine-gun fire broke the assault. The Japanese made another assault against the Indian center, which held out until a Japanese flank attack panicked the remnants of the 11th Indian Division. On December 11, Murray-Lyon asked his III Corps commander, General Heath, for permission to withdraw to a more suitable antitank barrier. After some vacillation, at 2200 he received orders to withdraw from Jitra 15 miles to the south. The hasty retreat was exploited by the Japanese, forcing the evacuation of Penang Island on December 16 and the abandonment of numerous barges, motor launches, and junks that would be used later by the Japanese for seaborne flank attacks farther south.

The fight at Jitra was disastrous for the British and Indian troops, with casualties running into the thousands coupled with losses of guns, vehicles, supplies, ammunition, and morale. Japanese casualties were light, and the morale of the victorious troops soared. The British lost the initiative after Jitra because there would not be enough time to adequately establish defensive positions in Johore Province and Singapore.

Now that all Allied opposition was crushed in northwest Malaya, Yamashita ordered his Takumi Detachment to deal with the 9th Indian Division on the east coast after landing reinforcements at Kota Bahru. Yamashita's goal was to occupy Kuala Lumpur by mid-January and reach the Straits of Johore by January 31. A large part of Yamashita's success in northwestern Malaya's Kedah Province was attributable to the use of tanks. The main tank was the Type 97 Chi-Ha medium tank, which had a 57mm gun and two machine guns. The British, lacking armor, could only answer with their 2-pounder antitank guns if they were unlimbered and in ambush positions.

On December 16, most Europeans from Penang Island were evacuated to the west coast of Malaya. Penang Island, with its harbor located at Georgetown, had been viewed as a fortress by the British. It was another vital site that Yamashita's 25th Army had to seize to keep his coastal flank free of Allied air or seaborne attack as he descended the western side of the peninsula in his drive toward Singapore. Another reason for the British desire to hold Penang Island was its underwater communication cables with both Ceylon and India, and thence to London and the War Cabinet.

Percival had a contingency plan to defend Penang Island, but it fell apart when the 11th Indian Division, which was to support the island's garrison, was routed at Jitra. Also, the island's garrison had been ferried to the mainland in an attempt to halt the Japanese advance. There were no first-rate troops left to defend Penang Island. Two companies from the Japanese 5th Division arrived unopposed in Georgetown at 1600 on December 19. Yamashita had captured the fortress of Penang Island without firing a shot.

The capture of Kota Bahru on December 8 was followed by a steady southward advance down the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula, ultimately forcing the 9th Indian Division into Kuantan, halfway between Kota Bahru and Singapore, by the end of December. On December 23, Percival countered by allowing the 9th Indian Division to extract itself west of Kuantan to defend Kuala Lumpur. However, to achieve this the 11th Indian Division needed to occupy defensive positions in Kampar on December 27. The Japanese 5th Division attacked Kampar on December 30, but the 11th Indian Division held out against the usual Japanese flank attacks and infiltration. The Japanese response was to launch an amphibious westward turning movement, using the watercraft captured at Penang Island and the small boats brought overland from the Singora landing.

THE FIGHT AT JITRA WAS DISASTROUS FOR THE BRITISH AND INDIAN TROOPS, WITH CASUALTIES RUNNING INTO THE THOUSANDS COUPLED WITH LOSSES OF GUNS, VEHICLES, SUPPLIES, AMMUNITION, AND MORALE.

National Archives

The invading Japanese took advantage of bicycles, a reliable form of transportation along jungle roads and trails. When the rubber tires went flat, the soldiers simply kept riding on the metal rims.

Again, the 11th Indian Division was without sufficient reserves to repel the Japanese landing. By January 2, 1942, Percival pulled the remnants of the division behind the Slim River. Pownall, who knew Percival from their British Expeditionary Force (BEF) days in France in 1940, wrote in his diary, "[Percival is] an uninspiring leader and rather gloomy. I hope it won't mean that I have to relieve Percival…. But it might so happen."

On January 7, during his visit to Singapore to inspect the defenses on the north side of the fortress island, Wavell, the new ABDA commander, found nothing erected nor any detailed plans made for resistance against a land invasion from across the Straits of Johore. The field marshal had also learned that only the 6- and 9.2-inch guns on Blankang Mati Island, south of Keppel Harbor on Singapore Island's southern shore, could be turned to fire inland. However, these batteries were equipped with armor-piercing shells for ships rather than high-explosive shells to break up infantry/armor attacks.

Percival's chief engineer, Ivan Simson, also badgered his commanding officer that there was a need to erect fixed defenses in Johore for the exhausted 11th Indian Division to retreat into, and time was running out to secure the northern shores of Singapore Island should evacuation of the peninsula become necessary. Ironically, the southern shore of the island bristled with defenses. Percival gave the lame excuse that erecting fixed northern shore defenses would weaken civilian morale while those in Johore would rob the 11th Indian Division of an offensive fighting spirit. A few days after his encounters with Wavell and Simson, Percival took their advice and directed his engineers to prepare a series of obstacles on the northern shore.

The British commanders on Malaya and Singapore Island could not have foreseen such a rapid advance by Yamashita's three divisions. A captured British officer from the Royal Engineers had told Colonel Tsuji that he had expected the defenses in northern Malaya to hold out for substantially longer than the few weeks that they had and mentioned, "As the Japanese Army had not beaten the weak Chinese Army after four years' fighting in China we did not consider it a very formidable enemy."

The month of January brought further disasters for the British and Commonwealth troops defending the Malay states to the north. The Japanese crossed the Perak River unopposed and advanced in strength down the motor road trunk toward the Slim River, which flows in an east-west direction near Telok Anson. After some fighting in Telok Anson, in which the Japanese 4th Guards Regiment and the 5th Division's 11th Infantry Regiment were landed by barge on January 1, British troops disengaged to the natural shelter of the Slim River. However, on January 2, the Japanese were making landings at Selangor and Port Swettenham, 70 miles behind the 11th Division in southern Perak Province.

On the eastern coast, the Allied 9th Division was retreating into central Malaya from Kuantan. General Heath was forced to abandon the airfield at Kuantan. Percival was already convinced that eventually III Corps would have to execute a retreat in stages into northern Johore, where the final stand on the mainland would be made. Kuala Lumpur would also eventually be abandoned.

The Japanese began their attack on the Slim River line on January 5 and were initially beaten off by two battalions of the 12th Indian Brigade, resulting in heavy casualties. However, on the night of January 7, Japanese tanks attacked down the motor trunk road and cleared the Indian roadblocks before any Allied antitank guns could be employed, resulting in the retreat of the 12th Indian Brigade. The attack across the Slim River continued a few miles to the south, where the Japanese engaged the 28th Indian Brigade. Allied Gurkhas and Punjabis were badly mauled, and the Japanese soon controlled the Slim River road bridge with all of the 11th Indian Division's motor transport trapped on the northern side. Casualties among the 12th and 28th Indian Brigades were extensive. After the Japanese captured all of the division's artillery, including 16 25-pounder guns and seven 2-pounder antitank guns, only about 1,000 British and Indian soldiers from the 11th Indian Division were able to escape south by foot.

According to the official British history of the war in the Far East, "The action at the Slim River was a major disaster. It resulted in the early abandonment of Central Malaya and gravely prejudiced reinforcing formations, then on their way to Singapore, to arm and prepare for battle…. The immediate causes of the disaster were the failure to make full use of the anti-tank weapons available."

British commanders confessed that they had no prior experience fighting tanks at night or in using field artillery in an antitank role. In addition, the motor road bridge across the Slim River was not demolished by

ABOVE: The Japanese advanced the length of the Malay Peninsula with great speed, annihilating some British and Commonwealth units that tried to slow them down. Eventually, the great fortress city of Singapore fell to the invaders in February 1942. OPPOSITE: Japanese soldiers, their helmets festooned with camouflage, cross a stream during their offensive. The inhospitable terrain of the Malay Peninsula did little to slow the advance of the invading Japanese, who were well trained and disciplined.

the British, enabling the Japanese advance to continue unimpeded.

To compound the operational dysfunction at Percival's headquarters, Wavell arrived on January 7 and accepted General Bennett's plans for the defense of Johore as a "done deal," which was the direct opposite of Percival's plan that the Australians would defend the east coast of Johore Province while Heath's III Corps held the west coast. Pownall noted in his diary that Wavell was "not at all happy about Percival, who has the knowledge but not the personality to carry through a tough fight."

After the crossing of the Slim River, Wavell drove north to find III Corps disorganized and the 11th Indian Division completely shattered. Wavell, too, recognized that the disaster at the Slim River necessitated the shifting of the entire British line back to the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula and ordered a general withdrawal of the Indian troops of almost 150 miles southeast to Johore Province for reorganization. There would be nothing between the victorious Japanese and Kuala Lumpur.

A new line was formed with the 9th Indian Division and the rested 8th Australian Division, the latter already positioned in Johore, to hold along the Muar River on the western coast, while the remnants of III Corps defended the eastern coast at Mersing. General Bennett's Australians would be entrusted, in large part, to make the final attempt to stop Yamashita's onslaught, while the battle-weary 9th Division would contribute to the line's defense. The remnants of the 11th Indian Division would refit in Johore.

Despite the visit by Wavell and the expectation that the British 18th Division would arrive to reinforce the Australians, giving Bennett some offensive punch, Yamashita committed troops of the Guards Division, which reached Ipoh. He was also bringing more of Mutaguchi's 18th Division down to Johore by road. Wavell, on January 9, discussed his plan with Bennett at Johore Bahru that a decisive battle should be fought on the northwest frontier of Johore near the mouth of the Muar River, using the Australian 8th Division (less the 22nd Brigade) that had been stationed in Mersing and the 45th Indian Brigade as the main Allied force. The 9th Indian Division and the 45th Indian Brigade would come under Bennett's command as Westforce while Heath's III Corps would withdraw into southern Johore Province.

The Australian 22nd Brigade would remain in Mersing but rejoin the Australian 8th Division on the Muar for an Allied counterattack against Yamashita's forces on the peninsula. The 22nd Brigade would join Bennett's forces after it was relieved by reinforcements from Singapore Island, which would not be before the middle of February. Wavell and Bennett's plan depended on holding the Japanese in northern Johore Province until reinforcements arrived. Already, the Japanese 5th Division had entered Kuala Lumpur on January 11, capturing copious amounts of supplies and equipment.

Initially, Bennett's fresh Australian troops gained some success against the Japanese, principally by ambushing them on the Muar-Bakri road west of Gemas on January 14-15; however, the Japanese crossed the Muar River without much opposition since Bennett believed that the bulk of Japanese forces would attack down the trunk road in the vicinity of Gemas. At the Muar River, the 4th Japanese Guards Regiment annihilated the Indian companies of the Rajputana Rifles, which had been poorly positioned on the north side of a river that did not have a bridge to retreat over.

At 0200 on January 16, the Japanese crossed the Muar River in force a few miles upstream of the Indians and established a roadblock. Yamashita had just turned Bennett's left flank, and when the 45th Indian Brigade began its withdrawal Westforce was in danger of being surrounded. Wavell, having left Singapore for Java on January 10, had always regretted that he did not send the 22nd Brigade to Bennett to stiffen up Westforce prior to being replaced at Mersing by reinforcements. It was clear that even Bennett's Australians could not stem the Japanese tide as it methodically kept demolishing each new static line of defense that the Commonwealth forces established, even though they were inflicting casualties on the Japanese.

On the afternoon of January 18, the British knew that the entire Imperial Guards Division was in the Muar area while the Japanese 5th Division was on the main road heading south. Despite a trickle of reinforcements from Singapore that Percival had dispatched to the peninsula, Bennett knew that unless the Westforce retreated his main force would be destroyed. Bennett's command was forced to withdraw from northwest Johore Province on the evening of January 19 over the one narrow bridge spanning a deep gorge of the Segamat River. In fact, the depleted 45th Indian Brigade had held up the Imperial Guards long enough to save Westforce from encirclement. After the Battle of the Muar, the 45th Indian Brigade ceased to exist.

On January 19, Wavell learned that there was no formalized plan to withdraw to Singapore Island. Wavell cabled Percival, "You must think out the problem of how to withdraw from the mainland ... and how to prolong resistance on the island."

Percival, in response to Wavell's cables, planned for his Malayan forces to retreat in three columns and the establishment of a bridgehead covering the passage through

Australian War Memorial

Johore Bahru. The following day, January 20, Wavell met with Percival on Singapore Island to plan its defense since the outcome of the battle on the mainland appeared to be a foregone conclusion. To his dislike, Wavell found that little had been done to strengthen the island's northern defenses and outlined some of his thoughts on augmenting defensive capabilities.

The Japanese launched three divisions in southern Johore against the British line, necessitating Percival on January 24 to issue orders for the withdrawal from the southern Malay Peninsula to Singapore Island should it become necessary. On January 28, Percival informed his division commanders that the evacuation should be carried out on the night of January 30-31 to form another defensive line on Singapore Island across the two to three-kilometer wide Straits of Johore. By dawn on January 31, troops on Singapore Island, and despite fresh reinforcements, including the 44th Indian Infantry Brigade, the British 18th Division, and approximately 2,000 Australians, the situation remained bleak since they were mostly untrained and not acclimated to the equatorial conditions. Although Percival commanded 85,000 troops to defend a land mass of 220 square miles, some 15,000 of them were administrative and noncombatant forces. Also, many units were lacking both adequate weapons and an appropriate esprit de corps to combat the Japanese.

Percival's staff officers had clouded their commander's military thinking by estimating that he would be fighting against 65,000 Japanese troops on the other side of the Straits of Johore. The Japanese had only 30,000 combat troops. Also, due to less than optimal intelligence gathering, the Japanese had planned to engage only 30,000 British and Commonwealth troops. Numerically, the defenders had more than enough strength on the island to repel the invasion. In Percival's favor, Singapore had ample provisions of food and was well stocked with ammunition for its artillery batteries and small arms.

Australian Wat Memorial

ABOVE: Ready to fight for control of the streets of Kuala Lumpur, Japanese soldiers take up positions on January 11, 1942. These soldiers are armed with Arisaka rifles, Nambu machine guns, and the Type 89 grenade launcher, popularly known as the "knee mortar." OPPOSITE: After their ignominious surrender at Singapore, British soldiers, their hands raised above their heads, are marched off into wretched captivity. Many of them did not survive, while others endured four years of harsh treatment at the hands of their Japanese captors.

British forces were over and preparations moved forward to destroy the causeway across the Straits of Johore. The straits were scarcely four feet deep at low tide where the causeway once stood.

Percival assumed operational control of all

Percival now failed to take the counsel of both his subordinate commanders and Wavell. In a tactical disagreement, Percival opted for an all-around perimeter defense of the island's beaches, whereas Wavell recommended that he concentrate his forces against the likely Japanese landing sites in the northwest and northeast corners of Singapore Island, while also massing some reserves inland for a strong counterattack to throw the invaders back into the Straits of Johore.

Percival divided the 27-by-13-mile island into three sectors with the Australian 22nd and 27th Brigades in the west, the 28th Indian (Gurkha) Brigade; the British 18th Division's 53rd, 54th, and 55th Brigades in the northern sector; and a southern zone to be held by the newly arrived 44th Indian Brigade along with the Singapore Straits Volunteer Force and the 1st and 2nd Malay Brigades, constituting the reserve to the west and east of Singapore City.

Before the war, the Japanese had studied the problem of attacking Singapore Island. They decided that the most favorable line of attack would be to cross the narrowest portion of the Johore Strait in the northwest. The southern coast of Johore Province opposite this landing area offered both roads and swamps to amass the necessary forces in comparative secrecy. Yamashita's intelligence reports indicated that the British expected the main attack to be hurled against the naval base at Sembawang to the northeast.

Yamashita decided to make his main thrust with the 18th and 5th Divisions against the northwest coast of the island, away from the three brigades of the newly arrived British 18th Division positioned near the naval base. Also, Yamashita would make a diversionary attack with the Imperial Guards Division well to the east to deceive the British about the major attack site. Then, he would deploy the main part of this division to the immediate west of the causeway after the main attack of the Japanese 18th and 5th Divisions had been successfully delivered.

On January 31, after the Allies abandoned the Malay Peninsula, Yamashita held a conference with his staff officers and told them that it would take four days to adequately reconnoiter for optimal crossing sites at the Straits of Johore. Japanese engineers also worked to repair the destroyed causeway. True to his schedule, on February 4, Yamashita's reconnaissance was complete. He gathered his division commanders at midday on February 6 to distribute their orders. During the days preceding the Japanese

attack across the straits, Yamashita brought up his artillery, ammunition, and supplies using captured railway stock and trucks. He also hid hundreds of folding boats and landing craft for the eventual crossing in the swampy areas about a mile from the straits.

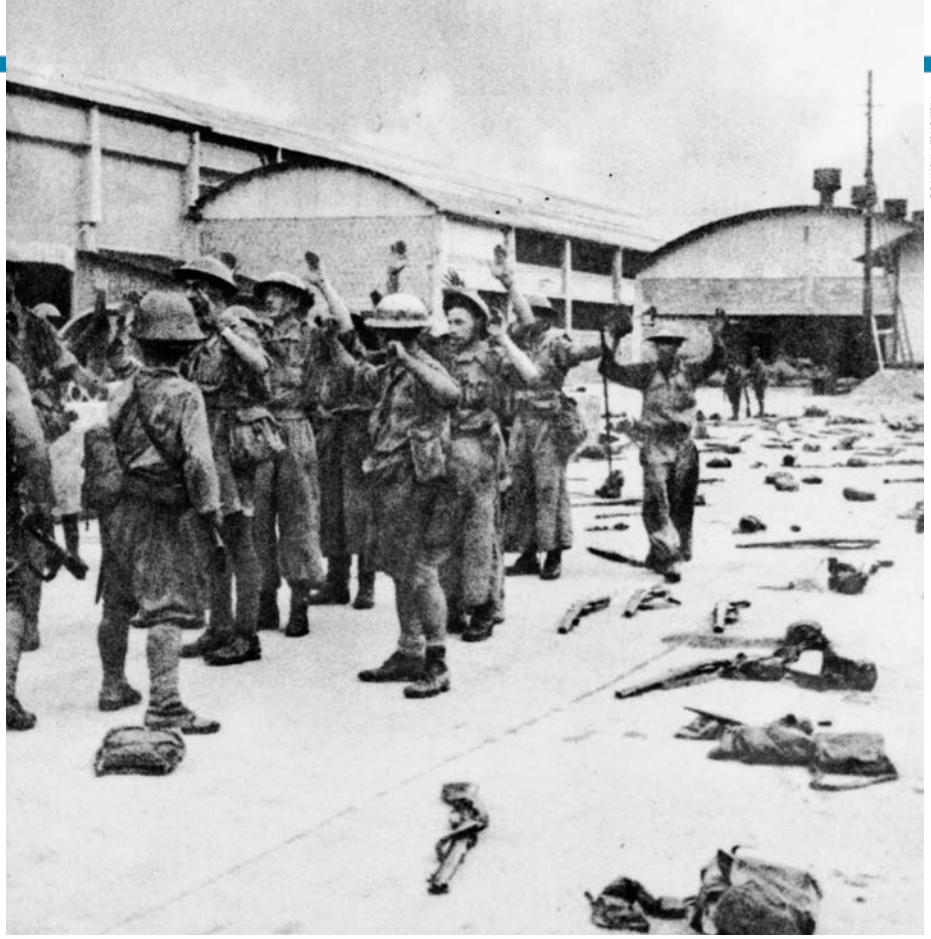
The Imperial Guards Division began its demonstration attack as planned on the night of February 7. Twenty noisy motor launches containing 400 Guardsmen landed on Ubin Island in the straits overlooking the Changi fortress and airfield to be easily detected by the British troops garrisoning the naval base. On the morning of February 8, Yamashita's artillery began its bombardment of the Changi fortress as the British, having fallen for the decoy attack, rushed reinforcements to the northeast corner of the island.

After the sun had set that day, Yamashita's 5th and 18th Divisions carried their folding boats to the straits' edge. As these troops reached the water, a massive artillery bombardment commenced against the naval base to destroy its oil tanks, depriving the British of the option of setting the straits afire with dumped gasoline. Then Yamashita's artillerymen turned their attention to Percival's machine-gun nests, infantry trenches, and barbed wire below the causeway at the northwest corner of the island.

At 2230, a force of 4,000 men in a flotilla of more than 300 assorted boats crossed the straits toward the awaiting 2,500 men of the 22nd Australian Brigade. Within minutes of their crossing, elements of the 5th Division were ashore facing heavy Australian machine-gun fire, while other Japanese troops landed in a mangrove swamp that was less defended. In some areas, the Japanese had to make three attempts before securing a beachhead on the island. After midnight, the Australians were being attacked from the rear as well as the front. The Australian brigades were unable to hold back the main Japanese invasion.

By 0300 on February 9, the entire 22nd Brigade was ordered back to a prepared position. At dawn, Japanese tanks with fresh 5th and 18th Division infantry—totaling roughly 15,000 men—arrived in waves. Once Yamashita observed that his invading force had reached the Tengah airfield, well inland on the island's western side, he crossed the straits himself. His troops were no farther than 10 air miles from Singapore City in the southeastern corner of the island.

Yamashita's assault on Singapore Island was executed with surgical precision and efficiency. Also, on February 9 the main elements of the Imperial Guards crossed the straits immediately



National Archives

west of the causeway, deploying through Johore Bahru town to confront the Australian 27th Brigade. After landing, the Imperial Guards Division was to swing east toward Sungei Seletar and then south between Singapore City and Changi to prevent the British from withdrawing into the Changi area. The Japanese 14th Tank Regiment was attached to this division.

On February 9, Wavell, flew from Java to Singapore. The ABDA commander railed at both Percival and Bennett for allowing the Japanese to establish a firm beachhead so easily. He issued an order for an immediate counterattack and reminded the British and Commonwealth officers, "It is certain that our troops on Singapore Island greatly outnumber any Japanese that have crossed the Straits. We must defeat them. Our whole fighting reputation is at stake and the honour of the British Empire. The Americans have held out on the Bataan Peninsula against far greater odds, the Russians are turning back the picked strength of the Germans, the Chinese with almost complete lack of modern equipment have held the Japanese for four and a half years. It will be disgraceful if we yield our boasted fortress of Singapore to inferior forces [numerically]."

Wavell was too intelligent a soldier to ignore the plain reality that the British and Commonwealth forces lacked modern armor and aircraft. Once back in Java, the field marshal cabled Churchill, "Battle for Singapore is not going well ... morale of some troops is not good ... there is to be no thought of surrender and all troops are to continue fighting to the end."

No successful Allied counterattack was made against the Japanese. Instead, Percival made a further tactical error by withdrawing inland toward Singapore City. General Yamashita sensed that the next British defensive site would be located on the hill at Bukit Timah, approximately two miles northwest of Singapore City. He attacked on the night of February 10 with his 5th and 18th Divisions. Although the Japanese anticipated a desperate struggle for the island's highest elevation, confusion among the British and Commonwealth troops led to a rapid loss of the position.

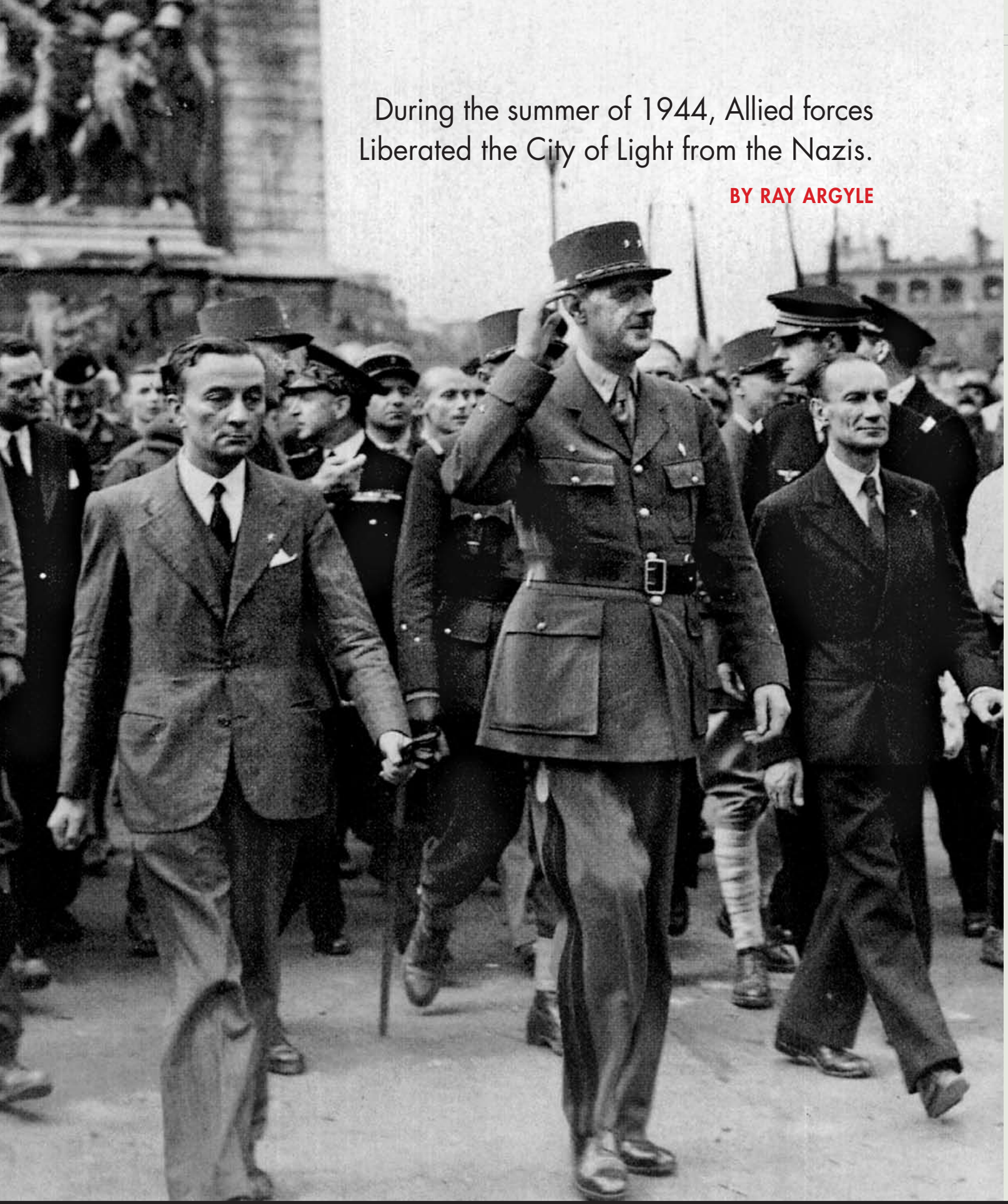
The Japanese did notice that the British were expending their artillery shells as if they had no shortage, while Yamashita's artillery ammunition stockpiles were running dangerously low. Perhaps it was Wavell's chiding comments, but to the Japanese commanders the Allied forces were putting up a more tenacious fight. Japanese tanks were halted just south of the settlement at Bukit Timah.

Some Japanese officers were also concerned that if the British held out for several more days they would win the battle since

Continued on page 73

During the summer of 1944, Allied forces Liberated the City of Light from the Nazis.

BY RAY ARGYLE



FLYING A TORTUOUS ROUTE FROM NORTH AFRICA TO the French coast of Normandy via Casablanca and Gibraltar, an unarmed Lockheed Lodestar of the Free French Air Force broke through cloud cover over the English Channel on the morning of Sunday, August 20, 1944.

The plane carried Free French leader General Charles de Gaulle, bound for a crucial meeting in Cherbourg with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander of Allied forces in the invasion of Europe. "I left for Paris," General de Gaulle would write laconically in his *Mémoires de Guerre*, of the day he flew out of Algiers. He was returning to France with but one mission: to seize Paris in time to save it from a Communist takeover or from last-minute destruction by the fleeing Germans.

The Lodestar pilot, Colonel Lionel de Marmier, uncertain of his bearings, asked for permission to land in England. "Non," replied de Gaulle, peering at a road map on his lap as he tried to identify a familiar landmark. With the plane's gas tanks nearly empty, de Gaulle sighted the landing strip at Maupertuis, south of Cherbourg. "La-bas [over there]," he signalled, pointing to the ground. The Lodestar's engines coughed out their last ounces of fuel as the plane thudded to a landing. Safely on the ground, de Gaulle received an ominous report from General Marie-Pierre Koenig, head of the Free French Forces of the Interior (FFI). "There has been an uprising in Paris. We need to move quickly."

THE RACE TO Liberate Paris

Two hours later, de Gaulle was at Eisenhower's headquarters. The pace of the Allied advance was picking up all along the front, General Eisenhower told de Gaulle. The U.S. First Army under General Courtney Hodges was about to leap the Seine River north of Paris, while General Bernard Montgomery's British and Canadian forces were advancing toward Rouen on the east bank of the Seine.

De Gaulle was surprised to hear no mention of Allied plans to occupy Paris. "I don't see why you cross the Seine everywhere, yet at Paris and Paris alone you do not cross."

This was the first meeting of the two generals since before D-Day and both were edgy and tired. The Allies did not want to risk the destruction of Paris and the heavy loss of civilian life that might come from a direct assault, General Eisenhower explained. It would be preferable to bypass the city, returning to it afterward.

"The fate of Paris is of fundamental concern to the French government," de Gaulle told the Supreme Commander. If necessary, he would order the Free French 2nd Armored Division into Paris on his own.

General de Gaulle's difficult relations with the Allied commander were well known. Since 1940, he had been struggling to assemble his country's forces in opposition not only to Germany but also to the traitorous government of Marshal Philippe Pétain that had installed itself at Vichy after the French defeat. Now, four years and two months later, de Gaulle was in control of much of the old French Empire as the undisputed leader of the Free French and their army, navy, and air force that were fighting under the French Tricolor and the Cross of Lorraine. By the end of the war, the Free French would have two million men in arms.

ABOVE: French General Charles de Gaulle (left) and Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower confer during one of several meetings during the liberation of France. When the two met in Normandy, de Gaulle was shocked to learn that Eisenhower initially intended to bypass the City of Light. LEFT: On August 26, 1944, the day after the liberation of Paris, General Charles de Gaulle (center) leads a march down the Champs Elysees in the French capital. On the general's left is close aide Alexandre Parodi, while Georges Bidault, head of the Conseil National de la Resistance, walks to his right. De Gaulle assumed control of the French government swiftly after entering Paris.

All photos: National Archives

A barricade of sandbags provides some cover for French Partisans armed with rifles and automatic weapons as they rise up against the Nazi occupiers of Paris. After the uprising began, de Gaulle called for a quick Allied military occupation of the city to avoid casualties and catastrophic damage to property.

De Gaulle's proudest achievement was the building of the French 2nd Armored Division, which he had entrusted to a titled French patriot, Jacques-Philippe Leclerc de Hautecloque. It had become de Gaulle's strongest striking force and had joined other Allied troops in Normandy on August 1. Four French divisions had fought with valor in Italy, and the French First Army had landed on the Mediterranean coast, along with the U.S. VI Army Corps, just a week before de Gaulle's arrival in Normandy.

The French general's claim to equal treatment as an Allied war leader and his insistence on reclaiming his country's "grandeur" was a cause of unending friction among the Allies. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, while sympathetic to de Gaulle, acceded to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's distrust of the Free French leader. The president leaned toward putting liberated France under an Allied military government as an alternative to what he saw as an incipient de Gaulle dictatorship.

All of these factors, plus the decision to exclude de Gaulle from D-Day planning, made for testy relations. There had been a ferocious blow up when de Gaulle, invited to England just ahead of D-Day, refused to provide liaison officers to assist Allied forces unless he was assured they would be recognized as the supreme civil authority in liberated territory.

This idea conflicted with President Roosevelt's dictate that the French people should have the opportunity after the war to choose, if they wished, a government other than one headed by de Gaulle. A "School of Military Government" had been set up at the University of Virginia in 1942 to train officers to manage civil affairs in former enemy-occupied lands. These "60-day marvels," as they came to be known, would face insurmountable tasks without the support of French administrators.

General Eisenhower handled the crisis skillfully. He obtained approval from the president to consult with the Free French on civil administration with the caution that "such dealings shall not constitute recognition [of a de Gaulle government]." After backing away from Roosevelt's plan for a military administration of France, he turned his attention to dealing with the powerful German forces still entrenched there.

Since D-Day, the 56 German divisions that awaited the Allied assault had been reduced to 40, many mere skeleton forces. After the closing of the Falaise Gap, which saw the capture of 200,000 Germans and 50,000 dead, General S. George Patton hoped to lead the U.S. Third Army in a dash for the Rhine while General Montgomery's British and Canadian forces pushed up the coast toward Belgium and Holland.

As Paris held no strategic military value, a pincer movement around the city was contemplated. Allied military planners had no desire to take on the job of maintaining order in Paris or of feeding the city's five million hungry inhabitants. This would require the diversion from the front lines of 4,000 tons of food and supplies daily, something the hard-pressed U.S. Quartermaster Corps hoped to avoid.

As de Gaulle and Eisenhower talked through Sunday morning in Cherbourg, a full-scale uprising of the French Forces of the Interior—the Resistance—was underway in Paris. Barricades were going up, and German troops were being picked off by Resistance fighters armed with seized weapons. General Dietrich von Choltitz, the German commander of the Paris garrison, was weighing Adolf Hitler's command that "Paris must not fall into enemy hands, or if it does, only as a field of rubble." Choltitz told Swedish diplomat Raoul Nordling, "I am a soldier. I get orders. I execute them."

The uprising had been forced on the French Committee of National Resistance (CNR), the united underground assembled by de Gaulle delegate Jean Moulin, by the Communist leader-

Henri Tanguy (left), leader of the Communist resistance in Paris, was outmaneuvered by Charles de Gaulle for control of the city and the French government. German General Dietrich von Choltitz (right) deliberately disobeyed Hitler's order to destroy Paris and surrendered the city virtually intact to the victorious Allied forces.

ship of the Paris Liberation Committee. "Paris is worth 200,000 dead," declared Colonel Rol-Tanguy, its Communist head. Gaullist members of the CNR, fearful of letting the Communists take ownership of the uprising, had no choice but to back the rebellion.

After walkouts by Metro drivers, postmen, and telegraph workers, the city's 15,000 policemen went on strike. On Saturday, the day before General de Gaulle's return to France, they seized the Prefecture of Police on the Ile de la Cité. "The hour of liberation has come," a police order declared. That day, a German Tiger tank had attacked the Police Prefecture, and 50 Germans had died in the fighting.

Nordling, as a representative of neutral Sweden, was in a position to negotiate with both sides. He met with General Choltitz to work out a truce, telling him that the Resistance was mainly against the French Vichy government

that had been cooperating with Germany. The truce the two arranged provided for the Germans to recognize the French Resistance fighters as regular soldiers, not as terrorists. Not only that, the Germans would make an orderly evacuation from the city. The Resistance reluctantly accepted the truce, but sporadic fighting continued.

By midweek, 400 barricades had made the streets of Paris virtually impassable to heavy trucks or tanks. At each, young men—and some young women—clambered about, proudly displaying FFI armbands or bits of military uniforms picked up from dead Germans. To existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the uprising was "a symbolic rebellion in a symbolic city." Those who could not play in the Resistance "felt left out of the game."

Knowing that only the arrival of French forces would prevent further fighting, Nordling got Choltitz's permission to send a secret mission through the lines to advise General de Gaulle to come quickly. At the same time, Rol-Tanguy agreed to send his chief of staff, Major Roger Gallois, through the Allied lines. Traveling with a Paris doctor who had a Red Cross pass allowing him safe passage, the two drove to a sanatorium in Bretèche, 20 miles west of Paris.

ABOVE: On the outskirts of Paris on August 25, 1944, French tanks roll down a tree-lined boulevard en route to the city as German artillery shells explode dangerously nearby. LEFT: The vanguard of the Free French forces that liberated Paris, three tanks and 12 armored cars, arrive in the city on the evening of August 24, 1944. In this photo a woman greets a Free French soldier riding atop one of the tanks.

Just before dark, Gallois slipped through a forest and found himself at an American forward base. Several hours passed before he was interviewed by an intelligence officer who recognized the value of Gallois's information. An uprising was underway in Paris, barricades were being erected, and the German high command had accepted a truce. Major Gallois was brought before a sleepy General Patton at 2 AM on Tuesday, August 22. A lively discussion ended with Patton producing a bottle of champagne and offering a toast to victory.

General Eisenhower received Patton's account of this new disclosure as he was reading a fresh letter sent to him by de Gaulle urging a move on Paris. The French general was keeping abreast of events unfolding in Paris via messages from the Resistance and from Underground newspapers that were being printed in the capital. Devouring the first uncensored papers to be published in Paris since the start of the occupation, de Gaulle was "pleased by the spirit of the struggle" reflected in their columns.

Emboldened by what he was reading, de Gaulle prepared his letter for the Supreme Commander. "The information I have received from Paris today," he wrote, "makes me think that in view of the almost complete disappearance of the police and of the German forces in Paris and the extreme shortage of food there, serious trouble is to be expected in the capital very shortly. I believe it necessary to have Paris occupied by the French and Allied forces as soon as possible even if it means a certain amount of fighting and a certain amount of damage within the city."

General Eisenhower pondered de Gaulle's letter as well as a cabled message from diplomat Nordling telling of the situation in Paris. Military action was now needed, Eisenhower decided. He scrawled a note across the top of the letter before sending it to his assistant, General Walter Bedell Smith: "It looks now as if we'd be compelled to go into Paris. Bradley and his G-2 think we can and must walk in."

At the airport in Le Mans, liberated a week earlier, Free French General Jacques Leclerc swung his cane as he paced nervously, awaiting the arrival of U.S. General Omar Bradley, commander of ground forces in the region. With Leclerc was the Resistance chief of staff, Major Gallois. Over the noise of the still running engines of Bradley's plane, they were told of Eisenhower's decision: "You win. They've decided to send you straight to Paris."

Standing on the Le Mans airstrip, General Bradley impressed on the two French officers the seriousness of the steps they were taking.

"A grave decision has been made and we three bear the responsibility for it: me, because I am giving the order to take Paris; General Leclerc, because he is the one who has to carry out this order; and you, Major Gallois, because it is based on the information that you have brought that we have acted."

The order from General Eisenhower had come just in time to prevent an irreparable split in the Allied front. General de Gaulle, irritated and frustrated by what he considered to be further stalling, had already given Leclerc the order to launch a reconnaissance column toward

General Jacques Philippe Leclerc, commander of the French 2nd Armored Division, stands inside his half-track and dispenses orders to soldiers awaiting instructions.

Paris. The road to Paris was now open to whoever dared take it.

Within a few hours of receiving the green light to move on Paris, Leclerc assembled his 2nd Armored Division and was giving final instructions to his officers. By now, the division consisted of 16,000 battle-hardened men, 200 U.S. Sherman tanks, 4,000 cars and armored vehicles, and more than 600 artillery pieces. It would jump off at dawn on Wednesday, August 23, with three columns taking separate routes on the 240-kilometer track eastward to the capital. The largest column, under Colonel Pierre Billotte, was to throw every ounce of its strength along an arc aiming at Fresnes, site of an infamous prison 20 kilometers from the capital. That would put Billotte in a position to slam into the city via Versailles and the Porte d'Orléans, the old southern gateway to Paris.

General de Gaulle by now had reached Chateau Rambouillet, the old country home of French presidents 50 kilometers southwest of Paris. Soldiers of General Leclerc's command were camped among the rain-soaked bushes surrounding Rambouillet. Seated in the Chateau's ornate Salle des Fêtes, de Gaulle and two senior officers dined on cold, canned American C rations. After dinner, de Gaulle had Leclerc ushered into the room. Leclerc outlined his battle plans for the next day, pointing out the routes for each of his three columns.

De Gaulle pondered the report of his young commander and, after a brief moment, nodded his assent. The general stood and held out his hand. They shook. "How lucky you are," de Gaulle said. Then, apparently with thoughts of the bloody aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 in mind, he added, "Go quickly. We cannot afford another Commune." That night, de Gaulle relaxed with a book from the chateau's library.

At 6 o'clock Thursday morning, Leclerc's three columns were on the move along a front 30 kilometers wide. German troops put up strong resistance around the town of Trappes, and the advance went slowly as delirious crowds embraced their French liberators, offering kisses and wine. The day-long procession led General Bradley to complain that the French were "dancing their way into Paris." He ordered the dispatch of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division into Paris, ensuring the French would not be alone in the liberation of their capital. When word came that the temporary truce in Paris had been broken by Communist units, Leclerc decided to send an advance detachment into the city.

At a crossroads near Trappes, Leclerc encountered Captain Raymond Dronne, a veteran of the African battles in which the Free French had cleared France's central African colonies of Nazi sympathizers and had gone on to help U.S. forces oust German armies from Tunisia.

"Dronne, what the f— are you doing here," Leclerc demanded to know. Dronne explained that his company of tanks and armored cars had been commanded to return to reserves. "Never carry out an idiotic order,' Leclerc answered. "Get on into Paris immediately," he added.

"Is my objective to be the heart of Paris?" Dronne asked.

"That's right, Paris. Tell the Resistance not to lose heart, that tomorrow morning the entire division will be there."

Dodging German formations, Dronne's three tanks and a dozen armored cars entered Paris through the Porte d'Italie. There was no serious resistance, and once in the city the column was engulfed by crowds blocking their way. "Les Americains!" someone shouted. "Ce sont des Français," an even more excited voice called out. German sharpshooters fired at the column as it passed the Gare d'Austerlitz, but Dronne moved his men on quickly without returning the shots. Once across the Seine River, the column had unimpeded access to the Hotel de Ville (city hall) of Paris. The clock showed 9:22 PM when Dronne's jeep parked in the square. He and his men were surrounded by Resistance forces that had taken over the building. One after another, the churches of Paris began to ring their bells, with the great 14-ton bell of Notre Dame Cathedral the last to join the chorus.

While Paris slept uneasily, forward units of General Leclerc's 2nd Armored Division spent the night probing the outer ring of the German defenses. Warnings had come from the Resistance of enemy troop concentrations, some supported by German armored units. Shortly after midnight, an advance detachment that had secured the Pont de Sevres on the Seine made its way across the bridge. They could hear sounds of German soldiers advancing toward them. German machine guns set up along the road began firing, and in a half hour battle the Germans lost three armored cars and three guns before retreating. French officer Jacques Massu estimated they had killed 40 to 50 Germans and taken a dozen wounded men prisoner. For the rest of the night, French patrols fanned out from the site of the battle, alert to any return of the enemy.

At dawn on Friday, August 25, French and American units fought their way into Paris, picking off scant resistance from 15,000 German defenders. Parisians surged into the streets to welcome their liberators. At 6 AM, as Simone de Beauvoir would later write, she ran along the Boulevard Raspail to see "the Leclerc division parade on the Avenue d'Orléans and along the sidewalk, an immense crowd applauded. From time to time a shot was fired; a sniper on the roofs, someone fell, was carried off, but no one seemed upset: enthusiasm stamped out fear."

While troops of the U.S. Fourth Division camped at the Bois de Vincennes and took control of eastern Paris, the first soldiers of the Free French 2nd Armored reached German headquarters at the Hotel Meurice around 2 PM. Lieutenant Henri Karcher, anxious to reconnect with his Parisian family, rushed the front door with three of his men. Smashing it open, Karcher spotted a large picture of Adolf Hitler hanging in the lobby. He turned his machine gun on it, ducked behind the reception desk, and threw a grenade in the direction of a German soldier who was firing at him from behind a pile of sandbags. The German fell dead, his helmet clattering to the floor.

Karcher bounded up the stairs to the first floor, where he confronted a German who quietly agreed to take him to General Choltitz. Asked if he was ready to surrender, Choltitz replied, "I am." He was spirited to the Prefecture of Police, where he signed the surrender order. It was in the name of the Provisional Government of the French Republic. Just as General Leclerc was about to sign the document, the Communist leader of the Resistance, Colonel Rol-Tanguy, burst into the room. He was furious he had not been invited to the ceremony and demanded that he be allowed to sign the surrender agreement.

From the Prefecture, Choltitz was driven to Gare Montparnasse to await the arrival of General de Gaulle. De Gaulle arrived at 4 PM and was taken to Platform No. 3, where General Leclerc, his uniform now sweat stained, welcomed him. When de Gaulle was shown the surrender document, however, he berated Leclerc for having permitted Rol-Tanguy to sign it. "This is not exactly right," he told him.

The ceremony completed, de Gaulle was driven through sniper fire to his old War Ministry office, where he found "not a piece of furniture, not a rug, not a curtain had been disturbed." Then it was on to l'Hotel de Ville, where the leaders of the Resistance awaited him. A tumultuous roar filled the building as de Gaulle made his way to the foot of the grand staircase leading to the great salon on the first floor.

Once in the hall, people surged around him. Everyone began talking at once. De Gaulle had not prepared a speech, and he had no podium from which to address the crowd. Bareheaded, his gesturing hands keeping time with his words, de Gaulle uttered his memorable line of defiance: "Paris outraged! Paris broken! Paris martyred! But Paris liberated!" The next day Free French forces paraded down the Champs Elysees, hailed by a million Parisians. A week later de Gaulle ordered men of the Resistance into the army and set out to form a provisional government. His arrival had come in time to thwart Communist plans to set up a new Paris Commune and before the Germans could begin destruction of the city. The race to liberate Paris had been won.

ABOVE: American soldiers of the 4th Armored Division stand ready with tanks and heavy weapons near Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. General Omar Bradley ordered the 4th Armored into the city to support the Free French 2nd Armored Division, which was hampered in its advance on the capital by adoring crowds. BELOW: After a German sniper has opened fire on the street below, a Free French soldier scurries for cover. A Resistance member aims his weapon toward the upper floors of a nearby building to return fire.

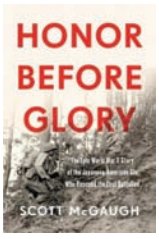
Ray Argyle is a Canadian journalist and author of several books, including The Paris Game: Charles de Gaulle, the Liberation of Paris, and The Gamble That Won France. *During his long association with France, he has closely tracked the political careers of Charles de Gaulle and his successors. He is working on a book on Vincent van Gogh's years in France.*

By Christopher Miskimon

Heroism of the Nisei Soldiers

Japanese American troops of the 42nd Regimental Combat Team risked everything to rescue a trapped unit of the 36th Division in the Vosges Mountains.

COMPANY K, 442ND REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM GREETED THE DAWN OF October 28, 1944, with trepidation. The previous day they had endured heavy fighting along with artillery fire during the night. Most of the men stayed in their foxholes through the night, their fighting positions in sight of the defending Germans. Medic Jim Okubo was dug in with them, having spent the previous day moving through the dense forest treating torn and broken men. He used his supplies of damp bandages to staunch their bleeding before turning them over to the stretcher bearers who took them back to aid stations farther to the rear.



Now the company's mission was to continue the attack. Ahead of them in the wooded hills were some 200 GIs of the 36th Infantry Division's 141st Infantry Regiment. Days before, they had been conducting an advance of their own but ran into a substantial German force and soon found themselves cut off and surrounded. They had been trapped for days now, enduring relentless German attacks, unable to break out and rejoin their unit. The 442nd's task was to rescue the "Lost Battalion" and bring it home. They were low on ammunition, food, water and radio batteries; the ensnared men could not hold out much longer.

Company K got no more than 100 yards before machine-gun and rifle fire broke out across their front. The Japanese American GIs, known as Nisei, fought back, spraying the ground ahead of them with their own fire. Jim Okubo heard the cry of "Medic!" and ran to help. He dropped into the mud next to the wounded man and dressed his injuries, telling him he would be okay. Another man cried out, and Jim began crawling through the mud toward the sound. Machine-gun fire cracked above him as mortar shrapnel tore the air overhead. He crawled 150 yards before finding the man prostrate a mere 40 yards from the enemy line.

Placing himself between the injured man and the enemy, Jim dressed his wounds. Realizing there was no one else to help get the man to safety, the young medic picked the GI up and carried him all the way back to the American position. Along the way he dodged two grenades and everything else the enemy threw at him. Somehow, he had come through the ordeal alive and unharmed. His lungs burned, and his legs ached from the exertion of carrying the 150-pound man to safety. He did not stop to rest. There were more men who needed his attention in the cold, wet forest of the Vosges Mountains.

Japanese Americans faced prejudice, persecution, and forced relocation during World War II, yet thousands of them volunteered to join the U.S. military. A number of them chose to serve in what became the 442nd Infantry Regiment, an "all-Japanese" unit that actually contained a number of white men—officers assigned to command the unit. With something to prove to the rest of the nation, they fought with a determination seldom seen in any other outfit. By the end of the war, the 442nd would be the most decorated combat regiment in the U.S. Army. Their supreme test came in the Vosges Mountains, when they carried out the rescue of the Lost Battalion. This effort is well-told in ***Honor Before Glory: The Epic World War II Story of the Japanese American GIs Who Rescued the Lost Battalion*** (Scott McGaugh, Da Capo

Japanese Americans of the the 442nd Regimental Combat Team attack German tanks during the rescue of men from the 141st Regiment, 36th Infantry Division in the Vosges Mountains, France, October 27-30, 1944.

Press, Boston, 2016, 257 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $25.99, hardcover).

The fighting in the Vosges Mountains during 1944-1945 was among the worst of the war. Bad weather, rough terrain, and tenacious German defenders combined to form a cold, hellish combat environment. The author brings their situation to vivid life through extensive and descriptive detail. The book was researched using more than 100 oral histories from former members of the unit and a journey to the battlefield itself, which was still littered with relics of the fighting. He clearly portrays the ability of dedicated men to endure hardship and overcome challenges to help their fellow soldiers.

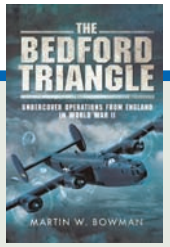
While the narrative focuses on the fight for the Lost Battalion, the author adds vignettes of the soldier's lives before they joined the 442nd, allowing the reader to understand their struggles in an America that feared and distrusted them but needed their services all the same. In the end their efforts not only brought them honor, but also, in time, helped show the country the depth of its mistake in their treatment.

Panic on the Pacific: How America Prepared for a West Coast Invasion (Bill Yenne, Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2016, 294 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, bibliography, index, $29.99, hardcover)

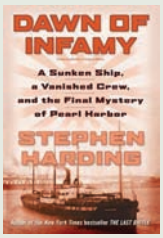
Smoke still poured from the wrecked ships and facilities at Pearl Harbor as the American citizens of the West Coast began preparing to defend their beaches and streets. Army Air Corps General Henry "Hap" Arnold had predicted years earlier that 40 bombers could fly around the defenses of Los Angeles and destroy the city's aqueduct system in Owens Valley, forcing two million inhabitants to evacuate. People feared attack from the air, by submarine, or even landings by Japanese troops. General Joseph Stilwell, a sector commander for the West Coast, feared the Japanese had the freedom to land anywhere along America's long shoreline while the Army lacked even the ammunition to significantly delay them. Still, measures were taken. Blackouts were initiated, and airports were disguised to prevent enemy use; some were hidden so effectively even U.S. pilots could not find them anymore. Frightened and jittery, anxious Americans did what they could to make ready for what might come.

The story of how America prepared the West

New and Noteworthy

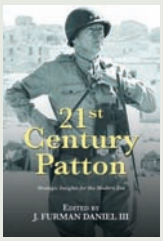


The Bedford Triangle: Undercover Operations from England in World War II (Martin W. Bowman, Skyhorse Press, 2016, $24.99, hardcover) A great hall in Bedfordshire was the center of a number of Anglo-American special operations during the war. This book reveals the details of those operations as well as the disappearance of bandleader Glenn Miller.

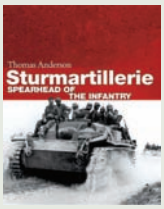


Dawn of Infamy: A Sunken Ship, a Vanished Crew, and the Final Mystery of Pearl Harbor (Stephen Harding, Da Capo Press, 2016, $24.99, hardcover) The cargo vessel *Cynthia Olsen* was sunk by a Japanese submarine halfway between Seattle and Honolulu on December 7, 1941. This book sheds light on the mysteries of the attack.

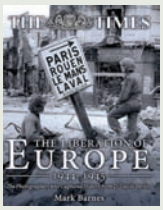
The Anvil of War: German Generalship in Defense on the Eastern Front (Edited by Peter Tsouras, Frontline Books, 2016, $18.95, softcover) After the war a number of German officers were persuaded to write of their experiences. This volume collects works about the Eastern Front.



21st Century Patton: Strategic Insights for the Modern Era (Edited by J. Furman Daniel III, Naval Institute Press, 2016, $24.95, softcover) Patton is mostly remembered for his flamboyant behavior and outrageous statements. This book analyzes Patton as a nuanced and effective military leader.

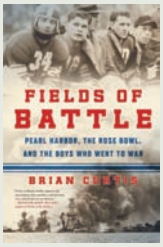


Sturmartillerie: Spearhead of the Infantry (Thomas Anderson, Osprey Publishing, 2016, $45.00, Hardcover) The assault guns used by the German Army began as simple infantry support weapons. By the end of the war they were standing in for tanks.

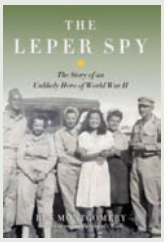


The Liberation of Europe 1944-1945: The Photographers Who Captured History from D-Day to Berlin (Mark Barnes, Casemate Publishing, $39.95, hardcover) This coffee table book is full of notable photographs from the archives of the famed British newspaper *The Times*. They show the breadth of the Allied offensive in Europe in the final year of the war.

An Iron Wind: Europe Under Hitler (Peter Fritzsche, Basic Books, 2016, $29.99, hardcover) The author uses firsthand accounts to show how average Europeans dealt with the war raging around them. This study includes the stories of victims, witnesses, and bystanders.



Fields of Battle: Pearl Harbor, the Rose Bowl and the Boys Who Went to War (Brian Curtis, Flatiron Books, 2016, $29.99, hardcover) The men who played the 1942 Rose Bowl finished the game and went off to fight World War II. They went on to serve around the world, and some paid the ultimate price.



The Leper Spy: The Story of an Unlikely Hero of World War II (Ben Montgomery, Chicago Review Press, 2016, $26.99, Hardcover) Josefina Guerrero spied, carried explosives, and smuggled maps for Allied forces in the Philippines. Japanese sentries would not search her because she had leprosy.

Deadly Sky: The American Combat Airman in World War II (John C. McManus, NAL Caliber, 2016, $16.00, softcover) American airmen served around the world under a multitude of conditions and enemy threats. This work summarizes their efforts, experiences, and sacrifices.

Coast for war is largely untold; many works mention it but give only the briefest detail. This new work sheds light on its subject. The author uses a balanced mix of detailed archival research and anecdotal occurrences to convey a lively and captivating retelling of the events that took place all along the western shores in 1941-1942. Included at the end is a four-chapter "what-if?" section containing interesting scenarios of how Japanese attacks and landings on the continental United States may have played out.

Operation Agreement: Jewish Commandos and the Raid on Tobruk (John Sadler, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2016, 340 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover)

Operation Agreement was a surprise raid on the port city of Tobruk in Libya that took place in September 1942. Rommel's army used the port to simplify its supply lines; possession and use of Tobruk's facilities made it much easier to keep his troops fed, watered, and fueled. The town had been the site of a famous siege earlier in the war but was now solidly in German hands. The plan included attacks by land and sea; the land portion was in the hands of the Long Range Desert Group, and it was to be assisted by a new unit—the Special Interrogation Group (SIG). The SIG operated behind enemy lines to gather intelligence. It was made up largely of German Jews displaced from their nation by the Nazis. Most had moved to Palestine in the 1930s to escape persecution, and now they fought against their tormentors. Their participation in the operation meant they risked everything to fight. If captured, execution or a concentration camp awaited.

Operation Agreement was complex with many moving parts across the sands of the deep desert and the waters of the Mediterranean. The author does an excellent job bringing all the disparate pieces of the raid together into a readable and easily understandable format. The level of detail and the addition of extensive material related to the participants' lives and experiences rounds out the book nicely. Readers interested in Special Forces operations in the Western Desert will find this volume of particular note.

Fighter! Ten Killer Planes of World War II (Jim Laurier, Voyageur Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2016, 192 pp., photographs and illustrations, index, $40.00, Hardcover)

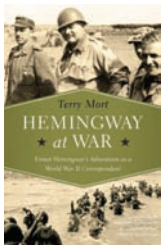
World War II spawned the largest campaign of air-to-air combat in history. Masses of fighter aircraft took to the skies in enormous duels, attacked troops and equipment on the ground, strafed ships, and defended or pounced on bomber formations. There were myriad designs, and they radically improved over the course of the war. The best of them rose to enduring fame and are revered even 70 years later. Designs such as the North American P-51 Mustang, Supermarine Spitfire, Messerschmitt Me-109, and Mitsubishi A6M Zero are known even to the most casual students of the war.

The author is an award-winning artist, and this book compiles his depictions of his top 10 fighters. Photographs and detailed text also entertain the reader, but the stunning artwork is what truly makes this book stand out. Line drawings and battle scenes are both included, showing the graceful lines of these warbirds along with images of them in action. This is a visually stimulating coffee table book that invites the reader to pick it up and start turning pages.

The Drive on Moscow 1941: Operation Taifun and Germany's First Great Crisis of World War II (Niklas Zetterling and Anders Frankson, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2016, 336 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $16.95, softcover)

In the autumn of 1941, more than a million German soldiers set out on a great offensive to take Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union. Most thought it would be the attack that would end both the campaign and their suffering on the Eastern Front. Their enemy was poorly trained and had so far lost thousands of miles of territory to relentless German assaults. The operation initially went well for Germany, and thousands of Russian troops marched off to the prisoner pens. Then the weather set in, seasonal rains that stopped armies in their tracks. By the time the Nazis could resume their offensive, the Soviets had built up their defenses, leading to a desperate and hard-fought conclusion.

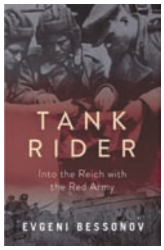
The Eastern Front was by far the largest theater of World War II; as a result, books on the subject are often lost in the grand sweep of the location, focusing too much on army groups and high-level actions. The human face of the conflict is lost. The strength of this work is its focus on that human dimension; attention is given to field marshals and national leaders, but equal space is given to soldiers on the front, facing artillery and mines along with the horrible weather. This book places the reader alongside combatants at all levels.



Hemingway at War: Ernest Hemingway's Adventures as a World War II Correspondent (Terry Mort, Pegasus Books, New York, 2016, 304 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $27.95, hardcover)

Ernest Hemingway was a larger than life character, a man who would go into the thick of the action, often with a bottle in hand to accompany his pencils and paper. In the spring of 1944, he agreed to cover the European Theater for *Collier's Magazine*. Though he had resisted going before then, once in England he went to work, flying with the Royal Air Force. On D-Day he rode a landing craft ashore to Omaha Beach. He rode into Paris before the city was secure and accompanied the French Resistance. His personality was sobered by his experience in the Hürtgen Forest, seeing his beloved unit, the 22nd Infantry Regiment, destroyed almost to a man. His wartime experiences greatly influenced his later work.

The author does an excellent job bringing a balanced view of the famous journalist to the pages of his work. This is no unabashed tribute to Hemingway, but rather a balanced look at the man, covering both his many talents and his numerous flaws. The result is a smooth and level look at one of America's great writers, written in equally smooth and level prose.



Tank Rider: Into the Reich with the Red Army (Evgeni Bessonov, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2017, 256 pp., maps, photographs, index, $24.99, hardcover)

Twilight came early on January 12, 1945. It made it difficult for Lieutenant Evgeni Bessonov to see the village looming darkly ahead of his men. They hung onto their T-34 tanks tightly, waiting for what the next few minutes would bring. Suddenly, German machine guns opened up, followed by the booming cracks of tank guns. Bessonov and his men leaped from their tanks; it was the worst place to be now. They lay down in the open field and began to dig in, but

their battalion commander ordered them to attack. The next minutes were a chaotic blur as the infantry came at the Germans from both flanks while the T-34s fired into the village at likely targets. They soon held the village but spent the rest of the night fending off Nazi counterattacks supported by panzers.

The Tankodesantniki, or "tank rider" was an almost ubiquitous part of the Red Army in World War II. Tanks and infantry work best when they support each other, and the Soviet tactic ensured infantrymen would be available by making tanks their primary mode of transport. When tanks were not available or had been lost, they fought as regular infantry. The author is a veteran infantry officer who served as a tank rider and managed to survive the war. His account relays the hardships, bravery, and sacrifices he and his men endured and witnessed across the Eastern Front.

Hitler's Gray Wolves: U-Boats in the Indian Ocean (Lawrence Paterson, Frontline Books, Yorkshire, UK, 2016, 287 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, bibliography, index, $34.99, hardcover)

The Battle of the Atlantic is known as the struggle of the U-boat against the Allies. However, these deadly submarines ranged much farther, cruising into the Indian Ocean where they were lethal against British shipping. U-boats also carried out technology and personnel exchanges with the Japanese Empire and even carried members of the famous Brandenburgers commando unit for special missions in South Africa. Almost 40 U-boats went to war in this arena, diverting much Allied effort toward their destruction. They carried out missions as far as Australia and New Zealand, but their story is almost forgotten today.

This unknown facet of the naval war is brought to light through the words of the sailors who crewed the submarines, existing records, and sharp analysis of the war these men fought. It is a straightforward work in which the author's expertise and study shines through. The book has many original photographs of the participants and what they saw during their long travels across an ocean far from home.

The Lost Eleven: The Forgotten Story of Black American Soldiers Brutally Massacred in World War II. (Denise George and Robert Child, Caliber Press, New York, 2017, 416 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index,

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

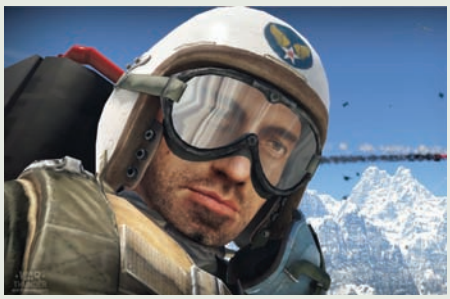
GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT'S *WAR THUNDER* GROWS WITH THE RECENT ASSAULT UPDATE, AND *STEEL DIVISION* GETS TACTICAL.

WAR THUNDER
PUBLISHER GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT • **GENRE** MMO • **SYSTEM** PLAYSTATION 4, PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

For those who have yet to get sucked in, Gaijin Entertainment's *War Thunder* is one of a small handful of successful free-to-play, massively-multiplayer military games available. With a focus on World War II, as well as vehicles from both WWII and the Cold War era, *War Thunder* has been chugging along admirably, continually making adjustments to its cross-platform combat. While there are plenty of differences, the easiest way to describe it is a slightly less arcadey combination of *World of Tanks* and *World of Warplanes*. The core game has been out for a while, but we recently got a chance to dig into the recent 1.67 update, *Assault,* and check out what the latest iteration has to offer.

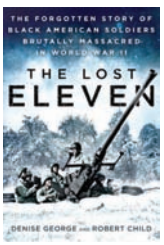
Some of the updates in *Assault* are purely aesthetic, while others make a larger impact on the overall game. That doesn't make the aesthetic upgrades any less cool, however. Chief among them is the addition of exhaust flames for aircraft, which is a very minor touch but serves to up the visual realism another notch. It's not something you're likely to care about once you're in the heat of an online dogfight, but it's cool to see Gaijin's dedication to immersion continue with the new update.

In more functional terms, weapon stabilization has been improved for ground vehicles. If you've ever played *War Thunder* and found yourself struggling to aim through all the shakes and stutters visible in targeting mode, you'll definitely appreciate this new feature. It applies to vehicles that were historically equipped with a gun stabilization system, so it still manages to fit the bill of realism where it counts. As far as gameplay implications are concerned, well, any tweaks in aiming are likely to have an impact on your success in taking down enemies and holding territories. The difference is definitely noticeable, so it should be fun to continue experimenting with this new level of accuracy.



That brings us to the namesake of the update, the Assault co-op missions. At the time of this writing the new missions were still in the testing phase and were only available for aircraft, so we didn't get enough action in to determine the full potential of this wave-based cooperative outing. The basic gist is that up to eight players can link up to take on waves of computer-controlled enemies, with each successive wave being more powerful than the last. The goal is to keep your team together and hold out for as long as you possibly can. The longer you last, the greater your reward booster will be, so Assault seems like a solid way to start your average day of *War Thunder* play.

Finally, *War Thunder* added a pair of new maps for both ground and air units to throw down in. There's the Ardennes, which has players battling in the mountain town of Bastogne in December 1944, the first major stage of the Battle of the Bulge. Gaijin has even attempted to mimic the early winter color palette for the stage, which has a wide variety of tactical points of interest for drivers and bombers alike.



$28.00, hardcover)

The men of Charlie Battery, 333rd Field Artillery Battalion were in the Ardennes Forest on the morning of December 16, 1944. Their 155mm cannon had seen little use during their time guarding this relatively quiet section of the front. It all changed that morning. Suddenly, German artillery crashed down across the front. The African American soldiers of the unit fired back. By the next morning, they were almost out of ammunition. German infantry arrived, pelting the GIs with machine-gun and rifle fire. The Americans shot back with their own carbines and rifles, but soon ran out of cartridges for them as well. The time had come to leave. The GIs clambered aboard trucks for a journey westward to perceived safety. Their tragic journey was only beginning, however.

The story of 11 of these men ended in a village called Wereth, where a farmer hid them. A neighbor's betrayal placed them in the hands of the Nazis, who brutalized and killed them in a field. The sad tale was nearly forgotten until the authors worked to bring it to light from dusty archives. Using interviews with survivors and the families of the lost, the authors created a volume that brings this heartrending story out of the darkness of obscurity and fully into the light.

All the Gallant Men: The First Memoir by a USS Arizona Survivor (Donald Stratton, William Morrow, New York, 2016, 320 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $25.99, hardcover)

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, was barely 15 minutes old, and Seaman First Class Donald Stratton was already near death. The 19-year-old sailor was

Then there's Guiana Highlands, a stage specifically crafted for air arcade mode. According to Gaijin, *War Thunder*'s artists came up with the idea based on Brazil's Mount Roraima, which Guiana echoes with its sky-high, flat mountain plateau.

Between all of the different versions of *War Thunder*—including PC, Mac, Linux, and PS4, the latter of which is what we've been playing on—and the latest update, Gaijin has been making good on its promise to keep things fresh. It's still a breeze to get into quick matches, too, so we'll likely keep firing this one up for the foreseeable future.

PREVIEW

STEEL DIVISION: NORMANDY 44

PUBLISHER PARADOX INTERACTIVE • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** 2017

War-based strategy titles are prevalent, but there are a few different types out there depending on your personal preferences. Some folks dig the more twitch-based reactive strategy that requires an eagle eye and the willingness to be a virtual babysitter for countless units. There's some merit to this flavor, but not everyone equates strategy with constant on-the-fly action. That's where publisher Paradox Interactive's *Steel Division: Normandy 44* comes into play. From early previews, this one looks to take a more thoughtfully tactical approach to the traditional World War II strategy game.

Paradox summed it up pretty effectively themselves, reassuring those attending a preview presentation that, in *Steel Division*, "Clicks per minute doesn't matter." According to one of their representatives, this entry in the real-time strategy genre is all about "tactics over twitch." The reason they're pushing for this specific direction is because they want players to be responsible for interesting tactical decisions. Rather than spending most of the session babysitting units, players will be making meaningful moves throughout a refined three-phase system. The course of battle is reflected in the ever-changing shape of the front line, so you'll be able to see when and where reinforcements are necessary, and respond accordingly without a persistent air of chaos.

If *Steel Division* ends up working like developer Eugen Systems (*Wargame, R.U.S.E.*) plans, there should be plenty of room for unique approaches to battle. Throw in 10-on-10 multiplayer battles and around 400 historically accurate units and we might just have something interesting on our hands.

at his battle station aboard the battleship USS *Arizona* when the deck beneath his feet heaved under the force of a tremendous explosion. A bomb had penetrated the ship's deck and detonated the ship's ammunition in a massive explosion. Stratton was burned over two-thirds of his body. Weakened, he managed to save himself by pulling hand over hand across a tether line connected to the neighboring repair ship USS *Vestal*. He made it across with four other sailors, but 1,177 others were lost aboard the ship. Many of them are still entombed there. Stratton spent a year in military hospitals. Doctors told him they should amputate his limbs, but instead he learned to walk again. Despite being given a medical discharge, he volunteered to remain in the Navy and served on a destroyer in the Pacific for the rest of the war.

This is the first memoir by an *Arizona* survivor and may well be the only one ever published. It is an intimate look at one sailor's unique journey through the maelstrom of World War II. Aside from being a personal account of the Pearl Harbor attack, it shows how that day affected the author and shaped his life moving forward through the war and afterward. The Pearl Harbor attack occurred over 75 years ago; this is a unique work that brings the reader closer to the events of that day. □

Continued from page 37

standard order for the 9th—"Clear the enemy from Ponyri."

For this attack, GR 507 would be supported by the 3/Pi. (engineer) BN. 292, the 2nd and 3rd Companies of Stug. Abt. 244, 1/Pz. Jäg. Abt 292, and four Ferdinands from Pz. Jäg. Abt. 653. The regiment was to take Hill 226.5 just south of Ponyri and Hill 239.8 east of the village and then block any Soviet reinforcements from entering the area. Part of the regiment would then sweep south to meet up with Zierhold's 508th, which would advance from the southern part of the village and then swing southeast. Zierhold would be supported by 1/Stug. Abt. 244, the rest of Pz. Jäg. Abt. 292, 1/ Pi. BN. 292, and the 2/Pz. Abt. 18 from the 18th Panzer.

Once the regiments linked up it was hoped that the 307th, 57th Motorized, and the 27th Guards Tank would be encircled and destroyed. The final objective of GR 508 was Hill 256.9, about 2,500 meters southeast of the jump-off position. An attack by PGR 52 would cover Zierhold's right flank.

The German artillery barrage began at 0605, and at 0615 the two regiments started their attack. By 0700, the 507th was in the open terrain south of Ponyri. There, they came under Soviet artillery fire that forced them to take cover. Two of the regiment's battalions were pinned down, but Major Josef Fischer's 11/GR 507 did manage to advance 1¼ kilometers to take Hill 239.8. However, Fischer's battalion had no support on either flank and was forced to halt after taking the hill.

Things were just as bad for the 18th Panzer's supporting attack. The bulk of Pa. Abt. 18, which was to support Seidlitz's PGR 52, assembled in the wrong area. To make things worse, as the first panzers crossed the Snova River they collapsed the bridge they were using, leaving the majority of the tanks stranded on the wrong side of the river.

Seidlitz began his attack without the panzer support and immediately came under fire. Without the armor, the attack was halted almost as soon as it had begun.

With neither GR 507 nor GR 508 making any progress, it was decided to switch the main effort of the 292nd to clearing out the southern portion of Ponyri. Zierhold's GR 508 had that honor. Backed up by the remaining guns of 1/Stug. Abt 244, they were ready to go again.

The Russian forces facing them had sustained heavy casualties, and units had become intermingled, but they still held firm. They were also backed up by a tremendous range of artillery pieces, vital in holding their positions. In the air both sides were fighting for superiority, and the sky was filled with aircraft trailing smoke as they plunged toward the earth.

Panzer Abteilung 18 had finally found its way to the right area and was ready to support PGR 52. As Seidlitz's men began to move forward, the panzers rolled out in front of them. They ran into a wall of artillery and antitank fire and were only able to advance a few hundred meters as they suffered casualty after casualty. The panzergrenadiers made even less progress. The war diary of Stug. Abt. 244 described the scene: "During the afternoon the Russian artillery increased to an unheard of intensity, especially against (Hill) 248.9 and the fruit orchard east of there. At the same time it (the Soviets) introduced a Russian counterattack from Ponyri south."

A company of Russians, commanded by Senior Lieutenant Ivan Ryabov, stubbornly hung on to the Ponyri schoolhouse despite numerous German attempts to take it. When one German assault threatened to overrun his defenses, Ryabov called for rocket fire to hit his position, causing him some casualties but driving the Germans back.

The fighting continued unabated up and down the German line of assault. In another attempt to breach Soviet defenses, the 1st and 2nd Companies of Pz. Abt. 18 sustained heavy losses from flanking fire as they once again led PGR 52 forward. Seidlitz's men also sustained more casualties, and the regiment was so depleted that the 18th Panzer reserve, Colonel Fleischauer's PGR 101, was ordered forward so that the line between the 18th and the 292nd would not be severed. At Ponyri the depleted Div. BN. 292 was also ordered into the line to plug a gap between GR 507 and 508.

As the fighting intensified the Soviet units holding central Ponyri were eventually surrounded. Oukhov rushed Colonel Ivan Konev's 3rd Guards Airborne Division to a reserve position southwest of the village and ordered Rumiantsev's 4th Guards Airborne into Ponyri itself to rectify the situation. Rumiantsev's men were soon in position, and they hit the forward elements of both the 507th and 508th. As night descended, both the 18th Panzer and the 292nd were ordered to dig in and hold on to their meager gains at all costs.

Harpe, after visiting Kluge's headquarters, decided that the 292nd was spent. Line companies had an average strength of 20 men, with some of them having sergeants or corporals commanding them. He requested that Maj. Gen. August Schmidt's 10th Panzergrenadier Division be taken out of reserve and be sent to replace the 292nd. Model agreed, and Kluge was informed that the turnover would occur the following night.

The Soviets were not about to give the Germans in Ponyri any rest. During the final hours of July 9, a battalion of Konev's 3rd Airborne attacked and breached the line of Div. BN. 292 south of the Ponyri water tower. It managed to move into an area in the north end of the village about a kilometer behind the main line of GR 508.

At 0700, the Germans counterattacked, using eight assault guns from Stug. Abt. 244 and a company of grenadiers. With the assault guns in the lead the Germans sealed off the penetration, trapping the Soviets in a pocket. A followup attack commenced at 1100 and smashed the trapped battalion. Schmidt officially took control of Kluge's sector at Ponyri at 1200 on July 10, but his units had not yet arrived on the scene. Meanwhile, the Soviets continued to attack GRs 507 and 508 with tanks and infantry. With the help of Colonel Grosskreutz's Stug. Abt. 244, the attacks were repulsed.

In the 86th Division's sector, the 4th Guards and the 51st and 129th Tank Brigades hit the division's right flank and tried to force their way into northern Ponyri. The fighting continued into the evening with the Germans, supported by Käppler's Stug. Abt. 177, fending off the attacks.

The assault guns became the backbone of the defense. The commander of the 2/Stug. Abt. 177, 1st Lt. Kurt Zitzen, moved his five assault guns forward as night was falling. He wanted to try to cut the Russian supply line in his sector. As he moved forward he spotted about 30 Soviet tanks, which were preparing to support an infantry attack. In the fading light Zitzen and his men were able to approach to within 200 meters of the enemy.

Opening fire, Zitzen continued a slow advance. In a 15-minute fire fight in which the opponents were sometimes as close as 30 meters, Zitzen's company destroyed 15 heavy (probably T-34s) and one super heavy (KV I or KV II) tanks and immobilized four more. Zitzen destroyed six of the enemy tanks himself. The survivors made a hasty retreat, totally disrupting the planned attack.

As the fighting died down, units of the 10th Panzergrenadier Division arrived, and the 292nd gratefully turned their positions over to Schmidt's men. As the 292nd departed for the rear, Pz. Abt. 18 was also pulled out of the line to give its men a rest and to perform much needed maintenance on its surviving vehicles.

On the Soviet side, Kluge's nemesis, Enshin's 307th, was also pulled out of the line, its posi-

tions taken over by the 16,000 men of the 3rd and 4th Guards Airborne. More units, including Maj. Gen. Ilia Dudarev's 2nd Guards Airborne Division, were also on the way.

By July 11, it was clear that Model's push on the northern flank of the Kursk salient was almost finished. While Manstein continued to push forward on the southern flank, the 8th Army was now on the defensive. The day passed relatively quietly, except for the incessant Soviet artillery fire and some probing attacks.

Things changed on the 12th, when the Soviets unexpectedly attacked the neighboring 2nd Army in force north of Orel. It marked the beginning of a massive Russian counterattack codenamed Kutuzov after a famous czarist general in the Napoleonic Wars.

Kutuzov effectively ended Zitadelle in the north. Even as the great tank battle at Prokorhorovka was taking place in the south, Model was ordered to send the 18th Panzer and schw. Pz. Jäg. Abt. 654 north to help contain the Russian attack on the 2nd Panzer Army, which was making considerable progress. Schmidt was ordered to broaden the 10th Panzergrenadier Division's line to cover the sector that would be left vacant by the 18th Panzer, and major elements of the 292nd were ordered to prepare to return to the line.

The Russians around Ponyri turned their attention to Weidling's 86th on the morning of the 12th and then switched to Ponyri itself, hitting elements of Major Walter von Thein's GR 20 (mot.), who had just relieved the 292nd. After an hour-long fight the Soviets finally withdrew.

July 13 saw a repeat of the sporadic attacks, but by then all eyes were focused on the battle in the 2nd Panzer Army's sector and on Manstein's actions in the south. Model's remaining panzer divisions were in desperate need of maintenance, and individual elements of those divisions had to be pulled out of the line.

The 14th was relatively quiet, with the Germans realigning their forces and the Soviets preparing for an attack the following day. Besides the three Guards airborne divisions facing Ponyri, Rokossovskii had ordered Colonel N.N. Zaiiulev's 55th Rifle Division to be transferred from the 60th Army to take the lead in the planned assault. Sinenko's 3rd Tank Corps would support the attack.

At 0415 on the 15th, a hail of artillery shells and Katyusha rockets hit the German line. Supported by more than 300 artillery pieces, the Russians advanced. At Ponyri the 3rd and 4th Guards Airborne Divisions were met with continuous machine-gun fire, stalling the attack.

East of Ponyri, Zaiiulev's fresh 55th Rifle Division was able to breach the line of Weidling's 86th. Hahne's GR 507, which was the corps reserve, was ordered forward to help the division. The remaining guns of schw. Pz. Jäg. Rgt. 656 and Stug. Abts. 177, 244, and 189 were ordered to hit the tanks accompanying the Russian infantry. Moving into ambush positions, the guns began picking off the oncoming enemy armor. A total of 11 Soviet tanks were destroyed by Lieutenant Hermann Feldheim, a gun commander in the 1/schw. Pz. Jäg. Abt. 656, and several other gun commanders claimed multiple kills. The Soviet attack lasted four hours before it was called off.

Pukhov tried again at 1300. Casualties were high on both sides, but the Russian losses could be replaced while the Germans' could not. Harpe knew that his men could not hold out much longer, and at 1610 he issued orders for his divisions to withdraw to new positions anywhere from ½ to three kilometers behind the main line. At 0430 on July 16, Soviet patrols reported that Ponyri had been abandoned by the enemy.

With Operation Kutuzov the Soviets began a drive that would take them to Berlin in less than two years. The Germans could not make good their losses in men and material that were incurred during Zitadelle, and it would show in the months to come.

The battle for Ponyri was hailed by the Soviets as the "Stalingrad of Kursk." While that may be an exaggeration, it is certainly true that once Model decided to take Ponyri instead of immediately flanking the village with his panzers, cutting its supply line, and leaving it for followup infantry forces to capture, it drew units from both sides like a magnet. Giving the Soviets time to reinforce the area also proved to be a costly error. In all, the 9th Army had only managed to advance 12-15 kilometers during the entire battle.

Model continued to have a reputation as a good defensive fighter on the Eastern Front. He commanded various army groups in the East during the retreats of 1944 and was promoted to field marshal. Sent to the West after the Allied invasion, he continued to use his defensive skills against the British and Americans, but the overwhelming superiority of men and material, especially Allied air power, proved to be too much.

When his Army Group B was trapped in the Ruhr Pocket, there was little Model could do. Instead of surrendering, he took his own life on April 21, 1945.

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top secret

Continued from page 23

Nishimura's death in 1934 perplexed the Japanese expatriate community in Singapore. The circumstances of the espionage allegations and his role in the affair were never fully explained in the press, and speculation about the episode continues to this day in Singapore.

For example, the plaque beside Nishimura's grave reads, "... the British Colonial Authorities ordered [Nishimura] to appear for a spy investigation for photographing their naval port…."

As for the rest of the figures in this affair, Chief Inspector Prithvi Chand managed to escape the fall of Singapore in 1942 and survived the war. In 1945 he was honored by King George VI for his service with Special Branch in India. The Japanese intelligence officer, Lt. Cmdr. Kaseda, proved an unworthy opponent. He stupidly blew his own cover in Singapore by using a briefcase inscribed with his true name and affiliation with the IJN in English. Ironically, the briefcase was a gift from William Forbes-Sempill, a retired British RAF officer and also a suspected Japanese spy.

Kaseda's involvement in the Nishimura affair did not bode well for his career. He was drummed out of the IJN in 1938 for involvement with a banned religious society. The two fortune seekers who were the first duped by Special Branch, Kokubo and Ohki, were banished from the Straits Settlements and deported in January 1935. Like their con men nemeses, Siregar and Don, their ultimate fates are unknown.

Nishimura's grave in the Japanese Cemetery Park in Singapore is a testament to his prestigious status within the Japanese expatriate community; he was buried in a place of honor just opposite the Saiyuji Buddhist Temple. The monument beside his headstone is inscribed, "Here lies one of the people who dedicated their lives to opening a new market in the South and the prosperity of Southeast Asia."

Now we know that Yoshio Nishimura was indeed dedicated to seeking prosperity in Southeast Asia, but as Japan slipped from commercial expansion into military conquest to open new markets he also tried to be a spy, a naive, amateur spy who stumbled blindly into a trap set by the skilled detectives of the Straits Settlements Police Special Branch. It was a world he never should have entered, and for his mistake he sentenced himself to the ultimate punishment.

Stephen Ruder is a civilian employee of the U.S. Navy. He resides in Singapore.

Graf Spee

Continued from page 49

After the battle, Harwood withdrew, although he had wanted to make courtesy visits to Montevideo and Buenos Aires. He transferred his flag to the *Achilles* while awaiting the arrival of his new flagship, the aging cruiser HMS *Hawkins,* in late January 1940. Harwood was given an immediate knighthood and promotion to rear admiral, and the captains of the *Ajax, Achilles,* and *Exeter* were each named Commanders of the British Empire. The three cruisers off Montevideo joined the battered *Exeter* at Port Stanley in the Falklands, where the ships' companies enjoyed Christmas dinners.

The *Ajax* then paid a "triumphal" visit to Montevideo, while the *Achilles* headed out to Drake's Passage, south of Cape Horn, in a futile search for the *Altmark* with her cargo of 299 British prisoners. Parting from the *Graf Spee* east of the Brazilian "bulge" on December 6, the freighter had sailed south. On January 24, she began a long northward voyage and eventually found refuge in a Norwegian fiord.

After her ship's company bade Harwood a "Maori farewell," the *Achilles* sailed home to New Zealand, where 100,000 cheering people crammed the streets of Auckland on February 23 as her 680 officers and men marched to the town hall. Dominions Secretary Anthony Eden telegraphed from London, "The heroic and skillful part which she [the *Achilles*] played in that notable victory will long be remembered in the annals of naval history."

The officers and ratings of the *Exeter* and *Ajax,* meanwhile, had returned to England and received a tumultuous welcome in Plymouth on February 16. Attending with the Admiralty's top brass, Churchill intoned, "In this somber, dark winter, the brilliant action of the Plate came like a flash of light and color on the scene."

The sailors marched through the historic port to the Guildhall, where the lord mayor honored them by having Sir Francis Drake's famous drum brought from Buckland Abbey. Tradition has it that the drum is supposed to sound when England is in danger.

While their New Zealand comrades were being feted in Auckland, the *Exeter* and *Ajax* crews marched through London's Trafalgar Square to the Guildhall on the gray morning of February 23. King George VI took their salute, and Churchill said that their victory had "warmed the cockles of the British heart."

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Singapore

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Yamashita's ammunition kept dwindling. Japanese artillery units had to limit their counterbattery fire on British and Commonwealth guns since they were down to fewer than 100 rounds per gun. Yamashita's supply system was stretched to the limit.

A few officers had the audacity to suggest calling off the assault and returning to the peninsula for resupply and refitting. However, Yamashita was under intense personal and political pressure to successfully conclude his offensive. To hasten Singapore's capitulation, Yamashita sent a request for surrender to Percival, warning him of the potential harm that could come to the civilian population of Singapore City should an all-out assault become necessary.

By February 13, the retreating British, Australian, and Indian troops formed a new 28-mile perimeter around Singapore City. Unfortunately for Percival and his defenders, Japanese artillery destroyed the island's water supply, and the attackers had convinced the British that a major epidemic would ensue without fresh water. The capture of the depots at Bukit Timah had reduced the island's reserve supplies to just one week. Deserters, refugees, and looters were all around the city.

Percival, sensing that there was still no panic in Singapore City, refused to reply to Yamashita's surrender request. Yamashita launched into a bluff. He would expend artillery ammunition as if it were unlimited to further convince Percival that he had no alternative but to capitulate.

Forty-eight hours later, Percival had a change of heart. He now sensed a crisis for the civilian and military forces in Singapore City. Although trying to exhort his subordinates as conditions looked bleak on this day, Percival conveyed to Wavell that further resistance and loss of life would be futile and that he anticipated not lasting beyond another 48 hours. Percival cabled Wavell for permission to surrender, but from ABDA headquarters in Java the latter refused and urged the island's defenders, "You must continue to inflict maximum losses on enemy for as long as possible by house-to-house fighting if necessary. Your action in tying down enemy may have vital influence in other theatres. Fully appreciate your situation but continued action essential."

After meeting with his commanders on the morning of February 15, Percival decided to surrender despite a personal message from Churchill to Wavell calling for a last stand by the numerically superior Commonwealth forces. Percival cabled Wavell that he would ask for a cease fire at 1600 hours. Wavell acquiesced and gave permission for the surrender if there was nothing more to be done. Percival had no fuel for vehicles; he had nearly exhausted his artillery ammunition, and there would be no water in a matter of hours in a city with more than 500,000 inhabitants. For a personally brave man such as Percival, capitulation was a bitter step, but he chose to ultimately go himself if called for by the Japanese in the hope of obtaining better treatment for his troops and the population.

Percival sought terms from General Yamashita on February 15 as Japanese division commanders were beginning to report severe shortages in ammunition and supplies. Yamashita's chicanery was successful. At 1100, Japanese lookouts saw through the trees along the Bukit Timah road a white flag hoisted atop the broadcasting studios. Lt. Col. Ichiji Sugita, one of Yamashita's staff officers, met a British party seeking terms of surrender. Sugita told the British officers, "We will have a truce if the British Army agrees to surrender. Do you wish to surrender?" The British interpreter, Captain Cyril H.D. Wild, assented. Then, Yamashita ordered that Percival and his staff come to the Ford Factory at Bukit Timah.

Six hours after the initial sighting of the white flag, Percival and some staff officers met the 25th Army commander for brief but tense negotiations. Yamashita demanded an immediate surrender, although Percival was doing his best to stall and keep negotiating until the next day.

Yamashita knew his own weakness and did not want any delay.

After the war, Yamashita said, "I felt if we had to fight in the city we would be beaten." He went on to say that his strategy at Singapore was "a bluff, a bluff that worked."

At 1950 on February 15, approximately 70 days after the Japanese invasion of the Malay Peninsula, the surrender document was signed. British and Commonwealth losses in Malaya and on Singapore Island totaled 9,000 killed and wounded with more than 120,000 British Empire servicemen taken prisoner. The Japanese lost approximately 3,000 killed and almost 7,000 wounded while completing the greatest military disaster in British history and Japan's greatest land victory.

Jon Diamond practices medicine and writes from Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He is the author of* Stilwell and the Chindits: The Allied Campaign for Northern Burma 1943-44, *released by Pen & Sword Publishers in late 2014.*

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TEEN T ESRB

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