Curtis 02313

# WWII HISTORY

## D-DAY Decision to Go!

EL ALAMEIN
## Rommel Defeated

6TH ARMORED DIVISION
## Captured at the Bulge

## Nazi Onslaught in the Crimea

+ U-BOAT ACE OTTO KRETSCHMER, AT THE FRONT WITH ERNIE PYLE, BOOK & GAME REVIEWS, AND MORE!

DECEMBER 2017

$5.99US $6.99CAN

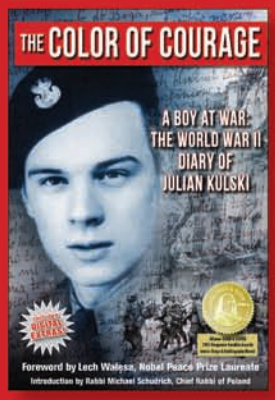
12

0 71658 02313 0

RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL JAN. 8

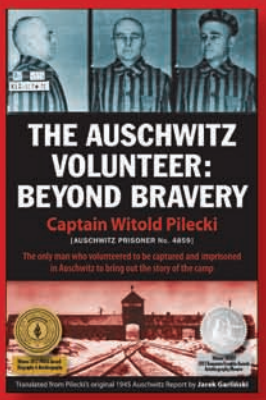
WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com

WWII HISTORY • DECEMBER 2017 Volume 17, No. 1




***The Color of Courage–A Boy at War: The World War II Diary of Julian Kulski***
**by Julian Kulski**

"Absorbing, inspiring, and tragic."
*— Publishers Weekly*

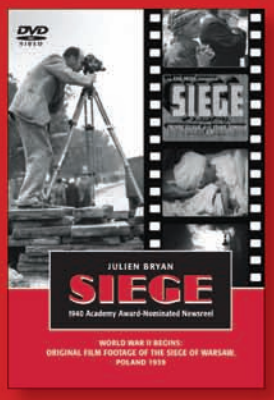



***The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery***
**by Captain Witold Pilecki**

"One of the FIVE BEST books on wartime secret missions."
*— Wall St. Journal*


***303 Squadron: The Legendary Battle of Britain Fighter Squadron***
**by Arkady Fiedler**

"About as exciting as it gets… a must-read."
*— The Washington Times*

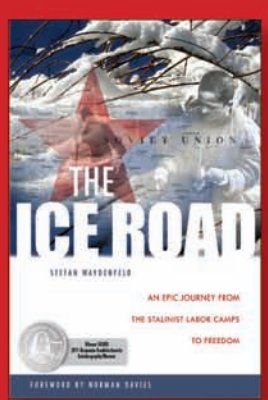



***Siege: World War II Begins***
**Filmed and narrated by Julien Bryan**
**DVD Video**

Nominated for an Oscar in 1940. Inducted into the U.S. National Film Registry in 2006.

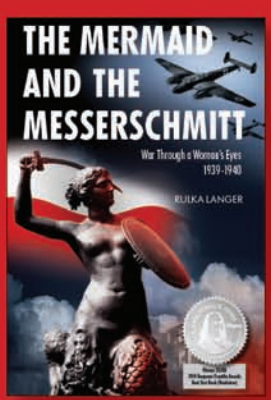
# POLAND

# THE FIRST TO FIGHT HITLER



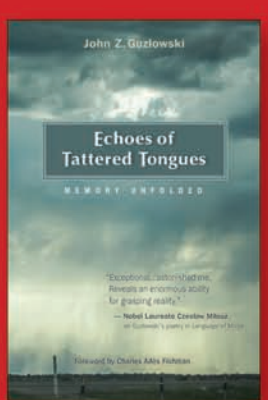

***The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom***
**by Stefan Waydenfeld**

"Extraordinary."
— Anne Applebaum, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Gulag*




***The Mermaid and the Messerschmitt: War Through a Woman's Eyes, 1939-1940***
**by Rulka Langer**

"Absolutely one of the best."
— Alan Furst, bestselling author of *The Foreign Correspondent* and *The Spies of Warsaw*




***Echoes of Tattered Tongues: Memory Unfolded***
**by John Guzlowski**

"A searing memoir."
*— Shelf Awareness*


***Maps and Shadows: A Novel***
**by Krysia Jopek**

"Jopek…shows how very talented she is."
*— Nightreader*

**Coming Soon!** ***FIGHTING AUSCHWITZ: THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP***

Available at fine bookstores, online retailers and major wholesalers.

AQUILA POLONICA®
www.AquilaPolonica.com


# FIGHT TOGETHER AGAINST EVIL. AND FIGHT DIRTY.

RAID: World War II takes place in a war-torn Europe, where four men are brought together to take on the Nazi Reich. So grab your weapon, head into battle and join the good fight.

This is not about the big battles, but rather about the smaller raids where you can really make an impact. Everything from blowing up bridges to classic assassinations - and you are the one pulling it off.

RAID: World War II is a multi-player first-person-shooter where you and three friends can team up and make life difficult for Hitler - available now on PC, Xbox One and PlayStation 4™.


**www.raidworldwar2.com**

PS4 XBOX ONE STARBREEZE LION GAME LION 505 GAMES

# Contents

WWII HISTORY


## Features



## Columns




Cover: General Dwight Eisenhower speaks with a member of the 101st Airborne Division shortly before giving the command to launch the D-Day invasion, June 5, 1944.
See story page 34.

Photo: National Archives

*WWII History* (ISSN 1539-5456) is published six times yearly in February, April, June, August, October, and December by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History,* Volume 17, Number 1 © 2017 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to ***WWII History*** **Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $5.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $24.95; Canada and Overseas: $38.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII History,* 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101. *WWII History* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

# Contents

WWII HISTORY


## Features



## Columns

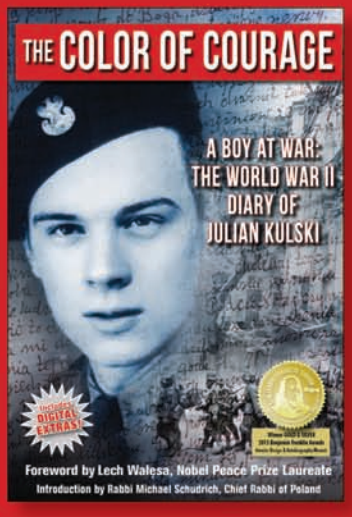



Cover: General Dwight Eisenhower speaks with a member of the 101st Airborne Division shortly before giving the command to launch the D-Day invasion, June 5, 1944. See story page 34.

Photo: National Archives

*WWII History* (ISSN 1539-5456) is published six times yearly in February, April, June, August, October, and December by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History,* Volume 17, Number 1 © 2017 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to ***WWII History*** **Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $5.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $19.95; Canada and Overseas: $31.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII History,* 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101. *WWII History* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

# WHICH ALLY?

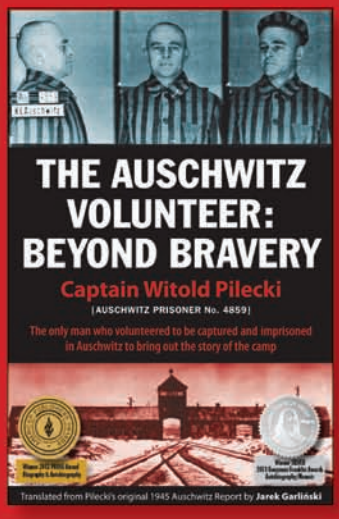



## Ran the largest noncommunist resistance organization in occupied Europe

"Absorbing, inspiring, and tragic."
*— Publishers Weekly*


## Had the highest-scoring fighter squadron in the Battle of Britain

"About as exciting as it gets…a must-read."
*— The Washington Times*




## Carried out a daring, nearly 3-year-long, undercover mission at Auschwitz

"A historical document of the greatest importance."
*— The New York Times,* Editors' Choice

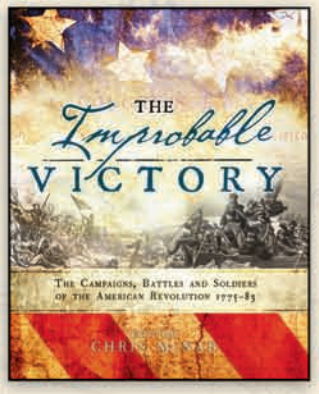
AQUILA POLONICA®
www.AquilaPolonica.com

Available at fine bookstores, online retailers and major wholesalers.

# POLAND: The First to Fight Hitler

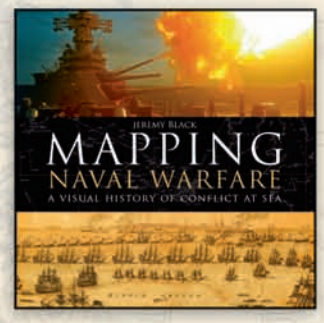

## TIGER

PAPERBACK
$21 US / $28 CAN
9781472822048




## THE IMPROBABLE VICTORY:
### THE CAMPAIGNS, BATTLES AND SOLDIERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

HARDCOVER
$35 US / $47 CAN
9781472823144

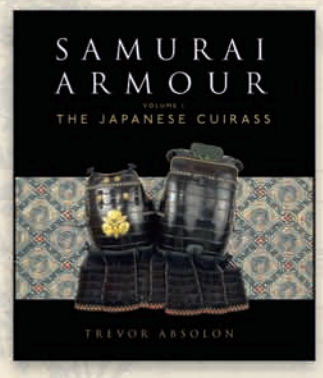



## MAPPING NAVAL WARFARE:
### A VISUAL HISTORY OF CONFLICT AT SEA

HARDCOVER
$45 US / $60 CAN
9781472827869

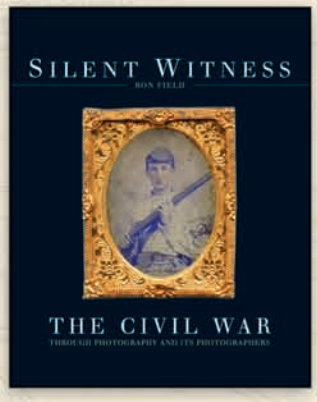

## BATTLESHIPS YAMATO AND MUSASHI

HARDCOVER
$60 US / $79 CAN
9781844863174



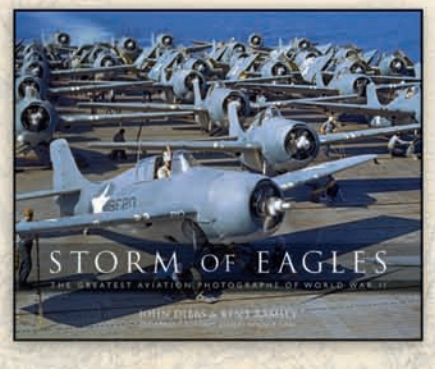

## SAMURAI ARMOUR: VOLUME I:
### THE JAPANESE CUIRASS

HARDCOVER
$60 US / $79 CAN
9781472807960




## SILENT WITNESS:
### THE CIVIL WAR THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY AND ITS PHOTOGRAPHERS

HARDCOVER
$35 US / $47 CAN
9781472822765




## STORM OF EAGLES:
### THE GREATEST AVIATION PHOTOGRAPHS OF WORLD WAR II

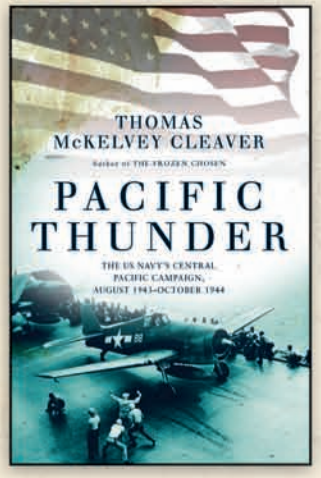
HARDCOVER
$35 US / $47 CAN
9781472823007

OSPREY
PUBLISHING

# THE NO.1 DESTINATION FOR MILITARY HISTORY.

# PERFECT GIFTS

## FOR THE MILITARY HISTORY READER

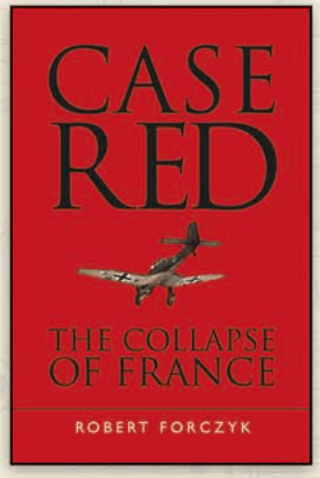



### PACIFIC THUNDER:
### THE US NAVY'S CENTRAL PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

HARDCOVER
$35 US / $47 CAN
9781472821843


### THE SPLINTERED EMPIRES:
### THE EASTERN FRONT 1917–21

HARDCOVER
$30 US / $40 CAN
9781472819857




### CASE RED:
### THE COLLAPSE OF FRANCE

HARDCOVER
$30 US / $40 CAN
9781472824424

## WWW.OSPREYPUBLISHING.COM

# Editorial

## Seventy-five years ago, scientists led by Enrico Fermi achieved the first sustained nuclear chain reaction.

**IN 1938 THE ITALIAN FASCIST GOVERNMENT OF BENITO MUSSOLINI BEGAN** enacting a series of laws intended to intimidate, persecute, and otherwise control virtually every aspect of the lives of Italian Jews. Among those caught in the web of these ordinances was Laura Capon Fermi, wife of the noted physicist Enrico Fermi.

Born in Italy on September 29, 1901, Enrico Fermi had begun to emerge on the world stage as both a theoretical and experimental physicist during the 1920s and received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1938 for "demonstrations of the existence of new radioactive elements produced by neutron irradiation and for his related discovery of nuclear reactions brought about by slow neutrons," according to Dan Cooper, author of the book *Enrico Fermi and the Revolutions in Modern Physics*. In the same year that Fermi received the Nobel Prize, he made a life and history altering decision.

The Fermi family traveled to Stockholm, Sweden, in December 1938, the same year that the Italian racial laws were being implemented, to receive the Nobel Prize. After the ceremonies, they did not return to Italy. Rather, they sailed to New York City, arriving on January 2, 1939, applying for permanent residency and then becoming U.S. citizens. Therefore, one of the unintended consequences of the racial laws enacted by Italy and the Axis coalition was to deliver the services of one of the foremost scientists in the study of nuclear energy then living to the United States. Fermi went on to play a significant role in the American development of nuclear energy and the feasibility of the atomic bomb.

Immediately after his arrival in the United States, Fermi was offered prestigious teaching positions at several universities. He was a member of the team that conducted the first nuclear fission experiments in the United States at Columbia University in early 1939. In the summer of 1941, he had amassed a "pile" of six tons of uranium oxide and 30 tons of graphite in a building on the Columbia campus. On December 18, 1941, just 11 days after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Office of Scientific Research and Development, amid a growing sense of urgency, shifted its focus from producing enriched uranium to the production of plutonium, which they believed might be an alternative source of nuclear energy available much sooner—perhaps by the end of 1944.

Arthur Compton, a member of the earlier Advisory Committee on Uranium and an official with the Office of Scientific Research, advocated the relocation of the plutonium research to the campus of the University of Chicago. However, amid concerns over radiation contamination, the site chosen for construction of a nuclear reactor was initially 20 miles outside the city. Shortly after the building project got underway, however, a labor dispute and other disruptions suspended progress. Fermi convinced Compton to proceed with building a reactor on campus.

Seventy-five years ago, December 2, 1942, the world's first sustained artificial nuclear chain reaction occurred when Chicago Pile-1 went "critical." The landmark achievement in the development of the atomic bomb took place inside the reactor built on the squash court beneath the west stands of Amos Alonzo Stagg Field, where the University of Chicago football team played its home games.

Fermi went on to further contribute to the progress of the Manhattan Project, which did ultimately succeed in developing the atomic bomb. He has been referred to popularly as the father of both the atomic bomb and of the nuclear age.

He died, aged 53, of stomach cancer at his home in Chicago on November 28, 1954.

*Michael E. Haskew*

WWII HISTORY

Volume 17 ■ Number 1

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
**Editorial Director, Founder**

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
**Editor**

LAURA CLEVELAND
**Managing Editor**

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
**Art Director**

KEVIN M. HYMEL
**Research Director**

CONTRIBUTORS:
**Richard A. Beranty, Christopher J. Chlon, Michael D. Hull, Kevin M. Hymel, Pat McTaggart, David H. Lippman, Joseph Luster, Tim Miller, Christopher Miskimon**

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
BEN BOYLES
**Advertising Manager**
**(570) 322-7848, ext. 110**
**benjaminb@sovhomestead.com**

LINDA GALLIHER
**Ad Coordinator**
**(570) 322-7848, ext. 160**
**lgalliher@sovmedia.com**

MARK HINTZ
**Chief Executive Officer**

ROBIN LEE
**Bookkeeper**

TERRI COATES
**Subscription Customer Service**
**sovereign@publishersserviceassociates.com**
**(570) 322-7848, ext. 164**

CURTIS CIRCULATION COMPANY
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
**6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100**
**McLean, VA 22101-4554**

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE
AND BUSINESS OFFICE:
**2406 Reach Road**
**Williamsport, PA 17701**

**(800) 219-1187**

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK

www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

By Richard A. Beranty

National Archives

# The Other P-38

## The penny pocket can opener was a well-known and useful piece of GI gear during World War II.

**FAR DOWN ON THE LIST OF IMPORTANT INVENTIONS ESSENTIAL TO VICTORY** inWorld War II is a modest gadget built of stamped metal called the GI Pocket Can Opener—commonly known as the P-38—which was used by American troops in the field to sever the lids off combat rations. Despite its small stature and relative obscurity, many consider it to be the most perfect tool ever developed by the U.S. Army.

Simple in design, efficient in use, and diverse in application, the P-38 was an ideal complement to the canned meat and bread components contained in C-Rations, a staple of military feeding for more than four decades. The little two-piece hinged device constructed of hardened steel never seemed to break, never lost its edge, and its rugged versatility always provided a quick solution in situations other than its original intent. Soldiers regarded the P-38 as their personal, government-issued Jack-of-all-trades.

"When we had C-Rations, the P-38 was your access to food, making it the hierarchy of needs," retired Army Colonel Paul Baerman told the *Army Times*. "Then soldiers discovered it was an extremely simple, lightweight, multipurpose tool. I think in warfare the simpler something is and the easier access it has, the more you're going to use it. The P-38 had all of those things going for it."

The official Department of Defense nomenclature for the cutting utensil is Opener, Can, Hand, Folding, Type I, jargon longer in print than its actual 1 1/2-inch length. Sealed in a paper wrapper to ensure cleanliness and packed inside combat rations, GIs soon realized the small opener with the long-winded title could do much more than open C-Rats. In a pinch it might be used as a screwdriver to help field strip a weapon, cut seams on a uniform, or scrape mess kits clean. To accomplish a mission it could strike flint, measure inches, strip wire, deflate tires, adjust a carburetor, or pick inside a wound. Need a box cutter, marking tool, or decorations on a makeshift Christmas tree? The usefulness of the P-38 seemed boundless, and like many great inventions its origin was humble.

Limited financially because of the Great Depression, the U.S. War Department in 1936 allocated a minimal amount of funding through the Quartermaster Corps and opened a facility on Pershing Road in Chicago called the Subsistence Research and Development Laboratory (SRDL). The lab's function was to test new foods for the Army and design modern methods of food packaging. By 1942, the original three-man staff had increased to 22 when commanding officer Colonel Rohland A. Isker sought out area metal fabricators to mass produce an inexpensive hand-held can opener with a sharpened and curved cutting blade that could be carried in a soldier's pocket.

Isker, a forward-thinking career officer who harbored an interest in cookery and the science of food technology, was a chemistry major at the University of Minnesota when he joined the National Guard in 1915, served on the Mexican border in 1916, and trained U.S. officers during World War I. He remained on active duty between wars as a cavalry officer in the Philippines, China, Siberia, and Japan, critical learning experiences that proved useful when he assembled his team at the SRDL.

Under Isker's command, a small cadre of talented chemists, bacteriologists, home economists, food acceptance specialists, and packaging engineers developed the first logical, comprehensive, and effective ration system ever used for operational feeding in U.S. military history. The lab also created emergency Ration D,

**Soldiers of the U.S. 91st Infantry Division, a component of the Allied Fifth Army fighting in the mountains of Italy, use their trusty P-38 can openers to open rations and grab a quick meal during a lull in the fighting. A reproduction of a P-38 can opener (inset) reveals the wonderful tool's simplicity.**

# TAKE COMMAND OF YOUR OWN BATTLE-HARDENED 1:24 SCALE RADIO CONTROLLED ARMY!

**Fight It Out With Up To 16 Players**

**~~$159.99~~ Each**
**Now Only $139.99**


- New 2.4GHz FHSS radio system with a minimum coverage of 60 meters
- Accurate markings, insignia and realistic sound effects
- Turret rotates and gun elevates
- Tracks and wheels roll
- Comes with commander figure



FORCES OF VALOR®
COMBAT PROVEN MACHINES


***General! The Commander-in-Chief has ordered you to take command of the legendary Forces of Valor. Each battle hardened radio controlled military vehicle has been faithfully reproduced and can be used individually, one-on-one or in team competitions of up to 16 vehicles.***

## Features and Capabilities

**Exterior:**
- Plastic exterior
- CNC machined aluminum gun barrel
- Hobby grade painting
- Weathering effects
- Zimmerit pattern on Tiger I tank
- Natural casting surface effect on Sherman tank

**Hardware:**
- Coils suspension system
- Individual track links *(Clipping type)*
- Turret rotates 320 degrees
- Gun barrel elevates 25 degrees
- Drives forwards, backwards, left and right
- Infrared shooting board for target practice *(Standard equipment)*

**Electronics:**
- New 2.4GHz FHSS radio system with a minimum coverage of 60 meters
- ARM Based MCU architecture
- Remote control volume adjustment
- Remote control headlight
- Left and right hand throttle interchangeable
- 12 steps throttle responsiveness control
- Auxiliary control mode - turret rotates, gun elevates, fire machine guns and main gun
- Engine running mode - drive tank forward, backward, left, right, battle with other tanks plus everything you can do in auxiliary power mode

**Sound:**
- Real sound recorded from museums and private tank collections
- Maybach 231 engine sound for Tiger I, Continental V8 for Sherman M4A3 and V-2-34 for Soviet T34/85
- Class D amplifier
- 1W output speaker
- 4 channel sound chip, can play up to 4 sound effects simultaneously
- 14 sound effect profiles that include engine ignition, engine shut off, engine idling, acceleration, maximum acceleration, deceleration, machine guns (recorded from real weapons), main gun (obtained from a sound library), turret rotation, gun barrel elevation, tank explosion, vehicle on fire (signifying destruction), and headlights switching on

**Power:**
- 4 x 1.5V Alkaline battery *(Transmitter)*
- 6 x 1.5V Alkaline battery *(Tank on board)*
- Optional Ni-MH rechargeable battery *(Tank on board)*

**Battle system:**
- Team A vs. B battle system, now supports up to 16 players. You can even form a team of up to 15 players against a single opponent. Team combinations can consist of 8 vs. 8, 7 vs. 5, 4 vs. 3, etc...
- Team N battle mode: last man standing (fight against everyone)

**Safety:**
- Tank shut off reminder system
- Automatic power cut off after 4 minutes of idling

**www.themotorpool.net • ph: (718) 465-3292**

**Ordering Information:** $14 for each vehicle shipped within the Continental US. If you reside in Alaska, Hawaii, the US territories or anywhere else outside the US, please contact us to inquire about applicable shipping rates. Order online via credit card, PayPal or Amazon Pay. New York state residents please add applicable sales tax. Sorry, no checks or money orders.

assault Ration K, the 5-in-1 and 10-in-1 mess packs, all necessary for the well-being of 16 million American troops serving in all climates and conditions across the globe.

The amalgamation of government with nearly every aspect of American industry was common during World War II, and three firms quickly responded to Isker's can opener challenge—Washburn Company of Rockford, Illinois, Bloomfield Co. located in Chicago, and Speaker Corp. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin—the only makers of wartime P-38s. Their production was based on a number of U.S. patents awarded for a handheld opener, the first in 1913, a second in 1922, and two others in 1924 and 1928. But new patents do not require improvements, only design changes, and the opener supplied to the Army during the war lacked one key operation for military liking: a locking mechanism that kept the cutting edge in place when the P-38 was not in use. Without such a feature, the blade was prone to open and cause cuts or rip holes in pockets.

**The tiny P-38 can opener displayed proven staying power with active military units and with veterans who retained them years after separating from the U.S. armed forces. The P-38 was standard issue to American troops for 40 years.**

Isker explained the problem to John W. Speaker, a native of Austria who since 1935 operated a metal shop in Milwaukee that manufactured automobile accessories. Born in 1903, Speaker studied engineering at the University of Vienna, immigrated to the U.S. in the 1920s, and eventually served on the Industrial Committee of the War Production Board during World War II. He worked closely with SRDL personnel and developed a means by which the blade of the P-38 remained in a closed position. Speaker called the improvement a "detent" in which two small lugs or protrusions on the opposite side of the hinge connection kept the cutting edge shut with spring-like tension. Motivated by patriotism for his adopted country and abhorrence of Hitler's Germany, Speaker signed a royalty-free, nonexclusive contract for his design with the U.S. Office of Patents in full knowledge that other makers would profit from his detent innovation.

The Army first used the opener in 1942 taped to emergency parachute or "bailout" rations that were supplied to air force crews. The C-Ration, which began large-scale production a year earlier, was initially manufactured with an opening key soldered to the bottom of each tin, which made for its own easy access. The key pulled off, threaded a metal strip built into the can, and opened with clockwise turns, a contrivance familiar to civilian consumers of SPAM and canned sardines. But the method was costly with the millions of combat rations being made and was slowly phased out in favor of the less expensive P-38.

John A. Speaker, who took over the family business after his father's death in 1960, said making can openers for the government was competitive. "Shortly after I became president of J.W. Speaker, the first contract I bid on was a Department of Defense solicitation for 10 million P-38s, with a rider for 10 million more," he said. "The bid was about $12 per thousand. We were the low bidder and we beat the competition by one cent per thousand pieces. After the bid opening, my competitor called to congratulate me. We were not the only suppliers of the can opener to the government."

At least 12 companies made the P-38 in its 40 years of production for the Army. Speaker estimated his company produced some 50 million from 1942 through the 1970s and has tried to learn from the Defense Supply Center Richmond under the Freedom of Information Act how many can openers contractors made for the government. "Unfortunately, they don't seem to have the information," explained the 85-year-old Speaker.

Manufacturing numbers for the P-38 soared following World War II to meet the Army's increasing demand. Luther Hanson, curator of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia, estimated 750 million P-38s were produced during World War II and the Korean War and over one billion since. The more that were made, the less expensive they became. During its peak years of production, the cost to manufacture one P-38 in quantities of 10 million or more, envelope included, was approximately one cent. In times when other military items contracted by the government were purchased at ridiculously high prices, the penny pocket can opener holds the distinct honor of being the most massed produced and least expensive tool ever created by the Army.

Millions of GIs learned early in basic training how to use the P-38 or else go hungry. First a puncture is made with the point of the blade along the top rim of a can. In a rocking motion the cut is advanced forward, toward the user, with a downward shearing action. The opener is held in place along the can's underneath rim by a notch built into the handle just below the cutting edge and "walked" around the can until opened.

Military specifications were exact and clear as to manufacturing guidelines. The opener had to be made of heat-treated carbon steel and tin plated to prevent corrosion. It was marked "U.S.," stamped with the manufacturers name or trademark, and to facilitate cleaning, a hole was put in the handle. The P-38 was folded flat, heat sealed inside a small envelope of unbleached Kraft paper, and printed with a diagram and written directions for proper use. Directions also advised that to sterilize the opener, tie a string through the hole and immerse it in boiling water or heat it with a match before reuse. The unassuming hole in the handle turned out to be a special feature allowing GIs to secure the P-38 to their key ring or hang it around their necks from a dog tag chain.

The origin of the P-38 name is somewhat unclear since those in uniform often develop a lexicon for equipment and duties common to their branch of service. Two other World War II creations are more noteworthy namesakes than the P-38 can opener—the U.S.-made Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter plane and the Walther-designed German P-38 semi-automatic pistol—but neither one had anything to do with its naming. Some have suggested the name came from its length—38 mm, which is equivalent to its 1 1/2-inch size, but that is unlikely since the metric system was not in common use by American soldiers. The most accepted theory is the 38 punctures it took to open a can of combat rations, which required some practice for new recruits. Experience with the P-38 gave rise to contests to see who could open their C-Rat faster. Some GIs were so skilled they could open a can of rations in less time than it takes to read this sentence.

For its intended purpose, the P-38 was effective in opening commercial-sized No. 2 cans but difficult to use on larger food containers. Group-sized rations given to troops in field kitchens required the Type II pocket can opener called the P-51, which was a larger version of the P-38 measuring two inches in length or 51mm. The extra half-inch gave the user better leverage and required less thumb pressure to

# "To you, it's the perfect lift chair. To me, it's the best sleep chair I've ever had."

— J. Fitzgerald, VA

Sit up, lie down — and anywhere in between!

Easy-to-use remote for massage, heat, recline and lift

We've all had nights when we just can't lie down in bed and sleep, whether it's from heartburn, cardiac problems, hip or back aches – it could be a variety of reasons. Those are the nights we'd give anything for a comfortable chair to sleep in, one that reclines to exactly the right degree, raises feet and legs to precisely the desired level, supports the head and shoulders properly, operates easily even in the dead of night, and sends a hopeful sleeper right off to dreamland.

**Our Perfect Sleep Chair® is just the chair to do it all.** It's a chair, true – the finest of lift chairs – but this chair is so much more! It's designed to provide total comfort and relaxation not found in other chairs. It can't be beat for comfortable, long-term sitting, TV viewing, relaxed reclining and – yes! – peaceful sleep. Our chair's recline technology allows you to pause the chair in an infinite number of positions, including the Trendelenburg position and the zero gravity position where your body experiences a minimum of internal and external stresses. You'll love the other benefits, too: It helps with correct spinal alignment, promotes back pressure relief, and encourages better posture to prevent back and muscle pain.

This lift chair puts you safely on your feet!

**And there's more!** The overstuffed, oversized biscuit style back and unique seat design will cradle you in comfort. Generously filled, wide armrests provide enhanced arm support when sitting or reclining. The high and low heat settings along with the multiple massage settings, can provide a soothing relaxation you might get at a spa – just imagine getting all that in a lift chair! It even has a battery backup in case of a power outage. Shipping charge includes white glove delivery. Professionals will deliver the chair to the exact spot in your home where you want it, unpack it, inspect it, test it, position it, and even carry the packaging away! Includes one year service warranty and your choice of fabrics and colors. For a limited time, this chair is available for 20% off (a $500 value!) – **Call now!**

## The Perfect Sleep Chair®

## 1-877-665-6372

Please mention code 107492 when ordering.

***Long Lasting DuraLux Leather***

Tan | Chocolate | Burgundy | Black | Blue

***DuraLux II Microfiber***

Burgundy | Cashmere | Fern | Chocolate | Indigo

46446

open bulk rations. Produced in far fewer numbers than its P-38 counterpart, the P-51 was less familiar to soldiers but exact in design and use. The origin of its name is also uncertain, and its shared designation with the North American P-51 Mustang fighter plane is coincidental since the can opener was not commonly used in the field until the late 1950s, nearly a decade after the U.S. Air Force withdrew the legendary aircraft from combat duty. Most likely the name was derived because of the 51 punctures needed to open large canned rations.

The end run of the GI Pocket Can Opener came suddenly in the early 1980s when the Army declared C-Rations obsolete and began to manufacture the Meal, Ready to Eat (MRE), which are easy-open food pouches made of aluminum foil and plastic laminate still in use today. U.S. veterans who last opened combat rations with a P-38 are now aged 50 and older, and for many of them the can opener is a fond connection to their time in the service. No one could have foreseen or predicted such an attraction between GIs and the one-cent gadget, nor the bond it created between people and nations during the Cold War.

In 1986 a couple from Czechoslovakia sent a letter to the American Embassy in Prague with something special inside—a P-38. They hoped the embassy staff could locate and thank the manufacturer of their dependable can opener marked U.S. SPEAKER that served them faithfully for four decades. Ludmila and Jiri Novak found the P-38 inside a food package from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which helped people after World War II with food, clothing, and other basic necessities in countries suffering from starvation, dislocation, and political chaos. Their missive explained how the P-38 long symbolized to them the tremendous sacrifice made by the United States to rescue their country from Nazi tyranny.

"In 1945 we received two of these can openers from UNRRA relief parcels which your country used to send to Europe to help overcome shortages after World War II. We have used these two can openers for the entire duration of our marriage, even though we tried to replace them with new ones several times. You can just imagine the number of cans of all types which we have opened for these 40 years, without a single problem. New openers did not last too long, they worked only a few times, but the UNRRA openers still work like new. We are sending you one of them in order to prove what we are saying and for the possible identification of a manufacturer so that you might thank them on our behalf. Every time we use the can opener we think about the unselfish assistance of America during and after WWII when in addition to arming the world against Fascism, she lost a large number of her sons, sons who lost their lives fighting for our freedom. We can never forget all these things."

The Speaker Corp. manufactured its last high-volume order of one million P-38s in the 1990s for a supplier of outdoor equipment, ending 50 years of production by the first and longest maker of the unheralded Army gadget that could do nothing wrong. The company still has some 50,000 can openers in stock that are stored in cardboard boxes, 500 items per box, at its facility in Wisconsin and are parceled out when a veterans group or similar endeavor makes inquiry.

P-38s can readily be found at Army surplus stores and elsewhere, but caveat emptor should be noted. Do not expect a sanitized envelope or plan to spend a penny. They cost about a dollar today. □

*Richard A. Beranty served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. The retired English and journalism teacher lives in Kittanning, Pennsylvania.*

Bigger Buttons

No Contracts

# "My friends all hate their cell phones... I love mine!" Here's why.

FREE Car Charger

*Say good-bye to everything you hate about cell phones. Say hello to the Jitterbug Flip.*

***"Cell phones have gotten so small, I can barely dial mine."*** Not the Jitterbug® Flip. It features a large keypad for easier dialing. It even has a larger display and a powerful, hearing aid compatible speaker, so it's easy to see and conversations are clear.

***"I had to get my son to program it."*** Your Jitterbug Flip setup process is simple. We'll even program it with your favorite numbers.

***"What if I don't remember a number?"*** Friendly, helpful Personal Operators are available 24 hours a day and will even greet you by name when you call.

***"I'd like a cell phone to use in an emergency."*** Now you can turn your phone into a personal safety device with 5Star® Service. In any uncertain or unsafe situation, simply press the 5Star button to speak immediately with a highly-trained Urgent Response Agent who will confirm your location, evaluate your situation and get you the help you need, 24/7.

***"My cell phone company wants to lock me in a two-year contract!"*** Not with the Jitterbug Flip. There are no contracts to sign and no cancellation fees.


Available in Red and Graphite.

| Monthly Plan | $14.99/mo[1] | $19.99/mo[1] |
|---|---|---|
| Monthly Minutes | 200 | 600 |
| Personal Operator Assistance | 24/7 | 24/7 |
| Long Distance Calls | No add'l charge | No add'l charge |
| Voice Dial | FREE | FREE |
| Nationwide Coverage | YES | YES |
| 30-Day Return Policy[2] | YES | YES |

More minute plans and Health & Safety Packages available. Ask your Jitterbug expert for details.

***"My phone's battery only lasts a short time."*** Unlike most cell phones that need to be recharged every day, the Jitterbug Flip was designed with a long-lasting battery, so you won't have to worry about running out of power.

***"Many phones have features that are rarely needed and hard to use!"*** The Jitterbug Flip contains easy-to-use features that are meaningful to you. A built-in camera makes it easy and fun for you to capture and share your favorite memories. And a flashlight with a built-in magnifier helps you see in dimly lit areas. The Jitterbug Flip has all the features you need.

**Enough talk.** Isn't it time you found out more about the cell phone that's changing all the rules? Call now! Jitterbug product experts are standing by.

**Order now** and receive a **FREE Car Charger** – a $25 value for your Jitterbug Flip. Call now!

Call toll-free to get your

## Jitterbug Flip Cell Phone

Please mention promotional code 107491.

## 1-877-459-4512

www.JitterbugDirect.com

We proudly accept the following credit cards:

jitterbug flip

firstSTREET for Boomers and Beyond®
1998 Ruffin Mill Road
Colonial Heights, VA 23834

100% U.S. Based Customer Service

47669

IMPORTANT CONSUMER INFORMATION: Jitterbug is owned by GreatCall, Inc. Your invoices will come from GreatCall. [1]Monthly fees do not include government taxes or assessment surcharges and are subject to change. Plans and services may require purchase of a Jitterbug Flip and a one-time setup fee of $35. Coverage is not available everywhere. 5Star or 9-1-1 calls can only be made when cellular service is available. 5Star Service will be able to track an approximate location when your device is turned on, but we cannot guarantee an exact location. [2]We will refund the full price of the Jitterbug phone and the activation fee (or setup fee) if it is returned within 30 days of purchase in like-new condition. We will also refund your first monthly service charge if you have less than 30 minutes of usage. If you have more than 30 minutes of usage, a per minute charge of 35 cents will be deducted from your refund for each minute over 30 minutes. You will be charged a $10 restocking fee. The shipping charges are not refundable. There are no additional fees to call GreatCall's U.S.-based customer service. However, for calls to a Personal Operator in which a service is completed, you will be charged 99 cents per call, and minutes will be deducted from your monthly rate plan balance equal to the length of the call and any call connected by the Personal Operator. Jitterbug, GreatCall and 5Star are registered trademarks of GreatCall, Inc. 

By Michael D. Hull

All: National Archives

Newspaper columnist Ernie Pyle (bottom) visits with a tank crew of the 191st Tank Battalion at the Anzio beachhead in the spring of 1944. Pyle was beloved by common soldiers because of his realistic reporting on the war.

# Foxhole Dateline

## Ernie Pyle was perhaps the best known correspondent of World War II.

**IF GENERAL OMAR N. BRADLEY WAS "THE GIs' GENERAL," THEN THEIR BEST** friend in World War II was undoubtedly a small, stringy reporter with graying red hair from Indiana who shared their foxholes and hardships while slogging across five battlefronts.

Writing six dispatches a week for the 13 million readers of 300 stateside newspapers from 1942 to 1945, Ernie Pyle offered a "worm's eye view" of infantrymen, providing an essential link between America and its far-flung sons, brothers, and husbands. Focusing only rarely on the big picture involving generals and strategies, he recorded—with insight, clarity, and simple eloquence—the war of the foot soldiers, on the ground and on the move from Algiers to Normandy to Okinawa.

Pyle marched, ate, and slept with the riflemen, machine gunners, and mortarmen and was their champion. He listened to their fears, hopes, and jokes as they endured filth, hunger, boredom, wounds, and death. "I love the infantrymen because they are the underdogs," he explained. "They are the mud-rain-and-wind boys. They have no comforts, and they learn to live without the necessities. And in the end they are the guys that wars can't be won without.... All the war of the world has seemed to be borne by the few thousand front-line soldiers here, destined merely by chance to suffer and die for the rest of us."

A "gentle soul" given to drinking, melancholy, and creative profanity, Ernie Pyle found no glory in war and decried its brutality whereby the boy next door was forced into becoming a trained killer. The former Hoosier farmhand, who narrowly escaped death twice, became America's most widely read and famous war correspondent, wrote a best-selling book, and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1944 for his frontline reporting.

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, the first lady and a popular columnist herself, said she never missed reading Pyle's dispatches, and A.J. Liebling of *The New Yorker* credited him with making "a large personal impress on the nation" during the 1939-1945 conflict. Poet Randall Jarrell said of the correspondent in *The Nation,* "There are many men whose profession it is to speak for us—political and military and literary representatives.... Pyle wrote what he had seen and heard and felt himself, and truly represented us."

Novelist John Steinbeck observed, "There are really two wars, and they haven't much to do with each other. There is a war of maps and logistics, of campaigns, of ballistics, armies, divisions, and regiments—and that is General [George C.] Marshall's war. Then there is the war of homesick, weary, funny, violent, common men who wash their socks in their helmets, complain about the food ... and lug themselves and their spirit through as dirty a business as the world has ever seen, and do it with humor and dignity and courage—and that is Ernie Pyle's war. He knows it as well as anyone and writes it better than anyone."

Ernest Taylor Pyle, the first and only child of sharecropper Will Pyle and his wife Maria, was born on Friday, August 3, 1900, at a farm near the small town of Dana on the western Indiana border. While the boy was a senior in high school, a neighborhood youth went off to fight in World War I, then raging in Europe. Ernie loved parades and patriotic songs, and, bored with the daily routines of farm life, he wanted to enlist, too. The distant conflict seemed like a romantic adventure to him. But his parents insisted that he finish school. After graduating, Ernie enrolled in the Naval Reserve, but the Armistice was signed in November 1918 before the young man could make it to advanced training.

In the autumn of 1919, Ernie entered the University of Indiana at Bloomington, where he studied journalism for 3 1/2 years. Against his parents' wishes, he dropped out in January 1923 to become a cub reporter on the *La Porte Herald*. After a few months, at the age of 23, the restless young man joined the *Washington*

# THE FIRST RUSSIAN FRONT OF WWII: 1939–1941

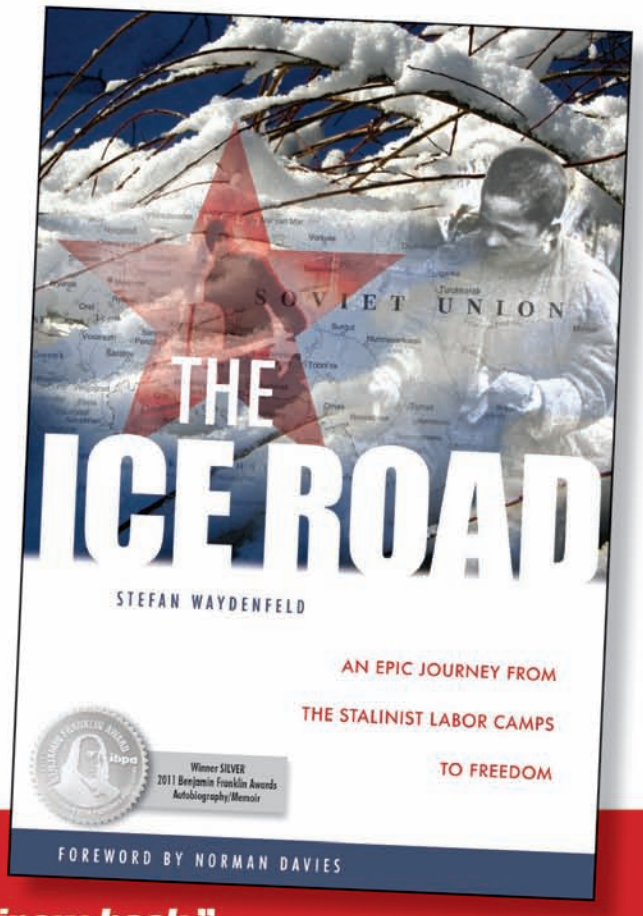
World War II exploded into history on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, Poland's allies Britain and France declared war on Germany.

**Two weeks later, on September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east—making Poland the only Western Ally invaded and occupied by two enemies:** Germany and the Soviet Union allied together under a secret protocol to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

The consequences of this first Russian front:

- Half the Polish officer corps, taken as POWs, brutally executed by the Soviets in the Katyn Forest Massacre.
- 1.5 million innocent Polish civilians forcibly deported to Siberia as slave laborers.
- A reign of terror in Soviet-occupied Poland.

***Winner:* SILVER Benjamin Franklin Award for Autobiography/Memoir**




***"Truly an extraordinary book."***
**— Anne Applebaum, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Gulag***

***"A thrilling adventure, all the more remarkable for being true."***
**— Norman Davies, leading historian and author**

***"A remarkable tale."***
***— Library Journal***

***"Within the first paragraphs of* The Ice Road *I knew I would be captivated."***
***— The Sunday Times,* London**

***"Masterful…spares nothing except self-pity."***
***— World War II Magazine***

Available in hardcover, paperback, audiobook and ebook, at fine bookstores, online retailers and major wholesalers.
Distributed by National Book Network, www.nbnbooks.com

Author blog on *Huffington Post*

www.polww2.com/IceRoadHuffPost

**A Selection of the HISTORY BOOK CLUB® and the MILITARY BOOK CLUB®**

AQUILA POLONICA®
www.AquilaPolonica.com

*Daily News*, a one-cent tabloid, and began a long association with the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain. He showed a flair for writing catchy headlines and became a copy editor. Lee Miller, a fellow Hoosier, edited Ernie's copy and encouraged him.

Ernie met his "ideal girl" in the form of civil service worker Geraldine "Jerry" Siebolds, who had moved to Washington from her native Minnesota. Bright, attractive, and nonconformist, she was willing to sympathize with Ernie in his periodic bouts of depression. Although Jerry had little use for marriage, they were wed by a justice of the peace in Alexandria, Virginia, on July 7, 1925. The couple lived a bohemian life in a modest, cluttered downtown Washington apartment.

In June 1926, Ernie and Jerry quit their jobs, pooled their savings, and bought a car, tent, and camp stove. They donned white coveralls and set off on a road trip around the country. After driving 9,000 miles in 10 weeks, they wound up in New York, where Ernie got a job on the copy desk at the *Evening World* and later the *Post*. Not fond of New York, he readily accepted an offer to become the telegraph editor at the *Washington Daily News* in December 1927. It was another desk job, but Ernie made sure there was time for writing. He started the first daily aviation column in American journalism at the time when Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh and other pilots were the nation's heroes, and the Scripps-Howard chain eventually made him its aviation editor. He disappointed many fliers and readers in 1932 by becoming managing editor of the *Washington Daily News*.

The three-year stint there aged Pyle, and he suffered a severe case of pneumonia in the winter of 1934. He was granted a leave of absence, recovered, and talked his bosses into letting him try a new career as a roving columnist. He was to write six columns a week for the 24 Scripps-Howard newspapers. Through the following six years, the restive, curious Ernie was in his element.

Crossing the continent 35 times and touching each state more than once, he filed reports from Alaska, Hawaii, and Central and Latin America. He moved by car, truck, plane, boat, horse, and mule and interviewed all kinds of people, from Alaskan gold miners to a squatter artist who lived in a shanty behind the Memphis, Tennessee, city dump. Although inherently shy, Ernie had a gift for putting people at ease and opening up to him. Typing his columns with two fingers in hotel rooms, he churned out more than two million words during the Great Depression.

Jerry retyped the copy for his "The Hoosier Vagabond" column and offered him praise and criticism, but it was not a happy life. Both were often discontented with the traveling, Ernie became impotent, and Jerry showed signs of depression, drank heavily, used sedatives, and twice attempted suicide. The couple spent increasing amounts of time apart, with Jerry living sometimes with her mother or friends.

Ernie pushed for syndication outside the Scripps-Howard chain and found himself writing "silly dull columns" as the world situation worsened in the late 1930s. His work now seemed trivial, but he took serious notice when Great Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany on September 3, 1939. "Personally, I'm just about to bust," he told his longtime university friend, Paige Cavanaugh. "I want to get over there as a war correspondent or something so bad.... Pacifism is fine as long as there ain't no war around. But when they start shooting, I want to get close enough just a couple of times to get good and scared."

Just over a year later, in mid-November 1940, Pyle headed for England to report on the aftermath of the Battle of Britain. Riding in a seaplane from neutral Lisbon, he arrived in mid-December for a three-month stay, just in time to witness brutal German firebomb raids on

London. Wearing a trench coat and borrowed steel helmet, he reported from a balcony that the city was "stabbed with great fires, shaken by explosions, its dark regions along the Thames sparkling with the pinpoints of white-hot bombs." He immersed himself in the life of London, recording for his many readers the daily sights and sounds of a great city under aerial siege. Of the air raid sirens he wrote, "To me, the sirens do not sound fiendish, or even weird. I think they're sort of pretty.... In fact, it sounded exactly like the lonely singing of telephone wires on a bitter cold night in the prairies of the Middle West."

Sometimes he showed a light touch, as when describing how one London hotel had set aside a separate area in its air raid shelter for chronic snorers: "They just herd 'em all together and let 'em snore it out." His chatty, concise columns—well received in the United States—described nights in the crowded subway air raid shelters, the heroic work of London firemen and rooftop plane spotters, and the devastation of Coventry. He also interviewed wounded soldiers and told how the war was affecting people in the industrial cities, on farms, and in the coal mines from Birmingham to Edinburgh to Bristol. Ernie came to like England and admire the cheerful spirit of her people. "In three months," he reported, "I have not met an Englishman to whom it has ever occurred that Britain might lose the war."

**Pictured at a small table in Normandy on July 25, 1944, war correspondent Ernie Pyle arranges notes he has taken during observations of American soldiers in action.**

Returning home in the spring of 1941, Pyle had to cope with the death of his mother in Indiana and a suicide attempt by his wife. Jerry recovered but started drinking heavily again. Ernie resumed his column stateside, and by the end of the year America was at war.

The year 1942 brought more troubles. Pyle had a brief platonic relationship with a woman in San Francisco and underwent nonproductive treatments for his impotence. Jerry's drinking and general condition worsened, and Ernie reluctantly divorced her. He hoped that she would come "to face life like other people" and left open the possibility of remarriage. Meanwhile, Scripps-Howard alerted Pyle to prepare for a foreign assignment. He was granted a six-month extension from the draft and flew in mid-June from New York to Ireland, where the 34th Infantry "Red Bull" Division and other U.S. Army units were training. Welcomed by King George VI of England, the 34th Division was the first sent overseas in World War II.

In Ireland, Ernie began his unique association with GIs. He chatted with them, studied them, picked up on their longings and homesickness, and sent back the kind of detailed human interest dispatches overlooked by most other correspondents. His circulation figures rose, as did his frame of mind. He gained another draft extension and learned in the autumn of 1942 that the government had stopped calling up men aged 38 and above. He was free to experience the war as an observer, and he did not have long to wait.

Operation Torch, the complex, hastily planned Anglo-American invasion of North

Africa, began on November 8 with landings in Algeria and Morocco. The following day, "feeling self-conscious and ridiculous and old in Army uniform," Ernie left London and boarded the *Rangitiki*, an aging British troop transport. She was part of an 800-ship convoy carrying U.S. soldiers to Algeria. After dodging a pack of lurking German submarines outside Gibraltar, the convoy safely reached the port of Oran, and a relieved Pyle went ashore on November 22. "Like twine from a bidden ball, the ships poured us out on to the docks in long brown lines," he reported. "We lined up and marched away. We marched at first gaily and finally with great weariness, but always with a feeling that at last we were beginning the final series of marches that would lead us home again."

Ernie spent the rest of the year in and around Oran, writing about the GIs, Colonel William O. Darby's Rangers, medics, Arabs, and a Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter squadron based at a desert airfield called the Garden of Allah. The correspondent was shocked when the pilots laughingly reported strafing enemy convoys and blowing the Germans out of their trucks "like firecrackers." It disturbed him that young Americans could kill so readily and with relish.

Late in January 1943, Pyle joined up with the infantry of Maj. Gen. Lloyd R. Fredendall's II Corps, headquartered at Tebessa in Algeria near the Tunisian border. Riding by jeep to the Tunisian front lines, he got to know the commanders and their men. His reporting manner was unobtrusive. Wearing a GI woolen cap and usually smoking a cigarette, he mingled, listened, and rarely took notes. The result was that he gained the respect and friendship of all ranks. He endured the hardships and dangers of the tight-knit line battalions and companies and was able to report the war at its basic, grimmest level. Ernie spent a week or two in the frontline foxholes before withdrawing to type out his columns.

A letter from Jerry refusing his offer of remarriage left Ernie "so disappointed I almost felt like crying," but he rallied. He found life at the front "so wonderfully simple" and invigorating. He was tanned and healthy; he had virtually stopped drinking, and his nerves were steady.

The U.S. Army matured in North Africa, and Ernie Pyle experienced it firsthand. He was with the II Corps on February 14, 1943, when German Afrika Korps panzers and infantry pushed it back 50 miles at Kasserine Pass in Tunisia. The poorly led, undisciplined Americans panicked, abandoned their weapons and equipment, and fled in disarray, forcing the British Eighth Army and other U.S. units to stabilize the situation. Kasserine was a humiliating blow to American morale, but the fumbling Fredendall was replaced by the fire-eating Maj. Gen. George S. Patton Jr., and the once cocky GIs learned bitter lessons swiftly.

Pyle wrote, "Apparently it takes a country like America about two years to become wholly at war. We had to go through that transition period of letting loose of life as it was, and then live the new war life so long that it finally became the normal life to us." Among the GIs, Ernie sensed "a new professional outlook, where killing is a craft." The American soldiers came to gain the respect of their seasoned British allies, who had questioned their fighting spirit and called them "our Italians."

By early April 1943, Ernie found that he had become inured to battlefield carnage. "Somehow I can look upon mutilated bodies without flinching or feeling deeply," he wrote. Yet he still had trouble sleeping after days of watching young men kill and be killed. "At last, the enormity of all these newly dead strikes me like a living nightmare," he said. "And there are times when I feel that I can't stand it all and will have to leave." He would always hate the "tragedy and insanity" of war but reported, "I know I can't escape and I truly believe the only thing left to do is be in it to the hilt." Meanwhile, his

stateside popularity was increasing. More newspapers were running his column, and Henry Holt & Co. offered to reprint his North Africa dispatches in book form.

As the British Eighth and U.S. First Armies pressed in on Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps and pushed toward the Mediterranean ports of Bizerte and Tunis, Pyle marched with Maj. Gen. Terry de la Mesa Allen's 1st Infantry Division. Ernie did not write much about the brass, but "Terrible Terry" Allen was an exception. "Major General Allen was one of my favorite people," he said. "Partly because he didn't give a damn for hell or high water; partly because he was more colorful than most; and partly because he was the only general outside the Air Forces I could call by his first name. If there was one thing in the world Allen lived and breathed for, it was to fight.... He hated Germans and Italians like vermin, and his pattern for victory was simple; just wade in and murder the hell out of the low-down, good-for-nothing so-and-so's."

It was while he was with the Big Red One that Pyle wrote his most memorable columns of the North African campaign. With humanity and his keen eye for detail, he recorded the daily ordeals of the weary, dirty foot soldiers as they marched, fought, and endured shellings and dive bombings.

**Ernie Pyle (left) stands with actor Burgess Meredith, who portrayed the veteran correspondent in the screen version of his bestselling book *The Story of GI Joe.***

To him, they were all heroes—ordinary men, not particularly brave, but who persisted in going forward because they had to do so.

"We're now with an infantry outfit that has battled ceaselessly for four days and nights," he reported. "This northern warfare has been in the mountains. You don't ride much any more. It is walking and climbing and crawling country. The mountains aren't big, but they are constant. They are largely treeless. They are easy to defend and bitter to take. But we are taking them...."

When soldiers of the U.S. First and British Eighth Armies linked up in Tunisia in April 1943, Ernie reported, "The men of the Eighth Army were brown-skinned and white-eye-browed from the desert sun.... Their spirit was like a tonic. The spirit of our own troops was good, but those boys from the burning sands were throbbing with the vitality of conquerors.... We envied them, and we were proud of them."

By mid-May 1943, the Tunisian war was over and the German and Italian foes had surrendered by the thousands. Ernie ruled out a home leave and worked on a long essay that would be the last chapter of his book, *Here Is Your War.* In this remarkable piece of writing, he explained that the war in North Africa had been a severe but beneficial testing ground. The troops had been well cared for, their rations and medical facilities were good, and their weapons and equipment had been flawed but were being improved. The soldiers themselves, he noted, had been made harder and more profane.

On June 29, 1943, a year and 10 days after his arrival in Ireland, Pyle flew to Bizerte, boarded the USS *Biscayne,* a seaplane tender and headquarters ship, and made ready for his second combat voyage in eight months. Opera-

**Seated third from left, Ernie Pyle hands a cigarette to a Marine of the 1st Division during a lull in the fighting on the embattled island of Okinawa in the Pacific. Just days after this April 8, 1945, photo was taken, Pyle was killed by a Japanese machine-gun bullet on the nearby island of Ie Shima.**

tion Husky, the massive British-American invasion of Sicily on July 10, found Ernie tired and sick. "I'm getting awfully tired of war and writing about it," he admitted to Jerry. "It seems like I can't think of anything new to say; each time it's like going to the same movie again." He persevered, and tagged along with the 120th Engineer Battalion of Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton's 45th Infantry "Thunderbird" Division in northwestern Sicily. But the stoic little Hoosier was felled by "battlefield fever" and spent five days in a field hospital amid the "death rattle" of dying men. The five-week campaign fought by the British Eighth and U.S. Seventh Armies ended just after Ernie's 43rd birthday, and he decided to go home for a break. He was exhausted.

Arriving in New York on September 7, 1943, four days after British troops invaded Italy, Pyle was besieged as a celebrity. Radio networks sought his services, 50 officers at the Pentagon questioned him, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson chatted with him, and Mrs. Roosevelt invited him to tea. Ernie's book, Here Is Your War, had been published and widely acclaimed, and he autographed copies before leaving for Italy in late November 1943.

Within days, he was back with the dogface soldiers he loved, covering the bitter action as units of Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark's Allied Fifth Army assaulted the Germans' 10-mile-deep Winter Line in the rugged Apennine Mountains. Fought in the worst winter Italians had seen for many years, it was the toughest campaign Pyle had experienced. North Africa had been exciting, but the war in Italy debilitated all involved in it.

"The country was shockingly beautiful, and just as shockingly hard to capture from the enemy," Ernie reported while with an artillery regiment. "The hills rose to high ridges of almost solid rock. We couldn't go around them through the flat peaceful valleys, because the Germans were up there looking down upon us, and they would have let us have it. So we had to go up and over.... Our troops were living in almost inconceivable misery. The fertile black valleys were knee-deep in mud. Thousands of the men had not been dry for weeks. Other thousands lay at night in the high mountains with the temperature below freezing and the thin snow sifting over them. They dug into the stones and slept in little chasms and behind rocks and in half-caves. They lived like men of prehistoric times, and a club would have become them more than a machine gun...."

Early in January 1944, Pyle hitched up with the 36th Infantry "Texas" Division, which was soon to get mauled in a tragic, failed attempt to cross the Rapido River. While with the Texans, he wrote the most moving column of his career, hailed as a classic of World War II dispatches. It recounted with powerful simplicity the death of young Captain Henry T. Waskow of Belton, Texas, a gentle and beloved company commander, near San Pietro.

Ernie told how the soldiers waited for their captain's body, lashed to the back of a mule, to be brought down a mountain trail: "One soldier came and looked down [at the body], and he said out loud, 'God damn it.' That's all he said, and then he walked away. Another one came. He said, 'God damn it to hell, anyway'.... Another man came; I think he was an officer.... The man looked down into the dead captain's face, and then he spoke directly to him, as though he were alive. He said, 'I'm sorry, old man'.... Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer, and bent over, and he too spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper but awfully tenderly, and he said, 'I sure am sorry, sir.'" The column was a sensation in America, and the *Washington Daily News* devoted its entire front page to it. The death of Captain Waskow was later dramatized in an acclaimed Hollywood film, *The Story of G.I. Joe*, based on Pyle's best-selling collection of dispatches, *Brave Men*.

Vivid reports of the action around San Pietro were also filed by Homer Bigart of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and John Huston depicted the battle in an award-winning documentary film.

Pyle filed his last reports on the Italian campaign in March-April 1944 from the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead, where British and American forces were hemmed in for four bitter months. "On this beachhead, every inch of our territory is under German artillery fire," he wrote. "There is no rear area that is immune, as in most battle zones. They can reach us with their 88s, and they use everything from that on up.... I've been weak [in the joints] all over Tunisia and Sicily, and in parts of Italy, and I get weaker than ever up here." At Anzio, Ernie narrowly escaped death with a cut on his cheek when a 500-pound bomb blasted a waterfront villa where he lived with other correspondents.

Early in April, Pyle boarded a hospital ship bound for Naples and then flew to North Africa and London. Shortly after arriving in the British capital, word came that he had won a Pulitzer Prize for "distinguished war correspondence" in 1943. He was surprised and elated. Then came the long-awaited Allied invasion of northern France, but Ernie's confidence had taken a beating, and he was apprehensive. "I have an awful feeling that I won't live through this one," he confided to a fellow correspondent. "It's a terrible feeling. I can't sleep, and it is like a constant weight, night and day."

But he steeled himself and left to cover the big show, landing at Omaha Beach in Normandy on June 7, 1944. He wrote pieces on the anti-aircraft gun crews protecting the beachheads and reported, "It was a lovely day for strolling along the seashore. Men were sleeping on the sand, some of them sleeping forever. Men were floating in the water, but they didn't know they


STEPHEN AMBROSE HISTORICAL TOURS PRESENTS

## D-DAY TO THE RHINE: A TOUR YOU WON'T FORGET

*Travel with us on June 1-13, July 27-August 8 or September 7-19, 2018*

Follow along the path where America's best and brightest fought in WWII as you travel from England to Normandy to the Ardennes, site of the Battle of the Bulge on our ***D-Day to the Rhine Tour***. Pay homage to the fallen in Europe on our ***Original Band of Brothers, In Patton's Footsteps, Italian Campaign, Ghost Army*** and ***Poland and Germany Tours***. Travel to the Pacific on our ***Iwo Jima Tour***, a transformative experience.

Founded by author Stephen E. Ambrose, our American-owned, family-operated company carries on his legacy by offering WWII, Civil War and Lewis and Clark tours that are unparalleled in their historical accuracy.

EXPLORE NOW AT **STEPHENAMBROSETOURS.COM** **1.888.903.3329**

were in the water, for they were dead. On the beach lay, expended, sufficient men and mechanism for a small war. They were gone forever now. And yet we could afford it...."

Ernie spent time with the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions and then accompanied Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy's 9th Infantry Division in its assault on Cherbourg. The correspondent narrowly escaped death for the second time when American bombs fell short during the breakout west of St.-Lo on July 25, and he rode a jeep into Paris when General Jacques Philippe Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division liberated the capital on August 25. The city's tumultuous celebration buoyed Ernie's spirits, but he told his 13 million readers, "I have had all I can take for a while."

He sailed to New York in September and found himself again under siege. Interviews and autographs were sought, John Steinbeck and Helen Keller wanted to talk to him, he sat for a bust by sculptor Jo Davidson and was profiled by *Life* magazine, and Hollywood producer Lester Cowan needed to discuss *The Story of G.I. Joe,* then in production. Ernie foiled another suicide attempt by Jerry, and she underwent shock therapy while he accepted several honorary degrees. He planned a trip to the Pacific War zone, although he admitted, "I feel that I've used up all my chances." He visited the set of his film biography, and he and Jerry danced at Ciro's, the Hollywood nightclub, on their last night together. Then, on the evening of New Year's Day, 1945, Pyle headed for Camp Roberts, California, on the first leg of his journey to the Pacific.

After being greeted by a 50-piece band and 1,000 cheering soldiers at the San Francisco port of embarkation, Ernie sailed to Hawaii and the Mariana Islands, where he filed several dispatches on the Boeing B-29 heavy bomber groups that were hammering Japan. He then reported from aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Cabot* and sailed from the great naval base at Ulithi in the Caroline Islands to Okinawa with units of the 1st Marine "Old Breed" Division. Ninety minutes after the big invasion began early on April 1, 1945, Pyle went ashore with men of the 5th Marine Regiment. He wrote columns about the leathernecks for the first time.

Ernie saw little action with the Marines and soon rejoined the Army dogfaces he loved. He was welcomed on April 17 by Maj. Gen. Andrew D. Bruce's 77th Infantry "Liberty" Division, which had landed two rifle regiments on tiny Ie Shima Island, four miles west of Okinawa, on the previous day. "The front does get into your blood, and you miss it and want to be back," said Ernie. He hitched up with the 305th Regiment, but time had run out for the heroic Hoosier.

On the morning after joining up with the 77th Division, he was riding in a jeep when it was hit by Japanese machine-gun fire. Ernie dived into a ditch, and the firing stopped. But when he looked up to see what was happening, he was shot in the left temple. He was 44 years old. Saddened GIs hastily erected a crude wooden marker reading, "At this spot, the 77th Infantry Division lost a buddy Ernie Pyle 18 April 1945."

Chaplain Nathaniel B. Saucier of the 77th Division's 305th Infantry Regiment conducted a simple burial service on Ie Shima and mourned the death of a "noble man now departed." Ernie's body was eventually reburied in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii's Punchbowl Crater.

The loss jolted a nation still mourning the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt six days before. His successor, President Harry S. Truman, said, "The nation is saddened again by the death of Ernie Pyle," and proposed a special congressional medal and the christening of a troop transport in his name. War Secretary Stimson expressed "great distress," Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal said the country owed Pyle its "unending gratitude," and General Bradley commented, "I have known no finer man, no finer soldier, than he." Young frontline cartoonist Bill Mauldin, whose syndication Pyle had promoted with the aid of Mrs. Roosevelt, said, "The only difference between Ernie's death and the death of any other good guy is that the other guy is mourned by his company. Ernie is mourned by his army."

*The Story of G.I. Joe* had its world premiere on July 6, 1945, and was hailed as a masterful depiction of the U.S. infantry in North Africa and Italy—stark and honest, yet sensitive and poignant. General Dwight D. Eisenhower called it "the greatest war picture I've ever seen."

Pyle had requested that Burgess Meredith portray him, and the veteran actor gave a superb performance, as did Robert Mitchum in the role of Captain Waskow. The film brought Mitchum his only Oscar nomination. The director was William Wellman, who crafted such other screen classics as *Wings, The Public Enemy, A Star Is Born, Beau Geste, The Ox-Bow Incident, Buffalo Bill,* and *Battleground.*

Ernie Pyle was not a great writer, but an unpretentious craftsman. In simple, declarative sentences, he reported the brutal reality of infantry war as few other correspondents did. And he probably saw more action than any of them. □

---

*Frequent contributor Michael D. Hull has written for* WWII History *on a variety of topics. He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

TECHNOLOGY SIMPLIFIED – BIGGER AND BETTER

# *Wow!* A Simple to Use Computer Designed Especially for Seniors!

## *Easy to read. Easy to see. Easy to use. Just plug it in!*


**NEW**

**Now comes with...**

Larger 22-inch hi-resolution screen – easier to see
**16% more viewing area**

Simple navigation – so you never get lost

Intel® processor – lightning fast

Computer is in the monitor – No bulky tower

Advanced audio, Better speaker configuration – easier to hear

Text to Speech translation – it can even read your emails to you!

U.S. Based Customer Service

***FREE* Automatic Software Updates**

*"I love this computer! It is easy to read and to use! I get photo updates from my children and grandchildren all the time."*

– Janet F.

Have you ever said to yourself "I'd love to get a computer, if only I could figure out how to use it." Well, you're not alone. Computers were supposed to make our lives simpler, but they've gotten so complicated that they are not worth the trouble. With all of the "pointing and clicking" and "dragging and dropping" you're lucky if you can figure out where you are. Plus, you are constantly worrying about viruses and freeze-ups. If this sounds familiar, we have great news for you. There is finally a computer that's designed for simplicity and ease of use. It's the WOW Computer, and it was designed with you in mind. This computer is easy-to-use, worry-free and literally puts the world at your fingertips. From the moment you open the box, you'll realize how different the WOW Computer is. The components are all connected; all you do is plug it into an outlet and your high-speed Internet connection. Then you'll see the screen – it's now 22 inches. This is a completely new touch screen system, without the cluttered look of the normal computer screen. The "buttons" on the screen are easy to see and easy to understand. All you do is touch one of them, from the Web, Email, Calendar to Games– you name it… and a new screen opens up. It's so easy to use you won't have to ask your children or grandchildren for help. Until now, the very people who could benefit most from E-mail and the Internet are the ones that have had the hardest time accessing it. Now, thanks to the WOW Computer, countless older Americans are discovering the wonderful world of the Internet every day. Isn't it time you took part? Call now, and you'll find out why tens of thousands of satisfied seniors are now enjoying their WOW Computers, emailing their grandchildren, and experiencing everything the Internet has to offer. Call today!

- Send & Receive Emails
- Have video chats with family and friends
- Surf the Internet:
  Get current weather and news
- Play games Online:
  Hundreds to choose from!

**Call now toll free and find out how you can get the new WOW! Computer.**

*Mention promotional code 107493 for special introductory pricing.*

**1-877-767-5561**

The WOW! Computer



81059

By Tim Miller

# The Scholarly Spies

> A group of Parisian scholars and museum workers were among the first to challenge the Nazis with propaganda and covert operations in occupied France.

**EARLY IN JUNE 1940, REFUGEES FROM NORTHERN FRANCE AND THE LOW** Countries who had flooded Paris in May fled with the residents of the city as the German advance neared. To save the City of Light from destruction, however, at the last moment Paris was declared an open city. The Germans marched in unopposed on June 15.

Five days later, in the distant village of Vicq-sur-Breuil, Agnès Humbert, an art historian and one of the millions of refugees on the road, happened to hear General Charles de Gaulle's famous address to the French people from London. While hardly anyone knew who de Gaulle was, and while those who did called him a crackpot, Humbert was immediately jolted out of her despair over the fall of France. In her diary for the day she wrote, "I feel I have come back to life.... He has given me hope, and nothing in the world can extinguish that hope now."

That same day she had somehow come across a fellow scholar on the road, Jean Cassou, also in his early 40s. Together they had witnessed the death of a 16-year-old girl run over by a fleeing French Army truck; help from a passing medic only did so much, and Humbert wrote of her and Cassou, "This half hour together at the side of a dying girl has bound us to each other with deep bonds of comradeship. We both know it." A month later, still on the road, Humbert noted with joy the news that German posters put up in Paris were constantly being torn down. "The people of Paris are rebelling already," she wrote, and she decided to return to the city and do the same.

By early August she was back, and so was Cassou. After exchanging some pleasantries, both found themselves expressing the same desire. Humbert told Cassou, "I feel I will go mad, literally, if I don't do something.... The only remedy is for us to act together, to form a group of 10 like-minded comrades, no more. To meet on agreed days, to write and distribute pamphlets and tracts, and to share summaries of French radio broadcasts from London." Admitting to herself that neither they or their colleagues were quite spymaster material and were unlikely to succeed on any practical level, nevertheless, "simply talking about our 'organization' makes us feel better."

It did not take long to gather a handful of

**ABOVE: Art historian Agnes Humbert became one of many French citizens to join the resistance against the brutal German occupation of Paris during World War II. TOP: Nazi motorcycle troops parade down the Champs Elysees in Paris as the Arc de Triomphe looms in the background. This spectacle was one of several that took place after German forces completed their lightning conquest of France and the Low Countries in the spring of 1940.**


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

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

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

***The hunter's back***

*The Ritorno watch back opens to reveal a special compartment for a keepsake picture or can be engraved.*

We wanted to bring this little piece of personal history back to life in a faithful reproduction of the original design. We've used a 27-jeweled movement reminiscent of the best watches of the 1940s and we built this watch with $26 million worth of Swiss built precision machinery. We then test it for 15 days on Swiss made calibrators to insure accuracy to only seconds a day. The movement displays the day and date on the antique satin finished face and the sweep second hand lets any watch expert know that it has a fine automatic movement, not a mass-produced quartz movement. If you enjoy the rare, the classic, and the museum quality, we have a limited number of *Ritornos* available. We hope that it will remind you to take time to remember what is truly valuable. If you are not completely satisfied, simply return it within 30 days for a full refund of the purchase price.

*Stauer 1944 Ritorno* ~~$147~~

**Now *only* $99** + S&P

**1-800-333-2045**

**Promotional Code RTN401-02**
***Please mention this when you call.***

*To order by mail, please call for details.*

**Stauer®**

14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. RTN401-02
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

For fastest service, call toll-free 24 hours a day **1-800-333-2045**

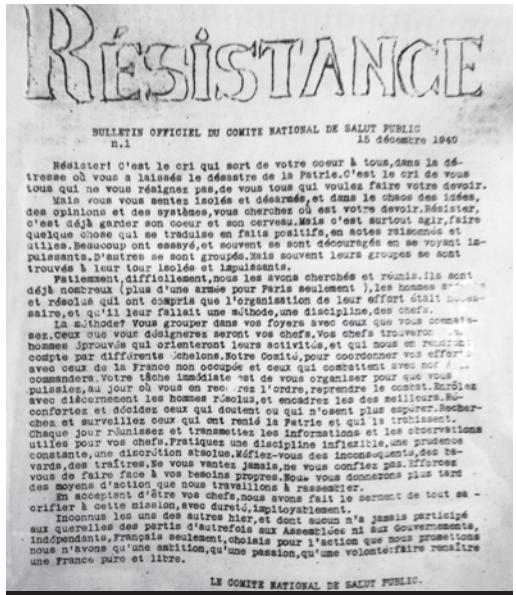
***Learn more about the history of the 1944 classic at www.stauer.com***

like-minded individuals under the slightly overblown name of The Free French of France (Les Français Libres de France), and while the group's intelligence activities did reveal their inexperience it would be wrong to say they had no experience whatsoever. Nearly all of them had already acted in some way on behalf of the Spanish Republic against Franco's fascists. Humbert herself was as much a scholar as a political activist, having both written a monograph on Jacques-Louis David, a renowned artist of the French Revolutionary period, and contributed articles to *The Worker's Life* (*La Vie Ouvrière*) under a pen name.

It took less than two months for their first pamphlet, *Vichy Wages War,* to appear. It was a response to the Vichy government's decision to fire on Free French forces in Dakar in the French colony of Senegal. Suddenly, there it was in the Métro, in post offices, and even mixed in among the clothing for sale in department stores. Stickers declaring support for General de Gaulle also began to show up in phone booths, on the walls of the Métro, and in public urinals (she later hope that de Gaulle would "forgive his humble servants their ignominious means.")

Humbert's group had been inspired in part by an anonymous pamphlet that had appeared in August, *33 Hints to the Occupied* (*33 Conseils á l'occupé*), a kind of guide for conscientious passive resistance. For example, in response to the obnoxious sight of German soldiers wandering the capital with guides and French phrasebooks, it says, "Every one of them has his little camera screwed to his eye. But have no illusions: these are not tourists." Parisians needed reminding of this because of how disturbingly easy "normal" life had reinstated itself under occupation. The Paris Opera reopened in late August with the same program from when it had closed in June, while the Louvre reopened in September. A columnist begged his readers to withhold judgment—especially if it was being made in the Free Zone—and asked what was wrong with trying "to forget our sorrows, and their piteous burden, by going to see a show"? The ease with which cultural life continued seemed to have even surprised Hitler, but it was considered a boon if the citizens of Paris wanted to keep themselves entertained, the Führer saying, "Let's let them degenerate. All the better for us."

From then on, the question of what constituted "collaboration" would exercise the minds of many. Should one not attend, let alone write, direct, or perform in, an opera, play, movie, or cabaret in which Germans were present or involved? Were the major literary magazines and publishers, such as the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and Gallimard, right to keep


RÉSISTANCE

BULLETIN OFFICIEL DU COMITE NATIONAL DE SALUT PUBLIC
n.1 15 décembre 1940

Résister! C'est le cri qui sort de votre coeur à tous,dans la détresse où vous a laissés le désastre de la Patrie.C'est le cri de vous tous qui ne vous résignez pas,de vous tous qui voulez faire votre devoir.

Mais vous vous sentez isolés et désarmés,et dans le chaos des idées, des opinions et des systèmes,vous cherchez où est votre devoir.Résister, c'est déjà garder son coeur et son cerveau.Mais c'est surtout agir,faire quelque chose qui se traduise en faits positifs,en actes réfléchis et utiles.Beaucoup ont essayé,et souvent se sont découragés en se voyant impuissants.D'autres se sont groupés.Mais souvent leurs groupes se sont trouvés à leur tour isolés et impuissants.

Patiemment,difficilement,nous les avons cherchés et réunis.Ils sont déjà nombreux (plus d'une armée pour Paris seulement ),les hommes s[illegible] et résolus qui ont compris que l'organisation de leur effort était [illegible]saire,et qu'il leur fallait une méthode,une discipline,des chefs.

La méthode? Vous grouper dans vos foyers avec ceux que vous connaissez.Ceux que vous désignerez seront vos chefs.Vos chefs trouverez [illegible] hommes éprouvés qui orienteront leurs activités,et qui nous en rendront compte par différents échelons.Notre Comité,pour coordonner vos efforts avec ceux de la France non occupée et ceux qui combattent avec nos [illegible] commandera.Votre tâche immédiate est de vous organiser pour que vous puissiez,au jour où vous en recevrez l'ordre,reprendre le combat.Enrôlez avec discernement les hommes résolus,et encadrez les des meilleurs.Réconfortez et décidez ceux qui doutent ou qui n'osent plus espérer.Rechercher et surveiller ceux qui ont renié la Patrie et qui la trahissent. Chaque jour réunissez et transmettez les informations et les observations utiles pour vos chefs.Pratiquez une discipline inflexible,une prudence constante,une discrétion absolue.Méfiez-vous des inconséquents,des bavards,des traîtres.Ne vous vantez jamais,ne vous confiez pas. Efforcez vous de faire face à vos besoins propres.Nous vous donnerons plus tard des moyens d'action que nous travaillons à rassembler.

En acceptant d'être vos chefs,nous avons fait le serment de tout sacrifier à cette mission,avec dureté,impitoyablement.

Inconnus les uns des autres hier,et dont aucun n'a jamais participé aux querelles des partis d'autrefois aux Assemblées ni aux Gouvernements, indépendants,Français seulement,choisis pour l'action que nous promettons nous n'avons qu'une ambition,qu'une passion,qu'une volonté:faire renaître une France pure et libre.

LE COMITE NATIONAL DE SALUT PUBLIC.

**Covert operatives opposed to the Nazis published a clandestine newspaper titled *Résistance* to stir French national pride and promote acts of disobedience and sabotage against the occupiers.**

# AMERICAN PRIDE
## Embossed Leather Duffel Bag

A Rugged Salute to American Pride
Exclusively from The Bradford Exchange

Expertly Crafted in Durable Genuine Leather

★★★

Rugged Patriotic Design Embossed on the Front

★★★

Roomy Interior Provides Ample Organization

★★★

Removable, Adjustable Padded Shoulder Strap for Versatility and Comfort


Actual size of bag is approximately 22" W x 11" H x 11" D

## AMERICAN TOUGH ★ AMERICAN PROUD ★ AMERICAN STRONG

With superior genuine leather craftsmanship, the versatile "American Pride" Leather Duffel Bag is wonderfully comfortable for everyday use and rugged enough for longer adventures. The detailed embossing on this bag features a billowing American flag, a banner reading "American Pride" and a majestic bald eagle in flight. The adjustable 60" shoulder strap can be worn over one shoulder, across the chest, or if desired, removed entirely. To protect and organize your belongings, the generously-sized bag has an interior zippered pocket and 2 accessory pockets plus an exterior slip pocket on the front. Antique gold hardware, genuine leather zipper pulls, and a convenient double zip closure complete the design.

*Not available in stores—Order Now!*

This patriotic leather duffel bag is an outstanding value at $199.95*, payable in 4 easy installments of $49.99 and backed by our 90-day guarantee. To reserve, send no money now; just mail the Priority Reservation. This exclusive design is only available from The Bradford Exchange—you won't find it in stores. So don't miss out on a durable classic that will never go out of style. Order today!

**www.bradfordexchange.com/patrioticduffel**

*For information on sales tax you may owe to your state, go to bradfordexchange.com/use-tax.

 01-24723-001-BIBR

PRIORITY RESERVATION SEND NO MONEY NOW

THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE
APPAREL & ACCESSORIES
*Apparel of Innovative Artistry and Design*

9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

**YES.** Please reserve the **"American Pride" Leather Duffel Bag** for me as described in this announcement.

Please Respond Promptly

*Plus $19.99 shipping and service see bradfordexchange.com. Please allow 2-4 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Signature

Mrs. Mr. Ms.
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address

City State Zip

Email (Optional)

01-24723-001-E57401

some semblance of themselves alive by continuing to publish, albeit now under Nazi censors? Did the then-unknown author Albert Camus act in the wrong by agreeing to remove footnotes mentioning the Jewish author Franz Kafka, simply in the desire to get real ideas out in occupied Paris? Was collaboration with the one hand justified if it meant access to influence and power which, with the other hand, could undermine that very collaboration?

After the war it was noted how collaborationist writers and artists had been condemned much more roundly than, say, the French workers for Renault, who manufactured tanks for the Wehrmacht. However, Humbert and her group, and later the more militant Resistance, seem to have understood that this was only true for so long. After all, Paris was not known for the beauty of its automobiles or the genius of its factories, but for its culture, and it was the subversion and perversion of that culture in the country's capital that was a symbol for how far France had fallen. Witnessing the reorganization of museum libraries, now filled with German authors and their dubious racial theories and their lecture halls now filled with the same, and with the occupying force ordered to be (for now) as gracious as possible, Humbert and Cassou saw the occupation not as a threat France's physical life, but to her soul.

Before Vichy relieved her of her job, Humbert had been an employee of the museum of French popular and folk art, the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, and by the autumn of 1940 she had come into contact with a clandestine organization centered around the neighboring anthropology museum, the Museum of Man (Musée de l'Homme. Both museums were housed in the Palais de Chaillot, built in 1937 to coincide with the World's Fair held in Paris that year. More organized and with a wider network of contacts than the Free French, in time all of them came to live under the umbrella of what was later called the Musée de l'Homme Group. Nearest to Humbert was the leader of the Musée de l'Homme Group, linguist and ethnologist Boris Vildé, who had already served in the French Army, been imprisoned by the Germans, and escaped; Christiane Desroches, Egyptologist at the Louvre; Anatole Lewitsky, Yvonne Oddon, and Jacqueline Bordelet, all three employed by the Musée de l'Homme; 18-year-old René Sénéchal, known affectionately as "The Kid"; a handful of other librarians, translators, lawyers, journalists, accountants, concierges, nurses, pharmacists, and other friends who listened nonstop to BBC broadcasts from London, by then an illegal act in Paris, or who helped distribute the group's publications.

At times Humbert admitted the precariousness of their situation. "Here we are, most of us on the wrong side of 40, carrying along like students all fired up with passion and fervor." She also noted the strangeness of following de Gaulle, since no one in the group had even seen a picture of him, which was quite a contrast to the ubiquitous presence of Hitler's portraits in Germany, or now of Vichy leader Philippe Pétain's portraits in France. Humbert had the feeling of following "an unknown figure," but they persisted and in October and November also began taking in downed British and Polish pilots and helping usher them out of France to Portugal and Britain. Even Humbert's ill and aging mother was fearless and unquestioning that she and her daughter would take these men in. Humbert no doubt thought of her two grown sons in taking the men in; at the time her son Pierre was still in the south of France with the others in exodus, while her other son, Jean, was in Newfoundland with French naval personnel.

In late November they finally had an actual newspaper in the works. Originally titled *Libération,* the name was rightly assumed a bit premature, and it was rechristened *Résistance.* Published on December 15, it contained what amounted to counterintelligence gathered from radio broadcasts, foreign newspapers obtained from the American embassy, and other outlets. By then the "legitimate media" had merely become an arm for Germany propaganda, and a later member of the French Resistance, Claude Aveline, described the importance of *Résistance* as "a true account of the latest news, explanations as necessary, acts of defiance and rallying calls, every possible reason for retaining an absolutely unshakeable hope and optimism."

And optimism is what Boris Vildé's editorial in the first issue hoped to instill. No doubt it had the same effect as de Gaulle's radio broadcast had for Humbert: "Give heart and resolve to those beset by doubt and those who no longer dare to hope. Track down and watch those who have disowned their country and who betray her."

Addressing the isolation many like-minded French people must have felt, Vildé encouraged individuals and groups to mobilize together and coordinate in order "to act, to do something that translates into positive actions, into calculated and positive actions.... Meet up every day to pass on information and observations that may be useful to your leaders.... Beware of those who are reckless or feckless, loose-tongued or treacherous. Be neither boastful nor too trusting."

It is in this context that Humbert began to see the danger her group was in. Given the opportunity of being the go-between for maps and other intelligence to be supplied by an air force veteran from World War I, Humbert initially exulted, "At last! Now I can see an opportunity to do something more than propaganda!" However, she reflected "As a direct result of my meddling, people—French people, living peaceful lives—will be killed and wounded, children maimed. Where are all my lofty humanitarian ideals now...? How could I ever have wanted to be involved in such a filthy business?"

Determined to refuse the offer, she suddenly came upon the indignity of three French porters, in the dead of winter, trudging along in the slush with the luggage of two German soldiers. At this sight Humbert's mind was made up again, and for good, and her words remained as brutal and pragmatic a statement as any to come from a mere "civilian" during the war. "We simply have to stop them. We can't allow them to colonize us, to carry off all our goods on the backs of our men while they stroll along, arms swinging, faces wreathed in smiles.... And to stop it happening we have to kill. Kill like wild beasts, kill to survive. Kill by stealth, kill by treachery, kill with premeditation, kill the innocent. It has to be done, and I will do it."

Yet by this time the group's inexperience was beginning to show. In trying to convince the friend who would supply her with the important maps, Humbert had mentioned the better known Jean Cassou by name and then naïvely remarked, "Too bad, his name is out of the bag—but for a catch like this it's worth it!"

Indeed, it was not until February of the next year, well after the group had been infiltrated by the Gestapo, that they realized they all needed to adopt code names. And it was almost maddening to read her remark, only a month before her own arrest, "Besides, why would anyone be interested in me? I've done so little and been so careful." Because, as valuable a document as her diary was, its very existence (and its free use of real names) showed just how incautious she really was.

Meanwhile, Jean Cassou's wife chided their plans at raising money "as though we are a couple of children playing at shops." Another member was so brazen as to wander the markets and shove leaflets into the baskets of housewives, a tactic she was merely teased about. Humbert herself, saying no one would destroy a bank note these days, wrote "Vive le Général de Gaulle" on five franc bills. And more than a few times she mentioned that their

clandestine meetings—until the end nearly always held at the same location—at times devolved more into reminiscing than getting on with the business at hand.

The specter of arrest and prison always loomed large in their minds, no matter how they tried to laugh its eventuality off. In mid-February, dozens of employees from the Musée de l'Homme had been arrested and questioned as the museum itself was raided, while those not yet detained attempted to flee and reach the Free Zone. During March, the Kid, who by this time had been going back and forth to Toulouse, passing documents to the British and trying to find printers for *Résistance*, whose fifth and final issue appeared that month, also disappeared. Others in the group believed they were being followed. One of the first to disappear was Boris Vildé, arrested on March 26.

Humbert herself refused to go to the Free Zone because she could not abandon her ailing mother. The Gestapo took no such considerations into account, and by the middle of April she was arrested as well. Arriving at her home, the Gestapo upended everything, confiscating her typewriter and even looking for secrets in the extendable dining room table. While they did come across an unfinished front page for *Résistance*, it was so incomplete that she could plausibly claim it was part of a personal project and nothing more. As she later noted, however, they never did find "the *Résistance* file, with its 400 names and addresses, lying quietly hidden—together with copies of all the tracts we had published since September 1940—under the stair carpet between two floors."

Not that the Gestapo didn't have other information to draw on, and not that this delayed her arrest at all. Once at police headquarters, she caught sight of Vildé, already much thinner and finding it difficult to walk. "Our eyes meet," she wrote, "and he gives me a long look of inexpressible sadness. A look that will haunt me forever." Her interrogator later asked her with a grin, "He's changed a bit since he's been with us, don't you think?"

In only a few months, 19 members of the group were arrested by the Gestapo. And yet it grew and changed to meet whatever demands occupied Paris required. In August of that year they assassinated a German naval cadet in the Métro. In October, Boris Vildé said from prison, "I love life, God, I love life. But I'm not afraid of dying. To be shot would in a sense be the logical conclusion to my life."

It took a few months, and despite the attempted intervention of the writers François Mauriac, Paul Valéry, and Georges Duhamel, Vildé and seven others were executed on Feb-

ruary 23, 1942. Humbert was spared the death penalty but sentenced to forced labor and was incarcerated in a succession of prisons until late March 1942, when she was transferred to Anrath prison in Germany, and finally the Phrix rayon factory in Krefeld, where she and other underfed female prisoners worked under horrible conditions, daily exposed to chemical injury with no protection. Humbert mentions burns, boils, abscesses, ulcers, temporary blindness from acid vapors, "and other suppurating wounds of mysterious origins." There was more than one suicide among the women in the factory. In 1945, Humbert was liberated by American forces and immediately set about assisting in their hunt for fugitive Nazis.

At least one member of the Musée de l'Homme group, the African ethnologist Deborah Lifchitz, died in Auschwitz. Others ended up in London and worked with Gaullist groups and British intelligence later in the war. Jean Cassou was able to escape to Toulouse and avoid capture in early 1941, but was finally arrested in December. While incarcerated, he composed his famous *33 Sonnets Composed in Secret* (*33 Sonnets composés au Secret*) in his head. It was published under a pseudonym in 1944. Released from prison in 1943, he continued his resistance activities in North Africa and Toulouse. In 1944, he was attacked by Germans the day Toulouse was liberated and spent nearly a month in a coma. When he woke, de Gaulle was at his bedside, no longer a faceless voice or even a venerated photograph, and awarded him the Croix de la Libération. After the war he was appointed director of the National Museum of Modern Art and died in 1986.

Later recalling her imprisonment and forced labor at the rayon factory, Agnès Humbert wrote of one evening among many when she and another woman were trying to push a cart, whose wheels were unoiled, through the factory. "I push so hard that I fall flat on my face," she wrote. "Furiously I said to myself: 'In 50 years' time my family will know how I was treated by the Germans. I have a grandson, Yves. He will tell his children how I was forced to work beyond the limits of human endurance.'"

Many later members of the Resistance testified to the importance of the work Humbert had done, so even lacking her own diary and memoir she would have been remembered. One of these Resistance members was Germaine Tillion, who spoke with admiration for these early resisters: "Small, autonomous entities [which] multiplied like microbes in tropical waters," so soon after the fall of France, and how like crystals, each group, each individual, illuminated and reflected all the others.

This was all Humbert seems to have wanted, after all. Demoralized in the south of France after fleeing Paris, disgusted at the sight of German soldiers on her train back to the capital, and mortified at how life seemed to have picked up where it left off despite the daily German marches down the Champs Elysees, despite having to change all of their clocks to Berlin time, despite coming upon French prisoners of war herded down the streets of Paris like animals, all she wanted was her country back.

On June 12, 1945, she finally got it. Hidden with a handful of others in the back of an American Army truck, she felt that simply by passing a few words with the cheerful French driver that she was already in Paris again. The night was a fitful one, and she felt every bump and jostle along the way until finally, ruminating over all that had happened and swirling around every thought in her head, she wrote: "In my profound philosophizing the driver lifts the corner of the tarpaulin, sticks his head through, and shouts: 'Allez, on your feet, you lot! Jump to it—we're in France!'"□

---

*Author Tim Miller is a first-time contributor to* WWII History. *He resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

# Battle Of The Bulge

This was the last major German offensive of WWII and the single largest battle fought by Americans during WWII. You can recreate this Battle with our 240 piece set. Included in the set is our exclusive hand painted street front. The German army is led by 6 tanks consisting of Tigers, Panthers and Panzer IV tanks plus two hanomags and one 88mm cannon supported by over 85 German troops.

The American army fights to hold their position with a force of 75 men supported by 4 Sherman tanks, 2 half tracks and 3 105mm cannons. To round out the set you will receiver a bridge and guard tower, stone walls, concertina wire and much more.

**CTS943B** • Order Classic Toy Soldiers 240 piece **"Battle of the Bulge Playset"** for **$399.95** plus **$45.00 S&H** (requires two boxes to ship set) today.

# Battleground Playset

This 160 plus piece playset is the perfect set to get any toy soldier collector started into the Earopean Theater of WWII. Included in the set are over 45 Germans and 50 Allied troops including GI's, French and British. You also get 5 German tanks, 1 German 88mm cannon, 2 Sherman tanks, 1 British Churchill tank, 1 US half track, and 1 US 105mm cannon. Additional accessories include barbed wire, heavy weapons, stone walls, trees, mortar pit, matching gun nest, and much more. This set is a tremendous value for the price.

**CTS917A** • CTS 160 piece **"Battleground Playset"** can be yours for **$209.95 plus $30 S&H**. You save over $150.00!

# The Battle of Kursk

In the spring of 1943 the Germans gambled all their reserves on a massive attack in Russia. If their plan succeeded, they would destroy more than 5 Russian armies. The ensuing Battle of Kursk became the largest tank battle in history and one of the decisive turning points of WWII.

You now can recreate this massive engagement with Classic Toy Soldiers 180 piece "BATTLE OF KURSK" playset.

The set includes 60 Axis troops with 3 Panzer tanks and 88mm cannon to battle over 75 Russian troops accompanied by 4 T-34 tanks and a 105mm cannon. Include is a large railroad embankment turned into a fortified position, plus stone walls, barbed wire, and lots more.

**CTS949A** • Order your 180 piece **"Battle of Kursk Set"** for **$299.95** plus **$35.00 S&H.**

**CTS has over 50 additional playsets and over 2,500 different items for sale. To see these and all the other products we have for sale, send $6.00 for our catalog and color brochure or visit our website at: www.classictoysoldiers.com**

Hours are 9:00 am to 7:00 pm Central Standard Time

## Classic Toy Soldiers, Inc.

15148 Mohawk Circle • Leawood, Kansas 66224

DAVID PAYNE, Call: 913-451-9458 • Fax: 913-451-2946 • www.classictoysoldiers.com

Contents and colors may vary from pictured but piece count will remain the same • Personal Checks will be held for 21 days to clear.

# 7 Meetings to D-DAY

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

General Dwight D. Eisenhower speaks to paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division before their jump into Normandy. Eisenhower delayed the invasion of Europe for one day to provide better weather conditions for the airborne drop.

National Archives

The invasion force was ready. All across the United Kingdom men waited in more than 5,000 ships and hundreds of landing craft. Pilots, crewmen, and paratroopers waited around fighters, bombers, and carrier planes. Jeeps, trucks, tanks, and every type of military vehicle in the Western Allied arsenal stood bumper to bumper, making roads almost impassable. Stockpiles of shells, small arms, and artillery pieces filled almost every field for miles around. The Western Allies were ready to spring across the English Channel and attack Normandy, France, beginning the long-awaited second front.

But before any pilots, sailors, or soldiers could begin their odyssey in the spring of 1944, they needed the "go" signal from the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Operation Overlord, D-Day, would land an Allied army on the beaches of Normandy and drive for the heart of Germany. Eisenhower needed weather conditions to be as ideal as possible before he could release his dogs of war.

The conditions had to be, if not perfect, suitable to maximize Allied strength in the air and on the land and sea. Overlord needed six synchronized elements for a successful landing: a late-rising, mostly full moon for pilots to navigate to drop

## THE ENTIRE NORMANDY INVASION HINGED ON GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER'S DECISION BUT WOULD THE WEATHER COOPERATE?

zones; a low tide so frogmen and demolition experts could destroy the hundreds of German half-hidden beach obstacles; calm seas to allow captains and coxswains to deliver the assault forces to the beaches; southerly winds to drive smoke and dust toward the enemy; an hour's worth of good daylight accompanying the first low tide so bomber crews could plaster the beaches with their bombs; and enough light during the second low tide to provide visibility to the followup forces.

Operation Overlord was so enormous that it would begin three days before troops actually hit the beaches. Ships in England's northern ports pulling up anchors and heading south needed that much lead time. D-Day would require a favorable weather forecast at least 72 hours ahead of the landings and two days following. Those following two days worried Eisenhower and his commanders. It was just too hard to predict weather that far out.

While Eisenhower and his team could coordinate the moon and tides, they had no control over the wind and clouds. The Allies wanted gentle breezes for the assault, 8 to 12 miles an hour—Force 3 winds. Force 4 winds, 13 to 17 miles an hour, would create breaking wave crests and make the airborne drop precarious but tolerable. Force 5 winds, 18-24 miles an hour, would create moderate waves, white caps, and spray and prevent any airborne operations. Force 6 winds, 25-30 miles an hour, would cause long waves, white foam crests, and more sea spray. Anything above Force 6 meant gale winds and very rough seas (the scale goes to 12, hurricanes).

Clear skies were just as important, but cloudy skies were tolerable as long as they were high enough for bomber crews to see the flare markers and sporadic enough for troop carrier pilots to identify their drop zones. Low clouds or a blanket of clouds, known as stratus clouds, would cancel the bomber and airborne forces. The troop carriers needed a cloud ceiling no lower than 2,500 feet, while the bombers needed at least 11,000 if they were going to spot their markers.

National Archives

National Archives

**ABOVE: WAAF and RAF radio operators record meteorological reports from aircraft and ships in the wireless cabin of the central forecasting station at Dunstable, Bedfordshire. The Dunstable team, along with the teams at Bushey Park and Southwick, provided Stagg with constant weather updates. RIGHT: Eisenhower's chief meteorologist, Group Captain James M. Stagg, had the unenviable task of predicting the weather for D-Day.**

Of course, all of those requirements were nearly impossible to count on, but Eisenhower needed to come as close to the mix as possible. The invasion had already been delayed past May of 1944 to gather more landing craft. That put the earliest invasion date in June. Monday, June 5, Tuesday, June 6, and Wednesday, June 7 possessed both the correct tides and moonlight. Those conditions would not coincide again until the period between June 18 and 20.

To choose the exact date, Eisenhower gathered his air, land, and sea commanders at Southwick House north of Portsmouth for seven meetings to find the best launch window for Overlord. Attending the meetings were Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower's deputy supreme commander; Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory, the commander in chief of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force; General Bernard Law Montgomery, the commander of 21st Army Group; and Admiral Bertram Ramsay, the Allied naval commander of the Expeditionary Force.

The commanders' chiefs of staff also attended: Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's chief of staff who went by the name "Beetle;" Maj. Gen. Frederick de Guingand, Montgomery's chief of Staff; and Admiral George Creasy, Ramsay's chief of staff. Leigh-Mallory had two deputy chiefs of staff: Air Vice Marshal James Robb and Air Vice Marshal Philip Wigglesworth. From Eisenhower's staff were also his chief of operations, Maj. Gen. Harold "Pink" Bull, and his intelligence officer, Maj. Gen. Kenneth Strong. Maj. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, the deputy air commander and chief, also attended one of the meetings.

But the most important man at all the meetings was the British Royal Air Force's Group Captain James Stagg, Eisenhower's chief meteorological officer. At six-foot-two, the tall, quiet, blue-eyed Scotsman towered over most men. Some found him dour while others considered him sharp minded despite his soft speech. Eisenhower trusted his judgment. When not addressing Eisenhower and his chiefs, Stagg spent most of his time hovering over weather charts for the English Channel, which he had studied as far back as 1894, looking for clues to his forecasts.

Stagg had the difficult task of reconciling three different weather teams: the U.S. Army Air Forces meteorologist group at Widewing, code word for their offices at London's Bushy Park; the Royal Air Force's weather team at Dunstable; and the Royal Navy's team down the road from Southwick House. They would all receive the same information from reconnaissance aircraft and ships in the eastern Atlantic to make their predictions. If they did not all agree on the weather forecast, Stagg had to analyze the three groups' results and deliver a consensus report to Eisenhower. On May 17, Eisenhower set the day for the invasion tentatively for June 5, but he knew that Stagg's weather reports would decide the definite date.

Southwick House served as Admiral Ramsay's battle headquarters. The early Victorian mansion sat nine miles north of Portsmouth on an isolated 360-acre park. While Ramsey occupied the house, Eisenhower, Montgomery, and their staffs occupied the park. Eisenhower lived in a large mobile trailer on the grounds in a wood but used the house as his advance command post. Montgomery had picked it because its surrounding trees disguised the Nissen huts, tents, and caravans that filled the area.

Eisenhower held his weather meetings in a large mess room on the house's first floor across from a broad staircase. A mahogany table stood at one end of the room while a sofa and cushioned easy chairs filled the rest. Empty mahogany bookcases lined the walls. The officers did not sit around the table; instead they leaned back in the chairs listening to weather reports. Eisenhower preferred the relaxed atmosphere to allow everyone to speak his mind.

The room's relaxed state contrasted with Ramsay's operations room next door, which buzzed with activity. Staff officers and British Women's Royal Navy Service (WRENS) packed the room, coordinating the invasion's movements once Eisenhower gave the word. A huge plywood map of the invasion filled the entire east wall. On it were the routes the Allied navies would take from southern England to Normandy, along with the locations of German minefields. Here the invasion would be tracked in exact detail.

The map had been constructed by the firm of Chad Valley Toys, but to keep the invasion location secret, the firm was asked to construct

a map of Western Europe, from Norway to the Pyrenees. When the map sections arrived at Southwick House, the two delivery men were told to bring only the section that contained Normandy. Since the two men now knew one of the most closely guarded secrets of the war, they were detained in the house until after the invasion.

Eisenhower had begun hosting meetings in Ramsay's headquarters as early as April to conduct "dry runs," drilling everyone on how the decision to launch D-Day would go. But the final seven meetings decided the fate of D-Day. Beetle Smith later said of the men at the meetings: "They were not only trying to predict the weather, they were trying to make it."

### FIRST MEETING (Monday, May 29, 10 am)

The first weather meeting took place on a perfectly sunny day. Captain Stagg reported that while the rest of the week should be operationally favorable there was a risk of minor, temporary disturbances during the weekend. Several of the commanders queried Stagg, asking him how long and how intense these "disturbances" would be. He calmly replied, "If the disturbed weather starts on Friday it is unlikely to last through both Monday [June 5] and Tuesday [June 6], but if it is delayed to Saturday and Sunday the weather on Monday and Tuesday could well be stormy." No one was happy with the forecast.

Stagg knew that the men in the room wanted more definitive answers, but he could not provide any until he processed the next delivery of weather reports. Would they support or contradict his forecast? "Those were the questions that gnawed away inside me during Monday [May 29]," Stagg later wrote.

After the meeting, Stagg reviewed the latest weather reports. What he learned troubled him. Storms appeared to be forming over the Channel just when Overlord was supposed to launch. "I began to fear the worst." At least Stagg would not have to appear before Eisenhower any time soon. Maybe conditions would improve before the next meeting, scheduled four days later.

As the next meeting drew closer, Stagg's predictions seemed to come true. The winds picked up around the Channel, and clouds rolled in. He spent his time reconciling his three weather centers. The British Dunstable and Admiralty forecasters foresaw a dark weekend with low clouds varying from day to day through Monday, D-Day. Stagg's own staff, as well as the Americans at Widewing, were more optimistic, seeing a front moving though the Channel by Saturday, followed by improved weather in the Normandy area "as a finger of high pressure [clear skies]" over the Channel would be protected by an anticyclone [a clockwise cyclone] over the Sea of Azores. Stagg could not reconcile the two outcomes.

### SECOND MEETING (Friday, June 2, 10 am)

Friday dawned clear and sunny, just as it had been all week. In the meeting room, Stagg presented a hybrid account of the weather to Eisenhower. While he held close to the Dunstable findings, he did acknowledge the Widewing forecast, which he considered "almost undiluted optimism." Clouds, he reported, would be prevalent and low while winds would be strong, especially toward the end of the five-day period. The commanders then asked Stagg to clarify his forecast as they sought a window to launch. Throughout the meeting, Eisenhower remained calm. He had time to wait for the weather to change. They were still three days away from D-Day.

After the meeting, Stagg's meteorologists were still deadlocked about the weather. The Dunstable group foresaw three successive depressions [rains and unstable weather] moving east with winds heading southwest and west. If depression troughs backed the southwest winds, stratus clouds would persist over the Channel. The Widewing group held to their forecast that the ridge of high pressure from the anticyclone over the Sea of Azores would situate northeast though the Channel. This meant some clouds on the British side of the Channel but little on the French side, with no strong winds anywhere in the area. Stagg had to figure out which forecast was more accurate.

### THIRD MEETING (Friday June 2, 9:30 pm)

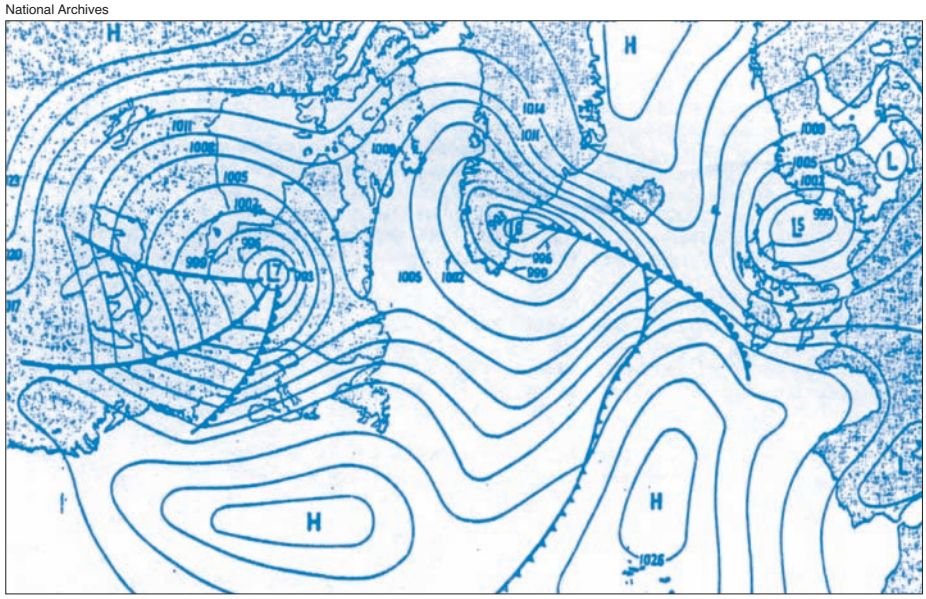
Eisenhower opened the meeting by asking, "Well Stagg, what have you for us this time?" Stagg reported that the situation from the British Isles to Newfoundland had now become "potentially full of menace." He admitted the last 24 hours had not brought a clearer picture of the situation and that the weather over the Channel would not be what they hoped for. There would be heavy clouds until at least Tuesday, June 6, and maybe into Wednesday. Winds would be coming in from the west at Force 4 and up to Force 5. Maj. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg asked about weather conditions for the airborne troops. Stagg repeated the information on cloud cover."It appeared the good weather might break at exactly the wrong moment for us," recalled Tedder.

Then Eisenhower asked about the weather on Tuesday, June 6, and Wednesday, June 7. After a long pause, Stagg spoke up. "If I answer that, sir, I would be guessing, not behaving as your meteorological advisor." With his dire forecast delivered, Stagg departed. Just as he

National Archives

**Eisenhower and his air, land, and sea commanders—as well as their chiefs of staff—wrestled with the invasion date. From left to right are Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, Admiral Bertram Ramsey, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower, General Bernard Montgomery, Air Chief Marshall Leigh-Mallory, and Lt. Gen. Walter "Beetle" Smith.**

National Archives




**Captain Stagg's weather chart for 1 PM GMT on June 6, 1944, shows a break in the storms raging over the English Channel.**

had left the room, Rear Admiral Creasy quipped, "There goes six feet two of Stagg and six foot one of gloom." The remark cut the tension in the room, and everyone laughed. Then Eisenhower addressed the men: "Okay gentlemen, I guess you are all agreed that we carry on until the next meeting."

Operation Overlord was still on, although the 24-hour window for postponing the June 5 landings was narrowing. The next two meetings would decide the fate of June 5 as D-Day. All around northern England, Allied ships weighed anchor and headed out to sea. Each passing hour meant it would be all the harder to stop their momentum.

**FOURTH MEETING (Saturday, June 3, 9:30 pm)**

With some of the ships already heading to Area Z—also known as Piccadilly Circus—the zone where the ships would circle as they prepared to cross the rest of the Channel, Eisenhower had to decide whether or not to postpone D-Day. As everyone filed into the room, Stagg told Admiral Creasy, who had joked about his gloom the day before, "I don't feel much better now." Once everyone was seated, Stagg and his staff were ushered into the room. "Gentlemen," Stagg began, "the fears my colleagues and I had yesterday about the weather for the next three or four days have been confirmed."

Stagg went on to describe the deteriorating conditions over the Channel and across the region. The anticyclone that Stagg hoped would protect the Channel from the Atlantic depressions had given way and could not be counted on to push the depressions northward. Starting the next day, June 4, strong winds between Force 4 and Force 6 would blow to the southwest and west until Wednesday, June 7. Clouds for the next few days would be low, and visibility would be anywhere from three to six miles. Tedder later called Stagg's presentation "most unpromising."

No one spoke. Stagg's gloom had spread to everyone in the room. Admiral Ramsay broke the silence. "Are the Force 5 winds along the Channel to continue on Monday [June 5] and Tuesday?" he asked. "Yes sir," Stagg replied. Ramsay then asked about the clouds, but Stagg could not give him a definitive answer; they were just too unpredictable. Tedder asked about weather conditions for June 7, to which Stagg predicted that the cold front should push most of the clouds away. Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory, who worried greatly about the airborne forces and his bomber crews, asked about the cloud ceiling. Stagg told him clouds would be down to 500 feet over France, way too low for bomber crews. General Montgomery simply commented, "I'm ready."

Eisenhower listened to all the questions and answers, gauging the reactions of the questioners. Finally, he addressed Stagg, recounting his forecast from the day before and asking, "Isn't there just a chance that you might be a bit more optimistic again tomorrow?" Stagg had to tell him no, that the chance he saw previously had disappeared. "The balance has gone too far to the other side for it to swing back again overnight tonight," he explained. Tedder asked if all the forecasting centers were in consensus about the report, hoping for some dissension. Stagg could not play along. "Yes, sir," he said. "They are."

With that information, Eisenhower announced that the invasion would be delayed on a day-to-day basis. Monday, June 5, would no longer be D-Day. But when would the invasion launch, the next day or in two weeks? Eisenhower decided that his final decision would be made in five hours, on June 4. One

## WHAT DID THE GERMANS KNOW?

Twice the Western Allies almost revealed the coming invasion to the Germans on June 4, when a typist accidentally sent out a message claiming Eisenhower had given the order, and when a flotilla of ships almost reached Utah Beach. To make sure they had not tipped their hand, Tedder called Group Captain Frederick Winterbotham to Southwick House.

Winterbotham, a Royal Air Force officer, supervised the distribution of Ultra intercepts to field commanders. Early in the war the British had cracked the German Enigma codes—communications between commanders—and used them to understand what the Germans knew or were intending to do on the battlefields. The deciphering program, known as Ultra, gave the Allies a great edge over Nazi Germany. If anyone knew what the Germans along the coast of Normandy were thinking in the early hours of June 5, it was Winterbotham.

The RAF captain reported to the house and waited at the bottom of the large staircase outside the meeting room as Eisenhower made his final decision. Winterbotham had information vital to the planners that might assist the men preparing to invade France.

Suddenly, the doors burst open and Eisenhower's commanders charged out. Tedder spotted Winterbotham and nodded at him as he hurried by, saying, "Tomorrow." Winterbotham, understanding this meant the invasion was on, responded, "Absolutely nothing." There had been no communication among the Germans that they were bracing for an attack. They had no idea the invasion was coming. In less than 24 hours the first Allied soldiers would drop onto French soil, completely surprising the officers of Germany's high command in Normandy. The Allies had kept the invasion a secret.

U.S. naval task force would be allowed to proceed to keep with the timetable and would not be recalled until after the next meeting, if necessary. There were no jokes this time, nothing to lighten the mood. The men filed out of the room with grave looks of worry.

When Montgomery got back to his trailer, he noted in his diary, "Tomorrow the final decision must be taken, and once taken must be stuck to; everything will be at sea, and if it is to be turned back, it must be turned back then. Strong and resolute characters will be very necessary."

### FIFTH MEETING (Sunday, June 4, 4:15 am)

The Sunday meeting convened with some alarming news. An Associated Press teletype operator had been practicing on what she thought was an idle machine that night when she typed out "ASSOCIATED PRESS MYK FLASH—EISENHOWER'S HEADQUARTERS ANNOUNCED ALLIED LANDINGS IN FRANCE." Unfortunately, the machine was live, and the message traveled across the Atlantic and to Moscow. It was cancelled 30 seconds later but no one knew if the Germans had intercepted it. That little flub by a low-ranking clerk only added to Eisenhower's stress as he prepared to listen to the latest weather report for the biggest decision of his career.

Tension gripped everyone.Despite the sleepless nights waiting to see if they could launch, most of the officers hoped for an improved forecast. Eisenhower nodded to the serious, unsmiling Stagg who reported almost no changes from his last forecast. The only change: the cold front expected for Wednesday was pushing through faster than expected. It was now expected 24 to 36 hours earlier, but Stagg was not confident it would reach the Channel in time. Everything else—cloud cover, wind direction, and speed—was exactly as previously reported. D-Day would definitely not be on June 5.

Again, Ramsay spoke up first. "The sky outside here at the moment is practically clear and there is no wind," he explained. "When do we expect the cloud and wind of your forecast to appear here?" Ramsay was ready to launch his fleet if Stagg gave him a window, but Leigh-Mallory interjected before Stagg could answer, explaining that his bombers could not attack through the predicted cloud cover. Bomber crews would have difficulty seeing flares marking their targets, making the bombings less than effective. Tedder agreed with Leigh-Mallory but observed that they had to make the most of the gaps between weather patterns.

Throughout the meeting Eisenhower remained particularly calm and asked fewer questions than before, for good reason. He had a secret he had not told Stagg: A member of Ramsay's staff had checked with the naval forecasters to get their latest take on the conditions. Ramsay, in turn, had shared the findings with Eisenhower a few minutes before Stagg made his presentation, so Eisenhower was not surprised by the forecast.

National Archives

**American amphibious forces, packed elbow to elbow, wait for the "go" word from General Eisenhower, who knew he could not keep the men aboard their ships indefinitely.**

Although the sea conditions were calm enough for the Allied ships to cross the Channel, cloud cover would prevent the air forces from completing their mission. Montgomery told Eisenhower he was willing to risk the assault without air support, imploring him, "We must go." But Tedder disagreed, supporting postponement. Eisenhower agreed with Tedder, explaining that the Germans possessed greater strength in the Normandy area. The operation would only succeed with air superiority. Eisenhower asked if anyone disagreed with his view. No one replied. He then ordered the naval forces that had not yet departed their ports not to sail and the forces that had already sailed to be recalled. Eisenhower scheduled another meeting later in the day.

When the meeting ended, Beetle Smith raced to the communications building and sent the code word for the postponement to all commands. He then called 10 Downing Street, Winston Churchill's residence, to tell the prime minister the news, and he notified the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

Word was also transmitted to the fleets that the invasion had been delayed and H-hour had been revised. Block and bombardment ships as far away as Belfast, Ireland, turned around and headed to port. But the message failed to reach a convoy of 138 ships headed for Utah Beach. Two destroyers were dispatched to retrieve them but could not find the flotilla. They ended up in a minefield, waiting for minesweepers. Finally, a Supermarine Walrus amphibious aircraft flying out of Portsmouth found the ships and dropped the return order in a canister on the deck of the lead ship. The convoy turned around, but because of the choppy seas one of the Landing Craft Tanks (LCTs) capsized.The crew survived.

### SIXTH MEETING (Sunday, June 4, 9:00 pm)

Throughout the day the winds picked up as clouds gathered above the Channel. Men packed aboard ships for more than 72 hours began to feel the strain. By nightfall the rains fell, and the wind blew furiously through the

Both: National Archives

**A 138-ship convoy headed for Utah Beach two days early because of bungled communications had to be turned around by a Walrus amphibian aircraft.**

pine trees outside Southwick House.

Inside the meeting room the commanders drank coffee and chatted among themselves. Eisenhower stood tense, the gravity of the decision weighing on him. If he delayed for two weeks it could have a devastating effect on the men's morale, and if he released them from their vessels they might inadvertently reveal the location of the attack. Even more, Moscow was impatiently awaiting the landings. If he did not launch in the next two days Soviet Premier Josef Stalin might think the Western Allies were not serious about relieving pressure on the Eastern Front. And then there were the Germans. An extra two weeks would give them time to beef up beach defenses and gather more troops. But Eisenhower refused to launch an invasion without a solid chance for success.

Eisenhower called the men to order as Stagg and his staff entered the room. "Gentlemen," Stagg began as he always did, "since I presented the forecast last evening some rapid and unexpected developments have occurred over the North Atlantic." He went on to explain that a cold front from one of the depressions had pushed farther south faster than expected. The front would pass over Portsmouth and across the Channel later that night, pushing most of the clouds out. The rain outside would stop in about two or three hours. The remaining clouds would hold at 2,000 to 3,000 feet, and winds would reduce along the French coast to Force 3 or 4. The improved conditions would last from Monday night and into Tuesday. Beyond that the weather would probably be unsettled and hard to predict.

But how long would it last? Stagg's charts showed that the bad weather and high winds would return by the evening of June 6, and he had no idea how long it would last. Stagg could give Eisenhower only 24 hours of good weather, nothing more. Maj. Gen. Kenneth Strong could not believe it. He looked out the window to see rain pouring down heavily. "I could see no signs that conditions were improving," he later recalled.

After the usual silence, Admiral Creasy asked about weather improvements from Wednesday,

## WHAT DID EISENHOWER SAY TO LAUNCH OPERATION OVERLORD?

There are several versions of exactly what General Dwight D. Eisenhower said in giving the "go" order in the early hours of June 5, 1944, to launch the Normandy invasion. Everyone who was in the room when he made the call seemed to hear something different.

Some of the British officers did not recall what Eisenhower said. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wrote in his memoir *Normandy to the Baltic*, "At 0400 hours on 5 June the decision was made: the invasion of France would take place on 6 June." Air Marshal Arthur Tedder followed suit, simply writing in his memoir, *Without Prejudice*, "Overlord was launched beyond recall." Group Captain Stagg, who had left the room prior to Eisenhower's decision and was outside in the hall, later wrote in *Forecast for Overlord*, "General Eisenhower had made the final and irrevocable decision."

Two British officers who did quote Eisenhower wrote completely different versions of the order. In his memoir, *Intelligence at the Top*, Maj. Gen. Kenneth Strong heard Eisenhower say, "Okay boys, we will go." Major General Frederick de Guingand, however, gave Eisenhower a bit of a soliloquy in his memoir *Operation Victory*. According to de Guingand, Eisenhower came forward after everyone had expressed their opinions. "This is a decision which I must make alone," de Guingand claimed Eisenhower said. "After all, that is what I am here for." Then, as everyone waited, Eisenhower gave the order: "We set sail tomorrow."

The one American in the room who later wrote about the meeting also heard something different. In his book, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, Lt. Gen. Beetle Smith claimed that Eisenhower gave the order, "Well, we'll go."

U.S. Army Historian Forrest Pogue tried to settle the matter for the Army's official history of World War II. He collected statements from several participants and accessed reports written hours, days and years after the meeting. No two versions were the same. Finally, for his book, *The Supreme Command*, Pogue simply quoted Eisenhower as saying "Go." Historian Stephen Ambrose also tried to solve the quote mystery, which he eventually wrote about in his biography, *The Supreme Commander*. Ambrose claimed that when he interviewed Eisenhower on October 27, 1967, Eisenhower told him that he was sure he said, "O.K., let's go," but Ambrose's meetings with Eisenhower have lately come under question.

Eisenhower tried to settle the matter himself when he told reporter Walter Cronkite in a 1963 interview that he said, "Okay, we'll go." But the controversy was not over. In 2014, Tim Rives, the supervisory archivist and deputy director of the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, Kansas, researched the controversy and found that Eisenhower wrote five different versions of his own quote while editing an article he wrote for *Paris Match*. The only conclusion could be that Eisenhower himself did not remember exactly what he said and, therefore, his words are forever lost to history.

June 7, to Friday, June 9. Stagg put the chances at fair. Eisenhower asked if it was practical to predict the weather beyond Friday. Stagg replied, "Conditions must continue to be regarded as very disturbed." But he stressed his confidence about the 24-hour forecast, telling the air officers that the clouds would be broken enough for moonlight to shine through the gaps and high enough for good bombing conditions from Monday night to Tuesday afternoon.

Eisenhower had a clear spot in the eye of a storm. The winds would not be south, as he wanted, only southwest. The sky would not be clear, but it would be clear enough. The seas would be satisfactory for the initial assault, but the followup troops might encounter rough conditions. There would be a full moon, but its power would be reduced by intermittent clouds. It was not the ideal situation, but it might be good enough. Eisenhower could risk setting his forces loose, or he could hold up and delay another two weeks and hope for better conditions.

Eisenhower polled the room. Admiral Ramsay reminded him that if D-Day were to be June 6, he would have to give the order to the fleet in the next half hour. If the fleet sailed and the date was delayed again, they would not be able to refuel for a Wednesday assault. That left a two-week wait for ideal conditions. Leigh-Mallory fretted that his bomber crews would not be able to see their bombing markers. Tedder agreed, saying the bomber operations would be "chancy." Eisenhower then put the question to Montgomery."Do you see any reason why we should not go on Tuesday?" Without missing a beat the British general announced, "No. I would say go."

Again, Eisenhower polled the room. Everyone held to their previous concerns. Only Montgomery was confident. Eisenhower then turned to his chief of staff, Smith, who agreed with Montgomery and added that the high seas and moderate winds might trick the Germans into believing the Allies would never attack in such conditions. "It's a helluva gamble," Smith told Eisenhower, "but it's the best possible gamble."

With all the questions asked, Eisenhower sat silently on the couch for a few minutes while his commander waited on his word. Smith was taken aback by his boss's huge responsibility. "I never realized before the loneliness and isolation of a commander at a time when such a momentous decision has to be taken, with full knowledge that failure or success rests on his judgment alone."

Finally, Eisenhower looked up, his face free of tension. "The question is," Eisenhower said to no one in particular, "just how long can you hang this operation at the end of a limb and let it hang there?" After a short pause he made the decision: "I'm quite positive we must give the order.... I don't like it but there it is.... I don't see how we can possibly do anything else." He asked if there were any dissenting opinions. No one spoke up. D-Day was now set for June 6, but Eisenhower was not completely sold on the new date. He ordered one more meeting in six hours to make sure the weather would cooperate or if the ships and planes would have to be recalled.

**SEVENTH MEETING (Monday, June 5, 4:15 am)**

The atmosphere of the last meeting was decidedly somber. Sheets of rain beat at the side of Southwick House. Everyone was now in battledress uniform except Field Marshal Montgomery, who wore a light yellow turtleneck and corduroy trousers. The men took their seats with grave faces, and the room quickly grew silent. At least Eisenhower had slept fitfully, having been awakened by gale force winds beating against his trailer. It was a good omen that he had delayed the landings. If he had green-lighted the attack for June 5, the air forces would have been grounded, landing craft would have capsized, and airborne troops would never have reached the battlefield.

Stagg was ushered in. He had heavy bags under his eyes from lack of sleep. "Go ahead Stagg," Eisenhower ordered. The weather officer delivered a forecast almost identical to the one earlier. He could report this time, however, that the weather from Wednesday to Friday would be variable, with completely overcast skies, clouds at 1,000 feet, and winds up to Force 5 or 6. The conditions, however, would be interspersed with fair periods with Force 4 winds and good visibility.

Everyone felt relieved. The followup operations could go ahead with a decent chance of success. To Stagg, the look on every face "was a joy to behold." Eisenhower broke into a smile. "Well Stagg," he beamed, "if this forecast comes off, I promise you we'll have a celebration when the time comes." The commanders asked a few questions about how Stagg had come to his conclusions and how far out he was willing to predict.

With everyone's input delivered, Eisenhower got up and began slowly pacing the floor, his head down and his hands clasped behind his back. Finally, he stopped walking, paused, and turned to the men in the room. With a confident voice he announced, "Okay, we'll go!"

**U.S. landing craft make their way through the rough waters of the English Channel toward the landing beaches at Normandy. Weather had caused several delays, but the invasion went forward on June 6 under favorable conditions.**

*Kevin M. Hymel is the historian for the U.S. Air Force Chaplain Corps. He is the author of* Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It*, and leads battlefield tours for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours, which include Southwick House.*

# The Tide Turns

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

## THE BRITISH EIGHTH ARMY WON ONE OF THE PIVOTAL VICTORIES OF WORLD WAR II AT THE WHISTLESTOP OF EL ALAMEIN IN OCTOBER 1942.

After more than two wearying years of seesaw fighting across the North African desert, the outlook was bleak for the British Eighth Army in the early summer of 1942.

The gallant but dispirited army had been outgunned and outmaneuvered by German panzers, deadly 88mm flak guns, and generalship as Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps and its Italian allies pushed east toward Egypt. After the loss of the key port of Tobruk and a defeat at Gazala in the Libyan Western Desert, the Eighth Army was in full retreat. Vital bases—the port of Alexandria and British General Headquarters in Cairo—and the strategically vital Suez Canal were threatened.

On June 25, General Claude J. Auchinleck, the tall, widely respected commander in chief of the British Mediterranean Forces, took direct control of the Eighth Army and ordered a withdrawal from planned defensive positions at Mersa Matruh, east of Tobruk, to the area of El Alamein, a remote coastal town and railway station in northern Egypt, only 65 miles west of Alexandria. The Alamein line would form the North African front over the next four months.

Rommel's forces reached the Alamein line on June 30, 1942, and launched the first Battle of Alamein the following day. The British defenses consisted of four fortified "boxes," linked by small mobile columns, stretched across a 40-mile bottleneck between the Mediterranean Sea and the impassable salt marshes of the Qattara Depression. Most of the British armor was only just arriving at Alamein, but the legendary "Desert Fox" was unaware of that fact.

Rommel's main armored thrust made progress until nightfall when the panzers were halted by artillery fire and attacks on their meager supply lines by fighters and bombers of Air Vice Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham's Desert Air Force. Convinced of Rommel's underlying weakness, Auchinleck launched a strong armored counterattack on July 1 that prevented a further advance by the Afrika Korps.

On July 3, after the British routed a converging move by an Italian division, Rommel broke off the battle. He had only 26 serviceable tanks left and little fuel. Both sides were exhausted. Auchinleck pressed his advantage with a series of armored thrusts in the next few weeks, but they were poorly coordinated at the field level. The battle petered out into a stalemate, during which both sides began to sow minefields and set up protective barbed wire entanglements. Reinforcements reached Rommel at the end of July.

Alamy Images

Auchinleck had won a vital though partial victory, halting Rommel's advance to the Nile Delta. The stalemate resulting from the relative failure of the followup attacks gave Auchinleck time to reinforce his positions to a greater extent than Rommel because German shipping in the Mediterranean was under constant attack by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. British and Commonwealth

In this still frame from a documentary film, British soldiers press on while a wounded man receives first aid on the battlefield at El Alamein, the turning point in the Desert War in North Africa.

troops, tanks, including 300 new American-built M4 Sherman medium tanks with 75mm main weapons, and field guns poured into the Alamein area during August 1942.

Meanwhile, despite Auchinleck's skillful leadership, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had grown impatient for a victory in the Western Desert and could not forgive "The Auk" for the loss of Tobruk. So the prime minister overhauled the command structure, replacing Auchinleck with the handsome Guardsman, General Harold R. Alexander, as Mediterranean commander in chief and naming the able, eccentric Lt. Gen. Bernard L. Montgomery as "new broom" commander of the Eighth Army. Monty replaced Geneneral William H. "Strafer" Gott, who had been killed in a plane crash just after his appointment. Alexander and Montgomery were both decorated, wounded veterans of World War I and heroes of the 1940 Dunkirk campaign.

On his assumption of command on August 13, 1942, the supremely confident Montgomery declared, "Here we will stand and fight; there will be no further withdrawal. I have ordered that all plans and instructions dealing with further withdrawal are to be burnt at once…. The

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1976-091-06, Photo: Klemens Valtingojer

**A German PzKpfw. III advances across the North African desert toward the Egyptian frontier and the village of El Alamein. German panzers inflicted heavy losses on their British counterparts prior to El Alamein, but by the time of the decisive battle in October 1942, their own numbers had dwindled.**

great point to remember is that we are going to finish with this chap Rommel once and for all. It will be quite easy. There is no doubt about it. He is definitely a nuisance. Therefore we will hit him a crack and finish with him."

As the Eighth Army regrouped and prepared for a new offensive, it received a significant morale boost on August 23—a visit from Churchill during his return from talks in Moscow with Soviet Premier Josef Stalin. Puffing on a familiar Havana cigar, wearing a pith helmet, and carrying an umbrella to ward off the hot desert sun, the buoyant prime minister inspected armor and gun positions, lunched and sipped beer with Monty's officers, and greeted cheering soldiers with V for Victory salutes.

The army's new leadership maintained and strengthened Auchinleck's defensive plan for the Alamein position, which offered only one possible attack point for Rommel's next offensive at the end of August, precipitating the battle of Alam Halfa. On the night of August 30, Afrika Korps armored and infantry units attacked to the south of Alamein between the Alam Nayil ridge and the Qattara Depression. Rommel now had 200 panzers and 240 vulnerable Italian tanks, while Montgomery could field 700 tanks. These included a number of American-built Grant (Lee) and some of the new Shermans, which could outperform Rommel's standard PzKpfw. III medium tanks. U.S.-built Stuart light tanks, known to the British as Honeys, also supplemented the Eighth Army's armored array of Cruisers, Crusaders, Covenanters, Valentines, Matildas, Churchills, and Bren gun carriers.

The skilled, audacious German commander hoped to surprise the British with a dawn raid in their rear after an eastward drive, but the enemy force got bogged down in a deep minefield. It was caught by RAF planes the next morning after an advance of only a few miles. Rommel then turned north across difficult soft terrain toward the British position at Alam Halfa, guarded by the 22nd Armored Brigade. Three veteran panzer divisions and the Italian XX Corps attacked, pressing back the British 4th Armored Brigade. But the enemy forces were pinned down by RAF bombers and deadly artillery fire, and their fuel shortages became critical. When Montgomery brought up his other two armored brigades on September 2, Rommel began a gradual withdrawal.

Unwilling to risk his precious tanks in pursuit, Monty called for the staunch 2nd New Zealand Division on the Alam Nayil ridge to close off the enemy retreat. But the Kiwis' attack on the night of September 3 was disrupted by panzer units guarding Rommel's flank, and the withdrawal proceeded unhindered. By September 6, the German and Italian forces were entrenched on high ground east of the original front, and the British called off the battle.

For a loss of 1,750 men and 68 tanks, the Eighth Army had again defied the wily Desert Fox, inflicted about 3,000 casualties, and knocked out 51 of Rommel's precious tanks. Another opportunity to inflict a decisive defeat on the Afrika Korps had been lost, but the Alam Halfa action marked a watershed in the Western Desert war. The enemy forces never again came so close to offensive parity in North Africa, and both sides were now aware that Rommel could no longer hope for an outright victory. After a string of battlefield successes that had mesmerized the world, he had shot his bolt.

Suffering from chronic catarrh, nasal diphtheria, and poor circulation, Rommel was ordered to return to Germany for sick leave and rest. He left in command his deputy, the monocled, good-humored General Georg von Stumme. The balance of power—and morale—in North Africa, meanwhile, had swung in the hard pressed Eighth Army's favor.

Montgomery, the self-confident, peppery son of the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania and a stern mother, strove to revive the spirit of the Eighth

Imperial War Museum

National Archives

**Adversaries in the desert of North Africa, British General Bernard Montgomery (left) took command of the Eighth Army after his predecessor was killed in a plane crash, while German General Erwin Rommel gained a reputation as an audacious commander and earned the nickname of the Desert Fox.**

Army. The world's first multinational fighting force was formed on November 16, 1941, and its shoulder flash was a Crusader's cross. The army's new commander displayed a knack for making complex issues appear simple, ruthlessly purged underachieving officers, and made meticulous preparations for an all-out offensive, Operations Lightfoot and Supercharge, to crush the Afrika Korps once and for all.

Although his manner as an outspoken, brusque maverick earned him the enmity of many peers and superiors, Monty had a flair for winning the confidence of his troops. One Eighth Army soldier said of him, "Most awkward to serve alongside, impossible to serve over, he was an excellent man to serve under." Wearing his familiar black Royal Tank Corps beret or an upturned Australian bush hat, Montgomery made a point of keeping his officers and men aware of his plans. Few generals in World War II kept their men as well informed about operations as Montgomery.

Major General Sir Francis de Guingand, his amiable, invaluable chief of staff, reported, "He very rightly had decided that in order to get the best out of his troops, it was necessary for them to know the whole plan so that they would realize how their particular contribution fitted in with the general scheme of things."

Cheerful and confident, Monty mingled regularly with the troops to deliver pep talks and sometimes hand out cigarettes, although he was a nonsmoker himself. He believed that "the morale of the soldier is the greatest single factor in war." Standing on the hood of a truck or jeep as they gathered around him, he told the soldiers crisply, "There will be no more retreat." He drummed in the need to retain the initiative always and to "kill Germans—even the padres, one per weekday and two on Sundays!"

Supported fully by Alexander, Monty built and maintained morale and physical fitness among the officers and men. Units were retrained in night movements and mine clearance; a complex artillery plan was worked out, and main unit and equipment sites were carefully camouflaged. Dummy transport, supply dumps, and staging areas were established behind the south end of the Alamein line, and radio traffic was stepped up. The aim was to make the Germans think that no attack would be launched before November.

On the enemy side, General Stumme suffered a fatal heart attack, leaving General Ritter von Thoma in temporary command of the Afrika Korps during Rommel's absence.

Under Montgomery's meticulous planning and single-minded resolve, the Eighth Army was honed to a new fighting pitch. Additional units, armor, vehicles, and upgraded equipment arrived in the Alamein area, including the highly effective 6- and 17-pounder antitank guns. By mid-October 1942, Monty's army was ready with nine infantry and three armored divisions. His three corps, the 30th, 13th, and 10th, were led respectively by Lt. Gen. Sir Oliver Leese, Lt. Gen. Brian G. Horrocks, and Lt. Gen. Herbert Lumsden.

The Eighth Army's ranks comprised 195,000 men of many proud brigades and regiments—British Guards, the Black Watch, the Gordon Highlanders, the Camerons, English Yeomanry, New Zealanders, Australians, South Africans, Indians, Canadians, Free French, Greeks, and Poles. The army had by now amassed 1,029 tanks, including 216 Crusaders, 194 Valentines, 252 Shermans, and 170 Grants, along with 2,311 artillery pieces. Facing the Allied force were 104,000 German and Italian troops, 489 tanks, of which 300 were inferior Italian models, and 1,219 guns.

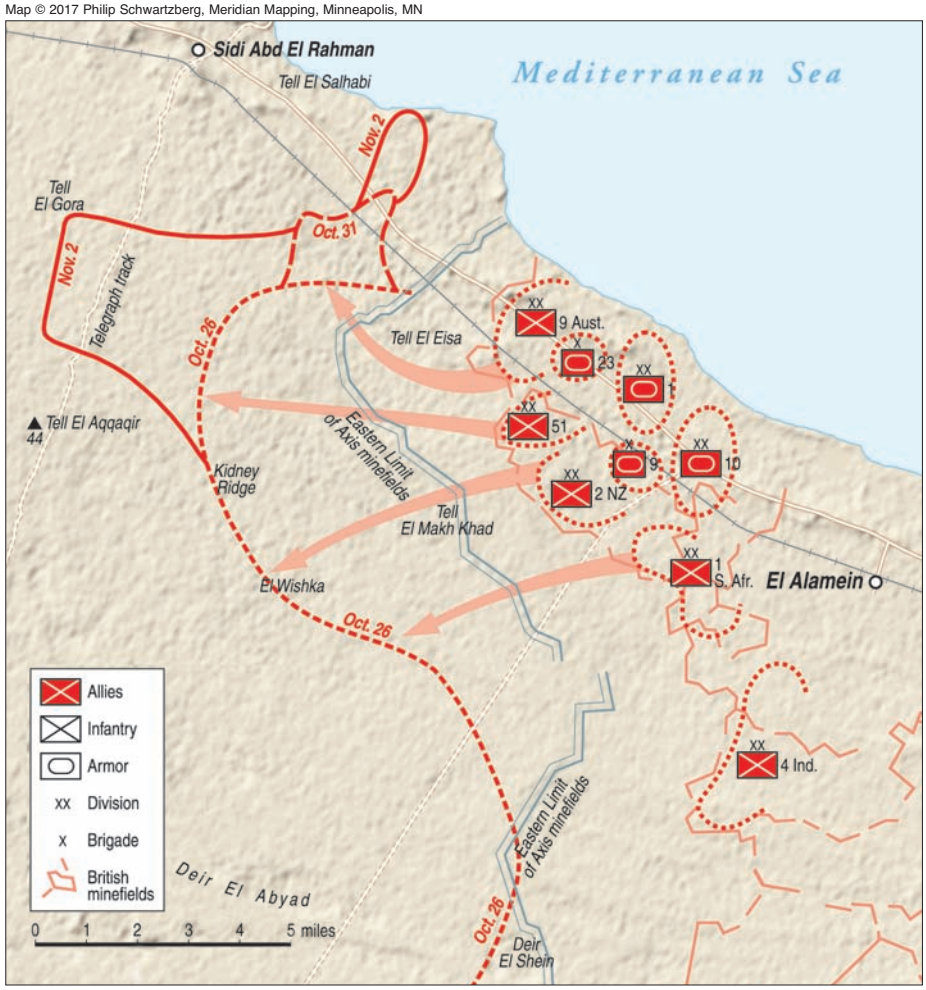

**ABOVE: A German armored vehicle burns in the distance as British soldiers take advantage of the little available cover during their cautious probing of enemy positions near El Alamein. BELOW: Painted in a desert camouflage scheme, these American-built M4 Sherman medium tanks helped tip the balance of battlefield power in favor of the British Eighth Army at El Alamein. These Shermans were assigned to the 7th Armoured Division, the famed Desert Rats.**

Both: National Archives

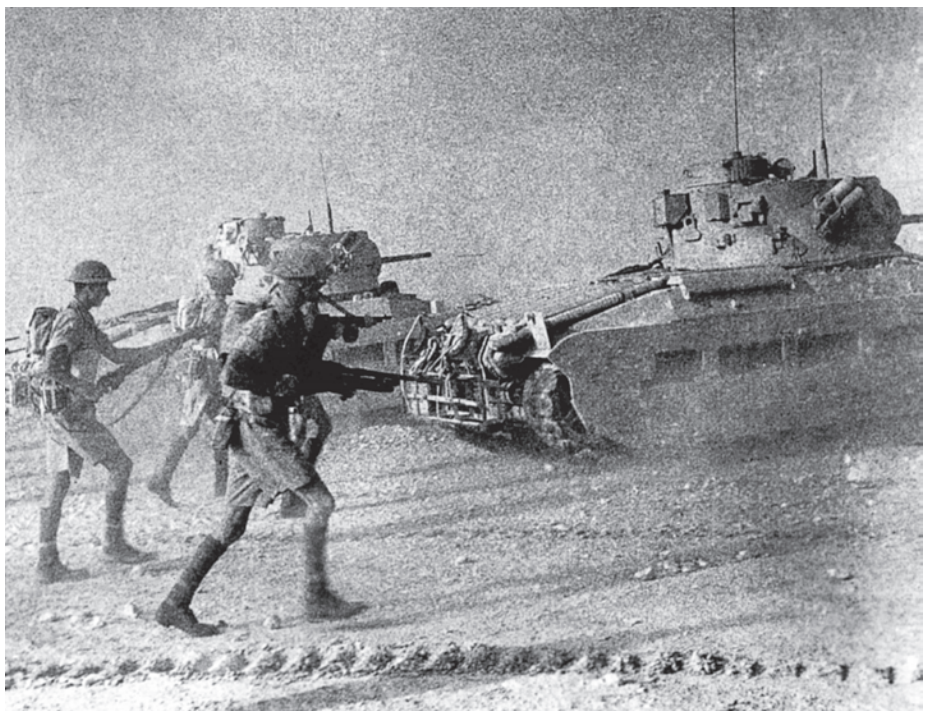
The Eighth Army was fine tuned and ready for the great offensive on Friday, October 23, 1942. In a personal message read out to all troops, General Montgomery said, "The battle which is now about to begin will be one of the decisive battles of history. It will be the turning point of the war…. Together we will hit the enemy for six, right out of North Africa…. And let no man surrender so long as he is unwounded and can fight. Let us pray that the Lord mighty in battle will give us the victory."

During the daylight hours of October 23, the assault troops were confined to their slit trenches and could not abandon cover even to use the latrines. Night came, and the moon rose full over the desert. Infantrymen waited tensely in their trenches, sappers stood ready with mine detectors to lead the way through enemy minefields, and the black-bereted crews of Monty's

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




**ABOVE: A heavy artillery barrage opened the Battle of El Alamein, followed by strong British infantry and armor attacks. After heavy fighting, British forces succeeded in breaching the Axis lines. An epic retreat across 1,000 miles of desert followed. BELOW: In this photograph, probably staged during a desert training exercise, soldiers of the Scots Guards advance behind British tanks.**



Imperial War Museum

"ironsides" primed up their tanks.

At 9:40 PM, all hell broke loose as 1,000 guns of various calibers—including big 4.5-inchers, 25-pounders, and 3.7-inch antiaircraft guns—opened simultaneous fire upon German artillery emplacements from along the 30-mile British line. The biggest artillery barrage since World War I rained steel and high explosives on the known German and Italian positions and ammunition dumps. The night sky was rent with blinding flashes and man-made thunder, and the desert floor vibrated for many miles. In 20 minutes, the British barrage wrought terrible havoc among the enemy gun positions.

At 10 PM, the artillery switched its targets and deluged the enemy's forward troop positions. As a choking curtain of dust and smoke towered over the enemy defenses, the first waves of infantry from the British 13th and 30th Corps moved out. White tape and shaded hurricane lamps marked their starting line. To the plaintive skirling of highland bagpipes, line after line of British and Commonwealth infantry moved methodically forward through the hellish din.

Sappers anchored white tape with rocks to guide the soldiers through the enemy minefields. Rommel's "Devil's Gardens" of mines, bombs, and barbed-wire entanglements were far deeper than had been calculated by Monty's planners. Some minefields stretched for five miles.

The infantry surged steadily forward as moonbeams glinted on their fixed bayonets and rifles were held at the high port position. The great offensive was underway, and nothing would stop it. With new strength and a revived spirit, the Eighth Army had taken the road to eventual victory. Its commander, meanwhile, had calmly gone to bed in his field caravan headquarters, believing that he would serve his men best by getting a good night's sleep.

As the initial waves of British infantry advanced, Monty's tanks began to move forward. Signal pennants fluttered on turrets as columns of Covenanter, Crusader, Valentine, Sherman, Churchill, and Grant tanks kicked up dust clouds, rumbling and clanking along ridges and the desert floor to breach the enemy lines.

In the northern sector, the 9th Australian and 51st Scottish Infantry Divisions went in with fixed bayonets to force a corridor through minefields, while below them the New Zealand and South African divisions attacked to carve out a southern corridor. From the dangerous salient on the Ruweisat Ridge, the 4th Indian Division began a strong

raid into the enemy positions, and at the northern end of the Alamein line an Australian brigade made a diversionary attack between Tel el Eisa and the sea.

The Germans fought back bravely, but by 5:30 AM on October 24, the major British objective had been achieved. Two vital corridors had been opened up, and behind the infantry the 30th Corps divisions and the 1st and 10th Armored Divisions of the 10th Corps were moving in. But at this point, Montgomery's precise timetable went wrong. Increasing enemy fire swept the infantry in the minefields. Although the 9th Armored Brigade and the 2nd New Zealand Division managed to push forward of Miteiriya Ridge, the 10th and 1st Armored Divisions were checked on a narrow front behind the slowing infantry. However, several panzer counterattacks were beaten off.

The enemy resistance was fierce, and British casualties mounted. Much armor was lost to enemy fire, and many setbacks bedeviled the British advance.

In the south of the Alamein line, the 7th Armoured "Desert Rats" Division and the 44th Infantry Division failed to get through the minefields north of Himeimat, and the 13th Corps infantry embarked on a bloody struggle to implement Montgomery's "crumbling" tactics. In the extreme south, an advance by the Free French was thrown back before their armored support could reach them. Although the night attack had secured a bridgehead in the enemy positions, when day came on October 24 the armor had failed to penetrate the minefields and the main German defense line had not been breached. Conditions were precarious for British tanks thrusting into the channels opened up by the infantry.

The Scottish infantry and the 1st Armored Division renewed their attack on the afternoon of October 24, and by dusk tanks of the 2nd Armoured Brigade had blasted their way through. But the 10th Armoured Division, following a massive artillery barrage, still encountered stiff resistance in the southern corridor. Monty ordered it to continue attacking despite casualties.

After two days of heavy fighting, the British offensive was losing impetus. The infantry had moved ahead rapidly, but the supporting armor had been slowed down by mines and soft ground. Losses were heavy, and the assault units were exhausted. There had been much brutal hand-to-hand fighting. Montgomery paused and made plans for a new offensive.

By daylight on October 25, the leading British armored brigade had managed to fight its way 2,000 yards through the enemy minefields, while the 9th New Zealand Armoured Brigade also reached its objective. Attempts by the Afrika Korps to destroy these salients were repulsed at heavy cost. Now that his armored spearheads had penetrated the enemy line and established positions from which they could challenge any counterattacks, Monty stepped up the "crumbling" assaults by his infantry.

Meanwhile, Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler ordered Field Marshal Rommel back to Egypt, where he characteristically made his presence known on the battle lines. At Kidney Ridge, northwest of Miteiriya Ridge, on October 27, men of the British Rifle Brigade and tanks of the 1st Armoured Division made an epic stand against successive assaults by German and Italian armor led personally by Rommel. The savage counterattacks were all repulsed, and the 1st Armoured Division alone destroyed 50 panzers that day. The massed panzers were eventually dispersed in furious attacks by Bristol Beaufighters, Douglas Bostons (A-20s), Hawker Hurricanes, North American B-25 Mitchells, and Curtiss Tomahawks and Kittyhawks (P-40s) of the Desert Air Force.

Ullstein Bild

**ABOVE: Italian tanks move forward in the vicinity of the Qattara Depression during the advance to El Alamein in the autumn of 1942. BELOW: During a training exercise prior to the Battle of El Alamein, Italian soldiers engage in squad-level infantry maneuvers. The Italian soldier in North Africa fought bravely in spite of poor leadership and obsolete equipment.**

National Archives

Montgomery went back on full offensive on October 28-29, telling Brigadier John Currie, commander of the 9th Armoured Brigade, "I am prepared to accept 100 percent casualties." At 1 AM on November 2, with a barrage of 300 guns, Monty launched Operation Supercharge against the Italian Trento Division. Spearheaded by British and New Zealand infantry and the 9th Armoured Brigade, the new blow breached the enemy lines. The 151st and 152nd Brigades reached their objectives, and the 1st Armoured Division eliminated its opposition. After a conference with General von Thoma on the night of November 2, Rommel decided to begin a withdrawal to the Fuka position.

Both: Library of Congress

**This American-built Grant tank, supplied to the British through Lend-Lease, slows during a desert rain as British forces pursue the Germans after El Alamein. Two days of heavy rain prevented the British from cutting off Rommel's remaining troops as they retreated.**

Brutal fighting continued as the Eighth Army infantry, gunners, and tankers battered against stolid enemy resistance. Desperate tank battles raged, and losses were heavy on both sides. German counterattacks withered as British armor, supported by artillery and Desert Air Force bombers, poured through gaps torn in the enemy lines. After confused fighting on the night of November 3, a breakthrough was achieved in the south by the 51st Scottish Infantry and 4th Indian Divisions.

On the sunny morning of the 4th, tanks of the British 22nd Armoured Brigade breached Rommel's defenses in strength and severed the Rahman Track, the main enemy supply line from the Mediterranean coast into the desert. The Axis forces began to retreat, pursued by the 1st, 7th, and 10th Armoured Divisions. Hard forward drives along the coast road by Lt. Gen. Leslie "Ming the Merciless" Morshead's 9th Australian Division, meanwhile, played a key role in swinging the whole battle in favor of the Eighth Army, and there was now no stopping Montgomery's forces.

On November 4, General Alexander reported to Prime Minister Churchill, "After 12 days of heavy and violent fighting, the Eighth Army has inflicted a severe defeat on the German and Italian forces under Rommel's command. The enemy's front has broken, and British armoured formations in strength have passed through and are operating in the enemy's rear areas…. The RAF have throughout given superb support to the land battle and are bombing the enemy's retreating columns incessantly. Fighting continues."

The Desert Fox realized that his forces were doomed unless he withdrew. In a letter to his wife, he said, "The battle is going very heavily against us…. At night, I lie open-eyed, racking my brains for a way out of this plight for my poor troops…. The dead are lucky; it's all over for them."

Rommel warned Hitler on November 2 that his army was without fuel and faced annihilation. Thanks to British ULTRA code breakers, the signal was in Montgomery's hands the next morning. But that day Rommel had received an urgent order from Hitler telling him to hold the El Alamein position to the last man. "There is to be no retreat," said the Führer. "Not so much as one millimeter; victory or death!" Rommel knew this was suicidal nonsense, but he was a soldier who rigidly obeyed orders.

A night attack by the crack 51st Highland Division overran its objectives, and on November 4 General Leese's 30th Corps pushed through the enemy lines at Tel el Aqqaqir, bringing the 12-day Battle of El Alamein to a close.

The stubborn Rommel had resisted calling for a retreat, but as his defenses caved in he finally received permission from Hitler on the evening of the 4th to withdraw. The pullout, however, had already begun, with Rommel turning a blind eye when General von Thoma sent columns of the Afrika Korps moving westward. Driving out into the desert to investigate a report that Eighth Army armor had broken through to the south, von Thoma was surrounded by British tanks and forced to surrender. Nine Italian generals were also in British hands.

Tough, stocky General Fritz Bayerlein assumed command of the battered Afrika Korps as it began a headlong but masterly westward retreat across Libya, leaving behind the desert battlefield littered with burned-out panzers and shattered flak guns, and abandoning its Italian allies. Tanks of the 1st, 7th, and 10th Armoured Divisions followed the fleeing Germans, and fighters and bombers of the Desert Air Force mercilessly harassed their long columns jamming the coast road.

Because of the toll taken by the Desert Air Force on the Axis transport and the critical shortage of fuel, there were only enough vehicles to get the surviving German troops away. With sparse food and water, and loath to retreat on foot in the face of relentless strafing and bombing, the men of six Italian divisions surrendered by the tens of thousands to the advancing British.

Montgomery sought to swing his main armored force northward and around the retreating Afrika Korps to block the coastal road at the bottlenecks of Fuka and Mersa Matruh, but he chose to be cautious. He had a healthy respect for Rommel's proven ability to hit back when all seemed lost, so Monty refused to allow the 10th Armoured Division to go all out for Sollum and Tobruk. Nevertheless, a large number of prisoners, tanks, and trucks was headed off and captured by the 8th Armoured Brigade.

Then, even as it had saved Rommel during the earlier Crusader campaign, the weather came to the rescue of the Afrika Korps. Within minutes as the New Zealanders bore down on

Fuka and the 1st and 7th Armoured Divisions converged on Mersa Matruh, a blinding deluge of rain turned the firm going into a treacherous quagmire. It rained for two days, and on November 7, Montgomery's whole pursuit force was bogged down. There was now no way to cut off what remained of the Afrika Korps. Although the Desert Air Force pressed home damaging attacks, the Germans were able to make good use of 24 hours of respite, and most of the surviving enemy troops got away along the coast road. Although four crack German divisions and eight Italian divisions had been annihilated, Rommel still had a compact and formidable force of armor, guns, and vehicles.

But time was running out for the Desert Fox and his army. During Operation Torch 100,000 British and American troops landed in Algeria and Morocco on the morning of November 8, 1942, and Rommel's fleeing army found itself boxed in between them and the advancing Eighth Army.

The Battle of El Alamein, the climax of the Western Desert campaigns and the first major turning point of World War II, was costly to both sides. The Afrika Korps lost about 20,000 men killed and wounded, and 30,000 prisoners were taken. Axis tanks destroyed or damaged totaled 450, and the Italians abandoned 75 due to lack of fuel. At least 1,000 enemy guns were destroyed. The battle cost the Eighth Army 13,560 men killed and wounded, 150 tanks knocked out, and 100 guns lost.

When news of the victory was flashed to Britain, spirits soared. The island nation's hard-pressed people, subjected to more than two years of bombing, severe rationing, and inured to a series of military defeats from Singapore to Norway to Crete, rejoiced at the headlines and radio broadcasts. On Churchill's order, church bells rang out in cities, towns, and villages on Sunday, November 15. They had been held silent for almost two years and would otherwise have been rung only as an invasion alarm. As loudspeakers crackled the tidings in war production plants, weary workers broke out in cheers.

"There's plenty more where that came from," said one woman lathe operator.

Churchill was ecstatic. "Before Alamein, we never had a victory," he said later. "After Alamein, we never had a defeat." In a cheerful speech during the annual Lord Mayor's lunch at London's Mansion House on Tuesday, November 10, the prime minister pronounced El Alamein "a remarkable and definite victory" and said, "The bright gleam has caught the helmets of our soldiers…. Now, this is not the end.

**Italian prisoners of war march into captivity. After the defeat at El Alamein, the British Eighth Army pursued Panzerarmee Afrika westward across the North African desert. Operation Torch, the Allied landings along the eastern coast of North Africa on November 8, 1942, caught the Axis forces in a deadly vise.**

It is not even the beginning of the end, but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

At that time, Rommel's army was being steadily pushed back to Sidi Barrani, 200 miles west of El Alamein.

General Montgomery was hailed as a national hero as the Eighth Army advanced westward for four bitter months through Bardia, Tobruk, Gazala, Derna, Benghazi, El Agheila, Sirte, Tripoli, Medenine, Gabes, the Mareth Line, and on to a triumphant march into Tunis with flags flying, regimental drums pounding, and bagpipes skirling.

In Tunisia, Monty's proud, bronzed crusaders joined with troops of Lt. Gen. Kenneth Anderson's British First Army, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s U.S. II Corps, and Free French units to crush the remaining Axis resistance in North Africa in March 1943.

The Eighth Army then played a critical role in the capture of Sicily and battled up the craggy Italian boot to Trieste and the Austrian Alps, taking part in the bloody campaigns at Salerno, the River Sangro, Monte Cassino, the Gothic Line, Primasole, Catania, the Gustav Line, Ortona, the Liri Valley, and the Po Valley. It covered more battle miles than any other army in World War II. General Richard McCreery was its last commander when the Eighth Army was unceremoniously disbanded in late July 1945.

Montgomery, meanwhile, had gone on to command the British 21st Army Group and head Allied ground forces in the great invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

The Eighth Army's finest hour, the Battle of El Alamein, was immortalized on film in *Desert Victory,* regarded by many as the finest documentary to emerge from World War II. Directed by Roy Boulting and Colonel David MacDonald of the British Army Film Unit and featuring an inspiring score by Sir William Alwyn, it received the 1943 Academy Award for best documentary. Of the 26 cameramen who filmed *Desert Victory* under fire, four were killed, six wounded, and seven captured.

Prime Minister Churchill sent copies of the documentary to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Premier Stalin, and the dominion governments. Stalin called *Desert Victory* "magnificent," and FDR said it was "about the best thing that has been done about the war on either side … everybody in town is talking about it." □

*Author Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to* WWII History. *He writes on a variety of topics and resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

# Prisoner in

NOBODY KNEW IT IN THE 6TH ARMORED DIVISION'S 9TH ARMORED Infantry Battalion, but the tide of the Battle of the Bulge had turned by the time the outfit moved into snow-covered fields and forests near Bastogne. Adolf Hitler had given up on his overly ambitious plan to force the Meuse River, split the Allied armies in half, and seize the major Belgian port city of Antwerp.

One major reason for the German failure had been the determined American defense of the Belgian town of Bastogne by the 101st Airborne Division and elements of Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division. Now the "battered bastion" had been relieved by Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army, and Hitler had ordered his elite SS panzer divisions to regroup and seize the consolation prize. The hardest fighting for Bastogne lay just ahead. So did the hardest ordeal in the life of a young Jewish GI from New Jersey named Robert Max, who would endure the multiple traumas of combat, captivity, slave labor, and escape from the Nazis, returning home at half his body weight, but surviving to speak about his experiences for decades, inspiring generations yet unborn.

**ABOVE: Bob Max survived a spate of combat during the Battle of the Bulge and several months as a prisoner of war. RIGHT: Tanks of the U.S. 6th Armored Division leave their telltale tracks in the snow as they advance toward the town of Bastogne, recently relieved after days under siege by German forces during the Battle of the Bulge.**

Bob's life story began in 1922 in New Jersey. Born in Newark and raised there and in neighboring South Orange, Bob won sprinting medals in junior high school and played football in leagues for teenagers, often against high school teams. Bob's father owned a wholesale milk business, which resulted in long hours and road trips. Bob's older brother Lester was often a father figure to him.

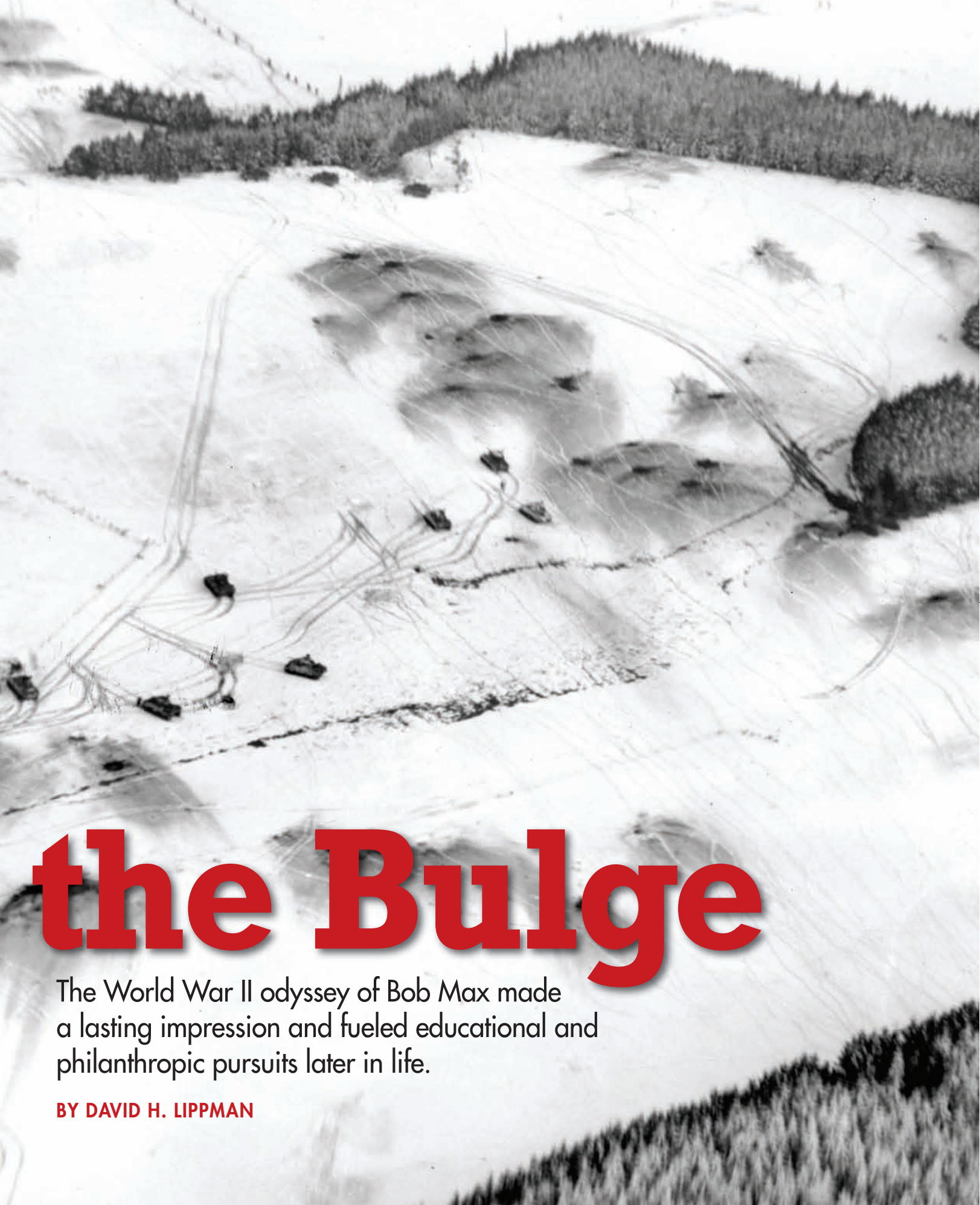
As World War II hit America, Bob enlisted in the Army on October 26, 1942, and was assigned to the 9th Armored Infantry Battalion, part of Maj. Gen. Robert Grow's 6th "Super Sixth" Armored Division, under III Corps, which fought under Patton's command in the breakout from Normandy, in Brittany, and in the Lorraine. When the Germans launched the Battle of the Bulge on December 16, 1944, the 6th Armored, like the rest of III Corps, was pulled out of its eastward attack into the Saar, turned 90 degrees, and hurled northward to relieve Bastogne. The spearpoint of Patton's drive on Bastogne was his veteran 4th Armored Division, with the 6th right behind it.

The 4th Armored did its job, hooking up with the legendary "Screaming Eagles" right after Christmas. But the 4th Armored was worn down by the fighting, and the 6th Armored moved in after them, taking over the 4th's positions as 1945 began.

At the same time, the German 1st SS Panzer Corps stormed down on Bastogne, its attack headed by the 9th "Hohenstaufen" SS Panzer Division and the 12th "Hitler Jugend" SS Panzer Division. The latter outfit, which had already amassed a hefty record of bravery and butchery, was based on a cadre of former Hitler Youth filled with Nazi rhetoric and lavishly equipped with Krupp tanks and guns. In Normandy, 12th SS men had mown down captured Canadian prisoners in cold blood, an incident that led to Canada's only postwar war crimes trial.

Adding to the misery was the terrible weather. After a brief period of clear weather that enabled American and British airpower to savage the German armor, temperatures dropped

Alamy



# the Bulge

The World War II odyssey of Bob Max made a lasting impression and fueled educational and philanthropic pursuits later in life.

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

Both: National Archives

**ABOVE: A German PzKpfw. V Panther medium tank, its long-barreled 75mm main gun jutting from the turret, blazes after being knocked out in combat in the vicinity of Bastogne, the vital Belgian crossroads town that played a pivotal role in the Battle of the Bulge. OPPOSITE: During heavy fighting against German forces in the vicinity of Bastogne, armored infantrymen of the 6th Armored Division advance cautiously across a snow-covered meadow. Sherman tanks are visible in support of the advance.**

again, burying men in intense cold and snow.

The two SS divisions slammed into Bastogne's weary defenders from the northeast on January 5 in a two-day attack that cost the 101st Airborne 53 dead, 393 wounded, and 91 missing, a 4.1 percent loss in personnel. The 6th Armored suffered 62 dead, 215 wounded, and 41 missing, for a 2.97 percent personnel loss. The Germans forced the 6th Armored's Combat Command B to give up the towns of Magret and Wardin.

Despite these losses, this last German thrust was ultimately stopped cold. At the close of the day, German Field Marshal Walther Model, commanding Army Group B and the whole Nazi offensive, ordered the 9th SS Panzer Division pulled back to cover his crumbling northern front. The 12th SS Panzer Division was ordered to withdraw.

None of these moves mattered to Bob Max, though. Early on the morning of January 6, his main concern was food. He hadn't eaten, and he was sent to the rear to get some chow and a little rest. There, he was told that the always fragile telephone lines to the forward positions were broken, and Bob volunteered to find out what was going on. He saw a jeep and commandeered it.

Bob headed off with five other soldiers picked almost at random. Reflecting decades later, Bob said, like many GIs, "I always loved driving in a jeep anyway." He took off to where he was told his unit was supposed to be, heading down a road. They knew they were near the front line when they saw a wrecked and burning American tank by the side of the road.

"As we rounded a curve, we saw a tank appear in front of us with an 88mm gun pointed directly at us," Bob recalled in 2015. It was likely one of the 12th SS Panzer Division's many self-propelled assault guns, but it packed more firepower than Bob's jeep, which was armed with only a machine gun.

"We had nowhere to go," Bob said. "We had to get out of the jeep. I jammed the brakes and went into a ditch; we were forced to abandon the jeep. I saw a shack off the road. One of the guys dismantled the machine gun. We took off and ran across the road under rifle and machine-gun fire. One of our guys was hit in the back. The bullets continued to pour in."

One of the American soldiers set up the machine gun in the shack's bay window and opened fire in the direction of the enemy. When the gunner was injured by a Nazi bullet, Bob instinctively jumped in front to replace him and resumed firing, fully exposed to enemy fire.

"The Germans were shooting at us from bunkers where they were well protected," Bob said later. "I shot at everything I saw move and hit many enemy soldiers."

All day long Bob and his band fought back against the entrenched German troops. By late afternoon, the Americans' ammunition was dwindling, the survivors were in agony from their wounds, and Bob and his crew had to decide what to do—hide, flee, or surrender.

"The shack had a trap door leading to a cellar, so when our ammunition eventually ran out, we decided to hide there temporarily. Our plan was to lead the Germans to suspect we had all been killed or fled, and then under the cover of darkness infiltrate through enemy lines. But when the Nazi soldiers entered the shack, one of our wounded moaned, which gave us away. When a German tapped on the cellar, I pushed up the door and saw a vision that remains clear to me today—a ring of black automatic weapons held by hooded Germans in white snowsuits, with their fingers on the triggers," Bob said.

"One of them, who looked like a sergeant, motioned for us to come up, so we did, and they took away our weapons."

All of the Americans were taken away at that point, leaving Bob alone with a German sergeant who forced Bob to check the shack for booby traps. Next the sergeant forced Bob to cross the road, his gun barrel jammed into Bob's back, toward the German bunkers. American artillery was shelling the area, and both shrapnel and tree fragments were flying through the air, creating a terrifying situation. "If that hot metal pierces your skin," Bob said later, "you're finished."

Nevertheless, Bob dashed across the road to the bunkers, and the Germans climbed into them, leaving Bob unprotected outside, at the mercy of the elements, American artillery, and

German rifles.

Bob tried to climb into a German bunker to be safe from the shelling, at least, but the German sergeant waved him off, saying, "Nein, nein."

Bob realized his life was probably on the line. "What are you going to do to me?" Bob asked the sergeant.

"I have to shoot you," the sergeant said, in English.

"My impulse was to run," Bob said later. "Just to get to the road and sprint down it like I did as a sprinter in school. I saw the burning American tank across the road, and from the light of its flames, I could see bunker after bunker, and each had a little silhouette of a machine gun. I knew that if I started running, I wouldn't get out of the starting block. So all that was left was conversation.

"I started talking with the German, and he asked me, 'What are you Americans doing here? This is not your war.'"

"I said, 'You made it our war,' and the talk went on. Then the German reached into his pants. I thought he was going to bring out his pistol and shoot me, but it was his wallet."

As shellfire and tree fragments rained down, the German sergeant showed Bob photographs of his family—wife, son, and daughter—and said, "Next year, we'll be in New York City."

Bob was astonished by "how assured the German was that Hitler would conquer the world. But as he looked at his wallet and his beautiful kids, I could see his attitude changing." Finally he said, 'For you the war is over. I'm sending you to a prisoner of war camp.'"

It was a "moment of elation" for Bob, knowing that he would not die. The German added, "You killed many of our men, but you fought well."

The sergeant signaled some guards, issued orders in German, and the Germans took Bob away. "I don't know what the orders were, but I assumed they were to take me to a POW camp."

As Bob and his escorts hiked through the snow, the story became stranger. The party ran into an officer who took the guards aside and issued them new orders. Bob was taken not to a standard POW camp, but to a large group of prisoners in unfamiliar uniforms surrounded by armed German guards. Most of the prisoners did not speak a language Bob recognized.

In all likelihood, Bob was handed over to an SS-controlled work unit, made up of Eastern European POWs being used as slave labor.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Nazis captured vast hordes of Soviet POWs. The Germans ignored the various conventions on treating these POWs and used them as slave labor, often starving them. To escape their plight, numbers of these POWs actually volunteered to join the German Army and were sent to Normandy and other battlefields to fight the American and British invaders. But most refused to become turncoats and instead suffered and starved in labor units that built and rebuilt bridges, railroads, and roads, worked in factories and coal mines, and built fortifications behind front lines. Somehow Bob had joined one of these units.

"The Germans took my overcoat and gloves. I assumed this meant I would be sheltered and hopefully fed," Bob said later.

This was not the German plan. "They marched us along a road at night, with lots of guards beside us. After a while, they pointed their rifles at us and told us to lie down on roads covered with snow and ice, which we did. That's what we did for the next 82 out of 90 nights."

Bob and his fellow prisoners marched through the sub-zero conditions of the Ardennes Forest under guard, lying down when ordered. He was unable to sleep, because he had to keep his fingers and toes, numb from cold and marching, moving to prevent frostbite. Periodically, the Germans fed them a crust of dark brown bread. The prisoners drank snow. "Whether we lived or died was of no importance to them," Bob said later. "Some men dropped out and died. Some were shot."

After a while, they were finally brought to a bomb-damaged railway line. There, the Germans ordered Bob and the other laborers to rebuild sections of track.

"We had to line up and carry a section of track on our shoulders," Bob said later. "It was excruciating. We carried those track sections for miles at night. They showed us how to repair the tracks by replacing wrecked sections with the new ones, and then putting in new ties to make them secure."

The prisoners had their own form of passive resistance against their SS guards, which they shared through hand signals with Bob. The slaves did not line the tracks up properly, kept the ties loose, or didn't install the ties at all, so that the tracks could not bear the weight

Both: National Archives

**A young American prisoner of war with a look of fear and consternation on his face marches toward the rear with his hands on his head. Soon after his capture, Bob Max was put to work with other prisoners repairing railroad tracks.**

of trains.

"I was very proud of our sabotage," Bob said. "We'd share our triumphs with looks and hand signals."

Day after day, Bob and the men moved rails amid appalling conditions, sleeping in snow and ice. Bob's right foot became enflamed with frostbite. The pain was so bad, he couldn't walk in his shoes. But if he fell out of the marches, Bob knew he would be shot. Finally, Bob tossed one shoe over a hedge and wrapped a scarf around his aching right foot; the scarf was his injured foot's only protection from exposure to the elements.

"That was my mode of transportation for the rest of the time I was in captivity," Bob said. "It was a painful decision."

Brutality was the rule in the labor gang. If men dropped out from weakness, they were left. If a slave went to help a fallen buddy, an SS guard would smash a rifle butt in his back—or shoot the Samaritan.

"When I was awake, I thought about food. I just kept thinking about foods I'd like," Bob said later.

During this ordeal, more prisoners joined the group, seemingly at random. One of them was, astonishingly, another American POW, Myron Barringer, a farmer from Rushfield, Indiana.

At one point, the party of slave laborers found themselves spending a night in a barn, sharing it with cattle. Barringer helped Bob lie down underneath a cow and milk it, providing Bob with fresh milk direct from the source.

Through it all, Bob kept envisioning all the meals he would eat if he ever made it home—apple pie, lamb stew, veal chops, t-bone steak with onions and peppers, Italian sausage, gefilte fish, soft-shelled crab, tuna fish salad, chopped liver, egg salad, lox, cheese omelets. "I would see bacon bubbling in the pan," he recalls. "I could even smell it."

The endless cycle of marching, repairing train tracks, and more marching ended in the German town of Prüm at the southern edge of the Ardennes.

There the Germans gave the prisoners six crackers, each one inch in diameter; this was the meal for the day. "Later we were marched into Gerolstein, and that's where we got a can of hot water with a small piece of potato."

Next Bob was marched to Stalag XIIA at Limburg, which was a regular POW camp run by the Wehrmacht—heated barracks, straw mattresses, and fellow Americans. Bob found a GI playing "Yellow Rose of Texas" on a harmonica.

There, Bob took a look at his own face in a metal strip for the first time in weeks and saw that it was orange from jaundice. But now, at least, in a proper POW camp, Bob figured he would get decent food and medical treatment.

He was wrong.

Two days later, Bob and others were marched out of camp to a train station, heading east. Alongside were German troops moving in the opposite direction, to the front, to face the advancing Allied armies.

Bob and his group were loaded onto filthy German boxcars. The German high command had made a decision to withdraw the POWs they held east and west away from advancing Allied or Soviet forces, hoping to use them as last-ditch bargaining chips.

"Eighty of us were packed in a car designed to hold 40, body against body. One time a day, they threw in some scraps of hard brown bread. Men crawled on the floor to get crumbs and became animals," Bob recalled. "It was survival of the fittest, and some became mentally deranged by the horrible conditions. The trains lacked latrines. Some died from malnutrition and at least one prisoner was killed by a German sergeant."

Oddly enough, the German sergeant's name was Eisenhauer, the Germanic version of Dwight D. Eisenhower's last name.

After six days, the prisoners were unloaded from their train and ordered to march again. "I couldn't take much more of this," Bob said later. "I was always thinking about escaping, and I knew it was time to do so."

Bob's plan was to find a curve in the march route where the German guards—less numerous than in the Ardennes—could not see him and flee the group. He and two other Americans threw themselves through some hedges. The others he had been with went stolidly on, whether to support his escape or from force of

habit he never knew.

Bob was no longer a prisoner, but he didn't know where he was. He remembered that the train had passed through a town earlier and he later learned that it was Reichenbach, a small country town in Baden-Wurttemberg surrounded by rolling hills.

Avoiding human contact, Bob and the others walked through the hills and began hearing sounds familiar to any combat soldier—the roar of battle. He went down a hill to see if he was near advancing American troops and saw that he was actually near a staging area for German soldiers defending that portion of the shrinking Reich from the advancing U.S. Seventh Army, which was driving on Stuttgart, the Brenner Pass, and the reputed (but nonexistent) German "National Redoubt."

So instead of GIs in olive drab, Bob saw German troops in *feldgrau* (field gray). He saw a white house in the distance, and the three Americans slipped away from the Germans to the house, sensing that it might be a safe place.

"A young guy came to the door and opened it. He saw me, with my shaved head, and tried to close the door. I shoved my left foot into the door and told my story," Bob said. "Then an elderly couple came to the door and saw us. The woman offered us some soup with a few pieces of meat floating in the broth, which was delectable," Bob remembered. "We could hear shells firing in the distance and realized we were near Allied lines." The man pointed us toward a barn. We crawled there through several alleys following a map the man had written and stayed there in the hayloft above some cattle."

When Bob woke up the next morning, he saw a German soldier on the ground beneath him, in suspenders and boots, milking a cow. Some of the hay in the loft flitted down near the German soldier and luckily fell behind him and did not reveal the Americans' hiding place.

Bob and the other two hid in the hayloft the rest of the day. The next day, Bob looked down from the hayloft into a narrow alley and saw men in uniforms and helmets, but he wasn't sure if they were American or German. Then he saw an olive drab-painted vehicle drive past, a big white star stamped on the side. The three Americans half ran, half crawled to meet the GIs.

"The GIs who met us had a real shock, faced with three emaciated survivors who looked half-human. They took us in their arms. We were nearly unconscious. They laid us down and gave us chocolate, which tasted great. They saw my right foot was in that scarf and rushed me to the field hospital," Bob said. He had lost half his weight and suffered 20 illnesses contracted from captivity and exposure. There, he was put on intravenous fluid and medication.

Bob was evacuated to the 1st General Hospital in Liege, Belgium, and from there to Paris. He was in the City of Light when he learned of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. While in the hospital, war crimes investigators took testimony from Bob about Sergeant Eisenhauer's criminal behavior.

Bob's disappearance had not gone unnoticed by the American chain of command. He was swiftly reported missing in action to his family, which included his older brother Lester, who was a communications man in another division in the Battle of the Bulge. When Lester saw Bob's name on a routine list of missing personnel, he sent a message to other units to let him know if Bob turned up alive.

When Bob did, the word got through to Lester Max on a new list of recovered MIAs being treated, and Lester immediately fired off a note home to New Jersey to let their parents know that Bob had survived the ordeal.

"It was the most dramatic thing," Bob noted. "Lester raised me, and my family learned from him that I was alive before they got the telegram from the War Department." Lester also survived the war.

Bob was evacuated to Halloran General Hospital on Staten Island to recover from his wounds and suffering, and started receiving medals—a Purple Heart with an oak leaf cluster, three bronze campaign battle stars, and decades later, the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal.

It took Bob a year to recover from the wounds, illnesses, and injuries he suffered. He recorded those in a little brown notebook a nurse had given him: trench fever, acute dysentery, malnutrition, pyoderma, frozen feet and hands, trench foot, swollen legs, fallen arches, sinusitis, beri-beri, typhoid, jaundice, bronchitis, and a back injury. He had lost 61 pounds.

He still has the little notebook today and something more important: his Army dogtags, a Mezuzah and Star of David attached to them.

Today, Bob lives at home in Summit, New Jersey. In his 90s, he is still active in the Max Foundation, which he and his wife established at Ohio University and with community work. He still lectures on his experiences during the war. He is turning his life into a book. He also has thousands of letters he has received from students over the years, thanking him for giving his lectures. "They show that each of those kids knows something. What we teach lasts a lifetime," Bob added.

The letters make Bob pause, as he did on World War II battlefields more than 70 years ago. "When I saw somebody who was killed, I would pause and look at that individual and think, 'That family will never be the same again.'" □

**Bob Max, right, photographed with a fellow patient in a hospital in the United States while he recovered from wounds and the privations as a German POW. His recovery required more than a year of treatment.**

*Author David Lippman is a frequent contributor to* WWII History. *He has written on a number of topics and has maintained a website detailing the daily events of the war.*

Fregattenkapitän (Commander) Otto Kretschmer sank or damaged more Allied ships than any other U-boat commander during World War II. According to German records, he racked up 312,000 gross tons sent to the bottom or damaged.

ullstein bild

Self-confident, well-trained, and with a ruthless quest for knowledge of the sea and ships, Kretschmer was a man who preferred ships to women. He carried himself with the bearing of a man who knew what he was doing and why he was doing it. He had other characteristics, too: a cruel contempt for weakness, an intolerance for anything that did not conform to his personal standards, a refusal to allow ordinary human failings to interfere with duty, and his pride, which was offset by a ready sense of humor and a willingness to listen to the problems of others providing they did not trespass on his privacy or lead to familiarity.

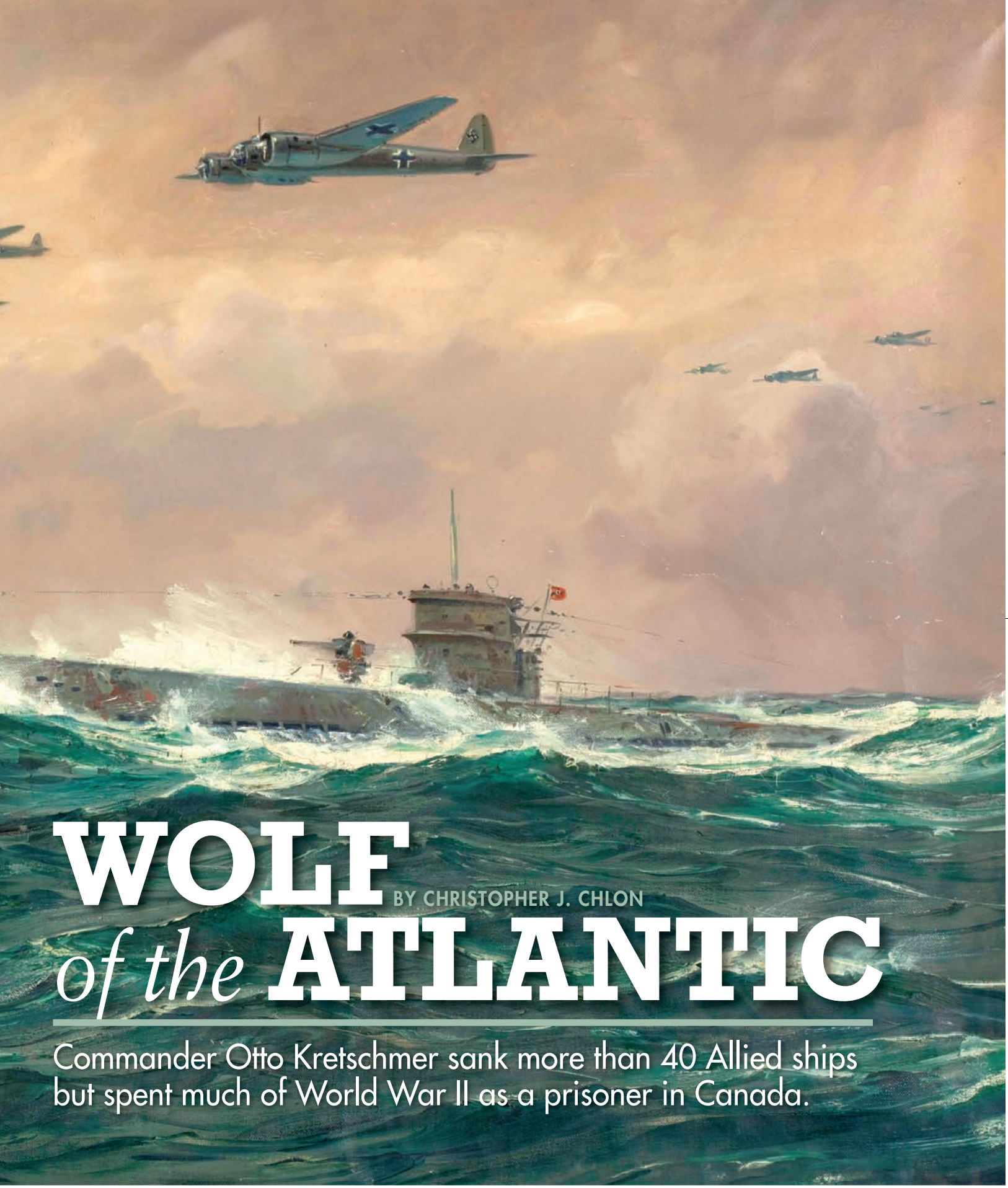
Born on May 1, 1912, in Prussian Silesia, he was the son of a schoolmaster who loved languages and science. Kretschmer shared his father's loves and at age 17 went to Britain, France, Italy, and Austria to perfect his knowledge of both. At age 18, he joined the Reichsmarine as an officer candidate. After completing his officer training, he sailed for three months aboard the training ship *Niobe,* followed by a year aboard the light cruiser *Emden.*

The Treaty of Versailles had placed strict limits on Germany's armed forces. Nevertheless, the Navy openly launched a reconstruction program. Under the command of Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, shipyards in Bremen, Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven, and Kiel built a new, modern fleet of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. However, Raeder was not satisfied. At a naval conference in Berlin, Raeder told Hitler, "The key to German power at sea lies below the surface. Give us submarines and we will have the teeth to attack."

Six months later, Hitler gave him the "teeth." He showed Raeder a telegram from Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop with the news that Britain had signed the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935 giving Germany the right

**In this 1940 painting by German war artist Claus Bergen, a Type VII U-boat of the German Navy sets out toward the waters off the coast of England on a wartime patrol accompanied by Junkers Ju-88 aircraft. INSET: Commander Otto Kretschmer, the top scoring U-boat ace of World War II, is shown in a formal portrait with the Knights Cross with Oak Leaves hanging at his throat.**

Bundesarchiv Bild 134-C1801; Photo: Unknown



# WOLF *of the* ATLANTIC

BY CHRISTOPHER J. CHLON

Commander Otto Kretschmer sank more than 40 Allied ships but spent much of World War II as a prisoner in Canada.

Alamy

**Under the command of Otto Kretschmer, *U-23* sows magnetic mines from its torpedo tubes in the Firth of Forth. Several of Kretschmer's early missions involved laying mines to impede British shipping.**

to build a surface fleet up to 35 percent of the size of Britain's. Also included was a clause that allowed Germany to build a new submarine service of 45 percent of the Royal Navy's and up to parity if a "situation arose which in their opinion made it necessary." Hitler curtly told Raeder, "There are your teeth."

Raeder quickly turned Germany's diplomatic victory into action. He pulled World War I U-boat Ace Karl Dönitz from his duty on the cruiser *Emden* and put him in charge of rebuilding the U-boat arm. He made the anti-submarine training school in Kiel the center for teaching both defensive and offensive tactics.

Kretschmer's career in the U-boat fleet began in 1936 as a trainee in Kiel. Along with the other trainees, he listened earnestly to Dönitz's greeting. "The Navy represents the cream of the armed forces. The U-boat arm represents the cream of the Navy. A few of you will command your own submarines one day. But most of you will be sent back to the big ships you came from. The future of each of you depends on your individual efforts to meet the standards that I require of you."

Two of Kretschmer's fellow trainees, Gunther Prien and Otto Schepke, were delighted to have the chance to train for U-boat duty, getting them away from obscure duties on ships. Both would achieve notable success for the U-boat arm.

By the middle of 1938, the U-boat fleet had grown from two World War I training boats to 30 modern oceangoing attack craft. Trainee crews anxiously awaited the new U-boats under construction in Germany's shipyards.

On the eve of the third meeting between Hitler and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in Munich in 1938, Dönitz called a secret meeting of his officers in his headquarters on the Baltic coast. More than 50 officers were there, including Prien, Schepke, and Kretschmer, all wearing lieutenant's stripes.

Prien was given command of *U-47*, a 500-ton oceangoing vessel. Schepke had the smaller *U-3,* and Kretschmer took command of *U-23,* a small 250-ton attack boat. During his training Kretschmer acquired a reputation as the finest torpedo shot in the German Navy.

By September 1938, rumors of war filled the air. The new commanders anticipated their first assignments with nervous tension. They guessed that the meeting in Munich would shed some light on the talk of war. Dönitz did not keep them waiting and addressed the U-boat men. "Gentlemen, you will know by now that Führer has left Berlin to meet with the British Prime Minister at Munich," said Dönitz. "I am assured by Admiral Raeder that he is determined to reach an agreement with England, but it is our duty to be prepared for the failure of any political settlement and the consequences which may result. You will therefore hold yourselves in readiness for hostilities as from now until further notice.

"Before leaving here you will be issued with sealed envelopes containing secret orders, and I must impress upon you that the seals are not to be broken until you receive signals from me indicating that hostilities have been declared. You will receive sailing orders from your flotilla leaders, and every operational submarine must be in battle stations within the next three days.

"Tomorrow a public announcement will be made that the German Navy is carrying out fleet exercises in the North Sea and the Baltic. This will serve to cover our real purpose. I hope—indeed I am confident—that the Munich conference will succeed in reaching a settlement with England. But should it fail, you will serve Germany in the forefront of the armed services. Good luck."

In the following 12 hours, 25 submarines sailed into the North Sea from their bases in Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. They proceeded to set up patrols from the Shetland Islands in the north to the Atlantic coast of France in the south. Dönitz had thrown "a loop of steel" around the British Isles while Chamberlain and Hitler argued in Munich.

Two days later Kretschmer, in command of *U-23,* sailed into his first patrol. The boat had stores and provisions for 25 days at sea. Built to carry four torpedoes, it had only one in order to allow for magnetic mines to be launched. The boat patrolled the area 15 miles east of the Humber region of England. Submerged during the day to avoid detection, the boat surface at night to recharge its batteries. *U-23* stayed on its battle stations for three days.

Gunter Prien and *U-47* patrolled the waters off Scapa Flow, the main anchorage of the Royal Navy's Home Fleet. Concerned about the outcome of the meeting in Munich, Prien did not relish the idea of attacking the well-defended base.

Otto Schepke cruised far to the south and was not worried about possible orders. He amused his crew with sarcastic comments as his boat carried out dummy attacks on freighters and passenger ships in the English Channel.

Two days later, on the eve of their third day at sea, Dönitz signaled his commanders: "All units return to base with utmost dispatch. Exercises completed."

Hitler had given Chamberlain his word that he had no further territorial ambitions. The two had achieved "peace for our time."

Dönitz ordered his commanders to open their sealed orders, hold inquests on them, and to send him a composite report. Upon reading their orders, the commanders learned that they had been expected to lay mines in the entrances of all the rivers and harbors around England. They were to have attacked targets close to shore batteries inside what they regarded as a well-

defended belt, running the risk of unknown antisubmarine devices. The commanders considered such operations suicidal.

By May 1939, the U-boat fleet numbered 56 boats with 40 operational. Fleet battle instructions called for all operational U-boats to be at battle patrols before war broke out. In August, Dönitz issued sealed orders to his commanders and banned personnel from communicating with friends or relatives until further notice. From August 17-27, the 40 operational U-boats slipped from their moorings and charted courses to their stations. Kretschmer eased *U-23* into the waters off Wilhelmshaven with orders to place mines at the entrance of the Humber region. On Sunday, September 3, a message from Wilhelmshaven to all U-boats delivered the anticipated news in a coded message.

"1105/3/9/39 From Naval High Command stop To Commanders-in-chief and Commanders Afloat stop Great Britain and France have declared war on Germany stop Battle stations immediate in accordance with battle instructions for the Navy already promulgated."

A second message followed from Dönitz that instructed commanders to open their sealed orders.

"1116/3/9/39 From Commander-in-Chief U-boats stop To Commanding Officers afloat stop Battle instructions for the U-boat arm of the Navy are now in force stop Troop ships and military ships carrying military equipment to be attacked in accordance with prize regulations of the Hague Convention stop Enemy convoys to be attacked without warning only on condition that all passenger liners carrying passengers are allowed to proceed in safety stop These vessels are immune from attack even in convoy stop."

Kretschmer opened his orders, which instructed him to take *U-23* to the Humber again and lay the mines that night. He estimated he would be ready by 10 PM. He brought *U-23* to the surface about five miles from the entrance to the Humber. He was deciding the best way to enter the shipping channel when a new message arrived from Dönitz.

"From Commander-in-Chief U-boats stop To U-23 U-47 U-35 Return to base immediately stop Present operations canceled stop Acknowledge."

Three days later Dönitz asked Kretschmer how long it would take to prepare *U-23* for the open sea. The answer was 12 hours.

Dönitz said, "You are the first commander who seems to recognize that we are at war. You will sail at 8 AM tomorrow. I want mines laid."

The next morning *U-23* sailed into the North Sea on the surface. During the voyage to the Humber, no ships were sighted. At dusk, submerged, Kretschmer eased the boat into the harbor at periscope depth, expecting to be discovered at any minute. The crew was tense as the mine laying operation took place without any problems. On the return trip, off the Firth of Forth *U-23* sighted its first target. Kretschmer followed the ship and determined that its course would bring it within one mile of the U-boat.

"Torpedoes ready," Kretschmer ordered. "Fire one."

The crew was silent as it listened for the expected blast from the torpedo reaching the target, but there was no blast. Two more attempts were made, but neither struck the target ship. Kretschmer ordered the attack to end.

He and his officers then met to determine why the torpedoes failed, but the discussion ended without an explanation. Although he successfully laid the mines, he failed to sink the targeted ship, and he was angry that he had to report the mission was a failure.

During the return, *U-23* stopped several ships in the Skagerak, a strait between the southeast coast of Norway, the southwest coast of Sweden, and the Jutland Peninsula of Denmark. Under prize regulations the belligerents could prevent the shipment of vital war materials to an enemy in neutral ships. Lists of cargoes had been published by France, Germany, and Britain. The Admiralty's list of banned goods to Germany was lengthy and confusing to the German naval high command, which considered it irksome and a hindrance to their war effort.

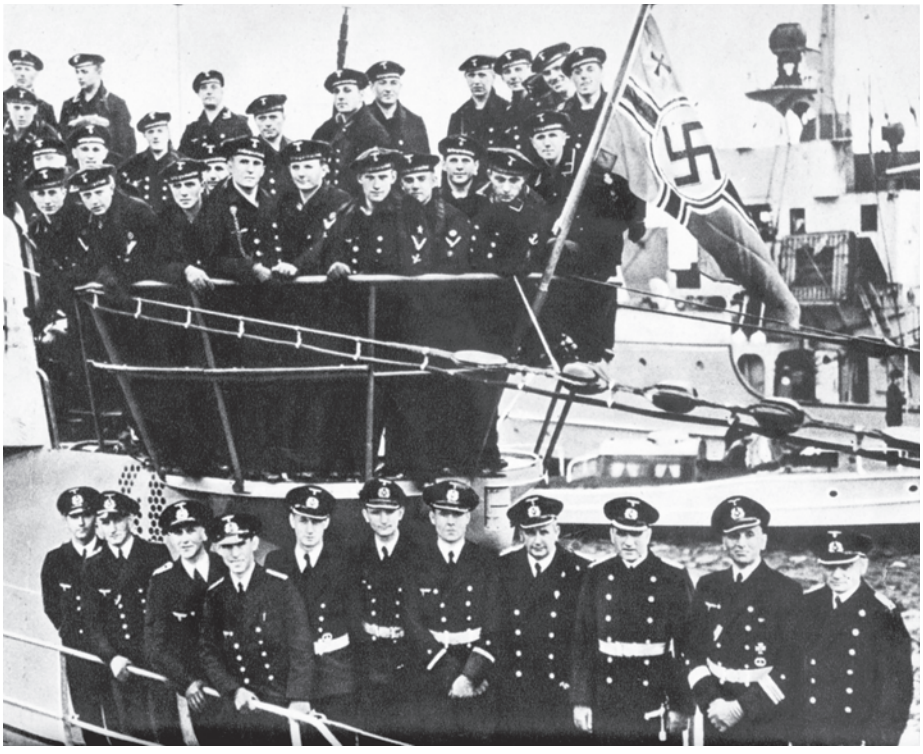
One ship was Swedish, carrying timber. Kretschmer ordered a shot across the bow with the submarine's 20mm gun. The ship stopped and sent up an international code signal: "I am stopped." Kretschmer checked the list of cargoes for timber but it was not included. In frustration, Kretschmer allowed the ship to proceed.

Stopping neutral ships and checking cargoes became a sore subject as the war proceeded. Kretschmer stated his opinion in a message to Dönitz. "It seems strange that Germany should allow cargoes of stout timber to be moved freely to England, thereby making ... pit props for mines that produce coal to make steel with, which in turn, is manufactured into weapons used to kill German troops." *U-23* returned to base, and the crew went on a short leave.

On October 1, Kretschmer received orders to patrol the western entrance to the Pentland Firth, which was the approach channel to the Orkney Islands and the British fleet anchorage at Scapa Flow.

During the three-day trip, *U-23* was on the surface most of the time. Kretschmer studied his charts for Scapa Flow and worked up a plan to penetrate the anchorage. He planned to breach

Unknown



**Officers and sailors crowd the conning tower and deck of *U-99* in this photograph taken at the German port city of Kiel in May 1940, just before the U-boat's first war patrol. Otto Kretschmer stands second from right in the first row.**

the defenses after dark, fire his torpedoes, and then retreat the same way he had entered.

On the third night of the patrol, while surfaced, the U-boat's lookout spotted a darkened ship that was passing through the lights of a fleet of fishing boats. Kretschmer expected the fishing boats to suddenly become fast patrol boats, but that did not happen. He waited until the lights of the fishermen had faded. At 1,000 yards his gun crew fired tracer rounds across the bow of the darkened ship. Instead of slowing, the targeted ship increased its speed. He called out to his gun crew, "On the bridge this time."

The second burst sent the ship's crew scrambling to man lifeboats. Its radio operator sent out a distress signal in plain language.

Naval History and Heritage Command

Kretschmer's radio operator reported, "Target calling for assistance, sir. She is saying *Glen Farg* attacked by U-boat using gunfire." Kretschmer allowed the crew to man their lifeboats before firing a torpedo. About 20 seconds passed before a blinding sheet of flame lit up the night from the middle of the coaster ship. After the smoke and spray had dispersed, the small ship sank in less than a minute.

The bridge lookout on *U-23* watched the lifeboats as Kretschmer took the boat alongside and called out, "What ship and what were you carrying?"

The immediate answer was: "*Glen Farg* in ballast."

"Right, head southeast and you will get the advantage of the current. Are any of you hurt?"

"No."

"Sorry you are landed in this position. I am leaving now."

"Thanks for coming over."

While Kretschmer patrolled near the Pentland Firth, Dönitz developed a plan for attacking Scapa Flow. He assigned Prien and *U-47* this daring mission. He needed a 500-ton boat that could remain submerged for 24 hours. Prien was briefed on the operation, and Kretschmer was ordered to take up a patrol in the North Sea away from the Orkney Islands.

At 1:16 AM on October 14, 1939, Prien entered the harbor at Scapa Flow and fired a spread of three torpedoes toward the old battleship *Royal Oak* and the seaplane tender HMS *Pegasus* then turned around and sent a second spread of torpedoes that hit the *Royal Oak* on its starboard side and caused a magazine to blow up. The battleship rolled over and sank in 19 minutes, taking 834 crew members to the bottom.

Upon receiving the news of the *Royal Oak* sinking, there was jubilation across the U-boat arm. The Germans learned that the British had no secret weapon to defend their shores against U-boat attacks.

By year's end, Kretschmer had successfully mined the Humber and Invergordon waters, sinking many Allied ships. At that point in the war, the mines had sunk more ships than the U-boats. Kretschmer acknowledged his successes with mines but was unhappy because he had not sunk more ships. During the first four months of the war, he accounted for only 6,000 tons. His mine-laying missions and patrols won him the Iron Cross 2nd Class, the Submarine War Insignia, and the Iron Cross 1st Class.

On his last trip before Christmas, he attacked a convoy off Farne Island, near the Firth of Forth. In less than one hour he sank the *Deptford,* 4,101 tons, and the *Magnus,* 1,339 tons. This patrol became known as "Kretschmer's Shetland Sorties."

After the attack on the *Royal Oak,* the British Home Fleet had disappeared from Scapa Flow, and Kretschmer was ordered to find it. He patrolled creeks and inlets in the islands, sometimes creeping in on the surface at night but more often sneaking around at periscope depth.

On January 12, 1940, Kretschmer inched *U-23* into the entrance of Inganes Bay and to his surprise saw two patrol boats anchored on either side of the channel. Farther in the channel he spotted the outline of a tanker. Oil tankers ranked as the richest targets for U-boats.

He cruised back and forth across the entrance at periscope depth trying to find a way to enter the harbor past the patrol boats. Unable to do so, he surfaced *U-23* and proceeded toward the tanker. After several minutes, he concluded that the patrol boat crews had bedded down for the night, but he determined that he could be caught in a crossfire between the boats if the crews were on duty.

The night sky was clear with a bright moon shining. As the range closed, Kretschmer ordered a torpedo launched. Its trail of bubbles was visible, and as it neared the tanker *U-23* made a 180-degree turn and raced for open seas. As the boat distanced itself from the tanker, a huge red ball of fire shot skyward with a deafening roar, illuminating the gray low-slung ship for a few seconds. A second explosion sent a sheet of white flame across the bay with large chunks of the superstructure rising into the air. Kretschmer kept his field glasses on the patrol boats and saw crewmen scurrying around on their decks. After *U-23* reached open waters, Kretschmer and his officers pored over their books showing the silhouette of merchant ships of all nations and decided that they had sunk the Danish motor tanker *Danmark,* 10,517 tons.

On another patrol in the Shetlands, they sighted what appeared to be a cruiser at anchor in Fell Sound. They crept into the bay and fired two torpedoes at the target. One struck with a flash and a roar, but Kretschmer's navigator, Warrant Officer Petersen, shouted, "It's not a cruiser; it's a rock." For a few moments, there was stunned silence in the conning tower. Suspecting a trap, they searched the bay but found it was empty.

Kretschmer was unhappy about wasting two torpedoes on a rock. Looking at his crew and their barely concealed grins, he sent a signal to U-boat command: "Rock torpedoed, but not sunk."

The *U-23* left the bay and charted a course

for the Fair Isle Passage and the North Sea. On its way back to Kiel, two more ships were sunk, the freighter *Polzella* and the coaster *Baltanglia.* By the time they reached Kiel, *U-23* had been at sea longer than any other boat in its flotilla.

After docking, Kretschmer reported to Dönitz on the depot ship there. Dönitz wanted a complete report of the action. He asked Kretschmer, "What about the torpedoing of the *Nelson*?"

"The *Nelson*?" Kretschmer asked in astonishment. "But I have not torpedoed the *Nelson.* I have never even seen the *Nelson.*"

Dönitz then telephoned the signal officer to bring in *U-23*'s file. When the officer arrived, Dönitz took the file and showed it to Kretschmer and then said triumphantly, "There, what does that say?"

Dumbfounded, Kretschmer read the report, which stated, "*Nelson* torpedoed but not sunk." He thought for a moment and then shook his head in amusement as he realized a mistake had been made. The German word for rock is *Felson,* and in the transmission report it had been entered as *Nelson.*

Dönitz sat down and said: "So you attacked a rock." He began to laugh.

"Oh Kretschmer, if you could know what I am thinking, I do not think either one of us would be laughing. Can you see the look on Goebbels' [Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels] face when he hears this."

Dönitz put in a call to Berlin and then turned to Kretschmer.

"All right, I will get tonight's announcement stopped. They were going to say, 'Where is *Nelson,* Churchill…?' I do not need much imagination to guess what reply would come from the Prime Minister."

On February 9, 1940, *U-23* sailed from Kiel on its eighth patrol. Soon after its departure, the lookout shouted, "Torpedoes to starboard." Kretschmer ordered control to steer hard to starboard and watched three lines of bubbles racing toward him. He ordered the ship to dive, and it leveled out at 50 feet. He and the crew listened to the propellers of the torpedoes, bracing themselves for impact, but the torpedoes missed. Kretschmer determined a British submarine had fired at them. After the torpedoes had passed, *U-23* surfaced and headed toward its rendezvous point.

A convoy lay ahead, and two destroyers were spotted. Kretschmer sank one of them. He then steered a course parallel to the convoy. While on this course a lone merchant ship appeared on the horizon. He attacked with two torpedoes that struck the ship, causing a gigantic roar. After checking the books, he told his men that they had sunk the freighter *Tiberton,* 5,225 tons.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101II-MW-1764-16; Photo: Tölle

**ABOVE: While *U-99* returns to its base at Lorient on the coast of France, two crewmen render military salutes while others stand at attention on deck. Another sailor is preoccupied with capturing the U-boat's return on film. OPPOSITE: In this painting by German war artist Adolf Bock, the commander of a U-boat and several other German sailors watch the death throes of a British merchant ship they have torpedoed in the Atlantic in 1941.**

Three days later off the east coast of the Orkneys, Kretschmer sank another freighter, the *Loch Maddy* at 4,996 tons. At this point, he had used all his torpedoes and steamed toward Kiel. After his arrival, Dönitz ordered him to take *U-23* back to the Orkneys, but it turned out to be a fruitless patrol. This patrol lasted nine days, and Dönitz ordered him to return to Kiel on the last day.

This patrol was Kretschmer's last as commander of *U-23.* He had taken it on nine patrols, spent 96 days at sea, and sunk eight merchant ships and one destroyer, racking up 30,000 tons.

In late April Kretschmer received an order from Dönitz informing him that he would be taking command of *U-99,* a new boat. It was a 500-ton oceangoing boat with a complement of 44 men and 12 torpedoes. Compared to the *U-23,* the *U-99* was luxurious. After loading stores, the captain took a skeleton crew for a trial run in the Baltic. They dived, fired torpedoes, and the gunnery crew completed its exercises without any problems. Kretschmer put his new boat through its paces until June 17, when he set out for the Atlantic.

During this patrol Dönitz signaled that the battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* was sailing along the coast of Norway and German aircraft would be making antisubmarine patrols in a 30-mile radius around the ship. Kretschmer was to keep

akg images

**Their faces showing stubbly beards along with the stress of a recently completed wartime patrol, officers of a German U-boat pause for a photographer sometime in 1940. The U-boat service was the most hazardous in the German Navy.**

outside that range, otherwise *U-99* might be attacked. The next day the lookout sighted a British submarine, which appeared to be unaware of *U-99*. Kretschmer changed course to give the enemy sub a wide berth, but the British sub spotted *U-99* and dived.

Kretschmer expected an attack and ordered the boat to full speed, taking it out of range of the sub, but his navigator informed him that they were within range of the *Scharnhorst*. At the same time, the lookout spotted an aircraft approaching. Kretschmer sounded the alarm to dive, but it was too late to escape. The plane attacked, dropping a bomb that exploded on impact with the sea. There were no leaks, but the periscope was jammed and its lens broken along with the compasses. Kretschmer cursed the fact that he had been attacked by German planes. With such damage, he decided to return to base for repairs, which took three days.

On July 5, Kretschmer began a new patrol, sinking Allied ships almost immediately. Seeing Convoy HX52, Kretschmer took aim at a Canadian steamer, the *Magog,* and sank it. The crew of the *Magog* had manned their lifeboats, ready to jump overboard because of the deck gun on *U-99*. Kretschmer reassured them he was not going to shoot them, and after conversing with the Canadian officer tossed him a bottle of brandy with instructions on how to reach land safely.

Two days later, Kretschmer sank the British steamer *Sea Glory* with two torpedoes at about 1 AM. At about 11 PM, the Swedish steamer *Bissen* went down after being hit with a torpedo.

This patrol saw the sinking of ships from Canada, England, Greece, and Sweden. An Estonian ship, the *Merisaar,* became Kretschmer's first prize. Attempts to sink it failed, and as a result Kretschmer ordered the crew, which had taken to lifeboats, to reboard the ship and set a course for Bordeaux. Total tonnage amounted to 22,719, for about two weeks work. It was a sign of things to come.

Kretschmer took his new U-boat and crew to Lorient for a rest, arriving on July 21. He felt close to his crew because none of them had panicked while enduring depth-charge attacks from British ships. He took them all out to a restaurant for a fine dinner. Afterward, the enlisted men explored Lorient and proceeded to get drunk. Dismayed at their behavior, Kretschmer delivered a stern sermon to them, demanding the same discipline on shore leave as they showed while on patrol. His crew relaxed in Lorient, but Kretschmer spent time welcoming other U-boats whose missions had been completed. On July 24, Dönitz ordered him to make another patrol.

At 4 AM on July 28, the weather report indicated calm seas and long swells with a light breeze. An hour later a British motor merchant was spotted. Kretschmer closed to about 1 1/2 miles. While on the surface, he fired his first torpedo, which hit the ship's stern but did not sink it. As its crew manned the lifeboats, a gun crew on the stern aimed at *U-99*. Alarmed, Kretschmer took the U-boat down and fired two more torpedoes. After languishing for about two hours, the *Auckland Star* vanished from sight. This ship turned out to be the first of seven attacked by Kretschmer on *U-99*. Four were sunk and three damaged.

Convoy OB191 came into view on July 31. Kretschmer maneuvered his U-boat until it was ahead of the ships, violating the principles he had been taught. U-boat commanders had been instructed not to wait but to attack a convoy as soon as they could fix a target at periscope depth outside the ring of escort ships and to fire a spread of torpedoes. Kretschmer knew this, but instead his strategy was to get ahead of the convoy to be in position for a surface attack. He wanted to prove that he could attack by night on the surface and carry out his motto, "One torpedo, one ship." He considered spreads of torpedoes to be wasteful. He took a calculated risk and became the first U-boat commander to attack convoys at night while on the surface. He returned to Lorient on August 2 having sunk or damaged 57,890 tons of Allied shipping.

A military band and a welcoming group of staff personnel greeted Kretschmer and his crew on August 7 as he departed the escort ship on the pier at Lorient. Seven victory pennants waved in the breeze, one for each ship sunk or attacked.

Before going ashore, Kretschmer explained his decision not to attack the convoy during the day while submerged. His report noted that rough weather made it necessary to maintain contact with the target ship. Dönitz did not fault him for not carrying out the standard procedure to make an attack.

The following day Dönitz telephoned

Kretschmer and invited him to a meeting that afternoon. Kretschmer left for Paris and soon learned that he was to receive the Knights Cross "for the greatest number of ships sunk by a commander in one voyage" and "continuous determination and skill" in the face of the enemy. He was also told that Admiral Raeder would personally present the medal the next day.

All of the naval crews in harbor at the time lined up for inspection by the Navy's commander in chief, with the men of *U-99* in the place of honor in the center of the parade ground. Raeder congratulated Kretschmer and his crew for their accomplishments and handed him a flat box containing the Knight's Cross and sash. After Raeder left, Kretschmer and his crew celebrated on the deck of *U-99* with beer for everyone.

On August 26, Kretschmer received his orders for Operation Sea Lion, the planned amphibious invasion of England. The task was to prevent any British ship from entering the English Channel from the west.

Days later, Dönitz invited Kretschmer to the Hotel Terminus, where he was introduced to an Italian submarine officer, Commander Longobardo, who commanded a submarine base in Bordeaux. The Italian Navy had sent him to Dönitz to learn German attack methods.

Dönitz said, "Kretschmer, I want you to take Commander Longobardo with you on your next trip. You should be ready to sail within 24 hours. I think you had better see that his gear gets aboard *U-99* today."

Kretschmer was not happy about this guest, even though it was customary to have another German officer on board to study operational methods before getting his own command. Dealing with an Italian commander who could not speak German was a different matter. He tried to speak to his guest in German, but Longobardo replied in Italian. Kretschmer then spoke to him in English, and the Italian replied in English.

Once underway, *U-99* sailed across the Bay of Biscay into the Atlantic and the area called "U-boat Alley" by the Royal Navy. While standing on the conning tower with his guest, Kretschmer heard his lookout shout, "Aircraft on starboard beam, sir, height about 40 degrees!" Kretschmer ordered the boat to dive, but it went well past periscope depth. To reach the depth he wanted, he ordered compressed air to be blown into the forward ballast tanks. His Italian guest watched intently, and Kretschmer wondered about the impression he made with his guest. He said, "Sorry about that. These things happen at times." The Italian replied, "That's all right. I knew you would right her easily."

On September 8, Kretschmer was following an outbound convoy when *U-99* was spotted by a destroyer. He gave the order to dive and spent that night and the following day tailing the convoy. He surfaced but was immediately seen by another destroyer. Once again, *U-99* dived, depth charges falling around it. He took the boat down to 300 feet to wait out the attack. Thirty explosions were counted before they stopped. After the echoes of the destroyer had faded, *U-99* surfaced only to be attacked by another destroyer. Down it went again, and a round of depth charges knocked the boat on its side, sending most of the control room crew rolling on the deck. Then the destroyer ended the attack and sailed off.

Alamy

**Kretschmer, the most successful Kriegsmarine U-boat commander of World War II, poses with Adolf Hitler after receiving the Oak Leaves to the Knights Cross in early November 1940.**

Back on the surface, Kretschmer scanned the horizon for a convoy. One large freighter was spotted, and two torpedoes were fired. They leaped from the water and went off course. Kretschmer dropped back to the stern of the convoy but was again spotted by a destroyer and had to dive to evade the attacker.

His luck changed when he sank the British steamer *Albionic* on September 11. It was the first sinking on this patrol. More followed four days later as the Canadian steamer *Kenordoc,* the Norwegian *Lotos,* and the British *Crown Arum* were sunk between August 15-17.

In a matter of about 90 minutes on September 21, Kretschmer sank three ships that were part of Convoy HX72. All were British ships, the *Invershannon, Baron Blythswood,* and *Elmbank*. As he watched his victims burn, a lifeboat occupied by one man in his underwear was spotted. Kretschmer took him on board and sent him below, where he was given dry clothes and food. Now Kretschmer had two guests on board. He decided that he could not take his prisoner back to Lorient, so he eased *U-99* close to the lifeboats from the *Invershannon* and handed over the prisoner. Out of torpedoes, Kretschmer headed for Lorient.

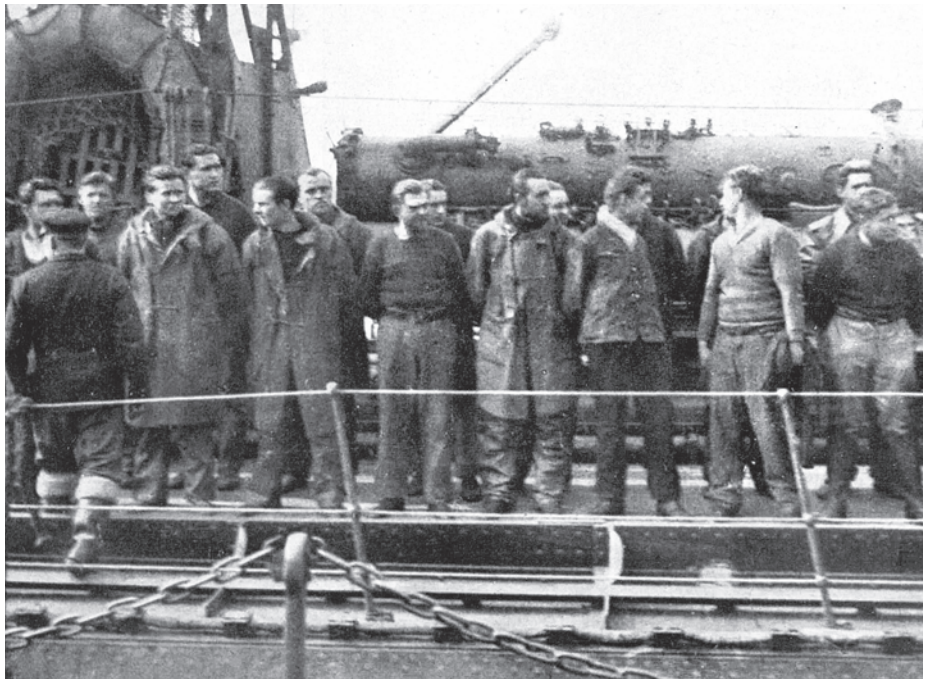
After disembarking, Kretschmer and his men dined at a local restaurant, Beau Sejour. They celebrated with many toasts, and afterward the men were informed that a rest camp had been provided for them at Quiberon. Kretschmer took a train to Paris to meet with Dönitz.

Meanwhile, Dönitz learned that Britain had undertaken additional measures to combat the U-boats. A new director of antisubmarine war, former destroyer commander Captain George Creasy, had been appointed. His job was to overhaul this office and to advise the Admiralty on what action should be taken to stem the tide of losses to U-boats. Creasy considered himself the direct opposite of Karl Dönitz. The moment of his appointment marked the official beginning of the Battle of the Atlantic.

On October 13, 1940, *U-99* sailed on her fourth Atlantic patrol, clearing the harbor at Lorient at 1:30 AM the next day. Less than an hour later, Kretschmer received a signal that Lorient harbor was closed because of mines that had been laid by the British. Two days later they received a signal from *U-93* that a large convoy was outbound from England. It was designated SC7.

Six other U-boats along with *U-99* were ordered to form a "stripe" across what was considered the path of the convoy. They were *U-93, U-100, U-28, U-123, U-101,* and *U-46*. Two additional U-boats later joined the chase. At the same time in London, signals received from escort ships reported that the convoy was being shadowed. Just after dark *U-99* was spotted, but Kretschmer eluded the escort.

At about 10 PM, seven U-boats began firing toward the convoy from outside the escort screen. Kretschmer trimmed *U-99* up for maximum speed and maneuverability and raced inside the escort screen. He passed between two destroyers, one on the bow and one on the beam of the convoy, with about a mile to spare on either side. Within three minutes he was through and approaching the outer column of the convoy. In less than two hours, Kretschmer torpe-



**ABOVE: The crew of *U-99* arrives at Liverpool, England, after their submarine was attacked and scuttled in the Atlantic on March 17, 1941. RIGHT: Commander Otto Kretschmer comes ashore in England after the sinking of *U-99* in the spring of 1941.**

doed and sank three ships, *Empire Miniver* and *Fiscus* from Britain and *Niritos* from Greece.

The following day, October 19, Kretschmer sank three more ships in one hour. These victims were *Empire Brigade* from Britain, the Greek steamer *Thalia,* and the Norwegian *Snejfeld*. Later in the day, *U-99* damaged the British ship *Clintonia* but did not sink her. She was finished off by *U-123*.

Kretschmer returned to base on October 22 and received a hero's welcome for his successes against Convoy SC7, which lost 17 ships in two nights. Kretschmer had accounted for half of them. His efforts did not go unnoticed. In his battle report, Dönitz noted, "Excellent led attack on convoy which has been rewarded with corresponding success. Signed Dönitz, Commander-in-Chief, U-boat Command."

After a leave of three weeks, *U-99* departed Lorient on a short but productive patrol. In a matter of three days, four British ships went down, including two armed merchant cruisers, the HMS *Laurentic* and the HMS *Patroclus*. After returning, a message was handed to Kretschmer:

"TO COMMANDING OFFICER U-99: WELL DONE STOP COMMANDING OFFICER OTTO KRETSCHMER AWARDED OAK LEAVES TO KNIGHTS CROSS STOP WARRANT OFFICER PETERSEN AWARDED KNIGHTS CROSS STOP COMMANDER KRETSCHMER WILL RECEIVE DECORATION FROM FUEHRER STOP COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF U-BOATS."

On November 12, Kretschmer was the only passenger in a Siebel five-seater plane that took him to Berlin. Admiral Raeder greeted him, and the two discussed the war effort. At 11:30 AM, Raeder's car took Kretschmer to the Reich Chancellery where he was greeted by Captain von Puttkamer, who instructed him on the protocol for receiving the award. At noon, the large doors opened and Hitler walked in along with an adjutant. Kretschmer was presented to Hitler, who formally awarded him the Oak Leaves. Afterward, they sat down and Hitler spoke:

"It is good that the enemy started this war so early, as it would have been a much harder task if they had waited to build up their strength. So, for our naval warfare, we have secured the ports of the Bay of Biscay. I am most happy about that. At the beginning of the campaign I was determined to get the French Channel ports for our submarine warfare."

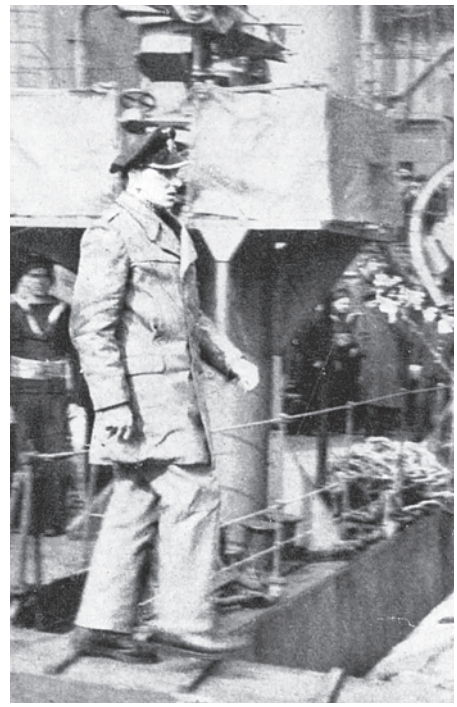
Hitler asked Kretschmer how the war was going, and the reply was that more U-boats were needed as soon as possible. Hitler nodded and thanked him for his comments. "Thank you, Commander. You have been very frank, and I will do what I can for you and your colleagues. You will be lunching here with me."

After lunch, Hitler stood up and left the room. Captain von Puttkamer and another adjutant joined Kretschmer in another room for coffee, brandy, and cigars. Later that evening, the staff car took Kretschmer to the state opera and the box used only by Hitler and important guests. Kretschmer sat alone in the flower-filled box.

He was flown back to Lorient, where he took *U-99* on patrol on November 27. In 15 days Kretschmer sank three British ships and one from the Netherlands. He returned to Lorient on December 12. He and his crew took leave and returned in February 1941. *U-99* embarked on its eighth and final patrol on February 22.

After searching for two weeks without sinking a single ship, *U-99*'s luck changed on March 7 when two British and one Canadian ship were added to its impressive record. Nine days later, Kretschmer attacked convoy HX112, sinking five and damaging another. The next day *U-99* was attacked by the British destroyer HMS *Walker* using depth charges and inflicting major damage. Kretschmer scuttled *U-99* at 3:43 AM on March 17, and he and his men were taken prisoner aboard the *Walker*.

For Kretschmer's colleagues Prien and Schepke, March 1941 was fatal. Prien and *U-47* went down with all hands on March 8. Schepke died on the same day that Kretschmer scuttled *U-99*. In less than two weeks, three of Germany's ace U-boat commanders disappeared from the high seas.



HMS *Walker* docked at Liverpool, the British operational center for the Battle of the Atlantic. After docking, the captives were forced to march through the streets. They were greeted with angry demonstrations by hundreds of women who had lost loved ones to U-boats. From Liverpool, they were sent to London for interrogation and ultimately to the prisoner of

war camp at Grizedale Hall. They remained there until October 1942, when they were transported to a Canadian POW camp, Camp 30, in southern Ontario.

Bowmanville, Ontario, sits in southern Ontario east of Toronto and Oshawa on Highway 2. The town was an incorporated community from 1858 to 1973. In 1941, there was a school for delinquent boys on the former farmland of Mr. John H.H. Jury. He donated his land to the government for the school in 1927, and it was in use until April 1941, when the government gave the school notice to find a new home because the facility was going to be turned into a prison camp. Work was completed in October 1941, and it was designated as Camp 30.

This POW camp had things that others lacked, including an indoor pool, athletic complex, and soccer and football fields. The prisoners played soccer, Canadian football, and hockey in the winter. They built a tennis court and a mini zoo. They could receive and send mail to and from family members. They received new uniforms from Germany and got their regular pay with which they could buy such items as cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, pipes, and razor blades. Medical and dental services were provided by German doctors. An orchestra and theater group put on various Shakespeare plays.

Since the camp was located on a former farm, the prisoners' meals were much better than those served in other camps. Breakfasts included coffee, jam, and butter. Lunch often featured roast beef, potatoes and gravy, and carrots. For dinner, macaroni, ham, soup, cheese, bacon, and tea were on the menu.

Even though the living conditions at the camp were quite good, it was still a prison camp, one that held high-ranking officers of the Afrika Korps, Luftwaffe, and the Kriegsmarine. One of the most prominent prisoners was Otto Kretschmer, the most successful ace of the German U-boat arm during World War II. From October 1939 until his capture in March 1941, Kretschmer sank about 312,000 metric tons of Allied shipping. He was so successful that he was given the nickname "Atlantic Wolf."

After arriving at the camp, Kretschmer began planning his escape.

He developed a plan with three other U-boat officers, Hans Ey of *U-433,* Horst Elfe of *U-93,* and Joachim von Knebel-Doberitz. Before proceeding Kretschmer needed to contact Dönitz for permission. This was accomplished by sending a coded letter to the spouse of Knebel-Doberitz, who happened to be Doenitz's secretary. The letter relayed the intention to escape, proposed that the escapees be picked up by a U-boat, and even proposed a rendezvous location. Dönitz approved the escape attempt and preparations began.

**Otto Kretschmer spent much of his time in captivity at Camp 30 near Bowmanville, Ontario. He participated in an escape attempt that involved tunneling his way to freedom; however, the plot was discovered. The facility, originally a school, today lies abandoned and in disrepair.**

Kretschmer intended to burrow a tunnel under the camp. To throw off the guards, three tunnels were dug. More than 150 prisoners took part in the digging. The intended escape route would extend beyond the camp and the barbed wire that surrounded it. At the same time, prisoners prepared false identification papers, civilian clothes, and dummies to be used as substitutes for the escapees.

While the work was being carried out, coded letters with progress reports and updates were sent to Germany. In August 1943, through a coded letter and radio transmission, the date was set for the breakout. In yet another letter from Dönitz, Kretschmer was advised that *U-536,* commanded by Lieutenant Schauenburg, would surface every night for two weeks beginning on September 23, 1943. Kretschmer and his men would have 14 days after their escape to make it to the rendezvous location at Pointe Maissonette in Chaleur Bay.

The Germans did not know that the escape plans had been discovered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Canadian Military Intelligence. Maps of eastern Canada were discovered in the Germans' mail, and one was for a rescue operation in Chaleur Bay. To learn more about the escape, the RCMP used a microphone to discover the presence of a tunnel and the sounds of digging. This information was not shared with the prisoners. The intent was to allow the Germans to keep digging and apprehend them once they emerged from the tunnel.

Two incidents changed the Germans' efforts, code named Operation Kiebitz. Digging the tunnel meant having to hide the dirt, and this was accomplished by putting it above the ceiling in the building where they were housed. One week before the attempted escape, the ceiling caved in, causing a racket that alerted the guards, who began to search for the source of the dirt. Due to this unexpected problem, Kretschmer decided to take action that night. However, another surprise occurred when a prisoner digging close to the camp's fence to fill his flower boxes with dirt felt the ground beneath him cave in, uncovering the third tunnel. The escapees were arrested and put under close watch.

Kretschmer remained a prisoner of war for nearly seven years and finally returned to Germany in 1947. In 1955, he became an officer of the Bundesmarine, the navy of the Federal Republic of Germany. He retired in 1970 with the rank of flotilla admiral after also serving in several positions with NATO. Kretschmer died following an accident while on vacation in Bavaria in 1998. He was 86 years old. His body was cremated and his ashes scattered at sea. □

*Christopher Chlon is a retired purchasing professional whose work has appeared in numerous historical and trade magazines. He is a graduate of Loyola University in New Orleans and resides in Fort Wayne, Indiana.*

# Soviet Disaster

## A Red Army offensive became a nightmare of death and defeat as German forces turned the tables during the battle for Sevastopol.

Christmas Day 1941 was anything but festive for the commander of German Army Group South's 11th Army, General Erich von Manstein. He was currently involved in his toughest battle of the war to date. Staring at the maps spread before him, von Manstein followed the arrows that marked the advance of his divisions.

"I want this to be over by New Year's Day," he said to his chief of operations, Colonel Theodor Busse. "The Soviet positions on the northern sector are ready to collapse. When that happens, the port will be ours."

The port von Manstein was referring to was the important Soviet naval base of Sevastopol. Originally founded as Akhtiar (White Cliff) in June 1783 as a naval base for the expanding Russian Empire, the name was changed to Sevastopol by Catherine the Great in February 1784. She also ordered a fortress to be built to protect the port. During the Crimean War the city underwent a siege by British, French, Turkish, and Sardinian troops in 1855-1856, holding off the attackers for 11 months before falling.

Von Manstein had no intention of taking that much time to conquer the fortress. When his 11th Army advanced across the Perekop Peninsula in late September it was met with heavy Soviet resistance before finally breaking through Russian positions guarding the entrance to the Crimea. Once those positions had been breached, von Manstein was able to spread his forces out with part of the army heading to Sevastopol while another part pushed eastward toward the port of Kerch.

By November 17, the entire Crimea was in German hands, save for the area around Sevastopol. Massive forts guarded the northern approaches to the city, and the Germans were able to take them one by one until only a few remained.

Most of the 11th Army was poised to strike Sevastopol. General Erik Hansen's LIV Army Corps (22nd, 24th, 50th, and 132nd Infantry Divisions) would strike the northern Soviet positions while General Hans von Salmuth's XXX Army Corps (72nd and the arriving 170th Infantry Divi-

# in the Crimea

BY PAT McTAGGART

sions and the 1st Romanian Mountain Brigade) would keep the Russians off guard east of the city.

To achieve the concentration of troops von Manstein thought was necessary to take the city, he had stripped Maj. Gen. Hans Graf von Sponeck's XLII Army Corps of all but one of its divisions. Along with two Romanian infantry brigades, von Sponeck had Maj. Gen. Kurt Himer's 46th Infantry Division to defend the coastline along the Kerch Peninsula.

On the mainland, the Soviet winter offensive had been in full swing for almost three weeks. Von Manstein knew that this would be his best chance to take Sevastopol before the ramifications of that offensive were felt in his command. He had soundly defeated Lt. Gen. Pavel Ivanovich Batov's 51st Army when his forces had taken the Crimea during the previous two months. When the Kerch Peninsula was finally evacuated, approximately 50,000 Red Army personnel made their way back across the Kerch Strait, but less than a third of them were able-bodied combat troops. Batov's army also lost all of its heavy equipment.

Von Manstein believed he had little to fear from the Soviet forces positioned across the Kerch Strait in the Taman Peninsula. He was dead wrong.

Lieutenant General Dmitri Timofeevich Kozlov's Trans-Caucasus Front, which would become the Caucasus Front on December 30 and the Crimean Front on January 28, had two frontline armies at his disposal and another in reserve. Maj. Gen. Konstantin Fedorovich Baranov's 47th Army had two mountain and two infantry divisions, and Lt. Gen. Vladimir Nikolaevich L'vov's 51st Army had one mountain and 10 infantry divisions plus the 12th Rifle Brigade. Colonel Alexsei Nikolaevich Peruvshin's 44th Army consisted of one mountain and two infantry divisions plus the 56th Tank Brigade and the 126th Tank Battalion. Kozlov also had some arriving infantry and tank units to use as a reserve.

The Soviet high command (Stavka) had already ordered Kozlov to plan a series of amphibious landings on the Kerch Peninsula before von Manstein planned his final assault on Sevastopol. Kozlov and his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Fedor Ivanovich Tolbukhin, had about two weeks to plan the Red Army's first major amphibious operation. They had little to go on. The Black Sea Fleet had suffered heavy losses during the previous months, and Rear Admiral Sergei Georgievich Gorshkov's Azov Flotilla was in the same shape. Consequently, the Soviets had to rely on anything

**German tanks attack across open ground during a general assault on the town of Kerch in the Crimea. A Soviet offensive bogged down in the face of German counterstrokes and cost the Red Army dearly in men and equipment.**

Mondadori Portfolio

that would float, including gunboats, fishing trawlers, transports and self-propelled barges. There were no amphibious landing craft to be found, so Gorshkov would have to use whale boats to ferry troops unloading from the transports to the shore.

A message reached von Manstein's headquarters late on Christmas night. It stated that Soviet forces had been observed in the Kerch Strait, but there was no mention of their size. Thinking that the Russians could mount nothing more than minor raids, he was confident that von Sponeck could handle the situation.

The Soviets began landing in force in the early hours of December 26. North of Kerch elements of the 51st Army's 224th Rifle Division landed at Capes Khroni, Tarhan, and Zyuk and Bulganak Bay. Due to rough seas and winds of 17 to 21 knots, the landings went anything but smoothly.

National Archives

**On December 26, 1941, the Soviets made several amphibious landings north of Kerch during their offensive. Since there were no appropriate landing craft available, they came ashore in whale boats and other makeshift boats. The 83rd Naval Brigade, depicted here, reinforced the landings later in the day.**

The II/Rifle Regiment, 160/224th Rifle Division was slated to land at Cape Khroni. About 700 troops were ashore by 0630, but the battalion had lost several troops due to hypothermia or drowning. German troops stationed north of Kerch were surprisingly unresponsive to the landing, and the Soviets were able to put a second battalion ashore along with a platoon of light tanks and some light artillery in the next few hours.

At Cape Tarhan the landing was a disaster with only 18 of the 1,000 men deployed reaching the beach. The Cape Zyuk landing went the same way. Only 290 men of the landing force made it ashore.

Soviet forces landing at Bulganak Bay were in a little better shape. Along with the approximately 1,450 soldiers that made it to the beach, the Russians were able to land a pair of 70mm howitzers, two 45mm antitank guns, and three light tanks.

Although the German forces stationed on the northern coastline offered little resistance to the landings, the Soviet incursions had been reported to higher headquarters. By midmorning the Luftwaffe had arrived over the landing sites. Targeting the ships off the beaches, they bombed and strafed several troop-laden vessels. About 450 Red Army soldiers were lost when the cargo ship *Voroshilov* was sunk.

About 10 kilometers south of Kerch, elements of the 302nd Rifle Division began landing at about 0500. Alert German sentries reported Soviet vessels approaching the beaches at Kamysh Burun and Eltigen. The alarm was sounded, and two battalions of Colonel Ernst Maisel's Inf. Rgt. 42/46 I.D. stationed at the towns were in defensive positions within minutes.

At Kamysh Burun, a small part of the landing force made it to the beach and took cover in some buildings near the shore. German fire forced a second wave to retreat. A third wave was able to reinforce the Russians on the beach, but only about 40 percent of the 5,000-man force scheduled to land was now on Crimean soil.

The landing at Eltigen was an unmitigated disaster. As the Soviets waded toward the beaches, the II/IR 42 opened fire. The Red Army soldiers in the surf did not have a chance, and the shore was soon filled with bodies, while others floated lifelessly in the sea.

Himer's headquarters was located about 25 kilometers east of Kerch. Steady reports of Soviet landings had been pouring into his communications center, but he had no firm intelligence concerning where the main concentration of Russian forces was located. With only the six battalions of Maisel's 42nd and Colonel Friedrich Schmidt's 72nd Infantry Regiments available in the eastern part of the peninsula, it would be difficult to defend the entire area. Himer's third regiment, Lt. Col. Alexander von Bentheim's 97th, was spread out dozens of kilometers to the west performing security duties.

Contacting the 97th, Himer ordered von Bentheim to move his two nearest battalions, the 1st and 3rd, to the incursion at Zyuk. It would not be an easy move. Rain had turned the few roads in the area into a sticky morass of clinging mud. The artillery battery accompanying Captain Karl Bock's III/IR 97 had to be manhandled again and again as the guns became stuck. Farther west the II/IR 97, stationed in the port city of Feodosia about 90 kilometers southwest of Kerch, was also ordered to move toward the northeast.

If things were confused at Himer's headquarters, they were downright impossible to sort out at von Sponeck's command post, located west of the Parpach Isthmus at Islam-Terek about 110 kilometers west of Kerch. Von Sponeck had just turned 53 and had served as a frontline officer and battalion adjutant in World War I. Wounded three times during the war, he had stayed in the postwar German Army and had commanded the 22nd Infantry Division during the invasion of the Low Countries. His leadership earned him the Knight's Cross on May 5, 1940.

With the situation still unclear, von Sponeck alerted his two Romanian brigades and ordered them to head east to support Himer. He also contacted von Manstein asking permission to plan for the evacuation of the Kerch Peninsula if the situation warranted it. If necessary, he planned to stop the Soviets at the Parpach Isthmus, which was only about 25 kilometers wide.

Von Manstein would have none of it and ordered von Sponeck to stand his ground. Himer was to clear out the Soviet bridgeheads and prevent future landings. In his memoirs von Manstein wrote, "If the enemy succeeded in establishing a firm footing at Kerch, the upshot would be a second front in the Crimea and an extremely dangerous situation for the entire army as long as Sevastopol remained untaken."

National Archives

**A group of Red Army soldiers takes up firing positions in a trench along the front in the Crimea. Their squad leader peers toward the enemy positions in the distance through a pair of binoculars.**

While remaining firm about von Sponeck holding his positions, von Manstein dispatched the 4th and 5th Romanian Mountain Brigades to Feodosia. He also ordered a regimental group of the 73rd ID to prepare to move east.

The condition of the roads continued to slow the movement of von Bentheim's forward battalions. Advance elements reached their jump-off positions by late morning on the 26th. By the time the main body of Bock's III/IR 97 was starting to deploy, it was already past noon. Bock was unaware that the fragile Zyuk bridgehead had received reinforcements in the form of a battalion from the 83rd Naval Brigade and some T-26 light tanks.

As the Germans deployed, the Soviets launched a spoiling attack supported by three tanks. The Germans were forced back for a time, but a 37mm antitank gun was rushed forward. Commanded by Corporal Max Freyberger, the gun managed to disable or destroy the tanks, stopping the Russian momentum. Launching a counterattack, Bock's men managed to push the Soviets back to their original positions, but he could go no farther. The attack to destroy the bridgehead had to be postponed until the following day.

During the night the I/IR 97 arrived along with two 105mm howitzers. With temperatures plummeting, the two battalion commanders worked out their battle plan. While infantry, supported by the howitzers, attacked from the southwest, an engineer company would put up a blocking position east of the beachhead. Luftwaffe support was also promised.

The attack began in freezing weather shortly after dawn. With artillery fire hitting the Soviet positions, the German assault forces moved forward. Russian fire slowed the advance, but the appearance of some Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers from Major Clemens Graf on Schöborn-Wiesentheid's Sturzkampf Geschwader (St.G—Stuka Wing) 77 soon silenced the stronger Soviet positions. After the dive bombers left, a half dozen Heinkel He-111 bombers followed up, dropping their lethal packages directly on the beachhead. By late afternoon the Soviet position was taken. At the cost of about 40 killed and wounded, the Germans had killed nearly 300 Russians and had taken another 458 prisoners.

At Cape Khroni the two battalions of Schmidt's IR 72 were also able to destroy the Soviet bridgehead. All that remained of the Russian assault forces were pockets at Bulganak Bay and Kamysh Burun. Those forces were surrounded, and Himer and von Sponeck planned to deal with them the following day. That plan fell apart during the early hours of December 29.

Soviet troops had been loading on ships in Taman Peninsula ports since the afternoon of December 28. The wind had subsided somewhat, allowing the advance elements of a new invasion fleet to weigh anchor by dusk. Crammed aboard the light cruiser *Krasny Kavkaz,* the destroyers *Nyezamozknik, Shaumyan,* and *Zhelezniakov,* and a host of smaller vessels, the Red Army soldiers endured the elements on open decks as the force moved toward its objective: Feodosia.

All seemed calm in the city as the assault convoy approached the port. With the departure of the II/IR 97, the garrison had been reduced to a skeleton force. The coastal defenses consisted of two artillery battalions (II/AR 54 and I/AR 77) that had a combined total of six Czech-made 150mm howitzers, four World War I-era 100mm howitzers, and 11 World War I-era 150mm howitzers. Also in the area were the lightly armed engineers of Lt. Col. Hans von Ahlfen's Engineer Staff (for special purposes) 617 comprising 700-800 men.

The darkness in the port was broken at 0350 on the 29th as the Soviet ships fired their first star shells. With enemy targets now identified, the Russian warships opened fire with a barrage that lasted about 15 minutes. On the heels of the bombardment, a naval infantry force landed on the harbor mole and captured its lighthouse.

Startled German forces began responding, but the fire was ragged. More naval infantry arrived as the Soviet destroyers pulled alongside the mole and disgorged their passengers. At 0500 the *Krasny Kavkaz* arrived at the mole. More than 1,850 men from the 633rd Rifle Regiment of Colonel Dmitrii Semenovich Kuropatenko's 157th Rifle Division poured off the deck, adding to the needed numbers to take the town.

As the first light of dawn appeared, German gunners were finally able to properly identify targets, and the *Krasny Kavkaz* made a good one. Although the ship was hit 17 times, Captain 1st Rank Aleksei M. Guscin gave as good as he got. Several enemy machine-gun and artillery positions were destroyed by the cruiser's 180mm guns. Under the cover of Guscin's fire, more Soviet ships unloaded troops, vehicles, and artillery, and by 1000 hours the Germans were forced to abandon the port and most of the town.

Von Sponeck was being kept apprised of the situation, and he realized that the Soviet landing posed a grave threat to the troops on the Kerch Peninsula. He had no troops available to stop the Russians from forming a line across the Parpach Isthmus, trapping Himer and threatening the rear of the German forces besieging Sevastopol. There were already 4,500 Soviet troops in Feodosia by noon, and more were pouring in every hour. Although the Luftwaffe made a brief appearance, the landings were not seriously disrupted. By evening, elements of three rifle divisions had come ashore.

In a telephone conversation with von Manstein, von Sponeck again requested that Himer's division be allowed to withdraw to the Parpach Isthmus, but the request was firmly denied. Von Sponeck had already ordered Brig. Gen. Cornelius Teodorini's 8th Romanina Cavalry Brigade to do an about face and return to Feodosia, while Brig. Gen. Gheorghe Manoliu's 4th Romanian Mountain Brigade was moved forward to prevent the Soviets from breaking out of the city to the west.

While ordering von Sponeck to hold his posi-

Alamy

**Advancing through a small Russian village near Kerch, German soldiers look to secure the adjacent buildings. The Red Army offensive that began with high hopes in the Crimea in the winter of 1941 soon came to grief as German commanders responded with counterattacks.**

tions, von Manstein promised to send Brig. Gen. Erwin Sander's 170th Infantry Division and a combat group of the 73rd Infantry Division under Lt. Col. Otto Hitzfeld to wrest Feodosia from the Russians. Von Sponeck was dubious. He then took matters into his own hands. After notifying 11th Army headquarters that he was evacuating the Kerch Peninsula, he severed all communications with von Manstein.

In his memoirs von Manstein wrote, "We were notified by radio that Count Sponeck had ordered the immediate evacuation of the peninsula because of the new landing at Feodosia. Though we immediately issued a countermand, it was never picked up by XLII Corps signal. While fully appreciating the corps anxiety not to be cut off by the enemy at Feodosia, we didn't believe that the situation would in any way be improved by a headlong withdrawal."

At 0830 on December 30, Himer ordered his dispersed regiments to begin a forced march to the west. At the same time the Romanians were ordered to launch an attack on the Soviet forces at Feodosia. The average Romanian soldier was brave, but he had poor leadership and outdated weapons. When the order to attack came the brigades had just finished a grueling march in freezing weather. They were led forward without artillery support, faltered, and then were driven back by a Russian counterattack that pushed the Feodosia bridgehead farther out to the north and west with some Soviet armor getting as far as the outskirts of Stary Krim, about 25 kilometers west of Feodosia.

Meanwhile, Himer's troops trekked westward throughout the 30th and 31st in a snowstorm and temperatures below zero. Some faced a march of more than 120 kilometers. By the time the forward elements of Himer's division reached Vladislavovka, located almost in the center of the Parpach Isthmus, they found the town occupied by L'vov's 63rd Mountain Division. With the division's heavy weapons far to the rear, there was no choice but to bypass the town and march across the snow-covered fields to the north.

As Soviet reconnaissance patrols probed the German line on the Kerch Peninsula, they reported the enemy withdrawal. The Kerch Strait was now mostly frozen due to the sub-zero temperatures, and troops could be brought over by foot and by vehicle. As soon as units arrived on the peninsula, they were sent piecemeal to the west in pursuit of the Germans. While Himer's division was pulling into the area just west of Parpach, the Red Army was taking back the Kerch Peninsula, including the port of Kerch, which was taken by the men of Colonel Mikhail Konstantinovich Zubkov's 302nd Rifle Division.

The arriving elements of the 46th Infantry Division immediately began digging new positions. With the arrival of Group Hitzfeld, a tenuous line was formed about 20 kilometers west of Feodosia with Manolius's mountain brigade dug in around Stary Krim and the German units manning positions to the north. The Soviets were not long in testing those positions.

A combined infantry-tank attack hit Hitzfeld's group, which was supported by four assault guns from Assault Gun Detachment 197. The assault guns waited patiently as the 16 T-26 tanks that were supporting the Soviet infantry approached. "Open fire at 500 meters," came the command.

It seemed an eternity, but the Soviet tanks were finally at the specified distance. As one, the four assault guns spat fire. Hit after hit left 16 blazing wrecks on the battlefield, and the Russian infantry retreated in disorder.

It is only speculation to consider the possibility that a coordinated attack by the 44th and 51st Armies that were now in the Kerch Peninsula could have broken the German line in the first days of 1942, but von Manstein commented on it in his memoirs, writing, "Had the Soviet commander [L'vov] pressed home his advantage properly by pursuing 46th Division really hard from Kerch and thrusting relentlessly after the Romanians fell back from Feodosia, the fate of the entire 11th Army would have been at stake. As it happened, he did not know when to take time by the forelock. Either he did not realize what a chance he had, or else he did not venture to seize it."

Von Manstein was forced to call off his assault on Sevastopol because of the developments. He left enough units to keep the fortress surrounded and then ordered Brig. Gen. Maximilian Fretter-Pico, who had replaced von Salmuth in late December, to move his XXX Corps east to bolster the Parpach defenses and to prepare for an assault to take back Feodosia.

Now it was time for von Sponeck to pay the piper. In severing communications with the 11th Army and intentionally disobeying a direct order from von Manstein, he had done something that was unthinkable at the time in Hitler's Wehrmacht. Von Manstein relieved him on New Year's Eve, replacing him with General Franz Mattenklott.

On his return to Berlin, von Sponeck stood before a court martial presided over by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. The court's sentence was reduction to the ranks, forfeiture of all orders and decorations, and death, which was later commuted to seven years' fortress detention. He languished in prison until July 23, 1944, when he was executed by an SS firing squad during the aftermath of the July 20 assassination attempt on Hitler.

Himer's 46th Infantry Division also received a startling sentence of sorts. Early in January the division's regimental commanders were ordered to report to 46th headquarters where an emotional Himer read a message from the new com-

mander of Army Group South, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau. It stated, "Because of its slack reaction to the Russian landing on the Kerch Peninsula, as well as its precipitate withdrawal from the Peninsula, I hereby declare 46th Division forfeit of its soldierly honor. Decorations and promotions are in abeyance until countermanded."

After marching across the peninsula on orders of the corps commander and then stopping the Soviets at Parpach, the officers were too stunned to reply to the slap in the face that von Reichenau had given them. However, the loss of honor for the division did not last long. On January 15, von Reichenau suffered a stroke. He was replaced by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, who issued the following order of the day toward the end of the month: "For its outstanding performance in the defensive fighting in the isthmus since the beginning of January, I express my very special commendation to the 46th Division and shall be looking forward to recommendations for promotions and decorations."

While the 46th occupied positions on the northern sector of the isthmus, Fretter-Pico prepared his two divisions for an attack to retake Feodosia. Peruvshin had enlarged his bridgehead, but in doing so he could not focus his forces on one central point of attack. His 236th Rifle Division (Maj. Gen. Vasilii Konstantinovich Morzov) occupied a line facing the Germans about 14 kilometers north of Feodosia. The two other divisions inside the bridgehead were spread out on either side of Morzov's division.

Besides the two divisions from his XXX Corps (Brig. Gen. Fritz Lindemann's 132nd and Brig. Gen. Erwin Sander's 170th), Fretter-Pico had Group Hitzfeld, two battalions from Himer's 46th, three assault guns from Major Gerhard, and a few assault guns from Major Heinz Steinwach's Assault Gun Detachment 197. Along with additional assault guns and Romanian troops, these units moved into positions to effectively stem any enlargement of the bridgehead to the north and west.

Peruvshin seemed content to wait for more reinforcements and for the arrival of L'vov's 51st Army at Parpach before he made his next move. On January 5, the 46th reported that advance elements of L'vov's army had arrived, but the main units of his divisions were still coming forward. The artillery elements of the 51st were even farther back on the peninsula and would take days to travel over the frozen ground to reach Parpach.

The Germans were able to strike first. On January 15, artillery fire hit Morzov's forward positions. About five kilometers behind these positions, the main elements of the 236th Rifle Division were entrenched along a ridgeline. While the German artillery pounded the forward positions, Luftwaffe aircraft appeared and dropped their deadly ordnance along the ridge, severing communications and generally creating havoc.

At 0600 the order came, "Aufmarsch—zum Angriff! ("Deploy—to the attack)." Group Hitzfeld, supported by Himer's I/IR 42 and II/IR 42, advanced quickly. The dazed Russians in the forward positions stood no chance against the Germans. At the village of Novopokrovka, a pair of T-26 light tanks tried to stop the enemy advance. They were knocked out by a section of guns from Assault Gun Detachment 190. The section, commanded by 1st Lt. Cardeno, continued to advance, but it soon came under direct fire from a 76.2mm gun battery. One assault gun, commanded by Lieutenant von Harnier, received a direct hit, killing the commander and his gunner. The remaining two assault guns were able to destroy the Russian battery as the German infantry continued to advance.

Peruvshin had been caught by surprise. To make matters worse, his headquarters came under air attack. The general was critically wounded during the bombing. The Russians were still unaware of German intentions, and it was thought that the attack on the 236th Rifle Division might be a feint to obscure a German attempt to take the village of Vladyslavivka. Therefore, instead of moving forces to assist Soviet units at Feodosia, both the 44th and 51st Armies sent units to reinforce the Vladyslavivka sector.

The bombing of the ridgeline, coupled with the Germans' lightning attack, made it possible for Hitzfeld's men to secure Morozov's main line, giving them a perfect observation point that allowed most of the Soviets' positions to be seen. As the troops settled in for the night, Hitzfeld was already planning his next move.

"We knew that we had them," Hitzfeld wrote in 1983. "My observers could call in artillery fire on the Russian positions, and the 132nd was already on the move on our right flank. My men would keep the Russians to our front busy while the 132nd would drive on Feodosia."

On the 16th, the infantry moved forward again. To Hitzfeld's left the two battalions of the 46th headed toward the heights southwest of Vladslavivka. They were supported by two assault guns under the command of Lt. Damman. The two guns stumbled into an assembly area for Russian tanks and infantry. Supported by some of the German infantry, Damman ordered his guns to attack the unprepared enemy. Tank crews were mowed down by rifle and machine-gun fire before they could react, and Damman's gunfire destroyed tank

National Archives

**German Junkers Ju-87 dive bombers drop their lethal loads on Soviet troop and armor concentrations below. When Soviet General S.I. Cherniak committed his armored reserve, the Stukas of StG-77 led waves of German aircraft that hit their assembly areas and destroyed 48 of the 98 Soviet tanks in the area. The surviving armored vehicles were compelled to retreat.**

after tank. When the cease-fire was given, 16 T-26s were smoldering wrecks. An antitank gun and several mortars and machine guns were also destroyed.

Lindemann's 132nd moved forward on the 17th, driving into the northern sector of Feodosia. To the right of the 132nd, Sander's 170th Infantry Division also made good progress. On the following day, Major Franz Griesbach's IR 170/170 ID reached the center of the city followed by other units that flushed out the remaining survivors. The Soviets had fought desperately, but they could not stop the German juggernaut. In his memoirs von Manstein wrote that the Soviets had lost 6,700 killed with 177 guns and 85 tanks destroyed. German casualties from XXX Corps numbered 243 dead or missing and 752 wounded.

Alamy

**A German antitank crew mans its weapon against a renewed Soviet onslaught launched in the Crimea in April 1942. German antitank guns such as this took a fearful toll on the Red Army drive and stopped the offensive in its tracks.**

With the capture of Feodosia complete, Fretter-Pico continued to attack the remaining two divisions of the 44th Army. In the north, XLII Corps joined in, catching L'vov's force off guard and pushing it back 22 kilometers. By the end of the 20th, the two German corps had advanced to the narrowest part of the Parpach Isthmus, but they did not have the strength or the supplies to go any farther. As the Germans dug in, the Russians did the same. The 20-kilometer-wide Parpach Narrows soon resembled a scene from the Western Front in World War I as both sides strengthened their positions with outposts and barbed wire.

Although Soviet reinforcements continued to flow across the Kerch Strait, the Russians were unable to make any headway against the German positions. Besides having logistical problems, Kozlov, who had just been named commander of the newly created Crimean Front, had to deal with Corps Commissar Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis. Mekhlis's job at the front headquarters was to make sure that the Crimea would be liberated.

A close cohort of Stalin, Mekhlis was known for his ruthlessness. He had been actively involved in the army purges of the 1930s, and he had ordered the execution of the commander of the 44th Rifle Division during the early disasters of the Winter War against Finland.

Mekhlis was constantly at odds with Kozlov. With no military background, he demanded that arriving reinforcements attack the Germans as soon as they arrived at the Parpach Line. His inane orders cost the Soviets thousands of lives from late January to the end of February and gained nothing.

Notwithstanding those losses, Mekhlis, on orders from Moscow, forced Kozlov to launch four offensives between February 27 and March 11. The first offensive began with an artillery barrage from more than 200 guns. The attack was aimed at Mattenklott's XLII Corps, anchored in the north by positions on the Sivash, a vast salty marsh. L'vov's 51st Army used five divisions in the attack. Although the initial armor-supported attack succeeded in driving back the 18th Infantry Regiment of Brig. Gen. Nicolae Costeacu's 18th Romanian Infantry Division, which was holding the area on the southern side of the Sivash, Kozlov was unable to commit his heavy armor due to the soft terrain, leaving only his light tanks to support the infantry.

The combined Russian force advanced about 4½ kilometers the first day but was stopped when Mattenklott sent German reinforcements to plug the gap left by the Romanians. Several Soviet tanks were knocked out by German artillery and antitank guns.

On the 28th, Kozlov ordered the 77th Rifle Division of Maj. Gen. Konstantin Stepanovich Kolganov's 47th Army, which was held in reserve in the eastern Kerch Peninsula, to enter the fray. The 77th did succeed in bending Mattenklott's left flank, but the German line did not break.

A frustrated Kozlov moved his attack farther south, going up against a German strongpoint at the small village of Koi-Asan. Four tank brigades and a tank battalion, supported by two infantry divisions, were committed to the attack. They ran into a wall of fire from German antitank guns. The defenders were supported by Captain Helmut Bode's III/StG 77, which fell upon the Soviet armor like hawks on field mice. By the end of the day, the Russians had lost at least 90 tanks, forcing Kozlov to call off the offensive.

A furious Stalin ordered another offensive to begin within 10 days—barely enough time for Kozlov to make good his losses. Mekhlis blamed Kozlov's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Fedor Ivanovich Tolbukhin, who would later rise to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, for the failed offensive. He was relieved on March 10 and replaced by Maj. Gen. Petr Pantelimonovich Vechnyi, who had accompanied Mekhlis from Moscow.

Kozlov opened his next offensive at 0900 on March 13. Once again, Koi-Asan, which the Germans had reinforced with an extensive minefield and more antitank guns, was the main target. A force of three rifle divisions from the 51st Army took part in the assault. They were supported by more than 200 tanks that were spread out piecemeal among the infantry as a reserve on Mekhlis's orders.

After three days of failure, Mekhlis ordered Kozlov to commit his armor. Churning up mud as they crossed the soggy ground, the tanks were met by antitank fire and the assault guns of 1/Assault Gun Detachment 197 and 2/Assault Gun Detachment 249. Lieutenant Johann Spielmann described the action in a 1987 letter to

the author: "We had excellent cover, and we waited until the slow-moving Russian tanks were at mid-range. My section fired again and again, making several hits. We destroyed 14 tanks in two days, mostly T-34s. It was like shooting on the practice range."

In all, the Russians lost 157 tanks to antitank guns and assault gun fire. The battle raged until March 20, when Kozlov was once again forced to admit failure and withdraw his battered forces. A third offensive began on March 26 and suffered a similar fate.

Both sides had received reinforcements before the fourth offensive began on April 9. Kozlov once again received more infantry and tanks, and on the German side Maj. Gen. Johann Sinnhuber's 28th Light Division was moved into the Parpach Line.

When the Soviets began their offensive early on April 9, Koi-Asan was again the main objective. The assault ran into trouble from the start. Several tanks were destroyed by a new antitank weapon, the 28mm tapered bore gun, which had a low silhouette. A corporal in the 28th, Emanuel Czernik, was able to destroy seven T-26s and an armored car on the first day using the weapon. After days of fighting, the Soviets once again withdrew.

The first four months of 1942 had ended with catastrophic losses for the Soviets in the Crimea. Between Kerch and Sevastopol, the Russians lost 352,000 killed, wounded, or captured. Most of those casualties were suffered trying to break the German line at Parpach. In comparison, von Manstein lost a little over 24,000 killed, wounded, or missing.

With Hitler planning his summer offensive to take Stalingrad, it became imperative that Sevastopol be taken as soon as possible. Von Manstein realized that this would not be possible with his rear still threatened by the three Soviet armies occupying Kerch. Therefore, even while the battles for Parpach raged his staff was working on a plan to destroy the enemy in the Kerch Peninsula. It was codenamed Unternehmen Trappenjagd (Operation Bustard Hunt).

The German and Romanian forces designated for the operation would be outnumbered by more than two to one. Although the Russians had suffered horrendous casualties during the previous months, Kozlov could still field 17 infantry divisions, two cavalry divisions, three rifle brigades, and four tank brigades in the Kerch Peninsula.

The main Soviet defensive line lay in front of a 10-meter-wide, five-meter-deep antitank ditch that ran across the width of the approximately 20-kilometer-wide Parpach Isthmus. East of the ditch, a second defensive line known as the Nasyr Line was constructed as a fallback point in the event the Germans breached the Parpach position. A final position, the Sultanovka Line, was built about 40 kilometers east of the Nasyr Line.

RIA-Novosti / The Image Works

**This Soviet propaganda photo purportedly shows a Soviet soldier falling to the ground as he is shot and killed during combat in the region. This image was supposedly taken during the fighting on the Kerch Peninsula in April 1942.**

In the air, Kozlov would count on a force of 176 fighters and 225 bombers from Maj. Gen. Evgenii Makarovich Nikolaenko's Air Forces Crimean Front. Unfortunately, many of those aircraft were obsolete and were clearly outclassed by German models. Nikolaenko was also short of reliable reconnaissance aircraft—something that would play right into von Manstein's plan.

Since the left flank of the Russian line, anchored by the Black Sea, was marsh-filled terrain, Kozlov expected any possible German assault to take place on his right in the 51st Army sector. Therefore, he strengthened L'vov's force, bringing a total of eight rifle divisions, three rifle brigades, and two tank brigades to man the approximately nine-kilometer front.

Defending the left, the 44th Army, now commanded by Lt. Gen. Stepan Ivanovich Cherniak, had five rifle divisions and two tank units. Kozlov placed more tank and cavalry units behind the main line to use as a mobile reserve. Kolganov's 47th Army was in position farther east with four rifle divisions and a cavalry division.

Trappenjagd was reminiscent of von Manstein's plan to drive through the Ardennes in 1940. Once again he planned to use terrain as an ally. He ordered Mattenklott's XXX Corps (46th and 50th Infantry Divisions) and General Florea Mitranescu's VII Romanian Corps (10 and 19th Romanian Infantry Divisions and 8th Romanian Cavalry Brigade) to fake preparations for an all-out attack on the 51st Army, which fit with Kozlov's assessment of where the main thrust would fall.

While Kozlov kept his eyes to the north, von Manstein planned to use Fretter-Pico's XXX Corps to drive through the marshland and hit Cherniak's army with the 132nd and 170th Infantry Divisons, the 28th Light Division, and a motorized group commanded by Colonel Karl von Groddeck. Brig. Gen. Wilhelm von Apell's 22nd Panzer Division, which had recently arrived in the Crimea, would be held in reserve to exploit the breakthrough. Also included in the plan was an amphibious landing behind the Russian frontline positions to further disorganize the Soviets.

Von Manstein's trump card was the Luftwaffe. While German fighters destroyed or kept Russian reconnaissance aircraft from flying over German lines, the commander of the VIII Fliegerkorps (Air Corps), General Wolfram von Richthofen, set up his headquarters in the village of Klyuchoye, about nine kilometers west of Feodosia, on May 1. During the next week the Luftwaffe presence in the Crimea swelled to a total of 555 combat aircraft, which were scattered in airfields around von Richthofen's headquarters. When Trappenjagd was ready to begin, elements of Jägdgeschwader (Fighter Wing) 52 and 77 and Kampfgeschwader (Bomber Wing) 26, 27, 51, 76, and 100 would be available. There would also be two groups from Schlachgeschwader (SchG.-Ground Attack Wing) 1 and all of von Schönborn-Wiesenthied's StG 77 participating in the air assault.

The forces under von Richthofen performed double duties once they reached the Crimea. To

Both: Alamy

**Romanian soldiers take to small boats during an amphibious operation behind Soviet lines near Kerch. The Romanians were heavily engaged in the fighting in the Crimea and sustained serious casualties in the effort to turn the tables on the Red Army.**

gain air superiority, Russian airfields on the peninsula became the objects of bombing and fighter attacks. In one such attack on May 2, German escort fighters shot down 32 Soviet planes without a single loss while the accompanying bombers destroyed several more on the ground.

Von Richthofen was also tasked with interdicting the Soviet supply line to Kerch. Since it would be next to impossible to keep a constant air presence over the narrow Kerch Strait, he concentrated his bombers on the key ports of Kerch and Kamysk-Burun on the east coast of the Crimea and Novorossiysk and Tupase on the Taman Peninsula. Because of the damaged port facilities, supplies to Kozlov's armies slowed to a trickle. The bombers also further weakened Kozlov's forces by hitting targets on Kerch that included fuel and ammunition dumps, artillery and antiaircraft positions, and infantry installations and troop concentrations.

Just before dawn on May 8, the German artillery opened up accompanied by rockets, heavy howitzers, and von Richthofen's antiaircraft guns, which could also be used for direct fire missions. Soviet positions disappeared as the fire crept forward. The barrage on the forward enemy defenses lasted 10 minutes, after which the German infantry surged toward the positions of Cherniak's 63rd Mountain Rifle Division and the 276th Rifle Division, which held a 6½-kilometer stretch of the Russian line. Bombers flew overhead and shattered the bunkers and gun emplacements in the main defensive line.

German fighters ruled the air over Kerch and the Kerch Strait, shooting down more than 80 enemy aircraft that rose to challenge them. The Russians were able to shoot down 10 German planes and damage 10 more, but they essentially lost control of the sky by the end of the first day.

As Stukas from StG 77 pounded a strongly fortified position known as the "Tartar Hill," the Silesians of the 28th Light Division, supported by 21 assault guns, moved around the hill and struck the 63rd Mountain Rifle Division's 346th Rifle Regiment, virtually destroying it. The now isolated 251st Rifle Regiment, which was holding the hill, was soon overwhelmed and also destroyed.

The third regiment of the 63rd, the 291st, met the same fate at the hands of the Bavarians from Lindemann's 132nd. Surviving remnants of the 63rd were soon streaming east toward the main defense line, which was held by the 157th and 404th Rifle Divisions on the western edge of the antitank ditch. Although Cherniak had his armored reserve (56th Tank Brigade and 126th Tank Battalion) stationed around Arma Eli, about 15 kilometers to the rear, he did not order it forward at this critical time.

Lindemann's IR 438 and Sinnhuber's Jäger Regiment 49 pushed through the Soviet main defense line and reached the western side of the antitank ditch before 0600. Less than two hours later the 49th had secured a bridgehead on the eastern side. An attack by the 126th Tank Battalion, which had finally moved forward, was beaten back by the 190th Assault Gun Detachment with the loss of only one German gun for 24 destroyed Soviet tanks.

North of Sinnhuber, Brig. Gen. Friedrich Schmidt's 50th Infantry Division had harder going against the 276th Rifle Division. The marshy ground and muddy roads made movement difficult, and it took most of the day to push the 276th back to the antitank ditch. Lieutenant Spielmann, who had taken command of the 1/Assault Gun Detachment 197 after its commander, 1st Lt. Liedkte, had been wounded, recalled the opening assault: "The condition of the roads slowed our advance and the battery also encountered a series of antitank obstacles that had to be removed by our pioneers [engineers]. Even with these difficulties my guns were able to hit several Russian positions, allowing our infantry to push forward."

Cherniak's army was in turmoil. To add to the confused situation, von Manstein's surprise amphibious assault began shortly after the main attack had started. An infantry company and a platoon of engineers were ferried by assault boats of Sturmboote-Kommando 902 from Feodosia to a point about 1,300 meters behind the vaunted antitank ditch. After enemy coastal defenses were destroyed in the surprise assault, reinforcements were landed during the course of the day under the protection of the Luftwaffe. By midafternoon most of Lindemann's IR 436 was ashore and bearing down on the rear of the 157th and 404th Rifle Divisions.

With the successful amphibious landing, von Manstein unleashed Group Groddeck. The colonel commanded a combined force of German and Romanian troops that contained approximately five infantry battalions, a Romanian cavalry regiment, elements of three assault gun battalions, some captured Russian tanks, and a variety of artillery, antiaircraft, antitank, and engineering units. Motor pools from all over the German-held Crimea were stripped bare to provide the needed mobility for the infantry.

Cherniak was finally alarmed enough to commit his remaining armor (the 56th Brigade and remnants of the 126th Battalion) to try and check the advance of the 28th Light Division. German air superiority stopped the Russians cold. StG-77 Stukas and Henschel Hs-129 B ground attack aircraft from Lt. Col. Otto Weiss's SchG 1 caught the Soviet tanks in their assembly areas. With sirens screaming, the Stukas dove on the tanks, dropping their bombs with deadly accuracy. The 20mm and 30mm cannons from the Henschels added to the destruction. In a matter of minutes, 48 of the 98 tanks scheduled to attack were destroyed and

the rest retreated north and east in disarray.

Commissar Mekhlis hoped to disassociate himself with the day's disaster by transmitting a damning condemnation of Kozlov and his military council to the high command in Moscow. He also said that he was the only one who had foreseen the threat of the German attack. The message was shown to Stalin, who shot back with the following reply that Mekhlis surely never expected: "Your code message I received. You hold a strange position that you work there only as a detached observer who is not accountable for the events at the Crimean Front. Your position is sure convenient, yet it is rotten to the core. At the Crimean Front, you are not an outside observer, but the responsible representative of Stavka, who is accountable for every success and failure that takes place at the Front, and who is required to correct, right then and there, any mistake made by military officers.

"You, along with the military officers, will answer for never reinforcing the weakness of the left flank of the Front. If everything seems to indicate that the opponent will begin an advance the first thing in the morning, yet you haven't done everything needed to repel their advance, because you limited your involvement to only passive criticisms, then you will make things worse for yourself. So it seems that you still have not figured out that we sent you to the Crimean Front not as a government auditor but as a responsible representative of Stavka.

"You demand that we replace Kozlov with anyone else, even with Hindenburg. Yet it is impossible for you to be unaware that Soviet reserves do not have anyone named Hindenburg. The situation is not complicated, and you could have taken care of it all with what you had all by yourself.... You do not need to be a 'Hindenburg' to grasp such a simple thing, while sitting for two months at the Crimean Front."

While the back and forth between Stalin and Mekhlis was taking place, the German assault continued. Although engineers at the antitank ditch had blasted the steep walls of the ditch with explosives, the crossing points were still narrow and soft. The engineers would have to work harder on them to allow the passage of the 22nd Panzer's tanks, but von Groddeck's lighter forces were able to traverse the obstacle with few problems.

By noon on the 9th, von Groddeck had raced past the advancing units of the 132nd Infantry Division and had sliced through the Nasyr Line. The Soviets were mostly unaware of the German units that had advanced almost 25 kilometers in just a few hours.

Although the bulk of Kozlov's divisions were on the Soviet right flank with the 51st Army, the Russian units there remained stagnant. One of the reasons for this was that a bombing raid had taken out the 51st Army headquarters and had killed L'vov, cutting communications with the Crimean Front headquarters at a critical moment.

As Group Groddeck approached the Sultanovka Line, the two Soviet divisions occupying the position (11th NKVD and the vastly understrength 72nd Cavalry of the 47th Army) were blissfully ignorant of its presence. The first indication of trouble was when elements of von Groddeck's group hit the Marfivka airfield, about 35 kilometers southwest of Kerch. The airfield's defenses were overwhelmed almost immediately, and in a few minutes 35 I-153 biplane fighter-bombers were burning on the ground.

While von Groddeck's forces raised havoc in the Soviet rear, the 22nd Panzer had finally made it across the antitank ditch. However, instead of making a lightning run to the north to cut off the 51st Army the divison became bogged down as a weather front came through accompanied by heavy rain.

**German infantrymen advance behind the cover of a tank during fighting in the Crimea in the spring of 1942. By mid-April, the Germans had crossed the Sultanovka Line and wrested the initiative from the Red Army. Luftwaffe aircraft continued to pound the Soviets from the air while the ground troops neutralized pockets of resistance.**

Although Group Groddeck had performed splendidly, von Manstein was concerned about the slow progress being made by the 22nd. "Everything was going too slowly for the army commander,' von Richthofen wrote later. "In my opinion he was worried. I calmed him down and pointed to our decisive actions planned for the next few hours. He remained skeptical."

Throughout the fog-shrouded night the 22nd Panzer struggled forward. The rain stopped early on the 10th, making movement easier as the sun began to dry the ground. A panicked Kozlov launched his last armored reserves (40th Tank Brigade and 229th Tank Battalion) in a desperate effort to halt General Wilhelm von Apell's progress. Once again the Luftwaffe rose to the challenge, and the Soviet armor was decimated. Around noon on the 10th, the 22nd was nearing the Sea of Azov, followed by the 28th Light and elements of the 170th and 50th Infantry Divisions.

A heavy artillery barrage caused the Germans multiple casualties, but the Russian guns were soon silenced by the Luftwaffe, led by von Richthofen himself, who directed the bombing from the cockpit of his Feiseler Storch observation aircraft. In his diary for the 10th he wrote, "By sunset we have isolated 10 Red divisions, except for a narrow gap. In the morning the extermination can begin."

Morning fog once again hampered closing the pocket on the 11th, but by 1100 hours visibility had improved. Von Manstein ordered the XLII Army Corps and the VII Romanian Army Corps to attack from the west, putting further pressure on the 51st Army. Overhead, von Richthofen's squadrons blasted the Soviet units holding open the gap at Ak-Monai, about 65 kilometers west of Kerch. A followup attack by the 22nd Panzer and 132nd Infantry scattered the dazed survivors, and the final escape route of the 51st Army was closed.

The Russian units that had made it through the gap were easy prey for the Luftwaffe as they fled eastward. The ground attack squadrons wreaked incredible destruction as they bombed

*Continued on page 86*

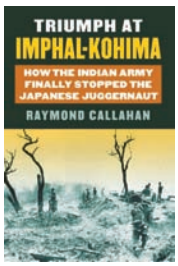
By Christopher Miskimon

Ghurka soldiers fighting in Burma in 1944.

# From Defeat to Victory

**After several disastrous defeats in 1942-1943, the Indian Army remade itself into a war-winning force that stopped the Japanese Army cold at Imphal-Kohima.**

**THE BATTLE OF SANGSHAK IS ONE OF THOSE UNKNOWN FIGHTS THAT LAID THE** groundwork for the subsequent Allied victory in World War II. In March 1944, the Japanese U-Go offensive was making gains against the mostly Indian British IV Corps as it advanced toward Kohima, a major Allied position. The India-Burma front was one of the war's backwaters, always last for equipment, weapons, and reinforcements. The soldiers in this theater had to make do with what little they had.




Sangshak began when General William Slim's XIV Army released a reserve unit, the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade, from its control and sent it into the fight to bolster the hard-pressed British and Indian infantry divisions under attack by the Japanese 31st Division. This unit had two battalions, one Indian and one Gurkha, which marched to the battle due to a shortage of transport. There the brigade took control of the 4th Battalion, 5th Mahratta Light Infantry, which had been left to await their arrival.

At first the 50th Brigade dispersed into a number of outposts and other positions. When the Japanese overran a company of paratroopers on a hill named 7378 (for its height in feet) the unit's commander, Brigadier Maxwell Hope-Thompson, decided to consolidate his troops to prevent being defeated in detail. They did so on a flat-topped hill near the village of Sangshak. The infantrymen were reinforced with a machine-gun company and a mountain artillery battery. Slim's headquarters planned to resupply them by air, though this never worked well due to the small area the unit occupied and the stubbornness of the Allied cargo pilots, who refused to drop their loads in the way the troops on the ground requested.

The Japanese attacked for six days, often using the supplies and water dropped by their enemy. It was stiff fighting for the Indians, who were well trained but were also experiencing combat for the first time. Finally, it was realized there was no further gain to be had from continuing to hold the position, so Hope-Thompson was ordered to break out after dark on March 26. Incredibly, this message was sent without encoding and in clear language, subject to Japanese interception. Despite this, most of the survivors made it back to Indian lines, but overall the Indian battalion suffered 80 percent casualties while the Gurkhas suffered 35 percent. It was a great sacrifice, but in the end it allowed Kohima to be reinforced sufficiently to hold out until the Japanese attack lost strength and ended.

The myth of Japanese invincibility was broken just as the Japanese disdain for Indian and British troops was dispelled. The successful defense at Kohima and Imphal set the stage for successful offensives later in the war. It was the result of hard training and deliberate planning on the part of William Slim and his army. How that army made the transition from defeat to victory is painstakingly retold in ***Triumph at Imphal-Kohima: How the Indian Army Finally Stopped the Japanese Juggernaut*** (Raymond Callahan, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 2017, 216 pp., map, appendices, notes, index $26.95, hardcover).

The author goes into great detail on how the Indian Army was rebuilt into a force capable of holding its own and even taking the fight to the Japanese Army despite being given short shrift by its nominal leaders in Great Britain. He also stresses how this was primarily an Indian effort; although the high command was entirely British, Indian troops bore the brunt of the fighting and sustained most of the casualties. This argument is made cogently and logically, using historical examples going back to the Indian Mutiny to demonstrate how Indian forces were raised and organized.

This theater of the war is much ignored, particularly in the United States, which had relatively little involvement in the action. The book lays out the ability of General William Slim and the efforts of his troops to great advantage and sheds light on their accomplishments. It follows the battle from its prelude through to the aftermath, when the British Indian Army prepared to carry the battle to the Japanese and did so successfully. This work is thought provoking,

# It took 6 Years to Fight...
# and 300,000 American Lives to win.

## *Now, WWII is being revealed as never before.*

# WWII HISTORY


## *The Foremost Authority on the Greatest War In History*

WWII HISTORY Magazine is more like a fine reference for your history library than it is like a regular magazine that you just flip through and discard. Incisive, full-length feature stories from the top experts in the field are beautifully illustrated with historic photos, paintings, and battle maps.

In just the first few issues, you'll gain a fresh new understanding of the war.

**OUR GUARANTEE:** Order now, and if at any time you decide WWII HISTORY isn't for you, you'll receive a full refund on all unserviced issues, no questions asked!

### *Subscribe now!*

Visit our website below for our best subscription offers! Available in our traditional Print Edition, as well as digital format.

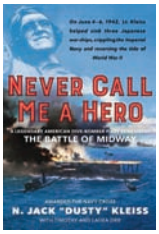
## www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com/magazine



giving the reader a new viewpoint on the war in the China-Burma-India Theater and backing up its assertions with credible evidence.

---

*Never Call Me a Hero: A Legendary American Dive-Bomber Pilot Remembers the Battle of Midway* (N. Jack Kleiss, William Morrow Publishers, New York, 2017, 311 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, index, $26.99, hardcover)




On June 4, 1942, the future of the Pacific War was in the hands of a few hundred American and Japanese pilots. One of them, Lieutenant (j.g.) "Dusty" Kleiss, was flying a Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber at 20,000 feet with an enemy aircraft carrier sailing far below. He was part of Scouting Squadron Six from the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise. The American torpedo planes had failed to achieve success, so now it was up to the dive bombers to make their attacks and turn the tide. Kleiss put his plane into its dive, soaring downward toward the carrier Kaga. His plane plunged through enemy antiaircraft fire at 240 knots. The young pilot released his bombs at the last second before pulling out of his dive to level off just above the ocean waves. The Kaga's flight deck exploded into flames. Kleiss's job was done.

Dusty Kleiss came from a small town in Kansas to become one of the Navy's elite pilots of the early part of World War II. His story is one of pushing limits, perseverance, and dealing with the toll of battle. It is an interesting memoir, told from the point of view of a pilot caught up in one of the pivotal battles of the war, a fighting sailor at the fighting level rather than an admiral. Despite the importance of his actions, the author tells the story with humility, and his ability as a storyteller in considerable.

---

*Storm of Eagles: The Greatest Aviation Photographs of World War II* (John Dibbs and Kent Ramsey, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2017, 247 pp., photographs, index, $35.00, hardcover)


A Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber soars high above the clouds, surrounded by flak. A pilot inspects the dozens of bullet holes in the fuselage of his aircraft. North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers line up on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* shortly before they launch their attack on Tokyo. A Luftwaffe ace relaxes on a pad marked "U.S. Air Corps" before his next mission. A Vought Kingfisher is pulled from the Pacific Ocean to be reloaded aboard the cruiser USS *Baltimore*. A YR-4B helicopter lands near a downed bomber in Burma in February 1945.

All these images and many more are contained in the pages of this new coffee table book. A mix of color and black and white photographs combines to make an attractive volume that beckons the reader to keep turning the pages to see what amazing picture is next. Each is accompanied by a detailed caption to put a place and time with the action. A few of the photos are well known, iconic imagery, but many have rarely been seen before, even by aviation enthusiasts.

---

*Rocky Boyer's War: An Unvarnished History of the Air Blitz That Won the War in the Southwest Pacific* (Allen D. Boyer, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2017, 440 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)


Rocky Boyer was a young lieutenant assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps in the Pacific. He saw a wide variety of events during his time at Nazdab in New Guinea, home to an Allied base that was described as part scout camp and part frontier boomtown. Rocky knew a chaplain who stood up to a group of colonels whose drunken promotion party ended in gunfire and exploding sticks of dynamite. There was also a private from an antiaircraft unit whose first sergeant was accidentally shot when he was sleepwalking and mistaken for a Japanese infiltrator. A fellow lieutenant came back from a date with a nurse disgusted because all she would let him do was rub her belly. Boyer even fought against Japanese paratroopers who attacked his camp on Leyte.

Many memoirs are full of tales of heroism, sacrifice, and hardship. This new work is a more grounded look at the entirety of a soldier's service, including the stupidities, drunkenness, and even the occasional good time. Daily life for most soldiers was not a constant grind of combat but rather moments of excitement and fear interspersed among long periods of boredom and mundane events. The author describes the war using Boyer's diary to add detail and life to his own interesting prose. The book presents a very real look at the experiences of one soldier doing his duty amid the larger scope of a world war.

---

*Blitzkrieg from the Ground Up* (Niklas Zetterling, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2017, 288 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, Hardcover)

# New and Noteworthy


**Blood and Fears: How America's Bomber Boys of the 8th Air Force Saved World War II** (Kevin Wilson, Pegasus Books, 2017, $29.95, hardcover) This is a history of the Eighth Air Force's long campaign against Germany. It is extensively researched with many personal accounts.


**Women Heroes of World War II: The Pacific Theater** (Kathyrn J. Atwood, Chicago Review Press, 2017, $19.99, hardcover) Contained in this volume are 15 stories of women who acted as spies, saboteurs, or resistance fighters during the war.


**Allied Intelligence Handbook of the German Army 1939-45** (Compiled by Stephen Bull, Bloomsbury Press, 2017, $15.00, hardcover) This compact edition gives examples of Allied intelligence-gathering efforts during the war. It effectively shows what Allied troops knew about their enemies.


**Hitler Versus Stalin the Eastern Front 1943-44: Kursk to Bagration** (Nik Cornish, Pen and Sword, 2017, $24.95, softcover) The author has compiled a photographic history of the war on the Eastern Front. This is the third volume, covering the 1943-1944 time period.


**Vehicle Art of World War Two** (John Norris, Pen and Sword, 2017, $39.95, hardcover) Soldiers and pilots decorated their vehicles with a wide array of artwork. This new work is a detailed study of the subject.


**At the Heart of the Reich: The Secret Diary of Hitler's Army Adjutant** (Major Gerhard Engel, Frontline Books, 2017, $19.95, softcover) The author was Hitler's Army adjutant from 1938 to 1943. His diary provides insight into the machinations of the Nazis in peace and war.


**Humanitarians at War: The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust** (Gerald Steinacher, Oxford University Press, 2017, $32.95, hardcover) This chronicle looks at the Red Cross and its efforts to rehabilitate itself after its failure to speak out against the Holocaust during the war


**Broken Wings: The Hungarian Air Force 1918-45** (Stephen Renner, Indiana University Press, 2017, $35.00, hardcover) Hungary built its air force in secret between the wars, only to see it squandered as part of the Axis forces.

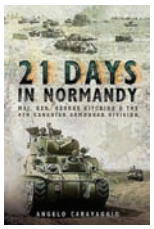

**The Spy in Hitler's Inner Circle: Hans-Thilo Schmidt and the Intelligence Network That Decoded Enigma** (Paul Paillole, Casemate Publishers, 2016, $32.95, hardcover) This new book explains the French role in the infiltration of Germany's intelligence agencies. The author was an operative who experienced the period firsthand.


**Hurricane: Hawker's Fighter Legend** (John Dibbs, Tony Holmes and Gordon Riley, Osprey Publishing, 2017, $45.00, hardcover) The Hurricane was one of Great Britain's best fighter aircraft. This coffee table book is lavishly illustrated with period photos and new images of restored planes.


At 3 AM on Christmas Eve, 1941, German Sergeant Bahls was roused from sleep by an urgent message. A Soviet attack had taken the village of Aristovo, three kilometers away. His unit, the 21st Panzer Regiment, was defending just outside of Moscow. He was told to take his tank, a Panzer IV, and a Panzer II to the village and help retake it in a counter-attack. The village held German baggage, including food and Christmas presents, all of it now captured. An hour later Bahls found a few German infantrymen still holding a few houses on the western edge of Aristovo. They directed him to their battalion commander, though the battalion was down to only 35 men. Bahls decided to attack. The Panzer II's turret was frozen, limiting its ability to fire, so Bahls led the way. Entering the town he ordered his gunner to drive down the main street and pour can-

non fire into every building still standing. The night air was rent by the crash of the 75mm gun and the explosions of shells. As he reached the east end of the village, the rising sun revealed the brown forms of Soviet troops fleeing across the fields away from the town.

This glimpse of the German experience of blitzkrieg is one of many in this new work. The author argues that the concept was not new, but merely a refinement of fighting techniques that were developed over decades. Tanks and other new weapons were merely inserted into a doctrine thath already emphasized flexibility, initiative, speed, and decentralized decision making. To demonstrate this idea the book uses not only the experiences of generals and their broad perspective, but also those of enlisted soldiers and junior officers as they fought the war on the ground.




***21 Days in Normandy: Maj. Gen. George Kitching & the 4th Canadian Armoured Division*** (Angelo Caravaggio, Pen and Sword Publishers, South Yorkshire, UK, 2016, 336 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

The fog of war was thick on the morning of August 9, 1944. A battle group of the Canadian 4th Armoured Division designated Worthington Force after its commander, Lt. Col. Don Worthington, was on the move toward the south and east, avoiding ongoing fighting so it could advance. After a time Worthington saw what he thought was his objective, Point 195. He occupied the position and dug his men in for defense while he awaited follow-on forces. Tragically, the unit was in the wrong place, 4.5 miles east of the objective and deep in a neighboring Polish division's zone. It was also terribly close to the remains of Kampfgruppe Wünsche, a German force with 39 Panther tanks. The result was a bitter and bloody battle; the Canadians lost 47 of 55 tanks and suffered hundreds of casualties. Meanwhile, division headquarters did not know where Worthington Force actually was and spent much effort trying to locate it.

This unfortunate action is just one retold in this new work. The Canadian 4th Armoured is the subject of much criticism for not closing the Falaise Gap during the Normandy fighting. The author uses new information to demonstrate the unit did show flexibility and adapted to the battlefield quickly, despite being thrown into battle during one of the Normandy Campaign's critical phases. His arguments are detailed and based upon in-depth research, and the book has many detailed maps to help the reader follow the action.

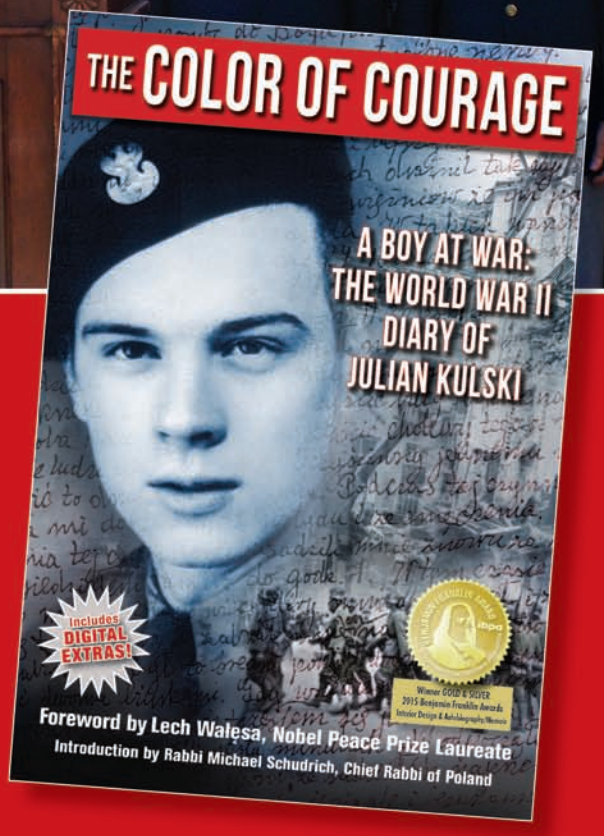

***The Lost Submarines of Pearl Harbor: The Rediscovery and Archaeology of Japan's Top Secret Midget Submarines of World War II*** (James P. Delgado et al., Texas A&M Press, College Station, 2016 226 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $45.00, hardcover)

In the hours before dawn on December 7, 1941, Japanese submarines offshore from Pearl Harbor launched five two-man midget submarines. Their mission was to penetrate the American defenses and strike the American battleships in the anchorage. None succeeded, and one was even fired upon and sunk by the destroyer USS *Ward* outside the harbor mouth shortly before the air attack began. For the rest of the war these submarines had a few notable successes but more often failed or were simply not as effective as hoped. Despite this they are a fascinating subject that still draws attention.

Few of Japan's midget submarines still exist; most were destroyed at the end of the war or lie sunken in the waters of the Pacific. This book is

# "FREEDOM IS NOT FREE"

— Julian Kulski, WWII Veteran


**Kulski's groundbreaking WWII diary written in 1945 as a 16-year-old veteran suffering from PTSD.**

**Foreword by NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE LECH WAŁĘSA**

**Includes 11 historical videos.**

***WATCH NOW!***

**GERMAN VICTORY PARADE**
**Warsaw, October 5, 1939**
www.polww2.com/GermanVictoryParade

## "At once ABSORBING, inspiring, and tragic."

*— Publishers Weekly*

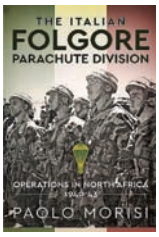
**More info: www.polww2.com/AboutCourage**
Available at fine bookstores, online retailers and major wholesalers.
Distributed by National Book Network, www.nbnbooks.com

AQUILA POLONICA®
www.AquilaPolonica.com

the product of a small group of dedicated researchers who strive to locate and study the remains of lost submarines across the ocean. While much of the book's focus is on the midget submarines used at Pearl Harbor, several chapters are dedicated to their operations elsewhere, such as the submarine attacks on Diego Suarez and Sydney Harbor in May 1942 and later actions at Guadalcanal along with suicide submarines at Leyte in 1944. This work is a good combination of military archaeology and history with many color photographs and images of artifacts.

---

*The Italian Folgore Parachute Division: Operations in North Africa 1940-43* (Paolo Morisi, Helion and Company, West Midlands, UK, 2017, 192 pp., maps, appendices, bibliography, index, $59.95, hardcover)




The Italian Army is often given scant praise for its performance during World War II, but this reputation is not well deserved. In North Africa the Italian Army served as a vital and usually more numerous portion of the Axis forces on the continent. Despite this, Italian service is overlooked in comparison to that of the German Afrika Korps. In particular, Italy's Folgore Parachute Division, created as an emulation of the German airborne troops, gave particularly notable service. It fought across the breadth of the North African battlefield, from El Alamein to Tunisia and many places in between. Despite their ultimate defeat, they earned the respect of their counterparts in the Allied military, even though they often fought outnumbered, were poorly equipped, and lacked modern weapons of all sorts.

This new work succeeds in bringing attention to the neglected story of Italian troops in the desert war. It contains a number of studies of small-unit actions that highlight the paratroopers' skill and determination. The book is well illustrated with a large number of photographs, many of them rarely seen. The text is drawn from numerous battle reports and war diaries of units from both sides, creating a narrative that shows the two sides of each engagement covered. The author also includes a chapter assessing the Folgore Division and its accomplishments, providing a thorough and balanced report on the service of a unit that is frequently mentioned in various histories but seldom described in any real detail.

---

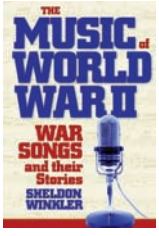
*Steadfast: Compelling Firsthand Accounts of Two Parallel Journeys in World War II* (Susan A. Herney, CreateSpace Publishing, 2015, 477 pp., map, photographs, bibliography, $23.50, softcover)


Al Herney's experience in World War II is representative of that of thousands of others during humanity's greatest conflict. Serving aboard the minesweeper USS *Scurry* (AM-304), Al did not have a glamorous job. There were few chances to earn medals or recognition, though the danger he faced was sure and true. Like many others, he was not where he wanted to be, either. His ship served at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and after the war it helped clear channels through minefields as part of the occupation effort. Al would certainly have preferred to be home with his wife and family. Since he was not, however, he did what thousands of other service members did. He made the best of it.

The author has taken a cache of her parents' wartime letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, and other possessions and woven them into a narrative of their experiences. It is the story of everyday common people and how they dealt with the extraordinary events sweeping them forward. The generation that fought the war is almost entirely gone now; this book's strength is that it helps preserve a piece of them for posterity.

---

*The Music of World War II: War Songs and Their Stories, 2nd ed.* (Sheldon Winkler, Merriam Press, Hoosick Falls, NY, 2017, 156 pp., photographs, bibliography, $14.95, softcover)




Most wars have their own music, songs to stir the heart or relieve it of the stresses of battle. World War II was no different, and its tunes ran the gamut. Spike Jones and his City Slickers mocked Hitler in their novelty hit "Der Fuehrer's Face." Woodie Guthrie wrote a tribute song for Lyudmila Pavlichenko, a Soviet sniper who is credited with killing 309 Nazis with her rifle. "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" was based on an actual event at Pearl Harbor and was so popular it became a slogan for over a generation.

This expanded edition contains the background information of 15 different songs along with famous movies and musicals of the war. It provides the reader with a detailed view of the music that motivated, entertained, and consoled a population at war. Some of the songs are still popular today, but all of them are significant for their popularity and relevance to the period. □

ALPVENTURES®

# WORLD WAR II TOURS

## Alpventures® World War II Tours are packed with History, Fun & Adventure.

*Visit the World War II Battlefields of Europe and Russia on our Guided Tours, and enjoy exceptional service, first-class hotels, experienced guide, and much more...*

**(888) 991-6718** **worldwar2tours.com**

## MAXIMUM 25 GUESTS PER TOUR!

- **Normandy to the Eagle's Nest Tour**
- **Men, Masterpieces & Monuments Tour**
- **Holocaust Memorial Tour to Poland**
- **Battleground Italy Tour: Sicily to Rome**
- **Franco's Spain Tour with Gibraltar!**
- **Britain at War! Tour**

**Travel with America's most knowledgeable Tour Guide**

# Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

## *SUDDEN STRIKE 4* BRINGS SERIOUS STRATEGY TO CONSOLES, AND WE JOIN THE SQUAD WITH A LOOK AT *RAID: WORLD WAR II*.

**SUDDEN STRIKE 4**
**PUBLISHER** KALYPSO MEDIA • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PLAYSTATION 4 • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Developer Kite Games' *Sudden Strike 4* recently made its way to consoles with a release on PlayStation 4, offering one of the rare opportunities to enjoy real-time World War II strategy on the system. Thankfully, despite a few issues that are common with console versions of RTS games, it serves as a mostly solid example of the genre for both long-time players and newcomers alike.

*Sudden Strike 4* lets players choose between German, Soviet, and Allied campaigns, each of which includes a variety of missions based on historical conflicts. The German campaign, for instance, follows the ups and downs of the Battle of the Bulge, Battle of France, and Battle of Stalingrad, tasking players with outsmarting and outmaneuvering their opponents in real time. This is where most players will likely start after they breeze through a relatively brief tutorial.

The fact that said tutorial is brief comes as somewhat of a relief, but the controls aren't as easy to peg down as they could be. This is one of the most common snags with porting real-time strategy games to consoles, and it's still a problem in *Sudden Strike 4*. It's not necessarily that the actions themselves are overly cumbersome—you can select and group units to an assigned directional button for easy access, and switching between split groups is as simple as the press of a button—it's remembering precisely what to do in the heat of the moment that tends to complicate matters. From the first mission to the last, you'll be faced with snap decisions that could result in significant losses if you fumble, and fumble is exactly what you're going to do while acclimating to the control scheme.

With that in mind, *Sudden Strike 4* is best approached in a more methodical manner. You're not going to get very far going all gung-ho right from the beginning, so it helps to take some time to figure out the best way to flank your enemy, or the best route to proceed forward without running into too many deadly surprises along the way. The combination of simplification and diversity makes all of this engaging, as players won't have to focus on too much outside of taking out the opposition and leading their soldiers through enemy territory. You can seize weapons and resources along the way, but you won't have to worry about too many additional details outside of keeping your units healthy and making sure your repair units survive long enough to continue doing what they do best.

Audio features such as voice acting and music are a bit uninspired, but the sound effects more than make up for them. It's clear the developers put a great deal of care into replicating the feeling of overwhelming war sounds and the immense pressure that comes along with them. From whizzing gunfire to the mechanical screech of tanks and other vehicles, you'll find yourself fairly well immersed once battles get truly heated. The presentation of *Sudden Strike 4* is top-notch in general. Environments teem with character, from rushing rivers to ice cold snow-covered maps that present their own unique strategic quandaries. The attention to detail is key, and it's not just cosmetic. In the snow, for instance, you'll be able to better track enemy movements. This also works the other way around, of course, and you'll also have to deal with limited visibility and hindered mobility. One of the keys to success involves learning how to use the environment to your advantage without letting the enemy do the same.

At the time of this writing, I was having some difficulties getting into regular multiplayer matches. Whether this was an issue of connectivity or a lack of free opponents is anyone's guess, but it wasn't easy.

Player-on-player seems to run pretty well when you can get into it, though, so my best advice would be to join a PlayStation community and search for like-minded people who want to schedule some action. Otherwise, you're better off playing on PC for a purely multiplayer experience.

Despite a few of the aforementioned hiccups, Sudden Strike 4 is an engaging real-time strategy game, and it's an especially rare one for those who primarily play on consoles. If you've been hankering for something similar on Sony's system, this is one of the best ways to scratch that strategic itch.

SPOTLIGHT
**RAID: WORLD WAR II**
**PUBLISHER** STARBREEZE STUDIOS • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** PS4, PC, XBOX ONE • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Developer Lion Game Lion and Starbreeze Studios recently put out a full release of *Raid: World War II,* promising an over-the-top, tongue-in-cheek entry in the first-person shooter genre. You know they're not going for a full-on serious story mode when there are cutscenes featuring none other than John Cleese, and that irreverent tone carries through to the four main characters. Raid puts players in the role of one of four prisoners of war, all of whom were freed by the same secret British intelligence officer, Mrs. White, and hired to take out Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. Thus, part of the goal is saving the world from the Nazi threat, while the other is, of course, earning as many riches as possible along the way.

By the time you read this, *Raid: World War II* will be available on PC and consoles (Xbox One and PlayStation 4), so we'll have to go in-depth at a later date. In the meantime, those who are curious about the one- to four-player action can look forward to choosing between four different classes: Recon, Assault, Insurgent, or Demolitions. Each is designed with a variety of play styles in mind and comes with its own unique skill tree for incremental improvements. The four hired heroes—which represent Germany, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States—can all be customized, as well, and *Raid* makes it easy to modify all the experimental weapons they find on the battlefield.

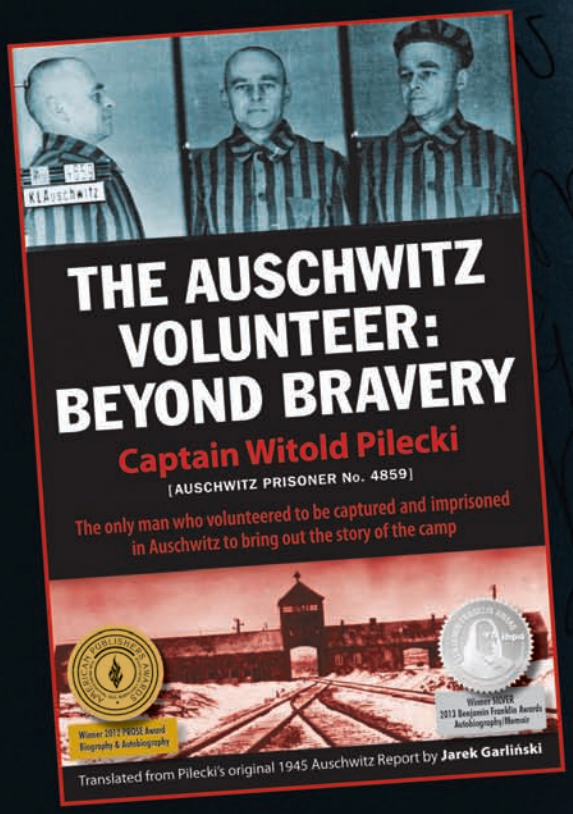
If you're planning on digging into *Raid: World War II* at some point, you might want to go ahead and plan out your party in advance. After all, four-player shooting is better with friends than it is with AI, so hop online, form your ideal squad, and get ready to take on wave after wave of enemy soldiers until your unit is the last one standing.

The *WALL ST. JOURNAL* calls this

# One of the FIVE BEST books on wartime secret missions!

**"A historical document of the greatest importance."**

*—THE NEW YORK TIMES, Editors' Choice*




**"The most extraordinary intelligence report you will ever read."**

*— THE INTELLIGENCER: JOURNAL OF U.S. INTELLIGENCE STUDIES*

Watch the trailer on YouTube!
*The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery*
www.polww2.com/AuschwitzVolunteerTrailer

Available at fine bookstores, online retailers and major wholesalers.

AQUILA POLONICA
www.AquilaPolonica.com

## Crimea

*Continued from page 75*

and strafed the Soviet columns. Von Richthofen, flying over the area in his Storch, initially described it as a "wonderful scene." As he swept down to where the Russians had defended Ak-Monai, he changed his mind and wrote: "Terrible. Corpse-strewn fields from earlier attacks… . I have seen nothing like it so far in this war."

Farther east, von Groddeck pushed on toward Kerch with following German infantry heading to the already breached Sultanovka Line. The only Soviet unit in von Groddeck's path was the 11th NKVD Division, which had been formed at Krasnador in January. Von Groddeck was wounded in an ambush by these troops, but the Russians soon fled in the face of artillery fire and Luftwaffe bombing.

With Soviet command and control completely shattered, the trapped units of the 51st Army began surrendering en masse, freeing up more German forces to drive on Kerch. By April 13, the 132nd and 170th Infantry Divisions had crossed the Sultanovka Line, closely followed by the 22nd Panzer. Even though von Richthofen had just lost command of two bomber groups and a fighter and Stuka group the previous day due to a Russian attack on Kharkov, his remaining aircraft continued to pummel Soviet pockets of resistance.

With German forces approaching Kerch, Kozlov used any troops that were left in the area to prepare positions for a last-ditch defense of the city. Soviet naval forces and small craft braved sporadic German fire to cross the Kerch Strait to evacuate wounded and essential personnel, but it was clear that the majority of the Crimean Front was doomed.

Nevertheless, the Dunkirk-style evacuation continued even as the Germans reached the outskirts of the city. With his diminished air capacity, von Richthofen became increasingly frustrated.

"The Russians are sailing across the narrows in small craft, and we can do nothing about it," he fumed. "It makes me sick. One isn't sure whether to cry or curse. The Reds remain massed on the beaches and cross the sea at their leisure. Infantry and tanks can't advance because of the desperately resisting Reds, and we [the Luftwaffe] can't do anything because we don't have adequate forces."

Kerch finally fell on April 15, but that was not the end of the fighting on the peninsula. Large and small groups of Red Army soldiers continued a fanatical resistance for several days. First Lt. Alfred Dürrwanger, commander of the 10th (heavy weapons) Company of Jäger Regiment 83/28th Light Division, described the fighting in a 1986 letter to the author: "We had never seen such enemy fire up to now. The Ivans were well entrenched in their positions in front of us and seemed to have unlimited ammunition. Several of my men were hit, but the rest of them showed great courage under the enemy fire. I told them that we would charge the first position, and they followed without question. It was better than being shot one by one."

Dürrwanger led his men forward, surprising the enemy with his audacity. Overcoming the first position, the Germans surged forward, taking another and then another. The assault opened the way for neighboring units to advance and overpower the Soviet defenses. Dürrwanger was wounded in the head during the attack but continued to lead his men until the battle was over. Less than two months later he received the Knight's Cross for his actions.

"It was for the courage of my men that the award was given," he wrote. "Since they could not all receive the medal the decision was made to give it to me, but each one of them deserved it."

The Soviet pockets soon collapsed. In less than two weeks von Manstein had cleared the eastern part of the Crimea. It had cost the XXX and XLII Corps 1,708 dead or missing and 5,885 wounded. A handful of aircraft had been lost, as were nine artillery pieces, three assault guns, and 12 tanks.

In return, three Soviet armies had been decimated. Of the 250,000 Russian troops on the Kerch Peninsula, about 170,000 prisoners had been taken and about 28,000 had been killed. The entire artillery and armored forces of the three armies (1,133 guns and 258 tanks) had either been captured or destroyed. Soviet air losses were place at more than 400.

For their failure, Cherniak, Kolganov, and Nikolaenko were demoted to the rank of colonel, while Kozlov was demoted to major general. Commissar Mekhlis, still sputtering comments about the front commander's incompetence, was reduced two ranks. It could have been much worse for all of them.

With the eastern Crimea now firmly in German control again, von Manstein was free to continue his assault on Sevastopol. In less than 2½ months, the fortress city fell, yielding another 90,000 prisoners. The Crimea would endure almost two more years of German occupation until it was liberated in May 1944. □

---

*Author Pat McTaggart is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front. He has written extensively for* WWII History *and resides in Elkader, Iowa.*

# THE LIBERATOR

*Aboard the Legendary Sea Cloud II*

**OCTOBER 19 TO 28, 2018 • MALTA, SICILY, & ITALY**

ALEX KERSHAW

Join beloved author Alex Kershaw and The National WWII Museum's Senior Historian Rob Citino, PhD as we set sail from Valetta, Malta to Rome, Italy following the path of Kershaw's newest book, *The Liberator.* This all-new, nine-night program features five-star accommodations on land and aboard the luxurious *Sea Cloud II.*

**SAVE $2,000 PER COUPLE WHEN BOOKING BY APRIL 2, 2018**

Engage. Reflect. Explore.
The National WWII Museum Educational Travel Program

THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM TRAVEL

Call 1-877-813-3329 X 257 or visit
ww2museumtours.org

**SAVE $1,000 PER COUPLE WHEN BOOKING BY DECEMBER 31, 2017**

# TYRANNY
## *—on Two Fronts—*

THE BALTIC DURING WORLD WAR II

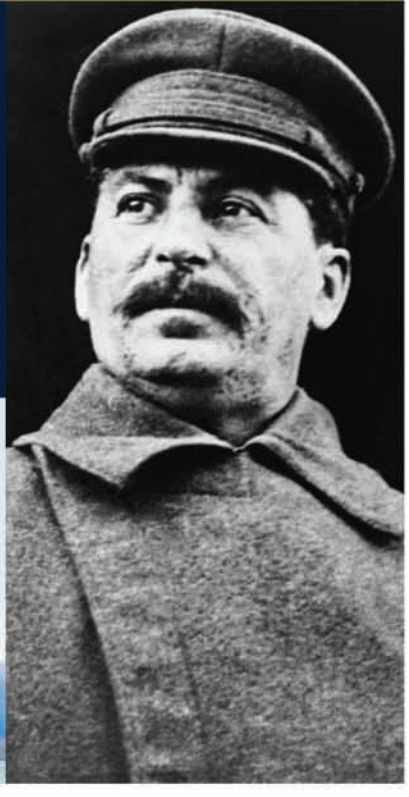
JUNE 6-15, 2018

• Featuring Historian Dr. Alexandra Richie •

INTRODUCING AN ALL NEW 9-NIGHT CRUISE ABOARD

*Le Soléal*

STOCKHOLM • HELSINKI • ST. PETERSBURG
TALLINN • COPENHAGEN




BEYOND BAND OF BROTHERS
ALL-INCLUSIVE
HISTORICAL TOURS
STARTING AT $2,000
BEYOND BAND OF BROTHERS TOURS
Procom America LLC | 811 Corporate Drive Suite 108 | Lexington, KY 40503
Contact us Monday-Friday 9 am to 5 pm EST at
1-888-335-1996 (toll free) | 1-859-368-7292
info@procomtours.com
EXPLORE HISTORY 24/7 AT www.beyondbandofbrothers.com
@BeyondBandBrothersTours
@beyondbandofbrotherstour
@procomtours
www.pinterest.com/BBoBTours