WWII HISTORY

CMG 02313

WWII HISTORY • FEBRUARY 2022 Volume 21, No. 1

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Battle for Guam

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FEBRUARY 2022

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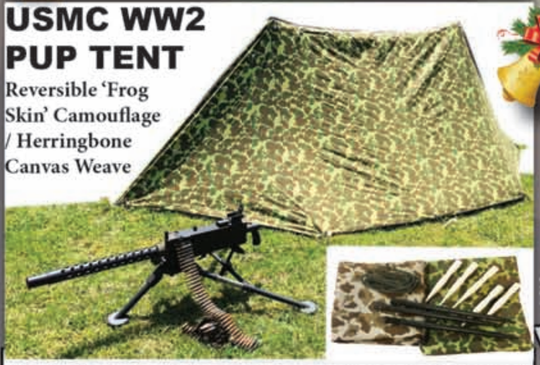

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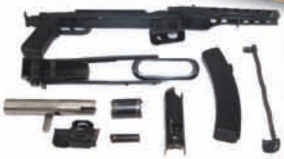

*Please note: This kit includes a **free 35rd magazine** which is restricted in certain states and localities, such as Washington State. - Check your state and local laws.*

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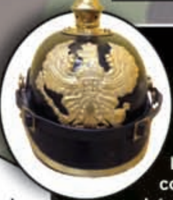

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Cover: Sergeant Fred Parke of the 99th Infantry Division emerges from his dugout in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. See story page 34. Photo: National Archives

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Editorial

This Month Marks the Anniversary of ‘If Day.’

THE DEFENDING SOLDIERS SURRENDERED AT 9:30 AM AND MARCHED WITH their hands up to a central point in the city. Nazi soldiers frisked them and made certain that they were unarmed. An invading tank clanked menacingly down a main thoroughfare.

The defenders had put up stiff resistance but could not withstand the German onslaught, and soon enough the victors began a reign of terror. Sound like a village in France in 1940? Try Winnipeg, Manitoba, on February 19, 1942. It was all a simulation, but it was real enough to illustrate just what might happen in the event of Allied defeat and German occupation of the city and the surrounding area.

“If Day,” as it was called, was an elaborately staged mock occupation of Winnipeg and environs engineered by the Greater Winnipeg Victory Loan, an organization hoping to raise $45 million across the province of Manitoba, $24.5 million from Winnipeg alone, during its Second Victory Loan campaign. On If Day alone, more than $3.2 million was collected in Winnipeg.

The occupation itself was quite realistic, and it began after a spirited clash of arms. Planes of the Royal Canadian Air Force, painted to look like Luftwaffe aircraft, buzzed the city on February 18, and the following day about 3,500 Canadian Army soldiers, representing all of the active units from Winnipeg, opposed a volunteer force of mock Nazi invaders. At 5:30 AM, Nazi foot patrols probed the city. A radio station was seized, and German broadcasts commenced. German aircraft appeared again and made simulated bombing runs.

Charges were placed, and explosions erupted. Tanks, jeeps and troop carriers were soon in motion, and the first casualties were moved to aid stations by about 8 AM. In a matter of hours, the tightly choreographed battle was over.

As the Germans moved in, citizens were rounded up and herded into a detention facility. Local political leaders and prominent civilians were arrested, and the Nazi swastika flag flew above Winnipeg. The main street became Hitlerstrasse, and the city was renamed Himmlerstadt in mock fealty to the odious Reichsführer-SS. A German bureaucrat was installed as the local gauleiter, and the Gestapo established a headquarters. A formal proclamation was issued, describing the intent of the Nazis to colonize all of Canada. The citizens were instructed: “No one will act, speak or think contrary to our decrees.”

The citizens of Winnipeg were subsequently given a new slate of rules to live by, and the notification read in part:

“This territory is now a part of the Greater Reich and under the jurisdiction of Colonel Erich von Neuremburg, Gauleiter of the Führer. No civilians will be permitted on the streets between 9:30 PM and daybreak. All public places are out of bounds to civilians, and not more than eight persons can gather at one time in any place. Every household must provide billeting for five soldiers ….”

Churches were closed, and books were burned, but before the day ended “prisoners” were released to make speeches on behalf of the occupiers.

Then, at 5:30 PM, groups began to gather for a march through the city, carrying banners reading, “IT MUST NOT HAPPEN HERE!” A parade and banquet followed, with a visiting Norwegian dignitary offering the sobering comment that “the make-believe Nazi occupation was an authentic glimpse of German behavior in German-ridden Europe.”

In terms of fundraising, If Day was quite successful, and it received extensive coverage in the media. Winnipeg exceeded its financial goal of $24 million on February 24, while throughout Manitoba more than $60 million was collected. Other communities, some in the United States, hoping to duplicate the success of If Day, inquired as to methods and best practices. One event was held in Vancouver, British Columbia, but on a smaller scale.

It seems the simulation was enough to convince not only the citizens of Winnipeg and environs surrounding that victory was not only desired but an absolute necessity. They had seen and heard of the real thing in Europe, but through grit and sacrifice, they were determined that the mock exercise would be the extent of the German occupation of Canada.

—Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of $2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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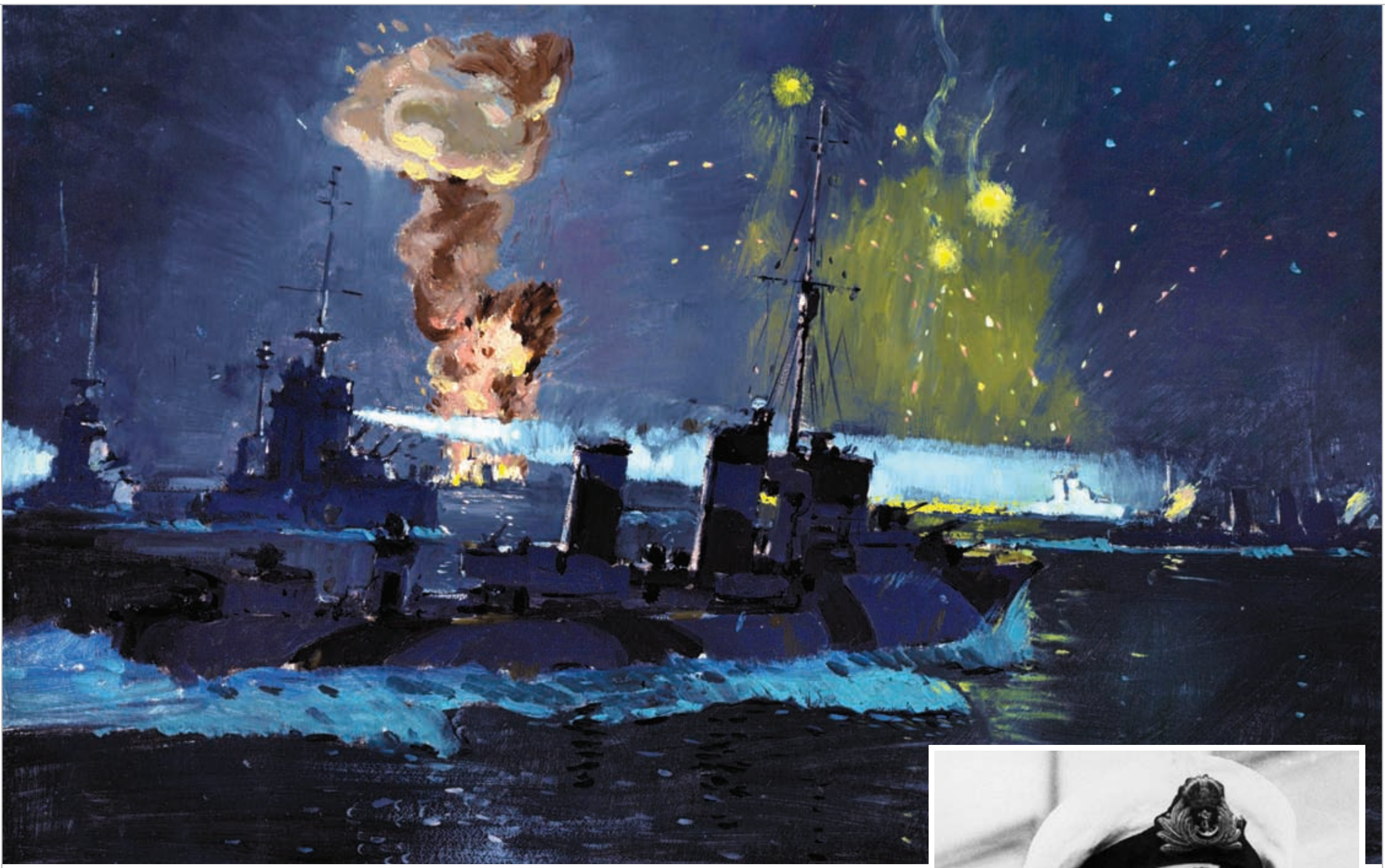
By Michael E. Haskew



Alamy

Prince Philip's War

The Duke of Edinburgh became a naval hero during World War II and went on to serve his adopted country as the husband of Queen Elizabeth II.

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ABOVE: Prince Philip sports a full beard in this photograph taken in Australia during World War II. TOP: Searchlights stab into the darkness as Royal Navy warships illuminate Italian cruisers during the Battle of Cape Matapan. Prince Philip served aboard the battleship HMS *Valiant* during the decisive naval victory over Mussolini's fleet.

THE SON OF PRINCE ANDREW OF GREECE AND DENMARK AND PRINCESS ALICE of Battenberg, Prince Philip was the last of five children and a great-great grandchild of Queen Victoria. Destined to emerge as a world figure, the stalwart husband of Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II, and a larger-than-life persona in his own right, he was first a hero of the Royal Navy during World War II.

In 1868, Philip's maternal grandfather, Louis Alexander Mountbatten, 1st Marquess of Milford Haven, had renounced his German title of Prince Louis Alexander of Battenberg and become a naturalized British subject. He went on to serve 40 years in the Royal Navy and rose to the post of First Sea Lord. In the autumn of 1938, when Philip decided to enter Sandquay Barracks at the Brittania Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, after prep school, his guardian and uncle, Louis Mountbatten, was currently serving with the rank of captain.

With Britain on the brink of war, Philip graduated the next year, earning the King's Dirk as the best cadet of his term along with the Eardley-Howard-Crockett Prize as best cadet at the entire college. He joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman in January 1940.

The single most significant event of Philip's time at Dartmouth occurred in July 1939, and it was hardly naval. King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, and their daughters, princesses Elizabeth and Margaret—Philip's third cousins—toured the college. Thirteen-year-old Elizabeth became smitten with Philip, who was five years her senior. He played croquet with the princesses and began an exchange of letters with Elizabeth that later blossomed into the longest marriage in British royal history.

Soon after the outbreak of World War II, Philip was active in the Royal Navy but classi-

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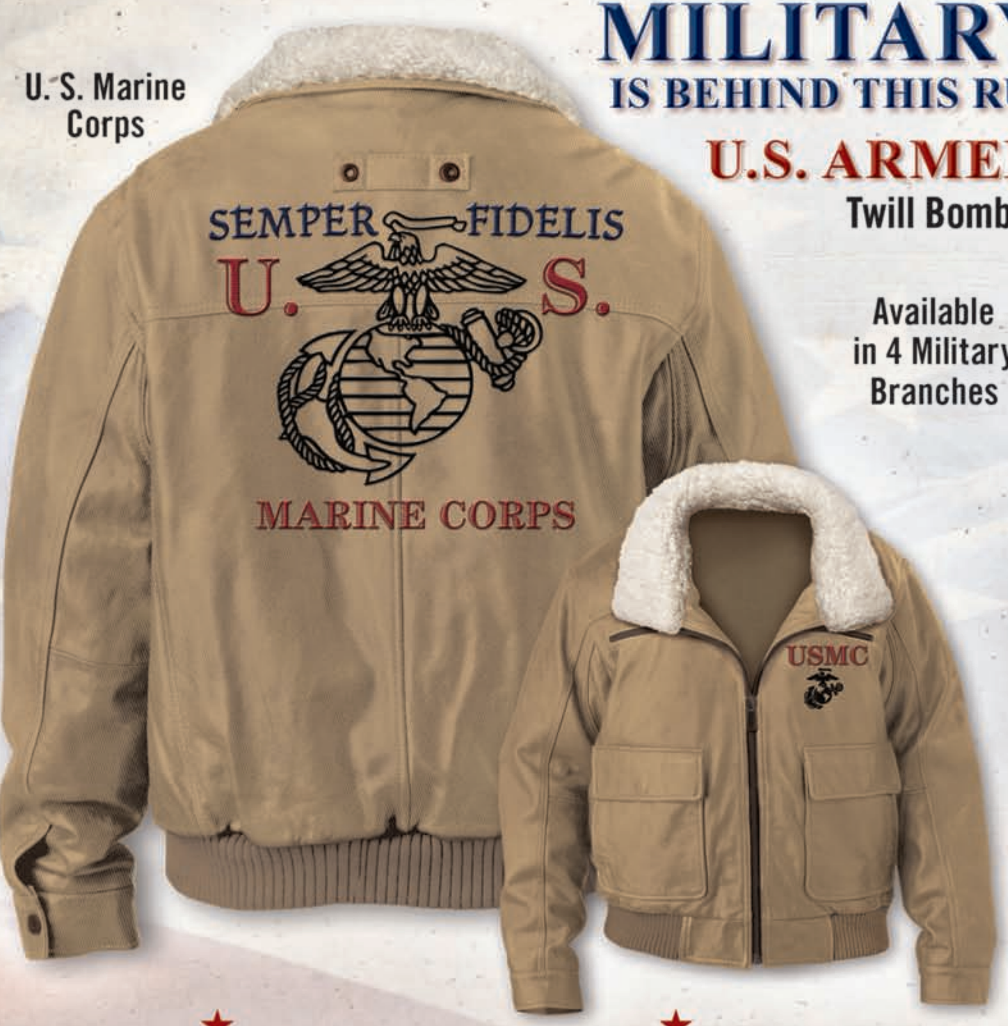

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ABOVE: The battleship HMS *Valiant* makes headway at sea. Philip was commended for his handling of one of the British searchlights on *Valiant* during the Battle of Cape Matapan in March 1941. BELOW: While serving aboard the destroyer HMS *Wallace* Prince Philip devised a ruse that fooled Nazi dive bombers and likely saved the ship, along with the lives of many sailors.

fied as a "neutral foreigner," which technically prohibited him from serving in a combat zone. Greece was neutral, and the death of a Greek prince while serving in the Royal Navy would present an awkward diplomatic situation. Uncle Louis Mountbatten intervened on his behalf, and the midshipman, a position which Philip later described as "the lowest form of life in the navy," was assigned to the battleship HMS *Ramilles*, performing escort duty with convoys transporting troops from Australia and New Zealand to Egypt.

Philip joined the battleship at Colombo, Ceylon, on February 22, 1940, performing the usual tasks, writing entries in his junior officer's journal and earning the nickname "Pog," although he signed the title page of his journal formally, "Philip, Prince of Greece." His evenings were spent as "Captain's Doggie," responsible for making cocoa.

In October 1940, Italy invaded Greece, which promptly went to war on the Allied side, removing the issue surrounding Philip's service in a theater of war. After postings aboard the heavy cruisers HMS *Kent* and HMS *Shropshire*, Philip was transferred to the battleship HMS *Valiant* in the Mediterranean in January 1941.

Aboard *Valiant*, Philip experienced action for the first time, as the battleship bombarded Italian positions at Bardia on the Libyan coast. Then, in February 1941, he was promoted to sub-lieutenant after completing the required courses at Portsmouth and achieving the highest marks in four of the five sections. Within weeks, he participated in convoy operations during the battle for control of Crete.

A shipmate aboard *Valiant* remembered Philip vividly and noted years later, "I like Prince Philip. I would love to meet him again someday. He was a wonderful fella." But the old rating also remembered Philip's sharp rebuke of an opponent who continually cheated during a field hockey match against an RAF team in the Egyptian port of Alexandria. "If you do that one more bloody time then I will cut your feet off you!" he growled.

On March 27-29, 1941, the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet, under the command of Admiral Andrew Cunningham, decisively defeated Italian naval forces in the Battle of Cape Matapan. Three Italian heavy cruisers and two destroyers were sunk with 2,300 killed and 1,015 taken prisoner, while the new battleship *Vittorio Veneto* was severely damaged. Royal Navy losses were three airmen killed when their torpedo plane was shot down, a single Royal Marine casualty, and four light cruisers damaged.

Philip's action station was on the bridge of *Valiant*, and after dark he was responsible for the operation of the battleship's port searchlight. The battle, fought off the Peloponnesian Peninsula, was a night engagement. According to sources, Philip remained quiet for years regarding his role in the battle, finally writing publicly about it in the foreword of the 2012 release *Dark Seas: The Battle Of Cape Matapan*. The book is an installment in the *Brittania Naval Histories of World War II* series, compiled from classified battle summaries written by Royal Navy officers, archived at Dartmouth, and published by the University of Plymouth.

"My recollection is that *Valiant* was the only capital ship fitted with, what is now known as RADAR, but was then known as RDF," Prince Philip wrote, "and was therefore stationed immediately astern of HMS *Warspite*, Admiral Cunningham's flagship. As far as I was concerned, it seemed that there was little chance of our catching up with the retreating Italians, and, as it got dark there was a general air of anti-climax. Then, suddenly, in the quiet of the night, came a report from our RDF operator that he had an echo on the port bow at about 5,000 yards."

Philip snapped on his searchlight almost simultaneously with the destroyer HMS *Greyhound*, and recalled, "I seem to remember that I reported that I had a target in sight, and was ordered to 'open shutter.' The beam lit up a stationary cruiser, but we were so close by then that the beam only lit up half the ship."

In seconds, the battle was joined. "At this point all hell broke loose, as all our 15-inch guns started firing at the stationary cruiser, which disappeared in an explosion and a cloud of smoke," Philip wrote. "I was then ordered

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ASSEMBLY HALL

ABOVE: Prince Philip (center) inspects sailors assembled in ranks at the Petty Officers' Training Center, Corsham, England, in 1947. LEFT: Newly married, Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth are pictured in 1947. Following the death of her father, King George VI, in 1953, Elizabeth acceded to the throne.

to 'train left' and lit up another Italian cruiser, which was given the same treatment. By this time the night was full of smoke, loud bangs, and flashes … That bit of the Mediterranean then became a very dangerous place.

"The next morning the battle fleet returned to the scene of the battle, while attempts were made to pick up survivors," Philip concluded. "This was rudely interrupted by an attack by German bombers. Fortunately, they missed, although *Valiant* was straddled diagonally from the port quarter to the starboard bow. A Royal Marine sentry on the quarterdeck was killed by a splinter, but otherwise no damage was done. Except that the two bombs going off simultaneously made the whole ship flex along its length…."

Philip, who confided in his aunt Alexandra that the experience was "near murder as anything could be in wartime," soon received the Greek Cross of Valour and was mentioned in dispatches for his skillful handling of *Valiant*'s searchlight. His commanding officer wrote, "… the successful and continuous illumination of the enemy greatly contributed to the devastating results."

In June 1942, Philip transferred to the destroyer HMS *Wallace*, which performed convoy duty along the eastern British coastline. The following month, he was promoted to lieutenant and then in October to first lieutenant. At age 21, he had effectively become second-in-command of *Wallace*, among the youngest Royal Navy officers ever to take on such responsibility.

A year later, the destroyer was detailed in support of Operation Husky, the Allied amphibious landings on the island of Sicily. The ships lying offshore were vulnerable to attack by Luftwaffe bombers at any time, and one night *Wallace* appeared to be leading a charmed life. But nobody aboard believed her luck would hold. In 2003, Harry Hargreaves, a yeoman aboard the destroyer, told the BBC the remarkable story of Philip's ingenuity, which likely saved the ship from destruction.

"It was obvious that we were the target for tonight and they would not stop until we had suffered a fatal hit," Hargreaves remembered. "It was for all the world like being blindfolded and trying to evade an enemy whose only problem was getting his aim right. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that a direct hit was inevitable."

About 20 minutes elapsed between each of the determined German air assaults, and as precious moments ticked by, Hargreaves noticed Philip in conversation with the destroyer's captain. "The next thing a wooden raft was being put together on deck. Within five minutes they launched a raft over the side—at each end was fastened a smoke float. When it hit the water the smoke floats were activated and billowing clouds of smoke interspersed with small bursts of flame gave a convincing imitation of flaming debris on the water."

Philip had suggested the deception in order to fool the German pilots into thinking the smoking raft was actually debris from a stricken warship. After tossing the raft into the sea, *Wallace* steamed full ahead for a few minutes, and the captain ordered the engines stopped.

"Quite some time went by before we heard aircraft engines approaching," Hargreaves recalled. "The sound of the aircraft grew louder until I thought it was directly overhead…. The next thing was the scream of the bombs, but at some distance. The ruse had worked and the aircraft was bombing the raft…. We lay there waiting for him to leave, which he did, and, in view of the solitary attacks so well-spaced apart, we were convinced he would not return. It had been marvelously quick thinking, conveyed to a willing team and put into action as if rehearsed."

In conclusion, Hargreaves did not mince words. "Prince Philip saved our lives that night…. He was always very courageous and resourceful and thought very quickly. You would say to yourself, 'What the hell are we going to do now?' and Philip would come up with something."

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True enough, and it was not the first time that Prince Philip had discharged his duties with outstanding precision and ingenuity.

By the spring of 1944, Philip had transferred to the newly commissioned destroyer HMS *Whelp*, which participated in Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France, and then sailed for the Indian Ocean, arriving at Trincomalee, Ceylon, in September. Two months later, he supervised the rescue of two downed airmen from the aircraft carrier *Victorious* and had dinner served to them in the officers' mess. On another occasion, he took one of *Whelp*'s whaleboats out to pluck a downed pilot from the ocean and pull another airman, clinging to a buoy, to safety.

Whelp then moved with the 27th Destroyer Flotilla to the Pacific, where Philip witnessed

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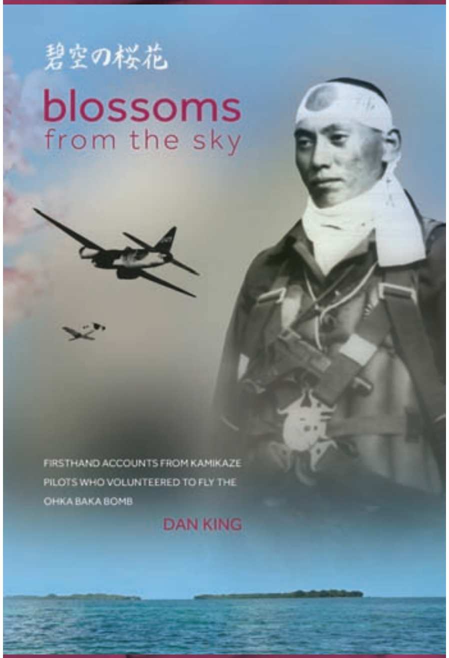
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the surrender of Japan, which took place aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* and ended World War II. He remembered, "Being in Tokyo Bay with the surrender ceremony taking place in the battleship, which was, what, 200 yards away, you could see what was going on with a pair of binoculars."

Whelp took aboard a number of former prisoners of war, and the occasion was somber. "That was very emotional," Philip commented years later. "These people were naval people—they hadn't been in a naval atmosphere for three or four years, sometimes longer … They just sat there, both sides our own and them, tears pouring down their cheeks. They really couldn't speak. It was a most extraordinary sensation. It affected everybody.

"From there, we went to Hong Kong," he concluded, "and … we suddenly realized we didn't have to darken the ship anymore, we didn't have to close all the scuttles, we didn't have to turn the lights out."

In January 1946, *Whelp* returned to Britain, and Philip became an instructor at the Petty Officers' School, HMS *Royal Arthur*, at Corsham, Wiltshire. His engagement to Princess Elizabeth was made public in July 1947, but there were several "obstacles" to the formal union.

Philip's lineage was strongly German, and despite the fact that the Windsors' own royal Teutonic bloodline stretched back to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, some members of the family derisively referred to Elizabeth's suitor as "the Hun." Although he used the surname Mountbatten, his father's family name was Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, decidedly un-British. To complicate matters even more, his sisters had all married German princes, and three of their husbands had served in the Nazi armed forces during World War II.

Philip had already formally renounced his Danish and Greek royal titles. He became a naturalized British subject in February 1947. He was quite used to the Anglican form of worship, attending services while at school in England and in the Royal Navy. In October, the Archbishop of Canterbury formally received Philip Mountbatten into the Church of England.

The royal wedding was scheduled for November 20, 1947, at Westminster Abbey, and on the eve of the ceremony King George VI invested Philip as a Knight of the Order of the Garter with the titles Duke of Edinburgh, Earl of Merioneth, and Baron Greenwich. Royal Navy Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten then became His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

More than 2,000 guests attended the royal wedding, which the BBC broadcast to more than 200 million people around the world. None of Prince Philip's German relatives were invited. In post-war Britain, their attendance would have been totally improper.

Philip remained active in the Royal Navy, serving with the Admiralty in London and at the Naval Staff College, Greenwich. The couple's first child, Charles, was born in 1948, and daughter Anne was born two years later. Andrew (1960) and Edward (1964) followed.

Philip was posted to Malta in 1949 aboard the destroyer HMS *Chequers*. He was given command of the frigate HMS *Magpie* in July 1950 and promoted to lieutenant commander. His career in the Royal Navy was full of promise; however, fate was soon to intervene. Certainly, Philip had contemplated the significant sacrifice that would be required of him when his spouse inevitably ascended the throne of England.

As Elizabeth assumed greater royal responsibility, Philip could not maintain the rigors of his naval career, which necessarily came to an end in the summer of 1951. As a postscript, promotion to commander in 1952 was little balm to the wound. He did as expected, subordinating personal aspirations for those of the country as consort to the future Queen.

The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place at Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953. There was never a question as to Prince Philip's loyalty. That day, he pledged to be Her Majesty's "liege man of life and limb."

Philip made good on that commitment for more than 70 years, perhaps giving up more than any lesser man might tolerate. An auspicious naval career, possibly destined to culminate in the post of First Sea Lord, was set aside. His identity was overshadowed for the good of the nation.

The role of consort was most demanding, publicly and privately. Still, Philip remained true to his pledge. He traveled extensively to represent the crown, going alone on 637 overseas trips. He delivered 5,496 speeches and served as patron, president, or member of 780 various organizations, many of them charities. He also found time to write 14 books.

Prince Philip carried out his final royal engagement in August 2017, at the age of 96. He died just over three years later, on April 9, 2021. He was 99 years old.

Michael E. Haskew is the editor of WWII History. *The author of numerous books and articles related to historical subjects, he resides in Chattanooga, Tennessee.*

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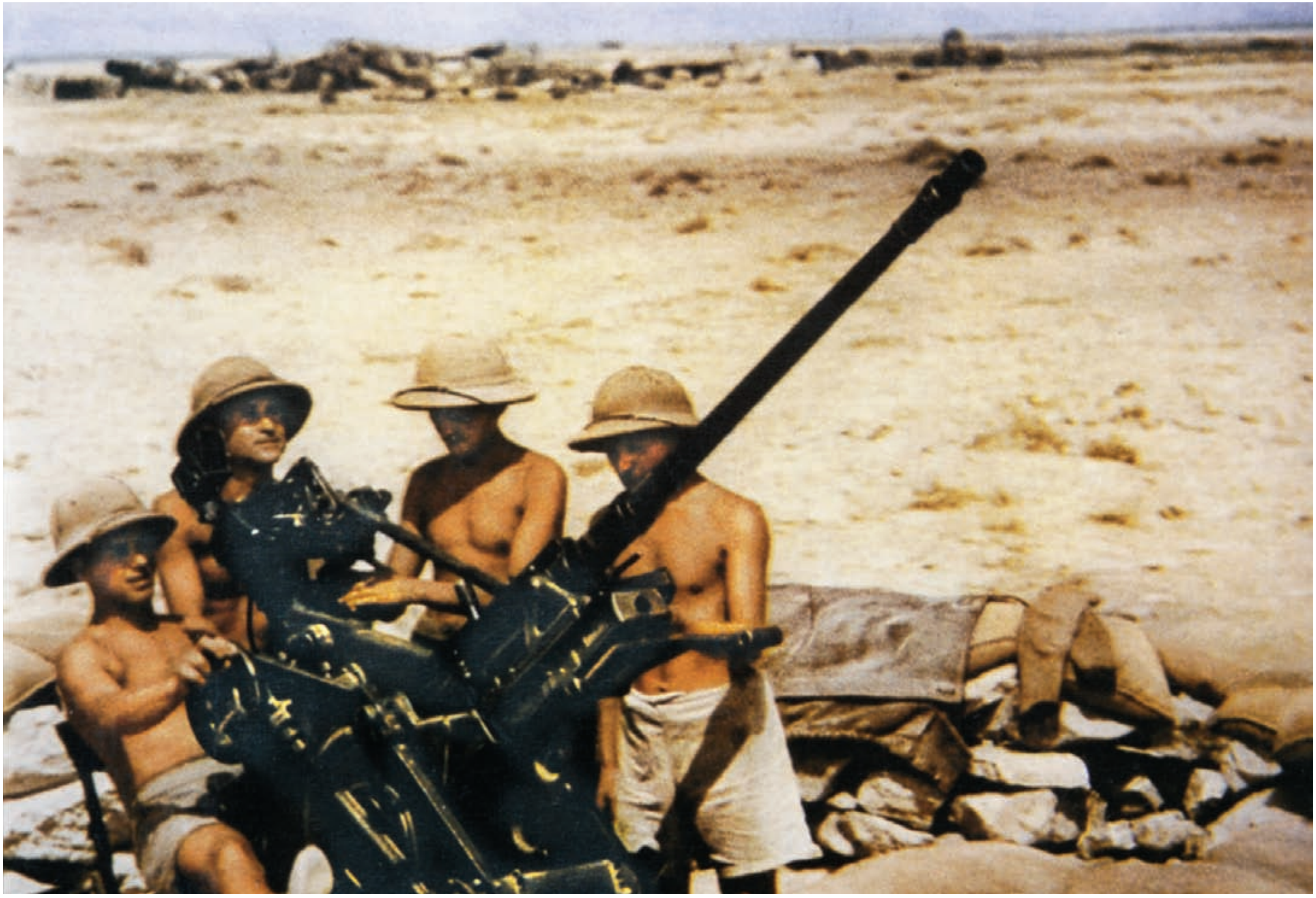

Defending the Skies Above the Reich

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DURING THE ALLIED AIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE THIRD REICH IN WORLD WAR II, well over a million tons of bombs were dropped on German territory, killing nearly 300,000 civilians and wounding another 780,000. While much of the focus remains on the air battles above Germany—the Anglo-American bombing offensive and the defeat of the Luftwaffe—the role of German flak units has generally been ignored, despite the employment of more than one million men and women who helped bring down more than half of all Allied aircraft.

As the effectiveness of the Luftwaffe's fighter defensive against Allied bombers failed, flak forces began to shoulder a greater portion of the load as the main element of home air defense. German antiaircraft concentrations around key targets grew dramatically. Prior to January 1944, fighters claimed the lion's share of downed U.S. bombers, but in June 1944, flak downed 201 Eighth Air Force heavy bombers while fighters claimed only 80.

Allied strategic bombing forced Germany to organize an extensive air-defense system of both air and ground elements. The defense system included concrete towers over 100 feet high that allowed heavy antiaircraft guns to be sited above the surrounding buildings, the creation of camouflaged streets, and even false towns. A network of air-warning, coordination, and direction centers detected Allied bombers and alerted thousands of antiaircraft gunners, searchlight units, and civilian defense authorities to the approaching waves of bombers.

Allied bombers had to penetrate belts of heavy antiaircraft guns spread across the Reich's frontier and along routes of approach to target areas. A target might be defended by anti-aircraft guns with barrage balloons overhead, an array of searchlights, and even smoke

An Afrika Korps antiaircraft gun crew scans the sky for enemy planes in 1941. Homeland antiaircraft units were also raised in Germany to augment the air defenses against massive Allied bombing raids.

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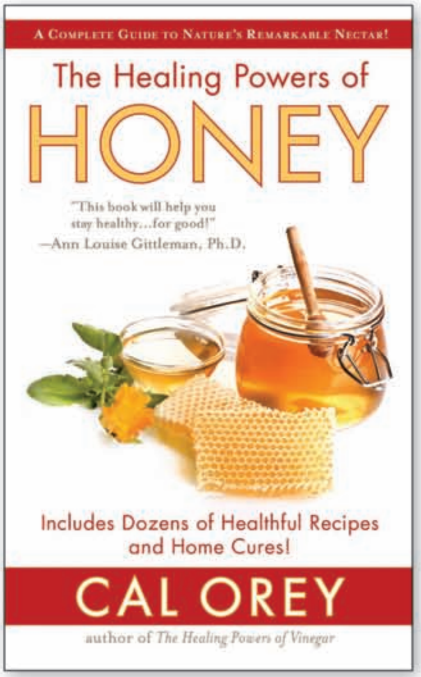

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An 88mm antiaircraft gun fires during a night raid by Royal Air Force bombers. The 88mm gun was a versatile weapon, gaining a fearsome reputation in the anti-tank role.

pots to obscure the area during daylight. Low-level raids had to run gauntlets of rapid-firing 20mm and 37mm guns.

After the start of the war, the Luftwaffe quickly realized the need for protecting Germany and occupied territories from the growing strength of Allied bombers. The result was an enormous expansion of the antiaircraft artillery organization. Total antiaircraft artillery personnel strength, including staffs and administration, grew to over one million, with hardware that included 9,000 heavy guns, 30,000 light guns, and 15,000 heavy searchlights.

The basic German air defense was called Flakartillerie, or flak, for short. It was part of the Luftwaffe, under control of the Air Ministry, the exception being Heeresflak—army antiaircraft. The chief of the Luftwaffe was responsible for the air defense of Germany and important areas of occupied countries. This responsibility was carried out through air-territorial districts (Luftgrue) and special defense commands, which contained aviation assets, antiaircraft artillery with searchlights and barrage balloons, and necessary aircraft-warning service units. The flak command in an air district was divided into Flakgruppen, which in turn were divided into subgroups called Flakuntergruppen, which operated sector controls.

The sector controls were the operational headquarters for fire control and also acted as communication centers. Close liaison was maintained between the flak organizations and the warning service, and between flak and fighter-intercepter units. Operational units included battalions and regiments. Organization of the individual units was not uniform; the exact composition of the unit depended upon the role it was expected to play in the defense scheme. Regiments might consist entirely of searchlight units, gun units, or mixed gun and searchlight battalions.

A heavy flak battery was equipped with four to six heavy guns, usually 88mm, and two light 20mm guns for close-in protection of the battery. Light flak batteries were usually equipped with about a dozen 20mm or 37mm guns. Static guns were placed on permanent mounts or in fixed positions, often with living quarters for the crews. Calibers of static guns ranged from light 20mm to heavy 150mm guns. Light- and medium-caliber guns could be mounted on the tops of buildings and factories.

Guns in static roles were also emplaced in towers. In Berlin, there were three 100-foot-high concrete towers, each with a roof area of 250 square feet and equipped with four heavy antiaircraft guns. Mobile guns were mounted on railway cars, allowing positions to be altered at short notice. The Germans believed that air defenses needed to be flexible and that active defense should be closely coordinated with deception. Under this system, different positions were occupied by mobile units at different times, and antiaircraft defenses were changed frequently to meet changes in enemy air tactics and confuse Allied planners.

In well-defended areas, heavy guns were deployed on the outskirts with special attention to expected lines of approach. Light guns were concentrated at vulnerable points, such as factories and docks. They were occasionally emplaced on lines of approach, such as canals, rivers, or arterial roads. In an effort to counter strafing operations, light guns were used to ambush fight-bombers.

Several types of fire-control methods were employed for heavy antiaircraft guns. Because there were times when the target was not seen, or when for various reasons it was not practicable to rely on fire directed at only one aerial target, the Germans used several methods of fire control, including sighted and unsighted targets, predicted concentrations, and fixed barrages. Guns might fire individually, or in salvos of as many as 32 guns.

Fixed barrages were used early in the war. Controlled by a central operations room, the fire could be laid in almost any shape—screen, box, cylinder, or in depth. This type of barrage was usually thrown over a vulnerable target point or just outside a bomb release point, mostly at night or under conditions of bad visibility.

Light or medium antiaircraft guns were highly maneuverable and could engage a target almost immediately as it came within view and range. These guns relied on high rates and volumes of fire. For altitudes below 1,500 feet, they were exceedingly accurate. At very low levels, about 50 feet, accuracy was considerably reduced owing to the limited field of view, the restricted time of engagement, and the high angular velocity of the target in relation to the guns. Fire from light and medium guns was directed and corrected by observation of tracers. Guns were sometimes sited close to a heavy searchlight to obtain approximate target data.

The Germans used a large number of searchlights. Although the searchlights were not particularly successful in illuminating high-flying bombers, they were also used to produce dazzle

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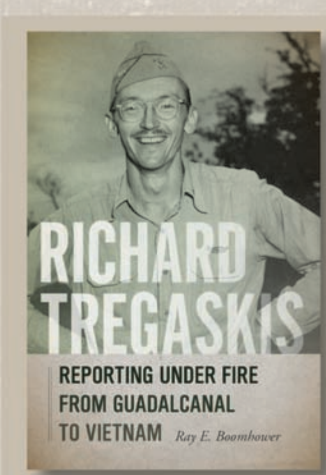

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or glare to blind and confuse hostile aircrews. The main searchlights used were 60cm- and 150cm-diameter parabolic glass reflectors. Dazzle and glare made locating targets difficult and lessened the accuracy of bombing, and keeping beams direct on an Allied plane helped defending fighters approach the plane unobserved.

A searchlight battalion included three or four heavy searchlight batteries. The batteries contained up to a dozen 150cm searchlights and a number of sound locators. Except for mass employment, initial directional data for heavy searchlights were usually obtained through the use of sound locators, while light searchlights relied on picking up targets by means of search patterns. Searchlights would be laid out in belts or in concentrations along likely lines of approach to important targets. A belt usually consisted of between 10 and 30 searchlights placed 1,000 to 2,000 yards apart.

Searchlight tactics varied depending on cloud conditions. On cloudy nights, if a hostile aircraft broke through low-hanging clouds, a limited number of searchlights, in belt or other configuration, went into action. They attempted to follow the course of the aircraft along the base of the clouds in order to indicate its course to night fighters or to produce an illuminated cloud effect against which the aircraft might be silhouetted for the benefit of fighters or antiaircraft artillery.

On nights with considerable ground fog or industrial haze, searchlight beams were unable to penetrate the haze, and searchlights went into action at a low angle of elevation to diffuse a pool of light to make target location or landmark identification extremely difficult for Allied bombing crews. On clear nights, when in belts to aid fighter interception, the usual tactic was to illuminate the target by directing beams vertically too produce a wall of light against which enemy bombers would be visible to fighters attacking from the rear, or to compel the bombers, as they ran the gauntlet of lights, to fly so close that they became visible from the ground, thus enabling other lights to engage them.

Barrage balloons were used in several industrial areas and towns. The barrage balloons formed an irregular pattern of perpendicular steel cables in the vicinity of the target area and were intended to discourage hostile aircraft from entering the region and to force planes to fly at an altitude less favorable for precision bombing. Barrage balloons were usually organized in irregular belts about five-eighths of a mile wide and 1.5 miles from the outer edge of the target area, with 200 to 800 yards between balloons. The balloons were flown at ullstein bild

A German antiaircraft gun crew prepares for action in 1940, as searchlights pierce the night sky to illuminate targets for the gunners.

varying heights at different times, the exact height and number of balloons depending on the time of day and the weather. The average heights at which they were flown was about 6,000 to 8,000 feet, although there were reports of balloons as high as 11,000 to 12,000 feet. A smaller balloon designed to counter attacks below 4,500 feet was introduced late in the war. Balloons were coordinated with antiaircraft guns, any gaps in the balloons being covered by light and medium flak.

Aircraft warning was the responsibility of the Luftwaffe. Although part of the Air Signal Service, the Aircraft-Warning Service was a separate organization created for the purpose of observation of German air space. The Aircraft-Warning Service network was a web-like system of air-guard stations and air-guard headquarters. The stations were arranged at distances between 20 and 45 miles.

The function of the air guard stations was to report the number, type, height, flying direction, and identity of any planes flying over the sector. These reports were channeled to a center where they were filtered and evaluated for dispersal to civil and military authorities. Both long- and short-range radio-location instruments were used for warning purposes. The long-range instruments were located at intervals along the European coast for early warning, with both long- and short-range sets scattered in a net throughout rear areas to supplement visual observation.

The ever-increasing German war effort required large numbers of antiaircraft personnel to be transferred to ground combat units. This transfer was made possible without appreciably weakening antiaircraft defenses through the use of railway antiaircraft artillery, which could be transferred rapidly from place to place for the temporary reinforcement of threatened areas, and by the introduction of Heimatflak, or home defense units, involving the replacement of antiaircraft artillery personnel with factory and office workers and 16- and 17-year-old boys.

German antiaircraft defenses were highly organized and coordinated, including fighter aviation, antiaircraft artillery, warning services, and civil-defense organizations. Nevertheless, the overall result of Allied strategic bombing was essentially effective. It caused the Germans to devote nearly one-fourth of their war production to antiaircraft protection and forced them to employ massive assets to defend a wide area, while the attackers could select targets, attack weak points, and overwhelm the system when and where they chose. ☐

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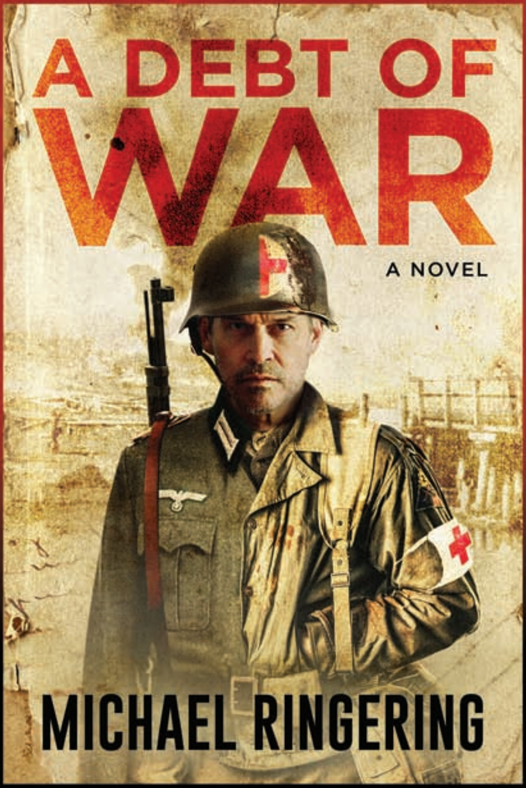

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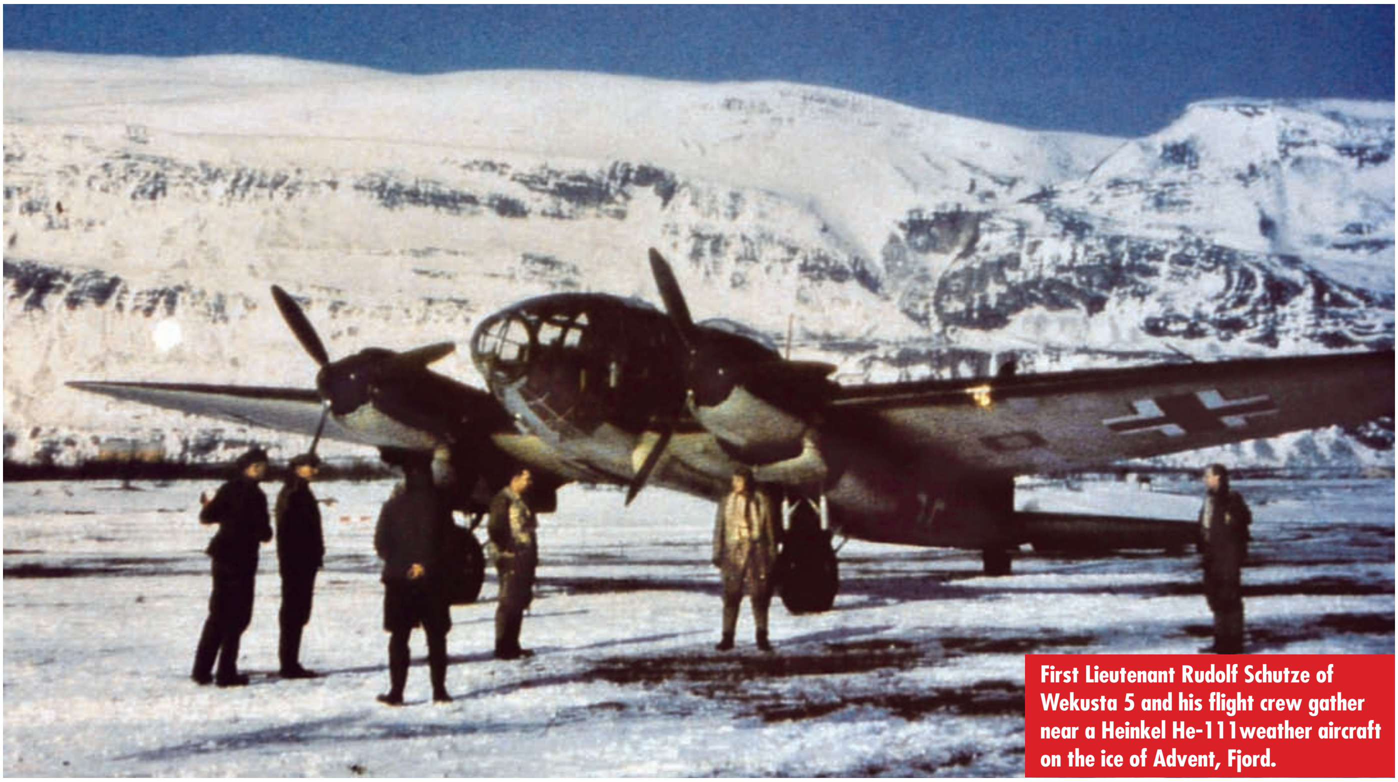

First Lieutenant Rudolf Schutze of Wekusta 5 and his flight crew gather near a Heinkel He-111weather aircraft on the ice of Advent, Fjord.

Weather Reconnaissance by the Reich

Nazi military planners left nothing to chance—not even the weather. A special weather-reconnaissance unit, the Wekusta, monitored conditions in brutal Arctic locales.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS OF WAR—STRATEGY AND TACTICS—INEVIABLY depend on an imponderable and uncontrollable factor: the weather. With the increasing sophistication of weather-data gathering, analysis, and forecasting in the early 20th century, predicting the weather became an integral part of World War II. Just how integral such predictions were was brought home to Germany after its initial thrusts at the beginning of the war in 1939.

The Allies launched a concerted effort to keep comprehensive weather data from the Nazis by blacking out the international exchange of weather data through open radio transmission. For Europe, the most important geographical area for data gathering was the wintry expanse of the Arctic, from which location stormy weather moved east and south. The vital data from Arctic stations, extending from Greenland to the Siberian Sea via Svalbard and Franz Josef Land, were almost completely cut off after these stations were progressively blacked out and deactivated by the Allies. The British went a step further, broadcasting bogus weather data into Germany.

Germany needed to act aggressively to defeat the data-gathering war. In January 1940, the German Naval Meteorological Service took the first steps in laying down a data grid network of its own to provide regular weather observations. Various trawlers and sealers were converted into weather-observation ships to collect and transmit accurate weather data from Iceland northward to the east coast of Greenland and on to Spitzbergen. The Allies quickly realized what the ships were doing and attacked them mercilessly.

The Luftwaffe decided on its own course of action, establishing long-range weather reconnaissance flights and manned and automatic weather stations in the Arctic regions. Both naval and air-force plans came under the grander strategy of securing continental Europe by the Third Reich.

The refusal of a nonaggression pact by Denmark and Norway sealed their eventual fate. They were too militarily and meteorologically strategic, especially the long western coastline of Norway, to be left to their own devices. On April 9, 1940, German air and sea forces descended on both Scandinavian countries. Denmark was taken quickly, but the Norwegian rough terrain required further logistics. Despite the delays provided by the valiant Norwegian resistance, by late April Norway was secured, and the Nazis began constructing defenses along the fjord-clogged western Norwegian coastline.

The most efficient means of gathering weather data over the North Atlantic and Arctic expanses was through air reconnaissance. The Weather Service of the Luftwaffe prepared a special weather-reconnaissance unit to collect weather data, the *Grossraum Wettererkundungsstaffel*—Wekusta for short. With the pro-

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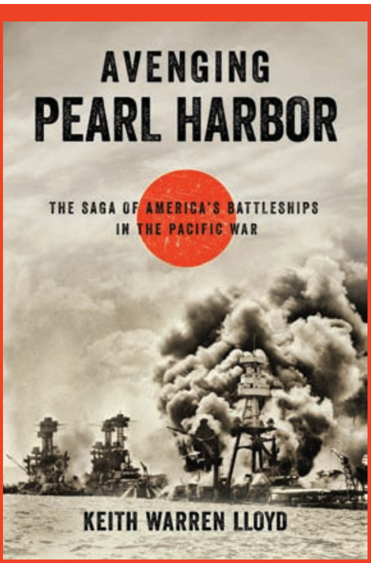

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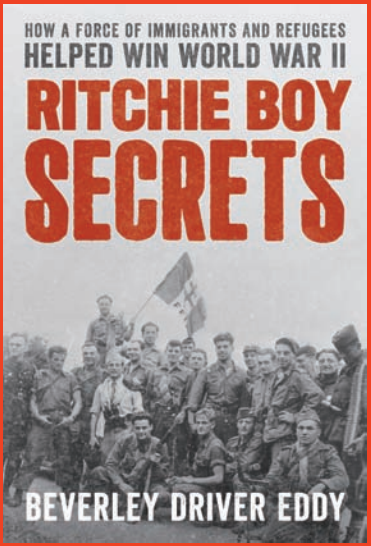

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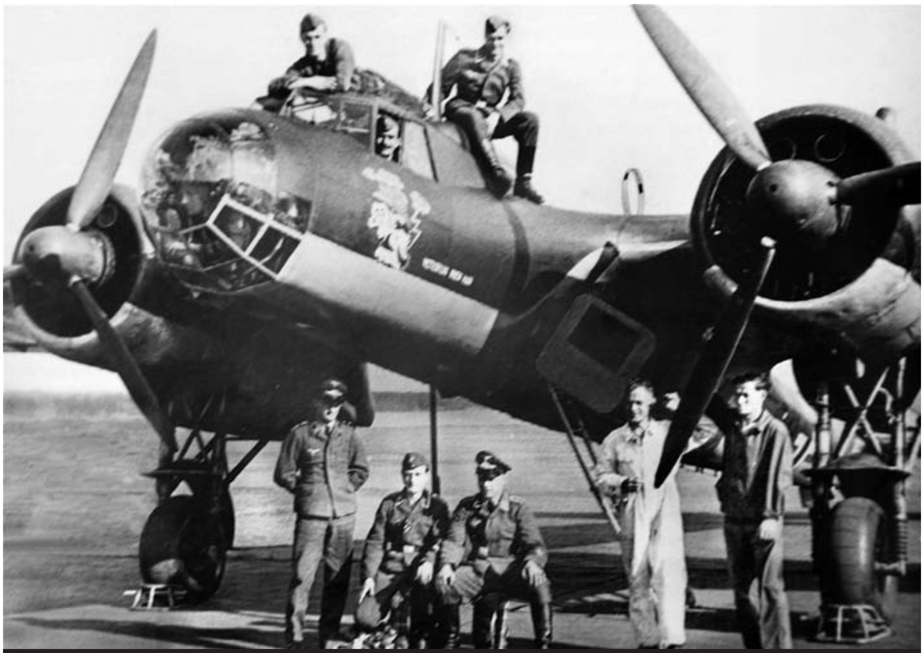

At the airport in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1940, a flight crew poses for a photographer with its Dornier Do-17 reconnaissance aircraft. Information on the weather was vital to the planning and execution of military operations for the Allies and the Axis throughout World War II.

gression of the war, Wekusta squadrons would branch out along German borders, a total of 12 squadrons with nearly 1,000 flight crews.

The demands on long-range weather recon programs were significant. To begin with, data gathering required reliable twin-engine planes. Prior to the war, the production of the German twin-engine bomber class had been cloaked behind designs for passenger planes and mail and cargo planes. German airplane manufacturers built planes that could be easily converted to bombers. By the mid-1930s, leading German airframe makers were developing three such twin-engine, low-wing planes: the Dornier Do-17, the Heinkel He-111, and the Junkers Ju-88.

The Luftwaffe converted all three from medium-range bombers into photo and other recon applications. All had structured metal that provided some armor protection for withstanding light machine-gun fire, along with self-sealing fuel tanks for long-range missions. The Do-17 carried a tightly fitted three-man crew, while the larger Ju-88 carried four crewmen and the He-111 carried five. Since the reconnaissance planes worked alone, defensive weaponry was essential. The Wekusta planes had progressively better models of machine guns placed in the nose and rear cockpit, along the sides, and in the ventral (underside).

Wekusta airstrips began appearing along the northern German coastline. By February 1940, a Wekusta base had opened at Oldenburg, near the port of Bremen, with an He-111 H-2 and a Do-17Z. With Norway already secured, another Wekusta base opened at Bad Zwischenahn in May 1940. Initially, it had a lone He-111, but the Heinkel was joined by a Ju-88. As the most recently designed reconnaissance aircraft, the Ju-88 had an increased wingspan and lengthened ailerons for better control. Junkers could not mass-produce its powerful 211J engines (1,340 hp) until late 1940, so the new airframe had to rely on 211B-1 engines (1,210 hp). The interim model was designated as the Ju-88 A-5 and was quickly put into mass production.

By later April 1940, routine Luftwaffe weather reconnaissance was under way in Norway from the farthest western base at Stavanger, southwest of Oslo. Norway was the essential springboard for gathering North Atlantic and Arctic meteorological data. Wekusta flights were considered of the utmost importance, scheduled for the same time every day, even in bad weather, to keep a continuous record of weather analysis.

Other Wekusta planes flew out of Oldenburg, Germany, on a scheduled daily nine-hour trip northwest to the Faeroe Islands, passing near Fair Isle off the Scottish coast and between the Orkney and Shetland Islands. With the expansion of British radar sites, these flights flew low to avoid radar and hostile encounters—standard altitude was only 30 to 50 feet above the ocean. Taking basic weather readings (pressure, wind, and temperature), they reached the Faeroes, then climbed to about 22,000 feet to take a vertical cross-section of weather data for transmission over shortwave radio during the return trip. The squadron's insignia was a profile of Fair Isle with a rainbow overhead.

Wekusta crews were a game lot, singularly dedicated to manning lone planes and flying over thousands of miles of cold northern ocean. Crew size depended on the plane, but there was always a pilot and a meteorologist with radio experience to transmit data if a radioman was not along. Usually there was a gunner-mechanic as well. The larger He-111 would often carry an additional backup radioman—such was the vital importance of transmitting the data. One of the meteorologists was Werner Schwerdtfeger, who had received his doctorate at the University of Leipzig's Geophysical Institute in 1931. Schwerdtfeger was no stranger to collecting aerial weather data. Between 1932 and 1934, he manned a balloon with an instrument-filled gondola, frequently drifting up to 8,000 feet in altitude. Schwerdtfeger's interest in polar weather turned him to the military, and he trained in weather reconnaissance for Wekusta between 1936 and 1940.

Schwerdtfeger soon moved on to an even more essential weather squadron, Wekusta 5, which was activated in May 1940 at Trondheim, Norway, 300 miles north of Stavanger. Trondheim would be the primary base for all weather recon flights westward and northwest. Auxiliary airstrips opened 600 miles farther north at Banak in November 1941. The new route took an initial leg to the Faeroe Islands, then headed west to the southern tip of Iceland. A second route flew northwest to the Jan Mayen Islands and due east to Banak. The various auxiliary strips could mean life or death for Wekusta flights returning from the Arctic and all its perils.

Eventually, Wekusta 5 would total 142 flight personnel, and Schwerdtfeger was not the only Ph.D. in meteorology. Of the 43 crew members classified as meteorologists, 15 were doctors of science. The men of Wekusta 5 adopted a rather comical winged leaping frog as their squadron badge. They had an interesting initial mix of early planes: He-111, Do-17, Ju-88, and some oddities including two Ju-52s (an older three-engine cargo plane) and an He-60 two-seat biwing seaplane for shorter reconnaissance trips.

By late 1940 and early 1941, recon losses had increased dramatically. The regular flights of "Weather Willies," as locals nicknamed the Wekusta units, were quickly recognized by British intelligence. On January 12, 1941, a Do-215 crashed with all aboard on a small island off Scotland after being intercepted by members of the British Hurricane Squadron No. 3 posted to Sumburgh in the Shetlands. Three days later, one of the few Ju-88s (A-5) allotted

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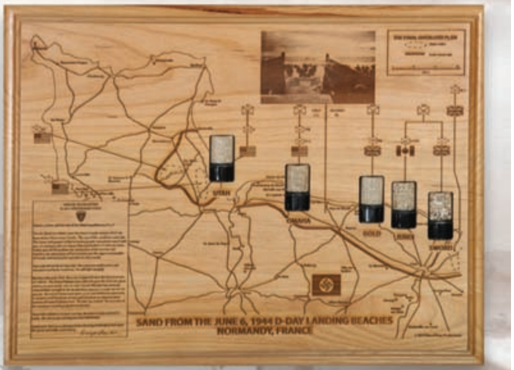

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to Wekusta was intercepted 10 miles north of Fair Isle but managed to escape, aided by its faster speed.

Two days later, an He-111 H-2 was caught by two Hurricanes near Fair Isle. The H-2 pilot, Lieutenant Karl Heinz Thurz, just 21 years old, had been fighting snow flurries across the North Sea at the usual wave-skipping height when increased snowfall forced him to climb to 8,000 feet. British radar immediately picked him up at that time, and Thurz spotted Hurricanes below him as he headed for the clouds. The British followed, strafing the length of Thurz's fuselage and hitting the engines. Thurz climbed into the clouds and lost them, but his problems had just begun. Turning east to attempt a return to Norway, Thurz's starboard and port engines began to smoke—there was no going home. He headed for a crash landing on Fair Isle. He came in too fast, bounced on the rough terrain, and forced the reluctant ship down by a hard rudder maneuver. The tail section broke apart at impact, throwing crewmen Leo Gburek and Georg Nentwig to their deaths. The three other crewmen escaped the wreckage before the engines caught fire, but were taken as POWs by island residents.

More casualties were to come. Three days later, an H-5 had to make an emergency landing in the Storskarvan Mountains near Vaernes, with injuries to the pilot and meteorologist. Two weeks later, on February 8, another Wekusta H-5 was mistakenly strafed by a Luftwaffe Bf-110 fighter, wounding one crew member.

The expansion of Wekusta flights became essential after the Allies destroyed Arctic coal mines and installations on the Svalbard archipelago, forcing the closure of the precious Norwegian weather stations on Spitzbergen and Bear Island during the summer of 1941. From the north, Germany was completely weather-blind. Although two manned stations were set up and resupplied by ship and air drop, Wekusta reconnaissance north and northeast became uppermost.

In July, the most veteran of the "weather fliers," as Schwerdtfeger called them, 1st Lieutenant Rudolf Schütze of Wekusta 5, made the first flight over the Barents Sea from Banak to Novaya Zemlya in the Soviet Union in an H-5. Since 1931, Schütze had logged some 5,000 weather flights as the central pathfinder in reconnaissance routing of the Arctic.

Arctic weather regularly played havoc with Wekusta recon. The magnitude of winter storms and the deep winter darkness lasting from early November into February grounded flights until daylight returned in late winter. Uninterrupted data transmission during these months came from two automatic stations replacing the manned Spitzbergen stations in 1942. The automatic stations covered the intense winter period with weather-sensor data transmitted by shortwave in encoded Morse letters. With the onset of Allied shipping support to Russia, the Germans made a valiant effort but fell short in expanding their automatic and manned stations.

Wekusta opened two new routes out of Banak, one west and one east of Spitzbergen. With the buildup of the forward auxiliary detachment at Banak, several Wekusta 5 personnel were posted there. Schütze became the first to land at Novaya Zemlya, the northeasternmost destination for weather recon. Among manned stations from Greenland eastward, the farthest-northern station was located at Alexandra Land (above 80 degrees north) in the fall of 1943.

Logistical problems soon necessitated the use of sea planes and U-boats for resupply, and weather-recon flights were further reduced when Wekusta planes were transferred to combat squadrons to meet the Allied push in the Mediterranean.

A new, long-range recon version of the Ju-88 D-1, equipped with the same big Junkers J engine and larger fuel tanks, reached Wekusta units toward the end of the year. The new plane

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reflected the necessity to fly the more risky and strategically essential Arctic reconnaissance routes with more reliable planes. The D-1 would become the main recon ship, its chief advantage being that it was faster and more maneuverable than the H-5. Even with the improved aircraft, Wekusta units continued to lose crews. Laconic but telling log entries such as "emergency landing at sea," "lost at sea," or "crashed at sea" recounted the losses. In the frigid Arctic waters, survivors without an onboard inflatable life raft counted their lives in minutes, not hours.

Between 1943 and 1945, Wekusta 5 was also a source for intelligence and ice recon as well as supplies for weather stations at Greenland, Spitzbergen, and islands north. The forward base at Banak welcomed a new weather- recon squadron, Wekusta 6, in October 1943. At Stavanger, Wekusta 1 split, forming another squadron, Wekusta 3, in January 1944.

All squadrons felt the downturn in supplies late in the war as they lost planes, personnel, and fuel allotments to combat units. As a result, Wekusta flight schedules were gradually restricted, and eventually, planes flew only on urgent notice.

Helmut Rau, seated in the observer position aboard a Heinkel He-111 reconnaissance plane, takes weather readings.

Casualties might have been expected to fall, but unrelenting nature—not enemy fire—continued to claim victims. In 1943, Wekusta 1 lost four D-1s and a D-5. Wekusta 5 lost an H-6, a D-1, and an Arado 232A boom-tailed, boxcar transport, this last marking the loss of Rudolf Schütze, who crashed on a mountainside in Porsanger Fjord off the coast and near Namsos, Norway, after takeoff on August 26. Short-lived Wekusta 6 lost only a D-1 and a bigger-engine H-16 in 1944, while its parent squadron, Wekusta 5, lost three D-1s. The shorter-lived Wekusta 3, in less than a year of operation, lost five Ju-88s of various sorts, one being shot down by mistake by a German U-boat. They also lost one of the new Ju-188s (bubble-nosed cockpit and increased fuel storage). Wekustas 1 and 3 carried on into the first two months of 1945, losing a Ju-88 G-1, a night-fighter version, and a Ju-188.

By May 1945, Wekusta aircraft were performing evacuation tasks as the war drew to a close, and the air and ground crews of the Norwegian Wekusta squadrons headed home. Some 120 would never return. Werner Schwerdtfeger was a surprising survivor, having flown hundreds of flights. Like many others with technical backgrounds and few opportunities in postwar Germany, he immigrated to Argentina, where he worked as a meteorologist. In 1963, he was invited to join the University of Wisconsin Meteorology Department, and he continued his celebrated career in polar meteorology. In 1982 he published a book, *Weather Flier in the Arctic,* recounting the exploits of Rudolf Schütze and other Wekusta comrades from the now-distant past, when risking all for the sake of a weather report was simply part of the daily routine. ☐

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By Jon Diamond

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The Uneasy Alliance

Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Premier Josef Stalin were wary of one another during days of contentious cooperation.

IN THE *GRAND ALLIANCE* VOLUME OF WINSTON S. CHURCHILL'S MEMOIRS OF the Second World War, the British prime minister lambasted his new ally, Josef Stalin, after Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, began on June 22, 1941.

“We must now lay bare the error and vanity of cold-blooded calculation of the Soviet Government and enormous Communist machine, and their amazing ignorance about where they stood themselves,” Churchill wrote. “They had shown a total indifference to the fate of the Western Powers … War is mainly a catalogue of blunders, but it may be doubted whether any mistake in history has equaled that of Stalin and the Communist chiefs … But so far as strategy, policy, foresight, competence are arbiters, Stalin and his commissars showed themselves at this moment the most completely outwitted bunglers of the Second World War.” Privately, Churchill later described Stalin and his Kremlin minions as “simpletons.”

Churchill was always highly critical of the Bolsheviks. In fact, contemporaneous with the Versailles Peace Conference in June 1919, Churchill, then Secretary of State for War and Air in Prime Minister Lloyd George's coalition government, was trying desperately to convince his fellow Cabinet ministers to allow General Edmund Ironside's strongly reinforced troops in north Russia to take the offensive against the Bolsheviks. Outspoken against Lenin since he first assumed the War Minister's post six months previously, Churchill was unshaken in his belief that the Bolshevik regime had betrayed the Allies by making a separate peace with Kaiser Wilhelm II at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

Ever the politician, Churchill suffered some publicly borne consequences in regard to his hawkish stance against the Soviet government immediately after World War I. First, it created friction within his own Liberal Party. Secondly, the Liberal Prime Minister, Lloyd George, running a coalition postwar government, was exasperated by his war minister, who was now clamoring for more combat after the four-year cataclysm that had just ended. Finally, his war-weary constituency sorely wanted peace after the carnage and bloodbath had ceased in November 1918. All in all, Churchill's hatred for the Leninist regime would haunt him and contribute to his political isolation, “the wilderness years,” for the next two decades.

As for the Soviet leadership, it is hard to imagine how they would be able to forgive Churchill, who was supporting the White Russians with British weapons, advisers, and specialty troops, thereby enabling them to advance on Moscow and to be poised to capture Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad), as well as enforcing a naval blockade against the few ports available to the Soviets. Even though other countries had troops deployed in Russia to support the White Russians, it was Churchill who “‘most vehemently articulated anti-Bolshevik policy” and sustained the British and international coalition supporting the White Russians.

The Bolshevik leaders had no doubt about Churchill being the architect and inspiration behind the international invasion opposing their government. It was due to this belief, among other reasons, that Stalin's display of gratitude at accepting Churchill's instant offer of aid after the German invasion commenced in June 1941 was paltry.

Despite having one of the most extensive intelligence networks in the world at the time, Stalin was caught completely unawares by the start of Nazi Germany's Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941. In fact, six days after the Nazi onslaught, Stalin stated to a small group of his associates, “Lenin left us a great legacy, but we, his heirs, have f——d it up.” This was Stalin's closest attempt to claim responsibility for his military's

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (left) and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin (right) were wary of one another as they confronted a common enemy in Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany.

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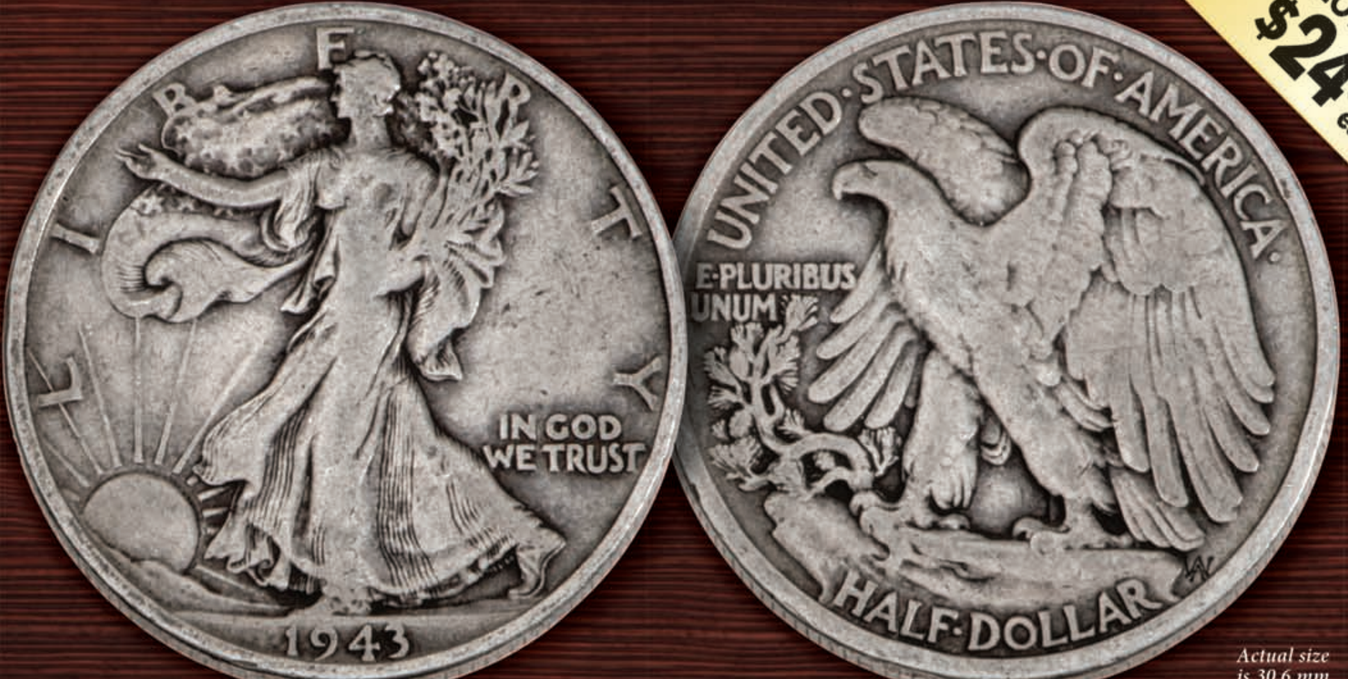

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The three leaders with advisors during the Yalta Conference. The relationship between Churchill and Stalin was at times fractious, but the leaders managed to maintain the alliance that eventually defeated Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

unpreparedness. This inexplicable lapse in Stalin's cunning and paranoid personality was coupled with his own self-imposed losses in Red Army officers as a result of his almost ceaseless purges during the 1930s. Approximately 35,000 officers, disproportionately from the higher ranks, were expelled from the army or arrested with only a small fraction being reinstated after careful "investigation."

In sharp contrast, Churchill had an almost Cassandra-like ability to accurately predict his enemy's (i.e., Hitler's) next move throughout the decade of appeasement during the 1930s. In fact, British Intelligence had warned of Hitler's imminent invasion weeks before it occurred, and Churchill had echoed these predictions even earlier to Stalin, via Sir Stafford Cripps, British ambassador to Moscow, on April 3, 1941. Stalin remained a disbeliever about the veracity of Churchill's message, which was the only message before the German attack that the British Prime Minister had sent to Stalin directly.

Churchill was dismayed that his warning was largely ignored and felt that Stalin had lost a large portion of his air force on the ground as a result of his incredulity. Churchill noted that the Chiefs of Staff warned on May 31, 1941, "We have firm indications that the Germans are now concentrating large army and air forces against Russia. Under this threat they will probably demand concessions most injurious to them. If the Russians refuse, the Germans will march." On June 12, the Joint Intelligence Committee reported, "Fresh evidence is now at hand that Hitler has made up his mind to have done with Soviet obstruction, and to attack."

Why did Stalin doubt the intelligence about Hitler's militaristic intentions from British channels? Prior to the Nazi invasion, Stalin was deeply concerned that Britain would search for a peace treaty with Hitler. This seemed especially likely after General Archibald Wavell's failed Greek expedition in the early spring of 1941 and General Erwin Rommel's incredible victories throughout Cyrenaica after the previous Italian defeat there.

It seems that Stafford Cripps alerted Stalin and his henchmen on April 18, 1941, about a scenario for such an impending truce negotiation: "It was not outside the bounds of possibility, if the war were protracted for a long period that there might be a temptation for Great Britain to come to some arrangement to end the war on the sort of basis which has recently been suggested in certain German quarters."

Such defeatist talk by Cripps was occurring contemporaneously with Churchill trying to coax Stalin to form a "Balkan front" against Hitler through a Soviet alliance with Yugoslavia and Greece. Thus, Cripps' discussion with the Soviet leadership only heightened Stalin's fears of another episode of "perfidious Albion." In addition, when Churchill tried to again warn Stalin on April 21, 1941, of the probability of a German attack on the USSR, the Soviet leader's paranoia only escalated, leading him to complain to his general staff, "Look at that, we are being threatened with the Germans, and the Germans with the Soviet Union, and they [the British] are playing us off against one another. It is a subtle political game."

Stalin concluded that Churchill was only attempting to lure the Soviets into a war with Germany. It is no wonder that based on this level of mistrust Stalin ignored Churchill's warnings and also harbored a deep-seated paranoia toward the British Prime Minister after Operation Barbarossa commenced. As late as June 14, 1941, the Soviet news agency, *Tass*, denounced the British for spreading rumors of an imminent outbreak of hostilities between the Russians and Germany. However, Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, passed on precise and detailed evidence of the likely invasion threat to Ivan Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador in London, the latter relaying these reports to Moscow.

Unlike Churchill, who assumed the mantle of leadership with vigor and defiance during the dark days of the Norwegian and French evacuations as well as during the subsequent Battle of Britain, Stalin was in a state of shock after the Nazi juggernaut got underway. During the first several days of Hitler's offensive, Stalin left the government and military without clear central direction as he sunk into a brief depression. The Soviet leader knew that he had committed an enormous diplomatic miscalculation. He now knew that he had misread Hitler and that this mental mistake was his own fault. This was a time when Churchill was making his first overtures toward alliance with the Soviet dictator, who actually feared a revolt by his own commissars during the initial days of the German invasion.

When the first British diplomats began arriving in Moscow, they found in Stalin "an irritable despot under intense strain." With the passage of a few months; however, he was characterized by both American and British leaders as "brilliant of mind, quick of thought and repartee, ruthless, a great leader." The British Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), General Alan Brooke, found in Stalin "a military brain of the highest calibre." Thus, Churchill was to acquire quite an adversary for an ally.

As soon as the German attack commenced, with "many hundreds of Russian planes … caught at daybreak and destroyed before they could get into the air," Churchill wryly wrote, "The wicked are not always clever, nor are dictators always right." For Churchill, the ideological differences with Stalin could be temporarily ignored as the practicality of an alliance became manifestly necessary for Britain to survive. From an opportunistic standpoint, Britain had everything to benefit, and almost nothing to lose, from an alliance with Stalin. After all, Churchill had proclaimed in his June 22, 1941, speech that the invasion of Russia "is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles."

What made Churchill so willing to ally himself to the Soviet Union after Operation Barbarossa commenced? Churchill had disliked Bolshevism for almost three decades and resented how resources had been given by Stalin to Nazi Germany, thereby negating the Royal Navy's attempt at blockade Hitler's ports. The factors that convinced Churchill to quickly extend his arm in alliance to Stalin were centered on reality. Churchill had only been able to score hit-and-run commando raids coupled with successes against weaker opponents such as the Italians along the North African littoral and in East Africa, the Vichy French in Syria, and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and his Iraqi insurgents as offensive victories. His newly created Eighth Army had recently been evicted from Cyrenaica by Rommel's Deutsches Afrika Korps (DAK), and small-scale counterattacks by Wavell in May and June 1941 during Operations Brevity and Battleaxe had failed to even to convincingly secure the Egyptian frontier from the Nazis. The entire Balkans had fallen with evacuations of British and Commonwealth forces from both the Greek expedition and the failed defense of Crete.

With the above-mentioned defeats and persistence of American Isolationism despite his best pleading with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the German invasion of Russia offered Churchill an immediate ally, which might consume the German tide, minimize pressure on Wavell's forces in the Middle East, and keep the Suez Canal and the Iraqi oil fields in Britain's control. Some have argued that relief from a full-fledged Nazi pincer through North Africa and the Balkans was what hastened Churchill to offer his full support of the Russian people and Stalin's regime. Secondly, with no major victories on the Continent in sight and now retreat in North

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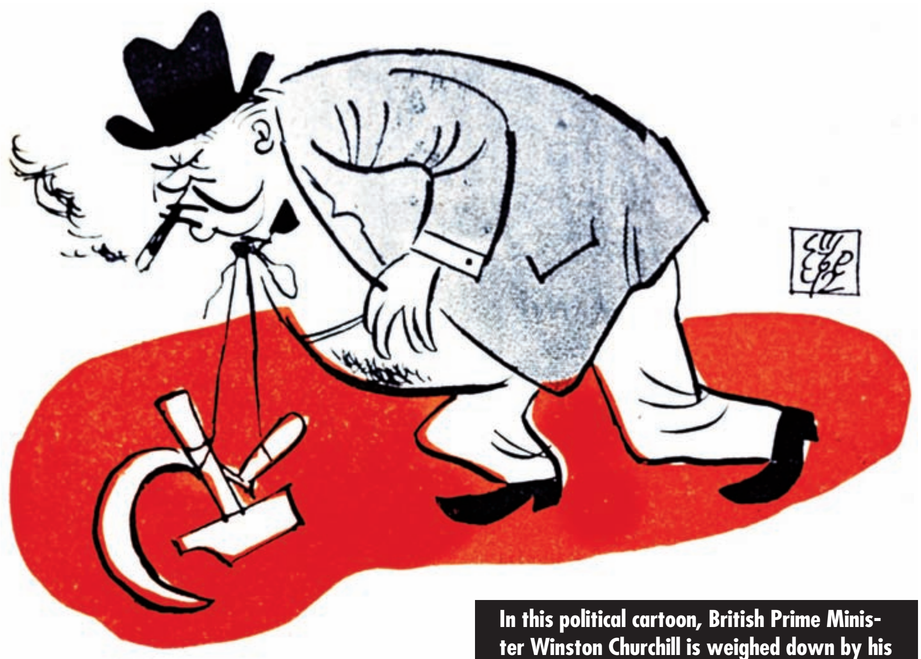


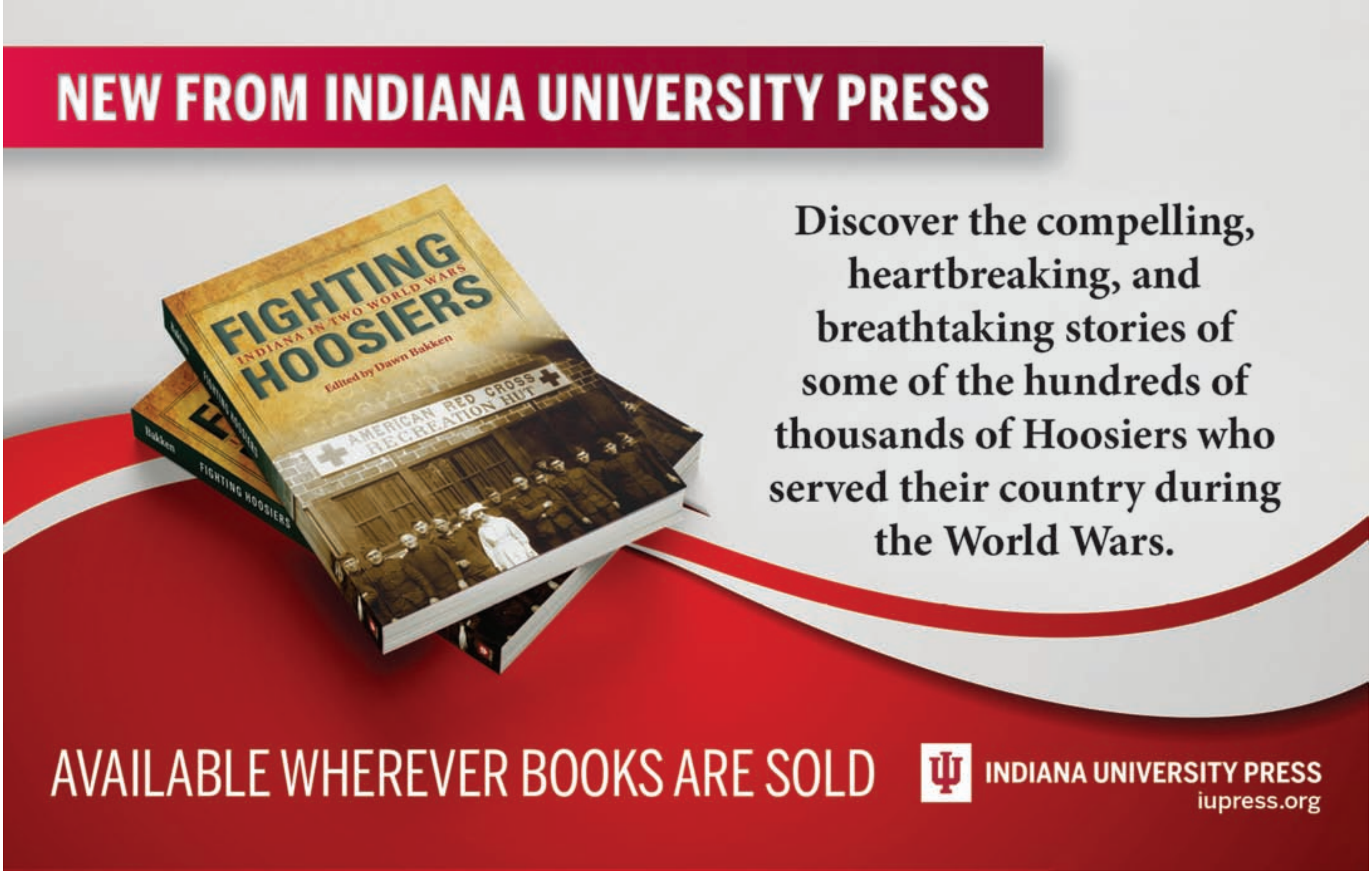
In this political cartoon, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill is weighed down by his alliance with the Soviet Union, symbolized by the hammer and sickle tethered from Churchill's neck.

Africa, it was questionable if Churchill could maintain his coalition in the House of Commons and keep the support of the British public.

With Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht would now be confronted in a great clash of arms on the broad plains of western Russia. Churchill's conundrum was whether an ardent anti-Bolshevik should leap to Stalin's aid. The Prime Minister as a student of history knew that Operation Barbarossa would be to Hitler what the Russian invasion of 1812 was to Napoleon, a huge military blunder. Also, Churchill possessed a large degree of emotion and humanity in this decision, stating, "The Russian danger is our danger and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe."

Although capable of being Machiavellian, Churchill was making a sharp distinction between the Russian people and the Soviet regime. However, Stalin was not an individual inclined to be grateful, and this perpetually irked Churchill. John Colville, Churchill's private secretary, spoke with the Prime Minister on the day of the Russian invasion and asked "whether for him, the arch anti-Communist, this was not bowing down to the House of Rimmon. Mr. Churchill replied, not at all. I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons."

In 1941, Britain was in no position to open a second front in Western Europe. Thus, Churchill resorted to a diplomatic ploy in which Britain would make no separate peace with Hitler. Stalin was still paranoid, among other reasons, about



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the nature of Rudolf Hess's flight to Britain in May 1941. The other offer that Churchill placed on the table was a share in Britain's own Lend-Lease aid. Stalin wanted a variety of Lend-Lease goods from Britain, which the United States was only just beginning to deliver to His Majesty's Government. Churchill, who appreciated the shortfalls in his own country from both ill-preparedness and the frequent military defeats and evacuations, was compelled to comply with Stalin's requests via a land route through Iran and an arduous and dangerous Arctic Sea voyage to Murmansk and Archangel south of the Barents Sea.

Stalin's other demand, which was echoed by the newly awakened and increasingly vocal Communist Party in Great Britain, was for a "second front" against Germany to blunt the strength of attack against the Soviets.

Churchill, who was always game to conduct a military adventure, initially considered mounting such an operation; however, his more conservative and pragmatic military chiefs of the Imperial General Staff quickly dissuaded him from such an enterprise. Ultimately, Churchill had to settle for a limited bomber offensive, which in 1941 was incapable of disrupting Nazi industry, Hitler's strategy, or the continued commitment of the German home front to the overall war effort.

Churchill committed himself to the support of Russia without thinking of the long-term consequences. The rationale for this decision was largely based on his total immersion in the short-term aim of defeating Hitler and partly because he did not expect any long-term consequences. Hitler, in one of his more memorable follies, had driven Stalin into Churchill's arms. However, Stalin's paranoia was fully evident as he believed that the British (and Americans) would not render any meaningful support to his regime until "they think we are out of breath and are ready for an armistice with Germany."

Immediately after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Stalin's ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky, met with Lord Beaverbrook to discuss the possibility of a second front. According to Maisky's war memoirs published after the conflict, "Beaverbrook's attempt to interest the Cabinet in the question of a Second Front was unsuccessful. Churchill, as I had supposed, was unfavorable to this idea. He was supported by a majority of the members of the Cabinet ... It becomes quite clear that the motive of aid to the USSR played a second- or third-rate part in organizing the invasion of France in the summer of 1944. And throughout

Continued on page 74

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HOLD AT ALL COSTS

BY BRENT DYCK

A desperate fight at Lanzerath during the Battle of the Bulge made the 394th I&R Platoon the most decorated American unit of its size in World War II.

After D-Day, the Allied armies slowly advanced across Europe and pushed the German army back. Paris was liberated on August 25, 1944, the Belgian capital of Brussels fell on September 3, and the important port of Antwerp was taken two days later. The capture of Antwerp was vital, as it now gave the Allies a port where they could offload 40,000 tons of supplies a day to prepare for the final push into Germany.

On September 16, Adolf Hitler called his generals together at his Wolf's Lair headquarters in Poland and made an announcement. Banging his fist on a map of Europe, he declared, "I am taking the offensive. Here—out of the Ardennes! Across the Meuse and on to Antwerp!"

Hitler was inspired by the example of Frederick the Great two centuries earlier. During the Battle of Lossbach in the Seven Years War, Frederick the Great's Prussian army had defeated his enemies. This caused the alliance against him to split up, and Prussia eventually won the war. Now Hitler hoped that by attacking through the Ardennes and taking Antwerp, the alliance against him between Great Britain and the United States would also dissolve. Once the Allies were defeated in the West, he could turn all his attention to the Soviet juggernaut in the East, where he hoped to defeat the Red Army with his new Vengeance weapons.

Over the next two and a half months, the German high command managed to pull off one of the greatest logistical feats of World War II. By using new conscripts from prisoner-of-war camps and troops from the navy, the air force, the home guard, and even the Hitler Youth, the Germans managed to create 25 new divisions. They then managed to move almost 300,000 men and 2,800 new armored vehicles to their jumping-off points on the Siegfried Line along the Belgian border, traveling at night under the cover of darkness. Hitler's great offensive was slated for mid-December 1944, when poor weather conditions would favor the Germans and hamper the Allies' air superiority. This epic fight that followed the initial German attacks would later become known as the Battle of the Bulge.

The failure to notice this buildup of enemy troops was one of the biggest intelligence failures in American military history. The Allies believed that the Germans did not have the manpower, the equipment, or the fuel to launch a

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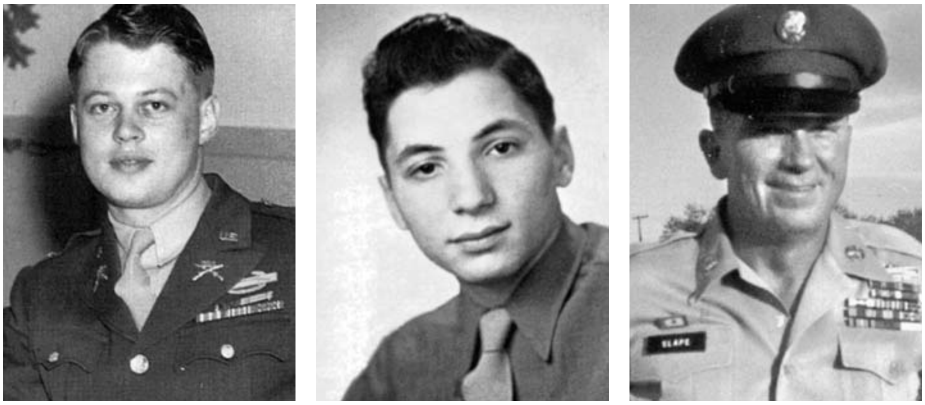
Sergeant Fred Parke of the U.S. 99th Infantry Division, armed with an M-1 carbine, peers from the dugout he occupies during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. The I&R Platoon of the 99th Division's 394th Infantry Regiment held off superior German forces at the village of Lanzerath for a full day.



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These three soldiers fought heroically at the Belgian village of Lanzerath during the opening hours of the Battle of the Bulge. Lieutenant Lyle Bouck (left) commanded the handful of American defenders from the I&R Platoon, 394th Regiment; Private William Tsakanikas (center) was the first American soldier to fire a jeep-mounted .50-caliber machine gun against the oncoming Germans and later was badly wounded; Sergeant Bill Slape (right) maintained fire with the same machine gun until the weapon overheated. ABOVE: Prior to an assault during the Battle of the Bulge, a German battalion commander gives last-minute instructions to a group of soldiers poring over a map of the vicinity. Lieutenant Lyle Bouck of the 394th I&R Platoon ordered his men to hold their fire when a Belgian girl approached from a nearby house and spoke to a gathering of German officers before the fighting at Lanzerath began.

major strategic offensive against them. The Allies were so sure that the Germans could not launch an attack that Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, commander of the 21st Army Group, requested permission from General Dwight Eisenhower, commander of Allied forces in Europe, to return home to England for Christmas since the front lines were so quiet and inactive. Additionally, nobody expected an attack through the rugged, dense Ardennes Forest, even though, as historian Antony Beevor has wryly noted, "the Germans had used this (same) route in 1870, 1914, and 1940."

One of the divisions earmarked to spearhead the surprise attack was the 3rd Fallschirmjäger (Paratrooper) Division. The 3rd Fallschirmjäger Division was an elite unit that had been rushed to Normandy after D-Day to help stop the Allied invasion. It had fought so tenaciously that it had delayed the U.S. 29th Infantry Division's capture of the important city of St. Lo for some time. In September, the 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Division was transported to Holland to defend the town of Arnhem against British and Polish paratroopers during Operation Market Garden. Now the division moved to the Siegfried Line, where its job was to break through the front lines to facilitate the advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper, led by SS Obersturmbannfuhrer (lieutenant colonel) Joachim Peiper, and his armored spearheads through the Ardennes and north to capture Antwerp.

The German soldier had very little respect for the fighting capability of the average American soldier. One of them wrote that the American soldier "doesn't attack without aircraft and tanks. He's too cowardly for that." Another German soldier wrote, "The American infantryman isn't worth a penny." This opinion of the American soldier would soon be changed by the actions of the troops of Lieutenant Lyle Bouck's 394th I&R (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) Platoon of the 394th Infantry Regiment of the 99th Division at the Battle of Lanzerath.

The I&R platoon was sent to the Belgian village of Lazeranth in early December. Lanzerath was only a few miles from the German positions on the Siegfried line, and the platoon was moved there because it was an undermanned section of the American front—located in a gap between the 99th and the 2nd Infantry Divisions. Lanzerath was tactically significant because it lay on a north-south road that led to the 394th Regiment's Headquarters at Hunningen, and then to the 99th Division's headquarters at Butgenbach.

I&R platoons were not meant to be frontline soldiers. Their job was to stay in the shadows and carry out reconnaissance patrols to gather information about the enemy's strength and positions. However, the front was so undermanned that Bouck's I&R platoon was needed to hold the line. Usually an I&R platoon is made up of 25 soldiers, but since some of his men were needed at regimental operations and regimental headquarters, Bouck's I&R platoon was down to 18 men when it was sent to Lanzerath.

Bouck's soldiers took their places in two- and three-man dugouts that had already been built into the side of a hill behind the town. Bouck had his men cut down trees and place them on top of the dugouts for additional protection against possible German shelling. In front of the dugouts was an open pasture about the size of two football fields and intersected midway by a barbed- wire fence. "We all felt that the position we had been put in was a very dangerous one due to the small number of men we had and the terrain," recalled Corporal Sam Jenkins. "Also, we did not have too many weapons."

Realizing that they needed more firepower, Bouck traded some German identity cards with the regimental ordnance officer for an armor-plated Jeep mounted with a .50-cal. machine gun. Bouck drove it back to the platoon's position and placed the Jeep in the middle behind the nine dugouts for extra fire support.

At 5:30 AM on December 16, 1944, the morning silence was broken by terrific explosions as German artillery let loose all across the front on the American positions. At first light around 8 AM, the first wave of the 9th Fallschirmjaeger Regiment emerged from the woods at the bottom of the hill. Bouck called regimental headquarters and requested artillery support. He gave the coordinates, but the artillery never came since he and his men were outside of the 99th Division boundary and artillery support was needed elsewhere.

The German paratroopers now began to cross the fields in the thick snow right in front of the dugouts. Bouck realized that he was outnumbered—by as much as 20 to 1. Private Risto Milosevich exclaimed, "My God, the whole German Army is here."

Bouck informed regimental headquarters of his situation and asked what he should do: stay or pull back and reinforce a larger force. As Bouck later recalled, "The answer was loud and clear: 'Hold at all costs!'"

Just then a jeep pulled up carrying Lieutenant Warren Springer and his four-man artillery spotter crew. Did Bouck need any help? Bouck was glad for any help he could get and sent them to man the dugouts.

Bouck told his men to wait to fire until he gave them a signal. Just as he was about to give the signal, a young blonde-haired girl emerged from the village and spoke to the lead group of German officers. Bouck refused to give the order to fire. He waited until the little girl was safely back in her house and then he ordered, "Open fire!" and dropped his arm.

The platoon and the artillery observers fired their machine guns through the slits of their dugouts at the unsuspecting Germans moving toward them. Private William Tsakanikas jumped onto the jeep and swept the battlefield with the .50-cal. machine gun. The armor-piercing bullets from the .50-cal. put dinner-plate sized holes in the Germans. Finally, the battlefield became quiet. The attack had lasted less than 10 minutes, but all the attacking Germans had been killed, wounded, or forced to retreat. Dead bodies hung on the barbed-wire fence, and blood turned the snow red.

The Americans had suffered, as well. Three platoon members were captured trying to get to regimental HQ to get reinforcements. Private Joseph McConnell had also been shot in the right shoulder, but this did not deter him and he continued to fight.

Just before 11 AM, the Germans launched their second attack. Once again it was a frontal

Their foxhole reinforced with logs, a pair of American soldiers of the 99th Infantry Division watch and wait for a German attack during the Battle of the Bulge. The heroic stand at Lanzerath by 20 year old Lt. Bouch and the 21 men under his command slowed the advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper.

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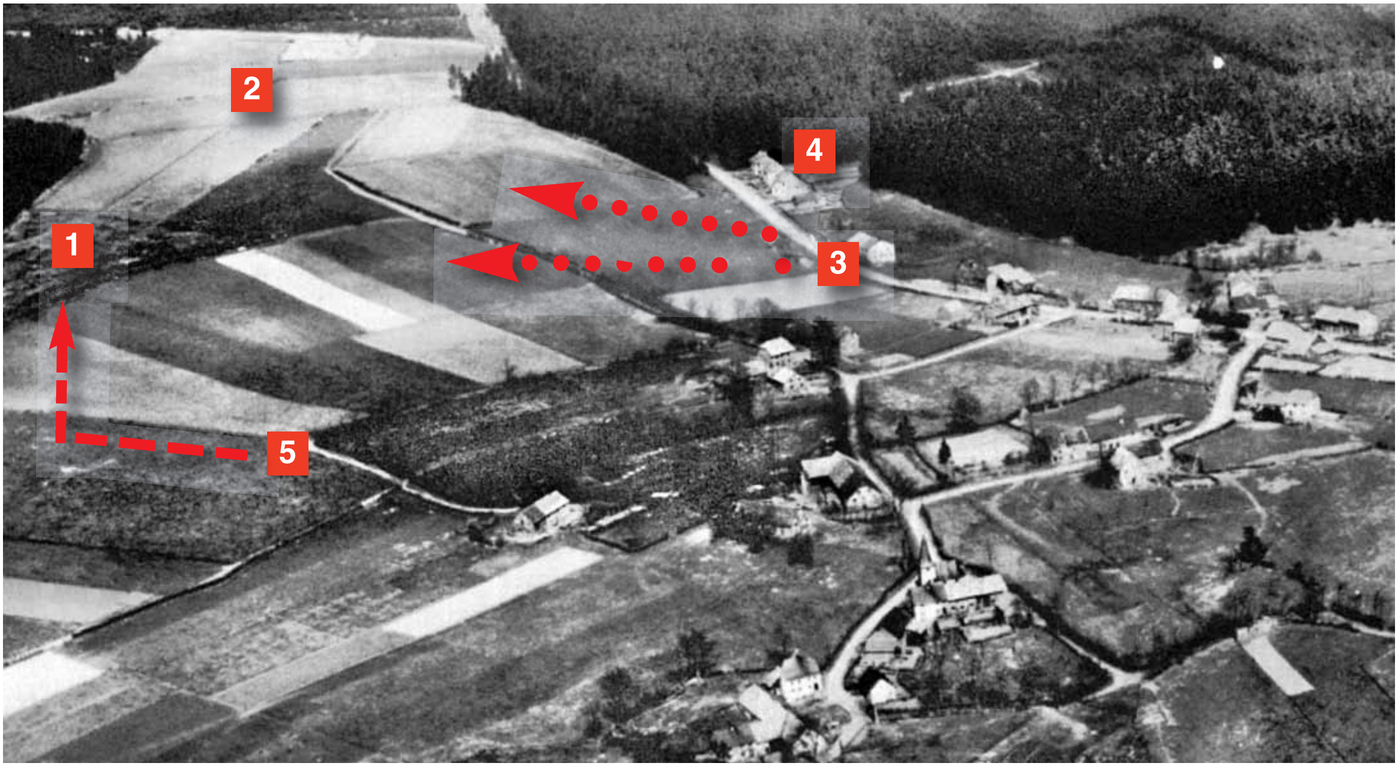


This aerial photo was taken after the battle for Lanzerath concluded. The American positions were located between numbers one and two, while number three indicates the direction of the initial German attacks in the area. Number four identifies the house from which the young Belgian girl emerged to talk with the Germans, and number five indicates the direction of the final German flanking attack against the Americans.

assault on the American position across the open field. This time Private Milosevich took his turn on the .50-cal. machine gun. He later said, "I figured we were going to get it (since we were so outnumbered), so I was going to take all the Germans with me I could."

One German soldier managed to crawl within 20 yards of one of the dugouts and fired his *Schiessbecher*, or rifle grenade, into the slit of the dugout. The grenade did not explode, but it hit Private Louis Kalil in the face, fracturing his jaw in three places and embedding his lower teeth into the roof of his mouth. Kalil's dugout partner, Sgt. George Redmond, put sulfa powder on the wound and wrapped his face with gauze.

"If things get to where you can take off, then take off," Kalil told Redmond, knowing that the Germans were inching ever closer.

"We're staying here together," Redmond replied. Redmond refused to leave his fellow soldier and friend behind. They both grabbed their weapons and kept firing through the slits. Everything went quiet. The Germans retreated to the woods at the bottom of the field.

After this attack, a German officer lifted a white flag and walked up the hill. Bouck ordered his men not to fire. The officer asked if his medics could remove the wounded from the field. Bouck agreed. There were so many wounded German soldiers that it took more than an hour for the medics to clear the battlefield.

Around 2:00 PM, the German paratroopers launched their third frontal assault on the American position. Once again, the Americans returned fire and held their ground. This time Sergeant Bill Slape manned the .50-cal. machine gun. He fired so many rounds at the enemy that the gun overheated and finally seized up.

Suddenly, artillery observer Billy Queen cried out. He had been shot in the stomach. With no medic or surgical equipment available, Queen died shortly afterward. Unable to dislodge the Americans and with their casualties mounting, the Germans called off their attack after a few minutes. Bouck was now down to 18 men, and the platoon was running low on ammunition.

Shortly after 4:00 PM, the Germans launched their fourth attack of the day against the I&R platoon. This time, the Germans had learned from their previous mistakes and spread out to outflank the Americans. Sergeant Slape noticed that Germans had made their way behind them. He remembered, "I started out of the bunker by the rear entrance and a German shot a hole in my field jacket. He was about 20 yards to the left rear of the bunker. There were three of them. A grenade handled the situation nicely."

Radio operator James Fort had strung up several fragmentation grenades around his dugout. Fort waited until the Germans had moved within the perimeter and then pulled the wires attached to the pins. The grenades exploded, killing several German soldiers.

Finally, surrounded and out of ammunition, the American soldiers surrendered and emerged from their dugouts. Private Tsakanikas had been shot five or six times in the face. He had lost his right eye, his right jaw was fractured, and pieces of bone were lodged in his brain. Bouck had been shot in his leg, but all the members of the platoon were still alive. The exact number of German casualties is unknown. Beevor estimates that over 400 paratroopers were killed or wounded that day by the I&R platoon and the artillery observers.

As the Americans walked down the road toward the town with their hands up, a German soldier suddenly yelled, "Halt!" in English.

Bouck stopped. The German pointed his machine gun in Bouck's stomach.

"St. Lo? St. Lo?" the German asked, wondering if Bouck had been at the battle in France that had killed so many of his fellow soldiers.

"Nein, Nein," replied Bouck.

Not convinced, the German pulled the trigger. Bouck closed his eyes and waited to die. Amazingly, nothing happened. The gun jammed. Bouck was still alive.

He was put back in line and marched with his men to a cafe in the town, where they waited.

The Germans brought their wounded into the same cafe. Private Milosevich recalled the scene many years later. "(Our boys) were really hurt. Boy, they were hurt. Tsakanikas at least three bullets in his face; Kalil, a grenade in his face; McConnell hit in the shoulder. But they never said a word. There was no crying. Downstairs, they had more German wounded, and they were screaming. The super race was screaming."

They had fought so tenaciously that the Germans refused to believe that a regiment of their elite soldiers had been stopped by a single American platoon. Surely a whole American regiment must still be in the woods around Lanzerath. The commanding officer of the 9th Fallschirmjaeger Regiment refused to advance any further until daylight the next morning when it was safer. Angry at the holdup caused by the I&R platoon, the commanding officer of Kampfgruppe Peiper, Joachim Pieper himself, arrived and asked if the commanding officer had sent any patrols to see if there were more Americans in the woods. The commanding officer replied that he had not. Peiper then ordered the paratroopers to accompany his tanks forward. It was now 4:30 AM.

The I&R platoon had held up the German advance for almost an entire day. This gave the Americans time for the 30th Infantry Division to join up with the 3rd Armored Division and the paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division to stop Kampfgruppe Peiper outside La Gleize a few days later. Peiper had only advanced 60 miles from his starting point before he was forced to retreat. Out of Piper's nearly 5,000, men only 770 German soldiers would return to German lines on Christmas Day. Hitler's dream of defeating the Allies in the West was over.

The men of the I&R platoon spent the rest of the war as POWs and were liberated four months later by American troops.

Though they did not know it at the time, Lyle Bouck and the other members of the I&R platoon had made a considerable contribution to the German Army's defeat. As Bouck's commanding officer, Major Robert Kriz, later wrote, "This small group of Americans had molded together to do something that they did not care to do, under the leadership of Lt. Bouck, (and) in giving of themselves gave a vast number of American troops a little more time to change positions, retrench, fight and hold to fight again another day."

Historian John Della-Guistina writes that without the "heroic stand" by the I&R platoon, the Germans would have been able to "drive to the Meuse River" and capture Antwerp. Historian Alex Kershaw noted, "Had they not stood and held the Germans and halted the attack, or rather postponed it for a crucial 24 hours, the Battle of the Bulge would have been a great German victory."

The exploits of the I&R platoon and the artillery observers were largely forgotten until columnist Jack Anderson wrote about them in *Parade* magazine in 1977. The U.S. Army formally recognized the valor of the I&R platoon in 1980, fully 35 years after the battle. Five members of the platoon were awarded the Silver Star, nine members were awarded the Bronze Star with a "V" for valor pin, and four members, including Lt. Lyle Bouck, were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. This made the I&R platoon the most decorated platoon in the U.S. Army for a single action during World War II.

National Archives

Dazed and confused, American soldiers captured by the Germans during the opening phase of the Battle of the Bulge march with their hands in the air toward an uncertain fate. The stand by the 394th I&R Platoon at Lanzerath was critical in slowing the German advance.

In January 1981, President Jimmy Carter awarded the I&R platoon a Presidential Unit Citation. It reads in part, "Although greatly outnumbered, through numerous feats of valor and an aggressive and deceptive defense of their position, the platoon inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy spearhead of the attacking German forces. Their valorous action provided crucial time for other American forces to prepare to defend against the massive German offensive. The extraordinary gallantry, determination and esprit de corps of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon in close combat against a numerically superior enemy force are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army."

After the article in *Parade* was published, the widow of William Tsakanikas, who died in 1977, was invited by New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner to throw out the first pitch of the home opener of the team's season. The remaining members of the I&R platoon were also invited to line up behind home plate.

The Yankees' announcer said, "In December 1944, eighteen brave Americans of the 99th Army Division halted a vast column of German tanks, paratroopers and SS troops in a fierce 18-hour battle … in the Belgian village of Lanzerath. These eighteen … thus blunted a massive surprise Nazi attack that could have changed the entire outcome of the Battle of the Bulge. On this opening day, the New York Yankees are remembering the survivors of Lanzerath, and hope they will not be forgotten by the country they so bravely defended."

The I&R platoon received a standing ovation from the 52,000 people in attendance.

Brent Dyck is a history teacher in Bradford, Ontario, and is a frequent contributor to WWII History.

Fighting for

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Staff Sergeant Chester B. Opdyke, Jr., crouched down at the tree line. He could see his objective, a crossroads village named Barrigada, shimmering in the hot August sun across a large open field just 300 yards away.

Inside Barrigada, Opdyke knew, was a deep well containing enough fresh water for thousands of thirsty GIs. But would the Japanese defend this tiny settlement and its all-important water hole? There was only one way to find out, so the 23-year-old squad leader motioned his lead scouts forward.

Those scouts, Pfc. John Andzelik and Private Salvatore Capobianco, kept alert for any sign of enemy activity as they stepped out into the clearing. The surrounding jungle remained eerily quiet. It was 0930 hours on Wednesday, August 2, 1944.

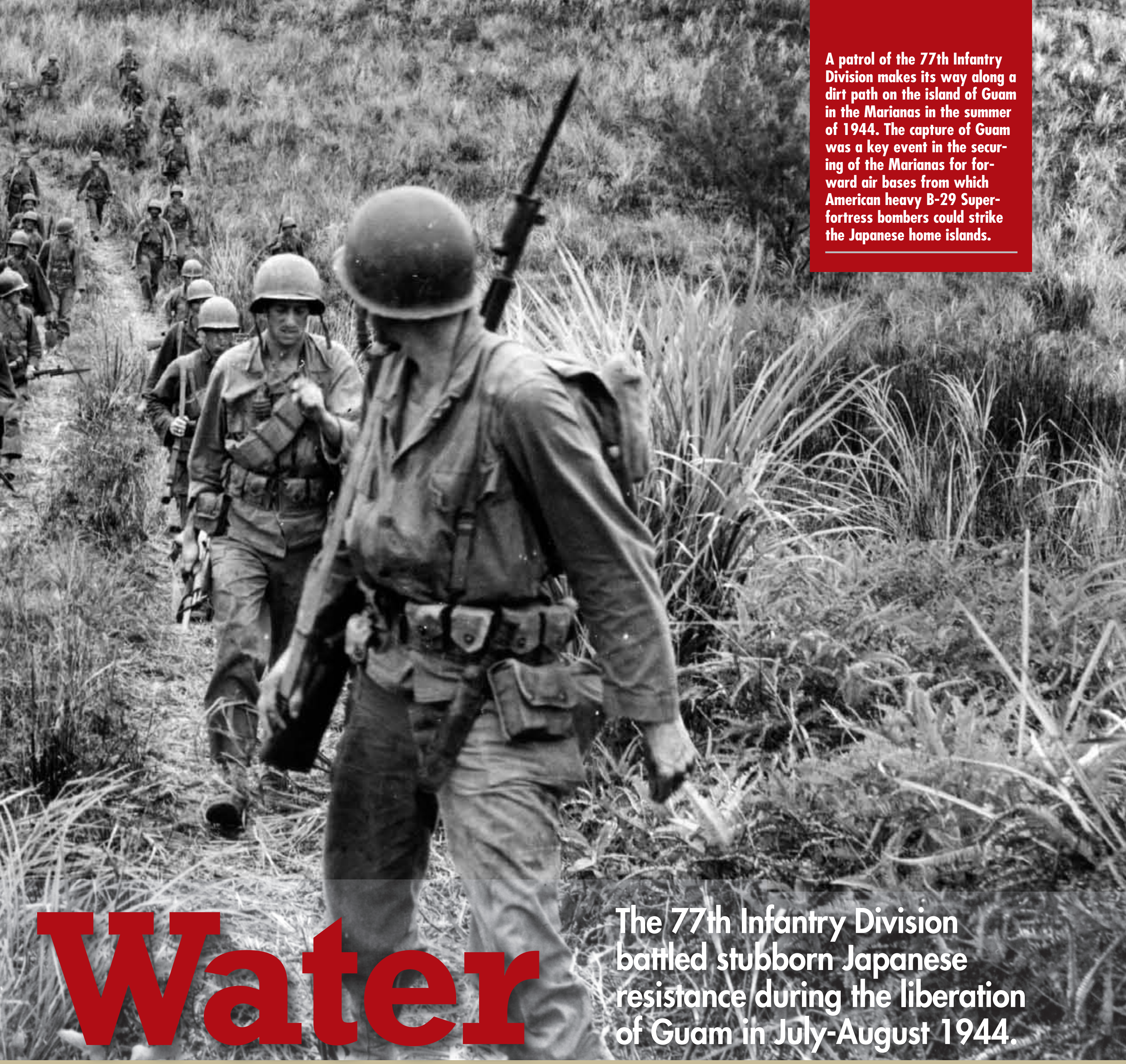
Just then, Andzelik spied three Japanese soldiers running across a trail up ahead. Taking cover, he and Capobianco signaled for their squad leader. Joining his scouts, Opdyke noticed a small shack off to the right that could serve as an observation post. He directed a section of infantrymen to clear it.

The soldiers advanced but a few yards when small-arms fire erupted from all sides. Andzelik was killed instantly while Capobianco went down with multiple wounds to his arm and leg. Sergeant Opdyke also took a bullet in the arm, and several members of his squad were shot as they rushed to cover.

In a matter of moments, the Japanese had pinned down 2nd Squad of 2nd Platoon, advance guard for Company I, 305th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division, U.S. Army. As medics went to work on the injured, company commander Captain Lee P. Cothran deployed his riflemen. In an attempt to find and flank the adversary, Cothran's 1st Platoon rushed across an open draw. An unseen machine gun opened fire on them, killing three GIs. Snipers, seemingly everywhere, began picking off key leaders and heavy-weapons crews.

Item Company had been stopped cold. As his troops licked their wounds, Captain Cothran reported the morning's action to higher headquarters. The foe held Barrigada with a strong force, he said, although no one knew for certain exactly how strong it was. Expert Japanese camouflage techniques, together with difficult terrain, made it impossible to accurately estimate enemy numbers.

The ambush tripped by Staff Sergeant Opdyke's squad opened a fierce two-day fight for Barrigada and its 30,000-gallon reservoir of precious water. In this life-or-death struggle, desperate bands of disorganized Japanese infantrymen pitted themselves against inexperienced but well-equipped American combat soldiers. At stake was the fate of Guam, a strategic island in the Marianas archipelago of the Central Pacific. Located some 1,350 miles south of Tokyo and 3,300 miles west of Pearl Harbor, this U.S. possession had been under



A patrol of the 77th Infantry Division makes its way along a dirt path on the island of Guam in the Marianas in the summer of 1944. The capture of Guam was a key event in the securing of the Marianas for forward air bases from which American heavy B-29 Superfortress bombers could strike the Japanese home islands.

Water

The 77th Infantry Division battled stubborn Japanese resistance during the liberation of Guam in July-August 1944.

National Archives

enemy occupation for nearly two and a half years. On December 10, 1941, Japanese invaders easily overwhelmed Guam's small Marine garrison. In the summer of 1944, however, American troops had come to take it back.

Along with neighboring Saipan and Tinian, Guam was sought after by the U.S. Army Air Force as a base for its new long-range Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber aircraft. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Ocean Areas, also wanted to establish a fleet supply center there. And Guam's location athwart Japan's major sea lines of communication meant it could not by bypassed—American troops would have to go in and vanquish the island's defenders rather than leaving those enemy soldiers to "wither on the vine."

Guam, then, served as an essential steppingstone on Nimitz' island-hopping campaign across the Central Pacific. The Japanese knew this, of course, and by late 1943 had initiated an emergency program to fortify their holdings in the Marianas. Time was against them, though. Powerful Allied forces were invading and occupying key island groups faster than Japan's Imperial High Command could bring in men, machines, and munitions to stop them.

No one felt this sense of urgency more than Lt. Gen. Takeshi Takashina, commander of the Japanese Army's 29th Division and the officer

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: The 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Provisional (Marine) Brigade began landing on Guam at 8:30 AM, July 21, 1944, and faced heavy Japanese fire on the beachhead. The 77th Division, initially held in reserve, began landing at 1:00 PM. While the Marines had been in combat before, this would be the 77th's baptism of fire. OPPOSITE TOP: The American invasion beaches on the island of Guam included several locations on the island's west coast, where soldiers of the Army's 77th Infantry Division and Marines of the III Amphibious Corps were to come ashore. The American's then wheeled to the North with the 77th moving up the east side of the island.

responsible for Guam's defense. Takashina and his men had already endured a harrowing sea journey from Manchuria to the Marianas during February and March of 1944; 2,350 of them drowned after an American submarine torpedoed their transport vessels. Those who survived immediately got to work constructing obstacles and fortifications.

General Takashina could count perhaps 18,500 soldiers as present for duty. His 29th Division only had one full infantry regiment, the 38th, on Guam, but the island's garrison also included two formations known as the 48th Independent Mixed Brigade and the 10th Independent Mixed Regiment. Three battalions of 75mm pack artillery, plus three tank companies, provided mobile fire support.

Also stationed on Guam were 3,000 members of the 54th Keibitai (Naval Guard Force), serving alongside 1,800 Imperial Japanese Navy construction engineers, as well as another 2,000 aircraft mechanics and technicians. Few of these sailors, however, possessed individual weapons or the training required to effectively use them.

Arrayed against Takashina's defenders was a seemingly overwhelming assemblage of American military might. The U.S. Fifth Fleet, totaling 800 warships, 900 planes, and 127,000 ground troops, converged on the Marianas in early June 1944. Commanding this vast expedition was the victor of Midway, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance.

Spruance's Fifth Fleet operated under an especially ambitious invasion plan. Upon arrival in the Marianas, his command would essentially split in half to form two amphibious assault groups. First, the Northern Attack Force (Task Force 52) was to invade Saipan and Tinian beginning on June 15. Three days later, the Southern Attack Force (Task Force 53) would land on Guam. Task Force 58, consisting of 12 fast aircraft carriers, eight battleships, and nearly 100 other surface vessels, positioned itself to protect the fleet against Japanese sea or air counterattack.

If all went according to plan, Operation Forager should take no more than 18 days from the moment U.S. Marines hit Saipan's beaches to the end of combat operations on Guam.

All did not go as planned. To begin with, intelligence officers greatly underestimated both the number of Japanese occupying Saipan and their determination to hold onto that island. Saipan's 29,000 defenders (the Americans thought there were 19,000) wreaked so much havoc on the Marines' first waves that U.S. commanders had to commit their floating reserve mere hours into the operation.

That day, Spruance also learned that Japan's 1st Mobile Fleet—consisting of nine flattops and 450 aircraft—had been spotted on its way out to fight a "single decisive battle" for control of the Marianas. While Task Force 58's fast carriers raced off to meet this threat, the vulnerable transport convoys of Task Force 52 and Task Force 53 prudently withdrew out of range. Although the subsequent Battle of the Philippine Sea resulted in a resounding American victory, it meant the date for Guam's invasion—designated W-Day to avoid confusion with D-Day on Saipan—needed to be postponed indefinitely.

This operational delay did give Spruance's Southern Attack Force time to significantly increase the number of preinvasion air and naval-gunfire missions directed against targets on Guam. The original plan called for a two-day bombardment; in fact, U.S. warships and planes pounded Takashina's defenses for 13 continuous days. It was the longest preparatory shelling of any amphibious landing site in the war so far.

Documents captured on Saipan confirmed

that Guam was strongly defended, although the precise size of its garrison remained a mystery. The Southern Attack Force would require additional troops to ensure victory against this dangerous foe, yet all combat units on Saipan were fully committed to the fight there and on Tinian. A full division of reinforcements had to be identified, loaded aboard transport vessels, and moved rapidly to the Marianas.

The U.S. Army's 77th Infantry Division, nicknamed "Statue of Liberty" for its blue and gold shoulder patch, appeared to meet these requirements. Stationed on Oahu since March 1944, the 77th's soldiers had spent the previous two years undergoing an extensive program of desert and jungle training. Guam would be their introduction to battle. The division commander, Maj. Gen. Andrew D. Bruce, had served in World War I, and he prided himself on building an organization that was prepared to accomplish any task.

The men of Maj. Gen. Bruce's division were about to test their training and readiness in the crucible of combat. On June 29, senior officers in charge of Forager set a new date for the invasion of Guam. W-Day would now take place on July 21, with the 77th Infantry Division assigned as Corps reserve.

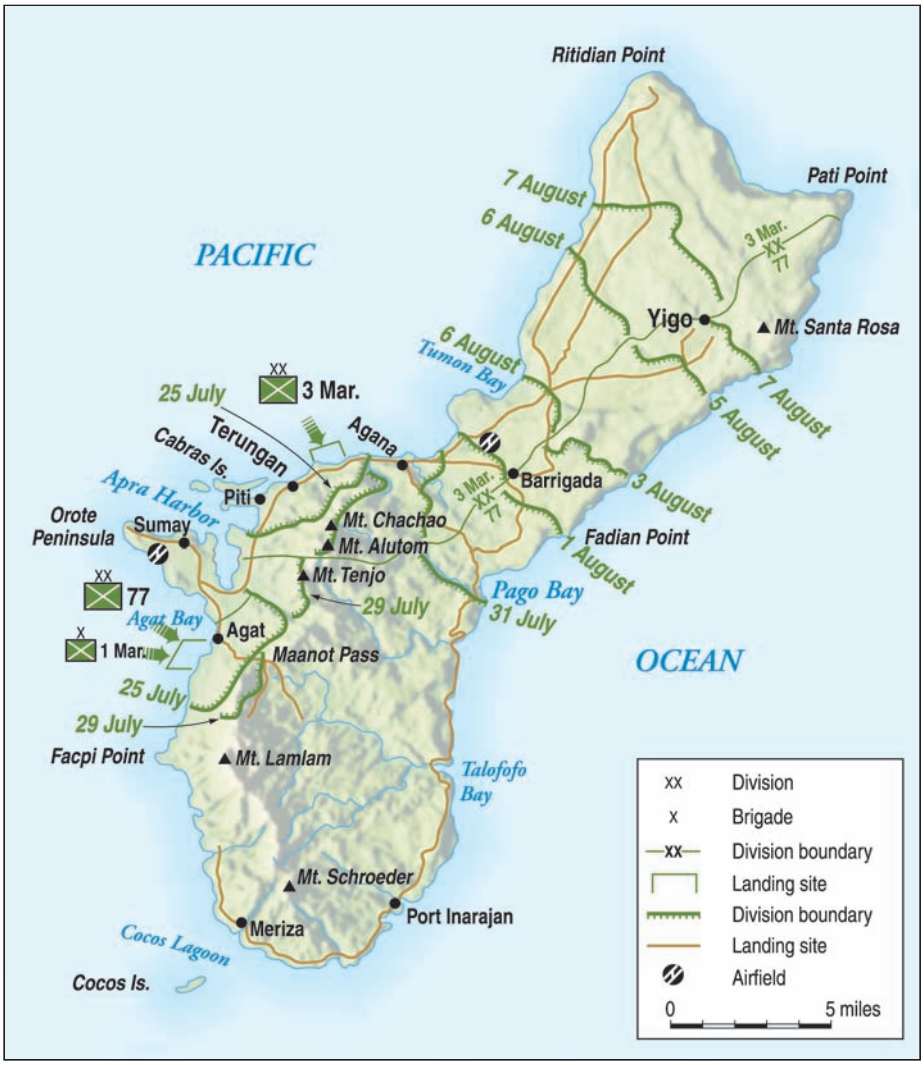
This decision gave the Statue of Liberty Division's soldiers less than two weeks to pack up their equipment, board attack transports for the 3,300-mile trip to Guam, and create a tactical plan. In the rush to load, some matériel such as tentage and kitchen gear was accidentally left behind. Meanwhile, the division's planning staff scrambled to obtain updated information on enemy dispositions, friendly missions, and the island they were about to invade.

Largest and southernmost of the 15-island Marianas, Guam measured 32 miles in length and from 4 to 10 miles across. Its surface area totaled 225 square miles. Peanut-shaped, this landmass was divided almost equally between a mountainous southern region and a rugged limestone plateau to the north. It was also completely surrounded by a coral barrier reef.

Most of Guam's 22,000 native residents, known as Chamorros, lived along its western shore. Recently, however, Allied intelligence learned the Japanese had been resettling thousands of civilians into concentration camps located well inland. Fiercely loyal to the United States, these people were unlikely to oppose an American invasion—but the sheer number of noncombatants inhabiting their battle zone presented frightening new challenges to the Marines and soldiers set to liberate the island.

All invasion troops fell under the command of Maj. Gen. Roy A. Geiger, United States

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


Ritidian Point
Pati Point
7 August
6 August
PACIFIC
3 Mar.
XX
77
Yigo
Mt. Santa Rosa
6 August
Tumon Bay
XX
3 Mar.
25 July
Terungan
Agana
7 August
5 August
Cabras Is.
Barrigada
3 August
Apra Harbor
Piti
Orote Peninsula
Sumay
Mt. Chachao
Mt. Alutom
Fadian Point
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29 July
Pago Bay
31 July
Agat Bay
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1 Mar.
Agat
Maanot Pass
OCEAN
25 July
29 July
Facpi Point
Mt. Lamlam
Talofofo Bay
Mt. Schroeder
Port Inarajan
Meriza
Cocos Lagoon
Cocos Is.
XX Division
X Brigade
—XX— Division boundary
Landing site
Division boundary
Landing site
Airfield
0
5 miles

National Archives

BARRIGADA
VILLAGE
OUT OF BOUNDS
WITHOUT PERMIT

Soldiers of the 77th Division fought the Japanese for control of a precious water source at the village of Barrigada. The opposing forces clashed for two days, and both sides used tanks in the fight to take possession of the town's 30,000-gallon reservoir.

Marine Corps. Geiger's III Amphibious Corps, landing-force headquarters for the Guam operation, contained three main tactical units: the 3rd Marine Division, the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade, and the 77th Infantry Division. These formations, except for the Statue of Liberty Division, had all previously seen combat.

The Guam landings would put 29,000 Marines ashore starting at 0830 hours on W-Day, July 21, 1944. In the north, between Asan and Adelup Points, the 3rd Marine Division was to come across the beach and seize key high ground that dominated their route of advance southward. Seven miles distant, the 1st Provisional Brigade would land at Agat, secure its flanks, and wheel north. General Geiger wanted these two outfits to link up with one another by dusk on W-Day, thus cutting off a major Japanese position on the Orote Peninsula before his foe could launch a counterattack.

Similar to what happened at Saipan, ferocious resistance on the beachhead quickly frustrated Geiger's scheme of maneuver. As casualties grew among the first waves of Marines, a call went out for more troops. Accordingly, GIs from the 305th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division, started boarding their landing craft and at 1300 hours headed in to reinforce the Provisional Brigade.

Over the next three days, the 77th's remaining two infantry regiments (306th and 307th) came ashore along with its three 105mm and one 155mm howitzer battalions. Also joining the Statue of Liberty Division for the Guam landings was an independent tank battalion, the 706th. These army field-artillery and armored outfits lent their Marine Corps comrades much valuable fire support as the Leathernecks cleared Orote of over 1,300 fanatical defenders beginning July 24.

A full account of what happened during the invasion's first 10 days is beyond the scope of this work. Yet great credit must be given to the Marines of 3rd Marine Division and 1st Provisional Brigade for their superior performance along Guam's western coast. At a significant cost in lives, these brave men overran beach fortifications, defeated massive nighttime counterattacks, and killed thousands of Japanese soldiers—including Lt. Gen. Takashina, who perished on July 28.

On that date, Maj. Gen. Geiger's command achieved a major campaign objective when it established a Force Beachhead Line (FBL). This control measure marked the limit of advance inland deemed necessary to prevent Japanese artillery from affecting unloading operations on the landing beaches. Starting on July 24, the Statue of Liberty Division occupied a continuous sector along the southern flank of III Amphibious Corps' FBL. The GIs posted there dug in, conducted patrols, and began acclimating themselves to the realities of combat in this hot, dangerous place.

In addition, the 77th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop—often led by Chamorro guides—conducted a number of four- and five-man patrols across Guam's hilly southern half. These cavalrymen found little evidence of enemy activity, convincing Geiger that all remaining Japanese troops were fleeing toward the island's

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Smoldering hulks of two Japanese Type 95 'Ha-Go' tanks lie abandoned after the fight. The Japanese used their light tanks successfully against the Americans. BELOW: Private William N. Wade, a soldier of the 77th Division, poses at center with comrades after the battle for Barrigada. Wade was lucky to survive when his helmet was penetrated by a Japanese sniper's bullet. OPPOSITE: A pair of M4 Sherman medium tanks from the 706th Tank Battalion leads the way for U.S. Marines advancing through the jungle on the island of Guam in the summer of 1944. The Sherman's 75mm cannon outgunned Japanese tanks and suppressed Japanese sniper fire.

Naval History and Heritage Command

northern region. He determined to pursue and annihilate them before they could reorganize into a cohesive defensive formation.

The III Amphibious Corps' plan for the final phase of combat operations on Guam called for the 3rd Marine Division to form a line stretching east to west with its left flank touching the coast. Meanwhile, the 77th Infantry Division would move cross-country and extend that line all the way to the island's eastern shore. Both divisions were then to move north, clearing out all resistance as they went. The 1st Provisional Brigade reverted to Corps reserve, while naval air and gunfire assets continued to support the attackers.

General Bruce's soldiers began their 10-mile march toward Guam's east coast at 0700 hours on July 31. Conditions were miserable. Near-constant rains turned all footpaths (there were no roads) into a muddy mess, while GIs struggled to negotiate steep hills, valleys, and gorges as they crossed the island's central mountain range.

One infantryman vividly described this jungle ordeal: "The distance across the island is not far, as the crow flies, but unluckily we can't fly. The nearest I came to flying was while descending the slippery side of a mountain in a sitting position.... After advancing a few yards you find that the [bolt] handle of the machine gun on your shoulder, your pack and shovel, canteens, knife, and machete all stick out at right angles and are as tenacious in their grip on the surrounding underbrush as a dozen grappling hooks.... The flies and mosquitos have discovered your route of march and have called up all the reinforcements including the underfed and undernourished who regard us as nothing but walking blood banks. We continue to push on."

That afternoon, Co. L of the 307th Infantry Regiment liberated a native labor camp near Asinan where 2,000 Chamorros had been imprisoned. Other troops kept walking toward Guam's eastern shore. By 1700 hours, the 3rd Battalion, 305th Infantry, had cleared a coastal settlement named Yona; significantly, the few dozen Japanese defending this village constituted the only organized resistance encountered by the 77th Infantry Division during its cross-island trek.

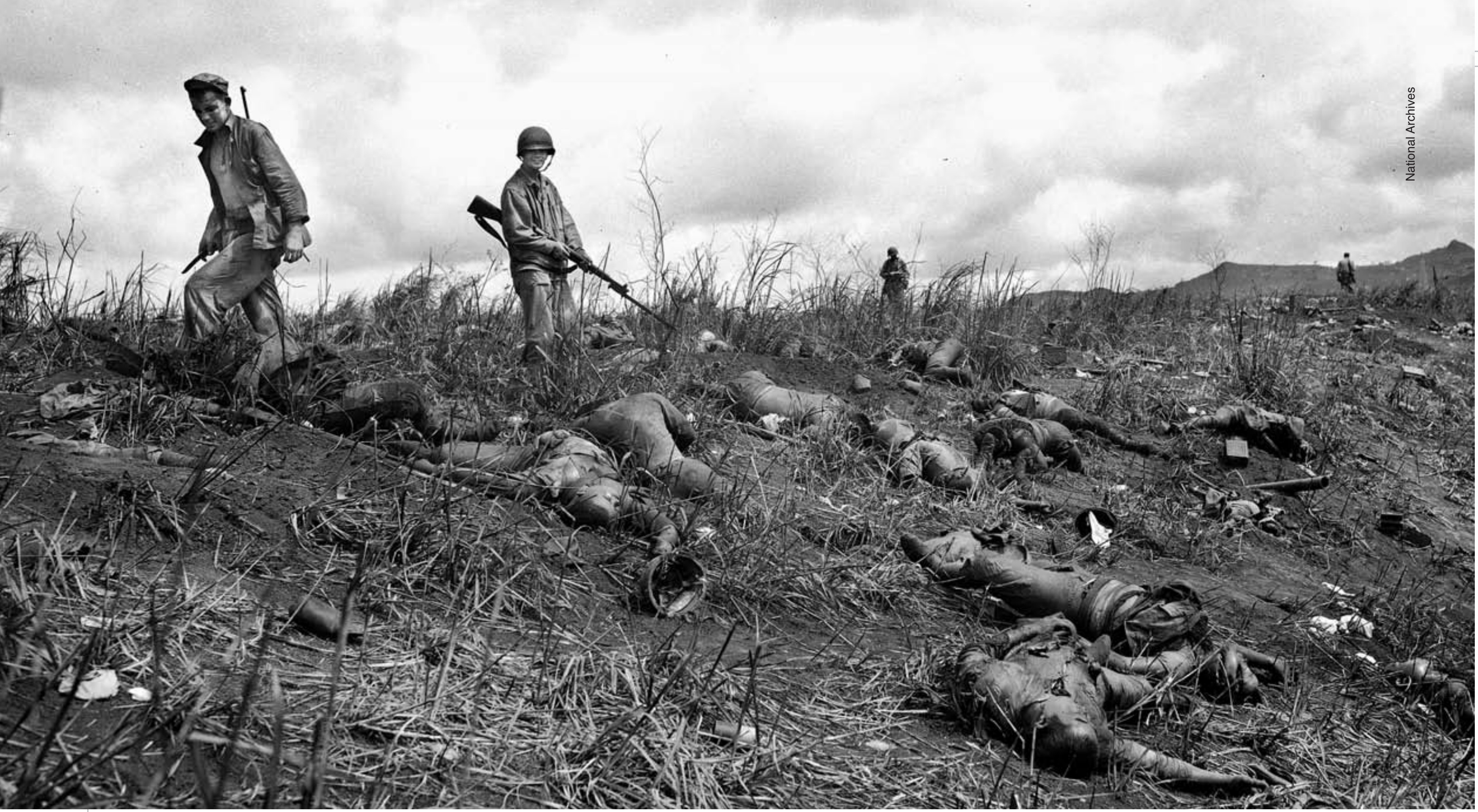
The Statue of Liberty Division's rifle battalions had reached their attack positions one full day ahead of schedule. Yet supply trucks and jeeps were unable to follow these foot soldiers across Guam's craggy mountain spine. Combat engineers attempted to cut a road out of the boondocks but stopped work after constructing just two miles of roadway. They simply did not possess the proper equipment for this project, one made worse by constant rains that turned the track into a bottomless quagmire.

Conditions improved when, on August 1, advancing infantrymen reached an important objective: the hard-surfaced Agana-Yona Road. Now, truck convoys could drive from supply dumps on the beach straight up to the front lines. There was one catch—both the 3rd Marine Division and the 77th Infantry Division had to share this narrow logistics artery.

Afterwards, General Bruce explained the problem: "We were faced with the … situation of supplying the division over a long, tortuous route which was also serving a Marine division, corps artillery, and later a Marine brigade as well. The books would say it can't be done, but on Guam it was done—it had to be. We did it by using all available transportation and keeping it on the go day and night."

August 2 dawned with the Statue of Liberty Division positioned along a north-facing line that spread two and a half miles across the eastern half of Guam. Riflemen from the 305th Infantry Regiment secured the right flank, anchored on the coast. On the left, GIs of the 307th prepared to advance while maintaining contact with the 3rd Marine Division. In reserve was the 306th Infantry Regiment. The day's objectives included Mt. Barrigada, 640 feet tall, as well as Barrigada Village and its all-important water well.

Overnight, 14 M5A1 Stuart light tanks from Co. D, 706th Tank Battalion, reached the 77th's forward positions. Beginning around


National Archives

ABOVE: American soldiers survey the jumble of Japanese corpses left following a futile banzai charge on the island of Guam. The Marines and Army soldiers faced nightime attacks that ultimately resulted in the slaughter of large numbers of brave Japanese soldiers. OPPOSITE: Japanese soldiers and Korean laborers, pressed into service with the Japanese military, emerge from hiding with their hands up. After 21 days of fighting in August and July of 1944, Guam was finally secured.

0630 hours, that outfit dashed into Barrigada on a mounted scouting mission. Drawing scattered small-arms fire, the tankers plastered all suspected enemy hideouts with their machine guns and 37mm cannon before returning to friendly lines.

At 0840 hours, Maj. Gen. Bruce ordered the tanks back into Barrigada to perform a more thorough reconnaissance. Captain Leonard H. Seegar, the company commander, once again took his armored chariots through the village before heading northwest toward Mt. Barrigada. Finding and destroying a hastily emplaced roadblock, Seegar's tanks then turned around to finish their patrol.

After moving a few hundred yards along a jungle trail, one M5A1 got hung up on a stump. This event triggered a violent ambush; some Japanese opened fire with machine guns and 20mm cannon while others tried to climb on board the tanks carrying satchel charges and hand grenades. After the stuck tank worked its way free, Seegar's crews shot their way out of the trap and beat a hasty retreat.

Meanwhile, riflemen belonging to the 305th and 307th Infantry Regiments started advancing toward Barrigada from the south. The 305th's Co. I, including S/Sgt. Opdyke's squad, found its path completely blocked by well-concealed Japanese soldiers. Additionally, thick vegetation in the 305th's zone made command and control a nearly impossible task.

Any assault on Barrigada would have to be made by the 307th, yet this outfit was having problems of its own. On the left, fast-moving Marines rapidly outpaced the Army unit responsible for keeping in contact with them. To the right, 3rd Battalion managed to squeeze two companies into line as a base of fire. But 1st Battalion, attempting to outflank Barrigada's defenders, got lost in a featureless labyrinth of tangantangan trees and "wait a minute" vines.

A 1,000-yard gap developed between Co. C on the left and the assault elements of Co. A. Enemy soldiers positioned in this area began to pour a devastating fire into "Able" Company's GIs as they advanced. Company B, the battalion reserve, went forward to shore things up. In the lead was Lieutenant Willis J. Munger's Second Platoon.

Rushing forward a few steps at a time, Munger and his outfit crossed the same large field that had held up Opdyke's squad several hundred yards to the east. Their objective was a two-story structure known as the Green House for its distinctive color. Second Platoon made it to the Green House, but then encountered a terrifying new threat.

From a nearby grass shack that had been set alight by American tracer bullets, a Type 97 Chi-Ha medium tank unexpectedly emerged. As Munger's men ran for cover, it raced through Barrigada spitting fire in all directions. Overrunning several crew-served weapons, the marauding Type 97 next turned toward U.S. lines. It shot up both an aid station and the 307th's regimental command post before anyone could react, then escaped unscathed into the boonies.

Following this surprise armored incursion, Japanese forces started to regain the tactical initiative in Barrigada. Cut off and with casualties mounting, Lieutenant Munger's besieged platoon received orders to withdraw from its position around the Green House. A flurry of mortar shells descended on the exposed GIs as they ran, killing Munger and several of his soldiers.

On the right, troops from the 305th Infantry Regiment once again tried to push forward. At 1330 hours, Co. K entered the battle alongside five M5A1 light tanks. Lying in wait for them was another Japanese tank, which quickly disabled one U.S. vehicle and killed three infantrymen. Trapped in the killing zone by expertly camouflaged adversaries, the men of "King" Company could only hug the ground and pray.

Finally, four M4 Shermans from 3rd Platoon, Company C, 706th Tank Battalion bulled their way up to the ambush site. Their powerful 75mm cannon made short work of the enemy tank, but by that time the 305th's advance halted due to darkness.

A second group of medium tanks aided the 307th Infantry's late-afternoon attempt to rescue those injured soldiers who had been left behind in earlier fighting. A covering force of GIs from Company G dashed toward Barrigada from the west, advancing into town under scattered sniper fire. Meanwhile, unseen Japanese riflemen began targeting medics and stretcher bearers; only blasts of shotgun-like canister rounds from the Shermans' 75mm main guns seemed to suppress these deadly sharpshooters.

Finally, with all casualties evacuated, the M4s began to withdraw. The foe then turned his wrath on "George" Company's security teams. First Platoon, under 1st Lt. James T. Whitney, absorbed the brunt of this onslaught. Caught out in an open field, Whitney's men were cut down one by one by Japanese machine-gun fire pouring out of the forest on their left. When a relief column reached them at nightfall, only a few members of 1st Platoon remained unharmed. Later, it was learned the platoon sustained 26 casualties—most of them killed in action—that afternoon. Among the slain was Lieutenant Whitney.

The 77th Infantry Division had received a rude introduction to combat at Barrigada. In the 307th, 22 soldiers were killed and 63 wounded that day, while the 305th counted seven men dead and 35 injured. Worst of all, as dusk fell on August 2, the Statue of Liberty Division stood no closer to capturing this key village than it had at sunup.

Most of General Bruce's problems stemmed from his soldiers' inability to accurately navigate their way through Guam's tangled boondocks. With infantry outfits unsure of their actual positions, the field artillery could not risk firing for fear of hitting friendly troops. Hopelessly lost, entire companies blundered straight into Japanese ambuscades. Other organizations lost contact with the units on their flanks and played no role in the day's action. The entire battle was fought in an uncoordinated fashion that failed to utilize the 77th's advantage in large-caliber firepower.

The Americans started redeeming themselves after dark on August 2, when warships off Guam's east coast started clobbering all known and suspected Japanese positions around Barrigada. Toward dawn, division artillery joined in with sustained volleys of 105mm and 155mm gunfire. Just before the infantry assault kicked off at 0630 hours, a heavy mortar barrage pummeled the objective.

The capture of this small settlement proved anticlimactic, though, as the Japanese had pulled out overnight. Marching rapidly, U.S. foot soldiers easily took Mount Barrigada by midafternoon. Back at the well in town, as a unit historian recorded, the "Engineers arrived, jacked up a jeep for a power plant, improvised a belt from a Japanese fire hose, and started the precious water flowing." For the rest of their time on Guam, the 77th's GIs would have full canteens.

For the next two days impenetrable jungle terrain offered more resistance than did the Japanese. General Bruce's troops moved forward in loosely coordinated company columns, using 32-ton Sherman tanks to laboriously break trails through dense vegetation. While pursuing American infantrymen experienced several sharp firefights with small bands of stay-behinds, intelligence officers predicted their foe's main force—still 4,500 soldiers strong—was establishing one last line of defense tied into Mt. Santa Rosa and the hamlet of Yigo.

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On August 5, the relatively fresh 306th Infantry Regiment passed through the 307th and established a solid connection with the 3rd Marine Division on its left flank. Now, III Amphibious Corps could once again move forward all across its zone. Overhead, carrier-based naval aircraft struck enemy-held road junctions and likely troop concentrations. The last phase of battle on Guam had begun.

General Geiger, anxious to conclude combat operations, committed the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade on August 6. He also instructed his subordinate commanders to keep only one rifle battalion in reserve; all other troops should press forward. Leaders in the Statue of Liberty Division made plans for an all-out assault on Yigo and Mt. Santa Rosa set to commence at noon on August 7.

Prior to the attack, U.S. cannoneers showered their target with a steel rain of high explosives. Seven artillery battalions—over 100 guns—participated in this barrage, as did a naval-bombardment group cruising off Guam's eastern shore. First, though, came waves of Seventh Air Force North American B-25 Mitchell gunships and Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers flying out of Saipan. After all these preparatory fires lifted, an immense cloud of smoke could be seen for miles around, spreading upward from Mt. Santa Rosa.

On the right, riflemen from the 305th Infantry Regiment moved forward along Guam's jagged coastline. Miles to the left, their comrades in the 306th burst through solid vegetation to block the enemy's routes of retreat. In the center, a task force of 307th Regiment foot soldiers and tankers belonging to the 706th Tank Battalion studied a large open space standing between them and Yigo. Were Japanese defenders hidden there, waiting for the Americans to timidly step into an

Continued on page 82

It was a quiet dinner on a side street in Berlin the evening of June 26, 1939, but more than food would be devoured that night.

The locale was one of Berlin's less-esteemed eating establishments, long used by German Foreign Office officials for the discretion it offered. At dinner were Dr. Kurt Schnurre and Walter Schmid of the German Foreign Ministry and Soviet diplomats Georgi A. Astakhov and Evgeny Babarin.

With Europe ruinously rushing toward war, they had been mundanely and tediously crunching the numbers of a trade agreement. Hitler's threatening Poland versus Great Britain and France's guaranteeing of Polish independence had set off a frenzy of diplomatic activity that in the end became centered on the power that had before been kept out of international relations, treated on all sides as an odious outcast—the Soviet Union.

"We formed the opinion," Soviet Premier Josef Stalin was to tell Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the Kremlin in 1942, "that the British and French governments were not resolved to go to war if Poland were attacked, but they hoped the diplomatic line-up of Great Britain, France, and Russia would deter Hitler. We were sure it would not." Stalin had signaled to Hitler this shift in the diplomatic winds with a speech in March 1939, blasting the British and French for not standing up to the Nazi dictator at Munich, warning them the Soviets would not be expected to "pick their chestnuts out of the fire." Two months later, Stalin fired the main proponent of an alliance with Britain and France, Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov.

AFTER SIGNING A SECRET NON-AGGRESSION PACT WITH NAZI GERMANY, THE SOVIET UNION INVADED NEIGHBORING POLAND IN THE EARLY DAYS OF WORLD WAR II.

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

Over a mediocre meal of salmon and Rhine wines, talk deliberately drifted on the German side from economics to elsewhere. "There was no problem," Schnurre, on intentional instructions from Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, carefully commented, "between the two countries anywhere from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and to the Far East, which could not be solved. No problem at all."

That calculated comment set in motion events leading to one of history's great diplomatic deceits—the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signed in Moscow two months later. Behind this public show of nonaggression between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia was a secretly planned invasion by both against the country between them, Poland.

Stalin gave the West a last-gasp chance for an alliance, but the British and French sent a low-

Red Army meets Wehrmacht in this photo as invading German and Soviet soldiers gather around a Soviet tank somewhere in Poland. The Nazis and Soviets concluded a non-aggression pact in 1939 and agreed in a secret protocol to invade Poland from west and then east, dismembering the country.

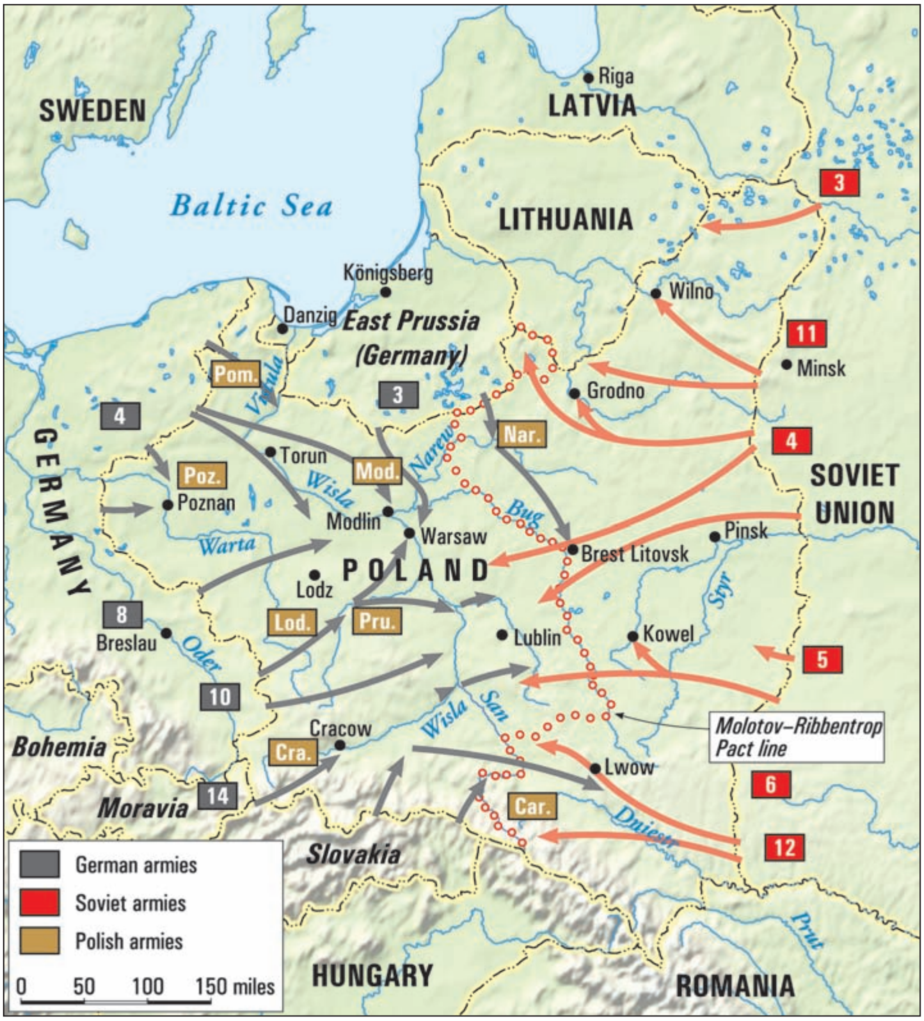
Alamy

Invasion *from the* East

National Archives

ABOVE: In a famous photo that was probably staged, German soldiers of the Free City of Danzig and customs officials remove a roadblock in the Polish town of Sopot, helping to facilitate the progress of the Nazis. Days later, the Soviet Red Army also invaded Poland. BELOW: In a previously agreed progression of events, the German Army invaded Poland from the west on September 1, 1939, and the Soviet Red Army then invaded from the east just days later. Poland ceased to exist as a nation. OPPOSITE: A Red Army tank rolls along a dirt road in the Polish town of Rakov.

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


SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Riga
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
3
Königsberg
Danzig
East Prussia
(Germany)
Wilno
11
Minsk
Grodno
Pom.
Vistula
3
Nar.
4
4
SOVIET
UNION
GERMANY
Poz.
Torun
Wisla
Mod.
Narew
Poznan
Modlin
Bug
Warsaw
Pinsk
Warta
Brest Litovsk
Lodz
POLAND
Styr
8
Breslau
Lod.
Pru.
Lublin
Kowel
Oder
5
10
Molotov–Ribbentrop
Pact line
Bohemia
Cracow
Wisla
San
Cra.
Lwow
6
14
Moravia
Car.
Dniester
12
Slovakia
German armies
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0
50
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HUNGARY
ROMANIA
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ranking military mission to Russia with no authorization to sign anything, while Hitler secretly struggled with the Soviets over a proposed 25-year non-aggression pact. "It was considered necessary by Stalin and Molotov for bargaining purposes to conceal their true intentions till the last possible moment," Churchill conceded about their diplomatic duplicity. Hitler, frustrated, finally outmaneuvered the Western Allies, directly cabling Stalin and requesting him to receive Ribbentrop to sign a deal on the spot.

The public pact to "desist from any act of violence, any aggressive action, and any attack on each other" shocked the world. A protocol that followed was kept secret. Uncovered in 1945 by a U.S. State Department investigator going through German diplomatic archives evacuated from Berlin, the protocol was only admitted to by the Soviets in 1989. It deviously declared, "In the event of territorial and political arrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish State, the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded by the line of the of the Narew, Vistula, and San Rivers. The question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish state and how such a state should be bounded can only be further determined in the course of further political developments. In any event both Governments will resolve this question by means of friendly agreement."

The diplomatic double-talk disguised the deliberate destruction of Poland as an independent nation. For the Soviets, it was about recovering territories of Byelorussia and the Ukraine lost from the 1920-1921 war with Poland. For Stalin, there was a personal score to settle: He was the commissar of that war, and he and the military commander bitterly blamed one another for the defeat. Stalin would win the argument, having his opponent beaten and summarily shot.

Hitler and the Wehrmacht began to territorially and politically "arrange" the dismemberment of Poland a week later. Through the German ambassador to the Soviet Union, Ribbentrop queried Stalin's stone-faced stooge Foreign Minister Vyachslev Molotov, "Would the U.S.S.R. object if, to hasten the destruction of the Polish Army, the Wehrmacht were to conduct operations in the Soviet sphere of influence? Would the U.S.S.R. not consider it desirable to send Russian forces in good time into the zone of influence defined for the U.S.S.R. in Polish territory?"

Molotov answered the next day, "We agree with you that at a suitable time it will be

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absolutely necessary for concrete action. We are of the view, however, that this time has not yet come." As they would do again in 1944 by waiting outside Warsaw, the Russians were letting the Germans do the work of destroying Polish resistance for them to the extent possible.

On September 8, Ribbentrop anxiously asked again for Soviet military intervention, saying the Polish Army was "more or less in a state of dissolution." Molotov told the German ambassador the Red Army would move "within the next few days," and the Russians spent them mobilizing along Poland's western border and trying to find a rationale for invading a country it had signed its own nonaggression pact with in 1932, still set to run until 1945.

Molotov finally came up with a rationale, asserting, "The Soviet Government intended to take the occasion of the further advance of German troops to declare that Poland was falling apart and that it was necessary, in consequence, to come to the aid of the Ukrainians and White Russians, make the intervention of the Soviet Union plausible to the masses and at the same time avoid giving the Soviet Union the appearance of an aggressor."

A propaganda piece ran in *Pravda* on September 14. German forces had crossed the demarcation line noted in the pact, and the Germans' premature announcement of Warsaw's fall put pressure on Stalin to act. "Now it was the turn of the Soviets," Churchill was to write. The German ambassador in Moscow had reported on September 16, "I saw Molotov at 6 PM Molotov declared that military intervention by the Soviet Union was imminent—perhaps even tomorrow or the day after." Just 12 hours later, at 5:20 AM, September 17, 1939, Molotov was secretly sending Berlin the word that the Soviet invasion of Poland was imminent.

First, the formalities of the aggression had to be odiously observed. Polish Ambassador Waclaw Grzybowski met with Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Potemkin, to receive an official note. With Gryzbowski insisting to first know what was in it, Potemkin dismissively droned Poland's declaration of double doom:

"The Polish-German war has revealed the internal bankruptcy of the Polish state.

"During the course of ten days of military operations, Poland has lost all her industrial areas and cultural centers. Warsaw no longer exists as the capital of Poland. The Polish government has disintegrated and no longer shows any signs of life. This means that the Polish state and its government have in fact ceased to exist. Therefore, any agreements concluded between the U.S.S.R. and Poland have lost their validity.

"Left to fend for herself and bereft of leadership, Poland has become a convenient field for all kinds of hazards and contingencies which may constitute a threat to the U.S.S.R. For these reasons, the U.S.S.R., which has hitherto remained neutral, can no longer adopt a neutral attitude toward these facts.

"The Soviet government can furthermore not be indifferent to the fact of its kindred Ukrainian and Belorussian people, who live on Polish territory and who have been left to the mercy of fate, have been left defenseless.

"In view of this situation, the Soviet government has directed the High Command of the Red Army to give the order to its troops to cross the Polish frontier and take under the protection the life and property of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia.

"At the same time the Soviet government

National Archives

intends to take all measures to extricate the Polish people from the unfortunate war into which they have been dragged by their unwise leaders, and to enable them to live a peaceful life."

Grzybowski angrily flung the note back on the table and responded, "Poland will never cease to exist!" A 10-minute table tussle followed as the note was pushed back and forth.

Grzybowski finally stormed out, only to find the note at his embassy's doorstep in a messenger's hand. He sent the messenger away but found the note again in his mail the next day, delivered by regular post. Claiming that Grzybowski's diplomatic immunity disappeared with his country, the Soviets arrested the Polish diplomat. However, the German ambassador, an aged aristocrat who still had a sense of shame, got him released. The consul in Kiev was less fortunate, arrested and never heard from again. The Soviets then delivered the message militarily.

The Soviet invasion began 20 minutes sooner than Stalin had expected. "Dead silence fell," a Polish general remembered. The commander of one unit, a soldier recalled, announced the invasion and then "declared the situation hopeless without any chance of victory, and so allowed the men to lay down their arms." He then asked those who "chose to fight for the honor of the Polish Army to step to the right. The entire platoon stepped to the right."

A half-million Soviet troops invaded with almost 5,000 armored vehicles and 2,000 aircraft. Pathetic Polish confusion was typified by a border officer on the phone to general staff headquarters being asked to send an emissary to the Russians to find their intentions.

The border officer's response was terse. "All my battalions are fighting and two Soviet tanks have been destroyed. I doubt whether I will be able to fulfill the order regarding the envoy. Air raid. I must go."

Compared to the Wehrmacht, the Red Army looked more like a military mob. "This was Asia. Asia has invaded us," a Polish officer said. "The soldiers looked tired, their coats were torn. They were dirty and harsh looking," a Polish girl said of the Soviet soldiers entering her town. "They wanted to buy any kind of watch, as long as it ticked."

Soviet forces advanced along almost 900 miles in two fronts (army groups) around the Pripet Marshes: the Byelorussian in the north led by General Michael Kovalev, the Ukrainian in the south under General Semyon Timoshenko. Accompanying Timoshenko as commissar was Stalin's hack/hatchet man in the Ukraine, Nikita Khrushchev. His wife, Nina, accompanied Khruskchev, searching for her parents, who had been stranded in Poland after the end of the war in 1921.

Kovalev aimed for Vilna and Grodno; Timoshenko drove toward Lvov. "Germany having killed the prey, Soviet Russia will seize that part of the carcass that Germany cannot use. It will play the ignoble role of hyena to the German lion," excoriatingly editorialized the *New York Times*. The Soviets lost more armor and aircraft to accidents and mechanical breakdown than to combat action. Fortunately for them, the only forces they faced were the 12,000-man Border Protection Corps (KOP) and scattered, disorganized Polish troops fleeing from the Germans.

The Soviet invasion made the Poles give up what hope they had of resisting the Germans, and the government and high command fled. By just 4:00 PM that same day, the Polish commander-in-chief was informing his shattered army, "I hereby order a total withdrawal to Romania and Hungary via the shortest possible route. Do not fight the Bolsheviks unless they attack or attempt to disarm our forces." But some Polish troops could not, or would not, obey. One KOP unit of just 50 men held off an entire Soviet division for four days until incinerated in their bunkers by flamethrowers. Another unit killed 200 Soviet soldiers, while a third saw fully half of its own men fall fighting.

At times, the Soviets deliberately confused the Poles by approaching while waving white flags and with bands playing patriotic Polish music. Their commanders shouted deceptively," Don't shoot, we've come to help you against the Germans." Many Soviet soldiers thought that was what they were doing, expressing confusion on learning differently. Some Polish officers believed the ruse. Invited to a reception, they were disarmed in their dress uniforms at gunpoint.

Other Soviets did not bother to fabricate fraternal fellowship. One Pole watched armor rampage through the streets. "They shot at everything that moved. The panic was indescribable, people ran in all directions, unable to find time or place to hide. I stood aghast as one small boy, frightened and confused, stopped to stare at an approaching tank. They

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: German soldiers gaze at the corpses of Polish soldiers littering a ditch alongside a country road, executed after their surrender. The Germans and the Red Army engaged in atrocities against the Polish military and civilian population as well. BELOW: After their marauding columns have achieved their objectives and halted, German soldiers engage a Red Army soldier in conversation in the city of Brest-Litovsk. The city held historical significance for both Germany and the Soviet Union, as it was the site of the peace-treaty signing with the Germans that extricated Bolshevik Russia from World War I. OPPOSITE: Polish troops engage in field exercises in April 1939, just five months before the Nazi invasion of their country and the outbreak of World War II. Some Poles initially thought the Soviet Army was there to help them.

simply machine-gunned him down."

The defenders of Vilna and Grodno in the north resisted heroically. Vilna had just 7,000 regular Polish troops, with only 15 artillery pieces and a few dozen machine guns. "The tanks were followed by infantry," a Polish soldier in the 6th Legion's Infantry Regiment remembered. "They cried 'Hurrah! For Stalin! For the Motherland! Hurrah! I will never forget those cries. But we took them with flanking fire."

"One falls, another comes after him, is hit, and another comes," one Polish defender said of oncoming Red Army soldiers. "A whole heap of corpses grew—and not a small one. We fought until evening, and I saw tanks catch fire one after another, our men throwing bottles with gasoline." After 24 furious hours on September 19, the Poles fought their way 12 miles to safety in Lithuania. The Poles at Grodno, 75 miles southwest, had even fewer resources—2,000 regular troops, civilian volunteers, a dozen machine guns, and a pair of antiaircraft guns—but no less battled bitterly.

Soviet tanks rolling on the morning of September 20 were hit by antiaircraft fire aimed at their tracks, then set ablaze with what the world would later come to know as Molotov cocktails, gasoline in bottles. Savage street fighting took place. A schoolteacher watched the struggle and later wrote of the Polish soldiers, "They fought as long as they have ammunition in their rucksacks, as long as grenades hang at their belts, as long as the machine guns they had pulled up to the barricade spit bullets."

Boy scouts acting as messengers and ammunition runners caught by the Soviets were tied as human shields to their tanks. Resistance in Grodno was crushed the next day. By then, an encounter of a Soviet armored car with elements of the German 10th Panzer Division just north of Brest-Litovsk set the stage for the signature scenes of the Soviet invasion of Poland. The irony was not lost on Churchill. "Here," he wrote, "in the previous war the Bolsheviks in breach of their solemn obligations with the Western Allies, had made their separate peace with the Kaiser's Germany, and had bowed to its harsh terms. Now in Brest-Litovsk, it was with Hitler's Germany that the Russian Communists grinned and shook hands."

Doing the handshaking for Hitler—and unhappy about it—was General Heinz Guderian. He had fought two days to take Brest-Litovsk from the Poles only to learn from the secret protocol that he had to hand it over to the Soviets. He no doubt got some satisfaction when he reviewed ragged Red Army troops at the September 22 handover ceremony while standing on a quickly raised platform and com-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: After fighting gamely, the Polish Army was steadily forced to retreat in the face of the advancing Germans. In this photo, a column of the Polish 10th Motorized Cavalry Brigade halts briefly during its retirement toward the Hungarian frontier. BELOW: A dazed group of Polish troops, captured by the invading Germans after being cut off and forced to surrender, makes its way toward a rear area. OPPOSITE: After linking up with their German partners in aggression, T-26 tanks of the Red Army's 29th Tank Brigade join a staged triumphal parade in occupied Poland. Less than two years later, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union.

pared them to his own men, with sharp uniforms and abundant, modern equipment. The event was also attended by Red Army Brigadier General Semyon Krivoshein, an interestingly low-level officer for such an event.

In the meantime, on the southern, Ukrainian front Timoshekno ordered his command to reach the Kowel-Wlodzimierez-Wolynski-Sokol Line in three days, then advance up the San River. Soviet forces had no trouble meeting his deadline, advancing 60 miles the first day. "When we crossed the border we encountered no resistance," Khrushchev was to recall. "Our troops reached Ternopol very quickly. Timoshenko and I traveled through the city and returned there by a different road, which was not very intelligent after all because some Polish units were still active, and they could have detained us. He and I traveled through small settlements inhabited by Ukrainians and through bigger towns with a fairly large Polish element; moreover, we were in areas where no Soviet troops were yet present, so anything could have happened. As soon as we returned to our own forces we were told that Stalin was asking for us on the phone. We reported back on how the operation was going."

Unaware how millions of their countrymen had been systematically starved by Stalin during the 1930s, Ukrainians greeted the Soviets. "Women and girls began handing out flowers," a Red Army general recalled. "Initially sparsely, but then more and more frequently, people began cheering. As we went down the street, we were welcomed by 'Long Live the Red Army!' and 'Long Live the Soviet Union!' shouted from every direction." They more cruelly celebrated the slaughtering of local Poles.

When the Soviets reached the outskirts of Lvov on September 21, already under German attack, a Polish colonel was sent to meet them. He asked, "Why have you come?"

"You must have read the newspapers," his Soviet counterpart replied.

When the Pole responded that newspapers were not getting through, the Soviet officer said, "So maybe you've heard on the radio what has taken place?"

The Pole knew but claimed the Germans had cut the power to the city and radios were dead. He asked again, "So why are you here?"

The Soviet officer repeated the lie that they were there to fight the Germans. The Pole pretended to believe him and showed him German positions on a map. The Soviet officer insisted, "But we wish to enter the city," suggesting they needed "observation points" for artillery.

"Something odd is taking place," the Pole would reflect. "But one thing is certain, both enemies want to break into the city."

After consulting his officers and deciding resistance from both sides was suicidal, the Polish commander in Lvov surrendered to Timoshenko and Khrushchev at 3:00 PM the next day. Nina Khrushchev was also successful at finally finding her parents. Khrushchev's relief at the reunion was matched by his anger at her packing a pistol.

Khrushchev assured surrendering Polish officers that they would be treated properly, advising, "Russia always kept her obligations." Poles learned soon enough, however, that these words were worthless. Polish General Wladyslaw Anders was encircled with his forces by Soviet armor just 12 miles from refuge in Romania and after fierce fighting forced to surrender. In the future for Anders were rat and bedbug-infested cells, beatings, interrogations, dysentery, scurvy, and finally solitary confinement cell in the Lubyanka—and he would be among the lucky ones!

After the surrender of Grodno, 29 Polish officers were marched out of town to be shot on the spot; their commander, Brigadier General Jozef Olsyna-Wilczynski, seized while fleeing by car, was summarily shot by the side of the road. The Soviets were, to their mind, displaying courtesy to his widow by giving her his blood-stained briefcase. A surrendering Polish brigade had its 100 officers and NCOs separated. They were marched away, and soon the soldiers of their former command heard shooting. "We asked the Soviet officers if another Polish detachment was still fighting," one soldier remembered. "In response we were told, 'Those are your masters, shot dead.'"

Some 2,000 Polish soldiers were captured 90 miles south of Lublin. The Polish 7th, 39th, and 41st Regiments were surrounded and surrendered the next day. Some 1,500 Polish cavalry charged Soviet tanks trying to break out of encirclement; 140 were killed, and the rest surrendered. The Poles under General Wilhelm Orlick-Ruckemann won their only victory against the Soviets at the village of Szack on September 28 against the Soviet 52nd Rifle Division, destroying eight T-26 tanks with Bofors anti-tank guns while 300 Soviet soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand fighting.

Those Poles, down to only 3,000 men, moved 18 miles west of the Bug River. Two days later, they fought the Soviets again at the battle of Wtytczno. After eight hours of hard fighting, they were down to 60 artillery shells, and the troops were too exhausted to carry out a counterattack Orlick-Ruckemann had ordered. That night, believing that his command would be wiped out the next day, Orlick-Ruckemnn ordered his troops to break out and disperse. He got through to Lithuania, but his wounded were not so fortunate. They were left behind, and the Soviets dreadfully dumped them into the local town hall to bleed to death.

Ribbentrop completed the cynical carving up of Poland by suggesting a demarcation line delineated on a map. Stalin answered by signing his name to it in blue crayon, 10 inches long and 18 inches wide. "Is my signature clear enough for you?" he asked. Ribbentrop responded that Germans and Russians should never fight again. Stalin pondered, then answered simply, "This ought to be the case."

The last Polish units held out against the Soviets until early October. "Russia has pursued a cold policy of self-interest," Churchill commented at the time. The quick campaign had cost the Soviets 737 killed and 1,862 wounded, and for it in the division of Poland they got 72,780 square miles to the Germans' 77,600. The Soviets claimed tremendous Polish plunder—900 artillery pieces with a million shells, 10,000 machine guns, 300,000 rifles with 150 million rounds, and 300 aircraft.

Polish combat casualties were initially estimated at 18,000, but they were to climb horrifyingly higher. "There will never be another Poland," the Soviet officer driving General Wladyslaw Anders to his cruel captivity told him.

The Soviets specifically slaughtered 50,000 members of Polish society—landowners, teachers, doctors, priests, businessmen, lawyers, and others. They economically eviscerated their piece of Poland with agriculture cruelly collectivized and over 400 banks and over 1,000 credit institutions looted. An estimated 1,500,000 people, including Poles, Jews, Ukrainians and Byelorussians, were packed into freight cars without food, water, or heat. "The nights were made unbearable not only by the racket of the trains themselves but the piteous cries of adults and children begging to be let out," remembered a villager along those terrible train tracks remembered. Thousands died en route to labor camps, while many more were worked, starved or frozen to death.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-121-0012-30

Some 250,000 Polish soldiers fell into Soviet hands. "What are they doing now? Where are they? How many of them are still alive?" a Polish colonel who had made it to the West was asking in 1941. Half of them were never heard from again. Some 15,000 officers, including a dozen generals and an admiral, were among those missing without a trace. General Anders, released to organize a free Polish Army, confronted Stalin in the Kremlin about the missing on December 3, 1941.

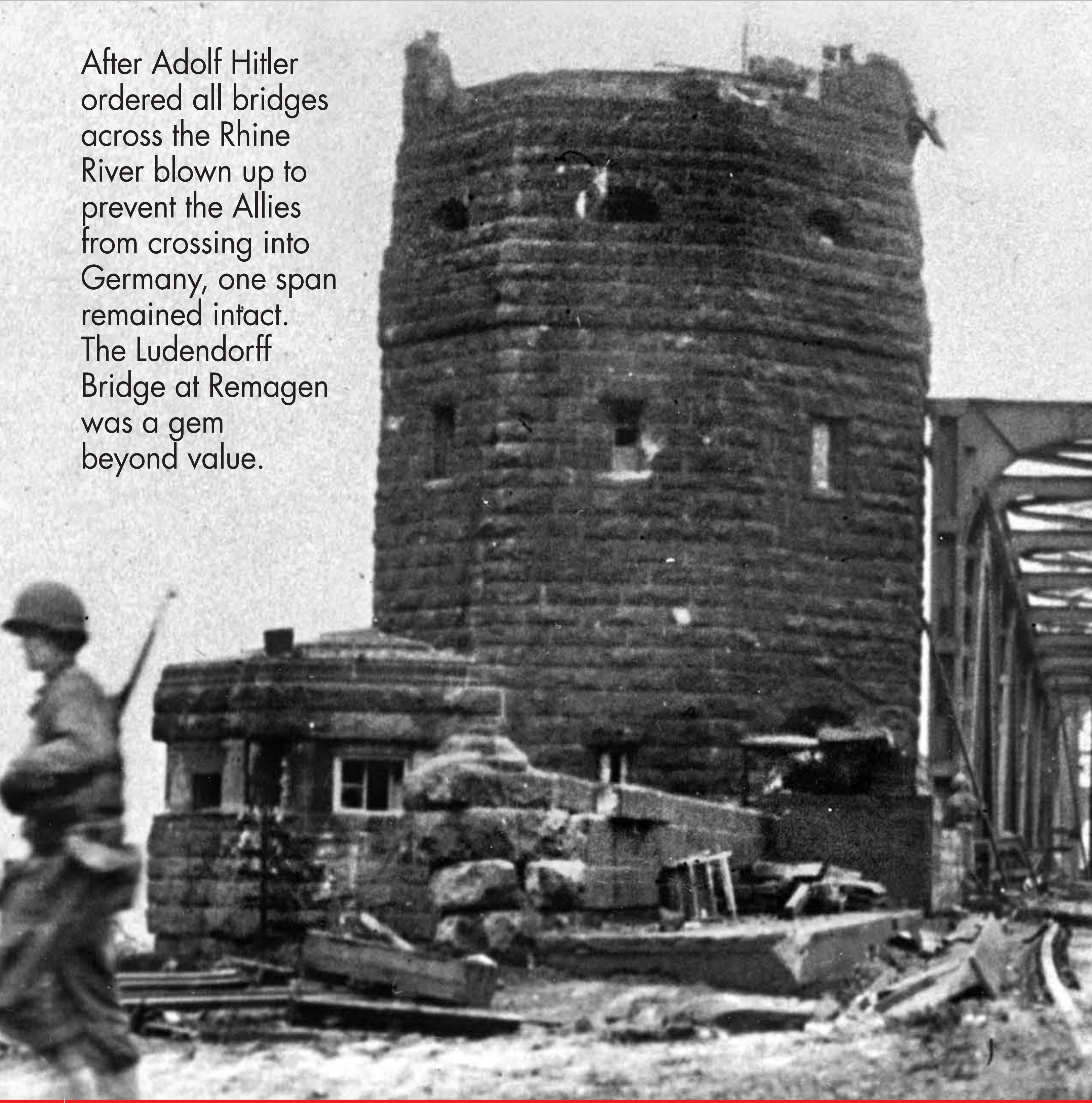
"That's impossible. They must have escaped," Stalin replied. When Anders asked where possibly to, Stalin shrugged, "Well, to Manchuria." The fate of at least 4,134 became known in 1943 with the discovery of their buried bodies in the Katyn Forest, executed with a bullet in back of each head. Not until 1990 did the Russians admit to the Katyn Forest massacre.

Ribbentrop had told Stalin the nonaggression pact and protocol were "the foundation stone of the new friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union." But Churchill would say, "I was still convinced of the profound, and as I believed quenchless, antagonism between Russia and Germany, and I clung to the hope that the Soviets would be drawn to our side by the force of events." That "force of events" would come two years later when Hitler tore up both pact and protocol to invade the Soviet Union.

"The very fact of the conclusion of an alliance with Russia embodies a plan for the next war. Its outcome would be the end of Germany," Hitler had written years earlier in *Mein Kampf*.

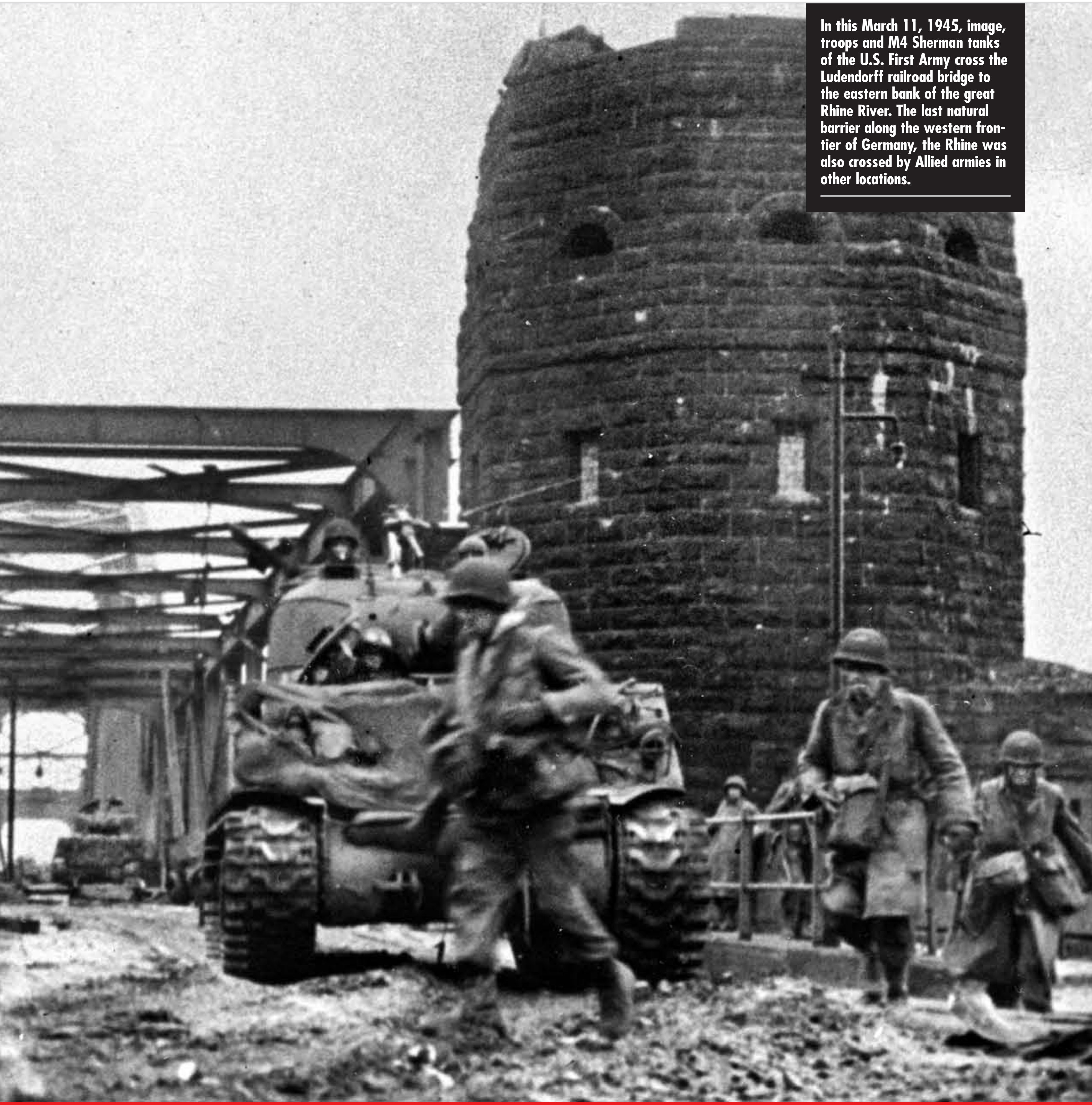
Poland did not free itself from Soviet domination until 1989.

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has written for WWII History *on a variety of topics.*



After Adolf Hitler ordered all bridges across the Rhine River blown up to prevent the Allies from crossing into Germany, one span remained intact. The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen was a gem beyond value.

Bridging the Rh



In this March 11, 1945, image, troops and M4 Sherman tanks of the U.S. First Army cross the Ludendorff railroad bridge to the eastern bank of the great Rhine River. The last natural barrier along the western frontier of Germany, the Rhine was also crossed by Allied armies in other locations.

ine at Remagen

BY GEORGE A. LARSON

National Archives

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As Allied troops advanced along a broad front toward Nazi Germany in the winter of 1945, the United States Army was eager to capture an intact bridge over the Rhine River to allow its troops and heavy equipment to advance rapidly into Germany. The Rhine was the last major obstacle to Allied forces on their nine-month-long offensive, which had begun on D-Day, June 6, 1944, at Normandy.

U.S. aerial reconnaissance identified two bridges still standing over the Rhine. One was at Oberkassel, near Dusseldorf, and the 83rd Division moved forward to seize it. As the American troops approached, German engineers blew up the bridge. The second was just south of Urdingen, and units of the 2nd Armored and 95th Infantry Divisions pushed toward the bridge. The American troops reached and crossed the bridge, but a German counterattack drove them back, allowing their engineers enough time to blow up the bridge. This near-loss caused great concern in Berlin, and Adolf Hitler ordered that all remaining bridges over the Rhine be blown up, even if German forces fighting west of the river were cut off from making a last-second escape.

German troops following Hitler's orders blew up all remaining bridges over the Rhine—except one. Inexplicably, the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, an ancient, Roman-built town located between Bonn and Koblenz, was left standing. The 1,000-foot-long railroad bridge had been built by German engineers during World War I to move supplies and troops to the Western Front from the armament factories in the Ruhr Valley. After the war, France occupied the area and took control of the bridge. French engineers filled in the demolition chambers with cement, making the bridge very difficult to destroy and increasing its strength.

Remagen, which had been fought over and occupied at one time or another by soldiers from France, Spain, Sweden, and Russia, was a noted resort town. Fine restaurants, cafés, and shops lined the old section of town, which surrounded the four-towered Gothic Church of St. Apollinaris and the remains of the saint, who was martyred in Italy in AD 79. Behind the town rose a 600-foot cliff known as the Erpeler Ley.

The Rhine, flowing swiftly past Remagen, is 300 yards wide; a tributary of the Ahr River adds its turbulent waters to the river's course a mile above the town. The Ludendorff Bridge, which residents of Remagen resented for ruining the fine view down the Rhine, passed through a 1,200-foot tunnel in the Erpeler Ley before continuing eastward into the Ruhr Valley. The Allies had mounted repeated air attacks against the bridge after the Battle of the Bulge in an effort to slow the movement of German supplies and troops toward Belgium. U.S. air attacks damaged the bridge, but German engineers were able to repair it. The bridge was scheduled to be attacked again on the morning of March 7, but the bombing raid was canceled on account of bad weather.

That morning, a reconnaissance unit assigned to the U.S. 9th Armored Division reached Remagen and reported the unbelievable news that the Ludendorff Bridge was still intact and was being used by the Germans. Second Lieutenant Karl Timmermann of the 27th Armored Infantry Regiment was leading the scouting party in a jeep when he rounded a hillside north of Remagen and saw a panorama below that made him blink: The two white-stone supports of the Ludendorff Bridge spanning the blue-green Rhine River were intact. German troops had laid wooden support planks across the bridge's widely spaced railroad tracks to allow tanks and trucks to cross the bridge to safety. Troops and civilians also jammed the bridge, making it a tempting target for Allied warplanes. Timmermann sent a hasty message back to his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Leonard Engeman, reporting what he had seen.

At noon, Brig. Gen. William M. Hoge, commanding Combat Group B, 9th Armored Division, III Corps, First Army, received verification from Engeman that the Ludendorff Bridge had not been destroyed by the Germans. Against standing orders not to deviate from his planned objective—the town of Ahrweiler—Hoge ordered the bridge to be seized at once. "Get those men moving into town," he radioed Engeman. "Already on their way," Engeman answered.

He had already ordered Timmermann to take a platoon of Pershing tanks from the 14th Tank Battalion, each equipped with a 90mm main gun, and head straight down the hillside toward the town. Said Engeman, "Go down into town.

Get through it as quickly as possible and reach the bridge. The infantry will follow on foot. Their half-tracks will bring up the rear. Let's make it snappy."

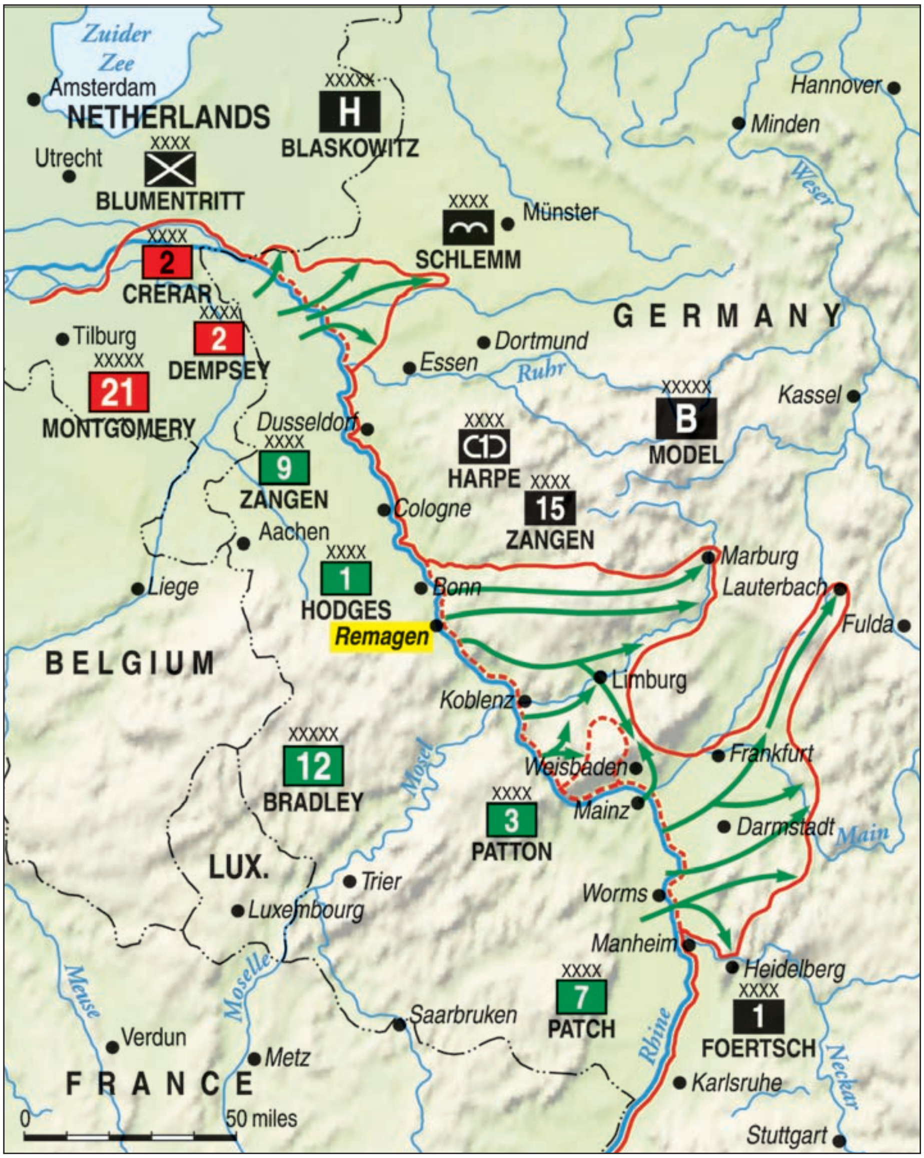
The Pershing tanks clattered down the winding road into Remagen followed by the infantry. The Americans moved rapidly against spotty resistance from scattered German snipers. German prisoners taken from houses on the outskirts of Remagen were asked about the defenses in the town and on the bridge. One German soldier told the Americans that the Ludendorff Bridge was to be blown up at 4:00 PM. Similar intelligence had been obtained earlier by troops assigned to the 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion at Sinzig, several miles away from Remagen.

These reports were relayed to Hoge, who told Engeman at 3:15, "You've got 45 minutes to take the bridge." Engeman radioed the leading Pershing tank commander, Lieutenant John Grimball: "Get to the bridge as quickly as possible." Grimball radioed back: "Sir, I am already there." The Pershing tanks turned to firing positions near the west end of the bridge. One of the first targets they found was a long string of freight cars along the east bank. The Pershings quickly destroyed the train.

German defenders at Remagen were under the command of Captain Willi Bratge, a former schoolteacher who had been given the unenviable task of guarding the vital bridge with a mere handful of wounded, elderly, or conscripted soldiers, some of whom were Russian "volunteers" who had been captured on the Russian front. Bratge had constructed an elaborate system of foxholes and bunkers, but he had only 36 men of mostly low combat efficiency to man them. The bridge itself had been wired with an electric-ignition fuse system connected to a control switch inside the entrance to the Erpeler Ley tunnel. Sixty boxes of high explosives had been placed along the structure's length, ready to be set off at the proper time by combat engineers.

On the morning of the 7th, German Major Hans Scheller was sent to take over the last-ditch defense of Remagen and the destruction of the Ludendorff Bridge. Scheller was totally unfamiliar with the town, the troops, and the bridge itself. He had scarcely arrived in Remagen and presented himself to Bratge when word came that German units on the hill above the town had been attacked by American tanks and infantry.

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN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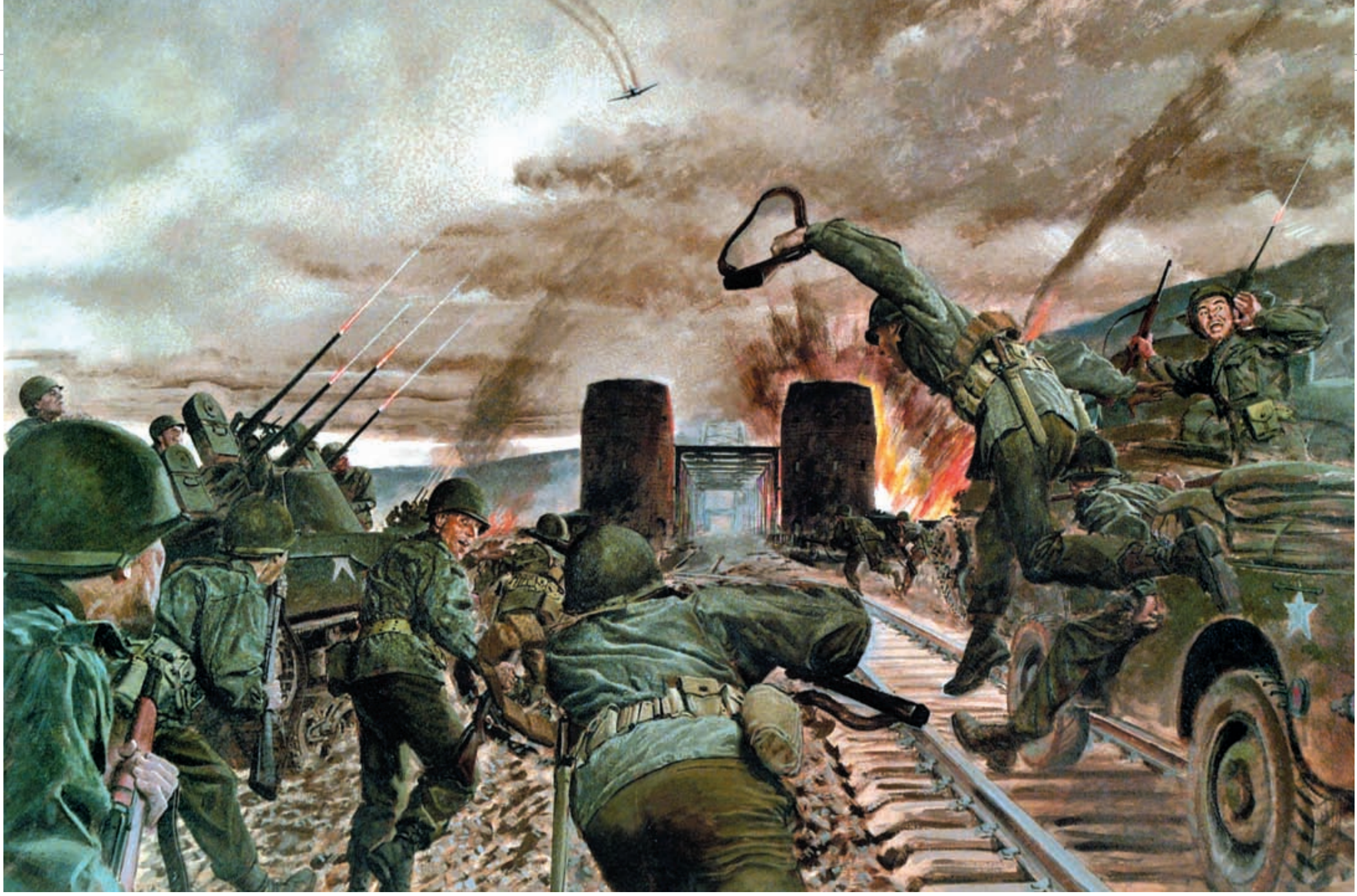
ABOVE: Utilizing the broad-front strategy, the Allied 12th and 21st Army Groups approached the Rhine in the early spring of 1945 and staged successful crossings at multiple points. OPPOSITE: With the Ludendorff railroad bridge in the distance, a German soldier inspects an antiaircraft gun position on the east bank of the Rhine in January 1945. Weeks later, elements of the U.S. First Army were using the bridge to cross into Germany.

A short while later, an artillery captain dashed up to say that his battalion was on its way to the bridge; he pleaded with the other officers not to blow up the bridge before his troops had crossed it. Scheller agreed. He and Bratge established their headquarters inside the mouth of the tunnel on the far side of the bridge and waited for the Americans to show themselves. Precious time was lost. Soon, none was left. The Americans appeared on the opposite bank and began blasting away.

Even though the German defenders of the bridge had waited dangerously long to blow it up, there was no assurance that American troops could make it safely across the bridge before the demolition charges were finally set off. Engeman reasoned that the Germans would probably wait until the American tanks roared onto the bridge before they set off the demolition charges. Infantrymen led by Timmermann moved through the town of Remagen toward the bridge.

Meanwhile, Grimball's Pershing tanks took up firing positions at the bridge's west end. When the 27th Armored Infantry Regiment's Company A reached at the west end of the bridge at 3:50 PM, the Germans set off a demolition charge, creating a large crater at the bridge's approach, preventing the tanks from crossing the bridge. The second detonation went off when Company A was approximately two-thirds across the bridge. The resulting explosion knocked out the main steel diagonal supports located on the upstream side of the bridge and destroyed a section of the wooden planking and flooring, resulting in a six-inch



U.S. Army Art Collection

ABOVE: In this action-packed painting by artist H. Charles McBarron, troops of the 9th Armored Division rush to secure the Ludendorff bridge from defending Germans. The G.I.s also disabled explosive charges that were placed by the Germans in their failed attempt to demolish the bridge and prevent its falling into Allied hands. RIGHT: Second Lieutenant Karl Timmerman (left) was the first officer of an invading army to set foot across the Rhine into German territory since the days of Napoleon, while Sergeant Alexander Drabik (right) was the first Allied soldier across the Rhine during the push into the homeland of the Third Reich.

Both: National Archives

sag to the bridge, but it did not destroy the bridge. The Americans, although shaken, continued across.

One of the first infantrymen to cross the bridge was Paul Priest of Flint, Michigan. He recalled many years later, "I almost did not make it to the Rhine River, being involuntarily assigned as a replacement crewman in a Sherman tank. I did not like it and after one day asked the captain of the tank unit to let me out, which he did. I was assigned to the division's headquarters company, performing reconnaissance patrols for the division.

"On March 5, 1945, two days before we reached the Rhine River, I was detached from the lead division's reconnaissance group, dropped off at a road checkpoint to guide the division's vehicles as to which one of three roads to take. I took up my guard post at 2:30 PM. I was told the division should reach my position by 4:00 to 4:30 PM. The vehicles did not reach me by that time. It kept getting later and later. I went out and picked up all the guns I could locate, creating a large pile near the gas station I decided to use as cover for the evening. These weapons were all over the ground. I recovered them from dead German soldiers in the area, fearing that someone may pick one up and turn it on me.

"I was in the building until 9:30 PM. At that time, I heard the sound of tank tracks coming toward my location. It was the lead column of the 9th Armored Division. I showed the lead tank which road to follow. I climbed onto the lead tank, rejoining my reconnaissance unit in time to make the historic dash across the Ludendorff railway bridge over the Rhine River.

"On the morning of March 7, I was in the group heading toward the bridge. Not with the lead group of soldiers, but farther back in the reconnaissance column. Our tanks quickly knocked out the German train on the eastern bank. There were many secondary explosions. The tanks first knocked out the engine, bringing the train to a stop in a large cloud of steam released from the destroyed engine.

"I was in the lead group of infantry attacking across the bridge when the tanks had to stop because of the large crater at the west end of the bridge. The demolition charge was set off in front of me. We were taking machine-gun fire from the two bridge towers at the east end of the bridge. I was not thinking about anything other than making it safely to the other side of the Rhine River."

The Pershing tanks provided covering fire for the advancing Company A, 1st Platoon, which was quickly followed by the 2nd and 3rd Platoons. At about the same time, three 9th Armored Division engineers were on the bridge, cutting wires to four-pound demolition charges that had not yet been set off. The engineers were led by Lieutenant Hugh Mott and supported by Staff Sgt. John Reynolds and Sergeant Eugene Dorland. They located the main demolition cable, only to discover that the cable was too thick to be cut with pliers. Mott used his carbine to fire three shots to cut and destroy the demolition cable.

Sergeant Joseph DeLisio knocked out the enemy machine gun in one of the east bridge towers, and Tech. Sgt. Mike Chinchar knocked out the other. The troops dashed across the bridge. The first U.S. infantryman to make it to the east bank of the Rhine River was Sergeant Alexander Drabik of Toledo, Ohio. He was joined a few seconds later by Timmermann, who thus became the first officer of an invading army to set foot on German soil since Napoleon's Grande Armée in the early 19th century.

Priest recalled the next part of the crossing: "One of our Pershing tanks, fitted with a bulldozer blade, filled in the crater at the west end of the bridge to allow tanks to move across the bridge. Engineers also were on the bridge to repair the hole in the flooring about two-thirds across the bridge. Once the east bridge-tower machine guns were silenced, we cleaned out the tunnel of scattered German troops, young kids, and older men. I helped paint a sign on a piece of wooden planking, nailing it up on the east bank of the bridge: 'Cross the Rhine with dry feet/courtesy of 9th Armd Div.'

"We moved through the railway tunnel, into the cliffs beyond, attacking remaining German 88mm and four 20mm flak guns in that location. Our Pershing tanks destroyed some of the 88mm guns, and the others were abandoned by the German troops, which we destroyed with grenades. We did not encounter any real organized German resistance, for one day, until the Germans brought in more troops."

With the American infantry dog-trotting across the bridge, the German defenders hunkered inside the darkened railroad tunnel. Scheller attempted to rally the men for a counterattack, but the troops, most of whom did not know who he was, refused to budge. No one wanted to be the last man to die contesting the American entry into Germany.

Frustrated, Scheller hopped aboard a bicycle and set off for the rear to get new orders. It was a fatal decision. A few days later, having made his way back to LXVII Corps headquarters at Altwied, Scheller was arrested and court-martialed for deserting his post. Along with three other officers—two engineers and an antiaircraft commander—who had failed to blow up the bridge at Remagen, he was handcuffed, led into the nearby woods, and shot in the back of the neck—four scapegoats for Adolf Hitler's raging anger at the American bridgehead.

Back at the tunnel, Bratge and the others attempted to exit the opening from the rear, only to find it blocked by enemy GIs. Bratge noticed another group of soldiers and civilians leaving through the front entrance beneath a waving white flag. It gave him the necessary cover to save his honor. "That white flag was raised against our will," he told the remaining troops. "To continue fighting now would constitute a brazen violation of the Geneva Convention and would make us responsible for the deaths of innocent women and children. For this reason, I order that all fighting cease immediately. Please disable your weapons and, soldiers, be the last to leave the tunnel." The erstwhile defenders now became captives.

The full exploitation of the bridgehead almost did not take place because of a command failure at the highest levels of the American Army. Overall operational planning for offensive troop operations east of the Rhine was under control of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces. Maj. Gen. Harold "Pinky" Bull, in charge of G-3 intelligence, did

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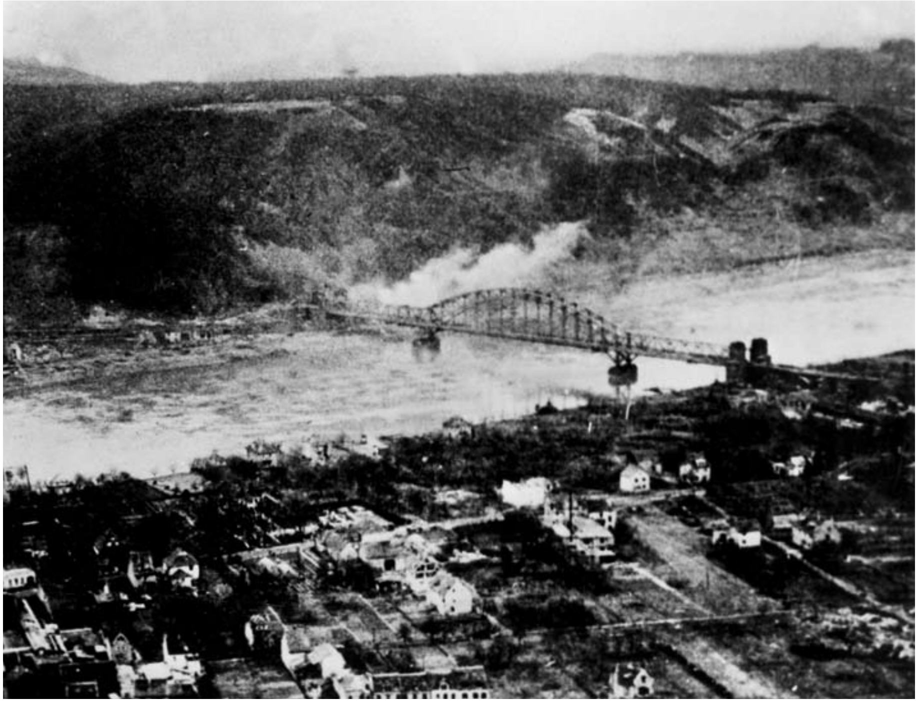
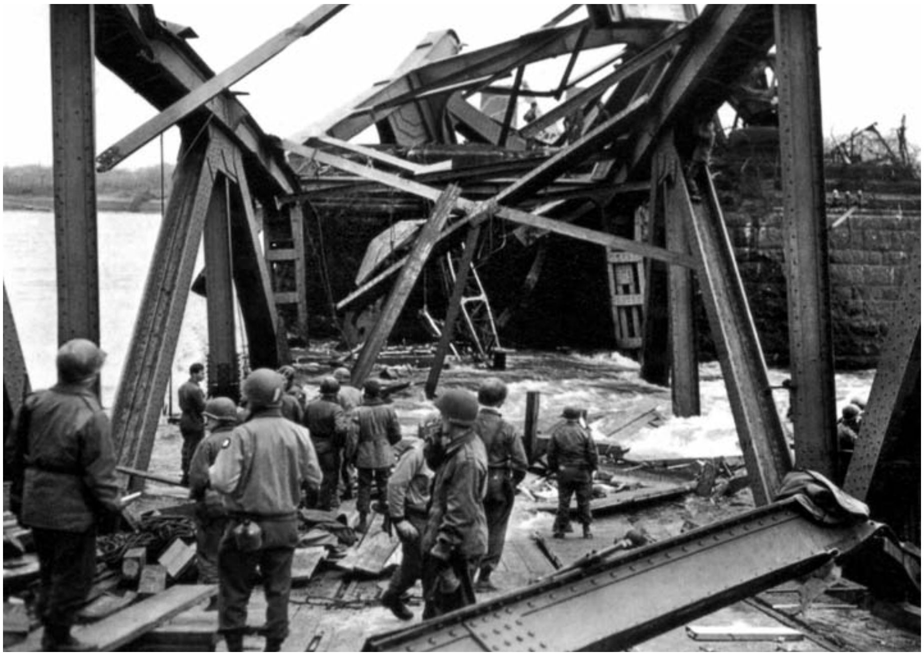


ABOVE: Plumes of smoke drift above the towers of the Ludendorff bridge as German artillery shells the area to disrupt the movement of American troops and supplies to the eastern bank. The Germans also launched air attacks in an effort to destroy the bridge. BELOW: A mass of twisted steel is all that remains of the bridge after it crashed into the Rhine on March 17, 1945. Twenty-eight American soldiers were killed in the collapse of the structure just over a week after it was captured intact by the 9th Armored Division.



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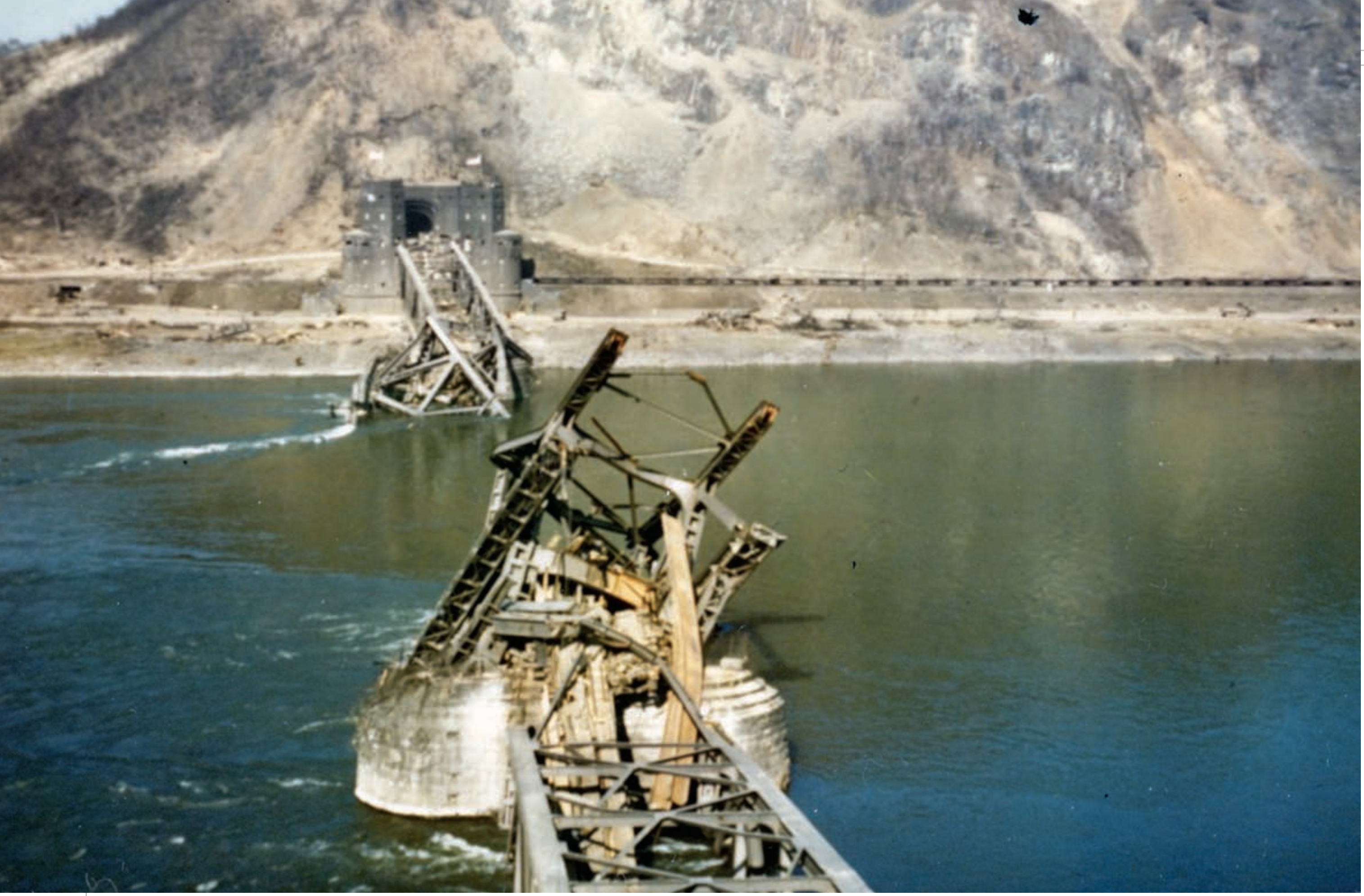


National Archives

not want the broad-front plan of advancement to be discontinued. General Omar Bradley, commander of the Twelfth Army Group, telephoned General Dwight Eisenhower, the overall commander of the Allied war effort, with the news that the 9th Armored Division had captured intact the Ludendorff Bridge across the Rhine River and had established a bridgehead on the east bank. Eisenhower told Bradley, "Brad, that's wonderful. Sure, get right across with everything you've got. It's the best break we've had. To hell with the planners."

Within 24 hours after the Germans failed to destroy the Ludendorff Bridge, 8,000 U.S. troops, large numbers of tanks, self-propelled artillery, and trucks had crossed the Rhine into Nazi-held territory. Everything did not go smoothly. Tanks assigned to Company A, 14th Tank Battalion, made it safely across the bridge, but a tank destroyer assigned to the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion broke through the wood planking, blocking following vehicles. U.S. troops riding in half-tracks behind the tank destroyer climbed out and walked across the bridge. It took some time to clear the stuck vehicle and resume the movement of heavy equipment across the bridge. After the first 24 hours, the German 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions were repositioned around the bridgehead the American forces had established, attempting to isolated the U.S. 9th Armored Division.

On March 9, 10 German Air Force aircraft, eight of which were Stuka dive-bombers, attacked the bridge, scoring two hits. On March 15, a larger force of 20 turbojet aircraft—a mixture of twin-turbojet-engine Messerchmitt ME-262 fighters and twin-turbojet engine Arado AR-234 B-1 bombers—attacked the bridge. They scored no hits.

The ubiquitous Priest witnessed the air attacks against the bridge by German aircraft. "This was the first time I saw turbojet aircraft," he recalled. "At first, I thought the aircraft had been hit from our antiaircraft fire, but the smoke was coming from their twin turbojet engines. They dived from altitude, attacking at a high rate of speed. They were very fast and dropped bombs on the bridge. None of these bombs hit the bridge; [they were] splashing all around the bridge. The Germans were desperately trying to knock out the bridge."

After Eisenhower ordered the bridgehead to be exploited, American military police on the west bank of the Rhine dealt with a large traffic jam of military vehicles and thousands of infantry. All roads leading to the bridge were crowded, slowing movement across the river. To protect the bridge from German aircraft, flak vehicles were lined up side by side on the west bank, supported by artillery firing across the river at German troops attempting to isolate the 1.5-mile-deep, 1.5-mile-wide American bridgehead. Beginning on March 9, German artillery shelled the bridge and the engineers assigned to the 51st and 291st Engineer Battalions working to repair the bridge. These engineers also constructed pontoon and treadway bridges across the river on either side of the Ludendorff Bridge to increase vehicular traffic and tonnage moving into Germany. They were also a backup against the possibility that the Germans would be able to destroy the main bridge.

The engineers continued to work during heavy German field-artillery shelling. Meanwhile, German civilians were removed from Remagen to eliminate the possibility of German troops receiving clandestine reports on what was happening on the west bank and the accuracy of their artillery shelling. American engineer teams worked 24 hours a day to keep the Ludendorff Bridge operational.

The Germans made persistent efforts to destroy the Ludendorff Bridge. They floated a barge containing explosives downstream to blow up the bridge. This was done at night but was not a very well-hidden attempt to destroy the bridge. U.S. troops intercepted the barge, preventing it from traveling close enough to the bridge to be ignited and destroy the structure. Mines were floated downstream to blow up the bridge, but American sharpshooters fired at them, blowing them up before they could reach the bridge. Volunteer German troops, putting on rubber suits, entered the icy water upstream, towing explosives behind them to blow up the bridge, but they were detected by American troops on the river's east bank and killed or captured before they could place the charges.

The Germans tried to make do with the troops and weapons they had along the east bank of the Rhine. The capture of the bridge cut off 300,000 German troops and their equipment west of the river. The German secret weapon, the V-2 rocket, was used against the Ludendorff Bridge. German troops opposite the U.S. east bridgehead pulled back approximately nine miles to get out of possible impact zones.

The unit assigned to fire the V-2s against the bridge was located at Hellendorn, Netherlands, 130 miles north of Remagen, positioned at that location on March 8. Because of Allied air attacks on its supply lines, the rocket unit suffered fuel and supply problems. Hitler wanted to fire 50 to 100 V-2s against the bridge to destroy it over a two-day span, but the rocket troops were only able to fire 11 V-2s against the bridge on March 17. The rockets came dangerously close to the bridge. One struck the ground near the Apollinaris church in the town of Remagen, one mile from the bridge. The rocket destroyed several buildings around the church, with blast damage reaching out approximately 3,000 feet. The resulting ground and air shock wave was felt throughout the town. Another V-2 splashed into the Rhine, one mile from the bridge. A third landed inside the town of Remagen, destroying a building where 12 U.S. troops were billeted, killing three. A fourth V-2 struck the command post of the U.S. Army 1159 Engineer Combat Group, killing three and injuring 31.

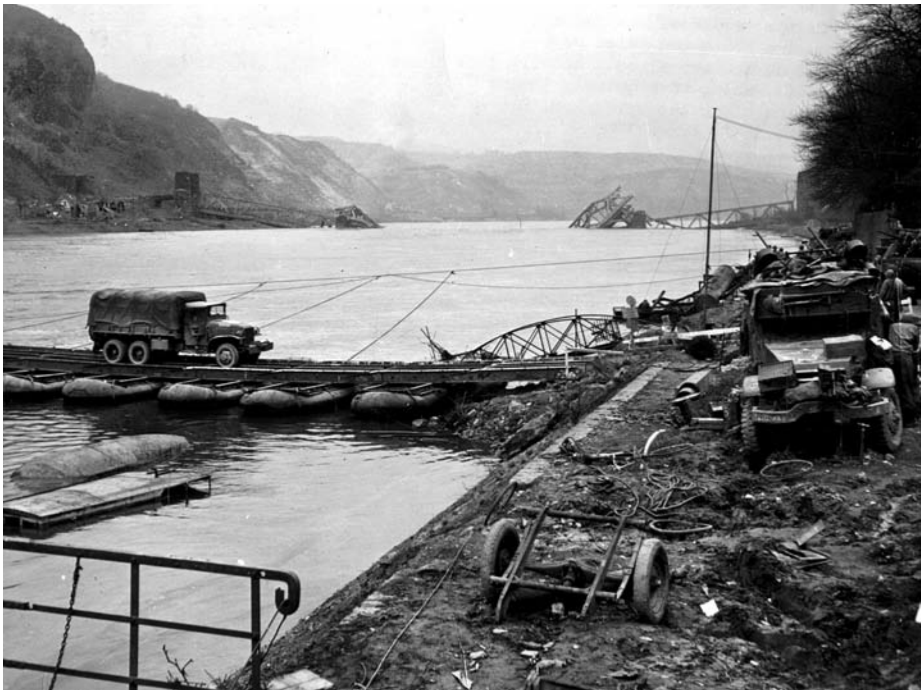
Even though none of the rockets hit the bridge, the ground shock-wave effects, along with the demolition explosions and constant U.S. military traffic on the bridge, eventually caused it to collapse. At 3:00 PM on March 17, the bridge fell into the Rhine River, killing 28 American engineers who were working on the bridge. Recalled Priest, "I was not in the area when the bridge collapsed from the volley of V-2 rockets. We had moved up into the hills, up through a gully. This was where I was shot by a German using a wooden bullet. The impact took my helmet off. I was kept in the line, the wound considered only a flesh wound. Fortunately, by the time the bridge collapsed, the pontoon bridges took up the burden of moving men and equipment across the Rhine. The bridge was a mass of twisted metal, visible near both the west and east banks of the Rhine River. When I left the United States, I brought with me a small foldout camera, [and I took] photographs as we moved from place to place. I also took photographs from German troops we encountered and disarmed during the search.

"As we moved away from the Rhine River, many German troops surrendered to us. They threw their weapons onto the ground, raised their hands into the air, and surrendered. I did not take part in any large actions after crossing the Rhine River. German troops gave up, surrendering to U.S. or British troops rather than to the Soviet Army troops farther to the east. It was at this time I found out my parents had received a telegram reporting my death in Germany. It was another Paul Priest. But things like that happen in war. It was a great relief to my parents when they heard I was still alive when they got a letter from me."

Priest survived the war and returned to Flint, where he married his prewar sweetheart, Joan. The couple had three children. After the war, Priest worked as a carpet and tile installer, eventually moving to Deadwood and then to Box Elder, South Dakota. As for his fellow GIs at Remagen, a shower of medals fell on their chests. Thirteen soldiers, including Timmermann, DeLisio, Drabik, Grimball, Mott, and Chinchar, received the Distinguished Service Cross. Another 152 received the Silver Star. The units that composed Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division were awarded Presidential Unit Citations. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall summed up the significance of Remagen: "The prompt seizure and exploitation of the crossing demonstrated American initiative and adaptability at its best, from the daring action of the platoon leader to the Army commander who quickly directed all his moving columns," said Marshall. "The bridgehead provided a serious threat to the heart of Germany, a diversion of incalculable value. It became a springboard for the final offensive to come."

Karl Timmermann, the first Allied officer across the Rhine, returned to his home town of West Point, Nebraska, after the war. He arrived without fanfare, alighting from a train and walking into town with his barracks bag slung across his shoulder. His welcoming committee consisted of one small dog that nipped at his heels. Timmermann ignored the dog. He had seen far worse at Remagen. □

National Archives



ABOVE: The remnants of the destroyed bridge are seen in the background of this photo depicting one of two pontoon bridges the Americans deployed to facilitate the movement of troops and equipment across the Rhine. OPPOSITE: The tunnel into the Epeler Ley cliff, where German soldiers and civilians took shelter during the fighting at Remagen, is visible at upper left in this photo taken in October 1945. The wreckage of the Ludendorff bridge, which had been heavily damaged during earlier fighting but miraculously remained intact for several days after its capture, lies in the foreground.

With the help of the Chetniks, an American OSS team extracted dozens of downed airmen from under the Nazis' noses.

BY KEVIN MORROW

Black puffs from flak bursts began blossoming in the air around Lieutenant Tom Oliver's Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber high over the town of Bor, Yugoslavia. Suddenly, he felt a violent jolt. The plane had taken a hit.

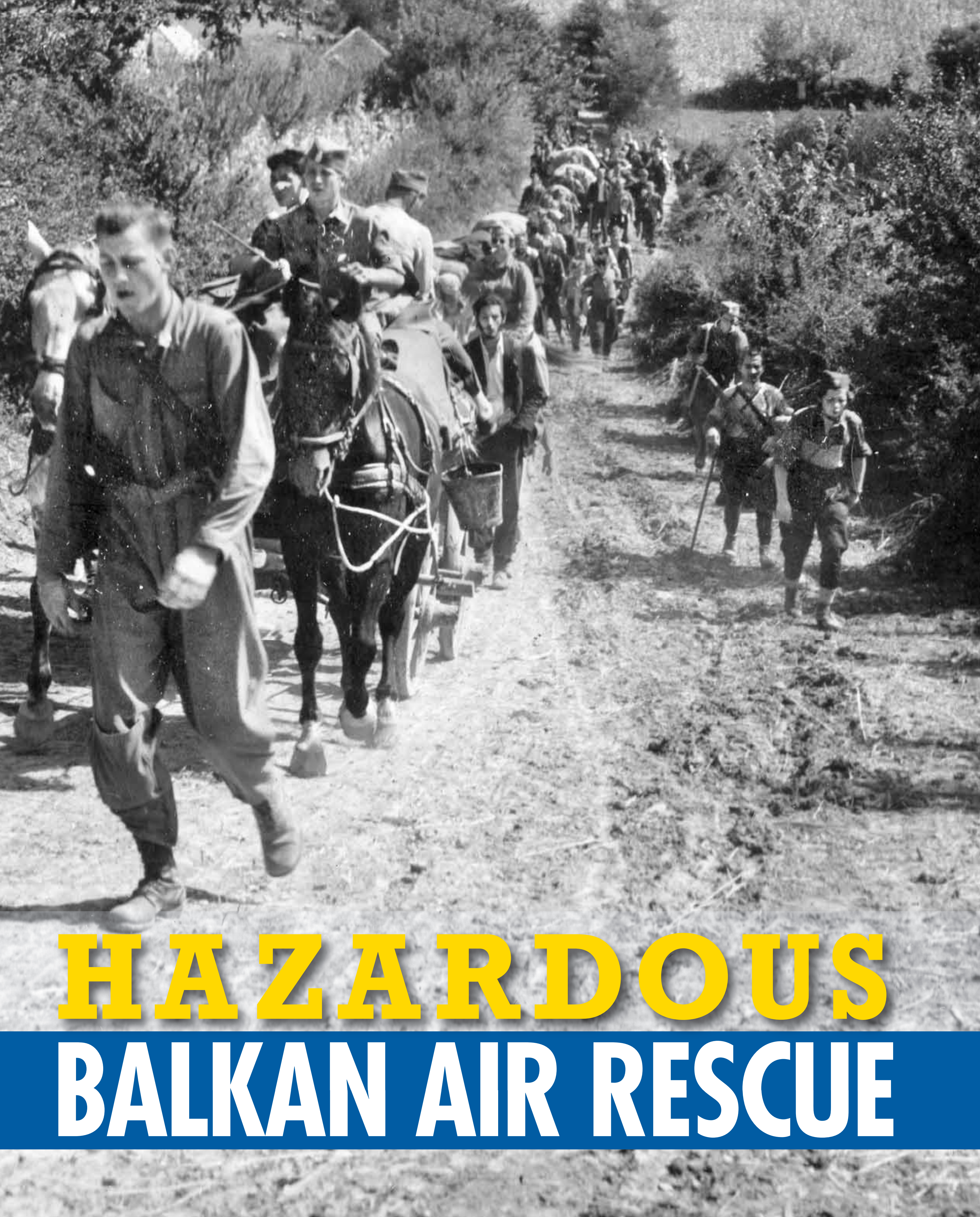
Enemy flak had already eviscerated engines three and four over the target, the railroad yards at Campina, Romania. Now, engine two was engulfed in flames. Oliver and his crew would never make it back to the 756th Bomber Squadron's base in Italy with one engine. Only one option remained.

Oliver hit the alarm button. "Bail out! Bail out!" he cried over the bomber's intercom system.

He looked out the window to check engine two one more time: still burning. Looking behind him, he saw John Thibodeau, the navigator and last crewman left, motioning for Oliver to come. Oliver waved to him to get out. He didn't want anyone in his way when he let go of the wheel to sprint for the hatches. Minutes later, the young pilot was tumbling earthward by parachute, watching helplessly as the plane slammed into the ground below, exploding in a massive fireball.

When Oliver touched ground, he landed almost on top of a Serb peasant family seated at a picnic table eating their lunch. The friendly Serbs offered Oliver the eyeballs from a sheep's head. Oliver declined, but he did accept a glass of wine instead.

American OSS officers accompanied by Chetnik guerrillas on the move from the original evacuation airstrip in Pranjani, Serbia in anticipation of Soviet Red Army advances, September 10, 1944. The OSS officers were part of OSS operations Halyard and Ranger.



HAZARDOUS

BALKAN AIR RESCUE

All photos: National Archives

Ten minutes later, two men on horseback wearing military jackets, caps, and guns slung over their shoulders came by and motioned for Oliver to mount a horse and accompany them. As Oliver rode off with them, he had no idea that his sojourn behind enemy lines would last 96 days, much less that the U.S. Army Air Forces and America's covert operations organization, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), would rescue him and hundreds like him in one of the largest and most daring air-rescue operations of World War II.

Oliver and his crew were frontline warriors in the so-called "oil campaign" of 1944, an attempt by Anglo-American air forces to destroy Nazi Germany's vast European network of fuel resources. One particularly vital target was the huge complex of oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania, which provided Germany 35 percent of its petroleum supply. In April, American bombers began blasting it nonstop, completely halting oil production by August 24. The bombing campaign ended in success, but Ploesti's defenses—the swarms of German fighters and massive rings of radar-directed antiaircraft guns—exacted a terrible price on the victors: 350 bombers lost, their crews killed, captured, or missing.

Hundreds of the missing airmen shot down between Ploesti and American air bases in Italy bailed out over eastern, Nazi-occupied Serbia, an area patrolled by a guerrilla resistance army called the Chetniks. When the Chetnik commander, General Drazha Mihailovich, became aware of the airmen coming down in his territory, he ordered his men to begin gathering them for evacuation back to the Allies.

Some of the American airmen treated their Chetnik rescuers with suspicion at first because rumor had it that the Chetniks routinely turned over downed Allied airmen to the Germans. These wild men of the mountains even fancied cutting the ears off of their prisoners, if the stories were true.

The reality on the ground looked quite different. Responding to Mihailovich's appeal for help, the Serb peasants who lived in the area around the Chetnik base in the mountain town of Pranjani willingly hid the airmen in their own homes. Even after the Germans demanded the surrender of the airmen who had been spotted bailing out, threatening reprisals for disobedience, the Serbs refused to give them up.

Mihailovich's goal was to return the men to the Allies, but despite his good intentions several serious difficulties would stand in the way of getting them back home again. For starters, just sneaking into Serbia past the Germans to reach the airmen in their rugged mountain sanctuary and then safely spiriting them back out would itself take a logistical miracle. Surmounting the massive political obstacles to forging an operational Allied-Chetnik partnership, though, ultimately proved even harder than the logistics, and for several reasons.

After Yugoslavia capitulated to a German invasion force in April 1941, the Royal Yugoslav Army's Chetnik units fled to the mountains to continue the fight against their occupiers. One large coalition of Chetnik bands led by then-Yugoslav Army Colonel Drazha Mihailovich began attacking Axis troops in the summer of 1941, which, in the beginning, generated favorable press, military assistance, and support from Allied countries. In response, Axis forces hit back with murderous reprisals against Serb civilians. This led Mihailovich to hit the brakes on active, armed Chetnik resistance in hopes of sustaining his army in the field to aid the future Allied liberation of Yugoslavia.

A rival communist guerrilla force known as the Partisans, by contrast, enthusiastically carried out armed confrontation with the enemy, gaining favorable attention from the Allies. This, plus the Chetniks' inaction, their distraction with the growing Partisan-Chetnik civil war, and some relatively credible allegations of Chetnik collaboration with the Germans and Italians eventually sank Allied faith in Mihailovich's commitment to the fight. At the end of 1943, the Allies decided to formally drop the Chetniks and shift official military support to the Partisans.

Despite now being persona non grata with his former allies, Mihailovich began attempting to alert them about the presence of the airmen using a variety of communication channels. He had his men send messages over a British radio link that the Chetniks had formerly used to communicate with Allied leaders, and he also sent word to the Yugoslav government-in-exile in Cairo. The Yugoslav government forwarded these messages to the Yugoslav ambassador to the U.S. in Washington, D.C., Konstantin Fotich, who in turn informed the U.S. War Department. The American government, however, took no action.

By a strange twist of fate, word of the airmen's plight reached the ears of a Serb employee of the Yugoslav embassy in Washington, Mirjana Vujnovich. She immediately wrote her husband, Captain George Vujnovich, chief of OSS operations at its field station in Bari, Italy.

She asked: had he heard of this, too? George Vujnovich had not. A round of inquiries in his sphere of activity revealed that the Americans were quite aware of the situation, but no rescue mission was planned because of Mihailovich's continuing black sheep status. Convinced that his wife's information was correct, Vujnovich began putting together a plan to get the men out. A son of Serb immigrants to America and a former refugee (he had himself fled Yugoslavia during the 1941 invasion), Vujnovich felt tremendous sympathy for both the downed airmen and their protectors in Serbia, but he had no illusions that the Allied leadership felt the same way.

Anti-Mihailovich sentiment reigned within the SOE (the Special Operations Executive, Britain's OSS), which Vujnovich and other Chetnik supporters suspected sprang from a smear campaign conducted by communist-leaning Partisan sympathizers within the organization. It came as no surprise, then, when the British bitterly opposed Vujnovich's plan, and as the SOE had formal jurisdictional control over covert operations in the Balkans, it quickly became clear that shepherding Vujnovich's plan through to approval would be an uphill climb.

The somewhat less hostile but still-skeptical American leadership speculated that Mihailovich, in aiding the airmen, hoped to use them as trophies of his loyalty to the Allied cause. On the other hand, the fraught relations within the Anglo-American intelligence community, which was riven by suspicion, uncooperativeness and occasional outright antagonism, tilted the political balance in Vujnovich's favor.

In the end, this determined opposition convinced the OSS to go all the way to the top to get the green light. In a meeting with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt in early July 1944, the famously straight-talking head of the OSS, Maj. Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan, reputedly summed up his case for the operation, now codenamed Halyard, by telling Roosevelt, "Screw the British! Let's get our boys out!"

Roosevelt agreed, and the wheels started to turn at last. On July 14, General Ira Eaker, U.S. commander of the Mediterranean Allied Air Force, signed orders creating a new covert mission organization, the Air Corps Rescue Unit (ACRU), which was to be supported by air resources of the Fifteenth Air Force.

Planning began in earnest with the formation of an OSS team to be airdropped into Serbia. The leader of the Halyard team, now officially designated ACRU-1, would be OSS officer Lieutenant George Musulin.

Musulin had served in Yugoslavia with an Allied intelligence and training mission attached to Mihailovich's I Chetnik Corps from October 1943 to late May 1944. He had witnessed himself the plight of the downed airmen, 40 of whom accompanied the mission on its evacuation back to Italy. Back at Bari, Musulin became furious after learning that no evacuation mechanism for downed airmen existed in Chetnik areas as was the case in Partisan territory, a result of the continuing Allied mistrust of the Chetniks. Convinced of their innocence, Musulin offered to parachute back into Serbia to gather evidence of the Chetniks' loyalty, but

ABOVE: General Drazha Mihailovich, leader of the Chetniks, inspects a group of his resistance fighters somewhere in Yugoslavia. Accompanying Mihailovich is Colonel Robert McDowell of the American OSS covert operations organization. McDowell and Mihailovich cooperated during Operation Halyard to rescue downed Allied airmen in August-September 1944. LEFT: Josip Broz 'Tito' led the communist partisan resistance to the Nazis in Yugoslavia during World War II. However, Tito was a pragmatist and attacked the rival Chetniks as well in an effort to maintain control of the country after the end of World War II. OPPOSITE: Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers endure intense enemy flak during one of several air raids against oil refineries in the Ploesti, Romania, area. Many of the American airmen shot down during the costly Ploesti raids found their way to Yugoslavia and were assisted in escape and evasion by Chetnik fighters.

ABOVE: The OSS operations team and its Chetnik partners that successfully accomplished the rescue of many downed American airmen in Yugoslavia during Operations Halyard and Ranger included, left to right, Michael Rajacich, Drazha Mihailovich, Nick Lalich, George Musulin, and Robert McDowell. OSS member George Vujnovich took the photo. BELOW: Lieutenant Lloyd G. Hargrave (center), a P-51 Mustang fighter pilot who was shot down 10 miles south of the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade, is questioned by OSS Captain Nick Lalich (left) and OSS Lieutenant Mike Rajacich (right).

his superiors refused the request.

Now, in July, the time had come to go back. Another veteran of OSS covert operations in Yugoslavia, Navy Radio Specialist 1st Class Arthur Jibilian, would serve as Halyard's radio man, and Army Master Sergeant Mike Rajacich would be Musulin's second-in-command. All three men spoke Serbo-Croatian.

As the Halyard team quickly ramped up their plans and gathered needed equipment, the planners began to seriously assess the risks the men would be facing. Just communicating their intentions to the Chetniks would be tricky, as the Allies had cut off all radio links to Mihailovich except for one indirect, nonsecured channel. Even if they could raise the Chetniks on this radio link, the OSS worried, the Germans would surely be listening in, threatening operational security. With the military situation in Serbia so fluid, the designated drop zone could also fall into German hands unexpectedly, and as Musulin was aware, the Germans often lit flares on the ground to attract Allied planes flying overhead.

Worse still, the Air Force would have to send its C-47 transport planes unarmed into a landing zone just minutes by air from nearby Luftwaffe airfields. This would leave the C-47 crews utterly defenseless to enemy air attack, so the Air Force opted for nighttime landings, which would be dangerous even if the one available landing strip near Pranjani was usable, which it definitely was not.

First things—safely inserting the three-man Halyard team—had to come first, and once the team reached Pranjani, Halyard commanders hoped they would be able to iron out the potential roadblocks to pulling off the first airlift.

When plans were set, the British alerted the Chetniks to expect the arrival of the Halyard team between the dates of July 15 and 20 at preset coordinates. Numerous snafus in attempted air jumps over the assigned drop zone, though, delayed the Halyard team's infiltration long past their original insertion date.

On July 8, bad weather canceled the drop. On July 19, the team flew over the drop zone, but in the absence of ground signals at the drop zone below, they decided to turn back to their launch point, fearing a trap. On their third attempt on July 25, their transport plane got pelted with heavy antiaircraft fire just inside Yugoslav airspace. At the drop zone, once again, there was no signal. The following night, July 26, the red signal lights down below didn't correspond to the signal they were expecting. Suddenly, a blinding glare from an airborne German signal flare lit the plane up, followed by small-arms fire. They were obviously in the wrong place, so the plane immediately turned around and headed back to Italy. Still another try aborted when Musulin, now suspecting deliberate sabotage by the British, found that the drop coordinates given to the pilot lay in Partisan territory.

The last straw came on the sixth try when the mission pilot tried to drop them over an area where a battle was in progress. That did it. As soon as the team got back to Bari, Musulin demanded and subsequently got from Vujnovich an American plane, crew, and jumpmaster.

As the operation was coming together, the airmen, who had been waiting in Serbia for weeks, remained largely in the dark about contemplated rescue preparations. Throughout the spring and early summer, they had been content to wait for the Air Force to come get them, but with each passing month the need for action had grown increasingly urgent. Local food stocks available for feeding their swelling ranks were dwindling, some airmen were sick or suffering from combat wounds, and they feared that their luck in concealing themselves from the Germans would eventually run out. They had heard about Chetnik efforts to contact Allied authorities, but the lack of response led some of them to conclude that their only hope of rescue might lie in reaching out on their own to the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy.

The airmen began discussing the possibility of sending a radio message to alert the Air Force to their condition and location, but some judged this to be too dangerous. Sending a message over an open radio channel as suggested might alert the Germans to their presence and provoke a swift and deadly German response. Others, though, were betting that the Germans, who were taking a beating on two fronts, had not kept their best troops in Yugoslavia and that these did not want to take the risks involved in trying to capture them. The ranking officers among the airmen ultimately decided to take the gamble, so in late July the Chetniks loaned them a radio salvaged from one of the many wrecked U.S. bombers the Germans had shot down in the neighborhood.

The first short SOS message the airmen sent out over a rarely used, unsecured radio frequency—every few hours for two days—went unanswered at first, but then the Air Force answered back with a string of wary, suspicious questions. To convince the receivers on the other end that they were who they said they were, Lieutenant Tom Oliver devised a code that referred to painted insignia on planes, details of the officer's club at his airbase, and other things that only a very few people would know.

"Mudcat driver to CO APO520. 150 Yanks in Yugo, some sick," the new SOS message read. "Shoot us workhorses. Our challenge: first letter of bombardier's name, color of Banana Nose's scarf. Your authenticator: last letter of chief lug's name, color of fist on wall. Must refer to shark squadron, 459th BG for decoding. Signed, TKO, Flat Rat 4 in lug order." Oliver added a jumble of numbers at the end of the message that cleverly mixed the longitude and latitude of their position (which he had plotted using captured German maps of Serbia) with the serial numbers of several members of his fellow airmen in Serbia.

A Royal Air Force radio operator in Italy received this new, cryptic message, and he immediately forwarded it to Fifteenth Air Force headquarters in Bari, where 756th Bomber Squadron intelligence officers decrypted the message. Not only did the Americans now have the precise coordinates where the airmen were waiting, but for the first time they realized that the flight crews who had gone down in that area were gathered in one place.

On the other end of the radio link, silence followed for several days. Finally, the Air Force replied: "Prepare reception for 31 July or first clear night following."

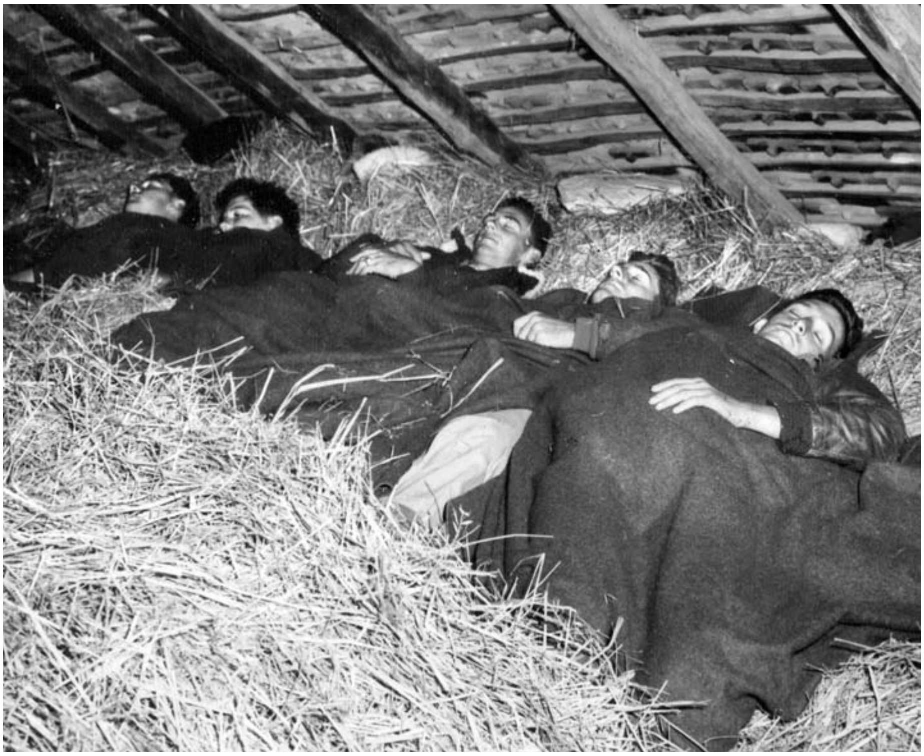
No plane came on the 31st or the following day, August 1. After six failed starts, the team members were by now "nervous wrecks," in Musulin's words, but dogged persistence finally paid off on the seventh and final jump attempt on the night of August 2.

Gathered at the drop zone, the waiting airmen and their Chetnik protectors caught the sound of an approaching plane. They crouched in the bushes, waiting tensely to see if it was German or American as the plane circled the drop zone for 10 minutes, then flew low over the ground. Then, the men caught sight of the white U.S. Air Force star under the wings. "With one voice, the men let out a yell," Lieutenant Richard Felman, one of the leaders of the airmen, recalled. "It was just like [Babe] Ruth hitting a homer with the bases loaded in the World Series."

Musulin, Rajacich, and Jibilian had accidentally missed the drop zone by two miles. As they approached the drop zone on foot, Felman heard a commotion in the darkness, Chetniks shouting and cheering, "Captain George, Captain George!" Moments later, the Halyard team walked up at the head of a crowd of exulting Serb civilians. Musulin stretched out a hand to Felman, and said, "I'm Lt. George Musulin."

Shortly after dawn the next day, Musulin got down to business, starting with a survey of American personnel needing evacuation. The senior American officers among the airmen informed him that approximately 250 men in the vicinity were quartered in small groups in the homes of local Chetniks dispersed in a 10-mile radius. Twenty-six of the airmen were wounded or injured, so Musulin set up a small hospital with the medical supplies the team had brought. Several of the airmen were barefoot and clothed in a motley mix of Air Force and Serbian peasant dress. Many had grown long hair and beards and had begun to resemble their Chetnik hosts in appearance.

Next, the commander of the I Chetnik Corps troops protecting Pranjani, Captain Zvonko Vuchkovich, briefed Musulin on local security conditions. Not too far away were several Ger-



As they await air rescue via Operation Halyard, a group of American airmen get some sleep in a hayloft somewhere in Yugoslavia. A cooperative effort to get downed airmen out of Nazi-occupied territory, Operation Halyard was a remarkable success.

WITH EACH PASSING MONTH THE SITUATION BECAME INCREASINGLY URGENT. Local food stocks available for feeding their swelling ranks were dwindling, some airmen were sick or suffering from combat wounds, and they feared that their luck in concealing themselves from the Germans would eventually run out.

man troop garrisons: 4,500 troops 12 miles to the south at Chachak; 250 at a garrison five miles from the airstrip; and yet another garrison at Gorni Milanovic, 20 miles east. Thirty miles south, there was also a Luftwaffe airfield at Kraljevo. The only things standing between the vulnerable airmen and the enemy were their remote location high in the mountains, the support of the local Serb civilian population, and the double ring of defenses and roadblocks manned by Chetnik soldiers surrounding Pranjani.

Now the Halyard team faced the most urgent and difficult task of all, making the Chetnik force's existing airstrip usable. The airstrip had been gouged out of a narrow plateau high up in the mountains; it was bordered by dense woods on one side and a steep dropoff on the other. It ran only 1,800 feet, too short for a C-47 to land with a comfortable margin of error, and this made it unusable. Somehow, the Halyard team would have to lengthen the airstrip.

The 250 airmen, joined by 300 Serb villagers and Chetnik soldiers equipped with 60 oxcarts and simple farm implements, got cracking. Cutting down trees, hauling rocks away with bare hands, hauling gravel, and tamping down the earth with their feet, the work crews labored for almost a week, stopping only to rush into the woods for cover when German warplanes approached.

Musulin pushed the laborers as fast as they could go, and by August 8, the field was ready. Jibilian radioed Bari that evacuations could start the following night, August 9.

All had gone well, except for a brief scare that almost derailed the whole operation a few hours before the first planes were scheduled to arrive. While Rajacich and Jibilian were laying out the flare pots to mark the airstrip at 6 PM on August 9, three German planes—a Stuka dive bomber, a Ju-52, and another plane marked with the Red Cross emblem—buzzed the landing field, circled, and then headed back the way they came. The horror-struck Halyard team feared the worst—that the Germans had discovered the impending operation and were sending troops to capture or kill the airmen or shoot down the incoming C-47s, which were already in the air and couldn't be recalled.

The men felt helpless in the face of impending disaster. Nonetheless, they had one ace in the hole that might allow them to get the drop on a German attack: a secret phone line to a Chetnik source in the nearby German garrison town of Gorni Milanovac. Unusual activity in Gorni Milanovac would constitute a sign of brewing trouble, but all was reported quiet in the town.

With that behind them, the first 72 designated evacuees, their fellow airmen, the Halyard team, and dozens of Serb villagers and Chetniks gathered at the airstrip after dark to await the first planes. All were excited and optimistic, but tense and anxious as well.

The first men to fly out would include the sick and wounded, and the passenger capacity of each plane was limited to 12 in order to keep the weight down because of the danger of the short airstrip. To help with the weight requirements, the Halyard team had asked the Air Force to strip each transport plane down and carry only half a tank of gas on each flight, just enough to last the round trip between Pranjani and Italy.

Cheers erupted when, at 11 PM, the crowd first caught the sound of C-47 engines approaching. Jibilian rushed onto the field to give the identification signals with an Aldis lantern (a lantern built to send focused pulses of light). He squeezed the trigger three times with the predetermined signal: *Red, Red, Red*. The lead C-47 responded with the same signal: *Red, Red, Red*. Jibilian gave the go-ahead signal for landing, *Nan*, to which the plane replied, *X-ray*.

"We're on boys! This is it!" Musulin shouted to his men, who again erupted into cheers. On Musulin's orders, the edges of the field flared to life with hay bales and green flares, the signal for the landings to commence.

Now came the trickiest, most terrifying part of all for the pilots of the Fifteenth Air Force's 60th Troop Carrier Group—landing in near darkness. The first plane overshot the runway, forcing it to take off again to avoid crashing. The other three planes coming behind it touched down successfully, followed again by the first plane on its second try. The only mishap was a crash with a haystack, which dented the wingtip of one of the planes.

Four passengers came with this first flight: Captain Jack Mitrani of the Fifteenth Air Force, two medical technicians, and OSS Lieutenant Nick Lalich, who was coming to join the Halyard team. Very quickly, they traded places with the first group of eagerly waiting evacuees, who, within 20 minutes, had said their emotional farewells with their Serb rescuers and climbed aboard the planes, ready to go. Seconds before takeoff, the side doors of all four planes suddenly opened up to reveal the departing airmen unlacing their boots and holding them up for the villagers to see.

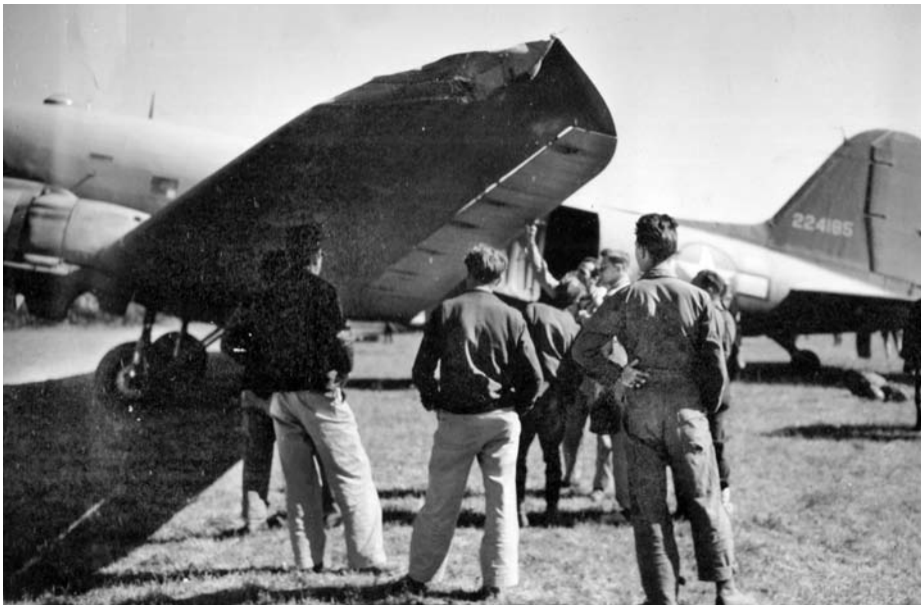
One after another, they cast their boots out the open doors, a final expression of profound gratitude to their caretakers, many of whom had nothing more than the traditional Serb felt slippers for shoes.

Takeoffs, like the landings, were successful, but just barely. Nervous about the dangers and difficulties of night landings, Musulin ordered Jibilian to request a daytime pickup from Bari.

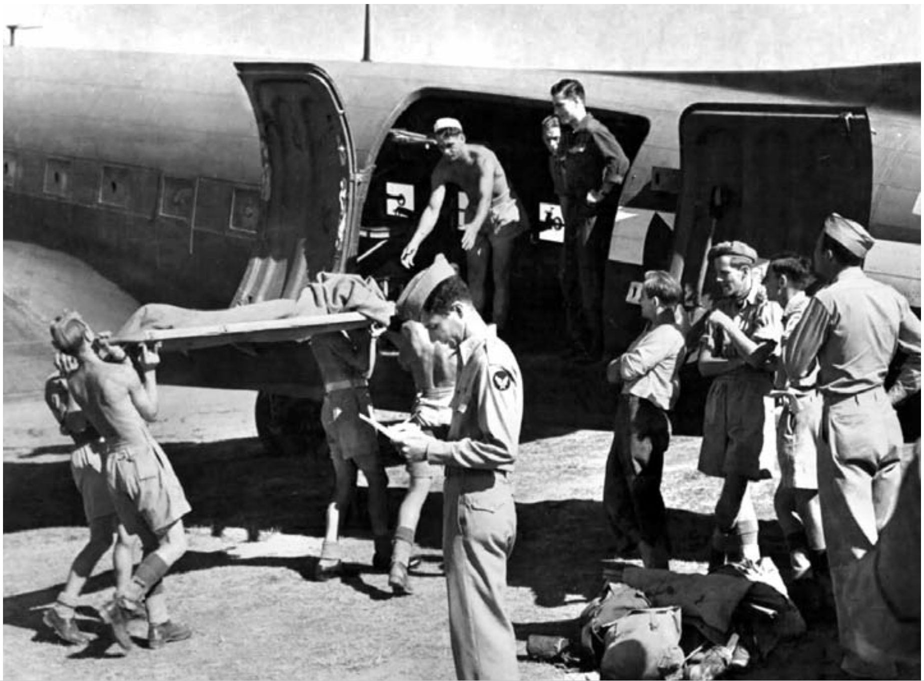
Two more flights of six C-47s each came the next morning, one plane landing every five minutes, this time with a strong escort of North American P-51 Mustang and Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighters. While the fighters peeled off to shoot up nearby German garrisons and the German airfield at Kraljevo as a diversion, the C-47s were able to land much more safely than the night before. As each plane landed, crowds of screaming Serb women surrounded it, pelting it with flowers, to which both the outgoing airmen and the transport aircrews responded enthusiastically with boisterous noisemaking of their own. In the ensuing chaos, Musulin had his hands full herding the airmen onto the planes and keeping the crews on task.

The operation went off mostly without a hitch, except when a P-51 coming in with the second wave of transports got its left wheel stuck in the mud at the edge of the landing strip after the pilot disobeyed instructions from Lalich, who was acting as the ground-control officer. Musulin instantly recruited 100 Serbs to dig the plane out and send it on its way.

At the end of that first 24 hours of operations, the Air Force had ferried 289 Allied airmen—including 38 Frenchmen, Italians,



ABOVE: A group of American airmen inspect the damage done to a C-47 transport plane during an Operation Halyard mission. The C-47 clipped a haystack during its landing approach at an airfield near Koceljeva, in what is now western Serbia. BELOW: Airmen load a wounded man into a C-47 for transport at an airfield in Yugoslavia. During the course of their rescue operations, the OSS and cooperative Chetniks successfully returned 417 downed airmen from Nazi-controlled territory in Yugoslavia to Allied bases. OPPOSITE: Chetnik fighter Radmilo Widojewic leads Lieutenant James D. Beckham, a P-51 fighter pilot shot down during a mission over Yugoslavia in September 1944, to a collection center.



Yugoslavs and Russians—out of Serbia to safety. Once the last plane had departed, the Halyard team and the Chetniks retreated higher into the mountains, fearing that the landings had caught the Germans' attention. They remained in hiding for several days, but when the Germans made no moves, the OSS team went back into operation, collecting downed airmen and receiving regular air-supply drops.

By the end of August, the Halyard team had gathered enough airmen for another airlift. The Air Force sent transports on the nights of August 26 and 27, which picked up another 60 airmen to take back to Italy.

Halyard's initial success was soon marred by trouble for George Musulin, who had to return to Bari on August 27, leaving Nick Lalich in place as mission commander. After the war, Musulin claimed that the OSS had ordered him to return in order to aid the Air Force in preparing "new escape maps for proper briefing" for Americans that went down in Chetnik territory. The actual truth was that Musulin had disobeyed the ban on Chetnik aid by approving the medical evacuation of two seriously wounded Chetniks on August 10. Two Partisan soldiers waiting on the other end in Bari recognized them as Chetniks, and before the end of the day Musulin's superiors had ordered him home for aiding the forces of the officially disgraced Mihailovich. Musulin resisted his own recall for two weeks before giving in.

Meanwhile, as a reward for their assistance in the initial airlifts, the Chetniks received 1½ tons of medical supplies from the Americans at Bari, despite the opposition to such aid in Anglo-American circles.

While the evacuation operation was getting rolling, outside events in the rest of Yugoslavia conspired to interrupt things. Partisan leader Marshal Tito, now firmly in control of all the Yugoslav provinces but Serbia and parts of Bosnia, launched a final drive in September 1944, to thrust into Serbia, crush Mihailovich's forces, and solidify his grasp on power.

Partisan forces, having bypassed the German garrisons around Pranjani, closed in on Chetnik headquarters and fought with Chetnik units outside the town for several days. Mihailovich's Chetniks, who had already suffered tremendous losses of territory, men (through desertion), and arms because of the cutoff of Allied aid, were forced to evacuate the town on September 10, the Partisans hot on their heels. The Halyard team had no choice but to leave with the Chetniks, and from this point forward the evacuation operation was a traveling road show throughout Serbia and Bosnia.

Chetnik leader Drazha Mihailovich talks with a group of his senior commanders. By the end of World War II, the Chetniks' ranks had been seriously depleted, with only a handful holding out in a mountainous area. They were eventually captured by Tito's communist security troops.

The Halyard team and their Chetnik partners first moved 30 miles northward over the Suvobor Mountains to Mijonice, and from there on to Koceljeva, where they found a new airstrip.

Evacuations over the next three and a half months were carried out on an improvised basis, using whatever broad, flat spaces were available and close by, such as farmers' fields. Even as the Chetniks moved into Bosnia, they continued collecting airmen—Americans, British, French, Italians, and Russians—for evacuation. While a battle between Chetnik and Partisan units raged just four miles away, two C-47s landed on September 17 to airlift 24 airmen out, as well as some of the Halyard medical team and navy photographer J.B. Allin.

From Koceljeva, the party crossed into Bosnia over the Drina River and continued into the Trebava Mountains, picking up more American airmen as they went. Moving on from there, the team readied a new airstrip at Boljanic and then again moved south past Sarajevo to the end point of their odyssey at Okruglice.

By November, three months after the end of the Ploesti campaign, the stream of downed aviators had slowed to a bare trickle. Only two more groups of airmen were known to still be in the country: 16 in Visegrad, who later made it to Okruglice, and nine more who were waiting in Boljanic. Clearly, the Halyard team's job was done, and the time had come to depart. The OSS leadership in Bari offered Lalich two options for the final evacuation: have the nine airmen at Boljanic come down to Okruglice, after which they and the mission could get picked up on the Adriatic coast, or turn themselves and the remaining 25 evacuees over to the Partisans for evacuation from the interior. Lalich strongly insisted on being picked up at the Boljanic airstrip.

In one of his last meetings with Mihailovich, Lalich relayed to the Chetnik leader an offer from the OSS to evacuate him on the last flight out of Boljanic. The case for giving up the fight was strong by this point in the war, as Mihailovich's situation had grown extremely dire. Partisan attacks destroyed his main fighting force in October, while the incoming Soviets, who had briefly joined the Chetniks, Partisans, and Bulgarians in fighting the retreating Germans, turned about to join the Partisans in fighting the Chetniks.

Mihailovich continued hoping for a landing in Yugoslavia by the Western, non-communist Allies. As those hopes began to wane, the desperate Chetnik leader secretly began joining forces with anyone who would help him take his stand against the Partisans—even the profascist forces of the German puppet ruler of Serbia, former Yugoslav Army General Milan Nedich, and the Germans themselves.

At any rate, Mihailovich had no interest in leaving Yugoslavia, preferring to share the fate of his own people. "I was born here on this soil," he told Lalich. "I will stay with my people on this soil, and I will be buried in this soil."

Smiling in anticipation of their return to Allied territory, a group of downed airmen sit aboard a C-47 transport plane. This photo was taken during a flight from an airstrip at Koceljeva on September 17, 1944.

As snow fell on the morning of December 11, Mihailovich assembled 2,000 Chetniks in Okruglice for a farewell salute to the last 16 airmen and a final exchange of gifts, a *kama* (two-edged Serbian knife) for Lalich and Vujnovich, and additionally, Mihailovich's Serbian insignia patch, which he had worn for four years and now gave to Lalich as an *uspomena* (souvenir). Ironically, it read, "Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava," or "Only Unity Saves the Serbs." In return, Lalich gave Mihailovich his American carbine. As the time came to say goodbye, Lalich was so overcome with emotion that all he managed to say was, "Thank you for everything."

The Halyard mission and their charges left with a guard of 40 Chetniks to guide them the last 150 miles through the mountains northward to Boljanic, stopping only for a church service at a Serbian Orthodox monastery.

The last evacuation flight left on December 27, 1944, from Boljanic in the Ozren area of Bosnia, but not before delivering 600 pairs of boots for the raggedly dressed Serbs, a last-minute act of generosity by George Vujnovich, who had cleverly requisitioned them from the British in defiance of the ban on aid to Mihailovich.

Halyard's job was now finished. They had airlifted out a grand total of 512 downed Allied airmen without the loss of a single airman or plane, truly an impressive accomplishment. The closing act of Operation Halyard was yet to come, though.

By late 1944, the end of the war in Yugoslavia was near. The fighting pushed most of the Germans out of Yugoslavia in the early months of 1945, although some continued clinging to their shrinking toehold in the country as late as April. The grinding war of attrition battered Mihailovich's Chetnik army to pieces until only a small handful of men were left. Mihailovich and his remaining followers held out in the mountains until the Yugoslav Department of National Security (the new Tito government's internal security agency) captured the Chetnik leader on March 13, 1946.

In March 1946, news of Mihailovich's capture and impending trial for war crimes by the new Tito government of Yugoslavia reached former Halyard participants in the United States. Outraged and strongly convinced of Mihailovich's innocence and loyalty, they immediately mounted a public campaign to clear Mihailovich's name. A meeting with Secretary of State Dean Acheson secured State Department aid in forwarding evidence of Mihailovich's innocence from the former evacuees to the Yugoslav government. It was rebuffed. Mihailovich was tried and convicted, then shot on June 17, 1946, and buried in an unmarked grave.

In a generous but futile gesture, U.S. President Harry Truman posthumously awarded Mihailovich the Legion of Merit on March 29, 1948, on the recommendation of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, but the award remained classified for 20 years because of concerns the State Department had of offending the Yugoslav government now led by Mihailovich's opponent, Marshal Tito. A U.S. State Department delegation, including Vujnovich, Jibilian, and a number of the surviving evacuees finally presented it to Mihailovich's daughter, Gordana, in the United States on May 29, 2005.

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Continued from page 33

the three years during which the struggle for the Second Front lasted, its main opponent invariably proved to be Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain. That was how in practice his formula that the British would give to the USSR in this war 'whatever help we can' was deciphered."

This harsh criticism of Churchill by Maisky coincided not only with the ongoing struggle of the Eighth Army against Rommel in North Africa, but also with the building up of the Japanese juggernaut in the Far East, which in a matter of a few months would vanquish British and Commonwealth forces in Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, and Burma. Britain would be reeling to the easternmost borders of India. Ceylon and shipping in the Indian Ocean would be bombed by Japanese naval carrier aircraft, and the hard-won victory in East Africa just months previously would appear to be in jeopardy. Churchill was candid when he informed the Russians that establishing a second front in northwest France or in the Arctic was just not feasible. The only problem was that no one in the Soviet hierarchy cared to believe him.

Stalin's sense of reality was not entirely well-grounded in his rude demands for material aid from Britain only one week after the Nazi invasion commenced. His list included 3,000 fighter aircraft, 20,000 light antiaircraft guns, radar, and night-fighting equipment. While Churchill was willing to give Stalin some cloaked Ultra decrypts about German troop movements, Churchill's private secretary, John Colville, noted, "Molotov will tell us nothing beyond what is in the official communiqués. Now, in their hour of need, the Soviet government—or at any rate Molotov—is as suspicious and uncooperative as when we were negotiating a treaty in the summer of 1939."

On July 3, 1941, Stalin made his first radio address to the Russian people about the war with Germany. Yet, although Anglo-Soviet diplomatic activity was resumed in the beginning of July, Churchill, according to Maisky's memoirs, was put out by the fact that Stalin did not in any way respond to his broadcast of 22 June, but still decided to take the first step toward establishing more friendly relations with the head of the Soviet state.

On July 7, 1941, Churchill sent Stalin a letter explaining that Britain's help to the Soviet Union would take the form principally of air bombardment of Germany. Cripps personally handed Stalin this letter, and the Soviet leader stated that an Anglo-Soviet agreement should be reached stressing two points: mutual aid during the war and the obligation not to sign a separate peace with Germany. Stalin explicitly stated that he wanted a formal agreement with Britain to "allay his continuing suspicion that Churchill wanted to stand aside while Germany and Russia destroyed each other."

Two days later, Churchill replied to Stalin, "I should like to assure you that we are wholly in favour of the agreed declaration of purpose." An agreement for mutual military assistance was signed on July 12, 1941, by Molotov and Cripps. Both of the above-mentioned points were included.

Churchill was driven by one overwhelming motive; he needed Russia to continue fighting at least until winter weather set in, since a separate peace between Stalin and Hitler would enable the Nazis to turn their full attention back on Britain. In Churchill's Anglo-Soviet agreement, the Prime Minister had to attend to American sentiments against any secret deals on European soil. Thus, a limited pact was presented to the House of Commons.

On July 18, Stalin brazenly demanded a British attack in northern France and the Arctic to be undertaken at once. Churchill responded to Maisky, who delivered the demand, that "unfortunately what he asks is at present impracticable." Stalin was furious at Churchill's refusal.

According to Maisky, Churchill began a detailed justification of his statement. In his words, the Germans had 40 divisions in France and a well-fortified coast along the Channel, in Belgium and in Holland. The forces of Britain, which had for more than a year been fighting alone, were under extreme strain and scattered far from the Home Isles. In addition, the Battle for the Atlantic was still raging, consuming a vast amount of British naval and air resources, let alone the losses in sinkings due to the U-boat menace. Churchill apologized that in the present circumstances Britain was incapable of doing more than air bombardment of Germany.

On July 30, Stalin received American envoy Harry Hopkins in Moscow. The report which Hopkins gave to Roosevelt after the visit made a deep impression on the president and had important consequences. On August 15, following their meeting in Newfoundland, Churchill and Roosevelt sent a joint message to Stalin: "We have taken the opportunity afforded by the report of Mr. Harry Hopkins on his return from Moscow to consult together as to how best our two countries can help your country."

Both Churchill and Roosevelt went on to report that shiploads of supplies had been dispatched to the USSR and propose a high-level meeting take place in Moscow in the near future. Maisky admitted in his memoirs that "in addition to everything else, British Lend-Lease greatly facilitated our receipt of American Lend-Lease." Churchill's granting of Lend-Lease to the Soviets on September 5, 1941, was a significant precedent which enabled Roosevelt to extend the Lend-Lease Act to the USSR, since there were groups in America that strongly objected to aiding the Soviets without payment.

History has to accord Churchill praise that he was at least candid with Stalin about Britain's inaction regarding a second front. He cabled Stalin on September 6, "Although we should shrink from no exertion, there is in fact no possibility of any British action in the west except air action, which would draw the German forces from the east before winter sets in. There is no chance whatever of a Second Front being formed in the Balkans without the help of Turkey."

At least Churchill the historian was aware of Napoleon's fate before Moscow in 1812 when the harsh Russian winter arrived; however, Stalin was still unmoved by Churchill's response and stated to the Politburo, "What a revolting answer!"

Churchill did not have to wait long for nature's intervention on the Eastern Front. On September 12, the first snows began to fall. Stalin was not just rude to Churchill in his official correspondence. At a meeting with an Anglo-American mission headed by Lord Beaverbrook and American diplomat Averell Harriman, the latter being Roosevelt's personal Lend-Lease envoy to Britain, Stalin chided the pair, "The paucity of your offers clearly shows that you want to see the Soviet Union defeated."

Churchill, too, had suspicions about the motives of the United States. The Prime Minister was worried that Roosevelt and his main emissary, Hopkins, would preferentially shunt weapons to the Soviet Union at the expense of aid given to Great Britain. This thought was to plague Churchill throughout the war, particularly because the Prime Minister knew that during 1941, only one percent of Britain's weapons were to come from Lend-Lease with the United States.

As the Nazi drive toward Moscow was underway in early October, Stalin demanded that Churchill send 25-30 British divisions to the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister sought the recommendations of his War Cabinet on October 27, and both concluded that Stalin's

Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, U.S. President Harry Truman, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (left to right) pause following a meeting during the Potsdam Conference held July-August 1945. At Potsdam issues concerning the map of post-World War II Europe and spheres of influence were discussed. Churchill was voted out of office during the conference and replaced by Clement Attlee, while Truman had assumed the U.S. presidency after the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

request could not be met. On November 7, Stalin rifled off a cable to Churchill in which he harangued, "There is no definite understanding between our two countries concerning war aims and plans for the postwar organization of peace; secondly, there is no treaty between the USSR and Great Britain on mutual military aid in Europe against Hitler."

Stalin did not mince words, since without a clarification of these issues, he asserted, "there will be no mutual trust."

Soon, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was invited to Moscow to help smooth the mutual distrust. There must have been some rapprochement, or perhaps the Russian winter slowing the Nazis on the Moscow front improved Stalin's humor. He wished Churchill "hearty birthday greetings" on November 29.

In November 1941, Churchill's hopes in North Africa resided in General Claude Auchinleck's Operation Crusader to liberate Tobruk and eject Rommel from the Egyptian frontier. The operation achieved some of its immediate military goals but failed to change any political fortunes for Britain. The United States, despite Roosevelt's leanings, remained neutral since only Congress had the constitutional power to declare war and that body was still very much Isolationist. However, Fate intervened on December 5, when temperatures fell to minus-32 degrees Fahrenheit outside Moscow. Stalin counterattacked the exhausted and unprepared Germans, forcing them to pull back.

There were some areas in which Churchill and Stalin actively cooperated. After the suppression of Rashid Ali's pro-German revolt in Iraq in June 1941, there was a suspicion that a similar event might occur in Iran. Rashid Ali, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and his supporters had fled to Iran when their insurrection was beaten back by Wavell and Auchinleck's ad hoc forces. By the end of July, Churchill had decided that Britain and Russia could cooperate in securing Iran and her oil supplies for the Allied cause as well as creating an overland route of supply to the Soviet Union. On December 6, 1941, at Stalin's request, Britain declared war on Finland, Hungary, and Romania, since troops from these three countries were actively combating the Soviets. A day later, the United States entered World War II with the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor.

Historical revisionists have pondered just how much information Stalin actually received from the British in regard to a German invasion and, furthermore, what Churchill's intent truly was in disseminating such intelligence. Even Maisky stated, "I had more than once already let Moscow know that an attack by Hitlerite Germany was close, almost around the corner."

On June 21, Stafford Cripps met with Maisky in London and informed him, "We have reliable information that this attack will take place tomorrow 22 June … You know that Hitler always attacks on Sundays … I wanted to inform you of this." Dutifully, Maisky sent yet another urgent message about this communication to Moscow. Yet, Stalin chose to ignore the warnings.

Such was the nature of the distrustful relationship between Churchill and Stalin, which was very soon to become an uneasy alliance after the German invasion.

Jon Diamond practices medicine and resides in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is the author of several books for Osprey Publications and a frequent contributor to WWII History.

By Christopher Miskimon

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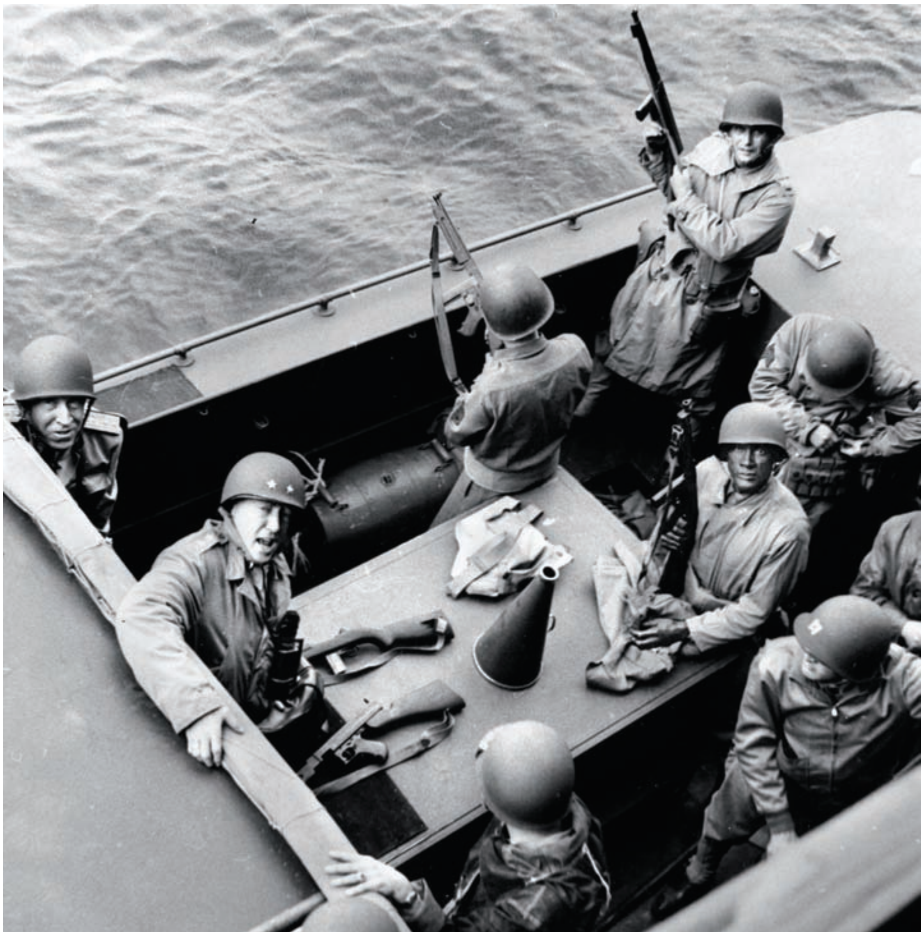
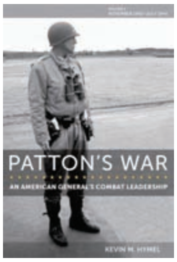


Maj. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. and his staff head to Fadalah Beach in Morocco. His African-American aide, Staff Sergeant George Meeks (right) would be with him throughout the war.

A Flawed and Brilliant WWII Combat Leader

General George Patton began a famed World War II sojourn on the beaches of North Africa.

GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON, JR., ENTERED HIS FIRST WORLD WAR II BATTLEfield on the morning of November 8, 1942. Scheduled to go ashore at 8:00 AM, at Fedala near Casablanca, after the initial assault waves, he suddenly had a problem. The General could not find his favorite pistols. He purchased the first, a .45-caliber Colt Peacemaker, in 1916, just before he left on the Pancho Villa Expedition. The Colt had two notches in its ivory handle, denoting two bandits he helped kill during a shootout at the Rubio Ranch. The Peacemaker was slow to reload, however, so eventually Patton decided on his second pistol, a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum revolver, acquired in 1935. He called it his "killing gun," and wore both weapons holstered on his belt alongside a compass stored in a handcuff case and another case for carrying spare ammunition. His orderly, Staff Sergeant George Meeks, soon located the pistol belt on Patton's landing craft and brought it to him.



Just as he prepared to board his landing craft, three French warships appeared. Patton's ship, the cruiser USS *Augusta*, increased speed and opened fire with its main guns. The muzzle blast destroyed the landing craft, which had to be jettisoned, taking all Patton's other belongings to the bottom of the sea. "Such are the fortunes of war," he quipped, and he had to wait hours until he could finally board another landing craft. Several staff members joined him, and sailors aboard the *Augusta* cheered as his small craft pulled away. Patton took off his helmet for a moment, so they see him smiling. Patton served in World War I, attaining the rank of colonel, but this was his first foray in World War II, now in its third year.

The landing craft reached the shore, and Patton jumped out into thigh deep water. Nearby, another landing craft sat stuck on a sandbar. He waded over to it and called to a group of soldiers carrying loads of ammunition from the stricken boat. "Come back here!" he yelled, and the men returned after dropping the ammo crates on the beach. Patton knew there were not enough landing craft in service, so he waited until a wave raised it slightly, then ordered everyone, himself included, to push. Its engine churning the water behind, the craft broke free and sailed off for another load of supplies.

Walking ashore, Patton saw his army had mostly moved inland, with a few rear echelon troops casually walked around. Major Robert Henriques, Patton's British liaison officer, walked up and handed the general a small statue, a Hawaiian war god made of lava rock and nicknamed Charlie. Patton's wife had made the major promise to bring it ashore; she was sure it would bring him luck. Moving on, Patton saw GIs walking around or sitting, with little sense of purpose. Some had stopped digging their foxholes. Among these wayward soldiers, a lone Arab walked along, leading a donkey adorned with sacks. Occasionally he stopped, picked up a discarded piece of American equipment, and stuffed it one of the sacks. Patton stopped to talk to a naval officer when he saw the Arab pick up a rifle and start to put it in one of the donkey's sacks. The general calmly drew one of his pistols and sent a shot toward the Arab, who dropped the rifle and ran off.

Patton went on to direct his troops back into action, just the first time he would do so in the-

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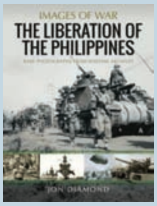
ater during the war. Ahead of him waited long days and nights of planning and ordering troops into battle against Vichy France and then Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. This first volume of Kevin Hymel's new trilogy on the famous figure, *Patton's War: An American General's Combat Leadership, Volume I: November 1942 – July 1944* (University of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO, 2021, 432pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover) covers Patton's entry into World War II and some of his most famous and controversial actions.

The author takes an in-depth and unfiltered look at his subject showing Patton's many strengths and equally numerous flaws. Together, they nevertheless made Patton who he was, a battlefield general able to motivate men in combat and get the most out of them. The books compile added information from a wide variety of sources, including veterans' oral histories and interviews as well as Patton's own extensive writings. Mr. Hymel also authored *Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It*, an excellent companion piece to this latest work. This work provides a thorough look at one of America's most famous military leaders.

New and Noteworthy



The Liberation of the Philippines: Rare Photographs from Wartime Archives (Jon Diamond, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $28.95, softcover) The fighting in the Philippines ranks among the most intense of the Pacific War. This book contains hundreds of photographs of the campaign.

The U.S. Army Infantryman Pocket Manual 1941–45 ETO & MTO (Edited by Chris McNab, Casemate Books, 2021, $16.95, hardcover) This title combines several war era manuals and publications to give a broad view of the GI's life during combat.

There Was a Time (George H. Wittman, Casemate Books, 2021, $24.95, softcover) Set in Vietnam during mid-1945, this novel fictionalizes the historical cooperation between the OSS and Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh Guerrillas.

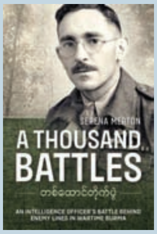
Behind Enemy Lines With SOE (Major E.C.R. Barker, Frontline Books, 2021, $49.95, hardcover. The author served as a sergeant in the Special Operations Executive during the war. He was captured during a mission into Austria in 1944.

The Battle for Burma 1942-1945 (Philip Jowett, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $28.95, softcover) The fighting in Burma involved British, Indian, Burmese, American, and Chinese troops combating the Japanese. This photobook provides hundred of images of the forces serving in this theater.

German Heavy Cruisers Versus Royal Navy Heavy Cruisers 1939-42 (Mark Lardas, Osprey Books, 2021, $22.00, softcover) Cruiser of the British and German navies stalked each other from the Arctic to the South Atlantic. The author assesses both the ships and the engagements they fought.

Ju-87 Stuka Versus Royal Navy Carriers: Mediterranean (Robert Forsyth, Osprey Books, 2021, $22.00, softcover) As British carriers cruised the Mediterranean, Stukas piloted by German and Italian aircrew sought to sink them. This book highlights the Axis attacks on the British vessels during key battles.

Anders Lassen of the SAS (Mike Langley, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $39.95, hardcover) Born in Denmark, Anders went to England in 1940 and soon joined the Special Air Service. By war's end he had earned the Victoria Cross and two Military Crosses.



A Thousand Battles: An Intelligence Officer's' Battle Behind Enemy Lines in Wartime Burma (Serena Merton, Helion Books, 2021, $29.95, softcover) Before the war, Cecil Merton worked as a forestry manager in Burma. He later joined Z Force, a special operations group tasked with patrolling behind Japanese lines to gather intelligence.

Mortain 1944: Hitler's Normandy Panzer Offensive (Steven Zaloga, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2021, 99pp., maps, illustrations, bibliography, index, $24.00, softcover)

Things were finally looking up for the U.S. Army in August 1944. After fighting their way off the Normandy beaches and through the thick hedgerows of the bocage country, the Americans broke out during Operation Cobra. With open country ahead, they pushed their armored spearheads against the Germans. In response, Hitler ordered an immediate counterattack designed to cut through the Americans and reach the sea. Named Operation Lüttich, it required much of the available German armored forces to be pulled from the British sector. Allied intelligence learned of the plan, however, so they were well prepared for the enemy onslaught. American troops fought the Germans to a standstill, inflicting heavy casualties the Nazis could not afford. Air power further drained the Germans as fighter-bombers such as the British Hawker Typhoon used bombs and rockets to pronounced effect. German armored vehicle crews were especially fearful of aerial rockets. Despite their inaccuracy, the rockets' large warheads meant when they did strike true the results were often fatal. The fight became known as the Battle of Mortain, and the result was a weakening of German forces in France, hastening their defeat and withdrawal soon after.

The author's known strengths as a writer are evident in this new work. He shows a good grasp of the tactical and operational situation as well as the realities of combat. Beyond a retelling of events, the book is full of the extra detail Mr. Zaloga adds to his work, including information on tactics, leaders, and actual weapons performance in the field. The book is beautifully illustrated, and the original art is gripping; a full-page spread depicting an American ambush of a German armored column is particularly compelling.

Commanding the Pacific: Marine Corps Generals in World War II (Stephen R. Taaffe, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2021, 248pp., maps, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

The 1st Marine Division arrived in Melbourne, Australia, in January 1943, in terrible condition. Malaria affected 7,500 of its members, and most of the Marines suffered from exhaustion or what was then termed combat fatigue. It took several months of recuperations before the division could begin training, but by summer they were ready for their next landing, at New Britain Island. Their commander, General William Rupertus, possessed a variety of experiences leading him to his command. A native of Washington, D.C., he served in its National Guard before attending and graduating from the Revenue Cutter Service School, which later became the Coast Guard Academy. He received a Marine commission in 1913. Rupertus saw shipboard service in World War I, then went to Haiti and later Peking. In World War II, he was picked by General Vandegrift to be assistant commander of the division. He led the attack on Tulagi before contracting Dengue Fever. Despite this impressive record, Rupertus was unpopular in the Corps, considered petty, selfish, and even incompetent by some. One officer remarked, “That guy was a loser. Christ, how the hell he got to be a division commander is astounding.” He kept advancing, however, helped by his friendship with Vandegrift, something critics referred to as “Vandegrift’s blind spot.”

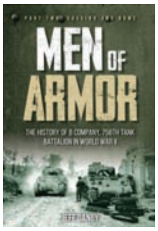
History is often generous to victorious generals, focusing on their strengths and ignoring their faults. This new book gives you both, revealing the officers who led the Marine Corps through some of its most famous battles and campaigns in a balanced fashion. The author withholds personal judgements to lay out the facts in a neutral fashion, allowing the reader to evaluate them. This book effectively presents its subjects as human beings, with all the good and bad that implies, serving in difficult circumstances.

THE WAR IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
BERNARD IRELAND

The War in the Mediterranean 1940 - 1943 (Bernard Ireland, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2021, maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $26.95, softcover)

Prior to the D-Day landings, the Mediterranean theater was the main area of combat for the Western Allies. The land operations often became swirling battles of maneuver as mechanized forces sought decisive victory. This eventual Allied triumph could never have happened, however, without the heroic and Herculean efforts of the naval forces toiling in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic near Gibraltar and the African coast. For nearly three years, British, Italian, American, German, and French ships sailed these waters, fighting pitched battles, escorting convoys, supporting amphibious assaults, and carrying weapons and supplies. The fighting in famous places such as Tobruk, El Alamein, and Tunisia could not have happened without the support of naval forces. The naval battles themselves were equally decisive if less well known, as both combatant forces and convoys fought to complete their missions and survive.

The author had an extensive career with the Royal Navy and brings his expertise to bear in this new book. The narrative switched smoothly from the strategic down to the tactical level as he describes the various actions the Mediterranean played host to during the war. Often bereft of resources and adequate ships, the naval war in this sea saw many small actions which nevertheless combined over time to make an interesting campaign.


MEN OF ARMOR
THE HISTORY OF B COMPANY, 756TH TANK BATTALION IN WORLD WAR II
JEFF DANBY

Men of Armor: The History of B Company, 756th Tank Battalion in World War II (Jeff Danby, Casemate Books, Havertown, PA, 2021, 369pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography notes, index, $34.95, hardcover)

Tank engines roared to life in the predawn darkness of January 27, 1944. Near Cassino, Italy, the American 756th Tank Battalion was about to enter combat in support of the 34th Infantry Division. The unit recently traded its M5 light tanks for heavier M4 Sherman medium tanks. Allied artillery pounded their objective, Hill 213, the feature dotted with German fighting positions. The tanks of Captain French Lewis’ A Company spread out before the hill and opened fire, adding the weight of their 75mm cannon to the artillery’s guns. In 15 minutes, they fired over 1,000 rounds of ammunition, each set with a delayed fuse to help them penetrate deeper into the enemy bunkers before exploding. Meanwhile, B Company advanced along a painstakingly built corduroy road, moving up to support the infantry. The Germans returned fire, however, and not all the 756th’s men would survive the day.

The experiences of B Company, 756th Tank Battalion are the focus of this new work. The author plans a multivolume series covering the unit; this first book tells of the 756th’s formation, training, deployment to North Africa and Italy, and entry into combat. The level of detail is impressive, as the author explains tank crew operations to clarify how and why the soldiers

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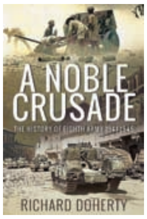
fought as they did. There are good maps and two photo inserts with the text.

A Noble Crusade: The History of Eighth Army 1941-1945 (Richard Doherty, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2021, 344pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $28.95, softcover)



Great Britain formed the Eighth Army in September 1941, when the nation's military fortunes were at a low ebb. Soon, it came under the command of Bernard Montgomery, who revitalized the organization and took it forward against the Afrika Korps. That campaign ended in victory in Tunisia in May 1943. Afterward, Eighth Army went on to fight in Sicily and Italy, slogging its way north against stout German defenses in

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

TWO WORLD WAR II OUTINGS PREPARE TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO ADDITIONAL PLATFORMS

WAR MONGRELS

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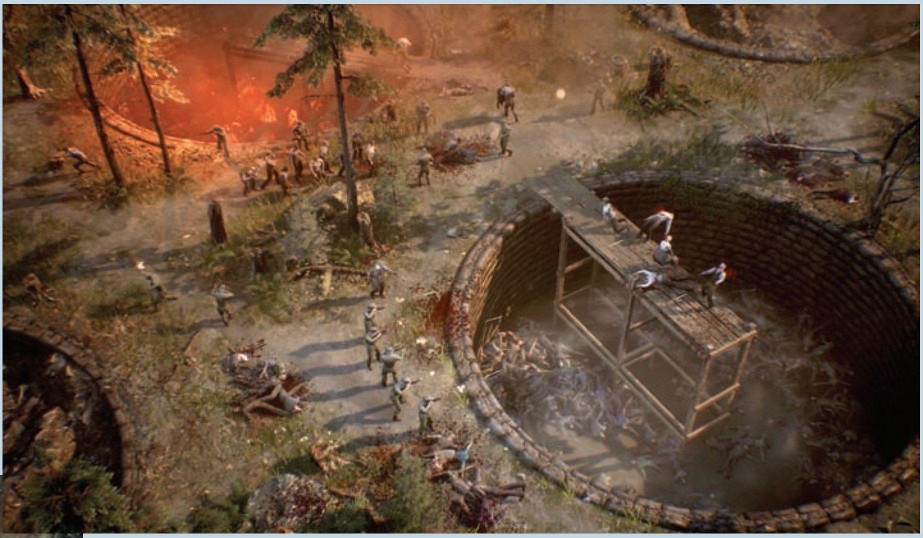


It's been a while since we had a chance to take a look at *War Mongrels*, the real-time World War II tactics game from publisher and developer Destructive Creations. Following a delay, the PC version landed on Steam and the Epic Games Store on October 19, featuring English voice-overs with support for English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Turkish, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Russian, and Simplified Chinese subtitles.

The story centers on a pair of Wehrmacht soldiers who start out fueled by propaganda. Before long, they find their new purpose in fighting back against the expanding Nazi forces that got them into their regrettable situation in the first place, opening their eyes to the horrors of war in the process and eventually meeting other like-minded soldiers who have their own unique skills to bring to the team. In the context of a real-time strategy game, these varied attributes provide a chance to mix up tactics and choose what works best for each situation, from those who specialize in sneaking and distraction to others who are more action-oriented guerrilla fighters.

The characters of *War Mongrels* don't just grow in terms of realizing their purpose, but they also evolve in the way they carry out their own acts of war along the way. While they started out simply hoping to get away from the war entirely, they eventually strive to prevent the unnecessary deaths of innocents who tend to get caught in the crossfire. The team at Destructive Creations promises an appropriately grim storyline, from the overall subject matter to details such as the bodies that remain in the trenches long after each skirmish has ended.

Even if the names aren't attributed to real soldiers who served in the war, there are plenty of true stories highlighting the history behind it all. It's not just about the events, dates, locations, weapons, and units scattered about the game; players will also find in-game historical articles and other artifacts of the time, keeping even the most intense of showdowns grounded in real circumstances. Moves like these are a great way to keep games in the genre from coming off as purely sensational or exploitative. *War Mongrels* doesn't want its players to forget that its events all have a basis in reality; they're just shown through a narrative lens unique to this particular outing.

Those who dig strategy and covert tactics can queue up actions in Planning Mode to set up a sequence of commands and fire them all off at once. Staying hidden and lurking in the shadows will give your squad the opportunity to distract the enemy, perform quick executions, and hide the bodies to keep the presence of your squad concealed. If that's not your bag, though, you can always go into a situation with guns blazing and take on some serious fire fight challenges along the way.

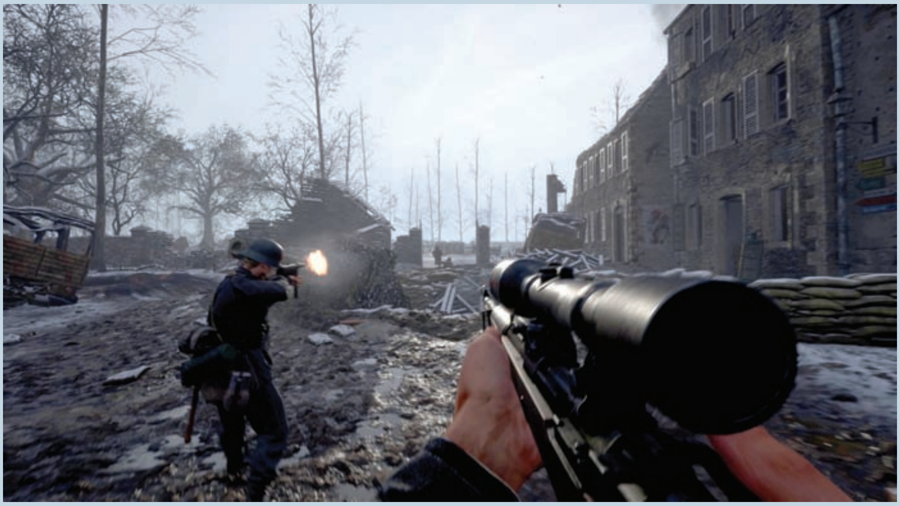
One of the features that makes *War Mongrels* unique is the way it switches out of these strategic moments and pivots into action. If enemies spot your stealthy squad, for instance, you'll be able to switch to twin-stick Combat Mode to shoot your way out of a potentially grim situation. It looks like Destructive Creations has put together something interesting for a few different types of players, and hopefully by the time you read this, the PS4, PS5, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X versions will have joined the PC version in the wild.

HELL LET LOOSE

PUBLISHER TEAM 17 • **GENRE** STRATEGY **SYSTEM** PS5, Xbox Series X • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Back in July, publisher Team 17 and developer Black Matter Party unleashed *Hell Let Loose*, a 50-on-50 World War II strategic squad-based first-person shooter, on PC. Now, the game's brutal places like Monte Cassino and the Gothic Line. Finally, in April 1945, it attacked into Lombardy as the war ended. Soldiers from every nation in the Commonwealth served in Eighth Army, earning 34 Victoria Crosses.

The Eighth Army is one of the United Kingdom's most famous military formations, and this new work reveals its history in a readable, straightforward way. Numerous excerpts from personal accounts add interesting detail to the narrative, describing the various actions at multiple labels. The book contains good maps to help the reader orient to the action, and the photo insert contains a good mix of field shots and images of persons mentioned in the book, from field marshals to Victoria Cross recipients.



brand of warfare has made the leap to current consoles with its recent arrival on PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X, following up on an open beta test that ran on PS5 in September.

The console versions of *Hell Let Loose* support cross-play functionality between platforms, so those who have been playing the PC version will still be able to dive in with their friends if they decide to switch over to consoles. There's also free post-launch content in the form of the Eastern Front maps of Stalingrad and Kursk and the Soviet forces, which will follow the suit of the PC release when the content hits consoles this winter.

The first theater of war to be featured in *Hell Let Loose* takes players to the Norman countryside in the early stages of 1944's Operation Overlord. One of the most attractive features is the sheer scale captured in this and other maps that are currently in the works. According to the devs at Black Matter, it takes approximately fifteen minutes to cross the Norman countryside map on foot. The surroundings include a mix of small villages, dense woodland, winding canals, and open countryside, offering up a bunch of different strategic possibilities along the way.

The battles themselves are waged with over 16 true-to-life rifles, machine guns, and pistols, all of which come with their own realistic limitations. From jamming to overheating and other aspects of weapon limitations, the goal is to get as close to mimicking real issues without making said limitations too overbearing or annoying. There are currently 14 playable roles that come equipped with their own unique weapons and other combat-ready items such as mines, mortars, and anti-tank measures.

Beyond settings and weapons, *Hell Let Loose* is split up into three key levels of warfare: Strategic, Operational, and Tactical. The first involves taking on the role of Commander and deciding on adaptive strategies for your ground forces. Call upon reinforcements and supplies and send in outside strikes to properly respond to the ever-changing field of battle. Operational duties consist of establishing supply lines to bolster forces, and Tactical roles include setting up observation posts and garrisons before settling on the appropriate course of action for each situation.

Whether this is your first time diving into *Hell Let Loose*, or you just want another platform or two to play on, hopefully the battlefields will remain well-populated for the foreseeable future. ☐

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STALIN'S WAR ON JAPAN
THE RED ARMY'S MANCHURIAN STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION 1945
CHARLES STEPHENSON

Stalin's War on Japan: The Red Army's Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation 1945 (Charles Stephenson, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2021, 226 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

The tanks of the Soviet Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group attacked at midnight. Motorized infantry and horse cavalry accompanied the leading columns. Many of the Soviet troops came from the recent fighting in Europe against the Nazis, while the Mongolians knew the border area and locations of Japanese outposts. As promised, the Soviet Union now entered the war against Japan in 1945. The plan required speed to achieve surprise, and it worked. Captured Japanese border guards said they had no idea an attack was coming until tanks appeared in the darkness. Colonel General Issa Pliyev described a "dazzling sea of lights" when his thousands of vehicles turned on their headlights. He called it a "fiery river, breaking free of its banks, and roaring into the depths of Manchuria." By evening the leading units penetrated 70 kilometers past the porous border. Japan's control of Manchuria was about to end as the war entered its final days.

This book provides an in-depth look at the Soviet offensive against Japan in the waning days of World War II. The author covers the campaign at multiple levels, from the high-level interactions between leaders like Truman and Stalin to the battlefield experiences of the participants. He also reveals how Soviet "Deep Battle" concepts shattered the Japanese Army, defeating it in a few weeks. In addition, the author also discusses how the Soviet attack affected Japan's decision to surrender.

THE JUNGLE WAR AGAINST THE JAPANESE
TIM HEATH

The Jungle War against the Japanese: From the Veterans Fighting in Asia 1941 - 1945 (Tim Heath, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2021, 193pp., photographs, appendix, bibliography, $34.95, hardcover)

"As a young lad who joined up to become a soldier, I never imagined the horrors of war that were to come. I returned home not only a victorious Allied soldier, but also a man capable of killing without any remorse whatsoever. I hated them [the Japanese] and I still do to this day." Carl Marksham, a World War II veteran of the British 14th Army, uttered those words in May 2010, almost 65 years after the war ended. The war the British Commonwealth fought against the Japanese Empire in Southeast Asia was unremitting and brutal. The empire trained Japanese soldiers to be merciless and unflinchingly obedient to their officers. Allied troops, upon experiencing this harshness firsthand, responded with measures such as unwritten rules about not taking prisoners. British soldiers had to learn how to survive not only the jungle environment, but an implacable enemy. Beyond this, Japanese treatment of civilians, including the infamous "comfort women," led to widespread hatred and retribution, both in terms of acts of revenge and through war crimes trials after the conflict ended.

This new book examines how British troops adapted to fighting the Japanese and dealt with the cruelty they saw, experienced, and sometimes inflicted. The author does an excellent job portraying the harshness of war and its effects on human beings.

RICHARD CAMP
COMMANDOS
SET EUROPE ABLAZE

Commandos: Set Europe Ablaze (Richard Camp, Casemate Books, Havertown, PA, 2021, 237pp., fiction, $22.95, softcover)

United States Marine Captain Jim Cain and Gunnery Sergeant Leland Montgomery receive unexpected orders to report to the British Army's Commando Basic Training Center, secluded in the Scottish Highlands. The regimen includes assault courses, live-fire exercises, and grueling forced marches. The tough training soon builds a shared bond between the two Marines and their British counterparts. Cain is quartered at the home of a British brigadier with a daughter named Loreena. The young officer finds her fascinating, but before he can get to know her better, training ceases for a real-world mission. Soon Cain and Montgomery are among a squad of men sent to destroy a German radar station on the island of Alderney, due west of Cherbourg, France.

Casemate Books has a long history of publishing high quality military history non-fiction. Lately, they have expanded their range of work to include well written novels using wartime settings. This new work looks at the exploits of Britain's commando forces through two American Marines, a few of the many Americans who cross-trained with the elite commandos during the war. The narrative is clear and engaging, keeping the reader's interest as the wide-ranging plot comes together to a thrilling conclusion. ☐

Guam

Continued from page 47

ambush as they had at Barrigada?

Shortly after noon, the 307th's Second Battalion and two tank companies came storming across the clearing in front of Yigo. Accompanied by squads of riflemen, a dozen M5A1s charged forward only to be stopped midfield by antitank fire coming from their left. Next, 10 M4 Shermans moved up to slug it out with the well-concealed Japanese. Two light and two medium tanks were disabled in this action, which also stalled 2nd Battalion's infantry advance.

While this was going on, however, a rifle platoon from the flanking 3rd Battalion, 306th, maneuvered through heavy undergrowth to get behind the enemy's ambush positions. With bayonets fixed, these fast-moving GIs rushed in to surprise their foe from the rear. Destroyed were dozens of Japanese soldiers, two Type 95 Ha-Go light tanks, one 47mm antitank gun, a pair of 20mm cannon, and eight machine guns—all without a single American casualty.

The Statue of Liberty Division had shown it could now move and fight in the jungle. At 1500 hours on August 8, the 307th reached Mt. Santa Rosa's 830-foot summit after overcoming moderate opposition. The enemy's last-ditch defenses never materialized; most of those Japanese fighting men who remained alive had long since disappeared into the undergrowth. American troops, later augmented by armed Chamorros, would spend months hunting down these fugitives.

Together with U.S. Marines from III Amphibious Corps, Maj. Gen. Bruce's soldiers liberated Guam in a 21-day campaign fought during July and August of 1944. In this clash, their first taste of battle, the Statue of Liberty Division's troops quickly learned the deadly business of ground combat. It cost them 265 G.I.s killed in action, two missing, and 876 men wounded seriously enough to require evacuation.

The 77th Infantry Division was fighting on Leyte in the Philippines when Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers began operating from airfields across the Marianas during January of 1945. One of those bases, North Field, was in fact carved out of the Yigo-Mt. Santa Rosa battlefield on Guam. Today, North Field continues to operate as Andersen AFB, a key forward logistics-support center for U.S. Air Force strategic bombers in the Pacific.

Frequent contributor Patrick J. Chaisson writes for WWII History *on a variety of topics from his home in Scotia, New York.*

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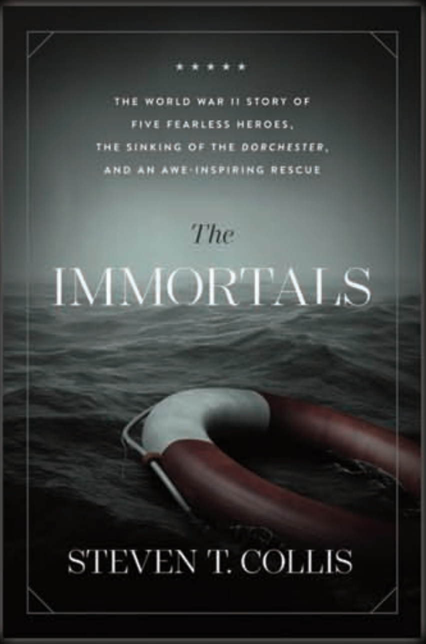
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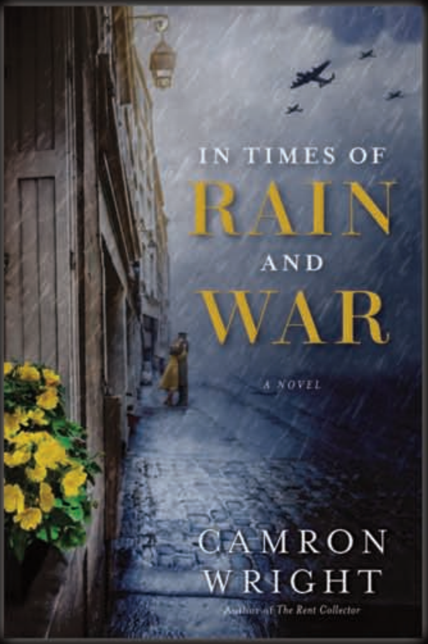
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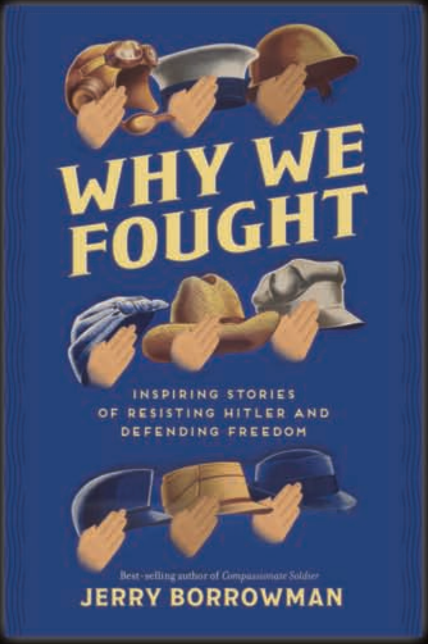
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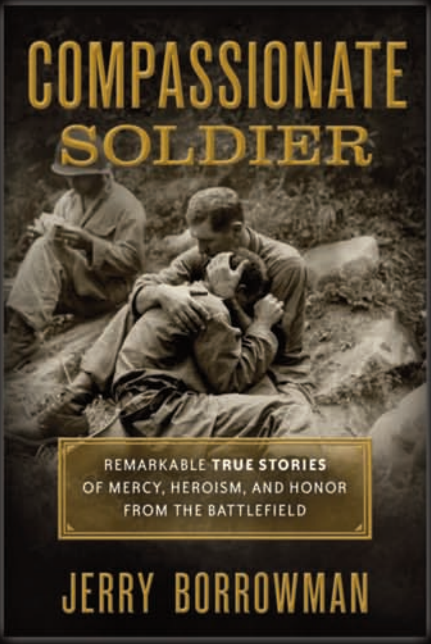
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