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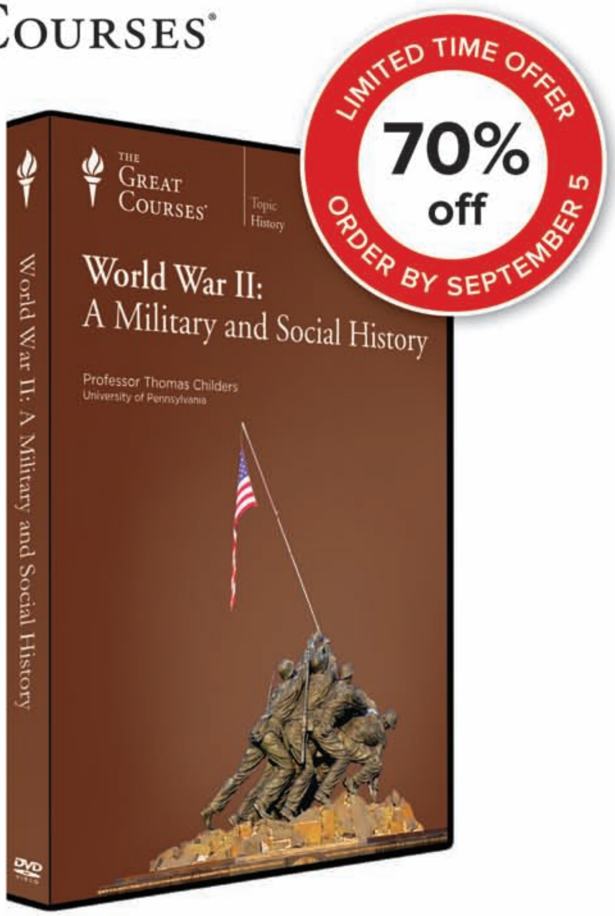
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Contents

August 2015

Features

28 **An Impossible Victory**
After Stalingrad, German victory against the Soviets was not a realistic possibility. Yet there were alternatives to Operation Citadel that could have prolonged the war or brought a stalemate on the Russian Front.
By Valor Dodd

34 **Belgium Besieged**
The German conquest and occupation of Belgium during World War II is a dark chapter in the history of the nation.
By William Floyd

40 **First Time Under Fire**
The U.S. 4th Marine Division experienced enemy action for the first time during the fight for the Japanese-held islands of Roi and Namur.
By Cleve C. Barkley

50 **Heavy Weather for Bull**
A powerful typhoon wreaked havoc with the U.S. Navy's Task Force 38 in December 1944.
By Michael D. Hull

56 **Tank Ambush at Herrlisheim**
An American tank battalion mysteriously disappeared during a bitter winter fight for a French village.
By Nathan N. Prefer

WWII HISTORY

Columns

06 Editorial
The watery grave of the Japanese super battleship *Musashi* has been found.

08 Ordnance
Early in World War II, the Matilda infantry tank added weight to the Commonwealth units in North Africa.

14 Profiles
Aviation pioneer Chuck Yeager was an ace in the European Theater during World War II.

20 Insight
Expatriated Russians and others who fought to liberate their homeland during World War II were summarily executed when the war was over.

26 Top Secret
Italian prisoners of war climbed a mountain in Africa and then returned to their camp.

64 Books
American industry prepared for World War II through a combination of determination, ingenuity, ego, and politics.

76 Simulation Gaming
MachineGames returns to *Wolfenstein* for a stand-alone expansion, offering the perfect excuse to take on the Nazis once again.

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Cover: A German tanker pauses for a smoke during the German Blitzkrieg into Belgium and France in May 1940.

See story page 34.

Photograph: Ullstein Bild / The Granger Collection, New York.

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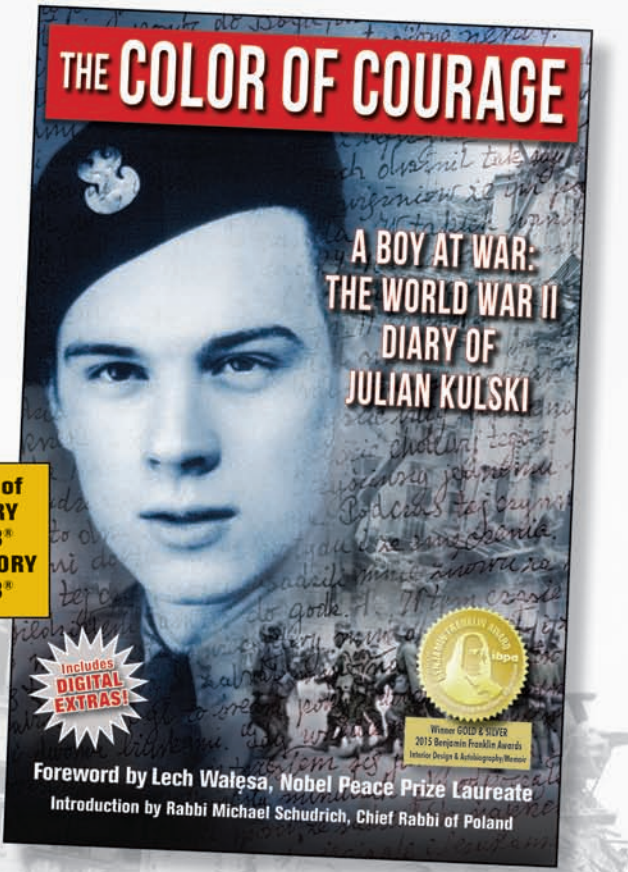

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Editorial

The watery grave of the Japanese super battleship *Musashi* has been found.

PAUL ALLEN IS ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST MEN IN THE WORLD. IN FACT, *FORBES* magazine ranks him 51st with a net worth of approximately $17.5 billion. The reason? He cofounded Microsoft with Bill Gates 40 years ago. Allen's great wealth has allowed him to pursue his dreams. Among them, in 1994 his SpaceShipOne was the first privately financed spacecraft to reach suborbital space. He is now working on a program to deliver cargo and people into space at a reasonable cost. He has also supported numerous charities through the years and is well known for his philanthropy.

Another of Allen's dreams has been to locate the wreckage of the Imperial Japanese Navy World War II-era battleship *Musashi.* Along with her sister, *Yamato, Musashi* was the largest battleship ever constructed. Fully loaded, she displaced 74,000 tons with a beam just over 121 feet, a draft of nearly 36 feet, and a top speed of 27.46 knots. *Musashi* was launched on November 1, 1940, nearly three years after the massive battleship's keel was laid down in March 1938 at the Mitsubishi Shipyard in Nagasaki. The launching itself was quite an event, displacing so much water in the harbor that it created a small tsunami, flooding nearby land and capsizing some fishing vessels. *Musashi* was armed with nine 18.1-inch naval cannons mounted in three triple turrets. Her secondary weapons included a dozen 6.1-inch guns and many others of smaller caliber.

By the autumn of 1944, World War II was going badly for Japan, and on October 20, American forces landed on the Philippine island of Leyte. While General Douglas MacArthur's troops fought on land, the epic Battle of Leyte Gulf was fought at sea. American forces were pressing relentlessly toward the Japanese home islands, and Japanese commanders decided on a desperate gamble to inflict serious losses on their enemy. Their plan committed *Musashi* to her final voyage.

On October 24, 1944, *Musashi* was sunk in the Sibuyan Sea after enduring heavy air attacks. Scores of dive bombers and torpedo planes launched from the decks of no fewer than six American aircraft carriers hit the immense battleship with at least 17 bombs and 19 torpedoes.

For more than 70 years, the wreck lay 1.6 miles beneath the ocean's surface. Then, in March of this year Allen's undersea exploration vessel, M/Y *Octopus,* located the grave of the great ship. Allen tweeted news of the discovery along with numerous photos of the wreck that he believes conclusively identify the battleship as *Musashi.* One of these appears to show the location on the warship's prow where the chrysanthemum emblem of the Japanese nation was once proudly displayed.

Kazushige Todaka, director of Japan's Kure Maritime Museum, hailed the discovery. "There have been so many efforts over the years to locate *Musashi,* but they all failed," he commented. "I feel like the warship might have been destined to show itself this year, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. With the memory of war slipping further and further from people's minds, I hope this discovery will help make the public think about history."

Allen told reporters, "I am honored to play a part in finding this key vessel in naval history and honoring the memory of the incredible bravery of the men who served aboard her. The *Musashi* is truly an engineering marvel, and as an engineer at heart, I have a deep appreciation for the technology and effort that went into its construction. Since my youth, I have been fascinated with World War II history, inspired by my father's service in the U.S. Army."

The apparent location of *Musashi*'s resting place has once again aroused the interest of enthusiasts around the world in discovering the tangible legacy of the greatest war in human history. As time, technology, and interest in the topic grow, other discoveries are waiting.

Michael E. Haskew

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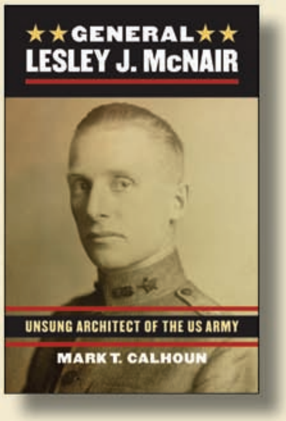
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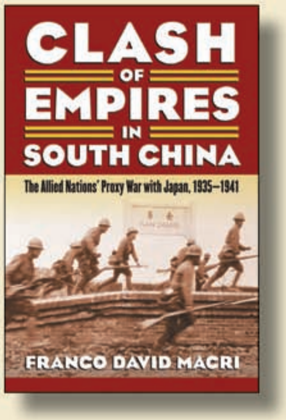
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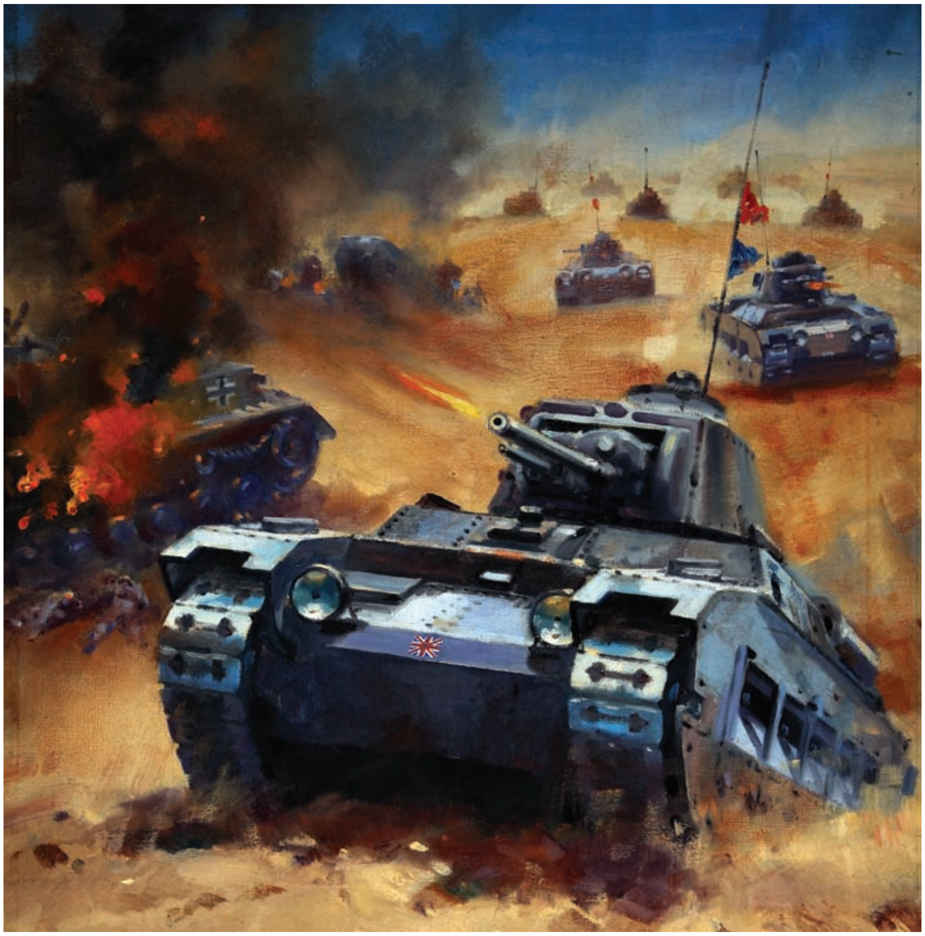

Queen of the Desert

Early in World War II, the Matilda infantry tank added weight to the Commonwealth units in North Africa.

THE ORIGINS OF THE MATILDA INFANTRY OR "I" TANK DATE BACK TO 1934, when Maj. Gen. Percy C.S. Hobart, then the Inspector, Royal Tank Corps (RTC), itemized the features of a new infantry support weapon that would be "moderately well-armoured and equipped with a machine gun, available in large numbers to swamp the enemy defences; or a larger type, mounting a cannon and armoured sufficiently to be proof against field artillery."

Due to finances, Britain's interwar military leaders favored the smaller of Hobart's prototypes, the A11, which was codenamed Matilda. This curious name was derived from a popular feathered cartoon character of the time, Matilda the Duck, because the tank's 27 tons of metal moved about as elegantly as an overweight waddling duck.

The initial A11 offering from Vickers-Armstrong, Ltd., in 1935 was an inexpensive, small, two-man tank that possessed a solitary machine gun, thus, hardly a mechanized weapon to "swamp the enemy defences," but rather a mobile, armored machine gun. By January 1938, as the prospects for war in Europe heightened, the British Army now desired a cannon-armed infantry tank, which was labeled the A12, Matilda Mark I, and was to be produced by the Vulcan Foundry in Cheshire. This tank would have a coaxial Vickers .303-caliber, water-cooled machine gun and a 2-pounder antitank (AT) gun firing armor piercing (AP) rounds only, housed in a three-man turret. The official rationale for the absence of a turret gun capable of firing high-explosive (HE) shells was that this tank was to protect infantry from enemy tanks. Just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the 2-pounder was believed to be the best AT gun in any army.

The first A12 prototype was available by April 1938, and an initial order was placed with Vulcan Foundry for an additional 140 tanks in June 1938. The A12's two understrength 87-horsepower engines were located side by side in the rear half of the chassis. The heavily armored vehicle managed a top speed of 15 miles per hour, which was ample to support infantry. Future events would prove the lack of speed to be a major problem in dealing with the fast-moving German panzers in France and then in North Africa against the Deutsche Afrika Korps (DAK). In reality, over rough desert the Matilda seldom managed speeds of over six miles per hour.

The main virtue of the A12 design was its armor protection. The hull front was to possess 78mm of armor, while the thinnest area of the tank's armor was 20mm, twice as much as that of any other British tank. The thickness of the steel plates would ensure that the A12 would be able to resist the impact of any enemy AT gun presently in use. Another protective feature of the A12 was that the suspension was totally enclosed with deep side skirts containing mud chutes and inspection panels. The Matilda A12 had a crew of four.

In May 1940, when the Wehrmacht's assault began in the West, there were only 23 A12 Matildas out of a desired lot of 100 tanks, and these were all with the 7th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (7th RTR). The other British RTR battalions, notably the 4th Battalion, RTR (4th RTR), had only the A11 Matildas. Although the A12 was invulnerable to the 37mm AT gun that the Germans fielded, it could be destroyed by the Nazi deployment of a "new" artillery weapon. In fact, it was Rommel's own 7th Panzer Division that first utilized the Flak 38 88mm antiaircraft (AA) gun in an AT role as the only means to deal with the heavily armored Matilda A12, Mark I Infantry tanks that suddenly attacked his troops south of Arras in France in May 1940.

In this painting by British war artist W. Krogman, Matilda II tanks rush past the burning hulks of German armor and fire their guns at distant targets. The Matilda in the foreground is emblazoned with a Union Jack on its hull.

These 88mm guns could easily kill the Matilda A12, Mark I at 2,000 yards, twice the effective range of most British guns, especially the I tank's 2-pounder, which could only fire AP solid

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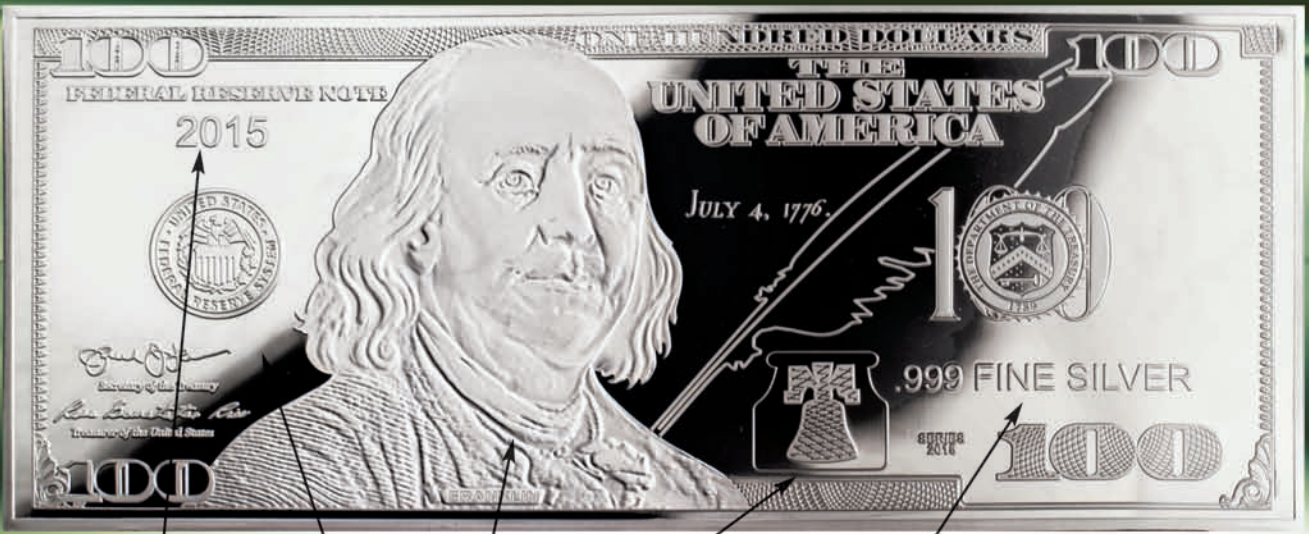
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shot. Lacking HE ammunition, the Matildas facing the 88mm guns without artillery, such as the excellent British 25-pounder field gun, and infantry support were more or less helpless against these Flak 38 guns. Also, since the Wehrmacht's tactic was to exploit enemy fortifications over a wide front, many A11 and A12 tanks experienced both engine and track failures, trying to keep up with the Nazi blitzkrieg.

With the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) evacuation from Dunkirk, every British infantry in France and Belgium was lost. German records claim that about 100 Matildas, mostly A11s, were captured in France. The handful of Matilda A12, Mark I tanks captured in France were not of much use to the Germans except for inspection and analysis. After the evacuation from the Continent, only the 8th Battalion, RTR (8th RTR) had tanks, with twice as many A11 tanks as A12s, and this armored unit was situated in the south of England waiting for the planned German invasion of England, Operation Sealion.

With invasion imminent, production of Matildas continued since there was no time to retool the factories for newer British tanks mounting heavier guns. The Matilda A12, Mark I was modified after the disaster in France to include the British version of the Czech ZB air-cooled .303-caliber Besa machine gun to replace the venerable Vickers machine gun. To accommodate this change, some spatial alterations needed to be made to the turret of the A12, Mark I. Also, the electric pump for the water cooling supply was removed and an extractor fan was positioned in the turret's roof. This modified vehicle was now called Infantry Tank, Matilda Mark II. Within a very short time, it was decided to replace the power units with seven-liter Leyland diesel engines, which could produce 95 horsepower. Another model included modifications to the gearbox and steering systems and was named Infantry Tank, Matilda Mark III. Later Marks (IIICS, IV, IVCS, and V) were produced with the turret modified to mount a 3-inch howitzer to fire smoke rounds to help conceal other 2-pounder gun tanks within the armored unit, hence the designation Matilda Mark IIICS, for close support.

The first Infantry Tank, Matilda Mark II contingent to arrive in Egypt in the autumn of 1940, after the threat of invasion of Britain waned, was with the 7th RTR under Lt. Col. R.M. Jerram. This unit, after two months of desert maneuvers, was to be part of the Western Desert Force, initially composed of the 7th Armored and the 4th Indian Divisions, all under the command of Lt. Gen. Richard O'Connor.

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: An explosion from an Italian bomb rocks a British Matilda II tank during fighting around the vital Libyan port city of Tobruk on October 15, 1941. Although the tank was rapidly becoming obsolete by 1942, the Matilda II served through the end of World War II. BELOW: The hulk of a damaged Matilda II flail tank lies on the beach in Normandy following the Allied landings on D-Day, June 6, 1944. A number of Matildas were modified for special purposes during the war.

National Archives

In early November 1940, O'Connor was appointed an acting lieutenant general in recognition of the increased size of his command and the ranks of his subordinate commanders. The Matildas of the 7th RTR were designed for direct support of infantry and to create a shock wave in the Italian defense positions then being erected on the Egyptian frontier. The Matilda tank, which caused much alarm to Rommel's 7th Panzer Division during the invasion of France and the Low Countries in the spring of 1940, was soon to demonstrate its invulnerability to virtually every Italian gun in the Western Desert during Operation Compass. This infantry tank, thus, had a prominent effect on destroying the morale of the Italian infantry, artillery, and armored troops as the Matilda's 2-pounder outclassed any Italian tank or antitank artillery gun.

O'Connor started Compass with an attack on the Italian camp at Nibeiwa, roughly 12 miles south of Sidi Barrani on the Mediterranean coast, just before dawn on December 9, 1940. He thoroughly surprised the Italians by emerging out of the Western Desert with elements of the 4th Indian Division that had disembarked from Bren carriers supported by 57 Matilda I tanks of the 7th RTR with their guns hammering away at the Italian artillery sangars and infantry field trenches. An Italian Army doctor referred to the Matilda tanks as "the nearest thing to hell I ever saw."

The Italians were overwhelmed as Indian infantry units mopped up what was missed by the assaulting Matildas. As aptly stated by observer Barrie Pitt, "These [Matildas] having brushed aside the Italian tanks, burst through the entrance and fanned out across the camp area like avenging furies.... Their 2-pounders had little to fire at once they were in the camp but their machine guns chattered interminably, cutting down anyone who moved above ground, then concentrating on the gun crews as these proved to be the most determined enemies.... Everywhere the Matildas ranged they flushed dazed, frightened but often desperate Italians and Libyans from covered trenches and slits, from open holes in the ground—some without weapons at all, some with weapons which they dropped as they put their hands up ... leaving death and disorder in their wake." So complete was the victory that more than 4,000 Italians surrendered at Nibeiwa with only two men killed and five wounded in the 7th RTR.

Soon thereafter, of the 50 Matildas engaged in the battle at Sidi Barrani, only one Matilda was destroyed when a tank driver opened the armored visor of his viewing port and an Italian artillery shell went through it at that very moment. As testament to its durability against Italian armor and artillery, one Matilda was hit 38 times and was still fully operational. After numerous successful engagements against the Italians, in what was initially General Wavell's planned reconnaissance in force (sometimes referred to as the "Five Day Raid"), the 7th RTR Matildas and the 4th Indian Division hurled the enemy back to its nearest coastal stronghold at Bardia. The Matilda had earned the sobriquet "Queen of the Desert."

By the end of December 1940, O'Connor was again keen to use the Matildas of 7th RTR to attack Bardia, this time with Australian infantry of the 6th Australian Division. Western Desert Force was redesignated XIII Corps officially on January 1, 1941. On January 3, 1941, a contingent of Matildas accompanied by Australian infantry making their combat debut in World War II advanced as Italian artillery was completely unable to halt the infantry tanks.

One Matilda commander described the state of his armored vehicle after storming the Italian coastal fortress with the comment, "Anything breakable, radio aerials, water cans, lights, etc. had vanished, and evidence of no less than 46 direct hits, which says a lot for the Matilda." On January 5, a set-piece attack with tanks and artillery was launched on the remaining Italian positions at Bardia. Six Matildas participated, and by midday the battle was over with thousands of Italians from the 45,000-man garrison surrendering.

In mid-January, the Italian defenses at the major Libyan port city of Tobruk were the last challenge for the Matildas of the 7th RTR. Some Italians who had escaped from Bardia to Tobruk had forewarned the defenders there of the "invincibility of the terrible Matildas." The only consolation for the Italians was that the Australian infantry was moving so quickly that the 7th RTR and its relatively slow Matilda tanks could not keep up. Lt. Col. R.M. Jerram, commander of the 7th RTR, had imposed a strict half-speed limit (7.5 mph) on the Matildas when out of contact with the enemy to save wear and tear on their engines and vulnerable steering mechanisms.

The final attack on Tobruk was postponed until January 21 to allow as many Matildas as possible to be ready for the assault. The passage across Tobruk's escarpment was especially difficult for the Matildas since they had to be hauled by heavy artillery tractors to save their engines from further wear. Even with the assistance of the hauling vehicles, only 18 Matildas were available for the January 21 attack. A troop of Matildas entered Tobruk's harbor at 10 AM on January 22. Two hours later, all organized Italian resistance had ceased. The 7th RTR's Matildas, after traveling an average of 1,200 miles, had to be withdrawn by both rail and ship for heavy refitting and maintenance.

Famed author and armor proponent Captain Sir Basil Liddell-Hart commented, "The history of war shows no case of a single fighting unit having such a great effect in deciding the issue of battles." O'Connor wrote Jerram, "It has been a wonderful show, and you are more than ever responsible for its success."

With the appearance of the Nazis in the

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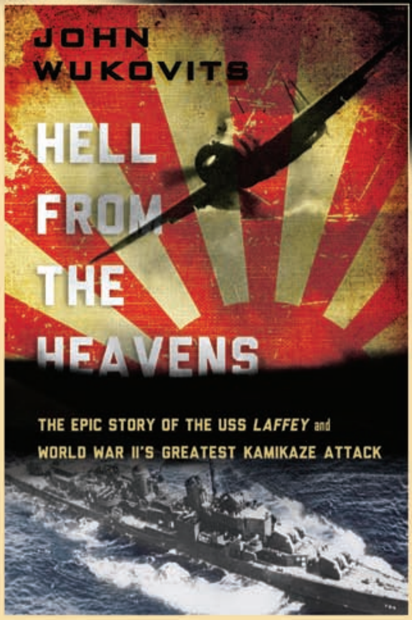
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North African littoral in early 1941, the German PzKpfw. III battle tank mounting a 50mm gun reached the battlefields of the desert war. Also, the German 50mm Pak 38 AT gun could penetrate the front of a Matilda using composite rigid shot. The DAK also had a number of heavier Panzer IVs, which carried 75mm guns. Also, the German tanks carried dual-purpose guns capable of firing AP and HE rounds, while the Matilda only fired solid-shot AP shells, of little use against AT guns and infantry positions.

Despite its evolving obsolescence, the number of Matildas in the Middle Eastern Theater continued to increase. Both the 7th RTR and the 4th RTR took part in Wavell's Operations Brevity and Battleaxe in May and June 1941. Wavell was pinning his hopes for success in these operations in part on the proven durability of the Matildas. However, both attacks, aimed at reclaiming the coastal region along the Libyan-Egyptian frontier and raising the siege of Tobruk, failed with many Matildas lost at long range. Of the 100 or so Matildas that participated in Battleaxe with the 4th Armored Brigade on the morning of June 15, only 37 were still capable of action when night fell, although the tank fitters would have 11 more ready by the following morning.

Curiously, a captured German officer claimed that about 20 Matildas had broken through the Axis lines during Battleaxe near Fort Capuzz and advanced on a defenseless Bardia, where only German administrative units were posted. However, these Matildas ran into a battery of German 88s stationed there for air defense. The guns destroyed all of the British tanks. After Battleaxe, Wavell was replaced by General Claude Auchinleck as Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.

Elements of the 42nd and 44th RTR of the 1st Army Tank Brigade, comprising roughly 65 Matildas, took part in Auchinleck's Operation Crusader battles that resulted in the relief of Tobruk. Approximately 70 Matildas of the 32nd Army Tank Brigade were also located within the Tobruk perimeter. On November 27, 1941, Matildas of the 32nd Army Tank Brigade from Tobruk met troops of the New Zealand Division near El Duda, raising the 240-day siege of Tobruk.

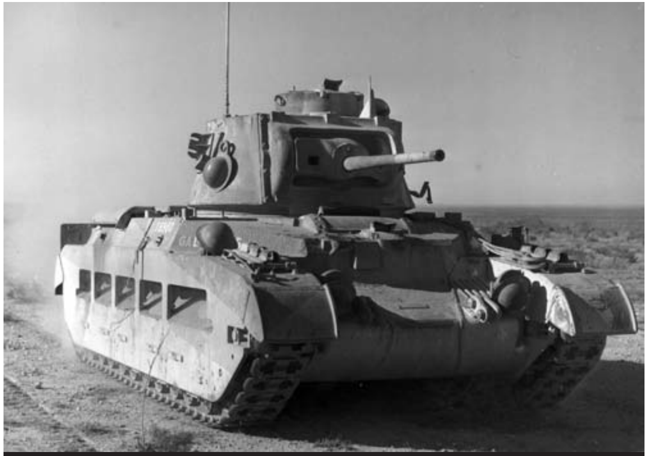
The last production order for 75 Matilda tanks was made in the spring of 1942, when the design clearly had become obsolete. However, the Matildas were implemented in a variety of different roles in the deserts of North Africa. The Gazala battles of May-June 1942 resulted in General Erwin Rommel's DAK retaking Tobruk on June 21, 1942, and the pell-mell retreat of Auchinleck's Eighth Army to the

Egyptian frontier. A few Matildas covered the withdrawal of British and Commonwealth infantry from their fixed positions.

At Ruweisat Ridge during Auchinleck's First Battle of El Alamein in July, four close-support Matildas mounting 3-inch howitzers to fire smoke rounds as cover for other tanks participated in a suicidal charge with Valentine tanks of the 23rd Armored Brigade with only one Matilda surviving. During the pivotal Second Battle of El Alamein at the end of October, British General Bernard Montgomery, now commanding the Eighth Army, utilized Scorpions, old Matildas fitted with revolving drums and chains to detonate mines by thrashing the ground ahead of the remaining armor and infantry. Twenty-four of these Scorpions participated in the Second Battle of El Alamein. A Matilda Baron Mark III was also developed to not only clear minefields with its flail but also to chop through barbed wire and excavate earthworks.

In other Mediterranean locales, a squadron of 16 Matildas was shipped from England to Port Sudan to be part of the 4th RTR spearhead in the British attack against the Italians in Eritrea in early 1941. In rough terrain, this squadron covered hundreds of miles on its original tracks to help defeat a much greater Italian force, ultimately enabling the British to gain access to the Red Sea. On the island of Crete in May 1941, New Zealand General Bernard Freyberg had nine Matildas from the 7th RTR that were shipped from North Africa. However, these tanks were lost when the island fell to the Germans in late May 1941.

Imperial War Museum



A Matilda II tank of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment advances across the Western Desert on December 19, 1940. The Matilda provided tremendous service with Commonwealth armored formations as they battled German and Italian forces in North Africa.

In the Pacific Theater, Australian forces obtained more than 400 Matildas from Britain and New Zealand between 1942 and 1944. Matilda A12s assisted Australian infantry in New Guinea, Bougainville, Tarakan, the Labuan Islands, and northern Borneo. These infantry tanks fought on roads no wider than jungle tracks. Additionally, the Matilda CS variant with its 3-inch howitzer proved effective against Japanese bunkers.

The Australians installed a telephone set on the rear of the Matilda's hull, which enabled squad and platoon commanders to directly communicate with the tankers when they were buttoned up. During interrogations after the war, it became apparent that Japanese defenders often fled from their fortifications rather than confront these Matilda bunker busters.

Jon Diamond practices medicine and writes from Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History. His Osprey Publishing Combat Series #10 book Chindit versus Japanese Infantryman 1943-1944 *was released in February 2015.*

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By Eric Niderost

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ABOVE: Famed American aviator and test pilot Chuck Yeager sits in the cockpit of the experimental Bell X-1 aircraft on September 26, 1947. Two weeks later, Yeager shattered the sound barrier, achieving a speed of Mach 1 in the aircraft. BELOW: This wartime photo of 1st Lt. Chuck Yeager was taken in October 1944. He is standing on the wing of his North American P-51D-5-NA Mustang fighter plane named *Glamorous Glenn II*.

Chuck Yeager: Fighter Pilot

The aviation pioneer was an ace in the European Theater during World War II.

MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES "CHUCK" YEAGER, UNITED STATES Air force (Ret.), is one of a handful of people who can rightly claim the title "living legend." He is best remembered as the first human being ever to break the sound barrier, a feat that some scientists claimed was impossible. Yeager achieved Mach 1 aboard the experimental Bell X-1, which he named *Glamourous Glennis* after his wife. The date was October 14, 1947, and his flight is considered a milestone in aerospace history.

But Yeager's much heralded feats as a test pilot in the 1940s and 1950s have obscured his World War II record, a record that equals—and perhaps surpasses—anything he ever did for the aerospace industry. He was a P-51 Mustang ace, fighting the Luftwaffe in the skies over Europe. Shot down, he managed to evade capture and successfully reached neutral Spain. Perhaps most remarkable of all, Yeager managed to return to combat, even though it was against official policy at the time.

U.S. Air Force

Charles Elwood "Chuck" Yeager was born on February 13, 1923, in Myra, a small farming community in West Virginia. Later, when Chuck was about three or four, the family moved to Hamlin, a town of some 400 souls. The Yeager family and their neighbors were mountaineers for the most part, the kind of folk that outsiders ridiculed as "hillbillies."

Though firmly rooted in the 20th century, Yeager's childhood reads in part like *Huckleberry Finn* with a touch of young Abe Lincoln. Farm chores like slopping the hogs and milking the cow were part of the daily routine. Boys went barefoot in the summer and enjoyed hunting, fishing, or taking a plunge in the old "swimming hole."

Chuck was the second of five children. His father, Albert Yeager, was a tough and honest man who eventually worked as a natural gas driller. A talented mechanic, he seemed to relish tinkering with his old Chevy truck and the generators and motors used in his drilling equipment. Young Chuck inherited this ability along with an almost insatiable curiosity about how things worked. These traits would stand him in good stead during World War II.

Young Yeager was also an experienced hunter and a crack shot, characteristics that would help him achieve success as a fighter pilot. He shot rabbits with a .22 rifle at age six, bringing them home to supplement the family's food supply. By the time he was a teenager, steady nerves, keen eyesight, and great muscle control and coordination made him stand out even in a region where marksmen were commonplace.

But Yeager had a strong desire to see the world that lay beyond the craggy mountains and narrow hollows of rural West Virginia. When an Army Air Corps recruiter came by, young Chuck eagerly signed on for a two-year hitch. He was going to be an airplane mechanic. It seemed an obvious choice because he had natural talents in that direction. He was one of the few young men in the area who could take apart and reassemble an engine with amazing precision and real enthusiasm.

Ironically, he had no interest in flying at the time. He records that the first airplane he saw up close was a Beechcraft that

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had crash landed in a cornfield along West Virginia's Mud River. It was a decidedly inauspicious encounter, and the experience left him unmoved.

Chuck Yeager enlisted as a private in the U.S. Army Air Forces on September 12, 1941, and was assigned to George Air Force Base at Victorville, California. His mechanical abilities and natural curiosity were so great he soon knew airplanes inside and out, right to the very last bolt. But there were some military duties that were not much to his taste, like guard duty and "KP." Perhaps there was a way to escape such onerous assignments.

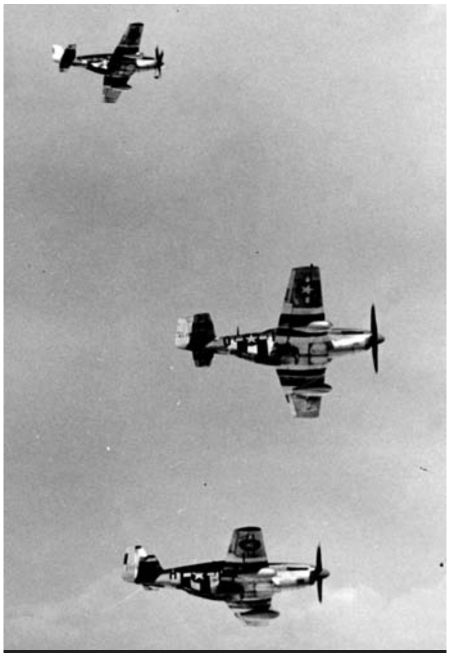
The young mechanic started thinking about becoming a pilot but discovered his relative youth and his educational background were against him. Pilots usually had a college education; Yeager was a high school graduate. But then Yeager saw a notice that announced a "flying sergeant" program. Once accepted, you would become a noncommissioned officer and a pilot to boot. This sounded like heaven to Yeager, a promotion and escape from boring duties like KP.

Rarely has a distinguished aviation career begun so casually or so inauspiciously. At this point the young cadet still had no real desire to fly. Indeed, it is a miracle he stayed with the program. His first fight was a disaster, with the would-be pilot becoming so violently airsick he threw up all over the cockpit. But Yeager slowly—and at times painfully—became used to flying. His natural abilities as a pilot, long dormant, came to the fore.

By his own admission, Yeager's first solo flight was rough, and when he landed he bounced down the field like any other raw novice. But he improved rapidly, and after 15 hours in the air he was the best pilot in his class, so skilled his instructor assumed he had been an aviator in civilian life. But perhaps more importantly, he now loved flying. As Yeager says in his autobiography, "The joy of flying—the sense of speed and exhilaration … makes you so damned happy that you want to shout for joy."

By this time America was in the war, and the pressing need for pilots changed the rules. By the time Yeager got his wings, he became a noncommissioned flight officer. He graduated on March 10, 1943 and was assigned to the 357th Fighter Group at Tonopah, Nevada. The main equipment used was the Bell P-39 Airacobra, and the fledgling pilots were put through their paces from dawn to dusk, six days a week.

National Archives



After escorting a flight of heavy bombers over a target in Nazi-occupied Europe, this formation of North American P-51 Mustang fighters is breaking away, possibly to search for enemy aircraft. Yeager became an ace during World War II but was also shot down and forced to evade capture.

The P-39 was something of an odd duck, with some modern features wedded to strange engineering choices. The engine, for example, was mounted behind the cockpit. Its turbo-supercharger was not very efficient, which meant it was a failure as a high-altitude fighter. The British initially were interested in it but ultimately rejected the design. Among other things it was discovered that constant firing of the P-39's 37mm cannon would produce deadly fumes that could fill a cockpit and actually threaten a pilot's life.

Eventually, these problems were somewhat overcome, and the P-39 enjoyed a good reputation in Russian service in close-air support missions. Chuck Yeager and the 30-odd men of the 357th seem to have enjoyed flying the Airacobra, whatever its reputation. Out in the desert they were free to fly to their heart's content, practicing strafing and dogfights hour after hour.

Not all was lighthearted fun. Combat flying, even simulated combat flying, was a dangerous business, where poor judgment or poor skills or just plain bad luck could cost a pilot his life. In six months 13 men of Yeager's group were killed, an accident/kill rate that was so high it nearly cost the 357th Group commander his job.

Yeager freely admits he did not mourn the pilots who crashed. In the Air Forces, the euphemism was they "bought the farm." It was a process that was Darwinian, a classic case of "survival of the fittest." While angered that these men wasted their lives through stupid mistakes, Yeager was not sorry to see them go. He reasoned rightly that poor fighter pilots would be the first ones to be killed overseas. And in real combat situations a stupid mistake might cost the lives of others, too.

Conditions were primitive in Tonopah, but the men did not care. They were housed in tarpaper shacks, the desert wind howled incessantly, and at night temperatures chilled to the bone. But to the men of the 357th, the skies were their real home, while the shacks were just a temporary place to sleep between flights.

For recreation Yeager and his buddies hit Tonopah, which was an old silver mining town. They patronized the Tonopah Club, drinking bourbon whiskey and rye until they could barely walk. For those who wanted further entertainment and were not too drunk to enjoy it, there was a stop at Madame Taxine's, the local brothel. But soon the fighter group was ordered to California and then to Wyoming to complete its training.

It was in Casper, Wyoming, while staging simulated attacks on Consolidated B-24 bomber defensive boxes, that Yeager almost bought the farm. He was in mock attack mode, speeding in at 400 miles per hour, when suddenly the P-39's engine exploded behind him. Flames shot in every direction as pieces of the plane detached from the fuselage. Yeager somehow managed to bail out, but the accident left him in the hospital with a fractured back.

Yeager recovered, and before long the 357th got its orders to go overseas. The group departed the States on November 23, 1943, to join the Eighth Air Force. Its duties were varied, including strafing missions and escorting B-24 bombers. The 357th flew North American P-51 Mustangs, arguably the finest American fighter of the war. Yeager's first mission took place on February 11, 1944, and today he candidly admits that the pilots were all scared to death.

It was a routine mission over the French coast, and though no German fighters came up to meet them they did have to go through heavy clouds of flak, the dreaded German antiaircraft fire. Even in those early missions there were periods of hair-raising adventure.

Chuck Yeager soon found he had all the qualities needed to become a top fighter pilot, including a hunter's instincts, quick reflexes, and superb eyesight (his visual acuity was 20/10). By most accounts his first fighter was a P-51B, which he handled superbly. Yeager chalked up his first kill over Berlin, shooting down a Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter with relative ease. The 21-year-old pilot was living up to his name, since Yeager is an Anglicized version of the German Jaeger, meaning hunter.

However, the fortunes of war can suddenly change. The next day, March 5, 1944, Yeager

U.S. Air Force

GLAMOROUS GLEN III
414

Another of Yeager's North American P-51 Mustangs, this plane is named *Glamorous Glen III.*

was himself shot down about 50 miles east of Bordeaux. It all happened so suddenly that, quick though his reflexes were, he hardly had time to react. A Focke Wulf FW-190 fighter got lucky, sending a steady stream of hot 20mm lead into Yeager's Mustang. The American's plane seemed to explode, the engine catching fire and spouting fingers of orange-yellow flame.

The burning Mustang began to roll, corkscrewing down to earth like a meteor. Yeager just managed to bail out at 16,000 feet but fought a natural desire to pull the ripcord and deploy his parachute. He knew that if he opened the chute too soon, it would take longer to descend to the ground and that would make him easy prey for German fighters.

After what must have seemed like an eternity, Yeager pulled the ripcord and floated down into a patch of heavily wooded French countryside. Once on the ground he took stock of his situation. Yeager had shrapnel wounds on his legs and hands and a deep gash in his forehead. He put some sulfa powder on his wounds and glanced over a silk map all pilots carried for occasions such as these.

Yeager was cold, scared, and probably in pain from his wounds, though perhaps the adrenaline that coursed though his body somewhat numbed the lacerations. He was in a tight spot, and he knew it. Yet, stubborn courage combined with the cockiness of youth to produce a curious optimism. He was a country boy and knew how to survive in a forest if he had to.

Yeager realized he was not out of the woods, literally or figuratively. Ever so often a German scout plane would circle like a bird of prey while he ducked for cover. They had not spotted him yet—or at least, he hoped not. For all he knew his position was already reported, and a German patrol might have been dispatched to pick him up.

Like all American fighter pilots he was armed with a .45 pistol, but Yeager knew he could not fight it out with a heavily armed German patrol. But there were two factors that gave him some reason to be optimistic: he was on French soil, and in southern France to boot. Neutral Spain was not that far away, relatively speaking, and if he could somehow make it across the Pyrenees Mountains he would be safe.

Yeager also knew it was good luck to be on French soil. There was a strong possibility he might make contact with the French Resistance. If he had been shot down over Germany, the chance of escape, at times even survival, was nil. German civilians had been increasingly angered by the incessant Allied bombing campaign, and downed pilots were sometimes killed on the spot.

The first night was probably the worst. The German planes stopped searching, at least for the moment, but a cold rain dampened Yeager's spirits as well as his body. He chewed on a stale chocolate bar, a remnant of his survival kit, then tried to bed down under his parachute. Yeager dozed a bit, but for the most part was unable to sleep. Clutching his .45, the downed pilot stared into the inky void, ears straining to hear the possible approach of danger.

The next morning, cold, stiff, and tired from his nocturnal vigil, Yeager suddenly spotted a man nearby, a French woodcutter, but the axe the man was carrying looked formidable. The woodcutter had not seen him yet. Now, the fact that the man was not a German soldier was a step in the right direction, but Yeager still had to exercise caution. There were French collaborators, those who supported the pro-German Vichy government.

Yeager jumped the man and waved his .45 in the Frenchman's face. The woodcutter did not speak English, so Chuck resorted to pidgin: "Me American. Need help. Find underground." Though obviously scared of the pistol, the woodcutter seemed to understand the basic

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message. He let loose a stream of rapid-fire French, but Yeager got the basic premise. The woodcutter was going to get another man who spoke English and might help.

The woodcutter soon returned with a companion, an old man who declared, "American, a friend is here. Come out." The old man was a guide, so Yeager followed him. The pair walked through the heavily wooded countryside, pausing ever so often to hear the muffled sounds of German voices echoing through the trees. German patrols were still scouring the forest for him.

The old man took Yeager to an isolated stone farmhouse in a clearing. The American was taken inside a barn then led up to the hayloft. The old man gestured to Yeager that he should enter a tool closet, and once the pilot was inside hay was stacked against the closed door. Later, Yeager heard German voices in the hayloft, possibly hunting for him. Yeager was dripping with sweat, his finger on the .45's trigger.

The Germans finally left, and after a few hours in the stifling tool closet the old Frenchman came back for him. "They're gone," the senior reassured then took Yeager to the main farmhouse. It was owned by a middle-aged Frenchwoman who spoke perfect English. He was fed, and a local doctor treated his wounds. After he stayed in the hayloft for almost a week, the French doctor returned and told him he was going to be moved.

Yeager was given civilian clothes, complete with an axe strapped on his back, a common custom among French woodcutters. Transportation was by bicycle, and Yeager was given false identity papers if stopped by a German patrol. The pilot and the doctor had a pleasant two-day journey, finally arriving at a farmhouse in the village of Nerac. The place was not too far from Roquefort, famed for its cheese.

The farmhouse was owned by a Frenchman named Gabriel, a bluff and hearty Gaul who sported a big black mustache. Gabriel in turn led Yeager into the mountains, whose craggy peaks were carpeted by thick forests. It was there they met a group of heavily armed men in black berets. Yeager did not need an introduction. It was obvious they were a unit of the Maquis, or French Resistance.

There were 26 men in this particular group, all heavily armed with British Sten guns and Spanish .38 Llama automatics. It was only March, so no attempt to cross the Pyrenees could be risked until the snow from the upper peaks melted. Yeager would stay with the Maquis for a time, sharing their dangerous life until it was judged a good time to cross the mountains.

The Maquis lived a peripatetic life, constantly on the move to avoid German patrols. They would hide out in the woods and mountains during the day, emerging when darkness fell. Sometimes they would act as saboteurs, blowing up bridges or destroying German military trains. Other times they might ambush German patrols, turning the tables on their would-be pursuers. Yeager did not actually go out on any missions, but he did assist in other ways when he could.

Once, after a night supply drop from a British Royal Air Force Avro Lancaster bomber, some of the cargo was found to contain bundles of plastic explosives as well as timing devices and fuses. Yeager was familiar with such items, having helped his dad shoot gas wells with plastique explosives, and was happy to lend a hand. He showed his Gallic companions how to set up various timings for the explosives, and they were delighted. For the time he was with them, Yeager became a Maquis "fuse man."

Yeager's sojourn with the Maquis was risky in more ways than one. He was in civilian clothes, aiding and abetting a resistance group. That meant he was not protected by the rules regarding prisoners in the Geneva Convention. If captured, he would probably be turned over to the Gestapo for interrogation, torture, and ultimately execution by rifle or machine gun.

Finally, it was deemed safe enough to travel over the Pyrenees. However, the concept of safety applied only to the weather, not other dangers. The border between France and Spain was heavily patrolled by the Germans, and the mountain passes and ravines would still be bitterly cold and choked with snow. Yeager found himself concealed in a truck along with three or four other Allied evader/escapees headed for the foothills.

Yeager was paired with another American named Pat, who had been part of a B-24 crew that had been shot down over France. Their French hosts supplied them with ample food and clothing for the journey; both men were young and strong and eager to set off. But they soon found their progress slowed by knee-deep snow, wet and viscous enough to make each step exhausting agony.

Soon they were forced to rest every 10 to 15 minutes, and a cold, biting wind chilled them to the bone. After a march of four days they started to wonder if they were lost. Just when they were at the limits of their endurance they bumped into an empty lumberman's cabin. It seemed like a dream as they crumpled to the floor and slept.

But the dream turned into a nightmare when they were rudely awakened by German bullets whizzing through the cabin. A German patrol was just outside, but instead of attempting to capture the fugitives the soldiers unslung their weapons and opened fire. The Americans scrambled out of the cabin somehow, found a log chute, and rode down the flume before the Germans could react.

The two Americans slid down rapidly and were deposited in a cold but deep pond at the bottom of a hill. In other circumstances it might have been funny, but Yeager discovered Pat was seriously wounded. Pat was ashen and lapsed into unconsciousness, and it was soon clear the airman was bleeding to death. A German bullet had severed most of Pat's leg.

There was nothing much Yeager could do but take a pen knife and sever the remaining tendon, completing the amputation. After staunching the bleeding, he then carried his companion through miles of snow-covered ground. Yeager refused to abandon Pat, only doing so when he was convinced the wounded man was dead. Later, Yeager discovered that Pat had been found by the Spanish Guarda Civil, weak but alive. Pat eventually was sent home and survived the war.

Now alone, Yeager stumbled on. He reached Spain and turned himself into the police in a small village. Yeager was allowed to check into a local hotel, and before long the nearest American consul showed up at his door. The American pilot was technically interned, but in reality it was a six-week wait in an Alma de Aragon resort hotel. All expenses were paid by the U.S. government.

Yeager seems to have enjoyed himself, soaking up the sun, eating (he gained 20 pounds), and flirting with pretty chambermaids. While the pilot lived a life of relative luxury, U.S. authorities negotiated with the Spanish government for his release. Eventually, a deal with struck. Six evader airmen, including Yeager, would be released in exchange for gasoline.

Now officially free, Yeager looked forward to going back home and marrying his sweetheart Glennis. He returned to England to pick up his things before going on to the States, but while there he experienced a change of heart. Officially, anyone who managed to evade capture was out of the war. It was reasoned that if he returned to combat, he might get captured again.

If recaptured, an airman might be tortured to reveal the names of those who helped him, or even the locations where the Maquis liked to hide. Yeager understood this, but the idea of "running away" while his buddies fought on was a notion too painful to bear. He was, by his own admission, a "stubborn cuss."

Yeager decided he was going to stay, come hell or high water, and was willing to go right up the chain of command if necessary. It was necessary. On the whole, the brass gave him a sympathetic ear because he was the first fighter pilot evader to actually it make to back to base.

In fact, Yeager managed to secure an interview with General Dwight D Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force just then gearing up for the invasion of Nazi-occupied France.

After surviving air combat, being shot down, and even enemy bullets on the ground, ironically Yeager almost fell victim to a German V-1 attack on London. He was in his hotel room preparing to see Eisenhower when he heard what he later described as a put-put-put that sounded like a jet engine. It was a V-1 flying bomb, one of the infamous buzz bombs or "doodlebugs" that the Germans launched on the British capital in 1944.

Yeager took a look out the window just in time to see the V-1's engine cut out and the bomb itself plunge to earth from an altitude of about 1,500 feet. The pilot hit the deck of his hotel room just as the V-1 exploded a few blocks away. The meeting with the supreme commander went on as scheduled.

General Eisenhower was sympathetic, and in the end Yeager was allowed to stay. By the time the decision was made, the Allies had already invaded France, obviating the need to protect the Maquis. His fighter group was happy to see him, though he was kidded about his escape: "Yeager, when are you going to do things right? When you are shot down, you are supposed to stay down!"

The period from summer 1944 to winter 1945 was the peak of Chuck Yeager's World War II career. He was finally promoted to lieutenant and ended the war as a captain. He excelled in the dogfight, a man-to-man, plane-to-plane duel in which skill was just as important as courage. It was during this period that he flew the P-51D-20NA, which he named *Glamorous Glenn* after his stateside intended.

Yeager became an ace in a day on October 12, 1944, though the first two credited kills were unique. Yeager bagged them without firing a shot. As he was closing in on one Me-109, the German banked sharply and ran into his wingman. Both pilots bailed out, giving Yeager credit for two Messerschmitts. The other three kills were earned the old fashioned way—skill, daring, and a little luck.

In the fall of 1944, the German Messerschmitt Me-262 jet fighter went into service, albeit in relatively small numbers. Nazi policy seemed to focus on the Allied bombers, so fighter pilots like Yeager rarely encountered one. When they did, the jets were so fast they could easily outdistance any attacker. But Yeager got lucky when he caught an Me-262 in the process of landing and shot it up. This was not as "romantic" as a one-on-one duel, but did have real hazards. As he pounced on the jet, German antiaircraft units guarding the field peppered the sky with flak.

Strafing targets was a distasteful duty, but often necessary. German or French civilians might be in the way, but mission strategy trumped conventional morality. The object of war is to win, and in World War II the dividing line between combatant and innocent civilian was sometimes blurred. If a target was near a farmhouse or a hotel, civilians might be killed. Though he would do what was necessary, Yeager preferred the straightforward challenges of dogfighting.

There was some glamour attached to being a fighter pilot, but Yeager willingly admits that it was not all fun and gallantry. On a typical mission he would take off at 8 AM. Before going aloft there would be many things to take care of like properly suiting up and being attentive in a morning briefing.

But even the small things like going to the toilet assumed a certain importance. Yeager, earthy but honest, has said you had to "pee" before leaving the ground. The elimination tube would usually be frozen solid, and a pilot knew he would be in the cockpit for at least six hours, maybe more. Much of the time he would be at 30,000 feet, and despite a small heater his body would be "frozen" from the waist down. At least his head and upper torso might catch a few warming rays from the sun.

The cabin in the cockpit was not pressurized, so a P-51 pilot would have to clip on his oxygen mask. Even so, at 30,000 feet a man might get easily fatigued. By the time he got back from a mission he was stiff, sore, and utterly exhausted. And yet through it all Yeager loved the life of a fighter pilot. There is no question most of the others loved it as well.

Captain Yeager flew his last combat mission on January 15, 1945. It was a clear and beautiful day, unusual for wintertime Europe, and he was flying with his close friend Clarence E "Bud" Anderson, a great fighter pilot in his own right. He was ordered back home, returning to the States in February 1945. He had flown 64 combat missions, some 270 hours. He was credited with 12½ kills.

Chuck Yeager went on to achieve great fame as a test pilot. And yet he should also be remembered for his outstanding record in World War II. As he once put it, "I don't deny I was damned good. If there is such a thing as 'the best,' I was at least one of the contenders."

Eric Niderost is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He writes from California, where he is also a college professor.*

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Stalin's Enemies

Expatriated Russians and others who fought to liberate their homeland during World War II were summarily executed when the war was over.

BETWEEN 1944 AND 1947, OVER TWO MILLION RUSSIANS WHO HAD BEEN LIVING in the occupied countries of Europe, some voluntarily, some not, were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union. Many met death by execution immediately, while others were literally worked to death in the hundreds of gulags that dotted the largest slave society in history.

Whether these individuals were civilian or soldier, Soviet Premier Josef Stalin reasoned that anyone who had been living outside the borders of the Soviet Union was to be considered contaminated by anti-Soviet ideology and therefore could not be trusted. It mattered not that many had been forcibly removed from their homeland by the former German enemy.

Approximately one million of the expatriates were military men who for various reasons took up arms against Stalin and volunteered to fight with Germany. Most, but not all, were Soviet citizens. Never before in the annals of warfare had so many soldiers abandoned their own side to fight for the enemy. The reasons for this say more about the horror of life under the Bolsheviks after the 1917 Revolution than Hitler's Germany. Sadly, these happenings also say much about the British and to a lesser extent the Americans, many of whom were willing participants in the forced repatriation. It would not be until the 1980s that the awful truth began to emerge, that the world eventually knew as the Secret Betrayal.

They were a disparate group, these Russians who wanted to stay in the West. Thousands had fled Russia at the time of the Revolution and had never lived in what became the Soviet Union. They all held citizenship in other countries. Before fleeing, many had fought with the White Army and for the czar against the Red Army and the Communists, then better known as the Bolsheviks. Therefore, they would forever be known as White Russians.

In the summer of 1942, the war between the Soviet Union and Germany was in its second year, and the Soviets were losing. The Germans were driving hard deep into Russia. Soon they entered the Caucasus and the land of the Cossacks, the fierce and noble warriors of storied history. In the years 1917-1920, some of the toughest resistance experienced by the Red Army came from the Cossacks of the Don River Basin, the Kuban, the Terak, Orenburg, the Urals, and Astrakan—the six federated republics that had been formed by these fiercely independent people. The Bolsheviks showed no mercy, liquidating the Cossack republics in the cruelest manner. It is little wonder that when the Germans arrived they were greeted as liberators, accepting the flowers and gifts that descended upon them. As later events would prove, the Cossacks offered more than a glorious welcome, and German General Helmuth von Pannwitz would find himself commanding a quarter million of the world's best fighting men.

A mounted Cossack unit lines up in ranks for a review. These expert horsemen chose to serve the Third Reich due to longstanding animosity with Josef Stalin and his communist regime in the Soviet Union.

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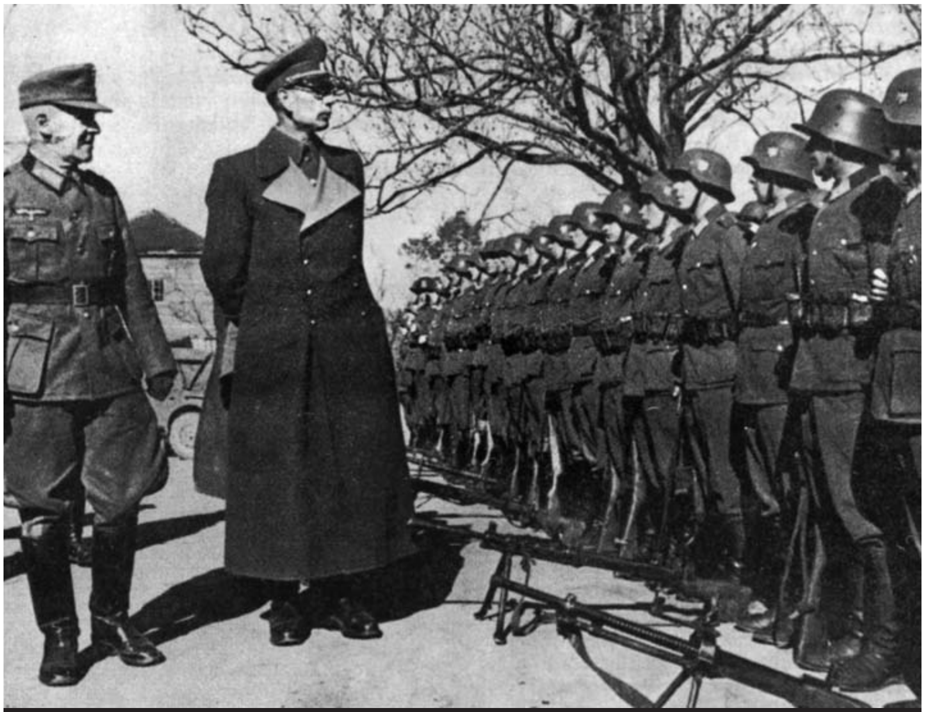
But the majority of those who came over to the German side had initially gone into battle as members of the Red Army, an army woefully unprepared for the better-trained, better-equipped Germans. Stalin had refused to believe that Adolf Hitler, who had signed a nonaggression pact in 1939, was about to attack, despite intelligence that said otherwise. On June 22, 1941, Operation Barbarossa caught the Soviets totally unprepared. The Russian soldiers went into battle with the German Wehrmacht to their front and the Soviet NKVD secret police at their back. They died by the hundreds of thousands and surrendered by the hundreds of thousands. When the Germans offered to abide by the Geneva Convention and allow the Red Cross to visit the POW camps, Stalin replied that there was no such thing as a Russian prisoner of war.

From the beginning of the war, the German officer corps, most of whom who did not share Hitler's racist theories, had plans to recruit Russian soldiers to its cause, and the recruiters were amazed at how easy it was, even after Hitler declared that since Stalin did not recognize the Geneva Convention, Russian soldiers would not be granted POW status. According to Hitler and other top Nazis, they were subhuman anyway. Of the 5,754,000 Russians taken prisoner after 1941, only 1,150,000 survived until 1945. Given the brutality of the Germans, it seems incomprehensible that so many were still ready to don German uniforms, pick up German rifles, and go forth to do battle against Stalin. To call them traitors strains the credibility of even the most prominent statesman. Indeed, they loved their country. It was their government they hated.

Just 60 days after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, the first major defection of Russian soldiers to the German side occurred. A Cossack unit, the 436th Infantry commanded by Major Ivan Nikitich Kononov, surrendered. Kononov laid bare his intentions to join the fight against Stalin. He told his troops how much he hated Stalin and then gave them a choice. "Those who wish to go with me take up their position on the right, and those who wish to stay take up position on the left. I promise no harm will come to those who wish to stay." The entire regiment moved to the right.

Kononov's disenchantment with Stalin had begun during the 1939 war with Finland, when so many Russian soldiers had died unnecessarily. He had been waiting two years for his chance to desert. In his naiveté concerning the Germans, he did not realize he had left one evil to join another. German General Max von Schenckendorff knew of Hitler's plans to destroy Russia as a nation, but how could he turn down another hard-fighting regiment? Kononov and his men were ecstatic that they were now the 102nd Cossack Regiment of the German Army. They would prove their mettle in battle as they cleared the steppes of the Red Army and communist partisans.

National Archives



General Andrei Vlasov reviews soldiers of the Russian Liberation Army, formed to fight alongside the Germans in the hope of ousting the communist government of the Soviet Union. Vlasov was convicted of treason and hanged on August 1, 1946.

While Kononov saw siding with the Germans as a chance to create a different homeland, German generals knew better. However, they were on the front lines and losing thousands of men daily. They welcomed help, no matter where it came from. In their defense, even though they knew of Hitler's plans for Russia they may have held out hope that even the bigoted Nazi leader would come around when he saw the fighting quality of these subhumans. There was no real chance of this happening. Hitler would never give up his insane racist beliefs.

But what the Germans were looking for was a Russian de Gaulle, a leader capable of molding one million Russians into an anti-Stalin army. They found him. It is too bad the Germans did not measure up to the man they picked.

His name was General Andrei Andreievich Vlasov. He towered over other military men in both stature and intellect. He came from humble beginnings but had great integrity and was one of the ablest generals in the Red Army. To this day there is a statue of him in a White Russian community in New York State.

Vlasov had been a strong believer in the Bolshevik cause and had helped defeat the White Army, though he did not join the Communist Party until 1930. Like so many, he became disenchanted with Stalin and his henchmen, realizing the Soviet Union had become a paradise for only a few and a living hell for everyone else.

In March 1942, Vlasov was deputy commander of the Volkhov Front. By mid-June, his army found itself surrounded, and on July 13, 1942, Vlasov became a prisoner. The Germans knew they had captured a prize. Vlasov was placed in a comfortable camp, and the subtle propaganda of the Germans may not have been necessary.

Despite Hitler's orders, the Russian Liberation Army was taking shape, and by September 1942, Vlasov, though still a prisoner, had issued a leaflet calling on the Red Army and the intelligentsia to overthrow Stalin's regime. From the beginning, the Germans proved to be unworthy allies. Added to the leaflet, without Vlasov's knowledge, was Nazi propaganda calculated by the German high command to persuade Hitler to accept the Russian Liberation Army.

Instead, the demonic dictator launched a tirade. How dare anyone suggest that the subhuman Russians were good enough to fight alongside the German soldier! But the Wehrmacht was undeterred. Again, against orders they organized the Russian National Committee with Vlasov at its head. On paper at least, the Russian Liberation Army (ROA) now existed.

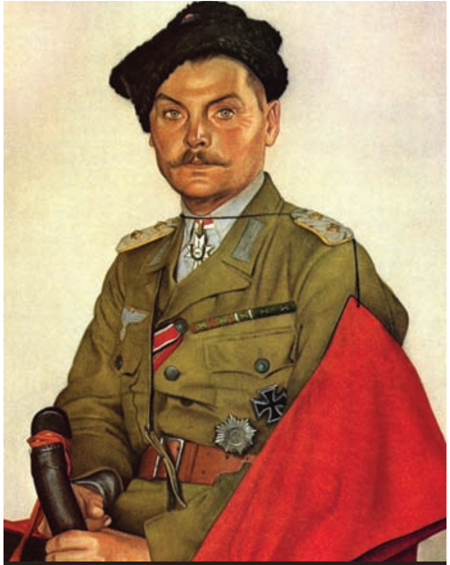
It is unfortunate that due to internal German wrangling and unabashed German stupidity this million-man army did not take the field as a single unit until the last few weeks of the war.

Still, the question lingered as to exactly what would cause a million men to desert their comrades and go over to the enemy.

One Russian enlisted man tried to explain. "You think … that we sold ourselves to the Germans for a piece of bread? Tell me, why did the Soviet government forsake us? Why did it forsake millions of prisoners? We saw prisoners of other nationalities and they were taken care of. Through the Red Cross they received letters and parcels from home; only the Russians received nothing. In Kassel, I saw American negro prisoners and they shared their cakes and chocolates with us. Then why didn't the Soviet government, which we considered our own, send us at least some plain hardtack? Hadn't we fought? Hadn't we defended the government? Hadn't we fought for our country? If Stalin refused to have anything to do with us, we didn't want anything to do with Stalin."

It is doubtful that even the noble Vlasov could have stated the case so eloquently.

U.S. Army Art Collection



Cossack leader Ivan Nikitich Kononov sat for this portrait proudly wearing his German uniform, including the Iron Cross, a decoration for bravery.

An outgrowth of the Russian National Committee was the Smolensk Manifesto, which emanated from the city of Smolensk, home of the Kulaks, who suffered and died by the millions under Stalin's collectivization plan in the 1920s and 1930s. The 13 points of the Manifesto declared there would be a united Russia, with abolition of forced labor and collective farms while land would be given to Russian peasants. Private commerce and handicraft would be reintroduced and the terror would cease. Personal freedom would be assured and also freedom of faith, conscience, speech, press, and assembly. The people would be able to work at their occupations of choice. All nationalities would be treated equally in the new Russia. Political prisoners would be released, and the government would be responsible for rebuilding the infrastructure.

The Germans added a statement to the manifesto declaring, "Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, pursues the aim of creating a new order in Europe without Bosheviks or Capitalists." Another example of German deceit, this addition would ensure that the manifesto would never be implemented.

Broadcasting the manifesto was forbidden by the Nazis. The committee that developed it would never be seated in Smolensk. Soviet citizens in the occupied countries would learn of the manifesto only from leaflets dropped by planes, a plan arranged by German generals who still had hopes for a Russian Liberation Army. Only they understood that the war would be lost in the East without their help.

Still, the leaflets themselves had an impact. Hope stirred in the breasts of those Russians who still thought freedom could be theirs. The commanders of the various German army

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Dressed in uniforms issued by the German Army, members of the Russian Liberation Army sit under guard after their capture during the fighting in Normandy. Many of these men were returned to the Soviet Union after the war only to be executed.

groups were so impressed with the thousands who wanted to join Vlasov that they sent him on tour to talk to prisoners of war, Soviet volunteers, and civilians. In March 1943, Vlasov published a letter giving his reasons for taking up the fight against Bolshevism. When Hitler found out, he flew into a rage, demanding to know who had given Vlasov permission to do such a thing. Then the German dictator gave orders that the name Vlasov should never again be uttered in his presence.

Despite frustration and disappointment, Vlasov soldiered on. He no doubt knew his more natural allies were the British and the Americans, but he also knew they would not see it that way. Even if they knew of the terror of Stalin's Russia, they also knew that the Red Army was killing Germans, and Germany was the primary enemy. Vlasov had cast his lot with the devil in order to destroy what he considered to be a greater devil. He knew there was little chance of success for his plan.

Despite all the barriers, Vlasov's eloquent speech and imposing physique continued to strike a chord with Russians in the occupied territories, who saw him as their last best hope. It was through his efforts that conditions for both civilians and soldiers improved. The German yoke lightened, and while the Russian Liberation Army was not taking shape, more Russians soldiers were fighting alongside Germans. One German commander said that 50 percent of his troops were from Russia and other Eastern countries. By the beginning of 1943, a full 427,000 were fighting against the Red Army on the Eastern Front.

During the autumn of 1943, approximately 80 percent of the Russian volunteers who had joined the Germans to free their homeland were moved from the Eastern Front to the Western Front. The Russians were now going into combat against people they had no interest in fighting—the French, British, and Americans—but all hope was not lost and help came from an unlikely source.

In the beginning, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, like his Führer, had been adamantly opposed to Vlasov and any idea of a Russian Liberation Army. However, Himmler was more practical than Hitler. He understood the deteriorating situation on the Eastern Front. He had created the first non-German SS division in April 1943, with the formation of the Ukrainian 14th SS Grenadier Division. Since the division was under Himmler's control, the soldiers had no real national identity but were promised that they would fight only on the Eastern Front. In March 1945, as the war became more desperate, the unit was renamed the lst Ukrainian Division. The troops fought well until the end.

To Hitler, though, this meant nothing. On March 23, 1945, he exclaimed,"I have just been told to my amazement that a Ukrainian SS Division has appeared. I do not know anything about this. What is happening!" Yet, it was said that Himmler was proud of his Ukrainians.

While the Russian Liberation Army came into being too late to make a difference, the Russian volunteers, despite being scattered among many German units, still saw Vlasov as their leader and the best hope for a free and independent Russia. By the middle of 1944, the practical Himmler scheduled a meeting with Vlasov that was to take place on July 21, 1944. Fate intervened with the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20. The meeting was not held until September 16. Still, even at this late date, Vlasov, after meeting with Himmler, may have seen a glimmer of hope.

Himmler, now the second most powerful man in the Third Reich and with the full confidence of Hitler, assented to the formation of a new committee, the KONR (Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia). Vlasov was to command all Soviet citizens living under German rule. Then, another complication arose. Many of the Soviet citizens now supposed to be under Vlasov's command were not Russian. They wanted independence from Russia and had no desire to be part of a new Russia. Also, there were some old Russian émigrés who wanted to return to the days of the czar and to some extent saw Vlasov as too Bolshevistic. Other old émigrés, realizing there would be no return to the Czar, accepted Vlasov's leadership. For Vlasov's part, he saw the refusal of groups like the Cossacks and Georgians to be anything but independent as a defeat for the KONR. He refused to accept the congratulations of Germans who thought he had brought the various factions together. Yet, as long as KONR existed it remained under control of Russians who were Soviet citizens.

After the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944, it did not take long for Allied commanders to realize that they were not just fighting Germans. In fact, up to 10 percent of the prisoners taken were not German and a good many were Russian. Had the British and American commanders had any real understanding of Soviet society, they would have understood why these Russians seemed so content in their imprisonment. These were men who had been knocked around and brutalized all their lives, first by the Communists, then by the Germans. For the first time in their lives, they were being treated like human beings. They did not know such a world existed. Later, when notified that they would be sent back to the Soviet Union, many preferred death to repatriation.

By November 1944, the KONR, though still referred to by some as the ROA, was finally taking shape. However, Vlasov was continually thwarted by German deceit and intransigence. He was growing tired of his messages to other Russians being altered or augmented without his knowledge. One such communication, which declared that equality for all would exist in the new Russia, was altered by the Germans to say that did not apply to Jews. Vlasov was not anti-Semetic and refused to sign the document. The Germans sent it out anyway without his signature. Despite this he continued on his chosen course because there was no alternative.

By the time the KONR was ready to take the field, the Third Reich was in dire straits and there was a shortage of equipment. Himmler had deserted the project, turning it over to the Wehrmacht. He knew of Hitler's objections and had decided the KONR was too little too late. It was time to think of his own skin.

Vlasov had to contend with German commanders who did not want to release their Russians to the KONR since it would weaken their own commands. Indeed, if it were not for the thousands of new volunteers that flocked to Vlasov, the 2½ divisions that were finally formed would never have taken the field.

Vlasov's men were finally an army, and on January 28, 1945, he took command. The German insignia was removed from uniforms and replaced by the KONR's own.

Considering the shortage of equipment, the two divisions and one brigade were well equipped by 1945 standards. They numbered 20,000 men per division and had adequate armor. The commander of the first KONR division, the 600th Panzergrenadier Division, was Sergei Bunyachenko. Operational readiness was not reached until mid-February, less than 90 days before the end of the war, and due to chaos in Germany it did not reach the front until the beginning of April. The second KONR division, the 650th Panzergrenadier Division, commanded by General G.A. Zveryev, never reached operational readiness.

On March 29, 1945, the Cossacks who had been serving under General von Pannwitz decided to put aside personal differences with Vlasov and voted unanimously to join him in the fight. However, the Germans were still in control, and Himmler, who had already given up on the KONR, did not issue the order until seven days before the end of the war, much too late for the Cossacks to join Vlasov. Only two KONR formations ever took part in the fighting against the Red Army. A unit tried to dislodge the Russians from a bridge on the River Oder. The attack failed. The most successful attack by the Vlasov men came, strangely enough, not against the Soviets, but the German SS.

After the failure of the attack on the Oder, the Germans no longer had any control over the KONR. Vlasov hoped that Prague would be occupied by Americans. What they found were German SS and a Czech council pleading for help in ousting the Germans. The Vlasov men could not know that the Americans had no intention of entering Prague due to a prior agreement with the Red Army. The Czechs knew but kept silent. The Red Army had stopped, deciding to let the SS deal with the Vlasov men, thus saving their own troops.

What followed was an agreement between the Czechs and the Vlasov men. "Clear our city of Germans and you will receive asylum," said the Czechs. Vlasov did not believe them, but Bunyachenko and his men wanted to believe, and besides this was a chance to repay the SS for all the indignities visited upon them. They had no choice. They would fight the Germans and hope that the Americans would move into Prague, at which point they would surrender to them. Vlasov, now totally discouraged, saw betrayal coming—and it did.

When the SS had been defeated, the Czech council informed Vlasov that the Red Army, not the Americans, would be occupying Prague. The Vlasov men, now completely dejected, began marching back in the direction from which they had come, hoping to run into the Americans. They did, but even that would turn into disappointment.

On May 1, 1945, emissaries from Vlasov reached the lines of the Seventh U.S. Army near the village of Schluesselburg. By this time Vlasov was a completely disillusioned man. Urged to escape to the American lines, he said he must share the fate of his men. Buny-

Continued on page 69

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An Extraordinary Climb

Italian prisoners of war climbed a mountain in Africa and then returned to their camp.

By Chuck Lyons

FELICE BENUZZI'S PART IN THE WAR MAY HAVE BEEN A SMALL ONE, BUT HIS story is one of the oddest to come out of World War II. An Italian diplomat, Benuzzi had been a British prisoner of war for two years and, feeling crushed by the tedium of the African prison camp where he was confined, decided to overcome his own boredom by taking action. Along with two fellow prisoners, he escaped in January 1943, leaving a note for the camp commandant promising that they would return.

They did.

However, it was only after he and the other two men had climbed the 17,000-foot Mount. Kenya that loomed above the camp, a peak Benuzzi described as "an ethereal mountain emerging from a tossing sea of clouds."

Felice Benuzzi was born in Vienna, Austria, on November 16, 1910, and grew up in Trieste, mountaineering in the Julian Alps and Dolomites. After studing law at Rome University, he entered the Italian Colonial Service in 1938 and was sent to Ethiopia as a colonial official. But Mussolini's dream of an African empire was short lived. Benuzzi was stationed in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, when a British Army offensive moved into East Africa. By 1941, he was a prisoner of war interned in British POW Camp 354 at the foot of Mount Kenya and just south of the equator

The life of the camp bored him.

"The sole activity for this host of people was to wander around the camp, walking around and talking to one another," Benuzzi said in the 1952 book he wrote about the camp and the mountain, *No Picnic on Mt. Kenya.*

Two experiences changed his outlook.

It was rainy season when he first arrived at Camp 354, and the mountain was hidden by rain and clouds. One morning another prisoner woke him and pulled him outside to see the mountain, which was briefly visible through the clouds. Though a mountaineer, it was the first 17,000-foot peak Benuzzi had ever seen, and he wrote that he remained "spell-bound" for hours afterward.

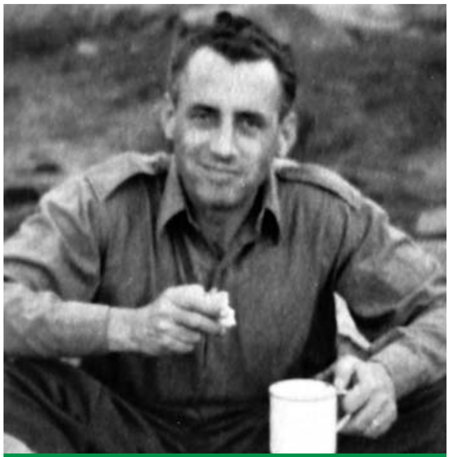
"I had definitely fallen in love," he said.

The first European to see Mt. Kenya, the second highest mountain in Africa, was a German missionary in 1849. It was first scaled in 1899. The mountain is topped with several peaks, the highest of which, Batian, is at 17,057 feet. Around its base lay fertile farmland cut out of the tropical forests, then it rose through jungle and belts of bamboo, through timberline forest with relatively small trees, lichens, and moss, then heath and grassland, followed by glaciers and snowfields.

The "ethereal mountain" beckoned Benuzzi.

Benuzzi's second transforming experience happened a few months later when he was heading back to his barracks one night from a chess game. He heard hammering from inside one of the camp buildings and realized someone was busy working on a project.

"A strange sense of envy crept into my mind," he wrote. "That prisoner had set himself a task,



ABOVE: Photographed in Australia after the end of World War II, Felice Benuzzi is remembered for his daring escape from a British prison camp in Africa and his ascent of nearby Mount Kenya. LEFT: The imposing 17,000-foot peak of Mount Kenya enticed Italian prisoner of war Felice Benuzzi so much that he led two fellow prisoners in an escape from a British POW camp to make the climb. Benuzzi left a note for the camp commander promising to return, and after the diversion he made good on his word.

whatever it was. For him the future existed, [and] he had found a remedy for captivity.”

To escape from the boredom he felt, Benuzzi realized he had to do the same thing.

“To break the monotony, I need only to start taking risks again,” he wrote.

And the risk he would take was to climb the mountain he had fallen in love with.

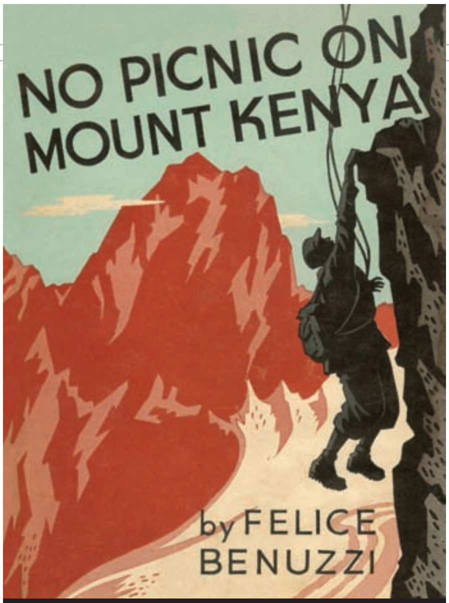
He began by writing to his family in Italy and, without saying why, asking that they send him his boots and some warm woolen clothing. He quit smoking and used his allotted cigarettes, the general currency of the camp, to buy other items he needed. He sold whatever of his personal belongings he could to raise additional capital, scoured camp trash heaps for usable items, and was able to locate a homemade Italian flag hidden in the camp. He hoarded chocolate, dried fruit, and crackers from the food parcels he received, had ice axes fashioned from hammers stolen from a workshop, and created crampons rigged from odds and ends salvaged from the trash heaps. For maps, he had only sketches he had made of the mountain and the label from a food can with a picture of Mt. Kenya that showed a different side of it. He undid the netting of a bunk bed and twisted it into a quarter-inch, 35-foot-long rope.

He also started recruiting. One recruit would need to be a mountaineer and would accompany Benuzzi on his final scramble to the peak. But the other man would be able to stay at the base camp while the final ascent was taking place. His main job would be to help with the night watches while the party worked its way up through the tropical forests, bamboo thickets, and the like on its way to their final camp. They were especially leery of the rhinoceroses that were known to roam the lower parts of the mountain.

Benuzzi recruited his bunk mate, Giovanni Balletto, a doctor and mountaineer, and for the third man found Enzo Barsotti, who had never climbed a mountain in his life.

The reason why he decided on Barsotti, Benuzzi said, “was because he was universally thought to be as mad as a hatter, and mad people were what we needed.”

During this time of preparation, Benuzzi wrote, he was often bedeviled by second thoughts. “There were occasions when the thought of our impending adventure made me frightened. Sometimes, I thought what it would be like lying out in the dark wet forest, dead tired, exhausted by hunger, drenched to the bone, in imminent danger of being attacked by wild beasts, That prospect I compared with the warm blankets in my bunk, the familiar oil-lamp and the good book I was now preparing to read.”


NO PICNIC ON MOUNT KENYA
by FELICE BENUZZI

Felice Benuzzi wrote a book about his famous escape from a British POW camp and his exploit became the basis for a feature film. A former diplomat for the Italian government, Benuzzi died in Rome in 1988.

When such thoughts arose, he wrote, he had only to look around the camp,

“Listening to the platitudes of prisoners talking, I sometimes felt that I could not understand them any more. At other times I felt only pity that they should be content to endure this stagnating life without having in mind a project like ours.”

With the team recruited and equipment prepared, the men still had one problem left: how to get out of the camp.

Earlier in their stay, camp authorities had given Balletto a plot in the camp garden where he could grow tomatoes and other vegetables and on which he had built a small tool shed. Perhaps they could escape through the garden. The three men gradually moved their equipment and supplies into the garden plot and hid everything among the tomato plants. Since it was the dry season, they had no fear of a sudden storm drenching their supplies.

Access to the garden was through a locked gate that was opened for any prisoner displaying a “garden pass” and seeking to go to work in his plot. But Benuzzi and his men would need to get into the garden at night, and except for Balletto they had no passes.

They needed a key to the gate.

After several failed attempts to get hold of the key, Benuzzi finally found it carelessly left on the British compound officer’s desk and was able to make several impressions in a piece of tar. A prisoner mechanic then cut a key based on those impressions.

Benuzzi leaned against the gate on a quiet Sunday afternoon and, watching a nearby sentry, slipped the new key into the lock. It did not work.

“The sentry did not move,” he wrote, “but neither did the key.”

Several adjustments to the key were made, but all failed. It was not until Benuzzi had what he called “the brilliant idea of oiling the key” that he “felt the blissful satisfaction of the click of a complete revolution.”

They were in, and the breakout was scheduled for January 24, 1943.

About noon that day while the prisoners and many of their guards were having lunch, a confederate dressed like the camp commander approached the gate with three prisoners carrying shovels. He opened the gate, the prisoners entered the garden, and he closed the gate, locked it, and walked off. Benuzzi, Balletto, and Barsotti were in the garden. They huddled inside the small tool shed and waited for evening when they would try to get out of the garden past the sentry said to guard the outer perimeter.

When darkness fell, fortunately coupled with a cloudy sky, the three men easily passed out of the garden without seeing any sentry, crossed the camp perimeter, crossed the rail line where they were silhouetted in the light of a passing train, and reached the shelter of some thorn bushes on the other side. They took a break there, and as the sky began to clear “the glacier-clad Mount Kenya was seen clear-cut against the starry background.”

They then worked their way to the main road, where a passing military car almost spotted them, and crossed quickly into a dark clearing on the other side and under some more thorn trees. At times, they walked backward to leave footprints that would further confuse any pursuers.

They had escaped the camp.

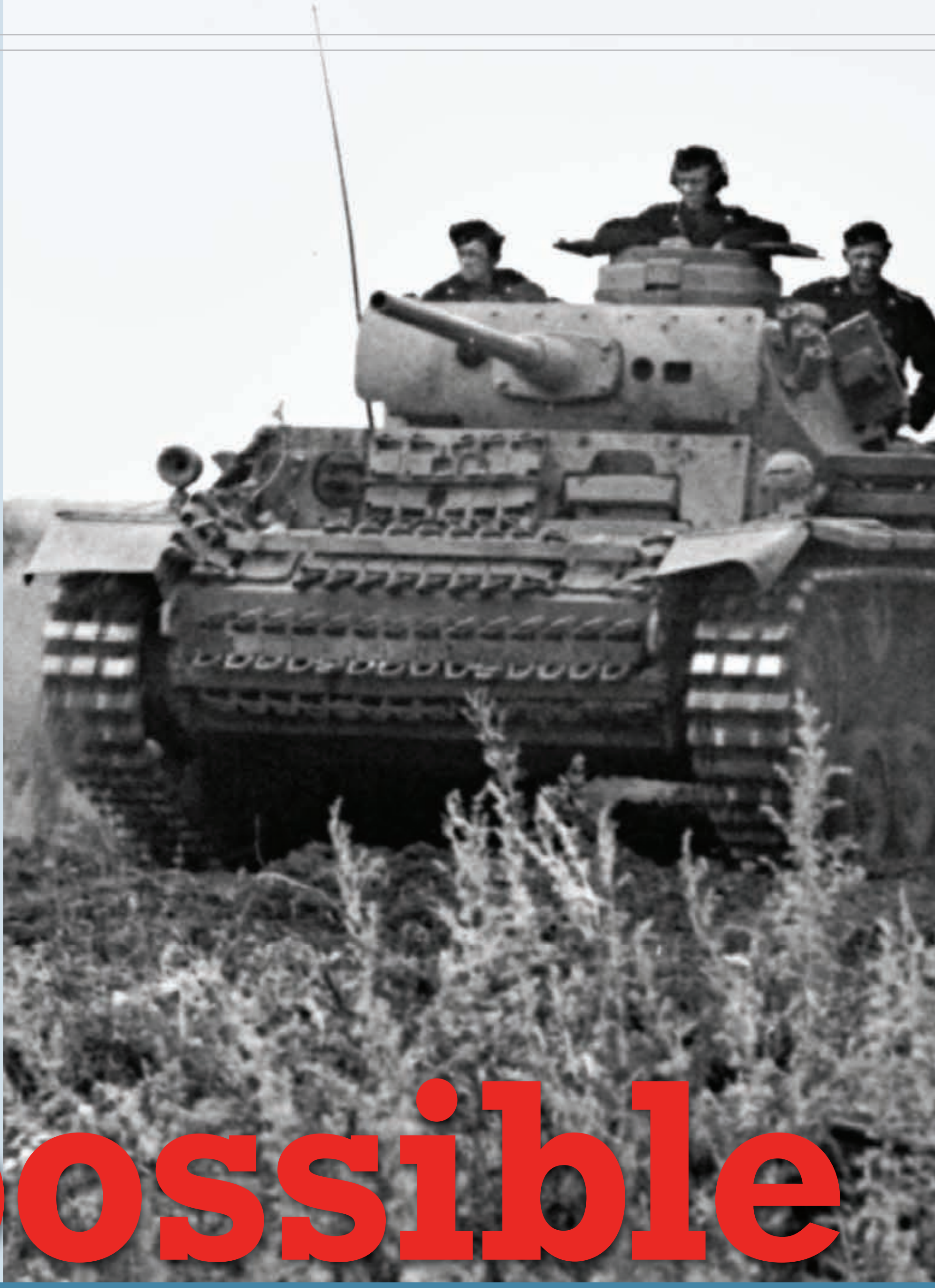
Over the next 18 days, they traveled first at night and then during the day past a logging camp and through the tropical forest, where they encountered a bull elephant through the bamboo groves and the grassland. They crossed glaciers and snow fields and established a base camp at 14,000 feet. From there Benuzzi and Balletto attempted to scale Buitan only to be beaten back by a heavy snowstorm. They returned to base camp, took a day of rest, and then attempted Lenana, at 16,355 feet the third highest summit on the mountain.

This time they made it, and they planted the camp’s homemade flag in a cairn at the top and ran four strings from the small flagpole, anchoring them with rocks to hold the flag in the wind.

Continued on page 70

BY VALOR DODD

AFTER STALINGRAD, GERMAN VICTORY AGAINST THE SOVIETS WAS NOT A REALISTIC POSSIBILITY. YET THERE WERE ALTERNATIVES TO OPERATION CITADEL THAT COULD HAVE PROLONGED THE WAR OR BROUGHT A STALEMATE ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT.



AN Impossible

AT daybreak on Monday, July 12, 1943, SS Sturmbannführer Christian Bachmann, the panzer group commander of the 3rd SS Panzergrenadier Division, ordered his unit to cross the Psel River and attack. The Germans drove north toward the east-west road connecting the towns of Karteschewka and Prokhorokva.

After fighting through several Soviet defensive positions and advancing nearly five miles, the panzer group reached the road around midnight. The plan for the next day was to attack the rear of the Soviet forces defending the town of Prokhorokva, just three miles to the east. The Soviets would either be encircled or forced to retreat, and the Germans would break through one of the last major defensive belts protecting the Russian town of Kursk, the objective of Operation Citadel, the effort to encircle a large number of Red Army troops that occupied a salient, or bulge, deep in the German front line.

Success would mean the death or surrender of thousands of Soviet soldiers, and Operation Citadel had reached a critical stage. Would one last successful German attack toward Prokhorokva unhinge the extensive Soviet defenses?

The attack toward the Karteschewka-Prokhorokva road had cost Bachmann's panzer group 45 tanks destroyed or damaged, nearly 50 percent of its total strength. Coupled with sheer exhaustion, mounting personnel losses, and the arrival of massive Soviet reinforcements, the panzer group could go no farther. In fact, all the German forces participating in the offensive were in the same situation. Operation Citadel had been stopped. The Karteschewka-Prokhorokva road was the closest the German's got to Kursk, and it was also the last gasp of the last major German summer offensive on the Russian Front in World War II.

The Soviet encirclement of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad ended on February 2, 1943, with the destruction of more than 20 German divisions and much of the Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian armies guarding the flanks of

A column of German PzKpfw. III tanks rolls across the Russian steppe prior to the decisive armor engagement at the Kursk salient. The PzKpfw. III was originally designed to take on and defeat opposing tanks; however, as the PzKpfw. IV proved more successful, the role of the PzKpfw. III evolved into infantry support.

Victory

the Sixth Army. The loss of nearly 225,000 men at Stalingrad left little for the Germans to stop the Soviets, who were trying to encircle the remaining armies of Army Group South. If the Soviets succeeded, the German Army would be defeated on the Russian Front.

The task of stopping the Soviets and restoring the front was placed in the hands of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, a master of mobile tank warfare who some consider the best German general of World War II. On February 17, Adolf Hitler flew to Manstein's headquarters near the town of Zaporozhye on the Dneiper River to discuss the predicament of Army Group South. In what was becoming a common theme of Hitler's hands-on approach to managing the army, he directed Manstein that no further retreats would be permitted and that the German soldiers would stand and fight. Manstein knew that order would lead to the destruction of the German armies in southern Russia and argued vehemently with Hitler. Manstein finally convinced Hitler to rescind the no retreat order and allow operational freedom of the forces under his command. Perhaps the fact that no German troops were between Hitler and a Soviet armored unit less than 25 miles away was also persuasive.

Manstein immediately initiated a plan that deceived the Soviets into thinking that the German Army was in full retreat to the Dneiper River. The Soviets, believing that a huge victory was within reach, had pushed their armies to exhaustion and had outrun their supplies lines. German cipher decryptions of Soviet operational codes had alerted Manstein of this fact, and he unleashed his panzer divisions in an attack on the weak Soviet flanks.

The plan, later to be known as Manstein's Counterstroke, was very successful and indeed accomplished its goals. The fourth largest city in Russia, Kharkov, was recaptured, and the Soviet offensive was stopped with considerable losses. Unfortunately for the Germans, the rainy season in Russia started in March and

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-219-0562A-07; Photo: Scheffler

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The crew of a German antitank weapon takes temporary cover during a Soviet artillery barrage. The shells are falling on a German-occupied village nearby and probably herald the advance of Red Army forces in a counterstroke against the Nazi invaders.

turned most of southern Russia into an ocean of mud in which most motorized movement was rendered nearly impossible. Exhaustion and mud put an end to the German counteroffensive just in time for the reeling Soviets. For the Germans, the unfortunate outcome of the victory was the formation of a bulge in the front line, 120 miles wide at its base, centered around the town of Kursk.

Within the Kursk Salient, nine Soviet infantry armies and two tank armies were at stake, and if the Germans were successful any Soviet offensive action planned for the remainder of 1943 would be delayed or canceled. A victory would allow the German Army in the East to rebuild and shift units to the Mediterranean or France to meet anticipated Allied amphibious landings.

The German plan was to use the classic pincer movement, attacking at the base of the bulge with the Ninth Army (from Army Group Center) from the north and the Fourth Panzer Army (from Army Group South) from the south. The armies would meet at the town of Kursk and trap the Soviet forces inside the bulge.

Despite Manstein's concerns about repeated delays, Operation Citadel finally began on the afternoon of July 4, 1943. Preliminary attacks, to gain artillery observation posts for the next day's full offensive, were conducted by the 48th Panzer Corps of the Fourth Panzer Army. The Ninth Army and the rest of the Fourth Panzer Army began the offensive on July 5.

In the north, the Ninth Army used its infantry divisions to begin the attack with the hope that they would breach the Soviet defenses. The panzer divisions would then be inserted into the breach and defeat the Soviet reserves in the open terrain north of Kursk.

After several days of bloody fighting, the attack stalled near the towns of Teploye and Ponyri. The German infantry failed to make the necessary breach in the Soviet defenses, and the panzer divisions got bogged down in the defensive belts. On July 12, after the Ninth Army had committed its last reserves to the offensive, the Soviets launched Operation Kutuzov, attacking the rear (north and east of Orel) of the Ninth Army and forcing it to curtail further offensive operations. Operation Citadel was over for the Ninth Army after an advance of only about 10 miles toward Kursk.

In the south, the Fouth Panzer Army employed its panzer divisions in the opening attack and had more success. The 2nd SS Panzer Corps performed exceptionally well but was hampered by the inability of the 3rd Panzer Corps and the 48th Panzer Corps to protect its flanks. The 3rd Panzer Corps, on the east flank of the SS formations, had to start the offensive by forcing a crossing over the Donets River. Strong Soviet defenses delayed the crossing, and the 3rd Panzer Corps was not able to keep pace with the advance of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps despite a successful surprise attack using captured Soviet T-34 tanks on the night of July 11.

The 48th Panzer Corps, despite containing the elite Gross Deutschland Panzer Division with more than 300 tanks, stumbled from the start. Poor tank tactics, weather, and bad luck kept the 48th Panzer Corps from protecting the western flank of the II SS Panzer Corps. This caused the SS panzers to divert resources to protect their flank instead of pushing north for a quick, decisive breakthrough to Kursk.

On July 12, the final episode of Operation Citadel began with the arrival of the Soviet 5th Guards Tank Army and several attached corps. These fresh Red Army formations attacked the II SS Panzer Corps with nearly 850 tanks, of which 520 assaulted a corridor between the Psel River and Prokhorovka being held by the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. The Soviets committed 240 tanks against the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich southwest of Prokhorovka.

Both: National Archives

Soviet Marshal Pavel Rotmistrov (left) led the Soviet 5th Guards Tank Army at Prokhorovka, while German Field Marshal Erich von Manstein led the German forces tasked with reducing the Kursk salient.

The massed Soviet tank formations tried to close the distance between themselves and the German tanks as rapidly as possible to offset the superior firepower and range of the German tank guns. It was a disaster for the Soviets. In total, the Soviets lost about 650 tanks to the II SS Panzer Corps. Lt. Gen. Pavel Rotmistrov, commander of the 5th Guards Tank Army, reported after the battle that he lost 400 tanks just in the area of Prokhorovka. The three divisions of the II SS Panzer Corps lost a total of 62 tanks.

Contrary to many published works, Soviet propaganda, and early Soviet battle reports, the tank battle at Prokhorovka was not the "death ride" of the panzers with hundreds of German tanks being destroyed. Thorough research of German battle reports and postwar admissions by Soviet generals clearly show that tactically

akg-images

Soviet T-34 medium tanks and accompanying infantry charge across open ground during the epic Battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943. Soviet armored doctrine required that Red Army tanks close rapidly with the enemy to negate the outstanding range of the heavy 75mm and 88mm guns that equipped German tanks.

and numerically the Germans won the tank battle at Prokhorovka on July 12. But after July 12, the Fourth Panzer Army failed to regain its momentum after advancing almost 35 miles since July 4. The German divisions were exhausted after eight continuous days of fighting with few replacements and no reinforcements. Despite the enormous Soviet tank losses at Prokhorovka, the Soviets did accomplish their ultimate goal of stopping the German offensive.

The two foremost causes of the German defeat were the lack of surprise and the enormous number of men and amount of equipment at the disposal of the defenders. Prior to the start of Operation Citadel, the Soviets were receiving excellent intelligence from British sources and their own spy network in Germany and Switzerland. British intelligence was indirectly sharing its intercepts from the German Enigma coding machine and gave the Soviets advance knowledge of the German plans. The Soviets also had a spy known as "Werther," who provided the starting date of Operation Citadel and locations of the German attacks. To this day, the identity of "Werther" is unknown, but some speculate that it was either Hitler's personal secretary Martin Bormann, chief of German intelligence, the Abwehr, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, or a high-ranking officer in the communications section at Hitler's headquarters.

Whoever Werther was, he had immediate access to the German high command since much of the information he passed on to the Soviets was timely, sometimes coming the day after the Germans issued the order. It is interesting to note that most of the command decisions made during Mainstein's Counterstroke originated from Mainstein's headquarters, not Hitler's. This lends credence to the prospect that a spy lurked in Hitler's inner circle or at least somewhere in the German high command. Further, it is reasonable to assume that since orders originated in Manstein's headquarters rather than Hitler's during the German counteroffensive, the Soviets were blinded and deceived into thinking the Germans were in full retreat rather than preparing a counteroffensive.

Even after two years of horrific battlefield losses, the Soviets still had considerable reserves that could be fed into the battle and wear down the Germans. After committing the 5th Guards Tank Army from the Steppe Front, the Soviets had four infantry armies, three cavalry corps, and three other mechanized corps—nearly 950 tanks and about 350,000 men still in the Steppe Front—as reserves. Had the Fourth Panzer Army broken through in the south, it would still have had to fight these overwhelming reserves.

The Soviet advantage in reserves is striking when compared to the available German reserves. The 24th Panzer Corps contained three understrength panzer divisions, of which only two were available for Operation Citadel. The two divisions (23rd and SS Wiking), with a total of 97 tanks and 12,000 men, only started to move up to the battlefield on July 12. The third division of the corps was still involved in combat operations with the 1st Panzer Army to the south. The Germans were too weak and stretched too thinly to be caught in a slugfest with the Soviets at Kursk.

In February 1943, Manstein put forth two operational proposals for the coming summer. The first, known as the Forehand Proposal, had the Germans initiating a limited offensive as soon as the rainy season ended, with the intent of crippling the Soviets so that they could not mount major offensive operations for the rest of the summer.

The second option was known as the Backhand Proposal. This plan would let the Soviets launch their major summer offensive and then use the superiority of the German panzer forces to attack the enemy flanks and encircle the attackers. It would require mobile operations and giving up large expanses of captured Soviet territory to encircle the Soviet forces. Of course, giving up any captured territory was totally against what Hitler wanted. The proposal was doomed from the beginning. After further discussions and the masterful counterstroke by the German forces in March, the Forehand Proposal was accepted, and it eventually became known as Operation Citadel.

Two other operations, known as Habicht and Panther, were also discussed as precursors to Operation Citadel. Their objective was to eliminate a bulge in the front line near Izyum that was threatening the industrial complex near Kharkov. Hitler seriously considered these operations but dismissed them in favor of launching just one operation, Citadel. By themselves, these two operations would have occurred on a smaller scale than Operation Citadel and would not have significantly changed the course of the war on the Russian Front. However, depending upon the success or failure of these operations, Citadel may never have been launched.

In addition, another operation briefly discussed was the elimination of the Kursk Salient by attacking it from the front near the town of Rylsk. German forces would capture Kursk and spread north and south to encircle the remaining Soviet forces inside the bulge. However, the road network and terrain around Rylsk were not suitable for transporting large numbers of men and their heavy equipment. This variation of the offensive offered little advantage since the Germans would still face the same defensive belts and Soviet reserves.

Any hope of winning the war against the Soviet Union was lost at Stalingrad. But in July 1943, the German Army was still capable of inflicting serious losses on the Soviets if properly led. Could all the other factors have fallen in place to change the outcome of the war with Russia to something other than total defeat?

The Germans could not recover from the losses incurred during the previous two years of campaigning, and Soviet resources seemed limitless. Soviet industrial output was several times that of the German war industry, and the Germans were at a significant manpower disadvantage even after the horrendous Soviet losses from the previous years of fighting. As an example, in August 1943, the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 1st Tank Army lost nearly 800 of their initial 1,000 tanks in a series of battles near the town of Bogodukhov. Both of these armies had been badly mauled during Operation Citadel, but the Soviets were able to replace the losses within of a month. The Soviet advantage in tanks, aircraft, artillery, and men would only get worse for the Germans in the remaining years of the war, especially after the Western Allies landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944. The Germans had no chance of competing with such overwhelming Soviet forces unless they used superior strategy and tactics.

The outcome of Operation Citadel might lead one to believe that Manstein's Backhand Proposal might have been more successful. This was the proposal favored by Manstein and General Heinz Guderian, another expert on tank warfare who was then serving as Inspector General of Panzer Troops. Backhand would have been a replay, but on a larger scale, of the successful March counteroffensive that utilized the German panzer force's superiority in mobile operations and tactics. If Backhand had any chance of changing the course of the war against Russia, the Germans had to inflict serious losses on the Soviets—and it would have to be done without direction from Hitler and his spy-infested headquarters. A successful Backhand strategy with an orderly retreat to shorter and more defensible positions along the Dneiper River would have prolonged the war against Russia.

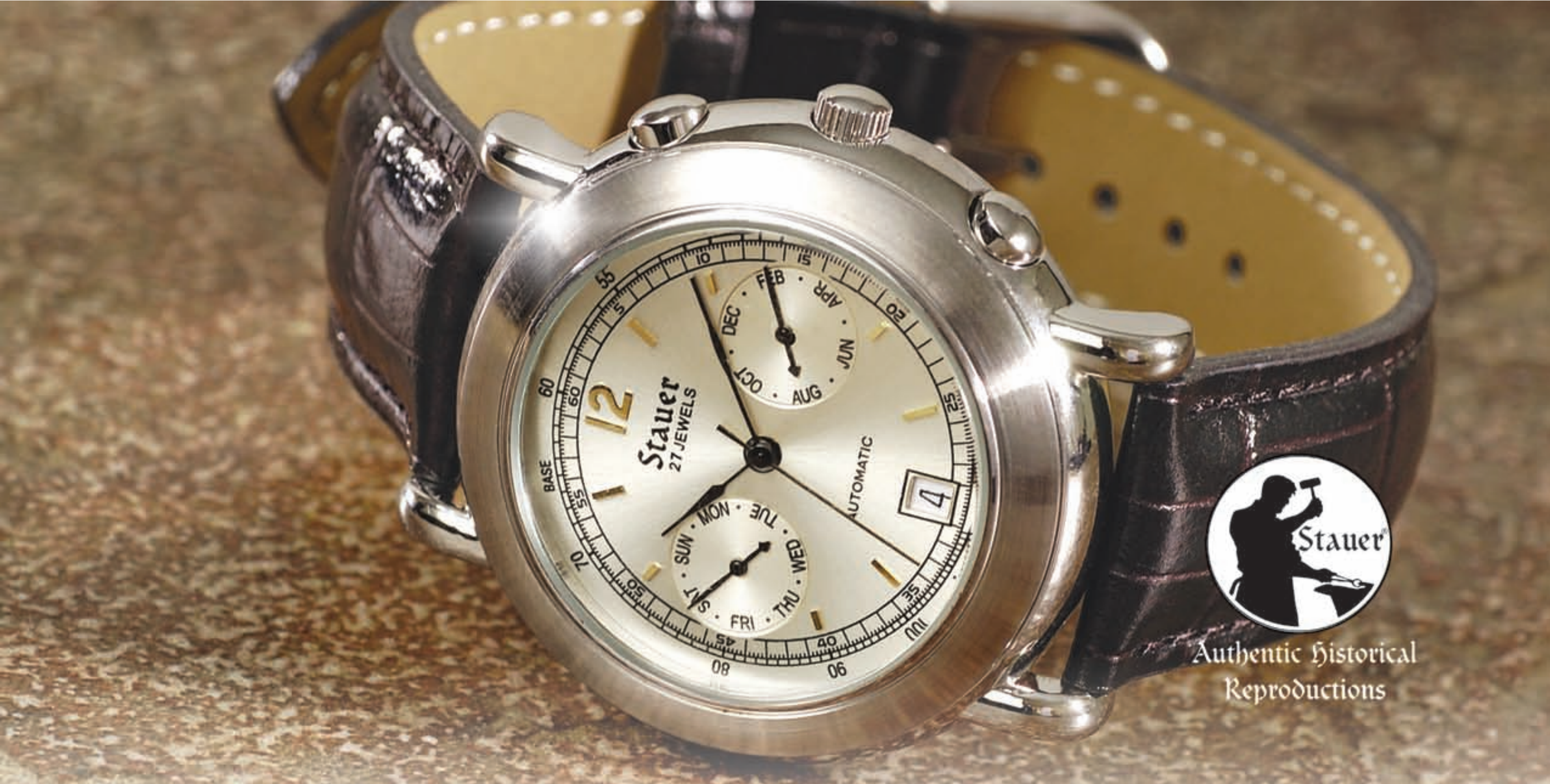
In January 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt met at Casablanca in North Africa and agreed that the only option for the Axis was unconditional surrender. Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, who did not attend the Casablanca summit, voiced his displeasure from the beginning but followed suit for the rest of the war. However, the agreement was made between untrusting partners. Roosevelt was afraid that Stalin would make a separate peace with the Germans and leave the Western Allies bearing the full weight of the German war machine. Churchill did not completely agree since it would leave out any possibility of negotiations with the Germans that could help keep the Soviets out of Eastern Europe. Stalin had always been leery of the Western Allies and thought they had underlying motives against Russia. After the German defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, Stalin even implied that peace negotiations with Germany could be possible if Hitler and his Nazi regime were removed.

A significant German victory in Russia during 1943 in conjunction with peace "feelers" that had been initiated with Russia in late 1942 may have been able to convince Stalin to accept a separate peace. Obviously, many things would have had to occur for this to happen. However, the possibilities did exist for any outcome besides a total German defeat in Russia.

Valor Dodd, a graduate of the University of Texas at El Paso, currently resides in Littleton, Colorado. He has worked in the aerospace industry for more than 30 years as a software engineer. He has written several technical articles pertaining to software development and has been a military history enthusiast for more than 20 years, in particular World War II and the Battle of Kursk.

National Archives

A cloud of smoke and earth erupts as Red Army infantrymen accompany T-34 medium tanks into battle at Kursk. The T-34 was one of the finest tanks produced during World War II, and more of the type were manufactured than any other armored vehicle of the war.



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

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

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

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

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Belgium Besieged

BY
WILLIAM
FLOYD

The German conquest and occupation of Belgium during World War II is a dark chapter in the history of the nation.

ON MAY 9, 1940, A BLACK MERCEDES AUTOMOBILE DROVE inconspicuously away from the Reich Chancellery in Berlin and merged with the weekend traffic. The car appeared to be an ordinary vehicle transporting a high-ranking Nazi official. In the suburb of Berlin-Finkenkrug, the automobile entered an abandoned railway station protected by the SD (German Security Service).

The occupant, Adolf Hitler, exited the Mercedes and went aboard his special armored train, ironically named *Amerika*. Hitler's secretaries thought they were headed for Denmark and Norway to visit the troops. After dark the train turned west, reaching Hanover by midnight, where it switched tracks. After traveling all night, the train arrived in the village of Euskirchen near the Belgian and Luxembourg border. It was there that Hitler and the other occupants exited the train and entered three specially constructed Mercedes limousines. After a short ride, the vehicles stopped near several old antiaircraft gun emplacements that had been converted to bunkers.

Hitler had come to see firsthand the beginning of Case Yellow, the Nazi invasion of France and the Low Countries. The serenity of the scene would soon end with the sound of artillery fire from the west. Hitler stated, "Gentlemen, the offensive against the Western powers has just started." The attack was a new form of warfare, Blitzkrieg or Lightning War, which was first used in Poland the previous September. Blitzkrieg was a term coined by Western news reporters to describe the speed and destructiveness of the German attack on Poland. One of Hitler's adjutants silently made note of the date and time, 5:35 AM, May 10, 1940.

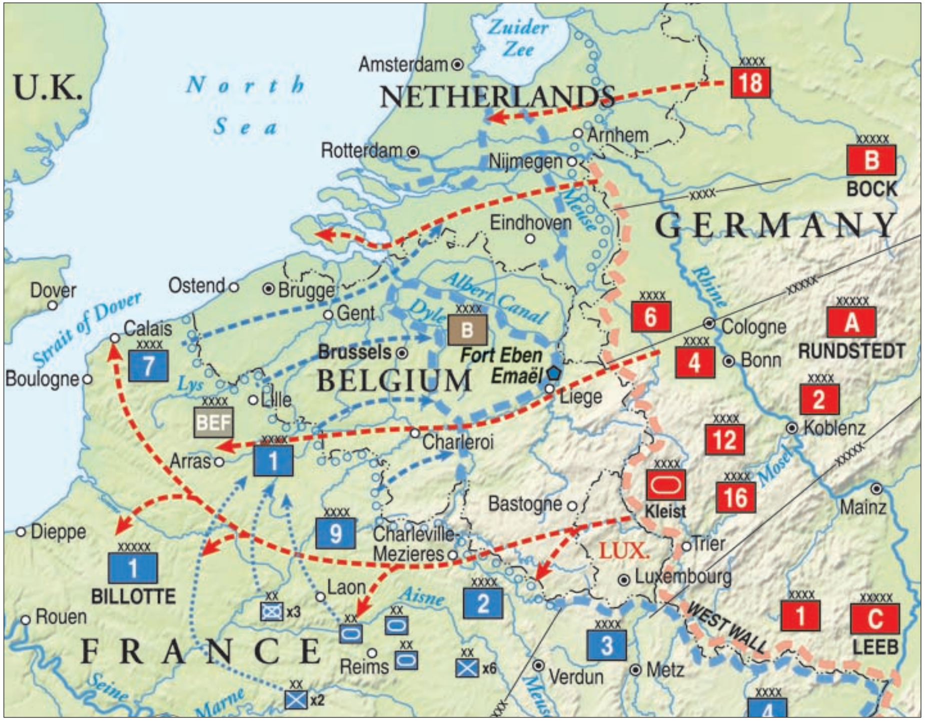
Prior to execution, the planning for Case Yellow had undergone a number of changes. One of the major reasons for changing the original plan occurred on January 10, 1940, when a German courier aircraft flying to Cologne got lost in fog and crashed in Belgium. The courier on board, Major Helmuth Reubriger, a staff officer of the German 7th Airborne Division, was carrying detailed plans for the Western offensive. As Reubriger ran for some nearby bushes, he set fire to the contents of the briefcase. Belgian soldiers spotted the fire, stamped it out, and retrieved what was left.

Reubriger was taken to a nearby military headquarters, where he again tried to destroy the papers by throwing them into a lighted stove. A Belgian officer was able to snatch them out. Reubriger reported the incident to Luftwaffe headquarters in Berlin through the German embassy in Brussels, falsely stating that he had been able to burn the papers to "insignificant fragments, the size of the palm of his hand."

akg-images

Confident German Army troops march through a Belgian town in May 1940. The lightning attack on France and the Low Countries ended the Sitzkrieg, or Phony War, and ushered in a violent period of German conquest as Nazi soldiers overran most of Western Europe.

Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN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BEF
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Charleroi
Arras
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Moselle
Mainz
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Kleist
Bastogne
Dieppe
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Charleville-Mezieres
LUX.
Trier
Luxembourg
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BILLOTTE
Rouen
Laon
Aisne
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WEST WALL
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LEEB
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FRANCE
Reims
x6
3
Verdun
Metz
Seine
Marne
x2
Meuse
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The swift German offensive codenamed Case Yellow drew French and British armies into Belgium with a feint as the main German thrust knifed through the rugged Ardennes Forest and threatened to cut off hundreds of thousands of soldiers. The Nazi dash to the English Channel capped a spectacularly executed movement.

National Archives

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ABOVE LEFT: The Luftwaffe provided close air support for advancing German armored and infantry columns and struck fear into the civilian populations of many Belgian towns. ABOVE RIGHT: A Belgian mother and her children attempt to escape the war that has come to their doorstep. As the Germans advanced westward, many civilians were displaced, clogging the roads toward temporary safety and impeding the progress of Allied troops as they sought to regroup.

But in Berlin there was a great deal of concern. Col. Gen. Alfred Jodl, the high command chief of staff, immediately reported the incident to Hitler. After seeing the Führer, Jodl confided to his diary, "The situation is catastrophic." On January 13, Jodl noted, "Order to Gen. Halder by telephone: All movements to stop."

The Belgians did not pass along a complete set of the plans to the British and French, only a two-page synopsis, and refused to say where they had obtained them. The plans were so detailed and their capture so fortuitous that the Allies, especially the French, were suspicious that the whole event may have been a hoax. General Maurice Gamelin, the commander in chief of Allied forces in France, was satisfied with only issuing a general alert. Gamelin felt that even if the captured plans were true there was not much he could do about it.

On the same day that Jodl contacted Halder, the German ambassador in Brussels was urgently informing Berlin of Belgian troop movements "as a result of alarming reports received by the Belgian General Staff." The following day the ambassador sent another message to Berlin that the Belgians were initiating Plan D, which called for the French 1st Army Group and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to rush into Belgium to stop the Germans. The Belgians, fully aware of the plan but still trying to cling to their neutrality, would actually only allow a few British officers in plain clothes to carry out reconnaissance. The official reason given by the Belgian government for partially implementing the plan was its awareness of "reports of German troop movements and the content of the partly unburned courier mail found on the German Air Force officer."

On January 17, Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak sent for the German ambassador and told him flatly, as the latter reported to Berlin, "The plane which made an emergency landing on January 10 had put into Belgian hands a document of the most extraordinary and serious nature, which contained clear proof of an intention to attack. It was not just an operations plan, but an attack order worked out in every detail, in which only the time remained to be added." One thing is certain as a result of this incident. The day after Hitler was informed he postponed the attack. By the time the plan reemerged in the spring it had completely changed.

The new plan for invasion was the brainchild of General Erich von Mainstein, chief of staff to Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander of Army Group A in the upcoming operation. The plan was based on the German belief that the French and British would advance into Belgium. Code-named Sichelschnitt (Sickle Stroke), it was to be carried out by three army groups. Army Group B, the northernmost commanded by General Fedor von Bock, was to move into Holland and northern Belgium in an attempt to draw the Franco-British armies as far east as possible. Army Group C, the southernmost under the command of General Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, was to move against fixed fortifications of the Maginot Line on the French frontier. Rundstedt's Army Group A, in the center, was to advance through the Ardennes Forest, drive northwest, and finally reach the English Channel coast, trapping approximately one-third of the Allied armies.

On the morning of May 10, 1940, the initial attacks were by the Luftwaffe, hitting Allied airfields, railroads, and other key points in France to disrupt communications. The attacking forces were made up of 137 divisions and more than 2,000 tanks. To support the massive assault, 3,800 Luftwaffe aircraft were available. Even though the Allies knew such an attack was possible, it came as almost a complete surprise. It was not long before German divisions were racing across Belgium and Holland, encountering generally weak resistance.

The BEF moved to positions along the Dyle River without being hindered by the Luftwaffe, which was in the process of destroying the Belgian Air Force, for the most part caught on the ground. There was another reason why the Luftwaffe did not hinder the Allied movement into Belgium. It suited the German plan perfectly. The confusing command structure between the BEF, the French, and the Belgians did nothing to help the Allied situation.

After several days of fighting, the Germans had not succeeded in penetrating any of the positions held by the BEF. However, a 5,000-yard sector of the line held by the French had been breached, causing the British to reconfigure part of their line. As for the Belgians, they had fought well along their frontier but were not able to hold out as long as they had expected. They, as well as the Dutch, could not cope with the tactics of the Wehrmacht. The Germans were seizing vital bridges using small groups of specially trained troops who would come in silently at dawn on gliders and capture the bridges before they could be blown up.

One of the Germans' greatest successes was at the Belgian Fort Eben Emael located at the junction of the Meuse River and Albert Canal. This modern fortress was thought to be the most impregnable structure in all of Europe, much stronger than anything the French had built along the Maginot Line or the Germans in the West Wall. Glider troops attacked Eben Emael with precision and quickly captured the fort.

Gamelin and his staff had no real idea how fast events were moving. French troops did go into Holland, but the Dutch Army had retreated too far to the northeast to create a common front, and the Belgian forces, including those along the Dyle, began falling back as their right flank was turned. The Wehrmacht had 29 divisions committed to seizing northern Belgium and Holland. There were 45 divisions committed to moving across central France and northwest to cut off the French and British forces in Belgium.

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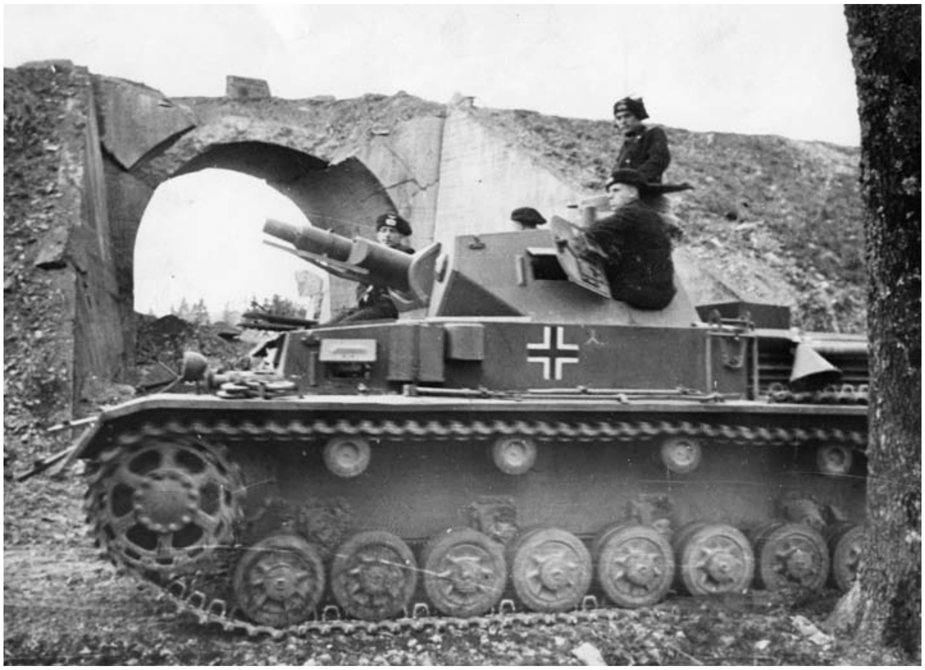
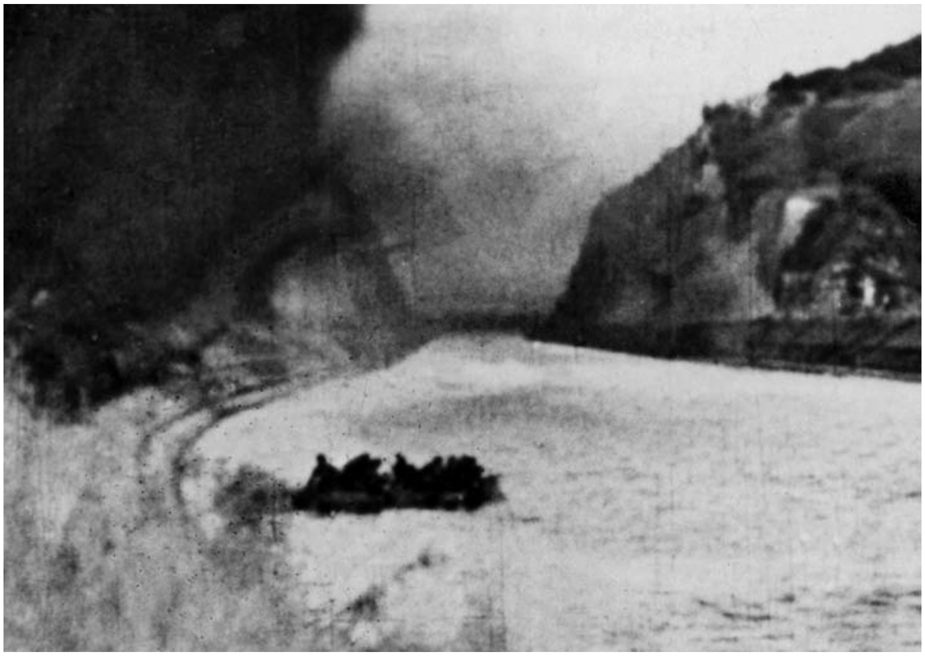


ABOVE: This German tank is one a relative few PzKpfw. III models that took part in the conquest of Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The PzKpfw. III mounted a short-barreled 50mm cannon, comparable to the best weapons mounted on heavy British and French tanks. BELOW: In this still photograph from the German propaganda film *Sieg im Westen,* or *Victory in the West,* Nazi soldiers cross the waters of the Albert Canal in a small boat. The action took place during the assault on Fort Eben Emael, which was thought to be virtually impregnable. The fort fell to a coordinated strike led by German glider troops.



ullstein bild

On May 14, General Alphonse Georges, commander of the French Northeast Front, flung himself into a chair and burst into tears. "Our front has been broken at Sedan," he announced. On May 15, the German armor began its breakout from bridgeheads across the Meuse. Holland surrendered that day after enduring the devastating bombing of Rotterdam.

French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud phoned British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and told him, "We are defeated—we have lost the battle." The Allies were now in the process of a massive withdrawal. German Army Groups A and B were on the move. Although the breakthrough in Belgium was not the decisive stroke that the Germans had hoped for in the West, its success cannot be understated. It had drawn the Allies' attention in the wrong direction, which absorbed their mobile forces in the fighting so that they could not be used on the French frontier where they would have been more useful. The effect of the German move through the Ardennes owed much to the French response, which seemed to fit perfectly into the revised German plan.

Early on the morning of May 28, Belgian King Leopold III surrendered. The headstrong young ruler had previously taken his country out of its alliance with France and Britain, declaring the country neutral. He had even refused to restore the alliance at a time when he knew the Germans were preparing to invade his country. Leopold surrendered against the unanimous advice of his government, which by the constitution he was sworn to follow.

Three days before his surrender, Leopold had met with three members of his cabinet, including both the prime minister and foreign minister. They urged him not to surrender and become a prisoner of the Germans. Leopold responded, "I have decided to stay. The cause of the Allies is lost." The Belgian government's repudiation of his decision to stay with his troops rather than join the London government in exile would lead to postwar issues over his right to the throne. Leopold was held prisoner by the Germans at his royal chateau near Brussels until 1944 and then in Austria until the end of the war.

Leopold's capitulation was strongly denounced by Reynaud and Churchill. Despite the Belgian king's behavior, his army had fought with honor and gallantry. It stood fast for a lengthy period, absorbing the unmerciful bombing of the Luftwaffe and the onslaught of German armor. This could not be said of all Allied troops fighting in the campaign.

Germany occupied Belgium until late 1944. In Belgium, as well as in other European countries conquered by Nazi Germany, Luftwaffe Chief Hermann Göring instructed his subordinates, "Whenever you come across anything that may be needed by the German people, you must be after it like a bloodhound. It must be taken out … and brought to Germany."

Whenever German troops occupied a country, Hitler's financial agents would seize the gold and foreign holdings of its national bank. In addition, staggering "occupation costs" were assessed. At the postwar Nuremburg trials, it was estimated that the Germans extracted occupation costs that amounted to approximately two thirds of the national income of Belgium. The Third Reich also began to take advantage of the economies of conquered countries in less obvious ways. The exchange rate in Belgium and other occupied nations was set at a level most favorable to the German Reichsmark. Germany would import huge quantities of goods legitimately from conquered countries, in addition to simply looting them, but did not pay for them by commensurately increasing its own exports. Instead, Belgian French, and Dutch firms exporting goods to Germany were paid by their own central banks, and the amounts paid marked up as debts to the Reichsbank in Berlin. The overvalued Reichsmark also allowed German companies to gain control of rival firms in occupied countries.

Coal, the basic fuel for generating electricity, was available in huge quantities in Western and Central Europe. However, production in occupied countries went down as workers slowed, and some even went on strike over food rationing and deteriorating conditions under the Germans. The drafting of farmworkers as forced labor in Germany had a huge effect in Belgium and other occupied countries. The German occupiers introduced food rationing, reducing the calories allotted to individual Belgians to 1,300 per day. This led to a situation where the economies of the occupied countries did far less than had been hoped to help the German war effort. A vigorous black market emerged.

Of course, the main weapon used by the Nazis in occupied countries was terror. The Nazis would publish notices in newspapers and put up posters promising retaliation for crimes committed against them. If a German officer was killed by partisans, 100 hostages would be put to death. Shown as evidence at Nuremberg, dozens of secret orders decreed the taking and shooting of hostages. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel of the general staff was hanged as a war criminal in 1946. Five years earlier he had decreed, "It is important that these [hostages] should include well known leading personalities or members of their families."

The quick surrender of King Leopold III, which had caused such anger in London, was seen in Belgium as a unifying act. His presence, even though it was in confinement in Brussels, provided a focal point for national unity. The government, which had fled to London, was blamed for the defeat. Because of the importance of the Belgian coast as a jumping-off point for a possible invasion of Britain, Hitler

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ABOVE: Belgium surrendered quickly before the German onslaught in the spring of 1940. Young King Leopold III was only 39 years old when Nazi troops rolled across the Belgian frontier. BELOW: A pair of French tanks knocked out during the fighting to stem the German tide lie abandoned in a town square somewhere in Belgium. BOTTOM: French prisoners carry a wounded comrade into captivity during the fighting in Belgium.

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decided to leave the military in charge. This led to a somewhat unexpected milder form of occupation than it would have been under a Nazi commissioner. The existing Belgian establishment, the civil service, lawyers, industrialists, the church, and political leaders who were not in exile tried to work with the German military administration to keep the peace and maintain the existing social order as much as possible under harsh conditions.

Still, the German occupiers showed no mercy to the Jewish population in Belgium. At the beginning of the war, there were between 65,000 and 75,000 Jews living in Belgium with only 6 percent of them being immigrants and refugees. On October 28, 1940, the German military government put forth a decree ordering all Jews to register with the authorities. This led to native Jews being dismissed from the civil service, the legal system, and the media. While this was taking place, most Belgians simply regarded Jews as Belgians.

However, when the first train left Belgium for Aushwitz on August 4, 1942, it contained only foreign Jews. By November 1942, some 15,000 Jews had been deported. By this time a Jewish underground organization was in contact with the Belgian resistance. This soon led to a widespread action to bring the country's remaining Jews into hiding. Local Catholic organizations also played an important role in concealing Jewish children. In addition, the Belgian police were not as willing to assist in the rounding up of Jews as police forces in other occupied countries. These activities contributed to lesser numbers of Jews being sent to the gas chambers, about 25,000 at Aushwitz, while a similar number found their way into hiding. In the end, 40 percent of the Jewish population of Belgium was murdered by the Nazis, a relatively small percentage when compared to 73 percent in the Netherlands.

There were two main underground groups in Belgium, the Secret Army and the White Brigade. One member of the Secret Army was Madame Renier Janssen, nee Martha Leyder, who participated in an effort called the official escape lines. She lived close to the Dutch border in the village of Eisden. Her group was known as the 59th Brigade of the Gehem Leger (Flemish for Secret Army). As a result of its work and that of its compatriots all over Belgium, many Allied pilots whose planes had been shot down over Belgian territory avoided capture. The pilots were guided through German-occupied towns and villages to the French border.

Other Belgian resistance groups focused on disrupting German operations. Because of the many major rail lines running through Belgium between Germany and France, the resistance fighters were able to supply the Allies with information on German troop movements. In addition, the resistance played a role in destroying key railways. One of the most successful attacks was on a rail bridge over the Ambleve River, which resulted in a German troop train going into the river with the loss of 600 men.

As the war continued, the resistance maintained an unceasing campaign of espionage, sabotage, and deadly force. The resistance became increasingly bold in 1943, when German losses in North Africa and Russia encouraged people in the occupied countries to actually believe that Hitler could be defeated. In addition, the intensified efforts by the German occupiers to send more forced labor to Germany to work on farms and in factories caused many Belgians to choose between fight and flight.

It was also during this period that the British secret services, joined later by the Americans, increasingly provided both the means and the training that the armed resistance required. The Allied group most concerned with active resistance was the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). The SOE sent 7,000 agents and instructors to the European continent. They included telegraphers, saboteurs, spies, propagandists, and liaison officers. The agents' most important task was to gather and transmit intelligence back to London. When textile factories in Belgium began manufacturing tropical uniforms in January 1941, the British surmised that the Germans were planning an operation in North Africa.

As the war dragged on, the Germans were slowly losing their grip on the occupied countries. Allied forces reached Brussels in September 1944. The important port city of Antwerp was in Allied hands by December 10. However, Hitler was not quite finished. On December 16, 1944, three German armies comprising half a million men attacked U.S. forces in the Ardennes area of Belgium and Luxembourg, achieving complete surprise. The confrontation that ensued became known as the Battle of the Bulge. By the end of January 1945, the German salient deep in American lines had been effectively reduced.

Like other European countries, Belgium was devastated by World War II. Foreign aid, principally in the form of the American Marshall Plan, helped the nation to recover, but the process took years.

Author William Floyd retired after 40 years of service as construction manager for the City of Norfolk, Virginia. He currently resides in nearby Virginia Beach.

National Archives

Following the surrender of Belgium, police forces were mobilized to work with the Nazis to round up subversives, Jews, Communists, and other perceived enemies of the new order. These policemen are searching civilians they have detained on a street in the Belgian capital of Brussels.

First Time UNDER

BY CLEVE C. BARKLEY

A U.S. Marine squad leader motions to his men to stay low within the protection of a shell hole on the island of Namur. The Marines assaulted Namur and the island of Roi on February 1, 1944, with a primary focus on seizing the airfield that took up nearly the entire landmass of Roi. Preinvasion bombardment had given the Marines plenty of craters in which to take cover.

THE U.S. 4TH MARINE DIVISION EXPERIENCED ENEMY ACTION FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING THE FIGHT FOR THE JAPANESE-HELD ISLANDS OF ROI AND NAMUR.

FIRE

AS 1943 DREW TO A CLOSE, ADMIRAL CHESTER NIMITZ'S CENTRAL Pacific campaign was gaining momentum. His forces had taken the Gilbert Islands that November and now targeted the Marshall Islands as the next step on the long road to Tokyo. Codenamed Operation Flintlock, the plan called for Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's V Amphibious Force to bypass the Marshalls' stronger outer defenses in favor of striking directly at Kwajalein Atoll in the archipelago's center. Maj. Gen. Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith, USMC, commander of V Amphibious Corps, selected the Army's veteran 7th Infantry Division to secure naval facilities at Kwajalein Island in the atoll's southern group while Maj. Gen. Harry Schmidt's untried 4th Marine Division, sailing directly from San Diego, would take Roi-Namur and its excellent airfield, 44 miles to the north.

Flat, barren Roi measures 1,200 by 1,250 yards, barely enough room to accommodate the airfield. Tethered to Roi by a 400-yard causeway and a narrow, lagoon-side sand spit lay Namur, encompassing 800 by 900 yards of heavily forested terrain that shaded the garrison's barracks and other structures. Thirty-five aircraft and approximately 2,000 members of Japanese Vice Admiral Michiyuki Yamada's 24th Air Flotilla occupied the islands, along with a 345-strong contingent of the 61st Guard Force and perhaps 1,200 service personnel. For defense, Roi-Namur boasted two batteries of twin-mounted 127mm guns, four 37mm cannons; 19 13.2mm heavy machine guns, and 10 20mm antiaircraft guns, nearly all facing northward in anticipation of an oceanside landing. Eight blockhouses and 52 pillboxes dotted the landscape with general purpose machine guns sprinkled throughout. Antitank ditches and fighting trenches girdled the beaches.

Following a two-month bombing campaign, Rear Admiral Richard Connoly's Task Force 53 closed in on January 29, 1944, to commence a massive three-day bombardment, pummeling the defenders with more than 2,655 tons of high explosives. In November 1943, the Navy's 2$^1/_2$-hour preparatory barrage at Tarawa proved woefully inadequate, resulting in 3,178 Marine casualties. As a result, Admiral Connoly was committed to destroying every man, tree, and building that occupied Roi-Namur.

The first objectives were five outlying islands that were taken by the 25th Marines on D-day, January 31, with little trouble. With these secured, the howitzers of the 14th Marines were placed to support the main invasion scheduled for the following morning.

Throughout the night, U.S. Navy gunners hurled shell after shell at the hapless islands. Just before dawn on February 1, the cannonading ceased to allow the lumbering Marine-carrying LSTs (Land Ships, Tank) to break from the fleet and enter the lagoon. Once these were in place, the bombardment resumed with unbridled vigor.

In the lagoon, the Marines prepared for action. Colonel Louis Jones' 23rd Marines were to take Roi with Lt. Col. Hewin Hammond's First Battalion going in on Red Beach Two while Lt. Col. Edward Dillon's Second Battalion stormed Red Beach Three, to Hammond's right. Colonel Franklin Hart's 24th Marines would make a simultaneous assault on Namur. Hart chose Lt. Col. Austin Brunelli's Third Battalion to storm Green Beach One while Lt. Col. Francis Brink's Second Battalion hit Green Two, to the right of the L-shaped Yokohama Pier, which served as the battalion boundary. W-hour, the time of assault, was set at 10 AM.

The infantry was divided into boat and assault teams with the former comprising riflemen and the latter a combination of demolitions specialists, bazooka men, and machine gunners, all embarked in LVT-2s (Landing Vehicle, Tracked). These amphibious tractors, or amtracs, were fitted with cleated treads designed to claw over barrier reefs. Each held 18 to 24 men. Four companies of armored LVT(A)s—amtanks—equipped with turreted 37mm cannons and machine guns would precede the infantry. Followup units would arrive in flat-bottomed LCVPs (Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel).

All photos: National Archives

ABOVE: Marines leap over the side of their amphibious Amtrac landing craft during operations in the Marshall Islands. Instead of attacking the strong defenses of islands in the outer Marshalls, the Marines struck at Roi-Namur while veteran Army troops attacked Kwajalein. RIGHT: Heavy U.S. naval bombardment of Roi made a shambles of the airfield installations the Japanese had built on the small island and destroyed any planes that were present on the ground. This photo shows the remains of the tail section of a Japanese bomber after the pounding meted out to the airfield by Navy guns.

The assault waves of the 23rd Marines would be carried by the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, while those of the 24th would ride the amtracs of the 10th Battalion. However, the 10th was in a state of disarray, having seen continuous service the previous day ferrying elements of the 25th Marines to the outlaying islands. It had been a long and trying ordeal for the crews, which expended much of their fuel and virtually all of their energy while transporting personnel and supplies to and from the various islets. As darkness fell many were unable to locate their mother ships. Consequently, some LVTs ran out of gas, causing bilge pumps to cease working. A number swamped and sank in the choppy seas, while others sought refuge on nearby beaches. By morning only 62 of 110 LVTs allocated for the Namur landings were available.

As late as 6:30 AM, Captain Charles Berkeley, Jr.'s Company G, one of the scheduled assault companies for Brink's Landing Team Two, was unable to secure enough LVTs to make the landing, so a last minute revision called for Captain John Ross, Jr.'s Company E, initially battalion reserve, to exchange roles with G Company. Berkeley's men would have to wait until enough vessels could be corralled to take them in. Similar shortages plagued Landing Team Three, but Lt. Col. Brunelli simply combined all available amtracs until both assault companies had sufficient transportation while his reserve element, Company L, remained aboard its LST with no means to embark. Chaos replaced order as the ad hoc assault waves struggled to gain the line of departure. As a result, W-hour was postponed until 11 AM.

Meanwhile, the Navy kept a tight schedule. At 6:50 AM Rear Admiral Howard Kingman's Fire Support Unit One had eased to within 3,000 yards of Namur's oceanside beaches to commence the final bombardment, while Rear Admiral Laurence DuBose's Fire Support Team Two ripped off salvoes toward Roi. At the first inkling of daylight, the howitzers of the 14th Marines chimed in from the neighboring islets. By then the entire Japanese air fleet had been destroyed, as well as the communications and command structure, including Admiral Yamada and his staff, all of whom perished in the rubble.

While all this occurred, naval control officers tasked with aligning the waves of the 24th Marines were experiencing much consternation as unscheduled units hove into view while designated teams were nowhere in sight. Fifteen more minutes ticked by with negligible improvement. It was feared that once again unnecessary fuel consumption would jeopardize the LVTs circling impatiently in the lagoon. Furthermore, the initial landing teams still lacked proper reserves. Fortunately, the floating reserve, Lt. Col. Aquilla Dyess' 1st Battalion, was already embarked in LCVPs 3,000 yards behind the line of departure.

Colonel Hart ordered Companies A and B to fill the void. But no sooner had these units arrived at the departure line than scraps of Company G materialized, loaded in a combination of LVTs and LCVPs, determined to reclaim their role as Landing Team 2's reserve. Wave officers were at their wits' end as Company A relinquished its position. Just then the red signal flag dropped from the control ship: "Launch the invasion." It was 11:12 AM. The landing craft of the 23rd Marines streaked for their designated beaches. Caught off guard, the coxswains transporting the disheveled 24th gunned their engines and set bearings for hostile shores, 4,000 yards away.

LCI(G) gunboats (Landing Craft, Infantry) led the procession, trailed by the armored LVT(A)s of the first wave with the assault infantry close behind. One thousand yards from shore, the gunboats swung broadside and cut loose with rockets and rapid-firing 40mm guns while the assault waves continued toward their destinations. On cue, the Navy's bombardment shifted to the interior while dive bombers commenced their final runs.

At Roi, the 30 LVT(A)s assigned to the 23rd Marines came in hot, lacerating the thick battle haze with streams of searing tracers as they waddled ashore. They had hardly made landfall when an imposing antitank ditch loomed a mere 60 feet from the surf. Unable to proceed inland, the armored tractors lurched to a halt while releasing a galling fire from their machine guns and turreted cannons. It was 11:33 AM.

Within 20 minutes the LVTs bearing the 23rd Marines clattered ashore. In the right-hand sector, the Marines of Companies E and F of Lt. Col. Dillon's 2nd Battalion hit Red Beach Three and scrambled up a slight rise, then dropped to peer apprehensively into a wall of smoke and dust. Although plenty of gunfire flashed overhead, very little seemed to be incoming—naval artillery had destroyed virtually every beachside pillbox and the Japanese defenses lay in shambles. Dillon's men crossed the ditch, shooting the few disoriented defenders encountered, then moved rapidly inland. By then the M4 Sherman medium tanks of Company C, 4th Tank Battalion had landed, followed by several light tanks of Company A. After crossing a collapsed section of antitank ditch, these quickly joined the assault. Within 20 minutes of landing, the Marines had reached the O-1 Phase Line along the lower arm of the airfield, about 200 yards inland. Company G beached soon after and commenced rooting out any bypassed enemies.

On the far left, Lt. Col. Hammond's 1st Battalion landed on Red Beach Two five minutes behind Dillon's men, also against negligible opposition. Captain James Scales' Company A peeled left to assault a pair of large pillboxes reported to occupy Wendy Point, 300 yards distant. These Marines found only smoldering, rubble-filled craters where the fortresses purportedly stood—mute testimony to the Navy's devastating firepower. Wendy Point, expected to be a tough battle, was a pushover.

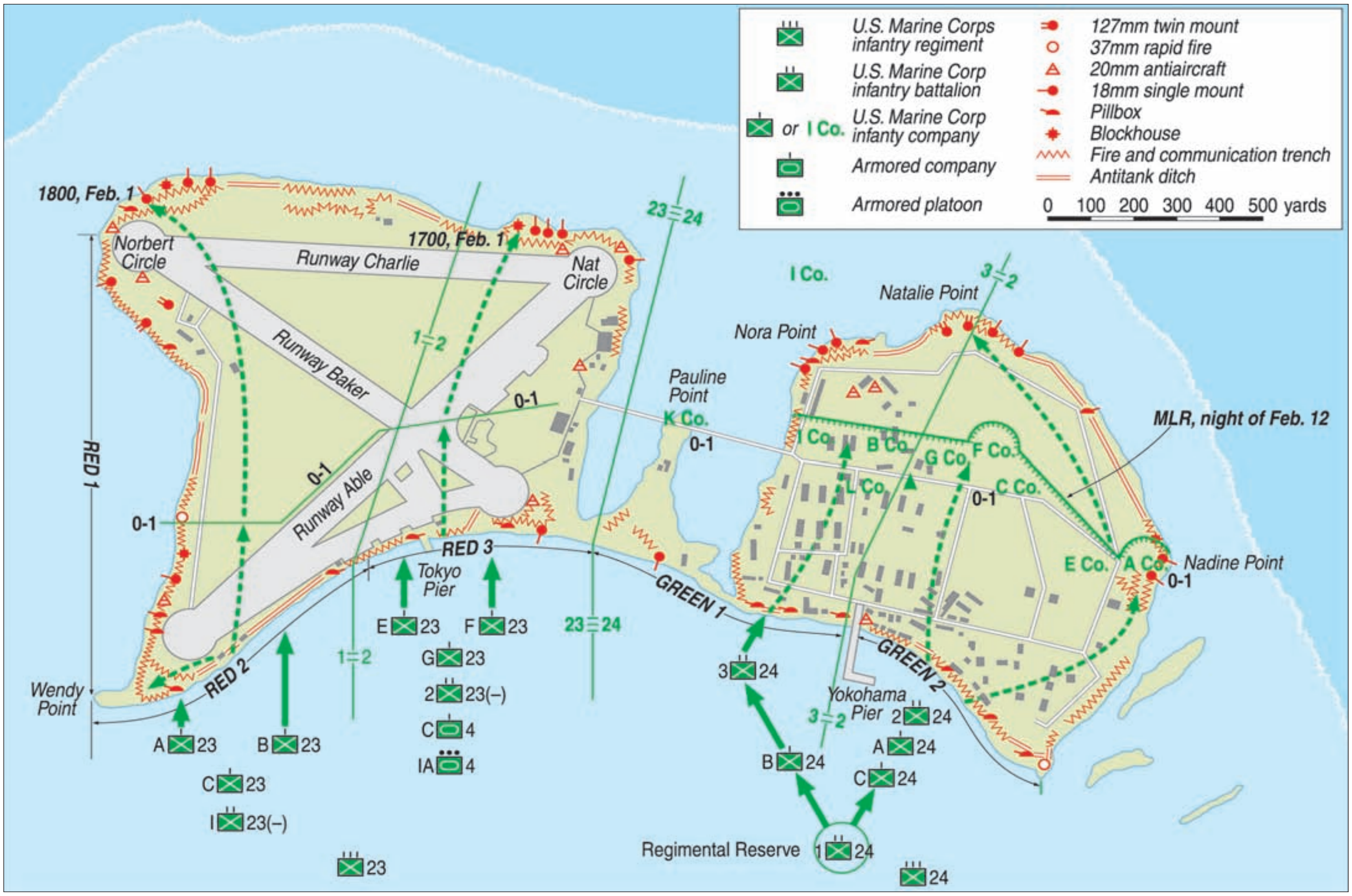
Having secured their first objective without a fight, Scales' men dashed up the western shore to claim their sector of the O-1 Line. En route, a spattering of gunfire erupted from a large blockhouse designated "Buster" 400 yards up the coast, but this too was quickly silenced after Marines crept close enough to pelt its entrance with grenades.

While Scales' men were securing Wendy Point, Captain William Weinstein's Company B pushed effortlessly inland to join Dillon's men along the crater-pitted runway, where resistance proved feeble at best. Live Japanese were scarce. At times, Bangalore torpedoes or satchel charges were required to snuff out a few pernicious riflemen, who sniped from nearby trenches and debris-shrouded culverts, but by 1 PM all elements were on line and anxious to proceed.

By then Colonel Jones had landed and set up his regimental command post near the beach. Ecstatic at the ease of the operation, he radioed General Schmidt aboard the amphibious support ship USS *Appalachian*. "This is a pip," he crowed, adding a few minutes later, "Give us the word and we'll take the rest of the island." General Schmidt advised Jones to calm down and prepare for the second phase of the attack.

Captain Robert Neiman, commander of Company C, 4th Tank Battalion, had no intention of settling down. His M4 mediums sat idle and exposed on the flat, open terrain, presenting juicy targets for the numerous antitank guns reported to infest the area. Favoring action over inaction, Neiman ordered his command to advance. The tanks set off, blasting every suspicious structure with their 75mm guns while bow gunners mowed down individual Japanese soldiers, who scurried like frightened rabbits before the massive treads. Upon seeing the tanks lumbering across the plain, the Marines of Company A moved out to provide protection while a platoon of amtanks waddled up the western coast in support. By 1:30 PM several M4s were dueling with enemy machine gunners defending the northeastern runway terminus called Nat Circle, while six others prowled the northern airstrip. It seemed as if victory was at hand.

However, General Schmidt was not pleased with this unauthorized action and ordered Jones to recall his wildcats lest they fall victim to the preliminary bombardment scheduled for the final push. It took nearly an hour before the mavericks were reined in and order was restored at the O-1 Line. Phase Two was to be launched at 3:15 PM with each assault battalion pushing straight up its respective half of the island.


U.S. Marine Corps infantry regiment
U.S. Marine Corp infantry battalion
or I Co. U.S. Marine Corp infanty company
Armored company
Armored platoon
127mm twin mount
37mm rapid fire
20mm antiaircraft
18mm single mount
Pillbox
Blockhouse
Fire and communication trench
Antitank ditch
0 100 200 300 400 500 yards
1800, Feb. 1
1700, Feb. 1
Norbert Circle
Runway Charlie
Nat Circle
Runway Baker
Runway Able
RED 1
RED 2
RED 3
Wendy Point
Tokyo Pier
0-1
1=2
23=24
3=2
I Co.
K Co.
Natalie Point
Nora Point
Pauline Point
MLR, night of Feb. 12
I Co
B Co
G Co
F Co.
L Co
C Co.
E Co.
A Co.
Nadine Point
GREEN 1
GREEN 2
Yokohama Pier
E 23
F 23
G 23
2 23(–)
C 4
IA 4
A 23
B 23
C 23
I 23(–)
23
3 24
2 24
A 24
B 24
C 24
Regimental Reserve
1 24
24

The islands of Roi and Namur are conjoined by a sandspit and causeway that runs the width of a lagoon between the two shores. On February 1, 1944, Marines of the 23rd Regiment hit the beaches and began the arduous task of clearing the island of defending Japanese troops.

At 3:10 PM, the cruiser *Santa Fe* commenced pumping five-inch shells into troublesome Nat Circle. Twenty minutes later, the 2nd Battalion jumped off, supported by a 75mm half-track firing from mid-island. Although 20mm fire sputtered from Nat Circle, resistance was sporadic at best with Marines discovering many more dead than living Japanese. Within seven minutes Captain John Padley's Company F was clearing out skeletal hangars along the northern runway while Captain Neiman's tanks reengaged the enemy defending Nat Circle. Captain Carl Grussendorf's Company E kept pace on Padley's left. While advancing, four of Grussendorf's Marines tumbled into a shell hole, believing that enemy soldiers occupied a nearby trench. Unwilling to take unnecessary chances, Pfc. Richard Anderson had just pulled the pin of a grenade when it slipped from his grip and rolled to the bottom of their crater. Realizing his blunder, Anderson threw himself on the bomb to save his comrades. He was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Initially, Hammond's 1st Battalion remained stationary to provide supporting fire for Dillon's men and did not join the advance until 4 PM. Led by a platoon of light tanks, Captain Fred Eberhardt's fresh Company C bolted up the western seashore trailed by three 75mm half-track guns. Mutilated Japanese corpses littered the landscape, residue of the fierce naval bombardment. The little resistance encountered came in the form of isolated rifle and machine-gun fire. In less than an hour Eberhardt's men were mopping up Norbert Circle on the island's northwestern corner.

Now only Nat Circle remained. Although Captain Neiman's tanks had knocked out several enemy positions, one pillbox continued to spew machine-gun fire in three directions. Colonel Dillon ordered his reserve, Captain Frank Snepp's Company G, to knock it out. While a half-track battered its steel door with 75mm rounds, a demolitions team closed in for the kill. When someone noticed a rent in the roof, a Bangalore-toting Marine climbed up and jammed his torpedo through the fissure while comrades ignited shaped charges at the apertures. Before the dust had settled, a half dozen Marines dashed inside and found three machine guns and three dead gunners. They also noted that the fort's firing slits, like many of the island's defenses, faced only north, east, and west, making their lagoon approach immeasurably easier. By 4:45 PM, all major resistance on Roi had ceased. Although the usual mopping up had yet to be completed, Colonel Jones declared the island secure at 6:02 PM.

For the most part, the battle for Roi had indeed been a pip. Namur would prove to be a different story.

Lt. Col. Dwight Dillon led the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines during the battle to wrest the airfield on Roi from Japanese control. The Marines who fought at Roi-Namur in early 1944 received their baptism of fire.

A thousand yards from Namur's beaches the jumbled assault waves of the 24th Marines churned past the rocket-spewing LCI(G)s as they skittered toward war's seething cauldron. Nearly three dozen cannon-wielding amtanks of Companies B and D, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion led the way, ordered to push 100 yards inland upon landing. For unknown reasons, the entire wave pulled up 50 yards short of the surf line where the landing craft continued to blast the unseen enemy.

Minutes later the infantry's amtracs scuttled past the reluctant LVT(A)s. Chancing enemy fire, 2nd Lt. John Chapin of Company K peered over the bow of his vehicle and searched for his assigned landing site on Green Beach One. He saw nothing but roiling smoke and dust. Uncertain, he turned to consult with his platoon sergeant only to discover his right-hand man slumped over dead, his skull reduced to bloody pulp. Unnerved, Chapin refocused on the island before him.

Several hundred yards to Chapin's right the amphibious tractors of Second Battalion clambered over Green Beach Two a bit before noon, while his own battalion struck Green One shortly after. All came in with machine guns blazing, intending to disgorge their Marines 100 yards inland, but as on Roi a deep antitank ditch forced them to an abrupt halt. Officers bellowed, "Let's go!" and vaulted the gunwales. Covering fire rose to a crescendo as heavily-laden Marines plunged a full seven feet to the beach below and then scrambled forward a few yards to belly flop, breathless, before the impeding ditch.

On Green One intermittent machine-gun fire scattered several boat teams as Captain Albert Arsenault's Company I and Captain Doyle Stout's Company K disembarked. Lying in the sand, Chapin asked his platoon guide if he knew his men's location. No sooner had the sergeant commenced pointing than his hand disintegrated in a spray of blood and bone. Wild eyed, the sergeant gripped his splintered stump and began yelling, "Sailor! Sailor!" employing the current term for corpsman, having been told that snipers understood the latter's meaning and would invariably target any medic who hastened to his aid. Having lost two key subordinates within a matter of minutes, young Chapin pondered whether Namur was about to degenerate into another Tarawa.

On Green Two elements of both assault companies also became intertwined upon landing, but fortunately resistance in their sector was nearly nonexistent. Occasionally, a Japanese soldier would spring from a trench, snap off a round or two, then disappear. Marines answered with a shower of grenades followed by a headlong charge, which ended the gunman's life. Only on the far right was serious opposition experienced when erratic machine-gun fire raked Company F from a pillbox planted above Sally Point on the extreme southeastern promontory. But this, too, was soon quelled with the cooperation of the heavy weapons of the 25th Marines firing from neighboring Ennugarret Island.

The boat and assault teams quickly cleared both beaches and pressed rapidly inland only to encounter an unexpected obstacle. Roi had been flat and open to accommodate the airfield, but Namur was heavily foliaged. Now, thanks to the savage naval bombardment, heaps of palm fronds, splintered trunks, and other debris meshed with the undergrowth to shroud the island's buildings, bunkers, and pillboxes from view. As a result, the Marines advanced with measured caution. Sometimes a lone defender would stagger from concealment in a desperate bid to die for his emperor accompanied by one or two others, but all fell in a hail of bullets. Elsewhere, defiant pillboxes required the skills of demolitions men while lesser positions were left for followup troops. Within 15 minutes many teams had penetrated to a depth of 200 yards.

At this point, the left flank of Brink's 2nd Battalion lost contact with Brunelli's 3rd. This troubling situation developed after elements of Company E landed directly behind Company F on Green Beach Two. Upon entering the jumbled vegetation, both companies became tangled, with much of Company E somehow winding up on the battalion's right flank—a complete reversal of the order of advance. As a result, a substantial gap appeared on the battalions' boundary. Fortunately, about half of Captain Berkeley's Company G had made landfall by then and was immediately dispatched to plug the gap. However, these troops ran into ever stiffening resistance from isolated enemy machine guns and riflemen and got no farther than 175 yards from the beach. Although they stumbled upon a lost team from Company E, the reserve was unable to gain contact with either assault battalion.

Captain Berkeley's men were not the only ones having a rough time. In the 3rd Battalion sector an assault team led by Chapin converged with that of Lieutenant John Power before a large, aggressively defended strongpoint constructed of sand-filled oil drums. Every attempt to bypass it was thwarted by scathing gunfire. Chapin and Power crouched behind a concrete wall 25 feet distant to formulate a plan. Under heavy covering fire, Power led a pair of automatic riflemen to the rear entrance while Chapin and another Marine armed with a Bangalore torpedo crept up to a narrow entrance near the front. Chapin flipped in a grenade, buying time for his companion to shove home the torpedo. Both rolled away just as the entrance collapsed in an effusion of smoke and dust. Mission accomplished, they quickly joined Lieutenant Power, who had somehow acquired a shaped charge. This time Power led the assault and the rear entrance vanished in a deafening roar as the bunker went silent. About then Chapin noticed blood oozing from Power's belly, but Power simply shrugged it off and rejoined his platoon

A short time later Power faced another menacing pillbox. Intent on repeating his earlier feat, Power and a demolitions man darted forward and placed their charge against its door, then winced as the blast ripped open a jagged hole. Pressing one hand against his bleeding stomach, Power inserted his carbine into the jagged slot and emptied its magazine. As he paused to reload, shots sounded from within. Power reeled as another bullet punched his gut while a third ripped out his throat. Enraged, his Marines rushed forward and finished the job. Power was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Despite such desperate actions, enemy resistance remained scattered and uncoordinated. Captain Milton Cokin's Company B hit Green Beach One at 12:45 PM and commenced mopping-up operations. Three light tanks of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion followed only to become immobilized by soft sand and shell holes. Just as the crews dismounted to free their vehicles nearly three dozen Japanese swarmed from supposedly vacant pillboxes and charged the tankers, who cut them down with small arms, netting two prisoners in the process at the cost of one Marine.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Brunelli's battalion pushed steadily up the western half of Namur with one flank hugging the coast as his teams plunged steadily toward the O-1 Phase Line set at an east-west road codenamed Sycamore

ABOVE: Having taken cover on the beach at Roi, American Marines look across the lagoon toward Namur as a huge explosion destroys a Japanese bunker. Marines on the adjacent island had placed a satchel charge to destroy the bunker, and its demolition ignited an ammunition storage area with spectacular results. BELOW: With a couple of Marines watching intently, an M4 Sherman medium tank moves across the sandy berm adjacent to the beach at Namur.

22
JUNGLE JIM

The defending Japanese had heavily fortified an administration building on Namur, and these American Marines are taking cover during operations to silence enemy rifles and machine guns firing at them from its windows and apertures. An American aircraft flying in support of the ground troops is visible in the distance.

Boulevard, roughly two-thirds of the way inland. However, as with the rest of the island, this defining landmark was obscured by debris making it difficult for onsite commanders to determine its location.

To the east, the right flank of Lt. Col. Brink's disorganized 2nd Battalion was badgered by intense machine-gun fire coming from a sturdy blockhouse guarding Nut Lane near Nadine Point midway up the coast. Less than 200 yards to the left, other elements pulled up short of Sycamore when another large bunker loomed into view. There was no indication that it was occupied, but it was feared that any attempt to bypass it would result in heavy flanking fire or counterattacks from any defenders who might be waiting inside. Realizing it would be foolhardy to ignore it, demolitions men were summoned to ply their trade.

An assault team led by Lieutenant Saul Stein of Company F approached from the left while Lieutenant Joseph E. Lo Prete's group from Company E closed in from the right. Demolitions men edged forward and placed a shaped charge against the bunker's wall then quickly backed away. Upon detonation, 20 or more occupants bolted for the surrounding bush, no doubt convinced that they had just survived a potentially fatal blast. Once the dust settled it became obvious that the charge had done its job—a cavernous hole yawned from the building's side. The sappers moved in again, this time with satchel charges that were flung into the gaping maw. What happened next was incomprehensible.

Everything within sight vanished in one catastrophic explosion. Smoke and fire and chunks of concrete shot skyward as if launched by a volcanic eruption, drawing up a dark gritty cloud that soared to a height of 1,000 feet or more. Those Marines not killed outright were rendered speechless, stunned by the sheer magnitude of the blast. Concussion waves bowled over men and trees and swept the lagoon with such force that incoming landing craft were stopped dead in the water. One Marine from Company F was blasted clear out to sea where he was later rescued, unbelievably intact, by the Navy. High overhead an aerial observer reported, "The whole damned island has blown up!"

At the moment of detonation every Marine's face on neighboring Roi snapped "Eyes Right!" with parade ground precision. Many believed that the entirety of Namur had been destroyed and every Marine there killed. Others thought that either the Navy had resumed its shelling or that a 500- or 1,000-pound bomb had been inadvertently dropped. Later evidence proved that the bunker had been utilized as a munitions storage facility that housed 100 or more torpedo warheads that were detonated by the demolition team's satchel charges.

A heavy brown cloud billowed from the epicenter and seeped across Namur like something inherently evil. Suddenly no one could see. Marines gagged and choked as acrid fumes clogged their lungs. Fearing that the Japanese had launched a chemical attack, a few cried, "Gas! Gas!" as they searched frantically for protective masks discarded earlier as useless equipment.

But the nightmare had only begun. Suddenly, monolithic chunks of reinforced concrete came screaming to earth like killer asteroids, accompanied by smaller but no less deadly missiles of concrete, splintered tree trunks, and lumber, some of which splashed far out to sea. At least one Marine was crushed by the unholy avalanche, and others were injured. In addition, scores of the stowed torpedo warheads tumbled from the darkness, some of which exploded upon impact.

In rapid succession, two more shattering detonations wracked the front, possibly from other bunkers. For a time, chaos reigned. In all, 20 Marines were killed and some 100 wounded. The effect on Captain Garretson's Company F was devastating: 14 killed including Lieutenant Stein and 43 wounded. Lt. Col. Brink was also injured but refused evacuation and quickly called up his recently landed reserve, Company A, to bolster his devastated command.

While these morale-sapping events disrupted the regiment's momentum, they seemed to have encouraged the Japanese. Suddenly, the entire front came alive with the distinctive chatter of

Nambu machine guns and the crack of Arisaka rifles. From that moment the battle took a dramatic turn for the worse. What had once been a steady drive against fragmented and poorly organized defenders now disintegrated into an inch-by-inch progression as the scattered teams closed on the O-1 Line. By 2 PM most had gained Sycamore Boulevard, but every attempt to cross was checked by intense machine-gun fire from three well-placed blockhouses fronting the Second Battalion sector: one at Nubbin Lane in the island's center, another located at the end of Nut Lane, not far from Nadine Point on the east coast, and a third at a nearby intersection designated Road Junction 58. The tempo slowed and then ground to a halt.

By that time, the regimental command post was ashore and fully operational. Realizing that the enemy had shaken off the stunning effects of the naval bombardment, Colonel Hart ordered a general halt to reorganize and reinforce his front with orders to resume offensive operations at 4:30 PM.

With the 2nd Battalion still reeling from the bunker catastrophe, Captain Irvin Schechter's Company A assumed operations on the far right flank while Captain Horace Parks' freshly arrived Company C moved up to relieve the shaken Company E. At the same time, Captain Houston Stiff's Company L, which had finally found enough boats to make the landing, moved up to 3rd Battalion to relieve Company B from its mopping-up duties, enabling that unit to replace battle-weary Company K, which in turn was sent to Pauline Point, the finger-like sandbar jutting between Roi and Namur, to provide flanking fire for the upcoming attack alongside the regiment's heavier weapons.

Now reorganized, the front ran from left to right as follows: Company I anchored the western shore abutting Company B near the junction of Sycamore Boulevard and Nasturtiam Lane while Company L hunkered as Third Battalion reserve. In the center, half of Second Battalion's Company G carried the line eastward along Sycamore Boulevard with Companies F, C, and A extending the front toward Nadine Point; remnants of Company E remained on line, having failed to learn of their relief.

As the hour of attack drew nearer, several light tanks and LVT(A)s rumbled up and commenced pumping 37mm shells into the three troublesome blockhouses that had plagued the infantry along Sycamore Boulevard. While those at Nubbin Lane and the road junction were neutralized, the guns proved too feeble to penetrate the thick concrete of the Nut Lane box, which remained a thorn in the battalion's side for the balance of the day.

At precisely 4:30 PM, Brunelli's Third Battalion launched its attack but was stunned by the ferocity of the Japanese response. Pockets of resistance more than made up for their lack of coordination with a tenacity born of desperation, pecking away with machine guns and sniper fire as Marines dashed forward amid bursting mortar shells. The dense terrain continued to mask enemy strongpoints, and the advance on the left was justifiably slow. At one point, Corporal Alex Haluchak's squad of Company B was pinned down by heavy machine-gun fire. Haluchak, already twice wounded, told his men to sit tight while he scouted the gun's location. Now alone in enemy territory, he stormed the menacing weapon and killed its crew, enabling his squad to proceed. Haluchak received the Navy Cross.

For some Japanese soldiers defending Roi-Namur, surrender was such a dishonor that suicide was preferable. This Japanese soldier killed himself as American Marines closed in on his position atop one of the few hills on the islands.

On the right the confusion of reorganization delayed the 2nd Battalion's attack for another hour. Supported by the light tanks of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion, the infantry crossed Sycamore Boulevard and waded into a jungle crackling with small-arms fire. Being forced to investigate every damaged building and pile of debris, the infantry soon lost contact with the tanks. The armor pressed on, covering one another with machine-gun and canister fire as they negotiated the jungle-like terrain. Within 20 minutes it had gained Narcissus Street, 300 yards beyond the line of departure. Here, several tanks pivoted right and churned down the road as it cut southeast toward a junction with Sycamore Boulevard.

After dodging one obstacle, Captain James Denig's command tank became isolated from the others, so Denig stopped in a clearing to gain his bearings. At that moment, five Japanese charged from the underbrush and swarmed his vehicle. One mounted the turret and dropped a grenade through a small signal port left open for ventilation, wounding the entire crew while setting the compartment on fire. Just then Pfc. Howard Smith of Company A broke through the brush and sprayed the tank with his BAR, killing four assailants while a buddy picked off the fifth. Climbing aboard the smoldering wreck, Smith pulled the mortally wounded Denig from the hatch then returned to extract two others but failed to rescue the driver who perished in the flames. Smith's actions earned him a Navy Cross.

Meanwhile, Captain Garretson's decimated Company F finally broke through in the center and also reached Narcissus Lane, only 35 yards from the northern beach. Lacking proper support, Garretson was ordered back 100 yards where his men maintained a bulging salient.

Things were perhaps even more desperate on the far right where elements of Company A pushed up the eastern coast near Nadine Point. At the tip of the spear was an irascible, tobacco-chewing former Marine Raider, Corporal Arthur Ervin, who charged far ahead of the lead scouts, flinging grenades and triggering round after round at every Japanese soldier he saw. When the company came upon the formidable blockhouse at Nut Lane, it was Ervin who led the assault. First Lieutenant Roy Wood's platoon was hot on Ervin's tail when heavy gunfire drove them to ground.

Dodging bullets, Lieutenant Phil Wood (no relation to Roy) and machine gunners George Smith and 18-year-old Steve Hopkins, son of presidential adviser Harry Hopkins, tumbled into a trench where they set up their Browning. Smith quickly went to work, adding havoc to mayhem while Wood summoned Hopkins to follow him farther down the trench. En route they passed a Japanese "corpse" that suddenly sprang to life and pulled a grenade. Hopkins was startled, and his rifle was nearly touching the soldier's skull when he pulled his trigger. The Japanese brute simply shook his head, as if stunned. Shocked, Hopkins quickly emptied an entire clip into the superman. "Did you see, Mr. Wood?" Hopkins queried incredulously. "Did you see the grenade? Did you see what he was about to do?"

Just then Japanese mortar rounds began plunking near the trench. Undaunted, the impetuous Ervin vaulted the parapet to conduct a one-man reconnaissance of the imposing Nut

Cautious with every step, these Marines pick their way through the ruins of a building previously used by the Japanese on Roi-Namur to store ammunition.

Lane blockhouse, killing two machine gunners as he did so while enemy bullets ripped the helmet from his head. Upon his return, Ervin gave his report. Lieutenant Phil Wood decided his platoon's 60mm mortars were the answer, but before the weapons could be deployed bazooka rounds slammed into the bunker and Marines rushed forward. First to arrive were Ervin and Lieutenant Harry Reynolds, the company executive officer. Both whipped grenades through the embrasures until gunfire from a nearby dugout punctured Ervin's abdomen, evoking a litany of curses. Lieutenants Reynolds, Wood, and Wood grabbed a few men and rushed the offending position, bombarding it with grenades and rifle fire as Sergeant Frank Tucker and Corporal Franklin Robbins sprang up and charged. Tucker shot an enemy rifleman guarding the dugout's entrance, then both ducked inside and riddled the interior with bullets, killing every enemy soldier.

Meanwhile, the Nut Lane bunker resumed firing. Hoping to outflank it, a dozen Marines crossed Sycamore Boulevard only to come under fire from a maze of entrenchments near the beach. Before others could join them, heavy machine-gun fire swept the road, denying further penetration. Led by Lieutenants Roy Wood and Reynolds, the isolated squad took matters into its own hands. Platoon Sergeant James Adams, a tagalong from battalion headquarters, charged the trench and gunned down a machine-gun crew only to crumple dead in a hail of bullets. Close by, Corporal Robbins emptied several clips, singlehandedly stopping an enemy counterattack before falling himself. Reynolds dropped several Japanese soldiers from behind a fallen log until a bullet slashed his leg.

Down the line, Sergeant Tucker stood upright behind a shattered tree trunk and zeroed in on dozens of enemy soldiers who scurried in the trenches a mere 15 yards away. Return fire ripped bark from Tucker's meager shelter. One round pierced his helmet and another drained his canteen, but Tucker kept firing. Noting Tucker's advantageous position, other Marines began tossing him grenades which the sergeant hurled into the trench until all were exhausted. More bullets whacked Tucker's tree. Sensing disaster, the sergeant called for covering fire. Pfcs. Lawrence Knight and Lester Kincaid hammered away with their BARs. Just as Tucker scuttled away, a bullet splattered Knight's cheek. Angered, Knight resighted his weapon and resumed firing until Reynolds ordered him to seek aid.

Their blood up, the other Marines closed in and drove the defenders from their works, killing a least 30 as they scampered for the shelter of another pillbox. By then dusk had arrived and the surviving Marines dug in, still separated from their comrades.

As daylight waned, Colonel Hart opted to cease offensive operations in favor of digging in with expectations of securing the island the following morning. Knowing that the northern beaches were but 200 yards away, the few combat veterans thought this folly. Having experienced the terror of Japanese infiltration tactics and the obligatory Banzai attack, these old hands believed the regiment should have pressed on and finished the job. But being Marines, they obediently pulled their entrenching tools and began hacking at the soil.

Darkness fell. Star shells popped and shimmered throughout the night, illuminating a landscape rife with rotting corpses, shredded foliage, and the battered ruins of the enemy's structures. No one slept. At times the high-pitched crack of Arisaka rifles sounded from the rear as well as the front and flanks, bearing evidence that the enemy was indeed all around. American arms responded, stitching the darkness with neon tracers. At times resolute infiltrators died at the rims of hastily dug foxholes. Marines died too, including young "Hoppy" Hopkins, who had earlier saved his lieutenant's life. Hopkins was mortally wounded while pulling flank security near Nadine Point.

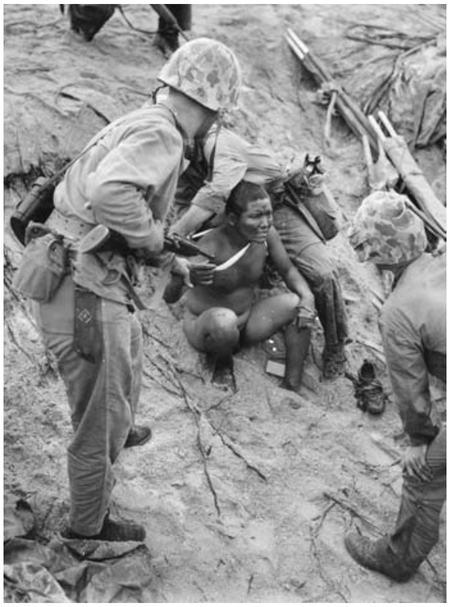
Just before daybreak a rustling in the brush fronting the 3rd Battalion caused eyes to strain and heartbeats to quicken. Trigger fingers tensed as the thrashing swelled to a universal clamor, and then it happened. "Banzai! Banzai!" Japanese soldiers burst from the undergrowth in groups of 10 to 20, yelling madly and brandishing rifles, bayonets, and swords. The Marines let loose with everything they had. A gap between Companies I and B was exploited, and the fight degenerated into a tangle of bayonets, knives, and clubbed rifles. Only the timely arrival of Company L and a few medium tanks stabilized the situation. Now reinforced, the Marines counterattacked.

During the melee, six Marines had taken position in a shell hole when something thudded and rolled sputtering to their feet. Private Richard Sorenson hesitated and then threw himself on the grenade just as it exploded. In a nearby crater, Corpsman James Kirby was treating several patients after they had been overrun earlier that night and heard Sorenson's screams. Scrambling to his assistance, Kirby dragged Sorenson to his impromptu aid station, now overflowing with 15 wounded Marines. Although grievously wounded, Sorenson survived to receive the Medal of Honor for saving his buddies' lives.

The entire action was over within 35 minutes. Company B's Third Platoon had nearly been wiped out, but more than 100 enemy corpses were strewn before its position. As a precaution against similar attacks, Lt. Col. Brunelli ordered Company K to rejoin his command from Pauline Point.

General Schmidt, the divisional commander, had landed the previous evening and took command of the entire operation. Wanting to reinforce his line, he ordered Captain Neiman's Company C, 4th Tank Battalion and a battalion of the 23rd to cross from Roi to Namur. At that time only four tanks had sufficient fuel and ammunition to make the trip. These had assisted 3rd Battalion in repelling the early morning Banzai attack. But now, with supplies stockpiling on both beaches, the balance of Neiman's command was fueled, armed, and moving into position. The men of the 23rd were held as reserve.

The attack would resume at 9 AM. Company K, now reunited with Landing Team Three, would roll up the western shore with Companies I and L deployed to its right and supported by two platoons of Captain Neiman's medium tanks. Captain Cokin's decimated Company B was pulled back as battalion reserve.



ABOVE: Weary of fighting, a Japanese soldier raises his hands in surrender at Roi-Namur as a companion begins climbing out of a hole near the center of this photograph. These are two of only a handful of Japanese troops that survived the fighting on Roi-Namur, choosing surrender rather than suicide. A wary Marine covers the prisoner with his rifle, taking no chances. LEFT: A Marine corpsman gives medical aid to a wounded Japanese soldier at Roi-Namur. By early 1944, the American juggernaut across the Central Pacific was beginning to gain momentum.

Lieutenant Colonel Aquilla Dyess of 1st Battalion assumed command of the right flank after Francis Brink had been evacuated for wounds received during the bunker explosion. Dyess kept Company G, now intact, tied in with Brunelli's battalion while Companies F, C, and A extended his line to the eastern shore. Captain Ross's Company E remained in battalion reserve while Company B, 4th Tank Battalion would provide support.

The attack jumped off on schedule with Brunelli's men easily overrunning the few enemy troops that remained. Within two hours his battalion had reached Nora Point on the island's northwest corner where it wheeled right to sweep the oceanside beaches.

Colonel Dyess did not get started until 10:05 AM due to the late arrival of his armor. The stubborn Nut Lane blockhouse continued to defy every attempt against it until tanks and halftracks beat it into submission. After that the pace accelerated. Dyess seemed to be everywhere at once, cajoling reluctant Marines here and leading others there as they combed the underbrush of battle-weary Japanese. By midday his Marines were within sight of the northern beaches where 25 to 30 Japanese had rallied in a deep antitank ditch. A platoon of light tanks trundled up and scoured the trough with machine-gun and canister fire. That done, Dyess sprinted to the ditch's rim to direct one final assault, and a burst of machine gunfire ripped through his body. For his dynamic leadership and unflinching courage, Dyess was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor, the fourth and final such award for the two-day battle.

Shortly after noon, both battalions converged near Natalie Point, the island's northernmost promontory, where the Marines ferreted out the last of the diehard defenders. By 2 PM the battle for Roi-Namur was over and the coveted airfield in American hands. The victors were appalled at the slaughter—numerous ditches and trenches overflowed with mangled corpses, in places heaped five deep. Most of these were victims of the fierce naval bombardment. Every building, tree, and shrub lay in shambles. Of the 3,563 defenders, only 92 were taken prisoner, more than half of them Korean laborers. The others were too stunned to resist. The Marines suffered 737 casualties in taking both islands, 190 killed. Four Medals of Honor and 17 Navy Crosses attest to the Marines' courage; who knows how many unseen or unreported acts of valor were performed.

Operation Flintlock was declared an unequivocal success. Having learned the bloody lessons of Tarawa, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps had devised the blueprint for further amphibious operations, a plan that, with some tweaking, would prove invaluable through subsequent campaigns.

With the Army's success at Kwajalein and another Marine victory at Eniwetok later that month, the conquest of the Marshalls was complete and the stage set for the assault on the Marianas, from which American bombers could stage raids on the Japanese mainland.

The struggle for Roi-Namur was the first combat action for the 4th Marine Division. The survivors would be engaged in other, bloodier battles as they did their part to dismantle the forces of Imperial Japan, including Saipan, Tinian, and ultimately the uncompromising horror that was Iwo Jima. But it was Roi-Namur where the Marines of the "Fighting Fourth" received their baptism of fire. Always attacking. Never looking back.

Cleve C. Barkley writes from his home in Loraine, Illinois, with a focus on military history. He is the author of the book In Death's Dark Shadow: A Soldier's Story, *which chronicles his father's service as an infantryman in the ETO.*

HEAVY WEATHER FOR BULL

A POWERFUL TYPHOON WREAKED HAVOC WITH THE U.S. NAVY'S TASK FORCE 38 IN DECEMBER 1944. **BY MICHAEL D. HULL**

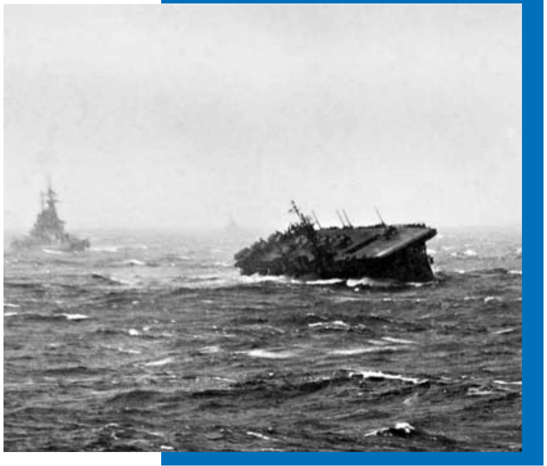
After two grueling months of action in the Pacific, Vice Admiral John S. "Slew" McCain's powerful Task Force 38 retired in late November 1944 to the big Caroline Islands base of Ulithi Atoll for a 10-day breather.

No one needed a break more than Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, the feisty, hard-drinking commander of the U.S. Third Fleet, who had come under fire for leaving San Bernardino Strait unguarded during the great Battle of Leyte Gulf on October 23-26, 1944. Pacing while "blue with rage," Admiral Ernest J. King, chief of naval operations, had told Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the Pacific Fleet, that Halsey should be given a "rest." General Douglas A. MacArthur, supreme commander of the Southwest Pacific Area, called for Halsey's relief.

On the tiny northernmost island of Mogmog, Ulithi's recreation center, McCain's bluejackets joyfully swam, played baseball and basketball, pitched horseshoes, and swigged soft drinks and beer. Halsey, meanwhile, visited wounded sailors. He joked and shook hands with them, but it was an ordeal because he was torn by the suffering of his men. He tried to console himself at a wardroom party attended by hospital ship nurses. The event became well oiled and rowdy, climaxing when an officer doused a wastebasket fire with a bottle of carbon dioxide and then squirted a nurse between the legs. She screamed as the dry ice burned.

The Ulithi respite was soon over, and by Thanksgiving Day Halsey and Task Force 38 were dodging Japanese kamikaze assaults off the Philippines. Three aircraft carriers were damaged, including the veteran USS *Intrepid*. The volatile "Patton of the Pacific" had initially dismissed the suicide planes as "a sort of token terror, a tissue-paper dragon." But his disdain gave way to anxiety as he watched his flattops burn. Halsey's fortunes worsened by mid-December, but his next ordeal was not to come at the hands of the Japanese.

All photos: National Archives



ABOVE: The aircraft carrier USS *Langley* rolls heavily in the rough seas of Typhoon Cobra in December 1944. The typhoon caused major damage to ships of the U.S. Third Fleet under the command of Admiral William F. Halsey. An inquiry into the conduct of the fleet followed. A battleship is seen in the background. LEFT: The tanker USS *Atascosa* attempts to refuel the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* during the heavy typhoon known as Cobra in December 1944.

Task Force 38 embarked from Ulithi on December 11, 1944. The fast carrier fleet had replenished, and its defensive tactics had been revised because of the increasing kamikaze threat. The armada comprised Task Group 38.1 commanded by Rear Admiral Alfred E. Montgomery, Task Group 38.2 led by Rear Admiral Gerald F. "Jerry" Bogan, and Task Group 38.3 commanded by Rear Admiral Forrest C. Sherman. Ninety ships set sail, including 13 carriers, eight battleships, three heavy cruisers, seven light cruisers, three antiaircraft cruisers, and 56 destroyers. McCain was aboard the carrier USS *Hancock,* and Halsey was in his flagship, the 45,000-ton battleship *New Jersey.* Both vessels were part of Task Group 38.2.

Plans called for the flattops to hit Luzon to support General MacArthur's imminent invasion of Mindoro and then to make an unprecedented foray into the South China Sea to sever Japan's remaining shipping lanes to the East Indies. The latter operation had long been sought by Halsey, but it was delayed because of the need for air support in the invasion of Leyte.

On December 13, the fast carriers topped off from their shadowing oilers and headed in toward the Luzon coast. Fighter sweeps started at dawn on the 14th and continued for three days. When the flattops withdrew on December 16, their fighters and dive bombers had destroyed 269 Japanese aircraft, sunk merchant ships, and blasted airfields and railroads. Twenty-seven American planes were lost. Enemy air opposition to the Mindoro landings was minimal, and none of the fast carriers

ABOVE: Heavy seas break over the bow of a U.S. Navy fleet oiler during refueling operations as Typhoon Cobra ravaged the U.S. Third Fleet. The oiler was attempting to provide fuel for the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*. RIGHT: Admiral John S. McCain, left, and Admiral William F. Halsey converse aboard the battleship USS *New Jersey* in December 1944.

were attacked.

Admiral Halsey planned to refuel his ships at sea on Sunday, December 17, and commence another three-day fighter strike on the 19th. Early on the morning of the 17th, TF-38 rendezvoused with 12 fleet oilers escorted by destroyers, destroyer escorts, and five escort carriers about 500 miles east of Luzon. Three days of high-speed operations had left many of the task force's ships critically low on fuel.

The vessels began refueling on schedule at 10 AM on the 17th, but a 20-30-knot wind and a cross swell made the operation difficult. "The wind," said Admiral Robert B. "Mick" Carney, Halsey's chief of staff, "was across the sea and it was impossible to find a course which would prevent yawing and surging." On the previous day, Commander George F. Kosco, the Third Fleet aerologist, had received reports from Ulithi and Pearl Harbor of a "tropical storm, very weak," and had informed Halsey and Carney. Kosco could not pinpoint the storm, but he did not think it would be anything serious.

At 11:07 AM on December 17, the destroyer USS *Spence* eased alongside the *New Jersey* to start fueling. When Halsey and his staff sat for lunch in the flag mess, they were alarmed to see the *Spence* rolling excessively on the starboard side, and it seemed that she might be slammed against the flagship. "She was riding up ahead," reported Halsey later, "and she'd drop well astern and charge ahead and drop astern.... She was pitching and rolling heavily."

Commander Kosco calculated that the "tropical storm" was coming closer to the fleet than he had estimated and was increasing in intensity. The swells mounted, and at 11:27 AM the fueling hoses parted on the *Spence*. Disturbing reports came in from task group commanders. The destroyers *Healy* and *The Sullivans* experienced steering problems, and hoses parted aboard the *Collett, Stephen Potter, L.K. Swenson, Preston, Thatcher,* and *Manatee*. A seaman on the *Caperton* fractured his leg when seas smashed over the forecastle.

At 12:51 PM, when the storm's center was 120 miles southeast of the task force's position, Halsey ordered a halt to the fueling operations, planning to resume them at 6 the next morning. "No warning of the typhoon was received up to this point from any outside source," he said later. "The storm followed an erratic course, different ... and contrary to available history of December typhoons."

Halsey called a conference in the flag mess, where lunch dishes were cleared and maps and charts spread out. Kosco placed in front of the admiral his morning's weather map, which indicated a storm center 400 miles southeast of the task force and moving toward it. He expected that the "tropical disturbance" would merge with a weak cold front and veer off to the northeast. Aboard the carrier *Lexington,* however, Admiral Bogan was sure that a severe storm was approaching, while Captain Jasper T. Acuff, commander of the TF-38 replenishment group, was the first to make the correct guess as to the storm's position and course. He and two escort carrier skippers agreed that the fueling rendezvous set for 6 AM on December 18 would be directly in the storm's path. Captain Michael H. Kernodle of the carrier *San Jacinto* had received storm warnings for 24 hours, but the information was not passed on to Kosco.

The weather continued to worsen as Halsey and his aides pored tensely over their maps, struggling to make a course toward calmer water. The assignment to support MacArthur on the 19th meant that TF-38 must refuel no later than the morning of the 18th. During the evening of December 17, the task force and its oilers butted steadily westward through mounting seas. At midnight, Halsey ordered a change of course from due west to due south, hoping to reach smoother water. Unwittingly, he was taking the armada directly into the path of the approaching typhoon.

At dawn on Monday, December 18, Halsey realized that fueling would be even more difficult than on the previous day. But it had to be attempted because of the Luzon combat commitment and for the safety of the smaller vessels in the task force. With their fuel tanks almost empty, the destroyers were riding higher in the water and becoming unseaworthy. But prevailing conditions made the operation impossible. Halsey had no choice but to halt the fueling just after 8 AM and send a dispatch to General MacArthur saying that TF-38 would not be able to support him the next day.

The storm soon assailed the task force and its support ships with howling winds and blinding rain. The fleet was by then 180 miles northeast of Samar in the eastern Philippines. The sea heaved, foam sloshed across decks, and vessels canted sickeningly, wallowing under tons of water. Some ships lost steering control, and sailors were reported washed overboard. Few men in the fleet had seen anything like the storm's fury.

The fleet and "jeep" carriers rolled heavily. Planes were swept from the flight decks, while others broke loose in their hangar decks, slamming against bulkheads and catching fire. Efficient firefighting was impossible. The carrier *Monterey* lost steerage way, the carrier *Independence* lost two men overboard, and the escort carrier *Kwajalein* temporarily lost steering control. The carrier *Cowpens* lost seven planes, the *Monterey* 18, and the *San Jacinto* eight. Nineteen floatplanes were blown off the battleships and cruisers, and a total of 146 aircraft were lost during the storm.

"We were completely cornered," Halsey reported. "The consideration then was the fastest way to get out of the dangerous semicircle and to get to a position where our destroyers could be fueled." He sent a warning to all ships and weather stations at 9:14 AM. "We didn't think that we were dealing with a storm as severe as a typhoon until we were within 100 miles of it," said Commander Kosco. Admiral McCain ordered changes in course and advised ships to disregard formation keeping and take the best courses and speeds for security.

As the barometer fell rapidly, the wind velocity rose sharply to 73 knots while 70-foot waves battered the ships from all sides. Some destroyers heeled over on their beam ends with their funnels almost horizontal. Water surged into their intakes and ventilators, shorting circuits, killing power, and leaving them adrift.

The ships rose and fell in the mountainous seas. The mighty *New Jersey* hung in the troughs and then slowly righted herself, lurching and laboring to the tops of swells. "No one who has not been through a typhoon can conceive its fury," reported Halsey. "The 70-foot seas smash you from all sides. The rain and the scud are blinding; they drive you flat-out, until you can't tell the ocean from the air…. At broad noon, I couldn't see the bow of my ship, 350 feet from the bridge…. This typhoon tossed our enormous ship as if she were a canoe…. We ourselves were buffeted from one bulkhead to another; we could not hear our own voices above the uproar." Admiral Carney voiced "grave doubts" that the battlewagon would survive, while Halsey feared for the fate of the destroyers. "What it was like on a destroyer one-twentieth the *New Jersey*'s size I can only imagine," he said.

He was right. The smaller ships were the worst hit, and the destroyer crews underwent a nightmare as the rising winds and seas tossed their craft around like toys. Caught near the storm center, the *Hull, Spence,* and *Monaghan* capsized and sank with practically all hands.

Water Tender Second Class Joseph C. McCrane was one of only six survivors of the USS *Monaghan,* which had rammed and sunk a Japanese midget submarine at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and fought in the Aleutians. He reported, "The storm broke in all its fury. We started to roll, heaving to the starboard, and everyone was holding on to something and praying as hard as he could. We knew that we had lost our power and were dead in the water…. We must have taken about seven or eight rolls to the starboard before she went over on her side."

It was later believed that the three destroyers went down because their oil and ballast were out of trim as a result of the interrupted refueling operation. Though damaged, the destroyer escort *Tabberer* managed to rescue 41 *Hull* survivors and 14 from the *Spence.*

The typhoon raged on, with the ships—now strewn across about 2,500 square miles—tossing, heeling over, and drifting with no way to escape. The storm reached its height between noon and 2 PM. The wind increased to 83 knots with gusts reaching 93 knots.

Many of the Third Fleet ships suffered varying degrees of damage. They included the carriers *Cowpens, Monterey, San Jacinto, Kwajalein, Cabot, Altamaha, Nehenta Bay,* and *Cape Esperance*; the light cruiser *Miami*; the destroyers *Dewey, Aylwin, Buchanan, Dyson, Hickox, Maddox,* and *Benham*; the destroyer escorts *Tabberer, Melvin R. Nawman,* and *Waterman*; the oiler *Nantahala*, and the fleet tug *Jicarilla*.

An estimated 790 officers and men were lost or killed, and scores of others injured. Task Force 38 was as severely battered as if it had been in a major battle.

Thankfully, the winds abated and the skies cleared late in the afternoon of that harrowing Monday. Halsey promptly dispatched ships and planes to search for survivors, and the operation lasted for three days. Lone swimmers were picked up, and sometimes raft loads. Destroyers rescued 54 men who had been aboard the *Hull,* 24 from the *Spence,* and 16 from the *Monaghan.* The search, said Halsey, was "the most exhaustive in naval history."

The shaken Third Fleet regrouped and finally fueled on December 19, and then steamed westward toward Luzon the following day. Predawn air strikes in support of MacArthur's invasion were planned on the 21st, but the seas became increasingly heavy and the typhoon was then passing over Luzon. Halsey and his staff agreed that the operation could not be conducted successfully, so MacArthur and Nimitz were notified. Early on December 24, the ships entered Ulithi harbor. The weary crews were allowed some much needed rest while a service squadron started repairing the damaged vessels.

A U.S. Navy FM-2 Wildcat fighter plane hangs off the deck of the escort carrier USS *Anzio.* Having broken its moorings, the plane was nearly tossed overboard in the raging seas during Typhoon Cobra.

Nimitz, who had been promoted to fleet admiral 10 days before, was hosted by Halsey at a festive Christmas Eve dinner aboard the *New Jersey.* The admirals and their staffs then spent much of Christmas Day in conference. Nimitz, meanwhile, had appointed a court of inquiry to investigate the loss of the *Hull, Spence,* and *Monaghan,* and to find out why Halsey's fleet had been caught by the typhoon.

Comprising Vice Admirals John H. Hoover and George D. Murray and Rear Admiral Glenn B. Davis, the court of inquiry convened aboard the destroyer tender USS *Cascade,* anchored in Ulithi harbor, in the last week of December 1944. The witnesses included Halsey, McCain, Bogan, Sherman, and Kosco, and the testimony was lengthy and complex. Halsey was blamed for the damage and ship losses, but no negligence was found, only the "stress of war operations" and "a commendable desire to meet military commitments."

Halsey stressed that he had received no "timely warning" of the typhoon and strongly criticized the Pacific Fleet's meteorological system. The court put the "preponderance of responsibility" on Halsey and cited his "large errors" made in predicting the location and path of the storm, but it concluded that the "aerological talent" assisting him was "inadequate in practical experience and service background in view of the importance of the services to be expected and required."

The court of inquiry recommended action to "impress upon all commanders the necessity of giving full consideration to adverse weather likely to be met in the Western Pacific, especially the … formation and movements of typhoons." Nimitz promptly approved the court's findings, and Admiral King concurred. At the court's suggestion, Nimitz called for three weather ships to be stationed in the Western Pacific, the deployment of weather reconnaissance planes, and for the Bureau of Naval Personnel to make more experienced aerological officers available to the Pacific Fleet. The Navy improved its weather service.

Admiral Nimitz also sent a letter to his fleet stressing the need for safety at sea, with much advice for dealing with severe weather conditions. "The time for taking all measures for a ship's safety is while still able to do so," he wrote. "Nothing is more dangerous than for a seaman to be grudging in taking precautions lest they turn out to have been unnecessary. Safety at sea for a thousand years has depended on exactly the opposite philosophy."

The typhoon was to provide the climactic sequence in Herman Wouk's blockbuster 1951 novel, *The Caine Mutiny,* and the 1954 film masterpiece directed by Edward Dmytryk and starring Humphrey Bogart, Fred MacMurray, Van Johnson, Robert Francis, Jose Ferrer, E.G. Marshall, and Arthur Franz.

Halsey characteristically wasted no time in December 1944 commiserating over the tarnishing of his outstanding service record and got busy with the plans for air strikes against Formosa, Okinawa, and Luzon in support of MacArthur's invasion at Lingayen Gulf on January 9, 1945. The admiral did not mention the court of inquiry to his staff except in a series of proposals for improving the weather reporting service and did not refer to it in his 1947 autobiography, although he recounted the typhoon. To him it was just "water over the dam."

In June 1945, Sailors hang on as the aircraft carrier USS *Langley* rolls sharply to port during Typhoon Connie, a second major Pacific storm that wracked the ships of the U.S. Navy's Third Fleet during World War II.

Hewing to his motto, "Hit hard, hit fast, hit often," Halsey led his mighty Third Fleet in harm's way during the first half of 1945 as Allied naval, ground, and air forces relentlessly pushed the Japanese back toward their home islands. After supporting MacArthur's operations on Leyte, Luzon, and throughout the Philippine area, the fleet made a broad sweep through the South China Sea on January 10-20 and destroyed huge amounts of enemy shipping. In May, Halsey began planning operations against the Japanese homeland. His hatred of the enemy had not dimmed. "Before we're through with them," he had remarked, "the Japanese language will be spoken only in hell."

But, in his last campaign of the war, the costly April 1-June 22, 1945, battle to capture Okinawa, Halsey would again fall victim ironically to the fearsome enemy he had faced six months before—another typhoon. After hoisting his flag in the 45,000-ton battleship USS *Missouri* at Guam on May 18, Halsey headed for Okinawa to relieve Admiral Raymond A. Spruance's Fifth Fleet. On the barren, 60-mile-long island, soldiers and Marines of Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner's U.S. Tenth Army were struggling to overcome fierce Japanese resistance while naval units offshore withstood many kamikaze attacks. Aerial support was provided by McCain's Task Force 38, which comprised Task Group 38.1 commanded by Rear Admiral Joseph J. Clark; Sherman's Task Group 38.3, and Task Group 38.4 led by Rear Admiral Arthur W. Radford. McCain flew his flag in the carrier *Shangri-La*.

After sending Sherman's group to Leyte for a rest period, Halsey ordered Radford's force northward on June 2 to strike the airfields on Kyushu, the southernmost Japanese main island. Halsey and McCain remained with Clark's group off Okinawa. When Radford returned on the afternoon of June 3, Halsey sent Task Group 38.1 southeast to rendezvous with Rear Admiral Donald B. Beary's Service Squadron 6. Ships and search planes, meanwhile, reported a tropical storm moving up from the south.

The *Missouri* and *Shangri-La* headed southeast with Radford's group, and Halsey ordered the amphibious command ship *Ancon* to monitor the storm. On the evening of June 4, Task Group 38.4 joined Clark's force and Beary's fueling squadron, and they all headed east-southeast. At this time, radar operators aboard the *Ancon* sighted the typhoon, but the ship's report did not reach Halsey until 1 the next morning. Later reports indicated that the typhoon was heading rapidly northeast, almost directly toward the Third Fleet.

Course changes were made, and there was much feverish plotting aboard the *Missouri* and other ships through the night and into the early hours of Tuesday, June 5. Halsey did not want his fleet scattered as before, and he hoped to find better weather so that his flattops could fend off kamikaze attacks. But the barometer was falling, and the howling typhoon closed in.

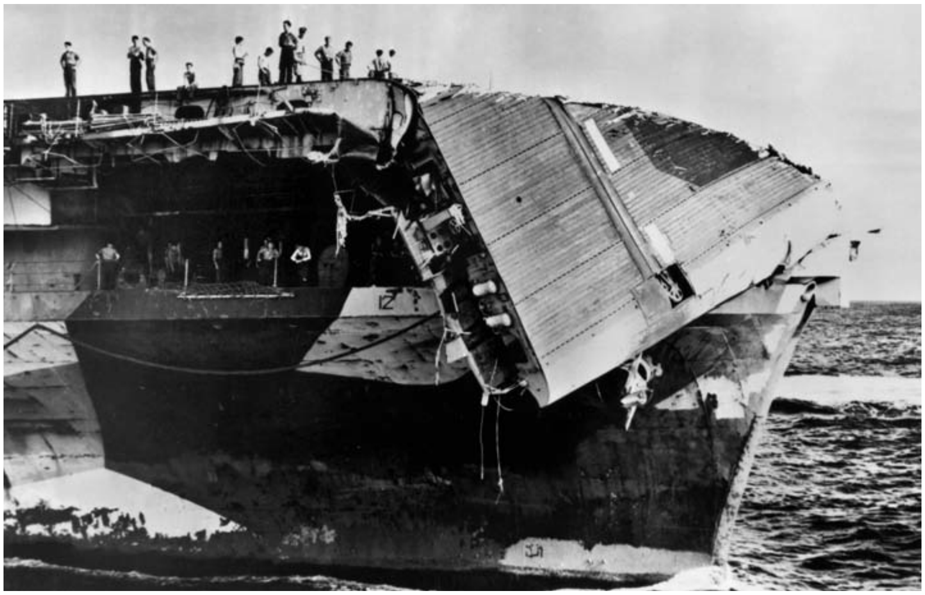
While Radford's group steamed through fairly calm seas 15 miles to the north, Task Group 38.1 was sucked into a maelstrom of high winds and mountainous waves. Clark ordered his ships to stop their engines and heave to.

Beary's fueling group, meanwhile, struggled against 75-foot waves and wind gusts up to 127 knots as it passed through the eye of the typhoon. His 48 ships were "riding very heavily," he reported, yet only four—two jeep carriers, a tanker, and a destroyer escort—received serious damage. Clark's group passed through the eye half an hour after Beary's, and almost all of his 33 ships suffered some damage. But none were sunk. The cruiser *Pittsburgh* had 110 feet of her bow section torn off, and Clark's four carriers—the *San Jacinto, Hornet, Bennington,* and *Belleau Wood*—were battered. Clark and Beary lost six men killed or swept overboard and four seriously injured. Seventy-six planes were lost.

The other TF-38 ships damaged in the typhoon included the battleships *Missouri, Massachusetts, Indiana,* and *Alabama*; the escort carriers *Windham Bay, Salamaua, Bougainville,* and *Attu*; the cruisers *Baltimore, Quincy, Detroit, San Juan, Duluth,* and *Atlanta*; 11 destroyers; three destroyer escorts; two oilers, and an ammunition ship.

Aware that he would have to face another court of inquiry, Halsey took the offensive. In an angry message to Admiral Nimitz, he complained that early-warning messages were garbled, that weather estimates conflicted, and that coding regulations critically delayed the *Ancon*'s message. The Third Fleet, meanwhile, soon went back into action. On June 6, 1945, Clark's and Radford's groups again provided air support off Okinawa, and Radford's carriers resumed strikes against Kyushu on the 8th. U.S. troops gained the upper hand on Okinawa, the kamikaze attacks tapered off, and TF-38 retired to Leyte Gulf on June 13 after 92 wearying days at sea.

Admirals Halsey, McCain, Clark, and Beary were ordered to appear before a court of inquiry aboard the aging battleship USS *New Mexico* anchored in San Pedro Bay, a Leyte Gulf inlet. Presided over again by the harsh Admiral Hoover, the tribunal convened on June 15 and deliberated for eight days. Blame was placed squarely on Halsey and McCain, with the court concluding that the main cause of the Third Fleet's damage was Halsey's "extremely ill advised" change of course from 110 to 300 degrees at 1:34 AM on June 5. McCain, Clark, and Beary were indicted because "they continued on courses and at speeds which eventually led their task groups into dangerous weather, although their better judgment dictated a course of action which would have taken them fairly clear of the typhoon path."



ABOVE: Angry waves and winds buffet the cruiser USS *Pittsburgh* during Typhoon Connie in June 1945. The *Pittsburgh* was heavily damaged during the storm, losing more than 100 feet of its bow to the powerful typhoon. BELOW: Sailors inspect the damage to the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* after Typhoon Connie subsided.

Hoover recommended the reassignment of Halsey and McCain, and Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal was reportedly ready to retire Halsey. When the court's finding reached the Navy Department, Admiral King agreed that the two officers had been inept and, with the weather data available to them, should have avoided the typhoon. But Halsey was a national hero, and King had no wish to humiliate him. It would tarnish the Navy's triumph in the Pacific. King decided to take no action, and Forrestal agreed.

McCain, however, received no such consideration. Nimitz had long doubted his competence, and it was decided that it was time for him to go. He was ordered by the Navy Department on July 15 to hand over command of Task Force 38 to Admiral John H. Towers and, after a furlough, become deputy head of the Veterans Administration. But McCain, worn out and emaciated, died of a heart attack on the day after he returned to his Coronado, California, home.

Halsey, meanwhile, sailed back to America and was greeted in San Francisco and Los Angeles by blaring bands, sirens, whistles, and cheering thousands. His reputation had been tarnished, yet he emerged from the war as a fighting admiral revered by the men who served under him.

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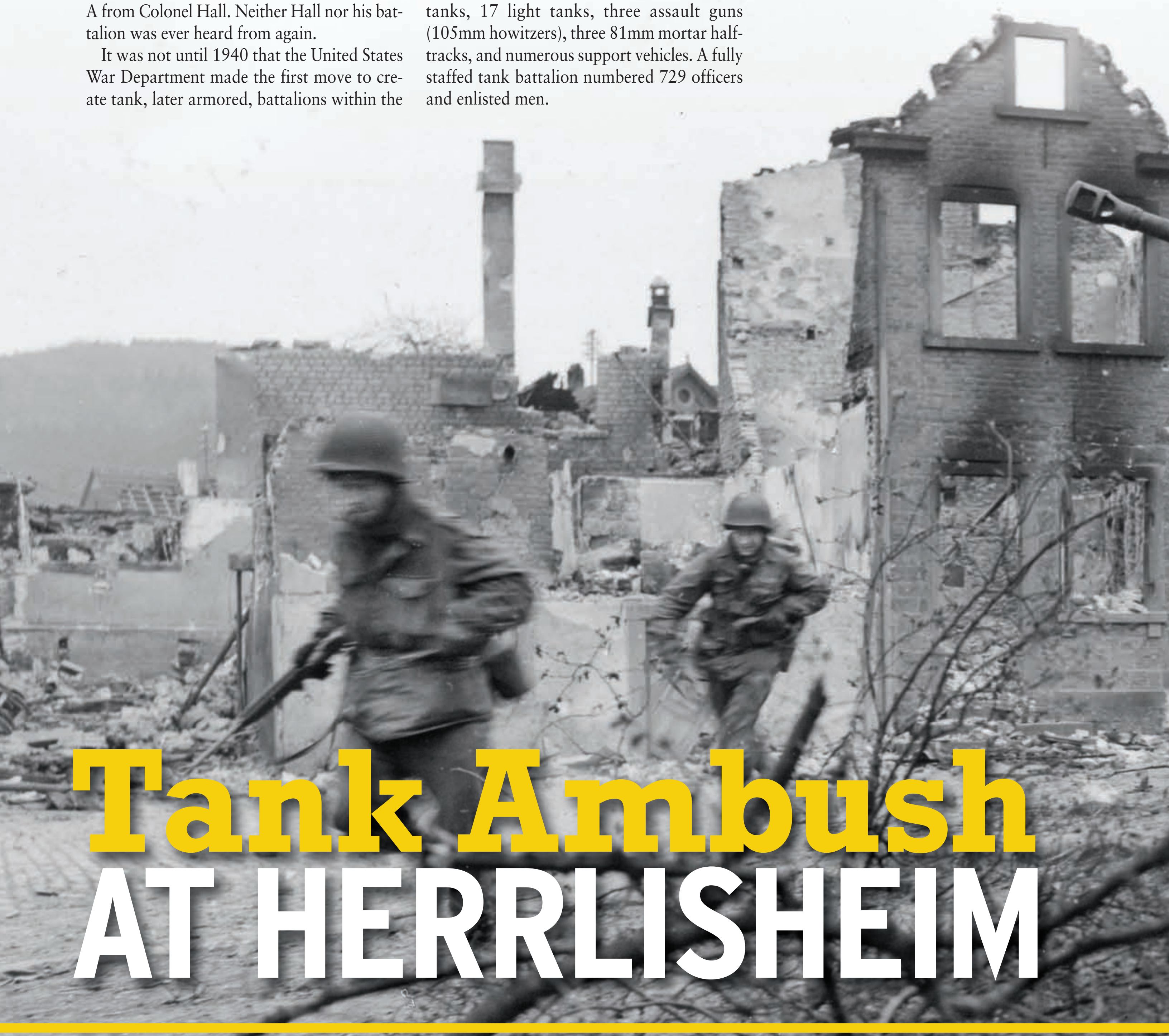
ON JANUARY 17, 1945, as Allied forces prepared to descend on Germany itself and put an end to the war in Europe, an American tank battalion disappeared. The 43rd Tank Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Scott Hall, organic to the 12th Armored ("Hellcats") Division's Combat Command A, joined with the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion to push German forces out of the town of Herrlisheim in France's Alsace region. Shortly after the battalion entered the town, some garbled but seemingly desperate messages were received by Combat Command A from Colonel Hall. Neither Hall nor his battalion was ever heard from again.

It was not until 1940 that the United States War Department made the first move to create tank, later armored, battalions within the U.S. armed forces. Originally only 15 were authorized, half "heavy" and half "light." The original battalions consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters (H & H) company and three tank companies. Each tank company consisted of three platoons of five tanks each, with a headquarters section of two additional tanks. In 1942, a service company was added. Later additions included a light tank company, an assault gun platoon, a mortar platoon, and a reconnaissance platoon. By 1943, the battalions usually had a total of 54 medium tanks, 17 light tanks, three assault guns (105mm howitzers), three 81mm mortar halftracks, and numerous support vehicles. A fully staffed tank battalion numbered 729 officers and enlisted men.

By January 1945, the standard American armored division numbered 10,937 officers and men, 195 medium tanks, 18 105mm self-propelled howitzers, and several other armored vehicles within the supporting reconnaissance, engineer, medical, and service units. But the bulk of the division's fighting power rested in the three tank battalions and three armored infantry battalions, which were usually paired under one of three (A, B, and R or Reserve) combat commands. In all, the U.S. Army



Tank Ambush AT HERRLISHEIM

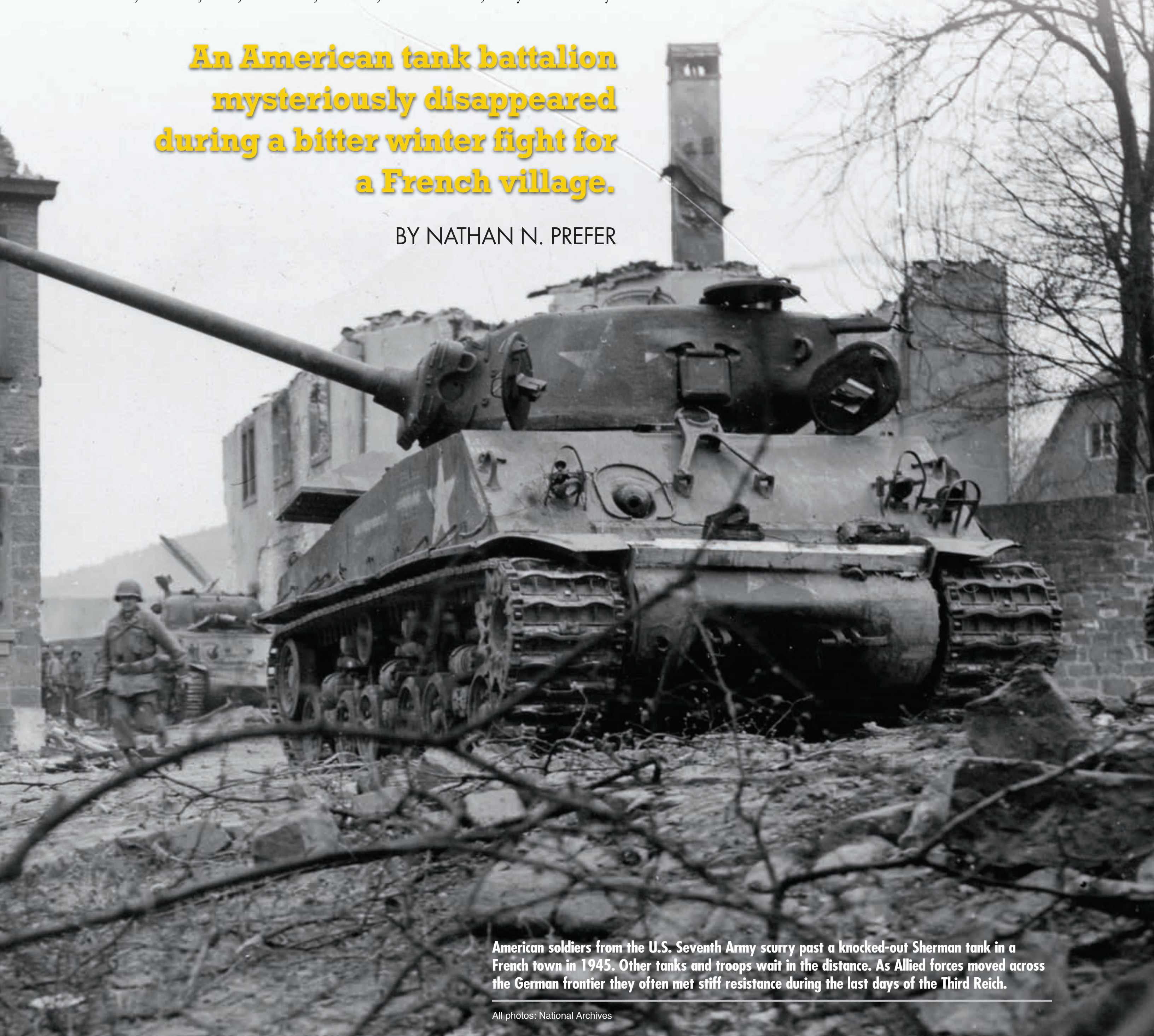
fielded 16 armored divisions during the war, all of which served in the European or Mediterranean Theaters.

One of these was the 12th Armored Division, which was activated at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, on September 15, 1943. After a year's training it moved to Tennessee to participate in Army-wide maneuvers and then to Camp Bowie, Texas, for additional training. The division's combat elements consisted of three tank battalions, the 23rd, 43rd, and 714th; the 17th, 56th, and 66th Armored Infantry Battalions with the 119th Armored Engineer Battalion and 92nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. By September 1944, the division was at Camp Shanks, New York, preparing to go overseas. The division's troops, who called themselves the "Hellcats," arrived at Le Havre, France, on November 9, 1944, after a month's stay in England. Originally assigned to the Ninth U.S. Army on the northern end of the American front lines, they had barely sent forward advance parties to scout out their area of operations when orders changed.

The 12th Armored Division, now commanded by Maj. Gen. Roderick R. Allen, unexpectedly found itself assigned to the Seventh U.S. Army, Sixth Army Group, one of three Army Groups under the control of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Sixth Army Group was at the extreme southern end of the Allied front lines in France.

An American tank battalion mysteriously disappeared during a bitter winter fight for a French village.

BY NATHAN N. PREFER



American soldiers from the U.S. Seventh Army scurry past a knocked-out Sherman tank in a French town in 1945. Other tanks and troops wait in the distance. As Allied forces moved across the German frontier they often met stiff resistance during the last days of the Third Reich.

All photos: National Archives

General Allen was a rarity among divisional commanders in the U.S. Army during World War II. He did not attend West Point. Instead, the Texas-born commander received a Bachelor of Science degree from the Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas in 1915 and was commissioned into the cavalry the following year. He served in France during World War I and later graduated from the Command and General Staff School and the Army War College. He had served in various posts with armored units since 1940 and had been promoted to major general in February 1944. He commanded the 20th Armored Division in training before assuming command of the Hellcats in September 1944.

The Sixth Army Group was also unique at this point. While half its units were experienced U.S. Army units, some of which had first seen combat in North Africa in 1942, the other half were French, the newly introduced French First Army. Commanded by Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, it had landed in southern France on August 15, 1944, and had been fighting its way to the Rhine River and Germany ever since.

The 12th Armored Division joined the American half of Sixth Army Group, the Seventh U.S. Army. Under the command of Lt. Gen. Alexander ("Sandy") M. Patch, the Seventh Army was pushing north and east to reach the Rhine River, the traditional boundary between France and Germany. Moving up, the leading units of Combat Command A entered the combat zone at Weisslingen on December 5, 1944, and soon relieved elements of the veteran 4th Armored Division. Here the first shots were fired by Battery A, 493rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion. The division's first success came with seizing the town of Singling and piercing the Maginot Line in its sector. After crossing the German border on December 21, 1944, the division was pulled out of line for a brief rest and recuperation period.

In this most difficult season, the weather in sunny southern France was anything but. The area in which Seventh Army operated in December and January 1944 was a wet, cold quagmire of mud, rain, and snow. Soon the Americans were whitewashing their tanks to blend with the snow-covered landscape. Nor could the local population be relied upon. Alsace Province had been under German control for years, and some inhabitants were German sympathizers. In one instance, the soldiers of Battery A, 495th Armored Field Artillery Battalion were puzzled by the accuracy of German counterbattery fire against them despite their best efforts at camouflage. They soon discovered that a dog, which made the same journey past their positions each day, was actually carrying the coordinates of their guns to the enemy then returning home to its master within the American lines.

A Stuart light tank of the U.S. Seventh Army moves toward the front line near the border between France and Germany while a truckload of German prisoners heads in the opposite direction.

The initial action of the 43rd Tank Battalion occurred on December 12 when, paired with the 66th Armored Infantry Battalion, it successfully attacked the towns of Guising and Bettviller in daylight. Casualties were light, and the battle went according to plan. Shortly after this first victory the division was relieved by the 44th Infantry Division and went into reserve. While in reserve the division's officers discussed what had worked in their first action, what had failed, and what they needed to do to improve their combat performance.

Combat Command A, led by Brig. Gen. Riley Finley Ennis, another non-West Point officer, moved back to the front on December 18 and once again relieved elements of the 4th Armored and 80th Infantry Divisions. These units were being pulled out to move north to attack the flank of the massive German offensive through the Ardennes that had hit the First U.S. Army hard. Part of General George S. Patton's Third Army, which held the front line just north of Seventh Army, they were badly needed to halt the Germans. Because of this, General Patch's Seventh Army would be required to cover more of the front lines as Patton pulled his troops to the north. As a result, the Hellcats' rest period was cut short.

The day after Combat Command A returned to the front a major conference was held at the French town of Verdun. Present were Generals Eisenhower, Omar Bradley (commanding 12th Army Group), and Patton. Concerned about the massive German attack in the Ardennes, what would come to be known as the Battle of the Bulge, the decision was made to pull Patton's Third Army to the north and to halt all offensive operations of the Sixth Army Group. Devers was even instructed to give up ground if necessary to maintain a continuous front line with 12th Army Group. Devers was disappointed at his new orders, but they were obeyed. While awaiting the outcome of the battle to his north, he made plans for a renewal of his offensive in the first week of January 1945, when he believed the northern emergency would be over.

In late December 1944, Patch's Seventh Army had six infantry and two armored divisions available. While the Hellcats were holding a sector of the front, Patch kept the 14th Armored Division in reserve. The frontline units had to hold a line that was 126 miles long, which meant that each battalion was responsible for a front of some two miles, far beyond the usual demands on a battalion. Because of priority given to the northern group of armies, supplies and equipment in Sixth Army Group were dwindling, as were sufficient replacements for casualties. Worse, intelligence officers began reporting signs of a German counteroffensive aimed at Seventh Army; whether it was a diversion or a real offensive remained unclear.

The 12th Armored Division was now a part of the XV Corps under Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip. It was backing the frontline defenses of the 44th, 100th, and 103rd Infantry Divisions. Operations were limited to sending out patrols,

M4 Sherman medium tanks of the 714th Tank Battalion, 12th Armored Division advance warily across the snow-covered landscape toward enemy positions near the town of Bischwiller, France, on January 8, 1945.

repulsing enemy probes, and engaging in sharp artillery duels. Christmas Day, 1944, proved busy for the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion holding a sector of the front line. A determined German ground attack was repulsed by artillery and mortar fire. Rumors of a pending massive attack circulated, including the probable dropping of German paratroopers behind American lines. Roadblocks were established and passwords changed frequently. Several units, including Combat Command B, were pulled out to perform maintenance on their vehicles and other equipment.

But nothing major happened. With no sign of any imminent attack from the Germans, Seventh Army pulled the 12th Armored Division into reserve on December 30. It remained on three-hour notice to move against any German attack. Replacements for the 62 men killed, 454 wounded, and four missing in action were being integrated into the division as the year ended.

The new year began badly. The anticipated German counteroffensive, known as Operation Nordwind, hit the Seventh Army hard. The German plan was to strike in Alsace and force an American withdrawal, delaying the Allied advance into Germany and giving German scientists more time to develop the so-called "wonder weapons," which would change the course of the war in Germany's favor. Knowing that Sixth Army Group had been significantly weakened while covering an extended front, the German planners also believed the attack would relieve some of the pressure on the southern shoulder of the Bulge. The ultimate goal was to split the Seventh Army, clear a way to the fortress city of Metz, and get behind Patton's Third Army, disrupting the entire Allied line.

After some initial success, the German offensive lost power. Generals Devers and Patch had been quick to react. One of their many moves was to assign the 12th Armored Division to VI Corps, under the command of Maj. Gen. Edward "Ted" Brooks. Brooks' corps had been exposed when the Germans attacked on both flanks and was forced to withdraw. It had no reserves. Both of Seventh Army's armored divisions, the 12th and 14th, were rushed to VI Corps.

Upon arrival in VI Corps, General Allen was told that a German bridgehead at Gambsheim was the greatest threat to VI Corps and that reducing it was his first objective. On January 8, 1945, Combat Command B, with the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion and 714th Tank Battalion, was ordered to attack the town of Herrlisheim at the center of the German bridgehead.

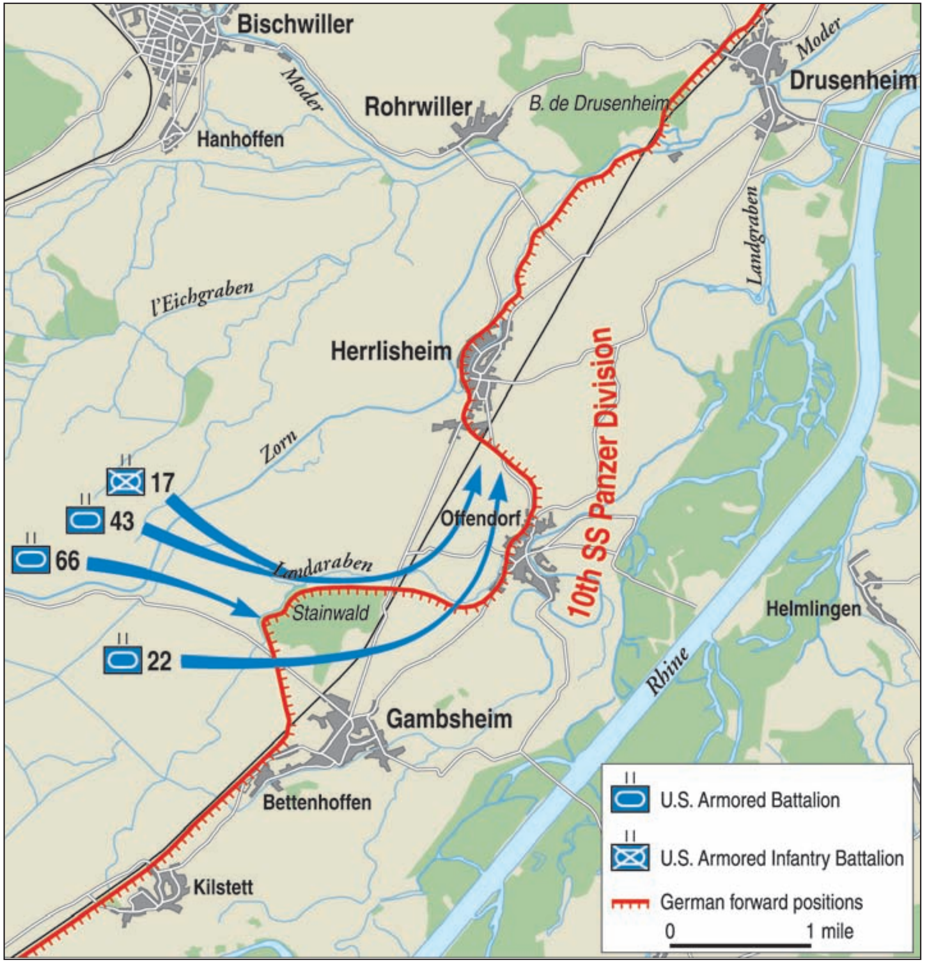
Attached to the 79th Infantry Division, Combat Command B attacked Herrlisheim from the north on the morning of the 8th, while to the south French troops were to attack Gambsheim. Supported by Company B, 119th Armored Engineers, the actual attack began at 10 AM. Intelligence reports indicated there were some 1,200 Germans in the entire pocket, but these estimates were later discovered to be far too low. In fact, Combat Command B was about to attack three regiments of the German 10th SS Panzer Division reinforced by elements of the 553rd Infantry Regiment.

Company B, 714th Tank Battalion followed Company A, 56th Armored Infantry Battalion in the attack, supported by both mortars and assault guns firing from elevated positions outside the town. Company C, 56th Armored Infantry Battalion, with a full complement of 251 officers and men, moved off to protect the flanks of the attack and join up with the French once Herrlisheim had fallen. Before that could be done, the company had to secure a group of small buildings near the Zorn River. These structures contained machinery used to control the flow of water from the Zorn to the Moder River, and they would soon be known simply as the Waterworks. While operating there, an American platoon rounded up several prisoners at a cost of four men killed and several others wounded.

Facing Herrlisheim, the tanks of Company C, 714th Tank Battalion came under fire from enemy artillery and mortars. Attempting to join the infantry, the tanks found that a bridge at the Waterworks was destroyed, halting their advance. Instead, Companies A and C, 714th Tank Battalion took up positions along the Zorn River and tried to support the infantry. Their fire soon ceased, however, when ammunition began to run low. Meanwhile, Companies A and B, 56th Armored Infantry Battalion were supposed to enter the Waterworks, cross the Zorn, and clear Herrlisheim. Despite the early loss of one of the company commanders, the operation proceeded after nightfall. With a crossing accomplished, the Americans surprised a group of about 30 Germans who were moving across open, flat ground, apparently completely unaware that they were within rifle shot of American soldiers. Indeed, so close were the Germans that the Americans had to give orders in whispers so as not to alert the approaching enemy.

Staff Sergeant Charles F. Peischl was first to notice that the Germans had become suspicious. He was also the first American to open fire, followed immediately by the rest of B Company. Most of the Germans were killed or wounded. Before the Americans could verify

Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: American troops advancing on the town of Herrlisheim, France, near the border with Germany, encountered tough enemy positions and fought a bitter encounter that lasted several days. The 17th Armored Infantry Battalion was trapped in the town. RIGHT: Corpsmen help a wounded soldier of Combat Command B, 12th Armored Division into an ambulance. This man was one of many wounded during the difficult fighting at Herrlisheim on January 9, 1945.

their success, however, there came orders to withdraw to the Waterworks. The entire 56th Armored Infantry Battalion, reinforced by Company L, 314th Infantry Regiment, 79th Infantry Division, assembled there.

The Waterworks soon became a trap for the Germans. In the middle of the night mortars began landing in the courtyard, and movement was heard outside. Hand grenades from German infiltrators were tossed at the American positions. The Americans defended themselves, keeping the Germans at bay, until suddenly two enemy tanks opened fire. Because of an intervening wall, the enemy tanks could not fire down into the sheltering Americans, but they continued to fire at the buildings. Efforts by the 40th Engineer Combat Regiment to replace a destroyed bridge to allow American tanks to cross the Zorn were halted by the German tank fire. One of the two German tanks was knocked out in a gallant action by Private Robert L. Scott of the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion, but increasing German pressure kept the Americans pinned down. Wounded men had to be evacuated by the light tanks of Company D, 714th Tank Battalion. Supplies were brought up the same way.

At daylight the German tanks and most of the enemy infantry withdrew, although more than 100 were trapped and forced to surrender. The 18 self-propelled 105mm howitzers of the supporting 494th Armored Field Artillery Battalion had fired more than 3,700 rounds during the night and into the morning in support of the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion. But so far no American had entered Herrlisheim. While the Americans decided what to do next, the artillery kept up a harassing fire against the outskirts of Herrlisheim, pinning down the several German tanks.

On January 9, the Americans renewed their attack on Herrlisheim. Once more the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion led the way with Companies A and B, with Company C in reserve. This time the attack was to begin just before dawn, secure the Waterworks, and then push forward to Herrlisheim by dawn. This would be an infantry battle supported at long range by the tanks of Company B, 714th Tank Battalion, still stymied by a lack of bridges across the Zorn. Captain James Leehman took Company B, 714th Tank Battalion forward, prepared to cross once the Bailey bridge had been completed at the Waterworks. Once across, he was to provide close support to the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion. The two remaining companies of the tank battalion were positioned in fields west of Herrlisheim, firing long-range support.

The plan went awry from the start. As Captain Leehman approached the Waterworks, he saw immediately that no work was being done to install the Bailey bridge. He joined the rest of the 714th Tank Battalion in providing long-range support. In fact, the bridge was not completed that day. In an effort to improve the fire support, Lt. Col. William J. Phelan, commander of the 714th Tank Battalion, ordered Company A to cover Herrlisheim from the north and northeast. However, Company A's field of fire was blocked by the infantry moving across its front.

The armored infantry had begun its attack on schedule. Moving toward the town they were immediately greeted with heavy machinegun fire. Then mortar rounds began to fall among them. Another company commander and several soldiers fell. Nevertheless, Company B pushed forward and reached a few of the closest buildings in Herrlisheim. There, enemy fire again stopped the advance. The company altered its direction to seek shelter in a gulley that ran nearby. Perhaps half the company had already been killed or wounded. The light tanks of Company D, 714th Tank Battalion were again pressed into service to evacuate wounded men. The battalion surgeon, Captain

William Zimmerman, later credited the light tanks with saving the lives of at least 65 wounded soldiers.

Company A was also hit by German fire but managed to advance with fewer casualties, coming up on Company B's flank and moving beyond it. Company A advanced halfway to Herrlisheim before halting to await Company B. When it did not appear, orders were received to enter Herrlisheim itself. Company C was ordered to follow Company A, mopping up as it went forward. Companies A and C entered the town at midafternoon and discovered that their radios did not work. A runner was sent to make contact with Company B, which remained pinned down in the fields before the town. Although the armored infantry began to clear the town in house-to-house fighting, the Americans were unable to contact anyone because of the radio problem. Niether Combat Command B nor the two battalion command posts knew anything of what was going on in Herrlisheim.

House-to-house fighting has always been a risky venture. In Herrlisheim each American platoon took a street or row of houses and methodically moved down the line from one to the next. While a few riflemen stood guard outside the house, others went to the rear to check the outhouses. They then went to the first floor windows and fired into the house to discourage snipers or any other enemy inside. Next the door was kicked down and the basement investigated as the GIs worked their way to the top floor. Any civilians encountered were ordered to assemble on the ground floor. In Herrlisheim, several abandoned machine guns and antitank positions were discovered.

The 56th Armored Infantry was making good progress when suddenly Company A came face to face with a German PzKpfw. IV tank. The Americans took cover from the tank's fire for about half an hour, after which the tank withdrew. As they resumed their advance, several more enemy tanks were observed approaching. With no tanks of their own on this side of the Zorn River, the infantrymen were in trouble. Indeed, although there were signs of progress, the attack was coming apart. Company B was still pinned down and suffering casualties at an alarming rate. Company A faced at least three enemy tanks, and the defenders were showing a more aggressive attitude with snipers infiltrating American lines. Darkness was coming fast, and Company A was ordered to withdraw to the edge of the town and establish a defensive position. Company C moved to aid Company B, which was withdrawn at dark. Captain Francis Drass, commander of Company A, took command of all the infantry elements in Herrlisheim as night fell. As Company B withdrew, it lost its second company commander in less than 12 hours.

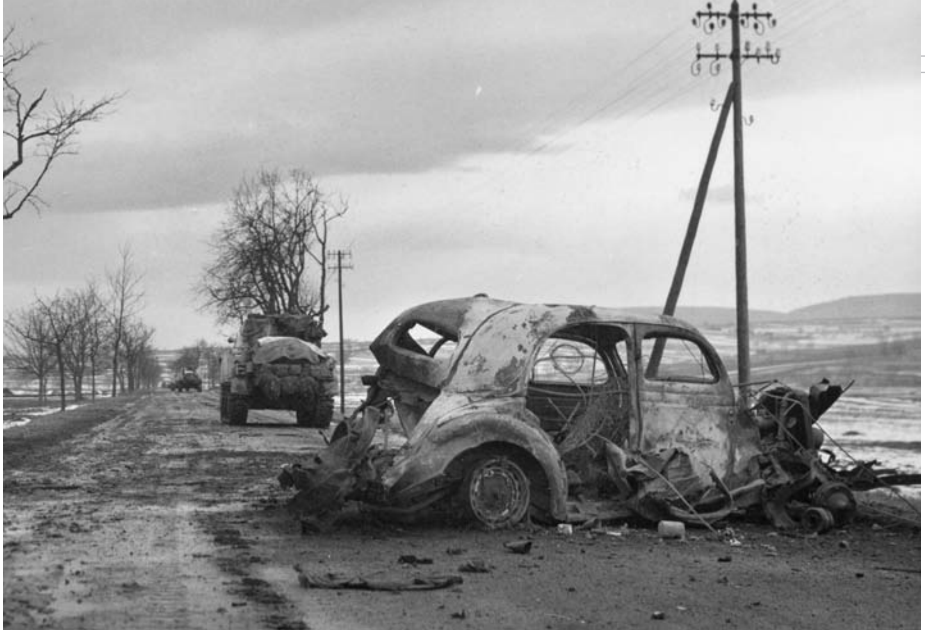
As night fell German artillery fire increased. Enemy infiltration intensified into and beyond the American positions. Company D, 714th Tank Battalion did yeoman's work in evacuating wounded and prisoners of war. Battalion headquarters of the 56th Armored Infantry sent a specially equipped radio patrol to try to make contact with its embattled companies in Herrlisheim, but it was stopped by German machinegun fire. A prisoner reported that the companies in Herrlisheim had been wiped out. Captain Elmer Bright, battalion intelligence officer and leader of the patrol, also found some 30 soldiers from the forward companies who had withdrawn. They confirmed the prisoner's report of the annihilation of their commands. With this information from two sources, Captain Bright turned back.

Taking partial shelter against the stone foundation of a building, the crew of an 81mm mortar of Combat Command B, 23rd Tank Battalion fires in support of troops operating in Herrlisheim. German forces contested possession of every building in the French town.

The night of January 9-10, 1945, was a nightmare in Herrlisheim. The Americans were surrounded and cut off. German patrols wandered throughout the town setting fire to houses they believed were occupied by the Americans. There was no contact with any headquarters. American officers ordered their men to shoot at anything that moved outdoors and told them not to leave their houses for any reason at the risk of getting shot by friendly fire. Sergeant Peischl, still fighting with Company B, later recalled, "The Krauts seemed to have a system of first firing at a building with tracers to mark it, and then blowing it up with a bazooka or antitank gun. Some might have been doped up, for they would come right up to our doors, open them, and yell, '*Komm heraus*!' We wasted no time in knocking them off."

Dawn brought some slight relief. The enemy ceased individual attacks on houses, although mortar fire and snipers continued to take a toll on the Hellcats. As dawn broke over Herrlisheim American medium tanks appeared in town. Captain Leehman's Company B, 714th Tank Battalion had finally crossed the Zorn on the just completed Bailey bridge. Now the tankers sought contact with the armored infantry companies beleaguered in the town. They knocked out one German tank at pointblank range and began shouting in an attempt to locate the infantrymen. Finally, a lone American appeared and directed the tanks to Company A, 56th Armored Infantry. A quick discussion between the tank and infantry company commanders determined that their force could not hold the town, and the tanks radioed back for permission to withdraw. This request was refused, and the combined force was ordered to hold where it was.

Once again the light tanks brought up supplies and evacuated wounded and prisoners. A thick fog enveloped the area, making movement difficult. One of the light tanks was knocked out by a German antitank gun using the fog for cover. After four round trips by the light tanks, enemy antitank fire became thick on the only route they could use, and so evacuation and resupply ceased. One light tank was



In this photo of a desolate road near Herrlisheim, a destroyed vehicle sits where it was booby trapped by the Germans. It blew up when an American Sherman tank of the 23rd Tank Battalion ran over the rear of the car on February 4, 1945.

trapped in Herrlisheim, two were knocked out, and only one managed to make the last trip successfully. Company B, 119th Armored Engineer Battalion was ordered to move into Herrlisheim and fight as infantry. Joining with the armored infantrymen, the engineers took their places in the bridgehead. That bridgehead remained static throughout January 10, with enemy fire so heavy that any movement out of the protecting houses was impossible. Nevertheless, both battalion commanders came up during the day to take charge of their respective commands.

The 714th Tank Battalion lost two tanks to roving German antitank teams during the day. Its battalion commander was wounded by enemy artillery. Several M8 self-propelled guns tried to get into town to provide support, but they ended up crashing through the thick ice covering the local canals and remained there until nightfall. Continuous German fire and heavy casualties delayed and eventually postponed an attack to complete the conquest of Herrlisheim. The arrival of reinforcements and supplies was halted, and attempts to drop supplies by light plane were prevented due to the fog. The wounded were piling up at the aid stations and battalion command posts. As darkness approached, the two battalions prepared for another long night as tanks paired up with occupied houses to await the next German attack.

Finally, at 2 AM on January 11, the order came to withdraw. The movement was completed in orderly fashion. Noise was kept to a minimum, and the tank engines were not started until they were ready to pull out. A friendly artillery barrage covered much of the noise and kept the Germans busy. The night was so dark and the fog so thick that the infantrymen had to hold each other's belts to avoid getting lost in the gloom. Within an hour the survivors were back across the Zorn. The first battle of Herrlisheim had gone to the Germans.

The Germans were convinced that the Seventh Army was weak and that another strong push would bring success. Indeed, the collection of American and French Army units containing the Gambsheim bridgehead lent credence to that belief. Surrounding the German enclave were the 314th Infantry Regiment (79th Infantry Division), Combat Command B of the 14th Armored Division, the 232nd Infantry Regiment (42nd Infantry Division/Task Force Linden), and elements of the French 3rd Algerian Infantry Division. To overcome what the Germans viewed as a miscellaneous collection of forces, they committed their experienced 21st Panzer and 25th Panzergrenadier Divisions to secure the Gambsheim bridgehead. General Brooks soon found his VI Corps fighting for its life against three attacks from three directions. Several days of bitter fighting ensued.

By January 16, the German attack had pushed VI Corps back along the west bank of the Rhine. Another attack was expected, but contrary to the expectations of Generals Patch and Brooks, it did not come against the main American line. Instead, the Germans hit the western flank held by the 12th Armored Division. The Hellcats had been ordered to seize Herrlisheim to cut the principal German north-south communication line with the Gambsheim bridgehead. They had moved into position and launched their first attack, which failed when far more Germans were found to be defending the town than General Allen had been led to believe. Normally a job for an infantry division, the Hellcats were the sole reserve available to Seventh Army, and so they had drawn the short straw.

Undeterred, General Allen ordered both Combat Commands A and B to renew the attack. This time Major James W. Logan's 17th Armored Infantry Battalion would attack Herrlisheim from the south while Lt. Col. Scott Hall's 43rd Tank Battalion skirted the east end of the town to surround it. The objective of Combat Command B was to clear the Stainwald Woods and the town of Offendorf, which flanked Herrlisheim. The attack was to begin on January 17.

Once again the armored infantrymen were able to enter the town and begin clearing it only to encounter increasingly stronger German defenses as they went along. The 17th Armored Infantry Battalion soon found itself surrounded in the town, cut off, and forced to withdraw despite strong artillery support, losing a number of prisoners. Major Logan's final message to headquarters at about 4 AM simply reported, "I guess this is it," as his battalion was overrun. But what had happened to their support, the 43rd Tank Battalion? It would be months before anyone discovered exactly what had happened to the battalion, which had never returned to American lines.

The 43rd Tank Battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. Scott Hall (some sources give Lt. Col. Nicholas Novosel as commander at this time), had fought at Offendorf the day before, where it had lost 12 tanks to enemy action. As planned, the 43rd followed the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion to the outskirts of Herrlisheim and then turned off on its flanking mission to the east and north. Radio contact between the two units of Combat Command A was lost at 10 that morning. At about noon on January 17, the commanding officer radioed his executive officer at Combat Command A, "Things are plenty hot." Some garbled messages came in later, but no one could understand them or determine where the battalion was located. One message from the battalion operations officer reported incoming German antitank fire. The last message from the battalion commander reported the unit's location as east of Herrlisheim, and a short time later a brief message was received reporting that the battalion commander's tank had been knocked out. Nothing else was ever heard from the 43rd Tank Battalion. Some 29 American medium tanks and their crews had simply vanished.

While the battle still raged in Herrlisheim, the supply and administrative units of Combat Command A searched in vain for some sign of the 43rd Tank Battalion. Despite being overrun, many of the 17th Armored infantrymen had managed to escape from Herrlisheim, but not one man returned from the flanking maneuver of the 43rd Tank Battalion.

It was not until a day later that the mystery began to clear. An artillery observer flying over the battlefield on January 18 reported several destroyed American tanks on the eastern outskirts of Herrlisheim. Continuing on, he found two more groups of destroyed American tanks in the area. These tanks were reported to be deployed in a circular defensive formation. Some were painted white while others had been burned black. General Allen immediately ordered a rescue attempt, but closer observation reported no sign of movement from the American tanks and also recorded a strong German presence in the immediate area. With no evidence that there was anyone left to rescue, the attempt was cancelled.

Intelligence reports later added to solving the mystery of the lost battalion. Information received after the battle revealed that the attack of Combat Command A had unexpectedly run into the counterattack of the 10th SS Panzer Division, which had been ordered to enlarge the bridgehead. That evening German radio announced that an American lieutenant colonel and 300 of his men had been taken prisoner at Herrlisheim and that 50 American tanks had been captured or destroyed. General Allen and his staff could only speculate that the 43rd Tank Battalion had run into a well-planned German ambush and been annihilated. With no fresh forces left to him, General Brooks ordered a withdrawal of his VI Corps. Herrlishiem would have to wait.

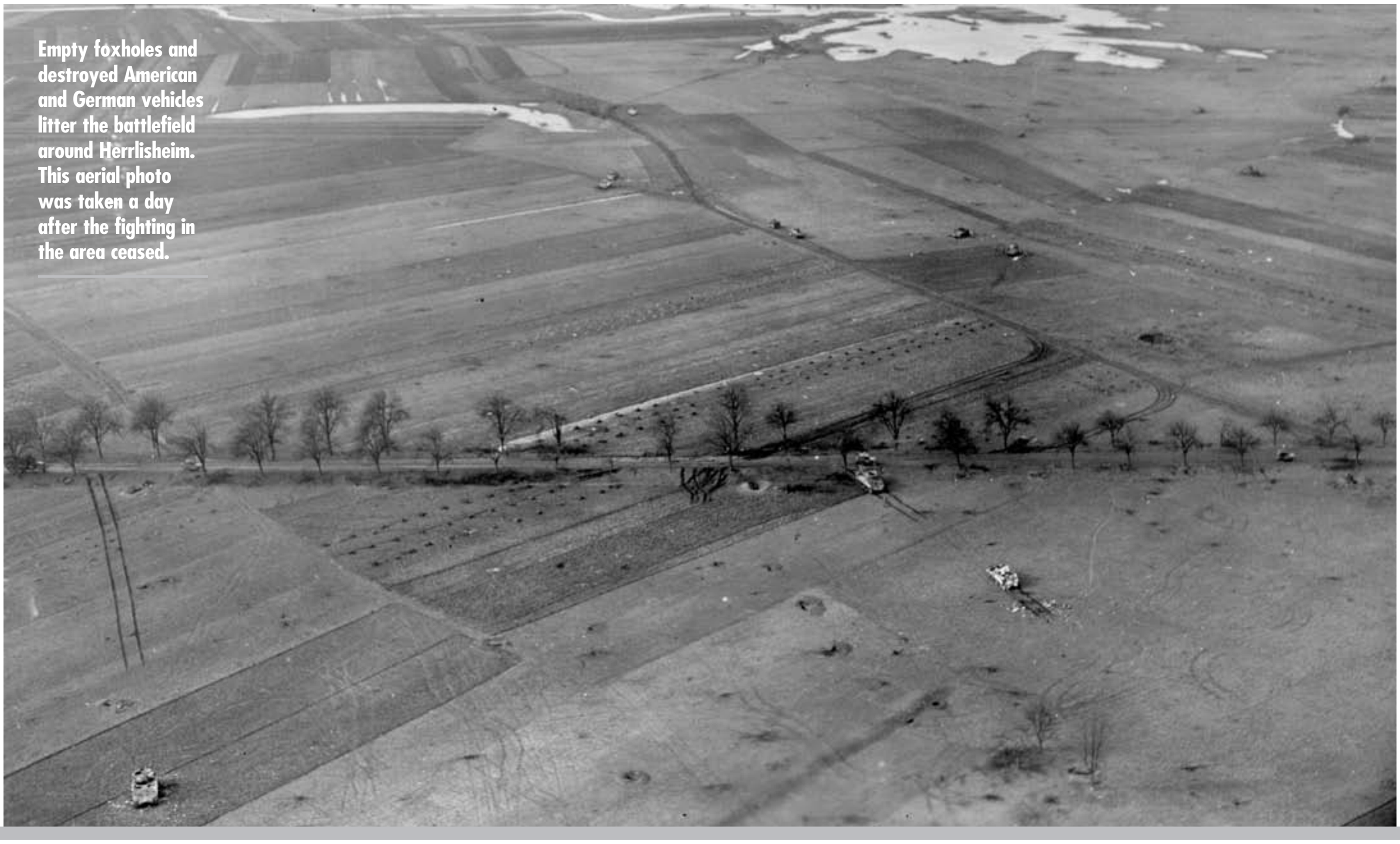
In late February 1945, more information on the lost battalion was found. The 12th Armored Division's graves registration report dated February 23 indicates that the 43rd Tank Battalion tanks that were found knocked out in the town had been hit by panzerfausts—infantry-held antitank weapons—while the tanks on the eastern edge of the town had been devastated by high-velocity cannons. The investigators found many German antitank positions indicating that both 75mm and 88mm antitank guns had been positioned just outside the town. The conclusion was drawn that the battalion had entered the town, been struck by infantry armed with antitank weapons, and had then withdrawn to the outskirts of the town, where it encountered a barrage of antitank fire. Some 28 destroyed tanks were identified. Contrary to the German report, the bodies of the battalion commander and many of his men were also identified. The report went on to state that it appeared from tracks and other indicators that perhaps four American tanks had been captured intact and removed by the Germans.

The Hellcats were not yet done with Herrlisheim. On January 18, a task force consisting of Company B, 66th Armored Infantry Battalion and Company B, 23rd Tank Battalion made an abortive attack to try to reach any survivors of the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion who might be in town. On the flank, Combat Command B made no headway against the Germans. That evening orders came for the division to withdraw to the west side of the Zorn to coordinate with a general withdrawal of VI Corps. Some small German counterattacks were repulsed once the division had settled into its new positions. The next day the Hellcats were relieved by the 36th Infantry Division. The Hellcats moved to Strasbourg for a rest before returning to combat with the French First Army.

Ironically, just a few days after the Hellcats were relieved, the Germans decided that they had no chance to break through Seventh Army and called off their Nordwind offensive. Their best remaining combat units were shifted to the Eastern Front, leaving behind some 23,000 casualties against American losses of 14,000. Indeed, the Seventh Army was stronger than ever with the arrival of the 42nd, 63rd, and 70th Infantry Divisions at the front and the veteran 101st Airborne Division held in reserve.

The Herrlisheim battle pointed out lessons that had been learned earlier in the battles for Normandy, northern France, and Brittany. Inexperienced combat divisions often had to learn in combat how to maneuver their tank

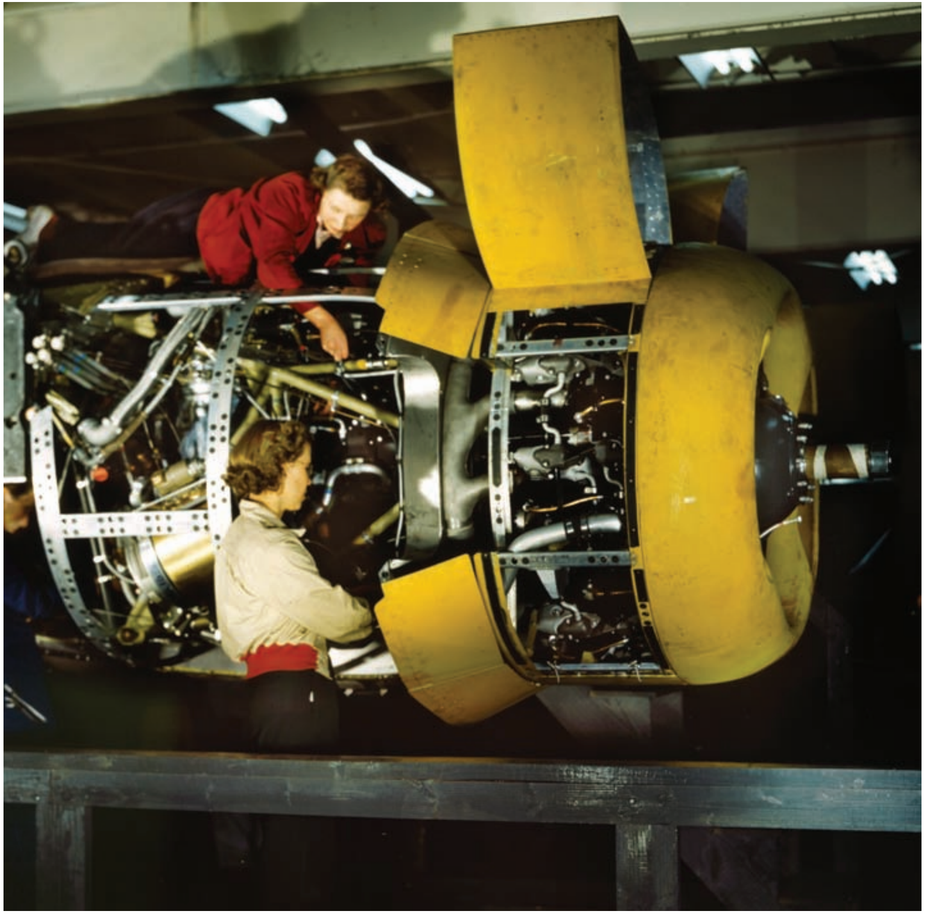
Continued on page 70



Empty foxholes and destroyed American and German vehicles litter the battlefield around Herrlisheim. This aerial photo was taken a day after the fighting in the area ceased.

By Christopher Miskimon

Library of Congress

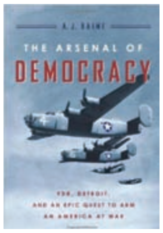


Women install an aircraft engine at Ford's Willow Run plant near Ypsilanti, Michigan, which produced B-24 bombers during World War II.

Wartime Industrial Colossus

American industry prepared for World War II through a combination of determination, ingenuity, ego, and politics.

AS SPRING TURNED TO SUMMER IN 1941, AMERICA'S THOUGHTS TURNED unwillingly toward war. While the nation was still reluctant to enter World War II, it now realized it needed to prepare its military, which had languished in the funding-starved 1930s. At the same time, other nations tacitly allied to the United States needed weapons in ever increasing numbers. President Franklin Roosevelt toiled ceaselessly to make America the Allies' armory, which he called the "Arsenal of Democracy" in a speech to Congress on December 29, 1940.



To achieve this lofty goal would require a supreme and concentrated effort on behalf of government and industry, two groups often at odds in Depression-era America. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, this focus acquired a sharp new edge as the United States now perceived the threat to its own security and existence. The push was now on to make American industry the key to victory in a war of production. A key player in this effort was the Ford Motor Company, one of the nation's largest automakers.

While history records how Ford and other companies became the Allies' arsenal, most works do not delve into the often tumultuous way this occurred. Rather than a smooth unified transition, the effort was plagued with fits and starts as shortages, politics, and personalities all worked to throw chaos into the order of the factory floors. ***The Arsenal of Democracy*** (A.J. Baime, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishers, New York, 2014, 364pp, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $27.00, hardcover) takes a plain, unedited look at the famous carmakers along with the flaws and strengths that contributed to the story of victory through mass production. A number of key players are covered in detail.

First is Henry Ford himself. A genius of both mechanical engineering and mass production techniques, he proved the near miraculous heights that industry was capable of attaining. By the dawn of the war, however, Ford was a committed pacifist and opponent of the Roosevelt administration. He was also in his 80s and showing signs of senility. Despite this, he would not step down as president of the company until a bitter threat forced him to do so.

His son Edsel Ford was dynamic and brilliant in his own right. He understood the need to compromise with labor and move forward into new areas to keep the company alive. Plagued by illness, his determination measured up to his father's stubbornness and finally allowed the company's aircraft plant to achieve the goal of a bomber an hour. While he would not live to see the war through, his son Henry Ford II would prove his father's equal in business acumen and ability.

As tension between Henry and Edsel grew, key members of the company began to side with one or the other. Charlie Sorenson was a talented engineer who saw Edsel and Henry II grow up and knew they represented the future of Ford. Harry Bennett was hired by Henry to essentially act as an enforcer for the company. As Henry grew old and inflexible, Bennett took advantage and began acting in his own interest, often at the business end of a baseball bat or pistol.

Despite the corporate and family infighting, which at times became almost absurd, Ford became one of the largest defense contractors of the war. It produced B-24 bombers, tanks, aircraft engines, jeeps, gliders, and myriad other weapons and equipment for the Allies. World War II really was a war of production, a war America was well equipped to prosecute and win. Soldiers won the war abroad while factory workers won it on the home front. This is the story

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Mr. President, Stop the Iran Deal Now!

Iran is the world's leading exporter of Islamic terror and our greatest enemy. Your deal fails to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. It's time for a reset.

Iran's constitution commands it to conquer the world through Islamic jihad, and Iran increases its bloody Middle East conquests daily. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei regularly leads chants of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." Can we afford an agreement that actually paves the way for a nuclear-armed Iran?

What are the facts?

Iran's terrorist aggression makes it the greatest threat to world peace—*and* America's greatest enemy. The Islamic Republic has sown seeds of global jihad for decades, killing thousands of Americans, Europeans, South Americans, Arabs and Israelis worldwide since 1982, including the deaths of 241 U.S. Marines and 58 French peacekeepers in the 1983 Beirut barracks bombings. Today, Iran sponsors terrorist proxies, such as Hezbollah, which controls Lebanon and militarily backs Iran's control of the Syrian government. Iran has also achieved dominance in Iraq by helping the Iraqis battle the Islamic State, and most recently it has seized control of Yemen through its Houthi agents. Suddenly Iran has graduated from being the largest state sponsor of Islamic terrorism to the major Islamist colonial power in the Middle East. Most distressingly, Iran proudly trumpets its intention to "annihilate" Israel, a goal it asserts is "non-negotiable."

> "The deal we'll accept is that they end their nuclear program."
>
> President Barack Obama, October 22, 2012

Despite Iran's record of terror attacks against the U.S and our allies worldwide, and its open hostility to American values and objectives, the White House now proposes a nuclear arms agreement with Iran that falls shockingly short of Mr. Obama's 2012 promise to "prevent them from acquiring a nuclear weapon."

Not only does the proposed "Iran Deal" *fail* to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear armaments, it permits Iran to *continue* developing nuclear weapons technology over the next ten years. Even more frightening, Iran denies agreeing to many key provisions that Secretary of State John Kerry claims are essential to it.

What's wrong with the "Iran Deal"? Iran has a long history of lying about its nuclear activities and cheating on agreements. Iran ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1970, yet has been developing nuclear weapons—and lying about it—for decades. Iran also has ignored a U.N. Security Council demand that it suspend nuclear enrichment activities. In short, Iran is a bad actor on the world stage and can't be trusted. President Obama promised in 2012 that "The deal we'll accept is that they end their nuclear program," which is the deal most Americans want. Here's what that deal must look like:

1. End Iran's nuclear program. This means shutting down Iran's Fordow and Arak nuclear facilities and ceasing all centrifuge-enabled nuclear R&D. Iran refuses. Why?

2. Export Iran's nuclear stockpiles. Iran has no peaceful need of its extensive nuclear stockpiles and should ship them away. It refuses this. Why?

3. Abandon development of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. ICBMs have only one purpose—to deliver nuclear bombs long distances, as far as to the U.S. Yet Iran refuses even to admit development of such missiles. Why?

4. Permit "anytime, anywhere" inspections. Iran must agree that nuclear inspectors can visit any suspicious site without warning. Iran refuses to allow this. Why?

5. Slow easing of sanctions. Any softening of economic sanctions must be spread over years, only as benchmarks are met. Iran insists on instant sanctions relief.

6. Abandon terrorism and colonialism. Iran must cease its global terror campaigns and its sponsorship of violent colonial aggression.

7. Severe punishment for any violation. Any agreement must facilitate true instant "snapback" of economic sanctions in case Iran violates this agreement.

What's our alternative? President Obama and Secretary Kerry seem desperate to make the Iran Deal—a weak negotiating posture that has led to weak terms. If we are to make a good deal, we must insist on the conditions above and be ready to walk away. No deal is better than the current proposed deal, which does not fulfill Mr. Obama's promise to the American people. This deal, in allowing Iran to keep its nuclear infrastructure and continue nuclear weapons research, is sure to start a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, starting with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. What's more, when Iran begins to cheat on this agreement—which is likely—it may force Israel to take unilateral military action, since a nuclear-weaponized Iran is an existential threat to the Jewish state. Those who criticize the proposed "Iran Deal" are often accused of wanting war with Iran. In fact, it is Iran's current nuclear weapons development that is provocative and bellicose.

If we want to avoid military action against Iran—which most Americans do—we must negotiate an agreement that truly prevents war. It's time to set aside the current deal—which Iran has not even agreed to—and start again. We must continue a harsh sanctions regime until Iran realizes we are serious about preventing their acquisition of nuclear weapons.

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of how one company did that.

This work is a refreshing change from reading about the battlefields of the war, revealing instead a battlefield back home where men struggled, mostly without bloodshed, to equip the Allied armies. When I picked it up I was concerned whether a book wholly about production on the home front would keep my attention, but happily it is engaging and informative. The infighting among the Ford family and its confidants reads like a drama but puts a human face on it. Politics, ego, personal opinions, and pride all mixed into the equation and the author does a commendable job sorting through it all to reveal the hidden story of a giant company during wartime. Strengths and flaws are given equal attention, providing a balanced look at a business during wartime, one that is still an economic powerhouse today.

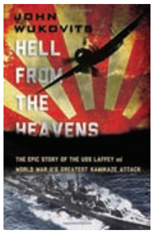
SHOT DOWN
The true story of pilot Howard Snyder and the crew of the B-17 Susan Ruth
STEVE SNYDER

Shot Down: The True Story of Pilot Howard Snyder and the Crew of the B-17 Susan Ruth (Steve Snyder, Sea Breeze Publishing, Seal Beach, CA, 2015, 360pp, maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $27.95, hardcover)

On February 8, 1944, the crew of the Boeing B-17G bomber *Susan Ruth* took off from an English airfield for a mission over Frankfurt, Germany. A dozen 500-pound bombs sat nestled in her bomb bays, and 10 crewmen flew the plane and manned its weapons. It was the first time all the men on this plane had flown together. Disaster struck as the bomber formation was attacked by German fighters over Belgium. *Susan Ruth* went down close to the border with France.

Several of the crew died, and the others shared various fates. A few were captured immediately and marched off to POW camps. Others were able to evade immediate capture and went into hiding. Of those men, some were later taken prisoner, betrayed by a Belgian Rexist, loyal to the ideals of the occupying Nazi regime. The rest were able to avoid their pursuers and stayed in hiding for seven months, counted as missing in action all that time.

This is a remarkable story revealing the fate of a single bomber crew. It is deeply researched; the author gathered the stories of not only the crew members, but of the Belgian civilians who sheltered them. Official records and interviews complete the story. The book is lavishly illustrated, showing the crew before and after the event along with many showing the environment they served and sometimes died in. Many books have been written about the bomber crews in World War II; this one brings to light personal stories at the airman's level.


JOHN WUKOVITS
HELL FROM THE HEAVENS
THE EPIC STORY OF THE USS LAFFEY and WORLD WAR II'S GREATEST KAMIKAZE ATTACK

Hell from the Heavens: The Epic Story of the USS Laffey and World War II's Greatest Kamikaze Attack (John Wukovits, Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2015, 320pp, maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography index, $25.99, hardcover)

During the Battle of Okinawa, the U.S. fleet faced the supreme test of the kamikaze: enemy pilots willing to die to achieve their goal of sinking American ships. It was an act of utter desperation, which in the end could not succeed but would cause great carnage nonetheless. To combat this threat, a picket line of destroyers was stationed around the fleet to give early warning. The USS *Laffey* was one of those destroyers assigned the hazardous duty. On the morning of April 16, 1945, the ship's crew underwent one of the most terrible kamikaze attacks of the war.

For some 80 minutes, the ship was the target of at least 22 enemy planes, of which six struck. The *Laffey* was also struck by several bombs and subjected to numerous strafing runs. When it was over, 32 sailors were dead and 71 wounded. The ship was burning, and the destroyer's survival was in doubt. The crew fought to keep her afloat and was able to get her home to a hero's welcome. Today the *Laffey* is a floating museum in Charleston, South Carolina.

The author has written numerous books on the Pacific War and does not disappoint here. The book is well researched and pulls the reader into the story of the ship and her crew. It is an interesting look at a harrowing 80-minute period when a group of sailors faced the worst their enemies could throw at them, paid a fearful toll, but emerged victorious.

Do Well or Die: Memoirs of a WWII Mountain Trooper (Marty Daneman, Cable Publish-

New and Noteworthy

SWAN SONG 1945
WALTER KEMPOWSKI
HITLER'S LAST WITNESS
ROCHUS MISCH
THE SECOND PEARL HARBOR
THE WEST LOCH DISASTER, MAY 21, 1944
A WORLD ELSEWHERE
SIGRID MACRAE
FORGOTTEN HEROES OF WWII
PROUDLY WE SERVED
The Men of the USS Mason
War Bonds

Swan Song 1945: A Collective Diary of the Last Days of the Third Reich (Walter Kempowski, W.W. Norton and Company, 2015, $35.00, hardcover) This book is full of excerpts from the diaries of soldiers, civilians, and politicians during the last days of the war. Both famous figures and common people are included in the accounts.

Hitler's Last Witness: The Memoirs of Hitler's Bodyguard (Rochus Misch, Frontline Books, 2014, $32.95, hardcover) The author was wounded in Poland in 1939 and later invited to join Hitler's bodyguard troops. He observed the Nazi dictator even during informal times.

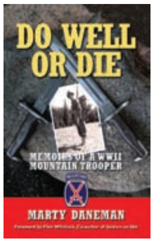
The Second Pearl Harbor: The West Loch Disaster, May 21, 1944 (Gene Eric Salecker, University of Oklahoma Press, 2014, $34.95, hardcover) In May 1944, an explosion tore through a group of landing ships assembled in Pearl Harbor for the invasion of Saipan. This book investigates the disaster and its cause.

A World Elsewhere: An American Woman in Wartime Germany (Sigrid Macrae, Viking Books, 2014, $27.95, hardcover) The author's mother married a penniless German noble, lived through Nazi Germany, and lost her husband during the war. She later had to flee with six children from the advancing Soviets.

Forgotten Heroes of WWII: Personal Accounts of Ordinary Soldiers (Thomas E. Simmons, Taylor Trade Publishing, 2014, $18.95, softcover) This is a collection of 14 veterans' experiences of the war. Each tells a story of the war on land, sea, or air.

Proudly We Served: The Men of the USS Mason (Mary Pat Kelly, Naval Institute Press, 2015, $24.95, softcover) The destroyer USS *Mason* had an African American crew. It was the only ship so crewed to enter combat during the war, escorting convoys in the Atlantic.

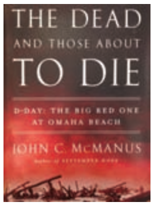
War Bonds: Love Stories from the Greatest Generation (Cindy Hval, Casemate Publishers, 2015, $24.95, hardcover) This is a collection of stories about couples who met during the war. It reveals how they built and maintained lasting relationships borne in conflict.



ing, Brule, WI, 2012, 180pp, maps, photographs, index, $17.95, softcover)

The 10th Mountain Division entered the war in the Italian Theater, fighting its way through the Apennine Mountains against fierce German resistance. In February 1945, the division commander, Maj. Gen. George P. Hays, ordered one of his battalions, which had never seen combat, to attack an enemy position known as Riva Ridge. It was literally a tall order; the troops would have to climb a steep cliff to get at the Germans. To achieve surprise they would have to go in without artillery preparation. Further, their rifles would be unloaded to prevent a discharge from alerting their foes. When an officer commented that the mission looked suicidal, General Hays told him, "You will do well or you will die."

That statement set the tone for the rest of the division's time during the war. It took the ridge and went forward from there. The unit never lost a battle from that time forward, nor did it ever lose ground to its enemies. The story of how this was achieved is well told from the point of view of one of the division's soldiers. The author, a Jewish boy from Chicago, became an expert on skis, climbing gear, and all the other things that made the unit unique in action. Here he retells the story of his unit through his own experiences.


THE DEAD AND THOSE ABOUT TO DIE
D-DAY: THE BIG RED ONE AT OMAHA BEACH
JOHN C. McMANUS

The Dead and Those About to Die, D-Day: The Big Red One at Omaha Beach (John C. McManus, NAL Caliber, New York, 2014, 367pp, maps, photographs, notes bibliography, index, $27.95, hardcover)

D-Day, June 6, 1944, was one of the most important days in human history. The success or failure of the invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe would decide what the world would look like for decades afterward. For the Americans, Omaha Beach was the supreme test and the 1st Infantry Division, nicknamed the Big Red One, would face a horrid maelstrom of bullets, shrapnel, and explosives that threatened to force it back into the sea. One by one, however, individual soldiers took heroic actions that secured the unit's lodgment ashore and thus the success of the attack.

Books on D-Day abound to the point where one more seems to blend with the rest. What makes this volume stand out is the focus on the small actions that made up the larger whole. The entire book covers just that one day on Omaha Beach, nothing more, allowing the author to delve into extreme detail. Readers who want to know the battle at the lowest level, where the sands of the beach mixed with the blood of those who seized it, will find this book of interest.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

The Battle of the Bulge: A Graphic History of Allied Victory in the Ardennes, 1944-45 (Wayne Vansant, Zenith Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, 2014, 104pp, $19.99, softcover)

The Bulge was the single largest battle ever fought by the United States. Nazi Germany threw the best it had left at the American army, but in the end it was not enough. There is much more to the story, however. Between the Germans' first attack and their final defeat over a month later is a tale of suffering, courage, fear, steadfastness, and ultimate triumph. American soldiers, cold, far from home, and often isolated, kept fighting under harsh conditions, fatally delaying the Nazi timetable while other units outside the Bulge counterattacked and eventually drove the Germans back in utter defeat.

The graphic book is not commonly used in military history and is unfamiliar to many readers. Wayne Vansant has brought new life into the genre by creating a comic-like softcover reminiscent of the war comics of the 1960s such as *GI Combat*. This new volume is historically accurate, clearly drawn, and appropriate for interested young readers of middle school age. While depicting combat, it is not gory or gratuitous in depicting the battle. A number of other titles are available from the same author.

JAMES LUCAS
BATTLE GROUP!

Battle Group! German Kampfgruppen Action of World War Two (James Lucas, Frontline Books, Yorkshire, UK, 2014, 192pp, maps, photographs, index, $19.99, softcover)

The German Army was famous for its ability to hastily form combined arms fighting units as a quick response to changing battlefield conditions. Known as Kampfgruppen, or battle groups, these forces were often named for their commanding officer. Early in the war they were often well-organized task forces usually formed from units within the same division to accomplish a specific goal, such as making an attack at a critical point or sealing off a breach in the German lines. Once their mission was accomplished, the component parts of the Kampfgruppe would split apart again and prepare for their next mission, perhaps with a different set of comrades in a new Kampfgruppe.

As the war continued and the situation became more desperate, the formation of Kampfgruppen became a much more ad hoc affair. As the German Army fought to hold territory against the punishing Allied onslaught, scratch forces were thrown together using whatever units were available. Armor and artillery became ever scarcer until Kampfgruppen often held little more than half-trained infantry or ill-equipped Volkssturm militia. In the end these groups faced utter destruction, often to allow those behind to escape capture, even if only for a little while. Still, during their heyday they were an example of the flexibility and professionalism of the German Army.

Stories of various Kampfgruppen throughout the war fill this book. Each is a well-chosen example that reveals the way these forces were organized and led from the first battles in Poland in 1939 to the last struggles of 1945. The author spent years gathering interviews with German veterans for his books, and it shows here in the personal details included in the text.

WHEN PARIS WENT DARK

When Paris Went Dark: The City of Light Under German Occupation, 1940-44 (Ronald C. Rosbottom, Little, Brown and Co., New York, 2014, 447pp, maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover)

Paris under German occupation is almost a cliché of World War II, but what was it really like? German tanks rolled into the city a mere eight days before France surrendered, leaving the populace with little choice but to quickly adapt to the new situation and its new overlords. Some chose the path of outright collaboration, while most walked a path of nervous neutrality, simply trying to stay out of the Nazis' way. A few decided to resist. They were a disparate group, many of whom would never have met without the pressure of wartime occupation to force them together. The methods of their resistance were small and large, ranging from the tiniest act of disobedience to large-scale violence and uprisings.

This new work covers the broad range of how Parisians fought back against their German overlords. The author's research produced extensive material that is blended seamlessly into a detailed narrative and provides an in-depth look at one of the most important bastions of the French Resistance during World War II. □

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

MACHINEGAMES RETURNS TO WOLFENSTEIN FOR A STAND-ALONE EXPANSION, OFFERING THE PERFECT EXCUSE TO TAKE ON THE NAZIS ONCE AGAIN.

WOLFENSTEIN: THE OLD BLOOD

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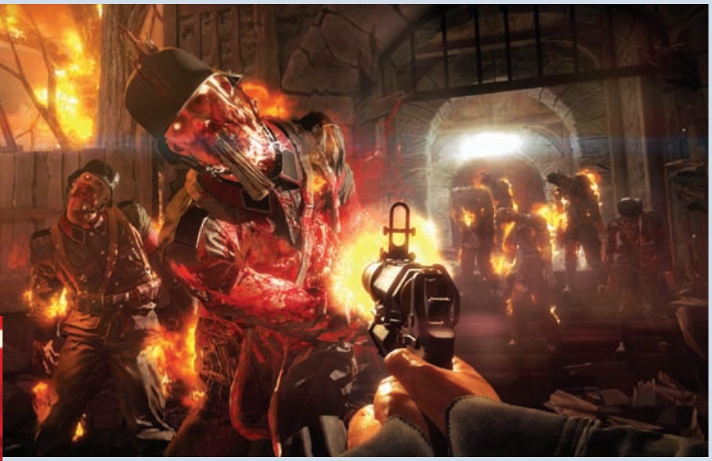

BEFORE THE NEW ORDER, THERE WAS...
Wolfenstein
THE OLD BLOOD
ALL NEW SECRETS, WEAPONS & VILLAINS!
COMING 5 MAY 2015

Expansions can be a tricky thing, especially when they come almost exactly one year after the main game. In the case of MachineGames and Bethesda Softworks' *Wolfenstein: The Old Blood*, just about the perfect amount of time has passed to make all the Nazi-battling seem fresh again. While it doesn't bring too much new to the table, *The Old Blood* delivers more of the same with an impressive amount of destruction for a relatively light cost of entry.

Wolfenstein: The Old Blood takes us back in time to 1946 ... well, at least the 1946 of this alternate timeline. Before Captain William "B.J." Blazkowicz took on the relentless forces of General Wilhelm "Deathshead" Strasse, he was tasked with an equally sensitive mission: Infiltrating Castle Wolfenstein. The castle itself is as foreboding as one could imagine. It looms menacingly on the horizon, and it's just as tough to get into as it looks. Thus, B.J. is thrown right into a sneaky little mission that quickly escalates into massive firefights against juiced-up Nazi soldiers, attack dogs, booming mechanical monstrosities, and a small sampling of the four-legged foes we faced in *The New Order*.

Anyone who just finished playing *The New Order* might want to hold off on *The Old Blood* for a while because there isn't too much differentiating the two other than the scenario and a few new weapons. This isn't a huge mark against it—this is an expansion after all, and a stand-alone one at that, so you don't need your copy of the original game to dig in—but playing both back to back will no doubt cause some fatigue. *The Old Blood* sports that familiar mix of stealth and pure white-knuckle action, and it works amazingly well for the most part. Sneaking around has its advantages, but it doesn't take much to turn a stealth mission into a desperate, shield-draining shootout.

It's both immensely satisfying and occasionally frustrating in that regard. As much as I enjoyed *The New Order*, I eventually started groaning whenever I would enter an area in which officers were roaming, poised to shout out my location and sound the alarms to trigger wave after wave of bullet-spraying baddies. For those who haven't played the original, the setup is pretty straightforward. You'll walk into a location and radio signals will pop up on the screen, giving you a vague idea of how close you are to an officer. Alert anyone of your presence along the way and you're pretty much screwed, so the idea is to sneak around, pop off some silenced shots, and kill the officers to snuff their ability to raise an alarm.

These sections are simple enough, and the majority of them won't give players too much hassle. The few that do just bring on a cavalcade of foes to chip away at your health, which is rarely in dire straights thanks to the fact that the environment is absolutely littered with replenishing items. That's another unfortunate aspect of the game. Not because it makes it too easy, but because I find myself unable to move on to the next area until I make sure every single shiny item that isn't nailed down has been duly inspected. It doesn't matter if Nazis are standing around riddling me with bullets, I WILL check to see whether or not that box of shotgun shells in the rubble is necessary.

As far as weapons and items go, one of the best additions is the pipe, which comes loaded with a handful of uses. Not only can B.J. whack the crap out of enemies with it, but it can also be used to hold doors open while you slide under, pry open vents, wrench the suits off of mechanized units, and, in true adventurer fashion, climb up cracked stone surfaces. There's not much to the climbing, but it is fun to pop your head over the ledge and sneak off a few shots at any soldiers unlucky enough to be patrolling the area.

The Old Blood starts out fairly rigid, and despite the fact that we're in the infamous Castle Wolfenstein, the adventure is at its best once B.J. escapes. It's not just that you'll be executing enemies faster at this point, but the environments themselves are so much more interesting outside of the confines of those cold stone-and-steel hallways. They eventually give way to cable cars high in the sky, and then a small connected village that holds its own secrets, including the heart of a burgeoning resistance. There's also a fantastic turning point that highlights the occult and horror aspects of the universe and switches things up just in the nick of time.

Connecting with the characters—both friendly and not—isn't quite as engaging as it is in *The New Order*, and that is perhaps the greatest distinction between the two. The plot of the last adventure was both sprawling and tightly wound. It was immediate and urgent, but it knew exactly when to slow things down and let its characters, including our burly hero, shine. There's very little of that here, and while it certainly keeps the pace fast and loose, it doesn't have the same impact. Those who assist you along the way are merely vessels to get B.J. from point A to B and so on. They'll let you in a locked door with the right password, outfit you with a few helpful items, and send you on to the next location. They might even meet some horrible fate in the process, but it doesn't resonate all that deeply.

In that regard, *The Old Blood* isn't going to end up as memorable as *The New Order*, but it's still a fine little package on its own. If you pick it up without playing the full game you might wonder what all the fuss was about, but why on Earth would you do that? Play *The New Order*, take some time off, and come back for more in this action-packed, nearly-full-length addition. And yes, it has more of those classic *Wolfenstein 3D*-style Nightmare levels, along with a batch of hefty Challenge missions, so you can keep the dream alive and play *Wolfenstein* however you prefer it. □

Continued from page 25

achenko pleaded with American officers to intern his army rather than turn the men over to the Soviets. He was told that since Schluessseburg was in the Russian zone his men could not be interned. The best the Americans could do was suggest that the Vlasov men try on their own to get to the American sector. Many tried, but few made it. Most were shot by Soviet troops. Some 17,000 were forcibly repatriated to Russia, where they were executed or worked to death in the gulags.

Vlasov was captured by the Red Army while on his way to the American zone. The horror visited upon those Russians who either voluntarily or involuntarily found themselves outside the Soviet Union at the end of World War II (even sooner in some cases) is almost incomprehensible to those who have spent their lives in freedom. The British, and sometimes American soldiers, helped perpetrate this horror, which did not come to light for many years. Two men, both of whom would later become prime ministers of Great Britain, share most of the blame for upward of two million deaths: Harold Macmillan and Anthony Eden. Until the time of their own deaths, neither would admit to any wrongdoing. However, if this were so, why were they so careful to keep what they were doing from the British people?

While German behavior in much of the occupied territories had been brutal, the German rule in the land of the Cossacks had been comparatively gentle. When Stalingrad fell, forcing a German retreat, the Cossacks turned west with them. As the Wehrmacht retreated even farther, the Cossacks retreated with them, finally ending up in northern Italy. Some of their leaders went back to the battle against the Bolsheviks, men such as General Peter Krasnov and General Vyacheslav Naumenko.

Things went well in Italy for a while, but with the collapse of the German military, communist Italians partisans became more brazen. The Cossacks were ordered out of Italy and, after a perilous journey, ended up in Austria on May 3, 1945. The Cossacks, their numbers down to a mere 32,000, set up camp at the small town of Lienz. It was Easter Sunday, and the Christian Cossacks were jubilant. "Christ Is Risen!" they cheered. The leaders knew the war was over, and the only decision involved who would take their surrender, the British or the Americans. They chose the British.

It was a decision the proud Cossacks would come to regret.

Negotiations with the British were confusing, and efforts to contact Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, who was familiar with the Cossacks from earlier duty, failed.

A sympathetic British officer, Major Rusty Davies, was soon given the duty of supervising the Cossacks, but as he was later to say, "This was not difficult because the Cossacks supervised themselves." The one big mistake Davies made was coming to care about a doomed people.

Davies did not believe the Cossacks when they told him of the horrors awaiting them in the Soviet Union until one day an old woman held up both hands from which the fingernails had been removed. Then he understood why the Cossacks said they would go anywhere but home. Things took a turn for the worse when the British confiscated the Cossack horses.

When the Cossacks complained, they were told these were not Cossack horses because the Cossacks were prisoners. It was the first time the Cossacks were referred to as prisoners.

The Cossacks became even more disturbed on the morning of May 27, 1945, when Davies told them that all weapons had to be handed in by midday. Davies, who had established a good rapport with the Cossacks, did not realize that the turning in of weapons would lead to something more sinister. He was simply the instrument his superiors were using to put a plan in motion. To soften the blow, the Cossacks had been given British uniforms.

If Davies and the Cossacks had heard General Geoffrey Musson giving instructions to British troops that morning, they would have been even more concerned. "I realize we are dealing with people whose language we cannot talk and there are many women and children here. If it becomes necessary to fire on them you will do so and regard it as an operation of war."

The next day the Cossacks were handed an order stating that all officers would be going to a conference held east of Oberdrauburg, where they would be addressed by Field Marshal Alexander. It was a lie, but Davies did not know. He reassured the Cossacks that everything was on the up and up. The question was asked but never answered as to why Alexander could not come in his staff car and talk to the Cossacks. Wouldn't that be easier than trucking 2,000 people miles down the valley?

The Cossacks dressed in their best uniforms. Nothing was too good for their friend, Field Marshal Alexander. Some of the Cossacks fell out along the way. They were suspicious, and their suspicions were well founded.

When they arrived at the appointed place, they were met by General Musson, who announced, "I have to inform you that I have received strict orders to hand over the entire Cossack Division to the Soviet authorities. I regret to have to tell you this but the order is categorical. Good day." With that the convoy was headed east into the abyss that was the Soviet Union.

When Rusty Davies realized he had been part of a carefully planned deception, he asked to be relieved of his duties. His request was denied.

With the officers out of the way, it was hoped the rest of the Cossacks would give little trouble. In a show of passive resistance, the remaining Cossacks linked arms and refused to get on the trucks. Troops waded in with rifle butts, pick axes, and bayonets. Mothers threw their children into a nearby river and jumped in after them. Fathers shot their wives, their children, and then themselves. British and American troops recall turning men, women, and children over to the Russians and then hearing the chatter of machine guns when the prisoners were barely out of sight.

Of all the Cossacks sent into the hell of the Soviet Union, only Lieutenant Nikolai Krasnov would ever see the West again. After 10 years in the gulags, he was, on the strength of his Yugoslav citizenship, released. His grandfather asked him to write a book detailing all the horrors of the forced repatriation. His book was published in the United States but read by few. He died soon after, probably poisoned by the KGB. Its leaders had read the book.

The forced repatriation of 1944-1947 was referred to as the "two million person holocaust." The first holocaust was perpetrated by Nazi murderers, but some of the most highly regarded people in the world were involved in the second. They excused their behavior by saying that if they had not forced the repatriation American and British servicemen who had fallen into the hands of the Soviets might not have been set free. Most consider this a rather shabby excuse.

General Andrei Andreievich Vlasov was imprisoned in the Soviet Union. When told if he did not confess there would be no trial and he would be tortured and then killed, he replied, "I know that, and I am very frightened but it would be worse to vilify myself. But our suffering will not be in vain. In time the Russian people will remember us with warmth."

On August 2, 1945, Vlasov was executed. One report said he was hanged with piano wire, a hook inserted in the base of his skull. Another report said the method of execution was too horrible to talk about.

Don Haines of Woodbine, Maryland, is a veteran of the U.S. Army and a retired registered nurse.

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Top Secret

Continued from page 27

"It was a grand sight indeed," Benuzzi wrote. They also left a sealed brandy bottle with a note inside listing their names.

The two men returned to their base camp, and the next day, with rations running dangerously low, began to descend the mountain. Eighteen days after leaving the Camp 354, they made it back to the road and the rail line where, tired, very hungry, and afraid they would be shot at if they were spotted, they fastened all their loose gear to prevent noise and began crawling back toward the camp garden.

In the darkness, they were not seen by any sentry and slipped back inside as easily as they had slipped out.

"We were safe," Benuzzi wrote, "but prisoners again."

The men worked their way back to Balletto's tool shed and began to search in the dark for the food and water they had arranged for friends to leave. They found nothing. Later they learned that every time their friends left supplies those supplies had disappeared by the next day. Finally, their friends stopped leaving anything. In the morning, after a long and hungry night, the three adventurers slipped out of their hiding place, mingled with other prisoners in the garden, and finally walked back into the camp with a working party and gratefully ate lunch. They skipped evening roll call, slept in their own bunks, and in the morning reported to the British compound officer.

They were carefully searched and put into cells, sentenced to serve 28 days for their prank. They only served seven days, however.

"[The] Camp Commandant was very kind to us and had, as he put it, 'appreciated our sporting effort,'" Benuzzi wrote.

Their feat became public knowledge a few days after they returned to camp when a party of British climbers found the Italian flag on Lenana.

Repatriated in August 1946, Felice Benuzzi entered the Italian diplomatic service in 1948, serving in Paris, Brisbane, Karachi, Canberra, West Berlin, and as head of the Italian delegation at the United Nations. In 1973, he was appointed ambassador to Uruguay and lived in Montevideo. Benuzzi retired to Rome, serving in retirement as head of the Italian delegation for the Antarctic.

He died in Rome in July 1988.

Author Chuck Lyons has contributed to WWII History *on a variety of topics. He resides in Rochester, New York.*

Herrlisheim

Continued from page 63

and infantry assets. In Herrlisheim the new 12th Armored Division too often separated its infantry and armor, particularly in street fighting. A good infantry-tank team was essential to clearing a defended town. Tanks alone in narrow streets with overhanging roofs were sitting ducks for German antitank teams. Similarly, infantrymen could not adequately clear a town without close armored support. At Herrlisheim, the armored infantry repeatedly went into the town without accompanying armor. Likewise, the attack of the 43rd Tank Battalion had no infantry support, which might have pushed the German antitank gunners back far enough to enable the combined force to gain a foothold on the eastern end of Herrlisheim. However, for an inexperienced combat unit the Hellcats gave as good as they took.

By the end of January 1945, the Seventh Army was once again on the attack. General Brooks' VI Corps was ordered to eliminate the Gambsheim bridgehead. He sent the 36th Infantry Division, supported by Combat Command B of the 14th Armored Division, to clear the zone. Miserable weather restricted the armor to a few good roads, and strong German defenses delayed the advance repeatedly. Nevertheless, the bridgehead was cleared by February 11, and American troops finally occupied Herrlisheim.

The Hellcats went on to take part in the clearing of the Colmar Pocket in February with the French First Army and then attacked through the lines of the 94th Infantry Division in March, reaching the Rhine north of Mannheim, Germany, on March 20, 1945. They crossed the Rhine at Worms and fought their way eastward through southern Germany until they reached Schweinfurt. Town after town fell to the now highly experienced combat division until it forced a crossing of the Danube River.

The Hellcats were in Austria, moving on Innsbruck, when the war ended. Months of fighting had cost them 724 killed and 2,416 wounded in combat. Many of these casualties had been incurred far to the west at a town called Herrlisheim.

Nathan N. Prefer is the author of several books and articles on World War II. His latest book is titled Leyte 1944, The Soldier's Battle. *He received his Ph.D. in Military History from the City University of New York and is a former Marine Corps Reservist. Dr. Prefer is now retired and resides in Fort Myers, Florida.*

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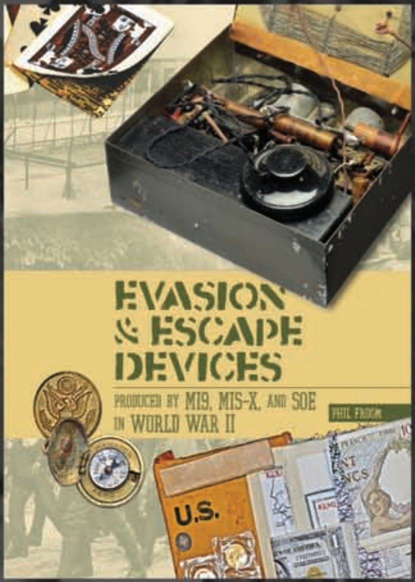
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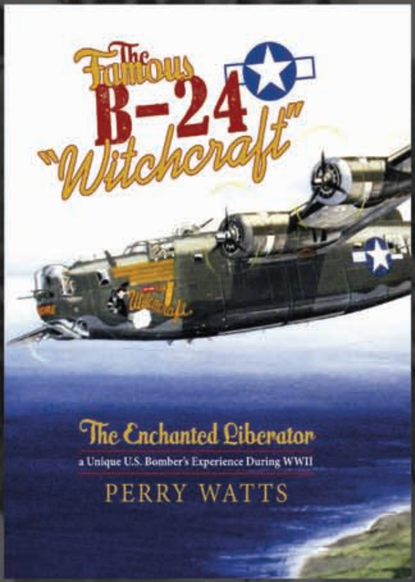
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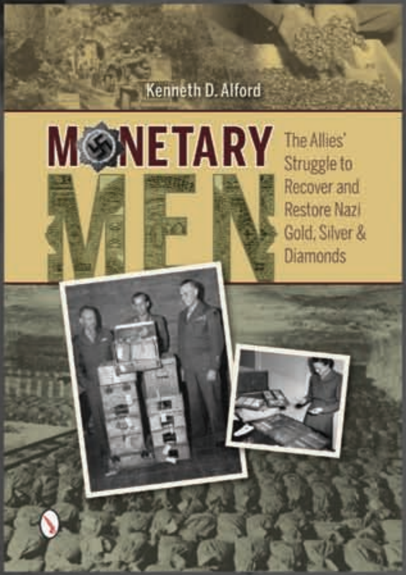
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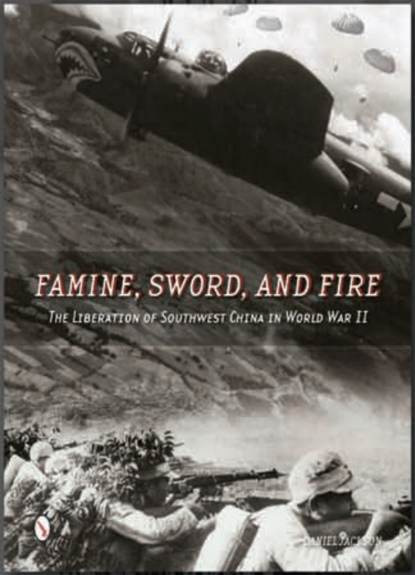
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