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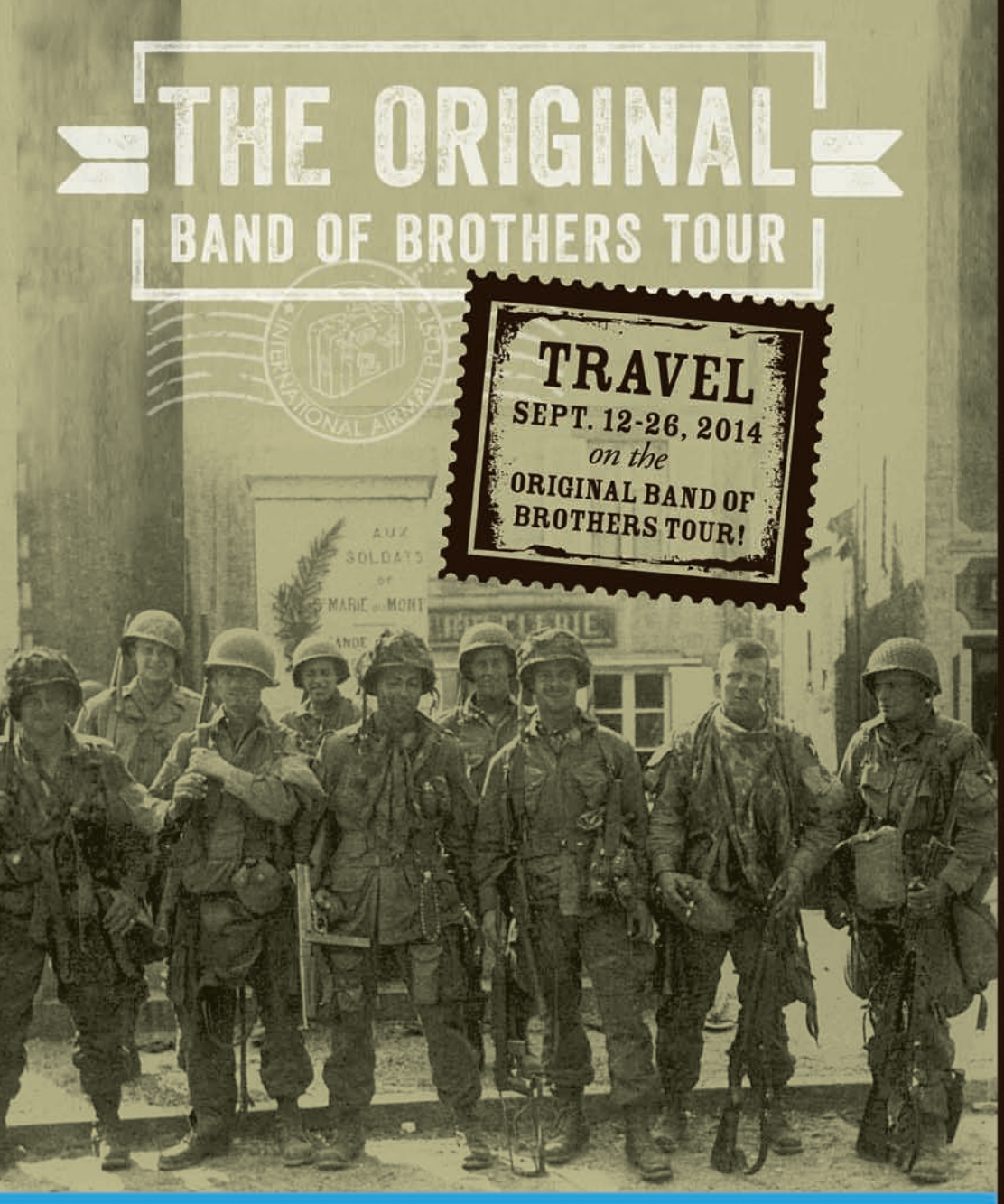

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Cover: Men of the 101st Airborne Division, their faces blackened to reduce glare in the moonlight, listen to General Eisenhower as he addresses Lieutenant Wallace C. Strobel. They soon boarded transports for their night drop into Normandy, June 5-6, 1944. See story page 48. Photo: National Archives

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Editorial

"I'm to command the whole shebang!"

ONE EVENING IN EARLY JUNE 1942, MAJ. GEN. DWIGHT EISENHOWER AND HIS wife Mamie enjoyed a quiet dinner. Over coffee, the career Army officer delivered big news: He was headed back to London, and this time his stay would be lengthy. When Mamie asked what position her husband would be taking in Britain, he grinned broadly and replied, "I'm to command the whole shebang!"

Command of the Allied forces participating in the D-Day invasion would come later. For now, he was to lead the American forces in Europe with particular attention to the buildup of manpower and matériel in preparation for the Normandy landings. To this point, Eisenhower's rise had been nothing short of spectacular. At the end of 1939, he had returned from a lengthy assignment as a close aide to General Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines. With the rank of lieutenant colonel, he subsequently was named chief of staff of the Third Army under General Walter Krueger and was responsible for the planning of this force's assignment during the massive Louisiana Maneuvers conducted in the autumn of 1941. When the Third Army decisively defeated the Second Army in the war games, Eisenhower received much of the credit. However, he remained largely unknown to the public, and in a photo of Krueger and his staff Eisenhower was incorrectly identified as "Lt. Col. D.D. Ersenbeing."

Public recognition was not as critical to advancement in the Army as the favor of superior officers who recognized talent. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall had met Eisenhower only once prior to the outbreak of World War II, and their conversation had been brief regarding their reviews of the content of General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing's memoirs. Marshall remembered Eisenhower's willingness to stand his ground even though their opinions differed somewhat. Five days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Eisenhower answered the phone in his office at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. On the other end of the line was then-Colonel Walter Bedell Smith, assistant to the secretary of the general staff in Marshall's office in Washington, D.C. The conversation was brief. Smith informed Eisenhower that General Marshall wanted him in Washington. Soon, Eisenhower was conferring directly with the chief of staff.

The situation in the Pacific was perilous, and Marshall asked Eisenhower to outline a course of action. Within a few hours, he advised Marshall to establish a base of operations in Australia, preserve the air link from there to Hawaii, and provide what little support was available to the embattled Philippines. He told Marshall that America's allies would forgive failure but not abandonment where the Philippines were concerned. Marshall replied, "I agree. Do all you can to save them."

When Eisenhower passed this initial test, Marshall knew that he had found an officer of great potential. Eisenhower was promoted to brigadier general in the War Plans Division. Two months later, he was promoted again—to major general and head of the new Operations Division. In the spring of 1942, Marshall ordered him to London to assess the progress of the American buildup in preparation for the invasion of Western Europe.

Eisenhower reported back that progress was slow. Marshall asked for recommendations and assigned Eisenhower the task of writing the scope of the responsibilities for the officer who would assume command of U.S. forces in the European Theater. In short order, Marshall informed Eisenhower that the job would be his. Eisenhower subsequently led Allied forces during the Operation Torch landings in North Africa. In December 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt informed him that he would lead Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France. Although many observers believed that Marshall would command the D-Day forces, Roosevelt would not allow it, stating that he needed Marshall in Washington. The choice was to be Marshall's protégé, Dwight Eisenhower.

In choosing Eisenhower to take command in Britain, Marshall displayed an uncanny ability to gauge potential in an officer. The choice proved to be superb. Although he had never commanded troops in combat and had passed over many officers that were his senior, Eisenhower was an excellent organizer and the officer most capable of managing the sometimes contentious alliance between Great Britain and the United States that ultimately contributed so much to victory in World War II.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Phil Zimmer

Japan's Underwater Aircraft Carriers

The massive submarines of the Imperial Japanese Navy threatened an attack on the Panama Canal.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER STEPHEN L. JOHNSON HAD A PROBLEM ON HIS hands; a very large problem.

His Balao-class submarine, the *Segundo,* had just picked up a large radar contact on the surface about 100 miles off Honshu, one of Japan's home islands, heading south toward Tokyo. World War II in the Pacific had just ended, and the ensuing cease fire was in its 14th day. The official peace documents would not be signed for several more days, on September 2, 1945, aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

As Johnson closed on the other vessel, he realized it was a gigantic submarine, so large in fact that it first looked like a surface ship in the darkness. The Americans had nothing that size, so he realized that it had to be a Japanese submarine.

This was the first command for the lanky 29-year-old commander. He and his crew faced the largest and perhaps the most advanced submarine in the world. The Japanese *I-401* was longer than a football field and had a surface displacement of 5,233 tons, more than three times the *Segundo*'s displacement. More troubling though was the sub's bristling weaponry that included a 5.5-inch gun on her aft deck, three triple-barreled 25mm antiaircraft guns, a single 25mm gun mounted on the bridge, and eight large torpedo tubes in her bow.

The large sub displayed the mandatory black surrender flag, but when the *Segundo* edged forward, the Japanese vessel moved rapidly into the night. The movement and the continuing display of the Rising Sun flag caused concern. Johnson's vessel pursued the craft that eventually slowed down as dawn approached. He brought his bow torpedo tubes to bear on the craft as the two vessels settled into a Mexican standoff.

Johnson and his crew had received permission by now to sink the reluctant Japanese vessel if necessary, but he realized he had a career-boosting and perhaps a technologically promising prize in his sights. Much depended on this untried American submarine captain and his wily opponent in the seas off Japan.

Little did Johnson know that the Japanese submarine was a part of the I-400 squadron, basically underwater aircraft carriers, and that the *I-401* carried Commander Tatsunosuke Ariizumi, developer of the top-secret subs initially designed to strike the U.S. homeland in a series of surprise attacks. Ariizumi was considered the "father of the I-400 series" and a loyal follower of the emperor with years of experience in the Japanese Navy, so surrender was a disgrace he could not endure.

Johnson also had to contend with Lt. Cmdr. Nobukiyo Nambu, skipper of the *I-401*, who traced his combat experience back to Pearl Harbor. He now commanded the world's largest submarine designed to carry three state-of-the-art attack planes in a specially built hanger located atop the vessel. These secret Aichi M6A1 planes were initially designed for "a second Pearl Harbor" or another surprise attack, possibly even against New York City or Washington, D.C. The I-400 series submarines were themselves full of technological surprises. They was capable of traveling around the world one and a half times without refueling, had a top surface speed of 19 knots (or nearly 22 miles per hour), and could remain on patrol for four months, twice as long as the *Segundo*.

Neither Nambu nor Commander Ariizumi readily accepted the emperor's surrender statement when it was broadcast on August 15. The subsequent communiqués from Tokyo were exceptionally confusing, especially Order 114, which confirmed that peace had been declared but that all submarines were to "execute predetermined missions and attack the enemy if discovered."

An Aichi M6A1 Seiran floatplane eases into a turn while a second Seiran takes off from the submarine I-400, a submersible aircraft carrier. Painting by Jack Fellows.

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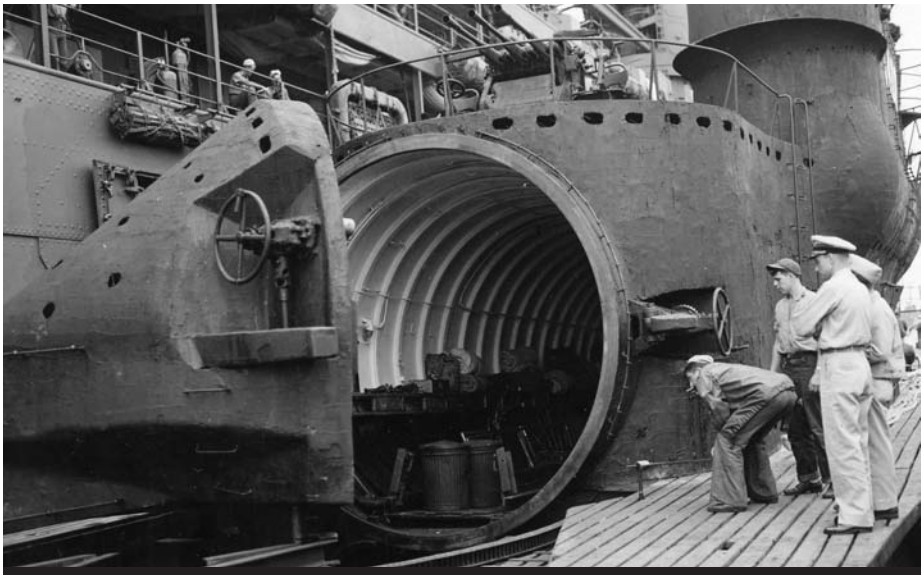


ABOVE: American naval personnel inspect the hangar of a Japanese submarine aircraft carrier. The hangar tube was sealed by a two-inch-thick rubber gasket, and the hatch could be opened hydraulically from inside. BELOW: The Japanese aircraft carrier submarines I-14, I-400, and I-401 are shown in Tokyo Bay at the end of the war. The submarines were destined to be sunk in Hawaiian waters during U.S. Navy torpedo tests.

It was Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of Japan's Combined Fleet and developer of the Pearl Harbor attack, who called for the construction of the I-400 series some three weeks after Pearl Harbor. The insightful Yamamoto, who was later killed when his aircraft was shot down by U.S. fighter planes, had toured the United States years before and had warned against a prolonged war with the highly industrialized United States.

However, once Japan was committed to war, he believed that submarine aircraft carriers dropping bombs "like rain" over major U.S. cities would surely cause the American people to "lose their will to fight." A second surprise attack with even more to come would prove psychologically devastating to the Americans, Yamamoto believed, and perhaps would be the best way to get the Americans to sue for peace.

The Japanese had previous experience with plane-carrying submarines, but these were float planes used largely for reconnaissance. The float planes could be easily shot out of the sky by American fighters, and each submarine carried only one plane, hardly enough to prod the Americans to the negotiating table. Yamamoto always thought big, and he called for a submarine that could travel 40,000 nautical miles without refueling, or nearly four times the range of a Balao-class submarine like the *Segundo*.

In addition, the I-400 series submarines would carry 1,750 tons of fuel, food for four months at sea for its crew of 147 to 157 men, and two attack planes with a speed of 220 miles per hour and a range of some 600 miles. The hangar atop the sub would need to be at least 100 feet long to initially accommodate two aircraft and be strong enough to withstand the pressure of the deep and a possible attack from enemy planes when surfaced.

Yamamoto's I-400-class submarines would displace some 6,560 tons submerged, about three times the displacement of the largest U.S. subs, and would be slightly more than 400 feet long, making them about the size of a small cruiser. Because one of the submarines was larger than a destroyer, it "wasn't an exaggeration, then, to say that Yamamoto was asking for something akin to a small underwater aircraft carrier," noted one observer.

Yamamoto called for the construction of 18 of the massive submarines carrying a total of 36 attack planes. The plan was rushed through the traditionally slow-moving Japanese naval bureaucracy by June 1942, with construction of the first five subs to begin in January 1943. The name of the special submarine class was abbreviated to Sen-toku.

The attack planes had to be designed from scratch. The need for speed, range and a decent sized bomb payload required tradeoffs. The wings had to be foldable to fit inside the tube, or hangar, atop the submarine. The design work, testing, and building of the plane was outsourced to the Aichi Aircraft Company.

To maximize range and speed, floats were removed from the planes. The crew would circle back after an attack, ditch the plane, and be picked up by the sub. Each plane had a pilot/bombardier in front and a radioman/navigator/tail gunner in the back. Initial plans called for a fixed, front-facing 7.7mm machine gun and a rear-facing 13mm Type 2 gun that was belt fed and handled 300 rounds.

The I-400 program did have its detractors in the heavily bureaucratic Imperial Japanese Navy. After the defeat at Midway in early June 1942, Japan became more focused on defending the homeland and far less on possible attacks on the U.S. mainland using the large submarines. The death of Yamamoto in mid-April 1943, just weeks after his 59th birthday, played further into the hands of conservative Japanese commanders. Cutbacks were ordered in the number of submarines to be built, although the I-400s' striking ability was to be increased by adding a third attack bomber to the large vessels and adding a second plane to two smaller submarines, the *I-13* and *I-14*.

Equally important, Japanese naval officials realized that with the loss of Guadalcanal, the nation's defensive perimeter was at dire risk. New York and Washington were dropped as targets for the underwater aircraft carriers in favor of attacking the Panama Canal. A successful attack on the canal would choke the American war machine in the Pacific and buy time for the Japanese to regroup and strengthen the nation's defensive perimeter.

The first test flight of the Aichi attack plane occurred on November 8, 1943. The plane, called Seiran or "storm from a clear sky," reportedly handled fairly well as the world's first subborne attack bomber. The Japanese began compiling limited available information on the heavily fortified Panama Canal. Their analysis showed that destroying the gate opening onto Gatun Lake would create a massive outpouring of water, destroying the other gates in its path while rushing toward the Caribbean Sea.

The United States had an estimated 40,000 troops defending the canal. The approaches were heavily mined, and there were major fortifications at Colon, Margarita Island, Toro Point, and Fort Sherman. The latter had 16-inch cannon with a range of some 25 miles. Antiaircraft batteries, radar stations, searchlights, nine aircraft bases, and 30 aircraft warning stations rounded out the canal's defenses.

After weeks of planning, the Japanese came up with a strategy to attack the Gatun locks at dawn when the gates were closed and presumably the defenses were lax. The attack would occur during the dry season because it would take Gatun Lake longer to refill and would be carried out with a combination of bombs and torpedoes. Initially, it was not to be a suicide attack; the pilots would circle back to the submarines and be picked up after ditching their planes.

The planners had nearly a full year to formulate the attack for early 1945. But there were problems ahead because none of the submarines were complete and the planes were not yet in the production stage. Thanks to the virtual blockade thrown around Japan by the U.S. Navy, steel was in particularly short supply in Japan, causing officials to cut back the scheduled production of I-400 subs to five plus the two smaller *I-13* and *I-14* submarines.

Despite the problems, planning went ahead, revealing how strongly the Japanese believed in the plan to knock out the Panama Canal and thereby stop the increasing flow of American men and war matériel toward Japan. The loss of the Panama Canal might prompt the Allies to modify their demand for unconditional surrender.

The Japanese labored on, and by the end of

1944 the I-400 and the smaller *I-13* were completed and turned over to the Navy. In early January 1945, the *I-401* was commissioned and the *I-14*, the last of the underwater aircraft carriers, was put into service by mid-March 1945.

The Seiran airplanes were still undergoing testing in late 1944, with the manpower shortage so severe that many of the aircraft workers were 12- to 15-year-old schoolgirls. The Japanese pressed ahead despite problems with the plane's engines, two earthquakes, and numerous American air raids that slowed production.

As an important aside, it should be noted that while preparations for the attack on the Panama Canal went forward, Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, vice-chief of the Naval General Staff, floated another idea for the use of the Sen-toku submarines. He suggested arming the Seiran planes with biological weapons to be unleashed against a populated area on the West Coast of the United States.

Dr. Shiro Ishii, Japan's top virus expert and head of the Army's notorious 731 unit in Manchuria, was consulted. He recommended that the planes drop plague-inflected fleas, something he had tested with success in China, on the United States with San Francisco, Los Angeles, or San Diego suggested as targets. The plan was discarded in late March by the head of the Army's general staff who called it "unpardonable on humanitarian grounds."

In effect, the Japanese Army, which had led the development of biological weapons and had tested them on Chinese and American captives, nixed the idea of using the weapons late in the war on American civilians, perhaps in the belief that the war was already lost.

The relentless American onslaught had taken a toll. By early 1945, the Japanese Navy had only 20 modern submarines left, including those in the Sen-toku squadron. Problems arose as the two available I-400 subs began test launching their Sieran planes. Each submarine was required to surface and get its three planes unlimbered and aloft within 30 minutes, but actual training showed that it took some 45 minutes. Those additional 15 minutes exposed on the surface could mean the difference between life or death to the pilots and the crews. They also encountered operational problems in getting the aircraft to sputter to life in a timely fashion. Fuel for the submarines and the Sierans was also in short supply. The presence of mines made matters increasingly difficult for the Japanese commanders.

Because of an increasing sense of urgency, the Japanese further modified their plans. A torpedo attack was ruled out because the pilots had not yet acquired the requisite skills. It was decided that each of the 10 planes designated for the Panama Canal mission would carry one 1,760-pound bomb, the largest in the Navy's arsenal and similar to the one that sank the battleship USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor. In essence, the pilots would now also be on a suicide run because they were to crash their low-flying planes against the locks, thereby ensuring the success of the mission. The pilots quietly accepted the decision.

The departure date was set for mid-June. With continued training, the crews of the larger subs were able to catapult the first two planes off in about four minutes each. With a bit of a struggle, the third plane could be launched in 20 minutes, bringing the total launch time to just under half an hour, which constituted nearly a lifetime when surfaced and bobbing about in heavily patrolled enemy waters.

The Seiran pilots made practice bombing runs in Nanao Bay against a full-sized replica of the Gatun gates. The pilots by now knew what was a stake because the real attack would entail flying in low and fast without floats and with live bombs firmly attached to their planes. Debugging the planes was proving difficult, with nine men killed in crashes and another lost in a non-flying mishap. Training aboard the *I-14* proved particularly difficult because it was the last of the four Sen-toku subs to be commissioned and the crew had the least training time.

The fall of Iwo Jima in March 1945 and the American attack on Okinawa increased the angst among the Japanese planners as the Americans closed in on the home islands. The war had leaped ahead of the planners, and the slated attack on the Panama Canal was canceled. As noted, there were discussions about possibly using the planes in a surprise attack on San Francisco or Los Angles, but those, too, were put aside in favor of a plan to attack enemy carriers at Ulithi, a large staging area near the island of Truk in the Carolines that was used by the Americans.

The two large subs were to proceed toward Ulithi independently for safety and then rendezvous near the target and launch the attack in mid-August. The *I-14* and the *I-13* were to reach Japanese-held Truk, get their planes into the air, and report on conditions at Ulithi to ensure that the American carriers were present. The *I-13* never made it to Truk and was correctly presumed lost. The *I-14* arrived at Truk on August 4, and its planes flew over Ulithi the following day.

Shortly thereafter word reached the submarines that an atomic bomb had destroyed Hiroshima, and on August 15 the Japanese seamen heard the broadcast from the emperor ask-

ing his warriors to lay down their arms. Subsequent orders from the homeland were confusing, with one commanding all submarine captains to execute their predetermined missions. On August 16, the underwater aircraft carriers received explicit orders that their planned attack on Ulithi had been canceled just hours before the *I-401* was to launch its planes. The subs were ordered to Kure, and the *I-401* turned course toward its fateful encounter with Lt. Cmdr. Johnson and the *Segundo*.

The Japanese eventually surrendered the *I-401* and the other two remaining underwater aircraft carriers. Commander Ariizumi, the developer of the top secret subs, took his own life aboard the *I-401* and was quietly buried at sea by the crew. Before encountering the Americans, Nambu had meticusouly followed orders from Japan to raise the black flag of surrender and dispose of the vessel's weapons, including the planes that were catapulted into the sea. Logbooks, codebooks, and the like were loaded into weighted sacks and tossed overboard. The torpedoes were jettisoned, with one causing alarm as it circled back toward the large submarine before disappearing harmlessly into the depths.

The three submarines drew considerable attention when they made it back to Tokyo Bay. Many Americans initially believed the large hangars atop the subs had been designed to haul supplies to troops on distant islands despite the clearly observed catapults. The Americans did receive some assistance from the Japanese crews as they tried to comprehend the purpose of the extraordinary submarines, and by the end of September the Americans had taken the submarines out for cruises. However, none was taken underwater.

National Archives

During a brief ceremony aboard one of the aircraft carrier submarines, the Japanese naval ensign is lowered and replaced by the Stars and Stripes as the vessel is turned over to the control of the U.S. Navy after Japan's surrender.

The submarines were then taken to Hawaii for further study. The U.S. Navy gleaned what it could from them, and then all three were deliberately sunk by early June 1946 to keep them away from the prying eyes of the inquisitive Soviets.

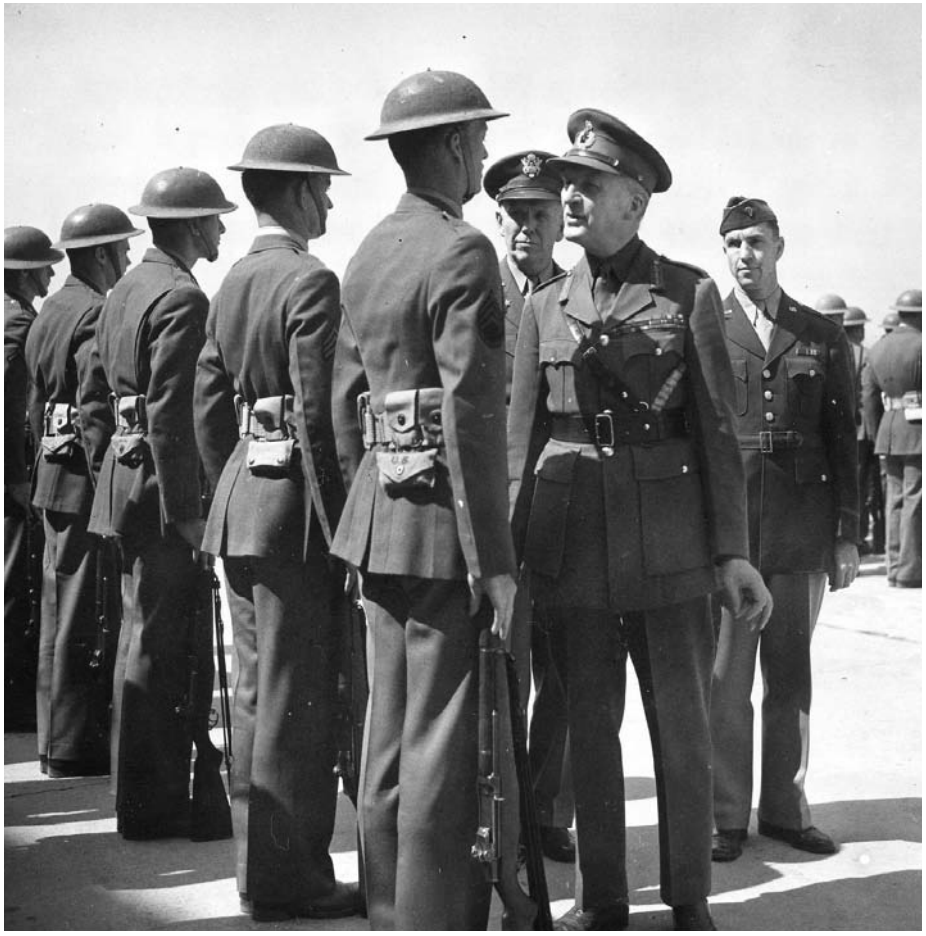
One of the Seirans did make it to the United States after the war and was eventually restored at an estimated cost of $1 million. It is now on display at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. Although the U.S. Navy was somewhat dismissive of the massive submarines, it did take a keen interest in the sound-protective coatings used on the vessels.

There is little doubt that the I-400s were the strategic predecessors to today's ballistic submarines, especially to the Regulus missile program begun about a decade after World War II that carried nuclear warheads inside waterproof deck hangars. In short, Yamamoto's plan lived on with "new and improved" versions that helped the United States win the Cold War.

Phil Zimmer is a former newspaper reporter and a U.S. Army veteran. He writes on World War II topics from Jamestown, New York.

By Jon Diamond

All Photos: National Archives



The Dilemma with Dill

Field Marshal Sir John Dill and Prime Minister Winston Churchill shared a contentious relationship on both sides of the Atlantic.

IN DESCRIBING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRITISH GENERAL SIR JOHN DILL and his political superior, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Dill's biographer, Alex Danchev, noted, "It was … an association strikingly lacking in empathy or understanding, etched in fundamental disagreement, and scarred by a mutual disaffection welling up at times into personal distaste."

Yet, in sharp contrast, at Dill's burial in Arlington National Cemetery on November 8, 1944, General George C. Marshall, the chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote to Dill's wife, "Officially the United States has suffered a heavy loss, and I personally have lost a dear friend, unique in my lifetime, and never to be out of my mind."

How was it possible for Churchill to be so contemptuous toward his Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) while General Marshall was so compassionate, having arranged for Dill's burial on American soil? A great disparity in temperament toward this British field marshal existed in the corridors of power that spanned the Atlantic.

Field Marshal Sir John Greer Dill was born on Christmas Day 1881 in County Armagh, Ireland. He attended Cheltenham College and then the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. After being commissioned as a second lieutenant, he served in South Africa in the 1st Battalion of the Leinster Regiment during the Boer War. After some adjutant positions, he became a captain in 1911 and attended the Staff College at Camberley in 1913. During the early months of World War I, he was the brigade major of the 25th Brigade, 8th Division at Neuve Chappelle, France. In 1916, he served as a major in the 55th Division, as well as with the Canadian Corps.

The next year, Dill was promoted to the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel while serving with the 37th Division. At the end of hostilities, he had risen to the temporary rank of brigadier and was Mentioned in Despatches eight times.

Dill returned to the Staff College for another posting after the war in 1919. After some command assignments to the Welsh Border Brigade and then the 2nd Infantry Brigade at Aldershot, he served as an instructor at the Imperial Defence College in London in 1926. According to Andrew Roberts, "Dill was Army Instructor there from 1926 to 1928. Alumni (such as General Claude Auchinleck, Admiral John Tovey, Canada's General Andrew McNaughton, and Air Chief Marshal P. Peirse) were both conscious of their exclusive status and loyal to Dill, their 'headmaster.'"

Following a posting to Quetta, India, with the rank of permanent brigadier, Dill was promoted to major general in 1930. Shortly thereafter, he returned to the Staff College at Camberley as its commandant from 1931 to 1934. From 1934 to 1936, he was the War Office's Director of Military Operations and Intelligence. Following that posting, he was appointed the General Officer Commanding (GOC), British Forces in Palestine in September 1936. Upon returning to England, from October 1937 to the outbreak of World War II, he was the GOC, Home Command at Aldershot.

While several junior officers were promoted over him, as was the custom of War Minister Leslie Hore-Belisha, Dill did secure the command of I Corps in France on the day war was declared and was promoted to general in October 1939. In late April 1940, before the Nazi blitzkrieg was unleashed on the West, he was appointed by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain as the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), and returned to London under the current CIGS General William Ironside.

During a tour of the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, British Field Marshal Sir John Dill talks with an American soldier as General George C. Marshall (left) looks on. School Commandant General Leven C. Allen is at right.

Within a few weeks of Churchill's being named prime minister, Dill replaced Ironside as CIGS on May 27, 1940. Fraser noted, "Dill had an unhappy time. He could not get on terms with Churchill or his methods of work. He had had a very painful period in his personal life [death of his wife]. He lived on his nerves and was exhausted. On 13th November he told [Field Marshal Sir Alan] Brooke that his departure from the office of CIGS was, he was sure, imminent. He made clear that he hoped Brooke would succeed him…."

On November 18, 1941, Dill received his field marshal's baton, and because he was to soon reach the age of 60 his retirement as CIGS was announced the next day. After helping Dill draft a press statement about his retirement as CIGS for the Ministry of Information, General John Kennedy, his subordinate at the War Office, noted that the CIGS seemed "very disturbed but I think not really unhappy and is glad that Brooke is taking over." General Sir Alan Brooke became Churchill's next CIGS on December 1, 1941.

Danchev, in chronicling Dill's tenure as CIGS from May 1940 to December 1941, stated that his achievement was considerable: "It was above all Dill who responded to the imperative of the moment and established the wearying but constructive adversarial relationship between Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff on which Brooke, blessed with new allies and augmented resources, so successfully built in 1942 for the duration of the war."

Dill wrote, "I live a very hectic life. Most of it is spent trying to prevent stupid things being done rather than in doing clever things! However, that is rather the normal life of a Chief of Staff."

Dill was rather audacious with his initiative to reinforce the Middle East with an armored brigade and other weapons as early as September 1940, at a time when invasion seemed imminent. This move enabled General Archibald Wavell to begin planning for his offensive against the Italian Tenth Army in North Africa, Operation Compass; however, it chronologically followed the tenuous consultations in August between Wavell and Churchill in London.

Clearly, Dill's support of Wavell, either personally or in war matériel, was not going to sit well with Churchill. Dill defended the Army as a whole and Wavell in particular from Churchill's "unjust" and "damaging" criticism, at one point threatening the prime minister with resignation. Dill regarded Churchill as an arch-meddler whose interventions had to be borne with as much patience as he could muster.

Soon after Dill became CIGS, Churchill began to have reservations about his appointment, especially as strategic setbacks accumulated and a seaborne invasion of Britain itself appeared imminent. Churchill even had a "cruel private nickname" for Dill, "Dilly-Dally," because his CIGS seemed to possess a "lack of fire."

To Churchill, Dill embodied the undesirable qualities of the War Office, namely being "hidebound, devoid of imagination, extravagant of manpower and slow." Even his responses to Churchill's razor-sharp tongue were tardy and often came to him later as afterthoughts of verbal sparring with the prime minister. Churchill's dismissive stance with Dill dated back to the summer of 1940, shortly after his appointment as CIGS.

As early as July 10, 1940, Chruchill wrote, "I do not think that we are having the help from General Dill which we hoped for at the time of his appointment…. He strikes me as being very tired, disheartened, and over-impressed with the might of Germany."

According to Danchev, this indictment "already incorporated one of Churchill's most characteristic and frequently reiterated criticisms: of a caution, a pessimism, amounting almost to defeatism…. He once stigmatized Dill, to his face in Cabinet, as 'the dead hand of inanition.'" Churchill's sparring with his CIGS would continue until the end of 1941. Churchill's private secretary, John Colville, noted, "By September 1941, he [Churchill] has now got his knife right into Dill and frequently disparages him."

Dill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden worked closely together at the War Office in their mission to garner Greek and Turkish support against the Axis at the close of 1940 and into the early months of 1941. Although Churchill was naturally anxious to help Greece if it could be done, he made it clear that if local commanders were against it, then the British government would not urge for it.

The prime minister sent Dill and Eden to take stock of such an endeavor. It was only after their visit to Athens and with the full endorsement of the top commanders in the Middle East that they both recommended the ill-fated Greek expedition that ensued. The humiliating failure of the Greek misadventure, followed by the loss of Crete to a Nazi airborne assault, not only weakened Britain's forces in the Western Desert at a crucial time, but also contributed to Churchill's disappointment with Dill.

Thus, despite the success of Operation Compass and Dill's enthusiastic offensive spirit for a Greek expeditionary force, what had mostly irked Churchill was Dill's strategic view of the Middle East during the spring of 1941. In his published memoirs, Churchill gave no reason for not reappointing Dill beyond his 60th birthday, but an earlier draft mentioned Dill's support for defending Singapore over Cairo during a row over grand strategy in May 1941.

Although Dill had supported the Greek expedition, he remained very dubious about the result and told his subordinate, Maj. Gen. Kennedy, "I suppose you realize we will lose the Middle East." While some of this pessimism was clearly Dill's nature, another aspect of it emanated from Dill's strategic view that Britain was committing scarce resources in the wrong theaters.

Throughout the late winter of 1940 and early spring of 1941, intelligence assessments continued to indicate that the Germans could and would attempt an invasion of the British Isles during the upcoming favorable Channel months as the only way to bring the war to a successful conclusion. In April, the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff reported that such an invasion was a Nazi priority, and despite mounting reports to the contrary, they felt a German attack on Russia was unlikely.

Parenthetically, Churchill was coming to the opposite conclusion at the same time. Dill, knowing how far from complete the reequipping and training of the British Army was, became more concerned that the Middle East commitment could expose Britain to a fatal blow by siphoning away resources that would be desperately needed should Hitler's postponed invasion of Britain finally be mounted.

On May 6, 1941, Dill offered Churchill an appreciation entitled, "The Relation of the Middle East to the Security of Great Britain." As noted in Churchill's war memoirs, Dill bluntly stated, "I believe we have gone to the limit, if not beyond it, in respect of the security of Great Britain." It was Dill's strategic view that Singapore, not the Middle East, ranked second to Britain itself on the empire's strategic priorities list.

To the contrary, Churchill was deeply committed to the Middle East and had always stressed its paramount importance to Britain's continued war effort. Churchill knew that without Middle East oil, especially if transatlantic shipments were to be threatened by the U-boat menace, the Royal Navy would not have sufficient fuel to continue and mechanized ground forces would grind to a halt.

British Field Marshal Sir John Dill, head of his country's military mission in Washington, and U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall forged a great friendship and working relationship.

Dill continued to sow ill will with the prime minister by his pronouncement, "The loss of Egypt would be a calamity which I do not regard as likely and one which we should not accept without a most desperate fight; but it would not end the war…. A successful invasion spells our final defeat…. It has been an accepted principle in our strategy that in the last resort the security of Singapore comes before that of Egypt."

Churchill's response to Dill showed the now extant disharmony between the prime minister and the CIGS: "I gather you would be prepared to face the loss of Egypt and the Nile Valley, together with the surrender or ruin of the Army of half a million we have concentrated there, rather that lose Singapore. I do not take that view, nor do I think the alternative is likely to present itself."

This major difference in opinion was "the nub of the strategic issue between them." Another major Churchill supporter, General Hastings Ismay, writing after the war, regarded Dill's May 1941 note on as "the most extraordinary document that has ever seen the light of day. Put yourself in the Prime Minister's place and ask yourself whether you would have much confidence in the strategical advice of a man who put his signature to that document!"

Dill refused to quit and defended himself against the charge that he was prepared to face the ruin of the Middle East and argued again for upgrading Singapore's defenses. He concluded on a defiant note: "I certainly intended to imply that if we reach a point when the maintenance of our position in Egypt would endanger either the United Kingdom or Singapore, we should hold fast to the two latter, even if this meant the loss of Egypt. That is my considered opinion."

Churchill was astonished by Dill's persistent stance. Dill wrote to Wavell in early 1942, when he was already posted to Washington, "It is odd that Winston should want me to represent him here…. We disagreed too often … among other things, on what we should do for the Far East."

It is ironic that after having taken such a contrary strategic stance for strengthening Singapore over the Middle Ease, Dill committed two mistakes that helped misshape the campaign in Malaya that began on December 8, 1941. First, he named the wrong person as commanding general there. Second, he failed to correct the worst of Churchill's misconceptions about the situation in the Far East. Dill's choice to command at Singapore was his longtime protégé, Lt. Gen. A.E. Percival, who has been forever consigned as a historical pariah for his surrender of Singapore.

Dill also failed to correct Churchill's worst misunderstanding about Singapore. The prime minister believed that it was a true fortress capable of all-around defense. But it was not and had never been intended to be.

In June 1941, after the defeat of Operation Battleaxe along the Egyptian frontier, Dill was not consulted and only learned of Wavell being replaced by Auchinleck when he received a copy of Churchill's cable to Cairo. The CIGS foolishly discussed with John Colville, Churchill's private secretary, that "Wavell had twice Auchinleck's brainpower and added that Wavell could write and would use his pen after the war." Quite naturally, Colville relayed his conversation with the CIGS to the prime minister, who with a flair of hubris replied that "he also planned to write after the war and offered to wager that he would outsell Wavell."

Dill wrote to Auchinleck after Wavell's dismissal, "The Commander in the field will always be subject to great and often undue pressure from his Government…. You should make it quite clear what risks are involved if a course of action is forced upon you, which from

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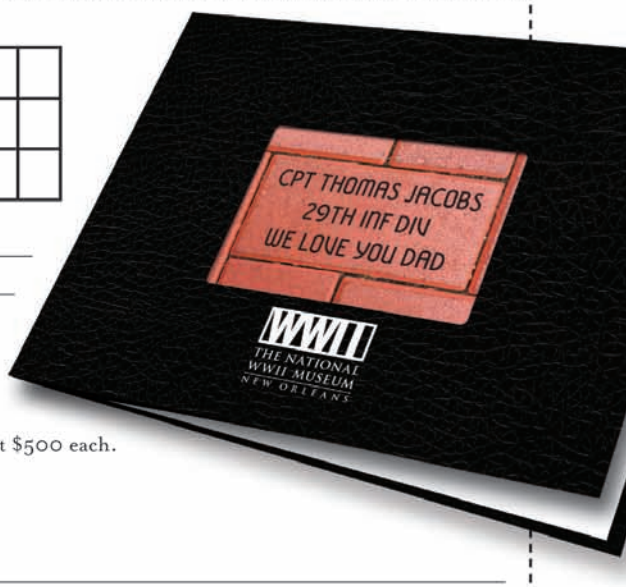

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a military point of view, is undesirable. You may even find it necessary, in the extreme case, to dissociate yourself from the consequences."

Ismay cautioned Auchinleck against "what he saw as Dill's great failing: it was a mistake to take lasting umbrage if his [Churchill's] criticisms were sometimes unduly harsh or even unjust." Unfortunately for Auchinleck's future as Middle East Theater commander, he chose to heed Dill's advice.

Although Churchill wanted him to be governor of Bombay upon his retirement as CIGS, Dill declined. Dill's successor, Brooke, persuaded Churchill on December 11, 1941, to take Dill to Washington with him for conferences with their new ally, the United States. Brooke wanted Dill to be the permanent head of the British military mission in Washington since all the other chiefs of service trusted and admired him.

Dill's intelligence, courtesy, and tactful integrity made an instant impression on the Americans. Also, Dill was not as abrasive as the new CIGS, Brooke. After the initial Washington Conference adjourned, Dill remained there as Churchill's representative and the Chief of the British Joint Staff Mission (JSM) Washington as well as the senior British member on the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) there.

After the Atlantic Charter Conference in August 1941, well before the entry of the United States into World War II, Dill wrote to Marshall, "I sincerely hope that we shall meet again before long. In the meantime we must keep each other in touch in the frank manner upon which we agreed."

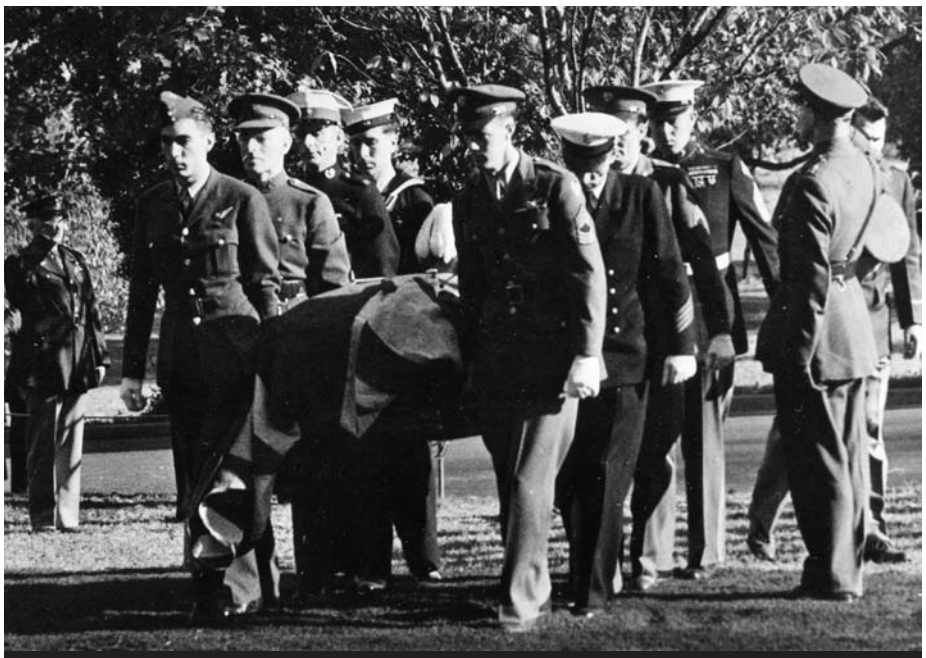
The bond struck between the two generals consisted of more than words. When Dill asked Marshall in November 1941 "for tanks to bolster British defences in face of a possible German attack through the Caucasus and Anatolia," the American chief of staff immediately agreed to supply the requested 350 medium tanks. This was not a trivial gesture since it represented three months of tank production that had been earmarked for the U.S. armored force.

Upon becoming the head of the British JSM in Washington, Dill represented the collective British chiefs of staff as the senior British member of the combined chiefs. Thus, on a daily basis he acted as principal spokesman for the British in his direct dealings with the Americans. When the combined chiefs did meet in person at Allied conferences, Dill joined them. So ubiquitous was Dill in the Allied leadership hierarchy after coming to Washington that even Churchill began to realize the "difficulties arising from Dill's vaguely defined outside influence and special relationship with me." Not only had Dill won over Marshall, but he also had the support of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his confidant, Harry Hopkins.

Dill and Marshall honored their commitment to candor. The Briton showed Marshall virtually all the Chiefs of Staff telegrams he received, including Churchill's "hot ones," which were immediately discussed by the two generals. Even in Dill's absence, these private messages were simply taken to Marshall's office by Dill's senior secretary rather as if Marshall were on the regular British distribution list.

Marshall stated, "Roosevelt would communicate with Churchill … and I would be wholly unaware of it," although it may have directly affected American military affairs. Marshall cunningly found out what Roosevelt and Churchill conferred about since Churchill would often relay Roosevelt's cables to Brooke, who, in turn, sent them on to Dill. Without either Churchill's or Brooke's knowledge, Dill dutifully showed them to Marshall and also had access to Roosevelt's often "Byzantine" machinations.

Marshall could not let on that he knew about the private dialogue between Roosevelt and Churchill since it would "endanger the position of his British spy, Sir John Dill." After the war,



The body of Field Marshal Sir John Dill is laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. Among the honorary pallbearers were General Marshall, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Ernest J. King, Air Corps Chief General Henry "Hap" Arnold, Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, and General Brehon Somervell, commander of Army Service Forces.

Marshall reminisced, "I had to be very careful that nobody knew this—no one in the War Department and certainly not the [British] Chiefs of Staff…. If the secret [of Dill's back-channel communication] came to light, Dill would be destroyed in a minute."

Under the impression that Dill was about to be recalled to London for being too pro-American, Marshall organized a campaign to convince Churchill of Dill's prestige on the other side of the Atlantic.

Dill died on November 4, 1944, in Washington, D.C., from aplastic anemia. Marshall wrote to Brooke, "We mourn with you the passing of a great and wise soldier, and a great gentleman." By a special act of Congress, Dill was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, a distinct honor for a non-American.

Marshall delivered the eulogy at Dill's funeral while a cousin of the American general noted afterward, "I have never seen so many men so visibly shaken by sadness. Marshall's face was truly stricken." To demonstrate the esteem that he had achieved from his allies in the United States, Dill was posthumously awarded the American Distinguished Service Medal, as well as an appreciation for his contribution to the war effort delivered through an unprecedented joint resolution of the United States Congress.

Jon Diamond practices medicine and resides in Hershey, Pennsylvania. A frequent contributor to WWII History, *his Osprey Command Series title on Field Marshal Archibald Wavell was published in 2012.*

By Patrick J. Chaisson

National Archives

The Big Sneak

A secret American airline flew some of World War II's most dangerous missions.

THE BUG WAS IN DEEP TROUBLE. ON A TOP-SECRET FLIGHT OVER OCCUPIED Norway, this ancient, war-weary C-47 Skytrain transport aircraft became the helpless target of German antiaircraft guns, all firing desperately to bring down the transport and its precious cargo. Her pilot maneuvered violently to dodge the curtain of flak, praying his decrepit airplane would hold together long enough to make an escape. It did.

Hours later, The Bug landed safely in Scotland, where Allied intelligence officers anxiously waited. Inside were the remains of a Nazi A-4 rocket, which had recently exploded over Sweden, the first real evidence of Germany's ballistic missile program that would shortly result in deadly V2 attacks across England.

The flight of The Bug, which took place on July 30, 1944, was one of hundreds conducted by a fleet of unmarked American military aircraft operating in and out of a supposedly neutral nation underneath the noses of the German Gestapo. The story of this secret airline is one of World War II's most amazing classified missions and sheds new light on the role of Sweden in the fight against Nazi Germany.

At the start of World War II, Sweden found itself in a precarious position. When Germany conquered its Scandinavian neighbors in 1940, the Swedes were able to remain carefully neutral. Sweden possessed many cultural and economic ties to the Third Reich, regularly trading Swedish timber and machine parts in exchange for German coal.

For a time, pro-Nazi elements in the Swedish government even permitted Wehrmacht troop trains to pass through Sweden on their way to and from Norway. This was a gross violation of Swedish neutrality but may have helped keep that country free from invasion by German forces.

As the fortunes of war began shifting in late 1942, Sweden began reconsidering its relationship with Hitler's Reich. Allied diplomats, formerly shunned, were now warmly received in Stockholm. And Sweden became a haven for those seeking to escape Germany's grasp on Scandinavia. Over 7,800 Danish Jews fled to safety in neutral Sweden after Adolf Hitler ordered their liquidation in 1943. Sweden also accepted over 70,000 Norwegian refugees, many of whom were of military age and determined to rid their homeland of the hated German occupiers.

The Norwegian government in exile, based in London, wanted those evacuees organized and trained as resistance fighters. Norwegian diplomats met with their Swedish counterparts in early 1943 to request Sweden's assistance in creating a force of "police troops." This quasi-military organization would consist of 13,000 Norwegian expatriates then living along the Swedish frontier. They also wanted Sweden to allow thousands of young Norwegian refugees to depart for military training in Great Britain. Lastly, Norwegian officials

SSPL / Getty Images

ABOVE: Colonel Bernt Balchen, photographed in June 1945, was already known as an adventurer when he was selected to lead the effort to make clandestine flights in and out of neutral Sweden. LEFT: Photographed during the rescue of the crew of a downed Boeing B-17 bomber on Greenland in 1943, the Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boat that carried Colonel Bernt Balchen to the scene sits on the ice. A team of dogs picks up the pace as it pulls a sled past the aircraft.

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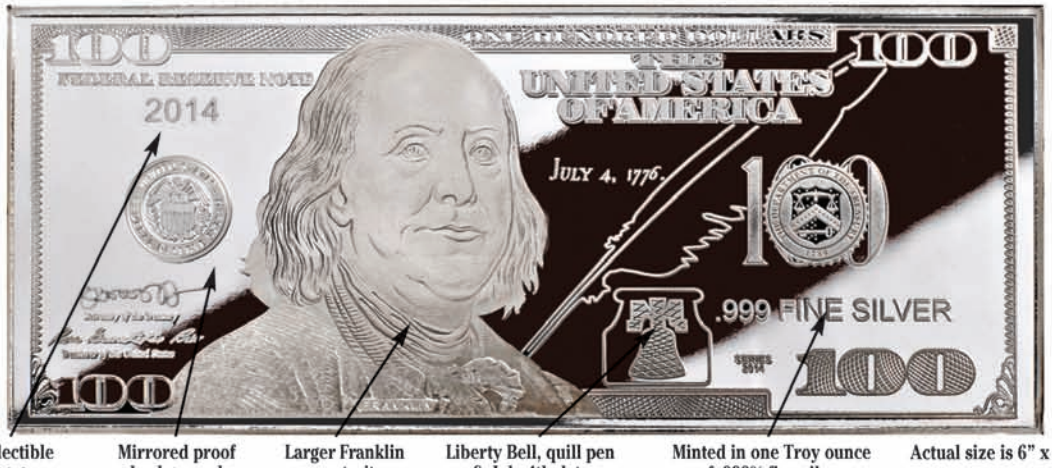

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ABOVE: Standing fourth from right, Colonel Bernt Balchen poses with the first "Sonnie" crew, dressed in civilian clothes, to land in Sweden. The B-24 Liberator bomber that completed the mission is seen in the background with its "V" for victory symbol emblazoned on the fuselage.
OPPOSITE: Prior to its departure with rescued Allied airmen and Norwegian resistance fighters aboard, a "Sonnie" B-24 Liberator sits on an airfield at Goteborg, Sweden, while a Swedish soldier stands guard.

asked the Swedes to aid by whatever means possible the nascent resistance movement then forming in German-occupied Norway.

Support for the Allies' cause was indeed growing throughout Sweden, but how could its leaders respond to the Norwegian pleas while maintaining at least an illusion of neutrality?

Compounding Sweden's difficulties was the growing number of American airmen landing their battle-damaged B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator bombers inside its territory. International law required Sweden to intern the men and equipment of belligerent nations ending up there. During the first years of the war only a few British and German pilots found themselves guests of the Swedish government and were usually repatriated within a short time on a one-for-one basis.

Starting in July 1943, however, U.S. bomber crews began seeking Swedish sanctuary rather than risk bailing out over occupied Europe. As the American bombing campaign intensified in 1944, so did the number of flak-riddled aircraft heading for Sweden. Some 131 Fortresses and Liberators eventually arrived there between 1943 and 1945.

At one point, over 1,400 American flyers were interned in resort camps, hotels, and private residences across Sweden. They were certainly better off than those aviators stuck in Luftwaffe prison camps, but General Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, commanding general of the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe, wanted these well-trained airmen back in the fight. Spaatz asked General Henry "Hap" Arnold, who commanded the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF), if a diplomatic solution could be arranged for the return of U.S. flight crews from Sweden.

Arnold approached Brig. Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan, the World War I combat hero then running Washington's Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Donovan promised his full cooperation, and soon the OSS field office in Stockholm began work to open talks with Sweden for the release of American servicemen interned there.

These negotiations succeeded; Sweden agreed to repatriate all the U.S. flyers it was currently holding, provided the Allies came and got them. There were other conditions. No military aircraft or crews could be used, and only three flights per each 24-hour period were allowed. Sweden also granted permission for Norwegian refugees to leave for military training in the United Kingdom so long as civilian airliners transported them out of the country.

Curiously, commercial air service between Great Britain and Sweden continued to operate despite the war. The British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) ran a regular weekly route between Stockholm and London using two twin-engined Lockheed Lodestars. These airliners could seat eight passengers and a small amount of cargo—clearly inadequate for what the Americans had in mind.

Arnold and Donovan agreed the OSS would need to set up its own air courier service with long-range bomber aircraft painted over and marked to resemble commercial aircraft. Their U.S. Army crews were to operate undercover as the fictitious American Air Transport Service, so civilian passports and clothing had to be obtained as well.

The Liberator-equipped 801st Bomb Group, nicknamed "The Carpetbaggers," had long experience working with OSS operatives in France, and its crews knew how to keep a secret. These special operations airmen were perfect for the Swedish project, but who would lead them?

Enter Colonel Bernt Balchen. This Norwegian-born adventurer was already a legend in the realm of polar exploration. A world-renowned arctic aviator, Balchen had flown over both poles with the likes of Richard Byrd and Roald Amundsen before becoming an American citizen and joining the Air Corps. He spoke English, Norwegian, Swedish, and German and knew almost everyone worth knowing in Scandinavia. Balchen was universally regarded as a courageous, charismatic airman.

His last assignment, just concluded, was the establishment of an air-sea rescue operation across stormy Greenland. Balchen's uncanny ability to read the erratic arctic weather, as well as his unparalleled skill as a pilot, resulted in the safe recovery of many U.S. flight crews who had crash landed on the unforgiving Greenland icecap.

In short, Bernt Balchen was the man to command this high-risk mission. On January 27, 1944, General Spaatz gave Balchen his marching orders: operate a fleet of unarmed planes to and from a neutral nation without fighter protection, evacuate Norwegian resistance fighters and interned Allied airmen, carry secret cargo as required by the OSS, and accomplish all this without being caught by the Germans.

In his heavily accented English, Balchen responded: "Ve do it!"

Balchen called his project Operation Sonnie in honor of the Norwegian figure skater and actress Sonja Heine, whom he greatly admired. He set up shop at the Royal Air Force base in Leuchars, Scotland, and then quietly began gathering his planes and flight crews.

First to arrive were five tired B-24D Liberators. No longer combat worthy, these aircraft were transferred to the European Division of the USAAF Air Transport Command for extensive modification. Each had its bomb bays sealed, bench seats for 35 passengers installed, all defensive armament and turrets removed,

and special navigational equipment put in for the long flight to Sweden. Every B-24 was also painted in a greyish green color and marked with false British commercial registration codes. No national insignia was visible to indicate they were American airplanes.

In February, seven Carpetbagger flight crews from the 801st Bomb Group reported for duty at Leuchars. Accustomed to not asking questions, they happily accompanied Colonel Balchen to Selfridge's department store in London to purchase business attire to wear in Sweden. The airmen also obtained U.S. passports and visas that listed their occupations as civilian airline pilots.

The Carpetbaggers were excited to work with Bert Balchen, and travel to Sweden also intrigued them. But then Balchen explained that parachutes were not to be worn as the flyers, dressed in civilian clothes, would be executed as spies if the Germans captured them.

By March 1, Balchen's aircraft and crews were ready to begin operations. As this was a supposedly nonmilitary courier service, though, they first required flight clearance from the British Foreign Ministry. Colonel Balchen submitted the paperwork, but in one of those unfortunate mix-ups that so often plague covert operations, the United Kingdom refused permission for his planes to fly in or out of British airspace.

As mentioned previously, BOAC was already running air service between the United Kingdom and Stockholm. The airline received a fee for every Allied airman or Norwegian refugee flown out of Sweden and did not welcome the loss of revenue occasioned by this rival American Air Transport Service. Yielding to pressure from BOAC, Foreign Ministry officials denied Balchen's clearance requests.

British commercial air policy had grounded Operation Sonnie.

Fuming over this bureaucratic snag, Colonel Balchen approached Trygve Lie, then the foreign minister of the Norwegian government in exile, with his problem. Minister Lie passed the issue on to Norway's King Haakon at a luncheon attended by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. King Haakon whispered a few words into Mr. Churchill's ear, and two days later Sonnie received all the necessary approvals.

Poor weather was forecast for occupied Norway on March 31, 1944. This suited Bernt Balchen, who would pilot the first green-painted B-24 to land at Bromma Airfield outside Stockholm that night. The 800-mile flight occurred without incident, and Balchen's strange looking aircraft was met at the field by Swedish Air Ministry officials, national police, and OSS operatives.

Author's Collection

After parking their Liberator in a well-guarded corner of the airport, Balchen's crew—dressed in suits and ties and carrying civilian identification—cleared customs in time for a breakfast of steak and eggs (items almost unobtainable in wartime Britain) at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm. While the other Americans were enjoying a second helping of fresh orange juice and buttered rolls, Colonel Balchen excused himself. He had much to coordinate.

A call to the chief of the Swedish Criminological Institute secured valuable information on German espionage activities in Sweden. Balchen then visited the heads of the Swedish Air Ministry, Foreign Office, and Swedish Air Force, all of whom were prewar friends and delighted to extend their cooperation.

The aviator also met with Norwegian Underground leaders headquartered in Sweden. They provided him with accurate locations of all Luftwaffe interceptor bases and flak batteries in occupied Norway. Resistance fighters also gave Balchen classified radio codes in case his aircraft needed to communicate with their teams on the ground.

To mislead Nazi spies, Balchen's team prepared two sets of flight plans—one that German agents in Stockholm could obtain and use to alert antiaircraft units in Norway—and another flight plan, filed secretly with the Swedish Civil Aeronautical Authority, that contained their planes' real routes.

The return trip two days later came off without a hitch. Balchen's plane returned to Leuchars carrying three dozen Norwegian Resistance members, the first of 3,000 recruits to receive military training in England before returning home to fight with the underground. Operation Sonnie was off to a good start.

Before long, 250 USAAF mechanics and support personnel arrived in Sweden masquerading as civilian technicians. Balchen rented apartment houses for them and also set up a command post at the BOAC terminal in Bromma. The Swedes assisted by moving internees and Norwegian refugees to nearby camps prior to pickup.

The presence in Stockholm of this famous polar explorer and his American compatriots could not be kept secret from the Gestapo for long. Balchen was followed everywhere he went in Sweden's capital city, and the Sonnie crews routinely discovered that their hotel rooms had been searched while they were away.

Yet there were also advantages to the German presence in Sweden. When one of Balchen's B-24s cracked an engine cylinder on the ground at Bromma, he jokingly approached a Swedish friend about buying one from the Germans. The helpful Swede telephoned Berlin and two days later a Lufthansa Ju-52 transport obligingly delivered the repair part—scavenged from a Liberator downed over Europe—so American mechanics could get their clandestine courier plane flying again that night.

After anxious Swedish officials complained about U.S. aircraft wearing British civil registration markings, Sonnie ground crews merely painted them over with equally bogus American codes. For example, the B-24 registered as "G-AFYO" when it landed at Bromma Airfield on April 19, 1944, departed Sweden a day later

with "NC-18649" painted on its fuselage. This satisfied the Swedes, and operations continued.

Whenever weather conditions allowed, Balchen's modified airliners made the trip to Scotland carrying up to 40 Norwegian refugees, diplomatic couriers, and returning American aircrews per flight. Captain David Schreiner, a pilot with Operation Sonnie, recalled his passengers' discomfort: "It was anything but a luxury ride for those boys," he said. "I just packed them in like sardines but nobody complained."

Before long, OSS officials began asking if the Sonnie planes could deliver cargo to the Norwegian Underground then organizing in Sweden. Disguised as medical supplies, boxes of plastic explosives, detonators, and other implements of sabotage started arriving inside the converted Liberators; Swedish police looked the other way.

Yet, the growing resistance movement needed more help. Learning the Royal Air Force was reluctant to fly airdrop missions over Norway during the summer months, Balchen asked OSS officers if his team could take on the job. Thus was born Operation Ball, named for the B-24 ball turret that had to be removed for these resupply drops.

Unlike Sonnie, Operation Ball was flown by armed, U.S.-marked airplanes. A second set of Liberators from the Carpetbaggers arrived at Leuchars, where they were painted in a nonreflective black scheme. Instead of the ball turret, a padded "Joe-hole" (OSS agents were all nicknamed "Joe") was installed for delivering resistance fighters and OSS operatives.

Ball missions tested the B-24s' long-range endurance, as well as their crews' arctic navigational skills. A typical sortie would reach far into occupied Norway at a time of the year when there is perpetual daylight, locate the drop zone, and then deliver a payload of equipment, munitions, and OSS Joes before returning home to Scotland. These flights never entered Swedish airspace.

The first Ball mission took place on June 22, 1944. True to form, Balchen flew this one personally. His B-24 successfully dropped 20 supply canisters to resistance fighters despite the presence of nearby German flak guns. Thanks to the underground, Balchen's aviators knew all their enemy's recognition codes and flashed them whenever Luftwaffe searchlights threatened.

Bernt Balchen's crews made 161 Project Ball flights from June to September 1944. The Norwegian-American colonel piloted 39 of these runs himself. One of Balchen's gunners, A.J. Sharpe, described his commander thusly: "I still recall him as the best flyer, the best navigator, and the most deadly soldier I ever knew. Balchen had a built-in compass in his brain which worked when the regular compass went crazy. We did not fly under cover of darkness, for that far north it doesn't get dark in July and August. We flew at fifty foot altitudes and ducked in and out of fjords. Canisters were dropped at [approximately] 100 feet and agents at 400."

On June 13, 1944, an A-4 rocket (precursor to the deadly V2) exploded over Bäckebo in southern Sweden. After examining the fragments closely themselves, Swedish Air Ministry officials invited the Allies to take the recovered "air torpedo" (code name for the A-4) back to Great Britain. Unfortunately, the rocket was too big to fit into a Sonnie B-24.

As a cranky old Air Transportation Command C-47 made its way to Sweden, Gestapo agents scoured the countryside in search of their missing missile. German air defense units in Norway also went on high alert for any Allied transport plane that might be carrying the A-4 to England. Despite the Nazis' best efforts, The Bug managed to sneak this intelligence gold mine out of Sweden and into the custody of British analysts.

The summer of 1944 brought with it news of great Allied victories, which caused Sweden's pretense at neutrality to fade. The sight of uni-

formed Americans became a common one on the streets of Stockholm as Colonel Balchen entered the next phase of his secret Scandinavian assignment—the liberation of Norway. With the Swedes' cooperation, Balchen was busier than ever.

Operation Where and When transported tons of cargo and over 1,400 resistance fighters organized as police troops from training centers in Sweden into occupied Norway. For this project Balchen used 10 USAAF-marked and -crewed C-47 transports operating out of Kallax Airfield in northern Sweden to fly these soldiers across the border to Kirkennes, Norway. Swedish fighters even escorted his transports whenever possible.

The SEPALS Project, Balchen's other clandestine operation, employed Carpetbagger B-24s from Leuchars to drop saboteurs and supplies deep behind enemy lines. One such mission put 15 OSS Joes led by future CIA director William Colby down near Jaevsjo, Norway, on March 22, 1945. Their job was to destroy a vital rail bridge, which they managed to accomplish only after an arduous 12-day ski trek across mountainous terrain while dodging German patrols and collaborators the entire time.

At the end of hostilities, Balchen's work still was not done. Some 70,000 starving Soviet prisoners had been abandoned by the Germans in Norway, so his C-47s provided rations and medical supplies until the Soviets could be repatriated. And Sonnie flights continued until June 1945, when the last American internees were returned from Sweden.

By all measures, these air operations had achieved superb results. Operation Sonnie transported some 4,304 evacuees from Sweden to the United Kingdom over a 13-month period. Ball flew its 161 resupply sorties throughout the summer of 1944 in support of Norwegian Resistance fighters. Balchen's SEPALS project delivered 50 OSS Joes and 11,040 pounds of sabotage equipment from December 1944 to the end of the war. The 572 missions flown during Operation Where and When moved 1,442 Norwegian ski troops, tons of provisions, and an entire field hospital under the enemy's noses to landing fields in occupied Norway.

Balanced against these successes was a total of three aircraft lost. Though none were destroyed by enemy fire, two B-24s did crash in Scandinavia as a result of mechanical failure. A third Liberator was accidentally shot down by the Soviets after being forced to divert to Murmansk during a Ball airdrop mission. Eighteen U.S. airmen perished in these mishaps.

Colonel Bernt Balchen was at the controls of the first American aircraft to land in Norway following Germany's surrender. He could not help but smile as Luftwaffe ground crewmen efficiently parked his C-47 transport at Bodø Airport next to a line of German Junkers Ju-88 fighter bombers and Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters. But Balchen, delivering a load of sorely needed medical supplies, could not dwell for long on such an ironic scene.

Norway, the land of his birth, was once again free. No one had done more to make this possible than Colonel Bernt Balchen and his secret air force. Accomplishing what others deemed impossible, this intrepid group of aviators flew some of World War II's most hazardous missions over forbidding terrain—often in terrible weather and unable to defend themselves against enemy interceptors.

Today, their legacy lives on in the U.S. Air Force's Special Operations Command (AFSOC), whose modern transport planes quietly conduct highly classified operations across Afghanistan and many other global hot spots. The AFSOC motto "Any Time Any Place" is a slogan Bert Balchen would surely have appreciated.

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer who writes from his home in Scotia, New York.

By Jason Antonio

Silver Screen Surprise

A young Canadian soldier found himself in a feature film after joining the Army.

NORVALD FLAATEN NEVER EXPECTED HE WOULD APPEAR IN A MOVIE WHEN HE signed up with the Canadian Army during World War II, but the subject of the movie and what he had to do was too good to pass up.

The film was called *Commandos Strike at Dawn* and was being produced on the Heals Rifle Range in Saanich, British Columbia. The story was about a gentle widower (not Norvald), who, after seeing atrocities committed by the Nazis in his peaceful Norwegian fishing village, escapes to Britain and returns later leading a commando force against the oppressors.

The commando force would include soldiers from Britain, with real Canadian soldiers acting as extras, leading the charge in routing the Nazi occupiers and recapturing the small Norwegian village.

The director had a special job for Norvald in the movie. The Canadian would appear as one of the hundreds of extra commandos taking part in the assault. However, he would also appear at the end of the movie for a few seconds and complete an important task. The director instructed Norvald in how he wanted the scene to play out.

"He said, 'At the end of this movie, I want you to pull down the swastika [flag]. Pull it down roughly, ruffle it up and throw it on the ground. Then pick up the Norwegian flag, unfold it very carefully, tie it on to the rope of the flagpole and hoist it up slowly. While you're doing this, I will have the camera on you taking your picture.'"

So Norvald did as he was instructed and rehearsed the shot a few times to get it as perfect as possible. After completing his assignment, it was back to Camp Colwood for more training.

Commandos Strike at Dawn was released to the public on January 27, 1943, across Canada and the United States and in England later that year. By then, Norvald's training had shifted 860 miles east to Regina, Saskatchewan, where he had enlisted in 1941. Walking through downtown Regina while on a leave, Norvald came across the movie in a theater and stepped in to watch the film and witness his few seconds of fame.

"I was given a key role in this movie, and I felt quite honored by that," the Canadian veteran said proudly, adding that taking part in the movie was one of the highlights of his Army training. "I don't know why I got the role, but maybe it's because I am of Norwegian descent and the sergeant major knew this. He, too, was of Norwegian descent."

Norvald Scotty Lystrup Flaaten was born on March 25, 1920, in Glenwood, Minnesota, the second of six children born to Nels and Annie Flaaten. Nels was originally from Norway and in 1902 moved to the United States, where he met Annie and worked on her father's farm for a short time. The two were married in 1917 and later moved to Canada, as Nels had purchased a piece of land years earlier, cultivated it, and started a homestead. The homestead and farm were located in southeast Saskatchewan, near the small hamlet of Grassdale, about 62 miles southeast of Regina.

During a trip to see family in Glenwood, Norvald was born. Once the family was back home on the farm, Norvald went to a

A poster for Commandos Strike At Dawn, a feature film in which Norvald Flaaten played a brief but dramatic role.

Following a heavy engagement with German troops, Canadian soldiers assist a wounded comrade to an aid station behind the lines. Norvald Flaaten saw combat and cinema duty during World War II.

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one-room country school until the ninth grade. By that point, since he was the oldest boy in the family, he was needed on the farm to milk cows and look after the general day-to-day affairs of a farming family. Norvald and his family were able to just get by during the long decade of the "Dirty '30s," or the "Hungry '30s" as the Flaatens came to know it. During this period Norvald realized farming was not for him.

After war broke out in 1939, he waited another two years before deciding it was time to get off the farm. On August 27, 1941, at the age of 21, Norvald was driven to the train station near Grassdale by his father and brother. He jumped on a train that ended up taking him to the initial training center in Regina.

"We did all kinds of medical tests, blood tests and x-rays. And the doctors—they were called medical officers—determined if we were fit for Army training. I was stationed in Regina for two months and took my basic training there from September through October 1941. Then I moved on to Currie Barracks in Calgary."

"Advanced training included quite a bit, [such as] classroom instruction," Flaaten remembered. "The subject I loved most was map reading. I loved Calgary. We could see out to the foothills and the Rockies, and I spent my first Christmas away from home in Calgary. Then in January of the next year [1942] we moved on to Burrard Barracks in Vancouver, [British Columbia].

From Vancouver the soldiers moved on to Vancouver Island and Colwood Camp, just west of Victoria. It was during this time that Norvald made his brief big screen appearance. A year later the soldiers finally deployed to an area of possible contact with the enemy. The scene was Kiska, a small island in the Aleutian chain off the coast of Alaska. The Japanese had invaded Kiska on June 6, 1942, and the neighboring island of Attu the next day.

For this excursion, Norvald was attached to the Rocky Mountain Rangers battalion, part of the 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 6th Canadian Infantry Division. This group was made up of roughly 4,800 to 5,300 Canadian soldiers. The battalion left Vancouver Island on July 12, 1943, and landed on Kiska on August 15.

"Lo and behold, somebody had warned the Japanese we were coming and they made their escape before we arrived," Norvald recalled. "They lived underground in most places on Kiska. And we went underground where they had lived and found some kettles of rice on the stoves, which they had been boiling. And this rice was still lukewarm. So you can tell how close we were to meeting up with the Japanese."

"It was quite depressing up there because there was no civilization," said Norvald. "All we saw was blue fox and some hawks, crows and eagles flying by. So we spent six months in desolation. We were happy when the Americans brought some movies up. We could actually see people moving and playing in the movies. And that was very, very cheerful."

ABOVE: Shown with his garrison cap at a rakish angle, young Norvald Flaaten left home for adventure and found himself in a feature film during his service with the Canadian Army in World War II. BELOW: Norvald Flaaten fondly remembered his moment of fame during the shooting of a feature film. Flaaten provided a dramatic flourish at the end of the movie, tearing down the Nazi flag.

After their six-month stay on Kiska battling strong winds and inclement weather, in January 1944 the Canadians sailed back to Victoria, where they then proceeded to Vernon, B.C. Here they were subjected to a "very strenuous" commando training course. This included going through caves, trenches, and underground tunnels filled with tear gas. They also walked on a cable 50 feet above a wide body of water while clinging onto a rope overhead.

"What a relief to reach the other side of the water," Norvald added with a chuckle.

Flaaten was also privileged to take a driver mechanic course, which included half- and three-quarter-ton trucks, Bren gun carriers, tanks, and other types of vehicles. Since he received the title of driver mechanic, he was eligible for trades pay and was considered a tradesman, the equivalent of a corporal in the army. He held this title until the end of the war.

From Vernon, Norvald and the rest of his unit traveled east to Ontario and then on to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the Atlantic coast. The troopship *Queen Mary* then crossed the Atlantic Ocean and landed in Rayburn, England, on May 25, 1944. There the troops received more field training and joined newly assigned battalions.

Norvald joined the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, which was part of the 6th Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division. The two sister regiments of the brigade included Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal and the South Saskatchewan Regiment. Nearly two weeks later, the D-Day landings took place in Normandy.

The Queen's Own did not take part in the initial D-Day landings, but instead landed a month later on July 7, 1944, at Graye-sur-Mer, France. From then until the end of the war, the Highlanders faced the difficult task of attacking and destroying German strongholds along the coast of France and up into Belgium, Holland, and finally into Germany.

Upon landing, Norvald was immediately placed in the front lines as a Bren gun carrier driver. "We hit Normandy. It was dark in the evening and rained all night.... We couldn't put the lights on the carriers because the enemy might spot us and bomb us. The way we traveled was by using the differential on the tails of the vehicles, which were painted in bright white. The motorcycle went ahead with an officer and we followed behind.

"I kept my eyes on the white differential ahead of me and that's how I stayed on the road," Norvald continued. "When the morning came, we were so happy to see some French women out on the road to meet us, as they had a hot pot of coffee. That sure was a Godsave."

Besides driving a Bren gun carrier, Norvald was also assigned to the three-inch mortar platoon as part of the support headquarters company. Each carrier had a crew of four to five men along with the mortar, which fired 10-pound bombs. When they had to stop and fight, one soldier would pick up the 50-pound base plate and set it on the ground, a second would insert the barrel into the plate, and a third would set up the tripod just under the barrel.

"We would fire when the platoon commander said fire. We kept dropping the bombs into

the barrel, and it would fire for three-quarters of a mile, over a hill, on trenches, at installations, or wherever the enemy was embedded," Norvald explained. "I remember the times when we fired so hard and fast that the barrels of our mortars got red hot. In that instance the platoon commander had to say stop fire, because the enemy were flying overhead and they would spot these red barrels and drop bombs on us. We were bombed, but fortunately I didn't get hit."

There were a couple of close encounters with enemy fire. Once Norvald and eight men from his company were standing in a stairwell leading to the basement of a house, and because they were all quite tired, had taken refuge there for a while. Norvald thought, "Well, what's the use of standing here when there is a newly dug trench a few feet away?" so he took some blankets and went to sleep in the trench.

When he awoke the next morning, he discovered an antitank shell had made a hole in the side of his Bren gun carrier, while his Bren gun, which had been close by, had been hit by an artillery shell and smashed to pieces. His comrades were still in the stairwell and pointed out that he had been below ground when the shelling had started. "They were OK, they were safe. They had enough sense to stay there until the shelling and bombing was over."

Canadian soldiers clear a group of buildings on the outskirts of a town in France. Canadian troops were involved in heavy fighting with Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery's 21st Army Group during the Normandy campaign and beyond.

On another occasion, Norvald's company had taken refuge in a vacant farm house, where they came upon some porridge which they decided to eat for breakfast. Unfortunately, they had no milk to put on it, but they spotted a herd of dairy cattle grazing in a field nearby. Since Norvald was familiar with milking cows, he volunteered to go out with a four-liter pail to get some milk.

"I had milked half the pail when a colt came over and scared the cow away, and that was the end of my milking," he continued. "I had enough milk, so I picked up the pail and started

toward the house. I had walked about 500 yards back to the house when a large shell landed and exploded right where I had been sitting. They were aiming at me because they had seen me and thought they could get rid of the cattle and soldiers. So I have loved horses ever since. That was a good colt."

After finishing up in Normandy, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, along with the rest of the Canadian Army fighting in France, turned northeast and headed into Belgium and later Holland. Hand-to-hand fighting took place for Norvald and others in Belgium, while they also continued to shell the Germans who were dug in in Holland.

"The Germans had invented a 'moaning Minnie,' and that shell was designed to demoralize the Allied troops," Norvald recalled. "They went over our heads and to either side. Whooooooo. What a screech! Boy we really hated the sound of those moaning Minnies. [But] we finally managed to get through Holland."

After spending Christmas 1944 in Amersfoort, Holland, the Canadians then cleared out the rest of Holland and moved into Germany itself. Norvald had a few more close calls while fighting through heavy forests, which the Germans continuously shelled as the Allies advanced. Norvald pointed out that it was so dark in some places that he could not even see a few feet ahead. The soldiers had to keep their hands up in front of them to avoid being hit in the face by low-hanging branches.

"It was very scary to be in the forest. We just marched ahead. There was no retreat, [just] keep going," Norvald recalled. "Prayed to God to get us through there safe. We lived in trenches underground, me and some of my buddies. We ate underground and existed underground for a lot of the time that we were in the front lines."

The Canadians later entered the city of Oldenburg, Germany, where on May 5, 1945, they received the news the war was over and that the armistice would be declared on May 8. The end of the war was a time of rejoicing. When the officers made the announcement, Norvald was one of the more fortunate ones to hear it right away. However, there were still some Canadian troops fighting who did not hear the announcement until four or five days later. A number were killed during that period.

"I can remember distinctly that there were four soldiers from my company riding in a quarter-ton truck, and these four soldiers were all killed and that was after the ceasefire," Norvald recalled. "They died by a mine or roadside bomb, like what they use now in Afghanistan. They hit a roadside bomb and it

exploded."

After spending a few more months in Holland and Germany doing garrison duty, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders began to sail back to Canada, arriving on November 22, 1945. After receiving leave to go home for Christmas, Norvald was finally discharged from the Army in Regina, where he had originally enlisted, on January 24, 1946.

For his efforts in the war, Norvald received the Volunteer Medal and Clasp, the Defence of Britain Star, the France and Germany Star, and the European King George VI medal.

Although he did not take part in the 1942 Dieppe raid, Norvald did have the opportunity to travel to that city in August 1992, with 40 other veterans for the 50th anniversary of the raid. While passing through the city of Kent, England, during the tour, many of the men had the opportunity to shake hands with the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip. The Duke had arranged to be there at a specific time, so the people in charge told Norvald and the others they were to go into one particular building, where they would be meet the man.

"The Duke of Edinburgh made it a point to walk around the building and shake hands with each individual soldier," recalled Norvald. "One question he asked each of us was what battalion or regiment we served with. He came to me and said, 'What regiment were you in?' I said, 'I am in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada.'

"He said, 'Oh my goodness, that's my wife's regiment.' He shook my hand and squeezed a bit harder than I expected him to do. I didn't know if he was going to let go. He added, 'It was nice to meet you and that you serve in my wife's battalion.' So he went on to the other soldiers. When I told my family about this, they were both surprised and thrilled that I had met the Duke of Edinburgh."

Norvald Flaaten lived in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, with Helen, his wife of 60 years. He passed away in October 2011 after complications from a fall. Even into his 90s, he spoke to students about his experiences and wrote articles for medical journals. He also contributed to The Memory Project, an initiative designed to capture Canadian veterans' experiences through pictures, written word, and audio interviews. To listen to Norvald discuss his experiences, visit thememoryproject.com/home.aspx and type "Norvald Flaaten" into the search bar.

First-time contributor Jason Antonio of Regina, Saskatchewan, is an award-winning freelance journalist with a passion for history.

MICHAEL J. DALY RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR ACTION DURING THE OVERLOOKED CAMPAIGN IN THE COLMAR POCKET IN EARLY 1945.

BY STEPHEN J. OCHS, PH.D.

Path of Hero

ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 18, 1945, amid street fighting in rubble-strewn Nuremberg, Germany, 20-year-old U.S. Army Captain Michael J. Daly, who had not slept in 24 hours and was running on pure adrenalin, had one overriding goal in mind: to protect his men.

Pinned down by enemy fire, Daly ordered them to stay put and then went forward alone, "a long-tall boy (6-3)," according to a Mississippi machine gunner in Daly's company, "running stooped-over with his carbine." Daly engaged in four single-handed fire fights, killing 15 Germans, silencing three enemy machine guns, and wiping out an entire enemy patrol.

For his conspicuous "gallantry and intrepidity" that day, Michael Daly was later awarded the Medal of Honor by President Harry Truman—one of 467 bestowed for action during World War II, 60 percent of them posthumously. Indeed, a member of the armed forces cannot receive the Medal of Honor for simply acting under orders, no matter how bravely he or she executes them. Michael Daly was a member of that select group.

Daly's heroism was not a one-time occurrence. Rather, it represented the culmination of 11 months of selflessly courageous acts from June 6, 1944, when he landed at Omaha Beach, to April 19, 1945, when he suffered a near fatal wound in Nuremberg. Daly served in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) first as an enlisted man in the 18th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Division, and then as an officer in the 15th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Division. During that time, he was awarded two Purple Hearts, the Bronze Star with V attachment for valor, three Silver Stars for valor, and the Medal of Honor. He also advanced in rank from private to captain, and from assistant squad leader to company commander. He embodied a quality absolutely essential to the ultimate triumph of Allied arms: the initiative to close with and aggressively engage the enemy. He did all of this before the age of 21 and on the heels of hell-raising teenage hijinks that led to his dismissal from Portsmouth Priory School and then the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Daly's path to redemption for his West Point fiasco and other teenage failings would pass through the crucible of an often overlooked but nev-

An American machine gunner sprints for cover while carrying his Browning .30-caliber machine gun as an ammunition carrier follows, his rifle slung across his back. This photo was taken in the French arrondissement of Sarreguemines at the height of the fighting in the Colmar Pocket during early February 1945.

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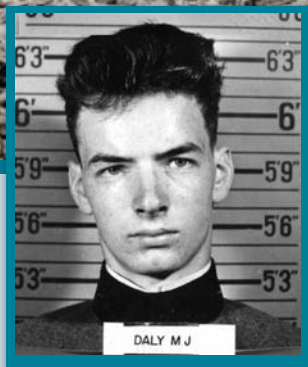

A photo of Army Captain Michael J. Daly taken during his plebe year at West Point presents the image of a young man with great potential.

ertheless brutal campaign on the Alsatian plain in eastern France. Its purpose was to close a German salient west of the Rhine River centered on the Alsatian city of Colmar, France, and known as the Colmar Pocket. The Battle of the Colmar Pocket would last from January 20, 1945, to February 9, 1945. Daly's development as an officer in the 15th Infantry Regiment during the Colmar campaign previewed his extraordinary actions later in Nuremberg and provided a prism through which to view the closing months of the war in an often forgotten part of the European Theater.

Tall and handsome, Michael Daly came from a privileged, lace curtain, Irish Catholic Connecticut family. His father, Paul G. Daly (known by family and neighbors as "the Major") cultivated the air of a country squire as he practiced law in New York City and raised steeplechase horses on his Connecticut farm. Paul Daly was also a highly decorated officer in World War I, having received the World War I equivalent of the Silver Star, the Distinguished Service Cross, and nomination for the Medal of Honor, among other commendations. The elder Daly sought to inculcate in his son values of courage, patriotism, selflessness, and leadership. He regaled young Michael with stories drawn from military history and from legends and myths. Mike also learned from his father how to manage fear. Like his father, Mike developed a love for riding horses and eventually competed in the steeplechase. Paul and Mike took long horseback rides together, and horsemanship became an arena for moral instruction and character development.

But hell raising rather than heroism seemed more the order of the day as Mike entered his teenage years, becoming headstrong, rebellious, and self-centered. His father enrolled him in the Jesuit Georgetown Preparatory School, the nation's oldest boys' Catholic high school located in the Maryland countryside near Washington, D.C. There, he proved himself

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ABOVE: As Daly's men fought their way into the streets of the Bavarian city of Nuremberg, these troops of the U.S. 15th Infantry Regiment move forward warily on April 18, 1945. Nuremberg was considered the cradle of Nazism. RIGHT: Towering above several of the sergeants he found alongside in the Colmar Pocket, the 6-3 Michael Daly grins during a brief respite from bitter combat during the waning days of the Third Reich.

a solid student, a likable, popular man on campus (elected president of the senior class), and often a thorn in the side of the Jesuit Prefect of Discipline, the Reverend Bernard F. Kirby. Mike was not mean spirited, insolent, or ill mannered. Most of his disciplinary infractions involved the school dress code, lateness, and hijinks in class.

Daly graduated in the Prep class of 1941 at the age of 16 and faced an important crossroads. His father wanted him to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. Mike did not wish to do so, but he never indicated that to his father because he did not want to disappoint him. Since Mike had been advanced from third to fifth grade during his grade school days, he was still too young to attend West Point immediately after high school graduation.

Therefore, Paul Daly, who had subsequently reentered the Army as a lieutenant colonel after Pearl Harbor, arranged for a postgrad year for his son at Portsmouth Priory, a Benedictine boarding school located outside Portsmouth, Rhode Island. There, Daly grew taller and more muscular, played football, did little studying, and capped a desultory semester with an unexcused night excursion to a bar in Portsmouth that resulted in his immediate expulsion.

Nevertheless, because of his father's political and social connections, Mike was still able to secure a Senatorial appointment to West Point. He also passed the entrance exam for the Academy, one that he had expected to fail. On July 15, 1942, he reported to West Point. He had no problem with the physical rigors of training at the Academy, but he hated the regimentation and hazing that were an integral part of life for plebes. He struggled with math and mechanical drawing in the classroom and bridled at what he perceived to be the arbitrary power wielded by upperclassmen, most of whom he came to loathe. Instead of maintaining a low profile, he took every opportunity to tweak them.

Ultimately, Daly did fail math for the second semester and faced dismissal unless he could pass a reentrance test at the end of the summer. At the urging of his father, Mike enrolled in remedial classes during the summer at the home of a tutor who lived in the Bronx.

George S. Patton IV, a classmate of Mike's and the son of America's most flamboyant general, was taking the tutorial also. According to Patton, on a steamy afternoon with the mercury approaching 100 degrees, Daly stood up, threw his books in the corner, and declared, "To hell with this! I'm going to war."

Eager for combat and yearning for redemption in the eyes of his father for his failure at West Point, Mike enlisted in the infantry. For him, basic combat training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, proved liberating. Freed from what he regarded as the arbitrary and pointless hazing of West Point and already in excellent physical condition—he had grown another inch and now stood at 6-3 and weighed about 190 pounds—Daly excelled. He could see the rationale behind the training regimen at Fort McClellan, even including the tirades by sergeants because they were preparing their men for the rigors of war.

In the spring of 1944, Mike was designated an infantry replacement and sent to Fort Shanks, New Jersey, to await passage to Britain. On arriving in Britain, Mike found himself assigned shortly before D-Day to his father's old regiment, the 18th Infantry, 1st Division. Paul Daly had pulled some strings to get his son into his old unit and into action as soon as possible. Landing in the second wave at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, Private Daly pulled a wounded man through the surf and then struggled along with his compatriots across the beach and eventually up the heights.

Within two weeks of landing in Normandy, Daly's actions exposing himself to enemy fire as a forward observer resulted in his being awarded a Silver Star for valor. He subsequently fought his way from Normandy to Belgium, earning the commendation of his commanding officers for his bravery, combat skill, aggressiveness, and initiative in volunteering for the most dangerous assignments such as taking the point during patrols and serving as a forward observer or as a sniper.

Photo courtesy of J. Leon Lebowitz

In July 1944, following the Allied breakout from Normandy that shattered Hitler's armies in the West and sent them reeling across France, Daly and some other decorated American servicemen were tapped to appear on an armed services radio broadcast originating with Ernie Pyle in Paris. As they entered the city, Daly and his compatriots experienced firsthand the jubi-

lation of liberated Parisiennes. A deliriously joyful crowd of young women lifted the Americans from their jeep and passed them over their heads—an exhilarating experience for the 19-year-old Daly. To many, including General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force, it appeared that the war might be won by Christmas.

The heady Allied optimism of the summer, however, dissipated as autumn approached and the resistance of German troops stiffened closer to their homeland. Daly experienced this firsthand near Battice, Belgium, on September 6, 1944, when he was wounded in the leg by shrapnel during a mortar barrage. Sent for treatment to a British hospital, Daly was then invited by General Alexander McCarrell "Sandy" Patch, the commander of the 7th Army and a close friend of his father, to finish his convalescence at Patch's headquarters located in Épinal in the Lorraine region of eastern France.

Meanwhile, throughout the fall of 1944, gloom deepened among Allied forces as they experienced a bloody stalemate all along the Western Front capped by the German counterattack in the Ardennes early on the mist-shrouded morning of December 16. Daly was at Patch's headquarters when the momentous Battle of the Bulge commenced to the north. Patch attempted to return Daly by plane to the 1st Division, but terrible weather thwarted three separate attempts.

Patch, who had recently lost his son in combat, took this as a sign that Daly should be transferred to the Seventh Army. After reviewing glowing reports and recommendations from Daly's commanding officers, Patch offered Mike a commission as a second lieutenant and a job as his personal aide. Daly accepted the commission but insisted on returning to combat. Patch acquiesced, and on December 28 Mike joined Able Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment, 3rd Division. The regiment was just ending a desperately fought and bloody, five-day battle for control of Sigolsheim, a town on the western Alsatian plain just east of the last line of the Vosges Mountains.

Daly had become a member of one of the most battle tested divisions in the United States Army. The 3rd had fought in North Africa, Sicily, and at Anzio Beach in Italy, and then had landed in southern France as part of Operation Anvil-Dragoon in June 1944. It had subsequently battled up the Rhône River Valley and through the Vosges Mountains with the rest of the Seventh Army. The commander of the 3rd Division was Maj. Gen. John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel. Stocky, gruff, gravel voiced, and outspoken, O'Daniel carried a bayonet scar on his cheek from combat during World War I. O'Daniel's troops admired him as a man of great personal courage who understood them and who himself had suffered the loss of a son during the war.

The arduous route that Captain Michael J. Daly and Able Company followed during the reduction of the Colmar Pocket in France resulted in lengthy periods of contact with the Germans and episodes of heavy fighting.

On the day Daly joined Able Company, the Germans were resisting fiercely, their artillery and mortar fire reducing Sigolsheim to rubble, but by the next day the 15th Regiment had taken the town. The 15th Regiment's determined victory had opened the gates to the plain of Alsace to the east. The Ardennes offensive, however, forced General Jacob Devers's 6th Army Group in the south to halt all offensive operations and extend its front northward. With an attack possible at any time, the 15th Regiment took up defensive positions with orders to hold the recently won ground "at all costs."

On New Year's Eve, the German high command launched operation Nordwind, the southern counterpart to the Ardennes campaign. A major armor and infantry offensive against Patch's overextended Seventh Army, Nordwind was designed to link up with German forces engaged in the Ardennes. The Germans also forced a crossing of the Rhine River just north of Strasbourg that threatened to recapture that city. A stubborn but flexible defense, however, wore the German forces thin, and by January 25, Nordwind had ended in defeat. Fortunately for Daly, the 15th Regiment sector had remained quiet. The division sat perched in Alsace ready to close a German salient known as the Colmar Pocket.

Daly found the men of his new platoon receptive and friendly, but many expressed astonishment at their new lieutenant's youth and boyish appearance. "The first time I saw him, he was a tall kid," remembered Sergeant Troy Cox. "He had wavy hair when he took off his helmet. I couldn't believe he could be an officer and a leader."

While some of the men of the regiment were seasoned veterans, Daly had also demonstrated his own mettle as a warrior during his four

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection

ABOVE: A squad of German soldiers moves across a snow covered landscape toward another encounter with well equipped Allied troops. By the time the fighting erupted in the Colmar Pocket, World War II would end within a matter of weeks. RIGHT: The camouflaged M4 Sherman tank sits atop the collapsed bridge following an attempt to cross the Ill River in the Colmar area. OPPOSITE: Camouflaged for winter fighting, American soldiers of the 15th Infantry Regiment advance along a country road in the Colmar area.

months of combat from June to early September 1944. The members of his platoon knew he had served as an enlisted man, had seen combat, had received the Silver Star and the Purple Heart, and had attained an officer's commission, all of which increased his credibility with them.

In January 1945, following the defeat of Hitler's counterattacks, General Eisenhower ordered General Devers and his VI Corps in Alsace to launch a major offensive (Operation Cheerful) to eliminate the Colmar Pocket. This German salient west of the Rhine River, which took its name from the city of Colmar, measured 45 miles at its base on the Rhine and extended 25 miles into the Vosges Mountains. The perimeter around the pocket, which measured 130 miles, enclosed 850 square miles. Creating a 50-mile gap in the Rhine front of the First French Army, the German presence in the pocket threatened the rear of both the Third and the Seventh Armies and thereby the entire Allied position in Alsace. It also drained Allied troops from what Eisenhower considered the more important front farther north, where he hoped for a deep breakthrough into Germany.

The American and French forces sought to strike the pocket simultaneously from the north and south, push along the Rhine plain, and then pinch off the salient, thereby cutting off, trapping, and eliminating an array of German units that had concentrated west of the Rhine. Committed to holding the Colmar Pocket, the Germans brought in the elite 2nd Mountain Infantry Division from Norway and ordered their forces to hold the salient.

At the beginning of the Colmar offensive, Daly and the men of the 3rd Division found themselves attached to II Corps of the First Army under French General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. In addition to German arms, Daly and his men faced a formidable foe in the weather. De Lattre graphically described the situation faced by both the Allied and German forces during the Colmar campaign as "frightful," and almost impossible to imagine.

Closing the Colmar Pocket also required offensive operations in terrain ideally suited to defense. Small villages, towns, and extensive wood patches dotted the flat Alsatian plain that spread eastward from the base of the Vosges Mountains to the Rhine. In addition, numerous canals, irrigation ditches, and unfordable streams crisscrossed the area. German troops armed with Panzerfaust shoulder-fired antitank weapons posed a deadly threat to American armor.

The offensive called for coordinated attacks on both shoulders of the pocket by American and French forces. The main objective, however, was not the city of Colmar, but rather the town of Neuf-Brisach and the nearby bridge over the Rhine. Neuf-Brisach and the bridge lay seven miles east of Colmar. The Brisach Bridge had proven invulnerable to earlier Allied air attack, and now Devers and de Lattre hoped to secure it and to trap as many Germans within the pocket as possible. The four regiments of O'Daniel's 3rd Division (7th, 15th, 30th, and attached 254th) would thrust at Neuf-Brisach from the northwest shoulder of the pocket. In an operation called Grand Slam, the 3rd Division would cross the Fecht River at Guémar, then the River Ill at Maison-Rouge, and finally the Colmar and Rhine-Rhone Canals to cut off the city of Colmar, thus assuring its fall. After that, troops would then move southward between the Rhone and Rhine Canals to capture the town of Neuf-Brisach and the Brisach Bridge over the Rhine.

Opposing them were the men of the German Nineteenth Army under the command of General Siegfried Rasp. Rasp hoped to tie down Allied forces west of the Rhine to afford the German Army time to redeploy units to the Eastern Front and to reorganize those units

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remaining east of the Rhine. The Nineteenth Army had been battered by the U.S. Seventh Army and Free French forces during the Vosges Mountains campaign. Its divisions were understrength, underequipped, and undertrained. They possessed only about 65 operational tanks and assault guns.

Still, Rasp had some advantages that would allow him to slow the Allies. He possessed some 22,500 highly motivated troops, whereas the Allies thought he had only 15,000. His army, moreover, possessed plentiful supplies of mines, food, and small-arms ammunition, the advantage of short interior lines of communication, a secure rear area, and the ability to transform the numerous small Alsatian towns into formidable defensive strongpoints. And then, of course, there were the great equalizers: weather and terrain. The Colmar Pocket would be no Allied cakewalk. Of that, Daly and the men of Able Company needed no convincing.

On January 20, the I Corps of the French First Army began the operation, attacking northward from Mulhouse in a driving snow-

storm with strong armor and infantry forces. This action drew armor of the German Nineteenth Army and the arriving 2nd Mountain Division to the southern part of the pocket. Two days later, on the night of January 22, the anniversary of the Anzio landings in Italy, O'Daniel committed his 3rd Division in Operation Grand Slam. In the early morning hours, the 7th and 30th Infantry Regiments with the 15th Regiment in reserve staged a surprise crossing of the Fecht River at Guémar before the Germans could react and then positioned themselves for an attack to the south. By noon the 7th and 30th had captured Ostheim, cleared the Colmar forest, and arrived at the River Ill, which the infantry crossed using rubber boats.

Troops of the 30th then proceeded down the east bank of the Ill and, after a brief skirmish with a small detachment of German troops, captured a 100-foot-long timber bridge and, about a mile away, a crossroads. The location was known as Maison-Rouge because of a nearby farm complex painted red. The Germans believed they had to deny the Allies access to the bridgehead across the Ill because, according to a later Army study, it opened "like the neck of a funnel into the whole area of German resistance around the Colmar Canal," and once captured "might well become [as it in fact did] the distributing point for American forces pushing to the Rhine."

At Maison-Rouge, however, the Americans encountered near disaster. The bridge over the Ill collapsed under the weight of a Sherman tank attached to the regiment. Until the engineers extracted the tank and repaired the bridge, the troops on the east side of the river had no armor support—a dangerous situation, especially in light of the Germans' seemingly uncanny ability to extract a terrible price for Allied mistakes.

The Germans showed themselves masters of active defense, ceding ground slowly, stubbornly, and bitterly as they conducted a fighting retreat that battered the Americans with tanks, artillery, and mortars. The German Army built its defensive doctrine around persistent local counterattacks. The units staging these counterstrikes, which varied in strength from company to battalion size, often used tanks and tank destroyers closely integrated with infantry. With lengthening nights and sometimes limited air observation and photography during the day, the enemy could mass forces in an assembly area close to U.S. lines and still avoid detection. Then, taking advantage of the morning fog or haze, they could engage U.S. forces quickly. Enemy artillery fire also increased appreciably, one of the most significant changes since the Normandy operations. The same weather conditions that limited aerial observation and photography made it more difficult for American artillery to locate and thus neutralize enemy guns.

The 30th Regiment, however, could not delay its offensive while the engineers worked frantically on the bridge over the Ill. It had to coordinate its attack with simultaneous drives by the French on its left and the 7th Regiment on its right. Using a footbridge laid across the Ill north of the helpless tank, the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 30th moved south and east across 1,000 yards of snow-white flatland, entering a section of woods on the outskirts of the villages of Reidwihr and Holtzwihr. Unfortunately, fierce resistance elsewhere had held up both the French and the 7th Regiment, leaving the 1st and 3rd Battalions with dangerously exposed flanks and facing a powerful enemy. At 4:30 PM the hammer blow fell. The Germans counterattacked ferociously with infantry and armor and routed the 1st and 3rd Battalions, which had no supporting armor of their own.

3rd Signal Co, 3rd Infantry Division / Toomey-Heller-Seesock-Nickelson-Cole

On receiving news of the disaster that had befallen the 30th, O'Daniel sent the 15th Regiment hurrying to the site of the footbridge over the Ill. He instructed the regiment to assume the mission of the 30th and to counterattack at once even though he knew that his infantry, absent armor, would be chewed up. He believed, however, that he had no choice. He had to try to keep the enemy at bay while the engineers repaired the bridge and could not let the Germans seize the initiative and concentrate their power.

At 3 AM on January 24, Companies I and K of the 15th Regiment's 3rd Battalion moved across the Ill to press the attack and suffered the same results as the 30th on the previous day. At about noon on January 24, Daly's 1st Battalion entered the fray, with his Able Company in reserve. Still lacking armor, they moved into the woods north of Riedwihr and were crushed, albeit with far fewer casualties than the 3rd Battalion had suffered. The 1st Battalion had maintained an orderly retreat because it had been able to call in supporting artillery fire. By late afternoon, the 1st Battalion had regrouped and was preparing to counterattack, this time thanks to the repaired bridge, accompanied by tanks and tank destroyers and by a ferocious artillery barrage that sent shells into roads, junctions, and trail crossings in the Riedwihr woods.

In his first combat role as an officer, Daly led Able Company as part of the 1st Battalion thrust southward from the road junction at Maison-Rouge in an attack on the woods. As Daly later recalled, the forest was dense, and though most trees were bare of leaves in the winter there were evergreens. Maintaining formation in the woods proved difficult. To do so, a man had to keep the soldier next to him in sight. Because the Americans were pressing the offensive, they were more vulnerable to ambush. When those attacks occurred, GIs would fire into bushes and at trees, but often they were unable to see the Germans who were clad in their winter-white parkas and pants— "spook suits"—that blended into the snowy terrain. Sometimes fighting involved individual duels between American and German soldiers separated by a few yards, each sniping at the other from behind trees. Sometimes, hand-to-hand combat ensued. Tree bursts from German

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection

ABOVE: German soldiers hitch a ride aboard a Sturmgeschütz IV self-propelled assault gun. The image reflects an eerie sense of well-being among troops fighting to escape encirclement. The Sturmgeschütz, mounting a high velocity 75mm gun, is festooned with white sheet for camouflage. OPPOSITE: A German "88" claimed five American lives when it hit their half-track during the battle for Riedwihr.

artillery proved especially lethal, sending flaming branches and red hot shrapnel to the forest floor.

As it happened, both Able and Charlie Companies ran into fierce opposition from enemy infantry and tanks at the edge of the forest, became disorganized, and suffered heavy casualties as the Germans employed a large number of tanks. Daly found himself in a desperate situation and momentarily confused about whether to fight or to flee. He hated to "let people down by retreating" but realized that he had to extricate his men from the woods so that they all could live to fight another day. He gave the order to pull out and made sure that his men, running downhill as fast as they could in knee-deep snow, got out. Then he followed them. Paul Daly would have approved.

Daly described the withdrawal as "urgent," not "panic stricken." Although the Germans did not pursue the Americans out of the woods, they did keep firing at them, hitting several more of Daly's troops. When Daly and company reached the Ill River, they had to swim or ford the stream. Icicles dripped from the soaked uniforms of the shivering men. Daly felt relief at having extricated his platoon from an untenable situation and at having gotten them to safety, but he felt embarrassment at having being shot at in retreat. His first major engagement as an officer had ended in near calamity. Armored battles raged throughout the night as Daly's platoon and the whole company, much reduced in size by casualties, regrouped.

All companies in the battalion had suffered numerous casualties and found themselves seriously weakened. When Able and Charlie Companies were combined, for example, they still numbered only a handful of men. In that precarious condition, the 1st Battalion dug in at the edge of the woods. Reorganizing the scattered companies took almost all day.

At midmorning on January 25, German infantry, accompanied by armor, counterattacked Able Company, which lacked both armor and antitank weapons. The Germans breached the line, driving some men back and isolating others while opening a gap through which their infantry tried to move. Daly's platoon sergeant, Kenneth W. Johns, however, remained in his foxhole and defended his position with his carbine against heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire from infantrymen seeking to exploit the opening. Six hours of grueling battle ensued, at the end of which the remaining men of Able Company forced the Germans to withdraw, even though one of their tanks continued to roam about in the woods shooting up whatever it found.

By 3 PM on January 25, the 15th Regiment prepared to attack again. The 3rd Battalion would take Riedwihr while the 1st and 2nd Battalions eliminated resistance in the northeast and northwest woods, respectively. The drained 1st Battalion had only 60 riflemen, with Able and Charlie Companies still merged. In the dark of night, Daly led 24 of his men 300 yards against a strongpoint at the edge of the woods that consisted of dug-in troops around a machine gun.

The Germans often located strongpoints in an opening in the woods or near a wide path where supporting troops dug in. Sometimes they were backed by mortars or one or two tanks. Advancing to within 30 yards of the German machine gun and "with bullets striking inches away from him," Daly killed the gunner, enabling his men to capture the weapon. He then led his platoon 300 yards over "heavily shelled and bullet-swept terrain" to clear the objective in three-quarters of an hour.

Twenty Germans died in the attack, and "many more were captured or wounded through his [Daly's] inspiring and aggressive leadership." Daly "went after the other guy and it was every man for himself." The next day, he and his men helped repulse yet another German counterattack of infantry and armor. Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion took Riedwihr.

After the capture of Riedwihr, Daly and another man from Able Company trudged their way to Maj. Gen. O'Daniel's headquarters for a regimental awards ceremony. On a snowy field, O'Daniel pinned an oakleaf cluster representing a second Silver Star on Daly's jacket. He made some encouraging comments and then asked the lieutenant if he was "ready to go back in there and get this thing over with."

Mike's mumbled "I think so" was less gung-ho than O'Daniel had hoped for, and he made his dissatisfaction apparent. But this rolled off Daly's back. The laconic second lieutenant had nothing to prove; his actions said it all. Numbed by cold, fatigue, and combat, Daly and his companion turned around and made their way back through the snow to company quarters. The headline in the Bridgeport newspaper back home read, "Lieut. M.J. Daly of Fairfield Cited for 'Inspiring' Attack."

In two days of fighting against continuous counterattacks and stubborn resistance, the 15th Regiment had saved the Ill River bridgehead, broken through the German defense, pushed south over difficult terrain, and established a line from which the offensive could be carried across the Colmar Canal to the immediate front. But the regiment paid dearly in casualties among officers, NCOs, and enlisted men. Some companies numbered only 15 men. Many 3rd Division veterans of the Anzio beachhead pronounced the fighting in the Colmar Pocket, especially around Maison-Rouge,

as "just about as severe as anything they had yet gone through."

Indeed, in the Colmar Pocket a dark mood prevailed. Daly recognized that in addition to brutal combat and high casualties—January would prove the bloodiest month for casualties in northwest Europe—the cruel winter weather of the Colmar Pocket endangered not only his men's health, but also their morale by increasing the physical and psychological difficulties of military operations. Daly looked back on the Colmar Pocket campaign as his most difficult combat, the dug-in veteran German units, the death and wounding of his men, snow and cold, the frostbite and trench foot. "We had to fight the weather as well as the Germans," he later recalled.

"Some genius decided that we would wear white sheet covers for camouflage," Daly remembered, "but the damn things flopped around, got wet, and then froze at night," making movement difficult and sleep impossible. Daly and many others quickly discarded the sheets.

There seemed no escape from the cold. Trigger mechanisms on rifles froze, as did oil on the weapons. When troops slept on the floors of abandoned schoolhouses or warehouses, they curled in the fetal position, hands clasped together and pressed between the knees. Essential clothing included long johns and gloves (or trigger-finger mittens), along with knit woolen caps and scarves, windbreaker trousers to be worn over the standard olive drab, and M1944 Shoepac boots. With leather uppers, rubber lowers, and moisture-absorbing insoles, these boots provided far better protection against water, especially in static positions, than the standard combat boot. But the early versions, which had no heels and gave no support to the arch of the foot, proved terrible for walking. The "paddle-foot shuffle" seen in the ranks of American infantrymen that winter signified not just bulky clothing, inadequate arch support, and numbed or frozen feet, but also psychological demoralization.

By March 1945, more men were missing from the lines because of trench foot than for any other reason. The 46,000 cold weather injuries constituted 9.25 percent of all casualties in the European Theater, the equivalent of more than three divisions. Daly later recalled "the constant challenge" that feet presented. He and his fellow platoon leaders and their NCOs minimized the incidence of trench foot in Able Company by insisting that the men change their socks regularly and by personally seeing to it that they did.

Fearing an American breakthrough, the Germans mustered what reserves remained east and southeast of Jebsheim. The Americans, however, shifted southward to the Colmar Canal, a 50-foot-wide, six-foot-deep waterway with 12-foot embankments and slow-moving water that had not frozen. The canal passed just north of the city of Colmar, connecting it with the Rhine River to the northeast. Well-dug emplacements protected the canal, and the fortified towns of Muntzenheim and Bischwihr lay nearby. These proved no match, however, for Allied air power and artillery. Allied planes bombed for two days, and on the cold, clear night of January 29, eight battalions of artillery pummeled the target area.

As a result, in an operation dubbed "Kraut," Allied forces quickly crossed the Colmar Canal and made short work of the dazed, disorganized force on the opposite shore. Daly's Able Company, held in reserve along with the rest of the 1st Battalion during the initial crossing, later led the 1st Battalion across the footbridges to join in the broadening offensive to clear the remainder of the Colmar Pocket and isolate the city of Colmar. The Americans would accomplish the latter task by occupying the area east and south of the city to the Rhine River. In the face of the combined American-French offensive, with the Americans driving to the center of the pocket and the French increasing pressure at both the northern and the southern ends, the Colmar Pocket began to disintegrate. As the German 2nd Mountain Division was ground down and then shattered, the 15th Regiment and the rest of the 3rd Division "encountered only scattered, piecemeal units and no cohesive battle order or defensive organization." Those piecemeal units, however, remained deadly.

In the first hour of February 1, the third phase of operations opened with an offensive to the Rhine designed to cut the pocket in two. This meant crossing yet another strategic water barrier, the Rhine-Rhone Canal, which ran in a north-south direction. Able Company's objective was to take the bridge leading into Kunheim. During the first phase of the attack through the Durrenentzen woods west of Kunheim, all company officers senior to Daly became casualties. He took command of Able Company and pressed ahead toward the town.

The Germans were well armed with tanks, artillery, mortars, and rockets and committed themselves to defending the approaches to the bridge. They had created strongpoints at its foot by sending reinforcements to man thick walled houses just west of the span. A 24-hour battle ensued. After several hours, word arrived that the French had taken Artzenheim and its bridge a mile and a half north, making seizure of the bridge at Kunheim unnecessary. The 15th Regiment objective changed from crossing the canal to clearing Germans from the area up to the canal and from the bridge itself.

As Daly and Able Company attempted to traverse a clearing near the bridge at Kunheim, they encountered a withering hail of machine-gun and small-arms fire as well as heavy mortar concentrations. Daly extricated his men from their untenable position, reorganized them, and then led them on a new route through woods infested by determined German opposition. Staying in the lead, Daly encouraged his men and impelled them forward in the

3rd Signal Co, 3rd Infantry Division / Toomey-Heller-Seesock-Nickelson-Cole

3rd Signal Co, 3rd Infantry Division / Toomey-Heller-Seesock-Nickelson-Cole

Photo courtesy of J. Leon Lebowitz

ABOVE: U.S. troops advance cautiously past the bodies of several dead German soldiers during combat on the outskirts of Jebsheim. RIGHT: Looking tired and dirty, Captain Michael J. Daly returns from a patrol near Schweinfurt, Germany, in March 1945. According to Sergeant J. Leon Lebowitz, the company clerk who snapped this photo, Daly was 'the best officer and bravest man I ever knew.'

face of a hail of fire until he found it impossible to move farther. He then directed his men to dig in and hold their ground. He personally supervised and checked the placement of their positions, enabling them to withstand intense fire from the fearsome German 88mm guns that night.

Daly's company also suffered numerous casualties as a result of machine-gun fire directed from tanks at a range of 150 yards and barrages of 150mm rockets, known to GIs as "Screaming Meemies," fired from Nebelwerfers, combination mortar and rocket launchers. The firing abated in the early morning hours, and at dawn Daly discovered that the Germans had withdrawn under cover of darkness, leaving behind many casualties.

Coming off the line, Daly moved his company into a former German barracks in the woods. There he thoroughly reorganized the men after their engagement, painstakingly checking their equipment and seeing to it that they were able to rest and bathe. The next day he turned over a fresh, victorious, and tightly organized fighting unit to the returning company commander. Meanwhile, the 7th Infantry had taken Kunheim after the battered German forces withdrew from the town.

Daly, however, had no sense of elation or victory. When one town fell there was always another, and then another, and another after that. Max Hastings captured the nature of battle in northwest Europe when he described it, not as a clash of mighty armies after the fashion of Waterloo or Gettysburg, but rather as "an interminable series of local collisions involving a few hundred men and a score or two of armored vehicles, amid some village or hillside or patch of woodland between Switzerland and the North Sea."

On the morning of February 3, Daly and his men returned to action, moving southward the three or four miles between Kunheim and Biesheim along a slushy, muddy road flanked by fields and interspersed with enemy pillboxes.

The 1st Battalion was charged with eliminating enemy forces in the rear of the 7th Infantry, some of whose units were engaged in the town of Biesheim, where fighting grew more intense. The Germans knew that if Biesheim fell, Neuf-Brisach, the communications center, could not hold out. Its capitulation in turn would sever key communications and supply lines, sealing the fate of the Colmar Pocket and providing the Allies a possible springboard into Germany. The combat that ensued, including street fighting, bombing, and strafing by Allied planes, and artillery barrages from both sides, reduced much of Biesheim to rubble.

Daly's company pushed to approximately 200 yards north of the town, when fire from three or four machine guns, manned by what was characterized as "fanatical infantry," hit the flanks and the front, pinning down the forward elements. There ensued one of the most harrowing nights of the war for Daly. It also highlighted an ugly reality and leadership challenge faced by company officers such as Daly in the war's final months, the fate of 18-year-old "greenhorns" pressed into service as combat replacements because of manpower shortages. One such youngster bore his lieutenant's last name.

Private Joseph Daly joined the platoon in the midst of the battle for the Colmar Pocket and was clearly frightened, insecure, and inexperienced. Daly tried to reassure him and told him to stay close to his sergeant and do exactly what the sergeant directed. While the company was pinned down north of Bisheim, Joseph Daly suffered a grievous wound to his back. There was no way to evacuate him, and Daly helplessly watched him die a slow, agonizing death as a medic valiantly but vainly tried to ease his suffering and provide some comfort. That scene seared its way into Daly's consciousness. He never forgot Joseph Daly, whose memory helped inspire Daly's efforts years later on behalf of the indigent and dying in Fairfield, Connecticut. The terrible experience also reinforced Daly's determination to do everything he could to bring his men home safely.

At daylight, Able and Charlie Companies called in armor, and three tanks helped wipe out the enemy positions. The small units of the experienced 3rd Division earned well-deserved praise for their skillful use of infantry-tank teams. In the words of one historian, they "almost unconsciously perfected their ... teamwork to a fine art, enabling them to overcome the physical fatigue that most of the soldiers ... felt."

On February 5, the final mission began, moving southward to secure the vital bridges across the Rhine at Neuf-Brisach and thus cut the enemy's last remaining avenue of escape from the crumbling pocket. Daly and his company, their uniforms covered with so much mud that only the shape of their helmets distinguished

them from the Germans, slogged down a slushy road southeast of the village as part of the 1st Battalion's drive to the south.

After trudging across 800 yards of flat, mucky, open field while enduring fire from 88s and heavy mortars that inflicted numerous casualties, Daly's platoon spotted a German strongpoint about 200 yards ahead. At a crossroads southeast of the town stood a fortified two-story stone house protected by barbed wire and surrounded by a low stone wall interspersed at intervals with stone columns. At least 25 German soldiers were entrenched about the structure.

Three enemy machine guns opened up and caught Daly and his men in a crossfire. By that time, only nine of Daly's 22-man platoon remained unwounded. Reacting quickly, Daly directed his men to withdraw down a ditch. Meanwhile, he stood up squarely in the middle of the road, firing his pistol to draw the concentrated fire of the enemy upon himself while his men retreated. For 30 minutes he moved about in plain view of enemy machine gunners and infantrymen armed with the MP40 machine pistol. They fired a hail of bullets at him. As he danced around, they ricocheted at his feet. At the same time he noticed a 15-man German patrol approaching on his flank, and he started firing his pistol at them. Killing two, he alerted his men to fight off the rest. Finally, he broke contact and raced toward his platoon, most of whom were crawling on their hands and knees toward the edge of town and the cover of two machine guns set up there.

Daly, meanwhile, worked his way among the more seriously wounded, who were lagging behind the others, helping and encouraging them. Not until he knew that every wounded man had made it back safely did Daly himself enter the company area. He then gave a concise and calm report on the enemy situation to his company commander. For his action in the road that day, Daly received a second oakleaf cluster on his Silver Star. He felt particularly proud of the Silver Star, later calling it the "infantryman's or workhorse medal," indicating valor in a specific instance, not just meritorious service.

Because Daly's company had not dislodged the Germans from the strongpoint, they once again received orders to seize it. The depleted 60-man company attacked across 500 yards of open field. Troy Cox recalled, "We couldn't run at all in the mud, and would fall because it was so soft." When he fell, he also dropped his machine gun into the mire. The quarter-size openings in the barrel meant to cool the weapon became packed with mud, rendering the gun useless, but Cox still carried it as he continued to slip-slide across the field.

The deadly crossfire from the German machine guns and numerous submachine guns mowed down 41 of the men. Only 19 reached the position. When an American tank moved up and blasted a hole in the wall, both the 2nd and 3rd Platoons charged forward in an attempt to storm the opening. But a German gunner on the other side, in combination with the continuing deadly crossfire, repelled two attempts. Finally, rifleman Deland Payne worked his way to within 50 yards of the breach, stood up amid a hail of fire, and blazed at the gunner with his M1 rifle until he killed him.

After an enemy grenade wounded the commander of Able Company, Daly leaped to the front amid the confusion and led the last assault. Grappling with the nearest German, he shot him dead with his pistol and then ran from man to man, directing them toward German positions. Finally, he led his men inside the stone wall surrounding the house and into the house itself. Firing his weapon, he yelled for his men to "Shoot the bastards!" inciting them to their utmost in the bitter close-range fighting. The result: nine enemy dead, six wounded, and nine prisoners.

A German counterattack ensued shortly thereafter. As fire from enemy self-propelled artillery began wrecking the house, Daly directed his men to dig in and hold the position. The Germans maintained fire on the house, the crossroads, and the roads to the rear in an attempt to deny the Americans use of them. Then, as Able Company fanned out to secure other houses in the area, German tank and artillery fire took them down one after another while continuing to zero in on the crossroads. The company clerk, Sergeant J. Leon Lebowitz, recorded approximately 25 missing or killed in action that day.

While Daly and his company hung on at the crossroads, other companies of the 1st Battalion, along with those of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, captured Fort Mortier, which commanded the northern approaches to the Rhine River bridge sites. The Americans swept southward to the bridges themselves, only to find that the Germans had demolished them.

By nightfall on February 5, the shelling had ceased, and the 15th Regiment had secured all its objectives. The next night the 30th Regiment scaled the walls of the old fortress town of Neuf-Brisach. The Americans now firmly controlled the designated area east of Colmar, including the approaches to the damaged railroad and highway bridges across the Rhine. A staff officer of the 136th Mountain Regiment of the German 2nd Mountain Division stated that by the first few days of February the German supply system had broken down completely, lack of gasoline being the major consequence.

A captured officer said that large numbers of casualties were the result of accurate and intense U.S. artillery fire. Still, the 15th Regiment suffered 744 battle casualties and more than 1,000 additional casualties from disease, exhaustion, frostbite, and trench foot. The 3rd Division as a whole suffered more than 4,500 casualties. Unable to retreat across the bridges, only 3,000 to 4,000 combat infantry of the now virtually destroyed German Nineteenth Army managed to escape to the east bank of the Rhine. The remnants of the German Army were mopped up, and resistance in the division sector came to an end after the 17-day campaign.

Continued on page 78

Author Photo

This modern photo depicts a house in the French village of Biesheim that the Germans fortified as a strongpoint during the fighting in the Colmar Pocket.

The light cruiser USS *Honolulu* fires at Japanese targets near Munda Point on the island of New Georgia in the Solomons. The Battle of Kula Gulf took place during operations to wrest the island from Japanese control.

SHOOTOUT IN KULA GULF

The light cruiser *Helena* was lost in the inconclusive 1943 sea battle.

BY JOHN J. DOMAGALSKI

The island of Guadalcanal loomed in the distance as the warships of Task Force 36.1 approached the waters of Iron Bottom Sound on July 5, 1943. The force was returning from a voyage to Kula Gulf in the Central Solomon Islands. Aboard the flagship, the cruiser *Honolulu,* Rear Admiral Walden L. Ainsworth was satisfied his force had accomplished its mission—a thorough bombardment of Japanese land positions on both sides of Kula Gulf.

The operation was carried out under the cover of darkness and executed nearly flawlessly except for the sinking of the destroyer *Strong*. Ainsworth incorrectly attributed it to an enemy submarine. The warship was actually torpedoed by a fleeing Japanese destroyer that was never spotted by the American ships.

The middle of 1943 found American amphibious forces again on the move in the South Pacific. After wresting control of Guadalcanal from the Japanese during a bloody six-month struggle, American troops landed on the island of New Georgia farther north and were moving overland toward an enemy airfield near Munda Point. Ainsworth's bombardment mission was in support of the ongoing land operations in the area.

Ainsworth had risen through the naval ranks in the decades following his graduation from the United States Naval Academy in 1910. He was an experienced leader who served as the commanding officer of the battleship *Mississippi* for the first half of 1942 before being promoted to admiral. He had been leading forays into Japanese-held waters for almost six months, making the voyage to Kula Gulf seem routine.

The situation suddenly changed when Ainsworth received an urgent message during the mid-afternoon from his immediate superior, Admiral William Halsey. The Imperial Japanese Navy was lurking. Enemy destroyers were expected in Kula Gulf during the night, and Ainsworth was directed to set an ambush.

With no time to take on more fuel and ammunition, the American ships set a new course back toward the enemy. The abrupt increase in speed was the first indication to the American sailors that something was amiss. "In obedience to these orders, this force reversed course, proceeded via Indispensable Strait and close to the southern extremity of Santa Isabel Island at 29 knots in order to reach the vicinity of Kula Gulf in time to intercept," Ainsworth recorded.

The admiral notified his ships of the new orders at about 3 PM. The route would take the ships through the Slot, a narrow channel with islands on both sides, to Kula Gulf. Bounded by the Slot, New Georgia, and Kolombangara, Kula Gulf was considered enemy-held waters.

The admiral had a total of seven warships under his command owing to the late addition of two destroyers from Tulagi. *Helena* and *St. Louis* joined *Honolulu* to round out a trio of light cruisers. Four destroyers, *Nicholas, O'Bannon, Radford,* and *Jenkins,* under the command of Captain Francis X. McInerney, completed the force.

The American intelligence was right on target as to enemy intentions. The Japanese were regularly using destroyers to transport troops and supplies to the front lines on New Georgia from bases farther north. The supply runs, dubbed the Tokyo Express by American sailors, had resulted in numerous naval clashes in the South Pacific during the previous year of fighting.

Japanese Rear Admiral Teruo Akiyama was leading a flotilla of 10 destroyers for the night's operation. He organized his ships into three smaller units for the mission. The First Transport Unit consisted of *Mochizuki, Mikazuki,* and *Hamakaze*. The Second Transport Unit included the destroyers *Amagiri, Hatsuyuki, Nagatsuki,* and *Satsuki*. The transport warships were loaded with 2,400 troops and 180 tons of supplies. A third group of ships, designated as the Support Unit, was composed of *Niizuki, Suzukaze,* and *Tanikazi*. These destroyers carried no cargo but were to safeguard the two transport groups.

Akiyama's orders were to travel through Kula Gulf to deliver the men and material to Vila on the southern coast of Kolombangara. He relied on the blanket of darkness to help hide his operation. The admiral used *Niizuki,* the only ship of his force fitted with radar, as his flagship. With American and Japanese warships on a collision course, the setup for the Battle of Kula Gulf was complete.

Bad weather prevented Akiyama's force from coming under attack by American bombers. The same conditions kept Allied aerial reconnaissance patrols from locating the enemy ships earlier in the day. The Japanese admiral was, however, keenly alert to the possibility that he could encounter American warships once inside the gulf.

The Japanese operation was proceeding as planned when the clock ushered in the start of July 6, 1943. Admiral Akiyama, who was already operating in Kula Gulf, directed the three destroyers of the First Transportation Unit to move ahead at 12:26 AM. The force was to proceed along the southeastern shore of Kolombangara directly to Vila. The remaining ships continued on a course taking them deeper into the gulf. At 1:43 AM, he dispatched the Second Transport Unit toward Vila, and

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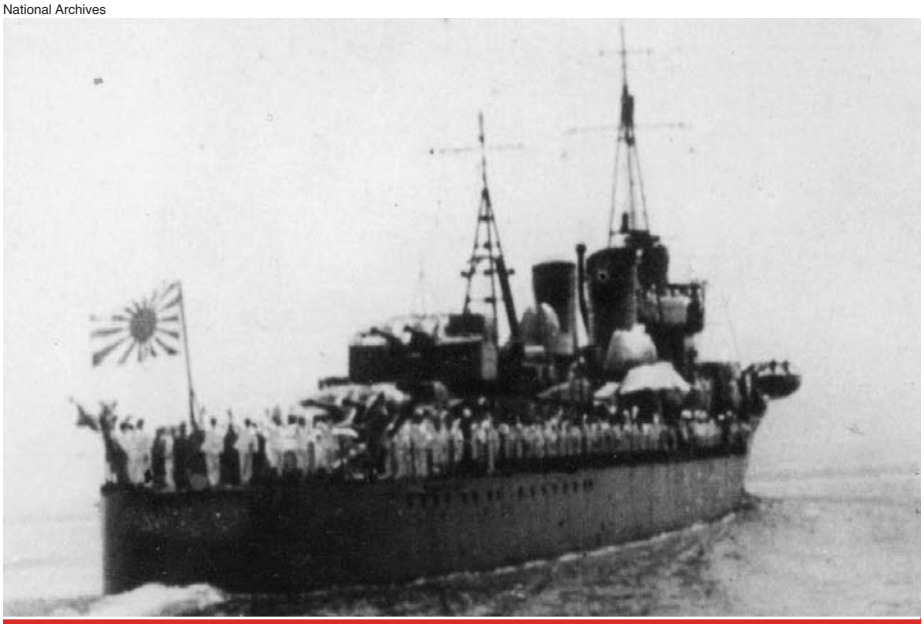

ABOVE: The crew of the Japanese destroyer *Hamakaze* turns out to greet sailors aboard other vessels of the Imperial Navy during ceremonies in 1941. Along with several other Japanese destroyers, *Hamakaze* was present during the Battle of Kula Gulf in 1943. RIGHT: Photographed aboard the light cruiser *Honolulu* during the heat of the Battle of Kula Gulf, U.S. Navy personnel coolly discharge their duties.

the three screening destroyers turned north to reverse course.

The American task force arrived at the entrance of Kula Gulf shortly after midnight. Admiral Ainsworth slowed the group to 25 knots to conserve fuel as he proceeded with caution. "No contacts had been received from our Black Cat scout planes and one of them had reported that he was returning to base because of the weather," he later reported. "The night was very dark, no moon, overcast, passing showers. The average visibility at its best did not exceed two miles, reduced to less than one mile at times."

American radar peering out into the night ahead spotted the enemy ships at exactly 1:36 AM at a distance of almost 25,000 yards. The American sailors, however, had no way of knowing they had been sighted by the enemy almost half an hour earlier and were under careful watch by Japanese lookouts. The radar on *Niizuki* first indicated the presence of American warships in the area. Admiral Akiyama initially decided to proceed with his operation as planned but kept a careful watch on the American vessels.

American radar men worked diligently to find any enemy warships and then ascertain the number, type, and course of the enemy. The separation of the Japanese groups and the sloping contour of Kolombangara in the background made it a difficult undertaking. Ainsworth soon learned he was facing two groups of Japanese ships positioned about 8,000 yards apart and totaling up to nine vessels. The American radar was actually looking at the Japanese Support Unit heading north and the Second Transportation Group moving south toward Vila. The First Transportation Unit, positioned farther south at Vila, was not seen.

Akiyama changed plans as the American ships continued moving closer to his position. He increased speed to 30 knots and recalled the Second Transportation Unit. The latter four destroyers were weighed down with troops and supplies but still had torpedoes and would have to fight nonetheless.

Ainsworth directed his warships to form a single column as they moved into Kula Gulf. The destroyers *Nicholas* and *O'Bannon* pulled into the lead followed by the cruisers *Honolulu, Helena,* and *St. Louis*. The remaining two destroyers, *Jenkins a*nd *Radford,* were positioned at the rear of the column. "One minute later the formation turned simultaneously sixty degrees to the left in order to close the enemy," Ainsworth recorded.

The American admiral needed to make some quick decisions. Radar seemed to indicate the more distant ships were heavier vessels, but the range to the near group was closing fast. He initially wanted to hit both groups simultaneously but soon determined it was not feasible. "It now appeared that it would be much better to hit them separately, even if to do so might give the second group a chance to run back into Blackett Strait. The range by this time had closed to about 7,000 yards, but there had been nothing to indicate that the enemy had either seen us or made contact on our formation."

Ainsworth wrote not knowing he was under careful watch by the Japanese. He gave the order to open fire on the closest group and directed his force "to blast this group first, reach ahead, then make a simultaneous turn and get the others on the reverse course."

The American battle plan was built on the advantage in radar technology. Every ship was equipped with SG radar—the most advanced type of unit available. The strategy focused on the use of guns over torpedoes. Ainsworth's ships were to engage the enemy at medium range with radar-controlled gunfire.

As Ainsworth was making his final decisions, Admiral Akiyama was preparing an attack of his own. Japanese naval doctrine for night battles relied heavily on torpedoes and limited the use of gunfire. There was no shortage of the favorite Japanese underwater weapon. The

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destroyers of the Support and Second Transport Units had a combined 50 torpedo tubes plus reloads. In spite of almost a year of sea combat in the South Pacific, most American flag officers—including Ainsworth—lacked clear knowledge on the powerful torpedoes the enemy had at his disposal.

The battle started at about 1:57 AM, when both sides opened fire at almost the same time. The three American light cruisers unleashed an opening barrage from their main batteries, sending almost 1,500 shells hurtling toward the enemy in first five minutes of the battle. Thin streaks of light lashed out into the night each time a six-inch gun roared. Gunners worked at a feverish pace to provide a continuous supply of ammunition. The two forward destroyers added fire from their 5-inch guns.

Ainsworth was convinced his ships were

pummeling Japanese targets. "Both cruisers and destroyers had demonstrated in several radar controlled target practices that they do not miss at ranges less than 7,000 yards, and the Task Force Commander has no hesitancy in expressing the firm opinion that this first group of enemy vessels were practically obliterated by the end of five minutes, all remaining [radar] pips on the screen appeared dead in the water," Ainsworth wrote.

American shells were causing damage, but mostly to a single ship. Gunfire smothered the Japanese flagship *Niizuki* in the opening minutes of the fight, turning the destroyer into a burning wreck. The destroyer's steering control was knocked out, causing her to veer out of the formation. Repeated shell hits quickly reduced *Niizuki* to a flaming wreck. The flagship was out of the battle and would soon sink. Admiral Akiyama went down with the ship along with a large number of his comrades.

The two remaining destroyers of the Support Unit suffered minor damage in the hail of gunfire. *Suzukaze* lost the use of her forward gun mount and a searchlight in addition to suffering a fire in a machine-gun ammunition storage locker. A dud shell flooded a food storage area aboard *Tanikaze*. Neither warship, however, was out of the fight.

The Japanese counterattack started shortly after the American ships opened fire. *Suzukaze* and *Tanikaze* each fired spreads of eight torpedoes and then turned sharply to avoid the burning *Niizuki*. The Americans spotted the turn, prompting Ainsworth to report it to his ships over the radio circuit. "Enemy seems to be reversing course." The two Japanese destroyers were heading northwest under the cover of smoke to reload torpedo tubes.

The Americans had a key weakness going into the battle—the quantity of flashless gunpowder was in short supply due to the prior night's bombardment mission. The amount aboard the light cruiser *Helena* was especially limited. "About fifty rounds per turret and per mount of flashless powder had been saved from the previous night's firing and was initially used by both batteries until expended, after which smokeless was used," *Helena* Captain Charles Cecil reported. The light cruiser's main battery guns were soon firing with a sheet of flame that created a quick flash of light in the blackness of the night. The flashes likely provided a good aiming point for Japanese torpedo men firing their deadly fish.

The battle continued as the spread of underwater missiles sped toward the American ships. The torpedoes only found two American hulls. One hit *St. Louis* but failed to explode. *Helena*

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ABOVE: The three U.S. Navy light cruisers that participated in the Battle of Kula Gulf in mid-1943, *Helena, St. Louis,* and *Honolulu,* patrol the area off Munda Point on the island of New Georgia several days before the battle. BELOW: One of the American warships engaged in the Battle of Kula Gulf fires its main 6-inch guns at a Japanese destroyer. The battle took place at night, favoring the Japanese, who were more experienced in nocturnal engagements.

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was not as lucky. She was hit about seven minutes after opening fire. Three torpedoes slammed into the warship in the short span of about three minutes. The first hit just behind the turret, one blowing off the light cruiser's bow. It was serious but not lethal damage. The second and third torpedoes hit at almost the same time and place, crashing into *Helena* dead amidships.

The massive explosion amidships sent up a tower of water and delivered a fatal blow. The damage was extensive and extended all the way down to the keel. Rapid flooding caused the cruiser to sink in jackknife fashion. Ainsworth again turned his ships at 2:03 AM, just as *Helena* was meeting doom. The fog of battle initially prevented the admiral from knowing of the light cruiser's plight.

The sea battle continued as the men aboard *Helena* struggled to get off their sinking ship. American gunfire began to subside after *Suzukaze* and *Tanikaze* turned away. The destroyers *Radford* and *O'Bannon* unleashed a spread of torpedoes in a futile effort to hit the fleeing enemy. All of the weapons missed.

American attention now focused on the four

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ABOVE: Crewmen aboard the destroyer USS *Nicholas* load ammunition for the main 5-inch guns of the warship before the battle. The *Nicholas* utilized radar to search for enemy vessels during the Battle of Kula Gulf. BELOW: Moments before she was torpedoed and sunk, the light cruiser USS *Helena* fires her guns at a Japanese destroyer during the Battle of Kula Gulf. The light cruiser USS *St. Louis* is visible just astern of the ill-fated *Helena*.

U.S. Navy

destroyers of the Japanese Second Transport Unit speeding north at 30 knots. About 13,000 yards separated the opposing forces. Ainsworth executed several turns to better angle his ships to meet the approaching enemy. The adroit boat handling positioned the American ships to "cross the T." The age-old naval maneuver allowed one force to bring full broadside firepower against an opponent who could only return fire with forward guns.

The American ships opened fire at 2:18 AM at a distance of 11,600 yards. "All the targets in this second group seemed to have been taken under fire by more than one ship, particularly as they turned away or were stopped dead in their tracks," Ainsworth noted. The first Japanese destroyer immediately turned hard right and made smoke. *Amagiri* escaped with minor damage. *Hatsuyuki* was next in column. She returned fire with her main battery guns and turned to port. She was hit by two or three dud shells causing damage to the gun director, communication system, and a torpedo mount. The remaining two destroyers quickly reversed course. *Satsuki* and *Nagatsuki* went to Vila to unload their passengers and cargo. The latter ship sustained one 6-inch shell hit during the escape south.

The destroyer *O'Bannon* contributed five torpedoes during the fight—long shots at 10,000 yards. None found a Japanese ship. *Radford* contributed a small amount of gunfire in the direction of the sinking *Niizuki*. The guns aboard *Nicholas* and *Jenkins* stayed silent during the action, but both destroyers later fired torpedoes that did not find targets.

The American ships turned west at 2:27 AM but could not locate any Japanese warships. A star shell from *St. Louis* illuminated the immediate area but yielded nothing. Radar also failed to find targets. It appeared the sea battle was over.

Ainsworth then directed two of his destroyers to thoroughly search the area. *Nicholas* forged west, allowing her radar to peer into Vella Gulf. She found no sign of the enemy. *Radford*'s radar combed Kula Gulf, spotting an apparently beached vessel near Waugh Rock off the Kolombangara coast. Ainsworth radioed the location to headquarters for further investigation by air during daylight hours.

The subsiding of the battle allowed Ainsworth to turn his attention to the plight of *Helena*. The ship had failed to answer a routine acknowledgment after a turn. It was a clear indication something was wrong. "Since *Helena* lost all speed and became dead in the water just as the other cruisers made their simultaneous turn in reversing the action, the fact that the *Helena* had been torpedoed and had fallen out of formation was not noticed until sometime later," Ainsworth wrote. "The visibility was very poor and made worse by the smoke of battle." The admiral had additional calls sent out across various radio channels and by blinker light, but *Helena* failed to reply.

The continued search of Kula Gulf by *Radford* eventually unraveled the mystery of the missing *Helena*. A small dot appeared on the destroyer's radar scope at 3:13 AM. The unknown target was about 5,000 yards away. Ainsworth directed *Radford*'s Commander William Romoser to investigate. Lookouts were able to discern the faint outline of a shape as the warship cautiously moved closer. Several minutes passed before Romoser had more information to report. "Think we see a two digit number on ship." The dreadful news soon arrived. "I regret to report the number is 50," Romoser reported referring to *Helena*'s hull number. The target was the tip of *Helena*'s bow, floating freely after becoming separated from the rest of the warship by the first torpedo hit.

With the fate of *Helena* now known, Ainsworth directed *Nicholas* and *Radford* to search for survivors. He placed Captain McInerney aboard *Nicholas* in charge of the rescue operation. As the two destroyers began their search for *Helena* survivors, the admiral set a

course for the Slot to take his remaining warships out of Kula Gulf. The ammunition supplies on *Honolulu* and *St. Louis* were dangerously low owing to the sea battle and previous night's shore bombardment mission. It was 3:30 AM.

The *Helena* sailors were spread out in the dark night in an area about 6 1/2 miles off the northeast coast of Kolombangara. It was a dangerous situation for the rescue ships. Although the enemy was thought to have left the gulf, there was no way to know for sure. The destroyers needed to depart Kula Gulf at daylight or face the certain probability of a Japanese air attack.

It was 3:41 AM when *Nicholas* and *Radford* found the first survivors. Both destroyers put nets over the side to allow men to climb aboard and dropped whaleboats in the water to search for more. As many stranded sailors as possible needed to be picked up before morning light ended the rescue operation.

Radar aboard *Nicholas* suddenly registered a contact just after 4 AM. The targets were approaching the survivor area from the west at a high rate of speed. Captain McInerney took his ship northwest to further investigate. The contact was *Suzukaze* and *Tanikaze* returning to the scene of the battle for another torpedo strike and to look for the missing *Niizuki*. The destroyers had been hovering a safe distance to the west reloading torpedo tubes since their first encounter with American ships. However, lacking radar, the pair of Japanese vessels did not see any ships and quickly departed west.

The report of Japanese targets near the rescue operation prompted Admiral Ainsworth to turn around his departing ships from the trek back to Kula Gulf. When a subsequent message indicated the area was clear, he resumed his voyage down the Slot.

Neither Ainsworth nor McInerney knew Japanese ships were still unloading troops and supplies at Vila. Some vessels escaped west via Blackett Strait, but three went north through Kula Gulf. The route would result in yet another clash between the foes. The Japanese were dealt another blow when the destroyer *Nagatsuki* ran aground on the Kolombangara coast about five miles north of Vila. She was later abandoned after attempts to pull her free failed.

The destroyer *Amagiri* reached the northeast coast of Kolombangara at about 5 AM. Aboard was Captain Katsumori Yamashiro, commander of the Second Transportation Unit. This destroyer found *Niizuki* survivors about 15 minutes later and began to close. At the same time, the rescue of the *Helena* survivors was continuing about 13,000 yards to the north. Captain McInerney suspended operations

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ABOVE: These fortunate crewmen of the sunken light cruiser USS *Helena* were photographed shortly after they were plucked from the Pacific off the coast of the island of New Georgia. BELOW: These sailors who survived the sinking of the light cruiser *Helena* during the Battle of Kula Gulf made their way to the island of Vella Lavella and were subsequently rescued. In this photograph, they are being issued new clothing.

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when *Amagiri* appeared on his radar scope. Japanese lookouts sighted the American ships a short time later. Captain Yamashiro quickly abandoned his rescue operation and sped northwest.

The ensuing clash was brief but fierce. *Nicholas* unleashed torpedoes at 5:22 AM. *Amagiri* returned fire with torpedoes eight minutes later. Both sides had near misses but no hits, with one torpedo exploding 15 feet behind *Radford*. Gunfire started minutes later. A star shell from *Nicholas* illuminated the area, helping one 5-inch American shell to find *Amagiri*. It crashed amidships, destroying the radio room and damaging fire control circuits. Yamashiro had had enough of the fight and departed to the west under the cover of smoke. The *Niizuki* survivors were left to fend for themselves.

A second Japanese destroyer arrived in the area just after 6 AM. *Mochizuki* exchanged gunfire with the American ships at a range of about five miles just after daylight began to illuminate the area. The destroyer fired a single torpedo to no avail and suffered damage to a gun mount and torpedo tube from American shells. She soon laid a smoke screen to hide her departure from the area. The encounter marked the last shots of the sea battle.

Daylight also brought an end to the rescue of *Helena* survivors. Captain McInerney knew he had to leave the enemy-held waters of Kula Gulf or face an air attack. With over 700 *Helena* sailors aboard his two ships, he made the agonizing decision to depart with survivors still in the water. *Nicholas* and *Radford* set a course for the Slot, leaving a trail of smoke to conceal their escape. Whaleboats manned with volunteer crews were left behind to help the men still in the water.

Kula Gulf fell silent with the departure of the last American and Japanese warships. Becoming increasingly separated by wind and ocean currents, hundreds of *Helena* men remained afloat facing an uncertain future. The *Niizuki* survivors were also clinging to life in Kula Gulf. No rescue was in store for most of them, and a large number perished. Thirty-nine American planes later found the beached *Nagatsuki*. The stranded destroyer was set aflame and eventually torn apart by large explosions.

Admiral Ainsworth returned to Tulagi confident he had scored a solid victory against the Imperial Japanese Navy. History would later record the clash as the Battle of Kula Gulf. He collected action reports from the individual ships under his command in the weeks following the battle. In his summary report, dated August 1, 1943, the admiral confidently predicted that his force had sunk at least six Japanese ships.

The American conclusions were far from accurate. Typical of American naval commanders in the South Pacific in 1943, Ainsworth had relied too heavily on radar-controlled gunfire and underappreciated Japanese night fighting capabilities. The battle was close to a draw. *Helena* was the sole U.S. warship sunk during the encounter. The Japanese lost two destroyers—*Niizuki* and *Nagatsuki*—but were able to deliver 1,600 troops and 90 tons of supplies to Kolombangara.

The Battle of Kula Gulf was just one of many sea battles fought in the South Pacific. It neither changed the course of the war nor strongly influenced the fighting on the island of New Georgia. American forces continued to advance, and the Japanese Navy continued to lose ships that it could not replace.

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THE NIGHT OF JUNE 5, 1944, AND THE morning of June 6 were without a doubt some of the most pivotal hours in the history of the 20th century.

In the vanguard of the massive Allied effort to wrest the European continent from the murderous grip of Nazi Germany, the Western Allies had crafted Operation Overlord, a combined air and sea invasion that relied on secrecy, stealth, surprise, deception, and violence to punch through German defenses along the northern coast of France.

The planners at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) had always seen the invasion being launched with a prelude of parachute and glider forces. These airborne troops would be dropped and landed behind enemy lines along the Normandy coast to seize key objectives such as crossroads and bridges to prevent the Germans from counterattacking the seaborne invasion force.

Not only that, but the planners were counting on such airborne forces being able to sow confusion among the enemy ranks, cause the Germans to look over their shoulders, and perhaps launch their counterattacks in the wrong direction, thus giving the amphibious troops a few precious hours more to come ashore.

To help their amphibious forces land, the British would land a force of paratroops and glider-borne soldiers at the easternmost edge of the invasion area to knock out gun positions that posed a threat to the debarking troops at Gold, Juno, and Sword Beaches and seal off the area from counterattacking German units.

THE LITTLE KNOWN BATTLE FOR LA FIÈRE HAS BEEN CALLED "PROBABLY THE BLOODIEST SMALL UNIT STRUGGLE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF AMERICAN ARMS."

Slugfest in Normandy

BY FLINT WHITLOCK

The Allies' western invasion beachheads were code-named Omaha and Utah; no airborne or glider troops were scheduled to drop behind Omaha, but, because it was the westernmost, Utah Beach, at La Madeleine, was deemed to be the most vulnerable. To secure it, over 13,000 men of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions would be inserted.

Shortly after midnight on June 6, as 821 C-47 Skytrain transport planes dropped advance elements of the divisions, the situation began to go wrong in a hurry. Quickly recovering from their surprise, the Germans on the ground began filling the night sky with antiaircraft shells. The planes, flying in formation, made perfect targets, and the paratroopers inside began bailing out far from their intended drop zones.

Some of the 82nd soldiers, and a few of the 101st as well, came down right over the vital crossroads town of Sainte-Mère-Église, while other groups of paratroopers ended up on the west side of the Merderet River and its flooded adjacent fields, where they could do little good.

Battles are often fought in places that had no prior historical significance. They are accidents of geography, imbuing importance to some otherwise insignificant piece of real estate. So it

In this painting by artist James Dietz titled Against All Odds, paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division supported by an M4 Sherman medium tank storm the causeway at La Fière. The action at the causeway was some of the bitterest fighting in Normandy.

was with a place called La Fière, a mile west of Sainte-Mère-Église.

La Fière was not so much a village as it was (and is) a collection of buildings—the Manoir de la Fière, then owned by the Leroux family—and a small stone bridge over the Merderet River, usually a small, meandering stream. It is an undistinguished, ordinary looking bridge that resembles scores of other stone bridges in Normandy. In fact, it could be a miniature replica of the stone bridge over Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, Virginia. But great events often imbue ordinary-looking places with historic importance. And, just as Ambrose Burnside's Union troops and Robert Toombs's Confederate forces imbued the Antietam Bridge with importance on September 17, 1862, and hallowed the ground with their blood, so, too, did the Americans and Germans at this small stone bridge over the Merderet.

Located on one of the few routes that German forces to the west of Sainte-Mère-Église could use to assault Utah Beach, the La Fière bridge assumed an importance far out of proportion to its modest size. To seize it, SHAEF had originally assigned two 82nd regiments: Colonel William Ekman's 505th, which would grab the east end,

and Colonel George Millett's 507th, which was supposed to seize the western side.

That, of course, was the plan, but like most of the other plans that morning, this one began unraveling even before it got under way. Regiments, battalions, companies, and platoons had been blown like autumn leaves all over Normandy; almost no troops had come down on their designated drop zones. Radios had been smashed or lost in marshes that were not supposed to exist. Maps were on the bodies of leaders drowned in the swamps or hanging dead from trees. Weapons, ammunition, and other vital supplies were safely inside equipment bundles that had landed who knows where.

To top it off, enemy forces were stronger than anticipated. Yet, the airborne troops had been taught to improvise, to do the best they could with what they had, to take charge of leaderless soldiers and accomplish the mission no matter what the cost. And, out of the confusion of the drop, that is exactly what they began to do.

Fortunately, the 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) commander, Major Frederick Kellam, and most of the rest of his battalion, performed a rare feat on D-Day morning: they landed on time and on the correct DZ.

Sergeant Robert M. Murphy, A Company, 505th PIR, 82nd Division, related, "My company assembled almost 98 percent of our men under the leadership of our hard-nosed first lieutenant, John J. "Red Dog" Dolan, so named for his red hair and tenacity. When I met up with Dolan, everyone seemed exuberant, high spirited and ready for action. There is a peculiar elation, a feeling that paratroopers experience after a combat jump. Their chute has opened, and they've reached the ground alive."

Once Dolan had assembled the majority of his company, about an hour before dawn, he struck out from DZ "O" toward La Fière manor and bridge. Dolan was supposed to seize and hold the bridge—an assignment that initially did not look too tough.

The bridge stands just a grenade's throw west of the manor buildings. Beyond the bridge was a swamp caused by the flooding of the Merderet, 1,000 yards wide at its narrowest; the elevated causeway between the farm and the tiny hamlet of Cauquigny, a kilometer to the west, was the only dry passage either side could use. Once Dolan's men captured the buildings that overlooked the bridge and causeway, they would have a ready-made fortress from which to defend them.

The number of enemy troops at this position was unknown at the time (it turned out to be only 28 men initially), but it was assumed that the Germans were guarding every bridge, no matter how small, and Dolan knew he needed to find out if the enemy was in or around the farm buildings. The only way to do that was to send a patrol into harm's way.

Sergeant Murphy related that the terrain, not the Germans, was his unit's greatest initial concern at the bridge. "On the west side of the Merderet River, running about 8,000 yards north and southeasterly at the La Fière bridge

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Paratroopers check their gear prior to loading aboard Douglas C-47 transport aircraft for the jump into Normandy during the predawn hours of D-Day. The transport aircraft came under heavy fire and encountered high winds, causing them to fly low and fast and scattering their human cargo across a wide area of Normandy.

area, the Germans had flooded the entire plain by closing the La Barquette locks in 1943. American reconnaissance photo and map experts did not detect the floodwater, for reeds, tall grass, and rushes had grown up out of the immense new marshland. These treacherous waters claimed the lives of many 82nd paratroopers.

"The DZ selection was one of the worst and most tragic mistakes that Allied pre-invasion strategists made," said Murphy. "Describing this new, wide-open prairie drop, they simply commented: 'ground here probably soft.' The Germans couldn't have conceived a more deadly trap for the paratroopers and glidermen who landed there."

Murphy continued, "Our sole D-Day mission was to seize La Fière bridge and hold it so that the armor of the 4th Division (coming ashore at Utah Beach) and the 8th Infantry Regiment, plus heavy artillery, could cross it fighting to the west."

As the spearpoint of the 505th, Dolan's company approached in the predawn blackness. No enemy movement could be seen due to the reduced visibility caused by the foliage, the hedgerows, the high stone walls around the property, and the darkness.

Confusion reigned because Dolan, even after sunrise and at the height of the battle, was unaware for a long time that he was being reinforced by other American units arriving piecemeal on the scene. Moving toward La Fière in A Company's wake were Colonel Ekman and elements of his 505th PIR; the 508th's commander, Colonel Roy Lindquist with portions of his regiment, Captain Floyd Burdette "Ben" Schwartzwalder (who would later be the collegiate football Coach of the Year at Syracuse), commander of G Company, 507th, and 45 others from the mis-dropped 507th.

Unaware of the presence of all these other converging resources, primarily because he had no working radios, Dolan maneuvered his 1st and 3rd Platoons into position around the manor. His account of what happened provides a chilling, firsthand view of a battle that military historian S.L.A. Marshall described as "probably the bloodiest small unit struggle in the experience of American arms."

Dolan directed Lieutenant George Presnell, leader of 2nd Platoon, to maneuver around the buildings from the north side and approach from the flank, using the hedgerows to conceal their movement. When 2nd Platoon neared, the Germans opened fire.

Dolan said, "I directed [platoon leader] Lieutenant Donald Coxon to send his scouts out. This he did, and he also went out with them. He had plenty of personal courage but he didn't have the heart to order them out without going with them."

It was a fateful—and fatal—move. "A few moments later," Dolan recalled, "a German machine gun opened up, killing Coxon and one of his scouts, Fergueson. Their fire was returned; and, with Major [James E.] McGinity [the battalion executive officer] and myself leading, a few men holding and returning frontal fire, the platoon flanked to the left. At the same time, I directed Lieutenant Presnell to re-cross the road and attack along the northern side down to the bridge. This was done, and the second platoon didn't meet with any fire until they arrived at the bridge.

"The third platoon continued its flanking move and cut back in toward the road to the bridge. Because of the fire, we calculated that there was just one machine-gun crew that was in our way. It later turned out that there must have been at least a squad dug in at this point, with at least two of them armed with [MP-40]

machine pistols. Prisoners captured later, in addition to the German dead, amounted to about the size of one of our platoons [40 men]. There were no German officers captured.

"We cut back toward the road, traveling in a northerly direction," Dolan noted. "Major McGinity was leading and I was about three or four paces behind and slightly to the right. There was a high, thick hedgerow to our left, and it was in here that I figured the machine gun was located. When we had traveled about two-thirds of the way up the hedgerow, they opened up on us with rifles and at least two machine pistols. I returned the fire with my Thompson sub-machine gun at a point where I could see leaves in the hedgerow fluttering. Major McGinity was killed instantly.

"As luck would have it, there was a German foxhole to my left which I jumped into and from where I continued to fire. I could only guess where to shoot but I had to, as part of the third platoon was exposed to their fire. Lieutenant [Robert E.] McLaughlin, the assistant platoon leader, was wounded and died later that day. His radio operator was also killed. The platoon by now was under fire from two directions, from the point where I was pinned down, and also from the direction of the bridge."

One of Dolan's sergeants began lobbing mortar rounds in, but it was all guesswork and, because of the danger of hitting his own men, the mortars stopped.

"I can't estimate how long we were pinned down in this fashion," Dolan said, "but it was at least an hour. I made several attempts to move, but drew their fire. On my last attempt, I drew no fire. They obviously had pulled out."

The effort to seize the small stone bridge started badly and would get worse.

Eight hundred yards north of the bridge, Colonel Roy Lindquist, commanding the 508th PIR, could hear the gunfire and urged his men to follow the railroad line south toward the sounds of battle. He was joined by Schwartzwalder's company and the 45 additional men from the 507th.

Lindquist and his contingent of the 508th arrived at La Fière along with Captain Arthur Stefanich's C Company, 505th. Colonel William Ekman, the 505th's commander, was there also, as was Captain Schwartzwalder, G Company, 507th. Only then did Dolan realize that he had reinforcements.

After meeting with Stefanich, Dolan said he knew where the other enemy machine-gun positions were and would take them out; he directed his men to flank the manor on both the north and south sides. A five-man patrol from A Company tried getting close to the buildings with their foot-thick stone walls, but a machine gun chattered, killing four. The Germans even had snipers hidden in trees.

Bud Warnecke of Captain Royal Taylor's B Company, 508th, said his unit was ordered to attack across the swamp and river: "I took my platoon into the river with just our heads out of the water. The German machine-gun fire we received was long range but, like the movies, the bullets were dancing off the water around us."

Surviving that ordeal, Warnecke was later preparing to attack enemy positions when he, a sergeant, and Lieutenant Homer Jones, who had taken command of B Company when Captain Taylor was injured on the jump, came under machine-gun fire. "I was hit in the shoulder," said Warnecke, "and felt as if I was hit with a sledge hammer. I was knocked down and on the way got one through my canteen. Got up somewhat dazed and saw that Lieutenant Jones had been hit through the neck. We called for a medic. Sergeant Fecteau, who was nearby, immediately used two fingers and plugged the holes to stop the bleeding."

The medic arrived, injected Jones with morphine, patched him up, and called for litter

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-731-0388-35; Photo: Theobald

ABOVE: German soldiers head for the front lines in Normandy in this photo taken sometime in June 1944 after the Allied D-Day landings. The Germans were surprised by the landings but proved resilient and put up stiff resistance at crucial points in Normandy such as the La Fière causeway. BELOW: The La Fiere Manor was the scene of intense fighting as a handful of Germans defended it from the paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division. One historian called the struggle at La Fière "probably the bloodiest small unit struggle in the experience of American arms."

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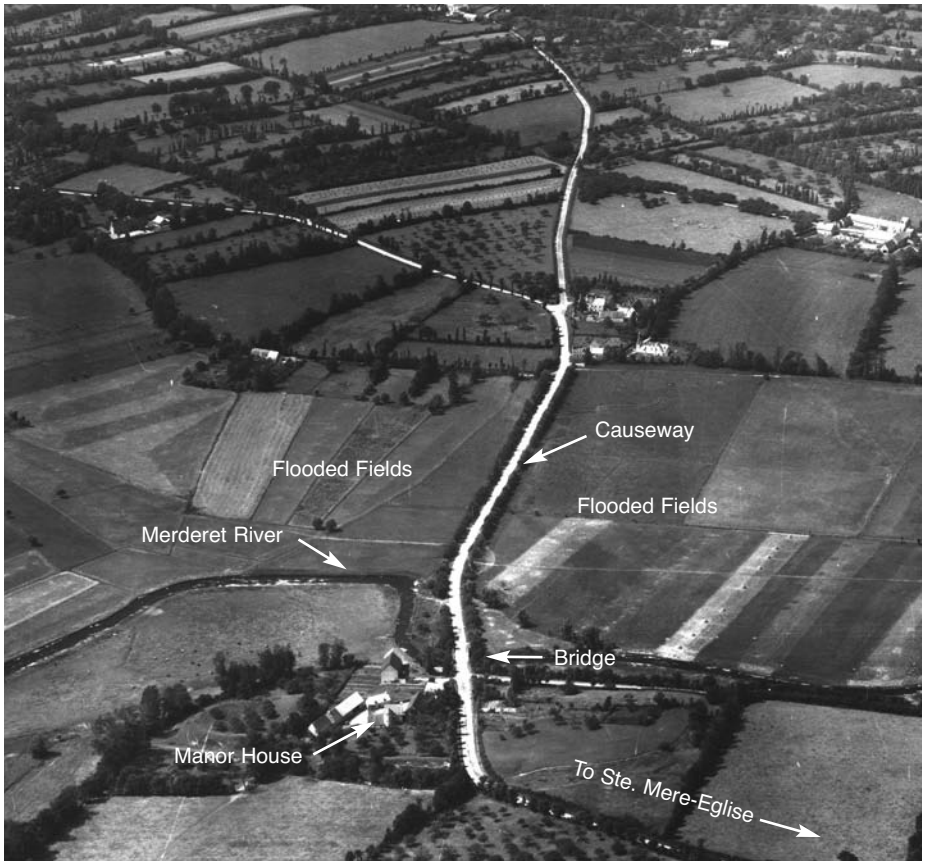

ABOVE: Looking west from Sainte-Mère-Eglise, the La Fière Bridge stands at the bottom of this photo, to the right of the embattled La Fière Manor. The large field in the center of the photo was completely submerged during the month of June 1944. BELOW LEFT: Generals Matthew Ridgway (left) and James Gavin, commander and assistant commander respectively of the 82nd Airborne Division, confer during operations in Normandy. BELOW RIGHT: The La Fière Bridge is quiet today. The flood waters have receded and the bridge stands between La Fière Manor and a wide, flat field that was once a lake.

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Photo: Neal Fausset

bearers to take him away. Warnecke's wound was judged to be superficial, but his left shoulder turned "blue and yellow."

At approximately 9 AM, Brig. Gen. James Gavin, who had been dropped northwest of La Fière on the west side of the Merderet, arrived at the manor with about 300 men from the 507th PIR. Major Kellam briefed Gavin on the situation and expressed confidence that, with all the men from his and other units now gathering at the bridge and the manor, they would be able to take control very soon.

Gavin, who had once commanded the 505th, knew the men were top notch and agreed with Kellam's assessment. Gavin then moved south toward Chef-du-Pont to orchestrate the taking of the bridge there, the other major crossing of the Merderet. An intense firefight broke out at Chef-du-Pont, but the Americans captured the town and bridge. Gavin then returned to La Fière where Red Dog Dolan was preparing to make one more assault against the Germans holed up at the manor.

Colonel Lindquist wanted in on the action and sent a message to Dolan that Schwartzwalder's company would attack from the south side, the 508th would attack from due east, and Dolan should keep attacking from the north. Not surprisingly, given the confusion of the morning, the message never reached Dolan.

Dolan and his men cautiously approached the manor, and someone fired a bazooka round into one of the first floor windows. All shooting stopped. Robert Murphy said, "The Manor battle now was over as far as we in A Company were concerned; it was only a matter of capturing any Germans who remained trapped inside.

"Then suddenly shooting started in the backyard. Some 10 or 12 Germans started firing out of the second-floor windows of the Leroux homestead. Everyone in the 508 patrol and the 505 and 507 men returned fire. After 10 minutes, one of the Germans waved a white sheet or pillow case surrender flag out the window."

A paratrooper went forward to accept the surrender—and was shot dead, probably by a German at another window who didn't know that his comrades had already indicated their desire to give up. Another brief, furious round of firing broke out, and the Germans once again surrendered—this time for good.

The paratroopers found the Leroux family huddled in their basement wine cellar, petrified by the battle that had raged for hours above them. The grounds of the shattered manor were littered with the bodies of dead Germans and Americans.

At about 1:45 PM, Captain Schwartzwalder, G Company, 507th, ordered one of his platoons to try for the bridge. Two men, Pfcs. Johnnie Ward and James Mattingly, made it across when a German at the far end popped up to take a shot; Mattingly emptied his clip into him, tossed a grenade into a machine-gun nest, and wounded several Germans, whom he took prisoner. An officer later said, "It was the best piece of individual soldiering I've ever seen." Mattingly would later receive the Silver Star.

At about this time, an advance party of paratroopers from Lt. Col. Charles Timmes's 2nd Battalion, 507th PIR—which had been misdropped and was surrounded in an orchard northwest of Sainte-Mère-Église, moving south down the west side of the Merderet—reached the causeway and made sure it was clear. The road to Cauquigny was now open for the taking. Taking it was Schwartzwalder's company, which marched the kilometer to it and linked up with a 10-man advance party from Timmes's battalion positioned around the village church.

But Schwartzwalder made a crucial error; he left a small force (eight men and one lieutenant, Lewis Levy) at the church in Cauquigny while

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An American 57mm antitank weapon fires at German armor and troop concentrations in Normandy. During the early phase of the fighting at the La Fière causeway, the 57mm gun was the heaviest available to the men of the 82nd Airborne Division.

he and 80 men set off in search of Timmes's battalion. The Yanks in Cauquigny were about to be overrun by the enemy.

At approximately 2:30 PM, with the battle for La Fière now over—or so everyone believed—Major Kellam set up a defensive force at the eastern end of the bridge and planted mines along the causeway at the western end in case the Germans counterattacked from that direction. A disabled German truck was pushed onto the bridge to act as a further roadblock, and three 57mm antitank guns that had been brought in by glider arrived at the manor. The American position at La Fière was beginning to look impregnable.

Then, at around 4 PM intense firing was heard to the west of the bridge, and Lieutenant Dolan spotted a group of paratroopers—a patrol from the 508th that had gone out earlier—rushing back across the marshland. It was obvious that they were being pursued. German forces led by three light tanks of French manufacture were coming down the causeway from the direction of Cauquigny; Levy's small force that Schwartzwalder had left there had been routed.

Sergeant Elmo Bell, C Company, 505th said, "There were about 12 or 15 [U.S.] paratroopers marching ahead of the tanks." The tank commander was forcing the paratroopers to pick up mines from the road and throw them into the fields.

With the captured paratroopers being used as human shields, the German force drew nearer to the bridge and manor; none of Dolan's men dared fire for fear of hitting their fellow soldiers. The tanks then began blasting the American positions with their main guns and machine guns.

Dolan said, "When the lead tank was about 40 or 50 yards from the bridge, the two Company A bazooka teams got up just like clockwork to the edge of the road. They were under the heaviest small-arms fire from the other side of the causeway, and from the cannon and machine-gun fire from the tanks."

One of the bazooka teams, Privates Lenold Peterson and his loader Marcus Heim, took aim at the lead tank. Before they could fire, though, a burst of American machine-gun fire killed the tank commander who was standing up, exposed, in the turret. Peterson then launched his rocket at the same time one of the 57mm guns fired.

The gun blew the track off the tank, bringing it to a halt. The turret swung around, fired, and killed the gun crew. Meanwhile, the dozen or so captured paratroopers threw themselves to the ground to avoid being hit in the crossfire.

Bazooka man Heim said, "The first tank was hit and started to turn sideways, at the same time swinging its turret around and firing at us. We had just moved forward around a cement telephone pole when a German round hit it, and we had to jump out of the way to avoid being hit as it was falling.... We kept firing at the first tank until it was put out of action and on fire." Another trooper jumped onto the tank and dropped a grenade into the open hatch, silencing it forever.

It was an astonishing scene. More tanks were pouring machine-gun fire into the American positions, and their main guns were pumping shell after shell at Dolan's men, who were firing back just as furiously. As the gunners were killed, more paratroopers rushed up to take their places; Sergeant Elmo Bell recalled that at least seven paratroopers died manning one of the guns. Germans, taking cover behind the tanks, were firing rifles and automatic weapons at the paratroopers; mortar rounds were exploding everywhere.

The rest of the American 57mm guns were brought to bear on the two enemy tanks and the infantry around them. Peterson and Heim saw the second tank trying to push the disabled first tank out of the way, so they moved forward and repeatedly blasted the second tank until it burst into flames.

Running low on ammo, Heim dashed through a hailstorm of flying bullets to the other bazooka crew's position, but they were nowhere to be found. The damaged weapon was lying on the ground, as were a number of rounds. Scooping them up, Heim dashed back to Peterson and put them to good use in knocking out the third tank. With some understatement, Heim said, "This was one of the toughest days of my life. Why we were not injured or killed only the good Lord knows."

At the La Fière bridge, the German infantry, their tank support gone, broke off their attack and began pulling back toward Cauquigny. Heim and Peterson yelled for more bazooka rounds, and Major Kellam, along with Captain Dale A. Roysdon, the battalion S-3, ran forward with a bag of rockets. At that moment German mortar rounds began exploding on and around the bridge; Major Kellam was killed and Roysdon mortally wounded. Since that day, the little stone bridge at La Fière manor has been called "Major Kellam's Bridge."

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Alexander, the 505th's executive officer, was at the regimental command post southwest of Sainte-Mère-Église receiving sketchy battlefield reports from what few operational radios there were. Colonel Ekman was gone, off to control the action around Sainte-Mère-Église. The Germans were trying to recapture the town, and Ekman had ordered Lt. Col. Benjamin Vandervoort's 2nd Battalion, 505th PIR, to move into it, augment Lt. Col. Edward "Cannonball" Krause's men (3rd Battalion, 505th PIR), and hold it.

A messenger rushed into Alexander's command post to give him the obsolete news that Major Kellam was reporting that the La Fière bridge was in American hands but enemy tanks were moving in to take it back. Shortly thereafter, another runner arrived with the devastating news that Kellam, McGinity, and Roysdon had all been killed; the situation at La Fière had turned critical. Alexander decided that he needed to get there, fast. He took off in a jeep

with his orderly, Corporal Chick Eitelman.

En route they were shot at by the enemy, and Eitelman was wounded in the knee. Alexander dropped him off at an aid station and resumed his run to La Fière. "On the way," Alexander said, "I found a mixed group of 40 or so 101st and 508th men lying in a ditch along the road. Supposedly someone held them as a reserve. I did not know who, so I rounded them up and took them with me. We arrived at the railroad crossing above the bridge at about 1:30 in the afternoon." The enemy was still lobbing mortar and artillery fire into the area.

Alexander met with Dolan, who filled him in on the situation. Although A Company had taken quite a few casualties, Dolan still held a strong position. But with ammunition running low, how long he could hold it was anybody's guess. Just then, General Gavin, who had gone down to Chef-du-Pont to gather reinforcements and bring them back to La Fière, returned. Alexander said, "[Gavin] had 507th men following some distance behind because he heard about 75 men of the 507th from Chef-du-Pont, Gavin attached them to Alexander's force, then gathered the men from the 508th and the 101st strays Alexander had brought with him and took them to Chef-du-Pont.

Alexander, trying to think like an attacker, then tweaked Dolan's defensive positions and beefed up a few of the weak points. He also helped to move a wounded man when the Germans began saturating the area with a mortar and artillery barrage that lasted nearly half an hour.

Later that afternoon, Gavin returned, picked up some more men, and took them back to bolster the river crossing at Chef-du-Pont. Alexander noted, "The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 505 were still having a rough go as well [at Sainte-Mère-Église]. Lt. Col. Krause was temporarily in the aid station after receiving several wounds. B Company was taken from us and attached to the 3rd Battalion in Sainte-Mère-Église. I objected to that when it happened, but Sainte-Mère-Église was being attacked from two sides and they had ongoing fighting while we were being shelled. No Germans were coming across the causeway right then."

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our men at La Fière were having a bad time. I assured him that the men were in good position and had weathered the attack. He instructed me to take command of the position.

"I said, 'Do you want me on this side, the other side, or both sides of the river?'

"He thought for a minute and said, 'You better stay on this side because it looks like the Germans are getting pretty strong over there.' He was worried that if we attacked them and things went badly, we might lose the bridge altogether. He added that I should hold fast, not allowing passage to the Germans."

When Lt. Col. Arthur Maloney arrived with

At Sainte-Mère-Église, the best word to describe what was happening in the 82nd's sector in and around the town is "donnybrook"—an Irish term meaning an "uproarious brawl." It seemed that on June 6, and again the next day, in every town, hamlet, and field, the American paratroopers were standing toe to toe with the Germans and slugging it out with everything they had—knives, pistols, rifles, grenades, machine guns, mortars, artillery, and tanks—battling without pause, each side knowing the terrible consequences if they lost. It was war without pity and combat without quarter.

And the La Fière bridge, too, was far from being secure. The Germans knew its importance and were about to do everything in their power to get it back.

Two days after the battle for the La Fière bridge began, it was still going strong, with neither side showing any inclination of giving up this important crossing over the Merderet.

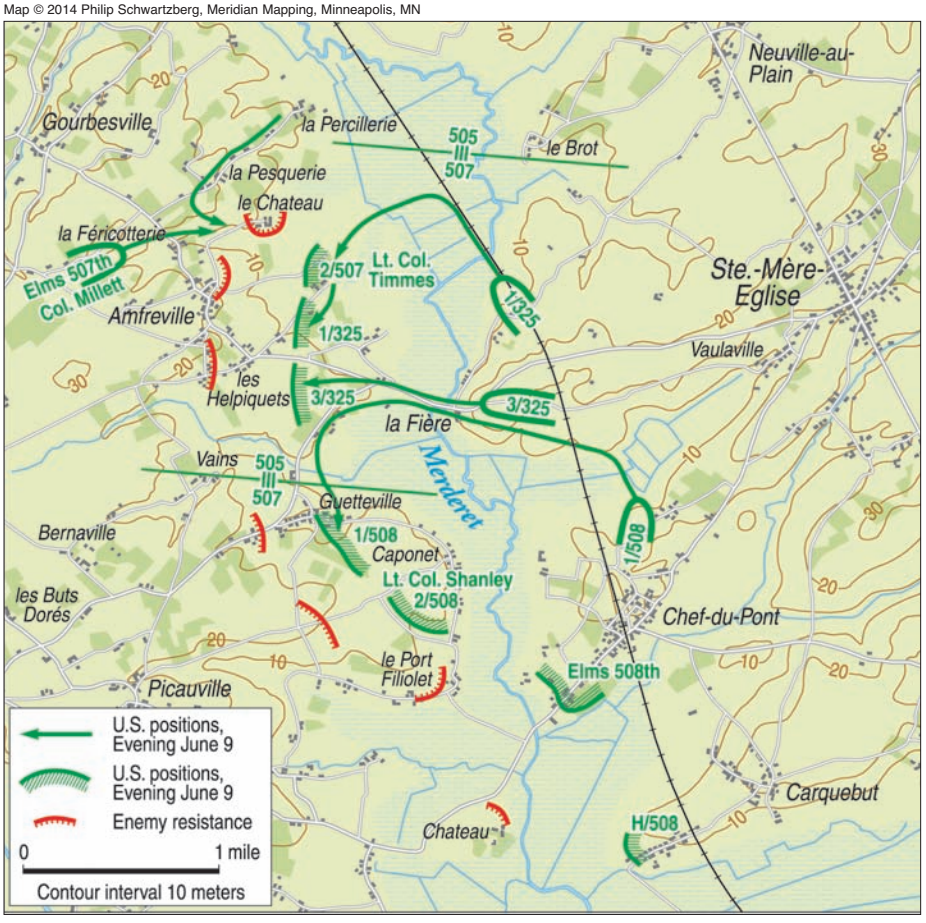
When Colonel Harry Lewis's 325th Glider Infantry Regiment arrived in Normandy, Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, the 82nd's commander, ordered it to force a crossing in the flooded area to the north of La Fière and attack the Germans to the west of the bridge from the rear. At dark, Lewis sent Major Teddy Sanford's 1st Battalion into the area, where it was to make a flanking maneuver through the marsh about 850 yards north of the bridge. Company C would take the lead, followed by A and B Companies.

The glider troops, virgins to combat, were determined to do well but, while fording the marsh shortly after midnight on June 8-9, B and C Companies lost contact with one another. Company C proceeded over a slight rise through a wheat field, entered an orchard, and reached a sunken road. In the dark, wild, intermittent firing broke out and much of the company was decimated.

One man stood tall—literally. Pfc. Charles DeGlopper from Grand Island, New York, was a very big man. Six foot six and over 200 pounds, he towered over everyone else in C Company. While his size made him appear more formidable than the mild-mannered 22-year-old he actually was, it also made him an inviting target on the battlefield. DeGlopper was advancing with the forward platoon when it came under enemy fire.

The platoon leader, Lieutenant Bruester Johnston, was killed. Knowing that his platoon was on the verge of being slaughtered, DeGlopper yelled for his buddies to take off for a hedgerow in the rear while he kept the Germans at bay with his Browning Automatic Rifle. Standing on a roadway in full view of the Germans and drawing their fire to him instead of his buddies, DeGlopper sprayed the enemy despite being hit several times.

DeGlopper remained firing until his wounds brought him to his knees. Even then he did not quit and continued firing until he ran out of ammunition and fell mortally wounded. Afterward, members of his company found the ground strewn with dead Germans and many machine guns and automatic weapons that he had knocked out of action.



ABOVE: Control of the La Fière area was crucial to Allied plans to move inland from the D-Day invasion beaches. The Germans put up a spirited fight at La Fière against lightly armed troops of the 82nd Airborne Division. LEFT: Private First Class Charles DeGlopper defended his comradres' retreat with his Browning Automatic Rifle. His body was later found surrounded by dead Germans he had killed. OPPOSITE: During the fighting at La Fière, American paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division handled bazookas with great skill and held German armor at bay. This paratrooper takes cover beside a roadway near La Fière, his bazooka nearby.

The only thing more surprising than DeGlopper's sacrificial heroism is that, considering the innumerable acts of courage that took place in Normandy, he was one of only two members of an airborne or glider unit to receive the Medal of Honor for extraordinarily heroic actions performed during Operation Overlord.

At La Fière, the Germans were of no mind to abandon their attempt to take back the bridge and continued pouring resources into the area; so did the Americans. Because the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment (GIR) had only two battalions instead of the customary three that most infantry regiments had, Lt. Col. Charles Carrell's 2nd Battalion, 401st GIR had been attached to the 325th as its third battalion. Lewis's 1st Battalion was across the river battling Germans north of Cauquigny.

To break the stalemate at the bridge, Gavin told Lewis at mid-morning on June 9 to employ Carrell's battalion along with a dozen Shermans from the 746th Tank Battalion and 155mm guns from the 90th Division Artillery and make one final push to secure the bridge. As waiting would serve no purpose, he told Lewis to get the attack started immediately; Lewis in turn, although believing it was suicidal to charge a mass of men through such a narrow, strongly guarded space as the bridge and causeway, gave Carrell the order to carry out the attack.

Carrell, feeling that his battalion had been unfairly singled out as sacrificial lambs, reluctantly gathered his company commanders and outlined what they were expected to do; Captain John Sauls's G Company, 401st, would lead the attack, followed by Captain Charles Murphy's E Company. Captain James Harney's F Company, 401st, would cross last. Once across, Saul's company would turn left, E Company would turn right, and Harney's men would dash straight ahead toward Cauquigny—a distance of over 500 yards—and le Motey, just beyond. Everyone agreed that the charge was suicidal, but an order was an order.

One aspect of combat that people who have never been to war fail to appreciate is the tremendous amount of noise made by modern munitions. The sound is truly terrifying—a literal assault on the eardrums as well as the other senses. When one is close to unceasing, shattering blasts, booming explosions, the cringe-inducing rattle of machine-gun and rifle fire, the popping and whizzing of bullets and shrapnel, and the concussions that batter the chest and in themselves can cause death by bursting the heart and lungs—not to mention the fear produced by flying, whirling projectiles of all sizes and the sight of men being violently torn apart—the very act of standing up and charging into such a maelstrom is an act of courage beyond the ken of anyone who has not experienced it.

So, with shells bursting and bullets cutting the air over the small bridge and the unbelievable din of battle physically hammering the very roots of their being, it was not surprising that Carrell's men naturally hesitated to expose themselves to the fire of both friend and foe. Gavin personally ordered Carrell to get the attack going, but he had been slightly injured in the glider landing and said he did not feel up to the challenge.

When Gavin again ordered him to move out, Carrell lost his nerve and declined, claiming that he was sick. Relieving Carrell on the spot, Lewis turned to Major Arthur Gardner, the 325th's S-2 (Intelligence) officer, and appointed him battalion commander.

Gavin was not happy about the sacking of Carroll, a fellow West Pointer. "Carroll had never been in combat, never been in a position like that," he wrote. "But I had to do it. The whole battle was hanging by a thread."

To bolster the attack, two tank platoons—a dozen Shermans—from the recently arrived 746th Tank Battalion added to the Americans' supporting fire, and a battery of the 90th's 155mm guns that had just been brought forward slammed their huge shells into the enemy's positions, then laid down a smoke screen. But smoke does not stop bullets or shells, and the Germans continued firing blindly through the fog at the bridge and manor.

Gathering his courage at the sight of the landscape to his front being obliterated by the barrage, Captain Sauls yelled, "Follow me!" and led his men from the safety of a stone wall at the manor into the firestorm; many were cut down as they began their charge; soon the bridge and causeway beyond were littered with dead and dying Americans.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Shortly after the fighting at La Fière concluded, these American soldiers paused for a photographer with the heavily damaged manor house in the background. The bitter fighting at La Fière was a harbinger of combat to come in Normandy. BELOW: Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division with helmet covers fashioned out of parachute silk chat with 4th Infantry Division soldiers near La Fière while a German soldier lies dead at their feet. Some of the flooded fields are visible in the background.

Gavin noted, "I was quite apprehensive about the ability of the 325th [i.e., 401st] to make the crossing, since they, too, had not been in battle before." To stiffen the glidermen's resolve, Gavin told Captain Robert Rae, commander of Service Company, 507th PIR, to provide every bit of support possible to the troops when they charged the bridge. "I told him also that I was a little afraid that the 325th might break in the fury of the battle. I said that if they did and any of them started drifting back across the causeway, I would signal to him and he was to lead the paratroopers in a charge across the causeway into the German positions. I figured that the momentum of this action would take the 325th along with it."

At 10 AM, every American near La Fière bridge opened up—riflemen, machine gunners, tankers, artillerymen—shocking the Germans with the violence of the massed fire that looked like everything in the American arsenal was being unleashed upon them.

When he was sure that the enemy was reeling from the force of the overwhelming assault, Gavin signaled the glidermen to begin their charge. With great apprehension, normal for troops going into their first battle, the 325th, 401st cautiously started moving forward.

Lieutenant Lee Travelstead, a machine-gun platoon leader, recalled feeling that the order to charge all the way to Cauquigny was "a Kamikaze charge if there ever was one," in which his men, being slowed down by heavy weapons and ammunition, "would be a bull's eye kind of target." But orders were orders and Travelstead and his men followed the 325th, 401st GIR riflemen. "We moved through the fire like a mule pack train," he said.

Some minutes later, unable to see through all the smoke and dust and debris, and worried that the 325th, 401st's attack had stalled, Gavin alerted Captain Rae and his 90 paratroopers to move onto the bridge. Rae remembered, "As the 325th's attack got underway, the causeway became a mass of stagnant humanity. It became obvious more men were needed on the west bank to secure a viable bridgehead. At the time the 325th's attack wasn't moving forward, so General Gavin came over to me and said, 'Rae, you've got to go and keep going!'

"We came out shouting, forcing our way through the log-jam of dead and dying soldiers and some soldiers refusing to continue the attack. We continued running until we reached the west bank. After we knocked out the German positions on the other side, I split my force, sending half down a dirt road to the south where the 325th was having trouble." Rae's force was followed by the Sherman tanks.

Unknown to Gavin, the glidermen's assault was moving. Sauls, miraculously untouched by enemy fire, had reached the western end of the causeway, blasting Germans with his Tommy gun as he went. One of his platoon leaders, Lieutenant Donald Wason, wasn't so lucky; he was killed while taking out a machine-gun nest at Cauquigny.

Gavin suddenly felt the need to be where the action was, and both he and Ridgway crossed the bridge during the battle. Gavin noted later, "When I had gone across, I knew I had not realized the extent of the German strength on the far side. In a field a hundred yards from the bridge were a dozen mortars dug in in huge square holes in the earth. There was a great deal of artillery, half-tracks, self-propelled guns. Much of their artillery was horse-drawn, and horses killed and wounded were still in harness."

Lieutenant Travelstead said, "Dead and

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These tanks of German Panzer Ersatz und Ausbildungs Abteilung 100 (100th Tank Replacement and Training Battalion) were knocked out during the intense fighting that unfolded around the La Fière causeway. All three of the vehicles seen here are French-made tanks that were captured by the Germans in 1940. This image was taken from a reel of motion picture footage filmed by a Signal Corps photographer on June 10, 1944.

wounded were everywhere as I moved steadily along. Then I saw General Ridgway in the causeway trying to remove a cable from the track of a tank to clear the way. It was bad enough for any of us to be there, but a two-star general?"

The battle went on without pause. Travelstead saw the men around him being killed but Ridgway "kept working at the tank, apparently oblivious to all else." Gavin soon appeared on the scene. "What was going on?" Travelstead asked himself. "It seemed like chaos in front, and here, almost by my side, were both General Ridgway and General Gavin, division commander and assistant division commander of some 10,000 troops, down here on that murderous causeway. Was it so important? Where were all the other troops?"

Side by side the paratroops and glidermen pushed the Germans back. At one point Travelstead was standing in the center of the causeway when two paratroopers suddenly appeared at his side. An instant later an explosion blew the trio into the ditch. Both paratroopers had shielded Travelstead from the blast and were now dead; the lieutenant was wounded but alive. Making his way back to the aid station, he "could not, and cannot, forget the two paratroopers who in a matter of a second, almost as angels, had stepped to my side, taken the explosion and shrapnel from me, and died instantly. Why?" He would wonder forever.

Now it was the turn of Captain Charles Murphy's E Company, 401st GIR. Men hunched their shoulders, lowered their heads, said a last prayer, and lurched forward, zig-zagging across the bridge and leaping over bodies strewn everywhere. Bullets thwacked into running soldiers, spinning them to the ground; 35 would die that day on the bridge and causeway. Murphy went down, wounded in the face. Somehow, Lieutenant Richard B. Johnson, leading an E Company platoon, continued into a barrage but was hit in the ankle and arm.

Undeterred, Johnson crawled forward and reached Cauquigny. One of his men kicked in the door to one of the six houses in the hamlet and was killed by fire from Germans inside; a grenade silenced the enemy. Johnson's platoon sergeant, Henry Howell, was wounded in the arm, and Johnson did his best to patch it up and give him a shot of morphine. "Blood was flowing more than I could account for," Johnson said, puzzled, "until I realized that a lot of it was mine, coming from that shrapnel slice in my left arm."

Johnson's men captured 30 Germans, then 12 more at Le Motey; Sherman tanks were on their heels, as were Generals Ridgway and Gavin. One officer, Lt. Col. Frank Norris, commanding the 90th's 345th Field Artillery Battalion, was astounded: "The most memorable sight that day was Ridgway, Gavin, and [Lt. Col. Arthur] Maloney [the 507th's executive officer] standing right there where it was the hottest. The point is that every soldier who hit that causeway saw every general officer, and the regimental and battalion commanders, right there. It was truly an inspirational effort."

That evening Gavin was informed that the Germans were again trying to wrest the bridge at La Fière away from the Americans, and so another battle broke out. Gavin threw everyone he had into stopping the German assault on the bridge—cooks, clerks, anybody who could hold a rifle. It took a bit of doing but, when the advance elements of the 90th Infantry Division finally arrived from the beach, the American position at Manoir de La Fière was unassailable.

La Fière-Cauquigny was just one battle in a whole host of others. The names of a score of heretofore unknown French towns and villages would, within a week, go down in glory in American military history: Sainte-Mère-Église, Sainte Marie-du-Mont, Saint-Côme-du-Mont, Saint Martin-de-Varaville, Saint Germain-de-Varaville, Saint Marcouf, Pouppeville, Angoville-au-Plain, Foucarville, Neuville-au-Plain, Beauvais, Picauville, Beuzeville, and so many others. La Fière, Cauquigny, and Chef du Pont would be added to that list.

Denver-based Flint Whitlock is the editor of Sovereign Media's WWII Quarterly. *This article was adapted from his book,* If Chaos Reigns: The Near-Disaster and Ultimate Triumph of Allied Airborne Forces on D-Day *(Casemate, 2011).*

IT WAS LESS THAN A MONTH since the great blood letting in the Orel salient in July 1943 had taken place. Both the German and Soviet armies that took part in the battle had suffered horrendous casualties. The losses of tanks and mechanized vehicles were also enormous as the German attack was met by a Soviet counterattack that left soldiers on both sides reeling like punch happy boxers.

Red Army units slowly pushed the Germans back to their start lines with both sides taking even more casualties. Ground troops were exhausted, and vehicles were worn out from constant use, yet the Red Army was preparing to launch its first summer offensive of the war.

In far off Berlin there were those at the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW—the German Armed Forces High Command) who scoffed at the idea that the Russians could mount a major offensive after the bloody nose they had received in the July battle. The frontline generals, however, were under no such illusions. The commander of Army Group South, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, wrote, "On 2nd August we informed OKH [Oberkommando des Heeres—the German Army High Command] that we were expecting an immediate offensive against the Army Group's northern front west of Belgorod. This, we thought, would probably be supplemented by an attack southeast of Kharkov with the aim of taking our forces round the town in a pincer movement and opening the enemy's way to the Dnepr [River]."

To Take KIEV

BY PAT McTAGGART

In 1943, the Soviet Red Army repulsed a brutal Nazi offensive to recapture the capital of Ukraine.

Von Manstein was right on the money. On August 3 all hell broke loose as an intense artillery barrage hit General Eugen Ott's LII Army Corps for five minutes. After a 30-minute lull, a two-hour barrage pounded the same sector, augmented by heavy air attacks. As the artillery ceased, infantry and tanks of the 5th and 6th Guards Armies hit the junction of Ott's corps and the XLVIII Panzer Corps, splitting the front asunder and driving a wedge between the two corps. The Soviet 5th Guards Tank Army exploited the breakthrough, and by the end of the day the Russians had penetrated up to 24 kilometers behind the German lines.

The offensive, code-named Rumyantsev after one of the foremost Russian generals of the 18th century, was only the first of several operations to pummel the Germans. During the following days, the Soviet 53rd Army was able to cut the vital Belgorod-Kharkov road, creating major supply problems for the enemy. On August 12, lead elements of the Steppe Front entered the outskirts of Kharkov, finally taking the city on August 23 after severe fighting.

Meanwhile, General Karl Hollidt's 6th Army's position on the Mius River was assaulted by Col. Gen. Fedor Ivanovich Tolbukhin's South Front. Within a few days, Hollidt had been pushed back from his river defenses, and the Soviets retook the city of Taganrog on the Sea of Azov

In this photo taken on August 12, 1943, Red Army infantrymen advance down a dirt road near the embattled city of during the Soviet Rumyantev offensive.

akg-images

at the end of the month. The August offensive had cost Army Group South about 133,000 casualties, of which only 33,000 were replaced. On September 3, von Manstein flew to Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg in East Prussia to ask for either more replacements or permission to shorten his lines if replacements could not be provided. He later wrote that the meeting "proved quite profitless."

The Russian juggernaut continued to roll forward in the first half of September. Railway and communications lines between Army Group South and Army Group Center were broken when the Soviets severed the Briansk-Konotop rail line. On September 4, Hitler gave permission for General Erwin Jaenecke's 17th Army to retreat from the Kuban to the Crimea. Further north, the Soviet 3rd Guards Army opened a 45-kilometer gap between the 1st Panzer Army and the 6th Army, which was closed on September 11 after five days of heavy fighting. On September 8, the city of Stalino fell, followed by the capture of Mariupal on the 10th. In essence, the Red Army was threatening to break open the entire German southern front.

September 15 found von Manstein in another long discussion about the deteriorating situation. Pullbacks on Army Group Center's right flank had left General Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army in a perilous posi-

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-709-0318-21; Photo: Gerhard Gronefeld

tion. Von Manstein pressed the issue of withdrawal to the Dnepr before a catastrophe ensued.

"The fate of the whole Eastern Front is at stake here," he told Hitler. Finally Hitler relented and gave permission for Army Group South to withdraw to a line running from Melitopol along the Dnepr to above Kiev, and then running along the Desna River.

The Soviet High Command (STAVKA) was watching events closely. When intelligence reports indicated German preparations for a retreat, it was generally acknowledged that the next German defensive line would be on the Dnepr. Orders from Moscow were soon issued.

General Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskii's Central Front and General Nikolai Fedorovich Vatutin's Voronezh Front were tasked with converging on Kiev and destroying the 4th Panzer Army. Col. Gen. Ivan Stepanovich Konev's Steppe Front was ordered to advance on Kremenchug, and Col. Gen. Rodion Iakovlevich Malinovskii's South West Front would keep exerting pressure on Hollidt's 6th Army, which occupied Army Group South's right flank, pushing him back toward Kherson with the objective of isolating the 17th Army in the Crimea.

Kiev had been in German hands for three years. The great battle of encirclement that took place in the area in August and September 1941 had cost the Soviets approximately 450,000 casualties. One of the oldest cities in Eastern Europe, Kiev is believed to have been founded in the 9th century. It had seen conquerors such as the Khazars, Varangians, Mongols, and Tatars come and go. On September 19, 1941, a new conqueror entered what was now the capital of the Soviet Ukraine as German troops marched through the city.

The soldiers were followed by the SS killing squads of the Einsatzgruppen, who rounded up the city's Jews after parts of the city had been set alight September 25 by troops of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, still hidden in the area. The fire gave the Germans a pretext for what became a name synonymous with the Holocaust.

On September 29-30, approximately 34,000 Jews were marched to a ravine outside the city known as Babi Yar. There they were met by the men of SS Colonel Paul Blobel's Sonderkommando 4a, which was part of SS Brig. Gen. Otto Rausch's Einsatzgruppe C. Backed up by SD and SS police battalions and local police, the Jews were systematically marched into the ravine and shot. Only a few were able to escape. It was the beginning of a three-year reign of terror that Konev and Rokosovskii were ordered to end.

Their first problem, of course, would be to breach the Dnepr and Desna River defenses, which were rapidly filling up with retreating Germans. To do this they had to overcome fierce resistance from German rear guards. On September 16, Konev took Romny. Hollidt pulled his 6th Army back to the Melitopol Line the following day.

September 21 saw Lt. Gen. Pavel Semenovich Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army reach the eastern bank of the Dnepr opposite Kaniv. Vatutin immediately ordered a bridgehead to be established on the western bank by any means. The next day Rybalko's men crossed the river north of Kaniv and secured a bridgehead in the Bukryn area. Rybalko was reinforced by Lt. Gen. Sergei Georgivich Trofimenko's 27th Army and Lt. Gen. Kiril Semenovich Moskalenko's 70th Army and quickly expanded the bridgehead while fighting off German counterattacks. Spending the next few days consolidating their gains, the Soviets planned their next move.

On September 26, two Soviet airborne brigades were dropped into the Bukryn bridgehead. Dropped at night, the 3rd Brigade landed on top of General Otto von Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps. The ensuing slaughter decimated the Soviet paratroopers. The 5th Brigade also suffered severe casualties during its drop, rendering it virtually useless.

The 26th was not a total day of disaster for the Soviets. Lt. Gen. Nikander Evalmpievich Chibisov's 38th Army forced a bridgehead about 20 kilometers north of Kiev at Lyutich. Soviet forces also established bridgeheads farther south in the Dnepropetrovsk area. The vaunted Dnepr Line was beginning to crack!

On September 27, the Russians received another bloody nose that showed them the Ger-

mans were still intent on holding their river defenses. Von Knobelsdorff launched a fierce counterattack on the Bukryn bridgehead, achieving several penetrations in the Russian line. The attack surprised Soviet commanders inside the bridgehead. With the German line stretched so thin a concentrated assault was considered extremely unlikely.

During the next few days the German assault continued. Several Soviet units simply ceased to exist, and many more were mere shadows of themselves. Von Knobelsdorff almost succeeded in clearing the entire bridgehead, but the stubbornness of the surviving defenders and Soviet artillery superiority helped the Red Army to maintain a fragile toehold.

By September 30, Army Group South had succeeded in withdrawing behind the Dnepr. The west bank of the river was considerably higher than the eastern bank, which was a large flat area laced with swamps and streams. Looking from west to east, the Germans had an unhindered view of the treeless Steppe that stretched for several kilometers.

If Hitler had allowed defenses on the west bank to be built earlier in the year, the Germans would have had a strong, heavily fortified defensive barrier to meet the Soviets head on. As it was, many strongpoints were only half completed and were manned by depleted and exhausted units.

During the withdrawal to the Dnepr, Army Group South had taken severe casualties, including more than 200,000 wounded. Despite von Knobelsdorff's strong attack, the average combat strength of von Manstein's 37 infantry divisions numbered about 1,000 men, about 50 per kilometer of front. His armored and motorized divisions were also vastly understrength in both men and equipment.

The Russians had also suffered during the fighting withdrawal. Since August 26, Rokossovskii's Central Front counted 35,000 killed or missing and 107,000 wounded, while Vatutin's Voronezh Front listed 46,000 killed or missing and 131,000 wounded. Although fighting would continue unabated further south, both Soviet generals knew they needed breathing space to rest their men and receive equipment replacements and reinforcements before continuing the plan to take Kiev and destroy the 4th Panzer Army.

Although the Germans were stretched to the limit, they were still willing to launch more counterattacks against the Dnepr bridgeheads. Supported by General Kurt von der Chevallerie's LIX Army Corps, which had been transferred from Army Group Center, Maj. Gen. Arthur Hauffe's XIII Army Corps launched an attack against the Lyutich bridgehead on October 6. After making some progress, the attack failed in the face of Soviet armor that had been quickly ferried across the river to strengthen the bridgehead.

To the north, Rokossovskii's Central Front was steadily pushing toward Gomel, but he was meeting increasing resistance from General Walter Weiss's 2nd Army. Lt. Gen. Pavel Ivanovich Batov's 65th Army was leading the advance. Since the opening of the offensive his divisions had been on the move, forcing the Desna River and heading northwest to the town of Unecha before turning southward toward Gomel. The city, located on the west bank of the Sozh River, was arguably the most important road and railway junction on the southern half of Field Marshal Ernst Busch's Army Group Center's front. If the right hook of the effort to take Kiev was to be in place, bridgeheads across the Sozh would have to be secured.

Gomel was about 200 kilometers north of Kiev. Rokossovskii hoped to capture the city, breaking the German communication lines between Army Group Center and Army Group South while establishing those bridgeheads from which he would spring when the time came to envelop Kiev.

The Germans had other ideas. Defending the Gomel area were the troops of General Johannes Friessner's XXIII Army Corps and General Rudolf von Roman's XX Army Corps. Both men were seasoned veterans of the Eastern Front, and they had methodically prepared their defenses. The area proved to be difficult to take, so Batov swung part of his army to the south, securing a couple of small bridgeheads across the Sozh.

On October 15, Batov's men found a weak point in the German Dnepr defenses in the Loyev area, about 55 kilometers south of Gomel. Regrouping his forces, Batov crossed the river and established a substantial bridgehead. Pouring more reinforcements across the river, Batov was able to enlarge his gains, forcing the Germans to send reinforcements to keep the Soviets at bay. The new bridgehead enabled the Soviets to have another dagger pointed at separating Army Group Center and Army Group South when the time came to continue the advance on Kiev.

While waiting for the rest of his armies to reorganize for the continuing Dnepr assault, Vatutin ordered his forces inside the Bukryn bridgehead to launch a new assault on the German forces surrounding the perimeter. The same day Batov crossed the Dnepr at Loyev, the 27th and 40th Armies and 3rd Guards Tank Army stormed the German line. Although the

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ABOVE: Red Army infantrymen advance as a shell explodes in front of them and throws up a curtain of smoke and debris. Out of the frame, Soviet tanks have taken the lead in this assault somewhere in the Ukraine. OPPOSITE: Traversing a muddy road on the outskirts of a Ukrainian village, two columns of German assault guns move toward the front lines. The vehicle to the left is the Sturmgeschütz III mounting a 75mm gun, and the vehicle on the right is the Hummel (Bumblebee) self-propelled 150mm howitzer.

Germans lacked defense in depth, their positions around the bridgehead were strong.

Using good interior lines and having corps artillery support, the divisions of the XLVIII Panzer Corps, temporarily commanded by Maj. Gen. Dietrich von Choltitz (the future commandant of Paris in August 1944) held their ground. Coming out of their start lines, the Soviets suffered terrific casualties as German artillery fired at preplotted target areas. The Russians regrouped again and again, but each time they came up against the same deadly wall of fire. They would try to break the Germans several more times during the next three days until the assaults were finally called off.

After it became obvious to STAVKA that the forces inside the Bukryn bridgehead were going nowhere, tacticians in Moscow came up with a new plan. The bridgehead at Lyutich, now firmly consolidated and bursting with men and equipment, seemed the most likely alternative for a breakthrough. The area around the bridgehead was held by General Ernst-Eberhard Hell's VII Army Corps. For the most part, perimeter fighting in the area had been limited to armed patrols clashing with each other.

When the Soviets abandoned their attack out of Bukryn, Vatutin was ordered to again redeploy his forces. With intense secrecy, Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army slipped out of the bridgehead and began the trek to Lyutich, about 150 kilometers to the north, while other forces inside the bridgehead continued to patrol, fooling the Germans into thinking that all three armies were still in the area.

There was also a necessity for speed, which was going to be difficult in the swampy terrain that separated the two bridgeheads. Lt. Gen. Andrei Grigorovich Kravchenko's 5th Guards Tank Corps was the first unit to make the move. His corps had to cross several small rivers and streams in the marshes to reach Lyutich. To accomplish this, Kravchenko ordered his troops to make their vehicles as waterproof as possible. They then sped full bore across the terrain—something that went against the standard rules of mechanized movement in that kind of environment. Although he lost several tanks along the way he managed to get most of his corps through. Other units of Rybalko's army soon followed.

On October 29, STAVKA redesignated its southern fronts. Vatutin's Voronezh Front became the 1st Ukrainian Front, while Konev's Steppe Front was renamed the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Their neighbors to the south, the South West Front and South Front, became the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian Fronts. To the north, Rokossovskii's Central Front was renamed the Belorussian Front.

Parts of Army Group South continued to be hammered during the last days of October. On October 24, Lt. Gen. Pavel Aleksei Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army took Krivoi Rog before it was pushed back by General Wend von Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division. The same day, General Maximilian de Angelis's XLIV Army Corps was almost overrun on the 6th Army's southern wing. In the 1st Panzer Army's sector, Dnepropetrovsk fell to the 3rd Ukrainian Front the following day, leaving General Maximilian Fretter-Pico's XXX Army Corps a shell of itself. During those attacks, the army group suffered losses that could not be replaced. On June 27, the 6th Army's 73rd Infantry Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Hermann Böhme, had just 170 combat effectives, while Maj. Gen. Hermann Recknagel's 111th Infantry Division had 200. Equipment losses were also high. In the entire 6th Army there were only 25 operational tanks and assault guns.

The German forces in the south suffered another crippling blow when Hitler refused to allow General Erwin Jaenecke's 17th Army to evacuate the Crimea. Soviet units of the 4th Ukrainian Front took the Perekop Peninsula, effectively bottling up the entire army and preventing it from taking any role in the furious battles to the north.

Around Kiev, General Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army was waging a war of strike and counterstrike. As Soviet forces in the various bridgeheads in his sector made spoiling attacks, Hoth deftly moved his meager reserves from one crisis point to another. Only the bridgehead at Lyutich remained relatively quiet. Rybalko's

3rd Guards Tank Army was still secretly filtering into the area, and STAVKA wanted to keep attention away from Lyutich until it was ready to attack. Most of Rybalko's units were across the river by November 1.

After a little more fine tuning, Vatutin was ready to strike. He planned to use the 38th Army, now commanded by Moskalenko, as his spearhead using the 50th and 51st Rifle Corps. They would hit an area held by Colonel Paul Scheuerpflug's 68th and Maj. Gen. Heinrich Roth's 88th Infantry Divisions after an artillery bombardment. The 68th was only about 40 percent effective, and the 88th was not much stronger. After initial contact was made, the 23rd Rifle Corps would follow. Kravchenko's 5th Guards Tank Corps would support the attack with 100 tanks. The orders were simple. Stalin wanted Kiev to be taken by November 7, the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

As dawn broke on November 3, more than 2,000 Red Army artillery guns opened fire on the VII and XIII Army Corps. German defenses collapsed in the explosive blasts as the shells tore them to pieces, and entire platoons disappeared. As the barrage moved forward, the 38th Army advanced, quickly overrunning the German positions as bombers and fighters from General Stephan Akimovich Kravsovskii's 2nd Air Army raced overhead, hitting positions further to the rear and strafing anything that moved behind the lines. The Red Army troops tore a hole in the German line that could not be closed.

About 18 kilometers north of Lyutich, Maj. Gen. Ivan Danilovich Cherniakhovskii had built up a bridgehead at Yasnohorodka. In conjunction with the Lyutich attack, Cherniakhovskii's 60th Army burst out of the bridgehead. His divisions advanced west toward Zhytomyr, brushing aside German resistance in the area. In all there were 337,000 men supported by 500 tanks in the combined attacks. Facing them were fewer than 150,000 Germans that had about 50 operational tanks.

The German had been caught flat footed. Upon hearing first reports of the attack, Hoth ordered Maj. Gen. Georg Jauer's 20th Panzergrenadier Division to counterattack. He also called on Brig. Gen. Hasso Freiherr von Manteuffel's 7th Panzer Division and Colonel Werner Friebe's 8th Panzer Division to join the attack on the Russians' northwest flank, even though both divisions were vastly understrength.

Von Manteuffel hit the Russians south of Dymer only to run into concentrated antitank fire. The Germans suffered more losses from the Red Air Force as they tried to find a way through the Soviet flank. Friebe and Jauer's

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ABOVE: During their successful campaign against France in the spring of 1940, the Germans captured large numbers of French tanks and pressed them into service with the Wehrmacht. Here, a French-made Char B1, converted to a flammpanzer or flamethrower tank, is seen in action in southern Ukraine. OPPOSITE: During the fighting around the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, Soviet sappers establish a crossing of the Dnepr River. One of the sappers is looking skyward in response to noise from approaching aircraft.

divisions met a similar fate and were forced to go on the defensive. Reeling under the Soviet assault, the Germans gave way as the Russians advanced. Hauffe ordered Maj. Gen. Heinrich Roth's 88th Infantry Division to retreat to Kiev. His mission was to hold the city at all costs.

By the end of November 4, the German front around Lyutich had collapsed and Rybalko's mechanized forces were unleashed, pouring through the gaping holes torn open by the 38th Army. The German withdrawal threatened to turn into a rout as Soviet tanks roamed the battlefield, slaughtering more of the enemy as they advanced.

On November 5, Moskalenko's men entered Kiev. They were met with fierce resistance as Roth's men, occupying strongpoints throughout the city, defended every block. In street battles reminiscent of Stalingrad, the Soviets destroyed position after position. The fighting raged into the night, with Roth becoming one of the German casualties.

The Soviets captured the main rail station by the end of the day, and Moskalenko announced that most of the area was back in Russian hands and that the enemy was fleeing. In fact, most of the 88th had been destroyed in the battle. On November 6, the Soviet general sent a report stating the entire city had been liberated and that 6,000 prisoners had been taken.

Meanwhile, Rybalko was moving toward the city of Fastiv (Fastov), about 60 kilometers southwest of Kiev. His original plan was to keep going all the way to Hitler's former headquarters at Vinnytsa, which would have threatened the entire rear of Army Group South. Fastiv fell on November 7. Continuing on, Rybalko ran into lead elements of Maj. Gen. Adolf von Schell's 25th Panzer Division.

Formed in Norway, the 25th had recently arrived from France. It was lacking in both training and equipment. One of its tank battalions still remained in the west, and some of its equipment included *f* booty captured in 1940. Many of its experienced men had been taken from the division while it was still in France and shipped to various units in the east, and some of the men who replaced them had less than a month's combat training.

The 25th had arrived piecemeal, and von Schell's divisional elements were scattered in several unloading areas. The day Kiev fell, von Schell was ordered to advance toward Fastiv, unaware that Rybalko's forces were fast approaching. He immediately formed a combat group consisting of two infantry battalions, two mixed artillery battalions, and 10 to 15 assault guns and began to advance toward the city. On the morning of the 7th, he was surprised by Rybalko's spearheads. After losing a couple of armored personnel carriers, the Germans were forced to retreat in the face of superior numbers.

While this was taking place, two other panzer divisions were racing to the scene in an attempt to fill the wide gap created by the Russ-

ABOVE: The front lines in the vicinity of Kiev and across Ukraine shifted back and forth during the bitter fighting for control of the Ukrainian capital city in the waning months of 1943. OPPOSITE: A German soldier looks through binoculars as he mans a checkpoint on the Dnepr River in November 1943. A nearby bridge has been destroyed by the retreating Germans. This soldier is well armed with a mounted MG34 machine gun in the center and what appears to be a captured Soviet submachine gun to the left. On the right is a Mauser 98 rifle.

ian assault. As von Schell's combat group was taking on Rybalko's spearhead, a combat group of Brig. Gen. Theodor "Teddi" Wisch's 1st SS (Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler or LAH) Panzer Division was brought into an area northwest of Fastiv to form a blocking force in a large void in the German rear.

On November 10, an armored infantry battalion of Maj. Gen. Walter Kruger's 1st Panzer Division arrived in Bila Tserkva with 60 armored personnel carriers. It was followed by the division's armored reconnaissance battalion. They immediately began to construct blocking positions to slow down the advance Soviet units in the area, which was about 35 kilometers south of Fastiv and 80 kilometers southwest of Kiev. The move gave time for the XLVII Panzer Corps, now commanded by General Heinrich Eberbach, to assemble forces for a counterattack.

Vatutin's forces continued to push westward. Cherniakhovskii's 60th Army, aided by Lt. Gen. Nikolai Pavlovich Pukhov's 13th Army, hit von der Chevallerie's LIX Army Corps, which was now defending the approaches to Korosten. On paper, the corps listed four divisions, but three of those divisions (183rd, 217th and 339th) were about regimental strength and were designated Corps Detachment C. The detachment was commanded by Maj. Gen. August Dettling, commander of the 183rd. During the next few days of fighting, he was replaced by the commander of the 339th, Brig. Gen. Wolfgang Lange, on November 15.

Von der Chevallerie could do no more than fight a delaying action against the 60th Army. Hauffe's XIII Corps, guarding the approaches to Zhytomyr, was also in the same predicament. Hoth's three infantry corps were now split, with two in the north and Hell's VII Corps in the south. They were all retreating, but VII Corps, located south of Zhytomyr, was rapidly being pushed southwest toward the left flank of the assembling XLVIII Panzer Corps.

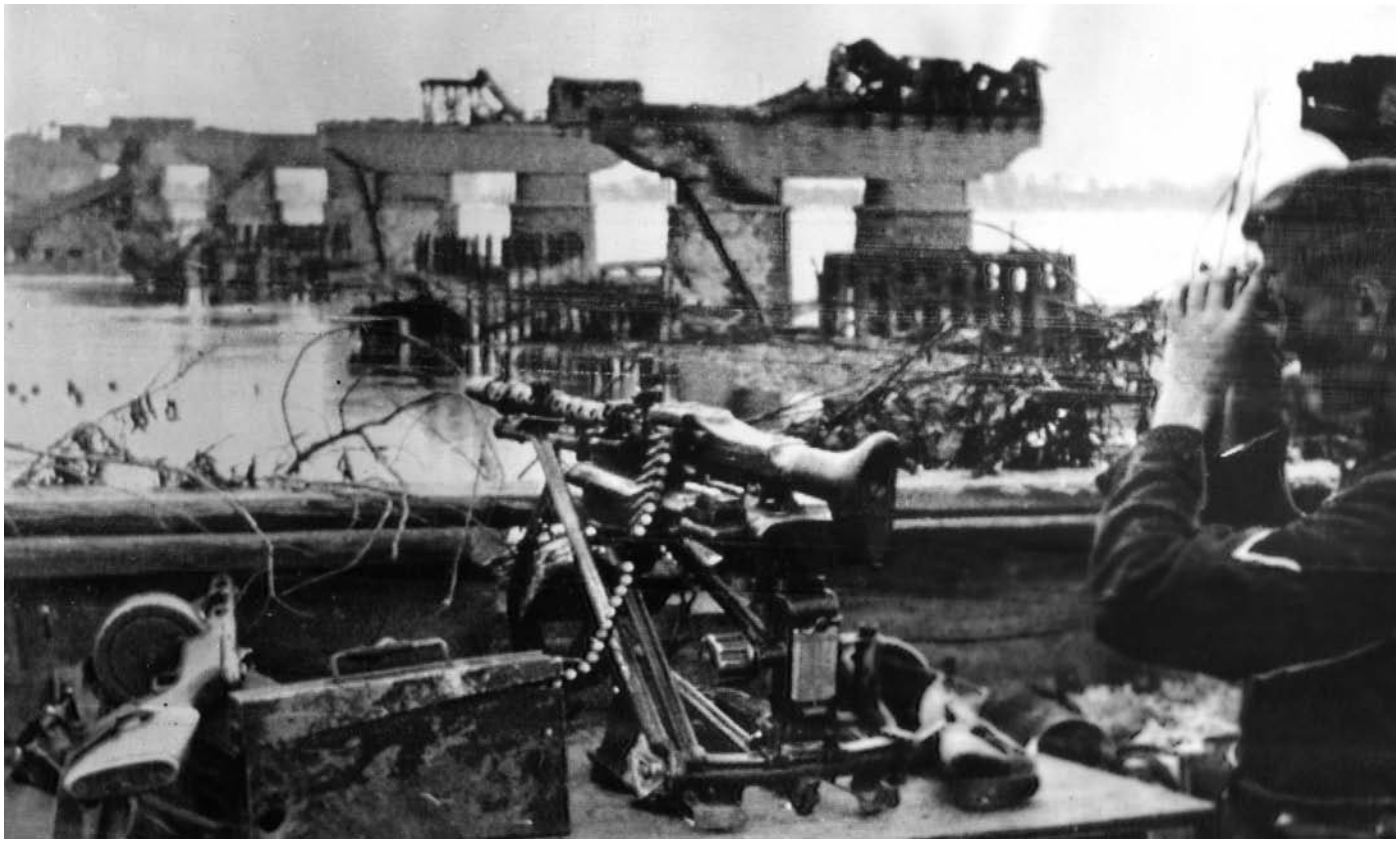
The gap between the northern corps and Hell's corps was significant. With virtually nothing to stop him, some historians have wondered why Vatutin did not head straight west. If he had, he could have driven all the way to Berdychiv instead of taking the time to take Korosten and Zhytomyr. Rybalko's armored and mechanized forces could have easily reached the area, as there were few German units deployed there. With infantry reinforcements to protect his flanks, he could have split Army Group South in half, making it exceedingly difficult for the enemy to mount any kind of concentrated counterattacks.

Instead, the 3rd Guards Tank Army had been sent farther to the southwest. Rybalko, still hoping to reach Vinnytsa, sent a brigade from his 9th Mechanized Corps and another from his 7th Guards Tank Corps out as spearheads for the drive south. Overextending themselves, the two brigades ran into elements of the LAH, which were heading toward their assembly area. The Soviet brigades were surrounded near the villages of Popil'nya and Pavaloch, about 30 kilometers southwest of Fastiv, on November 11.

Three days later, they were destroyed. However, the 55th Tank Brigade, commanded by the future Col. Gen. David Dragunsky, managed to get most of his men out of the area on foot.

The 1st Guards Cavalry Corps took Zhytomyr. Farther north, von der Chevallerie's corps was now nearly surrounded at Korotsten. Supplies had to be air dropped to the corps to keep it fighting, even as von der Chevallerie requested to pull back in order to maintain some semblance of a combat command. The request was denied, and Hitler ordered that the city be held at all costs.

National Archives



Von Manstein decided that relieving the pressure on the LIX and XIII Corps was to be his first priority in trying to stop the Soviets. He noticed that the Russians had exposed their left flank around Zhytomyr and Korosten as a result of Rybalko's southwest turn. On the 12th, he ordered an attack on the rear of the 38th Army, although some elements of the designated attacking force had not yet reached the front. The LAH and 1st Panzer would conduct the main assault, which was aimed at the Brusilov area, some 60 kilometers west of Kiev. With luck, he could then continue on to Zhytomyr and Korosten and then regain the ground lost on the west bank of the Dnepr, including Kiev. The two assault divisions were to be supported by the 7th Panzer and 68th Infantry Divisions on their left and the 25th Panzer and arriving 2nd SS "Das Reich" Panzer Division on the right.

While the attacking forces readied themselves, Vatutin took precautions of his own as his forces advanced westward. He also saw the same danger noticed by von Manstein, and he brought the 17th Rifle Corps down from the north and the 21st Rifle Corps forward from the Brusilov area to protect his vulnerable flank. Ordering both corps to plan for defensive action, he also strengthened them with additional antitank forces.

Eberbach sent his corps into action on the 13th. Von Manteuffel headed toward Zhytomyr, while the LAH and 1st Panzer drove toward Brusilov. With the LAH on his right, Krüger's 1st Panzer made good initial advances. Crossing the small Unova River, the 1st took the village of Kryve on the 14th and then advanced with elements of the LAH to the town of Kornyn, about 24 kilometers south of Brusilov. There, the Germans met the arriving Russian corps that were being echeloned in depth to cover the Soviet flank.

During the difficult fighting that followed the initial contact, the 1st Panzer and LAH were stalled for a time, as was the 7th Panzer farther north. While the Germans regrouped on the 14th, Hitler perceived the slowdown as due to inadequate command. On the 15th, he brought in Generals Erhard Raus and Hermann Balck.

Colonel Friederich-Wilhelm von Mellenthin, then chief of staff of the XLVIII Panzer Corps, later wrote, "General Balck, to my great joy, was given command of the Panzerkorps. With that, the Korps received one of the best Panzer commanders alive. Indeed, if Feldmarschall von Manstein is regarded as Germany's greatest strategist of the Second World War, so too, I believe, must General Balck receive his due recognition as the best field commander of the Wehrmacht."

He was not as kind to Raus. "As Chief-of-Staff of the Panzer Corps, von Mellenthin wanted to use all of the corps divisions grouped together in a strike from Fastiv toward Kiev instead of dividing those forces. Presenting his plan to the new army commander, he was told that it 'was too ambitious.'"

Raus stuck to the original two-pronged approach, prompting von Mellenthin to write, "The history of armored warfare—and that of cavalry warfare before that—shows that the great prizes can only be won by speed, daring and maneuver. The 'play safe' school of generals was all very well on the Western Front in 1914-18, but is out of place in this age of the gasoline engine and the airplane."

Nevertheless, the German attack rolled forward on the 15th with heavy rain falling. With the Panther medium tank elements of the 1st Panzer still en route, the LAH took the lead in the advance on Brusilov. At 1:05 PM, the commander of the 1st Panzer Grenadier Rgt./LAH, SS Lt. Col. Albert Frey, reported that his 1st Battalion had entered the village of Soloviika, about 10 kilometers south of Brusilov. Heavy Soviet tank and antitank fire resulted in several armored vehicles being destroyed, stopping the grenadiers dead in their tracks.

Frey ordered SS Captain Heinrich Heimann, commander of the LAH assault gun detachment, to send one of his companies to help take the village. His 2nd Company, commanded by SS Captain Emil Wiesemann, arrived on the scene and led an infantry-supported assault with his guns.

At the head of his company, Wiesemann personally knocked out several Soviet T-34 medium tanks and antitank guns before being killed by a shell that hit his gun. The attack forced the Russians to abandon the village, leaving 18 burned-out T-34s on the field. At 1:45 PM, Frey reported that Soloviika was in German hands. Wiesemann was posthumously awarded the Knight's Cross for his actions.

To counter the German threat to Brusilov, Vatutin ordered Kravchenko's 5th Guards Tank Corps to move into position to support infantry units dug in near the city. The rain made movement of both Soviet and German units difficult as roads turned into mud pits; however, the Soviets, with their wider tracks, were able to move their tanks faster while the Germans still struggled forward toward their goal. Other elements of Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army (6th and 7th Guards Tank Corps and 9th Mechanized Corps) were also being moved to try and block the German attack.

Meanwhile, von Manteuffel's 7th Panzer, supported by Scheuerpflug's 68th Infantry Division, reached the town of Levkiv, about 12 kilometers east of Zhytomyr, and cut the highway to Kiev on the 16th. The action severed communications and supplies between the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and the rest of Vatutin's front. Von Manteuffel then began to move northwest to attack the city from an unexpected direction.

In the Brusilov sector, the 1st Panzer Division was ordered to disengage and support the 7th Panzer, leaving the LAH to basically go it alone. At 3:15 AM on the 16th, SS Major Gustav Knittel's 1st SS Reconnaissance Battalion took Turbivka, about 14 kilometers south of Brusilov. Moving on the rain-soaked ground, Knittel launched an attack on Dyvyn, about four kilometers to the north. The attack ran into strong Soviet resistance, which forced Knittel to call of the thrust. After receiving reinforcements from the I/SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2, Knittel renewed his attack and took the village at 6:40 PM.

The attack toward Brusilov continued the following day, with Russian reinforcements streaming into the area. Wisch was forced to order the LAH to go over to a defensive posture as the Soviets unleashed counterattack after counterattack. The Russians broke through in several places, including the sector around the village of Kotscherovo, where Frey's SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 1 found itself surrounded. The regiment assumed an all-around defense and repulsed a total of eight tank-supported attacks of regiment size or greater before night fell.

During the fighting, SS Corporal Alfred Schneiderheit distinguished himself by holding a key position. An antitank rifle troop leader, Schneiderheit and his platoon held off several infantry attacks throughout the night. The next morning the Soviets attacked again, this time with tank support. Schneiderheit allowed the tanks to advance to within 60 meters of his position before opening fire and destroying one of them. Returning fire, the Russians forced Schneiderheit and his men back, with the corporal being wounded in the process.

Since his company commander had also been wounded, Schneiderheit took it upon himself to launch a counterattack with the remnants of his platoon. Grabbing a machine pistol, he led his men forward and regained the lost position, allowing his 8th Company to regain contact with its neighboring company. He and his men then repulsed two more tank-supported attacks. With every officer and sergeant either dead or wounded, he took command of the company and attacked the enemy flank.

During the attack he was hit by a shell fragment that almost severed his middle finger from his left hand. After a field dressing was applied, Schneiderheit continued to lead his men well into the night until he passed out from loss of blood. His actions halted the Soviet drive and earned him a recommendation for the Knights Cross, which he personally received from Hitler on January 16, 1944.

While the LAH was stuck in front of Brusilov, the situation at Zhytomyr was much more promising. The addition of the 1st Panzer Division had given the Germans the punch they needed to take on the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, which was supported by a rifle corps from the 60th Army. On the night of November 18, an attack by Lt. Col. Adalbert Schulz's 25th Panzer Regiment (7th Panzer Division) broke into the city.

Armored infantry was quickly brought forward, and during the morning of the 19th a sharp battle took place beneath the onion-domed churches and centuries-old buildings that dotted the city. The Soviets were pushed out by mid-afternoon, leaving the city in German hands once more. Guarding the flank, other elements of the 1st Panzer reported destroying more than 20 Soviet tanks that were attempting to reinforce the city's defenders.

The fall of Zhytomyr changed things for both sides. Like master chess players, Vatutin and Raus planned their next moves, hoping to catch their opponent making a mistake. In the Brusilov sector, the 25th Panzer moved up to support the LAH. Also arriving was Brig. Gen. Hans Källner's well-seasoned 19th Panzer Division. With the new arrivals, Raus had Balck order the 1st Panzer, LAH, and 68th Infantry Division to keep pressure on the Soviets, pushing them eastward toward Brusilov. A combat group of the 2nd SS Panzer Division was also moved into the area and attached to the 7th Panzer Division.

The fall of Zhytomyr changed things for both sides. Like master chess players, Vatutin and Raus planned their next moves, hoping to catch their opponent making a mistake.

While these moves were in progress, STAVKA ordered the 74th, 94th, and 107th Rifle Corps of the 1st Guards Army to move by rail toward Kiev and occupy a defensive line behind the 38th Army. The commander of the 1st Guards Army, Col. Gen. Vasilii Ivanovich Kuznets, was ordered to avoid contact with the Germans unless the situation absolutely warranted it. As German forces slogged through the mud, throwing themselves against the 38th Army's defenses, Kuznets received permission to send the 94th Rifle Corps to bolster the line. For the time being, Soviet forces were on the defensive, letting the Germans batter away against their positions.

With the 1st and 7th Panzer Divisions pressing from the west, Balck ordered the Brusilov attack to continue. Early on November 20, the LAH moved through a sea of mud from Vodotyi toward Brusilov. Although some units succeeded in overrunning several Soviet forward positions, the attack halted at 5:45 AM due to heavy artillery fire, local counterattacks by Soviet tanks, and the horrendous ground conditions.

The Zhytomyr detachment was now coming within range of the Brusilov positions, so Balck issued new orders to his corps. With the 7th Panzer and 68th Infantry Divisions guarding the northern flank, the 1st Panzer was tasked with breaching enemy lines east of Kolscherovo and then turning south to attack Brusilov from the northeast. Källner's 19th Panzer was

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Amid exploding shells and small arms fire, Soviet soldiers cross a shallow stream in the Ukraine. This photo appears to have been taken in early autumn as the soldiers have retained their lighter weight clothing for the assault.

charged with taking Khomutets, about 6½ kilometers southeast of Brusilov, while the LAH was to continue the attack from the south.

While the Germans regrouped for this new attack the Soviets were far from idle. Vatutin moved the battered 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and the 5th and 8th Guards Tank Corps into new defensive positions around Brusilov. The Russians also kept up heavy artillery harassing fire in the area. During one such barrage on the 30th, the commander of SS Panzer Regiment 1, SS Lt. Col. Georg Schönberger, was killed when his command post suffered several direct hits. He was replaced by SS Major Joachim Peiper, who would later be tried for the infamous Malmedy Massacre during the 1944 Ardennes Offensive.

The attack continued on the 21st. The LAH moved forward at 7:45 AM, but after some initial success the SS troops ran into heavy enemy resistance. By noon, the attack was completely stalled. Krüger's 1st Panzer also ran into problems as it hit a strong antitank line dug in in a forest. After losing several Panzer IVs, the division's Panthers rolled into position and shelled the enemy line. The Soviets countered by calling in several Ilyushin IL-2 Shturmovik ground assault aircraft, whose pilots seemed impervious to the rain laden skies. In the face of such opposition, Krüger was forced to call off his attack. The 19th Panzer suffered a similar fate.

For the next two days the Germans threw themselves at the Soviet positions, hoping to find a crack in the defensive line. The 1st and 19th Panzer Divisions finally made some headway and executed a pincer movement that all but encircled two rifle divisions and elements of a tank corps that was inside Brusilov. Meanwhile, the LAH made a renewed push from the south, overcoming heavy resistance and destroying several Soviet tanks. Although most of the defending troops were able to escape, Brusilov finally fell on the 24th.

Although the Germans claimed a tactical victory, they could go no farther. The days of heavy rain made further offensive operations impossible for the time being. Vehicles needed overhauling, and the troops were exhausted. On the 26th, Balck received orders to temporarily suspend his attack and form defensive positions. The assault in the Brusilov sector was at an end, but plans for a new offensive were already in the works.

Raus was worried about the Soviet forces northeast of Zhytomyr, particularly Cherniakhovskii's 60th Army, which had taken up new positions that threatened Balck's forces if a decision was made to continue to try to retake Kiev. He ordered the XLVIII Panzer Corps to once again regroup in preparation against what had become an inward bulge in Balck's northern flank. The Brusilov sector would be occupied by arriving reinforcements, since the ground conditions were so bad that neither side could conduct major offensive operations.

It is interesting to note that German intelligence concerning Soviet dispositions in the salient west and south of Kiev was totally inadequate. It had failed to notice the arrival of the 1st Guards Army, and it also failed to notice that Col. Gen. Konstantin Nikolaevich Leselidze's 18th Army was heading into the area. Although the 1st Guards and 18th Army were directly controlled by STAVKA, they would give Vatutin a strong force for both defensive and offensive operations in the near future.

The plan worked out by von Manstein and Raus had two objectives. Von der Chevallerie's LIX Corps was still isolated at Korosten, although the Luftwaffe was able to get some supplies dropped to the beleaguered troops. An attack on Cherniakhovskii's flank would force men and matérial from the Korosten sector to counter the German assault. If the attack against the Soviet bulge succeeded, it would also allow Hauffe's XIII Corps to link up with LIX Corps and reestablish a continuous front in the area.

During the last days of November and the first days of December, the Germans made their way to assembly areas around Zhytomyr. Once there, the units spent the days before the scheduled attack improving combat readiness and

scouting the best avenues of advance. After several weeks of combat, most of the units were severely understrength, and few replacements were forthcoming. On November 30, the LAH's SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 1 had a combat strength of 795 officers and men. SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 2 reported a strength of 747. For some reason, the only unit that had been brought up to full strength was von Manteuffel's 7th Panzer Division.

Reconnaissance of the enemy's main position was almost nil due to the weakness of infantry forces present. The bad weather prevented aerial reconnaissance, and the Germans were reluctant to send many ground patrols forward when they could because the Soviets might be tipped off about the coming attack. Therefore, Balck's troops were virtually in the dark about what awaited them on the enemy side of the battlefield.

During the night of December 5, the German units rolled slowly toward their jump-off points. Balck planned to attack Cherniakhovskii's right flank, defended by the 30th and 15th Rifle Corps. The 1st Panzer would hit the Soviets just north of Zhytomyr with the LAH on its right. Scheurpflug's 68th Infantry would also advance on the extreme right flank of the corps. While Balck attacked, the XIII Army Corps and XXIV Panzer Corps would pin down the Soviet forces defending the Radomyshl' sector.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

Von Manteuffel's 7th Panzer was Balck's ace in the hole. Its mission was to advance far to the left of the 1st Panzer into the rear of the 60th Army, causing a complete collapse of the enemy defenses. The terrain and lack of heavy bridges in the area deprived von Manteuffel of his Tiger detachment, which was attached to the LAH because it had an easier avenue of advance.

On the Soviet side, Vatutin was also busy during the time it took the Germans to assemble. STAVKA agreed to have the 74th and 107th Rifle Corps move forward and occupy defensive positions between Brusilov and Kiev. Leselidze's 18th Army, with three rifle corps, was also ordered into defensive positions. Since the Brusilov front remained stagnant, Rybalko was ordered to withdraw two corps from his 3rd Guards Tank Army and send them to positions west of Kiev. In addition, Col. Gen. Mikhail Efimovich Katukov's 1st Tank Army had advance units of the army entering the area.

At 6 AM on December 6, the panzers rolled forward. The weather had turned colder, and a light frost made the ground a bit more passable as the tanks moved out. Soviet outposts were taken by surprise. As the panzers approached, the Germans intercepted several radio messages calling for help. Their pleas were met with skepticism and accusations of vastly overestimated enemy strength. One such reply bluntly stated, "Your message is unbelievable."

The 7th Panzer made surprisingly good progress during the opening of the attack. Although the Soviets put up a spirited resistance in several areas, the defense was uncoordinated. Slicing through the Soviet line, von Manteuffel turned northwest for his end run behind the Russian line. He was helped by aircraft from the 8th Air Corps. Its commander, Maj. Gen. Hans Seidemann, established his headquarters close to the XLVIII Panzer Corps headquarters, and his air liaisons were with the spearhead of the attack, coordinating air strikes to help the advancing panzers.

The LAH also moved swiftly, capturing the village of Styrty after a sharp fight. It then moved on, taking Korchiva and Bezhiv before noon. During the afternoon, elements of the division set out east toward Mokrenshchyna and Chernyakhin. As darkness fell, the LAH

was still moving toward those two objectives.

Krüger's 1st Panzer became embroiled in street fighting in a small town about 30 kilometers northwest of Radomyshl'. It was not until late afternoon that the town was cleared. Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Hans Piekenbrock's 208th Infantry Division, which was attached to Balck's corps, moved into the area southeast of Chernyakhin while Hauffe's XIII Corps attacked Soviet positions south of Radomyshl' at Slipcaytsi and Golovin.

The advance continued with more success the next day. Von Manteuffel caught the 60th Army's headquarters flat footed, and several staff officers were lost as the headquarters scattered. His objectives were the Russian bridgeheads in the Malyn area, which intelligence thought were occupied by a few Soviet divisions. Actually, there were three full corps in the area. Along with the 1st Panzer and the LAH, the Germans were squeezing Cherniakhovskii's forces into an ever shrinking area along the south bank of the Irscha River.

Balck had hoped to coordinate an attack on the Malyn bridgeheads by using at least three panzer divisions. Von Manteuffel found himself in a tough battle at Nyankiva, 12 kilometers southwest of Malyn, as he awaited the arrival of the LAH. At 2:30 PM, Combat Group Peiper of the LAH captured the rail line west of Torchyn, about 40 kilometers southwest of Malyn. He then continued on, wiping out pockets of resistance as he moved northeast, but he was eventually forced to call a halt due to lack of fuel, which would not arrive until morning.

The 1st Panzer continued to drive northwest, with its eyes on the Teterev River. Hooking around Radomyshl', the 1st took the village of Horbuliv and then headed toward Ditynets and Mircha with a combat group commanded by Lt. Col. Ernst-Joachim Bradel. Bradel found Ditynets defended by determined Soviet forces, and after heavy fighting he reported 21 Russian tanks, three artillery pieces, and 20 antitank guns destroyed.

On December 8, Bradel set out for the village of Fedorivka, which was also heavily defended. The village was taken only after savage house-to-house fighting. After refueling, Bradel continued his march. His advance ended on December 11 when the 1st reached the Teterev west of the village of Mala Racha, just north of Radomshyl'.

Since the opening of his counterattack, Balck had forced the Russians back toward Kiev in several sectors. Although the Radomshyl' defenses still held, the Soviets north of the city had retreated across the Teterev—a move that not only threatened the 60th Army but also the flank of the 38th Army. Farther north, the 7th Panzer and LAH were hammering away at the Soviet bridgeheads in the Malyn sector while the XIII Corps chipped away at the Radomshyl' defenses from the south. In spite of the strong enemy resistance, the counterattack seemed to be going as planned.

While the Russians struggled to hold their own in the bulge west of Kiev, they continued to flow new units into the area. The 25th Tank and 4th Guards Tank Corps, each containing more than 200 tanks and self-propelled guns, were funneled into the Korosten and Malyn sectors. The 18th Army's 11th Rifle Corps was also sent forward into a defensive line along the eastern bank of the Teterev River to bolster elements of the 15th and 23rd Rifle Corps that were retreating across the river. Forward elements of the 27th and 40th Armies also arrived in the Kiev area unnoticed.

In order to continue their counterattack, the Germans first had to eliminate the various Soviet bridgeheads along the Teterev and Irscha Rivers. Von Mellenthin reported one such bridgehead being destroyed by the LAH and 1st Panzer, resulting in the elimination of 3½ Russian divisions. At Malyn the 7th Panzer was also successful in destroying several bridgeheads after heavy fighting.

As German infantry divisions moved into positions on the west bank of the Teterev, the panzer units there were pulled out of the line for a day's rest before turning north to help von Manteuffel out on the Irscha line. German forces had recaptured Korosten and were pushing the Soviets eastward. With the Russians focused on the attacking forces in front of them, Balck saw an opportunity for an enveloping attack that could inflict even more damage on the enemy.

He planned to use the 7th Panzer as his right hook and the 1st Panzer and LAH as his left. Von Manteuffel was ordered to cross the Irscha east of Malyn and form a bridgehead that would serve as a jump-off point for the maneuver. With the bridgehead secured, von Manteuffel waited for the other two divisions to arrive. Under cover of a heavy artillery bombardment, the three divisions began their attack on December 19. While von Manteuffel swung northwest behind the Soviet line, the LAH and 1st Panzer made a frontal assault on the Russian positions around the village of Meleni, about 30 kilometers to the west.

As the 7th Panzer turned west, the other two divisions fought their way through heavy Soviet defenses and continued moving north of the Irscha. This move cut off up to two Soviet divisions that were facing the Germans advancing from Korosten. The LAH and 1st Panzer then

Continued on page 78

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-708-0262-23A; Photo: Scheerer (e)

ABOVE: Defending their position in southern Ukraine in December 1943, these German soldiers are loading a heavy artillery piece. German efforts to take Kiev at the end of 1943 were thwarted by Red Army counterattacks. OPPOSITE: The strain of combat evident on his face, a German panzergrenadier in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, appears oblivious to the destruction around him. This photo was taken on December 21, 1943.

By Christopher Miskimon

U.S. Air Force

This German Me 262 jet fighter was the first flown by Americans after its pilot defected to the Allies in March 1945.

Prospect for Victory?

> Nazi wonder weapons presented challenges, but Allied airmen adapted their tactics to confront the new jets they faced.

ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY COVERED WHAT-IFS OF WORLD WAR II IS THE possibility of a Third Reich wonder weapon changing the course of the war. In particular, many love to consider the effect of German jet aircraft on the conflict's outcome if more of these wonder weapons had appeared sooner.

Indeed, it seems a daunting prospect; imagine thousands of jets screaming past Allied fighters to wreak havoc upon vulnerable bombers. In truth, except for the numbers of Axis jets, this is what happened. Far from a one-sided battle in the skies, however, American and British pilots found ways to engage the faster German planes despite their superior speed and heavy armament. ***Fighting Hitler's Jets: The Extraordinary Story of the American Airmen Who Beat the Luftwaffe and Defeated Nazi Germany*** (Robert F. Dorr, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2013, 298 pp., photographs, bibliography, notes, appendices, index, $30.00, hardcover) tells the stories of airmen on both sides of the fight as well as the histories of the aircraft they flew.

The book opens with a single day, November 26, 1943. On that day Hitler toured an airfield stocked with Germany's latest aircraft, surrounded by aides and Nazi officials such as Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring. One plane in particular became the subject of discussion. The Messerschmitt Me-262 fighter jet, nicknamed the Schwalbe, or "Swallow," represented the possibility of Nazi victory even as the war seemed to be gradually turning against Germany. The aircraft's development was pushed forward; it would tear Allied bombers from the skies above German cities. That same day, an ocean away, American fighter pilots were training, preparing to take on the best the Third Reich could offer. Their planes, however, would fly into battle pulled along by propellers rather than pushed by jets or rockets. How would they defeat such a foe?

The answer came through training, aggressiveness, and aircraft such as the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt and North American P-51 Mustang. While not as fast as the Me-262, these planes had strengths of their own and, properly handled, would take a toll on their supposedly superior foe. Here is where American advantages came to the fore. No one can dispute that Germany produced excellent aircraft and for a time equally excellent pilots. The United States was able to do the same thing, but in numbers that swamped their enemy with quality planes and pilots equal to their counterparts. While it indeed took time for America to gear up for war, after a short time it was ready to carry the battle to the skies over Europe as Germany was being over-

New Prostate Pill Helps Relieve Symptoms Without Drugs or Surgery

Combats all-night bathroom urges and embarrassment... *Yet most doctors don't even know about it!*

By Peter Metler, Health Writer

Thanks to a brand new discovery made from a rare prostate relief plant; thousands of men across America are taking their lives back from "prostate hell." This remarkable new natural supplement helps you:

- **MINIMIZE** constant urges to urinate
- **END** embarrassing sexual let-downs
- **SUPPORT** a strong, healthy urine flow
- **GET** restful nights of uninterrupted sleep
- **STOP** false alarms, dribbles and underwear drips
- **ENJOY** a truly empty bladder & unblocked flow

More men than ever before are dealing with prostate problems that range from annoying to downright EMBARRASSING!

But now, urological research has discovered a new solution so remarkable that helps alleviate symptoms associated with an enlarged prostate (sexual failure, lost sleep, bladder discomfort and urgent runs to the bathroom). Like nothing before!

Yet 9 out of 10 doctors don't know about it! Here's why: Due to strict managed health care constrictions, many MD's are struggling to keep their practices afloat. "Unfortunately, there's no money in prescribing natural products. They aren't nearly as profitable," says a confidential source. Instead, doctors rely on toxic drugs that help but could leave you sexually "powerless" (or a lot worse)!

On a CNN Special, Medical Correspondent Dr. Steve Salvatore shocked America by quoting a statistic from the prestigious Journal of American Medical Association that stated, "...about 60% of men who go under the knife for a prostatectomy are left UNABLE to perform sexually!"

HERE ARE 6 WARNING SIGNS YOU BETTER NOT IGNORE!

- ✓ Waking up 2 to 6 times a night to urinate
- ✓ A constant feeling that you have to "go"... but can't
- ✓ A burning sensation when you do go
- ✓ A weak urine stream
- ✓ A feeling that your bladder is never completely empty
- ✓ Embarrassing sputtering, dripping & staining

PROSTATE PROBLEM SOLVED!

But thanks to this astonishing new natural discovery, you can now beat the odds. The secret? You need to load your diet with essential Phyto-Nutrients, (traditionally found in certain fruits, vegetables and grains).

The problem is, most Phyto-Nutrients never get into your bloodstream. They're destroyed by today's food preparation methods. (Cooking, long storage times and food additives)

YEARS OF RESEARCH

Thankfully, a small company (Wellness Logix™) out of Maine, is on a mission to change that. They've created a product that gives men who suffer with prostate inflammation new hope. They call it ***Prostate IQ***™. And it's fast becoming the #1 Prostate formula in America.

Prostate IQ™ gives men the super-concentrated dose of Phyto-Nutrients they need to beat prostate symptoms. It's taken Wellness Logix, 2 long years of R&D to understand how to capture the prostate relieving power of this amazing botanical. But their hard work paid off. Experts say ***Prostate IQ***™ is the most effective prostate supplement ever developed.

DON'T BE FOOLED BY CHEAP FORMULATIONS!

A lot of prostate supplements fall embarrassingly short with their dosages. The formulas may be okay, but they won't do a darn thing for you unless you take 10 or more tablets a day. ***Prostate IQ***™ is different. It contains a whopping 300mg of this special "Smart Prostate Plant". So it's loaded with Phyto-Nutrients.

Plus, it's 100% bioavailable (which means it gets inside your bloodstream faster and stays inside for maximum results).

MEN RAVE ABOUT PROSTATE IQ™!

"***Prostate IQ***™ works! It really works! Thank You!"

- Christopher R.

"A buddy at work told me about this product and it DOES work great!

- Augustus L

TRY IT RISK-FREE

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR READERS

We've made special arrangements with the distributor, to supply our readers with a risk-free trial supply of ***Prostate IQ***™ just for asking! But you must act now, supplies are limited!

Call Now, Toll-Free!

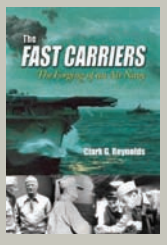
1-800-380-1029

Or visit. www.ProstateIQ.com

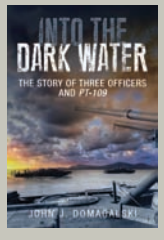
whelmed by a two-front war that sapped manpower and resources faster than they could be effectively replaced.

Once the Me-262 and other jet and rocket-powered planes took to the air, their appearance was indeed an unpleasant surprise to both bomber crews and the fighter squadrons assigned to protect them. They could fly 100 or more miles per hour faster than the American fighters, making them almost impossible to

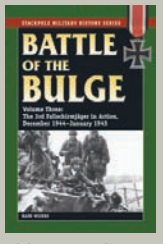
New and Noteworthy



The Fast Carriers: The Forging of an Air Navy (Clark G. Reynolds, Naval Institute Press, 2014, $26.95, softcover) This book analyzes the development of carrier doctrine in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Battlefield experiences mix with headquarters debate to complete the study.

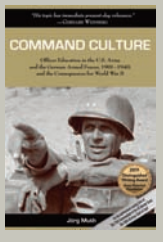


Into the Dark Waters: The Story of Three Officers and PT-109 (John J. Domagalski, Casemate, 2014, $29.95, hardcover) John F. Kennedy was not the first man to command *PT-109*. Two other men did so before this famous torpedo boat met its fate. The stories of all three men are told here.

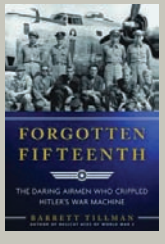


Battle of the Bulge: Vol. 3, The 3rd Fallschirmjager Division in Action, December 1944-January 1945 (Hans Wijers, Stackpole Press, 2014, $18.95, softcover) This book about German paratroopers uses firsthand accounts from both sides, revealing the bitter combat of the Wehrmacht's last great offensive.

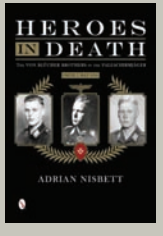
Italian Fighting Vehicles in Focus 1916-1945 (Ray Merriam, Merriam Press, 2014, $42.95, softcover) Italy operated a number of tanks, self-propelled guns, and armored cars. History and technical data are included along with numerous photographs.



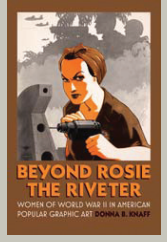
Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II (Jorg Muth, University of North Texas Press, 2013, $18.95, softcover) This book compares the advanced education programs of both the Wehrmacht and the U.S. Army. The author argues that the American system was conservative and outdated while the German one encouraged innovation and initiative.



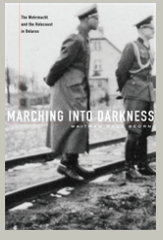
Forgotten Fifteenth: The Daring Airmen Who Crippled Hitler's War Machine (Barrett Tillman, Regnery Publishing, 2014, $29.95, hardcover) The U.S. Fifteenth Air Force waged its own war against the Third Reich's southern flank. This is the story of its high-risk missions and role in the Allied victory.



Heroes in Death: The von Blücher Brothers in the Fallschirmjäger, Crete, May 1941 (Adrian Nisbett, Schiffer Publishing, 2014, $35.00, hardcover) The Battle of Crete was a bloody affair. This book tells the story of three brothers who fought and died there.



Beyond Rosie the Riveter: Women of World War II in American Popular Graphic Art (Donna B. Knaff, University of Kansas Press, 2014, $19.95, softcover) Rosie the Riveter has become an icon in American art. The story of women and artwork during the war is told here in detail.



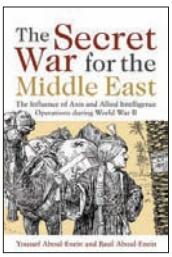
Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus (Waitman Wade Beorn, Harvard University Press, 2014, $39.95, hardcover) This new work exposes how ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers took part in the Holocaust. It describes how Army-organized hunts of Jews and the use of anti-partisan actions were used as a justification for extermination.

catch. They were well armed with cannon and air-to-air rockets that could make short work of a bomber's fuselage. They were fighting a defensive battle that gave them the advantage.

These advanced aircraft and their users had their shortcomings, however. Like all new technology, reliability was a problem. The Me-262's engines had only a few hours of service before requiring overhaul or replacement. Fuel shortages meant pilot training grew increasingly limited. The plane was exposed when taking off or landing, when its speed was useless. Despite frantic efforts, they could not be produced in enough numbers to turn the tide.

American pilots were quick to take advantage. They sought out the jets when they were in airfield patterns, slow, low, and vulnerable. Even the slower propeller planes could gain killing shots on Nazi jets when the Americans could get above them and dive. A number of American pilots acted aggressively against jet sightings, determined to take the fight to their enemy. The effort paid off; no less than 165 Me-262s and Me-163 Komet interceptors were shot down by American pilots alone.

This book is a well-researched look at the various jets of the Luftwaffe, the men who flew them, and how U.S. pilots battled them. Chapters cover all three in detail enough to satisfy any air power enthusiast. The author is an acknowledged expert on military aviation history, and it shows in this work. The stories of aircraft development, both Allied and Axis, are artfully interwoven with personal stories of the pilots on both sides who fought each other in the skies over Germany.



The Secret War for the Middle East: The Influence of Axis and Allied Intelligence Operations During World War II (Youssef Aboul-Enein and Basil Aboul-Enein, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2013, 288 pp., maps, notes, bibliography, index, $49.95, hardcover).

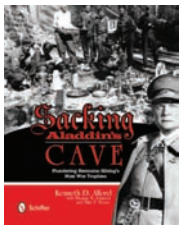
During World War II, the Middle East was a key theater for the Allies, despite the fact that Axis forces never penetrated it. German General Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps never made it past the Western Desert of Egypt despite grand dreams of taking the oil fields of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. In strictly military terms, the Third Reich never even came close, although in the realms of espionage, diplomacy, and intelligence, it was deeply engaged in the region.

The entire region was ripe for exploitation

by Axis agents. There was the simmering resentment toward British and French rule. Arab nationalist causes, most still in their infancy, could easily be stirred to action against their nominal rulers. Such was the case in Iraq in 1941, where pledges of German support for the overthrow and expulsion of the British led to an overconfident Iraqi attempt to do so, backed by the actual firepower of the Luftwaffe flying from bases in Vichy Syria. German success in the Middle East would threaten the flow of oil vital to the war effort. Generally, Allied responses were swift in preventing any threat from coming to fruition.

The authors have created a work that is as much a political as military history, full of detail on the intrigues of the period. They also make a broad effort to show how Nazi efforts influenced postwar Arab independence movements and thought.

Sacking Aladdin's Cave: Plundering Hermann Göring's Nazi War Trophies (Kenneth D. Alford with Thomas M. Johnson and Mike F. Morris, Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 2013, 136 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $59.99, hardcover).



It is well known that Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring helped himself to vast amounts of Europe's art treasures during Nazi Germany's 12-year reign. His several homes were adorned with them. Less understood is how many of these cultural riches went home with Americans after the war. Because of the book and miniseries *Band of Brothers*, the arrival of the 101st Airborne Division in Berchtesgaden in 1945 is popularly understood; the scenes showing GIs helping themselves to silverware and liquor are memorable. Another unit, the 1269th Engineer Battalion, also went to Berchtesgaden along with the U.S. 3rd Infantry and French 2nd Armored Divisions.

Once there, they found valuable artwork, goods made of precious metals and other valuables spread around, some in storage, others lying about as if dropped or thrown away. Soon, "Aladdin's Cave," part of a bunker system used to conceal the bulk of Göring's artwork, was discovered under the local Luftwaffe headquarters. Fresh cement had been poured to conceal it. From there it became a constant battle as items apparently began disappearing from the collection as generals, visiting politicians, and other VIPs down to private soldiers started putting their hands on whatever suited them. Some items were taken as legitimate trophies and now reside in museums and military centers. Others disappeared, and the search for them is ongoing. Millions of dollars in looted Nazi memorabilia was seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

We hit the battlefield in the console version of *World of Tanks*, while the undead lumber toward sniping spots in a *Nazi Zombie Army* port.

WORLD OF TANKS: XBOX 360 EDITION

Imagine if World War II had been fought with nothing but the rolling menace of tanks. No troops on the ground. No planes in the sky. Just a bunch of tanks striving for dominance in the field of war. That's what *World of Tanks* feels like—a world in which we abandoned our fragile forms and decided reinforced layers of steel were the only acceptable way to get around. If that sounds like fun to you and you happen to primarily be a console player, you'll be happy to know that *World of Tanks* made a relatively smooth transition from PC to Xbox 360. War is hell, sure, but it plays pretty damn nicely on consoles.

PUBLISHER
Wargaming

DEVELOPER
Wargaming

SYSTEM(S)
Xbox 360

AVAILABLE
Now

One of the truly impressive aspects of *World of Tanks* that holds up well is its balance between simulation-style attention to detail and fast-paced arcade action. Controls are simple enough to pick up, but there are plenty of little things that make battles more than just a straight guns-blazing race through the battlefield. One moment you could be doing just that only to have a tread blown off, slowing your unit down or completely immobilizing it in the worst case scenario. The next shot could pierce your tank's armor and find you riding around without a gunner. It's unpredictable, and no two matches end up being the same.

World of Tanks' particular pacing can end up keeping battles going late into the night. 15-on-15 matches aren't entirely unlike normal shooters when they first start. Everyone disperses quickly and races to gain their own strategic ground—especially those who know the terrain well—and then the real fight begins. While matches rarely take up the full 15 minutes, the differing speed of each tank can make it seem like a long haul or something that's over before you know it. Either way, though, you're rarely too far from the fireworks.

The combination and careful development of a few disparate aspects makes *World of Tanks* a more strategic game than one would think at first glance. Watch any trailer for the game and you'll see nothing but explosions and utter tank-based mayhem, but playing "damn the consequences" style will often get you blown to smithereens. That's where the environment and other more nuanced facets of the game come into play. Use the terrain wisely and you can overwhelm your enemies before they even have a chance to fire off a round. Even the most subtle positioning of your tank can alter the outcome of combat, so it's worth taking the time to get used to maps and develop your own way of being comfortable on the battlefield.

World of Tanks doesn't wear out its welcome too often, but console players will eventually find themselves longing for new maps and vehicles. Working to unlock all the available terrain and tanks can be quite a process—some might even disparagingly call it a grind, and I wouldn't disagree—but as the list of available options gradually opens up the freshness of the first few play sessions comes pulsing back. With that said, there's still a staggering amount of steel variety here to play with, and you may find that tanks unlocked at a later point better suit your particular style of play, so it's worth experimenting as more and more become available.

Of course, you could just buy your way through some of the more grindy aspects of *World of Tanks*, but you might find cutting to the chase isn't as fun as working hard for the rewards. Those who do decide

during a narcotics arrest in 1997. The story of all this is included in this well-researched, lavishly illustrated work.

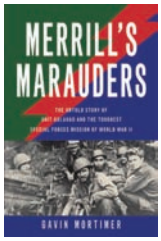
South From Corregidor (Lt. Cmdr. John Morrill, USN, reprinted by Mike and Tom Deal, Createspace Independent Publishing, North Charleston, SC, 2013, 273 pp., maps, illustrations, $14.00, softcover)

Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lt. Cmdr. John Morrill, commanding the minesweeper USS *Quail*, ordered its recently rebuilt engines tested. The ship was berthed in Cavite, Manila Harbor. As the crew set to it, Japanese planes appeared overhead. Morrill told his men to keep testing the engines—and open fire on the enemy fighters. Soon several nearby warships were disabled, floating helplessly. Morrill towed them out of harm's way so they could be repaired for further service. It was the first act of bravery during the Navy officer's Philippine odyssey, but not the last. After *Quail* was sunk and the island fortress of Corregidor fell, Morrill and 17 sailors decided to try to escape to Australia. Their journey took them through the islands of the Philippines, harrowing escapes, and constant danger.

This is a reprint of a 1943 book recounting Morrill's journey. While some of the text was obviously revised for easier reading, it is still an interesting account of how a small group of sailors created its own small victory of escape and survival.

Merrill's Marauders: The Untold Story of Unit Galahad and the Toughest Special Forces Mission of World War II (Gavin Mortimer, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2013, 240 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover).

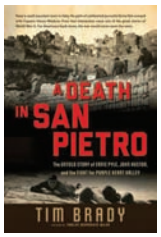
The 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) is one of the more famous American units in World War II, but few know them that way.



Rather, they are Merrill's Marauders, a group of 3,000 volunteers who went into the forbidding jungles of Burma to attack Japanese supply lines and seize an airfield near the town of Myitkyina. Theirs is a story of incredible hardship; these soldiers marched 700 miles through some of the harshest terrain on the planet. Along the way, disease and malnutrition withered their numbers until only a few hundred able-bodied fighters remained when reinforcements finally arrived at the Burmese town they had suffered to reach.

There have been many books written about the Marauders since their daring journey. This one merits reading through its attention to detail and excellent writing. Most of the book covers the direct experiences of the soldiers themselves, vividly revealing the twin hells of combat and life in the jungles of Burma. Occasionally, the author shifts to the higher levels of command, but wisely limits this in favor of retelling the Marauders' story at its basic level.

A Death in San Pietro: The Untold Story of Ernie Pyle, John Huston, and the Fight for Purple Heart Valley (Tim Brady, Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2013, 320 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $25.99, hardcover).



War correspondent Ernie Pyle was famed for reporting on the American soldier and his struggles during World War II. While in Italy, he was attached to a company of the 143rd Infantry, 36th Division. This unit soon found itself fighting a hellish battle for the town of San Pietro. The rugged terrain, often harsh weather, and stout German defenses combined to drain the American infantry of strength.

This company had a leader its men looked up to as if he were their father, Captain Henry Waskow. Despite the dangers, he led his men into battle time and again until his company was reduced to the size of a platoon and Waskow was killed leading yet another mission. Pyle wrote a column about Waskow that was so poignant that it gained instant fame across the United States. John Huston, the celebrated filmmaker, chose to make a documentary about the battle, which drew wide acclaim of its own. The film was shown in the spring of 1945, just weeks after Pyle met his own death on Okinawa. The stories of the battle, Waskow, Pyle, and Huston are combined here in this well-done book.

to throw down some real-world cash will get a decent amount of bang for their buck, but it's important to keep in mind that, with perseverance and dedication, you can eventually unlock everything without spending any actual money. And don't worry too much about deep-pocketed players ruining your fun by essentially paying to win and getting all the big guns right away. *World of Tanks* provides balance through match structuring and the variety of tank types, and just because someone purchased a heavy hitter doesn't necessarily mean they'll be able to use it well.

All that unlocking can be exhausting, but fatigue goes out the window when you have a good squad to play with. The strategy inherent to battle is much more enjoyable with friends, whether you go in with them in advance or end up finding solid strangers online. Headset communication allows for great tactical maneuvering potential, while those without will have to stick with communication presets for issuing orders. Still, it's unlikely that anyone playing online on Xbox Live doesn't have access to the packed-in headset.

It's difficult to just slap a score on something like this and call it a day. Much like when the PC version first launched, World of Tanks still has quite a bit of growing to do. It may be a while before it makes it to that level, and it's doubtful that a console version of a PC experience could ever truly mirror the original, but this is as solid a start as any. Players have a great foundation in World of Tanks, and it's something that can only grow exponentially over the coming months.

DEVELOPER
Rebellion Developments

SYSTEM(S)
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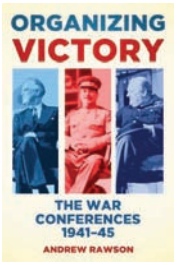
PORT OF WAR
Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army Games Head to Consoles

Recent years have seen pretty much every game try out a zombie mode in some shape or form, from the *Call of Duty* series to *Sniper Elite V2* and beyond. The latter has a pretty fun spinoff we've covered in these pages before, and now the *Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army* games are making their way to consoles.

Nazi Zombie Army has been very successful for UK-based developer Rebellion Developments. The first game and its sequel, *Nazi Zombie Army 2*, collectively sold more than half a million units worldwide over the past year, but the team promises the console version won't simply be a repackaging of both games. At the time of this writing Rebellion's CEO and Creative Director Jason Kingsley said they couldn't confirm the platforms, but "there will be plenty of new content to get stuck into."

Organizing Victory: The War Conferences 1941-45 (Andrew Rawson, The History Press, Gloucestershire, UK, 2013, 368 pp., photographs, index, $24.95, softcover).



In December 1941, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met at the Arcadia Conference. During this meeting the decision was made to concentrate on the defeat of Germany first, securing Great Britain and creating a supply conduit across the Atlantic Ocean to fuel that effort. Their respective chiefs of staff began setting up the immense logistical and planning needs to make those decisions reality. Over the course of World War II, the main Allied leaders met 10 times to discuss the overall strategies for victory. Each meeting was the birthplace of decisions that brought about the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

For those interested in these conferences, this new book reprints the minutes from each meeting in order. The author has edited out the procedural language and changed the wording to past tense for easier reading. Each meeting is covered day by day, showing the decision making that translated into orders to theater commanders for combat operations around the globe.

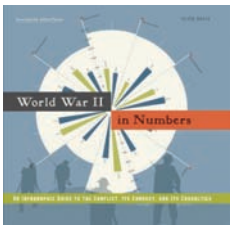
Savage Will: The Daring Escape of Americans Trapped Behind Nazi Lines (Timothy M. Gay, NAL Caliber, New York, 2013, 333 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $26.95, hardcover).

On November 8, 1943, a transport plane took off from an airfield near Catania, Sicily, crowded with a group of 25 nurses and medics along with a few others. A heavy fog caused the plane to stray off course. Rather than landing in Bari on the east coast of Italy, it instead crashed on a mountainside in central Albania, stranding the passengers in German-held territory. Quickly contacted by local guerrillas, the group began a long and harrowing journey to not only survive, but also escape the enemy.

No less a figure than President Roosevelt took a personal interest in the situation. While the stranded Americans were fleeing German patrols, suffering blizzards, and living in fear of the Gestapo, he was ordering their rescue—at all costs. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) had an active network in Eastern Europe. It had experience in extracting downed pilots and its own operatives, so it went into action to get what Roosevelt called "the flower of American womanhood" back safely. In fact, the SOE had already been working on the problem, apparently not fast enough for Roosevelt's taste.

The story of how these lost Americans escaped the treacherous Albanian mountains reads almost like a novel, combining the adventures of the trapped nurses and medics with the efforts of British and American operatives to get them out, along with the high-level attention the situation attracted. Their 62-day ordeal behind enemy lines is a tale worth reading.

World War II in Numbers: An Infographic Guide to the Conflict, Its Conduct, and its Casualties (Peter Doyle, Firefly Books, Ontario, Canada, 2013, 224 pp., maps, photographs, many charts and tables, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover.



Statistics are a part of everyday life in the 21st century. Everything from economic forecasts to batting averages is quantified daily in an attempt to fathom various aspects of life. While numbers never tell the whole story, they are a valuable way to gain understanding, and World War II is no exception. While most history books will give the reader some statistics in order to tell the tale, this new book gathers various numbers related to the conflict to provide an expanded concept of its scope and breadth.

Some numbers provide explanation of why the war went as it did. Charts showing the population figures for the combatants in 1940 reveal that the various Axis nations totaled 222 million people while the Allied countries had well over 1.3 billion. Likewise, the combined gross domestic product of the Axis was still less than that of the United States alone. Production numbers show this disparity in stark contrast. Casualty figures are also shown in easily understood tables revealing how the Western Allies lost relatively few soldiers compared to the Soviet Union.

Statistics of the battlefield are covered as well. Charts showing tank strengths in the Western Desert, the penetration capabilities of antitank guns, and the specifications of rifles give details more important to the soldier than the strategist. Lists of the top air aces by country, submarine losses, and even artillery rates of fire are all available in this work. It reads easily, almost as an almanac of World War II. □

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Iran, Nuclear Weapons and the "Interim Agreement"

Is this the time to relax—or rather *increase*—economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic?

Despite evasions, denials and equivocations, it is clear that Iran continues to pursue the holy grail of nuclear weapons. A temporary agreement recently struck between Iran and Western powers does nothing to disable Iran's nuclear weapons development, yet it does loosen hard-won economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic. In fact, Iranian diplomats brag that the agreement fails to inhibit them in the least and that their nuclear program will not be stopped. Does it really make sense to relax pressure on Iran, or should the U.S. and Western powers line up additional sanctions should Iran fail to discontinue nuclear weapons development?

What are the facts?

The P5 + 1 group of world powers—the U.S., China, Russia, France, Great Britain and Germany—celebrated when Iran recently agreed to a six-month interim agreement calling for the Islamic Republic to suspend enrichment of 20% uranium. In return, the P5 + 1 agreed to allow Iran to access $4.2 billion in previously blocked funds, and the U.S. agreed to apply no new economic sanctions for six months. Yet Iranian foreign minister Mohammed Javad Zarif says, "We did not agree to dismantle anything," and its president Hassan Rouhani promises Iran will absolutely retain its enrichment capability.

> "We did not agree to dismantle anything."

U.S. President Barack Obama has pledged that if Iran fails to abide by the interim agreement or to dismantle its nuclear weapons development, he would seek additional economic sanctions and possibly resort to military action. A bill currently before Congress—the Nuclear Weapons Free Iran Act—would impose just such additional sanctions on Iran if it breaks the interim agreement or does not cease its nuclear weapons program following expiration of this agreement. In other words, the bill formalizes exactly the diplomatic consequences the President has threatened. No wonder the Nuclear Weapons Free Iran Act is currently supported by at least 59 U.S. Senators, a clear majority.

Distressingly, the President has threatened to veto this act if passed by the Senate. The White House fears that the threat of new sanctions—even though they would *not* go into effect unless Iran fails to comply—could derail current nuclear disarmament talks.

What are the stakes? The primary targets of the Iranian ayatollahs' fanatical zeal are the U.S. (the "great Satan") and Israel (the "little Satan"), perceived as being America's agent in the Middle East. Since Iran now possesses long-range ballistic missiles, the United States, Europe and many Arab nations are in mortal danger of attack by that country. Indeed, as Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Sen. Richard Durbin notes, "If these [current] negotiations fail, there are two grim alternatives—a nuclear Iran, or war, or perhaps both."

Even short of such a war, a nuclear-armed Iran would be in unquestioned dominance of the Middle East and of its oil supply, the energy life blood of the entire world. It would surely cause intolerable disruption of the U.S. and international economies.

Israel, however, is the most immediate target of Iran's fury. Iran's unquenchable hatred of Israel is based on the conviction that "nonbelievers" have no legitimate place in the Middle East. Iran's leaders have repeatedly threatened Israel with destruction once they come into possession of nuclear weapons.

Israel is such a small country that one or two nuclear weapons strategically dropped on its narrow coastal territory would destroy it. Indeed, the effects of a nuclear attack on Israel are too horrible to consider. There can be little doubt, for example, that such an attack would turn the entire Middle East into a war zone, leaving wide-spread destruction and a worldwide economic disaster in its wake. Clearly this outcome must be prevented at all cost, and no effort should be spared to keep the hands of the ayatollahs off the nuclear trigger.

What is the solution? Of course, most Americans share the President's hopes that Iran can be persuaded to set aside its nuclear ambitions—and its vendetta against Israel—through diplomacy and other peaceful means. But one thing is certain: It is crippling Western economic sanctions, backed by the threat of force, that have recently driven Iran to the negotiating table.

Above all, Iran must decommission its nuclear weapons infrastructure. Yet with Iran's nuclear capability still intact and moving forward and its leaders vigorously asserting that the Islamic Republic will never reduce its 20,000 centrifuges or shut down its Arak heavy-water nuclear reactor or its Fordow enrichment facility, does it make sense to *reduce* the pressure of economic sanctions now? Sen. Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee believes it's a mistake to relax sanctions: "I am convinced that we should only relieve pressure on Iran in return for verifiable concessions that will fundamentally dismantle Iran's nuclear program."

Since sanctions brought the Iranians to the table, sanctions are clearly the most powerful, peaceful means at our disposal for convincing the Iranians to abandon hopes of acquiring nuclear weapons. But because the Iranians continue to declare themselves steadfastly committed to nuclear development, it's time to ratchet up the economic pressure. The Nuclear Weapons Free Iran Act should be passed now. The survival of the world is at stake.

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Colmar

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Daly had distinguished himself as a platoon leader during the Colmar campaign, adding two oakleaf clusters to his Silver Star, and his commanding officers sang his praises. Writing on February 7, less than two months after Daly had joined the company, Major Kenneth B. Potter, commander of the 1st Battalion, characterized the young lieutenant's service as "exemplary, evidencing a very high degree of leadership, aggressiveness, and organizational ability under the most difficult of conditions."

In recommending Daly for promotion from second to first lieutenant shortly after the actions at Kunheim and Biesheim, Potter not only praised Daly's initiative in twice assuming command of the company during battle, but also identified essential elements of the young officer's leadership: "a very high degree of aggressiveness, cool courage and calculated daring, high organizational ability under the most difficult of circumstances, and the utmost devotion to his men both in the height of combat and in the lull ensuing."

As Daly observed later, "You have to take the chance to get things moving."

Sergeant Lebowitz snapped a photo of an exhausted Daly returning from a night patrol. He later mounted it into a scrapbook and wrote a caption describing Daly as "the best officer and bravest man I ever knew."

In the "frozen crust" of the Colmar Pocket, during what one historian termed "America's unknown battle," Daly and his fellow citizen-soldiers had prevailed over a battered yet skilled enemy. Famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle attributed the victory to the foot soldiers who had demonstrated "real heroism—the uncomplaining acceptance of unendurable conditions." Amid those "unendurable conditions," Daly had mastered the role of platoon leader. Now, he and his men had a chance to rest and to train for the next phase, the battle for Germany that would also include Daly's rendezvous with the Medal of Honor.

Author Stephen J. Ochs holds a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Maryland. For the last 37 years he has taught U.S. History at Georgetown Preparatory School in North Bethesda, Maryland, where he currently holds the Lawler Chair. He is the author of numerous articles and books including A Cause Greater Than Self: The Journey of Captain Michael J. Daly, World War II Medal of Honor Recipient *published in 2012 by the Texas A&M University Press.*

Kiev

Continued from page 69

swung northeast, hoping to link up with von Manteuffel, which would create a pocket around Meleni that could be destroyed by the advancing German infantry.

It seemed like a good plan, and on the 20th things seemed to be going on schedule for the Germans as the Russians were again caught off guard. The problem was that German intelligence had no idea what Balck was facing. It was known that the Soviets had concentrated forces around Meleni, but it was only after a map was found on a dead Russian major that the Germans realized the extent of those forces. The map showed they were going up against at least three tank corps and four infantry corps! On top of that, the Russians were also pouring more troops into the area.

A report from the LAH stated, "There is a constant reinforcement for the enemy from the east. The fact that we are being outflanked on both sides makes it impossible to hold on to our decision to make a forward thrust on both sides of the march line."

The Germans continued to try to close the Meleni pocket up to December 23, when Balck issued orders to stabilize the line and suspend attacks in the area. During the afternoon and evening, the panzer divisions pulled back and established defensive positions.

While German eyes were on the thrust toward Kiev, the Russians had also poured more reinforcements into the Brusilov sector. On December 24, three combined armies, two tank armies, and a number of independent corps burst out of their positions, hitting the three weakened panzer divisions (8th, 19th, and 25th) that were facing them. They crashed through the German positions, creating wide gaps in the line that could not be closed.

With the beginning of the December 24 offensive, the German attempt to retake Kiev was finally at an end. The Soviets had firmly established themselves on the west bank of the Dnepr, something that Hitler had wanted to avoid at all costs. Fighting would continue to clear all German forces from the lower Dnepr, but the costly fighting around Kiev had so depleted the units of Army Group South, the outcome was inevitable. It would be several more months before the entire Ukraine would be liberated, but its capital would never again be under German control.

Pat McTaggart of Elkader, Iowa, is a longtime contributor to WWII History. *He is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front.*

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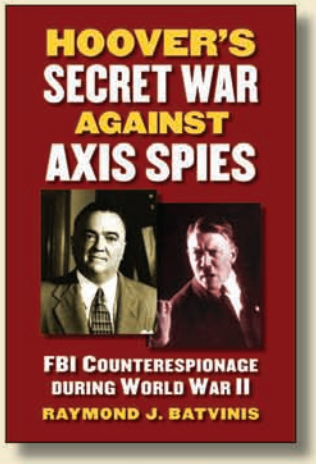

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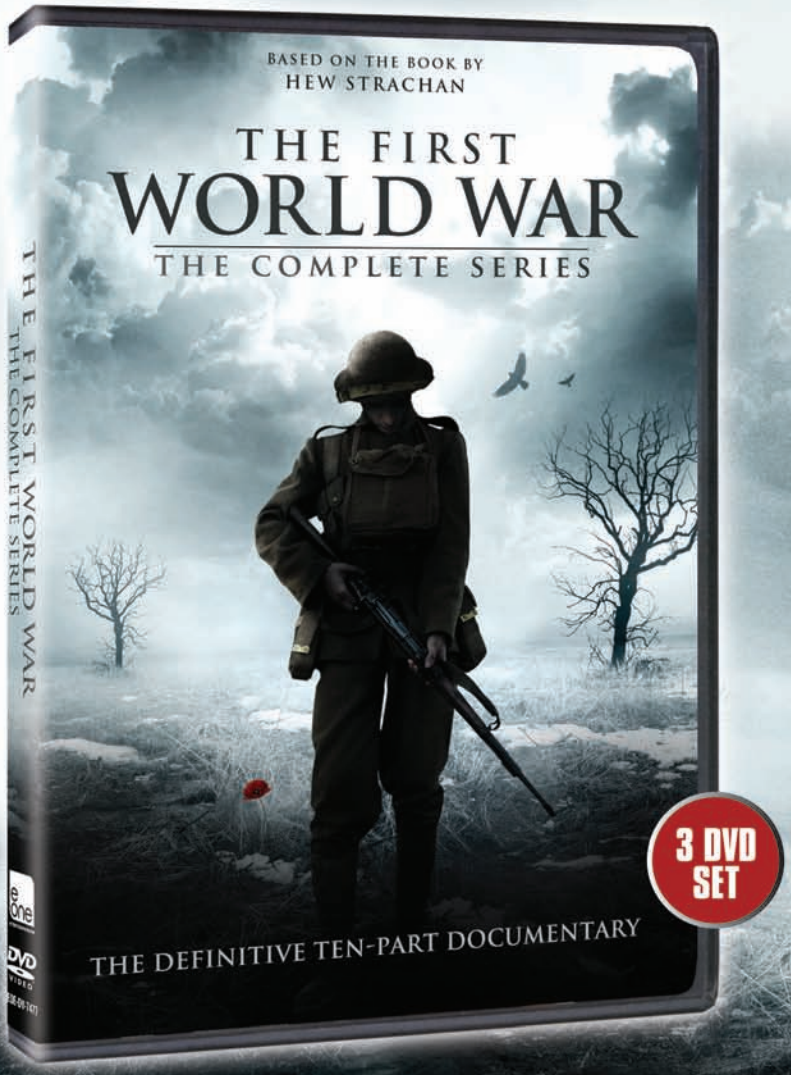





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