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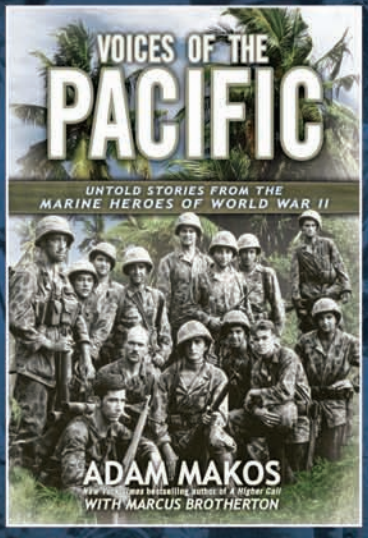

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Photo: Imperial War Museum

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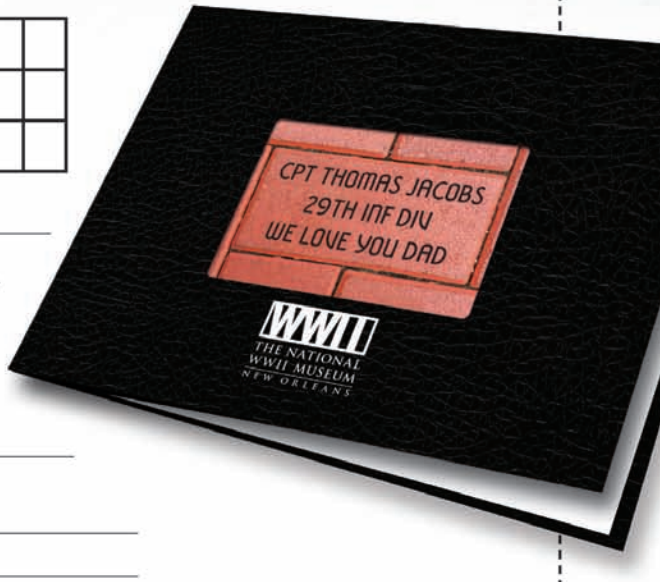

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Hero and Friend

Dear Editor:

During World War II, Victor J. Dowling of West Hartford and Simsbury, Connecticut, was a major in the Army Air Corps at age 21 and a pilot of a B-17 bomber stationed in England as part of the Eighth Air Force. His is a story of courage and heroism.

Victor was shot down near Paris, crash landed, then walked to Paris as it was being liberated by Patton's 3rd Army. On another occasion his airplane was shot up by enemy aircraft and flak, causing him to make an emergency landing at a British base.

During a bombing mission over Cologne, Germany, he was shot down and parachuted safely. As he walked across a small bridge in the city of Cologne, he heard, "Halten!" He was taken into custody, and the local citizenry, angry about the bombing, were planning to hang him. Fortunately, an SS officer stopped the hanging, and ordered him to be taken to a prison camp.

As the war was coming to a close, he and other prisoners were taken from the prison camp and marched west, the German soldiers fearing capture by the Russians. One night they slept in a barn, and the next morning Vic and a fellow prisoner hid in the barn's eaves. Vic and his fellow airman then proceeded to walk westward toward the Allied lines. They hid during the day and foraged for food at night. Eventually they ran into the U.S. 7th Army moving east and were liberated.

That, however, was not the end of it. The American Army officers believed that Vic and his companion were German SS officers masquerading as Americans. Calls to England straightened this out, and they returned to their base. Vic was in Tennessee training to be a B-29 pilot when the war against Japan ended.

Vic was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his courage and heroism. Upon returning to the United States, he went to law school and became a successful attorney and businessman. He practiced law in the Greater Hartford area and we became friends. I was to have lunch with him shortly after his release from the hospital, but this was not to be—he passed away there. Vic was a good friend and I still miss him.

Richard M. Rittenbrand
Hartford, Connecticut

Women Doing Their Share

Dear Editor:

I am a veteran of World War II, having served in the British Army Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) from 1942 to 1946. I was pleasantly surprised to see pictures of our women's auxiliary in your magazine.

We did a lot more than just carry the flag, though not as much as our male compatriots who were fighting on the front lines. We did our share by manning supply depots; transporting supplies and material where needed; working in hospitals helping our wounded soldiers, and sometimes even captured enemies; working in signals; and even parachuting behind enemy lines to help in organizing resistance.

My particular unit, the Provost Military Police, was stationed in Cairo, Egypt. We did train control between Cairo and Jerusalem where we had to check all military personnel to verify authorizations to travel and to check all types of contraband. We guarded the wives of German spies in the Citadel outside of Cairo waiting to be exchanged for imprisoned British sisters. I also spent a year in the Suez Canal Zone.

When King Farouk's government (the same one that was preparing Nazi flags to welcome the Germans while the El Alamein campaign was being fought) felt that our servicemen were using their parks too freely we had to form a "Moral Patrol" to police the parks to see that our men and women were enjoying them properly. These patrols consisted of two male MPs and two female MPs assigned from our Provost Unit.

Mrs. E. Robbins
Wellington, Florida

Vintage Trains Across Germany

Dear Editor:

I wasn't in World War II, but I am a World War II veteran. We arrived by troopship in early January 1946 at the port of Le Havre, France. There were several camps at Le Havre, all named after American cigarettes. I was camped at Camp Philip Morris.

We processed for a few days then boarded one of the few rejuvenated trains that would operate on the American Army Engineers reconstructed tracks. The tracks—rails—were supported by metal cross-ties; there were many of them.

The old coach cars had compartments. We were six men, baggage and duffle bags. This was January and the train ride was cold. There was no heat, no water, no lights. We ate K rations and drank canteen water. As we entered long, dark tunnels, the engine's black coal smoke consumed the whole train.

All across southern Germany we could see the damage left from Allied bombing; towns were piles of rubble. Our first stop where we got off the train was Rosenheim, Germany, the home of the Panzer Division. We stayed there about three days. While there I was given a detail of four Romanian POWs, to shovel coal.

I was back on another train to destination unknown. We finally offloaded in Bad Schallerbach, Austria, where we lived in an old Bon Hoff, or train station hotel. It was there we saw a train stop once in a while; these trains were of a much older vintage.

The story in *WWII History* (February 2013) reminded me in many ways of the old trains and tracks from France across southern Germany and Austria.

Jack L. Daniels
DeRidder, Louisiana

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CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Arnold Blumberg, John Brown, Al Hemingway, Michael D. Hull, Kevin M. Hymel, David H. Lippman, Joseph Luster, Duane Schultz, Steve Zaloga, Phil Zimmer

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

MARK HINTZ
Chief Executive Officer

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

JANINE MILLER
Subscription Customer Service
sovereign@publishersserviceassociates.com
(570) 322-7848, ext. 164

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By Duane Schultz

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Poignant Death of an American Soldier

Ernie Pyle wrote the story and Robert Mitchum starred in the movie about Henry Waskow.

THERE WAS A TIME, IN JANUARY 1944, WHEN EVERYONE IN AMERICA HAD heard of Captain Henry T. Waskow from Belton, Texas. His story had been told by Ernie Pyle, the most revered war correspondent of the day, and it had become the most famous and beloved of all the columns Pyle wrote during World War II. Everyone who read a newspaper or magazine or listened to the radio knew about the 25-year-old captain and how his men mourned his passing. It moved the national conscience, capturing the attention of the American public to a degree that few stories ever had.

In the nation's capital, *The Washington Daily News* put Ernie Pyle's column on its front page, and all but 39 copies sold out in a day, an unheard of achievement. The editor of Waskow's hometown paper wrote, "If it doesn't touch you, your heart's a little cold." *Time* magazine reprinted the column about Waskow's death, and two leading radio personalities, Arthur Godfrey and Raymond Gram Swing, read it on the air. Even the most hardened listeners were moved to tears.

"In this war," Ernie Pyle wrote, "I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Captain Henry T. Waskow." One soldier in B Company said that he never knew the captain to do anything unfair to the troops under his command. Another remembered, "He never gave an order. He asked his men to follow him and they did and they all loved him."

Lieutenant Ray Hood said simply, "His men would die for him." Riley Tidwell, Waskow's runner, who was 20 years old when Waskow was killed, described the 25-year-old captain as being "just like my Dad, or even better to me than my Dad." A sergeant said, "After my father, he came next."

Tidwell was with Waskow when he was killed. A few hours before, Tidwell had made coffee and toast for him by spearing a piece of bread on a bent coat hanger and holding it over a can of Sterno. Waskow really liked his coffee and toast, and one of the last things he said to Tidwell was, "When we get back to the States, I'm going to get one of those smart-aleck toasters where you put the bread in and it pops up."

When he finished eating, they headed up the hill. Suddenly, they heard an incoming German shell. Waskow shoved Tidwell out of the way and yelled, "Hit the ground!"

"I did," Tidwell recalled. "I hit the ground and the First Sergeant with me, he hit the ground, but the Captain didn't make it. A piece of shrapnel caught him in the chest. It killed him right there." It was December 14, 1943, on Monte Sammucro, not far from the shattered town of San Pietro, Italy.

Tidwell did not want to leave Captain Waskow's body, but the battalion commander ordered him to get treatment for his trench foot. Tidwell sought shelter in a small wooden shack at the base of the mountain to try to get warm. There he saw a group of soldiers sitting with a

TOP: Artist Peter Sanfilippo painted this poignant watercolor titled *Fallen Friend* in Italy in 1944. Those who knew Captain Henry Waskow, left, were deeply touched by his death, as were those who read about the incident in a column by famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle.

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man who was writing on a notepad. A fuzzy woolen cap was perched on his head. "I found out his name was Ernie Pyle, the correspondent. We sat and talked for a long time and I told him about my captain."

The next night, Ernie Pyle watched as five bodies were brought down the mountain strapped to the backs of mules. They were draped over the wooden saddles, heads down, legs dangling stiffly over the other side. The procession halted at the bottom of the hill, and the dead soldiers were untied and lifted off the mules. For an awkward moment, each body was held upright, as if the man was standing, until the detail could tighten their grip on the body and place it down gently on the muddy road beside a stone wall. A group of soldiers approached the bodies.

"This one is Captain Waskow," one man said, gesturing to the first corpse. The others looked on silently. No one moved. No one spoke as they stared at the body of their company commander who had meant so much to them. "The men in the road seemed reluctant to leave," Pyle wrote. "They stood around, and gradually I could sense them moving closer to Captain Waskow's body. Not so much to look, I think, as to say something in finality to him and to themselves.

"One soldier came and looked down, and said aloud, 'Goddamn it.' That's all he said, and then he walked away. Another one came. He said, 'God damn it to hell anyway.' He looked down for a few last moments, and then he turned and left.

"Then another man came; I think he was an officer. It was hard to tell officers from men in the half light, for they all were bearded and grimy dirty. The man looked down into the dead captain's face, and spoke directly to him. He said: 'I sure am sorry, old man.'

"Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer, and bent over, and he too spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper, but awfully tenderly, and he said 'I sure am sorry, sir.'

"Then the first man squatted down, and he reached down and took the dead hand, and he sat there for a full five minutes, holding the dead hand in his own and looking intently into the dead face, and he never uttered a sound all the time he sat there.

"And finally he put his hand down, and then reached up and gently straightened the points of the captain's shirt collar, and then he sort of rearranged the tattered edges of his uniform around the wound. And then he got up and walked away down the road in the moonlight, all alone."

Henry Waskow was an unlikely hero. He had been a quiet, serious, sober boy, the kind of kid who always did his schoolwork on time and tried not to make trouble for his parents or anyone else. His classmates remembered him as "a sweet little oddball." One said, "He was never young, not in a crazy high-school kid way."

Actor Burgess Meredith (left) talks with war correspondent Ernie Pyle on the set of the film *The Story of G.I. Joe*. Meredith played the role of Pyle in the film, which was based on the wartime writings of Pyle, including the story of Captain Waskow.

He recognized that he was different from the other children, and he mentioned that in his "just in case" letter to be sent to his parents if he was killed in combat. "I guess I have always appeared strange at times; it was because I had weighty responsibilities that preyed on my mind and wouldn't let me slack up to be human, like I so wanted to be. I felt so unworthy at times of the great trust my country had put in me that I simply had to keep plugging to satisfy my own self that I was worthy of that trust. I have not, at the time of writing this, done that, and I suppose I never will."

Waskow was one of eight children of German Baptist cotton farmers. He was short and scrawny and wore the same striped overalls and blue shirt to school every day. He worked hard, was elected president of the senior class, and won second prize in a statewide public speaking contest. He graduated with the highest grades anyone had earned in 20 years. He even led the algebra class for a week when the teacher became ill.

A classmate recalled in 2010 that many of the girls at school were attracted to Waskow, but he did not have time for them. "He had a life to live," she said, "goals to accomplish. Henry did what he was supposed to do because he was supposed to do it." He did not smoke or drink and remained very much an introvert.

Waskow attended a local junior college for two years and then enrolled at Trinity College in San Antonio, working his way through school as a campus janitor. He joined the Texas National Guard because he needed the $1 he was paid for every drill session he attended. When the Guard was called to active duty in 1940 as the 36th Division, Waskow advanced quickly to the rank of captain. And just as quickly he became idolized by his men, some of whom were older than he was.

Waskow was killed on December 14, but his family in Texas was not notified until December 29. The War Department, in an effort to avoid dampening the holiday spirit, deliberately held up those dreaded telegrams announcing more deaths until after the Christmas holiday. Waskow's mother had a premonition, and when the telegram finally arrived she simply said, "I was right, wasn't I? Henry's gone." She died six weeks later.

Ernie Pyle was overwhelmed by the response to his column, which appeared on January 10, 1944. He had been suffering from exhaustion and anemia due to the long stint at the front and was also depressed, drinking too much and convinced he was finished as a writer. He believed that all his best work was behind him and that he would never write anything good again. Yet, in that same year Ernie Pyle was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished work as a frontline war correspondent. Many of his columns, including the one about Captain Waskow, were collected in a popular book, *Here Is Your War*. On April 18, 1945, Pyle was killed by Japanese machine-gun fire on the island of Ie Shima, 10 miles west of Okinawa.

Two months to the day after Pyle died, a movie had its gala premiere in New York City. Some people called it "Ernie Pyle's movie" because so much of it was drawn from his columns. *The Story of G.I. Joe* opened to rave reviews, and audiences across the nation flocked to see it. Soldiers who had been in combat said it was the most realistic depiction they had ever seen of life at the front.

The closing scene was taken from Pyle's most popular column. The only change was that the words "Goddamn it" had to be omitted, considered by the censors of the day to be profanity. The soldiers in the film, with the Ernie Pyle character observing them, stood by Captain Waskow's body to say their farewells. One man

Library of Congress

Robert Mitchum (left), not yet a movie star, played Captain Henry Waskow in *The Story of G.I. Joe.*

knelt to straighten his collar and stayed quietly for a while, exactly as Pyle had described.

Ernie Pyle had spent two weeks in Hollywood "nosing into the picture" as he put it. "I did not like the title," he wrote, "but nobody could think of a better one, and I was too lazy to try." Actor Burgess Meredith played Pyle. "The makeup men shaved his head," Pyle wrote in a column on February 14, 1945, "and wrinkled his face and made him up so well that he's even uglier than I am, poor fellow."

Robert Mitchum, then a relatively unknown actor, played Captain Waskow, but the name was changed to "Walker" in the movie to make it sound more ethnically neutral, more "American." Army brass had insisted on the change. Reviewers called *The Story of G.I. Joe* a "hard-hitting, penetrating drama," with "uncompromising realism." They said it had "tremendous emotional impact" and was "humorous, poignant, and tragic."

In 2009 the film became one of 25 selected for addition to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress, judged to be culturally, historically, and aesthetically important enough to be preserved for all time. In 2012, David Denby, film critic for *The New Yorker*, called it "probably the grimmest and most poetic" of all World War II films, "beautifully photographed," possessing a mood that is "somber, slightly maddened, fatalistic."

Captain Henry Thomas Waskow, U.S. Army Serial No. 0-407112, is buried in Grave 33, Row 6, Plot G, in the Rome-Sicily American Cemetery and Memorial. The cemetery is located outside the town of Nettuno, a few miles east of Anzio and 38 miles south of Rome. It contains 7,860 graves; the names of 3,095 American soldiers missing in action are engraved on the white marble walls of the chapel.

Ernesto Rosi has worked at the cemetery since 1979. In an interview in 2012, he said that Waskow's grave remains "one of the most visited gravesites in our cemetery." He often recounts Captain Waskow's story for visitors, and when he does, they all want to see the resting place of the soldier Ernie Pyle made famous.

"If you get to read this," Captain Waskow wrote in his final letter home, "I will have died defending my country and all that it stands for, the most honorable and distinguished death a man can die. I made my choice, dear ones. I volunteered in the Armed Forces because I thought that I might be able to help this great country of ours in its hours of darkness and need—the country that means more to me than life itself. If I have done that, then I can rest in peace, for I will have done my share to make the world a better place in which to live." □

Duane Schultz is a psychologist who has written a dozen military history books including Into the Fire: The Most Fateful Mission of World War II *and* Crossing the Rapido: A Tragedy of World War II. *His most recent book is* The Fate of War: Fredericksburg, 1862. *He is currently working on a book on the Marine Raiders of World War II.*

By Phil Zimmer

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

Hidden Key to Soviet Victory

The Soviet military used deception on numerous occasions to thwart the Germans.

PROMOTED TO FULL COLONEL IN THE GERMAN ARMY AND AN AWARD OF THE prestigious Knight's Cross were significant accomplishments, even in the waning days of World War II. Yet, Lt. Col. Heinrich Scherhorn managed to get the promotion and the Knight's Cross while languishing well behind the lines in a Soviet prisoner of war camp, and his promotion was fully aided and abetted by his Soviet captors.

The Soviets had deceived the Germans into believing that Scherhorn had rallied a group of some 1,800 German soldiers who were behind enemy lines in Belorussia and surrounded near the Berezino River in the summer of 1944. The group was reportedly making a determined yet desperate attempt to reach German lines. The report was based, in part, on truth. However, Soviet forces had earlier destroyed the unit near Minsk, with Scherhorn and 200 troops taken captive. The Soviets seized upon the opportunity, knowing that the Germans already believed that some Wehrmacht soldiers were stranded in the forests near Berezino.

Before Operation Berezino was over nine months later, the hard-pressed Germans had been convinced to fly 39 sorties to the fictitious fighters, dropping 13 radio sets and 225 cargo packs consisting of ammunition, food, medicine, and more than two million rubles, according to Robert W. Stephan, a former CIA counterintelligence specialist. In addition, 25 German agents and intelligence officers were rounded up in the successful deception, adds Stephan, author of *Stalin's War: Soviet Counterintelligence Against The Nazis, 1941-1945*.

As the Germans slowly took the bait, the Soviets further added to the ruse, with the trapped unit supposedly growing nearly 40 percent in size, including 16 officers—all quietly captured earlier—and 884 wounded. This supposed growth, in turn, created the need for even more medicine, ammunition, and supplies.

"The German sense of duty, and the potential political and military value of rescuing 2,500 troops trapped behind Soviet lines, proved stronger than the suspicions surrounding the operation," reports Stephan. Despite some serious doubts and rapidly depleting resources, the Germans continued to supply food and ammunition to the nonexistent unit. Whenever the Germans asked detailed questions about various officers supposedly working with Scherhorn, the Soviets would isolate them and obtain the information requested by the Germans.

Luck certainly played a part when a German intelligence officer landed on a primitive airfield to meet Scherhorn. The excited Oberleutnant Barfeldt jumped out of the aircraft a bit too early as it was taxiing, and a propeller blade decapitated him. The rattled crew quickly recovered the body and flew off, perhaps saving Operation Berezino from being uncovered.

The Soviets invested considerable resources to Operation Berezino, including 32 intelligence officers and more than 250 servicemen. These included high-ranking Leonid Aleksandrovich Eitingon, who had earlier coordinated the assassination of Leon Trotsky, Stalin's political rival. A number of POWs were pressed into service to create a convincing camp, complete with dugouts and tents to further convince the Germans.

Adding even greater authenticity to the troops' predicament, Soviet counterintelligence convinced the Germans that some of the planned airdrops needed to be postponed because of approaching enemy troops. The Soviets even managed, according to reports, to have the cooperative Scherhorn initially talk with recently dropped German parachutists who radioed back that everything was as stated. The fresh Germans were then captured by NKVD (Soviet Intelligence) security troops hidden nearby.

To help combat German espionage, the Soviets printed some identification documents on wallpaper not available outside the Soviet Union. Here, Soviet officers inspect such paper.

The Soviet deception skills had developed to the point that they were able to continue the ruse for nine months while convincing their wily opponents to supply ammunition and food desperately needed elsewhere.

The Soviets had come a long way since the early phase of

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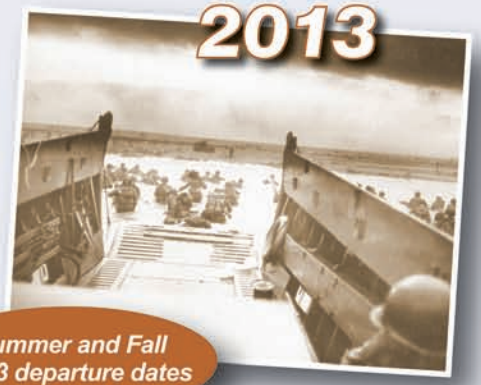

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World War II when the Red Army was overwhelmed and scattered as the powerful German Wehrmacht rolled across the Motherland in June 1941. The advancing Germans had swept down on the town of Orel, only 200 miles from Moscow, so quickly that they found the trams still running. The Wehrmacht moved so fast that within a few months the invaders were at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad, threatening the very existence of the Soviet Union.

More than three million Axis troops had invaded the Soviet Union, organized in 146 German divisions along with 14 Romanian divisions in the south and Finnish units in the north. They were supported by more than 2,000 aircraft and 3,300 tanks.

The Soviets had been caught flat footed, nearly totally surprised. Soviet aircraft were exposed and lined up "in inviting rows at major air bases," notes British historian Richard Overy. Many forward units had limited ammunition, and within the first month 200 out of 340 military supply depots fell into German hands.

ABOVE: KGB officer Leonid Eitingon was among the Soviet intelligence officers who helped in the deception. Eitingon had coordinated the assasination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1940. TOP: Lt. Col. Heinrich Scherhorn was captured by the Soviets and used to help deceive the Wehrmacht into believing that he led as many as 2,500 German troops behind Soviet lines.

By the end of December 1941, some 3.8 million Soviet prisoners had been taken and were stranded behind barbed wire in desperate conditions. Perhaps a million more had been killed. Leningrad, Russia's old imperial city, was surrounded, and the lack of food began to take its toll. The city's death rate rose to 5,000 per day during that first winter of the epic siege. Moscow itself teetered on the verge of collapse with many of the government offices evacuated to Kuibyskev, some 500 miles to the east.

Even Lenin's body had been whisked from Moscow, and Stalin himself had a special train on standby, but he decided at the last moment to remain in the capital city. His decision to stay helped calm the populace of Moscow, which had seen widespread looting and civil unrest.

The Germans had overrun some 40 percent of the Soviet Union's population and nearly the same percentage of its production capacity. Only 90,000 Soviet troops stood between the Wehrmacht and Moscow, which was so close that some German troops reported seeing the city's spires.

Stalin, in many ways, was like a prize fighter who had been knocked into his own corner. He and his comrades were dazed by the onslaught, but the decision had been made to stand and fight. The coming of winter certainly played a significant role in halting the German tide, as did information from a well-placed Soviet agent in Japan. The spy had informed Moscow that Japan had set its eyes on potential oil-rich war prizes to the south, rather than Soviet territory. Based on that information, Stalin moved winter-hardened Siberian units across the length of the Soviet Union to successfully shore up the defense of the capital.

Soviet military leaders had long held that *maskirovka,* or military deception, was a viable weapon in protecting the Motherland. They had believed firmly in Sun Tzu's centuries old contention that "all warfare is based on deception."

It was, perhaps, during the fighting for Moscow that the Soviets first demonstrated their affinity for *maskirovka*. The overly confident German commanders unwittingly assisted the effort. The Germans had convinced themselves that the Soviets had depleted their reserves. They further failed to realize that elements of three Soviet armies, including the experienced Siberian troops, had been redeployed around Moscow under a new commander, General Georgi Zhukov. Those Russian armies would serve as the shock troops to spearhead the early December 1941 Red Army counteroffensive before Moscow.

Bad weather, the repositioning of troops at night, and comparatively crude *maskirovka* efforts assisted in catching the tired and overextended Germans by surprise. The Germans were successfully pushed back, giving the Soviets a much-needed respite as winter fully closed in on the opposing forces.

"At best, Soviet experiences at Moscow partially indicated what could be done with *maskirovka,*" noted David Glantz, author of *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War.* "Moscow was only their first lesson in a long combat education." Successful early deception efforts prompted the Soviet high command to consider an even broader range of deceptive moves that could contribute to future operations.

The Germans did have some successes with their own military deceptions. An operation that began in Warsaw in the summer of 1943 lasted nearly a year. It led to the capture of 52 Soviet agent teams and enabled the Germans to determine the scope of some Soviet military operations in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Upper Silesia during that time frame.

However, as the war progressed so did Soviet sophistication in the use of deception. Basic practices such as false and misleading radio traffic, camouflage to conceal troops and equipment, and fake troop movements gradually gave way to more complex, coordinated, and sophisticated measures such as Operation Berezino.

The Soviets had a number of advantages over their German opponents when it came to deception. Russian-born American journalist Issac Don Levine summed up the Soviet system well in 1960. The government was "esstentially a counterintelligence apparatus. It was conceived in 1903 by Lenin as an operation in counterintelligence against the Czarist regime, and it remained a conspiracy ever since.... It was a front...," with real power resting with the Communist Party.

The Soviet Union from its very inception was "designed from top to bottom to catch, manipulate, kill, or imprision 'spies,' 'traitors,' and dissidents of every stripe, real or imagined, to keep the Communist party in power," observes Stephan.

German arrogance and hubris in dealing with the *untermenschen* or "subhuman" Slavs also played into the hands of Soviet counterintelligence officers. The time-proven Soviet system of suspicion made it difficult for German spies to operate behind the lines and collect valuable information. In fact, if more than 10 percent of German agents completed their assignments behind Soviet lines, the Germans were pleased.

Making things even more difficult for German agents was the fact that Soviet soldiers were required to carry five to 10 different documents, including identification, pay book, and military orders. Civilian truck drivers needed a bill of lading, title, travel orders, and a weapons pass if carrying a weapon. To confound German agents, the Soviets ingeniously used a type of rusting wire that was not available outside the country for staples. The Soviets even printed some documents on wallpaper not available outside the Soviet Union.

Soviet counterintelligence closely examined

the uniforms of suspected agents. Uncovered buttons on the underwear of German agents posing as Soviet officers would raise eyebrows because Soviet officers wore covered buttons on their underwear. Even the number of bullets issued to pistol-carrying officers could raise questions, with the Germans most often supplying 20 cartridges to agents while Soviet officers carried 21 cartridges to reload their Nagant pistols three times.

The Soviets were adept at not only capturing German agents, but also in turning them against the Germans. They were even able to plant double agents inside the German system. One agent, Ivan Savchuk, worked himself into a position serving as an interpreter for German intelligence screening of Soviet POWs for potential agent candidates. He managed to provide the Soviets with detailed information on 80 agents and 30 Abwehr (German intelligence) staff officers.

The Soviets also managed to infiltrate Abwehr spy training schools, with some agents actually becoming instructors. Information supplied by one such instructor alone resulted in the apprehension of some 112 German agents. At one time, Soviet counterintelligence officials were so emboldened that they actually instructed their agents to contact them by using the radio facilities at the German training schools.

By mid-war the Soviets had fully mastered radio discipline and communications security. Camouflage techniques had progressed significantly, and the Soviets had largely mastered the difficult task of quickly relocating troops to take advantage of German weak points. Zhukov noted that by that time the Soviets were much better at keeping their intentions secret and at spreading disinformation and misleading the enemy. By then most Soviet units were using code tables in all radio and telephone transmissions. Codes were being changed every 24 hours, and cipher keys were being transmitted only by courier. An extremely detailed *maskirovka* component was included in each operational plan.

In Belorussia, as part of Operation Bagration in mid-1944, Soviet tanks and guns rolled out of the swamps on the northern edge of the Pripet Marshes, surprising German defenders. Undetected by the Germans, Soviet engineers had laid wooden causeways, creating makeshift roads for the Soviet armor that made gains of 25 miles per day against the startled Germans, who dropped back against the remorseless onslaught.

The planning of Operation Bagration was kept so secret that the Soviets were able to have partisans strike German Army Group Center's key transportation points. Deception efforts had encouraged the Germans to reinforce the southern sector of the front while the decisive blow hit in the north. The destroyed railroad lines meant that the Germans could not easily redeploy their armor where it was most needed.

The two-month operation decimated Army Group Center, isolated Army Group North, and resulted in the loss of 450,000 German fighting men. It was perhaps the single largest German intelligence failure of the war, with the direction of the main thrust initially missed and Soviet strength underestimated by some 1.2 million men.

False orders, rumors, and feints played important roles in confusing the Germans. A number of German agents were turned by the Soviets prior to and during Operation Bagration, further aiding subsequent Soviet deception efforts.

Before Operation Bagration was over, the Soviets had advanced some 450 miles, liberating Belorussia and eastern Poland. The Soviets then focused on the southern sector, where the Germans had believed the first blow would fall. In late August, Army Group South collapsed. By September 2, Bucharest had fallen and the Ploesti oil fields, Germany's last major source of oil, were in Soviet hands.

The Soviets had clearly mastered *maskirovka,* substantially confounding German intelligence, which often underestimated Soviet strength by 25 to 40 percent. Soviet counterintelligence had achieved its two primary objectives during the war: elimination of enemy spies and the preservation of the regime itself. At the end of the war, Stalin remained in power, and the Soviet Union was well on its way to becoming a superpower.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had staunchly opposed the Soviet Communists for years prior to World War II, astutely summed up the situation in March 1944. He stated: "Not only have the Hun invaders been driven from the lands they had ravaged, but the guts of the German army have been largely torn out by Russian valor and generalship."

Wartime hyperbole set aside, Churchill's comments continued to be proven correct, right up to the time that German forces surrendered and the war ended. Soviet blood and *maskirovka* turned the tide in the East and helped achieve Allied victory in World War II. □

Phil Zimmer is a former newspaper reporter and U.S. Army veteran. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from SUNY Fredonia and a master's degree in journalism from Penn State University. He resides in Jamestown, New York.

By Steve Zaloga

All Photos: Author's Collection

Hellfire on the Hornet's Nest

American flamethrower tanks provided a horrific edge during island fighting in the Pacific.

U.S. PORTABLE FLAMETHROWERS WERE FIRST USED IN COMBAT DURING THE Guadalcanal campaign in January 1943. It quickly became apparent that the exposed flamethrower operator was vulnerable to Japanese small arms fire. So the idea arose to mount the portable flamethrowers in a tank as a means to reach Japanese bunkers without excessive casualties. After some experimentation in New Caledonia in the autumn of 1943, the first combat use of American flamethrower tanks took place in January 1944 on Bougainville in a little-known encounter against an enemy stronghold called the "Hornet's Nest."

The production of the M1 portable flamethrower began shortly before the outbreak of war in late 1941. This early design proved to be an extremely troublesome weapon, suffering from erratic ignition, short battery life, and poor durability in damp conditions. The M1 flamethrower was used successfully in combat for the first time during the fighting on Guadalcanal on January 15, 1943. In one attack, a team of engineers supporting the 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division carefully crawled to within 25 yards of a bunker defense line and burned out three bunkers during a day's fighting. The Army's flamethrower actions the same day were less successful.

These early flamethrowers continued to be used in combat in the Solomons, as well as elsewhere in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) such as Buna on the island of New Guinea and on the island of New Georgia. The initial combat use of the M1 flamethrower proved frustrating because of technical problems with the devices and the lack of established technical and tactical training. The M1 weighed over 60 pounds loaded and so was very difficult to carry in jungle conditions. Not only was the operator burdened with a heavy and bulky weapon, but it was impossible to hide once the flamethrower was ignited. Invariably, the use of flamethrowers would provoke a hailstorm of small arms and mortar fire from the Japanese defenders.

The technical problems with the M1 portable flamethrower led to the improved M1A1, which entered production in December 1942. This version had several upgrades and could use thickened fuel to provide better range. In spite of the modifications, it still suffered from reliability problems, especially with the ignition system in humid conditions. The first M1A1 flamethrowers reached the South Pacific in August 1943. With the arrival of the new flamethrowers came training teams from the Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) to help instruct the troops in how to maintain and operate the devices.

The idea of mounting the portable flamethrower in a tank occurred in the late summer of 1943 on New Caledonia, where some of the CWS personnel were training flamethrower troops. An officer in the 754th Tank Battalion had the idea of firing the flamethrower out of the small pistol ports on the turret of the M3A1

ABOVE: The flamethrower tanks on New Caledonia used two M1A1 fuel cylinders as depicted in this photo. One of these was placed on the floor of the tank in front of the bow machine gun position, and the other was behind the machine gunner's seat. LEFT: This Stuart light tank is shown with an M1A1 flamethrower mounted in the ball turret where a machine gun had originally been placed. In the autumn of 1943, U.S. Army and Marine Corps battalions on New Caledonia began the effort to adapt flamethrowers to their tanks.

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ABOVE: An M3A1 Stuart light tank spews a stream of fire from its bow flamethrower during a demonstration for officers from the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. BELOW: On the island of Bougainville on January 30, 1944, an M3A1 Stuart light tank of Company A, 754th Tank Battalion burns out a Japanese bunker with its flamethrower in an area of fierce combat dubbed the Hornet's Nest by American soldiers.

Stuart light tank. Official U.S. Army accounts of flamethrower development do not identify the inventor of the idea, but some memoirs suggest that it was the brainchild of Lt. Col. Joseph Hart, who commanded the 754th Tank Battalion at the time. The use of the portable flamethrower from the tank seemed like a good idea since it would enable the operator to get within effective range of Japanese bunkers while being far less vulnerable to Japanese small arms fire. In practice, firing the flame gun through the pistol port proved difficult because of the cramped conditions inside the light tank. The turret could barely fit the two-man crew, and trying to maneuver the long flame gun inside the turret proved nearly impossible.

The fighting on New Georgia in July 1943 against tenacious Japanese bunker defenses invigorated the effort to develop a more satisfactory mounting. The most systematic work on tank flamethrowers took place near Noumea on New Caledonia, where the I Marine Amphibious Corps was based. In August 1943, the U.S. Army XIV Corps began experiments to adapt the M1A1 flamethrower to the bow machine gun mount in the M3A1 light tank. A system was devised to shorten the M1A1 flame gun to make it more suitable for mounting in the .30-caliber ball mount in the M3A1.

Two five-gallon fuel unit assemblies from the M1A1 portable flamethrower were used, one on the floor in front of the bow gunner's seat and one behind the seat where .30-caliber machine-gun ammunition was normally carried. These improvised tank flamethrowers were mounted in light tanks of both the 3rd Marine Tank Battalion and the Army's 754th Tank Battalion. In October 1943, a demonstration was held near Noumea to acquaint Marine and Army officers, as well as Australians and New Zealanders, with the new weapon. The intention was to deploy the tank flamethrower in time for the November 1, 1943, landings on Bougainville.

The 3rd Marine Tank Battalion was deployed during the first phase of the Bougainville fighting, but there is no evidence that the tank flamethrowers were used at this time. The first recorded use came three months later when U.S. Army units replaced the Marines during the expansion of the Bougainville bridgehead in late January 1943.

The 754th Tank Battalion (Light) had departed the port of New York in January 1942 and arrived on New Caledonia on March 12, 1942, one of the first U.S. Army tank battalions sent to the South Pacific after the outbreak of the war. It was originally configured as a light tank battalion, equipped with M3 light tanks and later with the improved M3A1. Forward detachments of the battalion deployed to Guadalcanal in May and August 1943 under the XIV Corps but were not committed to combat. The battalion began to reorganize in November 1943, switching from a light tank configuration to a mixture of three medium tank companies and one light tank company. It took some time for the equipment to arrive, so the two tank companies of the forward detachment sent to Bougainville were still equipped with light tanks.

Some of the M3A1 light tanks were fitted with the improvised tank flamethrowers on New Caledonia before departing for Bougainville. In late October 1943, Major Reino Lehtonen assumed command of the battalion and led the forward detachment sent to Bouganville. When first deployed on Bougainville, Lehtonen's detachment was assigned to the XIV Corps reserve.

The initial landings on Bougainville in November 1943 had been conducted by the 3rd Marine Division, but Vice Admiral William "Bull" Halsey wanted the division for the forthcoming New Ireland landings. As a result, the U.S. Army's Americal Division was alerted on November 25, 1943, and began replacing the Marine regiments in mid-December 1943. The operational objective of the XIV Corps at the time was to push out the beachhead area to permit the unfettered operation of coastal airfields that were being used to harass the Japanese stronghold of Rabaul on the island of New Britain. The division's 132nd Infantry Regiment was on the far right flank facing the Torokina River. This sector was defended by the Japanese 4th South Seas Garrison, a regimental-sized force that included three infantry battalions.

Following the U.S. landings on Bougainville, the Japanese forces had built up a series of defense lines along the perimeter of the beachhead anchored by reinforced log bunkers and entrenchments. The 2/132nd Infantry began

Riflemen of Company C, 132nd Infantry Regiment take up positions behind a Stuart light tank of Company A, 754th Tank Battalion during the Hornet's Nest fighting on Bougainville.

moving toward this defense perimeter in mid-January 1944 and set up defensive positions along the jungle fringe. Periodic patrols east of these positions disclosed an extensive set of Japanese bunker defenses that were dubbed the "Hornet's Nest" by the Americal troops. The defenses were arranged in depth from the east side of the Torokina River several hundred yards to the village of Mavavia on the coast. These positions were held by the 6th and 7th Companies of the 2nd Battalion, 4th South Seas Garrison.

The 2/132nd Infantry conducted attacks on January 20 and 25, 1944, in an attempt to expand the lodgment on the east side of the Torokina River. Although some footholds were gained, the reinforced Japanese defenses prevented any deep penetration toward Mavavia. The continuing buildup of Japanese forces along the beachhead perimeter in January 1944 convinced Maj. Gen. John Hodge, the Americal Division commander, to clear out the Hornet's Nest to prevent the Japanese from pushing along the shoreline toward the heart of the American beachhead at Empress Augusta Bay.

The attack on the Hornet's Nest was planned by the staff of the 2/132nd Infantry, but General Hodge moved the 1/132nd Infantry forward to conduct the attack. Portable flamethrowers had proved useful in the initial attacks but were too vulnerable to Japanese small arms fire. As a result, Hodge was determined to use tank support to assist in clearing the bunkers. The use of tank support along with a preliminary artillery barrage convinced Hodge and the 132nd Infantry commander, Colonel Joseph Bush, that the assault would be a "pushover." An assortment of senior officers, including Hodge, was present on the morning of January 30, 1944, to observe when the attack began. Numerous reporters and pho-

tographers were also present.

The mission was assigned to Company C, 132nd Infantry, supported by various elements of the Forward Detachment, 754th Tank Battalion, including the light tanks of Company A, and the battalion headquarters company's assault gun platoon and 81mm mortar platoon.

Company C, 132nd Infantry moved to the line of departure at 0700 on January 30. A preliminary bombardment of the Hornet's Nest started with 4.2-inch smoke mortar fire by Company D, 82nd Chemical Mortar Battalion at 0745. After this had started, 81mm mortar fire commenced. Around 0800, the divisional artillery began the main barrage against the Japanese defenses.

The attack jumped off at 0830 with Company C, 132nd Infantry advancing in a skirmish line with 3rd Platoon on the right, 1st Platoon in the center, 2nd Platoon on the left, and the tanks in the lead. The battalion's weapons platoon had been equipped as a demolition detachment, reinforcing the 2nd Battalion's pioneer platoon. This detachment was instructed to advance behind the tanks and demolish any Japanese bunkers that were encountered.

The first casualty of the morning occurred at 0904 when one of the M3A1 light tanks was hit by friendly artillery fire about 200 yards forward of the line of departure and set ablaze. The impact killed the tank commander, Sergeant Minor J. Hall, and wounded two more crewmen. Corporal Joe Simon escaped the wreck but noticed that the wounded crewmen near the tank were pinned down by Japanese small arms fire. Simon attempted to rescue them but was hit and killed in the attempt. He was later awarded the Silver Star for gallantry.

This incident was observed by a platoon from B/132nd Infantry that was holding defensive positions nearby. Staff Sergeant Jessie R. Drowley raced forward and managed to rescue two of the wounded tank crewmen, while the third was rescued by another soldier from his platoon. A second M3A1 light tank became stuck on a Banyan tree stump and was eventually abandoned and destroyed by its crew due to its proximity to a Japanese bunker.

The 1st Platoon reached its objective at 0933 and the 2nd Platoon at 0940 hours. Once the objective was reached, the tanks halted and the infantry took up defensive positions about 10 yards in front of them. During the initial stage of the attack, the observer group, including Lt. Col. Donald Matheson, an Australian observer, and Colonel James Grier, the 132nd Infantry executive officer, moved forward behind the tanks. They were caught by Japanese fire, and both Grier and Matheson were killed.

This modified M1A1 flame gun was mounted below the Stuart light tank's .30-caliber bow machine gun, providing a more reliable ignition of the flamethrower by tracer bullets fired from the machine gun.

One of the main tactical problems during the course of the day's fighting was communication between the tanks and infantry. The infantry SCR-536 "handie-talkies" operated on AM radio bands, while the tank radios operated on FM bands. So communication had to be done either through the regimental radio net, which was time consuming, or via visual signals. The tanks had a hard time seeing the infantry signals since they were buttoned up for much of the attack.

Shortly after Company C, 132nd Infantry reached its objectives, the Japanese forces began a local counterattack. The attack was focused against the tanks and included Molotov cocktails and mortar fire. Around 1030 hours, 2nd Lt. John White was leading the 2nd Platoon behind some of the tanks when he and the acting platoon sergeant, James Jarman, were killed by mortar and machine-gun fire.

Some of the platoons of Company B, 132nd Infantry joined in the fighting even though this was not part of their original mission. Sergeant Drowley from Company B spotted a machine-gun bunker that had not been observed by the tanks or riflemen on the flank of 2nd Platoon near the junction of the beach and the jungle line. He ran over to one of the M3A1 tanks near the jungle edge while under Japanese small arms fire. On reaching the tank, he climbed up on the engine deck and banged on the turret hatch with the butt of his M1 rifle. He began pointing out the Japanese bunkers to the crew.

After engaging one of the bunkers, the crew handed Drowley a submachine gun loaded with tracer ammunition. He used this weapon to direct the tank fire. The tank came under continuous Japanese mortar and small arms fire, and Drowley was hit in the chest and face. In spite of his wounds, Drowley continued to direct the tank until the Japanese bunker line was overcome. He was later evacuated to the battalion aid station and spent several months in hospitals recovering. For his gallantry, Drowley was awarded the Medal of Honor, which was later presented to him by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Later in the morning, the attack paused, and some of the tanks were sent back to re-arm. The flamethrowers had only about 20 seconds of fuel and had to travel back to the rear to pressurize the compressed air tanks and to refill the flamethrower fuel tanks. Around 1330 hours, the advance resumed with five light tanks in the lead. The tanks used both their 37mm guns and the flamethrowers to knock out the Japanese bunkers. During the course of the day's fighting, a total of 28 large bunkers were destroyed, of which 14 were credited to the flamethrower tanks. Another four were knocked out by riflemen, and one was destroyed by 81mm mortar fire. The remainder were destroyed by combined tank-infantry action.

Besides the tank flamethrowers, the infantry also used M1A1 portable flamethrowers. These were judged to have questionable effect as their duration was too short and the operators were exposed to close-range enemy fire when attempting to burn out the bunkers.

During the day's fighting, casualties in C/132nd Infantry were one officer and 10 men killed, as well as one officer and 13 men wounded. The 754th Tank Battalion lost two men killed in the initial friendly fire incident while a further 14 men were wounded or injured in the later fighting. The infantry troops involved in the fight for the Hornet's Nest were awarded five Silver Stars and two Bronze Stars for their actions on January 30. Tank crewmen were awarded a further two Silver Stars. About 80 Japanese troops were killed outside the bunkers, and the 132nd Infantry estimated another 120 to 180 Japanese had been killed inside the bunkers.

The after action report of the 754th Tank Battalion concluded, "The perimeter was extended and straightened, defenses under our control made secure, enemy pillboxes were reached and the enemy suffered heavy casualties. The action proved conclusively that the Tank-Infantry team could be used to excellent advantage in jungle terrain."

The fighting against the Hornet's Nest underscored the serious problems of tank-infantry communication in close combat and the need for better means for the riflemen to talk to the supporting tank crews. One improvised method employed was the use of field telephones wired into the tanks. This was used dur-

ing the March 1944 fighting when the 754th Tank Battalion supported the Americal Division in the Battle of the Perimeter, pushing down the coast eastward to Mavavia.

Although the improvised M1A1 flamethrowers mounted in the light tanks had proven more useful than the portable flamethrowers, their range was too short and they ran out of fuel much too quickly. There were only 10 gallons of fuel in the two tanks, which provided a flame duration of only 20 seconds. Once the fuel was exhausted, the tank had to return to the rear to replenish the flamethrower. Following its debut on Bougainville, the 1st Marine Tank Battalion used the improvised mechanized flamethrowers on the Arawa Peninsula on New Britain in February 1944. This use was less successful because the flamethrower igniters failed. One crewman finally ignited the stream by throwing a thermite grenade in front of the tank.

There were a string of later uses of these devices with mixed results. The lingering problems with the ignition systems led to a variety of improvisations back on New Caledonia. One approach was to cut a small hole in the glacis plate of the M3A1 to fit a .30-caliber machine gun. Tracer ammunition could be used to ignite the fuel stream. Another approach was to leave the bow .30-caliber machine gun in place and reroute the flamethrower so that it was externally attached to the machine gun barrel. This permitted the machine gun to be used both for igniting the fuel stream and its usual role.

The fighting in the Pacific in early 1944 convinced senior Army and Marine officers of the urgent need for flamethrower tanks to deal with the threat posed by Japanese bunkers. As the war moved into the Central Pacific with its rocky volcanic and coral islands, the Imperial Japanese Army began to make increasing use of fighting positions carved into the local terrain.

In early 1944 a new, custom-designed auxiliary flamethrower, the E4-5, entered production. It began to arrive in the summer of 1944. Local initiatives proved more successful. The Chemical Warfare Service (Pacific Operations Area) office in Hawaii began to adapt the Canadian Ronson flamethrower to the turrets of M3A1 tanks. Nicknamed Satans, these flamethrower tanks saw their combat debut on Saipan and Guam in the summer of 1944. Flamethrower tanks continued to grow in importance during the final year of the war in the Pacific. □

Steve Zaloga is the author of U.S. Flamethrower Tanks of World War II, *published this year by Osprey Publishing. He resides in Abingdon, Maryland.*

By Michael D. Hull

Robert Taylor, The Military Gallery

Winged Knight of the Luftwaffe

Adolf Galland flew countless sorties, led the Luftwaffe fighter arm, and defied Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring.

ABOVE: Luftwaffe General of Fighters Adolf Galland was known for his somewhat flamboyant lifestyle. He was one of only a few holders of the Knight's Cross with oak leaves, swords, and diamonds. TOP: In this painting by artist Robert Taylor, Luftwaffe ace Adolf Galland and his wingman Bruno Hegenauer streak through a screen of Royal Air Force Supermarine Spitfire fighters to attack British Bristol Blenheim bombers in the skies above embattled France on June 21, 1941.

ON A BRIGHT SPRING DAY IN 1944, A LUFTWAFFE FOCKE-WULF 190 FIGHTER encountered a formation of U.S. Eighth Air Force B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers over the city of Magdeburg in east central Germany.

When the FW-190 went after one of the bombers, it was set upon by four escorting North American P-51 Mustang fighters. The German pilot, Maj. Gen. Adolf Galland, was wise enough not to attempt a dogfight with the fast, deadly American planes, so he dived and tried to escape. But the Mustangs stayed with him, their tracer shells zipping around his plane.

So, Galland pulled a trick that had worked for him in previous actions—he fired his machine guns. The resulting streams of smoke wafted back toward the P-51s, giving their pilots the illusion of rear-firing guns. They were showered with spent cartridges and links, and it appeared that hits were being scored on the American fighters. The ruse succeeded, and the four Mustangs broke into a right-hand climbing turn, allowing Galland to escape.

Galland, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, the invasion of Poland, and the Battle of Britain, was innovative as well as being a skilled and tenacious pilot. When American daylight raids over occupied Europe intensified in 1944, he had his FW-190s fitted with armor plating and two extra

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Two of the Luftwaffe's early fighter aces and national heroes, Adolf Galland (left) and Werner Mölders, led celebrated air combat units during World War II. Mölders was killed in a plane crash, but Galland survived the war. In this photo Galland is describing a recent encounter with British fighters that occurred sometime between July and October 1940.

cannon. The "Sturmgruppen" fighters, each weighing up to five tons, attacked the Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber groups while lighter Luftwaffe fighters took on the P-51 escorts.

Galland, who headed the Luftwaffe's fighter arm from 1941 to 1945, was a top-scoring German ace and one of the few to survive World War II. He was able to do so because he never underestimated his foes and always kept a few tricks up his sleeve. While Galland displayed a killer instinct in the air, he was a gentleman on the ground and chivalrous to his foes.

Adolf Joseph Ferdinand Galland was born on Tuesday, March 19, 1912, at Westerholt, Westphalia, in west central Germany. He was one of three sons of a well-to-do estate bailiff of Huguenot descent. After attending school in Hindenburg (now Zabrze, Poland), Adolf, like many boys of his age, became fascinated with aviation.

The Versailles Treaty of 1919 restricted powered flight to a privileged few in post-World War I Germany, so gliding became a fast-growing national sport. When the Gelsenkirchen Gliding Club set up a camp on the Borkenberge, a hill near Adolf's home, the youth began spending many hours watching the gliders being catapulted into the air. He longed to fly, so his father allowed him to go to nearby Gelsenkirchen twice a week to take the club's theoretical courses.

The result was that young Adolf failed his school examinations. But, "with the help of God and my schoolmates," he managed to stay abreast of his studies without having to sacrifice his precious weekends on the windswept Borkenberge. There, Adolf and other youngsters toiled like slaves dragging gliders back up the hill after each takeoff. They watched the fliers enviously until their own time would come.

Adolf, nicknamed "Dolfo," finally got his chance in 1929 at the age of 17. He squeezed himself into the tiny cockpit of a sleek glider and felt himself being shot into the air like an arrow from a bowstring. He almost smashed the glider on landing. But he learned quickly and won his A-license badge—a white gull on a blue background. Adolf proved to be a natural aviator. He won several contests and was an expert glider pilot by the age of 19.

In 1932, he was one of only 20 candidates out of 4,000 selected to attend the Lufthansa Flying School at Brunswick in Lower Saxony. That year, he joined Lufthansa, the German national airline, as a commercial pilot. National Socialism was sweeping the country, and, as Adolf said later, "the flame of unselfish enthusiasm burnt bright and pure in us boys." The flying school was run by Colonel Alfred Keller, a World War I pilot. His tales of bombing raids over London inspired Adolf to dream of becoming a military flier.

Germany had been forbidden under the Versailles Treaty to build military aircraft, but plans to create an independent air force had been secretly under way since 1923. Under the direction of World War I airman Erhard Milch, a small air force was developed within the framework of Lufthansa. Adolf was sent to Italy in 1932 for a covert course in service training and completed advanced flight instruction at Grottaglie. When he returned home in the autumn of 1933, he was "an almost perfectly trained fighter pilot."

After Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist party came to power in 1933, Germany began to rearm openly. Galland went to the Civil Airline Pilots Training School at Schleissheim in Bavaria in October 1934. He was ostensibly a civilian, but the school was transformed into the country's first fighter pilot training center. The energetic, ambitious young Galland soon became an instructor, wearing "an odd kind of uniform" with eagles embroidered on the lapel to indicate a civilian's military rank. After being assigned to the 10th Infantry Regiment and the Dresden War Academy, he was commissioned a lieutenant on January 1, 1935.

The following month, he entered the Luftwaffe for still secret combat training. Compulsory military service and the existence of the German Air Force were announced by Hitler the following month. Corpulent Hermann

Göring, a World War I fighter ace, was revealed as the Luftwaffe's commander-in-chief.

Galland was posted to the fledgling Air Force's first fighter wing, named for Manfred von Richthofen, the legendary Red Baron of World War I. The young man showed great promise as a fighter pilot with leadership qualities, but he had a puckish streak and could not resist stunting. One day in 1935, he flew too low and too slow and crashed. He had to be dragged from the wreckage with his nose broken and his left eye damaged. On another occasion, his plane hit a lamp post. His medical report read, "Unfit for flying," but a friendly officer helped him to memorize the eye chart letters, and he was passed for duty.

As Germany built up its armed forces to war pitch during the uneasy 1930s, Galland, a dark, mustached man with a fondness for brandy, cigars, and beautiful women, itched for action. He finally got his chance with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936. He volunteered for General Hugo Sperrle's Condor Legion, which flew for Generalissimo Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces against the Spanish Republicans. After being given command of a squadron in the Jagdgeschwader 88 fighter group, Galland arrived in Spain in May 1937.

The bitter three-year conflict was a valuable training ground for the Luftwaffe. Tactics adopted with the new and highly effective Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter in Spain were to prove invaluable in World War II; other German aircraft types also achieved a measure of success in Franco's service. These included the Heinkel He-111 and Dornier Do-17 bombers, and the notorious Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber. But other German aircraft deployed, such as the sluggish Henschel Hs-123 dive bomber and Heinkel He-51 fighter, both outmoded biplanes, were outclassed by the enemy's Russian-built Polikarpov I-15 Chato biplane and Polikarpov I-16 Rata monoplane. So the Henschels and Heinkels were used for ground support.

They proved effective, but Lieutenant Galland was not a happy warrior in Spain. His squadron was equipped with the biplanes, and he flew 300 sorties in Henschels and Heinkels. He was ordered to avoid encounters with the superior Chatos and Ratas, and the aerial victories he had dreamed of would have to wait for the imminent world war. Galland did not relish ground support flying. In one low-level sortie, his Heinkel was hit by rifle fire. A bullet went through a wing, another buried itself in the instrument panel, and a third pierced one of his boots. Although he chafed at his ground support duties, Galland helped to pioneer tactics that would enable Nazi Germany to roll

Library of Congress

Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe, stands at left while conferring with Adolf Galland during an inspection of Galland's former fighter command in 1941.

across Western Europe 2½ years later.

Like his Luftwaffe superiors and peers, he regarded the Spanish war as a valuable experience. But there were times when Galland, a chivalrous man, became disillusioned. He and his comrades had been "depressed" by a devastating air raid on Guernica in northern Spain. Late on the afternoon of Monday, April 26, 1937, a market day, Heinkel bombers and fighters bombed and strafed the historic Basque town, killing an estimated 1,654 people and wounding 889. George L. Steer of the *London Times* reported, "The town was a horrible sight, flaming from end to end."

The raid, a grim portent of the fate of many European cities and towns, shocked the world. Galland called the bombing accidental and attributed it to inexperienced crews. He said that the raid "had to be regarded as a failure, since one of our first principles was to destroy the enemy ruthlessly, but, if possible, to spare the civilians."

While tensions mounted across Europe in the summer of 1939, Galland was posted to the German-Polish frontier, where Wehrmacht armored, artillery, and infantry divisions were massing for the invasion that would open World War II. Galland was promoted to captain and assigned to the Luftwaffe's II Gruppe Lehrgeschwader 2, but he was still frustrated because he faced more ground support duty.

The Luftwaffe fighter, bomber, and dive bomber squadrons assigned to support the invasion of Poland were ready before first light on Friday, September 1, 1939. "It was still dark on the morning of September 1 as we climbed into our cockpits," Galland reported. "Blue flames spurted from the exhausts of our engines as they warmed up, and at the first signs of dawn the fireworks started." Panzer groups and infantry columns pushed across the frontier, backed by Luftwaffe planes bombing and strafing Polish cities, towns, and installations.

During the three-week campaign against the gallant but overwhelmed Poles, Galland flew 50 uneventful strafing sorties in Henschel Hs-123 dive bombers in support of the panzer spearheads and was awarded the Iron Cross Second Class. He had had his fill of ground support action and badgered his superiors for a transfer to fighters. Promoted to captain, he served as a training officer before his persistence paid off in the winter of 1939-1940, and he was transferred to the 27th Fighter Group as adjutant. Based at the River Rhine city of Krefeld, JG 27 was equipped with the speedy but short-range Messerschmitt Me-109E, the principal Luftwaffe fighter until 1941.

Galland was just in time for the May 10 onset of the great blitzkrieg offensive, when German forces pushed through the Low Countries and France to the English Channel coast. He wasted no time in fulfilling his dream and distinguished himself as an aggressive fighter pilot and skilled wing leader. He chalked up his first aerial kill against a Belgian Hawker Hurricane fighter on May 12, and there was no holding him back.

He downed three more Belgian Hurricanes in one day over Liege, and two weeks later won his first victory over a Royal Air Force Spitfire above Dunkirk, where the battered British Expeditionary Force was extricating itself from the beaches. In the following week, Galland downed two French Morane fighters, and by June 3 he had scored 12 kills.

Soon, Galland faced his biggest challenge—the Battle of Britain. History's first major air battle raged over southeastern England in the summer of 1940 as RAF Fighter Command Supermarine Spitfires and Hurricanes challenged Luftwaffe bomber squadrons whose objective was to soften up British defenses before Hitler's planned cross-Channel invasion, Operation Sea Lion. Promoted to major and leading Me-109s of Jagdgeschwader 26's Gruppe III, Galland entered the fray in July.

Of his first action in the Battle of Britain, Galland reported, "We got into a heavy scrap with Spitfires screening a convoy [in the English Channel]." In a "frenzy of twisting and turning," Galland picked out a Spitfire as his target. He tailed it and gave it a long machine-gun burst. The British fighter went down almost vertically. Galland followed it until the pilot bailed out, but his parachute failed to open and he plunged into the sea.

Based on a grassy airfield at Caffiers, near the French coast, Galland flew two to three sorties a day, escorting bombers and dueling with

Author's Collection

During his tenure as commander of the famed JG-26 fighter squadron of the Luftwaffe, Adolf Galland emerges from the cockpit of his Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter after landing at a forward airfield in France near the coast of the English Channel in 1940.

British fighters. After chalking up 17 victories in the skies over England, he was awarded the Knight's Cross. Six weeks later, with his score now 40, he became the third Luftwaffe pilot to win the Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross.

The daring Galland thrived on single combat. "The fighter must seek battle in the air," he believed, echoing the words of his hero, Richthofen, 20 years earlier. "Fighter pilots have to rove ... in any way they like, and when they spot the enemy, they attack. Anything else is rubbish." Fearless to the point of recklessness, Galland earned the admiration of both his comrades and the RAF fliers who tangled with him.

But challenging RAF squadrons that had been alerted by radar was a "very bitter" surprise to Galland and his comrades. He continued to rack up kills, but found that the odds "were not too rosy" for the Luftwaffe fighter pilots. With their limited range, he reported, the Me-109s were shackled in escort duties with slow-moving bombers, which "attracted Hurricanes and Spitfires as honey attracts flies." Escort deprived the Luftwaffe jäger (hunter) units of the initiative.

"In battle we had to rely on our own human eyes," said Galland. "The British fighter pilots could depend on the radar eye, which was far more reliable and had a longer range. When we made contact with the enemy, our briefings were already three hours old, the British only as many seconds old—the time it took to assess

the latest position by means of radar to the transmission of attacking orders from Fighter Control to the already airborne force."

Although the RAF's Spitfires and Hurricanes suffered from drawbacks in speed and rate of climb compared with Me-109s, Galland was nevertheless disturbed. "The short range of the Me-109 became more and more of a disadvantage," he reported. "During a single sortie, my group lost 12 fighter planes, not by enemy action but simply because after two hours' flying time, the bombers we were escorting had not yet reached the mainland on their return journey."

During the fateful summer of 1940 when Western freedom hung in the balance, the casual, lighthearted pilots of RAF Fighter Command exacted a heavy price in Luftwaffe men and machines, and the German Jägers soon developed a grudging respect for their foes. Back at their base, Galland and his men looked at one another gravely. "We were no longer in doubt that the RAF would prove a formidable opponent," the ace said. The mounting losses were demoralizing, and the carefree, hard-drinking Jägers grew bitter and despondent. "We saw one comrade after another vanish from our ranks," Galland told his younger brother, Wilhelm, who served with an antiaircraft battery on the French coast.

Major Galland felt even worse when he was summoned to Berlin for a briefing of Luftwaffe commanders called by Reichsmarshal Göring. Watching contented German civilians quaffing beer and strolling along the Kurfurstendamm, he was angered by the "I-could-not-care-less attitude and the general lack of interest in the war." It seemed to Galland as if "the whole burden of the war rested on a few hundred German fighter pilots on the Channel coast."

And no consolation was forthcoming from the usually jovial Göring. When he visited the Jäger squadrons in France at the height of the Battle of Britain in September 1940, he reproached the fighter pilots and demanded closer and more rigid protection for his Heinkel and Dornier bombers. Galland told him, "The Me-109 is not so suitable for purely defensive purposes as the Spitfire."

When the time came for him to depart, Göring became more amiable and asked the Jäger officers what he could do for them. General Werner Mölders, a high-ranking ace, the brilliant commander of Jägdgeschwader 51, and eventual general of fighters, asked for more powerful aero engines. Göring turned to Galland, saying, "And you?" Without hesitation, he replied, "I should like an outfit of Spitfires for my Jägdgeschwader." Speechless, the reichsmarshal stormed off growling.

Because of his success as a group leader in the Battle of Britain, Galland was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He and his Me-109 crews were transferred to the Brest area on the French west coast early in 1941, but they returned to the Pas de Calais that summer. The seemingly indestructible JG 26 commander had a remarkable experience on June 21. After shooting down two RAF Bristol Blenheim light bombers, Galland was forced to crash-land when he was set upon by a pair of Spitfires. Picked up by a liaison plane, he returned to his base, ate a hurried lunch, and took off again. That afternoon, he took revenge on a Spitfire but was downed again. He injured his ankle when he bailed out and was taken to a hospital by French peasants.

He was soon back in action. With his score of victories now 70, Galland became the first pilot to win the Swords to his Knight's Cross. Like many successful fliers, Galland was lucky. During one sortie over southeastern England, he realized that the fuel tanks of his Me-109 were almost dry. He reluctantly considered landing in Kent but decided to take a chance on crossing the English Channel. He just made it over and crash-landed on the beach at Cap Gris Nez.

Galland was concerned about his pilots' welfare, and they were devoted to him. And, while he gave no quarter in aerial combat, he clung to the chivalrous spirit of 1914-1918 that still existed among fighter pilots.

Early in August 1941, Group Captain Douglas Bader, the legless Battle of Britain ace, was captured after colliding with an enemy plane over France. After sending his Horch staff car to fetch the celebrated RAF flier from the hospital in St.-Omer, Colonel Galland and his officers chatted and sipped tea with him during a lavish reception. At Bader's request, Galland agreed to arrange for the RAF to air drop his spare pair of tin legs.

The two aces discussed the relative merits of British and German fighters, and Galland allowed Bader to sit in the cockpit of his Me-109. The smiling Briton asked if he could take off and "do just one circle over the airfield." Galland replied, "If I grant your wish, I'm afraid you'll escape and I should be forced to chase after you. Now that we have met, we don't want to shoot at each other again, do we?" Bader laughed, and the pair changed the subject. After a hearty goodbye, the RAF ace was driven back to the hospital.

The-good humored Galland later gave similar treatment to another of his enemies. When Wing Commander Robert Stanford Tuck, a Dunkirk and Battle of Britain veteran, was downed by antiaircraft fire and captured near

St.-Omer in January 1942, he was invited by Galland to dinner in the airfield mess and handed a bottle of whiskey before being taken to a prison camp. The two became close friends after the war, boar hunting in Germany and grouse hunting on Tuck's mushroom farm.

Galland's star, meanwhile, continued to rise. His tally of kills reached 94, and when General Mölders was killed in a crash on November 21, 1941, the dashing ace succeeded him as commander of the Luftwaffe Fighter Arm. Promoted to major general at the age of 30, Galland was the youngest general officer in the German armed forces. Hitler personally invested him with the Diamonds to his Knight's Cross, making Galland only the second pilot to receive the coveted decoration. The flamboyant Reichsmarshal Göring, however, confided to Galland that the stones were fake, so he ordered real diamonds to be sent from his personal jeweler.

Galland, who led fighters of the 2nd Air Fleet in Sicily in the summer of 1943, strove hard to improve technology, tactics, and strategy and inspire his pilots. The Allied air assault on Germany kept growing, and Luftwaffe losses mounted. Galland reported to the Air Ministry in 1944, "Between January and April, our daytime fighters lost over 1,000 pilots. They included our best squadron, gruppe, and geschwader commanders. Each incursion of the enemy is costing us some 50 air crew. The time has come when our weapon is in sight of collapse."

Hampered by shortages of planes, equipment, and matériel, General Galland pushed for increased fighter production. He even proposed a reserve of 2,000 planes that could destroy 4,000 enemy bombers in one day and seriously weaken the morale of Allied airmen. But he was fighting a losing battle. Besides the American B-17 and B-24 groups and the RAF's Avro Lancasters and fast, wooden De Havilland Mosquito fighter bombers, he faced mounting opposition from his superiors.

Hitler and Göring questioned the courage of the pilots and poured more money into the development of revenge weapons, such as the V-1 buzz bomb and V-2 rocket, which they insisted would force the weary British to sue for peace. Galland's frustration soared. At one stormy meeting with the blustering Göring, he tore off his Knight's Cross and tossed it on the table. "The atmosphere was tense and still," Galland reported. The Reichsmarshal was stunned but did nothing, and Galland refused to wear his decorations for the next six months.

Despite his tireless efforts, Galland was blamed for the collapse of the German fighter arm. Göring accused him of disloyalty and introducing unsound tactics, and Galland fell further out of favor with him and Hitler, both of whom refused to comprehend Germany's inevitable defeat. Its best-known fighter ace became the scapegoat for the Luftwaffe's failures.

Galland persevered as general of fighters until January 1945, when Göring sent him on leave, virtually relieving him. But the gallant ace—demoted, facing possible execution, and placed under house arrest in the Harz Mountains—was allowed by Hitler to return to combat duty. He was given command of the new Jagdverband 44, an elite "squadron of squadrons" equipped with Me-262 twin-turbojet fighters based at Munich-Riem. Its crack pilots included 10 holders of the Knight's Cross. Galland thus became the first man in history to command a jet fighter squadron.

The Me-262 mounted four 30mm cannon, had a maximum speed of 540 miles an hour, and could reach an altitude of 30,000 feet in seven minutes. It could far outstrip the P-51 and challenge the speedy Mosquito, but it could fly for only an hour. The Luftwaffe jets played havoc with U.S. Eighth Force B-17 groups for three months, and Galland himself scored seven kills. But JV-44's losses were heavy. The Me-262s had come off the assembly lines too late and in too few numbers to affect the course of the air war. Galland's score of victories reached 104 before he was put out of action two weeks before the end of the European war.

On April 26, 1945, he led six Me-262s in a head-on attack against a formation of American Martin B-26 Marauder medium bombers. He downed one of the planes over the River Danube, but his jet was badly damaged and forced down by escorting P-51s. Galland crash-landed in a bomb crater near Munich, badly injuring his knee. He was captured at an air base near Salzburg, Austria, by troops of the U.S. Seventh Army in May.

After being held in a prison camp for two years, Galland became a successful aviation consultant. Married three times, he spent six years as a technical adviser to the Argentine Air Force, returned to Germany in 1954, and worked as an industrial consultant in Dusseldorf. For a time, Galland was considered a likely candidate to head the new West German Air Force. His autobiography, *The First and the Last,* featured a foreword by his famed RAF adversary, Group Captain Bader.

He died on February 9, 1996, survived by his third wife, Heidi, and a son and daughter by his second wife. □

Author Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

Surging Tow

ALLIED TROOPS PURSUED THE RETREATING GERMANS DURING THE LAST DAYS OF THE WAR IN ITALY.

ard the Alps

During the final days of World War II in Italy, tanks of the U.S. Army's 81st Reconnaissance Squadron, 1st Armored Division move through the rubble-strewn streets of the town of Vergato along with accompanying infantry. These troops were on their way to Bologna, a communications center that was eventually abandoned by the Germans.

akg-images

FOR THE ALLIED ARMIES in Italy, the final winter of World War II was one of planning, replenishment, and the continuing effort to make existence in a war-ravaged land in the midst of snow and ice as bearable as possible.

Large-scale offensive operations were set to resume in April 1945, but the capture of the city of Bologna, its strategic importance as a communications center diminished, would not be the primary objective. The advance of both the Fifth and Eighth Armies in wide converging arcs might cut off the escape of thousands of German soldiers and push the enemy out of Bologna in the process.

Exposure to the elements still took its toll. The prospect of more mountains, more mud, and more Germans, compounded by the absence of a clearly defined objective such as the capture of Rome had been the previous year, was worrisome. Commanders, perhaps somewhat disillusioned themselves, maintained a vigil against sagging morale. On the positive side, an acute shortage of artillery shells had been alleviated. In fact, ammunition dumps were filled to capacity and another 20,000 tons remained some distance away at the port city of Naples.

The situation for German Army Group C was growing more desperate, even though its troops occupied strong defensive positions in the remaining mountains under their control and along the Senio River. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of Army Group C, had been involved in a serious auto accident in October 1944 and was unable to return to his post until January. The interim commander of Army Group C was the capable Col. Gen. Heinrich Gottfried Otto Richard von Vietinghoff genannt Scheel, who had led the Tenth Army in multiple delaying actions that had frustrated the Allies time after time during more than 15 months of combat on the Italian mainland.

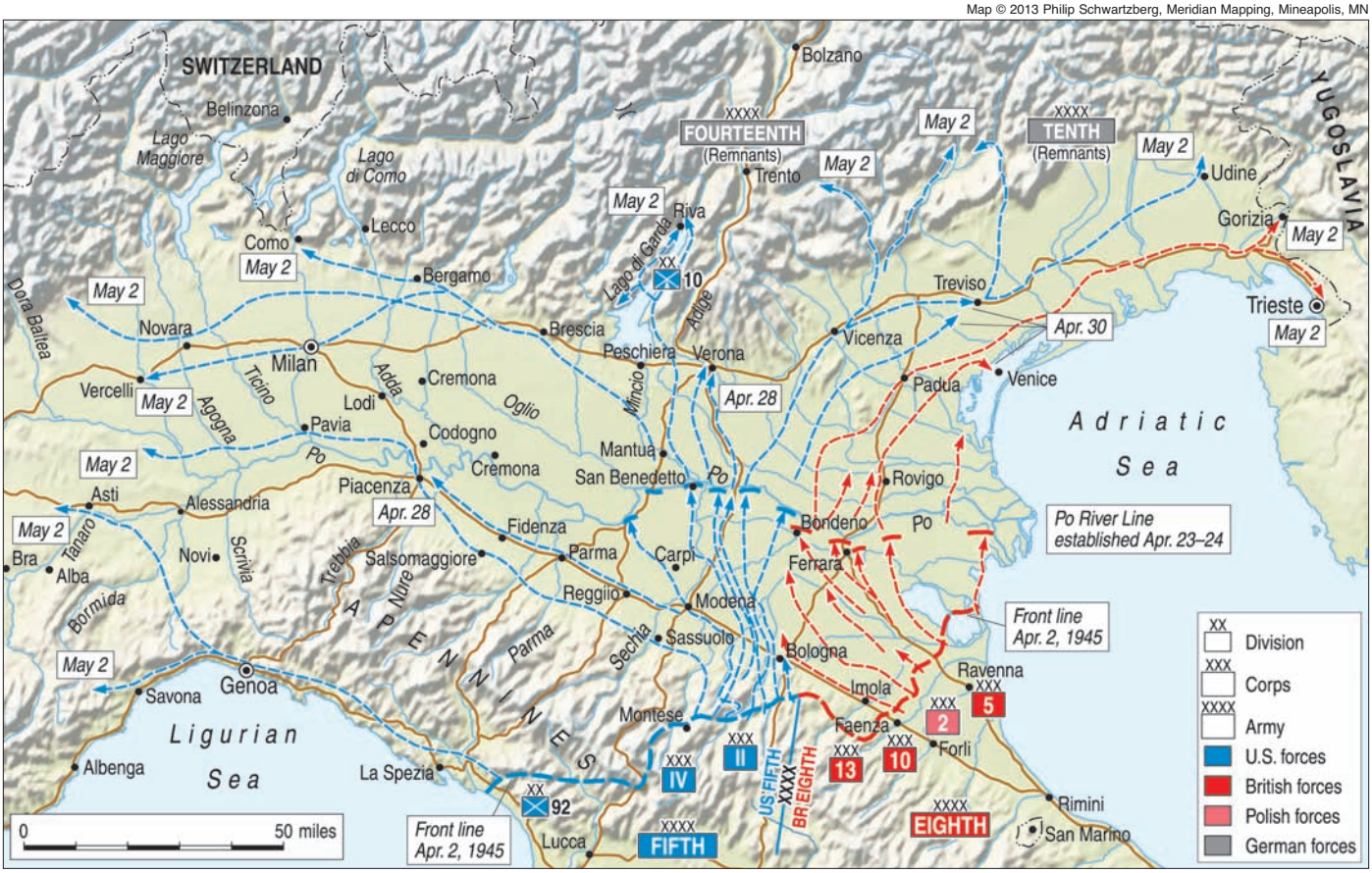
To the Germans' backs, the ribbon of the Po River might allow for some delaying time when the Allies renewed their offensive in the spring, but the Po was too long to defend for an extended period. The imposing peaks of the Alps, however, formed a natural barrier to any armed force. Occupying prepared defenses there, the battle-hardened Germans might hold their enemy at bay indefinitely.

The strongest incentive for the German soldier was not necessarily ideological. He was defending his homeland, and the war was going badly on all fronts. Hitler's bold Ardennes offensive in the West had clearly failed by January, and at the end of the month the Red Army had established a bridgehead across the Oder River, a scant 50 miles from Berlin. Only 5,600 replacement troops reached Army Group C during January 1945, while nearly 14,000 casualties were incurred, including 1,300 killed and 7,700 ill with maladies ranging from frostbite to respiratory infections.

On the Eighth Army front, General Richard McCreery assumed command from General Oliver Leese on December 31, 1944, and ordered the V Corps to eliminate the last two German bridgeheads on the east bank of the Senio during the first week of 1945. Still reeling from a December debacle during which elements of the division had been battered by the Germans along the banks of the Serchio River, the beleaguered 92nd Infantry Division was ordered in February to improve its positions along the Fifth Army line in the Serchio Valley and to capture neighboring hills.

Initially, the Americans took high ground in the Serchio but were forced to give it up. A German counterattack threw an entire battalion of the Buffalo Soldiers—black troops who had adopted the nickname given to black cavalrymen by Native Americans during the westward expansion of the United States decades earlier—into disarray, and further offensive action by the 92nd Division was canceled.

The only other limited objective offensive undertaken by the Allies during the winter of 1944-1945 was codenamed Operation Encore. With the promotion of General Mark Clark to command of 15th Army Group in December 1944, General Lucian Truscott was elevated to command of the



The Allied offensive in the spring of 1945 unhinged the German defensive lines in northern Italy and pushed the Axis defenders to the Austrian frontier and the Brenner Pass. Elements of the U.S. Fifth and the British Eighth Armies sealed the victory as the Third Reich, hundreds of miles to the north, collapsed and ended a 12-year Nazi reign of terror.

Fifth Army. Truscott viewed a 10-mile stretch of Highway 64, a major road through the valley of the Reno River and into Bologna, as threatened by Germans holding two ridge lines, which reached heights of 3,000 to 5,000 feet. These ridge lines were in the sector of the recently arrived 10th Mountain Division, troops specially trained for combat in rugged terrain, and known to the soldiers as Riva Ridge and Monte Belvedere-Monte della Torraccia Ridge. If these heights, which were 20 miles from the Po Valley, could be taken, then Highway 64 would be further secured, several low ridges could also be wrested from the Germans, and secondary routes winding down into the valley would be open.

The saga of the 10th Mountain Division is unique in the history of the U.S. Army, and its arrival in the Italian Theater was a noteworthy event. A brand new division of infantry was a rare sight among the battle-weary soldiers of the Allied Fifth and Eighth Armies, and these fresh troops were already considered elite.

The 10th Mountain Division had not fired a shot in anger when the first of its soldiers reached Italy on December 27, 1944. Their "status" was not born of battlefield exploits. It was more a logical conclusion drawn by many, both within the military establishment and outside it. The 10th Mountain had been conceived as the first of three divisions specifically outfitted and trained for winter warfare. These were soldiers whose basic equipment included skis, and each man had been required to present written recommendations for inclusion in the unit.

The father of the 10th Mountain Division was Charles Minot Dole, the founder and chairman of the National Ski Patrol, who had petitioned Congress for the formation of such a unit. Constituted at Camp Hale, Colorado, in the summer of 1943, the ranks of the 10th Mountain included many of the finest skiers and winter sports enthusiasts in the United States. Ski instructors and competitors from across the country volunteered. Malcolm Douglass, who had driven a dog team during Admiral Richard Byrd's expedition to the South Pole in 1940, came forward, as did Norwegian-born Torger Tokle, holder of the world ski jumping record. When Ludwig "Luggi" Foeger, an Austrian ski jumper and director of the Yosemite Ski School, decided to join up, he first went directly to Dole for an endorsement.

The majority of the 10th Mountain personnel were college educated and members of families that were at least affluent, often wealthy, and sometimes politically connected. As a matter of course, the veterans of other units resented the apparent aristocratic flair of the ski boys. Primarily because of its concentrated mountain training and light complement of artillery, which included three battalions of 75mm pack howitzers rather than the 105mm and 155mm guns of the standard division, the 10th Mountain had stood on the sidelines for months as commanders in other theaters had declined to employ them.

In the snow and ice of Northern Italy, however, troops trained in mountain warfare might be used to advantage. Still, observers wondered openly whether these soldiers could fight. They did not have to wait long for an answer.

In the gathering darkness of February 18, 1945, skilled climbers of the 86th Infantry Regiment shouldered ropes and gear for the ascent of 1,500-foot Riva Ridge. Intelligence reports indicated that the top of the ridge was lightly defended, and a full battalion reached the summit without difficulty. The surprised German defenders from the 232nd Fusiliers and the

1044th Infantry Regiment were able to mount only feeble counterattacks.

That evening, troops of the 85th and 87th Regiments moved on to Monte Belvedere and attacked from two sides. Choosing the advantage of surprise over a preparatory artillery barrage, the troops of the 87th were in the midst of the German defenders before the enemy fought back. The 85th did not encounter resistance until within a scant 300 yards of the summit but carried it within hours. Elements of the 714th Jäger Division and the 1043rd and 232nd Infantry Regiments counterattacked Monte Belvedere the following day but were driven off by the mountain troops. Monte della Torraccio was occupied on the 23rd.

General Willis D. Crittenberger, commanding the IV Corps, was elated. To General George P. Hays, commander of the 10th Mountain Division, he radioed, "You have done a wonderful job. All eyes are on you. You are carrying the ball."

Early in March, the 10th Mountain, supported by the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, completed the operation by capturing Monte Grande d'Aiano, Monte della Spe, and Monte della Castellano. The division had lost 1,500 casualties, including 309 killed. A captured German officer commented, "We didn't realize that you had really big mountains in the United States, and we didn't believe your troops could climb anything that awkward."

General Truscott's limited offensive had succeeded in bringing the IV Corps front even with that of the II Corps, providing excellent jumping-off positions for the coming spring offensive. He was aware, however, that a continuation of the fighting in February could rouse Kesselring to reinforce defenses farther along Highway 64 as he surely had already done on nearby Highway 65. Therefore, Truscott halted offensive operations, and a lull several weeks in duration set in all across the front.

Kesselring was called to Berlin on March 8 and informed by Hitler that he was to take command of German forces on the Western Front, which was rapidly deteriorating after the failure of the winter offensive in the Ardennes. In the East, the Red Army was fighting its way toward Berlin, and it was apparent that the German capital would be the front line in a matter of weeks. When Hitler asked Kesselring to suggest a successor, the latter evidently put aside the differences between them and endorsed Vietinghoff, who returned to Italy from command on the Baltic front.

Allied commanders had been considering their options for the spring offensive and settled on April 9, 1945, for the resumption of the campaign. Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, who was elevated to overall command of Allied operations in the Mediterranean Theater in December 1944 and succeeded by Clark at the helm of 15th Army Group, favored a strategy similar to that of previous offensive efforts. The Eighth Army would open with a thrust in the area of Lake Comacchio and the Argenta Gap. Five days later, the Fifth Army would attack into the Po Valley northwest of Bologna. The armies would remain in contact and then fully link up at Bondeno as preparations for the first crossings of the Po were under way. The operation was to be supported by a tremendous combined bombing and strafing effort from the Mediterranean Strategic Air Force, XII Tactical Air Command, and the Desert Air Force.

Prior to the opening of the general offensive, operations were conducted on both flanks of the Allied line. In the east, the British 2nd Commando Brigade conducted an amphibious assault across Lake Comacchio, advanced more

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-J28807; Photo: Zscheile

ABOVE: Preparing one of their defensive lines intended to slow the dogged Allied advance into northern Italy, fatigued German airborne troops, or Fallschirmjäger, manhandle an artillery piece into position. This photo was taken in February 1945. BELOW: In action on March 4, 1945, soldiers of the Company K, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, including two riflemen and a machine gunner, cover a roadway and the approaches to a farmhouse as other members of their squad rout Germans out of the building.

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than five miles, and netted 800 German prisoners while establishing forward positions for a potential amphibious assault against Argenta. A squadron of the Special Boat Service (SBS), a small, highly trained unit specializing in high-risk amphibious operations, also captured a cluster of islands in the center of the lake. Concurrently, elements of the 56th Division secured a prominent piece of land called "the Wedge" which juts into Lake Comacchio. Against stiff opposition, the troops of the 56th Division captured 700 Germans and established British positions north of the Reno River.

The death of one SBS member during the fighting of April 9 was particularly noteworthy. Major Anders Lassen, Danish by birth, had participated in several clandestine operations previously and was nicknamed the "Terrible Viking" by his German adversaries. As Lassen led a group of 17 soldiers against the garrison of a small town on the edge of Lake Comacchio, the group was challenged by sentries and then taken under fire by machine guns.

Lassen knocked out one position, silencing two machine guns and killing four Germans. Two more machine-gun nests went down in similar fashion. Moving toward a fourth position about 300 yards away, Lassen tossed grenades. He was hailed by a German shouting, "Kamerad!" As he moved forward to take the

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ABOVE: In April 1945, American soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division advance through the Po Valley. The all-black 92nd Division, nicknamed the Buffalo Soldiers, endured both triumph and tragedy during the Italian campaign. LEFT: Commonwealth troops and those of numerous Allied nations augmented the American and British soldiers who fought during the Italian campaign. These are Sikhs of the 10th Indian Division.

surrender of the position, a hidden machine gun cut him down. The remaining SBS men wiped the Germans out. Lassen had already been awarded three Military Crosses for heroism under fire. He received a posthumous Victoria Cross for the action at Lake Comacchio.

To the west, the Americans planned to subdue the final German defensive positions of the Gothic Line along their front by capturing the town of Massa. General Truscott chose the 92nd Infantry Division, which had recently been reorganized, for the task. Although the division's overall performance had been disappointing, those fighting men and officers who had done their duty well were consolidated into the 370th Infantry Regiment, while the 473rd Infantry was attached along with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), comprised of Japanese American soldiers who had returned to Italy in March after several months of fighting in southern France.

The experience of those who stood in the ranks of the 442nd RCT was somewhat unique in military history. These were Nisei, second-generation Japanese Americans who were in fact American citizens by birth. In the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese-American families had been quarantined in a number of internment camps in the United States. While the government had acted in the name of national security, this period of internment is remembered primarily as a great injustice.

Determined to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States, many young Japanese American men considered service in the U.S. Army highly preferable to the restrictive boredom of internment. In the spring of 1942, a volunteer unit of Nisei soldiers, the 100th Infantry Battalion, was formed in Hawaii. The 100th was deployed to North Africa in June 1943 and attached to the 34th Division. Within months, the 100th came to be known as the Purple Heart Battalion because of the high number of casualties it sustained.

On February 1, 1943, the 442nd RCT was authorized by the U.S. government, and the 100th Battalion later became a component of the 442nd. By the end of the war, the 442nd RCT had become the most highly decorated unit in American history. Its soldiers received more than 18,000 decorations for combat bravery, including two Medals of Honor, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, and 9,500 Purple Hearts. The 442nd first fought as a cohesive formation in Italy. Transferred to southern France following the commencement of Operation Dragoon, its soldiers gained lasting fame during an operation to link up with the "Lost Battalion," the 141st Infantry, 36th Division, in the Vosges Mountains.

The 442nd and 473rd Regiments, fighting in

relief of the 370th, succeeded in capturing several mountain peaks during a rapid advance that drew a regiment of the 90th Panzergrenadier Division away from the Eighth Army front. After six days of combat, Massa was in Allied hands, but stiffened German resistance had brought the limited offensive to a halt. At Monte Fragolita on April 5, Pfc. Sadao Munemori sacrificed his own life to save two of his comrades by falling on a German grenade that had landed in their foxhole. Munemori received a posthumous Medal of Honor for his act of heroism.

On the morning of April 9, nearly 2,300 Allied medium and heavy bombers began a two-day campaign to soften German defenses prior to the scheduled jump off of the Eighth Army at 7:30 PM. Supported by tanks, some of which were the fearsome flamethrowing Churchills which the troops had nicknamed "crocodiles," the thrust of General C.F. Keightley's V Corps rounded up 1,300 prisoners during the opening hours of the offensive. The 2nd New Zealand and 8th Indian Divisions crossed the Senio River, while the Polish II Corps encountered the crack 26th Panzer Division. Two brigades of the Polish 3rd Carpathian Division nevertheless succeeded in bridging the Senio the following morning. The next river, the Santerno, was crossed during the early hours of April 12, and the 56th Division initiated several amphibious moves that threatened to encircle the 42nd Jäger Division.

During the Senio crossing on April 9, Jemadar Ali Haidar, a *havildar* (sergeant) of the 13th Frontier Force Rifles, was one of only three men in his battalion section who reached the far side of the river, the remainder being pinned down by enemy machine-gun fire. Ali Haidar advanced alone and threw a grenade into the first enemy strongpoint he reached. At the same time, a German grenade exploded nearby and seriously wounded him. Despite his injuries, Ali Haidar forced the Germans to surrender. He was wounded again, in the arm and leg, but moved on to a second machine-gun nest, wounding two of its occupants and forcing the other two to surrender.

The way now open, the remainder of the company crossed the Senio and established its bridgehead. Ali Haidar received the Victoria Cross for his courage under fire. After the war, he returned to his native Pakistan. He died in 1999 at the age of 85, the only Pathan awarded the Victoria Cross during World War II.

The 78th Division passed through the ranks of the 8th Indian Division, advanced to the Reno River, and captured a key bridge by April 14. General Vietinghoff had patched together a final defensive perimeter before Bologna, but Allied troops were quickly through the perimeter of this so-called Genghis Khan Line. The German situation on the Eighth Army front was rapidly deteriorating. By the 18th, two battalions of the 78th Division had occupied and passed northwest of the town of Argenta.

Vietinghoff had warned the high command in Berlin that the Eighth Army advance threatened to outflank his line along the Reno, and the commander of Army Group C requested permission to withdraw. However, he received a terse reply from headquarters on the 17th.

"All further proposals for a change in the present war strategy will be discontinued," read the communiqué from Colonel General Alfred Jodl, chief of the high command operations staff. "I wish to point out particularly that under no circumstances must troops or commanders be allowed to waver or to adopt a defeatist attitude as a result of such ideas apparently held by your headquarters. Where any such danger is likely, the sharpest countermeasures must be employed. The Führer expects now, as before, the utmost steadfastness in the fulfillment of your present mission, to defend every inch of the north Italian areas entrusted to your command. I desire to point out the serious consequences for all those higher commanders, unit commanders, or staff officers who do not carry out the Führer's orders to the last word."

Vietinghoff was in no position to deny the reality of his plight. The 78th and 56th Divisions were rolling through the newly opened Argenta Gap, while the 2nd New Zealand, 10th Indian, 3rd Carpathian, and 5th Kresowa Divisions pushed forward along Highway 9 in a combined effort by the V, XIII, and Polish II Corps.

Five days after the Eighth Army's thrust, the Fifth Army began its drive into the Po Valley. After fog had lifted on the morning of April 14, four days of sustained air support began. More than 2,000 bombers hit German positions supported by massed artillery. The 85th Infantry Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division advanced into the Pra del Bianco, a valley northeast of Castel d'Aiano. When his company met stiff resistance, Pfc. John D. McGrath silenced four enemy machine-gun nests and used a captured weapon in the process before falling mortally wounded. McGrath received a posthumous Medal of Honor. Such individual acts of bravery gave momentum to the effort, and nearby Hill 680 was occupied along with several neighboring prominences.

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American soldiers of Japanese ancestry, these members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team trudge down a road in France prior to their second deployment to Italy. The 442nd gained lasting fame during the Italian campaign and finished the war as one of the most highly decorated units of the U.S. Army.

Meanwhile, the 85th Infantry cleared the village of Torre Iussi and took Hill 903, while the 86th Infantry captured high ground at Rocca Roffeno. The German 94th Infantry Division, in danger of encirclement, began to fall back the following day.

Fighting on Hill 913, 2nd Lt. Robert Dole, accompanied by two other infantrymen, set out in the darkness of the 14th to capture a German prisoner for interrogation. A hidden machine gun cut down the two scouts and seriously wounded Dole, who lost all use of his right arm

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ABOVE: Fighting along the southern bank of the Senio River on March 22, 1945, soldiers of the 2nd London Irish Rifles toss grenades at nearby German positions. Allied troops were ultimately successful in securing a crossing of the river. BELOW: Known as Crocodiles, Churchill tanks equipped with flamethrowers support New Zealand troops as they fight to cross the Senio River on April 9, 1945. By this time, the surrender of all Axis forces in Italy was imminent.

Imperial War Museum

and later a kidney. The future senator from the state of Kansas and candidate for the presidency of the United States spent 40 months recovering in hospitals.

Although five days of fighting cost the 10th Mountain Division nearly 1,300 killed and wounded, Monte Mantino, Monte Croce, and Monte Mosca were occupied, and by the 18th Allied troops were nearly within sight of Highway 9 and the Po Valley. Armor support and reinforcing troops from the Brazilian Expeditionary Force drew up to exploit the gains in the IV Corps sector.

The drive of the II Corps toward Bologna progressed much more slowly. In anticipation of a renewed Allied effort to take the city, the Germans had placed their strongest defenses in the area. On the left, the 6th South African Armoured Division captured Monte Sole in the predawn hours of the 16th, facilitating an advance toward the Praduro road junction on Highway 64. Although the Germans stubbornly resisted along Highway 65, flanking operations by the 91st and 34th Divisions cleared sections of the road. General Truscott repositioned several units, including the 85th Division, into positions previously occupied by the U.S. 1st Armored in preparation for the II Corps to finally break through to the Po Valley.

The 10th Mountain and 85th Divisions began moving once more on April 18. In 24 hours, the 85th was north of the town of Piano di Venola, while elements of the 10th Mountain took Monte San Michele the following day. German resistance began to crumble. An isolated stand at the town of Pradalbino obliged the 87th Infantry Regiment to fight house to house, while armor of the 90th Panzergrenadier Division, desperately trying to stem the tide, was engaged in a tank versus tank battle with the 1st Armored Division. Intercorps boundaries blurred in the race to the Po Valley. Troops of the 133rd Infantry Regiment of the 34th Division hitched rides on tanks of the 752nd Tank Battalion and headed up Highway 65 toward Bologna.

On April 21, as troops of the Red Army battled in the suburbs of Berlin far to the north, the II Polish Corps entered Bologna from the east at approximately the same time as the Fifth Army forces. The Poles were greeted enthusiastically. Seventeen Polish officers were declared honorary citizens of Bologna, and a number of Polish soldiers subsequently received medals inscribed, "To the liberators who were the first to enter Bologna—on 21 April 1945—in honour of their success."

The liberation of Bologna was the crowning achievement of the Polish II Corps during World War II. Throughout the campaign in Italy, the corps had fought with distinction, suffering 2,301 killed and 14,830 wounded, more than 36 percent of its strength.

The 92nd Division continued to attack in the west, intending to trap German troops at the naval base of La Spezia on the Ligurian coast. The 473rd Infantry reached a position within 10 miles of the base at the junction of Highway 62 and the coastal road, Highway 1. The 442nd RCT faced tough opposition in the mountains. On April 21, young 2nd Lt. Daniel K. Inouye lost his right arm while leading a company in the assault on Colle Musatello.

Inouye was wounded in the side by machine-gun fire but threw a grenade into a German position and killed the crew as the enemy sol-

diers rose from their cover. He destroyed a second position with a grenade but was driven to his knees due to loss of blood. Undeterred, he crawled forward to attack yet another machine-gun nest.

"At last I was close enough to pull the pin on my last grenade," Inouye remembered. "And as I drew my arm back, all in a flash of light and dark I saw him, that faceless German, like a strip of motion picture film running through a projector that's gone berserk. One instant he was standing waist-high in the bunker, and the next he was aiming a rifle grenade at my face from a range of 10 yards. And even as I cocked my arm to throw, he fired and his rifle grenade smashed into my right elbow and exploded and all but tore my arm off. I looked at it, stunned and unbelieving. It dangled there by a few bloody shreds of tissue, my grenade still clenched in a fist that suddenly didn't belong to me anymore.... The grenade mechanism was ticking off the seconds. In two, three, or four, it would go off, finishing me and the good men who were rushing up to help me.

"Get back! I screamed, and swung around to pry the grenade out of that dead fist with my left hand. Then I had it free and I turned to throw and the German was reloading his rifle. But this time I beat him. My grenade blew up in his face and I stumbled to my feet, closing in on the bunker, firing my tommy gun left-handed, the useless right arm slapping red and wet against my side."

Grievously wounded, Inouye was evacuated and spent 20 months in various hospitals. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Later, that recognition was upgraded to the Medal of Honor, which was presented to him on June 21, 2000. Inouye was elected to the U.S. Senate from the state of Hawaii in 1962 and continues to serve in that capacity until his death on December 17, 2012. His heroism exemplified the motto of the 442nd RCT, "Go For Broke." The regiment moved on to eventually liberate the cities of Genoa and Turin.

By April 20, it was apparent to Vietinghoff that all of Army Group C was in grave danger. The Fifth Army breakthrough west of Bologna threatened to drive a wedge between the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies. The U.S. Eighth Army also threatened to encircle the elusive Tenth Army. Vietinghoff took matters into his own hands that day and began a general retirement without orders.

As early as February, high-ranking German officers in Italy had realized that all was lost. One of these, SS General Karl Wolff, who commanded German police and SS forces in northern Italy, had contacted Allen Dulles, head of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Switzerland. Through diplomatic channels, Wolff communicated overtures of a separate peace in Italy between Germany and the Western Allies. On April 20, Wolff was officially rebuffed due to concerns over the repercussions such a development would have with the Soviets. Two days later, Wolff met with Vietinghoff at the Recoaro Terme in the foothills of the Alps, and the decision was made to surrender German forces in Italy. Further instructions from the high command in Germany would ostensibly be ignored.

> "It was a tragic moment, the complete defeat and the imminent surrender after a fight lasting six years, tragic even for those who had foreseen it for a long time."
>
> — General Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin

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A holder of three Military Crosses for heroism, Major Anders Lassen (left) of the British Special Boat Service was killed in action at Lake Commacchio and received a posthumous Victoria Cross. Lieutenant Daniel Inouye (right) of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team lost his right arm at the head of his company on April 9, 1945. Inouye went on to become a long-serving U.S. senator from Hawaii, received the Medal of Honor decades later, and died in 2012.

On April 21, the Fifth and Eighth Armies linked up north of Bologna and began roaring across the Po Valley. On the 23rd, the 88th Division captured 11,000 prisoners on the south bank of the Po River. Among them was General Friedrich von Schellwitz of the 362nd Division, the first German divisional commander to be captured in Italy. The British 6th Armoured Division encircled the remnants of the 278th Infantry Division near Ferrara and trapped several thousand more Germans of the I Parachute Corps upon contact with the 6th South African Armoured Division near the town of Finale. The entire LXXVI Panzer Corps was pinned in the east between the coast of the Adriatic Sea and the Eighth Army. Many of these Germans simply abandoned their equipment and endeavored to swim the Po River.

Allied crossings of the Po were undertaken against light resistance as early as the 22nd. General Truscott ordered each division of the Fifth Army to cross on its own, given the lack of German resistance. General McCreery's directive to the Eighth Army was much the same, and elements of both the V and XIII Corps crossed on the 24th. Some concern was expressed that the Germans might attempt yet another organized stand along the banks of the Adige River, and Allied forces made all haste to reach the Adige before that could take place.

Elements of the 88th Division crossed the Po on the 24th and sped 30 miles to Verona in 16 hours, slowed only by sporadic pockets of diehard Germans or of those wishing to make one final defensive effort before surrendering. A few men of the 4th Parachute Division were subdued in the city.

At the same time, a task force under Colonel William O. Darby, the former Ranger commander, headed for Lake Garda and the famed Brenner Pass on the Austrian frontier. To the west, the soldiers of the 92nd Division were in Genoa by the 27th. Partisans had already taken the surrender of the 4,000 Germans in the city. Elements of the Eighth Army crossed the Adige without opposition on the same day. German soldiers surrendered by the hundreds.

By April 26, General Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin's XIV Panzer Corps, instructed to defend a line near Lake Garda, could muster only about 2,000 soldiers. Senger's purpose in defense was to buy time for Army Group C to coordinate a collapsing withdrawal along with Army Group G north of the Alps in France and Austria and Army Group E, retreating from the Balkans. Field Marshal Kesselring, acting as commander of all German forces in southwestern Europe, hoped that these troops could stand along the Alps for a time, allowing as many German soldiers as possible to surrender to the Western Allies rather than the Red Army.

The following day, Combat Command A of the 1st Armored Division rolled into Milan, and the 442nd RCT sprinted 40 miles to Allesandria, accepting the surrender of the 3,000 Germans there. During the next two days, the

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The Sinister Valley

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

BITTER FIGHTING IN THE REICHSWALD DELAYED ALLIED ENTRY INTO THE RUHR, THE INDUSTRIAL HEART OF GERMANY.

ON FEBRUARY 8, 1945, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks climbed onto a platform halfway up a tree. From there, as he wrote later, "I could see in front of me a peaceful looking valley with small farms dotted here and there. On the far side lay the sinister Reichswald Forest. Over this valley 30 Corps were about to attack." Horrocks's men, watching one of the heaviest British artillery barrages of the war, expected a walkover. Instead, they would suffer some of the fiercest fighting of the war.

The Reichswald was the five-mile gap between the Maas and Rhine Rivers and the natural advance route from the German-Dutch border to the Ruhr. Since the British had closed on this sector in October 1944, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery had seen this valley of geometrically planted forests, towns, and small cities as the site for his next attack. It lay at the absolute right flank of the German West Wall defenses. Clearing it out would require a setpiece attack.

Montgomery planned the attack in two stages. First would be the British blast through the Reichswald. Next, south of the valley, the U.S. Ninth Army would strike across the Roer River a few days later, providing an anvil for the British Army's hammer.

Monty's plan to blast his way through the Reichswald was delayed, first by the necessity of opening Antwerp and the Scheldt Estuary to seaborne traffic, then by the Battle of the Bulge, which temporarily took 30th Corps away from the Reichswald to backstop the Americans on the Meuse River.

When the German offensive was defeated, Montgomery moved Horrocks's 30th Corps back to its area in front of the Reichswald, assigning it to General Sir Harry Crerar's 1st Canadian Army. Two Canadian divisions were added to the corps so that five divisions would make the attack. The five-mile assault area was extremely narrow. Horrocks wrote, "There was no scope for cleverness. I had to blast my way through."

To support the offensive, the British and Canadians brought up their biggest artillery support of the war. Some 1,050 guns were to be used, including 576 field guns, 280 medium, 122 heavy and super-heavy, and 72 heavy antiaircraft guns.

The British planned a new addition to their bombardment, the Pepper Pot plan, which would feature all other division weapons that might be underemployed in the opening barrage, to maintain a volume of noise and high explosive on the German position. This barrage was made up of 188 Vickers machine guns, 80 4.2-inch mortars, 114 40mm Bofors guns, 60 Sherman tanks in a stationary role using their 75mm guns, 24 17-pounder antitank guns, 12 32-barrel rocket launchers, a grand total of 850 barrels firing in the Pepper Pot and 1,050 barrels in the "real" artillery.

This assemblage of guns was supported by more than a half million shells, a weight of some 11,000 tons. General Crerar told war correspondents that the munitions were the "equivalent to the bomb drop of 25,000 bombers."

Bombers were present, too, in the form of the heavies of Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the U.S. Eighth Air Force, as well as the medium bombers of the 2nd British Tactical Air Force and the fighter bombers of RAF 83 and 84 Groups and the U.S. Ninth Air Force.

Also required for the attack were many different kinds of supplies, including 8,000 miles of four different kinds of cable, 10,000 smoke generators, a million gallons of fog oil, 750,000 maps, and 500,000 aerial photographs.

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: On February 10, 1945, British troops of the 2nd Seaforth Highlanders advance into the Reichswald during operations intended to breach German defensive positions and reach the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany. Bitter German resistance upset the British timetable and delayed the advance envisioned by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. RIGHT: During the opening hours of Operation Veritable, Achilles tank destroyers of the 15th Scottish Division advance toward the Reichswald on February 8, 1945. The main armament of the Achilles was a 17-pounder gun mounted in an open turret.

To mislead the Germans, the British and Canadians restricted movement by daylight and deployed dummy gun positions, which could be seen to be dummies. In the last 48 hours before the attack, the fake guns were replaced by real ones.

The deception measures worked. German intelligence reported, "Allied activities west of the Reichswald are intended to deceive us regarding the real center of gravity of the coming attack. It is possible a subsidiary offensive by the Canadians in the Reichswald area might be launched to draw our reserves but the appreciation that the main British attack will come from the big bend in the Maas is being maintained."

By this point in the war, the Germans had virtually no strategy in the West—their armor had been destroyed in the Bulge—and their only plan was to hold the line.

The German Reichswald defenses were thin, consisting of the 84th Infantry Division and its two regiments and the 2nd Parachute Regiment, about 11,000 men. One of the defending battalions was a "stomach" outfit, made up of men with various stomach ailments, and another was made up of deaf men. The latter was held in reserve, as the Germans feared they might not hear British shelling and react accordingly.

Against this, some 200,000 British and Canadian troops, backed by 500 tanks and the 500 specialized vehicles of the 79th Armored Division, made up the assault force. But the Germans had several advantages despite their numerical inferiority. First, they were defending their West Wall fortifications, which provided them with plenty of defensive barriers, including the dreaded S-mines, wooden booby traps that set off an explosive charge that detonated at waist height. The Germans also had flooded the area north and south of the Reichswald, forcing the British into a narrow advance area.

The Germans could also call upon reserves that included veteran panzer and parachute divisions skilled in close combat and executing last-ditch stands. And the Germans were fighting for the first time on their home soil against a foreign invader, which was an additional motivating factor.

"It's a typical Monty set-up," wrote Canadian war correspondent Alexander McKee. "Bags of guns crammed on a narrow front, all your force at one point and bash in. Unsubtle but usually successful. Jerry knows you're coming, but he can't do very much because the gigantic bomber formations we wield will sweep it like a broom."

At 5 AM on February 8, 1945, both sides' troops were awakened from their dugouts and trenches by the heaviest barrage employed by the British during World War II. The roar was heard for miles. At the same time, the Pepper Pot opened up, drenching the German front line to prevent movement of any kind, be it reconnaissance, supply, reinforcements, or merely a runner bringing up some hot breakfast.

While the British artillery blasted the German defenses, Bomber Command and the U.S. Eighth Air Force hammered the towns of Cleve and Goch, dropping 1,400 tons of bombs on them, turning the towns to rubble.

The historian of the 4th/7th Royal Dragoons wrote, "It was a fantastic scene, never to be forgotten by those who were there; one moment silence and the next a terrific ear-splitting din, with every pitch imaginable, little bangs, big bangs, sharp cracks ... the night was lit by flashes of every color and the tracers of the Bofors guns weaving fairy patterns in the sky as they streamed off towards the target." Forward of the guns the ground shook continuously. Men were unable to speak and felt like they were being hammered into the ground.

The bombardment kept going for 2 1/2 hours and then stopped at 7:30 AM. The only sound after that was the pop of smoke shells as a selected group of field guns built up a thick screen of smoke in front of the German first line, 13,500 yards long.

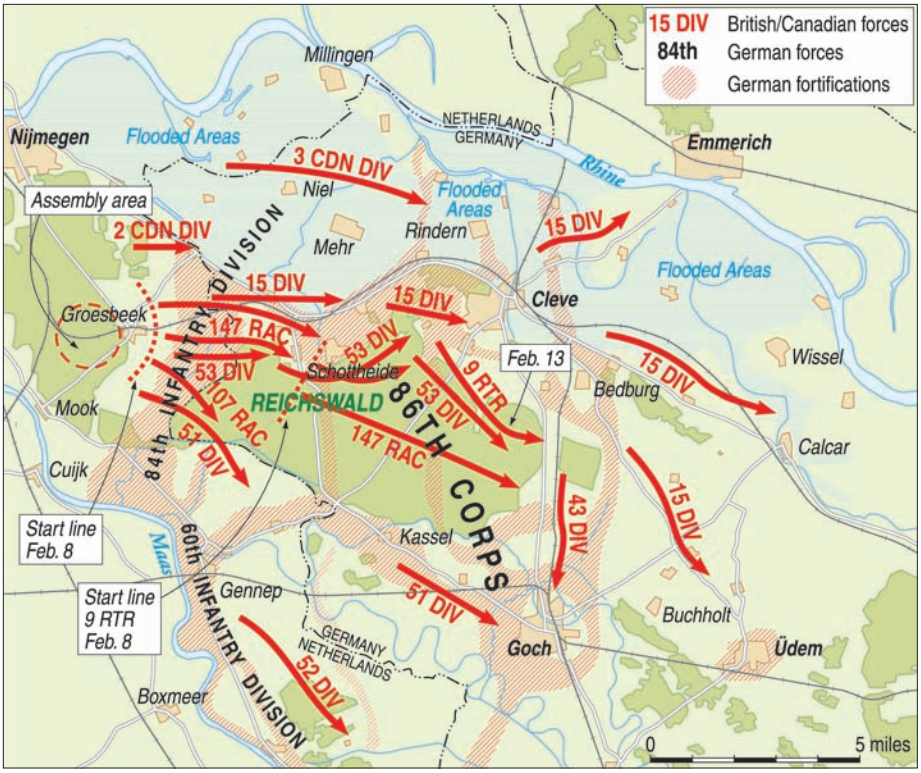
The Germans, seeing this screen, assumed the British were about to attack and began hurling artillery and mortar rounds back.

This was what the British were waiting for. Their artillery observers spent the next 20 minutes locating the German mortars and guns, and then the bombardment resumed at 7:50 AM, blazing away at the selected targets.

At 10:30 AM, the barrage switched to yellow smoke, and four British and Canadian divisions began the assault on the German defenses.

The advancing British troops expected the Germans to be pulverized but took no chances. Spearheading the advance were the specialized tanks of the 79th Armored Division, which included Crocodiles, Churchill tanks equipped with flamethrowers. Smaller Bren carriers equipped with flamethrowers were called Wasps. There were also Crabs, also known as Flails, which were Sherman tanks equipped with a device for beating the ground in front of them with whirling chains to set off antipersonnel mines, and Armored Vehicle Royal Engineers that could accomplish a variety of tasks. Some were equipped with powerful Petard mortars, which flung huge explosive charges. Others carried fascines, bundles of wood to fill in antitank ditches, or Bobbins, which were wound coil and tubular scaffolding carpets for laying a track over mud for wheeled vehicles.

The 79th had even more odd vehicles: Kangaroos, an early form of armored personnel



The heavily wooded Reichswald impeded British progress toward the Ruhr during Operation Veritable as the Germans contested key crossroads and fortified numerous positions throughout the extensive forest.

carrier; Buffaloes, an amphibious tracked vehicle that could carry 24 infantry or an artillery piece; and Terrapins, the British version of the DUKW, a large, amphibious, wheeled vehicle for carrying men and supplies across water. It was a huge collection of specialized vehicles. The 3rd Canadian Division alone required 114 Buffaloes to cross the flooded terrain it faced.

But as the British troops went in, the first piece of bad news began to pelt the attackers in the form of a cold penetrating rain that would fall with little break for the next five to six days, turning the low and cratered ground into a quagmire and adding to the floods.

When the British attacked, they found the German defenses in disarray from the massive bombardment ... dazed Germans emerging from ruined defenses, telling their captors of the complete disrupting of communications, of panic, and the breakdown of discipline as they thought they had been abandoned and were about to be overwhelmed.

In the north, the 2nd Canadian Division attacked south of its objective of Wyler and swung north to attack it from behind and the east. They found a stiff defense and suffered heavy casualties before Wyler was taken, at a cost of 15 dead to the Calgary Highlanders and two dead to the French-speaking Le Regiment de Maisonneuve. With that, the 2nd Canadian Division was squeezed out of the battle temporarily by the 3rd Canadian and 15th Scottish Divisions.

The 15th Scottish Division had a simple order "to break the Siegfried Line and take Cleve." To do so, the 15th Scottish had considerable tank support, the whole of the 6th Guards Tank Brigade and its 178 Churchill tanks, two regiments of the 79th Armored Division's "funnies," two squadrons of flamethrowing Crocodiles, and the 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment. Against this were two regiments of German infantry dug deep in two lines of trenches covered by wire and mutually supporting machine-gun positions behind a wide antitank ditch.

Major General Colin Muir Barber, the seven-foot-tall commander of the 15th Scottish, had his two Highland Brigades lead the way on their narrow assault front. Two troops of Flails led the 46th Brigade on the right. The Glasgow Highlanders moved across the cleared tracks and rounded up 230 prisoners, but the Coldstream Guards lost several tanks in the deep mud while knocking out three antitank guns.

Behind them came the 9th Cameronians, which found few human defenders but plenty of mines and booby traps. They reached their first objective at 4 PM, but the supporting tanks were held up by the mud. At 5 PM, the Cameronians went in to attack their second objective, Frasselt, and the tanks finally arrived. The Crocodiles burned the houses, flushing German troops from the cellars. To Corporal Ian MacDonald of the Cameronians, "It was an awe-inspiring sight in the wintry gloom, the column of tanks grinding and rattling along and the great gush of flame belching and rumbling to incinerate its target." In half an hour, the smoking ruins of Frasselt were in Scottish hands, along with an entire battery of 105mm guns and a tank destroyer.

The Cameronians struggled through minefields, with men getting legs and feet blown off, the wounded left in the freezing rain until stretcher bearers managed to struggle forward and get them out on small American Weasel carriers.

But the left attack, by the 227th Brigade, had more trouble. The 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders ran into heavy German fire. The left flank company lost all its officers. The company sergeant major then took command and continued the advance. The other leading Argyll company kept so close to the creeping

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-J28577, Photo: Pospesch

ABOVE: Photographed on the move prior to Operation Veritable, German panzergrenadiers move through a village as several buildings are consumed by flames. Battle-hardened German soldiers mounted effective defensive efforts in the Reichswald, delaying the movement of British forces deeper into the industrialized Ruhr. BELOW: British Churchill tanks support the advance of infantrymen of the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders on February 8, 1945. The British advance into the Reichswald was agonizingly slow, and casualties were heavy as the effort to reach the Ruhr bogged down against heavy German resistance.

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barrage that they were able to capture Eisenhof and 80 prisoners together with a battery of 88mm guns without a shot being fired at them.

During the afternoon, the Scots Guards' Churchills bogged down, but some were able to support the infantry. The Highland Light Infantry had the same problem with its supporting tanks—their Crab tanks bogged down in the mud. But by 6:30 PM, the 15th Scottish had achieved all its objectives, albeit two hours behind schedule.

The King's Own Scottish Borderers' regimental sergeant major hung out some token laundry on the West Wall fortifications, carrying out the promise of the old song of "hanging out the washing on the Siegfried Line."

The attack went on into the gathering gloom of early evening. British searchlights bounced off low-hanging clouds to provide artificial light, and the Scottish troops could see the onion-shaped church dome of their objective, Kranenberg, ahead of them. Vicious house-to-house fighting ensued, and the Scots used grenades to clear out the defenders. By 5 PM, the garrison and 300 prisoners had been taken.

South of the 51st Division, the 53rd Welsh Division attacked into the forest against mounting German opposition. The 71st Brigade's job was to take the Branden Berg feature, the high ground dominating the forest to the southeast. This would let 160th Brigade pass through and attack the Siegfried Line entrenchments by night with supporting Wasps—Bren carriers equipped with flamethrowers. Once through the West Wall, the Welsh would take the Stoppel Berg feature in the Reichswald's northeast corner and secure the track along which the 43rd Wessex Division would move up.

With heavy artillery support, the 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers moved 1,000 yards ahead, turning the attack over to two supporting battalions, the 1st Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the 1st Highland Light Infantry. These battalions pressed on to the antitank ditch, where AVREs (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers) moved up and dropped bridges in two places. The infantrymen and supporting Churchill tanks charged across the two bridges and headed into the forest. The Churchill tanks kept going, even though the forest tracks were ridged with mountainous mud. The leading battalion burst into the forest to find a desolate scene of smashed trees, stinking cordite, and everything dripping wet from the pouring rain. Frightened German troops burst out of their battered trenches and foxholes, panic stricken and eager to surrender.

Horrocks, watching the attacks, marveled at the "stoicism of the youngsters," calling them the "cutting edge of the vast military machine."

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A soldier of the 5/7th Gordon Highlanders exhibits the stress of combat during operations in the Reichswald. This photograph was taken on February 9, 1945, the second day of Operation Veritable.

The Welshmen continued to advance, finding the forest thicker and wooden blocks set up as tank obstacles, preventing the Churchill tanks from advancing. Private Dick Hughes recalled, "The long straight paths through the forest were death traps. The Germans had placed antitank guns and also had machine-guns sited among the fallen trees which made it near impossible to move forward."

The determined Welshmen drove on, the Germans pulling back just as they were about to be outflanked. Private Phil Morris fought his way up the Branden Berg feature, a low hill defended by German paratroopers. "The Germans opened fire with a machine gun from a covered position that was so well concealed we hadn't even seen it. We had no alternative but to leap into that stinking pool and it was bloody freezing. Three men tried to move to our right to outflank the machine gun, but the gunner saw them and they were raked with fire, killing one and wounding the others. While the gun was occupied with them, we threw several grenades which just exploded on the top in a cloud of earth and did no harm at all. But we immediately came under fire from another position to the left of the first one. I was sent back to our platoon commander to get a tank and scuttled back while the battle raged all around. The Captain was wounded but carrying on; he got a radio message back and a tank came up about a quarter of an hour later. It was guided to the problem machine-gun position by our sergeant and put a shell straight through the embrasure from about 70 yards away."

By 3 PM, the Welshmen had taken the feature and found the artillery bombardment had demolished most of the German positions there.

The hardest fighting was seen by the 51st Highland Division, known as the Highway Decorators for their habit of marking everything they captured with their "HD" symbol.

They had to clear a wide sector from a narrow base, and the right flank's assault, by the 154th Infantry Brigade, ran into trouble when snipers killed three Black Watch officers. Tanks dealt with the snipers, and the Gordons passed through, but their vehicles were held up at the antitank ditch. They only achieved their objective as night was falling.

The 153rd Brigade fought its way through minefields with the help of Crab tanks, which created a lane through the first minefield. An AVRE bridge-carrier dropped a bridge over the antitank ditch, which enabled important supplies to come up to the front, including 500 tins of self-heating soup.

The British had achieved their objectives, but the going had been slow because of the mud, and while the British took a lot of German prisoners the defenses had not cracked under the pulverizing bombardment. All night the battle continued.

That evening, the 15th Scottish sent in its reserve brigade, the 44th Lowland, ordered to attack while the other two brigades drew up more ammunition and fuel. Once the 44th Brigade had cleared up to Cleve, the British would commit the 43rd Wessex Division from corps reserve to the attack. It was an ambitious plan for one brigade, but it had plenty of artillery and tank support. However, the roads were rapidly being flooded, turning them to liquid.

The 44th Brigade loaded its men into Kangaroo APCs and trundled off behind Crabs at 9 PM. All night long the vehicles struggled through the muddy terrain, reaching the antitank ditch seven hours later. At 5 AM, just before first light, the attack across the antitank ditch went in.

The Crab tanks rolled into the attack and immediately got bogged down in the mud. Three of them were completely useless. The three operable tanks struggled to beat two tracks to the antitank ditch, to enable the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) to attack. An AVRE vehicle flung a bridge across the antitank ditch, and the British sent an antitank gun across as dawn started breaking. The antitank gun fouled itself on the bridge and blocked it completely. The attackers were now split, one company on the far side of the ditch, the rest on the near side. The British reacted by launching

a sharp attack that took the two villages ahead of them and brought in a number of badly shaken POWs.

Next up for the 44th Brigade was the road leading to the important Materborn feature, and the Royal Scots Fusiliers moved through the KOSB positions to continue the advance.

Meanwhile, the battle continued to rage. The 3rd Canadian Division launched its attack over the flooded polder to clear the left flank by night. The Germans had earlier blown the main dyke at Erlekom, and the Waal River now flooded the extreme British left flank. The Canadian 8th and 7th Brigades, veterans of D-Day, advanced on Buffaloes, which "sailed" over the flooded terrain, with support from RAF and Royal Canadian Air Force Hawker Typhoons. The Canadians attacked their objective villages by night, backed by British tanks and artificial moonlight—searchlights reflected off low cloud. La Regiment de la Chaudiere, consisting of French-speaking Canadians, had to slog through waist-deep cold water, but they captured their objective, Leuth, in a dawn assault on February 9. The town of Zyfflich, surrounded by flooded water, was taken in two hours, and more than 100 Germans were flushed from cellars.

By first light on the 9th, the 3rd Canadian Division had captured all its first objectives and continued its sweep to clear the flooded Waal Flats completely, which secured the British left flank.

But Horrocks was worried. Mud and rain were putting the timetable behind. The rain was continuing to fall, and the water across the main Nijmegen-Cleve road rose by 18 inches in five hours. Unsurfaced roads and trails, damaged by shelling and heavy vehicles, turned into black porridge. Horrocks needed to get into Cleve quickly, before the Germans could rush up reserves to hold the town or counterattack. However, the supporting U.S. Ninth Army attack, Operation Grenade, was to be launched on February 10, and when it went in, it would draw off the German reserves. Determined to attack, Horrocks ordered his reserve division, the 43rd Wessex, to be ready at one hour's notice to move from midday on February 9.

Meanwhile, the Germans assessed the British attack and its results. The 84th Infantry Division had had nearly six battalions destroyed by nightfall, and 86th Corps had suffered more than 3,000 casualties, including 1,200 POWs. British bombing had hammered the whole German defense system—even hitting the First Parachute Army's headquarters, killing the general commanding the army's artillery. The 84th Corps commander, General Erich Straube, had no trouble convincing General Alfred Schlemm, who headed the First Parachute Army that this was the main attack. Schlemm in turn was able to persuade the Army Group H commander, General Johannes Blaskowitz, to cut loose the 7th Parachute Division from reserves. But it was thinly spread and arrived piecemeal.

Studying his maps, Schlemm was gloomy—the only place it seemed he could stop the British offensive was at three hills just southwest of Cleve called the Materborn Feature, an obvious place to defend the Reichswald. The Germans raced to reinforce it, while the British moved to seize it.

Tasked to do so was the 44th Lowland Brigade of the 15th Scottish Division, which struggled through terrible road conditions. The 44th Brigade seized part of the Materborn Feature, the Wolfe Berg heights, by 11:15 AM, taking 240 POWs and a medium battery. But by now the attack was 11 hours behind schedule. On paper, the 15th Scottish would send the two

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During preparations for the jump-off of Operation Veritable, Bomber Command of the British Royal Air Force launched heavy raids against German cities in the path of the anticipated advance toward the Ruhr. The German town of Cleve was hit by RAF bombers on February 7-8 with devastating results. Scarcely a single building remained undamaged after the raid.

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Photographed in the flooded streets of the German town of Kranenburg on February 11, 1945, these British Archer tank destroyers are attempting to reach the front. German defenders opened the gates of numerous dams and flooded extensive areas to slow British progress during Operation Veritable.

Highland brigades, rested and refreshed, back into the lead, but the jammed roads and muddy terrain meant that the 44th Brigade had to continue the attack.

Going 30 hours without sleep and 15 on the move, the 44th Brigade advanced in Kangaroos of the 1st Canadian Armored Personnel Carrier Regiment as far as the western slope of the Bresserberg Feature, seizing the high ground, taking 160 POWs and a battery of medium guns. As soon as the 44th began to consolidate its gains, the German 7th Parachute Division counterattacked from Cleve's southwestern suburbs. All afternoon the Germans counterattacked but failed to recapture the height.

The Royal Scots Fusiliers attacked as well, into what was reported to be a formidable defense system, but the defending Germans were eager to surrender. Once again, as the British consolidated, they came under counterattack from the 7th Parachute Division.

By nightfall, the exhausted but triumphant Scots reported that they had "seized the Materborn Feature." The 15th Scottish Division's reconnaissance regiment probed past the heights and reported that the Germans in Cleve were still stunned and disorganized from the bombing and unlikely to offer resistance.

Horrocks, battling the terrain, the Germans, the weather, and a fever of 103 degrees, took the message and believed he could now unleash the 43rd Wessex Division to exploit the breakthrough.

But Horrocks was wrong. He committed his reserve too soon. He later said he did so because he was afraid of losing momentum. Instead of creating an offensive thrust, the 43rd Wessex Division began clogging the roads that the 15th Scottish was using to push forward. Soon both divisions were bogged down in mud and traffic jams.

Meanwhile, Horrocks's other divisions continued their relentless advance in the quagmire. On the northeastern edge of the Reichswald, the 53rd Welsh Division's 160th Brigade pushed on, now facing the 6th Parachute Division brought down from Arnhem. The roads behind the 53rd Division collapsed, further slowing the advance.

On the extreme right, the 51st Highland Division attacked the 2nd Parachute Regiment, which fought with the skill and determination of well-trained paratroopers. The commander of the Gordon Highlanders ordered his pipers to play the regimental march to ensure that other British troops would not fire on them in their moonlight attack. The 2nd Seaforths relied on more modern devices to overcome German defenses: the AVRE Petards and flamethrowing Crocodiles that supported their attack.

By the end of the second day, all objectives of phase one had been taken, and British POW cages were full with 2,700 captured Germans. Despite the delays due to traffic jams, weather, and mud, the British offensive was fairly successful. Now Horrocks revved up phase two, which would kick off on February 10 with the 51st Highland Division capturing Gennep and Hekkens, 53rd Welsh clearing out the Reichswald as far as the Cleve-Goch road, 43rd Wessex passing through the 15th Scottish to capture Goch, Udem, and Weeze, while the 15th Scottish captured Cleve. And while the British were accomplishing these hammer blows, the Germans would be tied down further by the massive American attack across the Roer River.

Except that the American attack did not happen. The Germans played their trump card on the massive Schwammenauel Dam, blasting open the inlet gate and jamming the outlet gate so that 100 million tons of water poured out of the dam and down the Roer River, creating a gradual flood. The river rose five feet. The American attack would be delayed by at least 11 days. Horrocks would have to clear the Reichswald all by himself.

To help him out, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied supreme commander, committed two more divisions to Horrocks's attack, the 52nd Lowland Division and the Guards Armored Division.

Meanwhile, the Germans were determined to hold their ground at all costs, as Blaskowitz ordered, saying that the consequences of a breakthrough to the Rhine were "incalculable."

Blaskowitz committed his reserve, the 47th Panzer Corps, under General Heinrich Freiherr von Luttwitz. The corps had fought hard in the Bulge and was down to 50 tanks.

Now the 43rd Wessex Division's 129th Brigade Group moved into the battle, struggling through gusting wind and icy rain. Much of the route was under water, and bogged vehicles on either side gave warnings as to the depth of the mud.

The column wound through the mud for hours, missing its turnoff in the dark and finding out where it was when German machine-gun fire ripped into it. The 4th Wiltshire leaped out of its Kangaroo APCs and with tank support cleared the roadblock. But the combination of mud, enormous bomb craters left in the initial bombing and shelling, and traffic jams held up the division's advance, and the division's boss, Maj. Gen. George Thomas, was laid low with a chill.

The Germans immediately counterattacked the 129th Brigade with the 16th Parachute Regiment—tough, well-trained men full of fight, backed by self-propelled guns and mortar batteries. The 4th and 5th Wiltshires fought back,

defending against the Germans in mud-covered bomb craters, holding off the paratroopers.

Mud, disintegrating roads, rain, and traffic jams slowed the 43rd Division's advance, putting the brunt of the attack back on the 15th Scottish Division, ordered to clear the bomb-cratered city of Cleve. Through hard fighting the Royal Scots Fusiliers were able to take the Cleverberg Hill, a mile and a half from the center of the city. But the British could not move any farther. They would have to wait a day to resume the attack.

On the left flank, Maj. Gen. Dan Spry's "Water Rats," the 3rd Canadian Division, had to delay its attack until 4:30 PM. The Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders sailed their Buffaloes straight to Donsbruggen and linked up with the 2nd Gordon Highlanders of the 15th Scottish and drove on to the next village, Rindern, for a five-hour battle, which lasted from midnight to dawn, with the Germans stopping the Canadians.

On the extreme right, the 51st Highland Division hit the main Siegfried Line defenses and found three large pillboxes constructed of two-foot-deep concrete reinforced with four-inch steel. The solution for all this concrete was to use smoke to isolate the pillboxes and then fire high-explosive shells directly into the embrasures. An AVRE Petard then came forward and launched its "dustbin" at the embrasure, blowing it in, opening a gap for the flamethrowing Crocodiles. Another defense line was taken by the 5th Camerons through a series of bayonet charges.

The third day of the offensive was a frustrating one for the British, with Cleve still in German hands, the German flank protected by the Roer floods, the weather still bad. But Crerar and Horrocks were determined to maintain the pace of the offensive, knowing that the Roer would drop and the weather would change. A quick victory was impossible, but a victory was inevitable.

Not if the Germans could help it, though. They committed the 116th "Greyhound" Panzer Division and the 15th Panzergrenadiers, both tough outfits, even if they were down to 50 tanks between them.

At dawn on February 11, the British resumed their attack, with the 3rd Canadian, 15th Scottish, and 43rd Wessex leading the way. The Canadians pushed up to the Spoy Canal and by midnight were along its west bank from the Alter Rhine south to the outskirts of Cleve.

The 15th Scottish, behind schedule, launched a two-pronged attack on Cleve with the 227th Highland Brigade on the left and 44th Lowland Brigade on the right. Before this could take place, the 44th Lowland had to relieve the 43rd Division's 129th Brigade, which had been fighting all night. By 10:30 AM, the Scots arrived and enabled the near exhausted 129th Brigade to get some rest. The men of the 129th staggered out of their positions, ate a hot meal, and then got their first real sleep in more than 50 hours.

Slowly and steadily, the 44th Brigade moved into Cleve backed by Grenadier Guards Churchill tanks. On their left, 227th Brigade advanced against panzerfaust antitank fire. As the day wore on, the Scots finally entered Cleve to find the venerable city an almost unrecognizable mass of ruined buildings, collapsed homes, and bomb craters. In their air raid shelters, the Germans had left behind vast stores of ham, fish, sausages, cheeses, pickles, and black bread, which the Scots found a welcome change from their own rations.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-P0213-501, Photo: o. Ang.

Moving into position along the German frontier, this PzKpfw. V Panther tank was photographed several weeks prior to the initiation of Operation Veritable.

The Scots pushed through the city and found a damaged bridge over the Spoy Canal. Teams of sappers made the bridge usable for vehicles.

Meanwhile, the 43rd Wessex struggled on, launching a setpiece attack on the Materborn village with divisional artillery in support. The 7th Somerset Light Infantry took the village and kept driving east, frustrated by darkness at 5 PM, machine-gun fire, and heavy sleet. All night the Somersets continued to advance, gaining little ground. At dawn on the 12th, the 1st Worcestershires relieved the Somersets, attacked down the road to Bedburg, and overwhelmed the Germans in a series of rushes.

The 43rd had finally broken through the traffic jams and the craters of Cleve and were in a position to advance south to Goch. The immediate task was to seize ground southeast of Bedburg and use it as a start line to capture the village of Trippenburg, attacking on the 13th.

The 53rd Welsh Division resumed its advance on the 11th, moving through the Reichswald to its eastern edge. The 53rd, facing self-propelled guns firing straight down long ridges, protected themselves among closely planted trees. Despite casualties in men and tanks, the East Lancashires reached the Cleve-Asperden road by 6:30 PM. That night, the German 2nd Parachute Regiment tried a counterattack against the Welshmen, which failed.

On the right flank, the 51st Highland Division continued its advance on the 11th, pushing toward the German Siegfried Line defenses west of Goch. It took most of the 11th for the division to move up its 154th Brigade. By the time it reached the front line, there was an hour and a half of daylight left, so the Scots attacked with maximum artillery and Crocodile support. The 1st and 7th Black Watch moved from their start line so close behind the exploding shells that the stunned Germans had no time to recover before the Scots were on top of them. By 7 PM, the strongpoint had fallen and more than 200 Germans had surrendered.

The 1st Gordon Highlanders found the Germans had barricaded themselves in Gennep's houses, so they used their distinctive street fighting technique. While mortar and machine-gun fire were directed against the front of a row

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Clearing German snipers and rearguard positions was hazardous duty for these men of the British 2nd Gordon Highlanders advancing through Cleve on February 11, 1945.

of houses the infantry attacked each in turn through the back garden until the entire street had been cleared on one side. Then the opposite side was dealt with in similar fashion.

Now the Scots had to cross the Niers River, doing so with Buffaloes of the 79th Armored Division, which operated a ferry service all day long, wearing out the gearboxes of the mechanical troop carriers. The 5/7th Gordons were pushed across the river on the 11th. After a night in the workshops, the Buffaloes resumed the task, ferrying across another battalion of Gordons while Royal Engineers shoved a bridge across the Niers. The 1st Fife and Forfar Yeomanry's Crocodiles lumbered across the Bailey Bridge into Gennep and burned out the last of the defenders.

By now the offensive was four days old and still behind schedule, but 30th Corps had reached positions from which the second phase of the battle could be mounted. The 15th Scottish were to advance from Cleve's bombed ruins to Calcar, while the 43rd Wessex wheeled right and struck for the high ground north of Goch. Nearing the forest's eastern edge, the 53rd would attack in an effort to grab the bridge over the Niers at Asperberg. On the southern flank the 51st Highland Division now had to cross the flooded Niers in force and clear the area to the south to mount an attack on Goch from the west.

After a morning of shelling, the British got down to business at 11 AM, with the 15th Scottish's 46th Highland Brigade leading the way backed with Canadian Kangaroos, Crocodiles, and self-propelled guns. They ran into trouble right away, losing two hours when one of the Churchills hit a mine on the muddy road, holding up the entire advance. At 1:30 PM, the attack was renewed and ran smack into panzerfaust and machine-gun fire. The British jumped out of their Kangaroos to attack just in time—four of the Kangaroos were knocked out by a self-propelled assault gun at the village of Qualberg two miles east of Cleve. The 7th Seaforths stormed the well-defended houses, killing 25 Germans and capturing 65 more, for a loss of 25 Scots.

Despite heavy German shellfire, the Scots pushed on to the next village, Hasselt, and came under more heavy fire. This time the Coldstream Guards' armor moved in to engage German 88mm antitank guns amid the twilight gloom. As the sun set, the British commander on the scene decided to pull back his small force.

That turned out to be a wise decision because the Germans moved up a strong force. The British dug in for the night as the floodwaters reached their highest point. The 15th Scottish Division used DUKW Terrapins to establish a taxi service to haul supplies, food, fuel, and ammunition to the frontline troops.

Now Luttwitz was ready to counterattack. He had only 50 tanks, but they were Tigers and Panthers, superior to the British Sherman tanks. Luttwitz's first plan was to counterattack and recapture Cleve, but the British were about to cut the Cleve-Goch road, so that did not seem possible. He decided to send both of his divisions into the Reichswald, where Allied numbers would be less effective in the dense terrain. The 116th Panzer Division would drive through Bedburg while the 15th Panzergrenadiers cleared the area from Cleve Forest down to the West Wall defenses in the southeastern quarter of the Reichswald.

Here stood the 53rd Welsh Division, which had continued its advance on the 11th and 12th. But that day it met violent counterattacks, which killed a 6th Royal Welsh Fusiliers company commander. The battalion's CO raced to the spot and personally restored the situation, capturing 40 Germans and digging in east of the important Cleve-Goch road.

That afternoon the Germans counterattacked in force, preceding their infantry assault with heavy mortar fire. The 6th Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/5th Welch Regiment stood their ground until the panzergrenadiers were 300 yards away. Then the Welshmen opened fire and cut down the German attack.

The Welshmen held the ground but had taken heavy casualties. So had their supporting armor. The 9th Royal Tank Regiment lost 38 of 52 tanks and had to be withdrawn. Antitank guns were rushed up to hold the gains, but the Germans continued to counterattack. The only option was to maintain the pace of the offensive despite the miserable weather.

The 53rd Welsh attacked shortly after daybreak and found the Germans dug in on high ground. The 7th Royal Welsh Fusiliers took 70 casualties before it could crack the German position, and the hope of capturing the Asperberg bridge across the Niers intact was doomed when demolition charges exploded. The Welshmen had failed to achieve their final objective of the first phase, but they had done a tremendous job amid appalling weather and mud in six days and five nights of hard fighting, breaking through two lines of German defenses. In doing so, they also knocked out eight 88mm guns, large numbers of mortars and machine guns, several Mark IV tanks, and four Jagdpanther self-propelled antitank guns.

Meanwhile, the 15th Panzergrenadiers deployed tanks and self-propelled guns across the 43rd Wessex Division's projected advance route. On the 13th, the Wessex men hit the Germans hard but took grievous casualties as it moved forward under German shellfire. Divi-

sional artillery brought every gun to bear on the country ahead, and the 4th Wiltshires, supported by 8th Armored Brigade, advanced. One by one the tanks bogged down in the deep mud. The infantry charged on without them and seized their objective, the small village of Trippenberg, by nightfall. There, lacking armor or antitank guns, they awaited counterattack.

It took place the next morning. German panzers and panzergrenadiers stormed the village with heavy 88mm air bursts. One company of the 4th Wiltshires was overrun, but the rest held their ground.

That same day, the Allies finally caught a break. The sun shone from a brilliantly clear sky, and while the terrain was still muddy, the visibility was unlimited. In 24 hours more than 9,000 sorties were flown against the German defenses. Hawker Typhoon attack planes and Spitfires circled above the fighting troops, ready to attack targets.

The 46th Highland Brigade took advantage of the good weather to launch an all-out assault on the German blocking position three-quarters of a mile east of Hasselt. But the 7th Seaforths were "marooned" atop their heights by floodwaters that had reached to the tops of hedges. The 9th Cameronians and 2nd Glasgow Highlanders had to attack south to Bedburg to "find the enemy and destroy him."

At 1:30 PM, backed by Coldstream Guards tanks, the Cameronians advanced against slim opposition, taking 30 POWs. The Glasgow Highlanders did less well, advancing through Moyland Wood and coming under heavy fire. The leading company was cut down to 40 men. German parachute infantry counterattacked, and the Scots had to withdraw under cover of smoke.

On the 46th Brigade's left the Seaforths and their supporting Coldstreams set out, two companies up, along the water-covered road, at 9:30 AM. The Churchills were stopped by mines, and the infantry went on, its pioneers lifting mines under fire, creating a path for the tanks, which moved in and hammered the German houses.

On the other side of the front, the 51st Highland Division drove the Germans off the high ground south of Gennep, moving into a position to attack Goch from the southwest. Straube rushed in 88mm guns to shell the British, followed by infantry counterattacks. Accurate 3-inch mortar fire stopped the German attack. On the 13th, Horrocks sent in the 32nd Guards Brigade, the infantry component of the Guards Armoured Division, to reinforce the 51st's attack on the village of Hommersum, three miles southeast of Gennep. The 5th Coldstream Guards and 1st Welsh Guards lost a few men to mines but bagged a few dozen German POWs. The 3rd Irish Guards then passed through and seized Hommersum with little difficulty, taking 78 prisoners.

The 51st Highland Division maintained its attacks on Goch itself. The Niers bridge south

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: A Sherman tank rolls past soldiers of the British 43rd Wessex Division on February 17, 1945. This photograph was taken during the Allied advance on the German town of Goch as fighting raged in the Reichswald. TOP: During bitter fighting for control of the town of Goch on February 20, 1945, soldiers of the 1st Middlesex Regiment man their Vickers machine gun in support of forward elements of their unit engaging German defenders.

of Hekkens was blown, so the Highlanders turned to their Buffaloes to ferry the infantry across, sending over two assault companies of Black Watch, swiftly reinforced by two battalions. Now, with the Niers behind them, the 51st was ready to attack Goch.

Meanwhile, the battle for Trippenberg raged on with the 5th Wiltshires resuming the advance at 11 AM. The Wilts ran smack into heavy fire from machine guns, mortars, and 88s, which pinned down the left and center companies. The company on the right flank got into a hand-to-hand battle. Soon every officer of the battalion was a casualty. The wounded CO told his men to "dig in and hold," and not until a new battalion CO arrived at 3 PM did he let himself be evacuated.

By darkness, the 5th Wilts were nearly exhausted, but the new CO decided that a night attack was needed to give the 130th Brigade a start line for the next day. The 5th Wilts fought their way through dark and heavy fire and pushed the Germans back. At dawn on February 15, the Wilts reached their objective with the loss of 200 men.

Now the 130th Brigade moved in for the next stage of the battle—and the weather went bad again, closing down British air support. The 130th attacked anyway, into heavy fighting.

On the night of February 16, the 53rd Welsh Division moved out of the southeast corner of the forest to clear the bridge area near Asperberg and the roads running east and northeast from it. The 53rd brought up four field and three medium artillery regiments to shell the Germans, some of the fire falling short. But the heavy barrage kept the Germans in their cellars and the Welshmen were on their objectives within two hours.

Some Germans hiding in their cellars burst

out after the frontline troops had passed and attacked the second line of troops. One party of antitank gunners, signalers, stretcher bearers, and ammunition carriers was almost wiped out by German paratroopers, who charged firing from the hip. The British sent men back to clear the village, and it was not until 7 AM on the 17th that the brigade was firmly established, at a cost of 73 casualties.

The same day the 160th Brigade cleared the whole area between the Reichswald and Cleve forests with no opposition. The next day the 71st Brigade closed up between the 43rd and 51st Divisions attacking Goch. The 53rd Welsh Division was finally done with the battle and began to pull out. It was the hardest battle of the war for the 53rd, with the division losing nearly a third of the 10,000 casualties it would suffer during the war in the hotly contested valley.

The 30 Corps as a whole had taken heavy casualties. Despite floods, rain, snow, mud, and the cancellation of Operation Grenade, the corps had achieved its objectives, admittedly behind schedule.

Horrocks himself had been a busy corps commander. With the troops following the prearranged plans, he had few decision to make—and the biggest one had gone badly. Despite his raging flu, he did the best thing a commander could do under the circumstances: made his way to brigade headquarters to give subordinates an opportunity to make requests, allow them to blow off steam, and encourage them in their efforts.

On the 14th, Crerar made a key decision. He separated the two Canadian divisions from 30 Corps and turned them back over to Lt. Gen. Guy Simonds's 2nd Canadian Corps. Simonds was a cold, competent gunner, and by making the attack a two corps affair it would take some strain off the ailing Horrocks. The 30 Corps would attack Goch, while the 2nd Canadian Corps would attack Calcar.

On the 15th, the two Canadian divisions, along with the 46th Highland Brigade, reverted to Canadian control. Simonds sent the 3rd Canadian Division to pass through 46th Brigade's positions in Moyland Wood to open the road to Calcar and committed the 2nd Canadian Division to take over from the 3rd Canadian at the right moment.

On Horrocks's right flank, the 52nd Lowland Division dug in while the 51st Highland Division attacked the southern half of Goch. The 43rd Wessex would drive south-southeast to cut the Goch-Calcar road and then south to the escarpment overlooking Goch. Finally, the 15th Scottish would move through the 43rd Wessex to seize the northern half of Goch.

National Archives

Gutted streetcars lie derelict along a rail siding as British soldiers, some walking and others aboard Bren Gun carriers, advance through the shattered streets of Goch on February 25, 1945, following the town's capture during Operation Veritable.

It looked good on paper, but the Germans had other ideas. When the 46th Brigade attacked, it was met with heavy mortar, infantry, and machine-gun fire. Despite mounting losses, the 46th drove the Germans off the westernmost knoll of Moyland Wood by 5 PM and then defeated a German counterattack shortly afterward.

The Highland Light Infantry advanced into dark and swirling mist that forced the tanks to be sent back. The accompanying guns bogged down in the mud. The leading two companies gathered up 80 POWs and reached their objectives before the Germans flung in a counterattack, which cut down the right-hand company.

On the 16th, the Highland Light Infantry tried to clear the eastern extension of the Moyland Woods, but German machine-gun fire was so intense the assault was stopped almost at its start line. The Cameronians attacked the easternmost knoll of the Moyland Wood and gained the heights just in time to take the inevitable German counterattack. The Cameronians maintained their offensive with the help of Wasp flamethrowers.

The same day saw the 7th Canadian Brigade attack east from the Bedburg area, with Scots Guards tanks, the Regina Rifle Regiment, and the Royal Winnipeg Rifles assigned the task of clearing high ground in the Louisendorf area. The German 346th Fusilier Battalion and 60th Panzergrenadier Regiment neatly fell back from the Regina Rifles, stopping them from crossing the road objective with their machine guns.

The Winnipeg Rifles, riding Kangaroos, advanced under a hail of shellfire from German reinforcements. The Kangaroos were slowed down by the shellfire, but the accompanying Scots Guards Churchill tanks reached Louisendorf alone. The Canadian infantry was reluctant to dismount until a Scots Guards captain, showing his disdain for danger, left his tank and walked from one carrier to another at the height of the shelling, encouraging the Canadians through example to get out and take their positions.

By dark, the Winnipeg Rifles were established in the town, digging slit trenches and sending back 240 POWs. Despite heavy German shelling, not one Canadian soldier was hit.

On the 17th, the Regina Rifles and Scots Guards tanks resumed their efforts to clear Moyland Wood, but German artillery fire was just too much for them. German 88mm fire detonated in the tops of trees, raining white-hot pieces of metal on troops below. At 4 PM, under cover of smoke, the infantry and tanks withdrew.

The 7th Brigade's third battalion, the 1st Canadian Scottish, captured 150 German paratroopers but suffered heavy casualties. One Scots' Guard tank broke down and had to be towed back. The driver was suspected of not having done his maintenance until the workshops crews opened the machine to find an unexploded 88mm shell lying amid torn-up transmission gears.

The Germans fought with skill and courage as usual, but one weapon made them break—the deadly flamethrower. However, the British and Canadians did not have enough of them. Moyland Wood refused to be cleared. By day's end, the Regina Rifles had suffered 100 casualties, and the way to Calcar was still blocked.

The 30 Corps was also facing tough resistance. The fresh 52nd Lowland Division attacked on the extreme right, aiming to capture Afferden and cross an antitank ditch that ran east from the river and included the moated, medieval Biljenbeek Castle. The 5th Highland Light Infantry and 5th King's Own Scottish Borderers attacked and were met with heavy mortar and machine-gun fire.

On the 17th, two battalions of the Highland Light Infantry attacked the Biljenbeek Castle with little success. The British brought up Churchill tanks, but the Germans knocked many of them out. A single company tried to rush a breach in the walls and was cut down.

Only when the weather cleared could the British break the castle. The RAF dropped nine 1,000-pound bombs on the castle and ripped it open. British troops stormed in to find its defenders numbered 15 paratroopers who had been kept supplied by rafts pushed across during the night. Their fanatical resistance, in spite of numerous surrendering Germans, showed that the Nazis were not giving up no matter how hopeless the situation.

The Guards Armored Division's infantry

resumed its advance on the 16th, but rain and mud cut the 19 supporting tanks down to two. For a week, the Guardsmen endured heavy shelling and incessant rain, which turned their section of the battlefield into something resembling Passchendaele.

After dark on February 16th, the 51st Highland Division resumed its drive eastward, relying on flamethrowers and rocket launchers to pave the way. At the same time, the last unengaged portion of the 43rd Wessex Division was finally able to pass through the mud and traffic jams. The 214th Brigade was hit by massive German gunfire as it was deploying. But the British hit back with nearly every gun in the 43rd Wessex Division's inventory, laying a carpet for the 214th Brigade's advance. The 214th began its attack at 4 PM and by dusk had advanced nearly 3,000 yards.

The British continued to attack with heavy artillery support as the night wore on. The 7th Somerset Light Infantry took 68 POWs and the commander of one German position. By 5:30 AM on the 17th, the Somersets were consolidated on a 1,000-yard front along the escarpment overlooking Goch, having taken 180 more POWs. Six hours later the Somersets continued their advance.

At 11:30 AM on the 17th, the 1st Worcestershires attacked, facing the heaviest and most accurate shelling of the war. By 6 PM, one observer remembered, "They were looking down on the chimneys of Goch along a front of 4,000 yards." Horrocks would later call 43rd Wessex Division's 8,000-yard continual advance the turning point of the Reichswald battle. With the 43rd Wessex Division in position, Goch would inevitably fall.

The Germans recognized this and sought permission to withdraw, but Adolf Hitler refused. The Allies had to be stopped and hurled back. Two additional battalions of the 6th Parachute Division were sent to take position between Moyland and Calcar.

On the 18th, the 1st Canadian Army prepared to attack the hinges of the German blocking line at Calcar and Goch. On the 19th, the 2nd Canadian Division rejoined the battle, sending in the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade on Kangaroos supported by tanks. At noon, 14 field artillery regiments, seven medium regiments, and two heavy batteries opened fire. The tanks bogged down right away, and the infantry ran into 88mm antitank guns, which forced the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry to dismount from the armored personnel carriers short of its objectives. The Essex Scottish did better, taking its objective.

That night the Germans counterattacked with the Panzer Lehr Division, a crack outfit badly weakened from the Bulge. The Canadians were quickly overrun, and the 4th Brigade sent in its reserve battalion, the Royal Regiment of Canada. These troops quickly reported that the Essex Scottish headquarters was "held by enemy tanks and infantry."

After being overrun, the Canadians regrouped and counterattacked at dawn, backed by tanks of the Fort Garry Horse. The Germans lost 11 tanks and six Jagdpanthers, forcing them to withdraw Panzer Lehr from the battle.

The relatively fresh 2nd Canadian Division attacked the eastern extension of the Moyland Wood, underestimating the defenders' strength. A company of Canadian Scottish only 68 strong advanced against positions held by a parachute regiment. The Canadians were swept by heavy fire, and only nine men escaped.

Both sides gasped for breath on the 20th, and on the 21st the Canadians poured artillery and machine-gun fire into the Moyland Wood. The Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Sherbrooke Fusiliers' tanks, and three Wasp flamethrowers moved in to attack. Rocket-firing Typhoons made 17 separate low-level attacks. The paratroopers replied with heavy fire and counterattacks, which were beaten off. By the 22nd, the road to Calcar was finally open, the Moyland Wood cleared.

The Germans had lost men and terrain, but the Canadians had taken casualties: 400 men from the 4th Infantry Brigade, 485 from 7th Brigade.

Meanwhile, 30 Corps continued to attack. On the 19th, the 44th Lowland Brigade attacked toward the center of Goch with tank support. At 11 AM, the British trundled off, and the point tank was just short of the inner antitank ditch when it was hit by a German antitank weapon and blown up. A second Churchill behind the lead tank was ditched, and the infantry had to clear the area for bridge-laying tanks. It took until 11:30 PM for AVRE fascines to be laid and the advance to continue.

Continued on page 73

National Archives

The fighting in the Reichswald wore on and took an incredible toll in both Allied and German casualties. On March 2, 1945, British soldiers prepare to board Kangaroo troop carriers for the assault on the German town of Kervenheim, three miles south of Udem, another key town that had to be taken during the sluggish advance toward the Ruhr.

LEFT: Deck crewmen race to an SBD Dauntless dive bomber after a barrier crash. The extended tailhook failed to catch the arresting wire, but the propeller stopped the forward momentum, almost flipping the plane. Aviators claimed that SBD stood for "Slow But Deadly."

RIGHT: USS *Charger*, the floating classroom.

FAR RIGHT: A student aviator gingerly climbs out of his dangling F4F Wildcat. A rope around his waist prevents him from falling into the icy brine of the North Atlantic.

HARD CHARGING

ABOVE: Mechanics work on an F4F Wildcat fighter after a barrier crash. The barrier consisted of an elevated pair of connected cables strung across the flight deck to catch planes that missed the arresting wires. Note the bent left wing and the damaged propeller.

LEFT: A student aviator emerges from the cockpit of his floating TBF Avenger torpedo bomber. The plane would soon succumb to the ocean. While Avengers held a crew of three, on training missions the aviators flew alone.

RIGHT: Using winches and a sling, Navy deck hands upright a TBF Avenger torpedo bomber that crashed on landing. The bent propeller attests to a harsh landing.

LANDINGS

Navy student pilots did not always land smoothly on the USS *Charger*.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

TO NAVAL AVIATORS, ANY landing they could walk away from was a good landing. The escort aircraft carrier USS *Charger* trained men in good landings, but bad landings were also part of the education. As a training carrier in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay, the *Charger*'s wooden deck served as the first landing strip for would-be aviators. Not all the landings were pretty: Tailhooks missed arresting wires, landing gear collapsed, propellers chopped the deck, and pilots overshot their landings, splashing their planes into the bay. Mishaps sometimes resulted in dead or injured pilots and deck crews.

Despite the dangerous mishaps, the *Charger* qualified both American and British aviators who went on to fly escort duty for Atlantic convoys. The aviators fortunate enough to walk away from their *Charger* landings helped win the war against Germany. ■

Battle at Bir el Gubi

Italian M13/40 tanks roll across the North African desert in 1941. By that time, the Italian Army in North Africa had encountered British and Commonwealth forces that handled it roughly on several occasions.

When planning the relief of Tobruk in late 1941, British Eighth Army commanders brusquely discounted the opposition they would face from Italian armored forces. The tank battle at Bir el Gubi proved that assumption decidedly wrong.

BY ARNOLD BLUMBERG

FEBRUARY 1941 saw the fortunes of war favor the British in the North African wasteland of Cyrenaica (modern Libya). Two months prior the Italian 10th Army, over 250,000 strong under Marshal Rodolfo Granziani, had been swept from the area sustaining 12,000 men killed and missing, another 130,000 captured, with the loss of 400 tanks, hundreds of aircraft, as well as 850 artillery pieces.

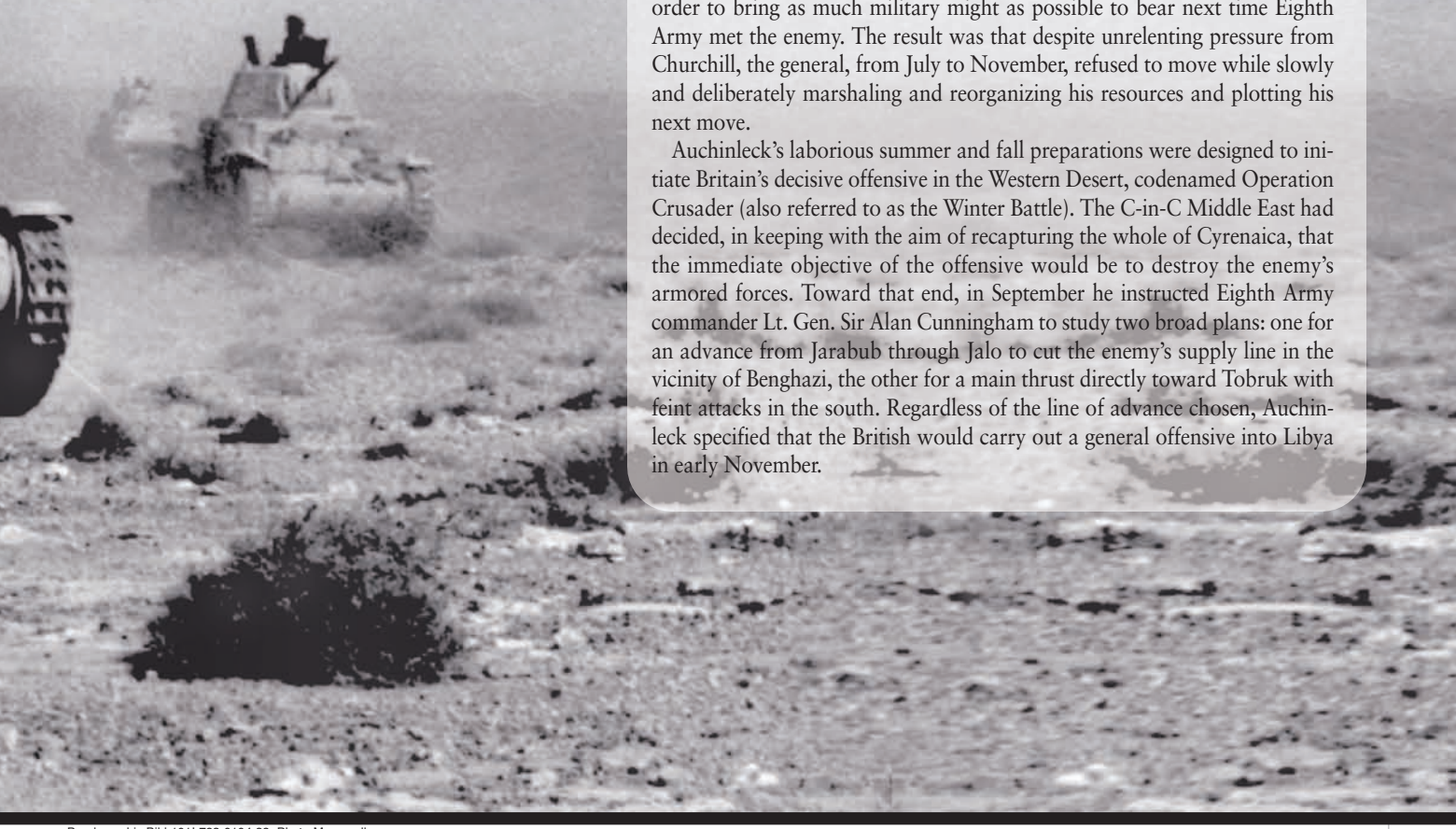
This crushing defeat had been inflicted by a Commonwealth force under the command of Lt. Gen. Richard N. O'Connor, numbering just 36,000 soldiers, 300 tanks, 190 aircraft, and 150 cannon. O'Connor's loss had been under 2,000 men.

Anxious to save his ally Benito Mussolini from further humiliation, Adolf Hitler dispatched two German panzer divisions to North Africa under the leadership of Lt. Gen. Erwin Rommel. By April 1941, Rommel had taken back the barren Cyrenaica, invested the port town of Tobruk with its Australian garrison, and driven the British forces, renamed the Eighth Army, back across the Libyan-Egyptian frontier. The British government was determined to reverse this unexpected setback.

Ordered to throw the Italian-German foe out of Libya, relieve Tobruk, and eventually conquer Algeria, thus erasing the presence of the Axis in North Africa, Eighth Army embarked on several fruitless counteroffensives in the spring of 1941. The first, Operation Brevity (May 15-17), after initial success, faltered from lack of strength to carry it through. The second effort, Operation Battleaxe, launched on June 15, was defeated two days later by a strong counterattack from the panzers of Rommel's Afrika Korps.

As the British repaired over the Egyptian border to lick their wounds after Battleaxe, Prime Minister Winston Churchill urged his new Commander-in-Chief Middle East, General Sir Claude J.E. Auchinleck, to prepare another invasion of Libya. Churchill demanded an immediate attack. However, Auchinleck wanted to carefully build up his strength in order to bring as much military might as possible to bear next time Eighth Army met the enemy. The result was that despite unrelenting pressure from Churchill, the general, from July to November, refused to move while slowly and deliberately marshaling and reorganizing his resources and plotting his next move.

Auchinleck's laborious summer and fall preparations were designed to initiate Britain's decisive offensive in the Western Desert, codenamed Operation Crusader (also referred to as the Winter Battle). The C-in-C Middle East had decided, in keeping with the aim of recapturing the whole of Cyrenaica, that the immediate objective of the offensive would be to destroy the enemy's armored forces. Toward that end, in September he instructed Eighth Army commander Lt. Gen. Sir Alan Cunningham to study two broad plans: one for an advance from Jarabub through Jalo to cut the enemy's supply line in the vicinity of Benghazi, the other for a main thrust directly toward Tobruk with feint attacks in the south. Regardless of the line of advance chosen, Auchinleck specified that the British would carry out a general offensive into Libya in early November.



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Responding to his chief's directive, Cunningham rejected a drive for Benghazi by way of the desert flank. He felt that such a move might not induce the enemy to respond at all since his forward area supplies would make him independent of the need to draw logistical support from the threatened town. Further, the time and distance required to reach the Benghazi vicinity would cost the British the element of surprise, stretch the attacker's supply lines, and limit friendly air power support the farther west the advance was made. Instead, Cunningham favored a direct move on Tobruk. This would allow British armor to stay concentrated, avoid extended and vulnerable lines of communication back to the Egyptian border, and assure a German reaction and the desired early tank battle since the Axis could not stand idly by while Tobruk was relieved. This plan was accepted in the first days of October.

Imperial War Museum

On November 18, 1940, the day before the battle at Bir el Gubi, British Matilda tanks roll forward during the opening phase of Operation Crusader. The British armor spearheaded an effort to reach the Austalian garrison besieged at the Libyan port of Tobruk.

Operationally, Cunningham planned to cross the frontier between Sidi Omar and Fort Maddalena. The main body of the British armored force would move northwest with the object of engaging the hostile armor near Tobruk, after which the siege would be raised in conjunction with a sortie by the garrison. Meanwhile, another force would contain and envelop enemy frontier troops and then go on to clear the area between Bardia and Tobruk. The 30th Corps, under Lt. Gen. Charles W. Norrie, held all three of the British armored brigades. It was tasked with the destruction of the enemy tank forces and preventing them from attacking the left flank of 13th Corps, the mainly infantry formation under Lt. Gen. Alfred Goodwin-Austin, which was to operate in the frontier area.

As a prelude to the decisive tank action, the British armored brigades, 4th Armored Brigade Group, 7th Armored Brigade, and 22nd Armored Brigade, all part of British 7th Armored Division under Maj. Gen. W.H.E. Gott, would use the first day of the offensive to move to Gabr Saleh, a central point about 30 miles west of Sidi Omar. From there they would march north to Tobruk or Bardia according to how the enemy reacted.

Axis tank units were known to be near Gambut, including the 15th Panzer Division; just west of Sidi Azeiz was the 21st Panzer Division; and at Bir el Gubi the Italian Ariete Armored Division. In addition, three Italian and one German infantry division closely invested Tobruk. The breakout from Tobruk was not to commence until the German-Italian armor had been defeated or otherwise been prevented from interfering with the attempt. When the latter had been accomplished, the garrison from Tobruk would capture the El Duda escarpment while 30th Corps took the Sidi Rezegh escarpment. Between these two ridges, situated south of Tobruk, ran the main enemy line of communication.

While the British completed their preparations, the Italian and German high commands agreed that possession of Tobruk was the essential prerequisite to any advance into Egypt and then on to the vital British-held Suez Canal. As his own supply situation slightly improved after September, Rommel planned to attack Tobruk during the third week of November 1941. Although observing the signs of the British military buildup across the border in Egypt, Marshal Ettore Bastico, head of all Axis forces in North Africa, and Rommel, in charge of the Axis operational formations, discounted any imminent enemy advance. But even if the Commonwealth forces did attack Rommel felt confident that his mobile units could successfully deal with that threat if carried out before his own offensive began, or even while Tobruk was being attacked.

Rommel came to believe in early November that his adversary would make some move to divert his attention away from Tobruk but that it would be a limited diversion designed to delay his own plans to capture the city. As a result of his mind-set about British intentions, not fully cognizant of the extent of the enemy buildup of men, tanks, and matériel, Rommel resolved to make no hasty response to any initial move by his opponent regardless of what it might be. However, the development of Eighth Army's battle plan hinged largely on the enemy's reactions. This curious mix of expectations on both sides would cause all British and German planning to become rapidly irrelevant during the first days of the Operation Crusader.

The weekend of November 16-17, 1941, saw Cunningham's command—100,000 men, 600 tanks, and 5,000 assorted other vehicles—rumble over the 130 miles from its main railhead in Egypt at Mersa Matruh to the Libyan-Egyptian border. This was done in a driving rainstorm, which turned the desert dust into liquid mud. From there Norrie's 30th Corps on the 18th motored 60 additional miles to the area around Gabr Saleh, as planned, while 13th Corps curled around the fortified Axis posts on the frontier.

At dusk the several elements of the armored fist of Eighth Army leaguered near the following points: 7th Support Group, a mixed mobile infantry and artillery brigade, screening the front of 7th Armored Division, south and east

of Gabr Saleh; 7th Armored Brigade about 10 miles to the northwest of Gabr Saleh; 22nd Armored Brigade 10 miles due south of Gabr Saleh; and 4th Armored Brigade Group 10 miles east of Gabr Saleh astride the Trigh el Abd. Forming a cordon of infantry behind 30th Corps running from south of the 22nd Armored Brigade to the coast just east at Sollum were the 1st South African, the New Zealand, and 4th Indian Infantry Divisions of 13th Corps tasked with first cutting off enemy troops on the Egyptian frontier, then advancing westward.

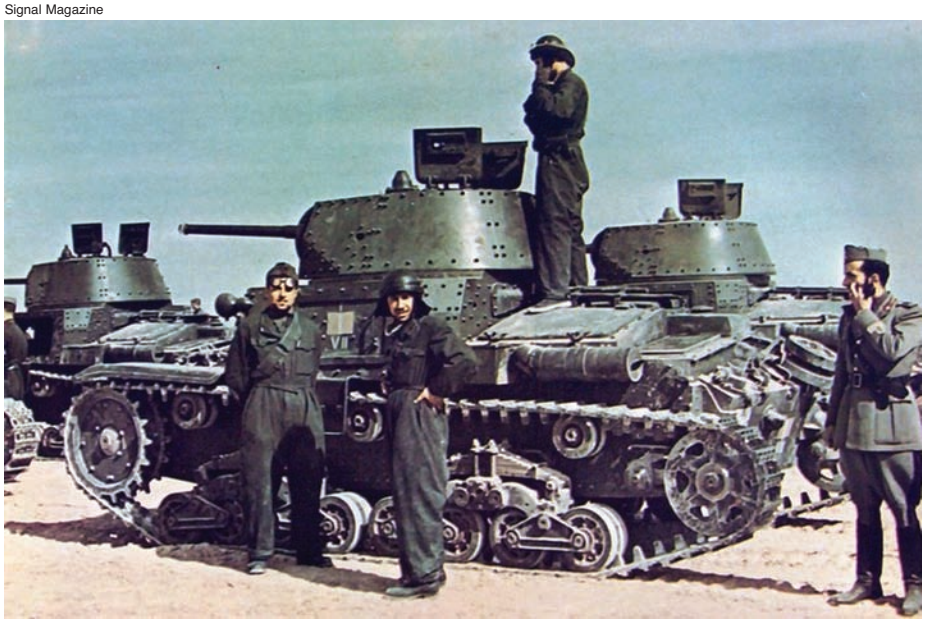
The approach march to the vicinity of Gabr Saleh on November 18 was relatively uneventful. At mid-morning the tank columns halted their procession to refuel. Meanwhile, various armored car platoons spearheading the advance of 7th and 4th Armored Brigades raced westward in search of the enemy. A number of these scouting parties reported their German counterparts from the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 21st Panzer Division just ahead covering the Trigh el Abd. Sporadic clashes occurred between the opposing armored car sections, but casualties were few. On the negative side of the ledger, an alarming number of tank breakdowns had occurred—7th Armored Brigade lost 22 of its original 141 tanks, while 22nd Brigade was reduced from 156 to 136.

Countering the initial euphoria the British commanders and troops felt as a result of their accomplishments through the 18th was a growing uncertainty about what to do next. Cunningham and Norrie were puzzled. The entire Eighth Army had marched all day toward Rommel's rear without causing a noticeable reaction on his part.

There had been no hardening of resistance, no local counterattacks, and no evidence of preparations on the Germans' part for a major counterstroke. All this enemy inaction led Auchinleck to issue what can only be termed rather colorless orders for the next day. These merely called for making secure the prearranged battle positions and pushing out strong reconnaissance forces toward Bir el Gubi and the Trigh Capuzzo. These bland directives reflected a growing unease on the part of Army headquarters. Where was Rommel?

Rommel was in his advanced command post at Gambut. He had not the slightest intention of reacting seriously to what he was certain was nothing but a diversion staged to frighten the Italians at Bir el Gubi and Bir Hacheim, causing them to divert his attention from his main purpose of taking Tobruk, which was to begin 60 hours hence. So sure was Rommel that he refused the pleas of Lt. Gen. Ludwig Cruewell, head of the Afrika Korps, which included Rommel's armored divisions, to send a German tank regiment to investigate reports of British armor in the neighborhood of Gabr Saleh.

Signal Magazine



ABOVE: Photographed in March 1941, these Italian tank soldiers have paused with their M13/40 light tanks to survey the terrain ahead. The Italians performed well at Bir el Gubi as the British attempted to relieve embattled Tobruk. BELOW: These Italian soldiers of the Ariete Division, photographed in the midst of their defense against Operation Crusader, appear confident as their commander discusses the tactical situation on a field telephone.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

While Rommel sat on his hands, one British commander summoned up the courage to act. "Strafer" Gott, leading 7th Armored Division, had no intention of losing the initiative his unit had achieved on November 18. He issued orders for 22nd Armored Brigade to probe toward Bir el Gubi, where the presence of the Italian Ariete Armored Division was known. At the same time, 7th and 4th Armored Brigades were to orient to the north and be prepared to battle German panzers if they appeared. Scout cars from 11th Hussars would screen both operations.

Two hours later revised orders from 30th Corps headquarters directed 7th Armored Division to occupy Bir el Gubi to the west with 22nd Armored Brigade. The 7th Armored Brigade was to occupy Sidi Rezegh to the northwest on a direct line to Tobruk. The 7th Support Group, moving between the two tank out-

Imperial War Museum

Manning the command post of the Royal Horse Artillery, officers use a map, megaphone, and field glasses to assess and redirect the accuracy of their fire against advancing Italian troops and tanks. The troop commander, left, is spotting the fall of the shells, while the gun position officer, right, gives the order to fire the heavy guns.

fits, would cooperate with either 7th or 22nd Brigade as circumstances dictated.

The new directive, although giving impetus to action, entirely changed the original concept of Operation Crusader. Now the decision had been made to go straight for Tobruk without first eliminating the enemy armor, which was so central to the initial plan. In addition, 4th Armored Brigade Group was not to support the move to the west or north but remain in place east of Gabr Saleh to protect the left flank of 13th Corps. The vital need for a concentrated armored thrust had been jettisoned in favor of the wide dispersal of British armored assets.

The early morning hours of November 19 witnessed the approach of 22nd Armored Brigade toward Bir el Gubi. It was known through prior intelligence that the entire Italian Ariete Division was there. Reconnaissance patrols from the 22nd had engaged in a sharp skirmish with armored cars attached to the Italian 20th Corps (Corpo d'Armata di Manovra, or Mobile Army Corps), which controlled all Italian tank and motorized infantry formations in Libya. After this scuffle at Taieb el Esem between Gabr Saleh and Bir el Gubi, the Italian cars withdrew northward.

The British tankers heading for Bir el Gubi were not combat veterans and lacked adequate training. The brigade, formed in 1939, had arrived fresh in Egypt on October 4, 1941. It took several weeks to acclimate to desert conditions. The formation was equipped with the new Crusader A15 tanks, which although very maneuverable were mechanically unreliable. The 7th Armored Brigade used the older A13 cruiser vehicles, while 4th Armored sported the American M5 Stuart light tanks, dubbed Honeys by the British. Little time was available for practical combat training before Operation Crusader commenced. However, this drawback did not deter 7th Armored Division's command from assigning the 22nd to confront the Italians at Bir el Gubi.

On the morning of the 19th, Gott instructed its commander, Brig. Gen. J. Scott Cockburn, to initiate a vigorous attack on the Italians at Bir el Gubi. The division commander felt that it would have been unwise to leave Ariete unmolested on his left and that its removal would have allowed easy occupation of the post by the 1st South African Division, thus securing the British desert flank. Further, it would present a good opportunity to blood the green British formation against a second-rate opponent in preparation for the much harder fighting it would encounter when the brigade faced the tougher Germans. Besides, the armored unit would be supported if necessary by the 1st South African Division following in its wake.

Gott may also have assumed, taking into account past battlefield performance, that separated from the Germans as they were, the Italians might simply flee rather than fight. Either way, the ejection of Ariete from Bir el Gubi would secure the 7th Armored Division's left wing and force the Germans to commit tanks in support of their Italian allies and away from Tobruk.

Gott's assumptions were not unreasonable, but he failed to consider that regardless of the performance of Italian tanks they would be fighting from defensive positions supported by artillery, a branch of the enemy army that had proved over the last year of desert combat to be a skillful and determined foe.

He also missed the point that any fight between the British and the Italians with about the same number of tanks would be more of an equal contest than assumed. The British Army's Crusader I (Cruiser Mark VI) tank fielded by the 22nd Armored Brigade held a four-man crew, weighed 19 tons, was fast moving (27 mph), with maximum armor plating of 49mm at its strongest points. However, its paltry 2pdr (40mm) main armament was short ranged, and except for a few models not plentiful during Operation Crusader, could only fire armor piercing ammunition. Even worse was the complete mechanical unreliability of the vehicle. Rushed into service before proper testing, more were lost during the Desert War to breakdowns than enemy action.

After Bir el Gubi the brigade reported that it had lost 82 tanks, and another account stated that it had only 10 to 20 battleworthy tanks left. These figures included not only battlefield losses but also Crusaders lost during the two days leading up to and including the battle due to mechanical problems.

Facing 22nd Brigade's Crusaders was the main Italian battle tank, the medium M 13/40. Rommel exclaimed that when he thought of these vehicles it made him sick since they were, in his opinion, obsolete. At the time of Operation Crusader, Rommel had 414 tanks, 260 German models including 15 PzKpfw. Is, 40 PzKpfw. IIs, 150 PzKpfw. IIIs, 55 PzKpfw. IVs, and 154 Italian M13/40s. Subtracting the obsolete Panzer Is and IIs and the 50 percent of his PzKpfw. IIIs that still sported the weak 37mm cannon, Rommel had to rely very much on the despised M13s as they comprised the backbone of his tank force.

Crewed by four men protected by only

40mm of steel plate, powered by an unreliable, underpowered engine capable of an average speed of 8 mph in the desert, and carrying a puny 47mm main gun (which fired both armor-piercing and high-explosive shells), and was not equipped with radios, the M13 was somewhat inferior (except in speed) in performance to its British Crusader challenger.

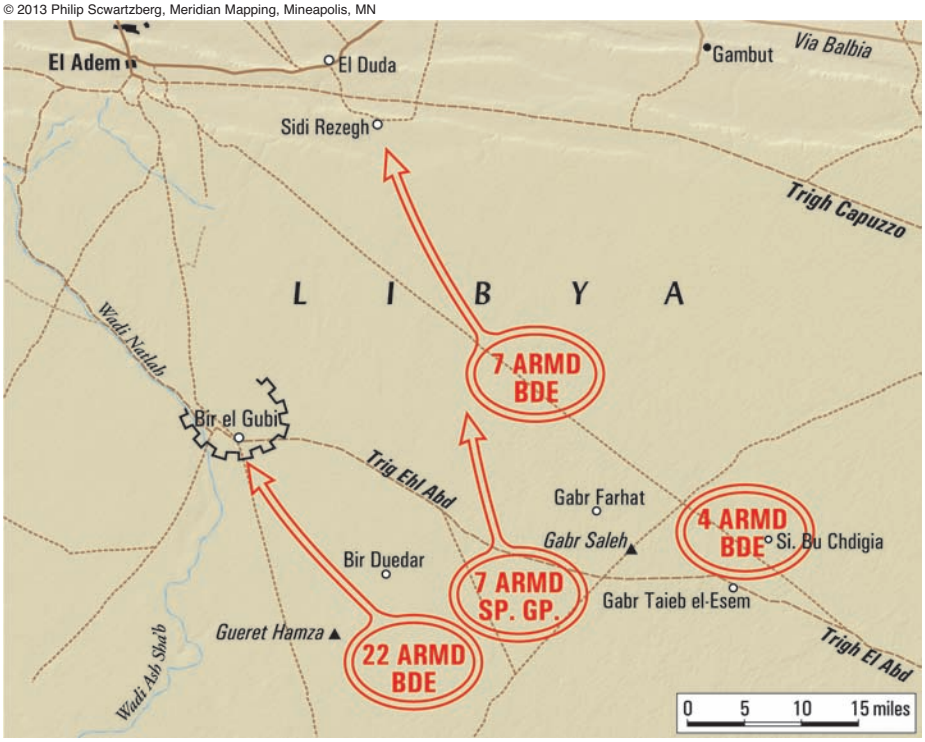
Gott had not anticipated that the inadequacy of the British communication system would compromise his plans. Although most commanders were aware that a push for Bir el Gubi was set for that day, orders for the South Africans under General Brink were only issued early on the 19th and interpreted to mean that the South Africans would only move up and occupy that location after the British armor had captured it. As a result, vital friendly infantry and artillery support would be lacking when the 22nd Armored went up against Ariete at Bir el Gubi.

The brigade took position a few miles southeast of Bir el Gubi at 0900 hours; the bulk remained in place until around noon. It then advanced behind a screen of 11th Hussars armored cars with the 2nd Royal Gloucestershire Hussars (2nd RGH) on the right, 4th County of London Yeomanry Sharpshooters (4th CLY) on the left, and the 3rd County of London Yeomanry Sharpshooters (3rd CLY) forming a second line behind 4th CLY.

Each regiment, containing four squadrons of four troops of three tanks each, formed into an arrowhead, the base of which was occupied by the regimental headquarters squadron. Brigade headquarters, containing eight tanks, took station in the center rear of the battle line where it could cover the brigade's artillery support provided by the eight 25pdrs of C Battery, 4th Royal Horse Artillery, and one troop of 2pdr antitank guns from the 102nd Northumberland Hussars, Royal Horse Artillery.

Facing the onrushing British, the Italian 132nd Ariete (or Ram) Armored Division had been raised in 1939 and deployed to the Western Desert in January 1941, where several detachments from the parent division had fought from April through October 1941. At Bir el Gudi under General Mario Balotta, Ariete would fight as a complete unit for the first time.

Although Rommel had radioed General Gastone Gambara, Italian 20th Corps commander, on the night of November 18 telling him not to worry about an enemy attack in the near future, Gambara chose instead to listen to his own intelligence sources and warned Balotta that a British assault on his position was likely on the 19th. As a result, the men of the Ram Division



ABOVE: Elements of four British armored formations mounted an offensive against Bir el Gubi and encountered stiff resistance from Italian tanks and antitank guns on November 19, 1941. BELOW: A pair of British Crusader tanks takes up positions in the forefront of their formation as the two commanders confer during Operation Crusader. At the time of the action at Bir el Gubi, the Crusader was the frontline tank of British armored units in North Africa.

Imperial War Museum

were alert and prepared to receive the British if they came. They would do so with 146 M13/40 tanks, 16 105mm and 32 75mm field guns, 18 47mm antitank guns, and eight 20mm antiaircraft guns.

Division personnel had spent the autumn training with these weapons and had gained confidence in their ability to fight, especially in prepared positions. Ariete's order of battle at Bir el Gubi included the 132nd Medium Armored Regiment (three battalions), Eighth Bersaglieri (light infantry) Motorized Infantry Regiment (three battalions), three companies of 47mm antitank guns, and the 132nd Motorized Artillery Regiment (three battalions).

In addition to intensive training, the men of Ariete spent early November 1941 fortifying the ground around Bir el Gubi. General Balotta created three main strongpoints called lozenges due to their shapes, each consisting of trenches, weapons pits, and connecting communication ditches. Each was occupied by a battalion of the

As an injured crew member crawls away, a British Crusader tank blazes following a direct hit from an Axis gun. The tank was among a number of British armored vehicles advancing on the besieged city of Tobruk in November 1941.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

Eighth Bersaglieri Regiment and backed by the divisional artillery as well as a battery of 105mm cannon assigned to Ariete from 20th Corps. In addition, seven 102mm naval guns capable of firing armor-piercing shells and mounted on trucks were present as antitank weapons. When the battle began, the tanks of 132nd Armored Regiment were stationed to the rear.

At 0700 hours a company of 16 Italian tanks and a battery of 75mm field guns was sent south of Bir el Gubi as an observer screen. At 0800 hours shells from the 25pdr guns accompanying 22nd Armored Brigade started to fall near the Italians, but no hits were scored on the M13s.As tanks from the 2nd RGH approached, a series of charges and counter charges ensued, resulting in a stalemate that ended at 1100 hours.

With reports of more enemy tanks approaching from the northeast, the lone Italian tank unit rushed to the new danger point and engaged 40 Crusaders in a spirited 10-minute duel, which left eight British vehicles destroyed for three Italian machines put out of commission and seven more damaged. Outnumbered, the Italians retreated to the Bir el Gubi defenses.

The British tank crews were exhilarated by their first taste of combat and eager to finish off what they assumed was a demoralized and beaten opponent. The fighting resumed about noon when the 2nd RGH was joined on its left by the 4th CLY. Despite warnings from an 11th Hussars officer that the enemy ahead was in a strong position, of unknown strength, and that the tankers would need infantry if they were to capture their objective, the brigade commander ordered an attack on what he thought was a mobile defense post five miles east of Bir el Gubi.

In what one observer stated to be "the nearest thing to a cavalry charge with tanks during the war" the 2nd RGH and 4th CLY slammed into what turned out to be the well-constructed and manned lozenges. After the battle the brigade was accused of making repeated "reckless" charges instead of advancing by firing from alternate hull-down positions. This indictment is unfair since the lack of adequate artillery support and the determined and valiant actions of the Italian defenders working their cannon provided no choice but for the unsupported British armor to advance as rapidly as possible.

After the fight at Bir el Gubi, British tanks littered the field. The first armored battle of Operation Crusader was an Axis—more appropriately, an Italian—victory.

The main thrust of the attack was directed at the Italian right, which put out such a volume of antitank and artillery fire that the subsequent confusion in the inexperienced British ranks caused the advance to veer toward the Italian center. There the assailants were greeted by deadly fire from dug-in infantry.

The range between attacker and defender was so close, 200 yards or less, that the antiquated 47mm antitank guns and 75mm cannon wreaked havoc on the charging British armor. After taking losses from the opposing infantry and artillery and then being counterattacked by M13s of the 9th Battalion, 132nd Tank Regiment, the British pulled back a few hundred yards to rethink their strategy.

After a brief radio conference between brigade headquarters and the battered 2nd RGH and 4th CLY commanders, the two bloodied units redirected their attack farther to the Italian right with 2nd RGH leading the way. The brigade once again proved its combat inexperience by rolling across the enemy front to its new jumping-off point. During this move, it sustained more tank casualties from enemy fire on its vulnerable flank without being able to return the favor.

As poorly executed as the new advance was, it did meet with initial success at about 1330 hours. The attack hit the Italian infantry of the 7th Bersaglieri Battalion just before the Italians had a chance to properly man their defensive positions and sight artillery.

As a result, as 4th CLY squadron leader Viscount Cranley recorded after the fact, the impetus of the British rush on the Italian entrenchments at first dismayed the defenders to such a degree that over 300 of them surrendered to the British tanks, but their captivity was very short lived. Seeing no enemy infantry to guard or direct them to the British lines, the Italian soldiers again took up their weapons to resume fighting. Meanwhile, the stand of the Bersaglieri had allowed tanks to mass behind the cracked Italian position, preventing a clean British breakthrough.

After their brief success the British tanks were pinned down by well-directed fire from dug-in Italian 47mm and 75mm guns. Follow-up squadrons from the 4th CLY and Lt. Col. R.K Jago's 3rd CLY tried to work around both enemy flanks but immediately ran into hidden minefields and heavy artillery fire. Lack of fighting experience led elements of these regiments to fall into a trap around 1500 hours when they blindly advanced at what they thought was an Italian truck park. Instead it was a cleverly camouflaged anti-tank position manned by the 102mm naval artillery detachment. Within minutes of the attack, six Crusaders were blazing hulks in front of the Italian gun line.

Throughout the day British tankers had urgently called for artillery fire to suppress the stinging Italian barrages that continually fell. The response to their pleas was usually silence since by mid-afternoon most regimental and brigade radio communications had broken down. When supporting artillery fire did infrequently occur it was feeble at best due to the small number of 25pdrs accompanying the brigade.

At 1530 hours a determined British relieving attack by the 3rd CLY to the northwest of Bir el Gubi was designed to help the effort of the 2nd RGH and 4th CLY then fighting in the center and northeast of the Italian positions. As the British prepared to move forward they were hit by the rolling armor of Ariete's 7th, 8th, and 9th Tank Battalions, 132nd Armor Regiment, placed there to counter such an enemy move.

Each side deployed 100 tanks in this engagement. As the British pressed northward of Bir el Gubi at high speed, the Italians attempted to flank them. Italian artillery batteries turned to fire on the passing enemy tanks. After one hour, the running gunfight ended with the British defeated and retreating to the southeast. With the 3rd CLY diversionary effort thrown back, 2nd RGH and 4th CLY were ordered off the field, and the bloodletting at Bir el Gubi soon ceased.

After the fight at Bir el Gubi, British tanks littered the field. The first armored battle of Operation Crusader was an Axis—more appropriately, an Italian—victory. Although early British reports, intended to explain the English reversal, claimed that some of the M13s were manned by German crews and that German PzKpfw. IV panzers and German infantry were involved in the battle, these assertions had no basis in fact.

Although the British admitted to a loss of only 25 Crusaders destroyed and 10 more damaged, it seems more likely that the Italian figure for British losses, about 50, is nearer the mark.

Mondadori / Getty Images

In this photo taken shortly after the fighting ended at Bir el Gubi, British prisoners are gathered by their Italian captors to await disposition. The Italian forces deployed at Bir el Gubi fought the British gamely and won praise for their effort.

The 22nd Brigade also reported that it had destroyed 45 Italian tanks and captured 205 prisoners. Ariete's after-action reports paint a different picture, admitting that only 34 tanks were written off and 15 damaged but brought back into service later. The division claimed that four 75mm and 12 47mm guns were lost, 15 men were killed in action, 80 were wounded, and a further 82 were missing. In addition, 37 British officers and enlisted ranks were captured.

The Battle at Bir el Gubi affected the entire Crusader campaign. Ariete remained in position for a few days guarding the Axis flank and diverting British armor and infantry to watch it. This prevented the full weight of 7th Armored Division from concentrating its strength against the German panzers barring the gate to Tobruk at Sidi Rezegh. Helping to keep the enemy armor dispersed, Ariete also allowed conditions to exist for German tank victories over isolated British armored units—against 4th Armored on November 20th, 7th Armored Brigade and 7th Support Group on November 22, and the destruction of the 5th South African Infantry Brigade south of Belhammed on the 23rd and 24th, in which Ariete took part.

Rommel's misguided "dash to the wire" on the Egyptian frontier on November 25 gained the Commonwealth troops enough respite to reconstitute their strength, relieve Tobruk, and send Axis forces packing once more, temporarily, out of Lybia in the waning days of December 1941. Ariete was one of the last Axis combat units to leave Cyrenaica, while 22nd Armored Brigade fought the final tank action against the Germans before retiring across the border into Tripolitania.

The Battle of Bir el Gubi, where Ariete and the 22nd Armored Brigade were first tested in combat, was described by General Norrie as "an encounter battle carried out too enthusiastically against prepared positions ... not seen or recognized until the attack had been launched." □

Military historian Arnold Blumberg lives and writes from his home in Baltimore, Maryland.

SEEDS OF CONTI

BY JOHN BROWN

IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY, THE FRENCH ESTABLISHED CATHOLIC missions in Indochina, and until the 1820s they enjoyed local protection, but after that persecution began and increased steadily, particularly under Emperor Tu-Duc, who reigned from 1847 to 1883 and wanted to stamp out Christianity. Emperor Napoleon III of France did not intend to let that happen, and in 1858 he began sending French forces into the Saigon delta. In 1862, Tu-Duc was forced to sign a treaty granting religious toleration and conceding some of his territory, including Saigon. From this nucleus the French expanded into the rest of Indochina.

Resistance to French occupation was mainly in the northernmost province, Tonking. In August 1883, French Admiral Courbet bombarded rebel-held forts at the mouth of the Hue river "inflicting fearful loss of life" and a treaty was extorted providing for a French protectorate over the whole of Indochina which included present day Vietnam (traditionally composed of the three kingdoms of Cochin China in the south, Annam in the center and Tongking in the north) and Cambodia and Laos.

Nguyen Ai Quoc, known more widely as Ho Chi Minh, is shown in 1948 as his revolutionary and anti-colonial policies reached new heights of popularity.

The French then sent expeditions against the north, but this brought China into the contest, for Peking claimed a loose suzerainty over Indochina and did not want its enemy France (from the Second China War) on its border. China began planning for a war against the French. Courbet was eager for full-scale hostilities, but France was too insecure in Europe for outright war and chose to try to eliminate guerrilla warfare in the north.

Then, in June a three-day battle near Bacle, in which Chinese troops took part, resulted in a defeat for the French. But the French pushed on, enveloping one strongpoint after another, forcing the rebels to retire. To strike terror, all prisoners including wounded soldiers and civilians, were executed. Labour was forcibly requisitioned and harshly treated, resulting in a mass flight of coolies and a consequent shortage of carriers to take provisions and ammunition to the fighting units. In March 1885, French General Oscar de Negrier was wounded and defeated at Langson near the frontier, and the French withdrew en masse.

The Chinese did not follow up this victory, and the French were allowed to regain lost ground. In June, the Treaty of Tientsin gave the French most of what they wanted. From then on they ruled Indochina with an iron fist, putting down insurrections savagely, making much use of the Foreign Legion and troops from France's North African possessions until the beginning of World War II.

Both: National Archives

Soldiers of the 20th Indian Division stand nearby as Japanese military policemen lay down their swords in surrender. This event took place in the Indochinese city of Saigon in November 1945. As World War II ended, unrest continued to smolder in Indochina.

ALLIED EFFORTS IN INDOCHINA WERE A HARBINGER OF YEARS OF FIGHTING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II.

NUING STRIFE

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: French soldiers struggle to repel an attack by Chinese troops during the Tonkin War in northern Indochina in 1884. After concluding a peace treaty with the Chinese the following year, France ruled Indochina with an iron fist for more than 40 years. BELOW: On September 15, 1941, Japanese troops ride their bicycles into the city of Saigon. After occupying Indochina and disarming the French troops there, the Japanese left the administration of the country to the collaborationist government of Vichy France until March 1945.

© Roger Viollet / The Image Works

France fell to Nazi Germany in 1940, and the Japanese, taking advantage of this, raided Indochina's borders and threatened to bomb Hanoi while making demands for military bases in Indochina. The French administration capitulated, and the Japanese moved in. They left the local administration to continue its rule much as before while they concentrated on building air, naval and military bases throughout the country in preparation for further expansion in the region. They looted the country of its agricultural and mineral wealth and closed an overland supply route to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists in China which ran through Indochina from the port of Haiphong.

French humiliation at the hands of the Japanese emboldened Indochinese nationalists, most of them communist-led, to begin a series of insurrections against French rule. One of them was a nationalist party founded in 1941 by Nguyen Ai Quoc, who changed his name to Ho Chi Minh ("He Who Enlightens"). At a conference of a number of nationalist groups, he formed the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi), soon shortened to Viet Minh.

The insurrections were ruthlessly put down by the French with many villages and small towns put to the torch and thousands of Indochinese killed, maimed, or imprisoned. Long lines of prisoners were seen in Saigon, tethered together by wire pushed through the palms of each man's hands.

With the end of World War II in the Pacific, the intention of the Allies was to return to the colonial position as it existed before the Japanese invasion. The British objective for Indochina was to drive out the Japanese and return it to the Free French led by General Charles de Gaulle, but the American attitude was quite different.

At the time, America was hostile to colonial restoration in general and to the restoration of French colonial rule over Indochina in particular. President Franklin D. Roosevelt made it clear he had no sympathy for the French and their empire. "France," he said, "has had Indochina and its 30 million people for nearly a hundred years and the people are worse off than they were at the beginning."

Roosevelt proposed that French rule should be replaced by a trusteeship that would prepare the way for independence. But American non-involvement in colonial restoration did not last for long, particularly when it became apparent that insurgencies in Indochina, Malaya, and the Philippines, were using Chinese communist methods of revolutionary warfare. By late 1946, in American eyes, a

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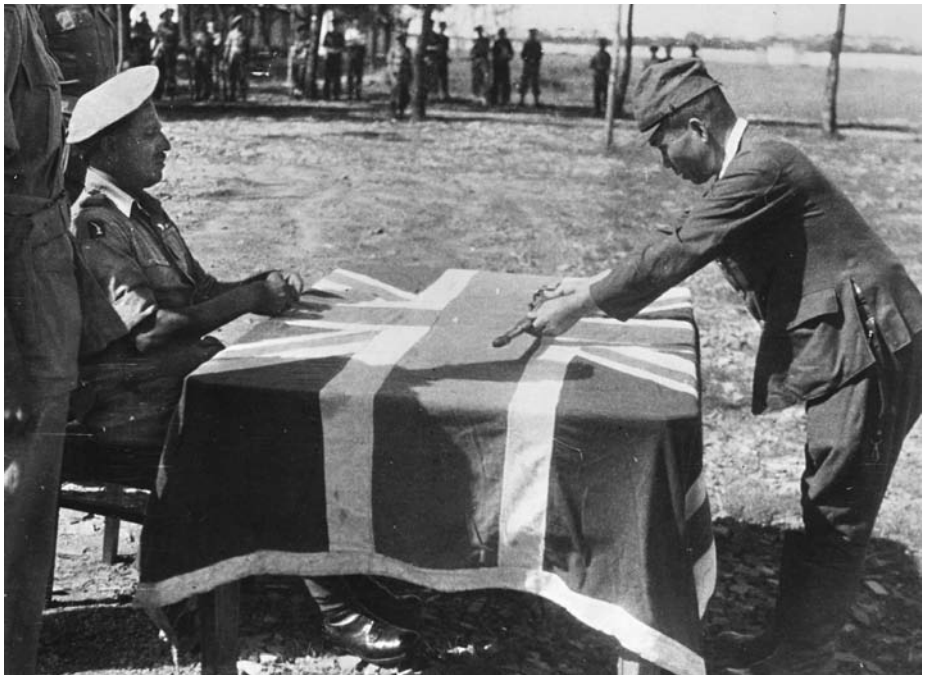

Major Ahmed Khan Sarda Bahadur of the 20th Indian Division sits before a table draped with the Union Jack and accepts the sword of a Japanese officer during surrender ceremonies in 1945.

spread of communism was more dangerous than Western involvement in the Far East.

In March 1945, the Japanese, in response to their deteriorating military situation elsewhere and fearing an American landing in Indochina after the fall of Manila, staged a coup d'etat in Indochina. They disarmed and imprisoned French troops and proclaimed Indochina independent of France. Some French troops resisted and tried to fight their way to China, appealing to the Allies for help. The British wanted to help, but the Americans, much better placed to do so, refused.

In the south, the Japanese set up a puppet government under the Emperor Bao Dai, while in the north the communists set up the Provisional Revolutionary Government and a National Liberation Army with the clear intention of taking power once the Japanese had been defeated. By the summer of 1945, Viet Minh forces had liberated six northern provinces and parts of four others, had established local administrations, and were building up their military strength.

In the south, communist-led nationalist parties in Saigon quickly moved to seize the organs of government, liquidating or intimidating their rivals as they did so. While the Allies stated that the French had sovereignty over Indochina, American policy in practice was to oppose the return of French possessions to them. There was no official American animosity toward the communist-led Viet Minh groups, and the Americans actually provided assistance to them through the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

As Japanese defeat became more obvious, General Vo Nguyen Giap, Ho Chi Minh's guerrilla leader, moved his forces towards the Red River delta, and when the Japanese surrender came in August 1945, he and his guerrillas were the only ones on the spot to take advantage of the situation. French troops had been disarmed by the Japanese since March, and so, on August 17, there was nothing to stop Giap raising the red flag with its yellow star all over Hanoi. He took over administrative authority on behalf of the Viet Minh and also took possession of the Japanese and French arsenals, providing him with some 60,000 rifles, 3,000 light machine guns, some artillery and a large supply of ammunition.

For the Allies, Indochina was included in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations under the leadership of Chinese Nationalist General Chiang Kai-shek with whom the Americans had two military advisors, Generals Albert C. Wedemeyer and Joseph Stilwell, who naturally shared the anti-colonial views. At one point it looked as though the colonial French Army, before it was disarmed in 1945, would stage a coup against the Japanese. Officers of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), called Force 136 in Asia, were trying to make contact with the colonial French Army to give them advice, supplies and encouragement. Wedemeyer got news of it and said it was a misuse of Lend-Lease equipment and that if the operation did not cease the equipment would be withdrawn.

At Potsdam in July 1945, the Allied leaders divided Indochina in half at the 16th parallel and decided that Chiang Kai-shek would accept Japanese surrender north of the parallel and return the territory to France and Lord Louis Mountbatten, British Commander-in-Chief, South East Asia Command, would accept Japanese surrender south of the parallel and restore French rule there.

Mountbatten formed an Allied Control Commission based in Saigon. It would have an infantry division to maintain civil order in and around Saigon while the commission itself would be concerned primarily with winding down the Supreme Headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Army in Southeast Asia and rendering humanitarian aid and assistance to Allied prisoners of war and internees. Major General Douglas Gracey was named to head the mission and take with him his crack 22,000 strong 20th Indian Division.

National Archives

Major General Douglas Gracey commanded the 20th Indian Division and shouldered responsibility for delivering humanitarian aid and helping former prisoners of war in Indochina.

Upon Japan's surrender, Viet Minh forces consolidated their hold over the north, and with Hanoi in his hands on September 2, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, reading out to a huge crowd of people in Hanoi the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence.

He cited the American Declaration of 1776: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

National Archives

Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap inspects Viet Minh soldiers during their fight against the occupying Japanese in 1944. Giap and the Viet Minh later turned their nationalism fueled by Communist doctrine against the colonial French and then the United States.

He went on: "The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country. We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam. A people who had courageously opposed French domination for more than 80 years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against Fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent."

While the communists were consolidating their hold over the north and establishing a stable government with broad support in Hanoi, in the south their influence was not so strong. In Saigon there were a number of nationalist and socialist organizations competing for influence and power. On August 21, the United National Front organized a large militant demonstration in Saigon, bringing together the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao organizations and the city's strong Trotskyist movement. This was a show of strength by those critical of communist policy and indicated that here in the south the Viet Minh would not have it all their own way.

On August 25, the Viet Minh organized their own much larger demonstration in Saigon and established the Committee of the South as a revolutionary government. The committee, headed by communist leader Tran Van Giau, attempted to establish control over Saigon and to extend its influence throughout the rest of the south.

On September 2, during another massive communist demonstration in Saigon, five Frenchmen and a number of Vietnamese were killed. Several French suspects were arrested but were later released at the insistence of the Committee of the South; the communists were determined to avoid anything that might turn the Allies against them. They were not preparing to fight British forces on their way to occupy Saigon. They hoped to be able to work with them.

Some British forces were already at sea, heading for Indochina when General Douglas MacArthur caused confusion by forbidding the reoccupation of Indochina until he had personally received Japan's surrender in Tokyo, set for August 28. A typhoon caused the ceremony to be postponed until September 2.

MacArthur's order meant that prisoners of war remained in the hellish conditions of their prison camps for longer than was necessary, and the additional delay before British troops arrived enabled revolutionary groups to fill power vacuums that had existed since the announcement of the Japanese capitulation on August 15.

MacArthur had his ceremony aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, and British medical teams began parachuting into prison camps. An advance party of support personnel with an escort of troops from Gracey's force arrived in Saigon to check on conditions and report back, and on the 11th the first brigade of the 20th Indian Division began flying in from Burma via Bangkok. These advance units were welcomed by fully armed Japanese and Viet Minh soldiers. The full division was not in place until the end of October.

General Gracey arrived in Saigon on September 13. He was faced with anarchy and chaos in a city where murder was commonplace. Administrative services had collapsed and a loosely controlled, communist-led revolutionary group had seized power—their soldiers were guarding all vital points in the city including Gracey's own office building. The Japanese were still fully armed, bad weather was slowing down the fly-in of Gracey's Indian Division, and on top of it all he could not communicate with his headquarters in Burma as, at the last moment, his American signals detachment had for political reasons been withdrawn by the United States. Replacement would take weeks.

On his arrival, Gracey was approached by the Committee of the South, but he refused to have any dealings with them. He was interested only with the Japanese military authorites and the French. He warned that unless something was done quickly the state of anarchy would worsen with the Viet Minh's lack of control over some of their allied groups.

Gracey's refusal to recognize the existence of the Committee of the South completely undermined its conciliatory position, forced the communists into confrontation, and strengthened the position of those who advocated armed resistance.

On September 17, the committee tried to compel Gracey to recognize it by imposing a boycott of the French, calling a series of strikes and ordering the closure of the Saigon market to cut off food supplies to the city. Gracey decided that the committee must be crushed, and on September 19 he closed down the Vietnamese press and took control of Saigon radio. He banned all demonstrations and meetings in southern Indochina, prohibited the carrying of weapons, reimposed the Japanese curfew regulations, and introduced the death penalty for a range of public order offenses. In effect, he declared martial law.

Gracey was persuaded by the French to rearm the soldiers of their local Colonial Infantry Regiment who were being held as prisoners and would evict the Viet Minh from the hold they had on Saigon. He saw this as the quickest way to allow the French to reassert their authority while letting him get on with disarming and repatriating the Japanese, of whom there were some 35,000.

During the next few days, the Viet Minh were eased from their grip on Saigon. Gracey replaced their guards on vital points with his own troops, who gave way to the French as the Viet Minh would never relinquish their positions directly to the French. By September 23, the French had regained control of the city, and then Gracey allowed 1,000 French former prisoners to be rearmed. Aided by the Colonial

Infantry Regiment, they ejected the Viet Minh in a coup in which only two French soldiers and no Vietnamese were killed.

The French commissioner, Colonel Henri Cedile, now had some 1,500 well armed soldiers under his control, and he used them to stage a coup d'etat. The soldiers seized public buildings, arrested large numbers of Vietnamese (the committee escaped them), raised the French Tricolor over Saigon's city hall, and the celebrations began. They soon degenerated into a pogrom with Vietnamese civilians insulted and beaten on the streets and in their homes. With this French coup, Gracey ended martial law and General Jacques Leclerc informed Lord Mountbatten, "Your General Gracey has saved French Indochina."

The Vietnamese reacted. On the night of September 24, a howling mob, not under Viet Minh control, abducted, butchered, raped and mutilated dozens of French and French-Vietnamese men, women and children. On the

National Archives

ABOVE: As the end of Japanese domination was becoming readily apparent, Viet Minh soldiers and supporters hold a public rally in the Indochinese city of Hanoi in March 1945. LEFT: Lieutenant Colonel Peter Dewey, an officer of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was killed during fighting between the Viet Minh and the British in September 1945. Another OSS operative was wounded during the battle and rescued by Japanese troops.

25th, the Viet Minh attacked and set fire to the central market and attacked the airfield perimeter but were repulsed by Gurkhas.

For the next few days armed Viet Minh parties fought British/Indian patrols all over the city with the Viet Minh suffering mounting losses. Mortars, 25-pounder guns and heavy machine guns were used by the British in the street fighting. The British troops were highly experienced, having battled their way through Burma against the Japanese, and many officers and other ranks had experience in internal security and guerrilla warfare in India and on the North West Frontier. A British officer observed: "The Viet Minh were a courageous enemy, but were still learning about war."

It was in this confused fighting that the OSS commander in Saigon, Lt. Col. Peter Dewey, was killed by the Viet Minh. He was probably mistaken for a French officer. The day after Dewey was killed, an OSS officer refused to intervene when Viet Minh troops arrested a French officer and executed him. The American declared he was neutral. Mountbatten protested to the Americans, but it appeared that they "were on the other side in this war."

A report by a British artillery NCO gives some idea of the sort of situation a soldier might be faced with on patrol in Saigon at the time: "Sometimes we came across rebels, mixed groups of Japanese and Viet Minh. One group had taken over a bungalow close to Saigon that had been occupied by a French plantation manager; they had cut the throats of the man and his wife and children and then dug themselves in under the bungalow which was raised on stilts about two feet above the ground. They were two Japanese with machine guns and five Viet Minh with rifles and they were holding up the advance of a French-led colonial battalion of about 450 men. The French were badly trained, no discipline—awful colonial troops. They called on us to use our guns.

"We fired ten shells at 400 yards range, reducing the bungalow to rubble. By this time the French had decided to go in, so a whistle was blown and everyone was shouting and bawling and firing. We stood looking at them in amazement. We'd been used to the Gurkhas who went in like snakes through the grass. You never heard anything with them. What an army this lot were, bugles going and everyone shouting. In the melee the rebels escaped through the back of the bungalow.

"They left behind an old man who had survived the shelling. He was obviously a carrier, and he was terrified. The French were kicking and beating him. They said they were interrogating him, but you could see he didn't know anything. Our battery commander, who spoke French, ran over and started to tell them what he thought of this. He was pushed aside and told to fight his war and let them fight theirs. He came back fuming."

Meanwhile, a length of telephone wire had been fastened around the old man's neck and the end of it thrown over a tree branch. "Our officer went over to them again; he was mad with anger and frustration. He came back and told me to limber up. 'I will not stay and witness a cold-blooded murder' he said as we left them. Later that day, he said: 'For two pins I would have turned the guns on them'. If he had done so he would have been fully backed up by the troops. That was French Indochina. We were glad to leave later that year."

While the British were trying to clear Saigon, the Viet Minh infiltrated soldiers into the out-

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ABOVE: In this October 1945 photo, a pair of armed Japanese soldiers sits in a Saigon street, aiding the British in their attempt to maintain order during an uprising by various political factions in Indochina. Fighting rages in the distance. BELOW: Communist soldiers loyal to Ho Chi Minh parade through the streets of Hanoi in April 1946. The Viet Minh eventually humiliated the French at Dien Bien Phu and drove them from Indochina. Later, The United States became embroiled in a long, arduous war in renamed Vietnam.

Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images

skirts of the city and established roadblocks that effectively isolated the city from the rest of the country.

In early October, Gracey made contact with the Viet Minh and truce talks began. For the British the talks were a ploy to gain time for more troops to be flown in. On October 5, General Jacques Leclerc arrived in Saigon to take command of French forces; he and his troops would come under Gracey's command. On October 10, the fragile peace with the Viet Minh was broken by an unprovoked attack on a British engineering party inspecting water lines near Tan Son Nhut. All members of the party were killed or wounded. This brought Gracey to accept the fact that the level of armed insurrection was such that he would first have to pacify key areas before he could afford to repatriate the Japanese.

Gracey's second brigade, the 32nd of his 20th Indian Division commanded by Brigadier E.C.V. Woodford, had arrived to join his now built up first brigade, the 80th, commanded by Brigadier D.E. Taunton. His third brigade, the 100th, commanded by Brigadier C.H.B. Rodham, was due to arrive on October 17. On the day following the attack on the engineering party, Gracey deployed the 32nd Brigade into Saigon's troublesome northern suburbs of Go Vap and Gia Dinh, and they drove the Viet Minh out of the suburbs.

On October 13, Tan Son Nhut Airfield came under a Viet Minh attack that came within 275 meters of the control tower, and they were at the doors of the radio station before the attack was blunted by Indian and Japanese troops with heavy losses for the Viet Minh. As the Viet Minh were pushed back from the airfield perimeter the Japanese, under British orders, pursued them until nightfall, killing more of them.

The fighting in and around Saigon took on the characteristics that became common later—ambush, assassination, hit-and-run raids, sweeps by security forces, and so on. This was the first of the modern unconventional wars and, although the Viet Minh had sufficient troops to sustain a long campaign, they were beaten back by well led professional troops who were not alien to Asia. By mid-October more than 300 Viet Minh had been confirmed killed by British, Indian, and Gurkha troops and 225 more by the Japanese. British, French and Japanese casualties were very small.

The Viet Minh concentrated attacks on Saigon's vital points, on powerplants, docks, the airfield, and the city's artesian wells. Saigon was periodically blacked out at night, and the sounds of small arms, grenades, mines, mortars and artillery became familiar. On one occasion the Japanese repulsed an attack on their headquarters at Phu Lam, killing more than 100 Viet Minh. Unable to overwhelm the city's defenses, the Viet Minh intensified their siege tactics as the first troops arrived from France. They were used to help break the siege, while aggressive British patrols kept the Viet Minh off balance.

On October 29 the British put together a task force with the objective of pushing the Viet Minh main units further away from Saigon. It was named Gateforce after its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Gates of the 14/13 Frontier Force Rifles. Gateforce was made up of Indian infantry, artillery and armored cars and a Japanese infantry battalion. In operations at Xuan Loc east of Saigon, between 160 and 190 Viet Minh were killed by Indian troops and 50 were killed by the Japanese, all the latter killed in a short action when the the Viet Minh were surprised while in training.

In another operation, in November, a Gurkha unit set out for Long Kien south of Saigon to rescue French hostages held there. En route they were attacked by units of Viet Minh, some of them led by Japanese deserters. At one

point the Gurkhas were held up by Viet Minh who were occupying an old French fort. The Gurkas blew in a door with a bazooka and went in silently with only their kukris, putting all the defenders to the knife. They reached Long Kien that same day but were too late – the French hostages had been taken away.

In early December, Gracey turned over Saigon's northern suburbs to the French with 32 Brigade handing over responsibility to General Jean-Etienne Valluy's 9th Colonial Infantry Division. On Christmas day 32 Brigade left for Borneo.

Many of the newly arrived French soldiers were ex-Maquis (French Resistance), not accustomed to strict discipline, and many of them held Asians in disregard. It caused Gracey to write a blistering letter to General Leclerc, lashing out at those French who looked down on his Indian soldiers. He wrote: "Our men, of whatever color, are our friends and not considered 'black' men. They expect and deserve to be treated in every way as first class professional soldiers and their treatment should be, and is, exactly the same as that of white troops.... it is obvious our Indian Army traditions are not understood."

National Archives

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ABOVE: Soldiers of the 20th Indian Division board a troopship as they prepare to leave Indochina in May 1946. Without British Commonwealth troops to help maintain civil order, violence intensified in the country. LEFT: British General Douglas Gracey (right) relinquishes command in Vietnam to French General Jacques Leclerc. Various political factions vied for control of the country, and the situation was precarious for the French after World War II.

The use of large numbers of Japanese troops against the Viet Minh outraged many British troops and caused an outcry in Britain, but Gracey found it necessary to supplement his inadequate forces and to minimize British casualties. Often, when fierce Viet Minh opposition was met, Japanese troops were sent to deal with it.

By the end of December, the British were ready to begin handing over the south to the French. The last battle between British and Viet Minh forces occurred on January 3, 1946, when about 700 Viet Minh, including a cadre of 200 from the north attacked the 14/13 Frontier Force Rifles positions at Bien Hoa. The fight lasted throughout the night, and when it was over 80 Viet Minh had been killed without the loss of a single Indian soldier.

In mid-January, with the Viet Minh now avoiding large-scale attacks on British forces, 80 Brigade handed territory over to the French and 100 Brigade withdrew into Saigon. Gracey left on the 28th. On his departure, control of all French forces passed to General Leclerc.

On March 30, 1946, the last two British/Indian battalions left Indochina, leaving only a single company of the 2/8 Punjab to guard the Allied Control Commission in Saigon and a few specialist troops to assist the French. On May 15, the commission was disbanded and the Punjabis left. The last British soldiers to die in Indochina were six soldiers killed in an ambush in June.

For Britain's Vietnam War the official casualty figures list 2,700 Viet Minh killed. About 600 were killed by British/Indian forces, the rest by Japanese and French. Given the efficiency with which the Viet Minh recovered their dead and wounded, the figures were probably two or three times those numbers. Forty British/Indian soldiers were killed. French and Japanese killed were substantially higher.

British military operations against the Viet Minh were conducted ruthlessly—it was conquest by force of arms of a hostile enemy city. In an operation instruction to the 20th Division, officers were warned that they would find it difficult to distinguish friend from foe and they should always use maximum force available to ensure the wiping out of any hostiles. "If one uses too much, no harm is done." For the British, Indochina was not a "hearts and minds" operation.

Mountbatten was horrified when he learned that British soldiers were burning down people's houses in reprisal for guerrilla attacks, and he complained to Gracey, "Cannot you give such unsavory jobs (if they are really military necessities) to the French?" Gracey replied that he considered the French much too undisciplined and trigger-happy to be relied on.

Without Gracey and his troops the French would probably have found it impossible to reestablish themselves in Indochina. The responsibility for the British intervention in Indochina lay with the Labor government in London which was involved at the time in the struggle to preserve European colonialism. From this point of view it was the British who started the Vietnam War and made it possible for the French to continue it, with American help, until their defeat in 1954.

The fighting from the latter part of the British intervention to the attempt by the French to restore their former rule had several unusual features. The first of these lay in the unusual demography of Vietnam. The vast bulk of the population was concentrated in two deltas, that of the Red River in the north and of the

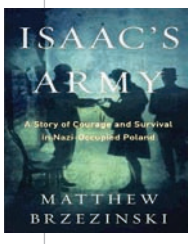
Continued on page 74

By Al Hemingway

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Jewish fighters battled the Nazis amid appalling conditions in the Polish capital.

ON THE COLD, DARK MORNING OF JANUARY 18, 1943, THE FAMILIAR SOUND OF German Army jackboots could be heard in the Jewish sector of Nazi-occupied Poland. Since the German Army had overrun the country in 1939, more than 400,000 Jews had been herded into a cramped 1.3-mile area within the city. It was soon known as the Warsaw Ghetto. From here, the Nazi government had decided to curtail food, medicine, clothing, and other essentials to decimate the population. Once the maniacal Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and his cohorts had decided on a "final solution to the Jewish problem," thousands of people were placed in cattle cars and taken to death camps to be gassed or put to work in slave labor camps.



But some Jews realized what was transpiring and opted to take up arms to fight their German masters. For months they collected what weapons ammunition, and food they could and constructed underground bunkers. And on that fateful winter morning they struck back—much to the surprise of the Nazis.

In his new book, *Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Random House, New York, 2012, 496 pp., notes, index, $30.00, hardcover), former *New York Times* correspondent Matthew Brzezinski has written a story of courage and hope amid the harrowing death and destruction wrought by the Nazis upon not only the Jewish people, but Poland's Christians as well.

Brzezinski traces the creation of the various Jewish underground groups that opposed the Nazis and, at times, even fought among themselves. He follows the exploits of certain individuals who played a paramount role in the short-lived success of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The main character, Isaac Zuckerman, is described by the author as "confident and charismatic."

Zuckerman managed to slip inside the Ghetto and organize a resistance movement to fight the Nazis. He recruited an odd but effective assortment of individuals, some no more than teenagers, to assist in his plan. Among the recruits were an 18-year-old orphan whose entire family was killed by the Nazis, Boruch Spiegel; a "quiet but resilient" person, Simha Ratheiser, who yearned for a Jewish homeland in Palestine and eventually became Zuckerman's bodyguard; and Zuckerman's future wife, Zivia Lubetkin, dubbed the "warrior queen" because she fought alongside her male counterparts during the uprising.

Zuckerman soon learned to his dismay that bringing the various Jewish splinter resistance groups together to form a cohesive fighting unit was as big a task as fighting the Germans. Also, the Underground Polish Army, known as the Home Army, did not offer much assistance to the Jewish underground, believing that Jews would not fight and could not learn how to use a firearm. Zuckerman had to overcome numerous obstacles to show the world that with the proper arms they could do battle with their Nazi oppressors.

Isaac's Army provides a glimpse into the terrifying world of clandestine meetings, acts of sabotage, and the day-to-day activities of a small band of Jewish fighters bent on dying with honor rather than allowing themselves to be taken to a concentration camp and certain death. Zuckerman's army had to constantly be on guard against spies and informants who would turn them in to the dreaded SS, who were determined to eradicate the underground movement at all costs.

When the Nazis finally crushed the Ghetto Uprising in May, many in the movement managed to escape to the surrounding countryside. Some returned to the Ghetto, however, fearing capture by partisan groups, roving bands of Ukrainian soldiers, and Polish "greasers" who made their living off the bounty they collected by snaring escaped Jews. Some fought alongside Polish Home Army soldiers during the Warsaw uprising in August 1944. Once again, the fighters received lit-

Jewish women, captured with weapons by the Germans during the uprising in Warsaw in 1943. The woman at right is identified as Malka Zdrojewicz, who survived imprisonment at the Majdanek Extermination Camp near Lublin, Poland.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Truth About the Muslim Brotherhood

Is it a moderate Egyptian party committed to democracy . . . or a jihadist group seeking to create an Islamist empire?

With the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi now president of Egypt, many wonder whether he will promote democracy and Middle East peace. But what do the Muslim Brotherhood's history and its leaders' pronouncements tell us? Is their goal to create a free democratic system . . . or hijack democracy in the service of an Islamist revolution?

What are the facts?

Founded in Egypt in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has been an immensely powerful force in Middle East politics, now boasting chapters in 80 countries. Its mission statement: "Allah is our objective; the Quran is our constitution, the Prophet is our leader; Jihad is our way; and death for the sake of Allah is the highest of our aspirations."

The Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Banna, stated that the group's goal was to create an empire governed by Islamic religious law and an autocratic caliphate. He claimed "It is in the nature of Islam to dominate, not to be dominated, to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet."

> "It is in the nature of Islam . . . to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet."

In 1948, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood assassinated the Egyptian Prime Minister, and the group was been banned in Egypt in 1954, after it attempted to assassinate Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. A Brotherhood splinter group assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

The Muslim Brotherhood's most influential leader was Sayyid Qutb, a racist, anti-Semite, misogynist and hater of the United States. His pro-Islamist and anti-Western hatred had enormous influence on Ayman Zawahiri, who went on to become a key mentor of Osama bin Laden and is today the number-two leader of al-Qaeda.

Despite its murderous history, the Muslim Brotherhood claims to have renounced violence—but it makes notable exceptions, including approval of terrorist acts by its Palestinian wing, Hamas, whose charter calls for the murder of Jews and the obliteration of Israel. What's more, former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Commander Muhammed Madhi Akef declared he was "prepared to send 10,000 jihad fighters immediately to fight at the side of Hezbollah" during the Lebanese terrorist group's 2006 war against Israel.

Given its history of murder and warlike declarations, the Brotherhood's claim to non-violence rings false. Consider finally a September 2010 sermon by Muslim Supreme Guide Muhammed Badi, who explained the "change that the [Muslim] nation seeks can only be attained through jihad . . . by raising a jihadi generation that pursues death just as our enemies pursue life."

While many pundits have declared the Brotherhood a moderate group, it is working rapidly to seize absolute control of Egypt, starting with a new constitution that favors Islamists and gives president Morsi power to name the prime minister, Supreme Court judges and heads of all public institutions. Parliamentary elections, to have been held in February, are postponed indefinitely. There have been four times as many "insulting the president" lawsuits in Morsi's first days in office than in all 30 years of former president Hosni Mubarek's reign.

We know that the Bolsheviks in Russia, Nazis in Germany, Islamists in Iran, and Hamas in the disputed Palestinian territories all started out as minority parties whose rise to power during political upheaval began democratically and ended in dictatorship—following the insidious pattern of "one man, one vote, one time." Given the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist philosophy, we can expect the same in Egypt.

What can we expect from the president Morsi's government? In 2006, the Muslim Brotherhood demanded that Egypt develop nuclear weapons. Recently a Brotherhood leader told interviewers that abolishing the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel would be one of the new government's first orders of business and that Egypt should prepare for war with Israel. In 2010 Morsi himself called on Egyptians to "nurse our children and grandchildren on hatred" of Jews and referred to Zionists as "descendants of apes and pigs."

For Christians, who make up 10 percent of the Egyptian population and continue to be victims of violent attacks, rule by the Brotherhood is a nightmare, curtailing their rights to worship publicly or hold high office. As for women, the Brotherhood insists that they be segregated, their bodies covered in public, and that girls undergo genital mutilation.

To assess the Muslim Brotherhood's commitment to democracy, we should heed the words of its Spiritual Leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who maintains that "The civilizational-jihadist process . . . is a kind of grand jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and 'sabotaging' its miserable house . . . so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all other religions."

While some pundits minimize the Muslim Brotherhood's threat, there's no doubt that the group fanatically opposes the United States, Israel and Western values, or that it will use both democratic and violent means to defeat them. Nor should we doubt that the Brotherhood is a powerful, well-organized political force that, if given enough power, would use it to crush the democratic process and turn Egypt into an anti-Western, fundamentalist Islamic state. Can we afford this risk?

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tle or no aid from the Allies, particularly the Soviet Red Army, and the Nazis crushed the revolt. As with the Ghetto rebellion 18 months earlier, thousands were killed or taken to the Nazi extermination camps.

Brzezinski interviewed many of the participants who were involved in the resistance groups during that period. Their incredible story is one of survival and heroism in the face of overwhelming odds. Their bravery is a testament to the heroism of those who defied death and fought for freedom—and gave their lives in the defense of their homeland.

Resolve: From the Jungles of WWII Bataan, the Epic Story of a Soldier, a Flag, and a Promise Kept by Bob Welch, Berkley Caliber, New York, 2012, 366 pp., photographs, notes, index, $26.95, hardcover.

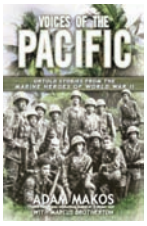
Lieutenant Henry Clay Conner, Jr., was indeed an extraordinary man. Embodied with steel nerves, overwhelming doggedness in his purpose, and an incredible will to survive—a will that was repeatedly tested in his nearly three years of desperately attempting to elude capture by a fanatical enemy that was every bit as determined to kill him.

When U.S. forces surrendered to the Japanese in the Philippines in April 1942, Conner decided instead to make his way with a few other Americans into the wild jungles of Luzon. Shortly after his trek, he contracted dysentery and was left behind by the group. Saved by friendly Filipinos along with other Americans who had escaped the clutches of the patrolling Japanese, his health began to improve. Soon those whose illnesses were far worse than his began to die. Conner turned to verses in his Bible to bolster his courage and began to write a journal about his terrifying experiences.

Conner and a few others formed an uneasy alliance with a small tribe of Negritos, tough resilient people who knew the rugged terrain. Their uncanny marksmanship with their crudely made bows and arrows made them a formidable foe in jungle fighting. The men created the 155th Provisional Guerilla Battalion in December 1943, comprised of about 200 men, both Negritos and Philippine Scouts, and waged a guerrilla war against the Japanese until American forces invaded Luzon in January 1945. Conner became a scout when U.S. Army units trekked into the countryside to hunt down the Japanese. On one patrol, all of his anger and frustration surfaced when he mistakenly gunned down several enemy soldiers who were attempting to surrender when he thought they were reaching for a suicide grenade. The years of pent-up emotions had taken their toll.

Oregon reporter Bob Welch has penned a remarkable tale of one man's incredible journey of survival amid the thick, uninhabitable jungles of Luzon. Connor refused to be taken prisoner and passed along his iron will to live to those with whom he came in contact. Welch writes that the Negritos and their homeland were virtually wiped out when Mount Pinatubo suddenly erupted after hundreds of years of lying dormant. The ash that spewed for miles buried the jungle where the 155th had waged its guerrilla warfare against the Japanese. Welch equates this event to a Biblical verse from the book of Genesis that Connor was quite familiar with: "For dust you are and to dust you will return."

Voices of the Pacific: Untold Stories from the Marine Heroes of World War II by Adam Makos with Marcus Brotherton, Berkley Caliber, New York, 2013, 416 pgs., photographs, notes, index, $7.95, hardcover.



Adam Makos and Marcus Brotherton have written a compelling account of 20 U.S. Marines, from their initial days in boot camp and additional rigorous infantry training, through the different island campaigns each individual participated in during their time in the Pacific. The authors answer a more impor-

Simulation Gaming

By Joseph Luster

MIXING THIRD-PERSON SHOOTING WITH REAL-TIME STRATEGY DOES NOT ALWAYS LEAD TO A SUCCESSFUL GAME.

UPRISING 44: THE SILENT SHADOWS

Developed by DMD Enterprise, an independent developer established in Warsaw, Poland, *Uprising 44: The Silent Shadows* is the kind of work that exemplifies "rough around the edges." Being relatively indie and priced along the lines of your average budget PC game, some of its failings are understandable, but the end result is so stunningly awkward it makes you wonder how much of it was legitimately finalized before being made available to the public.

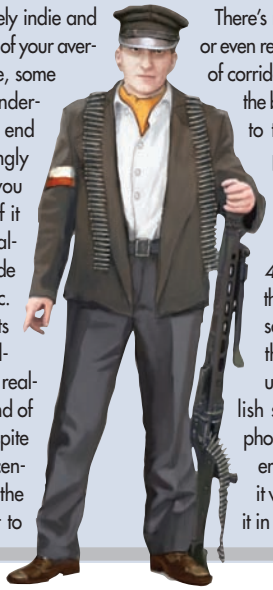
PUBLISHER
Immanitas Entertainment

DEVELOPER
DMD Enterprise

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Now

Uprising 44 tries its darndest to mix third-person shooting with real-time strategy, and kind of trips all over itself despite an interesting setting and premise. The plot centers on the Warsaw Uprising, carried out by the Polish resistance Home Army in an attempt to liberate themselves from the occupying Nazi forces. Appropriately, acts of subterfuge play out both in the open and in the shadows, hence the subtitle, but it never comes close to living up to the stealthy potential of both its name and the setting itself.



There's no real sense of thoughtful level design or even remotely elegant progression, with mazes of corridors sometimes revealing enemies out of the blue, each of which stumbles awkwardly to the ground once taken care of. Dispatching countless enemies with identical behavior isn't satisfying at all, and things like the wonky AI and limited animations combine to make *Uprising 44* seem about a decade more dated than it should. Audio cues attempt to add some semblance of atmosphere, but even those are recorded and implemented unprofessionally. Casual banter in English sounds like it was captured during a phone call between a few of the developers, and while that may be kind of a joke, it won't sound as far-fetched once you see it in action.

Anyone who saw promotional material leading up to the game's initial release—particularly the live-action trailer that enlisted the help of reconstruction groups to lend authenticity to the project—might get the idea that more care went into promotion than the actual execution of the game. In addition to the clip in question, other previews promised a "new approach to a World War II computer game." At some point during conception that may have been true, and the context of a civil uprising is certainly an intriguing direction to take in otherwise well-tread territory, but this one doesn't do it justice. Rather than nailing one genre, *Uprising 44* ham-handedly attempts to blend two together and does both a disservice in the process.

EAST VS. WEST: A HEARTS OF IRON GAME

Hearts of Iron started out as a standalone strategy title—

tant question—how can men survive the near-death experiences of war, watch their friends die, and then return home and forget it all and move on with their lives? Each of these Marines did—and that is what takes this book a step above most other oral histories.

From the landings on Guadalcanal in August 1942 until the last big battle of the war that raged on the island of Okinawa, men like Sid Phillips, Chuck Tatum, Richard Greer, Jim Young, and Roy Gerlach matched wits with their fanatical enemy and lived to tell their tale.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the book is its ending. Each individual relates his own thoughts on the fighting he took part in—and his honest view of the world he helped to save 70 years ago. Even at his advanced age, Greer travels and speaks about his time in the conflict. His definition of success, he says, is "to keep serving. Gerlach is proud of his service and realizes that what he did 70 years ago was worth all the pain. "The work we did stood for something," he says.

Phillips is sad that many Americans today have little knowledge of the earth-shattering events that took place during the 1930s and 1940s. He firmly believes that patriotism needs to be rekindled in America. Although his has been called "The Greatest Generation," he feels that the greatest generation is yet to come.

R.V. Burgin has no regrets about his combat in the Pacific. He is extremely proud to have been a U.S. Marine. His summation speaks volumes for all those leathernecks who stormed ashore on islands that are just a distant memory today—especially the ones Burgin served with. "The men

ROY GRINNELL: ARTIST OF THE ACES

There is no mystery why Roy Grinnell was chosen as the official artist of the American Fighter Aces Association (AFAA). He began drawing planes as a young boy and has maintained that passion throughout his life. He has completed 50 original paintings for the AFAA portraying aerial combat in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. His paintings, based on the oral histories of the aces, capture a moment of flight with near photographic accuracy.

Now 159 of Roy's images have been reproduced in a stunning 12 X 12, 196-page coffee table book. In addition to the fighter ace paintings, the book also includes an array of Roy's other aviation work and paintings of the American West and other periods of history.

The book can be purchased for $40 at www.roygrinnell.com or by calling 866-208-0888.

putting developer Paradox's Europa Universalis engine to good use—back when it was first released in 2002. Since then there have been a handful of sequels and spinoffs (even a browser-based card game!), the latest of which comes in the form of *East vs. West: A Hearts of Iron Game.*

PUBLISHER
Paradox Interactive

DEVELOPER
Paradox Development Studio

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Q2 2013

This time around things pick up shortly after World War II, setting East vs. West in the decades-spanning Cold War era. Players can choose any nation to lead and expand, and decisions made can make or break your influence on world politics, and ultimately the direction your nation takes and the future it faces. Policies of all nations can be influenced through pretty much any means, from diplomacy to espionage, so it's up to you whether you'll be using force, or more reasonable methods, to get what you want.

You needn't feel married to history, either, despite the fact that *East vs. West* boasts considerable accuracy in that regard. Events and outcomes of the past can be changed through even the smallest decision, and it can also be done in multiplayer, supporting up to 32

players. As tends to be the case with the *Hearts of Iron* series, the most interesting aspect of *East vs. West* seems to be the scale. It's called "grand strategy" for a reason, and hopefully this one will successfully continue that long tradition. We should be finding out how it fares in the second quarter of 2013.

East vs. West isn't the only grand strategy Paradox is dealing out this year, too. They've also got their hands in *Victoria II: Heart of Darkness*, an expansion that focuses on the scramble for Africa that took place between 1881 and 1914. Just as the *Hearts of Iron* series keeps itself hovering over a more or less consistent time period, the *Victoria* games stick to the Victorian period from 1836-1920. If *East vs. West* does well enough, it will likely end up with its own expansions, but in the meantime there's always the ever-extensive moddability these games offer as a way of making the experience one's own. □

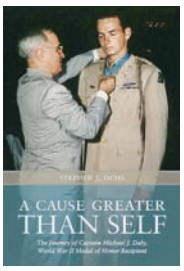
I served with were outstanding Marines," he says. "They were great men. Maybe the best warriors the world has ever seen."

The Drive on Moscow 1941: Operation Taifun and Germany's First Great Crisis in World War II by Niklas Zetterling and Anders Frankson, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2012, 336 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $32.95, hardcover.

Although German advances were significant in the early stages of Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941, their initial successes were soon overshadowed by many factors. Soviet resistance began to stiffen after humiliating defeats, and the capital city of Moscow, the prime objective of the German Army, set up fortified defenses. The weather also played a significant role in the Nazi juggernaut coming to a near standstill. First, incessant rains caused the earth to be transformed into a sea of mud. Then the harsh and unforgiving Russian winter created havoc on the German offensive as well.

The authors, experts on the fighting on the Eastern Front during World War II, have dug deep and provided the reader with an in-depth look at what transpired during this pivotal period in the conflict. Despite their setbacks, German forces almost pulled off the impossible and seized the Soviet capital. If that had occurred and the Soviet Union had collapsed, the war may have had a different outcome.

A Cause Greater Than Self: The Journey of Captain Michael J. Daly, World War II Medal of Honor Recipient by Stephen J. Ochs, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2012, 296 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $42.50, hardcover.

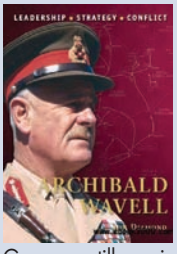


Growing up, Michael Daly was a brawler. A tough Irish kid from New York City, he learned to take care of himself at an early age. His father was a decorated World War I veteran having served with the 1st Infantry Division and wanted his son to graduate from West Point. Daly did attend the academy, but because of disciplinary problems and his being a "mediocre student," he resigned and was soon shipped overseas in time to participate in the D-Day invasion with his father's old unit, Co. I, 3rd Battalion, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division. Surviving the carnage of Omaha Beach, Daly went on to distinguish himself in combat, was given a battlefield commission, and was sent to the 15th Infantry, 3rd Division.

On April 18, 1945, in Nuremberg, Germany, Daly singlehandedly killed 15 German soldiers and destroyed three machine-gun nests. For his

Short Bursts

Archibald Wavell by Jon Diamond, Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2012, 64 pp., maps, illustrations, photographs, index, $18.95, softcover.



A soldier's soldier, Field Marshal Archibald Wavell never forgot his roots. As a young officer in the British Army, he spent his formative years serving in the Black Watch Regiment. During World War I at the Battle of Second Ypres, a fragment of shrapnel from a German artillery piece took out his left eye.

During the years between the wars, Wavell continued to rise in rank, and when World War II broke out in 1939 Wavell's Middle East Command encompassed nine countries and parts of two continents, certainly a massive amount of territory to cover. Because he could not breach the German defenses at Tobruk, he was relieved by Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Wavell was sent to the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations and was promoted to field marshal in 1943. He was named Viceroy of India in 1947 and died in 1950 of complications from abdominal surgery.

The author's text is accompanied by numerous photographs, excellent drawings, and detailed maps. It is another winner for Osprey Publishing in their Leadership, Strategy, and Conflict series.

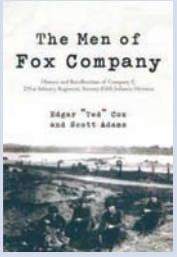
Unflinching Zeal: The Air Battles Over France and Britain, May-October 1940 by Robin Higham, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2012, 317 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $39.95, hardcover.

Higham's newest book is a continuation of his previous one, titled *Two Roads to War,* in which he examined the roles of the air forces of Great Britain, Germany, and France at the beginning of

World War II. As he states, the Battle for Britain was not Germany's "sort of battle." Casualties were higher, and aircraft losses exceeded the numbers they had lost during their aerial combat over mainland Europe. When a Luftwaffe plane went down, it was lost and its crew members either perished or were captured. Although they had the edge on the Brits in leadership and strategy, sheer determination and adaptability on the part of the Royal Air Force won the day.

For readers with a keen interest in the air war over Britain and a close look at the French, German, and British air forces, this a must read.

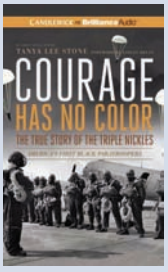
The Men of Fox Company: History and Recollections of Company F, 291st Infantry Regiment, Seventy-Fifth Infantry Division by Edgar "Ted" Cox and Scott Adams, iUniverse, Bloomington, IN, 2012, 206 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $17.95, softcover.



It is a shame that many of the major publishing houses overlook the personal accounts of service personnel and their units during wartime. One such infantry outfit was the 75th Division, with the motto "Make Ready," which participated in the Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central European campaigns in World War II. Pejoratively called the "Diaper Division" because the average age of many of its members was just 22, the unit distinguished itself throughout the conflict. The authors focus specifically on Fox Company. Cox was its executive officer and replaced the commander when he was seriously wounded at the Battle of Bulge; heremained in that position until war's end.

This is a wonderful tribute to the soldiers of Fox Company, who trained together, forged into a cohesive unit, and played a prominent role in the bitter fighting to defeat Nazi Germany.

Courage Has No Color: The True Story of the Triple Nickles, America's First Black Paratroopers by Tanya Lee Stone, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA, 2013, 160 pp., photographs, notes, index, $24.99, softcover.



This is a truly inspirational book about the first black soldiers to attend parachute school and become the first all-black paratroopers in the U.S. Army—the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, or the "Triple Nickles"—and the obstacles they had to overcome to be accepted into the segregated Army of World War II. Their dream came true on February 18, 1944, when 16 soldiers earned the coveted U.S. Army jump wings. Instead of going into combat, however, the unit traveled to the West Coast and became smoke jumpers, paratroopers that jump into remote regions and combat forest fires. This could prove an extremely difficult task with a raging inferno. Despite these difficulties, the 555th persevered and performed its duty magnificently.

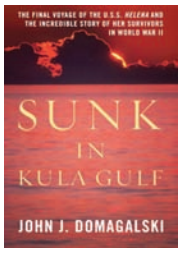
Despite all their accomplishments, the members of the 555th were still treated as second-class citizens. It would take patience and persistence until African Americans were finally integrated into all branches of the U.S. armed forces. The original members of the 555th were a part of that beginning, something of which they should be extremely proud. □

bravery, he received the Medal of Honor to accompany the three Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts he had already earned.

Daly's story does not end there. The author writes about his inability to readjust after the war, resuming in his old antics by getting in bar fights. He finally turned his life around, got a job, and then started his own company. He went on to serve on the board of directors of the St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and was instrumental in raising funds for the facility.

This is a truly inspirational story of one man's fight not to be locked in a "hero's cage" and find his way through life by ridding himself of the demons that he carried when one war ended and another one began.

Sunk in Kula Gulf: The Final Voyage of the USS* Helena *and the Incredible Story of Her Survivors in World War II by John J. Domagalski, Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2012, 239 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $29.95, hardcover.



Here is the amazing story of the USS *Helena,* a light cruiser sunk at the Battle of Kula Gulf in July 1943 near the Solomon Islands. Of the crew, nearly 200 met a watery death, but many were rescued, including one group who had managed to make their way aboard a makeshift raft to the island of Vella LaVella, still in Japanese hands.

Bad luck had followed the ship ever since the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor when she was struck by a lone torpedo from a Japanese plane that killed 20 of her crew. She narrowly missed getting struck again by enemy torpedoes and planes during another battle. Because she had expended all of her flashless powder during the bombardment at Kula Gulf, she was forced to use regular powder, which made her a tempting target for Japanese submarines. A torpedo slammed into her side, quickly followed by two more, causing her to take on water rapidly.

Most of the crew managed to make it to safety. The 165 sailors who washed ashore on Vella LaVella were cared for by local natives and Australian coastwatchers who radioed in their position. A rescue force of destroyers arrived about a week later for the stranded seamen.

The author has done a superlative job in mixing official accounts with the personal stories of the survivors he has interviewed. This is a thrilling book about a group of sailors who beat the odds and survived a horrific ordeal. □

reichswald

Continued from page 49

Before dawn the 15th Scottish had a battalion well into northern Goch on the right and two small bridgeheads on the left.

On the 19th, the 5th Black Watch advanced into Goch, catching the Germans asleep in their cellars, including Colonel Matussek, the town's garrison commander.

Fighting for Goch went on for two more days, with the 153rd Brigade taking the brunt. As the British cleared the town, the Germans could see that despite all their efforts there was no hope—the Roer flooding was receding, and soon the American offensive would be launched. The only move left was to withdraw to the Rhine.

So the Reichswald battle ended two weeks after it had started. The British had finally reached the lines they expected to take in three to four days, at a cost of 6,000 casualties, and the Germans still maintained a coherent front. The next stage of the attack would be the drive from the Reichswald to the Rhine—Operation Blockbuster.

On the 23rd, 1,000 American and British guns opened up in the U.S. 9th Army's offensive over the Roer, and four U.S. infantry divisions stormed across the still turbulent waters, delayed more by the flooding than the Germans. It was the last stand-up fight between the Allies and Germans in Europe, and despite hard weather, soggy terrain, and German determination, the British had won their victory. Veritable had done its job. The Germans could fight for but not hold the Rhineland. The Anglo-American armies were headed for the Rhine.

That same day, Horrocks signaled his corps, "You have now successfully completed the first part of your task. You have taken approximately 12,000 prisoners and killed large numbers of Germans. You have broken through the Siegfried Line and drawn to yourselves the bulk of German reserves in the West. A strong U.S. Offensive was launched over the Roer at 0330 hours this morning against positions, which, thanks to your efforts, are lightly held by the Germans. Our offensive has made the situation more favorable for our Allies and greatly increased their prospects of success. Thank you for what you have done so well. If we continue our efforts for a few more days, the German front is bound to crack." □

David Lippman is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He also maintains a website dedicated to the daily events of World War II.*

victory in italy

Continued from page 37

442nd advanced 50 more miles to the west and entered Turin. By May 1, both the 442nd and the 473rd Infantry Regiments had made contact with French troops of General Jacob Devers's 6th Army Group, which had advanced 60 miles across the French-Italian frontier. During four days of fighting from April 27-May 1, the 10th Mountain Division secured Lake Garda. Tragically, Colonel Darby and several other men were killed on the 29th by a single German artillery shell.

The Eighth Army was restricted by long supply lines and difficult communications. Therefore, only the 56th and 2nd New Zealand Divisions could initially be sustained across the Adige. Resistance was virtually nonexistent, and small bands of German soldiers surrendered readily.

The 56th Division took Venice, and the 2nd New Zealand captured Padua on April 29. Three days later, the New Zealanders entered Trieste after encountering Yugoslav partisans several miles outside the city. Nearly 150,000 German and Italian fascist prisoners had been captured during the final offensive. By May 6, Allied troops were through the Brenner Pass and across the Austrian frontier.

Following weeks of clandestine discussions, the terms for the unconditional surrender of all German forces in Italy were concluded on April 29 at General Alexander's headquarters in Caserta, near Naples. Amid some confusion, mistrust, and treachery, German diplomatic and military representatives eventually agreed that the cease-fire was to take effect at noon Greenwich Mean Time on May 2, 1945. The Germans, however, delayed their surrender broadcast for two hours. At 6:30 PM, when confirmation that the Germans had released the order was received, Alexander announced the cease-fire to Allied troops.

For his part, General Vietinghoff had been relieved of command by Kesselring for treason because of his unauthorized contact with the Allies. In one of the more noteworthy events during the last days, General Senger made his way under escort to 15th Army Group headquarters in Florence and surrendered to General Clark. The adversaries at last saw one another face to face. "It was," Senger wrote in his diary, "a tragic moment, the complete defeat and the imminent surrender after a fight lasting six years, tragic even for those who had foreseen it for a long time."

As the arduous campaign in Italy drew to a close, one final drama played out. On April 25, as Allied troops drew nearer, Benito Mussolini, the fascist former dictator of Italy, and his mistress, Clara Petacci, departed Milan for a rendezvous with an expected 3,000 loyal fascist soldiers at Como. Together, these stalwarts would fight to the last from an Alpine redoubt. Only a dozen men actually rallied to Il Duce for this final battle, and the small band instead began moving north with a German convoy. The next day, Italian communist partisans led by Count Pierluigi Bellini Delle Stelle, stopped the convoy near the town of Dongo.

Dressed in a German military overcoat and helmet, Mussolini was identified after a partisan noticed the quality of the leather boots he was wearing. For two days, the communists held both Mussolini and Petacci, waiting for instructions from their leaders with the Committee for National Liberation. On the morning of April 28, a partisan named Walter Audisio drove the prisoners to a villa and directed them to stand near a low stone wall. When he pulled the trigger on his weapon, it jammed. Audisio reached for another and shot Petacci. Mussolini opened his coat and muttered, "Shoot me in the chest." In seconds he was dead.

The bodies, along with those of several other fascists, were taken to Milan by truck and dumped into the Piazalle Loretto. They were subsequently hung by the ankles in front of a garage. Crowds gathered to jeer and spit at the bodies. One woman pumped bullets into Mussolini's corpse and shouted, "Five shots for my five murdered sons!"

World War II in Italy was over. Its repercussions would be dealt with for generations to come. For more than 20 months, the two great armies had fought one another, and the casualties had been enormous. German losses have been estimated at more than 434,000, with 48,000 of those killed. Allied dead and wounded in Italy totaled more than 300,000. Historians continue to debate the strategic and tactical merit of many decisions made by commanders on both sides in the theater.

In the final analysis, Allied victory in Italy appears to have been inevitable. Whether it was worth the cost depends on individual perspective. True enough, the Mediterranean became a secondary theater following the Normandy invasion. However, to the men who fought, bled, and died in Italy, this was their battle, their war, and their sacrifice. The effort is worthy of the utmost respect. □

Michael E. Haskew is the editor of WWII History *magazine. He is the author of numerous books and articles on World War II and resides in Chattanooga, Tennessee.*

indochina

Continued from page 67

Mekong in the south. There was a thin band of fairly dense population along the eastern coast, but the great mass of the central highlands was very sparsely populated, and that mainly by hill tribes traditionally hostile to the Vietnamese. So the struggle for control of the Vietnamese people was concentrated in two areas that were far apart.

A second aspect was the situation of the French. They were, ostensibly, not fighting to retain colonial control but to establish autonomous states within the French Union. Their constant objective was to find an indigenous Vietnamese grouping that they could rely on to resist the Viet Minh and yet consent to remain within the French Union. There were many nationalists who had little cause to love the Viet Minh, and many of these were prepared to negotiate with the French.

The existence of many anti-Viet Minh groupings made the situation far more complex than a straight conflict between the French and the communists. There was a very important Catholic element in Vietnam with about 1.7 million followers. Their leaders tried to demonstrate that they were not necessarily pro-French, and they maintained their independence with the aid of their own militia.

Add to the mix of varied nationalists and religious groupings the hill tribes such as the Montagnards and the various large bands of river pirates who flourished on the Mekong, the situation in Indochina at the end of World War II was chaotic. In France, the Fourth Republic was notoriously unstable, and the presence of a strong communist minority in the legislature contributed to ambivalence about the future of Indochina. A comment popular in France at the time was that "the squalid little territory of Indochina is hardly worth fighting to preserve."

The Indochina war that began with a win for Western forces in 1946 continued until 1954 when the loss of Dien Bien Phu after an epic siege of 55 days. The military catastrophe for the French resulted in the Geneva Conference in which France reluctantly conceded independence to all her territories in Indochina. But neither the new government of South Vietnam nor the United States were party to the agreement, and the Vietnam War continued until 1979 when peace finally came to the devastated land. □

Author John Brown has written numerous times for WWII History. *He resides in Queensland, Australia.*

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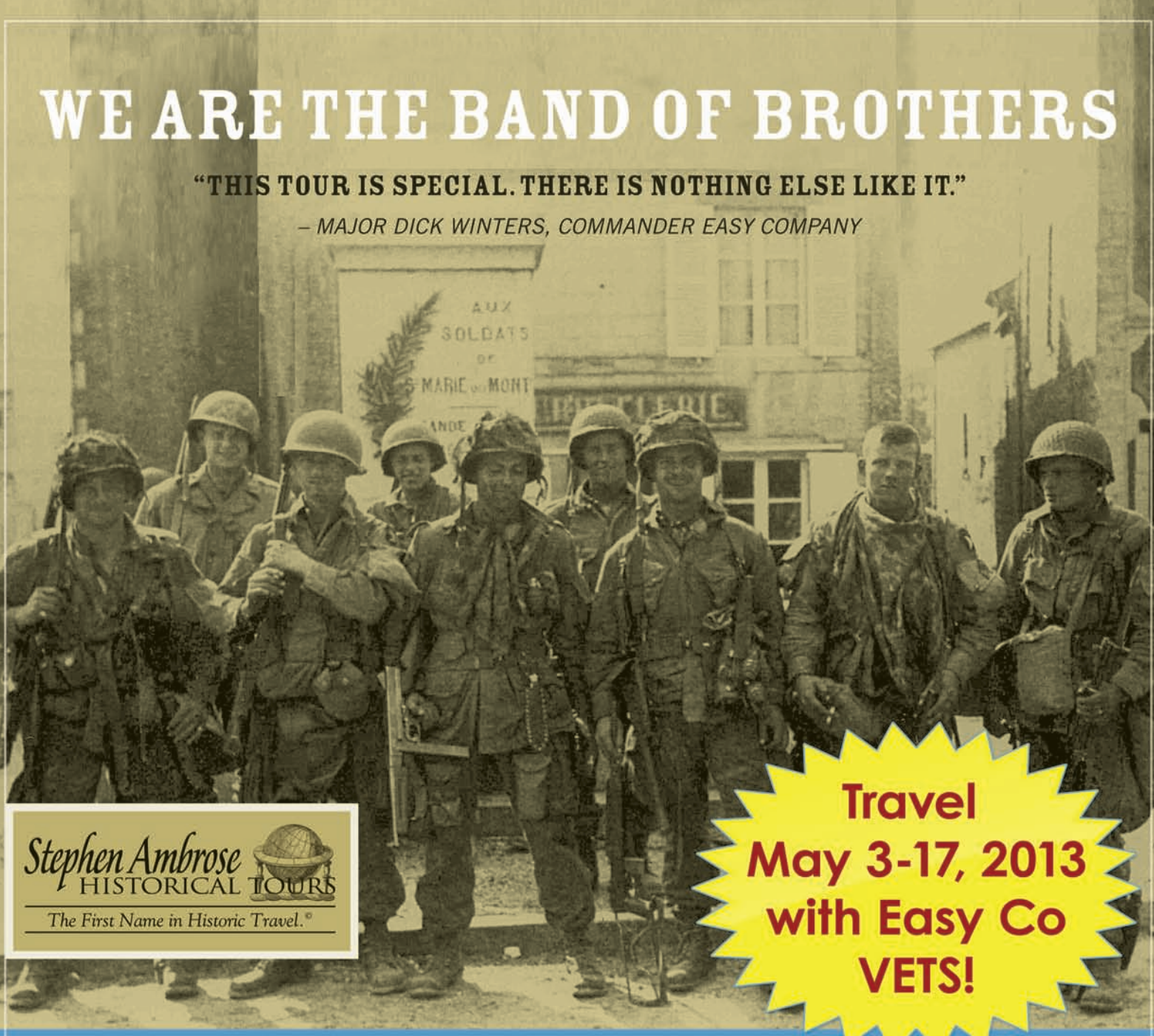

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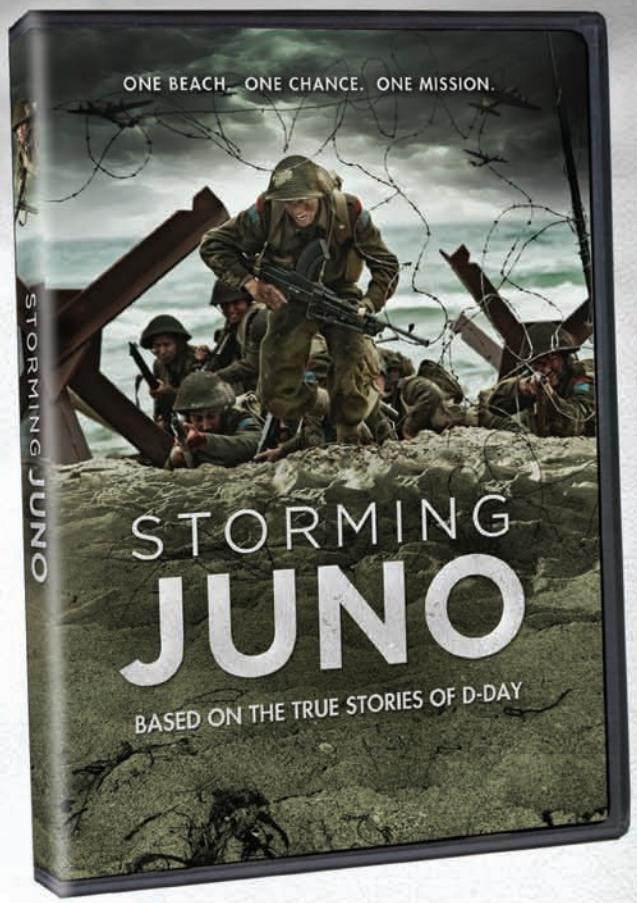

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