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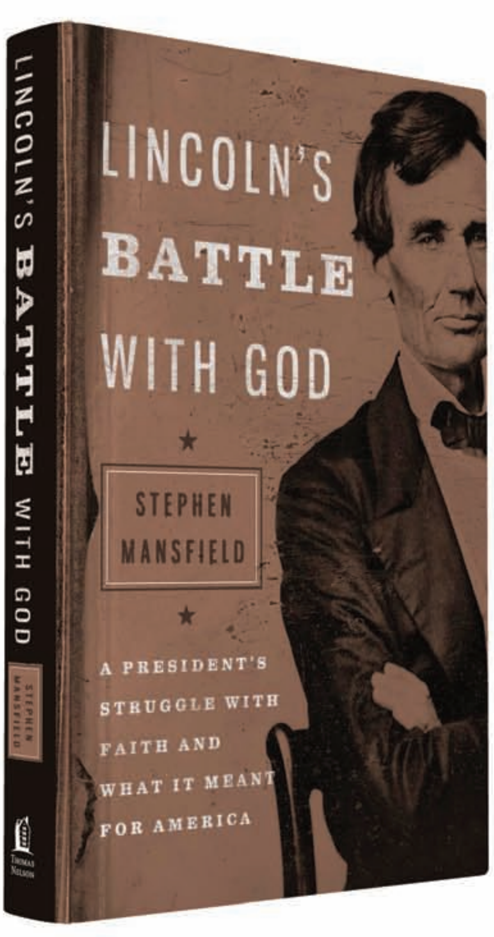

The figure at the door now stepped silently into the president's box. He paused and took stock of the mere four feet between himself and the president. Slowly, smoothly, the man pulled a .44-caliber Derringer pistol from his pocket and waited. He was listening for lines from the play on the stage below. They would signal his next move.

"We will visit the Holy Land," Lincoln continued, leaning toward Mary so as not to disturb the others.
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In the sacred seconds that remained, Lincoln spoke again– before the assassin's shot entered his brain just inches behind the left ear, before the blood and the confusion and the manhunts and the grief, before the ages took him and the great soul left its earthly home to hover over a nation still struggling to be born. Lincoln spoke once more.

"We will visit the Holy Land and see those places hallowed by the footsteps of the Savior," the president said.
And then, nearly as the Derringer ball cracked the air, "There is no place I so much desire to see as Jerusalem."

What was the journey that took Abraham Lincoln from outspoken atheist to a man who yearned to walk in the footsteps of Christ?

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Cover: U.S. paratroopers prepare to jump from their C-47 during training in 1943. See stories on pages 46 and 58.

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Editorial

WWII Aircraft Discovered in North Africa in Near Pristine Condition.

THE GHOSTS OF WORLD WAR II CONTINUE TO SURFACE IN REMOTE CORNERS of the globe. Decades after the war in North Africa ended, another reminder of the early and uncertain days in that theater came to the attention of the media last spring and excited historians with a snapshot of a pilot's ordeal in the unforgiving Egyptian desert where he was forced to land a crippled fighter plane.

In May 2012, a Polish oil company worker happened upon the remains of a Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk fighter, an American-built aircraft probably provided to Great Britain through Lend-Lease assistance as one of the frontline aircraft of the Royal Air Force during the North African campaign. The plane was believed to have been lost on June 28, 1942, when it was forced to land in the Sahara as its pilot, Flight Sergeant Dennis Copping, was ferrying the P-40 from one base to another for repairs to its landing gear that would not retract.

The arid desert climate preserved the plane remarkably well, and its discovery nearly 70 years after it was lost conjures up memories of the desperate fighting that had taken place in the spring and summer of 1942 as the Panzer Army Afrika under German General Erwin Rommel pushed the British and Commonwealth forces of the Eighth Army steadily across miles of territory toward the Egyptian frontier.

By the end of the summer, the British, under their new commander, General Bernard L. Montgomery, were marshaling their forces for a counterstrike against Rommel. The resulting Battle of El Alamein commenced in October 1942 and produced a resounding Allied victory, one of the turning points in the war against Nazi Germany. The ordeal of Flight Sergeant Copping may have resulted from an effort to get all available British aircraft into fighting shape for the coming offensive.

According to military historian Andy Saunders during an interview with CNN, 24-year-old Flight Sergeant Copping apparently got lost and began flying in the wrong direction while a fellow RAF pilot of 260 Squadron tried to no avail to get his attention and correct his course. After Copping failed to recognize his error, the plane ran out of fuel and made a rough landing. The plane sustained some damage, its propeller and nose torn away and landing gear collapsed. A glimpse into the cockpit reveals surprisingly little interior damage. Instruments remain intact, and the aircraft frame appears structurally sound.

Copping apparently survived for a while. Among the evidence that supports this contention is a parachute stretched to provide shade, indicating that he initially remained with the plane and tried to protect himself from the brutal Saharan sun.

"The parachute gives him shelter and a means to be identified from the air," said Saunders. "The guy also would have had a little silver signaling mirror to attract passing aircraft and a pistol with a limited number of flares. His chances of survival were not good."

RAF pilots typically flew without much in the way of rations. With the plane's radio likely broken and little or no food and water, Copping may have eventually concluded that his only chance for survival was to walk away from the wreckage toward where he thought help might be found. No human remains have been located to date, and the likelihood that those of Copping will be found seems remote.

Tentative plans for the plane involve the possibility of recovering it and placing it on display at the RAF Museum in London. Officials with the British Embassy in Cairo and the British Ministry of Defence are currently working with the Egyptian government on a plan for such an operation.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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Memoirs of Air Combat

Dear Editor:

"Time Stood Still" by Lester Rentmeester (Late Fall 2012 issue) is one of the absolutely very best short memoirs of World War II air combat I've ever seen. If anybody ever organizes an anthology of timeless wartime recollections, it's inclusion is a must. And I'd love to read additional narratives by Colonel Rentmeester.

Robet R. Dykstra
Worcester, Massachusetts

German Decimation of Poland

Dear Editor,

In "Superior Orders and Military Necessity" (Late Fall 2012 issue), Mr. Jones has done a commendable job in presenting the atrocities committed by the Einsatzgruppen. However, I believe his statement that "the Einsatzgruppen were four mobile killing units created shortly before the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941" is not accurate. I believe that the Einsatzgruppen followed the German invaders at the very beginning of the war into Poland in 1939. In the weeks leading up to the invasion of Poland, the Germans had dramatically increased their anti-Polish venom. Virtually every major Nazi leader was describing Poles as lower life forms that had no place on earth. Tadeusz Piotrowski in his book *Poland's Holocaust* states, "From the very beginning and without any respite, the Nazis conducted a systematic program of genocide; they were murdering the people of Poland." That is to say, not just Jews but Polish gentiles as well. Mr. Piotrowski further states that by the end of 1940, "Hitler called for the physical liquidation of the 'leading elements in Poland.'" Hitler even ordered the Luftwaffe to strafe evacuating civilians. It is too bad that historians fail to recognize how badly the Germans decimated the Poland and its people.

Tony Miller, via e-mail

"Rubber Boat Training"

Dear Editor:

The Early Fall 2012 issue of *WWII History* rang a particularly personal bell for this WWII veteran because of two stories: "Standby for Special Mission" (Top Secret) and "Taking on Counterinsurgency." The first was the story of covert submarine raids while the second concerned the occupation of Japan.

The 97th Infantry "Trident" Division was involved in aspects of both; some of its men trained for covert landings via submarines and all of its troops took part in the early occupation of Japan. As a young (19-20) member of the 97th I participated in both.

In August 1944, the 97th moved from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to Camp San Luis Obispo, California, to begin training for division-sized amphibious landings. One platoon from each regiment was designated for "rubber boat training." Training films included "how to" reconaissance from a sub, etc. The week-long training took place on the beach and Pacific waters of Morro Bay, down the road from Camp San Luis Obispo. Mainly, it was learning how to paddle those boats and ride the waves.

The division's assault amphibious training, however, went for naught. In the fall of 1944, the war in Europe demanded more manpower. The 97th was quickly shipped from California to the east coast of Europe.

The 97th did get to Japan, however. Following V-E Day it was ticketed for redeployment to the Philippines to train for the invasion of Japan. While regrouping at Fort Bragg from 30-day furloughs, the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The 97th did not stay home. Its troops soon sailed from Seattle as MacArthur was signing the surrender terms aboard the *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. The 97th occupied a wide swath of Honshu stretching from the Sea of Japan on the west coast to Fukushima on the east.

Your author wrote of MacArthur's retention of Hirohito and the reasons for doing so. The Emperor made himself seen by the people and in early 1946 he traveled to the town of Kumagaya, about 60 miles northwest of Tokyo. Headquarters of the 97th Division was at a former Japanese air base near Kumagaya. The three fellows who

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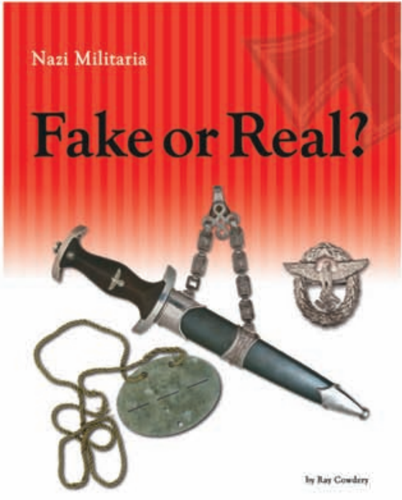

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manned the division's public relations office (among them this rifleman in Europe turned GI journalist in Japan) "covered" the Emperor's visit. Several terrific close-up photos of Hirohito are among my prized possessions.

Harold Yeglin
Roanoke, Virginia

The Undeclared War

Dear Editor:

I read with interest James Martino's "The Undeclared War 1939-1941" (Late Fall 2012 issue). I grew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia, during the war and remember convoys forming up in the harbor and jetsam from torpedoed ships on the shores in that area of Nova Scotia.

My father was employed with a Canadian railway and was involved with troop and ship movements. I remember him telling me that he was on the pier when the ship arrived bearing the French gold reserves. It had come from Martinique.

In late 1945, my father and I toured the captured German U-boat *U-190* which was on display in Halifax. I later learned that the German captain of *U-190* settled in Canada. The Canadian Navy lacked first-class equipment in those years. Their Asdic would not work properly in the St. Lawrence River where there was a blend of fresh and salt water.

Just recently, I read in the book *Industrial Revolutionaries* about the inventor or the torpedo, Robert Whitehead. His granddaughter was the first wife of Captain Georg Ludwig von Trapp, an Austrian U-boat commander, whose life was portrayed in *The Sound of Music*.

Jeanette Rankin, Peacenik

Dear Editor:

Very interesting and informative article on Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin in your Late Fall 2012 issue. It raises three issues:

(1) Why doesn't it mention the reason Professor Louis J. Snyder says she gave for her "nay" vote in his great work, *The War*? About her "wanting to show the dictatorships that in a democracy there are never any unanimous votings"? Or is that a legend? If it is, then she loses the last justifiable reason for her vote and comes out as just another "peacenik" with so fixated a mind that she can't see the obvious—like the "Mothers of England" who gushed over Prime Minister Chamberlain as he returned form Munich because, "Now our sons won't have to die for Czechoslovakia." Or was she a typical woman who won't admit to being wrong no matter what, or maybe both?

(2) At least she was more open and sincere in her beliefs than the original "president lied, people died" president, FDR, who assured us again and again that our boys "would not be sent off to die in foreign battlefields" while simultaeously doing everything he possibly could [to bring the U.S. into the war]—as shown by "The Undeclared War 1939-1941" article in the same issue. However, he cannot be blamed for Pearl Harbor. That was just plain and simple overconfident carelessness and stupidity on our part.

(3) Rankin was right when she claimed that Pearl Harbor saved FDR. Someone leaked a copy of FDR's war plans to the anti-interventionist *Chicago Tribune*. It came too late to make the Sunday morning edition, so instead of putting out a special edition, the editor decided to put it off until Monday. Had Pearl Harbor never happened—or happened on Monday afternoon, say—FDR would have been in a hot spot.

At any rate, the article does a very good job of exposing Rankin as a typical—"classical" peacnik, so fixated on "peace" that she was willing to sacrifice everything for it.

B.J. Figueredo
Gonic, New Hampshire

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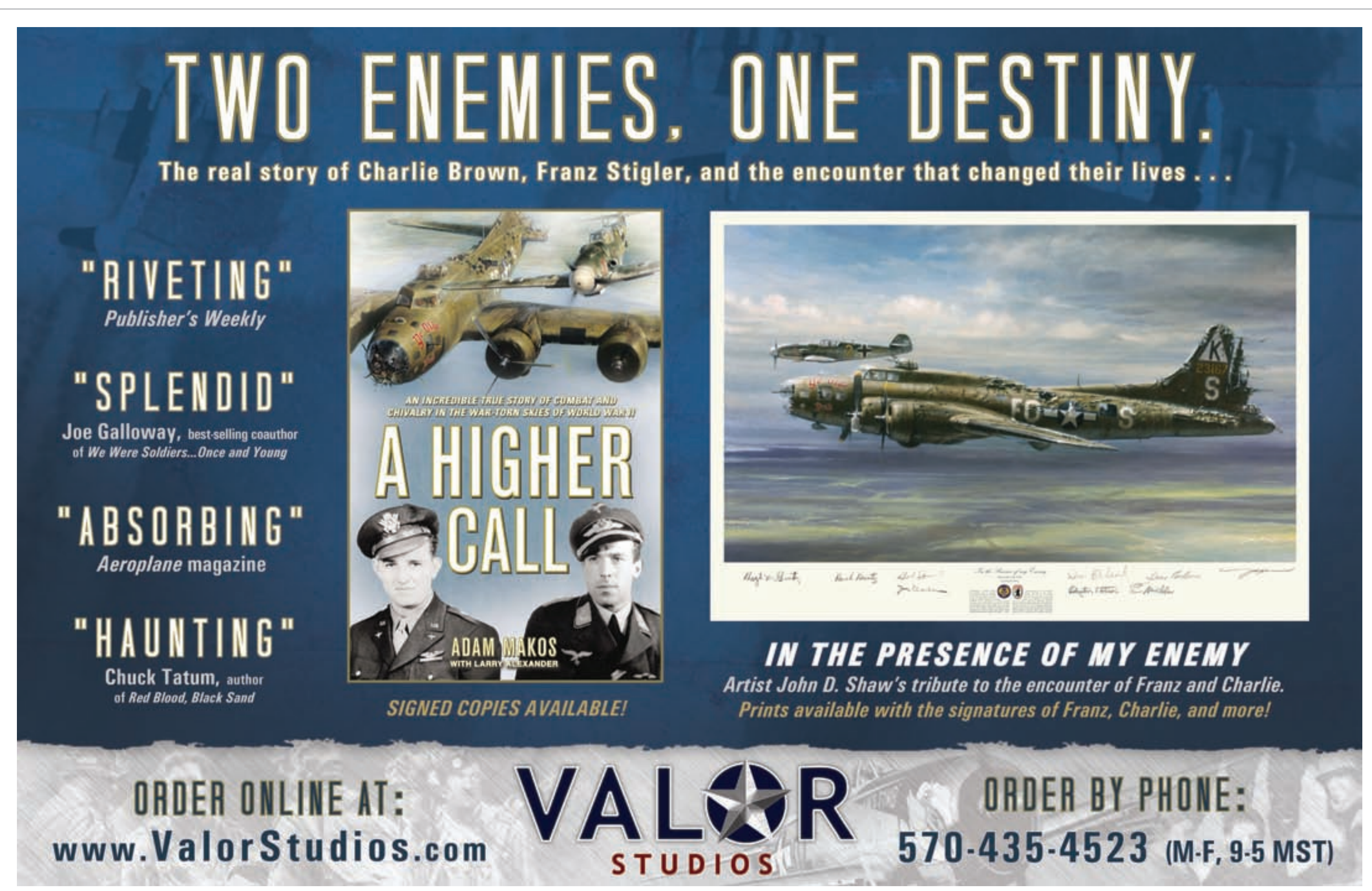

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Tiger tank No. 205, belonging to SS Obersturmführer Michael Wittmann, proceeds down a country road in France. Never far from the front, Wittmann became the leading tank ace of the Third Reich and died in his armored vehicle.

Pride of the Panzerwaffe

SS tanker Michael Wittmann became the most famous armor ace of World War II and died in the process.

STRADDLING THE RIVER ORNE NINE MILES FROM THE ENGLISH CHANNEL coast, the French medieval city of Caen was the focal objective of Lt. Gen. Sir Miles Dempsey's British Second Army on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

The Allied landings on five Normandy beaches had gone well that fateful Tuesday morning, despite fierce initial German opposition on the British beaches and a bloody setback for the U.S. 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions at Omaha Beach. The assault forces secured their bridgeheads and started pushing inland.

But they soon ran into concentrated resistance as the Germans swiftly drew the bulk of their panzer groups to the Bayeux-Caen-Falaise area, where the bocage country—a patchwork of small fields hemmed in by sunken roads, ditches, and thick embankments—strongly favored defense and hindered the Allied advance.

A costly slugging match developed, and a series of frontal assaults by British and Canadian armored and infantry units produced heavy losses and little headway. Caen, a key communications and transportation center viewed as the "hinge" of the Normandy campaign, was fiercely defended and would remain in German hands for a critical month.

General Bernard L. Montgomery, the Allied forces' ground commander and leader of the powerful British 21st Army Group, ordered a bold "right hook" to try and envelop Caen. The thrust was led by Maj. Gen. G.W.E.J. "Bobby" Erskine's 7th Armored Division, the famed Desert Rats, part of Brigadier Robert "Loony" Hinde's 22nd Armored Brigade. Erskine's tanks managed to penetrate as far as the town of Villers-Bocage, 10 kilometers southwest of Caen, but were halted there in one of the most astonishing actions of World War II.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-299-1802-08; Photo: Scheck

Seated atop the 88mm cannon of his Tiger I heavy tank, Obersturmführer Michael Wittmann sports the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves at his throat. The oak leaves were awarded to the Tiger ace on January 30, 1944, following an impressive combat record on the Eastern Front.

Almost singlehandedly, one German soldier blocked the advance of the armored force and upset the British timetable by a month. He was Obersturmführer (lieutenant) Michael Wittmann, commander of the 2nd Company of the 101st Heavy Tank Battalion, one of the spearhead squadrons of Col. Gen. Josef "Sepp" Dietrich's I Panzer Corps. A slim, boyishly handsome man, the 30-year-old Wittmann was already a legendary figure in the Wehrmacht.

The son of farmer Johann Wittmann, Michael was born on Wednesday, April 22, 1914, at Vogelfal in the scenic Oberpfalz district in southeastern Germany. After graduating from high school,

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the quiet, industrious boy worked on his father's farm and served in the Reichsarbeitdienst (National Labor Corps) for the first six months of 1934. That October, he enlisted in the 19th Infantry Regiment of the Reichscheer, the interwar German Army, and served for almost two years.

Discharged as a corporal in September 1936, the ambitious young man then joined the Waffen SS in April 1937 and was assigned to Sturm No. 1 of the elite Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (LSSAH), the personal bodyguard formed by the German Führer in 1933. The hand-picked unit was led by the brutal but able Dietrich, a World War I sergeant major, early Nazi street brawler, and Hitler favorite. In late 1937, Wittmann received driver training, excelled in handling light and heavy armored cars, and joined the 17th Panzer Scout Company of the LSSAH. The unit was reduced in status to a panzer scout platoon in the summer of 1938.

Germany invaded Poland on Friday, September 1, 1939, and Great Britain and France declared war the following Sunday. Now promoted to unterscharführer (sergeant), Wittmann was in action from the start with the LSSAH assault gun battalion. During the brief Polish campaign and then in the German blitzkrieg sweep into Belgium, Holland, and France, he commanded a six-wheeled heavy armored car on reconnaissance sorties.

After German forces invaded the Balkans on April 6, 1941, Wittmann led an assault gun platoon in Greece, where his skill and gallantry earned him the Iron Cross Second Class. He soldiered against British Commonwealth troops and partisans in Greece until mid-1941 and then headed for another front where he was to come into his own as a warrior. Early that June, Wittmann and the LSSAH armored formations were shipped eastward to prepare for Operation Barbarossa, the German Army's massive—and ill-fated—invasion of Russia.

When three Nazi armies swarmed across the Russian border on June 22, 1941, the LSSAH panzers rolled southward and Wittmann quickly distinguished himself as a tank commander in the first of many clashes with the Red Army. He knocked out Soviet tanks at an incredible pace, receiving another Iron Cross Second Class on July 12 for destroying six of them. He was wounded twice but stayed with his unit. During heavy fighting in the southern Rostov-on-Don area, Wittmann's panzer demolished six Russian tanks in a single engagement. He was promoted to SS oberscharführer (technical sergeant) and awarded the Panzer Assault Badge and Iron Cross First Class.

In less than a year of action on the Eastern Front, Wittmann and his gunner, Balthasar "Bobby" Woll, were credited with 66 tank kills. Rated an excellent gunner, Woll was able to fire accurately while the panzer was on the move.

Recognized as officer material because of his battlefield leadership, Wittmann was ordered back to Germany for advanced training. Early in June 1942, he was accepted as an officer cadet at the SS Junker School in Bad Tolz, south of Munich. After being earmarked as a panzer instructor that September, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in December.

On Christmas Eve, 1942, Wittmann joined the 13th Company of the LSSAH 1st Waffen SS Motorized Division, which had been upgraded to a panzergrenadier division the previous autumn. The company was led by Hauptsturmführer Heinz Kling. The division trained at Paderborn, Westphalia, and Ploermel in northwestern France, and was equipped with the new Tiger I heavy tank. Wittmann was seconded to lead an assault gun platoon designated to protect the tanks from enemy infantry.

The division was transferred to the Eastern Front in late January 1943. Early that spring, Wittmann left the support platoon and rejoined the 13th Tiger Company. He soon began a remarkable association with one of the most effective tanks of the war.

After invading Russia, the German armies had made spectacular advances against the unready Red Army and pushed close to the gates of Moscow. But the desperate Soviets mobilized, fought back, and rushed new weapons into production. When the 46-ton KV-1 heavy and 26.3-ton T-34 medium tanks appeared on the Eastern Front later in 1941, near panic swept through the German ranks. The formidable T-34 had revolutionary sloped armor, a powerful 76mm cannon, and a Christie suspension system.

Some German tank designers considered duplicating the T-34, but national pride overrode the idea. Despite the chaotic state of weapons procurement, the Third Reich's armaments industry had to act quickly, so designs for new and larger panzers were rushed through by the Henschel and Porsche companies. The 43-ton medium Panther with a 75mm gun was built, and a modified Henschel design for a heavy tank was approved by the German Army's weapons office. This was known as the Tiger E or Tiger I, and the production of 1,350 of them began in August 1942.

Everything about the Tiger I was impressive, and the Wehrmacht now had a tank to challenge the T-34 and the KV-1. It weighed 57 tons, had four-inch thick frontal armor plating, and mounted a long 88mm cannon and two machine guns. The Tiger's speed was 23 miles an hour, and it carried a crew of five. The Krupp company developed the tank's turret.

Lieutenant Wittmann and his Tiger I, crewed by gunner Woll, Werner Irrgang, Sepp Rossner, and Eugen Schmidt, went into action with the Waffen SS panzers on the Eastern Front in the summer of 1943. After the pivotal Russian victory at Stalingrad that January, Marshal Georgi Zhukov's reinforced Red Army was defending a front stretching from Stalingrad to Orel, with a bulge in the Kursk area, while Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's German forces held a smaller area adjacent to the River Donetz. The Soviet positions were exposed, inviting an assault by the Wehrmacht.

Equipped with the new Tiger and Panther tanks and two battalions of 67-ton Elefant tank destroyers, and supported by Luftwaffe bombers and fighters, a large German force launched Operation Zitadelle (Citadel), an attack on the Kursk bulge, on July 4. Operating with LSSAH panzers in the southern sector of the bulge, Wittmann wasted no time in deploying his Tiger to full advantage. On his first day of action, he destroyed two Soviet antitank guns and 13 T-34s and rescued Lieutenant Helmut Wendorff's tank platoon, which had run into trouble. On July 7 and 8, Wittmann's Tiger blasted two T-34s, two SU-122 self-propelled guns, and three T-60/70 tanks, and on July 12 his score was eight Soviet tanks, three antitank guns, and a field gun.

As many as 5,680 German and Soviet tanks and assault guns were involved in the week-long slugging match at Kursk, the biggest tank battle in history, and each side lost more than 1,500 of them. There, and at Kharkov to the south, Wittmann assumed command of a company of Tigers and put 30 Red Army tanks and 28 guns out of action. The German panzers and guns proved far superior to the Red Army's weapons, but the Soviet armored reserves outnumbered Manstein's.

Although it suffered an astounding 600,000 casualties at Kursk, the Red Army could afford to absorb the tank losses. On July 13, Manstein was forced to retreat in order to save his Army Group South, and four days later Hitler called off Operation Zitadelle. His high hopes for Barbarossa were dashed because his army never regained the strategic initiative on the endless Russian steppes.

Wittmann's 13th SS Panzer Company withdrew for refitting and occupational duties at the end of July 1943, but early the following October the tank ace was back on the Eastern Front after the start of a Soviet autumn offensive. On October 13, his Tiger destroyed 20 T-34s and 23

assorted Russian guns. Wittmann commented that the Soviet antitank guns were more challenging and prized targets than tanks. Cited for demolishing a total of 88 tanks, self-propelled guns, and other vehicles, he was awarded the Knight's Cross on January 14, 1944. The coveted decoration was usually reserved for generals and rarely given to enlisted men or junior officers. Wittmann and gunner Woll, who also won the Knight's Cross and the Iron Cross, were eventually credited with having destroyed 119 armored vehicles on the Eastern Front.

Wittmann had established himself as the top-scoring panzer ace. He received a telegram from Hitler praising his "heroic actions in the battle for the future of our people," his remarkable combat record was lauded on Nazi radio, and he was a national hero. After his unit was transferred to Mons, Belgium, Wittmann took time to marry his sweetheart, Hildegard Burmeister, on March 1, 1944. Gunner Woll, now a Tiger commander himself, was the witness for the ceremony.

The 30-year-old Wittmann made propaganda tours during the early spring of 1944 and visited the Henschel und Sohn armaments plant in Kassel. He thanked the workers for building the Tiger Is and showed great interest in the larger, up-gunned Tiger IIs, also known as King Tigers,

Tiger tank commander Michael Wittmann (right) wears the distinctive black uniform of the panzer corps. Wittmann is in conversation with General Heinz Guderian, the father of the Nazi Blitzkrieg tactics that overran Poland, much of Western Europe, and vast territory in Russia during the early days of World War II.

then rolling off the assembly lines. On April 20, Hitler's birthday, Wittmann was promoted to SS first lieutenant, and 10 days later proudly received Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross. Also that month, he was given command of the 2nd Panzer Company in Major Heinz von Westernhagen's 101st Heavy Panzer Battalion.

As part of an armored reserve, which included the 12th SS "Hitlerjugend" Division and the Panzer Lehr Division, the LSSAH unit was stationed near the historic Normandy city of Lisieux, famed as the birthplace of Saint Therese, 27 miles east of Caen. The commander was able, 36-year-old Brigadier Theodor "Teddy" Wisch.

On Tuesday, June 6, 1944, the fateful day when the British, American, and Canadian armies landed on the Normandy coast, Lieutenant Wittmann took charge of a new Tiger tank and soon went into action again. The 101st Battalion rumbled toward the invasion front, savaged on the way by Allied fighter bombers. Wittmann's company was reduced to six Tigers. Meanwhile, hastily deployed panzer squadrons fought hard to block British-Canadian armor and infantry units as they broke from their bridgehead perimeters and headed for the Bayeux-Caen-Falaise area.

On June 11, executing General Montgomery's "right hook" aimed at enveloping strategic Caen, new Cromwell tanks of General Erskine's 7th Armored Division attacked through the 50th Infantry (Northumbrian) Division and began an attempt to encircle the powerful Panzer Lehr Division near Tilly, west of Caen and north of Villers-Bocage. The Desert Rats swiftly captured the village of Verrieres-Lingevres, but the panzers counterattacked and a major armored battle raged there. The 27.5-

ton Cromwells were outmatched by the Mark IV and V panzers.

On June 12, as part of Monty's second all-out attempt to reach Caen, Erskine's division rolled through a thinly held gap in the enemy lines between Caumont and Villers-Bocage. The British tankers were glad to be on the advance. An officer reported, "Here we are in this first week of battle, exploiting a possible break-through with very little opposition, an armored brigade in front and the infantry coming along in lorries. It was exciting to be on the move at such a pace." But the Desert Rats' elation was soon to be shattered.

Supported by Canadian infantry, the British 6th Armored Regiment assaulted remnants of the 12th Panzer Division at Les Mesnil-Patry. The British tankers ran into a nest of deadly 88mm flak guns and were slaughtered. Thirty-seven tanks were knocked out, only a handful of men survived, and the Canadians were repulsed in savage fighting. The action went on until June 14, but the German line held.

At Tilly-sur-Seulles, Lt. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein, a vigorous, terrier-like Afrika Korps veteran, realized that his Panzer Lehr Division, rated one of the best in the German Army, was being out-flanked. While the bulk of Erskine's 7th Armored Division was pinning down his reduced force, a brigade-sized British armored group had penetrated as far as the Villers-Bocage area by the afternoon of June 12. Panzer Lehr's left flank was in danger, and Bayerlein had already committed his reserves. He called for help, and it was not far off.

In the slow, agonizing British struggle to reach Caen, the market town of Villers-Bocage became a focal objective. It was of strategic importance to both the British and German armies. Situated at the head of the Seulles Valley, the town was the center of a road network and the gateway to Mont Picon, 10 miles south, and to the Odon Valley and Caen to the east. Brigadier Hinde sent units of his 22nd Armored Brigade to seize high ground northeast of Villers-Bocage, unaware because of an intelligence lapse that the enemy had the same objective.

Hastily deployed Tiger I tanks lay in wait for the British brigade. Among the panzer lineup, camouflaged and primed for ambush, were four Tiger tanks and two 25-ton Mark IV Specials of Wittmann's 2nd Company of the 101st Heavy Panzer Battalion. The tank ace's former gunner, Bobby Woll, was with him that day because his own Tiger was undergoing repairs.

Early on the morning of Tuesday, June 13, 1944, a spearhead tank-infantry column of Brigadier Hinde's brigade advanced six miles behind the enemy lines and rolled unopposed into Villers-Bocage. The force comprised Cromwell and American-built Stuart light tanks, half-tracks, and Bren gun carriers of Lt. Col. Viscount Arthur Cranley's 4th County of London (Sharpshooters) Yeomanry, accompanied by men of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Brigade. Gaily dressed citizens cheered the surprised British troops, but the mutual joy was short lived.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-738-0267-21A; Photo: Arthur Grimm

Destroyed vehicles of the British 7th Armored Division litter the road in the French town of Villers-Bocage. Michael Wittmann singlehandedly smashed a British armored spearhead with his lone Tiger tank on June 13, 1944.

The closely packed British column rumbled through the town and headed for Hill 213, dominating the national highway leading to Caen. The vehicles halted on the road leading to the summit, closing up nose-to-tail to allow room for relief point units to pass. The soldiers dismounted, stretched their legs, and brewed tea. Waiting behind the crest were Wittmann's panzers and a strong infantry force. Unknown to Viscount Cranley's tank crews and riflemen, they were being observed by the panzer ace, whose recognition of a quick kill was instinctive.

Wittmann took note of the closeness of the British vehicles, with high hedges on both sides of the road preventing them from maneuvering if attacked. He decided that he had no time to wait for the rest of his panzers and ordered their commanders "not to retreat a step but to hold your ground." He would engage the enemy column on his own.

Wittmann's big Tiger burst from cover on the southern side of the Caen road and knocked out the rear tank of A Squadron of the London Yeomanry. Then he calmly drove along a parallel cart track with his Tiger's 88mm cannon blasting Rifle Brigade tanks, half-tracks, and Bren carriers as he went. One half-track was struck with such force that it was hurled, blazing, across the road.

The British tankers and infantrymen fought back fiercely, but they were no match for the Tiger. Shells from the Cromwells bounced off the panzer's thick armor, and A Squadron's two six-pounder antitank guns had little effect. The British vehicles were turned into burning hulks. In five minutes, the audacious Wittmann disabled 25 British armored vehicles, bringing his score of combat kills to an incredible 44.

The rest of his company—three Tigers and a Mark IV Special panzer—soon joined in the fray. Outgunned and unable to maneuver, the British Tommies fought on. A Rifle Brigade six-pounder gun hit three of the enemy tanks, but Wittmann and his panzers kept the upper hand, destroying a total of 25 British tanks, 14 half-tracks, and 14 Bren carriers. The spearhead of the 7th Armored Division had been stopped cold. It was the first defeat suffered by the legendary Desert Rats.

Wittmann then coolly drove into Villers-Bocage, and dismounted British tank crews there were stunned at the sight. Their apparent lack of concern amazed gunner Woll, who said, "They're acting as if they'd won the war already." His commander replied, "We're going to prove them wrong!" The Tiger lumbered along the town's narrow main street and knocked out three Stuart tanks of the 4th CLY's reconnaissance troop, four headquarters tanks halted on the eastern outskirts, and two unarmed command tanks of the 5th Royal Horse Artillery Regiment. The Tiger brushed off salvos from two six-pounder antitank guns, killed the crew of a stalking Cromwell, and exchanged fire with another Cromwell.

At 10 that fateful morning, the London Yeomanry's A Squadron reported that it was sur-

rounded by Tiger tanks, and half an hour later Viscount Cranley radioed that his position was untenable and withdrawal impossible. At 10:35 AM, the squadron radio sets went dead.

The fighting raged on until dark in Villers-Bocage, where the gallant, flamboyant Brigadier Hinde had frantically organized makeshift defenses. Using anti-tank guns, PIAT rocket launchers, and sticky grenades at close quarters, infantrymen of the Royal Queen's Regiment stalked an increased number of panzers and disabled 11 of them. But the furious day had belonged to the Germans, and the undergunned 7th Armored Division was ordered to pull back.

Cranley and many of his men were captured. Wittmann's Tiger was damaged during the day's fighting, but he was able to prudently withdraw into the cover of woods southeast of Villers-Bocage. His bold feat there had shattered the leading elements of Hinde's 22nd Armored Brigade and thrown the Desert Rats temporarily onto the defensive. The British capture of Villers-Bocage—and Caen—was still a month away.

While the action at Villers-Bocage was a triumph for Lieutenant Wittmann, it was a disaster for the British, although they had fought bravely. The setback was blamed on shoddy tactics and a failure to reinforce the 7th Armored Division. "The whole handling of that battle was a disgrace," commented General Dempsey.

On the recommendation of General Dietrich, Wittmann was rewarded on June 13 with prized Swords to his Knight's Cross, making him the most decorated tank commander of the war. Promoted to captain a few days later, he was offered the position of instructor at an officers' tactical school. But he refused and returned to the Caen front.

The fighting raged on, and the LSSAH and Hitlerjugend panzer groups, though suffering heavy losses, played a major role in resisting the British and Canadian armies as they pushed doggedly toward Caen and Falaise. The I Panzer Corps' divisions delayed the fall of Caen (a D-Day objective), thwarted Montgomery's bold attempts to outflank the city in Operations Epsom and Windsor, and brought his massive armored assault codenamed Operation Goodwood to a costly halt. Subsequent delaying actions by the LSSAH and Hitlerjugend armor southeast of Caen between July 20 and August 18 did much to frustrate Monty's timetable.

By early August 1944, Captain Wittmann's Tigers were battling units of the 4th Canadian and 1st Polish Armored Divisions as able, hard-fighting Lt. Gen. Guy G. Simonds's Second Canadian Corps attacked along the Caen-Falaise road during Operation Totalize. After a punishing bombardment by 1,020 Royal Air Force Bomber Command Avro Lancasters and Handley Page Halifaxes on the night of August 7, the British 51st Highland and Canadian 2nd Infantry Divisions, supported by Cromwell and Sherman tanks, pushed along a narrow six-mile sector between the villages of St.-Martin and Soliers, south of Caen.

Inexperienced men of the German 89th Infantry Division panicked and fled, much to the consternation of Oberführer (colonel) Kurt "Panzer" Meyer, whose 12th Hitlerjugend Division was nearby. Brandishing a rifle, the hardened, cigar-chewing veteran of a dozen campaigns, including two years in Russia, strode to the middle of the Caen-Falaise road on the morning of August 8 and rallied the retreating infantrymen. He temporarily checked the Allied advance but was in no position to halt the entire Canadian II Corps. Meyer's division had been whittled down from 214 to 48 serviceable panzers. Maj. Gen. Wisch's LSSAH Panzer Division was also now seriously understrength.

The road to Falaise was almost open, but green Canadian tank commanders were exhibiting caution. Realizing that his sector faced collapse before the weight of the Canadian corps,

Continued on page 74

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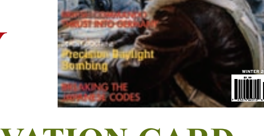

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By Kerry Skidmore

U.S. Army Art Collection

Repairing Wartime Railways

American railroad workers in specially formed units labored to keep men and matériel rolling forward after D-Day.

HISTORIAN CHRISTIAN WOLMAR CONCLUDES THAT THE TWO WORLD WARS could not have been fought to such devastation without military railways, in his book *Engines of War*. In wars, from the Crimean to the arrival of the jet engine, railways were a dominant technology. Consequently, the military that best employed its railways to transfer fresh troops and supplies to the point of greatest need usually prevailed.

The assault on Hitler's Fortress Europe saw the strategic use of military railways reach its peak. By 1944, all major armies had reached new levels of mobility and sophistication. A military command could launch devastating attacks by highly mobile armored units, supported by tactical artillery and air support and all supplied by rail. In this type of warfare, rapid transport of fuel, largely carried in millions of five-gallon Jerry cans, and ammunition were tantamount for success. Correspondent Ernie Pyle noted that American artillery fired $10 million worth of ammunition a day. These quantities could only be successfully moved by rail.

For Operation Overlord, the Normandy invasion, infantry-related supplies had been stockpiled in England to be landed at the artificial harbors—the miraculous Mulberries— and moved by truck to the troops. The immediate plan to integrate railways into the supply chain was to use the port of Cherbourg, sitting at the top of the Cotentin Peninsula, and discontinue the use of the beaches as supply depots as soon as possible. While Cherbourg was historically a tourist debarkation port and its cargo capabilities were limited, there were excellent deep-water piers there and an inner harbor protected from the North Sea's storms.

Cherbourg was to be opened within a week. But the Germans still had strong infantry and armored units stationed along the entire peninsula, and Hitler had a different war plan. He ordered Fortress Cherbourg to resist to the last and that the port facilities be destroyed. After a desperate defense the port finally fell on June 28, 1944. When American engineers arrived in the city, they found that the methodical German garrison had done a masterful job of wrecking the port and facilities

The main deep-water piers—Quai-du-Normandie, Quai-du-France, and Quai-du-Homet—and the entire arsenal area were expertly blocked with sunken hulks, demolished cranes and equipment, and tons of concrete blasted on top of the wreckage. In the inner harbor, only the seaplane ramp west of the great quays and the reclamation area to the east were undamaged. Thousands of magnetic, acoustic, and contact mines were sown in the waters, shoreline, and facilities. The engineers were also confronted with scores of the new "Katy" mines, which were specifically designed to prevent minesweeping.

Adding to the invaders' problems, the American Mulberry at Omaha Beach had been destroyed by a hurricane-force storm on June 21. For the American forces, the only good alternative was to ferry cargo to the beaches using the amphibious 2.5-ton DUKW (military abbreviation for 1942, utility, front and rear wheel drive). Soon cargo ships were offloading onto the ubiquitous DUKWs and all varieties of landing craft and ferried to shore.

At Cherbourg, the Navy succeeded in clearing lanes to the seaplane ramp and the sandy beach (Terre Plein) in the reclamation area, losing several minesweepers in the effort. More DUKWs and landing craft were brought in, and offloading began onto these beaches. The supplies quickly piled up awaiting transport. While these smaller craft had no problem landing, the 24-foot tides at Cherbourg made landing of heavy equipment, trucks, and trains difficult. Their transfer

In this painting by artist A. Brockie Stevens, a train crosses a bridge over the Moselle River somewhere in France while American combat engineers and a pair of French children wave from below.

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ABOVE: Thousands of railroad locomotives were supplied from the United States to Western Europe during the final months of World War II, allowing much-needed troops and supplies to move by rail. In this photo, a locomotive is unloaded from a freighter at the major port city of Cherbourg, France. RIGHT: This American Jeep has been fitted with train wheels to match the gauge of the French railway system. This allowed Allied railroad repair personnel to travel up and down the tracks while evaluating the soundness of the lines leading toward supply depots and the front.

from the offshore ships was a slow and dangerous process.

Trains, especially 70-ton steam locomotives, presented additional challenges because their long fixed frames required a flat landing area. The standard method was to offload from a berthed Liberty or Seatrain ship with heavy cranes and I-beams directly onto tracks on a dock. Alternatively, locomotives could be loaded onto a shallow draft craft and pulled onto the dock, provided the ship deck and dock were nearly level. This method limited landings to two times a day if the seas permitted.

Colonel Sidney H. Bingham, manager of the New York subway system in peacetime, devised a "breathing bridge" to land railway rolling stock even to the low tide line. A flange-wheeled ramp, which would connect to rails laid in an LST (Landing Ship, Tank), was run down to the lowest tide line and mated to an LST's bow ramp. By July 8, Bingham had four of the breathing bridges operating in the Terre Plein, each offloading 22 rail cars in 21 minutes.

With their heavy equipment ashore, the Corps of Engineers quickly cleared the roads and the railways in town. Soon a steady stream of trucks moved the backlogged supplies to the front, then as far south as Carentan. Except for a collapsed railway tunnel, the railway was surprisingly intact; several locomotives and a quantity of rolling stock were found undamaged (among them were six "General Pershing" 2-8-0 locomotives given to the French at the end of World War I). The engineers repaired the 15 miles of existing track and laid new track to the reclamation area, doubling port's rail capacity.

At the front the Allies still were making little progress against the Germans, slogging their way through the Bocage, or hedgerow country. However, reconnaissance and intelligence intercepts revealed that the German defenses west of Caen were unraveling. To break the six-week-old stalemate, the American 12th Army Group, commanded by General Omar Bradley, launched Operation Cobra.

On July 25, VII Corps, commanded by General J. Lawton Collins, attacked west of St. Lo and quickly broke through the German defenses. Carentan was taken on the 28th, and the coastal city of Avranches fell on the 30th. With the German defenses south of Caen rapidly collapsing, General Bradley activated the Third Army to exploit the breakthrough.

General George Patton had been selected to command the Third Army on January 22, 1944. From March to July, he had played the role of commander, First U.S. Army Group (FUSAG), the hugely successful ruse that kept the Germans tied to defending the Pas-de-Calais. Patton accompanied VIII Corps commander General Troy Middleton south to Avranches during the breakthrough. When the Third Army was activated on August 1, Patton was ordered to send the VIII Corps west to take the Brittany Peninsula while he took the remainder of the Third Army eastward. Its objective was the transport center at Le Mans. Patton's mission was to trap and destroy the German Seventh Army, commanded by General Gunther von Kluge, west of the Seine River.

On August 7, Kluge counterattacked westward in a desperate attempt to cut Third Army's supply line at Avranches. Bradley, well briefed on the coming attack by Army intelligence, saw this threat as an opportunity to trap the Germans. On August 8, Patton was ordered to turn Third Army north to Argentan while Montgomery's Canadian forces moved south to Falaise. The U.S. XV Corps, under General Wade Haislip, having taken Le Mans on August 8, raced north and captured the German supply depot at Alençon on the 12th and approached Argentan on the 13th. From Mayenne, VII Corps moved northeast to cover XV Corps' left flank; Patton was ready to close the trap.

National Archives

What followed was one of the most controversial episodes of the war. The Canadians could not get to Falaise, but Third Army was held at Argentan. Much of the German Seventh Army escaped after suffering tremendous casualties. As early as the 14th, Bradley was certain the Germans had gotten away, so he sent Patton east in pursuit. Fuel was now in short supply. Patton's armor consumed an average of 336,500 gallons of gasoline a day, and he needed trains to deliver it all.

The Military Railway Service (MRS) was developed in response to the lessons of World War I. Organized into grand divisions, each with four or five railway operating battalions (ROB) and a railway shop battalion (RSB), each battalion was sponsored by a Class I American railroad and placed in reserve status under the sponsoring railroad's name. Upon their activation, the railroads' supervisors became the battalion officers, and the inducted

employees reported to platoons relating to their railway specialty. Each battalion had 18 officers and 803 enlisted men.

Each battalion had a headquarters company, including dispatchers and signal management; Company A, track and signal maintenance; Company B, equipment maintenance, including car and locomotive repairs; Company C, train crews and train masters. The RSB's 23 officers and 658 enlisted men were strictly back shop repair and erection companies.

The Allies had begun ferrying railway equipment to England in 1942. By June 1944, some 900 steam locomotives, 651 Whitcomb diesels, and 20,000 prefab cars were ready to ship to Normandy. As the 2nd MRS, ultimately responsible for operations in northern France, arrived in England, they were put to assembling rolling stock and learning the operating procedures for the European railways. Unfortunately, many units arrived just as the invasion was imminent and left for France with no tools and only the clothes on their backs.

Before the war France had 26,000 miles of standard-gauge track. Many of the lines were double tracked for simultaneous bidirectional operations. While French rolling stock was lighter and far older than that on American railroads, the French railways were considered excellent. The 1940 blitzkrieg of France was successful in part because the Germans used the interconnected railways to provide logistical support for their armies. As the Overlord invasion approached, the French railways, now an integral part of the German defenses, were heavily bombed and sabotaged by partisans. Despite these interdiction campaigns, German engineers proved quite adept at keeping some critical lines open to the end. As the Allies pushed them out of western France, these engineers proved equally adept at destroying what little remained.

As the breakout had advanced, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers service regiments followed closely. These service units, often under fire, worked to open roads, blocked tunnels, wrecked track, and destroyed bridges. Behind them the railway operating battalions struggled to restore rail service. Allied practice at this time was to repair indigenous operating equipment and use the system's experienced railway workers to operate their railways.

However, it was discovered that the entire French railway infrastructure had been destroyed or rendered ineffectual. A high percentage of the bridges, rails, and ties were wrecked. Few water facilities and pumps were intact. There was no coal, no electricity, and the signal systems, phone lines, and other equip-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Allied bombers and fighters severely damaged the infrastructure of the French railway system prior to D-Day and during the Normandy campaign. In this August 1, 1944, photo damage to a railyard in the city of Coutances, France, is clearly visible. OPPOSITE: Combat engineers work to erect a Bailey bridge across a stream in France.

ment were systematically wrecked.

In the yards, the switches and the rail frogs were dynamited, effectively preventing their use; destroyed rolling stock blocked everything. Many of the French railway workers had been hauled off by the retreating Nazis; those remaining had taken their tools and were hiding.

The railway battalions were forced to start from scratch. They had to build their own tools and then develop facilities. Many were primitive but ingenious. In several areas local fire departments were called out to furnish water for the locomotives. By July 31, the rail line from Cherbourg to Avranches was opened but far from totally functional. Early operations were often compared to a second-rate Toonerville Trolley.

The five-man train crews set out with a case of K-rations in quarter-mile-long trains carrying 1,000 tons of fuel or ammunition over barely repaired track, often not knowing whether there was track ahead. At night, they moved blacked out, and conducted switching by using flashlights, cigarette lighters, or even lit cigarettes. The crews often went 90 hours on a single trip. Wrecks, from minor derailments to volcanic conflagrations, were frequent and completely halted railway operations.

As the Third Army moved east, the VIII Corps in Brittany and the First Army in the north were also moving rapidly. Each of these campaigns was along a major rail line and on each of them Corps of Engineers service regiments were frantically trying to restore the lines to service. In addition to this damage, equipment and troop shortages in both the engineering and the railway battalions also hampered efforts to restore service.

By July 31, the 2nd MRS still had only one grand division between Cherbourg and Avranches. Only 40 diesel and steam locomotives and 184 freight cars had been shipped from England. The Allies had only captured and repaired 100 locomotives, 1,641 freight cars, and 76 coaches. As the railways were increasingly unable to provide direct support to the advancing armies, trucks and even airlifts became the principal means of getting supplies to the tanks This situation hampered American operations until the end of the war.

The Third Army's path invested the main railway line from the Brittany ports to Paris. This double-tracked railway ran through Avranches, Rennes, Laval, La Chappelle, and Le Mans. The German presence in the area consisted of rearguard units trying to hold open the escape routes for forces withdrawing east of the Seine River. These units only slowed the Third Army by further wrecking the roads and railways as they pulled back.

By August 12, the repairs of the Cherbourg to Pontaubault railway were still far from complete. On just the one section near Folligny, 2,000 Corps of Engineers and ROB troops were working nonstop on the repairs. At sunset on the 12th, Colonel Emerson C. Itschner, commanding the Corps of Engineers regiments in northern France, received a remarkably prescient instruction from Third Army:

"General Patton has broken through and is striking rapidly for Paris. He says his men can get along without food, but his tanks and trucks won't run without gas. Therefore the railroad must be constructed to Le Mans by Tuesday midnight. Today is Saturday. Use one man per foot to make repairs if necessary."

Itschner had just 75 hours to open a 135-mile-long rail line. For this task he had the 347th and 322nd Engineer General Service Units (the 2,000 men near Folligny). Another 8,500 troops were scattered all over the Allied lodgment. These units, and all the equipment that could be rounded up, were ordered to rush south.

At daylight on the 13th, Itschner flew over the area searching for the route that could be repaired by the deadline. The damage to the high viaduct at Laval immediately eliminated the main line. Itschner was forced to select an alternate route over secondary single track lines from Pontanaubault to St. Hilaire-du-Harcouet, south to Fougeres, east to Mayenne, and south to rejoin the main line east of Laval and on into Le Mans.

This route was in little better condition. Five bridges were down. The most serious was an 80-foot span at St. Hillarie-du-Harcourt, but Itschner believed all could be repaired in time. All day on Sunday and Monday elements of the 392nd, 390th, and 95th Engineer Regiments—now some 9,000 men—began arriving piecemeal and were soon working on all the trouble spots simultaneously.

With six hours remaining before the deadline, Itschner flew over the line. Below him the engineers had spelled out "will finish at 2000" in white concrete. Thirty-one gasoline-loaded trains left Folligny at 1900 hours on the 14th and began crossing the St. Hilaire-du-Harcouet Bridge at midnight. Despite nine delays, the quarter-mile-long trains arrived at 30-minute intervals in Le Mans beginning at midnight on the 15th.

The Corps of Engineers had completed a dramatic achievement in military railway construction. On their rails the ROBs, the last leg anchored by the 740th Railway Operating Battalion, had transited the 135 miles using improvised rail lines to deliver the important fuel on time. For its effort, the 740th was to bring the first train into Paris on August 30. A remarkable opportunity, in a remarkable month, resulted in a total effort and assured that Patton would continue to pursue and destroy the Germans.

The U.S. XII Corps, commanded by General Manton Eddy, took Orleans on the 16th, and XX Corps, under General Walton Walker, occupied Chartres on the 18th. By August 24, the Third Army had four bridgeheads across the Seine, 30 miles south of Paris.

On August 25, the Third Army resumed its drive eastward toward Metz as far as logistics permitted. This drive created something of a

reversal of roles for the logistical support chain. The railways east of the Seine were in excellent condition, while their western counterparts remained primitive, still relying on single-track lines and hand signaling and lacking rolling stock.

In response, Red Ball Express truck transport was initiated to move supplies to Paris where they were loaded onto trains and moved eastward. Unfortunately, even this distance was too great for the trucks to support the Third Army indefinitely. By the end of August, 90 to 95 percent of all supplies were still on the beaches or at Cherbourg, 300 miles from the Third Army spearheads. The crisis reached a climax at the end of August; nothing was moved eastward from August 27 until September 2. Third Army, at the German frontier, was out of fuel.

Special cargos were loaded onto expedited trains, affectionately named the "Toot Sweet Express."

Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower had to make a choice; give the available fuel to Patton or the British 21st Army Group under General Bernard L. Montgomery in the north. For reasons more political than strategic, Eisenhower gave his erstwhile subordinate Montgomery all the available fuel to conduct his ill-conceived Operation Market-Garden, the ground and airborne invasion of Holland to seize vital bridges for a strike at the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany.

Third Army, which many historians believe could have continued to advance, would not receive fuel again until the port of Antwerp, Belgium, became fully operational later in the year. Thus, despite the somewhat anticlimactic end, the combat engineers and railway workers recorded a monumental achievement in the summer of 1944. □

Kerry Skidmore resides in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and works as a medical librarian with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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Balkan Bedlam

Britain's Special Operations Executive conducted abortive covert operations in Albania during 1943-1944.

WHEN BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WINSTON CHURCHILL CREATED THE SPECIAL Operations Executive (SOE) to organize guerrilla resistance against the Nazis, he famously ordered it to set Europe on fire. But those officers heading into the wildest, most remote, part of Europe would be the ones almost burned—by their erstwhile allies instead of their common enemy.

Occupying 11,000 square miles of the Balkan peninsula facing the west cost of the Adriatic Sea with Yugoslavia to the north and northeast, Macedonia and Greece to the east and southeast, Albania was what the Old West might have resembled had Billy the Kid and the Apaches won out over the sheriff and the cavalry. Its one million people were torn by deep religious divides—Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim—and even worse, by sometimes violent tribal differences, the Ghegs in the north, Tosks in the south.

After 500 years of Ottoman rule, Albania finally achieved independence in 1912, but the German prince installed by the great powers as king to stabilize the country fled in a year. In 1924, a northern tribal leader seized power and proclaimed himself King Zog I, his rule in equal parts comic opera, corrupt, and cruel. He survived 56 attempts on his life, once shooting it out with assassins in the Vienna Opera House, but made his fatal mistake in reneging on debts he owed Italy. Benito Mussolini landed five Fascists divisions in Albania on April 7, 1939.

A confused Albanian policeman asked the Italian troops for their passports. "We have none. We've come to occupy your country," an Italian officer answered. In five days, for five Italians and 15 Albanians killed, the Fascists did just that. Zog exited for Greece in a caravan of limousines with as much in gold and luxury items as he could carry. But the Albanians now had someone else to despise even more than Zog, and sporadic guerrilla resistance began.

After Mussolini entered World War II on the side of Hitler, the British sent a colonel into Albania in April 1941 to help the resistance, but he was soon captured. It would not be until April 16, 1943, that two more SOE officers, Lt. Col. Neil McLean and Captain David Smiley, parachuted into northern Greece and crossed the border.

Others would follow, including a former lieutenant in the Spanish Foreign Legion, Peter Kemp; Himalayan explorer Bill Tillman; and Reginald Hibbert, whose view of events in Albania in the years to come would put him bitterly at odds with his fellow SOE officers. "Now that we were on Albanian soil, we had achieved the first part of our mission," David Smiley wrote in a memoir, *Albanian Assignment,* decades later. "The next stage—getting in touch with Albanian guerrillas and encouraging them to fight the common enemy—was not to prove so easy."

SOE operations were hampered by woeful British ignorance about Albania. London had only a lower-level diplomatic presence there before the Italian occupation, and the main source of information had been an elderly Englishwoman who had lived there for 20 years.

Worse, the language was one of Europe's most ancient, obscure, and difficult. "We were mostly dependant on interpreters," Peter Kemp was to write, "whom we could trust neither to render our own words faithfully nor to give us a true picture of local reactions." While on a mission to the capital, Tirana, Kemp's SOE companion pulled out a handkerchief to blow his nose and their Albanian guide quickly yanked it from him. "No Albanian peasant would use a handkerchief," Kemp realized.

The mission's conduct and abil-

On November 28, 1944, the day Nazi rule ended in Albania, these guerrilla fighters pose under a sign that identifies their hometown. British efforts, led by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), to influence guerrilla operations in Albania met with only partial success at best.

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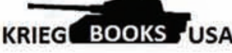

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Both: Imperial War Museum

Italian soldiers and equipment are unloaded from transport ships at the port of Durazzo, Albania, in 1939. The conquest of Albania by the Italians gave rise to the partisan movement that proved problematic not only for the Axis, but also for the British.

ity to navigate the labyrinth of Albanian politics were not helped by the strongly conservative bent of most of its members. After the war, Neil McLean became a Tory Member of Parliament on the party's fringe, while Peter Kemp was one of the few Englishmen to fight with Franco's side during the civil war in Spain. In September 1942, the Albanian Resistance had merged into a shaky Levizje Nacional Clirimtare (LNC, Council of National Liberation), but the dominant group in it had more in mind than just driving out the Italians.

The country's Communist Party had been founded in Tirana in secret, in November 1941. Its general secretary, Enver Hoxha, had been educated in Paris and, ironically for a Marxist, owned a tobacco shop. The military commander, Mehmet Shehu, had also fought in Spain—with the Loyalists, against Kemp's side.

Of these characters, Smiley wrote, "Hoxha had quite a sense of humor, and over a glass of raki could be cheerful and amusing, in contrast to his dour and morose companion, Mehmet Shehu.... He may have disliked us, but at least he concealed his feelings, whereas with Shehu, you could feel the hostility."

"This dilemma was our constant companion in our efforts to promote resistance: if we were to do our job properly, we were bound to put innocent people in jeopardy; they had to stay and face reprisals while we found safety in flight," wrote Kemp. "In the service of our country, we simply had to harden our hearts." So the British radioed for arms drops, joined in

attacks on the Italians, and helped the communists organize a partisan brigade.

Italy's sudden capitulation in July 1943, though, made the situation for Albania only worse. Needing Albania as a major source of chromium, the Germans rushed in two divisions. Then, the LNC's fragile cohesion finally came apart, Republicans forming the Balli Kombetar (BK, National Front), while Major Abas Kupi, the leader McLean and Smiley most favored, led Legalite, incredibly seeking the restoration of the despised King Zog.

The SOE leadership ended up seeing Hoxha as "the best of a very bad lot" and dropped most of its arms to him. Never mentioning Reginald Hibbert's name in his account, Smiley bitterly complained that the "BLOs [British Liaison Officers] attached to the partisans repeatedly told by them that Kupi was collaborating with the Germans, had absorbed these lies and signaled them."

The political infighting soon affected the fighting with the Germans. Smiley and BK personnel were preparing an ambush when communist partisans turned up and tried to muscle their way in charge.

"The object, without doubt, was to prevent the Balli Kombetar from carrying out an ambush that would give them credit in the eyes of the British," Smiley seethed. He angrily ordered them off "and a short while later my temper was cooled by the fine sight of a big German half-tracked troop carrier.... As the carrier drew closer, every one of us held his breath; then it went up on the mines with a flash of orange flame followed by a cloud of smoke, and the sound of the explosion echoed through the hills. I had taken a photograph as the mines exploded; by the force of the explosion, I estimated that all eight mines must have detonated at once. Once the smoke had cleared, everyone opened fire on the troop carrier; I exchanged my camera for the 20mm Breda, and was delighted to see several of my shots score direct hits. A few Germans jumped out of the carrier and tried to run back down the road but all were shot, and the others tried to take cover behind the carrier. In time, the shooting stopped and a silence followed only broken by the groans of some of the wounded."

Eighteen German soldiers died.

But when McLean, Smiley, and Kemp were preparing with the communists to ambush a large oncoming German column, Mehmet Shehu suddenly called it off. "Our battalion has been surprised by a German post on that hill," Kemp recalled Shehu's claim. "We must withdraw."

"Do you mean to tell me that 800 partisans cannot attack and wipe out a post of 20 Germans?" McLean raged. Shehu could not be budged, and the British had to settle for shooting up a solitary passing staff car.

"At that time, we attributed this fiasco to rank cowardice," Smiley wrote. "In fairness to Shehu, however, he was a brave man, and to the partisans themselves, we did not then know that Shehu had received a directive ordering him not to fight the Germans and Italians, but to preserve his brigade in readiness for fights with their political opponents that lay ahead."

In November 1943, McLean and Smiley were brought out of Albania by patrol boat for debriefing in Cairo while a new mission led by Brig. Gen. Edmund Davies parachuted in to take over. Davies got a rude introduction to guerrilla resistance, Albanian communist style, in his first encounter with Hoxha. "The military situation depends entirely on the political situation, so why will you not first give us your impression of world politics?" These were Hoxha's first words to Davies.

"Because I am a soldier and not a politician," was Davies's frustrated response. His aggravations continued to mount as his constant wrangling with the resistance groups to reunify and discipline them left him little opportunity to attack the Germans.

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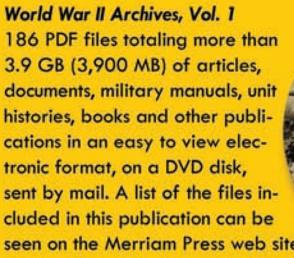

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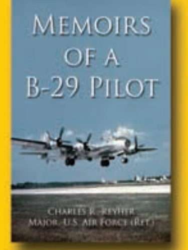

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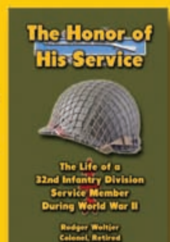

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"I felt that we could bring the country to a standstill with two brigades of British troops acting as guerrillas, or with half a dozen Commando units," Davies later complained. Instead, he was the one on the defensive as thousands of BK partisans defected to the Waffen SS to fight the communists, Abas Kupi unsuccessfully sought a truce with the Germans for their aid in his own struggle with Hoxha, and ruthless German counterinsurgency operations drove Davies and the resistance into the mountains for a harsh winter. Then on the morning of January 8, 1944, Davies and his mission were ambushed by renegade BK fighters.

Davies was wounded and was captured along with two other officers, ending up a prisoner in the high security Colditz facility. The mission chief of staff, Colonel Arthur Nicholls, and Captain Alan Hare fled into the snows, but Nicholls died of exposure and gangrene, the only SOE fatality in Albania, while Hare lost several toes before fleeing south.

Peter Kemp was also on the run. He had been sent into the Albanian province of Kosovo to organize Muslim separatists but had been betrayed. He never ascertained the identity of his betrayer and had to flee toward Macedonia.

"It was still snowing when we continued our journey in the darkness," he later wrote, "but the moonlight, filtering through the clouds, was reflected from the snow to diffuse a weird, pale light over the landscape. Soon we descended from the hills into a broad valley and followed the course of a river northwards over open meadows bounded by hedges.

"Crossing the flat, snow-covered ground in single file we must, I felt, be easily visible to any hostile patrols or sentries. The two Montenegrin partisans acted as scouts, moving about fifty yards ahead of us. Luckily they had sharp eyes.

"As we were crossing a field, they halted suddenly, then signaled us frantically towards the cover of a hedge. Crouching in the ditch beside it, I watched a file of men approaching on our left; I had counted a dozen of them when I felt a tug on my sleeve.

"'Tedeschi!' he hissed. 'Over there, too!' He pointed to a field, where I could make out another and larger party moving parallel with the first. 'But they haven't seen us—not yet.'

"Slowly, agonizingly slowly, the two German patrols stalked across the fields on either side of us. Silent and motionless we lay in the shallow ditch, holding our breath and sweating with anxiety....

"They plodded steadily past us, seeming to look neither to right nor left. We lay hidden for a full five minutes after the last files had disappeared into the night; then we moved forward in a series of bounds from hedge to hedge, floundering across the open fields as fast as we could pull our feet through the deep snow."

ABOVE: Enver Hoxha, the communist dictator of Albania, ruled with an iron fist for more than 40 years. BELOW: Often fickle with their loyalty, Albanian partisans meet with German officers in the rugged, mountainous country that proved as inhospitable to foreign influence as the partisans themselves.

Kemp crossed the border and was flown out. In April 1944, McLean and Smiley parachuted back into Albania with Major Julian Amery, son of a member of Churchill's cabinet and another future hard-right member of Parliament. They worked with Kupi to launch a series of attacks on the Germans in the north, hoping to earn him more arms from the SOE, but only a trickle dropped in.

In the meantime, Hoxha's army in central and southern Albania grew in the first half of 1944 from 5,000 to 20,000, and the day Smiley called "the blackest in the history of our mission" finally came, when Hoxha's forces attacked Kupi's. "Civil war had finally reached us," Smiley wrote. "All our high hopes of getting Kupi to fight the Germans had been shattered, for he would obviously have to move to protect his own region and its villages from the

ravages of the partisans.

"We marched for two days, passing through all the signs for preparation for civil war; Zogist bands were taking up positions, and in the distance, smoke could be seen rising from the Zogist villages which the partisans were burning down," Smiley recalled. He split off from McLean and Amery to make contact with other Legalite groups and had several close calls with the communists and the Germans, and even the British.

Smiley had to hide in a drain from partisans and was then alerted to exit a house he was sheltering in five minutes ahead of others. While riding with Legalite members in a car with his uniform on, a German sentry slowed them down but did not look inside the vehicle and waved them on.

Smiley was walking a back road with armed Legalite men, still in his uniform, when a lone German on a bicycle pedaled up behind them, got off, and walked alongside them almost a half hour before riding on! "My companions thought this a huge joke and Ramiz kept slapping his sides with laughter," Smiley recalled. "I often wonder who the German thought I was; perhaps he knew and did the only possible thing, for we were all armed and could easily have murdered him."

Smiley switched to an Albanian gendarmerie uniform and chanced hitching a ride with German soldiers in the back of a truck, fez and head hung low. The truck was attacked by Royal Air Force planes, and he had to join the Germans in hotfooting to cover. "We lay in the ditch as the fighters zoomed overhead, but luckily for us, the shower of bullets hit the road some way off, for the pilot had overshot his target," Smiley remembered. "The German in the ditch beside me shook his fist at the disappearing aircraft, and, to show there was no ill-feeling, I did the same."

Smiley soon joined up again with McLean and Amery, and they and the rest of the mission made for the coast as the communists demanded they turn themselves in for trial. "Our work in Albania was over, our mission had failed," a depressed Smiley wrote. "It was ironic that our main thoughts were now of an attack by the partisans, our former colleagues, rather than the usual threat from the Germans."

The mission was evacuated by sea on the nights of October 13 and 14, 1944. They had dispatched a message to London requesting that Abas Kupi be brought out with them, but a pro-communist SOE officer had blocked it. By the time a second message got through and was approved, Kupi had escaped on his own.

In November 1944, the Germans also withdrew, and within weeks Enver Hoxha was in control. "With a very small British and American intervention, we could have saved Albania for the West," Julian Amery was convinced. Closer to the events, Reginald Hibbert disagreed: "A revolutionary force was released in Albania in 1944 and that was the primary force which swept Enver Hoxha to power."

Until his death in 1985, Hoxha ran a regime as notorious for its bizarreness as brutality. He permanently maimed the landscape with over a million concrete bunkers and pillboxes. He declared Albania the world's only official atheist country, destroying every church and mosque, arresting every priest and imam. He broke with Russia, then China, as not communist enough. "Who disagrees with our leadership in some point will get a bullet into his head," threatened Mehmet Shehu, the prime minister. In 1981, he got one, officially a suicide.

When Neil McLean, David Smiley, Julian Amery, and British intelligence were next interested in Albania, it was to overthrow the communists. Between 1949 and 1954, in Operation Valuable, 200 trained exiles were landed or parachuted in to organize a revolt.

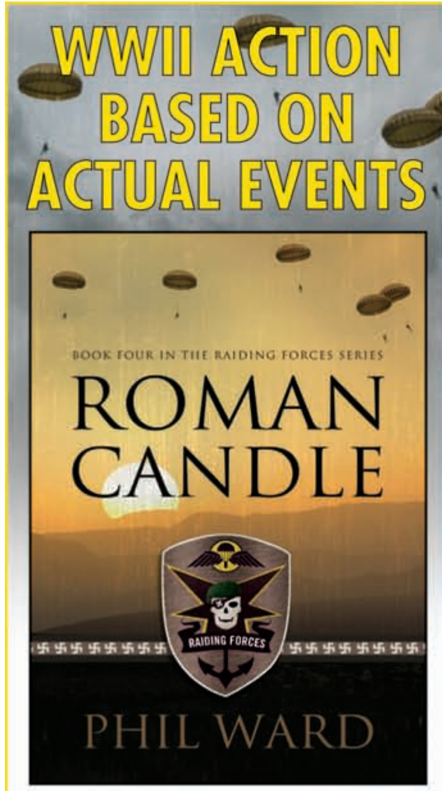
Except for a few escaping to Greece, the agents were killed, with over 1,000 members of their families executed as well in reprisal. Because he was involved in the early planning for Valuable, McLean, Amery, and Smiley always blamed the tragic fiasco on the notorious double agent Kim Philby.

Though Philby undoubtedly betrayed the existence of Valuable to the communists, he had gone on to Washington as liaison with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency before the first insertion and had no knowledge of the dates or locations of the following ones.

Ever the dissenter, Reginald Hibbert bluntly said, "It was a forlorn hope to suppose that the exiled followers of the nationalists who failed in 1944 would be able to raise a following against the iron rule of the Communist Party of Albania after six years of draconian social engineering."

When communism died in Albania, it was by sudden rioting in Tirana in December 1990, inspired inadvertently by those responsible for setting Albania on the tragic road from isolation to war and revolution, the Italians, through their television programming that Hoxha's successors unwisely allowed to be aired. □

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is a resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has previously written for WWII History *on the Spanish Blue Division, the Long Range Desert Group, the March on Baghdad, and the war in East Africa.*



Roman Candle is the Fourth in the Raiding Forces Series. Maj. John Randal has parachuted into Abyssinia to raise a guerrilla army. What he finds is a country stuck in the 19th century with a feudal system out of the Middle Ages. The parachute containing the radio malfunctioned leaving the major and RM Butch "Headhunter" Hoolihan cutoff, surrounded by 350,000 Italians, millions of homicidal natives and no way to arrange for the guns and Maria Theresa Thalers or for his recruits to be dropped in. How he accomplishes his mission is a classic tale of guerrilla war.

Download and read Chapter 1 of _Roman Candle_ at raidingforces.com.

Those Who Dare, Dead Eagles, Blood Wings and _Roman Candle_ are available for purchase or download at Amazon.com, Barnes&Noble or your local book store.

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George Strock/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

Korea Under the Rising Sun

Thousands of Koreans were forced to serve in the Japanese Army or provide labor during World War II.

THE FIRST RECORDED ENCOUNTER BETWEEN AMERICAN FORCES AND KOREANS in the Central Pacific during World War II came at Tarawa Atoll in November 1943. After four days of bloody fighting the Japanese fortified islet of Betio was brought under American control. The only survivors of the garrison were 17 Japanese soldiers and 129 Korean laborers who had helped build Tarawa's pillboxes, bunkers, and gun emplacements, though some of the Koreans may have actively participated in the fighting.

Little has been recorded of the support Korea provided to the defenders of the various island garrisons Japan had spread across the Pacific before and during the war, but how this Korean support came about was a tragedy in itself.

By 1941, Korea had been under Japanese rule for some 31 years, but the events leading to Japanese occupation began decades before. In 1873, there was considerable debate in Japan concerning whether or not to conquer Korea. One faction of the Japanese government insisted that Japan should confront Korea due to Korea's refusal to recognize the legitimacy of Emperor Meiji as head of the Empire of Japan, as well as to respond to insulting treatment meted out to Japanese envoys attempting to establish trade and diplomatic relations.

Three years later, the Japanese imposed the Treaty of Ganghwa, which opened three Korean ports to Japanese trade and granted extraterritorial rights to Japanese citizens. Japanese influence increased with the subsequent assassination of Korean Empress Myeongseong, also known as Queen Min, in 1895.

As a result of the struggle for control of northern China and Korea, a simmering rivalry between Russia and Japan eventually exploded into the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, which Japan won. Under the Treaty of Portsmouth, signed in September 1905, Russia acknowledged Japan's "paramount political, military, and economic interest" in Korea.

Under Japanese pressure the reigning Korean ruler, Emperor Gojong, was forced to relinquish his imperial authority and appoint the crown prince as regent. Japanese officials used this to force the accession of the new emperor, Sunjong, though it was never agreed to by Gojong. Sunjong thus became the last ruler of the Joseon Dynasty, which had been founded in 1392.

In May 1910, Japanese Minister of War Terauchi Masatake was given the mission of finalizing Japanese control over Korea after the previous treaties, the Japan-Korea Protocol of 1904 and the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1907, had formalized Korea as a protectorate of Japan and had established Japanese hegemony over Korean domestic politics. On August 22, 1910, Japan effectively annexed Korea with the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty signed by Lee Wan-Yong, prime minister of Korea, and Masatake, who became the first Japanese governor general of Korea. The governor general answered directly to the Japanese prime minister. All of the subsequent governor generals were high-ranking Japanese military officers.

Upon Emperor Gojong's death, anti-Japanese rallies took place across Korea, most notably involving the March 1st Movement of 1919. A declaration of independence was read in Seoul. An estimated two million people took part in these rallies. The Japanese responded by violently suppressing the protests. According to Korean records 46,948 were arrested, 7,509 killed, and

A Korean pressed into working as a slave laborer for the Japanese on the island of New Guinea receives medical treatment after his liberation. Thousands of Koreans were forced to construct installations and fortifications across the Pacific for their Japanese captors.

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ABOVE: Marching near the village of Chemulpo, Korea, these Japanese soldiers are advancing toward their Russian enemy during the Russo-Japanese War in September 1904. BELOW: Japanese influence on the Korean peninsula and eventual complete domination had its origin centuries earlier and increased with the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. In this photo, Japanese troops march toward the Korean capital of Seoul in 1905.

Library of Congress

15,961 wounded, while the Japanese placed the figures at 8,437 arrested, 553 killed, and 1,409 wounded.

In theory, the Koreans, as subjects of the Japanese emperor, enjoyed the same status as the Japanese, but in fact the Japanese government treated the Koreans as a conquered people. Until 1921 they were not allowed to publish their own newspapers or to organize political or intellectual groups.

With the Japanese occupation of the peninsula, many former Korean soldiers and other volunteers left for Manchuria and Primorsky Krai in Russia. Koreans in Manchuria formed resistance groups known as the Dongnipgun (Liberation Army), crossing the Korean-Chinese border to carry out guerrilla attacks against Japanese forces. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1932 and subsequent pacification of Manchukuo—the Japanese eventually creating a puppet government in Manchuria—deprived many of these resistance groups of their base of operations. They were forced to either flee west to China or to join communist-backed forces in Russia.

After 1937, when Japan launched the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) against China, the colonial Japanese government decided on a policy of mobilizing the entire country for war. Not only was the economy reorganized onto a war footing, but the Koreans were to be assimilated into the Japanese Empire. The government began to enlist Korean youths in the Japanese Army as volunteers in 1938 and later as conscripts in 1943. Worship at Shinto shrines became mandatory, and attempts to preserve a Korean national identity were discouraged.

Japanese rule was harsh, particularly after Japanese militarists began their expansionist drive. Internal Korean resistance virtually ceased in the 1930s as police and the military gendarmes imposed strict surveillance and punishments against antigovernment suspects. Most Koreans opted to pay lip service to the colonial Japanese government while some actively collaborated.

On December 9, 1941, the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, formed in opposition to Japanese rule under the presidency of Kim Gu, declared war on Japan and Nazi Germany. The provisional government brought together various Korean resistance groups such as the Korean Liberation Army, which was involved in combat on behalf of the Allies in China and parts of Southeast Asia. Tens of thousands of Koreans volunteered to be part of such groups as well as the National Revolutionary Army and the People's Liberation Army. The communist-backed Korean Volunteer Army (KVA) was established in Yenan, China, outside of the provisional government's control, from a core of 1,000 deserters from the Imperial Japanese Army. The KVA eventually entered Manchuria, where it recruited from the ethnic Korean population and became the Korean People's Army of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Among the noted Koreans that collaborated with the Japanese were Togo Shigenori, a prominent ethnic Korean who served Imperial Japan as a minister of foreign affairs and as a minister of Greater East Asia during the war, and General Hong Sa-ik (Kou Shiyoku), who served in the Imperial Japanese Army.

Even prior to the annexation of Korea, Japanese merchants had begun settling in towns and cities in Korea seeking economic opportunities. By 1910, the number of Japanese in Korea reached over 170,000, creating the largest overseas Japanese community in the world at the time.

From 1939, labor shortages in Japan resulting from the conscription of Japanese males led to official efforts to recruit Koreans to work in Japan, initially through civilian agents and later through coercion. As the labor shortage increased by 1942, Japanese authorities extended provisions of the National Mobilization Law to include the conscription of Korean workers for factories and mines on the Korean peninsula and in Manchukuo, and the involuntary relocation of workers to Japan.

Of some 5,400,000 Koreans conscripted by the Japanese for labor, about 670,000 were taken to Japan, including Karafuto Prefecture, present-day Sakhalin Island. Those who were brought to Japan were often forced to work in

coal mines, in military plants and factories, and on military construction, often under appalling and dangerous conditions. An estimated 60,000 died between 1939 and 1945 from harsh treatment, inhumane working conditions, and Allied bombing. The total deaths of Korean forced laborers in Korea and Manchuria was estimated between 270,000 and 810,000.

Beginning in 1938, Koreans both enlisted and were conscripted into the Japanese military as the first "Korean Voluntary" unit. Among notable Korean personnel in the Imperial Army was Crown Prince Euimin, who attained the rank of lieutenant general. Some Koreans who were former Japanese Army personnel later gained administrative positions in the postwar South Korean government. These included Park Chung Hee, who became president of South Korea; Chung Il-Kwon, prime minister from 1964 to 1970; and Paik Sun-Yup, South Korea's youngest general, famous for his defense of the Pusan Perimeter during the Korean War. The first 10 chiefs of staff of the South Korea Army were graduates of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy.

In 1938, the Japanese began accepting Korean volunteers into the army of Manchukuo, forming the Gando Special Force. This unit specialized in counterinsurgency operations against Communist guerrillas. The unit included such notables as General Paik Sun-Yup, who later served in the Korean War.

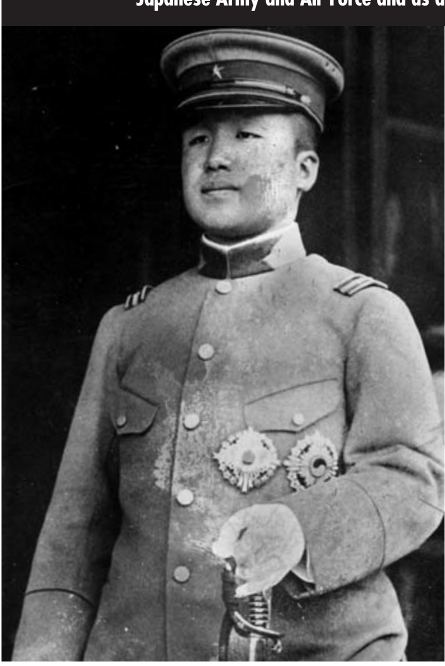
Japanese corporations operating under the direction of the Japanese military organized construction units to build military facilities. The Japanese Army and Navy also raised construction units composed of Koreans and led by Japanese officers to work on projects across the Central Pacific, building fortifications on island bases.

In 1944, Japan started the conscription of Koreans into the armed forces. All Korean males were drafted to either join the Imperial Japanese Army or work in military-related industry. Before 1944, approximately 18,000 Koreans were inducted into the Army. From 1944, about 200,000 Korean males were drafted into military service, the total number of Korean military personnel reaching 242,341, of which 22,182 died during the war.

In addition to a large portion of the male population being drafted into the military and construction units during the war, Korean women also became victims of the Japanese comfort women program, serving in Japanese military brothels. The estimated number of comfort women ranged from 10,000 to 200,000, which included Japanese women as well. There were reports that Japanese officials

Frederick Arthur McKenzie

These fierce guerrilla troops are among a number of Koreans who rebelled against Japanese rule in the early 20th century. This photo was taken in 1907, three years prior to the Japanese annexation that essentially made Korea a vassal of the powerful island nation. BELOW: Some prominent Koreans collaborated with their Japanese masters and even served in the Japanese armed forces during World War II. Crown Prince Eumin, younger brother of Emperor Sunjong, served in both the Japanese Army and Air Force and as a member of Japan's Supreme War Council.



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and local collaborators kidnapped or recruited poor rural women from Korea and other nations for sex slavery under the guise of offering them factory employment.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the history of Korea under the Japanese took a final and dramatic turn as the Korean people were brought to the end of a long period of darkness. However, this final stage would come at a terrible cost.

During the fighting in the Pacific, American soldiers and Marines reported that they frequently encountered Koreans within the ranks of Japanese units.

The U.S. advance across the Central Pacific began with the capture of Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands. The Japanese were well aware of the Gilberts' strategic location and had invested considerable time and effort in fortifying the islet of Betio. The garrison included the 7th Sasebo Special Naval Landing Force of 2,619 men, an elite Japanese marine-type unit. In order to bolster the island's defenses 1,247 men of the 111th Pioneers (construction troops) along with 970 men of the Fourth Fleet's construction battalion were brought to the island. Approximately 1,200 of the men in these two groups were Korean laborers.

The U.S. landing at Makin Atoll encountered a Japanese garrison of 798 troops along with a labor unit consisting of 276 men, "who had no combat training and were not assigned weapons or a battle station," according to one report. It was believed that most, if not all, of the members of the labor unit were Korean. Shortly after landing the Americans captured about 35 Koreans, and when the operation was completed a total of 105 prisoners had been taken, all but one of whom were noncombatant laborers.

During 1943-1945, Korean POWs taken by American forces in operations in the Central Pacific were brought to Hawaii and held in a camp on the island of Oahu. The camp, located in Honouliuli Gulch a little over three miles west of Pearl Harbor, was opened in March 1943. It was later renamed the Alien Internment Camp and eventually POW Compound Number 6.

Following action in the Gilberts, American forces moved on to the Marshall Islands. The

Continued on page 71

ON A DARKENED AIRFIELD AT 2230 HOURS ON JUNE 5, 1944, a reinforced company of British gliderborne infantry, D Company of the Second Battalion, Oxford & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Ox & Bucks), boarded gliders, prepared to start the invasion of France. Their commanding officer, Major John Howard, watched them in the night's dim, shuffling forward under the heavy load of their weapons and equipment. He recorded, "It was an amazing sight. The smaller chaps were visibly sagging at the knees under the amount of kit they had to carry."

There was more to their burden, however, than just Sten guns and spare ammunition. On their shoulders rested responsibility for securing the left flank of the entire Allied D-Day invasion force. A pair of small bridges was situated south-southeast of Sword Beach, the easternmost of the five landing points. If they remained in Axis hands, they provided fast access for German armored units to counterattack the beaches. If taken by the British, they could be used for the advancing British ground units. The mission of these glider troops was to seize the bridges in question. Major Howard's orders weighed heavily on his mind as they set out on their monumental mission: "Your task is to seize the [bridges] over R. Orne and canal ... and to hold them until relief…."

The preparation for this attack had been in the works long before Howard and his men boarded their gliders. Once the Allied command decided on the Normandy coastline for the invasion of France, planning began on how to secure the beaches and pave the way for the advance inland. On the invasion's left flank, attention quickly focused on a pair of bridges just a few miles northeast of the French city of Caen. The bridge over the river Orne allowed fast access for the invasion force to move east after landing. Conversely, it could allow German units to quickly move toward Sword Beach and attack the British 3rd Infantry Division as it struggled to get ashore. Just 470 meters west of the Orne Bridge sat a bridge over the Caen Canal, a man-

Glider Assault on Pe…

Imperial War Museum

A BOLD BRITISH GLIDER ASSAULT SEIZED A PAIR OF VITAL BRIDGES IN THE EARLY HOURS OF D-DAY.

Horsa gliders that transported British airborne troops to their D-Day objective, the bridge over the Caen Canal, lie broken in a field adjacent to the bridge. The glider pilots made their landings with pinpoint accuracy.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

gasus Bridge

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-300-1865-06; Photo: Speck

Two weeks prior to D-Day, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, commander of the German defenses in Normandy, inspects troops of the 21st Panzer Division. This inspection took place in the vicinity of the landing zone of the British 6th Airborne Division.

made waterway that flowed directly to Sword Beach. Together these crossing points were vital avenues to whichever army held them.

The east-west road that crossed the bridges led east to the village of Ranville, roughly 1,000 meters away, and then out to the countryside. To the west, the road crossed the canal bridge and came to a crossroads around 260 meters distant. This crossroad led north to Sword Beach or south toward Caen. On the west bank of the canal sat the village of Benouville.

Over time a plan formed to seize of the bridges using gliderborne infantry. There were certain advantages to using gliders for such an assault. They were quiet and would be towed by transport aircraft; the German occupation force was by now used to hearing Allied planes overhead and hopefully would not pay much attention to them. This would provide a cover for the incoming gliders and help achieve surprise. Also, using gliders kept the attacking force concentrated. Paratroopers could be scattered by wind or varying speed, altitude, and direction of their aircraft. Even a good airborne drop would require time for the parachutists to concentrate and move on their objective. A glider force could touch down already concentrated with one planeload of soldiers ready to move upon landing. If the gliders could land close together a large force could be quickly brought to bear.

The British 6th Airborne Division was charged with landing to the east of Sword Beach on D-Day and capturing the vital bridges. Like any airborne unit, it was not heavy enough to resist the sort of determined counterattacks the Germans could be expected to make and would need the more heavily equipped regular infantry and armored formations coming from the beaches to arrive as quickly as possible. The division contained two parachute brigades and one air landing (glider) brigade.

The force for the bridge assaults was drawn for the 6th Air Landing Brigade commanded by Brigadier H.K.M. Kindersley. The division commander, Maj. Gen. Richard Gale, went to his brigade commanders with the plan for the bridges, explaining to one of them, "The seizing of the bridges intact is of the utmost importance for the conduct of future operations ... the speedy overpowering of the bridge defenses will be your first objective and it is therefore to be seized by the coup de main party. You must accept risks to achieve this."

Gale asked Kindersley which of his company commanders might be up to the challenge. Kindersley chose Major John Howard, the commander of D Company.

Howard, a former enlisted man, had risen quickly through the NCO and officer ranks after the war began because of his ability and professionalism. He had completed one enlistment during the 1930s and was a policeman until recalled to duty after the war started. He impressed superiors with his skill and subordinates with his willingness to share their difficulties.

To see if Howard and his men had what it took, a three-day exercise was conducted, with the troops required to seize three bridges intact and hold them until relief arrived. They succeeded and ensured their place in the vanguard of the entire invasion force. After the exercise Howard was told what his mission would be and that D Company would certainly be "the first British fighting force to land on the continent."

They would not be alone, however. Gale wanted the coup de main effort to be reinforced, so Howard was told he could choose any two platoons from his regiment to be attached to his company. Also, a detachment of Royal Engineers from the division's 249th Field Company would provide the expertise needed to disable any demolitions placed on the bridges by the Germans. Howard chose two platoons from the Ox & Bucks B Company to join his unit.

The detailed plan for the attack came together over the coming months as the troops trained hard for their task, even though due to secrecy needs they did not know their exact mission. They would embark aboard six Horsa gliders that would each hold a platoon plus a small group of engineers. Howard wanted flex-

ibility in his plan and equipped his platoons so each could attack a bridge by itself if necessary. During training he envisioned the different ways things could go wrong and tried to compensate. Also, each platoon cross-trained so it could perform in another's role as needed. The training was arduous, but it bonded the men together. Howard also had good officers who shared hardships with their men and were aggressive and capable.

Along with their training, the glider troops benefited from access to constantly updated intelligence estimates. Photo reconnaissance flights provided timely images of the bridges and their defenses; over time the British noted improvements being made, such as the installation of an antitank gun and the construction of bunkers. Another invaluable source of information was the local French Resistance network. This included Madame Vion, who ran a maternity hospital on the south end of Benouville. She collected information from resistance operatives and passed it on to her contacts in Caen during her periodic trips there for medical supplies.

One of her primary sources of information was the conversation at the Café Gondree, located on the west bank of the canal near the bridge. The owners, Georges and Therese Gondree, simply kept their ears open and listened to the conversations of the various German soldiers who frequented the establishment. Therese was from Alsace and spoke German, while Georges spoke some English.

The intelligence effort gave them a fairly accurate picture of the bridge's defenses. About 50 troops guarded the two spans, drawn from the 736th Grenadier Regiment of the 716th Infantry Division. This unit was composed largely of conscripted men from German-occupied nations, such as Poles and Russians with some, mostly older, Germans mixed in. German NCOs and officers led the formation. The bridge defenses were commanded by Major Hans Schmidt.

From the layout of the defenses, the Germans expected any concerted attack on the bridges to come from the east. Most of the machine guns at each bridge were oriented to the east while the single antitank gun installed at the canal bridge was located on the east side as well. Several bunkers were also constructed, and trench systems radiated around the bridges for riflemen and machine gunners. Barbed wire entanglements were also emplaced, but these were mounted in such a way as to be easily movable.

Preparations had been made to destroy the bridges if necessary, but the explosives themselves had not been installed. This was due to fear of raids by the French Resistance which might try to blow up the bridges anyway. Some of these defenses, such as the antitank emplacement and the bunkers, were begun only the month before on orders of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, who toured the coastal defenses and found them wanting. He ordered a number of improvements throughout the area, including the upgrades to the bridge defense network.

Now, on the night of June 5, the six gliders hung from tow lines attached to Handley Page Halifax bombers, the whole group making its way across the English Channel. Three platoons would land at the canal bridge in a field to its southeast: 25 Platoon, led by Lieutenant "Den" Brotheridge, would lead off with three men detailed to throw grenades through the embrasures of the bunker on the east bank, thought to be where the demolition controls were kept. The remainder of 25 Platoon would cross the bridge itself and seize the western side. Lieutenant David Wood's 24 Platoon would remain on the east side and clear all the German positions there. Finally, in the last glider to land, Lieutenant R. "Sandy" Smith's 14 Platoon would follow Brotheridge's men across to the west side and reinforce them.

The other three platoons would land near the river bridge to its northwest. Lieutenant Tony Hooper's 22 Platoon was tasked to overrun the defenses and swarm the east side of the bridge. The men of 23 Platoon under Lieutenant H.J. "Todd" Sweeney would stay on the west side and take hold of the defenses there while Lieutenant Dennis Fox's 17 Platoon in the last Horsa would reinforce the first two groups.

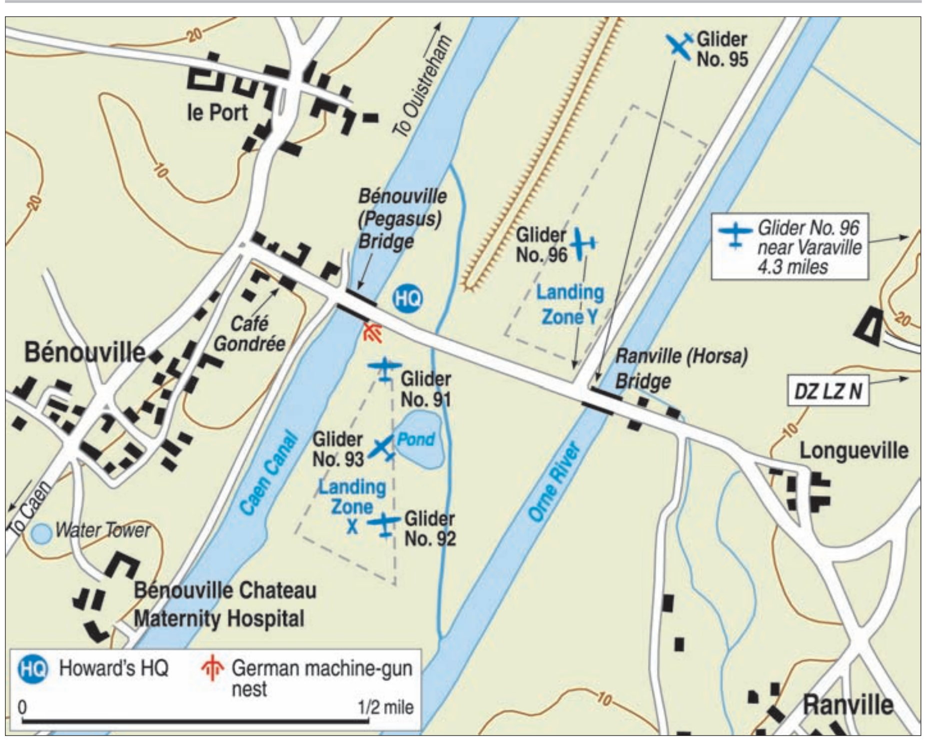
The sappers attached to each platoon would

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Taken some time after D-Day, this photograph depicts the bridge over the Caen Canal and the Café Gondree on the left bank. The café was turned into an aid station shortly after the action near Pegasus Bridge began. BELOW: Hamilcar gliders of the British 6th Airborne Division land near the town of Ranville, France, on June 6, 1944. These gliders are carrying Tetrarch light tanks to support the offensive operations of the airborne troops.

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Photographed a month after its heroic seizure by soldiers of the British 6th Airborne Division on D-Day, Pegasus Bridge is quiet and appears to bear few scars from the fight. Two Horsa gliders are visible at right, still lying in the field where they landed on D-Day. BELOW: The coordinated attack by elements of the 6th Airborne Division in the predawn hours of D-Day was intended to take the German defenders of Pegasus Bridge by surprise. The seizure of the bridge was accomplished according to plan and in no small part due to the accuracy of the glider landings.



Map © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

disable any explosives on the bridges while the glider pilots would unload and distribute the extra ammunition and equipment. Once taken, the code words "Ham and Jam" would be sent to confirm the seizure of the bridges. With both in British hands, the glider infantry would hold until relieved by the 7th Battalion, 5th Parachute Brigade, whose commander would take over when he arrived.

As the platoons sat in their gliders, the soldiers tried to pass the time by singing. Private Wally Parr led the group with a song called "Abby, Abby, My Boy." Parr had been in the company practically since the beginning and was once almost RTU'd (Returned To Unit) for a disciplinary infraction. Howard had personally intervened on Parr's behalf, believing the man would be an asset once in action. Parr stayed in the company but lost his corporal's stripes. Now, with his loud, cockney-accented voice, he sang one song after another.

In the front of the glider, Staff Sergeant Jim Wallwork concentrated on piloting the aircraft once it was free of the bomber. A series of turns had to be made during the descent, exactly on time, or the glider could wind up miles off course. Next to him co-pilot Staff Sergeant John Ainsworth held a stopwatch to time each turn and phase of the landing. The other glider pilots likewise prepared for their landings.

Seated nearby, Private Willy Gray had a much more serious problem. Before taking off he helped himself to plenty of tea and a bit of rum and now had to urinate badly. With nothing to do for it, he joined in the singing. Taking a break from his own singing, Parr asked loudly, "Has the major laid his kit yet?" On every training flight, Major Howard had suffered from airsickness and experienced the natural result. For whatever reason, this time his troubled stomach was calm, and its contents remained in his belly. Howard took the joke well and laughed with the rest of the glidermen.

Finally, at 0007 hours, June 6, 1944, it was time to cast off the tow line. The bombers roared off for their diversionary attack on Caen, and the gliders began their descent toward the bridges. At three minutes and 42 seconds, Ainsworth said simply, "Now!" and Jim Wallwork turned the glider to starboard. The glider lost altitude rapidly, and seconds later Ainsworth gave the signal for a second right turn that brought the glider onto course for the landing field next to the canal bridge. At first they could see nothing ahead of them, only the antiaircraft searchlights and tracer fire behind them in Caen, firing on the bombers.

Then, just as in their training, there it was. The bridge with its distinctive shape, the bunker, the antitank gun, and fields around it all were clearly visible. The barbed wire sat on the north side of the landing strip. During training Howard told Wallwork he wanted the nose of the glider right against the wire. The pilot was dubious as to whether it could be done but promised he would do his best. At 0016 hours, he did just that. The glider touched ground and skidded across the landing field, coming to a halt right at the wire.

The aircraft stopped so suddenly both pilots were thrown out the front, crashing through the windscreen and landing in front of the glider. In the rest of the glider, 25 Platoon sat stunned for a few seconds. Major Howard was unconscious for just a moment. His seatbelt had broken, throwing him forward where he hit his head on the ceiling. The impact forced his helmet down over his eyes. When he came to, he thought he was blind for a moment.

Behind him, Lieutenant Brotheridge opened the glider's door and told a nearby Bren gunner, "Gun Out!" The platoon quickly recovered and got out. The bridge was a mere 30 yards

away. Private Gray, also carrying a Bren gun, charged toward the bridge; his mission was to clear a barn on the west side. As he neared the span he saw a German soldier and fired a burst at him. The enemy soldier went down, and Gray carried on across the bridge, firing as he went. He reached the barn and tossed in a grenade before emptying the rest of his magazine into the structure. When he went inside to check, it was empty.

Meanwhile, Wally Parr's mission was to knock out the machine-gun bunker with grenades. His had gone so dry that his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. He finally freed it by shouting, "Come out and fight, you square-headed bastards!" By the time he got onto the bridge, he had recovered. Now shouting "Ham and Jam!" he went to the bunker, opened the door, and threw in a grenade. When he heard someone still alive inside, Parr pulled the door open again and sprayed the interior with his Sten gun.

As Wally Parr was clearing his bunker, Lieutenant Den Brotheridge was leading his platoon across the bridge. Someone on the German side fired a flare which now hung over the scene. Perhaps the flare's light exposed the young officer to enemy view or it may have been simple bad luck, but just then a burst of machine-gun fire lashed out across the bridge. A bullet hit Brotheridge in the neck, and he fell to the ground mortally wounded. So intent were his men on the attack no one noticed he had fallen until moments later.

Wally Parr later recalled just reaching the café when someone called out, "Where's Denny?" He looked around and saw someone lying in the roadway. Running back to him, Parr discovered it was Brotheridge. The private was struck by the idea of his lieutenant spending so much time preparing for this night only to die in the first minutes. "My God!" he thought. "What a waste!"

To the German sentries guarding the bridge that night, the attack was overwhelming. Private Vern Bonck, a young Polish conscript, had just turned over his post to Private Helmut Romer, an 18-year-old from Berlin. Bonck ran into another Polish draftee, and the two headed off to visit a late-night bar. Romer and the other sentry now on duty were to face the British attack. The antitank gun was unmanned, and the soldiers in the bunker and trenches dozed at their positions. They had ignored the antiaircraft fire and distant bombing; such things were commonplace by now. They had dismissed the noise made by the glider landing as falling wreckage from a bomber, again not uncommon.

There was no mistaking what they saw next. Dark, screaming figures raced out of the darkness, faces blackened, firing automatic weapons. The young Romer did the only thing he could; he turned and ran the other way, shouting "Paratroopers!" as he ran past the other sentry, who apparently fired the flare before being shot down, possibly by Brotheridge. The soldiers in the bunker and trenches were quickly overwhelmed.

A short distance up the road leading west, veteran German paratrooper Sergeant Heinrich Hickman heard the weapons fire and recognized it as British. He had been out collecting some soldiers on guard duty and was on his way back to his unit. He told two of the soldiers to get out of their car and take the right side of the road while he and the other two took the left. They had crept to within 50 meters or so of the bridge when Hickman spotted the British soldiers advancing toward him. What he saw frightened even him. He remembered that it was "at night-time when you see a Para running with a Bren gun, and the next with a Sten, and no cover round my back, just me and four youngsters who had never been in action. So I could not rely on them—in those circumstances, you get scared.... So I pull my trigger, I fire."

His first target was Billy Gray, who was just reloading after spraying the barn. Gray fired back, but neither hit the other. The British soldier ducked back into the barn, so Hickman shifted his fire toward the bridge. Inside the barn, Gray finally took a moment to empty his bursting bladder. Outside, Hickman expended the rest of his ammunition and realized it was time to go. Motioning to the four privates, they all got back into their car and raced off toward Caen. With the bridge in British hands his 15-minute trip back to his unit would now take six hours as he diverted around Caen.

At the bar, Vern Bonck rushed out into the street with his fellow Pole when the firing started. They ran up the street to the intersection west of the bridge. They took one look at the pitched battle and ran south on the road toward Caen. After running a while they stopped and talked about what to do. Their conclusion was simple; the pair fired all their cartridges and ran back into Benouville. There, they reported to their superiors that enemy paratroopers had attacked the bridge and that they had fought until running out of ammunition before retreating to make their report.

By now the other gliders had landed and more British troops surged onto the bridge. The second glider, containing Lieutenant David Wood's 24 Platoon, skidded to a halt mere yards from the first. It broke in two pieces, and Wood was thrown out onto the ground, though he managed to keep a grip on the bucket of hand grenades he was carrying. On the ground next to him were Private Harry Clark and several others. Fortunately, none of the grenades detonated. They moved off, and Clark remembered helping to clear the trenches. He ran past an abandoned MG34 machine gun, an unfired belt of ammunition hanging from its feed tray.

"There was a lot of firing going on and a lot of shouting," Clark said. "We cleared the trenches on the other side very quickly ... nothing really in the way of strong opposition."

Imperial War Museum

Glider troops of the 6th Airborne Division assemble near their wrecked glider in a field outside the town of Ranville. Moments earlier, the glider had careened through a stone wall during landing. Many of the casualties sustained by the glider troops were due to rough landings.

The third glider, carrying Lieutenant Sandy Smith's 14 Platoon, had a hard landing as well. It bounced heavily and sent Smith flying through the cockpit Perspex. He landed in front of the glider, stunned. Luckily, Lance Corporal Madge came up to him and said, "Well, what are we waiting for, Sir?" Somehow, that snapped Smith back into focus, and he led his able men toward the bridge. Several of his men were injured and stayed in the glider for the time being, including Captain John Vaughan, the group's medical officer. Tragically, Lance Corporal Greenhalgh, likely out of his senses as well, wandered into an undetected marsh pond near the glider and drowned.

As Smith moved onto the bridge limping from an injured knee, a German threw a grenade at him. A fragment from the blast struck the officer in the wrist, and the German tried to flee. "I saw him climbing over the wall ... I shot him as he was going over—I made certain too. I gave him quite a lot of rounds, firing from the hip—it was very close range," Smith recalled. Madge ran up and asked if he was all right. Smith inspected his torn wrist and replied. "Christ! No more cricket!"

Smith moved on and was soon outside the Café Gondree. Upstairs, Georges poked his head out to see what was happening. Smith saw him and in the heat of the moment fired at him. Luckily, the fire went high and the Frenchman ducked in time. He took his wife and daughters to the cellar to await the battle's conclusion. A short time later there was a knock at the café door. Georges opened it and saw two British soldiers in black face paint. They asked in French if there were any Germans in the building. After telling them there weren't, the café owner beckoned them inside. There, he took the apprehensive men toward the cellar, using gestures to convey his family was down there.

Finally, one of the Englishmen must have realized what Georges meant, because he told his comrade, "It's all right, chum." When the Frenchman realized they were speaking English, he began crying for joy. His wife and children began kissing them until their faces were smudged with the black camouflage paint. Wally Parr recalled later giving one of the daughters, five-year-old Arlette, a chocolate bar. It was the first she had ever had.

Imperial War Museum

The airborne troops holding Pegasus Bridge were instructed to hold until relieved. These Royal Marine Commandos march through the town of Colleville-sur-Orne en route to the bridge and the relief of the lightly armed airborne soldiers.

Within a short time the café was converted into an aid station. Casualties were brought into the main room while the dining table became a makeshift operating table. Captain John Vaughan would practice his skills here aided by Therese Gondree, who was a trained nurse. Out in the yard Georges grabbed a shovel and dug up some 90 bottles of champagne he had buried when the German occupation began in 1940. This he began giving out to whichever British troops came to the café. As the day went by many of the glidermen found an excuse to go to the café and get their free drink.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Wood thought his platoon had finished clearing the buildings near the bridge and had started back to report to Major Howard with his platoon sergeant and batman. As they moved off, a hidden German fired a burst of submachine gun fire that managed to hit all of them. Wood collapsed with a wound to the leg. Luckily, the platoon medic, Lance Corporal Harris, came along quickly and treated him. Wood recovered, but the injury left him with one leg slightly shorter than the other.

Howard, who had set up a command post in the trenches near the bridge, initially was unaware he had lost two of the platoon commanders so early in the fight. His radioman, Corporal Tappenden, was with him. Howard first learned of the loss of Den Brotheridge. The loss of a key leader was only exacerbated by the fact the lieutenant's wife Margaret was pregnant and due to deliver any day. Before long he learned all three of his officers were wounded or injured to some degree. Still, the canal bridge was in British hands.

At the Orne River Bridge, the first glider to land carried 23 Platoon under Lieutenant "Todd" Sweeney. Unfortunately, the glider had struck an air pocket on the way down and landed hundreds of yards from the bridge, perhaps as many as 1,300 yards by one account. Its occupants had no choice but to unload and make for the bridge as quickly as possible. The glider with Lieutenant Fox's 17 Platoon had better luck, at least in the landing. The touchdown was smooth, and Fox jumped up to open the door but it would not budge no matter how hard he pulled on it.

Then, Sergeant "Wagger" Thornton came up beside him and said, "You just pull it forward, Sir." In his excitement Fox had been tugging the wrong way. With the door now open the soldiers poured out, but another problem arose. A soldier, Tommy Clare, did not have the safety properly engaged on his Sten gun. When he hit the ground the weapon was jarred and fired a burst into the air. Quickly the platoon formed up under the wing of the glider and listened.

Quiet greeted them and Fox said simply, "To hell with it, let's get cracking." The platoon moved out, and almost immediately a German machine gun opened fire from the far bank. Wagger Thornton was thinking ahead, however. He had already set up a 2-inch mortar. He put two bombs on the machine-gun position, and the crew fled into the dark as British soldiers sprinted across the bridge. One of them took over the now abandoned weapon and started firing at its former crew. Within a matter of seconds, the river bridge was also in

British hands, this time without any casualties.

Minutes later, Sweeney and 23 Platoon arrived. The two lieutenants gathered to confer. Sergeant Thornton recalled Sweeney asking Fox what was happening. Fox, recalling their training back in England, replied, "The exercise went very well, but I can't find no bloody umpires to find out who's killed and who's alive!" A message was sent to Howard via radio reporting the seizure of the bridge intact.

There was still no sign of the third glider, however, and ultimately there would not be. Carrying Lieutenant Hooper's 22 Platoon along with the mission's second-in-command, Captain Brian Priday, the last glider flew off course. It landed some eight miles away at the Varaville Bridge. So now Howard and his men had completed the first part of their mission. They had seized the bridges. Now they had to hold them with one platoon missing and several of their officers wounded, missing, or dead.

Considering this, Howard modified his plan. He felt the biggest threat to his position came from the west. The British 6th Airborne was landing in the area to the east of the river bridge and would soon saturate it, providing a level of protection. Indeed, at 0050 hours, the first wave of paratroopers flew overhead and dropped to the east around Ranville. The men of Company D had a front row seat as tracer fire and searchlight beams mixed with the descending parachutes. Meanwhile, radioman Corporal Tappenden started sending the signal, "Ham and Jam," signifying both bridges were captured intact. After frustrating minutes of transmission, finally an acknowledgement was received. Howard ordered 17 Platoon to the canal bridge to bolster the defense.

When they arrived, Howard pushed them to the road intersection west of the bridge, where armored vehicles had been heard moving. Each glider carried a PIAT antitank weapon, but at the time only one could be found in working order. It was given to 17 Platoon with a few rounds of ammunition. Sergeant Thornton took the weapon and made ready. It was now about 0200 hours.

As the British soldiers took cover around the intersection, three German armored vehicles rumbled down the road in the darkness. Thornton took a position 30 yards from the T-junction and watched as the armored vehicle began moving cautiously toward the bridge. The Englishman later reported he was "shaking like a leaf" and it was hard to see. Nevertheless, he took careful aim and fired at the looming black shape. The spring-loaded spigot in the PIAT launched its bomb straight into the side of the enemy vehicle. Immediately, an enormous explosion shattered the night air and flames rose into the gloom. Four crewmen bailed out of the vehicle, and Wagger's assistant on the PIAT opened fire on them. A fifth man was apparently trapped inside the flaming wreckage. The other two vehicles beat a hasty retreat the way they had come as the wreck continued to burn for over an hour.

Imperial War Museum

Partially concealed in a ditch, glider troops of the 6th Airborne Division guard a crossroads near Ranville on June 7, 1944. Their glider is seen across the road where it landed the previous day.

Later reports variously identified the armored vehicle as a PzKpfw. IV tank, a captured French Char B1 tank, or a half-track. The unit identified as the first to reach the bridge in these vehicles was probably Panzer Pioneer Company 1. Such a unit would probably not have had tanks, but easily could have had half-tracks. If they were loaded down with explosives and mines, as an engineer vehicle would be, it would explain the pyrotechnic display of burning and exploding ordnance. Whatever the case, the Germans made a mistake trying to advance with armor unsupported by infantry.

To the east at the river bridge, the glidermen were also meeting the Germans. Some of Sweeney's 23 Platoon spotted a group of soldiers moving along the riverbank toward the bridge. Since the British 6th Airborne had landed, a challenge was given since it was expected the paras would gather at the bridge. A reply was heard, but it was in German. The defenders opened fire, wiping out the whole group. Sadly, when the platoon checked after daylight, one of the dead was found to be a British Para, a pathfinder apparently captured and brought along.

Shortly after the German patrol was wiped out, the sound of an armored vehicle was heard approaching from the east. An armored attack was of great concern to Sweeney. Like his comrades at the canal bridge, he had only a single PIAT. Within moments a German half-track came down the road followed by a motorcycle. Sweeney's troops were hidden in the ditches alongside the road and watched as it approached. As it passed, the British opened fire, peppering the vehicle, but it continued across the bridge. The British troops on the other side also opened fire, and a Corporal Jennings threw a grenade into the open topped half-track as it passed him. The German vehicle veered, crashing into the ditch.

With the action over, the British checked the vehicle and found a wounded German, none other than the commander of the bridge defenses, Major Schmidt. Wounded in the leg, he was taken for medical attention by Captain Vaughan. Schmidt spoke good English and proceeded to harangue the doctor with threats of Hitler throwing the Allies back into the sea. Afterward, he begged to be shot for having failed in his duties. Finally, Vaughan gave him a shot of morphine; within minutes Schmidt was much calmer and even thanked the doctor for treating him. An alternate version of the story had Schmidt arriving at the bridge in a staff car after a night with his mistress, but that version turned out to be untrue.

Starting at 0300 hours, paras of the 7th Battalion, Parachute Regiment began trickling in to

bolster the defenses. One of them was Lieutenant Richard "Sweeney" Todd, like the earlier mentioned Sweeney also nicknamed for the murderous barber (at the time, any British soldier named Todd or Sweeney seemed to earn the sobriquet). He and his paras began to relieve the glider troops, many of whom were sent to reinforce elsewhere. A number of them were sent to man the German antitank gun mounted in its defensive emplacement, called "Tobruk," on the east side of the canal bridge.

Wally Parr was one of those on the gun. Quickly they discovered a warren of tunnels. Using a flashlight, Parr searched the tunnel under the gun and found a shaking, frightened German soldier hiding under a blanket. Nearby, Sergeant Thornton found three German soldiers sleeping in an underground barracks, rifles stacked nearby. Thornton removed the rifles, and Lieutenant Fox went to rouse the captured Germans. He pulled the blanket off the first man and said repeatedly in German, "Komm!" The sleepy German, thinking it was a friend joking with him, responded with an expletive.

Wagger Thornton collapsed in laughter at the spectacle, while Fox, taken aback, left the job to his amused sergeant. Thornton alerted the Germans to the seriousness of their plight with a short burst from his Sten gun. One German prisoner could not believe what had happened but eventually wound up sharing pictures of his family.

With sunrise, enemy snipers began firing on anything that moved around the canal bridge. A medic attending to Lieutenant Smith was shot through the chest as he stood up, crying "Take my grenades out!" He was worried another shot might explode the deadly little bombs on his chest harness. Thornton found two more prisoners, who turned out to be Italian slave laborers. Howard ordered them released and given food. To the surprise of the British, the two Italians went out to the landing field, now littered with Horsa gliders, and began putting up the antiglider poles they had been ordered to install by the Germans.

Overhead, a pair of Spitfire fighters flew by at 0800 hours, their pilots seeing the recognition signals the British laid out to show they had seized the bridges. One of the fighters dropped a package of the early edition newspapers from England. None of them mentioned the landings, but Howard recalled his men being more interested in the comic strip adventures of the character Jane. An hour later, Maj. Gen. Gale came walking down the road with two of his brigadiers, Nigel Poett of 5th Parachute Brigade and Hugh Kindersley of 5th Air Landing Brigade.

Minutes after the officers arrived, Howard's men faced their next threat, this time from the water. A patrol boat approached down the canal from the north, armed with a 20mm cannon. When it got within 50 yards, Corporal Claude Godbold fired a PIAT round striking the boat behind the wheelhouse. It slewed over to the bank, and the crew, including its fanatical Nazi commander, an insult-spewing teenager, was taken prisoner. Eventually a fed-up British soldier shut the boy up by hitting him in the shoulder with a rifle butt.

As the German boat crew was marched off to captivity, a second boat advanced from the south. Parr and the men manning the antitank gun were trying to get it operational. They had figured out how to load it but were still having trouble with the firing mechanism when one of the men simply tried a button and sent a round downrange. Reloading, they turned the gun on the boat but missed with their first shot. Adjusting, they fired a second round, which hit the boat now some 300 yards distant. The enemy craft turned around and withdrew, but not before Parr and company gave it a parting shot, another hit.

Now the newly formed gun crew was getting used to its weapon. Parr spotted a water tower he thought was a perfect spot for the enemy to observe the bridges. He put two rounds

Royal Marine Commandos dig trenches and prepare defensive positions near Pegasus after relieving the glider troops who had taken the bridge across the Caen Canal hours earlier. Several of the gliders used by the airborne troops are visible in this photo, and the damage to the nose of one of the aircraft is prominent.

AP/ TopFoto / The Image Works

through it to the cheers of his fellow soldiers. Water gushed from the four small holes left by the round's entry and exit; they had fired armor-piercing shot, which held no explosive filler. Parr next turned his attention to a chateau to the south. Suspecting it as well, he shouted "Number 1 gun, fire!" and proceeded to put three rounds into the building's roof.

Howard was nearby and heard the shout, which he found odd considering there was only one gun in the area to begin with. Quickly he ordered Parr to cease fire; the chateau was actually the maternity hospital run by the local resistance leader, Madame Vion. After a while his fellow soldiers became annoyed with Parr for all his shooting; each time the cannon fired it attracted a swarm of bullets in return. Howard ordered him to stop firing.

At 1000 hours, the men of D Company saw a rare occurrence on D-Day, the appearance of a German aircraft overhead. The fighter roared down toward the bridge, sending the infantrymen scrambling for cover. The German pilot released a bomb that soared down, hit the bridge, bounced off, and splashed into the canal. Howard, having taken cover in the pillbox, was very impressed by the pilot's accuracy but relieved his ordnance had been a dud.

Midday came and went, and D Company grimly held onto the bridge despite the incoming fire. Still, no concerted attack by forces materialized. With the airborne landings, the beach assaults, and everything else being thrown at them on June 6, mounting an attack to retake the bridges proved beyond the Germans that day. At 1330 hours, a few of the glidermen heard bagpipes. When they said so, several of their comrades scoffed at them, but after a few minutes the sound grew louder and closer. It was the 1st Special Service Brigade commanded by Lord Lovat. Since radio communication was spotty at best, he had posted piper Bill Millin at his side, knowing the bagpipe would be a good recognition signal. Lieutenant Sweeney recalled a D Company man standing up and playing a bugle in return.

Within minutes Lovat was shaking hands with Howard, who apologized for the incoming mortar fire. Apparently Howard thought it was coming from the area of the maternity hospital but had orders not to fire on it. The commandos began running over the canal bridge, where several were hit by the ever-present snipers. It was a hard crossing for the commandos, but at least now the linkup between the landing forces and the glider troops had taken place. Howard's force would remain at the bridge, but the pressure had slackened somewhat with the arrival of Lovat's troops.

Imperial War Museum

Three days after it was secured by airborne troops on D-Day, the bridge over the Caen Canal allows British vehicles to cross the waterway. The span was later renamed Pegasus Bridge in honor of the heroic airborne assault and referencing the insignia of the 6th Airborne Division.

As afternoon turned to evening, German sniping and indirect fire were still coming in but lacked the strength to threaten D Company's position. Just before nightfall, a massive British glider drop occurred, hundreds of them landing nearby. The bombers towing them dropped supply canisters from their bomb bays. Soon afterward, friendly soldiers riding in jeeps came pouring down the road and crossed the bridge on their way east. It was all a welcome sight.

Even more welcome was relief, which came a few hours later, not long before midnight. The 2nd Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment marched up to the bridge, and Howard turned the defense over to them. Company D had completed its mission. They were among the first Allied soldiers to land in France on D-Day and the first to enter combat with the Germans. It was a very impressive job for the company's first time in combat. In their honor, the canal bridge was renamed Pegasus Bridge in recognition of the unit's shoulder patch, while the river bridge became known as Horsa Bridge. Major Howard was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his actions and leadership.

Months after the battle, Wally Parr was reading an American magazine that contained an article about the battle for the bridge. It mentioned how the dastardly Germans, in their cruelty, had shelled the local maternity hospital during the battle. He would later say, "This was the first and last time I had shelled pregnant women and newborn babies."

The seizure of the bridges was featured in Cornelius Ryan's postwar book *The Longest Day,* widening publicity of this action. When the film version of the book was made in 1962, the role of Major Howard went to actor Richard Todd, the former para lieutenant who was at the bridge on June 6.

The Gondrees continued to run their café and served free drinks to veterans of D-Day each year on June 6. The café and bridge area are now considered national monuments, and a museum is nearby. The bridge itself was replaced when the canal was widened postwar, but the original bridge sits at the museum. Also on display are a Horsa glider and Major Howard's beret along with various weapons and relics related to the battle. It is a fitting honor to the memory of a small group of men who risked so much doing their part to liberate France from the Nazi yoke. □

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Cargo pilots flying the treacherous route from Indian to China had to contend with Japanese fighters staged at the key town of Myitkyina. **BY JON DIAMOND**

Japanese Fighters Launch OPERATION TSUZIGIRI

WHY WAS MYITKYINA SUCH AN IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE IN THE reconquest of Burma in 1943 through 1944 for the Allies and especially among them, Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell?

After the inglorious Allied retreat through Burma in early 1942, with the ensuing capture of that entire country by Japanese forces, China was to become wholly isolated from resupply save for the dangerous air route over the Himalayas called The Hump. At a press conference, Stilwell made the now famous statement: "I claim we got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it is humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back, and retake it."

Coincidental with the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from France in June 1940 was the "voluntary closure" of the Burma Road by the British under Japanese coercion. This occurred after the Vichy government allowed the Japanese to occupy northern Indochina, effectively isolating China completely. The Burma Road ran from Lashio, south of Myitkyina, through the mountains to Kunming in China and up to Chunking. The road was constructed through the efforts of several hundred thousand Chinese laborers and wound through high mountain ranges and their low-lying valleys as well as across two rivers, the Mekong and Salween.

Although primitive from a civil engineering standpoint, the Burma Road was nonetheless one of Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek's last conduits for resupply since he had already lost the coast of eastern China to the Japanese. Thus, the British closure of the Burma Road severely impeded the flow of supplies to Chiang's new capital.

The loss of Rangoon within two to three months of the start of hostilities and then the remainder of Burma severely impeded Allied operations in Asia. China was usually supplied first by ship at Rangoon, then by rail to Lashio, and finally by truck convoy over the Burma Road to Kunming. With Rangoon now under Japanese control, this supply chain was broken. Without military assistance, China would be forced to surrender,

In the painting ***Nowhere to Hide*** by artist Roy Grinnell, American transport aircraft flying the treacherous Hump across the Himalayas are attacked by Japanese fighters. The Japanese were determined to interdict Allied supply flights from India to China.

Roy Grinnell

and Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) forces could be diverted to other Pacific war zones.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) at their Trident and Quadrant Conferences in Washington and Quebec, respectively, established a need for a land operation to capture northern Burma to improve the air route and establish overland communications with China with a target date of mid-February 1944. Another goal was to continue to build up and increase the air routes and air supplies to China and to develop air facilities with a view to keeping China in the war. Stated succinctly, all parties in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater were clamoring for more supplies and war matériel.

National Archives

This majestic photo of the Himalayas, taken from a window of a Douglas C-47 transport plane, also portrays the treacherous nature of the flights across the world's tallest mountain range from India to China. Allied planes used the air bridge when Japanese troops cut land routes.

However, it was apparent in 1942-1943 that an airlift alone would be inadequate for an enlarging force to go on the offensive in China, let alone to keep Chiang's government supplied to the minimum degree necessary to remain in conflict with Japan.

To accomplish the aims of the CCS, the capture of Myitkyina in north Burma became of paramount importance. Myitkyina, at the junction of the Mogaung and Hukawng Valleys, lies at the southern tip of the Hump, which U.S. cargo planes of the Air Transport Command (ATC) had to fly over in their trek from air depots in India to their terminals at Yunnanyi and Kunming in southwestern China.

Due to the threat of Japanese fighters stationed at the Myitkyina airfield, these transport aircraft had to fly far to the north of the more direct line from Chabua, India, to Yunnanyi and Kunming, and then swing south to the Chinese air terminals. However, this safer detour increased fuel consumption and reduced the load among the transports.

Furthermore, the air route itself was narrow, and its saturation with transports sometime in the near future was predicted. This supply nightmare would persist as long as Myitkyina remained in Japanese hands as the base for elements of the Imperial Japanese Army Air Force's (IJAAF) 5th Air Division. With Myitkyina in Allied possession, the transport crews would be able to resume the more southerly air route and avoid the geographical hazards of the Himalayan peaks in addition to reaping the logistical benefits.

According to Stilwell biographer Barbara Tuchman, "The ATC burned one gallon of fuel for every gallon it delivered to China and had to deliver 18 tons of supplies to enable [General Claire] Chennault's air force to drop one ton of bombs on the Japanese. A single cargo plane could carry approximately four to five tons and under optimum conditions could make one round trip per day. But rarely more that 60-70 percent of assigned planes was in operation at any one time, and weather and other failures reduced the flight. Losses over the route were heavy. In three years of operation the ATC was to lose 468 planes, an average of 13 a month. Sometimes the crew was able to parachute to safety and be guided out by Kachin rescue teams organized by OSS agents in Burma. Others died in the jungle or were captured by the Japanese or in some cases were caught in the tree tops and their corpses found hanging long afterwards, eaten by ants."

Another important reason for Stilwell and his Sino-American forces to capture Myitkyina centered on the fact that since the autumn of 1942 U.S. Army engineers had been building a road south from Ledo in Assam, India, which was intended to cross northern Burma and ultimately link with the old Burma Road at Mong Yu, which lies between Bhamo and Lashio. The Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys, through which this Ledo Road was to be constructed, entered the Irrawaddy Valley within a few miles of Myitkyina.

The city of Myitkyina was key to the rail and road net of prewar Burma, so when the Ledo Road reached it, the engineering problem would become one of improving existing facilities rather than constructing new ones. Therefore, taking Myitkyina was the prerequisite for completing the Ledo Road's juncture with the Burma Road, establishing a point where land communication could be reopened with China via an all-weather road with a gasoline pipeline.

According to official historians of the CBI, "One of the noteworthy aspects of the North Burma Campaign of 1943-1944 is that the logistical preparations, the planning, and the fighting proceeded simultaneously."

Stilwell started his military advance with the Ledo Road's construction following him and using his Chinese 38th Division as outpost protection for the American road engineers before getting official orders from the CCS. As the overseer for all Lend-Lease aid to China, Stilwell knew that aerial resupply would be insufficient, especially if the northern arc for the ATC planes was maintained to avoid Japanese fighters.

Upon receiving the directive from the CCS to advance into northern Burma, Stilwell also gained the approval from the Chinese to augment his offensive in the late autumn of 1943 with the Chinese 22nd Division which had been training in Ramgarh, India. This time point was to correspond with a little known IJAAF air assault from October 13-27, 1943, Operation Tsuzigiri, against the ATC, which added impetus to Stilwell's ground campaign through the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys with the ulti-

mate prize being Myitkyina.

In the autumn of 1943, the air defense of Burma was charged to the IJAAF's 5th Air Division, which contained, among others, the 50th and 77th Fighter Sentai in its 4th Air Brigade and the 64th Fighter Sentai in the 7th Air Brigade. A Japanese sentai was the equivalent of a U.S. squadron, consisting of roughly 25 planes. The 5th Air Division had scores of forward airstrips and possessed a few counterbalancing advantages. Its rear areas were well out of reach of all but the heavy Allied bombers, of which there were too few to neutralize Japanese bases. Defense against Japanese fighters, initially the Nakajima Ki-27 Nate and later the Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar, was poor because the Japanese concealed their airfields from aerial photography and even from Kachin scouts by hiding their planes in holes in the ground covered with sod.

The Ki-43 was considered the Japanese Army's best fighter in terms of maneuverability and speed, but it lacked an aerial punch, being lightly armed with only two 12.7mm machine guns. Also, it had no pilot armor, self-sealing gas tanks, or starter motor. The Ki-43 was developed in 1937 when the Japanese Army decided to produce a fighter with a retractable undercarriage to succeed the Ki-27.

This newer fighter went into service in June 1941 and proved successful despite its light armament. After encounters with more advanced Allied fighters, armor and self-sealing fuel tanks were added. The Ki-43 saw action across the Pacific and toward the war's end was used in kamikaze attacks against Allied warships and bombers. The Ki-43 was deployed in greater numbers than any other Imperial Army fighter and was second only to the Imperial Japanese Navy's Mitsubishi A6M Zero in terms of sheer production numbers. Vital for its role as a Hump interceptor, it had a service ceiling of 36,750 feet but a limited range of 1,095 miles.

Airmen of the ATC were of a very special caliber, largely due to the operational constraints placed upon them by the Hump route. Prior to 1944, these crews often flew 16-hour shifts sometimes comprising three round trips in a day. Their airfields were crude by construction standards.

The men of the ATC used a variety of planes, but the workhorse was the newer C-46, which was prone to engine failure, plagued by carburetor icing, and often overloaded when flying above its maximum ceiling of 27,600 feet. The Commando had a crew of four and was unarmed. This aircraft was designed as a replacement for the C-47 transport, which was better known by its civilian title, the Douglas DC-3. The C-46 was able to carry cargo at greater altitude than any other Allied twin-engined transport aircraft during the war.

ABOVE: The capable Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar was a frontline fighter of the Japanese Army in the China-Burma-India Theater. This Oscar was photographed in 1943 at an airfield in Hankou, China, as its pilot prepared to enter the cockpit prior to takeoff. BELOW: These antiquated Japanese Nakajima Ki-27 fighter planes were photographed at an airfield in Kwangtung, China, in 1938. By the 1940s, a few of these aircraft were still in service. Note the fixed landing gear.

Both: National Archives

The C-46 was promised for delivery in July 1942 to assist in supplying China after the fall of Burma to the Japanese in April. The C-46 was said to be a more reliable, heavier fitted variation of the older two-engine C-47 transport that the Army Air Corps had been using since the war's beginning. Capable of carrying nearly twice the load of the C-47, a C-46 could also operate at altitudes higher than the 24,000-foot ceiling of a C-47, more reassuring to the Hump pilots sometimes scraping the Himalayan mountaintops.

Due to delays in the production of the C-46, the ATC had to rely on the older C-47s along with scores of refitted American Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers, rechristened C-87s for cargo, and the C-109, a tanker version of the C-87, as fuel carriers. Even after the delivery of the newer transports, many of the C-46s were found to have structural flaws.

As the ATC began cobbling together an air fleet, the airlift began to show signs of improvement by September 1942 with over 400 tons of supplies delivered to China. The IJAAF observed this greater delivery rate to China, and its Burma-based air arm was waiting for the

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Act Two on the Coast of France

National Archives

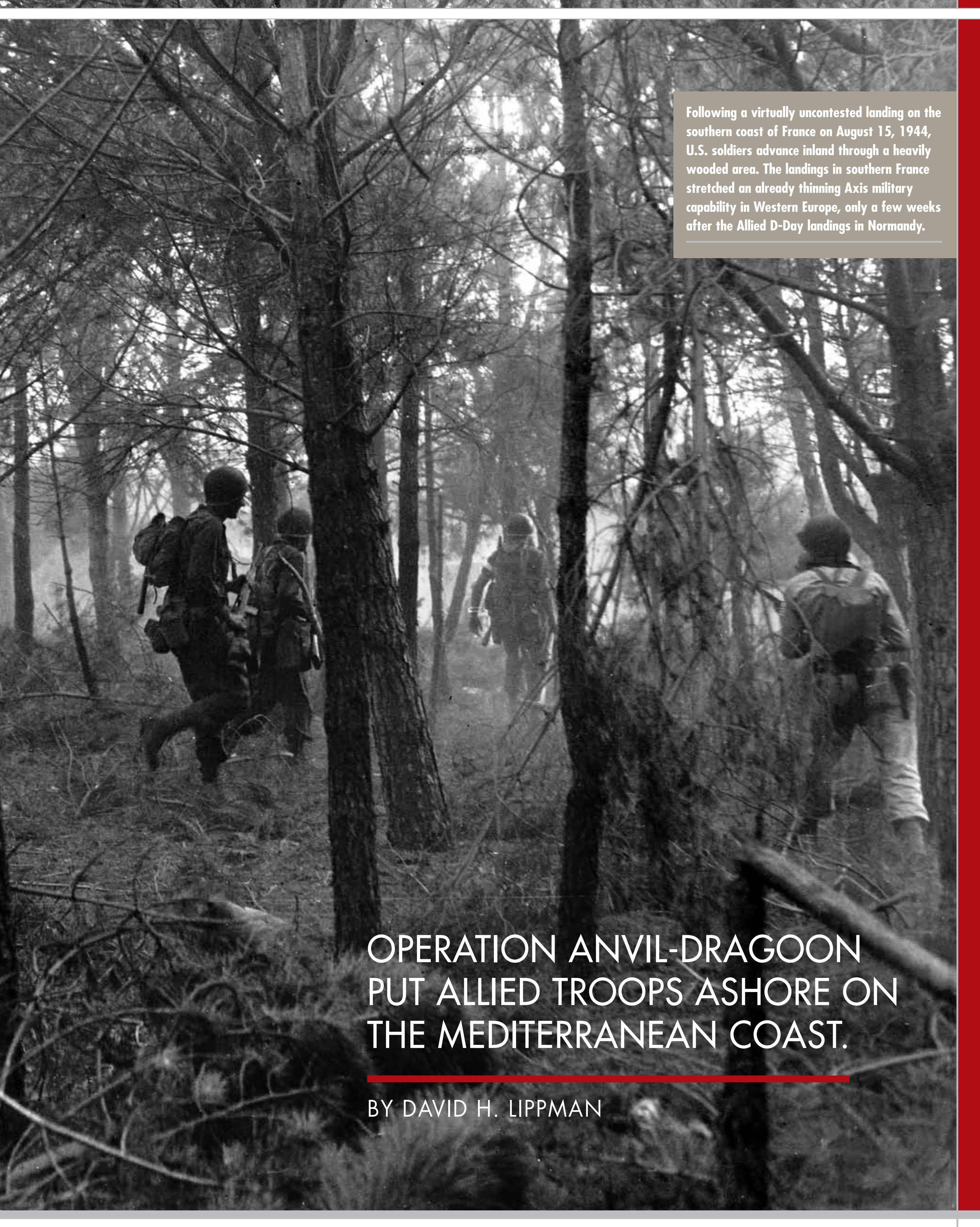
WINSTON CHURCHILL WAS AGAINST IT. So was Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark in Italy. But the American chiefs of staff were for it, and so was General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander in northwest Europe. The result was Operation Dragoon, one of the most controversial invasions of World War II, a stunning Allied victory that may have let the Soviet Union dominate Eastern Europe.

The original plans for the 1944 Allied invasion of Europe called for two massive invasions of France. The first, Operation Overlord, in Normandy, was the D-Day so familiar to the world. The second would be an "anvil" on which the Overlord "hammer" would resound, in the south of France, trapping the German war machine between the two massive invasions.

But as the Allies drove inland steadily from the Normandy bridgehead, Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, seeing victory as a mere matter of time, began to question the necessity of the southern France operation. He worried that the Soviets, driving hard from the east into Poland and Romania, would simply replace Nazi control of Eastern Europe with harsh Stalinism, replacing one tyranny with another. Churchill wanted to see the Allies pursue operations in Italy or use their naval superiority for landings in Yugoslavia in the Adriatic to drive toward Vienna, thus beating the Soviets into Eastern Europe.

Churchill was adamant about opposing this second invasion—even though he had agreed to it at the Teheran Conference in November 1943—telling Ike in August, shortly before the invasion began, "And if that series of events should come about, my dear general, I would have no choice but to go to His Majesty the King, and lay down the mantle of my high office."

Eisenhower knew Churchillian rhetoric and bluster when he heard it, and he admired the British prime minister immensely. As Eisenhower's public relations aide Harry Butcher wrote, "Ike said no, continued saying no all afternoon, and ended up saying no in every form of the English language at his command.... He was practically limp when the Prime Minister departed." But politics aside, Ike had good military reasons to invade southern France.



Following a virtually uncontested landing on the southern coast of France on August 15, 1944, U.S. soldiers advance inland through a heavily wooded area. The landings in southern France stretched an already thinning Axis military capability in Western Europe, only a few weeks after the Allied D-Day landings in Normandy.

OPERATION ANVIL-DRAGOON PUT ALLIED TROOPS ASHORE ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST.

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-027-1479-34, Photo: Wolfgang Vennemann

ABOVE: Photographed during an inspection in 1942, this heavy German coastal gun was intended to deter and then repel any attempt by the Allies to land troops in southern France. BELOW: In June 1944, General Johannes von Blaskowitz, commander of a Germany army group, inspects coastal defenses in southern France.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-J27018, Photo: Bronsema

The biggest reason was an obvious one—supply. Eisenhower needed a major port to support his fast-moving legions, which were using up gasoline faster than it could be delivered to the front. With the destruction of the artificial "Mulberry" harbors by storms and the damage to the great port of Cherbourg by German demolition, Eisenhower did not have a port. Marseilles in the south of France would fill the bill nicely.

In addition, more than 100,000 German troops were holding southern France. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's drive along the Loire River was resulting in a long, poorly guarded right flank, open to attack by those troops. If all of France could be cleared of the enemy, Ike would be able to secure that flank. The best way to do this would be to join the Overlord and Anvil forces, as planned.

Furthermore, Ike wanted more troops on the border of Germany by winter—and that meant the drive from southern France had to kick in. In addition to the 36 Allied divisions breaking out of Normandy, Eisenhower needed those 10 divisions assigned to Anvil. Once the major southern French ports were open, an additional 40 U.S. divisions could be moved into the European Theater of Operations through them.

Another factor in Eisenhower's mind was that half of the forces planned for the Anvil invasion were themselves French. So far France had played a limited role in her own liberation. Bringing French troops into play would empower that nation militarily and politically.

Eisenhower did not concern himself with the political issues that worried Churchill—that was the Combined Chiefs of Staff's job. But they were becoming increasingly skeptical of Churchill, whose genius and rhetoric occasionally alternated with schemes that led to disaster, like the intervention in Greece in 1941 or the failed Anzio invasion in 1944. Churchill's reversal on the southern France invasion seemed like another one of his madder ideas.

So the invasion of southern France went ahead, with the name changed from "Anvil" to "Dragoon," for security reasons. Churchill himself yielded to the overwhelming American pressure, including the code-name change, saying he had been "dragooned" into the operation.

The defense of Provence was the job of the German 19th Army under General Friederich Wiese. He in turn answered to General Johannes Blaskowitz, head of Army Group G. Wiese commanded 250,000 men in three corps scattered cross the Riviera's beaches, described by historian William C. Breuer as a "land of pink oleander, grassy seaside terraces, garden walls, pastel villas, lush shrubbery, ornate estates, hyacinths, and white beaches."

Wiese had three corps at his disposal divided into nearly seven divisions, three of them static coastal units long on emplaced artillery but short on transport. To make matters more difficult, many of his men were not Germans, but conscripted Russian and Polish POWs, who preferred a German Army uniform to starvation and would be unlikely to fight well. Some of them could not even be assigned to routine guard duty because few spoke German and fewer still could pronounce the passwords.

Wiese had only one panzer division at hand, the 11th, under Maj. Gen. Wend von Wietersheim, which was at half strength with 14,000 men, but only 26 PzKpfw. IV tanks and 49 PzKpfw. V Panthers at hand. However, the division was under Adolf Hitler's control and could not be released from reserve without the Führer's permission.

The Luftwaffe had 186 airplanes, and the Kriegsmarine could respond to invasion with 28 torpedo boats, nine submarines, five destroyers, and 15 patrol craft. Neither would be useful against the 300,000 men, 2,000 warplanes, and hundreds of ships that German intelligence esti-

mated would hit southern France.

Wiese would depend heavily for defense on his 106 coastal artillery which ranged up to 340mm guns and could fire 700-pound shells more than 20 miles. He also relied on German engineering, which had turned holiday beaches into deathtraps with Teutonic efficiency: the sands were studded with blockhouses, antitank walls, tank traps, pillboxes, minefields, and decommissioned tank turrets mounted in concrete and villas camouflaged to conceal his heavy guns. He had 600 concrete pillboxes all told. But the overall picture was bleak. The best he could hope for was to inflict a bloody nose on the Franco-American invaders, then stage a careful withdrawal to the Reich through the Rhone Valley.

The Germans had one advantage. They knew the Allies were coming. Thanks to their own codebreaking efforts and spies on the ground in Italy, the Germans had a rough picture of the Allied invasion. It was too big to be kept secret anyway, and there was only one target—the Riviera and the Mediterranean ports.

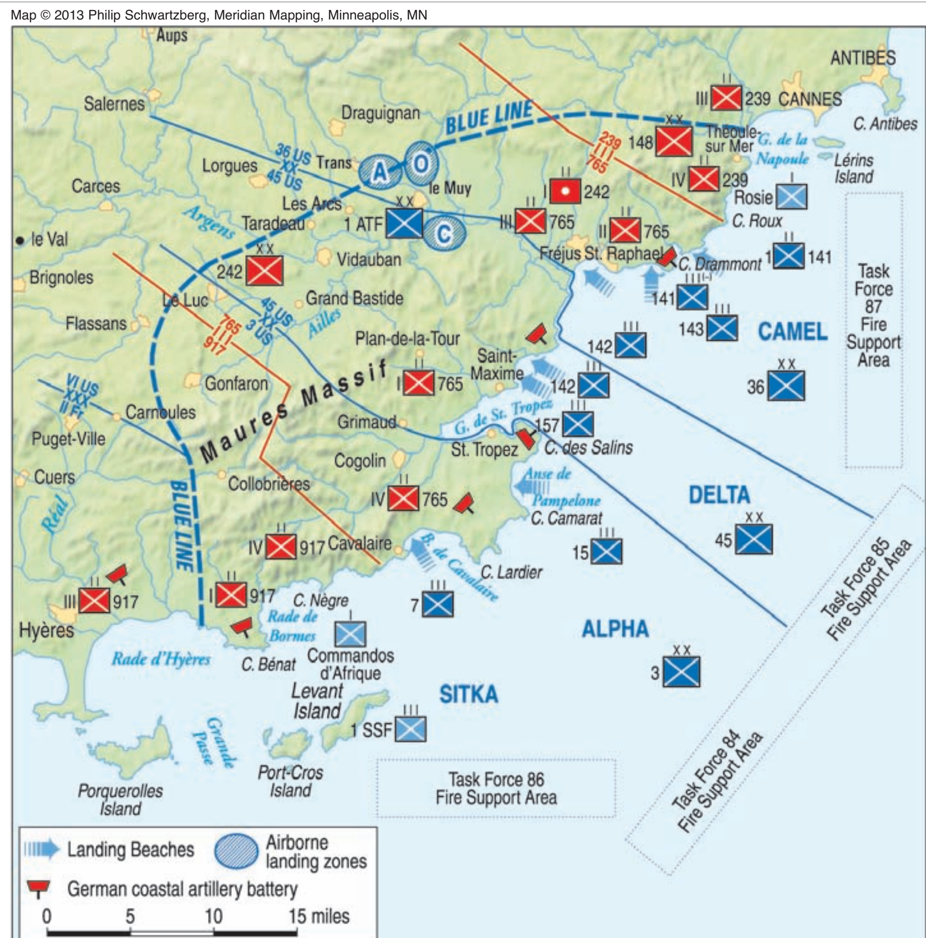
The problem for the Germans was, as usual, Adolf Hitler. He ordered "no withdrawal" from southern France, his primary strategy since Stalingrad. Wiese's men would have to stand and die on the Riviera's beaches.

Meanwhile, the Allies prepared their invasion. They had the usual advantages: air supremacy to empower massive aerial reconnaissance, detailed information from the French Underground, decrypted German messages from their codebreakers, and, most unusually, a vast collection of photographs shot by prewar holiday-goers on the Riviera beaches.

Early in the war, the U.S. military had issued a call for citizens to provide such photographs, and now the request paid off. As historian Samuel Eliot Morison wrote, "Thus, over the shoulders of a smiling couple in bathing suits taking the sun on the Ile de Porquerolles, one observes a pier suitable for tying up PT boats. The man who snapped Mademoiselle standing on the ramparts of an old fort inadvertently chose a background which helped an Intelligence officer to make a panoramic sketch of that part of the coast. A bather standing waist-deep in the waters of Baie de Bougnon tells us that an LST may beach there dry-ramp."

The Allied plan was not too complex. The target was a 45-mile stretch of the Cote d'Azur between Cavalaire sur-Mer and Agay, the targeted beaches being east of the German-held fortress of Toulon. Shortly after midnight on D-day, 2,000 Americans and Canadians of the elite 1st Special Service Force—the legendary "Black Devil Brigade"—would land on the Iles

Map © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



On August 15, 1944, the Allied landings in southern France struck near key port cities and areas where planners expected the best opportunities for rapid movement inland.

d'Hyeres, two pine-covered islands on the west flank of the assault beaches. Their target was a three-gun 164mm battery on the Ile du Levant, the easternmost island, which could inflict chaos on the assault. The Black Devils would silence this battery before the main force arrived on the Riviera.

Simultaneously, a detachment of French commandos, code-named Romeo, would attack the mainland just north of the Iles d'Hyeres to block the main coast road leading from Toulon to prevent German reserves from moving up on the beaches.

On the extreme right flank of the invasion area, another French naval demolition team was to land by rubber boats a short distance west of Cannes and establish similar blocking positions.

Next would come an airborne assault by the slapped together 1st Airborne Task Force, which consisted primarily of Britain's 2nd Parachute Brigade, the American 517th Parachute Regiment, two more American parachute battalions, and an American glider battalion. This temporary outfit even included the antitank platoon of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the legendary Nisei outfit. The task force was to drop around Le Muy and capture the town, which stood at the center of a web of roads. Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough, commanding the Task Force's 509th Parachute Battalion, told his men their job was to "raise as much merry hell behind enemy lines as the law allows."

The task force consisted of a mix of green and veteran troops and had only a few weeks to mesh together. But it had one advantage, the boss was Maj. Gen. Robert T. Frederick, age 37, who had brilliantly led—mostly from the front—the Black Devils in Italy.

After the paratroopers dropped, the plan called for three American divisions to land. All were veteran divisions, coming under the VI Corps, led by gravel-voiced Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., a hard-driving cavalryman who was as tough on the battlefield as the polo ground.

Alpha Force, consisting of Maj. Gen. John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel's 3rd Infantry Division, would storm two beaches 13 miles apart, at Cavalaire and Pampelonne. In the center, Delta Force would land Maj. Gen. William W. Eagles's 45th Infantry Division at Baie de Bougnon and La Nartelle. On the right flank,

National Archives

During the airborne phase of Operation Anvil-Dragoon, the parachutes of Allied soldiers blossom over the French countryside. The initial drop started in the predawn hours and was hampered by heavy fog.

Camel Force would deliver Maj. Gen. John E. Dahlquist's experienced 36th Infantry Division onto the coast at Saint-Raphael. Once the three divisions had consolidated their beachhead, the 2nd French Corps, under General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, would pass through the American beaches and drive on the ports of Toulon and Marseilles.

The whole force would come under the command of General Alexander "Sandy" Patch, commanding the U.S. Seventh Army. Patch was a soft-spoken and religious man who mixed easily with his fighting men, chatting with them while rolling a cigarette from a sack of Bull Durham. He had fought in World War I and led the Americal Division in battle against the Japanese on Guadalcanal, defeating a tough enemy. Patch had a lot of worries as he mounted the offensive. His only son, Captain Alexander M. Patch, Jr., was fighting with an infantry outfit in Normandy.

Once the French were ashore in force, they would be joined by the French I Corps, and De Lattre would move up to command the First French Army.

The French were eager to fight but annoyed that they would not have a major role in the initial landings. Patch mollified them by saying, "Don't forget, it is you who will have the honor of seizing our two principal goals—Toulon and Marseilles!"

With the plan in hand, there was little left to do but mount up the assault. Landing day was to be August 15, 1944, and the convoys began steaming out of Italian, Corsican, and North African ports on August 10.

Within a day, the Germans knew the Allies were moving from Abwehr agents in Spain, air reconnaissance, and decrypted radio messages. "Large Allied convoys have left North African ports with troops and supplies. Destination unknown," read the message to Army Group G. Wiese and Blaskowitz correctly assumed the Allies were headed for the Riviera. They asked Hitler for permission to bring up the 11th Panzer Division. No answer.

Meanwhile, the Allied invasion fleet was bearing down on the Riviera. Allied aircraft pounded the German installations and airbases in southern France, pinning down the defenders. The Allies had 5,000 aircraft deployed in the Mediterranean, 2,000 on Corsica and Sardinia alone.

The Allied armada was impressive, even by World War II's gargantuan standards. A total of 880 ships, vessels, and beaching craft reached the assault area under their own steam, and 1,370 landing craft were carried in the various davits. The boss was Vice Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, nephew of a New York City mayor Abram Hewitt, flying his flag in the headquarters ship *Catoctin.*

His force included three American battleships—the *Texas, Nevada,* and *Arkansas*—all veterans of Normandy, a British battleship, the *Ramillies,* and the French *Lorraine*. All were older dreadnoughts, no longer fast enough to keep up with the fast carrier task forces being used in the Pacific, but still packing 14-inch (12-inch for the *Arkansas*) guns that could bust through concrete blockhouses. Also in the task force were three heavy American cruisers, seven British escort carriers, two American escort carriers, and numerous American, British, and French light cruisers and destroyers.

The Allied nature of the invasion force was seen in its escorting armada. Among the ships present was Greece's destroyer *Themistocles,* Canada's transport *Prince Henry,* Australia's escort carrier HMS *Attacker* commanded by Captain H.B. Farncomb, and New Zealand's 24 Seafire fighter aircraft on HMS *Stalker,* commanded by Lt. Cmdr. G. Reece. Some of the ships were historic: USS *Nevada* had been beached during the attack on Pearl Harbor, HMS *Ajax* had cornered the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee,* HMS *Ramillies* had seen action for 28 years, gunboats HMS *Aphis* and HMS *Scarab* had served on the Yangtze River and been pulled out in advance of the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1941.

On the 13th, Hitler finally acted on Blaskowitz's request and ordered "resistance by all available means" on the southern French coast. That meant 11th Panzer Division could limber up. Blaskowitz's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Heinz von Gyldenfeldt, barreled into his boss's office, shouting, "Here's the order! It just came through." Moments later, Gyldenfeldt was on the phone to 19th Army, giving Wiese the good news.

That afternoon, the 11th Panzer Division was loaded onto 33 trains to head east the next day, but the unit was forced by Allied air attacks to abandon the trains and take to the roads. Armored cars in the lead, the division thundered for the Rhone with its "vehicles bristling with foliage, speeding along the main highways in broad daylight, leaving ample space between them, darting from one place of concealment to the next," according to the division's chief of staff.

That same day, the British destroyer HMS *Kimberley* steamed through the lines of Allied ships bearing a precious passenger: Winston Churchill himself, who swallowed his pride for the opportunity to watch an actual invasion in action. From the ship's bridge, he flashed his V-sign while GIs on the transports alongside cheered him. Also present on the destroyer was Undersecretary of War Robert Patterson, and aboard the *Catoctin* was Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal.

Operation Dragoon got started at 10 PM, on August 14, when the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta* arrived off the Hyeres roadstead to supervise the raids on the western flank. Just after midnight, some 396 troop carriers roared off airfields from around Rome, carrying more than 5,000 paratroopers of the 1st Airborne Task Force to their destinations.

The planes also dropped 300 life-size dummies dressed as American paratroopers rigged with noisemaking equipment and explosive charges, which simulated the sound of battle when they hit the ground. The noise and pyrotechnics frightened defenders of the 244th Infantry. The diversionary effort was extremely successful, as German troops chased or ran from the dummies through the woods and valleys behind the invasion coast. Next day, Radio Berlin fumed that the fake paratrooper attack was something that "could only have been contrived by the lowest and most sinister type of Anglo-Saxon mind."

The invasion of southern France began with Operation Romeo's 800 French commandos, under Lt. Col. Georges-Regis Bouvet, going ashore at Cap Negre from 20 landing craft. Their job was to scale a 350-foot cliff and destroy German artillery. Leading the commandos in a rubber boat was Sergeant Georges du Bellocq, who climbed over barbed-wire obstacles and into a network of trenches he thought was empty. Then he heard a voice yell, "Ludwig! Ludwig!" Bellocq leaped up and opened fire. The enemy soldier screamed once, then "gurgled and shut up," probably the first German to die in the invasion of southern France.

The gunfire set off a lively firefight—between German positions. "From that moment on during the whole rest of the night," Bellocq recalled, "the Jerries hardly left off shooting at one another."

At the same time, Sergeant Noel Texier, who had been told this would be his final combat mission, led his men ashore at Cap Negre and began climbing its 350-foot high cliff. The Germans above hurled grenades down at him, and Texier was killed—probably the first Allied soldier killed in Operation Dragoon.

Meanwhile, Bouvet, in his landing craft, waited for the green flares that would mean his advance party had reached the right beach. No sign of them. He decided to go in anyway. The Canadian midshipman commanding his Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) refused to go in. The determined Bouvet shoved a pistol in the Canadian's ribs and ordered him to go ashore. The French commandos landed a mile west of their beach.

Undeterred, the Frenchmen climbed out of their landing craft. Before scaling the cliff, they marked the end of years of exile by scooping up handfuls of wet sand and pressing it to their lips.

Amid chirping crickets, the Frenchmen climbed the cliff, taking the Germans by surprise. They picked up Bellocq's team and started destroying gun emplacements and setting up a roadblock on the coastal highway. Bouvet's band killed 300 Germans, took 700 prisoners, and only lost 11 dead and 50 wounded.

Next up was Task Force Sitka, the 1st Special Service Force, under Colonel Edwin Walker. Their targets were the 164mm guns that could savage the invasion. French intelligence officers insisted the guns had been destroyed when the Germans took over the Toulon base in 1942, but the attack went in anyway.

National Archives

Smoke pots billow a covering pall as troops of the U.S. 15th Infantry Regiment come ashore from their LCVPs (Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel) at approximately 8:30 AM on August 15, 1944.

The American-Canadian force, remembering they had not been fed before their previous assault landing in the Aleutians, demanded dinner before they went ashore. They got steaks.

The Black Devils disembarked from *Prince Henry* at 1:30 AM and found little opposition. They did find what 1st Battalion, 2nd Regiment commander Major Edward Thomas called "maquis brush, a head-high impenetrable growth," which slowed down the advance. Soon it came under machine-gun and mortar fire. Sergeant Kenneth Betts recalled, "A mortar shell hit right directly in front of me, mushrooming out on both sides. If I had been anywhere else other than right where I was, I would have been dead. It didn't knock me out, but it did make me foggy. It wiped out five guys on one side and five guys on the other side—I didn't get a scratch. They said, 'Betts got it this time!' No, I didn't. I walked out and someone yelled at me, 'Holy Christ! There's a corpse coming at me!' they thought it wiped us all out. I heard, 'I need a volunteer to take the wounded back,' and I said, 'I'll volunteer, Mack,' and he said, 'I thought you might.' I said I had had enough of this island already."

The "braves," as the First Special Servicemen were called, fought through the difficult terrain and found the three menacing guns, all deserted—no German troops. The Black Devils attacked and found the guns to be dummies—ordinary drain pipes skillfully deployed by the Germans to imitate heavy coastal guns. "Another dry run!" yelled a brave, and the Germans answered him with mortar fire. The German garrison of 200 men was holed up in a cave at the other end of the island with eight or 10 mortars, machine guns, and plenty of ammunition. The Black Devils moved in on the cave supported by shells from the British destroyer HMS *Lookout.*

As dawn broke over the Ile du Levant, the Black Devils had the cave surrounded on three sides. Bazooka men fired their missiles into the cave's mouth, and the Germans put out white flags. The battle was over.

Colonel Walker signaled Admiral Lyal Davidson, "Islands utterly useless. Suggest immediate evacuation. Killed: none. Wounded: two. Prisoners: 240. Enemy batteries: Dummies."

Davidson told Walker to stay put, and that turned out to be the right move: two Black Dev-

ils walking along a path later in the day came face to face with two German soldiers. Both sides were equally stunned to see each other and stared mutely for moments until both parties fled in opposite directions. Finding there was still resistance on the island, the Black Devils moved in to find 58 Germans holding out in a Napoleonic-era stone fort with 12-foot walls. The Black Devils called for naval gunfire, and the USS *Augusta* loosed her 8-inch shells at the fort, but her shells bounced harmlessly off the old fortress.

While this went on, the destroyer *Somers* spotted two strange ships on radar. They turned out to be a German auxiliary named *Escabart* and her escort, the corvette *UJ-6081,* which had been the former Italian corvette *Camoscio,* before the Germans seized her when Italy changed sides in the war.

Somers challenged them with a searchlight. They did not answer, so the destroyer opened fire and her first shot sent the *Escabart* bursting into flames. The corvette turned east at high speed with *Somer*s in hot pursuit. The crew in *Augusta*'s combat information center watched the action on its radar screens with great interest. An ensign exclaimed, "Maybe it's the *Tirpitz*!" The Germans, unaware of this compliment to their vessel, abandoned ship after daybreak, unable to escape. A boarding party from *Somers* found the corvette had taken 40 hits and could not be salvaged. They picked up her charts and left *UJ-6081* to sink at 7:22 AM on the 15th. But the flaming *Escabart* alerted every German on shore that something was up.

On the *Catoctin,* Patch worried about the Black Devils. He sent an aide to find out what was going on. "In that case, general," said the visiting Forrestal, "I wouldn't mind being in the party. It'll give me a chance to stretch my legs." Forrestal went ashore to help the aide. At 11 PM on August 15, the Germans holding the old fort, seeing themselves surrounded by Black Devils and Allied warships, surrendered.

At the opposite end of the assault area, film star turned U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., led Task Force Rosie, designed to block the coastal roads from Cannes to the invasion area. His operation consisted of the two British China Station gunboats, four fast PT boats, a fighter-director ship with sound equipment to broadcast a recording of naval gunfire, and 67 French commandos of Groupe Navale d'Assaut de Corse under Captain de Frigate Seriot.

Fairbanks's little flotilla sailed within radar range of the French coastline, spewing out metallic chaff and playing its recordings as loudly as possible. The commandos went ashore and ran smack into a minefield. Unable to achieve their objectives, they tried to withdraw, only to be mistaken for Germans and shot up by prowling Allied aircraft. Only 40 of the Frenchmen survived, and they were captured by the Germans. Luckily for them, they were liberated the next day by the 36th Infantry Division.

Aphis and *Scarab* hurled four-inch shells at the Germans. Lt. Cmdr. John D. Bulkeley, commanding the destroyer *Endicott,* shepherded the PT boats onto the correct course. Two years before, Bulkeley had earned the Medal of Honor for carrying General Douglas MacArthur from Corregidor to safety. Once again, Bulkeley was in the thick of the action. British Vickers Wellington bombers dumped strips of chaff to confuse German radar operators.

Both: National Archives

Hustling off the beach on the morning of August 15, 1944, American soldiers have just set foot in France during Operation Anvil-Dragoon. The cover of a nearby pine grove will serve as an area for orientation and rallying troops to their various commands.

The naval and sonic ruses de guerre worked well. Next day, Berlin Radio announced that the Germans had fended off a bombardment of Cap D'Antibes by "four or five battleships."

The Germans were certainly puzzled. At his headquarters near Avignon, Wiese was awakened by 4 AM to reports of landings and naval actions. "What do you think of it?" asked Wiese's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Walther Botsch. "Where do you think the main attack will be?"

Wiese stared down at his map and said, "I don't know, Botsch. I simply don't know. We'll have to wait and see what develops."

Meanwhile, the parachute Operation Albatross was opening up. Le Muy was where Route Napoleon met National Highway Seven, and the paratroopers went in at 4:30 AM.

Before climbing into his C-47 Dakota transport plane, Yarborough told his men, "Troopers, you have been chosen to spearhead the invasion that may break the Krauts' back. You now know where we are going. We are going to hold there until hell freezes over or we are relieved, whichever comes first! In case anything happens, I want you to know how proud and glad I am to be with you. I'll see you in France! God bless you all!"

Another source of support came from Archbishop Francis Spellman, on hand as apostolic vicar to the armed forces, to give his blessing and encourage the troops with a last-minute service attended by numerous non-Catholics. After returning to New York, Spellman wrote personal letters to the parents, wives, and next of kin of many of the men he blessed.

The parachute assault was spearheaded by pathfinders, who dropped with radar sets and T-lights. The British pathfinders got their radar beacons set up, but the Americans were less successful. But when the British paratroopers landed, Lieutenant T.W. Williams had a close call. He saw a shadowy silhouette nearby and

Near the French town of Le Muy, American paratroopers of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion hurry down Route D7 on the morning of August 15, 1944.

prepared to shoot it. Then the silhouette called out, "Who are you?" in English. Williams called back, "Who are you?" and the silhouette answered, "I'm Brigadier Pritchard." Williams lowered his gun and thus avoided killing the commander of 2nd Parachute Brigade.

The paratroopers' aerial armada stretched 100 miles and brought in 5,607 paratroopers and more than 150 artillery pieces. But the planes headed for the 509th Parachute Battalion's drop zone could not find it—the pathfinders had not set up their beacons, and the drop zone was covered with fog. The pilots dropped their paratroopers based on estimates of their flight position as suggested by the hilltops.

At 4:18 AM, the red light went on in Captain Ernest "Bud" Siegel's plane, and the former New York State Police officer leaped out, leading his men into the dark. Siegel's parachute caught on a tall tree, leaving him swinging 15 feet off the ground. He cut the harness strands with his trench knife and scrambled down the tree.

That fate befell many of the 509th. Pfc. Leon Mims's chute snagged on the top of a towering pine tree, and the 25-year-old Georgian was trapped, angling 40 feet in the air. A shell from a German gun exploded against the tree, shaking Mims loose and sending him tumbling down through the branches and to the ground. A buddy came up and gave Mims a shot of morphine. Mims told the paratrooper to leave him there. Mims would lie there, racked with pain, the morphine wearing off, for three days, until a Frenchman moved him by wheelbarrow to his house to await pickup.

Fortunately for all concerned, the paratroopers were dropped near their drop zones. Blue lights drew the men of the 509th together, and they set out on their way. A Frenchman invited his liberators to his house to celebrate with wine. "Hell, no," snapped Yarborough. "We're looking for Krauts."

The 517th Parachute Regiment, dropping 10 minutes later, was more scattered by the fog. Lieutenant James A. Reith, a platoon leader in the 517th Infantry Regiment, found himself standing next to a mysterious figure staring up at the sky. The stranger smelled of fish. Reith remembered an intelligence briefing that said German troops smelled like fish from a salmon-heavy diet, and Reith did a double take on his companion. He was wearing a German helmet. Reith whipped out his .45 and shot the German in the stomach.

Soon scattered groups of the 517th were banding together and fighting like their buddies in Normandy two months before, for unfamiliar objectives against an unknown enemy. At least they had a shorter wait for daylight. But it was difficult. Someone asked the 517th's commander, Colonel Rupert D. Graves, "Where are we?"

Graves answered, "I feel reasonably certain that we're somewhere in France. Other than that, I haven't the faintest notion where we are." He led two privates.

Others landed far from their objectives. Lt. Col. Melvin Zais, a future four-star general, landed 25 miles from his objective. He assembled 105 paratroopers, and they headed off to their drop zone in the gathering dawn, in approach-march formation. As they hiked through the countryside, a flight of Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter bombers swooped down on them. The Americans took cover from the bombs. Finally, a paratrooper was able to put out a yellow smoke pot, the recognition signal, and the P-38s zoomed upward.

Zais was not through battling his own side. They spotted another file of armed men in different uniforms heading in the same direction as the Americans. Zais deployed his men to attack, then someone said, "Look! Some of them are wearing red berets!" They turned out to be some of Pritchard's 2nd Parachute Brigade, who had also been dropped off-target. The two Allied groups joined forces and kept moving. They ran into a German convoy and at last could start doing their job. The Anglo-American force chewed up the German convoy with bazookas and machine guns, and all enemy troops were killed or captured.

Paratroopers and Germans were slugging it out all over the drop zone area, playing cat-and-mouse in the dark. American troops hollered the password "Lafayette," expecting to hear the countersign, "Democracy." Sometimes they forgot. Sergeant Leo Turco of Rochester, New York, stumbled alone through the dark until he heard a dark figure call out, "Is that you, Sergeant Turco?"

Turco lowered his Thompson submachine gun and said to Private Dan Rotundo of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, "For God's sake, Rotundo, you're supposed to call out the password, not 'Is that you?'"

One plan fell apart quickly. Lieutenant Jim Reith of the 517th was assigned to kidnap General Ferdinand Neuling, who commanded the German 62nd Corps, from his residence, the Villa Gladys, in Draguignan. The French Underground had an agent living right next to the villa, and she provided the Allies with all kinds of details on the general's life and movements, even his breakfast routine—6 AM precisely, two fried eggs, bacon, and toast.

But at 5:35 AM, Reith and his crew were 20 miles from Villa Gladys, and the detailed plan came to nothing.

Still, the paratroops by and large did their job. All across the drop zones, paratroopers, individually or in groups, many wearing war paint and with their heads shaved, ambushed German convoys and couriers, blew up bridges,

planted mines, and sprayed German patrols with gunfire. German survivors fled to report vast numbers of American and British paratroopers manning roadblocks, which created confusion at Neuling's headquarters. Yet despite these efforts—Captain Bud Siegel led a successful attack on a German force that netted 60 POWs—Le Muy remained in German hands, and German troops began destroying the port installations at St. Tropez.

Glider-borne reinforcements were due at 8 AM, but only the American gliders arrived. The British gliders could not be landed in the continuing fog shrouding their landing zones.

Meanwhile, the seaborne invasion got down to business. The minesweepers went to work at 5:15 AM, clearing invasion routes. At 5:50 AM, the Allied bomber force arrived to pulverize the 30-mile stretch of invasion beaches. As historian William Breuer wrote, "The ground shook and shivered and thrashed about under the enormous pounding. Gigantic orange balls of fire and gushers of earth shot into the air. Countless forest fires broke out. Wooden buildings were turned into splinters and stone structures into powder."

Some 1,300 heavy bombers blasted the defenses for 90 minutes, raising a vast cloud of dust and smoke. The Allies flew more than 4,200 sorties in direct support of the assault.

At 7:30 AM, the heavies wheeled home, but the naval bombardment began at 6:06 AM, when the cruiser HMS *Ajax* fired the first shot of 16,000 shells from 400 Allied naval guns. Landing Ships, Tanks (LST) equipped with rockets hurled their missiles through the haze, drenching the beach with explosives. The bombardment smashed bridges across the lower Rhone, trapping the 11th Panzer Division on the wrong side. Watching through his binoculars, General Lucian Truscott exclaimed, "How can anything live under such a bombardment?"

At 5:55 AM, loudspeakers blared, "Lower the landing boats," and the transports began swinging out landing craft of all types, loaded with three infantry divisions. The loudspeakers followed with the command, "Assault troops to your boarding stations! Board your landing boats!" For some of the Americans who climbed down nets into landing craft, burdened with rifle and pack, it was their fourth invasion.

The 36th Infantry Division went in on the right, Major Carthel "Red" Morgan, of Amarillo, Texas, leading the 3rd Battalion of the 141st Infantry Regiment ashore. A veteran of Salerno, he expected a rough invasion. His landing craft crunched as it hit the rocky slope of Green Beach at 8:03 AM. But instead of heavy gunfire, the invaders were greeted by silence. "What do you want to do now, Major?" a sergeant inquired.

"Get the hell on inland as fast as we can and while we can!" Morgan yelled, and the troops moved in. Their advance was not checked, but at neighboring Blue Beach, Lt. Col. William A. Bird's 1st Battalion of the 141st ran into automatic weapons fire and artillery, which sank three landing craft as they pulled off the beaches. Blue Beach was protected by an elaborate system of trenches. But the Germans were stunned, dazed, and demoralized by the heavy naval bombardment. As the Americans charged onto the beach, the exhausted Germans began staggering out of their trenches and bunkers, arms raised in surrender. Bird's battalion began moving inland.

National Archives

Abandoned gliders lie strewn across an open field in southern France after the execution of the airborne phase of Operation Anvil-Dragoon on August 15, 1944.

The 36th Division's third assault, on Camel Red Beach, led to chaos and controversy. H-hour for Lt. Col. George E. Lynch's 142nd Regiment attack was set for 2 PM, to provide time for warships, bombers, and minesweepers to wreck the defenses. Destroyers dueled with coastal guns along the Gulf of Frejus, and 93 Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers hammered the Germans to little avail.

Next, Apex drone boats were sent in to explode underwater obstacles, and the remote-controlled devices ran around in circles. Truscott watched one of them that "went out of control, dashed wildly up and down the beach, turned out to sea to our consternation, then turned about again." Two ran aground, and the destroyer *Ordronaux* sank one to avoid being rammed, two were boarded and put out of action, and only three exploded according to plan.

American Navy engineers claimed that German radio operators had "stolen" the radio direction of the "female" or explosive drone units from the "male" Apex directing boats. The Americans tried again with naval gunfire, bringing in the battleship *Arkansas* and her 12-inch guns along with two cruisers and four destroyers. Still the German batteries fired back, and most of the underwater obstacles remained in place.

Concerned with that, Rear Admiral Spencer J. Lewis, a Battle of Midway veteran commanding the assault force, tried to reach General Dahlquist, commanding the 36th Division, to discuss the situation. But Dahlquist had gone ashore to follow the battle and was out of touch. Out of options, Lewis took responsibility and ordered the Beach Red team to land at the already secured Beach Green.

As the landing force changed beaches, Truscott was stunned and furious—he had not been consulted on the move. Neither had Hewitt. Truscott saw the change of beaches as a threat to his timetable. A livid Truscott climbed into a landing craft and streaked to Green Beach to find Dahlquist.

When Truscott found Dahlquist, the senior general exploded. "Dahlquist, if you ordered that change I will relieve you, and if Colonel Lynch ordered it, I will try him by general court-martial!" Dahlquist told his boss the Navy ordered the change on its own, but Truscott was not happy. Truscott was less happy when he read a signal from Dahlquist to Lewis that read, "Appreciate your prompt action in changing plan.... Opposition irritating but not too tough so far." Truscott called Lewis's action "a grave error, which merited reprimand at least, and certainly no congratulation. Except for the otherwise astounding success of the assault, it might have had even graver consequences."

As it turned out, the 36th Division did well, suffering only 75 casualties and capturing 236 POWs. The day after the landing, the 36th took Cap Frejus without much trouble.

The 3rd Infantry Division had a relatively easy time on the left compared to its previous assaults. It hit two beaches 13 miles apart and moved to pinch off the St. Tropez peninsula and its vineyards. When the German soldiers finally did emerge from their pillboxes, where they had holed up during the preliminary bombardment, they seemed dazed and surrendered quickly.

On Alpha Red Beach, the 756th Tank Battalion's Duplex Drive Sherman tanks "swam" steadily to shore, providing the invaders with instant tank support. But when the Americans arrived, they found the Germans were gone, the

trenches unmanned, the only defenses the active mines that kept exploding. By 8:50 AM, Alpha Red Beach was secured.

The 15th Infantry Regiment came ashore at Alpha Yellow Beach, finding it dotted with bathhouses and elaborate fortifications held by Polish "volunteers." It took an hour to clear the beach.

The 3rd Division achieved all of its objectives by nightfall and took 1,600 POWs while suffering only 264 casualties.

In the center, the Thunderbirds of the 45th Infantry Division, which included numerous Cherokee and Apache from Oklahoma and New Mexico, had to worry about narrow sea lanes as well as the enemy sandwiched between Alpha and Camel Beaches.

General Eagles's men were to attack the beautiful Gulf of Saint-Tropez and the fashionable resort town of Sainte-Maxime, full of stucco villas that were now run down and shabby. The 45th Division's men were veterans of Anzio, and when they came under German machine-gun and rifle fire, they methodically blasted German defenders out of pillboxes and bunkers with grenades and dynamite charges. The division stormed into Sainte-Maxime and spent two hours in house-to-house actions with rifles, bayonets, and grenades, digging the Germans out.

Sergeant Vere "Tarzan" Williams of the 157th Infantry had a feeling something was going to go wrong. He said later, "I was in the second wave that hit the beach and went on this hillside to get the rest of the company. There were mortar shells landing on the side of the hill, getting closer to us. Then one landed about 15 feet to my right. I felt something hit my leg, and I looked down but didn't see anything. Then I saw the man in front of me and the one in back of me bleeding. One had his face bleeding and the other had his hand hit. I looked at my leg again and saw a hole in the pants leg. I opened my pants and saw blood running down my knee, so I took off my pack. The other men were laying on the ground, calling for the medic."

Williams felt the Germans were zeroing in on their position, so he told the men the next round would land among them. They managed to move behind a large boulder, just as a German shell landed in the very spot where they had been standing. Williams was one of only seven casualties in the 157th on D-day, but his premonition saved his life.

After being temporarily patched up, Williams was sent to the rear and evacuated by sea. On the ship that took him back to Corsica, a sailor produced a bottle of champagne. "I can't say that I like champagne all that much, but that really was good. The bottle was passed around twice for 11 men," he said later. Williams recovered from his wounds and was soon back in action, long before his family got two telegrams—the first saying he was missing in action, the second that he was wounded in action.

National Archives

Advancing cautiously through the streets of the city of Marseilles, Algerian troops keep an eye out for German snipers near the Notre Dame-de-la-Garde basilica on August 28, 1944, two weeks after the initial Allied landings in Southern France. The soldier in the foreground has affixed a rifle grenade to his weapon.

In Sainte-Maxime, the fighting continued. Two Thunderbirds saw the swastika banner flying over the town's railroad signal tower, shinnied up the pole, and ripped off the German flag and replaced it with Old Glory. Down below, sweating, weary Thunderbirds cheered as the Stars and Stripes fluttered in the breeze.

To clear out the town, the 45th brought in its tanks, which blasted open bunkers at a point-blank range of 50 yards, wrecking them. The division accomplished all of its objectives and took 205 POWs while suffering 109 casualties.

As the Americans moved ashore and inland, the Germans struggled to cope. General Neuling, the imperturbable commander of the German 62nd Corps, kept his uniform immaculate and his temper cool as the bad news flooded in. But he could not communicate with his forward units to order counterattacks. His only line was to Wiese's headquarters 120 miles back at Avignon.

Wiese was also taking things calmly at his headquarters. The Allies' objectives were obvious—Toulon and Marseilles—and everything depended on the 11th Panzer Division reaching that area in time. Their tanks had reached Avignon at dawn. Now it was a race to see who would get to the Riviera ports. The Germans did not know it, but they had already lost the race—all bridges between the Mediterranean and Avignon had been destroyed by Allied aircraft. Wietersheim would have to move his division across the Rhone by anything that would float. It would be four days before 11th Panzer could reform as a fighting unit east of the broad Rhone River.

Meanwhile, the Americans continued to advance. Captain Jess Walls and 250 paratroopers of the 509th Parachute Battalion hooked up with the 45th Infantry Division to attack an ancient, thick-walled citadel in the center of St. Tropez and brought up bazookas and machine guns. That seemed not enough to overcome the defenses, but the Germans hung out a white flag at 3:30 PM and surrendered the citadel. It took hours of house-to-house fighting to eliminate the German pockets. Some 130 Germans were captured or killed.

At 4:30, Truscott came ashore with his headquarters party at Sainte-Maxime. He asked his French liaison officer, Colonel Jean Petit, "Well, Jean, how does the soil of France feel to an exile?" Petit's eyes were filled with tears, and he was too choked with emotion to reply.

Truscott got a briefing on the situation—the 45th was starting to hook up with the paratroopers and the three assault divisions were

pushing inland—and said to an aide, "I guess this is a fitting celebration of the 27th anniversary of my original commission as an officer in the United States Army."

That afternoon, the troop carrier squadrons delivered reinforcements to the paratroopers on the ground—the 551st Parachute Battalion was airdropped into the landing zones. Pfc. Thomas B. Waller landed hard in a dry creekbed, shot at by Germans. Once on the ground, he cut his way out of his harness, assembled his rifle, and scrambled out of the creekbed. He then saw two Germans lying dead on their backs, staring sightlessly into the sky—the first German soldiers he had ever seen. He stared at them for several moments. Then he hustled to his company's assembly area.

En route, he saw six German soldiers coming toward him. Waller raised his rifle and then lowered it. The Germans were prisoners being brought in by Waller's company commander, Lieutenant Dalton, who had surprised them.

Another paratrooper, Lieutenant Dick Goins, had an equally odd encounter with the enemy. After landing in a cornfield, he looked up to see five Germans coming toward him. He was about to fire when they threw up their hands in surrender and offered Goins watches and rings to save their lives. They turned out to be Russian "volunteers" who had been told that American paratroopers were murderers and thugs who would kill any German who fell into their clutches. Goins simply took them prisoner.

After the 551st Parachute Battalion landed—mostly in the right place—337 glider tugs delivered the 550th Glider Infantry Battalion and the Japanese American antitank gunners. Night and overcast made for a difficult journey. Things got worse when the gliders slammed into huge wooden poles called "Rommel's Asparagus," the German name for anti-glider obstacles in the various fields chosen as landing zones. Gliders slammed into the ground at 90 miles an hour and were ripped into splinters by the tall wooden stakes. Lt. Col. Ed Sachs, who commanded the 550th, was hurled against the tubular wall separating the pilots from the soldiers, fracturing several of his ribs. The pain was terrible. He ignored pleas to be evacuated for medical treatment, recovered his map case from the wrecked glider, and hobbled off for his command post.

Technical Sergeant Ralph Wenthold of the 551st watched a glider land in an orchard, have its wings sheared off by two trees, smash head-on into another larger tree, and disintegrate. Bodies flew in all directions.

The flimsy gliders crumpled as they hit boulders, trees, and Rommel's Asparagus. Of the

National Archives

These Free French guerrilla fighters agreed to be photographed with their backs to the camera to protect their family members from German reprisals. The guerrillas played a much larger role in the Allied invasion of Southern France than in the Normandy invasion, which had occurred a few weeks earlier.

404 used in the assault, only 45 were deemed salvageable.

But the airborne operation had worked well. Frederick's 1st Airborne Task Force, an ad hoc outfit, had suffered 450 killed, captured, and missing, and another 300 wounded. The actual parachute and glider drops had caused 290 casualties, most of them in the 550th Glider Battalion.

Frederick's men were organized and in good shape, linking up with the seaborne forces. They had captured more than 1,000 Germans, and hundreds of dead Germans littered the roads and fields. The only weakness: the British 2nd Parachute Brigade had not taken the key crossroads town of Le Muy. Brigadier Pritchard claimed the Germans were too strong, even for his paratroops. Frederick ordered the newly arrived 550th Glider Battalion to take the town.

By midnight, with the Americans consolidating their positions and readying for new attacks, the German high command was facing yet another disaster in the West. In Rastenburg, East Prussia, Adolf Hitler stared down at his maps. The Führer had been listless and lethargic since the attempt to kill him on July 20, and his lack of energy suggested that he knew the war was lost.

The invasion of the Riviera was just another piece of bad news on a day full of reverses—the Russian Army was advancing remorselessly in Belorussia and western Poland, Eisenhower's tanks were racing toward Paris and Germany, Allied bombers were pulverizing Germany's cities nightly—and now this new invasion of southern France, and apparently no way to stop it. A gloomy Hitler looked up from his maps and muttered, "This has been the worst day of my life."

Depressed but calm, Hitler told his generals that he was ready to consider whatever measures were necessary in the event that the situation in France continued to deteriorate. The generals were dumbfounded. Normally the Führer called for defense to the last man. Now he was willing to yield ground and save lives, even retreat to the West Wall on the German frontier. Perhaps he was recognizing defeat.

As August 16 began in southern France, the 550th Glider Battalion moved up to Le Muy to assault the small town that was the 1st Airborne Task Force's prime objective. It was defended by 1,000 German soldiers dug in with antitank guns, mortars, and automatic weapons. The Germans realized the significance of the town and its road net and were determined to hold it.

The "Five and a Half" battalion attacked at 2:30 AM, moving through British positions silently to obtain the advantage of surprise. They did not get it. As soon as the Americans reached the edge of town, the Germans opened fire with automatic weapons, cutting down the glider men. Sachs pulled back to reorganize and prepare for a daylight assault.

At 11:40 AM, the glider gang tried again, using a flanking movement to encircle the town. A French Underground man pointed out a house to Lieutenant Paul Egan, and he and his five-man team rushed it. They captured seven German captains and a colonel hiding in the basement, while releasing an American paratroop officer and glider pilot who had been captured and were being held there. The Americans also captured the German aid station along with 33 wounded Germans and six medics.

The German defenders were soon swept up by the aggressive glider men, and the battle raged around the town's church steeple, which dominated the nearby fields. Every time a shot rang out in Le Muy, the Americans shot at the church steeple, drenching it with lead, wounding by mistake Private Paul A. Stinner when he climbed into it to have a look around.

By mid-afternoon, the Americans had Le Muy along with 700 POWs, and 300 more Germans dead and wounded.

On the second day of the invasion, the French 2nd Corps began landing on the secured beaches with great emotion. "I kept my eyes closed so as not to be aware of too

much happiness too soon," said a French soldier of his homecoming. "And then I bent down and scooped up a handful of sand, with the feeling that what I was doing was a private act, separate from anybody else's." Many French soldiers had the same sense of exultation. A witness to one French landing saw the troops "massed in the bows of the ship, fascinated by the beach; they jumped down with a single bound, bent down to pick up a handful of sand, then skipped like madmen to the nearest pine trees, where they regrouped, shaking each other's hands, or embracing like brothers, meeting again after a long absence."

At La Nartelle, Hewitt, Patch, Forrestal, and Admiral Andre Lemonnier, chief of staff of the French Navy, came ashore, and a crowd emerged, seeing Lemmonier's French hat, to welcome the liberators. Lemonnier made a short speech, but nobody heard it—everyone was too busy cheering.

The Franco-American invasion continued to expand its gains. The 517th Parachute Regiment fought to seize Les Arcs. The 36th Infantry Division pushed eastward along the Cote d'Azur toward Cannes and Nice. The Germans hit back with coastal batteries, so the Navy was called in. All night long warships and batteries exchanged salvos.

Now General Neuling was in personal danger—the American paratroopers were moving in on Draguignan. The German general was determined to hold his headquarters to the last man. The defense of Draguignan consisted of 750 men with no hope of reinforcements. Against this the 551st Parachute Battalion moved in for a night attack.

At 11 PM, the paratroopers attacked, charging through the fields and streets with ferocity. General Ludwig Bieringer, commanding the town's defenses, was astonished at the speed of the American attack—his command post was quickly surrounded and he was captured at his desk. Bieringer, fearing the worst at the hands of tough paratroopers, offered them a one-mark bribe not to shoot him.

All night long the wild battle for Draguignan continued, but the Americans soon gained the upper hand. Two paratroopers captured an entire German hospital through bluff—they convinced the German lieutenant colonel commanding it that they had a large force of paratroopers ready to seize the building. By later afternoon of D+2, the Americans secured the town. With its capture, the 1st Airborne Task Force's work was complete—all of its objectives had been taken and were being held.

Meanwhile, the last battle of the invasion was coming to a close. The Black Devils had yet to oust a band of Germans holed up in three stone Napoleonic forts on the offshore island of Port-Cros. Royal Air Force Hawker Typhoon fighter bombers and the cruiser USS *Augusta* had shelled the position for 48 hours to no avail. The British battleship HMS *Ramillies* steamed to within six miles of the target, pointblank range, and hurled 15-inch shells into the forts. Within a short time, white flags rose over the battered forts, and the Black Devils charged in to disarm the dazed defenders.

The Germans now faced the harsh facts—they could not drive the Americans into the sea. Fresh French troops were pouring into the beachhead, headed for Toulon and Marseilles. Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels readied the German people for the evil tidings with a broadcast that said, "We must be prepared for a German withdrawal from France. We must expect the loss of places with world-famous names." Army Group G was in peril of being destroyed.

The French began moving in on Toulon and Marseilles, with the tough 1st Free French Infantry Division and the 3rd Algerian Division leading the assault. Marseilles and Toulon were liberated on August 28. Within a month, Marseilles' great docks were supplying the advancing Allied armies. The campaign itself continued with Truscott trying to achieve a Cannae in the Rhone Valley and just missing. But the invasion of southern France reached its conclusion on September 11, 1944, when Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army linked up with the French at Saulieu, 40 miles west of Dijon.

The invasion of southern France was a fairly complete victory. The amphibious assault had gone in textbook manner, and the drive north covered 500 miles in one month. American casualties were 3,000 killed and missing and 4,500 wounded, while the French had 1,144 killed and missing and 4,346 wounded. Besides suffering far heavier casualties, the German armies lost 100,000 POWs, about a third of their total effectives in the south. More German troops were put out of action by Dragoon than in Tunisia. Blaskowitz was relieved of what was left of his command.

All that was left to debate was whether the invasion of southern France had been worth it. Churchill and Clark insisted that it prevented the Allies from freeing Eastern Europe, but Samuel Eliot Morison argued, "Unless the Allies managed to push the Germans beyond the Po, this operation would have had to start with an amphibious landing on the Istrian peninsula near Trieste. All naval planners, as well as the French and American generals, looked upon that with dismay. It would have meant thrusting a naval force up the long, narrowing and heavily mined Adriatic between enemy-held shores. The distance from

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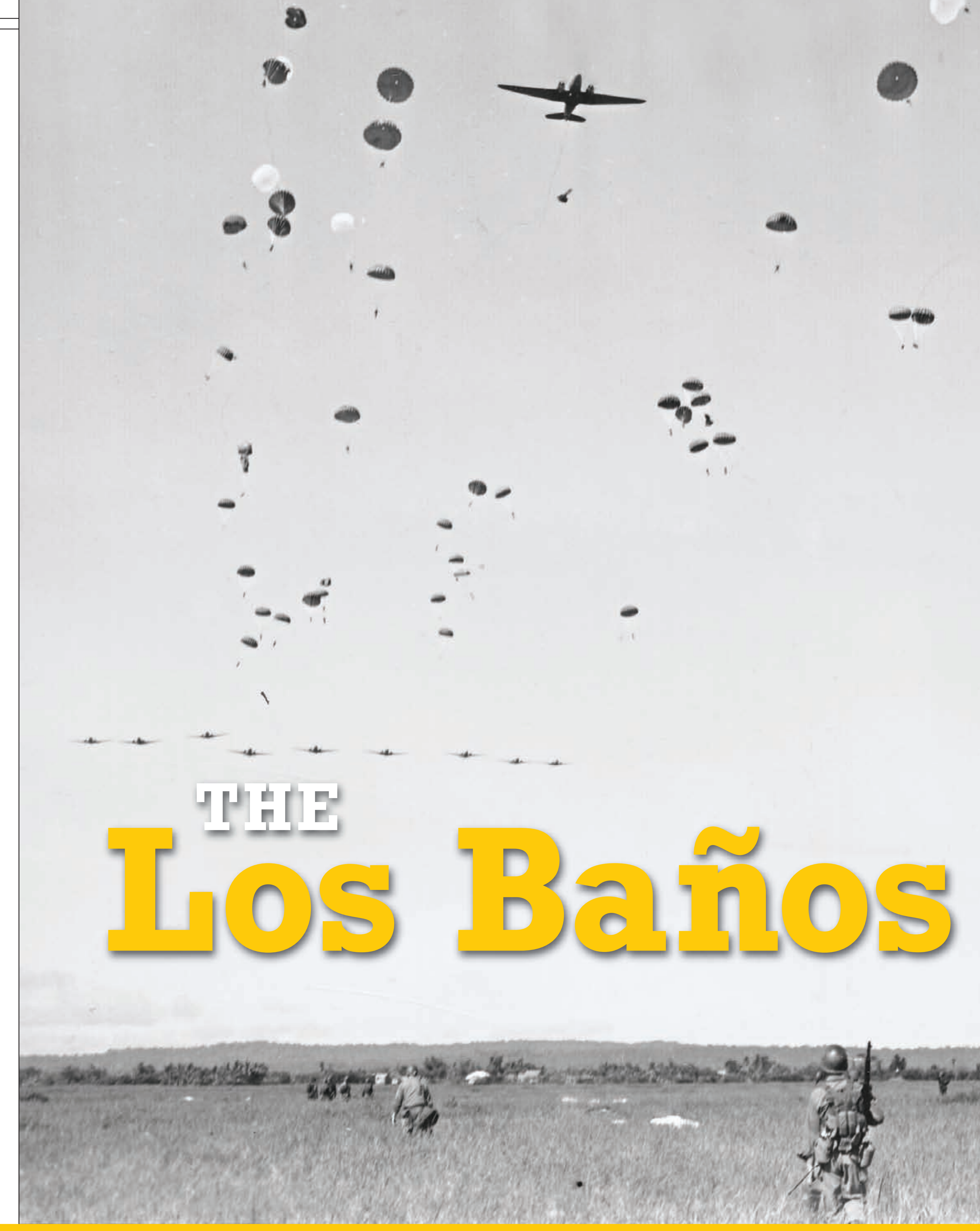
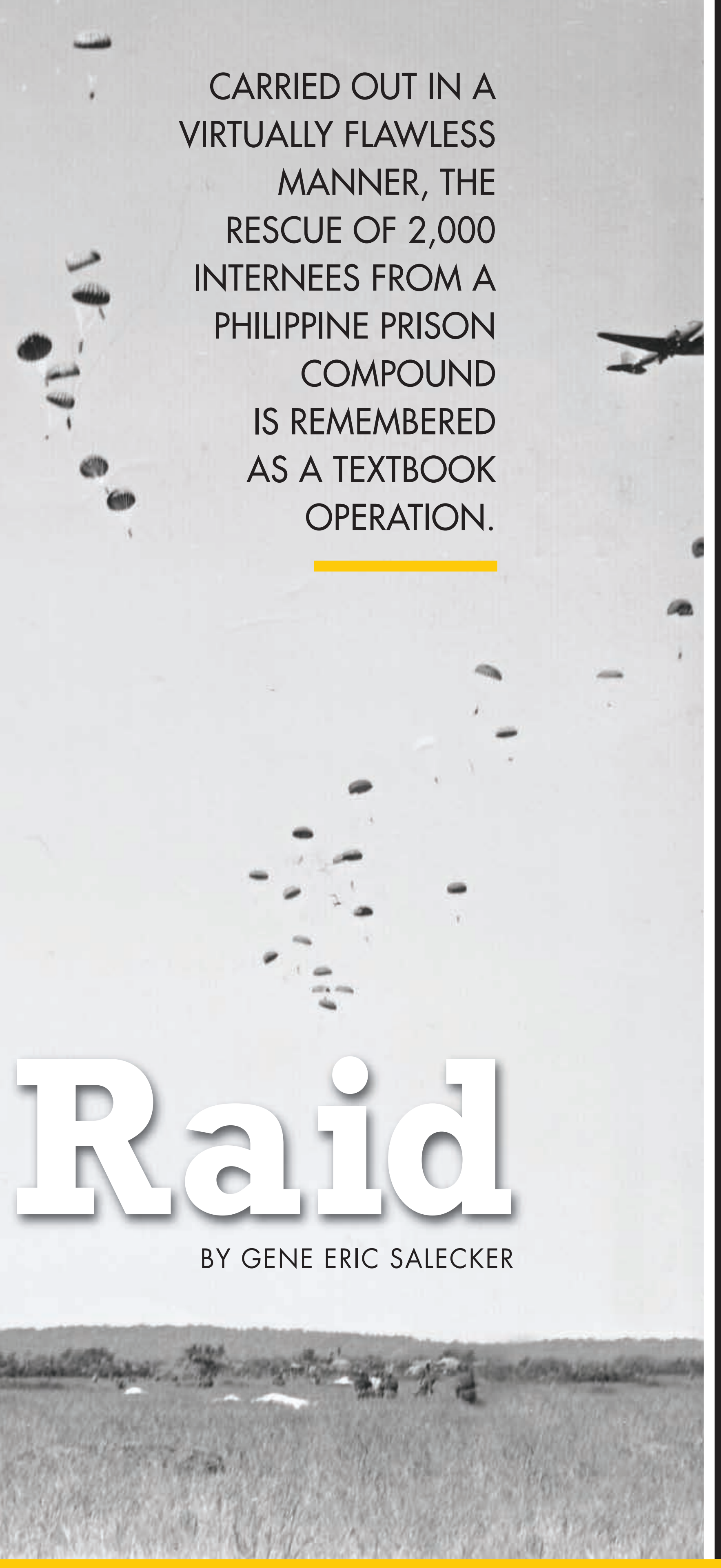
National Archives

Dignitaries and French officers review troops assembled in the city after the liberation of Marseilles. General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, commander of the French Army's 2nd Corps, walks second from right in the procession.



THE Los Baños



CARRIED OUT IN A VIRTUALLY FLAWLESS MANNER, THE RESCUE OF 2,000 INTERNEES FROM A PHILIPPINE PRISON COMPOUND IS REMEMBERED AS A TEXTBOOK OPERATION.

Raid

BY GENE ERIC SALECKER

ON JANUARY 9, 1945, after almost three years, General Douglas MacArthur and the United States Army returned to the Philippine island of Luzon, landing at Lingayen Gulf on the northwest coast. After establishing a fortified beachhead and moving inland a few miles, MacArthur formed two "flying columns" of cavalry, armor, and artillery and ordered them to go toward the Philippine capital of Manila.

"Go to Manila," he told the column commanders, "go around the Nips, bounce off the Nips, but go to Manila." Among the objectives for the flying columns was the rescue of civilian internees being held in captivity at Santo Tomas Catholic University and Bilibid Prison inside Manila. On the night of January 31, the columns started forward.

One of MacArthur's top priorities during the invasion of Luzon was to rescue the men, women, and children being held at four prison camps around the island. The civilians had fallen into the hands of the Japanese during the fall of the Philippines in 1942, and MacArthur wanted to set them free before the Japanese committed any acts of reprisal.

The first wave of airborne troops assembles on the ground as the second wave floats earthward during an operation executed by the 11th Airborne Division in the Philippines. The Los Banos Raid was one of the most flawlessly executed operations involving airborne troops in the history of modern warfare.

The prison camp near Cabanatuan, holding 500 prisoners of war, was liberated on January 28 in a daring behind-the-lines raid by the 6th Ranger Battalion. The two Manila area compounds, Santo Tomas University, with 4,000 civilian internees, and Bilibid Prison, holding 500 civilians and 800 American and Allied prisoners of war, would be liberated on February 3 and 4, respectively. The fourth internment camp, close to the village of Los Baños near the southern shore of Laguna de Bay, a large inland lake lying southeast of Manila, would be the only one still in existence in the middle of February, but not for long.

On January 21, on the Philippine island of Leyte, south of Luzon, Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger, commander of the Eighth Army, met with Maj. Gen. Joseph Swing, commander of the 11th Airborne Division, the only airborne division in the Pacific. During the meeting, Eichelberger informed Swing that his unit of paratroopers and glidermen would be used to form a second front in the battle for Luzon, making a beach landing and a parachute drop south of Manila. Among his objectives, Swing was given two priorities: get to Manila ahead of Sixth Army coming down from the north, and free the prisoners at Los Baños as soon as possible. Although Swing had never heard of the Los Baños prison camp, his staff began gathering information while they got ready for their invasion of Luzon.

The civilian internment camp near Los Baños had been established by the Japanese in December 1942 at the Agricultural College of the University of the Philippines, located about 2 1/2 miles southeast of the town. Held

All photos: National Archives

within the large, fenced compound of more than 30 buildings were 2,147 internees of various nationalities, including 1,575 Americans.

General Swing made a beach landing with his glidermen near the city of Nasugbu, 55 miles south of Manila, on January 31. Three days later, the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) dropped on Tagaytay Ridge, along the northern shore of Laguna de Bay, to capture and secure a vital road junction. Almost immediately, General Eichelberger asked Swing to form a flying column and send it south toward Los Baños to rescue the internees.

With his troops heavily engaged with the Japanese forces below Manila, Swing pointed out, "of the 8,000 troops of the division, no flying column of sufficient strength could be made immediately available." Instead, Swing recommended that the mission be suspended until he could "disengage a force of the necessary size from contact with the Japs." Over the next few weeks, although the 11th Airborne Division drove steadily northward toward the southern environs of Manila it was eventually beaten to the capital by the Sixth Army. Missing out on Eichelberger's first priority, Swing then turned to his second priority, the raid on Los Baños.

During the attack toward Manila, Swing's staff had been gathering intelligence and drawing up plans for the raid on Los Baños, located 40 miles behind Japanese lines. As envisioned, Swing wanted his planners to use both an airborne and amphibious attack. Swing wanted his paratroopers to land near the prison compound and destroy the Japanese garrison while his amphibious force swept across Laguna de Bay equipped with vehicles for transporting the internees to safety. Additionally, Swing felt that a diversionary attack was crucial to draw the Japanese troops away from the camp.

The raid would entail of a four-pronged attack. The 511th PIR Provisional Reconnaissance Platoon under Lieutenant George E. Skau, aided by local guerrillas, would move into an area opposite the camp prior to the strike. Then, simultaneous with a parachute drop of Lieutenant John M. Ringler's Company B of the 511th PIR and an amphibious landing by Major Henry A. Burgess's 1st Battalion, minus the airdropped company but reinforced with a platoon from C Company, 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion and two howitzers from Battery D, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, the recon platoon and guerrillas would eliminate the sentries along the wire.

While the amphibious force, landing in LVT-4 amphibious tractors or amtracs of the 672nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion rolled up onto the beach from Laguna de Bay and continued toward the camp, the company of paratroopers would link up with the recon platoon and guerrillas and wipe out the rest of the garrison. When the amphibious force reached the camp, it would deploy to the south and west to block any reaction by the Japanese.

The fourth force would form a flying column composed of the 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lt. Col. Ernie LaFlamme, the 675th Glider Field Artillery Battalion, the 472nd Glider Field

General Robert L. Eichelberger (center), commander of the U.S. Eighth Army in the Philippines and General Joseph Swing, commander of the U.S. 11th Airborne Division, confer during planning for an upcoming operation against the Japanese.

Artillery Battalion, and Company B of the 637th Tank Destroyer Battalion and move by road around the southwest end of Laguna de Bay up to the gates of the camp. This force, under the command of Lt. Col. Robert H. Soule and designated "Los Baños Force," would bring enough trucks with it to carry out all the internees and paratroopers. If the fourth group could not reach the camp, the internees could be ferried out in the amtracs across Laguna de Bay while the paratroopers fought their way out. The raid was scheduled for dawn on February 23, 1945, a moonless night.

Major Burgess pulled his 1st Battalion troops out of line on February 21 and moved them to New Bilibid Prison at Muntinlupa on the northwestern shore of Laguna de Bay. "Something big was brewing for B Company," remembered Jim Holzem. "We could feel it in the air. And the rumors! Something big, something important, was coming up. What was it all about? We were loaded onto trucks and driven about 20 miles south of Manila. The trucks drove up to the gates of a large penitentiary called New Bilibid Prison, and we were driven in. Some thanks for all the fighting we had been doing! We were being put in prison. We were assigned cells and that night slept on cots with boards for mattresses. I guess the reason we were spirited away to prison was that they wanted to maintain complete secrecy regarding the upcoming operation."

During the last few days before the raid, a major change was forced upon the planners. Combat engineers looking into the route of the mobile relief force had discovered that a number of bridges between the San Juan River, the jumping off point for the column, and the Los Baños Internment Camp had been demolished by the Japanese and that the road to the camp was in terrible shape. Although the engineers were confident that they could rebuild the bridges and fill in the roads, they admitted that such jobs would take time, too much time. An alternate plan had to be found.

Instead of carrying the internees out in trucks that would accompany the mobile relief force, the plan was changed so that the internees would be carried out in the amtracs, capable of carrying 35 combat infantrymen each. With over 2,000 internees, it would take two trips to carry everyone to safety. The 511th PIR would have to hold the beachhead until everyone was away. Colonel Soule's ground force, coming from San Juan, was now relegated to a diversionary role rather than a rescue role. One last change had the 511th PIR walking out of Los Baños on foot, heading west and hoping for a quick link-up with the mobile task force.

At 8 PM on February 21, Lieutenant Skau and his 22-man reconnaissance platoon set out for the southern shore of Laguna de Bay. Skau and seven men were the first to go, setting out into favorable winds in a small native fishing boat, or *banca,* handled by a Filipino crew. Fifteen minutes later, another group of six followed. When the third and largest group was about to set sail in the largest *banca,* carrying the reconnaissance platoon's heavy weapons, ammunition, rations, and extra weapons and ammunition for the guerrillas, the Filipino captain informed the men that he had a broken rudder. Two hours later, the third *banca* finally pushed into the bay, but by now the winds had died down. The crew would have to tack back and forth across Laguna de Bay to reach the southern shore.

On the afternoon of February 22, everything went into motion. Colonel Soule's diversionary column of glidermen, artillerymen, and tank destroyers formed up at Parañaque near the northwest corner of Laguna de Bay and began heading south along Highway 1. Paralleling the western shore of Laguna de Bay, the column finally stopped on the north bank of the San Juan River just before dark.

A second group that moved out that afternoon included Companies A and C of the 511th PIR, the engineer platoon from Com-

pany C, 127th Airborne Engineers, and the two guns and crews from Battery D, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. Heading out from New Bilibid Prison, the group also turned south down Highway 1 and eventually turned off at Mamatid, along the western shore of Laguna de Bay and about five miles above the San Juan River. Here, the entire convoy went into bivouac under a canopy of trees. Major Burgess finally informed the men about the upcoming mission, specifying the role of each company, the engineers, and the two gun crews.

That afternoon the convoy of 54 amphibious tractors of the 672nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Joseph W. Gibbs, moved out. The amtracs had been sitting at the Manila racetrack for a couple of weeks before making the trek southward through the streets. After traveling along Highway 1 to Muntinlupa, the convoy turned east and crawled into the waters of Laguna de Bay. Traveling southward until just after dusk, Colonel Gibbs led his amtracs ashore near Mamatid to join Major Burgess's waiting paratroopers, engineers, and artillerymen. Once ashore, the crews and drivers were briefed on the operation and each member of the waiting attack force was assigned to one of the vehicles.

Finally, in the late afternoon, the reinforced Company B paratroopers moved out of New Bilibid Prison. Before the men left, the plan was revealed to them. "Finally, Lieutenant Ringler, our commanding officer, called us together and told us of the operation," remembered Trooper Holzem. "There were over 2,000 American, Allied, [and] civilian prisoners in a Japanese internment camp about 25 miles beyond where our front lines were. Word had come in from Filipino guerrillas that the Japanese were going to execute all the prisoners on the morning of February 23rd."

Lieutenant Ringler recalled the reactions of the men: "The men of B Company accepted the initial news of the jump in good spirits. I don't believe that they initially understood the full danger of the mission until after our briefings were completed. At that time they became apprehensive of what could happen; however, with the amount of intelligence that we had we were very confident of success. We realized that we might be dropping into a hornet's nest, which could result in considerable casualties. Regardless of our feelings, we knew that the mission was ours to accomplish. This was truly an ideal airborne mission, and this is what we were trained for."

Taken from New Bilibid Prison to Nichols Field outside Manila, the troopers, engineers, and artillerymen who were to drop alongside the Los Baños Internment Camp were given their parachutes, ammunition, and rations. After assignment to one of the nine waiting Douglas C-47 transport planes, the men curled up under the wings of the planes and tried to get a few hours of sleep.

At this late hour, there was a last minute addition to the amtracs. Maj. Gen. Courtney Whitney, a staff officer with MacArthur who was charged with overseeing the entire guerrilla organization on Luzon, and a mysterious man dressed in civilian clothing, suddenly showed up and were given room in an amtrac. Although Whitney outranked Major Burgess, he came along solely as an observer.

Far away, along the southern shore of Laguna de Bay near the small barrio of Nanhaya, Lieutenant Skau and his recon platoon from the first two boats sweated it out for a whole day. Both boats had gotten ashore well before daylight on February 22, but the big *banca* carrying most of men of the platoon and all the heavy weapons and extra equipment was nowhere to be seen. When night fell and the boat had still not arrived, the lieutenant made alternate plans for the men at hand. Then, almost miraculously, the big *banca* loomed into view.

ABOVE: With their transport aircraft being loaded in the background, members of the 11th Airborne Division don their parachutes in preparation for a drop somewhere in the Philippines in February 1945. BELOW: American troops board a tracked landing vehicle during exercises. Ground troops traveling in vehicles such as these executed their portion of the Los Banos Raid in coordination with airborne troops.

A little behind schedule, Skau and his recon platoon and about 80 Philippine guerrillas moved over to San Antonio, a small shoreline barrio located about one mile east of the village of Los Baños. Leaving a few recon men behind to mark the beach with white phosphorous grenades, the rest of the band headed

inland. "Traveling overland through rice paddies, taking circuitous routes in order to skirt by the various enemy listening posts and outposts, it took us 10 hours to arrive at our objective [i.e. the internment camp]," wrote Terry Santos, a member of the recon platoon.

Around midnight, while most of the men were asleep, General Swing received information that the Japanese were moving large forces into the Los Baños area; this was confirmed by a night fighter pilot who saw numerous truck headlights on the highways. Had the secrecy been breached? Did the Japanese know that the raid was on? Too late to do anything at this hour, Swing decided to continue with the raid but notified the 2nd Battalion/511th PIR to be on standby for special movement south. He was hoping that the movement of the Japanese trucks through the Los Baños area was just a coincidence.

In reality, the movement of the Japanese was in response to the movement of the American amtracs from Manila to Muntinlupa. Lt. Gen. Masatoshi Fujishige, the Japanese commander in the area, had been informed of the movement of the amtracs but had been incorrectly told that they were American tanks. Assuming that the Americans were getting ready for a major drive down Highway 1, he shifted his forces accordingly, moving them west, away from the Los Baños prison area.

At 5:15 AM on February 23, Major Burgess's amphibious force was in motion. The LVT-4s crawled into the water and turned south. With the sun not yet up, the drivers would have to navigate the entire 7.4 miles to the San Antonio beachhead by compass, something that had never been done before. Moving at only five miles per hour in water (and 15 miles per hour on land), the trip would take just under 1 1/2 hours if everything worked out all right.

The next group to get into motion was the airborne segment. In addition to the paratroopers of Company B, 28 men from the Headquarters Company Light Machine Gun Platoon who had been attached for added firepower and nine engineers who had become separated from Colonel Soule's relief column would also make the jump onto Los Baños. In all, Lieutenant Ringler would have about 140 men in his strike force.

"There was no moon," Ringler wrote. "The sky was clear in the pre-dawn as we put on full combat equipment, then our parachutes, and loaded with our crew, several weapon bundles into the nine C-47s, under the command of Major Don Anderson, 65th Troop Carrier Squadron."

As the B Company paratroopers climbed into their planes, they must have noticed the huge yellow letters painted on the side of one of the planes—RESCUE. Perhaps one of the C-47 crews wanted to let the internees know just exactly what was happening when the paratroopers hit the silk and the gunfire started, and they wanted everybody to get ready to leave.

The planes took off around 6:15 AM and by 7 were nearing the Los Baños area. "As we dropped altitude and lined up with the drop zone," wrote Captain Herbert J. Parker, the co-pilot on Anderson's plane, "I flipped the cockpit switch to turn on the red light over the open rear door of the plane. At that signal, Lieutenant Ringler ordered his men to 'stand up and hook up.' They formed a row facing the rear of the plane, and each paratrooper checked the static line of the trooper in front of him, making sure that the chute was in order and the static line hook was attached to the metal anchor cable that ran overhead of the cabin."

Down below on Laguna de Bay, the 54 amphibious tractors carrying the men from Companies A and C/511th PIR, the platoon from Company C, 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion, and the two 75mm pack howitzers and crews of Battery D, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion were nearing their destination. Although guided only by their compasses, the drivers were approaching right on target. "We were told paratroopers would jump at dawn," recalled Art Coleman, a machine gunner on one of the amtracs. "At first light we had eyes glued straight up as we neared the lake shore. Suddenly, at treetop height, nine C-47s rounded a hill...."

On the ground below, the recon platoon, slowed by the late arrival of the large *banca,* was just approaching the compound. "Just as we crested the bank of Boot Creek [on the south side of the prison pen]," wrote Terry Santos, "enemy fire erupted at 3 minutes before 0700. This alerted the Japanese gunners in the pillboxes."

Charging the positions, two of the four recon men in Santos's squad were wounded, and one of the 12 Philippine guerrillas with them was hit before two pillboxes were silenced. "Then suddenly a third, unreported machine gun opened fire on us," Santos remembered. "We spotted this machine gun on a knoll near a large tree overlooking our

Map © 2012 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: A battery of the 675th Field Artillery attached to the 11th Airborne Division fires its weapon in the Philippines in February 1945. Accurate artillery fire supported the Los Banos Raid and played a critical role in its success. BELOW: The Los Banos Raid was a complex affair combining both air and ground troops moving toward assigned objectives and holding the Japanese at bay.

exposed position. We kept it under fire until B Company troopers reinforced us."

Up above, the pilots spotted the intended drop zone, a small field to the west of the compound. "As we crossed the edge of the drop zone," co-pilot Parker stated, "[Major] Don [Anderson] ordered the jump. I threw the switch that activated the green light over the rear cargo door. Lieutenant Ringler kicked out his equipment bundle and jumped. His troopers were right behind him. It was 7:00 AM, February 23, 1945."

Ringler recalled, "I was jumpmaster of the lead aircraft, and at dawn, 0700 hours, we jumped and all landed on the DZ without casualties.... My time in the air consisted of only a couple of oscillations and I was on the ground. If there was any firing, it was very light or the enemy was off target."

The crews of the amtracs watched in amazement as the paratroopers dropped out of the sky from an altitude of only 400 feet. At 6:58 AM the amtrac drivers saw white phosphorous smoke identifying the landing beach, courtesy of Lieutenant Skau's reconnaissance platoon.

The Japanese at Mayondon Point, an outcropping just west of San Antonio, fired upon the noisy, incoming horde of amtracs but scored no hits. As soon as the first wave of LVT-4s hit shore, one of Major Burgess's paratrooper platoons scrambled out of the vehicles and set up a defensive perimeter around the beach. At the same time, the two 75mm pack howitzers were offloaded and went into action, firing at a Japanese position on a hill to the west. The empty amtracs and those in the succeeding waves then started down the road to Los Baños, 2½ miles away.

Inside the Los Baños compound, all was suddenly noise and confusion. "That morning, as I walked out of the barracks with my family to line up for 7:00 AM roll call, I looked up into the sky and over a field near our camp saw several C-47 transport planes," remembered Robert A. Wheeler, a 12-year-old internee. "Suddenly, the sky filled with the 'Angels'; the men of 'B' Company of the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, floating down as if from heaven in their white parachutes. At that same moment, the Recon Platoon ... hit the guard posts and began the race to the guard room where the off-duty guards had their rifles stored. Those guards were outside doing their regular 7:00 AM morning exercise.... We all ran back into the barracks. With bullets flying just over my head through the grass mat walls, I lay on the floor under my bunk, eating my breakfast."

Twelve prisoners of war, Army nurses that had been captured during the fall of the Philippines, were being held at Los Baños along with the civilian internees. Navy Lieutenant Dorothy Still Danner remembered working through the night taking care of a newborn baby. "It was just about 7 in the morning," she wrote. "I had the baby in my arms when I noticed smoke signals going up. Nobody paid any attention to them. Then, all of a sudden we saw a formation of aircraft coming over. As the paratroopers started jumping out, the guerrillas and soldiers around the guard houses began killing the Japanese there."

The paratroopers took approximately 15 minutes to assemble and move the 900 yards or so to the barrier around the compound. "After a rapid assembly," remembered Lieutenant Ringler, "there was only minor enemy resistance, which was eliminated." Some of the men used a dry riverbed on the edge of the drop zone that angled toward the camp to provide cover as they rushed forward.

Within 20 minutes of the first shots, the firing seemed to die down. Most of the Japanese guards were either killed or fled to the south and west, away from the incoming paratroopers. All the guards doing their morning calisthenics in an open area to the south of the compound were either killed or scared off. Although most of the

ABOVE: In this photo taken during the Los Banos Raid, buildings inside the prison camp go up in flames. Baker Hall, one of the principal structures at Los Banos is shown in the upper right corner of this image.BELOW: Fires rage through several barracks buildings at Los Banos as American and Filipino soldiers prepare to evacuate a number of former prisoners. Some buildings were purposely set on fire by the military personnel to encourage bewildered inmates to leave the premises with some sense of urgency.

sentries and pillboxes had already been silenced, some had to be eliminated by the Company B paratroopers. For the next few minutes, there was only sporadic shooting as the paratroopers, guerrillas, and recon men completed a building-by-building search.

While the fighting was going on at Los Baños, the 54 amtracs were rushing to the scene over a small dirt road. Lieutenant Danner was still helping the mother with the newborn baby and recalled, "Then the amtracs came in, crashing through the swali-covered fence near the front gate."

Young internee Bill Rivers remembered, "A whole herd of the damnedest vehicles I'd ever seen, roared into the camp. When I saw the white star with the two bars on each side, I feared that the Russians had somehow rescued us, as I'd never seen that insignia before. But when I heard one soldier profanely order [another soldier nicknamed] 'Red' to give him the field phone, I believe I heaved a sigh of relief."

As soon as the amtracs were inside the prison compound the Company A and C men dismounted and took up their positions, C Company moving to the south to set up a defensive perimeter against any sudden attacks by the Japanese, and A Company, with less than 50 men, deploying around the amtracs to help with the internees.

Two of the first men to jump out of the amtracs were General Whitney and his mysterious civilian companion. As Major Burgess recalled, the two men went into the camp and after a short time General Whitney came out carrying "several boxes well tied together containing documents which he deemed to be of considerable military significance. I didn't believe it at first, but he was really sincere about keeping those boxes together and was with them all of the time."

Although the contents of those boxes were never made public, it is believed that the information on the captured papers was used against the Japanese during subsequent war crimes trials.

Lieutenant Ringler was inside the camp, busy with other things when the amtracs showed up. "Upon our arrival inside the camp, the internees were very jubilant and excited as to the events taking place," he wrote. "After a rapid survey of the situation, our company started to assemble the internees for a rapid movement out of the camp. With over 2,000 individuals, this became a turbulent mass of human beings. Trying to control them and keeping them in one place was almost an impossible task."

Former Los Banos prisoners exit landing craft at Mamatid where ambulances and medical personnel are standing by. Immediately after their passengers were handed to the medical personnel, the amtracs returned to Los Banos to retrieve the remaining soldiers and former prisoners for another run to freedom.

Although most of the paratroopers were shocked by the emaciated condition of the internees, the civilians in turn thought that the soldiers looked enormous. Sister Louise Kroeger, a Catholic nun, recalled her first look at the American paratroopers. She wrote, "We thought each soldier an angel, and a giant one at that. They were massive compared to our malnourished men in camp."

Recalled Lieutenant Danner, "Oh, we never saw anything so handsome in our lives. These fellows were in camouflage uniforms wearing a new kind of helmet, not those little tin pan [World War I-style] things we were used to seeing. And they looked so healthy and so lively."

Of the 54 amtracs that had climbed onto the beach near San Antonio, a few had broken down during their trek to the prison compound since they were not designed for such long overland travel along a rutted, jungle track. While the crews tried to get them repaired, the rest of the amtracs had gone on to the prison compound and had gathered in an open field near the old university baseball diamond. Now all the paratroopers and amtrac crews had to do was get the internees into the waiting tractors.

"Many of the internees did not want to leave their huts or were returning to retrieve items left behind," remembered Lieutenant Ringler. Eventually, the paratroopers came up with the idea of burning the internees out.

"The results were spectacular," Major Burgess stated. "Internees poured out and into the loading area. Troops started clearing the barracks in advance of the fire and carried out to the loading area over 130 people who were too weak or too sick to walk."

Nurse Danner, a trained military professional, agreed with the tactic. She wrote, "The American troops actually had to set fire to the barracks to get the internees moving."

Although the internees were told to take only one or two small suitcases with them, they were showing up with boxes and suitcases in large numbers and all shapes and sizes. Not wanting to disturb the situation, Major Burgess and Colonel Gibbs had their men load the impediments into the amtracs along with as many people as they could accommodate. All the while, the faint rumble of artillery fire could be heard from far off in the distance, indicating that Colonel Soule's task force was trying to break through to Los Baños.

On schedule at 7 AM, Colonel Soule launched his task force southeast across the San Juan River toward two Japanese-occupied hills while a large guerrilla force launched an attack against Calamba, a Japanese-held barrio near the western shore of Laguna de Bay. By mid-morning, the glidermen and their attached artillery had formed a bridgehead across the river and had managed to wrestle the hills away from the Japanese. After setting up a blocking force to stop any movement by the Japanese 80th Division soldiers up Highway 1 from the

south, most of the task force began moving southeast toward Los Baños, hoping to make their link-up with the reinforced 511th PIR and escort the paratroopers out of the area.

About 9:30 AM, 2 1/2 hours after the Los Baños Raid had begun, Colonel Gibbs and his fully loaded amtracs finally began the slow crawl back to San Antonio and Laguna de Bay. Those people that could not fit in the amtracs began walking back to the beach.

Father William R. McCarthy, an internee Catholic priest, remembered those that walked. "Men, women and children followed," he wrote, "bundles under their arms or dangling from sticks, carrying their scant possessions with them…. With many others we walked over the highway of freedom against a background of flames, as one straw barracks quickly followed another in an all-consuming fire fanned by the morning breeze."

"After the first amtracs were loaded with the disabled, along with women and children, we were able to assemble all the remaining internees into a walking column and head for the Mayondon beach area," wrote Lieutenant Ringler. "As our unit guarded the moving internee column we heard distant firing, indicating the enemy was probably sending elements to engage [Colonel Soule's task force]." By approximately 11:30 AM, the Los Baños Internment Camp was in flames and completely deserted.

The first amtrac reached the beach near San Antonio about 10 AM. After all of the amtracs had assembled, including the four or five that had broken down and been repaired, Colonel Gibbs turned them northward and they crawled into the water for the trip back to Mamatid. There, a horde of Army ambulances and trucks waited to whisk the internees to New Bilibid Prison for help and medical aid.

"We entered the water," wrote amtrac gunner Coleman, "having been instructed to stay away from the shore on the return. The 1st Platoon wanting more action, went close in with all those people on board and promptly the enemy opened up. They turned away and the bullets struck the tailgates which could withstand the fire better. No one was injured. On reaching the safe shore, the freed people boarded trucks and ambulances. We immediately returned to Los Baños."

Although the Japanese at Mayondon Point fired at the retreating amtracs, their fire was mostly inaccurate. The only casualty was one of the LVT-4s. One pontoon on the side of the vehicle was punctured by the enemy gunfire and began to fill with water. After a short while, the amtrac settled low in the water. Fearing that the craft might sink, the crew simply radioed for help and another amtrac came alongside and took off all of the worried evacuees. Then, another amtrac towed the water-logged tractor all the way back to Mamitid.

A group of U.S. Navy nurses, the only military personnel detained at Los Banos, talk with Admiral Thomas Kinkaid shortly after their liberation.

After seeing the first group of about 1,500 internees and some of his paratroopers move away in the amtracs, Major Burgess and his remaining paratroopers, about 420, strengthened the perimeter set up around the San Antonio beachhead and waited. Off in the distance to the west, they could still hear the slight rumble of artillery fire coming from Colonel Soule's task force. As intended, Major Burgess was still working under the belief that he was supposed to evacuate the remaining 720 or so internees in the amtracs once they returned and then march his men out on foot. However, seeing how many people the amtracs could carry out, he decided it would be safer to have his own troopers ride out with the second wave of internees.

Although Burgess could not establish radio contact with Soule, he was able to make contact with a Piper Cub artillery liaison plane flying overhead and carrying General Swing. After informing the general of the success so far, Burgess requested permission to evacuate his reinforced battalion along with the last group of internees by amtrac. When Swing suggested that Burgess might want to hang onto his beachhead deep within enemy territory until Soule's task force reached him, the radio suddenly went dead.

Recalled Major Burgess, "I was so startled at the inquiry that, rather than reply, I turned off our radio…. I decided against the 'suggestion' and ordered the artillery radio to remain silent. To communicate further about the subject might have led him to order me to make contact with the 188th. Accordingly, we continued the evacuation of the beach by the amtracs."

Colonel Gibbs and his noisy herd of amtracs returned to the San Antonio beach near 1 PM, and immediately the back ramps were dropped and the internees and their belongings were brought inside. The two 75mm pack howitzers of Battery D, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, which had been firing into the high ground to the west of the beachhead all day, were picked up and placed atop the clutter of suitcases and packages in the center of a couple of amtracs. When all the remaining civilian passengers were safely on board, Major Burgess and his paratroopers climbed in. As the LVT-4s returned to the water, they drew fire from Japanese soldiers that were finally closing in on the American beachhead.

"As we entered the water," remembered Coleman, "mortar and artillery fire descended on us but not a round found its target. The commander of the task force, Major Henry Burgess, later told me he could hear the Jap officers giving commands as we withdrew."

As the amtracs scurried across the water, the crew of one of the 75mm pack howitzers pinpointed the location of a Japanese machine-gun position. Sergeant Harold Mason, one of the gunners, recalled: "The howitzer was high enough on the pile of baggage for us to contemplate firing a round back at the hill, which was the only place we thought the firing might be coming from. So we loaded and fired at the hill with a charge one, I believe. The machine gun stopped firing but the '[am]track' was dipping from side to side and taking on water with each dip. The amtrac driver pointed a .45 pistol back at us and said, 'Anyone loading that thing again gets a bullet in the head.'"

Needless to say, the American artillerymen stopped firing, but then, so did the Japanese.

By 3 PM, eight hours after the Los Baños Raid had begun, the beachhead at San Antonio was clear of internees and American soldiers. Burgess was one of the last men to leave the beach. The raid had been a complete success.

The first group of internees, which included all the sick and most of the women and children, had reached Mamatid about noon. Once there, the civilians were overwhelmed by American soldiers and Filipinos wanting to lend a hand wherever they could. A few hours later, the second group of internees was brought ashore and met the same reception.

West of Los Baños, Colonel Soule and his men spotted the first group of amtracs heading north across Laguna de Bay toward Mamatid crowded with internees and knew that, at least

Continued on page 72

By Al Hemingway

Tracking Nazi Murderers

Royal Air Force investigators pursued the killers of the "Great Escape" airmen.

ON THE BONE-CHILLING NIGHT OF MARCH 24, 1944, SHADOWY FIGURES FROM nowhere out of the ground. They emerged from a makeshift tunnel that led from the German prison camp Stalag Luft III located approximately 100 miles southeast of Berlin to a wooded area outside the barbed wire. Stalag Luft III, situated near a small town called Sagan, was opened in 1942. The Germans believed its desolate location and soil composition would make it difficult for tunneling and escaping.

The escape route, nicknamed Harry, was more than 100 yards from the camp's perimeter. Unfortunately, the calculations were wrong and the tunnel fell 20 feet short of the tree line. Despite this, the men decided to push on before a German sentry spotted a "wispy column of steam rising from the ground." Before the tunnel was uncovered and all prisoners were corralled inside, 76 men had crawled their way outside the wire and made off carrying false passports and papers—all but three would be captured—and 50 of the remaining 73 would mysteriously disappear.

In his newest book, ***Human Game: The True Story of the "Great Escape" Murders and the Hunt for the Gestapo Gunmen*** (Berkley Books, New York, 2012, 352 pp., photographs, notes, index, $26.95, hardcover), award-winning newspaper reporter Simon Read takes the reader on an incredible journey that rivals a Sherlock Holmes story as Royal Air Force investigators unravel the fate of the missing airmen by researching every clue, no matter how small, and bringing to justice the individuals responsible for their disappearance.

Enter Squadron Leader Francis P. McKenna. During the war he had been a member of a bomber crew on an Avro Lancaster at the advanced age of 37, which made him an old man. Prior to the conflict, he had made a name for himself as a detective sergeant of the Blackpool Borough Police and became known as "Sherlock Holmes" because of his professionalism, methodical approach to solving crimes, and dedication. He was the perfect man for the job.

McKenna and his team stepped into a murky world of tracking former Nazi henchmen. The problem was they had little or no concrete information that could lead them to the culprits. They spent countless hours searching files, paperwork, and other documents. Unfortunately, they had barriers to hurdle. Much of the documentation had been destroyed by the Gestapo as the Allies were approaching, especially any information on the orders that were given to the executioners to murder the prisoners. The top Nazis, Hitler, Himmler, Göring, and others, were either dead or imprisoned, and McKenna's team was bent on snaring those who actually pulled the triggers. Also, the eastern portion of the country was in control of the Russians who provided little, if any, evidence of the whereabouts of the murderers.

Read does an excellent job of weaving the story of the escape, how it was planned and executed by the prisoners in Stalag Luft III. Through bits and pieces of information he has unearthed during his meticulous research he is able to describe the harrowing final minutes of those 50 men who were gunned down by their captors.

It took the Royal Air Force team several years of knocking on doors, speaking to relatives of the perpetrators, and following tips to arrest most of those involved in the murders. Some were seized decades later only to receive reduced sentences for their crimes years after the fanfare surrounding the case had been forgotten by most.

Watchtowers overlook a German POW camp in this painting by J.A. Russell. Fifty of the 73 Allied prisoners who escaped from Stalag Luft III and were recaptured were murdered by the Germans.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Most Practical Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Can the two current proposed solutions bring peace to the region?

A persistent mantra maintains that only two possible solutions exist to the seemingly intractable, centuries-old conflict between Arabs and Jews in the Holy Land. But is that really true . . . or is there a more sensible alternative?

What are the facts?

The "One-State Solution." Some commentators advocate a one-state solution, in which Jews and Arabs would be joined in one state, with all inhabitants having the same citizenship – call it Israeli or Palestinian. But such a "solution," as most observers know, is totally unacceptable to the Jewish population. Given the murderous hate expressed daily in state-controlled Palestinian media toward Jews, this would be a recipe for a second Holocaust. Within one generation, Arabs, with their high birth rate and inevitable immigration from abroad, would be a majority. They would unleash a civil war that would make the Lebanese and the Syrian wars seem like child's play. With more than half the world's Jews now living in Israel, Adolf Hitler's most fervent genocidal wish would finally be fulfilled.

The "Two-State Solution." This second solution is favored by much of the world, including the U. S. government. But this solution is not much better than one state and almost as unacceptable to those who support the welfare and future of the Jewish state. The example of Gaza is instructive. In order to advance peace and appease world opinion, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon abandoned Gaza with no reciprocal agreement from the Palestinians. All Jewish inhabitants, most living there for generations, were expelled from their homes by Israel and resettled in "Israel proper." What reward, what thanks did Israel get for its generous gesture? Today, almost daily bombardments by deadly Hamas rockets force up to one million Israel civilians into bomb shelters. Israel's forbearance to these affronts is almost unimaginable. One can imagine how our country would respond if Mexico were to launch hundreds of rockets on San Diego. Thus it's easy to foresee what would happen if, under a "two-state solution," Israel were to abandon Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). Israel would surely suffer daily rocket assaults on its population centers—Tel Aviv, its international airport, its industrial heartland and its military installations. Life would become impossible.

The surrounding Arab states and Muslim countries beyond (such as Iran) would certainly join the fray and assist in the final destruction of the beleaguered and helpless Jewish state.

Which Solution Should Israel Choose? It's clear that neither the one-state solution nor the vaunted two-state solution would resolve the region's issues. How then should Israelis respond to the demand that they choose either of these "solutions"? In fact they need choose *neither*. Those who insist that they choose between those two "solutions" either don't fully understand the problem . . . or they oppose Israel's continued existence.

> "How then should Israelis respond to the demand that they choose either of these 'solutions'? In fact they need choose *neither*."

The reality is that, according to virtually every Palestinian leader, including President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians are not interested in a resolution of the conflict or even in the creation of a twenty-third Arab state. Their unrelenting, stated mission is destruction of the Jewish state and extermination of its inhabitants. Neither does the conflict have to do with territory. The Arab states occupy territory larger than the United States including Alaska. Israel is the size of New Jersey. Would the seething Arab-Muslim world finally lapse into peace and contentment if they were to acquire this tiny piece of land?

A Practical Solution to Resolve the Conflict. Clearly, Israel cannot agree to a "solution" that would eventually lead to the end of the Jewish state and the slaughter of its citizens. Because the Palestinian leadership refuses to negotiate peace and continues to advocate conquest of the entire Holy Land, like it or not, Israel must for security reasons remain in control of the "West Bank." However, there's no reason that even under today's current impasse the Palestinians should not have full autonomy—which they almost have today—as an "unincorporated territory." While the situation is not ideal, until the Palestinians agree to full peace with Israel, providing they do not resume terrorism, they could be welcomed as partners in the Israeli economic system and should be able to fully participate in Israel's commercial and creative life. Even without statehood, in less than a generation the Palestinians could become the most advanced and prosperous people in the entire Arab world.

Obviously the prospect of the Arabs having to wait longer for the launch of a Palestinian state will be painful for them. But this is a price that must be paid if Palestinian leaders refuse to negotiate peace and cling to the futile dream of conquering Israel. Israel has given its land in Gaza to the Palestinians in the name of peace and receives rockets in return. Israel has offered 97% of the West Bank and a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem in the name of peace and received rejection. It's time the Arabs acclimate to a status quo of their own making and take advantage of living next to one of the most successful countries in the world. In any case they must accept that their dream of Israel's annihilation will never be fulfilled.

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Facts and Logic About the Middle East
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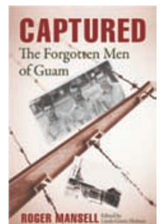
Read has written an edge-of-your-seat thriller that readers will find captivating. It is a fitting tribute to those detectives who relentlessly pursued and brought to justice the criminals whose only defense was the much often used excuse, "I was just following orders."

Captured: The Forgotten Men of Guam by Roger Mansell, edited by Linda Goetz Holmes, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2012, 288 pp., photographs, notes, index, $33.95, hardcover.

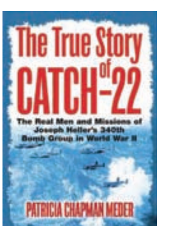


It seems that certain battles, personalities, or events have always been overlooked in World War II. One such tragedy was the seizure of Guam, the southernmost island in the Marianas chain, by Japanese forces in December 1941 and the horrible treatment of the POWs as well as the Chamorros, the native population indigenous to the island. Most of the military and civilian personnel were transported to Japan and used as slave labor for the Japanese war machine. The book goes into great detail describing the horrid living conditions, the incessant beatings, meager rations, and terrible weather conditions that the prisoners had to endure during their tenure as "guests of the emperor."

Prior to the Japanese takeover of Guam, some men did manage to scatter to the countryside and elude the Japanese. All but one were caught and executed. The lone survivor, U.S. Navy radioman George Ray Tweed, managed to evade the enemy for an incredible 31 months. When American forces invaded in July 1944, he signaled a destroyer offshore and was rescued. His time avoiding the Japanese remains controversial because some Chamorros believed he should have given himself up because many natives were tortured and killed for aiding him during his 31 months on the island.

Ironically, despite the brutality of their Japanese captors, some prisoners empathized with them at war's end. For others, their hatred remains to this day. After the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Japanese surrendered, the U.S. initiated Operation RAMP, Return of Allied Military Personnel. The book explains the homecoming of many of the prisoners and what become of them after the war. Of the 414 men captured on Guam, about three percent died while held prisoner—a true testament to their tenacity.

The True Story of Catch-22: The Real Men and Missions of Joseph Heller's 340th Bomb Group in World War II by Patricia Chapman Meder, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2012, 240 pp., illustrations, photographs, notes, $32.95, hardcover.



When Joseph Heller's satirical *Catch-22* was first published in 1961, it was hailed as a groundbreaking work in the world of literature. The novel, set in during World War II, concentrates on a B-25 bomber squadron located on the Mediterranean Island of Pianosa. Heller himself was a

Simulation Gaming

By Joseph Luster

UNDER DEFEAT HD IS A FUN AND UNIQUE SHOOTER.

Under Defeat HD: Deluxe Edition

It's not often we get to dig into the shoot 'em up genre in these pages, and no, I'm not talking about the other type of shooter we actually do get to talk about on a regular basis; I'm talking the games lovingly referred to by fans as "shmups" for short. Typically Japanese-developed, mostly 2D, these horizontal- or vertical-scrolling treasures tend to be coveted by the truly hardcore. While your average player will see them as quarter-munchers that can be conquered so long as your coin purse is deep enough, hardened veterans aren't happy with their performance until they've mastered beating the games with one continue, or even a single life. Enter one of the latest to hit North America, *Under Defeat HD,* in which YOU are essentially the Axis powers in an alternate-history World War II setting.

Unless you're one of those aforementioned shooter aficionados, *Under Defeat* likely slipped way under your radar when it first hit arcades and Sega Dreamcast in Japan in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Dreamcast was getting pretty up there in the years, so even importers may have skipped out on developer G.rev's chopper-centric shmup, but that's okay, because it's back on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, and this time it's actually flown west courtesy of publisher Rising Star Games.

PUBLISHER
Rising Star Games

DEVELOPER
G.rev

SYSTEM(S)
Playstation 3, Xbox360

AVAILABLE
Now

A friend of mine imported *Under Defeat* back when it hit Dreamcast, and I'll go ahead and admit I didn't get it at the time. For a first-timer, the controls can be aggressively unintuitive, so I was worried this would all simply resurface with the release of *Under Defeat HD,* which offers a newly arranged widescreen New Order mode in addition to the traditional vertically oriented arcade mode. Thankfully, like pretty much any shooter worth its salt, *Under Defeat* only asks that you spend some time learning the ropes, revealing addictive action wrapped in an unconventional control scheme.

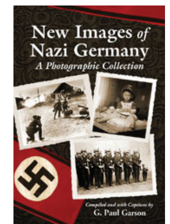
Those controls focus on maneuvering and rotating the helicopter. While most shooters just have you moving while your ship stays in a fixed position, pressing left and right rotates the aircraft, allowing for shooting in three directions. Hold down the fire button and your ship stays at a fixed angle. Hopefully reading about it at least hints at how awkward it can be at first, even with the option of reversing the left and right directions. While things don't quickly become second nature by any means, it isn't as harsh as it sounds after a couple hours, and the oddball charm of *Under Defeat*'s control scheme eventually grows on you. There's also an option in this version to map shooting to the right analog for dualstick controls, which should help alleviate the issue for the rest of the folks who just can't dig

the layout no matter what.

Under Defeat is pretty straightforward, but there's plenty of strategy to dig into beyond simply memorizing the stages. The key to victory is taking out troublesome, heavy-hitting foes first and figuring out which of the collectible Option items works best for you. Options

bombardier with the 488th Bombardment Squadron, 340th Bomb Group, Twelfth Air Force serving in the Mediterranean. Although Heller denied it, to those who served in the unit the similarity between the characters—Colonel Cathcart, Major Major, Brig. Gen. Dreedle, and Captain John Yossarian (based on Heller himself)—was unmistakable.

The author is the daughter of the real-life commander of the 340th Bomb Group, Colonel Willis Chapman, who was "somewhat irritated" when the book first appeared more than 50 years ago. Meder decided to write about the real men who risked their lives to fly countless bombing missions during the war in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Most notable is George L. Wells, whom Captain Wren is loosely based on, who flew an incredible 102 missions and passed away in 2010. This is an interesting book that will shed light on the real crew members of the 340th Bomb Group.



New Images of Nazi Germany: A Photographic Collection, compiled and with captions by Paul Garson, McFarland Press, Jefferson, NC, 2012, 496 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $55.00, softcover.

Once again photo historian Paul Garson has produced a startling volume that lays bare the daily lives of Germans during World War II, both in the military and in civilian life. Through countless hours of research Garson has produced a photographic record of the seemingly mundane activities that might otherwise appear ordinary were they not conducted by a people and a military that supported the most heinous dictator to rise to power in modern times—Adolf Hitler.

Garson describes these images, snapped by both amateur and professional photographers, in detail. Many of these appear for the first time in print. They depict soldiers standing with comrades on the Eastern Front, preparing meals, and manning their weapons. They include civilians embracing their loved ones returning from the front for a brief leave. They include haunting death cards produced by the families of soldiers who have died during their service in distant lands where the Reich stretched its military prowess.

While many of these photos may at first glance seem somewhat ordinary, the simple fact remains that the subjects appear generally as normal people going about their routine. In itself, the fact that these people were integrated into the Nazi machine of repression, murder, and war makes the images disturbing—a phenomenon that keeps the observer from looking away. Garson is also the author of the volume *Album of the Damned,* which also depicts images of the German military and people during the war years.

War Is Not Just for Heroes: World War II Dispatches and Letters of U.S. Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Claude R. "Red" Canup, edited by Linda M. Canup Keaton-Lima, The University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 2012, 259

here aren't the floating helpers most think of when it comes to shooters. These pickups—which include Vulcan, Cannon, and Rocket shots—need to recharge before appearing and firing again, and they can only do so when your finger's off the trigger. Rocket, for instance, is great at clearing out large threats, but it takes a bit longer to reload than the other options.

Even after figuring out the best way to approach things, *Under Defeat* is no cakewalk. It took me a while just to get to the point where I could regularly pass the second stage on Normal Mode with little trouble, and things only get more difficult from there. That's where Practice Mode comes in handy. In Practice you can choose from any stage you've already unlocked and focus on learning the ins and outs to your heart's desire. Scoring is based largely on contribution percentage—taking out key threats and facilities marked by the Imperial Forces warrants a bonus—as well as ammo, fuel, and life conservation.

There's plenty of fun to be had in playing and replaying stages, but *Under Defeat* isn't perfect by any means. Its alternate reality World War II setting is nothing special, even when framed in the context of playing as the Axis-like Empire. Quite a few of the stages range from gray to brown at their brightest, and uninspired enemy designs abound, but the shooting action itself rises above any scattered bits of mediocrity. Add to that the excellent soundtrack by Shinji Hosoe (*Dragon Spirit, Ibara*) and you have a shooter worth keeping in your library.

Under Defeat is available digitally, but Rising Star's Deluxe Edition on PlayStation 3 is a solid package for fans of the genre. In addition to the game itself, it packs a second disc with the soundtrack and a digital art book, which contains a message from G.rev CEO and *Under Defeat* HD producer Hiroyuki Maruyama, a bunch of character and weapon designs, and prototype screen layouts. Developer G.rev (*Border Down, Senko no Ronde*) created a fun and unique shooter with *Under Defeat,* and hopefully more folks will give it a chance now that there are a few ways to nab it in North America and Europe without importing.

World of Tanks Kicks Off Update 8.0

World of Tanks—an online "freemium" game developed by Belarusian company Wargaming.net—has been enjoying steady success since it was originally released for PC and, as of October 2012, reached 40 million registered users. While it's been out for a while now, substantial updates continue to improve the experience, and the latest at the time of this writing, *Update 8.0,* overhauls the way *World of Tanks* looks and plays in fantastic ways.

One of the most welcome additions to the game are the newly implemented real-world physics, allowing the vehicles to behave more closely to the way they would in real life, including the ability to push enemies and allies, ride over ledges, and plow through rivers. The graphics have also been improved, allowing users to toggle on the first iteration of a new rendering system that has more updates on the way following the initial push, which includes reworked lighting among a slew of enhancements.

PUBLISHER
Wargaming.net

DEVELOPER
Wargaming.net

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Now

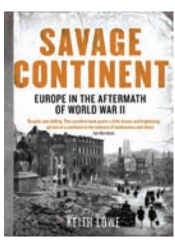
The full list of changes that come along with *Update 8.0* is pretty staggering, from audio improvements to a ton of vehicle rebalancing across all playable nations. Fans who have stuck with *World of Tanks* for the long haul will be in for a treat, and it should serve as an even better entry point for those just now enlisting in the microtransaction-based online action. □

pp., photographs, glossary, index, $29.95, hardcover.

When World War II erupted, South Carolinian "Red" Canup answered the call. Although 33 years of age and already established as a newspaper reporter and editor, Canup volunteered when he heard that the Marine Corps needed "mature" journalists to cover the conflict in the Pacific as Marine combat correspondents. Brig. Gen. Robert L. Dening was coerced out of retirement by Commandant Thomas A. Holcomb to build a solid core of reporters to cover the action. The group was soon dubbed "Dening's Demons," and Canup was a proud member.

After boot camp (despite their ages each man had to pass the same physical requirements that the other younger Marines did), Canup left for overseas and was assigned to the 2nd Marine Air Wing. He covered the Battle of Okinawa and sent hundreds of dispatches during the war describing the conditions and writing about individual Marines. Canup wrote numerous letters to his family as well, which he kept in a cardboard box. His daughter, who edited his material, had the good sense to gather all of it and have it published. This is a real treasure trove for historians about a man who epitomized the word "correspondent," as well as "Marine."

Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II by Keith Lowe, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2012, 460 pp., maps, photographs, $30.00, hardcover.



In May 1945, with the defeat of the Nazi regime in Germany, most of Europe lay in ruins. Thousands of refugees roamed a desolate countryside in not only Germany, but also in France, Italy, Poland, and Russia. With the Nazi loss also came retribution against those who collaborated with the enemy. The basic necessities, such as food, electricity, water, and transportation, were nonexistent in many parts of these countries. Savage infighting took place in Greece and Yugoslavia where brutal murders and pogroms occurred—especially against the Jews. The crime rate escalated, and a thriving black market soon emerged, making fortunes for a few individuals off the millions suffering from the terrible consequences of the aftermath of that war.

Historian Keith Lowe has done a marvelous job of writing about the squalor that most Europeans had to endure at war's end. While there are countless books describing the campaigns of the war, it seems there are few that tell about the plight of the survivors. Lowe does that quite well with his newest book.

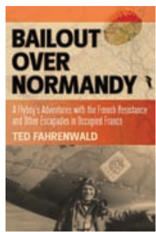
The Last Zero Fighter: Firsthand Accounts from WWII Japanese Naval Pilots by Dan King, Pacific Press, Irvine, CA, 2012, 348 pp., maps, photographs, illustrations, notes, $24.95, softcover.

What makes this book so absorbing and a cut above the run-of-the-mill ones describing the exploits of Japanese airmen is the fact that the author, Dan King, lived in Japan and can speak as well as write the language. That communication barrier being broken down, he was able to talk one-on-one to five of these survivors and get their unbelievable stories in print.

Perhaps the most intriguing person is the very first, 93-year-old Kaname Harada, who joined the Navy in 1933. In 1936, he took the rigorous exam to become a naval aviator. He graduated first in his class in 1937 and soon saw action in the skies over China. During the Pearl Harbor attack, he flew combat patrols to protect the fleet. He saw action throughout the war and miraculously survived.

King's book gives the reader glimpses into the minds of the enemy. As he says, they had the same feeling of patriotism and love of family that prompted Allied fliers to perform their duty as well. As one former Japanese airman said: "War is ugly, senseless and cruel. We must never forget."

Bailout Over Normandy: A Flyboy's Adventures with the French Resistance and Other Escapades in Occupied France by Ted Fahrenwald, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2012, 286 pp., photographs, $29.95, hardcover.



Move over Errol Flynn. There is another swashbuckler who flew with the 486th Fighter Squadron during World War II, and his name was Ted Fahrenwald. His incredible adventures after ejecting from his fighter plane during the war are the stuff movies are made of.

As a youth in rural South Dakota, Fahrenwald grew up learning to fish, hunt, and track. He developed a love for flying and quickly enlisted in the Army Air Forces, graduating as a fighter pilot in 1942. On his 100th combat mission two days after the Normandy landings, his luck ran out. His P-51 Mustang was struck by flying debris when the South Dakota native destroyed a truck. Bailing out, he was lucky enough to be assisted by the French Resistance, or the Maquis. Captured by the retreating Germans, he made his escape and began his perilous journey back toward Allied lines. Resistance fighters with code names such as The Flea and Cesar and French citizens risked their lives to help the downed airman get to safety.

This is an incredible tale of an American pilot with a devil-may-care attitude who persevered and was still able to find humor, even in the most dangerous of times.

Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II, edited by Eric L. Muller with photographs by Bill Manbo, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2012, 122 pp., photographs, index, $35.00, hardcover.

This is a stunning pictorial history depicting the internment of Japanese-Americans at the Heart Mountain detention camp in Wyoming, about 60 miles from Yellowstone National Park, from 1942-1945. The desolate, barren area was one of 10 internment camps where Japanese-Americans were sent because they were deemed potentially disloyal by the U.S. government after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Billy Manbo, a resident of the camp, took dozens of color kodachrome photographs of life within the barbed wire community. His pictures of everyday events are vibrant and depict the social activities and family life, as well as the solitary confinement and desperation many felt when their loyalty to the U.S. was questioned. The color pictures are breathtaking, crisp, and incredible, providing an intimate view of what it was like to live there as an internee.

A Higher Call: An Inspirational Story of Combat and Chivalry in the War-Torn Skies of WWII by Adam Makos with Larry Alexander, Berkley Books, New York, 2012, 400 pp., photographs, notes, index, $26.95, hardcover.

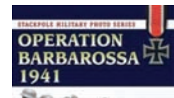
Despite being embroiled in bitter combat as pilots on opposing sides during the war, Charles Brown and Franz Stigler have something in common. They were both humanitarians first. Stigler, especially, when he deliberately disobeyed orders and saved the lives of Brown and his

crew when their badly damaged plane was trying to fly back to England.

On a mission over Germany in December 1943, Charlie Brown was piloting his B-17 Flying Fortress "Ye Old Pub" when it was riddled with antiaircraft fire from German batteries below. Severely damaged, Brown struggled to get his aircraft back to England. Suddenly, a German Me-109 appeared out of nowhere and the crew of the "Ye Old Pub" knew they would be shot down. Amazingly, the pilot of the plane, Franz Stigler, did something extraordinary—he looked at Brown and motioned him onward toward the English Channel as he provided escort.

Limping back to base, Brown was told to say nothing about the incident. Stigler, fearing repercussions because he did not down the bomber, also kept silent. It was not until 40 years later that both men opened up about the experience, a moving story about a heroic and humane act performed during a war that was filled with hatred and bitterness.

Operation Barbarossa, 1941 by Michael Olive and Robert Edwards, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2012, 200 pp., maps, photographs, notes, $24.95, softcover.



This is an excellent pictorial essay and overview of one of the bloodiest campaigns in World War II—Operation Barbarossa—Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. The multi-pronged assault saw the German blitzkrieg push deep into Russia in June 1941. The Northern Army Group advanced toward Estonia and Latvia, the Center Group pushed inland and captured Smolensk and moved on Moscow itself, while the Southern Army rolled toward Kiev and the Ukraine.

The book contains dozens of photographs illustrating the horror of the combat and its effects on the soldiers as well as the civilian population. In the center of the book are color photos of the uniforms, weapons, and other articles worn and used by each combatant.

Although it achieved some early success, the German juggernaut came to a screeching halt when they overextended their supply lines. They also did not count on the severity of the Russian winter. Running short on the essentials, the German Army was forced to retreat as the Red Army nipped at its heels all the way back to Germany. Hitler should have studied his history a little more carefully and read about Napoleon's disastrous foray into Russia nearly 150 years earlier.

Yamamoto Isoroku by Mark Stille, Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2012, 64 pp., maps, illustrations, photographs, index, $18.95, softcover.

An interesting and thought-provoking look at the man who masterminded the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, this book describes the life and career of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Retired U.S. Navy Commander Mark Stille delves into the decisions Yamamoto made while commanding the Japanese fleet. Although Yamamoto was revered in his own country, Stille criticizes Yamamoto's strategy and states he "was no military genius." His negligence in expanding Japan's air arm and constructing adequate airstrips once they occupied an island is evident, as he only envisioned the air force as a "raiding force."

"For all his gifts," Stille writes, "Yamamoto could not rise above the system that created him. A truly great leader could have taken control of the situation he was faced with, but Yamamoto never seemed able to do this." □

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insight

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islands of Kwajalein and Roi-Namur were assaulted in January-February 1944, and both Japanese troops and Korean laborers were encountered.

The defense of Roi-Namur left only 51 survivors of an original garrison of 3,500. Though the Kwajalein garrison numbered approximately 8,000 men, less than half were considered combat effective. The actions resulted in 7,870 dead and 105 Japanese soldiers captured along with 125 Korean laborers. To the distress of many Koreans, those Korean laborers who died in the Marshalls were and still are enshrined as war hero guardian spirits of the Japanese nation in the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan.

Some 300 to 400 Korean laborers were brought to the Honouliuli camp after the capture of Saipan in the Marianas in the summer of 1944, all of them noncombatant laborers. A number of these Koreans had been wounded. It was believed that most of their wounds had been inflicted by Japanese troops through beating, sword and knife slashing, and other abuses. Some had also received bullet wounds from the fighting as the Americans took control of the island.

It is likely that Korean laborers from various other Pacific islands, such as Guam, Tinian, and Peleliu, were also brought to the Honouliuli camp as POWs. During September 1944, U.S. Marines landed at Peleliu. The island was occupied by approximately 11,000 soldiers of the Japanese 14th Infantry Division, along with Korean and Okinawan laborers. The extremely bloody fighting resulted in 1,794 American dead and 8,010 wounded. Only 202 Japanese survived.

Japan's formal rule of Korea ended on September 2, 1945, with the nation's surrender to the Allies. The Korean prisoners held in Hawaii were repatriated to Korea in December 1945, along with many other Koreans from throughout the former Japanese Empire. But the final ending was not happy for all of the Koreans.

After the war, 148 Koreans were convicted of war crimes; 23 of them were sentenced to death. The convicted Koreans included many prison guards who were particularly notorious for their brutality. Justice Bert Röling, who represented the Netherlands at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, noted, "Many of the commanders and guards in POW camps were Koreans and it is said that they were sometimes far more cruel than the Japanese."

Korean guards were also sent to the jungles of Burma to oversee the construction of the Burma Railway. The highest ranking Korean to be prosecuted after the war was Lt. Gen. Hong Sa-Ik, who was in command of all Japanese prison camps in the Philippines.

The Koreans, as involuntary members of the Japanese Empire, had found themselves in that proverbial position between the rock and the hard place. Without the defeat of the Japanese Empire, Korean culture and the Korean people might have vanished from the world. Today, Korean independence day is celebrated on August 15, 1945, the date of the Japanese surrender ending World War II.

In an effort to record the remembrances of Koreans from this period in their history, the South Korean government's Truth Commission on Forced Mobilization under the Japanese Imperialism Republic of Korea has created a website (www.gangje.go.kr). The site is in the Korean and Japanese languages only. □

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operation anvil

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Gibraltar to Trieste is 1,000 miles more than the distance from Gibraltar to Marseilles, and a Trieste operation would require about threefold the shipping to support the same number of troops as an invasion of Southern France.

"Even if the Germans were routed out of Italy so that no amphibious landing near Trieste were necessary, the obstacles to sending a military force from the Adriatic to the Hungarian plain were tremendous. The so-called Ljubljana Gap is an area between the Julian and the Dinaric Alps where the mountains are not quite so high as they are to the north or the south. A route through it had been developed by Austria in the 19th century to link Vienna with Trieste. Between them, passing through Ljubljana, a double-track railway and a 20-foot-wide road had been constructed. The highway was very winding and poorly surfaced, with gradients up to one in 10, and it crossed two 2,000-foot passes dominated by much higher mountains.... Mr. Churchill in his arguments against Anvil, and even the official historian of British Grand Strategy, stressed the 'rugged nature' of the Rhone valley up which troops there committed would have to march; but the route north from Marseilles is an open speedway compared with the Ljubljana route to Vienna, which Mr. Churchill seems to have viewed as a sort of Sherman's march through Georgia in reverse."

British historian Max Hastings has a simpler view: "Though Eisenhower is often, and sometimes justly, criticized for lack of strategic imagination, he and [U.S. Army Chief of Staff George C.] Marshall were assuredly right to insist upon the concentration of force in France."

As matters developed, Marseilles and Toulon were critical to the Allied advance. The two ports injected 905,000 American soldiers and 4.1 tons of matériel into the advance. With the loss of southern France, the Germans were forced her to go to the defensive on their own border. Churchill may have had reservations about the campaign, but Marshall had none. He called Dragoon "one of the most successful things we did."

All the analysis was in the future. On the night of August 17, Truscott took up his headquarters outside Saint-Tropez. He reviewed the messages from his commanders and said, "Gentlemen, we're here to stay!" □

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los baños

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so far, everything was going as planned. A few hours later they watched as the amtracs returned to Los Baños, and a little after that, saw them heading north again, this time loaded with internees and paratroopers. Soule realized that the reinforced 511th PIR would not be fighting its way west to meet him, so he gave the order to begin a slow withdrawal to the San Juan River. Late in the afternoon, the entire task force was back where it had started.

The raid on the Los Baños Internment Camp understandably netted all sorts of publicity for General Swing and the 11th Airborne Division. News hounds interviewed the general, his men, and the internees themselves at New Bilibid Prison. Committees from among the internees wrote letters to General MacArthur, to Major Burgess, and to others. General MacArthur himself sent a letter to the 11th Airborne. "Nothing could be more satisfying to a soldier's heart than this rescue," he penned. "I am deeply grateful. God was certainly with us today."

When viewed by military historians, the Los Baños Raid is generally accepted as a roaring success. "Of all of the 11th Airborne Division operations during the Luzon Campaign," wrote the division historian, "the most spectacular was the hit-run raid on the Japanese internment camp at Los Baños."

A 511th PIR historian wrote, "The whirlwind speed and split second timing of the attack was the main contributing factor in the success of the operation. The support of the 188th Glider Infantry and the 472nd F.A. Battalion, coming down from the north kept the Japs occupied in that sector so that the northern flank was secured."

When studying the entire mission, the U.S. Army concluded, among other things, "Through the employment of airborne troops, tactical surprise can be obtained to a degree not possible in strictly ground operations." It also went on to state that an "operation involving airborne, amphibious, and ground troops can be successfully accomplished with pinpoint precision when it is carefully and exactly planned and executed with rapidity."

Preeminent airborne historian Major Gerard M. Devlin echoed the Army historians when he wrote in 1979, "Because of the highly accurate intelligence information, a perfect plan, and a faultless performance by the attacking troops, the Los Baños mission is still considered to be the finest example of a small-scale operation ever executed by American airborne troops. There is no doubt that it will remain a masterpiece of planning and execution and the blueprint for any future daring prisoner-rescue operation."

Unfortunately, when the Japanese discovered that the Los Baños prisoners had been spirited away from under their very noses, they retaliated against the Filipino residents in the barrio of Los Baños. Shortly after finding the internment camp empty and destroyed by fire, the Japanese rounded up an estimated 1,400 Filipinos, tied them to the stilts holding up their houses, and set the structures on fire. For these crimes and for others committed against the Filipino people and the internees at Los Baños, Lt. Gen. Fujishige and Warrant Officer Sadaaki Konishi, a brutally sadistic supply officer at the camp, were summarily found guilty by the subsequent war crimes commission and executed.

Almost 50 years after the raid, General Colin Powell, while chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a letter to the 11th Airborne Division association stating, "I doubt that any airborne unit in the world will ever be able to rival the Los Baños prison raid. It is the textbook airborne operation for all ages and armies."

For the men of the reinforced 1st Battalion/511th PIR and Task Force Soule, the war continued. Although praise came from many quarters, the highest praise that the men could receive came from the internees themselves. "They were and are a special breed, those men who came that day," wrote internee Robert Wheeler. "Superbly trained, thank God—men who went home after they served—going on with their lives—not complaining, humble, proud that they served. When I meet one of my 'Angels' for the first time, I take his hand and say, 'Thank you for my life.' To a man, they immediately insist, 'I was just doing my job. You guys were the heroes.'"

Santos spoke for many of the rescuers when he wrote, "We, the liberators, have in the past, sometimes have been referred to as 'Heroes.' I disagree. The true heroes/heroines were the internees and the ... POWs, [and] the U.S. Navy Nurses. These courageous people did not give up. They survived almost 1,200 days of incarceration, which emphasizes the invincibility of their spirit. Their faith in the United States and its armed forces remained unshaken. This, to me, is true heroism." □

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end of the monsoon season to contest the Hump route.

The Japanese air sentai, staged out of bases in southern and central Burma, began bomber attacks against American transport bases in Assam as well as fighter attacks against airborne transports. However, with the Japanese bases being nearly 500 miles from the Hump's flight path, the range limitations of the Ki-43 fighter of 1,000 to 1,100 miles became all too evident. To lengthen their time over targets or within the transport route, it became apparent that the Ki-43 fighters would have to recover to a more northerly staging base, like Myitkyina, to refuel.

It had been an IJAAF tactic to strike at U.S. air bases in Assam because they were easier to attack than solitary cargo aircraft in transit, which without radar would be extremely difficult to identify solely by visual recognition. As the numbers of ATC transports flying the Hump route increased to a few dozen flights a day by 1943, the 5th Air Division tried to interdict these sorties with aerial fighter attacks.

Thus, the 5th Air Division was now committed to attack the Hump route with aerial combat as part of the IJAAF plan to regain air superiority against the Allies in the skies over Burma. As a harbinger of this new air offensive, an unarmed C-87 transport was shot down on August 9, 1943, as two radio operators heard the crew state that they were under attack and that they were taking evasive action in the clouds to avoid the Ki-43 fighters. They were never heard from again.

On October 13, the Japanese 50th Sentai launched Operation Tsuzigiri (Street Murder). Eight Ki-43s were sent to Myitkyina to begin hunting transports. Japanese sources claim that 50th Sentai aircraft shot down three transports on October 13, while U.S. records comfirm only two. Moving their base forward to Myitkyina reduced the range from base to target for the Japanese aircraft, theoretically allowing them longer time in the air to engage the transports.

Aircraft of the 50th Sentai attacked again a week later and downed a single C-46. Three days later, another transport was shot down by Ki-43s.

General Chennault did not remain idle for long, dispatching his 308th Bomb Squadron of B-24s to mimic the flight pattern of their unarmed C-87 counterparts while hoping to lure the Ki-43 fighters into aerial combat. Some sources claim that these B-24s, wolves in sheep's clothing, shot down eight Ki-43s in a single day and as many as 18 over a three-day period.

Although the renewed offensive had lasted only two weeks, the American air combat response and the consequent IJAAF fighter losses ended Operation Tsuzigiri. Officially, Japanese commanders decided that the 50th Sentai could not spare missions that downed only a handful of U.S. transports.

Some intriguing observations have emerged from the geographical pattern of cargo transport losses during Operation Tsuzigiri. First, the five transports shot down during the two-week interval clearly showed that they were all from 50 to 100 miles south of Fort Hertz, a remote British outpost in northeastern Burma. This was in direct contradiction to the recommended safest air route for the transport crews in both 1942 and 1943, which was 30 to 40 miles north of Fort Hertz to avoid Japanese fighters. Second, the Japanese fighters were all staged out of Myitkyina.

Why had the American transport crews flown such a perilous route rather than the northerly arcing one? It was the most direct route possible between the Hump depots in Assam and the southwestern Chinese air terminals. Apparently, the transport pilots flew the northerly route only when it was deemed mandatory because of a Japanese air threat.

Since these crewmen knew that Ki-43s could not maintain a combat presence for long intervals because of their relatively short range, the Hump pilots were gambling against only a potential Japanese fighter threat rather than the certain one posed by the high Himalayan mountain barrier of northern Burma on the northerly arc.

Thus, when Ki-43 fighters were suddenly relocated to Myitkyina, they shot down several transports and drove the remaining ATC crews to the more treacherous northern route leading to more wasteful fuel consumption, reduced loads, and longer flight times.

Only the elimination of Myitkyina as a Japanese fighter base would enable the ATC pilots to resume the more southerly route, and commanders in and out of the CBI realized that this compelled Stilwell to launch his offensive for Myitkyina and the simultaneous construction of the Ledo Road in earnest in the late autumn of 1943. □

Jon Diamond is a practicing physician in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He has completed recent Osprey Publishing Command books on Field Marshal Archibald Wavell and the Chindit organizer, Major General Orde Wingate.*

Tour Highlights

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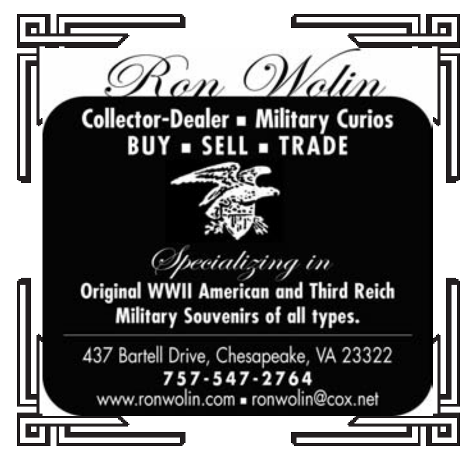

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profiles

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Meyer decided to launch a spoiling attack. He struck at midday on August 8 with Hitlerjugend Division panzers while General Simonds was getting ready to commit his Canadian 4th and Polish 1st Armored Divisions. A battle group of eight Tigers and 14 Panthers headed for the strategic village of Cintheaux, and 20 Tigers rolled toward St. Aignan-de-Cramesnil, to the north.

As Meyer's groups moved, almost 500 U.S. Eighth Air Force B-17 Flying Fortress bombers blasted the area, and stray bombs hit the panzers and the Canadian and Polish armor. In fierce fighting across rolling farmland, one of Meyer's columns wrested Cintheaux from the Canadians, and his other force clashed with Maj. Gen. Stanislaw Maczek's Polish Shermans. Six panzers were destroyed, but the Waffen SS gunners disabled 26 Polish tanks. Meyer's assault was halted, but Operation Totalize was temporarily derailed.

Captain Wittmann was in the thick of the action, facing his greatest challenge and his last engagement. At noon that day, Meyer had ordered him to lead four of his 2nd Company Tigers in supporting a thrust by Major Hans Waldmuller's battle group toward St.-Aignan, east of the Caen road. The German tankers' odds against the massing Allied Shermans and Cromwells were precarious. Meyer shook Wittmann's hand, wished him luck, and reported later, "The enemy artillery laid concentrated fire on the attacking panzers. Michael Wittmann's panzer raced right into the enemy fire. I knew his tactic during such operations: get through, don't stop, into the dirt and reach a free field of fire." All of the panzers lumbered into the fray with cannons and machine guns firing, followed by Waldmuller's grenadiers.

Around 12:20 PM, Meyer ordered Waldmuller and Wittmann to counterattack northward with all available resources. Because his own vehicle was then being repaired, the panzer ace was in an unfamiliar tank—Colonel Westernhagen's command Tiger, which carried 30 fewer cannon shells due to extra radio equipment. Wittmann's driver that afternoon was Heinrich Reimers. Advancing to engage a superior number of Canadian Shermans and Fireflies (Shermans mounting 17-pounder guns) north of Cintheaux, Wittmann was on an impossible mission.

Moving off from the cover of a hedge near Les Jardinets, east of the Caen road, Wittmann's four Tigers rumbled north-northwest. They paused in shallow gullies to fire long range at some Shermans of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers and knocked out several. Wittmann then deployed his panzers in line ahead to minimize the target they presented, but this rendered them vulnerable to northeastern orchards south of St.-Aignan, which Shermans and a Firefly of A Squadron of the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry had just occupied. The British tanks were behind a tall hedgerow near the village of Delle de la Roque, east of the Caen road.

The No. 3 Troop's Firefly, the only tank there capable of stopping a Tiger, moved to the southern edge of an orchard to get a better field of fire. Wittmann's panzer closed in around 12:40 PM, and the Firefly started shooting. Simultaneously, Fireflies of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers and the 144th Regiment of the Royal Armored Corps opened fire from west of the Caen road. Twenty-one-year-old Trooper Joseph W. Ekins, the gunner of the No. 3 Troop Firefly, loosed two shots at the rear Tiger, and it brewed up. With another round he exploded the second German tank.

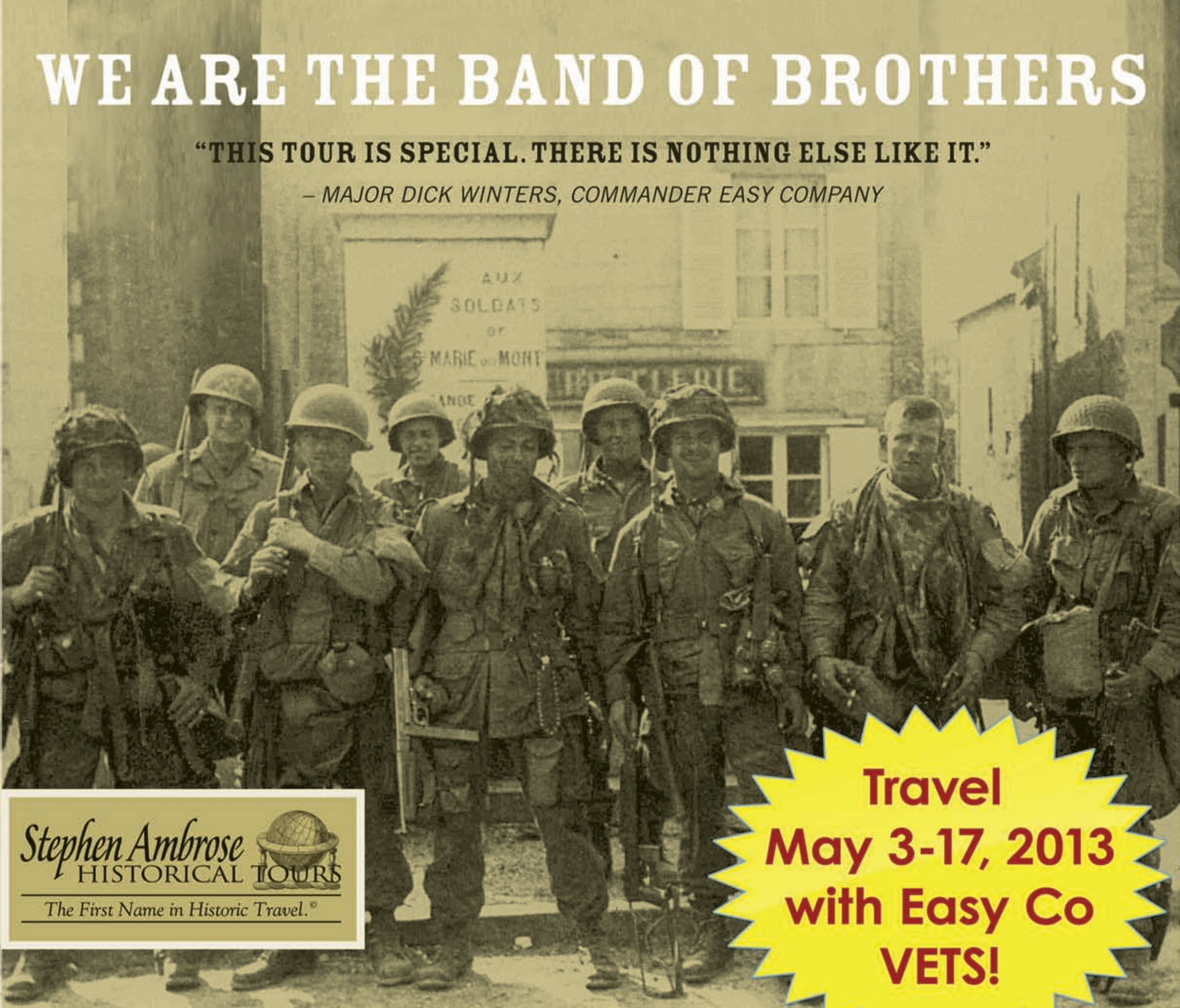
A Squadron's Shermans rumbled out of the orchard and blasted Wittmann's command Tiger. The 75mm shells failed to pierce the panzer's armor, but nevertheless caused damage, and it veered off erratically and ground to a halt near the main road. Trooper Ekins fired two shells, and the crippled Tiger burst into flames. At the same time, Fireflies of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers and the 144th Regiment also zeroed in on the area.

Wittmann and his four crewmen perished in the inferno. The legendary panzer ace had met a fitting warrior's death. "He was a fighter in every way; he lived and breathed action," eulogized General Dietrich.

Almost 40 years after his death, Wittmann's remains were found in a communal grave near the Caen-Falaise road at Gaumesnil, just north of Cintheaux, in March 1983. After positive identification was made from dental records by the German War Graves Commission, the remains of the panzer hero were reburied in the German Soldiers' Cemetery at the village of La Cambe, a few kilometers southwest of Omaha Beach on the Normandy coast.

The boyish, unassuming Trooper Ekins, a Bedfordshire native and veteran of the D-Day landings, sought no credit for killing Wittmann, nor did he express regret. He said simply that the panzer ace "was in someone else's country without being asked" and got what he deserved. Ekins died on February 1, 2012, at the age of 88. □

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



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