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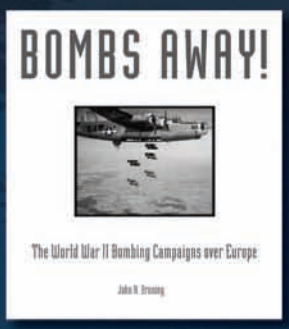


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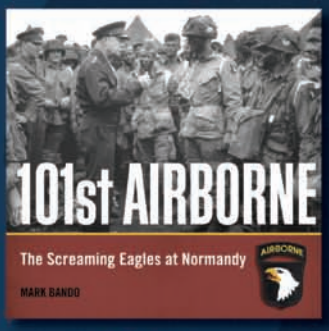


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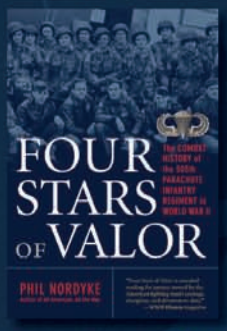


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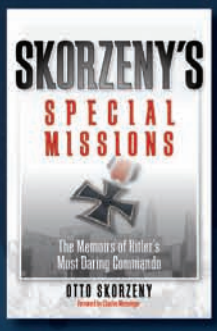


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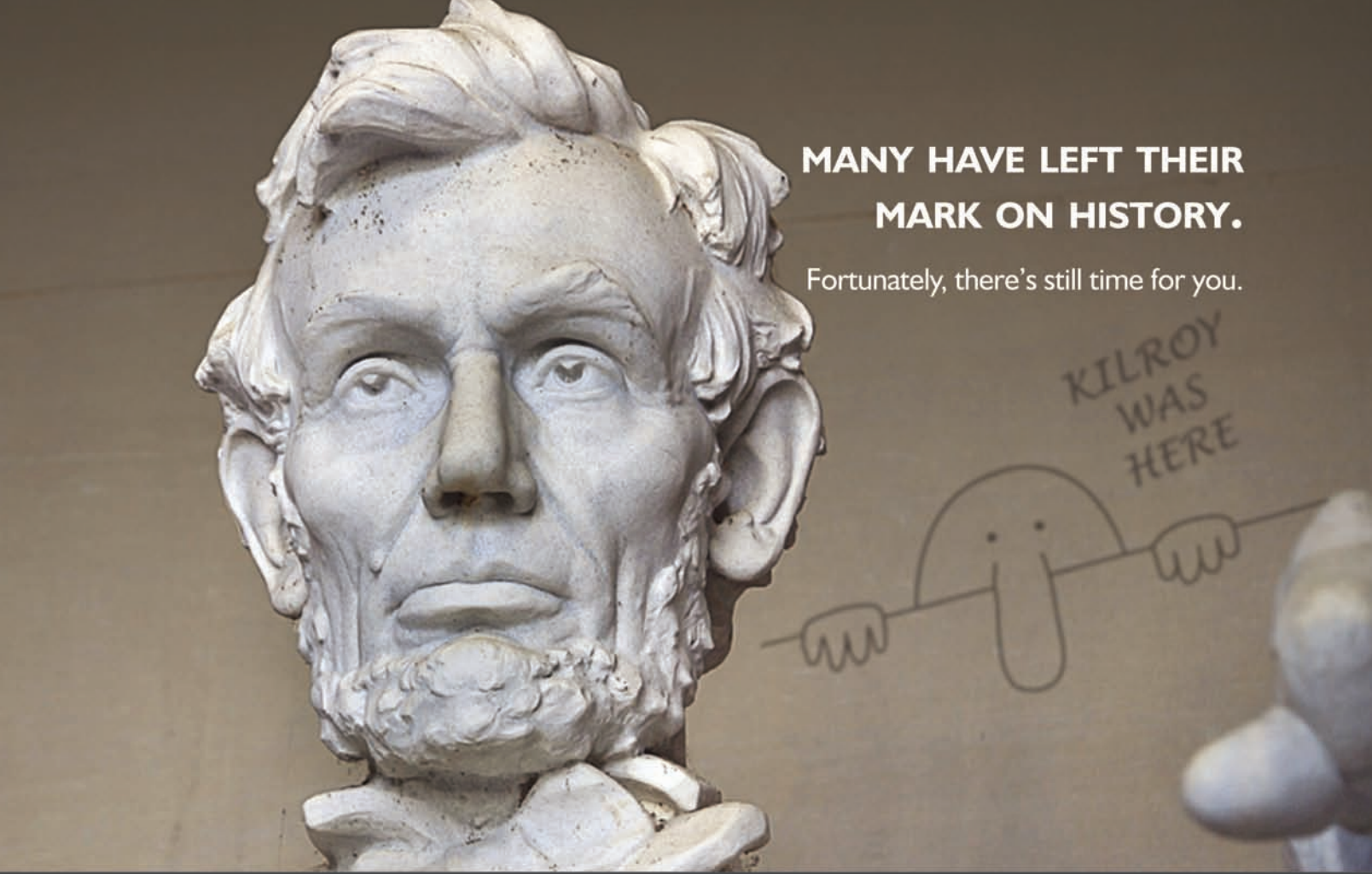


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Cover: A German raiding party on the attack in France in 1940.

Photo: akg-images

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# Editorial

## Accused of insulting Hitler, Jackie the dog's fate was superseded by the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

**AT THE HEIGHT OF ITS POWER AND WITH THE THIRD REICH ON THE VERGE OF** initiating its colossal invasion of the Soviet Union, high-ranking members of the Nazi intelligence community literally went to the dogs. No, the object of their obsessive investigation was not a concern as to the loyalty of Blondi, Hitler's Alsatian. It was, rather, the apparent disrespect of a non-Aryan mutt named Jackie.

Among the numerous talents that Jackie, evidently at least part Dalmatian, possessed was a knack for raising his paw in the air when his owners, Tor and Josephine Borg of Helsinki, Finland, gave the command, "Hitler." When the German Foreign Office in Berlin got wind of the dog's talent, orders were quickly sent to government representatives in the Finnish capital to gather information on Jackie and the Borg family.

Months before the German armed forces attacked the Soviet Union, it was apparent to these dutiful diplomats that even though Finland was friendly to the Nazi regime they should not roll over and play dead while the Finnish canine and its owners mocked the Führer.

Willy Erkelenz, the German Vice Consul in Helsinki, was just the man to spearhead the investigation. On January 29, 1941, he reported, "A witness who does not want to be named said he saw and heard how Borg's dog reacted to the command 'Hitler' by raising its paw."

Tor Borg, a pharmaceutical wholesaler, was summoned to the German embassy for questioning in regard to the perceived slight. Borg assured the German authorities that there had been no intent to insult the Nazi leader. Although he vehemently denied that he had addressed the dog as Hitler, he did confess that his wife had done so. A German citizen, Josephine's unflattering opinion of the Nazis was well known in Helsinki. However, Tor also pointed out that Jackie's disrespectful paw raising had only occurred on a few occasions, way back in 1933.

Insightful interrogators doubted Borg's sincerity from the beginning and notified Berlin that "Borg, even though he claims otherwise, is not telling the truth."

Not only was the German embassy in Helsinki sniffing about for evidence against Jackie and looking for an opportunity to bring the Borgs to trial, but the German Economic Ministry and the Reich Chancellery also became involved. An attempt to find witnesses willing to testify against the Borgs proved fruitless, and the idea of preferring charges was dropped. Since Borg was in the pharmaceutical business and his firm had been supplied with products by the huge German chemical corporation IG Farben, overtures were made to the management of IG Farben and other German companies to potentially cut off their trade with Borg's wholesale operation.

Eventually, the Foreign Office requested instructions from the Reich Chancellery for the final disposition of the matter and was informed the following: "Considering that the circumstances could not be solved completely, it is not necessary to press charges."

Although there is no indication that Hitler was aware of the situation, the Germans decided to allow the sleeping Finnish dog to lie. Obviously, there were issues of much greater magnitude to be considered.

Borg's pharmaceutical business, Tampereen Rohdoskauppa Oy, continued to prosper after the war ended and was later renamed the Tamro Group. In time, it grew to one of the leading wholesale pharmaceutical companies in northern Europe. Borg died in 1959 at the age of 60. Jackie, most likely, lived out his days in relative quiet and with little concern that the eyes of Nazi intelligence had been closely scrutinizing him.

The obscure episode involving the saluting dog was lost to history until 2009 when researchers discovered approximately 30 files containing correspondence from the Nazi period tucked away in the political archives of the German Foreign Office in Berlin. During an interview with the Associated Press, Klaus Hillenbrand, an author and expert on the Nazi era who examined many of the documents found in the files, asserted that the situation was "completely bizarre…. Just months before the Nazis launched their attack on the Soviet Union they had nothing better to do than to obsess about this dog."

A representative of the modern Tamro Group was contacted by the AP for comment and told that the company had no knowledge of Jackie's political leanings or that the story even existed.

*Michael E. Haskew*

WWII HISTORY

Volume 10 ■ Number 5



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# Dispatches

### A Passion for World War II History

Dear Editor:

I first bought your magazine for $4.99 at a Borders bookstore and have since subscribed to it. I have enjoyed reading your product for the past three years. I have always looked forward to receiving your magazine in the mail since I have a passion for World War II history. It is something that has captivated my attention for a long time and your magazine is an excellent source of information.

The variety and high-quality articles in your magazine never fail to impress me and I appreciate the range of perspectives provided by them. The sections on Ordnance, Profiles, and Insight always have an interesting topic that always surprises me when I receive my next issue. I always enjoy any opportunity to expand my knowledge of World War II, and your magazine provides the perfect place to do that.

I hope that you continue to publish *WWII History* and that I can continue to read about the famous battles and people that defined this period of history. WWII History provides information that I might not have found on my own and I will continue to enjoy reading your magazine for years to come.

Tyler Drozd
Clarendon Hills, Illinois

### Axis Dogface Interviews?

Dear Sirs,

I enjoy your fine publication but may I venture a suggestion? Could you please interview or publish the first-person, unfettered World War II accounts of an average Japanese enlisted man? Along with the Italian enlisted man, there is almost nothing to be found concerning the honest views and experiences of these Axis dog faces, as opposed to the umpteenth TV show/volume/article about some Prussian general.

A few years ago a fairly well-known book came out recounting the various first-person accounts of Japanese soldiers in Burma, something I had looked forward to but was disappointed in once I read it. In my opinion the entire effort was highly suspect at best. It was clumsily edited with the agenda of propagating various myths about the war designed to convince the unwary reader that the peace-loving, kindly Japanese somehow found themselves at war in places such as far off Burma, where the population embraced and loved them.

One particularly bizarre recounting, bordering on the surreal if not outright insanity, was how during a battle a British tank pulled up to a group of Japanese soldiers, the English commander jumping out to chat with them, perhaps have a spot of tea. They all agreed the war was unfortunate, shook hands, and bid each other adieu.

Rightttttt, and I am the greatest swordsman in all of France and New Jersey, Hoboken included.

We need publications such as *WWII History* to record the truth of the war before the World War II generation all dies off and the still influential though tiny militaristic elements in Japan are able to continue to distort history.

As for interviewing an average Italian soldier, it would be fascinating to hear from one, especially if he had fought the British, Americans, and later the Germans, comparing their attributes.

Mike Gordeuk
Garwood, New Jersey

### Is the British Monarchy Irrelevant?

Dear Editor:

I read, with interest, the letter from one Oreste Rondinella regarding the article relating to King George VI's visit to the United States. The Oreste missive was regarding some *irrelevance* of the British royal family during World War II.

I am not a Royalist but I feel I must point out that the British people of that period welcomed the comradeship that filtered from them to the royals, and vice versa. King George VI rallied Britishers worldwide with his uplifting speech of defiance to the Nazi menace rampaging across Europe.

We had in Britain a hierarchy that actually sympathized with German objectives. An example was

the friendship enjoyed between Adolf Hitler and elder brother of King George VI, Edward VIII. The latter was soon dispatched to the remote island of Bermuda with his American wife. This endeared the George VI to the British man in the street.

Several swarms of Luftwaffe bombers were nightly crushing cities in the British archipelago. When they blew half of Buckingham Palace away, the king and queen were seen standing upon the rubble, actually pleased ... pleased because, at that moment they were one with the thousands of ordinary Brits who stood on their own rubble. He, the king, discussed with the recalcitrant Roosevelt the danger of isolationism months, even years, before Pearl Harbor or Churchill's meetings with Roosevelt.

Brits were very busy at that time. Believe me, they needed time to absorb the war around them and the world. Moments that seemed daunting were relieved with humor from every level of society. Not least from the stalwart monarch and his family. Our present queen, Elizabeth II, was driving trucks for the British Army during the war, and her uncle Louis was commander of the British services fighting the Japanese in Burma, China, and Malaya. Dukes, earls, and princes of the realm were ralliers of British staunchness.

Keith Hunt
Camarillo, California

### May 2011 Comments

Dear Editor:

It is obvious to me from seeing the quality work you publish that you are interested in total accuracy and correctness in your articles. With that thought as my sole motive, I would like to point out two small "nits" I noticed in your May 2011 issue.

First, on page 36 in the article about the U.S. 29th Infantry Division at Omaha Beach by British MG Michael Reynolds, he wrote about the heavy load of equipment men were carrying ashore. He spoke of " extra ammunition belts for BARs (Browning Automatic Rifle)..." I would like to point out that the BAR was not a belt-fed automatic weapon. It was fed by double round wide magazines, I think of perhaps 30 rounds. The BAR was a wonderful, much loved infantry squad automatic weapon until being displaced by the also magazine fed M-16.

Second, on page 47 in Blaine Taylor's article about Benito Mussolini, "The Killing of Il Duce," he wrote, "Ironically, the flames of the memory of that day in Milan were fanned not by the Socialists who wanted to forget it, but rather by the neo-Fascists as a symbol of rightist anger."

I would like to point out some misunderstanding over the definitions of "fascism" and "socialism" and their irregular, or inconsistent use in the article. The quotation seems to assume that fascists are not socialists, which they are (witness the "Nazis" were the national socialist party of Germany) and, further that they are "rightists," rather than "leftists," as all collectivists, including communists, socialists, and Nazis are. The fact that Hitler and the Nazis saw the communists as their lethal enemies, does not relegate those Nazis to being "rightists."

I suspect Taylor recognizes that point when, on page 44, he wrote, "... the coming socialist republic that even Mussolini [A penultimate "fascist."] himself would have supported."

Anyway, thank you so much for a wonderful, enjoyable, educational, obvious labor of love that keeps our "Greatest Generation" on the center stage of caring history buffs.

Lou Schroeder
Greenwood Village, Colorado

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By Blaine Taylor

akg-images

# Surviving France's Shame

## The career of General Maxime Weygand spanned half the turbulent 20th century.

**"WHAT GENERAL WEYGAND HAS CALLED THE BATTLE OF FRANCE IS OVER,"** intoned British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. "The Battle of Britain is about to begin." Those famous words were uttered as German armies steamrolled beaten French armies in the spring of 1940 and chased the British Expeditionary Force into the sea at Dunkirk in one of the most successful military campaigns in martial annals.

But who was General Maxime Weygand? Small in stature, weighing only 120 pounds and standing but five feet tall, Weygand was a mild-mannered and reserved soldier who is today virtually unknown among the senior military commanders of France during the early days of World War II.

It was Weygand who took over the routed French armies from General Maurice Gamelin on the very eve of their defeat. Prior to the debacle of May 1940, Weygand had been consulted by all the Great War Allied political leaders and military commanders of his generation.

His main French military rival was Gamelin. Called "a man of authority and good sense ... who was always a man who did too much" by his biographer, Weygand was both a practicing warrior and prolific author like his peer, Philippe Pétain, and his protégé, ally, and sometime foe, Charles de Gaulle. All told, he published 21 books and penned 21 prefaces and introductions for other writers' works.

Weygand was denied the highest honor of a baton of a Marshal of France despite the fact that two of his former protégés, Alphonse Juin and Jean de Lattry de Tassigny, were, indeed, given the coveted staffs.

Reviewing his accomplishments in the Russo-Polish War of 1920 when Weygand was dispatched as chief military adviser to the embattled Poles fighting the Red Army outside Warsaw, Churchill assessed him thus: "A soldier of subtle and commanding military genius veiled under an unaffected modesty ... France had nothing to send to Poland but this one man. He was, it seems, enough."

The Poles defeated the Russians, thus securing their eastern frontier for almost the next two decades, but Weygand's true role, given full credit by some historians and virtually none by others, is still debated more than 90 years later. Another martial observer characterized Weygand as "the ideal soldier: precise, hardworking, firm in opinion, yet modest; brave, yet prudent; believing intensely in discipline, method, and organization, but neither stereotyped, nor deficient in resource."

Noted still another contemporary of General Weygand: "I had the most absolute deference toward, and respect for, his person. Without wishing to idealize him, I considered him one of the most remarkable people of our time, due to his broad outlook, serenity, uprightness, fundamental honesty, and deep faith, as well as the wideness and catholicity of his learning, moral rectitude, and fidelity of his friendships."

It was Weygand's historic fate to witness his country's fall to the Germans twice, in 1871 and 1940, as well as its resurrection and triumph twice, in 1918 and 1945. His long life spanned the Second Bonapartist French Empire of Napoleon III through the Fifth Republic presidency of "le Grand Charles," the haughty de Gaulle. His main fear both in 1940 and 1944 was that communist revolution might break out, akin to the bloody Paris Commune of 1871.

French General Maxime Weygand exits a command center after receiving the news that he would succeed General Maurice Gamelin as the leader of the French forces in a vain attempt to stem the Nazi onslaught.

Hidden by the omnipresent shadow of Allied Generalissimo and French Marshal Ferdinand Foch (whose chief of staff he was, both during and after World War I) for nine years of his career, Weygand was present at the 1918 Armistice negotia-


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

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

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

***The hunter's back***

*The Ritorno watch back opens to reveal a special compartment for a keepsake picture or can be engraved.*

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tions, reading out the terms to the vanquished Germans, in the famed railroad dining car at Compiegne that ended World War I. He was also a key player at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, in which he, albeit briefly, held sway at center stage as commander in chief of the greatest army in continental Europe before its Gallic sword was shattered.

While at the 1919 conclave, French statesman Georges Clemenceau characterized the quiet Weygand as "dangerous, but valuable," an opinion shared by others.

Oddly, mysteriously, and still controversially, neither Weygand's actual birth date nor his nationality, and not even his parentage, are entirely certain to this day. Born in Brussels sometime during 1865-1867, Weygand had a

National Archives

father who was most likely Belgian, and a mother who was possibly Austrian. It has even been rumored that he was the grandson of the famed Viennese diplomat Prince Clemens Metternich and the bastard son of either the mad Empress Carlotta of Mexico, or of her brother, Leopold II, King of the Belgians. No one is entirely sure.

"I was raised by a Jew," as Maxime de Nimal, he himself asserted later. However, he was allowed to be baptized as a Catholic in 1877 at the approximate age of 10. In 1888, when Maxime was about 23, he was adopted via a financial transaction by the Jew's accountant, one Francois-Joseph Weygand. Thus, he became the French citizen Maxime Weygand known to history ever since. Spitefully, de Gaulle once told his son Philippe that his rival was "without a drop of French blood in his veins."

Nevertheless, young Maxime entered the French Army as a Belgian cadet, graduated from the famed military academy of Saint-Cyr

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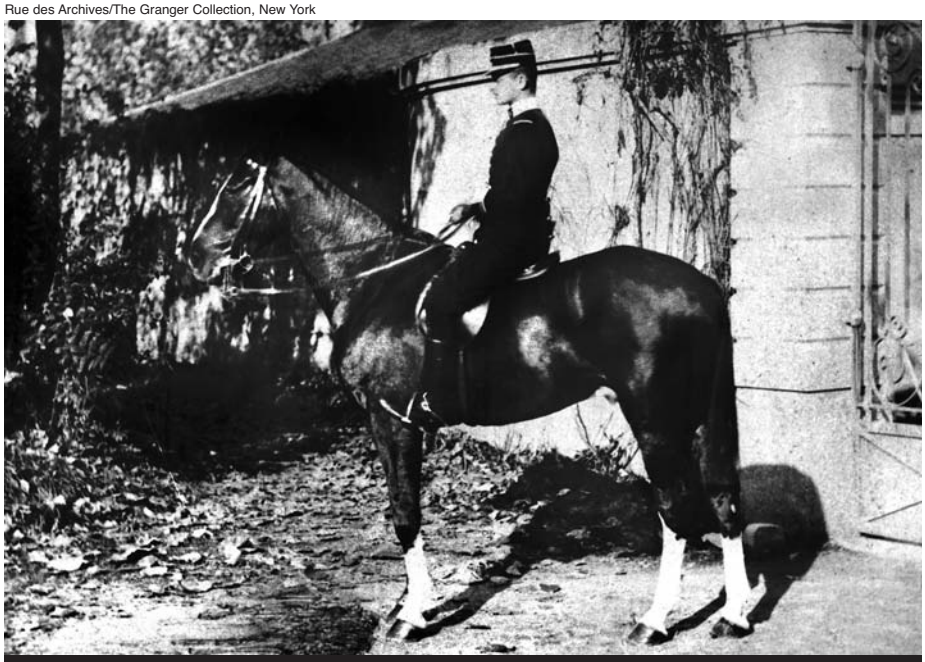

**ABOVE: A youthful Maxime Weygand sits astride his horse. Weygand spent many years in the halls of power in the French military and was present at the signing of the armistice that ended World War I. LEFT: Weygand (right) shares a conversation with Ferdinand Foch, a marshal of France who won lasting fame during the dark days of World War I. BELOW: General Weygand reviews Moroccan troops on parade in the Libyan capital of Tripoli in 1940.**

Library of Congress

in 1887, and received his first cavalry posting at the foot of the Alps. An avid reader of martial writings by Napoleon, Weygand also went to the elite, aristocratic French cavalry school at Saumur, where he was a top instructor for five years, until 1905.

Using a doctored birth certificate to effect his marriage in 1900, Weygand was a lieutenant colonel in 1914 and had served 28 days in action with the 5th Hussars when Foch selected him as his chief of staff, a post he held until 1923. Subsequently, he served mainly as a staff officer and not, therefore, a commanding officer for rather a long tour.

Called by some of his more combat-oriented peers, including de Gaulle, "this utter outsider," Weygand's organizational passion was in attention to detail. Beside Foch, he also idolized France's colorful "Papa Josef" Joffre, even after the catastrophic mutinies of the French Army in 1917. Promoted to brigadier general under Foch, Weygand was sent to Switzerland to advise the Swiss how best to counter a possible German invasion, a specter that raised its ugly

head again during World War II when he commanded the French Army.

Renowned as the taker of copious notes during high-level staff conferences, the unobtrusive Weygand was considered as "a useful go-between" by all the Allies and saw the entire Great War from the very top of the command pyramid, from the inside looking out. His peers, however, considered his lifelong idolatry of Foch misplaced.

On May 9, 1923, Weygand arrived in Beirut to take up the first real independent command of his career when he was named High Commissioner Levant of the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon in the Near East. Soon, noted a biographer, "The Arabs began seeing miraculous powers in this French official," so good a colonial administrator he was deemed to be, "with both art and science in his soul ... a military thinker" as well.

Indeed, Weygand developed into a sort of French Eisenhower during this period, coaxing disparate elements to work together smoothly. Like the Italians in their interwar colonies, General Weygand also became known as a builder of roads and railways. Still, a French leftist government in Paris recalled him on November 29, 1924.

Back in "Metropolitan France," the bookish, wiry Proconsul Weygand was posted as director of the Center of Higher Military Studies in Paris, the so-called school of marshals, in 1925. He was also named as vice president of the French Supreme War Council.

Like de Gaulle, Weygand was an advocate of developing armored warfare capabilities within the French Army. Weygand became the army's chief of staff on January 3, 1930, with his rival Gamelin as his own staff chief. Gamelin was slated to succeed Weygand as chief later on, with Weygand assuming the office of president of the Supreme War Council. Therefore, the little general was designated as the future wartime generalissimo of all French armies in the field for the expected war that was to come against a rearmed Germany.

Weygand was opposed to the French disarmament mania then current, and he favored tanks and a two-year draft. Elected to the French Academy in 1931, he was revered as a wonderful organizer. He also became obsessed with airplanes and arms limitations, yet worked well with War Minister Andre Maginot and, indeed, supervised the building of the famed line of defensive fortifications named after Maginot.

In 1932 came military budget cuts under Prime Minister Edouard Daladier, who wanted Weygand out. During 1930-1935, there were 10 French war ministers under 16 separate governments in Paris and, gradually, the less dogmatic Gamelin came to the fore at Weygand's political expense. On January 2, 1935, he edged out Weygand, both as generalissimo in time of war and on the Supreme Council, as well as in the offices of chief of staff and inspector general. Weygand retired from the army that same year.

Outmaneuvered politically, Weygand the scholar emerged again as he concentrated more on book writing and less on the static defense policies being advocated by both Gamelin and Pétain during the late 1930s. In one of his popular military pamphlets published in 1937, General Weygand accurately predicted the fate of the French armed forces three years hence: the air force destroyed on the ground, the Maginot Line bypassed, and the role of German and not French armor in winning the first campaigns.

Colonel de Gaulle concurred, and so the two became temporary allies. Daladier recalled Weygand to active duty in August 1939, on the eve of World War II, as commander in chief of the Orient Theater of Operations.

National Archives

**General Weygand, fresh from Nazi captivity in 1945, chats with General Anthony McAuliffe, the hero of the defense of the Belgian town of Bastogne by troops of the 101st Airborne Division during the Battle of the Bulge.**

The highly decorated Weygand was either 70 or 72 years old and found himself back in Syria, far from Metropolitan France, where his foe, Gamelin, considered him a noisy nuisance. Restored to the colonies, Weygand was an avid admirer of black French colonial troops, especially the hardy Moroccans of North Africa and the tough Senegalese of West Africa.

Considered a "military Jeremiah" in Paris, Weygand was pro-draft and favored the 1792 "nation-in-arms" concept of war but opposed de Gaulle's plans for a smaller, professional army instead. He had traveled to Spain, Iran, Turkey, and Romania, and was considered knowledgeable about their armed forces, even by his rivals.

According to biographer Barnett Singer in his fine work *Maxime Weygand: A Biography of the French General in Two World Wars,* he suddenly found himself "hurled to the top" of the French Army in May 1940 after but 10 days of Gamelin's field command proved to be an utter failure. It was, in his own estimation, two weeks too late, however, to halt the latest Teutonic invasion.

Flying from Beirut on May 18, Weygand was appointed commander in chief on the 20th and came under enemy fire on his very first tour of the front. Even as he traveled by road daily and covered great distances, the word "armistice" was already being mentioned, not only by Marshal Pétain, but even among his own staff. Weygand saw no other choice but to declare Paris an open city in order to forestall a repetition of the German artillery bombardment of 1871, much less a Luftwaffe aerial attack. He also promoted de Gaulle to brigadier general.

Weygand prevailed in sending the undefeated French fleet to France's North African ports of Dakar and Mers-el-Kébir. Politically and strategically, the wily Weygand viewed colonial France as an eventual springboard for the

Allied liberation of continental France. This was the very policy advocated by de Gaulle's Free French from London starting in June 1940 and secretly also desired by Marshal Pétain's "pro-German" collaborationist government at Vichy in southern France from June 1940 to November 1942.

It was also Weygand who selected French Army General Charles Huntziger to conduct the second set of negotiations in Foch's dining car, now back in the forest of Compiegne, having been moved from a museum to its earlier location for the humiliating 1940 surrender proceedings. Due to the Weygand-Huntziger combine, France emerged with its fleet and colonial empire entirely intact and unoccupied, plus a smaller French Army still under its own commanders. It was no mean political feat. Both Pétain and de Gaulle owed Weygand much. He was able to play a slick double game: both pro- and anti-German in France as well as with Vichy's Jewish populations in Africa and France.

Weygand vetoed continuing an active war from North Africa, however, mainly because he did not see it as winnable. He was named by Marshal Pétain as defense minister on June 17, 1940. As such, he personified the spirit of Vichy resistance to the hated Germans. He bided his time, rebuilt the army both in France and abroad, and quietly awaited the day of revenge.

Weygand was succeeded by Huntziger after 11 weeks in office and sent to North Africa by Pétain to continue a jointly agreed upon martial policy of peace.

After suffering six broken bones in an air crash, Weygand left France on October 9, 1940. In 40 days, he flew all over North Africa visiting his new command sites. On August 9, 1941, Weygand was also named governor general of Algeria. His efficiency led Hitler to call for his relief.

By November 11, 1941, he was again forced out of office for political reasons. He had wanted to form an all-black army in Senegal but was stymied. Still, Weygand increased the French colonial army in North Africa from 30,000 to 180,000 men equipped with tanks, machine guns, trucks, and artillery before his ouster due to German pressure.

Weygand went into exile at Cannes in the south of France, but was arrested by the German SS on November 12, 1942, after the Allies invaded North Africa and the angry Nazis seized unoccupied France in retaliation. Handcuffed, the aging four-star general was taken to Radolfzel on Lake Constance and was later transferred to Castle Gorlitz in German Mecklenburg, where he started writing the first volume of his memoirs. He and his wife were safely liberated by the U.S. Army in 1945.

In Paris and now pro-Gaullist, Weygand testified on Marshal Pétain's behalf at his trial and was acquitted at his own on May 6, 1948, after which he recovered both his rank and his former assets. He spent his declining years as a prolific author and died at the approximate age of 99 on January 28, 1965, after breaking a thigh bone in a fall.

Over 15,000 people attended his funeral, but Weygand was denied burial in the Hotel des Invalides near Napoleon I and Marshal Foch, another nasty swipe by then-president of France, Charles de Gaulle.

In death as in life, therefore, Maxime Weygand, holder of the highest military orders of France, Belgium, England, the United States, and Morocco, stood at center stage in French martial politics. □

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*Blaine Taylor is a Towson, Maryland, freelance writer who has published seven illustrated studies on the World War II period, most recently* Hitler's Chariots Volume 1: Mercedes-Benz G-4 Cross-Country Car *in 2009.*

By William B. Allmon

All photos National Archives

# Long Service in Wartime

**The destroyer USS *Murphy* survived a collision on the open sea and served during four amphibious operations in the European Theater.**

**EIGHTY MILES OFF THE COAST OF NEW JERSEY AND 280 FEET BELOW THE** surface of the Atlantic Ocean lies the forward section of a World War II destroyer, where it came to rest more than 60 years ago. According to the USS *Murphy* History Project, the warship's tragic and triumphant story reads "like a chronicle of the Second World War."

On the eve of World War II, with its emphasis on antisubmarine operations against German U-boats in the North Atlantic, the U.S. Navy's destroyer force consisted mainly of Fletcher-, Sumner-, Geary-, and Sims-class destroyers built between 1930 and 1938. Many destroyers of these classes, overweight and top heavy, lacking armor or strengthened decks, were considered unlikely to survive torpedo damage. To supplement the Sims class, both Bethlehem Steel Corporation and naval architects Gibbs & Cox submitted designs for a new class of destroyer, weighing 1,620 tons, with stronger hulls, and armed with four 5-inch guns, four centerline torpedo tubes, and improved antiaircraft batteries.

The U.S. Navy adopted Bethlehem Steel's design, and awarded Bethlehem the contract to build the new destroyers, hull numbers 421 to 616, in its East and West Coast shipyards. The first of the Benson-class destroyers, named after the first ship, USS *Benson,* was launched from Bethlehem's Staten Island, New York, shipyard and commissioned on July 25, 1940. A total of 30 Benson-class ships were built between July 1940 and February 1943. Four were lost in action.

The keel of the 17th Benson-class destroyer, assigned hull number DD-603, was laid at Bethlehem Steel's Staten Island shipyard on May 11, 1941. The destroyer was named USS *Murphy,* after Union Navy Lieutenant John McLeod Murphy, captain of the Civil War ironclad USS *Carondelet.*

Launched on April 29, 1942, *Murphy* was 347 feet long, 36 feet wide, and displaced 2,525 tons fully loaded. Like her sisters, *Murphy* came out, as naval historian Norman Friedman wrote, "very overweight, so that their light displacements generally exceeded these design standards."

Twin 47,000 horsepower Westinghouse geared steam turbines turned two propellers at 36.7 knots, while 2,291 tons of fuel gave her a 6,500-mile range. Armament consisted of four 5-inch guns, two 40mm and quad 1.1-inch anti-aircraft guns (later replaced by two 20mm Oerlikons), four 21-inch torpedo tubes amidships, and two stern-mounted depth-charge racks with 24 600-pound charges. Stronger decks, improved armor protection, and alternating engine and boiler rooms gave *Murphy* a better chance of surviving battle damage. Additionally, for the "luck of the Irish," *Murphy* officer John Keating wrote that Bethlehem's shipbuilders welded a large green shamrock to her aft smokestack, making her "one of the best known of all Atlantic destroyers."

**ABOVE: Commander Leonard Bailey was the USS *Murphy*'s first commander. TOP: Distinguished by a pair of funnels and two forward 5-inch gun mounts, the Benson-class destroyer USS *Murphy* is shown at sea in April 1944.**


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**An Allied LST burns after an attack by German dive-bombers near Gela on the coast of Sicily in July 1943. The USS *Murphy* sustained damage while covering the landings of American soldiers on the beaches at Gela.**

Four months later, on July 23, 1942, *Murphy* was commissioned. Commander Leonard W. Bailey assumed command and sailed to Casco Bay, Maine, for *Murphy*'s shakedown cruise. According to Boatswain's Mate Thomas Hillard, Bailey was "very well liked" by *Murphy*'s 16-officer, 260-man crew.

Completing her shakedown, *Murphy* joined American destroyers escorting merchant convoys from Casco Bay to Halifax, Nova Scotia. In mid-September 1942, *Murphy* joined Commander E.R. Durgin's Destroyer Division 24 in Norfolk, Virginia, part of Captain Robert R. M. Emmett's Task Group 34.9, which included the cruisers *Augusta* and *Brooklyn,* nine destroyers, six minesweepers, and 14 troop transports. Leaving Norfolk on October 23, 1942, Task Group 34.9 joined Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt's Task Force 34, transporting Maj. Gen. George S. Patton's American troops to invade Vichy French Morocco and Algeria during Operation Torch.

Arriving off the coast of North Africa on November 8, 1942, Task Force 34 split into its separate landing groups, which headed for their objectives. Task Group 34.9, designated the Western Attack Force, headed for Cape Fedhala, near Casablanca, Morocco. With the rest of Destroyer Squadron 24, *Murphy* was assigned to guide landing craft to the beach and provide fire support.

Near the Moroccan coast at midnight on November 9, while Western Force's transports loaded troops into landing craft, *Murphy* and sister destroyers *Wilkes, Swanson,* and *Ludlow* took position near the line of departure. Delays due to inexperienced crews led to H-hour's postponement from 4 AM to 4:45 AM.

Once the landing craft were loaded, *Murphy* and her consorts led them to the line of departure and anchored as the assault waves dashed ashore landing 3,500 combat troops. When daylight broke at 6:04 AM, French shore batteries at Cape Fedhala opened fire. Quickly raising anchor, *Murphy* and *Ludlow* opened fire with their 5-inch guns on Batterie Port Bloundin near Cape Fedhala. The Bloundin battery concentrated its four 138.6mm shore guns on *Murphy*, 5,000 yards off shore, straddling her.

"This damn turkey is getting our range," Bailey radioed. "Someone help me polish him off." A shell slammed into *Murphy*'s starboard engine room, knocking out the engine and killing three sailors. As his crew stuffed mattresses into the shell holes, Bailey pulled out of range while *Brooklyn* and *Ludlow* silenced the battery. By early afternoon, after emergency repairs, Bailey rejoined the ships off Fedhala, reporting *Murphy* ready "for any action at any speed."

French forces in Morocco surrendered to Patton on November 11, 1942. *Murphy* left Morocco on November 24. After repairs in Boston, Massachusetts, *Murphy* escorted convoys from New York to Panama and from Norfolk to Casablanca. In July 1943, *Murphy* joined Rear Admiral J. L. Hall's "Dime" Attack Force, which included the light cruisers *Boise* and *Savannah,* 11 destroyers, two LSTs, six transports, 33 landing craft, eight minesweepers, and 10 PT boats, supporting Patton's U.S. Seventh Army and General Bernard L. Montgomery's British Eighth Army's landings in Sicily.

As assault troops of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division went ashore at Gela, Sicily, on July 9, 1943, *Murphy* and other Dime Force warships stood 600 yards offshore. At 8:30 AM, 30 German Pz.Kpfw. IV tanks were spotted moving toward the beaches. American troops did not yet have antitank guns ashore to stop them.

"Something had to be done to stop these tanks," Roscoe wrote. "The call went out for naval gunfire." *Murphy,* along with destroyers *Jeffers, Shubrick,* and the light cruiser *Boise,* opened fire on the column, which turned tail and retired, leaving several tanks behind.

Axis aircraft bombed ships and landing craft near the invasion beaches in the afternoon. Several bombs fell near *Murphy,* inflicting minor damage. The next day, July 10, four Heinkel He-111 medium bombers and four Focke-Wulf Fw-190 fighter-bombers attacking the transports were driven off by heavy antiaircraft fire from *Murphy* and other destroyers. None of the vulnerable ships was hit.

"Fortunately the aim of most of the Axis bombers was very inaccurate," Morison wrote.

German and Italian bombers attacked again that night. "The planes dropped magnesium flares to light the transports," a sailor remembered, "and bombs fell on the ships in cascades, clumps and clusters."

Near misses straddled *Murphy,* puncturing her stern and wounding one sailor. Two nights later, on July 12, *Murphy* was again attacked by German bombers, one bomb missing her by a scant 100 yards. Undamaged, *Murphy* remained off Gela as American troops secured the beaches and advanced inland.

On July 27, *Murphy* joined Rear Admiral Lyal A. Davidson's Task Force 88, cruisers *Philadelphia* and *Savannah,* plus destroyers *Gherardi, Nelson, Jeffers, Trippe,* and *Knight,* providing fire support for Patton's troops attacking along the northern Sicilian coast. On the afternoon of July 31, a flight of 11 Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive-bombers attacked *Philadelphia* and *Murphy* while the warships pounded German defenses near the town of San Stefano di Camastra. *Murphy*'s gunners downed two Stukas while a bomb missed *Philadelphia* by 15 yards.

*Murphy* remained with Task Force 88, supporting Patton's advance and repelling additional air attacks, until Sicily was secured on August 27, 1943.

In early September, *Murphy* returned to the United States and became part of Captain Roy Pfaff's Task Force 69, which included the battleship *Texas;* Commander Albert G. Murdaugh's Destroyer Division 17, consisting of *Nelson, Jeffers, Herndon, Quick, Butler, Gherardi, Glennon;* plus Destroyer Division 20's *Cowie, Doran, Earle, Knight,* and escort oiler *Enoree* assigned to escort merchant and troop convoys across the North Atlantic to Great Britain.

On October 20, 1943, Convoy UT-4, bound for Britain, including one troop transport, two tankers, two cargo ships, and 13 freighters carrying 46,455 troops, escorted by Task Force 69's ships, assembled in New York harbor. UT-4, except for the destroyer *Jeffers,* damaged in a collision with a lighter the previous day, departed New York on the morning of October 21. *Jeffers* joined the convoy after it was repaired at the navy yard.

Once clear of the harbor, the convoy assembled into eight columns of three ships each, covering a six-mile area. Tankers *Esso Hartford* and *Markay* with plane transporters *Trumpeter* and *Slinger* in the middle, troop transports *Siboney, Athione Castle, Monarch of Bermuda, Empress of Australia, Capetown Castle, Scythia, Orun, Columbia, Athene, Fairisle, Santa Teresa,* and *Surprise* formed around them. *Texas* and escort oiler *Enoree* formed the fifth column with destroyers *Nelson, Glennon, Herndon, Knight, Gherardi, Quick,* and *Murphy* deployed in antisubmarine screen around the convoy.

On *Murphy*'s bridge, Lieutenant Thaddeus R. Beal, officer of the deck, and Lieutenant William R. Gordon, with a signalman, quartermaster, helmsman, and two lookouts, were on watch. Commander Bailey was in his cabin behind the bridge; crewmen off watch were asleep below decks.

A few miles away, the tanker SS *Bulkoil* steamed alone at 10 knots toward New York. On October 19, carrying 2,000 tons of oil, a crew of 54 Merchant Marine sailors and 72 U.S. Navy armed guards, *Bulkoil* left New York with Convoy CU-6 bound for Curacao, Netherlands East Indies. Barely a day out of port on October 20, *Bulkoil* lost steam in her starboard boiler. Unable to keep up with the convoy, *Bulkoil* turned back to New York, zigzagging to avoid lurking U-boats.

By 8 PM on October 21, B*ulkoil* was six hours from New York and safety. The ship was blacked out and without radar. Her third mate was on the bridge with the helmsman, and Ensign James W. Barrett, commander of *Bulkoil*'s armed guard, was on the flying bridge. *Bulkoi*l crewman Robert Taylor was a lookout

**The destroyer USS *Murphy* served in numerous operations during World War II but was lost as a result of a collision in October 1943.**

on the starboard bridge wing. "I was on deck at 8:20 when the third Mate ordered me to come up to the starboard side of the bridge," Taylor said. "I was watching left to right, right to left. I couldn't see anything but black."

Around 9:50 PM, *Murphy*'s radar picked up an object ahead of the convoy. Ordering Lieutenant Gordon to tell Commander Bailey, Beal called Murdaugh aboard *Nelson* over the TBS [talk between ships], reporting a "strange pip" bearing "120 degrees true," at a distance of 12,000 yards.

Murdaugh ordered *Murphy* to "head that fellow away from us." Beal immediately changed course and increased speed to 20 knots.

After checking *Murphy*'s radar for the stranger's position, Bailey entered the bridge and countermanded Beal's course change.

"The visibility was extremely low," Bailey recalled, "and it was necessary to rely entirely upon radar, amplified by the result obtained from the gun control organization, namely, plot and the gun director."

Bailey overheard Captain Pfaff aboard *Texas* asking Murdaugh on *Nelson* which way the convoy should turn to avoid the contact.

"Turn right," Murdaugh said. At the same moment, Beal reported he saw the stranger "bearing one or two points on the port bow," range 1,500 yards. Ordering *Murphy*'s helmsman to come right, Bailey informed Pfaff, "I intend to divert the stranger to starboard."

On *Bulkoil*'s bridge, the tanker's torpedo detector, designed to pick up torpedo propeller noises in the water, indicated a contact to starboard. "It was thought to be a German submarine regenerating its batteries," Taylor said. Certain a U-boat was nearby and unaware of any Allied surface ships in the area, *Bulkoil* turned to starboard to avoid a torpedo attack.

Looking into the darkness as *Bulkoil* turned, Taylor saw a "shadowy appearance of a bow coming out of the water," followed by "wiggly marks, then a pointed bow: I thought it was a submarine. Then all of a sudden I saw a housing, then a gun on top of it, and I realized it wasn't a submarine."

*Bulkoil* was close to *Murphy*'s side. Seeing that a collision was imminent, Bailey ordered *Murphy*'s speed to all ahead flank and then all engines ahead emergency flank. Before *Murphy* could turn away, *Bulkoil* slammed into her port side.

Boatswain's Mate Tom Hillard was going below when *Murphy* was struck. "The ship rolled to starboard," he recalled. "I looked up [and] saw the tanker going through, some flame and sparks forward place of collision." Some of *Murphy*'s crew were killed as *Bulkoil* cut through her midsection at a 90-degree angle, dragging her several hundred yards through the water.

"Suddenly there was this loud crashing sound, like a Greyhound bus slamming through a large plate of glass," remembered Seaman 2nd Class Frederic Sheller, on duty in *Murphy*'s combat information center (CIC). "The lights went out, and the emergency wall lanterns came on. Seawater began coming into the compartment."

*Murphy* broke in half, her bow separating from the stern. "After we plowed through it, I saw the bow come up, the aft scraped past our starboard side," Taylor said. "I saw a guy in the water and threw him a life ring. I was about to dive in to save this guy, but couldn't." *Bulkoil* quickly turned on its collision and running lights.

*Murphy*'s bow section immediately listed 90 degrees to starboard, trapping many sailors below deck while others struggled to escape.

On *Murphy*'s floating stern, her crew sprang into action. "Our first thoughts: Secure ship, rescue survivors in the water," Hillard said. "I got my division topside in life jackets and started to secure hatches." While their shipmates closed watertight doors, damage control parties put out a small fire in the forward fire room and plugged leaks in the engine room bulkhead. Other *Murphy* sailors threw rubber life rafts over the side to survivors, many without life jackets, swimming away from the rapidly sinking bow.

On *Murphy*'s bow, Sheller pulled himself out-

**A precarious fuel line stretches from the cruiser USS *Quincy* to the USS *Murphy* while the vessels ride the waves at sea. This photo was taken from aboard the cruiser in the spring of 1944.**

side. "As I stood up on the slanted gun mount number two, I looked down to my left and could see the phosphorous bubbles of seawater enveloping the bow as it was going down," Sheller wrote. Heading forward, Sheller saw Bailey near the port anchor.

"The skipper had a light of some sort, shining it down into the water," Sheller recalled. "He finally said, 'Well boys, looks like we'll have to get off here.'"

Sheller jumped into the water and "began to swim for all I was worth, as I could feel the pull of the bow going down."

Ten minutes after the collision, *Murphy*'s bow sank, taking 38 officers and men with it and leaving her survivors struggling in the choppy sea.

"It was pitch black, and the sea was quite choppy," Sheller recalled. "I kept swimming and floating with no way of knowing at the time if I would be rescued." Hanging onto a freshwater cask off a raft, Sheller paddled over to a life raft with 30 to 40 shipmates aboard and others in the water clinging to ropes. Chief Torpedoman Emmett S. Wild pulled Sheller alongside the raft, where he waited for rescue.

Seeing *Bulkoil*'s lights, Captain Pfaff was unaware of the accident and called *Murphy* over the TBS. Getting no reply, Pfaff ordered *Glennon* to investigate. When *Glennon* arrived at the scene, her captain, Lt. Cmdr. Floyd C. Camp, reported that *Murphy* was sinking and her crew was abandoning ship.

Pfaff ordered *Glennon* and *Jeffers* to begin rescue operations. Camp ordered *Glennon*'s searchlights turned on and ropes put over the side to pull survivors aboard. *Jeffers* lowered its whaleboat to search for survivors.

With *Murphy*'s stern remaining afloat, Tom Hillard and Seaman Matt Soloman put a life raft over the side and began picking up swimmers. After rescuing 10 survivors, Hillard and Soloman paddled the raft over to *Glennon*, where they were ordered aboard.

Eventually, *Glennon* came alongside Fred Sheller's raft and began pulling its sailors aboard. "I saw that some of the crew were tossing ropes down to us," Sheller said. He grabbed a rope, which "kept slipping through my extremely cold and oily hands as the guys on the ship were pulling the rope. However, luckily there was a huge knot towards the end of the rope, and when my closed hands got to this knot, up I went to the deck of the ship." *Glennon*'s crew bundled Sheller below decks with the rest of his shipmates.

While *Glennon* and *Jeffers* rescued *Murphy*'s survivors, *Bulkoil*'s crew tried to find out what happened. "We didn't know we had run across another convoy," Taylor remembered. "But the night was black, just pitch black. All of a sudden there was a battlewagon out there. They called to us asking, 'What ship is that?' We identified ourselves and asked if we could assist. They told us to stand by."

With permission from Captain Pfaff and having suffered only minor damage to its bow and no casualties, *Bulkoil* got under way for New York. After repairs, *Bulkoil* returned to service, survived the war, and was scrapped in 1961.

After picking up 12 officers and 95 men from *Murphy*'s bow, Camp reported *Murphy*'s stern was still afloat, and in no danger of sinking. Pfaff ordered *Glennon* to take *Murphy*'s stern in tow. Shortly after midnight, *Glennnon* passed a line to *Murphy*'s stern while *Jeffers* and *Knight* stood by and began towing it toward New York. *Murphy*'s crew jettisoned equipment, stores, and ammunition to make the towing easier.

The next morning, October 22, *Glennnon, Jeffers,* and *Knight* met the civilian tug SS *Rescue* escorted by the Coast Guard cutter *Cartigan* and subchaser *PY-37*. As *Rescue* took over towing Murphy's stern, *Glennon* transferred the 109 survivors to *Cartigan*. Their task complete, *Glennon, Jeffers,* and *Knight* rejoined Convoy UT-4.

*Cartigan* and *PY-37* reached New York later that afternoon and unloaded the survivors at Pier 12. *Rescue* arrived on the afternoon of October 23 and placed *Murphy* in the Brooklyn Navy Yard's dry dock. Her reunited crew was housed on Brooklyn's Myrtle Avenue, while the Navy investigated the collision and found that after the collision the "conduct of the officers and crew of the USS *Murphy* [had been] in accordance with the best traditions of the naval service."

*Murphy*'s reconstruction began on October 27, 1943, with the fitting of a new bow. Along with her new bow, *Murphy* received a new skipper. Bailey was replaced by Commander Russell G. Wolverton and went on to skipper the destroyer Harry E. Hubbard in the Pacific.

Seven months later, in April 1944, *Murphy*'s repairs were completed. After a month of shakedown and training, *Murphy* sailed to Portsmouth, England, joining Rear Admiral John L. Hall's Task Force 124. On D-Day, *Murphy* provided fire support for troops of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions fighting their way off Omaha Beach in Normandy and screened troopships offshore. *Murphy* engaged German shore batteries and E-boats until late June when she rejoined Task Force 124, now led by Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo.

Deyo's ships, split between his own Task Group 1 and Rear Admiral C.F. Bryant's Task Group 2, left port on June 25 to bombard German defenses around Cherbourg, France. After an uneventful crossing, Deyo's task group, with the battleship *Nevada,* cruisers *Quincy, Tuscaloo*sa, HMS *Glasgow,* and HMS *Enterprise,* and destroyers *Murphy, Ellyson, Hambleton, Rodman, Emmons,* and *Gherardi,* took position west of Cherbourg, while Bryant's battleships *Texas* and *Arkansas,* five destroyers, and 19 British and American minesweepers, took the east sector. When German batteries opened fire on the minesweepers, *Murphy* and the other destroyers laid a smoke screen protecting the larger warships while they opened fire with their main batteries.

For 90 minutes, Deyo's ships pounded the German defenses while *Murphy* and her sisters, Morison wrote, "made smoke as required and did their best to stay out of the way of the big ships." *Murphy* was straddled four times by German 280mm shells.

"Shells popped all around us," Wolverton recalled. "Any number of them hit in our wake ... but Jerry failed to hit us." As *Tuscaloosa, Ellyson,* and *Gherardi* fired on the battery, *Murphy* ducked inside her smoke screen, suffering no serious damage. At 3 PM, Deyo's ships ceased fire. Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins's VII Corps captured Cherbourg on July 1, 1944.

*Murphy* then sailed to the Mediterranean Sea, where she joined British Rear Admiral Thomas R. Troubridge's Task Force 88 on August 3, 1944, and provided support for Operation Dragoon, the Allied landings in southern France. *Murphy* left the Mediterranean on September 15 and returned to New York. After an overhaul, *Murphy* became the flagship of Captain John S. Keating's Destroyer Squadron 17 in Casco Bay.

On January 21, 1945, *Murphy* and Destroyer Squadron 17 escorted the cruisers *Quincy* and *Savannah* carrying President Franklin D. Roosevelt from Norfolk, Virginia, to the island of Malta in the Mediterranean. After Roosevelt flew on to the Yalta Conference in the Crimea, *Quincy* and *Murphy* sailed to the Suez Canal. On February 9, 1945, *Murphy* was ordered to proceed to Saudi Arabia and bring King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud back for a conference with President Roosevelt at Suez.

After a fast trip down the Red Sea, *Murphy* became the first American warship to drop anchor in the port of Jidda, Saudi Arabia. The next day, February 12, the Saudi king and 20 bodyguards and servants came aboard and settled into a large tent set up on *Murphy*'s forecastle. It was nicknamed the "big top" by the destroyer's crew. Rugs covered her steel decks; water from the Muslim holy city of Mecca and a corral with 10 sheep were also provided.

Once *Murphy* got under way, Keating wrote, "Extraordinary efforts were made to keep the king entertained." *Murphy*'s 5-inch and 40mm guns were fired, and a depth-charge pattern was spread. Guided by *Murphy*'s navigator, Saud and his party prayed on the forecastle five times a day facing toward Mecca. In turn, Keating recalled that Saud was "most considerate, always posed for snapshots, and his coffee bearer was continually pouring a demitasse of black Arabian coffee, as the king would greet any of his American hosts who passed by."

Two days after leaving Jidda, *Murphy* rendezvoused with *Quincy* off Suez on February 15. Since the cruiser's deck was higher than the destroyer's, a ramp could not be rigged. King Saud was placed in a bosun's chair and carefully elevated from *Murphy* to *Quincy.*

**King Saud of Saudi Arabia and his extensive entourage were guests aboard the destroyer USS *Murphy* for a brief period.**

Keating was pleased at how well the cruise had gone. "Not only had we not offended the king, but he was obviously pleased with our services." After disembarking the rest of the royal party at Ismailia, Egypt, *Murphy* returned to New York.

After minor repairs, *Murphy* joined a hunter-killer group on antisubmarine patrol off New England and Nova Scotia. On July 10, 1945, *Murphy* headed for the Pacific Theater, arriving at Okinawa in September 1945, after the Japanese surrender. Assigned to the U.S. Fifth Fleet, *Murphy* visited Nagasaki, Japan, six weeks after the atomic bomb was dropped.

*Murphy* left Okinawa on November 21, 1945, and sailed to Charleston, South Carolina. On March 9, 1946, she was decommissioned and placed in the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, receiving four battle stars for her World War II service. *Murphy* was sold for scrap on October 6, 1977.

*Murphy*'s original bow rested on the floor of the Atlantic off New Jersey, her story forgotten, for nearly 60 years. In August 2000, underwater explorers Dan Crowell and Ritche Kohler found the bow. The destroyer's story was featured in an episode of the History Channel series, *Deep Sea Detectives.*

*Murphy* had participated in several major amphibious landings in the European Theater. Captain Keating summed up the destroyer's wartime service best: "The destroyer *Murphy* was always a good ship. She played a role in four invasions and never failed an assignment."□

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By Michael D. Hull

Library of Congress

# Leclerc and Liberation

## Free French Forces under General Jacques Leclerc upheld the honor of France during World War II.

**AFTER THE HUMILIATING FALL OF FRANCE IN JUNE 1940, TWO IMPASSIONED** Patriots—a general and an infantry captain—refused to accept defeat and determined, against all odds, to exact retribution from the German invaders.

The two were Brig. Gen. Charles de Gaulle, an armored warfare visionary of the 1930s who had tried without success to upgrade his country's defenses, and Captain Jacques-Philippe Leclerc, who had fought Moroccan insurgents and Germans and could not wait to get back into action.

A lifelong, mystical patriot, de Gaulle was the symbol of French resistance to fascism, but now, in the second year of World War II, he was in an anomalous position—marooned in England and virtually powerless to carry on the fight against the hated Huns. The lofty, autocratic de Gaulle was not the head of an exiled state or government, but only of an organization called the French National Committee. Although it had the blessing of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, its numbers and resources were scant.

Languishing in London that year after the fall of his beloved homeland, de Gaulle chafed, impatient for men and resources to come and rally around the Cross of Lorraine, the historic symbol of French liberation. He could not begin to match the numbers of other foreign soldiers, sailors, and airmen who had flocked to Britain in the Allied cause—Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Indians, Czechs, Dutchmen, Belgians, Poles, Norwegians, and Gurkhas. The majority of French servicemen exiled in England after the ignominious June armistice signed in the Forest of Compiègne had opted to go home.

By the end of 1940, General de Gaulle could call on only 7,000 Frenchmen in England—soldiers and sailors who had been evacuated with the tattered British Expeditionary Force from the smoking beaches of Dunkirk that year. Yet, a trickle of Frenchmen and loyal colonials committed to de Gaulle and the Cross of Lorraine had begun—a Foreign Legion demi-brigade and men from North Africa, the French Congo, Equatorial Africa, French islands in the Mediterranean, the New Hebrides, and other colonies. Some made their way to England across the rugged Pyrenees and through neutral Spain and Portugal, but their numbers were thin and they were mostly young and unknown.

De Gaulle searched among the arrivals for men of his own caliber, especially leaders with experience. Such a man had arrived a week after the Franco-German armistice, a captain in the French Army's 4th Infantry Division, an inspired leader, and an impassioned upholder of French martial pride. He had escaped from German clutches and itched to get back at them. Vicomte Jacques-Philippe Hautecloque, who had assumed the pseudonym of Leclerc to protect his wife and children from enemy reprisals, shared de Gaulle's background in the conservative, Roman Catholic aristocracy of northern France. A graduate of the French military academy at Saint-Cyr and a career cavalryman, Leclerc was just the sort of man de Gaulle needed. He was the first regular officer to swear allegiance to the general's Free French forces.

A wiry, mustached, and birdlike man, Leclerc was standing on the threshold of a promising military career when disaster struck the French Army in the late spring of 1940. When the Battle of Flanders began on May 10, Captain Leclerc was an operations officer in the French 4th Infantry Division, which advanced into Belgium as French units and the British Expeditionary Force struggled to stem the German juggernaut. The 4th Division's survivors were driven back for a stand at Lille, where they were soon encircled.

Leclerc was captured, but he escaped. Recog-

**An American-built M3 Stuart light tank and a half-track parade through Paris along with other armored vehicles of General Jacques Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division. These vehicles passed through the Arc de Triomphe moments before to the cheers of an adoring throng of Parisians. Paris was liberated from the Nazis in August 1944.**

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nizing that the French cause was doomed, he gained his division commander's consent on May 28 to leave the battlefield to avoid surrender. Leclerc ended up with an armored group that was forming northeast of Paris. On June 15, having suffered a serious head wound during a delaying action on the River Aube, Leclerc was carried to a hospital at Tonerre, southeast of Paris, which had been taken over by the enemy. Despite his wounds, he managed to escape and make his way to a chateau near the southwestern port city of Bordeaux where his family had fled.

German troops had entered Bordeaux on June 27, and were in possession of the chateau, but the determined captain hid from them while they made merry with the contents of the wine cellar. Early one morning, Leclerc discarded his uniform, changed into a civilian suit, and, while their six children were still sleeping, bade farewell to his tall, poised wife. "Courage, Thérèse," he said, "our separation may be long."

Taking advantage of a refugee escape route through neutral Spain and Portugal established by Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the heroic Portuguese consul in Bordeaux (profiled in *WWII History* in November 2005), Leclerc gained a precious transit visa in Bayonne, south of Bordeaux, and made his way to England. He arrived on July 25, 1940.

In London, Leclerc demanded a fighting command, but de Gaulle was unable to give him one. Instead, he offered him another task. Anti-Vichy declarations in French West and Central Africa had offered de Gaulle's Free French movement a foothold there, so in August he sent Leclerc—promoted to major and with his wounds barely healed—to Nigeria. His mission was to consolidate the military situation. Leclerc was named general officer commanding French Equatorial Africa and military governor of the colonies of Cameroon and Chad, which had a 746-mile frontier with the Italian colony of Libya.

An expedition to Dakar, Senegal, in September 1940 failed, but Leclerc was able to capture Gabon and then move on to Fort Lamy in Chad, where the French officers and their Senegalese soldiers had declared loyalty to General de Gaulle. Although 1,000 miles of Saharan waste lay between his base and the nearest hostile position, Leclerc was determined to carry the war to the enemy.

He led a small motorized column comprising a handful of French officers and 100 Senegalese troops on a grueling trek across the desert toward the Italian garrison at the oasis of Kufra, in southeastern Libya. The French force besieged the 350-man garrison from February 7 until March 1, 1941, when it surrendered. Many prisoners and considerable booty were taken. As the French Tricolor was hoisted over the fort, Leclerc led his officers in an oath "not to abandon the fight until the flag shall fly again over Metz and Strasbourg." The 1940 armistice had incorporated both cities into the Third Reich.

Rue des Archives/The Granger Collection, New York

**Photographed in May 1941 during the North African campaign, a jaunty General Jacques Leclerc dons a pith helmet to fight the harsh desert sun.**

For his brilliant capture of Kufra, Leclerc was awarded the French Order of Liberation and the Distinguished Service Order. De Gaulle promoted him to colonel. Like de Gaulle, Leclerc was sentenced to death in absentia by the Vichy regime.

After being promoted to general in August 1941 and gathering more Free French and colonial forces, Leclerc launched a northward offensive to liberate the Fezzan region in southern Libya from the Italians in December 1942. For several hundred miles across the forbidding Tibesti Mountains and desert vastness where temperatures reached 140 degrees Fahrenheit, Leclerc led a mixed bag of 1,000 vehicles and 3,250 troops—a Senegalese regiment, the Meharistes Camel Corps, a recently trained French tank unit, and a few British Army officers. The force was supported by the French Bretagne Squadron, comprising 12 obsolescent bomber-reconnaissance planes.

The Italians' retreat turned into a rout as the motley Allied force overcame the last major Italian resistance in southern Libya. It was France's first significant military accomplishment since the 1940 surrender.

Ordered to link up eventually with General Bernard L. Montgomery's hard-fighting British Eighth Army, Leclerc's column made more raids into enemy territory in Libya, supported by patrols of the legendary British Long Range Desert Group, which specialized in hit-and-run attacks on bases, airfields, supply dumps, and lines of communication behind German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps.

After abandoning his base in Chad for good, General Leclerc led his Free French column on an epic 1,553-mile trek northward across the Sahara and through Libya to join up with Montgomery's army, then pushing westward after its resounding victory over the Afrika Korps at El Alamein in October 1942. The proud Chad Column—which its commander saw as "a sort of shining spearhead"—marched into Tripoli on January 25, 1943, as Montgomery's British and Commonwealth soldiers arrived.

Leclerc readily placed his column under Monty's command to create Force L, which, reinforced with a few tanks and antitank guns, played a significant role in breaking stubborn German defenses on the Mareth Line and in the subsequent advance on Tunis. In May 1943, Leclerc's force was redesignated the French 2nd Light Infantry Division, and he was ordered to Morocco to form the French 2nd Armored Division. It was equipped with U.S. matériel and reinforced with Free French units from Syria and Dakar and by volunteers from elsewhere.

For the next year, Leclerc built the division into the most powerful fighting force Free France had yet put into the field. First in Morocco and then in England, the 2nd Armored Division trained to make itself a match for the enemy. Men from France and all over its colonies were picked and instructed, the use of new equipment learned, and tactics rehearsed.

Leclerc branded the new division with his forceful personality, and he was a rigorous taskmaster. Impassioned, selfless, and impetuous, he drove everyone hard—rebels and adventurers, cowards and shirkers—until the division, known as Deuxième DB to all who belonged to it, was judged combat ready by the Allied Supreme Headquarters on the eve of D-Day, the June 6, 1944, invasion of Normandy. On August 1, General Leclerc proudly led his division across the English Channel to serve under General George S. Patton, Jr., commander of the U.S. Third Army.

As a component of Maj. Gen. Wade H. Haislip's U.S. XV Corps, the French 2nd Armored Division's M-4 Sherman medium tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery pieces became heavily engaged for two furious weeks around Alencon and Argentan on the southern flank of the Falaise pocket. The division proved to be a skillful and flexible combat formation and was poised to link up with Canadian and Polish units at Chambois when it was switched eastward because of a change of mind on the part

National Archives

General Jacques Leclerc and elements of the French 2nd Armored Division return to their native France on August 14, 1944, two months after the Allied landings in Normandy.

of General Omar N. Bradley, the cautious, hesitant commander of the U.S. Twelfth Army Group. The Free French division laagered in open country south of Argentan, and its leader chafed for more action.

Early on the evening of August 22, Bradley transmitted an order to Leclerc from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied supreme commander, directing the 2nd Armored Division to attempt the liberation of Paris. Leclerc had been dreaming of this opportunity for some time. After initially shunning Paris as a military objective, Ike had agreed to it and believed that its liberation by a French unit would be appropriate.

By now attached to Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow's U.S. V Corps, the French tankers were to receive support from elements of Maj. Gen. Raymond O. "Tubby" Barton's U.S. 4th Infantry Division, which had landed at Utah Beach on D-Day. Bradley, who viewed Leclerc as "a magnificent tank commander," told him in his high-pitched Missouri twang, "I want you to remember one thing above all: I don't want any fighting in Paris itself. It's the only order I have for you. At no cost is there to be heavy fighting in Paris." Bradley had recently witnessed the devastation in and around Saint Lo.

Leclerc was jubilant at the prospect of leading his armor into the capital, which had been under the Nazi heel for more than four years. De Gaulle, who had just established himself in the French president's spacious, opulent country residence at Rambouillet, endorsed the order

National Archives

**Standing adjacent to a machine-gun mount aboard a half-track, General Jacques Leclerc rides along the Boulevard Montparnasse on the day of the liberation of Paris, August 25, 1944.**

and planned to follow the division to Paris.

At first light on the morning of August 23, 1944, blue fumes filtered the clear air across the orchards south of Argentan as 16,000 men and their 2,000 throbbing Sherman tanks, tank destroyers, Stuart light tanks, half-tracks, field gun units, armored scout cars, and jeeps stood on the line of departure near the village of Ecouche. Painted proudly on the side hulls of the Shermans and tank destroyers were blue Crosses of Lorraine and the names of French cities, battles, and winds: Evreux, Lisieux, Cherbourg, Rennes, Romilly, Montmirail, Champaubert, Douaumont, Mort-Homme, Bourrasque, Astral, Ouragon, Sirocco.... Reclaiming the honor of France was the mission of Leclerc's ironsides.

With the feisty little general riding point in a jeep, the division moved out at dawn in three columns along a front 17 miles wide, heading for the southwestern corner of Paris. The French armor thundered in a breakneck drive along narrow departmental roads through Sees, Mortagne, La Loup, and Maintenon. A lashing rainstorm could not dash the ardor of the Free French liberators.

By midafternoon on August 23, Leclerc reached Rambouillet, 28 miles southwest of Paris. There, he dashed into the chateau to pay his respects to General de Gaulle, who was killing time with English cigarettes and a volume of Molière discreetly borrowed from the chateau library. Confidently, the two warriors agreed to rendezvous two days later at the Gare Montparnasse in Paris.

Leclerc moved his division out again in three columns at dawn on Thursday, August 24, in a steady drizzle. Growing throngs of well wishers ran out on the roads and slowed the troops' progress, and even the dour general was caught up in the excitement.

A few hours later, the 2nd Armored Division ran into the outer Paris defenses. The weather was wet and overcast, with no recourse to aerial support. At three locations, about 200 deadly German 88mm guns and concealed Tiger tanks opened up on Leclerc's armor, causing severe losses. Several Shermans were set afire, and for four hours dismounted half-track crews stalked enemy antitank guns and 20mm cannons behind hedges and in orchards. "The firing seemed to go on all day," reported one tank crewman. Leclerc was now having to fight his way into the city, and his confident prediction of an early arrival was in doubt. But he and his men were determined to get there at any cost.

At about 7:30 PM, while still 10 miles from Paris, Leclerc was met on the roadside by red-bearded Captain Raymond Dronne, the commander of a detachment of three Shermans and six half-tracks, who had been trying to locate a gap in the enemy defense lines. "I want you to go into Paris," Leclerc ordered him. "Take whatever you've got and go! Forget about fighting the Germans. Tell them (the Parisians) to hold on; we're coming tomorrow!"

Perched in the turret of a Sherman named Romilly, Dronne led his little force off, found a gap, and at 9:22 PM clanked to a halt outside the Hotel de Ville in the heart of Paris. Captain Dronne's three tanks—named Romilly, Montmirail, and Champaubert for Napoleonic victories of 1814—stood within a few hundred yards of the Hotel Meurice, the occupation headquarters of General Dietrich von Choltitz, commandant of Paris.

Then, between 8 and 10:30 on the historic morning of Friday, August 25, 1944, General Leclerc and his division rolled into the capital from the south and west, closely followed by troops of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division to the north. By 2 PM on that unforgettable day, German resistance had ended in the French capital. Swastika flags were hauled down from hotels and public buildings, and huge Tricolors hung from the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. Paris had never seen such a day of joyful pandemonium. People swarmed around the Allied vehicles, showering the weary, grimy soldiers with flowers, fruit, chocolate, and long-hoarded bottles of fine wine and champagne.

Riding alternately in an armored scout car and a command car, General Leclerc pushed through the teeming streets, first to the Gare Montparnasse, where he set up his divisional headquarters, and then to the Préfecture of Police. While lunching there with Resistance leaders, he was interrupted by a messenger with momentous news. After a sharp fight at the Hotel Meurice, General von Choltitz had been captured.

After being cursed and spat upon by indignant Parisians, the German general was hurried in a French half-track to the préfecture. In the police billiard room there, the pudgy von Choltitz—stiff, sweating in his dress uniform, and escorted by 20 gendarmes—was met by a more informal Leclerc, who wore a dirty khaki shirt, GI boots, and no decorations for the historic encounter. At 3:15 PM, the French officer formally accepted von Choltitz's surrender in the name of the French government.

About an hour later, General de Gaulle rode into Paris in a black Hotchkiss convertible. Inching through cheering crowds, he went into the baggage room at the Gare Montparnasse to congratulate Leclerc and his staff and to read the text of von Choltitz's surrender.

After its momentous entry into the French capital, General Leclerc's division refitted, rearmed, refueled, and headed eastward to Alsace and Lorraine with General Patton's free-wheeling Third Army while the British and Canadian armies were slugging it out against the bulk of the enemy panzer formations in Normandy. The Free French tankers were by now famous among the Allied forces for their dash and courage. Leclerc himself was highly respected by the Americans for his driving, no-

nonsense style, while his men were feared by the enemy because they sometimes exacted revenge for the humiliation of 1940 by summarily shooting German soldiers they found along the way.

The 2nd Armored Division was attached to General Haislip's XV Corps on September 29, 1944, and it then joined Lt. Gen. Alexander M. "Sandy" Patch's U.S. Seventh Army in Alsace with the objective of the Rhine River. The going was slow and the fighting brutal, but by mid-November, the Seventh Army was poised on the eastern slopes of the rugged Vosges Mountains and struggling to break out onto the Alsace plain. General Leclerc was now close to fulfilling the pledge he had made at Kufra more than three years before—the liberation of Strasbourg.

On November 22, Generals Patch and Haislip ordered Leclerc to advance on Strasbourg. He needed no second bidding. At 7:30 the following morning, his tankers saddled up and moved out hastily across the storm-sodden Alsace plain. Brushing aside enemy roadblocks and pockets of resistance, four task forces of the 2nd Armored rolled toward Strasbourg. All eyes were on the lookout for the spires of the 12th century city's great cathedral.

A U.S. Army liaison officer with the division reported, "We went roaring across the plain ... We passed working parties and groups of German soldiers. They just stood open-mouthed. When they saw it was French troops, they were scared to death, for they had heard that the French did not take too many prisoners."

Leclerc's Shermans and tank destroyers encountered stiff opposition as they neared the city, but they smashed through the German strongpoints and barricades with ease. The enemy troops were taken by surprise as Leclerc's armor barreled into Strasbourg and thundered along the old cobbled streets. German officers shopping with their wives were stunned to see American-built tanks bearing French insignias, and townspeople fell to their knees, weeping and uttering prayers of thanksgiving.

The swift seizure of Strasbourg startled General Jacob L. "Jake" Devers, able commander of the Sixth Army Group, and other American generals. "It was the most fantastic surprise I ever heard of in the whole war," declared Haislip. "The French swept into Strasbourg, going like the wind. The Germans had no idea the French 2nd Armored Division was within 50 miles of them." One of Leclerc's columns pushed on to the cathedral, and the Tricolor was hoisted from one of its graceful spires. The Free French were now on the Rhine.

After the Strasbourg triumph, Leclerc's division was assigned to the French First Army, whose commander, General Jean-Marie Lattre de Tassigny, wanted to consolidate French forces in northwest Europe. But Leclerc still mistrusted the French military establishment after the disaster of 1940, and the two officers clashed over a strategy for reducing the Colmar pocket. At his own request, Leclerc's division was transferred to the U.S. Seventh Army, joined General Frank W. Milburn's XXI Corps, and played a prominent role in the U.S. drive southward through Colmar early in February 1945. Leclerc had grown accustomed to serving alongside the Americans.

After crossing the Rhine, the 2nd Armored Division had the distinction of helping to capture Adolf Hitler's Eagle's Nest retreat at Berchtesgaden, high in the Bavarian Alps, on May 4, 1945. General Leclerc had little time to savor his proud division's accomplishments in the European theater. A month later, he was named commander in chief of French forces in the Far East and ordered to raise an expeditionary force to fight the Japanese. He left France on August 18, 1945, and signed on behalf of his country the Japanese instrument of surrender aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2.

Arriving in Saigon the following month, Leclerc became embroiled in negotiations between the French and the communist regime in North Vietnam. A preliminary accord was reached in March 1946 with communist leader Ho Chi Minh, whom Leclerc met in Hanoi. But French differences in political approaches and disapproval back home of his anti-insurgency tactics caused Leclerc to request relief from his command. He left Saigon in July 1946.

Promoted to full general, Leclerc became the inspector of land troops in French North Africa. But the situation worsened in Indochina, and in December 1946, Leclerc undertook another mission there to help arrange a political settlement. He was asked the following February to return to Indochina as high commissioner, but he felt that he was too isolated politically to be effective. He returned to North Africa.

After flying in bad weather on a mission from Oran to Colomb-Bechar, a commune in northwestern Algeria, on November 28, 1947, General Leclerc's plane crashed when it hit a rock upon landing. He was killed, less than a week past his 45th birthday.

The warrior who had skillfully and bravely fought on two continents under the Cross of Lorraine was made a marshal of France on August 23, 1952. □

*Author Michael D. Hull has written extensively on World War II and resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

By Eric Niderost

The Granger Collection, New York

# King Turned Pawn

## The Nazis attempted to detain the Duke and Duchess of Windsor for propaganda purposes.

**IT WAS AROUND NOON, JUNE 19, 1940, WHEN A SMALL CARAVAN OF CARS SET** out from Antibes in southern France en route to the Spanish border. Edward, Duke of Windsor was in one of the cars accompanied by his wife, the former American socialite Wallis Simpson. Edward had once been King of England, but he abdicated the throne to marry this woman who sat behind him, declaring in a radio address that he could not go on without "the woman I love."

Now they were in a desperate bid to reach safety in neutral Spain. It was a gamble because they had no visas and might be stopped and refused entry. But desperate times call for desperate measures. German tanks had smashed though the French frontier and defeated Allied armies in a stunning demonstration of the Blitzkrieg, and Paris had been evacuated. Before long a rump French government would sue for peace, and it was imperative the Duke get out of the country as soon as possible.

The journey to the Spanish border was anything but easy. There were numerous roadblocks, barriers manned by French soldiers who had been veterans of World War I. The royal caravan might have been stopped dead in its tracks, but when they came to the first roadblock a quick-thinking Edward let himself be seen by the soldiers.

"Je suis le Prince de Galles. Laissez-moi passer, s'il vous plait. (I am the Prince of Wales. Let me pass, please.)" he said. Edward had been a popular figure during the Great War, often visiting the front. He was known to most Frenchmen and well liked. His caravan was allowed to pass without difficulty each time a roadblock was encountered.

When the royal party reached Perpignan near the Spanish border a stubborn Spanish consul refused at first to issue transit visas for the fugitives. The duke sent hurried telegrams to the British ambassador at Madrid and the Spanish consul at Bordeaux, and after much argument, political pressure, and fervent appeals the consul gave in. The duke and his party set foot on Spanish soil around 6 PM on June 20, 1940, then proceeded to Barcelona and a well-earned rest in a luxury hotel.

The Duke of Windsor had escaped the fire of war only to land in the frying pan of espionage and political intrigue. Spain was ruled by the fascist dictator General Francisco Franco y Bahamonde, who made little attempt to hide his pro-Axis leanings. In fact, he had recently declared Spain to be not strictly neutral but actually "nonbelligerent." To many outside observers this seemed but one step away from actively joining the war on Hitler's side.

Edward's presence in Spain and later Portugal would lead to Operation Willi, a German attempt to capture the duke by fair means or foul. If he could be persuaded to come into Germans hands freely, so much the better. If not, the Germans were prepared to kidnap him and force him to comply.

The Willi plot has its roots in Edward's alleged pro-German attitudes. Some historians have gone so far as to maintain he was sympathetic with the Nazis, and he certainly was guilty of some indiscreet remarks concerning the possibility of German victory. But a few off-hand comments uttered in private to friends did not make him pro-Nazi. Further examination of his past can perhaps ferret out the truth.

Edward was born in 1894 at the height of the British Empire. A great-grandson of Queen Victoria, he became Prince of Wales and heir to the British throne when his father George V became king in 1910. When World War I broke out he was given a commission in the Grenadier

**In October 1937, nearly a year after his abdication from the British throne, Edward, Duke of Windsor, and his wife, the former Wallis Warfield Simpson, visited Hitler at his Berchtesgaden retreat in the mountains of Bavaria.**

Guards but was not permitted to take an active command.

The prince did make frequent tours of the Western Front and tried to expose himself, even in a limited way, to the danger and hardships of trench warfare. He may not have been in battle, but he saw enough of the horrors of war to mark him for life. Like many of his generation, he considered war a plague of mankind, something to be avoided at all costs.

In the 1920s, the Prince of Wales was something of an international celebrity, admired and even envied around the world. In 1935 Edward gave an address to the British Legion, an organization of war veterans, in which the prince expressed a hope that they would stretch a "hand of friendship" to their counterparts in Germany. The speech was considered pro-German and began a controversy over his loyalties that continues to this day.

Edward became king in January 1936, but his reign proved short-lived. He wanted to marry his mistress, American-born Wallis Simpson, and refused to consider any other course. Simpson had already been married once and was in the process of obtaining a divorce from her second husband. She was considered a gold-digging, unscrupulous adventurer, and the British establishment and many common British people were aghast.

And so it was that King Edward VIII abdicated the throne in favor of his younger brother Albert, who then took the title of George VI. Relations between Edward and his family quickly soured, especially when his new wife was denied the title of "royal highness." Edward was created Duke of Windsor and went into a kind of semi-exile in France. When he married Wallis in 1937, the new king would not give permission for any of the royals to attend the ceremony.

Hurt by what he perceived as shabby treatment, Edward foolishly visited Nazi Germany in October 1937. This would be a propaganda coup for the Nazis, and some of Edward's friends, notably Winston Churchill, urged him not to go. The duke rejected their advice. He was curious about Hitler and felt "red carpet" treatment in Germany would make up for the snubs Wallis endured from the royal family.

Edward and Wallis toured various sites and were entertained by Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring, propaganda minister Josef Goebbels, and many others. It was reported that once or twice the duke gave the infamous "Heil Hitler" salute. If true, it was probably more of a "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" situation than an outward expression of his inner beliefs.

National Archives

**Serving as a military liaison to the French Army, the Duke of Windsor tours a French military installation in July 1939, weeks before the outbreak of World War II. The duke had warned that France was ill-prepared for war with a rearmed and determined Nazi Germany.**

The 12-day tour of Germany climaxed when the couple had tea with Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The Führer seemed genuinely charmed by the Windsors and later remarked "what a good Queen" Wallis would have made. In retrospect, the trip was something of a turning point for the Duke of Windsor, though few were aware of the fact. As time wore on, Edward's loyalties became more and more suspect. Even in isolationist America the duke was indelibly seen as someone who harbored pro-German sympathies.

When war broke out in 1939, the Windsors came back to Britain but were partly cold-shouldered and given little to do of real substance. Edward was a British liaison officer with the French High Command, but his reports on the French lack of military preparedness were ignored.

When the Windsors arrived in Spain, the German ambassador, Eberhard von Stohrer, telegraphed Berlin asking what to do. This was a matter for German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, who immediately began thinking the duke would serve as a useful pawn in the German war effort.

Ribbentrop spoke English and had been German ambassador to Britain in the 1930s. He knew Edward from his brief reign as king and according to some reports also was acquainted with Wallis. In 1941, FBI agents investigating Wallis uncovered scurrilous rumors that Ribbentrop was actually her lover for a time. In any case Ribbentrop wanted to get the Duke and Duchess of Windsor into his hands as soon as possible.

Edward loved the privileges of rank but not its duties. He was often lazy, selfish, and inattentive, yet in his way was genuinely idealistic on social issues and staunchly patriotic. The duke tried not to say anything at least publicly that might hurt his country.

In spite of good intentions, Edward made some indiscreet private remarks to Alexander Weddell, the American ambassador to Spain.

The duke felt the war was an unmitigated disaster for Britain and that the island nation was on the brink of a catastrophic defeat. In his opinion, "The most important thing to be done now was to end the war before thousands more were killed or maimed to save the faces of a few politicians." This made Edward sound like a defeatist, if not exactly pro-German, and did little to help his reputation even though the remarks were not widely known.

Winston Churchill was now prime minister of Great Britain, and a man who supported Edward during the abdication crisis. Churchill wanted Edward to come home as soon as possible, and once back on British soil things could be sorted out. In other words, hopefully Edward could be given a job of real substance.

But Edward, still smarting from his family's

rejection of Wallis, would not come back until assured that his family would make some gesture of reconciliation. After mulling it over, Edward decided that if Wallis could meet King George and Queen Elizabeth for even 15 minutes his terms would be met. Unfortunately, the king and the rest of the royal family refused to make even a token gesture.

In the meantime, Ribbentrop telegraphed Franco's foreign minister, Colonel Juan Beigbeder y Atienza, requesting that the Windsors be detained in Spain as long as possible. Ribbentrop added that it was to be done in such a way as to allay suspicion the Germans were behind it. Colonel Beigbeder was intelligent and able but also an unpredictable eccentric, a man who displayed the Koran and liked to dress in Arabic robes.

Beigbeder offered Edward a chance to stay in Spain indefinitely as a guest of the Spanish government. To sweeten the offer, Beigbeder offered Edward the use of a romantic Moorish palace in Andalusia. It was tempting, but Edward's nominal status as a serving British officer would create problems if Spain joined Germany in the war.

Edward decided to go to Portugal. It would be a convenient place to wait while Churchill and the British government mulled over his terms. If acceptable, the ducal party could easily take ship from Lisbon. Edward and Wallis left Spain and crossed over the Portuguese border on Wednesday, July 3, 1940. When Ribbentrop heard the news, he flew into a rage. Edward had escaped! The German embassy had failed him completely! So had Franco!

While Ribbentrop fumed, the Windsors settled in their new, if temporary, home. The British embassy in Lisbon arranged for the ducal party to stay at the oddly named Boca do Inferno, or Mouth of Hell. It was an isolated but beautiful seaside villa owned by a Portuguese banker named Ricardo Espirito Santo Silva. Edward, translating the name with some humor, called him "Mr. Holy Ghost."

These moments of levity ended abruptly when the duke received a telegram from Churchill. While coldly polite, the message was ominous and appeared to threaten Edward with court-marshal if he did not come home immediately. Churchill had been a longtime friend and his supporter during the abdication crisis, so the duke was hurt. He nevertheless agreed to obey without conditions.

Back in Berlin, Ribbentrop started hatching new plans to seize the Duke of Windsor. But what did he intend to do with the former king? Most likely Ribbentrop, a man capable of flights of fantasy and prone to self-delusion,

**Early in World War II, Edward tours the front line in France with Lord Gort,**

had not worked out the details yet. He seems to have genuinely thought Edward would be a willing tool of the Nazis. If Edward proved to be less pliable, Ribbentrop was still going to use him, even if that meant kidnap or coercion.

Ribbentrop seems to have convinced Hitler that the duke could be used in some way. There were several possibilities. He could participate in Anglo-German peace negotiations after a German victory or even become a puppet ruler for the German Reich.

Wing Commander P.R.T. Chamberlayne, the air attaché to the British embassy in Lisbon, made all the security arrangements for the duke. Known by his nickname of "Tanks," Chamberlayne had to rely on security personnel supplied by the Portuguese government. Chamberlayne never seems to have thought of any kidnapping plots. His main concern was a German invasion of the Iberian Peninsula.

Edward was depressed over his situation, and his mood was not helped by the ever-present Portuguese security. He was used to detectives, but at one point was actually berated by Captain Agostino Lourenco for having slipped away to take a solitary walk. These kinds of restrictions made the elegant surroundings of Boca do Inferno more like a gilded prison than a place of refuge.

The duke soon received another telegram from Churchill offering him the position of governor of the Bahamas. The Bahamas are a tiny cluster of coral islands thousands of miles from Europe, and Edward could hardly believe his eyes at first. To him, this was exile, pure and simple, and it deepened his depressed mood. He accepted the post but with some reluctance.

When Ribbentrop heard of the Bahamas appointment, he cabled the German embassy in Madrid to try to lure Edward back to Spain. Portugal's Dr. Antonio Oliveira Salazar may have been a dictator, but he was also pro-British. The Germans felt that it would be much easier to lay hands on the duke if he were on Spanish soil.

The German foreign minister felt he needed a representative in Spain to expedite matters and make sure there were no further slipups. He chose SS Brigadeführer Walter Schellenberg, a man who already had experience in the German secret service. Schellenberg had his doubts about the scheme, but since Hitler had approved the project there was little more to be said.

Schellenberg flew first to Madrid and then to Portugal to make preparations for the plan, now code-named Operation Willi. To get the duke in a more receptive frame of mind, scare tactics were to be employed as well as some psychological pressure. Edward was already despondent, and the Germans wanted to create an atmosphere of paranoia.

If the duke felt the British Secret Service wanted to assassinate him, he might want to return to Spain for protection. Once there, he could be "persuaded" to cast his lot with the Germans, if only discreetly and indirectly. Once in Switzerland or wherever else he was placed,

he could be held in reserve until after the final German victory and disposition as a puppet of the Nazi government. If the duke proved cooperative, 50 million Swiss francs would be placed at his disposal.

Hitler made it clear that Edward and Wallis were not to be harmed physically, but everything else was on the table. If the duke proved too reluctant to come back to Spain, the gloves would come off in short order. He was to be kidnapped in Portugal and smuggled over the border by force.

In the meantime, the Spanish government sent one of the Duke's old friends, Miguel Primo de Rivera, to Portugal on a mission. He was to sound Edward out as to the possibility of returning to Spain. Don Nicholas Franco, brother to the Spanish dictator and ambassador to Portugal, also broached the subject. He found Edward friendly and willing to give the proposal serious consideration.

The topic is controversial, but it seems that in his darkest moments of despair the Duke of Windsor considered or at least toyed with the idea of going to Spain. He felt the war was a disaster, and Don Nicholas assured him that in the wake of a catastrophic defeat only he could save Britain. In July 1940 Britain stood alone, threatened with invasion, shakily poised on the brink of utter ruin. Maybe he did have a historic role to play.

Edward had no idea that the Germans were behind the Spanish offers. In the end duty called, and he could not reject his appointment to the Bahamas. Schellenberg stepped up the pressure and even had stones thrown against the Boca do Inferno's windows at night.

The Windsors were supposed to believe the rocks were thrown by the British Secret Service. It was a childish ploy, and if the windows were rattled Edward was not. Supposedly the duchess was sent a bouquet of flowers that contained a note warning her about the nefarious actions of the British Secret Service. These half-hearted tricks had little effect.

Edward's decision to go to the Bahamas was strengthened by a visit from an old friend, Sir Walter Monckton. Monckton had startling news: the British had picked up some indications of a German plot to kidnap the duke and duchess. The Windsors pushed forward their plans for departure.

Schellenberg had orders to kidnap the Windsors if necessary, but he was extremely reluctant to do so. Edward was well guarded, and the royals were in the heart of a neutral but actually pro-British country. The British Secret Service, an organization Schellenberg respected as both powerful and professional, was also operating in Portugal. Kidnapping sounded good perhaps, but the action carried too many logistical and political problems.

The Duke and Dutchess of Windsor sailed from Lisbon aboard the liner *Excalibur* on August 1, 1940. The Germans tried to delay their departure by spreading the rumor of a bomb aboard ship, but the tactic failed. Ribbentrop's fantastic scheme to make the Duke of Windsor a German Quisling collapsed.

Yet some historians feel the Duke of Windsor did play a small but significant role that summer of 1940 by keeping the Germans guessing as to his intentions. Hitler had a certain admiration for Britain and hoped the Britons would "see reason" and accept Nazi domination of Europe. There was always the hope that the British would themselves get rid of Churchill and King George VI and recall Edward to the throne.

These ideas were pure fantasies, but Hitler, encouraged by Edward's alleged pro-German stance, was more than willing to believe them. Yet he did not want to alienate the duke or harden British opinion by launching a premature and unnecessary invasion of Britain. It was also true Hitler had no real taste for amphibious operations.

The Duke of Windsor's flirtations, or seeming flirtations, with the Spanish and Germans played a part in Hitler's reluctance to order an invasion. The British were given time to recover from Dunkirk and prepare for the onslaught to come. During the summer of 1940, British factories were producing 500 Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane fighter planes a month.

On August 1, 1940, Adolf Hitler issued his Führer Directive No. 17, ordering the Luftwaffe to "overpower the English air force" in the shortest possible time. Though the Germans had attacked British shipping in the English Channel in July, the main phase of the Battle of Britain began in August. Historians point out that the Hitler directive was issued the very day Edward left Europe for the Bahamas.

The collapse of Operation Willi was also a blow to Hitler's Anglo-German fantasies. He realized that there would be no accommodation, at least for the present. The Führer also realized that Edward, the king turned pawn, would be off the political chessboard for some time to come. The Duke of Windsor, always seeking to serve his country, had unwittingly bought it time. □

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# Italians Eastward!

The Italian Savoia Cavalry mounts a charge into Soviet Red Army lines in the summer of 1942. This charge took place at strategically important Hill 213 at Izbushensky on the River Don. Observers were astonished by the Italian heroism.

The most successful Italian Army of World War II was a political creation of dictator Benito Mussolini. Il Duce desired to participate in the fascist dream to eliminate Bolshevism. Although heavily engaged in North Africa, the Balkans, and East Africa, Mussolini forged an expeditionary force to fight in Russia alongside the Germans and other Axis satellite forces.

This unit, the Corpo Spedzione Italiane in Russia (CSIR) became the most successful Italian army in the war. This army advanced the greatest distance, more than 1,100 kilometers, earned the most victories, and lost just two battles. But like many armies before it, the Italian force was swallowed up in the vast winter landscape of Russia and has been forgotten by history.

In May 1941, Mussolini, who always had keen political intuition, sensed that Hitler was about to launch an attack against the Soviet Union. Hitler never kept Mussolini abreast of the invasion plans. Yet on May 30, three weeks before the start of Operation Barbarossa, Mussolini told Army Chief of Staff General Carlo Cavallero: "We must assemble one new motorized division and a second one to be attached to the Grenadier Division near Zagreb."

As soon as Germany officially informed Mussolini of the invasion, Mussolini told his foreign minister, Galeazzo Ciano, "We must be present on the Russian Front as soon as possible!" Mussolini even named the commander of the CSIR, General Francesco Zingales.

In an official letter to Hitler, Il Duce offered Italian forces. He wrote that the Italian expeditionary forces would perform well because his soldiers never fought better than when they were fighting against the Bolsheviks. After heavy negotiations by Ciano, on June 30 Berlin officially transmitted to Rome the invitation to participate in the campaign in Russia.

Italian journalist Santi Corvaja in his book, *Hitler & Mussolini—The Secret Meetings*, described the assignment of the Italian forces. "The CSIR was given a geographic area in Zone B under [Field Marshal Gerd] von Rundstedt, within the German Eleventh Army, which was responsible for Bessarabia and the Dnieper River basin."

Mussolini sent the following orders to Zingales: "Get to the Russian Front as quickly as possible. Our presence in numbers in Russia is essential. That is where Hitler believes he will win the war. Should we be absent, even the fact that I was the first one to fight communism will not count in the face of the realization that the Italians were not present in Russia."

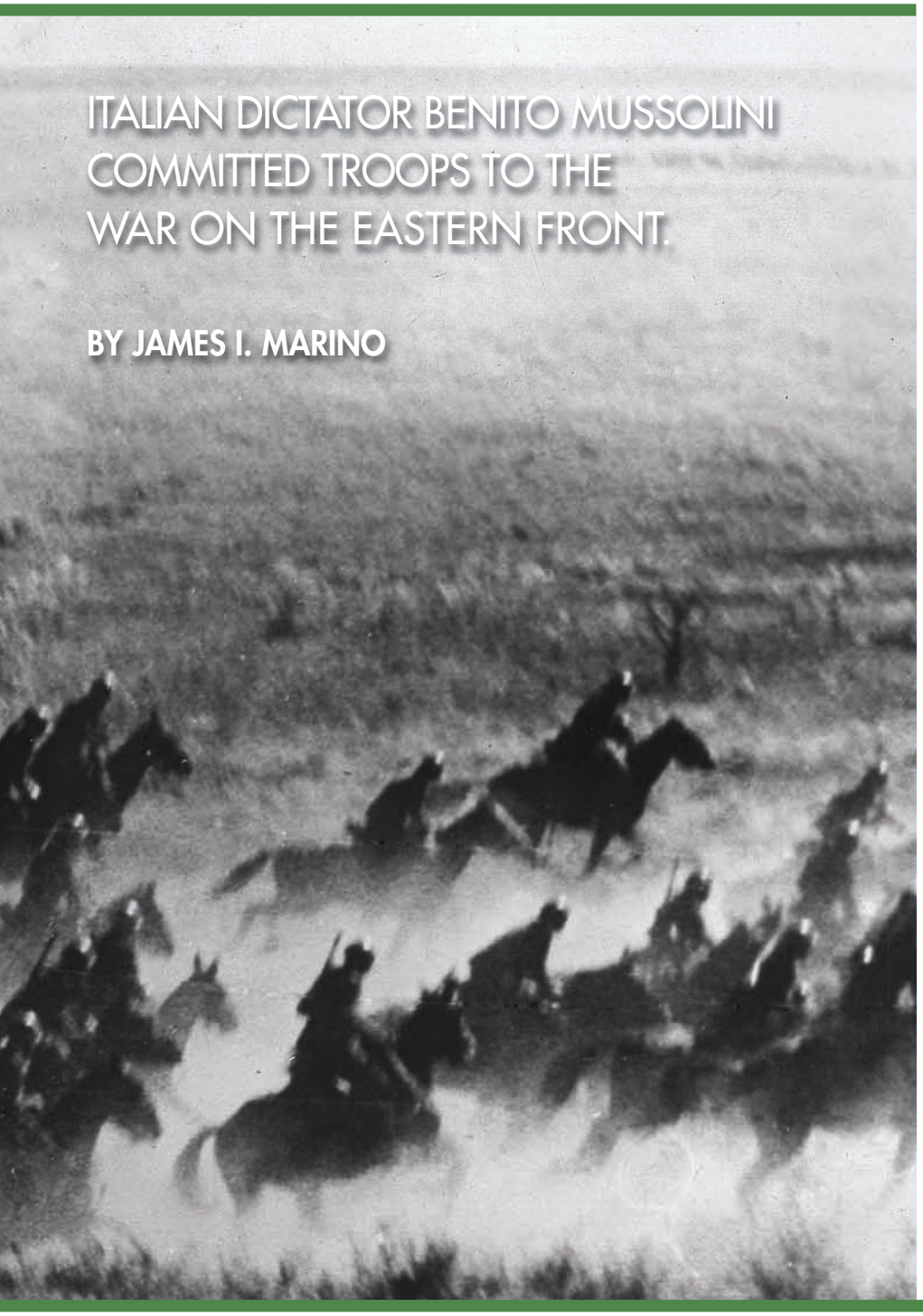
The Corpo Spedzione Italiane in Russia had a strength of 62,000, with two nominally motorized infantry divisions of the old 1938 binary type, the 9th Pasubio and 52nd Torino. The 3rd Celere, a cavalry division partially converted to a motorized division, the 30th Artillery Regiment, and the 63rd Motorized CCNN Legion of the fascist blackshirt militia completed the corps.

The Italian Air Force, Regia Aeronautica, supported the expeditionary corps in the Russian campaign. The headquarters was established in Turdora and consisted of the 22nd Gruppo made of four fighter squadrons, the 359th, 362nd, 369th, and 371st, and the 61st Gruppo of three bomber squadrons, the 34th, 119th, and 128th, a total of 83 planes. The Italian Air Force contingent remained with the Italian ground forces during the entire campaign.

Mussolini inspected the first units to leave at Verona on June 25. He inspected more regiments leaving for Russia on July 29 at Mantua. "Verona became the launching pad to Russia,"

# ITALIAN DICTATOR BENITO MUSSOLINI COMMITTED TROOPS TO THE WAR ON THE EASTERN FRONT.

**BY JAMES I. MARINO**



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**ABOVE: An Italian officer watches his troops advance, many of them riding horses, during the campaign in Russia. Mussolini sent troops to bolster Operation Barbarossa in the summer of 1941, and these soldiers performed admirably against the Red Army. BELOW: In October 1941, just prior to the onset of a harsh Russian winter which helped to foil Hitler's plan of conquest in the East, German and Italian soldiers share a trench and face toward the Russian enemy.**

ullstein bild

wrote Santi Corvaja. "From that railway station, 225 trains took the 62,000 soldiers, 5,500 cars and trucks, 4,600 horses and mules, and tons of supplies over a distance of 2,300 kilometers up to the Romanian border." Surprisingly the first contingent of Italian forces to reach the front was a flotilla of MAS torpedo boats and six midget subs.

The units of the CSIR embarked upon trains and traveled through Austria and Hungary and reached their assembly areas in northern Romania. The Pasubio (9th) Division left first on July 11 and arrived at Suceava, Romania, on July 17. In transit, General Zingales became ill and had to be replaced. Cavallero suggested General Giovanni Messe to Mussolini. Messe had led the Italian Mobile Corps during the invasion of Yugoslavia. Messe joined the CSIR on July 17 in Marmarossziger, Hungary.

At the assembly areas, the Italians used the vehicles from the two motorized divisions to move the Pasubio Division into the front line as soon as possible. The Celere (3rd) had sufficient horses and vehicles to reach the front. "The vehicles of the Chiaramonti Transport Regiment worked in relays to bring up units of the Corps' troops," noted military historian Franklyn Prieskop, "leaving the Torino Division to march east toward the ever-receding front lines, a distance of over 800 miles on foot."

The CSIR began its movement into Russia on July 16 from Botosani, on the border between Romania and Bessarabia. These were the best units in the Italian Army at this time. Historian William Craig, in his classic *Enemy at the Gates,* confirms this impression of the Italian units. "The Italians sent their best units into the Soviet Union," he wrote. " Proud military names such as Julia, Bersaglieri, Cosseria, Torino, Alpini, graced the shoulder patches of troops struggling through the enervating heat."

**The soldiers began the campaign with high** morale. Because of the high degree of mobility for Italian units, greater than the German infantry units, even the Germans were impressed.

"The first major action for the Italian troops in Russia occurred during the first weeks of August 1941," noted author Franklyn Prieskop. "The Germans planned a swift stroke between the Dneister and Bug Rivers to Nikolayev. A motorized division was required to proceed south down the west bank of the Bug River to seal off the various crossing points. Since no German units were available, the Pasubio Division, which had arrived 6 August at Jampol on the Dneister River, was chosen for the task."

The division was joined by the 1st Bersaglieri Motorcycle Company and two 105mm artillery battalions of the 30th Artillery Regiment. The Italian force went into action on the 10th. The advance guard, 1st Battalion, 80th Infantry Regiment and 1st Bersaglieri Motorcycle Company conducted the action as the force swept south along the river through Pokroskoze and sealed off the last crossing point at Jasnaza Polzana. Strong Soviet rearguard action enabled some Soviet forces to escape. The Italians called the action the Battle of the Two Rivers, which cost them 15 killed and 82 wounded. Proud of his units, Mussolini flew to Russia to review the Italian division.

Hitler and Mussolini flew to Uman, Ukraine, to inspect German troops, after which Mussolini drove a few miles to Takuska to greet Italian troops. Italian Vice Consul Filippo Anfuso, who accompanied Mussolini, described the scene. "The troops looked good, and the infantrymen looked like Italian soldiers, not

stoned-faced, but all smiles and changing expressions. On their faces their joy at having been seen by Mussolini was obvious since he had ordered all of them over there."

The Italian home front saw this historic Italian military accomplishment as Mussolini and General Messe were photographed standing on Russian soil some 400 miles inside the Soviet Union.

The Italian units became the spearhead of an entire group of German armies. The corps as a whole participated in the general advance to the Dneiper River, taking up positions between Oerizevka and Dneipropetrovsk by September 17. The Torino Division finally caught up after its 800-mile march. By the end of September, the Italian troops moved across the Dnieper and reached the Orel River. The CSIR was ready to conduct its first corps-level encirclement.

Prieskop described the action. "While the 3rd Celere Division and the rest of the corps troops held the center, the Pasubio Division crossed the Orel River and moved southward, while the Torino Division and the 63rd CCNN Legion broke out of the bridgehead and moved north and west, meeting up with the Pasubio Division at Petrokovka. This accomplished in two days an encirclement of about 100 kilometers of the Soviet front lines along the Dnieper River." The CSIR's victories became, according to J. Lee Ready in *World War Two—Nation By Nation,* an "elixir of glory to the Italian People."

Mussolini's commitment on the Eastern Front had personal ramifications. He had already lost his eldest son, a pilot, to the war. Now his daughter, Edda, wife of Count Ciano, Italy's foreign minister, volunteered for Russia as part of the war effort. Edda Ciano joined the Red Cross and worked in an Italian Army hospital at Stalino nearly 600 miles into Soviet territory and only 100 miles from the furthest point the Germans had reached at Rostov.

The CSIR pushed eastward for the next three months, fighting battles at Pavlograd, Gorlovka, Rykovo, Nikitovka, and Chazeptovka. The advance reached the headwaters of the Muis River in late December. The 63rd CCNN Legion bore the brunt of the fighting. During this phase the unit lost 126 killed, 262 wounded, 279 to frostbite, and 92 missing from a force of 1,500.

Both: Author's Collection

**ABOVE: On August 18, 1941, Hitler and Mussolini review Italian troops which Il Duce has sent to the East to aid his German allies during Operation Barbarossa. The gesture by the Italians was in response to Hitler's commitment of troops to North Africa and the Balkans. BELOW: During a grand sendoff, Mussolini tops a grandstand to review the ranks of passing Italian soldiers destined for the privation and defeat of the Eastern Front. The soldiers committed to the East fought bravely in support of the German offensive.**

**On December 26, the Italians fought what they** called the Christmas Day Battle. The Soviets launched a six-division attack on the Axis Muis River line. The Russians broke through German-Italian lines forcing the bulk of the 3rd Celere Division to fall back and form isolated pockets of resistance. A coordinated counterattack by the Torino Division and the German 318th Infantry Regiment recovered the ground and rescued the 3rd Celere Division. Four Soviet divisions were trapped and forced to surrender. In this action, the Italian corps lost 168 killed, 715 wounded, 207 missing, and 305 frostbite cases.

As winter set in, the soldiers had to wage a battle of survival with nature. During this time the Italian high command and General Messe took stock of the CSIR performance. Their report highlighted successes in the field despite inadequate leadership, poor armor, lack of mechanization, and a shortage of artillery and antitank weapons, revealing the CSIR to be ill-equipped for the nature of fighting on the Eastern Front. Deficiencies in communication, logistics, and winter uniforms also sapped the morale and fighting power of the Italian force.

British historian MacGregor Knox, in his book, *Hitler's Italian Allies,* is even more critical. "Command leadership demonstrated at all levels its structural and intellectual incapacity in the conduct of mobile warfare. Staffs in the expeditionary force were immobile, weighed down with as many as 150 officers, compared to 66 in a German corps staff."

akg-images/interfoto

**ABOVE: Photographed in the Ukraine in October 1941, soldiers of the German 1st Mountain Division are seen with Italian soldiers of the Celere Division. Note the plumed helmet worn by one of the Italians. BELOW: Italian soldiers take cover during the harsh street to street fighting in an industrial city in the Ukraine. Axis soldiers paid dearly for every inch of ground gained and quickly learned the difficulties of urban warfare.**

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Knox cites a German general staff officer with experience with the Italian forces who assessed, "The command apparatus is pedantic and slow. The absence of sufficient communications equipment renders the links to the subordinate units precarious. The consequence is the leadership has no capacity to redeploy swiftly."

The CSIR was hindered by a poor logistics system and incredible inefficiency. For example, the multiplicity of different truck types, 17 light and 30 heavy, taxed drivers and technicians and made it impossible for an adequate flow of supplies.

Knox also points out that "the War Ministry failed to provide units in Russia with low-temperature lubricants for vehicles and weapons." Combat units were perpetually short of fuel, ammunition, water, food, vehicles, weapons, and even manpower. Even if food was available, hot or prepared food was still a question given the primitive state of wood-burning stoves in field kitchens.

**Italian equipment proved to be totally obsolete.** The Italian armed forces had been the first European power to complete a rearmament cycle in the late 1930s, and by the early 1940s Italy was industrially incapable of supporting an upgrade. The main battle tank, the M13/40, was no match for the Red Army T-34 and never served in Russia. The CV 33 tankette was the equivalent of the Bren Gun carrier. A light tank, the Carro Armato L6/40, arrived in small numbers in 1942 and 1943 but weighed only 6.7 tons and carried a 37mm gun.

Unprepared for armored warfare, the CSIR accepted in large numbers the Polish Marosczek WZ35 antitank rifle from the Germans' collection of war booty. A major weakness noticed by commanders at all levels concerned inadequate training and tactical philosophy. This was never rectified and would prove fatal during the later retreat from the River Don.

Radio equipment, scarce as it was, also proved to be unreliable. The harsh Russian winters made the heavy equipment useless. Lieutenant Albano Castelletto of the elite mounted artillery regiment described the effect. "The greatest cold weather problem was the machines. The oil in the cannon shock absorbers froze, making some pieces unusable. Freezing oil also disabled machine guns and vehicles."

Like the German Army, the CSIR was sent to fight in Russia with little special equipment or clothing suitable for the severe conditions that they would encounter. Most of the men went to the Eastern Front wearing only the regular issue pantaloons or breeches which, although made of wool, went only to just below the knee. The bottom of the legs were covered with socks and hobnailed boots. In the subzero temperatures of winter both proved to be totally inadequate.

General Messe personally bought a large number of fleece hats while in Romania to issue to his troops. The hobnailed boot caused large numbers of frostbite casualties. The war ministry gratuitously rejected requests from units in Russia for felt boots like the Russian *valenki.* Despite these inadequacies, Luigi Villari, author of *Italian Foreign Policy,* claims, "The Italian soldiers proved hardier than the German in resisting the terrible cold of the Russian winter."

Corruption in the procurement and distribution of supplies among the Italian Army, government, and business exacted an enormous cost. Equipment ranged from inferior to unusable. Knox noted, "The troops were perpetually short of the small items that made the difference between discomfort and despair: buttons, threads, needles, razor blades, envelopes, writing paper, postcards, pencils, and rank and unit badges." Ultimately the Italian units depended on Romania for food and fuel.

The relationships between the German and Italian armies and the inhabitants of the conquered Soviet territory differed greatly. The Germans made a major mistake alienating the Ukrainian people. The Italians did their best to maintain good relations with them.

Italian Alpini soldier Tullio Lisignoli recalled his first Christmas in Russia and his experience with the Russian people: "We Italians decided to celebrate the upcoming Christmas season with a large Mass. It was too cold to hold the ceremony outside, so we decided to dig an underground church. We started to dig the hole and after a while some Russian civilians asked us what we were doing. We told them we were digging an underground church. The next day there were more Russians than Italians helping with the digging as they wanted to celebrate Mass as well, so our officers gave them permission to attend.

"The service was conducted by our military priest and was a happy occasion, with Italians and Russians worshipping side by side. Before we were sent to Russia the priests were saying, 'Go serve your country and fight the Bolsheviks as they are against religion.' The civilian population at least was usually co-operative with us Italians, but there was very little love lost between the Russians and Germans."

"The Italian units succeeded in creating goodwill among the population in Russia," wrote Corvaja, "and, perhaps because of this, were usually spared attacks by partisan fighters."

Into this logistical mess, Mussolini desired an expansion of the CSIR. Partially because of the success in Russia already achieved and partially because of the backseat his troops had taken in North Africa, Mussolini believed a larger commitment of Italian troops in the East would enhance Italian prestige. He requested that Cavallero commit 20 new divisions to the Eastern Front.

**However, Cavallero realized the potentially** catastrophic consequences of diverting forces from North Africa and attempted to reduce the expansion to six divisions. Italian King Victor Emmanuel's disapproval did not hinder Mussolini. In November 1941, Hitler, with his army stalled in front of Moscow, accepted Italian Alpine divisions for the future drive on the Caucasus.

Mussolini met with Hitler at Castle Klessheim in Salzburg on April 29-30, 1942, to discuss the next summer offensive. Hitler was extremely complimentary of the Italian performance in the initial invasion. Hitler said that the Italian soldiers had fought magnificently, had bravely endured all the hardships of the winter, and were fighting valiantly at the side of the Germans in Russia.

Eventually, Mussolini sent 200,000 men to the Eastern Front in the form of two corps, the Alpini Corps and II Corps, and additional support units. After the experience of the Russian winter Mussolini wisely chose specialized units. The elite Alpini units were added to the strength of the CSIR because of their expertise in harsh winter climates. Three Alpini Divisions, the 2nd Tridentina, the 3rd Julia, and the 4th Cuneense, formed the corps. Alpine regiments were elite forces that received the best possible supplies, equipment, and officers.

"Crack Alpini soldiers guided mules along and kept their mountain-climbing gear under canvas," noted author William Craig of the misuse of Alpini in the East. "Hitler had decided to conquer the Caucasus without the Italians. The elite Alpini trudged along the flat plains wondering why they were in Russia at all."

The II Corps consisted of regular infantry divisions, 2nd Sforzesca, 3rd Ravenna, and 5th Cosseria. These were professional units of the peacetime army, the best line infantry formations in the Italian Army. One additional infantry division, the 156th Vincenza, became the army reserve and was assigned to protect the lines of communication.

Commando Supremo decided to complete the motorization of the 3rd Celere Division. To accomplish this, they dispatched to Russia a motorized artillery regiment, a second motorized Bersaglieri infantry regiment, a motorized mortar battalion, and another Bersaglieri

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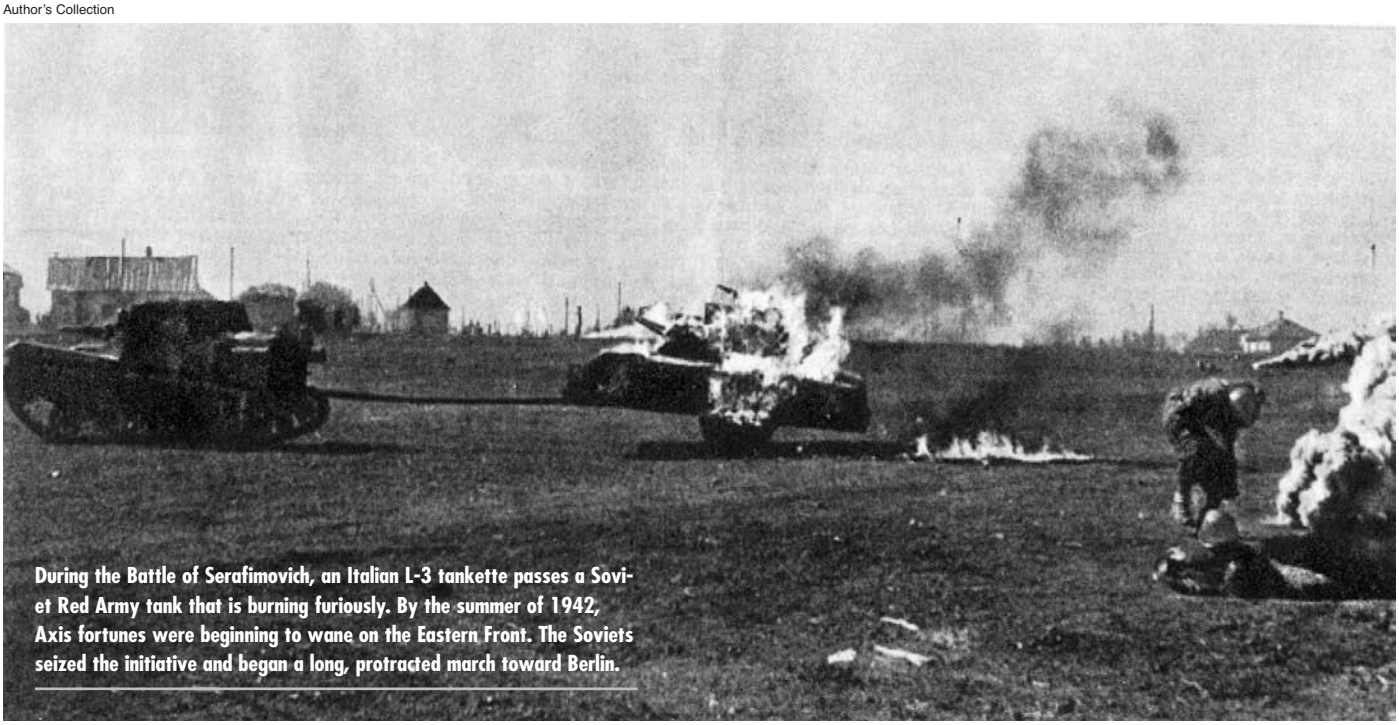

**During the Battle of Serafimovich, an Italian L-3 tankette passes a Soviet Red Army tank that is burning furiously. By the summer of 1942, Axis fortunes were beginning to wane on the Eastern Front. The Soviets seized the initiative and began a long, protracted march toward Berlin.**

motorcycle company. These replaced all the horse elements to form a division similar to the German light division of 1939. General Messe formed the horse units into a rear guard security unit called the Balbo Cavalry Brigade, which remained on the Eastern Front for the remainder of the campaign.

Mussolini's command structure on the Eastern Front was renamed the Italian Army in Russia or Armata Italiana in Russia (AIR). The CSIR remained a component of the new army and was renamed the XXXV Motorized Corps. The three corps formed the Italian Eighth Army.

**"The big problem was the cold and no food. You had to fend for yourself, find what you could, catch and kill what you could, and eat it raw or with whatever you had."** —Tullio Lisignoli, Alpini soldier

Chief of Staff Cavallero passed over Messe and selected Army General Italo Gariboldi to command the 8th Army. According to Prieskop, "Messe had made the mistake of being too successful and becoming too popular with Mussolini, the Italian people, and his troops, thus incurring the jealously of his superior."

Messe was transferred to Tunisia, where he commanded the Italian First Army and was taken prisoner. Later Messe joined the Italian forces on the side of the Allies in 1943 and fought against the Germans and Mussolini's Italian socialist state.

From January through July 1942, the Eighth Army built up to 270,000 men while it held defensive position against Red Army probes. The Italian Expeditionary Forces reached significant number in artillery, but armored vehicles remained few in number. The Italians fielded 946 artillery pieces in 204 batteries, 387 antitank guns, 276 antiaircraft guns, 1,297 mortars, and 1,742 machine guns. The armor element included 55 light tanks, 30 armored cars, and 17 assault guns. The motorized force moved with 16,700 trucks, 25,000 horses and mules, and 4,470 motorcycles. In May, the Italian Air Force contingent was reduced to 66 planes.

On July 11, 1942, the 3rd Celere Division launched the Italian Army's summer offensive against the town of Nikitino. The troops broke through the Russian line, and a force from the Bersaglieri Regiment exploited the breach to reach Petrovenki. By July 14, the 3rd Celere Division occupied Ivanokia, with the rest of the Italian forces moving forward in preparation for the coming battle of Krasny Lutsch.

The XXXV Motorized Corps and II Corps launched the encirclement of Krasny Lutsch on July 17. The 3rd Celere and 9th Pasubio struck from the north while the 2nd Sforzesca and Balbo Cavalry Brigade assaulted directly. In three days the Italians captured the city and pursued the retreating Soviets. The 3rd Celere had the highest casualties with 83 killed, 542 wounded, and 10 missing.

The main objective of the offensive was the Don River. Prieskop describes the assault: "On August 1, the 3rd Bersaglieri Regiment and the German 578th Infantry regiment achieved the objective with the capture of Serafimovich on the western bank of the Don. On the same day, the 6th Bersaglieri Regiment and the XLVII Bersaglieri Motorcycle Battalion captured the towns of Bobrovski and Belaievski, thus establishing the first ten kilometers of the Italian Army in Russia's 'Don River Line.'"

By August 20, the Eighth Army, reinforced with the German XXIX Corps, defended the Don River line from Pavlovsk to the Choper River, a front of about 200 kilometers. The struck the Axis flank in an area defended by the Italians. During the First Battle of the Don the Italian divisions held their ground for 11 days. The main weight of the Soviet attack landed on the 9th Pasubio and 2nd Sforzesca Divisions.

The Italians stood their ground. As MacGregor Knox wrote in *Hitler's Italian Allies,* "The troops did not show the readiness to surrender of popular legend. The units in Russia held together in conditions—usually deriving from the army logistical inadequacies—that would have caused soldiers of the industrial democracies to quail." No Soviet penetration was achieved in those 11 days.

**On August 24, the 3rd Savoy Cavalry Regiment** of the Balbo Brigade counterattacked the Soviet 812th Infantry Regiment reinforced by a battalion of field artillery as the Communists neared a breakthrough in the 3rd Celere lines. At Izbushensky, the Italian Dragoons attacked with saber and hand grenade.

Prieskop recorded the action. "In a series of three mounted cavalry charges, they completely destroyed the Soviet force, killing 150, wounding 300, and capturing 600 prisoners along with four field guns, ten mortars, and fifty machine guns. The cost to the cavalry regiment was 36 killed, 74 wounded, and 170 horses out of action."

Author Rex Tyre recounts the German reaction: "The Germans who witnessed the charge were incredulous, and so impressed that they congratulated the Italians with a citation." British historian Martin Gilbert declared, "It was the last successful cavalry charge of the war."

Four days after the battle the Alpini Corps arrived, followed in September by the Montebello CCNN Regiment and the 156th Vincenza in October. The Eighth Army was told to hold its ground while the German Sixth Army struggled for Stalingrad. Meanwhile, the Italian Army reached a strength of 7,934 officers and 210,682 men and prepared for a second winter in Russia as it screened the northern flank of the German offensive.

"The Italian Eighth Army prepared to occupy a long stretch of the looping river line running toward the east," wrote Craig. "The Italians not only had been given the job of containing any Russian threat from across the river, they also served as a buffer between the Hungarians and the Romanian Third Army. The German High Command had inserted the Italians between the other two armies to avoid conflict between ancient enemies."

The Italians were in a vulnerable position as a result of German command decisions. "The Germans imposed on the Italian Army an overstretched cordon deployment that Russian armor would rip to shreds," noted Knox.

Covering a 250-kilometer front from Babka in the north to Vescheskaya in the south, the Italian headquarters realized they were too thinly spread. Using all expediencies, the Eighth Army formed two volunteer units from occupied nationals. Like the Germans, the Italians recruited from Croatia and formed the Croatian Legion, which consisted of an infantry battalion, a mortar company, and an antitank company. The Italians also recruited a small unit of Cossacks, which consisted of a colonel, four officers, and 360 Cossack troops and was attached to the Norvaria Cavalry Regiment.

The Soviet Winter Offensive, known to the Italians as the Second Battle of the Don, began with Russian probing attacks on December 1, 1942. The Italian Eighth Army faced the Soviet 1st Guards Army, one of the Russians' best. The Don River froze, and the Soviets built crossing points in front of the II Corps and XXXV Motorized Corps sectors. On December 11 the 3rd Ravenna Division was hit by a Soviet attack but held. On the 16th of December the Russians launched their main attack on the Italian lines with 425,000 troops supported by 5,000

Author's Collection

**As the end of 1942 neared, the retreat from the River Don signaled the collapse of the Italian Army on the Eastern Front. Although the Italians fought well for a prolonged period, they were overwhelmed along with their German allies.**

guns and 1,000 tanks.

Lieutenant Felice Bracci of the 3rd Bersaglieri Regiment described the retreat. "We were ordered to retreat 30 miles south to Kalmikoff. I commanded the two antitank guns that remained and were the very end of the line. Nothing behind us but snow and wind. On December 20 we reached Kalmikoff, a magnet for thousands of exhausted and frightened soldiers. The town was a tangle of guns, trucks, baggage, and excited soldiers. The Regiment received new orders to retreat to Meshkov, a key road junction on the road to Millerovo. Bracci was captured during the retreat."

A major Soviet penetration occurred on the 19th when a second Soviet Army smashed through the Rumanians and overwhelmed the Italians. The bulk of the Pasubio, Ravenna, and Torino Divisions, the German 298th Division, and the 3rd Gennaio CCNN Brigade were surrounded in the area of Tschertkovo, fighting on for three weeks before surrendering.

By the end of December, only the Alpini Corps and the 156th Vincenza Division remained intact and functioning as combat units. The Germans provided Garibaldi with five German divisions and ordered him not to retreat from the Don. But in January the neighboring Hungarian Army collapsed and the Italians were cut off. The bulk of the Alpini Corps was encircled. The Soviet winter offensive destroyed German, Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian units throughout the southern region with one notable exception. On January 26, 1943, Radio Moscow reported, "Only the Italian Alpini Corps is to be considered unbeaten on the Russian Front."

Nevertheless, Mussolini's commitment in Russia had come to a tragic end. The remnants of the Italian Army in Russia withdrew to the Donets River south of Belgorod, which they reached on January 31, 1943.

"We were all on foot as the motor transport had either run out of fuel or got stuck in deep snow," remembered Alpini soldier Tullio Lisignoli. "The big problem was the cold and no food. You had to fend for yourself, find what you could, catch and kill what you could, and eat it raw or with whatever you had. About eighty percent of our soldiers had frostbite to the feet, hands, or ears. Many times a soldier would stop and sit down in the snow for a rest and when it was time to move someone would give him a shake and tell him to get up. But the sitting figure would fall over dead, having died in his sleep. They were left where they fell. The snow soon covered them."

Another Italian survivor recalled, "The sides of the road were dotted with these grotesque, immobile figures, human statuary marbleized with snow and ice."

Italian prisoners marched into a long cruel captivity. Lieutenant Felice Bracci of the 3rd Bersaglieri Regiment, described the march northwest of Gumrak. "The steppe lay under two feet of snow. The sun reflecting off its frozen crust cast a shimmering haze. We shuffled painfully, haltingly through the subzero wilderness. The men groaned constantly as the biting cold froze fingers and toes. Single rifle shots cracked loudly in the clear air as guards shot men who stumbled out of the column to seek rest."

**By the spring of 1943, almost 60 percent of** Mussolini's expeditionary force was gone. During 20 months of combat on the Eastern Front, the Italian Army lost 3,010 officers and 81,820 men killed or captured, as well as 1,290 officers and 28,400 men wounded of frostbitten.

Blame for the German debacle at Stalingrad almost immediately was shifted from the Germans to the Italian and Axis satellite armies. After Foreign Minister Ciano met with Hitler and the German General Staff at Rastenberg on December 18, his written report to Mussolini stated, "The atmosphere is heavy. No one tries to conceal from me the unhappiness over the news of the breakthrough on the Russian front. There were open attempts to put the blame on us."

At the very moment the Alpini Corps was holding fast after the first rupture of the II Corps line, and days after the Romanian and German collapses, an Italian military aide with Ciano asked a German officer whether the Italians had suffered heavy losses. The German officer replied, "No losses at all. They are all running."

During March 1943, all Italian units serving on the Eastern Front were transferred to Italy for reforming and reequipping; however, they never returned to Russia. The heavy losses of the 3rd Alpini Division are indicative of those suffered by Italian units in combat against the Red Army. The division set out for Russia with 16,000 men and 4,000 mules and returned to Italy with 3,200 men and 40 mules.

The CSIR served in the East with honor and fortitude. However, the finest army Italy fielded during World War II was swallowed up in the vastness of Russia. □

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BEN KUROKI FLEW WITH THE U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES IN FOUR THEATERS OF WORLD WAR II.

BY SAM McGOWAN

# Most Honorable

In 1942, many Americans considered anyone of Japanese ancestry to be an enemy, regardless of where they had been born or how long their families had lived in the United States. No one took time to consider their loyalties—they just assumed that anyone of Japanese ancestry was rooting for Japan.

Never mind that far more Americans were of German or Italian ancestry than those whose roots were in Japan. They were of European stock and assimilated into American society, while Japanese Americans had distinctive features denoting their Asian ancestry and setting them apart. Rumors spread that Americans of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast were acting as spies for Japan, and in February 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt succumbed to political pressure and signed an executive order authorizing the forced removal of all Japanese from the West Coast for relocation to internment camps.

The controversial decision represents a dark time in the American experience, as many young Americans felt that their constitutional rights

National Archives

# Son

were being violated. Yet, in spite of hostility and outright hatred, many young Japanese Americans entered the armed forces and fought heroically, particularly in the European Theater. One young soldier fought in four theaters and was the only American of Japanese ancestry to fly bombing missions against Japan. His name is Ben Kuroki.

Although his parents had been born in Japan and immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s, Ben was fortunate to have been raised in the Midwest, where racial intolerance and prejudice were mild, if not downright nonexistent, in comparison with other areas. The lack of prejudice is reflected in Ben's election as vice president of his senior class at his high school in Hershey, Nebraska, and his positions on the varsity basketball and baseball teams.

The fact that he was living in the Midwest probably had a lot to do with Ben's enlistment in the U.S. Army Air Corps. As soon as the family got word of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ben's father—who had adopted the English name Sam—encouraged Ben and his brother Fred to enlist in the military and fight against Japan. The two young brothers immediately went to the Army recruiting station in nearby North Platte, where they underwent enlistment physicals. After they were found to be qualified for military service, they were told to go back home and wait for notification to report for induction. It appeared that the War Department had yet to decide how to handle Japanese American men of military age who wanted to enlist.


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**ABOVE: Ben Kuroki, who overcame prejudice in the U.S. military to serve with honor, smiles for a photographer while on a promotional tour. LEFT: A Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bomber goes in harm's way in the skies above the Messerschmitt aircraft factory at Weiner Neustadt, Austria. As a member of the U.S. Army Air Forces, Ben Kuroki flew on numerous such hazardous missions.**

The two brothers waited about two weeks, until they heard an announcement on the radio that the Air Corps was taking recruits at Grand Island. Ben telephoned the recruiting sergeant, told the man he and his brother were Japanese Americans, and asked if that would be a problem. The recruiter said it was not a problem, that he got two dollars for everyone he signed up, and for them to come on over and he would swear them in. They drove 150 miles to the recruiting station and soon were Army Air Corps recruits.

Once they were in uniform, they encountered the prejudice that they had been spared growing up. They were now part of a military that bristled over the recent attack on Pearl Harbor and were greeted with outright hatred by many of their fellow recruits, including some NCOs and officers who were responsible for turning young men into soldiers. Ben found himself on KP constantly. Fred fared even worse. He was kicked out of the Air Corps and transferred to the engineers to do ditch digging and other common labor.

Ben was more fortunate than his brother. Upon completion of basic training he was sent to Fort Logan, Colorado, for clerical training, which would keep him inside doing paperwork instead of out in the hot sun doing manual labor. Upon completion of the administrative course, he was sent to Barksdale Field at Shreveport, Louisiana, where he was assigned to the 93rd Bombardment Group, which was training for combat with the Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bomber. The 93rd was the second Army Air Corps unit to equip with the new B-24.

Ben was assigned to the 409th Bombardment Squadron as a clerk-typist in the orderly room, where he typed orders and filed paperwork. His ancestry caused considerable problems; some senior NCOs decided they did not want any Japanese in the squadron and were determined to get rid of him.

When the group got orders to transfer to Fort Myers, Florida, to prepare for overseas duty, a senior NCO redlined Ben's name on the movement order, which meant he would be left behind. Fearful that he would spend the rest of the war on KP, Ben decided to fight back. He appealed to the squadron adjutant, Lieutenant Charles Brannon, requesting that he be allowed to remain with the squadron. Seeing the tears in the young man's eyes, Brannon reinstated him on the order.

After training at Fort Myers, the 93rd was ordered to Grenier Army Airfield, New Hampshire, to prepare for the move to England, where the group would be the first B-24 unit assigned to the fledgling Eighth Air Force. Once again,

Ben's name was scratched from the movement order. This time it was the chaplain, Lieutenant James A. Burris, who interceded on his behalf.

Chaplain Burris went to Lieutenant Brannan and pointed out that there was no military policy that prevented a Japanese American from going overseas. Brennan called Colonel Edward J. "Ted" Timberlake, the group commander who was already in New Hampshire, for guidance. Timberlake ordered that Kuroki remain in the squadron.

**By October all of the airplanes, aircrews, and** ground personnel had arrived in England. On October 9, the group flew its first mission, a cross-Channel operation against Lille, as the first B-24 group in the Eighth Air Force. As a clerk, Ben was not part of the operations. He spent his time in the 409th orderly room typing flight orders and keeping track of squadron records. It really was not the kind of military life he had in mind when he joined the Air Corps.

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**A pair of camouflaged B-24 Liberators flies above the countryside of East Anglia. Ben Kuroki served as a gunner, manning .50-caliber machine guns aboard the big bombers during long flights above occupied Europe and Germany.**

After the squadron arrived in England, Ben began spending a lot of time out on the flight line, usually helping the armament specialists who were responsible for the .50-caliber machine guns on the four-engine bombers. As a farm kid from Nebraska, Kuroki was no stranger to firearms. He owned a shotgun and hunted ducks and geese along the river by the family's farm. He soon knew the .50-caliber machine guns so well that he could strip them down and reassemble them while blindfolded. He was also able to get in some target practice.

In 1942, the Army Air Forces were in their infancy, and no training program had been developed for aerial gunners. Pilots had the option of picking their own enlisted crew members from among squadron ground personnel, and Ben was constantly pressing for aircrew duty. Most enlisted aircrew members had been trained in skills directly related to aircraft and systems maintenance or were trained as radio operators, but the need for aerial gunners allowed pilots to choose whomever they wanted as a replacement when there was a vacancy on their crew.

Ben's chance finally came when Lieutenant Jake Epting suddenly had a vacancy on his crew when his tail turret gunner was medically grounded. Epting told Kuroki he was his new gunner. The assignment meant flying status and silver wings along with a promotion to NCO rank. Coincidentally, the promotion was effective December 7, 1942.

A day or so later, the 409th joined two other squadrons of the 93rd on a temporary deployment to North Africa. Crew members flew their first combat mission with Ben along on December 13, a raid on the docks and supply depot at Bizerte, Tunisia. Their airplane was struck by flak, and a piece of shrapnel struck Sergeant Elmer Dawley in the head. When a crew member started to administer morphine to the injured airman, Ben quickly intervened, pointing out that the drug should not be administered for a head injury. His quick action probably saved Dawley's life.

Kuroki later reported that the first year of the war had been the most difficult of his entire life. As a Japanese American surrounded by young men who hated "Japs" in a country where wartime propaganda instilled such ideas, he was often lonely and constantly worried that he would do something that would cause him to be kicked out of the squadron.

Once he became part of a combat crew, however, he felt that he belonged. No one questioned him about his nationality anymore, and the rapport among the crew was something he had not experienced before in his year in uniform. The 93rd remained in North Africa for several weeks and did not return to England until February 1943. By that time Ben Kuroki had become an accepted member of the squadron by the combat crews, and his fellow crew members had started calling him "the Most Honorable Son."

The 93rd's B-24s began departing their North African base at midnight on February 23 for the first leg of their flight back to England. Planning for the return called for a fuel stop in Algiers. Daybreak found all of northwest Africa socked in with heavy fog. Each crew was flying on its own, and no attempt was made to maintain any kind of formation.

The bad weather presented two options—pull back power on the engines and head for Gibraltar while keeping their fingers crossed that the weather would be OK when they got there, or enter a holding pattern until the fog lifted at Tafaraoui airfield near Algiers. Epting's crew did not make it back to England with the rest of the squadron.

The radio range station at Tafaraoui had not been operating when they flew over it, and the navigator lost his bearings. Their airplane ran out of fuel over Spanish Morocco, and Epting was forced to put the bomber, a B-24D named *Red Ass,* down in a forced landing, a dangerous enough action that was made more so at night. Epting managed to make out some fairly level ground in the darkness and landed the bomber with no damage and no injuries to the crew.

As soon as the crew members emerged from their airplane, they found themselves surrounded by Moroccan militiaman. Curious natives were soon crawling all over and through the airplane looking for loot. A Spanish officer rode up on horseback and ordered that theAmerican men be moved to a nearby town, where they were thrown in the local jail. There were 15 men in all. In addition to the 10-man crew, five ground crew had been on the airplane as passengers.

There was a British consul in the town, and the men were given civilian clothes. The consul

notified the U.S. State Department that the men were safe but were to be interned by the Spanish government since they had landed in neutral territory. The jailers were kind to the men, providing decent food, toothbrushes, clean beds, and blankets.

In spite of the decent treatment given the rest of the crew, Ben Kuroki was worried. Being of Asian ancestry, he feared that he would somehow come into contact with Germans, who might realize he was Japanese American and take some kind of action against him even though the Moroccans thought he was Chinese. He decided to head out for the French Moroccan border, which the crew reckoned was about 20 miles away.

Disguising himself as an Arab by turning his raincoat inside out and splattering it with mud and fashioning a turban out of underwear, Kuroki set out to make his way to French territory. But the rugged terrain along the border proved difficult and after two days wandering in the hills Ben was picked up by local authorities.

After spending several days in a cell with some "naughty" Arabs, he was put aboard a Spanish Air Force Junkers Ju-52 transport and flown to Spain. There he was interned along with more than 20 other Allied soldiers of mixed nationality. He was eventually reunited with his crew, but they remained in captivity, although as internees in a neutral country rather than as prisoners of war. While they waited, U.S. and British agents were making arrangements for them to return to Allied control.

The internees ended up in Alhama de Aragon, a Spanish mountain town northeast of Madrid, where they were put up in a hotel that had been arranged for by the U.S. embassy. Several other Allied flyers were in the hotel, along with a couple of Frenchmen. The men were free to wander around the town, where they attracted the attention of the female population, but were advised to be cautious because of Nazi Germany's previous support of the Franco government.

**About a month after they left North Africa,** part of the crew was repatriated. Ben and three other members, two gunners and a ground crewman, remained for another month, and some members of the group would not be released until June. Their B-24, undamaged in the emergency landing, was claimed by the Spanish Air Force. A Spanish crew flew the airplane out of Morocco, and it was repainted in Spanish colors.

When the crew returned to England, they discovered that the 93rd had become famous. Thanks to several dispatches in the military

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**ABOVE: Photographed while on leave in Alexandria, Egypt, Ben Kuroki is seated second from left with other members of his crew. Kuroki gained the grudging respect of his squadron mates, serving with distinction. LEFT: Ben Kuroki is shown among a group of Allied internees who were temporarily held in Spain before being released to Great Britain and rejoining the 93rd Bomb Group.**

newspaper *Stars and Stripes*, the group was now known as Ted's Traveling Circus in recognition of their time in Africa. The group's three squadrons had moved from Northwest Africa, where they were originally assigned to General Jimmy Doolittle's Twelfth Air Force, to Libya where they operated with other Liberators assigned to General Lewis Brereton's Ninth. A fourth squadron had remained in England for experiments in night intruder missions into Germany, but the project was abandoned and the group was back to four squadrons, the 328th, 329th, 330th, and 409th.

As the only Nisei, or second-generation Japanese American born in the United States, flying combat in England, Kuroki was interviewed by Hollywood personality Ben Lyon, who was serving in the U.S. Army, for a broadcast on NBC in the United States and the BBC in Europe. Lyon was a well-known actor who had starred in Howard Hughes's *Hells Angels* in 1930. Lyon and his wife, actress Bebe Daniels, put the young airman at ease with small talk about Hollywood, and he came across in the interview that was heard around the world as a modest man with strong determination. It was the first of many such interviews and public appearances Kuroki would make. He had become the first Japanese American hero of World War II.

Having lost their original airplane in the emergency landing in Spanish Morocco, Epting and his crew were given a new one when they got back. Censorship had taken hold in the Eighth Air Force, and Epting was not allowed to name the new B-24 *Red Ass II*, so he instead relied on his home town of Tupelo, Mississippi, and gave the airplane the name *Tupelo Lass*. The crew's first mission after they were all reunited in England was against German submarine pens and shipping facilities at Bordeaux, France, on the Bay of Biscay.

Epting's crew was not aboard *Tupelo Lass* that day, but flew in another airplane named *Sex Appeal*. The airplane lost power and stalled at 21,000 feet, and in the fall to 2,000 feet gasoline from the engines came into the tail turret where Ben was manning his guns and soaked his flying clothes.

The men of the 93rd were not long in England. Allied war planners had authorized an ambitious mission against the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania, originally code-named Operation Soapsuds. At Ploesti, facilities produced most of the gasoline, diesel fuel, and other oil products used by Axis forces in the Mediterranean.

The 93rd and its sister group, the 44th Bombardment Group, were taken off combat operations and began training for the mission, which was to be flown at treetop height in order to increase bombing accuracy and achieve a level of surprise. Due to the distance to the target from the nearest possible launch points around Benghazi, Libya, the B-24 was the only bomber in the Allied inventory capable of such a mission. The two Eighth Air Force groups would go to North Africa to join the 98th and 376th Bombardment Groups of IX Bomber Command. A fifth group, the 389th, was still en route to England from the United States and would hook up with them in Africa.

After training at low level for several weeks in England, the 44th and 93rd flew south to Libya. Once again Ben and his crew and squadron mates found themselves on African soil flying missions against German and Italian targets. Although they were there for the Ploesti mission, they were put to work on missions with the Ninth Air Force B-24s against targets around the Mediterranean, including the first mission against Rome.

Allied troops were preparing to land on Sicily and the Eighth Air Force Liberators were used to swell the formations put up by IX and XII Bomber Commands on missions in support of the invasion. Then, on August 1, 1943, the five B-24 groups set out for Ploesti.

**Epting's crew was joined by the 409th squadron** commander, Major Kenneth "K.O." Dessert, who occupied the left seat while Epting flew as copilot in his own airplane. Kuroki, who now had a reputation as one of the best gunners in the group, flew in the top turret. It was a mission Kuroki and other survivors would never forget.

Although the 93rd bombed the target, it was not without heavy loss. The German forces had picked up the assembling B-24s while they were still over the Libyan desert and had tracked them across the Mediterranean, deducing that they were headed for Ploesti. An unfortunate navigational error caused the lead group, the 376th, to turn early and miss the target, an error that the new 93rd group commander, Lt. Col. Addision Baker, recognized. Ted Timberlake had been promoted to brigadier general and

Both: National Archives

**ABOVE: Smoke shrouds the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania, as a B-24 flies dangerously low over the target. The hazardous mission to Ploesti, code-named Operation Tidal Wave, temporarily reduced oil production for Hitler's war machine but at a terrible cost. BELOW: Bombs rain on military targets in and around the city of Münster, Germany. Ben Kuroki nearly lost his life on a mission to Münster when German flak tore through his .50-caliber gun turret aboard a B-24 Liberator bomber.**

moved up to command all B-24s in England.

The B-24s, which were fairly large airplanes, went in over the target literally below the treetops, dropping bombs with delayed-action fuses from as low as 50 feet above the ground. The bombers came in below the flak towers that had been erected to defend the oil-refining installations, and Ben and the other gunners used their .50-caliber machine guns to shoot up the towers. American and German rounds hit gasoline storage tanks on the perimeters of the refineries, setting fires that sent thick black smoke hundreds of feet into the air. After hitting the target, the Liberator crews fought their way to the safety of the Mediterranean.

**Some historians have written that the mission,** which had been renamed Tidal Wave, was a disaster, although such is not really the case. Losses were heavy, although not quite as high as those suffered by B-17 groups on missions into Germany while the B-24s were in Africa. It was a spectacular and dramatic mission that ranks among the most daring of World War II.

For the first and only time in the war in the European Theater, heavy bomber crews were literally eye to eye with the German antiaircraft gunners who feverishly fought to knock them out of the sky. Of 178 Liberators that took off from Benghazi, 54 never came back. A total of 532 airmen were reported killed or missing after the mission. The 93rd suffered its highest losses of the war, with 11 B-24s and their crews shot down over the target.

Of the nine crews from Ben's squadron who went on the mission, only two made it back to Benghazi that night. One of the crews lost over Ploesti was commanded by Colonel Baker. He and his copilot, Major John Jerstad, were both awarded the Medal of Honor, two of the five that were awarded for the mission. Everyone who went on the mission received a Distinguished Flying Cross.

Ben's group did not return to England immediately after the terrible mission, but remained in North Africa for several more weeks. After a two-week downtime to give the mechanics time to repair battle damage and replace worn-out engines, the Eighth and Ninth Air Force B-24s were sent on another dangerous mission against the aircraft manufacturing facilities at Weiner Neustadt in Austria, the third most heavily defended target in Europe.

Fortunately for Ben and the other members of the 93rd, they were part of one of the best-trained and most disciplined heavy bomber groups in the Eighth Air Force. Although the 93rd was one of the first heavy bomber groups to enter combat and was credited with flying the most missions as a group, it also suffered the lowest loss rate of any of the heavy bomber groups that were in combat during the dangerous time from 1942 to the spring of 1944 when losses began to decline. The 93rd reported only 100 B-24s missing during the entire war, and 11 of those were lost on the Ploesti mission.

The combat discipline of the men of the 93rd is also reflected in the low number of enemy planes claimed by Ben and his fellow gunners. While gunners in other groups made wildly exaggerated claims, 93rd gunners reported what they saw, not what they imagined.

Nebraska Printing Center

**Kuroki proudly displays the shattered plexiglass of his gun turret following a mission to Münster, Germany. When heavy flak ripped through the turret, Kuroki was fortunate to escape with his life.**

The Ploesti mission took a heavy toll on the morale of the men in the B-24 groups, and Ben Kuroki was affected. He was suffering from what medics called "combat fatigue" as the intense combat took its toll on his health. He would often lurch in his bunk and cry out in his sleep. Ben had flown the required 25 missions that allowed Eighth Air Force crew members to return home, but he volunteered along with the rest of his crew to fly five more. His buddies said he was out of his mind, but he felt that as a Japanese American he had something to prove.

He proved it.

Ben flew five more missions, bringing his total to 30, and he was almost killed on his last one. He was now flying with Lieutenant Homer Moran, a full-blooded Sioux from South Dakota, who had previously been the copilot on Epting's crew but had gotten a crew of his own. They were over the target at Münster, Germany, when a piece of flak took out the side of Ben's turret, with him inside. Fortunately, he was unscathed.

Technical Sergeant Ben Kuroki returned to the United States as a hero and was written up in the newspapers as one. He went to Santa Monica, California, for R&R at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, and learned that he was the first Japanese American to return to California since President Roosevelt had signed the internment order. *Time* magazine featured an article about him, as did the *New York Times*. Stories about him appeared in newspapers all over the country, and his photograph was frequently featured. Journalists sought him out for interviews, for both the print and broadcast media.

He also faced prejudice again. He was supposed to make an appearance on the *Ginny Sims Show,* but a female producer cancelled his appearance after taking him and two other GIs to dinner at the Brown Derby. Ben wanted to cancel an appearance before San Francisco's Commonwealth Club himself when newspapers owned by wealthy media magnate Randolph Hearst ran headlines that said "Jap to Address S.F. Club." He was forced to appear by the Army Air Forces public relations officer because all of the arrangements had been made. It was fortunate for Ben that he made the appearance because it changed his life.

Kuroki appeared at the Commonwealth Club on February 4, 1944. News of the Bataan Death March had just been released to the public, and Ben felt he could see hatred in the audience's eyes. He probably was not wrong. But by the time he concluded his 40-minute address, Ben had won over the audience of business and professional men. He received a 10-minute standing ovation and was recalled to the podium twice. He so impressed the audience that his speech has been credited as the turning point in the attitude of California's citizens toward Japanese Americans. His address was broadcast by shortwave radio to Japan. The *Chicago Tribune* ran an article about Ben beside an article about the Bataan Death March.

As the first Japanese American hero of the war, Ben was seen as the logical candidate to visit the internment camps where the people from the West Coast had been moved and to encourage young Nisei to volunteer for Army service or accept the draft. Several all-Japanese combat units were being formed, and the Army was actively seeking recruits from the camps and filling the ranks with draftees. Rising opposition to the draft was breaking out in the internment camps on the grounds that the internees' constitutional rights had been violated. Although he was greeted as a hero by most of the internees, he was confronted by dissidents,

Both: Nebraska Printing Center


**ABOVE: Named in honor of Ben Kuroki, the modern Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber *Sad Saki* sits at an airfield. Kuroki was granted a waiver to fly against Japan after serving in combat against the Nazis over Europe and North Africa. RIGHT: Bringing hope to Japanese residents of an internment camp in the western United States, the soft-spoken Ben Kuroki describes life in the service of his country**

some of whom despised him.

Ben was upset by the appearances. He found people of his own ancestry being guarded by armed men wearing the same uniform as he. It was not an experience he relished, even though most of the internees greeted him as their personal hero. At one camp he was greeted by a Jeep filled with flowers, and "Auld Lang Syne" was sung as he was leaving the camp at Heart Mountain. Occasionally he still experienced prejudice. A man refused to ride in a cab with him in Denver, slamming the door of the cab and shouting, "I don't want to ride with no lousy Jap" even though Ben was in full uniform with wings and a chest full of combat ribbons, including the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After his public relations tour ended, Ben reported to Salina, Kansas. He had volunteered for a second combat tour, only this time he wanted to go to the Pacific. He went to Harvard, Nebraska, where a heavy bomber outfit was preparing for combat duty with the Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber. Ben was eager to fly aboard the B-29 and to fly missions against his ancestral homeland.

He was shocked to learn that War Department regulations prohibited the assignment of Japanese Americans to B-29s. Ben was no longer as stoic as he had been as a recruit, and he took advantage of his notoriety to press for a change in the policy. He solicited letters and telegrams from people he had met at the Commonwealth Club, and several prominent people contacted the War Department and the Army Air Forces on his behalf. He was allowed to continue B-29 training with the crew commanded by Lieutenant James Jenkins, but the War Department still refused to allow him to go to the Pacific. As Jenkins's crew was preparing to depart for the Pacific, Kuroki was yanked from the airplane by federal agents, one of whom had disguised himself as a newspaper reporter sent to interview him.

**Ben went looking for Nebraska Congressman** Carl Curtis and found him at a lodge meeting in Minden. Ben had violated the Articles of War by contacting his congressman, but the two went looking for a telegraph station. Curtis sent wires to Secretary of the Army Henry L. Stimson and Generals George C. Marshall, President Roosevelt's chief military adviser, and Henry H. Arnold, commander of the Army Air Forces.

The next morning Ben received a message from Stimson that he was granting a waiver of the War Department regulations, stating that because of his previous combat record he would be allowed to remain with his crew. A few days later Ben waved from the tail turret window as Jenkins taxied out to take off in a new B-29 with the name *The Most Honorable Sad Saki* gleaming on the side in fresh paint.

Jenkins and his crew were assigned to the 505th Bombardment Group's 484th Bombardment Squadron on Tinian, a tiny island in the Marianas from which B-29s were flying missions against Japan. Although Ben felt comfortable with most of the men in the squadron, his ancestry presented new problems because there were still Japanese stragglers on the island who would sneak into the camp at night looking for something to eat. Since GIs were known for being trigger happy, Ben was forced to remain in his tent at night, not even going to the latrine.

**Jenkins insisted that Kuroki wear a helmet and** dark glasses on the ground and that he never go anywhere alone to avoid being mistaken for a Japanese straggler. Even on trips to the mess hall, he was surrounded by other members of his crew and squadron mates. They often kidded that he owed them protection pay. Ben kidded back, saying that if they were ever shot down he would find fish heads and rice for them to eat.

The first mission against Japan from the Marianas was flown in late November 1944, while the men of the 505th were processing for the movement from their training base at Hershey, Nebraska, to the Pacific. The original missions were daylight precision bombing, but the results were far less than had been expected. Jenkins's crew had just began flying missions when Maj. Gen. Curtis Lemay arrived to take command of B-29 operations and soon switched to nighttime attacks on Japanese cities. After the 505th arrived, the group flew a series of training missions followed by milk runs over Iwo Jima, where Marines were engaged in a fierce battle with the Japanese defenders. The group's first mission against Japan was on February 4, 1945.

Ben Kuroki's first combat tour had been in the B-24, which was a modern airplane when it was designed in 1940 but, with open windows, could be a miserable environment at high altitude. The B-29 was a major change. It had been designed with very long-range missions in mind and featured a shirtsleeve environment as the crew compartments were pressurized and heated, which relieved crewmen of wearing heavy sheepskin flying suits.

Initial B-29 operations over Japan met surprisingly little resistance. The Japanese had yet to organize their air defense forces, and the fighter force was much smaller than Allied intelligence estimates indicated. The B-29 was a

much faster airplane than the B-17s and B-24s that preceded it, and most Japanese fighters had a hard time intercepting it. The Japanese air defenses were also hampered by a lack of skilled pilots. Most of the men who had proven so adversarial during the opening months of the war were long since dead.

In March, General LeMay ordered a change in tactics that had been suggested by Twentieth Air Force staff in Washington, D.C. For some time, the Twentieth staff had been pressing for a switch to night attacks using incendiary bombs and napalm, but General Haywood Hansel, LeMay's predecessor, was a strong advocate of daylight precision bombing and had resisted the change—to the detriment of his future in the Pacific.

LeMay knew better than to resist "suggestions" from Washington and planned a night firebombing mission against Tokyo. He also ordered changes in combat tactics. Instead of dropping their bombs from high altitudes, the B-29s would come over the target at comparatively low altitudes in the 10,000-foot range. LeMay also ordered the removal of most of the ammunition from the guns, and all of the gunners except the tail gunner were left behind in order to save weight and increase bomb capacity.

As the tail gunner on his crew, Ben was on the mission. He later reported that for more than an hour after *Sad Saki* left the target he could see a fire-reddened sky. The raid was the most destructive in military history, and the young Nisei felt uneasy as he watched the fires that he knew were causing thousands, including women and children, to perish in the smoke and flames.

Nebraska Printing Center

Ben Kuroki flew 28 missions in B-29s and had the distinction of being the only Japanese American to fly missions over Japan. Still, racism continued to cause problems. When members of his crew were presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross, Ben inexplicably was not included in the ceremony but was told to remain in the barracks even though he had been awarded an oak leaf cluster to the DFC he had been awarded for the mission over Ploesti.

The worst example of racism Ben encountered took place just before the end of the war when a drunken private from New York burst into his barracks shouting, "Tojo and Kuroki —damned Japs." Ben immediately responded to the insult, telling the soldier, "You can call Tojo a damned Jap, but don't call me one."

**The other man was a lot bigger than Ben, but** even worse, he had a knife. He pulled it and slashed at Ben's head, leaving a gushing wound that put him in the hospital. He was still there when the war ended. But he was fortunate; Ben probably would have been killed had not Sergeant Russell Olsen, a B-29 flight engineer, stepped in and taken the knife. The attacker was court-martialed and spent six months in the stockade at hard labor.

The war ended before Ben got out of the hospital, and he missed going back home with his crew. Instead, he went back to the United States on a troop ship, taking 21 days for the journey that would have only been a couple of days in a B-29. Once again Ben was treated as a hero when he arrived home and was scheduled for a series of public appearances. He was invited to speak at the *New York Herald-Tribune*'s annual forum and was seated on the platform next to General Jonathan Wainwright, who had just been rescued from a Japanese prison camp in Manchuria.

Also on the platform were Generals George Marshall and Claire Chennault of Flying Tiger fame. Kuroki, a technical sergeant, was seated between Marshall and Wainwright. After Ben's speech, Wainwright jumped up and grabbed Ben's hand. The remarks Ben made that day were published in *Readers Digest*. As the only Japanese American air hero of the war, Ben was in demand as a lecturer, but he was tired of the war and talking about it, so he sought to return to civilian life.

Using the GI Bill, he enrolled in journalism school at the University of Nebraska, then went into the newspaper business. After 10 years in Nebraska, he sold a newspaper he owned and moved to California to start a new career as a reporter, then as editor of a major newspaper until his retirement in 1984.

Ben became active with the reunions of the 93rd Bombardment Group, and some of his fellow veterans undertook a campaign to convince the Army to award him a higher decoration than the two DFCs he received during the war. The campaign was successful, and in August 2005 he was presented the Distinguished Service Medal, the third-highest award a military member can receive. The medal was presented by President George W. Bush in a ceremony at the White House. □

National Archives

**ABOVE: The Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber was innovative for its time with a pressurized crew area, tremendous bomb payload, and great range. This B-29 disgorges a cargo of destruction during a raid on a Japanese city. LEFT: Ben Kuroki visits the White House and stands second from left. His wife Shige is at right standing next to President George W. Bush. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi poses at center, with First Lady Laura Bush to his immediate right. To the right of Mrs. Bush is Ben and Shige's daughter, Julie Cooney.**

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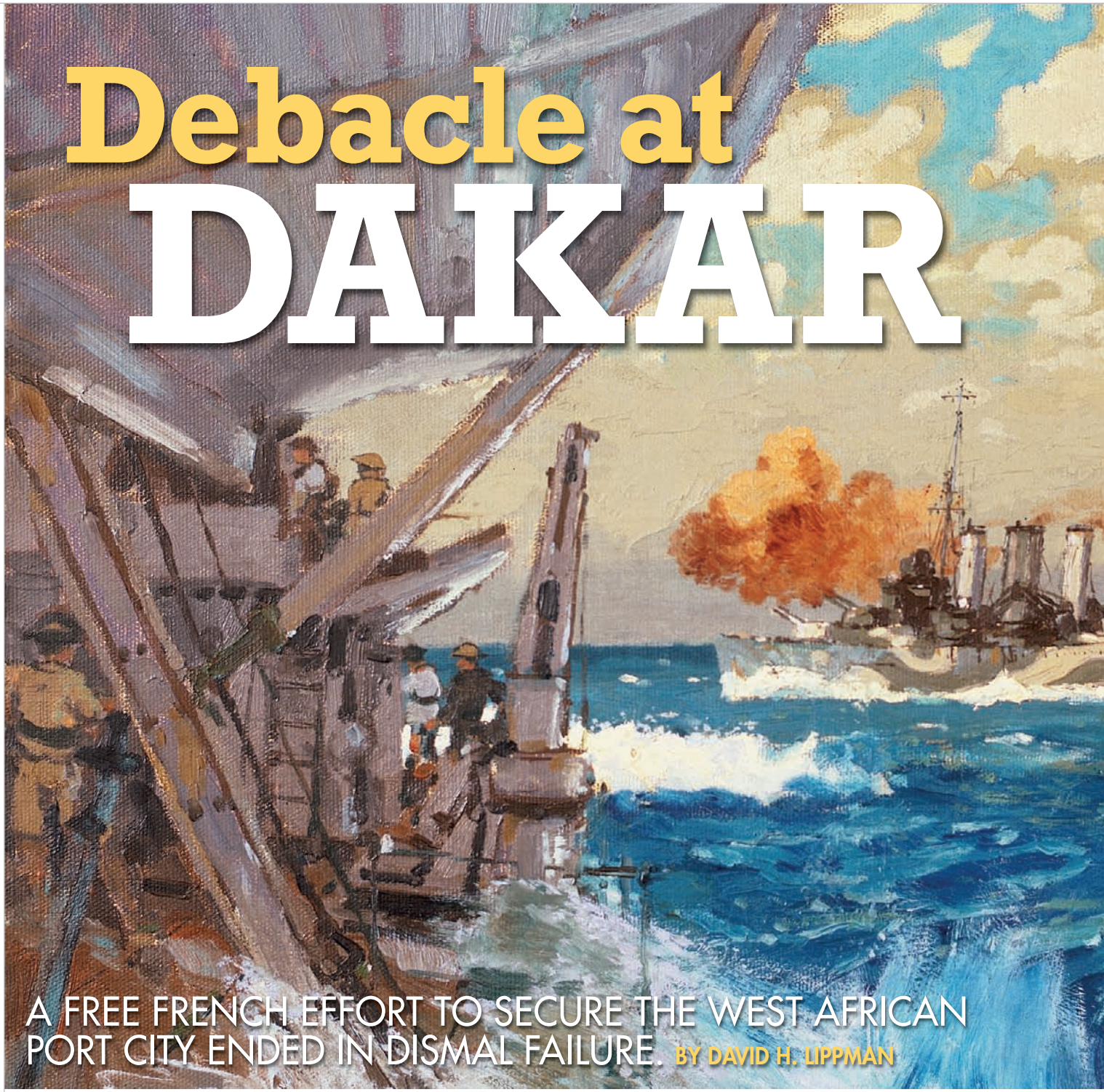
# Debacle at DAKAR



## A FREE FRENCH EFFORT TO SECURE THE WEST AFRICAN PORT CITY ENDED IN DISMAL FAILURE.

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

THE DIRECTOR FLICKED his finger, and General Charles de Gaulle began reading his address into the British Broadcasting Corporation's microphone, speaking from London to his defeated countrymen across the English Channel, calling upon them to continue resistance in the face of overwhelming German supremacy.

The date was June 18, 1940, and Charles de Gaulle, tall, confident to the point of arrogance, one of the few French generals who saw the value of armor and mobility, was defying his head of state, Marshal of France Henri Philippe Pétain, challenging Pétain's announcement the day before that France would seek armistice with Germany and accept crushing defeat.

"Nothing is lost," De Gaulle told his listeners, "because this war is a world war. In the free world, immense forces have not been brought into play. Some day these forces will defeat our enemies. On that day, France must be present at the victory. She will then regain her liberty and greatness. That is my goal, my only goal! This is why I ask all Frenchmen, wherever they may be, to unite with me in action, in sacrifice, and in hope. Our country is in danger of death. Let us fight to save it."

Few Frenchmen heard de Gaulle's speech. Most were not listening to BBC radio in the third week of June 1940. Hitler's panzers had crushed the mighty French Army, first by exploding through the Ardennes,

In this artist's rendering, the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia* looses a salvo from its forward 8-inch guns during a duel with shore batteries protecting the Vichy French port city of Dakar.

Australian War Memorial

destroying three armored divisions, and forcing the British to evacuate from Dunkirk. Shorn of much of their industrial region and armor, the French had mounted a determined but doomed defense of their heartland, which ended days after the Nazis strutted into an intact Paris. Defeatist and pro-Fascist French leaders like the shifty Pierre Laval, the aged and senile Pétain, and Premier Paul Reynaud's scheming mistress, Helene des Portes, forced Reynaud out, pushed Pétain in, and he immediately called for an armistice.

The victorious Germans were happy to grant it—handing over harsh but honorable terms to the French delegation on June 22, 1940, in the same railway car that Marshal Ferdinand Foch had used back in 1918 to extract the armistice from Germany that had ended World War I, on the same site at Compiegne.

At the ceremony, Adolf Hitler sat quietly while his top military manager, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, read out Germany's grievances against France and the armistice terms. France would keep a version of its independence in a new state, based out of the southern spa town of Vichy. The Third Republic and its values of "liberty, equality, fraternity," would be replaced by the "French state," under Marshal Pétain, and its core (stamped on thin aluminum coins) of "work, family, fatherland." Northern France would be occupied. Most of the French military would be disarmed, the troops held as prisoners of war, and France's economic assets yielded up to the invader.

Yet there was still some honor. The new Vichy government would enjoy a measure of independence and neutrality in the continuing world war. It would control the formidable French Navy and the large French empire, which included such proud holdings as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Indochina, and Senegal, down to small territories like Martinique, St. Pierre and Miquelon, and Reunion.

But these seemingly honorable armistice terms meant little to Charles de Gaulle, who had just been fired from his position as undersecretary of state for defense. De Gaulle, unlike his aged and perfidious colleagues, proposed to continue fighting the "Boche" from the empire. The colleagues regarded de Gaulle as "une peste," a jumped-up colonel holding a wartime brigadier general's rank, whose ideas of continued fighting would only mean a final and dishonorable defeat.

With 100,000 francs and a promise of British support, de Gaulle fled Bordeaux for England on June 17 and made his broadcast from London the following day.

There was no reaction at first. So de Gaulle went back in the BBC studio the following day and tried again. This time, there was an answer—from the Vichy government, which ordered de Gaulle back to France and warned that his statements were not those of the government and should be ignored. De Gaulle ignored his nominal Vichy bosses. The Vichy government promptly put de Gaulle on trial in absentia, charging him with high treason, and on August 2 condemned him to death.

Free French leader Charles de Gaulle (right) converses with an associate aboard a Dutch passenger liner en route to the West African port of Dakar and an embarrassing setback for his political and military movement.

Public Domain

The court-martial was pointless, though. Pétain himself wrote in the margin of the paperwork, "The sentence in absence can only be academic. It never entered my mind to put it into effect." Laval added, "You can't condemn someone to death for an excess of patriotism."

But by now the battle lines between de Gaulle and Vichy were drawn. More importantly, Vichy had served de Gaulle by publicizing his call to arms, and it was now filtering through France and its empire. Four Vichy newspapers reprinted it, French proconsuls across the empire read it, and de Gaulle himself tramped across England, speaking to interned French troops and warship crews, seeking recruits. He got some: most of the 13th Demi-Brigade of Foreign Legionnaires; some French Marines in Cyprus and Egypt; airmen and sailors

who had fled France at Dunkirk; some 133 fishermen from the island of Sein who sailed across the Channel rather than submit to Hitler; Lt. Cmdr. Thierry d'Argenlieu, a monk-turned-sailor, who headed the French Navy in its Pacific holdings; Admiral Emile Muselier, who had been sacked by Admiral Francois Darlan at the war's outbreak. By August, de Gaulle had about 7,000 men in his embryonic army, split between England and Egypt.

By August, however, relations between the average Frenchman and Briton had broken down because of an astonishing act by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Royal Navy, which led to British ships firing on and sinking Vichy warships.

Hanging in the balance of the German-French armistice was the modern and powerful French Navy, which included two battle cruisers, seven battleships, and a large number of cruisers, destroyers, submarines, and support ships. In German hands, they could tip the scale of naval power in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The British had to prevent the Germans from taking over these fast warships. Two battleships, *Lorraine* and *Courbet,* were in British ports and were at least out of the game. But the new battle cruisers *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg* and the older battleships *Provence* and *Bretagne* were at Mers-el-Kebir, near Oran in Algeria, and the even newer battleship *Richelieu,* packing eight 15-inch guns, was at Dakar on the Senegal coast. The British could not let Germany seize them.

On July 3, 1940, the Royal Navy's Mediterranean squadron appeared off Oran and issued an ultimatum to the French fleet, giving three choices: disarm on site, join up with Britain, or face destruction at the hands of British guns. Admiral Gensoul, commanding the French ships, refused the options, so the British opened fire. *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg* were seriously damaged, *Provence* beached, and *Bretagne* sunk.

The Vichy French were furious and fumed bitterly over the insulting and apparently treacherous behavior of their former ally, but British morale and American politicians were impressed—if nothing else, the British would fight on for survival.

Four days later, the British struck again at the Vichy fleet, this time at Dakar, where the brand new battleship *Richelieu* was at anchor to avoid seizure by either side. *Richelieu* was a formidable ship. Displacing 38,500 tons, she could cut the waves at more than 30 knots and packed eight 15-inch guns and nine 6-inchers. A match for anything afloat, she could provide either Hitler with a shortcut to sea power or de Gaulle's Free French with a prodigious amount of gunnery.

Gamma-Keystone/Getty Images

**An obsolete British biplane recovered and brought to Dakar on September 25, 1940, is inspected by Vichy French personnel following the failed attempt by Allied forces to capture the city.**

The British, with sang-froid, hit *Richelieu* first, sending in a motor boat by night that dropped depth charges under the battleship's stern. The depth was too shallow for them to get off. At dawn, the British sent in six antique Fairey Swordfish biplanes from the old carrier HMS *Hermes,* and despite the seeming mismatch of biplanes and battleship guns the old aircraft did their job, punching a hole in the battleship's stem. Dakar's limited dockyard facilities could not repair *Richelieu,* so she was immobilized but still able to fire her main battery.

The French broke off diplomatic relations with Britain on July 5 to retaliate for the attacks—they could do little more—and Britain's diplomats in Dakar reported to London on their return that the French colonists and military there were ripe to split from Vichy. The information was inaccurate—the French troops in Dakar were actually merely angry over German demobilization orders, which cut their numbers and paychecks—but the reports fueled ideas in Britain's War Office and, more importantly, with de Gaulle.

**The French general, having assembled an** embryonic army, now sought a physical base. So far, France's proconsuls were sticking with Vichy. But if he could establish himself on French colonial soil, he might set off a string of colonial dominoes and gain the support of France's far-flung holdings and their manpower and resources. Dakar, sitting at the center of French West Africa, a major seaport standing astride the Atlantic sea-lanes, hosting a prestigious if immobile battleship, could be that place.

Another factor in favor of Dakar: the French, Belgians, and Poles had shifted their gold reserves there before conquest, and the stacks of bullion would be critical Allied economic assets.

At the same time, de Gaulle finally got some real backing. Felix Eboué, the black governor of Chad, overthrew the Vichy military, put Colonel Philippe Hautecloque (known to history as Jacques LeClerc) in command, and rallied to de Gaulle. Eboué's gutsy move set off a chain reaction in French Equatorial Africa, and Gabon, the Cameroons, and the French Pacific territories joined up with Free France. De Gaulle now had a base of support. But Dakar stood between him and Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo.

The Free French began planning a descent on Dakar with 2,700 men drawn from de Gaulle's small army, embarked in two Dutch liners, *Pennland* and *Westernland.* De Gaulle himself made his headquarters on the *Westernland.* On August 8, the day after the Germans began the Battle of Britain, the British agreed to support the invasion with the Royal Navy and 4,000 Royal Marines in four battalions. The Marines were preparing for a possible assault on the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands and the Azores to gain bases to use against U-boats, but the British

War Committee was unsure about the idea of invading territory held by "Britain's oldest ally." So the British would back Operation Menace, the code-name for the attack on Dakar.

The Royal Marines were packed into four mechanical transport ships, and Maj. Gen. Noel Irwin was appointed boss of the land force. Admiral John Cunningham was chosen to head the naval force, which consisted of the tough aircraft carrier *Ark Royal,* the old battleship *Resolution,* the slightly faster battleship *Barham,* the cruisers *Devonshire* and *Fiji,* 16 destroyers, and two sloops. Free France provided three sloops, a patrol vessel, and two Luciole touring aircraft for *Ark Royal.*

The Allied plan was to sail to Dakar and launch the Luciole touring planes, loaded with emissaries from de Gaulle. They would bring a message urging the Vichy leadership to join with de Gaulle. If all went well, Dakar could be taken without firing a shot.

As usual before an amphibious assault, all was confusion. French officers ignored security by toasting, "To Dakar!" in Liverpool pubs before embarking. Loading of the ships was chaotic: motor transport, miscellaneous stores, and four tons of ammunition were not loaded, even though the ships were packed to capacity. Nobody made a plan of storage for the equipment on board, and nobody told the Liverpool and Greenock port authorities what supplies had the highest priority for unloading, so nobody knew where the supplies were loaded on each ship. The ships were barely seaworthy. Irwin's headquarters had problems, too. His staff had only one typewriter upon which to make the required 200 copies of the 140-page command directions.

Once at sea, the ships could communicate only with signal lamp because of a shortage of trained expert wireless operators. Irwin himself lacked a headquarters ship and had to embark on the battleship *Barham.* The result was that at one point he was heading north at 25 knots while his forces were heading south at 12 knots. On another occasion, he was heading at five knots to the advance base while his ships sailed ahead of him at 12 knots.

Nor were the invaders well prepared. The French troops were completely untrained in amphibious warfare. The invaders had only 18 landing craft for the entire operation. Their air cover consisted of *Ark Royal*'s 25 Swordfish biplane torpedo-bombers and 20 Blackburn Skua fighters, neither of which were the equal of the American-made Hawk 75 fighters and A-22 bombers the French fielded.

The French defenders would be tough, too. Admiral Landriau had been sent down from

Australian War Memorial

**The cruiser HMAS *Australia* (foreground) escorts the Vichy French cruiser *Gloire* away from Dakar prior to the commencement of Operation Menace, the Allied attempt to capture the West African port in the autumn of 1940. Elements of the Vichy navy were persuaded to avoid hostilities during the operation.**

Vichy to put them into shape, and he had imposed order and efficiency. In addition to *Richelieu*'s guns, the French fielded about two understrength brigades and a number of coastal artillery pieces, some of them at Fort Gorée, an island bastion infamous as the transshipment point for generations of slaves to the Western Hemisphere for three centuries. But they were far from home, and their nation had just been defeated by a major power. British determination and Free French ferocity could overcome these obstacles.

**But Vichy was not idle. They greeted the secession** of Equatorial Africa with firmness, dispatching Force Y, consisting of three light cruisers, the *Georges Leygues, Montcalm,* and *Gloire,* from France to deal with the insurrection. Also en route to the Congo from Casablanca was the light cruiser *Primauguet* and an escorting tanker, to fuel Force Y.

To reduce tension, the British had chosen a policy of not interfering with Vichy ships on purely French missions. So when the three cruisers headed for Gibraltar, there were no plans in hand to stop them. Worse, the British boss at Gibraltar, Admiral Sir Dudley North, had no knowledge of the plans to invade Dakar. When the three cruisers sailed past Gibraltar in the early hours of September 11, he took no action to stop them. By 4:30 PM, however, London and Vice Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, who commanded Force H based at Gibraltar, reacted. The battle cruiser HMS *Renown* went to sea to try to prevent the French ships from at least reaching Dakar. Too late. That evening, the French ships were refueling in Casablanca. They left before daylight, heading south.

Meanwhile, the Dakar expedition weighed anchor on August 31, sailing from the Clyde, Liverpool, and Scapa Flow. Cunningham flew his flag on the cruiser *Devonshire* and moved to *Barham*. Along with the force were six destroyers from Force H and the boom defense vessel *Quannet* from the South Atlantic squadron. The heavy cruiser *Cumberland* was already on station off Dakar.

On the first day, the German submarine *U-32* put a torpedo into the side of HMS *Fiji* just west of the Hebrides, making her a dockyard case. The British, now short a cruiser, sent *Fiji* back to the Clyde and replaced her with HMAS *Australia,* attached to the Home Fleet in Scapa Flow, and she sailed from the Clyde for Sierra Leone on September 6, to relieve *Cumberland* on patrol off Dakar, reaching it at 8:20 AM on September 19.

Twenty minutes later, *Australia* spotted the three French cruisers coming toward it, heading southeast. *Australia* followed the trio all day, until she lost them that evening. *Australia*'s captain, R.R. Stewart, figured the French were

TopFoto/The Image Works

**A pall of smoke rises from the stricken city of Dakar during bombardment by warships of the British Royal Navy. Errant British shells overshot their military targets and landed in residential areas of the city, causing civilian casualties.**

headed for Dakar and plotted an intercept course. Sure enough, Stewart came up on a darkened ship, which turned out to be *Gloire,* moving slowly due to an engine breakdown.

A game of signal-lamp diplomacy ensued, with those on the *Australia* convincing the Vichy French to sail back to Casablanca, signaling, "I know how difficult the situation is."

But Admiral Bourragué, commanding the French cruisers, turned his other two ships about, cranked up to a snappy 30 knots, and sailed in to Dakar on September 20.

The two additional cruisers at Dakar tipped the balance for M. Boisson, the Vichy governor. He would fight anyone who attacked his colony. It also irritated Darlan, boss of what was left of the Vichy Navy, who hated Britain. He fired Bourragué for not fighting back against the British or heading on to the Congo.

It turned out that Borragué could not get to the Congo. The lead ship, cruiser *Primauguet,* ran into the light cruiser HMS *Neptune* in the Gulf of Guinea. *Neptune* convinced the French to head back to Dakar, and that ended Darlan's porous plans to overawe the Congo into ending its secession.

The Vichy French moves unnerved London, which suggested de Gaulle's force return and Operation Menace be called off. De Gaulle argued to his British seaborne colleagues, Cunningham and Irwin, that to withdraw would only hand Vichy a propaganda victory. Churchill agreed. Operation Menace went on.

But while *Primauguet* and her tanker turned about, the British fleet arrived off Dakar on September 23, to find the French colony fogged in. That shot down Churchill's plans of massing a huge (by local standards) fleet off Dakar to overawe the French leadership. Instead, it was time for Plan B, which consisted of *Ark Royal* launching the two Luciole aircraft off her flight deck with four Free French airmen aboard to make a surprise landing at the airfield at Ouakam, three miles from the town. Meanwhile, a Free French motor launch with Lt. Cmdr. d'Argenlieu aboard would sail into Dakar to deliver a personal message from de Gaulle to Boisson. While this went on, British planes would drop leaflets on the town. De Gaulle would also broadcast on radio. With luck, the Vichy French would give in.

**The first part went fine. The airmen landed at** Ouakam and found the commanding officer waiting to greet them. The airmen promptly took the commanding officer prisoner and laid out a "success" signal for *Ark Royal*'s planes. But the Vichy guard was not impressed and took the intruders prisoner in short order.

Next up, d'Argenlieu. He and three other officers, Major Gotscho, Captains Bécourt-Foch and Perrin, and Sub-Lieutenant Porgés sailed into the port in a motorboat from one of the two Free French sloops in the attack force and stepped ashore, asking to meet with Boisson. Instead, Admiral Landriau, the top French officer on the scene, showed up, having heard de Gaulle's speech. He ordered d'Argenlieu and his cronies arrested. The Free Frenchmen jumped back in their motor boats as the Vichy guard opened up with their machine guns. D'Argenlieu and Perrin were seriously wounded, but the two boats made off into the fog and met up with their sloop at the harbor entrance, bringing the bad news as *Richelieu*'s secondary guns hurled parting shots at them.

De Gaulle's speech had told his countrymen that if they gave in the Royal Navy would not open fire, but with the failure of diplomacy, de Gaulle made another broadcast, warning that the Royal Navy would train its guns on Dakar if the defenders did not surrender. The Vichy response was gunfire from the coastal batteries, now manned by naval gunners instead of colonial soldiers of questionable reliability. Tugs maneuvered the *Richelieu* to an angle where it could more effectively fire its two forward-mounted 15-inch turrets. Clearly, neither Vichy's rulers at Dakar nor their rank and file had any love for de Gaulle or the British.

At the same time, two of the four Vichy submarines at Dakar, *Persée* and *Ajax,* put to sea to wreak havoc among the attackers. The British destroyers *Foresight* and *Inglefield* spotted them and gave pursuit. Both tin cans came under shore battery fire and took hits. The *Persée* showed foolhardy courage, trying to make a surface torpedo attack on the huge *Barham*. British gunfire sent the submarine to the bottom.

Cunningham signaled the Vichyites: "Why are you firing on me? I am not firing on you." The Vichy men answered, "Retire to 20 miles distance." The British responded with gunfire of their own.

At a range of less than 6,000 yards, the *Barham* opened fire on the French forts with her 15-inch guns, but some of the "overs" hit the town, killing civilians, which added to the bad Vichy temper. The Vichyites fired back, hitting *Foresight* and putting a 9.4-inch shell into *Cumberland*'s hull, seriously damaging the cruiser. At 11:15, Cunningham pulled his ships out of range. From the desultory fighting so far, de Gaulle did not believe the Vichy men intended to do anything but put up a brief fight to protect honor, then surrender. But clearly there was no way to storm the harbor without a greater battle, which could inflame passions in Dakar or worse, Vichy, and bring the otherwise inert and semineutral nation back into the war as a German ally. The British were ready to assault the port but knew the casualties on both sides would be terrific.

"Up to now, we have not made an all-out attack on Dakar," de Gaulle said. "The attempt to enter the harbor peaceably has failed. Bombardment will decide nothing. Lastly, a landing against opposition and an assault on the fortifications would lead to a pitched battle, which for my part, I desire to avoid and of which, as you yourselves indicate, the issue would be very

doubtful. We must, therefore, for the moment, give up the idea of taking Dakar. I propose to Admiral Cunningham that he should announce that he is stopping the bombardment at the request of General de Gaulle. But the blockade must be maintained in order not to allow the ships now at Dakar their liberty of action. Next, we shall have to prepare a fresh attempt by marching against the place by land, after disembarking at undefended or lightly defended points, for instance at St. Louis. In any case, and whatever happens, Free France will continue." The British agreed.

**While Cunningham and de Gaulle plotted their** next move, all hands ate lunch, bully beef stew on HMAS *Australia,* which a sailor pronounced "Rotten!" At the same time, Boisson signaled the British, saying that all landings would be opposed.

The British and the Gaullists decided to try again, this time landing Free French Marines at Rufisque, a small port on the far side of the bay, 10 miles east of Dakar. The port was too shallow to allow the British to unload their Royal Marines and their heavy equipment from transports, so the two French sloops would land 180 Fusiliers Marins. Perhaps their appearance would convince the Vichyites to surrender.

To do so, the British and Free French ships had to regroup—they were getting lost in the mist.

But at 4 PM, the French destroyer *L'Audacieux* steamed out, battle flags flying, near Gorée Island. The British destroyers *Fury* and *Greyhound* steamed in to attack her, joined by HMAS *Australia,* which spotted the Frenchman at 4:26 and opened fire with three-gun 8-inch salvos a minute later. The third salvo dismasted the enemy, and the fourth set *L'Audacieux* on fire forward. Blazing fore and aft, the French destroyer was clearly disabled, and *Australia* withdrew while the blazing French ship drifted ashore, more than 80 of her crew dead.

At 5:30 PM, the two Free French sloops sailed into Rufisque harbor and put a few men ashore. The Vichyites replied with 4-inch gunfire from a shore battery, while Senegalese troops treated the Marines to machine-gun fire. The Marines had to be reembarked and withdrawn—sharp eyes on the *Westernland* saw the *Georges Leygues* and *Montcalm* heading for Rufisque.

The British steamed into the mist and out of range for the night to treat their wounds and plot their next move. Clearly the Vichy French were fighting, and another bloody battle between British and French forces was developing. Somehow, Dakar had to be taken without heating the battle up further.

The commanders could call off the operation, but at 9 PM Cunningham received a message from Winston Churchill himself, saying, "Having begun, we must go on to the end. Stop at nothing!" Fine rhetoric, but what to do? Cunningham, Irwin, and de Gaulle conferred again, and at 11:45 PM they sent another message to Boisson, Landriau, and the inhabitants of Dakar.

This time the British told them that the Allies had to seize Dakar at all costs and demanded an acceptance of their terms by 6 AM on the 24th. Then everybody waited for the Vichy answer. It came at 4 AM: Boisson rejected the British demand. He would defend Dakar to the end.

At dawn, Cunningham's two battleships and two cruisers opened fire on Dakar from eight miles out, joined by *Ark Royal*'s aircraft, which tried to plaster the forts and *Richelieu,* as well as the two Force Y cruisers.

The British had no luck. The French cruisers maneuvered behind their booms and avoided the torpedoes. The British lost three Swordfish. At 8:30 AM, the French submarine *Ajax* tried to attack the British battleships on the surface, and the destroyer *Fortune* sank the *Ajax*. *Barham* and *Resolution* traded salvos with the forts and *Richelieu* for 40 minutes, by which point fog and smoke rendered the French fully covered.

At this point, the French Air Force materialized, with Glenn Martin bombers trying to make high-level attacks to no avail. After waiting for the smoke to dissipate, the British tried again, shelling the French for half an hour, with *Barham* suffering four hits from French fire.

The British fired more than 400 rounds of 15-inch ammunition and completely failed to silence the shore batteries, while causing more civilian casualties in the town. The smaller French batteries, which were damaging the British destroyers, could not be silenced. The Fleet Air Arm was facing more opposition.

There seemed no way to get the troops ashore without a massive battle, which was just the thing the British commanders did not want. Late that afternoon, de Gaulle met with Cunningham and Irwin aboard the *Barham*. De Gaulle had to admit that he had underestimated both the Vichy defenses and Vichy resolve. A British landing would only expand the war and make things worse. De Gaulle had two ideas: either land his troops at Bathurst for training and take Dakar later by land or disembark the

Rue des Archives/The Granger Collection, New York

**Free French Marines aboard ship prepare their motorcycles and other equipment for anticipated landings at Dakar. Fierce Vichy resistance and other factors combined to render the effort unsuccessful in an embarrassing reversal for Charles de Gaulle and the Free French.**

French troops at a lightly held area and march on Dakar. Either way, he could not risk the political liability of British troops fighting a battle against French troops—it would only drive Vichy into Hitler's arms.

Next morning, the fog lifted and visibility was better. The battleships steamed in, White Ensigns flying, to resume bombarding the port, while the two cruisers headed for Gorée Bay to take on Force Y. At 9 AM, the *Richelieu* opened fire on the *Barham* at a range of 23,000 yards. The two dreadnoughts traded salvos, and as

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**Damaged during the Vichy defense of Dakar, the French battleship *Richelieu* was eventually captured by the Allies and sailed to New York for repairs. Anti-British sentiment ran high among the French people following Royal Navy offensive action against Vichy naval units to prevent their falling into Nazi hands.**

the British ships turned to the bombardment course the last French submarine, *Bévéziers,* appeared and fired four torpedoes at *Resolution,* scoring a hit amidships.

The old battleship suffered serious flooding and slowed to a halt. Cunningham ordered two destroyers to cover *Resolution* with a smokescreen. Meanwhile, *Barham* engaged *Richelieu,* *Devonshire* fired at Fort Manuel, and *Australia* took on Force Y. The French shot back accurately, hitting *Barham* once and *Australia* twice. The French 6-inch hits on *Australia* caused no casualties and only slight structural damage in the wardroom and an engine room store. At 9:16, the two cruisers withdrew, and at that moment French antiaircraft guns blasted the *Australia*'s spotter Walrus seaplane, causing the *Australia*'s only casualties of the battle, the deaths of the plane's crew: Flight Lieutenant G. J.I. Clarke of the Royal Australian Air Force and Lt. Cmdr. F.K. Fogarty and Petty Officer Telegraphist C.K. Bunnett, both of the Royal Australian Navy.

At 9:20 AM, all British ships ceased fire and withdrew on a southern course, under cover from *Ark Royal*'s fighters. *Resolution* was now doing a bare 10 knots with a 12-degree list, which made her a target for French bombers, but she avoided further damage.

On his flag bridge, Cunningham did the sums: all four of his heavy ships had been damaged. Further attacks could lead to unacceptable losses on his side and Vichy French alliance with Hitler on the other. Cunningham decided to withdraw the entire force to Freetown, with *Barham* towing *Resolution* home. Dakar remained under Vichy control.

**De Gaulle was devastated. "The days which** followed were cruel for me," he wrote later. "I went through what a man must feel when an earthquake shakes his house brutally and he receives on his head the rain of tiles falling from the roof."

Nothing had gone right for the British. Intelligence was lamentable, planning slipshod. British gunnery had accomplished nothing against the defenses, and neither the diplomatic landings nor the Marine assaults had accomplished anything. German propaganda had a field day with British ineptitude, and the Australian government complained to Churchill about learning of the use of their heavy cruiser only after the battle was over.

It was left to Churchill to smooth over ruffled Australian feelings, and he did so with a letter that blamed the French cruisers, the fog, and the shortage of British ships and men at a time of great peril at home and abroad. The Australians showed sympathy and support for Churchill's position.

Meanwhile, officers on the spot and historians after the fact—Churchill among them—assessed blame. Part of the failure was a systemic issue. The assault was Britain's second amphibious operation of the war (the Norwegian disaster being the first), and little had changed for the Royal Navy since its last big amphibious campaign at Gallipoli in World War I—another disaster. Had the British force gone in, it may have well been undone by poor logistical loading as much as by the determined French defense.

But there was a good reason for the British ineptitude. Most of the paraphernalia of the later Allied invasions had not even been invented yet. Amphibious landing craft, coordinated air observation techniques, fire control, even weather forecasting, were all marvels yet to come. While the British fumbled about at Dakar, the Germans, by way of comparison, were planning their invasion of England, which called for thousands of horses in the first wave. Amphibious operations needed a lot more planning and expertise before they could achieve success.

Other problems came from the difficult polit-

ical situation. The British were eager to make Dakar a key base of operations, both to fight U-boats and to rally the Free French cause, but were reluctant to fight hard with Vichy, fearing that Pétain and his cronies would join Hitler in the invasion of England that was a real and hourly fear in London. Nor did de Gaulle have anywhere near enough weaponry and men to impose his will on the Dakar leaders.

In his memoirs, Churchill noted that the weather for the time of year at Dakar usually called for sunny skies, but the heavy fog was a surprise. Other Admiralty officials claimed that was not so. Churchill also noted that the British and Gaullists had underestimated Vichy resolve to hold Dakar and overestimated their small force's ability to compel the Vichy defenses to surrender. The British would not make that mistake again in dealing with Vichy, using heavy forces to overwhelm Vichy defenses in

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Syria and Madagascar later in the war.

"No blame attached to the British naval and military commanders," Churchill also wrote, and he pointed out that Vichy did not follow up by declaring war on Britain; it merely launched a pair of air raids from Morocco on the British base at Gibraltar. "The French aviators did not seem to have their hearts in the business, and most of the bombs fell in the sea," Churchill wrote of the two strikes. "Some damage was done, but there were very few casualties. Our AA batteries shot down three aircraft. Fighting at Dakar having ended in a Vichy success, the incident was tacitly treated as 'quits.'"

To the world, Churchill wrote, the affairs "seemed a glaring example of miscalculation, confusion, timidity, and muddle." He was right. American military attaché General Raymond Lee wrote acidly, "Dakar does not sound like any resoundingly successful feat of arms."

TopFoto/The Image Works


**ABOVE: Civilians and Vichy military personnel inspect the damage to buildings in Dakar as a result of British naval bombardment. The cooperative effort between British and Free French forces to capture the city in September 1940 ended in abject failure. LEFT: Torpedoed off the coast of Dakar by a Vichy French submarine, the battleship HMS *Resolution,* a veteran of World War I, lists to port while being towed to facilities for repairs.**

**Still, some things were gained. The British loss** of prestige was minor compared to their heroic defense of the British Isles that summer. Three French submarines and a destroyer were punched out. The damage to the British ships was all reparable, and the Free French colonies stayed loyal to de Gaulle. *Richelieu* remained immobile at Dakar, and the two cruisers stayed with her in a similar plight. Indeed, a barrel explosion wrecked one of *Richelieu*'s guns during the battle.

Ultimately, Dakar would go over to the Allied side in November 1942, after Operation Torch and the German occupation of Vichy France. With American assistance, *Richelieu* would get under way and sail to the Brooklyn Navy Yard to gain a new 15-inch gun, a complete modern electronics suite, and additional antiaircraft guns, while having hundreds of barnacles removed from her bottom. *Richelieu* would serve in both the Atlantic and the Pacific, shelling German and Japanese defenders, while the two light cruisers steamed into battle against Hitler on D-Day in Normandy and again in the invasion of southern France.

De Gaulle's determination to fight kept him at the head of the Free French movement. Within two weeks, he went ashore at Libreville, the capital of Gabon, and by November, through his own personality and local resources, won control of the whole of French Equatorial Africa.

Still, the battle had been a close-run thing. Supposedly, when Cunningham withdrew his ships for the last time, Boisson had been writing out a message of surrender as his forts were nearly out of ammunition. However, that story is questioned by historians.

These thoughts were far from the minds of the Allied ships as they turned for Greenock, the Clyde, or the Congo. On the damaged ships, crewmen repaired shell holes. On a troopship, Royal Marine Lieutenant Evelyn Waugh started batting out a rough draft of what would become his novel, *Put Out More Flags*. De Gaulle plotted his next moves.

When HMAS *Australia* returned to Greenock, the crew got some leave, and Captain Stewart wrote in his log the only piece of good news from the whole affair: that the conduct of his officers and men under fire had been outstanding, and "a most noticeable ship spirit has now been born which gives me every confidence for the future of HMAS *Australia*." □

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# OFF TO WAR

## THE GLIDER PILOT REGIMENT TOOK PART IN SOME OF THE MOST HAZARDOUS OPERATIONS OF WORLD WAR II.

**BY ROBERT BARR SMITH**

*They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old;*
*Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.*
*At the going down of the sun and in the morning,*
*We will remember them.*

ON JUNE 22, 1940, the British prime minister, the formidable Winston Churchill, directed that an airborne force of at least 5,000 men was to be formed. It was a noble notion but replete with difficulties, not the least of which were the absence of any doctrine, a lack of aircraft, and no organized training facility. The third problem was solved by setting up the "Central Landing Establishment," a vague enough title to protect its function from speculation by the inquisitive. It resulted in some curious mail being sent to men assigned there, including letters addressed to the "Central Laundry" and the "Central Sunday School."

The absence of any doctrine existed because airborne assault was a very new thing in the British Army. Everything had to be improvised:

**In this 1942 painting by war artist Leslie Cole, a British glider pilot is seen at the controls of his aircraft while in flight. The aircraft towing the glider is visible in the distance. Powered aircraft often towed gliders in pairs. OPPOSITE: During the airborne phase of Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France, a British Horsa glider heads toward its assigned drop zone on August 15, 1944.**

Imperial War Museum

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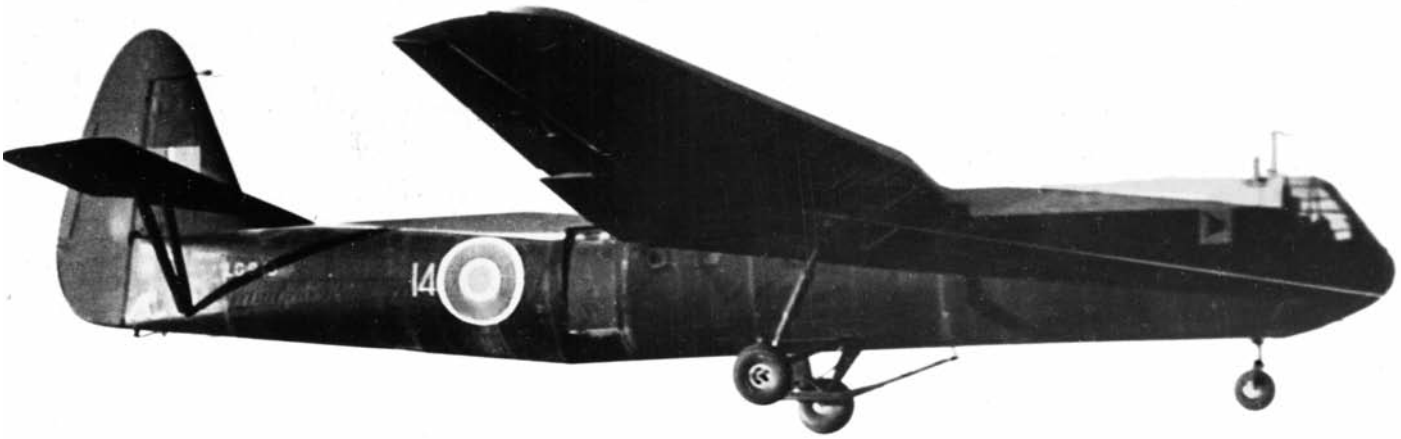

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buildings, training facilities, and, not least of all, aircraft. Some training jumps could be made from balloons, and they were. Other stopgap devices included a weird conversion of the aging Armstrong-Whitworth Whitley bomber, in which its rear turret was removed and the jumpers were launched into space from a little platform jury-rigged there. There was also a version of the Whitley with a hole cut in the floor of the fuselage, through which men dropped one at a time.

Later the paras would make civilized jumps through the doors of the omnipresent DC-3—the Dakota, to the British—but it would take time for overstretched production lines to produce enough of these versatile aircraft. The men were all volunteers, though; their leaders and trainers were tough, smart, and inventive; and the school progressed. And in time airborne soldiers would wear the distinctive maroon beret. Later in the war, some Germans called them the Red Devils, and the name was well deserved. They were also distinguished by the shoulder patch of the fabulous hero Bellerophon riding Pegasus into battle, an artistic touch said to have been the work of Daphne du Maurier, wife of Lt. Gen. Sir Frederick Arthur Montague Browning, nicknamed "Boy Browning," who would command the whole airborne establishment.

The beret was distinctive, not only to ladies in pubs, but also to the enemy. A German friend of the author served throughout World War II. Recuperating from a wound, he took command of a scratch unit of old men and boys in what was supposed to be a quiet sector near the Dutch town of Arnhem. On the night of the British drop, one of his few veteran sergeants brought in a teenage machine-gun crew, crying bitterly, "They took our machine gun."

My friend assumed it had been a neighboring unit, but the boys said, "They were big men in red berets." A British patrol had seen the youth of the crew, taken the gun, and left the boys alone. "I knew then," said my friend, "if I had any doubt remaining, that the war was surely over."

The abiding problems in the early days remained, however. First, how to get the maximum number of troops on the ground before the defenders could adequately react, and, second, how to provide them with heavy weapons such as artillery, antiaircraft weapons, transport, and engineer equipment once they got to, or close to, their landing zone. Today's heavy-drop technique was far in the future, and in any case there were no aircraft designed to deliver a howitzer or a bulldozer from the air.

A soldier could jump with his personal weapon, but getting heavy machine guns and mortars on the ground was a problem; so was enough ammunition for them. The initial answer was to drop such equipment separately in containers to be opened by the troops once on the ground. That was all very well if you could find the things in strange country, in the dark, with people shooting at you. That problem was partially solved by saddling jumpers with a separate bag much like a similar device used by the American airborne. Once out of the airplane you unhooked the device from your harness, and the bag then dangled below you on a length of line. The bag hit the ground first, taking the weight off the jumper. It worked, although those of us who have jumped so burdened did not enjoy the experience.

The answer to both problems was the glider, not only for resupply of weapons, equipment, and ammunition, but as a means to get a lot of people on the ground quickly and together, fully equipped and ready to fight. Once loose from the tug, you could land a glider in a pasture, a field of wheat, even a marsh, in theory at least. There was no landing gear to worry about; you could jettison the tricycle undercarriage at need and land the glider on its belly, some rudimentary skids taking up some of the shock, again in theory. You could build them as big as a tug aircraft could tow them, even building in a knock-away nose or tail so you could get big loads out quickly. You could tow one—later several—from a powered aircraft flown by a trained pilot.

But gliders presented more serious problems of their own. First there were not any military gliders in Britain when the war broke out, nothing more than small, lightweight civilian sailplanes. Gliders were not the major problem. Those could be built, and the first order to British industry was for 400.

The second problem was more perplexing. Who would fly the gliders? In those early days the British armed forces were short of every-

# PLYWOOD BOX

thing, and that included pilots. The Royal Air Force, engaged in driving off the Luftwaffe in the summer of 1940 and in creating a substantial bomber force to strike back, needed every one of its flyers. The obvious answer was to train soldiers to fly the glider force. After all, speaking pragmatically, they would not have to fly very far once the powered tug cut them loose in line with the target.

The British pondered the problem and opened training. The idea, which proved itself in practice, was that it was a great waste of a good soldier if all the two pilots did was land this glider contraption. They ought to be able to fight, along with their passengers, once on the ground. And so the Glider Pilot Regiment was born. It had only a brief lifespan. Born in 1942, it was disbanded in 1957, but during its life it covered itself with honor.

The pilots were introduced to the first purpose-built military glider. It had an 88-foot wingspan and was called Hotspur, named in traditional British style for a North British fighting man. The little Hotspur would carry six infantrymen and their gear. Later on, some of the British airborne troops would ride to battle in the American Waco glider. The British called this one Hadrian, and it could lift 15 troops including the two pilots.

The Hotspur would be followed by the Horsa, namesake of a ferocious and successful Saxon warrior. To save weight, the skin of the Horsa, like that of the Hotspur, was plywood over a wooden frame. You could open the Horsa's tail to get heavy gear out; you could even blow the tail off with what was called a "dynamite cartridge," although that procedure involved some risk of setting the wooden airplane on fire. Later on, the air-landing units would get the Hamilcar, an 18-ton behemoth of wood over a steel frame, curiously named for a Carthaginian soldier.

There were two pilots up front, flying with standard controls. There was no throttle, of course; instead, there was a little red handle that released the 350-foot tow rope whenever the pilots deemed the moment propitious to land. A telephone line along the tow rope kept them in touch with the crew of the tug.

Later a curious instrument called the cable angle indicator was added. This device—irreverently called by glider pilots the "angle of dangle"—told a pilot flying at night his position in relation to the tug, either just above or just below the airplane up front. The glider pilots learned never to fly directly behind the tug, for the slipstream there could be violent enough to tear the fragile glider apart.

The Horsa was designed primarily to carry infantry. The larger Hamilcar was designed to carry a couple of jeeps with trailers, two Bren-gun carriers, or even a small light tank called the Tetrarch. The whole nose of the Hamilcar was hinged, so you could swing it up to roll out your load.

The whole project began modestly when, in October 1940, a pair of small aircraft towed two single-seat sailplanes. It would have been hard then to visualize what would come of this tiny experiment. The pilot school formally opened in January 1942, and the candidates trained not only in flying but heavily in combat skills as well. It was well they did. For example, a formidable sergeant pilot named Ainsworth landed in the water short of land off Sicily, swam ashore towing a wounded man, killed two Germans with a knife, disarmed still another one, captured 21 prisoners, and then fought on as infantry for several days more. Other pilots manned antitank guns and machine guns on the ground, some for days after landing.

There was never a shortage of able, willing volunteers for the airborne forces, but tugs were another matter. RAF bomber crews were as scarce as trained fighter pilots, and only a few could be spared at the start. The same went for the aircraft at first. Most of the aircraft big enough to haul a glider were bombers, some already becoming obsolete. Among them were the Handley Page Halifax, the Armstrong-Whitworth Albemarle, and the ungainly Armstrong-Whitworth Whitley, considered so behind the times that it was pulled out of production in 1941. The workhorse of the Allied airborne in future years, the Douglas C-47, was still coming off the production lines in the United States. It would be produced in prodigious numbers but was needed in large quantities all over the world. The new airborne division was just one customer.

Even as the tug fleet increased, the crews were also permitted to fly combat sorties into occupied France, generally low-level attacks on transformer stations to disrupt the power grid. They also dropped supplies to the French Resistance and British agents operating with them. Such missions were more than morale builders; they also provided what was quaintly called "flak inoculation," getting the crews used to pressing home their attacks in a sky full of tracers, precisely what they would be called upon to do when they towed gliders into action.

In spite of a lack of doctrine and shortages of equipment, the training went on, with more and more gliders becoming available and RAF crews ordered into the towing operation. More and more airplanes became available, and a little later in the war American C-47 crews would also carry British airborne soldiers into battle. Regular infantry battalions would be assigned to what were now being called the air landing brigades.

In October 1941, Maj. Gen. Boy Browning left the Guards Brigade to become commander, paratroops and airborne troops. The airborne division he was to command was nowhere near

All photos Imperial War Museum unless credited otherwise

**A Royal Air Force flight instructor familiarizes a pupil with the controls of a General Aircraft Hotspur Mark III glider. This photo was taken in December 1942 at the No. 3 Glider Training School in Gloucestershire, England.**

full staffing and organization and was short of almost everything, but one of its major elements, 1st (Air Landing) Brigade, was quickly assembled.

The brigade was composed of a battalion each of the Border Regiment, the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry, the Ulster Rifles, and the South Staffordshire Regiment. These were all storied infantry units, all loaded with battle honors from a dozen wars. To them the British added a recon company, an antitank battery, a "field ambulance" of medical personnel, and small support units. As the airborne forces expanded, other infantry battalions and artillery batteries were added. The brigade trained separately from the paratroops, who were drawn from volunteers all over the Army, and would become the 1st Parachute Brigade.

By the summer of 1943, there would be three parachute brigades in addition to the air-landing outfits. Their support included light artillery units equipped with American 75mm howitzers, and they would be moved by large numbers of Dakotas, many flown by American pilots. But that was well into the future. For now the paratroop and glider pilot training cadres made it up as they went along.

The division's leaders were able and hard-driving commanders; one particularly tough battalion commander was nicknamed "Dracula" by his soldiers. Physical conditioning was high on Dracula's list of desirable things, as it was throughout the regiment. The pilots were famous for their discipline and military bearing. They were coming to be recognized as the elite soldiers they were.

Since there was virtually no experience to draw from, all was improvisation and trial and error, down to experimentation and modification of parachutes, uniforms, weapons, harnesses, and kit bags. Training was improvised too, but the command of the new airborne forces settled on two jumps from a captive balloon and five from aircraft, including a night jump. Ringway, the training installation, also hosted foreign volunteers, especially Polish soldiers, and gave a special short course for several thousand SOE (Special Operations Executive) agents—including a number of women—for their night drops into occupied France.

The glider pilots trained with the Royal Air Force at Derby and went through the same 12-14 week course in powered aircraft as did the RAF pilots, flying the forgiving Tiger Moth. After glider training—both day and night flying—some were selected for the big Hamilcars; the rest would fly the Horsas, the troop carriers leading the attack. With everything in short supply, some of the lighter gliders were towed in training by antique Hawker biplanes.

**ABOVE: The Pegasus insignia of the 6th Airborne Division prominently emblazoned on the fuselage of their Hotspur glider, a pair of glidermen prepare for a mission. Elements of the 6th Airborne gained fame in the predawn hours of D-Day, capturing the Caen Canal Bridge, which was later renamed Pegasus Bridge in honor of the exploit. BELOW: Glider troops prepare for a training exercise in 1942. Glider operations were particularly risky given the light weight and wooden construction of the aircraft and the need for substantial clear ground on which to land and disgorge troops.**

Medical support for both air-landing troops and paratroopers was provided by the field ambulances, which landed with the men they supported, both paratroops and glider soldiers. One doctor, an officer named Robb, performed more then 160 surgeries during the North African fighting. Most of his operations were major, and he lost only a single patient. His last patient was himself, for he had injured one knee on landing; he had said nothing and had hobbled on until his job was done. Hippocrates would have been proud. He and other airborne doctors were supplied by air after the initial landings, blood plasma and surgical gear dropped in weapons containers.

The air-landing brigades included a full company of Royal Engineers—the parachute brigades each had a platoon—signal detachments, small headquarters elements, and light artillery. Horsas carried the gunners and their howitzers. One glider could lift six passengers,

a gun, a jeep, a trailer or two, and perhaps a motorcycle. Supplies and ammunition arrived not only by glider but were dropped in simple wicker panniers, carrying up to 500 pounds, pushed from an aircraft door from a conveyor system. Weapons were also dropped in what the British called bombcells, metal containers that fit the bomb racks on fighting aircraft.

These and many other vital things trickled down only slowly to the troops, from a supply system overwhelmed with the immense requirements of all the Allied forces. The airborne forces had settled on the American jeep as the ideal transport for troops on the ground. But by early 1943, this vital vehicle was still in short supply. At one point, 132 of them were reported to be "standing on the quayside waiting to be delivered." But, as one British soldier recorded, "It could not be discovered on which side of the Atlantic this quayside was." There were shortages too of 20mm cannon, of 6-pounder antitank guns, and a dozen other things the troops required. But the men—the cream of the crop—were ready.

**Gliders lie motionless in daylight near the Caen Canal bridge, which was seized by British glider troops in the early hours of June 6, 1944. The bridge was a key element in the inland movement of British soldiers from the invasion beaches of D-Day.**

A handful served in an indispensable unit that played a crucial role in glider operations. Called the Independent Parachute Company, they were pathfinders, dropped in ahead of the parachute troops and gliders. First into any LZ (landing zone), they deployed a signaling device code-named Eureka, which broadcast to an aircraft-borne receiver called Rebecca. They could set up lights as well, when and if the tactical situation permitted.

The first airborne operations were small ones, the first a strike against a major aqueduct in southern Italy. The insertion was by parachute for this one, a small element that succeeded in blowing a span out of the aqueduct and dropping a bridge. But none of the raiders made it out to the coast where they were slated to be collected by submarine, which in any event could not itself keep the rendezvous. The second airborne raid, however, was a tremendous success.

This time the airborne troops dropped on the French mainland, where they attacked a German radar station at Bruneval, on the coast. The objective was parts from the big Würzburg radar, which British boffins needed to devise countermeasures. While the soldiers shot up the German garrison, a Royal Air Force NCO named Cox calmly dismantled the apparatus, and took what he needed. The Royal Navy lifted the raiders over the beach, complete with radar parts, and British casualties were minimal.

But the gliders had still to be tried. Their first test was a small one, Operation Freshman, in November 1942. Two Horsas, carrying sappers, were towed from Scotland to Norway, a mission of some 400 miles. The objective was the Norsk Hydro heavy water plant about 60 miles from Oslo. The mission was fraught with peril because navigation was extremely difficult and the weather bad.

One tug, flying beneath cloud cover to locate the objective, smashed into a mountain. The crew all died, but the glider was jarred loose. It landed heavily, killing or injuring several more sappers. The second tug flew higher, but as it crossed the Norwegian coast, turbulence jerked the glider loose. It landed near the wreckage of the first, and the Germans quickly rounded up the survivors. The Gestapo took jurisdiction over them, and they were eventually murdered—shot or strangled pursuant to Hitler's notorious "commando order."

In the spring of 1941, the dramatic German parachute and glider attack on Crete painted a spectacular picture of what airborne soldiers could do: with massive close air support, a fleet of transport and tug aircraft, and a sky full of gliders, the Germans carried the island. But Crete also emphasized the risks attendant on attack from the sky against fierce opposition. While Crete fell, the island was also the grave of the German airborne. Those who did not die on Crete kept their pride and morale, but they fought as regular infantry through the rest of the war.

Not so the British. The British airborne forces would persevere. After the fighting in North Africa—most of which involved neither parachutes nor gliders—the first major effort for the air landing units would be Sicily. Lots of hard lessons were learned there, by both the British airborne and the American 82nd Airborne Division. General Jim Gavin of the 82nd Airborne aptly described the operation as a "self-adjusting foul-up." Even so, much was learned and much accomplished, in particular the capture of two vital bridges by the British—at Primasole and Ponte Grande.

Just getting there was a major undertaking. The gliders first had to be flown from Britain to the new Allied bases in North Africa. The task required the Halifax towing aircraft to fly a total of about 70 hours per mission. Some 50 of these were spent towing the vital gliders. Worse, their route to their first stop, an airfield near Casablanca, took them far too close to German territory, and they flew crammed with extra fuel. At least one tug was shot down by Focke-Wulf Fw-200 Kondors. Its glider landed in the sea, and its pilots were collected several days afterward by a passing Spanish ship. In about the same area another pair—both tug and tow—simply disappeared without a trace.

The glider-borne troops this time flew mostly in Wacos with British pilots, hastily trained in this unfamiliar aircraft. Some of the pilots even assembled their own gliders—at one airfield glider pilots put together 52 gliders in just 10 days. And the operation was indeed a series of errors from which everybody learned. The

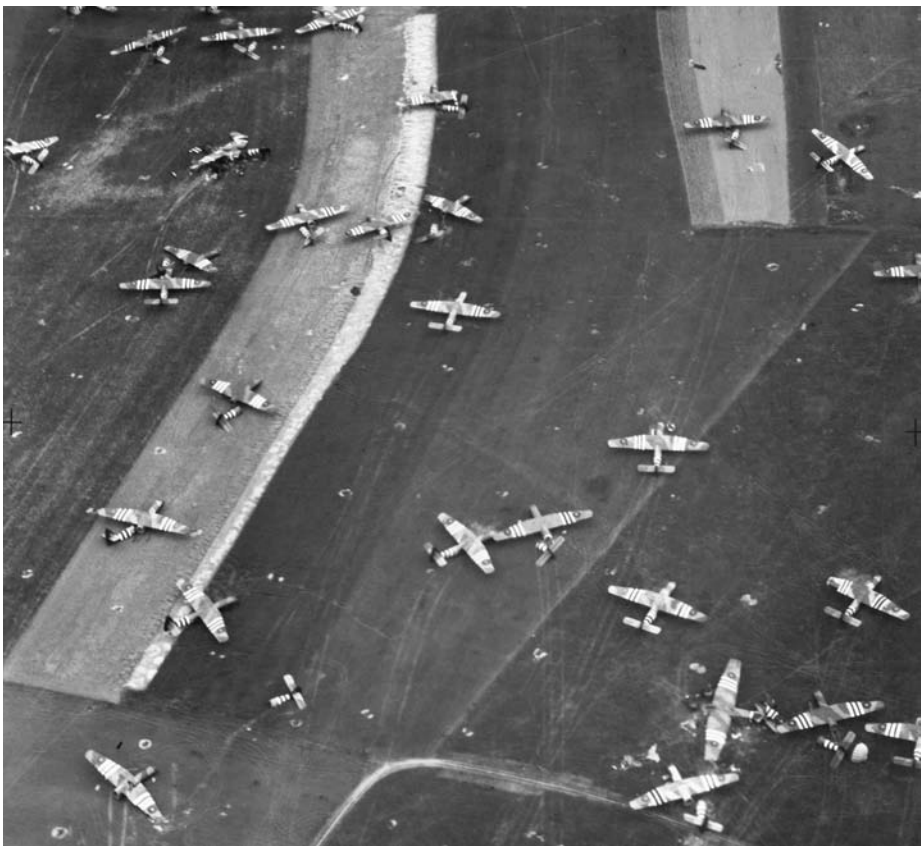
weather was foul, with a gale-force wind that made it difficult for the tugs and gliders to stay on course. The trip was especially difficult for the glider pilots trying to keep station with their tugs. It was about 450 miles long, and the aircraft flew at no more than 100 feet. The completion of the mission speaks volumes for the endurance and expertise of the glider pilots.

Their landmarks invisible in the gloom of the night and shrouded in a monstrous dust cloud driven by a powerful offshore wind, many of the gliders dropped their tows too soon and ended in the ocean. Clinging to the remains of their glider, Brigadier Philip Hicks, commanding the air-landing brigade, spoke drily to his brigade-major. "All is not well, Bill," he said, and it was a massive understatement. Only 52 gliders managed to reach the land, and only 14 landed anywhere near their target LZs.

Even so, the Ponte Grande Bridge fell to a Lieutenant Withers and some 14 men of the glider-landed South Staffords. Withers and five of his men swam the canal, and his minute force then put in its attack from both ends of the bridge. This handful of glider soldiers removed the enemy's demolition charges and with occasional small reinforcements held doggedly onto the bridge through the night, although there were never more than 100 troopers to fight off determined counterattacks. Driven off the bridge at last, the glider troops met other friendly units advancing and took the bridge back. It was now permanently British.

In the blackness over Sicily, German antiaircraft fire hit one Horsa, unfortunately carrying bangalore torpedoes; it exploded in the air. Three other Horsas flying with it, however, put down safely. Finding themselves some 25 miles from their objective, the soldiers on board nevertheless, as the British put it, "yomped" through the night and got their mission done. A handful from another crashed glider—just six men of the South Staffords, including a doctor—rejoined their unit after swimming ashore, crawling under a 20-foot tangle of barbed wire, and marching 10 more miles in the darkness. Along the way they accounted for an antitank gun, three machine guns, and a couple of pillboxes, and brought in 21 prisoners.

Wherever they found themselves, the glider troops raised havoc with whatever hostile units they encountered, although much of their time was spent wandering through the gloom of a strange landscape, searching for each other and for somebody to fight. One small group from brigade headquarters, including the brigade commander and a handful of glider pilots, put in their own improvised attack on a shore battery, working through the enemy wire and destroying five field guns and the ammunition dump.



**Gliders of the British 6th Air Landing Brigade litter the ground near the town of Ranville, France, on June 7, 1944. The precision with which many of the British gliders were piloted during D-Day operations astounded observers.**

If the initial landings had been bad, worse was to come. As a second wave of powered aircraft and gliders approached the coast, gunners on the Allied invasion fleet, cruising off the Sicilian coast, mistook the transport aircraft and the gliders for hostile aircraft and opened fire. Casualties were heavy as aircraft were destroyed in the air or crashed into the sea. The final casualty list counted 50 gliders crashed at sea out of a force of 108; another 25 had simply disappeared forever.

Nevertheless, the glider soldiers and their pilots had acquitted themselves very well indeed. Although they could not know it yet, there was a monumental test waiting for them, one on which the future of the world quite literally depended. Back in Britain planning was already well advanced for Operation Overlord, the invasion of Festung Europa from both the sea and the sky. Overlord would be the payoff for all the years of training, the casualties, the disappointments, and the valor. Of all the extraordinary feats of arms in this or any other war, the glider assault on the French mainland has few equals.

Deep in the night of June 5, 1944, flights of gliders crossed the English Channel for one of the most crucial assaults of the war. The crossings of the Orne and Caen Canals were vital to the Normandy invasion, and these gliders were headed for those objectives. As the vast invasion fleet set to sea from England and thousands of British and American paratroops headed for the French shore, the glider pilots headed through the night to find their objectives in the darkness.

The chief worry of the Allied planners was the German panzer formations held well behind the beaches. While some of the German units manning the beach defenses were of less than the highest quality, three divisions in reserve were first class, including the 12th SS Hitler Jugend Division with its Panther tanks. The veteran 21st Panzer Division was also equipped with Panthers, and the 352nd Infantry division was at full strength as well. Among them, these three divisions boasted some 60,000 men in addition to the first-line tanks. A massive armored counterattack into the flank of the British at Sword Beach could mean disaster for the whole invasion force.

To hold up any German assault, the bridges had to be captured and held. This task, on which so much depended, went to 6th Air Landing Brigade and to three platoons of the

2nd battalion, Ox and Bucks Light Infantry, with an attached detachment of sappers. The success of their mission hung on their ability to quickly take and hold the bridges. That in turn depended on six Horsa gliders and their Army pilots, one of whom was the redoubtable sergeant-pilot Ainsworth, the single-handed scourge of the enemy in Sicily.

The gliders had to be landed close to the bridges so that their infantry could strike the objective before the Germans had time to react in force. That depended on the skill of the pilots, and they did their job nearly to perfection. Three gliders headed for each of the bridges. One missed its landmarks and landed several miles away from the objective. The others, however, released from their tugs just as they crossed the French coastline, landed almost on top of their targets, one coming to earth less than 50 yards away from the Caen Canal bridge.

National Archives

**Two of the first British gliders to touch down in Holland during Operation Market-Garden carried jeeps and trailers. Although these gliders were damaged when they brushed wings, the initial airborne phase of ill-fated Market-Garden was successful.**

That glider landed so close to the target that its nose pushed into the German barbed wire and the canal embankment. Ainsworth and his colleague, Sergeant Wallwork, were thrown through the windshield with the shock of the landing. He was the first Allied soldier, said Walwork later, to land in occupied Europe.

It was remarkable flying.

The remaining two gliders assigned to the Orne bridge also landed close to the objective. The infantry swarmed out of their gliders and shot their way across quickly. "Ham and Jam," radioed the commander of the bridge assault; it was the signal of success, anxiously awaited by the rest of the British command. The captors of the bridges were soon reinforced by other division units, and the British would hold the vital bridges firmly while the invasion force came ashore. The vital flank of Sword Beach—and the rest of the invasion forces—was secure.

The Caen Canal bridge was renamed "Pegasus Bridge" after the war, and it carries that proud name today. The Orne bridge is called Horsa bridge, honoring the pilots who put their passengers so close to the objective.

More than 90 other gliders dropped out of the night sky onto French soil, most of them carrying antitank weapons, and many of these were scattered across Normandy. The pilots of one, looking for anybody friendly, stumbled into German fire and went down wounded. One, Sergeant Jock Bramah, was shot through the lung and left for dead. He managed to find shelter in a nearby village. Ten days later, as German troops came to capture him, Bramah shot two of them, jumped out a window, and vanished into the night. Like Ainsworth, he fit the mold of the Glider Pilot Regiment exactly.

Gliders also helped out in the paratroop attack on the vital Merville Battery, which enfiladed Sword Beach. The plan called for three gliders to land virtually on the battery, inside the protective wire entanglement, while the paratroops attacked from outside the perimeter. Two gliders found their target, but both were hit on the way in. One finally landed two miles away. The pilot of the other, coming in to land, at the last moment spotted a mine-warning sign on his chosen LZ and managed to pull up the glider, leapfrog the mines, and crashland in an orchard beyond the minefield. His passengers piled out and immediately ran into German troops hurrying toward the battery. The glider soldiers fought the Germans off, and the paratroopers carried the battery and spiked its guns.

Overlord complete, and the Allies firmly in control in Normandy, glider pilots next flew in Operation Dingson, the successful delivery by 11 Horsas of French SAS men, their jeeps, and their machine guns on their way to join the French Resistance. Their job completed, the British crews were passed through the American lines and on back to Britain.

Market-Garden, the famous "bridge too far," in Boy Browning's words, left the Glider Pilot Regiment with terrible losses. Of the more than 1,300 pilots who landed in Holland, 229 were killed and almost double that number wounded or captured. The commander of the British 1st Airborne Division wrote that the glider pilots "played all kinds of parts but everything they were asked to do they did wholeheartedly." In typically dry, understated British military prose, it was the highest possible compliment.

One of the wounded, Lieutenant Michael Dauncey, led two paras in a rush that captured eight German prisoners and a machine gun. Taking a piece of shrapnel in the eye, he went to the dressing station, which could not help him. Dauncey consoled himself by sleeping awhile and next morning returning to the fighting. Shot again and his jaw broken in two places by a German grenade, Dauncey was captured.

After treatment in a Dutch hospital, Dauncey was moved to a German prison hospital. Still full of fight, he and a Black Watch officer shinnied down a rope of knotted sheets, climbed a barbed wire fence, and disappeared into the night. They managed to find shelter with a civilian doctor and his family, and by February they were back in the British lines.

Three other, much smaller glider-borne operations took place in 1944. All were daylight landings. In the first, in February, three Hadrians carried a military mission to Tito in what was then Yugoslavia. The operation was called Bunghole; its vaguely obscene title may have had something to do with the fact that the pas-

sengers were Russians. After a successful landing in snow, the pilots remained with the partisans for several weeks until the RAF could get a Dakota on the ground to lift them out.

Thirty-five Horsas were part of Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France in August. Again the mission was a complete success, the airborne forces holding until the amphibious landing forces reached them. Another success was Operation Manna, 40 Hadrians landing near Megara, Greece, to help in the liberation of Athens. Four of them carried bulldozers, the rest of them troops and jeeps.

In spite of the losses of Market-Garden, the Glider Pilot Regiment was ready and willing when the time came for the crossing of the Rhine, Operation Varsity, in late March 1945. The pilots' depleted ranks were filled out with some 1,500 Royal Air Force pilots, trained in a conversion course to fly gliders. Once more, casualties were heavy; 60 percent of those killed,

**ABOVE: During Operation Varsity, the airborne crossing of the Rhine on March 25, 1945, a glider pilot peers from the cockpit of his Horsa glider. The airborne crossing of the Rhine was the largest operation of its kind up to that time. LEFT: A Douglas C-47 transport aircraft takes a Waco glider in tow during the opening hours of Operation Market-Garden on September 17, 1944. The airborne seizure of bridges across several rivers in Holland ran into trouble at Arnhem, where elements of the British 1st Airborne Division were isolated.**

wounded, or missing were men of the RAF.

Casualties were heavy in the infantry as well. Many men of the 2nd Battalion, Ox and Bucks Light Infantry, died in the air as German flak tore into their gliders. One soldier later described the chaos of the assault: "With some of the controls damaged and no compressed air to operate the flaps, we flew across the landing zone … to crash head on into a wood … number 1 glider … was breaking up, spilling out men and equipment as we had done—except that with them there were no survivors…."

This single battalion took more than 100 casualties in dead alone, and the LZ was littered with the wreckage of gliders shattered and burning. Its fighting strength was reduced to about 200 men, and much of their equipment had not survived the landing. But they held onto their objective—a bridge across the river Issel—until German tanks backed by infantry grew too strong and too numerous. The panzers' armor was simply too thick for the few 6-pounder antitank guns that had survived the carnage among the gliders. What was left of the battalion blew the bridge and fell back.

Other air-landing battalions had similar experiences trying to fight off armor with their few lightweight antitank guns and PIATs, the spring-loaded, short-range cousin to the German *Panzerfaust*. But the aggressive British infantry held on, knocking out individual German strongpoints with grenades and Sten guns. The flak positions were silenced, clearing the way for more landings.

And there was help from the Royal Artillery as well. Two 25-pounder howitzers survived the landing and went into action, hitting German positions with smoke rounds, marking them for the "cab rank" of cannon-armed RAF Hawker Typhoons orbiting over the battlefield and waiting for targets. Heavy British artillery fire from across the Rhine added to the strength of the surviving infantry. A little more support came from men of the Armored Recon Battalion. Only two of their little tanks—Locust, they were called, successor to the Tetrarch—made it to the ground unscathed, but they went into action immediately.

For all the casualties and confusion, the air-landing troops had done their job. The glider troops carried all their objectives and within a day had linked up with 21st Army Group.

The regiment is only history now, and most of its pilots have passed on. But the memory remains—a luminous memory—of tough and gallant men who flew unarmored, unpowered aircraft, fragile and vulnerable, into the teeth of streams of tracers and the deepest gloom of night. Often without landmarks, buffeted by winds, they managed to land their troops on or near their objectives with astonishing frequency. Like Sergeant Wallwork, crashing through his windshield to be the first invader of Europe, like the paras they flew at the point of the spear ... and drove it home. □

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# *First Strike Against* Japanese Industry

AN ATTACK BY U.S. BOMBERS AGAINST THE JAPANESE-HELD ISLAND OF NAURU RESULTED IN HEAVY DAMAGE TO ENEMY INSTALLATIONS. **BY PHIL SCEARCE**

Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber crews of the U.S. 11th Bombardment Group spent the first three months of 1943 organizing on Hawaiian airfields and flying practice and patrol missions around the islands. By mid-April, with no strike missions and no contact with the enemy, the bomber crews were restless. But the morning of April 17 had a different feel—electric.

The group's officers were still in a closed-door briefing while rumors buzzed about a bombing mission, their first. All that remained for pilots to tell their crews was when and where. When pilot Lieutenant Joe Deasy met with his crew and gave them the particulars, it was the first time they had heard of Funafuti. Twenty-three Liberators would fly to Canton Island, a pork-chop shaped atoll 1,900 miles southwest of Oahu, refuel, and continue 740 miles farther to Funafuti in the Ellice Islands group, more than 2,600 miles from Hawaii.

"We didn't know where Funafuti was," B-24 gunner Sergeant Ed Hess recalled. "When we saw the map, we griped about it being halfway to Australia."

Six months before, on October 2, 1942, 11 ships of the United States Navy entered Funafuti's lagoon and landed a Navy construction battalion. The Seabees immediately began construction of an airfield and support facilities

Time Life/Getty Images

while Marines prepared defenses and set up antiaircraft guns. To build the runway, the Seabees bulldozed thousands of coconut trees and covered arable land with hard-packed coral. The airfield was completed before the end of the year.

On the long flight to Canton, the men ate sandwiches delivered to the flight line from Kahuku's mess hall. They used their flak jackets for pillows and stole naps in the back of the airplane. A relief tube, or "piss pipe" as crewmen called it, was built into the side of the plane just aft of the left waist window; another one was installed behind the flight deck. There was a portable toilet that most men avoided, better to wait than use the "honey bucket" and have to wash it out after landing because "if you used it, it was yours to clean," radio operator Sergeant Herman Scearce remembered. Even the piss pipe could be a nasty problem at higher altitudes where its flow could freeze and cause a messy backup.

The Navy garrison on Canton treated its overnight guests well. The Air Corps men ate a hot meal in the Navy mess hall and slept in clean barracks with fresh bed linens. Early the next morning, 23 refueled B-24 Liberators took flight for the final leg of the trip to Funafuti, and on the afternoon of April 18 the wisps of land of the Ellice Islands came into view.

The planes approached Funafuti's coral airstrip from the southwest. The island, shaped like a long, narrow boomerang, curved from the southwest to its thickest part in the middle, then bent back toward the northwest. Long and graceful, Funafuti was about 50 yards wide at each end, about 700 yards wide in the middle, and seven and a half miles long. Waves broke along the eastern side, the dark blue water of the Pacific just beyond and to the right as the aircraft approached.

To the left of the island, in the middle of the boomerang, was a lagoon, its calm water a beautiful shade of light blue fading to green close to shore. Coconut trees covered the island from its lower tip, nearest the approaching planes, and ended at the airfield. The white coral runway cut straight across the leading edge of the boomerang, beginning just a few feet from the ocean, and it seemed to end in the ocean on the other side.

After landing, the aircraft were parked along the runway side by side. There were no taxiways and very few revetments or bomb proofs on Funafuti to shelter parked aircraft, though there were plans to add them later. If a plane was hit during a Japanese air raid, the planes on either side were also at risk. But the airmen on Funafuti were not worried about a Japanese attack because Funafuti was just a staging base; they were not going to keep the planes there long. Besides, the briefing officer back at Kahuku made it clear that the Japanese would not know they were there.

Early on Monday, April 19, 1943, an officer stepped front and center on Funafuti's outdoor stage before the assembled air crews. The men sat on felled palm logs arranged in rows like seats in a theater. Behind the officer was a map, and on the bottom right of the map was Funafuti. There was another island near the upper left corner, and beside the map was a separate, large, scale drawing of the second island, Nauru.

The officer tapped his pointer on targets and visual references on the map of Nauru. He described antiaircraft gun positions and what

**LEFT: Smoke rises from the phosphate plants on the Japanese-held island of Nauru. The first American bombing raid against a Japanese industrial target occurred in the spring of 1943 and inflicted extensive damage. BELOW: The author's father, Herman Scearce (center), posed with flying mates Al Marston (left) and Jack Yonkus (right) on Oahu in early 1943. Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers of the 11th Bombardment Group struck the first U.S. blow against a Japanese industrial target.**

Author's Collection

Author's Collection


**The crew of the B-24 Liberator *Dogpatch Express* stands proudly beside its aircraft. The crewmen took part in the raid against the phosphate facilities on Nauru on April 20, 1943.**

kind of fighter interception the men would face. When he was finished, a weather officer took the stage, describing the conditions expected through each part of the flight. Next, the operations officer gave the crews critical mission details, including engine start time and order of take off. Each man mentally calculated when he needed to be at the plane in order to preflight his equipment and be ready for engine start.

After the briefing, aircrews prepared their planes for the next day's mission. Ground crews fueled each B-24 with 2,700 gallons of gas from tank trailers towed behind Cletracs, tracked vehicles similar to bulldozers. Flight Engineer Jack Yankus and Assistant Engineer Bob Lipe confirmed the fuel level and checked engine oil levels of their B-24, *Dogpatch Express*. Yankus, Lipe, radioman Herman Scearce, and gunners Hess, Elmer Johnson, and Al Marston cleaned and oiled the barrels of their machine guns and loaded them with ammunition, belts of .50-caliber rounds in a repeating sequence of two armor piercing, two incendiary, and one tracer. Scearce confirmed the radios were working properly and ready to go.

Bombardier Lieutenant Shorty Schroeder oversaw the bomb loading of *Dogpatch Express*. Eight 500-pound general purpose bombs were loaded in the plane's bomb bay racks from bomb trailers pulled by a truck. Most of the bombs were fused to explode on impact; some were equipped with delay fuses. Once the plane was loaded, Yankus checked the landing gear for four inches of travel in their shock-absorbing struts because less could cause the gear to fail.

After a fitful few hours of sleep, the crew of *Dogpatch Express* walked to their plane. Yankus made certain the ignition switches were off, then he and Lipe pulled the propellers through, counting six propellers at each engine, two full revolutions of the Liberator's three-bladed prop. While Scearce rechecked his radio equipment, Yankus climbed aboard and fitted the pilot and copilot parachutes into the recesses of their seats, then reported to Lieutenant Joe Deasy that the plane was ready.

On the flight deck of *Dogpatch Express*, Deasy and copilot Lieutenant Sam Catanzarite completed their preflight checklist as pilots and copilots aboard 22 more Liberators on Funafuti's moonlit runway completed their own. At engine start, four 14-cylinder Pratt & Whitney R-1830-43 radial engines, 1,200-horsepower each, joined the motors of the other aircraft to produce a mighty harmony unlike anything Funafuti had ever heard before.

Before his takeoff roll, Deasy opened the throttles and held the brakes until engine manifold pressures reached 25 inches of mercury. When Deasy released the brakes, Catanzarite held the throttles to the stops so they would not creep back. Yankus called out speed as *Dogpatch Express* accelerated, slowly at first with its full bomb load. Deasy began to apply gentle pressure, pulling the yoke back, and the heavy bomber lifted off Funafuti's dusty coral runway.

In the predawn darkness of April 20, the B-24s took off, each loaded with 4,000 pounds of bombs. One plane developed an engine problem and turned back to Funafuti, but the remaining bombers droned on toward a midday strike against Japanese positions on Nauru.

Nauru lies 26 miles below the equator, 1,000 miles northwest of Funafuti. Oval shaped with about eight square miles of territory, it is ringed by trees and a sandy beach on its perimeter. The interior of the island is almost solid high-grade rock phosphate, essential in metal alloys and used in bomb production. Phosphate mining, refining, and shipping facilities operated by the British on Nauru before the war were shelled by a German auxiliary cruiser in 1940 and seized by the Japanese in 1942. Far flung Nauru, with the unusual distinction of being occupied by the British and attacked by both German and Japanese forces already during the war, was about to be bombed by Americans.

The Liberators drew closer to Nauru and more than 220 air crew and observers were wholly and irrevocably committed. There was no way to avoid whatever was to come, no place to hide. Nauru lay just beyond the horizon, the distance closing at more than three miles per minute. The American bombers would reach their target at noon, each man keenly aware that the bright, beautiful day meant Nauru's Japanese defenders would see the bombers approach with plenty of time to prepare their reception.

Scearce recalls sitting at his radio operator's table behind copilot Catanzarite when navigator Lieutenant Art Boone leaned toward their pilot and said, "Joe, we're one hour out." Scearce glanced at his pilot, and from the right and behind him, he saw Lieutenant Joe Deasy swallow and take a breath before speaking to the crew through the interphone. "We're 60 minutes from the target, boys. Man your guns."

Scearce and Yankus unplugged their interphone headsets and moved toward the rear as they had practiced a hundred times before. They stepped into the bomb bay, *Dogpatch Express*'s four massive radial engines howling in unison, much louder than they had seemed from the flight deck. Moving along the narrow catwalk and indifferent to the thousands of pounds of high explosives just inches to their right and left, waist gunners Scearce and Yankus gripped the framework of the bomb racks as they went. The vibrating metal felt cool.

After Scearce and Yankus passed, Bob Lipe took his position in the top turret, just behind the flight deck, and rotated the turret clockwise, then back, out of habit. Ed Hess settled into the nose turret. Elmer Johnson, already in the aircraft's rear section with Al Marston, stepped back from the piss pipe and stretched himself

before jacking up the belly turret with the hand pump, just enough to release its safety hooks. Johnson opened a hydraulic valve and allowed the turret to slide into the wind stream beneath the plane. He glanced back at Scearce and Yankus, smiled, and made a diving motion, hands together as if he was on the high board at the YMCA, and then opened the turret's hatch door, stepped into the turret, and folded himself into position.

Marston moved up the sloping floor toward the twin .50s in the bomber's tail. There was an interphone jack box at every position, and each gunner plugged in, pulled on his interphone headset, and checked the jack box to make sure the switch was set to "INTER."

Throat microphones around their necks, Yankus and Scearce glanced down and pushed their flak jackets flat with shuffling feet, standing on them for protection against gunfire from below. They pushed their wind deflectors out, swung open their windows and latched them overhead. Already Lipe, Hess, and Johnson had reported ready. Yankus and Scearce swung their machine guns into the air stream and charged their guns with an expert pull on the handle.

"Right waist gun ready," Scearce said. "Left waist ready," Yankus reported, then Marston called in from the rear. Joe Deasy recalled telling his crew, "Keep your eyes open, keep the chatter down, and call 'em when you see 'em. Hold your fire 'til they're in range."

Hess swept the nose turret side to side. Lipe kept the top turret forward, mostly, rotating through 360 degrees, first right, then to the left, as often as his stomach could handle it. Al Marston shifted his eyes up and then straight behind the plane, scanning the sky from just below the twin rudders of his bomber, wind whistling to either side. Elmer Johnson rode below the plane, almost in his own world, the expanse of the ocean thousands of feet below. Scearce searched the sky, and behind him Yankus gripped his machine gun. Back to back they shared almost identical views, a beautiful bright sky, sun directly overhead, other B-24s nearby.

**Deasy's voice broke the interphone silence, clear** and steady, "Eleven o'clock, got two coming in 11 o'clock high!" Scearce heard Lipe and Hess open fire from the top and front of *Dogpatch Express*. He and Yankus leaned forward, trying to see, fists gripping their guns, instinctively pointed where the men were looking.

"Two o'clock high, coming down fast, be ready, top." Lieutenant Deasy's voice was matter-of-fact, Yankus remembered, almost calming, though the words came quickly. The top turret opened up again. The first two Japanese planes, attacking head-on, had broken off to one side of *Dogpatch Express*. The Liberators had been modified by the Hickam Air Depot with tail turrets mounted in the nose, surprising the Japanese fighter pilots who expected to attack the weak, glass nose of unmodified D model Liberators. After their initial head-on pass, the Mitsubishi Zero fighters attacked from other angles.

Scearce's heart pounded like a jackhammer. He could not see the Zeros yet. The nearest B-24's top turret and left waist gunner blazed away, their tracers leading Scearce's eyes above *Dogpatch Express*'s right wing, when a blur of gray flashed beneath the wing. Scearce reacted instantly, pushing his gun barrel low, squeezing the trigger. A two-second burst and the Zero was gone before Scearce heard its 14-cylinder Nakajima Sakae 12 engine scream past. Elmer Johnson in the belly turret then saw the Zero and squeezed off a burst.

Up top, Lipe spoke clearly, a nervous edge in his voice. "One, two more at two o'clock high ... out of the sun again!"

"Eight o'clock low, coming up! Another one at five o'clock," Yankus and then Johnson called. Each man was part of a whole, a working team, and part of their machine. *Dogpatch Express* was now fully engaged, every gun hammering at the attacking fighters in turn. The .50-caliber machine guns pounded like angry fists beating hard and fast on a steel door. Hot, spent brass and gun belt links falling to the floor clinked like glass breaking around the waist gunner's feet.

"We were all scared," Scearce recalls. "We all prayed selfish prayers…God, just get me back on the ground again."

Scearce joined Johnson and Lipe, five .50-caliber machine guns blazing at a single Zero fighter, tracers spitting toward the Japanese plane in burning white lines. Lipe, in the top turret, sent a stream of gunfire into the belly of the Zero as it streaked overhead. From the left waist window, Jack Yankus saw Lipe's tracers drill the unprotected bottom of the enemy plane. He watched it pitch forward, nose down, and lost sight of it as it plummeted straight down. A few seconds of strained quiet followed while the men scanned the sky.

Scearce suddenly spotted a Zero "four o'clock high" and called out the position. Lipe swung around in his electrically powered turret. Scearce bent low, aiming high, waiting for the range to be right when Lipe opened up. Johnson swung left and strained to see the Zero. Scearce saw muzzle flashes through the Zero's propeller; its twin guns seemed to be shooting

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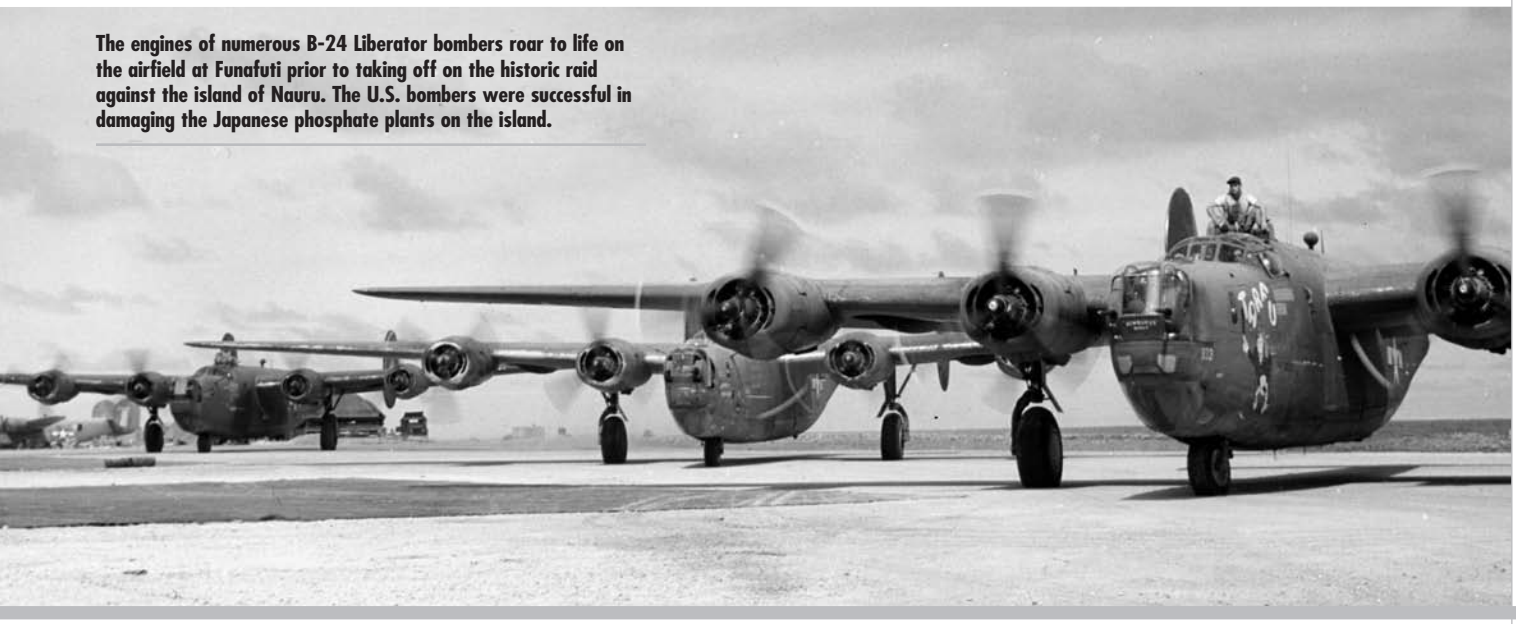

**The engines of numerous B-24 Liberator bombers roar to life on the airfield at Funafuti prior to taking off on the historic raid against the island of Nauru. The U.S. bombers were successful in damaging the Japanese phosphate plants on the island.**

straight at him. Squeezing the trigger, Scearce swung his gun down as the Zero passed. He saw tracers run through the Zero's cowling and remembered that a .50-caliber bullet could knock a cylinder head off a Zero's engine.

Nose gunner Ed Hess gave a quick burst from up front, swinging through 10, then nine o'clock as the fighter passed, and then it was quiet again. Scearce kicked some brass away from his feet, took a deep breath, and thought, "This is a long way from gunnery school."

**As the Zeros moved off, the crew was sure the** other bombers were catching hell behind them. The twin 7.7mm machine guns of the Zero fighters were supplemented by menacing 20mm cannon mounted in each wing. The explosive round from the 20mm gun weighed more than a quarter of a pound, and hits by the Zero's cannon could be devastating.

However, the Zero's impressive armament belied the nimble fighter's weaknesses. The Japanese plane sacrificed the added weight of self-sealing fuel tanks and armor protection in favor of speed and agility, qualities that could serve the Zero well in combat with other fighters. As an interceptor of B-24 Liberators, however, with their armor protection, self-sealing fuel tanks, and 10 .50-caliber guns, the Zero was vulnerable, even fragile. Zero pilots pressing home an attack against a Liberator needed nerves of steel.

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**A portion of the tail section of a U.S. B-24 of the 11th Bombardment Group is seen in this photo of the island of Nauru, which is visible through broken cloud cover. On April 20, 1943, U.S. aircraft struck Japanese facilities on the island.**

Aboard *Dogpatch Express,* bombardier Lieutenant Shorty Schroeder was ready to take control of the plane for the bomb run, his bomb sight connected to the flight controls. The bombardier aimed his entire aircraft through the bomb sight.

The Japanese fighter pilots changed tactics as the bombers readied for their bomb runs, and the flak batteries on the ground below began sending their shells skyward. Nine Zeros circled at a distance, chasing one another's tails in an oval, a racetrack pattern that advanced as the bombers sped forward. The Zeros fired their guns each time the circuit brought them to face the American bombers, but with his own plane's right wing and engines between him and the enemy fighters Scearce could only watch, a white flash each time, a blink, and hope the streams of Japanese bullets missed.

Antiaircraft gunners now took their turn. Flak bursts filled the sky ahead, inky dark puffs drifting closer as the bombers approached. In the distance, a single Japanese plane idled along, out of range of the Liberators' guns, holding the same altitude as the American planes, reporting it to the ground batteries below. The B-24s rushed unalterably, purposefully ahead.

There was no dodging the flak. *Dogpatch Express* held 7,500 feet altitude during the bomb run, level, steady, with no deviation from course. This was a bomber at its most vulnerable during a strike mission, 45 seconds that lasted forever, 45 seconds, it seemed, before the crew could breathe again. Flak bursts, like sinister potholes in the sky, caused the plane to shake and bounce as they exploded. Scearce was amazed anything flew through it. Spent flak pelted the plane like hail on a tin roof.

"We wanted to be small, very small," Deasy remembered. They wanted the bomb run to end, the bombs to be away, but they also wanted the bombs to be on target. They did not want their trip to be wasted, did not want to have to do it again. Scearce noticed his knuckles, ghost white on the grips, and he forced himself to flex his hands as he watched the sky.

Behind the flight deck of *Dogpatch Express* there suddenly was a loud thump and a metallic clang, followed immediately by an evil hissing sound behind copilot Sam Catanzarite. Scearce heard navigator Art Boone say, "We're hit!"

"Bombs away!" Schroeder reported, as the last 500-pound bomb fell from its rack. The plane seemed to leap in the air, free of its heavy burden. Deasy pushed the control yoke forward, nosing *Dogpatch Express* over, and put the throttles to the stops, getting the hell out of there fast.

The hissing slowed as Yankus traced the damage. Sunlight streamed through a hole just below the leading edge of the right wing. A piece of flak, a jagged shard of twisted metal three inches across, had come through the ship just behind Bob Lipe's legs as he sat in the top turret. After cutting a compressed oxygen line, the bomb fragment had stabbed through the pilot's seat. The Zeros harassed the trailing B-24s for half an hour more and finally turned away.

"How'd we do?" Deasy asked. There was a pause, a moment's hesitation, before Yankus spoke. "Everything hit the water, sir." Scearce had seen the splashes, too.

Scearce and Yankus swung their guns inside, locked the windows closed, and pulled the wind deflectors in tight to the sides of the plane. Bob Lipe stepped down from his turret, wiped his face on his sleeve, and looked up at the ugly hole in his plane's skin. He hadn't heard the impact. A few feet aft, and the flak might have hit the top turret. Ed Hess unfolded himself from the nose. Yankus steadied Johnson as he pulled himself from the belly turret and helped him jack it up and secure the turret inside the plane. Johnson stood and stretched, as he had before settling into the turret almost two hours before.

From the rear, they heard Marston say, "Fellas, I'm going to sit here a minute, watch our ass a little while."

Out of danger, the aircraft returned to a higher cruising altitude and continued toward Funafuti. Their targets, phosphate plants, gun positions, maintenance and barracks buildings, and runways on tiny Nauru, were so small that each plane had to make its bomb run alone. As a result, their return to Funafuti was staggered.

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**A B-24 flies above the clouds and just beyond the reach of Japanese antiaircraft fire high above the Pacific Ocean. The black shellbursts from the Japanese guns were often close enough to shower the bombers with shrapnel, producing a disheartening sound which some likened to gravel thrown against a metal door.**

Since each plane had to find its own way, each crew needed a skilled navigator. There was nothing below but ocean, no point of reference except the sun. Navigators relied on dead reckoning, calculating position based on the previous position, taking into account time, heading, and drift. Errors in dead reckoning were cumulative, so each calculation increased the difference between the aircraft's plotted position and its actual location. Because the aircraft were returning to a pinpoint island base hours away and burning limited fuel supplies, mistakes in dead reckoning could be deadly.

The "Navigator's Information File" of the Army Air Forces advised: "In the Central Pacific celestial navigation is used in conjunction with dead reckoning on all missions. Many of the islands and atolls are plotted in error from 2 to 10 miles, usually eastward or westward. Interpretation of sun lines and fixes is important. Radio facilities are not always available in this area and you cannot always depend upon them because of local disturbances. Be careful when you use clouds for pilotage. Cumulus often builds up around islands, but shadows of clouds also look like land…."

Twelve hours after taking off, *Dogpatch Express* settled gently onto Funafuti's dusty coral strip and Deasy taxied the bomber to a stop, guided by a ground crewman's hand signals. On the ground again, the men of *Dogpatch Express* walked around their aircraft, checking it for damage. Some elevator fabric was torn away. There was the jagged flak hole behind and above the copilot's seat, big enough for Yankus to put his fist through. Joe Deasy found the razor-sharp metal in his parachute pack where, its energy finally spent, it stopped less than an inch from the pilot's spine.

A ground crew corporal skidded up in a weapons carrier, wooden planks along its sides for seats, to take the crew of *Dogpatch Express* to the mess hall. There an intelligence officer debriefed them. He gathered information about enemy fighters, how many and what tactics they used, how aggressive they were. He made notes about the antiaircraft reception, bomb hits, fires started, what color the smoke was, and how far out the smoke could still be seen.

After their debriefing and after a few bites to eat, the men walked back to the flight line. They counted 22 B-24s, all but one. Word got around about Lieutenant Russell Phillips's crew. A burst from a Zero's 20mm cannon had raked the side of *Super Man,* practically rolling the plane out of control.

Phillips struggled mightily to get back to Funafuti. There were hundreds of holes in his plane, plus the right rudder was half gone. Six men of Phillips's crew were hurt, including Scearce's good friend, Harold Brooks. Brooks had been rushed from *Super Man* to the field hospital on Funafuti, rushed the short distance from the plane to the hospital, but only after the agonizingly slow flight of nearly six hours from Nauru.

Scearce returned to the tent that housed the enlisted men on his crew. He sat on his cot, untied his boots, and pulled them off. He lay down and stared straight up at the sloping canvas ceiling, turning his head when Jack Yankus stepped in. Yankus had lingered at the flight line with *Dogpatch Express* where he surveyed the severed oxygen line, checked for other damage, and got the latest news. Yankus said, "Brooks, uh ... Brooks didn't make it, Herman."

**A man injured on a bombing mission in the** Pacific had hours to go, perhaps longer than any soldier in any theater of the war, before getting to a field hospital and a surgeon. There was little his crewmates could do beyond basic first aid, try to stop the bleeding, try to position the man correctly, give him morphine, maybe stop the pain. He would wait for hours, riding in his bomber back to a waiting ambulance and a field hospital.

Scearce responded weakly to Yankus, "That's bad." He sat up without looking back toward his friend, pulled his boots on again, and walked back to *Dogpatch Express*. At the plane, Scearce climbed through the open bomb bay and went to his gun position. He inspected his gun and decided against changing the barrel. Some gunners changed their barrels religiously, to be sure the gun would be straight and true for the next mission. A long burst from the .50s could generate enough heat to damage the barrel, but Scearce believed that a proper inspection of the gun was more sensible than frequent barrel changes. He would install a new barrel if and when the gun needed one.

The radioman got down on his knees on the floor of Dogpatch Express under the right waist window. In the silent, parked bomber he knelt for a moment on his flak jacket, still flattened on the metal floor. Kneeling there he scooped up spent .50-caliber machine-gun shell casings with both hands. He wondered whether Brooks had used his weapon, whether, just maybe, Brooks had gotten a burst into a Zero, possibly even the one that killed him.

Scearce dropped the spent brass into a galvanized metal bucket. After picking up the last few casings from the bottom of the airplane, he turned to check the left side and saw that Yankus had already cleaned up his area. Scearce carried the bucket forward, dropped out of the plane through the bomb bay, and set the bucket of shell casings on the ground beside a tool cart. Maybe tomorrow the crew chief would empty the casings into the island's waste dump.

Intelligence information gathered from each air crew just returned from the Nauru mission was compiled and compared, and photos developed and analyzed, until an accurate accounting of the bombing results was completed. Maj.

Gen. Willis Hale endorsed the final report, which was then sent to CincPac, the office of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command.

The report described a highly successful mission: "All bombs dropped hit target except eight.... Damage to installations and material was heavy. Personnel casualties were extremely heavy. Large fires were observed in all bombed areas ... a group of approximately twelve buildings in the center of the runway were destroyed.... Phosphate Plant #3 was completely demolished by at least two direct hits ... at least three direct hits were made on Phosphate Plant #2 ... this plant was completely destroyed. Six bombs destroyed at least three large warehouses, thirteen buildings, eleven small railroad cars, stock storage pile, two water tanks supplying plant ... Diesel power plant, main plant elevator building, one water tank, five cisterns, seven buildings and water distillation plant badly damaged. A train of six 500-lb bombs burst in residential area. Large fires were started which were increasing in scope when last oblique photo was taken ... most buildings in immediate area were destroyed. At least ten fragmentation bombs put out of action three machine gun positions and one heavy antiaircraft. At least fifteen motor vehicles were destroyed. Four two-engine bombers were completely destroyed, two of which burned ... at least three one-engine fighter planes were destroyed."

The report also described damage to American bombers, crediting all of it to attacking Japanese fighter aircraft, and noted that 12 airmen were wounded and one killed. The missing B-24, low on fuel, had landed at Nanumea, where it gassed up and made the hop back to Funafuti.

General Hale concluded his report, stating, "It is believed that this operation was the first successful attack against a valuable Japanese industrial installation since the raid on Tokyo. It was probably the longest offensive air operation of the war to date—the target was in excess of 3,200 miles by air from the home base of the attacking unit."

**After the attack, Nauru's Japanese defenders** rounded up their prisoners. These prisoners, 191 employees of the British Phosphate Commission, had been left behind when their colleagues evacuated ahead of the Japanese landing eight months before. Because they feared that the aerial bombardment was a precursor to an American invasion, an invasion that would never come, and because they would not risk the prisoners' cooperation with the enemy, the Japanese executed them all.

Author's Collection

**The accommodations on Funafuti were sparse for the American bomber crews stationed there. However, the crews of the 11th Bombardment Group were given the honor of flying the first mission against a Japanese industrial target on April 20, 1943.**

The 11th Group crews on Funafuti prepared for another strike mission, but *Dogpatch Express* would not be in the lineup. Ground and flight crews spent the evening fueling and "bombing-up" undamaged airplanes for a raid against Tarawa atoll while repairs to planes damaged in the Nauru raid continued.

Repair and maintenance work on Funafuti was slow and improvised. As an advanced staging base, Funafuti was lightly equipped. The "72 hour kits" carried to the island in the bomb bays of the aircraft were adequate for three days' maintenance, but repair to some of the damaged aircraft was beyond the capabilities of the base. The sheet metal work to *Dogpatch Express* was completed on Funafuti, but the severed oxygen line would wait until the plane returned to Oahu.

A crew from *Life* magazine was on Funafuti, having accompanied the group on the flight from Hawaii via Canton. It seemed strange to the crewmen having the magazine people there because the airmen were not used to being newsworthy. But the Nauru raid was the first strike by American heavy bombers against a Japanese industrial target, and it seemed that the Air Corps wanted publicity for it. Besides chatting with officers, the *Life* crew toured the island in little groups, taking pictures and writing in notebooks while their officer escort pointed out Funafuti's features.

The largest building on the island was the Missionary Church, a concrete structure with a wood-framed roof thatched with pandanus, the same plant natives used to weave mats. The church was built by the London Missionary Society on the west side of the island near the lagoon, almost even with the northeast end of the runway. It provided an easily recognizable visual reference for pilots. Native huts, about 60 of them in all, were on the lagoon side protected by the crescent curve of the island. The huts were rectangular, with corner posts of strong coconut trunks. Roofs were similar to the church, timber framed and thatched with pandanus. The sides of the huts were also thatched and made so they could be rolled up and tied open during the day. Gentle waves in the lagoon lapped at the beach, but on the eastern side, the ocean's waves met the shore with noisy crashes and salty spray.

Funafuti was short on amenities, but the island did have the advantage of a friendly, cooperative native population, and the American servicemen at Funafuti were amused by the pretty, dark-skinned, and topless girls among the island's several hundred natives. But the men were supposed to keep their distance from native women and "the novelty wore off soon enough," Yankus recalled.

Many of the natives spoke English, learned from the London Missionary delegation. They were friendly. In fact, they had worked themselves to near exhaustion months before, help-

ing men of the 5th Marine Defense Battalion, two companies of the 3rd Marines, elements of Navy Scouting Squadron 65, and a group of Seabees unload gear and equipment from their landing vessels.

A quirk of time and location had turned this place, an island paradise, into a wartime bomber base. As beautiful as it looked, like a Robinson Crusoe shipwreck setting, it was a sorry place for a military operation.

Each morning, the relentless equatorial sun heated aircraft and tools so quickly that it was difficult to work. Ground crews who serviced

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**ABOVE: On the night following the raid on Funafuti by B-24 bombers of the 11th Bombardment Group, the Japanese launched a retaliatory raid against the American airfield on Funafuti. Two Liberators were destroyed on the ground and burned furiously well after daylight. LEFT: American airmen wounded during the raid on Nauru and the Japanese raid on Funafuti that followed line the edge of the airfield at Funafuti as they await evacuation to a hospital in Samoa.**

the several Marine Vought F4-U Corsair fighter planes and the Navy's Kingfisher scout planes on Funafuti knew how critical it was to keep tools and equipment covered or put away because salt and sand were everywhere. In the afternoon, it rained, cooling things a bit, but the sun quickly cooked off the rain so that humidity joined forces with the heat to make working conditions miserable.

The coral runway built by the Seabees should have been as solid as concrete, but rain prevented the live coral used to build it from curing properly. The coral packed like gravel, rutted and dusty. When aircraft took off or landed, dust from the runway created storms of minute abrasive particles. The northeast to southwest orientation of the single airstrip offered no alternative if the predominantly easterly winds shifted to the southeast. In those conditions, pilots met a 90-degree crosswind, challenging enough with a heavy load on takeoff, but nerve-racking with low fuel, an engine out, or battle damage on the return.

Freshwater was provided by distillation units. The Marines and Navy men supplemented the water supply by catching rain runoff in barrels placed under the drape of their tents. In the middle of the island was a pond, really more of a swampy bog, that the Seabees had to partially fill when they built the runway, but the bog was of little practical use except to the island's mosquito and rat populations.

The enlisted men of each bomber crew shared a tent. The canvas tents lacked floors and electricity and were equipped with cots. Officers were housed in a separate area, also in tents but with electricity from gas-powered generators.

**Equipment for servicing bombers was barely** adequate. Ground crewmen had two Cletracs, slow, tracked vehicles, more tractor than truck, for servicing aircraft. Cletracs were excellent for towing and parking aircraft but dreadfully slow for pulling gas trailers to refuel airplanes. A mess hall and barracks were planned, but for now the men made do with field kitchens and tents.

There was a one-room hospital on Funafuti, completed in November 1942. It had 40 field beds and was staffed by two doctors, a dentist, and 22 Navy corpsmen. They boasted that the famed World War I fighter ace Eddie Rickenbacker was among their first patients. Rickenbacker was one of seven survivors of an October 1942 B-17 crash in the ocean. Survivors drifted for weeks in their rafts before being rescued by a Kingfisher aircraft.

Rickenbacker and his men were taxied half an hour across water, lashed to the aircraft's wing because the rescue made the plane overloaded for flight. The Kingfisher finally met a PT boat that took Rickenbacker the rest of the way to Funafuti.

There were a few bunkers for personnel, built by the Marines, but not enough for every man's protection. There were shallow slit trenches and some holes where palm trees had been bulldozed down, but most of the island was too low for much digging. There were a few revetments for aircraft, but not enough to protect them all. The group's best defense on Funafuti was secrecy, but there were only so many places from which B-24s could have attacked Nauru.

The Japanese may have sent a plane to follow the Americans as they returned, or they may have reconnoitered Funafuti undetected. The briefing officer on Kahuku who told the bomber crews bound for Funafuti that the Japanese would not know they were there had made no promise that the secret would last.

In fact, sometime during the night of April 20, just hours after the last B-24 returned, three twin-engined Mitsubishi aircraft took off from a Japanese air base on the island of Betio in the Tarawa atoll with full bomb loads. The Japanese planes turned south-southeast, headed for Funafuti.

*Continued from page 78*

By Al Hemingway

Signal Magazine

# Finland: Germany's Blind Alley

**The shaky alliance between Germany and Finland was an ultimate disaster for the Third Reich.**

**ORIGINALLY A PART OF SWEDEN, FINLAND WAS ABSORBED BY RUSSIA IN THE** early 19th century. It was not until the late 1800s, when Russia began to impose new taxes on the Finns, draft their citizens into its military, and station troops within its borders, that Finland yearned for its freedom.


Although Finland gained its independence in 1917, the next quarter century saw unrest and wars erupt between Russia and Finland. By the late 1930s, the Soviets were demanding that the Finns allow them to use their country as a base to launch military operations against Nazi Germany.

In his new book, ***Finland's War of Choice: The Troubled German-Finnish Coalition in World War II*** (Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2011, 416 pp., photographs, maps, notes, index, $32.95, hardcover), retired U.S. Army Colonel Henrik O. Lunde, examines a little-known part of World War II and how each of the participants fared at the end of hostilities.

In mid-October 1939, both sides were engaged in sharp dialogue over the Russian demands on the Finns that included building a huge naval base within their borders to guard against the looming Nazi threat. When the Soviets went public with the information, the Finns felt that they had been publicly humiliated and they severed talks with the Russians. This prompted the Soviet Union to invade Finland on November 30, 1939. Although they ultimately lost the three and a half month struggle known as the Winter War, the Finnish Army made a good showing, prompting the German High Command to reevaluate its high opinion of the Russian Army.

As the author states, with the German victories in Norway and Denmark, Finland looked upon the country as a "rising star." Cut off and isolated from the Western powers, which offered no assistance in the Winter War, Finland turned to Germany as a potential ally against Russia.

When the Finnish government extended an olive branch to Adolf Hitler, the Nazi government reciprocated. Talks soon began and, with Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union in 1941, the nations formed an uneasy coalition. Because the Finns believed that the Soviet Union would continue in its efforts to conquer their nation, Finnish government officials made a pact with the devil.

German forces soon occupied Finland in preparation for Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia. In the summer of 1941, the "Continuation War" erupted with Finland regaining most of the territories it had lost to the Soviet Union during the Winter War. During the next few years, Finland fought a defensive campaign until the Red Army launched another attack in June 1944. Although surprised, the Finnish Army fought well against greater numbers. By September 1944, however, with the Soviets racing toward Berlin, the nations signed an armistice.

The terms of the agreement demanded that Finland oust German troops from the country. This resulted in the Lapland War during which the Nazis burned and laid waste to the northern section of the country, resulting in 100,000 Finns being driven from their homes. By the spring of 1945, the German Army had left Finland.

Lunde claims that Hitler's preoccupation with Scandinavia drained Germany of its resources. A large number of troops that could have been deployed elsewhere were sent there.

**Finnish troops fought with Germany but provided little help with Hitler's planned conquest of Russia.**

The war in Finland was the first time large-scale armies conducted

*You deserve a factual look at . . .*

# A Most Stalwart and Reliable Ally

## Is Israel indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier?

In previous *hasbarah* (educating and clarifying) messages, we made clear what a tremendous asset for our country Israel is. We gave many examples of its contribution to American safety in that important area of the world. But there is much more.

### What are the facts?

**Turmoil in the Middle East.** There is upheaval in the Middle East. Governments shift, and the future of this vital area is up in the air. In those dire circumstances, it is a tremendous comfort to our country that Israel, a beacon of Western values, is its stalwart and unshakable ally.

**Unreliable "allies."** Egypt, a long-term "ally" of our country, is the beneficiary of billions of dollars of American aid. Its dictator, Hosni Mubarak has been dethroned. As of now, it is unclear who and what will be Egypt's new government. It is widely assumed, however, that it may be the Muslim Brotherhood. Far from being a religious organization, as its name would imply, it is dominated by fanatical radicals, ardent antagonists of the West, obsessed anti-Semites, and sworn enemies of the State of Israel. If the Muslim Brotherhood would indeed come to power, a bloody war, more violent than anything that has come before, is likely to ensue.

> "What a comfort for our country to have stalwart and completely reliable Israel in its corner..."

Saudi Arabia, a tyrannical kingdom, is another important "ally" of the U.S. It is the most important source of petroleum, the lifeblood of the industrial world. It is, however, totally unreliable and hostile to all the values for which the United States stands. The precedent of Iran cannot fail to be on the minds of our government. The Shah of Iran was a staunch ally of the U.S. We lavished billions of dollars and huge quantities of our most advanced weapons on him. But, virtually from one day to the next, the mullahs and the ayatollahs – fanatical enemies of our country, of Israel, and of anything Western – came to power. Instead of friends and allies, Iran's theocratic government became the most virulent enemy of the United States. Could something like that happen in Saudi Arabia? It is not at all unlikely!

Other U.S. allies in the region – Jordan, the "new" Iraq, and the Gulf emirates – are even weaker and less reliable reeds to lean on. Libya, which once, under King Idris, hosted the Wheeler Air Base, became an enemy of the U.S. under the loathsome Khaddafi. Turkey, once a strong ally, has cast its lot with Iran.

**A stalwart partner.** Israel, in contrast, presents a totally different picture. Israel's reliability, capability, credibility and stability, are enormous and irreplaceable assets for our country. Many prominent military people and elected representatives have recognized this. Gen. John Keegan, a former chief of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, determined that Israel's contribution to U.S. intelligence was "equal to five CIA's." Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said that "The intelligence received from Israel exceeds the intelligence received from all NATO countries combined. The Soviet military hardware that was transferred by Israel to the USA tilted the global balance of power in favor of our country."

In 1981, Israel bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor. While at first condemned by virtually the whole world – sad to say, including the United States – it saved our country a nuclear confrontation with Iraq. At the present time, US soldiers in Iraq and in Afghanistan benefit from Israel's experience in combating Improvised Explosive Devices, car bombs and suicide bombers. Israel is the most advanced battle-tested laboratory for U.S. military systems. The F-16 jet fighter, for instance, includes over 600 Israeli-designed modifications, which saved billions of dollars and years of research and development.

But there is more: Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank. Its superb harbors, its outstanding military installations, the air- and sea-lift capabilities, and the trained manpower to maintain sophisticated equipment are readily at hand in Israel.

Israel does receive substantial benefits from the United States – a yearly contribution of $3 billion – all of it in military assistance, no economic assistance at all. The majority of this contribution must be spent in the US, generating thousands of jobs in our defense industries.

Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier. If it were not for Israel, thousands of American troops would have to be stationed in the Middle East, at the cost of billions of dollars a year. In contrast to the unreliable friendship of Muslim countries, the friendship and support of Israel are unshakable because they are based on shared values, love of peace and democracy. What a comfort for our country to have stalwart and completely reliable Israel in its corner, especially at a time when in this strategic area turmoil, upheaval and revolution are the order of the day. Yes, Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East.

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FLAME

*Facts and Logic About the Middle East*
*P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159*
*Gerardo Joffe, President*

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military campaigns in an arctic environment, and all sides suffered tremendous losses from 1939 until war's end in 1945. Finland suffered 52,500 dead, 7,800 wounded, and nearly 150,000 missing in action. Germany dead were counted at 16,400, while 60,400 were wounded, and 6,800 missing. The Soviets lost more than a quarter million dead and 550,000 wounded.

There is no doubt that Germany gained nothing from its association with Finland. The Finnish government did not assist Germany when it was bogged down during the siege of Leningrad or help with the interdiction of the Murmansk railroad.

"The end result was that the Germans were left to dance to the Finnish fiddler," writes Lunde. "Their army in Lapland and the arctic was trapped both geographically and operationally. It did not have the strength to cut the Murmansk railroad alone. That army could have served the German war cause better on other fronts. For Germany, Finland was a blind alley."


***The Final Betrayal: Mountbatten, MacArthur and the Tragedy of the Japanese POWs*** by Mark Felton, Pen & Sword, South Yorkshire, England, 2010, 192 pp., notes, index, photos, $39.95, hardcover.

In the past several decades, disturbing reports that General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander in the Pacific, had purposely squashed rescue attempts of prisoners of war by British and Australian troops have surfaced. In this book, the author sheds new light on these startling revelations.

By 1944, even the Japanese knew it would be a matter of time before an invasion of their homeland would be launched. As island after island fell to the Allies, the Japanese officers in charge of the internment camps became progressively crueler in their treatment of prisoners. Especially singled out were flight crews, who the Japanese viewed as the main reason they were losing the war. In one such incident in August 1945, seven American fliers were taken to a rifle range in Singapore where they were used for training in sword-fighting tactics as Japanese sailors beheaded each man. Because most of the Japanese were not familiar with using a sword, it often took more than one blow.

Orders from Sadayoshi Nakanishi, acting director of the Prisoner of War Information Bureau in Tokyo, were found after the war with a document stating that POWs were to be force-marched so they could be used as "slave labor as long as possible."

In addition, the War Ministry in Tokyo ordered their commanders not to let any prisoners be repatriated. The edict said that they were well within their rights to kill all their prisoners without fear of censure or punishment. With consent from the Japanese High Command, officers went on a murderous killing spree before war's end—with little or no inter-

## Short Bursts

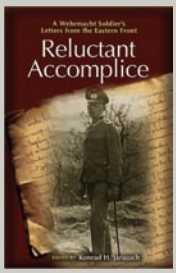
***Reluctant Accomplice: A Wehrmacht Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front*** edited by Konrad H. Jarausch, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2011, 412 pp., index, notes, photographs, $35.00, hardcover.

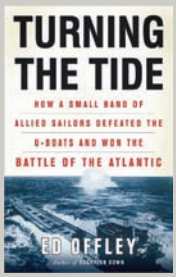
Here is a collection of compelling letters written by a German soldier who served at the outset of World War II on the Eastern Front. And what makes this book additionally intriguing is the fact that his son, noted German historian Konrad H. Jarausch, Jr., edited his father's letters.

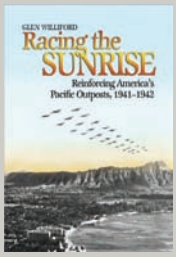
Initially, the younger Jarausch had deep concerns about confronting his father's service in the German Army. He avoided reading the correspondence between him and his mother and other individuals for fear it would deeply trouble him.

However, when he finally began reading his father's accounts of life in the army in Poland and Russia, the letters demonstrated another side of the soldier. In the beginning, his writings were those of a soldier filled with patriotism and believing in the Nazi cause. But, as the months dragged on, the elder Jarausch saw the war in a whole new light—not one of glory, but one of death and atrocities that the sensitive youth could not bear.

"We discovered another case of cannibalism today," Jarausch wrote while a guard at a POW camp. "Yet the corpses, when they are carried without clothes to the graves, are scrawny like late gothic figures of Christ, frozen stiff. But the whole thing is already more murder than war."




***Turning the Tide: How a Small Band of Allied Sailors Defeated the U-Boats and Won the Battle of the Atlantic*** by Ed Offley, Basic Books, New York, 2011, 480 pp., bibliography, notes, photographs, $27.99, hardcover.

There is no doubt that the Battle of the Atlantic was a crucial part of the Allied victory in World War II. Great Britain, isolated and alone, was locked in combat with Nazi Germany and needed essential supplies to maintain the war effort. Thousands of merchant vessels sailed across the Atlantic to bring England the materials she sought to continue the fight—and patrolling those waters were the German U-boats bent on sinking as many ships as possible and bringing England to her knees.

This book details the Allied effort in delivering war materiel to the island nation in spite of the constant U-Boat threat. Fighting in the Atlantic began in September 1939, just a few days after Hitler's army invaded Poland. For five and one-half years both sides slugged it out to gain supremacy on the high seas.

When it was over, The U.S. lost 71,000 civilian crew members and gunners, and 9,500 Merchant Marine crewmen also perished. The Brits fared much worse with nearly 25,000 of their merchant seaman lost at sea. The Germans paid a heavy price, losing 717 of their 830 commissioned U-boats.

The author has done a marvelous job paying homage to the men who risked their lives keeping the sea lanes open and winning the Battle of the Atlantic and eventually the war itself.

***Racing the Sunrise: Reinforcing America's Pacific Outposts, 1941-1942*** by Glen Williford, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2010, 398 pp., index, notes, photographs, $37.95, hardcover.

The author, one of the cofounders of the Coast Defense Study Group, attempts to disprove the statement that remote U.S. Pacific bases such as Guam, Wake Island, Midway, and the Philippines were not being supplied at the outbreak of World War II.

Herculean supply efforts were underway six months prior to hostilities against Japan. In mid-1941, both the Army and Navy began to bolster their garrisons at Pearl Harbor, and General Douglas MacArthur was a persuasive spokesman for resupplying the

ference from MacArthur, historians say.

In *Prisoners of the Japanese*, author Davan Daws writes, "MacArthur had given the highest priority to finding and freeing POWs and civilian internees in the middle of the large-scale fighting, and with no expense spared."

Daws claims that because MacArthur wanted to make a "grand gesture" of the "I shall return" promise he had made when he left the Philippines in 1942, he allowed the Japanese at the Cabanatuan and Bilibid prisons to continue abusing prisoners. He saw this as a huge propaganda asset for himself, Daws asserts.

Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia, was furious with MacArthur's foot dragging when it came to rescue and relief efforts for British troops and their allies. At one camp, he even told the POWs that MacArthur had ordered him to halt reinforcements headed toward Malaya that could have arrived weeks before the formal surrender ceremony on September 2, 1945.

British, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, and Indian troops suffered grievously at the hands of the brutal Japanese captors. Of the 128,554 total POWs, 29,149 were murdered by the enemy. The highest percentage to be killed was among the Aussies at 34 percent. They lost nearly 7,500 of a total of 21,776 who were captured.

For the remainder of his life Mountbatten hated the Japanese with a passion because of the unspeakable atrocities they had committed against Allied POWs.

When Mountbatten was assassinated at the hands of IRA terrorists in 1979, no Japanese dignitaries were allowed to attend his funeral. His disdain for his former enemy did not diminish—even after his death—more than 30 years later.


***The Beasts of Buchenwald: Karl & Ilse Koch, Human Skin Lampshades, and the War-Crimes Trial of the Century*** by Flint Whitlock, Cable Publishing, Inc., Brule, WI, 2011, 325 pp., notes, index, photographs, $24.95, hardcover.

At first glance Karl and Ilse Koch looked like any normal married couple, raising children, with Karl a career Army officer. However, the pair committed some of the most heinous crimes against humanity during World War II when Karl Koch was the commandant of the notorious Buchenwald concentration camp.

A cruel, sadistic man, Koch streamlined the killing machine at the camp. He endorsed and encouraged torture, beatings, and medical experiments among the prisoners, especially the Jews and clergy who were imprisoned there during his reign of terror. His wife, Ilse, actively participated in the cruelty by hitting prisoners with her riding crop, selecting inmates to be tortured after she said they looked at her, and choosing prisoners with unusual tattoos to be murdered so she could have the tattoos as souvenirs and, some have claimed, use them as lampshades and other items around her home.

Karl Koch was eventually transferred from Philippines.

By late 1941 and early 1942, a major effort was underway to rush supplies to these isolated bases. This account focuses on the plans and methods employed to reinforce the outposts six months before the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

***Finding the Foe: Outstanding Luftwaffe Mysteries of the Battle of Britain and Beyond Investigated and Solved*** by Andy Saunders, Grub Street Publishing, London, England, 2010, 208 pp., index, photographs, $39.95, hardcover.

Author Andy Saunders, an aviation historian specializing in the air war over Europe from 1939-1945, has become a modern-day Hercule Poirot in attempting to identify German pilots and flight crews lost over Great Britain during World War II.

Although these are German pilots, the author feels that the "airmen fought and died ... in the service of their country," leaving behind loved ones who mourned their loss. Just as it is important to bring closure to Allied servicemen, it is just as imperative that the same be done for the opposing side.

Saunders asks that anyone with information on any case of a missing German air crew member notify him through the publisher's address or website at milhis@grubstreet.co.uk.


***The Children's War, Germany 1939-1949*** by Peter Bodo Gawenda, Brown Books Publishing Group, Dallas, TX, 2010, 338 pp., photographs, $24.95, hardcover.


Here is a unique book on war as viewed through the eyes of children. The place is Germany, 1939. Peter Bodo Gawenda's father has been drafted into the German Army, leaving his family to fight for the Third Reich and eventually enduring years as a POW until his miraculous return. It also depicts the harsh conditions that his family had to endure, especially as the war was winding down. Food, clothing, and medical supplies, were always in constant demand.

Gawenda also has shared a list of "Children's Rules" that were implemented during the conflict. Some of them include never throw away food, leave the room when adults speak in low voices, and never lie.

The book delves into his mother's decision to leave their hometown when Russian troops were approaching. Their arduous trek took them through Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, where they escaped from an internment camp, and finally into Bavaria. The journey took them eight months. This is a fascinating and, at the same time, a tragic story of one family's plight and survival during the war.


***Dogfight: The Greatest Air Duels of World War II*** edited by Tony Holmes, Osprey Publishing, Long Island, NY, 2011, 352 pp., bibliography, photographs, $25.95, softcover.

There is nothing more exciting than witnessing two fighter pilots engaged in an aerial duel. Usually this air-to-air combat lasts only for a matter of seconds before one skilled pilot outlasts, outmaneuvers, and outguns, his opponent.

In his new book, aviation historian Tony Holmes takes the reader through World War II by examining the aircraft used by the Allies and Axis powers. The planes include Great Britain's Supermarine Spitfire and Seafire, Germany's Messerschmitt Me-109 and Focke Wulf Fw-190, the U.S. North American P-51 Mustang, Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, and Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, and Japan's Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar and Mitsubishi Zero. Each is closely scrutinized for its performance.

But it was more than just the plane—it was the skills of the pilot who handled it—that resulted in victory or defeat. These top guns of their day swirled, dodged, and looped their way around each other in what have become classic dogfights in aviation history.

"If you want to kill that guy," one pilot said, "the best thing to do is get around behind him where he can't see you ... and shoot him." □

Buchenwald and was later gunned down by a Nazi firing squad for crimes against the state. His wife was eventually tracked down and put on trial for her terrible crimes. The legal proceedings were covered extensively by the American press, and the public learned for the first time the extent of the cruelty administered in the camps.

Ilse Koch maintained her innocence and, because of Cold War politics, her life sentence was reduced to a mere four years. But Ilse Koch did not get away that easy. She was arrested again by West German police and retried for her alleged war crimes. This time she received another life sentence with no parole.

Author Flint Whitlock spent several years questioning survivors of the death camp and the American liberators of Buchenwald. The former inmates insisted that the "Bitch of Buchenwald" had carried out her evil crimes. Whitlock, editor of *World War II Quarterly,* visited the camp and the prison where Isle Koch was incarcerated but could find no trace of her grave.

On the morning of September 2, 1967, Isle Koch committed suicide by hanging herself in her cell. Her son, whom she conceived while imprisoned during her first trial, had come to visit her that morning. Her suicide note read, "I cannot do otherwise. Death is for me a liberation."

Justice had finally been served.

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***Fighting Spirit: The Memoirs of Major Yoshitaka Horie and the Battle of Iwo Jima,*** edited and annotated by Robert D. Eldridge and Charles W. Tatum, U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2011, 244 pp., index, notes, photographs, $26.95, hardcover.

There have been numerous books, movies, and articles dealing with the bloody 36-day Battle of Iwo Jima in February and March 1945. Everyone knows about the heroic struggle of the U.S. Marines to seize the island from a fanatical Japanese enemy who had spent months preparing a maze of underground tunnels, caves, and machine gun nests throughout the island of five square miles.

Because there were very few prisoners taken due to the Bushido Code that dictated Japanese soldiers were to fight to the death, little is known from the Japanese perspective about the battle.

One staff officer, however, who was involved with Iwo Jima's defenses, was transferred to nearby Chichi Jima prior to the invasion by U.S. Marines. Major Horie Yoshitaka survived the war and wrote his memoirs in 1965.

Horie breaks down the island's troop strength, weapons and, most importantly, what the innermost thoughts were of the Japanese commander, Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi Tadamichi, who was fully aware that his mission was futile. No matter how much destruction his men could inflict upon the Marines, the Americans would be victorious in the end.

Horie is critical of his country in his account. He asks why the Japanese survivors from the war were treated so poorly by his country. He also asks a timely question, "How can we use the tragedy of Iwo Jima to prevent war in the future?"

A more compassionate individual, who testified against his fellow officers in war crime trials, Horie was befriended by the Americans. One was Marine Lt. Col. James H. Tinsley, to whom Horie gave his sword after the war. Horie traveled to the United States and spoke at veterans gatherings about the battle and the role he played in it.

Horie's story is intriguing. It gives great insight into one of the most horrendous battles of World War II in the Pacific where more than 26,000 died on both sides for a small speck of sand.

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***To Kingdom Come: An Epic Saga of Survival in the Air War Over Germany*** by Robert J. Mrazek, Caliber Books, New York, 2011, 400 pp., index, photographs, $25.95, hardcover.

Because of its industrial significance, Stuttgart, Germany, was the target of numerous Allied bombing raids during the war. For four and one-half years, the city endured numerous attacks that resulted in the deaths of nearly 4,600 residents and the destruction of more than 39,000 buildings.

However, the Allies suffered tremendous losses as well. Hundreds of Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses and their flight crews were shot down. One of the deadliest raids was conducted on September 6, 1943, when 338 B-17s took off from their bases in England to bomb German military targets within the city. Nearly half did not even make it to their destination.

The author has interviewed six men about their personal experiences during the mission that resulted in the loss of 45 Flying Fortresses. Most were shot down, some held as prisoners of war, and others miraculously made their escape from the enemy with the assistance of the underground forces operating against the Nazis.

One such survivor, 2nd Lieutenant Jimmy Armstrong, spent weeks with the help of the French Underground avoiding capture after his plane, the *Yankee Raider,* crashed. His incredible adventure of passage on a fishing boat across the English Channel is riveting. Forced to go below in cramped quarters, he was bounced about as the tiny vessel pitched and rocked all the way to the port of Falmouth.

The book is a wonderful tribute, not only to the half-dozen veterans mentioned who survived that deadly day in the skies over Stuttgart in 1943, but also to the countless other airmen who braved the horrendous flak from German fighter planes and antiaircraft guns and did not come home.

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***Hitler's Savage Canary: A History of the Danish Resistance in World War II*** by David Lampe, Arcade Publishing, New York, 2011, 256 pp., index, $24.95, hardcover.

Alone and cut off from the main Allied forces during World War II, Denmark was forced to fend for itself. From the beginning of the country's occupation, Hitler had said that the two nations, with similar Aryan backgrounds, could actually be one country. The Nazis expected no trouble from the Danes and did not even consider themselves an occupation force which, as the author states,was incorrect. Even Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill called Denmark Hitler's "tame canary."

Both Hitler and Churchill would be proven wrong. Because of their fierce nationalism, the Danes formed one of the most ingenious resistance movements of any occupied nation in the conflict. Even British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery was extremely impressed and referred to it as "second to none."

Another amazing aspect of the Danes' defiance of Nazi rule were the average citizens, many of whom did things to sabotage the German war effort. Danish workers secretly placed sugar into the concrete that built the gun emplacements, causing them to crack when the first howitzer was fired. Postmen opened letters mailed to the Gestapo headquarters to learn secrets. Others made copies of German blueprints, sending them to Great Britain to be studied.

Perhaps the greatest achievement by the Danish people was the rescuing of 7,000 Jews from the clutches of the Nazis. Many of these refugees would have certainly been transported to one of the Nazi extermination camps, never to be heard from again.

Lampe's book is a true testament to the courage and determination of the Danish people. □

By Joseph Luster

# COMING TO YOUR CONSOLE THIS SUMMER

*Hearts of Iron III* includes a partisan wartime system and *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars* takes the resistance movement to the air.

## Hearts of Iron III: For the Motherland

There are strategy games, and there are strategy *games*. You know what I mean when I get all italicized like that; I'm talking about the difference between simply sending units out across a grid-based map to do battle, and actually getting the player involved in the diplomacy of war. *Hearts of Iron III: For the Motherland* caters to the would-be war wager who wants to get as in-depth as possible, acting as an expansion to *Hearts of Iron III* (following last year's *Semper Fi*), which was originally released for PC (and OS X) in 2009.


PUBLISHER
Paradox Interactive

DEVELOPER
Paradox Interactive

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Q2 2011

The *Hearts of Iron* franchise has been running strong since 2002, and the third entry ballooned the series' established features to an even more absurdly layered degree. One of the key elements of *Hearts of Iron* is that it strays from the typically (and often understandably) limited country choices provided in most WWII strategy games. Here you can choose from pretty much any country that existed during 1936-1948, with over 100 nations to pick from overall.


Adding to the scope of the series, *III* also marked the introduction of a new graphics engine that runs the action in 3-D.

*For the Motherland* strives to offer an even deeper WWII experience than its predecessors, *Semper Fi* included. The title (and cover art) kind of give it away, but this expansion puts a lot of emphasis on the Soviet Union. In addition to its leaning toward the motherland, one of the fresh additions to the franchise is a new partisan wartime system, which allows the players to build their own partisan units.

In general, there's more customizability in setting up unique, yet still appropriate scenarios. For instance, once France falls, you can then start building up the French Resistance. Similarly, Paradox wanted to explore aspects of the war that haven't been touched on in other games. Players can even dive into the Undeclared War, which involves remodeling the resource system to support many different facets of battle, including America's predeclaration dive into battle via an undeclared naval campaign.

On a broader scale, the folks at Paradox are really aiming at a faster game and improved artificial intelligence. Players can finance or push for a coup; implement "war goals," which gives more options to countries like Finland, adding generously to the specific goals of whichever region the player has chosen to control; and they are now granted the ability to hand over control of certain parts of the game to computer AI. This allows the players to spend time and effort on what they specifically want to work on and improve in regard to their country's war efforts.

Hopefully Paradox has taken similarly careful measures in tweaking things like *Hearts of Iron III*'s user interface, which was one of the titles most glaring weaknesses. In a series with so much depth, and so many options presented to the player at any given turn, these aspects can make or break the experience. *Hearts of Iron III* and its expansions will likely evade the interest of more casual strategists regardless, but the series is definitely worth digging into for those who fancy themselves virtual world leaders.

## Air Conflicts: Secret Wars

On a less heavy note comes *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars*, from developer Games Farm. This is another in an increasingly long line of air combat games that purposefully straddle the line between arcade and simulation by offering each as an option. Playing *Air Conflicts* arcade style takes some pressure off the players and allows them to focus on the dogfighting at hand, while simulation offers more options for controlling the various (over 16) selectable aircrafts.

Each of the game's seven campaigns are based on a resistance movement within World War II—the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia, the Polish Armia Krajowa, the French Maquis, etc.—with historical battles ranging from the Battle of the Neretva Bridge to the Siege of Tobruk. All in all, campaign mode is comprised of over 48 missions, with variety in the form of patrolling, hit and run, stealth, bombing and escorting.

The only downside to the title thus far comes in the form of what appears to be fairly limited multiplayer modes. That's not to say that the amount of modes themselves are terribly restrictive, but they allow for only up to eight players, either via local or online play. It's unclear whether that's by design, or if it has to do with the fact that *Air Conflicts* is available on both PC and console, with the latter possibly restricting the scale of battle. Either way it's still nice to have the option available when it comes to the platform of choice, as consoles (and their controllers) would certainly work well for the game's more arcade-centric mode. □


PUBLISHER
Kalypso Media/bit-Composer Games

DEVELOPER
Games Farm

SYSTEM(S)
Xbox 360, PS3, PC

AVAILABLE
August 2011

*Continued from page 71*

Scearce made his way to his crew's tent before curfew. An ordnance truck, a bomb loader with a small crane attached to the rear, was parked nearby. Scearce assumed that whoever used it last must have parked it near his own tent. Parking it in the shade of coconut trees in the crew quarters area would keep the vehicle and its steering wheel a little cooler than parking it beside the runway.

Inside the tent, the enlisted men of *Dogpatch Express* chatted quietly. They talked about Nauru and the coming strike against Tarawa. They speculated about their next mission and whether Lieutenant Schroeder would get his bombs on target next time. Conversation faded quickly because the men were exhausted; they had not slept much the night before.

Shortly after midnight, the air raid signal sounded. A shrill, piercing siren, 10-second blasts at five-second intervals, caused the men to stir. Marines ran from tent to tent, yelling "Air raid! Air raid!"

Scearce and his heavy-eyed crewmates half-heartedly swung their legs to the ground, assuming this was someone's idea of a joke or maybe a drill. Then a Marine Corps antiaircraft battery opened fire, boom ... boom ... boom ... and the men knew immediately it was no drill. They scrambled in the dark to pull on flight suits and ran out of their tents. Now aircraft could be heard, but the direction was indistinct, there was just the sound of unsynchronized aircraft engines overhead. A familiar voice shouted, "Get in the hole!"

There was a shallow hole near the crew's tent, and Scearce piled in on top of his crewmates. Falling bombs made menacing whistling sounds while explosions threw orange flashes about treetops and tents, casting silhouettes of men running. The smell was pungent, like sulfur or a spent shotgun shell.

Forty terrified villagers huddled inside the Missionary Church, praying that its concrete walls would save them. Marine Corps Corporal Fonnie Black Ladd ran into the church, calling for the people to get out, imploring them to get away from the church, to take cover elsewhere because the church was an obvious target for the Japanese.

A salvo of bombs stepped toward the hole containing the men of *Dogpatch Express,* its pattern of explosions growing louder and closer. Scearce held the sides of his helmet with both fists clenched, trying desperately to fit under it. Knees to his chest, teeth gritted, and eyes squeezed tight, Scearce knew the next one whistling toward them would be very close.

With a terrific whang the bomb hit the ordnance truck parked just a few feet away. Dirt and metal rained down. In the next second, a hissing cylinder landed in the crew's tiny hole, right on top of Elmer Johnson. For a moment, the men of *Dogpatch Express* could hear nothing, then the sensation of sound returned with a shrill ringing, and the powerful stench of explosives filled their nostrils. Scearce's mind raced: "This is it," he thought. The metal cylinder continued to hiss, and the men did not move, afraid they could cause it to explode.

The hissing weakened, and the whistling of falling bombs and their terrific explosions finally stopped. Voices were audible now, agonized screams, cries for help, shouts, men giving orders. The enemy aircraft could be heard again, leaving the island toward the north, toward Tarawa. There were crackling and popping and strange metallic groans; an aircraft was burning. In the dim light of early morning, with gray-black smoke stinging their eyes, the enlisted men of *Dogpatch Express* accounted for each other.

"It's a damn fire extinguisher," Johnson said. The cylinder that landed on him, the hissing object that the crew feared was a bomb, was instead the damaged pressure tank of a brass fire extinguisher blasted from the ordnance truck when the truck took a direct hit.

Men had jumped under the truck for cover. Scearce thought there were four. Parts of bodies were strewn about, and one man still lay under the demolished truck. Scearce could tell the man was a staff sergeant by his stripes, but could not recognize him because his face and the top of his head were gone.

Corpsmen rushed to help the injured while others fought fires. Casualties were lined up by the airstrip in the shade of planes' wings. As bulldozers cleared debris, the worst of the injured were placed aboard a plane to be sent back to the U.S. mainland. Others went to a hospital on Fiji, 670 miles south. Some injured men refused to be evacuated, insisting on staying with their crews.

One Liberator was burned completely. Smoking radial engines lay on the coral runway, propellers bent and folded under as if they were made of rubber. The twin vertical tail planes seemed intact, though the rudder fabric was scorched away. The tail section stood on the coral, pitched forward, as if the plane were in a steep dive.

Other aircraft were holed by shrapnel, tires blown out, and plexiglass shattered. Some of the planes could be repaired, and some would be scrapped and used for parts to keep others flying. Bomb-loading equipment, radio gear, the mess area and tents were damaged, burned, or blown down by the concussion of bombs. The walls of the Missionary Church stood, but its roof was gone and its interior was gutted. A bomb had crashed through the thatched roof and exploded, bringing roof timbers and flaming, dried pandanus down into the building vacated by the villagers a moment before.

A young native man named Esau Sepetaina lay on his back as if resting, arms at his side, his chin, mouth, and left ear visible, but the rest of his head was smashed like a melon. He was the only native killed in the raid, and he died beside one of the few true personnel bunkers in Funafuti's shallow earth, his feet just inches from the edge.

On the morning after the air raid, Scearce, Lipe, Yankus, and Johnson stood with a handful of other men near the broken remains of the ordnance truck, watching helplessly as medical corpsmen lifted one of the dead men from the wreckage. They felt hollow, sick, and at the same time relieved it was not them. Beside the wrecked truck lay its splattered and torn seat and the vehicle's battery, and beyond them a *Life* magazine photographer captured the scene on film.

On April 21, *Dogpatch Express* took off past the still smoldering remains of a sister aircraft. The bombers in the lineup for the next mission stayed behind, scheduled to hit Tarawa the next night. The long flight back to Hawaii, with its overnight stop at Canton, lacked the sense of purpose and anticipation of success that sustained the men on the way out. The return flight felt like retreat. The men felt beaten.

The Japanese air raid consisted of a few medium bombers making several passes at night. The enemy planes had traversed the island, back and forth, as if without concern about the three Marine Corps antiaircraft batteries. The Japanese took their time, working thoroughly and deliberately, taking advantage of a full moon's light on Funafuti's white coral runway. Their show of skill was sobering to the American bomber crewmen, particularly the men of *Dogpatch Express*, who had seen their bombs explode in the water just off the sandy beach of Nauru. □

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*Phil Scearce is the son of Sergeant Herman Scearce, a World War II Pacific War veteran. This story is adapted from Mr. Scearce's book,* Finish Forty and Home: The Untold World War II Story of B-24s in the Pacific, *which won top prize at the 2010 Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference.* Finish Forty and Home *will be published in August 2011 by the University of North Texas Press.*


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