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Cover: American howitzers shell German forces retreating near Carentan, France, July 11, 1944. Photo courtesy of the National Archives.

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MARCH 2007

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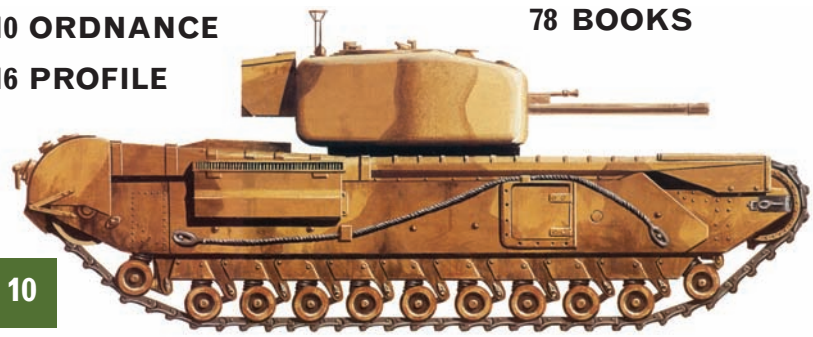

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The specter of Nazi war crimes continues to cast a shadow in the 21st century.

A RECENT NEWS STORY SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT MORE THAN 60 YEARS AFTER THE end of World War II, the pursuit and punishment of Nazi war criminals remains relentless. Although many of those who perpetrated some of the most heinous crimes against humanity have died, others now aged at least into their 80s, are still living—possibly among us. At the age of 83, Elfriede Rinkel, a resident of San Francisco, was deported to Germany. Last October in June 2006, she had made an agreement with prosecutors to surrender her green card and never return to the U.S. In exchange, the U.S. government agreed not to disclose details of Rinkel's case. Although these particulars were not released, it was noted that investigators regularly compare immigration documents with rolls containing the names of Nazi concentration camp guards.

Rinkel admitted that she had served as a guard at the infamous Ravensbrueck camp, where more than 90,000 of a reported 130,000 prisoners, all women, perished during the war. She was at the camp from June 1944 to April 1945.

After emigrating to the United States, Rinkel married a German of Jewish descent. Her brother and sister-in-law, who currently reside in northern California, denied knowing anything about her wartime activities and asserted their belief that her husband, now deceased, had also been in the dark about the subject.

An attorney for the U.S. Justice Department emphasized the commitment of the U.S. government to pursue war criminals aggressively. "Concentration camp guards such as Elfriede Rinkel played a vital role in the Nazi regime's horrific mistreatment of innocent victims," she said. "This case reflects the government's unwavering commitment to remove Nazi persecutors from this country."

The prosecution and deportation of Elfriede Rinkel conjures up images of such apostles of Nazi evil as Adolf Eichmann, architect of the supposed "Final Solution," who was responsible for the deaths of millions. Eichmann was located in Argentina, spirited away to Israel, tried, convicted, and hanged in 1962. Martin Bormann, Hitler's personal secretary, was tried in absentia and sentenced to death after the war. His disappearance from Berlin was a mystery for decades until his remains were discovered and it was determined that he died in 1945.

Dr. Josef Mengele, the "Angel of Death" at Auschwitz, reportedly lived in relative obscurity in South America until he drowned in 1979. Klaus Barbie, the Butcher of Lyon, ordered thousands to their deaths between 1942 and 1944. Although he was known to be living in South America during the 1970s, Barbie was not apprehended and put on trial until 1984. Found guilty by a French court, he was sentenced to life in prison in 1987. However, he served only four years before dying of cancer.

Alois Brunner, perhaps the highest ranking Nazi war criminal thought to still be alive and at large, was one of Eichmann's most feared lieutenants. Brunner was tried in absentia and sentenced to death in the 1950s. As recently as 2005, members of the media reported that the virulently anti-Semitic Brunner, who would be 95 years of age, was living in Damascus, Syria. Efforts to bring him to justice are ongoing.

Another, somehow more disturbing example of the postwar hunt for Nazi war criminals concerns John Demjanjuk, who for nearly 30 years was an auto worker in Ohio. He was pursued by the U.S., German, and Israeli governments on charges of being the brutal guard "Ivan the Terrible" at Treblinka. Alternately tried, convicted, and then acquitted, Demjanjuk was never proven to be Ivan the Terrible, but later he was determined to have been a guard at both the Sobibor and Majdanek camps in Poland.

On May 1, 2004, Demjanjuk was stripped of his U.S. citizenship. Then, on December 28, 2005, he was deported to his native Ukraine.

The additional disturbing point about Rinkel and Demjanjuk is simply this: aside from the well-known leaders of the Nazi regime, there also existed the rank and file who did their bidding. Without those willing to follow such orders, the Holocaust itself was much less likely to happen. □

Michael E. Haskew

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Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DeTULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN HYMEL
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Contributors:
Eric T. Baker, Glenn Barnett, Bob Bergin, Michael D. Hull, Pat McTaggart, Christopher Miskimon, Michael Reynolds, Robert Barr Smith, Mason B. Webb, Charles Whiting, Flint Whitlock, Ken Wright

ADVERTISING OFFICE:

JEFF KIGHT
Advertising Director
(570) 322-7848, ext. 117

DIANE BONIFANTI HINTZ
Director, Client Services
(703) 964-0361, ext. 25
dhintz@sovhomestead.com

MARK HINTZ
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TINA POUST
Comptroller

KATHY PAULHAMUS
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KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

CURTIS CIRCULATION COMPANY
Worldwide Distribution

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453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:
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Williamsport, PA 17701
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Notice Of Final U.S. Mint Release 2006 American Silver Eagle Dollar Coin - Brilliant Uncirculated

The U.S. Mint has announced the end of striking of the historic 2006 American Silver Eagle coin. These coins have historically increased in value after each year they have been minted. The price of silver has already increased 65% in the last three years and experts are forecasting silver to reach $20 per ounce in the first quarter of 2007. These Brilliant Uncirculated silver dollar coins are struck from 1 oz. of pure silver and are official U.S. Legal Tender. The U.S. Government guarantees the weight and purity which makes the Silver Eagle the first choice for both silver investors and collectors alike.

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16th Air Depot Group History?

Dear Editor,

I wish to determine whether there exists a written history of my WWII organization. We were the 16th Air Depot Group, activated at Stinson Field, San Antonio, Texas, in the summer of 1943. Our 16th ADG consisted of Headquarters Squadron, the 90th Supply Squadron, and the 96th Repair Squadron, plus other attachments of military police, signal corps, etc. We went to England in September 1943 as a unit of the Eighth Air Force, and to France as a unit of the Ninth Air Force. After VE day, we returned to the United States in 1945, and our unit was demobilized in October 1945 at Warner-Robbins Air Force Base in Georgia.

I would appreciate your help in providing a history, if available.

Marvin A. Carmichael
Vancouver, Washington

WWII History didn't have any luck tracking down a history of the 16th Air Depot Group, so we are appealing to our readers. If you have information on the 16th ADG please contact us at dispatch@wwiihistorymagazine.com.

P-39 and P-40 Aircraft

Dear Editor,

Sam McGowan's article in the September 2006 issue (Ordnance, page 20) gives proper credit to the role of the P-40 and P-39 WWII aircraft. Both served well, both in the Mediterranean and Pacific War fronts.

The P-40 aircraft was positioned to receive high public recognition provided by the American Volunteer Group, while the P-39's contribution has never been acknowledged. Sam's article provides a good account of the assets of these two early fighter planes.

As a member of the 81st Fighter Group, Ninety-First Fighter Squadron I feel qualified in correcting some aspects of Sam's article.

Upon our 91st Squadron's landing on the beach in French Morocco and about a three-day delay in our securing the airport at Port Lyautey, it is correct that the escort carrier USS *Chenango* received a message that the airport was secure. The message, however, did not include the fact that the beautiful concrete runway had been demolished by the Germans and French. Therefore, the 17 crashed P-40s were not the result of the landing characteristics of the P-40, nor the inexperience of the pilots.

One other item in Sam's article behooves clarification: When the 81st Group arrived in India, we did not receive P-40 aircraft. We received new P-47s as they had been shipped to the large sea port at Karachi, India.

Dail E. Huddleston
West Lafayette, Indiana

From Shanghai to Corregidor

Dear Editor,

The photos that illustrated my story "From Shanghai to Corregidor" were well chosen, but I feel that there are one or two others that would also add to the story. The enclosed photo

(shown above) shows the Fourth Marine Band marching down Nanking (Nanjing) Road in Shanghai on November 28, 1941. This is a companion photo to the marching Marine column already published. This was the day the Marines were leaving the city that they had known since 1927.

Interview subject Donald Versaw can be seen just behind (and over the shoulder) of the trombone player, and near the tuba player.

Don also tells me there was a minor transposition error in the text. In reality, a "*katika*" is a short-handled hoe, and an "*ebu*" is a open-sided basket.

Eric Niderost

Heroic Defense of St. Vith

Dear Editor,

Since my father served in the 9th Armored Division (16th Armored Field Artillery Battalion) during World War II, I read with great interest the article "Heroic Defense at St. Vith" by Charles Gutierrez in the November 2006 issue. I thoroughly enjoyed the article, but I believe the notations for a picture on page 64 may contain some errors. I believe that the picture is actually a medal presentation in recognition for the crossing of the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen on March 7, 1945. According to the Appendix in Ken Hechler's book, *The Bridge at Remagen,* Sergeant Chinchar (note spelling) received the Distinguished Service Cross for his action as platoon leader of the 1st Platoon, Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, as one of the first group of infantrymen across the bridge. I think the man in the picture to the right of Sergeant Chinchar is 2nd Lieutenant Karl Timmermann, who also received the DSC as the first officer over the bridge. Lieutenant Timmermann was the company commander of Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion.

Otto Tennant
Campbellsville, Kentucky

Hollywood at War Redux

Dear Editor,

As an author, I know that readers are almost always right when they report a mistake in a history article (Insight, November 2006). Roy E. Billet, Jr. (Letter, January 2007), however, isn't.

Contrary to Mr. Billet's correction, Ronald Reagan was indeed a member of the Army Air Corps. The Army Air Corps was founded July 2, 1926. After the Army Air Forces were created on June 20, 1941, both existed simultaneously until September 18, 1947, when the Air Force became an independent service branch. As for Glenn Ford's service, he was a Marine during World War II but later became an officer in the Naval Reserve, eventually reaching the rank of commander and serving briefly in Vietnam, so it is quite correct to refer to him as having served in the Navy.

Robert F. Dorr
Oakton, Virginia

War Games Addict

Dear Eric Baker,

I read your November column on Simulation Games, which is a topic I must know everything about because I am a video game addict as every 14-year-old boy is. Plus, it's even better to see that the game companies are coming up with a game about Iwo Jima, which is a battle I know a lot about, respect, and hope to see in my game system. Thanks for the information and keep writing about the upcoming games.

Michael Perrone
Bloomsbury, New Jersey

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Despite a troubled development, the Churchill went on to become one of the most numerous and versatile British tanks.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

THE GERMAN TOWN OF GOCH LAY EAST OF THE REICHSWALD FOREST, a scene of heavy fighting for the British Army as it ground its way steadily into the heart of Germany. The 107th Regiment, Royal Armored Corps, and elements of the 79th Armored Division had taken part in the fighting there through much of February 1945. The poor condition of the local roads had made tough going for the Churchill tanks of both units, as much an enemy as the antitank mines and dogged German resistance.

After clearing the forest, Goch fell. It was February 20, 1945. However, some of the pillboxes on the town's outer defense line continued to be occupied by German troops still willing to fight. To solve this dilemma the British troops devised a successful technique that would destroy or capture them. First, Churchill tanks armed with either 75mm cannon or 95mm howitzers would shell the bunker in question. If the Germans inside still held out, then Churchill AVREs, an engineer version armed with a large mortar called a Petard and capable of lobbing 40 pounds of explosives, would move in, protected by the gun-armed tanks. The AVRE would hit the bunker, the massive charge doing substantial damage to the emplacement's interior and hopefully inducing surrender. If that also failed, the Churchill Crocodiles would come in, flamethrowers mounted in their hulls. A stream of flame would be fired, and one last chance for surrender given. If the soldiers in the pillbox still refused to give up, the structure would be doused in fire.

The Churchill tank was one of the most produced British tank designs during World War II, with over 5,600 being built. It was also one of the most widely modified, and Churchills found use in a variety of nonstandard yet vital roles. The Churchill's beginning, however, was filled with development problems and design changes. Most, or at least enough, of these problems were overcome so that the tank gave good service right up to the end of the European war.

At the start of World War II, British Army doctrine divided tanks and their roles into three distinct categories. Light tanks were intended for reconnaissance. Cruiser tanks were designed to speed through gaps in the enemy's defenses and plunge deep into their territory, akin to the horse cavalry of an earlier time. Finally,

Advancing across the Italian countryside in the summer of 1944, a Churchill tank of B Squadron, 51st Royal Tank Regiment crashes through brush and undergrowth. The Churchill became the basis for a number of innovative armor designs with specialized functions.

Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

Fitted with the Crocodile flamethrower apparatus, the Churchill was a feared adversary, although its flammable petroleum was carried in an exposed trailer that was towed behind the tank. The Crocodile was capable of spewing a jet of flame 120 yards in length.

the infantry tank was meant to move with the infantry and support its attacks. Infantry tanks would have heavy armor to defeat antitank guns and a low top speed since they only needed to keep up with the walking pace of the foot soldiers.

The Churchill was designed as an infantry tank, with initial pilot models, designated A20, ordered soon after the start of the war in September 1939. As such, thought was given to the characteristics it would need to support infantry. The vehicle would need armor at least 80mm thick to resist all known enemy antitank guns then in service. The top speed requested was only 10 miles per hour. Based on World War I experience, the Army believed the tank would need to be able to cross trenches, obstacles, and shell craters. Its decision makers wanted a crew of seven and an armament of two 2-pounder guns and three machine guns. Trials began in June 1940. There were troubles with the transmission, and it was discovered that the pair of 2-pounders in the hull had to be eliminated.

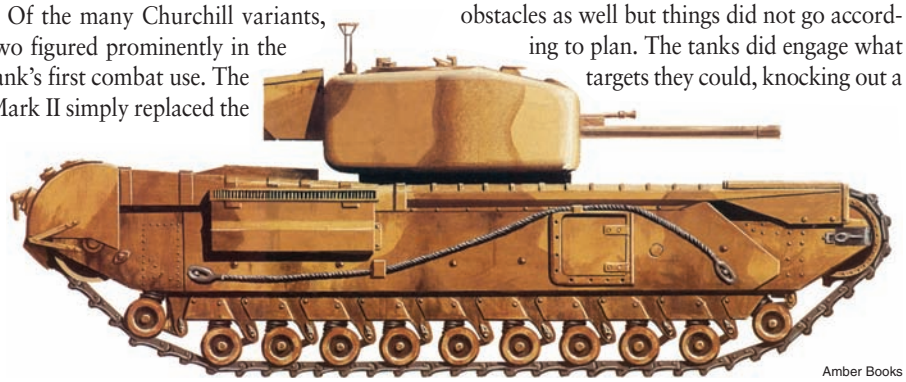
France had fallen early during the trial period, negating the chance that the vehicle would have to fight in the conditions it was designed for, but development continued nonetheless. At this point Great Britain was thought to be in imminent danger of invasion, with most of its tanks destroyed or abandoned in France. It was decided to finish development with some changes and get the tank into production. It was now designated the A22 and named for British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. This rush to bring the Churchill into service was largely responsible for the early mechanical troubles, as there was no time for the normal testing that would reveal weaknesses and solutions.

The first model to enter service was designated the Churchill Mark One, sometimes simply called the Churchill I. It was armed with a 2-pounder gun in a cast turret with a coaxial machine gun. Mounted in the hull was a 3-inch howitzer. The hull of the tank consisted of a mild steel layer a half-inch thick onto which the armor plates would be riveted or bolted. The tracks ran all the way around the hull, reminiscent of World War I British tanks. This allowed the hull to extend within the tracks, so that the interior was more spacious, making the Churchill a prime candidate for modification into the many variants later seen. Maximum armor thickness was 102mm, quite thick for the early war period. Weight was correspondingly high at nearly 40 tons. Top speed was 15.5 miles per hour with a range of 90 miles, powered by a 12-cylinder Bedford engine at 350 horsepower. The crew of five included a commander, gunner, loader, driver, and co-driver. Its length was 24.5 feet, with a width of almost nine feet and a height of just less than 11 feet.

Of the many Churchill variants, two figured prominently in the tank's first combat use. The Mark II simply replaced the 3-inch howitzer with a second machine gun, and the Mark III carried a new turret with a 6-pounder gun. Close-support versions of the Churchill placed the 3-inch howitzer in the turret instead of the 2-pounder.

The first combat action for this design would not occur with British tankers, but with their Canadian Allies. Churchills of all three Marks, issued to the Calgary Regiment of the Canadian Army, were assigned to go ashore for the raid on Dieppe, France, on August 19, 1942. Three of the tanks were modified to carry flamethrowers and five were equipped to lay canvas "carpet" on the beach. Plans called for the tanks to assist the attacking infantry in causing as much damage as possible to the town's port facilities, German garrison, and a nearby airfield. The carpet-laying Churchills would unroll their fabric and wood carpets to help the other vehicles get better traction on the stones of the beach's shingle. The rest of the vehicles would follow and scale a seawall with help from the engineers. Things went awry almost as soon as the operation began. Two of the tanks wallowed in the water and never even got to shore. Twenty-seven more reached the beach, which was covered by small stones. These stones got into the tracks of a number of Churchills, breaking them and leaving the tanks stuck on the beach. Teams of engineers had been detailed to use explosive charges and materials to build ramps over the seawall to help the vehicles get over it. These engineers were not able to carry out their tasks, so the armor was left to get itself over this obstacle. Only 15 were able to get over the seawall and move inland to support the infantry as heavy German fire covered the beach.

Once inland, the Churchills were stopped by more concrete obstacles placed by the Germans to prevent the movement of tanks into the town. Engineers were supposed to remove these obstacles as well but things did not go according to plan. The tanks did engage what targets they could, knocking out a



Amber Books

The Mk IV, a later version of the Churchill tank, offered a few improvements over the original design. In this rendering, the numerous small wheels of the tank's drive train are clearly visible.

number of bunkers and an immobile French tank used by the Germans. One Churchill even drove into a building to knock it down and dislodge its defenders. The last wave of Churchills, still aboard landing craft offshore, was never sent in by the operation's commander. German fire was heavy, and slowly the attackers were pushed back toward the sea. None of the tanks were recovered, and only a single man of the Calgary Regiment's tank crews that went ashore returned to England.

For its part, the Churchill actually proved resistant to enemy antitank fire except for the tracks, which, besides being vulnerable to breakage from the stones of the beach, also fractured when directly hit by enemy shells.

Later, a copy of a German report on Dieppe was received by the British. It criticized the Churchill as being weakly armed with obsolete, ineffective weapons, equipped with tracks that broke easily and armor plating of poor quality. However, only two of the 29 tanks were penetrated by the German antitank guns, despite numerous hits on many of them.

The next action for the tank came in North Africa. Concerns over whether the tank could withstand desert service resulted in six Mark IIIs being sent to Egypt to find out. Formed as part of an ad hoc group known as Kingforce, under Major Norris King, they went into action at the Second Battle of El Alamein. King led three Churchills against dug-in panzers and 88mm cannon near a position known as Kidney Ridge. A furious deluge of fire greeted them, but the trio of tanks pressed on.

One Churchill was forced to retire, however, when its cannon's recoil system failed. A second Churchill advanced into action and disappeared, then was seen reversing back toward British lines out of the smoky battlefield. Suddenly, the tank started to burn and only one of the crew got out. Later, an examination of the tank revealed the terrible punishment it had absorbed. In all, 38 rounds of German 50mm and six rounds of 75mm shells had hit the tank. Only one round of each caliber had penetrated, and one of those rounds had breached the fuel tank.

Eight rounds from British 6-pounder guns had hit the tank in the rear, and four of these had gotten through the armor. These shots apparently came from a nearby Australian battery of antitank guns. Two explanations exist for why the Churchill was fired upon by the battery. One states that the Churchill's silhouette, being new to the Australian gunners, was mistaken in the smoke for a panzer and engaged. The second story goes that the smoke from the burning Churchill was obscuring the line of sight for the antitank guns, so they shot

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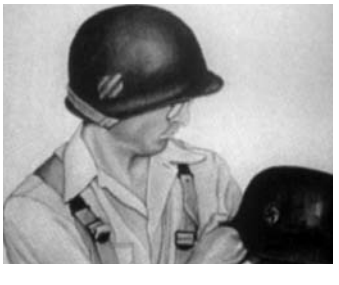

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ABOVE: Women of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) work to guide a Churchill tank's turret into position at a Royal Army Ordnance Corps depot. RIGHT: During Operation Epsom near the French town of Caen, a Churchill tank of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 31st Tank Brigade moves along a dirt road. Branches have been placed about the hull as makeshift camouflage.

it so it would burn out more quickly. Major King, in the third tank, took eight hits but remained operational and hit four German tanks in return.

Kingforce fought again a week later at Tell el Aqqaqir. This second and last engagement for the unit proved once again the Churchill's toughness. Although one tank endured a turret failure before engaging, several others took tremendous punishment. One was hit 30 times but suffered only a broken track, while another took nine hits that resulted finally in a jammed turret. King himself was in a Churchill that had a German 50mm round fly right through the driver's vision port and into the crew compartment. Believing the tank was about to catch fire, the crew abandoned it. Before long, they realized it was not burning, and it was driven off the battlefield.

Several Churchill-equipped regiments were used in the tough fighting in Tunisia. It was here that British ingenuity spawned a variant not on the testing grounds, but in the combat zone itself. Captain Percy Morrell was an officer in the 665th Tank Troops Workshop, a unit that scrapped damaged tanks deemed too expensive to fix. Morrell noticed that the gun mantlet of the Churchill cast a shadow that provided a clear aiming point for German gunners. A number of Churchills had been hit around this area. Also, by mid-1943 the 6-pounder armament was fast becoming obsolete and lacked a high-explosive round. With the fighting in Africa finished, several Churchill units were being held back from the fighting in Italy, apparently due to this issue.

There were also a number of Sherman tanks, equipped with 75mm cannon, in the scrapyard. Morrell studied, took measurements, and concluded the 75mm gun would fit into a Churchill turret with some modifications. He was given permission to try a conversion but was warned that if it failed and he ruined an otherwise serviceable Churchill, his career was as good as over. Luckily, the conversion was a success, and over 200 tanks were so equipped. For his part, Morrell was rewarded with a promotion to the rank of major. Given the designation Churchill (NA) 75, with the NA standing for North Africa, these tanks served in the Italian Theater. Meanwhile, the first Mark VI Churchill models, also armed with a 75mm cannon, came into production. Many earlier versions were upgraded as well.

The design's versatility would be taken a step further with the Normandy invasion. Sir Percy Hobart, commander of the 79th Armored Division, oversaw the development of specialized tanks that would help ensure the landings' success. Collectively, these vehicles would come to be known as "Hobart's Funnies," a name the general despised.

The first was the Churchill AVRE (Armored Vehicle, Royal Engineer), which was built with a set of standard fixtures so it could be adapted to carry different equipment as needed. For getting across ditches, the vehicle could carry the Small Box Girder (SBG) Bridge that would unfold from atop the tank. Fascines, bundles of wood that could be dropped into a ditch, could also be carried. The carpetlayer, used earlier at Dieppe, carried a large roll of canvas over the hull that played down across the front of the tank, went under, and then trailed behind to leave a roadway for vehicles that might otherwise bog down in the sand.

AVREs could also be equipped with a 290mm Petard mortar in the turret. It could throw a 40-pound explosive charge up to 80 yards to smash bunkers and obstacles. Engineers also appreciated the side escape hatches, which they could use to exit during battles with less exposure to enemy fire.

The second was the Churchill Crocodile, an improved flamethrower tank. The flame unit was carried in the hull in place of the machine gun, so the main gun was still available for use. An armored trailer was towed behind and carried enough fuel for 80 one-second bursts at ranges of up to 120 yards. This variant was particularly feared for obvious reasons, and enemy gunners would often aim for the trailer, hoping to disable it before the Crocodile could get into flame range.

These specialized variants were the only Churchills to see action on D-Day; the first regular regiments did not join the fighting until the end of June. The British give some of the credit for their successful landings to the modified Churchills of the 79th Armored. AVREs used their Petard mortars to destroy German defenses on both Juno and Sword Beaches, working in concert with other armored vehicles and engineers. Once committed, Churchills took part in the attacks to break out from Normandy. The 31st and 34th Tank Brigades,

Continued on page 84

Sergeant Major Stan Hollis was the only British soldier to win the Victoria Cross on D-Day.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

The Bridgeman Art Library

In this painting titled "The Tanks Go In" by artist Richard Willis, several DD Sherman tanks, equipped with amphibious apparatus for landing with the assault troops on D-Day, move inland during the fighting at Sword Beach.

A CHILL BREEZE CUT THROUGH THE EARLY MORNING HAZE, AND THE storm-swollen sea was rough off the coast of northern France on Tuesday, June 6, 1944. An armada of 5,000 Allied ships carrying 250,000 soldiers and sailors, supported overhead by 3,000 fighters and bombers, moved inexorably across the English Channel for the invasion of Normandy and a long-awaited showdown with the forces of Nazi Germany on European soil. The "longest day" and the last great turning point of World War II had dawned.

Crammed aboard a host of landing ships, British, American, Canadian, and Free French assault troops shuffled to their debarkation stations, adjusted weapons and equipment, and nervously joked, prayed, or just fell silent. Destiny awaited them on five assigned beaches—the Americans on Utah and Omaha, and the British, Canadians, and French Commandos on Gold, Juno, and Sword. This was it. The biggest and most complex amphibious invasion in history was in motion, and there was no turning back.

Aboard the 5,000-ton *Empire Lance,* one of the mother ships butting through the Channel on that gray, fateful morning, were the 6th and 7th Battalions of the Yorkshire-based Green Howards, one of the British Army's oldest and proudest infantry regiments. The invasion ground commander, wiry, irascible Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery of El Alamein fame, had hand-picked the seasoned 50th Northumbrian (Tyne Tees) Infantry Division to storm Gold Beach, and the Green Howards were its spearhead.

As the 7:30 AM zero hour approached, the Green Howards, laden with Lee-Enfield .303 rifles, Bren and Sten guns, mortars, packs, ammunition, and medical kits, clambered 20 at a time down slippery webbed nets into bucking landing craft. When the "green for go" command was finally given after an hour of circling in the heavy swell, Royal Marine coxswains steered the packed landing boats toward Gold Beach. Many of the assault troops were so seasick that they were impatient to get ashore, no matter what awaited them. There was little of the usual cheery pre-action banter.

The assault troops were a blend of unblooded recruits and veterans of the Dunkirk, Western Desert, and Sicily campaigns. The 6th Battalion of the Green Howards, in particular, had served with distinction during the fighting retreat to Dunkirk in the spring of 1940, in Libya at the great Battle of El Alamein, and in Sicily, and one of its stalwart noncommissioned officers was about to become the British Army's leading hero of the D-Day landings.

He was 31-year-old Company Sergeant Major Stanley Elton Hollis, returning to action in France after four years. Part of the leading wave during the British assault on Gold Beach east of Arromanches, his D Company of the 6th Battalion was assigned to go ashore at King Sector. The objective was to knock out the German heavy guns of the Mont Fleury battery,

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Preparing for their D-Day embarkation, soldiers of the 6th and 7th Battalions, Green Howards, check their equipment, sort through their kits, and make final preparations to land on Sword Beach.

sited on higher ground just beyond the beachhead, near La Riviere, and create one of several coastal footholds through which waves of British reinforcements could be funneled.

On that day, the seemingly fearless CSM Hollis, already mentioned in dispatches for gallantry, wounded several times, and who had killed more than 90 enemy soldiers, would enter the pantheon of British and Commonwealth heroes by winning the Victoria Cross, the world's most renowned medal for valor under fire. Not only would Hollis receive the only VC awarded during the initial Normandy landings, but he would gain it for two distinct acts of selfless courage. Highly decorated officers in his battalion would say later that Stan Hollis's exploits in the Bayeux, Coulombs, Tilly, and Villers-Bocage areas of Normandy during the early hours of the invasion were worthy of two or even three VCs.

Even in a battalion with such a distinguished combat record, Hollis stood out as a remarkable man and leader. Muscular, six feet, two inches tall, and with fiery red hair and hands like shovels, he was a tough, disciplined soldier who had risen through the ranks to become a highly respected sergeant major. He could handle any type of small arms weapon, and his reactions under fire were like lightning.

Stan Hollis had an unbreakable force of will, a quick mind, and instinctive decisiveness that invariably led to the annihilation of the enemy, even when the odds were stacked against him. He also had a volcanic temper when provoked, and was quick to use his fists, whether in the midst of a close-quarter attack or a fracas behind the lines. But he never held a grudge. He was also a naturally modest man.

Born in the large industrial port town of Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, on September 21, 1912, Stan Hollis was the eldest son of Alfred E. Hollis, a laborer at an iron works in the tough Teesside district, and Edith Jane Hollis. After Alfred Hollis returned, gassed, from World War I, the family moved to the village of Fylingthorpe in picturesque Robin Hood's Bay, near Whitby. Young Stan played with toy boats, explored the beaches and coves of the North Sea coastline, and scrambled up the cliff paths. He was a bright lad, but school was less appealing than the outdoors, and he was often in trouble for truancy. He grew into a strong, athletic youth.

When his parents moved back to the North Ormesby district of Middlesbrough, Stan helped out in their fish and chips shop. He was almost 14 years of age when he met the girl who would become his wife, pretty Alice Clixby. They worked together behind the counter, peeling potatoes and slicing chips, and romance gradually blossomed. Stan attempted to catch up on what he had missed in school and passed a scholarship to attend Sir William Turner's School in Redcar. But his parents could not let him go because he was needed in the shop.

Nevertheless, the youth had an adventurous streak and ran away to sea several times. So, when Stan was 17 years old, his father apprenticed him to the Merchant Navy to learn to be a navigation officer. Stan sailed aboard the SS *Dunsley* out of Whitby and later joined the Elder Dempster Steamship Line, which made regular voyages to West Africa. His maritime career ended there in 1930 when he fell seriously ill with blackwater fever. He was left with chest problems, but was able to overcome them later in the dry heat of the Western Desert.

Stan married his beloved Alice at the Middlesbrough Register Office in 1931, and drove a truck for a Teesside brick company. He always shared his cab with an Alsatian dog. When he lost his job during the Depression, Stan found work on local farms. Proud and self-reliant, he refused to accept the dole or family allowance payments. In later years, he would even refuse a war pension.

When war clouds started gathering over Europe in the late 1930s, Stan worked for the Army, driving munitions to the Middlesbrough docks. His pay rate was 15 shillings for three days' work, and his basic ration consisted of meat pies. Meanwhile, he noticed that many of his friends had joined the Territorial Army (National Guard), and were drawing full pay at the Lytton Street Drill Hall (armory) in Middlesbrough. Not wanting to miss out on the action, Stan enlisted in the 4th Battalion of the Green Howards Regiment. He was promised a transfer to the Royal Navy, but it did not materialize. Stan then applied for a commission in the Army, but his limited education ruled him out.

While garrisoned before the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939, Stan proved to be a strong-willed and sometimes difficult soldier. He would sneak out of the barracks on a Friday night and go home to see his wife, his mother, and his two small children, Brian and Pauline. Consequently, he frequently found himself on defaulters (company punishment). Thanks to his early labors in the family fish and chips shop, Stan good naturedly estimated, he probably peeled more potatoes than anyone else in the British Army.

When British forces were mobilized with the outbreak of war, Stan Hollis helped to form the 6th Battalion of the Green Howards in Middlesbrough. He and his comrades finally got their chance at action when the unit sailed to France on April 24, 1940, to join the small but highly professional British Expeditionary Force fighting alongside the French Army. The 6th Battalion's main function during the last days of the so-called Phony War was to build airfields behind the British lines.

Singled out as a bright prospect, Stan was assigned as his commanding officer's dispatch rider and given a lance corporal's stripe. The

euphoria of the Phony War ended abruptly in May 1940, when fast-moving German panzer and infantry formations rolled through Belgium, Holland, and France. The BEF and French forces, poorly equipped and loosely coordinated, fought gallantly but were soon forced to retreat. That month, the 6th Green Howards saw action on the River Scarpe and in the desperate defense of Gravelines as the hard-pressed BEF, outflanked by the collapse of the Belgian Army and the withdrawal of key French units, pulled back toward the port of Dunkirk. Hollis performed sterling service as a dispatch rider, though he had never before ridden a motorcycle, and was promoted to sergeant.

He rode boldly along roads and through towns reported to be held by the enemy and sometimes arrived at his destination only to find that the British troops had gone. Yet, he never failed to get through with his dispatches. He was always ready to go out again, and was often seen asleep from sheer exhaustion in his saddle. His devotion to duty inspired all in the battalion.

On the afternoon of May 29, as German forces pressed closer to the British lines, the Green Howards were dug in near Hague Moelen, protecting the right flank of the main axis of withdrawal to Dunkirk. Stan and five comrades were ordered at a few minutes' notice to try and distract German attention so that the 2nd Battalion of the Welsh Guards could escape imminent entrapment by the enemy.

The six soldiers grabbed three Bren guns and wildly drove a truck to an assigned spot, where they jumped out and sprayed as much fire at the Germans as they could muster. The desperate exploit succeeded against all odds; the Welsh Guards were able to force a gap in the enemy lines and escape an ignominious fate. Hollis and his five comrades were recommended for the Military Medal, but they later lost their chance for it, thanks to a petty-minded sergeant major. He put them on a charge of being drunk on duty at Highcliff Barracks, near Bournemouth, after the Dunkirk evacuation. The six men had celebrated with only half a pint of beer each.

On another occasion, Hollis demonstrated coolness in the face of the enemy that was to amuse his comrades for a long time. When the battalion was set to leave Arras and head for Gravelines late in May 1940, Stan's company was handicapped by a lack of transport because of destruction or capture. All that was left were several trucks and Stan's motorcycle. So, he rode off and managed to scrounge a couple more trucks. The unit mounted up and set off, escorted by Stan on his motorcycle.

As the column approached a crossroads, the Tommies noticed two German MPs standing

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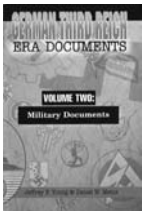

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there. Hollis pulled up alongside them and calmly started directing traffic for them, letting the Green Howards' trucks through. "The Germans never twigged we were British because he had been so bold," reported Jack Smith, one of Stan's comrades and later the president of the Middlesbrough branch of the Green Howards Association. "They were using our captured lorries at this time, and so they must have thought we were Germans. Thanks to Stan's cheek, he got half a company of Green Howards through to safety."

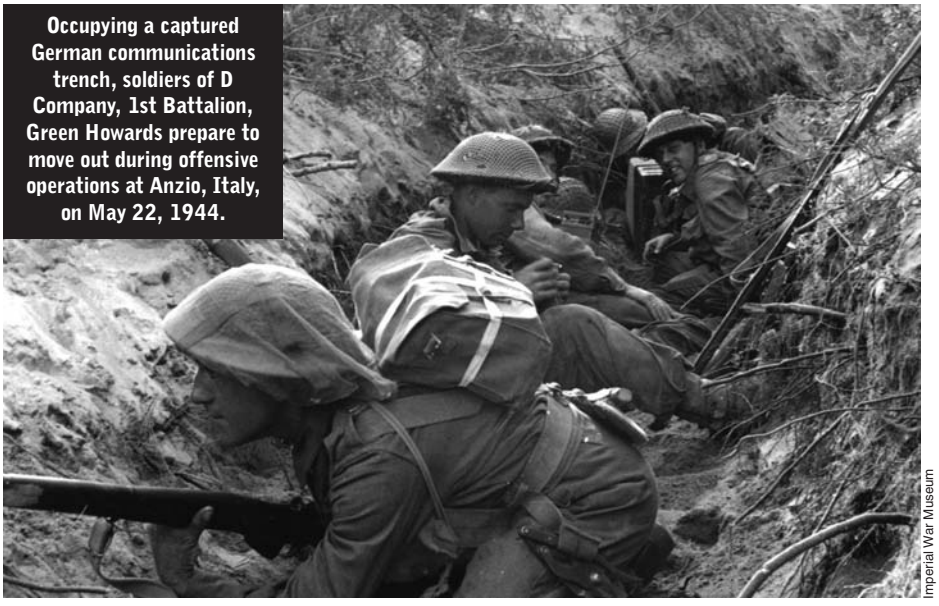
Added Smith, "He was such a brave man. He had a very quick mind, and could sum up situations in a flash. He never, ever, panicked, and he knew exactly the right thing to do in action."

During the momentous days at the end of May and beginning of June 1940, Operation Dynamo under the command of Admiral Bertram Ramsay was launched to try and extricate the battered BEF from France. Royal Navy ships and a fleet of "little ships"—yachts, ferries, launches, and paddle steamers manned by civilian volunteers—moved in close under enemy fire to the smoking beaches of Dunkirk, where long lines of British and French soldiers waited patiently for evacuation.

Stan Hollis lay on the sands wounded and exhausted, with most of his clothing torn off. It was rumored that wounded men would have to be left behind, but Stan's comrades would not abandon him. So, he managed to swim out several yards to a waiting Navy ship, where he was hauled aboard and wrapped in a blanket. Like many other Tommies, he said later that he escaped literally by the skin of his teeth.

After a spell in a hospital, Stan refused to be invalided out of the service and instead rejoined his battalion. After regrouping and retraining, it sailed for the Middle East in June 1941. The 6th Green Howards soldiered in Egypt, Cyprus, Palestine, Persia, and Syria before shipping out to Libya in February 1942 to join the British Eighth Army, which had been engaged in a long, see-saw struggle against Italian and German forces. After arriving on the Gazala Line, the 6th Battalion went into action with the 50th Northumbrian Infantry Division's mobile column at Alem Hamza, Bir Thalata, Buq Buq, Wadi Akarit, Mersa Matruh, Mareopolis, and Ruweisat through June-July 1942, and moved up to the El Alamein defense line early that October, just in time for the decisive battle that pushed back Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's vaunted Afrika Korps and its Italian allies.

Company Sergeant Major Stan Hollis of the Green Howards was the only British soldier to win the Victoria Cross during the fighting on D-Day.



Occupying a captured German communications trench, soldiers of D Company, 1st Battalion, Green Howards prepare to move out during offensive operations at Anzio, Italy, on May 22, 1944.

Imperial War Museum

With bayonets fixed and jaws clenched resolutely, the 6th Green Howards stood to on the historic night of Friday, October 23, 1942, when a thousand British field guns thundered the opening of the first great Western turning point of World War II. Under the command of General Montgomery, and heartened by the skirl of highland bagpipes, British and Commonwealth infantry moved forward to breach five miles of minefields while their artillery battered the enemy positions ahead. The British infantry was followed by squadrons of Cruiser, Churchill, and Sherman tanks, churning up dust clouds with their pennants silhouetted against the desert sky.

Hollis's battalion made a successful subsidiary attack against strongly held German positions around the Munassib Depression. One dark night during the Battle of El Alamein, Stan was on patrol at Mersa Matruh in a Bren gun carrier when he was told that a German 60-ton Tiger tank was holding up a company of the Green Howards that was probing the enemy defenses. Without hesitation, Stan grabbed a gammon bomb and sped off in the carrier to confront the Tiger. Knowing that the tank could not dip its powerful 88mm gun far enough to hit his low-slung carrier, Stan jumped out, attached the sticky bomb to the tank's hull, and roared off. The bomb detonated and killed everyone inside.

On another occasion in the Western Desert late in 1942, Stan and some comrades were riding in a Bren carrier that came under German shellfire. The Tommies jumped out to find shelter, and Stan suddenly yelled, "Get down!" He had trodden on a deadly German S-mine, which all British desert soldiers feared and hated. Once activated, S-mines—nicknamed "bouncing Betties"—shot about 10 feet high before exploding with devastating effect. Showing instant presence of mind and aware that the slightest jar would set off the mine, Stan ground his boot down on it. His comrade, Ernie Roberts, a mortar platoon member, reported, "Stan kept his foot hard on it, and amazingly it went off harmlessly in the ground. It is safe to say he saved the lot of us—and he finished up with just a bruised foot."

Hollis was captured by the Germans in the desert and sent to a transit prison camp, where his captors kicked his face and head, breaking his cheekbones and cracking his skull. He was fed potato peelings. While in captivity, he was introduced to Field Marshal Rommel, who had heard of Stan's fighting spirit and asked to meet and congratulate him. The admiration was mutual. Stan said later that while he hated most Germans and what they stood for, he respected Rommel as a warrior. Not wanting to be shipped to a prison camp in Germany and miss the rest of the war, Stan escaped with the help of his friends. He then spent time in a British hospital and had to have metal plates put in his face.

Next came Operation Husky, the massive invasion of Sicily in July 1943, by Montgomery's Eighth Army and General George S. Patton Jr.'s green U.S. Seventh Army. While the Americans wheeled out across the western areas of the craggy, dusty island, facing sparse

Imperial War Museum

Tanks and other vehicles following, soldiers of the British 2nd Army move against German positions on Sword Beach during the morning of June 6. The British troops were able to push inland and establish a secure beachhead after overcoming stiff resistance.

opposition, the British battled against firmly entrenched German defenses on the eastern coast. The strategic port of Messina, gateway to the Italian mainland, was the main objective.

Recently promoted to company sergeant major, Hollis was again in the thick of the action as his battalion and the 1st and 7th Green Howards fought an arduous campaign through the Catania Plain to seize the vital Primosole Bridge over the River Gornalunga, helping to bring about the eventual capture of the island. Casualties were heavy as the tough Yorkshire infantrymen faced German parachute troops, and Stan's D Company was whittled to 30 men. There were many hand-to-hand struggles.

Stan displayed his characteristic courage on several occasions. During one skirmish, he tossed a hand grenade at a German soldier. It did not explode, but it was enough to send him dashing off like a scalded cat. For his overall gallantry, Stan's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Robin Hastings, put him in for the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the next decoration down in line from the Victoria Cross for an NCO.

Hollis received a head wound during the Primosole Bridge action and was shipped back to a hospital in Philippeville, Algeria. It was one of six serious wounds he suffered during the war, and he had to have a metal plate inserted in his skull. He was out of action for three months while he recuperated. Meanwhile, after fighting at Catania, Riposto, and Capo d'Ali in Sicily, the 6th Green Howards sailed home to England in October 1943, for well-deserved leave, re-equipping, and training at Inverary in Scotland and on the English south coast for the forthcoming invasion of Normandy, Operation Overlord.

The din in the Channel was deafening early on the morning of June 6, 1944, as CSM Hollis and the other Green Howards rode toward Gold Beach. British and U.S. battleships, cruisers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, monitors, and rocket ships pounded the French coast and enemy defenses inland; formations of Allied heavy bombers thundered across the coast at high altitudes, and fighters and medium bombers roared over at low levels to blast German installations and communications networks. The Normandy shore was wreathed in smoke and flame.

As the Green Howards were ferried closer to the shore, they were heartened by the devastation being wrought upon the German defenders hunkered down in concrete pillboxes, trenches, and steel-reinforced artillery bunkers. It looked as though nothing and no one could survive such carnage, but Hollis and his fellow veterans knew better. Battles and wars had always been won ultimately by such men of grit armed with rifle and bayonet. Tense but less nervous than many of his comrades, Stan Hollis was ready to kill more Germans and determined to return to his wife and children.

Enemy shellfire opened up on the Allied invaders, and great geysers marked shell bursts in the sea. The Mont Fleury battery was firing on the massive Allied fleet lying just off the coastline. Machine-gun bullets clattered on the thick metal sides of the British landing craft as they neared Gold Beach. Stan spotted a German pillbox on the seawall that had caused him concern during pre-invasion training, and knew that his men would come under heavy fire when they crossed the beach. So, he lifted a stripped Lewis gun from the floor of his landing craft and belted it with a full pan of ammunition. But the gun was white-hot and gave him a "bloody great blister" across his hand. It was the most painful wound he received during the entire war. Nevertheless, he rested the Lewis gun on the front ramp of the landing craft and fired long bursts to keep the Germans' heads down.

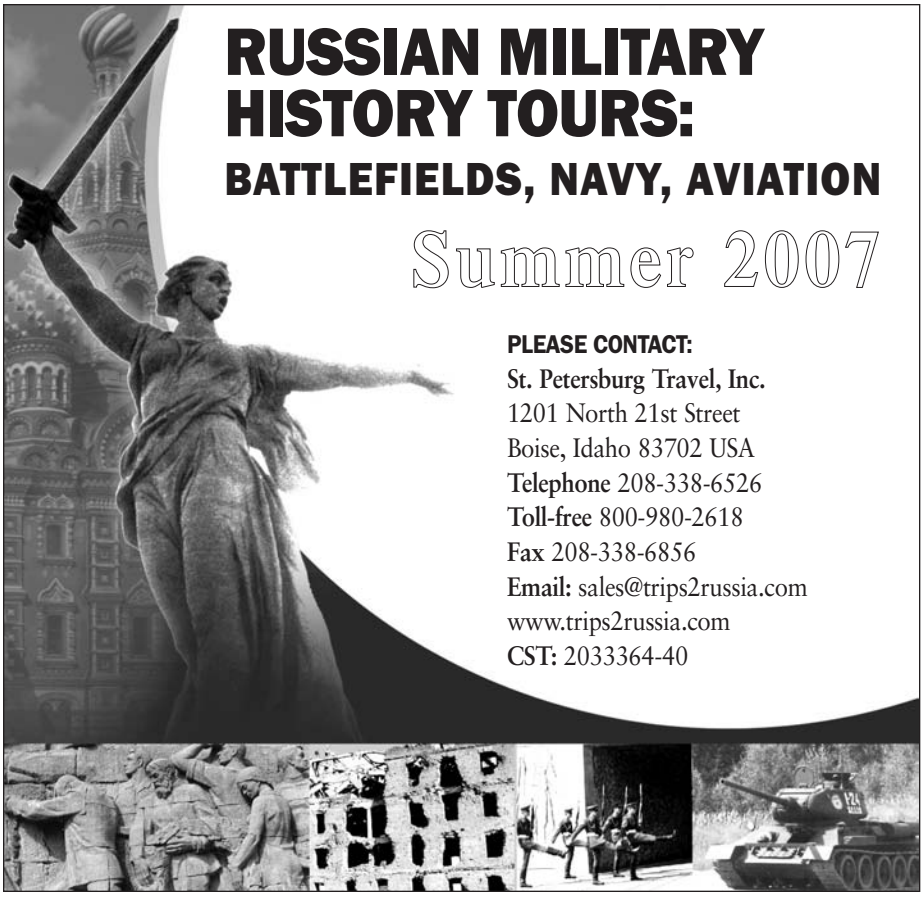
When the ramp was finally lowered, Stan jumped into the waist-deep water and led his men at full pelt up the heavily mined beach. He took two machine-gun and two-inch mortar crews to lay down smoke in front of the pillbox so that his men could work their way safely through the minefield. The noise was stunning as salvo after salvo of naval gunfire shook the ground.

Soon, the leading Green Howards platoons were across the minefield, through a hedge, and working their way up a hill in the direction of a house with a circular driveway. A burst of fire aimed at the leading platoons came from an enemy pillbox 50 yards to the right of the house, and Hollis reacted instantly. Firing his Sten gun from the waist, he charged the pillbox, dodging as the Germans inside returned fire. He shoved his gun muzzle through the firing slit, let off a burst, and then clambered on top of the pillbox and pushed a grenade through the slit. When it detonated, Stan jumped down into the trench leading to the entrance and barged through the pillbox door. Two Germans were dead, and four other dazed defenders surrendered. Then, Stan noticed that the trench led to another pillbox about 100 yards away. He changed the magazine on his Sten gun and walked warily along the trench. He threw another grenade, and German soldiers emerged from the second pillbox with their hands up. A total of 18 Germans surrendered to him, and he directed them back toward the beach.

Stan's first act of gallantry on D-Day—the first action for which he would be awarded the VC—came only half an hour after he had landed. Asked later why he had made a suicidal assault on an enemy pillbox over open ground in broad daylight, CSM Hollis replied simply, "Because I was a Green Howard."

By midday on June 6, the Green Howards had taken most of their immediate objectives. Casualties were not as high as expected, but Colonel Hastings lost many of his officers, including two company commanders. The platoon leader and sergeant of the 16th Platoon had been killed, so Major Ronald Lofthouse, D Company commander, ordered Hollis to assume command. The company's immediate task was to clear the village of Crepon to allow the 6th Green Howards to pass through and reach their main objectives five miles farther south on the road to Creuilly, Coulombes, and Bronay.

Around 11 AM, D Company liberated Crepon, and Hollis's platoon was ordered to search a lone farmhouse to the west. Stan led his men into the farmyard and found the farmhouse empty, except for a 10-year-old boy cowering in a corner. Scouting the rear of the farmyard behind a stone wall, Stan saw an orchard. Suddenly, there was a sharp crack, and a German



bullet hit the wall a few inches from his face. About 150 yards across the orchard Stan saw movement through a gap in a high hedge—two dogs wagging their tails. Then, he spotted what appeared to be a hidden enemy field gun. He reported its position to Major Lofthouse, who gave him permission to deal with it.

Stan picked up a PIAT (projectile, infantry, antitank) launcher and ordered two Bren gunners to accompany him. The three men crawled stealthily through a rhubarb patch toward the German position. At the far end of the patch, Stan loaded the PIAT, took careful aim, and fired. The rocket looped through the air and fell short. The enemy gun traversed until Stan felt as if he was looking down its barrel, and a shell screamed over his head and slammed into the farmhouse behind him. Calling on the two Bren gunners to follow him, Stan crawled back rapidly to report to Major Lofthouse. The company commander decided to press on south because the German gun was not directly threatening the Green Howards' route.

It was then that Stan heard the sound of a Bren gun firing from the rhubarb patch. The two Bren gunners, both wounded, had failed to follow him. Wasting no time, Stan grabbed a Bren gun and doubled back into the orchard. He charged straight toward the German position, firing from the waist and shouting at his two men to pull back fast. "I got them into all this, so it was my job to get them out," he said later.

Disregarding small-arms fire from the Germans, he kept on firing until the two men had withdrawn. Once they were out of enemy range, Stan sprinted after them, miraculously untouched by the bullets whistling past him. Minutes later, the German position was silenced.

After being promoted to warrant officer second class, Hollis received the Victoria Cross for his actions that day. The award was announced in the *London Gazette* on August 17, 1944. The citation read, "Wherever the fighting was heaviest throughout the day, Hollis displayed daring and gallantry…. He alone prevented the enemy from holding up the advance of the Green Howards at critical stages…. By his own bravery, he saved the lives of many of his men."

Brigadier John Powell of the Green Howards said, "Stan Hollis was a remarkable, resolute fighter. He was one of those people who, through the force of his own personality, could change the course of a battle."

The 50th Northumbrian Division had overcome its initial difficulties by midmorning on D-Day, and by nightfall had pushed almost to the outskirts of Bayeux. It was closer to its prescribed objectives than any other Allied

Continued on page 83

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IWO JIMA, THE FIRST FLAG

Painted by Ron Stark

February 23, 1945... atop volcanic Mt. Suribachi, Marines of the 5th Division hoist the first American flag over Iwo Jima. As Old Glory breaks the skyline, a tremendous roar of shouts and whistles will emerge from the Marines on the beaches and the sailors at sea. Hours later, this flag would be lowered and a replacement raised. Although a photo of the second flag would be cherished by the homefront, the first flag belonged to the heroes of Iwo Jima. Prints available autographed by the last living flag raiser, Chuck Lindberg!

HANG TOUGH, BASTOGNE 1944

Painted by John D. Shaw

December 24, 1944...within the pines of the Bois Jacques forest, on this frigid Christmas eve, Capt. Dick Winters bolsters his men with his words: "Hang Tough." Despite being surrounded and ill-equipped, the Band of Brothers of the 101st Airborne would hold the line. Prints available autographed by 8 Band of Brothers veterans!

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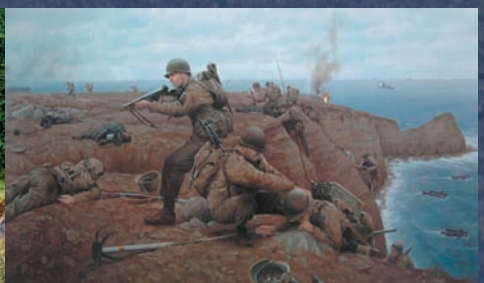

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Cultures clashed as large numbers of American troops came to Brisbane, Australia, during World War II.

BY KEN WRIGHT

IN 1942, BRISBANE WAS THE THIRD LARGEST CITY IN AUSTRALIA AND THE state capital of Queensland. To many, however, it was more like a big country town than a city, its 340,000 inhabitants living in a quiet, conservative, and isolated atmosphere. Not many people came to visit, and even fewer stayed. Then the Americans arrived. The geographical situation and the presence of General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters drew American servicemen to the city center by the thousands. Australian soldiers (Diggers) were there too, their numbers increasing as the war effort grew and Brisbane swelled with the influx. By November 1942, it had become a garrison city. It was not even Brisbane anymore. American High Command was calling it Base Section 3.

Australian War Memorial

Australian Corporal G.E. Burns welcomes a trio of American sailors to Brisbane in a photo that has obviously been staged.

For most servicemen based there, the enemy was not the Japanese—but boredom. Idleness was a constant companion. The hotels only opened three hours a day, and the cinemas were closed on Sundays. Everyone always knew when the few city cinemas were open, as the lines of people seeking admission extended several blocks. Hotel sessions were as limited as the available alcohol, and any form of entertainment was hopelessly inadequate for the numbers seeking it. There was also deep resentment from many of the inhabitants, notably the Australian servicemen returning from action in the Middle East. They quickly concluded that the Americans had virtually taken over their town—both militarily and socially.

It seemed that most women, single and married, were in the arms of the well-groomed, prosperous Americans. The old grievances of pay, clothing, food, and perceived preferential treatment festered in the minds of the Diggers. Overseas they fought a common enemy, but here tensions between the Allies increased and violence escalated. From April to October 1942, 1,032 American servicemen were charged with mischievous offenses. The Australian equivalent was probably proportionally no less. Many incidents warranted the attention of the civil authorities, some the Coroner's court. The press was heavily censored at the time, and very few details of serious offenses reached the general public. The local newspapers condemned the American habit of carrying knives.

The U.S. Consul, Mason Turner, advised the State Department that there was considerable dislike of Americans. He went as far as to suggest that in many areas of Queensland, "matters had reached such a pass that some Australians and Americans would rather kill each other than the Japanese."

In Brisbane, the Provost Marshal of the American forces, Lt. Col. Harry H. Vaughan, reported that in November his military police units were breaking up 20 fights a night. The situation was similar in some southern centers. In Sydney, Colonel A.N. Kemsley confided to a colleague that letters "intercepted from different areas revealed that GI's had considerable ill feeling towards Australian servicemen." Clearly, both sides had different views.

For the Australians, Maj. Gen. J.M.A. Durrant, commander of the Australian troops in Queensland, interpreted the ill feeling as resentment at the first claim on accommodations, foodstuffs, and luxuries which, rightly or wrongly, "they believe is accorded to U.S. personnel because their spending power is so much greater than the Australians." There was further reference to the perennial problem of U.S. troops and local women. Durrant made mention of "the conduct of a large section of women folk who permit themselves to be literally 'mauled about' in public, irrespective of the time and place." Resentment toward Americans in England by British servicemen was

Author's Collection

Two views of wartime Brisbane belie the rift that developed between members of U.S. and Australian military in the overcrowded city during 1942.

aggravated by the same sentiment. The situation was not made any easier with the American attitude of being a law unto themselves in the host countries.

In Brisbane alone, divorce figures for 1942-1943 rose from 100 to almost 400. It was estimated that approximately 200 of these involved adultery, with a third attributed to the Americans. The cessation of engagements, fallouts with sweethearts, and broken vows and hearts must have been enormous in number. There is no doubt that Brisbane was the Allied love nest during the war. Of the 15,000 marriages involving American servicemen and nationals, 5,000 were at Base Section 3.

Both the Australians and the Americans had resentment, indeed hatred, for most levels of authority. To many of them, the nemesis of authority was the military police, sometimes called provosts. With almost 100,000 servicemen in the city, the maintenance of law and order was hopelessly out of the reach of the civil authorities and military control was necessary. In Brisbane in late 1942, the American Provost Corps had over 800 active personnel; the Australian Provost staff in the area numbered 110. In November, U.S. military law and order was the responsibility of the 814th and 738th MP Battalions based at Whinstanes, a few minutes from the city center, which was the favorite social haunt for all servicemen as the Australian and American canteens were located there.

In addition to enforcing order, the provosts undertook sentry duties on docks and facilities. The suitability of the 738th Battalion personnel for their duties was suspect. According to the official history of the Provost Marshall's Section, "At least half the members were unsuited for police work because of habits of insobriety, lack of dependability, physical weakness, physical build and mental development."

The typical provost was armed and aggressive, and one historian of the early war years has suggested, "It is probably a fair generalization to say that in the United States, the display of batons and firearms in the hands of police is an effective way of quelling a riot whereas in Australia it is an effective way of starting one."

If the military police were not to be treated with respect, then they were to be treated with caution. A taxi driver was shot and killed outside a U.S. camp in Sydney while he was looking for his passenger. An Australian sailor was killed in an argument over the possession of a salt shaker by a provost in a café. Another Australian sailor was gunned down after an altercation with a provost who knelt and with a fixed arm position, fired two .45-caliber rounds into the chest of the unfortunate sailor.

These and other tragic episodes have a common denominator. In the heat of the moment a firearm resolved the situation. Without the presence of weapons, these men would not have died. The numerically inferior Australian provosts carried only a baton, while the Americans, like lawmen from the old Wild West, carried a holstered .45-caliber automatic, a weapon of devastating effectiveness. On many occasions, the weapons created more problems than they solved. It was also a clash of cultures where one country had, to a degree, been established by the use of firearms, while the other was fortunate enough geographically not to have needed to rely on the gun.

Increasing tensions with provosts, servicemen, and civilians in the depressing environment of a gloomy, dark, and crowded Brisbane suggested that a day of reckoning was at hand. The confrontation between Australian and American servicemen that came to be known as the Battle of Brisbane shocked many but surprised few. Scarcely reported at the time and only sporadically since, the incident has largely faded into history. Most cannot remember. A few cannot forget. In hindsight, the significance of the battle is apparent. Not only was it the largest and most violent disturbance between Allies during the war, but it was a significant factor in destroying Brisbane's innocence and an influential factor in the ever-changing relationship between the two Allies.

On November 26, 1942, fate was to place a company of the 738th MP Battalion in Base Section 3 with a few thousand servicemen looking for entertainment. It was a fine summer's day in Brisbane with everyone going about their normal activities, but just before noon there was an omen of things to come when an American MP had tried to stop a fight on Albert Street. A baton struck the head of a Digger, which drew others to the scene. After a small but violent brawl, some peace was restored. Nonetheless, many observers believed the authorities were losing control. At 6:30 PM, the hotels had closed for the second time that day and, as always, the darkening, unlit streets were crowded with aimless servicemen and a few civilians looking for some form of entertainment.

Private James R. Stein, 404th Signal Company, United States Army, was about to inadvertently start one of the most notorious episodes of the war on the home front. Stein had been in the Australian canteen, with whom and for what purpose is unknown, but he had been there drinking. When he left the canteen, he started to walk in the direction of the American PX canteen, a short distance away. On his way to the PX, Stein walked into three Diggers who had also been drinking. If a serviceman bumped into another at that time, either talk or fighting ensued. Initially, on this occasion, there was talk.

While this friendly dialogue between Allied servicemen was taking place, it is unclear if one or two American MPs arrived on the scene. There is no doubt that Private Anthony E. O'Sullivan, 814th MP Company, challenged Stein for his leave pass.

Nobody knows who struck the first blow. There was cursing, a baton raised, blows landed, boots and fists connected, and then the three

Diggers became 10, then 20. Civilians came too. There were whistles from all quarters, and more MPs arrived, most from the PX. The fight was getting out of hand and the MPs, not used to being outnumbered, retreated to the PX. Stein stumbled in also. O'Sullivan was carried in, and the doors were quickly closed and bolted.

Immediately, there were frantic phone calls and alarms. Hundreds gathered outside, and soon rocks, sticks, and bottles were being hurled at the canteen. First Lieutenant Lester Duffy, from the 814th, arrived at 7:15 PM. "There were about a hundred Australian soldiers struggling to break through a makeshift cordon around the PX door," he later reported. "They were shouting for the Yank bastards to come out—or they would come in."

Police Inspector Charles Price was one of the first of the civil authorities on the scene. According to Price, "The crowd was growing rapidly. They were hooting and shouting—pull the bloody place down—come out and fight.… You used the batons on our mates but you ran away at Milne Bay."

According to Captain Robert M. Wise, an American liaison officer who observed the action from the balcony of the nearby Gresham Hotel, "Civilian police were lined across the door, backed by U.S. military police. Every so often green clad soldiers milled in front of the door and rushed it, and I could see night sticks being used and there would be much fighting."

As the battle spread into other streets, women workers were evacuated and escorted clear of the area by soldiers. In the PX, Private Stein attempted to retrieve his leave pass from the pocket of the prostrate Private O'Sullivan. Stein disappears from recorded history with a brief statement: "I was told to forget about the pass. Someone gave me a club and I stood in line with the other fellows and helped them out."

The area was cordoned off by military police of both sides, who formed pickets with the civilian police. Many vehicles were turned back by armed men. Some were there out of curiosity; some wanted to join in. Duncan Caporn remembers detaining a small truck driven by an Australian officer and three men. The four were arrested after sentries found four Owen submachine guns, several boxes of ammunition, and a quantity of hand grenades. By 8 PM, it was estimated that 2,000 to 4,000 people were involved in the melee, which showed no sign of easing.

The chance to stop the riot was lost when the local fire brigade appeared but could not or would not train its fire hoses on the crowd. The Americans would bitterly criticize this failure.

"We have no intention of using our services to quell military or civil riots. Our job is to put out fires," said the bureaucratic fire chief shortly after the event. Some Australian MPs removed their armbands and joined the mob, while others tried to placate them.

Private Norbert Grant of C Company, 738th MP Battalion, was not even in the city when the battle started. He was in South Brisbane's Musgrove Park reading a book. At 7 PM, he left. It had become too dark to read and, besides, the word was out that there was a fight in town. It was not your everyday fight, but a real brawl. Grant thought it best to report for duty early. He was just through the barracks door when he was handed a 12 gauge Stevens pump action shotgun. It is a riot gun capable of firing a casing of 30 pellets, a genuine peacekeeper and devastating at close range. Grant was then ordered to join the others and proceed to the PX because "there is a hell of a riot and our boys are getting hurt."

The Australian and American MPs and civil police had shown considerable responsibility in not resorting to the use of firearms up to this stage. Private O'Sullivan, to his credit, did not

draw his pistol when being assaulted. The riot so far was only being fought with bottles, sticks, fists, boots, and any handy objects. It took about eight minutes for Norbert Grant and other members of C Company to reach the battle. Soon they were elbowing, pushing, and shoving their way through the crowd to get to the PX where the Americans feared they were going to be killed. Outside, they could see thousands of servicemen, civilians, and Australian military and civil authorities.

There were armed sentries outside manning the pickets and trying to pacify the crowd. Civil police were frantically attempting to protect civilians; some were also talking to the crowd. Police later stated that the armed pickets were ineffective; some left, some joined the crowd, many remained passive.

What Grant saw as he forced his way toward the PX was a sea of hostile humanity. "Jesus Christ," he thought, "I'm goin' to get killed tonight." Within an hour of reading a book in the tranquil surroundings of Musgrove Park, Private Norbert Grant was about to be immortalized in notoriety. "Look!" someone shouted. "One of the bastards has got a gun."

Grant told the subsequent court of inquiry, "Suddenly they all came for me, and I had my back to the wall of the PX and I menaced them with the gun and told them to break it up. One of the Australian soldiers came close to me so I jabbed him with it. Then as I was standing against the wall, they grabbed the front of the gun and this other soldier had hold of me by the neck, and this is when the gun went off."

The gun went off. Three shots were fired. Grant could only remember firing one. The first shattered the chest of Private Edward Webster from the 2/2 Anti-Tank Regiment, and he was dead before he hit the floor. Private Kenneth Henkel fell with wounds to the cheek and forearm. Private Ian Tieman fell with a wound to the chest, and Private Frank Corrie with a thigh wound. Private Walter Maidment was aged only 18 when he was wounded in action on the street of his own city. Private Richard Ledson, a comparatively old man at 35, suffered a compound fracture of the left ankle and gunshot wounds to the left thigh and left hand. Sapper DeVosso was shot in the thigh, and a civilian, 38-year-old Joseph Hanlon, was shot in the leg.

There were screams, shouts, and then a momentary silence. Grant scrambled from the footpath and headed toward the PX, breaking the butt of the shotgun over the head of an Australian in the process. Another American soldier, Private Joseph Hoffman, who was posted as a guard on one of the PX's doors, was to bear the brunt of the Australians' fury. His skull

Author's Collection

American MPs stand watch on a Brisbane street. Often called upon to break up fights between U.S. and Australian personnel, law enforcement organizations faced hazardous duty.

was fractured. From 7 PM until 10 PM, the Battle of the Canteens, as some called it, continued virtually unabated. Eventually it subsided. The crowd dwindled, the fire brigade left, and the ambulances arrived. The lower section of the PX was destroyed. Litter and broken glass became the mementos of the battle.

Considering the intensity of the riot, the casualty list was slight. One Australian dead, eight with minor gunshot wounds, six with baton injuries, hundreds more with black eyes, swollen cheeks, split lips, broken noses, and assorted abrasions. Eight MPs were injured. At 11 PM, the Chief Censor's office in Brisbane sent a directive to all states that there would be no cabling or broadcasting the details of the Brisbane riot.

In Brisbane and across Australia, the tight censorship had an adverse effect. With no official details, rumors were rampant. The Yanks were being blamed for it all.

Ten Diggers, no 15, had died when the Yanks shot, no, machine-gunned the crowd. Some were beaten to death by batons. One was run over and left to die. There was talk of vengeance and retribution.

On Friday, November 27, groups of Diggers went into the city looking for Americans and for trouble. Fortunately, trouble was expected and some precautions were taken. Both canteens were locked up, and pickets were manned by dozens of armed troops. The target for the Australian packs was not necessarily the PX, nor was it the American MPs. It was any American in uniform.

Further trouble might have been averted had servicemen of both sides been confined to their bases. Some were, but many still walked the streets. As the evening sky began to darken, crowds gathered outside the American Red Cross building, the area around the PX having been secured. NCOs in the crowd confiscated hand grenades and attempted to find their men and get them away from the area. The situation was delicate. American MPs on the first floor were heavily armed and ready to fight.

The throng broke up and gathered again at the corner Queen and Edward Streets outside General MacArthur's headquarters, and the mob shouted abuse in the direction of the general's office. The mob was wasting its time as the general was in New Guinea on a rare visit to the front. American Warrant Officer William A. Bentson worked in MacArthur's headquarters and has the distinction of being an eyewitness to both rounds of the battle. He recalled the Friday night disturbances:

"I had just left barracks and was walking to headquarters for my shift. When I got to Queen Street, it seemed to be at a standstill. People were everywhere. Aussies were grabbing every American they could find and kicking the hell out of them. It didn't look good so I ran down a lane and made a run for HQ. The Aussies were Militiamen not regular AIF soldiers. I could tell this by the band on their hats. There could not have been more than 300 [figures vary between 300 and 600]. I was watching the events from HQ's 6th floor. There were three circles formed in the crowd and they were passing Americans in uniform over their heads and into the circles where they were punching and kicking them. The Aussies could only find 21 Americans and they were taken to hospital after being beat up. Many friends of mine in GHQ were beat up and the next morning, several of them showed up for duty with their arms in slings and black and blue marks on their bodies."

The potential for disaster increased when a group of Diggers waving stolen batons faced a group of 20 U.S. provosts in Queen Street. The Americans lined up and drew their holstered .45 automatics. An unknown Australian officer became the hero of the hour when he persuaded the American commander to get his men into a truck and to drive away, thus averting what could have been a bloodbath. If the provosts had gunned down the Australian soldiers, it is possible war would have been fought in the streets of Brisbane instead of the jungles of New Guinea.

Casualties for the second and final night of the battle were 21 injured, of whom 11 were hospitalized. All were American. The figure included eight MPs and four officers. Measures were implemented the next day to ensure there

would not be a repeat of the past two days. Units prominent in the battle were moved, MP strength was increased, the Australian canteen was closed, and the American PX was relocated. An investigation began almost immediately. The Americans insisted that the incident was caused by the Australians' involvement in an affair that had nothing to do with them. Australian authorities admitted that their troops were responsible for the incident but suggested that the American provosts needed to learn the virtue of tact and restraint.

There was much criticism of the ineffectual control shown by the civil authorities, and base commanders were taken to task for not confining nonessential personnel to base during the riot. There were calls for better communications between the two sides. When it was suggested to MacArthur that a series of discussions and lectures could bond the fragile link between the two Allies, MacArthur dismissed the idea as unnecessary, saying, "It would make the situation seem more serious than it is and there is no staff or facilities to support such a venture."

It should not be forgotten that the ultimate blame for the lack of inter-Allied harmony should rest with him as supreme commander. Events before, during, and after the Battle of Brisbane occurred not only in MacArthur's resident city, but in the streets outside his office. General MacArthur had more important priorities, such as winning the war and his own personal glory.

The inquiry also achieved many positive developments. Certain restrictions were lifted, including entertainment becoming more accessible, and soon tensions eased. However, no authority had the power to resolve what was always the fundamental problem. The Australian soldier during World War II remained the poorer relation to his American counterpart. The Battle of Brisbane might have started with a beer, a baton, and a boot, but the frustration of the Australian servicemen was their battle with a foe they could never beat—the Yank down under and his dominance of all things military and otherwise. The Yanks may well have been oversexed, overpaid, and in Australia, but the Australians were undersexed, underpaid, and under MacArthur.

To summarize the problem, it included liquor, GI pay and smarter uniforms, and discrimination in shops and hotels in favor of the Americans. The spectacle of American troops with Australian girls, particularly the wives of absent soldiers, and the American custom of caressing women in public added to the situation. If it had been reversed would Americans have reacted any differently?

On February 27, 1943, Private Norbert Grant, 738th MP Battalion, faced a court martial for manslaughter. He was found not guilty on the grounds of self-defense. Five Australians were convicted of various charges of assault, with one being sentenced to six months in jail. Quarrels and fights were common until the war ended but never on the scale of the Brisbane incident. Some have suggested the relationship between the Allies improved as a result of the riot. It certainly provided a release for tensions, resentment, and hatred.

During World War II, respect and unity between American and Australian soldiers, so desirable under the circumstances, was never completely nurtured on the home front. However, mutual respect, comradeship, and unity were certainly found on the various battlefields where the men of the two nations, the Aussie and the Yank, fought and died together for a common cause. □

Ken Wright is a resident of Melbourne, Australia. He is an expert on the experience of his native land during World War II.

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An RAF attempt to assassinate Hitler in 1945 failed, but the Führer soon made the effort moot by committing suicide.

BY CHARLES WHITING

ADOLF HITLER BELIEVED IN *VORSEHUNG* (PROVIDENCE). THE GERMAN leader felt that if anything was going to happen to him, such as assassination, there was nothing he could do about it. He had been selected by fate to achieve something great; he would not die, either by accident or assassination, until he had fulfilled that God-given mission.Time and time again in the past, providence, not planning, had taken care of him. In 1933, for instance, just before he became master of the Third Reich, he was involved in a terrible car crash with a truck. He emerged from the wreckage stating that he could not die yet—his mission had not yet been achieved.

It was the same with assassination attempts. Hitler explained that he had many enemies and expected disgruntled Germans and others to try to kill him. But they would never succeed, especially if they came from the German working class. He used to state to his staff quite categorically, *"Mil tut kein deutscher Arbeiter was"* ("No German worker will ever do anything to me."). Once, when he was advised by worried police to use the back entrance to a noisy and angry meeting of workers, Hitler snorted, "I am not going through any back door to meet my workers!"

As for those aristocratic *Monokelfritzen* (Monocle Fritzes, those high-born, monocled aristocrats Hitler had hated with a passion ever since the Great War), both civilian and military, whom he knew from his intelligence sources had been trying to eradicate him in these last years of the 1930s, he was confident that this personal providence would save him. And in truth, until the very end, providence did protect Hitler from all the attempts on his life, including the generals' plot to kill him in July 1944.

Naturally, ever since Hitler's election as chancellor in 1933, his security guards had taken secret precautions to protect him. Like some medieval potentate, all the Führer's food was checked daily before it was served to him. Each day, his personal doctor had to report that the Führer's food supplies were free of poison. Party Secretary Martin Bormann ran daily checks on the water at any place where the Führer might stay to ascertain whether it might contain any toxic substances.

Later, when Bormann, in his usual fawning manner, started to grow "bio-vegetables" in his Berchtesgaden gardens for the Führer's consumption, Hitler's staff would not allow the produce to appear on the master's vegetarian menu. Once, just before the war, a bouquet of roses was thrown into the Führer's open Mercedes. One of his SS adjutants picked it up and a day later started to show the symptoms of poison-

U.S. soldiers walk past the bombed-out barracks that once housed members of Adolf Hitler's SS guard. The building was hit during an Allied bombing raid.

All photos National Archives

ing. The roses were examined and found to be impregnated with a poison that could be absorbed through the skin. Thereafter, the order was given out secretly that no "admirer" should be allowed to throw flowers into Hitler's car. In addition, from then on, adjutants would wear gloves.

On another occasion, Hitler, who loved dogs (some said more than human beings), was given a puppy by a supposed admirer. It turned out that the cuddly little dog had been deliberately infected with rabies. Fortunately for Hitler, and not so fortunately for the rest of humanity, the puppy bit a servant before it bit him. It seemed that Hitler's vaunted providence had taken care of him yet again.

Thereafter, plan after plan was drawn up to kill Hitler by his German and Anglo-American enemies. All failed. Although back in 1939, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, had stated, "We have not reached the stage in our diplomacy when we have to use assassination as a substitute for diplomacy." Prime Minister Winston Churchill decided in April 1945, however, that Hitler must die—by assassination! He gave the task to his most ruthless and anti-German commander, Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, the head of Royal Air Force Bomber Command, whose aircrews often called him bitterly "Butcher" Harris.

Back in the summer of 1943, Harris had sworn that Berlin would be "hammered until the heart of Nazi Germany would cease to exist." Hard man that he was, Harris had once been stopped by a young policeman and told if he continued to speed in his big American car, he would kill someone. Coldly, "Bomber" had replied, "Young man, I kill hundreds every night." He now ordered that Hitler should be dealt with at last in his own home. The Führer had escaped, so Allied intelligence reasoned, from his ruined capital Berlin. So where could he be? The answer was obvious. "Wolf," the alias Hitler had used before he achieved power in 1933, had returned to his mountain lair.

In that last week of April 1945, Allied intelligence felt there were only two possible places where Hitler might now be holed up since his East Prussian headquarters had been overrun by the Red Army. Either he was in Berlin, or at his Eagle's Nest in the Bavarian Alps above the township of Berchtesgaden. Reports coming from Switzerland and relayed to Washington and London by Allen Dulles of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) stated that the Germans were building up a kind of last-ditch mountain fortress in the Austrian-German Alps, so Allied intelligence was inclined to think that Hitler had already headed for Berchtesgaden where he could lead the Nazis' fight to the finish. The bulk of the Reichsbank's gold bullion had already been sent to the area to disappear in perhaps the biggest robbery in history.

Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring had gone in the same direction, followed by Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, who had taken up residence in his stolen Austrian castle. More importantly, SS General Sepp Dietrich's beaten 6th SS Panzer Army was retreating from Hungary, followed by the Red Army, heading for Austria and the same general area. Thus, the Allied planners decided that if they were finally going to assassinate Hitler, they would find him in his mountain home—built for him over the last decade by Bormann. Prominent Nazis, the *Prominenz,* just like Mafia chieftains, had erected their own homes in Berchtesgaden to be close to Hitler.

Once it had simply been a rural beauty spot, with a couple of modest hotels surrounded by small hill farms that had been in the same hands for centuries. Bormann changed all that. He bribed, threatened, and blackmailed the *Erbbaueren* (the hereditary farmers, as they were called) to abandon their farms. He sold their land at premium rates to fellow Nazis and then, as war loomed, erected a military complex to protect the Führer whenever he was in residence on the mountain among the "Mountain People," as the Nazis called themselves. After he completed his 50th birthday present for the Führer, the Eagle's Nest, which Hitler visited only five times and which cost 30 million marks to construct, Bormann turned his attention to making the whole mountain complex as secure as possible, both from the land and the air.

Bormann, the "Brown Eminence" as he was known, the secretive party secretary, who in reality wielded more power on the German home front than Hitler himself, declared the whole mountain *sperrgebiet* (off limits). A battalion of the Waffen SS was stationed there permanently. Together with mountain troops from nearby Bad Reichenhall, the SS patrolled the boundaries of this prohibited area 24 hours a day, something the British planners of Operation Foxley, a land attack planned by the British in February 1945, had not reckoned with.

Then, Bormann turned his attention to the threat of an air attack. Great air raid shelters were dug, not only for the Führer and the *Prominenz,* but also for the guards, servants, and foreign workers—there was even a cinema, which could hold 8,000 people. Chemical companies were brought in and stationed at strategic points on the mountain. As soon as the first warning of an enemy air attack was given, they could produce a smoke screen, which, in theory, could cover the key parts of the area in a matter of minutes. Finally, there were the fighter bases such as Furstenfeldbruck in the Munich area where planes could be scrambled to ward off any aer-

ABOVE: The remains of the Berghof, the house used by guests at Hitler's residence in the Bavarian Alps, stand as mute testimony to the ferocity of Allied bombing. LEFT: Hitler's Eagle's Nest offered panoramic views of the Alpine countryside. An attempt to assassinate the Nazi leader failed; however, the Führer committed suicide days later.

ial attack from the west or indeed over the Alps from the newer Allied air bases in Italy.

Whether it was because of Bormann's precautions, the problem of flying over the Alps in a heavy, bomb-laden aircraft, or Allied scruples about bombing an enemy politician's home, the mountain had not been seriously troubled by air raids until now. Bomber Harris was determined to end all that. If anyone could, Harris swore, he would blast Berchtesgaden off the map.

To do so, he picked one of his most experienced bomber commanders: 24-year-old Wing Commander Basil Templeman-Rooke, who had begun his bomber career in 1943. By the end of that year, he had already been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and more importantly had flown over the Alps to bomb Turin in the hope that a bombing raid on that city, so far away from England, would encourage the Italians to surrender. After one tour of duty, Templeman-Rooke commenced another one in May 1944. He took part in the D-Day preinvasion bombing of French railways, storage depots, and other targets, and then in the attacks on V-1 buzz

An Allied air raid, which had been staged in the hopes of killing the Führer, failed but buildings in the mountain retreat, including Hitler's own residence, sustained heavy damage .

bomb sites after the invasion.

The controversial bombing of Dresden followed in February 1945. Shortly thereafter, Templemann-Rooke had been given the command of the Royal Air Force's 170 Squadron and awarded a Bar to his DFC. In March, he received the Distinguished Service Order. For Harris, the young squadron commander must have seemed the ideal leader for what he had in mind for 170 Squadron. He was young, brave, very experienced and, above all, lucky. In his two years of combat, he had survived over 40 missions, and even when he had been hit by flak over Gelsenkirchen, he had brought his Avro Lancaster bomber back on two engines and crash-landed the four-engine plane without injury. Now, Harris ordered Templeman-Rooke to fly his squadron's last combat mission of the war, its target perhaps the most important one left in Germany during April 1945.

For days now, although the hilltops were still covered with snow down to 900 meters and causing fog, reconnaissance planes kept flying over the mountain, setting off the wail of the sirens and sending the populace scurrying for the shelters. Then, once again the smoke screen would descend on the deserted homes of the Prominenz. For even Hitler's most devoted followers had reasoned that the mountain was no place to be at this stage of the war. Still, there had as yet been no attempt to bomb the area.

Hit hard by Allied bombs, the home built for Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring in the Berchtesgaden complex lies in ruins.

That changed at 0930 on Wednesday, April 25, 1945. On the half hour precisely, the prealarm sirens started to sound. Obediently, the locals began to file into their air raid shelters, believing that, as usual, nothing much would happen. This time they were wrong. Most of the mountain, right up to the Eagle's Nest at 9,300 feet, was obscured by fog. This time, on Harris's order, 170 Squadron, part of a force of 318 Lancasters, was determined to carry out its mission. Within half an hour of the pre-alarm being sounded, the first bombs were raining down on the twin heights of Klaus-and-Buchenhoehe.

Then came the second raid. According to German reports, the Lancasters swept in shortly afterward, dropping 500-pound bombs. Immediately, they hit Hitler's Berghof, where back in what now seemed another age, the Führer had once received British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, the "Umbrella Man," as the Germans had mocked him due to his appearance. Afterward, as German eyewitnesses recorded, the interior looked like a landscape after an earthquake. Göring's house, demolished together with his swimming pool, followed. Bormann's house received a direct hit. The only place that was not destroyed or damaged was the Eagle's Nest. It had been well camouflaged with tin leaves and was perhaps too small a target for Harris's men. But as the bombers swept on to attack nearby Bad Reichenhall, where 200 people were killed that day, they left behind them only smoking wreckage, which would be added to when the SS guards retreated, setting fire to everything they could not loot.

But the RAF's raid on the mountain had been in vain. Templeman-Rooke had been misinformed—the Führer was not in residence. He had remained in his bunker, spared yet again by the "providence" in which he believed so strongly. But he knew he could not go on forever. As he declared to anyone still prepared to listen to him in his Berlin bunker, he was not going to die at "the hands of the mob" like his friend and fellow dictator Mussolini. Nor was he going to allow himself to be "paraded through the streets of Moscow" in a cage. So, a broken man, embittered at the failings of his own people, and perhaps a little mad, the leader who had survived so many assassination attempts died by his own hand. His "providence" had run out at last.

Even today, at a certain angle, one can see the series of depressions leading up to where Göring's house was, marking one bomber's run into the attack. Of the house itself only a few steps remain next to some bushes where visitors allow their dogs to do their business—"*Hundepissecke*" the locals call it. One wonders what roly-poly Göring would have said. Probably, he would have reached for his shotgun and started blazing away; he was always very keen to shoot anything on four legs. □

Well-known author Charles Whiting has contributed regularly to WWII History. *He has written a number of well-received books, which have sold millions of copies worldwide.*

By Major General Michael Reynolds

SS ELITE BATTLE

THE STORY OF HITLER'S BODYGUARD, THE 1ST SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte (LAH), in the battle for Bastogne does not begin until after the siege of that city had been raised by the U.S. 4th Armored Division, part of General George Patton's Third Army, on December 26, 1944. By then the American Bastogne salient posed such a threat to the flank and rear of German Army Group B that it could no longer be ignored—in fact, by then Bastogne was becoming the center of gravity of the whole Battle of the Bulge.

As a consequence, the men who wore Hitler's name on their cuffs found themselves rushed to this new sector. Their division had already suffered heavily in its failed attempt to break through in the northern sector of the Bulge, but the fighting in which it was about to take part was some of the most bitter and costly of the entire campaign. It will probably come as a surprise to many readers to learn that American casualties in the second half of the Battle of the Bulge (December 30, 1944, through January 12, 1945), were nearly one-third higher than in the first half.

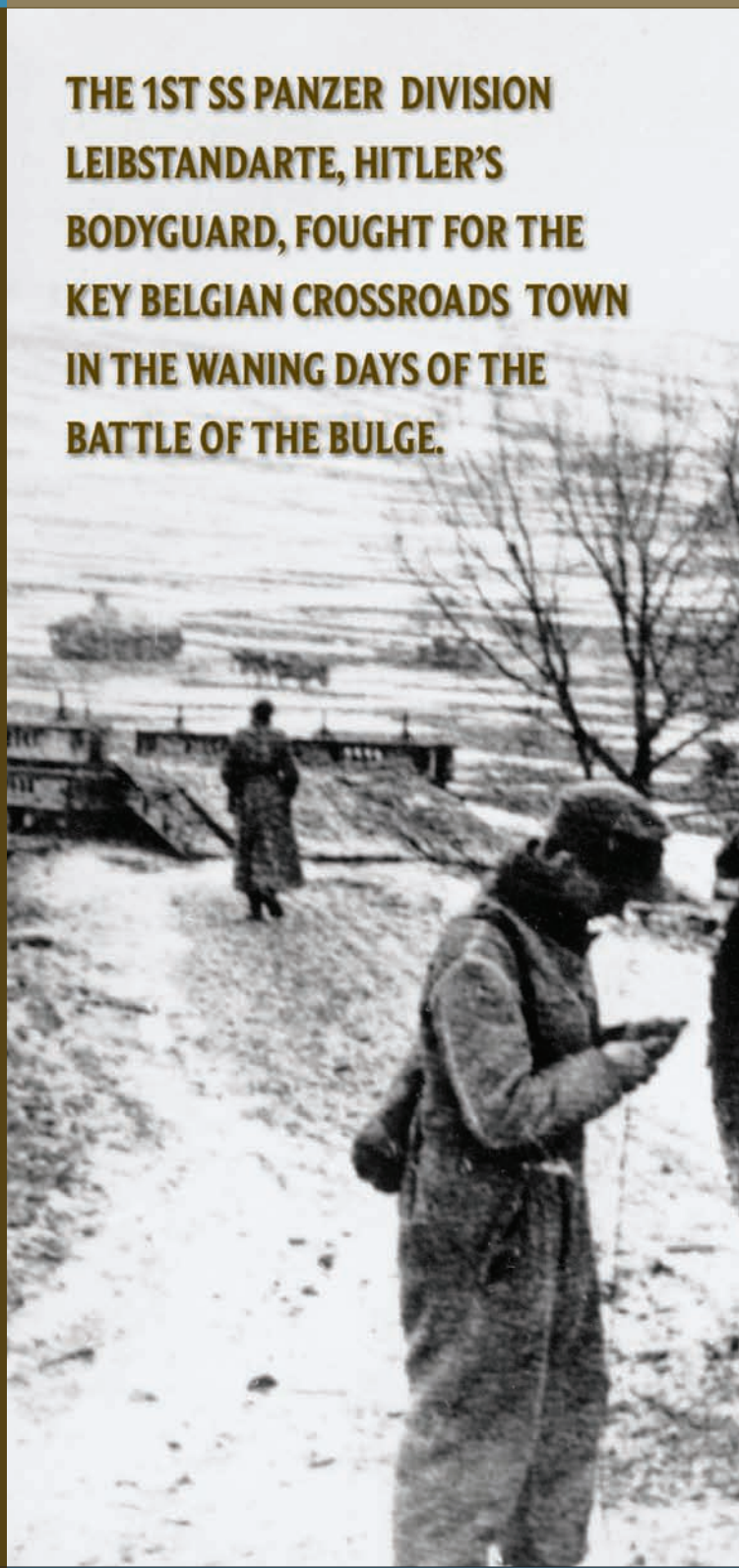
In the same way that the Bastogne salient was causing problems to Army Group B, it was clear to the senior U.S. commanders that they had to fill the gap between their 4th Armored Division and the 26th Infantry Division to its southeast. In particular, it was important to push the Germans away to the east from the Bastogne-Arlon road—the main open artery into the Bastogne pocket. To this end, the 35th Infantry Division was ordered to advance into the gap and given the Bastogne-Longvilly road as its ultimate objective. By the evening of the 29th, it was lying directly in the path of the eastern prong of the German counterattack designed to cut Patton's III Corps corridor into Bastogne—the counterattack in which Hitler's Bodyguards were to participate.

On December 28, 1944, the LAH was transferred to XXXIX Panzer Corps in General Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army. Headquarters Army Group B reported that night: "Kampfgruppe 1st SS Panzer Division, with its Panzer Regiment, Panzerjäger Battalion, 1st Panzergrenadier Regiment, Artillery Regiment, Pioneer Company and Armored Reconnaissance Platoon, left the Vielsalm area at 1625 hours and moved into the … Longvilly area."

In fact, owing to fuel shortages, some elements of the LAH were unable to start their move until midday on the 29th, by which time the division had become part of Army Group Lüttwitz, a new unified command comprising both the XXXIX and XLVII Corps. General Heinrich F. von Lüttwitz had been given the task of eliminating the Bastogne salient.

During the night of the 29th, the LAH moved farther south to the Tarchamps-Lutremange area, from where it was to launch its attack. This part of the Duchy of Luxembourg was hilly and heavily forested, with a very restricted road network. It was bitterly cold; the roads were icy, and a blanket of snow covered everything.

THE 1ST SS PANZER DIVISION LEIBSTANDARTE, HITLER'S BODYGUARD, FOUGHT FOR THE KEY BELGIAN CROSSROADS TOWN IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE.



for BASTOGNE

A Panther tank of the 1st SS Panzer Division "Leibstandarte" moves forward warily during the Battle of the Bulge as its commander scans the horizon for signs of enemy forces.

ullstein-bild / The Granger Collection, New York

The LAH's attack was to be supported on its northern flank by the 167th Volksgrenadier Division (VGD) and a Kampfgruppe (KG) of Panzer Lehr's 901st Regiment, which included some Mk IV tanks. The latter was already in the sector but worn down and understrength. The 167th VGD had arrived from Hungary on December 24 and then, after detraining on the east bank of the Rhine, had experienced great difficulty in reaching the Bastogne sector. To add to its problems, the division had no heavy weapons, and although a third of its men were veterans of the Russian Front, many others were recently joined Luftwaffe personnel.

On the LAH's southern flank, a regiment of the 5th Parachute Division (FSD), already in the line and resisting the advance of the U.S. 35th Division, had also been ordered to support the attack, but it too was tired and seriously understrength.

For its new mission, the LAH commander, SS Maj. Gen. Wilhelm Mohnke, divided his depleted division into two KGs. The northern KG, under the command of SS Captain Werner Poetschke, comprised all the available tanks, two weak battalions of panzergrenadiers, and a pioneer company. It was tasked with capturing Lutrebois and then advancing to the Bastogne-Arlon road in the vicinity of Remonfosse. At the same time the southern KG, under SS Lt. Col. Max Hansen, was to capture Villers-la-Bonne-Eau and reach the Bastogne-Arlon road via Losange. It consisted of the 1st SS Panzerjäger Battalion, all the remaining panzergrenadiers, an SS reconnaissance platoon, and a pioneer company.

A Waffen-SS Panzer IV tank rolls forward along a snow-covered road during the Battle of the Bulge. By January 1945, the last desperate German offensive in the West had lost its momentum.

ullstein-bild / The Granger Collection, New York

After reaching the Bastogne-Arlon road, both KGs were to continue their advance west to link up with the Führer Begleit Brigade (FBB) and the 3rd Panzergrenadier Division (PGD) in the area between Assenois and Hompré. H-Hour was set for 0600 on the 30th. Suggestions that the infamous SS Lt. Col. Jochen Peiper, the designated commander of the LAH's 1st SS Panzer Regiment, was a "backseat driver" in KG Poetschke during this operation can be discounted. Following the defeat of his KG in the northern sector of the Bulge from December 17-25, he was suffering from mental and physical exhaustion and had been evacuated.

How strong was the LAH at this time? There is very little firm information from German sources, but it is still possible to determine the strength of the division with reasonable accuracy. It is clear that the 1st SS Panzer Battalion still had a theoretical strength of 16 Panther and 26 Mk IV medium tanks. Karl Rettlinger's 1st SS Panzerjäger Battalion had suffered little and should have had about 18 Jagdpanzer IVs and the corps' 501st SS Heavy Battalion still counted 33 Tiger II tanks in strength, although it is unlikely that more than 15 were operational.

How many of these tanks and Jagdpanzers actually reached the Bastogne area remains a matter of conjecture, and, out of a total of 93, it is unlikely that more than 50 saw action there. With regard to infantry, Hansen's 2nd and Rudolf Sandig's 1st SS Panzergrenadier Battalions were allocated to KG Poetschke, while Hansen was left with the remnants of his 1st and 3rd battalions. Overall, it seems probable that each Leibstandarte KG had the equivalent of about one panzergrenadier battalion.

The relevant front line on December 30 ran south from Neffe, through the woods to the east of Marvie, then along the line of the woods and the Lutrebois-Lutremange road to Villers-la-Bonne-Eau and Livarchamps, and finally away to the east below Harlange.

As already mentioned, the American 35th Infantry Division lay directly in the path of the German attack. One of its regiments (the 134th) had captured most of Lutrebois in the early evening of December 29, and another (the 137th) had taken Sainlez and Livarchamps from the 5th FSD and, during the night of the 29th, penetrated into Villers-la-Bonne-Eau with two companies.

"They couldn't completely dislodge a company of German Pioneers and ended up sharing the village with them for the rest of the night," the divisional history reported. The third regiment of the 35th Division (the 320th) was at this time "engaged in bitter battle" with elements of 5th FSD around a farm and in the woods 1,000 meters southeast of Harlange. The division had suffered 148 battle casualties in three days of fighting to reach this line.

The artillery fire plan heralding the LAH attack was weak and ineffective due to a shortage of ammunition. Nevertheless, the leading tanks of KG Poetschke moved forward from Lutremange on parallel roads at 0625 hours.

Fortunately for Mohnke's men, the morning of the 30th dawned cloudy with poor visibility. Although this kept the Allied fighter bombers away for the first few hours of the attack, it also prevented the assistance that had been promised by the Luftwaffe.

Poetschke's tanks met no resistance other than from artillery fire as they approached Lutrebois, which was held by a battalion of the 35th Division (3/134th), with another battalion (2/134th) deployed in the wood line on the ridge dominating the valley to its south. Artillery fire delayed the advance, but panzergrenadiers soon infiltrated the American lines south of Lutrebois. Others engulfed the village,

Remonfosse. The American commander wasted no time and ordered his units to turn east in support of the 35th Infantry Division.

The after-action report of CCA reads, "Counter-attack of at least infantry battalion strength supported with SP guns and 20 to 30 tanks drove 3/134 out of Lutrebois and enemy infantry infiltrated through the woods to within 400 yards of the highway [Bastogne-Arlon road] seriously threatening our position."

WITH THE NORTHERN REGIMENT OF THE 35TH Division forced to withdraw south through the woods toward Losange, Poetschke's 6th SS Panzer Company's Mk Ivs were nearing Point 535, from where they could see Remonfosse and some 3-4 kilometers of the Bastogne-Arlon road. The 7th Panzer Company was heading for Saiwet, and CCA's situation was indeed becoming serious. Urgent action was needed. The Americans deployed an armored infantry battalion with two tank companies (51st Armored Infantry Battalion and B & D/35th Tank Battalion) in support into the woods to the west of Lutrebois. They also brought ground attack aircraft and all available artillery into play. The weather had improved as the day progressed and the LAH tank companies, now that they were out in the open, were extremely vulnerable.

CCA's report goes on: "At about 1100 hours B Company (strength six tanks) engaged thirteen enemy tanks advancing NW out of Lutrebois, destroying eleven of them without loss. With clear weather and good visibility air and artillery support was [sic] excellent, the air getting seven confirmed tank kills and the artillery breaking up several troop concentrations.

Hugh M. Cole's *Official History of the U.S. Army* adds more information about the air support. "The main body of the 1st SS Panzer KG appeared an hour or so before noon moving along the Lutremange-Lutrebois road; some twenty-five tanks were counted in all. It took two hours to bring the fighter-bombers into the fray, but they arrived just in time to cripple or destroy seven tanks and turn back the bulk of the Panzers."

Further details are to be found in the AAR of the CCA tank battalion involved in this action: "Thirteen German tanks ... reached the woods south-east of Lutrebois, but a 4th Armd Div artillery spotter in a Cub plane spotted them and dropped a message to Co B of the 35th Tank Bn … six Sherman tanks and a platoon from the 701st TD Bn formed an ambush near a slight ridge that provided hull defilade and waited. The leading German company (or platoon) which had six Panzers, happened to see Co A of the 35th and as the fog briefly lifted, turned, with flank exposed, in that direction. The first shot … put away the German commander's tank and the other tanks milled about until all had been knocked out. Six more German tanks came along and all were destroyed or disabled. In the meantime the American TDs and seven tanks hooked around to the north. American tank destroyers claimed four of them, and two were said to have been knocked out by artillery fire, while one was immobilized on a mine.

News of the German attack reached the headquarters of Combat Command A (CCA) of the 4th Armored Division at 0635 hours. This combat command was located just to the east of the Bastogne-Arlon road and behind the northern regiment of the 35th Division. It was basically facing north with its advanced elements at

"When the smoke cleared I saw that my hatch was gone. What I did not see was that the hit had torn our cannon right away from the turret."

On January 1, 1945, American Sherman tanks fire their 75mm cannon at German positions in the Belgian countryside. Although they were no match for the German panzers in one-on-one confrontations, sheer weight of numbers tipped the balance of power to Allied armor.

National Archives

took on some accompanying assault guns, shot up three of them, and dispersed the neighboring Grenadiers."

These reports equate reasonably well with the few German accounts of events on the 30th, although they claim many more tanks knocked out. A member of the 7th SS Panzer Company, Manfred Thorn, remembered, "At about 0930 hours we reached the Lutrebois hills.... American infantry were scattered through the left portion of the forest, right along the road. The forest lined the road for only a hundred meters, then the first houses of Lutrebois could be seen.... At the end of the forest a Panther stood on the right.... On the horizon to the west I saw the last Panzers of the 6th Company disappearing behind a hill. They were driving in the direction of Remonfosse.... The Company then drove in a wide wedge formation toward the hills 4km south of Bastogne [north of Remonfosse]. On our right were the woods, to our left open ground, behind us Lutrebois.... At 1515 hours we noted several Panzers behind us already hit and burning. Within ten minutes six of our Company's Panzers were knocked out."

Whether the Panther referred to was that of Werner Poetschke we shall never know, but his command Panther was certainly put out of action and he and his adjutant, Rolf Reiser, were given a lift back to their command post later in the day in a 7th Company Mk IV. Thorn's Mk IV withdrew into the forest after last light and eventually reached Bras.

Another member of the 7th Company, Rolf Ehrhardt, described his participation. "We bypassed the center of the village [Lutrebois], leaving it on our left and ... headed northwest.... Suddenly we saw movement near the 6th Company. The Panzers angled to the left and one fired its main armament.... The artillery fire became stronger. Then there was a new tone in the explosions—a harder, drier whipcrack.... The fire was coming from due west (from a dominating wooded ridge which runs for some 3 kilometers along the west side of the Bastogne-Arlon road).... The Amis must have set up anti-tank guns further to the left of the 6th Company. Two shells exploded in front of our tank.... A tank was knocked out in front of us.... It was almost a relief when we were hit ourselves.... When the smoke cleared I saw that my hatch was gone. What I did not see was that the hit had torn our cannon right away from the turret."

Yet another member of the same company told later how he and his tank commander drove forward again that night to search for damaged tanks. They found six, all from their own company and still burning, in a row in an open field. Amazingly, only two crewmen had been killed during the day; SS Captain Oskar Klingelhöfer had suffered burns but would soon return to command what was left of the company.

In the southern sector of the LAH's front, KG Hansen's advance progressed well despite an appalling route that twisted its way through woods and up and down deep valleys. By midmorning, SS Captain Haft's panzergrenadiers, with support from at least seven Jagdpanzers, had relieved the few German pioneers who had shared Villers-la-Bonne-Eau with the Americans the previous night.

The AAR of the 35th Division describes what happened: "Companies K and L of the 3/137th Infantry came under attack by seven tanks [Jagdpanzers] heavily supported by infantry. The Panzers moved in close, blasting the stone houses and setting the village ablaze. At 0845 a radio message reached the CP of the 137th Infantry asking for the artillery to lay down a barrage of smoke and high explosive, but before the gunners could get a sensing the radio went dead. Only one of the 169 men inside the village got out."

The report of the U.S. infantry regiment involved gives more details: "At 0645 the 3rd Battalion held four buildings in Villers-la-Bonne-Eau and by 0900 the enemy activity and resistance in the town increased considerably. Enemy assault guns [Jagdpanzers] and SS

ullstein-bild / The Granger Collection, New York

troops moved into the town in the morning to reinforce the enemy garrison [pioneers] and the armored guns moved in and around the town shooting into the houses occupied by elements of the 3rd Battalion. Two of these guns were knocked out by bazooka fire and the rest withdrew out of bazooka range and shelled the houses with direct fire.... Companies K and L were cut off from the rest of the Battalion."

At 1445 hours the German advance continued and the Chateau Losange was captured by 1600. But this was to be the high-water mark of Hansen's advance, for as the leading elements of his KG reached the main Bastogne-Arlon road, just to the west of the Chateau, they came under intense artillery fire and direct tank and antitank fire from parts of CCA and the 137th Infantry Regiment. The attack stalled, and Hansen gave orders for his men to go firm.

By last light on December 30, the Leibstandarte was holding Point 535, Lutrebois, the Chateau Losange area, and Villers-la-Bonne-Eau, and the 35th Division had been forced back to a line running from Remonfosse to Sainlez to Livarchamps. But the German counterattack had failed in its mission of crossing the Bastogne-Arlon road and reaching the Assenois area, and the cost had been heavy. At least 20 tanks and Jagdpanzers were lost, and many panzergrenadiers killed and wounded. Nevertheless, the attack had driven a wedge 3 kilometers wide and 3 kilometers deep into the flank of the Bastogne corridor and, as the *Official History* says, "It had achieved an important secondary effect, becoming, as it did, a true spoiling attack that put the 35th [Division] out of the running from 31 December on."

The concurrent attack by the 167th VGD along the axis of the Bras-Bastogne road met with some initial success and reached the first houses of Bastogne itself; however, in the face of intense artillery fire, attacks by fighter-bombers and finally a counterattack by armored elements of CCA, the division ended the day at the western edge of Marvie.

THE 5TH FSD HELD ITS GROUND ON THE 30TH against limited attacks by the 35th Division but was too weak to join in the overall German assault on the Bastogne corridor.

There are no detailed reports of the fighting on the eastern side of the Bastogne corridor on December 31 from either the Americans or Germans. Clear weather produced plenty of air activity—the Germans claiming 3,550 Allied aircraft operating against 550 of their own.

Ralf Tiemann's *History of the LAH* says the fighting continued with "undiminished ferocity" on the 31st, with both LAH KGs reaching the Bastogne-Arlon road again at about midday before being pushed back again to their start points by "massive artillery fire and counter-attacks during the afternoon by the 4th Armored and 35th Infantry Divisions."

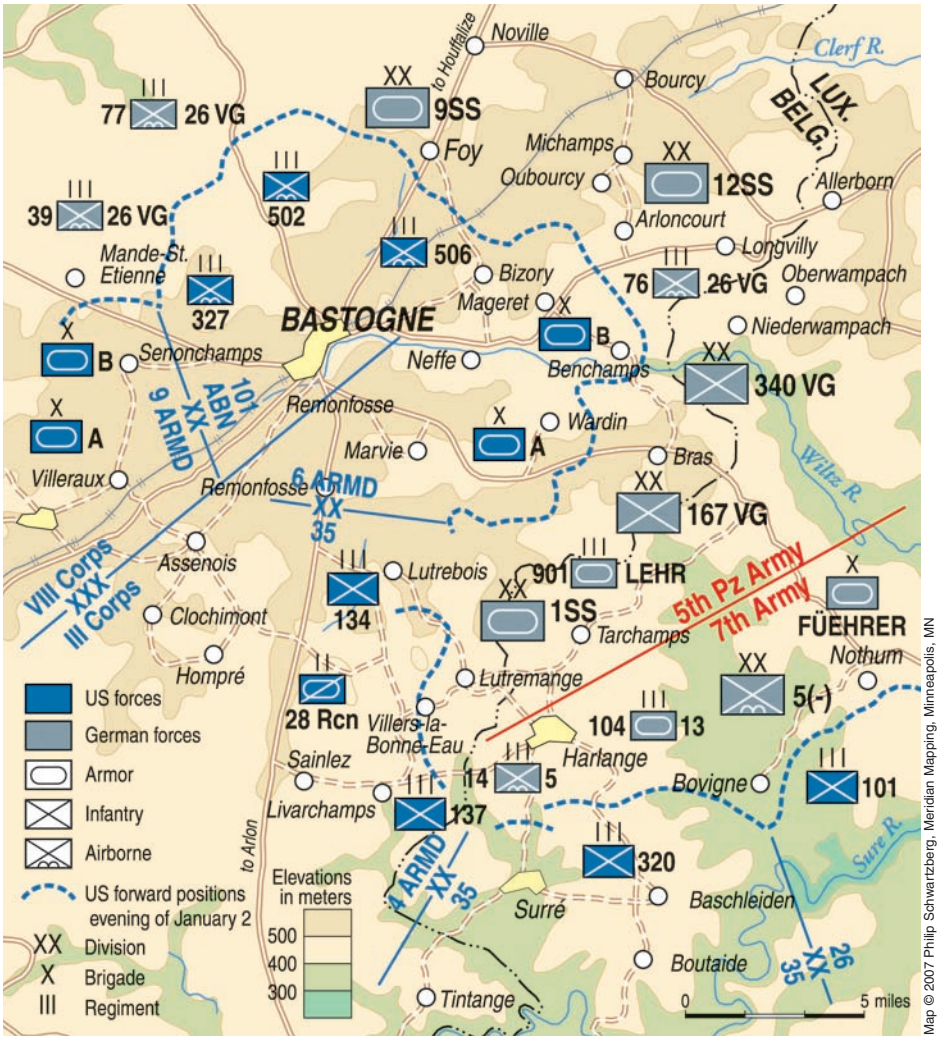
Neither of the U.S. divisional after-action reports makes any mention of this. CCA of the 4th Armored merely says, "Positions taken up late on 30 Dec were improved and strengthened ... enemy tank lurking in edge of woods was destroyed."

The 35th Division's after-action report says, "The Division was ordered to attack to the north-east, supported by tanks from the 4th Armd Div, to capture the two 510m high hills north-east of Lutrebois, but no progress was made."

The war diary of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander-in-chief of German forces in the West, has the following entry for the 31st: "A report from Army Group B at 1215 hours again described the ferocity of the fighting around Bastogne. The western attack group [3rd PGD and FBB] cannot advance any further without the support of the eastern group [LAH and 167th VGD]. The eastern group has indeed resumed the attack, but can only gain a little ground. The deployment of artillery will bring some relief. In spite of this, the forces committed so far appear to be insufficient to achieve the assigned objective."

January 1-2, 1945, saw only limited activity on the Leibstandarte's front. The Americans claim to have cleared Hansen's men from Losange and the woods to the west of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau, but KG Poetschke still controlled the area of Point 535 and Lutrebois.

The commander of Army Group B, Field Marshal Walter Model, had now come to the



ABOVE: Originally formed as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the 1st SS Panzer Division "Leibstandarte" failed to secure the Belgian crossroads town of Bastogne, which was a key to the entire German offensive. OPPOSITE: On January 15, 1945, German infantrymen pick their way through a wooded area during the costly Ardennes offensive. Hitler's bid to capture the port of Antwerp and split the Allied armies in the West ended in failure.

conclusion that there was little or no chance of cutting the Bastogne corridor and that a direct attack against the town was more likely to bring success. The decision was to bring the LAH's sister division, the 12th SS Hitlerjugend, into action in the Bastogne sector with disastrous results. Its personnel casualties would reach catastrophic proportions in the ensuing fighting, and the division was to lose seven Mk IV tanks, six Panthers, 17 Jagdpanzer IVs, seven Jagdpanzer Vs, and 18 armored personnel carriers.

On January 3, elements of the 35th Infantry Division managed to infiltrate into Lutrebois, and on the 4th, KG Poetschke launched a local counterattack with armor to recover the village. Although initially successful, the attack failed

ABOVE: Sergeant George Meyer looks in disbelief at the scars from six direct hits against an enemy Mark VI Tiger tank. The thick armor of the Tiger withstood the successive impacts during desperate fighting in the Bulge.
RIGHT: On January 11, 1945, tanks of the U.S. 6th Armored Division move forward in pursuit of the retreating Germans as a snowstorm rages.
RIGHT TOP: Looking for the nest of a German sniper in the Belgian town of Lutrebois, Sergeant Herbert S. Liman of the 134th Regiment, 25th Infantry Division watches for telltale movement.

and by last light the Americans were in control with the German tanks back in Lutremange. Even so, the Germans continued to hold the woods to the south and east of Lutrebois. Although Hansen's men had lost the road junction just to the northwest of the village, they were still firmly in control of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau.

Farther east, the after-action report of the 35th Division mentions German counterattacks by tanks as well as infantry after the 137th Infantry had captured four houses in the village of Harlange. It seems likely that part of Hansen's KG assisted the 5th FSD in resisting American attacks in that area too—the so-called tanks probably being Jagdpanzers.

The American reports for January 5-6 speak only of heavy resistance to all their attempts to advance against the LAH and make no mention of the following account of events in the *History of the Leibstandarte*: "On 5 and 6 January, the attack [against the Bastogne-Arlon road] was continued in the 167th VGD and LAH sectors. The advance of the 3rd SS Panzergrenadier Battalion of the 1st Regiment, which contained only 80 men, together with the remaining assault guns out of Villers-la-

All: National Archives

Bonne-Eau against Losange stalled right from the start under concentrated blocking fire from the artillery of the 35th Infantry and 4th and 6th Armored Divisions.

The attack by the 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Battalion from the forest west of Tarchamps to regain Lutrebois, with approximately 100 men supported by the remnants of the 6th SS Panzer Company and several combat groups from the 1st SS Panzer Regiment with Panthers, made it to the enemy positions on the edge of the town. There it was repulsed by the concentrated commitment of all infantry weapons and heavy antitank gunfire.

Although the Leibstandarte continued to hold its positions throughout January 7, the overall situation facing the Germans at this time was becoming so serious that there was a distinct possibility of another Falaise Pocket-type disaster. The following day, Hitler authorized Field Marshal Model to give up the area west of Houffalize and south of Bastogne. The withdrawal of the LAH was scheduled for the 10th. In the meantime, current positions were to be held.

On January 9, Patton's III Corps launched a coordinated attack to eliminate the mini bulge southeast of Bastogne. The after-action report of the 35th Division is succinct. "The Division was ordered to resume attacking to the northeast. The 320th Infantry, with elements of the 6th Armored Div in support, advanced 800m. The 134th Inf gained a kilometer."

According to the *History of the LAH*, "The Americans attacked … along with strong armored support and continuous artillery fire, from the direction of Losange and Livarchamps against the 3rd SS Panzergrenadier Battalion's positions on the western edge of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau. During the evening a single penetration was achieved into the center of the village. It was blocked by the battalion and SS pioneers committed with the support of assault guns. The battalion prepared to counterattack … during the night."

There are no reports of similar actions on other parts of the front.

On January 10, the 5th FSD and 167th VGD began to fall back to the Bizory-Wardin-Bras line. Early that morning the LAH also began

its withdrawal to an area east of St. Vith, where it was to return to the command of I SS Panzer Corps. By that date, the U.S. 35th Division had suffered 1,432 battle casualties—its only consolation being that it had inflicted grievous harm on its major adversary.

A member of Hansen's 2nd SS Panzergrenadier described part of the withdrawal: "In the early morning of 10 January we received orders to evacuate the Lutremange–Villers-la-Bonne-Eau corridor and assemble to the east. It was nearly light when we reached the hilltop on the road to Harlange [Tarchamps]. There [at the boundary with the Duchy of Luxembourg] we again came under fire from American tanks and suffered bloody losses. We reached Doncols, east of Bastogne, in the afternoon."

The U.S. regiment tasked with the capture of the same area described events as follows: "Supported by tanks and TDs, the 137th Infantry pushed ahead against the enemy on January 10, making a slight gain and capturing the much sought and fought for town of Villers-la-Bonne-Eau, a target of the Regiment for the past thirteen days. The Regiment attacked at 0915 … and by 1400 had two buildings on the edge of the battered town. Later in the afternoon, the entire village was cleared…. At 1400 the road leading from Lutremange was choked with enemy vehicles and an air strike and artillery pounded the column…. The Regiment suffered heavy casualties today."

Villers-la-Bonne-Eau had only 15 houses before it became engulfed by war, so it is hardly surprising that by January 10 the village had almost ceased to exist. The Americans estimated that 6,000 artillery rounds fell on it in just one day's fighting.

During the following four days a few minor but costly actions were carried out by small armored elements of the LAH to cover its withdrawal, but for all intents and purposes the LAH's commitment in Hitler's last great offensive in the West was over. After three weeks of intense combat, it was a mere shadow of the division that had entered battle on December 16.

No firm figures exist for the strengths of the panzergrenadier battalions, but it would appear that they totaled no more than a few hundred men. In the case of armor, official strength returns for the LAH and the Corps' 501st SS Heavy Panzer Battalion dated January 15, 1945, relate some surprises. They show the 62 tanks and 15 Jagdpanzers or assault guns still on strength, 19 Mk IVs, 12 Panthers, 11 Jagdpanzer IVs, four Sturmgeschutz StuG assault guns, and 33 Tiger IIs; of these, three Mk IVs, one Panther, two StuGs, and 13 Tigers were under repair. From these figures it is possible to make a reasonable estimate of the losses suffered during the fighting in the Bastogne area: seven Mk IVs, four Panthers, seven Jagdpanzers, and two Tigers. Coincidentally, U.S. Army personnel photographed two of the Panthers and the two Tigers soon after the battle. One of the Tigers was allegedly near Villers-la-Bonne-Eau and the other in the Wardin area.

Readers may be surprised that the losses in armor quoted above are much lower than those claimed by the Americans, but it has to be appreciated that the nature of the ground in the Lutrebois-Losange area precluded the deployment of large numbers of armored vehicles. Further, the *Official History of the U.S. Army* states, "Two or three units would claim to have destroyed what on later examination proves to have been the same enemy tank detachment and a cumulative listing of these claims—some 50-odd German tanks destroyed—probably gives more Panzers put out of action than 1st SS Panzer brought into the field."

It is also somewhat strange that there was no mention by either side of Tigers being involved in the Lutrebois-Lutremange fighting. This would seem to indicate that very few reached that area, and the fact that a photograph was taken of one allegedly knocked out on January 8 in the First U.S. Army sector, would tend to confirm this.

There is, however, a report by an American tank company that claims that two Tigers knocked out four of its tanks in the Mageret area in the late afternoon of January 4. The summary of operations for January 1945, by the battalion of which that company was a part, has the following entry for January 5: "Destroyed 2 Tiger tanks."

These reports tend to confirm statements that a KG, comprising some 14 to 16 Tigers of the 501st SS Heavy Panzer Battalion, operated in the general area to the east of Bastogne from December 28 to January 10. No reliable details of this KG's actions are provided.

And so ended the part played by Hitler's Bodyguard in the Ardennes campaign. In summary, it can be said that the division had been ordered to fight through unsuitable terrain, starved of essential supplies, and denied the air support this type of operation demanded. But it also has to be said that, due to failures by German intelligence staffs, the men of the LAH had often been surprised by the situations in which they found themselves and by the speed of the American reaction to their attacks.

There was one more thing that spelled disaster for Hitler's last offensive in the West: the bravery and tenacity of the American frontline soldier. This came as a shock to the Germans who, like their Führer, had a poor opinion of the U.S. Army. □

Michael Reynolds is a retired major general in the British Army. He is a veteran of the Korean War and the former director of NATO's Military Plans and Policy Division. Reynolds is a recognized expert on the Battle of the Bulge. He initially directed and later appeared as a guest speaker on some 50 British Army and NATO battlefield tours in the Ardennes. Since retiring from the Army, he has written three well-received books on the subject.

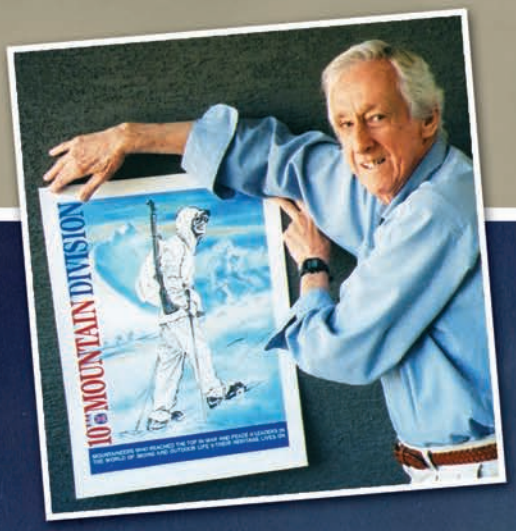
A Mountain Trooper's Sketchbook

By Flint Whitlock

The 10th Mountain Division's Jacques Parker fought the war with a pencil, pen, brush, and machine gun.

Since the days of ancient Babylon, artists have taken the time to record their visions of war. Long before the invention of photography, scenes of battle were being sketched, painted, and sculpted by talented individuals able to imbue their creations with sentiments of glory, dignity, and heroism. The march of an army, the death of a general, and the charge of a brigade could all be captured for the enlightenment and education of generations to come.

Not until Spanish artist Francisco de Goya came along in the mid-1700s and recorded scenes of death, destruction, and human misery did war art dare to deal with the seamy and squalid side of combat. Matthew Brady's photographs completed changing people's perspective of war as intrinsically glorious and made them understand that war is a terrible enterprise that must be avoided whenever possible. Thanks to Brady (and other Civil War photographers) people could view actual images of real carnage that sickened and revolted them—headless corpses, bodies burned beyond recognition, hideous skeletal remains exhumed from shallow battlefield graves.



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Wearing white camouflage and aiming their weapons toward enemy positions during a training exercise in 1945, these soldiers on skis are preparing for another operation in the alpine area of northern Italy. **OPPOSITE:** (left to right) Leading a pack mule across a snowy trail in Italy's Apennines, a trooper of the 10th Mountain Division heads for camp. A 10th Mountain trooper rappels down the side of a cliff during training at Camp Hale, Colorado, in 1943. Carrying his carbine during a training exercise at Camp Hale, a 10th Mountain soldier trudges along in snowshoes.

Although the wars that have taken place since the mid-19th century have been recorded primarily on film—moving and still—as well as video, it would be easy to conclude, therefore, that a soldier or sailor or marine armed with pencil, pen, and watercolor brushes is nothing more than a quaint anachronism.

But such a conclusion would be wrong. Even today, at the start of the 21st century, the combat artist is alive and well. Artistically talented individuals in uniform continue to sketch away, recording the mundane and the momentous, adding a personal, mind's-eye touch to a scene that might otherwise be recorded only by the impersonal eye of the camera—or, given the limitations of photography, scenes beyond the ability of the camera.

World War II saw combat artists from all sides recording their impressions of the conflict. Sometimes the scenes they drew and painted captured the visual beauty—a lushly foliated tropical shore, a flight of aircraft silhouetted by a setting sun, a stark and stunning mountain vista. At other times the artists concentrated on capturing human faces—the grizzled, unshaven face of a soldier who had seen too much combat; the small, frightened face of a refugee child; the face of a pretty girl who reminded the boys of their girls back home. The tragedy and suffering of war—bombed-out villages, long lines of pitiful civilians, piles of dead in a concentration camp—also filled sketchbooks by the dozen. Whatever the subject, the artist was there to get it down on paper or canvas, to selectively leave in or omit certain details to convey his impression of the scene.

During World War II the Germans had an extensive *kriegsmaler,* or war painter, program, stemming quite possibly from the fact that Adolf Hitler considered himself an accomplished artist and

was keenly interested in the arts, especially if they glorified the militarism of the Third Reich.

Each major German army, naval, or air force headquarters had attached to it a *Propaganda Kompanie* (PK) composed of writers, photographers, and artists whose twofold job was not only to capture the images of war but to boost morale on the home front.

Britain, Russia, Australia, Italy, Japan, and other combatant nations also had war artist programs. While many of the drawings and paintings produced were primarily for reproduction in newspapers and magazines, a large number of works also found their way onto museum walls.

The United States, too, employed a number of war artists. The first was probably New York muralist Griffith Bailey Coale. In the spring of 1941, he volunteered to become a Naval Reserve officer and "make paintings from sketches and drawings ashore and afloat of ships, docks, and all the intricacies incorporated in the running of a mighty navy."

He got his wish—and perhaps more than he bargained for. On October 31, 1941, while sailing with a convoy to Iceland, Coale witnessed the German submarine attack on, and sinking of, the destroyer USS *Reuben James,* the first American warship lost to enemy action in the Atlantic; his paintings of the scene were reproduced in several magazines. The Navy's Office of Public Relations, recognizing the value of having artists reflect the activities of that branch of service, instituted a program to attract those willing to risk their lives for art's (and history's) sake.

Captain Leland P. Lovette, the Navy's director of public relations, expressed the purpose behind the program: "Painters could catch the dramatic intensity of a scene and put it down on canvas. They could also omit the confidential technical details a camera might reveal, thus making many interesting subjects unavailable for publication. Subjects beyond the range of photography can be vividly depicted by painters, such as action at night, or in foul weather, or action widely scattered over the sea or in the air."

The Marine Corps, too, employed artists on the front lines. Brig. Gen. Robert L. Dening, public relations director for the Corps, said, "A special case for art in time of war may be made, for it is then that a man's spiritual, as well as physical, being is most severely in need of sustaining strength."

ABOVE: Jacques Parker captured two British officers chatting during the ski races at Gross Glockner. LEFT: A wounded soldier receives treatment from a doctor at the 38th Evacuation Hospital during 10th Mountain Division operations in northern Italy. LEFT TOP: A dead German mountain soldier lies motionless in the snow next to a box of machine-gun ammunition. The German *Gebirgsjäger* were considered among the elite soldiers of the Wehrmacht.

Marine Corps artists were first and foremost warriors. They were expected to hit a hot landing beach, wade in with the troops, and trade fire with the enemy. Then and only then would they make sketches, later finishing the work in

the safety of a rear area.

In January 1943, a War Department Art Advisory Committee was formed and 42 Army artists—many of whom were already well-known painters and commercial illustrators—were selected to work in combat areas around the world. George Biddle, the head of the committee gave them their marching orders:

"Any subject is in order, if as artists you feel that it is part of War; battle scenes and the front line battle landscapes; the dying and the dead; prisoners of war; field hospitals and base hospitals; wrecked habitations and bombing scenes; character sketches of our own troops, of prisoners, of the natives of the countries you visit ... the tactical implements of war; embarkation and debarkation scenes; the nobility, courage, cowardice, cruelty, boredom of war; all this should form part of a well-rounded picture. Try to omit nothing; duplicate to your heart's content. Express, if you can, realistically or symbolically, the essence and spirit of war. You may be guided by Blake's mysticism, by Goya's cynicism and savagery, by Delacroix's romanticism, by Daumier's humanity and tenderness; or better still follow your own inevitable star. We believe that our Army Command is giving you an opportunity to bring back a record of great value to our country."

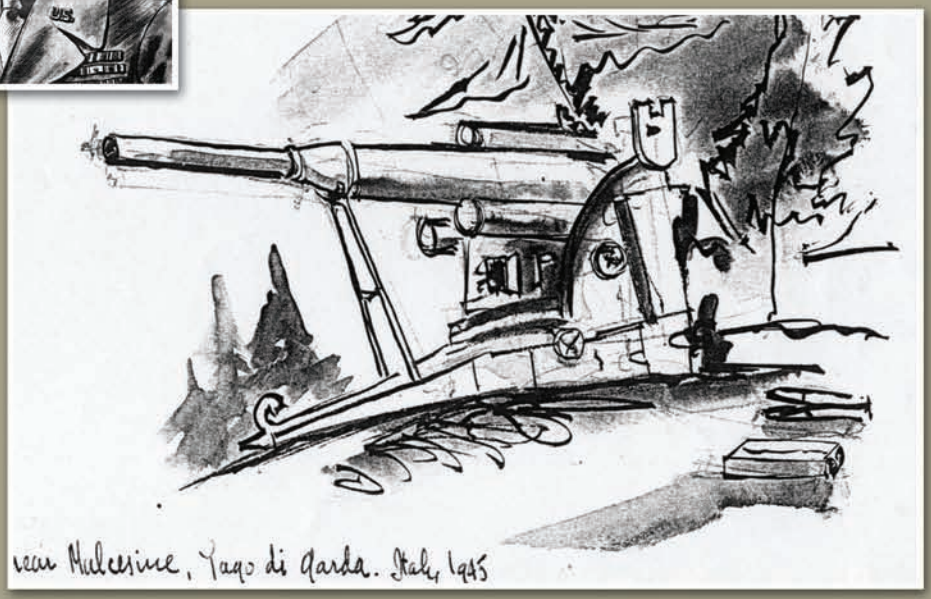
Curiously, the only subject that Biddle advised the artists to stay away from was "official portraits."

In the middle of 1943, however, the Army's combat artist program came under fire from a suddenly budget-conscious Congress. From a war budget of nearly $72 billion, the Army combat art project's miniscule $125,000 budget was cut. *LIFE* magazine picked up the contracts of many of the civilian artists, while a few generals assigned some of the enlisted artists within their commands to continue their work with individual units. In 1944, Congress reversed course and reinstated the Army's combat artist program.

Not all the combat artists served in an official capacity. Within every infantry or tank company, artillery battery, Air Corps squadron, or naval vessel there were bound to be three or four men with artistic talent and even some with special art training or a professional art background.

One such soldier within the 10th Mountain Division, the last American infantry division to be deployed for combat in Europe, was Jacques Parker, assigned to Company C, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment.

Born in France to a French mother and an American father attached to the U.S. Consulate, Jacques attended L'Ecole St. Cyr Militaire, an elementary school run by Jesuits in Nevers, where rudimentary military training was part of the school day.



ABOVE: Abandoned near La Garda, Italy, at the end of the war, a German 88mm cannon sits derelict. The versatile 88mm was one of the best all-purpose artillery pieces of World War II. INSET: Major General George P. Hays, commander of the 10th Mountain Division, sat for this sketch by trooper Jacques Parker. LEFT: His belongings bundled, slung over his shoulder, and stuffed into a small bag, a German prisoner of war walks off to captivity and an uncertain future.

In the late 1920s the family moved to East Orange, New Jersey. Gifted both athletically and artistically, the lithe and nimble Parker loved sports—basketball, gymnastics, track and field, and, especially, cross-country skiing.

Parker showed his artistic abilities at an early age, making drawings of the subjects around him or imaginary scenes from his head. He even received his first pair of skis in exchange for a mural he painted on the wall of a local sporting goods store. After graduating from high school, he attended the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts with the dream of one day becoming a famous illustrator on the order of Norman Rockwell.

World War II, however, intruded upon Parker's plans, as it did to so many others. He had been at the Newark School for only two and a half years when Germany invaded Poland and France and Britain declared war on the Nazi state.

Parker's first thought was to somehow get into the war. "Back in 1940 and 1941, when England was alone against Hitler," he says, "I so admired the handful of guys who were flying Spitfires around the clock and holding off the German Luftwaffe. At that age, being rather romantic, I wanted to join the Eagle Squadron [volunteer American aviators flying for the Royal Air Force], so I went up to Canada to enlist.

"I went to a recruiting office and there were two RAF officers sitting there—both of them had seen combat. One had a very crisp British accent. They asked me why I wanted to join the RAF

All images © the Jacques Parker except as noted.

and I did my best to answer their questions. The problem was, as they explained it to me, Americans in the Eagle Squadron were getting killed and, as the U.S. was getting closer to being involved in the war, there was a dispute between the Canadian and British governments—did an American citizen have to temporarily relinquish his American citizenship in order to enlist? Who would be responsible if you got killed?

"The officer got out from behind the desk, put his hand on my shoulder, and said, 'Go home, son.' I said, 'Yes, sir,' and, with my tail between my legs, I left."

With his dreams of aerial combat dashed, Parker returned home downhearted but not discouraged. He next applied to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at King's Point, Long Island, but was again rejected, this time for being underweight. His spirits suddenly picked up when, shortly after Pearl Harbor was attacked and the United States was thrust into the war, he learned that a special unit of skiers and mountaineers was being formed.

When the unit that would eventually become the 10th Mountain Division was organized in late 1941, Parker eagerly sought to be part of the "ski troops." The division was unique; it was the only military unit that used a civilian agency (the National Ski Patrol System) as its official recruiter, and counted hundreds of foreign-born, world-class skiers, and ski instructors—from Norway, Switzerland, and Austria—in its ranks.

Getting into the 10th was not easy. For one thing, a volunteer had to have three letters of recommendation attesting to his character. For another, an applicant had to demonstrate his proficiency at either skiing or mountaineering or some other specialized skill required by the mountain troops.

"It was beautiful stuff, because Jacques was in the line. He was a gunner!"

Fortunately, Jacques Parker was an accomplished cross-country skier, and obtaining the letters of recommendation was no problem. After a few weeks of training at Fort Dix at the end of 1942, he was sent by train to Pando, Colorado, near Leadville, site of the newly built Camp Hale and home to the 10th Light Division, Alpine, Pack.

"When I got out to Camp Hale, Colorado," Parker said, "I was 17 or 18 years old. I was taught the 'Arlberg technique' that Hannes Schneider, the great ski instructor, had brought over from his native Austria. Another Austrian by the name of Schaeffer was my instructor. He was an older chap with a heavy accent. I later became a ski instructor with the division, and also taught rock climbing."

An inveterate sketcher, Parker drew everything that caught his eye—on anything that would hold a pencil line. "There were no art supplies at Camp Hale," he said, so he used stationery or pads of paper he bummed from supply sergeants and other soldiers.

Parker made friends with Frank Kappler, Dartmouth class of 1936, who was the editor of the division's biweekly newspaper, the *Ski-zette*. Kappler had a few former newspaper journalists and photographers on his staff but needed someone who could draw. With a number of excellent artists in camp from which to choose, Kappler selected Parker. "He was meticulous," says Kappler, who would become a reporter for *LIFE* magazine after the war.

From the spring of 1942 until the summer of 1944, the 10th trained at Camp Hale, becoming what some have called "the most overtrained American infantry division of the war." The men ached to see combat, and Parker hoped he would have the chance to draw something more than scenes of training and barracks life.

In June 1944, the division, not knowing if it were just a failed experiment and would be broken up to provide replacements for units with heavy combat losses, received a new commanding general. George P. Hays had received the Medal of Honor in World War I and had just served as the commander of the 2nd Infantry Division's artillery in France. Hays brought a renewed fighting spirit to the burned-out, overtrained 10th and assured them that they would soon be seeing combat.

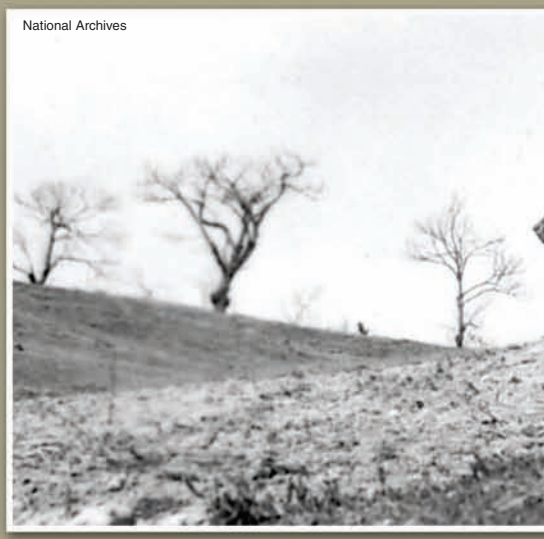
After training at Camp Swift, Texas, for six months, the outfit was redesignated the 10th Mountain Division and shipped to the one location where mountain fighting was still taking place—Italy. At the end of 1944, the division arrived in the port of Naples and was taken by train to the snowy, craggy peaks of the Northern Apennines, north of Florence.

Here Lucien Truscott's Fifth Army drive had stalled in the autumn of 1944, and the Allies had been unable to punch through the Germans' alpine redoubt and into the vital Po River Valley just to the north. Although the 10th was highly trained in mountain and winter warfare, no one was expecting the combat-inexperienced division to be able to do much better than the other combat-hardened outfits that had already been turned back by the enemy and the elements. The 10th determined that the key to seizing the mountain range was first seizing a five-mile-long series of connected peaks—an area known as Riva Ridge.

Riva Ridge, a commanding terrain feature that overlooked the all-important Highway 64, was occupied by a battalion of *Gebirgsjäger* (mountain troops). From their lofty perch, the Germans could call down devastating artillery fire any time they saw hostile movement toward the highway, the ridge, or the neighboring mountains.

As a sergeant in charge of a .30-caliber machine-gun squad, Parker took part in the famous February 19, 1945, night climb up the nearly sheer face of Riva Ridge—the 10th's first major combat action.

"We climbed all night, trying to be as quiet as could be," says Parker. "Lieutenant John McCown was in the lead of our four-man section, and I took up the rear. As we reached the top, I joined Lieutenant McCown and peered over. Nobody there. We saw this small hut with a little chimney. Lieutenant McCown looked at me and then looked at the chimney. I nodded and reached for a grenade, but I thought no—it's his baby. So he took one of his grenades and dropped it down the chimney and there was a huge boom because the blast was contained. It blew the door off the hut.


National Archives

"I then went back down the ridge to bring up the rest of the company that was hiding in the woods down below—3,000 feet down below. That was probably the scariest part of my whole time in Italy. I slid, I scrambled, I tried to be as crafty as could be. We had prearranged a sort of bird call. When I got to the edge of the woods, I tried it. No answer. There was nobody

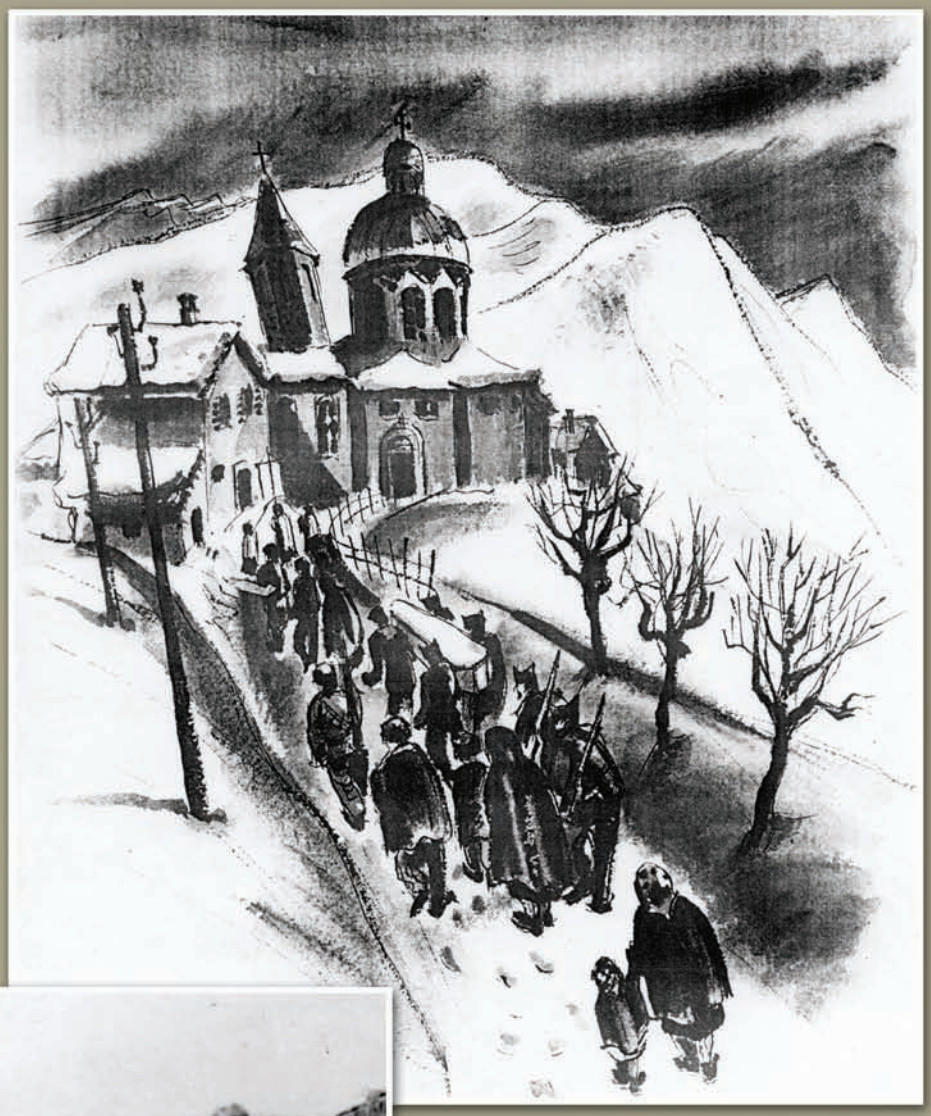
there. It was eerie. I thought I might get shot by our own men. Then somebody returned the call, grabbed me, and pulled me into the woods. I was lying there, half laughing in a delirious way. With the company together, we went back up the ridge."

The 86th Regiment took the ridge away from the Germans. Since no photographers accompanied the 1,000-man assault, Parker's drawings are the only visual record of the event.

After Riva Ridge was secured, the rest of the division was able to assault a number of nearby, enemy-held mountains—a combat action that took nearly a week of bloody fighting and resulted in considerable losses to both friend and foe.

Continued on page 82

BELOW: Parker notes, "We had no blankets on that climb," in reference to this rendering of a 10th Mountain trooper trying to catch some sleep and stay warm in a snow cave on Riva Ridge. RIGHT: Mourners carry the body of a partisan killed by the Germans toward a small church in the village of Lizzano-in-Belvedere, Italy. By the time Parker painted this scene in February 1945, World War II was nearing its end.



ABOVE: On March 4, 1945, soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division advance cautiously toward German positions at Sassomglare, Italy. The ranks of the 10th Mountain included some of the finest skiers in the world, but the troops also fought as regular infantry. RIGHT: The only visual record of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment's nocturnal assault against German defenses at Riva Ridge was provided by Jacques Parker in his combat artist role. The subject of this drawing is Lieutenant John McCown, who was later killed in action.

FLYING TIGER CAGED

Warlords

BY BOB BERGIN

CHARLES D. MOTT WAS A U.S. NAVY dive-bomber pilot when he joined the American Volunteer Group (AVG), the small band of Americans who flew under the leadership of General Claire Lee Chennault and became known to history as the Flying Tigers. Mott was assigned to the AVG's second squadron, the Panda Bears. As the AVG was forming up in Burma during the latter half of 1941, Chennault appointed him the AVG adjutant; he also became the operations officer of the second squadron. In late November 1941, he was sent to Kunming, China, to make arrangements for the AVG's move there from its training base at Toungoo, Burma. In December, with the Japanese moving into Burma, Chennault sent the Panda Bears to Mingaladon Airdrome to assist in the defense of Rangoon, the Burmese capital.

By January 1942, the AVG had repulsed Japanese daylight air attacks on Rangoon and started taking the war to the Japanese. In leading an attack on a Japanese airfield in Thailand, Mott was shot down and became the first American aviator captured by the Japanese on the Asian mainland. He was taken to Bangkok, Thailand, and later sent to the infamous Japanese prison camp on the River Kwai. Mott not only survived imprisonment, but the 150 Allied prisoners that he became responsible for made it through the ordeal with the lowest rate of loss of any POW group on the River Kwai

On January 8, 1942, as Mott flew over the Japanese airfield at Mae Sot, Thailand, his Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk was hit by ground fire.

WWII History: Your P-40 has just been hit by ground fire, your engine has quit, and despite your best efforts you can't restart it. It is time to get out of the aircraft. How did you make your exit?

AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP PILOT CHARLIE MOTT SURVIVED AS A CAPTIVE OF THE JAPANESE, OFTEN IN SURPRISING CIRCUMSTANCES.

National Archives

American P-40 pilots based in the Aleutians play baseball near their fighter planes in 1942. Note the detail of the nose art on these Aleutian Tigers. INSET: World War II Flying Tiger pilot and POW Charlie Mott remembers vividly his days in captivity.

Charlie Mott: Luckily, I had a lot of speed, about 350 miles per hour, and was able to zoom up to about 400 feet. I rolled over, slid back the canopy, released the safety belt, and shoved the stick forward. I was catapulted out into space. I found myself head-down and pulled the ripcord. After a terrific yank, I took one swing, and then stopped nice and gently. Just like an elevator. I thought to myself that there was nothing to this parachuting business. Then I looked down and realized that I had not finished jumping. The canopy had caught in the top branches of a giant tree. I was dangling like a persimmon, about 35 feet from the ground.

WWII: How close were you to the Japanese at this point?

CM: My plane had hit about 400 yards away and was burning furiously. Every half minute or so, some of the ammunition in the pans would burn off and go pop-pop-pop. Like everybody else at the start of the war, the Japanese were very jittery about paratroop landings. When they saw my parachute and then heard all the ammunition in my airplane cooking off, they must have thought the airborne invasion had come. All the Japanese forces in the area were mobilized. Meanwhile, some airdrome guards had already reached the vicinity of where I had come down and were lobbing mortar rounds into the area. The P-40 was putting up a good fight.

WWII: How did you see your situation?

CM: I had my .38 automatic, lots of ammunition, money, and emergency rations. I figured if I could get my feet on the ground, it would take one fast Japanese to catch me. It was only about 60 miles to the Salween River. I figured if I could swim it, I stood a good chance of getting back to home sweet home.

WWII: You had not yet been spotted by the Japanese at this point?

CM: A Japanese fighter took off after our guys finished strafing and left the area. He scouted around, found the plume of smoke from my burning plane. Then, he spotted my parachute canopy in the top of the tree. He was flying an open cockpit Nakajima 98 fighter. He flew by once and looked me over. Then he turned and dove directly at me so I could look right down his guns. He did the same thing a second time, then left me to my own devices.

WWII: It must have seemed like time to get out of the tree?

CM: Thirty-five feet below me was a bush. Not a big bush, but I thought it would cushion my fall. I undid my harness and dropped down. I missed the bush and hit the ground with a thud. My right leg crumpled under me. I hit on my right flank and rolled, banging my head on the ground. My left arm broke above the wrist, a compound fracture, with the jagged end stuck in the dirt. Something was wrong in my pelvic area. I lay there, immobilized. All of a sudden, a Japanese soldier jumped out from behind the bush and stuck me in the flank with his bayonet. I struggled to get to my feet, but fell back.

WWII: Did he make any move to help you?

CM: He realized my condition and let me lie there. His friends came pounding into the clearing, all with fixed bayonets. They went running around like madmen, jumping like they had springs in their heels. Two of them took off their trousers and ran bamboo through the legs to make an improvised stretcher. They put me on the stretcher, and off we went.

WWII: Where did they take you?

CM: Back to the airfield I had just strafed, about a mile away. When we reached the edge of the field, I raised up and looked to see what damage we did. On the other side of the runway were four planes, still burning furiously. There were pillars of smoke at other places on the field. Altogether I think I confirmed eight airplanes burning. I must have looked too pleased. A Japanese soldier attacked me from behind with a bayonet. He slashed at my head and cut

Australian War Memorial

ABOVE: Marching to a new campsite, Allied prisoners of war are relocated to a new area to continue working on the Burma-Thailand Railway. Thousands of prisoners lost their lives working in harsh jungle conditions. OPPOSITE: Australian and British prisoners lay track on the Burma-Thailand Railway in sweltering jungle heat. Another group of prisoners, mostly Americans, also labored on the rail line.

my scalp before somebody stopped him.

WWII: You must have been feeling pretty beaten up by this time.

CM: The first blow the guy had given me with the bayonet was like a shot of morphine. It numbed my pain, but didn't affect my consciousness. And then they took me to the first aid tent. A Japanese medical officer put a splint on my left arm, bound up my foot, and sewed up my scalp. He gave me a few shots of sedative. Then all the big wheels came in and stood around me in a circle.

WWII: How did these senior Japanese react to you?

CM: They looked; I looked. They stared; I stared. They glowered; I glowered back. I could literally feel the tension building up. I was completely depressed. I had given up any hope and wanted whatever was going to happen to me to be over with as soon as possible. Then came a surprising question: "What can we do for you?" I had an overwhelming thirst. I said, "Do you have a bottle of beer?" A Japanese officer said the Japanese Army did not drink beer, but they had some "cider." I thanked them and had visions of good old apple cider. An orderly came back with two bottles of cherry soda pop. Later I discovered that the Japanese word pronounced cider meant soda.

WWII: Did they interrogate you?

CM: The field questioning started right there. The first question was, "How many planes are there in Rangoon?" I thought, they can't possibly check up on me, so I said "200"—about five times the number of planes we actually had there. The Japanese officers nodded to each other. Then came the second question: "Do you shoot Japanese soldiers?" Now how is one supposed to answer this question? I stalled. I said, "Who, me?" "Yes, you!" I told them: "Not me. I do not shoot Japanese soldiers, only Japanese airplanes." That seemed to clear the atmosphere.

WWII: What happened then?

CM: A guard picked me up and took me to a clearing. They put me in a truck on a pile of rice straw so I would have an easy ride over the rough road. There was an attendant, a medical orderly, who had a syringe and plenty of dope. He was glad to administer as many shots as I requested. Occasionally he gave himself one. I spent the night at a Japanese encampment.

WWII: When did they send you on to Bangkok?

CM: The following morning. I was taken to the railroad station. They had reserved a first-class compartment, but I was on a stretcher and they couldn't get the stretcher through the door. I wound up in the baggage car of the Bangkok Express with my parachute and a .50-caliber machine gun from my P-40 that was bent around like a pretzel.

WWII: Where were you taken when you got to Bangkok?

CM: I was taken to a building the Japanese were using as a billet. I believe it was at Chulalongkorn University. I stayed there for three days until my condition got worse and the Japanese decided to send me to the hospital.

WWII: What was the hospital like?

CM: It was the base hospital for the entire initial Burmese campaign: three large white concrete buildings. It was also used as a truck park by a Japanese transport regiment. The medical facilities were scanty. There was no x-ray machine, no traction apparatus for setting compound fractures; plaster of Paris was practically nonexistent. Used bandages and dressings were washed, boiled, and reused. I was given a room in the surgical wing, which formerly had been the maternity ward.

WWII: Did you have contact with other patients?

CM: My room opened on a veranda, and the troops would line up just outside for treatment. About the second morning, I woke up to see a Japanese private standing at the window staring at me. The next morning he came back with a little bag, which he said was for me. It had soap, toothbrush, and tooth powder, everything I needed. He continued to bring little gifts, like razor blades and a deck of cards. I found he had been spending his small private's salary and

borrowing from others. I learned he was a Christian, and in his youth had received a beautiful doll from an American child. He was using this opportunity to repay the kindness.

WWII: How long did your friendship last?

CM: He used to sneak into the room at night. He brought me a Bible. I read and explained excerpts from it. After about a month he left. The day he left, he came into my room with pack, rifle and bayonet, and a bouquet of flowers. He was a machine gunner and he was leaving for the front in Burma. He asked me to write a letter to his parents after the war. I realized he did not expect to come back. We shook hands and he left, and I never saw him again. I did try to contact his parents after the war, but I was not able to locate them. The name was Hyokichi Takunago of Shosho Gun.

WWII: Did you have similar contacts with other Japanese?

CM: A Japanese warrant officer used to pass by every afternoon, and each time he would scowl at me. Finally, he stopped at my door and said that if he met me on the battlefield he would kill me. Then he said, "But this is a hospital." From his dispatch case he pulled a bottle of chocolate milk and gave it to me. We had a conversation and I learned he was an aircraft technician.

WWII: How long did you remain in the hospital?

CM: After two months I was able to take about five steps and get around with the aid of a cane. I was ordered discharged. I told the doctor that all my clothes had disappeared. All I had was a hospital robe and a towel. The doctor said he would see what he could do about it. Evidently they looked over their regulations and could find no provision for this, so they went to Mr. Peck, the American Ambassador to Siam, and got 50 Thai Baht from him. I asked that they buy stout khaki clothes, but they came back with a Chinese businessman's outfit—brown calfskin shoes, two pair of "high water" trousers, underwear, socks, and a gem—an Arrow shirt! A day later I was taken in a truck to the Japanese Burma Headquarters in Bangkok, where I was quartered with three other prisoners.

WWII: Who were your fellow prisoners?

CM: There was an Englishman, an assistant colonial commissioner from Burma named Knaiff; his chief of police, an Anglo-Burman named Archard; and a Burmese policeman. All three had been taken at Victoria Point, on the lowest point of Burma, when a Japanese regiment captured the town. There were 200 British Indian Army troops defending the airdrome at Victoria Point, but they had been withdrawn. Knaiff had been ordered to stay at his post to protect the civilian population. By the time the Japanese arrived, the civilian population consisted of one Indian too sick to move. Knaiff, with true British civil servant honor and stupidity, remained at his post. The Japanese, not being capable of understanding such altruistic motives, considered him a spy.

WWII: Where were you kept?

CM: We had two rooms next to the guardhouse and above a Japanese shrine. Right below us was a large room used as a shrine. The ashes of the Japanese soldiers who died in the Burma campaign were brought here in little white boxes and placed on shelves flanking a small bronze Buddha. Flowers and offerings of fruit were placed there by their comrades. When shipping was available, two or three hundred of the little white boxes were sent back to Japan. For morale reasons, not too many were allowed to accumulate.

WWII: How did you pass the time?

CM: We played cards. We smoked when we could find anything to smoke, played chess, and read anything we could. Knaiff was quite a linguist. Among other languages, he was fairly accomplished in Japanese. I started studying Japanese intensively at this point. Our tutors and language guinea pigs were the Japanese guards. There was always one in our room.

WWII: How were your relations with the guards?

CM: They would become quite chummy. They purposely changed guards about every two weeks, but by the end of that time, the guards were always more acquaintances than guards.

WWII: Were you able to take advantage of this?

CM: It helped keep us in cigarettes. My hobby had always been playing chess. I saw the Japanese playing a game similar to chess and got one of them to teach it to me. They called the game "Shoh Gee," or "Elephant Chess." I taught Knaiff, and once we reached a certain proficiency, we began to challenge the Japanese sentries. Most of them would put their rifles down, and—after making sure the sergeant of the guard was not around—we would proceed with the game. As time went on, I noticed competition was getting stronger. It turned out that the sergeant of the guard found out that some of his men had been playing chess on duty—and losing. This lost a lot of face. To preserve the prestige of Nippon, the billet was combed for the best chess players, who were sent up to regain face. None of them succeeded. I managed to hold my chess superiority and eventually none of the Japanese would play.

WWII: Did you think of escape?

CM: Always. One thing every prisoner always has in his mind is escape. After five months in Bangkok I was able to walk and move pretty well for short periods, and I came up with a way to escape. It was a harebrained scheme, but I went ahead with it despite the threat of execution for escape attempts. I had a stout teak walking stick, and I stole two latches from a shutter and a big nail from the exercise yard. I used these to work on a large board in the floor under the bed. I did this at night with a Japanese sentry 10 feet away. I almost got caught a couple of times when my walking stick slipped and clattered on the floor. I would hop back in bed before the guard came and pretend I was having a nightmare.

WWII: How far did you get with the scheme?

CM: I got all the nails in the board loose and

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Allied prisoners stand outside their huts at the Nong Pladuk POW camp. Charlie Mott was sent to this location in September 1942. After the completion of the Burma-Thailand Railway, a number of prisoners were taken to Nong Pladuk. Others boarded Hell Ships for the arduous trek to Japan. The headquarters building of the Japanese camp commander can be seen in the background.

was ready to go the next night. My plan was to pry up the board, drop into the room below, get out through a window, over a fence, and into Bangkok, destination unknown. That day, I came back from taking a shower, which was part of our daily routine, and I found a splinter I had laid in a particular way on the plank had been moved. I figured the Japanese had discovered what I was up to, and that I had probably been given away by the Anglo-Burman prisoner, who was "Jap-happy." This sobered me, and I decided to wait a few days in case the Japanese set a trap. And sure enough, on the third day, they removed a guard who they had stationed down below, where I would have made my exit through the window. And they nailed up the shutter on the window.

WWII: Did anything else come of this?

CM: Only that one of the guards told me quietly that Archard, the Anglo-Burman, tipped them off. I went to Archard and told him that I was wise to him and that I would kill him if he ever did anything like that again. Archard started squirreling away things in his mattress, pieces of iron that he could use as a knife. Sleeping at night under a mosquito net a foot away from Archard did nothing to help my peace of mind. I could only hope that Archard's feelings were similarly disturbed.

WWII: Did you have any other interesting moments during your stay in Bangkok?

CM: There was a Japanese officer named Nongatodi who was detailed to take command of an Indian POW camp in Bangkok. His prisoners had not arrived because of shipping problems, so he would come up to sit around and brush up his English. One day he asked us how we liked our accommodations. When we told him we thought it was a gloomy hole, he said he would take us on a trip. We had a good laugh and then forgot about it. Four days later he came by and asked if we were packed. We grabbed the few things we had, got in a truck, and went down to the railroad station. We traveled south by train for four days, down to Prai, which is across the bay from Penang in upper Malaysia. We were quartered in houses and had nothing to do but enjoy ourselves.

WWII: That sounds like a pretty good deal.

CM: It got better. In the evening, we would take walks in the village, accompanied by Nongatodi and the guards. The highlight came when we dropped into a Chinese coffee house and had real coffee and small cakes. One day when the Chinese shop owner presented the bill, Nongatodi flew into a towering rage. He chased the Chinese shop owner into the kitchen, and there were shouts in Chinese, Japanese, Malay, and broken English. We thought it was all over for the shop owner. Nongatodi came back calmly and finished his coffee. I felt a little bad about the Chinese being chased about and said so to Nongatodi. Nongatodi said the shop owner was a very bad man. He was Chinese, and Nongatodi had told him that as a member of the AVG I was a member of the Chinese Air Force, but the Chinese had presented a bill for my coffee anyway. Nongatodi believed the Chinese should have given it to me free.

WWII: What was the Japanese purpose in giving you a holiday down south?

CM: Nongatodi told us later that the original orders were to send us to Rangoon, but the unavailability of ships made that impossible.

WWII: Did you ever meet any Japanese airmen in Bangkok?

CM: Bangkok was a stopover on the Japanese air route to the south and to Burma. Many aircrew passed through Bangkok. They would leave their aircraft at Don Muang airport outside the city, and some came in to spend the night at the Burma Campaign headquarters in Bangkok. They seemed to have no love of life. There was none of the kidding around or horseplay that you would find in one of our squadrons. They dragged in at the end of the day, flopped down on a mat, and went out in the morning. Occasionally, one of them would come up and see me. They were young and had about half the number of flying hours that we did for comparable years of service. They were curious about me, but docile. Not one ever showed any direct hostility to me.

WWII: When were you moved to the River Kwai?

CM: By the end of August 1942, it became apparent that the Japanese outfit holding us was breaking up. One night, a Japanese first-class private told me that I would be sent to a prison camp west of Bangkok on September 13.

WWII: How did you travel up to the River Kwai?

CM: Knaiff and I were separated from the Anglo-Burman and the Burman and put on a civilian train with guards. After about two and a half hours we got to a station named Nong Pladuk.

WWII: Is that where the POW camp was located?

CM: It was. The Nong Pladuk POW camp occupied an area of about 300 square yards, with a bamboo fence around it. It held two battalions of British troops who had been captured at Singapore.

WWII: Where did you get to stay?

CM: I was taken care of by the Royal Army Supply Corps of the 18th British Division. A Major Sykes was the CO. He was a thorough gentleman and an accomplished officer.

WWII: What were accommodations like?

CM: I was taken to the 18th Division officers mess, which occupied one end of the huts. I was given a stretcher to sleep on. We slept on the floor, folding beds, or whatever we could impro-

vise. Everyone seemed to have a lot of equipment and to be in good health and spirits.

WWII: How were living conditions for the prisoners?

CM: At this stage, this was September 1942, life was hard but bearable. The officers were receiving the equivalent of about 25 cents a day for their work. This was enough to buy an egg or a handful of bananas. Food was largely rice and some vegetables and a few ounces of meat. The men worked all day in the hot sun. Dysentery and malaria were rife, but given these factors, general health was good. Before long, conditions would deteriorate considerably.

WWII: How was your health, and how did you maintain it?

CM: My foot was still giving me trouble. I could not stand for more than an hour at a time and was very weak. I went to Major Sykes and asked if he could get me a job where I would not have to stay on my feet for long periods. I noticed a car, a Ford, being used by the Japanese. It had a British driver assigned to it, and I asked Sykes to make me the mechanic for the car. Sykes agreed, and the Japanese approved. For about a month, I adjusted the points, cleaned the plugs, and puttered around the car.

WWII: Did you get a chance to drive in the car?

CM: The Japanese NCO in charge of the vehicle was Sergeant Nomura. At the beginning I suggested that we take a trial spin to see how it ran. Nomura and I buzzed through the gate with me driving. It was great to be at the wheel of an American car again, despite the fact that it was running on four cylinders. I told him the car needed new plugs. Next day we got authorization to get the plugs by local purchase, so we headed out for Bangpong, about three miles down the road. The Thai at the local garage said they had the plugs, and they cost the equivalent of about three dollars apiece. Nomura almost fainted. He suggested that while he engaged the shopkeeper in conversation, I would steal some plugs off the rack. I suggested that I keep the shopkeeper engaged while Nomura stole the plugs. Nomura told me that was incompatible with the dignity of the Japanese Army. We eventually bought the plugs. After that the car ran 100 percent better.

WWII: And this led to another job?

CM: In December 1942, Nomura told me there were 62 trucks coming from Singapore and that I would be in charge of them.

WWII: What were the trucks to be used for?

CM: They would be used to carry rations and POWs to POW camps that were being established up and down the river. They would be used exclusively for the benefit of the POWs, and for that reason I was willing to take the job on.

WWII: What was the story of these POW camps being built along the river?

CM: The Japanese were building a railway to link the Thai and Burma rail lines that would extend from near Bangkok to Moulmein, a distance of about 225 miles. This railroad was a key part of the Japanese plan to invade India. It was to run through the heart of the jungle, through a range of mountains as high as our Appalachians in some places. There were no bulldozers. It would be picks, shovels, and baskets, manned largely by the British troops captured in Singapore, about 50,000 of them. The work was to be completed in a year.

WWII: How was your trucking job organized?

CM: The Japanese authorized me to form a detachment of 150 men as drivers and mechanics. There were a great number of applicants. Anyone with a screwdriver or a pair of pliers got the job. The Japanese furnished no tools or spare parts.

WWII: What kind of shape were the trucks in?

CM: Generally good. Most were U.S. Lend-Lease Fords and Chevys. They had been partially sabotaged and inexpertly repaired in Singapore. We picked them up at the railroad yards, and in the mile back to the camp about two-thirds of them broke down. By pushing, towing, and sweating, the men got them lined up at the camp gate. We found it more difficult to get back into the camp than to get out. We kept waiting until an interpreter came to tell the guard to let us in. That was the beginning of what became popularly known as "Mott Motors," or the "One Wing Transport Company of Siam."

WWII: How were the trucks actually used?

CM: To save time and speed up the construction work, POWs were put in the main camps along the projected route, about 60 miles apart. From each main camp, satellite camps would be set up. Ten men would go out to work from these camps each day. Food supplies had to be carried into the camps either by barge or by truck along a narrow jungle cart track. There were not enough barges, nor were our trucks sufficient to supply such an organization. As a consequence, adequate supplies did not get to the camps above the 125 mile mark. Above that point, the POWs existed and worked on little more than plain boiled rice.

WWII: It can get awfully wet in that area. How did the weather affect your operation?

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Emaciated Allied prisoners stare blankly at the photographer who snapped this photo of them lying on sleeping platforms in a large POW camp hut.

CM: From December on, conditions got progressively worse. The roads became a quagmire and at last were impassable. Trucks would sink down to the differentials.

WWII: It must have been very rough on the POWs.

CM: At one point the groups were losing as many as four percent of their personnel each month. They died slowly, the hard way, except in the case of cholera when they died fast—the hard way. Almost everyone had malaria and dysentery. Small scratches got infected because of the lack of antiseptics and grew into great engulfing sores. The flesh rotted slowly away, leaving bones and tendons exposed. Our only treatment was hot rice fermentations. Maggots were sometimes used to clean the ulcer. The time came when amputation was the only

Continued on page 85

Italian Fleet FOILED

IN JUNE 1940, ITALIAN DICTATOR BENITO Mussolini wrestled with a dilemma. German Chancellor Adolf Hitler was the very essence of a victorious warlord. Nazi forces were sweeping through northern France, having already overrun Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. These rapid conquests, added to the Germans' previous victories in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, made the Third Reich the most powerful country in Europe, if not the world.

Mussolini had to decide whether to ally himself with the all-conquering Hitler and pick up some of the pieces of a crumbling Europe or remain in supportive neutrality and gain nothing.

Against the advice of his king and his Pope, Mussolini dispatched Italian troops into France to assist Hitler and cast his lot with the victor. To his surprise and embarrassment, Hitler would not let him occupy any significant French territory, only some disputed border areas. The Führer was cobbling together an alliance with the French government at Vichy, and the upstart Italian was inconveniently in the way. This border incident set the tone for the German-Italian alliance.

The dream of Mussolini and his Fascist party was to recreate the glory of ancient Rome. The immediate goal was to control the Mediterranean Sea, making it again the Mare Nostrum (Our Sea) of the Caesars. To that end, Italy pursued its own war aims independent of Germany.

As early as 1918, Mussolini had railed against foreign navies in the Mediterranean. This meant specifically Great Britain's Royal Navy with its important bases at Alexandria, Gibraltar, and Malta. The French also had a powerful fleet and extensive Mediterranean bases. In the 1930s, Italy inaugurated a ship-building program that created a fleet of swift battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and motor torpedo boats that outclassed much of the aging English fleet.

The British battleships *Warspite, Valiant*, and *Barham* fire upon the Italian cruisers *Fiume* and *Zara* during the Battle of Cape Matapan on March 28, 1941. The Italian fleet suffered a humiliating defeat in the pivotal Mediterranean engagement. INSET: Hours before the Battle of Cape Matapan, crewmen aboard the Australian cruiser HMAS *Perth* take part in a refueling operation.

Australian War Memorial

BY GLENN BARNETT

The humiliating defeat of Mussolini's navy at the Battle of Cape Matapan was a serious blow to Axis plans in the Mediterranean.

Bridgeman Art Library / Royal Navy Museum

The Royal Navy, with its proud tradition of ruling the waves for the previous four centuries, was hard-pressed by the German Kreigsmarine, whose U-Boats roamed at will in the Atlantic. Most of England's naval strength was committed to convoy duty in the North Atlantic and the home waters to guard against a German invasion.

That left precious few second-rate ships to guard the important passage to India through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. Italian airplanes soon made Malta untenable as a naval base.

With the powerful French Navy neutralized by the armistice with Hitler and the British bombardment at Oran crippling the Vichy fleet, Mussolini was confident that he could defeat the scant British forces arrayed against him. The Mediterranean would become an Italian lake.

THERE WERE MANY FACTORS THAT MUSSOLINI did not consider when he went to war. Had he consulted with his naval officers, he would have learned that Italy had a finite amount of fuel oil for its thirsty ships. With both ends of the Mediterranean Sea controlled by the British, there would be no ready sources of oil available. The vast pools of oil in Italian-controlled Libya would not be tapped until after the war.

If the impending shortage came to his attention, Il Duce ignored it and began the systematic conquest of territory around the Mare Nostrum. But he bit off more than he could chew. From Libya, the Italian Army struck deep into Egypt to dislodge the stubborn English from Suez. In East Africa, Italian forces, now cut off from home, overran British Somaliland and tried to close the Red Sea to British shipping.

Meanwhile, other Italian forces invaded and occupied Albania. But when Greece became the next target of conquest, Italy got more than it bargained for. The Italian invasion of Greece stalled. Buttressed by British support, the Greeks threw back the assault and pursued the invader into Albania.

In Egypt, Britain gathered troops from throughout the empire to repulse Italian advances. On this front, Italian troops were pushed back into Libya. In desperation, Mussolini turned to his German ally for help. The result was the introduction of the small but tenacious German Africa Korps to North

THE ITALIANS HOPED TO

Photographed in the Ionian Sea at the time of the Battle of Cape Matapan, British warships are seen from the air. The plane in the photo is a British Fairey Fulmar.

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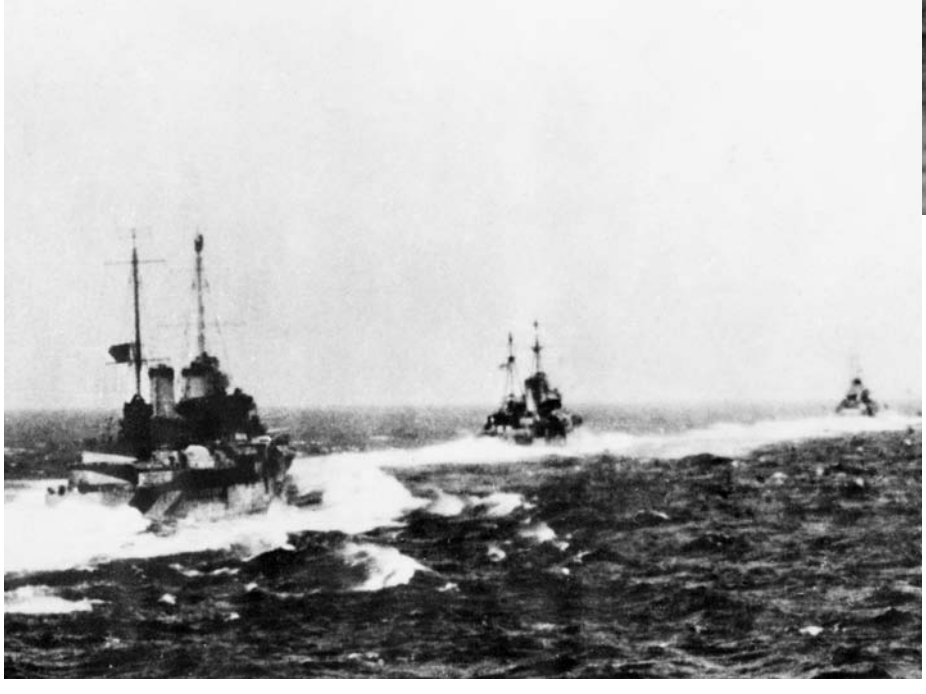

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Africa. Units of the Luftwaffe also moved to bases in Sicily and North Africa.

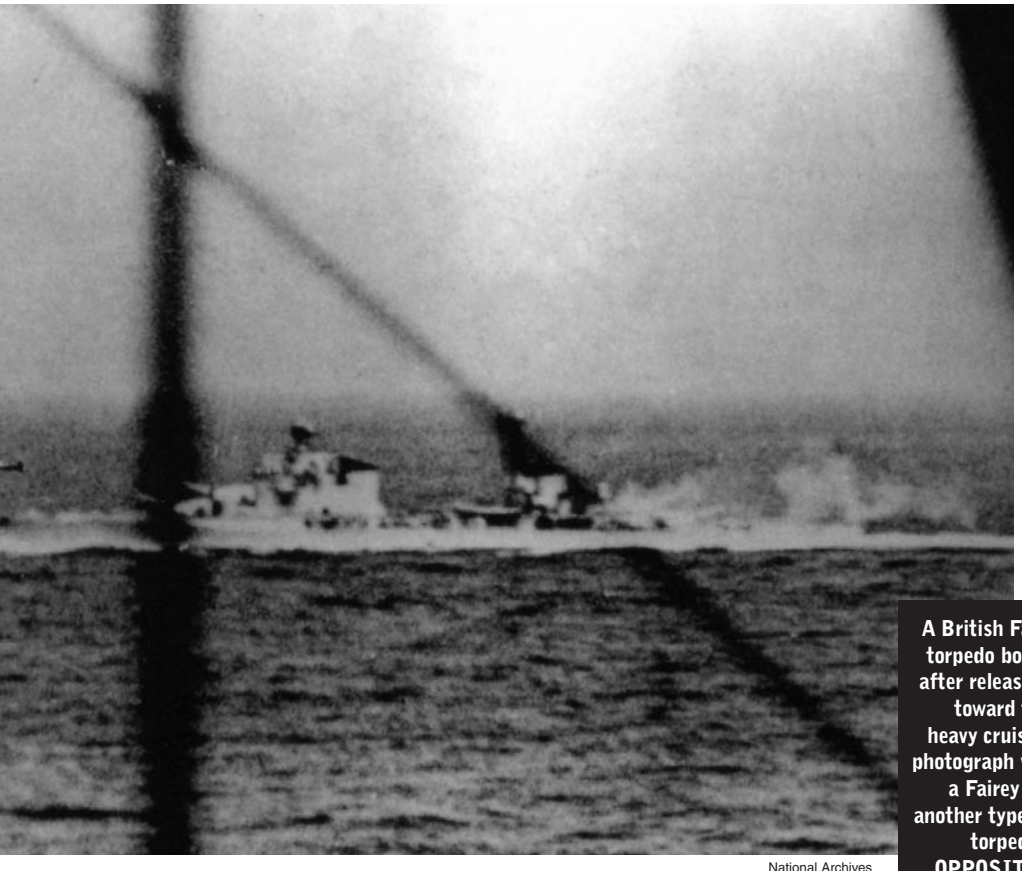
In addition, Mussolini requested help from Hitler with the deteriorating situation in Greece. As the fortunes of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy became more intertwined, greater military cooperation was necessary. The Italian surface fleet was far more powerful than that of the Germans in the Mediterranean, and the Italian admirals felt they had little to gain from this coerced cooperation. But the German price of assistance in Greece was the proxy use of the Italian fleet.

The admirals of the Italian Navy, the Regia Marina, did manage to get Germany to commit stocks of fuel oil, but Germany had little of its own oil to spare and the shortage for the Italians would always be acute.

However, the British struck first in a bold move against their Mediterranean rivals. The bulk of the Italian fleet was anchored at the well-protected port of Taranto in the arch of the Italian boot. On the night of November 11, 1940, Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes from the aircraft career HMS *Illustrious* sank or damaged several of Italy's capital ships in a daring raid. It was this innovative raid that became the inspiration for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 13 months later.

The crippled Italian fleet sought safer ports at Naples and in the Adriatic, where the warships remained at anchor for the next four months. But the Italians were still full of fight and desperately needed a victory. They would have preferred a fight of their own choosing, but the choice of a battle was made for them in Berlin.

AVENGE TARANTO AND REDEEM THE PRIDE OF THEIR NAVAL TRADITION.



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A British Fairey Albacore torpedo bomber pulls up after releasing its weapon toward the Italian heavy cruiser *Pola.* This photograph was taken from a Fairey Swordfish, another type of Royal Navy torpedo plane.
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Seen from the deck of the Royal Navy cruiser HMS *Gloucester,* the British cruisers *Ajax* and *Orion* sail in company with the Australian cruiser HMAS *Perth.*

Germany was willing to help Italy with the war with Greece, especially now that the British had become involved. Allied convoys of troops and supplies were moving freely between Alexandria and Athens, reinforcing the Greek counteroffensive. The Nazis wanted that supply line cut, and the Italian Navy was the only tool at hand. Germany was even willing to give the Italians some precious fuel oil for the impending naval offensive. The Italians grudgingly agreed to the proposal if the Germans could provide air support. The Germans, full of confidence, agreed. In February 1941, the senior naval staffs of each nation met for three days to plan joint operations.

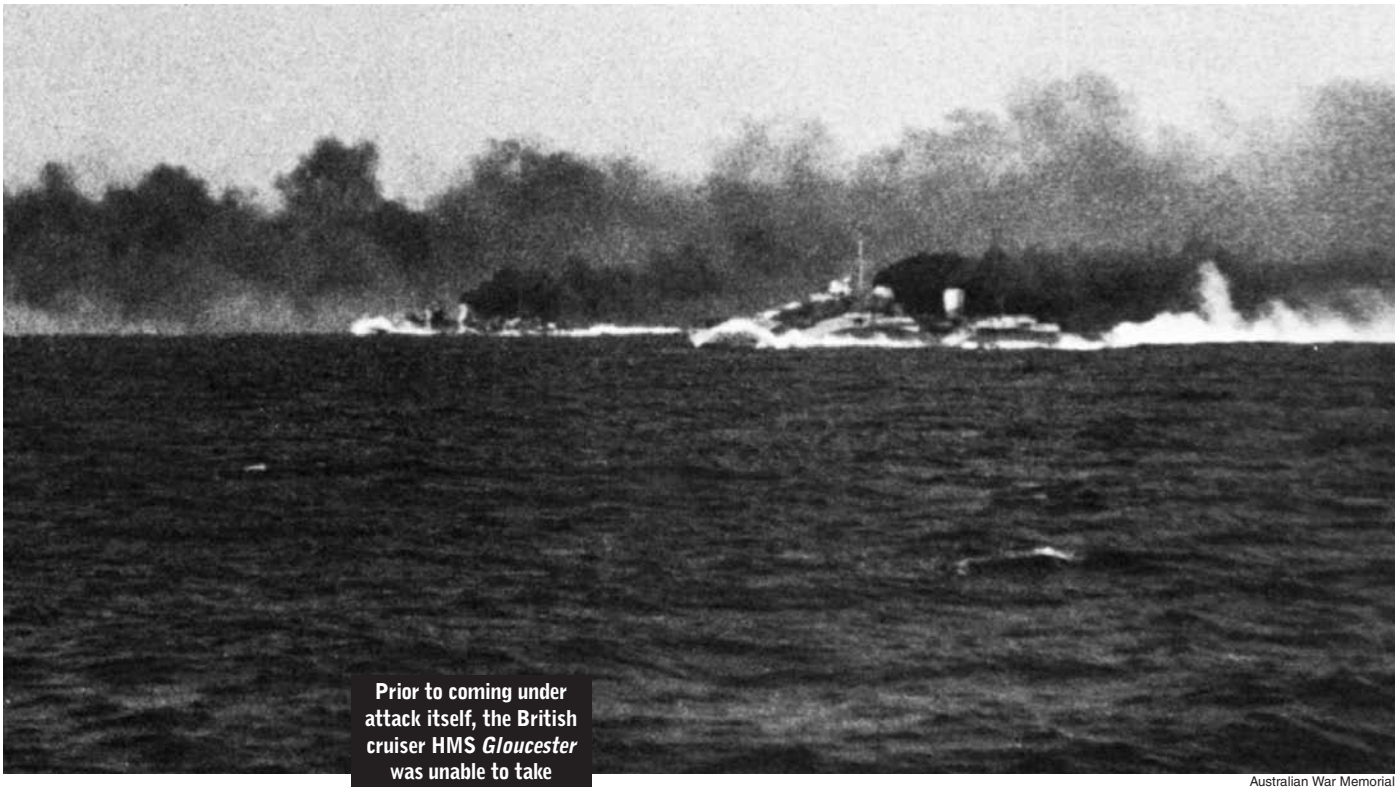
Italy, like all belligerents in the war, was plagued by interservice rivalries. The Italian Air Force was vigilantly independent of the Navy and vice versa. If a naval commander needed tactical air support during a battle, he had to request it from the naval command headquarters. They passed on the request to the supreme command of all Italian forces, which in many cases meant Mussolini himself.

If he approved, the request went to the air force command and then, if convenient, to the individual aerodrome closest to the action. Divided German air authority on Italian soil only added time-consuming layers of bureaucracy in the lengthy command structure. By contrast, British commanders on the scene made all such tactical decisions and dispositions themselves without having to request permission from London.

INTO THE ITALIAN CAULDRON OF INDECISION WAS born Operation Gaudo, an effort to secure the seas around Greece. Hoping to catch a British convoy by surprise but unsure if a convoy was even at sea, a powerful Italian squadron weighed anchor on March 26, 1941. Steaming under radio silence, the Italians hoped to avenge Taranto and redeem the pride of their naval tradition. The Italian Admiral Angelo Iachino counted on the element of surprise but was already worried that no land-based German or Italian planes were overhead in support of his flotilla.

Aboard his flagship, the brand-new 45,000-ton battleship *Vittorio Veneto,* Iachino steamed out of Naples and moved boldly southward. Meanwhile, three squadrons of cruisers and a unit of destroyers departed from other Italian ports to rendezvous with him at sea. In all, his armada included the battleship, eight cruisers, and 13 destroyers.

On the 26th, an Italian spotter plane observed three British battleships, *Warspite, Barham,* and *Valiant,* and the aircraft carrier HMS *Formidable* resting quietly at anchor in



Australian War Memorial

Prior to coming under attack itself, the British cruiser HMS *Gloucester* was unable to take advantage of a protective smokescreen seen belching in black and white clouds from the cruisers HMS *Ajax* and HMAS *Perth*. In this photograph taken from the deck of the *Gloucester*, the other British warships are being fired upon by the Italian battleship *Vittorio Veneto*.

Alexandria. So far Iachino was enjoying the element of surprise.

That same day, British scouting planes sighted one of the Italian cruiser squadrons, alerting the British to Italian naval activity but not unmasking their true intent. British codebreakers had also unlocked numerous German and Italian codes and provided intelligence on the Italian sortie. The British commander in Egypt, Admiral Andrew B. Cunningham, took heed of the warnings and alerted the 7th Cruiser Squadron, which consisted of four cruisers and two destroyers under Admiral Henry Pridham-Whippell. Cunningham ordered Pridham-Whippell to steam south of Crete to intercept what was then perceived as a single enemy cruiser squadron. A flight of 30 Bristol Blenheim bombers stationed in Greece was also put on alert.

CUNNINGHAM WAS CONVINCED THAT THERE were significant Italian naval units at sea, though he could not yet determine their number, purpose, or destination. He ordered his three battleships and the carrier *Formidable* to build up steam and prepare to put to sea. Cunningham gave orders for all British units in the eastern Mediterranean to converge south of Crete at 1700 hours on March 28.

Meanwhile, the Italians continued to steam eastward toward the same waters south of Crete, still hoping to bag a fat British convoy. In a major failure of Italian reconnaissance, no flights were made over Alexandria on the 28th. This oversight kept Admiral Iachino from knowing that the main British fleet had departed the harbor and was steaming westward in the Mediterranean to join in the hunt.

But if the Italians had problems with their chain of command and intelligence, the British had to deal with ships that had been in almost constant service since the war began. Generally older, slower, and less well armed than their Italian counterparts, many British ships, especially the destroyers, had gone for long periods without routine maintenance. Some ships could not even leave port, while others had to turn back, and still others slowed down the newer, faster ships.

On the morning of the 28th, Iachino launched a short-range scout plane from the deck of the *Vittorio Veneto* at 0600 hours. The little plane would have to fly on to land, as the battleship was not equipped to retrieve and reuse her scouting planes as the British could.

The scout hit pay dirt. Only 50 miles ahead of the leading Italian cruiser squadron was the British squadron of Pridham-Whippell. The British cruisers were steaming in the area awaiting the expected convergence with the rest of the fleet.

The combined Italian fleet increased speed from 23 to 30 knots to engage the outnumbered enemy. By 0745, lookouts on the cruiser HMS *Orion* sighted smoke from Italian cruisers. Knowing that he was outgunned by the faster Italians, Pridham-Whippell ordered a retreat toward the safety of the distant battleships. By 0812, the nearest Italian cruiser, *Trieste,* opened fire with her 8-inch guns on the slower moving cruiser HMS *Gloucester,* which was straggling at the end of the British line. *Gloucester* fired back with her 6-inch guns, but her shells fell short.

Aboard the *Vittorio Veneto,* Admiral Iachino distrusted the hasty British withdrawal. This timidity vexed him. He sensed a trap and ordered his cruisers to withdraw.

Meanwhile, the main British fleet under Cunningham had closed to within 70 miles. The British admiral was frustrated by the uneven speed of his fleet. The World War I-vintage *Barham* could barely keep up. *Warspite,* the flagship, struggled with mechanical problems and also lagged behind. The Australian cruiser HMAS *Vendetta,* another World War I veteran, was so slow she was ordered back to Alexandria.

When he learned of the Italian attack on Pridham-Whippell's cruisers, Cunningham ordered the newest and fastest of the British battleships, the *Valiant,* to steam ahead with a brace of

destroyers as escort. The *Formidable* was then ordered to launch her Fairey Albacore biplanes for a torpedo attack, but it would be nearly 1000 hours before they were all away.

Iachino was still unable to determine his enemy's true strength. His own air reconnaissance was woefully inadequate, and the promised German and Italian air cover had not materialized. When he received news from an Italian aerodrome in Rhodes telling of two British battleships, an aircraft carrier, cruisers, and destroyers headed his way, he disregarded the message, thinking that the observers had spotted his own returning cruiser squadrons instead. He knew only that Pridham-Whippell had turned west once more, shadowing his cruisers. With the spotty information that he had, Iachino decided to attack the British cruisers once more.

BY 1100 HOURS, THE *ORION* ONCE AGAIN sounded the alarm as smoke from *Vittorio Veneto* was spotted only 16 miles away. For the second time Pridham-Whippell ordered an about face while 15-inch shells from the Italian battleship rained down among his ships. Two cruisers were slightly damaged from near misses as the Italians closed in rapidly.

The attack was spoiled by the timely arrival of the first flight of Albacore torpedo planes, which caused the *Vittorio Veneto* to take evasive action, allowing the British cruisers to escape.

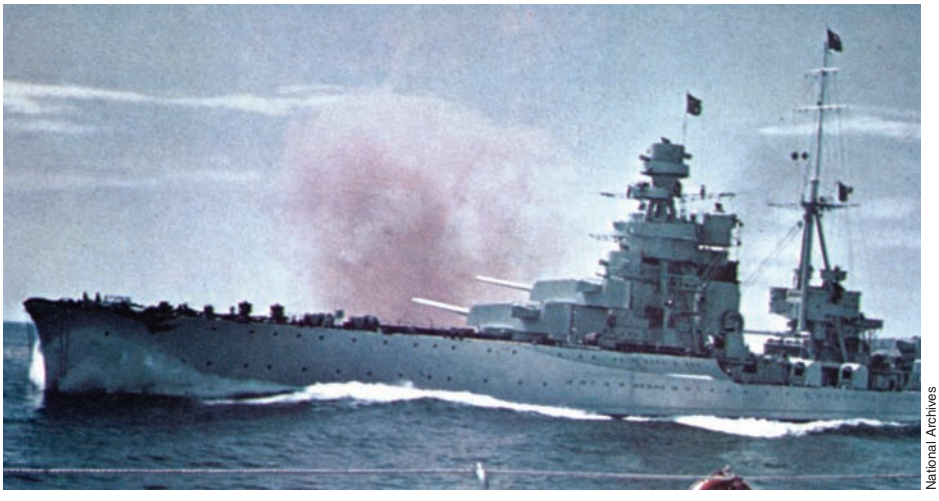
With no convoys spotted, reduced fuel reserves, and no air cover, Iachino decided to withdraw. The Albacore attack had alerted him to the presence of at least one British aircraft carrier. All the Italian ships were ordered to turn northwest for home. Yet, Iachino did not yet feel any urgency to get away and steamed at an economical speed to conserve precious fuel. The Italian admiral had been cautious, fearing the aggressiveness of the Royal Navy. Now, he ignored the thought that the British would seek every means to destroy him.

In fact, the British were just getting started. *Formidable* prepared to launch a second wave of planes, even while being attacked by Italian torpedo bombers. When the Italian attack ended, more planes were launched. By 1500 hours, three Albacores had found the Italian battleship and closed in. The Italians already had their hands full with a flight of Blenheim bombers that had joined in the chase.

While Italian gunners focused on the high-altitude Blenheims, the Albacores flew at low level out of the afternoon sun to completely surprise the *Vittorio Veneto*. At a range of 1,000 yards, one of the biplanes slammed a torpedo

Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: Superb Royal Navy seamanship and the implementation of radar spelled disaster for the Italians during the Battle of Cape Matapan. BELOW: An Italian heavy cruiser of the *Zara*-class cuts through the waters of the Mediterranean. Three of these warships, the *Zara, Pola,* and *Fiume*, armed with 8-inch main weapons, were lost during the Battle of Cape Matapan.


National Archives

home before being shot out of the air. This single torpedo bomber would be the only British loss of the battle.

The *Vittorio Veneto,* hit in the stern below the waterline, took on water, lost power, and began settling by the stern. Her crew's frantic efforts were enough to get her moving again but at a greatly reduced speed. Iachino now wanted nothing more than to reach the safety of Italy. Even though he still did not know it, the main British fleet under Cunningham was just 65 miles away and closing fast.

At 1700 hours, Iachino was alerted that the two British cruiser groups were closing in on his stricken battleship. Still unseen, the three British battleships were right behind them.

By 1900 hours, the third and final aerial attack was shaping up. Six Albacore and four Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes from *Formidable* pressed toward the Italian fleet, which

Destroyers were

THE WORKHORSES OF THE ROYAL NAVY

No class of ship in World War II saw more service than the destroyers of the Royal Navy. While capital ships might rest at anchor for months at a time, the destroyer fleet was always busy. From the moment the war started in September 1939, destroyers were at sea performing convoy duty, antisubmarine patrols, rescue operations, minelaying and minesweeping, escort duty for the big ships, shore bombardment, and whatever additional tasks might be required of them. Their work was dirty and dangerous.

As a testament to their perilous duties, by war's end 139 of the Royal Navy's destroyers were lost to enemy action, storms, or accidents. In the early days of Great Britain's lonely vigil, they were being sunk faster than they could be built. The 50 vintage destroyers given to Britain by the United States in exchange for bases could hardly stem the losses.

The destroyers that participated in the Battle of Cape Matapan were not exempt from harm. Although there were no British naval losses that day, over half of the participating destroyers would soon be lost.

Many of the destroyers at Matapan were already veterans of other fights. Several of them had been at Narvik in Norway. Some had been pressed into service to evacuate British troops at Dunkirk, while others had done escort duty across the Atlantic. Assigned to the Mediterranean, the destroyer fleet was augmented by World War I-era ships of the Royal Australian Navy and convoyed tankers, freighters, and capital ships the length and breadth of the sea. The destroyers attacked Italian shipping and German U-boats and defended against them. It was not easy duty. The crew of one ship, HMAS *Vendetta,* estimated that they were attacked by bombers 80 times while on assignment in the Mediterranean.

British ship designs of the 1930s called for a destroyer between 1,400 and 1,600 tons. At the same time, German, Italian, Japanese, and American destroyers were larger, faster, and more heavily armed and armored than the diminutive ships of the Royal Navy.

What they lacked in size the destroyers of the British fleet made up for in aggressiveness. They showed no fear in attacking, even when outnumbered or outgunned. At Cape Matapan, Italian Admiral Iachino rightly feared a trap when British cruisers and destroyers fled before him rather than fight it out.

Of the destroyers victorious at Matapan, less than half would survive the war. The German presence in the Mediterranean would grow, and the menace to Allied shipping would increase. During the evacuation of Crete, *Hereward* and *Greyhound* were sunk by Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive-bombers. In April 1941, *Mohawk* attacked a German-Italian convoy and was struck by two torpedoes. She sank with the loss of 41 men. In April 1942, *Havock* ran aground off Tunisia and was scuttled by her crew.

Janus was lost to a German torpedo during the amphibious operation at Anzio after firing over 500 rounds in support of the landings. German radio-controlled bombs struck *Jervis* at Anzio, causing heavy damage. *Jaguar* was sunk by torpedoes from *U-652*. *Defender* was rendered dead in the water by Italian bombs and sunk by friendly fire rather than abandoned afloat.

Although the fighter planes of the Royal Air Force won the popular imagination and fame for the defense of Britain, the plucky little destroyers bore an equal if unheralded burden. □

formed a protective cordon around the *Vittorio Veneto*. The main British fleet was closing to within 50 miles and preparing for night action. Racing at 30 knots, the leading destroyers spread out over a seven-mile area in an advanced screen looking for the enemy.

At 1930, the ancient-looking biplanes made their third attack of the day. Fountains of antiaircraft fire rose up from the Italian ships in a chaotic display of tracers, searchlights, and explosions. Only one hit was made by the attackers, but it proved critical to the outcome of the battle. The heavy cruiser *Pola* was struck by a torpedo and stopped dead in the water. Three of her wards were flooded, including her engine room. All electrical power was lost. The remaining Italian ships, ignorant of her plight, steamed westward into the growing darkness.

CUNNINGHAM HAD NEW WORRIES OF HIS OWN. If he pressed his night attack against the fleeing Italians, the morning might find him within range of Italian and German land-based planes. Subordinates warned him against pursuit, but he ignored their timid counsel and charged ahead. *Valiant* slowed to allow her sister battleships to catch up.

Night brought the advantage of radar to the British. They had secretly developed shipboard radar in the 1930s and were using it to good effect. In the early 1930s, the great Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi, father of the radio, had been actively working on shipboard shortwave radio-location, but with his death in 1937 his advances were not pursued. The Italians did not know that British ships were equipped with the device.

In the darkness, HMS *Orion* picked up the helpless *Pola* on her screen. At about the same time, Iachino finally learned of the plight of *Pola*. Still unaware of the onrushing British fleet, he impulsively dispatched the other cruisers of *Pola*'s squadron, *Zara* and *Fiume*, with their four destroyers, into the night to tow their stricken sister to safety.

The Italians were ordered to steam at 16 knots to conserve fuel. They were expected to complete the rescue mission and reach the safety of port before dawn exposed them to danger.

The leading British battleship in the nocturnal chase was now *Warspite*. Cunningham ordered a change of course for his battleships to intercept the invisible targets that radar had identified. The Italians were totally unaware of their presence. Neither navy had ever intentionally fought a battle at night, but the British, using their top secret radar, had been practicing

Artist Frank Norton painted this nighttime scene of the Battle of Matapan. HMAS *Stuart* is in the foreground, HMS *Havock* at left, and two Italian *Zara*-class destroyers in the background. Radar gave the British the advantage during night action.

Australian War Memorial

during the 1930s for just such an occasion. The moment of truth had arrived.

Around 2230 hours, lookouts spotted the Italian cruisers in line-ahead formation. Admiral Cunningham ordered all three of his battleships on a parallel course. Their 15-inch guns were laid in at a range of only 3,800 yards.

At a signal, the destroyer HMS *Greyhound* illuminated the *Fiume* with her searchlights. All three battleships opened up with their 15-inch guns. *Fiume, Zara,* and the destroyer *Alfieri* were turned into burning wrecks within five minutes. The remaining Italian destroyers closed for an impotent torpedo attack before withdrawing into the night.

The British battleships made a 90-degree turn to retire and escape the counterattack. Cunningham ordered his destroyers to give chase. The action became highly confused in the night as the opposing destroyers sought each other in the darkness. In the firefight, the destroyer *Carducci* was also sunk. The remaining two Italian destroyers sped off to the northwest.

Star shells were fired from the destroyer HMS *Havock* over the position where the crippled *Zara* was presumed to be. Instead, the listing *Pola* was illuminated. She was mistaken for the *Vittorio Veneto*. *Havock* fired twice into her bridge and reported finding the Italian battleship "undamaged and stopped."

A prize crew was sent over to *Pola* to take command. Some 200 *Pola* crewmen were still aboard, having abandoned ship and then returned. They were soaking wet and shivering while drinking wine to stay warm. This would give rise to later rumors that the Italian crew was drunk. The British prize crew debated towing *Pola* back to Egypt, but soon abandoned the notion. They took off the surviving crewmen and sank the hapless Italian cruiser.

Pridham-Whippell's cruisers, which were trailing the actual Italian battleship, reported that they had spotted Very lights over her position. Admiral Cunningham believed this sighting to be a new Italian squadron entering the fray and, to avoid confusion in the dark, ordered all of his ships not engaged with the enemy to turn northward simultaneously, allowing the remaining Italians to escape.

The searching British destroyers found the stricken *Zara* in the darkness and sank her. More Italian seamen were then in the water than the British destroyers could handle, though they picked up all they could. Some 900 Italians were plucked from the sea before 0800 the next morning when German dive-bombers arrived and chased the rescuers off. The British transmitted the location of the sailors still in the water to the Italian high command. Another 300 men were rescued by that evening. Curiously, Prime Minister Winston Churchill reprimanded Admiral Cunningham for this gallant action.

With the battle lost, the wounded *Vittorio Veneto* and her remaining escorts made it safely back to Italy. The British fleet prudently retired rather than face aerial assaults. The Battle of Cape Matapan was the last offensive operation of the Italian Navy in World War II. From then on only the destroyers and submarines and the occasional cruiser would play any part in staving off the growing power of the Allies.

Their one-sided victory did not let the British off the hook. The next two months witnessed considerable British naval losses in the Mediterranean from German bombers and U-boats. Many of the victorious ships and crews involved in the Battle of Cape Matapan were lost in the evacuation of Crete as Great Britain continued to stand alone against the Axis tide. □

Glenn Barnett is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He is a freelance writer and an instructor of history at Cerritos College in Norwalk, California.*

PRAGUE UPRISING

BY PAT McTAGGART

THE FIRST DAYS OF MAY 1945 FOUND THE GERMAN WAR MACHINE IN ABSOLUTE chaos. Berlin had fallen, and entire German armies were surrendering en masse. Most of Europe was under Allied control, and in liberated capitals wild celebrations were already under way to mark the coming end of the war.

In the capital of Czechoslovakia, however, the mood was still somber. German units patrolled the streets, and the heel of the Gestapo still put fear into the hearts of city residents. Even the death of Hitler and the imminent fall of the Thousand Year Reich did little to deter the German troops in and around Prague from continuing to follow the day-to-day routine.

National Archives

The situation in Czechoslovakia was in complete disarray during those first days of May, and the players in the final quest for the liberation of Prague only added to the tumult. In the western part of the country, American troops under General George S. Patton, Jr., were advancing, sweeping aside most German opposition. The Red Army, along with some new Eastern European allies, was moving in from the east.

German units, already decimated by the Red Army's winter and spring offensives, were frantically trying to make their way westward to surrender to the Americans. In their attempt to reach the West, the Germans frequently fought pitched battles with a loose coalition of Czech Communist partisans and partisans loyal to the Czech government-in-exile, which was located in London. Another important player in the Prague drama was the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia (KONR) Army, which was in an assembly area west of Prague.

Czechoslovakia was one of the first countries in Europe to fall under Hitler's control. After Germany completed its *Anschluss* with Austria, Hitler turned his eyes to the Sudetenland, a part of western Czechoslovakia that had a large population of ethnic Germans. The Sudetenland, a rugged mountainous area, contained a vast system of defensive positions designed to protect Czechoslovakia from any enemy attacking from the west. It also contained a great deal of the country's iron and steel works as well as major armaments factories.

IN THE SPRING OF 1945, THE CZECH RESISTANCE MOVED TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR CAPITAL CITY.

Getty Images

Ethnic Germans, backed by Germany, began clamoring for a "Return to the Reich" in 1938, and street brawls between Czechs and the German minority resulted in casualties on both sides. At the same time, Berlin began a propaganda offensive designed to enflame the German public by reporting supposed Czech atrocities against their ethnic brothers.

THE CZECH GOVERNMENT TURNED TO THE West for help. The result was the famous September 1938 meeting in Munich between Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain at which there were no Czech representatives present. In exchange for Hitler's promise to make no more territorial claims and a German guarantee to preserve the national integrity of the remaining portion of Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland was ceded to Germany and was incorporated into the Reich in January 1939.

Hitler's promise was broken two months later, and on March 15 German troops marched into Prague with hardly a whimper heard from the Western powers. The nation of Czechoslovakia was effectively dissolved later in the month. Czechoslovakia was divided into two parts: the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in the west and Slovakia in the east. Poland and Hungary were also able to annex small portions of the country.

Slovakia was governed by Roman Catholic priest Josef Tiso, a staunch supporter of Hitler. Under a treaty with Germany, Slovakia came under the Reich's protection. Many Slovaks were already pro-Fascist, and the country would contribute a Schnelle Division (fast motorized division) and a security division, as well as two fighter squadrons and a reconnaissance squadron, to fight on the Russian Front when Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was permitted to be governed by a civilian administration under a Czech president, Dr. Emil Hácha, but in reality it was a German satellite with most of the power in the hands of the Reichsprotektor. In the early days of the German takeover, the day-to-day running of the Protectorate fell to the deputy Reichsprotektor, who also had economic responsibility for the production of the Czech factories and mines.

The economic facet of the Protectorate was of major interest to the Reich. The Czechs continued to work at their old jobs in the ore mines and the famous Skoda armaments and munitions plants, which were now totally geared to increasing the strength of the German war machine. Although rations were cut by the Germans, the workers were still grateful that they were being paid and that the Czech people were not subjected to the same harsh treatment that befell the Poles after the German conquest of that country in September 1939.

A Czechoslovak government-in-exile was formed in Great Britain under Eduard Benes, but that entity was half a continent away. There was a loosely organized resistance movement funded by the British, but it was largely ineffective during the first years of the war.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, members of the Czech Communist Party, who had up to now obeyed orders not to antagonize the Germans, began to form their own resistance groups. These groups would become more effective than the pro-democratic partisans, but it would take months of planning and organization before they would become more than a nuisance to the German occupiers.

National Archives

ABOVE: Reinhard Heydrich (left), a principal participant in the Nazis' Final Solution whose nickname was the "Butcher of Prague," strides up the stairs of his headquarters in the city. To Heydrich's left is SS Brigadeführer (brigadier general) Carl Hermann Frank, a Sudeten German who enthusiastically supported Heydrich. RIGHT: Strutting through the streets of Prague, German paratroopers participate in a military parade after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939.

A turning point in the German-Czech relationship came in September 1941. On the 27th of that month, Adolf Hitler received the following message:

"Mein Führer,

I dutifully report that this afternoon, in accordance with today's Führer Decree, I took over the leadership of the affairs of Reichsprotektor of Bohemia-Moravia. The official takeover follows tomorrow at eleven in the morning with the ceremonies at Hradcany Castle.

All political reports will reach you by the hand of Reichsleiter Bormann.

Heil mein Führer, and thank you for your confidence.

(signed) Heydrich. SS Obergruppenführer"

The author of that letter was Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich, "Heydrich the Hangman." Following a checkered past in the Navy, Heydrich had joined the fledgling SS and soon attracted the eye of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler. A superb athlete with a brilliant organizational mind, Heydrich soon worked his way into the inner circle of the SS.

Heydrich organized the SS Sicherheitsdienst (SD, the SS Security Police) before Hitler came to power. His collection of files on friend and foe alike made him one of the most feared and dangerous men in the Third Reich after the Nazi takeover in 1933. The SD became so powerful that it was often described as "the brains of the Party and the State."

As Heydrich's power grew, he became involved in the so-called Jewish problem. It was

Heydrich who presided over the infamous Wannsee Conference on January 10, 1942, where the extermination process that cost the lives of 11 million people was decided.

When he took his new position in Prague, Heydrich immediately set about consolidating his power. His predecessor, the ineffectual and incompetent Konstantin von Neurath, had been sent on permanent sick leave, and the meticulous Heydrich had no reason to share duties with any deputies. Setting himself up in Hradcany Castle, Reichsprotektor Heydrich began to build his own fiefdom. There was no one to oppose him.

Heydrich earned his nickname, "The Hangman of Europe," by ruthlessly cracking down on any form of resistance to the German Reich. Intellectuals, writers, priests, and anyone else who could sway the population were rounded up and marked for "further treatment." Death squads executed prisoners daily in the courtyard of Hradcany Castle, often with Heydrich watching from his office windows.

ullstein-bild / The Granger Collection, New York

While the Reichsprotektor dealt with the resistance movement, he used a carrot-and-stick approach with Czech workers. Munitions plant laborers who made their quota were granted extra rations, and those that surpassed quotas obtained further privileges. As a result of these measures, Czech factories continued to furnish the German armed forces with high-quality and high-tech war materials as the Wehrmacht pushed deeper into the Soviet Union.

By the spring of 1942, the Czech exile government in London decided that something had to be done to revitalize the resistance movement, eliminate Heydrich, and discourage worker cooperation with the Germans. A team of assassins was dropped into the Protectorate, and on May 27, 1942, Heydrich was ambushed while being driven through the streets of Prague. He died in agony a week after the attack.

Heydrich's assassination had its desired effect. The carrot was now gone from his equation, and Protectorate Higher SS and Police Leader Karl Hermann Frank now wielded the stick. With Heydrich gone, Frank became the real power in the Protectorate and would remain so until the end of the war.

Within hours of the ambush, Frank unleashed SS and security forces throughout the Protectorate. The men that shot Heydrich were finally cornered and killed in the basement of a Prague church, and hundreds, if not thousands, were rounded up for questioning or execution. One of the most infamous German reprisals was the total eradication of the village of Lidice. The entire village was razed, and the men and women were slaughtered or sent to concentration camps while the children who survived were either sent to camps or were adopted by German families.

The massive German response to Heydrich's death assured the Allies that a growing resistance movement would soon flourish in the Protectorate, impeding war production and causing precious troops to be diverted for security duties. For the next three years, the Czech population would suffer under the heavy-handed policies of Frank and his cronies. By early 1945, the Czechs were more than ready to strike a death blow to their occupiers.

In early April 1945, Adolf Hitler was still in denial about the situation he faced. The Soviets were gathering more than 1.5 million men for their final assault on Berlin. Reserves were almost nonexistent, and commanders facing the Russian forces along the entire Eastern Front were either in retreat or holding on by the skin of their teeth against the enemy.

Generaloberst (colonel general) Gotthard Heinrici, the commander of forces in front of Berlin, was told that he would be receiving reinforcements that had escaped from East Prussia to bolster his line. He had also managed to put together a few understrength armored units that would be used as a reserve force to counter any Soviet breakthrough. The German general knew that his position was all but hopeless, but he hoped to gain time and at least slow the Russian juggernaut enough to allow civilians populating the east to flee westward.

HITLER, ON THE OTHER HAND, DID NOT SEEM overly concerned about a Soviet attack on his capital. His eyes were on the Red Army advance through Slovakia, which was defended by the troops of Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner's Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army Group Center).

Schörner, a favorite of Hitler, was a fairly mediocre commander, but he was totally loyal to his Führer. Since January, Heeresgruppe Mitte had been slowly pushed back across Slovakia by the forces of General Ivan Y. Petrov's 4th Ukrainian Front and General Rodion I. Malinovsky's 2nd Ukrainian Front. Included in the Soviet Fronts were Czech, Romanian, and Polish units.

Both Hitler and Schörner were certain that the Soviet buildup in front of Berlin was a gigantic deception. "My Führer," Schörner had said to Hitler, "remember Bismarck's words, 'Whoever holds Prague holds Europe.'" Hitler, who fancied himself as a modern-day cross between Bismarck and Frederick the Great, agreed with Schörner's assessment. Prague must be held at all costs.

On April 5, four of Heinrici's precious armored units were taken from his Heeresgruppe Weichsel (Army Group Vistula) and sent south to reinforce Schörner. Several of the promised units from East Prussia were also diverted to Heeresgruppe Mitte.

Heinrici immediately rushed to Hitler's headquarters to confront the dictator. Refusing to be silenced by Hitler's aides, he angrily demanded the return of his units.

"I'm very sorry," Hitler said, "but I had to take them from you. Your panzers are needed much more by your southern neighbor. The main attack of the Russians is clearly not aimed at Berlin. There is a stronger concentration of enemy forces to the south."

Hitler continued to lecture Heinrici on the importance of stemming the Russian advance through Slovakia. He dismissed the Soviet buildup in front of Berlin and said that there would probably be a secondary attack against Heinrici's forces in support of the main Soviet objective.

"The main thrust of the enemy will not be directed at Berlin—but here," he said. Going to a field map, Hitler placed a finger directly on Prague. "Consequently, Heeresgruppe Weichsel should be able to withstand the secondary attacks." With those words, Hitler had upped the ante for control of Prague. He had also sealed his own fate and the fate of the people of Berlin.

While Hitler moved forces back and forth on his military maps, with little regard to the actual difficulties faced by his commanders, most of the players in what was to become the Prague Uprising had now gathered in the Protectorate and in Slovakia. As was previously mentioned, the Red Army and some Allied units were battering Heeresgruppe Mitte from the east. Upon entering Slovakia, the Soviets established a "National Front" in Kosice, a city in the eastern part of the province. It was a loose coalition of Communist, Socialist, and exile government representatives, but was largely controlled by the Communists.

THE CZECH RESISTANCE, EMBOLDENED BY SOVIET successes in the east since mid-1944, was now a force to be reckoned with. A revolt in Slovakia had been put down by the Germans with bloody fighting and massed reprisals in September. The uprising had received the blessings of the exile government, and it had made the group more cautious when it came to condoning the same thing in the Protectorate. Even in the spring of 1945, the memory of the failed Slovak adventure made the exiled officials extremely reluctant to call for another national uprising.

In April 1945, resistance hit-and-run attacks were the order of the day. Field Marshal Schörner's Heeresgruppe Mitte, reeling from Soviet attacks in Slovakia, had already retreated into the Moravian province of the Protectorate. Attacks on German supply lines and depots hampered German defensive operations and sucked troops from the front to counter the partisans.

Resistance forces in Prague engaged in harassing attacks against the garrison, but the strong German presence made any large-scale attacks impractical. The Kommandant of Prague, General Rudolf Toussaint, had several ad hoc Army, security, and SS units, as well as the core garrison units, with which to battle any insurgents.

Toussaint, born in 1891, had been the Wehrmacht Plenipotentiary to the Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia since July 1944. In that capacity, he was privy to the roundup and transportation of Czech Jews and Gypsies to the death camps, and he worked closely with the SS in supplying antipartisan forces to counter the Czech Resistance. As Kommandant of Prague, Toussaint was determined to hold the city for as long as possible.

The Red Army and the Czech Resistance were not the only problems for Toussaint and Schörner. At the western border of the Protectorate, General Hans von Obstfelder's 7th Army was facing the powerful Third Army of General George S. Patton. The Third Army was in a perfect position to slice through the weakly defended German line and enter the Protectorate, but Allied aims did not coincide with the situation.

The liberation of Czechoslovakia was given a low priority by the Western Allies. A demarcation line had already been agreed upon with the Soviets, and with the Red Army already controlling much of Eastern and Central Europe, it was the view of most Allied commanders that the Russians were in a much better position to liberate the country.

Patton was champing at the bit to unleash the Third Army, and he sent requests to his immediate superior, General Omar Bradley, to be allowed to take western Czechoslovakia. Those requests were denied by both Bradley and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, who had the unpleasant burden of making not only military decisions, but political ones as well.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on the other hand, was in favor of wresting as much land away from the advancing Red Army as possible. His was a voice in the wilderness as he pushed for Allied forces to take Prague as soon as possible.

On April 21, the first Soviet artillery shells fell on Berlin. The final act was now closing on the German-Soviet war, but Hitler would not be around for the finale. Germany was on the verge of collapse, and the people in the still-occupied sections of the continent waited with increasing impatience for the end to finally come.

With the fall of Berlin, Prague was the only European capital that had not been liberated

National Archives

ABOVE: Manning a barricade in a Prague street, Czech Resistance members brandish captured German weapons. The revolt against Nazi rule began at 3 PM on May 5, 1945. RIGHT: The bodies of members of the Czech Resistance lie sprawled on a Prague street corner following the uprising.

from the Germans. The German armed forces were still a fighting entity, but there was a vast difference in the outlook of troops engaged in the East compared to their comrades fighting in the West. For German soldiers on the Western Front, surrender, although distasteful to many, was a ticket to life after the war. Hitler was dead, Berlin had fallen, and the enemy occupied most of the Fatherland, making further resistance seem very futile.

Those German troops unlucky enough to be fighting the Soviets had a different set of goals. Even at this stage of the war, surrender was seen as a most unhealthy alternative. German soldiers taken by the Red Army were frequently beaten or shot out of hand, and being sent to a prison camp in the Far East or the Urals was just short of a death sentence.

The final hope for the men of Schörner's Heeresgruppe Mitte was to make a fighting retreat to the West, where they could hopefully escape the Red Army and surrender to the Americans or the British. This was the goal that just about every one of Schörner's soldiers was trying to achieve.

Fighting was moving closer and closer to Prague, and both the general population and the resistance fighters were growing increasingly eager for freedom from German rule, but the multitude of parties and factions that made up the Resistance movement in Prague impeded any unified plans to take back the city. Members of the Communist underground movement, the Czech National Committee, the Czech National Council, and splinter groups such as the Military Group Alex all vied for dominance, pushing their own plans to oust the Germans.

WHILE PROPOSALS AND COUNTERPROPOSALS FOR an uprising were being discussed, Heeresgruppe Mitte was being pressed into a pocket east of Prague. The Soviets, now done with the Berlin Offensive, sent Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front speeding south to be in on the kill. His units were moving rapidly through Silesia, and they were poised on the northern Czech border by May 4.

General Toussaint received reports of the growing unrest in the streets of Prague while, at the same time, keeping abreast of the deteriorating military situation. His garrison troops were enough to keep an unsettled population in line, but if a general uprising were to take place, they would be hard-pressed to hold the city. With Schörner's men fighting for their lives there were hardly any units in Bohemia that were not engaged with the enemy or that could be used as a "fire brigade" to reinforce the Czech capital.

About 40 miles west of Prague, General Sergei K. Bunyachenko sat in his headquarters. Bunyachenko was the commander of perhaps the most important player in the liberation of Prague, but he did not know it at the time. Born in 1902, the Russian general had served as chief of staff of the Red Army's 26th Rifle Division from 1940-1942. He was the commander of the 389th Rifle Division and the 59th Rifle Brigade later in 1942 and was captured by the Germans that same year. Bunyachenko—a former officer in Stalin's Red Army—was now commander of the 1st Division of the KONR Army, which has often been confused with the Russian Liberation Army (ROA), an organization in which many of the KONR troops had previously served.

The driving force behind an anti-Soviet Russian army was General Andrei Andreivich Vlasov, a distinguished Red Army officer who was captured during an attempt to relieve Leningrad in 1942. Vlasov felt betrayed by Stalin, who had made no effort to relieve his encircled army. For the next two years, the embittered general worked with pro-Russian German officers and diplomats to try to build an anti-Communist army from the vast number of Russian prisoners held in German captivity.

The Wehrmacht was already using about a million Russian volunteers to help with supply and noncombat duties on the Eastern Front, a fact kept from top Nazi officials. The inane racial bias against the Slavs had a telling effect on the growth of the Soviet partisan movement while, at the same time, depriving the Germans of an enormous anti-Communist military force that could have been used against the Red Army.

Worsening conditions on the Eastern Front finally got Vlasov some grudging concessions from Party officials. On November 14, 1944, a conference was held in Hradcany Castle. High-ranking SS and Wehrmacht officers crowded the castle's Spanish Hall to hear Vlasov set out his own manifesto concerning equality and democracy in a new Russia that would be liberated by his own anti-Soviet Russian army.

Surprisingly, Vlasov was given a green light to begin forming his army, which was to be part of the KONR. The news made its way through POW camps, and by the end of the month, former Red Army soldiers were signing up for the new formation in the thousands. Vlasov had finally gotten his wish, but it was too little too late.

The deteriorating situation on both the Eastern and Western Fronts had already taxed Ger-

"HERE IS PRAGUE! HERE IS PRAGUE!

AMERICANS AND ENGLISH—HELP US! WE NEED GUNS. THERE ARE TOO MANY GERMANS!"

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man war production to the limit. Only about 50,000 men, trained and equipped in two divisions, were chosen from the volunteers. These two divisions were designated to form the core of the KONR Army, but it was a futile undertaking.

After a somewhat disastrous attempt to stem the Soviet drive across the Oder, Vlasov ordered his divisions to move south to Bohemia. Knowing that the war was lost, he hoped that he could save his men by surrendering to the Americans. In the current climate, the Western Allies seemed to be the only chance the KONR Army had.

ullstein-bild / The Granger Collection, New York

On May 4, Konev was poised to drive into the northern flank of Heeresgruppe Mitte. On the same day, the entire 11th Panzer Division surrendered to American forces, opening a wide gap in the lines of the 7th Army. The road to Prague was open, and Patton gleefully asked Bradley once again for permission to move into western Bohemia.

His wish was granted at 1930 hours on the 4th, and within the hour, the Third Army poured into the province. Patton's forces advanced on a broad front, brushing aside most opposition as tanks and infantry rolled through the countryside. News of the American advance caused spontaneous uprisings in a number of cities along Patton's route.

In Prague, the various resistance leaders heard the news and immediately called a special meeting that included all the major groups. They argued into the evening about if, or when, an uprising in the city would take place. The Czech National Council opposed any preemptive action, but other factions pointed out that there had already been an increase in clashes with the German garrison. The people of Prague, they argued, could not be put off any longer. The National Council finally relented. It was time for action.

During the early hours of May 5, emissaries from the Czech National Council arrived at General Bunyachenko's headquarters. The Czechs told the Russian general that Prague would be in full revolt later in the day and they appealed to Bunyachenko, as a fellow Slav, to help liberate the city and fight the German garrison.

Bunyachenko was moved by the request, but he was still under Vlasov's orders to remain where he was so he could hopefully surrender to the Americans. A call went out to Vlasov, and a heated exchange took place between the two Russian generals. It is not clear whether Vlasov acquiesced or Bunyachenko took matters into his own hands, but the KONR 1st Division was headed toward Prague within hours.

On the morning of May 5, resistance fighters gathered weapons and filtered out to predesignated positions. An important part of the uprising would be getting information to the general population. To accomplish that goal, it was vital for the rebels to take control of the powerful transmitters of Prague Radio.

National Archives

General Toussaint, already anxious about reports of fighting in the city the previous day, sent orders for his troops to go to high alert. Some of the communications lines between his headquarters and subunits had already been cut; the other units received the message and began preparing for action.

Meanwhile, resistance fighters were on their way to seize Prague Radio. Group Alex was at the forefront in the opening stages of the revolt against the Germans. Rushing the radio building, which was located on Vinohradská Street, the Czechs were able to take over the communications center. At 1233 hours, Prague Radio broadcast its first appeal to the public to rise against the German occupiers. Even as the broadcast was going out, members of the resistance and the Czech police were battling the SS troops charged with guarding the station.

With the sound of combat as a backdrop, the announcer asked for public support with the following message: "Calling all Czechs. Come to our help at once. Come and defend Czech Radio. The SS are murdering Czech people here. Come and help us. You can still get through the Bilbinava Street entrance …"

To manage the military aspect of the uprising, Group Alex's General Karel Kutlvar was named commander of Prague. His small staff was charged with coordinating the activities of the resistance groups. Other public buildings were seized in the first chaotic hours of the uprising, and Czechs and Germans fought running battles in the streets as armed groups blundered into each other.

During the afternoon of the 5th, the Czech National Council took over political control of

the revolt, putting General Kutlvar and his staff under Council authority. At about the same time, newly appointed mayor of Prague, Václav Vacek, pledged his allegiance to the Council, putting the city government squarely on the side of the rebellion.

Antonin Sum, a teenager at the time, was involved in the resistance. "The uprising started in Prague," he said. "You could see in the streets, as I saw myself, people with guns, which was absolutely impossible before. They were guns that had been hidden away somewhere underground in caves.... It was just the start, but nobody knew what was practically going on."

Prague Radio continued its broadcasts to the people. At about 0100 hours on May 6, the radio called on residents to build barricades throughout the city and to defy the Germans at every turn. Thousands took to the streets in reply to the appeal. In scenes reminiscent of European uprisings in the 19th century, cobblestones were torn from the streets to form the foundations of barricades. Carts, vehicles, and trolleys were overturned to block key intersections, and snipers took to the rooftops overlooking choke points. By morning, more than 1,600 barricades had been erected.

Broadcasts from the radio station now reached out beyond Prague in hope of a quick rescue from the Allies. "Here is Prague!" one broadcast said. "Here is Prague! Americans and English—help us! We need guns. There are too many Germans!"

The Americans heard. The English heard and the Russians heard—yet no one did anything. Patton had reached the city of Plzen (Pilsen), about 50 miles west of Prague. That was the deepest penetration that Eisenhower would allow. The rest of Czechoslovakia had been promised to the Soviets, and that was that! The Red Army, still fighting Schörner's Heeresgruppe Mitte, also chose not to send help. The more Czech Resistance fighters killed by the Germans, the easier it would be to install a Communist government after the fighting ended.

In Prague, May 6 was a day of crisis. General Toussaint, taken aback by the previous day's action, was now marshalling his forces to crush the rebellion. About half the city was occupied by the resistance, and his scattered units needed time to concentrate. Barricades and snipers made treks to assembly points hazardous affairs, but the Germans were able to gather units close to the radio station.

BELOW: A column of captured German soldiers trudges along a road near Prague during the final days of World War II. Many Germans who were captured by Soviet forces never returned home. LEFT: Citizens of Prague welcome the arrival of Red Army tanks on May 10, 1945, as Soviet forces roll into the city. LEFT BOTTOM: Czech civilians crowd around a U.S. Army jeep as American troops are welcomed into the liberated capital city of Prague on May 8, 1945.

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TOUSSAINT ALSO RADIOED SCHÖRNER FOR HELP. Although Heeresgruppe Mitte already had its hands full, an enraged Schörner sent SS units toward the city to help put down the uprising. One of those units was Kampfgruppe (Combat Group) Wallenstein, composed of two understrength infantry regiments, an assault gun battalion, and other affiliated detachments.

Reinforced with the SS units, the Germans struck at the radio station. As resistance fighters tried to stem the tide of infantry, assault guns, and tanks, a new voice came over the airwaves begging for help from the Allies. "Prague is in great danger! The Germans are attacking with tanks and planes. We are calling urgently our allies to help. Send tanks and aircraft immediately. Help us defend Prague. At present, we are broadcasting from the radio station. Outside, there is a battle raging."

The voice belonged to William Grieg, a Scottish POW who had escaped from the Germans. Grieg found himself in the middle of the uprising and was asked by the Czechs to make the appeal. With fighting erupting all around him, Grieg calmly sat in front of the microphone and sent out the urgent request.

The Czechs fought bravely, but the Germans were too strong. They recaptured the radio station, but Czech engineers had already removed enough equipment to set up another broadcasting center in a safer part of the city. Grieg was called back into action later during the uprising to ask for an Allied air strike against a German armored column that was advancing on the city. Unlike his first appeal, that request was answered and the German column was decimated.

Hearing of Grieg's first call for help, Patton once again phoned Bradley and Eisenhower to ask permission to move on the Czech capital. "I'll call you tomorrow from Prague," he told Eisenhower. Once again, in no uncertain terms, the feisty general was told to hold his position and under no circumstances was he to advance any farther.

Patton did, however, send a three-man team racing toward Prague in a jeep. Making their way into the embattled city, the trio observed the plight of the resistance fighters and then returned hastily to Patton's headquarters. When the general received their report, he made a final call to Bradley pleading for freedom of movement. The request was forwarded to Eisenhower, and once again the request was denied.

While the Americans stood idle, General Bunyachenko was pushing his troops to reach Prague. The first few units of his division entered the city on the 5th, but the bulk of the 1st KONR Division arrived on the 6th. Bunyachenko immediately threw his forces into the fray.

The Russians were soon side by side with the Czechs fighting the Germans, who had been so confident earlier in the day. It was a surreal scene with men on both sides wearing the Iron Cross and many other identical combat decorations trying to kill each other. Fighting lasted into the night, with the Russians gradually pushing the Army and SS forces back.

General Toussaint reported the situation to Schörner, who was outraged at the betrayal of the KONR. He promised more SS units to Tou-

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The Triumph of USS BATFISH

In a remarkable feat of seamanship, the American submarine sank three Japanese submarines on one patrol.

BY ROBERT BARR SMITH

SHE WAS A SLEEK, EFFICIENT, deadly killer, a home to six officers and 60 enlisted men, and a holy terror to the enemy. She was a fleet submarine, and she was called *Batfish*.

She was not among the record-holding American boats in total tonnage or number of ships sunk, but the submarine force of Imperial Japan had reason to fear her. For *Batfish* was one of only two Allied boats with the distinction of sinking three enemy submarines. Her only competition came from Great Britain's HMS *Upholder,* which sank three Axis boats in the Mediterranean, part of almost 130,000 tons of German and Italian shipping she sent to the bottom.

Oddly, *Batfish*'s first encounter with a hostile vessel was also with a submarine, this time a presumed German U-boat in the Atlantic, not long after her commissioning. The German fired two torpedoes at her, but both missed entirely. Engine room crewman Tex Davis remembers the occasion vividly, especially three commands in quick succession from the skipper of *Batfish:* "Battle stations, fire 9 and 10, and dive."

"It was all over," says Tex, "before I could even get to my battle station." Today, surviving *Batfish* crewmen suspect that they may have sunk still another submarine on that day, but no official confirmation of the German sub was ever received.

Sadly, *Batfish*'s only rival—*Upholder*—disappeared with all hands on her 25th sortie from embattled Malta, victim of an Axis mine or surface escort, but *Batfish* had better luck. Today she lies quietly on the lawn outside the World War II Museum in Muskogee, Oklahoma, basking in the sun, dreaming, maybe, of other days. Some of her old crew visit her from time to time, and the public goes aboard her and wanders through her compartments, sometimes wondering aloud how so many men could live and fight in such a tiny, cramped space for weeks on end.

In fact, her crew quickly got used to their cramped quarters: "It was," says signalman Jim Callanan, "like being in my own living room." And by the standards of World War II *Batfish* was not tiny at all. She was state-of-the-art for those far-off days, a diesel-electric submarine of the *Balao* class, just over 300 feet long, displacing some 1,800 tons surfaced and about 2,400 submerged. She was capable of just over 20 knots on the surface, using all four of her diesel engines. She could do almost nine knots submerged for short periods, and her 10 21-inch torpedo tubes gave her a mighty punch. She carried 24 torpedoes, each of which would run at 45 knots over about 4,500 yards; they could also be set to run at 31 knots, extending their range to some 9,000 yards.

National Archives

The amazing feat of sinking three Japanese submarines is commemorated in this painting by artist Alfred Johnson titled "*Batfish* Gets a Hat Trick." OPPOSITE: An officer reads orders during the commissioning of the new submarine USS *Batfish* at the Portsmouth Navy Yard on August 21, 1943.

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In addition to her sonar and radar, *Batfish* also carried a unique piece of equipment called a bathythermograph, which measured the thermal layers of the deep sea. These layers, made up of water of differing temperatures, distorted and deflected sound, and so provided a refuge for submarines, places in which to hide from the deadly tentacles of a destroyer's sonar search. Properly used, it could also help the boat find a spot from which her own "ears" could reach out extraordinary distances to locate an enemy.

BATFISH MOUNTED A 4-INCH DECK GUN PLUS antiaircraft weapons—one 40mm and one 20mm—and later in her career she would be fitted with still another light cannon of each caliber. And she carried radar, two sets in fact, much more efficient equipment than that installed in her Japanese rivals, as time would prove.

One radar set scanned the vastness of the sky for aircraft, generally hostile in her operational area. It would efficiently warn of the presence of an aircraft somewhere within the set's range, but could not pinpoint its direction. On the other hand, the surface-search radar would reach far out to tell the direction of a vessel on the surface. It could give the radar men a bearing on anything the set saw, and it could be used when the submarine was slightly submerged. These radars were the key to surviving in her operational area, the extremely perilous waters off Japan, the Philippines, and Formosa.

Batfish could easily operate as far below the surface as 400 feet, about a hundred feet deeper than her otherwise similar predecessors of the *Gato* class. If she were driven deeper, somewhere below 400 feet lay her "crush depth," but just how far down that was, nobody knew. The best guess was that she could not live below 850 feet.

For *Batfish* was built to survive. Her all-welded hull was made of inch-thick steel, and she was divided into eight watertight compartments. The passage between compartments was only one by four feet, a perpetual danger to heads and shins, but each compartment could be closed by a massive 500-pound watertight steel door. Her conning tower, also watertight, was a tiny place, about eight feet by 15, the heart of the boat during an attack. Once she neared a target, she closed down her big search periscope, relying on the attack periscope, which was longer and thinner and left less of a wake, a "feather" in submariner jargon.

Running on the surface, she used one or more of her four diesels, which were also used to charge her array of batteries, more than 50 tons of them. When she had to dive, those batteries powered her electric motors, which would keep her going submerged for about 24 hours at very low speeds.

Batfish was commissioned August 21, 1943, at the Navy Yard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. After her trials, she joined the ever-increasing submarine offensive in the Pacific, a ceaseless, merciless campaign that accounted for more than 300 enemy ships during that year at a cost of 15 American boats. Before Japan surrendered, *Batfish* would do seven war patrols, sinking 14 enemy vessels, almost 38,000 tons of shipping. She also damaged two or three other ships, and along the way she fished three American aircrews out of the unforgiving waters of the South China Sea.

Batfish earned a Presidential Unit Citation, nine battle stars, a Navy Cross, four Silver Stars, and 10 Bronze Stars. It was a gallant and enviable record, and the men who sailed in her had every reason to be proud.

Early on, however, in spite of some modest success against the Japanese, some of the men who sailed in *Batfish* may have felt that she still had something to prove. Under a prior commander, later relieved of command, *Batfish* had spotted the super-battleship *Yamato,* but failed to attack her. *Batfish* had picked up the huge ship on radar at night in heavy seas, but according to one story the sub's skipper so feared a hit from one of the battleship's 18-inch main guns that he refused to press home an attack.

According to that version of the incident, the

Coming alongside the tender *Chogei*, the Japanese submarine *I-121* commences refueling near Kwajalein Atoll. The *Batfish* and the British submarine HMS *Upholder* shared the distinction of sinking three enemy submarines during World War II.

National Archives

captain remained adamant even when one of his own officers told him he had been a battleship turret officer and, "[I]t would be utterly impossible for a pointer and trainer of a fire control party to stay on us the way we were bounding around. [He] was still concerned over being 'blown out of the water' by a 16-inch [sic] shell.…"

Batfish's executive officer was so angry that he later asked to be—and was—transferred out of the boat. In any case, after the boat's second patrol this captain was relieved of command, probably because of an alcohol problem.

On the other hand, one crew member, Tex Davis, recalls that a combination of *Yamato*'s speed, the heavy weather, and the battleship's alert escorts made an attack impossible, although several attempts were made to close in to torpedo range. *Yamato* steamed directly over *Batfish,* he remembers: "Her screws shook the whole boat."

The captain, he recalls, tried to close with *Yamato* in spite of the escorts and very rough seas but could not shoot without endangering his own boat. Davis remembers that *Yamato*'s escorts dropped more than a hundred depth charges to protect their huge charge. For his part, he admired the captain, who, he said, "was like a father to me."

Better, more successful days followed under the new captain, Commander John K. Fyfe, called "Jake," who took over the boat after her second patrol. Patrolling off Honshu under Fyfe's highly effective leadership, *Batfish* got one Japanese ship, and then, in the Palaus, she finished off the destroyer *Samidare,* already damaged by an air strike. Jake Fyfe made very sure of *Samidare,* putting six torpedoes into her, blowing off her stern, and leaving her "sinking fast and smoking heavily." When a Japanese minesweeper showed up to help *Samidare,* Fyfe got her too.

Along the way *Batfish* encountered an unusual foe, the lineal descendant of a British innovation in World War I. She looked like the sort of quarry every submariner coveted, a *Maru,* a substantial Japanese merchant ship. In fact, she was what the Royal Navy dubbed a "Q-ship," a merchant vessel filled with lumber or cork, crammed with concealed guns and manned by a regular Navy crew. They were trained to remain hidden no matter what punishment their vessel absorbed, hoping an enemy submarine would surface long enough for their guns to sink her.

This time the Japanese were unsuccessful. *Batfish* engaged the *Maru* at long range on the surface, but turned to run for her life once the shielding on the Q-ship's guns fell away to reveal her true nature. "That was the biggest damn barrel," said one lookout afterward, remembering the gaping muzzle of the Japanese ship's forward gun. Fyfe recalled a series of unsuccessful salvos from the frustrated Japanese ship, and crew members vividly remembered a dive in record time. "One hundred feet in 26 seconds," said one.

National Archives

The diving officer and two enlisted men prepare to send the USS *Batfish* into a dive on May 1, 1945.

BATFISH HAD MORE ENEMIES AT SEA THAN THE destroyers and smaller escort vessels of the Japanese Navy. Aircraft were a constant threat in the waters off Japan, Formosa, and the Philippines, although Captain Fyfe was surprised by the number of hostile aircraft that came close to the submarine but did not attack. The captain attributed this lack of vigilance in part to American air power. Japanese aviators, he thought, probably spent "as much time looking up as looking down," for fear of American planes.

Those same friendly aircraft, however, were sometimes a mighty trial to *Batfish*. Eager American aviators were occasionally wont to attack anything that looked like a submarine, without wondering long to whom the boat belonged. Three times, Tex Davis recalls, U.S. aircraft bombed *Batfish*. On one occasion, he remembers, the boat was attacked by American aircraft when the submarine had two rescued American pilots on board. At another time, a friendly airplane dived on them while *Batfish* was talking by radio to the offending pilot's squadron leader. On at least one occasion, an American aircraft dove on *Batfish* while the submarine was operating her IFF (identification friend or foe) equipment.

Surviving not so friendly fire, in October 1944 *Batfish* was part of the massive submarine cordon around the Philippines during the long-awaited invasion. In the next month, she was part of a wolfpack led by the submarine USS *Ray,* attacking a convoy in Lingayen Gulf. Captain Fyfe got credit for two freighters on this occasion, but the best was yet to come. It happened in February 1945, as *Batfish* was on her sixth combat patrol.

Batfish returned to Pearl Harbor to refit after her fifth patrol, traded in her 4-inch gun for a 5-incher and added a 40mm antiaircraft gun. Some 67 alterations, read additions and repairs, were undertaken during the boat's 16-day refit, and even then there was not enough time to fully finish up everything necessary to get *Batfish* up to her top fighting trim. But the Pacific War did not wait for repairs or much of anything else, and after a brief training period, *Batfish* announced her readiness for sea on December 30, 1944.

The year 1945 would be a banner year for *Batfish*.

She was working the area of Luzon Strait, off

the Philippines, when American codebreakers picked up a message that four Japanese submarines were bound for Luzon. Their mission was to run ammunition into the Philippines, and on the return leg to evacuate Japanese aircrews and other critical personnel to Formosa. American naval intelligence had even deciphered the submarines' sailing dates and the routes they would take. The Japanese boats were sailing straight into the teeth of a waiting American picket line composed of *Batfish, Plaice, Scabbardfish, Archerfish, Blackfish,* and *Sea Poacher,* all deployed across Luzon Strait.

Batfish was combatworthy, but she had developed some defects her commander looked forward to repairing during the next refit. In addition to some more minor problems, both of the boat's periscopes leaked badly, and the once quiet boat had developed a serious noise problem. "Now any speed over 3 knots," wrote Captain Fyfe, "and we sound like a freight train." But even with these and the other nagging problems, she was about to have her finest hour.

About 10:15 on the night of February 9, the submarine's radar watch picked up signals on the sub's APR gear, emissions from somebody else's radar, somewhere out there in the blackness of the night. Not long afterward, the submarine's own radar picked up a blip, a vessel some 11,000 yards distant. But was the vessel friend or foe?

Fyfe radioed the other American boats in the pack to which he belonged, asking each her position. Crewmen remembered the answers coming in one by one, "not me, not me." Once all the friendly boats had answered, Fyfe was virtually certain that the contact was not a friendly ship and assumed it to be one of the Japanese submarines making for Luzon.

He was right, but even then he would not shoot until he gained visual contact and made sure the target was an enemy. At last the captain saw what radarman Jim Callanan and Tex Davis remembered as the characteristic hump forward of the conning tower in Japanese *I*-class submarines. Fyfe was sure of his quarry now and set up his torpedo attack.

The night was gloomy, dark and overcast, and there was no moon, excellent weather for a surface attack. Captain Fyfe positioned his boat to take advantage of the darkness, so that he approached his target from the east with the deepest of the gloom behind him.

Just before midnight, Fyfe fired at 1,850 yards, but all of his torpedoes missed. He was still in the game, however, for the Japanese vessel did not dive or otherwise react, but went steadily on its way. Apparently nobody on the target's conning tower had seen the track of the American torpedoes, and her crew had obviously ignored the explosion of Fyfe's torpedoes at the end of their unsuccessful run.

And so Fyfe reasoned that the Japanese radar was either designed solely for antiaircraft detection, or terribly inefficient, or maybe both. So, Fyfe recomputed his attack, deciding that the enemy's estimated speed for the first attack had been two knots too slow. He then closed to 990 yards and fired three more fish just after midnight. The first ran hot in the tube, ejecting on the second try but running erratically off into the night. The third also missed. But the second torpedo ran true.

IN A "BRILLIANT RED EXPLOSION THAT LIT UP THE whole sky," the Japanese boat exploded and sank quickly, and Fyfe's radar watch saw the target blowing apart. Crewmen thought they had heard an "air fish," a compressed air torpedo, rush past their hull in the water, as if the Japanese boat had fired about the same time *Batfish* did.

Because Fyfe's crew heard he had spotted the hump forward of the conning tower, and Fyfe noted in his log that he had seen an *I*-class boat from his bridge, the Japanese boat was almost surely *I-41*. Various authorities have later theorized that the submarine might have been either one of two *RO*-class boats, but the *RO* boats had no such distinctive bulge.

Fyfe rigged a searchlight and searched for survivors and debris, but found neither. There

LEFT: As she heads home from a combat patrol on May 22, 1945, the submarine USS *Batfish* flies battle flags from her mast. BELOW: On patrol in the open sea, the submarine USS *Batfish* is photographed from the air on September 20, 1943.

National Archives

National Archives

was only a heavy stench of oil and a thick oil slick, but nothing more. Fyfe sensibly called off the search, realizing, as he wrote later in the ship's log, "We were advertising ourselves needlessly and accomplishing little except ruining the night vision of the bridge personnel and probably drawing airplanes."

The sinking was a substantial success, for the Japanese boat was almost surely inbound to Formosa from the Philippines, loaded with Japanese aviators or other VIPs, perhaps even bullion or other wealth destined for the imperial treasury.

But *Batfish* was not finished.

The next day aircraft flew toward *Batfish*. They might have been friendly, although Fyfe was convinced the offending planes were using Japanese antisubmarine tactics. *Batfish* was still on the surface, and the appearance of the aircraft drove her under, spoiling Fyfe's plans for a surface reconnaissance, losing the advantages of better speed and better visibility that surface cruising would have given his boat.

He came to periscope depth later in the morning, but again approaching aircraft made him dive, and this time they dropped a torpedo, which fortunately missed. It was, wrote Fyfe, "a tender moment, and if these actually prove to be blue planes [American] a most unfriendly act." But he stayed on station, even though Japanese aircraft remained active deep into the night.

Fyfe's persistence paid off again on the very next night, February 11. As *Batfish* surfaced to recharge her vital batteries, the APR again alerted the radar watch. Once more, something was out there in the night, its radar looking, searching, reaching out its long, probing fingers in the gloom. *Batfish*'s own radar picked up her target at about 8,000 yards.

On the conning tower, *Batfish*'s officers and lookouts strained to pierce the darkness ahead through their binoculars ... and there she was, some 1,800 yards away, moving at only about seven knots but zigzagging. Fyfe went to battle stations and *Batfish* closed to 1,200 yards. At that range the American lookouts were sure. They were stalking a Japanese submarine, apparently somewhat smaller than their last victim.

It was *RO-112,* outbound from Formosa. Fyfe again had perfect weather for his attack, an overcast, moonless night, and he began his approach on the surface with rain squalls behind him, shielding his boat from the Japanese lookouts.

Before Fyfe could make his range and speed calculations and shoot, his quarry disappeared. He could not tell whether she had seen him on her radar or made visual contact, or whether she was simply making a routine dive. Either way, his disappointment was intense, and Fyfe wrote in his log that he blamed himself. "Signal on APR went off and target dove. Changed course to left and speeded up, in the meantime trying to reconcile myself to the fact that I had lost this one by trying to wait for the theoretically perfect set up."

National Archives

Standing in the conning tower of the USS *Batfish*, a U.S. Navy officer scans the horizon for Japanese ships during a combat patrol on May 5, 1945.

Then, only half an hour later, *Batfish*'s sonar equipment picked up the characteristic sounds of a submarine blowing its ballast tanks, the Japanese radar resumed operating, and *RO-112* was on the surface again, working her radar but obviously seeing nothing on it. Her blindness would be fatal. This time Fyfe dove to radar depth at about 6,000 yards and was able to close the range to less than 900 yards. From that distance, at about 10 PM, he fired a spread of four torpedoes.

THE BLACKNESS OF THE NIGHT ERUPTED IN A garish yellow fireball, and *RO-112* was finished. As she began to sink, two more torpedoes exploded, detonated either by fragments of her hull or by the water turbulence caused by the first torpedo. Her death was spectacular, maybe a byproduct of a cargo of ammunition, for she was headed for the Philippines, where ammo was in short supply. As Fyfe wrote, "The target literally blew apart and sank almost immediately."

Two more heavy explosions followed as *RO-112* went down, capped by a third colossal blast and the sounds of escaping air and structural collapse. The Japanese boat was gone, and *Batfish*'s sonar men listened to the secondary explosions as she went down, and to the ghastly death rattle of a sinking vessel breaking up as she drifted into the terrible pressures of the great deep. *Batfish* could find no trace of her enemy left on the surface of the dark water, only a monstrous oil slick.

Two in a row. No American boat would surpass that record throughout the war, and only one other boat, USS *Tautog,* would even equal it. But only one night later, early on the morning of February 13, *Batfish* would break her own new record in spectacular fashion. Before another night was out, she would have a crack at still another submarine of the Imperial Navy.

The next night the faithful APR again warned the skipper and crew of *Batfish*. This time it was a little past midnight when the apparatus picked up hostile radar emissions far out in the night, almost 11,000 yards away. Although she could not pick up her enemy with her own surface radar, *Batfish* circled slowly, zeroing in on the Japanese signals with her own anti-air radar. Fyfe got a bearing on the Japanese transmission and followed it through the darkness.

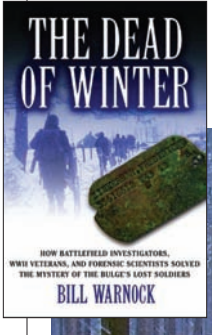
And then, at about 2:15, Fyfe's own radar picked up the target. This time it was *RO-113,* another of the Formosa boats, again bound for the Philippines to deliver supplies and ammunition and rescue critical Japanese personnel. Fyfe began his stalk.

Continued on page 84

A chilling tale recounts the search for the lost soldiers of the Battle of the Bulge.

BY MASON B. WEBB

HE DUG DOWN TO A HALF-ROTTED OVERSHOE AND TUGGED IT FREE FROM THE BLACK soil at the bottom of the old foxhole. The hair on the back of his neck prickled as he stared at the bottom of the hole. 'C'*est occupé!*' he muttered in amazement. It was a grave. The clearing he had created revealed two human bones, the remains of a lower leg." So begins ***The Dead of Winter: How Battlefield Investigators, WWII Veterans, and Forensic Scientists Solved the Mystery of the Bulge's Lost Soldiers*** (New York: Chamberlain Brothers/Penguin, 2006, 314 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, $24.95, hardcover.), Bill Warnock's masterful if sometimes macabre story of amateur battlefield archeologists who, in their spare time and at their own expense, have made it their passion to search for the long lost soldiers of the Battle of the Bulge.



By following the lives of Jean-Louis Seel and Jean-Philippe Speder, two Belgians, Warnock takes us into the deep, dark woods of the Ardennes Forest along the German-Belgian border as the men scour old battle maps in search for likely foxholes and burial sites. Most days they return home empty handed, but on rare occasions their metal detectors and spades reveal the grim remains of American and German soldiers.

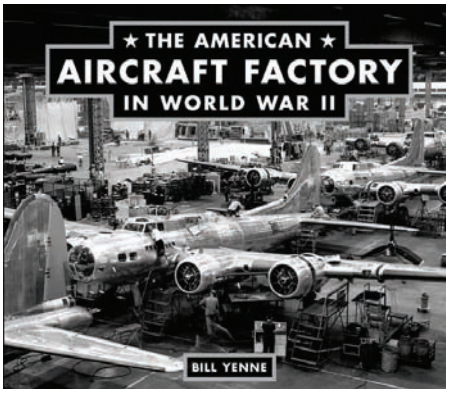
Unlike others who have profited financially from digging up battlefield artifacts, the pair's mission is not to unearth bits of uniforms, equipment, and weapons for resale, but rather to ultimately reunite the remains of long dead soldiers with their relatives—a reward that is gratifying beyond words.


Jean-Luc Menestrey

After 10 years of exhaustive searching, the graves of three soldiers of the 99th Division were located on 88 Hill in the Ardennes Forest, April 19, 2001.

Warnock cautions that battlefield archeology, besides being illegal, is often deadly. He writes of several artifact hunters who were badly injured or lost their lives when they disturbed old, unstable munitions. But, to Seel and Speder, the risks are worth the rewards. When they do uncover remains, they notify the authorities, who remove the bones to laboratories, work to identify the casualty, then notify the relatives for burial instructions.

The Dead of Winter is not so much a book about the Battle of the Bulge as it is a gripping, hard-to-put-down tale of the aftermath and human cost of the tragedy that is war. Not to be missed.



The American Aircraft Factory in World War II by Bill Yenne, New York, Zenith Press, 2006, 192 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, $40.00, hardcover.

How the United States, in the grips of the Great Depression, managed to gear up for the super-human industrial effort that would be required to win the war is a tale mostly forgotten in this day and age. Yet, manufacturing on an unprecedented scale was precisely what was needed if America and her Allies were to have the guns, tanks, ships, planes, and all the other accoutrements of war.

No story is more emblematic of the all-out

industrial effort than that of the American aircraft industry. And no book captures that effort better than this handsome, oversized work by Bill Yenne.

Using 125 exquisitely detailed black-and-white photos and 50 color shots, Yenne captures the hustle, bustle, and sheer muscle that was required to turn steel and aluminum into the legendary aircraft of the day—the fighters, transports, and bombers—that helped win the war.

The stunning collection of photographs takes the reader onto the famous assembly lines at Boeing, Consolidated, Curtiss, Douglas, GM, Vultee, Martin, Lockheed, and many others, and shows the tremendous amount of work and dedication that went into the manufacture of each aircraft.

This beautiful book is truly a magnificent tribute to the men and women who toiled round the clock in the war plants at home so that our boys overseas had the tools of war they needed. All aviation buffs will want to own this one.

We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema During World War II by Robert L. McLaughlin and Sally E. Parry, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2006, 358 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, filmography, $40.00, hardcover.

Motion pictures, to a great extent, have influenced how modern societies view the world. If it were not for Hollywood, we would not know what a chariot race or gladiatorial contest may have looked like, how dinosaurs might have moved, what future civilizations on other planets might be like, or how elephants could fly just by flapping their ears.

No truer illustration of that concept is how the films before, during, and immediately after World War II influenced Americans' perceptions of who the enemy was, the values for which America and its allies were fighting, and the war's impact on the returning veterans and their loved ones.

During the early 1940s, Hollywood produced 400 to 500 films per year and, in that era before television, some 90 million Americans went to the movies every week. Little wonder, then, that America's attitudes about the war, our enemies, and ourselves were shaped to a large degree by what was presented upon the silver screen—images that changed as the fortunes of war changed, but never varied from implying that the United States and its allies were right, good, and would eventually be victorious.

McLaughlin and Parry, two college professors, have put together a terrific book that explores not only the themes of hundreds of

Realistic versus Cinematic Game Play

New for the PC is Battlefront Games' real-time squad-level strategy game, ***Theatre of War.*** Four years in the making and vetted by three historians, *ToW* is one of the most accurate portrayals of squad-level combat ever done in a fully 3-D computer game. It is not just that the game has 150 vehicles, 200 uniforms, and 100 types of weapons. It is that all these elements are employed more intelligently and more realistically than in other video games. For instance, even though men are grouped in squads, their statistics and guns are tracked individually. Even without being prompted, soldiers will pick up dropped weapons, or reinforce gun crews, but the player can also micromanage to the point of telling soldiers which ammo to use in their guns.

A typical force for a *ToW* scenario is one ATR squad, one Infantry squad, two Bofors 37mm AT guns, two 75mm Field guns, and an armored car. The game has five historical campaigns representing five different nations: United States, England, Russia, Germany, France, and Poland. The campaigns include 40 scenarios based on real battles from the war. There are also five non-campaign battles and three training scenarios. Overall, *ToW* is a game that is both amazingly impressive in its detail and yet still very playable.

On the other hand, ***Call of Duty 3,*** from Activision, seems to be for every system in the world except the PC. There are versions for the Xbox and PS2, but the game is really designed for the next generation consoles, the 360, the PS3, and the Wii, where the better graphics and greater online options will allow for more robust game play. Like the previous games in the series, *CoD3* is a first-person shooter in which the player experiences the war from down the iron sights of a rifle. In this version, the players can also have their characters fight hand to hand as well as do some battlefield tasks like wiring explosives. The classic divide is on display in comparing *ToW* and *CoD3*. One is trying to model the war as it was and the other is trying to give a cinematic representation of the war experience. Both games want to immerse the player in the action, but *CoD3* is willing to cut some corners on reality to reduce the frustration that comes from having to deal with all the realities soldiers faced. The single-player campaign of *CoD3* is a good game, and when it is combined with the multiplayer option to let up to 24 humans fight each other, it is a very good game.

In yet a third genre is ***Shifting Sands,*** a card-driven board game from Multi-Man Publishing. This game models the Desert War in North Africa from 1940 to 1943 at the strategic level of divisions. Damaged divisions become battle groups, and there are infantry and armor versions of both types, but that is it for unit differentiation. The heart of the game is keeping units in supply while cutting off the enemy's units, and the key to managing this is using the strategy cards to best effect. There is a deck for each player, and on any given turn, the player can use a card for one of four things. All of the uses are "right," but depending on the situation, some are "righter" than others. □

films but also their impact on patriotism and national will in a time of war.

The authors go into detail about many of the classic films, especially *Casablanca, Bataan, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo, The Best Years of Our Lives,* and Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series, and touch on scores of films that are all but forgotten today—films such as *Dragon Seed, Keep 'Em Flying,* and *San Diego, I Love You.*

As the authors say in the Preface, "When we tell people about our fascination with these films, we frequently hear the deflating response, 'Aren't they just propaganda films?' implying that they must be simple and straightforward and offer little to think about. This grates on us, because the best of these films are amazing artistic accomplishments, sophisticated and effective filmmaking, and even the worst offer an opportunity to peer into a complex socio-historical moment and to better understand how the United States perceived itself as the world was undergoing the great transformative crisis of the twentieth century."

Although the prose sometimes lapses into the arcane and academic (who but college professors could use the words "epistemological" and "homogeneity" in the same sentence and get away with it?), *We'll Always Have the Movies* is a thoroughly researched and highly entertaining, informative book for movie buffs and anyone seeking to learn the inestimable value of propaganda in wartime. A definite "must-read."

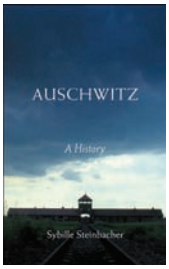
Warlords: An Extraordinary Re-Creation of World War II Through the Eyes and Minds of Hitler, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin by Simon Berthon and Joanna Potts, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2006, 358 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, $24.95, hardcover.

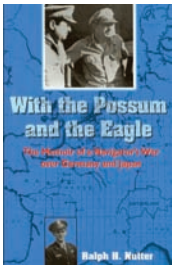
While their nations engaged in a titanic struggle for survival and supremacy, Hitler, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin attempted to outwit and outmaneuver each other in a battle that would decide the fate of the world and the future of mankind.

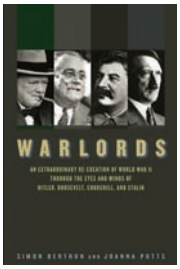
In *Warlords,* authors Berthon and Potts have structured a unique approach along the lines of a cinematic thriller, telling the familiar story of World War II, but from the perspective of how the four leaders engaged in a private, psychological war in which they lied, schemed, charmed, and deceived allies and enemies to achieve their ends.

Both authors work in television, and it shows. The narrative is very visual, cutting back and forth between the four protagonists to explore their thinking as the tide of war shifted back and forth. At times the book chronicles world-shaking events as they unfold day by day, and even hour by hour, revealing unparalleled insights into parallel actions.

Curiously, however, the authors have underplayed the important roles of the other Axis leaders, primarily Benito Mussolini and Hideki Tojo. While the inclusion of these two would have lengthened the book, it would have also made the picture more complete.







Nonetheless, Berthon and Potts have crafted an interesting psychological study that, as of this writing, is in production to become a program for The Military Channel.

With the Possum and the Eagle: The Memoir of a Navigator's War Over Germany and Japan by Ralph H. Nutter, University of North Texas Press, Denton, 2005 (reprint), 326 pp., photographs, maps, $29.95, softcover.

Ralph Nutter had the privilege of serving under two of America's greatest aerial commanders—Maj. Gen. Curtis "The Eagle" LeMay and Brig. Gen. Haywood "Possum" Hansell. He also had the unique experience of taking part in the bombing of both Germany and Japan.

From 1942 to 1943, Nutter was the lead navigator of then-Colonel LeMay's 305th Bomb Group (Eighth Air Force) and took part in bombing missions over Germany; Hansell was the wing commander.

In the fall of 1944, Hansell was transferred to the Twentieth Air Force in the Pacific and given command of Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers based on Saipan in the Marianas; he took Nutter with him to become his XXI Bomber Command navigator. In the meantime, LeMay was transferred from England and made head of the 58th Bomb Wing operating out of western China. Chief of the Air Force General Henry "Hap" Arnold replaced the older Hansell with the younger LeMay in January 1945, a bitter and controversial move, and Nutter and LeMay were reunited.

Nutter, with his unique position and his personal relationship with two of the U.S. Air Force's most intriguing personalities, has written a fascinating, behind-the-scenes account of his experiences in the headquarters of both major theaters of war.

Braun's Battlin' Bastards: The Bushmasters of Company B, 1st Battalion, 158th R.C.T. by Harold Braun, Sea Bird Publishing, Melbourne, Fla., 2005, 290 pp., photographs, $23.00, softcover.

The day is not far off when all of the participants of World War II will be gone. Fortunately, while they are still with us, many of them are writing their memoirs and preserving for current and future generations what they experienced in the cauldron of combat.

One of the better memoirs has been penned by Captain Harold "Hal" Braun who, as commanding officer of Company B, 158th Regimental Combat Team, led his men from their baptism of fire in New Guinea until he was badly wounded in the Philippines and evacuated in January 1945.

After growing up in New Jersey, Braun left home to attend military school, join the Army, attend OCS, and be assigned to the 158th, then in Panama. The 158th—the New Mexico National Guard—had been part of the 45th Infantry Division before the Army "triangularized" the divisions and it was made a separate regiment. The 158th was one of the most ethnically diverse units, with 30 percent Hispanic members and representatives from 22 Indian tribes.

Deployed to Port Moresby, New Guinea, in February 1943, and then to Milne Bay, the regiment and Braun's company would see some of the fiercest fighting of the war—fought not only against the tenacious enemy but also against heat, humidity, disease, insects, poisonous snakes, and poisonous plants.

While much of the book focuses on humorous, slack-time shenanigans, Braun also details his unit's time under fire. During the 158th RCT's six months of combat on Luzon in the Philippines, the unit was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. Of the 158th, General Douglas MacArthur said, "No greater fighting combat team has ever deployed for battle." After reading Braun's entertaining and masterful account, the reader will undoubtedly feel the same.

Jagdgeschwader 300: A Chronicle of a Fighter Geschwader in the Battle of Germany by Jean-Yves Lorant, illustrations by Richard Goyat, Eagle Editions, Hamilton, Mt., 2005, 400 pp., photographs, illustrations, index, bibliography, approx. $160.00, hardcover.

This is a hefty, handsome, and heavily illustrated book (over 400 photos) that minutely details the history of JG 300, a storied Luftwaffe fighter wing, during the period June 1943-September 1944. The French author spent two decades interviewing surviving pilots and ground crewmen and combing through archives, logbooks, and stacks of personal photographs. The result is a remarkable, unprecedented inside look at a German fighter unit attempting to defend the Fatherland during a time of increasingly heavy Allied bombing missions over Germany.

Noville Outpost to Bastogne by Don Addor, Trafford, Victoria, B.C., 2005, 191 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, $26.95, hardcover.

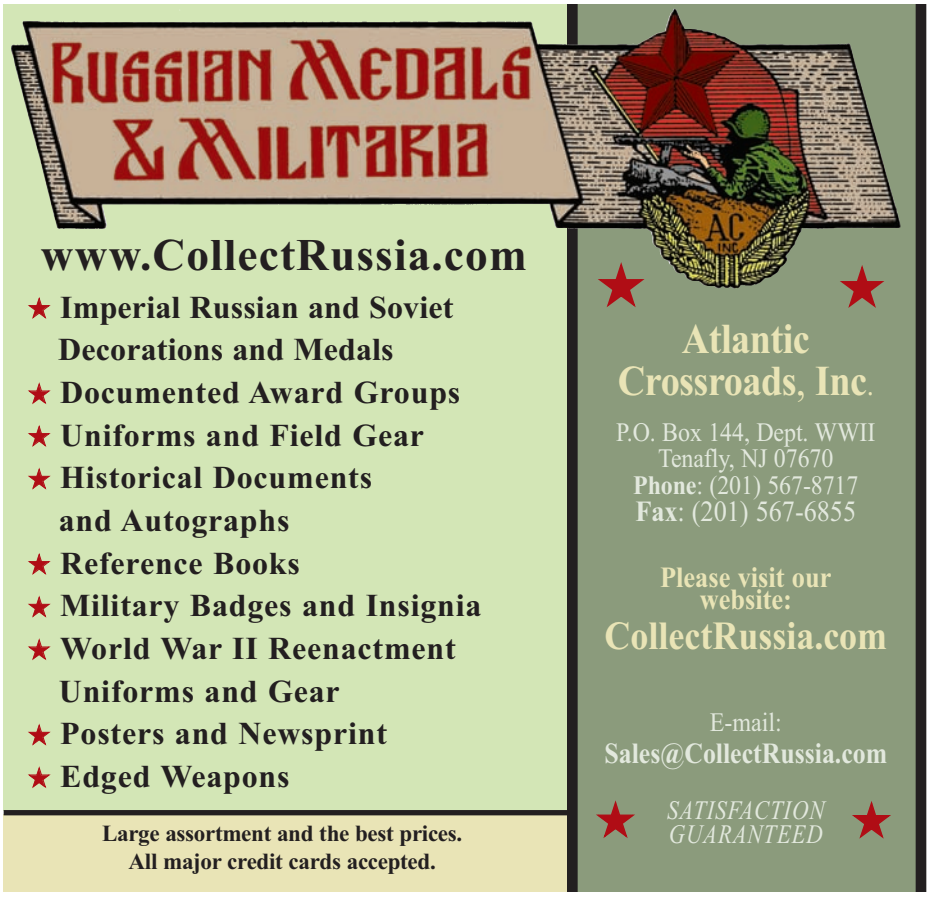
A well-written personal account by an infantryman fighting with Team Desobry, 10th Armored Division, during the defense of Bastogne in the winter of 1944-1945. Addor was among the first of Patton's Third Army to reach Bastogne, then was sent to the small Belgian town of Noville with orders to hold at any cost. He was badly wounded and lost a leg in the ensuing fighting during the Battle of the Bulge. Besides recounting his combat experiences, Addor, a journalist after the war, goes into detail about his rehabilitation and learning to readjust to civilian life with an artificial leg.

Auschwitz: A History by Sybille Steinbacher, Translated by Shaun Whiteside, Ecco/HarperCollins, New York, 2005, 166 pp., maps, photograph, index, bibliography, $23.95, hardcover.

Although small in size, this powerfully understated book by a professor in Germany reminds the world of the enormity of the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi regime.

Steinbacher gives a precise and chilling account of the history of Auschwitz—a sleepy, unimportant town in Poland transformed into the Third Reich's largest concentration camp and extermination center, a slaughterhouse where over a million people died. Her final chapter examines the postwar punishment (or not) of the perpetrators and the Holocaust denial movement.

This is a disturbing yet essential book for everyone who wants to know more about one of the most tragic chapters in human history. □



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Continued from page 49

To maintain some degree of calm, Parker continued to draw and paint between battles. He carried a small watercolor tablet he had picked up somewhere, along with a pen, a brush, and a bottle of India ink. "I would either use spit or melted snow to wet the black tablet," Parker recalls. "Sometimes I would have five or 10 minutes of quiet when I could draw something."

At one point, a fellow soldier "liberated" a sketchbook from an Italian town and gave it to Parker. "I still have that sketchbook today," the artist says.

Knowing that Frank Kappler always liked his work, Parker sent some of his best sketches back to Kappler, still editing the division paper, now called the *Blizzard,* at division headquarters. Parker carried his drawings in his mountain rucksack, but once while under enemy fire he had to abandon his rucksack and lost about a third of his artwork. To protect the drawings, he rolled them up and sent them back to Kappler inside empty mortar tubes.

Although he had photos taken by the division photographer, Roy Bingham, Kappler loved Parker's artwork "It was beautiful stuff, because Jacques was in the line. He was a gunner!" says Kappler.

In March 1945, while the 10th was still battering its way through the mountains and spearheading the Fifth Army drive toward the Po Valley, Parker was medically evacuated.

"Why I wasn't wounded I'll never know," he says. "We had been going for quite a while with whatever rations we had. I had become, without even realizing it, in bad shape, nutritionally. I remember wandering around with all my equipment on in some town or village when a medic came along. He asked me a few questions. I guess I was half-dazed. Nutritionally I was shot, but I had all this adrenaline like everybody in combat did—you're operating on adrenaline and nerves. They put me in a truck and the next thing I know I'm in the 38th Evac Hospital in Florence."

Parker couldn't eat. "At the time, as a way of restoring your appetite, they would give you a little shot of whiskey. I slowly began to eat and regain my physical strength."

In the cot next to Parker was a British flyer who had been wounded. "He had this wonderful moustache. I tried to grow a moustache to emulate him. Before we parted, he gave me a little container of moustache wax. The moustache lasted for a while, but I don't think it was me."

As he got stronger, Parker was transferred to the main U.S. military hospital in Livorno, on the west coast of Italy. Even in the hospital he continued to sketch the scenes around him.

"The Red Cross gave me paper and watercolors and brushes in the hospital," he says. "I never stopped drawing and painting."

During his recuperation, one of the doctors, a psychologist, came to him with an unusual request. "The doctor and I had gotten to be pretty good friends," Parker says, "and he knew I was an artist. One day he said, 'You're perfectly all right, and it looks like the war's going to be over any day now. Would you do me a favor while you're here? We have a problem with a guy downstairs who was in the 34th Infantry Division who slogged it up from Southern Italy."

The captain told Parker that the soldier was a lieutenant with a complex personality and a drinking problem. "He's from Boston and was a very well-known comic-strip artist before the war. Would you go down there and talk with this man? We've had a hard time getting through to him." Parker said he would.

The lieutenant was in a basement room with an iron-grille door. "This was where they put the 'nut cases,' in a sense," Parker says. "You could hear the guys in the back who were really in bad shape."

Parker paid several visits to the lieutenant, each time talking about art and earning more and more of his trust. "Every day he would relate a little more to me," says Parker. "The captain told me that I helped open him up so the staff could help him. I remember that there was a column next to his bunk on which he had painted this beautiful *trompe l'oeil* 'worm' coming out of the shadows. I guess they had given him some paints and art supplies as part of his therapy. Art can be therapy." After the war, Parker visited the ex-lieutenant, who was then living in New York's Greenwich Village and working as an art director for a major life insurance company.

By the end of April 1945, the war in Italy was nearly over. The 10th Mountain Division had spearheaded the Fifth Army's drive into the Po Valley, was first across the Po River, and had chased the retreating Germans all the way to Lake Garda, at the foot of the Alps.

"By then there was no purpose in my going back to the company," says Parker, "so Frank Kappler went through channels and got me reassigned to the *Blizzard* staff."

Besides working at Kappler's side, Parker also made the acquaintance of Henry Moscow, who would go on to be the editor-in-chief of the *New York World Telegram and Sun*. "Henry Moscow was a gruff guy but he was one hell of an editor," laughs Parker. "Once he took a pencil and lined through a guy's story and said, 'If you take out all those !*@#! adjectives, now you've got a story.'"

After the Germans surrendered, Kappler arranged for Parker to sketch the portrait of General Hays. "The general was wonderful to work with," Parker remembers. "He was a very regular, straightforward, simple guy. I knew his time was limited, so I did everything I could to get the portrait right."

In the summer of 1945, the 10th held a ski race on Austria's Gross Glockner mountain. "The Austrians there were our hosts," Parker says. "We had guys like Steve Knowlton, who was an Olympic skier, and Walter Prager, the Dartmouth ski-team coach. An English team was also there. Fritz Kaiser, a photographer with the *Blizzard,* and I were assigned to go up there to cover the race. He took the photos and I did the drawings. That was my last assignment for the *Blizzard.*"

As a civilian after the war, Jacques Parker decided to pursue art as a full-time career and lead a "Bohemian" lifestyle. He found a loft in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, practically rubbing elbows with such famous painters as Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, and dance maven Martha Graham.

Rather than live the financially precarious life of a painter, however, Parker opened his first commercial art studio and worked as a freelance illustrator for a number of advertising agencies. He also combined his artistic skills with his love of skiing and created over a dozen paintings of mountain and skiing scenes that became covers for *Ski* magazine in the late 1940s and early 1950s. For the next 50 years he worked for many of New York's major advertising agencies and for such clients as Air France and IBM. The recipient of numerous awards, Parker also served as director of design for the City of New York under Mayor Ed Koch and taught at the Parsons School of Design. He also has had a few exhibitions of his fine art.

Still active as a designer, illustrator, and painter, Parker looks back on his time spent with the mountain troops with deep regard and appreciation. "The 10th gave so many of us a profound sense of brotherhood and accomplishment. It was another dimension to our lives." □

Flint Whitlock has written several books, including Soldiers On Skis, *the story of the 10th Mountain Division in World War II,* Rock of Anzio, *a chronicle of the U.S. 45th Infantry Division, and* The Fighting First, *the experience of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division on D-Day.*

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formation on that longest day. Meanwhile, Hollis was wounded in the leg and evacuated to England in September 1944. His fighting days were over. He was decorated by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on October 10, 1944. The man who had done as much as anyone to ensure the success of the Normandy landings was quiet and humble and regarded himself as just a professional soldier who did his job. "I was no hero—I did what I had to," he told his daughter, Pauline. "I just wanted to come home and survive."

After the war, jobs were scarce in Middlesbrough, and Stan was forced to spend several years as a sandblaster in the local steelworks. He then worked and became a partner in a Darlington motor repair business before returning to sea. Stan joined a Canadian registered ship as third engineer in 1950, and spent four years sailing in the Far East.

Returning home, Stan trained as a publican with Vaux Breweries and successfully managed the popular Albion Public House—later renamed The Green Howard—in Market Square, North Ormesby. When the pub was demolished in 1970, Hollis took over the Holywell View Pub at Liverton Mines, near Loftus. He found time to take part in annual Normandy battlefield tours organized by the British Army Staff College at Camberley, Surrey. After suffering a severe stroke, Stan died in North Ormesby Hospital on February 8, 1972, at the age of 59. He was buried with full honors at Acklam Cemetery in Middlesbrough on February 12. The Green Howards Regiment turned out in force to honor its D-Day hero, and two other VC winners attended.

Stan's Victoria Cross and other decorations were auctioned at Sothebys in 1982, and fetched a then-record sum of 32,000 pounds. The buyer was anonymous. The Green Howards Association had not been able to raise the funds to acquire the medals, but in November 1997, their owner, Sir Ernest Harrison, OBE, gave them to the regimental museum in Richmond, North Yorkshire. He also helped the Green Howards erect a regimental memorial in Crepon, the Normandy village where Hollis carried out the second of his courageous acts on D-Day. Meanwhile, his regiment later made arrangements for a plaque honoring the hero to be placed on the beach at La Riviere. □

Michael D. Hull has written extensively on famous personalities of World War II. He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.

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along with the 6th Guards Tank Brigade, fought during this period, mostly in support of various infantry formations.

During the advance into the Low Countries, one Churchill formation, the 107th Royal Tank Regiment, was combined with infantry, artillery, engineers and tank destroyers to form Clarkeforce, named for its commander, Brigadier W.S. Clarke of the 34th Tank Brigade. The unit's mission was to spearhead an advance to take the Scheldt Estuary, needed to secure the major port of Antwerp, Belgium. It was a deep penetration into German lines, a daunting task for an infantry tank unit.

The flat terrain was punctuated by woods and waterways, the former defended by the Germans and the latter impeding maneuver. Fighting ended after 10 days from October 20-30, 1944, during which the force went 25 miles and fought numerous engagements. Clarke issued a report the following week, noting the losses on both sides. Clarkeforce had fought mostly against assault guns and infantry, knocking out 13 of the assault guns and taking some 230 prisoners for the loss of 11 Churchills, three Stuart light tanks, and a recovery vehicle. Supporting units lost a further 19 Churchills, though only seven of the combined total were considered unrecoverable. Even against the improved antitank weapons of the late war, the Churchill could still hold its own better than most other Allied tanks.

The fighting around Goch was one of the last actions fought by Churchill units, though some did see action during the Allied airborne assault across the Rhine. With war's end, some Churchills were retained in service. A few later saw action in Korea. Most were scrapped or disposed of, however, gradually replaced by Centurions or late-war British designs like the Comet. The Australian Army kept some in service until 1956, and the Irish Free State received four of them. One was kept in working condition until at least the 1970s, still capable of firing until ammunition was no longer manufactured for it. A few can still be seen at museums and war memorials in Britain, Europe, and the United States.

Despite development problems, the Churchill tank, much like its namesake, doggedly continued in service and eventually proved a versatile and capable design. □

Christopher Miskimon served in the U.S. Army in both the infantry and artillery. He writes out of Denver, Colorado.

uss batfish

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As *Batfish* closed to about 7,000 yards, but before Fyfe could set up to shoot, the target dived as her sister had done during his last attack. Fyfe moved his boat to a position flanking the track of the Japanese submarine, ready to attack if she reappeared. Tension ran high in *Batfish,* for the crew knew that if the Japanese boat had spotted them she would have a good shot at the American hunter.

But then, more than an hour later, the quarry surfaced again some 9,600 yards away; this time Fyfe had time to close, compute, and fire. With only two torpedoes left forward, he swung his boat to bring the aft tubes to bear. *Batfish*'s crew had their hands full stabilizing the boat's depth and bearing against a tidal rip, but Fyfe managed to fire three torpedoes from about 1,500 yards.

The first torpedo struck home, and his quarry disintegrated, blowing apart and slashing the night with a "large yellow ball of fire," probably the result of a cargo of ammunition for the battered Japanese forces in the Philippines. The Japanese submarine was gone in 10 seconds, its image on the radar screen torn into "a wide diffusion of pips as the vessel went to pieces." On the radio equipment, Callanan had been listening to the Japanese radar man "keying" his set, listening to the signal rising, then fading away. Callanan heard the Japanese apparatus quit abruptly, as if it had been cut off, and shouted, "We got him!"

"I knew our torpedo had hit," he told this author, "at almost the same instant as the lookouts did."

Batfish closed in to the scene of the sinking and used her spotlight to look for survivors, without success. This time Captain Fyfe stayed in the area until daylight, hoping to recover something useful from his sunken foe. In the midst of a large oil slick, the crew recovered books and papers and a small wooden box about 14 inches square and about eight inches deep, a box that held Japanese navigation equipment, including navigation tables and a battery. From the contents of the box, Captain Fyfe learned something about his late opponent. "From the positions listed in the work book, it looks like this guy went from Nagoya to Formosa before he headed down to Luzon to join his ancestors."

Batfish's sixth war patrol had been spectacularly successful and would earn her crew the Presidential Unit Citation for "extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese combatant forces." Sometimes medal citations can err on the side of hyperbole, but in this case the Navy's recognition of the crew's "courage, superb seamanship and gallant fighting spirit" was right on the money. At the time of that sixth patrol, there were no more than four Japanese submarines in the waters around the Philippines. *Batfish* had sent three of them to the bottom.

No compliment rings truer or means more than a tribute from an enemy. The Japanese submarine force recognized courage and efficiency when they saw it. "American submarine crews were very well trained, skillful, and brave," says Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi Miwa, who commanded the Japanese undersea fleet. "We did not expect such skillfulness."

Batfish had survived dozens of Japanese depth charges, hostile bombs and friendly ones, and the guns of a Q-ship. She had overcome grounding on a volcanic crest 240 feet below the surface when her chart said she had 400 feet of water beneath her keel. Now it was time for quieter days and nights, for rest. Her war over, *Batfish* was decommissioned in April 1946 and retired to the mothball fleet at Mare Island Navy Yard in California.

But then, with the increasing pressures of the Cold War, *Batfish* was sent back into harness, recommissioned in the spring of 1952. She served thereafter as a training boat, until she was finally decommissioned in November 1969. In February 1972, she moved to her final resting place in the warm sun of Oklahoma. Her old crewmen visit and remember other, perilous days. "After you've served in submarines," said Tex Davis, "you're not afraid of anything anymore."

Batfish had retired from the sea, but she left a hardy heir. Attack submarine USS *Batfish* won herself well-deserved fame as the boat that shadowed a big Soviet *Yankee*-class missile submarine for almost 9,000 miles through all kinds of sea conditions. She surfaced for the first time 77 days later, still undetected by her quarry.

Altogether, American submarines sank 25 enemy boats in the Pacific, including two German U-boats. For a single submarine to sink three of the enemy is extraordinary and speaks volumes for the efficiency and drive of *Batfish*'s captain and crew. It is easy to attribute successes like these to luck, but it is also well to remember that Jake Fyfe and his crew not only managed to find three enemy boats, but efficiently stalked and killed all of them.

You cannot argue with three for three. □

Robert Barr Smith is a retired U.S. Army colonel and serves as associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Oklahoma Law Center in Norman.

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chance. We were lucky in having a number of superb surgeons and doctors. Even with the best specialists doing their job, the mortality rate on amputations ran up to 50 percent. Then cholera and typhus hit us. Whole camps were practically wiped out. POWs were organized into parties to go up and down the river burying cholera victims, many of them coolies who had been lying there for days.

WWII: How did people survive?

CM: Looking back on it, I wonder how any of us survived. What kept us alive? Hope. Those who lost hope stretched out and died. Those who had great inner courage generally stuck it out. This elemental courage had nothing to do with physical size. The big, six-foot, 200-pounder very often gave up before the scrawny-looking skinny broomstick.

WWII: Were there escape attempts?

CM: I know of many who tried, but no white man succeeded. A white man trying to move through Burma or Thailand during that time stuck out like a sore thumb. We were surrounded by jungle. It was 600 miles through hostile territory to the nearest friendly line. The jungle was our keeper.

WWII: How did your relations with the Japanese progress?

CM: One thing I learned in dealing with the Japanese was to stand on my dignity. At one point, I and 40 of my men were moved from the main camp to the POW general headquarters area. There was a question of billets. The tents given to my men were quite good, but on principle I asked for separate quarters for myself and our sergeant major. The Japanese in charge of the quarters made suggestions, which I turned down, and finally assigned us space in a large room. The sergeant major and I were thunderstruck to find out that we were to sleep in the Japanese NCO area—with the Japanese NCOs. I did not like this, but there was an advantage to it. I got to know all the right people, and that meant that I could get almost anything for my men.

WWII: You survived on the River Kwai until the end of the war. How did the end of POW life finally come about?

CM: Just before the war formally ended with the peace treaty, a member of the Thai resistance contacted me through another POW out on a work party. The Thai wanted me to walk away from the POW camp and into the jungle. He said that there was an airfield hidden in the jungle that was manned by the Thai resistance and an OSS team. I followed his instructions and, as promised, there was a Thai guide waiting for me with some ponies. After a long trip on horseback, which brought on a bout of malaria, we reached the jungle airfield. There were three American OSS personnel at the field and about 300 Thais. Because I had been a pilot, I was named airdrome officer.

WWII: Was the airfield used at all?

CM: The OSS thought there was a chance that it would be used to fly out the POWs once the war ended. I paced the airfield off and found it was only 1,200 feet long. Expanding it did not seem practical. Instead, another airfield at Ratburi was chosen for the POW evacuation. And that was where I left from. Two weeks after VJ-Day, I was flown out of Thailand by the U.S. Army Air Forces Combat Cargo Command to Calcutta.

WWII: And you went back to your career in the Navy?

CM: I went back to the Navy and, as promised when I joined the AVG, I got my rank back. In time I was selected for a regular commission and retired in 1963. I continued as a corporate consultant on aviation, ordnance, and guided missiles.

WWII: Looking back over the years, what are your thoughts about your experiences on the River Kwai?

CM: If you went to Japan today—or had gone there right after the war—you'd find that the Japanese are polite, honest, decent human beings. The anomaly is where did all the bastards go? The things they are accused of did happen: they beat, they starved, they murdered. It's a matter of record that orders were out to kill the prisoners in the event of the invasion of Japan. My own view of why this happened is not everyone's view. The Japanese were out of character in their treatment of POWs in World War II. The principle is that on an individual level you can have murderers and thieves, but to perpetrate a crime on a grand scale such as the holocaust, you need organization.

The Germans had the Nazi party. In the case of the Japanese, it was the Japanese Army that embarked on a course of world conquest, while the emperor and the civil institutions tolerated it. The Japanese Army world view was not typical of the individual Japanese in the one-on-one situations that I often found myself in. Early on I decided to learn as much as I could about my enemy, to understand the Japanese and his civilization, and to deal with each Japanese soldier I met as an individual. On the individual level I found this worked. □

First-time contributor Bob Bergin is a resident of Fairfax, Virginia.

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prague

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ssaint, who by now was contemplating a cease-fire or surrender. The German Kommandant hoped to save what was left of his command from the Red Army, which was now pushing toward Prague despite the fanatical resistance of Heeresgruppe Mitte.

Upon hearing reports of more German troops on their way to join the battle, Bunyachenko ordered his reserve regiment to take up blocking positions on a hill about eight miles from the city. When an SS unit finally appeared, it was met with a withering fire from the Russians, who had dug in on the hillside. The SS were stopped in their tracks, and assault after assault was repulsed by Bunyachenko's men.

With the SS relief force stalled and the KONR and resistance fighters closing in from all sides, Toussaint formally requested a truce. Blindfolded, he was led to the National Council headquarters. For more than four hours, Toussaint alternatively argued and pleaded. He offered to surrender the city but asked that the garrison be allowed to march west and surrender to the Americans.

News of the impending surrender of all German forces in Europe had already reached Prague, and the Council saw no reason now to continue fighting—it would just cost more Czech lives. Toussaint's terms were finally accepted, and word of the liberation soon spread throughout the city. "I am now a general without an army," Toussaint exclaimed as he left the meeting.

German forces hurriedly gathered to form convoys for the drive to the west. As garrison forces left the city, Prague celebrated its liberation. There were also acts of revenge and atrocities committed against German and ethnic German civilians that remained in the city. May 8 was a day of liberation, but it was also a day of retribution for six long years of suffering caused by the Germans.

Bunyachenko's men were also leaving. Konev's divisions were finally near the outskirts of the city, and every KONR soldier knew what awaited them if they fell into the hands of the Red Army. Joining the KONR 2nd Division, the Russians, about 50,000 strong, marched southwest toward an uncertain fate.

About half of the KONR Army managed to make it through encircling Russian units to the American lines. In small groups they infiltrated through Soviet advance elements to surrender to the United States Army. Some of those who had surrendered to the Americans were returned to the Soviets, but most managed to remain in the West. The unlucky half that did not make it was doomed, for the most part, to a long slow death in the Gulags. Vlasov, Bunyachenko, and some 20 other KONR and ROA generals were given a show trial in Moscow and then executed.

General Toussaint was turned over to the Czech government for trial. He was sentenced to life in prison for his part in the transportation of Jews and Gypsies to the camps and for crimes against the Czech people, but was released in 1961. Some say that he was released because of services rendered to Soviet intelligence while in prison. Toussaint died in 1968.

Patton's forces never did reach Prague. On May 9, Konev's forces finally entered the city with great fanfare. The date was officially named Liberation Day, although it was the Czech people, with KONR backing, who liberated the city the day before. Between 1,700 and 2,000 Czechs were killed in the uprising, and thousands more were wounded.

The exile government returned to Prague on May 10 and promptly dissolved the National Council. Resistance leaders were delegated to minor positions and were not represented in the new national government. Soviet forces now occupied almost all of the country, and within months, under the Potsdam Agreement, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans were expelled from the Sudetenland.

Under Soviet occupation, the fledgling democratic government went the way of Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and other countries in the Russian sphere of influence. In 1947, the Slovak Democratic Party was made virtually impotent. By February 1949, all Czech democratic parties were eliminated, and a few months later the Communists officially took over control of the government.

History books were rewritten, and the Prague uprising was given a minor place in the liberation of the capital. Soviet forces were given the lion's share of credit for liberating Prague and, of course, there was no mention of Bunyachenko or the KONR. It was some years after the fall of Communism that the entire true story came out.

Prague was not, as most history books claimed, freed by the Red Army. The true heroes were members of the Czech Resistance, the Czech people, and a forgotten army of turncoat Russians that had fought its final battle against the very forces that had once been its greatest hope. □

Pat McTaggart is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front. He writes from his home in Elkader, Iowa.