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COVER: A Canadian rifleman fires though an opening in the wall of a German fort in Normandy shortly after D-Day. Story page 40. Photo: National Archives

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"LESSONS LEARNED ON THE BATTLEFIELDS
of yesterday, can still be applied today."
John D. Hoptak | Faculty, School of Art & Humanities
John D. Hoptak is an American and Civil War historian and educator. Author of *The Battle of South Mountain*, *Our Boys Did Nobly*, *First in Defense of the Union*, and *Antietam: September 17, 1862*, Hoptak brings to life the riveting conflicts that divided a nation. Hoptak's laboratory is the Antietam National Battlefield, where as a Park Ranger he shares his vast knowledge about the bloodiest day of battle in U.S. history.
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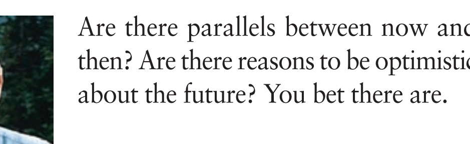
A Moment to Celebrate



As I write this editorial, the news is just coming through about the demise of the world's arch-terrorist, Osama bin Laden. While much more detailed information about the spectacular, precision joint CIA/Navy SEAL operation will have been disseminated in the intervening weeks since my writing this and your reading it (not to mention the predictable paroxysmal retaliatory reactions of other Al Qaeda psychotics and their ilk), I am still basking in the glow of the moment.

The television is filled with images of happy Americans dancing in the street, waving American flags, singing the National Anthem, and chanting "USA! USA! USA!" It feels like V-J Day 1945 all over again (or so I'm told; I was only three when the war ended).

The sensation I have is probably not unlike that day in May 1945 when inexpressible joy swept across the land (and across much of the Free World, too) as it was announced that Adolf Hitler was dead and that his terrorist Nazi regime was no more.

Of course, it should be remembered that the end of Nazi Germany and its allies did not mean the immediate end of the war.

As Winston Churchill soberly declared to the British people on V-E Day, "We should allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing." However, with the Japanese foe still holding out, Churchill cautioned his nation that the war was not yet over. Many hard days and many more deaths would follow before total victory over the Axis Powers could be declared.

Will we ever see the day when the terrorists realize the folly of their embracing the culture of death? When they finally admit defeat? When they march, unarmed, to the surrender ceremony? When the "Mission Accomplished" banner is unfurled again, this time for good (and without mocking)?

It's easy to say, "No, probably not." But then, think back to the depths of WWII, when the situation seemed the bleakest for the Allies; when the Germans, Italians, and Japanese were goose-stepping their way across conquered territories, seemingly unbeatable, murdering whole populations; when Allied forces were under assault and retreating everywhere; when it was impossible to think that Hitler would take his own life in a dark, dank bunker below bombed-out Berlin; when the idea of Mussolini being killed by his fellow Italians and strung up—upside down—at a Milan gas station was just a fantasy; when the image of Tojo facing a war-crimes tribunal and then the hangman seemed about as unbelievable as a single bomb being capable of vaporizing an entire Japanese city.

Are there parallels between now and then? Are there reasons to be optimistic about the future? You bet there are.

A Bit of This and That

During the course of putting out this magazine, an amazing amount of material crosses my editor's desk on a semi-regular basis. Some of it is in the nature of "letters to the editor," in which sharp-eyed readers sometimes point out errors (such as a story in the Spring 2011 issue in which it was erroneously stated that the Doolittle Raiders took off from the deck of the carrier *Enterprise,* when, of course, it was the *Hornet*) and occasionally offering a few words of praise.

At times we also receive suggestions and proposals for future articles, or news snippets that call certain WWII-related topics to our attention. Some people even write with questions asking about how they can find out more about a deceased relative's military service.

With that last item in mind, one reader suggested that I emphasize the importance of having a living relative who served during WWII (or even someone who served on the home front) create a memoir of his or her service—to which I whole-heartedly concur. Too many veterans have already departed this life without leaving some sort of record or memoir of their service.

I know that for many veterans, it is still difficult, if not impossible, to talk with others (especially family members) about the terrible things they witnessed during the war. Many of these accounts are shared at unit reunions only with their buddies, or around the bar at the local VWF or American Legion hall. But each story is important to impart the reality of war to future generations. We will probably never eliminate war, but perhaps we can come

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closer to understanding what war does to people.

If you are a veteran who doesn't want to talk about your experiences, that's understandable. But how about making a video or audio recording, or writing down your wartime memories, with the instructions that they not be played or read during your lifetime. And if you know a veteran who doesn't want to open up, you might suggest this alternative to him/her. In this way the veteran will be preserving an important chapter of the role that he or she played in what many regard as the most important event of the 20th century.

V.E. Day, New York City, May 8, 1945.

Occasionally we'll also receive something that takes advantage of modern technology. I'm no blogger, but prolific author and frequent *WWII Quarterly* contributor Eric Hammel recently set up the "Pacifica Military History Blog" as an open review and discussion platform. Eric is looking for reviews of recent and classic military history books that may be of interest to wide audiences. Comments on posts are also welcome. He invites you to visit the blog at: http://www.pacificamilitary.com/wordpress (all lower case) and register if you'd like to take part.

HITTING THE BEACHES... On a personal note, I'm helping to organize a small, "private" (10-12 participants) tour of the Normandy battlefield in conjunction with well-known, Normandy-based French military historian Dominique François, author of *Normandy: Breaching the Atlantic Wall,* and many other histories; along with Martin K.A. Morgan, former research director of the National World War II Museum in New Orleans and author of *Down to Earth: The 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Normandy*; and yours truly.

Details are still sketchy, but we envision this "VIP" tour as taking about 10 days, involving 8-10 participants, costing about $2,000-$2,500 (excluding air fare), and taking place in June 2012. If this is of interest, contact me at WWIIQuarterly@gmail.com.

Now, pardon me while I go out and wave Old Glory one more time.

— Flint Whitlock, Editor

LOST IN THE ARDENNES

IN DECEMBER 1944, A RAW AMERICAN INFANTRY DIVISION HAS ITS BAPTISM OF FIRE IN THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE. CAUGHT UP IN THIS MAELSTROM OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION, ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT AMERICANS. TRAPPED BEHIND ENEMY LINES, THEY EXPERIENCE THE HORROR OF WAR AND A HUMANITY BORNE OF SACRIFICE.

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THE LION'S PATH

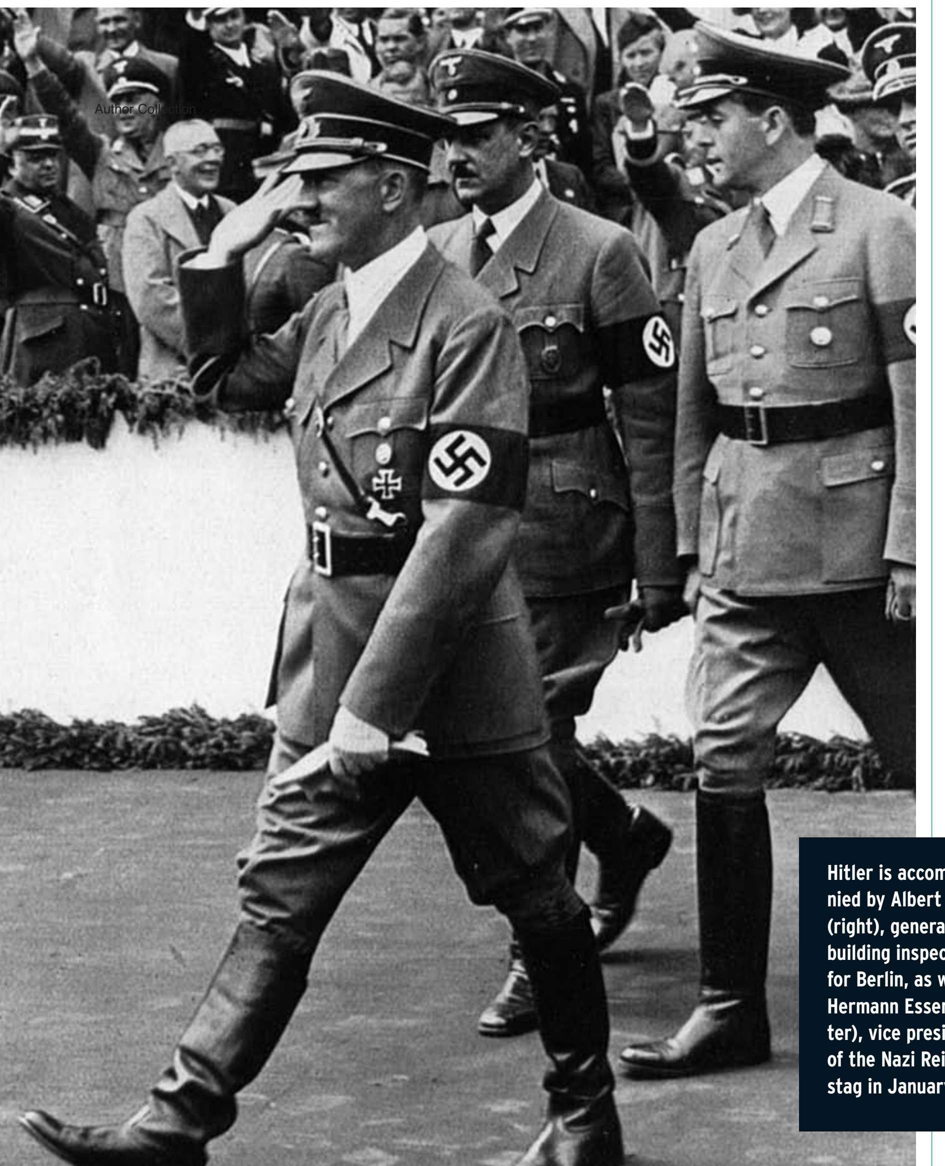
C. J. KELLY

"Where there is muck, one gets dirty," asserted Hitler's chief architect and arms czar, Albert Speer.

On October 6, 1943, Dr. Albert Speer, Reich minister of armaments and war production for the Third Reich, gave a 50-minute address to the assembled top officials of Nazi Germany at Posen Castle in occupied Poland's Reich Gau (Region) of Wartheland on the critical state of World War II at that point.

Nazi Propaganda Minister Dr. Josef Goebbels later noted in his diary entry, "Speer told them very bluntly that no protests and no arguments would deter him [from converting all plants to war production]. He is, of course, right…."

But that is not how the "Golden Pheasants" of the Nazi Party—the *Reichsleiters* (national leaders) and *Gauleiters* (regional leaders)—or secretary to the Führer Martin Bormann (already a deadly Speer foe) saw it, as they sat stunned in the sumptuous Golden Hall of the castle, summoned especially for the occasion.



Author Collection

Hitler is accompanied by Albert Speer (right), general building inspector for Berlin, as well as Hermann Esser (center), vice president of the Nazi Reichstag in January 1937.

National Archives

They took special umbrage at Speer's next words, which they correctly viewed as a direct threat to their domains: "You will please take note of what I am saying. The manner in which some of the *Gaue* have hitherto obstructed the shutdown of consumer goods production will no longer be tolerated…. I am prepared to apply the authority of the Reich Government at any cost. I have discussed this with Reichsführer-SS [National administrator of the SS] [Heinrich] Himmler, and from now on, districts that do not carry out within two weeks the measures I request will be dealt with firmly."

Was Speer grand-standing, claiming more power for himself than he should have? Whatever the case, he ruffled many Nazi feathers with his speech.

Bormann, who was also present, returned to Adolf Hitler with this information in a successful attempt to undermine Speer's standing with his Führer. Himmler had also spoken at Posen, and it was on this notorious occasion that he told the assembled guests about what the SS had been doing "in the East" to the Jews and others since the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.

This was "part of Hitler's determination to make sure that his supporters were all implicated in the catastrophe he was bringing on Germany," wrote Gitta Sereny in her excellent revisionist 1995 work, *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth*.

Speer later claimed that he wasn't there—that he'd left before Himmler spoke—and that, therefore, he didn't know about the terrible realities of "the Final Solution of the Jewish Question." He did, of course, know of the slave-labor conditions in use at the underground V-2 rocket factory at Nordhausen/Dora in the rugged Harz Mountains of Germany that was under his direct control.

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How did a talented, intelligent architect from an upper-middle-class family in Mannheim, educated at the Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe and universities in Munich and Berlin, find himself in this situation?

In his best-selling biography, *Speer: The Final Verdict,* published in 2003, the late German author Joachim C. Fest included much interesting detail on young Albert's early family life. The son of an architect, Albert grew up to be a man of no fixed principles and an opportunist—the type who can be found in virtually any American corporate boardroom today. On the other hand, as Fest pointed out, "Unlike nearly all the members of Hitler's close entourage, Speer was never servile or undignified," which probably gained him a measure of respect in the Führer's eyes. His demeanor would also impress the Allied court during the International Military Tribunal in Nürnberg in 1945-1946.

Not only did Fest himself grow up during the Nazi period in Germany, but—following Speer's release from prison—worked closely with the new memoirist as his editor on his first two best-selling volumes, *Memoirs: Inside the Third Reich* and *Spandau: The Secret Diaries.*

In 1933, Hitler, who had once dreamed of an architectural career himself, met Speer and was impressed by the young architect and his monolithic designs that would become the template for "Fascist" architecture. Hitler gave Speer some "small" initial projects, such as Nazi monuments, but the scope of his work quickly grew.

Speer's career was profoundly influenced not only by his most famous patron, Hitler, but also by the timely deaths of two men. The first—Dr. Paul Ludwig Troost—the Führer's original main (but not only) architect, died suddenly in 1934. Speer, then 29, succeeded him and took over most of Hitler's grandiose building projects, such as the parade grounds at Nürnberg where the 1934 Nazi Party Congress would be held (captured by Leni Riefenstahl in her iconic and powerful film, *Triumph of the Will*).

In fact, it was Speer who was responsible for orchestrating Nürnberg's spectacular setting—the gigantic Nazi eagles and emblems, the striking lighting effects, the sea of swastika-emblazoned flags, the stirring military bands, and the tens of thousands of uniformed marchers. Remarking on the frenzy of the crowds at Nürnberg, the American journalist William L. Shirer wrote that Hitler "was restoring pageantry to the drab lives of Germans." He, of course, did not know that it was Speer who was behind the magic curtain. Speer had even bigger dreams; plans for a 400,000-capacity stadium at Nürnberg were also in the works.

While churning out designs for the Reich, Speer was also working as a freelance architect. The workload was crushing. Joachim Fest reported that Speer "was stupefied by the never-ending flood of inquiries, commissions, journeys, and administrative duties, often coming home late in the evening, 'speechless with exhaustion.' To begin with, he had refused to accept a fee for his official work, but he increasingly got into difficulties. Only toward the end of 1935, when Göring assured him with his constantly cheerful greed, 'They're all nonsense, your ideals.

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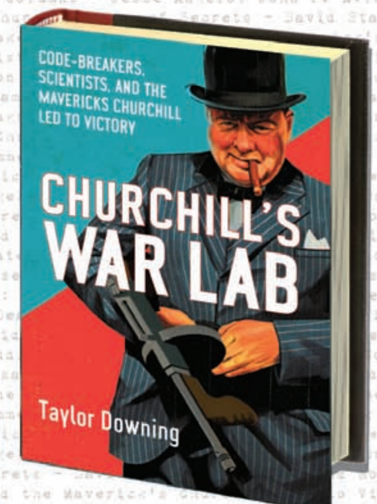

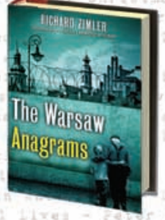

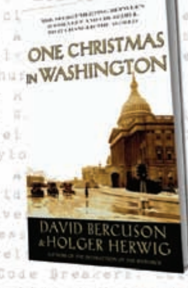

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You've got to make money!' did Speer accept a fee of 30,000 marks for his work up until then."

On January 30, 1937—the fourth anniversary of his being appointed Reich chancellor—Hitler elevated his young protégé to the position of general building inspector of the Reich. This made Speer a state secretary in the Reich cabinet, which meant that he was, in effect, serving as the Führer's own deputy in all matters architectural, reporting to him alone.

The young man of 32 had arrived. He and his patron immediately meshed, asserted author Fest, because Hitler was "always ready to take the most eccentric ideas seriously and put them into effect with that fearlessness with which he etched himself so indelibly on the world's memory."

Soon Hitler began entrusting more and more projects to Speer, including the German pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition (see *WWII Quarterly,* Winter 2011), a number of government buildings (including the new Reich chancellery in 1939), and the greatest plum prize of all: turning Hitler's dream of converting dowdy Berlin into the shimmering Welthauptstadt Germania—the capital of a Nazi-dominated Europe—into reality. Numerous buildings from the overall plan were erected in the prewar years.

Signal Magazine

Two Nazi guards stand in front of the New German Reich Chancellery, designed for Hitler by Speer and built during 1938-1939.

His biographer also noted that it was Speer who was given the task of "arranging a harvest festival on the Buckeberg near Hameln" that annually drew over a million peasants and farmers in their colorful garb, no mean feat. Fest pointed out that Speer was not the Führer's sole architect—that Hermann Giesler (whom Hitler took with him to Paris along with Speer on June 28, 1940, for his only tour thereof) was his great rival, a fact that Speer never acknowledged in his own trio of postwar volumes.

Thus, only Nürnberg and Berlin were solely Speer projects, while Bormann—Speer's most malevolent enemy—saw to it that Giesler got the much sought-after commissions of buildings on both the Obersalzberg in Bavaria and at Linz. The latter was the projected site of Hitler's

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planned tomb in Austria, which would never be built, just like most of the other grandiose Nazi prewar structures.

Still, Speer sought to build the "highest skyscraper for Hamburg, the greatest seaside resort for the island of Rugen, and the world's most powerful radio transmitter."

As the war clouds over Europe gathered in 1939, Speer was not shy about siding with those who favored going to war. With its coming, ironically, Speer's rising star in Nazi Germany started to peak—if not to fall—because his role as a majordomo in the building sphere gained him no laurels at Hitler's military conference tables at the various Führer headquarters spread out across German-occupied Europe.

But Speer's life would take a dramatic turn before long.

Then the second of two men who would propel Speer's career into the heights died. On February 8, 1942, engineer Dr. Fritz Todt, head of Organization Todt—the construction arm of the Third Reich and prewar builder of the autobahns (the world's first true automobile expressways)—and Nazi Germany's initial wartime arms tsar—was killed in a mysterious airplane crash that Speer, in his memoirs, implied may have been an assassination. Hitler, in a stunning rebuke to Reich Marshal Göring (who coveted the post himself), appointed Speer to succeed Todt—despite Speer's protestations that he knew nothing about armaments production.

According to Speer in 1970, Hitler said merely, "I know you will manage it," and he knew his man well enough. By the end of the war three years later, Speer had not only returned production to private industry from the bungling of Nazi Party bureaucrats and regulators, but actually managed to produce more planes, tanks, and guns in the last year of the conflict. This, ironically, was as the Nazis were losing the war, rather than had been done under Todt, when they were winning. Allied historians thus credited Speer with prolonging the war by at least a year.

In the course of this truly phenomenal achievement, Speer employed millions of foreign slave laborers, including Jews—thousands of whom died—and thus began his road to eventual imprisonment and possible eternal damnation in history. As he plainly acknowledged—although he lied about explicitly knowing during the war of the extermination of the Jews and others—"It will be my stamp."

On the purely military side of the ledger, Joachim Fest asserted, "After the conclusion of the Norwegian campaign [in 1940] Hitler commissioned [Speer] to take on the plans for the new town that was to arise near Trondheim, Norway. With shipyards, docks, and a quarter of a million inhabitants, it was to be the largest naval base of the future Reich," most likely for the planned naval war with the United States' Atlantic Fleet.

Continued Fest, "Although he was one of the producers, Speer himself was undoubtedly gripped by these overwhelming emotions: seducer and seduced at the same time. 'I was swept away,' he admitted, adding that he would not have hesitated to follow Hitler 'blindly ... anywhere.' He always insisted that the relationship that had developed between them had resembled that of an architect toward an admired patron rather than of a follower toward a political leader."

"Not until much later did [Speer] realize that whenever the regime was accused of persecution or breaking treaties, he subconsciously began to search for justifications, and that soon he had joined the chorus of yes-men."

Whatever else can or cannot be said of Adolf Hitler, he never did anything by halves, and thus Speer emerged as the handmaiden of his will in many of his better-known projects, such as their joint buildings that can still be seen in both actuality (among other things, the street lamps he designed for Berlin are still there) and also in models in period prewar and wartime films today.

Indeed, more than 40 "Führer cities" across Germany were slated for rebuilding by the dynamic architectural duo of Hitler and Speer. By 1940, Speer had emerged as a major power player within the Third Reich.

It was in his new role that Armaments Minister Speer would take his place on the world stage, becoming as familiar to Western newsreel audiences as he was at home in the Reich.

In effect, by reversing Göring's earlier blunders made during the latter's Four Year Plan economic dictates of 1936-1942, Speer returned armaments (and later war production) to the private-sector captains of German industry—mainly by ousting the Party's own bureaucrats. These men knew what they were doing, and Speer allowed them to do it with a minimum of oversight and supervision. As long they met his and Hitler's production-quota demands, he was happy—and so was his grateful Führer.

In the midst of his two unsettling dilemmas—the requirement to increase industrial output during the increasingly heavy Allied air raids and his use of slave labor in the armaments industries to achieve that increase—plus his almost by now certain knowledge that Germany had lost the war in terms of production against the Allies—Speer decided to spend Christmas 1943 in German-occupied Lapland in the far north with his personal secretary, Annemarie Kempf, and one of his top aides, Rudolf Wolters—rather than with his family, or even with Hitler.

It was in Lapland that he developed a swollen left knee and, later, leg, which by January 18, 1944, left him at age 38 in a state of collapse and overwork. He asked his friend SS Dr. Karl Brandt—Hitler's own surgeon and commissioner for public health—for advice. The latter recommended to him SS Dr. Karl Gebhardt, a leading orthopedic surgeon with a hospital of his own outside Berlin, who was also a personal friend of Himmler.

Speer later claimed that he did not know that this hospital at Hohenlychen was an SS facility, but this is difficult to believe in the light of his detailed knowledge of virtually everything in Nazi Germany. And, after the war it was revealed that SS criminal medical experiments were performed there as well.

Speer was now in the clutches of the SS and Himmler, another of his rivals for the eventual succession to Hitler as Führer. Himmler was a certain plotter during 1944 and planned to inaugurate an SS state with himself as Führer in the spring of 1945 in an alliance with the Western Allies to continue the war against the Russians.

But first, in that scenario, Speer must go. If the new patient at Hohenlychen were to die conveniently under SS medical care, Speer as a rival would disappear, and Himmler could concentrate next on the man closest to Hitler, Martin Bormann.

Bormann, on May 10, 1941, had succeeded Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess in his duties—if not his title—as head of the Nazi Party when the latter had flown to Scotland on a supposed "peace" mission and was incarcerated for the duration.

One of Bormann's operatives was a spy within Speer's own ministry—Franz Xaver Dorsch, head of Organization Todt, which was tasked with building the "West Wall" (Siegfried Line) and the "Atlantic Wall" fortifications to repel the forthcoming Allied invasion of western Europe. Dorsch was an admirer of the late Dr. Todt and had hopes of succeeding him as armaments minister until Hitler named Speer instead to the coveted post.

For the 10 weeks that Speer lay in the hospital at Hohenlychen, Dorsch was the linchpin behind the secret cabal to overthrow him that included not only his own shadowy, secret boss Bormann, but also the duplicitous Dr. Goebbels, German Labor Front Leader Dr. Robert Ley (who wanted Speer's job outright), and also Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, who had lost many of his previously held economic Four Year Plan powers to Speer in 1942.

Indeed, within the Third Reich, the ambitious (some said arrogant) Speer had developed a powerful host of enemies who were now determined to bring him down once they clearly saw their opportunity—as they now did.

Both Speer himself and Annemarie Kempf said after the war that they believed Himmler was out to assassinate him medically. The secretary even claimed to have overheard a conversation between Himmler and Dr. Gebhardt that concluded with the words to the doctor, "Well, then, he'll just be dead!" Himmler was already making inroads into Speer's domain, according to the latter's 1981 book *Infiltration: How Heinrich Himmler Schemed to Build an SS Industrial Empire*, his third and last volume of personal memoirs.

Gitta Sereny wrote, "On admission, January 18, 1944, Gebhardt's clinical notes say, 'The patient appeared exhausted. Exceptionally taut swelling of the left knee joint. We immobilize the leg and apply arnica poultices. Diet: vegetarian and fruit.'

"When there was no improvement after five days, he ordered massive doses of sulfa. Eight days after admission, although Speer showed general cold symptoms—bronchitis, hoarseness, and nasal catarrh—and although the consultant's registrar suspected pleurisy, Gebhardt stuck to his diagnosis of rheumatoid inflammation of the left knee.

"Although a retrospective study of Gebhardt's clinical reports clearly establishes that he misdiagnosed his patient—who either already on arrival had the beginnings of an embolism, or developed it in the course of that week—it is highly doubtful that, given Speer's determination to continue working, any physician could have done much better."

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection

In this photo published in *Signal* magazine in August 1943, Albert Speer is shown at the wheel of a prototype tank.

Meanwhile, while the palace revolt went on within Speer's ministry at Berlin, during his absence, Fraulein Kempf remained at his side constantly. When it appeared that Speer had taken a turn for the worse and might actually die, it was she who called his wife, Margarete, urging her to come at once, and also to get another doctor for a second opinion. Margarete did so, bringing onto the case Professor Friedrich Koch.

Under Koch's care, the crisis passed on the night of February 11-12, 1944, leaving the patient in what seems to be described as a drug-like trance. He himself later stated, "I've never been afraid of death since I'm certain it will be wonderful." Noted Dr. Koch, "An astonishing recovery on the 15th ... breathing normal, no other physical symptoms."

The origin of the inflammation of the knee and then the left lung remained "a mystery," though. Dr. Gebhardt had wanted to perform an operation to puncture the left lung, but Dr. Koch declined. Speer also thought that the SS doctor wanted to poison him.

Speer was then moved to the grounds of Castle Klessheim in Austria, the German Foreign Office's lavish, Baroque guest facility near Salzburg for heads of state who came to see Hitler. It was there—after a 10-week-long recuperation—that he again saw his Führer for the first time since his illness began, when the latter came to visit him. Their reunion was a cold affair,

though, with both men noticing the difference from former times when their being together as "fellow architects" had been so warmly anticipated.

Now, Speer would recall later, he believed Hitler to be a criminal who was bringing death and destruction to Germany, and the end to all their joint building plans as well—not to mention the lost war and the Holocaust in the East for which the entire leadership corps of the Third Reich would one day have to pay with their necks.

From Salzburg, the entire Speer family left for an additional six-week recuperation stay at Castel Goyen near Merano, Italy, where Speer mused over the past decade of his life—and decided to resign from his post as minister of armaments and war production. He submitted his resignation to Hitler on April 19, 1944, the day before the latter's 55th birthday. While Göring fumed that he simply could not do this, Hitler raged to his own secretary Johanna Wolf that it was "impertinent." At Merano, Speer was "guarded" by 25 SS men.

It was at this point that a delegation headed by Speer's ally, Luftwaffe Field Marshal Erhard Milch, arrived unexpectedly to plead with him not to resign and to reassure Speer that he still retained Hitler's favor. An enraged Speer blurted out, "The Führer can kiss my ass!" to which the shocked marshal replied, "You are much too insignificant to use such language toward the Führer!" in an attempt to cut him down to size.

Earlier that same day, April 20, industrialist Walter "Panzer" Rohland arrived from Hitler's birthday party at the Berghof—the Führer's alpine retreat at Berchtesgaden—to also beg Speer to remain at his post, using for the first time the words "scorched earth," which Soviet dictator Josef Stalin had employed to halt the German drive outside Moscow in 1941, and that had so impressed Hitler at the time. Would the Führer use the same methods in regard to the Reich? Rohland believed that he would, and for this reason alone, Speer must remain at his post, he asserted.

Speer decided to reconsider his position. Meanwhile, Dr. Gebhardt had told everyone that Speer was incapable of returning

Author's Collection

to work, Hitler told Frau Speer her husband might die (as Göring also intimated to the patient), and the Reich marshal was gleefully shopping around for a successor to boot!

Later, Speer decided to fly directly to see Hitler at the Berghof. Dr. Koch approved the flight on medical grounds, but Gebhardt balked. Koch recalled later, "He again accused me of not being a 'political doctor.' Here, as in Hohenlychen, I had the impression that Gebhardt wanted to keep Speer in his clutches."

At the Berghof, Speer was received, curiously, by the Führer as a "visiting head of state," as he noted in his best-selling *Memoirs: Inside the Third Reich*: "Hitler had donned his uniform cap and, gloves in hand, posted himself officially at the entrance…. He conducted me into his salon like a formal guest…. Although the old magic still had its potency, although Hitler continued to prove his instinct for handling people, it became increasingly hard for me to remain unconditionally loyal to him."

According to a well-researched and tautly written account by Dr. Matthias Schmidt, *Albert Speer: The End of a Myth,* Speer gave his all to prolonging the war and encouraging the German people to "stick it out," even though—asserted Dr. Schmidt—he must have known that it was hopelessly lost long before his famed March 1945 memo to Hitler stating as much. Far from seeking to limit the Führer's "scorched-earth" policy to provide a postwar life for the Germans, Schmidt translated this as merely Speer's desire to maintain the Reich's industry as the basis of his own, personal power in a new life after Nazism was defeated.

It is Dr. Schmidt's last thesis that—far from being an "apolitical technocrat"—Speer participated up to the hilt in Nazi grand power politics to the best level that he could and strove to succeed Hitler himself as Führer. Moreover, Speer worked in tandem with Himmler to first build, and maintain, the extermination camps that promulgated the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" across German-occupied Europe during the latter years of the war.

Nevertheless, whatever differences there were between the two men were papered over—at least for the next year, that is, when the threatened scorched-earth policy that Rohland had mentioned became a dire possibility. Dorsch was restrained and placed once more under Speer's complete control. Speer said, "I had learned the valuable lesson that a resolute stand with Hitler could achieve results" [in suppressing the Dorsch revolt]. Martin Bormann was defeated on this and other issues as well, and tried unsuccessfully to cultivate a friendship with Speer that was doomed from the start, because the men loathed each other.

Göring retreated to his hunting preserve at Karinhal outside Berlin, and Dr. Ley's plan to succeed Speer was aborted. The wily Goebbels realigned himself with Speer in time for the July 20, 1944, German Army bomb plot explosion designed to kill Hitler at the Wolf's Lair in East Prussia. Indeed, on that very day, the two men were together in Berlin.

Oddly, for Speer himself the danger was not yet over, as his own subordinate, Walter Brugmann, died in a mysterious plane crash on May 26, 1944, very similar to that of Speer's own predecessor, Dr. Todt. Had someone sent him yet another warning of his mortality?

As Speer noted in his memoirs, his absolute loyalty to the Führer and the Nazi Party had been shaken by these events: "I was beginning to bid farewell."

In April 1945 the Nazi empire was on its last legs. Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz was appointed by Hitler to become head of government in the event of his demise. Named Reich minister of economy and

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LEFT: The only image of Speer (fourth from right) visiting a concentration camp (Mauthausen). Speer claimed not to know about the existence of Hitler's "Final Solution."

OPPOSITE: Speer protects his eyes while inspecting the process of pouring molten steel in his role as German minister of armaments and war production.

production by Dönitz, Speer sought to buy time under this "operetta government," stated Schmidt, until the Western Allies themselves would name him to head the new Reich under their aegis (a vain hope also shared by Hess, Himmler, and Göring all, by the way).

But it was too late. Germany's army, navy, and air force were defeated. The cities were rubble, the infrastructure destroyed. Millions were dead or homeless. And the hunt was on for the perpetrators of the war crimes in order to bring them to justice.

Taken prisoner by the Americans in Flensburg along with Dönitz and a few others in the "new" Nazi government, Speer was transported to a castle in Mannheim that had once been a headquarters for Göring and would serve as a temporary holding facility until he was taken to Nürnberg to await trial.

Placed in the Nürnberg dock full of accused war criminals in November 1945, Speer was very nearly hanged for his crimes. Based on what has been revealed since his death in 1981, it is fair to assert that, had these revelations of the true state of his knowledge of war crimes been known to the tribunal, Speer most likely would have been hanged.

At the tribunal, Speer denied all knowledge of the planned destruction of the Jews and others during the Holocaust, but nevertheless accepted full responsibility before an outraged humanity and the sober judgment of posterity for his role as a top figure in one of history's most grisly epochs. As William L. Shirer observed at the trial, "Speer would distinguish himself by being the only defendant to show remorse for his crimes."

Found guilty on September 30, 1946, for his use of slave labor in the armaments factories, he avoided the hangman and was sentenced to 20 years in Berlin's Spandau prison.

The last stage of his career—as historian (some say apologist) for the Nazi regime—evolved from his enforced confinement at Spandau. During his two decades there, Speer secretly worked on three books, all with the continuing aid of a prewar, wartime, and even postwar associate whose name never once appears in any of Speer's own writings: Dr. Rudolf Wolters. Wolters knew Speer from their student days in 1924, and kept the originals of the formal Speer Office Journal during the war.

Speer produced the first of his postwar books—*Inside the Third Reich,* published in the United States in 1970—at least in part in prison, where the first draft was written, done on toilet paper and cigarette packs, and then smuggled out by friendly guards. This was later revised into proper book form upon his release. It was and remains an unrivaled, close-up view of the top stratum of the Nazi leadership corps in both victory and defeat.

The second tome—*Spandau: The Secret Diaries* (1976)—was essentially more of the same, interspersed with self-debates over the moral questions posed by the fate of the Jews, and his own sellout to Hitler for a top spot among the chosen. The last book, *Infiltration* (1981), was a detailed account of how the SS successfully invaded his production turf over the years.

Speer would outlive virtually all of the Third Reich potentates. Hitler, Bormann, Himmler, and Drs. Goebbels and Ley all died in 1945, while the captured Göring took a cyanide capsule in his Nürnberg jail cell on October 16, 1946. Of the two SS doctors involved in the Speer case, both Karl Brandt and Karl Gebhardt were tried, convicted, and hanged by the Allies in 1948 for their roles in crimes against humanity.

Unlike many other convicted German war criminals whose sentences were later reduced, Speer remained locked up for his entire 20-year sentence.

A frail and white-haired Albert Speer died while on a visit to London, ironically, on September 1, 1981, the 42nd anniversary of the German invasion of Poland.

A man of subtle irony, Dr. Speer would have appreciated that—in death as well as in life—he has remained a controversial figure: damned by many, understood by some, and acknowledged by most historians today as the preeminent memoirist of his era in history. □

FRENCH ACES *on the*

The Normandie-Niemen Squadron of Free French fighter pilots scored impressive victories with the Soviet Air Force.

BY ANDRE BERNOLE AND GLENN BARNETT

In *Yak Attack*, by artist Roy Grinnell, Roland de la Poype shoots down a German FW-190 over Russia on October 23, 1944. This was Poype's 15th aerial victory, and the 182nd for the Normandie-Niemen Squadron. OPPOSITE: Pilot Louis Delfino commanded the squadron, had 17 victories.

Painting © 2011 Roy Grinnell, www.roygrinnell.com

EASTERN FRONT

The world was understandably shocked when France capitulated to Nazi Germany in June 1940, but not all Frenchmen accepted their country's humiliation. Chief among them was General Charles de Gaulle, who fled to England to continue the struggle as the self-proclaimed head of the Free French government in exile. Almost alone at the beginning, others would join his cause.

Individually and in small groups, pilots of the French Air Force (Armée de L'air) made their way out of Vichy-controlled France, North Africa, Madagascar, and even Indo-China to join the Free French forces.

One such pilot, Louis Delfino, had scored several aerial victories against the Germans before France's capitulation. He then flew for Vichy at Dakar where he scored a victory over an RAF Wellington bomber before joining the Free French fighting on Britain's side. By war's end, Delfino's official score against the Germans would be 17 victories, including seven in Russia. (It should be noted that recognized victories in the heat of battle are subjective and there is often more than one list of scores. The victories cited here are the "official" version of Normandie-Niemen pilots' scores.)

Yves Donjon, Memorial du Normandie-Niemen

Another French pilot, Constantin Feldzer was born in Ukraine in 1909. In 1917 his father immigrated with his family to France where, in 1929, Feldzer took up flying and flew missions during the Spanish Civil War. Against orders in June 1940, during the Sitzkrieg, or Phoney War, he shot down an Me-109 that had intruded into French airspace. After France's surrender and the establishment of the new collaborationist government at Vichy, Feldzer decided to defect. His perilous journey included imprisonment by the Vichy authorities in North Africa and subsequent escapes. When the Allies invaded North Africa, he was quick to join them and the Free French.

Soon, many of these stateless pilots had their property confiscated by Vichy and sentences of death imposed on their heads. Defiant, they formed their own fighter and bomber squadrons within the RAF, where they played an important but largely unsung part in the Battle of Britain. At least 13 French pilots were awarded the bronze Battle of Britain bar for their services in the skies over England between July 10 and October 31, 1940. Other Frenchman served in regular RAF squadrons, most notably the future Prime Minister of France, Pierre Mendés-France (1954-1955).

De Gaulle believed that it was important for French soldiers to fight alongside the Allies and against the Germans anywhere possible. When the Soviet Union was invaded in June 1941, de Gaulle declared, "Without agreeing to discuss now the depravity and even crimes of the Soviet Regime, we must declare, as Churchill did, that we're very sincerely with the Russians as they are fighting the Germans."

He reached out to Stalin with offers of assistance and a request that his Free French organization be recognized as the legitimate government of France. Stalin broke relations with Vichy when Russia was invaded but he hedged about recognizing de Gaulle. He did not think that de Gaulle had much to bring to the table and, besides, in the summer and fall of 1941, he was preoccupied with the German invasion.

De Gaulle's relations with the United States were no easier. After Pearl Harbor, de Gaulle offered to send a squadron of Free French fighter pilots to serve with the United States, proposing to call them the "Lafayette Escadrille" (or Escadrille de Lafayette) in honor of the American pilots who served with France in World War I. The U.S. Army Air corps turned him down.

Even after entering the war following Pearl Harbor, the United States continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the Vichy government, and de Gaulle was frozen out. To Franklin Roosevelt, de Gaulle was a demagogue who had never been legitimately elected by the French

Rue des Archives / The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: After defecting from Vichy France, some French aviators escaped to the Middle East and then went on to Russia. Here a group of French pilots is shown in Lebanon in 1942. OPPOSITE: A French pilot prepares to take off from a snowy Soviet airfield. Brutally cold temperatures hampered operations.

people. Churchill reluctantly followed FDR's lead. It soon became apparent to de Gaulle that the Anglo-American alliance would overlook French interests. He was determined to counter this by building bridges to Stalin.

In March 1942, de Gaulle ordered that a new group of Free French fighter pilots and ground personnel be organized; they would be offered to Stalin to fight alongside the Soviet Air Force. Stalin tentatively accepted this idea, provided that the French pilots were of the highest caliber. Thus began a remarkable saga of courage and fortitude.

De Gaulle dispatched Albert Mirlesse to Moscow to be the French representative for the proposed air squadron. Mirlesse was the French-born son of Russian Jewish émigrés who fled the czarist police in 1905; he spoke fluent Russian and worked closely with the Soviets to iron out the details.

By September 1942, French pilots began gathering in Syria, which was newly liberated from Vichy control. There they trained and honed their flying skills while studying Russian.

The new force was known as Groupe de Chasse 3 (GC3). This was the equivalent of an RAF wing with three squads (or *escadrilles*), though it would be awhile before the new Groupe was up to full strength.

All Free French squadrons were named after French provinces. GC3 took the nom de guerre of "Normandie" (Normandy). Its insignia, borrowing that of the province of Normandy, included two golden leopards, one above the other, on a red background. Beneath the lions was a white lightning bolt, the symbol of their Soviet Division.

For de Gaulle, France naturally came first. When visiting Joseph Pouliguen, the first commandant of GC3 in Syria, he remarked, "Above everything, when you have any decision to make, always ask yourself: what is the interest of France in that matter?"

Pouliguen was a Great War veteran who had been wounded as an infantryman. He then took up flying and completed 30 missions in a Breguet XIV, a large biplane used as a bomber and for reconnaissance, before war's end. He then flew 30 missions against the emerging Bolsheviks. He reenlisted in 1939 but resigned his commission in the Armée de L'air before escaping France to join the Free French.

The next task was to get the pilots and crew to Russia. It was decided that sailing from England to Murmansk was too dangerous because of the very active menace of U-boats which were taking a heavy toll of Allied shipping in the North Sea. Another route had to be found.

In November 1942, three American DC-3s from Egypt were made available to take the group of 12 pilots, their ground crews, and equipment first to Baghdad and then to Tehran. They flew on to Russia on three Lisunov LI-2s (which were essentially Douglas DC-3s built under licence in the USSR). By November 28, the pilots and ground crews assembled at their training center at Ivanovo, 125 miles northeast of Moscow.

Coming from Syria, they were not ready for the extreme cold of the Russian winter. Temperatures of 30 to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit were common. But they were warmly and officially welcomed into the Soviet Air Force, which providently provided them with some winter gear. The pilots were assigned to heated cabins with three or four men to a room. Their rations consisted of porridge of millet seeds and an occasional bit of sausage of questionable origin.

The pilots were under no illusions about the nature of the Soviet government. Pilot Roland de la Poype would later write, "As soon as we reached USSR in 1942, I was not fooled about the reality of the Soviet regime. Along with all my friends, I was not seriously listening to the conferences organized by the political commissar. But all of us were strongly united by our determination to fight the Nazis, and that was all. Even at the worst of the Cold War, the friendship bonds we had during the war were still there."

Their willingness to fight did not keep them from being tested. One night Michel Schick, a French pilot and liaison officer who spoke Russian fluently, was attending a circus in Moscow. There he met a lovely, young Russian woman who invited him back to her apartment. There with a friend, a war widow, they drank vodka and flirted. Suddenly one of the women asked Schick if he had heard of the Stalinist purges in which thousands had been killed. They called Stalin "a crazy pig" and worse. Smelling a trap, Schick replied that a French officer would never listen to such "shit." He stood up and abruptly left.

Upon returning to base, Schick informed Commandant Pouliguen of the incident. Together they confronted an officer of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Russian was told that the French had come to fight and did not have time for these games. They suspected that the culprit was the Soviet political liaison officer assigned to them. Within a week he was replaced by a Lieutenant Kounine who spoke perfect French. (Like all units in the Soviet military, Normandie was assigned a political officer whose job it was to monitor the opinions of his charges. Despite this, Kounine was accepted as a part of Normandie and became fast friends with everyone.)

Soviet authorities offered their French guests the choice of using Lend-Lease American or British planes or the Soviet-built Yak 1. When consulted, de Gaulle told Commandant Pouliguen to choose the best fighter without thinking about the country it came from.

On December 4, 1942, Colonel Choumow, the Russian commander at the Ivanovo training base, designated Captain Pavel Drousenkow as the lead instructor for the French pilots. Choumow told his guests, "Pavel will show you all the planes that we can equip you with. I believe that your pilots already know American and English planes; we have Bell P-39 Airacobras, Hurricanes, and Spitfires. Pavel will also show you our fighter, the Yak1. You'll then choose whatever you like."

Yves Donjon, Memorial du Normandie-Niemen

Commandant Pouliguen wanted to know everything about the different planes. He consulted with Lieutenant Michel (head of the mechanic team) and his pilots. He was especially interested to hear from the most experienced pilots: Albert Durand (nine victories, two shared), Marcel Albert (nine, with 14 shared), and Marcel Lefèvre (seven, with three shared), who had all logged many hours in Spitfires with the RAF. His own experience and that of another experienced pilot, Albert Littolf (seven, with two shared), allowed him to compare the French planes such as the 1940 frontline fighter Dewoitine 520, with which most of the pilots and mechanics were familiar. (Of the four pilots mentioned here, only Albert would survive the war.)

The American Airacobra was appreciated as a ground-attack tank-buster, but it made for a poor fighter. English airplanes needed very precise technical maintenance and a fairly smooth runway for taking off and landing. The French learned that their bases would be very close to the front—between three to six miles—with snow on the ground all winter, slushy mud in spring or autumn, and clouds of choking dust in summer.

The Yak, with its low-pressure tires, had a distinct advantage on rough dirt runways. Though rustic, it was robust and efficient. Its wood and aluminium alloy construction made it very light. Unfortunately, the pilot was not well protected. There was only a bullet-proof back seat and front windscreen, but the fuel tanks automatically filled with exhaust gases as the fuel was consumed to prevent explosions.

The Yak engine was very simple and familiar to the French mechanics as it was derived from a licensed French Hispano-Suiza 12 Y (similar to that of the Dewoitine 520), which produced a speed of 350-360 mph.

The Yak's armament included a nose-mounted 20mm cannon with 150 rounds and two wing-mounted 50-caliber machine guns housing 700 rounds. The Yak was everyone's first choice.

The Russians were flattered but not everyone was happy. In Moscow, Mirlesse was called to the American embassy by Ambassador William Standley and in the presence of an English air marshal was asked to explain that decision. Mirlesse replied, "We know that Hurricanes are already inferior to the Focke-Wulf [Fw-190]; our pilots have had that experience. And, what's more, you are delivering only second-rate planes to the Soviets. We do understand that you're keeping the best for your country, but you'll have to understand that we also want for our men the best there is for use here. And the best for us is the Russian plane."

The Yak aircraft took its name from its chief designer, Alexander Yakovlev. Before the war, Yakovlev had built racing planes. In 1938, he won a competition sponsored by the Soviet government for a new fighter plane. His prototype, built largely of wood, flew in March 1939 and won the design competition. With refinements, it was able to fly at 370 mph by January 1940 and went into mass production shortly thereafter. With admirable foresight, the production factory was built east of the Ural Mountains where it would be safe from future German bombing.

The Yak did have its faults. In most areas of performance it was inferior to the German fighters. It flew without radios because Russian radios were so bulky and unreliable that, even when available, many pilots preferred to do without them.

The Normandie Squadron was to be a

part of the 303rd Fighter Air Division of the Soviet First Aerial Army. As such, their planes sported Soviet markings; the red star was painted on the tail and both sides of the fuselage. A white lightning bolt was painted along the fuselage. The French then added the Normandie emblem under the cockpit. The nose that spun with the propeller, called the "spinner," was painted with the distinctive red, white, and blue tricolor of the French flag.

In February 1943, Lt. Col. Jean Tulasne (eight victories, three shared) became the second commandant or wing commander. Tulasne was a graduate of the French military academy Saint Cyr and had served with the Armée de L'air before the war, and with the RAF at Tobruk, where he had flown a Hurricane in combat. Besides being in overall command, Tulasne frequently flew combat missions himself.

After two months of cold-weather training that stressed navigation over the vast, featureless white terrain, the 54 men—pilots and ground crew—and the 14 Yak-1s of the French squadron were moved to a primitive dirt airfield southwest of Moscow where they were assigned to their division.

The 303rd was commanded by General Géorgui Zakharov, who would take a special interest in their performance. Zakharov, born in 1908, was alone in the world when his parents died in the 1920s, so the Soviet Air Force became his new family. He fought in the Spanish Civil War and against the Japanese in the 1939 Battle of the Khalkhin-Gol on the border between Manchuria and Mongolia. Although, as a commanding officer he was not supposed to fly, by the end of the war he would have 18 victories.

Normandie took part in its first combat mission in March 1943 when the unit flew escort for a flight of Soviet Pe-2 ground-attack bombers. The spring thaw and rains had come to Russia and the dirt airfields were now slushy morasses. The overworked ground crews had to physically manhandle the aircrafts' wheels from muddy ruts to get them moving.

The improvised airfields were very primitive. Usually there was no electricity, heat, or running water. Showers consisted of cold water falling from a large can punched with holes. Accommodations were iffy, no better than the infantry, and obtaining food at a time when thousands of Russians were starving to death was a continual problem. There were also numerous pests to contend with; bedbugs, fleas, gnats, mosquitoes, and tapeworms would plague the combatants of both sides.

At this stage of the war the Soviets did not have radar. Incoming enemy planes were sometimes spotted by forward ground observers and phoned in (if phone lines were available). Often communications were delivered by motorcycle messenger over treacherous Russian roads.

On April 5, 1943, Normandie pilots scored their first two kills when two Fw-190s attacked a flight of Pe-2s under their protection. Attacking from above, the French-piloted Yaks surprised the Germans and shot them down. A week later, Normandie suffered its first losses when three of its pilots failed to return from a mission.

Yves Donjon, Memorial du Normandie-Niemen

Pierre Pouyade took charge of the squadron after the first commander, Lt. Col. Jean Tulasne, was killed in action. OPPOSITE: A formation of Normandie-Neiman fighters heads off on a mission in the skies over the Soviet Union.

The German high command soon learned of the presence of the Free French pilots and was furious. An order went out to the front from General Wilhelm Keitel that any French pilot captured while flying for the Soviets should be shot immediately upon capture and their families arrested. His reasoning was that the French pilots were in violation of the armistice between Vichy France and Germany; more than one Normandie pilot would meet his end by execution. One pilot, Roger Pinon, who was forced down behind enemy lines on August 1, 1944, was shot in the back of the head while still inside his plane.

Within weeks after the capture of Aspirant (Officer Candidate) Yves Bizien on April 13, 1943, his family—parents and three brothers—was arrested by Vichy police and sent to a concentration camp; only a younger brother survived the war.

General Zakharov was sympathetic to the French for the loss of their friends, assuring them that they would be able to avenge their fallen comrades "a hundredfold." On April 15 he showed a special trust in the French by placing a patrol of six Yak-7s with Soviet pilots under French command. In the spirit of cooperation among allies, Commandant Tulasne assigned a Russian captain to lead a mixed patrol of six French and six Russian planes on a suppression mission to keep German planes grounded during a bombing raid.

For the next two months the *Normandie* Squadron would continue gaining frontline

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experience, flying interdiction missions or cover for the Pe-2 and the more famous Il-2 Sturmovik ground-attack plane. Protecting these planes meant flying at low altitude and continually watching overhead (and below) for the enemy. Typically, the P-2s and Sturmoviks would fly at around 1,000 feet while the Yaks would fly cover overhead at 2,600 feet.

In July 1943, Normandie would be involved in one of the greatest battles of the war. The Battle of Kursk is remembered as the largest tank battle in history, but this ignores the importance of the battle in the air. The Germans amassed 1,800 aircraft for the epic struggle while the Soviets committed 2,000 planes.

Based between Moscow and Kursk, Normandie saw action in the Orel sector, north of the embattled city. When the fight was over, Normandie claimed 17 confirmed kills and several probables. At the same time, they lost six of their pilots to enemy action. One of these was Commandant Tulasne.

Tulasne was replaced by one of the Normandie veterans, Pierre Pouyade (three victories, four shared). Before the war Pouyade had commanded a French fighter unit in Cambodia. When the Japanese were "invited" in by the Vichy government in Hanoi, he quickly tired of their belligerent and dominating attitude. He escaped to China in an old biplane that ran out of fuel as he landed. In China he met General Joseph Stilwell but received no help from the Americans as the U.S. State Department still recognized Vichy.

So, even though Pouyade provided Stilwell with a stolen map of the Japanese air combat system in French Indochina, the general said his hands were tied; Pouyade was on his own. He laboriously made his way to London to join the Free French before joining Normandie.

As a commander, Pouyade was a flamboyant character who has been compared to Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, the irascible U.S. Marine Corps flying ace who was awarded the Medal of Honor. Once, when grounding a pilot for forgetting to lower his landing gear, Pouyade took away the man's poker privileges for eight days. But the very next night Pouyade invited the man to a poker game because he was short a player. Another time, Pouyade had an affair with a married Russian woman. When her husband complained to the authorities, General Zakharov protected Pouyade from official criticism; he could not afford to lose the Frenchman.

After the epic battle at Kursk, the Normandie pilots moved westward to a forward air base but their French mechanics did not go with them. After eight months in service, they went home and Soviet mechanics took their place.

It had been hard duty for the French ground crews. While the pilots had been received with honor and camaraderie, the mechanics were not. Upon arrival, they soon learned that they had to fend for themselves in subzero weather. Awake at 3:00 AM, they ran warm oil and water through the cooling system of the planes to warm them sufficiently to start their engines at dawn. They could not remove their gloves to do intricate work for more than 15 to 20 seconds without suffering frostbite to their fingers.

About a third of the mechanics were experts at their job and hoped to be promoted to become pilots, which was the French practice dating from World War I; the Soviets had no such system of promotion and training. On the other hand, Soviet mechanics who were certified became officers; the French did not have that system. Their mechanics were always noncoms, with no chance to advance.

Another third of the mechanics were very enthusiastic about the adventure of going to Russia but were relatively untrained. Their on-the-job training was brutal. The final third of the mechanics were troublemakers who had been bounced from other units. They fared the worst.

While pilots got housing and decent food (when it was available), the French mechanics, like Soviet mechanics, were ignored and were basically on their own. At a time when the civilian population was starving, soldiers and pilots got first priority for food. The mechanics did not fall into that category.

Furthermore, they were expected to work 14-hour days. In the harsh winter of 1942-1943, they had to improvise their own shelters and hunt rabbits and (to the horror of the Russians) even cats for food. Disease also took a debilitating toll.

The mechanics were ready to leave, and few in the West were willing to take their place, so Soviet mechanics filled the void. The French pilots were at first leery about

this proposition but the Soviets proved more than capable. With the addition of 100 Soviet mechanics to their numbers, Normandie became a very mixed squadron.

Some of the new Soviet mechanics worked hard to learn French. The pilots' favorite mechanic was Sergueï Agavelian. A brilliant engineer, Agavelian could easily size up what each plane needed in terms of maintenance. To add to his popularity, he quickly mastered the French language. Meanwhile, many of the pilots learned much of their Russian from girls they met while on leave in Moscow

The bond between the pilots and mechanics was cemented later on July 15, 1944. It was customary when moving to forward bases for a pilot to squeeze his mechanic into his plane so that he would be available immediately to work on the plane if needed. On that day, while making such a move, pilot Maurice de Seynes became blinded by a gas leak that spewed into the cockpit. He was ordered to bail out but refused to leave his mechanic, Lieutenant Vladimir Bielozoub, tucked into the back without a parachute. He attempted to land but crashed, killing them both. They were buried side by side near the airfield, and local children adorned their graves with red, white, and blue flowers.

Normandie had another problem after the Battle of Kursk. The unit's pilot losses had been high and replacements were not forthcoming, prompting fears that the squadron would be disbanded. Just in time, the Ukrainian-born Constantin Feldzer came to the rescue. After his stint in a Vichy prison in Algeria, he found himself flying for the liberated French authorities. These were not de Gaulle's men but ex-Vichy officials who had switched sides. As a Gaullist, he was not popular among them. Nevertheless, on one mission he scored a victory over a German Ju-88, though it was never acknowledged by his superiors.

In the summer of 1943, Feldzer met a Soviet officer desperately trying to recruit pilots for the Normandie Squadron. Andreï Vichinsky was posted by the Soviet government to establish relations with the Free French in North Africa. The Soviets were realists. They knew that, compared to the massive scale of the armies fighting, Normandie was almost insignificant. But symbolically, as an ally fighting alongside Soviet forces, the unit was very important. Vichinsky recognized the value of the Normandie Squadron but could not find anyone in the French Air Force who was sympathetic. Feldzer took up his cause.

There was one catch. The pilots he wanted were already assigned to other units and did not have permission to leave. Feldzer solved the problem in a unique way. Convinced that they would be eager to fight, he sent counterfeit telegrams to men he had known for 10 years in the Armée de l'air, ordering them to report to Algiers. When they arrived, he asked them if they wanted to join Normandie. Fourteen pilots were recruited in this way and together they all flew to Moscow. The new pilots arrived to replace casualties and to fill out the three *escadrilles* that composed the Groupe. Normandie was back in business.

By the end of August, the squadron had 42 confirmed victories. They also began receiving a trickling of the newer Yak-9T. This version replaced the nose-mounted 22mm cannon of the Yak-1s with a 37mm cannon. To accommodate the larger gun, the cockpit was moved farther back along the fuselage. Another variant, the Yak-9K, would mount a 45mm cannon. With this new firepower, even the German Tiger tank was vulnerable.

But the pilots discovered that the new heavy weaponry would slow down their aircraft considerably when fired. They used this to their advantage when landing too fast on a short runway; a short burst of cannon fire would slow their approach.

By September 1943, the city of Smolensk was liberated, an event celebrated with champagne and toasts between Russians and French. Yet, as the Germans retreated, they systematically destroyed the infrastructure of the cities and towns. What had not been destroyed by the Russians in retreat two years before was now ruined by the Germans. Flying overhead, Normandie pilots witnessed hundreds of fires burning where the Germans had evacuated.

In October, Normandie made its seventh change of airfield. As the front moved ever westward during the Red Army's relentless advance, the air forces had to keep up. By now the logistics of the move were down to a science. The pilots flew themselves and their mechanics in their own planes while equipment, baggage, and other ground crew members followed in a LI-2. Only two hours elapsed during the move before Normandie was again ready for combat.

By mid-October, mounting losses and decreased effectiveness brought an order from Normandie's Russian general to temporarily cease operations. During the hiatus, new provisions were flown in as food became more plentiful. Often the pilots' few luxuries were paid for by well-connected French ladies in the West and flown in. Champagne, wine, chocolates, winter clothing, and other treats arrived in this way.

During the stand-down, the pilots relaxed as best they could. Part of their relaxation included inviting their Russian counterparts to dinner. The 18th Guards Fighter Air Regiment of the Soviet Air Force worked closely with Normandie, sometimes sharing the same airfield and the same patrols. A close bond soon developed between the pilots of both units that would continue until the end of the war.

The lull also brought with it a unit medal. It was the Order of the Liberation (Ordre de la Libération), the second highest French military medal. It had been created by General de Gaulle and only he could approve its recipients. The citation acknowledged Normandie's 50 victories as well as its 17 lost pilots.

The honors were not over. That same month the Knight of the Legion of Honor (Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur), France's highest medal, was awarded to Commandant Pouyade and five other pilots of the squadron. The Soviets awarded five of the veterans with the Order of the Red Banner and others with the Order of the Patriotic

Both: Yves Donjon, Memorial du Normandie-Niemen

ABOVE: Marcel Albert, shown in a Yak-9, was France's top fighter pilot ace on the Russian Front, shooting down 24 German fighters. BELOW: A Soviet mechanic inspects the wreckage of a German plane shot down on the Russian Front.

War, first and second class. These were the first of many honors received by the men of Normandie Squadron.

The stand-down lasted all winter. Like all soldiers, the pilots appreciated their leaves. That meant Moscow and the Savoy Hotel, where they could take an actual warm bath, unavailable at the front. Sometimes their hotel phones would ring and the voice of a young Russian woman would offer to show them around the town. The pilots knew that the young ladies were probably NKVD agents but they didn't care. Lonely women and lonely men always find a way to get together.

In the spring of 1944, when the city of Alitous in Lithuania was liberated, the pilots often went to Sunday Mass at a local Catholic church. General Zakharov was impressed by the piety of the French until he learned the truth—it was easier to meet girls in church than on the streets.

There were no combat missions until the spring of 1944. There would, however, be extensive training that would last until May. New airplanes, Yak-9s, arrived in numbers. Unfortunately, there was a series of accidents during the training in which several planes were lost or damaged and four pilots were killed. One of them was veteran Lieutenant Marcel Lefevre, who was mortally injured in the crash of his plane. Lefevre was an ace with seven victories (three shared).

Despite the setbacks, by June the squadron was up to full strength and consisted of 47 operational pilots and 61 planes divided into four *escadrilles*. Organizationally it was now recognized by the Soviets as a regiment.

Shortly after the Normandy invasion on June 6 came the renewed Soviet advance known as Operation Bagration. June 22, 1944, was the third anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union and was the signal for a major Soviet offensive to begin. Hundreds of Red Army planes took part but the Luftwaffe had largely vacated the skies. The Russian advance was so rapid that the supporting airfields were soon far in the rear. Normandie was ordered to move forward once again.

With the growing fame of the squadron, more and more French pilots were volunteering for service and making the arduous journey to Moscow. In over a year of operations, the squadron had amassed an enviable record. Of all the Soviet bombers that it had escorted by *Normandie* pilots over German territory to date, not one had been lost to enemy fighters.

By July 1944, the Red Army had reached the Niemen River in eastern Poland and some units of the 3rd Byelorussian Front had crossed the river to form a bridgehead for future operations. Yet here German resistance stiffened. Following their long retreat across the Ukrainian steppes, the beleaguered Wehrmacht troops hastily reorganized and fought back. Air superiority, however, had passed to the Soviets.

Normandie flew constant missions in support of this breech west of the Niemen River, and for their efforts Stalin awarded them the honorary title of "Niemen." Henceforth, the regiment would be known as Normandie-Niemen.

Around the same time, the Soviet political officer, Lieutenant Kounine, was replaced. Kounine had been quite helpful to

Both: Yves Donjon, Memorial du Normandie-Niemen

ABOVE: Despite his plane being crippled, Maurice de Seynes refused to bail out and leave his on-board mechanic; both died on July 15, 1944. BELOW: Constantin Feldzer helped form the Normandie-Neiman squadron; he was later shot down and captured.

the French and was highly esteemed by them. His replacement was a different matter. Kapitan Vdovine was much more devoted to rooting out "wrong thinkers." He played hell with the Russian mechanics.

All Soviet soldiers had the right to send postage-free letters home. These letters had to be folded a certain way and left unsealed. This allowed censors like Vdovine to read them with ease. The result was a serious decline in morale among the ground crew, and his heavy-handedness was blamed for at least one suicide. This was the case of a pretty 21-year-old Russian woman named Nina who worked as a secretary for the mechanic Agavelian. She had had an affair with a French officer—an act forbidden by the Soviet authorities. When Vdovine found out, he put such pressure on her to end it that she shot herself. The truth was hidden from the pilots but they eventually discovered the reason for her suicide.

On August 1, 1944, Constantin Feldzer was shot down over East Prussia. Captured by the Germans, he managed to avoid being summarily shot by pretending to be a Russian pilot. He was imprisoned by the Germans until March 1945 when he escaped. He was one of only five French pilots out of 25 POWs who survived German captivity.

By mid-August the squadron surrendered all of its Yaks of different models; they were replaced by 44 brand-new Yak-3s. The most capable of all the Yak variants, the "3" could climb to 35,000 feet and had a top speed of 350 mph. They also were equipped with improved radios so the pilots were able to communicate with new ground-installed radar sites. The Yak-3s were also better dog-fighters than anything the Luftwaffe had at this point in the war.

The nose-mounted gun was reduced to a 20mm cannon to improve stability when firing. There were also two 12.7mm. machine guns firing through the propeller. Of course, like all airplanes, the Yak-3 was not without its faults. It had a limited range, less shielding for the pilot, and, occasionally, a defective landing gear system. Still, it was an impressive machine.

Warrant Officer Roland de la Poype (six victories, nine shared), who had flown Hurricanes for the RAF, would later write, "With the Yak-3 we had at last a fighter able to compete with the Fw-190 and Me-109. It was even outclassing them under 4,000 meters where we most often had to fight.…" After four years of the inferior Hurricanes and Yak 1s, the French pilots finally had a superior combat plane.

There was more good news in August. On the 24th, the BBC reported that Paris was liberated. The news was celebrated with singing and fireworks by both the French and their Russian friends.

East Prussia and central Poland now lay open to attack. The Luftwaffe was still strangely absent. A year earlier the Soviets reckoned that 100 German planes a day were shot down; now that number was more like 15. So the Soviet and French flyers focused on ground attacks. Using the nose-mounted cannon, they went out hunting for trains, depots, troop concentrations, road traffic, and river barges. This was not without risk, however, and at least two French pilots were lost while attacking armed trains.

The Soviet offensive in the summer of 1944, though highly successful, left the supply lines in chaos. Food, fuel, and mail from Moscow were agonizingly slow in reaching the distant front. It took months to receive mail from outside of Russia, which had a depressing effect on the pilots. Lack of aviation fuel slowed the fighters' efforts to clear the skies and discomfort the enemy. The advance had stalled at the Niemen River and there was little action in September. There was also much frustration among the pilots who had hoped to return home to a liberated France before Christmas.

A touch of good news arrived for 18 veteran pilots who had served with the regiment for over a year—they were offered the opportunity to go home to France. But when the offensive started again, they all elected to stay and fight.

The Soviet juggernaut began once more on October 15, and the offensive into East Prussia was heralded with the advent of a few days of good flying weather. Normandie-Niemen pilots were in the air constantly, attacking the few Fw-190s and Bf-109s that dared rise to challenge them. Otherwise, the air was full of Soviet Pe-2s, Sturmoviks, Airacobras, Bostons, Yaks, and La-5s. The Luftwaffe finally responded by sending up as many planes as it could muster—just what the Soviet and Normandie-Niemen pilots were hoping for.

The day after the offensive began was a banner day for the French regiment. Its pilots downed 29 German aircraft without loss on that single day. The next day they scored nine

ORIENTAL PRUSSIA © Roger Viollet / The Image Works

Normandie-Neiman Yak-3s lined up at an airfield near the Nieman River in eastern Poland as part of the Soviet counteroffensive, July 1944.

more kills. One French pilot was shot down, but he was rescued by Soviet ground forces.

There were many more victories for the next two weeks. Even though German industry continued to turn out planes, their newer pilots were less well trained because severe shortages of fuel in Germany limited training flights.

The offensive stalled toward the end of October with a determined German counterattack and the coming of winter weather, turning November into a time of consolidation and preparation. On the 27th, the regiment occupied a new field inside East Prussia. Of the Western Allies, Normandie-Niemen was the first combat group to occupy German soil. The inaction, though, wore on the veterans. It would be their third winter in Russia. With most of France now liberated, many longed to return home.

In December, most of the regiment boarded a train for Moscow where General de Gaulle was on a state visit to see Marshal Stalin. All the pilots were excited to meet the man who had single-handedly redeemed France's honor. At a special banquet, medals were awarded to the pilots and some Soviet personnel who worked closely with them.

Some of the veterans at last left for home. Their departure prompted the decision to reduce the regiment from four to three *escadrilles*. The year 1944 ended on a high note: all told, French pilots had shot down 201 enemy planes.

The weather now turned unpredictable, with snow followed by fog or brief moments of clear skies. Sometimes the snow had to be shoveled off a runway before planes could take off. The squadron also received a new commandant: Louis Delfino, who began the war flying for Vichy. He took over operational duties from Pierre Pouyade, who had gone home with 17 other veterans.

New pilots trained when the skies were clear but few missions were flown until January 13, 1945, when the Soviet offensive was resumed. Normandie-Niemen pilots added to their victories but began sustaining increased losses of their own as the fighting intensified.

Striking deeper into East Prussia, the Red Army began liberating French prisoners whom the Germans had put to hard labor. Whenever they could, the French pilots befriended their freed countrymen with gifts of cigarettes and food.

As the number of pilots diminished, there was news that 15 new replacement pilots were in Tehran waiting for transit to Moscow. It was hoped that a new Groupe de Chasse would be formed with the new pilots, but the war would end before this could be accomplished.

The fight for the northern German city of Königsberg would be Normandie-Nieman's last battle. As the Germans retreated in East Prussia, they gathered in the heavily defended fortress city on the Baltic for a last stand. The 3rd Byelorussian Army, which operated in this sector, unleashed all it had. Waves of bombers dropped tons of ordnance on German positions. Even the DC-3s got into the act as crews manhandled bombs out the side doors. Katyusha rockets sent more tons of explosives into the beleaguered city, and artillery and strafing added to the din, death, and destruction. The French flew protection and hunting missions during this climactic battle.

During the struggle, the French were charged with clearing the skies of the last vestiges of the Luftwaffe. Their new forward base was so close to the front that their runways received incoming fire from German artillery. Pilot Georges Henry (seven victories), who scored the squadron's last victory on April 12, was killed the same afternoon by a German shell.

Losses during the battle reduced the regiment to two serviceable *escadrilles*, but even with reduced manpower, they flew all the missions assigned to them. In the end some 42,000 Soviet soldiers and an equal number of Germans died in the rubble of Königsberg.

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TARGET: SAINTE-MERE-EGLISE

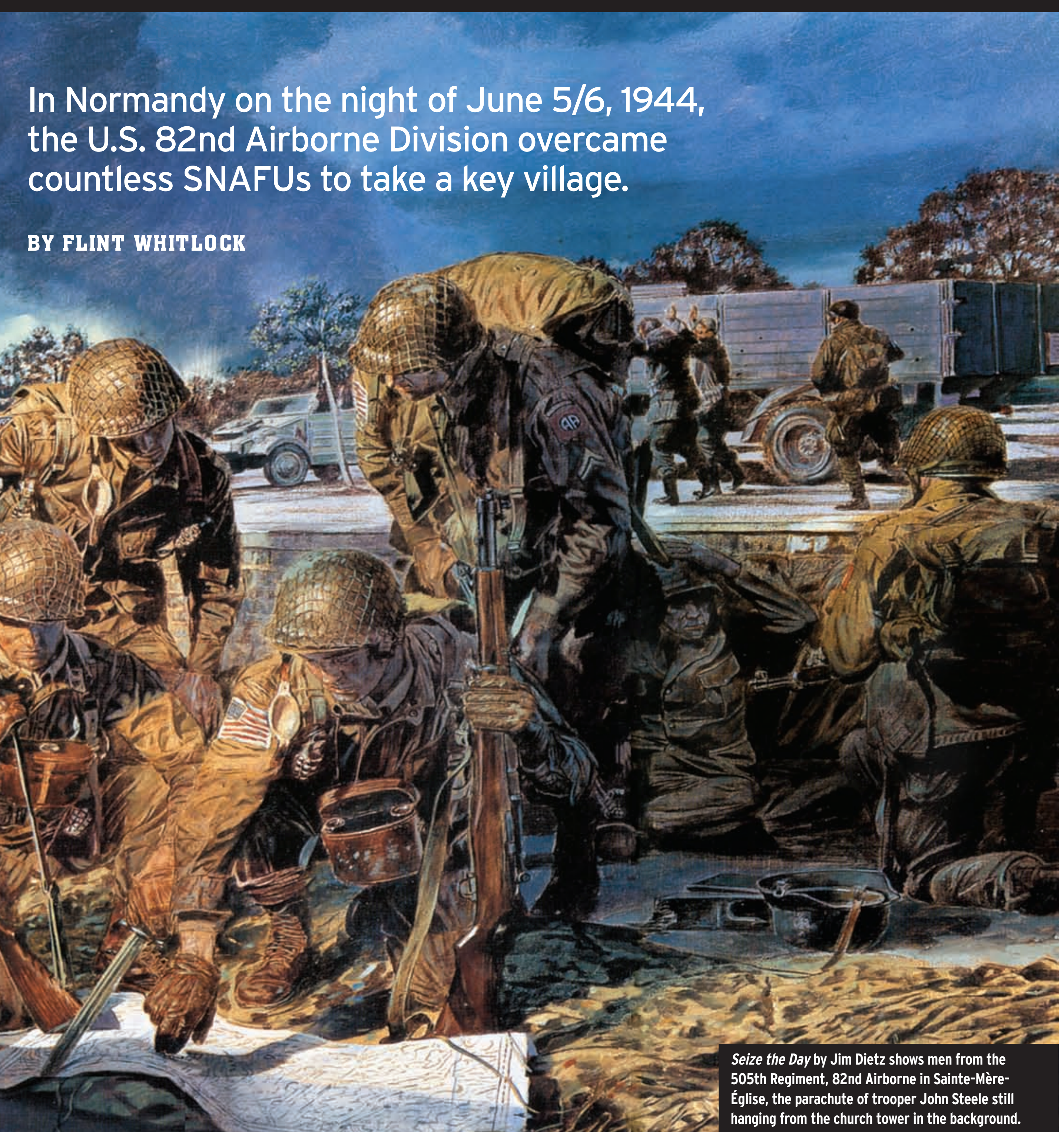
The night of June 5/6, 1944, was pretty much like every other night since the Germans had occupied Normandy and the Cotentin Peninsula in the summer of 1940: dark, quiet, chilly, and mostly boring.

While there had been innumerable over-flights by Allied aircraft (probably taking reconnaissance photos) and the occasional aerial bombing, Normandy was still considered good duty for anyone who had had his fill of war on the Eastern Front and was recovering from wounds psychological and physical.

Here in Normandy there was plenty to eat and drink (especially Calvados, the strong brandy made from apples), scenery that hadn't been mostly destroyed by heavy fighting, and French people who seemed to, if not exactly warmly welcome, at least be resigned to and tolerate the presence of foreign soldiers on their soil.

In Normandy on the night of June 5/6, 1944, the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division overcame countless SNAFUs to take a key village.

BY FLINT WHITLOCK



Seize the Day by Jim Dietz shows men from the 505th Regiment, 82nd Airborne in Sainte-Mère-Église, the parachute of trooper John Steele still hanging from the church tower in the background.

When not on actual watch, looking for the first signs of an invasion that might or might not come to this location, the soldiers in Normandy had busied themselves by following Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's orders to so strongly fortify the coast that the Allied invaders would not stand a chance, that they would, as Rommel had put it, be driven back into the sea.

This night, with the peninsula cloaked in darkness, and the farmers and villagers fast asleep beneath the cloud-obscured moon and the German soldiers—who were on watch in their observation bunkers straining with the help of strong French coffee to keep their eyelids open and scan the black horizon or sound asleep in their barracks or making love to their French mistresses—had no idea what was about to hit them.

A glance at a map of northwest France

reveals a basic truth: there are no large cities in the arc between Cherbourg and Caen; only Carentan, Montebourg, Bayeux, and Valognes can be regarded as sizable. A spiderweb of roads connect one town and village and hamlet to another. One town at the center of a web of roads is Sainte-Mère-Église. But the roads—mostly narrow farm roads suitable for bringing produce to market or for driving herds of slow-moving cows from the barn to the fields and back again—also made it hard to move large formations of military vehicles and large numbers of troops.

For centuries—ever since the Vikings or Normans first set foot here, giving the region its name of Normandie—the area has been pastoral and bucolic, with time measured by seasons rather than by the clock. The sturdy homes, shops, and churches are built solidly of stone—a whitish-grayish-yellowish limestone native to the region, capable of fending off the strong winds that blow in fiercely from the North Atlantic and sometimes rattle the shutters and windowpanes. Although treated to the same warm currents that can give southern England a semi-tropical feel (there are, after all, palm trees growing along the English Channel), the winds can sometimes be bitter, and the cold can penetrate through multiple layers of fabric like a gunshot.

BELOW: During the German occupation of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, two German soldiers on a motorcycle pose for the cameraman in front of city hall. RIGHT: Men of the 82nd adjust gear before boarding their transports on June 5, 1944. OPPOSITE: With faces blackened and their divisional insignia obscured by a censor's brush, these smiling, heavily laden paratroopers prepare to board their transport plane, June 5, 1944.

The people, too, like their buildings, are a sturdy lot. Hard-working like any agrarian populace, the dour Normans typically rise at (or before dawn), put in a full day's worth of physical work, eat a hearty dinner topped off with a glass or two of Calvados, and retire at sunset.

The stolid citizens of Normandy were not happy, of course, when, in June 1940, the gray-uniformed Germans marched in and took over, but they accepted their fate the way they accepted most everything that came their way. For the most part, they did not go out of their way to welcome the occupiers, nor did they collaborate with them. They merely tolerated them and went about their usual business of growing the apples that went into the making of Calvados, pulling fish from the Channel, and pasturing their cows, extracting the milk to make into cheese.

It was Sainte-Mère-Église, roughly halfway between Montebourg and Carantan, that had caught the eye of American military planners as early as 1942. Control Sainte-Mère-Église and you control the Cotentin, the planners saw. No fewer than five roads pass through it, plus it was only seven miles from the westernmost amphibious landing beach known as Utah. Drop an airborne division or two, along with their glider-infantry regiments, into the area and you stood a good chance of preventing German reinforcements from Cherbourg in the north and Brittany in the west from slamming into the troops coming ashore at Utah. The western end of the 60-mile-long beachhead that ran from La Madeleine to Ouistreham would thus be secure and the seaborne troops could move inland after overcoming local German opposition. Yes, Sainte-Mère-Église would definitely have to be taken in the early hours of D-Day.

In the days before D-Day, Alexandre Renaud was a man with a dilemma. Besides his full-time job as the local pharmacist, the World War I veteran was also the mayor of

Sainte-Mère-Église and, as such, he was expected by the occupiers to cooperate with them—and by his constituents to resist. Whenever the Germans gave him an order to do something, such as provide tools, transportation, and laborers to assist in the building of some defensive work, and he could find no one willing to perform the work, punishments would follow.

In May 1944 the Germans were demanding all sorts of things. It was obvious that the local Germans were expecting an invasion and that Sainte-Mère-Église would likely be caught up in it. The roads through the town were filled with trucks towing artillery pieces and carrying troops in all directions. In the fields cordoned off by hedgerows, holes were being dug and large poles were being planted—Rommelspargel (Rommel's Asparagus) some wag called them—designed to discourage glider landings. Trenches were being dug, and anti-aircraft guns emplaced.

When Renaud spoke clandestinely with townspeople, everyone seemed to have an opinion: the Allies—if and when they attack—will cross at the Pas de Calais, Cherbourg, Le Havre, Dieppe, Boulogne, Dunquerque. Brittany will be the target. No, it will be the Cotentin. Ridiculous—the Allies will feint at Normandy but land on the Belgian coast. Few thought that Sainte-Mère-Église was in any real danger unless Allied bombers decided to target the anti-aircraft batteries that were being installed around the town. After all, air attacks had struck at the bridges at Beuzeville la Bastille and Les Moitiers en Bauptois. Someone else pointed out that leaflets were recently dropped over the area hinting at paratroop landings and showing illustrations of Allied tanks and jeeps and what British and American paratrooper uniforms looked like, and giving instructions on what to do in the event of an invasion. The Allies are probably dropping them all over France, someone else pointed out, just to keep the Germans guessing.

Renaud noted that the digging of trenches around Sainte-Mère-Église was almost completed, but that the Germans didn't seem to be in any rush. "With the means of punishment at its disposal," he said, "[the German command] could have made the work go five times as fast, and could have demanded that it should be done by June 1st."

Throughout May, the presence of German troops increased. Renaud said, "We have seen encamped in our fields infantry, artillerymen, Aryan Germans, and also Georgians and Mongols with Asiatic features ... commanded by German officers. In the latter part of May, the artillery units quarter in Gambosville [less than a mile south of Sainte-Mère - Eglise]. The officers come to see me at the Town Hall. They need spades, picks and saws immediately. The town is to be secured, and the work has to be finished in five days.

"I reply that there are no more spades or saws in the neighborhood and that they will have to canvass all the houses in order to find a few tools. They phone the Feldcommandantur at Saint Lô to get instructions about what punitive measures to take. He gives an evasive answer. Discouraged, they finally go to a hardware store where, after threatening to loot everything, they manage to obtain a few tools. Guns are then installed at all the town approaches; on the Carentan road, on the La Fière road, before Capdelaine, on the Ravenoville road.

"Then, suddenly, three days after their installation, the guns are taken away, and I am asked to provide transport immediately to haul ammunition and food to Saint Côme-du-Mont . . . . Sainte-Mère-Église is once again alone with its anti-aircraft unit."

The invasion—Operation Overlord, with the airborne phase known as Neptune—had been delayed for a day because of a fierce storm that had swept over England, the English Channel, and the Normandy coast, but now it was back on. At RAF airfields with such quaint, typically English names as Upottery, Cottesmore,

Down Ampney, Tarrant Rushton, Greenham Common, Barkston Heath, Brize Norton, and others, superbly trained British, American, and Canadian paratroopers and glider infantrymen waited for the orders to go.

The U.S. 82nd and 101st and British 6th Airborne Divisions had been training for months in anticipation of just this moment. Despite some SHAEF staff officers' worries that the American airborne and glider operations would meet with disaster, everything that could have been done to ensure success was done. The maps, aerial photos, and sand table models of each unit's objectives had been carefully studied and memorized. Each plane had its precise schedule as to when it was to take off. All the necessary equipment had been gathered and issued. Knives and bayonets had been sharpened, faces blackened with burnt cork, last letters home written, last prayers said.

Both: National Archives

The advance U.S. assault wave that would strike Normandy before the seaborne troops arrived numbered about 17,000 men being carried by 822 C-47 transport planes. They were the dice that American Generals Eisenhower and Bradley were willing to throw. Although the overwhelming majority of the sky soldiers had never been in combat before, and had only an inkling of what to expect once they reached France and the bullets began to fly, they were supremely confident of victory.

Sergeant Spencer Wurst, an 82nd Airborne trooper, spoke for them all when he said, "It may seem naïve now, but at no time did we ever dream that we would not be successful in Normandy. We never even mentioned the possibility of defeat. The commanders may have agreed among themselves that if the beaches were not held successfully, everyone who could get out would head for Sainte-Mère-Église. But down at my level, absolutely nothing was said about withdrawal or evacuation."

"That evening [June 5] we got the word that we were going," said Henry "Duke" Boswell, G Company, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne. "They took us out to the planes in city buses; they didn't have enough trucks. It was hard to get in the buses with all our equipment. We got to the plane and Lt. Col. [Ed] Krause, 3rd Battalion C.O., came around and talked to us, and every other word he had to say was a curse word; I guess he was a good leader, but I sure didn't like that part of his personality."

Boswell also remembered that Krause held up an American flag and said, 'This was the flag we raised over Naples when we took Naples, and when you meet me in Sainte-Mère-Église, we're going to raise this flag there.' We loaded up [on the plane] and we were nervous. Some of the guys tried to joke, but most of the guys were quiet. Some of them had been in combat before and some hadn't; we had had a lot of replacements. Everybody was just kind of thinking their own thoughts."

On the flightlines of a dozen British airfields, the C-47s began to roll, then took off into the dark sky and headed for France. The invasion was on, and no force of man or nature could turn it back now.

Because of the German-imposed curfew, the town of Sainte-Mère-Église, like all the towns in Normandy, was dark and shuttered tightly on the night of June 5, 1944. Mayor Renaud was awakened shortly after midnight by the distant thumping of anti-aircraft batteries. As a precaution, he herded his wife and children into the family's makeshift bomb shelter when there came a pounding on his door. Renaud opened it to find the town's fire chief standing there in his shiny brass helmet, anxiously informing him that the two-story home belonging to the Hairon family, just off the southeast corner of the town square, was ablaze. The chief asked the mayor if he could get the commandant to lift the curfew. Renaud said he would try.

He hurried to German headquarters at the town hall, explained the situation to the duty sergeant who, without waking the commandant, gave Renaud permission to call out the volunteer fire department and citizen bucket brigade to help extinguish the fire. German guards were also called out to stand watch over the volunteers and make sure no acts of sabotage were committed.

Renaud then dashed to the parish house and asked Father Louis Roulland to have the sexton toll the bell as a means of alerting the citizenry. Soon more than a hundred men and women, some still in their nightclothes, had assembled outside the church to form

ABOVE: Their faces displaying a variety of emotions, these paratroopers from the 101st Airborne prepare to take off in a C-47 "Skytrain" on D-Day. OPPOSITE: Their faces displaying a variety of emotions, these paratroopers from the 101st Airborne prepare to take off in a C-47 "Skytrain" on D-Day. In a somewhat fanciful representation of D-Day, a combat artist shows Waco CG-4A gliders mixed in with the aerial invasion force.

a line of buckets from the pump at one end of the Place de l'Église to the firemen at the scene of the fire some 50 yards away. Some 30 well-armed German soldiers stood watch over them.

While the British 6th Airborne Division was crossing the Channel toward its objectives at two bridges over the Orne River and Canal and the casemated guns at Merville on the far eastern flank of the 60-mile-long invasion area, the paratroopers of Matthew Ridgway's 82nd Airborne Division—"Mission Boston"—were following the C-47s that were carrying Maxwell Taylor's 101st Airborne troopers.

The invasion route took the airborne armada to the western side of England, then south toward the Channel Islands, finally east across the Cotentin Peninsula. The C-47s were in formation and traveling at 130 mph; as they approached the drop zones, the pilots would reduce speed to about 110 mph or less.

In a C-47 that was carrying 18 paratroopers from Company H, 508th PIR, 82nd Airborne, Lieutenant Victor Grabbe was leading his men in song, even though the tune and lyrics were swallowed up by the sound of the engines.

One of Grabbe's men, Lew Milkovics, recalled, "All was quiet for a time while we were flying over the Channel. Most of us, like myself, I am sure had our thoughts on our loved ones and, no doubt, were feeling sorry for ourselves as we knew what would soon be happening. We wondered how many of us would survive. Lieutenant Grabbe sensed the tension and he loudly shouted, 'Hey, fellows, how about some songs?'

"That broke the silence. Someone started with 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart,' then 'Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree with Anyone Else But Me,' then 'Deep in the Heart of Texas.' And so it went as we sang many more oldies for the next 10 or so minutes. It was great, as it relaxed us, and took our minds off ourselves and the coming danger."

Milkovics said, "I sat there thinking, 'Boy, that Grabbe—he is one smart cookie.' Under our kind of pressure, I doubt if any other stick leader thought to do this. I will never forget the intelligence and smart thinking of our lieutenant." Unfortunately, Grabbe would die of wounds suffered in the upcoming battle.

Sergeant Otis Sampson, E/505/82nd, remembered his flight being quiet, no singing, "each man with his own thoughts as the plane winged its way to our rendezvous; each second drew us closer. As we crossed the coast of Normandy we stood up and hooked up. I saw no guns firing below. Everything was going good, too good for my liking; it seemed we were going into a trap. Being near the open door, I could see the moon-drenched countryside below, with no sign of life. I stood with perfect control of my mind and body as the plane went into a dive.... We leveled

off and then went into another dive. By this time we were well inland; the plane slowed down. It looked so peaceful below. I never expected it to be that way."

In the lead ship was the 82nd's assistant division commander Jumpin' Jim Gavin; he would be jumping with the 508th. He wrote in his memoirs, "We began to receive small-arms fire from the ground. It seemed harmless enough; it sounded like pebbles landing on a tin roof. I had experienced it before [over Sicily] and knew what it was."

Shortly after the planes entered the airspace over the Cotentin, they flew into a bank of thick clouds. Sergeant Elmer Wisherd, a flight engineer in a C-47 carrying elements of the 101st, recalled the heart-stopping moments when his formation hit the clouds: "I can't figure out how we went through those clouds without collisions or damage to the planes. Then we came out and started getting AA fire. I could see the other planes around us taking ground fire. We went back up through the clouds; it was quite a layer of clouds. And we came out in formation! How we did it I have no idea. Our pilots were the best, all instrument-rated pilots. There was no talking between planes whatsoever—complete radio silence. But I'll tell you, it was 'pucker' when you're going through clouds and you can't see the airplanes around you and all at once you pop out on top and here you are, still in formation. Then we dropped to 800 feet. It was clear over the drop zone."

At the controls of a C-47 loaded with 82nd Airborne troopers was 1st Lt. Bill Thompson. Despite the months of training, he recalled that many of the other pilots panicked when they flew into the clouds and when the ground fire began to reach up for them. Many broke formation, swerving wildly to avoid the ordnance, suddenly accelerating, or violently going into steep dives or sudden climbs.

"I could see the tracers in front of us," Thompson said. "They were leading us too much since they probably were not used to firing at slow-flying aircraft. We did not get hit so finally I let down some more and broke out of the clouds. I could see the water on the other side.... My right wingman saw the water and I guess he got excited and started dropping [his paratroopers] before I signaled him to."

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Aerial photo of Sainte-Mère-Église after its capture. Note American military vehicles lining the main street. BELOW: All that remained of a C-47 that crashed and burned in Normandy.

Lieutenant Edward V. Ott, Headquarters, 2/508/82nd, said that he felt the drop "was doomed to be a disaster when the C-47 pilot began to take evasive action to avoid the heavy flak. He gave us the green light when the plane was in a climbing attitude as the engines roared at top speed. When I jumped, the prop blast was so severe that it tore off my pack and equipment so that when I hit the ground, the only weapon I had was my jump knife. I didn't see any other member of my stick."

Sergeant Ed Barnes, a communications section leader in 3/507/82nd, had dozed off

during the hour-long flight but was awakened as the aircraft closed in on France. "We were given the signal to stand up and hook up and check one another's equipment. We were all standing there poised and looking at the red light, waiting for it to turn green. As we peered out the door, we could see the flak and tracer bullets coming up out of the darkness. Then the light turned green and we started to pile out the door."

As the jump master in his plane, Lieutenant J. Phil Richardson, H/508/82nd, recalled, "When we arrived at the drop zone in France, I looked down at the DZ and saw it was covered with tracers. I felt that we should not land in that area and I told the pilot not to slow down but to keep going, which he did. Soon, the English Channel became visible on the other side of the peninsula. We had an order that no airborne troops could return to England [by plane] once they had left. The area that I looked at then was clear of tracers and we did the jump there; this was near the small city of Bayeux." But Bayeux was over 30 miles from H Company's drop zone.

James Eads, another 82nd paratrooper, remembered vividly that his C-47 was receiving heavy AA fire on the run in. "We had been hit at the worst time by flak and machine-gun fire. We were off target. The green light came on and the troopers started out of the plane. The fifteenth man had equipment trouble. After some delay trying to fix his rig, I—being the 16th and last man to go out—bailed out on a dead run."

Glen C. Drake, H/508/82nd, said, "I knew there was no one more anxious to get out of the plane than I. After hooking my static line to the steel cable that ran the length of the plane, I had to hang on to the cable and the side of the plane to stay on my feet. I was next to last of our stick, and I was wondering if I would get out."

At last the green light came on and the line of heavily laden men began moving toward the door and disappearing into the night. "It seemed to take forever," Drake said. "All the way back to the door we had to struggle to stay on our feet and I was thinking, 'God damn it, let's go, let's go, let's get the hell out of this damn plane before it goes down!'

"When I finally went out the door, I knew right away I had jumped from the frying pan into the fire! It was a night jump, but the hundreds of white phosphorous flares floating on small parachutes turned the night into day. What a field day those Krauts had—like shooting fish in a barrel!"

Sergeant Spencer Wurst, F/505/82nd, wasn't happy about the haphazard nature of the drop. The discipline acquired over many months of training with the C-47 crews seemed to have evaporated in the heat of the moment, as pilot after pilot broke formation in an effort to avoid the ground fire. Hopelessly lost, and under orders not to bring any paratroopers back to England with them, some pilots simply flipped the switch that turned on the green "jump" light—whether or not they were over their designated DZ.

Wurst said, "As it turned out, 2nd Battalion, 505, had the best drop of all six regiments in the American airborne effort. We knew exactly where we were, we knew what we had to do, and we proceeded to do just that."

In his C-47, Dwayne Burns, F/508/82nd, was becoming more and more anxious as the moment to jump grew nearer. The red warning light by the door suddenly came on, meaning that they were just minutes away from being given the "go" signal. The jump master in Burns's plane "was hanging out the door, trying to see how far we were from land, when our airship entered a cloud cover and the pilots started to spread out. Most pulled up and tried going over the top. It was going to be bad for jumpers because we would be widely dispersed at landing, but the aircrew needed to avoid possible collisions. No one wanted to be taken out of action that way.

"It seems we stood in position for a long time before our flight began picking up flak; it was light at the beginning. At least I knew we were finally over the coastline. Then our waiting for the green light really started. The flak grew quickly and became really heavy while we tried to wait it out. The ship was getting pinged from all sides. The noise became awesome, an indeterminate mix of twin engines, flak hitting the wings and fuselage, and men yelling, 'Let's go!' But still the green light did not come on."

To Burns the aircraft "was bouncing like some wild bronco. A ticking sound danced across the bottom side of the plane as machine-gun rounds found us. It became hard to stand up while the pilots tried to maneuver and troopers lost their footing and fell down. They fought to get back up. Other jumpers had to help them but they could hardly remain standing themselves. Some were getting sick, I know, because the stench of vomit drifted my way from somewhere else. It was one hell of a ride. With all the training we'd had, there was still nothing that could have prepared a soldier for this event. I wondered if anyone of us would get out of the plane alive."

Courtesy Vincent Wolf Courtesy Otis Sampson

LEFT: Lieutenant Vincent E. Wolf, 82nd Airborne Division, photographed in an English studio prior to D-Day. RIGHT: Sergeant Otis Sampson, E Company, 505th PIR, 82nd Airborne Division, was deadly with a mortar.

The fire at the Hairon house was not anywhere close to being contained. And then they heard it, the citizens and the soldiers. Above the church bells and the noise of the fire and the people fighting it came the sound of aircraft, at first far off to the west but quickly growing closer and louder until it was a wall of thunder beating the air directly overhead. People looked up and out of the blackness there came human forms floating down beneath mottled green parachutes! They were American paratroopers, and they had come to liberate a continent.

All across Normandy in the early hours of D-Day, chaos reigned. Small groups and individual parachutists jumped into German positions and fought pitched battles

with the enemy in the dark. Some troops landed in trees and dangled helplessly until they could either cut themselves down with their combat knives or were shot to death by the Germans. Others drowned in flooded fields, pulled underwater by their heavy equipment. Flaming transport planes crashed or exploded in midair. Farmhouses became fortresses, bridges barriers, and roadways killing zones.

Author Photo

A dummy representing Private John Steele, F Company, 505th PIR, 82nd Airborne Division, still hangs from the steeple of the church in Sainte-Mère-Église. In actuality, Steele hung from the opposite side of the steeple.

The enemy had no idea of the scope of the airborne assault and fought back furiously, aware that their—and Germany's—very existence depended on defeating the Allied paratroopers who seemed to be behind every tree, building, and hedgerow. In some cases, Soviet POWs, who had been impressed into German service, fought as fiercely as their German overseers but, given the opportunity, were more likely than not to surrender at the first opportunity. German commanders sent frantic messages back to higher headquarters where the captains and majors and colonels had no better idea interpreting what was transpiring than did the average Ländser in his foxhole.

Almost nowhere was the scene more chaotic than at Sainte-Mère-Église.

Spencer Wurst, F/505/82nd, was one of those dropping over the town. "The first thing I remember seeing as I descended was a large spire in a bunch of buildings that later proved to be Sainte-Mère-Église," he said. "To my surprise, there were fires in the town. Almost immediately after—these things happen in microseconds—I started receiving very heavy light flak and machine-gun fire from the ground. This was absolutely terrifying. The tracers looked as if they were going to take the top of my head off, but they were actually coming up at an angle. Many rounds tore through my chute only a few feet above my body.

"The third thing I remember is the explosions on the ground, making me fear that the Germans had already zeroed in on our DZ. I later found out that these explosions resulted from our mine bundles. Either the speed of the plane pulled the chutes off, or the bundles dropped faster than expected, and the impact bent the safety clips on the fuses, causing them to explode."

Another paratrooper, Pfc. Ernest Blanchard, was floating down over the town when a buddy next to him, loaded with a mine or demolitions, exploded and completely disintegrated right in front of him.

Duke Boswell, G/505/82nd, recalled, "When we jumped, we floated over the edge of the town. There was fire coming up. We could see the tracers from the machine guns. And you know for every tracer round you can see there's about ten bullets in between. When they went by you, they'd pop and made you kind of jump. It's funny—you jump with 10,000 troops and you hit the ground and you're all alone. That's a hell of a thing. For a moment or so, you're right there by yourself, period. We actually hit our designated target, right outside Sainte-Mère-Église. I think that all of the other units, including the pathfinders that went in ahead of us, missed their targets. I landed within a half a mile of Sainte-Mère-Église, or closer."

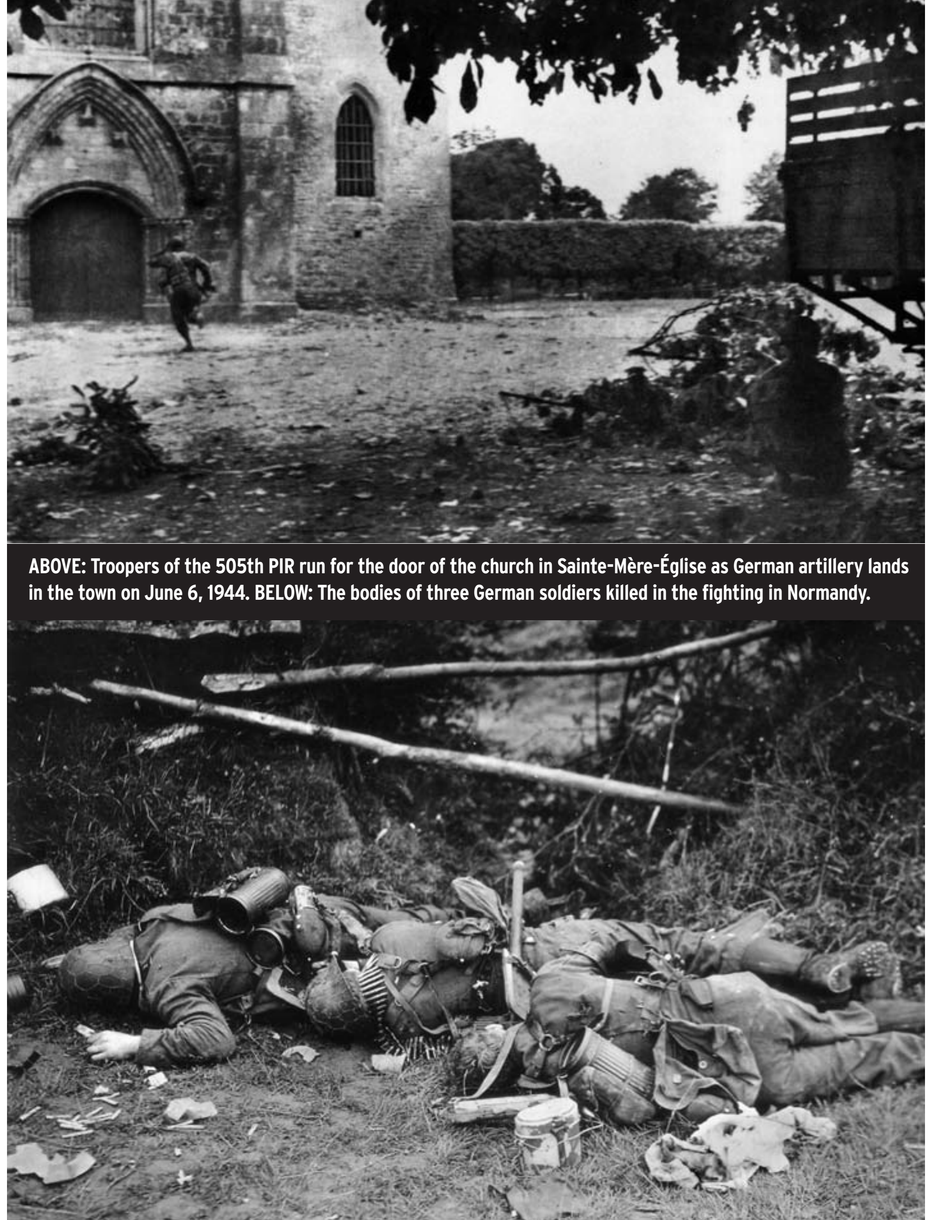
Lieutenant Vincent Wolf, a platoon commander in F/505/82nd, also had indelible memories of the drop. "The 2nd Battalion did not land in any of the flooded areas; that was mostly the 1st and 3rd Battalions, so we were lucky. After we landed, we took fire immediately from the Germans; thank God I had my Thompson sub-machine gun."

Misdropped men from the 101st were also drifting over Sainte-Mère-Église. The jump master of his stick, Lieutenant Charles Santarsiero, 506/101, remembered looking out his C-47's doorway as the plane neared the town. "I could see fires burning and Krauts running about. There seemed to be total confusion on the ground. All hell had broken loose. Flak and small-arms fire was coming up and those poor guys were caught right in the middle of it."

Earl McClung, E/506/101st, was jumping with a leg bag full of machine-gun and mortar rounds that weighed more than 60 pounds. "I couldn't lift it," he said. When he jumped, he noticed that he was coming down above a town where a major fire was burning; it was Sainte-Mère-Église, and he was many miles from his intended DZ.

"I landed on the roof of a small Catholic shrine about a block and a half west of the church. I hit that roof and bounced off. It was pretty hectic for the first few seconds. Two Germans were running toward me. I guess they saw me coming down, but they were shooting at my chute that was on this little roof. I jumped with my M-1 assembled and in my hands. It was no contest—they were only a few feet away and I took care of those guys. At least I think I did; I didn't wait around long enough to make sure. I went on by them and headed out of town. I ran through the graveyard and ... joined up with the 505th of the 82nd for about the next nine days. I finally rejoined my unit at Carentan."

Both: National Archives



ABOVE: Troopers of the 505th PIR run for the door of the church in Sainte-Mère-Église as German artillery lands in the town on June 6, 1944. BELOW: The bodies of three German soldiers killed in the fighting in Normandy.

Most of the parachutists landed safely in the dark fields around Sainte-Mère-Église, but some of them—primarily from F Company, 505th—were coming down in the very center of the town, where the light from the burning Hairon house made it easy for the Germans to spot them. Breaking out of their momentary bewilderment, the German soldiers suddenly unshouldered their Mausers and Schmeisers and began firing up at the descending forms. The paratroops hit the ground or landed in trees or snagged their chutes on utility poles, killed in their harnesses even before they could reach their Thompson sub-machine guns or remove their disassembled rifles from their carrying cases and put them together. It was an unmitigated slaughter.

The civilian bucket brigade scattered as the lead flew indiscriminately and a full-scale battle for the town square erupted. But neither the French nor the Germans immediately realized that the parachutists were Americans; most everyone thought they were British. As David Howarth noted in *Dawn of D-Day,* "The people of Sainte-Mère-Église, through all their years of listening to the BBC, had never dreamed that their liberators, in the end, would be Americans." It was only after the American flags sewn onto the sleeves of the dead paratroopers' jump jackets were seen that the truth became known.

One paratrooper was caught in a tree near the church and was machine-gunned to death as he struggled to release his harness. Mayor Renaud recalled, "About half a dozen Germans emptied the magazines of their sub-machine guns into him and the boy hung there with his eyes open, as though looking down at his own bullet holes."

One paratrooper pulled his risers hard to slip away from the gunfire in the square but found himself drifting straight for the burning house. Having jumped from the plane so close to the ground, he had no time to maneuver and dropped into the inferno that was sucking in the air all around it; all the munitions he was carrying detonated.

Another of the paratroopers, Private John Steele, a member of Wolf's platoon, was shot in the foot as he descended, then got his canopy snagged on a corner of the church steeple and dangled there helplessly. With all the wild gunfire going on below him, Steele decided that the best thing he could do was play dead.

A German soldier, Corporal Rudolph May, was up in the church's bell tower when the airborne attack came. Noticing Steele dangling outside one of the openings in the steeple, May said, "There was a man hanging there, suspended. He hung there like he was dead—but after a while he started moving. Then we also heard him sighing." May's comrade raised his weapon as if to shoot him, but May stopped him. He decided to try and cut the suspension lines of Steele's chute. After he had cut several, he threw Steele a rope by which he could lower himself to the ground and be taken prisoner.

The exact number of paratroopers who came down in Sainte-Mère-Église is unknown, but Cornelius Ryan estimated it to be no more than 30, with about 20 of that number landing in and around the church square.

Lieutenant Colonel Ed Krause patted the pocket of his jump jacket to make sure it was still there. "It" was the flag he had raised over the Naples city hall eight months earlier and he had sworn to repeat

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A captain in an 82nd Airborne Division medical unit (right) gives a cigarette to a wounded German soldier. OPPOSITE: A unit of 82nd Airborne Division troopers advances past a knocked-out M4 Sherman tank along a hedgerow in Normandy.

that act here in Sainte-Mère-Église—if he lived to do so.

On the outskirts of town, Krause, from Green Bay, Wisconsin, and commander of 3rd Battalion, 505/82nd, surveyed the ville which, minutes before, had been in an uproar, what with a fire blazing, parachutists dropping here, there, and everywhere, and bullets flying.

One of those who landed with Krause's battalion was Pfc. Leslie P. Cruise, Jr., H/505/82nd. He said, "We could hear sounds of machine-gun and rifle fire all around, but nothing was from our immediate location. We had secured our area and were waiting orders to move, which came after the confrontation with a civilian who had been convinced to join our group by a group of troopers. With the assistance of our newfound friend we moved out toward Sainte-Mère-Église with G Company in the lead, followed by H and I Company groups. Some groups were missing by the planeload, and we had no idea where they were, but we could not wait for them because time was very important to the success of the mission."

Krause had nearly 200 men with him, hiding in the weeds and in the hedgerows and behind buildings, preparing to enter the town. Without first making a house-to-house search, Krause and his men would slip into the town with their rifles empty, using only knives and grenades if they should encounter the enemy. That way, if any flashes were spotted in the dark, they would know it was the enemy doing the firing and be able to pinpoint the location. Krause knew that it was a dangerous gamble, but one he had to take.

Spencer Wurst made a hard landing in a field outside of Sainte-Mère-Église, hurting his back and hips. "If it had been a training jump," he said, "I would have sought medical attention; I didn't have that luxury. Before I even attempted to get out of my chute, I crawled over to the nearest hedgerow to get some cover. I pulled my pistol out, put it beside me, and went to work on the buckles of my chute."

As he lay there, Wurst saw C-47s above him seemingly coming from all different directions and taking AA fire. He then saw a green star cluster. "This was the sign that someone in the battalion command group had reached the battalion assembly location." With pain in his back and hips, he hobbled off in that direction and met up with his platoon leader, Lieutenant Joe Holcomb.

Despite the darkness at the battalion assembly point, Holcomb could see a standing paratrooper. Not wanting to give the position away, Holcomb told Wurst to tell that soldier to get down and take cover. Wurst said he hollered at the individual. "I don't know about the politeness of the language I used. As the individual turned toward me, I saw two big stars. It was General Ridgway. That was the first and last time I tried to chew out the general."

As a platoon commander in the 82nd, Lieutenant Vincent Wolf was supposed to be in charge of 40 men, but his platoon was scattered from hell to breakfast. Strangely, he didn't mind. "If you had two or three guys together," he explained, "it was a lot easier because you knew what you were going to do, instead of worrying about 30 or 40 other guys and what the hell they're doing; you could get yourself lost in the dark a lot easier with 30 or 40 other guys. And if you have a small group and you see the enemy, it's easier to knock them off with a knife."

Wolf said that, after landing, "We cleaned out buildings, ran into groups of Germans who were well-trained—German paratroopers [6th Fallschirmjäger Regiment]—who were tough guys."

Also moving toward Sainte-Mère-Église, Sergeant Otis Sampson, E/505/82nd, noted that the night sky was still filled with paratroopers. "Troopers came raining down to the rear of us," he said. "My heart was in my throat, afraid that the first ones out would be hit by the lower-flying planes as they floated to earth, and there were some pretty close calls."

At the battalion assembly point on the outskirts of town, Sampson came across the injured Lt. Col. Benjamin Vandervoort, his battalion commander. "He had his back

against a wall and his legs outstretched," Sampson said. "He filled me in, saying, 'Some of the planes have become lost. I have sent out to gather what men and equipment we have; we've got the situation in hand.' He paused for a spell and then said, 'I came down quite hard on this leg,' running his hand along his left one. 'I've done something to it; I've sent for a medic.'"

Sampson said, "I could see he was in pain. There was nothing I could do for him, so I turned to go. 'I'm proud to have you with us,' he said as I walked away. It is me who should be telling him that, with a busted leg and still in control of the situation; it was a nice compliment."

Spencer Wurst also saw Vandervoort. "He had broken his ankle in the jump and was hopping around on one leg, using a rifle as a crutch." Broken leg or not, Vandervoort had come to France to fight and lead his battalion, and that was what he was going to do. The 505th's exec officer, Mark Alexander, described Vandervoort as "a hell of a good battalion commander, but he was hard-headed as hell."

Vincent Wolf recalled that Vandervoort "had a broken ankle but he wouldn't let that slow him down. He was the greatest guy alive—great, great, great, great. We always called him 'Ben,' never 'colonel.' He'd give you a rap on the head if you saluted him in combat. I was the same way; I told my men 'Never salute me,' because that gives away to the enemy who the officers are, and then you'd get picked off by snipers. That's what we did with the Germans. Once you knocked their non-coms off, the privates, hell, they didn't know what to do. We could improvise a lot quicker than they could.

"I knew that we were supposed to free the French people, but I was more concerned about my men and me. The men first—where the hell were they? How many guys have survived? Out of the 18 that jumped with me, Russ Brown, my 60mm mortarman, he's the only one that survived. There were Germans all around. It was a matter of survival—who saw who first."

Vandervoort nabbed a couple of 101st men with a cart to haul him to his battalion's objective. His mission was to get to Sainte-Mère-Église and that's just what he intended to do, broken leg or not.

As Lt. Col. Krause's group crept closer to the town, it looked like everything was over; the fire was out, the townsfolk had returned to their homes, and the German soldiers had also vacated the square by the big church, apparently thinking the battle was over, not just beginning. Smoke still filled the air and the bodies of dead paratroopers hung from trees and poles or lay sprawled on the pavement.

With stealth and silence the Americans slipped into town, found a building that was being used as a German barracks, and took 30 soldiers prisoner; 10 others were killed when they resisted. The Yanks also found the main communications cable to Cherbourg and destroyed it, then established a defense around the town's perimeter.

Although he didn't immediately know where he was other than somewhere in northern France, Duke Boswell did his best to round up other troopers. "My mission was just to get our group together and move into Sainte-Mère-Église. I put a flashlight on top of a pole—several sections that fit together—about 20 feet high. I think the lens was colored—red or green. The idea was to stick it in the ground so the troops could see it as an assembly point. We found somebody right quick-like, and then we got several more together. I assembled most of my squad and we got a few more and then one of the officers got there. The officer took charge and we went into Sainte-Mère-Église.

"We had certain positions around the town that we were to occupy, and the mission was to hold the village of Sainte-Mère-Église, well, not really the whole village, but the crossroads and a bridge to keep [German] reinforcements from getting to the beach and others at the beach from retreating. Seemed like our whole regiment was in and around Sainte-Mère-Église. We established our position on the edge of town on one of the roads. The first thing we saw when we got there were some of our guys hanging from the trees. They had jumped right over the town, and were shot before they could get out of their chutes."

To hamper the Germans from returning to Sainte-Mère-Église, Pfc. Leslie Cruise and other paratroopers had set out mines on one of the roads leading into the city, then dug foxholes and set up firing positions to establish a roadblock. After the first gliders began landing in the area, Cruise heard equipment being off-loaded,

followed by the sound of an American jeep being started. The jeep, with two soldiers in it, came tearing up the road toward Cruise's position.

The paratroopers tried shouting to warn the jeep's occupants of the roadblock and mines but the vehicle flew past them at a high rate of speed. Cruise said, "The occupants of the jeep were in a big hurry as we at the roadblock heard their running motor coming in our direction. Above all the noise, the distinct yells at the roadblock of 'Hit the ground!' were heard clearly and we all buried ourselves in the dirt of our foxholes. The driver must have thought our men were Germans and was not about to stop. Down the road they rode on full throttle.

Both: National Archives

"KAPOW ! BLOOEY ! BANG ! BOOM !—a deafening crescendo of explosives sounds as a number of our mines blew the jeep and its troopers into the air. All Hell broke loose—flashing lights with pieces of jeep and mine fragments raining down around us. Directly across the middle of our minefield they drove and immediately their direction became vertical, and in an arching skyward path they landed in the hedgerow beyond. We could hear the thump and bangs of falling parts all around us. The men had left the jeep on first impact and they had become the first casualties in our area, but they would not be the last. We had lost about half of our mines, which we had so carefully delivered, and they would be sorely needed in case the Krauts should attack. Those GI's sure wrecked the hell out of our defenses."

The defenders would indeed need the mines, for it wasn't long before the Germans tried to retake the town.

The sky finally lightened to a gray overcast. Ben Vandervoort decided that he had assembled all of 2nd Battalion that he was likely to gather and so, with about 400 men, including some from the 101st, moved out cross-country toward Sainte-Mère-Église, sending out small patrols to farmhouses and barns to make sure that no German troops were lying in wait.

Lieutenant Wolf said, "We went into Sainte-Mère-Église. It was chaos for the simple reason that everybody was all over the place. We didn't know who was who, who was supposed to do what, where the CP was. Total confusion."

Otis Sampson recalled, "Orders were for us to take Sainte-Mère-Église. It wasn't known at the time that the city had already been taken by Colonel Krause and was secure in his hands. It was early morning when our group came into the city with our colonel [Vandervoort] on a makeshift two-wheel stretcher. There were paratroopers still hanging from their chutes where they had been caught in the high trees before they could release themselves. Colonel Vandervoort's first command: 'Cut them down!'"

In the northern part of town, Krause's American flag flew proudly from the city hall flagpole. Next door, at the large hospital/hospice, 505th surgeon Robert "Doc" Franco and his medics set up shop, caring for Americans, Germans, and civilians alike. "I was there from about 4 am until noon. During that time we treated about 30 or 40 casualties. Somebody came in and told me that about a mile away there was a farmhouse loaded with wounded guys. The family who lived there was doing the best they could to care for them. I walked to that farmhouse and, sure 'nough, all around the outside there were dozens of wounded guys, some of them badly wounded. There were a few inside, too, in this large room. I was alone, with nobody to help me." Franco himself would himself be wounded a few days later.

But if the Germans thought the onslaught ended with the paratroopers, they couldn't have been more wrong; the glider force was on the way.

By the next day, June 7, Sainte-Mère-Église was still in 82nd Division hands, but no one knew how long the Yanks could hold if the Germans decided to counterattack in force. Vandervoort's 2nd Battalion, 505th, was supposed to have moved up to Neuville-au-Plain to prevent the enemy from attacking from the north, but a German assault from the south compelled General Ridgway to order the bulk of 2nd Battalion to remain in Sainte-Mère-Église and reinforce Krause's 3rd Battalion there. Vandervoort decided on his own, however, to send a reinforced platoon to Neuville-au-Plain to forestall any attack from that direction. General Gavin later called Vandervoort's move "one of the best tactical decisions in the battle of Normandy,"

ABOVE: Dead American paratroopers gathered in a field by a Graves Registration unit prior to burial. OPPOSITE: A destroyed German self-propelled gun smolders along the road leading from Neuville-au-Plain to Sainte-Mère-Église. Private John E. Atchley, H Company, 505th PIR, was credited with destroying the assault gun with a 57mm antitank gun—the first time he had ever fired one. His courageous stand caused the Germans to halt their armored counter-attack against Sainte-Mère-Église.

for it was there that the Germans were gathering for a panzer-and-infantry assault.

First Lieutenant Turner B. Turnbull III, a half-Cherokee, took 44 men up the N-13 highway from Sainte-Mère-Église to Neuville-au-Plain, pushed out the German defenders, then prepared for the counterattack. Vandervoort, in a jeep towing a 57mm gun, joined him. Receiving word from a civilian that a group of paratroopers were approaching from the north with a captured self-propelled gun and a large number of German POWs, Turnbull and his colonel watched and waited. Before long, the group was seen coming down the road.

It was a trick. The "POWs" turned out to be well-armed Germans, and the "paratroopers" were either Germans in American uniforms that had been stripped from the dead or were real Americans who had been captured by the Germans. At any rate, the SP gun, and more behind it, began blasting Turnbull's positions in Neuville-au-Plain, along with mortars and small arms. Vandervoort told Turnbull to delay the enemy for as long as possible, then withdraw back to Sainte-Mère-Église; the colonel then departed to alert the troops in Sainte-Mère-Église that the enemy was coming.

Turnbull's men fought off the assault by the 1058th Infantry Regiment, reinforced, 91st Air-Landing Division. The battle lasted all day, with Turnbull's outnumbered force giving as good as it got. At one point a soldier, Private John Atchley, manning a 57mm gun he had never fired before, knocked out a German SP gun, but the enemy was flanking the Americans on both sides. Sergeant Otis Sampson, located south of Neuville, personally dropped mortar rounds on the enemy threatening Turnbull's platoon; his aim was on target and his platoon leader, Lieutenant Ted Peterson, called Sampson "the greatest and most accurate mortar sergeant in the business."

At about 5 PM, the time came to withdraw, given the fact that Turnbull had only 16 effectives remaining out of his original number. But it was too late for him. Lieutenant James Coyle, E/505, recalled, "We engaged the enemy and prevented him from going any further in his plan of encirclement. We were able to hold them even though we were outnumbered, while Turnbull got his surviving men out of Neuville-au-Plain and on the way back to Sainte-Mère-Église."

Turnbull never made it. Pfc. Stanley Kotlarz remembered a terrible shelling during the pull-back: "When [the shell] hit, all of us seemed to go up in the air. I got hit in the wrist and in the arm. A guy by the name of Brown got hit in the head. And Lieutenant Turnbull, it sheered the top of his head right off. When I got up, I saw Brown crawling away, staggering. Turnbull was lying there with his brains peeling out of his head." For his valor, Turnbull received the Silver Star, posthumously.

The 82nd retook Neuville-au-Plain the following day with the help of armor that had landed at Utah Beach. Turnbull's delaying action had given the 505th time to consolidate its position and likely saved the men in Sainte-Mère-Église.

Like the battles for scores of towns and villages in Normandy, the war passed through Sainte-Mère-Église, then moved on toward the east, leaving hundreds of dead and wounded—both combatants and civilians—in its wake. But the dead were, and are, remembered.

Chaplain Francis L. Sampson, 501/101st, reflected, "The French people of the little city of Sainte-Mère-Église had arranged that each family adopt a couple of graves [at the American military cemetery above Omaha Beach]. On Sundays and Holy Days they bedecked them with flowers, promising always to remember those soldiers in their prayers. This promise still holds good. American visitors to the cemetery are always moved by the sight of a French family placing fresh flowers on a grave or kneeling there offering their prayers for the soul of an adopted son or brother whom they had never seen in life." □

This article is adapted from Flint Whitlock's latest book, *If Chaos Reigns: The Near-Disaster and Ultimate Triumph of Allied Airborne Forces on D-Day, June 6, 1944* (Casemate, 2011).

"CANADIAN FISHES" STORM THE BEACH

The Canadian 3rd Infantry Division paid a heavy price to ensure victory on D-Day.

BY HERB KUGEL

ON JUNE 7, 1944, D+1, two volunteer Canadian 3rd Division, 9th Infantry Brigade regiments, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders (the North Novas) and the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment (the Sherbrooke Fusiliers)—together with volunteer units from the Camerons of Ottawa and Forward Observers from the 14th Field Regiment—fought an important but now generally forgotten battle in Normandy.

Forgotten or not, the outcome of this battle can be considered to be a significant factor in preventing a planned German attack into the D-Day landing beaches that could have split the Allied invasion force in two.

In June 1944, the Canadian military was a completely voluntary force; there was no conscription in Canada. The Canadian Army consisted of 405,834 men and women who had volunteered for General Service. Of these volunteers, only about 100,000 men were in the First Canadian Army, which was preparing for its role in Operation Overlord, the D-Day invasion of Normandy.

From west to east, the Allies' beachheads were code-named Utah (to be initially assaulted by the 4th U.S. Infantry Division), Omaha (1st U.S. Infantry Division with a regiment of the 29th Infantry Division attached), Gold (50th British Infantry Division), Juno (3rd Canadian Infantry Division), and Sword (3rd British Infantry Division). Utah and Omaha were the responsibility of the American First Army, while the three other beaches were the responsibility of the British Second Army. All told, these five beaches comprised an invasion sector more than 50 miles long. Three airborne divisions (the U.S. 82nd and 101st, and the British 6th, which included a Canadian airborne battalion), with glider components, would arrive before the seaborne landings took place to seal off the invasion sites and prevent German reinforcements from attacking the amphibious forces.

The Canadian beachhead known as Juno was a five-mile length of sand and dunes and seaside vacation homes stretching west to east from Bernières-sur-Mer through Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer, and Graye-sur-Mer to Courseulles-sur-Mer. The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. R.F.L. "Rod" Keller, was made responsible not only for capturing Juno, but also for striking inland (southward) from there once the coastal defenses had been overcome.

To allow for orderly and synchronized landings, Juno Beach was divided into two primary assault sectors that were then further divided into subsectors. From west to east,

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Soon after landing at Juno Beach, Canadian troops became hotly engaged in urban fighting in a multitude of small towns and villages. Here Canadian soldiers, using a "Grizzly" medium tank (the Canadian variation of the M4 Sherman) for cover and fallen tree branches for concealment, advance toward an enemy-held French town.

the sectors were Mike (divided into Green and Red subsectors) and Nan (divided into Green, White, and Red subsectors). Mike-Green was the farthest western and Nan-Red the farthest eastern of the Juno Beach subsectors.

The Canadian 3rd Division's 9th Infantry Brigade (the Highland Brigade, under Brigadier D.G. "Ben" Cunningham) was assigned to the First Canadian Army for Operation Overlord. The 9th Brigade had been designated a "reserve brigade," but on D-Day it was an assault brigade because it was on the eastern flank of the Canadian push southward into Normandy. The 9th Brigade's task was to land after the 7th and 8th Brigades had secured Juno Beach, move past the 8th Brigade assault troops, and then fight its way inland.

The Canadian 3rd Division's General Staff had defined three D-Day lines: Yew, Elm, and Oak, which respectively marked three objectives in their D-Day invasion plan. The North Nova's and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers' objectives as laid out for Objective Oak were clear. Quoting the Sherbrooke Fusiliers' regimental log: "To spearhead the advance south to the west of Caen and assist the 7th Brigade in Operation Oak to secure the capture of Carpiquet and its airfield, then to meet the

Both: Imperial War Museum

anticipated counterattack."

What was critical and not included in this mission statement was that the 9th Brigade was also to make contact with units from both the British 3rd Division, operating east of the Canadian 9th Brigade, and the Canadian 7th Brigade, operating west of the 9th Brigade. The three units were to form a powerful spearhead and continue to push inland. However, for this spearhead to succeed, it was crucial that the British take Caen, something they were ordered to do on D-day, but failed to accomplish.

What was omitted from the Oak mission statement were many of the operation's details. It is said that "the devil is in the details," and this was certainly true of Operation Oak. To reach Carpiquet, the Canadians would have to fight their way through the German-occupied villages of Villons-les-Buissons, Buron, Authie, and Franqueville; while they were doing this, their left (east) flank would be wide open to attacks by marauding units of the 21st Panzer Division, which, at that moment, was the only German armored unit in the area.

As the 7th and 8th Brigades waded ashore and struggled to capture Juno Beach, the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, General Keller, on board the converted merchant ship (which was now a D-Day command ship, the "cruiser" HMS *Hillary*), struggled to make sense out of the conflicting reports he was receiving. He was forced into making a crucial decision: Where would he order the 9th Brigade to land? The preferred plan was to have the 9th Brigade land at both Bernières-sur-Mer and St. Aubin-sur-Mer; an alternate plan was to land the brigade at Courseulles-sur-Mer.

Initially, Keller was unaware that the Navy had closed the beach at St. Aubin-sur-Mer because of intense German gunfire. When he learned this, he reluctantly ordered the entire brigade to land at Bernières-sur-Mer, a narrow "Nan-White" beach whose exits were already packed with 8th Brigade men and equipment—the equipment ranging from light bicycles to trucks and tanks. The bicycles were initially brought ashore to be used to speed up the infantry advance on country roads but were quickly cast aside because they were easy targets for German snipers.

TOP: Braving fire coming from Germans holed up in beachfront houses, Canadian troops of the 9th Infantry Brigade disembark from their landing craft at the Nan Red Beach sector of Juno Beach, June 6, 1944. BOTTOM: More 9th Brigade troops, some carrying bicycles, wade ashore at Juno Beach. Many of the bikes were soon abandoned by the soldiers who found they attracted German fire. OPPOSITE: Canadian forces came ashore between two British infantry divisions, the 3rd and 50th. One of the Canadians' major objectives was the seizure of Carpiquet Airport east of Caen and 20 miles inland.

Cunningham's brigade had waited tensely, as the North Nova Scotia Highlanders War Diary, 3-6 June, 1944, recorded: "At 0630 hours all wireless sets were on listening watch to keep the Battalion informed of the progress of the assault battalions. At 11:00 AM the orders came through that we were to land." (0630 was really 0430, as England was using Double Daylight Saving Time, the clock being set back two hours.)

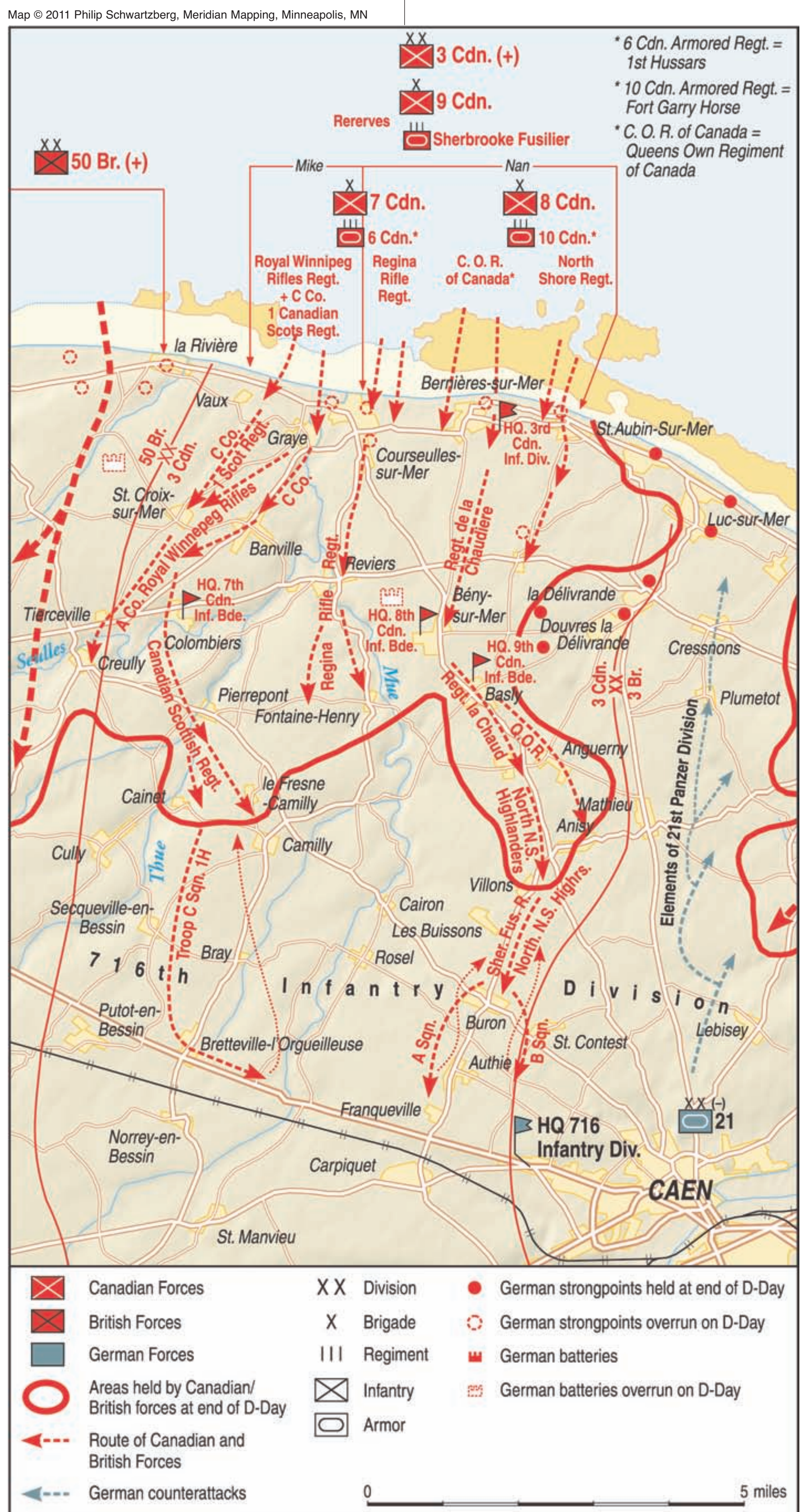
Once landed, Cunningham had orders to push through the 8th Brigade units as soon as the 8th had captured Beny-sur-Mer, code-named "Elder," which would be the brigade's assembly area. Beny-sur-Mer's time of capture is uncertain but it was taken sometime around noon by C Company of Le Régiment de la Chaudière, a unit from the French-Canadian Province of Quebec that had been assigned to the 8th Brigade.

The 9th Brigade reached the shore with the second assault wave; the 9th's first regiment to land was the North Novas. Though reported times vary and often conflict, it appears that the North Novas began coming ashore near Bernières-sur-Mer at 11:40 AM—a time when the narrow invasion beach was already very heavily congested with 8th Brigade troops and equipment. At 12:05 PM, 9th Brigade Headquarters erroneously reported, "Beaches crowded, standing off waiting to land." However, 15 minutes later, at 12:20 PM, headquarters signaled that the 9th Brigade had landed and its units were ready to move inland toward the assembly area at Elder.

No matter what headquarters reported, it appears that the North Novas and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers were not completely ashore until 2:00 PM and, because of congestion at the beach exits, did not begin moving toward Beny-sur-Mer until 4:05 PM. They were followed by the brigade's two other regiments, the Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders, and the Highland Light Infantry of Canada. At 6:20 PM, the North Novas and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, acting together as the 9th's advance attack force, left the Beny-sur-Mer assembly area to continue their push inland. The Stormont and Highland Regiments remained in the assembly area.

The lead North Nova-Sherbrooke Fusilier unit was the Reconnaissance Troop of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment, traveling in Stuart light tanks (a tank built by the Cadillac Division of General Motors and powered by a Cadillac V8 engine). They were followed by the North Nova's C Company, mounted on the carriers of the regiment's Carrier Platoon, which was followed by the Machine Gun Platoon from C Company of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa. (On D-Day, the Cameron Highlanders' 1st Battalion landed on the beaches of Normandy, the only Ottawa unit to do so. The Camerons functioned as a divisional reserve and served much of the following months spread out at company and platoon levels, providing machine-gun and mortar support for the 3rd Canadian Division's infantry battalions.)

Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



Both: ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: With his comrades looking on, a wounded soldier of the 12th SS Panzer Division ("Hitlerjugend") receives medical attention during a lull in the battle for Juno Beach. RIGHT: Commanding SS-Panzer-grenadier Regiment 25 was Standartenführer (Colonel) Kurt "Panzer" Meyer, shown in 1943. A rabid Nazi, he was tried for war crimes in 1945 and condemned to death, but was later released.

The Cameron Highlanders were followed by a troop of M10 tank destroyers from the 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, these weapons being built on the chassis of the American M4 Sherman tank. Next came the balance of the North Novas' Support Company, followed by an advance guard riding on the tanks of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers. In total, this was a mixed force of some 300 men.

However, riding on a Sherman tank was especially dangerous. Three-quarters of the 27th Armoured Regiment's battle tanks were M4 Sherman Mk III 30-ton medium tanks. The Sherman was completely outgunned and inadequately armored compared to the heavier German Panther and Tiger tanks. Particularly lethal was the German 88mm antitank gun, originally an antiaircraft gun that had been modified and then used as a field piece to successfully decimate Allied tank and infantry units in Egypt, Libya, and Russia. In any confined area, the casualties that an 88 could cause were horrific. Trooper L.J. Gilbert, a tank soldier with the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, summed it up in few words: "Their eighty-eights were really terrible. We had nothing like them."

If the 88s were not lethal enough, the Shermans were built with an unfortunately high profile that furnished a prominent target, which made detecting the tank a simple matter. When a Sherman was hit, it readily exploded in flames because it was propelled by gasoline rather than diesel fuel.

Gilbert, again quoting the Sherbrooke logs: "We soon got to find out what the Germans called our tanks—'Tommy cookers.'" Gilbert did not report what the British Tommy tank soldiers thought of the Sherman, but in the same, dark vein, the Americans named their Sherman tanks "Purple Heart boxes" and, with similar bleak humor, they called them "Ronsons" (after a popular cigarette lighter that, according to the advertising slogan, "lights first time, every time").

Nevertheless, the North Novas and the Fusiliers, with their dangerous tanks, continued to push southward against German mortar and machine-gun fire. They fought their way to Villons-les-Buissons and were now about four miles from Carpiquet. With British Double Daylight Savings Time, they would have had plenty of daylight left to take Carpiquet. However, the brigade was ordered to halt by Lt. Gen. Miles C. Dempsey, commander of the British Second Army, under whom the 3rd Canadian Division served.

Dempsey's decision was based on events around Caen. Shortly after 4:00 PM, a scout troop of the British Staffordshire Yeomanry reported that a 21st Panzer battle group consisting of 50 tanks and a battalion of infantry, advancing from Caen, was moving toward the gap between the Canadian Juno and British Sword Beaches. Dempsey acted in haste and ordered all three of his assault divisions—the divisions from Sword, Juno, and Gold Beaches—to dig in. Dempsey did not know that the German battle group he feared was approaching had already been ordered to withdraw. Dempsey's "dig in" orders went out sometime after 7:00 PM, and General Keller's headquarters confirmed the order at 9:15 PM.

To Dempsey's cautious reasoning, it was dangerous to allow the Canadians to continue advancing south in the dark and further extend their unprotected left (east) flank in an area where German armored units were active. He felt it would be better to wait until dawn and hope that the British assault troops could overcome the resistance they

were facing and take Caen, then join with the Canadians and quickly capture the Caen-Carpiquet airport. What Dempsey was hoping for did not happen because the British did not capture Caen.

After receiving Dempsey's order to halt, General Cunningham commanded his vanguard to stop and dig in. The two regiments formed a fortress on the high ground around the crossroads between the villages of Anisy and Villons-les-Buissons. The North Novas and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers were totally alone when night fell; the brigade's other regiments were still at their assembly area at Beny-sur-Mer. The Canadians spent an uneasy night, staring and listening in the blackness. Sherbrooke Fusilier tank commander Sergeant T.C. Reid later recalled: "What a bastard of a night, no time for sleep, no time to eat, no time for anything but looking into the dark and wondering what's ahead."

The Canadians were attacked and fought several skirmishes with nomadic groups of disorganized German stragglers. At the end of D-Day, some 14,000 Canadians had been successfully landed, and the North Nova and Fusilier Regiments of the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division had penetrated farther into France than any other Allied force. However, on the evening of D-Day, they were unaware how precarious their situation was becoming, or how unexpectedly grim it would become the next day.

D-Day caught the German top military echelon flat-footed; Feldmarschal Erwin Rommel, commanding Army Group B, which was responsible for Normandy's defense, was at his wife's birthday party back in Germany. Generalleutnant Edgar Feuchtinger, who commanded the 21st Panzer Division (which was already in the Normandy area), was apparently visiting his mistress in Paris, though later he pushed hard to deny this. Because Hitler had not believed the invasion would strike the Normandy beaches (he, like many in the German high command, fell for the Allies' deception plan and was convinced the attack would come at the Pas de Calais), there was only one panzer division near the the coast—Feuchtinger's.

At about 9:30 AM, Rommel was notified of the landings, whereas Hitler was informed when he awoke, sometime around noon (senior officers were said to be afraid to wake him). After Hitler awoke, it is believed that it was not until about 4 PM that he released three reserve panzer divisions: the 12th SS Panzer, the Panzer Lehr, and the 21st Panzer.

One of the units that moved northward toward Caen was the 12th SS Panzer Division's Panzergrenadier Regiment 25. It arrived in the Caen sector about midnight of D-Day. The 25th was a regiment of Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth) soldiers, and the North Novas and the Sherbrookes would soon be facing "child soldiers" between 16 and 18 years of age in a division that some called the "Baby Division," while others called it the "Murder Division."

No matter what the division's name, the "boy soldiers" were dedicated, ruthless, and highly trained fighters. Their officers and noncommissioned officers were recruited from the elite 1st SS Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, Hitler's personal bodyguard regiment. The vast majority of rank-and-file soldiers and panzergrenadiers (motorized or mechanized infantry) in the division were intelligent boys who had been indoctrinated from a very young age with the brutal tenets of Nazism's perverted theologies. The young troops became the living embodiment of Hitler's concept of ideologically and racially pure Aryan warriors.

The commander of SS-Panzergrenadier Regiment 25 was the fanatical 33-year-old SS-Standartenführer (Colonel) Kurt "Panzer" Meyer. Tall and rigidly arrogant, Meyer was the epitome of the Nazi Aryan. He had shown no qualms about commanding his young soldiers to kill civilians, nor had he displayed any remorse whatsoever about ordering them to commit suicide rather than allowing themselves to be captured. He said: "Remember, the last round in your magazine is for yourself."

Imperial War Museum

Canadian infantrymen, some with motorcycles and bicycles, along with men from the Royal Marine Commandos, crouch on a road during a German mortar attack early on D-Day.

The Hitler Youth, much to the frustration of its officers, had been ordered by Hitler to remain on standby duty south of Lisieux, 28 miles east of Caen, and not to move until Hitler gave the command personally. After Hitler's orders finally came through late on the afternoon of D-Day (reported times vary), it had taken Meyer

and his regiment about eight hours to reach the Caen area; a significant amount of the regiment's travel time was spent hiding in roadside ditches trying to survive powerful Allied air attacks.

The German 716th Infantry Division, commanded by Generallieutenant Wilhelm Richter, was responsible for defending both the Canadian and British target beaches. Richter recalled a late-night D-Day meeting between Meyer, Feuchtinger (who, besides commanding the 21st Panzer Division, also acted as liaison for the elite German armored unit, the Panzer Lehr Division), and himself.

A counterattack was planned for D+1 that would have the 21st Panzer Division operating east of Caen while, west of Caen, the 12th SS Panzer Division, together with the Panzer Lehr Division, were to sweep forward into the Canadian beachhead, cut it, and then smash it into the sea. During this meeting, Meyer, perhaps recalling August 1942 when the Canadian 2nd Division was decimated on the beachhead during the abortive invasion at Dieppe, proudly announced that he would "throw those little Canadian fishes into the sea."

Even after it became obvious that Caen would not be taken on D-Day, Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, who commanded the British and Canadian ground units, did not modify his orders. General Keller commanded the North Novas and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers to continue fighting their way inland. The orders were passed down the chain of command and, at 6:45 AM on D+1, Ben Cunningham sent word that the advance was to continue as soon as the men were ready. The two regiments moved out in the same order they had used during the previous day and now advanced toward Villons-les-Buissons, a town northwest of both Buron and Authie.

Initially, the Canadians faced little opposition—only sporadic sniper and mortar fire. They moved across a gently rolling plain marked by occasional clusters of trees, farm hedges, and haystacks. They passed through tiny villages where farmers lived and worked among clumps of small houses, barns, and outbuildings, their cluster of farms surrounding a village center comprising a church, a few small shops, and an occasional tiny café. Stretches of stone wall were a part of each community, as was a horse pond. Had a war not been going on, it would have been a quiet, picturesque scene.

Villons-les-Buissons was taken at about 9:30 AM during a pincer attack in which a German antitank gun and a 16-barreled mortar were destroyed. The North Novas' Company A moved around the west side of the village, while Company B came around the village's east side. The remainder of the regiment proceeded directly into and through the town.

While Villons-les-Buissons was being taken, A Company advanced to the west of Les Buissons, a town southwest of Villons-les-Buissons. The Canadians encountered and cleared a small group of snipers and machine guns. This took time, however, so when the company was free to continue, the rest of the battalion had moved ahead of them. They were now on their own.

B Company then ran into trouble. They were riding on Shermans when they suddenly came under heavy fire from St. Contest, a village west of Buron. As the shelling was obviously to defend Buron, it became grimly certain to the Canadians that if St. Contest was still in German hands, then so was Buron, and, if Buron was still under German control, it was assured that nearby Authie and Caen were also still held by the enemy. It also seemed obvious to the Canadians that the British 3rd Division, on their left flank, had been unable to keep parallel with them, according to plan. The North Novas and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers found that they were alone and unprotected on either flank.

The Canadian 7th Brigade was keeping parallel with the 9th Brigade but was too far to the right (west)—so much so that none of its units was visible to the North Novas or the Sherbrookes. It was, therefore, very doubtful if the 7th could be of any help if the situation became worse, which it soon did.

Unaware that the odds were rapidly turning against them, the Canadians did not hesitate as the reserve squadron received orders to send one troop after another forward to Buron to assist the vanguard. The Sherbrooke Fusiliers moved quickly and silenced both the German mortar and machine-gun fire, and Buron soon fell.

The Art Archive

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ABOVE: German soldiers, captured by Canadian troops in Normandy, are marched back to a prisoner-of-war holding pen. The Germans did not always treat captives according to the rules of war, as several massacres of Allied troops would soon prove. OPPOSITE: Grizzly tanks of the Canadian 3rd Armored Brigade kick up dust as they roll toward the front in Normandy.

The Canadian push toward Carpiquet was planned on the assumption that they would be facing only units of the 21st Panzer and the 716th Infantry Divisions. Allied air reconnaissance did not report that an entire panzergrenadier regiment, complete with a battalion of PzKpfw IV Ausf (commonly known as the Panzer IV) medium tanks, each mounting a 75mm main gun, was arriving at St. Germain and was assembling on the back slope south of the Caen-Bayeux road.

St. Germain was a short distance from the Abbaye d'Ardenne and the Canadians soon painfully learned that the towers of the Abbaye had become Kurt Meyer's headquarters. The Canadians did not yet know about Kurt Meyer. If the North Novas and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers didn't know about Meyer, he didn't know about them yet, either, but the two regiments would soon be under the powerful and totally unexpected and unprepared-for attacks by Meyer's SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 25.

Meyer's elite Hitler Youth faced the two volunteer Canadian regiments, the North Novas being mainly farmers and fishermen in civilian life, and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, who were mostly volunteer mill and factory workers. Whereas Meyer's "baby soldiers" were commanded by experienced and brutal officers, most of whom had learned their craft in vicious battles in Russia, the men of the Canadian 3rd Division were rightly called "amateur soldiers." Although many of the division's generals were graduates of Canada's Royal Military College, most of the other officers, from colonel on down through lieutenant (except for the very few who had served in World War I), were simply "citizen soldiers" without any combat experience. Many of these "amateurs" had trained for as long as five years, repeating countless drills without ever seeing any blood. That changed on D-Day; it would change much more on D+1. This upcoming battle would be the first battle for both groups.

Meyer set up his headquarters in the Abbaye d'Ardenne, just over a mile from Authie. The Abbaye consisted of an imposing group of medieval buildings that included an early Gothic church, a chateau, and several farm buildings, encircled by stone walls and surrounded by fields of grain. Meyer made the church tower his command post because the Abbaye was on high ground, and this, coupled with the height of the tower, gave him an unrestricted view of the area.

At about 1 PM, the Canadians spotted German armor about a half mile east of Authie and a tank battle began. Sergeant T.C. Reid, writing in his log, reported: "I discovered two [German tanks] at about a distance of 800 or 900 yards. [I was instructed] to take the one on the left and my gunner, Trooper L.J. Gilbert ... with his first, his second and third shots burnt said tank up. In the mean time, Sergeant Cathcart, who had come up and joined us, or Lt. MacLean, I couldn't truthfully say, blew the other [tank] up."

Reid then went on to log the Sherbrooke Fusilier victory in the battle for Authie: "[Our tanks] were running line abreast. The first house we came to gave forth machine-gun fire so I lobbed high explosives (H.E.) in the windows. Those [Germans] that ran out on the road were smacked down by our machine gun fire. We shoved on again and it was a breeze...."

Authie had been taken. What happened after that was not a breeze.

Meyer's corps headquarters had ordered the 12th SS and 21st Panzer units to begin their combined attack against the Canadian beaches at 4 PM, but the unexpected arrival of the North Novas and the Sherbrookes removed all possibility of surprise, and had also raised the chance of his regiment being outflanked. Meyer could not wait until 4 PM and then attack the beaches. Even though his forces were not completely ready, he would hit the "Canadian fishes" at once.

A surprised Meyer had watched the Canadian approach from the Abbaye d'Ardenne tower and had seen the Canadians pass directly in front of his 2nd Battalion panzers. He later wrote in his autobiography, *Grenadiers*: "Was I seeing clearly? An enemy tank was pushing ... [Going forward] then stopped.... The commander opened his hatch and observed the terrain. Was he blind? Didn't he realize he was only 200 meters from [our Second Battalion panzers]? The enemy was showing us its unprotected flank.... I then saw

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Canadian troops ambush a German convoy in a French village in Normandy.

what was happening.… The tank had been sent forward to provide flank cover. The enemy tanks were rolling towards Authie from Buron. My God! What an opportunity. The tanks were moving right across [our front]…. The enemy formation was showing us its unprotected flank….”

Meyer readied two of his three infantry battalions and, also, three Panzer IV companies, with about 50 Panzer IV tanks between them. At about this time, Major Don Learment, who was commanding the Canadian spearhead, felt he could hold Authie and began to organize its defenses. Able Company, advancing on the west, was ordered to dig in on the high ground behind Authie while the rest of the battalion would hold at Buron. Although this was a textbook response to the expectation of an enemy counterattack, it required naval and artillery support to succeed, something the Canadians did not have.

The naval problem was straightforward. A young Royal Navy officer bearing the title Forward Observer, Bombardment, and attached to the 9th Brigade, broke into tears when he lost radio contact with his ship, the light cruiser HMS *Belfast,* a cruiser that was "light" in name but not in clout. *Belfast*'s main armament was the BL Maxis 6-inch gun, which could send a shell to a maximum distance of 14 . Using guns with this range, the *Belfast*, with its four triple-gun turrets, could typically fire at a maximum rate of eight rounds per gun, per minute. Luckily for some Canadians, the young officer's radio was later repaired with radio parts taken from damaged tanks. For other Canadians, the repair came too late. (Today the *Belfast* is a floating museum, moored on the River Thames between the London and Tower Bridges.)

The ground delay involved the 14th Field Regiment which, like the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, was a divisional support unit designed to be sent where needed. The regiment consisted of the 34th, 66th, and 81st Field Batteries, each battery consisting of four field "Priest" 105mm self-propelled guns, these guns derived from American experiences with howitzers mounted on half-tracks. (The weapon was nicknamed "Priest"by its British crews because of its pulpit-shaped machine-gun turret.)

Unfortunately, when two of the 14th's batteries reached Basly, they came under fire and were held up by mortars coming from Douvres-la-Déliverande, a town southwest of Luc-sur-Mer. Because of this holdup, the 14th could not provide artillery support to the North Novas or the Sherbrookes for two hours. The two regiments were thus without either sea and ground support when Kurt Meyer launched his attack.

When Meyer struck, he struck hard. A Squadron of Sherbrooke tanks was attacked by German armor, and the two forward troops on Authie's west side were forced to retreat after losing three of their six tanks. Similarly, B Squadron, to the east of the village, fought a close-range battle before heavy artillery fire and losses forced it to withdraw. Sergeant Stan Duke of the North Nova Scotians recalled: "Within minutes most of our tanks had been knocked out; everything happened so fast we never had a chance. The Shermans went up like torches, explosions first, fire, smoke and screaming men."

With their armor support gone, about 100 North Novas were suddenly cut off and left alone trying to defend both themselves and their Authie position. The only tank they could call upon was a single Firefly, the British variant of the American Sherman, but fitted with a British 17-pounder (76.2mm, 4-inch) antitank gun as its main weapon.

Able Company, on the high ground north of Authie, was still digging in when the Germans attacked, but without armored or artillery support; they were quickly surrounded and taken prisoner. The battle for Authie itself began with a heavy barrage fired by 12th SS artillery; this was followed by a tank-infantry attack. The Canadians held out for more than an hour, beating back several German charges and inflicting more than 100 German casualties but, outnumbered and without support, the Canadians were forced to surrender.

Surrendering to the Hitler Youth became a death warrant for many Canadian prisoners of war. It started when the Hitler Youth began murdering Canadian prisoners in the streets of Authie but did not end there. Canadian POWs were also killed at the Abbaye d'Ardenne, Buron, and elsewhere. In Authie, at the southern end of the village, the Canadian POWs were first disarmed and then told to remove their helmets. They

were then shot at close range and, after this, the Hitler Youth soldiers obscenely mutilated the bodies of the prisoners they had just murdered.

In one incident, German soldiers propped up the body of a murdered Canadian soldier, shoved an old hat onto his head, and then stuffed a cigarette box into his mouth. In another incident, eight lifeless Canadian bodies were dragged onto the street and repeatedly run over by passing Hitler Youth tanks, trucks, and armored vehicles. Horrified French onlookers later testified that the SS troops "whooped like drunken pirates" at what they were doing. (A street corner in southern Authie was named Place des 37 Canadiens in honor of the 37 Canadian prisoners murdered there.)

The murders at the nearby Abbaye d'Ardenne were equally brutal. After the Abbaye had quickly filled with Canadian POWs, 10 were randomly chosen and moved to the chateau next to the abbey; an 11th POW was brought there later. That evening all 11 men—five North Nova and six Sherbrooke POWs—were taken from the garden and shot to death. Ten bodies were found later, six with crushed heads.

On D+2, seven more North Novas were murdered, taken to the Abbaye and then sent one by one to their deaths. They shook hands with their comrades and were escorted by the SS to the Abbaye gardens, where they were each shot in the back of the head.

That night another heinous atrocity against Canadian POWs took place on a moonlit back road, the Caen-Fountenay road, in the Normandy countryside. Forty Canadian POWs were taken to a grassy area next to a grain field northeast of the village of Fontenay-le-Pesnel, about 10 miles west of Caen. Once in the field, they were ordered to sit down, facing east. They were clustered together in several rows, with the stretcher cases placed in the middle. As their SS murderers closed in around them, even the most hopeful of the Canadians now realized they were doomed. Any lingering hopes were shattered when Lieutenant Reginald Barker of the 3rd Canadian Antitank Regiment, who was in the first row of the bunched-together prisoners, and would certainly be hit by the bullets from the first German volley, calmly advised, "Whoever is left after the first round, go to the left."

The battle for Buron lasted longer and the Germans suffered heavier casualties. Buron was lost and then recaptured by the Canadians when contact was established with the HMS *Belfast,* which then began naval support. In addition, the 14th Field Regiment was able to move into a position from which it was able to bring its artillery into action. In spite of being able to hold Buron, the town was later abandoned when Brigade Commander Cunningham decided to move what was left of his battle group to his "Brigade Fortress" in Villons-les-Buissons, a town just five miles north of Caen, in an area that was given the name "Hell's Corners." The Canadians lost 110 killed, 192 wounded, and 120 taken prisoner.

The 9th Brigade was pulled back from Carpiquet and the Caen-Carpiquet airport at the moment when they were close to capturing them. A furious series of battles had taken place on D+1, battles some military historians claim the Canadians lost because of their inexperience. The Canadians were certainly inexperienced, and though these battles might be regarded as a Canadian defeat, it is also possible that a menace to the entire Allied bridgehead might have developed if the outnumbered and outgunned "Canadian fishes" hadn't held their own against superior odds.

The "inexperienced, amateur Canadians" had destroyed 15 German tanks and killed more than 300 Hitler Youth soldiers. These German casualties, together with Meyer's decision to quickly mount a piecemeal full-scale attack with his three battalions, effectively tied up these battalions and thus reduced the chances of further immediate large-scale German offensive action in the Normandy beachhead area.

The D+1 battles for Buron and Authie were over, but the battle for Caen was just beginning. Taking Caen proved to be a bloody and costly fight that finally ended with the town's capture on July 20, 1944—44 days after D-Day. Montgomery's tactics were questioned and criticized during the entire campaign. Eisenhower fumed that "it had taken 7,000 bombs to gain seven miles."

Kurt Meyer was captured on September 6, 1944. The SS commander who wanted his Hitler Youth soldiers to commit suicide rather than surrender was found hiding in a Belgian chicken coop by partisans. The partisans gave Meyer to the Americans, who then handed him over to the Canadians. Aside from deciding suicide was better for his Hitler Youth soldiers than for himself, Meyer never changed his rabid, pro-Hitler attitude, saying to an American interrogator: "You will hear a lot against Adolf Hitler in this camp, but you will never hear it from me. As far as I am concerned, Adolf Hitler was and still is the greatest thing that happened to Germany."

Meyer was put on trial in December 1945 in what had once been a naval barracks in Aurich, Germany. The trial came under the Convening Authority of Maj. Gen. Chris Vokes, who commanded the 3rd Canadian Division of the Canadian Occupation Force. Meyer was found guilty and sentenced to death by firing squad, but the sentence of death was soon commuted to life imprisonment by Vokes.

This lenient treatment caused a firestorm in Canada, and even as late as 1981 Vokes was apparently trying to defend his questionable action: "We ... discussed the question of responsibility of a commander for the action of men under his command.... For instance, if one of his soldiers committed murder, was Meyer guilty of murder [?] But there was a vicarious responsibility...."

The verdict was debated hotly, but it didn't matter. Meyer, first incarcerated in a Canadian prison, was soon sent back to Germany and there released from prison in 1954. He became a beer salesman and, ever the loyal SS officer, was active in HIAG, a mutual help association of Waffen-SS veterans. He died in 1961. After Meyer's trial, there were no further Canadian trials for the murder of POWs. □

THE ROAD TO

A combination of factors led to some of the worst atrocities in history. **BY WALTER ZAPOTOCZNY JR.**

ON AUGUST 15, 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army bombed Nanking, the capital of China. These raids were unrelenting until December 13, when Japanese troops entered the conquered city. For the next month Japanese soldiers killed, raped, looted, and burned. More than 300,000 Chinese died. Six months later random atrocities were still occurring. This is the event known to history as the Rape of Nanking.

For the Chinese, this event is an immediate symbol of outrages committed by Japanese troops during the war. During World War II, all of the major participants in the conflict committed atrocities. These actions were often covered up or denied. Arguably, the actions of the Japanese Imperial Army at Nanking are some of the most horrific and controversial.

Both: National Archives

Roy Brooks writes in his book *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy Over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice,* "The Japanese turned murder into sport. They rounded up tens of thousands of men and used them for bayonet practice or decapitation contests." Sometimes the soldiers simply sprayed gasoline on their victims and burned them alive. They skinned some men alive, tortured others to death with needles, or buried them up to the waist in the soil, and then allowed dogs to rip them apart.

The Chinese women suffered even worse, as many were horribly mutilated after being raped. In an attempt to further degrade their victims, the Japanese forced fathers to rape their daughters, or sons their mothers. The Japanese were equally brutal to infants and small children. Other atrocities are simply unspeakable, ghastly beyond description—on the whole far worse than those committed by the Nazis.

The following is from the description of the documentary film *The Rape of Nanking,* based on Iris Chang's book of the same title:

"Japanese soldiers made a game of torturing and gang-raping women and children. They were encouraged by their officers to invent new and amusing ways of killing and torturing their captives. Murder, rape, and torture, including burning and the rape of children, were believed to be a good way for bolstering the morale of their soldiers."

This type of behavior is all the more astounding because the Japanese Army had a long tradition of honor, chivalry, and courtesy. The actions of the Japanese Nanking units were not in keeping with that tradition as a whole. After a close analysis of the Japanese soldiers, one can see five factors that perhaps had the greatest influence, either directly or indirectly, on these soldiers:

Indoctrination and training
The economic and political conditions that existed in Japan
The characterization of the Chinese populace as morally deficient
The tactical military circumstances in China
The living conditions of the soldiers

When the conditions that led to the severity of the group's actions are studied, one

NANKING

Following a brutal assault, conquering Japanese troops parade triumphantly through the Chungshan gate that leads into Nanking, the capital of China.
OPPOSITE: A Chinese woman weeps for her husband and children, killed during a Japanese bombing raid.

might begin to see why the Japanese soldier acted as he did. By understanding the steps that led to their actions, one can perhaps predict behavior from future army groups given similar circumstances.

Indoctrination and Training

During the Asia-Pacific War, the Japanese were widely regarded as the most fearsome light infantrymen in the field, highly disciplined, devoted to their duty, and ready to fight to the bitter end rather than surrender. This reputation was a product of social influence as well as Army training.

By the 1930s, militarism inundated Japanese society. Many schools gave military instruction to young students. Local elementary schools, for example, taught

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boys military drills using wooden guns. “The greatest honor,” they would tell the young pupils, “is to come back dead.” There were also Army apprentice schools, which took children directly from school at ages 14-15. Colleges also offered military instruction. According to the 1944 U.S. War Department Handbook on Japanese Military Forces, “In Japan, military indoctrination began from infancy.”

Schools were molding a new Japanese citizen to be indifferent to emotions, to be brutal and obedient. Young boys learned to use wooden guns, while older boys were taught the use of real weapons.

The military wanted well-trained Japanese citizens, and capitalized on the discipline learned at school by continuing the abuse. While some draftees died during the brutality of training, the majority became hardened soldiers.

Once a soldier was in the Army, his training emphasized obedience and loyalty over skilled weapon handling. Officers often lined up new soldiers to slap them in the face, punch them, or beat them with belts, sometimes until blood poured down their faces. “I do not beat you because I hate you. I beat you because I care for you” was a mantra used by officers. Therefore, many of their charges soon became immune to violence and to the killing of civilians.

During a soldier’s training, any lack of discipline was punished by superiors with more beatings. By the time the trainee joined his regiment, it was clear to a soldier that it was in his best interest to obey orders blindly. Japanese infantry training was a gradual toughening-up process. It grew in intensity until long marches with full equipment and stiff endurance tests produced the ability to withstand fatigue, hunger and hardship for long periods.

The obedient soldier was exemplified by the well-known and numerous kamikaze attacks (particularly toward the end of World War II), in which Japanese pilots were trained to fly their planes directly into American ships. In order to save or bring honor to the emperor, the Japanese military were ready to sacrifice their lives.

There are certain international laws and codes of conduct that all soldiers must abide by in time of war yet, obviously, the Japanese did not. For example, the rape of women is certainly not permissible but, according to Iris Chang in her book *The Rape of Nanking,* “Rape remained so deeply embedded in Japanese military culture and superstition that no one took the rules seriously.” She asserts that a widespread belief among the Japanese military was that raping virgins would make the Japanese stronger for battle. The official military policy forbade rape, thus encouraging the Japanese to kill their victims afterward.

The individual Japanese soldier’s whole outlook and attitude toward life was influenced by his home life, his schooling, his particular social environment with its innumerable repressing conventions, and his military training. In the Japanese social system, individualism had no place. Children were taught that as members of the family, they must obey their parents implicitly and, forgetting their own selfish desires, help everyone of the family at all times. This system of obedience and loyalty extended to the community and Japanese life as a whole. It permeated upward from the family unit through neighborhood associations, schools, factories, and other larger organizations, until finally the entire Japanese nation was instilled with the spirit of self-sacrifice, obedience, and loyalty to the emperor himself, considered a living god on earth.

Superimposed on this community structure was the indoctrination of ancestor worship and of the divine origin of the emperor and the Japanese race. Since the restoration

of the Imperial rule in 1868, the Japanese government put much stress on the divine origin of the race. They amplified this teaching by describing Japan's warlike ventures as divine missions. Famous examples of heroism and military feats in Japan's history were extolled on stage and screen, in literature, and on the radio. Hero worship was encouraged. Regimentation of the Japanese national life by government authorities, with their numerous and all-embracing regulations, had been a feature for many centuries.

Throughout his military training, the Japanese soldier received instruction that instilled him with a spirit. This spirit could endure and be spurred on to further endeavors when the hardships of warfare were encountered. However, even though his officers appeared to have a zeal, which could be called fanaticism, the private soldier was characterized more by blind and unquestioning subservience to authority.

The determination of the Japanese soldier to fight to the end or commit suicide rather than be taken prisoner may have been prompted partly by fear of the treatment he might receive at the hands of his captors. More likely, though, it was motivated by the disgrace that he realized would be brought upon his family should he fall into the enemy's hands. (Consequently, he felt that any enemy soldiers who surrendered had acted dishonorably and did not deserve to be treated with dignity or respect. POWs of the Japanese were treated much more brutally than POWs in German custody.)

To understand the origins of the behavior of the Japanese, we must look not only to the time immediately preceding the Japanese invasion of China, but also to the 19th century and indeed before.

Japanese society and values were more than a thousand years old; social hierarchy was very important. The warlords of the islands would employ private armies to go into frequent battle with each other. By the medieval times, these armies had become the Japanese samurai warrior class, where the way of the warrior, Bushido, was the code of conduct. Bushido dictated that the greatest honor a warrior could ever achieve was to die in the line of duty in the process of serving his lords.

So strict was this code of conduct that anyone who failed to meet the high standards of the military service felt it their moral duty to perform hara-kiri or seppuku—in which the warrior commits suicide without flinching by disemboweling himself in front of witnesses.

From the 12th century on, Japan's powerful military commanders, the shoguns, offered the emperor protection with this strict military service and, over time, they became the real source of power. The code of the samurai, loosely analogous to the concept of chivalry, became the philosophy of protecting the emperor. Although the samurai comprised only two percent of the population, the code was embedded deeply into the Japanese culture and psyche. It gradually became the model of honorable behavior among all men.

The Economic and Political Conditions That Existed in Japan

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 had seen an almost unbelievably rapid modernization of education, infrastructure, engineering, science, and militarization in Japan. This modernization resulted in the downfall of the shogunate and the disempowerment of the samurai.

Partly as a concession to the samurai, the Japanese government instituted an aggressive foreign policy in Korea and Manchuria in mainland China. In 1904-1905, Japan's power, authority, and self-confidence reached new heights with its defeat of Russia over territorial ambitions in Manchuria.

The prosperity of the 19th century was succeeded by economic collapse in the 1920s and drew down the curtain on Japan's golden era of prosperity. When the end of World War I halted the previously insatiable demand for military products, Japanese munitions factories were shut down and thousands of laborers were thrown out of work, and the international depression of 1929 further reduced demand. Japan's population and unemployment were increasing while food supplies were diminishing.

Furthermore, China, enraged by the

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: With his men as witnesses, a Japanese officer beheads a Chinese prisoner. Such acts were designed to harden soldiers toward death. OPPOSITE: A Japanese soldier bayonets a Chinese POW whose hands and feet are bound. To many Japanese soldiers, anyone who surrendered had dishonored his uniform and did not deserve to live.

Treaty of Versailles provision that granted Japan rights and concessions in the Shantung Peninsula, organized widespread boycotts of Japanese goods. These developments hurt the Japanese economy still further and gave rise to the popular belief that Japan had become the victim of an international conspiracy.

During the Great Depression, some influential political groups argued that Japan must conquer new territory in order to avoid mass starvation. People spoke enviously of the spacious territories of other countries, especially of China's vast land resources. The military propagandist Sadao Araki asked why Japan should accept 142,270 square miles to feed 60 million people, while countries like Australia and Canada had more than 3 million square miles to feed 6.5 million people each. This argument was similar to Nazi Germany's quest for *Lebensraum,* or living space, as a pretext for aggressive expansion.

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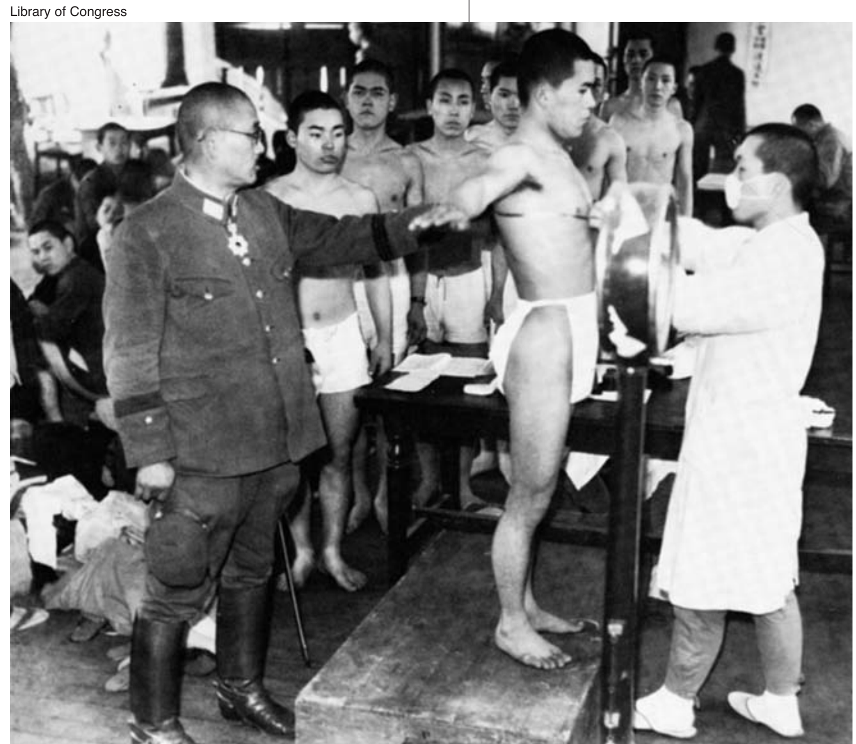

An officer watches as Japanese teenagers are given their pre-induction physicals.

As well as providing new territory for agricultural exploitation, the militarists felt Japan's prestige and influence would be enhanced by such territorial acquisitions. China, weak militarily, seemed like the perfect target. The Japanese knew that the Chinese Army was in the process of reorganization and buildup and were therefore aware of the importance of acting quickly. Education in particular had reached the point where schooling and war preparation had become almost interchangeable.

"The crumbling of autocracy in Europe after World War I, followed by the tide of democracy, socialism, and Communism, had a dramatic impact on the young people of Japan," wrote John Toland in *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945.* They cried for change as political parties emerged and a universal manhood suffrage bill was enacted in 1924. Japan's four main islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku (comprising an area scarcely the size of the state of California)—already had more than 80 million people.

"Farmers, who were close to starvation following the plunge of produce prices, began to organize in protest for the first time in Japanese history," said Toland. "The national economy could not absorb a population increase of almost one million a year. Hundreds of thousands of city workers lost their jobs. Out of all this came a wave of left-wing parties and unions." These movements were counteracted by nationalist organizations that combined a program of socialism with imperialism.

One of the most popular leaders of the nationalist organizations was Ikki Kita. His words appealed to all who yearned for reform: "Seven hundred million brethren in India and China cannot gain their independence without our protection and leadership. The history of East and West is a record of the unification of feudal states after an era of civil wars. The only possible international peace, which will come after the present age of international wars, must be a feudal peace. This will be achieved through the emergence of the strongest country, which will dominate all other nations of the world."

In his monumental book *New History of the World,* J.M. Roberts writes, "When Japan's wartime economic boom finally ended, hard times and social problems followed even before the onset of the world economic depression. By 1931, half of Japan's factories were idle and the official unemployment rate was 24.9 percent. Newspapers of those days reported up to 200,000 undernourished children in farmhouses across the country. The position of the Japanese peasant deteriorated as millions were ruined and many had to sell their daughters into prostitution in order to survive. Unable to pay tenant rents amid such rough economic situations, tenant farmers in arrears increased, and landowners acting against these tenants tried to take away their land."

The political consequences were soon marked by the intensification of national extremism. The collapse of European colonial markets and the entrenchment of what remained of them behind new tariff barriers had a shattering effect. Japanese exports of manufactured goods were down by two-thirds, making it critical for Japan to export to the Asian mainland. Anything that seemed to threaten Japan's markets provoked intense irritation.

By 1928, many felt that Manchuria was one answer to poverty in Japan. The wilderness could be transformed into a civilized, prosperous area. It could alleviate unemployment and provide an outlet for the overpopulated homeland. Japanese troops had been stationed in the Peking area since the end of the Boxer Rebellion in 1901, and

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ABOVE: Militarism permeated every aspect of Japanese society. Here, schoolboys dressed in military uniforms and armed with toy weapons salute a picture of the emperor. BELOW: Japanese philosopher and ultra-nationalist Ikki Kita advocated that his country pursue military means to achieve greatness.

Japan poured a billion dollars into the region, inspiring Japanese, Chinese, and Korean traders and settlers to flood into the area. Many in Japan began to envision Manchuria free of Chinese influence. In the summer of 1931, they took Manchuria away from the Chinese by force and set up a puppet government.

Tensions between China and the Empire of Japan were inflamed by the invasion of Manchuria and creation of the nominally independent state of Manchukuo with Puyi, the last monarch of the Qing Dynasty, as its sovereign. Although the Kuomintang government of China refused to recognize Manchukuo, in 1931 a truce was negotiated.

However, by the end of 1932, the Japanese Army invaded Rehe Province and annexed it to Manchukuo in 1933. Per the He-Umezu Agreement on June 9, 1935, China recognized the Japanese occupation of eastern Hebei and Chahar Provinces. Later that year, the East Hebei Autonomous Council was established by Japan. As a result, at the start of 1937 all of the areas north, east, and west of Peking were controlled by the Japanese.

The Marco Polo Bridge, located outside the walled town of Wanping to the southwest of Peking, was the choke point on the Pinghan Railway and guarded the only passage linking Peking to Kuomintang-controlled areas in the south. Prior to July 1937, the Japanese military had wanted the Chinese forces stationed in this area to withdrawal. They also attempted to purchase land to build an airfield. The Chinese refused, as Japanese control of the bridge and Wanping would completely isolate Peking.

On the night of July 7, 1937, at the ancient stone bridge, an incident ensued that became known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. A Japanese Army company stationed near the landmark was holding night maneuvers about a mile from a large Chinese unit. Just as the signal for the end of the operation came, bullets flew from the Chinese lines. There was a single Japanese casualty—one man missing.

A second company went to the bridge along with a staff officer, who began arranging a truce when another round of bullets poured into the two Japanese companies. The Japanese counterattacked, and it was not until the next morning that both sides agreed to withdraw. Just as the Japanese were pulling out, they again were fired upon and the fighting resumed. The Japanese launched a punitive expedition against Chinese troops that led to war with China.

The Characterization of the Chinese Populace as Morally Deficient

Ideologically, the Japanese were taught that their imperial hierarchy lay at the center of the world morality and that they were superior to all other peoples. As part of this philosophy, China was made the focus of contempt. Initially, some Japanese intellectuals used China to develop a more confident Japanese identity. Japanese teachers instilled hatred and contempt for the Chinese people, preparing young boys psychologically for a future invasion of the Chinese mainland. Iris Chang tells the story about an incident in a school in the 1930s in which a boy started crying while dissecting a frog. The teacher slammed his knuckles against the boy's head and yelled, "Why are you crying about one lousy frog? When you grow up you'll have to kill one hundred, two hundred chinks!"

Even at primary schools, it was part of the curriculum for the teachers to teach a very strong hatred toward the Chinese. Military propaganda filled school textbooks in order to prepare the Japanese boys for what was to come. The lives of Japanese males seemed to be an ongoing preparation for a war against the Chinese. Many of the teachers were military officers whose militaristic views were forcefully taught. Telling evidence was given by Hakudo Nagatomi, who was brought up in Korea, which was at the time under Japanese colonial rule.

"I was taught of Japanese racial superiority," explains Nagatomi, "and the need for Japan to control Asia according to the teachings of the emperor. I was taught to despise other Asians." These teachings had

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the desired effect when Nagatomi participated willingly in the barbarism at Nanking. "On my first day in China, back in 1937, I proved my courage by beheading twenty Chinese civilians. It is very hard to say this, but the truth of the matter is that I felt proud of Japan."

Anti-Chinese attitudes spread in Japan as the popular voices of journalists and politicians condemned China as backward and encouraged Japanese expansion into Chinese territory. By the 1930s, Japanese textbooks taught students to believe in Japan's superior position in Asia, to view China as a civilization in decline, and to consider Chinese people morally deficient. This view permeated the Japanese military, leading to racial slurs and contempt. Soldiers were told that expansion into China was Japan's destiny and that heroic behavior brought victory and death. The overall atmosphere of the Japanese military life created soldiers who followed orders, ignored personal feelings, and treated anyone beneath them with the same contempt that they experienced themselves.

By 1937, Japan was engaged in a full-scale war with China that they continued to call "The China Incident." "Crush the Chinese in three months and they will sue for peace," War Minister Sugiyama predicted. Patriotic fervor swept through Japan as city after city fell, but almost the entire Western world condemned Japan's aggression. On October 5, 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made a forceful speech condemning all aggressors and equating the Japanese, by inference, with the Nazis and Fascists. He said: "When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community. We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement, but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down."

Japanese reaction was quick and bitter. "Japan is expanding," said Yosuke Matsuoka, a Japanese diplomat. "And what country in its expansion era has failed to be trying to its neighbors."

From the beginning of the armed conflict in July 1937, the Japanese government and its supporters, including the mass media, stressed that Chinese Nationalists had planned and initiated armed struggle. According to the official view, Japan had been seeking peace in Asia, only to be dragged into an unwanted military conflict with China.

Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro's decision to dispatch additional forces to China received enthusiastic support from the major national newspapers. In an article in *Asahi*

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ABOVE: Japanese soldiers, shown scaling a wall, trained for up to 14 hours a day, six days a week. Troops were often abused by their instructors if they did not perform well. BELOW: A formation of Japanese tanks advances on Nanking's Gate of China, December 12, 1937.

National Archives

(a widely circulated newspaper in Japan) titled "Obviously Planned Anti-Japanese Armed Conflict; Firmly Decided to Dispatch to Northern China; Determined Statement by the Government to China and Other Countries," the editor used boldface type to emphasize that this incident was no doubt an anti-Japanese armed conflict.

He went on to say that the incident was carefully planned by China and that the Japanese government sincerely hoped that the Chinese side would immediately reflect on its attitude, and that peaceful negotiations would be instituted in order not to worsen the circumstance. The media stressed that the Chinese soldiers and guerrillas were recklessly killing innocent Japanese civilians as well as combatants. Japanese casualties inflicted by unlawful Chinese shootings at the Marco Polo Bridge and other places were widely reported in the newspapers.

When approximately 3,000 Chinese troops in Tongzhou attacked Japanese forces as well as civilians and killed 200 Japanese and Korean residents, the Japanese war correspondents described the event in detail and expressed outrage. *Asahi,* for example, detailed Chinese looting and destruction in the Japanese community as well as the stabbing and killing of women, children, and infants. In another article on the same page, the *Asahi* correspondent Tanaka, who had met survivors of the incident, described his feelings of unprecedented fury and declared, "July 29 must not be forgotten."

A Japanese soldier, Azuma, was stunned at the reluctance of the Chinese Army to fight back. A man who came from such a strict military culture found it incomprehensible that the Chinese would rather be captured than fight an enemy to his death. His automatic impulse was to dehumanize prisoners by comparing them to insects and animals.

Tactical Military Circumstances in China

Japan's expectations of a quick victory over China were shattered when the battle for Shanghai stretched on for several months before the city finally fell in November 1937. The battle was significant in that it effectively destroyed Japan's goal of conquering China in three months and signified the beginning of an all-out war, not just some incidents, between the two countries.

Divided into three stages, the battle lasted three months and involved nearly one million troops. The first stage lasted from August 13 to September 11, during which the Chinese Army defended the city against the Japanese, who were landing at the shores of Shanghai. September 12 to November 4 represented the second stage, during which the two armies fought in a bloody house-to-house battle in an attempt to gain control of the city. The last stage, lasting from November 5 to the end of the month, involved the retreat of the Chinese Army by the flanking Japanese. Approximately 200,000 died on both sides during the battle.

When Shanghai finally fell in November, Japanese military planners and leaders turned their eyes toward the Chinese capital, Nanking, with the goal of retribution. Commanders pushed their units toward Nanking, quickly outpacing supply lines and telling their men to survive on what they could scavenge. Soldiers robbed villages and the Chinese populace they came across as they passed through. Japanese troops forced peasants to carry equipment and goods. In order to end any threat of resistance, villages were razed. Brutalities were excused in the name of war and of capturing Nanking.

Conquering the capital grew in importance with each new atrocity. The Japanese knew that their job was to kill the enemy, and the barely acceptable conditions of the frontline warfare grew worse, thereby amplifying the animal natures of these soldiers as they marched toward the capital city of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government. Officers promised women and plunder to encourage their men. When the soldiers reached Nanking, their expectations of revenge, sex, and goods, combined with the heightened desire to make an example of Nanking and prove Japan's dominance, created an atmosphere conducive to brutality.

The imperial troops advanced toward Nanking with heightened aggression, raiding small villages and razing entire cities to the ground. Japanese soldiers keyed up by the heavy fighting in Shanghai and the losses of their own men were ripe for an outlet of the pressure that had built up within them. The Japanese Army's march to Nanking created multiple factors that made the subsequent atrocities in Nanking highly likely. These were a combination of several factors, both old and new.

First, the near robbery-like requisitioning by Japanese soldiers caused the breakdown of their discipline. Quite a few cases of murder and rape recorded in private diaries were its natural consequence. In this respect, the Japanese troops degenerated into a pre-modern army living off the land to support themselves.

Second, strong anti-Japanese feeling among the Chinese population in the region and the frequent encounters by Japanese troops with straggling and plainclothes soldiers led to the killing of prisoners of war as well as ordinary civilians. Japanese soldiers conducted such ruthless killing because they were highly sensitive to and scared of the plainclothes soldiers. In this respect, the Japanese were fighting a new type of war against the "inner front" as German soldiers had done in Belgium in World War I (and would do again in Russia in World War II).

Third, both sides resorted to burning for their own strategic or tactical purposes. The Chinese implemented a "scorched-earth" policy and burned huge areas to deny the advancing Japanese troops supplies—a campaign of destruction in line with their own tradition. Japanese soldiers frequently burned houses and villages to deprive Chinese irregulars or plainclothes soldiers of their staging bases. Other cases were attributable to the breakdown of discipline, such as Japanese soldiers' carelessness or the sadistic pleasure they found in seeing houses in flames.

John Rabe writes in his diary, *Good Men on Nanking*: "The Japanese marched through the city in groups of ten to twenty soldiers and looted the shops. If I had not

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Manhandling an artillery piece, Japanese troops advance toward enemy positions through the ruins of a Chinese city. OPPOSITE: Proudly posing for the camera, a Japanese soldier shows off his grisly trophy.

seen it with my own eyes I would not have believed it. They smashed open windows and doors and took whatever they liked, allegedly, because they were short of rations. I watched with my own eyes as they looted the cafe of our German baker Herr Kiessling. Hempel's hotel was broken into as well, as was almost every shop on Chung Shang and Taiping Road. Some Japanese soldiers dragged their booty away in crates, others requisitioned rickshaws to transport their stolen goods to safety."

Confronted by spreading rumors and increasing body counts, some Westerners in Nanking assumed that the Chinese exaggerated family losses to get more relief supplies. By spring, burial stories presented death numbers far beyond initial estimates. Westerners reacted with mistrust. This disbelief was rooted in the feeling that a modern people such as the Japanese could not act in such uncivilized ways. Westerners in Nanking actually expected the Japanese to bring a normalcy back to war-torn China.

Living Conditions of the Japanese Soldiers

Once in the field, the Japanese soldier was supposed to have three meals a day, mainly of rice supplemented with fish, meat, vegetables, and fruit. He slept on a mat on the ground. Often, however, the Japanese Army faced supply shortages, and the soldiers more often than not had to fend for themselves. The sick or dying were often left alone, as medical care was very basic, if not nonexistent. Malaria, dysentery, cholera, and beriberi took many lives.

The Japanese attacked Shanghai and began bombing Nanking in August 1937 with the expectation that the Chinese forces could be easily subdued and all of China would fall in a matter of months. Instead, the siege of Shanghai required four months of bloody fighting. This angered the Japanese high command and the frontline soldiers who had watched their comrades die at the hands of the despised Chinese.

Japanese forces in China faced the constant threat of guerrilla attacks while trying to deal with a severe lack of supplies. These attacks often came from the Chinese armies, but Chinese organizations of various kinds also resisted the Japanese presence.

The battle for Shanghai ended in mid-November with a successful landing of Japan's 10th Army at Hangzhou Bay in the south, and of the 16th Division at Baimaokou in the north. These landings threatened the Chinese forces' flank and forced them to withdraw to the west.

On November 19, the 10th Army, led by Lt. Gen. Yanagawa Heisuke, cabled to headquarters: "The group is commanded to put on a spurt in pursuit of the retreating Chinese to Nanking." The sweating, dust-covered soldiers marched, accompanied by countless swarms of circling flies. The story of the Japanese Army in China at the end of 1937 is one of hard fighting in the capture of Shanghai and outrunning their supply lines on the way to Nanking, forcing them to forage for food. After experiencing heavier losses than expected, they felt a great deal of anger toward the Chinese.

Contrary to the Japanese military's intention to seek a decisive battle in northern China, Chiang Kai-shek tried to avoid such a showdown in that theater in order to concentrate his military effort in Shanghai. Subsequently, the Chinese troop concentration and the Japanese initial strategy of maintaining a defensive posture in the Shanghai area resulted in stalemated positional warfare.

Historians and observers generally dwell on the more advanced equipment used by the Japanese as compared with the relatively outdated weaponry with which the Chinese equipped themselves at the Battle of Shanghai. The Japanese troops, however, had their own problems. Although they had more artillery, they did not have sufficient or reliable ammunition. Foot soldiers often complained that many of their hand grenades did not explode. One company commander referred to such a defective weapon as "the leftover of the Russo-Japanese War."

As a result, a ranking officer of the General Staff who inspected the Shanghai front concluded in his report that the Japanese Army's equipment for close-range fighting was inferior to that of the Chinese troops in terms of both quality and quantity. One soldier of the 19th Mountain Artillery Regiment also said, "The enemy's machine guns, firing almost without interruption, make our infantry charge nearly impossible."

In the static battle of attrition, the Japanese losses amounted to 9,115 killed and

31,257 wounded by the end of the Shanghai campaign in early November 1937. The heavy casualties caused bitter resentment at home. After the Chinese defense in and around Shanghai crumbled, the ranking Japanese generals wished to punish the enemy by pursuing him all the way to Nanking.

The 10th Japanese Army started its full-scale advance to Nanking on December 3. This hastily planned and executed military campaign caused considerable confusion and even contradiction in the conduct of frontline troops. Because the Japanese had decided on the Nanking campaign without adequate prior planning or logistical arrangement, they could not supply the advancing troops sufficiently. Apparently, the Japanese depended mainly on water transportation for sending materials forward.

Major Kisaki Hisashi, a staff officer of the 16th Division, said in his diary, "Supply columns have not arrived yet. Beyond Tanyang, there is no river route. Moreover, motor vehicles could not run due to the conditions of the road."

When some troops could not obtain necessary food and other materials, these items were sometimes supplied by air drops. In most cases, however, the Japanese Army had to live off the land. Even General Matsui apparently hoped to procure a substantial amount of food in the enemy's territory. Although he worried about the supply situation in his diary on November 20, he quickly added, "We need not be concerned about the victuals despite the lack of supply because rice is plentiful in the areas where the troops are operating."

The Army leadership set forth the same principle in its official guideline for the Nanking campaign; that is, it would give a logistical priority to ammunition rather than food for, after all, a hungry soldier with ammunition can still fight, but a well-fed soldier without ammunition cannot.

A U.S. military attaché's report underlined this supply policy. According to Major Harry I.T. Creswell, acting U.S. military attaché to China, the Japanese Army used horse-drawn carts as a major means of transportation and loaded most of the carts with ammunition and only a few with rations for the men and forage for the animals. In addition to a severe weakness in their logistics operations, Japanese forces in China faced the constant threat of guerrilla attack. Wherever Japanese were in China, they faced varying degrees of hostility, which put further pressure on supply lines.

In Conclusion

The stories of the Japanese Imperial Army units in Nanking, China, in one respect are not unique in the study of man's treatment of his fellow man during war. Soldiers as individuals or in small groups have committed atrocities in all conflicts down through the ages. What happened in Nanking was a spontaneous outbreak of incredible violence and brutality, and it says a great deal about the Japanese military and culture at the time that it was allowed to go on for so long.

The Japanese generals who took time out to toast the early success of their China campaign in 1937 drew their jubilation not only from the quick rout of the numerically superior enemy but also from deep cultural roots. By the very act of fighting, they were fulfilling the ancient role of the samurai—the medieval warrior whose fate was conquest or death. The Japanese warriors in China found plenty of both.

Within two years after they swarmed over the Great Wall from attack points in occupied Manchuria, the Japanese had swept south and east 1,200 miles. On the way, their 600,000-man force suffered 60,000 casualties and killed two million Chinese. Among those killed were civilians, butchered in a distinctly un-samurai-like orgy of murder at Nanking.

On November 1, 1948 Japanese General Iwane Matsui, commander in chief of the Central China Area Army, which included the Shanghai Expeditionary Force and the Tenth Army, was indicted by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and convicted of Count 55, "Deliberately and recklessly disregarded their duty to take adequate steps to prevent atrocities."

The verdict read: "Before the fall of Nanking, the Chinese forces withdrew and the occupation was of a defenseless city. Then followed a long succession of most horrible atrocities committed by the Japanese Army upon the helpless citizens. Wholesale massacres, individual murders, rape, looting, and arson were committed by Japanese soldiers. Although the extent of the atrocities was denied by Japanese witnesses, the contrary evidence of neutral witnesses of different nationalities and undoubted responsibility is overwhelming. This orgy of crime started with the capture of the City on the 13th of December, 1937 and did not cease until early in February 1938. In this period of six or seven weeks, thousands of women were raped, upwards of 100,000 people were killed, and untold property was stolen and burned.

"At the height of these dreadful happenings, on the 17th December, Matsui made a triumphal entry into the city and remained there from five to seven days. From his own observations and form the reports of his staff, he must have been aware of what was happening. He admits he was told of some degree of misbehavior of his Army by the Kempetai and by Consular Officials. Daily reports of these atrocities were made to Japanese diplomatic

Continued on page 94

THE POWER *of* CLOTH

THE NON-UNIFORM UNIFORMITY OF THE THIRD REICH BY G. PAUL GARSON

The evolution of the Nazi-era military wardrobe followed from a long history of European uniforms in general and Imperial German uniforms in particular. It is acknowledged that the varied apparel worn by the German armed forces is, and has been, the most popular focal point of interest in the entire field of uniform history.

In that highly militarized society, some 20,000,000 Germans, both men and women (and even children), donned a uniform of one kind or another during the 12-year reign of the Third Reich. The dramatic designs of Nazi-era uniforms were created in a wide assortment of styles and colors and, in great part, helped to project and promote the image of Nazi Germany as a powerful nation—a nation to be feared and respected.

The pantheon of medals, badges, pins, ribbons, and other emblems literally "advertised" the prowess and achievements of their wearers. Uniforms apparently often had a direct effect on the individual wearing the uniform. In many cases, they seem to transform ordinary men and women into personifications of the State and the ideology it represented.

Well, it was so theatrical. You know, I guess pure evil ... whoever designed the Nazi's uniforms was a theatrical genius. And the German cause was pure evil, that's all there was to it. I don't think there's been another war like that.

—Kurt Vonnegut

Models—Standard Army Issue **(Above)**
As if posing for a catalogue photo, three soldiers in a casual photo happen to display three variations of Army uniforms and equipment. The soldier on the left wears the "all-purpose" *Zeltbahn* (1934 camouflage pattern in green, brown, and beige). The triangular-shaped item could be worn as a poncho, for concealment or several could be lashed together to create a makeshift shelter.

The enlisted man or *Landser* in the center wears the standar-issue infantry uniform used in the Polish and French campaigns with relatively little change from the WWI German uniform (including the Model 1911 triple rifle cartridge pouches). The gray-green M35 tunic is matched to basic field-gray trousers. It features the national emblem of eagle and swastika on the right, standard for all ranks.

The third trooper wears the field-gray long winter coat or *Ubermantel* and what appears to be an M35 steel helmet while his companions wear soft field caps. All three are shod in the standard marching boots (*Marschstiefel*) produced up to 1940, when shorter lace-up boots were introduced to save costs and leather. The so-called "jackboots," nicknamed *Knobelbecher* or "dice-shakers," featured the well-known hobnail-impregnated soles. The soldiers also wear the standard enlisted man's silver metal belt buckle with the inscription "*Gott Mit Uns*"—"God with us."

Uniform Catalogue **(Oppposite Top)**
A page from a uniform catalogue presents illustrations of uniforms for a lieutenant and a section leader/sergeant in the SA Marine unit. The catalogue was printed prewar and prior to the dissolution of the SA (*Sturmabteilung*) in 1934 after its purge by Hitler and the SS.

Father of Wehrmacht Family
(Oppposite Bottom)
A proud father poses with his three sons, each a member of a different branch of the Germany military—Heer (Army), Kriegsmarine (Navy), and Luftwaffe (air force). Prior to its renaming as the Wehrmacht under the Third Reich, the military forces of Germany were known as the *Reichswehr.*

(All Photographs and Images from Author's Collection)

Luftwaffe Cameraman (Left)

A color photo would reveal that these uniforms were of a light blue color while the patch on the cameraman indicates he is a member of a geographical mapping unit. The three "wings" on both men's collar tabs indicate a rank of *Obergefreiter* (corporal) while their smoking comrade is an NCO Stabsfeldwebel (staff sergeant*)*.

"Life is hardest on the last day before the first!" (Below)

A young Army soldier counts his few pfennigs at the end of the month and prior to pay day. He wears his Waffenrock field-green formal "walking out," or parade, dress uniform with its elaborate cuffs. Before being abolished at the outbreak of WWII, these tunics were modeled after the old Imperial Army uniform and often hand-tailored for their owner. The various color tabs, braid, insignia, and other decorative trim also served to identify rank and branch of service.

Army Panzerman—Basic Black and Death's Head (Bottom)

Panzer or tank would be a key word in the Third Reich's strategy of Blitzkrieg—the lightning war that coordinated aircraft and motorized armor to devastating effect. The creation of the new tank arm of the Wehrmacht called for a special black uniform design (*Sonderbekleidung*), one influenced by the original Imperial German Death's Head Hussar uniform, and issued to all ranks in all armored fighting vehicles. The *Totenkopf* or death's head insignia was also originally worn by the Bodyguard-Hussars, later by the SS initially for concentration camp personnel, then adopted by the Waffen-SS combat troops as well as the panzer divisions.

Kriegsmarine Ceremony at Kiel

The elegant dress uniforms of the German Navy seem a throwback to the previous century. Officers, one seen here holding the Kriegsmarine battle flag, often had their uniforms tailored for extra smartness while the designers of the Third Reich "costumes of conquest" were some of the most talented in Germany. Kiel, the site of this photo, is located some 60 miles north of Hamburg, strategically situated in northern Germany on the Jutland peninsula and the southwestern shore of the Baltic Sea. During Nazi Germany's 1930s military expansion, the Kiel shipyards prospered with the construction of Kriegsmarine vessels from battleships to submarines. Suffering some 35 bombing raids during the war, 80 percent of the city was destroyed.

Costumes of War (Left)

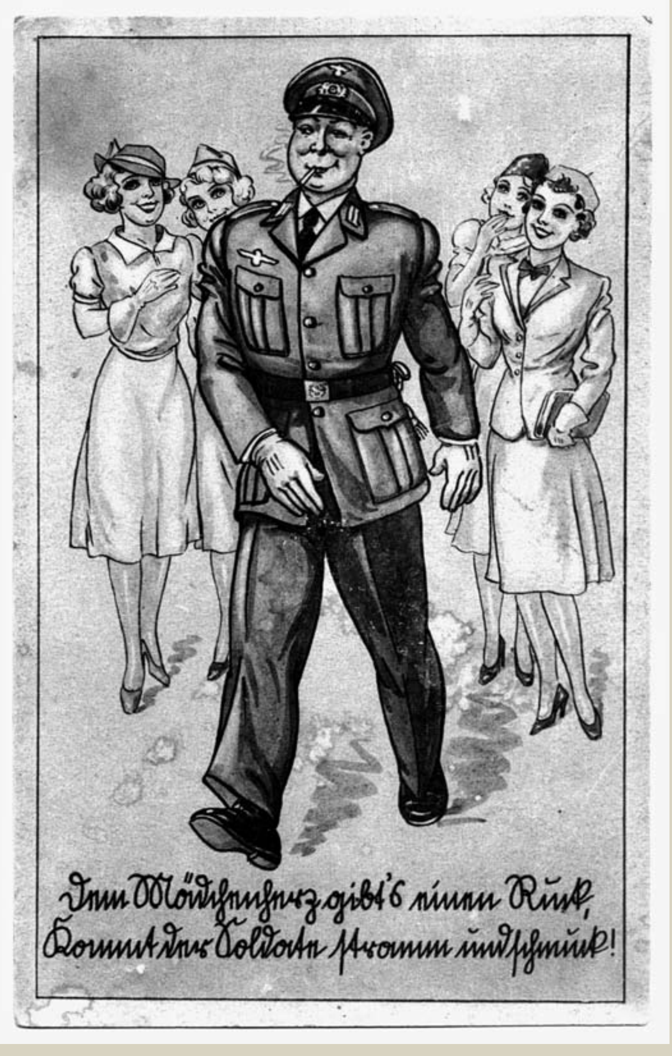
Two soldiers have been "volunteered" to serve as extras in one of Josef Goebbels's epic historical propaganda films. Some 2,000 were produced during the Third Reich's 12 years and literally to the very last days of the war. While the actors wear plumed caps, their standard-issue comrade wears an M34 field cap that was nicknamed *Schiffschen* or "little boat" because of its shape.

Monochromatic Confusion (Below)

This postcard speaks to the "girl magnet" effects of a man in uniform. German uniforms are most often seen in black and white images but were actually produced in a wide spectrum of colors with an equally large range of collar tabs, patches, emblems, badges, medals, pins, and other detailing. Depending on the branch of the military, the identifying color system (*Waffenfarber*) of shoulder straps alone included carmine, bright red, white, gold yellow, lemon yellow, copper brown, light green, grass green, cornflower blue, light blue, black, gray-blue, light gray and rose pink, silver, and gold.

Luftwaffe in Color

Another uniform catalogue illustration shows a pilot lieutenant in a protective flying suit and a staff sergeant of the Signal Corps wearing his dress uniform. In the background the artist has included renderings of three Stuka aircraft. The pilot's sleeve indicates he has been credited with downing two enemy aircraft and sunk one naval vessel. The sergeant wears the Iron Cross, both second and first class indicated.



Polish soldiers, wearing British uniforms, fire a two-inch mortar while taking cover beside a destroyed German self-propelled gun.

Both: National Archives

BLOOD *in the* SOIL

In spite of their valor during the Allied fight for Italy, the soldiers of the Polish II Corps became displaced refugees at the end of the war. **BY GLENN BARNETT**

In 1939 the one thing that Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin could agree on was the partition of Poland. Czarist Russia and Prussia had done so three times in the 18th century, and the protocol and mechanics were well known. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact negotiated by the foreign ministers of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, and named for them, was a standard nonaggression pact that contained a secret agreement—the amicable division of the country that lay between them. But the Nazis and Soviets would add their own ruthless twist to the partition: genocide.

Major General Wladyslaw Anders, commander of the Polish II Corps.

Because of previous partitions, Poland had been a part of Russia at the turn of the century. When the Communists bludgeoned their way to power in Russia in 1917, Wladyslaw Anders joined with other Polish soldiers to support a new Polish state. He fought against the Red Army in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920 and participated in the decisive Battle of Warsaw, which assured Polish independence.

On September 1, 1939, the German Army created an "incident" and invaded Poland. On the 17th the Russians attacked from the east. The two armies advanced to prearranged positions, and Poland ceased to exist for the duration of the war.

Wladyslaw Anders, now a general, fought against the invaders as long as he could. He commanded a cavalry unit against the Germans. When the Russians attacked he shifted his army to face the new threat and kept fighting until he was captured.

Anders began his career as an officer in the czarist army in World War I with command of an all-Polish Corps.

In 1939, when he was trapped between his country's enemies, he surrendered to the Soviets. The next year and a half of his life was spent in prison because he refused to sign a document expressing his willingness to join the Red Army. For that he was kept in an unheated, windowless cell during the bitter winter of 1939-1940. Temperatures outside dropped to -22 degrees Fahrenheit, causing Anders to suffer from frostbite. In the spring, still refusing to sign, he was transferred to another prison, where he was kept in solitary confinement with a bright light shining on him day and night. He was incessantly interrogated and often denied food. For a time he was held in the notorious Lubyanka prison in Moscow.

Stanislaw (Stan) Cybulski was 13 in 1939. He lived in the village of Medyka on the banks of the San River, just inside the Soviet zone of occupation. Before the war Stalin had uprooted potentially rebellious people in the Soviet Empire and sent them

to Siberian labor camps. The people of eastern Poland were to be next. Any man considered to be a leader was shipped out first. In February 1940, 220,000 men, women, and children were deported. Stan's father was sent to a labor camp near Murmansk on the White Sea. Stan, along with his mother and two sisters, was sent to a labor camp in Siberia. The brutally cold and crowded train trip lasted three weeks. Initially they were housed in a drafty hut with more than 200 other people. There were only three small wood-burning stoves in each hut. Spanish inscriptions on the wall told of the former occupants, prisoners from the Spanish Civil War.

National Archives

In April 1940, 320,000 more Poles were shipped by rail to Kazakhstan. In June and July, 240,000 more were removed from Poland. These were mostly civilians, and their fate was to work on collective farms and in mines and factories. Polish sources estimate that during the war 1,700,000 Poles were uprooted from their homes by the Soviets and that one million of those died or were unaccounted for while in Soviet custody. One of them was Stan Cybulski's older sister.

The military was dealt with separately. Estimates of the number of Polish military personnel who fell into Russian hands range from 200,000 to 300,000 men. The officers were separated from enlisted men and kept in separate camps.

Stan Cybulski, too young to work (the minimum age for workers was 15), was sent to school with other Poles and Russian youth from a local farm. Instruction was in Russian.

It was not so easy for his mother. The local industry was lumber. Trees were felled and dragged to a makeshift steam-operated sawmill. Mrs. Cybulski and other women were made to hand-saw timber and haul water for the steam engine. After school Stan would help his mother with the chores. Sometimes he would search the nearby woods for mushrooms and berries to supplement his family's meager diet of bread, potatoes, and cabbage. Their only meat came if a workhorse died.

The prisoners were allowed to build new huts for themselves according to Soviet specifications. The new accommodations slept 10 or 11 people from three families in one room. Each room had its own stove.

The surprise German invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, changed everything. Desperate for manpower and allies, the Soviet government recognized the London-based Polish government in exile. They then forged an agreement for Polish prisoners in the USSR to form a military unit with a Polish commander but subordinate to the Red Army. The Polish government chose General Anders to lead their new unit.

On August 4, Anders was brought directly from his prison cell for a meeting with NKVD chief Lavrenti Beria and told of his new assignment. He was then given a comfortable apartment in Moscow.

The Soviets freed the Poles from their gulags and labor camps and encouraged the formation of a Polish Army from these tired and hungry men. Funding for the new army in the USSR was paid for by means of "credits" or loans extended by the Soviets, to be reimbursed by the Polish government and Great Britain.

Among those released was Stan Cybulski's family. Miraculously, his father had located them from his distant camp on the White Sea and made the long train ride to be reunited with them. From there they joined a mass Polish exodus to the south, where the army was forming up. It was not easy. Soviet authorities did little to facilitate the move. Every Pole was on his or her own. Many had to work or beg to afford passage on trains headed south. Some died of exposure or hunger along the way. The Soviet Union was a vast land, and no one was quite sure where the new Polish Army was. Stan Cybulski's father worked for a few weeks on a road construction gang in Kyrgyzstan to purchase railroad tickets for the next leg of his family's journey.

Not all Poles were released, however. Thousands were retained to work in factories and mines and on collective farms, or conscripted directly into the Red Army. But for those who did manage to join Anders, salvation was at hand.

Anders was given extensive leeway by the Soviet government in the formation of the new army. His reputation and fluent Russian opened doors for him. He was even allowed to meet with Soviet leader Josef Stalin. He insisted that the families of soldiers be allowed to join them so that the men would not have to worry about them. Stalin agreed.

The initial understanding was that Anders was to enlist a force of 10,000 men to be armed by the Soviets and sent into battle by October 1, 1941. The six-week window for enlisting, arming, and training was clearly unrealistic; Anders did not think his men would be ready for battle until June 1942. Anders was right—the men who were being recruited came straight from the wretched labor camps. They were malnourished and diseased and clearly not ready to fight.

Supply problems, too, were rampant. By November, Anders had recruited 44,000 soldiers but had only 160 rifles. More than 40 percent of the men had no shoes. Food was scarce throughout the entire country, and the Soviets were reluctant to feed 44,000 men and their families, who were not fighting. Stalin argued that they were to be fed from rations sent by Great Britain through Iran, but these were slow in coming. Soviet author-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Polish soldiers on parade in the Soviet Union before being sent to Iran. BELOW: Joyful familiy members are allowed to accompany the Polish troops to Iran. OPPOSITE: Former inmates of a Soviet gulag, these Poles nevertheless volunteered for the new Polish army being raised by the Russians.

ities then ordered Anders to reduce his army to 30,000 men and send the rest to labor camps. Anders refused. The Soviets retaliated by providing rations for only 30,000 men. Anders divided what he received among all of his soldiers and civilians.

By February 1942, Anders's men had received British-style uniforms and small arms. Food shipments also improved. At least one of his divisions was ready for battle and the Soviets insisted that they be sent to the front at once. But the division had no heavy weapons. The Soviets informed Anders that these would be provided at the front, but the Polish general insisted that his men needed training in using these weapons before going into battle.

In March, Anders met with Stalin again. He now had two divisions armed and trained, but recruits kept coming in and his total manpower was at 70,000, not including families. Because of nationwide food shortages, Stalin was not willing to feed more than 44,000. The rest were to be sent to Iran where they could be fed and trained. The goal was for them to return to Russia to join the fight. In April 1942, 30,000 soldiers and 12,000 civilians left the Soviet Union for Iran. Some traveled overland by truck, but most were shipped across the Caspian Sea in overcrowded boats. Stan Cybulski and his family were among them.

Up to 40 percent of the evacuees to Iran were infested with lice and other vermin. When the refugees came ashore in northern Iran, their clothes were taken from them and burned. They were deloused and given new clothes. Most were also diseased with typhus and ailments associated with malnutrition. The weakened evacuees had to be careful what they ate; too much rich food all at once would kill them. Their new diet contained a great deal of rice, which was easier to digest than meat.

As the soldiers of the former Polish Army began to swell the ranks of this new army, the junior officers were unaccounted for. No one had seen them since Soviet authorities separated them from the enlisted men. The Soviets kept making excuses for their absence.

While the first evacuation to Iran was taking place in April 1942, the Germans announced that they had found a mass grave of Polish officers and civilians in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk. The death toll there and in three other camps would eventually be calculated at 14,000 officers and more than 7,000 civilians. The massacre, according to the Germans, was committed by the Soviets. Stalin's government denied everything. Yet only 12 days after the German announcement, the Soviets broke off relations with the Polish government in London, which had demanded a full investigation of the incident at Katyn.

Anders and his men knew instinctively that the report of the massacre was true. They had not seen these officers since they were separated from their men late in 1939. Most of Anders's men, like him, had suffered in Soviet prisons and labor camps. They knew quite well that Stalin was capa-

ble of such a thing. Anders was all the more anxious to get his men out of Russia. The Russians, fearing an armed enemy loyal to the Polish government in London within their borders, were happy to see them go.

Before the Katyn massacre was revealed, the Red Army did not want any more Polish fighters to leave the country for Iran. After that event, and the break in relations with the London Poles, they supported the departure. Soviet authorities did not like the idea of a disaffected armed force, loyal to the exiled Polish government within their borders.

In July, the second evacuation took place. This time, 70,000 Poles—including 25,000 civilians and General Anders—made the long trip to Iran. In all, the official total of evacuees reached 115,000.

When Anders was negotiating with the Russians to send his men out of the country, the Soviets insisted that Jewish soldiers not be included in the evacuation. He ignored their demands. As many as 4,000 Jewish soldiers and 3,000 Jewish civilians were included in the evacuation to Iran.

The Poles who remained in the Soviet Union would either be conscripted into the Red Army or continue to labor in fields and factories for the duration of the war. For many of them it was a death sentence.

Anders and his fledgling army made their way to Iraq for further training. There they were joined by the Independent Carpathian Brigade, which had formed in Britain in 1940 from Polish exiles who had escaped to the West. They had fought in North Africa and distinguished themselves at Tobruk. They now became a part of Anders's army.

The civilians who had been brought out of Russia were sent to refugee camps in India and Africa. Stan Cybulski's family and 4,000 others ended up at Camp Masindi in Uganda. There they built a red-brick church that is still used by Ugandan Catholics today. Stan returned to school where instruction was now in Polish while English, French, and Latin were offered as second languages.

General Anders continued to train and equip his army—only this time, instead of the Russians, he was dealing with the British. Polish exiles had already proven their worth to the British. Before the war Polish scientists had broken the German "Enigma" code and provided that knowledge to the British. Much has been said about the importance of the compromised Enigma code to the Allied war effort.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Members of a Carpathian Division artillery unit blast German positions at Cassino, March 1944. OPPOSITE: Polish soldiers, attached to the British Eighth Army in Italy, slog along a flooded road.

The Polish Podhalanska Brigade fought with the British at German-occupied Narvik in Norway. Polish pilots swelled the ranks of the RAF during the Battle of Britain, and Polish crews manned up to 27 ships and submarines for the Royal Navy.

Anders wanted to dramatically increase Polish participation in the war effort. He proposed creating a Polish Army of two corps. The British countered by insisting that the Poles form a single corps of two divisions, and so the Polish II Corps was born.

From Iraq the Poles made their way to Palestine. While in Palestine, the Polish Army experienced a number of defections; more than half of the Jewish soldiers deserted to be a part of the Zionist experiment. Their military training would be of great service when Israel fought for its independence. One of the Jewish soldiers, Menachem Begin, refused to desert but requested discharge papers from the Polish Army. When he was honorably discharged, Begin remained in Palestine, where he would become a leader in the nascent Jewish state. Many other Jews fought and some died with II Corps. General Anders and his officers knew of these defections but allowed the Jews to make their own choices.

While the Polish Army was going through its long ordeal, the war in the west shifted from North Africa to Sicily and then to Italy. From Palestine Anders's II Corps was trucked to Egypt, where it was maintained in a huge camp at Quassassin near Suez.

In early December 1943, after talks between Anders and Allied commanders, it was decided that II Corps would be sent to southern Italy under British command to reinforce the Allied forces. Because of the limited space available on a small number of transports, the move took place between December 1943 and May 1944. Things had changed since their last voyage across the Caspian Sea in 1942. Before, they were desperate refugees; now they were a confident army.

Stan Cybulski turned 17 in December 1943 and in May 1944 he left Uganda for Quassassin in Egypt, where he enlisted with the Polish forces in the Middle East and began his basic training.

In Italy the Polish II Corps now numbered 52,000 men in two divisions (the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division with the old Carpathian Brigade at its core, and the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division, consisting of men who had come out of Russia with Anders). There was also an armored brigade, a reconnaissance regiment, an artillery regiment, and a tank division. The II Corps was equipped with 189 tanks, 245 armored cars, 500 mortars, 250 antitank guns, 230 field guns, 132 anti-aircraft guns, and some 3,000 machine guns.

If there was a weakness in the Polish Army, it was that it was cut off from its source of new recruits and reinforcements; no new recruits could get out of Poland or the Soviet Union. Anders's solution was unorthodox. He let it be known that he would recruit from German POWs. At this point in the war, the Wehrmacht forcibly conscripted men from Poland and elsewhere in their conquered empire. In the Italian campaign the Germans relied on these conscripts to fill their depleted ranks. Anders received permission to interview Poles in German uniform who had been taken prisoner. He would enlist those willing to fight.

The II Polish Corps arrived in Italy in the midst of a stalemate. The Allies had secured southern Italy by the end of 1943 and the Italians had not only surrendered but gone over to the Allied side. The Germans, however, had no intention of surrender. Despite their recent crushing defeat at the Battle of Kursk, they dispatched significant forces to occupy Italy.

The Germans quickly disarmed their former Italian allies and moved forces to the south. At the same time, the Allies, victorious in Sicily, invaded Italy at several places in the foot of the Italian boot. The outnumbered Germans retreated slowly while buying time to fortify a major defense line that made maximum use of the natural terrain— mountains, rivers, and narrow valleys. Called the Gustav Line, it stretched across the entire peninsula. Concrete pillboxes and steel-topped machine-gun nests provided interlocking fire on the approaches to the heights where the Germans had dug in. Naples had to be given up, but Rome was to be protected at all costs.

Meanwhile, the Allies advanced up both coasts of Italy. The U.S. Fifth Army under Mark Clark operated out of Naples and marched along the west coast while the British Eighth Army under General Oliver Leese advanced along the Adriatic coast until it reached the German line anchored on the mountaintop Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino. At that point, the Allied advance stalled completely. The mountain chain around the monastery dominated the Liri Valley, through which ran one of only two roads connecting Rome with southern Italy (Route 6). The other road, which ran along the coast, was the famous Appian Way of antiquity (Route 7). It, too, was dominated by German-controlled heights.

The monastery atop Monte Cassino was one of the most famous in Christendom. It had been established by Saint Benedict in the sixth century and over time had become a repository of valuable art works and a world-renowned library. The mount that it crowned was to become the key to the German defense line.

With the help of the Germans, the movable art and books of the monastery were transported to the Vatican for safekeeping. In all, 120 truckloads of the priceless treasures were secured without loss. It was a wise decision, as the German propaganda machine boasted of their efforts to save the collection from harm's way. German commanders vowed not to garrison the monastery or the grounds surrounding it within 330 yards. By all accounts they kept their promise.

The Italian winter of 1943-1944 was brutal. Cold rains turned unimproved and unpaved roads to mud while overcast skies neutralized Allied air superiority. The weather and terrain combined to favor the defender.

Between January and May 1944, while the Polish II Corps was arriving in Italy, three major attacks were launched against the mountainous Gustav Line, where a major stalemate had developed. On January 20 the Americans, led by the 36th "Texas" Division, advanced into the Liri Valley while farther east elements of the Free French fought their way into the foothills. The U.S. 34th Division almost overran Monte Calvario (Point 593), a height that dominated the key position at Monte Cassino. These assaults were designed to pull German troops out of Rome to defend against them, while two

days later a bold amphibious landing by VI Corps was made at Anzio 60 miles behind the Gustav Line in an effort to cause the Germans to abandon the defenses and flee northward. Counterattacks, however, threw them back with great loss.

The British and American troops put ashore at Anzio were to rush inland, threaten the Germans from behind, and break up their defenses. But Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas, the VI Corps commander, fearing a counterattack, decided to dig in to protect his beachead. The pause gave the Germans enough time to counterattack and contain the Allied pocket. Hitler himself ordered the beachhead to be eliminated. In all likelihood the Americans at Anzio would have been thrown into the sea if not for the accurate and deadly support of dozens of offshore naval guns. Long-range German guns dueled with the close-in destroyers and transports. Still, the result was a deadly German ring around Anzio that tied up Allied resources and men.

More landings behind enemy lines might have been successful, but all the available landing craft were now required to be sent to Great Britain to support the upcoming invasion of northern France. The attacks against the Gustav Line also failed.

The frustration of the Americans soon took a horrific turn.

Convinced that the Germans were using the monastery of Monte Cassino for artillery spotting or for the actual mounting of guns, they resolved to destroy it. On February 15, 1944, 200 Allied bombers dropped 576 tons of bombs on the sacred monastery, reducing it to rubble. Yet the outer walls and cellars of the ruin were untouched. There was no evidence that the Germans had violated their word about using the monastery, but they commandeered it after the bombing and used the twisted ruins to rain death on the Allies below. After the war General Clark would write that the bombing of Monte Cassino was "a tactical military error of the first magnitude."

On the evening of the monastery bombing, the New Zealand Corps joined in the second attack, supported by troops of the 8th Indian Division. The Indian units included the justly famous Gurkha Rifles. Their assignment was to attack the Monte Calvario position that the 34th couldn't hold. At first all went well, but, as with the first attack, the result was heavy casualties and little to show for it. The Indian Division lost 600 men.

National Archives

ABOVE: Even in ruins, the Benedictine monastery atop Monte Cassino loomed as a formidable fortress. BELOW: Battle-hardened members of the 1st Parachute Division were one of 23 German divisions defending Monte Cassino and the Gustav Line. OPPOSITE: By May 1944, the Allies threw everything they had at finally breaking through the Gustav Line at Cassino and opening the road to Rome.

Imperial War Museum

The next attack, in March, was preceded by an eight-hour barrage from 890 guns that consumed 200,000 shells. It had little effect on German positions but created piles of rubble that impeded the progress of the New Zealanders and Indians, who were having another go at it. The offensive lasted for eight days, but in the end only slight progress was made against the German positions. By now the New Zealanders were totally spent.

In mid-March, Anders was visited by General Leese, his nominal boss as head of the

British Eighth Army. Leese told the Polish commander that a new offensive was planned and asked if the Polish II Corps was prepared to take part in it. Leese envisioned an offensive along a 20-mile front with the intention of breaking through to the trapped men at Anzio and opening the road to Rome. He wanted the Poles to attack the most difficult position of all, the monastery of Monte Cassino. He gave Anders 10 minutes to think it over.

After a brief discussion with his chief of staff, General Kazimierz Wisniowski, Anders accepted the assignment. He knew that the unit that assaulted Cassino would suffer the highest casualty rate, but he reasoned that Cassino was the key to the line and would win the most glory and publicity for the unit that could take it. He might suffer casualties equally high against another objective but without the recognition. He also wanted to counter recent Soviet propaganda that the Poles were afraid to fight. Finally, he hoped that news of a Polish victory would spark an uprising in his homeland. For all these reasons, Anders accepted the most dangerous target in the Allied attack.

Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Military planners chose May as the time for the next offensive. By that time the skies would be clear for aerial operations and the mudmaking rains ended. On April 17, nearly 52,000 Polish soldiers moved up to the line to relieve the exhausted New Zealanders. The movement was done quietly and at night or behind smoke screens because German positions were, in some places, very near and within range of even small artillery. Jeeps were the only vehicles that could navigate the ruined roads, so they carried supplies most of the way. The last part of the supply run up the steep slopes of the foothills was undertaken by 1,200 mules. The mules were last worked by the Indians but had been trained to obey commands in Italian. Observers who watched the Poles now trying to work the mules were amused.

There were to be four large Allied assaults. On the left would be the U.S. Army's II Corps. Next to them were the men of the French Expeditionary Corps. To their right would be the British XIII Corps and the Polish II Corps. Twenty-one Allied divisions supported by 11 specialized brigades faced a determined force of 14 German divisions and three brigades, though these were not up to full strength.

The Poles faced an enemy reduced and exhausted by continual fighting and the transfer of some of its brigades to northern France. To even the playing field, the Germans used propaganda to play upon the Polish soldiers. Radio Wanda, broadcasting a program from Rome in Polish, aimed to keep the II Corps informed of Soviet moves to gobble up Poland after the war and the British acquiescence to Stalin's demands. The announcer urged the Poles to desert and join Germany in fighting the Soviets. Few did. It was becoming clear to the men of II Corps that they might never see their homeland again. While fighting for the freedom of the Italians, they were losing theirs.

On May 11 at 11 PM, after weeks of an Allied misinformation plan aimed at convincing the Germans that the next attack would be an amphibious landing north of Rome, 1,600 guns opened up on German positions along an 18-mile front. The Germans were taken completely by surprise.

On the Polish left, four divisions of French soldiers, led by the Moroccan 8th Rifle Regiment, stormed forward and took several hilltop positions south of the Liri Valley by sunrise.

The Poles pushed off for their attack on May 12 at 1 AM. Their assignment was to take several hilltops northeast of Monte Cassino and then approach the ruined monastery from behind. The 1st and 2nd Carpathian Brigades were tasked with taking Monte Calvario—a mountain that had already cost the Americans and Indians so much blood. The 13th and 15th Infantry Battalions of the 5th Kresowa Division were to take a height (Point 517) known as Phantom Ridge, or Widmo, by the Poles.

Poppies were noticeably in full bloom on the tortured hillsides and became the symbol of the Polish battle. Even today poppies often adorn the graves of Poles who fell in the battle for Monte Cassino, and a popular Polish song commemorates the event:

The red poppies on Monte Cassino
Drank Polish blood instead of dew…

The Carpathians rushed up the steep slope as closely as they could behind the rolling Allied artillery barrage. They knew that the Germans hid in shellproof bunkers on the reverse slope of the hill. When the barrage was over, they would climb over the ridge and man their machine guns and mortars. If the Poles could not beat the Germans to their posts, they would be easy targets. The Carpathians won the footrace and reached the summit of Monte Calvario before the Germans could man their

firing positions. During the day the Germans would counterattack four times without success.

Unfortunately, the Kresowa Division was not as quick in its assault of Phantom Ridge. The Germans reached their firing positions first and rained down artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire on the advancing 13th and 15th Battalions, almost wiping out two companies of the 13th. Supporting tanks got hung up on rocks, hit mines, or were knocked out by German guns. To complicate matters, communications broke down, preventing commanders from coordinating the offensive. That evening the Germans successfully counterattacked and threw the Poles off the mountaintops that they had fought and died for all day; the Polish 5th Division sustained 20 percent casualties. It was II Corps' baptism of fire.

Anders did not despair. He ordered rear-echelon troops turned into riflemen to fill out the depleted ranks. Cooks, clerks, drivers, anti-aircraft gunners, engineers, and others picked up rifles and machine guns and made their way to the front. Meanwhile, Anders and his staff analyzed their mistakes. They had not scouted beforehand on orders from General Leese, who did not want the enemy to know that fresh Polish troops had arrived at the front. Communications were also a problem between the Poles and the Indian forces on their flank; neither side could understand the way the other spoke English.

A new offensive—the Fourth Battle of Cassino—was originally set for May 15, but Leese postponed it until the 17th. He gave the mission to Lt. Gen. Sidney Kirkman's British XIII Corps (consisting of the British 4th Division, the British 78th Division, the 8th Indian Division, and the British 6th Armored Division) and Anders's II Polish Corps. Kirkman was aware of the reckless abandon with which the Poles had attacked on May 11 and told Leese, "Please don't let Anders attack until we are ready for him or there won't be any Poles left."

In preparation, to determine the position of hidden enemy strongpoints, Anders ordered patrols to scout the objective.

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: After the U.S. 11th Air Force destroyed the monastery at Monte Cassino, German troops used the rubble to their advantage. BELOW: Attacking a German position near the monastery with grenades, Polish troops work their way to the summit.

Roads were cleared to allow tanks to reach the front, artillery concentrations were plotted, and radio gear was reissued.

On the 16th, a patrol of the Polish 5th Kresowa Division discovered that the German defenses on Phantom Ridge were very weak. The Polish brigade commander ordered an immediate but unsupported attack, which nevertheless carried the ridge.

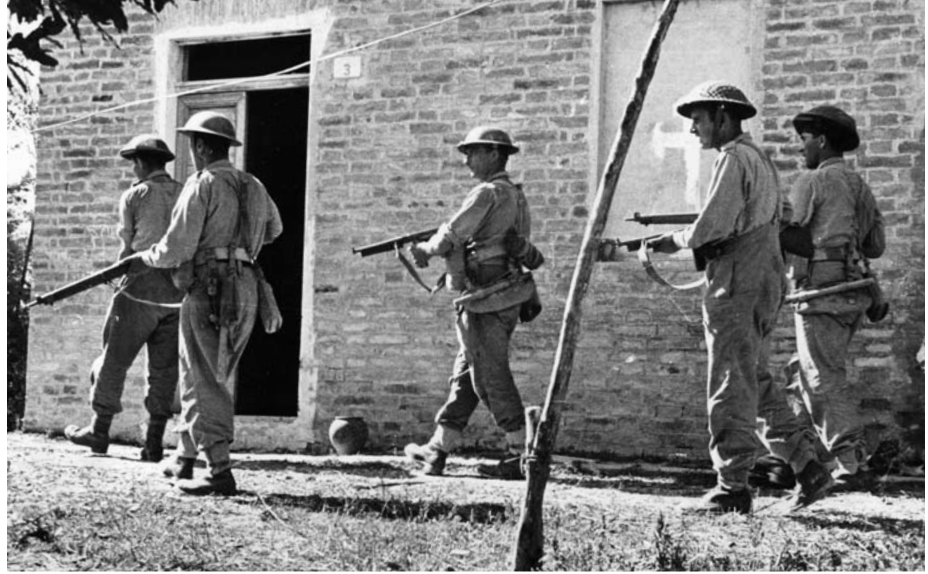
The next day attacks all along the line commenced with the Poles seizing their next

objective, Colle San't Angelo, and holding it all day against German counterattacks. The 3rd Carpathian Division also seized its objective, Monte Calvario, having taken heavy losses in the process. The Poles were exhausted, and casualties were so high that they lost the ability to continue the offensive.

But they had outflanked the enemy positions at Monte Cassino. To prevent it from being cut off, the German defenders were ordered to retreat. Their withdrawal began on the 17th and continued the next day. When the Allies realized that the enemy was fleeing the outposts it had held for the past five months, a race developed between the British and the Poles to reach the shattered monastery. The first to arrive was a patrol of the 12th Podolski Lancers, who raised the Polish flag above the ruins. Anders, a consummate diplomat, ordered that the British flag be raised as well.

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Polish troops were given the mission of capturing the Benedictine monastery atop Monte Cassino, May 1944, after three previous Allied assaults had failed. BELOW: A Polish patrol searches an Italian village along the Germans' Gothic Line, September 1944.



II Corps paid dearly for its victory. In that single week of fighting it suffered 4,199 casualties, including 923 dead. The infantry battalions lost 50 percent of their officers and 30 percent of their men. It was a sacrifice that proved that the Poles could and would fight.

There was no time to rest or celebrate. The Germans were on the run, and Allied leaders wanted to keep it that way. The II Corps' next objective was the town of Piedmonte, a German strongpoint fortified with concrete bunkers, antitank guns, and machine-gun nests. The town anchored the next German defensive line known as the Senger Line.

The initial attack on Piedmont commenced on May 20. Tanks raced toward the fortified town only to be repelled by hidden guns. It would take four attacks and five days to push the enemy out of town.

Meanwhile, other Polish forces stormed the nearby heights including Monte Cairo, the highest peak in the Senger Line. Its capture broke the German defensive positions and opened the road to Rome; others would have the honor of taking the Italian capital. For II Corps it was time to rest and refit. There was little resting, however. After only two weeks in the rear, the Poles were transferred to the Adriatic side of Italy.

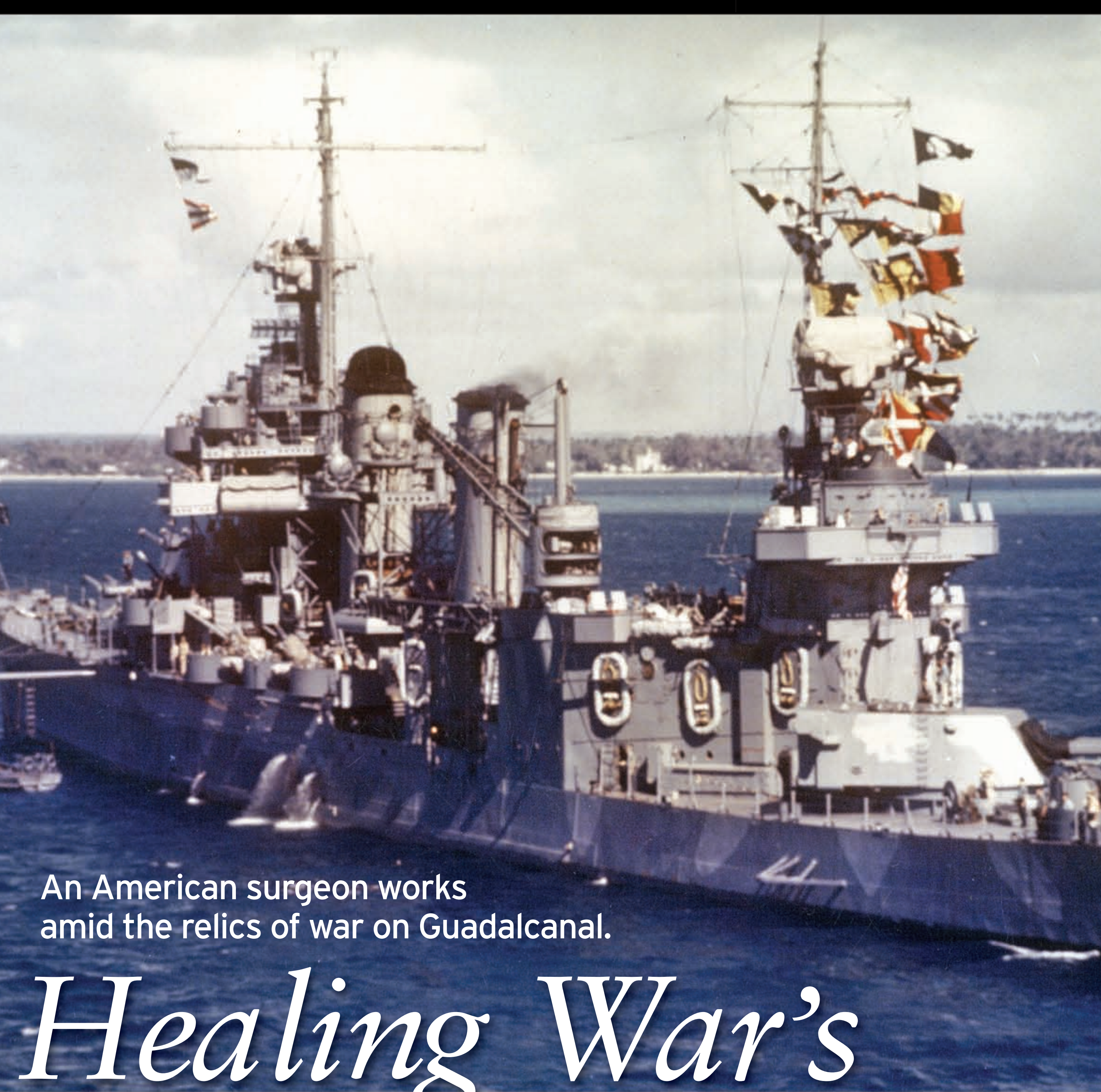
In their new sector, Anders took command of three British regiments and some battalions of the Italian Liberation Corps. The victory at Monte Cassino and the Polish general's stature had convinced the British that he and his officers were capable of commanding British troops in battle.

In a month of combat, the augmented II Corps would advance 75 miles and capture the important port of Ancona. They took 3,000 prisoners during the fighting but suffered 2,424 casualties. Yet more battles lay ahead.

The Germans had fortified the Gothic Line in northern Italy—a line that needed to be erased. II Corps was thrown into the fight, which lasted from mid-June to September 1944. During that time they marched 150 miles, fought eight major

Continued on page 94

U.S. Navy



An American surgeon works amid the relics of war on Guadalcanal.

Healing War's LEGACY

BY EILEEN NATUZZI, M.D.

THE DOWNWIND APPROACH of my Boeing 737 into Honiara International Airport goes over Iron Bottom Sound, with Savo Island off in the distance. Below are the rusted remains of two Imperial Japanese Navy transport ships that ran aground on the northern coast of Guadalcanal in November 1942.

On final approach, the plane glides over World War II battlefields now converted into squatters' camps built of wood, tin, and grass. The white triangular battlefield marker at Bloody Ridge is visible as the plane settles onto the runway. There is one taxiway at the airport and the rusted old control tower built in 1943 is still standing along its western side.

Honiara International Airport is Henderson Field, the very airstrip the Guadalcanal campaign of World War II was fought over. The runway is paved now and it has been extended to allow larger jets, like the 737 I arrive on, to land.

I travel to the Solomon Islands three times a year. I am a doctor, a surgeon. I work in the Solomons because there is only one doctor for every 18,000 people. Outside the capital, Honiara, located on Guadalcanal, there is virtually no surgical care available. A child with appendicitis must travel hundreds of miles by boat to get surgical care. Even in

STANDARD TIME INDICATED
RECEIVED AT
TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAMS TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH

Postal Telegraph
Mackay Radio
Commercial Cables
All America Cables
Canadian Pacific Telegraphs

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107-06 101 AVE RICHMONDHILL QUEENS COUNTY NY=

THE NAVY DEPARTMENT DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON WILLIAM MOORE STACK APPRENTICE SEAMAN USNR IS MISSING FOLLOWING ACTION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DUTY AND IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY. THE DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES YOUR GREAT ANXIETY BUT DETAILS NOT NOW AVAILABLE AND DELAY IN RECEIPT THEREOF MUST NECESSARILY BE EXPECTED. TO PREVENT POSSIBLE AID TO OUR ENEMIES PLEASE DO NOT DIVULGE THE NAME OF HIS SHIP OR STATION=
REAR ADMIRAL RANDALL JACOBS CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL.

The author's late uncle, Apprentice Seaman Billy Stack, photographed in April 1942 at the Newport (Rhode Island) Naval Training Center. Stack and his boot camp colleagues pooled their money and bought the Brownie camera used to take this picture. ABOVE; The Navy Department telegram sent to the author's grandparents more than a month after Billy Stack died in the *Quincy*'s sinking. Her grandparents were frustrated by the lack of information about what happened to their son. OPPOSITE: The heavy cruiser USS *Quincy* (CA-39), pictured before she was sunk during the First Battle of Savo Island, August 8-9, 1942.

All photos courtesy of the author except where noted.

The skeleton of the Henderson Field control tower, built in 1943, sits on the edge of the runway of what is now known as Honiara International Airport.

Honiara at the country's main hospital, the National Referral Hospital (NRH), there are backlogs of patients waiting for surgical treatment.

NRH is the old 9th Army Field Hospital, and some of its buildings are left over from World War II. The walls are crumbling and the electrical wiring and plumbing are falling apart. Open sewer drainage ditches run between the hospital's buildings and ultimately empty directly into the sea. There are three surgeons providing surgical care for the entire country. There is no intensive care unit for critically ill patients, no CT scanner, and limited surgical supplies.

In 1942, nearly every American could tell you where the Solomon Islands were located and why they were important to us. Some of the fiercest and most savage battles between Allied and Japanese forces were waged on land, sea, and air throughout these islands. Over time, and with the accelerating loss of many of our World War II veterans, most Americans do not even know this small island country exists.

I first heard of the Solomon Islands as a child during family gatherings. My mother's oldest brother, Billy, went there while serving in the Navy during World War II. Billy was killed in action when his ship, the heavy cruiser USS *Quincy* (CA-39), was sunk during the Battle of Savo Island. While my mother and her brothers and sisters would mention Billy, my grandparents would not speak of him. The pain they felt at losing their eldest son was deep, and the lack of information surrounding the battle in which he was lost left them bitter. Billy's Purple Heart medal, awarded posthumously, was stored in the very back of a dresser drawer out of my grandparents' sight. All those years growing up, my cousins and I knew of our uncle Bill, but we never really knew who he was until 2004.

I made my first trip to Guadalcanal and Savo Island in 2004. I tacked the visit onto the tail end of a surgery teaching trip at the Fiji School of Medicine. This teaching trip was a part of the Loloma Foundation's academic exchange program. When my aunts and uncles heard I was going to visit the site where their brother Billy died, they asked me to deliver a memorial capsule into the waters of Iron Bottom Sound over the *Quincy* where Billy is entombed. They filled this capsule with some very powerful and emotional letters written by each of them. The letters were frozen in time: 1942, when they last saw him. As a result of these letters, and this memorial service, my family now talks more openly about Billy. We shared his last letters home and even the telegram the Navy Department sent to my grandparents.

Billy was born in Ireland and immigrated to the United States when he was four years old. He came from a long line of Irish Republican soldiers who fought for Ireland's independence. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, Billy, like most young men, announced to the family that he wanted to enlist. On his 17th birthday in February 1942, Billy persuaded my grandparents to sign him into the Navy. After a month of boot camp training at the Newport (Rhode Island) Naval Training Center, Billy was assigned to the *Quincy* as a gunner's mate and was stationed on one of the newly installed 20mm Oerlikon cannons on her aft superstructure.

The *Quincy* joined other ships in Operation Watchtower and sortied to Guadalcanal. In the early morning hours of August 9, 1942, Gunichi Mikawa's Japanese Navy Eighth

Fleet sank the *Quincy, Vincennes, Astoria,* and *Canberra,* killing 1,077 men, including Billy.

Since my 2004 trip to Solomons, I have been working with the Loloma Foundation, taking teams of doctors and nurses to Guadalcanal and the outer islands where 80 percent of Solomon Islanders live. We provide much-needed volunteer medical and surgical care as well as equipment. I was not a World War II buff before my first trip but I have become one now. It is virtually impossible to ignore the World War II history we work among, and after every trip I find myself researching the history of the area we visited.

Leftover World War II debris is evident all over the islands. It is remarkable how rusting hulks have been reprocessed into the daily lives of modern Solomon Islanders: Marston matting that once formed airfield runways is now used as fencing, and Quonset huts as business warehouses. In Taroaniara, at Lyons Point near Purvis Bay, the clinic building we worked in was the original Solomon Islands WWII Navy Headquarters. The huge, beached bow of *LST 342* is located nearby, hauled there from the Kula Gulf.

Beached on the northern coast of Guadalcanal is the rusted wreck of the *Kinugawa Maru,* a Japanese transport bombed by the Cactus Air Force, and today a popular snorkeling and swimming destination. (The Cactus Air Force was a name given to the Allied air power based on Guadalcanal from August 1942 until December 1942. After December, the name officially became Allied Air Forces in the Solomons. The word "Cactus" refers to the Allied code name for the island.)

ABOVE: One of the Loloma Foundation's missions is to teach local doctors to perform surgery. Here the author (left) instructs Dr. Andrew Soma in a hernia repair. RIGHT: Two of over 70 amtraks left near Red Beach in Tetere appear to stand guard as Solomon Island children play soccer.

Traveling from island to island to provide surgical care, we have touched down on historic airstrips—like the Seghe fighter airstrip, built in just 10 days by the 47th Naval Construction Battalion Seabees, and the Munda airstrip, built by the Japanese but taken by Allied forces in August 1943 during the New Georgia campaign.

Our team has treated hundreds of people in Tulagi, Savo Island, and the Russell Islands, including Puvuvu, the site of the 1st Marine Division's rest camp. In the western portion of the country, four Japanese 6-inch coastal defense artillery guns are still positioned on shore at Enogai inlet, looking, despite the rust, as ready for battle as they did back in 1943. On the edge of a Bairoko Harbor village, there is an M3 Stuart light tank that is remarkably intact.

While working on Guadalcanal, we have crossed the Matanikau and Lunga Rivers. We have provided surgical care at a small hospital on the edge of Tetere where children play soccer among hundreds of amtraks that once carried Marines to shore. Having World War II relics located in a Solomon Island village is like gold for the people of that village. It allows them to charge visitors a custom fee of between $5 and $10 U.S. to see the wrecks. These custom fees are used to cover educational and medical expenses for people living in the village.

But leftover war relics can come with a steep price if they are unexploded ordnance. Many an arm, leg, eye, and even life has been lost when the bombs and shells and other munitions explode while their gunpowder is harvested for use in reef fishing or when one is dug up accidentally.

When our medical team arrives in a village or hospital to work, the people of the Solomon Islands welcome us. They are happy to have doctors—especially surgeons—there to treat them. They are also happy to know that the Americans are back again. Many of the older villagers remember *bikfala faet.* They worked as scouts with the coast watchers or as members of the Labor Corps. They are proud to tell us of their experiences working

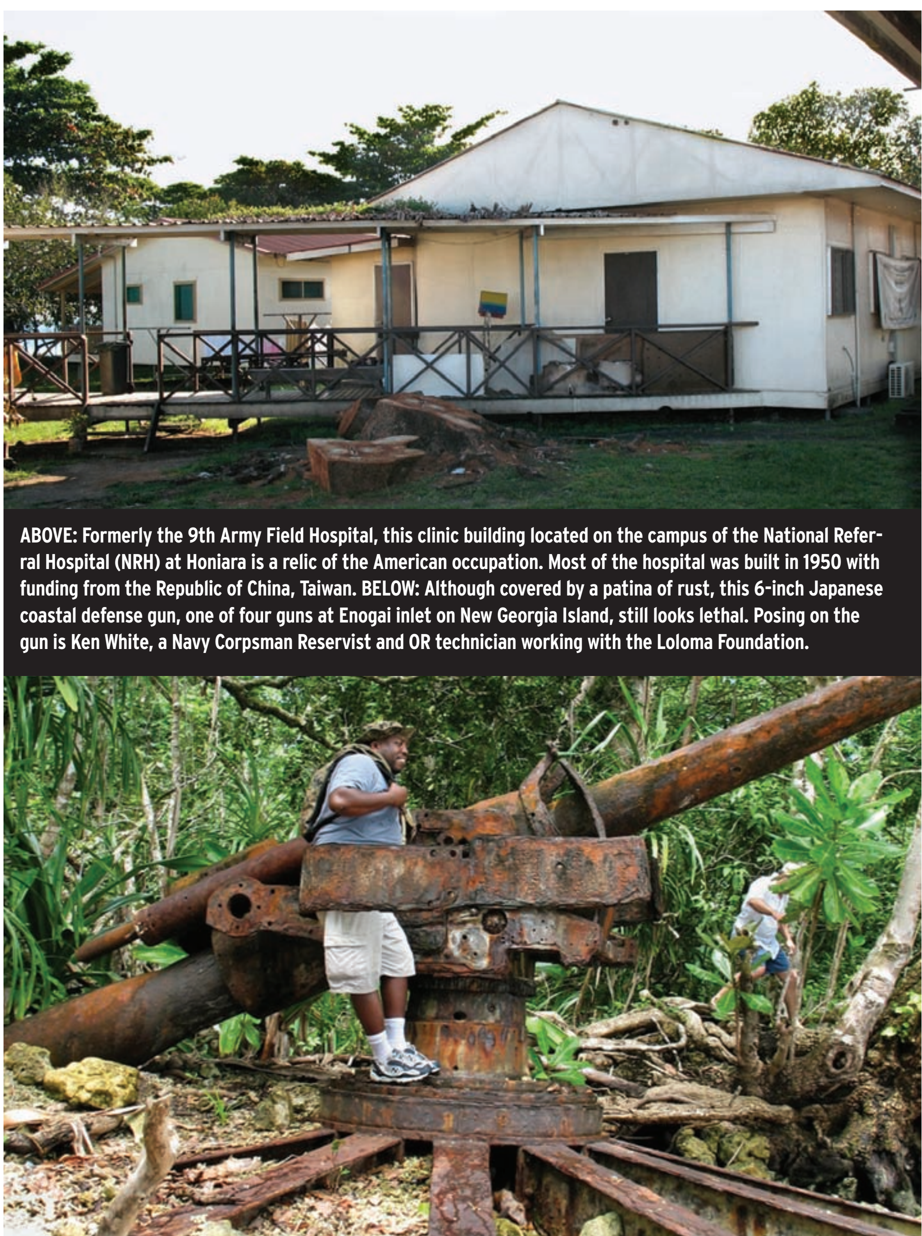
with Allied forces.

The diseases and maladies that Solomon Islanders suffer from present in advanced stages. What we are seeing is the natural history of disease untreated. Breast, ovarian, lung, and laryngeal cancers are on the rise, as are diabetes and heart disease. Children have a spectrum of congenital anomalies such as an untreatable encephalocele and cleft lips. And then there is malaria. Ironically, the very same disease that plagued our Marines during World War II still plagues modern Solomon Islanders today. More than 30 percent of islanders have the disease at any given time.

The Pacific Malaria Initiative oversees the current eradication program. Today Coartem has replaced the Atabrine that was used to treat malaria during the war. Despite improved drug therapy, children still die from cerebral edema secondary to *Plasmodium falciperum* infection. Children die from diarrhea and dysentery as well. People suffer from filariasis, leprosy, and tuberculosis. A young girl paralyzed from the waist down was brought into our clinic on Savo Island. She had a form of tuberculosis known as Potts disease. The TB bacteria had eaten away at her vertebral bodies, causing them to collapse and compress her spinal cord. We initiated antibiotic therapy and transported her to the NRH.

We have provided surgical care for hundreds of Solomon Islanders during our visits. Some patients are lucky that their surgical emergency happens when we are there to treat them, like the 28-weeks pregnant woman with appendicitis, or the woman pregnant with twins, one breech, who needed an emergency C-section. I feel good about helping those patients, but it is the people who need emergency lifesaving surgery when we are not there who worry me.

To solve the problem of surgical access, we have begun training Solomon Island doctors in surgical techniques. We have established a teaching partnership program in which U.S. specialty surgeons travel to Guadalcanal and teach skills and new techniques to the three talented and hardworking surgeons at the National Referral Hospital, as well as the doctors working in the remote provincial hospitals.



ABOVE: Formerly the 9th Army Field Hospital, this clinic building located on the campus of the National Referral Hospital (NRH) at Honiara is a relic of the American occupation. Most of the hospital was built in 1950 with funding from the Republic of China, Taiwan. BELOW: Although covered by a patina of rust, this 6-inch Japanese coastal defense gun, one of four guns at Enogai inlet on New Georgia Island, still looks lethal. Posing on the gun is Ken White, a Navy Corpsman Reservist and OR technician working with the Loloma Foundation.

There are 75 Solomon Island medical students currently studying at Cuban medical schools. They will graduate in 2013 and will return to the Solomon Islands to obtain postgraduate training. We are working with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health on establishing training sites for these graduates at some of the country's provincial hospitals. These locally trained doctors will improve medical and surgical care in the provinces and create sustainable solutions to the health care shortage. We are also working toward improving the infrastructure of the hospitals and introducing new medical equipment that has been generously donated by Stryker, Olympus, Gore, Sonosite, Abbot Point of Care, Direct Relief International, and Professional Hospital Supplier, to name a few.

Loloma Foundation is one of the only American organizations providing medical and surgical care as well as training consistently in the Solomon Islands. Nearly all aid to the country is provided by Australia, the Republic of China, Taiwan, and Japan. The United States government provides virtually no health care assistance to the people of

ABOVE: The rusted hulk of an M3 Stuart light tank is slowly being reclaimed by the jungle on the edge of a Bairoko Harbor village, New Georgia Island. BELOW: A Quonset hut from the war is now used as a warehouse on Ghizo Island, 236 miles west of Honiara.

the Solomon Islands today. In a small way, I see the work we are doing as a way to reconnect with a country that has shared history with us. American soldiers had a positive impact on Solomon Islanders. While assisting our troops with reconnaissance, loading and unloading supplies, and even carrying the injured and dead off the battlefields, Solomon Islanders changed.

A man named Billy Alli, a former scout, put it succinctly: "U.S. soldiers showed us how white men and black men could work together as equals. American soldiers made us feel important." This feeling of being valued and respected helped Solomon Islanders to organize the *Maasina Ruru* or Marching Rule Movement, which ultimately resulted in the country gaining its independence from Britain in 1978.

In addition to rekindling a connection with the people of the Solomon Islands, the work we do is a kind of "living memorial" to the men who served and to those who died in the Solomon Islands. Virtually every World War II veteran I have spoken with expresses the same concern: With time, what they did, and the sacrifices of those who never came home, will be forgotten. Our work is a way to keep their memory alive. The hard-fought campaigns on Guadalcanal and in the western Solomons are fast being forgotten. History can record these battles but, unlike the 6-inch steel guns that stand guard at Enogai inlet, our veterans are disappearing and so, too, are their firsthand accounts of the men left behind.

In 2004, when I dropped the memorial capsule full of letters from my aunts and uncle to Billy, I thought about how Billy and some of his shipmates are entombed within the *Quincy* on the bottom of Iron Bottom Sound. While crossing Iron Bottom Sound on the way to Tulagi Hospital, I have tried to imagine what it must have been like in these waters nearly seven decades ago. These thoughts have stayed with me.

Dr. Gerry Schneider, one of the surgeons who has worked with me in the Solomons, articulated beautifully what I have felt since 2004: "I feel uneasy and disturbed in the Solomon Islands, not just for the diseases and medical problems we see, but also because I sense the horrors that went on here 68 years ago." On Guadalcanal and all throughout the Solomon Islands, the energy of the thousands of young lives lost can still be felt.

As the result of my own family's tragic loss, I volunteer my time working in the shadows of World War II history. I do it with profound respect for all those Americans who came here before me; who sailed the seas, landed on the beaches, and touched down on the airstrips during one of the most violent, yet unique, times in our history. I do it so they are not forgotten. But I also do it because the people of the Solomon Islands deserve a better health care system than they currently have. □

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers wishing to donate to this worthwhile cause are invited to send a check to the Loloma Foundation, c/o Dr. Eileen Natuzzi, 351 Santa Fe Drive, Suite 220, Encinitas, CA 92024. Doctors and nurses who wish to get involved and volunteer their services may contact Dr. Natuzzi at esnmd@mac.com.

PATTON IN LORRAINE—PART 3

BREAKING THROUGH THE WALL

Patton's Third Army fought hard to reach the outerworks of the West Wall in the Saarland. Just when they had a foothold, they were called north to contain the German breakout in the Ardennes. **BY WILLIAM E. WELSH**

The portion of the Siegfried Line guarding the Saar industrial region of Germany proved a sinister gateway into western Germany for Lt. Gen. George Patton's Third Army in late 1944. By the time Patton's troops arrived at the fortified line, the German engineers had improved it to the point that it was the strongest section of the entire 390-mile fortified zone.

Advancing from the west in late November, Patton's troops first encountered antitank ditches and "dragon's teeth." The "teeth," which were concrete foundations containing four or five rows of concrete pimples, deterred tanks and vehicles from accompanying infantry into the maze of pillboxes and bunkers that lay beyond.

Fearing a French attack through that sector, German leader Adolf Hitler had visited Saarbrücken, one of the cities that would be integrated into what the Germans preferred to call the West Wall, in October 1938 to announce the pending

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construction of the Aachen-Saar section. Twice in a five-year period, with the initial effort in 1939 and 1940, and then a second effort in 1943 and 1944, when the Germans sensed that a full-scale Allied advance into Germany was inevitable, laborers toiled to make this particular section of the West Wall formidable enough to give the Allies pause before entering it.

Patton's 250,000-strong Third Army accepted the challenge with confidence; his troops had arrived in the French province of Lorraine on August 31. For nearly a month, "Old Blood and Guts" struggled to get his troops across the Moselle River. After a five-day lull in which it waited for gasoline shipments, Patton's army launched its first full-scale offensive into Lorraine on September 5. The offensive's main objective was to get Third Army's two corps across the river in force.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

German troops occupy muddy trenches on the Saar front in anticipation of Patton's attacks, December 1944. OPPOSITE: Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy (left), commanding U.S. XII Corps, talks strategy with Third Army commander Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., during the drive into the West Wall, December 1944.

Major General Manton Eddy's XII Corps, on Patton's right flank, managed to secure a bridgehead east of Nancy after a month of hard fighting. However, Maj. Gen. Walton Walker's XX Corps found it impossible to establish a sizable bridgehead near Metz, because of the punishing long-range artillery from outlying enemy-occupied forts that disrupted his troops' attempts.

Owing to a more protracted fuel shortage in October, Patton was forced to undertake small, isolated battles to correct his lines. Never willing to assume a purely defensive stance, Patton received permission from 12th Army Group commander Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley to chip away at the German lines in front of him where he saw fit. When troops from Maj. Gen. Leroy Irwin's 5th Infantry Division suffered a particularly bloody repulse at Fort Driant during one of these limited attacks, Patton realized he must conduct a large-scale encirclement of Metz in his next full-scale offensive to avoid similar disasters that were bound to occur trying to clear the Metz forts one by one.

Third Army's second major offensive in Lorraine began on November 8. At times, it seemed that Patton's army had moved no faster than a man on crutches throughout the muddy countryside of Lorraine. Heavy rains had restricted the armor to roadways and mud-filled foxholes almost as soon as

they were dug, making life miserable for the riflemen. As a result of the latter, noncombat casualties related to trench foot were recorded by the thousands and soldiers suffering from the condition had to be withdrawn from the front lines.

Third Army's initial objectives for the new offensive were to strangle the German garrison at Metz on the left flank and push the Germans farther back toward the West Wall on the right flank. When Third Army completed its encirclement of Metz on November 19, leaving only mop-up operations inside the pocket, Patton's corps and division commanders set about reorganizing their units for a final push to the West Wall.

Behind the front line, Patton gave orders for the 5th Infantry Division to besiege five forts inside the pocket whose garrisons refused to surrender. As for his other eight divisions, their new objective was to carve a corridor through the West Wall that would allow Third Army to push on to the Rhine River. It was a lofty objective, considering that the closest of Patton's units were still more than a hundred miles from the fabled river.

Meanwhile, the German First Army under General of Panzer Troops Otto von Knobelsdorff slowly withdrew toward the West Wall. In the north, as a result of heavy fighting for Metz, the units on First Army's right flank were highly disorganized. However, they had a shorter distance to retreat to the safety of the West Wall than those in southern Lorraine. Third Army's reorganization for the second phase of the offensive lasted six days and its troops did not resume their march east on a broad front until November 25.

Much to Patton's displeasure, Knobelsdorff's First Army slipped east in good order. "Regrouping is a curse of war and a great boon to the enemy," the American general said of the situation.

Two months earlier, units belonging to Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges's First Army had breached the West Wall in two places: Aachen and just north of Trier. With troops bogged down by the strongly defended pillboxes, American casualties soared. All implications were that Patton's troops would find the going equally rough.

Third Army's first order of business following the fall of Metz was to get its forces to the Saar River and probe for crossing points along a 30-mile stretch—from Saarburg in the north to Saarbrücken in the south. Once the best crossing points were determined, the army would cross the river in force to establish two bridgeheads, one to support each division.

Because the section of the West Wall protecting the Saar ran from southeast to northwest, Walker's XX Corps on the left flank was much closer to the fortified zone than Eddy's XII Corps on the right flank. Indeed, the lead elements of Maj. Gen. William Morris's 10th Armored Division on XX Corps' left flank already were facing after the capture of Metz, an east-west extension of the West Wall known as the Orscholz Switch Line (or Siegfried Switch). The switch was designed to prevent an enemy from racing north up through the triangle formed by the junction of the Moselle and Saar Rivers and, in so doing, outflank the double portion of the West Wall farther south.

South of the 10th Armored, Maj. Gen. James Van Fleet's 90th Infantry Division advanced in XX Corps' center, while Maj. Gen. Harry Twaddle's 95th Infantry Division pressed forward on the corps' right flank. Patton initially hoped that Morris would be able to cross the Saar River at Saarburg, which lay within the Moselle-Saar Triangle. If that effort failed, the main effort would shift south where Twaddle was to hurdle the Saar at the road and rail hub of Saarlautern and then turn north to clear a crossing point for Van Fleet's division.

Owing to the collapse of the German line around Metz and to the shorter distance to the West Wall in their sector, Walker's troops faced less resistance from enemy forces in front of them than that experienced by Eddy's division on the right flank.

Eddy's five divisions would probe for crossings of the Saar at two key points. On Eddy's left flank, abutting XX Corps, the 35th and 80th Infantry Divisions backed by the 6th Armored Division would advance on Sarreguemines, while on Eddy's right flank, adjacent to Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers's Sixth Army Group, the 26th Infantry Division and 4th Armored Division would push toward Sarre-Union.

Knobelsdorff's German First Army fell back in front of the weight of Third Army toward the West Wall. Keeping a close eye on Knobelsdorff, and frequently intervening in the direction of First Army's divisions, was Army Group G commander General of Panzer Troops Hermann Balck. A member of the Nazi Party faithful and a decorated veteran of desperate battles on the Eastern Front, Balck instilled those under him a renewed sense of hope and confidence during the waning of the Third Reich.

After the fall of Metz, Knobelsdorff issued orders for German forces along the Maginot Line—the French fortified position facing Germany—to fall back to the Saar Heights. From there, the Germans might slow the Allied advance just enough to give those units on Knobelsdorff's right flank sufficient time to entrench themselves in the Wall's prepared positions.

The German First Army comprised three corps. First Army's right flank, in the north, was held by General of Infantry Walter Hörnlein's 82nd Corps. His right flank, within the Siegfried Switch, was anchored by General-Lieutenant Kurt Pflieger's 416th Division, which had escaped the Metz fighting largely intact. In contrast, Colonel Karl Britzelmayr's 19th Volksgrenadier Division, which held Hörnlein's left flank at Merzig, had lost nearly 90 percent of its combat strength in the first half of November and had only 630 men left.

To ensure that the Americans would not punch right through the 19th Volksgrenadier, Balck received permission from Commander in Chief West Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt to commit the 21st Panzer and 25th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, both previously part of First Army but by then part of the German Army's reserve, to the Merzig

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Infantrymen and a Sherman tank cautiously advance down a walled lane near Metz, November 1944, as German troops pull back.

sector to buttress Britzelmayr's infantry.

General-Lieutenant of the Waffen-SS Max Simon's 13th SS Corps headquarters was responsible for First Army's center at the West Wall above and below the key crossing of Saarlautern. Simon's command consisted of remnants of General-Major Kurt Mühlen's 559th Volksgrenadier Division and the 48th Division, both of which had seen hard fighting in early November and together numbered only 360 men after the fall of Metz. They were bundled into a *kampfgruppe* under Mühlen's direction at Saarlautern. Simon also had remnants of the decimated 347th Division. Perhaps his strongest unit was General-Major August Wellm's 36th Volksgrenadier Division. The reduced remnants of the once formidable 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division held the ground farther south.

The last of the three corps in First Army was General of Infantry Gustav Höhne's 89th Corps, posted on First Army's left flank. It comprised the 361st Volksgrenadier Division and General-Lieutenant Wend von Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division, a unit that had distinguished itself throughout the fighting in Lorraine.

Although the second phase of Patton's November offensive would not be in full swing until November 25, there were significant actions on the flanks of each army as armored divisions probed the German defenses. On Third Army's left flank, the 10th Armored Division's Combat Command A, led by Brig. Gen. Kenneth Althaus, reached the Siegfried Switch on November 20. The Siegfried Switch was manned by two rifle battalions and one machine-gun battalion belonging to Pflieger's 416th Division.

Like other sections of the West Wall, the Siegfried Switch featured antitank ditches and dragon's teeth as forward defenses. Behind these obstructions were various strongpoints, ranging from small pillboxes with several firing slits to large, multilevel bunkers. Althaus deployed his command along a six-mile front. On the left was Lt. Col. Miles Standish's Task Force, and on the right was Lt. Col. Thomas Chamberlain's task force.

Standish had orders to strike toward Tettingen, while Chamberlain advanced on Orscholz. With field howitzers blazing to pin the Germans in their positions, CCA's armored columns rolled forward on November 21 against the outerworks of the Siegfried Switch. Both commanders subdivided their commands into two columns for the attack. Chamberlain's right column, advancing on Orscholz, would have the most success that day. It fought its way to within nearly a mile of Orscholz until a hail of German mortar and artillery fire broke up the attack and forced the Americans to withdraw. Elsewhere, the attackers made no progress. Efforts to bridge the tank ditches or blow up the dragon's teeth on the first day of fighting were disrupted by intense fire

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

from enemy forces in pillboxes just behind the obstructions.

The two armored task forces regrouped after the first day's fighting and renewed their attack on November 22 with limited success. The increased tenacity with which the Germans defended their positions on the second day was due in part to the arrival of the 21st Panzer Division.

After two days of unsuccessful fighting in which the Americans were able to penetrate the switch only to a distance of a half mile, Morris instructed the 358th Infantry Regiment of Van Fleet's 90th Infantry Division, on loan to 10th Armored, to attack in the center of the switch the following morning. Colonel C.H. Clarke, the regimental commander, had orders to attack with his three battalions toward the towns of Müzingen and Sinz, which lay on the far side of the switch. Once the towns were in American hands, Morris planned to commit his armor to exploit the breach and race north through the Moselle-Saar Triangle.

On the first day of its attack, the 358th made good progress. A heavy fog that morning gave cover to the advancing Americans but also grounded tactical air support. Clarke sent his 1st and 2nd Battalions along a hogback ridge on the right flank while his 3rd Battalion pushed forward alone on the left flank. Because the town of Tettingen was protected by pillboxes that blocked all avenues of approach, 3rd Battalion skirted it to the east. Elements of the 3rd Battalion then attacked Tettingen from the rear, while other parts advanced on Butzdorf farther north. By day's end, Clarke and his men were able to report steady progress, and a large number of prisoners from the pillboxes and trenches had been captured.

The following day, Clarke's riflemen on the right flank ran into heavy resistance outside Oberleuken, a village that had to be secured as part of the advance on Müzingen. From a massive bunker outside Oberleuken, enemy machine guns raked the American ranks. While the 2nd Battalion engaged the Germans in the bunker, the 1st Battalion outflanked the bunker and entered Oberleuken, where the two sides fought house to house. On the left flank, the German infantry, armed with flamethrowers, counterattacked Clarke's 3rd Battalion.

ABOVE: German troops manning a 3.7cm Flak 36/37 anti-aircraft gun in the Saarland are on the alert for an American aerial assault, December 1944. BELOW: The many rivers and streams in Lorraine kept the combat engineer battalions busy building bridges. Here tanks of the 15th Tank Battalion, 6th Armored Division, cross a pontoon bridge over the Seille River at Port-sur-Seille, between Metz and Nancy.

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Despite tenacious resistance, Clarke's 3rd Battalion was able to enter Butzdorf, a village on the path to Sinz. When German infantry, backed by tanks, counterattacked into Butzdorf, the men of Company K, 3rd Battalion, took cover in the cellars of the village in the late afternoon. Throughout the night, soldiers of the 21st Panzer Division methodically went from house to house using tank and bazooka fire against the entrenched Americans.

On the third day of fighting, the fog cleared and P-47 Thunderbolts shot across the sky, dropping napalm and fragmentation bombs on German staging areas in Müzingen and Sinz. A relief column backed by M4 Sherman tanks extracted 36 survivors of Company K from Butzdorf on the left flank, but by then the Germans had infiltrated behind 3rd Battalion's lines into the village of Tettingen, and the Americans shelled the Germans with artillery and committed tanks to the battle to cover a general withdrawal on the left flank.

Although Clarke's 2nd Battalion was able to advance beyond Oberleuken, it suffered heavy casualties attempting to capture high ground south of Müzingen and also had to break off its advance. Clarke's rifle battalions were able to penetrate the Siegfried Switch more deeply than Morris's armored infantry, but they failed to clear a corridor that would allow the armor to break out into the Moselle-Saar Triangle.

Third Army suffered heavy losses at the Siegfried Switch. In particular, Clarke's regiment suffered 60 percent casualties during three days of fighting at that position. Realizing that Morris did not have sufficient infantry resources to sustain a protracted fight at the switch, Patton ordered him to break off the action on November 26. Leaving the 3rd Cavalry Group behind to screen Third Army's left flank, Morris redirected his armored columns toward the Merzig-Saarlautern section of the West Wall.

Eddy's XII Corps was able to resume its advance east after the capture of Metz more quickly than Walker's XX Corps because it did not have to mop up pockets of the enemy behind its lines. The Germans in front of Eddy's corps still held key towns such as Falquemont and Dieuze that had to be secured before a general advance to the West Wall could begin. Once these objectives were captured, Patton told Eddy to rest his infantry while the armor probed enemy defenses for soft spots to exploit.

Although Eddy benefited from having two armored divisions under his command, he did not get along well with 4th Armored Division commander Maj. Gen. John Wood. The well-respected tank leader believed Eddy's habit of sending the armor ahead of the infantry resulted in higher casualties for his command. Because of this, Wood and Eddy had clashed over the matter on several occasions. It was clear to both Patton and Eddy that something would have to be done to ensure Wood's compliance with orders.

What that solution would be had not yet been decided when Eddy ordered Wood to capture the key town of Sarre-Union as a staging area for an attack against the West Wall on Third Army's extreme right flank. When Eddy ordered Wood to drive his tanks northeast toward the objective, the feisty tank commander secured permission from an adjoining unit, Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV Corps, which lay outside Third Army's area of operations, to take a more daring route to his objective that would turn the German right flank along the Saar River. Although the move was a sound one, Wood made the request without Eddy's knowledge.

On November 24, the tanks and armored infantry of Wood's Combat Command B overran the 361st Volksgrenadier Division guarding two key crossings of the Saar River south of Sarre-Union. Not far behind the 361st Division were German tank columns belonging to the veteran Panzer Lehr Division led by General-Lieutenant Fritz Bayerlein. CCB's tank column clashed with Bayerlein's panzer grenadiers at the village of Barendorf that afternoon, and it was clear that the following day would produce a major engagement between well-matched opponents.

CCB's thrust upset Bayerlein's attack against XV Corps. Rather than being able to strike Haislip's units with two armored columns, Bayerlein was forced to redirect his western column to face Wood's tanks and infantry at Barendorf. With a heavy mist concealing his advance on the morning of November 25, Bayerlein's panzers counterattacked Wood's CCB. Using the terrain to their advantage, CCB's tank crews were able to inflict heavy losses on Panzer Lehr, forcing it to assume a defensive position after a long day of fighting.

For four more days the two sides sparred along the east bank of the Saar until Panzer Lehr suffered enough casualties for Balck to pull the division out of line and replace it with the 25th Panzergrenadier Division. By that point, Wood's CCB had advanced to within about five miles of Sarre-Union.

To the north, Twaddle's 95th Infantry Division crossed into Germany on November 25 and prepared to attack enemy positions on the Saar Heights. The Germans were determined to make the Americans pay a heavy price for capturing the Saar Heights and shifted elements of the 21st Panzer and Panzer Lehr Divisions to the escarpment to greet the Americans with cold steel. The fighting was fierce throughout the day on November 29, with the Germans launching as many as 10 counterattacks against the Americans in an effort to keep them from clearing the heights and reaching the Saar River.

When elements of the 95th's 377th Infantry Regiment secured the village of St. Barbara on the left flank, they set up a section of 57mm antitank guns on the eastern edge of the village in expectation of a German counterattack. They didn't have long to wait. A *kampfgruppe* from the 21st Panzer Division slammed into the gun positions, captured two of the antitank guns, and forced the surviving Americans to seek cover in the village until reinforcements arrived. On the right flank, the 378th Infantry Regiment reached the village of Berus but a counterattack by a *kampfgruppe* from Panzer Lehr was so ferocious that the Americans fell back more than two miles to the village of Merten.

The fighting for the Saar Heights lasted 48 hours, with the Germans finally breaking off the action on the night of November 30 and pulling back to Saarlautern. To the north, Van Fleet's 90th Infantry and Morris's 10th Armored Divisions encountered far less resistance, and by November 30 both had closed up to the Saar.

As Walker's infantry in the north reached the Saar, Eddy ordered Maj. Gen. Willard Paul, commanding the 26th Infantry Division, to send his 101st Infantry Regiment

Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

to assist Wood's 4th Armored Division in an all-out assault on Sarre-Union. The plan of attack was for Wood's Combat Command B to attack from the east while the infantry attacked from the south. Soldiers of the 25th Panzergrenadier Division were entrenched on high ground north and east of the town, which they felt offered a better defensive position than the town itself. From there, the grenadiers would have a perfect staging area for counterattacking the Americans and could draw on the assistance of *kampfgruppen* from the 11th Panzer and Panzer Lehr Divisions.

On November 30, the 101st Infantry Regiment marched east, leapfrogged the Saar, and took up a position south of the town. The next day, American armor and infantry advanced simultaneously on Sarre-Union. Two rifle companies from the 101st were able to reach the town and take cover in its buildings. Several attempts to storm the heights north of the town were easily repulsed by heavy machine-gun fire and pretargeted mortar barrages. Unfortunately for the infantry, they were unable to receive armor support because Wood's CCB had become engaged in a tank fight with a *kampfgruppe* from Panzer Lehr for a key position known as Hill 318 several miles east of the town.

The fighting at Sarre-Union was desultory the following day. But on December 3, a *kampfgruppe* from Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division rumbled toward Sarre-Union from the heights to the north, overrunning a five-gun antitank battery and forcing the American riflemen to take cover in cellars of the town's buildings. While the riflemen hunkered down, American 105mm howitzers south of town poured more than 400 rounds on the German armor and half-tracks, forcing the Germans to retreat. To ensure that the Americans could hold Sarre-Union against any future counterattacks, Paul inserted a fresh regiment—the 104th—into the town to bolster his position.

Although Patton admired the 4th Armored Division's headstrong commander for his aggressiveness, he at last agreed with Eddy that Wood's disruptive behavior could no longer be tolerated. "On the second [of December], it became evident that General Wood had to be sent home for a rest," Patton wrote in his memoirs. The following day, Patton relieved Wood of his duties in the field and replaced him with Third Army's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey.

The Germans holding First Army's left flank subsequently retreated north to new positions in the Maginot Line bunkers at Rohrbach-les-Bitche, where they awaited the inevitable follow-up attack by the Americans. Wood's CCA would bear the brunt of the fighting over the next five days until such point as the entire 4th Armored Division was ordered to the rear to rest and refit. Its place in the line was taken on December 8 by Maj. Gen. R. Allen's 12th Armored Division, which had been loaned to Patton from Haislip's XV Corps.

Patton had granted permission for Eddy's infantry divisions to rest on November 22 before resuming their advance toward the West Wall. Despite heavy fighting on Eddy's

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ABOVE: American troops of XII Corps move through the rubble of St. Avold, a key communications center of the German 19th Army. The town was captured by Third Army units on November 27, 1944. OPPOSITE: The fortified city of Metz, near the corner of where France, Germany, and Luxembourg come together, was a vital objective for the U.S. Third Army. To take it, Patton committed his entire force.

extreme left flank, Maj. Gen. Horace McBride's 80th Division had still not secured the town of Falquemont, where the two sides had been sparring for 10 days. In 48 hours of heavy fighting beginning November 25, McBride's men finally secured the towns of Falquemont and St. Avold and cleared Germans from Maginot Line pillboxes. When the Germans inside the pillboxes refused to surrender, tank destroyers were brought forward to fire at point-blank range and kill the defenders.

After the three divisions on Eddy's left flank—the 35th and 80th Infantry and 6th Armored Divisions—corrected their line, they began a concentrated push toward Sarreguemines. Using their artillery to maximum effect, the infantry drove remnants of the 36 Volksgrenadier and 17th SS Panzer Divisions before them as they pushed toward the West Wall. By December 7, both the 35th Infantry and 6th Armored were in position to attack German forces in Sarreguemines, a key town 10 miles south of the West Wall fortifications.

The following day, two regiments of Maj. Gen. Paul Baade's 35th Infantry Division (the "Santa Fe" Division) crossed the Saar to establish a bridgehead on its eastern bank. The 320th Infantry Regiment crossed in assault boats, while the 134th used a semi-demolished railroad bridge south of Sarreguemines to effect its crossing.

A counterattack that afternoon by a *kampfgruppe* from Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division was smashed in 15 minutes by guns from nine field artillery battalions before it could inflict any substantial losses on Baade's infantry.

To Baade's south, Paul's 26th Infantry Division fought its way through the Maginot Line where the Germans had retreated following the fall of Sarre-Union. As Paul's 104th Infantry emerged from the Maginot Line on December 10, it tied in with Allen's 12th Armored, which had forced the Germans from Rohrbach-les-Bitche to the east. By this time, Eddy's infantry and Allen's armor had crossed the border and were fighting the Germans on their own soil.

The American drive was marked by fits and starts. Once across the Saar, the advance of Eddy's infantry divisions was slowed considerably in the following days by German artillery in superb positions on the east bank of the Blies River, a right tributary of the Saar, which constituted yet another barrier in Eddy's march to the West Wall.

The intensity of the fighting on Third Army's right flank was best exemplified by a grinding, three-day battle that Baade's 35th Division fought trying to establish a bridgehead at the town of Habkirchen on the east bank of the Blies. When Baade's engineers succeeded in laying a Bailey bridge across the Blies at that location on December 15, the division's armored support was finally able to drive the Germans from the town.

By mid-December, the 26th Infantry had suffered so many losses that Eddy decided to send it to the rear to rest, refit, and absorb replacements. Taking the place of the 26th was Maj. Gen. Frank Cullin's fresh 87th Infantry Division, which had moved up the front line from Metz. Cullin's regiments would eventually reach the outerworks of the West Wall on December 16.

A problem that would plague Third Army throughout its attempts to penetrate the West Wall in December was the shockingly high rate of attrition in trained riflemen it was suffering. Because the riflemen bore the brunt of the fortress fighting at Metz and continued to do so at the West Wall, casualties soared in the infantry ranks. Many of Walker's infantry battalions were at 55 percent combat strength by early December, and Eddy's infantry was no better off.

Patton reported that Third Army was short 11,000 riflemen by the time he reached the outerworks of the West Wall in the Merzig-Saarlautern section. To compensate, Patton twice drafted 5 percent of the manpower from his corps and divisional staffs to serve as replacement riflemen for the front lines. The December 6 and December 15 drafts produced about 6,500 new riflemen; however, they were of poor quality because they lacked sufficient training. These troops were parceled out to the 26th Infantry Division of Eddy's XII Corps, and also to the 90th and 95th Infantry Divisions of Walker's XX Corps.

Third Army's most determined attempt to breach the West Wall occurred on Walker's right flank. By the end of November, Twaddle's 95th Division had cleared German resistance from the Saar Heights and stood poised to descend into the Saar Valley where its commander planned to send his men into the sprawling city of Saarlautern.

Fortunately for Twaddle's men, the western portion of Saarlautern lay outside the West Wall fortifications. This meant that they would be able to clear the city's west side and establish themselves a base from which to try to push their way into the eastern edge of the town, which the Germans had incorporated into the fortified zone, and also to launch attacks against other nearby suburbs also integrated into the West Wall. Twaddle's 378th and 379th Regiments reached the Saar River on December 1 and scouted potential crossings. While they scouted the river, wave upon wave of B-24 Liberators pounded German defenses on the eastern side of town.

The following day, an American reconnaissance plane found an intact bridge over the Saar and radioed the information to the ground commanders. Twaddle immediately ordered Colonel Robert Bacon to send a battalion of his 379th Regiment across the river in assault boats to seize the far end of the bridge. As this was taking place, another battalion fought its way to the close end of the structure and captured it. As soon as the bridge was in American hands, Bacon sent a company of tank destroyers across the bridge to expand the bridgehead and brace for an inevitable counterattack.

In a desperate attempt to damage the bridge and prevent further crossings, the Germans loaded several tanks with explosives and rolled them toward the bridge. These efforts failed and the Americans were able to clear the Germans from two nearby bunkers overlooking the bridge.

The outerworks of the West Wall that Twaddle's division encountered at Saarlautern consisted of mines and multiple rows of barbed wire, in some places to a depth of a mile, and pillboxes clustered together to provide mutual fire support. South of the city, the outerworks were flush against the Saar, but in the vicinity of the captured bridge the fortified zone began about three-quarters of a mile back from the river.

Five miles behind the river was a second fortified line to which the Germans might withdraw if the first line was breached. Although the West Wall had substantial limitations—poor communications infrastructure, shortage of anti-aircraft guns, and small mounts that could not handle guns larger than 75mm—these shortcomings were offset by the frequent fog and low clouds that made it difficult for the Americans to conduct aerial reconnaissance and provide regular air support.

On December 3, Twaddle continued to funnel more infantry battalions into the narrow bridgehead he had established in western Saarlautern. He also ordered the 3rd Battalion, 378th Infantry to cross the Saar below the main city and begin attacking German positions in Ensdorf, a suburb of Saarlautern.

Following a lull in the fighting, the Germans counterattacked the Saarlautern bridgehead with a meager force of two infantry companies and a handful of tanks the following day. The attack was easily repulsed with the assistance of tank destroyers inside the bridgehead and heavy guns on the opposite bank of the Saar. Enraged that the Americans had gained a foothold in Saarlautern, Balck sacked Knobelsdorff the same day, replacing him with General of Infantry Hans Obsterfelder, who was deemed a better defensive tactician than his predecessor.

As for Balck, he was in the midst of a protracted struggle with Rundstedt for control of key armor and artillery assets being used by First Army to prevent Patton from breaking through the West Wall. At the beginning of December, Rundstedt had ordered Balck to transfer Panzer Lehr, 11th Panzer Division, and 401st and 404th Volksartillerie Corps to Army Group B defending the Ruhr industrial area. The two commanders eventually reached a compromise on December 5 in which Balck agreed to transfer Panzer Lehr and the 401st to Army Group B, but retain the 11th Panzer and 404th for First Army's defense of the West Wall in the Saar sector.

Twaddle's men quickly became bogged down in Saarlautern. As they pushed their way toward the eastern suburbs of the city, the infantry battalions ran into thick clusters of pillboxes. Progress under these circumstances was measured not in fractions of miles advanced, but rather in a small number of pillboxes cleared each day.

The task facing Twaddle's 94th Division was a substantial one. The Germans had fortified all three eastern suburbs of the city: Ensdorf to the south, Fraulautern to the east, and Saarlautern-Roden to the north. The divisional commander sent one of his regiments into each of the three suburbs. By December 7, Twaddle had managed to get two armored battalions—the 778th Tank Battalion and the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion—across the Saar to support the infantry in the bridgehead on the east bank.

Roger Viollet / The Image Works

A woman (left) looks on as U.S. soldiers march through Puttelange, France, in late November 1944.

The pillboxes, which were the central feature of the West Wall defenses, were placed to cover key roads and were also constructed in empty spaces between buildings or homes in urban areas. The typical pillbox was manned by a machine-gun team, which received supporting fire from riflemen stationed nearby. Patton's men used everything they had—including bazookas, flamethrowers, and demolition charges—to knock out the crews inside the pillboxes.

The Germans launched frequent counterattacks and also infiltrated behind American lines into pillboxes already cleared. Patton's men quickly learned to weld shut the doors to prevent the enemy from reoccupying the pillboxes. Although the German units in the Saarlautern sector conducted piecemeal attacks against the Americans, they nevertheless retained their morale and only small numbers surrendered.

The 378th Infantry would have the most difficult time of the 95th's regiments. Each time the engineers attempted to throw a pontoon bridge across the Saar opposite Ensdorf, German artillery destroyed it before vehicles and supplies could be brought across. Nevertheless, the riflemen were able to work their way beyond the barbed wire and begin clearing the suburb one block at a time. To the north of Ensdorf, the 377th Infantry was able to clear and secure half of Fraulautern after three days of intense fighting once the tanks and tank destroyers reached the east bank on December 7. Despite such success, however, the Germans were able to hold the shoreline along the Saar between Fraulautern and Ensdorf, thereby prohibiting the linking of the Saarlautern and Ensdorf bridgeheads.

With the 95th engaged in brutal urban fighting for control of Saarlautern's suburbs, Patton toured the main city on December 14 to see firsthand the nature of the fighting at the West Wall. The general noted on his tour that the houses in the city were constructed at their base with thick concrete that enabled the Germans to easily transform them into strongpoints. "Nearly all of the houses I inspected on either side of the river in Saarlautern were actually forts," Patton wrote in his memoirs.

North of Fraulautern, the 379th fought desperately to secure a foothold in Saarlautern-Roden, managing to clear about a half of that suburb before the 379th and the 377th were relieved by elements of Irwin's 5th Infantry Division moving up to the front lines on December 17. Patton chose to leave the 378th in place at Ensdorf until it could secure a pontoon bridge that would make relieving the regiment a more practical undertaking. After more than two weeks of hard fighting in Saarlautern and its suburbs, Twaddle's division reported capturing nearly 150 pillboxes and 1,250 defended buildings.

A short distance north of Saarlautern, Van Fleet's 90th Infantry Division was making preparations as early as December 2 to cross the Saar near the towns of Pachten and Dillingen. Pachten bordered the Saar on its east bank, and Dillingen was located a short distance to the southeast.

Walker's original plans for establishing a bridgehead for his corps on the east bank of the Saar called for Twaddle's division to swing north and clear the east bank of the

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Members of a U.S. Army engineer unit stand on "dragon's teeth" antitank obstacles in a portion of the West Wall. RIGHT: An American soldier of the 4th Armored Division inspects one of three German panzers of the 11th Panzer Division knocked out during fighting near Guébling, France, about 30 miles southeast of Metz, on November 14, 1944.

Saar so that Van Fleet's division could cross unopposed, but the strength and depth of the West Wall outerworks above and below Saarlautern made it impossible for a rapid advance in either direction.

While the 95th Division to the south was expanding the Saarlautern bridgehead in preparation for an attack on the city's three suburbs, Van Fleet on December 6 began sending across elements of his 357th and 358th Infantry Regiments to establish their own bridgehead on the east side of the Saar. On the right flank, elements of the 358th managed to slip past several pillboxes guarding the approaches to Pachten and reached the western end of the town.

On the left, the 357th attacked toward the Huttenwald, a forested ridge, in a move designed to block enemy forces moving south to reinforce Pachten and Dillingen. Engineers toiled through the night to build pontoon bridges, but the muddy conditions prevented them from anchoring the structures on the banks.

Fearing an American breakthrough, Balck planned to reinforce the southern end of the Merzig-Saarlautern section of the West Wall with the 719th Infantry Division, a fresh division just moved in from Holland, and elements of the 11th Panzer Division to contain Van Fleet's bridgehead on the east bank of the Saar. The 719th, although not a first-rate division, had a large complement of organic artillery and was backed by elements of Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division.

On the second day of Van Fleet's offensive, elements of the 719th backed by a small number of Panzer Mark IVs counterattacked the 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry in Pachten, slowing the regiment's advance. While Van Fleet's long-range guns pounded the Germans in the town, the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry crossed the Saar opposite Dillingen and began assaulting enemy positions there. By the end of the second day, the 90th Division's front stretched for more than a mile—from Dillingen in the south to the Huttenwald in the north. To maintain the expanding front, Van Fleet was forced to commit his reserve regiment, the 359th, to the expanding battle.

The cold, wet spell that had plagued Third Army throughout its time in Lorraine continued as the Americans tried valiantly to break through German positions at the West Wall. Van Fleet's riflemen shivered day and night in foxholes and slit trenches half-filled with water on the east bank of the Saar as they beat back one counterattack after another by German units determined to throw them back across the river.

On Van Fleet's exposed left flank, about 600 soldiers from the vanguard of the 719th Division, backed by a dozen tanks, crashed into the front lines of the 357th Regiment on December 8. American artillery firing from the safety of the west bank eventually broke up the attack, but not before a platoon from the 357th had been overrun and annihilated.

On the southern end of the bridgehead, a *kampfgruppe* from 21st Panzer attacked the forward positions of the 358th Infantry at Pachten, putting pressure on both ends of Van Fleet's battle line.

For the next several days the situation grew increasingly grim for Van Fleet's division, despite the commitment of his reserve regiment. During the early hours of December 9, the 359th landed in assault boats on the east bank and turned south to throw its weight against Germans occupying the salient that divided the two isolated bridgeheads established by the forces already engaged.

Unknown to the Americans, additional elements of the German 719th Division were being fed into the Huttenwald, and the 719th began setting up dozens of long-range guns to hammer the Americans on the east bank of the Saar. By midday, the Germans were pouring heavy artillery and mortar fire into the ranks of both the 357th and 359th from the high ground of the Huttenwald. As if that weren't bad enough, German troops in two large concrete bunkers inside the salient dividing Van Fleet's two bridgeheads continued to hold out, despite repeated attempts by soldiers of the 359th Infantry to neutralize them.

Making the situation even more miserable, the weather deteriorated on December 10. The precipitation alternated between rain and snow, precluding any possibility of air support to the troops inside Van Fleet's beleaguered bridgeheads. With all of the 719th

Infantry now having arrived at the battlefront, the Germans began attacking along the entire length of the American line. Unlike the Americans, who had only established footbridges and had to ferry across vehicles and antitank guns, the German infantry had at their disposal nearly 100 artillery pieces of various caliber and also armored support.

The Americans weathered strong attacks throughout the day, and on the following day Van Fleet ordered his regiments to pull back from exposed positions. On December 12, Van Fleet's troops finally were able to open a corridor linking the northern and southern bridgeheads at Pachten-Dillingen when riflemen from the 359th cleared and captured one of the bunkers that had proved so resistant to American artillery fire and talked the defenders of five adjacent pillboxes into surrendering.

That same day, the 90th Division's engineers were able to ferry across a company of tanks and a company of tank destroyers to strengthen the 357th Infantry and enable it to engage the Germans on more equal terms.

The initiative in the Pachten-Dillingen sector swung back to the Americans on December 15. On that date, the 358th and 359th Infantry Regiments launched a coordinated attack against Dillingen following a bombardment with phosphorus rounds from 4.2-inch chemical mortars designed to burn the enemy out. With the support of some of the tanks and tank destroyers transferred from the left flank, the American infantry was able to break the German main line around the city and begin the slow work of isolating and

destroying individual pillboxes. German resistance in the sector waned considerably when Balck received orders to transfer more units, the 404th Volksartillerie and the 21st Panzer Division, to other parts of the Western Front.

When it became evident in early December that Walker's infantry had little prospect of rapid success in the Merzig-Saarlautern section of the West Wall, Patton began to consider alternate tactics. The cornerstone of his new plan was a massive aerial bombardment that would soften up the enemy for a fresh offensive slated for December 19.

To plot the air strikes, Patton met with Maj. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, commander of the IX Air Force, on December 6. A sense of urgency surrounded the planning for the new offensive because Patton feared his resources might be transferred to British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group for another attempt to cross the Rhine in the north. "While my attack was going forward by short leaps, it was not very brilliant, and I felt that if I failed to break through after the air blitz, I would have to go on the defensive and lose several divisions," Patton noted in his memoirs.

The plans for a new offensive that would capitalize on air strikes to help breach the West Wall in the Saar were shelved permanently when the Germans struck the thinly defended VIII Corps sector of Lt. Gen. William Simpson's Ninth Army, which was adjacent to Third Army's left flank, in the Ardennes on the morning of December 16. It would become known in the West as the Battle of the Bulge.

Three weeks earlier, Patton had fretted that the static front held by Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton's VIII Corps was an open invitation to the Germans to attack. "The First Army is making a terrible mistake in leaving the VIII Corps static, as it is highly probable the Germans are building up east of them," Patton wrote in his diary on November 25.

It took a commander with a keen mind like Patton's to foresee threats to adjacent forces, and the prescient Patton had detailed his staff four days before the German attack to sketch plans for a counterattack north by Third Army should the Germans punch through Middleton's line. These plans would prove invaluable to the Allies in countering the German thrust through the lightly defended Ardennes in the second half of December.

In response to the German attack into the Ardennes on December 16, Bradley's 12th Army Group chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Leven Allen, phoned Patton that night and conveyed orders for Patton to send Morris's 10th Armored Division north from its position opposite Merzig to help contain the breakthrough. "I protested very strongly," Patton wrote. He told Allen that Third Army had paid a high price for its gains in the Merzig-Saarlautern sector and that withdrawing key forces would be tantamount to relinquishing the initiative to the Germans. Nevertheless, he complied with the order.

Within 48 hours of the German attack, Patton drove north to Luxembourg to confer in person with Bradley about how to strike back at German forces in the Ardennes. The commander of the 12th Army Group bluntly told Patton that he would have to transfer half of his command north as soon as practical. Finally

Continued on page 96

The National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center is a tribute to the American foot soldier.

THE AMERICAN INFANTRY'S ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORY, WHICH IS OLDER than that of the country, comes alive in an impressive, $100,000,000, 190,000-square-foot museum located just outside Fort Benning, Georgia.

During 2009's opening ceremonies, General (Ret.) Colin Powell aptly described the facility: "The word 'museum' is entirely inadequate.... It's the only attraction in the country to tell the story of the Infantry from the perspective of the Soldier. The exhibits allow you to walk through battlefield conditions, a trench, a jungle, a desert … [giving] a glimpse of what our sons have witnessed and endured for us from Colonial times until the present."

Army Rangers climb Pointe du Hoc and paratroopers fall from the sky in the "World Power 1920 - 1947" Gallery.

Visitors are immediately immersed as they ascend the signature Last 100 Yards ramp—so named because infantry boots on the ground are said to own the last 100 yards of the battle. Along the incline, full-scale dioramas depict significant battles in infantry history from the Revolution through the desert wars.

From there, visitors enter the Fort Benning Gallery, which illustrates through sight and sound the training that turns ordinary citizens into soldiers.

Downstairs in the Grand Hall are the four galleries that feature diverse experiences such as walking through a replicated World War I trench and a Vietnam jungle.

"A World Power 1920-1947" is a particularly popular gallery. It includes sections on Europe and the Pacific. Several dioramas depict significant battles while the stories of those conflicts are relayed through individual soldiers' possessions.

Among the many artifacts from the European Theater are one of Mussolini's shoulder boards, an M1 helmet developed at Fort Benning, and a flag from D-Day. In the Pacific area are a Japanese cold-weather uniform, a jeep, a flamethrower used against the enemy, a parachute used during the re-taking of Corregidor.

Soldiers are inveterate souvenir collectors and so another popular exhibit is the war trophy display, which includes Hermann Göring's gold-and-diamond field marshal's baton and the swords of Japanese emperors.

The museum grounds include a stately walkway leading from the museum to the parade field. The five-acre field, used in graduation ceremonies, features soil taken from every major battle the nation has fought.

A visit to the World War II Company Street, opposite the parade field, is put into context by the docents. All the guides are

Photograph by Harlan Hambright.

veterans who bring their own experiences to tours of the seven-building complex.

The barracks, mess hall, orderly room, supply room, chapel, and General George Patton's headquarters building and sleeping quarters are the only fully preserved set of "Series 700" buildings in existence. The structures are fully furnished with realistic touches like period music, photos, and furniture. A Sherman tank and period Physical Training (PT) field add to the realism.

The Walk of Honor, which winds around the property, pays tribute to various infantry units through the monuments being placed along the walk.

The Soldier Center also includes an IMAX theater, Engagement Skills Trainer, rifle simulator, restaurant, and gift shop.

The world-class museum's significance is documented on a plaque at the entrance that quotes General Powell: "Among many other things, this is what we owe those who went before. This is the place. This is the home. This is their legacy."□

National Infantry Museum
Location: 1775 Legacy Way
Columbus, Georgia 31903
Phone: 706-685-5800
Website:
www.nationalinfantrymuseum.com

Admission is free. However, the museum is privately funded and made possible through donations. There is a small charge for theater and simulator attractions.

Hours: 9:00 AM-5:00 PM Tuesday through Saturday; 11:00 AM-5:00 PM Sunday. Open on all federal holidays that fall on Mondays (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, etc.). Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

French Aces

Continued from page 25

When Königsberg capitulated, Normandie-Niemen could finally stand down. In Berlin, the Germans announced their unconditional surrender. The war was over. More medals were handed out amid jubilant celebrations. Then Stalin himself gave the squadron pilots a unique gift. Forty Yak-3s were presented to the pilots as the Soviet leader's special thanks for their services, and the men flew home in their planes.

Flying all the way from Moscow to Paris, the pilots were feted with banquets and champagne at every stop along the way. Their faithful Soviet mechanics went with them and shared in a bounty unheard of in their homeland. Reaching Paris in their Yaks in mid-June, the pilots received a heroes' welcome, and the donated Russian planes would form the nucleus of France's postwar air force.

It had been a long, hard war for these dedicated pilots. They had endured unimaginable privations: cold, disease, hunger, neglect, and a brutal enemy. Forty-two of their number had been killed. Yet over 30 of them became aces. They had collectively shot down a confirmed 273 enemy aircraft with many more probable, and their combat record of victories was the second highest score in the Soviet Air Force. During their 5,240 missions, they had also destroyed 27 trains, 22 locomotives, two E-boats, 132 trucks, and 24 staff cars, and damaged a number of tanks and armored vehicles.

For France, the accomplishments of Normandie-Niemen were a source of great pride and are remembered to this day by the French people. For many years the Memorial Normandie-Niemen museum was located at Les Andelys in Normandy, but it was closed in 2010 and the collection moved to a new and larger facility at the Le Bourget Airport in Paris (where Charles Lindburgh ended his historic 1927 transatlantic flight) that will open in 2012. The director of this new museum is Girard Feldzer, the nephew of Normandie-Niemen pilot Constantin Feldzer. □

Nanking

Continued from page 59

representatives in Nanking, who in turn reported them to Tokyo.

"The Tribunal is satisfied that Matsui knew what was happening. He did nothing, or nothing effective, to abate these horrors. He did issue orders before the capture of the city enjoining propriety of conduct upon his troops, and later he issued further orders to the same purport. These orders were of no effect, as is now known, and as he must have known. It was pleaded in his behalf that at this time he was ill. His illness was not sufficient to prevent his conducting the military operations of his command nor to prevent his visiting the city for days while these atrocities were occurring. He was in command of the Army responsible for these happenings. He knew of them. He had the power as he had the duty to control his troops and to protect the unfortunate citizens of Nanking. He must be held criminally responsible for his failure to discharge this duty. The Tribunal holds the accused Matsui guilty under Count 55."

General Iwane Matsui was sentenced to death and hanged on December 23, 1948. The verdict of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East provided to the world the proof of the atrocities committed and denied by the Japanese Army.

The history of Nanking has been altered over time to meet the needs of changing societies in different sociopolitical contexts. Though the details and the number of deaths continue to be debated, most historians agree that the Nanking massacre was an atrocity, in which 370,000 or more Chinese civilians and surrendered soldiers were killed and tens of thousands of women raped following the Japanese capture of the city. Some publications in Japan seek to deny or greatly minimize this event; a term like "so-called" is often placed in front of one of these names. Some seeking to link the event rhetorically or structurally with the more widely known Holocaust in Europe during World War II use the term "Nanking Holocaust."□

Polish II Corps

Continued from page 73

battles, and liberated 3,400 square miles of Italian territory.

But there was a growing sadness among the troops. As the Russians began "liberating" Polish territory, it became clear that they had no intention of allowing a free Poland to exist in the postwar world. For most of the men of II Corps, there would be no going home after the war.

The autumn rains and cold weather did not stop the Allied offensive. After a three-week break, II Corps was back in action. Between mid-October and mid-December, they fought their way to the banks of the Senio River, where fighting stopped for the winter.

In February 1945 Stan Cybulski was shipped to Italy, where he would enter officer candidate school. The war would be over before he could join in the fighting.

The offensive resumed on April 9 all along the front. The goal of the Polish forces was the ancient city of Bologna but, for the Poles, the battle began with a bad omen. American bombers misjudged their targets and killed 38 Polish officers and men while wounding 188 more. Anders personally visited the front, where the demoralizing effect of the accidental bombing on his troops was palpable. Despite the tragedy, the advance over the Senio River continued.

By April 21 the Polish flag was raised over Bologna. Within a week the German command in Italy surrendered unconditionally and Germany surrendered soon after. The war was finally over, but Polish soldiers, whose homeland was now occupied by the Soviets, did not share in the general joy of the Allied victory. Although the Allied armies in Italy packed up and went home, the men of II Corps had no place to go. Stalin refused to allow them to return to Poland, and in any event, after their experience in Soviet labor camps, Anders and his men wanted no part of living under Soviet domination.

For Stan Cybulski and the other men from eastern Poland, their homes and

towns were now a part of the Soviet Union. Western Poland was ruled by a puppet government answerable only to the Soviets. Returning was out of the question.

The British urged their allies to take the Poles as refugees. The United States refused. Other countries took token numbers. While the British wanted to scatter the Polish soldiers and their families throughout the world, Anders was adamant. He insisted on keeping his army together, and so they were housed in camps around Italy until the British could decide what to do with them. Some of his men felt they should use their weapons to march on Poland and free their homeland. This possibility frightened all the Allies.

After a year on Italian soil, the Italian government felt that the continued presence of a heavily armed force of Polish soldiers within its borders was intolerable. Italian communists were especially uneasy about the vehemently anti-Soviet Poles. Meanwhile, the cost to the British government to continue feeding and housing them was also telling.

In June 1946, II Corps, minus its weapons, began moving to Great Britain; the process would not be complete until the end of October. For Stan Cybulski, Britain would be his home for the next 10 years before moving to the United States. All the while, the British increased their efforts to scatter the Poles throughout the world.

II Corps had proven itself in combat but had not shared in the Allied victory. They themselves, like so many other victims of the war, became displaced refugees. For this victor there were no spoils.

Soon after the battle at Monte Cassino, a cemetery was dedicated to the fallen Polish soldiers who gave their lives to capture the monastery. More than a thousand Polish soldiers are buried there, including General Anders, who died in 1970. At the entrance, an inscription in Polish dedicates the memorial. It reads:

We Polish soldiers
For our freedom and yours
Have given our souls to God
Our bodies to the soil of Italy
And our hearts to Poland □

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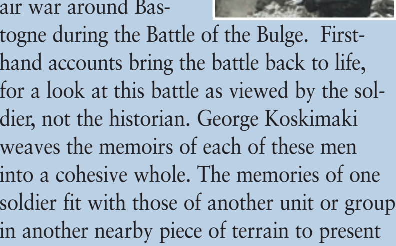
The Battered Bastards of Bastogne

Written by George Koskimaki • Fully Illustrated with Photos and Maps • 484 Pages • Copyright 1994 • $32.95.



Through the eyes of the US 101st Airborne Division, The Screaming Eagles, *The Battered Bastards of Bastogne* relives the land and air war around Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. First-hand accounts bring the battle back to life, for a look at this battle as viewed by the soldier, not the historian. George Koskimaki weaves the memoirs of each of these men into a cohesive whole. The memories of one soldier fit with those of another unit or group in another nearby piece of terrain to present a gripping account of the battle.

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FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE

D-DAY

Through A Soldier's Eyes... *Limited Edition Print*

THE STORM WAS VIOLENT, the waves were huge and the noise was deafening for the soldiers in the landing craft on D-Day, June 6, 1944. As they neared the beach, the door dropped open... and this photo lets you see exactly what they saw, and feel what they felt: treacherous breakers, withering machine gun fire, a long beach, huge cliffs, and near-certain death.

None hesitated. These brave unselfish men jumped into the cold Atlantic waters. Two thirds of them died soon after, so that we could live in freedom.

This historic photograph shows American soldiers from Company E, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division exiting their LCVP landing craft under heavy German machine gun fire on Omaha Beach. The photo was taken by Coast Guard Chief Photographer's Mate Robert F. Sergeant.

Company E landed on Easy Red Beach at 0645 in the face of murderous fire. Those few who survived kept wading right into everything the enemy had and took their objective, which provided the only exit from the beach that the entire Fifth Corps had for two days. Company "E," perhaps by strength of will and courage alone, helped keep the entire landing force from being thrown back into the sea. For a month afterwards, those who survived remained almost in a daze.

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Patton in Lorraine

Continued from page 91

appreciating the severity of the situation and resigned to going on the defensive in Lorraine, Patton said, "What the hell, we'll still be killing Krauts."

Having already drawn up plans for just such a situation, Patton told Bradley that in addition to the 10th Armored, he could have three more divisions—the 4th Armored, 26th Infantry, and 80th Infantry—all moving north within the next 24 hours. Rather than place them under the command of Eddy and his war-weary staff, Patton planned to put them under the direction of Maj. Gen. John Milliken and his III Corps headquarters staff, which had joined Third Army in October but had not yet played an active role in the fighting in Lorraine.

On December 19, Eisenhower arrived to consult with Bradley and Patton on the situation. Eisenhower wanted Patton to commit six divisions, but Patton said that he would lose the element of surprise if he waited for two more divisions to reach the point of attack. Patton stated that he could counterattack as soon as December 22 if he were allowed to do so with the smaller force of four divisions. Ike understood the logic, and Patton proceeded to Luxembourg to establish a new headquarters from which to direct his forces.

The withdrawal of the bulk of Eddy's XII Corps from the West Wall in the Saarbrücken sector necessitated a redrawing of the boundary between Bradley's 12th Army Group and Devers's Sixth Army Group. Eisenhower and the two army group commanders involved agreed that Walker's XX Corps would remain for a time in the Merzig-Saarlautern sector, but Devers would extend his army group's northern boundary to a point midway between Saarlautern and Saarbrücken. Rather than leave Third Army overextended, Walker's troops abandoned their bridgeheads in the vicinity of Saarlautern and withdrew to the safety of the west bank. With those developments, Third Army's involvement

in the Saar drew to a close.

A number of factors contributed to Third Army's protracted battle in Lorraine. One factor was that Patton had, from the outset, misjudged the enemy's morale, which remained strong despite obvious shortcomings in manpower, training, and war-fighting equipment.

Another factor was Patton's persistence in spreading out his forces—both in trying to cross the Moselle River in September and also in trying to punch through the West Wall in December—in hopes of finding a hole or weak spot in the enemy line. Instead, he should have concentrated his divisions in one powerful column to overwhelm the Germans in a specific location. Still another factor was the acute shortage of riflemen as Third Army's infantry had to carry the weight of the battle on its shoulders both in reducing the Metz forts and also in attempting to clear the outerworks of the West Wall.

One factor completely beyond Patton's control was the dismal weather. Exceptionally heavy rains over the three and a half months that Third Army fought in Lorraine produced flooded rivers, soggy terrain, and record numbers of trench foot cases among the infantry in their wet, freezing foxholes. Largely restricted to roads, the armor was unable to exploit opportunities that arose.

Lorraine was certainly not the high point of Patton's career, for he relished the swift advance and despised costly set-piece battles. The proof is in the numbers. It took Patton's troops more than three months to advance 60 miles at the cost of 50,000 troops.

Nevertheless, during the static slugfest, Patton's Third Army wore down the enemy, which suffered 180,000 casualties trying to prevent one of the most aggressive Allied commanders from achieving a breakthrough on the southern end of the Western Front. Unable to maneuver around the enemy's main force, Patton's Third Army had no choice but to trade punches with the German First Army until the German counterattack in the Ardennes put an end to the fighting in Lorraine. □

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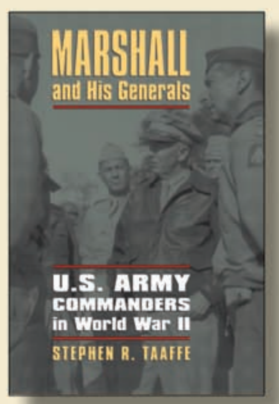

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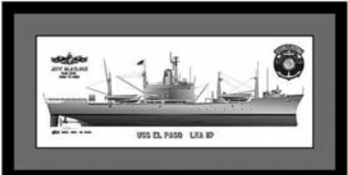

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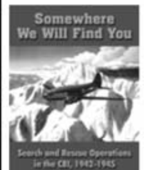

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Borden Black, an "Army brat," has more than 20 years of news experience, including 14 as a news director at various times for the ABC, CBS, and NBC affiliates in Columbus, Georgia. She currently is a freelance journalist and photographer specializing in military subjects. Black has received the Georgia Associated Press President's Award for Excellence in Journalism, was a finalist for the Broadcast Management Woman of Georgia, and has served as president of the Georgia Associated Press Board of Directors. She is a graduate of the University of Alabama.

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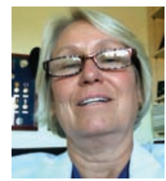

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After retiring as a U.S. Army command historian, **Walter S. Zapotoczny Jr.** works today as a freelance writer. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in world military history and a Master of Arts degree in global history. He lives in Los Barriles, Mexico.

CORRECTION: A reader noted: "I enjoy your magazine but I had to point out a major error in your article, "Bloody Battle at Fortress Metz" (Summer 2011). My father, Julius Yuhasz, was in the 90th Infantry Division. He is 95 years old now and is still very proud of the having been a "Tough Ombre," as the 90th was called. Sometimes he talks about WWII and one of the stories he tells is of crossing the Moselle and taking Fort Königsmacker. In the article, credit is given to the 378th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division for taking the fort. It was actually taken by the 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division.

"I would appreciate if you could print a correction in your fine magazine to clear this up. Keep up the good work telling the stories of what happened in WWII. It is sad, but it seems that a lot of people now forget or do not even know the sacrifices that were made."

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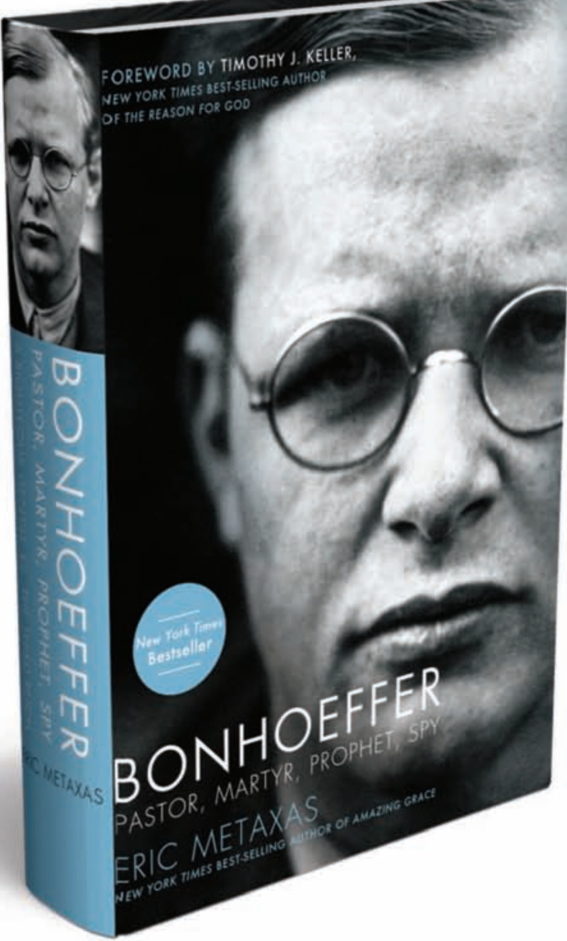

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