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Cover: A Soviet infantry scout looks for German forces during a Russian advance. See story page 44. Photo: © Sovfoto.

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Editorial

The battle for Iwo Jima saved many American lives.

SEVENTY YEARS A GO, ON FEBR UARY 19, 1945, THOUSANDS OF AMERIC AN Marines hit the beaches at Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands of the Pacific. Taking the small island, encompassing only about eight square miles, required the commitment of 70,000 American fighting men and 26,000 casualties, over 6,800 of them killed.

The island itself is situated only 650 nautical miles south of the Japanese capital of Tokyo, and the defenders of this steaming, sulfurous piece of land shaped like a pork chop fought to the death. Nearly 19,000 Japanese troops were killed in action, and only 216 were taken prisoner.

This otherwise obscure piece of real estate would ordinarily attract no attention at all. However, by early 1945 Iwo Jima was the focus of the costly war in the Pacific, now in its fourth bloody year. Iwo Jima's proximity to Japan made it an ideal staging area for American forces that were inching closer to the home islands, anticipating a massive amphibious invasion that would ultimately thwart the territorial ambitions of Imperial Japan.

The Japanese had also constructed three airfields on Iwo Jima, and enemy planes flying from these locations posed a threat to American naval units operating ever closer to Japan proper. The U.S. Navy's top commanders were already well aware of the hazards posed by the fanatical kamikaze, suicide pilots bent on inflicting damage on American ships and sacrificing their own lives in the process. Once these airfields were captured, the kamikaze menace, at least insofar as it emanated from Iwo Jima, would be eliminated.

Another prime mover in the decision to commit American blood and treasure in the capture of Iwo Jima involved U.S. air power. Long-range Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers were already flying from bases in the Mariana Islands and regularly pounded military targets and cities on the Japanese home islands. To accomplish their strategic bombing missions, these massive aircraft flew through a gauntlet of Japanese fighter planes and antiaircraft fire. Many of them were crippled in the attacks, and a significant number were forced to ditch in the broad expanse of the Pacific Ocean, too damaged to complete the return flight to their bases in the Marianas.

The trained crews of the B-29s were a valuable commodity, and those B-29s that were damaged might be repaired and returned to service. In order to save lives, though, lives had to be lost. It fell to the brave men of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions, their attached Navy medical personnel, and the sailors manning the fleet off the coast of Iwo Jima to accomplish the task of wresting the island from the Japanese. They paid a terrible price, and in their heroic sacrifice allowed more than 2,400 B-29s, damaged, low on fuel, and carrying wounded crewmen, to land on Iwo Jima.

On March 4, 1945, even before the island was declared secure, the B-29 *Dinah Might* reported that it was critically low on fuel and requested an emergency landing. It is estimated that by the end of World War II more than 27,000 American airmen were saved from an uncertain fate when their planes safely landed on Iwo Jima. A decades long debate has wrestled with the question as to whether the capture of Iwo Jima was worth the cost. Some American families experienced a devastating loss, while others welcomed home their veteran servicemen.

When it was over, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, stated that on Iwo Jima "uncommon valor was a common virtue."

Twenty-seven American Marines and Navy personnel were awarded the Medal of Honor on Iwo Jima, and 14 of these were posthumous. Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal captured the iconic image of the flag raising atop Mount Suribachi, and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal noted that the image would ensure the existence of the Marine Corps for the next 500 years.

The battle for Iwo Jima, fought 70 years ago, provided one of history's greatest examples of strong, dedicated men laying down their lives for others. Such devotion to duty is forever worthy of honor and respect.

Michael E. Haskew

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The Maverick Marine

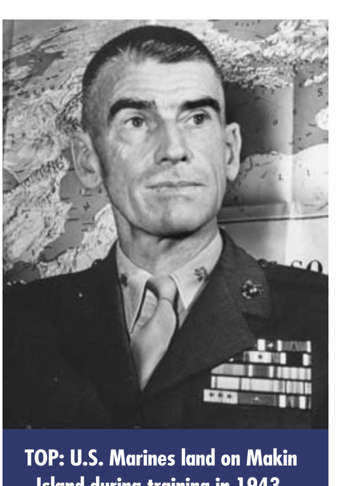
Evans Carlson led America's first Special Operations force.

MAJOR EVANS CARLSON STOOD ON A RICKETY PLATFORM BUILT FROM wooden crates, the kind their rations came in. He said nothing for a moment as he looked out over the young Marines he and his executive officer had personally selected after grueling interviews. These were the elite, the toughest and most adventurous of the already tough and daring Marines. These were the men of the newly formed 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, America's first special operations team, trained to strike back at the Japanese in the hit-and-run style of the British commandos.

It was 3 PM on a chilly, rainy day in the second week of February 1942. The Marines were assembled in the middle of a muddy field surrounded by eucalyptus trees, which made the whole camp smell like menthol cough drops. This dismal place was called Jacques Farm, five miles south of Camp Elliott, a rapidly expanding part of the Marine Training Center near San Diego, California.

In the two months since the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, U.S. forces in the Pacific were being beaten back in one battle after another; Wake Island, Guam, and Bataan were no longer unknown names. Throughout the nation cries arose for America to strike back against the Japanese.

Carlson's Raiders, as the media called them, would thrill Americans with the first victory against Japanese-held territory, tiny Makin Island, some 2,000 miles west of Pearl Harbor. Evans Carlson and his men became instant national heroes on a huge scale, celebrities filling the headlines of every newspaper in the country with two Hollywood movies glamorizing their exploits. Everyone knew about Evans Carlson and his Marine Raiders.



TOP: U.S. Marines land on Makin Island during training in 1943. Evans Carlson (above) and the Marine Raiders conducted an operation against the Japanese on Makin the previous year and were hailed as heroes.

Carlson did not look much like a hero that day at Jacques Farm. He was 46 years old and rail thin; although he stood tall and straight, he appeared frail. He had piercing blue eyes, a long nose, and a pronounced, chiseled jaw. Historian John Wukovits described him as "an intellectual who loved combat; a high school dropout who quoted Emerson; a thin, almost fragile looking man who relished 50-mile hikes; an officer in a military organization who touted equality among officers and enlisted; a kindly individual with the capacity to kill." The first thing he did at Jacques Farm was take out his harmonica and lead his men in singing the national anthem.

Carlson's executive officer did not look like a hero either. The 35-year-old captain was also thin, prematurely balding, and seemed in poor health. He had vision problems and flat feet, so he could not wear regulation combat boots. As a child he had suffered from a heart murmur and frequent bouts of pneumonia and was often so weak that his father had to carry him. He was also nervous, socially anxious, and suffered from ulcers. Through sheer force of will, he became a good officer, respected by Carlson and his men. His name was James Roosevelt, and both he and his father, the president, played pivotal roles in bringing about Carlson's Raiders.

When the last words of the national anthem rang out that day at Jacques Farm, Carlson put away his harmonica and announced that he had a lot to tell the men about their lives as Raiders. They would train and fight like no other outfit had ever done; he was not exaggerating. He talked about his years in China, where he learned from Mao Tse-tung how to fight the Japanese, and about his months with the Chinese Communist Army operating behind Japanese lines. He said that the Raiders would work together—officers and men as one—the way the Chinese Communists did. There would be no distinction by class or rank; every man would eat the same rations, sleep on the ground, and have the same rights and privileges. No one was better than anyone else.

Then Carlson gave them their battle cry: "Gung Ho!"

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The Chinese phrase meant "work together," which was how the Raiders would learn to fight.

Six months later, Evans Carlson and his Raiders had become instant celebrities. Anyone in the States who read a newspaper, listened to the radio, or watched a Movietone newsreel knew about them. Banner headlines screamed the story of the small group of Marines, only 221, who went by submarine to attack the Japanese-held island of Makin. Now Americans had a victory to cheer and heroes to praise.

"Marines Wiped out Japanese on Makin Isle in Hot Fighting," wrote a *New York Times* reporter. The press reported that the Raiders cleaned out the Japanese troops. Carlson was quoted as saying, "We wanted to take prisoners, but we couldn't find any. Our casualties were light. We took more than ten for one. The Japs fought with typical Japanese spirit—they fought until they died. It was a sight to see. There were dead all over the place."

This was just what Americans needed to boost morale on the home front, giving the enemy a taste of its own medicine. It was too early in the war for most people to realize that government sources sometimes distort or conceal the truth or deliberately issue propaganda. The press had little choice but to go along, even when some reporters uncovered the truth. It was not the right time to mention what had gone wrong on Makin, what was covered up, and would not be known for 50 years. In 1942 America needed a victory, and it got one at Makin—or so Americans were told.

Overnight Carlson and his Raiders had become a sensation. When the first submarine bringing them back from Makin reached Pearl Harbor, James Roosevelt recalled, "We were surprised to find bands playing and the piers lined with cheering people. We had not shaved or bathed or washed our clothes for two weeks, so I sent my men to clean up as best they could. It turned out to be a hero's welcome."

Sailors in dress uniforms, standing at attention, lined the decks of every ship the Raiders passed. Bands played the Marines' Hymn. As the submarine eased up to the dock, a huge cheer rang out. A battalion of Marines in dress blues stood at the ready along with Admiral Raymond Spruance and his boss, Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Behind them waited a crowd of reporters and cameramen.

As Nimitz led a military delegation on board, he stepped up to Carlson, returned his snappy salute, and shook his hand to offer congratulations on a successful mission.

"Makin has made you and your Raiders famous," he said.

Colonel Evans Carlson, left, and his executive officer, Captain James Roosevelt, right, pose with a young lieutenant for a photograph while training for the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion's assault on Makin Island.

Sergeant Howard E. "Buck" Stidham recalled 50 years later, "The realization was slowly sinking in that we had gone from the status of a courageous and fortunate bunch of dumb-dumbs to what Kipling would probably call 'a bloody bunch of heroes.' We had no concept of the hunger the American people had for some good war news and that this operation had attracted the attention of every citizen in the country."

Three months later, Carlson and his Raiders were back in action, this time on Guadalcanal. They were sent behind Japanese lines where, in what came to be called the Long Patrol, they fought in close combat for 30 days and covered over 120 miles in the steaming jungle. The Raiders killed nearly 500 of the enemy, losing 16 killed and 18 wounded. The press once again lavished praise on "Carlson's Boys," the most famous outfit in the Marine Corps, and for a time they were the most glorified group among all of the military services.

Carlson was sent back to the States to be treated for malaria and jaundice. He did not yet know it, but he would never again be allowed to lead men in combat or to serve with his beloved Raiders; the battalion would soon be disbanded. Instead, Carlson was sent to Hollywood to make a war movie.

The script grew out of a two-part article written by one of the Raiders for the *Saturday Evening Post.* In proper gung ho spirit, Carlson, as technical adviser, insisted that cast and crew bunk together in a nondescript building rather than permitting the movie stars and producers to be housed in a luxury hotel separate from the crew. An article in the 2001 *Marine Corps Gazette* noted that less than a year after the Makin raid, "Hollywood enshrined Carlson and his Raiders forever with the movie *Gung Ho,* starring the Southern-drawling Randolph Scott. Followed by *Marine Raiders,* in 1944, which starred Robert Ryan and Pat O'Brien, these cinematic efforts ensured the Raiders their fair share of glory."

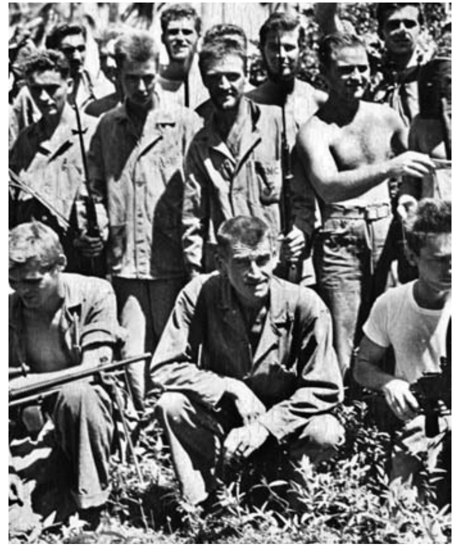
After his stint in Hollywood, an assignment not of his own choosing, Carlson attempted through all the channels open to him to return to combat, whether in command or not. He would have gone to the front as a private, but even that was no longer an option.

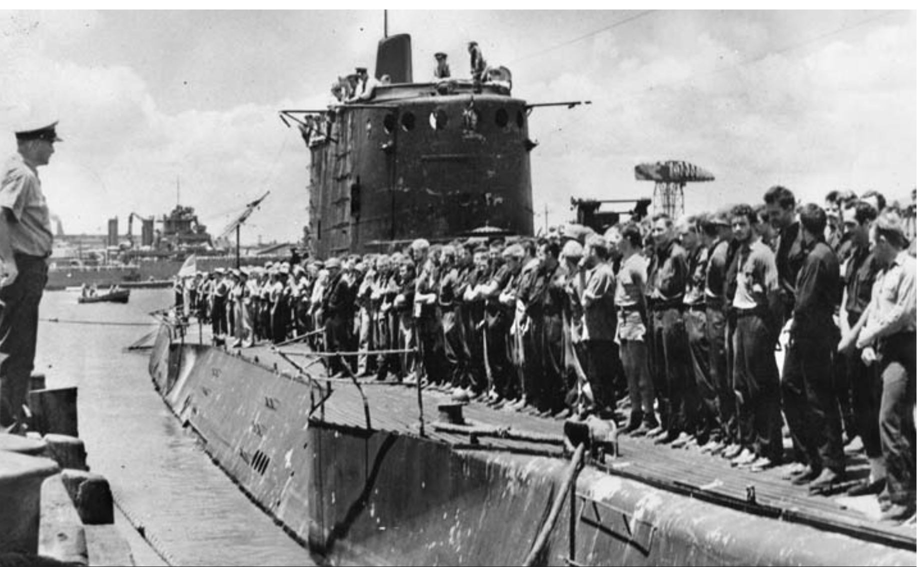
Despite all the public acclaim for Carlson and his Marine Raiders, his career was at a standstill in the middle of a war he had trained for years to fight. It was his very fame, or notoriety, that was holding him back. It had generated resentment, distrust, and jealousy within the top ranks of the command structure, as well as from those of equal rank who were competing with him for advancement. They had never fully trusted him, and his celebrity status had worsened the situation.

Carlson had not pursued a traditional Marine Corps career. He had spent five years in

the Army and then joined the Marines only to leave in 1939. He felt compelled to quit, he said, so he could warn the American people about the coming threat from Japan and to criticize the American business community for continuing to sell war supplies to the Japanese. The Marine Corps brass thought that was bad enough, but then there was the matter of the Chinese Communists.

Word spread that Carlson was a Bolshevik, a "Commie" himself. After all, he had been in China in the 1930s, spoke the language fluently, traveled with the Communist army, and met Mao Tse-tung and Chou Enlai. He even wrote a book praising the Chinese Communists. And that motto of his, Gung Ho? That was definitely Chinese. He taught his Raiders that officers and men were equal. That was how the





ABOVE: Returning to Pearl Harbor aboard the submarine USS *Nautilus* following the Makin raid, these members of the 2nd Raider Battalion await the opportunity to go ashore. LEFT: Posing with his Marine Raiders following their "long patrol" on Guadalcanal, Colonel Evans Carlson was justifiably proud of his command's performance.

Communist Army operated, so how could Carlson be trusted?

And the Roosevelts! Father and son had become friends with Carlson in the early 1930s when he was in command of the Marine guard at the Little White House at Warm Springs, Georgia. Word leaked that when Carlson went back to China the president asked him to send private reports on what was going on there. Carlson received letters from the White House in return, all without going through proper military channels. For a mere captain to be in private communication with the president was unheard of and strictly against the rules. A growing band of detractors knew that a regulation, orthodox Marine Corps officer would not have done that.

The high command also knew that there would have been no Carlson's Raiders without the president's friendship and intervention, and not nearly so much acclaim for the Makin raid had James Roosevelt not been involved. Both situations offered Carlson obvious advantages, but they also served to stoke jealousy among other officers. Carlson did not have to go through channels to obtain whatever supplies and equipment he needed. He only had to tell James, who promptly called his father and arranged everything Carlson wanted. It did not seem that Carlson had to answer to anyone; he operated his irregular outfit according to his own rules.

Then rumors began to circulate after the Makin operation that Carlson had tried to surrender to the Japanese—when he was supposed to be winning and when there were few Japanese troops left alive! Some people claimed there was an actual surrender note, broadcast by Tokyo Rose to American troops in the Pacific Theater.

That there was such a note, written on the second night of the operation when it appeared that some Raiders would be trapped and unable to return to the submarines, seems beyond dispute, but the signature was illegible. The letter was not made public for 50 years. In 1992, Captain Oscar Peatross (then a retired major general) wrote about it in *Leatherneck: Magazine of the Marines.* He described the incident in greater detail three years later in his book *Bless 'em All: The Raider Marines of World War II.*

Carlson made no mention of a surrender attempt in his after-action report on the Makin raid. Admiral Nimitz had given orders that the matter was never to be discussed. Carlson told at least one Raider that Nimitz had told him "that we should rewrite our reports [on the Makin raid] deleting all references to the offer to surrender." Another Raider reported in 1999 that Carlson had told him that there was a tacit agreement among the few men directly involved "that nothing would be said between us about the surrender note. What's done is done."

Other Raiders insisted as recently as 2008 that they never heard anything about a surrender note and that Carlson would never have considered doing such a thing. "There was no way," one said in 2007, that "Carlson would have surrendered with the President's son with us. Carlson would have died defending us."

The origins of a surrender note are lost in a maze of contradictory testimony, claims and counterclaims, assertions and denials, with no resolution in the more than 70 years that have elapsed since the raid. But the rumors among the high command during the war further darkened Carlson's reputation, even lacking sufficient corroboration. Those who already resented him added the story to their growing list of grievances.

And obviously there was jealousy about the media attention the Raiders had drawn. So this rogue outfit whose maverick commander was too far out of step with the high command was effectively eliminated. It was absorbed into more traditional units. Said one Raider when he got the news, "Gung Ho is dead." Carlson would never be given another command. Maj. Gen. Merrill B. Twining, who had known Carlson since before the war, wrote in 1996, "Evans Carlson was worthy of a more generous treatment than he received."

Continued on page 74

By Jon Diamond

All photos: National Archives

Wounded in Combat

The treatment of American soldiers wounded in jungle action followed a medical care echelon system initially devised for European battlefields.

THE U.S. MILITARY EMPLOYED AN ORGANIZED SYSTEM FOR THE TREATMENT of soldiers severely wounded while fighting in the Pacific, including their evacuation stateside if needed. This system was based on the concept of medical care echelons.

Echelon I comprised an aid station/unit dispensary, while Echelon II referred to collecting or clearing stations. Mobile hospitals for evacuation, emergency surgery, and convalescence made up Echelon III. Echelon IV was composed of the general hospitals, hospital centers, and station hospitals. Echelon V was made up of hospitals in the Zone of the Interior.

It should be emphasized that this nomenclature was devised for medical care for the wounded mostly in the European Theater of Operations (ETO); however, it was also applied for the treatment of wounded American soldiers, Marines, and sailors on remote jungle battlefields in Burma and the South Pacific.

Often routes through the jungle battlefields of Burma and the South Pacific islands were no wider than a column of troops trekking in single file. Allied soldiers required mules and horses to carry the heavy equipment and supplies. In addition, wild vegetation—12-foot tall, razor sharp elephant grass, dense bamboo forests, and mangrove swamps—presented further obstacles for the troops. Wild animals and venomous snakes inhabited many areas crossed by troops of both sides and caused non-battle casualties. Disease-laden mosquitoes, poisonous scorpions, biting flies, and leeches infested the impenetrable forests and swamps.

During the bitter fighting on Okinawa in 1945, a U.S. Navy corpsman attends a wounded Marine. The availability of life-giving blood plasma on the battlefield saved many lives.

One salient issue that emerged for these remote, often impenetrable battlefields was what to do with the wounded. The Allies had paid a high price in military personnel and negative morale after the debacles of the British retreat in Burma in 1942 and Operation Longcloth in 1943, conducted by Brigadier Orde Wingate and his Chindits. Simply leaving the wounded and accompanying medical caregivers with either local villagers or to the Japanese resulted in executions and atrocities and was no longer an option.

General Douglas MacArthur's advances in New Guinea in 1943-1944 and the Allied invasion of northern Burma were to be true offensives and as such would possess frontline and rear echelon capabilities of treating and evacuating wounded troops. Control of the air and the emergence of larger fleets of air transport craft to ferry the wounded from the front line to the rear echelon would add greatly to the care administered to the wounded.

A typical pattern of events occured once an infantryman became wounded during combat. Within minutes of someone "getting hit," a company medic or aid man would cautiously crawl to the wounded soldier, assess the extent of the wound, and begin the actual treatment process, which at this level would include field dressings and tourniquets to stop the bleeding and placement of antibiotic sulfonamide powder onto the wound, coating it immediately to minimize the likelihood of infection.

With time, more potent antibacterial agents such as penicillin and streptomycin were being used in rear-echelon areas. At this initial juncture of treatment in the jungle, medics learned that dressings had to be dyed khaki or green because Japanese snipers took aim at white bandages. At times, even casualties tore off their white bandages to prevent becoming easy targets.

Survival depended on a number of factors, including the type and location of the wound and the proximity to medical care. Soldiers in the Pacific usually fared worse than their counterparts in Europe. An actuarial approach was applied to the chance of survival after being seriously wounded. If appropriate and adequate treatment were initiated within an hour, there was a 90 percent chance of recovery. After eight hours the likelihood of survival fell to 25 percent. Thus, rapid movement of the wounded to advanced field hospitals increased the survival chances of

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battlefield casualties considerably.

After being initially treated by a combat medic, if the wounded soldier was fortunate, a litter team of four men from a forward aid station would be summoned, usually by portable radio or field telephone immediately after first aid was applied. Again, depending on the severity of any ongoing combat, the litter team could often arrive within 30 minutes of the wound being inflicted. The litters would be carried back to wherever the aid men had left their jeep or mules, often a distance of 25 to 100 yards or more.

The litter would frequently have to be carried up and down ravines, making it extremely uncomfortable for both the wounded and the litter team. Since the combat front was literally yards away, a four-man litter team was usually accompanied by one or two infantrymen with Thompson submachine guns, well suited for close combat defense in the jungle. From there, the wounded man could be transported to a battalion aid station about a mile away from the front line.

An injection of morphine was accompanied by a note advising subsequent medical personnel that the narcotic had been given. The note was usually tagged through the wounded soldier's uniform buttonhole. At the battalion aid station, if pain were still paramount, additional morphine was given, followed by a surgeon's examination of the wound and removal of any evident debris such as shrapnel, rock, or wood. Fresh bandages were applied and anti-tetanus shots given. Any fractures were reduced and splinted. If massive blood loss or shock was evident, blood plasma or albumin infusions were administered to maintain adequate blood volume and blood pressure. Again, the treatment rendered and initial diagnosis were tagged to the wounded soldier via his uniform's buttonhole.

After initial stabilization at the battalion aid station, the wounded soldier was moved an hour or two later via jeep, ambulance, litter, or "piggyback" in oppressive heat or rain through jungle to a divisional forward clearing or collecting station that might also house a portable surgical hospital, usually located 1,000 yards to the rear.

The divisional forward clearing or collecting station was still close to the front, and portable surgical hospitals were often housed in sandbag-lined dugouts or bunkers with coconut log roofs and additional sandbags to withstand enemy mortar rounds and artillery fire. If the divisional clearing or collecting station were operating during an advance, it might simply be out in the open under the jungle canopy. Casualties were sorted and triaged again at these divisional forward stations.

A wounded soldier is removed from the tank that served as an impromptu ambulance to evacuate casualties from the battlefield on Okinawa. The fighting on the island was intense, and medical personnel were often vulnerable to enemy fire as they tried to carry wounded to safety and treatment.

Ideally, those needing immediate surgery went to the portable surgical hospitals while those not so seriously wounded or too ill to remain near the front were sent to rear clearing or collection stations. When the 3rd Portable Surgical Hospital arrived, after flying from Port Moresby into Dobodura, New Guinea, it carried its 1,250 pounds of equipment in pack frames and hauled it to the front near Buna Mission by mules. Once there, the medical personnel set up close to the divisional forward clearing or collecting aid station, which was only about 300 yards from the entrenched Japanese positions.

It was the mission of the surgeons at these portable surgical hospitals to provide emergency lifesaving and stabilizing treatment. They did not hold any soldiers who were ill with fever or those who could safely travel to the rear. Throughout the day and night, bullets struck the tents. During a single week, its first on the line, 3rd Portable Surgical Hospital personnel performed 67 major surgical procedures, including amputations, bowel resections, and other operations that would challenge a metropolitan urban hospital's capabilities.

It was at these divisional clearing or collecting stations that a more thorough examination of the wound and triage would be conducted and, if needed, an emergency operation performed. The surgical team consisted of the head surgeon, his assistant surgeon, an operating room scrub nurse, and someone administering the anesthetic. Medical personnel prepared casualties for evacuation by jeep, boat, or litter to ambulance loading points for transport to rear collecting stations that stood under canvas approximately 2½ miles behind the initial battalion aid stations.

Additional emergency care, mostly plasma and more morphine, was provided at these rear collecting stations. If further surgery was required, updates were made to the wounded soldier's medical tag. Then any available transportation took the casualties to field hospitals, usually also under canvas approximately three to four miles to the rear.

Some portable surgical hospitals were present at the field hospital locale if emergency operations became necessary. Just because these field or portable surgical hospitals were in the rear did not exclude them from harm's way. Field and portable surgical hospitals were bombed and shelled unmercifully by the Japanese. The hazards faced by medical personnel were, in some cases, similar to the medics being shot at while carrying litters or dragging wounded to battalion aid stations or dressing wounds in the field.

Allied surgeons working in Burma began to develop alternative treatment methods more suited to jungle conditions. Limb wounds were left open, and damaged muscle and bone were excised. Sulfonamide powder and a protective layer of lint covered with Vaseline were laid on the raw surface before the appropriate splint or plaster cast was applied. This was done to relieve any tension in a wound that would develop if immediate closure were performed in the hot, humid climate. Even some abdominal wounds were left partially open, as infections often developed if wounds were completely closed. As with limb wounds, the procedure was to clean the wound and leave it open for around 10 days, after which it could be sutured.

By late 1944, radical excision of wounds, improved evacuation (preferably by air), and the introduction of newer antibiotics such as penicillin improved survival rates. Most jungle battlefield casualties were then receiving treatment within hours due to the increased mobility of field hospitals and the extensive use of air transport as ambulances.

Medical personnel preferred air over sea transport, since evacuation by ship entailed many transfers of the wounded from ambulances to lighters and from lighters to ocean craft. Journeys by ship were long, usually two to three days as compared to four hours by air across the same 600 miles of ocean. Air transport also played a prominent role in medical supply. The same aircraft that brought in supplies ferried out casualties. Air evacuation to a base hospital in the rear echelon of the battlefield or stateside was crucial when dealing with great distances.

A series of photographs taken by frontline soldiers of the U.S. Army Signal Corps on the island of Bougainville aptly demonstrates the process of rendering care to wounded soldiers at all medical echelons. Bougainville is the largest island in the Solomons. On November 1, 1943, the 3rd Marine Division landed there to fight the Japanese. The terrain, both swampy and hilly, posed a greater operational obstacle to the invading American soldiers and Marines than the 20,000 Japanese garrisoned on the island.

In the accompanying series of photographs, a detachment of American infantrymen of the 37th Infantry Division aggressively patrols the outside of its perimeter in single file in late 1943. When the leading men enter the tangle of trees and vines, a Japanese mortar round suddenly explodes, blowing both mud and vegetation high into the air. At the same time, Japanese snipers open fire on the detachment, and Private Homer Connell of Columbus, Georgia, one of the last men in the patrol, is hit just as he is about to enter the jungle. He grabs his right hip, where he is hit by an enemy sniper's bullet and calls out for help as he edges his way to cover and first aid.

TOP: After being wounded during a patrol on a Pacific island in 1944, Private Homer Connell receives medical treatment. Aid stations and field hospitals were placed in relatively close proximity to the fighting in the Pacific to provide medical care as rapidly as possible. BOTTOM: After triage, Private Connell is carried to an operating room located in an underground portable surgical hospital.

A combat medic, Corporal William Ackley of Cleveland, Ohio, runs to the aid of the fallen Private Connell, reaches for the soldier's field dressing pouch, and begins to assess the extent of the injury. After administering a dose of morphine, the combat medic pins an empty syrette to the jacket of the wounded soldier to clearly exhibit that he has received a narcotic dose and to avoid repetitive dosages, which could cause accidental death from respiratory depression. The tag on Connell's jacket also indicates that he received the narcotic and other pertinent data.

Private Connell and another wounded soldier begin their journey to a battalion aid station just behind the front lines. Litter bearers are careful to keep the men from being bounced too vigorously during the trip up a hilly jungle trail into the perimeter, indicated by the barbed wire. All four litter carriers have their M1 carbines slung over their left shoulders, while the soldier leading the party has a Thompson submachine gun for close-quarter jungle combat.

From the battalion aid station, the wounded Private Connell, while still on a litter, is taken by jeep to a divisional forward clearing or collecting station and carried into the underground portable surgical hospital, which is protected on all sides and on top from anything but a direct hit from an enemy artillery shell or bomb. The wounded soldier is immediately made ready for surgery. The anesthetic is administered, and the surgeons go to work, saving the wounded soldier's life. The operating team at this portable surgical hospital was made up of both officers and NCOs and included the main surgeon, his first assistant surgeon, scrub nurses, and the anesthetist.

It was not until World War II that the enemy killed more American troops than disease did. Thirty percent of those wounded in action during World War II ultimately died; however, the vast majority survived. During most campaigns in World War II, for every single American soldier killed four or five were wounded. Of these, one would be seriously wounded and would no longer see combat, while another would have serious wounds taken care of to such a good extent that a return to action was possible.

The U.S. Army had planned for the proper care of the wounded soldier on the battlefield. In a division consisting of 14,000 men, a medical battalion of 1,000 soldiers was included. During any major U.S. Army assault, each battalion would have an attached medical platoon. Unarmed medics were ubiquitous in combat, even during amphibious assaults where they would be present in the first wave of troops landing under fire. Beachhead casualties were particularly hazardous because there were so many in a confined area, and the gravity of the situation was made worse by persistent enemy fire and successive waves of troops coming ashore.

The valor and heroism of these combat medics, physicians, surgeons, and nurses cannot be overstated as they worked under extreme conditions to render lifesaving care and dramatically increase the chance of surviving a wound on a remote jungle battlefield in Burma and the South Pacific islands.

Jon Diamond practices medicine and resides in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He has written numerous articles for World War II History *as well as Osprey Command Series titles on Archibald Wavell and Orde Wingate.*

By Glenn Barnett

Australian War Memorial

From Trainer to Fighter

The Australian Wirraway was forced into a role for which it was not intended during World War II.

BY THE MID-1930S MANY PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA WERE CONCERNED THAT IF WAR came to Europe that Great Britain would not be able to come to their defense against a growing and aggressive Japanese Empire.

In 1936, with the encouragement of the Australian government, several private manufacturing companies combined to form the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) to begin work on the first Australian-built warplanes. By 1937 a factory for this purpose was completed at Fishermens Bend in Port Melbourne.

In the meantime, Australian delegations had been sent to Great Britain, other European countries, and the United States to evaluate aircraft designs suitable for Australian needs and that Australian companies would be able to produce. The world-class Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane fighters were beyond the abilities of Australian firms at that time. The design chosen was the North American Aircraft (NAA) NA-16 model (sometimes called the NA-33), a purpose-built trainer with inline seating for pilot and instructor. It was cheap and relatively easy to produce. In the United States this design would evolve into the popular T-6 Texan trainer. It was exported as the Harvard.

The Australian decision caused some grumbling in Great Britain because it was expected that a British aircraft would be selected. The British even asked the Australians to reconsider their decision, but to no avail. Australian Minister for Defense Archdale Parkhill justified choosing the NA-16 "on the grounds of urgency and the lack of a suitable British design." It should be noted that Australia was not totally against British designs. During the war they would also build under license the British Bristol Beaufort and later the de Havilland Mosquito.

Two models of the NAA NA-16 were purchased by the CAC, and a contract to build a variant, under license, suitable for Australian needs was signed. The Australian version would be called the Wirraway, from the language of the Wurundjeri Nation of Aborigines meaning "to challenge" or "Challenger."

The CAC also contracted to build the Pratt and Whitney R-1340 Wasp 600-horsepower engine. This engine gave the Wirraway a maximum speed of 220 miles per hour. CAC further contracted to build a Hamilton Standard constant speed forged aluminum propeller. CAC wanted to manufacture as much of the aircraft in Australia as possible in the event that in wartime the nation was cut off from suppliers in faraway Britain and the United States. The first Wirraways were made from largely imported components from NAA until the small local Australian foundries and manufacturers could tool up to make the parts at home.

Unlike the American version of the trainer, the Wirraway would be outfitted for war. It was fitted for gun mounts forward of the windshield for twin .303 caliber (7.7mm) Vickers machine guns, synchronized to fire through the propeller. Each gun had a removable magazine of 600 rounds. The .303 was the standard round of all British and Commonwealth rifles and machine guns, making resupply uncomplicated. Another .303 flexible gun mount was added for the observer/instructor to serve as a tail gunner. The plane was also fitted with hard points for a role as a light bomber.

Despite the mounted guns the Wirraway would be no match against the best Japanese fighter, the Mitsubishi A6M Zero, with

In this painting, a Royal Australian Air Force Wirraway fighter flown by Pilot Officer J.S. Archer scores a rare aerial victory over a Japanese Zero in the skies above Sanananda.fighter early in the war in the Pacific.

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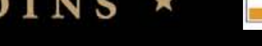

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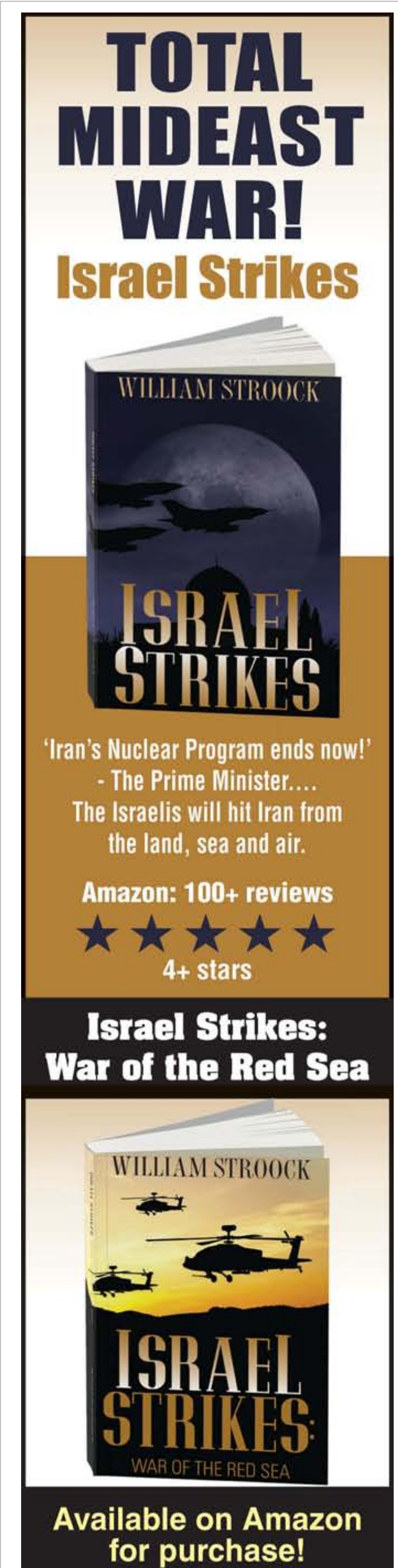

National Archives

A Wirraway of the Royal Australian Air Force flies during a training mission. The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation chose the North American NA-16, known in the United States as the T-6 trainer, to be the first Australian produced military aircraft.

its 950-horsepower engine and 331 mile per hour maximum speed. In addition to two .303 machine guns, the Zero also mounted twin 20mm cannons. The inline two-seat Wirraway was also much less maneuverable than the agile Zero.

The capabilities of the Zero were as yet unknown and unappreciated by the Western Allied military establishment. Rapid advances were being made in fighter technology. The war soon taught the lesson that a two-seat aircraft, while imperative for the trainer role and useful in reconnaissance, is a heavy burden for a fighter.

Production of the Wirraway was given top priority, and by July 1939, the first production aircraft were delivered to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The new plane was immediately tested in its new roles of pilot training, reconnaissance, antisubmarine patrol, bombing, and ground support. When war began in Europe that September, production and training speeded up. By December 1940, seven aircraft were being delivered every week, and by September 1941 a total of 45 Wirraways were coming off the production line each month.

The first five Wirraways off the assembly line were assigned to No. 12 Squadron, RAAF and sent to the backwater town of Darwin on Australia's northwest coast to defend that lonely outpost. They arrived in Darwin on September 5, 1939, just as war in Europe was beginning.

A training accident in 1940 destroyed one Wirraway, killing its two crew members. It was soon replaced by another plane. When war started in the Pacific, Darwin had only five Wirraways. Nine more of them would be forwarded to Darwin.

Darwin's primitive civilian airport at Parap was home to the first Wirraway advanced trainers of 12 Squadron. This group was known as A Flight. The nine new planes of the squadron were based at newly built Batchelor Field, 50 miles south of Darwin and known as B and C Flights. Training and patrols continued until February 19, 1942, when a powerful Japanese fleet of four aircraft carriers, all veterans of Pearl Harbor, launched 188 fighters and bombers toward Darwin.

As many as 54 Japanese Army planes flew from captured Dutch airfields on Ambon and Kendari to be the second wave of the Japanese punch. When the attack came, every plane in A Flight at Parap was grounded for service and repair.

Even if the Wirraways in Darwin were serviceable, they could not have intercepted the Japanese bombers because there was no efficient early warning and control system at the time. The radar equipment that had been sent to Darwin had not yet been assembled, and reports of incoming planes from coastwatchers were ignored. Darwin was caught completely by surprise.

Often referred to as Australia's Pearl Harbor, the attack on the 19th killed 243 people and wounded 320 more. Much of the town was destroyed by bombs or exploding ordnance on the ground. Thirty-three ships in the harbor were sunk or damaged. Several planes on the ground were bombed, including two Wirraways of A Flight that were damaged badly enough to be written off. The Wirraways also lost much of their stores, ammunition, and spare parts when a nearby hangar was bombed and burned to the ground.

Distant Batchelor Field was spared from the

bombing. Wirraways did not engage the enemy. However B and C Flights conducted post-raid activities, including locating and dropping supplies to survivors of sunken ships and stepped up patrol duties. The Wirraways continued serving at Darwin until mid-year when they began to be replaced in the fighter role by American-made Vultee Vengeance fighters. The Wirraways would continue in their training and patrol functions.

Wirraways were also busy elsewhere in the Pacific. In Malaya a squadron of the Royal Air Force departed to fight in the Battle of Britain. They were replaced by three squadrons of Australian planes and one from New Zealand. Two of the Australian squadrons were equipped with Lockheed Hudson bombers, while the third, No. 21 Squadron, flew camouflaged Wirraways painted with the squadron's recognition letter "R."

The 16 planes of 21 Squadron arrived in Malaya aboard the SS *Orante* in August 1940. A year later they were replaced by American-made Brewster Buffalo fighters. Ten of the Wirraways were crated and returned to Australia, while six were allocated to the RAF as trainers. They did not see combat, and all were lost in the chaos of the swift Japanese victory on the peninsula.

Australian War Memorial

The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation established an aircraft factory at Fishermens Bend near Melbourne, Australia, in 1937 to produce the Wirraway.

The Wirraway saw its lengthiest combat as a fighter above Rabaul on New Britain. The island had been a German colony prior to World War I. After the war it was allocated to Australia by the League of Nations as a trust territory. The port of Rabaul was formed by a collapsed volcano, open on one side, which created the finest deepwater port in the western Pacific. It was an obvious target for the Japanese, who controlled nearby Truk Island, also as a trust territory.

Australia took steps to defend the territory. Women and children were evacuated, ground troops were dispatched, and a wing of No. 24 Squadron was sent to Rabaul in early December. The squadron was under the command of Wing Commander J.M. Lerew. As the Australian planes landed at Lakunai airfield, Japanese reconnaissance planes flew overhead at high altitude and observed their arrival. The full complement of No. 24 Squadron included eight Wirraways and four Hudson bombers.

The first Japanese air raid came on January 4, 1942, around 10:30 AM. Twenty-two Japanese bombers flying at 18,000 feet bombed the aerodromes and port facilities. Two Wirraways were scrambled to intercept them but could not catch them.

Nevertheless, the Wirraway pilots were confident in their abilities. The squadron's second test came on January 6, when the Japanese made another attack on the town. Nine Kawanishi H6K Mavis flying boats zoomed in at 18,000 feet to bomb Vunakanau airstrip, which consisted of a single unpaved runway located 10 miles south of Rabaul.

Several Wirraways were scrambled, but only one, piloted by Flight Lieutenant B. Anderson could get close enough to fire a burst at the retreating floatplanes. Even then he was afraid of overheating his engine. Although none of the enemy planes were brought down, Anderson was the first RAAF Wirraway pilot to engage

Wikipedia Commons/Bidgee

ABOVE: This restored CA-16 Wirraway is a favorite of visitors to the Temora Aviation Museum. The name Wirraway was derived from a native Aborigine language, meaning 'to challenge.' OPPOSITE: Fresh from the factory, a lineup of newly completed Wirraway aircraft receive the finishing touches from workers before assignment to units of the Royal Australian Air Force.

in air-to-air combat with the Japanese.

On January 20, a coastwatcher on a nearby island reported seeing a flight of 22 enemy planes headed for Rabaul from the north. Another coastwatcher observed 33 more planes approaching from the west. Both flights were probably from Truk. Another 50 bombers and fighters remained undetected and were coming in from the east. These were launched by the aircraft carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku,* both veterans of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

At the time, two Wirraways were in the air on standard patrol. The six others were scrambled while ground control still believed there was a single flight of 22 Japanese planes approaching. It was assumed that most of these would be bombers with a few escorting fighters. The Australians were outnumbered by more than 10 to one. The Australians quickly learned what the Americans already knew. The Zero was the best fighter in the Pacific Theater.

Japanese fighters intercepted the Wirraways. Three Australian planes were shot down, and two others crash-landed as a result of enemy fire. One other plane landed with part of its tail shot away. Just one emerged undamaged. No Zeros were hit. Six members of the squadron were killed and five wounded or injured that day, the worst but most gallant in Wirraway history. Only three of Lerew's aircraft, one Hudson and two Wirraways, remained undamaged.

The next day the two remaining Wirraways left for Australia by way of Lae, New Guinea. The Hudson followed on the 22nd carrying the wounded. The Australian infantrymen at Rabaul were left to their fate. Few would survive the war.

Not all of the Wirraways were playthings for the almighty Zero. On December 12, 1942, Pilot Officer J.S. Archer and his observer, Sergeant J.F. Coulston, became the instruments of the Wirraway's finest hour. They were flying a tactical reconnaissance mission over the Gona-Buna battlefield on New Guinea to observe the wreckage of a Japanese ship sunk while trying to resupply the Japanese garrison at Gona.

When he returned to base at Popondetta airstrip (now Girua Airport), Archer rushed to find his control officer and excitedly told him that he thought he had shot down a Zero. He elaborated, "I went in to look at the wreck off Gona and I saw this thing in front of me [a thousand feet below] and it had red spots on it, so I [dived on it and] gave it a burst and it appeared to fall into the sea."

The control officer calmly replied, "Don't be silly, Archer, Wirraways can't shoot down Zeros." However, within minutes the officer received a dozen calls from observers on the battlefield confirming Archer's story. He had shot down a Zero with his twin Vickers .303 machine guns. For his efforts the United States awarded Archer the Distinguished Flying Cross. It was the only time during the war that a Wirraway was victorious against a Zero. Archer's plane survives today and is on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Archer's victory was the high point of the Wirraway's service during the war, but there were still everyday tasks to be done. By removing the second man from the plane, it could carry as much as 500 pounds of bombs, and in the New Guinea campaign it often carried out this duty. On December 11, 1942, a flight of six Wirraways took off from Popondetta, each carrying two 250-pound bombs to hit targets at Buna. Only five of them returned to base.

The Wirraway had other uses as well. At Popondetta, Archer was but one of the pilots who flew reconnaissance missions over the Gona-Buna battlefield. General Robert Eichelberger, commander of American forces at Buna,

considered the Wirraway's service particularly valuable. After the war he would write, "The Wirraway pilots never received adequate credit." Eichelberger frequently hitched a ride in the tail gunner's seat when he wanted to visit other areas of the front.

The attrition rate of the Wirraways was high, and when the last one was either shot down or lost in the jungle no American plane was forthcoming to fill the reconnaissance roll.

Several Wirraways were lost in combat. On January 1, 1943, according to the official record, "The aircraft crashed on a reconnaissance operation in the Gona area … Crew of two bodies discovered on 19/1/43 … by soldiers of the 2/18th Battalion Australian Army … Though the area was held by Japanese troops at the time of the forced landing, it is not sure if they were captured and executed, or were killed trying to evade capture…."

By February 6, 1943, the fighting at Gona-Buna had ended, so an air attack was unexpected when three Wirraways were damaged or destroyed on the ground during a Japanese bombing raid on Berry airstrip at Dobadura.

During the early days of the war, several Wirraways were lost on the ground to Japanese strafing and bombing, but by far accidents caused the greatest loss to the Wirraway fleet.

National Archives

There were several causes of these accidents—design or manufacturing flaws, unfamiliarity with a new plane, pilot error, and engine failure all contributed to a high loss rate. Even minor ground accidents could put a Wirraway in the hangar for repairs.

On January 5, 1942, No. 7 Squadron had only 41 serviceable Wirraways out of 126 assigned to it due to accidents and servicing. In July 1942, No. 5 Squadron had 39 of its 100 planes waiting for new engines or engine service.

It was clear that the Wirraway was no match for Japan's best fighter. By mid-1942 it began to be replaced by American planes with bigger engines, greater speed, and massive firepower. The CAC later produced an Australian fighter, the Boomerang, which had a more powerful engine, two 20mm cannons, and four .303 Vickers guns mounted in its wings. Wirraway partisans, however, like to point out that the Boomerang never brought down a Zero.

The Wirraway continued in its trainer, light bomber, sub hunting, and reconnaissance role for the rest of the war. The initial order for 620 aircraft was filled by June 1942, but limited production continued until 1946, when the 755th plane was completed.

In 1947-1948, a Wirraway was employed by the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan. The Wirraway continued in service with the Royal Australian Air Force as a trainer and communications aircraft until 1959. Today Australians are still proud of their first indigenously produced aircraft and the brave pilots who flew them in combat at a time when no other fighter was available.

Glenn Barnett is a retired college instructor and aerospace engineer. He worked on the Apache helicopter, B-1B bomber, and Space Shuttle. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History.

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The Mysterious Death of Dr. Todt

A plane crash claimed the life of Hitler's minister of armaments, paving the way for the appointment of Albert Speer.

IN HIS 1969 MEMOIR, ALBER T SPEER ASSER TED THAT ADOLF Hitler would never have appointed him Third Reich minister of armaments had not his predecessor in that post, acclaimed engineering genius Dr. Fritz Todt, been killed in a still unexplained airplane crash in early 1942.

Indeed, that was the universally and historically accepted version of this event until 1982, four decades later, when young German postwar historian Dr. Matthias Schmidt began questioning Speer's motives a year after that top Nazi's own death in London in the company of a woman who was not his wife.

Ostensibly, the night before his sudden death Dr. Todt had a furious argument with Hitler at the latter's Eastern Front military headquarters at Wolf's Lair, Rastenburg, East Prussia.

The contested topic reportedly was the engineer's bold assertion to his Führer that the war could no longer be won now that the Third Reich was fighting the world's greatest land power in the Soviet Union, its best sea force in the British Royal Navy, and the globe's mightiest heavy industrial nation in the United States.

Dr. Speer was already there, waiting in the wings, having made his first trip to Wolf's Lair that very day, perhaps even for the purpose of succeeding Dr. Todt.

That night, Drs. Todt and Speer agreed to fly back together to Berlin the next morning, but Speer decided instead to sleep in and cancelled. Shortly after take-off, Todt's Heinkel He-111 plane blew up in mid-air and crashed on the Rangsdorf airfield near Rastenburg on February 8, 1942. All aboard were killed in a fiery blaze.

Immediately and ever since, dark suspicions of an assassination plot centered on Hitler and the main trio of Todt's rivals for power within the Nazi German state, Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, and even Speer himself, then Hitler's architect and general building inspector for Berlin.

As for the latter suspect, members of the slain Dr. Todt's family alleged that Speer was capable of anything.

According to Speer in his memoirs, as Göring hurried to Rastenburg allegedly to induce his Führer to appoint him to succeed Dr. Todt, Hitler instead suddenly and surprisingly named Speer to all of Todt's many offices. The portly Göring was checkmated in another round of Nazi insider power politics.

Hitler may have been keeping Speer in reserve for just such an opportunity. Hitler was also just beginning to realize that the arms industry was not producing as much as needed in the third year of an ever-expanding global war.

Thus, Speer's presence at Wolf's Lair proved to be very propitious.

But just who was Dr. Fritz Todt, and why was his loss so lamented by his brother Nazis, at least publicly?

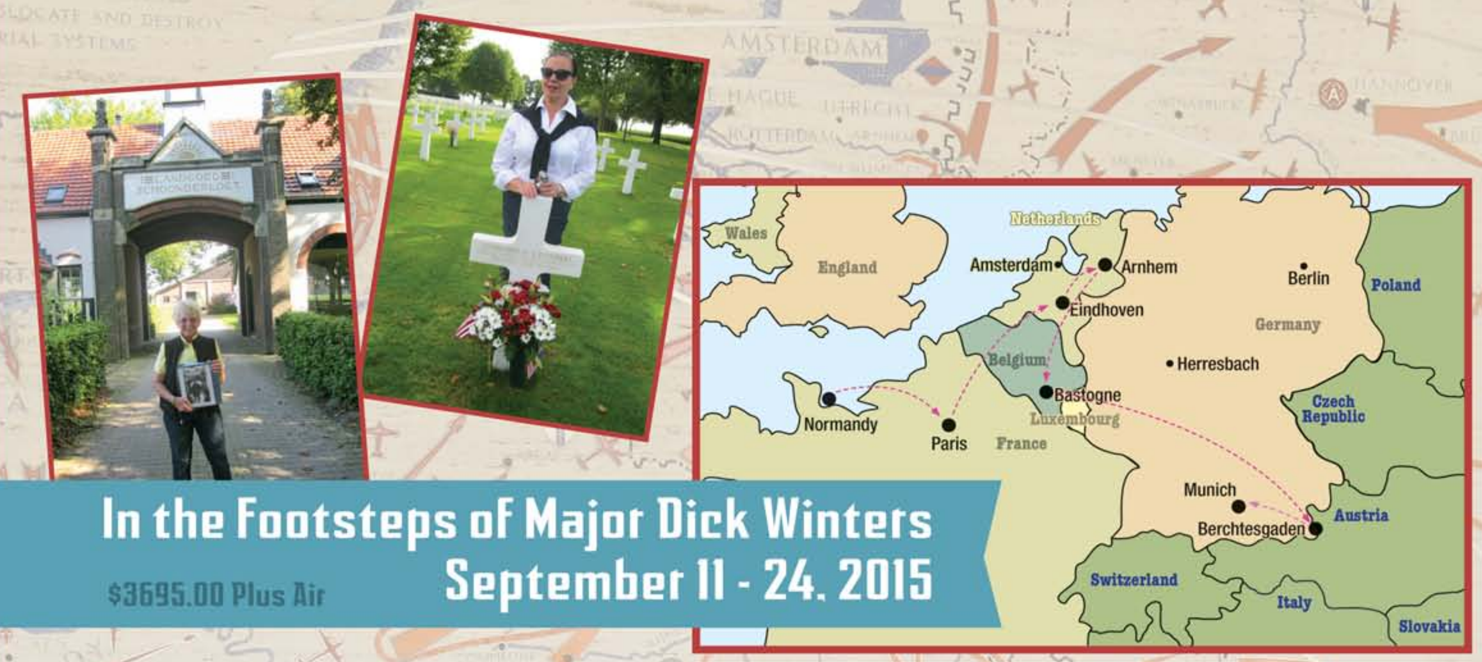
The master builder of the Third Reich, Todt was Nazism's engineer supreme, the man who erected the much acclaimed Autobahn prior to the war, the East Wall facing Russia, and the vaunted Siegfried Line in the West, as well as the startup of the Atlantic Wall opposite Great Britain across the English Channel. Finally, he served as the first minister of the German armaments industry, upon which Hitler depended to win the war.

A German sentry stands atop one of the massive artillery emplacements constructed along the coastline of Europe by laborers of Organization Todt. The construction force's namesake, Dr. Fritz Todt (above), died under mysterious circumstances.

The Nazis were fond of naming important groups after their top leaders, such as Organization Todt and its derivatives. Its members wore a brown Nazi Party uniform with a yellow armband on the left with its name lettered in black Germanic runes: ORG. TODT (OT).

Established in 1933 as the Nazis' construction unit, OT became especially active in the

European WWII Battlefield Expeditions



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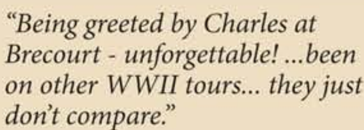

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wartime occupied territories, used mainly for rebuilding roads, bridges, and railway lines destroyed in the fighting.

Although commanded first by Todt and then by Speer, OT was ultimately placed under the overall aegis of the armed forces' engineering command in a typical Third Reich division of authority.

In addition to its native German members, OT ultimately included thousands of POWs, foreign civilian slave laborers, and even Jews. More than 1.4 million men built above-ground bunkers and bridges, and had Todt survived the war he might well have been indicted by the Allies as a war criminal, as was his successor, Speer.

A highly specialized unit independent of the Nazi Party's own bureaucracy, OT carried out the most impressive construction program since the Roman Empire. By 1945, up to 80 percent of its membership was non-German.

Like Speer later, Dr. Todt worked well with other Nazi organizations such as Dr. Robert Ley's German Labor Front, the DAF, and Konstantin Hierl's Reich Labor Service, the RAD.

In the Balkans, OT mined ores essential to the war effort and built roads in Greece and Yugoslavia. It constructed concrete and bombproof U-boat pens on the French coast, airfields to the far north to bomb Allied Murmansk convoys, and the Atlantic Wall to defeat the projected Allied cross-Channel invasion.

In the east, OT took part in the thinly disguised "anti-Partisan" combat operations that really meant killing Russian civilians and Jews. Fully armed as a military unit in 1944 and newly named the OT Front, it contained construction worker, administration, works direction, signals, medical, propaganda, and even musical, sections.

OT also built all of Hitler's many headquarters across Nazi-occupied Europe. Like all other Nazi organizations, OT had regional headquarters as well, at Berlin, Kiev, Belgrade, Paris, and Oslo, plus Rastenburg, Essen, Weimar, Heidelberg, Munich, Villack, and Prague.

After the war, the Allies disbanded OT, thus dashing Dr. Speer's hope to use it to rebuild the new West Germany from scratch.

Friedrich "Fritz" Todt was born at Pforzheim, Baden, Germany, on September 14, 1891, the son of a jewelry factory owner. After the completion of his secondary education, young Fritz continued his studies at Munich's College of Technology from 1911 to 1914, and again during 1918-1920 at Karlsruhe.

Todt served in World War I, starting as an infantryman with two years on the Western Front from 1914 to 1916. Awarded the Iron Cross for bravery in action, Lieutenant Todt then became an aerial observer directing ground artillery fire for the German Army and was wounded in air combat.

Heinrich Hoffman Albums, National Archives

With Dr. Fritz Todt standing at right, Hitler turns the first spade of dirt to begin construction on the German Autobahn near Frankfurt in 1933.

Upon graduation from technical college in 1920, Todt worked as a construction engineer for the firm of Sager & Worner, writing his doctoral dissertation on concrete roadway surfaces and being awarded his doctorate in 1931. Combat veteran Todt joined the Nazi Party on January 5, 1922, and by 1931 was an SS colonel on Himmler's staff.

In 1933, Hitler, upon his appointment as reich chancellor, placed Dr. Todt as head of the government's construction group that later bore the engineer's own name. Dr. Todt's official title was Inspector General of the German Road and Highway System—later known as the Führer's Roads, the world famous Autobahn, which Hitler commissioned him to build in 1933.

Begun during the last years of the reign of German Kaiser Wilhelm II, the roads were continued in 1921 with the debut of the privately funded AVUS experimental racing circuit. Initially, Hitler opposed the building of the new roads as a means of denying any credit to the hated Weimar regime, but once in office, he swiftly claimed the entire project as his own idea.

Dr. Todt began with 30,000 workers, and soon this figure was more than doubled. Hitler's stated goal was an ultra-modern network of 7,300 miles of four-lane highways, and a quarter of this was completed by 1938. Even now, many older Germans still recall Hitler as "the man who built the Autobahns."

The first gala groundbreaking occurred at Frankfurt on September 23, 1933, the initial stretch to Darmstadt being duly opened to the public on May 19, 1935. The first 1,000 kilometers of the Autobahn were completed by September 27, 1936; the second such benchmark was achieved by December 17, 1937; and the third and final 1,000 kilometers by December 15, 1938.

Militarily, Dr. Todt's motorways could transport 300,000 troops from the eastern border of the Reich to its western frontier in two days of hard driving. From 1935 to 1939, Dr. Todt's Autobahn facilitated Hitler's bloodless occupations of the Saar, the Rhineland, Austria, the Sudetenland, and the Czech capital of Prague, as well as the overt invasion of Poland in 1939 and of Western Europe the following year.

World War II was in its second year when Chancellor Hitler named Dr. Todt as inspector general for roads, water, and power, thus increasing his influence. He later added the Head Office for Technology to his growing list of governmental portfolios. By the time Hitler invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, Dr. Todt was also responsible for road building in all the territories occupied by the Germans, stretching from the northernmost tip of Norway to southern France.

Todt was thus in charge of all civil and military engineering for Nazi Europe. This included electrical and mechanical units, port operations, and naval U-boat bunker pen construction on the Continent's Atlantic coastline.

During the last four months of his life, Dr. Todt found an ever-increasing amount of his time occupied with new road building in the vast regions of the Soviet Union to the far-off Ural Mountains, the expected final eastern expansion of Hitler's new Nazi empire.

Dr. Todt had built Nazi Germany's Siegfried Line facing the French Maginot Line during 1938-1939, and he supervised the construction during 1935-1942 of the lesser known East Wall. The East Wall included a trio of lines, the Oder-Warthe Bend, the Pomeranian Line, and the Oder Line, stretching along the eastern German provinces of Pomerania and Silesia.

On both projects, Dr. Todt's OT worked with the Army's own elite Fortress Engineering Corps. In November 1939, Hermann Göring, in his capacity as chief of the Nazi economic Four-Year Plan (1936-1940), named Dr. Todt to take overall responsibility for the entire construction sector of the Third Reich proper and its conquered Polish lands.

He faced yet another formidable task, the startup of Hitler's projected Fortress Europe,

the outer shell of which was to be the "impregnable" Atlantic Wall barring a Western Allied seaborne invasion of Nazi Europe. Beginning in 1942, a popular Nazi slogan trumpeted, "The West Wall shields the Reich, while the Second Wall protects Europe!" On December 12, 1941, Hitler gave the new Atlantic Wall the highest construction priority. It became equivalent to 5 1/2 Hoover Dams and was the largest construction project of the entire war, with 1.5 million tons of steel, enough for 57 Chrysler Buildings.

By D-Day in 1944, there were half a million people from the OT working on the Atlantic Wall. "I needed a job," stated one. "Those Germans were expert with concrete—I take my hat off to them!" By June 6, 1944, more than 8,500 bunkers had been both designed and built by the OT.

The Atlantic Wall was designed by Dr. Todt during December 1941-February 1942, but was built mainly by his successor, Speer, during 1942-1943, and then improved upon by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in December 1943-June 1944. Despite all this, however, the fact remains that the Allies breached it in a single day in Normandy, June 6, 1944, because it was strong in line, but nowhere in depth. Via Nazi propaganda, however, the 1942 "Front by the Sea" morphed in the public imagination into the mighty Atlantic Wall.

By early 1940, Hitler was dissatisfied with the Army's direction of German wartime weaponry production, and so on March 21, 1940, the Führer named trusty paladin Dr. Todt as the Reich's first civilian minister for armaments and munitions. Despite his best efforts at reform, though, on December 3, 1941, Minister Todt told Hitler that 60 arms experts had warned him that the overall war economy was at the breaking point.

On March 24, 1940, Dr. Todt told the head of the Army Weapons Office, General Georg Thomas, "From 1941 on, time works against us," in regard to the overwhelming U.S. industrial potential.

Another problem was that the industrial war effort was dominated by two segments only, aircraft and ammunition, and these claimed more than two-thirds of all German resources. Indeed, as of April 1940, there was even an ammunition supply crisis, just as Nazi Germany was invading Norway and Denmark.

Dr. Todt began reorganizing German armament production and munitions supply, planning to replace the Nazi bureaucracy overseeing them with a permanent industrial council. In effect, this would return them to private business concerns and responsibility. His proposed

Library of Congress

ABOVE: In this photograph snapped during the 1930s, a section of the modern Autobahn stretches into the distance across the German countryside. Note the service station at left. BELOW: Concrete antitank obstacles such as these studded the German West Wall, or Siegfried Line, along with wide ditches, fortified strongpoints, and mines. The Siegfried Line was one of the many major construction projects supervised by Dr. Todt.

National Archives

reforms included greater self-regulation by industry, modifying the harsh system of price controls, a better distribution of government procurement contracts, and an overhaul of the raw materials rationing system among the four competing armed services. These now also included Himmler's new Waffen SS. A regional ammunition committee was established as well.

In the future, the Army procurement offices would issue orders directly to these committees, with German industrialists themselves taking responsibility. This, in effect, was the very same "self-responsibility of industry" for which Speer was later given full credit, resulting in the 1942-1944 German armaments production "miracle."

As for Dr. Todt's sudden and violent death on February 8, 1942, if not an outright, covert assassination how can the mysterious explosion be explained? The answer may have been provided by Hitler's personal pilot, SS Lt. Col. Hans Baur, who noted in his postwar memoirs that eyewitnesses to the crash recalled seeing a blue jet of flame exiting from the rear of the aircraft. Like all German military airplanes during the war, the He-111 had a kilogram of dynamite stowed beneath the pilot's seat that was set off by a tiny looped pull string.

Dr. Todt's normal place during his aerial trips was in the cockpit next to the pilot. Baur theorized that in squeezing his way into the small cabin and into his passenger's seat, Todt may have accidentally caught the loop of this pull cord on a side button of his boot, activating both the box's timer and detonator.

When this fatal sequence of events was noticed, Todt's plane had been airborne about two minutes, beginning a macabre death race to disarm the explosive device, known as a "destroyer." The aircraft had reached only the end of airfield tarmac when it exploded, with the plane flipping over at a 30-meter altitude and crashing to earth.

Dr. Todt's charred body was duly identified when pulled from the grisly wreckage. Baur concludes, probably correctly that there was no plot, only an aerial accident, pure and simple.

Ironically, however, the official Luftwaffe accident report of March 8, 1943, was never published. It is missing, and the enduring mystery continues.

Towson, Maryland, freelancer Blaine Taylor is the author of several books on World War II, including Volkswagen Military Vehicles of the Third Reich *and* Apex of Glory: Mercedes and Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich.

THE SUN WAS JUST RISING AND THE DAY PROMISED CLEAR skies overhead. Since 5 AM maintenance crews had been running the engines, making last minute adjustments, and arming the scores of aircraft sitting on the steel flight deck of the Japanese aircraft carrier *Akagi*. She had started life as an Amagi-class heavy battlecruiser but had been converted to an aircraft carrier. On February 19, 1942, *Akagi* served as the flagship of the Imperial Japanese Navy's First Air Fleet, commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo.

Directly behind *Akagi,* at a distance of about 8,000 yards, was her sister ship *Kaga,* the other member of the 1st Carrier Squadron. On *Akagi*'s port side, 8,000 yards away, sailed the carrier *Soryu,* flagship of Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi. Behind and equidistant from *Soryu* and *Kaga* was the carrier

Australia's Pearl Harbor

The Japanese Imperial Navy's air attack on the Australian city of Darwin was the greatest military disaster ever inflicted on that country's soil.

BY ARNOLD BLUMBERG

Hiryu. Like *Soryu,* her partner in the 2nd Carrier Squadron, *Hiryu* was smaller and a bit faster than *Akagi* and *Kaga.* As on the *Akagi,* the sailors of the *Kaga, Soryu,* and *Hiryu* were scurrying on and below the decks readying their warplanes for action.

An array of Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) vessels supported the carriers. These included the bristling shapes of the heavy cruisers of the 8th Cruiser Squadron: *Tone, Chikuma, Maya,* and *Takao,* sporting 10 8-inch guns each, stationed 10,000 yards from each carrier. Between them, in front, and behind, was a screen of nine destroyers from the 17th and 18th Destroyer Divisions, 1st Destroyer Flotilla, under the control of the light cruiser *Abukuma.* These craft were each armed with six 5-inch guns and eight excellent Long Lance torpedoes.

Surveying the frenetic activity of the *Akagi*'s personnel that morning was Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, the task force air leader. The 39-year-old Fuchida, who had entered the Navy in 1921, was a specialist in horizontal bombing in the naval air arm. His ability as a tactician and administrator led him to command the attack against the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. On that fateful day, he coordinated the entire Japanese aerial assault against that bastion of American power in the Pacific. Once again, 10 weeks after he and his comrades had wrought such thorough destruction on the naval might of America, Fuchida would be leading another airborne strike force against the enemy.

At 7:30 AM, Fuchida signaled all the carriers that the launching of their planes was to begin. The sea breeze freshened from the northwest, which required that the flattops turn while the aircraft took off. When the fleet reached nine degrees south latitude and 129 degrees east longitude 220 miles northwest of the target, Nagumo ordered reversal to a reciprocal course to bring the carriers into the wind. The other warships also turned, and the entire fleet commenced to steam away from its objective and

would continue to do so, though at a reduced speed, until the aerial strike force returned three hours later. Having completed their turns, heading full into the wind, the carriers increased speed until velocity over their flight decks reached 25 miles per hour.

After a final briefing the pilots and their crews climbed into their cockpits. Fuchida and his two crewmen boarded their three-seater Nakajima B5N2 Kate level bomber. When all planes were ready, the *Akagi*'s skipper, Captain Taijiro, ordered them to take off. Eighteen Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighters roared from the flight deck followed by 18 Aichi D3A1 Val

In this painting by artist Keith Swain, the Australian Navy corvette HMAS *Katoomba* fights off Japanese bombers at the height of the raid on Darwin harbor. The scene depicts the *Katoomba* in dry dock and is based on the descriptions of the action from *Katoomba*'s captain, Allan Cousins, and photographs and other records from the period.

Australian War Memorial

dive-bombers, and 27 Kates.

Astern of *Akagi* the warbirds of the other carriers hurtled into the blue. When all were airborne at 8:45 AM, Fuchida brought the attacking force of 188 aircraft, comprised of 36 Zero fighters, 71 Val dive bombers, and 81 Kate high-level bombers, onto a compass bearing of 148 degrees, with the Zeros, flying above and ahead of the others, acting as a protective screen against possible enemy fighter interception. With the prevailing northwest wind the Japanese expected to be over their objective in a little more than an hour. That objective was the Australian port city of Darwin, and the IJN air branch planned to deliver a destructive blow only surpassed by that visited upon Pearl Harbor.

The massive IJN air raid winging its way to Darwin in mid-February 1942 was a response to a joint military command set up by the Allied Western governments designed to stem the Rising Sun's advance across Southeast Asia. ABDA (American, British, Dutch, and Australian, as the command was named, became operational in January 1942 and established its main supply base at the port of Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory. From Darwin vital military supplies were funneled to the Dutch East Indies, Singapore, and the Philippines. Further, Darwin was critical to the transfer of Allied fighter aircraft that staged from Timor to Bali, then to Java. Without these air assets Java would fall to the Japanese, and the entire Dutch East Indies, with its vast oil and rubber resources crucial to the Japanese war effort, with it.

The Japanese were aware of the Allied buildup at Darwin, whose prewar population was 5,800, and contemplated attacking it in late January 1942. However, an argument among the high command as to whether Darwin or Ceylon should be struck first postponed any decision to assault the city. The impasse was finally broken by Commander Minoru Genda, a brilliant naval staff officer and one of the chief architects of the Pearl Harbor attack. He advised Admiral Isokoru Yamamoto, commander in chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet: "Darwin poses a threat to current and planned operations in the Netherlands East Indies and recommend it should be the first target." Genda went on to observe that "there had been a substantial buildup of [enemy] army and air forces in the area and do not want it to be used as an offensive base against us."

Persuaded by Genda's logic, on February 9 Yamamoto ordered a carrier strike on Darwin "to annihilate the enemy strength in the Port Darwin area and to intercept and destroy enemy naval and transport fleets…." The attack would also provide support for the

Both: National Archives

LEFT: Commander Mitsuo Fuchida of the Imperial Japanese Navy led the attack on Darwin harbor and in some respects duplicated his success at Pearl Harbor. RIGHT: Commander Thomas H. Moorer received the Purple Heart when his U.S. Navy PBY Catalina patrol plane was shot down during the Darwin raid. Moorer later rose to the rank of admiral and served as Chief of Naval Operations and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Japanese effort to capture the island of Timor and thus cut off Allied air reinforcements to Java. Genda was assigned to plan the operation. He not only crafted the carrier attack but added a second strike to be made by 54th Army Air Force twin-engine bombers based at the recently captured Dutch airfields at Ambon in the Maluku and Kendari in the Celebes Islands. After the war Genda recalled that the Japanese had reliable information about the state of Darwin's defenses and that as a result, "We did not expect serious opposition."

Departing Palau (in today's Indonesia) on the night of February 15, Nagumo's task force reached Kendari on the 17th and made a high-speed run across the Banda Sea the next day. During the early hours of the 19th, the Japanese entered the Timor Sea, where Nagumo launched his aircraft toward Darwin.

About 9:30 AM near Bathurst Island, Lieutenant Thomas Moorer's U.S. Navy PBY Catalina flying boat, Patrol Wing 22, became the first victim of the large Japanese force heading to Darwin. Pounced on by up to nine Zeros, the PBY was forced into the sea before it could radio an alarm to Darwin. Later, its crew was rescued by a friendly merchant ship.

Some early warnings of the enemy raid were received but were not acted upon. Lieutenant John Gribble transmitted a sighting at 9:15 AM, while a few minutes later Father John McGrath, a coastwatcher at the Catholic Mission on Bathurst Island, at 9:37 AM radioed Darwin, "An unusually large air formation bearing down on us from the northwest." Both messages were ignored at the Naval Communications Center at Darwin. Meanwhile, Commander Fuchida's attack force crossed the east coast of Australia, turned northwest, and headed for the city. Without radar, the port was unaware of the surprise enemy assault, which commenced at 9:58 AM.

On the morning of the Japanese attack the only air assets defending Darwin were 10 Curtiss P-40B Tomahawk American-built fighters of Major Floyd "Slugger" Pell's 33rd Pursuit Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Returning to Darwin after aborting a flight to Java due to heavy rains, Pell ordered five of his command, designated B Flight under Lieutenant Robert G. Oestreicher, to stay aloft at 15,000 feet and act as a combat air patrol over the Darwin area, while Pell landed the five P-40s of A Flight at the Darwin Royal Air Force airfield for refueling. The time was about 9:55 AM.

As B Flight, in two two-plane elements with Oestreicher above them, climbed over Darwin harbor, it was attacked from 2,000 feet above by Zeros, which broke the P-40s' formation. Oestreicher later recalled how Lieutenant Jack R. Peres's P-40 was hit by cannon fire from a Zero chasing him and seeing Peres's plane "slowly rolled over and down." Moments later, Lieutenant Elton S. Perry was shot out of the sky, plunging into the bay.

Oestreicher climbed into the sun and was hit by a passing Zero but managed to get in a burst of machine-gun fire on his attacker. At 12,000 feet he counted 18 enemy fighters "in a lazy circle at … 20,000 feet" waiting for their turn to dive at the hapless and vastly outnumbered P-40s of B Flight. As the flight leader frantically ordered his unit to head for the clouds south of Darwin, Lieutenant William R. Walker, who had been hit in the left shoulder, landed his plane at Darwin RAAF airfield, which was later strafed, bombed and burned to the ground on the runway.

As Walker taxied to the RAAF airdrome, Lieutenant Max R. Wiecks found himself surrounded by "wild and frenzied" air action. His P-40 was soon riddled with bullets and out of control, forcing the 27-year-old pilot to bail out of his stricken machine. He hit the water 10 miles from land.

Of B Flight, only Oestreicher stayed in the air until the raid ended. He shot down two Japanese dive-bombers, the first aerial victories by the Allies over Australia. After he landed at 11:45 AM, his plane was being repaired when it was destroyed by the second Japanese air raid of the day. He spent the rest of the 19th hunkered down at the bomb-ravaged RAAF base.

While B Flight fought and died in the sky over Darwin, A Flight was being destroyed on the ground at the RAAF base by fighters from the *Hiryu*. Commander Fuchida later commented that as his force flew over Darwin, "There were 20-odd planes of various types on

the airfields. Several U.S. P-40s attempted to take off as we came over but were quickly shot down and the rest were destroyed where they stood." Spotting approaching enemy fighters, Major Pell and the rest of his element attempted to get airborne. While rolling down the runway, he was strafed by Zeros as his plane lurched 80 feet into the air. Pell parachuted and hit the ground, injured but still alive. As he crawled away, he was machined gunned and killed by Zeros making another pass over the airfield.

Following Pell was Lieutenant Charles W. Hughes. He never got off the ground. He was strafed as he gathered speed and crashed and died in his cockpit. Twenty-one-year-old Lieutenant Robert F. McMahon tried to get into the air after seeing his commander sprint to his plane. After almost colliding with the injured Walker's incoming B Flight plane, McMahon took off, and the next few minutes found him dueling with a score of Zeros over the harbor. Wounded in the leg, his aircraft's engine on fire, he had to hit the silk, landing in the harbor alive after being machine gunned by the Japanese as he helplessly floated in the air.

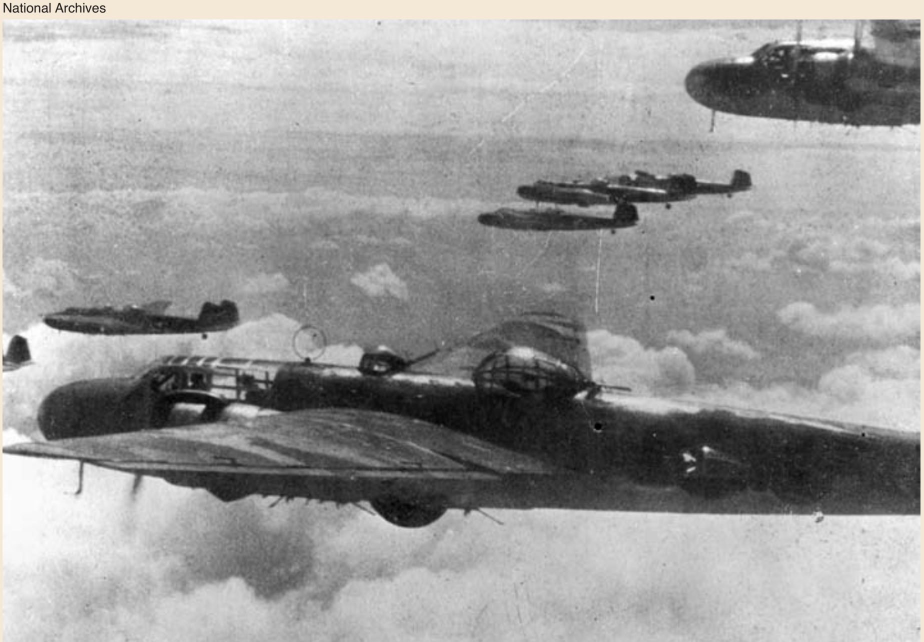
Lieutenants Burt R. Rice and John G. Glover were the last of A Flight to lift into the air. Rice was shot down and machined gunned by Japanese Zeros as he swung below his parachute. Viewing Rice's predicament, Glover sought to protect his helpless comrade. In doing so he downed an opposing fighter before his own plane was critically damaged by enemy fire. Crashing into the airfield, Glover miraculously survived the enemy strafing that followed as he walked away from the wreckage that had once been his aircraft. Rice landed in a swamp and was found several hours later.

Outnumbered and outfought by the more experienced Japanese pilots, B Flight had been wiped out. Some Japanese World War II historians claim that the destruction of the four B Flight planes was accomplished by one Zero airman, Naval Air Pilot 1st Class Yoshikazu Nagahama, who is also credited with shooting down the luckless PBY flown by Lieutenant Moorer.

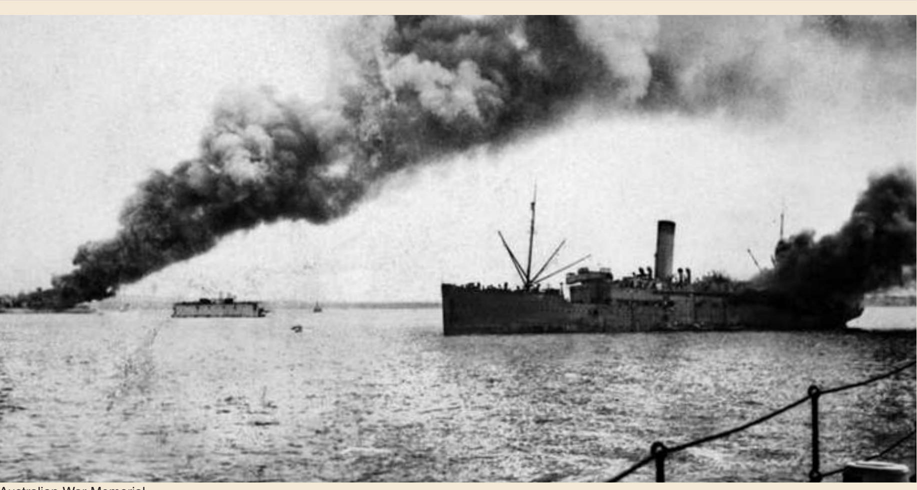
As Pell's airmen fought and died in the skies over Darwin, the air force and civilian airstrips in the region were repeatedly bombed and strafed by the Japanese, making them unserviceable. Besides the nine P-40s of 33rd Squadron, 11 other RAAF aircraft were destroyed in the initial Japanese 32-minute raid on Darwin.

Trailing the Japanese fighters were the Kates and Vals. At 10 AM, the former began their runs over Darwin's harbor at 14,000 feet. Fuchida wrote, "The harbor was crowded with all kinds of ships which we picked off at our leisure." There were 46 vessels, many of them merchantmen, in port that morning. A cyclone had shut down the port from February 2-10, then a dock workers strike had created a logjam of vessels waiting to unload war material. Their stay had been prolonged even more by the fact that Darwin's small single wharf could only unload two ships at a time.

National Archives



ABOVE: A flight of Japanese Navy Mitsubishi G3M Nell bombers wings its way toward a distant target. These bombers were heavily engaged during the attack on Darwin harbor on February 19, 1942. BELOW: Smoke billows from Australian ships hit by Japanese bombers during the raid on Darwin harbor. In the foreground the troop transport SS *Zealandia* has been hit near the stern. In the distance, the cargo motor vessel *Neptuna* blazes.

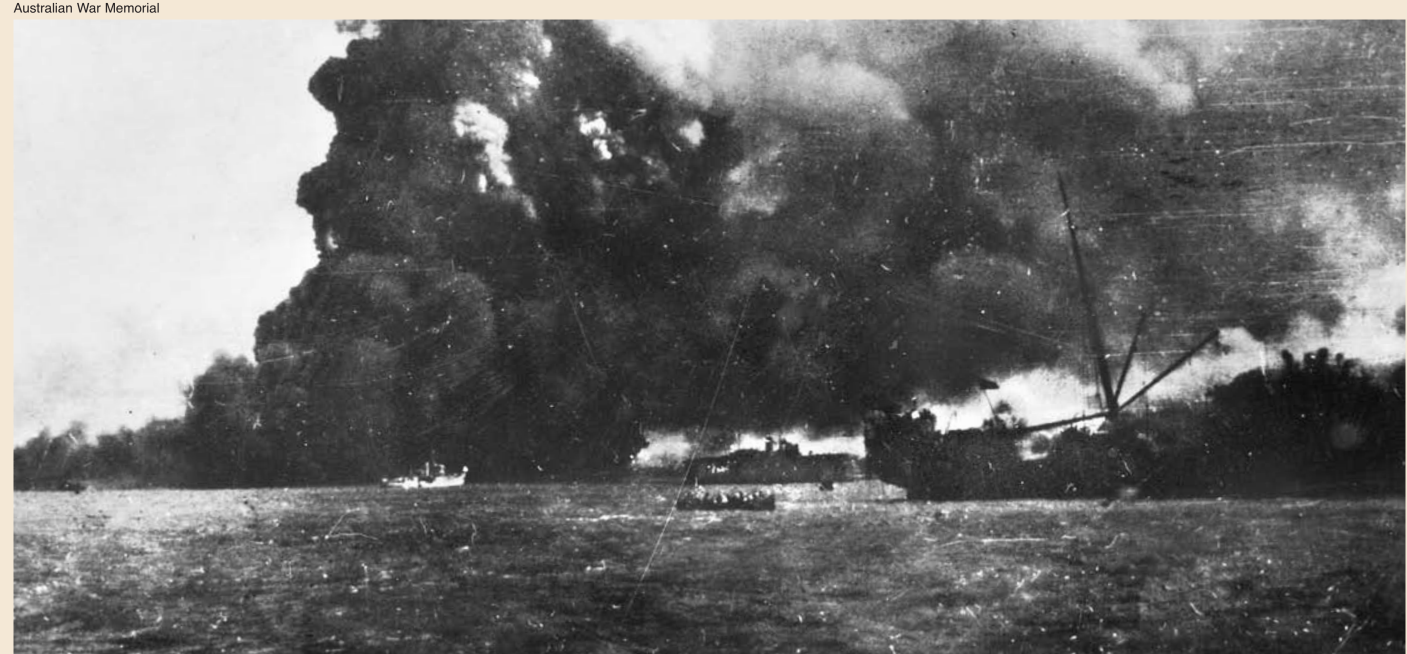


Australian War Memorial

A rain of Japanese bombs wrecked the wharf, water mains, oil pipes, and much of the pier. The destruction slowly moved across the administrative district of the town, demolishing the hospital, post office, and police barracks. Dozens of civilians were killed or wounded and trapped in the rubble. After the war Fuchida declared, "I personally gave orders to the pilots not to attack the town." Whether this is true or not, civilian eyewitnesses attested to the fact that the Japanese methodically struck the city, adding that the "machine gunning harried the town more than the bombs."

As the Kates completed their fiery work, the Vals, attacking singly, in pairs, or in waves of three, concentrated on the shipping in the harbor. The USS *William B. Preston,* an American tender, and the Australian sloop *Swan* got underway and were hit and damaged, losing a total of seven killed and 22 wounded. The USS *Peary,* a 1,190-ton U.S. Navy destroyer, was buried by five bombs that gutted her engine room and exploded a forward magazine. Peary lost 80 killed, including her captain, Lt. Cmdr.

Australian War Memorial



A catastrophic explosion signaled the end of the cargo motor vessel ***Neptuna,*** hit by Japanese bombers during the air raid. ***Neptuna*** was launched in 1924 and served in the merchant marine fleets of both Germany and Australia.

John M. Bermingham, and all her officers. Forty crew members, most of them wounded, survived. By the time the last Japanese carrier planes left the area at 11 AM, Darwin harbor had witnessed the sinking of nine vessels with 12 more badly damaged; 25 other ships in the port escaped serious damage or were untouched. Three Catalina flying boats were destroyed in the harbor as well, while two U.S. Navy freighters were sunk northwest of Bathurst Island by Vals from *Hiryu* and *Soryu*.

When the Japanese bombers began to unload their deadly cargo on the port and the Zeros started strafing the harbor, the defending antiaircraft batteries of the 2nd AA and 14th Heavy AA Batteries, sporting 3.7-inch guns for high-altitude fire, and a small number of Lewis machine guns for low-flying intruders, opened fire from locations at Darwin Oval, Fannie Bay, and other strategic locations around the city. Joined by the 19th Light Horse Machine Gun Regiment, which had mounted its weapons on oil tanks near the port, the Australian guns sent a lot of lead into the air above the harbor but managed to damage only a few enemy planes and shot down one Val. The problem for the gunners was that their pieces were just too slow to effectively engage the attacking aircraft at short range.

Around noon, 27 Japanese Army Mitsubishi G4M1 Betty bombers from Kendari and 27 Mitsubishi G3M1 Nell bombers staging from Ambon appeared above Darwin. Flying at 18,000 feet, the bombers separated into two groups. They ignored the town and port, instead concentrating their attention on the military airfield. While one formation flew in from the southwest, the other roared in from the northeast, both arriving over the base and dropping their ordnance at the same time. They then turned and made a second pass over the field. Two hangars, four barracks, the mess hall, the hospital, and a number of storage buildings were obliterated. The attack also took out six Lockheed Hudson light bombers and damaged another while two P-40 fighters, the ones landed by B Flight, 33rd Squadron after their aerial encounter of that morning, and a U.S. Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber were blown to pieces. Six RAAF personnel were killed.

After the attacking aircraft were recovered, Admiral Nagumo steered for Kendari, arriving there on February 21. The Darwin operation had been a complete success, topped off by the capture of Timor on the 20th. Both actions severed vital supply lines needed by the Allies to prevent the fall of Java, which was soon invaded from the sea and taken by the Japanese. After the war, Fuchida expressed some reservations about the action, appearing not to want to identify the leader of the Pearl Harbor raid as the leader of the Darwin raid. He candidly admitted that the Darwin blow "seemed hardly worthy of us. If ever a sledgehammer was used to crack an egg it was then."

Unlike Pearl Harbor, where Nagumo's airmen failed to hit fuel stocks, repair facilities, and other storage installations, these were thoroughly destroyed in the Darwin raid by 206 bombers dropping 681 bombs. As a result, Darwin was eliminated as an Allied supply and transport base from which aid to the Dutch East Indies could be delivered.

The cost to the defenders of Darwin was 191 killed and more than 400 wounded. About 68 of the dead and injured were civilians. Japanese aircraft losses are in dispute, ranging from two to seven planes, with crew losses totaling seven, of which two were killed, one taken prisoner, and the remainder rescued by friendly forces. Four Japanese aircraft losses, including a Val hit over Darwin that came down in the sea at East Point, a Zero struck over the harbor that crashed on Melville Island, and two dive-bombers shot out of the sky by Lieutenant Robert Oestreicher, have been verified.

The port of Darwin would later be rebuilt as a major supply depot ringed by numerous new airfields. After the February 19, 1942, raid the Allied navies largely abandoned the Darwin naval base, dispersing their units to Brisbane, Fremantle, and other ports. Darwin would be attacked by Japanese airpower 62 more times between March 1942 and November 1943, the heaviest raid coming on June 16, 1942, when the Japanese inflicted great damage on the harbor oil fuel and railroad yards. However, improved radar along with strengthened antiaircraft and fighter defenses assured that another Australian Pearl Harbor did not occur.

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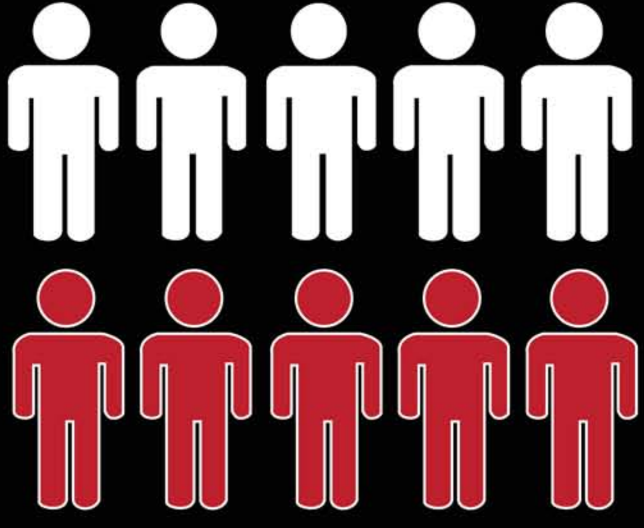
WARNING

BY AGE 50, HALF OF ALL MEN HAVE AN ENLARGED PROSTATE



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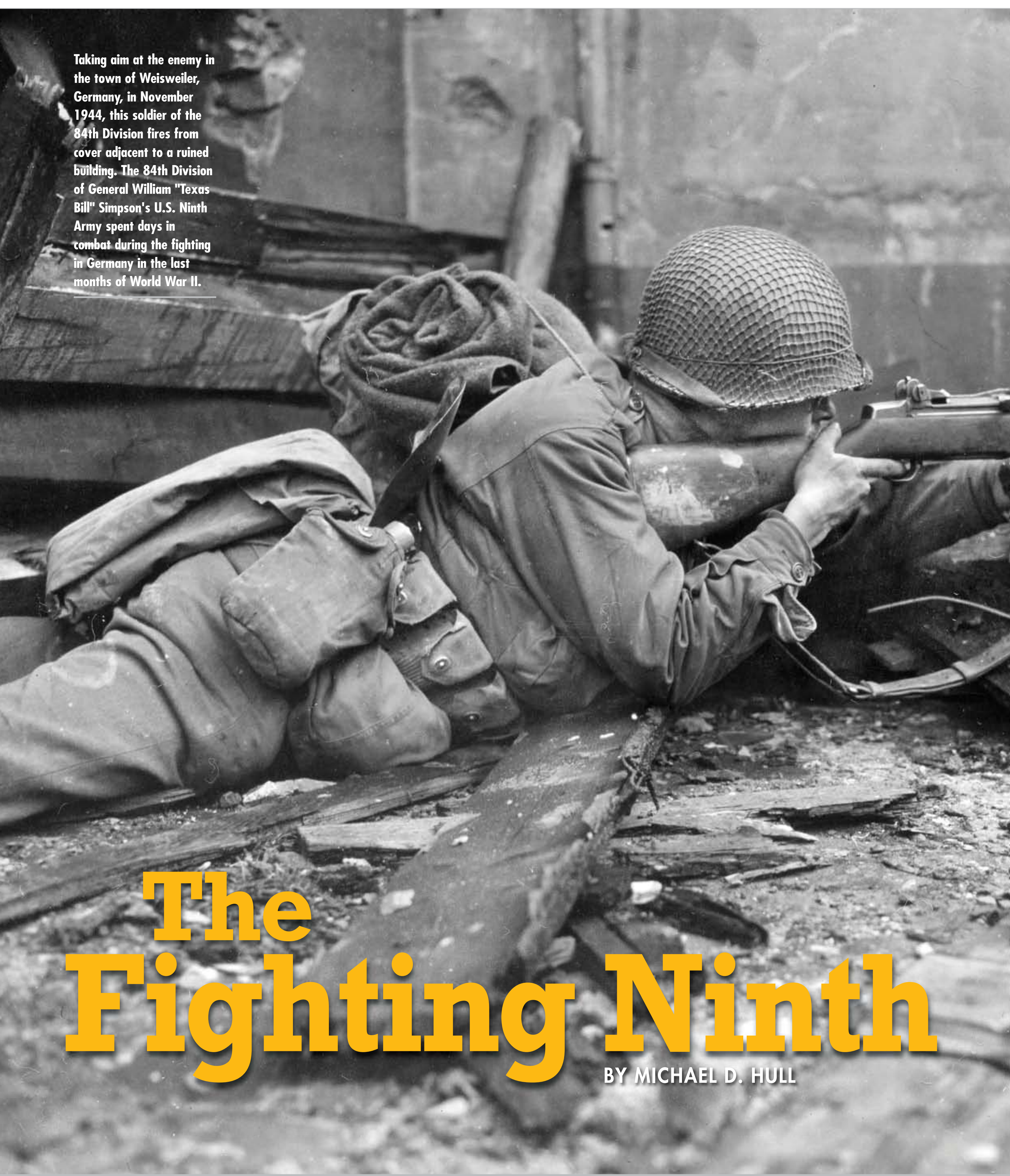

Taking aim at the enemy in the town of Weisweiler, Germany, in November 1944, this soldier of the 84th Division fires from cover adjacent to a ruined building. The 84th Division of General William "Texas Bill" Simpson's U.S. Ninth Army spent days in combat during the fighting in Germany in the last months of World War II.

The Fighting Ninth

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

COMMANDED BY GENERAL WILLIAM "TEXAS BILL" SIMPSON, THE U.S. NINTH ARMY FOUGHT ITS WAY ACROSS EUROPE.

AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE DELAYED THEIR ADVANCE by six critical weeks, the British, U.S., and Canadian armies went on the offensive in mid-January 1945 and pushed toward the German frontier.

They lined up on a broad front from north to south, with the British and Canadians in the north, the Americans in the center, and the Free French in the south. It was tough going as the enemy—retreating but fighting more desperately than ever—forced the Allies to pay dearly for virtually every yard gained. At the gates of their homeland, the German forces made full use of natural defensive barriers, including such rivers as the Rhine, Main, Ruhr, Maas, Weser, Elbe, and the Roer. They destroyed bridges and caused widespread flooding.

Defending a 38-mile front along the fastflowing Roer River, from north of Monschau to north of Linnich, the powerful U.S. Ninth Army—a comparative newcomer to the European Theater—faced a daunting challenge early in 1945. Two days after the U.S. First and Third Armies had linked up at Houffalize on January 16, Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, commander of the British 21st Army Group, ordered the Ninth Army to cross the Roer in Operation Grenade, the southern pincer of a two-pronged attack on the Rhineland. The jump off was tentatively set for February 10. Monty had assumed operational control of the Ninth Army on December 20 while supporting American units in the Ardennes offensive.

All: National Archives

General William "Texas Bill" Simpson commanded the U.S. Ninth Army in Europe.

Grenade was planned to coincide with the Canadian First Army's launch of Operation Veritable, the northern pincer, on February 8. Detailed planning for the Roer crossing had been started in early December, but everything hinged on the First Army's securing the Roer's seven dams. Before this was achieved on February 9, however, the Germans jammed open the dams' discharge valves to cause a sustained overflow of the river, widening it to between 400 and 1,200 yards and rendering it almost impassable.

General Henry D.G. Crerar's Canadian and British units attacked on schedule, but the Ninth Army had to wait impotently for the waters of the Roer to subside while their allies were left to fight alone. For 11 frustrating days, 56-year-old Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson, commander of the Ninth Army, kept a close watch on the water level. His combat engineers calculated that the Roer would be at its lowest level around February 25, but Simpson wanted to take the Germans by surprise, so he planned to launch his attack just before that date. A meticulous planner like his boss, Montgomery, Simpson decided that the river level would be low enough on the morning of February 23 for his troops to cross and for bridging operations to be undertaken.

His northern XIII Corps, led by Maj. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem Jr. and comprising the 29th, 84th, and 102nd Infantry Divisions, was to head east across the river, swing northward to link up with the Canadians, and then turn east toward the Rhine. Maj. Gen. Raymond S. McLain's southern XIX Corps (8th, 78th, and 104th Infantry Divisions) would move northeastward and clear the Rhineland. A third corps, the recently activated XVI led by Maj. Gen. John B. Anderson, comprised the 8th Armored Division, the British 7th Armored (the famed Desert Rats), and the 35th Infantry Division.

While waiting for the Roer level to moderate, Simpson was able to build up his army to more than 300,000 men, 1,000 tanks, and 2,000 field guns in three corps totaling 11 divisions. He marshaled men and equipment under cover of darkness.

While other U.S. Army formations were by then suffering a critical shortage of artillery ammunition, Simpson secured almost 46,000 tons and the largest concentration of firepower yet fielded by an American army on the Western Front. Montgomery, with his emphasis on "colossal cracks" of artillery, had ensured this.

At 2:45 on the gray, chilly morning of Friday, February 23, 1945, a tremendous artillery barrage lit up the dark skies as 1,500 guns of the Ninth, First, and British Second Armies hammered suspected German strongpoints across the River Roer. When the shelling died down after 45 minutes, Simpson started his assault across the river on a 14-mile front. The infantry of six divisions dragged their 15-man assault boats across the muddy shores and into the river.

The most northerly of the assault formations, Maj. Gen. Alexander R. Bolling's 84th Infantry Division, jumped off from the center of Linnich across a relatively narrow section of the Roer. Leading troops of the 1st Battalion of the 334th Regiment paddled across the swollen river. The swift current swept away broadsiding boats, but the first infantry waves made it across with few casualties. Successive assault waves were peppered by enemy mortars and small arms fire until they reached the far side, but the casualties were still relatively light.

The orderly initial crossing was followed by chaos and delays. Boats were stuck on the far shore, some drifted downstream, and hastily laid wooden footbridges were broken up by enemy fire. Bolling's 3rd Battalion was not able to start across the river until 6:45 AM. Using a shuttle service of boats, the battalion completed its crossing at 10:35 AM.

German planes and artillery homed in and pounded the crossing site, but the gallant infantrymen and combat engineers persevered. New treadway spans were laid, anchored to trees and assault craft, and more troops made it across the river. The 84th Division's 1st Battalion took the enemy by surprise, captured the village of Korrenzig, and carved out a 4,000-yard bridgehead. Bolling's entire 334th Regiment was over the river by 2:50 PM.

The Americans pressed on, and by the end of the day 28 of Simpson's infantry battalions had crossed the Roer. Because of elaborate security precautions, he had caught the enemy by surprise and unable to mount a major counterattack. The construction of heavy bridging across the river was completed the next day, and on February 25, the Ninth Army linked up with Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges's U.S. First Army to form a 25-mile-long bridgehead from Baal to Duren.

Crossing the rain-swollen Roer River in February 1945, soldiers of the U.S. Ninth Army head toward the front in support of British and Canadian troops who have initiated an offensive that will push the Germans back farther toward Berlin.

Infantry and armor of the XIII, XIV, and XIX Corps, meanwhile, began pushing eastward and branching out. The Ninth Army linked up with the Canadians at Geldern on March 3, after reaching the Rhine opposite Dusseldorf the previous day.

Operation Grenade, which ended on March 5 and cost just over 1,400 casualties, was the Ninth Army's outstanding contribution to victory on the Western Front. It inflicted 16,000 casualties on the Germans and captured 29,000. The action placed Simpson in the front rank of American field commanders, though he had been fortunate in facing 30,000 Germans in four understrength divisions and only 70 tanks, while Crerar's Anglo-Canadian force battled 11 enemy divisions and suffered 15,634 losses in Operation Veritable. As Montgomery had planned, Crerar drew the German strength onto him, as General Sir Miles Dempsey had done at Caen, leaving Simpson to break through, as General Omar N. Bradley had done in Operation Cobra, the breakout from the Normandy beachhead, in July 1944.

Simpson was justifiably proud of the performance of his army at the River Roer. A classic feat of maneuver, Operation Grenade had succeeded, with relatively light losses in men and equipment, in striking the enemy at vulnerable spots on his flank and rear. General Bradley, commander of the 12th Army Group, called the February 23 crossing "one of the most perfectly executed of the war." Simpson, he said, was "steady, prepossessing, well organized, earthy, a great infantryman and leader of men," and his army "a first-rate fighting unit." General Ernest N. Harmon, the tough commander of the 2nd Armored "Hell on Wheels" Division, viewed Simpson as a "general's general."

Six feet, two inches tall, rawboned, and bald as a billiard ball, "Big Simp" also earned the praise of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied supreme commander. Citing Simpson's "brilliant service," he said later, "If he ever made a mistake as army commander, it never came to my attention…. Alert, intelligent, professionally capable, he was the type of leader that American soldiers deserve." Respected by his men, his superiors, and his allies, General Simpson had many admirers and no detractors. Yet he remained one of the most astute but least known senior U.S. Army commanders in the European Theater. His army was the last American field army to be continuously deployed in northwestern Europe and the first to reach the Rhine and the Elbe.

The son of a Tennessee cavalry veteran of the Civil War, William Hood Simpson was born on Saturday, May 19, 1888, in the little town of Weatherford, 40 miles west of Fort Worth, Texas. After attending the local school and playing football there, he secured an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at the age of 17. He attained the nickname of "Texas Bill" at West Point. He did poorly as a student and graduated second from bottom in the class of 1909, which included future generals George S. Patton, Jr., Robert L. Eichelberger, and Jacob L. Devers.

Commissioned a second lieutenant, Simpson joined the 6th Infantry Regiment at Fort Lincoln, North Dakota, and trooped with it to the

Philippines for two years. After serving at the Presidio of San Francisco from 1912 to 1914, he was ordered to his home state on a border patrol assignment. Returning to his regiment after duty at the Panama Pacific Exposition in 1915, Simpson took part in Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing's punitive expedition into Mexico in 1916.

After promotion to first lieutenant, Simpson served as an aide to Maj. Gen. George Bell, Jr., commander of the 33rd Division at Fort Logan, Texas. Promoted to captain in May 1917, Simpson accompanied Bell on an observation tour of the British, French, and U.S. armies in France later that year. The up and coming young officer returned to France when the 33rd Division embarked for the Western Front in April 1918. Receiving temporary promotions to major and lieutenant colonel, Simpson advanced to divisional chief of staff and attended the American Expeditionary Force General Staff School at Langres, France.

Dragging flat-bottomed assault boats toward the banks of the Roer River on February 23, 1945, engineers of the 84th Infantry Division, Ninth Army, prepare for a contested crossing in less than ideal conditions. Days of rain had turned the Roer into a torrent and prevented units of the Ninth Army from crossing on schedule during the opening phase of Operation Grenade.

The lanky Texan saw action in the autumn of 1918. After training with Australian troops, the 33rd Division fought in the big American offensives at St.-Mihiel on September 12-16 and the Meuse-Argonne from September 26 to November 11. The division was inspected by King George V of England, who decorated some of its officers and men. Simpson earned the Distinguished Service Medal for his staff work and the Silver Star for gallantry. After occupation duty in Germany, Simpson returned home and became chief of staff of the 6th Division at Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois, in May 1919. He reverted to the rank of captain on June 30, 1920, but was promoted to major the following day.

Early in 1921, Simpson began a two-year tour of duty at the War Department. That December, meanwhile, he took time out to marry Ruth (Webber) Krakauer, an attractive widow from London whom he had first met at West Point. They were wed in El Paso, Texas. After his Washington stint, Major Simpson entered the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, graduated in 1924, and went on to the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He ended the course as a distinguished graduate in June 1925.

After spending two years commanding a battalion of the 12th Infantry Regiment in Maryland, Simpson entered the Army War College in August 1927. He graduated the following year and then taught military science and tactics at Pomona College in Claremont, California, from 1932 to 1936. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1934 and to colonel in 1938, and instructed at the Army War College from 1936 to 1940. He briefly led the 9th Infantry Regiment at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, rose to temporary brigadier general, and became assistant commander of the 2nd Infantry Division there.

From April to October 1941, Simpson commanded Camp Wolters, Texas, was promoted to temporary major general, and took the helm of the 35th Infantry Division at Camp Robinson, Arkansas. Shortly after America entered World War II, he led the division to a training site in California. After further command assignments and promotion to temporary lieutenant general in October 1943, Simpson took over the Fourth Army at San Jose, California. He moved with it back to Fort Sam Houston in January 1944 and braced for a role in the century's second European war.

Simpson and his able chief of staff, Brig. Gen. James E. Moore, flew to England on May 6 to organize a new army, the Eighth. Simpson attended the final SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) briefing for the Normandy invasion at St. Paul's College in London on May 15 and reported to Eisenhower the next day. His former War College classmate told him that his Eighth Army would become the Ninth to avoid confusion with the British Eighth Army of Western Desert fame. Simpson set up a command post at Clifton College in Bristol, Somerset, and began readying the new army for movement to France, where it would join General Bradley's powerful U.S. 12th Army Group.

The Ninth Army's headquarters moved to France, became operational at Rennes on September 5, and assumed command of Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton's Eighth Corps, which had been part of the Third Army and was engaged in besieging the French port of Brest. After a full-scale ground and air assault on September 8, followed by 12 days of fierce action, German resistance ceased. The port had been demolished, but it was no longer needed by the Allies. To Simpson, it was a hollow victory.

The Ninth Army moved eastward, and Simpson established his headquarters in Maastricht, Holland, where he built up his command to six divisions in preparation for Operation Queen, a major 12th Army Group effort to cross the Rhine and capture Cologne. Supported by artillery and a strike by 3,000 bombers, the First and Ninth Armies jumped off at noon on November 16. Moving out on a narrow 12-mile front, Simpson's force encountered fierce resistance, heavy rains, and record flooding as the battle devolved into a 23-day struggle of attrition. The Ninth Army incurred 10,256 casualties while covering only six to 12 miles, but by December 9 it had cleared the western bank of the River Roer. The Ninth had advanced more rapidly than the First.

Although his army had been in action for only three months, Simpson was now well known as the ideal field commander. Quiet spoken, unassuming, and always immaculate, he

An American tanker of the 2nd Armored Division, Ninth Army, sits in the turret of his tank with a .50-caliber machine gun at his disposal. The soldier watches warily as a throng of curious civilians gathers around in the German town of Juchen, captured by American troops in March 1945.

had a warm smile, was quick witted, and possessed a good sense of humor. He had a knack for making others feel comfortable and enjoyed the confidence of both his officers and enlisted men. He seldom raised his voice, even when rarely angry.

Texas Bill cared about his soldiers' well-being and had a rule drilled into his subordinate officers: "Never send an infantryman to do a job that an artillery shell can do for him." He relied heavily on his loyal staff and, unlike many of his peers, was not afraid to delegate responsibility. He let his aides deal with their assigned tasks without checking them at every turn, and, as Field Marshal Sir Archibald P. Wavell said of Field Marshal Edmund Allenby of Palestine fame, did not "devil his staff to death."

After relocating to the northernmost 12th Army Group sector shortly before the Germans broke through thin American lines in the Ardennes Forest on December 16, 1944, Simpson's Ninth Army sat out the Battle of the Bulge. It dispatched seven divisions to the threatened area, including Maj. Gen. Robert W. Hasbrouck's 7th Armored Division, which valiantly defended the town of St.-Vith.

On December 20, Field Marshal Montgomery took command of the northern flank of the Bulge in a bid to "tidy up" the battlefield, and the Ninth Army passed under the operational control of the British 21st Army Group until April 4, 1945, after the encirclement of the Ruhr Valley pocket by the First and Ninth Armies. It was a controversial move because the eccentric, egotistical Monty had rankled many, from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to Eisenhower and Bradley.

But Simpson, a good subordinate who kept himself above politics and personalities, was unfazed. He had told Ike, "You can depend on me to respond cheerfully, promptly, and as efficiently as I possibly can to every instruction he gives."

Monty was initially politely aloof and skeptical of Simpson's ability as an Army commander, but the big Texan won him over. He and Moore soon enjoyed a cordial relationship with the wiry, birdlike British officer, whom Simpson admired for his calmness in the Bulge and as an example of military professionalism. Moore described Montgomery as "a feisty little somebody, and he pulled things together down there for First Army during the Battle of the Bulge."

Simpson and Monty had much in common. Both were energetic, charismatic leaders who kept in close touch with the lower ranks, and both were meticulous planners who strove to keep the battlefield orderly and conserve manpower. What Simpson particularly liked was that Monty left him alone and permitted freedom of action in planning and execution. And he was delighted that his army was built up to 12 full divisions while with the British.

After crossing the Roer, Simpson pushed his army hard eastward against stiff resistance and then took part in Operation Plunder, the massive assault across the Rhine by Montgomery's 21st Army Group. He had lined up a quarter of a million men for the biggest operation since D-Day. After an hour-long artillery barrage and 7,500 sorties by Allied planes, the crossings between Rheinberg and Rees got underway at 2 AM on Saturday, March 24, 1945. The Ninth Army was on the right and General Sir Miles Dempsey's British Second Army on the left. Anderson's U.S. XVI Corps crossed north of the Ruhr.

Prime Minister Churchill and General Eisenhower joined a bevy of war correspondents to watch the crossings. The British leader exulted to Ike, "My dear General, the German is whipped. We've got him. He is all through." Eisenhower, who walked among the assault troops shaking hands and encouraging them, observed, "Simpson performed in his usual outstanding style." Although fierce fighting followed, Operation Plunder went well, with only 31 casualties. By the end of the day, the Allied bridgehead was more than five miles deep.

Prime Minister Churchill, who had experienced action at Omdurman, in Cuba, in South Africa, and on the Western Front in 1915-1916, was exhilarated to be on the front lines again, and, against Ike's advice, went across the Rhine on the afternoon of Sunday, March 25. Accompanied by Montgomery, Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Simpson, he rode a Buffalo amphibious tractor to the outskirts of the occupied town of Wesel. Simpson was nervous about having the three most important British figures of the war so close to the enemy. His concern grew when Churchill, with a cigar clamped in his teeth, dashed forward 40 yards and scrambled onto a destroyed bridge while German shells fell 300 yards downstream.

General Simpson appealed to him. "Prime Minister," he said, "there are snipers in front of you, they are shelling both sides of the bridge, and now they have started shelling the road behind you. I cannot accept the responsibility for your being here, and must ask you to come away."

After putting his arms around one of the twisted girders of the bridge for a final time, Churchill quietly withdrew. Sir Alan Brooke reported, "The look on Winston's face was just like that of a small boy being called away from his sand castles on the beach by his nurse…. It was a sad wrench for him; he was enjoying himself immensely…. However, he came away more obediently than I had expected." The following day, Alan Brooke watched the prime

ABOVE: With troops of the U.S. Ninth Army taking cover behind it, a British tank fires on enemy positions in a German town. The U.S. Ninth Army fought under both American and British army group command during the Allied push eastward into Germany. BELOW: British Prime Minister Winston Churchill climbs across the rubble of a bridge over the Rhine River at Wesel, Germany, on March 25, 1945. As Churchill moved forward, General William Simpson, commander of the U.S. Ninth Army, warned the prime minister that German snipers were still quite active in the area.

minister wander off and solemnly urinate into the Rhine as General Patton had done at Oppenheim two days earlier.

The Ninth Army battled on across Germany. The 2nd Armored Division battered through Haltern to the Dortmund-Ems Canal on March 30, beginning what Simpson called "the breathless race" to the strategic Elbe River. On April 1, leading elements of Gillem's XIII Corps reached the outskirts of Munster while Harmon's tankers linked up with the First Army's 3rd Armored Division at Lippstadt, completing the encirclement of the Ruhr.

Three days later, the Ninth Army reverted to the command of the 12th Army Group. Infantry and armor of the XIII and XIX Corps rolled on through crumbling resistance to capture the cities of Hannover, Hildesheim, and Brunswick in quick succession, and on April 11, the 2nd Armored Division raced 52 miles to gain a bridgehead on the River Elbe near Magdeburg. The following day, the 83rd Infantry Division of the 19th Corps and General Gillem's 5th Armored Division reached the Elbe, followed by the 84th Infantry Division.

By April 15, the XIX and XIII Corps were closed up on the Elbe. Simpson was elated, the Ninth Army's morale was high, and he reasoned that he could forge on and reach Berlin, 60 miles away. Since his army had advanced 226 miles from the Rhine to the Elbe in 19

days, he was confident that his forces—spearheaded by the 2nd Armored Division—could get to the German capital well before the Soviet Red Army. But Texas Bill's euphoria was swiftly shattered that Sunday after he was ordered to fly to the 12th Army Group headquarters at Wiesbaden.

"You must stop on the Elbe," General Bradley told Simpson. "You are not to advance any farther in the direction of Berlin. I'm sorry, Simp, but there it is." Simpson asked, "Where in the hell did you get this?" Bradley replied, "From Ike." Simpson was unaware that Ike had decided on March 28 not to go to Berlin, but to link up with the Soviets along the Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden line.

Simpson was stunned and "heartbroken." He recalled later, "I got back in the plane in a kind of daze. All I could think of was how am I going to tell my staff, my corps commanders, and my troops? Above all, how am I going to tell my troops?" He insisted then and long after that his army could have reached Berlin in 24 hours. General Gillem said, "Forty-eight hours. That's all it would have taken."

The last few weeks of the European war were an anticlimax for the disappointed Simpson as his army mopped up pockets of enemy resistance, made contact with Soviet troops near Zerbst on April 30, and assumed occupational duties. The war was over for the Ninth Army, much praised by U.S. and British commanders. The army had "performed magnificently in Europe," said Colonel Jerry D. Morelock, director of the Winston Churchill Memorial and Library at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, later.

Simpson's forces were transferred to Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch's Seventh Army on June 15, and the gallant Texan returned to America. After being feted in Fort Worth and his Weatherford hometown, he flew to China to serve as deputy to Lt. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, the commander of U.S. forces in the China-Burma-India Theater. While arranging for his Ninth Army headquarters to join him, Japan surrendered, so Simpson returned home again.

The Ninth Army was deactivated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on October 10, 1945, and Simpson took charge of the Second Army at Memphis, Tennessee, that month. He retained the command until June 1946. Suffering from ulcers and a hernia, he was forced to retire that November 30. He lived in San Antonio, Texas, from December 1947 and was promoted to general on the retired list in July 1954. General Simpson died at the age of 92 in the Brooke Army Hospital on August 15, 1980, and he and his wife were buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Although Simpson's personal performance during World War II and the combat record of the Ninth Army are often overlooked, they are nevertheless worthy of high praise.

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Cobras Over

Shortly after 11 AM on August 22, 1942, the roar of aircraft engines shattered the stillness over Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. Weary Marines looked up from their foxholes to see what was causing this racket, and then broke into wild cheers. As the formation of five long-nosed fighters circled to land, all below could read the words "U.S. ARMY" marked on each plane's wings.

Reinforcements had come! The 13,000 Leathernecks occupying the embattled island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons, codenamed Cactus, were no longer alone. Army Air Forces pilots of the 67th Fighter Squadron and their sleek P-400 Airacobras had arrived to help the Marines hold this strategic island base against vicious Japanese counterattacks. For weeks enemy bombers had flown almost unopposed over the American positions, and these heavily armed Army interceptors seemed just the solution to checking the Japanese raids.

Captain John A Thompson

Pilot John A. Thompson was one of only two airmen who had any time in the P-400 Airacobra when the 67th Fighter Group was assigned to fly the plane.

Yet when the 67th got into combat its pilots discovered to their horror that the Airacobra could not even climb high enough to reach those bombers. Down low, nimble Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighters chewed their sluggish P-400s to bits. Marine commanders on Cactus called the Airacobra "practically worthless," and whispers of cowardice surrounded the 67th for running away during air attacks.

Within weeks, however, the brass changed its tune. While hopelessly outclassed in air-to-air combat, the P-400 soon found its niche as a ground attack plane. Marine riflemen came to rely on the 67th's hard-hitting fighter bombers to destroy enemy troop formations and defensive fortifications. The Airacobras also proved lethal against supply-laden Japanese barge convoys.

Flying as many as five missions per day, the 67th Fighter Squadron played a key role in the American victory on Guadalcanal. Its pilots surmounted many obstacles in doing so, and their story of endurance and ingenuity began long before the first P-400s landed at Henderson Field.

In the weeks following Pearl Harbor, the full extent of America's unpreparedness for war became shockingly apparent. American outposts across the Pacific at Guam and Wake Island fell swiftly to the Japanese juggernaut, while Allied forces in the Philippines fought a brave but doomed delaying action throughout the spring of 1942. The enemy was everywhere, or so it seemed to those officers in Washington whose task it was to stop the Japanese.

Key to the Americans' plan was a "last line of defense" stretching 2,000 miles between Hawaii and bases in Australia and New Zealand to encompass such strategic islands as Fiji, Samoa, and New Caledonia. Forces stationed on these bastions would help keep open vital sea lanes and deny Japan their use.

But the Allies had to get there first. During January 1942, hastily organized shiploads of U.S. Marines and soldiers set sail for the South Pacific. Army Air Corps flying squadrons went along to provide air cover for these occupying troops.

One such unit was the 67th Pursuit Squadron, nicknamed the "Fighting Cocks," stationed at Harding Army Airfield in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Fighting Cocks were understrength, like most Air Corps outfits at the time, and equipped with just a few obsolete Seversky P-35 fighters. When orders arrived

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On September 14, 1942, Bell P-400 Airacobra fighter bombers of the 67th Fighter Squadron attack Japanese positions near Edson's Ridge on the embattled island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons. The Airacobra was a failure as a dogfighter but came into its own as a ground attack plane.

Cactus

THE ARRIVAL OF THE 67th FIGHTER SQUADRON BOLSTERED THE AMERICAN ATTEMPT TO SEIZE GUADALCANAL FROM THE JAPANESE.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

to prepare for overseas movement, the 67th had barely 50 percent of its full complement of pilots on hand, and most of these men were fresh out of flight school.

Fortunately, the squadron was led by two experienced lieutenants who together embodied the soul of the Fighting Cocks. Dale "D.D." Brannon, an Ohio native whose lanky six-foot frame almost disqualified him from flying fighters, held the unit together while a parade of higher ranking commanders came and went. And then there was Oregonian John A. Thompson, handsome, skilled, and fearless under fire. Brannon and Thompson made an unbeatable team but could not imagine the challenges they would have to overcome on a primitive, dangerous island halfway around the world.

On January 23 1942, the Fighting Cocks embarked from Brooklyn, New York, aboard the Army transport ship *Thomas A. Barry,* a converted passenger liner. Their trip to the South Seas was no pleasure cruise. The vessel was dangerously overcrowded, and a shortage of fresh water meant each man received one canteen per day for drinking, washing, and shaving. It took the *Barry* five weeks to reach Australia, where the squadron recovered from its unpleasant journey while headquarters figured out what to do with the 67th.

The answer came on March 5, 1942. The 67th's destination was New Caledonia, a French possession 750 miles east of Australia. The men embarked the next day, squadron personnel sailing in one troop ship while another freighter carried their as yet unseen aircraft. No one knew what type of fighter the squadron would fly, only that 47 of them had been disassembled and put in crates for the long journey from the United States.

The mystery of the crated airplanes was solved at the port of Nouméa when 67th maintenance personnel unloaded them onto the docks. Inside were 45 P-400 fighters and two P-39Fs, built by the Bell Aircraft Corp. of Buffalo, New York. It was the first time most of the Fighting Cocks had ever seen either plane.

An export version of the Airacobra, the tricycle-geared P-400 was first offered to the British Royal Air Force as part of the Lend-Lease program. The Royal Air Force found the little Bell fighter's high altitude performance unacceptable and rejected it for combat service. The U.S. Army Air Corps, taking anything that flew, quickly requisitioned the planes for duty against Japan.

The Air Corps in 1941 considered the Airacobra a state-of-the-art interceptor. Its 1,150-horsepower engine sat mid-fuselage behind the pilot, leaving room for a heavy cannon in the nose. The P-400 model came equipped with a 20mm cannon, while P-39 variants mounted the larger 37mm. Four .30-caliber and two .50-caliber machine guns rounded out the Bell's impressive armament. It could also carry a 500-pound bomb on a centerline hard point.

Captain John A. Thompson

John Thompson, seated, meets with two other pilots of the 67th Fighter Squadron at the Cactus Air Force operations shack at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal.

The P-400, however, came with several flaws. It lacked a supercharger, which meant the Airacobra could not reach the altitudes at which Japanese bombers routinely flew. The Bells unloaded at Nouméa were also equipped with British high-pressure oxygen systems, incompatible with the low-pressure canisters used on American aircraft.

Worse, no one could find a manual telling the airmen on New Caledonia how to put these Airacobras together. The 67th deployed with 10 sets of mechanics' hand tools but lacked the special equipment necessary to assemble and test a modern fighter aircraft.

The squadron's first problem was to get the crated P-400s off the docks and to the nearest airfield. Using a borrowed truck, crews hauled each 10,000-pound shipping container 35 miles over dirt roads to a newly built airstrip at Tontouta. One trip took eight hours to accomplish, but by working around the clock all 47 Airacobras were delivered safely to the Fighting Cocks' new home within a week.

Then the process of reassembly began. Master Sergeant Robert Foye, a veteran line chief with the 67th, recorded his impressions of that time: "Assembly rig built from old timbers picked up around Tontouta ... no replacement parts. Every fifth ship was designated 'spare parts' before it was uncrated … no technical orders or manuals of instruction but started producing airplanes at the rate of 1.5 a day after the first week."

Foye continued: "Frequent troubles. One prop was missing from crate. Sometimes vital fuel and pressure lines found to be mysteriously plugged with Scotch tape. One airplane had electrical circuit hooked up at factory evidently by a maniac. Press flap switch and wheels would retract. Press wheel switch and guns would fire. Took days to straighten it out."

Conditions at Tontouta taxed the crews' endurance as well. "Rain, mud, and mosquitos," Foye noted. "Work day was from 5 AM until dark … not a growl from any man." Poor food and unsanitary living spaces soon brought on a wave of dysentery, yet the Fighting Cocks labored day after day to get their Bell fighters ready for combat despite insects, disease, and the occasional Japanese air raid.

On March 28, 1st Lt. D.D. Brannon—who along with John Thompson was one of two 67th pilots who had ever flown an Airacobra—made the first successful P-400 test flight over New Caledonia. At last the planes were airworthy, but plenty of hard work remained. Brannon and Thompson began checking out their novice aviators in the tricky Bell interceptors, training them to fly and fight as a team.

Morale soared on May 1, when the Air Corps reorganized as the United States Army Air Forces. This meant the 67th got a new name as well. The Fighting Cocks were no longer a "pursuit squadron" but now called themselves the 67th Fighter Squadron. They passed the spring and summer patrolling New Caledonia in their camouflaged P-400s, training for the battles that everyone knew were just over the horizon.

Japan's offensive plans had been stymied with the American strategic victory at the Battle of the Coral Sea in May and in an even more decisive setback at Midway a month later. In both encounters, American airpower had arrested the enemy's momentum and kept Japanese forces from invading key Allied bases in New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, and even potentially Hawaii. Shipping lanes appeared safe as well for the time being.

Reconnaissance flights over the nearby Solomon Islands brought troubling news. Roaming patrol planes had discovered a new airstrip being built on Japanese-held Guadalcanal, only 560 nautical miles from U.S. installations on Espiritu Santo. From Guadalcanal, land-based bombers could threaten vital supply lines and potentially cut Australia off from its American allies.

Guadalcanal had to be taken, and soon. The job went to Marine Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift and his 1st Marine Division (Reinforced), then training in New Zealand. Within a matter of five weeks Vandegrift's Marines planned, rehearsed, and executed Operation Watchtower, the first major offensive landing of American forces in World War II.

The invasion, occurring on August 7, 1942, did not go smoothly. While American troops easily captured the partially completed airstrip on Guadalcanal, enemy garrisons occupying the neighboring islands of Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo resisted fiercely. Later that night as the transports unloaded, a screening force of U.S. and Australian warships met with disaster off Savo Island at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Navy. This defeat caused American naval commanders to immediately stop unloading supplies and send the fleet off for safer waters.

The 1st Marine Division had been abandoned. While most of Vandegrift's men were on the beach, less than half of their artillery, heavy equipment, and supplies had made it ashore before the transports fled. The Leathernecks were left with a 10-day load of ammunition and so little food that for weeks they subsisted on abandoned enemy rations of canned fish and rice.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The wreckage of a Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber lies burned on the runway at Henderson Field after a Japanese air raid. LEFT: Mechanics work on a plane at Henderson Field. These tireless ground crewmen were often tasked with scrounging spare parts to keep P-400s of the 67th Fighter Squadron flying.

With the U.S. Navy's unexpected departure, Japan controlled both the sea and the air around Guadalcanal. Finishing the runway became Vandegrift's number one priority, since for the time being it was the only way to receive supplies and evacuate the wounded. Vandegrift also knew that warplanes based on Guadalcanal could strike back at the enemy bombers and surface ships then harassing his positions.

Henderson Field, named after Major Lofton R. Henderson, a Marine aviator killed during the Battle of Midway, was declared operational on August 19. The next day, 12 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers and 19 Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters arrived at Henderson Field from the escort carrier USS *Long Island*. They were the first of the "Cactus Air Force," a term used to describe the Marine Corps, Navy, and Army aviators defending Guadalcanal during its darkest hours.

Meanwhile, on New Caledonia the 67th Fighter Squadron received orders to move to the Solomons. D.D. Brannon, now a captain, led five P-400s on a three-day overwater hop, first to Efate, then Espiritu Santo, and finally Cactus on August 22. The 560-mile flight from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal pushed the Airacobras' maximum range, despite their being fitted with belly tanks. Two Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers escorted the diminutive Bell fighters part of the way to their destination, ready with life rafts in case a fighter was forced to ditch from fuel exhaustion.

Once parked on Henderson Field, the Army pilots surveyed their new surroundings. Gunfire was clearly audible from the Marines' perimeter, a half mile from their hangar. Nearby stood a ramshackle old building, nicknamed the Pagoda, which served as the Cactus Air Force's command post. Leathernecks there told Brannon and his men to watch for a black flag being raised on an adjacent flagpole; this was the field's air raid warning signal.

Japanese bombers normally paid Guadalcanal a visit every day around noon, "Tojo Time" to the wisecracking Marines. For weeks these high-flying intruders, operating from bases on Rabaul 565 miles to the northwest, bombed the Americans with impunity. The arrival of the Marine Wildcats promised to equalize matters. Captain Brannon's pilots hoped they would get a crack at those bombers as well.

The first night on Cactus was a memorable one for the men of the 67th. Camped in a palm grove 200 yards from the front lines, the Fighting Cocks experienced sniper fire, biting insects, and other jungle dangers. They also had a visit from "Washing Machine Charlie," one of several enemy aircraft appearing overhead throughout the night to randomly drop bombs on the American perimeter. No one, including the 67th's ground echelon which had arrived by transport ship that evening, got much sleep.

August 23 was spent learning the ropes, which meant dawn to dusk patrols around Guadalcanal's coast. No enemy aircraft were spotted. Marine scout planes did, however, detect a large number of troop transports and warships steaming down "The Slot," a body of water running through the Solomon Islands, from Japanese bases near Rabaul. This was the infamous "Tokyo Express," and the first of many convoys delivering troops determined to expel the Americans from their tenuous hold on Guadalcanal.

Henderson Field felt the long arm of Japanese air power the next afternoon. Pilots and ground crews of the 67th were working on their aircraft when up went the black alert flag. Dashing madly for their Airacobras, Captain Brannon and 2nd Lt. Deltis H. Finscher managed to get airborne just as a string of bombs hit the field. While Marine F4Fs shot down eight of nine enemy bombers, Brannon and Finscher happened across a careless Zero at low level and

National Archives

ABOVE: This Japanese aircraft was photographed during an attack on American shipping off Guadalcanal. The P-400 Airacobra proved ineffective in dealing with enemy aircraft; however, it was converted to a ground attack role and excelled. BELOW: Japanese pilots such as this group, many of whom were battle hardened and experienced after service in China, flew combat missions against the Americans in the skies above Guadalcanal from the huge Japanese base at Rabaul.

Wikipedia Commons

flamed it. The 67th was on the scoreboard.

Yet, when SBDs from Cactus joined carrier-based Navy aircraft to fight the Battle of the Eastern Solomons on August 24-25, the short-legged P-400s stayed close to home. Patrolling at medium altitude, the Fighting Cocks never quite knew whether those distant spots they kept seeing meant enemy aircraft or were just an illusion caused by their oxygen-deprived brains.

On August 26, the black flag signaling "Tojo Time" ran up the pole, causing another frantic scramble for takeoff. While a dozen Wildcats scooted upstairs to engage the Japanese, four of Brannon's Airacobras wallowed around thousands of feet below the action. They returned to Henderson, guns unfired, finding the airstrip plastered with bombs and the fuel dump ablaze. The disappointed Fighting Cocks had to swerve around bomb craters upon landing.

Nine more P-400s, led by newly promoted Captain John Thompson, showed up from New Caledonia the next day. They arrived in the middle of an air raid, and ground crews quickly refueled the fighters so they could clear the field. The 67th now had 14 of the poorly performing Bell fighters on Guadalcanal. So far—except for one lucky kill—they had yet to prove their worth in air-to-air combat. Morale began to sag.

Spirits fell even further on the 29th when 12 P-400s took off to meet an incoming raid but could not climb high enough to reach the enemy formation. While the Fighting Cocks circled helplessly at their maximum altitude of 14,000 feet, Marine F4Fs pounced on the Japanese and downed eight aircraft. Again the Army pilots returned to a bombed airfield having done nothing to help the situation.

The 67th kept at it. On August 30, a flight of 11 Airacobras went up to intercept a group of suspected enemy dive bombers. The dive bombers turned out to be Zeros, 20 of them, and they tore through the American formation with guns blazing. Four P-400s went down in flames while the remainder limped home riddled by Japanese gunfire. John Thompson landed with 15 holes in his fighter and a bullet in his shoulder—but he had bagged a Zero in the process.

In three days the squadron went from 14 to three serviceable planes, somehow patched together by the resourceful mechanics. Henceforth the 67th's klunkers—as they now called their P-400s—would no longer perform interception duties. Instead, whenever a black flag fluttered over the Pagoda all flyable Airacobras were to take off on what headquarters termed "reconnaissance" missions. The Fighting Cocks called it something else—running away.

The pilots felt frustrated and betrayed. They were brave enough, but that mattered little when the enemy's aircraft so completely outmatched their sluggish klunkers. D.D. Brannon said, "We thought we were a fighter outfit, but if you got into combat with a Zero you were done."

So disappointed was Maj. Gen. Vandegrift with the Airacobra's air-to-air performance that he begged Army commanders not to send him any more of the Bell fighters. In his diary he condemned the P-400 as "practically worthless for any kind of altitude fighting." Vandegrift was right, but the klunkers of the 67th Fighter Squadron could still provide valuable service to his embattled Marines.

September brought with it both a new base and a new mission for the Fighting Cocks. Due to crowded conditions at Henderson Field, engineers opened another landing strip called Fighter One about a mile east of the main runway. Airacobras began flying out of Fighter One, nicknamed the Cow Pasture, on September 2.

Their first mission began at dawn. Newly promoted Major D.D. Brannon led four planes, each armed with a 500-pound bomb, to attack Japanese barges off the village of Tasimboko. After dropping their ordnance, the P-400s circled around again to strafe enemy troops wading ashore. One pilot later said he and his wingman cut a "bloody X" on the water with their bullets.

Returning to the Cow Pasture for more fuel and ammunition, the Airacobras took off for another sortie over Tasimboko two hours later. This became their daily routine, flying attack missions from dawn to dusk.

Thus was born the moniker of the "Jagstaffel," a corruption of the German word for fighter squadron. Sometimes flying five runs a day, the 67th went after the Tokyo Express with as many aircraft as their hard-working ground crews could get operational. Whenever barge hunting proved fruitless, the Jagstaffel made low-level strikes against Japanese troop concentrations and supply dumps in support of Marines on the ground.

These close air support missions, unglamorous and decidedly dangerous to fly, gave the squadron a new sense of purpose. They were contributing at last and in a way that directly aided the 1st Marine Division's fight to hold Guadalcanal.

In early September, Japanese efforts to retake Guadalcanal increased dramatically. Almost every night transports unloaded thousands of soldiers while Japanese warships bombarded U.S. positions mercilessly. Fuel depots and parked aircraft burst into flames while terrified men huddled in their foxholes, sweating out the barrages. All signs pointed to a major enemy counterthrust, but when would the Japanese attack?

Meanwhile, the Jagstaffel tried to cope with conditions on the hellish island. Enemy action notwithstanding, the poor food and jungle diseases began to take their toll. Typhus, carried by huge rats, was a constant threat. Ferocious mosquitos infected many men with malaria, and a steady diet of cold rice and tinned sardines often resulted in crippling dysentery.

Clothing, shoes, and equipment quickly rotted in the fetid jungle environment. A blazing sun pushed daytime temperatures into the 90s while driving tropical rains turned runways, roads, and bivouac areas into muddy quagmires. One Marine observed that Guadalcanal was "the only place on Earth where you could stand up to your knees in mud and still get dust in your eyes."

Supply shortages, especially aviation gas, often curtailed operations. Once when Cactus

National Archives

Photographed at Guadalcanal in October 1942, these Bell P-400 Airacobra fighter bombers are obviously battle worn. The Airacobra's cannon and machine gun armament proved well suited to reducing ground targets.

ran out of bombs the 67th resorted to dropping contact fused depth charges wrapped in lengths of chain. Without spare parts or proper tools, mechanics struggled constantly to keep their P-400s flying. As the squadron history noted, "Every airplane in commission soon became an example of the ground crew's ingenuity and resourcefulness."

Wrecked planes normally became a source of replacement parts, but on Guadalcanal the need for serviceable aircraft grew so great that extraordinary measures frequently had to be taken. When one Airacobra cracked up on landing, maintenance personnel decided to rebuild the aircraft instead of scrapping it. Replacing the crumpled wing with one off a derelict P-39, mechanics more or less balanced a set of recycled propeller blades by pouring molten lead into them until they felt right. Christened *The Resurrection,* this battered Bell continued to operate over Cactus for months.

Unknown to the Jagstaffel, 2,400 battle-hardened Japanese soldiers commanded by Maj. Gen. Kiyotake Kawaguchi were slowly moving into assault positions along the American perimeter. The tempo increased; seemingly every night there was a naval barrage while "Tojo Time" brought with it an inexhaustible rain of enemy bombs. One 1,000-pounder nearly buried Major Brannon alive on September 12, when it exploded five feet from his command bunker. Badly wounded by a shrapnel fragment, Brannon hastily turned command of the 67th over to Captain Thompson before boarding an outbound transport plane for medical treatment.

That night Washing Machine Charlie dropped flares to mark American lines, signaling the start of another naval bombardment. Instead of targeting Henderson Field as usual, this barrage pummeled American positions on a grassy ridge 1,700 yards to the south. Once the warships ceased fire, riflemen from Kawaguchi's 35th Brigade began moving forward to take that key terrain feature.

Leathernecks from the 1st Marine Raider Battalion and 1st Parachute Battalion blunted these probing attacks, but Lt. Col. Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson, commanding the American defense, knew more were coming. "They're testing, just testing," Red Mike advised. "But they'll be back."

After dark on the 13th, the Japanese struck again, their relentless assaults slowly pushing Edson's hard fighting Marines halfway back across the ridge. American artillery and mortars hammered Kawaguchi's men, yet still they came on. The situation had turned critical. Vandegrift fed his last reserves into the fight and prepared for the worst. If the enemy captured Edson's Ridge, as this knoll came to be known, they could then seize the airfields and finally retake Guadalcanal.

Around 3 AM on September 14, Captain John Thompson of the 67th Fighter Squadron was awakened and told to report for orders at the Pagoda. There he met a bloody, begrimed Marine officer from Edson's headquarters who sought his help.

Thompson later recalled the scene: "He grabbed a pencil and a scrap of paper and drew a rough diagram of the ridge showing the positions of both sides. He said the Japanese were expected to make a big push at daybreak." The 67th had to stop them. There was enough fuel left for three Airacobras. Thompson, along with Lieutenants B.E Davis and Bryan Brown, took off at dawn, circled the field, and dove down to attack.

According to Thompson, "We came in low over the trees, pulled up and saw the Marine positions. In the clearing below were hundreds and hundreds of Japanese, ready to charge. I lowered the nose, pressed the trigger and just mowed right through them. The next two pilots did the same thing."

Enemy return fire damaged Brown's P-400, so he used the momentum of his dive to pull away and land deadstick on Fighter One. Thompson and Davis banked around for another run, every moment of which was visible to the 67th's mechanics watching from less than a mile away. More of Kawaguchi's infantry fell under their chattering guns, but this time Thompson took hits to his plane's radiator and had to break off. Davis continued to strafe until his ammunition trays ran empty.

The desperate airstrike broke up what was to be the enemy's final assault. As surviving Japanese riflemen withdrew into the jungle, Edson's Leathernecks took time to reorganize and reinforce their positions. The Marines, with help from the Army Air Forces, had held. Officers later counted the bodies of 600 dead enemy soldiers below Edson's Ridge, many of them felled by the Airacobras' gunfire.

Afterward, General Vandegrift met

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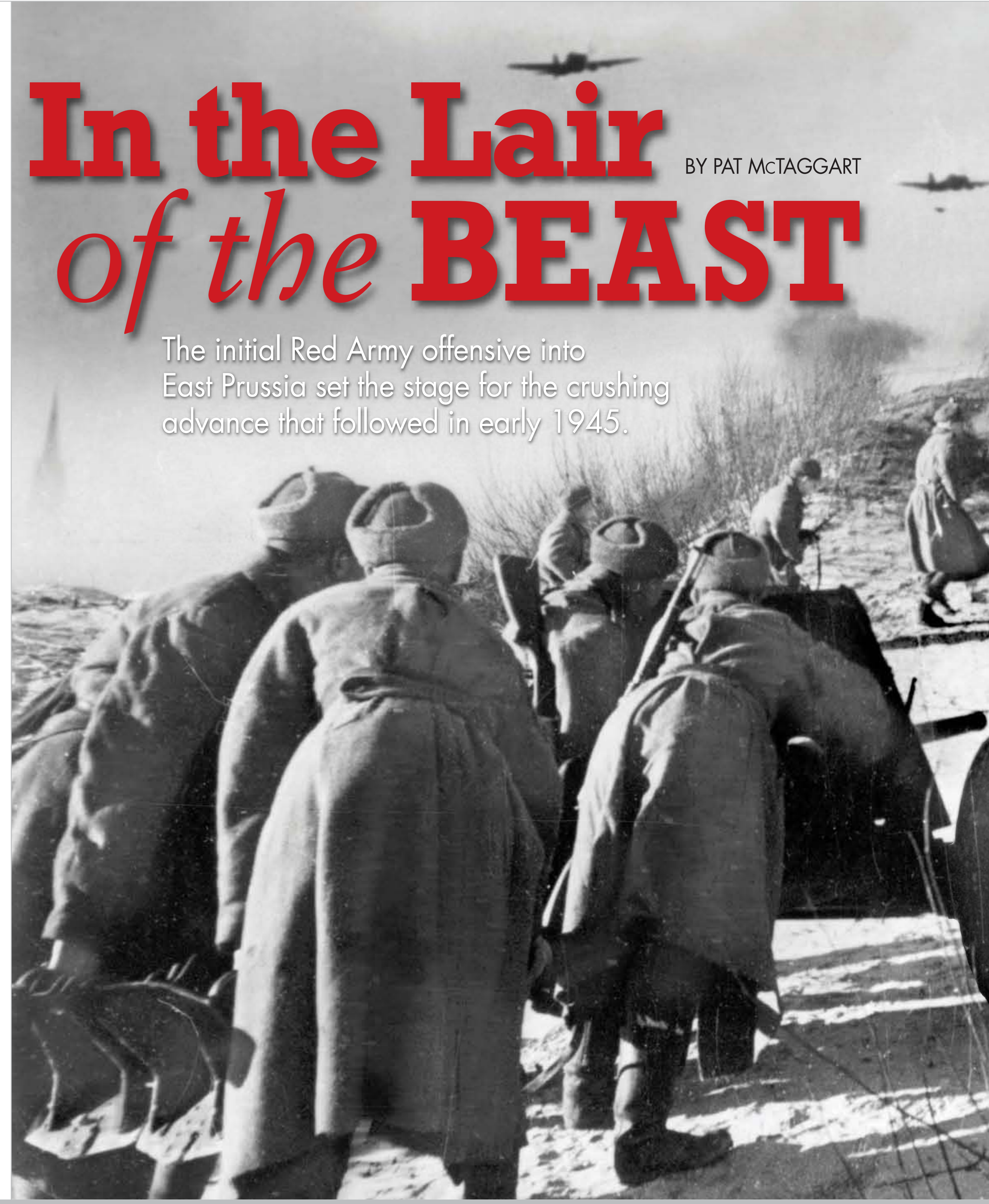
In the Lair *of the* BEAST

BY PAT McTAGGART

The initial Red Army offensive into East Prussia set the stage for the crushing advance that followed in early 1945.



Red Army soldiers manhandle an artillery piece into position while comrades scramble forward across the sandy landscape near the East Prussian town of Tilsit on the Baltic Sea in October 1944. Soviet aircraft strike targets of opportunity in the distance.

Soviet General Ivan Danilovich Cherniakhovskii was in a good mood as he waited for his generals to arrive. Born in July 1906, in the city of Uman, Cherniakhovskii joined the Red Army in 1924. In 1936 he attended the Red Army's Academy for Motorization and Mechanization, eventually commanding the 28th Tank Division in March 1941. With the outbreak of the war, his career skyrocketed, not because of political connections but through his actions.

From December 1941 to June 1942, he commanded the 241st Rifle Division, formed from his disbanded tank division. Promoted to major general in May 1942, he was given command of the 18th Tank Corps for a month before he moved up to command the 60th Army. His troops recaptured Voronezh in January 1943, and promotion to lieutenant general followed in February. The 60th Army then took part in the Battle of Kursk and the subsequent Dnepr and Kiev offensives.

Promoted to colonel general in March 1944, Cherniakhovskii became the commander of the Western Front, making him the youngest front commander in the Red Army at age 38. He retained command of the front when it was renamed the 3rd Belorussian and was promoted to general of the army on June 26, having received the Hero of the Soviet Union designation twice.

During the Soviet summer offensive of 1944, Cherniakhovskii smashed through the lines of the German 3rd Panzer and 4th Armies, taking Minsk and pushing on to Vilnius, Lithuania. By the end of August, the 3rd Belorussian Front had crossed the Nieman River and taken Kaunas before moving farther west. In September, Cherniakhovskii's troops stopped to regroup and resupply. They had achieved great victories, but replacements were also needed before they could continue their advance.

It had been a good run for the general. His men had helped liberate Belorussia while inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. Now, in the early days of October, the 3rd Belorussian Front stood on the border of East Prussia—the first province of Germany proper to be threatened by the Red Army. Some of his advance units had already crossed the border in small probing actions.

The Russians regarded East Prussia as the seat of German militarism. Many of the Wehrmacht's top commanders came from the area, which had produced highly trained soldiers for centuries. It was from East Prussia that the Teutonic Knights launched forays into Poland and the Baltic regions in the 13th and 14th centuries.

During World War I, the Russian Army invaded the province and had suffered decisive defeats in the 1914 Battle of Tannenburg and the 2nd Battle of the Masurian Lakes in 1915. Driving the czar's army back, German forces

then moved into Russia. Detached from the rest of Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, East Prussia was reconnected with the Third Reich after the defeat of Poland.

During the opening days of the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, East Prussia served as the jumping off point for Army Group North's drive to Leningrad. Now, Army Group North was bottled up in the Baltic States and Cherniakhovskii had received orders from Stavka (the Soviet high command) to continue his advance. It was time to enter the lair of the German beast.

As his commanders filed into a crucial meeting, Cherniakhovskii greeted each one before directing them to the map table. The maps showed a somewhat detailed area of the East Prussian border and the interior of the province. Stavka's orders were rather ambiguous. Given his successes against the German defenses in the Baltic States, it seemed that it might be possible for Cherniakhovskii to drive his forces straight through the German lines to the province's capital of Königsberg. However, Soviet aerial reconnaissance showed that the Germans had prepared a series of defensive lines and strongpoints to prevent such a move.

Once the initial breakthrough occurred, Cherniakhovskii could weigh his options as the battle developed. If the German defenses collapsed quickly, the possibility of a quick drive to Königsberg was still in the cards. If not, the 3rd Belorussian Front could penetrate as far as possible and dig in to await support from its neighboring fronts. Cherniakovskii could also swing his armies north to the Baltic Sea, cutting off several German divisions defending positions along the coast. Whatever the initial outcome, the Soviet general planned to have his front inside East Prussia and not be kicked out.

Pointing out these possibilities, Cherniakovskii unfolded his plan of attack, which would become known as the Goldap Operation. His finger moved from the Soviet frontline positions through the initial German defenses to the town of Gumbinnen. From there, he followed the Gumbinnen-Insterberg-Königsburg highway to the East Prussian capital. That would be his main axis of attack.

Colonel General Kuzma Nikitovich Galitskii's 11th Guards Army, composed of nine rifle divisions and an armored regiment, would hit the Germans in an area around Edytkau, about 40 kilometers west of Gumbinnen. To his left, the 31st Army (seven rifle divisions) under Col. Gen. Vasilii Vasilevich Glagolev, was to advance on the Rominte Heath to the town of Goldap. On the 11th Guards' right, Lt. Gen. Ivan Illich Luidnikov's 39th Army (eight rifle divisions, an armored brigade and regiment, and an assault gun regiment) would breach German lines around Schirwindt, located about 55 kilometers northeast of Gumbinnen, and head for Schlossberg. He would be supported by Lt. Gen. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Luchinskii's 28th Army (nine rifle divisions, an armored brigade, two armored regiments, and two assault gun regiments).

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-J30355; Photo: Tomaschek

Young men of the German RAD, or Reich Labor Service, dig fortifications in a wooded area of East Prussia during the summer of 1944. The Germans knew that East Prussia would be a likely location for a Soviet Red Army offensive into German territory and tried to prepare for the coming onslaught.

Colonel General Nikolai Ivanovich Krylov's 5th Army (eight rifle divisions and an armored brigade and regiment) would be held in reserve to exploit any breaches in the German line. In addition, the 3rd Belorussian Front had Maj. Gen. Aleksii Semenovich Burdeinei's 2nd Guards Tank Corps (three armored brigades and a mechanized brigade), which would operate as an independent formation. Once the initial objectives were taken, Cherniakhovskii could decide how he wanted the assault to progress.

Facing Cherniakovskii were the battered divisions of General Friedrich Hossbach's Fourth Army. Since retreating into East Prussia, these troops had been busy repairing long neglected defenses. Hitler's propensity for holding captured territory contributed to the neglect since he thought preparing defenses too far behind the front would lead to unauthorized withdrawals. However, East Prussia was now the front, and the men worked feverishly to improve positions that might stop the Russians.

According to Cherniakhovskii's plan, the main weight of the attack would fall on General Gerhard Matzky's XXIV Army Corps and General Hermann Preiss's XXVII Army Corps. Both men had served as general staff officers in Berlin before commanding forces on the Eastern Front, and both had received the Knight's Cross as divisional commander.

In early October, Matzky's corps consisted of two infantry divisions, the 1st and the 56th. The 56th, commanded by Brig. Gen. Edmund Blaurock, was newly reformed after being decimated during the Soviet summer offensive. Brig. Gen. Hans Schittnig's 1st Infantry Division was Matzky's ace in the hole. The veteran division was largely made up of men from East Prussia and had garrisoned Königsberg, Insterburg, and other East Prussian cities before the war. During the coming battle they would not only be fighting for the Reich but for the homes of their friends and families.

Preiss's corps was a different case. Although he controlled four divisions, three of them (the 549th, 561st, and 547th) were Volksgrenadier divisions that had been raised in July. The

Volksgrenadier division (VGD) was a formation created out of necessity. It had only six battalions compared to the normal nine and had a higher proportion of automatic weapons than the standard German infantry division. Formed around a small cadre of veteran troops and officers, the Volksgrenadier divisions were fleshed out with raw recruits, teenagers, and men considered too old or unfit for the regular army. Their main role was considered defensive.

The 549th was led by Brig. Gen. Karl Jank. Brig. Gen. Walter Gorn led the 561st, and Brig. Gen. Ernst Meiners commanded the 547th. Gorn and Meiners had received the Knight's Cross for bravery in battle. The other unit in Preiss's corps was Maj. Gen. Friedrich Weber's 130th Infantry Division, which had been badly mauled during the summer but had received some replacements from the recently disbanded 196th Infantry Division. As the battle progressed, both of these corps would be reinforced, and the units would be traded back and forth as needed.

Hans Schittnig had only recently taken command of the 1st Division. He was just getting to know the division, and he made almost daily visits to the front, talking to his regimental, battalion, and company commanders and getting their input on what their opponents might be planning. On his first visit, he was appalled by the inadequacy of the positions that his troops were expected to defend.

The division had a 20-kilometer front in the Schirwindt area just inside the border. The town itself was located about 55 kilometers northeast of Gumbinnen. As the division pulled into the sector, enemy probing patrols and harassing artillery fire made it clear that the Russians knew of its arrival. The increased enemy activity left little doubt that the sector was in danger of an impending attack, and Schittnig's men worked around the clock to improve the almost nonexistent positions. Aided by two corps engineer battalions, they managed to build a frontline barrier as well as a secondary line about three kilometers behind the first. Rear area troops begin building more positions behind the first two in order to have fallback points to give the division a fighting chance.

Work went on in other sectors of the front as well. Hossbach and his corps commanders knew that time was running out, and the old axiom that "sweat saves blood" was repeated again and again as the veterans and new recruits worked together before the Soviet attack. It would help, but most of the positions along the front were still inadequate to stop the initial assault that Cherniakhovskii had planned.

On the Soviet side, the men had been bombarded with propaganda. The Germans had occupied Mother Russia for three years, committing many atrocities against soldiers and civilians alike. The men of the Red Army had paid for the liberation of their country in blood, taking millions of casualties. It was now time for revenge.

One of the most prolific propagandists on the Soviet side was Ilya Ehrenberg. His pamphlets were read daily by the political officers to the men of the 3rd Belorussian Front, fueling their hatred for the enemy. One such pamphlet read:

"The Germans are not human beings. From now on, the word 'German' strikes us to the quick. We have nothing to discuss. We will not get excited. We will kill. If you have not killed at least one German a day, you have wasted that day…. If you cannot kill a German with a bullet, kill him with your bayonet. If your part of the front is quiet and there is no fighting, then kill a German in the meantime…. If you have already killed a German, then kill another one—there is nothing more amusing than a heap of German corpses. Don't count the days; don't count the kilometers. Count only one thing—the number of Germans you have killed. Kill the Germans! Kill the Germans! Kill!"

Ehrenberg's diatribes were not just directed against the German soldier. His message to the Red Army soldiers, heard over and over again, called for retaliation against the German people as a whole.

"Kill! Kill!" he wrote. "In the German race there is nothing but evil; not one among the living, not one among the unborn but is evil! Follow the precepts of Comrade Stalin. Stamp out the fascist beast once and for all in its lair! Use force and break the racial pride of these German women. Take them as your lawful booty. Kill! As you storm onward, kill, you gallant soldiers of the Red Army."

With those words ringing in their ears, Cherniakhovskii's men prepared themselves for battle. They were ready for vengeance, and the civilian population of East Prussia would be the first to feel their wrath.

In Hitler's headquarters there was denial. The Führer could not bring himself to believe that East Prussia faced disaster. He refused repeated requests from Hossbach to turn the province into an operations zone. Such a move would put East Prussia under the control of the Army, usurping the power of Gauleiter Erich Koch, who had been in the position since 1928. A fanatical Nazi, Koch had joined the party in 1922 with membership number 90. Ever since Hitler had come to power, he was charged with controlling every aspect of civilian life in the province.

If Hossbach's request were granted, he would be able to order the evacuation of civilians in potential combat areas. The Army could also use the Nazi Party apparatus to help prepare defenses, which had so far been left to Koch, whose preparations were more of a hindrance than having any military value. Hitler stead-

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Advancing near the border of East Prussia, Red Army soldiers launch a probing attack against nearby German positions. The infantry support machine guns were often mounted on wheeled carriages, and these are prominently visible as the troops rush across a farmyard in September 1944.

Map 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

The Red Army offensive into East Prussia in the autumn of 1944 was a harbinger of the death and destruction that were to come for German military personnel and civilians alike.

fastly refused the notion—a move that would cost tens of thousands of civilian lives through May 1945.

German reconnaissance units had been active during the first half of October. On October 14, after receiving intelligence reports and aerial photographs, Hossbach judged that he had only a day or two before the Russians unleashed hell. As his troops filed into their forward positions there was an uneasy calm in the air. October 15 passed slowly, with the men still working on strengthening their positions before falling asleep—the sounds of insects echoing through the swamps and forests.

The calm was shattered at 4 AM on the 16th, when hundreds of Soviet artillery pieces opened fire. A three- to four-hour bombardment hit the German front, raining a hail of iron and explosives on the enemy positions. The intensity of the bombardment and accompanying bombing from the air shocked the German defenders. Such firepower had rarely been seen on the Eastern Front. Men were buried alive as trenches collapsed or were blown apart by the heavy mortar shells fired by corps and army artillery units. Frantic calls for help were cut short as communication lines were blown apart and eardrums were shattered by the force of the concussions from heavy shells.

As the bombardment moved to the rearward German positions, the troops of Luchinskii's 28th Army advanced on Matzky's corps. They expected to find only corpses and dazed survivors of the bombardment and the shattered remains of the German defenses, but they received an entirely different experience. Rising from the rubble, the soldiers of the 1st and 56th Infantry Divisions greeted the advancing Soviets with a withering fire. As the bombardment passed on, men struggled to right machine guns and mortars, while others dug up buried comrades. Two-man details were also sent to repair a damaged radio line that had been cut, and as more men were put back into action the divisional and corps artillery battalions, guided by surviving forward observers, brought down a wall of fire on the advancing Red Army.

Losses in front of Schittnig's division were particularly heavy. Five rifle divisions, supported by the 516th Armored Regiment, sought to break the East Prussians, but attack after attack was beaten off. Tank hunter squads roamed the front, cautiously creeping up on Soviet tanks that had outrun the infantry and destroying them with "sticky mines," which were attached to the tracks or rear of the armored vehicle. Many of these men were killed before they could accomplish their missions, but enough succeeded to make the Soviets pause.

Luchinskii ordered the self-propelled guns of the 122nd and 881st Assault Gun Regiments forward. Reaching the front, the guns opened fire point blank, targeting several German strongpoints. They were answered by the 75mm antitank guns of Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 1. Those guns that had survived the earlier shelling opened up from their concealed positions, hitting several Soviet vehicles and forcing the rest to withdraw.

Luchinskii was undeterred, and he ordered more units into the battle. Calling upon his last reserves, Schittnig succeeded in preventing a decisive breakthrough and ordered his troops to retreat in hedgehog fashion. The Soviets had received a bloody nose in his sector, but the 1st had also paid the price with casualties on the front line reaching 10 to 12 percent. With survivors making it back to the secondary line, the 1st Division prepared for another onslaught.

To the south, Galitskii's 11th Guards Army slammed into Jank's 549th Volksgrenadier Division, which was supported by elements of Maj. Gen. Hans Bergan's 390th Sicherungs Division (Security Division or SD). Bergan's men were lightly armed, and although their primary purpose was to control rear areas of the army, they suddenly found themselves in the thick of the fighting. The division itself was a hodgepodge of units that included a regimental security group, four companies from the divisional war school, engineer and signals companies, and a replacement battalion among its formations.

To Jank's right, Corn's 561st Volksgrenadier Division also came under heavy attack. With the help of Sturmgeschütz (assault gun) Brigade 276, commanded by Captain Axel Sewero, the Russian assault was slowed, allowing the Germans to retreat toward Ebenrode and the Pissa River. Some Soviets managed to infiltrate the thin German defenses and had worked their way into the rear areas. In one incident, 1st Lt. Friedrich Stück, commanding Sewero's 3rd Company, stopped his unit in front of a vast cornfield.

Stück, thinking that it would be a perfect spot for an enemy ambush, ordered his guns to fire high explosive shells into the field. A member of the unit described the scene: "When we fired, we couldn't believe our eyes. Hundreds of Russian infantry had wanted to lead us into an ambush and annihilate us in close combat."

The Soviets, panicked by the fire from the

assault guns, retreated. Stück ordered his company to continue firing, cutting down dozens of Russian soldiers. His accompanying infantry joined in as the assault guns advanced. Dozens more of the enemy perished before some made it to the safety of nearby woods, but it was clear that they had been totally disorganized by the attack as they disappeared among the trees.

While soldiers at the front struggled to hold a cohesive line, the Red Air Force struck German supply lines in the rear. The town of Gumbinnen felt the full fury of the Soviet airmen as fighter bombers smashed the rail line that ran through it. A follow-up by medium bombers caused more damage, almost destroying the entire town.

Frustrated by the first day's action, Cherniakhovskii urged his generals to make better progress, and October 17 opened with another massive bombardment. The East Prussians of Schittnig's division, which occupied positions in and around Schirwindt, were once again the object of Luidinikov's 39th Army. The 1st Division stopped the initial attack of the day dead in its tracks.

Luidinikov then sent armor and infantry to outflank the town from the north and south. Once again the antitank guns of Pz. Jag. Abt. 1 destroyed several Soviet tanks, but the move was effective. The Russians were able to enter the town, and the battle deteriorated into house-to-house fighting. By evening, the Germans had evacuated the town, leaving many of Schirwindt's 1,000 inhabitants dead in the streets.

Meanwhile, Galitskii was making decent progress against the hard-pressed 549th Volksgrenadier Division. After taking the village of Wirballen, about eight kilometers east of Ebenrode, the Soviets advanced another three kilometers and attacked Edytkau. Jank's grenadiers fought for every house, but the enemy numbers were too great. Abandoning the town, the 549th made a fighting withdrawal to Ebenrode, where it prepared to make a final stand to protect the highway leading to Königsberg.

As they approached Ebenrode, the grenadiers found a welcome sight. A battalion of the 103rd Panzer Brigade, commanded by Maj. Gen. Werner Mummert, met them on the road. Mummert's tanks were supported by a panzergrenadier battalion, which immediately formed a defensive line in front of the town. As the Soviets approached, the combined infantry and tank fire demolished the advance units of Galitskii's army, forcing the Soviet general to halt the attack.

With his main avenue of attack blocked, Galitskii ordered the bulk of his army to move south and then head west, threading its way through an extremely marshy area filled with several small streams. It was a risky move, especially for his armored units. Once through the marsh, the Russians would be greeted with a landscape marked by hills and valleys, which would hinder reconnaissance. Nevertheless, with the unexpectedly strong German defense in the north both Cherniakhovskii and Galitskii agreed that the main effort of the assault should be switched to the southern portion of the 3rd Belorussian Front.

The assault on the 17th finally shocked local Nazi Party leaders into action. The Kreisleiter (district leader) of the Schlossberg District, where Schirwindt was located, belatedly issued an order for the civilian evacuation of the district, too late for many civilians who had been caught up in the fighting. Farther south, the Kreisleiter of the Goldap District issued similar orders to his people after Glagolev's 31st Army had forced Brig. Gen. Siegfried Hass's 170th Infantry Division and Brig. Gen. Werner Schultz's 131st Infantry Division to retreat.

Panicked men, women, and children took flight with only what they could carry, and horse-drawn wagons clogged the roads, hampering the movement of reinforcements to the front. The resulting chaos, which could have been prevented if Hossbach's earlier request had been granted, worked in favor of the Russians. During breaks in the clouds, Soviet fighters swooped down, strafing the columns and causing more panic as the refugees fled westward.

By the morning of October 18, Galitskii's troops, having made it through the marsh, were assembled near the village of Schlossbach. Under an umbrella of Red Air Force fighters and bombers, the 11th Guards Army moved forward. While the Russian forces left at Ehrenrode attacked German forces there, the bulk of the army moved westward, outflanking the Ebenrode defenses and continuing on to the Rominte River. At the town of Grosswatersdorf, about 25 kilometers southwest of Ebenrode, Galitskii's forces crossed the Rominte and reached relatively open ground. From there, the 11th Guards Army pushed north and west on the plain between the Rominte and Angerapp Rivers.

Hearing news of Galitskii's action, Hitler issued an order to mobilize the Volkssturm, which was composed of boys and men who were so far considered unfit for military ser-

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ABOVE: Supported by heavy self-propelled assault guns, Soviet soldiers advance rapidly toward the west and German territory in East Prussia. LEFT: The mulitated corpses of women and children lie gathered for burial in the East Prussian town of Metgethen. Soviet troops were encouraged to exact revenge and retribution for the atrocities suffered in the months that followed the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

In October 1944, German civilian residents of an East Prussian town are undergoing training for the Volkssturm, units composed of old men and boys who offered a last line of defense against the marauding Red Army. These ill-prepared men are thus far without uniforms and fielding antiquated weapons.

vice, even in the Volksgrenadier divisions. Members of the units ranged in age from their early teens to well into their 60s. For the most part, Volkssturm units were not well trained and were armed with various weapons that included both German and captured enemy guns. Like their Volksgrenadier counterparts, they relied on light machine guns and Panzerfaust antitank weapons to stop the enemy.

Volkssturm battalions were usually commanded by elderly or crippled reserve officers or by Nazi Party hacks. To make it worse, Gauleiter Koch insisted that the party remain in control of the units. This usually led to a total breakdown in communications with Wehrmacht forces, which resulted in neither force knowing what the other was doing or where they were.

In the west, the Volkssturm usually melted away at the first sign of approaching Allied troops. In the east, however, many Volkssturm units fought bravely trying to stop the encroachment of the Red Army on their homeland. Like the East Prussian units of the regular army, they were fighting for their families and their homes.

As Galitskii's units advanced, Cherniakovskii ordered Luchinskii's 28th Army to begin redeploying to the south to aid Glagolev's 31st Army in its advance across the Rominte Heath. This left Krylov's 5th Army to continue pounding Matzky's northern front.

As the Russians redeployed, Hossbach rushed to bring reinforcements to hold his flanks. The recently formed Hermann Göring (HG) Parachute-Panzer Corps, consisting of the 1st HG Parachute-Panzer Division (Colonel Hans-Horst von Necker) and the 2nd HG Parachute-Panzergrenadier Division (Colonel Erich Walther), came in from the north. Colonel Rolf Lippert's 5th Panzer Division also arrived on the northern flank. Major Werner Freiherr von Beschwitz's Schwere Panzer Abteiling (Heavy Tank Detachment) 505, which already had elements fighting in the area, was also being readied for a possible counterattack.

In the south, elements of Colonel Hans-Joachim Kahler's Führer-Grenadier Brigade (FGB) was arriving piecemeal. The FGB had been formed in the summer, and although well led, its troops were largely inexperienced.

While the 1st Infantry Division held strong in the north, the combined forces of Galitskii and Glagolev continued to push the Germans back in the south on the 19th. Although the Soviets were advancing, they were paying a price in men and equipment. Defending the villages of Alexbrück and Goriten southeast of Ebenrode, the Tiger tanks of von Beschwitz's heavy tank detachment knocked out seven Russian tanks before retreating to avoid being outflanked. The Germans were trading land for time, allowing the Soviets to edge westward and exposing their flanks for a counterattack.

The ferocity of the defense was costly for the Germans as well. Captain Gerhard Hoppe, commander of Sturmgeschutz Brigade 279, was killed. His replacement, Captain Hans-Joachim Heise, was badly wounded in fighting on the northern edge of the Rominte Heath. His place was taken by 1st Lt. Gerhard Stahlhacke, who continued the fighting withdrawal.

On October 20, the Soviet assault continued unabated. A local attack on Galitskii's right flank was launched by the HG Panzer Corps and von Beschwitz's 505th. Von Beschwitz's unit claimed four tanks and 26 antitank guns destroyed. The attack drove the Russians farther south, but the Soviets strengthened their flank with more antitank units and continued to advance toward the Angerapp and the river crossing at the village of Nemmersdorf.

While Galitskii fanned out to the north and west, Luchinskii's 28th Army was advancing on Goldap. Much of the town's population of 13,000 was already on its way out of the town, but many civilians remained. Schulz's 131st Infantry Division, holding positions east of the town, was successfully parrying Soviet attacks. He was supported by the 400-man strong Goldap Volkssturm Battalion. When the battalion was formed, Schulz immediately put it under his command, refusing to accept party authority over the unit. Since then it had been holding a defensive position between two of Schulz's battalions and had proven itself in combat.

October 21 saw more heavy fighting as Gumbinnen came under attack. Soviet tanks,

some of them the massive IS (Josef Stalin) IIs. These heavy tanks weighed 45 tons fully loaded, and had up to 160mm of armor for protection. They were armed with a 122mm gun, which made them dangerous opponents, as Lieutenant Alfred Regeniter had already found out. As part of Sewero's Sturmgeschutz 276 Brigade, Regeniter had engaged part of the 75th Tank Breakthrough Regiment near the village of Kleinschellendorf, nine kilometers north of Ebenrode. Recalling the engagement, Regeniter wrote:

"I spotted an IS II with the telescopic sight standing empty at about 2,000 meters. Every one of our armor piercing shells hit exactly—we could see the tracers gliding slower and slower toward the target, six times—all bounced off!"

Regeniter had better luck that evening. A burning T-34 revealed an IS II lurking in the darkness. After firing four rounds with no effect, his fifth shot managed to pierce the giant, which blew up a couple of minutes later.

By the end of the day, the Soviets had pushed even farther westward. Cherniakhovskii, frustrated by the continued German resistance, had released his reserves, Burdeinei's 2nd Guards Tank Corps, prematurely. Moving quickly, Burdeinei's 25th Guards Tank Brigade and 4th Guards Mechanized Assault Brigade swept toward the Angerapp River and took the crossing at Nemmersdorf. After occupying Nemmersdorf the Soviets set up defensive positions on the western edge of the village.

The Russian spearhead was now less than 80 kilometers from Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg. Some of Hitler's aides urged him to evacuate the headquarters, but he refused. He was worried about the effect on the morale of the troops if it appeared that he had abandoned them.

Cherniakhovskii now found himself in a rather precarious position. Galitskii had made the farthest advance, but his flanks were exposed until the neighboring armies overcame resistance in their sectors. In the Schlossberg area the 1st Infantry Division still resisted all efforts from the 5th Army to break its line. Farther south, the line ran across Ebenrode to Gumbinnen. That line had been strengthened by the HG Panzer Division and Lippert's 5th Panzer. The arrival of Brig. Gen. Günther Sachs's 18th Flak Division added a deadly array of antiaircraft guns, including the renowned 88mm, which were also used in an artillery and antitank capacity, to combat the Russians.

Fighting near Gumbinnen and Trakehnen was particularly fierce. Elements of the HG Corps were forced to give way—a move that threatened Trakehnen. As the infantry retreated, it ran into panzers from the HG Panzer Division, which had been sent to reinforce the sector. A swift counterattack pushed the Soviets out of their newly captured positions and restored the line.

Heavy attacks at Gumbinnen were repulsed by reinforcements from the 5th Panzer Division. In a series of sharp engagements the Russians sustained substantial casualties. German losses were also severe and included the commander of the XXVII Army Corps, General Preiss, who was killed in action about five kilometers southwest of Gumbinnen near the village of Hasenrode. His replacement, Maj. Gen. Maximillian Felzmann, arrived five days later to take command.

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Bombers of the Soviet Red Air Force fly toward targets in East Prussia. Soviet aircraft executed countless sorties against German targets in the path of their offensive launched in the autumn of 1944.

To Galitskiis's south, the 31st and 28th Armies were clawing their way toward Goldap. The hard-pressed 131st and 170th Infantry Divisions bore the brunt of the attack. A Soviet armored column managed to break through the 131st's line, but disaster was averted by the timely arrival of Sturmgeschutz Brigade 179, which destroyed several Russian tanks and forced the rest to retreat. A second breakthrough met the same fate. Goldap itself would fall the next day when the 170th was forced out of its positions within the town.

Late on the evening of October 21, Hossbach ordered a counterattack. He planned to use the 5th Panzer, with von Beschwitz's 505th attached, to attack from the north and link up with the FGB, which would advance from the south. If all went well Galitskii's forward elements would be cut off from the main part of the army and be destroyed. German units covering the flanks could then move forward and establish a shorter defensive line on the main front.

The assault units moved into their jump-off positions during the early hours of the 22nd. After a short artillery barrage, the Germans moved forward. The Soviets, caught off guard, put up heavy resistance in some sectors and abandoned others without much of a fight. Von Beschwitz's detachment recaptured the village of Grünfliess, five kilometers southwest of Trakenhnen, and continued to roll forward with the 5th Panzer Division.

With the support of 150 infantrymen, Lieutenant Regeniter, leading seven assault guns, attacked toward the village of Kleinschellendorf, eight kilometers north of Ebenrode. Three Soviet tanks were quickly destroyed as the Germans advanced on the village. Regeniter recalled:

"The enemy pulled back and we occupied the village in the early morning fog. Our infantry provided security in the direction of the enemy. We crushed three light antitank guns under our tracks and took a 76.2mm 'Ratschbum' [German nickname for the Soviet antitank gun that made a distinctive sound as it fired] in tow." Regeniter had already knocked out five enemy tanks during the first hours of the attack.

In the Daken sector the FGB was fighting off vicious counterattacks as the men pushed forward toward their objective—Grosswaltersdorf. In Daken itself a panzergrenadier battalion, supported by one Panther medium tank, held out against mixed tank and infantry attacks. By the end of the day, advance elements of the FGB had reached Tellrode, about one kilometer south of Grosswaltersdorf, but the main objective was still in Soviet hands.

Around Nemmersdorf a variety of Volkssturm and ad hoc units had formed a defensive line around the small Soviet bridgehead. Günter Koschorrek was a member of one such unit. Recovering from wounds received two months earlier in Galicia, he had been put in charge of a group of men training to become panzergrenadiers. When Cherniakovskii opened his offensive, Koschorrek and his men formed up and were trucked eastward.

With the attack near Grosswaltersdorff going well, Koschorrek's unit and others were ordered to attack the enemy positions to their front. Casualties were initially high as Soviet machine guns swept the field, but the Germans pressed on, taking forward enemy positions and reaching the outskirts of Nemmersdorff. There, they found out what total war meant.

"When we moved through the village, we found no more Soviets," Koschorrek recalled. "But we were greeted by grisly scenes of the people that had been caught up there, which reminded me of the atrocities suffered by Soviet

villagers from their own soldiers, something I had often seen during our retreats early in 1944. Here were German women, whose clothing had been torn from their bodies so that they could be violated and finally mutilated in horrific ways.

"In one barn we found an old man whose throat had been pierced with a pitchfork, pinning him to the door. All of the feather mattresses in one of the bedrooms had been sliced open and were stained with blood. Two cut-up female corpses were lying amid the feathers with two murdered children. The sight was so gruesome that some of our recruits fled in panic."

A Volkssturm member named Karl Potrek described finding "four naked women who had been strangled behind a cart." He estimated that there were about 70 civilian bodies, all but one being women and children. About eight kilometers to the southeast in the village of Schulzenwalde, about 95 more bodies were found.

Some of the body counts may have been exaggerated, but it was clear that Ehrenberg's propaganda had done its work well. As one Soviet soldier stated, "All of us knew very well that if the girls were German they could be raped and then shot." Another added, "Our soldiers have not dealt with East Prussia any worse than the Germans did with Smolensk. We hate Germany and the Germans deeply."

He was right on that point. However powerful Ehrenberg's words were, many of the average Red Army soldiers had already witnessed or heard about the atrocities perpetuated by German forces on the Soviet people. There were few rules of war on the Eastern Front, and the slaughter of German civilians caught up in the chaos of war was payback for three years of terror that people living under the German occupation had suffered.

The northern and southern German pincers met on October 23, establishing a tenuous defensive line that faced both east and west. A battle group of the 5th Panzer Division under Captain Alfred Jaedtke, commander of the I/Pz. Gr. Rgt.14, set out to the west to take on the Soviet units that had been cut off. Jaedtke hoped that those Russian units would be crushed between his battle group and the forces that were attacking from the west.

Russian pressure at Daken had finally forced the Germans out of the town. The battalion holding it retreated and set up a new defensive line. Meanwhile, elements of the HG Panzer Division were moving to the area to reinforce the FGB. The commander of the I/HG Pz. Rgt., Captain Joachim Renz, was killed as his battalion engaged the enemy.

Undeterred, 1st Lt. Gerhard Tschierschwitz, commanding the battalion's 2nd Company, moved forward with his men and pushed the enemy out of Wirballen. Lacking infantry support, he continued the advance to the village of Jägershagen, seven kilometers southwest of Trakehnen. In the village he found an enemy command post and assembly area.

"There was no hesitation as to what to do," he wrote in a letter to this author some 40 years later. "The Russians had not expected us to show up, and they were astonished to see us in their rear area. I immediately ordered my panzers to advance and use direct fire on the enemy."

The ensuing engagement netted the 2nd Company 16 destroyed Russian tanks, 16 antitank guns, six artillery pieces, and 13 machine guns. Tschierschwitz'a panzers also destroyed the command post and killed almost 300 Russians.

With the Soviet troops near Nemmersdorf in confusion, Jaedtke's battle group surprised several units from the rear. He kept moving and finally entered the village after overcoming enemy trench systems guarding Nemmersdorf's eastern sector. During his westward march, Jaedtke passed through the village of Brauersdorf, about eight kilometers east of Nemmersdorf. He noted:

"In Brauersdorf itself there were many women next to the village road who had their breasts cut off. I saw this with my own eyes."

Although Galitskii's spearhead had been blunted, Cherniakhovskii had no intention of admitting defeat. He ordered his armies to continue the attack, knowing that the Germans had suffered considerable casualties that could not easily be made up. On the German side, it was a matter of thrust and parry as the weakened units tried to keep their line intact.

Von Beschwitz's heavy panzer detachment and the 5th Panzer's II/Pz. Gr. Rgt. 14 attacked Grosswaltersdorf on October 24. Russian forces, dug in on the western outskirts of the town, threw up a wall of fire as the Germans advanced. It was too much for the Germans, who were forced to retreat.

Fighting renewed along the front the following day with neither side making much headway. Both were realigning their forces, hoping to outguess their opponent and exploit any weaknesses. One of the few successes of the day occurred when Galitskii took Ebenrode on the night of the 25th, which threatened the flanks of German units defending the highway to Königsberg.

On October 26, a powerful Red Army combined force, including 50 tanks, broke through a sector of the HG Panzer Division's defensive line in the Trakehnen area. The commander of the 1st Company of the German division's antitank battalion, 1st Lt. Karl-Heinz Wallhäusser, launched an immediate counterattack. Collecting stragglers along the way for infantry support, Wallhäusser's self-propelled antitank guns struck the Russian flank, destroying a number of tanks and heavy weapons and driving the remainder back to their start line.

In another sector, Private Albert Plapper, leading the 4th Company of HG's Pz. Gr. Rgt. 2, took over a machine gun that had been put out of action and stalled a Russian infantry attack. The Soviets called up tank support. As they approached, the 18-year-old Plapper destroyed five of them with a Panzerschreck hand-held reloadable 88mm antitank weapon. He then led a counterattack that threw the Russians back and restored the line.

At Grünweiden, about 4½ kilometers northeast of Grosswaltersdorf, a Soviet attack also broke through the German line. Four of von Beschwitz's Tigers were sent to the village of Weidengrund, about two kilometers to the northeast. There they engaged the point of the Russian attack, sending the enemy tanks and infantry reeling.

Bringing up reinforcements, the Russians attacked en masse, pushing the Tigers back. The situation was saved by the timely arrival of some Panthers and assault guns, which launched a counterattack that broke the Soviet assault. Nine Soviet tanks and four antitank guns were destroyed in the operation.

Fighting continued the following day with the same give and take. On the 28th, Schittnig's 1st Infantry came under another massive attack. In the previous 12 days, the 1st had been pushed back about 25 kilometers, but it still hung onto Schlossburg. The division had also destroyed about 130 tanks and assault guns as it fought to hold off the Russians.

The preliminary bombardment was huge, and parts of three Soviet armies took part in the assault, but Schittnig's men held. Small reserve forces were formed from the declining numbers of the division and were rushed to any area that was in danger of a breakthrough. By keeping his reserves moving up and down the line, Schittnig was able to stop the Russians as they attempted to break his defenses.

As the situation settled down once again, Hossbach moved to smash the Soviet salient around Goldap that threatened the valley between the Rominte and Angerapp Rivers. He called on Maj. Gen. Karl Decker, commander of the XXXIX Panzer Corps, which had transferred from the Third Panzer Army, to make the attack.

The assault called for a two-pronged attack. From the north, Lippert's 5th Panzer (which

National Archives

Soviet soldiers streaming through an East Prussian village during the followup Red Army offensive in early 1945. Within months, the Nazi capital of Berlin was in Soviet hands and World War II in Europe was over.

Decker had previously commanded), supported by the FGB's panzergrenadier battalion, would make a thrust toward Goldap. In the south, Haus's 50th Infantry, supported by the FGB's Panzer-Fusilier Battalion, would move to link up with the northern force.

All of the units set for the attack had been weakened by the previous fighting. For example, the monthly condition report of the 5th Panzer showed a total of only 21 Panthers and 12 Panzer IV tanks fit for operations on November 1.

During the night of November 2, the two forces moved into their jump-off points. There, they waited in darkness in the snow-covered terrain. As midnight approached, officers and NCOs went through the plan of attack one more time with their men. The movement to their new positions seemed to have gone unnoticed by the Soviets, and all was quiet on the enemy side of the line, so the chances of surprise seemed good.

At 10 minutes after midnight on November 3, the attack rolled forward without any preliminary artillery bombardment of the enemy positions. As they advanced, the 5th Panzer tanks opened fire. Captain Jaedtke described the action:

"The first tanks and half-tracks ran into mines, but we reached the first Russian trenches, which they appeared to have abandoned hastily. As we advanced we penetrated into a trench system where, in places, the Russians mounted stiff resistance."

Overcoming the Soviet defenders, the 5th Panzer and FGB grenadiers continued to advance, reaching Lake Goldap. By dawn they were only two kilometers from Goldap itself.

To the south, Haus's 50th Infantry and the FGB fusiliers fell upon the unsuspecting Russians with a fury. Quickly overrunning trenches, the Germans pressed forward. Along the way they destroyed 42 Soviet tanks. They made contact with the northern force and then established defensive positions east of the town.

The combined elements of Decker's force now moved to take Goldap while fighting off Soviet attacks intended to relieve the encircled town. Casualties mounted during the back and forth struggle, but Decker's force held off repeated enemy assaults. Decker's attack finally succeeded when the Soviets inside Goldap were eliminated on November 5, and German forces recaptured the shattered town. Looking at the shattered buildings, they knew that this would be the fate of all of East Prussia if the Soviets ever took over the province. They were right.

Cherniakhovskii's assault did not lead to the capture of Königsberg. The Germans reestablished a solid front and fought 40 Soviet divisions to a standstill, although the Russians now retained a 40-kilometer-deep and 150-kilometer-wide foothold within the Reich.

With both sides exhausted and winter setting in, only minor actions took place for the remainder of November. The Soviets had learned that even the weakened enemy divisions, such as the 1st Infantry Division, could stand up against sustained attacks now that they were defending their homeland, and the breathing space in November was used to replace losses and bring new forces into the area as about 79,500 Soviet soldiers of the 337,000 committed to the Goldap Operation had become casualties.

When the red storm broke over East Prussia on January 12, 1945, it would truly mean the end of the Third Reich and of East Prussia itself. The drive would take the Soviets in the north through East Prussia and down the Baltic coast into the eastern part of Germany. At war's end the province of East Prussia was divided between the Soviet Union and Poland, with almost all of the German population that had not been killed expelled to the west. The seat of German militarism was no more.

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Because the victorious Allies had destroyed Imperial Germany's fleet after World War I, Adolf Hitler had no choice but to construct a new navy after he came to power. This worked to his partial advantage since, although Britain's massive fleet vastly outnumbered Nazi Germany's, its ships were generally older, slower, and more thinly armored than the sleek, state-of-the-art vessels of the New German Navy, or Kriegsmarine.

New battleships, battlecruisers, pocket battleships, and heavy and light cruisers were built during the 1930s. Among these was the battlecruiser *Scharnhorst,* one of Nazi Germany's new generation of fighting ships that were too fast to be kept bottled up in the North Sea like their Imperial predecessors had been 25 years earlier. German capital ships were at large in the Atlantic during wartime, and the Royal Navy was hard pressed to bring them to bay while simultaneously dealing with menacing packs of U-boats that continually raided merchant shipping.

Still, in many instances these warships failed to live up to expectations, largely because they were so few in number. Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, chief of the Kriegsmarine, initiated his Z-Plan for building the German surface fleet during the 1930s. However, the construction effort was nowhere near completion with the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. Other factors were also involved.

Captain Hans Langsdorff scuttled *Graf Spee* outside Montevideo, Uruguay harbor on December 12, 1939, rather than face a feeble British flotilla he believed was much more powerful than it actually was. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill got away with committing virtually his entire North Atlantic fleet to hunting down the battleship *Bismarck* without losing any merchant ships. While much of the Royal Navy's resources were off hunting down and sinking the *Bismarck,* other free-ranging German commerce raiders somehow failed to locate any of the lumbering, unprotected convoys. *Scharnhorst*'s star-crossed career was the most fascinatingly bedeviled of all.

At 31,800 tons, *Scharnhorst* was lighter and much faster than older British battleships or battlecruisers. Although her 11-inch rifles were smaller than the 15-inchers of the Royal Navy's battlecruisers *Hood, Repulse,* and *Renown,* she had much thicker armor. She was also fitted with a newfangled device called radar, enabling her gunners to accurately shell targets that were over the horizon. Regardless, all of *Scharnhorst*'s menacing armament and state-of-the-art systems were, some believed, more than offset by an element rumored to have dogged her even before her construction was completed. She was damned.

In this 2010 painting by artist O. Rahardt, the sleek German battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* is shown slicing across the open sea. *Scharnhorst* and her sister warship *Gneisenau* were major threats to Allied merchant shipping in the North Atlantic, but *Scharnhorst* was dogged by misfortune during her entire career.

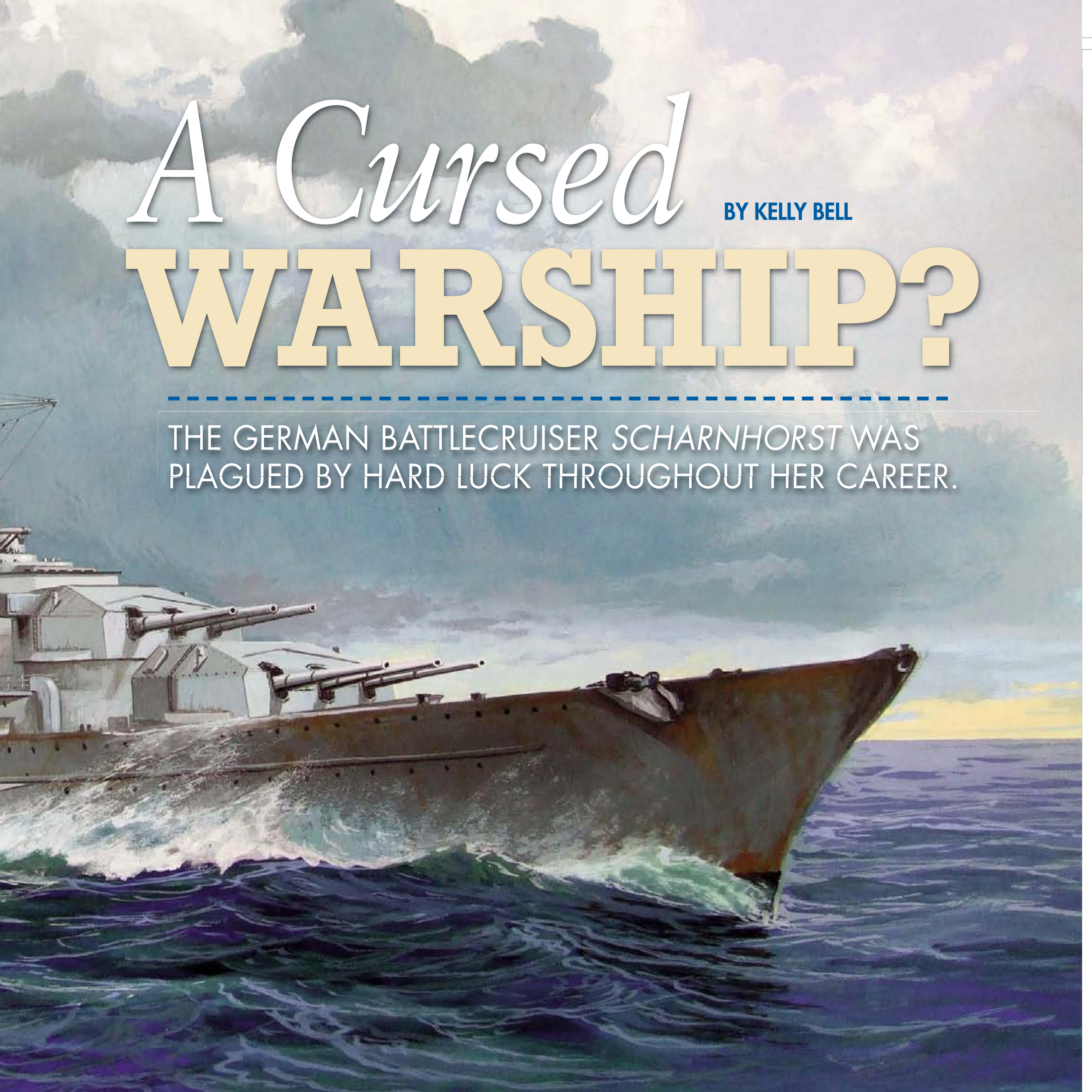
While the ship was being constructed in drydock, her supporting timbers abruptly gave way, and the huge hull rolled onto its side crushing to death 61 skilled workers and injuring 110 more. Jittery work crews had to be conscripted for the three-month job of righting the vessel, and when the subsequently delayed launch date arrived so did Hitler, Luftwaffe chief Herman Göring, Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess, and Admiral Karl Donitz, commander of the navy's U-boat arm, all eager to witness this deadly marvel of the New Germany splash into her native element.

She stood them up. During the previous night *Scharnhorst* had snapped her mooring lines and slid of her own accord into Kiel's crowded harbor, pulverizing two barges anchored in her premature path. Despite the circumstances, it was a victory of sorts. She was finally com-

A Cursed WARSHIP?

BY KELLY BELL

THE GERMAN BATTLECRUISER *SCHARNHORST* WAS PLAGUED BY HARD LUCK THROUGHOUT HER CAREER.



pleted and in operation, which was more than had been expected by many.

After months of bitter international debate, the free city of Danzig was a mere backwater of the land battle when the Polish campaign commenced. The garrison was reduced by offshore bombardment. The German Navy flotilla dispatched to the scene experienced negligible return fire, for all the good this did *Scharnhorst.* During the shelling one of her big guns exploded, killing nine men. The ventilation system shorted out in another turret, suffocating the 12-man crew.

After her self-inflicted damage was repaired, *Scharnhorst,* accompanied by her identical sister ship *Gneisenau,* embarked on her first wartime patrol. This sortie was not highly successful, with only a single merchantman sunk, and this vessel, *Rawalpindi,* got off a radio message that alerted the British to the raiders' whereabouts. However, the Germans pulled off a dazzling escape, hiding out near the Arctic Circle until the arrival of inclement weather and then steaming undetected through the middle of a huge task force (the Royal Navy did not yet have radar) sent to intercept them, arriving safely at Wilhelmshaven on November 27, 1939.

The following spring Hitler was forced to commit virtually his entire surface fleet in the invasion of Norway due to the lack of a common land border. Between enemy action and atrocious weather, the naval contingent suffered unexpectedly heavy casualties, losing 10

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

destroyers in the assault on Narvik alone.

Meanwhile, *Scharnhorst* was off Oslo participating in the bombardment of the city's shore batteries, which turned out to be much more formidable than Danzig's. She came away from the battle crippled. *Gneisenau* towed her out of the combat area, and her engineers patched her up sufficiently to enable her to limp homeward by night and hide from the Royal Air Force by day. Entering the Elbe River on the last leg of her journey home, she collided in the darkness with the *Bremen*, Germany's largest passenger liner. *Scharnhorst*'s armor-plated prow was barely dented, but *Bremen* was severely holed and settled into the shallow water as a sitting duck for the British bombers that soon pounded her into junk.

Following extensive repairs, *Scharnhorst* resumed patrolling the Atlantic, and on June 9, 1940, she and *Gneisenau* happened upon the fleet evacuating the last Allied forces to leave Nazi-occupied Norway. British and Norwegian troops were being ferried to England with a number of old Gloster Gladiator biplanes aboard the aircraft carrier *Glorious*. The planes were used primarily for reconnaissance but could launch torpedoes. Before any of them could take off in the contrary wind, however, the German ships' heavy guns had reduced the flotilla and its escorts to floating wreckage. The destroyer *Acasta* was burning and taking on water when her captain had a great idea.

The Germans were 10 miles south of their targets and firing their main guns head-on when *Acasta* suddenly veered eastward and then made a 180-degree turn at full steam. Unnoticed by her distant attackers, the British destroyer had fired a full spread of torpedoes during the brief moments in her direction change when she was facing the Germans. Every man on the German battlecruisers was baffled by the strange maneuver, but they kept firing and adjusting direction to port to keep facing their westward-bound quarry.

Nine minutes later *Scharnhorst*'s starboard hull was ripped open just below the waterline by a torpedo fired from the *Acasta*. The explosion and subsequent flooding killed 47 sailors. *Gneisenau* escorted her damaged sister to the Norwegian port of Trondheim for emergency repairs and then to Kiel for refit.

On February 8, 1941, the twin battlecruisers slipped through the Denmark Strait and reentered the Atlantic to participate in the Kriegsmarine highly successful worldwide offensive against Allied shipping in the first half of that year. Commanded by Admiral Gunther Lutjens (who was soon to be killed in action as commander of the battleship *Bismarck*), the two

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: This photograph records one of the proudest moments in the star-crossed career of the battlecruiser *Scharnhorst*, the commissioning ceremony for the new warship in the harbor at Wilhelmshaven, Germany, on January 7, 1939. BELOW: The battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* was launched in 1936. Hitler and other Nazi dignitaries, including Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, commander of the Kriegsmarine, to Hitler's left await the beginning of ceremonies.

dreadnoughts sank 21 supply and merchant ships totaling 115,622 tons and captured one. Whenever the Royal Navy pinpointed the raiders' location, the Germans used their superior speed to outdistance their frustrated foes. On March 23, they docked at the occupied French port of Brest, where *Scharnhorst* was idled several months for major engine repairs.

Between *Scharnhorst*'s sick motors and the bomb damage inflicted on *Gneisenau* by the Royal Air Force while she was moored, it was autumn before the German battlecruisers were operational again, and even then bombers pinned them down in the harbor until the evening of February 11, 1942, when, acting on orders directly from Hitler they slipped out of Brest in a heavy fog and headed north at full speed in company with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* in a desperate attempt to reach Norway.

The Kriegsmarine high command had desperately opposed the plan as too risky, but Hitler was convinced the Allies were preparing to invade Norway and, as he had foreseen, they never dreamed he would send his precious surface raiders into the heavily patrolled English Channel. The movement was codenamed Operation Cerberus.

A skilled and experienced naval commander, Vice Admiral Otto Ciliax led the Brest squadron on its northward sprint. Luftwaffe General Adolf Galland assembled a force of 250 Messerschmitt Me-109 and Focke Wulf FW-190 fighters for the crucial task of air cover, and Luftwaffe Director of Communications General Wolfgang Martini was assigned the task of jamming the British radar system.

Hugging the French coastline, the warships would stay out of range of English coastal batteries while their own coastal gunners could support them against any unfriendly warships that might attack. The vessels left Brest at nightfall.

After covering the 240-mile stretch from Brest to Cherbourg under cover of darkness, the Germans entered the Channel at dawn so that the fighters could give them vital cover throughout the daylight leg of the trip. During the moonless night the three capital ships had been joined by six destroyers and a number of minesweepers, gunboats, and other smaller craft whose crews were determined to see them safely through to their linkup with the rest of the fleet in the Norwegian fjords.

Scharnhorst was in the lead, and on her bridge Ciliax noted with little surprise the absence of hostile aircraft in the cold, gray midwinter skies. The weather was not ideal for air patrols, and Martini was doing an excellent job of jamming the Britons' radar, so much so that the operators did not realize their blank sets were the result of deliberate interference. They attributed them to the foul weather.

The run was uneventful until 10:42 AM, when two British Supermarine Spitfire fighters happened to pass overhead. All along the English coast the alert sounded, but the shocked Allies reacted with disbelief and hesitation. As Hitler had foreseen, they had been taken totally by surprise. The Dover coastal batteries gamely opened up on the distant targets, but their 9-inch shells fell a full mile short. After wasting 33 rounds, the artillery fell silent.

By noon the task force had traversed the Channel's narrowest point, between Dover and Calais, and was only 200 miles short of its destination. It was there that it encountered its first hostile ships. A squadron of torpedo boats

National Archives

Operation Cerberus, the Channel dash by Nazi warships through the English Channel in February 1942, embarrassed the British Royal Navy, which mounted only feeble attempts to challenge the movement. *Scharnhorst* was one of several German warships that took part in the dash to safe ports in northern Germany, accompanied by an aerial escort of Luftwaffe planes.

churned from Dover harbor and attacked at 35 knots through the roiling swells. *Scharnhorst* and the destroyers drove them off with a blizzard of shells. The torpedo boats managed to launch a few missiles, but all missed.

At this point, six Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes swooped down on the squadron. Eight months earlier the Swordfish had been the only British plane capable of crippling the *Bismarck* so that she could not escape her pursuers, but *Bismarck* had had no air cover. On this dreary day Galland's Me-109s and FW-190s savaged the Swordfish. Lowering their landing gear so that they could fly slowly enough to stay on the lumbering biplanes' tails, the Germans quickly shot down every one, ending another impotent jab at the convoy.

The main danger to the German naval squadron turned out to be thousands of mines both sides had planted throughout the Channel. German minesweepers had toiled for days clearing an avenue through the fields but only had time to complete a narrow opening a half mile wide in places. Shortly after the torpedo planes attacked, a massive underwater explosion convulsed *Scharnhorst* as she strayed out of the safe corridor. As she shuddered to a complete stop, her admiral quickly abandoned her. Ciliax ordered the destroyer *Z-29* alongside and leaped from his stricken ship onto the smaller one. Assuming repairs to his flagship would be fatally lengthy, Ciliax left her in the care of her engineers and rushed to catch up with the fleet's main body.

At this point the German ships came under attack from a ragged pack of Bristol Beaufort light bombers and Lockheed Hudson medium bombers. This assault, too, came to naught as all the bombs missed. This was uncharacteristically good luck for *Scharnhorst* as the British were so preoccupied with the fleet's main body they failed to notice the stationary battlecruiser to the rear long enough for her engineers to patch her up sufficiently to resume the dangerous trek.

The German ships had reached the widest part of the Channel, off Belgium, when the Allies made their last attempt to inflict serious damage. Six World War I-era destroyers normally used only for coast patrol charged out of the mouth of the Thames River in an attempt to intercept but were mistakenly bombed by RAF twin-engine Handley Page Hampden bombers. Amazingly, all the bombs missed, and at 3:17 PM the destroyers *Campbell, Worcester,* and *Vivacious,* in a show of suicidal bravado, bore down on *Gneisenau* while the other three went after *Prinz Eugen*. When the little attackers turned broadside so they could launch torpedoes, *Gneisenau* opened up on them from the close range of 3,000 yards, wrecking *Worcester* with three salvoes while the remaining five destroyers prudently ducked into a fog bank.

As daylight waned on the frigid afternoon, *Gneisenau*'s and *Prinz Eugen*'s antiaircraft batteries and covering Luftwaffe fighters repeatedly turned back attacking bombers. Nightfall and inclement weather soon suspended all air operations. Just before 8 PM, *Gneisenau* was skirting the Frisian Islands when a mine seriously holed her. *Scharnhorst,* meanwhile, blundered into a second mine, sustaining sufficient damage to her brand new hull to drydock her for yet another round of lengthy repairs.

Two weeks after their brazen sprint so embarrassed the British, while *Scharnhorst* was having her gaping wounds welded shut, RAF bombers severely damaged *Gneisenau* while she was docked at Kiel. *Gneisenau* was towed to the Baltic port of Gotenhafen, where naval engineers tried to patch her up, but the attempt had to be abandoned because of a lack of essential materials. She never left the harbor. Three years later she was scuttled to prevent her from falling into the hands of the advancing Soviet Red Army.

Repairing *Scharnhorst* was time consuming because of the scarcity of so many essential materials. Relentless Allied air raids on Germany's manufacturing and industrial facilities were beginning to tell, and the battlecruiser's return to seaworthiness was delayed for six months. For the bulk of 1943, she and the 50,000-ton battleship *Tirpitz* rode at anchor in Norway's Altenfjord, where their mere presence prompted the jittery British to set aside a substantial portion of the Home Fleet for the sole purpose of keeping a watchful eye on the potentially lethal raiders. The Royal Navy would soon have more to do than stand idle watch.

On December 19, 1943, a Luftwaffe recon-

naissance pilot spotted a 20-ship convoy escorted by 14 or 15 destroyers and cruisers. The German high command suspected poor visibility had caused the airmen to mistake cargo-carrying vessels as warships and that the escort was smaller than reported.

On Christmas Day, *Scharnhorst* was sent out alone for the first time in her career, and bad luck struck again. Her commander was Admiral Erich Bey, who had never before commanded a ship of such size. Furthermore, because of Christmas leaves the vessel was undermanned.

Had there been sufficient available fuel for *Tirpitz* to come along, it is sobering to consider the havoc that would likely have been wrought in the Allied shipping lanes, but the Kriegsmarine had only enough fuel for the smaller warship and her escort of five destroyers.

Bey was uneasy about the severe weather. His destroyers were pitching wildly in the heavy seas, which would make aiming their guns with any degree of accuracy extremely difficult. Furthermore, their rudders and propellers were spending almost as much time out of the water between swells as they were in it, making steering a full-time, imprecise job.

In a thinly veiled plea to abort the mission, Bey radioed Narvik: "Use of destroyer weapons gravely impaired." It was ignored. The task force had to sail. Admiral Dönitz had promised Hitler a major victory at sea, and the Führer was pressuring his naval chieftain to produce. Dönitz's reply was clear and uncompromising: "The fight is not to be half finished!" However, the operation was already unraveling.

By breaking radio silence Bey had alerted the Royal Navy that something was afoot in the Far North, and the British Admiralty was determined that there would be no repeat of the previous year's dismal showing during the Channel dash. The British response was immediate, forceful, and effective.

The Germans' target was convoy JW55B, whose escort had indeed been overestimated. Concerned with providing an antisubmarine screen, the British had assigned just 10 destroyers and no cruisers to shepherd the freighters. Unknown to the hunters, however, news of their general whereabouts was spreading rapidly across the wintry North Atlantic.

Vice Admiral R.L. Burnett's force, including the cruisers *Belfast, Sheffield,* and *Norfolk,* was escorting a convoy returning empty from Murmansk. Leaving these ships in the Barents Sea, Burnett made for the trouble spot at top speed. Also, Admiral Bruce Fraser's squadron of four destroyers, the cruiser *Jamaica,* and the battleship *Duke of York* was making top speed from off the south coast of Iceland.

Worried about betraying his position, Bey was sailing blind, having turned off his surface search radar. Just before 8 AM on December 26, he was bewildered at the convoy's not being where he had expected it and ordered his destroyers to veer southwest to search for their quarry. It was an ill-advised move in such stormy weather and protracted polar darkness, for Bey quickly lost contact with the smaller ships. From that point *Scharnhorst* and her skeleton crew were completely alone.

The British had already noted this fact. The implications were clear. If Hitler was desperate enough to send out a solitary dreadnought, Germany must be in even worse straits than they had imagined. If they could eliminate this last significant, active Nazi surface raider, complete control of the Atlantic would be theirs and the end of the war would be in sight. Meanwhile, there was a Wagnerian drama to act out.

At 8:40 AM, *Belfast*'s radar detected a large vessel 17 miles ahead. Forty minutes later it was positively identified as *Scharnhorst*.

Bey was frantically searching for the elusive convoy. He had no way of knowing that Fraser had sent it north to a safer position. Suddenly, a flare exploded overhead. Six minutes later, at 9:30, a rain of 8-inch shells from *Norfolk,* firing from 13,000 yards, bracketed his ship.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: In this image from a German propaganda newsreel, the bow of *Scharnhorst* is awash in heavy seas in the North Atlantic. *Scharnhorst* did successfully attack merchant shipping and elements of the British Royal Navy during her short career. BELOW: This photograph of *Scharnhorst* was taken in the shelter of a Norwegian fjord in 1940. *Scharnhorst* and *Geneisenau* served as naval covering forces for the German assaults on the Norwegian towns of Trondheim and Narvik during the February 1940 invasion.

National Maritime Museum, Greenwhich / The Image Works

In this wartime painting, flares illuminate the night sky on the day after Christmas 1943, as elements of the British Royal Navy led by the battleship *Duke of York* surround and overwhelm the German battlecruiser *Scharnhorst,* sending her to a watery grave in what came to be known as the Battle of the North Cape. Nearly 2,000 German seamen were killed.

On the bridge, Captain Fritz Hintze had just switched on his forward radar to get a fix on his attackers when a shell slammed into the foremast, wrecking the aerial and leaving him with only aft radar. *Belfast* and *Sheffield* were also closing, so Bey turned his ship around and fled southeast at full speed, easily outdistancing his foes. Should his vessel be severely damaged and still manage to escape, there would be little hope for repair in hard-pressed Germany.

Burnett suspected that Bey would attempt to lure him a great distance from the convoy, wheel around in a great arc, and with *Scharnhorst*'s superior speed double back to the lumbering supply ships that would then be protected only by the destroyers. Moreover, Burnett realized the German raider would be virtually impossible to track down without air support, which was ruled out by the weather.

Returning to JW55B, Burnett dispatched four destroyers to aid the cruisers in laying a trap for *Scharnhorst*. Steaming 10 miles out in front of the convoy, they commenced zigzagging in front of the merchant ships.

As Burnett had suspected, Bey came at them from dead ahead just as the brief Arctic winter day was dawning about noon. Upon sighting the hostile vessels, Bey again headed southeast at top speed, this time firing on the British. The destroyers tried to get in position for a torpedo attack but were outrun.

Norfolk was severely damaged in the exchange, but the Germans were discouraged from further attempts to assail the convoy. They churned away to the southeast at 31 knots.

Some confusion surrounds the battle's final stage. Since none of *Scharnhorst*'s officers survived, there is no way of knowing why her crew failed to react to the menace of Fraser's warships approaching from the west at 24 knots, for they had been shadowed by Luftwaffe night fighters for several hours. The Germans' radio may have been wrecked in the same exchange that knocked out the radar. Regardless, Bey continued blithely straight ahead until he blundered directly into Fraser's heavy warships.

Just before 5 PM, *Belfast* scattered star shells in the inky sky above *Scharnhorst,* and 13 miles away *Duke of York* opened fire with her 14-inch guns. Unlike her sister ships, the *Duke of York* was new and state of the art, but her heavier armament gave her opponent a four-knot edge in speed. When the Germans knocked out *Duke of York*'s radar, the Nazi dreadnought had an excellent chance to escape, but Fraser, noting how Bey was swinging his ship from side to side to fire broadsides, had the *Duke of York* fire a broadside in the direction he guessed his target would next swerve. Predictably, the German ship swung directly into the path of the storm of shells.

His vessel immobilized by the barrage, Bey radioed Berlin, "We shall fight to the last shell!" German sailors transferred their heavy, 11-inch shells by hand from the wrecked forward turrets to the aft guns and desperately continued to defend themselves, but at 7:12 PM, *Belfast* knocked out the last aft turret, leaving the Germans with only two 5.9-inch cannons. These kept firing until just before 8 PM, when the stricken ship suddenly turned on end and sank bow first. This brought to an end the last traditional surface battle fought in the Atlantic.

Only 36 sailors from Hitler's last sleek gray lady survived to be plucked from the icy water by the British, but *Scharnhorst* did not take her hex with her.

Two crewmen managed to paddle a raft to a nearby island, for all the good it did them. Several months later their frozen bodies were found there. Immediately after landing, they had been killed by the explosion of their faulty oil heater. Surviving the Allies and the icy Atlantic were long shots, but there was no escaping the curse of the *Scharnhorst.*

Author Kelly Bell writes regularly on various aspects of World War II, including the naval war in the Atlantic and the land war in Western Europe. He resides in Tyler, Texas.

National Archives

INCIDENT *on the* YANGTZE

THE U.S. NAVY GUNBOAT *PANAY* WAS SUNK BY JAPANESE AIRCRAFT ON THE GREAT CHINESE RIVER, PUSHING THE TWO COUNTRIES CLOSER TO WAR.

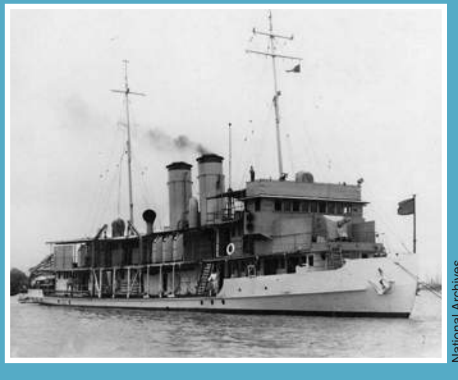
BY MICHAEL D. HULL

While America and Europe struggled through economic depression and nervously watched the spread of fascism in the second half of the 1930s, the situation was far more ominous in the Far East.

Expansionist Japan had sown the seeds of war in China early in the decade, and hostilities broke out in July 1937. By that autumn, Japanese troops were advancing. Drunken and undisciplined soldiers pillaged and burned towns and villages; civilians were captured and shot, and females of all ages were raped, murdered, and mutilated.

There were no limits to Japanese brutality; piles of Chinese bodies were even used for grenade-throwing practice. A Japanese general apologized to a Westerner by saying, "You must realize that most of these young soldiers are just wild beasts from the mountains."

Japanese troops marched into the city of Soochow in eastern China on November 19, and the roads to the great cities of Nanking and Shanghai were open to them. When Japanese units approached Nanking on November 21,



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Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's office notified the American Embassy that it should prepare to evacuate. Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson and most of his personnel left the next day aboard the gunboat USS *Luzon*. Chiang, his wife, and remaining members of the Chinese government fled from the threatened city on December 8.

Japanese diplomat Yosuke Matsuoka explained that his country was fighting to achieve two goals in China: to prevent Asia from falling completely under white domination and to stem the spread of communism.

Japanese troops soon triumphantly entered Nanking and began a month of unprecedented atrocities. They roamed the city looting, burning, raping, and murdering. Men, women, and children were "hunted like rabbits." Wounded and bound prisoners were beheaded, and an estimated 20,000 men and boys were used for live bayonet practice. Even the friendly Germans in the city issued an official report branding the Japanese Army as "bestial machinery."

The invaders were supported by a new policy ordering the sinking of "all craft on the

ABOVE: As the invading Japanese draw closer to the Chinese city of Nanking, frightened civilians crowd the city's waterfront in a frantic attempt to find safety and escape from the coming battle. The Japanese committed horrific atrocities against the Chinese civilian population.
OPPOSITE TOP: Lieutenant Commander James J. Hughes, right, captain of the gunboat *Panay*, is shown in a still frame from a film that was made on the day of the attack against the gunboat.
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The U.S. Navy gunboat *Panay* was typical of the small river vessels that patrolled the waters of the Yangtze River during the 1920s and 1930s to protect American interests in China.

Yangzi River," regardless of nationality. The aim was to leave China's principal waterway clear for Japanese operations. The order came from Colonel Kingoro Hashimoto, founder of the Cherry Society, the Army's "Bad Boy," and commander of artillery batteries along the Yangtze River. He told his men to "fire on anything that moves on the river."

To protect Western citizens, legations, and business interests, the waterway and its tributaries had been continually patrolled since the 19th century by British and American gunboats. The U.S. Asiatic Fleet established supply depots in Tsingtao, Hankow, and Canton and organized gunboats, which had been operating on the river since 1903, into the famed Yangtze River Patrol (Yangpat) in December 1919. Its first commander was Captain T.A. Kearney.

The U.S. Navy's presence in China was lengthy. In 1832, President Andrew Jackson sent the 44-gun frigate USS *Potomac* to defend merchant ships against piracy in East Asia. She was commanded by Captain Lawrence Kearny, a veteran of piracy patrols in the Caribbean and Mediterranean. Named commander of the Navy's East India Squadron, Kearny sailed from Boston to Macao and Canton aboard the 36-gun frigate USS *Constellation* in March 1842, just as the British-Chinese Opium War was ending. A skilled diplomat as well as a gallant sailor, Kearny formed good relations with Chinese officials.

U.S. Navy vessels were thereafter regularly assigned to East Asia, and in 1854 the side-wheel gunboat USS *Ashuelot* became the first American ship to patrol the Yangtze River. The Sino-American Treaty of 1858 granted U.S. warships the right to navigate all Chinese rivers and visit all ports. U.S. naval activity increased significantly after victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898, which led to the annexation of the Philippine Islands, and American naval units served in the Boxer Rebellion of 1899 when Chinese insurgents besieged the foreign legations in Peiping.

The Yangtze Patrol comprised 13 vessels, including nine gunboats, and 129 officers and 1,671 enlisted men. In addition, 814 men of the 15th Infantry Regiment were stationed in Tientsin, 528 U.S. Marines in Peking, and another 2,555 Leathernecks in Shanghai.

As revolutionary upheavals swept the country after World War I, the U.S. Navy beefed up its presence on the Yangtze in 1927-1928 by deploying six gunboats built in China and designed especially for river duty. They were the *Guam, Luzon, Mindanao, Oahu, Tutuila,* and the aging *Panay.*

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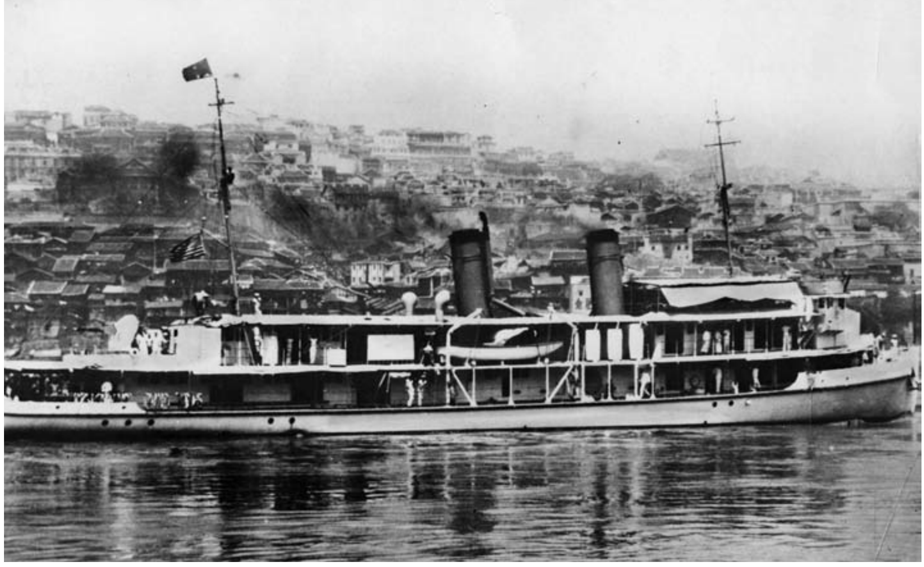


The U.S. Navy gunboat *Luzon* is shown prior to the attack by Japanese aircraft that sank the vessel in the Yangtze River in December 1937.

The British and American sailors tensely plying the great waterway faced heightened danger as Japanese aggression mounted through the 1930s. The perceptive U.S. ambassador to Tokyo, Joseph C. Grew, reported that American-run churches, hospitals, universities, and schools across China had been bombed despite flag markings on their roofs, and missionaries and their families killed. Stressing that the attacks were planned, he loudly protested the pillaging of American property.

As Japan's undeclared war intensified, focusing especially on Shanghai with its international business settlement, President Franklin D. Roosevelt warned Americans in China that they should leave for their own safety. If anything happened to them or their property, he said, "The United States has no intention of going to war either with China or Japan, but instead would demand redress or indemnities through orthodox, friendly, diplomatic channels."

The man on the spot was Iowa-born, 61-year-old Admiral Harry E. Yarnell, new commander-in-chief of the U.S. Navy's Asiatic Fleet. An Annapolis graduate and veteran of the Spanish-American War and the Boxer Rebellion who had successfully "attacked" Pearl Harbor during war games in 1932, Yarnell commanded only two cruisers, 13 destroyers, six submarines, and 10 gunboats. Yet, on September 27, 1937, he sent an order to his fleet contradicting FDR's policy.

"Most American citizens now in China are engaged in businesses or professions which are their only means of livelihood," said the admiral. "These persons are unwilling to leave until their businesses have been destroyed or they are forced to leave due to actual physical danger. Until such time comes, our naval forces cannot be withdrawn without failure in our duty and without bringing great discredit on the United States Navy." Yarnell reported his fleet order to Washington and, surprisingly, it was not countermanded by Roosevelt.

Public opinion supported the admiral's initiative, and FDR fell in line. In an October 5 speech, the president declared, "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." His listeners understood what he meant.

The uneasy quiet along the River Yangtze was shattered at 9 AM on Sunday, December 12, 1937, when Colonel Hashimoto's gun crews opened fire on the Royal Navy gunboat HMS *Ladybird*. Four shells struck the vessel, killing a sailor and wounding several others. A British merchant ship and four other gunboats were also fired on. Twelve miles above Nanking, a Japanese air attack missed the gunboats HMS *Cricket* and HMS *Scarab,* which were escorting a convoy of merchant ships carrying civilian refugees, including some Americans.

Alarmed by the attacks, Ambassador Johnson hastily composed a telegram that morning to the secretary of state in Washington, the embassy office in Peiping, and the American consul in Shanghai. Dispatched by the gunboat *Luzon* at 10:15 AM, the telegram urged the State Department to press Tokyo to call a halt to attacks on foreigners in China. Prophetically, Johnson messaged, "Unless Japanese can be made to realize that these ships are friendly and are only refuge available to Americans and other foreigners, a

terrible disaster is likely to happen."

That same morning Admiral Yarnell sent a message to the USS *Panay* ordering her to get underway at the discretion of her skipper, Lt. Cmdr. James J. Hughes. Japanese shells had been landing regularly and close to the gunboat.

At 8 AM the previous day, the *Panay* had embarked Ambassador Johnson, American officials, and some civilians and started upriver on a five-mile journey. The gunboat escorted three Standard Oil Co. barges, the *Mei Ping, Mei Hsia,* and *Mei An* and was followed by a few British craft. American flags were hoisted on the barges' masts and painted on their awnings and topsides. For two miles, moving slowly against the current, the vessels were fired on by Japanese shore batteries. But the shooting was wild, and the little flotilla was able to pull out of range without suffering hits.

The *Panay* and the barges anchored near Hoshien, about 15 miles above Nanking, at 11 AM on December 12. The berth was in a wide space that seemed secure, 27 miles away from the fighting around Nanking.

A veteran of service in the Philippines before World War I, the 450-ton *Panay* (PR-5) had been commanded in 1907 by a 22-year-old ensign named Chester W. Nimitz, later to gain fame as the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet in World War II. The shallow-draft, two-funnel gunboat was capable of 15 knots, and her crew comprised five officers and 54 men. She mounted a main battery of two high-angle, three-inch guns and eight .30-caliber Lewis machine guns of World War I vintage. The vessel was painted white and buff, and two large U.S. flags, 18 feet by 14 feet, were painted horizontally on her upper deck canvas awnings. The flags were clearly visible from the air at any angle.

The mixed crowd aboard the gunboat that morning included several newsreel cameramen who had just completed a short documentary film about the *Panay.*

The day was sunny, clear, and still. The gunboat crewmen ate their noon meal, secured, and got ready for a peaceful Sunday afternoon. Eight bluejackets were permitted to take a sampan over to the *Mei Ping* for some cold beers, and others took naps. The *Panay*'s guns were covered and unmanned.

Meanwhile, an attack force of 24 Japanese naval bombers, fighters, and dive bombers had been formed up after the Army mistakenly reported that 10 ships laden with refugees were fleeing up the Yangtze from Nanking. It was a golden opportunity for eager young Navy pilots to attack ships instead of ground targets. The enemy fliers took off with such haste that no strike plan was set up. They roared toward the river.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The Japanese Aichi D1A2 dive bomber was a biplane with fixed landing gear that was rapidly becoming obsolete by the mid-1930s. However, it was an effective weapon in the attack against the U.S. gunboat *Panay.* BELOW: During the fateful attack on the *Panay,* Boatswain's Mate Ernest Mahlmann (right) and a fellow crewman man antiaircraft weapons and return Japanese fire. Mahlmann attempts to shade his eyes to locate the Japanese planes overhead.

Suddenly, at 1:37 PM the *Panay* lookout reported two aircraft in sight at about 4,000 feet. Commander Hughes peered from the pilothouse door to see planes rapidly losing altitude and heading his way. Three Aichi D1A2 "Susie" dive bombers flew over the gunboat and released 18 bombs. Seconds later, an explosion threw Hughes across the pilothouse, breaking his thigh.

The bombs felled the gunboat's foremast, knocked out the forward 3-inch gun, and wrecked the pilothouse, sick bay, and fire and radio rooms. When he regained consciousness, Hughes found the bridge a shambles. The quiet Sunday had erupted into a day of fury, and a Universal Pictures newsreel cameraman recorded it. His film showed the planes strafing at masthead level, so low that the pilots' faces were seen clearly.

Soon after the first strike, 12 more dive bombers and nine fighters made several runs over the *Panay,* strafing for 20 minutes. She was riddled with shrapnel from near misses.

The response from the gunboat was immediate but ineffective. Crewmen tore the covers off their weapons, and the .30-caliber machine guns clattered away at the Japanese planes. The salvos were directed by Chief Boatswain's Mate Ernest Mahlmann, who fought without his trousers. He had been sleeping below decks when the attack started and had no time to get dressed.

Ensign Dennis Biwerse had his clothes stripped off by the bomb blasts, and Lieutenant Tex Anders, the executive officer, was hit in the throat and unable to speak. He wrote instructions in pencil on a bulkhead and navigation chart. Lieutenant C.G. Grazier, the medical officer, heroically tended to the wounded during the ordeal. Suffering great pain and with his face blackened by soot, Commander Hughes lay propped up in the galley doorway. There was no need for him to give orders to his well-trained crew.

The *Panay* was soon helpless in the water. An oil line had been cut, so no steam could be raised to beach her or use pumps to cope with the rapidly rising water. By 2:05 PM, all power and propulsion were lost.

While the crew strove to save its gunboat, the Japanese raiders paid special attention to the three nearby oil barges. Half a dozen planes dropped bombs, but all missed their targets. Then six dive bombers and nine fighters bore down, bombing and strafing, but the oil barges were able to get underway. The eight gunboat bluejackets who had been drinking beer aboard the *Mei Ping* helped the panicky Chinese seamen fight fires and move the vessel out of range of the Japanese onslaught.

Wikipedia Commons

ABOVE: A Type 96 carrier-based attack plane of the Imperial Japanese Navy flies above the aircraft carrier *Kaga* in 1937. Along with Aichi dive bombers, Type 96 aircraft flying from *Kaga* took part in the attack on *Panay*. RIGHT: Wounded during the attack, Lieutenant Commander James J. Hughes grimaces after being brought ashore from the stricken vessel.

The *Mei Hsia* made a valiant effort to ease alongside the stricken *Panay* and take off survivors, but Hughes and his crew frantically waved her away. They did not want the highly flammable barge alongside while bombs were still falling. The *Mei Hsia* and *Mei Ping* then tied up to a pontoon on the southern side of the river, and the *Mei An* beached on the northern bank.

Less than half an hour after the first bomb hit, it was obvious that the *Panay,* listing and settling, was doomed. The forward starboard main deck was awash, and there were six feet of water in some compartments. Commander Hughes gave the order to abandon ship, and crewmen started making for shore in the gunboat's two sampans. While two of the oil barges were being bombed and destroyed, other low-flying enemy planes fired at the sampans, stitching holes in their bottoms and wounding some of the occupants. At 3:05 PM, Ensign Biwerse was the last man to leave the gunboat.

Chief Mahlmann, still without his trousers, and a sailor gallantly returned to the gunboat to retrieve stores and medical supplies. While they were paddling back to the riverbank, two boatloads of Japanese soldiers machine-gunned the *Panay,* boarded her, and then quickly left. At 3:45 PM, the gunboat rolled over to starboard and slowly slid beneath the water bow first.

The American survivors spent the rest of that day hiding in eight-foot reeds and ankle-deep mud on the riverbank, while the enemy planes continued strafing. "Doc" Grazier did his best to make 16 wounded men comfortable. Because of Commander Hughes's wounds, Army Captain Frank Roberts, an assistant military attaché who had been aboard the *Panay,* was put in command of the survivors. His knowledge of the Chinese language and the situation ashore proved indispensable.

With few rations and inadequate clothing for the near freezing nights, the survivors spent two grueling days wandering through swamps and along footpaths and canals to seek refuge away from the river. They were treated kindly by the Chinese and managed to get word of their plight to Admiral Yarnell. They reached the village of Hoshien and were taken aboard the gunboats *Oahu* and HMS *Ladybird*.

The *Panay* was the first American vessel lost to enemy action on the 3,434-mile Yangtze River. Two crewmen and a civilian passenger were killed, and there were 43 casualties, including 11 officers and men seriously wounded.

The loss of the *Panay* and British vessels, including HMS *Ladybird* and HMS *Bee,* and the bombing of the gunboat USS *Tutuila* at Chungking made headlines in the British and American press. Outrage was widespread. Even the Japanese people and government were aghast, yet the international community failed to take effective action. Remembering the sinking of the 6,650-ton battleship USS *Maine* in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, Ambassador Grew at first expected his country to declare war. Prompt Japanese regrets and promises of reparation eventually turned away wrath.

In the Japanese capital, the government of 46-year-old Prince Fumimaro Konoye, the prime minister, was as shaken by the sinkings as were the Americans and the British. An embarrassed Foreign Minister Kiki Hirota took a note to Ambassador Grew expressing regret and offering full restitution for the loss of the *Panay.* "I am having a very difficult time," said Hirota. "Things happen unexpectedly."

The Japanese Navy high command showed its disapproval by dismissing the commander of the 38,200-ton carrier *Kaga,* who was responsible for the *Panay* attack. "We have done this to suggest that the Army do likewise and remove Hashimoto from his command," said Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the naval vice minister, who did not relish doing battle with the U.S. Navy. After spending much time in America, he was aware of the country's potential military strength. Following an investigation led by Yamamoto, the Japanese government was quick to apologize. Ambassador Grew was intensely relieved, but he wrote prophetically in his diary, "I cannot look into the future with any feeling of serenity."

National Archives

President Roosevelt called an immediate meeting of his cabinet, and Navy Secretary Claude Swanson, Vice President John Nance Garner, and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes urged a declaration of war. "Certainly, war with Japan is inevitable sooner or later," noted Ickes. "If we have to fight her, isn't this the best possible time?" FDR replied that the Navy was not ready for war and that the country was unprepared. Senator Harry Ashurst of Arizona told the president that a declaration of war would gain no votes on Capitol Hill. Senator Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota spoke for many when he suggested that American forces in China be withdrawn. "How long are we going to sit there and let these fellows kill American soldiers and sailors and sink our battleships?" he asked.

The president directed Secretary of State Cordell Hull to demand an apology from the

Japanese government, secure full compensation, and obtain a guarantee against a repetition of the Yangtze River attacks. FDR also instructed Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. to prepare to seize Japanese assets in the United States if Tokyo did not pay and considered the possibility of an Anglo-American economic blockade.

Intent on clamping a quarantine on Japan, Roosevelt summoned the British ambassador in Washington, Sir Ronald Lindsay, and suggested that the two nations impose a naval blockade that would deprive Japan of vital raw materials. Lindsay protested that such a move would lead to war but cabled London that his "horrified criticisms" had "made little impression upon the president." The British Admiralty, however, approved FDR's blockade plan. The president was resolute and briefed the cabinet about his quarantine plan on December 17.

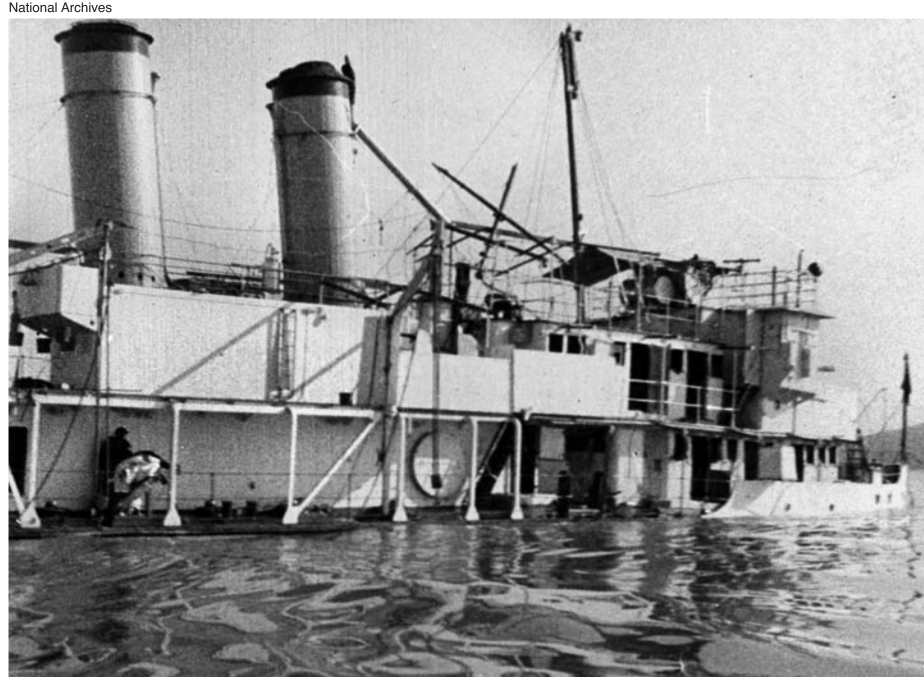
Roosevelt's stance was strengthened by a report from a court of inquiry called by Admiral Yarnell aboard the cruiser USS *Augusta* off Shanghai stating that the attack on the Panay had been wanton and ruthless. The president was also informed that a message to the Japanese Combined Fleet had been intercepted and decoded by U.S. naval intelligence indicating that the raid had been deliberately planned by an officer aboard the *Kaga*.

Foreign Minister Hirota informed Washington that orders had been issued to ensure the future safety of American vessels in Chinese waters and stressed that the commander of the force that had launched the *Panay* attack had been relieved. An official Japanese inquiry concluded that the attack was accidental and that the British and American vessels had been mistaken for Chinese. The Japanese naval aviators thought they were bombing enemy troops escaping upriver in Chinese merchant ships. Anxious to avoid a war for which it was ill prepared, the U.S. government accepted the "mistake" theory together with an indemnity.

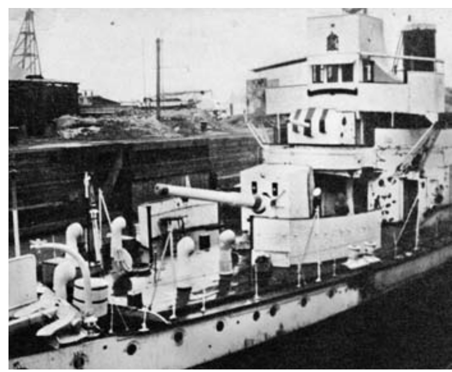
The Japanese apology arrived in Washington on Christmas Eve, 1937, and was officially accepted on Christmas Day. Ambassador Grew believed that the timing was "masterly." British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's government also gracefully accepted an apology for the sinking of HMS *Ladybird*.

Though it foreshadowed, generally unnoticed, what was to happen four years later, the *Panay* incident ended agreeably with a sigh of relief passing across America. It bolstered isolationist efforts to keep America out of war, and a Gallup poll conducted in the second week of January 1938 showed that 70 percent of voters favored a complete withdrawal from China—the Asiatic Fleet, Marines, soldiers, missionaries, medical personnel, and all.

National Archives



ABOVE: Its decks awash in the waters of the Yangtze River, the gunboat *Panay* lies helpless following the December 1937 attack by Japanese aircraft. BELOW: The British gunboat HMS *Ladybird* lies in drydock at Shanghai undergoing repairs after being attacked and seriously damaged by Japanese aircraft. One British sailor was killed and several others were wounded during the unprovoked attack.



Imperial War Museum

Eventually, on April 22, 1938, the Japanese government complied with Washington's claim by handing over a check for $2,214,007.36 as "settlement in full" for the *Panay,* three oil barges, personal losses, and casualties. Tokyo said that if the United States wanted a replacement gunboat for the *Panay* it would be glad to receive the contract. It also asked if it could salvage the gunboat and oil barges. Washington refused.

Despite the apologies and reparations, the Japanese—led by Emperor Hirohito and Premier Konoye—showed no remorse for the "China incident." Colonel Hashimoto was not reprimanded and in fact was eventually awarded the Kinshi Kinsho Medal seven weeks after the December 7, 1941, raid on Pearl Harbor. Konoye denounced the Chinese government's "anti-Japanese movement," and the offensive continued in China. Aided by heavy naval air bombardment, fresh Japanese divisions assaulted Canton and the cities of Wuchang, Hankow, and Hanyang.

While European nations appeased Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler and America clung to neutrality in the late 1930s, war was a brutal reality in the Far East. Time was running out. In January 1938, Britain and the United States signed a secret agreement to the effect that if the Japanese made any southward move the U.S. Fleet would concentrate at Pearl Harbor while a Royal Navy battle fleet would be based at Singapore. That March, Representative Carl Vinson of Georgia forwarded a bill in Congress to increase the Navy by 20 percent over 10 years. The originator of an act to bring the Navy up to treaty strength, Vinson was the Navy's best friend on Capitol Hill.

Only a few months after the loss of the *Panay,* a small-scale but shattering preview of things to come, omens of future threats were evident to perceptive Western observers. Through the spring and summer of 1938, information flowed into the Washington-based Office of Naval Intelligence from attachés in Tokyo and Berlin. The messages from each capital indicated that the Axis powers were arming but did not seek war with the United States. Some of the information received from Japan, however, was less than reassuring.

Continued on page 74

National Archives

On June 30, 1943, U.S. Army troops take cover wherever they can during the opening hours of the battle for the island of Rendova in the Solomons.

Campaign on Land & Sea and in the Air

The defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific required a tremendous Allied effort combining all available resources.

AFTER THE U.S. VICTORY AT MIDWAY IN JUNE 1942, THE FOCUS OF THE WAR IN THE Pacific moved south. While the Imperial Japanese Navy had suffered a stunning defeat at Midway, it was still on the move elsewhere, particularly in the Solomon Islands.

Japanese forces there were trying to isolate Australia from its lifeline to the United States. When the Japanese began constructing an airfield on the island of Guadalcanal, the Americans responded by landing there and seizing it. This began a months-long struggle for control of this vital island, one that ended in American victory. It was the first major engagement in the area, but far from the last.

This was the beginning of a long, grueling campaign of land, air, and sea battles in the South Pacific as the Allies began pushing the Japanese out of the territory they had seized in the first six months of the war.

Unfortunately, the herculean efforts of Allied troops in the South Pacific have often been glossed over in favor of Central Pacific battles such as Tarawa and Saipan. *South Pacific Cauldron: World War II's Great Forgotten Battlegrounds* (Alan Rems, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2014, 312 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $38.95, hardcover) goes a long way toward redressing that imbalance, systematically covering the struggle to recapture the islands on Australia's northern frontier and beyond.

The book begins with a retelling of Guadalcanal, the gateway to all that came later. American forces landed unopposed on the island but suffered greatly in the effort to capture it. Japanese naval forces roughly handled a U.S. Navy still getting its feet under it, and the terrible conditions on the ground took a toll on the defending Marine and later Army personnel. The counterattacking Japanese underestimated how many Americans were on the ground and always had trouble coordinating their multipronged attacks in the thick jungle, often allowing their opponents to deal with them piecemeal. The author notes this was a particular flaw of Japanese planning throughout the war, a consistent underestimation of enemy strength and their own offensive moves, which were complicated and difficult to coordinate.

After Guadalcanal the Allies embarked on a sustained effort to carry the war to an enemy dug in across thousands of square miles of ocean dotted with islands large and small. The Japanese had been pushed onto the strategic defensive at last, but they were determined to hold what they had, forming a perimeter around their vital conquests so these could be protected until the Allies gave up and negotiated a peace settlement. Large forces were installed in places like Rabaul, boasting a major port and airfields capable of supporting hundreds of planes. Eventually this great bastion was neutralized from the air and bypassed, but not all Japanese strongholds could be left to wither and die under air attacks. Others had to be invaded and taken.

This entailed combat in fetid jungles and dank swamps, where the conditions were nearly unbearable. The Allied forces were a mix of soldiers and Marines along with a substantial number of Australians and New Zealanders. Each component had its own style of fighting, not always in harmony with one another or the desires of various leaders, including American General Douglas MacArthur or Australian General Thomas Blamey. While the leadership generally cooperated, there was friction. By 1945, the Japanese forces remaining in this theater were beaten, neutralized beyond the capacity for effective action, and often starving. Despite this, fighting went on as the Australians in particular kept hounding the Japanese garrisons, a controversial decision at the time.

Although it covers the wide topic of an entire theater of operations, this book is thoroughly detailed, and the level of research is obvious. The occasional squabbles among the senior commanders are covered as well as notable individual and small unit actions, such as instances where a

MEN'S HEALTH

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By Peter Metler, Health Writer

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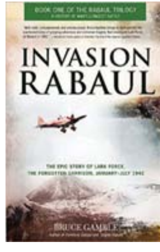
soldier earned the Medal of Honor or Victoria Cross. The real strength of this book, however, is in its coverage of an often ignored area of the war. This work places it into an easy to follow narrative that makes sense of the war in the South Pacific.



Invasion Rabaul: The Epic Story of Lark Force, the Forgotten Garrison, January-July 1942 (Bruce Gamble, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2014, 304 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $18.99, softcover)

Rabaul on the island of New Britain was under the control of Australia when the Pacific War began in December 1941. A reinforced battalion of Australian infantry was stationed to defend it in case of Japanese attack. When that attack came in January 1942, the garrison, known as Lark Force, was woefully outmatched by a Japanese force of almost 5,000 backed by a powerful naval task force. Neither equipped nor trained for such a battle, Lark Force was quickly overcome, the survivors fleeing unprepared into the jungle.

Tragically, the Australian government had no plan in place to evacuate survivors, though some ad hoc efforts did occur. A small number escaped in boats largely provided by local civilians and coastwatchers. This meant the majority of Lark Force became Japanese prisoners. Some were executed in brutal atrocities, while others were relegated to slave labor. Even worse, about a thousand of the prisoners were lost at sea when the vessel taking them to Japan was sunk by a U.S. submarine. The ship was not marked as a POW transport.

This is the first in Bruce Gamble's Rabaul trilogy, telling the story of this naval base that figured prominently in the South Pacific during World War II. The story of Lark Force is relatively unknown in America but it is a fascinating tale of the tragic unpreparedness of Allied forces and the attendant consequences. Gamble's prose is clear and easy to read, and his expertise on the Pacific Theater is well established. The second book in this trilogy was reviewed in this column recently; both are well done.

Evans Carlson, Marine Raider: The Man Who Commanded America's First Special Forces (Duane Schultz, Westholme Publishing, Yardley, PA, 2014, 280 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $26.00, hardcover)

Like many leaders of special operations units, Evans Carlson did not fit the mold of a conventional military leader. He eschewed standard hierarchies and adopted an ethos of teamwork and a shared desire to accomplish goals for the good of the group. However, these methods allowed Carlson to create an elite fighting unit capable of accomplishing extraordinary feats of endurance and courage. The Marine Raider unit he formed would go on to make a famous raid against Japanese-held Makin atoll before going on to Guadalcanal. There it conducted the famous "Long Patrol" deep behind enemy lines.

This biography of Carlson delves deep into the man and his life, highlighting the events that helped make him the leader he was. His early days in the Army and then the Marine Corps, his time spent with Chinese troops fighting the Japanese in the 1930s, and his efforts to create a commando-style unit are all covered in detail. Likewise, the controversies surrounding Carlson are evaluated. The Makin raid was used as a propaganda victory, but inside military circles there were questions about how it was conducted and whether some Marines were left behind. Carlson's unconventional leadership

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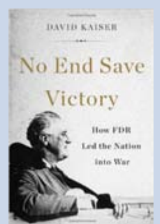
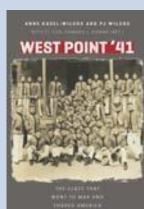
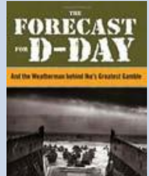
NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

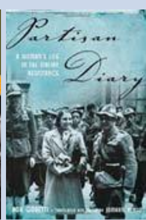
No End Save Victory: How FDR Led the Nation into War (David Kaiser, Basic Books, 2014, $27.99, hardcover) Roosevelt saw war was coming for the U.S. and was determined to prepare for it. This work shows how he worked around a reluctant populace and an unready nation to get America on a war footing.

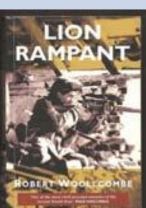


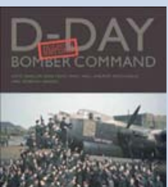
West Point '41: The Class That Went to War and Saved America (Anne Kazel-Wilcox and P.J. Wilcox, University Press of New England, 2014, $29.95, hardcover) West Point's Class of 1941 was thrust directly into combat in World War II. The service these men gave throughout their careers shaped the nation.

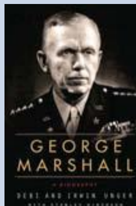












The Forecast for D-Day and the Weatherman Behind Ike's Greatest Gamble (John Ross, Lyons Press, $24.95, hardcover) James Stagg was the chief meteorologist for Eisenhower during the D-Day invasion. This is the story of how he made the most important prediction of his life.

Partisan Diary: A Woman's Life in the Italian Resistance (Ada Gobetti, Oxford University Press, 2014, $34.95, hardcover) This book provides a firsthand look at the day to day operations of Italian partisans in the Piedmont region. They had to fight both German troops and the mountain terrain.

Hitler's Last Witness: The Memoirs of Hitler's Bodyguard (Rochus Misch, Casemate Publishers, 2014, $32.95, hardcover) The author was assigned to Hitler's personal bodyguard. This memoir covers his experiences in the Nazi inner circle.

Lion Rampant: The Memoirs of an Infantry Officer from D-Day to the Rhineland (Robert Woolcombe, Black and White Publishing, 2014, $15.00, softcover) An officer's account of his experience leading soldiers in Europe, full of detail on the foot soldier's life in combat.

D-Day Bomber Command: Failed to Return (Steve Darlow, Sean Feast, Marc Hall, Andrew MacDonald, and Howard Sandall, Casemate Publishers, 2014, $34.95, hardcover) The story of the RAF's campaign during the buildup to D-Day. This book discusses the high cost British airmen paid to enable the invasion.

George Marshall: A Biography (Debi and Irwin Unger, HarperCollins, 2014, $35.00, hardcover) Marshall was an architect of American victory in World War II. This book covers the life of this great man.

World War II Album: Consolidated B24 Liberator (Ray Merriam, Merriam Press, 2014, $24.95, softcover) This is a photo book of the famous American bomber. Pictures cover every aspect of the plane from prototype to combat.

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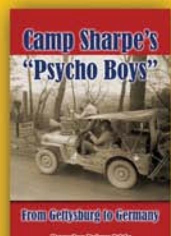
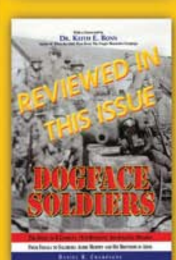
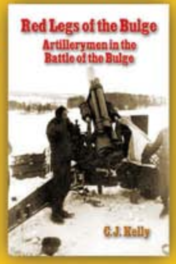


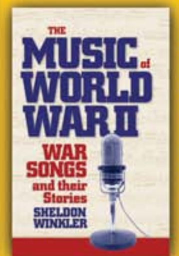
Camp Sharpe's "Psycho Boys": From Gettysburg to Germany by Beverley Driver Eddy
Drawing on company histories, memoirs, and interviews, *Camp Sharpe's "Psycho Boys"* traces the history of the men of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Companies during World War II. The story begins with the establishment of a secret camp in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and the specialized training in military intelligence and propaganda services that the men received there. We then follow these men abroad: to further training in Britain, to the D-Day landings, the Battle of the Bulge, the conquest of Germany, and the liberation of the concentration camps. *Camp Sharpe's "Psycho Boys"* is enriched with new material acquired through personal interviews and correspondence with nine veterans of the camp. Beverley Driver Eddy is professor emerita of German at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Paper, 220 pages, 37 photos. $16.95



Dogface Soldiers: The Story of B Company, 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division: From Fedala to Salzburg: Audie Murphy and His Brothers in Arms by Daniel R. Champagne. This is the story of the B Company foot soldiers—a moving and vivid account told primarily by the characters themselves, through their own eyes and their own experiences. Paper, 262 pages, 36 photos, 32 maps. $17.95



Red Legs of the Bulge: Artillerymen in the Battle of the Bulge by C. J. Kelly. This work focuses on a small, but very important part of the larger battle in and around St. Vith, highlighting the artillery units from the 106th Inf. Div. and the 333rd Field Artillery. Telling the story from the artillerymen's point of view, it sheds light on some untold aspects of the war. Paper, 184 pages, 42 photos, 3 maps. $15.95



The Music of World War II: War Songs and Their Stories by Sheldon Winkler. Tells the stories behind the origins of many of these musical compositions, some of which have survived to become standards still popular today. Paper, 126 pages, 39 photos. $14.95

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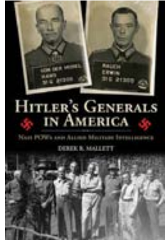
style also rankled some within the Marine hierarchy, so much so that eventually he was sidelined for the rest of the war. This book is a worthy read for anyone seeking a better understanding of this much debated officer.



Hitler's Generals in America: Nazi POWs and Allied Military Intelligence (Derek R. Mallett, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2013, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)

As World War II progressed, more and more German officers fell into Allied hands as prisoners of war. As the American military advanced through North Africa into Sicily and Italy, it began to accept the surrender of its own share of generals. Back in Germany these men were of a distinctly different social class from the soldiers they commanded. Unlike the British, who recognized this reality and acted accordingly, the Americans failed to appreciate what this meant. Thus German generals in U.S. captivity found themselves treated little better than other prisoners, while those in British hands were treated according to their perceived station, something the British used to their advantage for intelligence purposes.

As the war progressed, American leaders began to see things differently. They began to realize their nation was growing into a superpower. Also, they could see that the looming Soviet menace was waiting after the Nazis were defeated. America would need every advantage it could seize to counter the Soviet threat. So, the U.S. military began to court captive German generals, capitalizing on their vast experience fighting the Soviets. Many German generals wrote about their experiences on the Eastern Front and elsewhere, providing insight for American leaders for the coming Cold War.

The author does an excellent job showing how the American military was able to draw these enemy generals into cooperation and gather their useful insights. Interrogators had to weigh the reliability of each man's statements and watch them for signs of betrayal. Many stayed in Allied hands for several years after the war. Some were suspected of war crimes. This complex situation meant that American leaders

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

World of Diving observes war from a different point of view, while Company of Heroes 2 expands its playground.

WORLD OF DIVING
PUBLISHER VERTIGO GAMES • **DEVELOPER** VERTIGO GAMES • **PLATFORM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

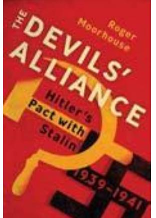
World War II games span a plethora of genres and sub-genres, but a recent content update for *World of Diving* might be one of the most unique. For the unfamiliar, *World of Diving* is a massively multiplayer simulation game, and while it falls on the casual side of things, there's still plenty to do for those thirsty for something a bit more exciting. Players start off in the Caribbean and, just as the name suggests, enter the world of deep sea diving in both single and multiplayer modes. Throughout the adventure *World of Diving* tasks you with everything from tracking and documenting peaceful marine wildlife to surviving disaster scenarios that mirror real-world situations, hunting for treasure, salvaging shipwrecks, dealing with malfunctioning and limited gear, and more. Or you could just chill and dive, hence the casual nature of the game.

If one of the main features sounds like the perfect excuse for mixing in a bit of World War II- flavored action into it all, well, Vertigo Games—the Dutch indie studio behind *World of Diving*—is way ahead of you. One of the content updates lets players discover and explore the sunken remains of German battleship *Bismarck*. As many of our readers are likely well aware, *Bismarck* was one of the two largest battleships Germany ever built and was commissioned into the country's battle fleet in 1940. Before the British sank *Bismarck* during her maiden voyage in 1941, she managed to assist in destroying British battle cruiser HMS *Hood*. An intriguing but brief life on the sea, to say the least.

Now you can fully dive into *Bismarck*, including extensive exploration of the ship's inner structure. Thankfully the update also adds the ROV (remote operated vehicle) buddy, so players won't be left in the dark while combing the depths of *Bismarck*.

For an extra intense experience, *World of Diving* supports the Oculus Rift virtual reality headset in addi-

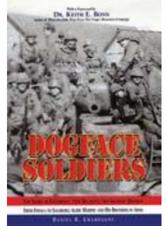
had to make difficult decisions regarding their level of trust in the German officers and their potential prosecution.



The Devil's Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin 1939-1941 (Roger Moorhouse, Basic Books, New York, 2014, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $29.99, hardcover)

On August 23, 1939, two of the greatest mass murderers of the 20th century made an agreement. Less than two years later they would become implacable foes, flinging vast armies across a continent. For the moment, however, Adolf Hitler was free to move east into a Poland isolated from Western support. Josef Stalin could focus on defeating Japan in the East and annexing part of Finland without fear of German involvement. The pact had other advantages for Germany and the Soviet Union. The two nations traded raw materials and machinery across their new border. In the end, the Nazi-Soviet Non-agression Pact strengthened both nations for the brutal war they would fight against each other.

Many today are unaware of the temporary alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II. The author wrote this book with the intent of enlightening readers about it, and he has done a commendable job, presenting the story in clear prose and fascinating detail. The numerous ways in which the Nazis and Soviets cooperated are well documented, and the narrative is structured in an easy to follow style. This book is a political as well as a military history.



Dogface Soldiers: The Story of B Company, 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, From Fedala to Salzburg: Audie Murphy and His Brothers in Arms (Daniel R. Champagne, Merriam Press, Bennington, VT, 2011, 264 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $39.95, hardcover, $4.99 in PDF format on disc by mail)

Audie Murphy is one of the most famous American soldiers of World War II, and for good reason. He was the most decorated American soldier to come out of the conflict. Though he finished the war as a lieutenant, his exploits occurred while he was an enlisted man. This makes him one of only a few soldiers from the ranks to gain lasting fame. Murphy's actions are well known. He even

tion to a standard monitor, putting you as close to all of those underwater discoveries as possible without actually heading out into the unfathomable depths yourself. As you might have guessed from the mention of "massively multiplayer," you can also play with friends, with *World of Diving* supporting up to 16 players and the option of choosing NPC companions. Team up for cooperative exploration or go head to head in arcade challenges, it's up to you.

Since *World of Diving* is constantly in development, player feedback plays a major role in how it grows over the course of its lifespan. Hopefully the addition of the *Bismarck* dive paves the way for more World War II-themed content, because it seems like a pretty fantastic opportunity for history buffs to get up close and personal with some of the period-specific wonders of war, even if said wonders eventually found themselves at the bottom of the unforgiving ocean.

COMPANY OF HEROES 2 CRACKS OPEN OBSERVER MODE

PUBLISHER SEGA • **DEVELOPER** RELIC ENTERTAINMENT • **PLATFORM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Company of Heroes 2 players recently got a treat in the form of an update that adds in some oft-requested features. First up is Observer Mode, which lets players sync up and watch live multiplayer matches,

viewing the games from a variety of angles and different speeds while switching between player perspectives. Observer Mode also grants access to previously inaccessible live data and should ultimately serve as a handy tool for analyzing strategies and learning from some of the best players *Company of Heroes 2* has to offer. Those who want to fall on the broadcasting side of things can do so through an integrated Twitch interface, opening up an already wide audience. The Observer Mode itself allows for more than 500 concurrent viewers per live match, with the ability to scale up to tens of thousands for special events.

The folks at Relic Entertainment also added in Mod Tools, serving up more creative opportunities for the ever-growing modding community. Features in the Mod Tools release include an Attribute Editor, Mod Builder, Archive Viewer, Tuning Packs, and Win Condition Packs. Now let's see what some of our crafty readers can cook up in *Company of Heroes 2*.

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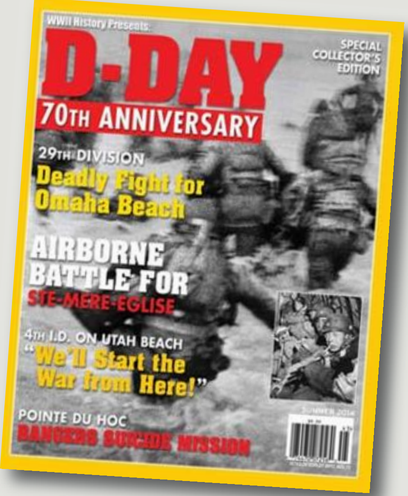

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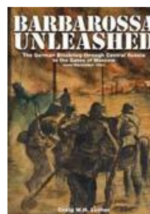
wrote his own book. Like all infantrymen he was part of a unit rather than a lone hero. This book looks at that unit, Murphy's company, the center of a foot soldier's world then and now. Company B entered the war in North Africa during Operation Torch in November 1942. The unit stayed in the war until it ended for the company in Salzburg, Germany, in May 1945. Along the way Murphy earned his honors, and his fellow soldiers stood by him through hellish combat.

This book is full of veteran accounts, anecdotes, and references to official records. Books such as this seldom fail to entertain the reader with the experiences of the men who lived the history. This book focuses well on the common infantryman.



Barbarossa Unleashed: The German Blitzkrieg through Central Russia to the Gates of Moscow June-December 1941 (Craig W.H. Luther, Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 2014, 712 pp., maps, photographs, notes, appendices, bibliography, index, $59.99, hardcover)

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union was the largest military operation in history. Millions of soldiers, tens of thousands of armored vehicles, and a like number of aircraft all came together on the western frontier of the Soviet realm. In the first six months of the offensive, Germany came as close to conquering its communist foe as it ever would. Army Group Center, carrying the German main effort, pushed from the Polish border to the very edge of Moscow before a stiff counterattack pushed it away from its prize forever.

The complexity and sheer scope of Operation Barbarossa is enough to overwhelm most minds, making concentrated study a requirement even to attain a basic understanding. This new book from Schiffer Publishing brings the entire effort of Army Group Center into one volume, which examines nearly every aspect of the campaign. It combines material from various archives with extensive veteran accounts and other writings to provide a comprehensive look at this world changing campaign. The level of detail is extensive, and the author's analysis is insightful. Aside from recounting the actual fighting, the book also looks at the role of the German Army in war crimes against both civilian and military personnel. Many German memoirs seek to provide justification for various actions, but this book avoids that pitfall while still incorporating the useful information from them. □

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Why Can't the Palestinians Have a State?

After the Arabs lost the West Bank and Gaza to the Jewish state in 1967, they denied Israel's right to exist—as well as the prospect of a Palestinian state.

When Israel defeated five invading Arab armies in 1967, it drove Jordan from eastern Jerusalem and the Jewish homelands of Judea and Samaria (later known as the West Bank) and repulsed Egypt from Gaza. Shortly thereafter, the Arab League issued its famous Khartoum Resolution: "No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with it." Since then, despite numerous Israeli offers of land for a Palestinian state, the Arabs continue to reject peace.

What are the facts?

Despite having lost wars to Israel in 1947, 1967 and 1973, all Arab nations—except Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994—have steadfastly refused to accept peace with the Jews, denied the existence of a Jewish state and rejected all offers of land by Israel for a Palestinian state.

Indeed, Israel, backed by the U.S., has made several bold, groundbreaking land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians: In 2000 and in 2007 Israel offered about 95% of the land it captured in 1967, plus a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem. In 2005, Israel also unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, leaving it under Palestinian control.

> The preponderance of evidence compels one to conclude that the Palestinians don't want a state.

Why then have the Arabs rejected peace with Israel, and why is there still no Palestinian state? In 1964, the Arab League embraced the charter of Yasser Arafat's new Palestine Liberation Organization, which held that a) Palestinians had rights to the entire region of Palestine, b) Jews who had arrived in Palestine after 1917 were occupying Arab land and c) "armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine." In 1967, following the Arabs' humiliating defeat by Israel, the Arab League issued its "Three No's of Khartoum," denying Israel's right to exist and any desire for peace.

This ingrained Arab claim to absolute ownership of all the territory of Palestine—from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea—and the absolute rejection of a Jewish state has persisted since Israel's war for independence in 1948. Indeed, when Palestinian politicians speak of ending "Israeli occupation," they are referring to Jewish occupation of present-day Israel.

Today in Palestinian public schools, students are taught that they will return to their "homes" in what is now Israel—even though these children and 95% of their parents have never lived in Israel. Palestinian news media and school books only show maps of "Palestine" encompassing all of Israel.

Likewise, Palestinians have maintained an implacable commitment to the "liberation of Palestine"—meaning all Arab and Israeli territories—*through violence*. Even the so-called moderate Palestinian leadership in the West Bank regularly celebrates "martyrs" who murder innocent Israelis. In 2010 the Palestinian government named a town square for Dalal Mughrabi, the female jihadi who in 1978 helped hijack a bus and massacre 38 Israeli civilians, including 13 children. Most recently, Palestinian leaders praised the Arab man who killed a 3-month-old Jewish baby at a train station in Jerusalem.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to a Palestinian state is the terror group Hamas. Now part of the ruling Palestinian coalition government, Hamas continues to stand—and act—on its original covenant of 1988 to "obliterate" Israel, "fight Jews and kill them," and "raise the banner of Allah" over every inch of Muslim lands. Hamas's charter also specifically rejects "so-called peaceful solutions." No wonder Hamas has launched more than 15,000 rockets at Israel and engaged in outright wars in 2008, 2012 and 2014.

Though Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has—at the insistence of American Presidents George Bush and Barack Obama—participated in several rounds of peace talks with Israel, he has been unwilling to relent on deal-breaking demands that would make peace and a Palestinian state possible. For example, Abbas has refused to back off the Palestinian demand that as many as five million Arabs—descendants of refugees from Israel's 1948 war of independence—be allowed to "return" to Israel, a land most have never seen. Most importantly, Abbas refuses to acknowledge Israel as the Jewish homeland.

When we look for an answer as to why the Palestinians can't have a state, the preponderance of evidence compels one to conclude that they don't want a state. Palestinian actions and rhetoric demonstrate in any case that they are unwilling to accept a state next to the Jewish nation of Israel.

Following World War II, the Germans and Japanese surrendered and were forced to give up lands they had earlier occupied. In return they were granted peace and sovereignty. The Arabs, on the other hand, have never surrendered, despite losing numerous wars with Israel, and they have never accepted peace. Sadly, until the Palestinians are willing to give up their quest to conquer Israel, they are doomed to unending struggle and statelessness.

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Profiles

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Carlson was kept in staff and training assignments until November 1943, when he was allowed to participate in the invasion of Tarawa as an observer. Still, he managed to involve himself so directly in the fighting that Colonel David Shoup (later Marine Corps Commandant) said memorably, "He may be Red, but he isn't Yellow."

In 1944, Carlson talked his way into joining the invasion of Saipan, once again as an observer, which did not stop him from being at the front. He was seriously wounded risking his life to rescue an injured enlisted man. He was sent to hospitals in California to recover and never saw combat again.

The war was over for Evans Carlson, and so was his career. His wounds required extensive and repeated surgery. Between that and the lingering malaria and a growing sense of bitterness and disappointment, he never recovered his health or stamina.

Then in July 1946, Carlson and the Raiders were stunned by the revelation at the Japanese war crimes trials that nine Marine Raiders had been captured on Makin and beheaded—two months after the raid. No one had known that any Raiders had been left behind. Carlson had been certain that every Raider still alive after the battle had reached the safety of the submarines.

On May 27, 1947, Carlson died of a heart attack at the age of 51. General Alexander Vandegrift, then Marine Corps Commandant, attended the funeral at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, but few others were present. The Marine Corps had made no public announcement of the service. When it was over, before the small group of mourners left, a Marine who had served with Carlson in China overheard General Vandegrift say, "Thank God, he's gone."

At great personal cost, Evans Carlson had achieved what he set out to do—create an elite special operations force that helped boost the morale of the American people when it was at its lowest point. And he accomplished this on his own terms, in his own way, in defiance of the establishment and its rules.

Duane Schultz is a psychologist and author of more than a dozen acclaimed histories, including Coming Through Fire: George Armstrong Custer and Chief Black Kettle, Crossing the Rapido: A Tragedy of World War II, *and* Evans Carlson, Marine Raider: The Man Who Commanded America's First Special Forces, *available from Westholme Publishing.*

67th Fighter Squadron

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Thompson and said, "You won't read about this in the newspapers, but you and your flight of P-400s just saved Guadalcanal." Vandegrift then slipped a bottle of scotch into the pilot's pocket, a much appreciated reward for the work he had just done.

Both Brown and Davis received Silver Stars for their role in this mission. As flight leader, Thompson was awarded the Navy Cross, one of only 11 Army Air Forces personnel to receive this decoration during World War II. Those who were there insist all three pilots deserved the Medal of Honor.

The defeat of Kawaguchi's detachment did not mark the end of combat on Guadalcanal. Twice more, in October and November, large Japanese forces steamed toward Cactus intent on evicting the Americans from their island lodgment. On the night of October 13, two Japanese battleships hurled over 1,000 14-inch shells into the U.S. perimeter, wreaking incredible destruction while transports put ashore another 10,000 Japanese soldiers. Later that month those infantrymen attacked American lines only to be stopped cold by Vandegrift's weary Marines, reinforced now by a regiment of fresh Leathernecks and 4,000 U.S. Army troops, the first of many soldiers to arrive on Guadalcanal that autumn.

Help for the Cactus Air Force arrived as well. New model P-39 Airacobras, fitted with proper oxygen systems, began replacing the worn out klunkers, while fresh-faced pilots reported to learn the dangerous business of aerial combat. In November, the Fighting Cocks joined Navy and Marine aircrews as they pounded the Japanese battleship *Hiei,* caught off Savo Island as part of a final naval offensive against Guadalcanal. Mortally wounded by torpedoes, bombs, and gunfire, the *Hiei* was scuttled—much like Japan's dream of victory in the Solomons.

While victory was still a long way off, a growing number of American aviators flying increasingly capable warplanes began carrying the fight back toward Tokyo. Yet, the 67th Fighter Squadron, battling against incredible odds in an aircraft totally unsuited for its task, can take credit for being there from the start—when guts, ingenuity, and stubborn determination began to turn the tide in the skies of the Pacific.

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer who served with the 82nd Airborne and 42nd Infantry Divisions. He writes from his home in Scotia, New York.

Panay

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An April 13 report from the naval minister in Tokyo stated, "The [Japanese] Navy is not building any super-dreadnoughts and has at present no intention of doing so." In fact, the building of the 72,000-ton *Yamato* had been started a year earlier, and her sister, the *Musashi,* was laid down in 1938. In the same report, a Japanese naval officer said, "A Japanese-American war is now out of the question." However, he further remarked that "the present world situation may lead to a war between democratic and totalitarian states, and in this Japan would oppose America in the Pacific." The officer "felt no doubt about the ultimate victory of the Japanese Navy."

A June 1938 intelligence report from Tokyo declared, "The Japanese are going places. For the present, the United States has not much to fear. But when Japan has consolidated her gains in China several years hence, a clash with her is inevitable."

In April 1938, meanwhile, Admiral Yarnell's 1932 exploit had been repeated by Vice Admiral Ernest J. King, commander of the Aircraft Battle Force, as part of Fleet Problem 14. Taking advantage of foul weather, planes from the unnoticed carrier USS *Saratoga* north of Oahu made a successful mock raid on Pearl Harbor. After each of the war games, judges concluded that if the attacks had been real they would have succeeded. However, few people took the maneuvers seriously; they were just interesting exercises.

The growing list of Japanese war crimes in China had prompted a call from President Roosevelt early in 1938 for a "moral embargo" of Japan by American arms exporters, and this was made a policy that July after the bombardment of Canton. It was the first expression of American displeasure with Japan, and it proved moderately effective.

Secretary Hull sent a long letter in October protesting Japanese activities in China, and Tokyo responded the following month. Premier Konoye declared a "new order in East Asia" whereby Japan planned to entrench its domination of Manchuria and China regardless of anyone else's "rights." East-West relations inevitably worsened, and just over three years later the Imperial Japanese Navy sent its carrier planes against the U.S. Pacific Fleet, thrusting America into World War II.

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

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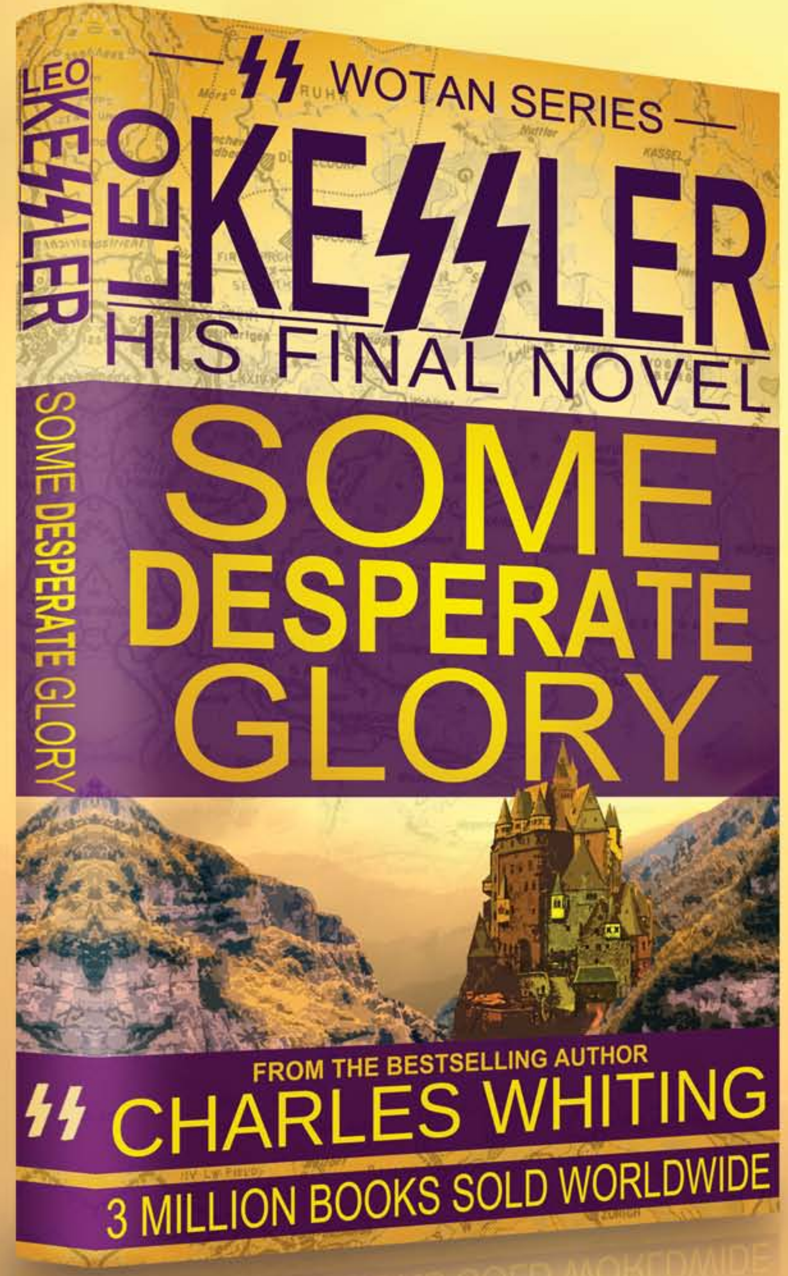

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