

1945

OPERATION 'BODENPLATTE'

On January 1, 1945, the German Luftwaffe launched a surprise attack on thirteen British and American held airfields in Belgium and northern France. Around 800 aircraft, mostly Focke Wulf Fw190s and Messerschmitt Bf109s took part in this low level attack. A total of 224 Allied aircraft were destroyed, the RAF lost 144 planes, with a further 84 damaged beyond repair. Pilot losses were minimal. On the way there and back, around one hundred Luftwaffe planes were shot down by their own anti-aircraft ground batteries whose officers were not warned of the planned assault.

RELUCTANT DRAFTEES

On January 3, 1945, the first Canadian draftees sailed for Europe from Halifax. Prior to departure, 7,800 had gone absent without leave. At sailing time 6,300 were still absent. Many of the draftees, as they boarded the ship, dropped their rifles from the gangplank into the water as a form of protest to going into a combat zone in Europe. Most of the protesters were French Canadians. Eventually, 13,000 of these draftees did go to Europe but only 2,463 managed to reach their respective units before the war ended. Of these, sixty-nine were killed in battle. Total military casualties were 39,319 dead.

ICE CREAM BARGE

Perhaps the war's most unusual ship was commissioned in 1945 at a cost of around one million dollars. It was the US Navy's 'Ice Cream Barge' the world's first floating ice cream parlour. Its sole responsibility was to produce ice cream for US sailors in the Pacific region. The barge crew pumped out around 1,500 gallons every hour! The concrete hulled vessel had no engine of its own but was towed around by tugs and other ships. A second barge, also in the ice cream business, and under the command of a Major Charles Zeigler, was anchored off Naha, Okinawa.

SPECIAL TRAIN (Sonderzug)

Hitler's private train was pulled by two locomotives and including two armoured railroad cars. The train was originally named 'Amerika' and after the United States entered the war the name was changed to 'Brandenburg' and was last used by Hitler on January 15, 1945, when he left the Führer Headquarters at Adlerhorst at 6pm and arrived back in Berlin the next day. This train was used by Hitler during the attack on Poland and during the war a total of thirteen H/Qs were built for Hitler including the underground bunker at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. The balcony was added in 1937 by Albert Speer who had just been created Inspector General of Buildings in Berlin.



The Chancellery in 1939.



The Chancellery, with balcony, in 1945.

BATTLE CASUALTIES

The 'Battle of the Bulge' (December 16, 1944, to January 27, 1945) cost the Americans 8,497 killed and 46,170 wounded. A total of 20,905 men were reported missing, most of them prisoners of war. German casualties amounted to 12,652 killed. This final offensive by Germany delayed the Allied advance by six weeks. By January 28, the line was restored to its original German starting point as at December 16. The majority of the American dead, including those from the Battle of the Huertgen Forrest, lie buried in the magnificently kept US Military Cemetery at Hamm, near Luxembourg. It contains 5,076 graves plus the names of 371 missing. The grave of General George S. Patton is also located here, the inscription on his Italian marble cross reading "George S. Patton Jnr ... General Third Army ... California ... Dec 21, 1945."



General Patton's car after the crash. This 1939 French assembled Cadillac is on display at the Patton Museum of Cavalry and Armour at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

LIBERATION

On January 26, 1945, Red Army troops liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Among the 2,819 prisoners found alive (including 180 children) were 754 Poles, 542 Hungarians, 346 French, 315 Czechs, 180 Russians, 159 Dutch, 143 Yugoslavians, 76 Greeks, 52 Rumanians, and 41 Belgians. Of these, 223 were suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. As well as the living, 536 dead corpses were found in the grounds of the camp. Most had died from hunger and pure physical exhaustion. For the survivors in the camp a new source of terror emerged as the Soviet troops set about raping the female prisoners including many Soviet women prisoners. Eighty-four days after the liberation the Red Army was in Berlin. Around 50 British Jews died in Auschwitz, most had emigrated to France, Belgium or Holland before the war.

It is not generally known but in Auschwitz a brothel was established to give incentives to those hard working slave prisoners. Block 24 was emptied and the first floor turned into a brothel. Girls were picked from the non-Jewish prisoners and forced to work in the brothel. Visits were only allowed if the prisoner had a special voucher which was issued only to those prisoners who were well and fit enough to work. No male Jews were given these vouchers.

FRENCH 'TRAITORS' BRUTALLY PUNISHED

Some 8,000 Frenchmen donned the Wehrmacht uniform and formed the Charlemagne Division of the Waffen SS. They fought so well on the Eastern Front that many were awarded the Iron Cross for their bravery and three were awarded the Knights Cross. After the war, when the survivors of the Charlemagne Division returned to their homeland, they were treated in a most brutal and inhumane fashion when the French Resistance extracted their revenge on all collaborators. During the four years after the war, a total of 118,000 men and women were prosecuted for collaboration with the Germans. Fifty thousand were brought to trial but only 791 were executed. Women collaborators, especially those who had formed romantic attachments to German soldiers were also

singled out for punishment. Many suffered the indignation of having their hair cut off and marched through the city streets to display their baldness while carrying their babies, many fathered by enemy soldiers. (See title picture at the top of the page, one of the 26,000 known cases of French women being punished for having an affair with German soldiers.) In Belgium, volunteers from the Belgian Wallonie SS Regiment were locked up for weeks behind bars in the Brussels zoo. There, they were jeered at and spat upon by members of the public.

THE EDDIE SLOVIK EXECUTION

At 10.05am on January 31, 1945, Private Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415, of Company G, 109th Infantry Regiment, US 28th Infantry Division, was executed by a twelve man firing squad from his own regiment. The execution took place in the garden of a villa at No 86, Rue de General Dourgeois in the town of St. Marie-Aux-Mines near Colmar in eastern France. Slovik, the son of poor Polish immigrants, was the only American since the Civil War to be shot for desertion. The order for the execution was signed by General Eisenhower. Of the hundred thousand or so GI deserters from the US Army, 2,864 were tried by general court-martial for desertion since the war began. Forty-nine were sentenced to death but in only one case, that of Eddie Slovik, was the sentence carried out. Colonel James E. Rudder of the 109th Infantry Regiment would later write to his men "The person that is not willing to fight and die, if need be, for his country has no right to life." The villa at No. 86 has since been demolished and three residential apartment blocks have been built on the site. The street name has also been changed. Eddie Slovik's widow died in Detroit on September 7, 1979 where she had been living under an assumed name. In 1987, the remains of Eddie Slovik were returned to the USA and now lie buried next to his wife, Antoinette, in the Woodmere Cemetery, Detroit, Michigan.

During World War I over 300 British and Commonwealth soldiers were shot by firing squad for alleged cowardice and desertion. Completely ignored was the fact that the majority of these soldiers were sick, traumatised and clearly suffered from shell-shock.

MILITARY CRIMES

A total of 49 US soldiers were hanged for crimes that were committed on French soil after the D-Day landings. In the whole European theatre of operations, 109 civilians were murdered by American soldiers. In Germany, 107 German nationals were murdered. At the same time 214 US soldiers were also murdered by their own countrymen.

In France, there were 181 reported cases of rape by US Forces. In Germany there were 552 reported cases of rape. Those sentenced to death for various crimes amounted to 443 (245 white men and 198 coloured) Only 21 per cent of those sentences of death were actually carried out. (Only one Canadian soldier was executed in WWII, the charge being murder and black market dealings.)

SHEPTON MALLETT PRISON

Britain's oldest jail was built in 1610 and used for executions up till 1926 when the last hanging took place on Tuesday, March 2. During World War II this prison in Somerset was taken over by the American Armed Forces for the executions of convicted US soldiers. An execution chamber was added to one of the prison's wings and a British style gallows was installed as the normal method of US Army hanging was not permitted in England. In all, 18 executions were carried out in the prison, 9 were for murder, 6 for rape and 3 for both crimes. Eleven of the condemned were Afro-Americans, three were Latino and four were white soldiers. Seventeen were of the rank of private and one corporal. Rape was not a capital offence under British law but was under US Military law. Sixteen of the executions were carried out by hanging, the executioners being Albert Pierrepont and his nephew Tom Pierrepont. Two executions for murder were by firing squad, the first on May 30, 1944 and the second on November 28, 1944. Shooting by firing squad was the usual sentence in the case of a soldier convicted of a purely military offence, i.e. killing of an officer or fellow soldier.

Cell No. 10 in Shepton Mallett prison was used to store some of Britain's national treasures including a copy of the Magna Carta, the Doomsday Book and the logs of Nelson's Flagship, HMS Victory.

L.M.F. (Lacking In Moral Fibre)

Lack of Moral Courage is a subject that has been largely ignored in military history records. This unique and horrendous label LMF was given to RAF bomber crew members who displayed 'cowardice' during combat and were indefinitely banished from his squadron and his flying badges taken away, a most degrading thing for the victim who showed guts on previous missions. In the Royal Air Force some 4,000 cases were classified LMF

(Later changed to 'Forfeiting The Co's Confidence') and in late 1944 around 2,000 were incarcerated in the detention facility at Sheffield. Sergeants were reduced to the lowest rank and put to work shovelling coal, peeling potatoes and in some cases sent to work underground in the coal mines. An officer was asked to resign or transferred to a desk job in administration. Many of these LMF cases had already completed a dozen or more operational raids, some even were decorated for bravery which makes any punishment unfair and unjust. No one was executed for LMF, the ultimate punishment was dispensed with many years before. After the heavy losses during the bombing of Leipzig and Nuremberg most air-crew were flying in fear although few would admit it. Most LMF case reports have somehow disappeared or have been destroyed and it is hoped that the stigma of LMF has been erased from the files.

CAMP X

Established in December, 1941, on a 275 acre farm bordering Lake Ontario in Canada, this Special Training School for secret agents saw hundreds of agents trained for secret missions into occupied Europe and Asia. Training was extremely rigorous and involved parachute jumping, hand-to-hand combat, radio operation, secret writing and use of explosives. The camp ceased operations in 1944 but continued as a secret communications facility throughout the Cold War. In 1969, Camp X was closed down and today all that remains is contained in a 17 acre memorial site named 'Intrepid Park' in memory of Sir William Stephenson, head of the British Intelligence Service (BSIS) and founder of Camp X.

JEWISH SUICIDES

Relatively few Jewish prisoners committed suicide while in the concentration camps, but after liberation, many hundreds took their own lives. The guilt they felt for being alive, while so many of their people died, was worse than the daily threat of death and torture they faced in the camps. Many survivors gave up their faith after the war and refused to believe their Rabbis who tried to explain that the Holocaust was the 'Will of God' a necessary sacrifice to the establishment of the state of Israel.

FLAG RAISING

The first US flag, the Stars and Strips, raised on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, was considered too small (54 by 28 inches) for such an important victory. Another, much larger flag (96 by 56 inches) was procured from a beached Tank Landing Ship, LST-779 and raised on the Mount on February 23, 1945, just as press photographer Joe Rosenthal took his famous picture. The two flags were preserved by the marines and are now displayed in the US Marine Corps Museum in Quantico, Virginia. The first flag raising was photographed by combat photographer Louis R Lowrey but being a less dramatic picture was never given the publicity of the Rosenthal photograph. In the bloodiest fighting of the Pacific war, 4,554 Americans were killed including 170 Navy frogmen who died attempting to clear beach defences on Iwo Jima. Japanese casualties included around 21,900 dead. (On March 16 the island of Iwo Jima was declared secure, only a small pocket of 200 Japanese were still active. The final suicidal assault by the trapped Japanese troops ended in the deaths of 196 of them.)



Rosenthal's famous photograph. Three of the men pictured were killed before the island was secured. (This photo is a re-enactment after the first flag, a smaller one, was raised.)

OKINAWA

(April 1-June 21, 1945) The only invasion of the Japanese homeland, 360 miles south of Japan. The 81 day battle for the island in the Ryukyus caused losses totalling 107,500 among the Japanese garrison. The US 10th Army casualties were 7,374 killed and around 4,600 wounded. This was the highest losses suffered by the Americans in the Pacific War. For the first time large numbers of enemy troops surrendered, a total of 7,400. The commanding general of the Japanese forces, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, committed suicide. The commander of the Japanese naval base, Admiral Minoru Ota, also committed suicide. In all, 234,183 persons were killed. This included Japanese and US soldiers, Korean labourers and Okinawa residents. All their names can be seen today inscribed on 114 stone Memorials. Just before the invasion, US forces discovered around 350 Japanese suicide boats in nearby Kerama Islands. All were positioned for attacks on Allied ships in the expected invasion of Okinawa. The US Navy lost 4,907 men and 36 ships. The ferocity of the Japanese defenders was a key consideration in the decision to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese homeland although conventional fire-bombing had killed more civilians than the two atomic bombs. (It was here on Ie Shima, near Okinawa, that American war correspondent Ernie Pyle, aged 44, was shot dead by a sniper on April 18. His grave is in the Punchbowl Cemetery, Honolulu. In the six days of fighting for the island, 4,706 Japanese troops were killed.)

OPERATION 'STARVATION'

The code name for the American attempt to starve the Japanese into submission in early August, 1945. The US Navy and Air Force blockaded Japan's inner waters and harbours by laying 12,135 mines the result of which around 670 ships of all sizes were sunk or put out of commission. On August 6 the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and the second bomb dropped on Nagasaki on the 9th. Japan agreed to surrender unconditionally on August 14. (The demand for unconditional surrender was first laid down at the Casablanca conference in January, 1943) The damage done by the bombs was greater than at first thought, according to US Airforce generals who flew a low-level reconnaissance tour over the target cities. The aircraft assembly plant at Nagoya was completely destroyed, not a thing was left. As to the Mitsubishi plant in the same area, all that was left was some concrete and steel framework. By 1945, the tremendous Allied air superiority was such that the collapse of Japan was only a matter of time and the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan on August 9 and its invasion of Manchuria next day, made it a certainty. Japanese factories, still in production were on the point of closing due to the shortage of coal. There was really no real need for the atom bombs. America's intention was to impress the Russians and so the bomb was dropped on people rather than in the ocean. (Japanese casualties in all theatres from 1937 to 1945 were 1,140,429 killed in action.)

V2 BOMBING MISSION FIASCO

On Saturday, March 3, 1945, fifty-six RAF B25 Mitchell bombers appeared over the Hague in Holland. Their mission was to bomb the V-2 rocket sites situated in the woods just outside the city. Inadvertently the bombs started to fall on Bezuenedhout, a residential suburb of the city and at least a mile from the V-2 sites. Over 3,000 houses were destroyed and 511 of its citizens killed. In all, around 12,000 people were rendered homeless. An inquiry by the RAF revealed that the tragedy was the fault of the aircrew briefing officer who had read the horizontal and vertical co-ordinates the wrong way round. The officer concerned was later court martialled and punished.

THE LARGEST BOMB

On March 29, 1945, the railway viaduct at Bielefeld, Germany, was attacked by RAF Lancaster's of 617 Squadron, (The Dambusters). The bombers were specially modified to carry the 'Grand Slam' - the monster 22,000lb (9,979kg) bomb designed by Barnes Wallace. At almost 10 tons, the Lancaster could only carry one bomb at a time. Piloted by Squadron Leader C. Calder, his Lancaster, one of the 33 converted, dropped the bomb about thirty metres from the viaduct, the resulting explosion caused powerful shock waves to radiate outwards destroying two arches each 1,100 feet in length. The bomb was the largest ever used in war, it could penetrate seven meters (23 feet) of reinforced concrete as it did on the U-boat pens near Bremen. The Grand Slam measured 7.7 meters in length and contained 4,144 kg of explosive. A total of 41 of these bombs were dropped during the war. In all, 7,374 Lancaster bombers were built during the war. (The last RAF crews to lose their lives in the war were the crews of two Halifax bombers which collided in mid-air during a raid on Kiel on May 2, 1945. All thirteen crew members were killed.)

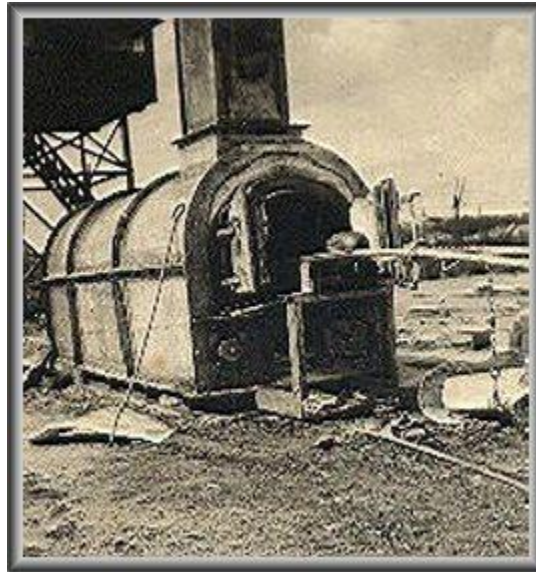
SLAVE LABOUR?

Just over 18,400 Italian P.O.W.s were brought to Australia between 1943 and 1945. Due to a labour shortage in rural areas, around 13,000 were assigned to work on farms throughout the country. Farm owners were obliged to pay £1 sterling per week to the War Office for each prisoner assigned to them. The P.O.W.s themselves received one shilling and three pence per week for their work. Food and lodging was free. Labour Unions and the Returned Services League (RSL) bitterly opposed this arrangement, seeing the use of prisoners as a form of slave labour. The RSL complained that Italian prisoners on the farms were being treated as members of the family while Australian soldiers were dying in battle in a war that Italy helped create.

BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

On April 15, 1945, the Belsen concentration camp, near the village of Bergen, north of Hannover, was liberated by British troops. Scattered around the grounds were around 10,000 decaying corpses which the troops had to bury in mass graves using bulldozers. Some of the survivors who had been transferred to Belsen from Auschwitz, stated that living conditions here were far superior to those in Auschwitz. But this was soon to change as trains bringing thousands of inmates from camps in the east began to arrive in Belsen. Conditions became catastrophic during the final months of the war as transports bringing food supplies to the camp were increasingly being destroyed on the roads and railways by Allied bombers. Gross overcrowding, inadequate supplies of food, water and medicines and an uncontrollable outbreak of typhus caused the deaths of about 37,000 inmates up to the day of liberation.

In the few weeks after the British takeover, another 13,994 died in spite of all the care taken to preserve life. Some 2,000 of these died after eating the rich food given to them by the British soldiers. On May 2, some 95 medical students from London's teaching hospitals were flown to Belsen to help treat the sick prisoners. But in striking contrast to the distorted press coverage at the time, the Belsen Concentration Camp was not an extermination facility. There was no deliberate intention by the Germans to starve the prisoners to death at Belsen (officially designated as a convalescence camp). No gas chambers were discovered and the crematorium consisted of only one furnace in which to cremate the dead. The Camp's Commandant, Josef Kramer, along with his chief physician, Dr Fritz Cline, quarantined the camp and did everything in their power to prevent the catastrophe, even appealing to higher authority for more transport to fetch vegetables and other foodstuffs from the countryside. In spite of their efforts both Kramer and Cline were executed after being found guilty at the Belsen War Crimes Trial. A total of 86 staff members, including 28 SS women guards were captured. By June 17, twenty had died, some by suicide and others from the rigours of digging the long trench graves to bury the dead bodies which the British forced them to do. These bodies were later interned in the huge mass graves that can be seen today. In the camp's cemetery lie the bodies of over 19,500 Soviet prisoners of war. By the end of the month the whole camp had to be burned down, even the timber building housing the crematorium.



The Crematory Oven At Belsen (now removed)



One of the Mass Graves (2,500 Dead) at Belsen today.



The burning of Belsen in 1945.

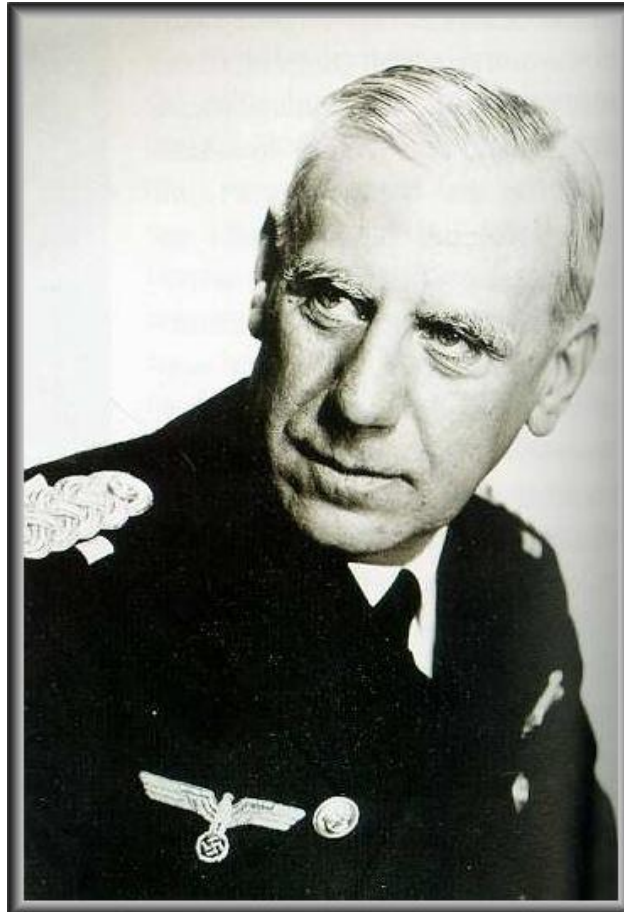


Under Guard. Joseph Kramer and Irma Grese at Celle Prison.

FLOSSENBÜRG CONCENTRATION CAMP

Situated in an isolated area close to the Czech border in north-eastern Bavaria, near the ruins of Schlossberg Castle, the site was chosen because of its close proximity to granite stone quarries where prisoners could be used as cheap slave labour. Established in May, 1938, it has often been referred to as the 'forgotten camp' having received less publicity as other Nazi camps. The twenty huts for the prisoners were built to accommodate 300 persons but by 1944 around 1,000 persons were crammed into each hut. This caused serious health problems. Tuberculosis and Typhoid ran rampant in 1944 and resulted in the deaths of around 50 prisoners each day. An estimated 300 prisoners, too sick to work, were killed by lethal injection carried out by the camp doctors. Prisoners were forced to work in winter in temperatures of 25 degrees below zero. Punishment was severe, prisoners doused in water and forced to stand until they froze.

In 1943 the camp expanded into armaments production, producing the Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane. It was here in the bunker courtyard that Hitler took his revenge for the 20th July assassination attempt. Seven of the co-conspirators were hanged including Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Hitler's Chief of Intelligence in the Abwehr. General Hans Oster the former Chief of Staff to Canaris and anti-Nazi theologian Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Canaris was found guilty of high treason by SS Judge Thorbeck and next day, April 9th, 1945, was taken from his cell and marched, naked, down a number of steps into a small secluded area where stood the six meat hook gallows. Hanged the same day were Oster and Bonhoeffer. The hangings were swift, the SS did not wait for one to die before hanging up the next victim. The bodies were then burned on a wooden pyre in the execution yard and the ashes buried in holes dug in the ground. In 1945, Flossenbürg and its 74 sub-camps held some 40,000 prisoners, 11,000 of them women. On April 16, the entire SS detachment of guards abandoned the camp leaving 1,526 seriously ill and emaciated prisoners to be liberated by units of the US 90th Infantry Division on April 23. In the week that followed some 350 of these prisoners died. Prior to liberation thousands of inmates were forced marched to other camps such as Belsen or Mauthausen and during these death marches some 7,000 died on the way. Today, the Flossenbürg Camp Cemetery of Honour contains 5,451 graves.



Unsung Peace Hero, or Unspeakable Traitor? The aristocratic, arrogant, blueblood Admiral Wilhelm Franz Canaris in his powerful heyday, before his final downfall, disgrace and unpleasant naked execution. He was a snob who despised Hitler's humble roots and his highly-placed treason did more damage to Germany's war effort than probably any other single cause. His cunning secret treachery doomed several crucial battles, particularly the absolutely vital Battle of Kursk. We will never know for sure, but it's quite possible that he single-handedly lost Germany the war.

PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE USA

On February 8, 1945, the US Army announces that there are 359,258 P.O.W.s interned in the USA. These include 305,873 Germans, 50,561 Italians and 2,820 Japanese. In all, 666 P.O.W. camps were set up in the USA during the war.

PUBLIC DOUBLE-HANGING

On February 10, 1945, in the village of Hameau-Pigeon on the Cherbourg peninsula, hundreds of black US troops were made to witness a double hanging. Two black US soldiers (Privates Yancy and Skinner) were convicted of murder and rape and sentenced to death. Among the spectators were twenty French witnesses including nineteen year old Marie Osouf, the girl who was raped and the family of Auguste Lebarillier, Maria's boy friend, who was murdered.

THE NATTER PROJECT

Forty kilometres north of Lake Constance lies the town of Waldsee. It was here at the Bachem Werke, the 'Natter' project was first developed. After years of trial and error the First Natter was prepared for launching. The Natter was a rocket powered vertical take-off interceptor aircraft which would blast its way into the oncoming bomber stream, fire its battery of 73mm anti-aircraft rockets then dive and glide back to earth and in the process jettisoning the forward part of the craft, including the pilot, and parachuting to the ground. On March 1, 1945, watched by its inventor, Erich Bachem, the first manned rocket powered Natter blasted off from the Heuberg Military Training Area near Bachem. After some 55 seconds the BA 349 Natter crashed killing

its pilot, Lt. Lothar Seiber. He became the first man ever to take off vertically from the ground under rocket power. As the Allied armies were approaching Bachem the Natter project was cancelled for the time being and no further tests were carried out.

BREAKOUT

Near the town of Bridgend in the south of Wales stood the Island Farm 'Prisoner of War Camp 198 for German P.O.W.s. It was originally built to house workers at the huge Ordnance factory nearby. During the night of March 10/11, 1945 an attempt was made by the prisoners to escape. Using a 60 foot tunnel which had been dug during the previous three months from Hut 9 near the fence, some 72 prisoners managed to get out of the camp. Police, Army, Home Guard and civilians were mobilised and the area around the camp was subjected to a vast search. Even children joined the search equipped with toy rifles made from broom handles. Eleven prisoners were recaptured within a few hours. Their intention was to reach the sea at Swansea and steal a boat then sail to neutral Ireland. By March 16, all the rest were recaptured. (Sixty years later the tunnel was reopened in the presence of a number of former inmates who travelled to Wales for the opening celebration.)

OPERATION 'CARTHAGE' (March 21, 1945)

At the request of the Danish resistance movement, a force of RAF Mosquitos from 487, 464 and 21 Squadrons of 140 Wing, escorted by Mustangs of Fighter Command, attacked the Gestapo Headquarters in Copenhagen. The Gestapo had taken over the five storey Shell House, the pre-war H/Q of the Shell Petroleum Company. On the day of the raid it housed a large number of Danish resistance fighters who had been arrested and were being interrogated as the first bombs fell. Some prisoners were killed but 30 escaped during the bombing. Some 151 Gestapo agents and their Danish collaborators were also killed.

Although the raid was a success, a horrific tragedy occurred nearby. One of the Mosquitos, on its bombing run, struck a light mast in the railway goods yard, veered to the left and crashed in a ball of fire near the Jeanne d'Arc Catholic School. The fire and smoke from the crash was mistakenly targeted by the next wave of Mosquitos which dropped their bombs on and around the crash site. The resulting fires soon spread to other buildings and eventually engulfed the school which burned to the ground in less than two hours. Eighty-six children and ten teachers lost their lives in this tragedy and sixty-seven were injured. When rescuers reached the school cellars they found the bodies of forty-two children huddled together. They had all drowned in water from the firemen's hoses.

SAFE BET

On March 27, 1945, Argentina declared war on the Axis powers, thus bringing the number of countries fighting against the Axis to 53. Another latecomer was Turkey who remained neutral through most of the conflict but declared war on Germany in January, 1945. This was followed by Paraguay on February 8, Egypt on February 24, Lebanon on February 27, Saudi Arabia on March 1 and finally Finland on March 3.

ANTI-RED

On March 27, 1945, sixteen prominent anti-communist Poles were invited to a conference with Russian officials to discuss political matters. All were arrested on arrival, sent to Moscow and imprisoned. Thus, the mighty Soviet Union eliminated the last vestige of anti-communist leadership in Poland.

END OF AN ERA

On March 29, 1945, the British Empire Air Training Scheme was officially ended. Training schools were located in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Southern Rhodesia. Trained in these schools were 168,662 aircrew including 75,152 pilots, 40,452 navigators, 15,148 bomb aimers and 37,190 other miscellaneous aircrew categories, many of whom were trained in South African Air Force schools.

RADIO WERWOLF

On April 1, 1945, the German station 'Radio Werwolf' began broadcasting for the first time from a special transmitter in the town of Königswusterhausen, not far from Berlin. It was created by Propaganda Minister Goebbels to rally the population to suicidal resistance. Its theme, repeated over and over again was "Besser tot als rot" (Better dead than red).

TANK PRODUCTION

Towards the end of the war, the German firm of Krupp was producing more tanks than it did in previous years. This was proof that Allied bombing had failed. However, production had to stop because of the bombing of the German rail network. There were simply not enough trains to transport the tanks to the fronts.

GERMAN KAMIKAZES

On April 7, 1945, the first German kamikaze attacks on Allied aircraft took place west of Hannover. Driven by desperation, the volunteer pilots in their ME-109s fired their cannons at point blank range into a stream of American bombers and then ramming them. Twenty-three bombers were destroyed this way and another twenty-eight shot down by the escorting jet fighters during the battle. On the eastern Front, twelve Luftwaffe pilots, led by Rudolf Escherich from the Fighter Squadron Udet volunteered to form a suicide mission to crash their planes into bridges spanning the river Oder. The mission was a failure, many of the planes being shot down before they reached the target and others failed to find the bridges as the area was blanketed with smoke. With the Red Army across the Oder, further suicide missions were abandoned.

JAPANESE KAMIKAZES

The destruction by Japanese suicide planes was considerable. Thirty-four ships from destroyers down were sunk and 288 ships damaged including 16 aircraft carriers, fifteen battleships, eighty-seven destroyers and twenty-eight minelayers. From their initial flights on October 25, 1944, until the end of the war, 1,228 suicide pilots plunged to their deaths in a final act of desperation to stop the Allied invasion of their homeland.

BOMBER WING KG-200.

A top secret wing of the Luftwaffe commanded by bomber ace Werner Baumbach. It was within this wing that the Luftwaffe established its own suicide (kamikaze) units. In February, 1944, KG-200 was responsible for all strategic and covert aerial missions. Operational orders came direct from Hitler's own intelligence service, the S.D. Many of the planes flown by KG-200 were captured Allied aircraft such as the American B-17 and B-24. These were given Luftwaffe markings and colours. But not all, some retained their original Allied markings and colours which completely fooled Allied pilots and ground ack ack gunners. The most secret weapon of KG-200 was the MISTAL bomber, usually a Junkers 88A with four tons of explosives packed into the cockpit. Mounted on top of the bomber was a Messerschmitt BF 109F fighter, both planes controlled by the pilot of the 109F. The bomber was aimed at its target before release. They were intended to destroy bridges over the Elbe and Oder rivers thus delaying the Soviet advance on Berlin. However, though some bridges were attacked, in the end they proved to be a dismal failure.

TREASURE TROVE

The Kaiseroda Salt Mine at Merkers, north of Frankfurt, gave up its secret to the men of the 358th Infantry Battalion of the 90th US Infantry Division on April 8, 1945. Under shaft No. 3 and 1,600 feet below ground, the American soldiers discovered a veritable treasure trove. Among the hundreds of kilometres of tunnels and chambers they found in vault No. 8 almost the entire gold and currency reserves of Hitler's Third Reich. More than 700 numbered sacks were stored, each containing between 55 lbs and 81 lbs of gold bars and coins, laid out in twenty rows. Currency to the value of \$241,113,302 was also found in sacks in vault No. 20, this included 110,000 English pounds and in 711 sacks were US twenty dollar gold coins, \$25,000 to a sack. In addition to this treasure, SS loot stolen from the occupied countries of Europe was also stored here. This included over 1,000 paintings, objets d'art and 189 boxes and suitcases filled with coins, jewellery and silverware. In one vault were over two million books including the Goethe library from Weimar. The removal of this treasure, estimated at 400 tons, involved the use of thirty 10-ton trucks to transport the hoard to the American Exchange Depository building on the Adolf Hitler-Allee in Frankfurt.(The city of Frankfurt was captured on March 29, 1945, by the US 5th Division. During the war it had suffered 5,559 dead in Allied air raids.)

INTERNMENT CAMP KETSCHENDORF

Established in April, 1945, by the Soviet occupation forces near the village of Ketschendorf in Furstenwalde south-east of Berlin and named 'Special Camp Number 5'. It housed internees who were arrested or kidnapped by the Russian military forces. No reason was given for the arrests, they were simply taken away and disappeared. Many were teenage boys who were never seen again by their parents. At first the prisoners were primarily members of the Nazi Party and members of the SS. Parents of the teenage boys arrested were also

suspected of being Nazis. In November, 1945, months after the war had ended, there were still 9,395 persons interned in Camp Ketschendorf. During this time it is believed that over 5,000 internees died due to the catastrophic conditions under which they were forced to live. During 1952 and 1953 the site was being developed by the civil authorities and many mass graves were discovered. Around 4,500 bodies were exhumed and reburied in a mass grave at Halbe. Another camp 'Special Camp Number 2' was set up in the former concentration camp at Buchenwald. It held 28,000 internees, 7,000 of whom died from neglect and hunger. These camps were unknown to the outside world till years after the war.

WRONG LISTING

On April 25, 1945, patrols of the US 69th Division's 273rd Infantry Regiment first made contact with the Soviet Forces in the village of Leckwitz on the Elbe river. The nearby village of Torgau has been incorrectly reported as the first meeting place (it was in fact the second) and as such is mentioned in nearly all official history books.

FIRST HELICOPTER RESCUE

In April, 1945, Captain James Green of the US Army Air Force, became the first person in history to be rescued by a helicopter. While searching for a downed transport plane in the Naga Hills in Burma, the light plane in which he was flying ran out of fuel and crashed in the jungle. A week later a search team reached the crash site to find Green barely alive. Badly injured, he could not be carried out. Back at the airfield at Shinbuiyang a small Sikorsky helicopter was available and the pilot, Lieutenant R. Murdock, decided to attempt a rescue. Barely clearing the mountains, the helicopter managed to land and airlifted Captain Green to safety.

It was not until the Korean War that the helicopter fully came into its own.

ARCHIVES

On April 17, 1945, a special team of American Intelligence agents searched a castle in the Hartz mountains belonging to Baron Witilo Griesheim. In room after room the agents found, staked in piles, hundreds of thousands of documents representing the entire archives of the German Foreign Ministry. Some documents dated from 1871. When the war ended, it took a fleet of over one hundred trucks to transport the archives to Berlin. The complete records of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry were uncovered in a salt mine, 1,300 feet underground, near Graslleben. In a room in the Hotel Kyffhauser in Sangerhausen, were found the SS Marriage Bureau Files. The Bureau was responsible for investigating the background of all SS personnel and their brides to be. Permission was granted only to those who could prove to be one hundred per cent pure 'Aryan'.

WELCOME TO LEIPZIG

The task of capturing the German city of Leipzig was given to the US 2nd Infantry Division and the US 69th Division. The commander of Company G of the 2nd Division's 23rd Infantry was Captain Charles B. MacDonald. The city surrendered on the 20th of April, 1945 without much of a fight. As the troops entered the city they were surrounded by teeming crowds of civilians and thousands of armed Wehrmacht soldiers, British and American prisoners of war who were on work detail in the town and thousands of slave workers. The chief of the city's police, General von Grolman, welcomed them with a generous supply of cognac and champagne. Captain McDonald returned to his battalion headquarters for further orders which were to pull his men out from the city. He drove back to Leipzig once more to negotiate the surrender only to find a real binge was taking place, his men now in an advanced stage of intoxication and were really whooping it up with the city's fairer sex. Disappointment followed when they sobered up to find the US 69th Division (General Reinhardt) had entered the city from the south-east and claimed the kudos for capturing the town. But not everyone was happy that April day. In his office in the Town Hall, Alfred Freyburg, the town's mayor, was found seated at his desk, dead. His wife and daughter sat opposite on armchairs, both dead from poison each had taken. Next door, the city's treasurer, Dr Kurt Lisso, sat slumped on his desk while nearby on a sofa lay his wife and 20 year old daughter. In an adjoining room the body of Walter Dönnicke, the commander of the local Volkssturm, lay dead. All had committed suicide. (As Leipzig lay in the future Russian Zone of Germany, the city was handed over to Soviet troops on July 2, 1945. The Soviet occupation would last for the next 44 years.) During this 'Cold War' period, for some obscure reason, the Goosestep (Prussian Paradeschritt) was retained by the East German Army until disbanded in 1990.



The suicide of Dr Kurt Lisso and family.

OPERATION 'MANNA'

On April 29, 1945, aircraft of No 153 Squadron and 622 Squadron of RAF Bomber Command, began dropping food parcels from a height of 400 feet to the starving Dutch civilians. In the cold winter of 44/45, the 'Hunger Winter' as the Dutch call it, northern Holland and the heavily populated cities in Western Holland was still under German occupation. Around 18,000 of the elder, sick and young had died through sickness and lack of sufficient food. Churchill had written on April 10th, 'I fear we may soon be in the presence of a great tragedy'. In Amsterdam, residents tore out the floors, window frames and doors of the houses which were left empty after the Jews were deported to the East and used the wood to fuel the fires in their unheated homes. The first food drop (284 bags) was over Ypenburg, near the Hague, subsequent drops were on the Dundigt Racecourse. Before the food-drop operation began an agreement was reached whereby German anti-aircraft units would not fire on low flying aircraft dropping food. This was agreed to by the then Reich Commissioner for the Netherlands, Artur Seyss-Inquart, who was later found guilty of participating in the deportation of Jews. (He was hanged at Nuremberg on October 16, 1946) Over the next ten days the squadron flew 111 sorties, dropping 7,029 tons of the much needed food. Soon, on May 2nd, the US 8th Army Air Force with their B-17s joined in the rescue operation dropping a further 4,155 tons. In Holland today, the 5th of May is celebrated as Liberation Day. It is estimated that about 50,000 Dutch civilians died during the war because medical help and food was not available.

THE COST

The liberation of Holland cost the lives of over 50,000 Allied soldiers. Altogether 4,500 Dutch soldiers died for their country as did 258 P.O.W.s who died in German prison camps. At sea, a total of 1,500 Dutch sailors lost their lives and 104,000 Dutch Jews were exterminated. Some 23,000 citizens died in air-raids and over 5,000 died in concentration camps. Of the half million men transported to Germany as slave labour, 30,000 never returned. Executions and massacres claimed over 2,800 victims, 19 of whom were women. In all, 237,300 Netherlanders perished during the Nazi occupation. This does not include the 10,000 Dutch pro-Nazis who died fighting on the German side. About 25,000 Dutchmen were pro-Nazi and fought for Germany. Although many Dutchmen fought bravely on the Allied side it is a sad fact that more went into battle wearing the field grey uniform of the enemy than in the British khaki.

GRAND THEFT IN HOLLAND

The loot the Germans transported back to the Reich from Holland was staggering:

- 13,786 metal working machines
- 2,729 textile machines
- 18,098 electric motors
- 358 printing presses
- 31 dredgers
- over 7,000 barges
- 90,000 lengths of railway line and a half million sleepers
- over 60,000 motor cars, 40,000 trucks and 25,000 motor bikes
- 154,647 kilos of Dutch gold disappeared into the Reichsbank's safes in Berlin
- 320,000 cows, 472,036 pigs and 114,220 horses.

A total of 346 works of art were also stolen including 27 Rembrandts, 12 Hals, 47 Steens, 40 Rubens and 12 Van Goghs. Most of these paintings were recovered after the war.

tunnel FLOODING

In the early morning of May 2, a group of sappers from the SS Nordland Division, part of Steiner's 11th SS Panzer Army, were sent into the U-Bahn and S-Bahn rail tunnels in Berlin directly under the Landwehr Canal near Trebbinestrasse. Demolition charges were fastened to the ceiling of the tunnel, the ensuing explosion blasting a large chunk out of the reinforced concrete roof allowing the canal waters to rush in and flooding over twenty kilometres of tunnels up to a depth of one and a half metres. Thousands of civilians and wounded soldiers were sheltering in the tunnels as well as several train carriages acting as hospital trains packed with wounded. In the S-Bahn tunnel under the Anhalter railway station, the Munchenberg Panzer Division had set up its temporary command post. As the water rose to over a metre and a half those sheltering there panicked, trampling others underfoot while overhead heavy fighting continued. Casualties were impossible to determine as many could have already died from their injuries in the underground dressing stations set up in some of the tunnels. At the time it was thought that thousands had drowned but a recent, more conservative, estimate puts the death rate at around the 100 mark. Fifty bodies are known to be buried in the Jewish Cemetery on the Gross Hamburgerstrasse.

GRAND THEFT IN BERLIN

Berlin fell to the Russians on May 2, 1945. A Major Feodor Novikov of the Red Army ordered the vaults of the Reichsbank to be opened. Still in the vaults were 90 gold bars worth 1.3 million dollars and gold coins worth 2.1 million dollars. Also 400 million dollars worth of negotiable bonds. Major Novikov ordered the vaults locked and demanded the keys. Shortly afterwards the entire contents of the vault disappeared. The gold was never seen again, but the bonds keep turning up even today all over the world! Another six and a half tons of gold, recovered from Ribbentrop's castle 'Schloss Fuschl' near Salzburg and turned over to the US Army on June 15, 1945, also disappeared and no records of it being received at the Frankfurt US Foreign Exchange Depository can be found. In 1945 it was worth over seven million dollars. Much of the gold recovered by the Americans was re-melted and in the process all hallmarks, Nazi symbols and identification numbers, were erased.

OPERATION OVERCAST

Code name (later changed to Paperclip) for the project which involved the search and capture of the Peenamunda V2 rocket scientists and technicians who were now working in the tunnels at Nordhausen in the Hartz mountains. All the Peenamunda documents relating to the design and construction of the V2 rockets were hidden in an abandoned mine near the village of Dörten not far from Nordhausen. The documents, when found by the Americans, weighed around fourteen tons. Six trucks with trailers were needed to transport the hundreds of boxes of these documents to the docks at Antwerp for shipment to the US. Also shipped were about 100 partly assembled V2 rockets found in the tunnel workshops. The Russians were also searching for these technicians and put out an offer of 50,000 Reichsmarks to Wernher von Braun to entice the expert to come over to the Soviet side.

VOLUNTARY SURRENDER

While the Russians were looting Berlin an anti-tank unit of the US 324th Infantry Regiment was patrolling a remote area in the Austrian Tyrol when they encountered a lone civilian pedalling towards them on a bicycle. He introduced himself as Mangus von Braun, brother of Wernher von Braun and said that his brother and a team of V2 engineers were billeted in a hotel up ahead and wanted to surrender. All were taken into custody including

around 500 other Peenemunda technicians who were rounded up in next few days. All were incarcerated in a German military barracks in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. On September 29, 1945, von Braun and six other specialists arrived in the US as 'Wards of the US Army'. On December 2, another fifty-five specialists arrived and by February, 1946, the total number of V2 men in the US had reached 115. By May, 1948, a total of 492 German specialists plus 644 of their dependants had been evacuated to the USA. The first V2 missile was test-fired on March 14, 1946 and on June 28 of that year an upper-air research V2 soared to a height of sixty-seven miles. This successful launch by the Peenemunda team contributed greatly to the start of the American missile program which eventually put a man on the Moon.

OUR ALLIES (May 3, 1945)

On this day the British 6th Airborne and the US 7th Armoured Division captured the north German town of Wismar. The actual capture was carried out by men of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. Just outside the town were the Russian front lines from where drunken soldiers, fuelled by a mixture of vodka and rocket fuel, were flocking into town in search of wine, women and song. The main hospital in Wismar was now occupied by the Paras. That night, a group of Russian soldiers approached the main gate of the hospital and demanded that all German nurses be brought out. Told that no women were here they pushed the sentry aside and entered the courtyard. A half dressed Para poked his head out of a window and shouted 'They are our girls, get lost'. Suddenly a shot rang out followed by the rattle of a British Sten-gun. The drunken Russians scattered as shooting broke out on both sides. It was all over in minutes, the Russians retiring to their own lines. In the cobbled courtyard of the hospital lay the bodies of six dead Soviet soldiers.

BLIMPS

The forgotten warriors of World War II, known as Blimps, there were about 15 Squadrons of these LTAs (Lighter Than Air) in operation when the war ended. They were a most dependable and effective defence against submarines. Around 35,600 operational flights were made over the Atlantic, 20,300 in the Pacific area. No ship escorted by a Blimp was ever sunk. Only one Blimp was reported lost. On the night of July 18, 1943, it engaged an enemy submarine on the surface in the Caribbean. It was brought down by the submarine's gunfire but all the crew were rescued next day. Squadrons of these Blimps continued service in the US Navy after the war until the 1960s when they faded from the scene.

VICTIMS (May 5, 1945)

The only US citizens killed by enemy bombs were a woman and five children. They died in Lake View, Oregon, when they picked up a bomb that was carried across the Pacific by balloon from Japan. The Rev. Archie Mitchell, minister of the Christian Alliance church in Bly, his wife and five children, aged between eleven and thirteen, were hiking through the Fremont National Forest looking for a picnic spot when one of the children picked up something that looked like a large balloon. They started dragging it from the wood when the attached bomb exploded. When Rev Mitchell caught up with them he found his wife and the five children all dead. Hundreds of these balloons, 25 feet in diameter, were launched against the USA and Canada but only 290 actually landed.

LAST SURRENDERS

The last Wehrmacht soldiers to surrender were a small company on the tiny Channel Island of Minquiers and a group of eleven soldiers on the island of Spitzbergen. A French fishing boat, skippered by Lucian Marie, approached the island of Minquiers and anchored nearby. A fully armed German soldier approached and asked for help saying "We've been forgotten by the British, perhaps no one on Jersey told them we were here, I want you to take us over to England, we want to surrender." This was on the 23rd of May, 1945, three weeks after the war ended!

Under German occupation since June 30, 1940, the German garrison surrendered the Channel Islands on May 9. This was the only British home territory occupied by the enemy. On a tiny outpost of Hitler's Third Reich, eleven German soldiers and naval marines maintained a top secret weather monitoring station on an isolated part of the east island of Spitzbergen, code name, 'Operation Haudegen'. Although they were told that the war had ended on September 4, 1945, nothing was done to fetch them back. They survived on canned food and by shooting polar bears until their distress calls were picked up by the Norwegians. A seal-hunting ship was sent to their rescue. It arrived on September 4 and its captain accepted their surrender, four months after the war had ended!

STRIKE

VSM24125769 - GPFARS

British reluctance to sack top Nazi officials in the Ruhr coal mines was the cause of a strike by German coal workers in September, 1945. The coal workers simply refused to work along side them. These former Nazi overseers, whose brutal methods caused the deaths of many slave workers as well as German miners, were eventually sacked. Coal production in the Ruhr immediately increased.

LIGHT UP

On May 28, 1945, all British and American merchant ships on the Atlantic and Indian oceans were now allowed to show their full navigation lights and need no longer darken ship. Convoys were abolished. These conditions did not apply to the Pacific theatre.

'FLYING BOMB' CASUALTIES

In the first four months of 1945, 1,275 persons were killed and 2,578 injured from V1 and V2 attacks on Britain. On the 27th of March the last V2 rocket fell on London killing 127 people and wounding 423.

TOKYO RAID

The most destructive air raid of the war was against Japan's capital city, Tokyo. During the night of March 9/10, 1945, 1,665 tons of napalm-filled bombs was dropped on the city from 279 US B-29 bombers. The death toll was greater than that at Hiroshima or Nagasaki, the official count being 83,793 Japanese killed in the 30 minute raid. Another 41,000 were severely injured or burned. Fourteen B-29s were lost. The Allied air attacks on Tokyo destroyed 15.8 square miles of the city. As of July 1, 1945, only about 200,000 residents of Tokyo remained in the city, all others had been evacuated to safer areas. Japan lost 658,595 lives as a result of conventional and atomic air raids.

TOKYO ROSE

Iva Ikuko Toguri, an American citizen with Japanese parents. War broke out when she was visiting her parents in Japan and she decided to stay on and work for the Japanese Broadcasting Company. She was given the name 'Yokyo Rose' by the GIs who listened to her radio show. Although she never used the nickname she introduced herself as 'Orphan Ann' during her 'Music for You' segment on Radio Tokyo's English-language 'The Zero Hour'. There were more than one Tokyo Rose, American GIs branded all female radio broadcasters with the name and there were at least a dozen but she was the only one persecuted. After the war she was wrongly convicted of treason and after spending some time in prison (about six years) she was pardoned by President Gerald Ford in 1977. Iva Toguri died in September, 2006, in Chicago. She was 90.

JAIL BREAK

Richard Sakakida was a native of Hawaii and son of Japanese parents. As a naturalized American he joined the C.I.C. (US Counter Intelligence Corps). Sent on a secret mission to the Philippines, he was taken prisoner when the Japanese invaded that country. While working for the enemy as an interpreter, he was able to arrange meetings with the guerrilla forces. Their leader, Ernest Tupas, and many of his followers were locked up in Muntinglupa prison in Manila. Sakakida and a group of guerrillas, dressed in Japanese uniforms, entered the prison and overpowering the guards, released Tupas and nearly 500 of his followers, most of whom fled to the mountains to continue their guerrilla activities. After the war, Richard Sakakida was awarded the US Bronze Star for his part in one of the greatest jail breaks of the war.

P.O.W. TRAIN DISASTER (July 16, 1945)

A few weeks after the war ended, a US military freight train carrying tanks crashed into the rear of a train carrying German prisoners of war. The P.O.W. train had stopped due to an engine breakdown and the US train carrying the tanks had been given a signal by the American signalman to proceed despite the track ahead being blocked. On the P.O.W. train, 96 German soldiers were killed and six killed on the US train. This happened at Assling, near Munich and was Germany's worst rail disaster in the previous fifty years.

FORGOTTEN PRISONERS

The repatriation of Italian P.O.W.s from Russia took place between September 1945 and March 1946. A total of 10,087 were released from the Soviet camps where many had died. Twenty-eight of the prisoners were

considered 'Fascist War Criminals' by the Soviets and unjustly accused of the most horrendous crimes. They were detained for a further twelve years and only after the death of Stalin in 1954 were they released. One prisoner, Father Giovanni Brevi, kept a diary in which he listed all the names of prisoners who died in the camp. Alongside each name he added the cause of death; starvation, torture and shooting etc.

INTERNEES

During the Pacific war, 291 American airmen were interned in the Soviet Union. They were the crews of 37 planes which had to make emergency landings on Soviet soil after bombing operations over Japan. All were interned in a camp near Tashkent from which most of them 'escaped' to Teheran in Iran. The dilemma these prisoners created for the Soviets was that under international law, a neutral country during wartime (the Soviet Union and Japan were not at war) was prohibited from releasing combatants from belligerent countries who came into their custody. The so-called 'escapes' were secretly negotiated between the US and the Soviet Union. (In spite of its neutrality treaty with Russia, the Japanese military contemplated an attack on Russia from the east but in one of the most fateful decisions of the war decided instead to intensify their push south into Indonesia.)

DENMARK'S SHAME

As the war drew to its close, between 200 and 250 thousand German refugees fled to Denmark from the advancing Red Army. Six months after the war ended, Dr. Kirsten Lyloff became curious as to the great number of babies and children's graves in a cemetery at Aalborg where she used to live and practice. The refugees, mostly women and children, were at first housed in schools and local halls until later in 1945 around 142 camps were set up for them. Danish civilians were forbidden to have any contact whatsoever with the refugees. Dr. Lyloff discovered that by the end of 1945, 13,492 refugees had died in the camps. This included around 7,000 children under the age of five. Most had died from malnutrition, dehydration and curable illnesses such as scarlet fever. Medical assistance was consistently denied the refugees by the Danish medical authorities and the Red Cross. After five years of Nazi occupation from April, 1940 to May, 1945, the Danish authorities were in no mood to play 'nurse' to these unfortunate German refugees. Fear that they would be branded collaborators by the Allies was another factor. During the German occupation over 10,000 young Danish men joined the German forces to fight on the Eastern Front. Around 6,000 were killed.

SWEDEN'S SHAME!

During 1939-1940, the Stockholm Enskilda Bank (SEB) of neutral Sweden purchased all the branches of the Bosch Group that were situated outside Germany. This bank acted as a cloak for Hitler's regime and also helped the giant corporations such as IG Farben and Krupp to hide their foreign subsidiaries in order to avoid confiscation by the Allies. This association with Nazi Germany did not end there, massive shipments of iron ore were sent to Germany from the Kiruna-Gällivare ore fields in Northern Sweden. There is no doubt that this material support helped extend the war by several months. The Enskilda Bank also helped the Nazis dispose of many assets confiscated from Dutch Jews prior to their deaths in Auschwitz. In 1940, Sweden was coerced into allowing German troops to march through the country to Norway during the German invasion.

BRITAIN'S SHAME!

British policy towards the Jews of Europe during WWII leaves little to be proud of. It was the British Government which did its best to block all escape routes out of German occupied territory to these unfortunate people. If they had been treated as refugees and not as prospective Palestine immigrants there is no doubt that much more would have been done to help them. There was extreme reluctance by British authorities to admit refugee Jews to any of its territories. Official thinking in many government circles at that time was that Jews were part of the nations among whom they lived and were not a distinct entity and therefore had no special claim to help. i.e. a Dutch Jew was a Dutchman, a Polish Jew, a Pole, in spite of the fact that they were persecuted as Jews, not as Dutch or Poles. (Of the 460,000 Jews in Palestine at that time, around 30,000 served with the British armed forces. Of the Palestine Arabs, about 9,000 donned the British forces uniform.)

GERMANY'S SHAME!

About 90% of the German legal profession aligned themselves voluntarily with the Nazi regime. During this time they handed out no less than 45,000 death sentences. The two most notorious judges were Judge Oswald Rothaug, who once sent a Jewish shoe wholesaler named Katzenberger to the gallows for allowing a German girl to sit on his lap, and the Berlin Peoples Court Judge, Roland Freisler, who dispensed death sentences at every

opportunity. Freisler was killed during an Allied air raid on Berlin on February 3, 1945, a falling beam crushing his skull. (He is buried in his wife's family grave in the Forrest Cemetery in Dahlem, Berlin) After the war, only a few judges were ever prosecuted for judicial murder, none receiving a death sentence. After the war about 90 found re-employment in the West German Justice System. In 1941, the age at which a death sentence could be given was reduced to 14 years. In 1940, about 900 German civilians were executed. This had risen to over 5,000 by 1943. Between 1943 and 1945, the 258 Peoples Court Judges and prosecutors had sentenced to death a total of around 7,000 people.

ARGENTINA'S SHAME!

Under the rule of Juan Peron, Argentine provided a safe haven for hundreds of Nazi war criminals. Set up in 1944 by Otto Skorzeny, the escape route known as 'Odessa' (Organization Der Ehemaligen SS Angehörigen) Organization of Former SS Members, helped many top Nazis to escape the justice of the Allies. In 1950 Argentine held the record for helping these illegal immigrants to settle. War criminals such as Adolf Eichman, Joseph Mengele and Claus Barbie, were among those who disappeared from sight at the end of the war. Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli) and Odwal Hugal, a prominent bishop in the Vatican endorsed the hiding of these Nazis and helped their escape plans for entry into Argentina where most lived in relative safety for the rest of their lives.

PLÖTZENSEE PRISON

In Berlin's infamous Plötzensee Prison, constructed between 1869 and 1879 on a 62 acre site, 2,891 persons were executed during the twelve year reign of National Socialism, 1,437 of these were German. Also included were 679 persons from Czechoslovakia, 254 from Poland and 245 from France. During the years 1933 to 1936, forty-five persons were beheaded by the executioners axe the prison courtyard. In 1937 the guillotine was put in place in the execution chamber, being brought from its former home in the Bruchsal prison at Baden. In that year a total of thirty-seven prisoners were beheaded. In 1938, fifty-six prisoners were executed and in 1939, ninety-five prisoners were put to death. In 1942, a steel beam, to which eight iron hooks were suspended, was fitted between the walls of the chamber. The first victims to die by this slow strangulation method were members of the resistance group known as the 'Red Orchestra' whose members consisted mostly of Berliners, forty percent of whom were women. After the failed July 20 coup, ninety persons were executed here for their part in the conspiracy. The executioners were paid an annual salary of 3,000 Reichmarks plus sixty-five Reichmarks for each execution. The guillotine was badly damaged during the night air raid on September 7/8, 1943, when a bomb hit the execution chamber. After this raid, 186 prisoners were executed in groups of eight to prevent them escaping from the damaged prison. The execution building is now preserved as a Memorial to the Victims of National Socialism 1933-1945.



Memorial Urn, situated outside the execution chamber, contains a handful of earth from all Nazi concentration camps.

JEWISH SOLDIERS

Among the 5,000 European Jews who emigrated to Palestine before the outbreak of war, 734 were killed in action after volunteering for the British armed forces. As the only Jewish fighting unit in the war, they saw action against the Wehrmacht in North Africa, Greece, Crete and in Italy. In Poland, after the German invasion in 1939, around 61,000 Jewish soldiers were among the 400,000 Polish Army men taken prisoner when Poland surrendered. They were separated from their Polish comrades-in-arms and sent to Germany as slave labourers. Not many survived the hunger and brutality imposed on them.

THE JEWISH BRIGADE

In 1944, the Jewish Brigade, consisting of three infantry battalions and commanded by Brigadier Ernest Benjamin, became part of the British Army fighting in Italy under its own official Zionist flag. After the war, the Brigade carried out many clandestine operations in Europe as secret vengeance squads seeking out former concentration camp guards and SS officers who had gone into hiding when the war ended. Called D.I.N. 'Dahm Y'Israel Nokeam' (The Blood of Israel Will Take Revenge). It hunted down over one hundred ex-SS members in the first two month period of their operation. Their method was straight forward, first apprehend the victim for routine questioning, drive him to a safe location in a wood and there the Brigade identified themselves and then passed out a death sentence. The victim was then immediately strangled or in some cases shot.

The spare-time activities of the Brigade was to help other Jews, who survived the concentration camps, to get to Palestine despite the British blockade. When the Brigade received instructions to return to Britain and disband, 130 stayed behind to carry on the work, especially the rehabilitation of thousands of Jewish orphan children. They achieved this by swapping identities with young Jewish persons from the many displaced persons (DPs) camps in Europe. These Jews were then sent to ports in southern France for transportation to Palestine. As one 'double' remarked "Out of the darkness of the Holocaust we were able to show them the way back to joy and normality."

GERMANY'S LAST HOPE

The entire youth of Germany, boys of 14 to 17 years, were expected to turn the war around during the last days of Hitler's Third Reich. But reality soon overcame the illusion. The Hitler Youth and the Volkstrum, consisting of old men, were Germany's last hope of survival. These troops were all that stood between Germany and Armageddon. Over a thousand of these boy soldiers were sent to defend the city of Breslau. There, they awaited the Russian onslaught. When it came, every house became a strongpoint. Many of these young boys killed themselves out of sheer terror of falling into the hands of the Soviets but their comrades fought on desperately for days more until the city surrendered on May 6, 1945. These boy soldiers only helped prolong a war which had long been lost. In Hitler's last public appearance he decorated the Hitler Youth member Alfred Zeck, from Goldenau, with the Iron Cross. Zeck was only twelve years old, becoming the youngest recipient of the prestigious medal.

12 YEAR-OLD HEROES

The 12th SS Division 'Hitlerjugend' consisted of 22,540 officers and young soldiers. many aged between 12 and 14. Only 12,500 survived the Normandy campaign 1944, and By the end of the war only 455 members of the Division survived. On March 19th, 1945, Hitler, on his 56th birthday, held a reception outside his Berlin bunker for twenty Hitler Youth members, his 'Young Heroes' as he called them. They received Iron Crosses for single-handedly knocking out a Soviet Tank with a Panzerfaust.



The very last-known photo of Adolf Hitler outside his Führerbunker. He refused to leave Berlin as the symbolic heart of Germany. Perhaps here he was mulling over the damage which the morning's Soviet shelling had wrought to the bunker—the last redoubt of his empire—as they both crumbled, literally, around him.

THE HALBE POCKET

In a last desperate stand before the fall of Berlin, General Busse's 9th Army, retreating from the Oder, fought a ferocious battle in the forests around the small town of Halbe 40 kms south-east of Berlin. Surrounded by the army of the Soviet Marshall Georgi Konev, all avenues of escape were closed and in the following slaughter the 9th Army suffered catastrophic losses compatible with any suffered in the Soviet Union. As one witness remarked 'The massacre in that forest was appalling, wounded were left untreated and screaming by the roadside'. In this desperate battle over 50,000 soldiers of both sides and many civilians, mostly refugees fleeing from the east, were killed and buried near where they died, in woods, fields, private gardens and roadside graves. It took months for the local population to clear the forest and surrounding area of corpses which were dug up and reburied in the war cemetery at Halbe (Waldfriedhof Halbe) the largest World War II German cemetery. There are over 22,000 graves, with hundreds of headstones simply marked 'Unknown'. Many markers mention mass burials of 30, 50, 100 or more unknown soldiers. Every year for a decade after the battle, scores of bodies were still being discovered in shallow graves in the woods around the town. In the battle around Halbe at least 20,000 soldiers of the Red Army died, most of them buried in the cemetery on the Baruth-Zossen road. The number of refugees killed is not known but must have been in the hundreds. Around 120,000 German soldiers who survived the Halbe Pocket Battle were taken prisoner and ended up in Soviet prison camps.

Author's note: in August 1988, my wife and I visited the cemetery, having first obtained the necessary permission and special passes from the East German communist authorities. Our guide, Walter Passoth, from the village of Münchehofe, remarked that he believed we were the first foreigners (Engländer) to visit the cemetery.

MUNCHEHOFE

As the Russian troops encircled the villages of Halbe, Neundorf, Buchholtz, Prieros and Münchehofe, bombing, strafing and artillery shelling became intense. When the barrage subsided, 17 year-old Ilse Kutschewsky, who had been hiding under piles of household junk in the cellar of her parents bakery in Münchehofe for the past week, emerged to survey the debris of war. Bodies of German and Russian soldiers, civilians and refugees were lying everywhere, on the street, and in the gardens many still alive and crying out for help. To help out in the local makeshift hospital and morgue, already filled with the dead and dying, she noticed a soldier, barely conscious and with his leg partly blown off. Grabbing a scissors she cut through the remaining strips of skin and muscle thus separating the leg from the body. A tourniquet was applied to the upper part of the thigh but on checking his condition some minutes later she found that he had died. After the Russians had overran the villages and continued their march to Berlin, the task of cleaning up began. Bodies found on the street and

gardens were dragged by the residents to the local cemetery and placed in a large pits dug by the locals. One unmarked grave, containing around thirty bodies, can be seen today just inside the entrance to the Munchehofe cemetery. (note: Ilse Kutschewsky is now Mrs. George Duncan, wife of the author of this website, both now resident in Australia).

AUSSIES NEEDLESSLY WASTED

Australian pilots were needlessly wasted on missions of no tactical benefit to Australia. The last months of the war saw these young pilots assigned to an inferior role shooting up enemy positions on odd islands of no strategic importance bypassed during the American advance. Many were shot down by anti-aircraft fire or crash landed when they ran out of fuel. Eager to participate in the real war further north, which was 'OUT OF BOUNDS' to Australians, they felt 'left out' of the really important operations that were being fought to bring the war to a speedy end. These pilots gave their lives in the backwaters to feed the ego of General Douglas MacArthur who had no intention of bestowing laurels on the brows of anyone but himself and his own men. In spite of his promise that Australian troops would be integral to the liberation of the Philippines, his fanatical determination to re-capture his former home, alone and without the help of his allies, caused great indignation and bitterness within the ranks of Australian Air Force Squadrons.

The campaigns, in which Australians replaced US troops needed in MacArthur's campaign against the Philippines, i.e. New Britain, Bougainville, Tarakan, Brunai Bay and Balikpapan, made no difference to the outcome of the war or the time it took to bring the Pacific war to a close. The capture of the airfield at Balikpapan for instance, cost 229 Australian lives but could not be repaired before the end of the war. At Brunei Bay, 114 Australians died for what was planned to be a British naval anchorage but it was never used. At Tarakan, 225 men of the 26th Brigade of the Australian 9th Division, died in a campaign that lasted 52 days. With the end of active hostilities, the troops were left wondering what it was all about. The capture of the island had not shortened the war by even one day. The campaign had no military or strategic value, some officers described the effort as "a complete waste of time", another said "All it was good for was killing Japs and to bury our dead". (Japanese dead totalled 1,540.)

WHAT IF?

If China had been a united country and combined the forces of the Peoples Liberation Army with the Nationalist Army instead of against each other, it could well be that the Japanese forces would have been forced to withdraw early in the war. The self-seeking leaders of the two armies, Chiang Kai-shek of the Nationalists and Mao Tse Tung of the Peoples Liberation Army uselessly wasted time in confrontation with each other instead of concentrating on the common enemy, Japan.

RE-EDUCATION FILM FLOP

At the cessation of hostilities in Europe a campaign was launched by the Allies to re-educate the Germans in the hope that they (the Germans) would grovel, stoop, cringe and beg forgiveness. In a country 60% devastated by war and with chaos and disorder everywhere, the Allies forced 2,000 German civilians to watch a film titled 'Todesmühlen' (Mills of Death) screening at ten different cinemas. In the film, scenes from the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Belsen, Dachau and Nordhausen were shown. About half the audience choose not to respond but the 1,040 who did said the film should be shown to all Germans. The surprising thing was that 85.5% felt no sense of collective guilt. 82% admitted that they had no knowledge of the Nazi death camps. 70% said they thought the German people should not share responsibility. Few civilians in Germany bought the idea of collective guilt. An opinion poll conducted by the US Army in November 1945, showed that fifty per cent of those polled believed that, with around six million unemployed, National Socialism was a good idea but badly carried out. The film 'Todesmühlen' as a re-education device, was a total failure.

PIERRE LAVAL (1883-1945)

Three times Prime Minister of France, the third time head of the French Vichy Government, he was given asylum in Spain when the Allied armies invaded France. On July 31, 1945, he was flown to Linz in Austria and there he gave himself up to the US authorities who promptly turned him over to the French army. Eventually he was tried by a French court and sentenced to death for treason. After a failed attempt at suicide he was executed by firing squad. (He is buried in the Cimetiere de Montparnasse in Paris.)

FEAR IN WAR

In a research into Fear in Combat, the US Army questioned the men of four divisions, a total of 6,020 men.

- 304 admitted to a violent pounding of the heart
- 254 to a sinking stomach feeling
- 207 to shaking and trembling
- 190 to a sick stomach
- 183 to coming out in a cold sweat
- 74 to vomiting
- 46 to losing control of the bowels
- 28 to urinating in their pants.

US SERVICEMEN: FIT FOR DUTY?

From 1941 to 1945, a total of 17,955,000 Americans were medically examined for induction into the armed forces. Some 6,420,000 (35.8 percent) were rejected as unfit because of some physical disability. Altogether, 16,112,566 Americans served their country in World War II. A total of 38.8 percent (6,332,000) were volunteers. In all, 405,399 American service men and women gave up their lives in a war that cost the US \$288 Billion Dollars.

The most decorated unit in U.S. military history is the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, whose motto was "Go for Broke." It consisted of Japanese-American volunteers. Together they won 4,667 major medals, awards, and citations, including 560 Silver Stars 4,000 Bronze Stars, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, and one Medal of Honor, plus 54 other decorations. It also held the distinction of never having one single case of desertion during the entire war.

A VERY LONG WAR

The last Japanese soldier to surrender was Captain Fumio Nakahira who held out until April, 1980, before being discovered at Mt. Halcon on Mindoro Island in the Philippines. Before that, there was Onoda Hiroo, discovered in the jungle of Lubang Island on March 11, 1974, twenty-nine years after the war ended. He has since published a book 'No Surrender: My Thirty-Year War'. Nakamura Teruo was discovered on the island of Morotai on December 18, 1974, still believing the war was on. Sergeant Yolo Shoichisurvived in the jungles of Guam until found on January 24, 1972. He died in September, 1997 at the age of 82.

RAPE IN WAR

The rape of Jewish women by Nazi forces is well documented. After the attack on Poland in September, 1939, mass rape of Jewish women was an everyday occurrence. In Warsaw, forty women were taken from the ghetto to a party in the officers mess and forced to drink, strip and dance with German officers after which they were raped repeatedly before being sent back to the ghetto. In the concentration camps, Jewish women were raped by their guards. This of course contravened the Nazi race laws that prohibited sexual relations between 'Aryans' and Jews. At the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials evidence was presented that hundreds of Russian women were raped. Many French women, especially those in the resistance, were brutally raped during the occupation. Not only German soldiers but British and American fighting men did their fair share of raping.

During the occupation of Japan, Japanese women were subjected to mass rape by the soldiers of the occupation forces starting on the first day, August 21, 1945. Over a period of ten days, 1,336 cases of rape were reported. In one instance a woman was raped by twenty-seven US soldiers. In Hiroshima, occupied by the British and Commonwealth Forces, many Japanese women were raped. One young woman was raped by twenty Australian soldiers. On August 21, 1945, Japanese authorities decided to set up a Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) for the benefit of Allied occupation troops in an attempt to cut down the instances of rape. At its peak, around 20,000 prostitutes worked for the RAA. On September 20, 1945, the first brothel for the 350,000 US troops in Japan was opened. It was called 'Babe Garden'. It was closed down on March 27, 1946 to stop the spread of VD. Unfortunately these brothels did little to minimize the incidence of rape during the first year of the occupation.

SOVIET RAPES IN BERLIN: A HUGE, UNKNOWN TOTAL

The official figures for Berlin rapes by Soviet troops does exist but has never been published. However, Berlin's former mayor, Ernst Reuter, said that the figure given him was 90,000. In 1945, Berlin had a population of some

2,700,000 of which about 2,000,000 were women. Many rapes of course were never reported and the figure of 90,000 includes only hospitalized cases and doctors reports. Some 10,000 women in Berlin died as a result of rape, many by suicide. The death rate was thought to have been much higher among the 1.4 million estimated victims in East Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania. Doctors were besieged by women seeking information on the best way to commit suicide. A charity institution, orphanage and maternity hospital, 'Haus Dehlem' was forcibly entered by second line Russian troops and pregnant women and women who had just given birth were repeatedly raped. In the Soviet Zone of Germany nearly 90% of females ages between 10 and 80 were raped in what undoubtedly was the largest case of mass rape in history. This included women expelled from the eastern provinces. Among the rape victims were many women who became prominent figures in post-war Germany. Hannelore Kohl, wife of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl was raped when twelve years old, along with her mother while they tried to escape from Berlin on a train heading for Dresden. Hannelore Kohl committed suicide in 2001.

Most German children born in Berlin in 1946 were the result of rape. Women and young girls were forcibly dragged from their homes and raped, the drunken Soviet Mongolian soldiers queuing up to await their turn. For two whole weeks these mass rapes of women continued. Some Jewish women, thinking that their nationality would save them, showed their identity cards to the rapists but none of them could even read. Marshal Zhukov issued orders that any soldier caught in the act of rape after the two week period was up, was to be shot on the spot. Many a Russian soldier met his end this way. Although no US soldier was ever executed for rape in Germany, as one GI wrote: "many a sane American family would recoil in horror if they knew how 'our boys' over here conduct themselves." The psychological effects on many of these rape victims were devastating, future relationships with men became extremely difficult for the rest of their lives. (Between 1942 and 1945, a total of 2,420 rapes were reported in England, 3,620 in France and more than 11,040 in Germany by the occupying troops.) It is estimated that around two million German women had undergone an illegal abortion in the three years after the war ended.

TRANSFERRED

By September, 1944, around one million and thirty thousand prisoners from the Soviet Gulags were transferred to the Red Army. Political prisoners and those convicted of anti-Soviet activities were not released. Further releases were made in the Spring of 1945 just weeks before the onslaught on Berlin. Exchanging a Gulag death for a hero's death at the front was motivation enough for many of these prisoners, five of whom later became 'Heroes of the Soviet Union'. Fed a daily dose of anti-German propaganda and films showing the terrible atrocities committed by Nazi troops while in Russia, they soon became full of a burning hatred for the enemy and longed for revenge. Once on enemy soil they were confronted with signs saying "Red Army soldier: You are now on German soil, the hour of revenge has struck." The orgy of rape, looting, murder and drunkenness committed by these ex-prisoners of the Gulags on innocent German women and children was a direct result of this indoctrination. (At this time Berliners were saying that optimists were learning English and the pessimists learning Russian.)



Berliner women's worst nightmares were realised when they were repeatedly raped in their tens of thousands by the barbarous invading Soviet hordes. Many were brutally murdered. Our "valiant Soviet allies" were actually at first officially encouraged to rape, murder and take loot as legitimate Communist wartime plunder. Until the disgusted Marshal Zhukov finally intervened and stopped the mayhem—as good Bolsheviks and animalistic Mongolian riffraff—most raped away with bloodthirsty relish.

SUICIDE ATTACKS

Prior to the proposed invasion of mainland Japan, Operation Olympic on November 1, 1945, the Japanese military speeded up its preparations to attack the Allied invasion force while still at sea, coming up with some very desperate ideas for suicide attacks of differing kinds:

- Thousands of volunteer pilots were hastily trained for airplane suicide attacks. Over 500 aircraft of all types were available for these kamikaze missions.
- Around 400 Koryu and Kairyu suicide submarines (five and two-man versions of the Kaiten) would set out on their one-way journey. Also prepared to sacrifice their lives were 300 volunteers for the Shinyo human torpedoes.
- Most bizarre of all were the hundreds of strong swimmers who would swim out with deadly mines strapped to their backs to explode against the hulls of the Allied ships.

Just when all was set for the greatest military mass suicide in history, the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. On August 14, 1945, the Japanese ordered all kamikaze operations to cease. The originator of the first kamikaze attack, Vice Admiral Takijiro Ohnishi, committed suicide by disembowelling himself.

WAR BRIDES

Around 48,000 European women, with 22,000 children, emigrated to Canada during and after the Second World War. Today in Canada there are some 300,000 children or grandchildren of these War Brides. Over one million American GIs were stationed in Britain in the two years preceding D-Day. Approximately 130,000 were black Americans. Near 70,000 British girls married their GI boy friends and 47,000 married their Canadian soldier. About 20,000 children were born to these GIs and just under 1,000 were black children. By 1950, a total of 14,175 German and 758 Japanese war brides arrived in the USA. In Australia, by 1950, about 650 Japanese girls married their Aussie boy friends and were admitted to Australia when the admission ban was lifted in 1952. Many of these brides experienced prejudice, jealousy and resentment by Australian women who were enraged that their soldiers had chosen foreign girls as wives. Some 7,000 Australian women married their American GI boy

friends and travelled to the USA as war brides. Between 1946 and 1949 some 20,000 German women immigrated to the USA to start a new life with their American husbands or boy friends. Most found that they were anything but welcome. (The first US troops arrived in Brisbane, Queensland, on Christmas Eve, 1941.)

MEMORIALS

In 1989, in Britain, the UK National Inventory of War Memorials was established. Its database lists around 45,000 memorials to those who gave their lives during World Wars 1 and II. The best known is the Cenotaph in London, erected in 1919 and rebuilt on the same spot on Armistice Day in 1920. There are 222 memorials marking the site of plane crashes, both RAF and Luftwaffe aircraft. The War Room at No 10, Rue Franklin-Roosevelt in the town of Reims, France, where the German surrender was accepted by General Eisenhower is preserved exactly as it was in 1945.

One of the most unusual memorials was the one which opened in Berlin on May 8, 2002. Called the 'Deserters Memorial', it is dedicated to the 232 German soldiers, the youngest 18, who were shot for desertion in the closing stages of the war. Realizing that the war was lost they threw away their arms and deserted. All were rounded up and faced a military court which sentenced them all to death. The punishment was legal according to German military law at the time. After the verdicts the 232 men were taken to the Wehrmacht training ground behind the Waldbühne sports complex in Berlin and shot. In Germany there is a law which forbids the building of memorials to its fighting troops of World War II.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

America's most famous military cemetery, comprising 657 acres, is situated on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River in Washington DC. In this beautifully landscaped area the focal point is Arlington House where Robert E Lee, of Confederate Army fame, lived for thirty years of his life. Requisitioned by the Union Army for a military cemetery during the American Civil War the cemetery now contains over 240,000 graves. The first burial took place on May 13, 1864, when Private William Christman, a soldier of the 67th Pennsylvania Infantry, was laid to rest. In the Memorial Amphitheatre is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from World War I. In front of the tomb are two sunken crypts, one containing the remains of an Unknown Soldier from World War II, the other containing the remains of an Unknown Soldier from the Korean War. There is no Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from the Vietnam War as each soldier who fought and died in that conflict has been identified. Instead a special plaque dedicated to those who died was unveiled on November 11, 1978, by President Jimmy Carter. Also here, lie the remains of 364 Congressional Medal of Honor recipients including America's most decorated soldier, Audie L. Murphy. A total of 433 US soldiers were awarded the medal for services during World War II. Foreigners can be awarded the Medal of Honor provided they are a member of the US Armed Forces. They are not required to be a US citizen.

KRANJI WAR CEMETERY

Situated near the Naval Base on Singapore Island, 22 kilometres north of Singapore City, the former military camp became a military cemetery containing the graves of around 6,000 servicemen who died fighting in the Far East. These include 4,461 British Commonwealth graves, 850 of which are unidentified. From 1936 to 1941 the site became the largest ammunition dump in Asia. Just before the capitulation the British blew up the dump to prevent it falling into the hands of the approaching Japanese forces. When Singapore fell, the Japanese established a P.O.W. camp on the site and after reoccupation the prisoners developed a small cemetery in the camp which was later enlarged by the Army Grave Service. At the rear of the cemetery are twelve large columns on which are inscribed the names of around 56,000 servicemen and women who have no known grave. These include the names of those who met their deaths on the Japanese Hell Ships.

WAR CRIMES TRIALS (Europe)

The Nürnb erg International Military Tribunal began on November 20, 1945. It was conducted in four languages, English, French, Russian and German. The trials lasted ten months in which it held a total of 403 sessions. Twenty surviving leaders of the Third Reich were arraigned before the Allied judges as major war criminals. All pleaded 'Not Guilty'. Ten were hanged on 16th October, 1946, seven were given prison sentences ranging from ten years to life, and three were acquitted. Two, Herman Göring and Robert Ley committed suicide during the trial. It is doubtful that Göring would have taken his own life if the Tribunal had granted him his most cherished wish, to die like a soldier in front of a firing squad. Forty Allied officers, including four Generals, one each from Britain, America, France and the Soviet Union, witnessed the executions. Also present were two newspapermen from each nationality as well as the camera crews and lighting technicians. The hangings were conducted by US

Master Sergeant John C. Wood of San Antonio, Texas, a professional hangman in civil life with 299 executions to his credit. Thirty-three witnesses gave oral evidence for the prosecution against the defendants and sixty-one witnesses gave evidence for the defence. Written evidence was given by 143 witnesses for the defence. A total of 1,809 affidavits from other witnesses were also submitted. Everything said at the trial was stenographically and electrically recorded. The United Nations War Crimes Commission was established in London on October 7, 1942, with the support of seventeen other Allied governments. On August 8, 1945, Britain, America, France and Russia signed the London Agreement setting up the N.I.M.T. to bring the top leaders of Hitler's Germany to trial.

The evidence against the defendants were, in most cases, documents of their own making on which their own signatures were proved authentic. Some historians believe that the hanging of General Jodl was a miscarriage of justice but by signing Hitler's order to have fifty prisoners of war shot for escaping from Sagan, sealed his fate.



Senior surviving Nazis got rough justice indeed at the widely-condemned Nürnberg Tribunal. These "Victor's Justice" propaganda show trials were unique in history, complete with fake "Jewish Skin" lampshade exhibits; a German-hating "impartial American judicial team" made up almost entirely of European Jews; barefaced lies, perjury and third-hand hearsay testimony. Most damning of all: widespread, unchallenged torture 'confessions' written in detailed English by non-English speaking German defendants.

PRISON FOR SEVEN

On July 18, 1947, a DC-3 landed at the Royal Air Force airfield, at Gatow, near Berlin, formally Kladow Airfield, in the late afternoon. In the plane were seven high ranking Nazis convicted to terms of imprisonment at Nuremberg. The seven were Baldur von Schirach, Gross Admiral Karl Donitz, Konstantin von Neurath, Admiral Erich Raeder, Albert Speer, Walter Funk and Rudolf Hess. They were then driven in a bus with blacked out windows to No. 23 Wilhelmstrasse in Spandau, better known as Spandau Prison. Built to hold 600 prisoners it now contained only seven prisoners guarded by 78 persons including 32 armed guards, 18 warders and 28 ancillary staff. Prisoners were given the same rations as German civilians. Talking to each other was forbidden, except in the garden. German newspapers were only allowed after May, 1954. Reveille was at 6am and lights out at 10pm. Albert Speer has calculated that he has walked a distance of 31,936 kilometres round the garden in his effort to keep fit during the twenty years he spent in Spandau. After the longest serving prisoner, Rudolf Hess, died in August 1987, the prison complex was demolished, the thousands of tons of rubble buried in the shooting range at RAF Gatow. The site was redeveloped as the Britannia Centre, a community centre for British garrison troops in Berlin. It contained a NAAFI superstore and a picture theatre named Jerboa Cinema, the name taken from the Jerboa Cinema that was situated next to the former British NAAFI Club on the Reichskanzler Platz. (Previously Adolf Hitler Platz, now Theodor Heuss Platz).

WAR CRIMES TRIALS (EAST)

The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal convened on May 3, 1946, and adjourned on November 12, 1948. Twenty-eight Japanese military and civilian leaders were put on trial for war crimes. Conducted by eleven Justices and presided over by Justice Webb of Australia, eleven of the defendants were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging, the executions taking place in Sugamo Prison on December 23, 1948. Among those executed was General Hidaki Tojo, former commander of the Kwantung Army and later Prime Minister of Japan. Outside the Tokyo trials there were more than 2,000 other trials involving 5,379 Japanese, 148 Koreans, 173 Formosans (Class B and C war criminals). These trials were conducted in forty-nine locations. Over 4,300 individuals were convicted of war crimes of whom 984 were sentenced to death. The rest to terms of imprisonment ranging from life for 475 and shorter terms of imprisonment for 2,944. China held thirteen war crimes trials which resulted in 504 convictions and 149 death sentences.

DEATH SENTENCES

In the US Zone of Germany, 462 major war criminals were sentenced to death in 1945. In the British Zone, 240 received the death penalty and in the French Zone the number was 104. Of the 806 death sentences imposed by the western allies only about 400 were actually carried out. In the forty years since 1945, around 5,000 war criminals were hunted down, tried and executed. The search continues to this day.

CAMOUFLAGE LANGUAGE

In many documents discovered after the war, it is interesting to see how SS unit commanders reported their operations to their leaders, Himmler and Heydrich. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, reports flooded in describing the systematic mass killing of Jews, partisans and others by SS death squads (Einsatzkommando). Some 195 documents were found to contain words that have been described as "camouflage language". A few unit commanders, no doubt the more fanatical Nazi types, used plain language in describing their activities, for instance, the words shooting, killing, and hanging, left little doubt about what they were doing. In other reports we find the words: liquidated, cleansed, annihilated, resettled, deported, collective punishment and that ominous phrases "subjected to special treatment" and "executed according to martial law". Towns, reported "free of Jews" were said to mean that the entire Jewish population had either been killed or transported to concentration camps.

RE-ENACTMENT FOR FILM

One evening in the summer of 1946, some members of the Chancellery Group, those who were captured in May, 1945 by the Russians in and around Hitler's bunker in the grounds of the Reich Chancellery, were flown back to Berlin from their prisons in the Soviet Union. In Berlin they were made to re-enact the events of the last day in the Bunker for a Russian film company. They were in Berlin for some twenty-four hours before being flown back to Moscow, there to remain in various prisons for the next ten years. The film 'actors' that day included Hans Baur, Heinz Lange, Major Guenche, General Mohnke and Sergeant Rochus Misch the SS telephonist. For the first time, an information panel, with maps and images, has now been erected on the site of the former bunker to show visitors the exact location. (Many photographs shown in history books today are actually re-enactments of the actual incident where it would have been too dangerous at the time to record the scene on film.)

P.O.W. DEATH RATE

A total of 7,310 British prisoners of war died while in German captivity and 12,443 died while in Japanese captivity. Of an estimated 350,000 prisoners captured by the Japanese in WWII, 35,756 died, a death rate of 10.2%. Of the 235,473 prisoners interned by Germany and Italy, 9,348 died, a death rate of 4%. At midnight on August 14/15, 1945, the unconditional surrender of Japan is announced by the American President Truman and the British Prime Minister Atlee. World War II was over. (This war was unnecessarily prolonged by the short-sighted insistence by the Allies for 'unconditional surrender'.)

KILLED BY THEIR OWN COUNTRYMEN

Twelve French volunteers in the German Waffen SS (33rd SS Grenadier Division 'Charlemagne') who had fought on the Eastern Front were in a hospital in Bavaria when the war ended. They surrendered to French soldiers under the command of General Philippe Leclerc, the liberator of Paris. Accusing them of being traitors to France, Leclerc ordered them shot, their bodies left lying on the ground to be discovered some days later by US troops and buried. Years later their bodies were recovered and reinterred in the local cemetery. Inscribed on a memorial

above the graves are the words "To The Twelve Brave Sons Of France, Prisoners Of The Victors, Who Were Executed Without Judgement".

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Just before Christmas, 1946, the ban on fraternization between German Prisoners of War and British civilians was finally lifted. Invitations poured into P.O.W. camps in Britain from British families eager to invite the P.O.W.s into their homes for Christmas, the first real Christmas the prisoners had experienced in years. The last of German P.O.W.s were repatriated by the end of 1948 but around 24,000 decided to stay in Britain rather than return to their homes now in the communist zone of East Germany. Many of those who stayed behind ended up marrying British girls and raising families.

WWII LEGALLY 'ENDS' IN DECEMBER 1947

Although the war officially ended on August 14, 1945, Britain extended this date to December 31, 1947, as a cut-off date. This extension was introduced to make allowance for the many casualties who died from wounds received during the true war period to be classified as war dead.

GERMANIA

In 2002, on an island in the middle of the 115 square kilometer Mueritzsee Lake, the largest in Mecklenburg and sixty miles from Berlin, amateur historians discovered the only building Hitler ever saw completed for Germania, the name he would have given Berlin after it was rebuilt. This was a prototype of the bomb-proof apartments he wanted to construct for the workers building the new capitol that would rule Europe. Known as the 'White House' or Festwerk-T, it is the only surviving example of the type of architecture that the German Führer would have dominated the new capitol with after the 'final victory'.

POST-WAR

When the European war ended, the great debate began. What had turned young men into unthinking slaves of evil? What happened to make them susceptible to the lust for power, to lose all sense of right and wrong, to commit acts of such unspeakable bestiality, to fight with such fanatical courage and without question to carry out the orders of their unscrupulous leaders? After the war, hundreds of non-Nazi priests, doctors, and psychiatrists were interviewed and not one could report a single instance of confession to the criminal acts in which they, the perpetrators, participated. When, on May 23, 1945, SS Führer and Gestapo Police Chief, Heinrich Himmler, gave himself up to British Military Police at Bremervörde and then committed suicide by biting on a phial of cyanide hidden between his teeth, the terrifying bloody history of Hitler's SS came to an end. But its evil deeds will for ever stand as a warning to all nations and in particular to the new generations growing up in Germany. As the terrible events of World War II recede more and more into the past, the average German person is less and less inclined to feel a sense of individual guilt for the past. The younger generation, quite rightly, asks "why should I feel guilty? I was not born then."

DIENSTGRUPPEN

The German word for Service Groups. This relates to the 70,000 German P.O.W.s and other nationals still in uniform and engaged in post-war operations including mine clearing and guard duties in Northern Germany in 1947. Germans at that time, and even now, were convinced that this para-military force of 81,358 members, called the Black Reichswehr by the Germans, was really a reserve force kept in readiness for a possible war with Russia.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

Originally the Tracing Bureau of the British Red Cross and later the Central Tracing Bureau created by SHAEF in 1944 at Frankfurt-am Main. It later moved to Bad Arlosen in 1946 where it remains to this day under the management of the International Red Cross since 1955. Comprising 26,000 metres of shelf space it contains over fifty million reference cards for over 17.5 million persons who were held in Nazi prisons and concentration camps. The cards also contain details of forced labourers and displaced persons. In 2007, the Bureau received over 61,000 requests from seventy countries for information on long lost family members.



It was here in the octagonal shaped downstairs room of the villa at 31a Uelzener Strasse, Luneburg, that Himmler committed suicide while being searched. This interrogation centre was set up by the British Second Army HQ Defence Company and it was here also that Mrs Margaret Joyce, wife of William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw) was interrogated by MI5 and held for six days after her arrest.